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PRIA

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PRJA- Panchayat Pratinidhi Jagrukta Abhiyan or Initial Orientation of Newly Elected Representatives

Background/Rationale:

PRIA and its network of partners have been undertaking Pre-Election Voters' Awareness Campaign (PEVAC) in the states where elections to Panchayat are conducted. These campaigns are undertaken with support from the Ministry of Rural Development. During a joint review of Pre-Election Voter Awareness Campaign (PEVAC) in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, it was clearly established that:

- A large number of representatives elected to the Gram Panchayats were elected to public office and stepping into public arena for the first time.
- They were assuming new roles and responsibilities as leaders in their respective communities.
- To enable them to discharge their responsibilities more effectively, they needed capacity enhancement, in terms of building their confidence, leadership, knowledge and skills.
- This was particularly true in the case of women, tribals and dalits who had hitherto been relegated to the periphery, where position of political leadership was concerned.
- In all the five states mentioned above, there were distinct gaps between the elections and the institutional delivery of capacity building. Wherever these efforts were made, they were largely sporadic in nature.
- Both the governmental and non-governmental sector had developed fairly comprehensive capacity building programmes in some of the states for elected representatives, but these tended to be formal, residential and resource intensive. The reach was limited and as a result substantial segment of elected representatives could not be covered by any capacity building efforts at all.
- A previous analysis (of 1997-98) for the state of UP revealed that the Government trained only 2 percent of the Panchayat Representatives.
- In the states Haryana and Rajasthan, the Governments did initiate a process to train newly elected representatives on a large scale, but after the orientation of master trainers, the actual delivery of capacity-building inputs to the Panchayat functionaries, did not take place.
- In Madhya Pradesh, the government had taken the initiative to train all the elected representatives after the 2nd round of elections. In pursuance of this objective, large-scale involvement of NGOs and government to prepare TOT manual and train all the representatives, had started in March 2000. However, the training could not be accomplished as was originally planned. Therefore, a large segment of Sarpanches and Panches remained untrained and lack of awareness among most of them was conspicuous with the passing months.

Given this backdrop, and perceiving the urgent need for quick, proximate orientation for newly elected members, PRIA and its partners in the states of UP, MP, Haryana, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh (where the second round of elections to Panchayats was conducted), took up the challenge and decided to launch a campaign in each of the above states to provide initial orientation to newly elected members.

Objectives of the Campaign:

The objective of this campaign (PRJA) was to create awareness among the elected representatives on the following:

- What is the significance of Panchayats and democratic decentralisation?
- What are the roles of the newly elected representatives in the Panchayati Raj institutions?
- How can they play their roles effectively?

Approach of PRJA

The challenges posed and the lacunae identified in the area of capacity building initiatives for newly elected PRI representatives, led PRIA and its partners to design its campaign in the following manner:

- Taking the training/orientation to the place where representatives were located rather than expecting the trainees to come to a central training facility. To facilitate easy accessibility, the training was conducted at the cluster level (4-5 villages each), based on compactness and physical proximity, rather than at the block or district level. The proximity and familiarity of training venue ensured higher participation of women representatives
- Designing brief but comprehensive training capsules for these representatives. The training was designed to be non-residential and of one-day duration.
- The campaign to provide orientation, attempted maximum outreach by mobilising local partners and local resources.
- In some states such as Rajasthan and Haryana, separate orientations were held for women, taking into account their specific capacity building needs. Moreover, in Rajasthan, separate orientations were also conducted for dalits,
- Appropriate materials were designed and participatory methods were employed to impart the training, so as to encourage participants to articulate their doubts, queries, and participate in discussions. In the process, special attention was paid to the use of innovative methodologies, such as pictures, role-play, illustrations and games, to communicate information and learning so as to address the learning needs of illiterate/neo-illiterate elected representatives.
- PEVACs in the above-mentioned states had mobilised a wide cross-section of civil society organisations and the same platform was employed during the orientation campaign so as to help sustain an enabling environment for PRIs.
- Help create a demonstrable, replicable model of providing orientation so that other institutions and organisations would be enabled to take up the campaign, thereby extending the outreach of the orientation effort to the widest possible degree.
- In the course of the campaign, attempts were also made to forge linkages and involve other actors as well, such as, BDOs and district administration, members of other tiers of PRI and local organisations/CBOs for facilitation. The purpose of engaging the above actors were to build better rapport between government officials and elected representatives, sensitise both government officials and CBOs to participatory methodologies, and ensure their continued support to the elected representatives in future.
- Local resources were harnessed in various aspects of the campaign, such as the engagement of local resource persons, venue, local transport, entrusting the preparation of meals for participants to the local women's group (as was the case in Haryana) or the temple kitchen, school canteen local dhaba, etc. (as in Himachal Pradesh) proved to be extremely effective. Together with making the campaign cost-effective, it helped to generate local income, was time-saving and most importantly resulted in enhancing community feeling and ownership for the programme.

