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Centre for Civil Society hosted a Policy Forum on Alternative Service Delivery Mechanisms for 12 Parliamentarians

Monday, August 13, 2012

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New Delhi: Centre for Civil Society successfully hosted a Policy Forum on Alternative Service Delivery Mechanisms for 12 Parliamentarians at the Constitution Club of India in New Delhi on 9 August. Former Chief Economist of the Asian Development Bank, Advisor to the World Bank and Professor of Indian Political Economy at Columbia University, Dr. Arvind Panagariya opened the floor for discussion.

The concept of Alternative Service Delivery Mechanisms, according to Dr. Panagariya constituted a two-fold objective of combating poverty and making available a socially desirable basket of goods. Several ideas were presented to the Members of Parliament as options available within Alternative Service Delivery Mechanisms, such as vouchers and cash transfers. Dr. Panagariya brought attention to the value benefit of transitioning from traditional delivery mechanisms to Alternative Service Delivery Mechanisms; the transfer of power from the provider to the beneficiary.

Attended Parliamentarians raised captivating points and drew to specific schemes currently being tested in the Indian market to evaluate the efficacy and efficiency of Alternative Service Delivery Mechanisms. Questions and alternatives contributed to greater involvement and raised questions about our political focus. "A large part of the success was that all members were extremely open and participatory, and this dynamism should encourage a formal parliamentary forum on Alternative Service Delivery Mechanisms," said Parth J Shah, President of Centre for Civil Society.

Kalikes Singh Deo, BJD, MP from Orissa questioned the metrics that define poverty and government monitoring mechanisms to check leakages through cash transfers. Members like P.D. Rai, the incumbent MP from Sikkim, attempted to address the question by drawing to success stories of the mid-day meal scheme. Analysis brewed as Piyush Goyal of the BJP speculated whether there was a real difference between cash transfers and subsidies, with the former only being a subset of the latter. Rajya Sabha MP Prakash Javdekar asked several pointed questions and pointed out education, as an exceptional space where subsidies were desirable.

The event concluded with a mutual realisation that there is an immediate need to generate a political will to transform entitlement politics to empowerment politics. Other attendees included Prakash Javdekar, P.L. Punia, Jayant Choudhary, T. Ratna Bai, Ninong

Ering, Vivek Gupta, M.N Haque and Rangasayee Ramakrishna.



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