

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

2021-22



National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj

Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India

Rajendranagar, Hyderabad - 500 030, India

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Research Highlights 2021-22

Authors: Faculty members of National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj , SIRDPRs & ETCs

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FOREWORD



The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj takes up research studies across the country in order to gain first-hand insights into the requirements of the rural population, process of rural transformation, implementation of flagship programmes of Government of India and assessing the impact of various schemes. These studies contribute significantly to knowledge creation on critical aspects pertaining to rural development, poverty alleviation, livelihood promotion, policy formulation, etc. The research findings provide a better understanding of the ground realities and give a clear picture of the prevailing situation as well.

In order to facilitate wider dissemination of the findings of the studies, NIRDPR is bringing out the annual publication of Research Highlights. These studies are mainly related to Agriculture and Marketing, Food Security, Livelihoods, MGNREGS Flagship programme, Sustainable Rural Livelihoods, Gender Studies, Geo-informatics, Geo-informatics and ICT applications in RD, ICT and e-Governance in Local Governance, Good Governance, Panchayati Raj, Rural Infrastructure, Social Audit, Access to Finance by MSEs, Evaluation of Training Efficiency, Fiscal Decentralisation, Swachh Bharat, etc. The findings of these studies will be useful for the policymakers, academicians and rural development functionaries to understand the ground realities.

Hyderabad
February, 2023

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of the initials 'G. N.' followed by a stylized flourish and a horizontal line underneath.

Dr. G. Narendra Kumar, IAS
Director General
NIRDPR, Hyderabad



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Re-verification of ODF Status with a Focus on Use and Maintenance: An Empirical Investigation in Madhya Pradesh, India

Dr. R. Ramesh

Introduction

India's journey to declare itself an Open Defecation Free (ODF) nation remains an intellectual puzzle - not just amongst the international sanitation progress watchers, but within India itself. The stride of progress to be made, the momentum to be maintained, and the amount of mobilisation required to enable households to construct nearly 110 million toilets within a period of 60 months was not an easy challenge to take on.

A country with a sanitation history of more than three decades that had achieved coverage of less than 38 per cent of the rural households, covered the remaining 62 per cent within sixty months' time obviously should sound only as a mystery to the external world. Statistics presented by the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS) are quite impressive, and exciting. For instance, India today has over six lakh Open Defecation Free (ODF) villages in 711 ODF districts, meaning there is none in these villages, who defecate in the open, as reported by the DDWS. India was declared an ODF nation on 2nd October 2019 - a delightful moment for all Indians.

What the SBM-G has done is a gigantic leap and a wonderful achievement. However, amidst this excitement, a kind of inquisitiveness stems because construction is only part of the story. It means constructing toilets for every household is not a sufficient condition for achieving ODF status. Providing access is one, utilisation is another. Often, in our enthusiasm to see many ODF villages, we take a triumphant march ahead accelerating construction, only to realise when we look back that a considerable number of toilets constructed are either misused or remain disused (Bell, 2013). This is a far more serious concern than not having one. For instance, a sample survey of Nirmal Gram Purashkar (NGP) awarded villages conducted in August 2014 revealed that as much as 67 per cent of the toilets in some of the States remain unused or disused for some reason or the other (CMS, Research House, New Delhi, 2011). 'What use a toilet is put to' is one vital outcome question that can answer 'whether a sanitation mission is successful or not'.

Now, we have a great ODF story to narrate to the world. There are two vital concerns at this moment that we cannot choose to ignore. Firstly, there is a need to verify the extent of truth behind our ODF story; secondly, if there is a gap in our ODF story, we must be principled enough to acknowledge it because plugging the gap is our collective responsibility. In the unlikely outcome of our ODF claims being unconvinced, we need to acknowledge that fact, and find ways to rectify the mistakes so as to set the right things. In other words, if the ODF claim is not validated, and paid the timely attention it deserves, it will become like watching Sisyphus story being enacted: *'of rolling a boulder uphill then watching it roll back down again'*.

Research Questions:

The questions unravelled are (i) the percentage of households that are truly ODF; (ii) the causes of households not using toilets despite having a toilet; and (iii) the household-level behaviour change that has occurred in terms of toilet use, hand washing practice, and proper maintenance of toilets. The following are the findings of the study.

Research Methods

This is a cross-sectional study that uses survey-based empirical investigation. The primary source of data for this study comes from households that availed IHHL under SBM-G. A short questionnaire was used for data collection. This study was conducted in Madhya Pradesh, as this was one of the front-runner States that declared ODF much ahead of others. Two districts in Madhya Pradesh were selected for this study, viz. (i) Indore and Satna. Five Gram Panchayats (GPs) were studied in each district as the sample. In order to select Gram Panchayats, we took the Blocks where ODF status was declared much ahead of other Blocks in the State. Using Random Number Generator Tool, GPs were chosen from those Blocks. For this study, 2500 households were interviewed in these two districts.

Although the sample size is large enough, the number of Gram Panchayats studied may not be sufficient to generalise the findings to the entire State. However, it may give a strong indication of the status of ODF vis-a-vis the claims made. This study focuses on Individual Household Latrines (IHHLs) constructed under SBM-G and does not cover institutional toilets such as school toilets, *anganwadis* toilets, and toilets in other public places in the study villages. So, the results and discussion pertain only to IHHLs, and they do not refer to institutional latrines in the study area.

Analysis and Discussion

Scheme Assistance to Construct Toilets: It was found that 90 per cent of the toilets in Indore villages have been constructed with the assistance of SBM-G or other earlier government programmes on sanitation, and the remaining 10 per cent by using own funds. In Satna district, it was found that 81 per cent of the households have used SBM-G or other earlier government programmes to construct toilets, and about 2 per cent use personal funds. However, it's alarming to notice that out of the 83 per cent of the households that have toilets, only 61 per cent are using them, and the remaining 22 per cent are not using the toilets. This is to say that in absolute numbers nearly 271 toilets have been put to disuse.

Access to Toilet: The data pertaining to Indore villages show that 96.6 per cent of the households have access to IHHLs; and the rest (0.4 per cent) reported using shared toilet facilities. In the case of Satna, 17 per cent of the households do not have access to any type of toilet at all, which confirms that a considerable number of households in the district still practice open defecation. While we record the crucial role played by SBM-G in assisting households to have access to toilet-use, we cannot ignore/sweep under the carpet the fact that 17 per cent of the households do not have access to toilets at all.

Toilet Use: We can conclude that nearly cent per cent of the respondents of Indore district have access to toilet. Secondly, they are using it regularly (as reported) and further confirmed by direct observation that hardly a few (less than 3 per cent remaining unused). It is saddening to note that 22 per cent of the respondents of Satna district although they have toilets, but are not using them. Nearly one-fifth (17 per cent) of the respondents of Satna district do not have a toilet of their own. Shared toilet as a practice is found only in Indore district. It boils down to 61 per cent of the households using toilets in Satna, and the remaining 39 per cent continue to practice open defecation.

Water Availability: More than one-third (38.0 per cent) of the respondents of Satna district reported that water is not available for toilet use. This finding indicates that people in rural areas, despite owning toilets, are unable to use them due to the non-availability of water for toilet use. In areas where there is severe water scarcity – either year-round or seasonally – water is mostly prioritised for cooking, drinking and washing. Using it for sanitation becomes the last priority. Thus, it could be inferred that the availability of water is an important factor in determining ODF sustainability. The much-expected Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) possibly, shall resolve this issue. But, the concern is that the toilets constructed but not in use now should remain technically usable until the time the JJM provides functional house tap connection (FHTC) to every rural household.

Availability of Soap in the Toilet: Vast inter-district variations are observed as far as the availability and use of soaps in or around the toilet among the sample respondents. Direct observation reveals that about 88 per cent of households in Indore villages have soap available either inside or near the toilet, whereas it was only 36 per cent in the case of households in Satna district. The data collection for this study took place before the coronavirus outbreak. Currently, while writing up this report, the corona virus has made everyone wash their hands with soaps frequently. This practice of handwashing with soap could be one good thing that corona can leave rural communities with. But, we need to wait and see if this habit of handwashing with soap will continue to remain with us, or fade away once corona pandemic normalises.

Hand washing Practice: More than three-fourths (78 per cent) of the respondents in the study districts follow the practice of washing their hands with soap after using toilet. About 13 per cent of respondents do not follow this practice. District-wise analysis reveals that 97 per cent of the respondents of Indore district follow the practice of washing hands after defecation, whereas it was 59 per cent in the case of respondents of Satna district.

Presence of Water Seal: Almost all the toilets in Indore villages were found to be having water seals. This is a significant indication/quick way of confirming if a toilet is in use or disuse. Obviously, the presence of water seal indicates use and its absence indicates disuse. In the case of Satna villages, out of the 83 per cent of the households that had toilets, 13.2 per cent did not

have water seals, and another 13.6 per cent were found to be in bad condition. It goes to prove that technically 56.2 per cent of the households (i.e. 83 minus 26.8) only had usable/functional toilets. A significant number of toilets in Satna district require some kind of retrofitting to become usable. This goes with an optimistic assumption that households without access to water for toilet use somehow arrange for water and use the toilets if they had access to one. Even after this optimistic assumption, one tends to raise a question here that our earlier statement '61 per cent of the households use toilet' is unlikely to be true. It becomes questionable now. This stems from the fact that if only 56.2 per cent of households had usable toilets, how could 61 per cent usage could be reported? This requires further validation, which we shall do subsequently.

Habit of Open Defecation Practice: To the question of whether one or two members of the families still have the habit of defecating in the open, 41 per cent of respondents of Satna district responded that all their family members are defecating in the open and that no one used toilet. In 3 per cent of the households, it was found most male members not using toilets, whereas others use. In another 3 per cent of the households, only children go for open defecation, whereas others in the family use toilet. In another 6 per cent of households, it was found that only elders in the family continue with the habit of open defecation.

Excreta: To the question of means of disposal of human excreta from the toilet, it was found that more than half of the toilets (56 per cent) had septic tanks for excreta disposal followed by 19 per cent using single pit toilets; and 12 per cent using twin pit toilets. A few households (4 per cent) had connected toilet outlets to common drainage lines for excreta disposal. Single pits and twin pits are the major disposal arrangements found in Satna district, while it was septic tank in the case of Indore district. This is possibly because of a considerable number of households in Indore district getting their toilets constructed using personal funds even before the announcement of SBM-G. The practice of excreta disposal connected to drainage is found only in Satna district. This finding indicates that there are inter-district variations with regard to the technical arrangements for excreta disposal. Indore villages mostly have septic tanks. It means the faecal sludge has to be emptied after 7 – 8 years. The arrangement for Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants has to be made in Indore, anticipating the demand for such a facility to emerge in the near future.

Disposal of Child Faeces: In Indore, there were no children in 53 per cent of respondents' households and in Satna, 76 per cent of the households did not have children. Concerning the disposal of child faeces, it was found that in Indore villages 'it' was reportedly being flushed into the toilet in 44 per cent of the households, and in the case of Satna villages the same practice reportedly existed only in 7 per cent of the households. In Satna, majority of the households (14 per cent) practised disposing of child faeces in open areas. Generally, it is recommended that child faeces must also be flushed into the toilets, without human hands coming into contact with it. Thus, when it came to disposing of child faeces, Indore villages followed better practices than Satna villages.

Conclusion

The results of the analysis show that in Indore villages, 100 per cent of the households have access to toilet, whereas only 97 per cent of them are regularly using toilets, as reported. Three per cent of households do not use the toilet. It must be easy for Indore District Water and Sanitation Mission (DWSM) to identify these households and facilitate them to use the toilet.

The situation is very uninviting as far as Satna is concerned where first of all 17 per cent of the households do not have toilets at all. Secondly, 26.8 per cent of the toilets are technically flawed in construction and so remain unused. Thirdly, 22 per cent of the households that have toilets are not using them, and are defecating in the open due to various reasons such as (i) non-availability of water, (ii) habituated to doing it in the open, (iii) or the toilet is not usable due to technical malfunctions. Out of 83 households that were directly observed as having toilets, only 56.2 per cent are technically usable. Among those who have children, about 14 per cent think it doesn't matter if children do it in the open. Thus, more than half of the respondents (53 per cent) of Satna district responded that their family members are still practising open defecation.

The study confirms that open defecation is rampant in Satna district. It shows that 41 per cent of the households regularly defecate in the open, and about 12 per cent are irregular users of toilets. This makes 53 per cent of the households defecating in the open. But, this does not take into account 17 per cent of the households that do not have toilets at all. It is possible that Satna is at 30 per cent on the road to declaring it ODF because data suggests that 70 per cent (53 per cent + 17 per cent) are still not using toilet. The ODF declaration has been made in haste, and it's impulsive.

The ODF declaration made by Satna district must be put on hold until (a) all retrofitting required in the existing toilets are done, (b) the 17 per cent of the households that do not have toilet get their toilets constructed and (c) everyone gets access to shared toilets if those households were found to have no space for toilet construction. The SBM-G needs to put in greater effort in bringing rural India into declaring ODF - ODF as mentioned in our mass media campaign on SBM-G through punchlines like '*Har Koi, Har Roz, Hamesha*' - 'Everyone, Every day, Always.'

Analysis of irregularities identified through Social Audit in MGNREGS

Dr. C. Dheeraja

Introduction

Section 17 of the NREGA Act mandates that the Gram Sabha shall conduct regular social audits of all the projects under the scheme taken up with in the Gram Panchayat. It lays heavy emphasis on the conduct of social audits with quality, regularity and effectiveness. Though Social Audits are widely accepted as an important mechanism that allows people to enforce accountability and transparency in MGNREGS and are mandated to conduct twice a year, a lot of variations were observed across the States. In this backdrop, to make social audits effective and to have a common understanding and uniform way of application of social audits in MGNREGS across the States, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Audit of Scheme Rules, 2011 were notified in consultation with the Comptroller and Auditor General (CA&G) of India. As of now, in 28 States, social audit units are functional with the resource persons to facilitate social audits in place. Many of the social audit units are coming out with findings which need corrective actions. The irregularities are broadly classified as financial misappropriation, financial deviation, process violation and grievances. The present study is proposed to understand the sort of issues/irregularities/misuses/corruption practices emerging out of the conduct of social audits, the efficacy of the action taken and how it is leading to the effective implementation of MGNREGS.

