

State Level Dissemination Meeting

Under the Project

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

July 16, 2008, Jaipur

Introduction

CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART), in partnership with The World Bank, organised a State Level Dissemination Meeting (SLDM) under the project ‘Assessing 2Qs (Quality & Quantity) Outputs of the 'National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme' (NREGS), as per the provision of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, being implemented in Sirohi District of Rajasthan, at Patel Bhawan, Jaipur on July 16, 2008

Background

Social Accountability refers to the broad range of actions and mechanisms that citizens, communities, civil society organizations (CSOs) and independent media can use to hold public officials and servants accountable. The various tools of Social Accountability, like Citizen Report Card (CRC), Community Score Card (CSC) and Participatory Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) can be effectively used for rejuvenating the governance agenda.

Using these tools, CUTS CART assessed the implementation of NREGS and brought out the report of the citizens on delivery of various services entitled under NREGS. The report of nearly 1025 people including service recipients (825) and service providers (200) collected through CRC and the findings were disseminated in presence of policy makers, senior bureaucrats, Panchayat Raj Institution (PRI) representatives, CSOs and media persons in the Dissemination Meeting.

In partnership with The World Bank, CUTS CART has conceptualised it as 2nd pilot study in the field of Social Accountability and implemented the project in the Sirohi district of Rajasthan. During the project period, various stakeholders including service seekers, providers as well as CSOs were deeply engaged in the implementation of the project.

Objectives

The overall objective of dissemination was to propagate the effectiveness of Social Accountability tools and its potential to improve service delivery among policy makers as well as sharing of the key findings of the assessment.

Participants

The event experienced participation of around 50 relevant stakeholders including A K Pande, Additional Chief Secretary (Development), Rajendra Bhanawat, Secretary, Rural Development, Yaduvendra Mathur, Secretary, Planning, Anita Bhatt, Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to the Chief Minister of Rajasthan



Madhu Pokhrana, Director, Evaluation Unit, Department of Planning, Benjamin Powis, The World Bank, Sharada Jain, renown researcher and director, *Sandhan*, and representatives of CSOs, PRIs, media persons and others.

Details of the Proceeding

Screening of the Film

A film ‘Social Accountability in Action: Experiences from Grassroots’ showing the experiences from grassroots of using the tools of Social Accountability in getting better service delivery was shown to the participants. This film was widely appreciated by the viewers present in the meeting.

Welcome and Introduction

At the outset, George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS welcomed the distinguished participants and informed them of the importance of the day claiming it a red letter day for CUTS wherein four different activities – right from the grassroots to state, national and international level – happening under the umbrella of CUTS International simultaneously. He articulated the wide presence of CUTS and levels of its involvement.

Cheriyan introduced the governance and various Social Accountability approaches and outlined the purpose of the project including reasons for selecting Sirohi as project area, including the effort made for making the research scientific and also the objective of the project. He also mentioned the concerns of whole world on governance issues and described briefly the effectiveness of the Social Accountability tools which are capable of

raising client power and voice to demand accountability. He put forward the example of using Social Accountability tools in Mid Day Meal Schemes (MDMS) in implemented Chittorgarh district, which had resulted in a number of positive outcomes.

He demanded from the policy makers to institutionalise the use of the tools to improve various service deliveries and said that people are ready and capable enough to build the capacity of personnel from both Government & Non Government Organizations to use these effective tools.

Presentation of Key Findings

Om Prakash Arya of CUTS presented the key findings emerged out of the assessment of CRC, observations during CSC, Focused Group Discussions (FGDs), interviews, meetings, etc. Based on the observations, Arya presented certain recommendations categorised into three tiers of the system namely: *Gram Panchayat* Level; District Level; and the State Level for their quick adoption for change. A few of the key findings and recommendations are enlisted below.



