



## The Focus

### No Money for Promotion of RTI

Right to Information Act is a pro-poor act to establish transparency and accountability in the long run. As a part of Civil Society Strengthening Programme of DFID & PRIA, DRCSC is engaged in state-wise promotion of RTI Act. We are organizing village campaigns, orientations for grassroots CSOs, training for Public Information Officers of various government departments etc. Several pamphlets, booklets, books, films have been prepared for free circulation for promotion of RTI. We are also running a state helpline to answer RTI-related queries of people.

In the initial phase, five underprivileged districts of West Bengal viz. Uttarakhand, Jalpaiguri, Coochbihar, Dakshin Dinajpur and Maldah have been undertaken as the operational area. The RTI team of DRCSC is conducting training, awareness and counselling sessions in

response to invitations from all corners of the targeted districts.

In response to an appeal dated 21.10.08 to know how much money has been spent to promote RTI, Mr. Niloy Ghosh, Director of Information and Cultural Affairs Department, Govt of West Bengal declared, "There was no allocation of fund for the promotion of Right to Information Act during the period 2005-07." But, in the 26th Article of the act itself, it has been clearly mentioned that "The appropriate Government may, to the extent of availability of financial and other resources, - promote timely and effective dissemination of accurate information by public authorities about their activities." In the same letter, he conveyed that "the budget allocation for various campaign programmes for the period 2005-07 was Rs. 34,55,000.00" out of which 40%



has been spent for *krishi amader bhatti, shilpo amader bhabishyat...* the pet campaign of WB Govt. to combat charges against them of destroying agrarian economy to promote widespread industrialisation. That is definitely an indicator of the pecuniary crisis that WB Government is in for promotion of RTI!!!

For more details visit <http://www.drcsc.org/rti/rti.html>

### Livelihood based education for school dropouts

Sending all children to school by 2010 is the target set by the Govt. of India. What about the quality of education? Even if we go by the quantity, most of the children enrolled will not cross the 'barrier' of middle school. Keeping in mind that 70% of our people live in rural areas, for 80% of the rural children, the current curriculum is of no use in their professional life. Obviously the situation is worse for the marginalized SC/ST population. When we talk about jobs, we only acknowledge formal education. Even the newly found West Bengal State Council for Vocational Education & Training (WBSCVET) is stuck to the same urban market-based ideas of imparting training on soft toy





essentially an educated youth from the village who was trained by us.

134 children with 74 girls among them received this training in the first phase. They have already started micro-enterprises like making hand fans from palm leaves, integrated farming,

making, TV mechanism etc.

A study undertaken by DRCS in the dryland areas like Purulia, Birbhum, Bankura shows that dropouts in the age group 12-18 are mostly engaged in domestic work or as wage labourers in brick-kilns, teashops and coalmines or accept cow grazing as means of livelihood. Often they are compelled to migrate to resourceful districts in search of work. They earn a maximum of Rs. 30/- a day. In many instances they work for the whole day in exchange of just one noon-time meal.

For the last few years we have been trying to initiate livelihood-oriented study centres for non-school going adolescents. As a pilot, we launched a new phase of this programme in 2006 with 18 centres in 3 districts. In the first 6-8 months, a few batches of students from marginalized families were admitted. They were imparted functional education that comprised of basic literacy and numerical ability; collection and interpretation of data; basic accountancy; communication skill; local history & geography; understanding of local natural resources & environmental disorders; group activities like gardening, bee keeping, fish culture, vermicomposting etc. In the next 6-12 months, they were assisted to take up local natural resource-based micro-enterprises as groups on apprenticeship basis. Trainees who showed interest were supported with small loans. The guide was es-

nursery of multipurpose trees, vegetable garden, fishery, cycle repairing, carpentry especially for making agricultural tools, stitching, composting, making bamboo baskets, *Babui* grass rope, flattened rice, spices, date palm leaf mats, paper bags etc. We have made booklets on 10 successful enterprises. As a result of this initiative, children have now become interested in doing group activities and tobacco addiction problem among adolescents has significantly decreased. 2 children have been reinstated in a mainstream school at middle school level. Most importantly, the number of child migration has decreased from 61 to 55 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year to 18 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year.

We are looking for support for mainstreaming the initiative.

## Maintaining ecological balance through Integrated Pest Management

Green Revolution in the 1960s introduced high yielding variety seeds that necessitated the application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in abnormally high quantities. The impact of this on yield, ecology and human health is known to everyone.

