

Minute of the meeting of steering committee of PRF

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> Aug'11

Venue- Secretariat office

The meeting began with the introduction on OXPAM by Bulbul. She mentioned that the OXPAM India is working in 7 states on food security out of which Assam is one of them. She added that they want to capture the authentic status of the food and nutrition prevailing in the state of Assam presentation of which will be made in the national level on the 17<sup>th</sup> Oct'11. She further put forward that if PRF agrees unanimously the program could be taken up by PRF to which OXPAM is ready to support.

She then recapped of the decisions taken in the last initial meeting of Peoples' Rights Forum (PRF, hereafter) on the 12<sup>th</sup> Aug'11

The decisions of the last meeting were as follows;

- Conducting public hearing on food and nutrition
- If not public hearing, fact finding program could be taken up as suggested by Debu of The ANT
- The public hearing or fact finding have to be made on or before 30<sup>th</sup> Sept'11
- The program could be taken up at least in 6 districts
- The districts are Kokrajhar, Jorhat, Sonitpur, Dhemaji, Kamrup metro, Nalbari
- Whether PRF could take up the program in collaboration with partner organizations in the respective districts
- Final decisions could not be taken as certain members didn't attend the last meeting

On his part Raju, the convener of PRF stressed on the necessity of such inevitable program like public hearing and fact finding. He detailed on the non functional of the mechanism of ICDS in many places in Kokrajhar in particular and the state in general. He mentioned that there are as much as 65 thousand numbers of IDP in Lungsung who are living under open sky and not at all connected to Public Distribution System (PDS, hereafter). As compensation the Govt. agencies paid Rs. 50,000/ to some families only and supplied 600 gm of rice and 400 gm of dal respectively only for few days. Now they are either temporarily scattered or living in cluster. The condition is so uncertain and pathetic that some of them have to engage in flesh business and other anti social activities.

Gita Bhattacharjee of AMSS supplemented that ICDS entitlements are only in theory and they are never availed in practice. She cited some examples of Tinsukia and Goalpara districts. Monisha Behal of NEN added that once The ANT of Bongaigaon submitted the survey report on ICDS to the Chief Minister to which he accepted only to keep it in his shelf. She also informed the members that NEN would like to collaborate with PRF to invite Mr. Madhura Swaminathan, an economist in a program in Tezpur University.

Raju made PRF stand clear that due to time constraint PRF won't able to organize public hearing but he suggested that individual organizations could taken up the programme. To this Gita said that AMSS had formed and registered 4 federations of Mahila Samities in Goalpara who could take up the programs as they have determined earlier to do so.

Stephen Ekka of PAJHRA suggested that we have to think of two options before organizing the program. He suggested either the program should be either state wise or local. To which everybody agreed to confine to only local areas.

Behal wanted to know whether it won't be a technical problem for PRF to receive funds from OXPAM as it is not registered. To this Raju replied that PRF is not registered nor will be registered in future. He added that he won't see a problem to this as PRF is being funded by IFSN through sSTEP. Bulbul added that since the program will be supported by OXPAM India, there won't be problem of funding NGOs without FCRA. In return Behal urged the members to focus on the displacement problem. She requested that PRF could expedite partner organizations in completing the task in the stipulated time. Lastly, everybody agreed to avoid the public hearing program and decided to go for fact finding only.

Regarding the budget Raju clarified that the fund for the purpose has to be deposited by OXPAM in the account of NERSWN for his convenience to operate as he is part of the organization and at the same time the convener of PRF. He added that the fund will be segregated in two parts. One part will be used by the fact finders and the other by the centre.

The meeting came up with various issues and places to be undertaken for the fact finding program in the month of September.

| Sl no | Issue                           | District      | NGO involvement   |
|-------|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1     | Displacement and food security  | Kokrajhar     | NERSWN            |
| 2     | Urban poverty and food security | Kamrup(Metro) | sSTEP             |
| 3     | Rural poverty and food security | Goalpara      | AMSS              |
| 4     | Tea community and food security | Sonitpur      | PAJHRA & The EAST |
| 5     | ICDS and food security          | Nalbari       | GVM               |
| 6     | Disaster and food security      | Dhemaji       | RVC               |