

Project Launch Meeting
Zilla Parishad Hall, SIROHI August 09, 2007

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

Event Report

Organised by

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I. Background

1.1 CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART) organised a one-day Project Launch Meeting at *Zilla Parishad* Hall, Sirohi on August 09, 2007. This was the formal launch of the project “Assessment of the Qualitative and Quantitative Output of NREGS Project in Sirohi” at the district level.

1.2 CUTS CART, in partnership with the World Bank, has conceptualised and finalised the project for the promotion of social accountability and achieving the practices of good governance through civic engagements so that budget allocated for the development of poor and marginalised sections can be utilised efficiently.

1.3 The project will assess the output of NREGS in Sirohi district of Rajasthan by using various social accountability tools such as Citizen Report Cards (CRC), Community Score Cards (CSC) and Participatory Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) The overall objective of the project is to generate awareness and enhance the transparency and accountability in the implementation of NREGS by engaging the common citizens, community-based organisations (CBOs), Media and *Panchayati Raj* Institution (PRI) functionaries.

II. Participants

2.1 The dignitaries participated in the event were: Siddharth Mahajan, District Collector, Sirohi; Ashfaque Hussain, CEO, *Zilla Parishad*; Anna Ram Borana, *Zilla Pramukh*; Loomba Ram Chaudhary, *Pradhan*, Sirohi *Panchayat Samiti*; and O P Chauhan, Executive Engineer (NREGS).



2.2 The event witnessed an active participation of around 60 relevant stakeholders representing various civil society organizations (CSOs), PRIs, Government Officials of concerned departments, media persons and other common citizens being benefited under NREGS.

III. Proceedings

3.1 Inaugural Session

3.1.1 The meeting commenced with a welcome speech by Rajendra Kumar Sharma, Deputy Head, CUTS CART. Welcoming the participants, he described the purpose of the project, various aspects of implementation of NREGS in the district and then invited the stakeholders to join hands to ensure good governance through social accountability. He also stated the actual position of various programmes in the state implemented earlier and authenticated this project by mentioning CUTS CART's earlier project "Assessing the Output of Mid-day Meal Scheme".



3.1.2 George Cheriyan, Associate Director, CUTS and Head, CUTS CART, introduced the concept of social accountability and narrated its credibility in making the power holders accountable towards common citizens. In today's fast changing world, he said, there is a need to shift from the traditional focus of supply side to demand side of institutions by applying social accountability mechanisms. Speaking on the importance of social accountability, George said that it is vital for achieving good governance, citizen empowerment and development effectiveness. He described accountability relationships between policy makers, service providers and the poor people stating the need for strengthening the power of the client or the consumer (the end beneficiary). He also described various tools of social accountability and its process of implementation, including nature of linkages between the key stakeholders in the process.

Speaking on the emergence of CUTS from a grassroots level organisation with zero initial budget to an international level organisation, he inspired the small NGOs present in the meeting. Seeking the support from the entire stakeholders, George appealed them to take it as their own project with their full and active participation. He also pointed out the applicability of the findings of the project in the areas where NREGS is being implemented or will be implemented.

3.1.2 Om Prakash Arya from CUTS CART made a power point presentation on the highlights of the project covering the background, the objectives, methodologies, tools major activities, expected outcomes etc.



3.1.3 Siddhart Mahajan, District Collector, Sirohi, started his inaugural speech describing World Bank's keen interest in the implementation of this social accountability project. He promised to extend full support of the district administration for successful implementation of the project. During his speech, he pinpointed several aspects of the implementation of NREGS in the area. He said that the quality of the implementation of NREGS is satisfactory in comparison to the other programmes related to the employment. He also pointed out the gender inequality quoting that 80 percent or more of the beneficiaries are women but at the supervisory level, women are negligible. Hence, the Collector emphasised the need for appointing female *Mats* (supervisors) during the implementation of the scheme, including the need for capacity building of *Mats* for proper monitoring. He informed that some initiative like training of *Mats*, format development for monitoring etc., have been taken up by the administration.

He suggested that the study under this project should be independent and should reveal the facts and figures at the grassroots level so that corrective measures can be taken for better further implementation. He hoped that this assessment will be useful for not only Sirohi but also to the entire country. He also raised the issue of migration in the district.

3.1.4 Anna Ram Borana, *Zilla Pramukh* reiterated the importance of the scheme for downtrodden and deprived sections of the society. He put his concern forward to the stakeholders for the successful implementation of the scheme. He emphasised the need for adding the NREGS scheme to the scheme of construction of houses for the poor and deprived section of the society.

3.1.4 Ashfaque Hussain, CEO, *Zilla Parishad*, Sirohi, discovered the reason for low wages. He said that the average wage in Sirohi is more than the national average wage under the scheme but it has not reached to Rs 73. The reason behind this, as he said, is reluctance of workers to provide the labour demanded for a day by the programme. Many workers see it as

a famine relief programme and just seek attendance in the Muster Roll. He appealed to the community to extend appropriate labour and build asset for their villages. He sought support from various agencies to come forward for making the scheme more successful.

3.1.5 Other participants including the representatives of NGOs, *Panchayat Samiti*, other than above-mentioned Government Officials and beneficiaries also pointed out their concern regarding implementation of the NREGS and its scope. Woman *Sarpanch* Meera Yadav told that there is a need of logical and behavioural measurement of the works done by the labourers. 'There should be more appropriate tools and techniques for the measurements of the work done' she said.

3.1.6 Mahesh Yadav of *Jan Chetana Sansthan* pointed out that this scheme should not be advertised as mere an employment guarantee scheme but as a sustainable means of livelihood through asset creation. Executive Engineer of NREGS O P Chauhan presented the relevant data and problems in the implementation of NREGS in Sirohi and expected support from various stakeholders. K M Jain, representative, *SAROKAR*, a local NGO, promised to extend support to CUTS CART in its assessment project. Female beneficiary Leela pointed out the need for hike in wages and told that it is difficult to sustain lives in such a meager amount.

3.1.7 In the end, Om Prakash Arya thanked all the participants for their active participation in the meeting. The meeting concluded with lunch.

IV. Highlights/Outcomes

4.1 The project launch meeting provided an opportunity to draw attention of Government officials, PRI functionaries, CBOs, Media and Common Citizen towards the need for ensuring good governance for successful implementation of various developmental programmes.

4.2 The event of project launch and its media coverage helped immensely to move further to fulfill its aims and objectives and promote social accountability.

4.3 The meeting also provided an opportunity to the representatives of CSOs and other stakeholders to get acquainted with the ongoing problems/condition in the implementation NREG Scheme and the reasons behind. This event could put the stakeholders in a thinking process for achieving more accurate implementation.

4.4 The meeting provided an opportunity for the participants to understand various tools, techniques and process of social accountability, and its credibility in ensuring good governance.

4.5 The event witnessed a very good participation of both electronic and print media and resulted in wider coverage.