

Building resilient villages through fostering Democracy

Dissemination Workshop on UNDEF support Project
**Fostering Ethical Democracy and
Advancing Micro Justice in India**



Madurai Symposium 2017

Thamukkam Ground, Madurai
September 23, 2017





Background

India is one of the largest democratic countries in the world. In spite of its vast diversity in terms of geography, culture, language and lifestyle, it integrates its citizens through its democratic political system. The government of India has initiated policies and programmes to facilitate building democratic and participatory processes to help its citizens, such as the Right to Information Act, setting up a Social Audit in major government programmes (such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act & Scheme), providing government department support to share citizen charters, as well as establishing websites to be more citizen friendly and transparent.

However, practical usefulness and the utility of democratic systems are facing major gaps in terms of its outreach in India. It is observed that Indian democracy in practice is highly imbalanced in terms of gender, generation, geographic context and institutional spread.

Issues in Indian Democratic System

Choices and opportunities for democratic practices are not provided equally among Indian citizens, especially in regards to people living in tribal and rural areas. Most of the rural and tribal people are unaware of their rights and entitlements to available public services. Also, they tend to not be familiar with actual usage & impact of the Right to Information Act, and there are no affordable and accessible legal services to ensure the proper exercise of their rights and entitlements.

It has resulted in poor access to government welfare services to the under-served communities. Furthermore, the local government officials and elected representatives show little interest in educating their citizens on their rights. All these factors create an environment where democratic development is hindered for disadvantaged people and thus results in a further deterioration or stagnation in quality of life and obstructs the

“The best, quickest and most efficient way is to build up from the bottom... Every village has to become a self-sufficient republic. This does not require brave resolutions. It requires brave, corporate, intelligent work...”

Mahatma Gandhi (H, 18-1-1922, p. 4)

Lack of capacity of women, youth, students on democratic tools

Issues in

Lack of information and access mechanisms on their entitlements



voices
of grass-
r o o t s
c o m m u n i t y
from taking part
in the democratic
system.

Major issues in the present
democratic model observed
can be grouped in the following
four areas - **refer chart**

Brief about the Project

To address these issues, DHAN Foundation has approached United Nations Democracy Fund and the proposal was positively considered by UNDEF. This project got implemented in five states in five regions of India: South India (Tamilnadu), South West India (Karnataka), Central India (Madhya Pradesh), West India (Rajasthan) and East India (Odisha) during past two years (2015 – 17).

The project will pick up one block in each district based on the criteria of discrimination, lack of services and imbalance in terms of democratic practices, in order to pilot a community level citizen involvement and demonstrate the results in respective region for future scaling up of the project.

Project coverage

The project will work mainly with vulnerable groups such as women, rural / tribal youth, and students.

Through Direct action

1. Benefiting 7,500 women (belonging to rural, tribal contexts) who are economically poor and a vulnerable section
2. Benefiting 1,000 youth (18-25 years old)
3. Benefiting 1,000 students (12-17 years old)
4. Promotion of 250 para legal volunteers among trained women and youth
5. Involvement of 125 elected representatives and member in local government institutions

Lack of
institutional
mechanisms for
the excluded on
democratic rights
& entitlements

Democratic Model

Lack of
accessible,
faster
and affordable
legal assistance
to excluded
people



In general, about 7% of total population in these blocks (50,000) belonging to rural and tribal community citizens will get indirect benefit through awareness campaigns of the Rights to Information Act and receive para-legal services.

About this Workshop

This workshop is planned mainly to share the experience gained through this project to larger group and evolve mechanisms to sustain the initiatives in the coming years. Participants from women, youth, panchayat representatives, officials and development practitioners will be coming together and share their observation, reflection on the project and their thoughts on strengthening democracy for better world.

This workshop is planned as part of Madurai Symposium 2017, Biennial Development festival at Heritage city of Madurai, India. It will be organized on 23rd of September, 2017 from 09.30 am to 05.00 pm.

For further information, please contact

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