

## Electricity Reforms in Select South Asian Countries (RESA)

CUTS with the support of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) has undertaken a project entitled 'Capacity Building on Electricity Reforms in Bangladesh, India and Nepal (RESA)' over two years (2008-2010) in Nepal, Bangladesh, and two states of India, viz. West Bengal and Rajasthan. The project aims to build capacity of consumer groups/civil society organisations (CSOs) to enable them to deal with the issues involved, take-up action research, share experiences, and carry out advocacy with policymakers and regulatory agencies to affect pro-consumer changes in the electricity regulatory/policy processes.



**A view of the Local Inception Workshop of the RESA Project in Jaipur**

The overall objective of the project is to increase long-term capacity of CSOs; to improve consumers' representation as a measure to enhance effectiveness of regulatory regimes in electricity sector in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. Under the project, a State Level Inception Workshop was organised on April 17, 2008 in Jaipur. In the workshop, 49 participants took part which included CSOs working on power sector reform, policy makers, government officials, media and subject experts.

Along with CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART), CUTS Centre for Human Development (CUTS CHD) is one of the partners at the grassroots in Udaipur division for CART. For identifying the problems of consumers, a Base Line Survey was carried out in six (Chittorgarh, Gangrar, Badesar, Badi Sadri, Begu and Kapasan) blocks of Chittorgarh district. A total of 70 consumers were interviewed. The purpose of the survey was to study problems of electricity users, services provided by electricity board, availability of electricity and how efficiently consumer grievances are being addressed by the electricity board. The survey was finished and forms were submitted to CUTS CART, Jaipur. Based on the feedback from CUTS CART, necessary action was taken to procure missing information.

The outcome of RESA project includes: Base Papers in 3 countries (4 Territories) on electricity reforms; a Training Manual for undertaking training programmes at the territorial level; advocacy document highlighting impediments to ensuring consumer participation in the electricity reforms process; and communication materials, handouts etc., which will be used for grassroots meetings.

## CUTS Initiative in Power Sector

Initiative on power reform was non-existent in Rajasthan. For example, during the hearings at Rajasthan Electricity Regulatory Commission (RERC) on tariff setting petitions, there was hardly any active participation, apart from CUTS, to argue the consumers interests. The sole reason was lack of awareness.

Hence CUTS, in association with Fiedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), took initiative and announces the project, titled 'Involvement of Consumers in Power Sector Reforms' on August 20-21, 2001, which covered three divisions of Rajasthan, namely, Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur. The project aimed to generate awareness and sensitise all stakeholders and end users on the power reform process, with the intent of ensuring their active involvement and participation in the process.

Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS, on several occasions, highlighted the role of the organisation in the ongoing reform process in electricity sector in the state and mentioned that CUTS has always been raising its voice in favour of protecting the consumer's interest and due to CUTS' intervention, greater involvement of people in reform process was achieved.

Since then, CUTS has been actively engaged in implementing projects on power sector reforms. RESA project is the latest in this context, which seeks to build capacity of CSOs and other stakeholders in three countries, viz. Bangladesh, India and Nepal.

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**SHG Projects**

CUTS has got approval of a three year project from National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) for formation of 800 self help groups (SHGs) in Chittoargarh and Bhilwara districts. 400 SHGs will be formed in each district during the project period. The project will target mainly above poverty line (APL) families. In the first year, the focus will be on mobilising women and men, formation of groups, inter loaning, opening bank account at local banks and capacity building of group leaders and members. In Bhilwara, project is to be implemented in Banera, Suwana and Mandalgarh blocks, while in Chittoargarh, the project is to be implemented in Chittoargarh, Nimbahera and Gangrar blocks.

During April-June 2008, new villages were identified and visited. The purpose of the visit was to know about the ground reality of the area and interact with local community. The selection of field animators was carried out. These animators will be the contact person for CUTS workers during the project period. About 70 animators were selected for the work, while 4 new block coordinators were selected. The block coordinators will supervise the project in coordination with animators. Also, during the quarter, problems related to already formed 200 SHGs in Bhilwara district were addressed. Meetings were held in SHG villages on regular basis and banks were visited to update the SHG status. Problems of SHG members were resolved during the SHG meeting.