Objectives:

The specific objectives of the study are

- To analyse the type/nature of irregularities that are emerging in social audits
- To assess the pattern of irregularities, i.e. whether reduced or increased year by year
- To document how financial misappropriations have taken place
- To study the actions taken on such irregularities identified in social audits
- To suggest the ways and means to control irregularities

Methodology

Data pertaining to issues/irregularities identified in social audits of MGNREGS for the years 2018-19, and 2019-20 has been taken from SAUs and MGNREGS MIS. Based on the highest misappropriation amount involved, 10-15 irregularities from each state were identified and a detailed case documentation was done by visiting work sites along with interviewing different stakeholders. The trend analysis of three years (2017-2020) was captured by taking data on Social Audit findings from MGNREGA Social Audit MIS.

Study Area

The study was taken up in three States where a good number of issues/ irregularities are identified by the social audit units. The States identified are Jharkhand, 2) Telangana 3) and Andhra Pradesh

Key Findings

- At all-India level, a total of 15, 75,134 issues were reported for the FY 17-18, 18-19 and 19-20. Of this, 23 per cent were related to financial misappropriation, 21 per cent were related to financial deviation, 40 per cent were related to process violation and 16 per cent related to grievances
- Approximately 3.69 lakh financial misappropriation issues have been identified in the social audit amounting to a total of Rs. 832 crore for the FYs 17-18, 18-19 and 19-20
- The issues related to financial misappropriation and grievances have declined continuously over the years whereas financial deviation and process violation have increased over the years. (2017- 2020)
- Financial misappropriation had gone down from 29 per cent in FY 17-18 to 21 per cent in FY 19-20. Grievances also had gone down from 21 per cent in FY 17-18 to 14 per cent in FY 19-20. Financial deviation had gone up from 18 per cent in FY 17-18 to 22 per cent in FY 19-20 and Process violation had gone up from 32 per cent to 43 per cent in FY 19-20.
- Sixty-three per cent of the financial misappropriation paras pertained to issues such as payment to persons who did not work, work done but no trace of work now, work done with machines and fake bills, etc.
- Rs. 280 crore worth of records were not produced for the social audit team over three FYs which is a violation of the Act.
- Frequently repeated issues under the Financial Deviation category include work taken up without administrative sanction and technical estimate, work on private land - beneficiary did not work in the worksite, sanction of ineligible work, same work has been taken up repeatedly, significant differences between measurements at the worksite and recorded values in M-book, etc.
- Frequently reported issues under process violations are: Rozgar Diwas is not conducted once every month, Citizen Information boards are not put up, Payslips are not issued to workers, No process to collect work applications, Worksite facilities are not provided, Non-payment of compensation for delayed wages and unemployment allowance, etc.
- Frequently repeated issues under Grievances are related to Wages payment, Job card related, Work site facilities and Work-related, etc.
- Out of 15, 75,134 total issues reported for the FY 17-20, 3, 53,536 issues were closed, and this accounts for 22 per cent. Out of 3,69,606 financial misappropriation issues reported in the financial years 2017-20, 60,287 issues were closed, which accounts for 16 per cent.
- In Jharkhand, MGNRGA workers are doing the work on a daily basis instead of

measurement basis. The general timing of the work is 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, which is again a violation of the Act.

- In some instances, machines were used in earthworks in all three sample States which is a violation of the law. In some instances, contractors and middlemen played a key role in the implementation of the scheme.
- While analysing the data, it was observed that for small misappropriation of amounts, full amount was recovered and for big amounts, PO has taken the decision to recover 5 to 10 per cent only, which shows that the actions taken were just namesake.
- Job cards and records are not being maintained properly. Wage-seekers ' awareness is low on MGRENGS. Most wage-seekers are unaware of the term "Social Audit". But when the process of social audit is explained they are recognising it.
- There are no citizen information boards and it is difficult to identify the works without name boards. In some instances, expenditures are being booked but the name boards are not being installed. Thus, it is a big source of corruption.
- Delayed payment is one of the common issues observed in all the States.
- The Social Audit team's focus is on the verification of the MIS data in the field but the affiliated issue which is more serious and of intense misappropriation is not coming to the surface.
- Data has to be categorised systematically under an appropriate category. In most cases what has been written in the social audit report is not matching with what was entered in the MIS

Suggestions to SAUs

- The quality of the social audit should be improved. Social audits should not limit to financial audits; importance should also be given to creating awareness among wage-seekers on their rights and entitlements along with grievance redressal.
- The resource persons should be trained on proper documentation of the issues along with evidence collection.
- The quality of the social audit report should be improved. In some cases, resource persons have reported partial information which leads to presiding officer simply dropping the issue in the public hearings.
- As a policy, 5 per cent of audits are to be test checked. This will make the resource persons conscious to perform the audit.
- In Andhra Pradesh, SAU resource persons have entered three to four issues as a single issue in MIS. The sum of the four issues amount has been entered in the issue amount column. SAU have to identify all such issues and enter fresh issues by deleting old ones.
- Training is required for the resource persons on issue categorisation along with the data entry and importance of the MIS.
- There is a need to take the social audit term and social audit process deeply to the people.

Suggestions to Implementation Officials

- Implementation officials have to take appropriate actions based on the report and evidence submitted by the social audit team.
- Proper follow-up is required to take actions after the completion of the social audit public hearing.
- The State implementing agency should form an independent committee comprising the officials from the RD, SAU representative, and civil society representative to follow-up and review the action taken on a fast-track basis.
- Implementing staff need capacity-building training.
- Data reconciliation should be done between SAU and the implementation wing after the completion of every social audit to maintain the same data at both ends.

Nutritional and Educational Status of Children of Women-Headed Households working and not working in MGNREGS

Dr. Lakhan Singh

In the year 2006, a remarkable rural development programme was launched by the Government of India called Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) which covers all the earlier poverty alleviation schemes as well. This is a wage-for-employment policy that provides 100 days of guaranteed wage-employment to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage. Although MGNREGA is not designed to promote gender equality, it offers 33 per cent employment to women, guarantees childcare facility at the worksite and provides scope to women to participate in the planning and implementation of MGNREGA and conducting social audits as members of Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat.

This is the first kind of rural development scheme in India which aims to increase the purchasing power of women directly by giving them cash. Studies also support that if women are employed for cash, the likelihood of their participation in decision-making increases. This further affects the decisions taken at the family level in general, and health and education-related decisions for the children in specific.

There are several studies related to MGNREGS and women. It seems from the studies that women and their children have benefited in multiple ways through MGNREGS (Khera & Nayak, 2009; Pankaj & Tankha, 2010; S M Dev, 2011). However, there is a paucity of studies on the linkages between MGNREGS and children's health and educational status. Majority of existing studies on the MGNREGS have focused primarily on its operational aspects (selection of worksites, physical asset creation, payment of wages on time and minimum stipulated amounts, social audits, transparency, etc.) rather than its practical impact and behavioural aspects. In addition, there is hardly any study which has taken both control and study population to understand the magnitude of the impact of this programme on two very important indicators of child development, i.e. nutritional status and education status. Therefore, keeping in view the existing literature, the gap in the study was identified and it was proposed to carry out a research study on this subject. The research study was sponsored by UNDP, New Delhi under the UNDP Goals study.

Hypothesis

Based on the review of literature, the following hypothesis was formulated to study:

Women-headed households working in MGNREGS will be high likely to have a higher impact on nutrition and educational status of children than women-headed households not working in MGNREGS.

Objectives

The main objective of the study was to compare the nutritional and educational status of children of women-headed households who were participating in MGNREGS and not participating in MGNREGS. However, the specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the nutritional and educational parameters of children of study households.
2. To measure the impact of vulnerability on identified nutrition and education parameters of children of study households.
3. To evaluate the impact of MGNREGS wages on identified education and nutrition parameters of children from women-headed households.

Methodology

Study Area: The study has selected six States from six zones of the country based on the highest number of women person-days of employment under MGNREGS during the financial year 2014-15. Thus, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Rajasthan and Tripura were selected from Central, Eastern, Northern, Southern, Western and North Eastern zones of the country, respectively. In the second stage, similar criteria were followed to select the district from each selected State, thus Durg, Siliguri Mahakuma Parisad, Hamirpur, Kozhikode, Sirohi and Gomati district were selected from Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Rajasthan, and Tripura, respectively. In a similar pattern, at the third stage, Blocks were selected and the identified Blocks were Durg, Matigara, Bamson, Vadakara, Pindwada, and Killa from Durg, Siliguri Mahakuma Parisad, Hamirpur, Kozhikode, Sirohi, and Gomti, respectively. Gram Panchayats were selected at the fourth stage of sampling and four Gram Panchayats (GP) from each selected Block were selected - two GPs having the highest and two having the lowest percentage of women person-days in MGNREGS works were selected to represent the characteristics and variations of two extreme villages in the sample. Thus, a total of 24 GPs were selected for the study.

Selection of Respondents and Sample Size: Keeping in view the objectives of the study, women were selected based on three criteria: head of household, working in MGNREGS (not working in the case of control group), and having at least a child aged between 4-14 years. Households satisfying all three criteria were listed with the help of the GP President, ward members, Aganwadi workers and self-help group. It was decided to select 70 households (35 each for the study and control group) from each selected village with a margin of 10 households by following systemic random sampling if required; otherwise, all women were selected. If the number of respondents in the GP was lesser than the desired number, the adjunct village was approached to complete the target sample size. Thus, a total of 1649 women were selected for individual interviews which includes 876 women in the study group (women working in MGNREGS/ beneficiary women) and 773 women in the control group (women not working in MGNREGS/non-beneficiary women). The minimum sample size for

both groups of the study was 840; however, in the case of non-beneficiary households (control group), the sample size was short to 67 households due to the non-availability of such households who were not working in MGNREGS, particularly in States of Tripura and Rajasthan. To understand the educational and nutritional status of children, a total of 2608 children aged 4-14 years were identified and required information was sought from their mothers. The reference period of this study was three financial years from the date of data collection, i.e. between the years 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Statistical Technique used for Data Analysis: Keeping the objectives of the study in view, some select statistical techniques were used for analysing the data. The statistical techniques which were used in data analysis were percentage distribution, Bi-variate analysis, Chi-square test, Multinomial Logistic regression analysis and Proportion z-test.

Results

The present research study report comprises five chapters which are Introduction, Background characteristics of households and respondents, Awareness and participation in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Educational and nutritional status of children, and Conclusions and recommendations. The findings of each chapter are summarised below.

Background Characteristics of Households and Women: The average household size of the total interviewed households (1649) of the study area was 4.5 persons per household. It was found that almost 40 per cent of the total household members were from the active working age group (20-44 years) who can be called as demographic dividend. The overall sex ratio of the study area was in favour of females, i.e. 1075 per 1000 males. Majority of the households were living in kaccha or semi-pucca houses (72 per cent) remaining 28 per cent had pucca houses. Almost 77-78 per cent of households of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries had access to improved sources of drinking water. Availability of flush toilet facilities in the household was slightly higher in non-beneficiary households (48 per cent) than in beneficiary households (44 per cent). The use of LPG fuel for cooking was also found higher among non-beneficiary households (37 per cent) than the beneficiary households (22 per cent). Almost 70 per cent of households of both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries did not own agricultural land. As far as the economic condition of the household was concerned, more than two-fourths (45 per cent) of the beneficiary and 33 per cent of non-beneficiary households were belonging to the poorest or poor wealth quintiles. It was also observed that more than half of beneficiary households were holding the below poverty line card in comparison to 43 per cent of non-beneficiary households. Thus, it can be concluded that beneficiary households were lagging behind in all household amenities and assets compared to non-beneficiary households. With respect to education, although more than 80 per cent of members of both beneficiary and non-beneficiary households were educated but years of schooling gradually decreases towards higher education for both types of households. As far as the schooling of children is concerned, 88 and

90 per cent of children, respectively, of beneficiary and non-beneficiary households aged 4-18 years were currently attending school. However, after attaining the age of 13 years, there was a sharp decline in attending school (96 to 76 per cent) both for boys and girls.

Concerning the background characteristics of the respondents, it was observed that the majority of the respondents (86 per cent) were from the age group between 23-42 years. The average age of the respondents was 34. 2 years. Eighty-four per cent of respondents were currently married at the time of the survey. However, the percentage of vulnerable women (ever married) was higher among beneficiary households (18 per cent) than the non-beneficiary households (14 per cent). Majority of the respondents were from the Hindu religion (91 per cent) and the percentage shares of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe was nine percentage points higher among beneficiary women than non-beneficiary women (34 per cent). Illiteracy was found little higher among beneficiary women (34 per cent) than non-beneficiary women (30 per cent). More than half of women (53 per cent) in non-beneficiary households were homemakers; on the contrary, more than half of women in beneficiary households (52 per cent) were working as agricultural or non-agricultural labourers.

