

Poorest Areas Civil Society Programme 2001-2008

PACS IMPACT

Strategic action areas and implementation

Reaching India's poorest people

Strengthening civil society

Fostering debate

Enabling entitlements

Empowering women

Ensuring better governance

Strengthening livelihoods

Facilitating networks

Enabling the poor to do what they want to do and be what they want to be

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This publication has been produced for the PACS Programme by InfoChange with inputs from several resource organisations, civil society organisations (CSOs), communication agencies and individuals associated with the programme

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Introduction

Addressing poverty in India's poorest districts

The Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) Programme is probably the largest civil society initiative aimed at reducing poverty in the poorest regions of India.

The programme today covers 93 of India's poorest districts in six geographically contiguous states: Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand.

The programme directly impacts around 17,467 villages in around 446 blocks in these states. A total of 593 civil society organisations (CSOs) supported by the programme are working in this area (176 lead CSOs and 417 network partners). While the programme is focussed on rural poverty, it has made some efforts to tackle urban poverty as well.

The PACS Programme has a rights-based approach with two basic aims:

- Enabling the poor to realise their rights and entitlements through just and democratic means
- Strengthening the capacities of CSOs associated with the programme so that they can have a more long-term impact in remote and underdeveloped areas, where they usually have better reach than government or market forces.

PACS Programme-supported CSOs, known as programme partners, are engaged in a variety of strategic interventions including:

- Strengthening the capacity of the poor, especially the most marginalised sections, to make their voice heard through panchayati raj institutions
- Mobilising the poor so that they get due benefits under various social welfare and anti-poverty government programmes
- Making women aware of their rights and capacities, particularly in relation to income-generation and decision-making in the family and the village
- Catalysing change in thinking and behaviour to reduce discrimination against dalits, women, children and people with disability
- Working on advocacy efforts to fine-tune and implement more effectively policies in favour of the poor
- Initiating and supporting sustainable alternative livelihood efforts, especially among women, landless labourers and people with disability
- Promoting the emergence of new, socially-committed leaders
- Developing community efforts to combat drought and floods.



Development Alternatives

The Development Alternatives (DA) Group is a 25-year-old internationally recognised not-for-profit corporate organisation whose mission is the promotion of sustainable national development.

The corporate objectives of the Development Alternatives Group are innovating and disseminating the means for the creation of sustainable livelihoods on a large scale, thus mobilising widespread action to eradicate poverty and regenerate the environment.

The corporate strategy is to attain:

- Innovation, through design, development and dissemination of appropriate technologies, effective institutional systems and environmental and resource management methods
- Sustainability, through commercially viable approaches
- Scalability, through partner organisations and networks.

DA's activities cover a broad array of complex development issues requiring sophisticated, trans-disciplinary responses. To be able to provide such responses successfully, DA has built up a strong capacity to identify priority issues confronting the nation and devise effective ways of solving them.

DA has three branches:

- An environment systems branch with groups for biodiversity conservation systems, environment monitoring, geomatics, global environment, industrial environment systems and rural environment systems
- An institution systems branch with a communications unit, Development Alternatives information network, small organisation support group and a training systems unit
- A technology systems branch that has developed pioneering, low-cost and appropriate technology for building and energy services.

Among the important contributions of DA are the development and commercial rollout of cost-effective technologies in key areas like captive power generation, rural housing, clean water and use of information and communications technology (ICT) in remote locations. These innovations are disseminated through several companies formed under DA's Technology and Action for Rural Advancement (TARA) initiative. Recently, DA with the help of the PACS Programme, also initiated the formulation of India's first National Rural Housing and Habitat Policy.

PricewaterhouseCoopers (P) Ltd

PricewaterhouseCoopers (P) Ltd is the largest professional services firm in India. The company is a member firm of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), the global network of PricewaterhouseCoopers International Limited, the world's largest professional services organisation employing over 120,000 people in 139 countries.

In India, PwC has around 4,000 professionals, including economists, sociologists, accounting and financial management, IT, training and education specialists, urban planners and engineers who provide a variety of services for private and public sector and government organisations. PwC helps public sector organisations, all levels of government and large donors to:

- Develop policies
- Forge public-private partnerships
- Improve performance
- Strengthen institutions
- Build capacity
- Maintain accounting and financial management systems, and
- Develop human resources.

PwC has experience of working with:

- International financing institutions such as the World Bank
- Various state governments
- Municipal corporations
- Central and state government institutions
- Urban development and housing boards
- State utilities such as the electricity boards of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh
- Indian financial institutions such as the Infrastructure Development Finance Corporation
- Industry associations
- Civil society organisations such as Save the Children and the Development Alternatives Group.

PricewaterhouseCoopers (P) Ltd's head office is in Kolkata. It also has offices in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Bhubaneswar and Pune.

Programme management

The PACS Programme is managed through a three-tier structure, at the national, state, and local level.

At the *national* level, the Management Consultants (MC) are the apex decision-making body, directly accountable to DFID. Within the MC, DA is responsible for overall programme management and implementation, and PwC is responsible for financial management.

The MC is guided by a National Advisory Board, consisting of 11 members representing a wide cross-section of Indian civil society, academia, the private sector and government. Independent of the MC is a Projects Selection Committee (PSC) which scrutinises and approves project proposals.

Also at the national level is a MEAL Core Group (MCG), with representatives from MC and different organisations and individuals involved in the PACS Programme. The MCG is responsible for devising policies and procedures connected to the programme's unique Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEAL) system, discussed later in this section.

At the *state* level, state managers from the MC are responsible for overall management of the programme in the state. A state MEAL coordinator is responsible for facilitating implementation of MEAL in the state. A Project Support Team, comprising the state manager, resource organisations (ROs) and state-based communication agencies appointed by the programme, initiates and manages state-level programme efforts. A state core group comprising experts from different fields works as an advisory body.

ROs appointed by the programme support CSOs, to enable them to enhance their capacities and achieve the desired outcomes. ROs also monitor CSO progress regularly.

At the *local* level, the programme is run by CSOs, usually with the help of community-based organisations (CBOs). CSOs work individually or under the banner, supervision and guidance of larger CSOs. The latter are called lead CSOs and the former, network partners.

National Advisory Board members

- A K Basu, Chairman, Society for Rural Industrialisation, Ranchi
- Sushila Zeitlyn, Social Advisor, DFID
- Ajay Mehta, Executive Director, National Foundation of India, New Delhi
- Neelima Khetan, Chief Executive, Seva Mandir, Udaipur
- Maja Daruwala, Director, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
- S K Thorat, Director, Indian Institute for Dalit Studies, JNU, New Delhi
- D N Tiwari, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission
- Dr Uma Tuli, Founder and Managing Secretary, Amar Jyoti Charitable Trust, New Delhi
- Mathew Cherian, Chief Executive, HelpAge India
- Prakash Louis, Director, Bihar Social Institute, Patna

- Dr Ashok Khosla, Chief Advisor to the Programme, Development Alternatives

Projects Selection Committee members

- A K Basu, Society for Rural Industrialisation, Ranchi
- Mark Lewis, DFID India
- Dr Ramesh Sharan, Ranchi University
- Joe Madiath, Gram Vikas, Orissa
- Snehlata Kumar, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, New Delhi
- Martin Mcwan, Navsarjan, Ahmedabad
- T D Dhariyal, Deputy Chief Commissioner Disability, New Delhi
- Prakash Louis, Bihar Social Institute, Patna
- Mathew Cherian, HelpAge India

Previous Projects Selection Committee and National Advisory Board members

- K C Malhotra, Professor, Indian Statistical Institute
- Dennis Pain, DFID India
- Dr Kamla Kumar, former Advisor (Add Secretary), Department of Science and Technology
- Murray Culshaw, former Director, Oxfam (India)
- Dr Padma Vasudevan, Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi
- B K Jhavar, Usha Martin Industries, Kolkata
- Pradip Krishen, eminent writer and filmmaker
- Shankar Ghose, former Executive Director, National Foundation of India
- Tinoo Joshi, Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), New Delhi
- Sanjay Valsangkar, DFID India
- Girish Menon, DFID India
- Uma Tulli, Akshay Pratishthan, New Delhi
- Sangeeta Mehta, DFID India

DA's PACS Programme unit

- George C Varughese — Programme Coordinator
- Kiran Sharma — Programme Director
- Sanjeev Ranjan — State Manager (Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh)
- Rakesh Jha — State Manager (Bihar)
- Poonam Mehta — State Manager (Maharashtra)
- Sharad Tiwari — State Manager (Jharkhand)
- Santosh Kumar Dwivedi — State Manager (Uttar Pradesh)
- Satya Ranjan Mishra — Capacity-building Coordinator
- Vinamrata Rani — Advocacy Coordinator
- Communications Coordinator
- National MEAL Coordinator

PwC's PACS Programme unit

- Amrit Pandurangi — Programme Coordinator
- Rajesh Aggarwal — Programme Manager
- Sumeet Malhotra — Programme Executive
- Amit Phull — Programme Executive
- Vishal Gupta — Programme Executive
- Soumitra Banerjee — Assistant Programme Executive
- Dipendra Thapa — Project Accountant

MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning) system

MEAL is a unique learning system in the PACS Programme that systematically draws knowledge inputs from four quarters:

- **Monitoring:** This component relates to information about the progress of approved CSO projects on parameters of inputs, activities and processes, and information on achievement of stated outputs and purposes.
- **Evaluation:** This component relates to information about CSOs' organisational capacities, capacity-building requirements for organisational development, the impact of CSO projects on target communities as perceived by the community, PACS Programme performance at state/national levels and performance of programme support organisations.
- **Research:** This component relates to information about socio-political situations in programme areas; programme thematic issues; approaches, ideas and successful development models from outside the programme; studies and reviews at the state and national level.
- **Innovation:** This component relates to information about new approaches and strategies used in the programme for addressing challenging issues in difficult circumstances; innovative development models successfully implemented by programme partners; demonstration pilots initiated by partners on specific issues and innovations on programme thematic areas made by organisations outside the programme.

MEAL captures information from all the above four areas and enables the use of this information by all stakeholders in their decision-making processes.

MEAL provides mechanisms and opportunities for capturing, analysing, reflecting and acting upon crucial information for learning and improvement at all levels of the programme.

MEAL is implemented at the CSO, state and national levels through well-defined mechanisms and procedures, supported by manuals, MEAL initiation workshops and training programmes.

Programme evaluation

Through MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning) system the PACS Programme is continuously evaluated at the CSO, state and national levels. Each CSO project is also monitored and evaluated by the resource organisations (ROs) appointed by the programme. The programme as a whole is evaluated independently every year by DFID. In addition to the above, a large evaluation exercise was undertaken in February 2006 to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes and impact of the programme.

The externally-led self-evaluation exercise involved the development and use of unique tools to generate clear analytical foci. The evaluation covered 21 projects in six states — around 28% of mature projects in the programme — in February 2006. The projects were selected such that there was adequate coverage of:

- Large, medium and small projects (in terms of budget)
- Individual and network projects
- Projects in all six states
- All thematic focus areas such as women's empowerment
- Women-headed NGOs.

The evaluation team comprised five state managers of the programme, five state MEAL coordinators, five representatives of ROs, two representatives from the Management Consultants, one representative from Catalyst Management Services, which developed MEAL, and two external consultants. Each CSO review team had three members, including one external RO, one programme state manager from another state and one local RO for logistical assistance. In all, around 180 villages were visited.

A report card with 53 parameters, which provided space for quantitative and qualitative reflection, was deployed after development, initial testing and pilot testing. Use of the report card was complemented by information from the MEAL database and other review exercises. Report card scores were then generated.

In terms of entitlements, high scoring areas recorded overall by surveyed projects included:

- Attitudinal changes in target communities, other villagers, local elite, government administration at local level
- Women's role in the development process
- Transaction cost of entitlements realisation
- Involvement of poorest sections of the community, women, marginalised sections and dalits in CBOs.

Coverage of a high proportion of poor, marginalised women and dalits was recorded in more than half the projects.

In terms of CSO institutional capacity, the high-scoring area was the level of support and rapport of the CSO within the community. Medium-scoring areas included:

- New projects and initiatives for poverty alleviation beyond the PACS Programme
- New ways of working for the development of the poor
- Effectiveness of CBO linkages
- Support/resources mobilised from government and financial institutions
- Development of CSO networks and cluster hubs
- Strengthening capacities of project staff and organisational expertise
- Perspective and strategy of CSO for sustaining initiatives beyond the project period
- Effectiveness of internal documentation, research and learning efforts.

In terms of programme management, the high-scoring areas were:

- Match between problems in the area and project design
- Real coverage of projects and appropriateness of selection of villages
- Reporting compliance by projects.

MEAL was cited as the key positive factor for systemic improvement in CSO reporting.

Programme In Action



Reaching India's poorest people

As several studies have emphasised, India cannot meet the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015 unless it makes special efforts to address problems in its poorest regions.

The poorest regions of the country have been identified by government and independent researchers by different criteria since 1960. Whatever the methodology used, the conclusions of all these efforts support the following observations:

- The poorest regions of the country score significantly lower than the national average on key human development indicators like incidence of poverty and hunger, infant mortality and literacy. For instance, in Begusarai, Bihar, 55% of the population lives below the poverty line, only 16% of children get complete immunisation, and the literacy rate is only 48.6 (*District-level Deprivation in the New Millennium*; Bibek Debroy and Laveesh Bhandari; New Delhi, 2003)
- The poorest regions are concentrated in the central and eastern part of the country. Thus, the highest per capita net state domestic product figures are from states in the western half of the country (Delhi, Goa, Maharashtra, Punjab) while the lowest figures are all from states in the eastern half (Bihar/Jharkhand, Assam, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and Meghalaya)
- Within the poorest regions, as in the rest of India, people from the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) have standards of living significantly lower than the rest of the population
- In large states like Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, there is wide intra-state development disparity. For instance, nearly half the poor in Maharashtra live in the central and eastern parts of the state (National Institute of Rural Development's *India Rural Development Report*, 1999). While Maharashtra is often considered one of the most developed states in India, it accounts for a very large number of the total poor in the country — over 22 million in 1999-2000, much more than the total poor in Orissa (around 17 million).

It is clear therefore that the poorest regions of the country require special development efforts and public and private investments. Moreover, such efforts must be focussed on particular districts within states, and within these, the efforts have to be concentrated on SCs and STs who usually constitute the poorest of the poor.

The district-focus has indeed been the thrust of several national and state-level government initiatives. For instance, at the state level there are several incentive programmes to promote industrialisation in particular districts. At the national level, programmes like the Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme have a clear focus on the poorest districts.

However, as experience has shown, the mere formulation of a programme followed by infusion of funds does not yield the expected results.

A major practical hindrance to implementation is inadequate government staff. A study done in 2005 by a PACS Programme consultant in UP, Proact, showed that availability of workforce at the gram panchayat level in the poorest districts was lower than in developed districts. In gram panchayats in the PACS Programme areas of Bundelkhand, central UP, and eastern UP, the availability of workforce ranged from 76-80% compared to 91-95% in relatively developed districts like Gaziabad, Lucknow and Allahabad. Even when staff is appointed, it is frequently absent from work as postings in the poorest areas are considered a 'punishment'.

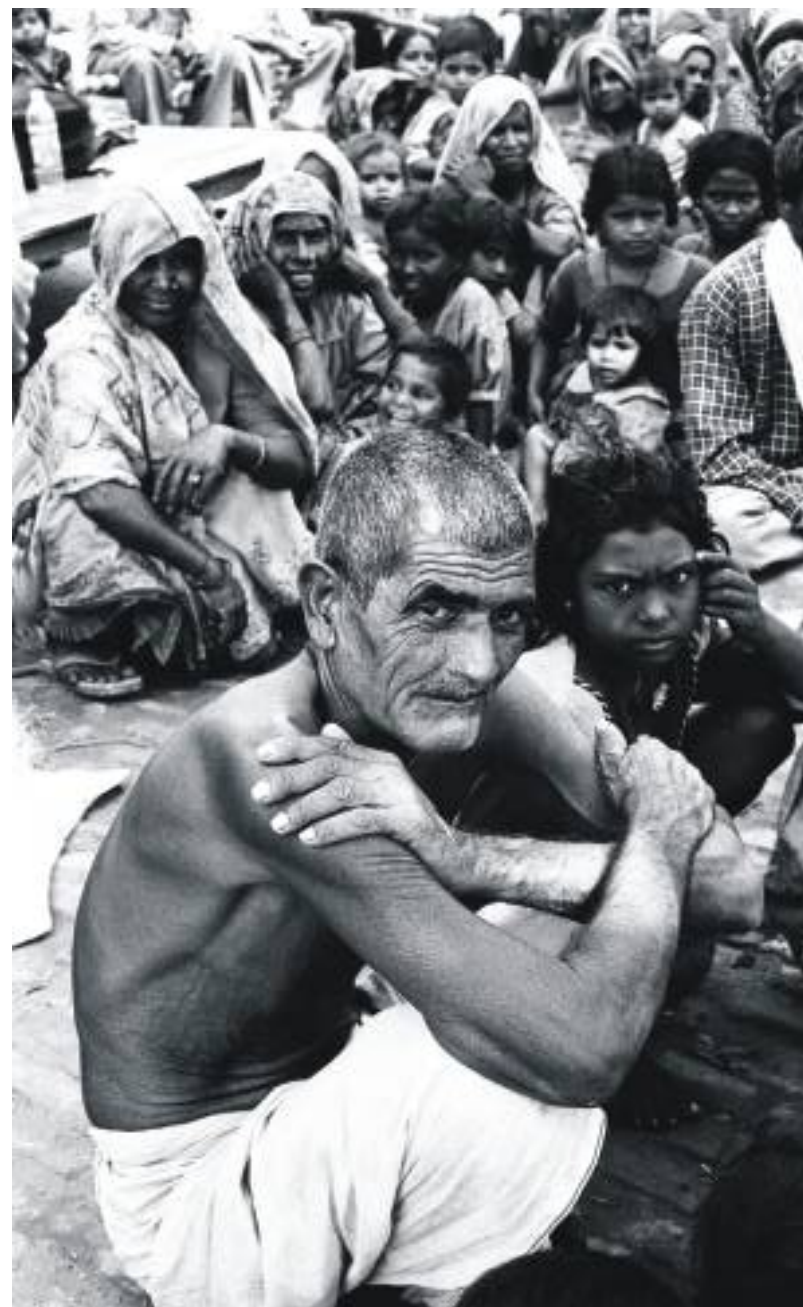
Inadequate government presence is compounded by poor infrastructure, a history of poor governance, widespread illiteracy, and negligible presence of major market forces in the poorest regions.