Key Findings

- Provided employment during lean season in own villages itself (97 percent).
- Improved facilities in the villages (94 percent).
- Helped in reducing migration (93 percent).
- Helped in increasing the monthly income (87 percent).
- Improvement of the status of women in the family (75 percent).
- People prefer NREGS work while work available outside (61 percent).
- Helped in creating assets, which will result in sustainable livelihoods (85 percent).
- Increased bargaining power of labourers.
- 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 redress mechanism available (39 percent)
- Low Satisfaction on the components like Transparency & Accountability (48 percent) and honesty in implementation (56 percent).
- Absence of social audit as per the provisions of NREGA.
- Shortage of implementing staffs at various levels.

Recommendations

- Exclusive Programme Officers with the responsibility of only NREGS with all required infrastructure and powers (related to executing agency at grassroots) at every block..
- Direct recruitment of staff (with reasonable salary and qualification) for NREGS at *Gram Panchayat* level on contract without involvement of any external agency.
- A proper mechanism to accomplish social audit (Andhra Model, where an independent social audit council works for ensuring social audit) as per the provisions of the act.
- A parallel set up to the existing administrative set up, hiring of qualified people from the market to support for the proper implementation of the NREGS, can be established (West Bengal has adopted this model & the payment is made to them from contingency).
- A public private partnership for GO-NGO collaboration in the field of NREGS as being done in the field of education.

Panel Remarks

Commenting on the findings, A K Pande said that overall findings of the project are extremely complementary and all the findings and recommendations are accepted to the government. However, main problem is their implementation, he added. He also emphasised the need for an independent social audit to be done once in



year and an intensive awareness campaign with proper *Gram Sabha*. He also informed about the government plan to provide smart cards to 5 million people by which the beneficiaries will get all the benefits from government in their bank account.

Yaduvendra Mathur appreciated the effectiveness of the CSC tool for ensuring Social Accountability as shown in the film and suggested the evaluation cell of planning department and Centre for good governance (CGG) to work on CSC in collaboration with CUTS CART to investigate the possibilities of scaling up the tool in different schemes.

He talked about providing alternatives/choices to beneficiaries and developing the ability in them to choose from the various choices available. He also pointed out the need to develop skill in workers under NREGS and linking it to the livelihood programme.

Anita Bhatt appreciated the research findings and expected more qualitative outcomes through this kind of research and suggested to involve Self Help Groups (SHGs), CSOs,

NGOs for generating awareness about the provisions of NREGS. She informed that there is network of 2 lacs SHGs, which has huge potential.

Rajendra Bhanawat informed that the fund being expanded under NREGS will continue, so some amount of it should be kept for developing skills among labourers. He also emphasised the need of linking the workers to various self employment schemes by developing skills in them.

Bhanawat also voiced his concern about the people who get lesser wage due to the non-performers at the work site and called for conducting the group work and daily measurement at the work sites. On the issue of low participation of below poverty line (BPL) families shown in the study, he mentioned the presence of loopholes in selection of BPLs at many of the places because of which the benefits for BPL families are being grabbed by the above the poverty line (APL) families. He also informed about the announcement in the state budget that the roads made under NREGS will be made *Pucca* by Public Works Department (PWD) under *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana* (PMGSY). He also emphasised the need for strengthening the PRIs for conducting social audits.

Benjamin Powis suggested that the demand as well as supply side should evaluate and assess the different schemes using Social Accountability tools to make the service providers accountable. He also talked about scaling up the process of social accountability.

Discussions from Grassroots, CSOs and Others

Sharda Jain appreciated the methodology, sample size and endorsed the findings and stated that she had also come across with same kind of gaps during her visits to several places. She also mentioned an incident where the worker was not aware of the wage provisions.

Kedar P Shrimal of *Gramodaya Samajik Santhan*, an NGO working at Chaksu, Jaipur, said that labourers are getting much less than the statutory minimum wages. Besides, the *Mate* is not qualified and facilities are also not adequate, he added.

