

**Report of  
The District level Workshop on  
Right to Information  
Deogarh, Orissa**

**27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> July 2005**

**Background**

Deogarh Pressure Group (DPG) organized this district level capacity building workshop on Right to Information at the Deogarh Town Hall on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> July 2005. DPG is a network of 5 grassroots organizations working in Deogarh district, which is located in western Orissa. The member organizations of DPG include AWARD, YAVARD, WORD, Jana Vikash and Sahayog. The bilingual workshop was carried out in Oriya and Hindi. Staff of Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) was invited as resource persons for this workshop.

**Participants**

The participants were mainly staff members of these 5 organizations as well as self-help group (SHG) members. There were also a few participants from the neighboring district of Sambalpur. There were around 30 participants. (See participant's list)

**Resource Persons**

- Sohini Paul, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, New Delhi
- Chitta Behera, RTI Activist, Cuttack, Orissa
- Suchit Ranjan Singh, REALS, Bhubaneswar, Orissa

**Objectives**

- To raise awareness about the value of citizen's right to access government held information
- To raise awareness about the Right to Information Act, 2005
- To build skills in relation to writing applications for information as well as for appeal
- To develop organization specific action plans on inclusion of RTI in their projects as well as in relation to NGOs role in raising public awareness about the RTI Act.

**Workshop Proceedings**

**Day One**

The workshop was inaugurated by lighting a lamp and the welcome address by Mr. P.C. Mullick, Secretary AWARD. On this occasion two publications of the DPG re the right to information Act in English and Oriya was released. This was followed by introductory remarks by the resource persons and some of the participants. In the introductory sessions, the participants besides introducing themselves also shared their expectations from the workshop. These expectations are stated below:

- Basic understanding of what is right to information
- Understanding the RTI Act in details and thereafter its utilization
- To learn about the Right to Information so that one can disseminate it further at the grassroots level

### **Session on Right to Information Act 2005**

The first session was on understanding the **Right to Information Act 2005**. Sohini Paul in Hindi made a detailed presentation of the RTI Act. She explained the salient features of the Act, namely

- Coverage
- Proactive Disclosure of information
- Application process, which included appointment of Public Information Officers, Assistant Public Information Officers, writing applications, fees, accessing third party information, time limit, penalty
- Appeals Mechanism
- Role of the State Information Commission
- Exemptions

This was followed by a more detailed discussion on the important provisions of the RTI Act by Chitta Behera in Oriya. Mr. Behera had prepared simplified notes on 5 different aspects of the RTI Act. These include

- Obligations of public authorities for suo moto publications
- Procedure for citizens to access information from the government bodies
- Appeals and Complaints procedures
- Existing legal hurdles to implementation of RTI Act
- Framing of Rules

These notes were distributed to all the participants. The notes on suo moto disclosure and applications process were read out loud for the whole group by some of the participants following which detailed discussion took place on these important provisions of the Act. This method proved to be beneficial as the participants got to discuss and debate on the important aspects of the law and seemed to understand the provisions.

### **Implementation of RTI Act: steps taken by Orissa Government**

During this session Mr. Chitta Behera informed the participants about the latest developments re implementation of the RTI Act by the state government. He said that instructions have been sent out to the public authorities to set up norms and procedures in compliance with the Act. He also said that a core committee of 11 senior officials of the state government have been set up to supervise the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Act. Thirdly, a committee for selection of the State Information Commissioners has been set up under the Chairmanship of the Chief Minister, Shri. Naveen Patnaik. The other two members of this committee are Janki Patnaik (Leader of the Opposition) and Dr. D. Raut, Minister for Panchayati Raj.

## **Day Two**

The second day began with a recapitulation of the first day's proceedings by two participants in Oriya. On the basis of this presentation Mr. Behera further explained the provisions in Sections 8, 18 and 19. He emphasized the role of the State Information Commission as being more than the second appellate authority. It is also the place where people can make a complaint in case they are unable to submit a request to a PIO. He stressed on the fact that the Central or State Information Commission would have the same powers as those of the civil court.