It is in this context that civil society organisations (CSOs) have a crucial role to play.

Approach

The PACS Programme works in the poorest districts identified in 1997 by a committee of the Government of India's Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment, headed by E A S Sarma, then principal advisor to the Planning Commission. From this 1997 Sarma Committee list, the PACS Programme area was carved out in such a way that it covers the maximum number of 'poorest' districts in a geographically contiguous region in the central and eastern part of India (excluding the north-east, and the states of Orissa and West Bengal, where DFID has other programmes running).

The PACS Programme area so created covers 108 of India's poorest districts across the six states of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand. The programme area constitutes around 85% of the 'poorest' districts of India listed by the Sarma Committee. About 40% of India's population lives in the programme area. An estimated 100 million people living in the programme area are 'extremely poor'.



Within the identified poorest districts, the PACS Programme has focussed on people belonging to scheduled castes and tribes



The Musahars of eastern UP and Bihar are among India's most marginalised communities

Within the identified poorest districts, the PACS Programme has focussed on the most remote areas, and on marginalised communities like SCs and STs living in these areas. The selection, refinement and finalisation of project proposals were based on these criteria, among others.

Deep reach

The deep reach of the programme, in areas far away from government or private sector investments, is clear from this analysis of location of PACS Programme villages in MP:

- 61% of the programme villages are more than 5 km from a pucca road
- 79% of the villages are more than 5 km from a primary health centre
- 81% of the villages are more than 5 km from any bank
- 26% of the villages are more than 5 km from a middle school
- 61% of the villages are more than 5 km from a post office.

Reaching out to most marginalised sections

Several PACS Programme partners have established a strong presence among the most marginalised sections of society such as tribal groups in eastern Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, the Sahariyas and Kol tribal groups of Uttar Pradesh, and the Musahars in Bihar and eastern UP.

As a result of programme interventions, significant changes are visible among

all these target groups. For instance, in 25 villages of Maharajganj district, which has a Musahar population of around 10,000, a PACS Programme-supported project implemented by ActionAid has led to these important changes:

A strong community body: For the first time, the Musahars are organised under a development and advocacy body of their own — the Musahar Vikas Pahal (MVP). Over 1,200 families are members of this organisation. The MVP has organised around 15 rallies and demonstrations over two years (2003-05) and has taken up several cases of injustice. The Poorvanchal Musahar Maan Saman Padayatra, organised in 2003, saw participation from over 2,000 people. This was the first time the Musahars had presented themselves before the district headquarters in such large numbers.

Allied to a similar body set up under the ActionAid initiative in neighbouring Kushinagar district, the MVP displays a newfound strength and commitment in fighting for rights.

Responsive district administration: “When we first started working here, some officials were not even aware of a community called the Musahars,” says ActionAid’s Sameer Pandey. An important first step was a ‘social audit’ presentation in the office of the district magistrate, in 2004. “We explained to the officials what we were seeking to do,” says Pandey. “We even shared information about our funding.” Officials from several departments, representatives of other CSOs, mediapersons and local politicians were all present at the meeting, at which Musahar representatives spoke at length about the many hardships the Musahars face.

The meeting had an immediate impact. A special officer was appointed to ensure proper implementation of government schemes in Musahar tolas (hamlets). Instruction letters were issued to block development officers, asking them to accord high priority to the demands of the Musahars. A special drive was launched to resolve land record distortion cases and distribute homestead land to landless Musahars.

The meeting was followed up by regular interface camps with government authorities. As a result:

- 38 Musahar families have received possession of their entitled agricultural land; 37 families have received record of rights for agricultural land; 9 disputed land cases have been resolved; 27 families have received record of rights for homestead land
- 346 families have got benefits from government welfare schemes

- 5 bridge-course schools have been established in project villages
- 700 Musahar children have been enrolled in government schools.

Grain bank: The Musahars have a community grain bank that has halved the number of food-insecure days from around 120 days a year to 60 days. The grain bank is particularly useful during the months of January, July, August, September and December, when the availability of work on farmlands is low.

Revolving fund: With PACS Programme funding for the project, which covers 75 tolas in six blocks, the Musahars started a revolving fund of Rs 25 lakh to meet their frequent medical expenses. The fund is also used to support business initiatives.

Savings: The Musahars have also formed self-help groups, which have helped over 250 families start additional income-generation activities. For the first time in their lives, the Musahars are saving some money — an average of Rs 200 per family per month.

Reacting to atrocities: Musahar women and men are no longer passive victims of upper-caste/class violence and exploitation. Between 2003 and 2005, 12 serious complaints of atrocities were registered by the Musahars with the local police. The most well-known case was that of a 55-year-old woman from Aurahwa tola who was raped by a local thug in February 2004. After a village meeting, the woman and 25 other people from her tola went to the nearest police station and lodged a complaint. After enduring a harrowing investigation, she managed to get an FIR lodged. Despite threats by the accused, Paras Yadav, the woman did not take back her complaint. Paras Yadav was caught and charge-sheeted in September 2004; in October 2004 the woman received a cheque of Rs 25,000 as compensation from the department of social welfare.

Panchayati raj: The Musahars now have some say in village development through panchayati raj (local self-governance). In the panchayat elections of 2005, 36 Musahar candidates were elected as ward members in 25 villages. Two Musahars — one of them a woman — were elected as pradhans from seats reserved for scheduled castes.

These are giant steps for a community that has physically, socially and politically been restricted to the margins of life in the villages in which they live.

Bringing poor children to school

Child rights are an unknown concept for poor families. Parents need their children to start working early in their lives to supplement family incomes; they see little value in education. But a PACS Programme CSO in Maharashtra, Socio-economic Development Trust (SEDT), has demonstrated in 260 villages of five districts of the state that poor families can be motivated to send their children to school regularly. SEDT works by forming groups of children, women, village elders and teachers. It urges these groups to coordinate efforts to create an environment in which the school and quality of primary education are seen to be most crucial for overall development.

One of the activities of these groups is monitoring and supporting the Gram Shikshan Samitis (village education committees) set up in every village of Maharashtra in 1998 by the state government under directions from the central government. The committees are supposed to look into pre-primary and primary education. Besides counselling the parents and students, the Gram Shikshan Samiti members make concerted efforts to improve the quality of education at the village school. Parents are encouraged to take a keener interest in their children's education and progress. One of the practices followed in several villages is chavriwachan. This is an open meeting, during which anyone from the village is entitled to ask a particular child to read some text aloud or to demonstrate the level of schooling expected from the class in which she is studying. Chavriwachan enables people to get an understanding of what is really happening in the school. It also increases their involvement in education and strengthens their belief that it can open the doors to development and change.

SEDT has also been getting school dropouts to return through bal panchayats, groups of school-going children with enthusiasm and powers of persuasion unmatched by adults. Says Prabhakar Dhapse, an SEDT project coordinator: "Children are very effective in bringing about a change in mindset and working for the development of the village."



Strengthening civil society

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have a foothold in many of the poorest regions of the country. They have staff with a grasp of local realities; dedicated individuals with long-term vision and unflinching commitment lead many of them.

Enhancing the capacity of these organisations and their staff can substantially increase the reach and effectiveness of government anti-poverty programmes.

The PACS Programme works on the premise that strengthening the capacities of CSOs located in the poorest regions of the country is a sustainable, long-term way of tackling poverty in these regions.

Approach

The PACS Programme invited project proposals from CSOs across the country that were keen to work in the identified programme area. Outreach workshops identified all CSOs working in a region and brought them together onto a common platform.

Proposals from only reputed CSOs that adhered to specific legal and other requirements were considered. Proposals submitted by CSOs were scrutinised and approved by a specially constituted Projects Selection Committee (PSC), which includes renowned development experts and practitioners independent of the Management Consultants. All proposals were rigorously appraised and many had to undergo modifications demanded by the PSC.

Through this process, the PACS Programme has involved around 593 CSOs falling into two categories: Lead CSOs, which are well-established organisations, and small CSOs that work under particular lead CSOs as their network partners. The programme's Management Consultants deal directly with the lead CSOs.

Around *two-thirds* of all CSOs involved with the PACS Programme are small organisations and the programme provided them a great opportunity to increase their organisational infrastructure, systems capacities and strengths.

The development of CSO capacities takes place in several ways:

- Through programme funding for additional staff and office infrastructure like computers and two-wheelers for field staff
- Through specially devised training programmes conducted by the programme's Management Consultants, CSOs themselves, or external

agencies, including state-based communication agencies (SBCAs) appointed by the programme

- Through implementation of the PACS Programme's innovative Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEAL) system (described in *Introduction*), which all programme CSOs have to follow
- Through discussions with over 63 expert resource organisations appointed in the PACS Programme states to monitor the work of CSOs, identify problem areas and provide guidance on organisational and programme issues
- Through biannual peer learning workshops organised for the programme partners of each state
- Through participation in regional, state and national consultations organised by the programme on important issues like livelihood-generation, panchayati raj and women's empowerment
- Through regular interaction of small CSO network partners with their lead CSOs
- Through organisational development programmes for select CSOs
- Through cluster workshops at the district level.

A range of training programmes

The PACS Programme has a detailed annual training programme schedule displayed on the programme website, www.empowerpoor.org. The programme leverages the excellent training infrastructure built at DA's TARAGram centre in Orchha, MP, to conduct programmes for both CSO staff at different levels as well as community representatives from programme areas. The Management Consultants also conduct trainings at other venues according to requirements.

In the last two quarters of 2005, 122 capacity-building programmes were organised by the Management Consultants for 331 CSO participants. Around half the participants were trained in the use of MEAL, while the other half were trained in livelihood-generation and governance issues. Earlier, training workshops have also been conducted on issues like gender, leadership development and effective CSO board governance. Appropriate staff of almost all lead CSOs have received hands-on training in computerised financial management.

In the last two quarters of 2005, CSOs themselves conducted around 175

training programmes for the benefit of 1,013 staffers. The maximum attention was on building the capacities of project staff in the areas of governance, livelihood-generation, project management and formation of community-based organisations (CBOs).

In the last two quarters of 2005, 358 members of CSOs benefited from 111 capacity-building exercises conducted by external agencies in areas like institutional development, livelihood-generation and governance. SBCAs appointed by the PACS Programme have also conducted workshops on the use of community radio and low-cost alternative media like wall newspapers, and media relations.

Training programmes conducted by Management Consultants until March 2006

- Capacity-building workshop on building CSO partnerships (March 2003)
- Capacity-building workshop on project management (April 2003, May 2003)
- Training of trainers on panchayati raj institutions (August 2004)



Development of CSO capacity takes place through a range of specially devised training programmes

- Communications and presentation skills training programme (November 2004)
- Microplanning workshop (January 2005)
- Organisational development training programme (September 2004)
- Training of trainers on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) (September 2004)
- Process documentation workshop (September 2004)
- Project management tools training programme (October 2005, February 2006)
- Leadership development programme (November 2004)
- Social audit training programme (January 2005)
- Entrepreneurship development programme for CSO partners (March 2005)
- PRA training programme (October 2005, January 2006)
- Project management tools training programme (October 2005, February 2006)
- Leadership development programme (November 2005, February 2006)
- Microenterprise development training programme (November 2005)
- Customised programme on microfinance (December 2005)
- Micro-level planning training programme (November 2005, February 2006)
- Organisational development training programme (January 2006)
- Strategic planning and reporting workshop (November 2005, February 2006)
- Organisational development self-assessment (ODSA) training workshop (December 2005)
- Bihar panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) workshop (January 2006)
- Basic financial management workshop (January 2006)
- Human resource development programme (January 2006)
- Orientation programme on information and communication technology (February 2006)
- Anti-trafficking and livelihood training programme (March 2006)

Workshops on effective boards for effective CSO governance have also been

Year	No of training programmes conducted by MC	Total number of PACS Programme CSO representatives who attended the training programmes
2003-04	17	247
2004-05	22	390
2005-06	23	400
2006-07 (till Aug 1, 2006)	11	188
Total	73	1,225



Communication agencies have trained CSOs in the use of alternative media like wall newspapers

held in Maharashtra (June 2004), UP (April-June 2005) and Jharkhand (December 2004).

Gender training workshops were held at the cluster/individual levels in Uttar Pradesh.

Learning through MEAL

The PACS Programme's MEAL system provides CSOs a unique opportunity for in-depth reflection on various project issues. By learning to use MEAL, through orientation and training workshops, and modification of their own systems, CSOs have enhanced their project design and strategising abilities.

MEAL has given CSOs a clear framework and process to refine and concretise project design, formulate guidelines for tracking quality of processes, streamline internal management of information systems (MIS) and reflect on project outputs in a systematic way. MEAL has introduced CSOs to new methods and approaches of analysis like the CSO Project Performance Index, CBO grading and qualitative and quantitative analysis of a variety of data from MEAL and other sources. Some CSOs like People's Action for National Integration (PANI) in UP have started to implement MEAL in their other

projects not connected to the PACS Programme.

MEAL has established useful institutional mechanisms such as Programme Support Teams (PSTs) in all states and state core groups. Three rounds of programme analysis and synthesis have been undertaken and yielded state and national reports for discussion and reflection. MEAL has also yielded an exhaustive CD-based Desktop Interactive Information System (DIIS), which provides a vast amount of raw data and analyses for decision-making.

Peer learning workshops

In each state of operation, the PACS Programme encompasses a large and diverse range of CSOs, with different areas of proven expertise and working in different districts. To bring all these CSOs onto one platform and foster exchange of information and views, the programme regularly holds, in each state, two peer learning workshops (PLWs) a year. Until October 2006, seven such workshops were held in each state (PLWs for MP and Chhattisgarh are combined). Usually each state-level PLW is preceded by regional PLWs. The agendas for state-level PLWs varied across states and years, depending on immediate state issues and emerging programme concerns and priorities. Participants also gained from the knowledge and insights provided by invited experts.

Organisational development support to CSOs

The PACS Programme enhances the institutional capacities of CSOs in several ways:

- Formal capacity-building training programmes and workshops
- Handholding support by resource organisations
- Systems support
- Providing space to CSOs to experiment and learn through their project experiences.

The programme has also initiated organisational development (OD) programmes led by external experts for select CSOs in all states. (OD is a long-drawn-out process that has to be carried out sensitively with the full cooperation of the organisations concerned; it has not been feasible to work out an OD plan for all programme CSOs.)

Enhanced institutional capacity of CSOs

All these efforts have strengthened the institutional capacity of participating CSOs in many ways. The capacity of CSO staff and overall organisational expertise has improved in areas such as project planning and management,



The PACS Programme has enabled CSOs to establish contact and rapport with communities living in remote areas



CSOs have shifted from a relief and welfarist approach to a rights-based approach

reporting and documentation, working on governance and livelihood issues. Increased capacity is manifest in various ways:

- New projects and initiatives for poverty alleviation have been undertaken beyond the programme framework, with a shift from a relief and welfarist approach to a rights-based approach
- New ways of working for and with the poor have been demonstrated
- There is increased mobilisation of support and resources from government and financial institutions.

A large number of CSOs have demonstrated the ability to develop perspectives and strategies to take their initiatives beyond the PACS Programme's term. Their understanding of poverty-related issues has deepened and their internal documentation, research and learning processes have improved. This improvement is particularly noteworthy in the context of grassroots organisations that have severely limited staff and reach. Large CSOs that have undertaken PACS Programme projects with a network of smaller organisations have gained valuable knowledge and experience in playing the role of facilitator.

Many CSOs have also reported systemic improvements such as:

- Improved monitoring of project work
- Improved regularity and effectiveness of planning and review meetings
- Improved financial management and reporting.

Fostering debate

Issues related to the poor are increasingly relegated to the margins of mainstream media as well as politics. There appears to be a growing feeling that liberalisation of the economy and the forces of globalisation will 'inevitably' lead to acceleration of growth rates, which would in turn lead to faster progress in alleviation of poverty and redressal of the basic problems of the poor.

These assumptions are questionable, as these facts reveal:

- Whereas India's population increased by 1.95% per year between 1991-2001, employment during this period increased by only 1.05% per annum.
- Per capita foodgrain availability declined from 510 gm per day in 1991 to 430 gm in 2001-02, whereas foodstocks with the Government of India mounted from 24 to 60 million tonnes in the same period.
- Nearly half of the children in the 1-5 age-group in rural areas are under-nourished, with girl-children suffering even more severe malnutrition.
- The infant mortality rate has stagnated at 72 per 1,000 for the last several years.
- Around 60% of rural households and 20% of urban households do not have a power connection.
- Deterioration in urban environment, increase in slum population, and in air, river and water pollution has vastly affected the quality of life of the urban poor.
- Land and forest degradation in rural areas and over-exploitation of groundwater is seriously threatening the sustainability of food production.
- There are disturbing indications that gender inequalities in critical human development indicators like life expectancy, health and employment have either remained stagnant or increased.
- The decline in the juvenile sex ratio over the last decade, visible in data from Census 2001, is an indication that the constitutional assurance of freedom and equality for women is still far from being fulfilled.

