

Consolidated Technical Report

April 2006 to March 2007
Agreement No.106/04-05



Building Networks of Voluntary Organisations for Promotion of Civil Society Actions in Selective Poor States of India



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SUMMARY SHEET

- 1.1 **Agreement No. :** 106/04-05
- 1.2 **Project title:** Building networks of voluntary organizations for promotion of civil society actions in selective poor states of India
- 1.3 **Executing agency:** Voluntary Action Network India, BB-5, 1ST Floor, Greater Kailash Enclave-II, New Delhi – 110 048
- 1.4 **Institutional partner:** Development Alternatives & PriceWaterhouseCoopers (Management Consultants – Poorest Area Civil Society Programme)
- 1.5 **Reporting period:** April 2006 to March 2007
- 1.6 **Funds received during the reporting period:** Rs. 49,34,053/-
Interest: Rs.30,838/-
Total receipt: **Rs. 49,64,891/-**
- 1.7 **Opening balance:** NIL
- 1.8 **Funds expended during the period:** Rs. 54,80,602/-
- 1.9 **Closing balance:** (-) Rs. 5,15,711/-
- 1.10 **Date of submission:** August 1, 2007

BACKGROUND

The project 'Building Networks of Voluntary Organizations for Promotion of Civil Society Actions in Selective States of India under Poorest Area' was initiated by VANI on April 2005 with the support of Development Alternatives & PriceWaterhouseCoopers in six states - Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) Programme aims at building state level networks to strengthen civil society in six poorest states of India. In continuation of to the same, different state level networks have been initiated except for Uttar Pradesh where VANI is collaborating with already existing network UPVAN.

The programme has successfully completed two years and it has been full of experiences and learnings. During the reporting period, efforts were made to further strengthen and consolidate the state level networking processes and continuation of dialogues that had been initiated during the initial phase. The state level networks are well on course to promote civil society actions through advocacy, workshops, publications and other such interventions. VANI adopted multiple strategies to address some critical issues such as state networking, national policy for voluntary sector, GO-NGO cooperation, FCR Bill, NREGA, RTI, and promotion of good governance practices among CSOs. This also provided a platform to take up other sectoral problem collectively through networking.

The overall goal has been to build a just and good society where voluntarism as an expression and conscience gets centrality. As in the initial phase, VANI's strategy was to attach the state coordinators with nodal agencies in each state to provide supportive supervision and guidance. The nodal agencies continued to be:

- Centre for Communication Resource Development (CENCORD) in Bihar;
- Lok Jagrati Kendra in Jharkhand;
- Madhyavan in Madhya Pradesh
- PRIA in Chattisgarh;
- NCAS in Maharashtra;
- UPVAN in Uttar Pradesh.

There were state co-coordinators for state specific operations connected with state level networking. The team working in the six states was as follows:

1. Mr. Anurag Mishra, State Coordinator (Uttar Pradesh)
2. Rajesh Kumar, State Coordinator (Bihar)
3. Mr. Nilesh Munje, State Coordinator (Chhattisgarh)
4. Mr. Ganesh Puranik, State Coordinator (Maharashtra)
5. Mr. Nalini Tigga, State Coordinator (Jharkhand)
6. Mr. Ajay Gupta, State Coordinator (Madhya Pradesh)

The above team was personally supervised by Mr. Pooran Pandey, CEO, VANI.

ACTIVITIES:

The main activities carried out during the reporting period across six PACS states included capacity building workshops for network partners on various issues identified as challenges faced by the voluntary sector, national convention on “visioning voluntary sector in emerging India”; follow up initiatives on NREGA and other issues; information collection, processing & publication of state specific quarterly newsletters highlighting civil society issues; capacity building & training of the project personnel;; and regular publication of quarterly newsmagazine “Civil Society Voices”.

Capacity building workshops for network partners

Workshop on reporting and documentation in Ranchi: November 2006

A two-day training workshop on ‘reporting and documentation’ was organized by J-VAN (Jharkhand-VANI) on 17th and 18th November 2006 at Social Development Centre, Purulia Road, Ranchi. The objective of the training was to enhance the capacity of the organization through improving reporting and documentation systems in the organization. The main points discussed and deliberated during the meeting included concept, component, inputs, and checklist for good reporting & documentation. The outcome of the training workshop was improved learning on various types of reporting in the organization. The invited resource person was Mr. A.K. Singh., SPAR, Ranchi.