**Orientation-cum-Training Programme for Animators**

The orientation-cum-training programme for animators was held at CUTS CHD on June 11-12, 2008, in which 32 out of 40

animators turned up for the training. Aarti Joshi, SHG expert and Chawla, Project Officer, *Swarn Jayanti Grameen Swa-Rozgar Yojna* (SJSRY), Chittoargarh attended the programme as a trainer. Rajeshwari Meena, *Pradhan*, Chittoargarh was the Chief Guest. The orientation-cum-training programme for animators



**Stakeholders at the orientation-cum-training of the SHGs**

of Bhilwara SHG project was held at Senior Secondary School, Bigod, Mandalgarh on June 13, 2008, in which 13 out of 32 animators attended the programme. Animators were oriented on project objectives and activities during the training programme. Animators were provided training kits for future reference.

**Project Implementation & Monitoring Committee Meeting**

The first Project Implementation & Monitoring Committee of NABARD sponsored Bhilwara SHG project was held on May 06, 2008 at Bhilwara. The meeting was attended by HS Shekhawat, DDM-NABARD, Bhilwara, RS Chundawat, Manager-Central Cooperative Bank, Bhilwara, Pankaj Kumar, Additional Lead Bank Manager, SK Sharma, Manager, Bank of Baroda and BK Arora of Bank of Rajasthan. The Project Implementation & Monitoring Committee meeting of NABARD sponsored Chittoargarh project was held on May 12, 2008 at CUTS CHD, Chittoargarh. The meeting was attended by Sudhansu Kumar, DDM-NABARD, Chittoargarh, BL Dhupar, Lead Bank Manager-Chittoargarh, PK Kala, Senior Manager, Bank of Baroda and Mathura Prasad Jat, Managing Director-Chittoargarh Central Cooperative Bank. The purpose of the meeting was to share the project objectives and plan of execution with the committee members and take their approval for release of the first installment. The committee approved for release of the first installment.

**Swarn Jayanti Grameen Swa-Rozgar Yojna (SGSY) – Chittoargarh**

CUTS CHD is implementing a micro-credit project in three blocks (Nimbaheda, Bhadesar and Chittoargarh) of Chittoargarh. The project is being funded by *Zila Parishad* under SJSY scheme of Government of India. The project will cover below poverty level (BPL) community. During April-June 2008, all project villages have been visited and 80 percent animators have been selected for implementing the project. The objective of the project is to empower weaker sections of the society, linking them with income generating activities and make them self reliant. The orientation-cum-training for animators was clubbed with the NABARD training programme that was held at CUTS CHD on June 11-12, 2008.

**Software for SHG Reporting System**

Rajmal Gaur and Om Prakash Jaiswal have developed a reporting and recording system for documenting SHGs work. It will help in tracking defaulters and also saving and loan status of individuals. A standard reporting system has been developed for Field Coordinators of CUTS CHD working on SHG project so that anyone can see the status of their progress at any time on the computer.

**Jago Upbhokta Jago**

In order to avail better goods and services, there is a need for strong consumer awareness. The example of Bhagwati Lal Bapna of Chittoargarh district is good example of alert consumer. Bapna had bought a refrigerator from ‘Jetha Air Conditioning Cold Firm’ of Udaipur. The refrigerator developed some defect during the warranty period. Bapna, who participated in the training workshops organised by CUTS, talked with CHD staff and registered his complaint. CUTS CHD sent a notice to the firm asking for remedial measures within 15 days. In response, the vendor sent a mechanic immediately from Udaipur for repairing work. And in one week, the mechanic arrived and did the repair work. Bapna thanked CUTS for cooperation and promised to be a volunteer to help poor consumers in raising their voice against exploitation.