Clearly, we cannot take for granted that economic development will alleviate poverty or improve social indicators. To ensure equitable growth, it is



There is a need for constant dialogue with community representatives to ensure pro-poor policy reform and formulation

imperative that government focuses on the needs of the poor and under-privileged. However, experience suggests that availability of funds is not the panacea. The successful implementation of development programmes requires an appropriate policy framework, formulation of suitable schemes, effective delivery machinery, and good governance. Weaknesses in these areas can no longer be side-stepped as micro-level problems. They need to be faced squarely and redressed at the planning stage itself. This can happen only if basic and immediate issues concerning the poor are highlighted and debated at all levels — grassroots communities to national-level media and government.

The issues involved are tricky and cannot be addressed without a thorough understanding of ground realities, as well as the intricacies of law, policy frameworks, international commitments and recent research in specific areas like the implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS).

There is a need for constant dialogue between experts, CSO workers, community representatives and policymakers, to ensure pro-poor policy reform and formulation.



The PACS Programme has fostered dialogue on several key issues through a variety of consultations at the national, state and regional levels

Approach

The PACS Programme has fostered dialogue on several key issues through a variety of forums:

- Broad-based national-level consultations
- State-level and regional consultations on specific issues like livelihoods
- State-level and regional peer learning workshops for programme CSOs, involving programme resource organisations and invited experts
- Disability forum

The programme has also supported and participated in debates initiated by other organisations, such as formulation of the draft National Rural Housing Policy facilitated by the basin South Asia Regional Knowledge Platform, initiated by Development Alternatives.

National consultations

Until August 2006, the PACS Programme had organised three large national-level consultations in New Delhi:

- 'Information and knowledge management for effective policy advocacy' (August 2003)
- 'Advocacy for realising rights and eradicating poverty' (January 2004)

- 'Empowering livelihoods: State policy, private initiatives and civil society action' (October 2005)

Information and knowledge management for effective policy advocacy (August 2003)

This consultation focussed on ways to strengthen the capacity of CSOs to harness information and knowledge management for effective policy advocacy. The rationale was that empowering communities through access to information could have remarkable effects on improving transparency, enhancing peoples' participation in governance and reducing corrupt practices. CSOs can play an important role in advocacy, monitoring, evaluation, knowledge-generation and dissemination, and ultimately force the government to be accountable and transparent.

Among the key topics of deliberations were:

- Information and knowledge management in the PACS Programme context
- Policy analysis and the right to information
- Development implications of policies and legislations
- Thematic perspectives on policy advocacy
- Information and knowledge management for governance
- Information and knowledge management for gender equality
- Approaches to policy advocacy
- Communication skills
- Understanding public policy, with specific reference to Union budgets
- Using media effectively for policy advocacy.

Among the main speakers were Dr Denis Pain, then Social Advisor of DFID; Dr Ashok Khosla, President, Development Alternatives; M D Mistry, Member of Parliament.

Participants' feedback revealed that the workshop was successful in introducing the need to generate information and knowledge for sustainable development. Most participants reported that their understanding and skills had improved after the two-day workshop and they would be able to use learnings from the workshop for policy advocacy.

Advocacy for realising rights and eradicating poverty (January 2004)

The consultation was organised with a view to *understanding* what civil society can do to improve policy formulation and design by government. From the deliberations, three required forms of policy advocacy emerged:

- Identification of policies that are blatantly against the interests of the poor,

women and other marginalised sections of society.

- Identification of pro-poor macro-policies and programmes which are not working well because of design problems, and therefore need modification. These policies, especially in the sectors of agriculture, food and rural development are critical for the welfare of the poor, more so because the Government of India (GOI) has invested several billions of rupees in these sectors; the country cannot afford wastage here. Advocacy is also required to promote missing pro-poor policies such as land reforms, social control over natural resources and equitable utilisation of urban land.

- Advocacy concerning policies where the design seems to be good, but benefits are not reaching the poor either because of lack of attention, or inadequate monitoring and evaluation, or governance problems.

The consensus among participants was that governance issues are difficult, but not impossible, to confront. Donors and large NGOs should continuously collect best practices that show how programmes have been better implemented without any radical change in the political economy of the country. Many grassroots interventions have contributed positively to sustainable development but have remained oases of success. There is a need to weave these successful stories into proactive policies.

Among the key speakers were Dr Charlotte Seymour-Smith, former head of DFID in India; Dr George Mathew, Founder Director, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi; Javed Abidi, Executive Director of the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP); John Samuel, Director, ActionAid, Asia, and Founder Director of the National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS); Prof K C Malhotra, Chairperson, National Advisory Board, PACS Programme; Maja Daruwala, Executive Director of Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI); Dr Naresh C Saxena, former Secretary, Planning Commission, Government of India; Rajan Rao Yerdoor, Executive Director, Credibility Alliance; and Justice Sujata Manohar, former Justice, Supreme Court, and member, National Human Rights Commission.

Empowering livelihoods: State policy, private initiatives and civil society action (October 2005)

This consultation focussed on five themes:

- Women's empowerment
- Disability
- Governance



The PACS Programme seeks to carry the needs and aspirations of the poorest of the poor to policymakers



Disability is one of the issues being addressed by the programme as it is frequently the cause and consequence of poverty

- Self-help initiatives
- Marginalisation

The three-day event, which witnessed participation from 440 PACS Programme partner CSOs and representatives of community-based organisations initiated by the programme, brought together and provided an interactive forum for CSO heads, staff, bureaucrats and academics deeply committed to the eradication of poverty in rural India. Presentations and panel discussions involving several distinguished development practitioners opened major new areas of dialogue.

The consultation was one of the largest civil society-organised events of 2005 and the array of distinguished chairpersons, thematic paper presenters and panelists included: Snehlata Kumar, Executive Director, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh; Dr Neelam Gorhe, Chairperson, Stree Adhar Kendra; V Radha, then Director General, YASHADA, Pune; Dr Pam Rajput, Professor of Political Science, Punjab University; Malini Bhattacharya, member, National Commission for Women; Dr Mukund Ghare, Chairman, Action for Agricultural Renewal in Maharashtra (AFARM); Jill Carr-Harris, Executive Director, LEAD India; Meera Khanna, Vice-President, War Widows Association; Sunaina Walia, International Centre for Research on Women; Prof Imrana Qadeer, Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU); Nandita Baruah, Anti-trafficking Advisor, USAID; Dr Sulochana Vasudevan, Executive Director, Swa Shakti Programme; Vipula Kadri, National Director, Save the Children India; T D Dhariyal, Deputy Chief Commissioner, Disability; Bhushan Punani, Executive Director, Blind People's Association; Ali Baquer, Chairperson, Concerned Action Now; Mathew Cherian, Chief Executive, HelpAge India; Jayshree Vyas, Director, SEWA Bank; S K Mitra, Executive Director, NABARD; Joe Madiath, Executive Director, Gram Vikas, Orissa; Dr Shankar Datta, Managing Director, BASIX; Dr Rajesh Tandon, President, PRIA; Sudha Pillai, Additional Secretary, Panchayati Raj, GOI; Prof H M Desarda, former member of Maharashtra State Planning Board; Meenu Wadhwa, Director, Hunger Project; Dr Roop Rekha Verma, former Vice-Chancellor, Lucknow University; Dr Suman Sahai, Director, Gene Campaign; Harsh Mander, Advisor to the Commissioners of the Supreme Court; Dr Gopal Guru, Senior Professor, JNU; P V Rajgopal, Founder Member, Ekta Parishad; Martin Mcwan, Director, Dalit Shakti Kendra, Ahmedabad; B K Pandey, Director, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment; Dr Lalit Kumar, Deputy Advisor (Voluntary Action), Planning Commission; Dr Alok Mukhopadhyaya, Chief Executive, Voluntary Health Association of India; Ashok Bharti, National Coordinator, National Conference of Dalit Organisations (NACDOR); S K

Thorat, Senior Professor, JNU; Dr Amaresh Dubey, Senior Advisor, National Council of Applied Economic Research.

M V Rajashekar, Minister of State for Planning, inaugurated the consultation and Dr B N Yugandhar, member, Planning Commission, was the chief guest of the valedictory session.

State and regional consultations

Each PACS Programme state and its constituent regions present certain unique problems and challenges for development. For example, drought is a recurrent phenomenon in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra and in 12 of the 22 districts of Jharkhand, severely affecting all government and non-government poverty alleviation initiatives. Similarly, the industrially backward and feudalistic Bundelkhand region in southern UP and northern MP presents basic hurdles in terms of poor governance and routine oppression of marginalised communities. At the same time, its natural resources present great livelihood opportunities.

To deliberate on such issues and arrive at workable, long-term strategies for both government and civil society, the PACS Programme has organised a series of state and regional-level consultations including:

- Bundelkhand development initiative workshop (June 2003)
- Partnership meet on livelihood creation in Bundelkhand (May 2005)
- Jharkhand consultation on food security and livelihood options (August 2005)
- Bihar development conference (August 2005)
- MP and Chhattisgarh regional consultations on livelihoods security (July-August 2005)
- MP and Chhattisgarh state conference on livelihoods security (August 2005)
- Maharashtra livelihoods consultation (August 2005)
- UP livelihoods consultation (September 2005)

Knowledge and insights gained from these consultations have been put into practice by PACS Programme CSOs.

Disability forum

Disability is one of the major issues being addressed by the programme, as it is frequently the cause and consequence of poverty. While around 12 of the ongoing PACS Programme projects focus on disability, the programme has also insisted on a disability component in all new projects. To exchange views

on the promotion of livelihoods for people with disabilities, the PACS Programme has initiated a learning forum that includes experts from the field and representatives of various organisations working for the disabled. The first meeting of the livelihoods forum for persons with disability was held in New Delhi in June 2005. The meeting was attended by around 45 representatives of various organisations including Nav Prerna, Ghaziabad, Sense International, the Blind People's Association, Ahmedabad, and Janarth, Aurangabad.

Subsequently, three more meetings of the forum have been held. The last was in Bhopal on February 7, 2006.

Debate on draft National Rural Housing and Habitat Policy

The PACS Programme supported a consultation in February 2006 in New Delhi on a draft National Rural Housing and Habitat Policy (NRHHP) 2005, for the consideration of the Government of India, which has been facilitated by the basin South Asia Regional Knowledge Platform, initiated by Development Alternatives. The consultation brought together representatives of NGOs, bankers and government functionaries to discuss, debate and propose clauses for the policy document. The draft NRHHP was a result of this process.

The policy was discussed at village-level meetings in PACS Programme areas and state-level PLWs, and suggestions and inputs received will be submitted to the policymakers who are preparing the draft.

Consultative processes are being held in all the states of India, wherein initiatives in states not covered by the PACS Programme are being supported by other donors, the private sector and state governments. A national seminar to share the recommendations of this consultative process country-wide will be held in early-2007.



Enabling entitlements

As a rights-based initiative, the PACS Programme's concrete outcomes are increased access of the poor to their entitlements such as foodgrains from the Public Distribution System (PDS), benefits under different social security schemes, and the occupation of land allotted under various land redistribution efforts.

Approach

At the programme level, access to entitlements is ensured by:

- Increasing the awareness and voice of the poor so that they can demand their rights, exercise democratic control over public representatives and public services, and demand accountability from government officials
- Strengthening of panchayati raj institutions
- Encouraging peaceful and socially cohesive efforts to secure rights, especially for the benefit of traditionally marginalised and deprived sections
- Advocating policy changes.

Within this broad framework, PACS Programme CSOs have been encouraged to evolve strategies based on ground realities in consultation with the communities with which they are working. The programme has encouraged innovation and adaptability to changing circumstances and new challenges. As a result, the entitlement strategies adopted by CSOs vary across regions and states.

CSOs implement strategies through a variety of regular activities including:

- Awareness-generation through meetings, rallies and camps
- Communication through media like wall paintings, posters, puppet shows, newsletters, radio and TV
- Formation of community-based organisations (CBOs) and strengthening the capacity of new and existing CBOs through training programmes and exposure visits, so that they can act as effective pressure groups
- Advocacy through public hearings, media exposure and protests
- Strengthening linkages with government departments and other agencies
- Monitoring the performance of relevant central and state government schemes.

A range of entitlements

Programme CSOs and CBOs have with varied success ensured:

- Regular allotment of PDS, Antyodaya rations to eligible BPL (below poverty line) families
- Allotment of BPL ration cards for eligible families that had been left out of the PDS
- Benefits under various social welfare schemes like widow's pension, old age pension, disability allowance, SC/ST scholarships, etc
- Regular operation of school mid-day meal schemes
- Filling of vacancies in schools and primary health centres, and regular functioning of these
- Linkage to schemes like Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana (SGSY), Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), Gram Samridhhi Yojana (GSY), Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY), Kisan Credit Card, Village Infrastructure Development Scheme and MP/MLA fund
- Registration of families and allotment of job cards under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)
- Payment of dues in cash or kind according to stipulated rates to people who had worked in the Food for Work Programme, NREGS, or were involved in collection of tendu leaves, etc
- Infrastructure benefits through Indira Awas Yojana, Nirbal Awas; water and sanitation schemes; rural electrification programmes; construction of tarred access roads and bridges to villages, etc
- Repair of public handpumps, borewells; cleaning of public wells
- Linkage of SHGs to banks, so that they can access credit
- Possession of land by people who had been granted land rights under land distribution schemes but had been unable to secure these rights due to lack of information, incomplete formalities, illegal occupation of land by powerful persons, etc
- Possession of land grabbed from the poor by powerful persons or illegally acquired by government departments
- Control of gram sabha over natural resources of the village, including water



The range of entitlements ensured by CSOs includes work under the Food for Work and National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme



Many CSOs have ensured regular functioning of schools in project villages

sources, forests and quarries in tribal areas covered by the Panchayats Extension to the Scheduled Areas Act (PESA)

- Drought/flood disaster relief benefits
- Payment of compensation to victims of accidents, upper-caste or police atrocities.

The realisation of these and other entitlements varies according to circumstances such as the age of the project, CSO capabilities, local social and political environment, a community's history of participation in democratic assertion of rights, the local law and order situation, the absence or presence of sensitive, pro-poor officials at the district level, and the interest of local/regional media in issues affecting the poor.

The realisation of entitlements is also unfavourably affected by natural or man-made disasters like drought and floods. In Maharashtra, for instance, a severe drought experienced in 2003-04 in Marathwada and parts of Vidarbha forced programme partners to focus on multilevel advocacy to ensure timely relief and create an atmosphere for developing long-term solutions. Work on the realisation of other entitlements was inevitably hindered.

Entitlements case study

A three-year project (April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2006) in backward and feudal Bundelkhand in Uttar Pradesh provides a clear picture of the difference that can be made in the realisation of entitlements with civil society involvement.

The project is being implemented by the Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan (ABSSS) with seven network partners (Bundelkhand Sewa Sansthan, Arunoday Sewa Sansthan, Antyoday Sewa Sansthan, Paragilal Vidhyadham Samiti, Krishnarpit Sewa Ashram, Damini Samiti and Patha Kol Vikas Samiti) in 257 villages of seven blocks of five districts (Hamirpur, Mahoba, Banda, Lalitpur, Chitrakoot). While the total population of these villages comprises around 40,000 families, the project targets approximately 24,000 poor families mostly belonging to the scheduled castes and backward classes.

The project operates in a challenging environment (see box *Fear is the key in Bundelkhand*). Oppression of dalits, often with the connivance of the authorities, is common here. There are many instances of gun-wielding *dabangs* grabbing land owned by the poor. Bonded labour is prevalent in some areas. Payment of statutory minimum wages is the exception rather than the rule; even government departments have been found guilty of

paying less than the minimum wage and/or inordinately delaying payments. Hardly any villages have electricity and most health centres are non-functioning. PDS and other benefits are routinely cornered by powerful interests. Livelihood opportunities for those who cannot live off their land, or have no land, are largely limited to manual labour in fields and stone quarries. During the lean months, many poor families go without food for days and starvation deaths have occurred.

Caste-based exclusion and humiliation is common. Many villages do not have tarred access roads. There are no regular public transport services to these villages and visits by government officials are rare. To reach the nearest hospital or government office, poor people from most villages have to walk for an hour and then travel by tonga or jeep. The maximum distance from a project village to the nearest block headquarters, where government offices,

banks, high schools, post offices and hospitals are located, is 72 km; the average distance is 15 km.

ABSSS has a record of working in this region for over 25 years. The PACS Programme project was implemented by ABSSS's seven network partners, five of which were founded after 2001.

The ABSSS project involved an expenditure of Rs 1.82 crore, with 72 staffers working full-time for a three-year period ending March 31, 2006. Of the total expenditure, 12% was spent on staff salaries, 9% on overheads like travelling, office expenses and printing and 2% on fixed assets like computers. The remaining 77% was spent on project activities like training programmes, workshops, meetings, mobilisation drives, campaigns, formation of self-help groups and local advocacy bodies called Chingari Sangathans, public hearings and media advocacy.

Pressure exerted by community-based organisations led to significant infrastructure development in Naraini, Banda



Fear is the key in Bundelkhand

A first-time visitor to the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Madhya Pradesh (MP) will be struck by the sight of men openly carrying guns. Explains Vidyasagar Bajpeyi, a long-time worker of the Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan (ABSSS), a leading CSO in Bundelkhand: "This is a very feudal area. Guns are status symbols."

The guns are also frequently used.

In Rawatpura village of Naugaon, a region of UP which juts into MP, 30 landless dalit families have been allotted land by the government. However, the land is cultivated by gun-wielding upper-caste landlords and the dalits are forced to work as labourers on their own land. In February 2005, a dalit youth who protested against the cutting of mahua trees on his land was severely beaten up and hospitalised. When a field worker from Arunoday Sansthan, a PACS Programme-supported network partner of ABSSS, went to the village, he was shown a gun and told to keep away.