Awareness and knowledge of the respondents on the components of MGNREGS: Universally, all women of MGNREGS households were aware of MGNREGS compared to 93 per cent of women of non-MGNREGS households. The major source of information for beneficiary women was Gram Pradhans (61 per cent) while villagers/others were for non-beneficiary women (49 per cent). However, almost half of the women did not know about the process of getting work in MGNREGS which includes as high as 31 per cent of the beneficiary and 68 per cent of non-beneficiary women. Only 59 per cent of respondents were aware that getting a job in MGNREGS is their right. Overall, 52 per cent of women did not know about the provision of 100 days of work availability in MGNREGS but it was astonishing to know that 35 per cent of beneficiary women were unaware of it. Similarly, 13 per cent of beneficiary women were not aware of the provision of equal wages for both men and women. 16 per cent of women of the beneficiary and five per cent of women of non-beneficiary knew about women-related provisions of MGNREGS, only one-third of the respondents were unaware of Gram Sabha meetings of MGNREGS, and only 37 per cent of women of beneficiary households had ever attended such kind of meetings.

Out of the total beneficiary women, 79 per cent were currently working in MGNREGS and the remaining 21 per cent had worked earlier but discontinued working in MGNREGS. Non-availability of work with Gram Panchayat was the major reason (46 per cent) to discontinue MGNREGS works. About getting 100 days of work in MGNREGS, it was discouraging to know that only 21 per cent of beneficiary households have ever got 100 days of work under MGNREGS in the last three years. As far as the total income from MGNREGS is concerned, on average every household has earned Rs.16,382 in the last three years of the reference period. Households of Scheduled Tribes have earned the highest from MGNREGS - 67 per cent of them had earned more than Rs.20,000 followed by households of other castes (30 per cent), scheduled caste (23 per cent) and other backward classes (19 per cent).

With respect to the impact of earnings from MGNREGS on the economy of the household, 77 per cent of women of beneficiary households reported improvement in their economic condition. While reporting of improvement in economic condition due to earnings of MGNREGS was observed highest among Scheduled Tribes households (87 per cent). It is interesting to note that the money earned from MGNREGS was spent mainly on food items (43 per cent) followed by on education of the children (36 per cent), family needs (15 per cent) and health of family members (6 per cent).

It can be concluded from the results that MGNREGS has played an important role in empowering women by providing easy accessibility to work near their home, equal wages, full control over the earnings due direct transfer into their account, improvement in economic condition, freedom to spend money, such as spending on education of children, purchasing food items, and on family health, etc.

The empowerment index revealed that women belonging to MGNREGS households were highly empowered (40 per cent) in making decisions at the household level than the women of non-MENREGS households (28 per cent). The statistical difference in the level of decision-making power of beneficiary and non-beneficiary women was tested through multinomial regression analysis and it was observed that the odds ratio for decision-making power among women belonging to scheduled caste/scheduled tribe beneficiary households increases consistently from low level to medium level to high level. However, the odds ratio for non-beneficiary women was inconsistent. This indicates that women working in MGNREGS have significantly more chances of moving from a low level of decision-making power to a high level of decision-making, whereas the same was not observed with non-beneficiary women.

Educational and nutritional status of children: In total, 2608 children aged 4-14 years were identified from 1649 households. Educational information was sought from children aged 4-14 years while children in the 4-7 years age group were identified for information on nutritional status. Currently, the practice of attending school was slightly higher among the children of beneficiary households (92 per cent) than children of non-beneficiary households (90 per cent). The attendance rate was also observed high among beneficiary children than the non-beneficiary children. It was observed that the practice of parents visiting the schools for interacting with teachers was high among beneficiary households (35 per cent) than non-beneficiary households (28 per cent). It was appreciating to note that the contribution to the educational expenses of the child by the mother alone was significantly high among beneficiary households (33 per cent) than to non-beneficiary households (14 per cent). Thirty-one per cent of mothers of beneficiary households can contribute more than Rs.3000 per annum for the educational expenses of their children which was almost equal to the families of non-beneficiary households. Further, it was observed that reporting of the positive impact of MGNREGS on a child's education was significantly over two times higher among women of beneficiary households than those of non-beneficiary households. Thus, the hypothesis of the study that 'the women working in MGNREHS will have a higher impact on child educational status' was accepted. The most important impact of MGNREGS on child education was the improvement in interest and educational performance.

As far as the nutritional status of children is concerned, 65 per cent of women of beneficiary households reported that after working in MGNREGS, the dietary pattern of their children has improved. In comparison, only 40 per cent women of in non-beneficiary households had the same opinion. Furthermore, among women of beneficiary households who belong to relatively vulnerable sections such as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, non-Hindu religion, illiterate, ever married, and poorest wealth quintiles, the reporting of improvement in the child's dietary pattern was higher than the women who were not working in MGNREGS. Similarly, the consumption of different food items by children in one day has also increased significantly among the children of beneficiary mothers (63 per cent) than children of non-beneficiary mothers (41 per cent). The other indicators for the nutritional status of the children were also reported better by mothers of beneficiary households than the mothers of non-beneficiary households. For example, instances such as the frequency of child falling sick last month, treatment for undernutrition or weakness, no food in the household at least once last month, and children going to bed hungry were reported by a higher percentage of mothers of non-beneficiary households compared to mothers of non-beneficiary households.

Recommendations

- Since the majority of people who are participating in this scheme belong to poor, marginalised and vulnerable sections of society, this programme may be continued till other sustainable alternatives are opened up for them.
- For wider utilisation of this scheme, there is an urgent need of disseminating information about the essential features of MGNREGS, process of getting work, participating in Gram Sabha meetings, and social audits among people, particularly for women.
- Issue related to non-availability of 100 days of work or no work in Gram Panchayat should be addressed at the earliest as this is the main reason for discontinuation of MGNREGS work.
- The availability of work within the Gram Panchayat is one of the most attracting features of the MGNREGS.
- For women from scheduled tribes, MGNREGS is the major source of income during the lean period and the earning received from MGNREGS contributes a lot to their economic condition. Therefore, this programme should be implemented with full commitment in tribal areas of India.
- MGNREGS has increased the purchasing power of women in rural areas and has built up confidence among them. It has emerged as an instrument for women empowerment. MGNREGS can play a major role in gender mainstreaming.
- Women participating in MGNREGS have reported a positive impact on the educational and nutritional status of children. The children's dietary patterns and consumption of food items in one day have increased after joining MGNREGS. Similarly, children's interest in the study and educational performance has increased due to MGNREGS. Therefore, MGNREGS can play a crucial role in curbing malnutrition in India and can also be a strategy to increase the enrolment ratio and minimise dropping out of school.

Impact Evaluation Study of Farmer Producers Organisations (FPOs) in Andhra Pradesh State

Dr. Ch. Radhika Rani

Dr. R. Divakar

Shri Baburao R.

Dr. Surjit Vikraman

Introduction

In a country with more than 86 per cent of landholdings operated by small and marginal farmers, scale efficiency remains an elusive but indispensable solution. Farmers are facing a range of issues and challenges concerning the value chain development activities from inputs up to processing and marketing. Farmer Producer Organisations, the third-generation institutional models of farmers' collectives, have been proving to be harbingers of hope for the vexed issue of agrarian crisis in the country. FPOs are attempting to guide the farmers about the collectivisation of specific value chain development activities of their respective agriculture commodities, leading to perceptible incremental incomes.

PRODUCE FPOs are the first batch of FPOs which have been promoted by NABARD and their performance evaluation is extremely critical to shape the new generation FPOs under the series of subsequent schemes like PODF, ODOP, CBBO and Central Scheme for "Formation and Promotion of 10,000 new FPOs" with a budget outlay of Rs.6865 crore.

The current study is located in the context of evaluating the impact brought in by the PRODUCE FPOs on the lives and livelihoods of its shareholder members in Andhra Pradesh.

Objectives

1. To analyse the organisational and management structure of FPOs and their effectiveness in operations and governance.
2. To assess the utility and effectiveness of training and capacity-building interventions for making the FPOs vibrant and suggest further measures, if any.
3. To evaluate the impact of various FPO activities on the gross and net income of member farmers on account of timely input supply, productivity increase, crop diversification, mechanisation of farm operations, aggregate produce marketing, diversified marketing interventions, value addition of produce, etc.
4. To understand the current business models and credit linkages to the FPOs and suggest new business models.
5. To assess the level of convergence with other stakeholders and their schemes, if any, such

as of the State governments, corporate, technology institutes, etc., in the operations of FPOs.

6. To identify bottlenecks, inadequacies, etc., in the FPO ecosystem for its long-term sustainability and recommend pointers for New FPO Policy.

Methodology and Study Area

Out of 95 PRODUCE FPOs promoted, 20 are selected using both purposive and random sampling methods, encompassing all three zones of Andhra Pradesh, viz. Rayalaseema, South Coastal and North Coastal AP.

By employing a carefully designed schedule, drawing outreach, and operational and financial indicators of the FPOs comprehensively, the study was conducted through direct interface with the stakeholders at the field level, viz. shareholder farmers, office-bearers of FPOs and POPIs of PRODUCE FPOs. Care is taken to ensure that there is uniform representation to all three zones, divergent crops and commodities and sector-specific primary producers like fisheries, livestock and SHG women in addition to agriculture-focused FPOs. Secondary data in the form of Audited Financials of the sample FPOs for three to five years were collected and analysed to infer their performance vis-à-vis their mission objectives and business plans.

Findings and Conclusion

The study has also attempted to make critical recommendations based on the key findings as to how to go about with the formation of new FPOs under various upcoming schemes like CBBOs, ODOP and 10, 000 New FPO schemes.

When farmers are expected to graduate to a professional producer company shareholdership, the transformation throws formidable challenges on the capacity-building front. One of the key findings was that capacity building of all stakeholders is still a critical gap and more intensive training programmes addressing the specific issues and gaps of FPO formation and transformation are needed. It is found that a uniform approach for the promotion of FPOs across divergent agro-climatic and socio-economic zones is leaving strategic gaps and there should be a contextualised and area-specific project design even within the State.

Small and marginal farmers, tribal farmers and women farmers are found to be still marginalised when it comes to their inclusion in the FPO movement. There is a need for mainstreaming them into this movement. The study has found that the existing social infrastructure in the form of SHGs should be leveraged to the full extent in strengthening the membership base comprehensively.

While a majority of the FPOs are found to have made headway in the procurement of agriculture inputs through their collectives, the areas needing focus are value chain development, transport and market. POPIs are found to have rendered noteworthy services in social mobilisation and institution building of FPOs. But their capacities in value chain

development and marketing need to be addressed. Statutory audit of FPOs is an area of concern as the majority of the sample audited financial statements are found to have technical flaws and there is a need to standardise the statutory audit formats and norms for recognition of income and expenditure of FPOs. When it comes to the performance of FPOs, MACS format of FPOs and the Producer Company format of FPOs seem to have been performing uniformly without a strong correlation to their statutory format of registration.

The FPOs are found to have set a very good tone for convergence with the government-sponsored schemes and bank linkages but there is a need for deepening the engagement of FPOs in these critical areas. Equity mobilisation and membership enrolment have been found to be satisfactory but the FPOs need to operate to their full potential by enrolling all the eligible farmers in the area. When it comes to sector-specific FPOs like small ruminant, livestock and fisheries-based FPOs, the initiative is found to be acceptable to farmers, but the areas of convergence, technology support and processing are still a concern.

There is a need to leverage the strong social infrastructure that is painstakingly built over two decades in the form of women SHGs. The new policy of promotion of FPOs should clearly spell out strategies for SHG's inclusive approach to building the FPOs.

Commodity-focused FPOs have been critically challenged by their shareholder farmers for their approach to one or two commodities but in many cases, the farmers fall back on multiple bottom-line livelihoods sources for year-round incomes. The study found that the FPOs should broad base their value chain development activities, encompassing livelihoods basket for round-the-year employment and income generation. The New Policy should facilitate the integration of on-farm and off-farm livelihood activities under one umbrella to provide holistic value chain development solutions to their livelihoods basket.

Tenant farmers, share croppers, women farmers and farmers with usufructs rights over land are still marginalised and the new policy has to facilitate the inclusion of such marginalised communities in the mainstream FPO movement.

Registration of FPOs is still a formidable challenge as the Companies Act insists on DSC, DIN, PAN and other requirements for all the promoters and BOD members. In rural ecosystem, these requirements are still a formidable challenge and Aadhaar-based registration can help a hassle-free registration process. The new policy should also demarcate the operational areas of existing FPOs so that there is no duplication of operation of new FPOs, including their membership.

Service providers like ATMA, DOT Centre, Line Department of Government, RARS, KVK and Agriculture Colleges are yet to come in full grip with the FPO movement and their involvement should be strongly supported by policy measures.

Though bank linkages are trickling, many bankers still do not find FPO as a bankable proposition or they are unaware of the FPO bank linkages and their guided policies. The new FPO policy should have an in-built provision for timely bank linkages based on the performance and business requirements of FPOs.

The Critical Rating Tool evolved by NABARD needs restructuring as many of the FPOs, which are in A grade as per the CRI rating, are still struggling and have not reached the stage of

operational and financial sustainability. There is a need for contextualised CRI rating, categorising the FPOs as newly formed, emerging and stable FPOs, based on their volume of business.

Chartered Accountants, who are statutorily qualified to audit the FPOs, have been following different templates of audit, sometimes in conflict with the provisions of the Act on income and expenditure recognition. The new policy should come out with well-laid-out templates for financial statements and rules governing the audit for all Chartered Accountants.

State-sponsored programmes like custom hiring centres, input stores and procurement centres are not working in close coordination with the existing FPOs, thereby leaving the farmers at crossroads; they have to avail these services either from their FPOs or government-sponsored centres. There is a need for a district-level coordination committee for FPOs headed by the District Collector to ensure strong convergence of FPOs with these service centres of government.

While POPIs have been spearheading the FPO movement in social mobilisation and registration and initial formation, they lack skills in terms of building robust value chains, market linkages and governance and management practice in lieu of the FPC Act. They need strong capacity building in these areas.

The new guidelines governing CBBO and ODOP schemes have to take into confidence the PRODUCE FPOs and their value chain development approaches avoiding overlapping and duplication of such activities with new initiatives.

