

State Consultation on Peoples Framework Policy on Agriculture, Water, Forests and Climate Change

24th and 25th May 2013, Ranchi

The State Consultation was co-organized by a collective of organizations including PAIRVI, CECEOEDECON, BCPH, SADED, BJVJ, HUMANITY AND JJBA and others. The consultation witnessed the participation of more than 100 participants representing civil society organizations, peoples movements, academicians, community based organizations, state representatives and state networks over the two days.

The discussion was organized in the background of the state of Jharkhand adopting a slew of policies including ag policy, water policy, mining policy, forests policy and climate change policy within a period of two years. However, no discussion has taken place on these policies and the gaps in the policies.

Main issues: The discussion on various issues/sectors including agriculture, water, forest, mining, and climate change policies raised critical issues related to

- Development paradigm and policy direction
- Peoples role, positioning in these policies and their participation
- Question of adivasi identity
- Policies do not answer the question that these policies are made for “whom”
- Gaps in the policies are result of capacity gaps, exclusionary processes, and political positioning of the state.
- Need for alternative policies, which should be a peoples framework policy

Major outcomes:

1. The consultation decided to form groups on sp issues viz. agriculture, forests, mining, water, and climate change to formulate alternative policies. The follow up meeting should be held within the next month (June) where working groups will meet and exchange their views and finalize the policies.

2. The working groups will be led by Prof. Ramesh Sharan (Agriculture), Sanjay Basu Mallick (forests), Mamta Dash (water), Soumya Dutta (CC). Groups and group leader for mining will be determined within two weeks.

3. The process will pursue various political parties, political leaders and individual candidates in the coming elections (likely to be held in Dec-Jan). The elections and policies on mining, and forests being in the process and draft agriculture policies being finalized present good opportunities to include peoples voices in these policies.

Session/s summary: Innaugural

Participants: Dr. Nirmal Minz, Chair, Mr. Salkhan Murmu (Ex MP and chair, Jharkhand Dishom Party), Mr. Anil Angshuman (CPIML), Mr. SoumyaDutta (BJVJ), Mr. Ajay Jha (Pairvi & beyond Copenhagen), Mr. Praveen Kumar Pravind (Oxfam India), Mr. Xavier Kujur from JJBA, coordinated the session.

Ajay Jha, laying down the expectation of the workshop, said that policies being made are not pro people and are being made in pursuance of overall economic direction of the policies, which is based on overexploitation of natural resources, market led growth, and undermining traditional occupations. Referring to the 12th plan, he said that it is overtly outward looking, seeks approbation from outside agencies and has a extremely small base, which will benefit only few people. There has been delinking of growth from agricultural growth which results in exclusion of large number of people from participating in the economic growth. Referring to Jharkhand, he said that policymaking is so exclusionary in the state that recent policies and specially state Action Plan on climate change declared last month has held no consultation to seek peoples opinion.

Nirmal Minz, said that India is having two identities now, and policies, which favour India (signifying very small section of the population) are being imposed on Bharat, which works at cross purposes for the majority population in the country and the state. He also said that 16 out of 24 districts in the state are witnessing popular protests against displacement, and government is taking no cognizance. He added that the state was made for the tribal's but it seems that the government is out to exterminate the entire tribal population. He also questioned that govt is promoting only big business which will benefit few but not cottage industries which will make the growth more inclusive. He stressed on political and social collaboration to help the struggles of rights of adivasi people.

Anil Angshuman said that the policies work in isolation with the people rater than against the people, and it is not possible to improve the policies within the given framework. He underlined that the issue of adivasi identity is a big issue in the state, and while state has huge mineral resources, their proceeds are in no way benefitting people of the state.

SoumyaDutta said that the policies are being developed in silos and have hardly any interlinkages. Citing an example he said that energy policy does not have any connection with agriculture and water policy, and seeks to expand power generation which will have huge demand on the water (5,000 crore sqmeter/1000 MW), which will affect availability of water for both domestic use and agriculture. He also emphasized that policies do not take into account the needs and rights of people, for example energy policy talks only about electricity or power, which is less than 16% of the total energy use. It also does not talk about biomass, which is main source of energy for more than 70% people in the country. He stressed that policymaking does not have people in the centre, and does not at all looks at social and justice aspect.

Mr. Praveen Kumar Pravind (Oxfam India) said that these issues require that all political parties merge their differences and come on a platform. Civil society organizations too, need to come together to have some influence on the policy.

Mr. SalkhanMurmu said that the constitutions of India, the judgment of the Supreme Court all are being defied for political and economic gains. He said that Samta Judgment (SC, 1997), Judgment of the Supreme Court dated 18th April on Niyamagiri that land in schedule V areas cannot be taken without the consent of the Gram Sabha, is being openly flouted. Referring to the struggle of the people in the Nagari Village (Jharkhand) he said that government is bent upon acquiring 227 acres of fertile land from the adivasi to build a university, which could have built on a barren land. He said that 6000 adivasis are held in various jails of Jharkhand on charges of being naxalite. He added that all the struggles need to be made into political struggles.

Agriculture Policy: Dr. Hareshwar Dayal, Ranchi University

Dr. Dayal said that Agriculture Policy draft was declared two years ago, however, it still remains a draft that shows the lack of sincerity of the Govt. towards agriculture, which is source of livelihood for more than 70% people in the state. He said that the only thing that the policy does is to acknowledge the problem, but does not accord right priorities in the absence of a system of weightage. Measures proposed are mainly a wish list rather than turning the priorities into clear actions, strategies and targets. The policy also does not talk about the constraints viz. why net sown area in the state (18 lakh ha/80 lakh ha) has not increased. The policy is based on three premises, 1) enabling farmers to access information and capacity, 2) enabling farmers access to finance, and 3) enabling their access to technology. However, there are also other constraints, which are not being looked into (viz. issues related to land leasing in CNTA, SPTA, constraints of technology, weather variability etc). The policy promotes diversification into vegetable cultivation, floriculture, sugarcane, all of which require more water. The state also does not have appropriate post harvest support and mechanism, marketing infrastructure for floriculture etc.