Apart from several hundred such *dabangs* — a common Hindi heartland word for someone who lords it over others without respect for the law — Bundelkhand has at least a dozen gangs of dacoits. Known as *dadus*, they usually target businessmen, rich farmers and contractors. The dacoits also occasionally terrorise the poor. Many Bundelkhand villages are deserted, following attacks by *dadus*.

In this scenario of terror and fear, the language of rights sounds remote and unconnected with the ground reality. However, some courageous CSOs and individuals are using this language, with positive results.

On December 4, 2003, Sakila Khatoon, a field worker at Arunoday Sansthan, was abused and taunted by the sachiv (panchayat secretary) and son of the pradhan of Baura gram panchayat in Jaitpur block of Mahoba district. Sakila fled. The Arunoday Sansthan lodged a police complaint. No action was taken. The Sansthan complained to the district magistrate and collector, and superintendent of police, and also alerted the local press. There were immediate results. The man was suspended. He gave a written apology and was transferred. Reveals Abhishesh Mishra, head of the Sansthan: "Women now walk in that area without fear. The transferred sachiv has himself become an active supporter of our programmes."

The Sansthan also used the intervention of the district magistrate to free 39 dalit families in Ganj village (Kulpahad block, Mahoba district) from the *dabangs* who had taken over land allotted to them in 1996. Unlike the dalit families of Rawatpura, these dalits were willing to assert their rights, and despite formidable obstacles the Sansthan was able to pursue the matter till the families began tilling their land. Says Mishra: "The *dabangs* even came to our office and threatened us."

There are also cases of individuals refusing to be cowed down. In Dhaurisagar village of Lalitpur district, a woman panchayat member, Surjubai, has been taking part in many training programmes organised by the Bundelkhand Sewa Sansthan (BSS), a network partner of ABSSS. In August 2004, her son drove some cattle belonging to a *dabang* off their fields. The *dabang* struck back. As Surjubai and her son travelled back from a training programme in a local bus, they were thrashed by the *dabang's* henchmen. "No one tried to stop them," Surjubai says. "I was so badly beaten in the chest that I could not speak." Yet she went to the Dhaurisagar police station to lodge a complaint. The police, who also 'respect' the local strongmen, turned a deaf ear. With the help of the BSS, Surjubai took the matter to the superintendent of police (SP) of Lalitpur. He issued arrest orders and the strongman and his son were led away handcuffed.

There are, however, limits to assertiveness. Surjubai has many complaints about the manner in which the pradhan of Dhaurisagar gram panchayat runs the panchayat. But like the other people in the village, she is reluctant to protest publicly. The pradhan is a powerful person. CSOs too work within limits. Says Abhishesh Mishra: "There are many villages in Naugaon we cannot enter."

Strategies to help the people get their entitlements included:

- Petitions, lawsuits and meetings with government officials by CSOs
- Democratic forms of protest and pressure applied by Chingari Sangathans and SHGs
- Public hearings by top government officials and media reports facilitated by CSOs.

Many aspects of entitlements, such as the improved functioning of schools, cannot be quantified. Even so, the figures are impressive.

ABSSS asked its network partners to provide documentary evidence, such as copies of official orders, to support all their entitlement achievement claims. The achievement claims have been scrutinised by Trust Consulting Pvt Ltd, the supportive supervision resource organisation appointed by the programme for this project. Then, InfoChange, which has produced this publication, randomly cross-checked entitlements under all heads in June-September 2006 with the documentary evidence, field visits, interviews with beneficiaries, and physical verification of construction of bridges, roads, etc. Only entitlements that can be attributed to the project CSOs or CBOs that initiated them have been considered. The value of all land and infrastructure-related entitlements was calculated on the basis of government rates.

The computation thus made shows that the value of the monetised entitlements is *more than five times the project expenditure*. Here is a summary of monetised entitlements and other entitlements that can be quantified:

- 629 families got possession of 1,182 acres of land that had been allotted to them. For years the allotments had remained on paper, or the land had been illegally occupied by *dabangs*. The total value of the land that has now been rightfully occupied by the families is Rs 5.91 crore. Many of these families have started cultivation; the income generated has not been estimated.
- 206 families got household plots totally valued at Rs 41 lakh.
- 45 landless families got land allotments. The total allotment of 29 acres is valued at Rs 64.49 lakh at government rates. Additionally, 11 families got 3.60 acres of land valued at Rs 18 lakh for making pots.
- 259 families got houses under the Indira Awas Yojana. The total value of this entitlement is Rs 51.80 lakh.
- Construction of one bridge, costing Rs 1 crore, was completed following



The PACS Programme's NREGS Week (June-July 2006) received wide coverage in local and regional media



CSOs use a variety of ways to demand entitlements, including use of folk arts

pressure from Chingari Sangathans. The Chingari Sangathans also got sanction for a 7.65 km road. The project is valued at Rs 2.02 crore. The sangathans also ensured construction of around 3 km of other roads, two bridges and three ponds, including two large ponds involving a construction cost of Rs 6 lakh. One primary health centre that had not been functioning for eight years was made operational thanks to Chingari Sangathan pressure.

- 47 handpumps were installed at a total cost of Rs 16.45 lakh. 357 handpumps were rebored/repared at a total cost of Rs 1.78 lakh.
- 1,429 families got their wage dues amounting to Rs 13.88 lakh and 203 quintals of foodgrain under the Food for Work Scheme for work on road construction projects and for plucking tendu leaves. The wages had been inordinately delayed or paid at less than the statutory rate.
- Bribes amounting to Rs 7.04 lakh collected by bank and government officials were given back to 12 families.
- Regular implementation of the mid-day meal scheme was ensured in 191 schools.
- The functioning of 22 schools was regularised. (The schools had been running erratically, or were closed due to the absence of teachers.) 67 Shiksha Mitras (assistant primary schoolteachers) were appointed.
- A khadi ashram that had been taken over by a politician and used for personal profit was restarted following pressure from CSOs. As a result, 200 families retrieved their regular source of income. (The number has multiplied after March 2006.)
- 653 families got drought relief compensation, 411 families flood relief compensation and three families accident compensation. The total compensation amounted to Rs 4.79 lakh.
- 2,385 families got Antyodaya ration cards; 407 families got BPL ration cards.
- 1,314 children got scholarships amounting to Rs 38 lakh.
- 139 persons got old age pensions; 102 widows got their pension, and 33 persons with disability got monthly allowances.
- 14 families got family benefit scheme payments amounting to Rs 1.40 lakh.
- Nine families got marriage benefit scheme payments amounting to Rs 90,000.

- 2,487 families got NREGS job cards.
- 258 SHGs were linked to banks and they accessed credit amounting to Rs 7.58 lakh.

Media advocacy and public hearings have resulted in three substantial infrastructure entitlements since March 2006:

- Sanction of a Rs 8 crore bridge and Rs 2 crore link road to connect Chandpura, Naraini block, Banda.
- Sanction of a Rs 20 crore watershed project for the benefit of Kurhat and nearby areas in Madawara block of Lalitpur.

Work has commenced on both these projects.

Besides all this, the project has recorded significant achievements in mobilisation of the community, especially women, through SHGs and Chingari

The programme encourages peaceful and democratic means of demanding entitlements

Sangathans. Members of around 15% of the target families are members of SHGs, and members of 13% of the target families are members of Chingari Sangathans. Many members of these community-based organisations were encouraged to stand for panchayat elections, and, overall, 361 CBO members were elected as panchayat members; four were elected at the block level, and 51 were directly elected as gram pradhans.

Women's groups enable entitlements

Across the PACS Programme area, hundreds of women's groups have been effective in realising entitlements. This is particularly so in tribal areas, where women historically enjoy a larger space in family and community matters, and enjoy greater freedom. In areas covered by the Jan Utthan Samiti in Hazaribag district of Jharkhand, tribal women have gained the confidence and ability to improve delivery of services. They have ensured that anganwadi (pre-school) centres function regularly and that handpumps are repaired.





CBOs promoted by the programme have thrown up a large number of socially committed local leaders

They have also been successful in accessing more facilities for their villages, such as minor bridges and upgraded schools.

Mobilising government support

Many PACS Programme CSOs have been successful in mobilising support from government to extend the reach of social welfare schemes. A remarkable example is from Maharashtra, where the Social Economic Development Trust (SEDT) worked to get funds to the tune of Rs 5.4 crore from the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan for shelter and schooling for the children of migrant labourers in Beed district. Over 30,000 children of migrant labourers benefited in 2005. SEDT also mobilised grants to the tune of Rs 61 lakh for 25 schools under the National Child Literacy Programme (NCLP).

Responding to community needs

There have been many instances of programme CSOs responding to community needs and facilitating entitlements. In Shahpur Jot Yusuf, in Chittaura block, Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh, the issue of women's privacy and

sanitation was raised at the first meeting held by the Developmental Association for Human Advancement (DEHAT), working on a PACS Programme project here. DEHAT organised a meeting with the District Panchayati Raj Officer (DPRO) in September 2003 to discuss the sanitation situation. They decided to conduct a workshop with the community and especially with women. At the first workshop held on September 7, 2003, the women refused to sit on chairs together with the men. However, 158 women did participate in the programme, and the Muslim woman chairperson of the gram panchayat, Shakeela Bano, faced the public for the first time. A Total Sanitation Campaign was inaugurated with the distribution of ceramic toilet seats to five women.

The DPRO committed to providing cash assistance of Rs 500 to each family for toilet construction, and Rs 75,000 was released the same day to the panchayat. The participants organised the rest of the required money themselves.

Then, a meeting was held with all the panchayat members of Shahpur Jot Yusuf where roles and responsibilities were allocated to make the village the cleanest in the district. Each panchayat member was made responsible for cleanliness in his/her own ward.

Since 76% of the population was below the poverty line it was difficult for the people to collect the Rs 3,000-3,500 required to construct the toilets. The SHGs initiated by DEHAT came to the rescue by loaning their members the money. Ceramic toilet seats were bought at a wholesale price. DEHAT motivators regularly conducted home visits. Community mobilisation workshops were jointly organised by the panchayati raj department and DEHAT on a quarterly basis.

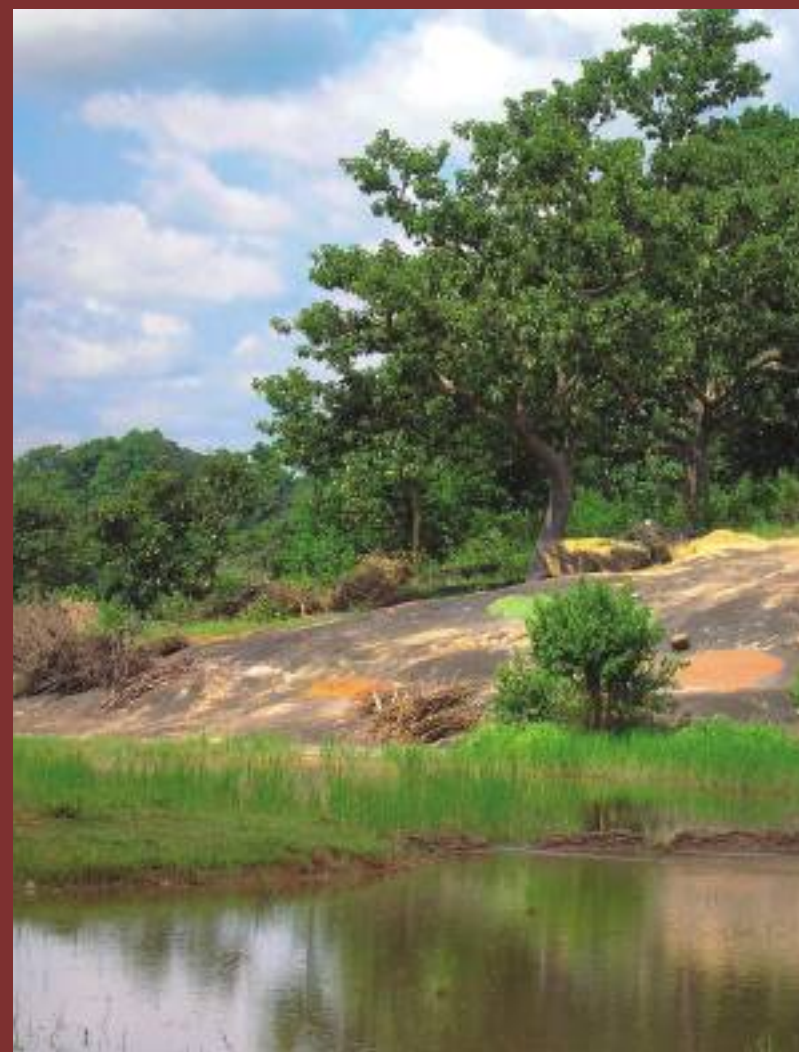
On March 13, 2004, DEHAT organised a women's empowerment camp at the municipal hall in Bahraich. Twenty-two women from Shahpur Jot Yusuf participated in the programme. Waqar Ahmad Shah, UP's labour minister and local MLA, was the chief guest. The women from Shahpur Jot Yusuf demanded that he provide extra support to the campaign. As a result, Shahpur Jot Yusuf came under the Samagra Gram Vikas Yojana and received Rs 10 lakh for RCC road construction, safe drinking water facilities, a drainage system, etc.

On February 27, 2006, a team from the central government visited Shahpur Jot Yusuf and declared it a 100% clean gram panchayat. On March 27, 2006, the gram pradhan of Shahpur Jot Yusuf received the Nirmal Gram President

Award at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi. The total cost of the sanitation project was Rs 18.50 lakh. The panchayati raj department gave Rs 2.25 lakh, the villagers put in Rs 6.25 lakh and the local MLA gave Rs 10 lakh.

The village has seen several other developments:

- A 5 km pucca road from the district headquarters to the village
- An upper primary school for girls
- 32 houses for homeless families under the Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Awas Yojana
- Safe drinking water to all households
- Abolition of manual scavenging
- Zero incidence of epidemics.



In tribal areas covered by the Panchayats Extension to the Scheduled Areas Act (PESA), the PACS Programme has promoted control of gram sabhas over natural resources like water sources and forests



Empowering women

Women's empowerment must be an integral part of any development strategy as, apart from being denied equal status, women bear the brunt of poverty in poor societies. In poor rural families in India women eat less, have poorer access to health and education facilities, get less wages, and bear the major part of the responsibility of bringing up children and looking after the family; often they do more physical labour than men. This enormous contribution goes largely unrecognised. Women are even denied a role in household (let alone village) decision-making.

Empowering women is thus clearly a basic human rights issue. It is also an issue linked closely to poverty alleviation. There is a large body of evidence to show that empowerment of women leads to greater progress in poverty reduction.

Approach

Irrespective of their focus areas, all programme partners have been encouraged to work out project strategies that lead to achievement of the following objectives:

- Women gaining greater access to assets and new or alternative economic opportunities
- Women having greater participation in village decision-making and leadership
- Women enjoying greater personal security and being subjected to less violence
- Women getting equal rights and opportunities under all government development programmes
- Reduced gender stereotyping and positive changes in social attitudes towards women.

The mechanism adopted by most partners to achieve these ends is the formation of women's self-help groups (SHGs). The PACS Programme as a whole works with around 25,000 community-based organisations (CBOs) with a membership of 2.5 lakh. Seventy-two per cent of the members are women; two-thirds of all CBOs are women's SHGs. Enhancing the capacity of SHG members and groups as a whole through awareness and training programmes

is the fundamental plank of many PACS Programme-supported projects. Special efforts are being made to ensure a higher number of women candidates in panchayat elections.

CSOs themselves are not free from gender discrimination and stereotyping. Hence the programme has organised gender workshops and discussions for partner CSOs in all states. The programme has also actively encouraged greater participation of women in CSOs. Around 33 PACS Programme-supported organisations are headed by women. Around a third of all CSO staff working on programme projects are women. On an average, programme projects require the full-time involvement of 19 CSO staff, and six of them are likely to be women. At the level of field staff, a little over half the total CSO staff working on programme projects are women.

Empowerment through independent income

Women's empowerment through SHGs, it is sometimes feared, may translate into enhanced savings and income-generation but does not necessarily translate into greater decision-making powers at home or in the community. At the same time, it is recognised that an independent source of income is a powerful trigger for women's personal growth and higher social status.

Hundreds of case studies on small businesses started by women through SHGs under the PACS Programme show that SHGs are a useful vehicle for building the confidence of women and their ability to deal with the world outside their homes, changing, in the process, deeply entrenched patriarchal attitudes.

In some cases, the business activity is the sole source of income for widowed and other abandoned women who are struggling to survive without any family support. An example is 40-year-old Phoolbano of Madaripur village in Sitapur district, UP, a mother of four daughters. Her husband Alijaan, the only earning member of the family, blamed her for not giving birth to a boy. He tortured her mentally and physically and eventually left her to marry another woman. Phoolbano was left to fend for herself and her four daughters with no income. She then joined other women in the village to form a self-help group. She discussed her problem with members of the SHG and they decided that she should open a shop selling bangles and other ornaments. She was guided and trained in running the shop by the SHG, which was supported by Network of Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (NEED), a PACS Programme partner.

Today, her small business is doing well and she is able to take care of her



SHGs have enabled women to explore new livelihood options with locally available resources

family. Not only her economic status but also her social status has improved greatly. Everybody in the village looks up to her as a role model, asks her advice, and seeks her views on important issues.

Another example is Sakirunnisha of Rahilamau village of Unera Nyay panchayat, Mahmoodabad block, Sitapur. She lived with her parents after her husband abandoned her. She is practically illiterate and had no way of earning a living. In October 2002, the Ekta SHG was started in the village under the PACS Programme. Sakirunnisha helped form the group and was nominated its president. This was a major achievement for a divorcee who has little respect in a community dominated by men.

Apart from being group leader, she also started learning stitching and chikan and zardozi embroidery at a training centre run by NEED. She soon became a trainer at the centre. Then NEED gave her a loan of Rs 5,000 with which she bought a sewing machine, which enabled her to earn a living by stitching and embroidering clothes. Emboldened by this success, Sakirunnisha took a second loan to buy more equipment and raw material. She is also planning to open a tailoring shop in partnership with other group members.

