Enabling community participation in Rashtriya Swaasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)
A national sharing by civil society organizations and stakeholders

10:00 am - 6:00 pm, February 19th, 2013
Speaker Hall, Constitution Club
New Delhi

With more than 100 participants attending the RSBY national sharing workshop for enabling community participation on Tuesday, February 19th, 2013 in New Delhi, it was an informative and insightful day, spent well, in sharing experiences and brainstorming ideas for enhancing the reach and impact of RSBY.

The workshop began with a welcome note by Mr. Rajan Khosla, Director, PACS Programme, welcoming the dignitaries – Mr. Sam Sharpe, Head, DFID India; Mr. Anil Swarup, Director General for Labor Welfare, Ministry of Labor and Employment, Government of India; Mrs. Sumita Chopra, Technical Consultant, RSBY, Ministry of Labor and Employment Government of India; Miss Belinda Bennet, Head of Region South Asia, Christian Aid UK; and the various civil society organizations and State Nodal Agencies (SNAs).

A presentation by Mr Rajan Khosla shared the experience of PACS and its partners’ success in promoting RSBY, with more than 220 organizations, in seven states of India (Jharkhand, Odhisa, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Chattisgarh and Bihar). Mr. Khosla pointed at the need to take a step ahead, in improving the impact of the scheme among the beneficiaries, addressing key areas:
- Awareness about RSBY (use of Smart Card) among beneficiaries
- Capacity building of block level workers
- Enhancing effective communication among CSOs and State Nodal Agencies
- Lack of interest within private sector

Mr. Sam Sharpe, Head, DFID India was invited to address the audience next, and he mentioned the significance of RSBY in the context of high costs to meet health needs among the poor. To quote, “Our task is to talk about the challenges and make ways for better implementation.” Further, he shared DFID’s expectations regarding RSBY and what PACS and the CSOs can do for creating more effective results.

The keynote address was made by Mr. Anil Swarup, DG-L&W, MoLE, GoI who discussed the challenges faced in the implementation of RSBY and the lack of awareness about the smart card among the beneficiaries. He highlighted the important issues that still needed to be dealt with, i.e. the lack of resources for RSBY to promote it on a larger scale, building capacities of the various stakeholders and setting up block level offices to impart more information to the beneficiaries. The collective working of PACS and CSOs was critically examined and it was suggested that PACS can:
- Work on enhancing its funds so that it can increase its outreach,
- Elicit consistent feedback from the field, both regularly and in a structured format to build on the impact of RSBY.

An overview presentation on RSBY was made by Mrs. Sumita Chopra, Technical Consultant, RSBY, MoLE stating the main features and implementation design of the scheme. Mrs. Chopra’s session was interactive as she engaged the partner organizations on the following points:
- Understanding the provisions provided in the scheme
- Educating CSOs in order to impart further information to the beneficiaries
- Sharing success studies with private hospitals in order to empanel capable service providers
- Keeping a check on the enrolment process and utilization of Smart Cards
In *summing up* the morning session, Miss. Belinda Bennet, Head of Region South Asia, Christian Aid UK addressed how socially excluded groups are often left out because of the "*holy show of discrimination*". Miss. Bennet shared a desire of changing RSBY into a movement and having a shared vision of a healthy and casteless society. She talked about the need to test the potential of civil society organizations in order to bring out the challenges and limitations on the table.

This session was also marked by the *release* of a training manual a flipchart book on promotion of information, education and communication strategies on RSBY by the guests.

Following the tea break, *presentations* were made on building effective communication strategies and improving the role of SHGs and CSOs, by State Nodal Agencies of West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. The following points were highlighted:

- Developing an effective information strategy for the RSBY community.
- CSOs and SHGs to play an important role in imparting information to beneficiaries.
- Engage target audience through district level workshops and block/ municipality level workshops.
- Strengthen RSBY through community participation and effective use of communication strategies (Local folk media, Mobile vans, Rallies, etc.).
- SNA of Uttar Pradesh was highly successful in bringing out equivalent number of private hospitals to district hospitals.
- Effective communication is required between SHGs, CSOs and SNAs.

The workshop resumed after lunch with six *small group work sessions* where participants discussed the following three questions:

- Looking ahead: Three areas where civil society needs to focus for increasing utilization?
- What are the possible strategies for engaging communities on RSBY?
- What are the possible areas for communities to take up accountability and morning aspects?

The *plenary* brought to attention several interesting points from the group work, some of which include the following:

- Necessary to keep a track of pre and post awareness exercises by doing community meetings and sharing success stories.
- Convergence meetings with district key managers.
- Improve partnership with stakeholders and aanganwadi workers.
- Training and capacity building of community leaders and CBOs.
- Regular meetings with PACS partners and discuss issues including the grass root level issues.
- IEC material and posters should be properly displayed.
- A process of social audit should be carried out.

Many important questions were answered by this interactive workshop paving a way towards the success of RSBY and making it a support for the poorest of the poor. Key issues related to awareness and outreach of RSBY – smart cards, enhancing relationship among the State Nodal Agencies and Civil Society Organizations, improving capacity building among the field level workers, providing extensive training to them in order to reach out desired result and working on measures to address socially excluded groups were discussed by the keynote speakers and the partner organizations.

The workshop ended with a *vote of thanks* by Mr. Rajan Khosla who suggested that the information and inputs generated should be analyzed and worked upon further to promote RSBY. To quote, "*It requires us to act like a community and work on the problem. The empowerment process should be a collective process.*"