

PARTNERING TO MAKE BUDGETS WORK FOR THE PEOPLE

Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement (SVYM) – India

Founded in 1984 in the state of Karnataka, SVYM works to build a new civil society in India through its grassroots to policy-level action in health, education, and community development. To promote communities' efforts toward self-reliance, SVYM strives to develop local, innovative, and cost-effective solutions to sustain community-driven progress. The organization is primarily dedicated to providing services to poor and marginalized communities. In the area of health, SVYM operates hospitals and mobile health units in rural areas and provides primary and secondary health care services, including maternal and child health care, eye care, and such HIV/AIDS services as testing, counseling, and anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment. SVYM also carries out activities related to reproductive and child health, water and sanitation, and tuberculosis control. The organization's research and advocacy work focuses on health, education, and the right to information. SVYM has conducted social audit work in the past and has started to include health-sector public expenditure tracking in its work, as well.

SVYM Helps Displaced Tribal Groups Obtain Compensation and Rehabilitation Package from the Government

When SVYM began working on community farming in Mysore district of southern Karnataka in 1996, the organization discovered that the tribal groups there were still facing serious injustices as a result of being forcibly displaced from their land years before. In the 1960s five tribal groups living in the huge forest around the Kabini River were forcibly evicted and their land was submerged to create a reservoir. In 1972 tribal land around the Begur Forest was declared a protected area and became the Bandipur National Park. Tribal families were again forcibly evicted, moved to resettlements, and no longer permitted to collect forest products within the reserve. These communities lost their forest-based livelihoods, yet the government did not adequately compensate them or provide proper rehabilitation.

Around the time that SVYM began working with the tribal communities, the state government published a notification in *The Gazette of India* that 2,999 tribal families displaced by the Kabini Reservoir had received rehabilitation assistance and a total of about 6,221 acres of land had been released to them. The reality was that very few families had been rehabilitated and no land had been released. A few years

later, the tribal communities displaced by the Bandipur National Park were offered a mere Rs. 12,000 (US\$ 255) per acre as compensation for their land, which they refused. During the period 1988-1996, tensions escalated between the tribal communities and the state Forest Department, which managed the national park. In one case, an activist was shot down by a Forest Department guard, and in another, four tribal people were beaten up by Forest Department personnel. When the people

INDIA
Open Budget Index 2008
Overall Score: 60%
Government provides some information to the public on how it manages public resources.

Availability of budget documents critical for effective public input:	
Pre-Budget Statement	No
Executive's Budget Proposal	Yes
Citizens Budget	Yes
Enacted Budget	Yes
In-Year Reports	Yes
Mid-Year Review	Yes
Year-End Report	Yes
Audit Report	Yes
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brought these incidents to the police, the police refused to act on them. Fearing further harassment, the tribal communities filed a case against the Forest Department under the Prevention of Atrocities Act, with the support of SVYM.



In 1996 SVYM petitioned the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) about the following issues: inadequate rehabilitation and resettlement assistance for tribal communities affected by the reservoir and the national park, harassment by Forest Department personnel, and police inaction in cases filed under the Prevention of Atrocities Act. A member of the NHRC (a former Chief Justice of India) visited Mysore to investigate the situation and then appointed a special rapporteur to collect facts about the case from government officials, SVYM, and community members. From 1997 to 1999, the NHRC's interventions led to a number of meetings with high-level state officials, including the Forest Department Secretary and the Chief Secretary of Karnataka (the head of the state government). Afterwards, the police withdrew their cases against the tribal communities and the communities withdrew their atrocity cases against Forest Department personnel.

SVYM subsequently pressured the state government to submit a proposal to the national Ministry of Forests to return 500 acres

of land under the Forest Conservation Act to the tribal communities, but the proposal was rejected. In early 2000, the tribal communities approached the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to request assistance. The National Commission then met with the Chief Secretary of Karnataka, and an alternative site was identified for the resettlement and rehabilitation of the tribal communities.

In April 2001 the Chief Minister of Karnataka finally met with the tribal communities and listened to their grievances and recommendations. Following the meeting, the Chief Minister called a special cabinet meeting of senior ministers and bureaucrats, which was held at SVYM's campus. The cabinet decided to consider a rehabilitation package for the affected tribal communities, which included land. In the meantime, SVYM also approached India's Prime Minister about the rehabilitation package. In August 2002 a member of parliament raised the issue of the alternative site for tribal resettlement in the Rajya Sabha (Council of States within the Parliament),

however the national government turned down the alternative site. The NHRC continued to advocate intensely around the case. In January 2003, at the insistence of the NHRC, the Chief Minister of Karnataka announced the release of the land and committed to providing a rehabilitation package to the tribal communities. A state oversight committee for tribal rehabilitation was formed to vet beneficiaries, articulate local needs, and ensure local monitoring of the implementation process. The committee was made up of NHRC and SVYM representatives, as well as representatives of the tribal communities.

To implement the rehabilitation package a list of 154 beneficiary families was finalized, houses were constructed, two residential areas were designed based on the needs of the communities, basic services were established, and title deeds were allotted. The beneficiary families were given one hectare of land; a house; agricultural equipment; a pair of bullocks; vessels, utensils, and other household needs; and one year's supply of food and groceries for each family.

SVYM's Participation in the Partnership Initiative

For its project with the Partnership Initiative, SVYM is using expenditure tracking to study the flow of financial resources through the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), the goal of which is to improve the availability of and access to quality health care for the rural poor. While a significant amount of resources is being allocated to the NRHM, there is a serious concern about underutilization and misuse of funds. Anecdotally, there are a number of factors that have been alleged to cause underutilization: inadequate guidelines for fund utilization; delays in the disbursement of funds; obstacles in the sanction of the funds to the end user and in approval of expenses; limited competence among the field staff and *Panchayat* (local governing body) members in planning, understanding of procedures, and financial management; and misuse of funds by field functionaries, especially the *Panchayat* members and local-level health officials. In order to gather evidence on these allegations, SVYM is analyzing the allocation and adequacy of NRHM resources as well as delivery processes, outputs, service quality as perceived by users, accountability, transparency, and the timeliness of disbursements.

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The IBP's Partnership Initiative is a collaborative effort that seeks to enhance the impact of civil society budget work in selected countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The initiative strives to contribute to the development of sustainable institutions; to increase public access to timely, reliable, and useful information; to enhance the effective participation of civil society in policy and budget processes; and to establish a platform of good practices on which future generations of civil society can build.