

Planning Commission
(Voluntary Action Cell)

**Summary Record of the Presentation by Civil Society Groups from
Mewat, Haryana held on 30th June 2005 at Yojana Bhavan Planning
Commission**

List of Participants is enclosed as Annex.

While welcoming the participants, Chairperson, Dr. Syeda Hameed, Member, Planning Commission informed that this is the first meeting of the interactive window opened for the civil society voices at the Planning Commission. Member (SH) informed that the primary aim of the whole initiative is to effectively interact with Civil Society Organizations and integrate their real life grass-root experiences into the planning process.

Shri B. N. Yugandhar, Member, Planning Commission congratulated Member (SH) for conceptualizing and launching the vital initiative of opening the Civil Society Window at Planning Commission. He shared some successful cases of NGO interventions in and around the country and highlighted the need for training and capacity building for undertaking the new developmental challenges. He urged DC, Mewat to formulate a plan whereby development work could be handed over to the federation of CBOs / SHGs developed in the new district of Mewat. To have discussions for resolving the issue of streamlining the administrative machinery of Mewat, hon'ble Member desired to have a separate meeting with the DC, Mewat.

Prof. Abhijit Sen, Member, Planning Commission clarified that the purpose of the Civil Society Window is to involve NGOs in the planning process and not to solve their immediate problems. Therefore, this window will provide opportunity of learning from the NGOs and by the end may be some funding or liberalization of laws might become possible for the voluntary sector. At the

same time, he informed that Planning Commission has no provision for financial assistance for NGOs / CSOs.

Dr. Kirit Parikh, Member, Planning Commission referring to Gandhiji, who had advised to keep windows open to let fresh ideas flow in stated that this initiative has been started in order to listen to the NGOs about their grass-root experiences.

Dr. V.L. Chopra, Member, Planning Commission opined that continuity of Self Help Group (SHG) movement should be maintained by NGOs and flexible manuals for SHGs should be prepared, keeping in view the diversity of our country. He further pointed out that 'bad extension' is worse than having 'no extension'; therefore, good extension work in rural areas should be undertaken through reliable NGOs / CSOs.

Ms. Neerja Sekhar, Deputy Commissioner, Mewat informed that main problems of the newly created Mewat district are as follows: lack of infrastructure, low female literacy, large family size, lack of manpower especially in the areas of education and health. The perception of the people in Mewat is such that government teachers, para-medical and medical staffs do not want to work in this backward area. She also informed that the Mewat Development Board (MDB), constituted in 1980, is working through its executive arm called Mewat Development Agency (MDA), having a staff of 21 persons, under another IAS officer. The administrative machinery in the new district is being re-structured for accelerating development.

Dr. Abdul Aziz, (MSEDS), shared his experience of working in Mewat for over a decade and gave a brief description of the area, the characteristics of Meos, majority inhabitants of Mewat and some statistics regarding the low literacy rate, etc. In this regard, Dr. Aziz quoted a local saying, which was prevalent in the area till recent times: *Thoda Padha Kaam Se Gaya, Jyada Padha Gaon Se Gaya*, reflecting the fear about education amongst common Meos. However, things are now improving and people are sending children to

schools in greater number. He informed that earlier as many as 85% persons were reported to be defaulters after taking loans from banks. MSEDs has formulated SHGs in the Mewat area and tried to link them with formal banking system and over time the number of defaulters has declined considerably. Accessing loan for common people, he added, is a problem as middlemen (*Thonda*) are monopolizing the process. Regular funding to NGOs working in the Mewat region is a serious problem, as programs of MSEDs have stopped three times because of various reasons. Other NGO representatives also shared his viewpoints.

Dr. Rajesh and Ms. Zeenat of SPYM shared the views of Dr. Aziz and agreed that education and health are the main problems of the area. Their organization is working for the socio-economic development of Meos of Mewat region, for considerable time, with particular focus on the upliftment of women and girls. She gave a brief overview of the SHGs with which they are working and the problems faced by them. Reasons for low enrollment of girls and high dropout rate were also discussed. They were of the view that in Mewat region there is a need for separate school for girls.

Dr. Shobha Mishra, Development Support Team and Dr. Suman Chahar from the International Centre for Women and Child informed about their work on women empowerment undertaken in the area by organizing SHGs and linking them with banks and providing market linkages. They further informed that her organization uses the MYRADA manual for SHGs formation.

Following main issues were highlighted by the participating NGOs from Mewat:

- The middlemen operating in Mewat area indulge in malpractices to monopolize the functions of banks in the area.
- Due to lack of financial support NGOs have limited number of staff for deployment to work in the field.
- Health and education related issues, particularly for girls have not received the needed attention in Mewat.

- Abrupt stoppage of funds from MDA lead to paralysis of the work of NGOs, at one stage, therefore, the policies for funding NGOs should not change with the change of the Government.
- Inadequate employment opportunities in Mewat region, creating unrest, therefore, the problem need to be addressed urgently.
- Need for backward and forward linkages by the NGOs, particularly with banks for strengthening the SHGs created in the region.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Presentation by Civil Society Groups from Mewat, Haryana
held on 30th June 2005 at Yojana Bhavan

IN CHAIR

Dr. (Ms) Syeda Hameed
Member, Planning Commission

Ms. Kinuko Mitani
Programme Officer
UN Volunteers, UNDP
New Delhi

Dr. Kirit S. Parikh
Member, Planning Commission

PLANNING COMMISSION

Prof. Abhijit Sen
Member, Planning Commission

Dr. Ratnakar Gedam
Joint Adviser

Dr. V.L. Chopra
Member, Planning Commission

Shri S.G. Raoot
Joint Adviser (VSE)

Shri B.N. Yugandhar,
Member, Planning Commission

Dr. Sharat Kumar
Director

Ms. Neerja Sekhar
Deputy Commissioner, Mewat

Mrs. Rupa Dutta
Director

Shri Krishan Lal Pawar
Block Co-ordinator
Development Support Team, Nuh
Distt. Mewat (Haryana)

Mrs. Renu S. Parmar
Director (Agri.)

Shri B.S. Rana
Project Officer
Mewat Dev. Agency, Nuh
Mewat

Shri M.R. Anand
Director (FR)

Dr. Shobha Mishra
Executive Director
Development Support Team
Gurgaon

Shri Devender Singh
Director (Tpt.)

Ms. Purnima M. Gupta
Director (Tsunami)

Ms. Kusum Mishra
Senior Research Officer (PPD)

Dr. Zeenat, Chairperson and
Dr. Rajesh Kumar, Executive Director
SPYM, B-4/3054, Vasant Kunj
New Delhi

Ms. Suranjana Paul
Consultant (DP)

Dr. Lalit Kumar
Deputy Adviser (VAC)

Dr. Suman Chahar
Chairperson
International Centre for Women and Child
Palam-Dabri Road, New Delhi

Ms. Vandana Siwal
Consultant (VAC)

Dr. Abdul Aziz and A.R. Asari
Mewat Social & Educational Development
Society (MSEDS)
Punhana, Mewat