Opportunities for Engaging Civil Society in Implementation of SDGs

Lessons From The Grassroots In India

Bucharest – 17th March 2016
• An opportunity like never before – over a 100 countries; spectrum of stakeholders including prominent contribution from civil society
• Discussions at global, regional, national and local levels
• Capturing the aspirations of specific constituents – youth, women, industry etc
• Varied communication platforms – expert consultations, online dialogues, new social media platforms
• Dedicated thematic and sectoral consultations as well as integrated discussions

- Taking forward the success of the consultative and participatory process followed for development of the SDGs even in its implementation
Gaps Across Different Levels of Federal Structure

- National 5 Year Plan
- State / Province
- Sub-Province / District
- Villages & Towns

Capacity for Integrated Planning

Information and Knowledge on Policies

Understanding of ground realities and community perspectives, aspirations

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) emerge as crucial link between the different levels to address the identified gaps.
The Intervention

- PACS programme built capacities of 650 CSOs in 100 of India’s poorest districts to enable them to improve access of government programmes at last mile

- Large scale awareness on entitlements and methods of access, CSO led local innovations in entitlement access, grassroots advocacy and assessment studies on level of implementation

- The WNTA (Don’t Break Your Promises Campaign) is a national campaign that monitors and produces a report card on progress on MDGs based on data collected from large number (4000) of grassroots civil society organisations analysed against government records

Benefits & Highlights

- Improved penetration and access of government programmes (40 million people impacted) leading to improved efficiency

- Informed policy makers with real time grassroots data for fine-tuning strategies and plugging implementation gaps

- Multiplier effect of CSOs as agents of change

- Held government accountable on behalf of the communities they represent and effectively positioned the goals in the public mind-space

- Revealed progress levels in disaggregated manner

"Equity and justice are not simply moral issues, they are a practical societal requirement ... no society can be good for long – for either the rich or the poor – if the deprived and marginalized are not living with dignity and fulfilment"
Case Study 2 – Lok Awaas Yatra (LAY) & Village Micro-Planning

The Intervention

- **Village Micro-Planning**: Capacity building of village stakeholders on adopting 4As approach of Assessment-Awareness-Advocacy-Action for participatory development planning of the village
- Strengthening of existing local participatory governance mechanisms
- **Lok Awaas Yatra**: A sustained nationwide campaign for new rural habitat policy for the country – through multi-level consultations, engagement with government and policy makers
- Groups of practitioners in different eco-zones of the country taking on a journey of exposure, learning and discussion
- Analysing and highlighting innovations appropriate for scaling

Benefits & Highlights

- Local communities are able to chart a sustainable course of local development when adequate and reliable information in accessible format is provided
- Long term perspective visioning with short term planning and implementation cycles enable balance between long term sustainability concerns and immediate development priorities
- Platform for exposure to best practices and engagement with progressive communities spurs demand and initiative for progress
- The proposal on rural housing policy was presented to the Government of India and then served as a base document – 12th 5 year plan incorporated several key recommendations

"Civil society can bring in knowledge from grassroots to bear upon policy development; it could work from bottom up to address poverty from the perspective of the poor themselves"
Case Study 3 – Community Owned Community Operated Models

The Intervention
• Defunct government infrastructure (for drinking water) adopted by local community institution (women federation) and upgraded with advanced and environment friendly technology
• The federation operationalises and undertakes management and maintenance of the infrastructure
• Payment for service model developed and implemented in participatory manner
• Federation also conducts behaviour change campaign in the village to generate demand for the services

Benefits & Highlights
• Model for effective service delivery at last mile
• Sustainability of investments made on local common infrastructure development due to community ownership
• Communities are willing to pay for reliable services
• CSOs as partners and extension arm of government service delivery mechanism (and not as replacement)

“Multi-functional systems, based on small, decentralized, self-organizing sub-systems with governance at each level tailored to the needs of that level often offer the most effective and resilient solutions to today’s world”

Civil society as service delivery partners
Case Study 4 – Rural Reality Show on Climate change Adaptation

The Intervention
- World’s first rural reality show pitting community groups from different villages against each other in a competition to select and celebrate the most sustainable communities
- Community radio (with reach in 200 villages) as interface at grassroots
- Experts on sustainability were engaged as mentors to promote uptake of scientifically robust adaptation methods by participating community groups
- 100 villages – 500 village practitioners – 25,000 families – 25 change agents

Benefits & Highlights
- Resulted in effective and sustainable behaviour change communication towards adoption of sustainability action
- Peer learning led to wider impact amongst communities
- Bridging science and practice led to more informed decisions by communities and also helped inform policy
- Use of new media along with traditional communications led to effective community mobilisation

“There exists an obvious relationship between the diversity of natural systems and the diversity, health and sustainability of human systems – cultural, social and economic”

Civil society for creating a conducive atmosphere through stakeholder mobilisation
Engagement of Civil Society – Lessons for Optimising Benefits

• Simple communication of status, scenarios helps communities appreciate and thereby respond better to the challenges of sustainable development – civil society needs to be enabled with such simple tools

• Sensitization of media leads to more informed and healthy debates

• Participatory learning platforms to spur replication and collective advocacy

• Allowing space for innovation in service delivery approaches leads to emergence of more effective models

• Informing the mind – Engaging the heart
  • Does it touch me, my family, my village?
  • Does it outrage me?
  • Does it give me hope, solutions, alternatives
THANK YOU