



CUTS-Centre for Human Development (CUTS-CHD)

PACE

Participation and Action towards Community Empowerment
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INITIATIVE TOWARDS CHILD HEALTH AND EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTENANCE

“We need to pay attention to child development and environmental conservation if we aspire for the well-being of our nation. In fact, these should be the prime thrust areas for us.” These were the words of Inspector General (IG), telecommunications, Chittorgarh, Alok Tripathi while addressing the people and dignitaries present on the occasion of Girl School Admission and Plantation and mid-day meal Programmes on July 26, 2005.

The programme was organised at Karediya *gram panchayat* (village council) of Bhadesar block in Chittorgarh district by CUTS-CHD and *Sawariya Ji* Temple Trust. Alok Tripathi also said, “it is our duty to ensure health, education and nutrition for every child and we should help towards the conservation and growth of our natural resources”. The District Collector, Ashutosh Gupta, emphasising the need for conservation of national resources said, “we need to make our environment sustainable and then only we can help its growth by planting new trees. We should ensure access to education for every child”.



Mr. Ashutosh Gupta District Collector Chittorgarh, planting a tree at Bhadesar block, Chittorgarh

The Superintendent of Police, Chittorgarh, T C Damor, said that children are indeed the future of our nation, and to have a good future we need to provide them good and healthy upbringing. Together, all the participants including the children participated in planting new trees and during the Girl School Admission

Programme, the dignitaries welcomed the children and asked their parents to support them in their education and make the programme meaningful.

The Chairman of *Sawariya* Temple Trust, Kanhaiya Das, informed that the mid-day meal programme is being implemented in 55 schools of the district. He also said that such programmes act as a facilitating platform for the poor and deprived children in developing their health and education. In addition, Kanhaiya Das expressed the Trust’s commitment towards continuous support to such programmes for the children community. Coordinator of CUTS-CHD, Dhanna Singh Rawat, while welcoming all the guests, said that the programme aims at simultaneous effort towards conserving environment, increasing awareness among the community towards the importance of education and helping the children to connect to education and nutrition. This joint effort shall provide an impetus to a better educational, nutritional and environmental scenario.

About CHD

Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS), a rights advocacy group, began in 1983 from a rural development communication initiative, a wall newspaper, ‘*Gram Gadar*’ (Village Revolution). *Gram Gadar* is published regularly and reaches every nook and corner of Rajasthan, even remote villages where radio is the only medium of communication. It has been instrumental in providing a forum for the oppressed classes to get justice.

Ever since its inception, CUTS has the policy of working on ‘community-based action programmes and consumer issues’ at the grassroots level. In pursuit of this policy, the Centre for Human Development (CHD) was established in 1990, at the village Senti of district Chittorgarh, Rajasthan, India. The Mission Statement of CHD is to “*be an innovative centre for strategic interventions to raise the living standards of people*”.

CHD aims to achieve its mission through:

- implementing people-centred projects on health, environment and development with a thrust on women, weaker sections of the society and the disadvantaged; and
- empowering people to participate in their own governance and understanding the development process more effectively.

Developing internal skills and capacities through training and publications to implement health, environment and development projects, enhancing external activities on civic and political education of people and building up strong networking between influencers and organisations are the strategies adopted by CHD. Presently, for grassroots activities, the geographical spread of the centre covers six blocks of the Chittorgarh district and one block of the adjoining Bhilwara district. The centre has 17 full-time staff out of whom nearly one-third are women. Also, more than half of the networkers directly associated with CHD are women. It has well-equipped computer, information/documentation and legal aid centres. CHD has identified reproductive and child health, water resources management, environment and sanitation, and good governance and accountability as its core work programme areas.

HIGHLIGHTS

• International Youth Day	2
• Rural Girl’s Empowerment Programme	3
• SHG Intervention of CHD	3

WORKSHOPS ON CONSUMER AWARENESS

Presently, a project 'Good Governance through Consumer Awareness Campaign' is being implemented by CUTS-CHD. This project started in December 2004 in all the 14 blocks of Chittorgarh district aiming to strengthen the consumer rights movement, which has now become a movement of the masses. Under the project, Consumer Resource Centres have been established at the block levels, which provide information and guidance to the consumers and also act as grievance redressal centres. In July 2005, a series of workshops were organised at all the block level centres to ensure the proper implementation of the programme as well as to add on to the momentum that it has gathered during the time.

These Consumer Resource Centres are being helped by resource materials and assistance from the CHD. In the workshops, the main emphasis was on providing greater information to the consumers regarding the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. During the workshops, participation was ensured from the educated community as well as the senior staff from CHD who interacted with the attendees and made them increasingly aware of the programme and its aspirations. Information was also provided on the issues related to the legal aspects of consumer's rights and their mitigation.

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

A great gathering was organised at Bhilwara on August 12, 2005 to commemorate the International Youth Day in which around 350 people participated. The main agendas taken up were of youth's rights and awareness rally and National Youth Policy 2003. The Superintendent of Police, Bhilwara Govind Gupta, flagged off the rally. The awareness rally commenced at the District Collector's office and passing through different areas culminated at *Hari Sewa* Marg. Various slogans like, 'youth are the pride of the nation', 'youth are the strength of the nation', 'youth are the destiny of the nation' filled the air.