Workshops/ meetings on FCRA Bill 2006

The Foreign Contribution (Management and Control) Bill (FCMC Bill), fairly restrictive in nature, was introduced by the UPA government. Immense opposition from the civil society section, led to the dropping of the FCMC Bill. Nevertheless, in 2006 the government reintroduced FCMC Bill as Foreign Contribution Regulation Bill 2006 (FCR Bill). The revised Bill contains some tough regulatory measures to regulate and prohibit the expenditure, utilisation and accounting of registered association receiving foreign grants and contributions. Cleared by the Union Cabinet in early November 2006, the Bill at the moment is with the Standing Committee of Parliament. Under the immense opposition from the civil society, the committee had asked for an extension of time from Rajya Sabha.

Details of the workshops on FCR Bill 2006 held during the reporting period are given below:

No	Date and Venue	Organising Partner	Brief Report
1.	29 January 2007 Pune, Maharashtra	AFARM and VANI	Workshop on FCRA was held in Pune. Forty organisations participated in the meeting. Regional consultation in each region of
2.	New Delhi a. 18 Jan 2007	Joint Women's Programme	a. 15 Delhi based organizations participated in the meeting.

	b. 02 Feb 2007	Foreign Correspondence Club	b. A Press Conference on Foreign Contribution Regulation Bill, 2006, was held at the Foreign Correspondent Club.
	c. 20 Feb 2007.	PACS	c. A meeting on networking and development was convened by PACS, New Delhi. CEO – VANI discussed the proposed FCR Bill 2006 in the meeting.
	d.09 March 2007	ICONGO	d. A panel discussion was held on the proposed FCR Bill 2006 in the ICONGO conclave. ED, FMSF, ED, CHRI, and CEO, VANI were the panelists. It was telecast live on television.
3.	23 Feb 2007 Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh	VANI and Madhyavan	48 representatives of Voluntary organizations (VOs) participated. Details of Regional workshops are given below this table.
4.	23 – 24 Feb2007 Patna, Bihar	VANI and ABVA	The workshop was held for two days in which a total of 43 participants participated.
5.	28 Feb 2007 Lucknow Uttar Pradesh	VANI and UPVAN	FCR Bill 2006 was discussed in a one day workshop held in Lucknow.
6.	10 March 2006 Ranchi Jharkhand	VANI and Lok Jagriti Kendra	FCR Bill 2006 was discussed in a one day workshop held in Ranchi.
7.	19 March 2007 Raipur Chattisgarh	VANI	FCR Bill 2006 was discussed in a one day workshop held in Raipur. 30 voluntary organisations participated in the meet and discussed the issue.

Madhya Pradesh:

MADHYAVAN organized a state level workshop on FCR Bill on February 23, 2007 at AICUF Ashram Bhopal, which was attended by 48 representatives of various VOs of M.P. as well as funding agencies. It also organized four regional consultations for sensitizing VOs regarding FCR Bill. The details are given as under:



No.	Date	Region	Regional Partner	Venue	Participants
1	March 11, 2007	Jabalpur	Rashtriya Yova Sangathan	Hotel Shikhar Palace	54
2	March 15, 2007	Gwalior	Dharti Santha Murena	State Health and Communication Training Centre	39
3	March 16, 2007	Chhattarpur	Samhit Vikas Samaj Sevi Sanstha	Gandhi Ashram	35
4	March 18, 2007	Indore-Nimar	Vikas Anusandhan Evam Shakjshanik Sansthan	Kasturba Gram	23



Chhattisgarh:

As part of strategy, Chhattisgarh VANI organized a regional workshop on the subject at Jagdalpur Dist. Astar on 15th February for South Zone (Bastar, Kanker Dantewala districts). More than 25 organisations participated in the workshop. A state level consultation on FCR Bill 2006 was also organized on 19th March 2007. More than 80 VOs participated in the deliberations.

Maharashtra:

Maharashtra VANI or 'Maha-VANI', the informal network of civil society organizations of Maharashtra State and working for the last couple of years, also decided to give a complete focus on the issue of proposed FCR Bill 2206 in the reporting period. The proposed Bill would have an adverse impact on the development of civil society in the State. Therefore, Maha-VANI also initiated a campaign against FCR Bill from January to March 2007. The first state level meeting on FCR Bill was organized on 29th January 2007. More than 15 representatives of different CSOs of the state attended the event.

