



Knowledge. Voice. Democracy.

PRI

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PRI Activity Report of CENCORED 1995-97

Introduction

The Bihar Panchayati Raj Act was passed in 1947 and by 1954 about 2000 non-governmental and about 4387 government Panchayats had been formed covering about one third of the villages of the state. In 1961 the Bihar Samiti and Zila Parishad Act had been formulated.

The next link in this chain of events was the start of Community Development Programme by the Ministry of Community Development on 2nd October in 1952.

But the major flaw in implementation of the rural development programmes at government level was top-down planning with no consultation and need assessment of the people and absence of their participation in the planning process and programme. Moreover, this development programme was capital centred; by passing or even marginalising concerned people to build and construct. The programme were less successful in promoting people's involvement in the development process. Officials who were associated with these programmes often did not have any idea of the rural set up and ground realities.

To fulfil these shortcomings the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee in its recommendations said, that there must be administrative decentralisation and the organisations and institutions chosen for administration were to be brought under greater control. Consequently, the Panchayati Raj was made a three-tier system (village, block and zila) which was for the devolution of power to the village level.

The vision of Or. L M Sanghvi and Late Rajiv Gandhi was fulfilled in 1992 when the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution was passed. According to the Central Government directive the Bihar Panchayati Raj Bill 1993 was passed and barring a few tribal areas was implemented in the whole state

The lesson learnt from earlier experience made the Centre decide that all rural schemes and programmes should be run by the Panchayats. Moreover, the new provision provides for one-third reservation for women, schedule caste and tribes and the backward classes to ensure the participation of the less educated and under privileged, bereft of any previous experience in the Panchayati Raj set up. The new democratic set up, the new law and the need for legal information opened new avenues for training and capacity building of the elected representatives of the people. It is in this situation that voluntary organisation came into the picture to play a crucial role and contribution the development of an egalitarian socio-political set-up.

Role of Voluntary Organisation

To ensure the participation of the rural community in the New Panchayati Raj set up voluntary organisations can do the following: -

- Before the election process it can orient the voters about the importance of their vote, the rules & regulations of the election, and help them in analysing various parties dictum.
- During the election process it can encourage everyone to vote and help in ensuring free and fair election and after the election process voluntary organisations can

inform the members of Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat about their roles and responsibilities and also guide them.

- Voluntary Organisations also have a role in keeping the Panchayats informed about the rural developmental works, schemes and programmes, the financial allocations and the expected difficulties. The panchayat can design their own programmes and the voluntary organisation can help them in programme planning and implementation. They also provide trainings and conduct workshops for the new and old representatives of the people. The work of evaluation, monitoring and survey can be aided by them and last but not the least they can encourage the panchayats to work for the people.

CENCORED's PRI Activities

Censored, established in 1989, is one such voluntary organisation whose basic vision is to empower the grass-root level organisations through educational intervention, trainings and workshops. Such organisations working for social change are provided support in developing means of communication, monitoring and evaluation and capacity building. Censored in its effort to provide support to the various voluntary organisations organised several programmes under the Panchayati Raj Institutions programme.

Need Assessment workshop

The first step taken by Censored was to organise a workshop for need-assessment. In 1994 about 51 voluntary organisations got together in Gaya. to decide upon ways in which the awareness generation programme could be run effectively. The experience sharing showed that the messages of Panchayati Raj were not being effectively communicated. The verbal transmission of message was not making much impact and therefore it was decided that to successfully transfer the messages of Panchayati Raj, audio-visual aids should be used and the importance of cost-effective media was highlighted, Communication. thus, became an important component of the Panchayati Raj intervention.

Establishment of Information Centres

The second workshop held in Patna raised the issue that there was a need for a support structure besides the use of media for continuous flow of information and it was in this workshop that the idea of an information centre was mooted. The objective behind it was to create a resource centre for the people who are running Panchayati Raj awareness programmes in villages and other remote areas. Information centres were created at ward and block level. These information centres were sometimes at the voluntary organisations office or located in the Panchayat Bhavan in the village or at a public place. Some of the information centre are located in

- Sakhiri, Basantpur, Siwan
- Samta Oram Vikas, Vaishali
- Deep, West Champaran
- Oram Vtkas Manch, Parsiyakburd, Rohtas
- Janhit Vikas Samiti, Nawada
- Sada, Kanhara, .Rochahatt.