B R Chaudhary, Programme Officer, Sirohi talked about the steps being taken to root out gaps shown in the findings. He said that committees have been formed to generate awareness and the efforts are being made to make the employment demand driven. He endorsed the problem of staff-shortage as qualified staffs are not available in the districts like Sirohi. He also



stated one problem being faced due to advance sanction of work in NREGS at certain Basic Standard Rate (BSR) and implementation of those works at changed/increased BSR.

Chandrakant Vaisnav, *Sarpanch*, Watera *Gram Panchayat*, Sirohi boldly accepted that the social audits are not being done in appropriate manner. He also raised the question that why there is difference in the budget provided to *Gram Panchayat* and PWD for same work differs. Same road for which *Gram Panchayat* is sanctioned Rs.5 lacs, PWD get sanction of Rs. 14 lacs.

Conclusion and Vote of Thanks

George Cheriyan, in his concluding remarks, pointed out that the project aimed at finding out the highlights and gaps in the implementation of the scheme, which it has succeeded in and resulted in drawing three sets of recommendation for improvement at all levels. Government should institutionalise the efforts and involve, CUTS CART, which has the expertise with requisite funding support in capacity building of the CSOs as well as the Government Officials.

Dharmendra Chaturvedi proposed the vote of thanks. He thanked all the distinguished guests and participants, who attended State Level Dissemination Meeting from various places and gave special thanks to the stakeholders of Sirohi, who helped in the study for their efforts in various ways in supporting the project activities and showing their active presence in the meeting.

Highlights

- Majority of the expected policy influencing government officials arrived to the meeting and showed sign of important collaboration to scale up the tools of social accountability in to other sectors of development.
- Most of the findings were endorsed by other CSOs, researchers and officials and few of the problems found in study were taken seriously by the concerned authorities that can trigger and initiate administrative changes.
- Coinciding with the Assembly session, good media coverage can certainly draw attention of other policy makers.

THE HINDU • SUNDAY, JULY 20, 2008

Employment scheme checking migration

Also an increase in incomes of the local population in Sirohi district of Rajasthan

Special Correspondent

JAIPUR: An assessment of the impact of the much talked-about National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in Sirohi district of Rajasthan has revealed a sharp decline in migration and a substantial increase in the incomes of the local population in the wake of introduction of the jobs scheme. The district, bordering Gujarat, is a tribal-dominated area where unemployment has been rampant and migration of labour a regular feature during the lean season.

A 2Qs (quality and quantity) assessment of NREGS in Sirohi, one of the first six districts

brought under the scheme in Rajasthan, by the CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research and Training (CUTS CART) in partnership with the World Bank has revealed 97 per cent employment for the inhabitants in their own villages during the lean season. The scheme has helped bring down migration by 93 per cent and helped improve facilities in the villages by 94 per cent.

The findings were presented at a high-level meeting held here to share the key findings of the assessment. Even while there were many gaps detected in the scheme including those pertaining to lack of proper awareness among the people on their entitlements and no

• 97 % employment for locals

• Migration down by 93 per cent

full utilisation of allocated funds, its positive impact showed monthly income of the local people going up by 87 per cent and the labourers' bargaining power gaining new heights.

With 1.48 lakh households carrying job cards, Sirohi district had an allotment of Rs.7,570 lakh for the year 2007-08 while the spending remained at Rs.2,509 lakh. A total of 84,561 persons sought

work under the scheme and almost all — 84,537 of them — were provided the same.

CUTS director George Cheriyan, who presented an overview of the project, said lack of awareness (63 per cent) was found to be a major reason for lower participation of labourers in the scheme. "There seems to be an information gap. We found only 4,840 persons who made use of the scheme completing 100 days of work. That is a mere 5 per cent," he noted. The lack of awareness about entitlements was as high as 63 per cent.

Om Prakash Arya, who presented the key findings, said the study also revealed an absence of local participation in

decision-making and low satisfaction levels (50 per cent) on the process of measurement of work. There was no effective grievance redress mechanism in place, he said. 48 per cent of the workers were found unhappy about the transparency and accountability. There was also a shortage of implementation staff, he pointed out.