Sector-specific FPOs like fisheries, livestock and SHG-based FPOs have been facing critical challenges in terms of technical support in their respective sectors and convergence of the respective line departments. The new policy needs to separately spell out policy guidelines with a focus on the specific requirements of each sector.

MIS is still an area that needs huge overhauling in terms of specifying the performance indicators of information, tracking and feedback loops. The new policy has to refine the existing MIS, NABFPO dashboard and reporting systems from FPOs.

Income Tax and GST are still red flag issues due to confusion over the provisions of the Act with regards to income and expenditure recognition and computing of final accounts. The new policy has to work in tandem with the Ministry of Finance to offer lucid policy support to FPOs and ease of filing both Act and Tax-related returns.

Farming proof document is an area of concern for the farmers as land is inherited from male member to male member of the family in succession, and denying land ownership to women. There should be a family-based farming proof certificate system in place of individual farmer-based certificates to enable women take shareholdership.

Online market platforms like ENAM, NDEX, NEML and other corporate-based platforms are not making much headway due to lack of capacities of the farmers to leverage these resources. The new policy should initiate a farmer and FPO-friendly policy framework for these market service providers.

With regard to options left for the FPOs to register as cooperatives or producer

companies, the new policy guidelines should provide succinct solutions and grant support from SFAC should be equally offered to cooperative-based FPOs also.

Project Monitoring and Implementation Committee (PMIC), which is meant to oversee the fund release for the FPOs, has to be overhauled with the institutional mechanism of regular monthly meetings and timely release of grants. Its constituent members should also be trained and oriented on the total scheme guiding the FPO fund release.

Initiatives for increasing Own Sources of Revenue (OSR) for Gram Panchayats and its role in Development – A study in selected States

Dr. R. Chinnadurai

Introduction

The enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) puts the Gram Panchayat at the centre of rural governance. Under Article 243G of the Constitution, the State Legislature is required to transfer such powers, functions and responsibilities to village, block and District Panchayats to enable them to function as institutions of self-government.

Resources are required by public agencies for delivering services. Normally, a local government is assigned certain specific services for which it would remain responsible. Once such a 'bundle' of services is assigned, ideally a commensurate 'bundle' of fiscal instruments is also assigned in order to enable the local government to discharge the services it is responsible for. The fiscal instruments made available to a local government may be classified into three groups, namely, (i) fiscal powers to raise revenue by imposing tax and/or different kinds of fees, rates, tolls, user charges, etc., which is generally called own source revenue (OSR); (ii) transfer from the higher-level government in 'tied' (conditional) or 'untied' (unconditional) form; (iii) borrowing from the market or financial institutions.

A critical factor in improving the fiscal autonomy of rural local bodies is to help them enhance their own revenues. Improving own revenues will also strengthen the link between revenue and expenditure decisions of local rural bodies at the margins, which is extremely important to promote efficiency as well as accountability in the provision of services. The Thirteenth Finance Commission (TFC) highlighted the need for augmenting local government resources through better tax administration and improved collection efficiency along with the provision of better quality services. The Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC) also re-emphasised the need to augment resources by GPs at the local level.

Objectives:

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To examine the existing as well as new and potential areas of own sources of revenue of the Gram Panchayats under study.
2. To analyse the initiatives of sample Gram Panchayats including people's willingness for mobilising OSR and problems in mobilisation.
3. To study the utilisation of OSR on various assets and services for fulfilling the basic needs of people and village development
4. To identify and analyse the governing factors of OSR of sample Gram Panchayats

Methodology

The study has been carried out by using primary as well as secondary data. The secondary data was collected from GP offices. To collect primary data, two groups of respondents Gram Sabha members and Focus Group members were selected. It may be noted that the Gram Sabha members consist of villagers of the Gram Panchayat whereas Focus Group members belonged to five categories, i.e. President, Vice President, Standing Committee members, members of Ward Committees and officials of the Gram Panchayat.

Sample Selection

The required sample of respondents from the above two groups was selected by using the Multi-Stage Random Sampling method in four stages.

Stage 1 Selection of States: The States were classified into three groups, viz. i) Higher order States, ii). Middle Order States and iii) Lower order States based on the Gram Panchayats' per capita own sources of revenue. Finally, from each group, three States having higher, middle and lower per capita own sources of revenue were chosen.

Stage 2: Selection of GPs: In this stage of sample selection, the different clusters among the highest per capita own sources of revenue of Gram Panchayats were created based on six additional criteria, i.e. the size of the population, more SC/ST population, (occupational) more farmers and agricultural labours, women-headed Gram Panchayats, Gram Panchayats close to Urban areas, and high literacy of Gram Panchayats. Finally, from each of the six clusters, one Gram Panchayat having the highest per capita OSR was selected.

Stage 3: Selection of Sample Respondents: A sample of 50 Gram Sabha members was chosen from the selected Gram Panchayat of each State from a total of nine study States, amounting to around 450 sample respondents, using the simple random sampling method. Similarly, a sample of 25 Focus Group members was chosen from the selected Gram Panchayat of each State from a total of nine States, making 225 sample respondents in total.

Study Area: Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Tripura and Uttar Pradesh

Findings:

- Property tax exists in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala
- Water tax is levied only in Karnataka and Kerala.
- Building tax is levied in Kerala, Assam and Karnataka.
- Licence fee is levied in Assam, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.
- Tap connection fee is charged in the States of Karnataka, Kerala, Assam and Andhra Pradesh. Respondents from the sample population opined that land tax does not exist in any of the State under study.

- With regard to the identified good aspects of tax/fee collection of the selected State-wise Gram Panchayats, the following conclusions may be noted.

GOOD ASPECTS	STATES
1. Provision of better services 2. The role of Gram Panchayats in strengthening livelihood	Andhra Pradesh
1. Proactive leadership and 2. Spending directly on development.	Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal
People voluntarily pay taxes.	Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal

- On the whole, the highest percentage of respondents from all the States considered the aspect of proactive leadership, followed by the provision of best services among all as the good aspects of tax collection of Gram Panchayats.

With regard to the identified worst aspects of tax/fee collection of the Gram Panchayats, the following observations are made.

WORST ASPECTS	STATES
1. Low income of people 2. No political interest	Andhra Pradesh
1. Low income 2. Lack of political interest 3. Lack of government rule 4. Lack of benefits from taxes	Uttar Pradesh
1. Lack of political interest 2. No direct benefit from taxes	Telangana and Tripura
1. No direct benefit from taxes	Himachal Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh

- On the whole, a majority of respondents from all the States expressed that the aspect of no direct benefit from tax as the worst aspect followed by no political interest.
- All the respondents from Assam, Tripura, West Bengal and a majority of respondents from Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka suggested measures to improve the performance of Gram Panchayats.
- Government norms are required in Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh,
- All the respondents in Kerala, Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal and a majority of respondents in Karnataka, Assam, Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh suggested a measure of spending more percentage of their revenue on developmental activities.

- Further, all the respondents unanimously in all the states suggested a measure of the creation of assets by the Gram Panchayats for increasing its tax/fee collection.
- The Gram Panchayats in Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh are in a position to undertake the above-suggested measures. However, in the remaining states, the Gram Panchayats are not in a position to adopt such measures for enhancing their tax collection as expressed by a majority of respondents.
- All the respondents in all the states agreed that people must be motivated to pay taxes to the Gram Panchayats.
- All the respondents in Karnataka, Kerala and Telangana and a majority of respondents in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh and West Bengal stated that user charges need to pay.
- All the respondents in Telangana and a majority of respondents in West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh stated that contribution and participation help Gram Panchayats for increasing tax collection.
- About the adoption of the above measures for improving tax collection, it may be noted that the Gram Panchayats in Karnataka and Kerala followed by Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Assam are in a position to adopt such measures. However, the Gram Panchayats in Uttar Pradesh, Telangana and Tripura are not in a position to adopt the same, as stated by a majority of respondents.

SECTION II: Focus Group Findings

- All the respondents in all the States either strongly agreed or agreed that incentives for the collection of own sources of revenue are treated as positive if it is possible to utilise the revenue for village development rather than spending on the establishment. Further, any increase in existing taxes deters the Gram Panchayat from raising revenue from own sources.
- The members and officials of Gram Panchayats do not have awareness about the scope for and manner of mobilising additional own sources of revenue.
- A majority of respondents in all the States except Karnataka and Kerala either strongly agreed or agreed that the Gram Panchayats get less volume of own sources of revenue in a village where the general economic activity is poor and the average income is low.
- According to a majority of respondents in all the States except Karnataka and Kerala, the elected representatives of Gram Panchayats feel that the imposition and collection of taxes will affect their political career, while in Karnataka and Kerala, a majority of respondents disagreed with the same.
- About 53 per cent of respondents from all the States felt that the collection of OSR gives financial liberty to the Gram Panchayats. But, at present, State Governments interfere in the expenditure of own sources of revenue of Gram Panchayats.

- On the whole, 58 per cent of respondents from all the States opined that the Gram Panchayats spend their own sources of revenue only for carrying out developmental activities. But at the same time, the officials of Gram Panchayats are not motivated for the creation and collection of own sources of revenue.
- With regard to the scope for own sources of revenue in Gram Panchayats, a majority of respondents in Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Assam, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh either strongly agreed or agreed that there is no scope for mobilisation of own sources of revenue in their Gram Panchayats. However, a majority of respondents in Karnataka, Kerala, Tripura, and Andhra Pradesh and a few respondents in West Bengal opined that there is scope for the collection of own sources of revenue.

Concerning the adoption of strategies for the collection of own sources of revenue, the following State-wise conclusions may be noted.

STRATEGIES	STATES
Regular collection of internal revenue by person	Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and West Bengal
Online Option	Karnataka and Kerala
Collection of own sources of revenue at the time any certificate needed by individuals	Andhra Pradesh, Assam and West Bengal
Incentive for tax collectors	Assam and Karnataka
No tax collection	Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Tripura and Uttar Pradesh

Problems faced by the GPs

All the States are reported to be facing the six major problems identified, i.e., a) low income or more people b) people not interested in paying tax c) no political will d) State not motivated e) no potential for collection of OSR and f) creation of OSR assets.

The following State-wise conclusions may be noted:

- The Gram Panchayats in Uttar Pradesh face all six problems. The Gram Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh and Assam also have similar problems but it share varies, as stated by respondents.
- The Gram Panchayats in Himachal Pradesh are facing all the problems except lack of interest among people for payment of tax and lack of creation of OSR assets.
- The Gram Panchayats in Telangana face all the problems except low income, no political will and lack of potential areas for the collection of OSR.
- The Gram Panchayats in Tripura are facing the problem of lack of motivation and creation of OSR assets

- The Gram Panchayats in Kerala and West Bengal are facing the problem of creation of OSR assets.
- The Gram Panchayats in Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal are facing all the identified problems such as no common property rights, no fund for the construction of assets, no opportunities; neither people nor Gram Panchayat leaders having interest.
- The Gram Panchayats in Karnataka are facing the problem of lack of common property rights, shortage of funds for the creation of assets and lack of opportunities.
- Similarly, the Gram Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh and Assam are facing the problems of lack of opportunities and lack of interest among people and also among the leaders of Gram Panchayats for the creation of OSR assets. The Gram Panchayats in Tripura are facing the problem of lack of funds as well as lack of interest both in the case of people and Gram Panchayat members for the creation of OSR assets.

Conclusion

The States should motivate Gram Panchayats to create and mobilise own sources of revenue and should not interfere in the spending of own sources of revenue by the Gram Panchayats so as to make them free to utilise their resources for carrying out various developmental works. Gram Panchayats are expecting more untied funds to meet the needs of the community preference such as service delivery and infrastructure. For example, many of the GPs are unable to meet the expenditure on safe drinking water supply, uninterrupted electricity supply, drainage and sanitation, addition and alteration of public buildings, construction of roads and bridges, etc. GPs are unable to fulfil the needs of their citizens from untied resources/own funds, as the statutory grant is also a kind of tied grant of which 60 per cent goes to electricity dues and the remaining 40 per cent goes to administrative expenditure of the GP, including salary of staff. Hence, the own sources of revenue are a deciding factor of financial autonomy. Therefore, the degree of financial autonomy of Gram Panchayat is higher in the developed regions.

Policy Recommendations

In light of the above conclusions, the study offers the following specific recommendations for the better functioning of Gram Panchayats, particularly in terms of mobilisation of own sources of revenue and its utilisation on various developmental works in villages of their jurisdictions.

- The presence of staff encourages people to pay taxes as they communicate their problems and get solutions.
- It is argued that if the Gram Panchayats fulfil the basic needs of people, they come forward to pay taxes regularly. Similarly, if the Gram Panchayats deliver services besides basic needs, they get more revenue as people, who are satisfied, pay taxes.
- Provision of common facilities by GPs in villages motivates villagers to pay taxes.

- One of the objectives of PRIs is to improve the living conditions of marginalised groups in villages as their betterment is imperative for achieving sustainable development in the country. The study strongly recommends that they have to implement various plans and programmes for the welfare of marginalised sections.
- Transparency in the functioning of Gram Panchayats is highly desirable as it creates confidence among people. Hence, the Gram Panchayats in these States are advised to maintain transparency in their functioning.
- The Gram Panchayats in all the States are suggested to display the list of tax defaulters as they are not doing so. This forces defaulters to pay taxes.
- It is suggested that the Gram Panchayats need to prepare the list of properties with revised rates and display the same in favour of information to the villagers as they are not displaying. This will enhance the transparency in the functioning of the Gram Panchayats.
- The officials have lack of awareness about the scope for and manner of mobilising additional own sources of revenue. Hence, they need to be educated and motivated in this regard.

In addition to the above, the study suggests the Gram Panchayats across States implement the following measures for mobilising a high volume of own sources of revenue.