The details of the regional consultations are given as under

Sr. No	Date	Place	Region / Area	Organising Partner	Representative of Civil Societies
1	10/03/07	Pune	Maharashtra State	PACS & AFARM	21
2	13/03/07	Latur	Marathwada	AFARM Centre, Latur	15
3	14/03/07	Nagpur	East Vidarbha	I.I.Y.W., Nagpur	44

4	15/03/07	Amaravati	West Vidarbha	Apeksha Society, Amaravati	28
4	16/03/07	Nasik	North Maharashtra	Pragati Abhiyan & U.M. Lok Vikas Manch	45
5	17/03/07	Ahmednagar	Maharashtra	Maharashtra Social Forum (A Part of India Social Forum)	More Than 1000
6	17/03/07	Solapur	Maharashtra	Maha Wash Network Partners	28
7	17/03/07	Usmanabad	Usmanabad District	Paryay, Usmanabad	25
8	18/03/07	Chiplun	Konkan	Kokan Vikas Samvay Vyaspeeth, Vikas Sahyog Pratishthan & Shramik Sahyog, Chiplun	22
9	20/03/07	Mumbai	Mumbai	Apanalaya, Mumbai	41
10	24/03/07	Gargoti, Dist. Kolhapur	Maharashtra State	R.S.C.D. & Mahila Rajsatta Andolan	20
11	26/03/07	Pune	Maharashtra State Consultation	VANI, AFARM, NCAS & Campaign Against FCR Bill 2006	142
Total Participants/ Representative of Civil Societies :-					1431

Jharkhand:

The State Level Workshop on FCR Bill was held on 10th March 2007 at SDC, Ranchi. The participants included around 60 representatives from different NGOs of Jharkhand. The main objectives were to sensitize the Grass Root NGOs on the issue of FCRA Bill 2006; oppose the issue of renewal of FCRA registration every five years with fee, and to discuss future complications arising out of FCR Bill 2006.

Bihar

A two-day workshop, jointly focusing on FCR Bill 2006, NREGA and RTI, was organized at Sramik Disha, Patna (23-24 February 2007). A total of 43 participants participated in the deliberations and got sensitized on the issues on hand.





A two-day workshop was again organized on 29-30 March 2007 at Chawla Guest House, Frazer Road, Patna, to further spread understanding among the organizations about FCR Bill and to train them on ways to develop an action plan on NREGA. A total of 35 representatives from various VOs from Bihar participated in this workshop.

Uttar Pradesh



On 25th January 2007, VANI and UPVAN organized a state level review and planning workshop on NEERJA. The objective was to review the past and on going activities under NEERJA campaign; plan out future strategy as per program status; discuss the status of FCR Bill; and initiation of a letter campaign by the member organizations. District coordinators from central, eastern, and Bundelkhand region comprising 22 districts participated in the workshop and shared their experience on a common platform.



On February 28, 2007, a workshop on FCR Bill 2007 was organized in Lucknow. The objective was sensitizing the CSOs on the draconian amendment suggested under the bill and how collective efforts of all the CSOs as well as National Campaign on the same can result in favorable changes.

Capacity building initiatives for state coordinators:

- Under the capacity building initiatives, Mr. Ajay Gupta, State Coordinator, Madhya Pradesh, was invited in the First Quarter to improve his skills in reporting & documentation at the VANI Secretariat in New Delhi.
- On the eve of the National Convention (August 2006), all the State Coordinators went through capacity building exercises (at VANI Secretariat, New Delhi) with regard to improved understanding on the nuances of the forthcoming National Policy on Voluntary Sector.
- Mr. Anurag Mishra, State Coordinator, Uttar Pradesh, attended PRIA's Certificate Course on Panchayati Raj Institutions in India (Local Self Governance). The main Units of the course included, among others, Panchayati Raj Governance, Democratic Mandate, Strengthening Financial Capacities of PRIs, Local Development: Priorities, Process and Outcomes, etc.

National Convention 2006

The two-day long National Convention 2006, the flagship event of VANI which brought together various stakeholders of voluntary sector at one platform to discuss common issues of voluntary sector, was successfully held at Chinmaya Mission Auditorium, New Delhi on August 28-29, 2006. The Convention was attended by over 400 representatives from various fields ranging from civil society to bureaucrats, media persons, development thinkers and practitioners, academicians, and others.



