

Workshops on Report on Right to Housing and Homestead Land in Rural Bihar: Status, Issues and Challenges

Two workshops- one in Delhi and another in Patna- were organized to discuss and deliberate upon the findings of the Report on Right to Housing and Homestead Land in Rural Bihar: Status, Issues and Challenges, published by Deshkal Society in association with Fredrick Ebert Foundation (FES), India. The purpose of the workshops was to discuss and deliberate upon the findings of the Report and to generate dialogue and debate across various cross-sections of the society on the issue of right to homestead land, channelise the voices of the marginalized communities, particularly women to demand and claim their homestead rights and entitlements, and bring forward this issue in the priority areas of the government of Bihar for urgent initiative and action.



Workshop in Delhi

The first workshop was held on 8th May, 2010 at IIC, New Delhi. On this occasion, the Report was formally released by the eminent economist and member of Planning Commission of India, Prof. Abhijit Sen, and was discussed by eminent panelists like Justice (ret'd) Rajinder Sachchar, former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court, Dr. Praveen Jha, Associate Professor of Economics, JNU, Dr. Praveen Sinha, Senior Labour Advisor, Fredrick Ebert Foundation India, Dr. Miloon Kothari, UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Prof. Imtiaz Ahmed, Chairperson, Deshkal Society, and Prananjay Guha Thakurta, eminent journalist and writer. The Report was highly commended by the panelists for the valuable insights it provides on various dimensions of the issue of right to housing and homestead land.



Workshop in Patna

The second workshop was held on 25th June, 2010 at the A.N. Sinha Institute, Patna, Bihar. The programme began with a formal release of the report by Shri Narendra Narayan Yadav, Hon'ble Minister of Revenue and Land Reforms, Govt. of Bihar followed by a discussion by eminent panelists like Shri Vyasji, Principal Secretary, Deptt. of Labour, Govt. of Bihar, Prof. D.M. Diwakar, Director, A.N. Sinha Institute, Patna, Ms. Arundhuti Roy Choudhury, Social Development Advisor, DFID India, Ms. Jyoti Devi, eminent Dalit woman activist and Shri Kapileshwar Ram, Dalit leader, Bihar. The workshop was also addressed by Justice Shiv Kirti Singh, Hon'ble Judge, Patna High Court, as the Chief Guest of the programme. Dr. Shaibal Gupta, Member Secretary, ADRI, Patna chaired the panel discussion.

On this occasion, five women and men, primarily from marginalized communities, were also honoured for their commitment and consistent work for the realization of land rights of the landless and marginalized communities in different parts of Bihar.

About The Report

The Report on Right to Housing and Homestead Land in Rural Bihar: Status, Issues and Challenges has sought to analyse the issue of the right to housing and homestead land in rural areas in its various dimensions, and has focused on identifying the reasons for the large number of rural landless and marginalized community households in Bihar being denied these rights. It is based on secondary as well as primary data. While the magnitude of rural housing shortage and the provisions in laws and policies, particularly in Bihar, have been discussed and analysed on the basis of secondary data, primary micro data from the critical learnings and experiences especially from the efforts and initiatives undertaken by Deshkal Society in partnership with GNK and LSSK for facilitating the realisation of the right to homestead land in 361 villages of Gaya District in Bihar under the first phase of PACS Programme of DFID India has been used to analyse the administrative practices



and procedures involved in the process of acquiring access and ownership rights over homestead land in rural Bihar and to identify the reasons for the large number of eligible landless rural and marginalized communities households being denied these rights.

Bihar was one of the first states in India to enact a law, the Bihar Privileged Persons Homestead Tenancy Act, 1947, to grant permanent homestead rights to the rural landless and marginalized communities to settle on rai-yati land. Since then various other policies and provisions have also been made by the government of Bihar for granting homestead rights over gairmazarua khas/malik and gairmazarua aam land as well as for allotting house-sites to those without access to land. Though these laws, policies and provisions are very clear and simple, it is unfortunate that Bihar today ranks first among the states in terms of rural housing shortage.

The report suggests that the government urgently needs to adopt a multi-pronged approach to deal with these numerous obstacles and to streamline the administrative processes and procedures. There is a need to identify all the landless households that do not have access to and ownership rights over homestead land, to adopt a proactive approach and act in a mission mode to reach out to all those who need to be granted right to housing and homestead land.

The discussions and deliberations of the workshops helped in building an orientation on how to consolidate the agenda of right to homestead land, and develop a future strategy to carry it forward. The programme has also created a ground for policy advocacy on the agenda as well as for facilitating the ongoing processes at the level of action. The extensive media coverage that the programme received has also brought forward the agenda forcefully in the public space.