- Making the staff concerned active, efficient and responsible for the creation and collection of own sources revenue. Creating awareness and motivating people to pay taxes regularly.
- Providing proactive leadership at the Gram Panchayat level. Strengthening livelihood for poor people so as to make them pay taxes.
- Allocating funds for the creation of OSR assets.
- Spending own sources of revenue on developmental activities only in villages.
- Extending incentives to Gram Panchayats as well as tax collectors for mobilising more tax revenue.
- Evolving various strategies for mobilising own sources of revenue, i.e.
 - a) Regular collection of revenue by person/online
 - b) Collection of tax when people applies for certificates
 - c) Making tax payment mandatory for getting ration card, water connection, etc.
 - d) Making use of available common property rights and natural resources in villages such as temples, tourist spots, etc.

A Century of Agrarian Change in Lower Cauvery Delta: A Study of Palakurichi Village 1918- 2018

Dr. Surjit Vikraman

Introduction

In India, agriculture sector provides livelihoods to nearly 60 per cent of the rural population. Hence, any strategy to bring rural transformation has to focus on interventions in the agriculture sector. Agriculture, in addition to providing food, is also a source of livelihood for a significant share of rural population through crop production and provision of employment opportunities. Hence, agrarian relations in any region play a crucial role in defining the nature and characteristics of development trajectory, and are very critical for any inclusive and sustainable rural transformation. There were long-term village studies carried out by scholars as well as institutions, trying to understand the dynamics of rural transformation through an analysis of agrarian relations and the nature of agricultural development in rural areas. Among the various studies, the study of Palakurichi village in Thanjavur region (present Nagapattinam district) of Tamil Nadu stands unique with the fact that it was one of the 'Slater villages' studied since 1918, and the agrarian relations in the villages have been studied continuously for nearly a century since 1918. There has been a study of Palakurichi village within a span of every two decades from 1918 till 2008. So far, there are five studies of the village done by eminent scholars, sketching out the socio-economic changes, agrarian relations and livelihoods of households. The period has also covered major phases of agricultural and rural development programmes in India focusing on bringing rural transformation.

The importance of Thanjavur region in terms of its contribution to rice production in the country has been widely noted in the literature. The region falls within the Cauvery delta and has assured irrigation from the Cauvery River. The irrigation system in the Cauvery delta is one of the oldest water control facilities in India and dates back to the Chola period during the second century A.D. In order to understand the long-term changes in the lower Cauvery delta region, a detailed village study of the Palakurichi village was undertaken with the resurvey of the village during 2019. This is the sixth study of the Palakurichi village since the first study in 1918, followed by studies spanning over a period from 1918-2018.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were

1. To characterise the agrarian structure and agrarian relations and its changes over a century (1918 – 2018) in Palakurichi village of the lower Cauvery delta region.
2. To analyse the socio-economic conditions of households in the village, and how has it changed over a century.

3. To understand how *Dalit* households are positioned in relation to other households in terms of socio-economic changes during this period.
4. To assess the role of important public-supported agriculture and rural development programmes in transforming the lives and livelihoods of households in Palakurichi village.

Methodology

This was a detailed village study, adopting the methodology of household survey carried out based on a pretested structured questionnaire for the collection of primary data. Along with primary data, secondary sources of data on the village and the region from the Census of India and various other official sources were also collected and analysed. A detailed census survey of all the households in the village was carried out based on a structured questionnaire.

Study Area

At present, the study village of Palakurichi is situated in Kilvelur taluk of Nagapattinam district at the tail end of the Cauvery delta. It was part of the old undivided Thanjavur district, which forms the Thanjavur region of the Cauvery delta. Thanjavur region here refers to the old undivided Thanjavur district which comprised the present districts of Thanjavur, Thiruvarur and Nagapattinam. The Thanjavur region is historically known as the “rice bowl of south India” for its prosperous rice production system. During the early decades of the twentieth century, the proportion of net sown area under rice cultivation (70 to 80 per cent) was highest in Thanjavur among all districts of the Madras Presidency. The region falls within the Cauvery delta and had a prosperous agricultural production system supported by irrigation from the Cauvery river. The irrigation system in the Cauvery delta is one of the oldest water control facilities in India and dates back to the Chola period during the second century A.D.

Conclusions

The most important conclusion that emerges from the long-term analysis of agrarian relations and social change weaved from all the six studies of Palakurichi village, including the recent study of 2019 are as follows.

Palakurichi has remained primarily an agrarian village for a century, dependent entirely on agriculture for the livelihood of majority of the households. The most striking feature is the long-term dominance of a single crop of rice cultivation in the village for nearly a century, with the exception of two crops of rice being cultivated for a brief period of two decades during the 1970s and 1980s. However, later with the decline of irrigation water availability from the Cauvery irrigation system and the deterioration of production conditions due to natural calamities, including floods and droughts, villagers could afford to grow only once crop of long-duration rice. The agro-ecological characteristics of the region could only support the production of a single crop of long-duration rice, and the livelihoods of majority of households depended on this.

Palakurichi village historically had a significantly higher share of *Dalit* households which constituted 60 per cent of the total households in the village. Though *Dalits* constituted the majority of households in the village, they were subjected to extreme forms of oppression and discrimination based on caste historically. They were largely agricultural labourers and were bonded to landlord households through the *pannaiyal* system, which prevailed during the pre-colonial period in the region and continued in various forms and ways even after the colonial rule and the country became independent. The studies on Palakurichi at different points in time sketch the extremely oppressive and discriminatory treatment extended to *Dalits* in the village, and the deplorable and vulnerable living conditions faced by them for a long period before they could mobilise and fight against such oppressions and demand basic necessities of life. These efforts were later complemented by various public-supported programmes, such as PDS, IAY and PMAY and MGNREGA, aimed at improving the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable households.

A distinct feature of the agrarian structure of Palakurichi village was the historical inequalities in ownership of means of production, particularly the extremely unequal distribution of land ownership. This remained the defining characteristic of agrarian relations even during the beginning of the twenty-first century. Historically, the dominance in landownership helped the land-owning *Naidu* community to exercise control over the social and economic activities of the village and keep the landless *Dalits* bonded to them through economic and extra economic coercions. For nearly nine decades till around the mid-2000s, *Dalits* could never imagine owning a small piece of land in the village. However, due to declining fortunes from rice cultivation, a generational shift in focus from agriculture to non-agricultural sources of livelihoods and migration to nearby cities and abroad, *Naidu* households were unable to continue agricultural production in the manner and scale which they used to carry out in earlier days. A significant change in landownership was achieved through the implementation of the Land for Tillers' Freedom (LAFTI) programme in Palakurichi. This was a remarkable transformation in the lives of *Dalit* households in Palakurichi that gave them access to land ownership and a major upliftment in terms of improved social relations and economic opportunities. However, the fact that more than half of *Dalits* are landless is a major constraint towards achieving equity in social and economic development.

The occupational diversity of Palakurichi village has been stagnant with a large share of the workforce engaged in agriculture sector for a long period. From the first study in 1918, till the study in 2003, agriculture remained the major source of employment. However, by the study of 2019, the occupational workforce underwent a slow transformation from dependence on the agriculture sector to non-agriculture sector. This transformation was supported to an extent by employment generation through the implementation of MGNREGA programme.

Policy Recommendations

The analysis of changes in the agricultural production conditions and agrarian relations in Palakurichi village brings to the forefront the absence of any policy or programme that could

address the stagnation and decline in the agriculture sector, particularly during the post-Green Revolution period. The absence of any policy or programme for making agriculture sector viable through cropping pattern changes to perennials and less water-absorbing crops suitable for the agro-climatic characteristics of the region, diversification to allied sectors including livestock, particularly focusing on small ruminants is very evident. This has resulted in a slow transition of livelihood dependency of households in Palakurichi on agriculture to opportunities in non-agricultural sectors in nearby towns and cities, which also is growing only at a slower pace. The intervention of various public-supported social security programmes, particularly PDS and MGNREGA, in supporting vulnerable households in the village during periods of distress and despair is noteworthy.

Access to Finance (A2f) by Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in the Indian Economy and its Impact on the MSE Sector

Dr. M. Srikanth

Dr. A. Bhavani

Mr. Veneet J. Kalloor

Mr. Chandan Kumar

Introduction

If farmers provide food and nutritional security to the nation, Micro & Small Enterprises (MSEs) contribute to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment, and exports of our country. MSEs face legacy issues such as lack of formal registration, inadequate & untimely credit, delayed receivables, technological obsolescence, negligible market linkages, absence of exit policy, etc. Out of all the challenges, access to finance is the major issue that MSEs have been facing across the country. Besides, the MSEs have long-delayed receivables on their books which stretch their working capital cycle and hike interest costs substantially. Though the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006 stipulates that the buyer has to make payment to these firms within 45 days, almost all the MSEs are at the receiving end and face inordinate delays in collecting their receivables due to their low bargaining power.

In view of the aforementioned, SIDBI funded the Centre for Entrepreneurship Development & Financial Inclusion (CEDFI), NIRDPR in March 2020 to examine the major road blocks being faced by the MSEs while accessing credit from banks and financial institutions in India and the constraints of these firms in getting converted into formal entities. Since we commenced the research study on April 1, 2020, i.e. prior to the change in the definition of the MSMEs, we conducted the research study based on the old definition.

Objectives

1. To examine the major road blocks being faced by MSEs while accessing finance and to assess whether the borrowers have ease of access (timeliness, i.e. non-cooperative behaviour of loan officers, delaying or denying of loans, etc., and inadequacy of credit) to credit from banks and financial institutions (FIs) so that last mile financial inclusion can happen;
2. To scan the unorganised segment of MSEs and the hurdles they face while getting converted into organised entities;
3. To study the aspirations of MSEs under NRLM/NULM programmes and the challenges they face while accessing credit/non-financial services;
4. To analyse the economic development of the individual loan beneficiaries; and
5. To assess the level of financial/digital literacy among the MSEs, especially in the context of emerging scenarios of digital lending.

Methodology

After conducting the pilot study, primary as well as secondary data related to MSEs was collected to bring in a holistic view of the research topic. Besides, we documented some case studies on MSEs illustrating the status of accessibility to finance and conducted a two-day national webinar in order to elicit views from all stakeholders and obtain valuable insights on the research study.

Study Area

We collected secondary data on MSEs for the entire country for the last 12 years, starting from the year 2008-09 to 2019-20 to assess the trends and progress of financial assistance to MSEs in India. The data throw light on several enterprises, registered enterprises, their characteristics, outstanding credit from banks/FIs, etc. While collecting secondary data, we relied on data from the public domain, i.e. data from RBI, SIDBI, Ministry of MSMEs, etc.

We collected primary data from four States of India, namely Uttar Pradesh (north), Telangana (south), West Bengal (east), and Maharashtra (west). It may be noted that each one of these States is at a different level of industrialisation and has special characteristics. We collected primary data from individual entrepreneurs through a semi-structured questionnaire/schedule. While collecting primary data, we engaged non-government organisations (NGOs)/local agencies in the study States to reach out to the respondents. Since COVID was prevailing during the study period, we collected primary data through various means, viz. mobile phone, visits to MSME exhibitions, Google Sheet, etc. In fact, restrictions on mobility during the study period impeded our ability to conduct the research as envisaged.

Findings

- Our sample consists of 87.38 per cent male entrepreneurs and 12.62 per cent female entrepreneurs.
- Majority of the enterprises (51.40 per cent) were owned by the general category followed by other backward classes (40.19 per cent).
- A majority of the entrepreneurs (66 per cent) pursued higher education, i.e. degree & above.
- First-generation entrepreneurs were a greater part of the sample (73 per cent) and a majority of the entrepreneurs (72 per cent) were running their enterprise for more than five years.
- While 64 per cent of the enterprises of the sample were into manufacturing and 36 per cent were engaged in services. Thirteen per cent of the entrepreneurs in the sample were SHG members.
- From the primary data, we found that nine out of 10 MSEs depended on informal sources for working capital as well as term loans. In fact, these loans were high-cost funds and would adversely affect their profitability.

- It is observed from the field survey that more than half of the MSEs in the sample were unregistered entities and had never approached a bank/FI for sanction of a loan.
- One-third of the sample respondents did not pay any tax. However, 57 per cent of the sample entrepreneurs paid GST and 46 per cent paid income tax.
- Majority of the sample MSEs were first-generation entrepreneurs (73 per cent). The sample mainly comprised proprietorship firms (72 per cent), and private limited companies (15 per cent).
- Only one-tenth of the sampled MSEs were involved in exports. While three-fourths of the MSE respondents used digital banking channels for their business operations, entrepreneurs from Maharashtra were found to be more financially savvy than others.
- Most of the MSEs in the four sample States cited challenges while accessing finance from formal banks/FIs such as insufficient information on different loan products, absence of credit counsellors/mentors while applying for loans, non-cooperation of the loan officers, lack of adequate credit, non-availability of timely credit, inability to meet the requirement of collateral security, high rate of interest on the loans, and inadequate moratorium period while sanctioning the loan in that order.
- As per the secondary data, the procedure for registration of the MSEs had been changed thrice by the government during the last one-and-a-half decades, which obviously confused them.
- We found that there is a secular decline in the average size of the loan since 2016, i.e. perhaps due to enhanced coverage under MUDRA loans. Since 2015-16, it had been decreasing and reached Rs. 3,38,872/- as of December 2020. If inflation is taken into account, the decrease in the loan size is significant in real terms.
- Out of the estimated number of 6.34 crore MSEs in 2015-16, only 4.18 crore (65.93 per cent) could access formal institutional finance as of December 2020. However, a notable feature is that there is a high growth rate of NBFC credit to MSEs during the last five years, i.e. 133 per cent, between FY2016 and FY2020.
- It is noticed that the micro & small entrepreneurs had been facing inadequacy of loans and they had to arrange funds to the extent of 80 to 95 per cent from other sources, which are high-cost funds. This would dent their profit margins.
- It is also observed that the credit to the services sector as a proportion to the manufacturing sector was less than 100 per cent until FY2010, and gradually it increased to 220 per cent by FY 2020.
- Stakeholders, mainly bank officials, felt that banks/FIs reject loan applications from the MSEs mainly due to generation of low cash flows by the MSEs (78.85 per cent), inability to meet the requirement of collateral security (78.85 per cent), no or low credit rating (75 per cent), lack of adequate market linkages for their products/services(75 per cent), non-compliance with the requirement of margin money (73.08 per cent), absence of formal registration (73.08 per cent), non- maintenance of authentic records (71.15 per cent), and diversion of funds (69.23 per cent) in that order.