Some of the critical issues discussed during the Convention were: role of NGOs in reforming governance; relevance and credibility of voluntarism; collaboration and partnership with government – potential and challenges; governance & accountability in voluntary sector- issues and challenges; and legal & financial challenges for the voluntary sector.

The galaxy of distinguished participants who took part in the deliberations included Mr. M.V. Rajasekharan, Minister of State for Planning, GOI; Mr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, GOI; Dr. Rajesh Tandon, Chairperson, VANI; Mr. L.C. Jain, Former General Secretary, Indian Cooperative Union; Dr. Syeda Hameed, Member (VAC), Planning Commission, GOI; Mr. Natwar Thakkar, Founder Secretary, Nagaland Gandhi Ashram, Nagaland; Mr. Ashok Khosla, President, Development Alternatives; Mr. Ramesh Ramanathan, Campaign Coordinator, Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, Bangalore; Mr. Deepak Raja, Secretary General, The Indian Newspaper Society, New Delhi, to mentioned a few.



Planning Commission Deputy Chairperson Montek Singh Ahluwalia, called upon NGOs to increase their contribution to Gross Domestic Product of the country from the present 0.01 percent to at least 1 percent in coming years, improve their management and infuse fresh thinking and dynamism by tapping talent from IITs and IIMs. "Voluntary organizations are doing a commendable work in areas of policy advocacy and implementation of innovative development programmes.

However, they must learn to work with PRIs in the changing circumstances. Increased mobilization of domestic resources independent from government support is also vital for their long-term survival", he said. (A comprehensive report on the Convention attached)

State level consultations on NREGA and other important issues

Workshop on NREGA: May 2006

VANI in collaboration with Uttar Pradesh Voluntary Action Network (UPVAN) organised a workshop on NREGA in Lucknow on May 6-7, 2006. The objective was to provide a forum for identifying strategies to link systematically local level concerns for national and state planning. The major

decision taken during this workshop was to launch an awareness generating campaign in 23 districts of Uttar Pradesh on NREGS.

To implement this campaign, future course of action will be to organise regular orientation workshops at the district level as well as prepare and distribute education material on NREGS scheme. State level NGOs in coordination with UPVAN and VANI will also organise weekly padyatras as a part of awareness campaign and also to share the outcomes of workshops.

District level CSO sensitization workshop on NREGA, Lalitpur, June 29 – July 1, 2006

A two-member team from UPVAN and VANI visited Lalitpur District for an orientation and sensitization workshop on NREGA and the NEERJA mass awareness campaign. Lalitpur is one of the NREGA districts in Uttar Pradesh where the ground realities are somewhat different than in other districts. The workshop was organized on 30th of June with a presence of about 16-member organizations that are operational in Lalitpur District on different issues of development. Some of the organizations are also working with PACS under livelihood programme in many villages of the area.

Regional sharing workshop on NREGA campaign: July 17, 2006

A regional sharing workshop was organized with an intention to get the feedback about the ongoing NEERJA campaign, problems faced, and future strategy to make it more effective. All the Central zone partners from eight districts (Sitapur, Unnao, Pratapgarh, Hardoi, Barabanki, Fatehpur, Pratapgarh and Lakhimpur Kheri) participated in the event and highlighted the campaign. Most of the campaign partners were of the opinion that the campaign has been successful in creating awareness at the grass root level as well the CSO's working and due pressure has been created on the govt. functionaries for smooth implementation of the scheme.

State level consultation on NREGA/ NEERJA campaign held in Lucknow: August 2006

VANI in association with Uttar Pradesh State Network (UPVAN) organised consultation on August 19th, 2006, to review the first phase of NREGA campaign and strategic planning for second phase. It was held at Hotel Gomti in the state capital Lucknow and was attended by representatives of voluntary organisations from 19 districts of Uttar Pradesh besides 4 funding agencies along with well known media representatives from the state.

The event was marked by the release of 'Operational Guidelines' booklet in Hindi, which will be of great assistance to all the stakeholders that include implementing agencies, voluntary organisations, independent community workers as well as government officials. The first phase of the NREGA has been quite effective since with the help of 150 partner organisations, VANI and UPVAN have managed to sensitise the rural masses about their rights under the NREG scheme. A review of first phase of the campaign indicated towards the need of more training at regional and district level within the state. To achieve more rigorous effects during second phase of the campaign includes organising resource material and to involve panchayat raj institutions in local planning. This meeting was given a wide coverage in local dailies.

