

Launch of the Project Titled “Promoting Greater Role of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Rajasthan to Foster Rural Livelihood Opportunities: Meeting the Challenges of Globalisation and Economic Liberalisation”

1. Introduction

CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART) organised a state level launch-cum-brainstorming workshop of the project “Promoting Greater Role of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Rajasthan to Foster Rural Livelihood Opportunities: Meeting the Challenges of Globalisation and Economic Liberalisation” on February 28, 2007 at Hotel Maharani Plaza, Jaipur. The project is being implemented in the Rajasthan state.

The Canadian High Commission, New Delhi under the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) supports this project. The objective of the fund is to enhance the economic, cultural and social life of the people of India, and to promote and strengthen good governance, democratic development and respect for human rights. The fund is supporting projects implemented by domestic civil society organizations.

The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (PRIs) and grassroots organisations in Rajasthan, so that they could help in sustaining the livelihood, keeping in view the challenges posed by globalisation and economic liberalisation to the rural sector.

2. Participants

The invited dignitaries in this workshop were: Rohit Brandon, Chairman & Managing Director, Rural Non-farm Development Agency (RUDA); Ram Gopal Guard, *Zila Pramukh, Jaipur Zila Parishad Jaipur*; Rajan Mathur, Executive Director, RUDA; and Prof C S Barla, Consultant Economist and Chairman of Project Consultative Group. The workshop witnessed an active participation of 65 relevant stakeholders representing civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade research institutions, consultants, private entrepreneurs (domestic and exporters), self-help groups (SHGs), leaders, representatives of different producer/community groups from the rural areas, media and national/international trade promotional agencies etc.

3. Proceedings

3.1. Inaugural Session

The Workshop commenced with welcome and introductory remarks by Shri R.K. Sharma, Deputy Head, CUTS CART and brief presentation on the project by Mr. Manish Dubey, Project Coordinator, CUTS-CART.

Rohit Brandon, Chairman & Managing Director, RUDA, while delivering his keynote address, emphasised the strategies to eradicate poverty in rural communities and said that the non-farm sector (handloom and handicraft) should be promoted through community participation and assuring access to adequate market of the products. Brandon, also opined that there is a need for developing a Community Public Private Partnership (CPPP) model in the non-farm sector.

Ram Gopal Gaurd, *Zila Pramukh, Jaipur Zila Parishad, Jaipur*, while delivering the special address was of the view that there is a need for effective implementation of programmes and policies in rural areas, including the involvement of PRIs in real sense. He stated that handloom and handicraft activities could be one of the impressive modes to revive the rural economy and eradicate unemployment and poverty from rural areas.

3.2. *Technical Session*

Due to time constraint Technical Session, which was earlier, bifurcated in two sessions were combined into one.

Technical Session was started with the address of George Cheriyan, who expressed that the project is a unique, as it endeavours to link local self-governance to address the issues relating to livelihood/employment opportunities. He emphasised that there is a need to sensitise and build the capacity of *Panchayati Raj* Members to initiate the process of rural development. He also pointed out that there is a need to know the requirements of global market and design the domestic policies and products accordingly.

Prof C S Barla, Consultant Economist, while expressing his views on '*Pro-active role of PRIs in Promoting Non-farm Sector*' told that despite 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, the progress with regard to implementation of programmes of economic development and social justice by members of PRIs, as an institution of local self-government, cannot be claimed satisfactory. He also told about the present situation of poverty in the Rajasthan state.

Rajan Mathur, Executive Director, RUDA expressed his views on '*Existing Threats & Opportunities in Non-Farm Sector*'. He was of the view that *Panchayati Raj* Members were not aware of the concept of development. According to him, to construct buildings, roads, etc., were not considered as development, since these are only part of it. He explained that the concept of development consists of health, socio-economic, cultural and political development. He told that there is huge potential exists in non-farm sector to tackle the problem of livelihood in rural sector in Rajasthan. He informed that non-farm sector consists of textile, leather, minor minerals and handicrafts sectors.

3.3 *Interactive Session*

In the Interactive Session, various questions were asked by different participants regarding project, role of *Panchayati Raj* Members, rural non-farm sector, etc. Besides, a variety of useful suggestions and ground realities emerged from the Interactive Session. The queries were answered by R K Sharma, Rohit Brandon and Prof C S Barla.

After Interactive Session, George Cheriyan delivered concluding remarks and expressed that the workshop is the beginning of such an endeavour and said that issues generated during this workshop will be taken further. Training module will be framed and training will be imparted accordingly, he added.

Manish Dubey extended the vote of thanks and with that the workshop concluded at 03:30 p.m.

4. **Outcome**

- 4.1. This workshop created a platform to propagate project's aims and objectives among relevant stakeholders coming from various districts of Rajasthan.
- 4.2. This workshop provided an opportunity to build a synergy between different stakeholders and discuss collectively the issues related to rural livelihood/employment opportunities in non-farm sector.
- 4.3. The inputs received from the workshop will also be helpful in designing the SLOT-cum-base line survey and training modules.
- 4.4. The workshop also provided an opportunity for the *Panchayati Raj* Members to get acquainted with the concept of development and act accordingly to support the process of development relating to rural non-farm sector.