Today, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) launched its biggest civil society projects in the world. The Poorest Areas Civil Society Programme (PACS) and the International NGO Partnerships Agreement Programme (IPAP) represent a UK commitment of £45 million (Rs 360 crores) over the next five years.

Announcing the two new projects at the British Council in New Delhi, Mark Lowcock, DFID Director General for Country Programmes said:

“Today is Human Rights Day. No government can deliver on rights on its own. But governments that work in partnership with civil society can. With civil society’s help, these projects will make rights and entitlements a reality for millions of marginalized families across 120 of India’s poorest districts, projecting the voices of those on the margins of society and lifting them out of poverty. I hope both projects become beacons in the fight to end inequality and discrimination in India and elsewhere around the world.”

The launch brought together eminent representatives of the Government of India, academia, non-governmental organisations and DFID’s project partners, Management Consultants, IFIRST (for PACS) and TARU - GT (for IPAP).

Michael Anderson, Head of DFID India said:

“DFID is doubling its funding to civil society globally. It is right that we should contribute to this target first in India. India is DFID’s largest country programme. The NGO partners leading these two projects share DFID’s commitment to measuring and delivering real results for poor people.”

Through PACS, DFID will work in partnership with Indian civil society organisations to help socially excluded groups (scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and Muslims) across 100 districts in seven states get better access to government services and benefits. The complementary IPAP will harness local and international experience to develop new ideas for tackling social exclusion.
The launch was followed by a panel discussion on social inclusion by Ms Sayeda Hameed, Member of India’s Planning Commission, Professor Sukhdev Thorat, Chairman of the University Grants Commission, and Mr Amitabh Behar, Co-Convenor of National Social Watch Coalition.

Notes to editors:
Eliminating world poverty is a priority for the UK Government. The Department for International Development (DFID) leads this agenda for the UK in many countries, including India.

India is DFID’s largest country programme. DFID works in partnership with the Government of India and other partners to achieve national poverty reduction targets and internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

DFID is the biggest bilateral grant donor in India. In 2008 DFID published a seven-year Country Plan to reduce poverty in India. DFID is providing £825m to India between 2008-2011, £500m of which will be devoted to health and education.

DFID India works at the national level as well as supporting programmes in five states: Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. Both the national and state programmes are focused around promoting equitable growth and improving access to better quality services for poor people, particularly in health and education.

DFID currently works with civil society in India in four ways:
- Direct support from the bilateral programme to civil society programmes;
- Sectoral programmes which involve some work with civil society - in education, health and rural livelihoods for innovative and inclusive service delivery;
- Support to the multilateral organisations;
- Civil society grants from DFID UK schemes such as the Civil Society Challenge Fund, Programme Partnership Agreements, Governance and Transparency Fund.

The Poorest Areas Civil Society Programme (PACS) is a five year programme (2009-2014) with a total budget of £25 million (Rs 200 crores). The programme will work with national and grassroots civil society partners in addressing inequality and social exclusion in 120 poorest districts in seven states of India: Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and West Bengal.

IPAP brings together seven international NGOs - Save the Children, Action Aid, Oxfam, Christian Aid, VSO, Water Aid and Skillshare International. The five year programme with funds of £20 million (Rs 160 crores) will focus on the issues of water, disability, violence against women and the exclusion faced by people belonging to scheduled tribe and scheduled caste groups.

The first phase of PACS ended in 2008. PACS (2002-08) helped over 6.5 million people in 19,000 villages, across 98 districts. It worked with more than 650 NGOs, and
35,000 community based organisations (CBOs). PACS helped poor people claim over Rs. 1,414 million of entitlements.

The Management Consultant for PACS is Indian Forum for Inclusive Response and Social Transformation (IFIRST), a consortium of five organisations. IFIRST is led by Christian Aid with Caritas India, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, ACCESS Development Services and Financial Management Services Foundation (FMSF).

The Management Consultant for IPAP is a consortium of TARU-Grant Thornton (GT), notable for its years of experience and their trans-disciplinary expertise to engage with India’s development challenges.

For more information on DFID India programmes, please visit: http://www.dfid.gov.uk/where-we-work/asia-south/india/