

Press Brief

Shri Jairam Ramesh, Union Minister of Rural Development launches the profile book of Prime Minister's Rural Development Fellows and announces the recruitment of second batch of Fellows.

New Delhi, 06 November 2013

Shri Jairam Ramesh, Union Minister of Rural Development, launched the profile book of Prime Minister's Rural Development (PMRD) Fellows and announced the recruitment of second batch of the ongoing PMRDF Scheme at Unnati Conference Hall of KrishiBhavan today. Mr. Ramesh also interacted with media representatives on the occasion. The book profiles the current batch of 138 Fellows spread over 83 districts across 9 States and shares their experiences with the Fellowship in their own words. One hundred forty Fellows will be selected in the second batch through a competitive process starting with an online All India Competency Assessment Test (AICAT) to be held on 15th December 2013.

Mr. Ramesh notes that helping the poor get their place in the society and development of underdeveloped regions remains a major challenge before the country. The task is much more complex than is commonly understood. It calls for a high degree of professionalization of our development interventions and a great sense of empathy while dealing with the underprivileged. We have an acute scarcity of professional human resources in the districts and for working with the poor. This is more so in the underdeveloped regions of our country. We need to expand the pool of professional human resources to confront the challenge of poverty head-on. PMRD Fellowship is a unique effort to address this challenge.

He has remained personally in touch with the State Governments as well as with the current batch of Fellows and is enthused by the results so far. His field visits, interactions, media reports, reflective self-profiles of the Fellows in the PMRDFellows blog and the Facebook narrations has showed that the Fellows are working hard. In his travels to these districts he often met them and was impressed by their commitment and passion.

PMRD Fellowship is an initiative of the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) where the focus is to reduce poverty and improve the lives of people in rural India. PMRD Fellowship is being implemented in collaboration with State Governments.

The Fellowship is a short term work opportunity for young women and men who already possess academic and/or professional expertise. During the two-year duration of the Fellowship, PMRD Fellows work closely with District Collectors of backward and remote districts in improving programme delivery and interface with marginalized sections, aiming to reduce

the developmental and governance deficits. Alongside, through structured learning exercises and events the Fellows get an opportunity to build their capacity in programme implementation, gain field experience and explore self-motivation as well as life goals. Thus the PMRDF scheme has the twin objective of providing short term catalytic support to the District Administration to improve the effectiveness of development programmes as well as to develop a cadre of development facilitators, who will be available as a ready resource for rural development activities over a long term.

PMRD Fellowship was launched in September 2011 and the first batch of Fellows joined in June 2012. Fellows were selected through a highly competitive process conducted by Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS).

MoRD now launches the PMRD Fellowship II after incorporating lessons from the first. In addition to filling up vacancies in the existing districts, Fellows will also be placed in the North Eastern States.

PMRD Fellows of the second batch, as they continue their work in the districts, will simultaneously participate in a post graduate degree programme through e-enabled distance learning and contact sessions leading to M.Sc/M.Phil in Development Practice, to be conducted by TISS. Immediately after successful completion of the fellowship, a PMRD Fellow will be required to spend at least one year in public service as a paid full-time employee of the State Rural Livelihood Mission in the State she/he is assigned to.

In the words of SwetaTrayambak, PMRD Fellow:

I am privileged enough to get an opportunity to work with the Sabars&Birhors (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups), the poorest of the poor as we know them.....

.....Suppression of women is really disheartening for me. So I planned to mobilize and form women's groups so that they can understand and support each other. The best practices I observed were that groups themselves started forming other groups and started sharing important information among them. Now the groups want to move a step further i.e. to work on enhancing livelihood sources. During my one year tenure as PMRD Fellow, I came across very sad incident about an old lady who died on her way to post office to collect old age pension. This incident made me to think that development does not only mean visiting fields but it also means making the people's accessibility easier. To solve this sort of problems, we (along with district administration) are implementing payment at door step through business correspondent model.

I consider myself fortunate to be a PMRD Fellow as it gave me an opportunity to reach people, understand their problems and empower them and to channelize their voices into the existing government system for better policy and implementation. I hope with my sincere efforts, innovative ideas, technology and support from district administration, I would be able to make some difference in the lives of the people specially women at the end of my second year and my efforts would go on.....

Sweta is based at Ramgarh district in Jharkhand. She is a post graduate in Entrepreneurship Management from XLRI, Jamshedpur. She has worked on the issues of education, entrepreneurship, women empowerment and livelihoods for more than three years before joining PMRDF.

To read the experiences of PMRD Fellows, please visit: pmdrfellows.wordpress.com

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/pmrdfofficialpage

Official website: <http://rural.nic.in/pmrdfs/>