

DRC

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND PANCHAYAT REPRESENTATIVES

73rd amendment of the constitution has empowered the Panchayati Raj Institution as an institution of local self governance. Panchayats have been given the rights and responsibilities for planning and implementation of development program and schemes of economic development and social justice for the village people.

As Panchayats have been given a major responsibility of local development, regular capacity building of the panchayat representatives is pre-requisite. Their access to timely and authentic information and updating of their knowledge regarding the panchayat and govt. system, various development program of state and center must be ensured at regular interval to enable them to perform their role and duties well. A number of development schemes and programs are being implemented by different deptt. of the district but due lack of proper and authentic information the benefit is not reaching to the target group.

Himalayan Action Research Centre, HARC, Dehradun in collaboration with PRIA New Delhi is involved in strengthening local self-governance in Uttaranchal state. Under its various interventions to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institution as an institution of local development, HARC tries to create an opportunity to bring panchayat representatives and govt. officials on to a common platform to share information, views, suggestions and problems.

During its liasoning and networking with govt. departments and interaction with panchayat representatives DRC observed that there is a lack of communication and coordination between different development department of the district and panchayat representatives. It was also noticed that Panchayat representatives do not have proper and authentic information regarding various development programs and schemes being run by different departments in the district. DRC planned to bring all these development department and panchayat representatives on to a common platform where both of them can share the information and the problems. In the first phase of this intervention DRC collected all the information related to development programs and schemes of the district and started sharing with panchayat representatives. DRC also contacted District Magistrate and District level officials of different departments and discussed the concept of an interface between govt. officials and panchayat representatives. DM responded to this concept very enthusiastically and promised to be present in the interface meeting. He himself ordered all the officials to be present in the interface meeting.

As a result an interface meeting amongst elected representatives of Gram Panchayat, Kshetra Panchayat, Zila Panchayat and govt. officials of various departments was organized on 28th January 2005 by District Resource Centre, Gopeshwar. The main aim of this interface meeting was to have an open discussion on the development program and scheme of different departments being implemented in the district.

The representatives of 13 departments were present in the workshop. DM Chamoli presided over this interface and he was of the opinion that this interface will help in breaking the silence and lack of communication between panchayat representatives and govt. officials.

He said that district administration is willing to share all the information regarding the development program and for that purpose all the information is being collected at one place from different department which will be disseminated to panchayat representatives.

The meeting focused on sharing the information by the govt. official regarding the on going development schemes of the district with the panchayat representatives. In an open discussion the panchayat representatives asked the concerned official about the criteria of selection of beneficiaries and all related formalities to be completed to get the benefit of the scheme. This was followed by an open discussion on the problems faced by the panchayat representatives in implementation of development program.

Education department shared all the information regarding education for all. Social welfare department told about old age pensions, widow pension, insurance schemes, scheme for widow marriage, scheme for handicaps, scholarship schemes for BPL students etc.

Horticulture department gave detailed information on horticulture mission in the district chamoli. Health department told about the services of ANM being provided by the deptt. and also about the health camps, family planning camp, maternity benefit schemes.

Watershed department provided information of Hariyali Yojana and समेकित बंजर भूमि विकास कार्यक्रम. Irrigation department told the participants about the work being done by the deptt. and he also informed the representatives that the proposal for construction and repair work of good and canals should be sent through gram panchayat to kshetra panchayat. Department of animal husbandary, postal department, DRDA also gave information about the work and schemes of their department.

Panchayat representatives felt that all the information was very important for them but the most important thing about this workshop is the sharing of information on the process of the schemes. Due to lack of this information the beneficiaries are unable to apply for their schemes and is deprived of the benefits.

Participants felt that this initiative is like a bridge between panchayat representatives and Distt. officials. It will help in proper implementation of schemes.

This interface and interaction enhanced the understanding of both govt. officials and panchayat representatives on related issues. The participants actively participated in the debate on various issues related to implementation of development program.

This open platform helped in breaking the barriers for developing coordination and networking among panchayat representatives and govt. officials. All the participating departmental representatives showed much enthusiasm in sharing the information to panchayat representatives.