Conclusion

From the analysis of secondary data, we found that there is a secular decline in the average size of the loan since 2016 perhaps due to enhanced coverage under MUDRA loans. Inadequate loan amount may lead to diversion of funds and ultimately result in NPAs. As a low amount of loan might not be sufficient to undertake any income-generating activity by the MSEs or diversion of funds may happen, policymakers may have a rethink in this context.

From the primary data collected from 214 MSEs in the four study States, namely Maharashtra, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, we found that nine out of 10 MSEs depend on informal sources for working capital as well as term loans. It is observed from the field survey that more than half of the MSEs in the sample were unregistered entities and had never approached a bank/FI for sanction of a loan. One-third of the sample respondents did not pay any taxes. However, 57 per cent of the sample entrepreneurs paid GST and 46 per cent paid income tax. Majority of the sample MSEs were first-generation entrepreneurs (73 per cent). The sample mainly consisted of proprietorship firms (72 per cent), and private limited companies (15 per cent). Only one-tenth of the sampled MSEs were involved in exports. While three-fourths of the MSE respondents used digital banking for their business operations, entrepreneurs from Maharashtra were more financially savvy than others.

Most of the MSEs in the four sample States cited challenges while accessing finance from formal banks/FIs. Since 2007-08, the procedure for registration of the MSEs had been changed thrice by the government which undoubtedly confused the entrepreneurs.

As MSEs lack awareness of various formal banking/financial services and government schemes, there is an imperative need to disseminate information through print and electronic media in this regard. MSEs should be imparted with financial/digital literacy and they should be encouraged to make use of digital channels, including TReDS platform for the speedy realisation of their receivables.

As most of the MSEs do not have market linkages and branding for their products/services, the government may promote more clusters, thereby building synergy and sustainable value chains in the ecosystem. Banks/FIs need to provide credit plus services to MSEs, including training, capacity building and handholding of the entrepreneurs for mutual benefit.

Policy Recommendations

- Policymakers may focus on training of trainers, i.e. creating a pool of master trainers to bridge the knowledge/skill deficit.
- Entrepreneurs may be impressed upon to improve their credit score by servicing loans from banks/FIs without delay.
- Training and capacity building is also necessary for bank officials to appreciate the needs of MSEs, and prevailing government schemes for improving the supply of adequate and timely credit to this sector.

- Banks/FIs may provide credit by relying less on collateral security and more on cash flows, validated by the digital footprint of MSMEs. Also, if an effective insolvency regime/proper exit policy is available, the lenders will have more certainty and predictability to recover the defaulted loans, which, in turn, enhances the ease of access to finance for MSEs.
- Essentially, three policy support measures are necessary to revive the businesses of MSEs during the post-pandemic situation – adequate and timely credit, better marketing support, and adoption of technology. After all, a resilient and healthy MSE sector is essential for making a big impact on India’s inclusive growth story.

Status of Implementation and Governance Challenges of PESA Act in Extremist Affected Areas: A Study in Chhattisgarh

Dr. Rubina Nusrat

Introduction

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment which came into force w.e.f. 24th April 1993, inserted Part IX in the Constitution of India and accorded Panchayats a Constitutional status as institutions of local self-governance for rural India. Article 243M of the Constitution, while exempting the Fifth Schedule Areas (FSA) from the implementation of Part IX of the Constitution, provides that Parliament, may by law, extend its provisions to the Scheduled and Tribal Areas subject to such exceptions and modifications as may be specified in such law and no such law shall be deemed to be an amendment to the Constitution. Based on the report of the Bhuria Committee submitted in 1995, Parliament enacted “The Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996” popularly known as the PESA Act, to extend Part IX of the Constitution with certain modifications and exceptions to the Fifth Schedule Areas notified in 10 States, viz. Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Telangana. These Schedule Areas in 10 States are spread over 108 districts (45 fully covered and 63 partly covered).

In 1996, when the PESA Act was implemented, the State governments were required to amend their respective Panchayat Raj Acts within a year and not to make any law that would be inconsistent with the mandate of PESA. It was in 2000 that Chhattisgarh became an independent State. The Panchayat Raj legislation applicable in Madhya Pradesh was applied in Chhattisgarh and a new chapter of Chhattisgarh Panchayati Raj Adhiniyam, 1993 (CPRA) was added to make special provisions for the extension of Panchayats in Scheduled Areas. The State PESA rules have been drafted and have been uploaded on the State government website for suggestions by the stakeholders. The requisite changes shall be instated in the Draft PESA rules after deliberations, prior to implementation of the PESA Act in the State.

However, Chhattisgarh is one of the few States suffering from extremism; so the implementation of PESA for imbuing self-rule in the tribal people becomes imperative. Mani Shankar Aiyar (2021) records that the guerrilla prevails because he lives among them, serves their elementary needs and, in return, receives their protection and assistance. If the tribal people could be enabled to govern themselves as is their right by Constitutional law and the PESA legislation, they would much rather be self-reliant than beholden to the armed outlaw in their midst, he adds.

The research shall describe the process of implementation of PESA in the study area in detail, emphasising the situational analysis of the implementation process. Further, the study shall highlight the challenges experienced in the implementation of PESA in its right spirit by various stakeholders and prepare policy recommendations based on the findings of the study.

Against this backdrop, NIRDPR proposes to conduct a research study on the status of implementation of PESA and governance challenges in the State of Chhattisgarh.

Objectives:

The key objectives of the study are mentioned in the following description.

- To understand the status of the implementation of PESA and the implication in extremism-affected areas
- To examine the situation of PESA in the intervened locale with special reference to livelihood conditions and development schemes.
- To analyse the governance challenges of the PESA Act in extremism-affected areas
- To suggest further strengthening of the PESA Act to protect tribal culture, traditions and livelihoods in extremism-affected areas

Methodology

The study begins by reviewing the traditional governance system as PESA Act is built on the concept of Gram Swaraj or self-governance. PESA lays emphasis on every village having a Gram Sabha which will be competent to safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs of the people, their cultural identity, community resources and customary mode of dispute resolution. Hence, it becomes pertinent to study the traditional governance systems in the villages of PESA districts to understand whether the nature of the status of implementation of PESA is in consonance with the tribal culture and tradition of that PESA State.

Section 4(m) of the PESA Act says that to function as an institution of self-government, a State Legislature shall ensure that the Panchayat at the appropriate level / the Gram Sabha is endowed specifically with powers of enforcing prohibition or to regulate in respect of the sale and consumption of any intoxicant; ownership of minor forest produce; prevention of alienation of land in the Scheduled Areas; management of village markets; moneylending to STs; and exercise control over institutions and functionaries in all social sectors; control over local plans and resources for such plans including tribal sub-plans. These shall be the determinants that help in understanding the status and extent of PESA implementation in PESA States.

If the data analysis of collected data on these variables shows a positive trend, then there is an effective implementation of PESA in the villages of these PESA States. The gap analysis shall help in assessing the varying degree and nature of PESA implementation in Chhattisgarh.

Study Area

Purposive random sampling was adopted for choosing districts and villages that are fully PESA and extremist areas. The study covered three scheduled districts. The districts chosen were on the basis of Extremely-Affected Areas (Dantewala), Medium-Affected Areas (Bastar)

and Least-Affected Areas (Kanker). From each select district, one block was chosen based on purposive sampling. Similarly, from each block, three GPs preferably the headquarter GP and another two medium to long-distance GPs to the block headquarter were taken for the study. In the process, three districts, three blocks and 12 Panchayats/villages were covered. For the collection of household data, purposive random sampling (PRS) was adopted. Out of the total households, a sample size of 10 per cent of households belonging to the BPL category was selected. One FGD per village was conducted in the selected GPs. Convenience sampling was used for the collection of household data from the villages based on the safety and accessibility of areas for data collection.

Findings:

Functioning of Gram Sabha

- Participation in Gram Sabha was medium (45.1 per cent) as there is lack of knowledge about PESA and intimation about Gram Sabha meetings was low till the hamlet level.
- Village records were maintained after Gram Sabha meetings (65 per cent), but the register of the minutes was kept with the Secretary of the Gram Panchayat, thereby indicating that Gram Sabhas are happening at the Panchayat level unlike at the hamlet level suggested in PESA.
- Process of Identification of works (32.1 per cent) and beneficiaries (29.6) was low in Gram Sabha and a decision in this regard was taken by Sarpanch and Secretary in the Gram Sabha, refuting powers of GS in PESA
- Awareness about the process of passing utilisation certificates by Gram Sabha was low (25 per cent).

Working of PESA Act in terms of Powers accorded to Gram Sabha in PESA

- The working of provisions of PESA was high in terms of control of Gram Sabha in the regulation of moneylending (80.4 per cent) and sale of intoxicants (85.2 per cent).
- Through Gram Sabha, people had medium access and control over Minor Forest Produce (76.5 per cent).
- Control of Gram Sabha over the acquisition of land (47.3 per cent) and management of water bodies (53.6 per cent) and village market was low (47.3 per cent).

Extremism and PESA

- In terms of PESA, 66.9 per cent did not believe that proper implementation of Gram Sabha governance shall lead to curbing Naxalism and 60.9 per cent opined that proper implementation of Panchayat rule shall not lead to self-governance, Henceforth, demonstrating low confidence and ignorance of powers accorded to Gram Sabha in PESA. Effective Implementation of PESA shall instil self-governance through Gram Sabha in them and shall decrease their dependence on extremist influences for basic daily needs in their hamlets.

- Perceptual analysis of people about accessibility of roads leading to enhanced development was 60.6 per cent, indicating that roads have led to enhanced accessibility of the villages in extremist areas to welfare schemes like food for security PDS, Health and education and infrastructural development through PMAGY, PMGSY and MGNREGA.
- Perceptual analysis of people about development led to a reduction in extremist activities was 67.3 per cent as people noted that the connectivity of roads to their villages has helped them avail welfare schemes at their doorstep, which has enhanced their dependence on and trust in the government.

Conclusion

1. There is immense ignorance regarding PESA amongst the people and officials with a complete lack of conceptual clarity of definitions, provisions and powers of Gram Sabha in PESA
2. Gram Sabha is held at the village level and not at the hamlet level as per PESA.
3. Gram Sabha seems to have low participation due to lack of proper announcement/intimation about the date of meeting and inaccessibility of people from hamlets to attend village-level GS meetings.
4. For communication, Hindi language is used in Gram Sabha meetings at the village level, which was difficult for a forest-dwelling *Gondi*-speaking tribal to understand.
5. Gram Sabha's functioning was not proper as per the provisions of PESA as people are unaware of the powers accorded to them under the Act.
6. The powers accorded to Gram Sabha in PESA were low in terms of control of GS over the acquisition of land, management of water bodies and local village markets, medium in terms of minor forest produce and high in terms of control of Gram Sabha in the regulation of moneylending and sale of intoxicants. Hence, officials need to ensure consulting accorded and making its decision binding in terms of the acquisition of land, minor forest produce, management of water bodies and local village markets.
7. Infrastructural developmental activities undertaken have led to high accessibility of extremist villages to welfare schemes by the government, which has led to an evident decrease in extremist activities. However, the emphasis on self-governance of tribal communities through effective implementation of PESA has the potential of tackling extremism through *Vikas, Vishwas, Suraksha and Swaraj*.

Policy Recommendations

For Chhattisgarh:

- Chhattisgarh has to implement PESA rules with greater power to Gram Sabha categorically mentioned with administrative bindings and penalties if powers with respect to minor forest produce are not appropriately disseminated within PESA hamlets.
- As the State PESA rules are drafted and are to be implemented, this is the apt time to

implement PESA with the mandatory provision of the creation of sub-committees at every hamlet level, which acts as supporting wings for the effective functioning of Gram Sabha and enhances its credibility in alignment with Gram Panchayat.

- Setting up of State PESA Implementation Cell, PESA ICT Cell, PESA training cell and PESA Grievance Cell.
- Develop the village of Shri B. D. Sharma (masterbrain behind model PESA rules) at Chhattisgarh as *PESA Dhaam*.
- The State government's decision to celebrate tribal festivals uniformly on the same date is in conflict with PESA as Gram Sabha is authorised to safeguard the traditions and customs, including the festivals.
- Documentation of the tribal traditions, customs and customary laws is imperative to preserve the traditions and customs of the tribals in PESA areas.
- Trust building in tribals of extremist areas can be enhanced by being sensitive to cultural burial stones of the ancestors placed along the roadside while constructing roads. This is one strong point of contention tribal hold towards the government.
- In the State government's successful three-pronged strategy of *Vikas, Vishwasaur Suraksha*, the fourth element of *Swaraj* needs to be added in PESA areas by consciously according more powers to Gram Sabha in terms of self-governance through the assistance of administrative machinery.