### **Session on Writing Applications for Information and Appeals**

This session was mainly to understand the importance of writing the application for information request as specifically and clearly as possible so that it does not get rejected. Another aspect, which was discussed in this session re application process, was the fact that applications could be made for information in different forms. For example a citizen can ask for a) certified copies of documents, b) information in floppy/CD, c) information in the form of a video recording or a DVD, d) can request for inspection of works, documents etc.

Sohini Paul explained a model application request to the group. Such an application should have particulars of information sought and contact details. Reasons for requesting information do not have to be mentioned. Chitta bhai further explained the application process by giving examples of different types of applications. After this the participants were divided into five groups and were given the task of writing an application for information to a PIO. Each group presented their application on which comments were made by the other participants and resource persons.

### **Formulation of Action Plans**

In the last session of the workshop, the participants were again divided into small groups, each group consisting of staff from the same NGO. This was done in order to facilitate the process of formulation of NGO specific action plan for the next 8 months. As such 6 action plans were prepared and presented before the larger group. Suchit Ranjan Singh later compiled these into one action plan for the DPG. This plan will be discussed in the next meeting of DPG.

The workshop ended with a vote of thanks given by Mr. P.C. Mullick, Secretary  
AWARD.

## **Participants' List**

1. Hrushikesh Brahma, AWARD, Sahaj Bahal, district Deogarh
2. Jagannath Panda, Coordinator, WORD, Dudhianali, district Deogarh
3. Promila Minz, Coordinator, AWARD, Sahaj Bahal, Dimrikuda, district Deogarh
4. Rukmani Kishan, Coordinator, WORD, Dudhianali, district Deogarh
5. Anil Khalkho, Secretary, GLARE, Jarabaga, district Sambalpur
6. Sailabala Mahanta, Coordinator, SAHAJOG, Baghamunda, district Deogarh
7. Letaran Minz, SHG member, Sahaj Bahal, district Deogarh
8. Sushil Kumar Nayak, Community Organiser, AWARD, Sahaj Bahal, Dimrikuda, dist. Deogarh
9. Jhasaketan Kalio, Dimrikuda, district Deogarh
10. Namita Mishra, Organiser, JANA VIKASH, Nuabhuin, district Deogarh
11. Puspa Ghatual, SHG member, Bhukabeda, district Deogarh
12. Sushila Balua, SHG member, Bhukabeda, district Deogarh
13. Madan Mohan Sahu, co-organizer, YAVARD, Salohi, district Deogarh
14. Krushna Chandra Sahu, Programme Organizer, JANAVIKASH, Nuabhuin, dist. Deogarh
15. Tarinisen Padha, Programme Coordinator, SAHAJOG, Baghamunda, dist. Deogarh
16. Dillip Kumar Toppo, Coordinator, PRAYASH, Kukam, district Sambalpur
17. Jyotsna Rani, Programme Organizer, WORD, Dudhianal, Khajuridarh, dist. Deogarh
18. Manju Nira Kerketta, Co-organizer, AWARD, Sahaj Bahal, Dimrikuda, dist. Deogarh
19. Sangita Kindo, SHG member, Budhikutuni, Dimrikuda, dist. Deogarh
20. Sabita Naik, SHG member, Sahaj Bahal, Dimrikuda, dist. Deogarh
21. Amar Patel, Jarabaga, district Sambalpur
22. Purushottam Patta, Jarabaga, district Sambalpur
23. Nabin Chandra Majhi, AWARD, Jarabaga, district Sambalpur
24. Narendra Kumar Patta, AWARD, Jarabaga, district Sambalpur
25. Prahallad Chandra Mallick, Secretary, AWARD, Jarabaga, district Sambalpur
26. Ajay Kumar Mahanto, President, YAVARD, district Sundergarh