**Bhilwara Mother NGO Project**

Under the Mother NGO Project, data entry work was completed during April-June. The date for proposal planning training workshop for FNGOs was finalised. A two-day project proposal writing workshop was organised at CHD on May 09-10, 2008. Two representatives each from *Mewar Sewa Sansthan*,



*Gharib Nawaz Mahila Avam Bal Kalyan Samiti*, *Prayas Sewa Sansthan* and *Vikalang Kalyan Shayata Samiti* attended the workshop. During the programme, participants were enlightened on the project proposal concepts. Gaps identified on health issues in the survey data analysis were discussed and FNGOs

were asked to prepare proposal based on the identified gaps. Issues related to finance and monitoring systems were also covered. Finally, participants were requested to submit first draft of the project proposal by first week of June, 2008.

In the later part of the quarter the draft proposal submitted by *Mewar Sewa Sansthan*, *Gharib Nawaz Mahila Avam Bal Kalyan Samiti*, *Prayas Sewa Sansthan* and *Vikalang Kalyan Shayata Samiti* were thoroughly assessed and feedback was given to the partners.

**Kanjar Community Rehabilitation**

The local police of Chittorgarh is worried about the Kanjar community whose main livelihood is practicing burglary/robbery/crime. The police has tried its muscle to change their habits but failed in their endeavor. CUTS was approached and a district team was formed to draw a plan for their rehabilitation. A local CUTS volunteer was given responsibility to start dialogue with the community. The Superintendent of Police (SP) ordered the local police not to visit the village without informing CUTS CHD and its volunteer. On May 08 2008, the team with representatives from CUTS CHD SP and local police inspectors and local social workers attended a meeting in the village with the community. After the meeting, a plan was drawn for their rehabilitation. One major objective of the meeting was to convince people, on whom number of cases is pending to surrender. SP ensured to be lenient with those who will surrender on their own and will also support them to start their own enterprises. The surrender programme has been planned in July. CUTS has been given three months time to work with the community and convince them to surrender to the police.

**Fault of Electricity Board**

Pyarchand Regar of Bansen village in Chittorgarh district had got a 3 HP agriculture connection from the electricity board and paid the bills on a regular basis. But last month, the board sent a bill meant for 7 HP connection to Regar. He was worried as the bill was too high. His neighbour advised him to register a complaint at the district consumer forum. Regar registered the complaint at the forum. The forum asked the electricity board to check the bill and make the necessary correction. The board accepted their fault and issued a new bill, which was Rs 5,000 less than the previous one.

**Improving Quality of Elementary Education**

Save the Children, UK is implementing a project on *Improving Quality of Elementary Education* in 100 villages in 4 of the disadvantaged districts Alwar, Chittour, Karauli and Rajsamand of Rajasthan. Four NGOs have been selected for implementing the project in four districts; CUTS CHD for Chittorgarh, AIMED for Alwar, *PRIA* for Karauli and *Pratham* for Rajsamand. The project is based on the twin strategies: first, children’s involvement and community empowerment; and second, developing the capacity of government functionaries to effectively implement the policies and programmes to enable children, especially the most marginalised, to realise their right to education. This project also complements the Indian Government’s ambitious programme called *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA), an initiative that aims to provide useful and relevant elementary education for all children in the 6-14 years age group by 2010. The project is for 11 months from May 2008 to March 2009. Based on the outcome of the initial phase, project duration will be increased from three to five years.



**Narbada Bhambhi speaking at the launch meeting**

The overall objective of the project is to improve the quality of government elementary education system in Rajasthan so that it becomes more relevant and responsive to the needs of children, especially those who are from migratory families, tribal communities, ethnic minorities, or have disabilities, girls or engaged in hazardous labour.

The project will be implemented in six *gram panchayats*. The number of villages will be 25.

| <b>Gram Panchayats</b> | <b>Villages</b>                                      |
|------------------------|--|
| Chiksi                 | Chiksi, Ragunathpura, Jitawal, Banasti               |
| Devvari                | Haapawas, Parliya, Devvari ,Thukrawa, Gagsa, Rithola |
| Semaliya               | Semaliya, Jafarkhera Chothpura, Bilola               |
| Sehanwa                | Sehanwa, Bojunda, Pachtoli                           |
| Ochari                 | Ochari, Lalji Ka Khera, Barada                       |
| Jalampura              | Jalampura, Meeno Ka Kanthariya, Khor, Oradi Biloda   |

The project was formally launched on June 16, 2008 at CUTS CHD. Narbada Bhambhi, Additional District Education officer (Elementary), Suresh Chandra Sharma, Additional District Coordinator, SSA, Ram Pratap Daad, Lecturer, District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Chittorgarh and Chaturbhuj Jat, Member, *Panchayat Samiti*, Chittorgarh attended the programme and requested animators to cooperate CUTS for successful implementation of the project activities. About 35 participants attended the launch meeting.