District Level

- Intensive training should be imparted to officers/functionaries at district, block and village levels functionaries in saturation mode.
- ICT materials in local tribal language should be displayed at strategic points for easy dispersal of information regarding PESA.
- PESA material should be made available in local tribal languages like *Gondi and Hubli* for the understanding of youngsters at the hamlet level.
- Officers need to be oriented with the process of conducting Gram Sabha in order to build a better understanding of them by adhering to the decisions taken within Gram Sabha.
- Orientation programmes for cultural sensitisation of officials towards tribal culture, traditions, language and tribal needs for helping tribals live a better life. For example, Gram Sabha sees low participation of people due to low information regarding the date of conduct of the GS meeting.
- Officers should ensure that there should be one joint Gram Sabha of all hamlets (*paara*) in a village.

Village level

- Extensive training should be imparted to village-level PR functionaries for building up a *PESA SENA/PESA Toli* at the village level to create awareness of PESA and the powers of Gram Sabha at the hamlet level.
- *PESA SENA/PESA Toli* should ensure that Gram Sabha is conducted at the hamlet level and not the village level.
- Hands-on training and handholding to tribal people on the process of conducting Gram Sabha, right from decision and announcement of date of next Gram Sabha, constituting Standing committees of Gram Sabha like Peace Committee, Justice Committee, Resource Planning and Management Committee, Intoxication Control Committee, Debt Control Committee, maintenance of *Gram Sabha Kosh*, process of issuance of utilisation certificate to Gram Panchayat by Gram Sabha and record-keeping in terms of decisions taken in Gram Sabha meetings.
- Innovative vocational programmes for generating skill-based employment should be taken up by Gram Sabha to discourage youth from joining extremist activities in PESA villages.
- The medium for primary education in *Ashram* School should be the local language. As the preservation of traditions and customs by Gram Sabha is an intrinsic part of PESA provisions, most traditional leaders in the PESA hamlets felt that the modern education system disturbs their traditions and customs, leading to intergenerational conflicts.

Evaluation of Society for Social Audit Accountability and Transparency (SSAAT), Telangana

Dr. Rajesh Kumar Sinha

Dr. C. Dheeraja

Dr. Srinivas Sajja

Introduction

MGNREG Audit of Scheme Rules 2011 mandates that an independent Social Audit Unit (SAU) should be created in each State to facilitate social audit. Auditing Standards for Social Audit, 2016 mandates that there should be periodic internal and external assessments of social audits and these should be done once in two years. At the request of Society for Social Audit, Accountability and Transparency (SSAAT), the NIRDPR has undertaken an evaluation of SSAAT and social audit process in the State of Telangana.

Objectives

1. To carry out an independent assessment of the social audit unit (SAU) in Telangana.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of social audit facilitated by the SAU as seen by the primary stakeholders.

Methodology

Primary data was collected from a total of nine GPs, which were selected through stratified purposive sampling. From each of these GPs, a minimum of 20 MGNREGA wage-seekers (workers), including five wage-seekers with grievances, were identified randomly. In total, 188 MGNREGA wage-seekers, including 47 wage-seekers who had registered any grievances in the last three rounds of social audit, were administered questionnaires. Two FGDs with villagers (mostly wage-seekers) were conducted in each of the nine selected GPs. One FGD was conducted with Mandal and GP level MGNREGA officials in six Mandals where these nine GPs are located. Botlavanaparathi GP of Dharmaram Mandal in Peddapalli district was selected for non-participant observation of social audit process. Secondary data has been gathered from official records, policy documents and annual reports of SSAAT.

Study Area

Pedanhallabali, Arlagudem, Pathamaredubaka GPs in Bhadradi Kothagudam district; Munugode, Anthampet, Jangamreddi Gudem GPs in Nalgonda district; Mujgi, Nilaipet, Pembli GPs in Nirmal district, and Botlavanaparathi in Peddapalli district.

Findings:***(i) Achievements of SSAAT:***

- SSAAT has a governing body of eminent people since its inception.
- The Society has a robust organisational structure with seven verticals- Admin, Accounts, HR, Programs, IT, CB and Field, with Section heads and is well staffed.
- SSAAT is the first SAU to build a dedicated cadre of social audit facilitators from VSA (now called VRPs), BRPs, DRPs, STMs and PMs.
- For the facilitation of in-house training, SSAAT established the social audit training cell way back in 2010
- Resource persons, mostly from humble backgrounds, enjoy improved social and economic status. They have improved their knowledge and skills and feel confident in interacting with officials and community.
- Steps such as test audits, constant monitoring, and immediate response to any complaint have been taken to maintain the integrity of the social audit process and ensure that there is no corruption in the social audit process.
- SSAAT covers households of more than 90 per cent wage-seekers during the social audit process and 100 per cent verification of works.
- Social audit has helped create awareness among wage-seekers. Three-fourths (75 per cent) of wage-seekers said that social audit team gave information about rights & entitlements under the MGNREGA.
- In 2020-21 and also in 2021-22, during the peak of COVID-19 related restrictions, SSAAT has been among the leading States which started facilitating concurrent social audits (CSA) of MGNREGS.
- A Vigilance wing has been set up in the year 2011 both at the State and the district levels to ensure seamless follow-up actions are taken on the social audit paras. A protocol for follow-up action in the form of SRDS Rules for FTE has also been put in place.
- APSAPCPA, 2012 has been adopted by the Telangana government post-bifurcation, ensuring the setting up of mobile courts in Medak and Karimnagar, with the support of the High Court, to try cases in the villages by a First Class Judicial Magistrate, brought out by social audit.
- SSAAT has initiated measures such as training for independent observers identified by the government; preparing guidelines for performance; attendance and performance review of the observers in the monthly review meetings.
- SSAAT has established a synergy with the CAG/PAG on social audit.
- SSAAT created its website in the year 2010, (www.socialaudit.telangana.gov.in) compliant with the Section 4 of the RTI promoting suo-moto disclosure. The website hosts all the circulars, GOs, budgetary and expenditure details pertaining to the society, including the original social audit reports.

- SSAAT is audited by the AG's office every three years. SSAAT has also been audited by CAG as part of its Compliance Audit of implementation of MGNREG Audit of Scheme Rules 2011.
- The Department of Rural Development has also benefitted from the inputs provided by the social audit teams and this has led to policy changes in the implementation of the various schemes such as MGNREGS, SSP, AABY and IWMP.
- SSAAT has also facilitated social audit/verification of various other schemes of other departments. Important among them are ICDS, Stree Nidhi, MDM, verification of ODF status of GPs under SBM-G, etc.
- SSAAT has made important contributions to the evolution of the legal framework of social audit at the national level such as the drafting of MGNREG Audit of Scheme Rules 2011 and Auditing Standards for Social Audit 2016.
- SSAAT has assisted other States in setting up SAUs and has also provided training to their key officials and resource persons.
- SSAAT has contributed significantly to knowledge creation on social audit. Papers related to the social audit process have also been published in leading national and international journals.
- SSAAT has also hosted international training for Government/CSOs/International Supreme Audit Institutions of other countries to learn about social audits.
- Wage-seekers perceive community assets under MGNREGS as of good quality and useful. A very high proportion (95 per cent) of the respondents said that the public assets created under MGNREGA are useful to the village community.
- Social audit has emerged as an accessible and no-threatening platform for registering grievances. Forty-four per cent of the wage-seekers, who were facing issues, said that they raised their issues with the social audit team.
- Despite certain procedural weaknesses, delayed and inadequate actions, 78 per cent of wage-seekers said that social audit had a positive impact in terms of grievance redress, reduction in corruption, improved quality of works, etc. As a result, 62 per cent of wage-seekers are willing to participate in social audits in future.

(ii) Challenges:

- Inadequate deployment of staff and social audit resource persons mainly due to paucity of funds.
- The requirement to stay in the GP and not enough rest days are leading to a high attrition rate.
- SSAAT has not been able to facilitate two social audits in a year in all GPs; instead, it facilitates one social audit in every GP per year.
- Social audits of PMAY-G, NSAP and MoPR have not been taken up by SSAAT so far.
- Poor maintenance of records and delay in making them available to the social audit team.

- Identification of VRPs has become a challenge due to low resource fees, strenuous work, and the requirement to stay in the village.
- Training of VRPs is not systematic.
- The community mobilisation efforts by the social audit team are inadequate to participate in social audit Gram Sabha. The attendance of wage-seekers as well as the airing of opinions is low in the Gram Sabha. In public hearings, their participation is almost nil.
- The social audit team shows reluctance to register common grievances such as delays in payment of wages.
- Only 14 per cent of wage-seekers who raised their issues with the social audit team reported to have received any acknowledgement.
- The summary of findings is not displayed at the GP office.
- Sixty-two per cent of wage seekers said that they did not attend social audit Gram Sabha.
- Most of the social audit Gram Sabhas are held without an independent Observer.
- In public hearings, wage-seekers and people with grievances present are not communicated of the decisions taken and its reasons.
- There is negligible participation of wage-seekers in Mandal-level public hearings; 82 per cent of wage-seekers said that they had never participated in a Mandal-level public hearing.
- The data entered in the MIS has errors such as multiple entries and wrong entries.
- Despite regular conduct of social audits, the number of issues reported in the State of Telangana is not decreasing.
- Even after more than a decade of social audit, MIS data of financial years 2018-19 to 2020-21 shows that the number of process violation issues has increased.
- Insufficient staff with vigilance wing at the district and Mandal levels has affected the follow-up actions on the decisions of public hearings on social audit findings.
- DVOs and AVOs work under the control of DRDOs and their salary is also released by DRDOs which may affect their independence and autonomy.
- SRDS Rules have been framed long back and there are some gaps.
- The actions of social audit findings are not satisfactory. As per MIS, only six per cent of issues identified by social audit during the FY 2018-19 to FY 2020-21 have been closed. Less than two percentage of the misappropriated amount is recovered.
- Reviews of action taken on decisions of public hearings are not done at the district level. The practice of joint review at the State level has also become irregular.
- SSAAT is not receiving ATRs of previous social audits from the Vigilance wing. Eighty-one per cent of the wage-seekers were unaware of the action taken on social audit findings.

Recommendations

- MoRD may consider raising funding to 01 per cent of MGNREGS expenditure to SSAAT. Till then, the gap in the funding may be covered by the State government. State government may provide one-time funding to SSAAT to build its corpus fund.
- Fund releases from MoRD need to be streamlined to make it timely.
- The funds may be transferred directly to the SSAAT.
- SSAAT may create regional infrastructure and also provide laptops with internet facilities to DRPs.
- SSAAT may continue facilitating social audits of other schemes on demand. The budget proposed should target 25 per cent of savings.
- Decisions on genuine demands of social audit resource persons may be taken on a priority basis to reduce attrition.
- Accountability and performance of resource persons need to be ensured through an Employee Report Card method.
- Vigilance and Monitoring Committee (VMC) at the GP level needs to be activated.
- More human resources need to be hired by SSAAT.
- Stringent action needs to be taken in the cases of poor maintenance and non-provisioning of records.
- Implementing agencies and SSAAT need to scrupulously follow the action plan of the year.
- Resource fees for VRPs may be enhanced and they may be allowed to work in adjoining GP
- BRPs may undergo training of trainer courses where they can experience direct trainers' skills in a participatory manner.
- SSAAT may work on effective IEC strategies for awareness generation.
- People's participation in social audit Gram Sabha and Mandal public hearings needs to be enhanced through the mobilisation of wage-seekers.
- DRP must ensure that all BRPs carry along with them the grievance register, besides noting down complaints and issuing receipts.
- During the verification of works, JE or TA must be present. In the case of re-verification of works, representatives of the social audit team and vigilance wing may also be present.
- An official from a Mandal other than where the GP is located may be deputed as Independent Observer.
- To strengthen the vigilance system, civil engineers and auditors at State and district levels may be inducted and vigilance staff may be trained on social audit and its MIS.
- Retired officials like DVO/AVO may be brought out of the control of DRDO and their salary may be released directly by the CVO and not by DRDO.
- SRDS Rules need to be reviewed and updated to address recent changes, including MoRD categorisation of issues and removal of Field Assistants (FA).

- Periodic joint reviews of ATR may be organised at the district and Mandal levels.
- The practice of DRDO or Additional DRDO presiding over the social audit public hearings at the Mandal level needs to be revisited. Instead, a district-level official from another department, not junior to the DRDO, may be deputed to preside over the public hearing.

Establishment of CGARD Technology Centre in Madagascar

Dr. P. Kesava Rao

Dr. N. S. R. Prasad

Dr. M. V. Ravibabu

Er. H. K. Solanki

Introduction

The Indian Government has sanctioned Technology Centre on Geoinformatics Application for Rural Development (CGARD) in five African Countries to be taken up for establishment by NIRDPR. The Republic of Madagascar is the first country to be benefited from India's development partnership for promoting space technology initiatives under the India Africa Friendships Forum (IAFS-II) Grant. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Government of Madagascar and the Government of India, on the 29th February 2016, for installation, operationalisation, training and capacity building and handing over the CGARD Centre to the Government of Madagascar. The CGARD Technology Centre is hosted by the Ministry to the Presidency in charge of Agriculture and Livestock (MPAE)/ Directorate of Information Systems (DSI), Government of Madagascar.

After successful installation and operationalisation, the Centre for Geoinformatics Applications for Rural Development (CGARD) Technology Centre was inaugurated by the Honourable President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind and the Honourable President of the Republic of Madagascar Mr. Hery Rajaonarimampianina jointly on 14th March 2018, in Antananarivo with the assistance of the Government of India.

CGARD Technology centre will have technology facilitation of Geospatial Infrastructure, Capacity Building & Geoinformatics Technology Dissemination facility and Geospatial data generation for customised applications in agriculture, disaster management, infrastructure planning, natural resources management viz. land, water, forestry, minerals, etc., socio-economic and social sector development, viz. education, health, ethnic, habitat development etc., planning, project implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development programmes, and spatial decision support.