How resource persons were selected?

The entire campaign was designed by enabling participation of local groups of volunteers and community based organisations. Resource persons associated with

PRIA were taken from varied sectors to encompass plurality of experiences. They were:

- From all the three tiers of Panchayats - Ex, as well as present Pradhans/Sarpanches, Zilla Parishad members, Panchayat Samiti members, Gram Sachivs.
- Retired officials such as Block Education Officers who were settled in the given area, Extension officers, etc.
- Facilitators from local community based organisations and NGOs
- District administration such as District Development Officers.
- Retired teachers having training experience.

In Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana, an innovative effort of bringing together present and ex-elected members was made. The objective of this interface was to build a good relationship between the two, and also learn from ex-elected members' experiences.

Training Needs Assessment

Prior to the orientation, a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) was conducted which took into account factors like local language, custom, gender division, strengths of the CBOs, local resource availability, and other location-specific information. The TNA also helped to gauge the training needs of the participants which helped to design simple, relevant and appropriate learning material. The material designed ranged from manuals for trainers, to simplified versions of State Acts, informative booklets with pictures and illustrations, games and newsletters.

Expected outcome

- The initial orientation would help the newly elected representatives to articulate their goals and build a perspective on governance.
- It would help clarify the roles of the elected representatives and form the basis for effective functioning of PRIs.
- Elected representatives would see the need for mobilising Gram Sabhas in order to improve their own negotiating position vis-a-vis other institutions, e.g., accessing MP/MLA LADs.
- It would help to build lateral linkages between the elected representatives and local sources of information and knowledge within the community, e.g., retired officials, former Pradhans, etc.
- The model of quick orientation for newly elected representatives would influence other institutions and organisations to adopt similar approaches and thereby maximize impact.
- It would help create a sustainable link between voluntary organisations at the grassroots level and the elected representatives in PRIs.
- The orientation events would provide an opportunity for dissemination of information on governmental schemes and programmes.

Lessons Learnt \ Challenges Ahead

- It was realised (particularly in UP and MP) that there is a need to have separate training programmes for women and dalit members.
- Taking into account the prevalent social pattern (particularly in UP) and considering the literacy and economic independence levels of women, a pressing need was felt to simultaneously orient the male guardians of the female representatives.
- Holding the orientation event at a cluster level was especially helpful for women and dalit representative who had hesitation in travelling far from their homes.

- It was realised that there is a need to have separate training programme for the Secretaries/ Panchayat Development Officer.
- Dates of the training need to be fixed after consulting the participants and taking into account the seasonality of agricultural operations.
- Varied methodologies need to be experimented in different sessions to sustain interest and have a deeper impact.
- There is a need to have higher participation of government functionaries in these training programmes.
- Need to incorporate audio/video inputs in the orientation in order to enable participation by non-literate/non-literate members.
- It was realised that apart from awareness about the government programmes, it is also important to discuss with the members on how to access those programmes.
- Such training needs to be followed close on the heels of the election of Panchayat representatives when the initial euphoria and enthusiasm of emerging victorious is still present. Too long a gap between the elections and the delivery of the orientations may result in dwindled interest. Timely delivery of orientation on the other hand, also ensure greater clarity from the beginning of the tenure.
- There is an urgent need to bring our Acts and Rules governing PRI members in a simple, accessible form.
- Need for development of a forum of the representatives at the Block/ Cluster level.
- Need for regular separate/specific training on different aspects, such as laws, schemes, grants, financial management, etc. as a follow up, to reinforce the impact achieved through the campaign.
- Need for similar campaign for Gram Sabha mobilisation was realised.