DRCS has undertaken the initiative to train the farmers in the techniques of IPM as the most vital measure of intervention against this pesticide menace. Farmers of a village or a group of villages are organized into groups who are motivated to use only organic manure and bio pest repellents (if required) in ricefield ecosystems and are trained to apply the different techniques of Integrated Pest Management. The activity is being done under the joint aegis of Agricultural Deptt., Govt. of West Bengal, Central IPM and the local NGOs. Local farmers, volunteers, agricultural training assistants are being trained to develop skills. Farmer schools are being run on a regular basis. Recently, IPM practices are being introduced in vegetable cultivation also.





In winter of 2003-04, 32 farmers adopted IPM practices in paddy covering almost 29 acres in Jasai Kathi village under Baduria block in North 24 Parganas. In 2004-05, 150 farmers living in 5 villages under the same block applied IPM techniques on crops over an area of 100 acres. In the same year 106 farmers in the same villages adopted the practice on winter crops over 42 acres. In the rainy season of 2007-08, 7294 acres in 46 villages under 5 blocks viz. Baduria, Swarupnagar, Deganga, Hingalgunj and Basirhat II in the same district could be included in the IPM map. In the winter IPM was practiced by 2650 farmers in 70 villages under the same blocks to cover 4488 acres. The data show how IPM is being embraced by more and more farmers as beneficial both economically and ecologically.

## Announcement

Launching [www.indg.in](http://www.indg.in) in Bengali

Day-long workshop on "Knowledge sharing for Rural Development - InDG as a platform in West Bengal" on November 26 at Academy of Fine Arts in collaboration with C-DAC.

### RTI consultation

A state level consultation on RTI will be organised at ATI on 22<sup>nd</sup> November. All are welcome. Just send us an email at [rti@drcsc.org](mailto:rti@drcsc.org)

### Bal vividha 2008

Bal vividha, a festival for celebrating alternative approaches to learning, will be held at BITM, Kolkata during 4-7 December, 2008. It is a fun filled festival with workshops for kids & grown-ups, interactive corners, film shows etc. This year's theme is *Schools for Social Change*.

### Reports

- A pictorial report on developing

school garden and integrating it with the curriculum: [www.drcsc.org](http://www.drcsc.org)

- Study of NREGA in some specific locations of West Bengal done by students of MICA. The report also consists of a socio economic study of some proposed models of interventions under NREGS introduced and promoted by DRCS: [www.drcsc.org](http://www.drcsc.org)

## Happenings

- A workshop on Economic Enterprise Development for SHPIs was held at DRCS Training Centre in Santiniketan with participants from Orissa, Jharkhand and dry areas of West Bengal.
- Ardhendu S. Chatterjee and Amitava Sarkar represented DRCS in SAS sharing workshop at Ottawa, Canada.
- Mr. Michael Hollaender and Mrs. Barbara Clasen Loeprick from KKS Germany visited DRCS.
- Ardhendu S. Chatterjee, our president - underwent a surgery for gallstone. Best wishes for him to get well soon.
- All the staff of DRCS visited Kulik Bird Sanctuary for the purpose of training on documentation and brain storming on future initiatives of the organization.
- DRCS actively collaborated and participated in BIODIVERSITY 2008, showcasing the biodiversity of Noth Bengal at Siliguri along with ASED and Department of Forestry, WB Govt.
- DRCS took initiative to call leading NRM-concerned organizations to find out scope for mutual collaboration and cooperation.

## New Productions

### Chasher Katha

Vol. XII No. 4 has been published. This issue of the Bengali quarterly focuses on right to information in West Bengal.



### Sarkari Scheme e manuser Adhikar

This book elaborates the different schemes of government.

### "Nagarik Rajniti Unnayan" by Dr. Ashok Ghosh



This book provokes debate on the CSOs, their roles and responsibilities in development and politics etc.

### Kaktarua

A newsletter on environment and society from children of our ENRE network. This issue contains a pictorial report on school garden.



### List of PIOs

Right to Information Act was passed in 2005. As is the case in most of the acts passed, people have very little knowl-



edge about this act also. This book consists of all the addresses of PIOs, APIOs, so that one can easily find out, whom to apply.

### Audio CDs on RTI

Audio CD with short plays, *kabi gaan* and folk songs on Right to Information Act, 2005 for mass awareness.

For information, training, ideas, books, films, techniques on alternative development through natural resource management contact

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