

## **‘Orientation Workshop for Field Surveyors - A Brief Report At Sirohi, Rajasthan on September 19, 2007**

### **Introduction**

CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART) organised a one-day Orientation Workshop for Field Surveyors at Hotel *Swagat*, Sirohi, Rajasthan, on September 19, 2007 under the project titled, “Assessing Quality & Quantity Outputs of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme’ (NREGS), as per the provisions of NREGA, 2005 in Sirohi District of Rajasthan, India”.

The project aims to make power holders (political, financial, administration or others), in service providing mechanism, much “accountable” to the citizens for their actions by applying “social accountability” tools. At the formulation stage, the project is participatory in nature, and as it progresses, there will be attempts to accommodate all relevant stakeholders. At the questionnaire development stage, the office bearers of the *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (PRIs), different other government departments and local civil society organisations (CSOs) were contacted and were requested to provide inputs in making the questionnaire effective and workable while assembling requisite information.

Representing the CSOs, the *Jan Chetna Sansthan*, Sirohi and Social and Health Institute for Voluntary Action, Sirohi come forward to associate with CUTS CART for project implementation. For finalising the survey criteria, sample questionnaire, besides taking into account the inputs from “good governance team” of the World Bank and CUTS CART, eminent academicians from Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Jaipur, Prof S Ray and Prof S S Acharya, former Director, IDS, Jaipur and Former Chairman, Commission for Agriculture Costs & Prices, Government of India were also consulted. Also, comments were sought from the field staff of the *Jan Chetna Sansthan*, and Social and Health Institute for Voluntary Action.

### **Objectives**

The Orientation Workshop on Field Surveyors was aimed to familiarise the surveyors with the project, including its proposed activities, “social accountability” tools, sample criteria for field survey, precautions for effective field survey and operational strategy that need to be implied. It also provided an opportunity to build a synergy between CUTS CART and its district network partners that further help in conducting certain other field level activities such as the Citizen Report Cards and Community Score Card.

### **Participants**

A total of 12 surveyors, including two female surveyors and a former *Upsarpanch* (Deputy Head of a *Gram Panchayat*) participated actively in the workshop. The surveyors were bit aware of the NREGS and its implementation processes, since they have been involved in doing the social audit at *Gram Panchayat* level in their respective area of operations. R Kumar Sharma and Om Prakash Arya from CUTS CART facilitated the workshop, while Ashok Yadav from *Jan Chetna Sansthan* and Shailendra Koshti from Social and Health Institute for Voluntary Action were the resource persons.

## **Inaugural Session**

The workshop commenced with the welcome address by Om Prakash Arya, who described the purpose of the orientation workshop. R K Sharma outlined the project specifications, related issues and the current governance scenario that helped surveyors in understanding the approach behind assembling the requisite information. He insisted for assembling correct information in order to prepare a firm base for future advocacy to introduce logical improvements in NREGS implementation. The surveyors were suggested to be straightforward in clarifying their queries.

## **Technical Session**

The session began with detail introduction of the NREGA and NREGS. Om Prakash Arya explained the objectives of schemes and government's aim behind its implementation. He pointed out the stages where a chance of misappropriation exists. He also reminded to keep all information in mind while conducting the survey. Then he invited two surveyors, who have had the experience of doing "social audit"; to narrate the points that remained unexplained. Ranchod Devasi and Lakhma Ram presented a few missing points and also shared "social audit" experiences. The entire process proved worthy in developing understandings of the surveyors. R K Sharma, Ashok Yadav and Shailendra Koshti also provided their valuable inputs intermittently and made the process smoother.

Om Prakash Arya explained the objectives, methodology, activities, field study significance and proposed outcomes of the project from "social accountability" and "good governance" angles. RKS explained the relevance of "rapport building" with interviewee, including necessary cautions while putting up questions. He also presented detail description about criteria that has been considered for field study and stimulated participants to comment on it.

Both R K Sharma and Om Prakash Arya briefed the questionnaire, explaining the purpose behind each draft question. Ashok Yadav and Shailendra Koshti provided inputs while deliberating the questionnaire. Om Prakash Arya, delegated the responsibility to each surveyor for filling the number of questionnaires at a work site and submitting their feedback/observations in a report form since it has to be analysed further for necessary modifications in the questionnaire prior to its finalisation. With that the workshop concluded by giving vote of thanks to all invited participants.

## **Outputs**

The active participation of surveyors clarified many aspects of the activities and helped build their understanding on logical assessment of the scheme. The queries raised by surveyors and sharing of experiences will certainly help them, while testing it at field level and receiving quality feedback from relevant stakeholders.