These information centres besides spreading awareness on Panchayati Raj also prepares Shanti Dal which consists of members of the Gram Sabha, both men and women from the village who make efforts to spread awareness about the model code of conduct, the election process, and make efforts for free and fair elections. A cultural team is also associated with these information centres to spread the message of Panchayati Raj through folk and mass media. Several training and workshop were organised to establish such information Centre show to operationalise them.

Training workshops were then organised on communication in Panchayati Raj for equipping the grass-root level organisations in effective communication of messages and ideas on Panchayati Raj.

Women focused trainings were organised to create an atmosphere of awareness among them and orient them in such manner so that they could fully avail the 30 per cent reservation made for them. These trainings were aimed to educate the women about the election process, prepare women trainers team, and build leadership qualities among them. Among the new interventions made by censored one was the creation of information centre and the other was introduction of Kishori Panchayat.

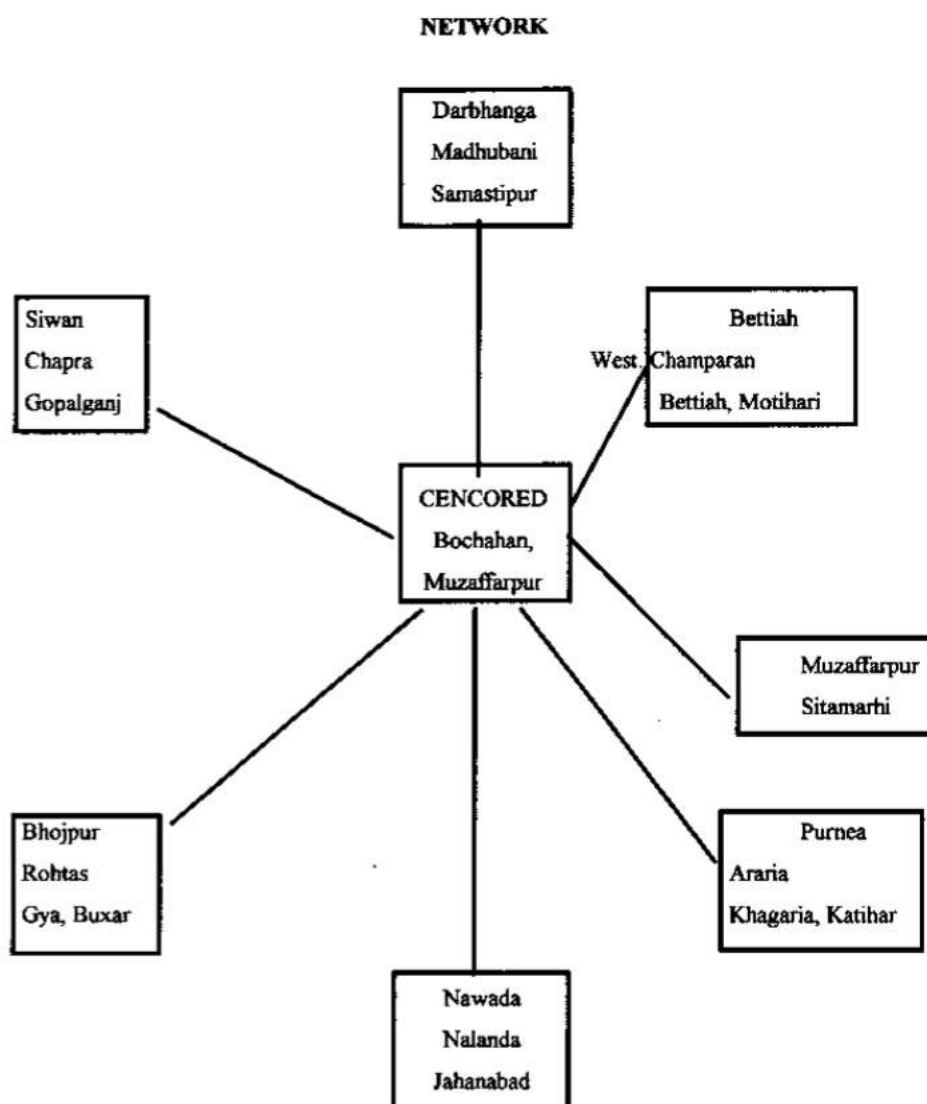
Formation of Kishori Panchayats

The idea behind the formation of Kishori Panchayat was the fact that children are indisputably a good means of interacting with the parents and also enabling them to participate. Training was thus organised for Kishories i.e. girls in the age group of 7 to 17 to give them information about Panchayati Raj, the role of women, election process, the provision of reservation for them in order to sensitise them and who in turn would motivate and organise for both school going and non-school going girls with cultural based activities such as songs, street plays and puppetry to make them aware. These school going girls then formed 'samooh' or groups. Thus, media has been important component. This intervention is aimed towards overall social development of adolescent girls and creation of pressure groups to further awareness generation.

New Initiatives

Preparation or PRI resource centre in geo-cultural zones.

In its effort towards creation of PRI resource centre in different geo-cultural zones censored selected one active voluntary organisation from each district and 3 such organisation formed one resource centre.



There are seven such resource centres for whom a training of trainers (TOT) was organised and then the trainers were sent to their resource centre to train the volunteers of smaller organisation. The follow up evaluation and monitoring was done by these resource centres. The evaluation and monitoring of these resource centres was then done by censored. The second phase of TOT for the volunteers of these resource centres is to be organised soon.

Working exclusively with women groups:

Censored along with Mithila Samaj Seva Sansthan, Mohatldinagar, Samsatipur; Lok Jagriti Kendra, Madhupur and Gramsheel, Supaul is working exclusively with women for awareness generation among them and their empowerment so that they are prepared to face election for all the post in the panchayat.

