

District Level Dissemination
Zilla Parishad Hall, Sirohi, May 21, 2008.

**‘Assessing 2Qs (Quality & Quantity) Outputs of the
‘National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme’ (NREGS),
as per provisions of NREGA (2005) in Sirohi District of Rajasthan**

Organised by

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Introduction

CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART) organised a one-day District Level Dissemination meeting at *Zilla Parishad* Hall, Sirohi on May 21, 2008 under the project 'Assessing the Qualitative and Quantitative Output of NREGS' in Sirohi, as per the provision of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), 2005., The project is being implemented in partnership with the World Bank.

Objective

The objective of conducting District Level Dissemination was to disseminate the findings of the assessment done under the project across the relevant stakeholders. This was mainly to show them the picture of the status of implementation of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in their district. It also aimed to suggest measures to rectify the gaps for further smooth implementation.

Background

CUTS CART has been putting its efforts in the area of governance since long. Under this project, three tools of the social accountability, namely Citizen Report Card (CRC), Community Score Card (CSC) and Participatory Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) for assessment of NREGS were developed. Along with these tools, the findings, which were presented at this meeting at Sirohi included other community meetings and group discussions.

The sample drawn for CRC included one member from 829 sample households, 30 *sarpanch* (*Panchayati Raj Institutions or PRIs representative at the Gram Panchayat level*), 60 *panchayat/assistant secretaries* and 75 *mates* (*supervisors at worksite*). The samples were drawn purely on random sampling methodology, which was scientific to avoid any biasness in the study.

Participants

The event observed an active participation of more than 50 relevant stakeholders representing all the three tiers of PRIs, various levels of government officials from grassroots to district level, media persons and other common citizens being benefited under the scheme of NREGS. The *sarpanch*, who took part in the process of CRC and CSC, were present in the dissemination meeting.

The notable dignitaries participated in the event were: Siddharth Mahajan, District Collector, Sirohi; Ashfaque Hussain, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), *Zila Parishad*, Sirohi; OP Chauhan, Executive Engineer (NREGS), *Zila Parishad*, Sirohi; Anna Ram Borana, *Zila Pramukh*; Padma Kunwar, *Pradhan*, *Reodar Panchayat Samiti*; Anadaram, *Pradhan*, Abu Road; and three programme officers of NREGS from the blocks Abu Road, Pindwada and Sheoganj of Sirohi district.

Proceedings

The District Level Dissemination began with the welcome address by **Om Prakash Arya** of CUTS, followed by an introductory remark by **George Cheriyan**, Director CUTS. **Cheriyan** outlined the achievements of the project during one year of intervention in the district and discussed the reliability of the findings as the scientific methods were applied for sampling and analysis. He also reiterated that the tool of CRC is used for the first time in history of Rajasthan which is drawing the international attention towards the district. It has been proved through findings that Andhra Pradesh may be an advanced state due to e-governance and other technological upgradation, Rajasthan, especially Sirohi district is far ahead in implementation it at the grassroots level, he argued.

Om Prakash Arya made a PowerPoint presentation on the findings of the assessment, the process involved in the assessment and the methodology adopted. He mentioned the sample size, the criteria for sampling, the methodology for sampling and a few of the key tools under the project and their outcomes. He stated that the findings are on the basis of the perceptions given by the beneficiaries of the scheme. So wherever there are problems in reality, it needs to be explored and rectified or effort should be made to change the perception, he added.

Anna Ram Borana said that some of the issues need to be covered in the study next time which is missing. His emphasis was on the problem of negligence being faced by PRIs. In reality, the scheme is being implemented by PRI members and the credit must go to them, he said. He also threw light on the need for including the work of land development for marginal farmers under NREGS and small roads constructed by public works department (PWD).

Ashfaq Hussain appreciated the work done by the PRI functionaries. He referred to the findings as inspiring and gave the credit for such better implementation to local authorities. He congratulated the local machinery and appealed to continue it in the same way.

OP Chauhan, while pointing out the experience of his exposure visit to Hyderabad, said that most of the work being sanctioned at Hyderabad was found '*Kuchcha*' whereas the situation is better in Sirohi. He acknowledged their advancement in the area of technology like smart card and software they have with them for better pattern of management information system (MIS).

Padma Kunwar showed her consent to some of the findings and disagreed with a few of them as well. She pointed out that few of the provisions of the NREGA and said that these are being violated every now and then. She showed unhappiness over the way the scheme is being implemented. On the issue of food security, **Kunwar** showed her concern and told that small farmers are facing much problem due to rise in the labour cost.

Anadaram, Pradhan said that the scheme is propelling due to active participation of the PRI members and nearly 80 percent labourers are coming for work but there is lack of sanctioned work.

Seema Kavia, Programme Officer, Sheoganj, showed her dissent to a few of the findings like high percentage of error in measurement, absence of quick redressal of the grievances. She said that 50 percent female *mates* have been trained and now the female *mates* can be found substantially at the worksite.

Siddharth Mahajan, in his valedictory speech, referred to the study unbiased, close to reality and a few recommendations as very convincing. However, he also denies a few of the findings of the study like availability of water at the work site and the percentage of women working under NREGS. **Mahajan** clarified that the dissatisfaction in people in case of measurement arises due to task-based work. When they do not get full wage, they think there is error in measurement, he argued. Replying to a few issues raised in the meeting, he appealed to the *panchayat* level authorities to send the proposals in priority for sanction, as he does not understand the grassroots reality. He informed the participants that in the first year of implementation of NREGS was amount 35 crore, which has increased to 65 crore in the second year, which would not have become a reality without the hard work of PRI representatives and *panchayat* secretaries.

In the end, **Dharamendra Chaturvedi** of CUTS gave hearty thanks to all the participants for their active participation in the meeting and invited them for lunch.

Few Key Findings

Positives

- It has provided employment during lean season in own villages itself (97 percent).
- It has improved facilities in the villages (94 percent).
- It has ultimately helped in reducing migration (93 percent).
- It has helped in increasing the monthly income (87 percent).
- It has helped in creating assets, which will result in sustainable livelihoods (85 percent) and
- It has increased bargaining power of labourers.

Concerns

- Lack of awareness about entitlements (63 percent)
- Lack of participation in the decision making process (42 percent) as people were not informed.
- Dissatisfaction on the process of measurement of work done (50 percent).
- No effective grievances redressal mechanism available (39 percent)
- Absence of social audit as per the provisions of NREGA

Highlights/Outcomes

- The District Level Dissemination meeting provided an opportunity to share the findings of study among the government officials, PRI functionaries, community-based organisations (CBOs), media and common citizens. The event made them aware of the real situation in the field and encouraged them to take measures for rectifications. This resulted in a step towards getting better implementation in the field and hence better governance.
 - The meeting helped the project in getting feedback from the key stakeholders about the study done under the project and hence learning experience.
 - The media coverage fostered a sense of participation in governmental schemes among common citizens and helped in understanding the motives, status and gaps related to implementation of the NREGS and hence strengthen the process of social accountability.
 - It also provided an opportunity to the representatives of CSOs and other stakeholders to get acquainted with the ongoing problems/condition in the implementation and the reasons behind. This event could put the stakeholders in a thinking process for achieving more accurate implementation.
 - The meeting could be able to make people aware of the various tools and techniques and process of social accountability and its credibility in ensuring good governance.
 - The event witnessed a very good participation of both electronic and print media and resulted in wider coverage.
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