Workshop on Right to Information in Uttar Pradesh: August 2006



VANI and UPVAN jointly organised a two-day workshop on Right to Information Act (RTIA) in Lucknow on 24th & 25th August, 2006. The title of the workshop was, RTI; Current Status and Future Strategies. The objective was to provide information to the civil society representative including VANI and PACS partners on RTI Act and how to use it as an effective tool as well as to sensitise the civil society organisations on recent amendment on RTI Act proposed by the Government.



The event was well attended by more than 350 civil society representatives from more than 50 districts of Uttar Pradesh. National representatives of Participatory Research in India (PRIA), Parivartan, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) and Chief Information Commissioner MR Justice M A Khan and Information Commissioner Mr Gyanendra Sharma were also present on this occasion. The highlight of the workshop was an extensive discussion on the strategic planning for dissemination of information on RTI Act at regional as well as district level to achieve a better impact.

The outcome was very fruitful as the major decision taken was, to organise a cadre building exercise with through intensive training workshop and material preparation with the support of local and regional network. A task force will be formed to discuss the recommendations and suggestions of members as well as to chalk out the strategy by September end.

Training cum workshop on NREGA/ RTI in Patna: 12-13 August 2006

A two member team (S.S.K and VANI state Coordinator) was invited for sensitization of state level network on the issue of NREGA and to chalk out the campaign strategy on NREGA in Bihar. The workshop was organized on 12 and 13th of August in which more than 50 network partners participated. On the first day several issues pertaining to NREGA were discussed with special ifocus on state level problems. The partners were very much convinced that it was important that an awareness campaign should be initiated in all the coverage district and a detail survey/study should be initiated to get the first hand information on NREGA status. Second day was especially devoted for Right to Information (RTI) act and that how the CSO's could play a key role in its effective implementation. Several provisions pertaining to RTI and different clauses were explained to the representatives and were very much keen to incorporate NREGA and RTI. The workshop ended with a note that all the partners of ABHA will try to collect the data regarding field level problems and then draft out the future strategy.

One-day training workshop on RTI in Patna: November 2006

A Workshop cum Training was organised on 22nd of November 2006 in Patna on Right to Information (RTI). It was organised at Chawla Guest House. The total number of participants was 41. The training/workshop was more of a practical guide type rather than of a theoretical one. In order to make the participants understand the issue in a better way sample applications were shown and participants were asked to try how to fill them. There was a round of discussion on what kind of issues are there at the regional or local level, which can become an issue for filling application under RTI act.



Two-day workshop in Patna on RTI and NREGA: December 2006

A two-day workshop was held on 2 – 3 December 2006, in Patna. The Venue of the meeting was Bihar Voluntary Health Association (BVHA). The workshop was held in collaboration with an international network named INTAF. The purpose of the workshop was to see how we can take the message of RTI and NREGA to the people and how to make it workable at the largest scale at the grassroots with the help of CSOs available in the state. The workshop was also attended by the International Convener of INTAF Mrs Jyoti Singh and Mr Mukut Singh, in addition to more than 100 CSOs from all over the state. The first day was devoted to making strategy upon RTI and formation of a platform down to district level in order to pave way for effective dissemination of information to the grassroots. The leadership of this platform at the state level was agreed upon to be taken up by ABVA. The second day was exclusively devoted to NREGS.



The mode of workshop was discussion that is all the participants were requested to express their opinions so that a cumulative view of the entire participants could be taken into account.

Workshop on NREGA held in Sidhi: July 2006

VANI and Madhya Pradesh Voluntary Action Network (MADHYAVAN) organised a one day workshop in Sidhi district of Madhya Pradesh on 25th July, 2006, to discuss the effective implementation of NREG Scheme in the state.

Around 50 panchayat representatives participated in the workshop. The objective of the workshop was to sensitise civil society organisations and Government official on the NREG Scheme to have a better impact in the state.

Workshop on NREGA, RTI Act and other important issues in Pune: June 2006

A two-day workshop on RTI Act, NREG Act, Right to Water, Gramnyayalaya (local courts) Bill and FCMC Bill-BPT Act was held in Pune on 5th and 6th June, 2006. Around 35 representatives from various organisations and networks participated in this workshop co-sponsored by Action for Agriculture Renewal in Maharashtra (AFARM), National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS), Sosva Training & Promotion Institute (STAPI), Yeshwantrao Chavhan Pratishthan, (YCP) Pune.