Mining in Jharkhand: Umesh Nazeer, JMACC

Mr. Nazeer delved into historical aspects of mining and rights of the tribal and indigenous people, and emphasized that though mining has had significant contribution in human development, the currently the overexploitation of natural resources, will not only harm the environment and human race but have significant immediate bearing on the rights of the tribal population in the state. (To be supplemented with the presentation)

Jharkhand State Action Plan on Climate Change: Dr. H S Gupta, IFS, Tribal Development Officer

Dr. H S Gupta provided an overview of the global and national context in which the state action plan on climate change was made. He also provided brief outline of the policy, and said that the policy is made on the line of NAPCC incorporating missions on agriculture, water, forests, mining, health, urban development, transport and energy. He said that the policy seeks to create an overarching framework in which sectoral policies will operate in the coming years.

Ajay Jha, respondent raised a number of issue regarding the plan. His major observations are as follows:

- The state plan should have been in Hindi or local language. Having the plan in English only smacks of disrespect of people's opinion and exclusionary nature of policymaking.
- The plan also does not talk about whether public consultations were held, what recommendations were made, which of them were accepted and which rejected and why.
- There are no financial estimates in the plan. Until there are financial estimations, people cannot make out the priorities that the plan seeks to set.
- The plan is very ambiguous. It does not have specific targets, timelines, and strategies. Whether it is a policy or a plan?
- Whether the plan only seeks to create an overarching framework or does it have an overriding effect on the sectoral policies, if not, what is the purpose of this arduous exercise?
- The plan also says that the current emission of the state is approx 48 mtco₂eq, which will rise upto 105 mtco₂eq by 2020. Whether this rise in emission is without the action plan, how much emission does the plan seek to reduce by 2020.
- Agriculture is highly mitigation focused, the plan seems to be completely oblivious of discussion on mitigation in agriculture (in developing countries), so is the case with CDM, REDD+ etc.
- Whether the deficiency in the plan are only result of capacity gaps which can be improved or is it a question of political positioning of the government.

MrSoumyaDutta, chair of the panel said that people were allowed to provide feedback only for the 15 days and that too through the internet, in the state, the use of internet is not very high and therefore, consultation with public should have been held to allow them to understand the plan of such immense dimensions and provide their feedback and contributions. He also attracted his attention to the number of factual errors in (data and the arguments) the plan. He also asked the timeline within which people are supposed to provide the feedback and what is the current status of the plan?

Dr. HS Gupta said that he worked on the plan as his additional responsibility and it is the pollution control board, which will implement the plan. However, he admitted that the Pollution control board should provide at least a summary of the plan in Hindi to enable wider participation. He also agreed that more consultations in different agro climatic regions should be held. He said that though the initially declared period for providing feedback has come to an end, genuine recommendations are welcome and can be still incorporated. He added that the steering committee in the state was not sure of financial contribution of the central government in implementing the plan therefore, financial estimates were not attempted. He also added that we do not have disaggregated data, risks and vulnerabilities, financial estimates and contribution from the central government, which worked as major impediments in making the plan, strategies

and action very specific and crisp. However, he avoided questions regarding the nuances on mitigation vs adaptation, mitigation target of the plan, inter linkages in the various sectoral strategies etc.

Forest Policy: Mr. Xavier Kujur (JJBA) and Mr. HarendraSinha (XISS)

Mr. Kujur started by providing facts and figures regarding forest coverage (29%), percentage of the population dependent on forest (1/4th of the population, classification of forest etc. he added that by an estimate 85 lakh people in the state depend entirely (up to 70%) for their needs, livelihoods, food, fuel on the forest. He also talked about evolution of forest governance and rules in India. He said rules and regulations related to forests have strengthened the control of forest department on the forests and declared people who have resided in the forests for hundreds of years as encroachers. However, later on it was realized that forest management was not possible without peoples participation, and the Govt had to come out with joint forest management committees. However, it has never been followed in letter and spirit. Later, on forest rights act recognized the rights of tribal and indigenous population over homestead land and non timber forest produce (NTFP). However, he added that it is being violated openly and there are thousands of applications under forest rights lying pending all over the country. In Jharkhand, there is no forest policy as such (pls check), and the forest governance does not acknowledge the contribution of forest dependent communities in maintaining the forests. Rather, new ways are being explored to drive forest dwellers out of the forest. He underlined that marketization of forests is the new danger that forest dependent communities face, and in GIM, forest carbon offsets and REDD+ are in clear contravention of the rights of the forest dwellers and the UNDRIP.

Mr. Sinha, added that forest governance does not have an ecosystem approach, and they see forest only as woods. This is merely continuation of forest policy of the Britisher Govt.who were only interested in wood and never bothered about people living in the forests. He added that forest communities are lured with higher incomes and engage in monoculture, which is destroying the forests. He emphasized that forest based livelihoods might not be very lucrative but it provide a range of livelihood option to the forest dependent communities and maintenance the forest ecosystems too. He emphasized that forest governance does not recognize rights based approach and forest dwellers who have the first charge on the forest and forest produce. He wondered whether tinkering the policies without changing its overall character, will be helpful to restore the rights of the forest dwellers and forest dependent communities.

The session was followed by a question answer session and a lively exchange of ideas and concerns.

The final session discussed the strategies to be followed for formulation of alternative policies (as discussed above).