Later, a function was organised at the Arihant Hotel, which was chaired by the Assistant Manager, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), R K Srivastava. Also present on the occasion was the Additional District Education Officer, Geeta Gujar. R. K. Srivastava, while emphasising the youth power said that the progress of the nation depends on them, hence, they should be provided with a suitable atmosphere so that they can grow and contribute to the well being of the nation. He also reiterated that youth are human resources full of energy and vibrancy, and their potentials should be utilised in a constructive manner.

At the commencement of the gathering, CHD coordinator, Dhanna Singh Rawat welcomed the participants, and elucidated the history, background and importance of International Youth Day saying that it is a day to recognise the strength and creativity of youth and to think about utilising it in the well being of the nation.

Geeta Gujar appealed to the youth to be empowered and useful for the nation by educating themselves. She said that our youth have the capacity to change the prevailing situation and only a small inspiration is required for this. She also urged the youth to simultaneously think about self as well as social development. India has great expectations from the youth and it is their foremost duty to fulfill those expectations.

The youngsters present in the gathering also expressed their views, including the girls, who felt that they have to shoulder the increasing burden of society. The girls also pointed out that little attention is paid to the primary education when it comes to the girl's education. Seeta, from Kachlodiya village, appealed to all the girls that they should take up this matter to their families as well as to the society and convince them to pay attention to the predicament. Small group presentations were made on the issues related to National Youth Policy 2003, rights and responsibilities of the youth, expectations of the society from the youth and administration etc.

POLLUTION

Since the last few months, a local river that runs across Chittorgarh and adjoining areas and ultimately merges into Yamuna, is fast becoming a source of trouble for the residents of Billiya town. The reason is mass emission of pollutants being propelled into the river by Hindustan Zinc Smelter Plant (HZSL). This is not something new to the inhabitants, as this plant has a history of spreading pollution. The plant was established in the year 1991, and since then it has been a source for spreading pollution.

Among the main pollutants, lead and sulphur-di-oxide are the prominent ones. Cadmium, which is one of the key ingredients of the smelting process, is also to be found in the samples that have been taken from the river sites. A team from the Rajasthan State Pollution Control Board (RSPCB) visited the site but unfortunately, came across fabricated facts without deciphering the reality. The local Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Kalu Lal Khatik has also raised the issue in the Legislative Assembly and the then Industry Minister, Rajasthan had written a letter to the Health Department of Chittorgarh.

A report was prepared in 1999, which indicated that of the 40 people inspected, each carried disease of the eye, skin and lungs. Earlier, in 1998, a big incident of gas-leakage occurred at the plant. The one common factor in all these incidents is that no concrete step has been taken so far to tackle this issue. Cattle have been dying due to lead poisoning and there have been cases of termination of pregnancies, skin diseases and lung ailments. The current situation is uneasy and the residents are highly agitated, as they are trying to settle this issue on their own. A recent incident, in which fishes were found killed in large numbers due to the pollutants, led to mass agitation by the people. CUTS, because of its operations in the area, is bestowed with the responsibility of pursuing the matter and helping the people in getting justice.

INTERVENTIONS:

Projects under implementation:

- Rural Girls's Empowerment Programme: extension phase (RGEP- II)
- CHAYAN Youth intervention Programme
- Self-Help Group (SHG) Formation
- Good Governance through Consumer Awareness Campaign (GGCAC):

RGEP- II (Rural Girl's Empowerment Programme): This programme primarily focuses on elimination or reduction of violence or discrimination against girls. It aims at empowering the girl community residing in rural areas of Chittorgarh and Bhilwara districts of Rajasthan. This project is being implemented in seven blocks of the two districts.

Phase-I was undertaken during the year 2002-2003, and the extension phase started from August 2005 and shall continue till March 2006. The project is supported by Save the Children (SC), UK.

CHAYAN-Youth towards Healthy Future Programme: This project is basically a youth intervention programme. It aims at sexually transmitted disease (STD) and HIV/AIDS prevention, increased knowledge and demand for contraception birth spacing etc. This project is being implemented in the urban slums of the Bhilwara City, and is supported by CARE-India.

Self-Help Group Formation: This project is currently being implemented in about 100 villages of the Mandalgarh and Baneda blocks of Bhilwara district. The target is to form 200 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in the area. The project is supported by NABARD. An in-house activity of similar kind has also been undertaken at the Chittorgarh district. The target group under this project shall be women and people below poverty line (BPL).

GGCAC: (Good Governance through Consumer Awareness Campaign) : This project, an in-house initiation of CHD, is being implemented in all the 14

blocks of the Chittorgarh district. The project aims at creating awareness among the consumers of the district and to facilitate the process of good and transparent governance. Over the last one year, this project has been aiming at sensitising and empowering the consumer groups with information on consumer issues.