Her association with the group also helped Sakirunnisha personally. Her own family considered her a burden after her husband left her. Now, as group president and teacher at the centre, she is independent and respected, and frequently travels to Lucknow to buy raw material.

When women like Phoolbano and Sakirunnisha earn the respect of the community, they help change deeply entrenched male attitudes. Haasimi Begum of Nathupur, Sitapur, proves this. Haasimi Begum worked as a maid in people's houses. Her husband Jalaluddin was a barber, his income insufficient to meet the needs of a family that included three children, one of whom is handicapped. Haasimi Begum joined the Laxmi SHG, formed under the PACS Programme in 2002. The members voted Haasimi president. Her husband disapproved of this, torturing her mentally and physically. But Haasimi did not give up her post. She took a loan of Rs 1,000 from the SHG and gave it to her husband to open a hair-dressing saloon. As the small saloon started doing well, Jalaluddin's attitude changed.

In 2003, NEED opened a Mahila Panchayat Suchana Kendra (women's panchayat information centre) in the village. Haasimi Begum was made caretaker of the Kendra. This time her husband came forward to help her. He is proud of her achievements and regards her with a new respect.



Thousands of women have started small businesses, usually with loans from SHGs

A major change in women's status also occurs when they find new and additional sources of family income. Take the case of 32-year-old Razia of Bhauri village in Sitapur district. Razia's husband worked as a seasonal labourer earning very little. The fluctuating income was always a source of worry, and Razia could see no way of enhancing the family's economic status as she herself was illiterate.

When NEED started working in this village, they held a series of mobilisation programmes and helped the women form the Puja SHG in January 2001. The SHG trained members in income-generation, group management, leadership development, agriculture and animal husbandry. As a result, an increasing number of villagers started income-generation activities of their own.

Razia decided to breed fish in a pond near her house. The group gave her the required support and she was able to generate sufficient income to meet her household expenses and to pay for the education of her children. Today, her

children who used to go to government schools, are attending private schools. She herself has started taking part in the decision-making at home.

With new sources of income, women are instrumental in changing family livelihood patterns and stopping migration. Laxmi, 35, from Budhora, Mahoba district, belongs to the Kori caste, which traditionally earns its living through manual labour. Like others in her community, Laxmi had to migrate in search of work. Since 2004, however, things have changed for the better. Laxmi was associated with Arunoday Sansthan, a network partner of a PACS Programme lead CSO, Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan. As a member of an SHG promoted by this organisation, she began participating in group meetings and discussions, and in due course became a beneficiary of the organisation's attempts to provide self-employment to women.

With an initial capital of Rs 500, Laxmi opened a shop selling bangles and cosmetics. It did well and she returned the borrowed amount with interest. She borrowed another Rs 2,000 to buy various items demanded by her customers, and repaid this too. Today she has material worth Rs 5,000 in her shop and earns a profit of up to Rs 150 per day during festivals and around Rs 45 per day on other days. Laxmi has learnt to do business. She is able to contribute to the family income and her children's education. Most importantly, she does not have to migrate to find work but earns in her own village.

As these stories show, in an enabling environment created by NGOs and SHGs, women can initiate major changes in their lives with marginal investments. The SHGs also trigger important changes in the community. The programme evaluation exercise of the PACS Programme (see *Introduction*) undertaken in February 2006 found, for instance, that SHGs initiated by the network of the Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra (NBJK) in Jharkhand have been successful in reducing witchcraft, domestic violence associated with alcoholism and social strife between men and women, in 309 villages. The SHGs run a Mahila Lok Adalat (women-run people's court). An annual convention of SHGs is held and the best-performing group is given an award.

Women become leaders

Thanks to SHGs and training programmes, women across PACS Programme areas have assumed leadership roles. Bebitai Gunanagar Gautam's is a story of individual struggle marked by extraordinary courage, supported at a crucial time by a CSO. The success then achieved triggers group-building and group success.



Training in traditional arts like chikan and zardozi has enabled women to supplement family income



Bebitai, a Gond woman, has initiated successful individual and group enterprises in Gadchiroli

Bebitai, a frail woman in her early-40s, belongs to the Gond tribe. Her village, Marakbodi, is located some 10 km from Gadchiroli town in the eastern tip of Maharashtra. The village has a largely tribal population of Hindus, Buddhists and a few Christians surviving on subsistence farming and allied activities.

Bebitai's husband was murdered in the mid-'80s over a money dispute with a neighbour. He belonged to the Thakar tribe. As a Gond, Bebitai was an 'outsider' in Marakbodi. She took to running her husband's grocery shop, a task made difficult by a hostile village, which also had some lecherous men. Possessing no special skills, and educated only till Class 4, she had to look after a handicapped daughter and a toddler son.

In 1997, Bebitai was introduced to activists from the Nagpur-based Indian Institute of Youth Welfare (IIYW) who were in Marakbodi under a community development project. "We came across this young widow fighting all odds in the middle of the village," recalls Manohar Hepat, IIYW's project coordinator in Gadchiroli district. "She was eligible for a government programme aimed at mother-headed families (MHFs), which involved financial assistance as well as vocational training and orientation."

Bebitai took a loan of Rs 5,000 under the MHF programme. But her problems mounted. Her grocery business was doing badly as a result of fresh competition, and she lost her handicapped daughter after a prolonged illness. Somehow, she managed to return the loan. Then, in 2000, under the PACS Programme, IIYW motivated her to start a self-help group (SHG). Bebitai pursued a dozen women and the Sharada Bachat Gat came into existence. "We had no idea what lay in store for us. All we did for nearly a year was individually save Rs 20-30 per month and draw loans for household needs," recalls Meenatai Nenchelwar, chairperson of the Sharada Bachat Gat.

But Bebitai, who was then heading the SHG and continues to be its secretary, had many practical schemes in mind. After repaying an initial loan, the group took a loan of Rs 16,000 from the district cooperative bank, of which Rs 5,000 came Bebitai's way. She invested it in buying *khaprel*, traditional roof tiles commonly used in rural parts of Maharashtra. Many of these curved tiles need to be replaced every year; Marakbodi's residents would buy them from nearby markets. Bebitai made them available at their doorstep, helping villagers save on transportation costs while making a decent profit for herself.

Having made a little extra money this way, Bebitai ventured into the mahua flower business, buying the flowers in kilos from people in the village and selling them in bigger markets nearby for a small profit. This business



SHGs have enabled women to deal with the outside world with confidence

continues to be a regular source of income for her.

Bebitai's early successes motivated other women, who had so far been taking loans only for marriages and other household requirements, to form SHGs and venture into small income-generating activities. Today, Marakbodi boasts 16 SHGs, including two men's groups.

In 2002, Bebitai took the lead in procuring for her SHG a licence for trading in foodgrain — it was perhaps the first time in Maharashtra that such a licence was issued to a women's group. In 2003, the group approached IYW for assistance in taking a loan of Rs 1.5 lakh to buy land to build a godown and start a farmer service centre. The plan was to buy foodgrain, mahua and fertiliser and sell them through the centre to farmers in surrounding areas at a fair price or on credit. This was a major step forward; accounts would have to be meticulously maintained as a big investment was involved. IYW organised courses for selected members of the group in basic accounting and book-keeping, business relations, banking and government schemes. The organisation also got its auditor to supervise the accounts and oversee the audit process for the group.

Meanwhile, Bebitai's standing in the community had changed radically. Men who earlier made lewd comments now came to the widow to buy grain and take seeds and fertiliser on loan. They also offered their labour as a goodwill gesture. "She was no more a widow. She became our leader," says Meenatai.

Bebitai then went a step further. She decided to enter politics. The exposure she gained through the PACS Programme was a major contributing factor. "I went to New Delhi and spoke in front of dignitaries. I met educated people and fellow women activists from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. That is when I felt the need to expand my outlook," she says.

Emboldened, she also confronted a local politician over illegal tree felling in the forests outside her village. The incident was reported in the local press. Bebitai had to withstand a lot of pressure, but she refused to budge, and outsiders stopped raiding the forests surrounding Marakbodi.

There have been other significant developments in the village. People have more or less given up liquor and started looking at mahua as an income-generating source, along with honey, medicinal plants and other forest produce. Today, the village looks quite tidy, with clean roads and neat rows of houses, temples and a solitary church in the middle. There is a school with education facilities up to Class 7 and a ground for cultural and social events.

But there is much still to be done, Bebitai recognises. While women have started attending social events, especially gram sabhas, where they outnumber men, the power of decision-making eludes them. "I want to organise the women in my area and influence gram sabha decisions," Bebitai says. "How long will we continue to shed tears over failed crops and denuded forests? We have to take charge of our collective resources and individual homes."

That is just what the women of Hat Balalong village in Arki block, Ranchi district, Jharkhand, have done. They were initially wary of the SHGs that the Trust for Community Development and Research (TCDR), affiliated to the Jan Utthan Samiti (JUS), introduced in the area in 2003. It was only after the PACS Programme was successfully implemented in the neighbouring village of Upar Balalong Panda Toli that they decided to form their own self-help group in September 2004.

"We are illiterate people. We did not know what a 'committee' was and hence there was initial apprehension. But that is in the past," says Sagarmani Devi, president of the Shoshan Virudh Mahila Vikas Samiti. There is one more SHG in this village of 100-odd Munda, Lohar, Mahato and Sawansi tribal families.

One of the first challenges to the establishment of the SHG came from Naxalites who warned the women against forming any committee in the region. "They told us not to trust outsiders; that they would help us form a committee," recalls Sagarmani Devi. "But when they realised that we were firm in our decision, they withdrew from the scene, though not completely."

A couple of months after the SHGs were formed the women got down to business. There was a long-pending dispute between Hat Balalong and Upar Balalong Panda Toli over an 800-foot stretch of road that bypassed the two villages. At a training programme organised by TCDR, under the PACS Programme, the women of both villages decided to stop fighting each other and develop the road for the benefit of both villages.

A two-member committee comprising Champa Devi from Upar Balalong Panda Toli and Seema Devi from Hat Balalong was formed. It successfully negotiated a development plan for the road with the block development office, that would cost Rs 192,900. In spite of their initial apprehensions, the local Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), block development officer and other government officials were impressed by the women's commitment

to development. This ensured that the women got additional money from the MLA's Area Development Fund. This was enough to transform the disputed road into a 'grade one' road.

After this achievement, the women shifted their focus to the indiscriminate exploitation of sand by contractors from the Kanchi riverbed, known locally as the Hat Balalong Balu Ghat. At a training programme, the women learnt that sand was an important local resource, like the forests surrounding the twin villages. The men of Hat Balalong had earlier wanted to set up a village development fund by charging the private contractors a royalty. But they failed to get organised and the contractors, in connivance with a couple of influential locals, continued to exploit this village resource. Ignoring opposition from the men, the women imposed a royalty in February 2005. It was fixed at Rs 50 for a big truck, Rs 30 for a mini truck, and Rs 20 for a tractor-trolley. The money would be equally divided among the men and women, who would set it aside for development work.

Meanwhile the Naxalites, who continue to hover around the villages, demanded their share. The village reluctantly agreed to pay them Rs 10 per vehicle. "It was a collective decision; at this juncture we could not afford to antagonise the Naxals," says Mangli Devi.

The 30 women members of the two SHGs took turns guarding the riverbeds. Every day, after finishing their household chores, they would gather at a temporary shack erected along the road leading to Balu Ghat to collect the royalty. It was not long before the aggrieved contractors got the *daroga* (policeman) to intervene, and the women were summoned to the local police station. A delegation of six women, led by Kistomani Devi, went to meet the *daroga*. When he saw that the women would not relent, the *daroga* hinted at a regular arrangement for his *chai-paani* (the well-known term for a small bribe). The women refused, explaining that the funds collected as royalty belonged to the village. The *daroga* was silenced.

Until November 2005, the women had collected Rs 6,000 as royalty on the sand. Their success led to the formation of a third SHG whose women members contribute Rs 10 every month. Collections from the three SHGs stood at Rs 5,000 in November 2005, minus loans extended to members. The women, most of whom belong to landless labourer families, are determined to achieve the distinction of having the best-managed SHGs in Arki block. "We want to ensure a regular income for our families through group farming," says Kistomani Devi.

A new assertive voice in panchayats

“Women face many kinds of atrocities in villages. Girls face discrimination and women are tortured for dowry. All this motivated me to stand for election and I have won with the support of all the SHGs and the people of my village,” says a young and confident Rita Devi of Sakra village of Sirajabad panchayat in Muzaffarpur district, Bihar.

Rita Devi is one of hundreds of women who were motivated and supported by PACS Programme CSOs to contest the panchayat elections conducted in the state in May-June 2006. The programme effort was part of a larger, concerted drive launched before the elections; a similar effort was made in Uttar Pradesh earlier. (These are discussed in the next section.) The focus was on energising CBOs to select and vote for candidates with a social commitment. While Rita Devi belongs to an OBC caste, several dalit women have also been elected with CBO support.

One such woman is Kailashi Devi who was elected sarpanch of Jamunia panchayat in Chakia block of East Champaran. Belonging to the Musahar community, her family is extremely poor and she is illiterate. But she is an active member of the Musahar Vikas Manch promoted in the district under the PACS Programme by the Samajik Shodh Evam Vikas Kendra, a partner of ActionAid . “I got information on panchayats from them and I will also take information about the powers and responsibilities of the *mukhiya* from them,” she says. One of the first things she did after winning the elections was organise a rally in the panchayat on July 10, 2006, to mobilise people to send children to school.

Women like Rita Devi and Kailashi Devi will now receive training in panchayat affairs through the PACS Programme, as has already happened with hundreds of panchayat members — women and men — across all programme states.



Women like Rita Devi represent a new voice of assertiveness in Bihar's panchayats



Ensuring better governance

The Planning Commission's *National Human Development Report 2001*, estimates that roughly Rs 8,000 is allocated per annum per family to 50 million poor families in the country through central and state government schemes. The money is not given to the poor directly; it is spent on state-run schemes on the assumption that such initiatives are likely to build capacities, raise income levels and provide other beneficial spin-offs.

It does not require an elaborate study to establish that few poor families get benefits equivalent to even Rs 8,000 per annum. This tragic situation can be directly attributed to poor quality of governance. Financial allocations translate poorly into benefits for the majority of the targeted people because of corruption, cornering of benefits by a powerful few, maladministration, poor accountability, inadequate people-led planning, monitoring and implementation.

Poor governance manifests in several ways:

- Disparities in the pace of development across social groups and geographical regions
- Denial of basic needs — food, water and shelter — to a large number of people
- Threats to life and personal security
- Marginalisation, exclusion or even persecution of people on the basis of caste, religion or gender
- Lack of sensitivity, transparency and accountability in the administrative machinery
- Subversion of rules
- Inability of the poor to get free, fair and timely justice
- Lack of credibility of political institutions
- Lack of opportunities for the poor to participate in local self-governance
- Systematic destruction of the environment by vested interests.

Better governance requires action in three areas:

- Institutions
- Mechanisms for service delivery
- Supportive framework of legislation.

A pre-requisite for effective action in these areas is a strong, alert and assertive citizenry. The voice of the poor must be heard, for they

suffer the most as a result of poor governance.

Approach

The PACS Programme seeks to ensure better governance by:

- Increasing participation of the poor and marginalised in panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) and training elected PRI representatives so that they can understand and perform their roles better
- Building and strengthening the capacities of CBOs so that they can monitor the performance of government schemes and demand accountability through peaceful and democratic means
- Using the media to highlight immediate and long-term issues concerning the poor, to create an enabling environment for pro-poor policy formulation and implementation, and to move authorities to take immediately-required action in certain cases
- Increasing awareness about and monitoring specific schemes of immense importance to the poor, like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), in a systematic and coordinated manner across programme areas in all states
- Encouraging regular and close interaction between government officials and CSOs through formal and informal channels, so that the former gain a better understanding of the ground realities and demonstrate more sensitivity towards the needs and demands of the poor.

The programme has also made concerted efforts to increase awareness and use of the Right to Information (RTI) Act among all stakeholders. It is now planning to work closely with the Right to Food Campaign-India.

Increasing participation of the poor in PRI

Panchayati raj is an ideal medium for the poor to express their voice, to influence and monitor the implementation of government schemes at the village level, and exercise democratic control over elected representatives and public services. Unfortunately, though the spirit of the law is against politicisation of PRI, the institution has been co-opted by powerful political interests. There is an urgent need to create space for the poor in PRI, and this was the task undertaken by the PACS Programme in two states where panchayat elections were held in the last two years: Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.



The PACS Programme encourages regular and close interaction with elected representatives and government officials

In UP, a large Pre-Election Voter Awareness Campaign (PEVAC), organised by PACS Programme partners before the state panchayat elections held in August 2005, involved over 300 large and small CSOs and covered 48 of the state's 70 districts. As part of the PEVAC:

- Over 60,000 copies of seven educational publications on panchayat elections were printed and distributed
- Over 2,000 workshops were held at the block level to discuss how participation of women, dalits and youth could be increased
- Nearly 30,000 village-level meetings were held to ensure greater and more meaningful participation of voters
- A variety of awareness-building campaigns were undertaken by various CSOs
- Regular interaction with many media representatives and government officials was maintained
- A telephone helpline was set up to guide candidates and alert authorities about malpractices.

The focus of the entire effort, spearheaded by well-established organisations like Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra (SSK) and People's Action for National Integration (PANI), was on increasing the participation of women, dalits and other marginalised communities in a political process largely dominated by 'paisa' and 'pratishta' (money and feudal claims to status). The result was that in the area covered by the PEVAC, several hundred candidates supported by CBOs were elected from reserved seats. At least 85 women and over 170 dalits were elected from unreserved seats, that is, with the support of males and upper-caste people. In UP's highly patriarchal and caste-dominated society, this was a significant change.

