

2014

# European Union Workshop

Soochna Sewa

DEF

3/6/2014



## Acknowledgement

### Contents

Background .....	2
About the Workshop.....	3
Agenda.....	
Workshop Objectives .....	3
Workshop Broad Areas .....	4
Workshop Themes .....	4
Outcome .....	4
Consultation Proceedings.....	5
Speakers .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Guest of Honor & Chairperson .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Moderator .....	5
Power Panel Speakers .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
The Proceedings.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Recommendations.....	5

## Background

It's been more than six decades since we the people of India got independence but a question always remains on the lips of crores of Indians "Are we really independent?" We believe "No". Tragically, even today we are living in a country which is slave of countless challenges like poverty, gender discrimination, sanitation, mal-nutrition, unemployment, massive under development etc. More than 70% of Indian population resides in villages but they always remain untouched of development and growth initiatives made by government and several other organizations. They are still deprived of exclusive economic & social benefits due to poor governance and ignorance. Governments make policies for rural communities but they seriously lacks in implementation part.

To achieve complete inclusive growth, it is imperative that we should adopt a pragmatic approach and shed economic and social divides prevails within the nation to empower rural communities so that they can join us to realize the dream of making India "A Global Power". Access to information and resources is the main component for the growth of rural communities but unfortunately, it is not in an impressive state. There is a serious lack when it comes to disseminate the accurate and adequate informations for the advancement of rural communities.

To deal with the issue and achieve concrete upshots, European Union along with fourteen Indian organizations & 55 associate partners is coming forward with an initiative "**Improving access to information of public schemes in backward districts in India**". All the 14 organizations will run their individual projects with the help of grant provided by EU to achieve a collective dream that is *"Every EURO spent should effectively mobilize EUROS 100 (may be ambitious, but possible); by this assumption the portfolio of 14 projects has the collective potential to effectively mobilize and utilize public funds to the tune of INR 10,000 crores in five years."*

The workshop was held at "Vivanta-by Taj", New Delhi on February 7<sup>th</sup> as an introductory round between participating organizations to know each other better in order to promote synergies by discussing operational strategies, exploring scope for joint learning, research, documentation, advocacy, peer review etc., identifying other opportunities for information sharing and dissemination including the use of the EU Delegation as well as partners website, clarifying expectations and brainstorm further ideas for collaboration among partners.

## About the Workshop

The European Union workshop was a kind endeavor of European Union & Digital Empowerment Foundation to bring all fourteen organizations working on “**Improving access to information of public schemes in backward districts in India**” under one roof to discuss and share how they all can work collectively in different direction to achieve one mission that is "to make India a fairer place to live". This was a formal beginning of the collective journey that is going to last about 5 years. The day witnessed stakeholders from European Union, partner organizations, policy advocates, finance experts and others to air views, opinions, inputs, concerns and suggestions on a wide area of topics related to the initiative.

## Workshop Objectives

Key objectives of the European Union workshop identified were:

- Enabling beneficiaries and invited partners **to know each other** in particular by letting them know who works where, with which partners and key stakeholders, and what makes each project unique
- Re-emphasizing one more time the **suo moto** disclosure principle of the RTI Act, which
  - (a) Translates in this Call into a supportive and collaborative partnership mode (not a “let’s file an application to get the data” approach) between civil society organisations and local authorities;
  - (b) requires the identification of key government officials and local authorities entry points at various levels;
- Promoting **synergies** among partners in particular by:
  - (i) Leading discussions on operational strategies, systems and tools;
  - (ii) Organizing same-state(s) / same sectoral group discussions and networking;
  - (iii) Exploring scope for joint learning, research, documentation, advocacy, peer review etc
  - (iv) Facilitating project partners to help / mutually support others projects
- Discussing **web-based information exchange** and storage in particular relating to
  - (i) setting up a common website to manage the information flow across partner projects (while each organisation can decide what information to post on their own websites, one organisation may decide to take lead role in terms of collecting, posting and sharing information with a focus on promoting good practices);
  - (ii) Identifying other opportunities for information sharing and dissemination including the use of the EU Delegation as well as partners website;
- Clarifying **expectations** from both sides (EU and CSOs) in particular with regard to reporting, disclosure, communication and visibility.

