

## Brief Report of the ITP on 'Decentralization and Good Governance with Gender Perspective' 2011

Amarjeet Singh from CUTS International attended the International Training Program (ITP) on "Decentralization and Good Governance with a Gender Perspective", organised by the International Centre for Local Democracy, ICLD in Sweden from Sept. 19<sup>th</sup> to Oct. 14<sup>th</sup> 2011 with support from Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

### 1. Background:

The objective of the ITP is to provide long-term support to development co-operation and to create opportunities to establish well-functioning and long-lasting networks and partnerships in development partner countries by Sweden. This ITP is specially designed for professionals who work actively with issues related to decentralization and good governance. This was the first phase of capacity building, to be followed by mentoring to work on a 'change project' and second phase of capacity building workshop after 6 months.

#### 1.1 Few facts learnt about Sweden:

Sweden is a very sparsely populated country (with 9.2 million population in 450000 square K.M. area), diverse climate, constitutional monarchy, individualistic society, high per capita income, high taxes, export based innovative industries, welfare state, large public sector, vary high on developmental indexes, deep democracy, 'part-time politicians', high public trust on govt. systems and excellent data management of almost everything.

### 2. Participation:

This ITP was for 5 Asian countries (*India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Vietnam and Cambodia*) and 5 participants (total 25) from each country were selected. But 1 participant from Cambodia could not



come and 1 participant from India (*Ms. Pomela Parsad, IRS, working in Income Tax Deptt. Gol*) had to leave after first week due to 'health problem'. So 23 participants (12 male + 11 female) comprising of representatives of NGO and Govt. attended the ITP for full time.

### **3. Key Learnings**

The programme was combination of lectures and study/exposure visits in various organisations working on subject issues. First 2 days (Sept. 18-19, 2011) were in Stockholm, then 5 days (Sept. 20- 25, 2011) in Gotland (Visby) and then finally 3 weeks in Gothenburg upto Oct. 14, 2011.

#### **3.1 Decentralization:**

Sweden is very successful in decentralization (290 municipalities, 21 county councils & 349 member parliament) of governance, which further strengthens its democracy. Each level has its defined role and responsibilities. Municipalities are empowered to plan, even to collect & decide taxes in their region.

Elections are held every four year on a single day for each level for whole Sweden. Despite being an active democracy, Sweden keeps close eye to its democracy and continuously doing conscious efforts to strengthen it.

*There is great scope in India to work decentralization issues, ranging from research, capacity building, advocacy, evaluation etc.*

#### **3.2 Good Governance:**

Sweden, which was a poorest county in the European region (with almost all such evils prevailing in India as corruption etc.) has become the most advanced nation in almost all standards. Freedom of Information, Freedom of Press, clear division of boundaries between politician & executives, E-Governance, performance auditing, deregulation, public administrative reforms, financial management reforms, result based management, decentralization and active citizen participation etc. are the pillars of good governance in Sweden.

Sweden has moved from government to governance, and from making elaborate rules to setting goals.

*Good governance is the key to sustainable, equitable and inclusive development. Though many things are happening in this direction in India on various levels, but still there is great scope (rather need of hour) to expand and deepen our governance work.*

#### **3.3 Gender:**

Though Sweden is one of the most gender equal country (women ratio 45% in parliament, about 50% in employment), still it keep 'gender lenses' on everything like planning, implantation and monitoring with gender segregated data.

There are no special provisions for women due to gender equality policy. There is no maternal leave but parental leaves, no reservation in jobs or politics but providing equal opportunities and non-discrimination based on sex and sexual orientation. It has strict laws to prevent domestic violence and purchase of sexual services, equal opportunity.

*Gender mainstreaming is the necessary ingredient of good governance but mostly we overlook many gender issues and problem (or do not recognise, as an issue) due to lack of gender perspective and prevailing social norms. It will be better, if we do conscious efforts to monitor and mainstream gender perspective in all our programme/project planning and implementation, as well as organisation policies & practices.*

*Gender being the cross –cutting theme, has wide scope for work in all programmatic areas.*

#### **4. Highlights:**

4.1 Excellent opportunity to learn about Swedish governance model of decentralization, good governance and gender mainstreaming.

4.2 Excellent opportunity to network with fellow participants and experts etc. Indian Ambassador (Mr. Ashok Sajjandhar) attended reception dinner in Stockholm, met and interact with Indian participants. Met with youngest Swedish MP (19 year old) and many other politicians, bureaucrats and social activists. Discussed with ICLD team about possible collaborations.

4.3 It was a good opportunity to share about our organisation work with other participants and Swedish experts & organisations.

4.4 Good logistic arrangements and cooperation by ICLD. Despite being a vegetarian, I did not faced much problems related to food, as ICLD team was taking well care.

4.5 Good for capacity building on these issues and to about some new resources /tools like [www.gapminder.org](http://www.gapminder.org) ; <http://www.ted.com/> ; social media tools and gender mainstreaming.

4.6 ICLD created a blog for the ITP and assigned group mentors to provide continuous support to the participants till the final phase of ITP.

4.7 There are many lessons to be learnt from Sweden by India in area of decentralization, good governance & gender.



#### **5. Lowlights:**

5.1 There was too much focus on gender and visits to local governance bodies, rather on concepts and theories to make the things more clear.

5.2 There was problem in interacting with some experts due to language constraint.

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**Amarjeet Singh,**

Project Coordinator,

Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS International)

D-217, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park, Jaipur 302 016, India

Ph: 91.141.5133259, 2282 823/2282 482

Mob: 91. 9829015812

Fax: 91.141. 4015395

Email: [as7@cuts.org](mailto:as7@cuts.org); [amarjeetpanghal@gmail.com](mailto:amarjeetpanghal@gmail.com)

Web: [www.cuts-international.org](http://www.cuts-international.org)