In areas where they have a well-established presence, CSOs that made concerted efforts over a period of months managed to mobilise communities to select and support candidates with such strength that over half these candidates were elected. For instance, in the 84 gram panchayats of Maharajganj and Siddharthnagar districts, covered under the PACS Programme by the Purvanchal Gramin Seva Samiti (PGSS), Gorakhpur, and its four network partners (Vikalp, Maharajganj; Purvanchal Seva Sansthan, Deoria; Yuva Chetna Kendra, Maharajganj; Bharatiya Jan Kalyan Evam Prashikshan Sansthan, Ghazipur), CBOs selected and supported around 550 candidates for the post of ward members. As many as 325 of them were

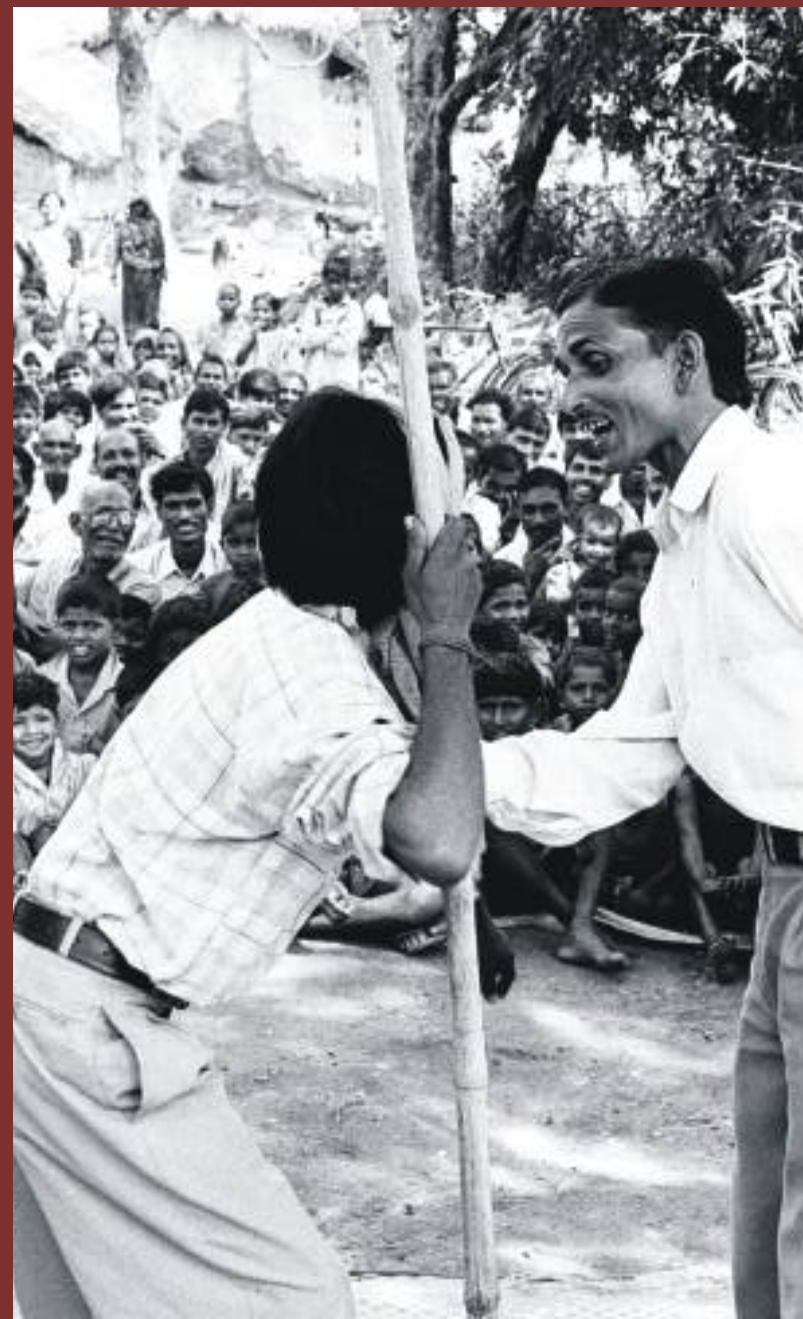
The PACS Programme seeks to create space for the poor in panchayati raj institutions



elected. Around 80% of those elected were women. In addition, around 30 women selected and supported by CBOs were elected to the post of *pradhan*.

In Bihar, the PACS Programme's Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan covered over 3,500 villages in 662 panchayats in 23 districts divided into five clusters. All PACS Programme CSOs and their network partners were involved in the Abhiyan. In all, around 104 CSOs were involved. The Abhiyan undertook five main activities:

- **Capacity-building of CSO staff.** A training of trainers workshop was held in Patna on January 17-19, 2006. CSO participants in the workshop then conducted capacity-building workshops for other CSO staff in each of the five clusters, during the first two weeks of February 2006. The workshops covered the election process and guidelines. Participants were given specially prepared folders and booklets on frequently asked questions.
- **Voter-awareness drives.** A voter-awareness kit, containing pamphlets, posters and an audio-cassette with songs, was produced and distributed to CSOs. The CSOs in turn ensured that the material was used in each of the villages in their area of operation. A street theatre group was trained to spread voter awareness. CSOs set up village-level information centres to provide information to voters as well as candidates, and help candidates fill up forms.
- **Facilitating the selection of candidates by community consensus.** Using the platform of self-help groups and other community-based organisations initiated under the PACS Programme, CSOs motivated people to select candidates with a track record of integrity and social work. The emphasis was on the selection of consensus candidates from dalits and other marginalised communities.
- **Liaising with government machinery to ensure that elections were conducted properly.** The PACS Programme's January panchayat consultation was inaugurated by Bihar Panchayat Minister Narendra Narayan Yadav. The Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan's core committee was in touch with senior officials. Programme partners worked to establish sound relations with government officials in each cluster. District collectors and other officials were invited to CSO capacity-building workshops, and block development officers were urged to offer support to grassroots workers.
- **Using mass media.** Bihar Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan officials informally met several media representatives. A media kit containing all the



Awareness about panchayati raj has been increased through use of a variety of methods, including street plays

Gramdhoots, agents of change in southern MP

To make panchayati raj more effective and meaningful in around 450 villages in the interiors of southern Madhya Pradesh, the concept of 'gramdhoots' has been initiated by the National Institute for Women, Child and Youth Development (NIWCYD) and its network partners.

Gramdhoots are volunteers who work as advisors and catalysts. They are selected from amongst the villagers themselves. They work on a voluntary basis, their sole motive being to serve the people of the village they live in. There are no age, sex or educational requirements to qualify, although basic education does help in dealing with an unresponsive bureaucracy. Enthusiasm for participation in the affairs of the village, and an aptitude for social service are the only qualifications necessary for becoming a gramdhoot. On selection, gramdhoots undergo training by NIWCYD through its network partners, learning how government schemes work, how they can disseminate information, how they can help people get, fill and submit different forms needed to secure various welfare benefits, and how they can increase people's participation in the political process.

Santosh Khoware of NIWCYD explains how the gramdhoots make a difference: "Gramdhoots help villagers obtain *pramanpatras* (certificates of income and caste). They help them overcome their awe and fear of government officials, and stand up to them and demand their rights. They keep the villagers informed of government schemes, operate as catalysts in the formation of self-help groups, farmer groups and other community bodies. They encourage villagers to attend gram sabhas on a regular basis and get their voices heard. Many gramdhoots themselves stand for election and get elected as panchayat members. A few have even been elected to the post of sarpanch in some panchayats. They create awareness on issues and help find solutions to problems faced by the villagers."

material developed by the campaign was given to every media group. The election commissioner spoke in a radio programme facilitated by the PACS Programme's communications agency for Bihar, Communicators for Development. The programme, Jan Vichar, provided a platform for election officers, experts and PACS Programme grassroots workers to express their views and experiences. Through the radio programme, which was aired across Bihar, the election commissioner explained the election procedure and appealed to women to cast their votes.

As a result of all these efforts, in areas covered by the Abhiyan:

- Over 5,000 candidates including a large number of women and dalit candidates were helped to fill nomination forms
- Over 1,000 dalit, women and backward caste candidates contested from general seats
- Only 2% of nomination forms were rejected, compared to 14% in the state as a whole
- Over 2,600 of 4,745 CBO-supported candidates were elected at different levels, from gram panchayats to zilla parishads. Most of the candidates were from marginalised communities, who were entering the arena of electoral politics for the first time.

The fact that over half of the CBO-supported candidates were elected signalled a major change in a state where elections are marked by the use of money power, caste considerations and violence.

Newly elected panchayat members are being trained by programme CSOs in a phased manner. SSK, which has well-established training expertise and infrastructure, has conducted over 700 programmes for around 32,000 members of PRIs and CBOs under the PACS Programme.

Empowering gram sabhas

Participation in panchayat elections is not the only way the poor can make their voice heard through PRI. Legislation for panchayati raj in different states provides different ways in which people can participate directly through gram sabhas. Increasing awareness about these opportunities is a priority area for many programme CSOs. Increasing the participation of women has been emphasised. The result is that in many areas where gram sabha meetings were held only on paper, meetings are now attended by 40-100 people, or more. Special gram sabha meetings have also been convened by following the due procedure.

In many scheduled areas, where gram sabhas have specific powers, people have demonstrated the resolve to exercise democratic control over their resources. For instance, an alert and active gram sabha in Gopling Chuyan panchayat in the Chauki block of Rajnandgaon district in Chhattisgarh has stopped illegal quarrying in the area. It also demanded, and got, work under the Food for Work Programme. In Mahuatikra ward of Sayar village of Udaipur block, Surguja, people used a gram sabha resolution to retrieve 300 acres of land cultivated by 107 families, which had been illegally taken over by forest department officials.

Monitoring government schemes through community organisations

Around 25,000 CBOs formed or strengthened by the PACS Programme across all its areas of operation constitute an important people's body to ensure proper implementation of government schemes. The range of CBOs formed under the programme includes Gram Adhikar Manch, Sarpanch Sanghs, local resource groups, Mahila Sabhas, Mahila Dalans, Lok Samitis, Musahar Adhikar Manch, Yuva Mandals, Kishori Groups, Chingari Sangathans, Gram Vikas Samitis, Apda Sahajiwani Samitis, Bal Panchayats and Shiksha Premi Groups. The difference they can make is seen in Prithvipur block of Tikamgarh district, MP, where Sambhav, a network partner of the Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI), has initiated an effective PDS monitoring system through a community-based organisation called Jan Sangathan Manch (JSM). Active in 123 villages of Prithvipur block, the JSM has around 1,200 members, mainly from the dalit and adivasi communities.

From February 24-March 1, 2006, the JSM organised a padayatra to highlight corruption in the PDS system. The padayatra, which covered 30 villages of Prithvipur block, found that BPL families were not getting rations from PDS shops, or receiving less than the stipulated amount. On Antyodaya cards people were getting 20-25 kg of foodgrain instead of 35 kg. Rations were sold at market rates to the needy, and there was a variation in quantity supplied. Wheat was sold at Rs 7 per kg instead of Rs 4.65 to BPL families. In many villages, sugar had not been distributed for one or two years. In some villages, the sarpanch and the secretary demanded anything between Rs 50-500 to prepare Antyodaya cards. There was a discrepancy between the ration weighed and the amount distributed, which was always less.

At the conclusion of the padayatra, a memorandum was submitted to the district collector. The collector set up a three-member committee to look into



Information centres set up by CSOs help people gain knowledge about development programmes without leaving their village

the issues. In front of the padayatri, the collector instructed senior officials to ensure that rations were distributed in his presence in the villages from which complaints were received, and the order was followed. This small victory was highlighted in the local press.

Likewise, in Tal Behat block, Lalitpur district, there are 53 CBOs called Jan Shakti Samitis (JSS) that have brought instances of PDS malfunctioning to the notice of the authorities. Of the 69 PDS shops in this PACS Programme area, around 40 were not functioning properly. Thanks to the efforts of the JSS, this number has been brought down to 23.

From CBOs across the PACS Programme area have emerged community leaders who can ensure that the momentum built during the programme period is sustained after the end of the programme. An analysis of 145 community leaders from 44 villages in the areas covered by the Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra (NBJK) in Jharkhand revealed that they could get the participation of the community; they were able to advocate village issues with government and PRIs; they had a reasonable ability to articulate community needs.



CSOs try to ensure an atmosphere of social cohesion and cooperation by regularly organising village-level functions

Monitoring the NREGS

Recognising that the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) has immense potential for assuring livelihood and food security to the poorest of the poor, the PACS Programme has launched a special initiative across all its areas of operations to:

- Increase awareness about the NREGS amongst communities, local and district-level officials and civil society
- Monitor the implementation of the scheme and draw the attention of authorities to anomalies
- Ensure that the scheme is implemented at all levels in its true spirit and according to the letter of the law, so that its full potential is realised.

Towards this end, the PACS Programme organised an NREGS week in all the six PACS Programme states in June-July 2006. During the week, awareness drives were carried out in all programme villages covered by the NREGS to increase registration for job cards; field surveys were conducted to identify implementation problems; and public hearings were held at various locations.

Based on the information collected, state-wise NREGS advocacy reports have been prepared for dissemination among officials, policymakers and the media. A consolidated national report is being prepared. PACS Programme CSOs will continue to be involved in the planning and monitoring of the NREGS and efforts will be made to demonstrate 'ideal' implementation of the scheme in selected villages.

In Uttar Pradesh, PACS Programme partners in 13 districts participated in a statewide Rozgar Adhikar Yatra organised by the National Conference of Dalit Organisations (NACDOR), a confederation of more than 300 grassroots dalit organisations. PACS Programme partners in these districts were closely involved in the planning and mobilisation for the yatra, which ended in a massive Rozgar Adhikar Sammelan in Lucknow on July 3, 2006, and formal adoption of a Lucknow Declaration. The Rozgar Adhikar Yatra had an immediate impact in many areas. One day after its launch at Palia in Lakhimpur Kheri district, on June 23, 2006, the district collector ordered a four-day campaign to receive applications from villagers seeking employment under the NREGS and to issue them job cards. The district administration was ordered to complete the process by July 1, 2006.

Working on the right to food

The PACS Programme has initiated a close involvement with the Right to Food Campaign-India. Under this initiative, community representatives and CSOs will report to the Commissioners to the Supreme Court all instances of chronic food insecurity and hunger. These reports will support the ongoing Right to Food Case, alert the media and hopefully influence the political establishment to take short-term and long-term remedial measures.

Using the media to influence government

Several programme CSOs have effectively used the local and regional vernacular print and electronic media to highlight pressing problems faced in particular areas and move the authorities to act. The media is usually approached when petitions are submitted or padayatras and demonstrations held. The process has been facilitated and strengthened by communication agencies appointed in each state. These agencies train CSO staff in media management, help CSOs liaise with the media, organise press visits and coordinate media publicity for programme initiatives. At the national level, the programme organised press visits by journalists from leading English language publications on the eve of the 'Empowering Livelihoods: State Policy, Private Initiatives and Civil Society Action' consultation in New Delhi in October 2005.

Strengthening livelihoods

Economic security is critical for the overall empowerment of the poor. Apart from facilitating food security, which is the primary requirement of the poor, economic security gives the freedom to resist different forms of exploitation like bonded labour, trafficking and child labour. However, strengthening livelihoods or generating alternative livelihoods among people who have few assets in terms of land, knowledge or social networking is a formidable challenge.

Approach

The PACS Programme's focus on livelihoods complements its rights-based approach to poverty reduction. The basic objective is to empower the most vulnerable sections of the community and strengthen the capacity of the poor to secure sustainable livelihoods. Based on an understanding of the livelihoods of the poor, their capacities, needs and aspirations, and the constraints that prevent the realisation of those aspirations, PACS Programme CSOs are identifying approaches and strategies, formulating training programmes, and providing technological inputs and financial assistance for the generation or strengthening of sustainable livelihoods.

In each state covered by the programme, partner CSOs deliberated with communities and then with experts on region-specific challenges and opportunity areas. The perspectives, insights and ideas gained from these state-level consultations were then brought to a national conference on the promotion of livelihoods, held in New Delhi from October 24-26, 2005. The state and national consultations led to a keener understanding of:

- State policy
- CSO and community success stories from across the country
- Private sector livelihood initiatives in rural areas
- Appropriate finance and technology options.

From these efforts, several activities emerged, including:

- Training of CSOs in livelihood strategies
- Facilitating the establishment of small businesses through SHGs, especially among women (discussed in *Empowering women*), and subsequently forging linkages with banks
- Promotion of appropriate and better technology and management





Production of value-added items has been promoted through introduction of simple, low-cost technologies

practices, especially in flood and drought-prone areas and among forest-based communities.

Alternative sources of income through SHGs

The PACS Programme as a whole works with around 25,000 community-based organisations (CBOs), which are broadly of two types: savings-based SHGs and non-saving groups. While both types of CBOs function as pressure groups for improving entitlement realisations and basic services for the poor, the savings-based SHGs have supported hundreds of collective and individual efforts to explore alternative sources of income.

Collective efforts include fish-farming, supplying meals in primary schools, running ration shops and trading in foodgrains and mahua. Individual efforts include goat-rearing, vegetable-vending, running grocery shops, rearing cows and buffaloes to sell milk, bamboo and metal work, and selling bangles and cosmetic products. In Maharashtra, 13% of the 43,000 SHG members under the PACS Programme have started some such off-farm income-generation activities. In ActionAid's project for Musahars in East Champaran, Bihar, a CBO of Musahars decided to use a revolving fund set up under the programme to support five most vulnerable families in each of the 125 villages covered by the project. As a result, 625 extremely poor families have been able to start some alternative income-generation activity.

Across the programme area, SHG members undertaking alternative income-generation activities have been able to increase their income by Rs 200-1,000 per month.