The main objective was to build larger partnership with civil society organisations for greater impact and coherence in dealing with the state specific issues concerning people as well as the civil society organisations.

It was unanimously decided to form a working group for initiating a process of forming common platform of civil society organisations to address issues affecting CSOs and people. Some of the members of this group include M A Ghare of AFARM, Datta Patil of YUVA, Parinita Kanitkar of STAPI, Sampat Kale of NCAS, N.D Patil of Sri Shani Manmdir Trust, Rahul Bagde of VLVM, Umakant of VANI, Shantabai Yavatkar of Shranjeevi Mahila Vikas Mandal, Mohan Surve of Vikas Sahyog Paritishthan and P.T Pandit of YCP. VANI volunteering to act as secretariat was unanimously agreed to by the group. This working group will get actively involved in review of 11th five year planning process, encourage state's CSOs to collectively take up the issues of state voluntary sector policy with state government as well as identify mechanism for information dissemination.

Consultative Meeting on NREGA in Ranchi: July 7-8, 2006

As part of week long Programme of NREGA initiated by PACS programme, VANI & SRI jointly organized a two-day consultative meeting on NREGA for a select group of NGOs in Jharkhand. The objective was to make people aware about the intrinsic power of the Act and initiate district level similar discussions. As a result of the deliberations, the participants realized that the act has to be responded to by the citizens (Village people), with a sense of responsibility. The first task is therefore an awareness campaign involving each family of the villages.

Workshop on implication of NREGA, Lohardaga, July 24, 2006

A one-day workshop on the implementation of NREGA was organized at Lohardaga Gram Swarajya Sansathan (LGSS), Lohargaga, Jharkhand, on July 24, 2006. The objectives were to understand and discuss the implications of NREGP at all levels (Panchayat, Block, District, and State); know whether NREGA would alleviate the poverty of rural people and block the migration; to discuss the role of Civil Society Organizations; and decide the future strategy & action areas of the Civil Society organizations.

The workshop was successful in the sense that participants made their common understanding on National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme/Scheme. They showed their confidence on the programme meant for asset building in the village level and poverty alleviation programme. The participants therefore realized that the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has to be responded to by the Village people with a sense of responsibility. They decided to make aware people about the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and its consequences on the rural poor.

Workshop on implication of NREGA, Palamu, August 19, 2006

A one-day workshop on the implementation of NREGA was also organized in Palamu, Jharkhand at Sadhna Sadan on August 19, 2006. The objectives were same as the one held in Lohardaga in July. It was tried to understand and discuss the implications of NREGP at all levels (Panchayat, Block, District, and State); know whether NREGA would alleviate the poverty of rural people and block the migration; to discuss the role of Civil Society Organizations; and decide the future strategy & action areas of the Civil Society organizations. The output or the results were also the same that was achieved in the Lohardaga workshop.

Lucknow State Tribunal on NREGA: November 4, 2006

An assignment for conducting the state tribunal in state of U.P was given by PACS in between and was part of the national tribunal to be conducted in Delhi at ISF. The state tribunal was conducted at Lucknow on 4th Nov with presentation of more than 40 cases from 18 districts compiled and categorized into four major issues as under:

- Job card- 18 cases
- Wage Payment-9 cases
- Implementation level problem-11 cases
- Legal and Technical anomalies-6 cases

The event was divided in to three sessions in which three panels were constituted:

- Session I: Registration and Inauguration and Introduction
- Session II: Presentation of the cases, issues, followed by opinion of the judges/panelist
- Session III: Conclusion



In the day long proceedings, some major issues related to NREGA and its implementation process were highlighted. Finally after hearing different cases the panel arrived at some conclusions that at the first instance lack of awareness among the villagers and the concerned officials mars the implementation process of the act. A legal mechanism should be developed to enable a person to resort to it if need so arises. Stakeholders were advised patience and were assured that the act will definitely yield the desired result if civil action and pressure continues at this pace.

Chhattisgarh State Tribunal on NREGA: November 7, 2007

The State Tribunal on NREGA in Chhattisgarh (Raipur, 7th November 2007) was organized to measure the response of the State Government and involvement of the beneficiaries on the programme. The tribunal also tried to gauge various problems that both the administrating authorities and those intended to achieve the benefits faced and also put in perspective the challenges and opportunities that NREGA presented in the development of the State infrastructure.

(A comprehensive report on Chhattisgarh State Tribunal is attached separately.)