## CHD REPRESENTATIONS

- On April 15, 2008, Amit Chowdhury and Madan Giri Goswami met Sudhanshu Kumar, DDM, NABARD, Chittorgarh and discussed NABARD sponsored SHG project. The date for Project Implementation and Monitoring Committee meeting was fixed. During the meeting, the name of the committee members was also discussed.
- On May 06-07, 2008, Amit Chowdhury attended a meeting with Save the Children officials for finalising project on 'Improving the Quality of Elementary Education (IQEE)'.
- On May 14, 2008, Amit Chowdhury visited Ahmedabad to attend the national consultation workshop on "Microfinance in India: Evolving Strategies to Deepen and Broaden the Outreach" organised by Mahatma Gandhi Labour Institute (MGLI), Ahmedabad. Amit presented a paper on "Strengthening the institutional base for reaching extreme poverty" during the seminar.
- On May 16, 2008, Madan Giri Goswami attended a meeting of the District Committee for SHG of Department

- of Women & Child Development, Chittorgarh. The purpose of the meeting was to review the progress of SHG work.
- On May 17, 2008, Madan Lal Keer attended the District Reproductive & Health Committee meeting at Chittorgarh. The purpose of the meeting was to review the progress of health projects in Chittorgarh.
- On May 26, 2008, Madan Giri Goswami and Amit Chowdhury attended the Consumer Protection Committee meeting at Chittorgarh. The purpose of the meeting was to review the progress of consumer services provided by various departments in the district.
- On June 16, 2008, Seema Yagnik attended the SJSRY-District Committee, Chittorgarh meeting. The purpose of the meeting to review the progress of SJSRY project activities.
- On June 26, 2008, Madan Lal Keer and Madan Giri Goswami attended the District Health Committee, Bhilwara meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to review progress of various district health projects.

### VISITORS

- HS Shekhawat, DDM, NABARD, Bhilwara visited SHG villages in Mandalgarh, Bhilwara district on April 25, 2008 to review and monitor the progress of NABARD sponsored SHG project. He interacted with SHG members and checked record books maintained by SHG members.
- Rajeev D Mathur and George Cheriyan visited CHD on April 19, 2008 to review CUTS CHD programme activities and discuss administrative matters.
- Kishore Singh, External Consultant of MAMTA, New Delhi visited CHD on April 25, 2008 for in-depth documentation of the Srijan project. He visited Kamalpura village of Bhilwara district and interacted with youths of Srijan project.

### INTERNSHIP

Ishupal Singh Kang and Kanishka Sewak from Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Patiala, Punjab has joined CHD as interns on June 09, 2008. They will be with the organisation for one month. Ishupal Singh has been engaged in Save the Children project and Kanishka has been engaged in Kanjar community initiative.

The collage features several news items:

- परियोजना प्रस्ताव निर्माण कार्यशाला पर कार्यशाला**: A workshop on project proposal formulation held in Chittorgarh.
- सचेतक प्रशिक्षण शिविर**: A training camp for the District Committee held in Chittorgarh.
- नाबार्ड पोषित स्वयं सहायता समूह कार्यक्रम का शुभारंभ**: Inauguration of a self-help group program sponsored by NABARD.
- गुणात्मक प्रारंभिक शिक्षा परियोजना शुरू**: Start of a quality primary education project.
- जिले में गुणात्मक प्रारंभिक शिक्षा परियोजना शुरू**: Start of a quality primary education project in the district.
- नाबार्ड पोषित स्वयं सहायता समूह कार्यक्रम शुरू**: Start of a self-help group program sponsored by NABARD.
- सचेतकों ने सीखे सामाजिक विकास के गुर**: District committee members learned the lessons of social development.