- Brainstorming **further Ideas** for collaboration among EU partners in the immediate / long run

### **Workshop Broad Areas**

In light of the above, the following broad areas were discussed:

- 1- To increase and improve the access, delivery and quality of public services aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion
- 2- Ensuring access to quality public services pertaining to basic rights and entitlements like civil registration, health, education, housing, water, sanitation, employment, income generating and savings schemes, food security, nutrition, energy, natural resources and other social protection schemes.
- 3- To help local authorities and service providers increase and improve access to information of public schemes and initiatives, in backward districts, down to the village level, throughout the planning, budgeting, implementation, control and evaluation continuum
- 4- Ensuring that information is communicated to poor, marginalized and often illiterate populations at the right time and in ways which are meaningful and useful to them.

### **Workshop Themes:**

The workshop was organized on the basis of three core information-sharing blocks:

- 1- Geographic
- 2- Thematic
- 3- Public Schemes
- 4- Finance & Contract issues

### **Outcome**

The national consultation workshop looked at the following key outcomes

1. Consolidate factors and inputs to uniform policy framework for unlicensed wireless spectrum;
2. Consolidate solutions towards issues related to media, access and rights, ownership of unlicensed spectrum, ownership of accessibility and exploring opportunities in terms of accessibility;

3. Building a roadmap towards a working framework on adopting cost-effective technologies to propagate the wireless network networks far and wide across the country for ensuring equality of access, digital equity and media access.
4. Consolidating scope of policy areas and suggest workable action steps;

### **Discussion Proceedings**

The workshop adopted a round-table format where 6 groups were formed to discuss and debate on the assigned topics, sharing ideas and perspective and conclude with suggestive pointers related to the project. The focus of the discussion was to get an idea what other partners are doing, what are their focuses and mission, how they will be proceeding with plans. Two tables were dedicatedly arranged for discussion on financial issues and regulations where financial experts from partner organizations and EU deliberated on contractual issues & necessary financial consideration during project time period.

### **Moderator**

Mr. Laurent le Danois, Attache (Coop), EU  
Mr. Ram Subramaniam, Project Manager, EU

### **Speakers**

There were, as such, no key speakers. A member from each table was assigned to join the stage to make concluding note of the discussion of his/her respective table.

### **Presentations**

UN women members presented the views on Indian Women Education.

### **Recommendations**

- 1- There should be same procedures for all partners to follow, probably designed by EU as everyone may have clashing procedures. Communication between the partners should be more of capacity building and less of emphasizing on their own policy and guidelines. All the partners should communicate right rules to each other and maintain transparency. **It will be good if finance teams of the partner organizations organize workshop from time to time to maintain a balanced approach throughout the program.**
- 2- It was recommended that there should be separate **telly system** for each partner which will be attached to EU telly system where all the financial statements will be recorded and reviewed. The telly of a particular organization will be accessible only to its members or EU.

- 3- Partners should keep supporting documents with them till **7 years** from the beginning of the project to claim the cost. There can be **random check** with the partners to get an idea how ethically they are doing. There is a possibility of on spot expenditure verification. Lack of proper documentation may lead the organization to risk.
- 4- **EU** recommends that partners should have **internal audits/reviews time to time** to ensure that they are meeting the contractual conditions and they will not feel any difficulty during external audit. There should not be a lack of commitment in terms of financial management.
- 5- It was recommended that Financial Team of partner organizations should go through the "**Financial Manager toolkit**" accessible on **EU** website for better understanding.
- 6- If a partner wants to make **amendments/change in the contract or plan**, it should tell **EU** in advance and take prior permission for the same. Without informing **EU**, any changes in the pre-decided plan will be considered illegal. In time of confusion, partners should ask as many questions from **EU** rather than making assumptions and mistakes.