Regional training workshops on RTI in Uttar Pradesh



In order to take up the issues of NREGA and RTI on a priority basis and impart training on various aspects of RTI which can then be taken up at the grass roots level, VANI in association with UPVAN organized four different regional level trainings on the different dates of December. Participants included respective regional partners. The details of the training programme conducted are provided below:

S.No	Date	Place	Region	Number of Participants
1.	30 th Nov-1 st Dec	Lucknow	Central	26
2.	5 th - 6 th Dec	Gorakhpur	Eastern	45
3.	11 th -12 th Dec	Bareilly	Central	25
4.	15 th -16 th Dec	Lalitpur	Southern	30
5.	2 nd -3 rd Jan	Varansi	Eastern	60
			Total	186

All such workshops were designed for one and half day duration so as to provide an in-depth knowledge on RTI and its practical usage. The overall assignment of training was actively supported by Sahbhagi Sikshan Kendra and PRIA, New Delhi.

Working Committee meetings

Quarter one:

Working Committee meeting in (ABHA, Bihar)

The Working Committee meeting in (ABHA, Bihar) was held on 15th of May 2006 at Chawla Guest House, Patna. The main agenda of the meeting was planning for the coming year for ABVA.

The main points of discussion were as under:

- ABVA will organise an interface meeting with the Government and Donors in New Delhi so as to highlight ABVA at the national level.
- A research study on Situation or status of VOs in Bihar.
- For convenience in providing training to the partners the entire Bihar has been divided into 5 regions:

1. Koshi & Kamla
2. Gandak
3. Angika
4. Magadh
5. Bhojpur

- Profile of ABVA members would be made for having a proper document of the network.
- Letters would be issued to the members for the giving their fees.
- The auditor has been finalized to be A.M. Salaluddin
- The date of the Annual GBM for the year has been kept on 10th of July 2006.
- The weaker organizations should be selected among the partners of ABVA to provide them a theme to work upon.
- Receipt of the fees or money deposited should be given in the meetings ABVA.
- ABVA should apply for the membership of VANI at the earliest.
- Capacity Building of ABVA members would be done. The issues on which CB would be done are:

1. NGO management
2. Disaster management
3. RTI, NREGA, NRHM
4. Education, Health, Rehabilitation, Entitlement, etc

- A profile of ABVA should be sent to all the departments.
- There should be advocacy on PPP (Public Private Partnership) policy of the government and their effects on the NGO sector.
- Workshops should be organised on a periodic basis on some theme and the minister concerned with the thematic ministry should be invited so as to have a proper recognition of ABVA among the government departments as well as among the officials of the concerned ministries.
- The secretary of ABVA, Mr. Ganesh Singh, will devote one day to the work of ABVA.

Quarter three:

Steering Committee Meeting (J-VAN):

The Steering Committee Meeting (J-VAN) was held on 13th December, 2006 at J-VAN Office, Shri Maa Apartment, Purulia Road, Ranchi – 834001. The Agenda of the meeting was as follows:

- Finalization of byelaws
- Registration of J-VAN
- Discussion on Future Strategy & Planning

Finalization of Byelaws: The byelaws for J-VAN were finalized in the meeting. The valuable suggestions and recommendations came out and incorporated in the byelaws.

Registration of J-VAN: After the next meeting on 16th January, 2007 the registration of J-VAN will be carried out.

Sharing of Future Strategy & Planning: The future strategy of J-VAN till December, 2007 was shared during the meeting. The same to be shared in the next meeting.

Decisions Taken included as under:

- The meeting of General Body Members will take place on 16th January, 2007
- The Steering Committee members will be known as General Body Members.
- Legal formalities of J-VAN in the month of January, 2007

Quarter four:

Steering committee meeting (J-VAN)

The Steering Committee meeting (J-VAN) was held on 16th January 2007 at Shri Maa Apartment, Ranchi. While the number of participants was 14, the agenda of the meeting included the following:

- Presentation of the minutes of the last meeting and progress report
- Activity planning for the next quarter.
- Capacity Building or Network Partners
- Registration of State Voluntary Action Network(J-VAN)
- State level Meeting of GOs and NGOs
- Sharing of FCRA Bill 2006
- Website formulation
- Strengthening of Network Membership
- Status of Civil Society.

In the meeting, CEO, VANI, focused everybody's attention on few important points. It was informed that PACS support will continue only up to December, 2007 and it's very important to strengthen our own capacities for our sustainability of our network. The immediate action regarding J-VAN Registration was agreed by everyone.