Training CSOs in livelihood strategies

With the help of the BASIX group, a livelihoods-promotion institution established in 1996, the PACS Programme undertook a major effort to train CSOs in Bihar in the promotion of livelihoods. The Indian School of Livelihood Promotion (ISLP) set up by the group is engaged in building a cadre of livelihoods-promotion professionals, particularly among PACS Programme partners. ISLP developed and conducted a customised course for PACS Programme CSOs in Bihar to help them develop a strategy to link SHGs with microfinance institutions (MFIs). Through this training, CSOs were expected to:

- Develop a strategy and action plan to strengthen SHGs in building linkages with MFIs

- Identify livelihood opportunities for enterprise development around SHGs
- Gain an understanding of tools for analysis of livelihood intervention choices and their application
- Build a livelihoods learning group at the state level.

ISLP trained 66 operating managers of PACS Programme CSOs in Bihar. Through these managers, at least 120 more development workers were expected to learn the tools for SHG grading and identification of livelihood opportunities. ISLP also helped 49 CSOs develop a concrete action plan for

livelihoods-promotion in their area.

Livelihood strategy training programmes have been conducted in other programme states as well at the CSO and cluster levels.

Helping farmers cope with floods

Unpredictable floods are a perennial problem in the Kosi river belt of Bihar. Every year, houses, property and lives are devastated, and the standing water due to floods cripples agriculture, the principal livelihood in this region.

Enhancing income of tribal communities dependent on collection of non-timber forest produce is a major challenge undertaken by some CSOs





DA's TARAgam centre at Orchha has been used to conduct a range of technical and non-technical training programmes

Innovative techniques promoted by a programme CSO, the Ghogardiha Prakhanda Swarajya Vikas Samiti (GPSVS), have helped farmers of the Ghogardiha block in Madhubani face this challenge. The main technique is *dopang*, a method of preparing rice seeds to minimise losses from annual flooding. Rice seeds take at least 45 days to mature enough for transplantation. If the floods come after the rice has been transplanted, the standing crop is destroyed. When the *dopang* method is used, seeds take only 15-20 days to mature, giving farmers ample time to grow and transplant the rice after the floodwaters recede. The method was known to farmers, but not many were practising it. The PACS Programme is publicising it in the region through meetings and forums.

Farmers have also been encouraged to use different rice varieties in different areas. In lowlands, where there is more waterlogging, rice varieties such as dhusri, dhumma, lalsar and matia are recommended. These varieties have long stems and therefore can cope with the high-standing water. In the uplands, where there is less waterlogging, use of jaswa, mansoori, mala and basmati are suggested. Farmers have also moved away from their dependence on rice, to multiple cropping. They plant janer and munager which are not affected by the standing water. Janer is used for cattle fodder while munager is used in cooking. These plants also stop soil erosion. GPSVS is also trying to

popularise the traditional method in which farmers dig small ditches in their fields where water collects. Fish are farmed in these waters and mothi, a plant used to make mats, is planted around the periphery of the ditch.

Similarly, in the riverine, low-lying eastern belt of Uttar Pradesh, the Siddharthnagar-district-based Shohratgarh Environmental Society (SES) has demonstrated how an early-growing variety of paddy called Narendra-97 can help farmers whose kharif crop is frequently destroyed by floods. Narendra-97 requires little water at the time of sowing and yields a crop within 100 days. In SES's PACS Programme project, covering 30 villages in Siddharthnagar district, Narendra-97 was first tried out in 2004, on around 50 hectares of land owned by 210 farmers, after extensive discussions and training sessions. Data collected from one village by SES shows that in the case of marginal farmers, cultivation of Narendra-97 led to a 25-50% increase in income. In the event of severe floods, this income would be the farmers' only kharif income.

While the number of farmers growing Narendra-97 in the PACS Programme project area has doubled, farmers and NGOs in other parts have also shown keen interest in what they call *jhatpatwa* (early, or instant) paddy. In the nine districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh, at least 10,000 farmers are growing Narendra-97.

Increasing income from Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP)

NTFP like honey and mahua is a major, and at certain times of the year, sole source of income for tribal groups living in forest areas. However, NTFP-related work is beset by a number of problems. The work is laborious and seasonal. People who are unable to work during the season, for reasons such as illness or old age, face food insecurity for the whole year. There is little or no value-addition and no direct linkage to markets; people earn a pittance for the raw material they sell.

The challenge of introducing appropriate new practices in NTFP-related work has been taken up by two PACS Programme partners in Madhya Pradesh: Centre for Advanced Research and Development (CARD) and Udyogini. In one of the most backward regions of the state, Mandla district, CARD has helped tribals — mostly Gonds and Baigas — to practise better collection, preservation and processing of honey. The tribals have also been successfully trained in group enterprise skills.

Honey-gathering is a major activity in the district. The traditional method of

extracting honey, however, was destructive; it damaged the entire family of bees, leading to loss of honey and posing the risk of injury to people involved in the extraction. The traditional method caused a shortage of beehives, fewer honey-collectors and, ultimately, less honey harvested. The quality of honey also suffered, as wax from the hive percolated into the extracted honey, giving it a foggy appearance. This led to a lower price in the market.

CARD began work with 220 families in Mandla district in July 2001. It introduced tribals to non-destructive ways of collecting honey, which would be ecologically sustainable. The organisation introduced safety measures such as wearing canvas gear and using ladders to reach the combs. People were taught how to cut only part of the honeycomb. These innovations almost doubled the amount of honey harvested, from 5-7 kg to 12-13 kg. It also ensured higher price realisation — from Rs 30 per litre to Rs 60 per litre.

CARD has extended support to SHGs for marketing the honey. The honey is collected, branded and sold through a network of SHGs under the banner of the Makail Suta Sahad Vikas Samiti. Groups supported and strengthened by CARD have set up a large honey unit in Ghugri block in Mandla. Twenty-one SHGs collect honey and deposit it at the plant in Ghugri. The honey produced by these groups is made available in shops in Mandla and at government fairs that are held at the district, state and national levels. These efforts are now being replicated in other areas, through training.

Tribals in Mandla region are traditionally known as "mahua-collectors". Flowers and seeds of the tree (*Madhuca indica*), which have medicinal and nutritional properties, are collected and dried. The flowers are then consumed as food or used to make a local form of liquor. They are also sold by tribals through a local barter system, to procure onions and salt. Oil is extracted from the seeds.

The collection of mahua flowers involves hard work for entire tribal families. Every day, from March-end to mid-April, family members are involved in collecting flowers from forest areas and sometimes from their own land. The flowers are dried over four to six days. Flowers not used for personal consumption are sold to local traders. The income so earned varies between Rs 1,000 and Rs 1,200 per household, which puts in 15-21 days of hard work.

In the last few years, Udyogini, which works in 30 villages in Mandla district under the PACS Programme, has brought about noticeable changes in this traditional occupation.



Individual enterprises supported by SHGs include rearing cows and buffaloes to sell milk



CSOs have helped landless artisans find new markets for traditional skills like metalcraft

To start with, Udyogini's team along with local tribals collected systematic data on the annual mahua trade over three years from three local markets. Information was collected on the production, sale, selling period, average price, total local consumption and price behaviour. This information gave Udyogini a clear picture of mahua-collection and trade in the region. It also helped the team plan an income-enhancement strategy.

Through consultations with local communities, it was decided to do the following:

- Collect mahua during the peak season and sell it during the lean season, to get a price advantage
- Trade in mahua flowers through existing SHGs in the region
- Share information drawn from market research with SHG members
- Help tribals secure loans to address their cash needs, which often force them to sell collected mahua flowers at low rates
- Impart training in adopting scientific storage practices like drying on pucca and cemented floors, packing mahua in jute bags, applying kusum leaves and plaster of Paris to prevent insect attack.

These initiatives resulted in better price realisation. For the first time, people could sell mahua for more than Rs 10 a kg.

Enhancing income from traditional crafts

In many PACS Programme districts, there is scope to enhance family incomes from traditional crafts like chikan embroidery. In Nindula and Bichrawa blocks of Rae Bareilly district, SEWA initially targeted 750 women for chikan training under the PACS Programme. The women undergo a two-day orientation and then a two-month-long training in the traditional chikan embroidery with its distinctive stitches. During the apprenticeship they do not receive any money but later, as they progress, they are paid for their labour. This could be around Rs 600-700 a month. Those who display aptitude and the right motivation then undergo a 15-day training programme in Lucknow, after which they qualify as trainers. A trainer can earn between Rs 700-1,000 per month.

Forging linkages for finance

People require a range of assets to achieve positive livelihood outcomes. They need human capital, such as skills, knowledge, ability to work and good health; social capital like formal and informal networks and established relations of trust and exchange; natural capital like land, water and forests;

physical capital like energy, transport and other infrastructure; and financial capital, which includes loans, savings and other liquid assets like livestock and gold.

Financial capital is not enough to start a new income-generating activity. However, in the context of the poorest of the poor, it is often the biggest stumbling block. While the PACS Programme framework does not facilitate grants for new businesses, programme CSOs have been encouraged to forge linkages between SHGs and other CBOs and sources of finance. Finance has thus been procured from a number of sources such as the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), nationalised, regional and local banks and microfinance institutions. Particularly noteworthy are the efforts of

the Socio-Economic Development Trust (SEDT) in Maharashtra, which has mobilised Rs 4 crore from the State Bank of Hyderabad for the benefit of 1,000 women. One of the results was that women's groups could set up a milk-chilling plant with a capacity of 5,000 litres.

Many CSOs have been successful in forging linkages between banks and SHGs, so that the latter can take up work under the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana (SGSY). For instance, in Jharkhand, the Badlao Foundation has facilitated such links for nearly half the SHGs it initiated under the PACS Programme. In Maharashtra, out of 124 SHGs initiated by Paryay, 40 have already taken bank loans under the SGSY.

Forging linkages between community producers and remunerative markets remains a major challenge in the absence of transport facilities



Facilitating networks

A common criticism against CSOs is that they tend to work in isolation. The criticism is quite valid and has one major crippling implication: CSOs working in the same geographical or thematic area do not share knowledge, expertise, learnings and resources. This results in a waste of energy and time. Proven 'best practices' are not easily adopted by others. People for whose benefit CSOs work are the ultimate losers.

Formal or informal networks can help overcome this weakness. If handled well, with visionary leadership and commitment to common causes, such networks can largely overcome or bypass inevitable differences in ideological

orientation, organisational cultures and styles of working of individual CSOs. There are many good examples of effective networking in civil society in India and the rest of the world. The examples need to be emulated and multiplied. Good networking can be a 'win-win' situation for all concerned: donor agencies, CSOs, individual CSO staff, and the communities for which CSOs work. Networking is also essential for CSOs to acquire the critical mass required to advocate important policy changes and provoke immediate government action in certain situations.

Approach

The PACS Programme is developing two kinds of CSO partnerships:

Networking provides the critical mass required for policy changes and immediate government action



- Partnerships within the programme (internal networks), by strengthening the capacity of CSO partners to manage large projects, develop linkages beyond project activities, envision long-term impacts and undertake sustainable short-term interventions
- Partnerships outside the programme (external partnerships), by disseminating learning, and by developing platforms for partners to engage creatively on thematic and geographical issues.

The programme also aims to develop the ability of CSOs to leverage interventions by other programme partners as well as manage external partnerships with government, financial institutions and the private sector.

Productive internal networks

The development of internal networks was a necessity in the programme as around two-thirds of the programme CSOs are small organisations, with a pre-project staff strength of less than 10, local reach, and minimum office infrastructure. To increase effectiveness of project delivery, enhance CSO knowledge, expertise and organisational capacity, and generate advocacy opportunities at the district, regional and state levels, it was necessary to form a system of large 'lead' CSOs working with smaller network partners under one project. A good example of such a system at work is the network of Save The Children India (STCI), which is implementing a project for the prevention of trafficking of women and children in 30 blocks of four high-trafficking districts of Maharashtra, through a network of around 70 small CSOs. Through this network, the STCI project has been able to set up village-level vigilance committees to keep track of the movement of traffickers in 272 villages.

Another example of such a network is the project of the Action for Agricultural Renewal in Maharashtra (AFARM), which involves three CSOs and 48 CBOs working on dalit land rights (Jamin Adhikar Andolan) in eight districts of Marathwada.

The PACS Programme also gave relatively large and well-established CSOs the opportunity to expand their geographical reach by promoting or supporting new CSOs founded by people aligned to their way of thinking and working. An example is the Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan, based in Chitrakoot, UP, which expanded its reach into the districts of Banda, Mahoba, Lalitpur and Hamirpur through CSOs started by people who had been associated with the organisation in the past.



Commitment to common causes can help CSOs overcome differences in ideological orientation, organisational cultures and styles of working



The PACS Programme's NREGS Week and panchayat election awareness campaigns involved hundreds of CSOs working in a coordinated manner

Another example from UP is the Jan Priya Sewa Sansthan (JPSS), which had been working in isolation in pockets of Pratapgarh district before the PACS Programme. The programme provided JPSS the opportunity to develop its own network, called Saathi, with 17 CSOs across the district.

Other emerging CSO networks include:

- Network of People's Action for National Integration (PANI) in UP
- Madhubani (Bihar) cluster of CSOs working on flood-related issues, initiated by Ghogardiha Prakhand Swarajaya Vikas Sangh (GPSVS)
- Flood-coping network initiated by Integrated Development Foundation (IDF) in Muzaffarpur, Bihar

All the extensive networks formed as part of the PACS Programme are confident that they will continue to function and grow after the end of the programme.

Broad-based partnerships with external links

The PACS Programme has consciously promoted issue or region-based CSO partnerships that extend to organisations, activists and experts outside the programme. The programme initiated a Bundelkhand civil society platform, a first in the region's history. Before the PACS Programme effort, even a directory of CSOs working in Bundelkhand was unavailable, and the heads of all the major CSOs had never met on a common platform. The programme has taken this platform forward with efforts to work out a draft development plan for the region.

Pre-Election Voter Awareness Campaign (PEVAC) platforms initiated by the programme before panchayat elections in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (read more in the section *Ensuring better governance*) consciously included several organisations and experts from outside the programme network.

Further, in each state the programme's organisational network itself provides spaces for external agencies and experts, through the institution of state core groups, which work as advisory bodies.

A proactive forum to eradicate drought in Maharashtra

An important long-term network developed and supported by the programme is the Maharashtra Dushkal Hatavu Manus Jagavu Drought Forum

(DHMJ-DF). The forum evolved as a response to the severe drought situation experienced in 2003-04 in Marathwada and parts of Vidarbha covered by the PACS Programme. At a peer learning workshop held in Aurangabad in March 2004, programme CSOs resolved to work collectively on the issue of drought. Partner CSOs organised rallies, padayatras and dharnas in drought-hit areas to raise awareness and mobilise the government machinery to provide fodder, water through tankers and work under the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS).

Sampark, a Mumbai-based advocacy organisation supported by the PACS Programme, arranged tours of journalists to the worst-affected districts of Maharashtra, and lobbied with policymakers and people's representatives. Green Earth, a PACS Programme resource organisation, coordinated a rapid assessment of drought in six districts and 50 villages in Maharashtra. The ground situation was discussed at three regional workshops in early-September 2004 and the state-level peer learning workshop later in the month. PACS Programme partner CSOs then chalked out a road map to eradicate drought in Maharashtra within the next ten years.

In order to put the plan into action, it was felt necessary to build a cadre of 'drought warriors', with a shared vision and purpose, and fully equipped with knowledge of drought relief and government resolutions and schemes related to drought. An initial period of three months was earmarked to build a band of 180 drought relief workers, to be deployed in 900 villages in nine districts. These drought warriors were trained to assess, monitor and document the situation in 900 villages in a common format, study government policies, interface with government officials, and undertake and push for relief and mitigation measures.

As drought is a recurring and widespread phenomenon affecting huge sections of the population, and a number of organisations in Maharashtra have already done considerable work in the area of drought mitigation, PACS Programme partners expressed the need to network with other CSOs on the issue and build a large and effective civil society platform. The DHMJ-DF thus evolved organically as a result of this felt need.

The DHMJ-DF was initially an informal federation of around 40 CSOs working with the PACS Programme in nine drought-prone districts. An effort to create a larger network was made at the peer review workshop held in March 2005, when leading experts and civil society drought activists from outside the programme were invited to share their experiences and insights. With the involvement of most programme CSOs in the state and other CSOs working



The Maharashtra drought forum organised a padayatra covering around 160 villages of Marathwada and Vidarbha in January-March 2006

on drought, the Drought Forum (DF) then planned a huge drought padayatra. Around 100 people were involved in the planning of the padayatra in various capacities over the next eight months, and the padayatra was finally flagged off from a village in Beed district of Marathwada on January 1, 2006.

Over the next two months, the padayatra covered around 160 villages in nine districts of Marathwada and Vidarbha, culminating at Mahatma Gandhi's Sewagram Ashram (Wardha) on March 2, 2006. Overall, around 10,000 people participated; on any given day there were at least 150 people walking in the padayatra. That apart, some 50 experts from various fields, and students, took part in detailed assessments in 60 villages. In the first 15 days of the padayatra itself, discussions were held with around 5,000 drought-affected people. Through these interactions, several instances of gross mismanagement and injustices were uncovered. On the positive side, the interactions also inspired some communities to take action on their own.

The PACS Programme then decided to give the DHMJ-DF a formal character, with vision and mission statements, a strategic plan, a core organisational structure, district coordinating agencies, short-term action plan and a secretariat in Pune. The broad objectives of the DHMJ-DF that have thus emerged are:

- Building a strong, inclusive forum
- Training of drought warriors in consultation with experts
- Selection, orientation and capacity-building of new drought warriors, with preference for women
- Undertaking micro-level initiatives for replication in other parts of the state
- Undertaking research on policies and practices for drought mitigation.

