

MUMBAI DIOCESE'S PLANNING PROCESS

Dates : April 8-10th 2008, Venue : Christian Mission (CM) House, Mumbai Central

Facilitators - CNI SBSS Team: Sunil Mahajan and Vikram A. J.

Participants - Mumbai DBSS Staff : Richard Tiwade - DBSS Coordinator, Lata Dalvi, Suhas Dalvi, Rev Anand Raju and Shailesh Bhingardive. (Along with two community representatives from Dhuktan Area)

Introduction

The facilitating team had an informal discussion with the DBSS Staffs in person on April 8th and briefed them about the process and the arrangements. The team explained them the importance of community presence and participation to make this planning process participatory, people-oriented and inclusive in real sense. The staffs agreed to it and promised to do their best in bringing the community but in actual process initiated on next day, only two community representatives turned up. The process began with a prayer, introduction and briefings about the planning for the next phase beginning from Oct-2008.

The Process begins...

With the inputs from general discussions, the group affirmed that at this stage of completion of two and half years of the first phase begun in April 2005, it is imperative that the DBSS must retrospect, review and realize the work they have done and assess the impact of these efforts on their reference communities. The group also agreed upon that this revisiting shall help them in mirroring themselves to rectify, check out the flaws and take necessary action in terms of fulfilling the set objectives in coming days.

Mirror Image!

The staffs were then asked to share about their activities and achievements one by one. The activities comprised only the list of meetings conducted like information sharing on NREGA/MREGA, PRI, RTI, Forest Act, etc. Vague statements like established rapport with people, generated awareness in communities... were jotted as achievements while formation of new SHGs as impact! After synthesizing the whole sharing, the facilitators made the group aware that in the entire phase the DBSS was involved only in few Analysis and mostly Assistance programmes that failed to reach to the Advocacy and Action stages. The following things also came out in this sharing :

Tools used

- Group Discussion & Individual Expressions : about the work, the problems, shortcomings and solutions.
- Rapid Solitary Jottings about what they could not do...
- Graphical representation of Area coverage
- Bible Study - Parables of Fig tree (*Luke 13:6-9*) & Vine and Branches (*John 15:1-8*)

- Though Mumbai DBSS claims to cover both urban and rural areas, the continuous work in the slums of suburban Mumbai is hardly visible. After the relief work carried during the floods in 2006, there has not been any major work done.
- The activities seem to be taking place only in the rural areas of Palghar district that is about 100kms away from Mumbai DBSS office.

- The distance did affect the field-visits. The staffs admitted that poor time management reduced their performance as due to lack of time they were not able to spend meaningful time with the communities which would have strengthened CBOs.
- The activities were seen as need-based DBSS activities than the people-oriented meant for the communities which failed to leave an impact.
- Lack of coordination and absence of morale among the DBSS team also brought down the performance level.

Scattered and shattered...

The area coverage lies scattered in the both urban and rural areas. The said work done in the slums from Matunga to Kalyan or Govandi to Goregaon is more of charity-based rather than the rights-based. Helping the slum-dwellers in accessing basic and civic amenities was entirely fruitless for DBSS as these efforts didn't take DBSS anywhere towards building people's movements but the local political parties thrived on this, taking credits to themselves. These communities too were contended to be at receiving end only.

The rural area covering only one district – Palghar reports only 10 to 15 villages as its area coverage. Here again these villages as field areas of different staffs are speckled and spread over the area in such difficult manner that one staff has to hop over 2-3 villages that are taken care by his/ her team-mate. Thus, the visit becomes time consuming activity than producing any commendable results.

With the Community?

The meeting with the community was arranged next day in Vasrolli village. It was disappointing to see that the staffs had no hold over their reference community. In spite of repeated revisions of the objectives of the planning process, DBSS team failed to ensure community's participation to take process further. The community representatives present for the meeting were the SHG women who soon after gathering got into disagreement over petty local issues without paying any heed to the DBSS staff! The new village *Sarpanch*, young lad simply 'graced the occasion with his presence!' Seeing the situation, the facilitation team cancelled the visit to the next village and carried the discussion further in the same place. They asked the DBSS staffs to reflect upon the incidence and find out the reasons why they were able to capitalize on anything?

Deductions

It was seen that the DBSS Staffs took this visit just as routine visit expecting SBSS team to 'lecture' the community. The motivator even announced that way but when it was again told that DBSS team is supposed to facilitate this process in the community, only the motivator of that particular area spoke that too out of context, getting tangled in the debate of local women. Not even single staff, even the gender facilitator tried to intervene when there was commotion in the meeting. When asked the staff said that they were told by their coordinator to keep off from other's field areas and communities.

The SBSS team shared that if this is the picture they are going to see in the next village too then there is no use of heading further. The coordinator was asked to exert his authority to bring in the efficiency in the team and the work DBSS is involved into.

Sharing the Reflections

- Area coverage needs to be reworked towards consolidation. Area should be constituency-wise or at least district-wise that should cover whole block not few *panchayats* in some blocks but total *panchayats* of related block. The area coverage needs to be more concentrated. The work in the slums should better be shifted totally from the urban to the rural areas concentrating on the sole objective of building people's movements.
- The staff too agreed upon shifting of DBSS Office from Mumbai to Palghar would intensify the work. The Coordinator should monitor the programme intervention and staff involvement in Palghar on a regular basis.
- Along with the congregation in Bhandup, the DBSS must get started with the Palghar congregation extending the CME Model.
- There is no clear role & responsibilities of the CBOs. Strengthening of CBOs should go beyond merely forming SHGs. No issues were identified and worked on to build PO and there was no linkage between these CBOs.
- The DBSS should initiate the process of bringing the CBO's on to one platform with the aim of forming and SHG federation / *Taluka* Level Social watch group.
- Instead of working on core issues, the DBSS has engaged itself as an aid-desk trying to help people in accessing government schemes and benefits. There is much scope to work for the adivasi communities. List out the resources and capacities.
- Integrating the Cross-cutting themes... CME has not gone beyond core-group formation; gender is understood only in the context of women.
- DataBase is beyond mere compilation of information collected. The data should be utilized as a base/ foundation while planning the activities and programmes for the communities and must be updated from time to time.
- Summing up, all the identified issues need to be addressed in a campaign mode aiming towards movement building.

The points were well taken by the DBSS Staffs. The facilitation team hopes to see the things incorporated that came out during this process. It was good that all these things didn't come up as recommendations or suggestions from the 'expertise' but from the DBSS itself as it accepted the flaws they realized during the mirroring process. The diocese plans to consolidate the field, shifting to Palghar, restructure the team and villages so that they get sufficient time with the communities, identify the issues inclusive of cross-cutting themes, strengthen the CBOs and to move towards movement building.

- Sunil Mahajan & Vikram A. J.