A decision was also taken to organize a state level workshop on FCRA Bill 2006. The ideas of forming a separate state level website for J-VAN were deliberated upon.

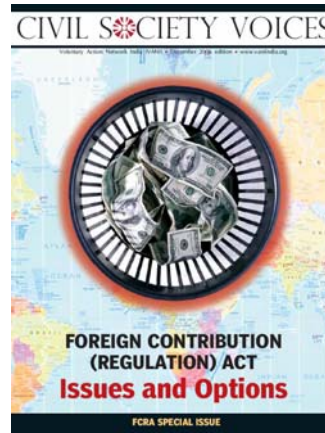
Information collection, processing and publication of state-specific newsletters

In view of the need for state-specific newsletters to focus on state-specific issues and important events/ upcoming events under the PACS programme to be disseminated and distributed among network partners and other stakeholders, the state level networks have been regularly publishing state-specific newsletters (quarterly) during the reporting period.

Newsletters were regularly circulated among academia, media, VOs and other stakeholders as part of routine information collection, processing, and dissemination exercise.

Publication of newsmagazine “Civil Society Voices”

VANI has also been promoting good governance among CSOs through its quarterly news magazine *Civil Society Voices* which has a readership base of approximately 10000 people.



The December 2006 edition of 'Civil Society Voices' December 2006 was devoted to the theme of Foreign Contribution Regulation Bill.

'Civil Society Voices' has gained a status of sorts as it carries besides news, events, articles and write ups a host of useful information such as government circulars, advisories and information that voluntary sector can use to their advantage. .

Learning of the project

There has been a number of experiences and learning during the reporting period. It is summarized as under:

VANI focused primarily on strengthening of networks at state level and on specific issues that impact civil society actions. Keeping in mind the demands of changing political environment, VANI has adopted multi-pronged strategy to address some critical issues such as sustainability of state networking, national policy on voluntary sector, GO-NGO coordination, the proposed FCR Bill 2006, proper implementation of NREGA, and promotion of good governance practices among CSOs. As far as network strengthening is concerned, ABHA in Bihar after being revived in the first first phase, is well on course to become a sustainable identity in the years to come. In Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, despite some hiccups here and there, CSOs in general are happy with the idea of further strengthening and promoting state level networks. In M.P., a different strategy to sustain the network through Vada Na Todo Campaign is still continued. Membership of Madhyavan was gradually increased in Madhya Pradesh. PACS partners are actively involved in program and campaign of Madhyavan.

However, the sustainability issue of the networks continues to be grim. Most of the networks established under the project (other than UPVAN of course) are still very young and not in a position to survive without further assistance, and guidance. As a matter of fact, two years are too little to make a network fully functional and deal with the dynamics of the sector efficiently.

Problems encountered

The following constraints are worth mentioning that VANI experienced while accomplishing PIP during the reporting period:

- State coordinators are still facing problems in maintaining their identity as VANI employees. They continue to be seen as partner organization's staff members. As a result, some of the state coordinators moved on to greener pastures, making the overall coordination work of the concerned network difficult at times. Nevertheless, the problem has been shorted out of late. Now there is a high level of acceptance both of VANI-coordinators and the overall activities that state networks have performed.
- To address the broad based issues, it is still a challenge to bring all the stakeholders to a consensus. Basically there is lack of consensus among civil society organizations on the policy issues. As a result, more interface and consensus building efforts are needed.
- Benign neglect of CSOs by the government and lack of GO-NGO co-ordination and partnership at state levels continue to exist. There is resistance among government officials in simplifying rules, regulations and procedures for CSOs.
- Lack of adherence to compliance norms is also a major challenge to address. This necessitates further strengthening of the capacities of network partners to be able to meet such legal requirements.
- The reporting period also witnessed lack of documentation of best practices and successful stories in advocacy and policy issues. As a result, showcasing of efforts becomes a little difficult.
- Efforts by the Ministry of Home Affairs, to bring in Foreign Contribution Bill 2006 without any consultation with civil society organizations. The fact that the Bill is still pending with the departmentally related Parliamentary Standing Committee, is a cause of concern.
- Establishing linkages at various levels of networking especially at national and state level is also one of challenges for VANI. Local dynamics and individual egos also hamper the development of networks, for instance some of the national networks are apathetic towards other networks impacting participation of other networks and organizations due to their varied needs and interests.