Will feed into:

- On the programmatic front, experiences of this campaign have prompted us to undertake a similar campaign for Gram Sabha mobilisation. This aspect has already been woven into our plans for the coming year. (Gram Sabha mobilisation campaigns are already under way in some of the states).
- The learning garnered in the course of the PRJA will help us to refine our strategies for future PRJAs, as also for similar other campaigns.
- Beyond PRIA and its loop of RSOs, wide dissemination of the experiences and learning from the campaign may encourage other practitioners. support organisations and government institutions (SIRDs, NIRD, etc.) working with Panchayats to undertake similar campaigns.
- Other CSOs and CBOs associated with the PRJA may be encouraged to be associated with other such campaigns.

FACT SHEET ON PRJA (2000 - 2001)

Uttar Pradesh

The PRJA campaign started on 2nd March 2001 and continued upto the first week of May 2001

Total representatives trained: 13921

Pradhans (male): 597

Pradhans (female): 220

Panches (male): 9998

Panches (female): 3106

Total no. of GPs covered: 1232

No. of districts covered: 18

No. of blocks covered: 20

No. of partner organisations involved 20

Haryana

The campaign was held during the months of February and March 2001

Total representatives trained: 1532

Total no. of GPs covered: 231

No. of districts covered: 5

No. of blocks covered: 5

Himachal Pradesh

In the state of Himachal Pradesh, the PRJA took place from February-March 2001.

Total representatives trained: 2495

Male: 1722

Female: 773

Total no. of GPs covered: 479

No. of District covered: 4

No. of blocks covered: 10

No. of partner organisations involved: 6

Madhya Pradesh

The PRJA in Madhya Pradesh took place during January- March 2001.

Total representatives trained: 5166

Male: 4020

Female: 1146

Total no. of GPs covered: 213

No. of districts covered: 6

No. of blocks covered: 24

No. of partner organisations involved: 29

Rajasthan

In Rajasthan, the second round of Panchayat elections were held from 30th January - 4th February, 2000. Our partner organisation, Unnati in Rajasthan, had already chalked out its programme for capacity building of newly elected representatives, which was done in the following phase;

- Following close on the heels of the second round of Panchayat elections, from March to May 2000. complete coverage of the Jodhpur district was achieved, in respect of capacity building of women sarpanches and ward Panches,
- 18 trainings were conducted through 6 PRCs (@ 3 trainings per PRC). 540 participants attended these trainings, in which the participants were divided into three categories: women sarpanches and ward Panches; dalit Panaches and ward Panches; and members of the Panchayat Samiti.
- UNNATI conducted a State level Training of Trainers (STOT) in Panchayati Raj and a State level. consultation from October 17th-20th 2000, which was attended by 50 NGO representatives belonging to 27 organisations from 16 districts.
- As a follow-up on this, training for Panchayat representatives was conducted in collaboration with partner organisations. This was done in the campaign mode. Apart from joint training for male and female sarpanches and ward Panches, separate training events were also held with women and dalit Panchayat representatives. The details are as follows:

Total representatives trained: 728

No. of trainings held for women Panchayat representatives: 7 (423 participants)

No of trainings held for dalit Panchayat representatives 3 (115 participants)

No. of districts covered: 10

No. of blocks covered: 17

No. of partner organisations involved 15

- Trainings were also held in collaboration with the Government of Rajasthan. These events were held at the block level and spanned a duration of 2 days. 611 participants from 9 districts attended these trainings.

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