Some of the expected outputs are:

- Formation of drought study circles in 11 districts
- Training of 400 drought warriors in one year
- Mass mobilisation to actively link 2,000-odd villages to the Drought Forum
- Preparation of drought plans for 11 districts
- Building of a comprehensive, computerised information system based on tracking of issues, NREGS implementation and information on drought status in villages filed by drought warriors
- Mobilisation of resources.

The drought secretariat organises, manages and coordinates activities towards these objectives. The core committee is the executive body of the forum. All

decisions of the forum will be ratified and executed through the secretariat. Membership to the DHMJ-DF is open to all individuals, groups and actors who believe in the vision and mission of the forum; are ready to work on a collective basis with mutual respect; share their experiences, experiments and capacities; believe in people-centred development processes, transparency and accountability; are ready to work as a pressure group for social change; and believe in promoting and nurturing local leadership.

PACS Programme Lead CSOs and Resource Organisations

Below are state-wise listings of PACS Programme lead CSOs. Projects are implemented by lead CSOs either individually or through a network of smaller CSOs working under them; the latter have not been listed for reasons of space. Some CSO projects are implemented across states, and some organisations are working across the entire programme area.

Note: Some CSO projects have attained closure or are close to closure. A few CSOs whose projects have been sanctioned but were awaiting statutory clearance on September 1, 2006, have not been included.

Bihar CSO partners

Partner	Project Location District	Individual/Network/ Multi-state Project
Abhiyan	Jehanabad	Network
ActionAid India	East Champaran	Multi-state
Arpan Gramin Vikas Samiti	Bhojpur	Individual
Bharatiya Viklang Sangh	Sitamarhi	Network
Bihar Dalit Vikas Samiti	Munger, Saharsa	Individual
Bihar Seva Sansthan	Nawada	Individual
Bihar Sewa Samiti	Madhubani	Network
Binoba Arogya Awam Lok Shikshan Kendra	Nalanda	Individual
Deshkal Society	Gaya	Network
Ekta Parishad, Bihar/ Pragati Gramin Vikas Samiti	Patna, Jehanabad, Gaya, Nawada, Nalanda, Jamui, East Champaran, West Champaran, Muzaffarpur, Samastipur	Individual
Fakirana Sisters' Society	West Champaran, East Champaran	Network

Ghogardiha Prakhand Swarajaya Vikas Sangh	Madhubani	Network
Gram Bharti	Supaul	Network
Gram Nirman Mandal	Nawada	Individual
Gram Vikas Parishad	Madhubani, Darbhanga	Network
Gramin Ewam Nagar Vikas Parishad	Nalanda	Individual
Gramin Sewa	Madhubani	Individual
Integrated Development Foundation	Muzaffarpur	Multi-state
Jaiprabha Gram Vikas Mandal	Bhojpur	Network
Kanchan Sewa Ashram	Muzaffarpur	Network
Mahila Bal Jyoti Kendra	Bhojpur	Network
Mahila Sewak Samaj	Nalanda	Network
Mahila Vikash Samiti	Nawada	Individual
Manav Vikas Kendra	Bhojpur	Individual
Mandan Bharti Jagriti Samaj	Saharsa	Network
Mukti Niketan	Banka	Network
Nav Bihar Samaj Kalyan Pratisthan Kendra	Nalanda	Individual
Nav Jagriti	Saran	Network
Nidan	Vaishali, Muzaffarpur, Katihar, Khagaria	Network
Organisation For Socio-Economic & Rural Development (OSERD)	Gaya	Network

Parivar Vikas Kendra	Jamui	Network
Ramawati Prashikshan Kendra	Jamui	Individual
Samanvay Tirth	Gaya	Individual
Sense International India	Buxar, Bhojpur, Nalanda	Multi-state
Sewa Bharti Sewapuri	Banka	Individual
Shaktivardhani	East Champaran	Individual
South Asia Partnership Trust (SAPIT)	Nalanda, Bhagalpur, West Champaran	Multi-state
Vikash Vihar	Saran	Individual

Chhattisgarh CSO partners

Partner	Project Location District	Individual/Network/ Multi-state Project
Jagriti Sewa Sansthan	Rajnandgaon	Individual
Lokshakti Samajseva Sanstha	Rajnandgaon	Individual
Margdarshak Seva Sansthan	Surguja	Individual
Parivartan Samaj Sevi Sansthan	Kawardha	Individual
Prayog Ekta Parishad	Koriya, Surguja, Rajnandgaon, Kawardha	Individual
Samarthan Centre For Development & Support	Surguja, Rajnandgaon	Multi-state
Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI)	Surguja	Multi-state

Jharkhand CSO partners

Partner	Project Location District	Individual/Network/ Multi-state Project
Badlao Foundation	Godda, Sahibganj, Pakur	Individual
Cheshire Homes India	Saraikela	Network
Chetana Vikas	Deoghar, Dumka	Network
Gramin Vikas Trust	Ranchi, Gumla	Individual
HelpAge India	Ranchi, Hazaribag, Gumla	Multi-state
Integrated Development Foundation	Palamu	Multi-state
Jan Seva Parishad	Hazaribag	Network
Jan Utthan Samiti	Ranchi	Network
Jan Vikas Kendra	Hazaribag	Network
Judav	Pakur, Dumka, Deoghar, Giridih	Network
Kalanga Bazar Education Trust	Ranchi	Network
Karra Society For Rural Action	Ranchi	Network
Lok Chirag Sewa Sansthan	Jamtara	Network
Lok Jagriti Kendra	Deoghar, Dumka, Godda, Giridih	Network
Lok Prerna	Dumka	Network
National Rural and Mountain Tribal Development Association	Palamu	Network

Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra	Ranchi, Hazaribag, Koderma, Pakur	Network
Naya Sawera Vikas Kendra	Hazaribag	Individual
Network For Enterprise Enhancement & Development Support (NEEDS)	Dumka, Deoghar, Godda, Pakur, Sahibganj, Jamtara	Network
Pragati Luyadih	West Singhbhum	Individual
Pragatisheel Yuva Kendra	Giridih	Individual
Prerna Bharati	Deogarh	Individual
Prerna Niketan	Hazaribag	Network
Programme For Rural Actions & Youths Association For Social Service	Hazaribag	Network
Sampurna Gram Vikas Kendra	Gumla, Ranchi, Lohardaga, West Singhbhum, Palamu	Network
Shramjivi Mahila Samiti	West Singhbhum	Individual
Singhbhum Legal Aid and Development Society (SLADS)	West Singhbhum	Individual
Socio Economic and Education Development Society (SEEDS)	Saraikela-Kharsawan	Individual
Society For Participatory Action & Reflection (SPAR)	Simdega, Lohardaga, West Singhbhum, Ranchi, Palamu, Gumla, Hazaribag	Network
Srijan Foundation	Hazaribag	Individual

Support for Sustainable Society	Simdega	Network
Tata Steel Rural Development Society	West Singhbhum	Individual
Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAL)	West Singhbhum	Multi-state

Madhya Pradesh CSO partners

Partner	Project Location District	Individual/Network/ Multi-state Project
Action for Social Advancement	Chhatarpur	Network
Advocacy For Alternative Resources Mobilisation & Brotherhood (AARAMBH)	Raisen	Individual
Asha Niketan Welfare Centre	Hoshangabad	Individual
Bhopal Yuwa Paryavaran Shikshan and Samajik Sansthan (BYPASS)	Raisen	Network
Bundelkhand Vikas Samiti	Damoh, Chhatarpur, Tikamgarh	Network
Centre For Advanced Research & Development (CARD)	Mandla, Ghughari	Individual
Concerned Action Now (CAN)	Barwani	Network
Grameen Vikas Mandal	Balaghat	Network
HelpAge India	Betul, Sehore, Chhindwara	Multi-state

Integrated National Development Centre for Advancement Reforms and Education (INDCARE) Trust	Tikamgarh, Chhatarpur	Multi-state
Institute For Development Youth Women & Child	Chhindwara	Individual
Mahatma Gandhi Sewa Ashram	Tikamgarh, Damoh, Panna, Chhatarpur, Sagar, Vidisha, Raisen, Betul, Seoni, Mandla, Dindori, Balaghat	Network
Mahila Samiti, Chhatarpur	Chhatarpur	Individual
Naman Sewa Samiti	Betul	Individual
National Institute Of Women Child & Youth Development (NIWCYD)	Dindori, Betul, Mandla, Chhindwara	Network
Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN)	Hoshangabad, Betul, Vidisha	Individual
Rural Environment and Community Health Awareness Society (RECHA)	Betul	Network
Samarthan Centre For Development & Support	Seoni, Tikamgarh, Panna	Multi-state
Satpura Integrated Rural Development Institution (SIRDI)	Betul	Individual
Self Reliant Initiatives through Joint Action (SRIJAN)	Tikamgarh, Sagar, Vidisha	Individual
Society For Rural Upliftment (SRUB)-Betul	Betul, Raisen	Network

Udyogini	Mandla	Network
VAMA-Bal Mahila Vikas Samiti	Sagar, Vidisha	Network
Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI)	Mandla, Tikamgarh, Chhatarpur, Seoni	Multi-state
Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA)	Betul	Individual

Halo Medical Foundation	Osmanabad	Individual
Indian Institute Of Youth Welfare	Yavatmal, Gadchiroli	Network
Indira Gram Sudhar Sanstha	Beed, Jalna, Aurangabad	Network
Janarth	Aurangabad	Individual
Janvikas Samajik Sanstha	Aurangabad, Beed, Jalna, Latur, Nanded, Osmanabad, Parbhani	Individual

Maharashtra CSO partners

Partner	Project Location District	Individual/Network/ Multi-state Project
Action for Agricultural Renewal in Maharashtra (AFARM)	Aurangabad, Nanded, Parbhani, Beed, Latur, Osmanabad	Network
Annapurna Mahila Mandal	Latur, Beed	Network
Asmita Institute For Development	Yavatmal	Individual
Bhartiya Dnyanpith Bahudeshiya Gramin Vikas Sanstha	Yavatmal	Network
Elgar Pratishthan	Gadchiroli	Individual
Ganpatrao Nimbalkar Smruti Mukti Ashram	Latur	Individual
Gramin Samasya Mukti Trust	Yavatmal	Network
Gramin Vikas Mandal	Beed	Network
Grass Roots Action For Social Participation (GRASP)	Aurangabad, Jalna	Network

Kalapandhari Magasvargiya and Adivasi Gramin Vikas Sanstha	Beed, Latur, Nanded, Parbhani	Individual
Mahatma Phule Samaj Sewa Mandal	Osmanabad	Individual
Marathwada Sheti Sahayya Mandal	Aurangabad	Individual
Paryay	Osmanabad	Individual
Rural Development Centre	Beed	Individual
Sahayog Nirmitee	Latur, Osmanabad	Network
Sandhi Niketan Shikshan Sanstha	Nanded	Individual
Sankalp Manav Vikas Sanstha	Parbhani	Individual
Save The Children India (STCI)	Beed, Latur, Osmanabad, Nanded	Network
Social Action for Association and Development (SAAD)	Aurangabad, Nanded, Parbhani, Beed, Latur, Osmanabad, Jalna, Hingoli	Network
Social Institute Programme for Rural Area	Nanded	Individual

Socio-Economic Development Trust (SEDT)	Parbhani	Network
Vidarbha Nature Conservation Society	Gadchiroli	Individual
Vikas Sahyog Pratishthan	Buldhana	Network
Yuva Gram Vikas Mandal	Beed	Individual

Bundelkhand Gramodyog Sewa Sansthan	Hamirpur	Individual
Centre For Social Research	Kanpur-Dehat	Individual
Darpan	Jalaun	Individual
Daud Memorial Christian Vikas Samiti	Siddharthnagar	Individual

Uttar Pradesh CSO partners

Partner	Project Location District	Individual/Network/ Multi-state Project
ActionAid India	Maharajganj	Multi-state
Akhil Bhartiya Gramodyog Sewa Sansthan	Bahraich	Individual
Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Seva Sansthan (ABSSE)	Chitrakoot, Banda, Mahoba, Hamirpur, Lalitpur	Network
Baba Shrinath Shiksha Sansthan	Bahraich	Individual
Better Education Through Innovation (BETI) Foundation	Lalitpur, Bahraich	Individual
Bharat Gramodyog Vikas Samiti	Jalaun	Individual
Bhartiya Gramothan Seva Vikas Sansthan	Bahraich	Individual
Bhartiya Jan Sewa Ashram	Pratapgarh	Network
Bhartiya Manav Samaj Kalyan Sewa Sansthan	Bahraich, Maharajganj, Shrawasti, Siddharthnagar	Network

Development Initiatives by Social Animation (DISA)	Siddharthnagar	Network
Foundation for Rural Recovery and Development (FORRAD)	Banda, Chitrakoot, Mahoba, Jalaun, Jhansi	Network
Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group	Maharajganj, Barabanki, Siddharthnagar, Sitapur, Jalaun	Network
Gram Niyojan Kendra	Maharajganj	Network
Grameen Development Services	Lalitpur	Individual
HelpAge India	Banda, Kanpur-Dehat, Unnao	Multi-state
Indian Institute of Rural Technology	Pratapgarh	Network
Indo Global Social Service Society	Jhansi, Lalitpur	Network
Institute for Integrated Society Development	Barabanki	Individual
Integrated National Development Centre for Advancement Reforms and Education (INDCARE) Trust	Lalitpur	Multi-state

Jan Kalyan Parishad	Mau	Individual
Jan Priya Sewa Sansthan	Pratapgarh	Network
Jan Sewa Samiti	Pratapgarh	Individual
Lokarpan	Kanpur-Dehat, Hardoi	Network
Mahila Jagriti Mandal	Chitrakoot	Individual
Margshree Charitable Trust	Jhansi	Individual
National Youth Project Trust	Lalitpur	Network
Network Of Entrepreneurship & Economic Development (NEED)	Sitapur, Barabanki	Individual
New Public School Samiti	Banda, Fatehpur, Hamirpur, Jalaun, Kanpur-Dehat	Network
Om Gramaya Vikas Sevashram	Siddharthnagar	Network
People's Action For National Integration (PANI)	Pratapgarh, Maharajganj, Siddharthnagar, Barabanki, Bahraich	Network
Purvanchal Gramin Sewa Samiti	Maharajganj	Network
Purvanchal Gramin Vikas Sansthan	Siddharthnagar, Bahraich, Barabanki, Sitapur	Network
Purvanchal Manav Kalyan Sansthan	Maharajganj	Individual
Purvanchal Rural Development and Training Institute	Mau	Network

Saarthi Development Foundation	Sitapur	Individual
Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra	Rae Bareli, Sitapur	Network
Sarvodaya Ashram	Hardoi	Individual
Satya Ahinsa Bal Vidyalaya Samiti	Rae Bareli	Individual
Sahyog Vikas Samiti	Bahraich	Individual
Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)	Rae Bareli, Barabanki	Individual
Sense International India	Pratapgarh, Mau, Maharajganj, Siddharthnagar, Barabanki	Multi-state
Shohratgarh Environmental Society	Siddharthnagar	Individual
Shramik Bharti	Kanpur-Dehat	Network
Solidarity Of Nation Society	Bahraich	Individual
South Asia Partnership Trust (SAPIT)	Fatehpur	Multi-state
Sushurusha Samiti	Mau	Individual
Swami Vivekanand Shiksha and Samaj Kalyan Samiti	Siddharthnagar	Individual
Vatsalya	Barabanki, Sitapur, Fatehpur, Hardoi	Network
YUVA	Barabanki	Network

Programme area partners

- Voluntary Action Network India (VANI)
- National Centre for Promotion of Employment For Disabled People (NCPEDP)
- National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS)
- Right to Food Campaign-India

Programme consultants and resource organisations

Action for Food Production (AFPRO), New Delhi
Active, Ranchi
Adhar, Mumbai
Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (APMAS), Hyderabad
Anita Anand, New Delhi
Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI), Patna
Basix, Hyderabad
Bharat Dogra, New Delhi
Bhopal Rehabilitation
Carm Daksh, Bhopal
Catalyst Management Services Pvt Ltd (CMS), Bangalore
Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR), New Delhi
Centre for Environmental Concerns (CEC), Hyderabad
Centre for Sustainable Livelihoods Consultancy Pvt Ltd, Patna
Chaitanya, Pune
Charkha, New Delhi
Communicators for Development, Patna
Constructive Catalyst, Pune
Consultus, Ranchi
ENV Development Assistance Systems (I) Pvt Ltd (DAS India), Lucknow
Dhan Foundation, Madurai
Development Support Society (DSS), New Delhi
Ekjut, Jamshedpur
EPOS Health Consultants India Pvt Ltd, New Delhi
Four x 4, NOIDA
Gender Training Institute (GTI), New Delhi
Global Ideas, Lucknow
GreenEarth Social Development Consulting Pvt Ltd, Pune
Harsh Mander, Office of the Commissioners to the Supreme Court, New Delhi
Human Resource Development Corporation, Nagpur
Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), Bhopal
InfoChange, Pune

Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS), Patna
Knowledge Links, Ghaziabad
Kriti, New Delhi
Leapfrog, New Delhi
Manthan Yuva Sansthan, Ranchi
Marketing & Research Team (MART), New Delhi
Mind Mentor, Bangalore
MK Bhatt, Bangalore
Murray Culshaw Consulting, Bangalore
National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI), Lucknow
National Conference of Dalit Organisations (NACDOR), Lucknow
NC Saxena, New Delhi
Organisation for Applied Socio-Economic Systems (OASES), New Delhi
Options & Solutions, Bangalore
Pragati Consultancy Services for Social Development, Pune
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Write Solutions, Bhopal



*Ultimately, progress has to be judged by an expansion of freedoms.
The freedom to do what you want to do and be what you want to be*

— Nobel Prize-winning economist, Amartya Sen

For more information on the PACS Programme, please visit www.empowerpoor.org

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