Working with network: JP Saraisa, Siwan, Muzaffarpur.

J P Saraisa, Mohaddinagar work at the panchayat level and has several linkages with other organisations working on Panchayati Raj. Sakhiri in Siwan is working at block level and its linkages have been strengthen and Muzaffarpur has good

led to dissatisfaction among the people working on the issue. The official apathy and the pending courts cases added to the problem.

Studies conducted from time to time have helped censored to assess the situation and develop new strategies and action plan. A study was conducted to identify the reasons behind the delay in holding the Panchayati Raj elections in Bihar. A panel of academicians, intellectuals and legal experts were interviewed to get their opinion on the issue. According to them the state government is not serious about the election and is not giving it any primacy, the Act is only a window-dressing. Moreover, power-hungry leaden do not want the devolution of power to take place and all political parties are equally to blame. The absence of both ruling party and the oppositions commitment to get the election conducted in the state, and the fact that in spite of the 73rd amendment, the election was not made time bound led to this state of affairs.

The general feeling about, what should be done to bring about change is that more measures need to be taken to make people aware and motivate them for early elections through signature campaigns, demonstration etc. At Panchayat, Block & Zila level workshop and seminars should be held on Panchayati Raj.

Another study was conducted to assess the impact of Censored's efforts towards awareness generation on Panchayati Raj. This study was undertaken after a period of six months after completion of one round of training of voluntary organisations personnel and the start of their awareness generation programmes. Following are some of the observations made by the study: -

- Voluntary organisation have fully utilised their resources and personnel in the awareness generation programmes for their target group.
- The information centres might have played a more positive role in the programme had they been managed in a better manner and if they had been more fully utilised by the villagers.
- The villagers were found aware about Panchayati Raj, Gram Sabha, Gram Panchayat, Gram Kachahri and about Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad to a little lesser extent and it can be said that voluntary organisations have succeeded in their mission to some extent.
- The level of awareness in the intervened panchayats is 46% which is a positive indicator of the efforts made.

The study recommended the following: -

- The personnel of voluntary organisations need to be oriented from time to time to update their knowledge and enhance their communication skills.
- Censored needs to work upon a "follow-up" programme to guide and monitor other organisations in their efforts.
- The functioning of Information Centre" should be made effective, so that the weaker sections of society, the backward classes, schedule caste and women get the maximum benefit.

