Dear Members,

We are pleased to share with you that in 2013 the Gender Community will facilitate as a knowledge partner the work undertaken by PACS - a DFID Programme on ‘Addressing Gender Issues in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)’.

Via this FOR INFO we are currently soliciting our members’ inputs towards preparing a Briefing Note on ‘Gender and NREGA’. The briefing note aims to capture some of the key gender issues under NREGA; challenges faced by women especially those belonging to excluded communities; structural/institutional gaps in implementation of NREGA provisions, and possibilities of strengthening opportunities to make NREGA more gender responsive.

PACS (www.pacsindia.org)
Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) – a DFID programme works exclusively with socially excluded communities including scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, Muslims, women and people with disability, to claim their rights and entitlements. The programme supports civil society organisations (CSOs) in promoting inclusive local, district and state policies, programmes and institutions. It focuses on areas of livelihood, education, health and nutrition in gender and rights perspectives.

PACS programme is being implemented in 90 districts across 7 states viz. Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and West Bengal.

Under its intervention for sustainable livelihood, PACS focuses on MGNREGA, Forest Rights Act, Revenue Land and Skill Building.

PACS Programme on NREGA
MGNREGA is one the key engagements for PACS partners towards non-discriminatory access to livelihood work under the scheme. PACS sees the struggle to leverage the demand and supply for
the scheme by socially excluded communities, especially women, as a long-term engagement to leverage assets and participatory planning.

There is a campaign titled MGNREGA Abhiyan, which is underway to highlight these aspects in the policy space and building capacity of the civil society organizations to ground these in their constituencies. The campaign in Bihar and Jharkhand for instance aims to create and establish a community driven process to address gaps through work demand generation, conduct social audits and assets mapping that are informed and driven by a social exclusion perspective. One of the most critical aspects of this engagement will be to convince the state administration through a constant feeding of positive messages towards a call for effective implementation and need for reaching the most marginalised.

Some Key Programme Deliverables for PACS

- Collate and review existing materials on NREGA and review it from a gender perspective
- Organize on-field learning exercises in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh bringing together policy makers and grassroots practitioners, which will culminate into state level consultations
- Based on the insights from on-field learning exercises run an e-discussion to seek comparative experiences from other States.
- Documentation of case studies of 10 women across the country those who are benefiting/benefitted from NREGA – focusing on the challenges; as well as the impact if any on livelihood and well-being of their family and themselves due to NREGA.
- A national consultation ‘Addressing Gender Concerns in NREGA’ to come up with specific suggestions and recommendations.

Through its Programme on NREGA, PACS aims to create narratives and knowledge products as advocacy tools that could facilitate a more inclusive and gender focus implementation and planning for MGNREGA. It also aims to establish community processes that can leverage inclusion and participation for women especially from the excluded communities. In addition, PACS interventions are geared towards creating ‘policy engagements’ with the state governments and the planning commission.

We request members to circulate this FOR INFO if they can and encourage any practitioner/organization focusing on NREGA to currently provide inputs to the Briefing Note. Following peer reviews, this note will be shared with members and disseminated widely including relevant functionaries/agencies. It will also form the basis of other activities, as mentioned under Key Programme Deliverables, by PACS in collaboration with the Gender Community.

Peace and Solidarity
Malika Basu
Resource Person & Moderator
Gender Community

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