State Additional Chief Secretary A.K. Pande, who attended the meeting, said: "We accept the findings and the recommendations as there is no point to differ."

World Bank representative Benjamin Powis, too, felt that further institutionalisation of the scheme would add to its effectiveness.

THE TIMES OF INDIA, JAIPUR
THURSDAY, JULY 17, 2008

Rural women feel empowered through NREGS, says study

P J Joychen | TNN

Jaipur: Nearly 75% rural women in the state feel that their status within the family has increased after they began earning through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), says a study. The scheme has thus turned out to be a vehicle for social and economic transformation which resulted in the economic empowerment and decision-making process of women in rural areas.

The findings are part of a sample survey and study of social accountability conducted by CUTS CART, an NGO, in partnership with the World Bank in Sirohi district of the state. The study was conducted in 825 households spread over five blocks in the district on a random basis. Around 51% women admit improvement in their living standard following increased income generation through the NREGS. More than 50% of the workforce under the scheme have daily labour as the main source of income while the literacy level of women workers was found to be very low at 19%.

Another interesting aspect of the finding was the presence

of large number of above poverty line (APL) families (72%) enjoying the benefit of the scheme reflecting the paradigm shift in the economic status of the so-called APL families in the rural areas.

The study noted that the major attraction of the scheme is that it provides employment during lean season 'in own village' which has ultimately helped to reduce migration. "Migration has reduced by about 3% after the launch of the NREGS programme," it said.

It noted that the bargaining power of the labourers has increased considerably with an alternative job opportunity in sight, while 61% of the people prefer NREGS to any other work available outside.

The study recommends that the recess time at work-site can be utilised for running literacy programmes.

The health worker or an ANM can visit the worksite to interact with the women. Self Help Groups (SHGs) can be motivated among the women workers. Besides, subsidy could be given to those who are willing to invest in alternative income sources like cow and goat by clubbing it with self employment schemes.

दैनिक भास्कर

जयपुर, गुरुवार 17 जुलाई, 2008

रोजगार गारंटी योजना से सभी वर्गों को लाभ

न.सं.जयपुर. राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण रोजगार गारंटी योजना से समाज के सभी वर्गों को लाभ प्राप्त होता है। कट्स (सेंटर फॉर कंज्यूमर एक्शन रिसर्च एंड ट्रेनिंग) की ओर से बुधवार को ओटीएस में आयोजित कार्यक्रम में मुख्य अतिथि अतिरिक्त मुख्य सचिव ए.के. पांडे ने कहा कि इस योजना में महिलाओं व पुरुषों की समान भागीदारी रखी गई है। उन्होंने कहा कि आमजन को आजीविका के दो तरीके हैं मजदूरी व स्वरोजगार। उन्होंने कहा कि मजदूरी प्रदान करने के लिए नरेगा योजना है, लेकिन स्वरोजगार के लिए कोई योजना नहीं है।

इस सामूहिक संवाद कार्यक्रम में योजना सचिव यदुवंदर माथुर ने कहा कि वर्तमान में सेवाओं के मूल्यांकन की महती आवश्यकता है। सभी योजनाओं में ग्रामवासियों को सेवाएं देने के साथ-साथ अन्य विकल्प भी उपलब्ध कराने होंगे। राष्ट्रीय रोजगार गारंटी योजना में अभी कौशल विकास को बढ़ावा देने की जरूरत है। ग्रामीण विकास सचिव ने योजना के बारे में ग्रामीण स्तर पर और अधिक जागरूकता की आवश्यकता जताई। परियोजना समन्वयक ओमप्रकाश आर्य ने परिणामों के बारे में बताया। इस मौके पर रोजगार गारंटी योजना से जुड़े अधिकारी, स्वयंसेवी संस्थाओं व पंचायतीराज प्रतिनिधि मौजूद थे।