
Tracer Study on
Citizen's Assessment of NREGS in Sirohi, Rajasthan

Background

CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART), a programme centre of CUTS International, established in 1996 at Jaipur, Rajasthan, India, had implemented second pilot to test again the potential of social accountability (SAc) approaches in establishing accountability of the service providers. This pilot was done in collaboration with The World Bank and used mainly two tools of SAc: Citizen Report Card (CRC) and Community Score Card (CSC). Through the use of these two tools, CUTS CART assessed the implementation of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in 2007-08.

Under this project, the CSC was used first time in Rajasthan for assessment of any scheme and probably first time utilised in India in the assessment of NREGS. The dissemination of the findings of the assessment at various levels of implementing hierarchy contributed towards many operational and policy changes. The study provided a lot of recommendations for further improvement in the implementation of the schemes. Many provided the policy makers and service providers a food for thought at that time, few of them were implemented at that time and few are still a matter of discussion in the courtyards of policy makers for further improvement. This tracer study aims at figuring out those improvements in the implementation of SAc tools after one year.

Objectives of the Study

The overall aim of the study was to trace the impact of the second pilot project on social accountability after one year:

- trace the outcome of the policy implications emerged out of the pilot project; and
- find out the change in the status of implementation of the NREGS.

Methodology

The methodology used in the study includes the secondary information, one-to-one meeting with service providers, focused group discussions (FGDs) with beneficiaries and mate and general observation.

Findings of the Tracer Study

- **Recommendation:** Possibility of convergence of various government schemes related to health, education, income generation with NREGS should be explored.

Impact: Union Finance Minister Pranav Mukharjee has announced that convergence of NREGS with other schemes related to agriculture, forest, water resources, land resources and rural roads are being initiated to increase the productivity of assets and resources under National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). In the first stage, a total of 115 pilot districts have been selected for convergence. <http://www.dare.co.in/news/others/convergence-of-nregs-with-other-related-schemes-to-be-initiated-finance-minister.htm>

Linkage: CUTS cannot claim that this announcement of Union Finance Minister is only because of the recommendation made under CUTS pilot. But CUTS pilot should have contributed towards this outcome.

While evaluating the performance of NREGS of the districts of Rajasthan, CUTS came to know from the then Sirahi District Collector Siddharth

Mahajan that Amita Sharma, Joint Secretary, NREGA wanted to view CUTS' assessment of NREGS in Sirohi. The report was sent to Amita Sharma on January 16, 2009.

Sayed Hameed, Member, Planning Commission, visited Rajasthan to get the feedback of civil society organisation (CSO). CUTS was invited in the meeting where it presented the findings and recommendation of the SA pilot on NREGS.

- **Recommendation:** Setting up a local helpline on call centre model with a toll free number.

Impact: The Ministry of Rural Development in India has set up a national helpline number in order to enable NREGA beneficiaries seek assistance from the Ministry and other NREGA authorities. The national helpline consists of a toll free *Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited* (MTNL) number (1800110707) that will be duly publicised and used by the NREGA households and other individuals and groups to raise their questions, submit their grievances and complaints and seek guidance from the Ministry. State governments and districts have been requested to obtain helpline numbers and engage dedicated persons for its management. <http://www.igovernment.in/site/India-to-set-up-helpline-for-NREGA-households/>

Rajendra Bhanavat, Rural Development Secretary and Commissioner NREGS announced setting up of a district helpline in Kota in April 2009. The helpline number will be 1077 and accessible from any corner of the district.

Linkage: Rajendra Bhanavat, Rural Development Secretary and Commissioner NREGS was present in the state level dissemination meeting for disseminating pilot's findings and recommendations on July 16, 2008.

- While describing various impacts created through the implementation of the tool, Chandrakant Vaishnav told that the people in his *gram panchayat* have become more aware and interested towards the implementation of scheme and have become vigilant by asking questions. He himself accepted that he has become more accountable towards the people and developed the understanding about the accountability issues and problems of the demand side of any service delivery after the use of CSC.

Linkage: Chandrakant Vaishnav is the elected representative (*Sarpanch*) of the *Gram Panchayat* Vatera, where CSC was executed

- The Rajasthan Health System Development Project (RHSDP) is working in 348 facilities in Rajasthan and very much inclined to use CSC for the enhancement in the effectiveness of service delivery. It has invited CUTS to put up a proposal to conduct CSC for assessing the performance under RHSDP. They want to do pilot in few of the districts in Rajasthan and then extend it to other districts. The collaboration is under progress and can be seen as a beginning of institutionalisation.

Linkage: The Additional Director of RHSDP, Rashmi Sharma came to know CUTS using community score card through the effort of CUTS liaison with government officials for creating a market for social accountability approaches. CUTS' effort and the World Bank's interference to incorporate SA approaches in RHSDP worked together and Rashmi Sharma called CUTS to submit the expression of interest for utilising the approaches to improve accountability in RHSDP.

- The social audits are only symbolic in Rajasthan and it was one of the major findings under the project on NREGS implemented in Sirohi district. After Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan is now working towards institutionalising social audits of the NREGS. The Rajasthan State government with the help of CSOs

initiated a ten-day long exercise in Bhilwara. Now a social audit directorate has also been set up in the state.

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2009/10/20/stories/2009102050400500.htm>

- Several other policy and operational changes took place after the implementation of the project which can be viewed at: <http://www.cuts-international.org/CART/pdf/NREGS.pdf>

Limitations of the Study

- The number of respondents was less.
- The government officials positioned at the time of implementation at respective positions got transferred in most of the cases.
- This study was done after a year of completion of the pilot projects, and there was no such intervention in continuation of that study.