Project Recently Completed:

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) Support and Mobilisation (PRISMO): This was a project dealing with the issue of empowering decentralised governance and providing training support to facilitate functioning of these institutions and making them more efficient. Also, it aimed to empowering women participants in the *Panchayati Raj* (local self-governance) Institutions (PRIs) and assisting them to come forward and justify the duties entrusted to them. Under this project, a *Panchayati Raj* Resource Centre was run by the CHD to disseminate information related to PRIs. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) supported the project.

Project in the Pipeline:

Universal Birth Registration Programme: The Project aims at awareness generation and strengthening of procedures relating to birth registrations in rural areas. Under the project, 14 *gram panchayats* in Chittorgarh district and six in Bhilwara district would be covered.

The project envisages involving PRIs in the entire process and to provide them with a realistic and implementable strategy. The monitoring work will also be assigned to the PRIs so that the target groups would have a sense of involvement.

MNGO Scheme under RCH Programme: The project 'Mother NGO under the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH)' broadly intends to address healthcare issues, utilisation and delivery mechanism of health services for reduction in maternal mortality,

reproductive morbidity, infant mortality, and fertility as well as improvement in maternal healthcare, child care, and family welfare through multi-stakeholder involvement and action.

SHG INTERVENTION OF CHD:

In 1999, CUTS-CHD felt that in order to reduce the cases of violence against women, it has to empower them economically. Taking this forward, a Self-help Group Intervention programme was initiated. Due to the unavailability of funds, it was decided that this programme would be implemented simultaneously with the other project activities of the centre and taken up in-house.

Presently, there are a total of 45 SHGs, out of which, 13 are in Gangrar block, 10 in Chittorgarh block, six in Bhadesar block, seven in Nimbahera and nine in Kapasan block. Among these SHGs, 31 are linked with the banks and seven have been granted loans by the banks, amounting to Rs 1,69,000. Majority of the loan has been repaid. Five SHGs have applied for the re-loaning and this they are expecting a loan of Rs 1,00,000 per SHG. The total contribution of all SHGs is Rs 4,89,712 as in August 2005.

This SHG programme of CHD has led to an enormous network of almost 550 people out of which, 90 percent are women. This network has not only contributed to the economic upliftment but has also been instrumental in liaisoning with the local self-governance bodies to facilitate the overall development of the area. For instance, the networked people are continuing with the advocacy work for the establishment of facilities like schools, hospitals, roads, tube wells, plantation activities etc. Moreover, this intervention has led to reduction in the cases of violence against women, which was the basic aim of the activity. The SHGs have also helped in mitigating the social problems of the villages and coming up with solutions. Some women activists have been elected as *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (PRI) members, further strengthening the process.

Vedio Films:

- *Baat Mabri Maan Lo* (Heed My Advice)
- *Abe Ya Pol Ni Chale* (This wont do any longer)

Representations:

- Vivek Khanna participated in a two-day workshop on “Information and Communication Technologies for Community: MIS for Micro Finance Institutions” held at Madurai, on August 1-2, 2005.
- Dhanna Singh Rawat participated in a one-day experience-sharing workshop on ‘Pre-election Voter Awareness Campaign’ held at Jaipur, on September 23, 2005, organised by PRIA.
- Dhanna Singh Rawat participated in a three-day workshop on “Mainstreaming HIV/AIDS” organised by NOVIB held at Bikaner during September 12-14, 2005.

CHD Advisory Committee

CHD has an advisory committee comprising of eminent personalities from the fields of administration, academics & social service. The committee is chaired by M. L. Mehta, ex Chief Secretary, Govt. of Rajasthan followed by Usha Jumani, Consultant, Jumani Foundation, Ahemdabad, Nilima Khetan, Chief Executive, *Seva Mandir*, Udaipur, Indu Kapoor, Director, CHETNA, Ahemdabad, B.L. Sisodiya, Senior Advocate cum Social Worker, Chittorgarh, Bhagwat Singh Tanwar, Retired Chief Engineer Haryana & Director, Arravali Jal & Paryavarna Sansthan, Chittorgarh, I.M. Sethiya, Senior Chartered Accountant, Chittorgarh, Anil K. Singh, Director, Network of Entrepreneurship & Economic Development (NEED) Lucknow, M.S. Rathor, Researcher Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Jaipur & Barun Kanjilal, Professor, Indian Institute of Health Management Research (IIHMR), Jaipur. The Advisory committee meets on yearly basis to discuss and review the activities that are taken-up by the centre.

PUBLICATIONS

CUTS-CHD has been engaged in the publication of resource and information materials since 1991. The aim is to disseminate information on issues of people’s concern at the grassroots level and to support its interventions by providing knowledge-based modalities some select publications are:

Books and Training Manuals:

- *Soochna Hi Shakti Hai* (Information is Power)
- *Logon Tak Nyaye* (Justice for People)
- *Sasakt Nari Sudrid Samaj* (Empowered Women Robust Society)
- *Jaiv Vividbta Ke Samvaahak Guni* (Traditional Healers are the agents of Bio-diversity)
- *Alakh Jaga Hai Gaon-Gaon* (Awakening in the Rural India)
- *Khuli Khidkian Khule Darwaze* (Open Windows and Open Doors)
- *Samooch Ki Kabani Mahilaon Ki Zabaani* (The Success Stories of SHGs by the Women Members: In Process)