Objectives

- To establish a state-of-the-art infrastructure for Geoinformatics Application Technology Centre in Madagascar with the latest hardware, customised, commercial and open source software, peripherals, appropriate Server, training facilities, etc.
- To convert and generate geospatial digital data from maps, satellite data and survey data for wide applications in different development sectors.
- To train, handhold and build capacity in the application of Geospatial Technology and knowledge dissemination.

Methodology: (Step-by-step process of Implementation)

- Procurement of Hardware and Software
- Establishment of CGARD Technology Centre
- Geospatial Data Creation
- Training & Capacity Building
- Application Development

Study Area:

Madagascar is the fifth largest island in the world (592,000 km²), located in the western part of the Indian Ocean and 430 km east of Mozambique between 10.00 ° E and 28.00 ° S. It is very mountainous in its entirety and crossed by the Tropic of Capricorn. Similar to the other countries located in the tropical zone, it has only two seasons: the dry season from May to October and the rainy season, which starts in November and lasts till the end of April. It is a republic and administratively divided into 22 regions, i.e. Analamanga, Amoron'i Mania, Alaotra Mangoro, Atsimo Atsinanana, Anosy, Androy, Atsimo Andrefana, Ihorombe, Haute Matsiatra, Vatovavy Fitovinany, Atsinanana, Itasy, Bongolava, Menabe, Melaky, Boeny, Diana, Sava, Analanjirofo, Vakinankaratra and Sofia.

Findings***a) List of Projects executed:***

1. Land Use and Land Cover of Madagascar 2018-2019.
2. Crop Acreage for 4 regions of Madagascar 2018-2019.
3. Mapping of Road Transportation network for Agricultural production zones (for 22 regions).
4. Estimating Irrigated Crop area using Remote Sensing and GIS in Lalangina, Haute Matsiatra, Madagascar.
5. A detailed methodology submitted to the Director General of Agriculture (DGA) for estimating yield through assimilation of Crop Simulation Model (CSM), i.e. using DSSAT with remote sensing techniques.
6. Yield estimation through correlation with NDVI in Google Earth Engine: A case study of Manjakandriana district, Analamanga region, Madagascar.
7. Agricultural Drought Analysis using the NDVI and Land Surface Temperature Data using Google Earth Engine; A Case Study of Ambalavao District, Haute Matsiatra, Madagascar.
8. Delineating of Meteorological Drought Hazard area using Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Systems: A Case Study Androy region, Madagascar.
9. Land Suitability assessment for Maize Farming Using a GIS Method for Ambatomainty Commune, Alaotra-Mangoro, Madagascar.

10. A detailed methodology on rice crop monitoring using sentinel-1 was submitted to the Pole of Competence in Earth Observatory in Madagascar (PCOT).
11. Land Use / Land Cover and crop acreage of Itasy region, Madagascar 2020.
12. Pilot project: Estimating Annual Soil Erosion by Integrating Remote Sensing and Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE) in Mahajanga Rural, Boeny, Madagascar.
13. Soil Erosion of Madagascar 2018-2019.
14. Identifying forest loss areas using the Google Earth Engine coding system in Ankarana special reserve, Diana, Madagascar.
15. Web app for monitoring various reflective indices.
16. Wildlife Habitat Suitability Mapping using Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Systems - A case study Makira natural park, Madagascar.
17. Mineral explorations using Landsat image ratios.
18. Pilot project and Conference Poster presentation (ACRS 2020): Flood mapping and damage assessment using sentinel – 1 & 2 in Google Earth Engine of Port Berge & Mampikony districts, Sophia region, Madagascar.
19. Flood mapping and damage assessment flash flood- January 2020.
20. Mangrove mapping of Madagascar 2019-2020.
21. Conference oral presentation (ACRS 2020): Studying the impact of mangrove increment on the accreted coastal area.
22. Mapping of Coral reefs using Sentinel 2 data: A case study from Nosy Mitsio Island, Madagascar.
23. Prediction of Potential Fishing Zones (PFZs).
24. Variation of water turbidity seasonally using the NDTI method.
25. A GIS-based multi-criteria evaluation for wind farm site selection in Diana region, Madagascar.
26. Other Department projects
 - i. Appui au Renforcement des Organisations Professionnelles et aux services Agricoles (AROPA) report on location of assets for Amoron'i Mania, Haute Matsiatra and Ihorombe.
 - ii. Développement des Filières Agricoles Inclusives (DEFIS) report for Vatovavy Fitovinany region, Madagascar.
 - iii. Projet d'Extension du Périmètre du Bas Mangoky (PEPBM) report for finding the existing and extension of rice area near Bas Mangony, Atsimo Andrefana.
 - iv. Mapping the extension and rehabilitation of the perimeters and rice plains of 100,000 ha of the presidential project (nine regions).

b) List of Training imparted:

1. Training on Basics of Remote Sensing, GIS and GPS to the staff of Appui au Development du Menabe et du Melaky (AD2M).
2. Training on Basics of Remote Sensing, GIS and GPS to the staff of Unité Régionale des Statistiques Agricoles (URSTATAGRI).
3. Training on Basics of Remote Sensing, GIS and GPS to the staff of Statistiques Agricoles (STATAGRI).
4. Training on Basics of Remote Sensing, GIS and GPS to the staff of Direction du Système information (DSI).
5. Training on Basics of Remote Sensing, GIS and GPS to the staff of Direction Régionale de l'Agriculture, de l'Elevage et de la Pêche (DRAEP), Anosy region.
6. Practical sessions on GPS to the staff of Direction Régionale de l'Agriculture, de l'Elevage et de la Pêche (DRAEP), Vakinankaratra region.
7. Practical sessions on Remote Sensing, GIS and GPS to the staff of Direction Régionale de l'Agriculture, de l'Elevage et de la Pêche (DRAEP), Haute Matsiatra region.
8. Practical sessions on Remote Sensing, GIS and GPS to the staff of Direction Régionale de l'Agriculture, de l'Elevage et de la Pêche (DRAEP), Amoron'i Mania region.
9. Practical sessions on Remote Sensing, GIS and GPS to the staff of Direction Régionale de l'Agriculture, de l'Elevage et de la Pêche (DRAEP), Ihorombe region.
10. Training on Basics of Remote Sensing, GIS and GPS to the staff of Project and Direction Officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MAEP).
11. Practical sessions on drone operating and GPS to the staff of Projet d'Extension du Périmètre du Bas Mangoky (PEPBM).
12. Practical sessions on Remote Sensing, GIS and GPS to the staff of Direction Régionale de l'Agriculture, de l'Elevage et de la Pêche (DRAEP), Itasy region.
13. Training on Basics of GIS and digitising rice area in Google Earth to the staff of Direction Central of Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MAEP).
14. Training on Basics of Remote Sensing, GIS and GPS to the staff of Direction Régionale de l'Agriculture, de l'Elevage et de la Pêche (DRAEP) for 22 regions of Madagascar.
15. Training on Basics of Remote Sensing, GIS and GPS to the staff of related Organisations of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MAEP).
16. Training on Basics of Remote Sensing, GIS and GPS to the staff of project programme of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MAEP).
17. Training on Basics of Remote Sensing, GIS and GPS to the staff of Unité Régionale (URSTAT).
18. Three students of the Observatory of the Institute of Geophysics Antananarivo and a student from the University of Fianarantsoa (Department of Geomatics).
19. Five students from the Polytechnic University of Antananarivo (Topographic Department).

20. Training in Geographic Information System (GIS) and GPS for technicians of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MAEP).

Conclusion

1. Extensively promoted the use of GIS-based application for Madagascar in all development programmes, Natural Resources Management, especially in agriculture, water resources development, irrigation management, fishery development, forestry sector, Survey and Land Records, Disaster Management, Land Use and Land Cover Mapping, Road Network and Utility Mapping, Socio-Economic and Social Sector Development and other sectors of the economy;
2. Developed a knowledge hub with a data storage and retrieval module for the baseline data that will assist all development functionaries and policy planners for effective planning, monitoring, project implementation and evaluation and decision-making at all levels;
3. Extensively trained and demonstrated in improving technical skills and knowledge base on geospatial technology in planning, project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, including decision-making.

Socio-economic & Psychological Study of Transgender People & Strategies to mainstream them

Dr. S. N. Rao

Introduction

Human beings are diverse in nature. The male and female do not totally represent the human race. There is one more aspect added to the human race i.e., the transgender community. Transgender people have gender identity/expression that differs from their assigned sex. In other words, "Transgender is an umbrella term that describes people whose gender identity or gender expression differs from the sex assigned at birth." Transgender people were known in different nomenclature in India - Hijras, Aravanis/Aruvanias, Tirunangais, Kothis, Jogtas, Jogappas, Shiv Shaktis, "Kinnars," etc. Transgender people are also called as Hijras, eunuchs, and intersex. But they call as Kinnara or Kinner. The Kinnara refers to the mythological beings that excel at song and dance.

Officially, the population figures of transgender people in the country account for 6 lakh. Over 66 per cent of them live in rural areas - 28 per cent in Uttar Pradesh, followed by 9 per cent in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, 8 per cent each in Maharashtra and Bihar, over 6 per cent in both Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal and over 4 per cent in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Odisha. Rajasthan accounts for over 3 per cent and Punjab for 2 per cent.

Statement of the problem

Despite enjoying a privileged status in society, transgender people are subjected to severe discrimination and harassment in all respects of their lives like verbal abuse, physical and sexual violence, denial of share in ancestral property, services and admission to educational institutions; and victimisation in family, educational institutions, workplace, health care settings and public spaces. However, the perpetrators of violence and discrimination are their parents, siblings, friends, neighbours, school and college authorities, employers, house owners, health service providers, police, clients, etc. Efforts were made by the Central and State governments to fight for their rights and introduction of welfare policies. One of the milestones in this direction is the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019. Another breakthrough was the declaration of transgender as a 'socially and economically backward class.'

Objectives

In view of the above issues, the following objectives were defined for the study.

- Understand the Socio-economic & Psychological aspects of transgender people
- To study the implications of social exclusion in transgender people and
- To devise strategies to mainstream transgender people.

Methodology

Due to COVID-19, most of the research report is based on secondary sources like books, journals and net-based articles and primary sources like newspaper clippings, and personal interactions with transgender people. A schedule was canvassed through e-mail, but transgender people have not responded but personally interacted with me about the socio-economic and psychological conditions of the transgender people.

Study Area

The study is based on interaction with transgender people from Telangana, Karnataka, and Assam. COVID-19 has restricted the collection of data.

Findings

The transgender community faces psychological, social and economic problems. The trauma and agony still continue, as society has yet to accept them that 'they are part of the society'. Lakshmi Narayan Tripathy explains the agony and trauma.

"For a trans woman, it's like we are toys in the hand of patriarchy. We are molested, we are insulted. The courts even say that it is impossible for us to be molested. On the ground, it's the same old story. People call us chakka, hijra...we are called by a bunch of names. There is so much violence. In my community, there are thousands of Nirbhayas. You can't imagine how many of us are raped and killed."

The transgender community continues to be the target of harassment and humiliation. Transgender people, as a whole, face multiple forms of oppression. Discrimination is visible in the field of healthcare, employment, education, and social exclusion. According to a UNDP report (2010), HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STI) are now increasingly visible among the transgender population. NACO study (2011) highlights the pathetic situation of transgender people. The report says that they are extremely vulnerable to HIV. In the year 2017, there was a landmark judgment being decreed by the judicial bodies in recognition of the transgender community and their rights. But the community is marginalised and ignored by society and continues to face social exclusion.

Transgender people face harassment from multiple sources like parents, teachers, peers, and society in every sphere of their lives and activities. Brutal stories of abuse and sexual violence were reported by them. The nature of harassment involves verbal abuse, assault, bullying, sexual violence, etc., and social restrictions have resulted in psychological trauma. On the other hand, the Hindu society has also created a sacred status for hijras once upon a time and is prevalent even today, especially at weddings, births and festivals. But in the contemporary context, gender non-conformity has wrapped transgender people in embarrassing problems such as lack of gender recognition certificate, sexual expression, employment, decent housing, subsidised healthcare services, etc.

Seldom, the society realises the trauma, agony and pain that the members of the transgender community are enduring. Society also is unable to appreciate their innate feelings,

especially those whose mind and body disown their biological sex. Society often ridicules and abuses them in public places like railway stations, bus stands, schools, workplaces, malls, theatres and hospitals. They are side-lined, forgetting the fact that the moral failure lies in society's unwillingness to contain or embrace different gender identities.

Lakshmi Tripathy says that the non-recognition of the identity of transgender community as a third gender denies them the right to equality before the law and equal protection of law guaranteed under Article 14 of the Constitution and violates the rights guaranteed to them under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

Transgender people are deprived of social and cultural participation and hence have restricted access to education, health care and public places. This deprives them of the constitutional guarantee of equality before law and equal protection of laws. Laxmi Narayan Tripathy, a hijra, highlighted the trauma undergone since birth. To quote in Tripathy's own words: "That the applicant has born as a male. Growing up as a child, she felt different from the boys of her age and was feminine in her ways. On account of her femininity, from an early age, she faced repeated sexual harassment, molestation and sexual abuse, both within and outside the family. Due to her being different, she was isolated and had no one to talk to or express her feelings while she was coming to terms with her identity. She was constantly abused by everyone as a 'chakka' and 'hijra'.

Siddarth Narrain, a eunuch, highlights the feeling about transgender, "Ever since I can remember, I have always identified myself as a woman. I lived in Namakkal, a small town in Tamil Nadu. When I was in the 10th standard, I realised that the only way for me to be comfortable was to join the hijra community. It was then that my family found out that I frequently met hijras who lived in the city. One day, when my father was away, my brother, encouraged by my mother, started beating me with a cricket bat. I locked myself in a room to escape from the beatings. My mother and brother then tried to break into the room to beat me up further. Some of my relatives intervened and brought me out of the room. I related my ordeal to an uncle of mine who gave me Rs.50 and asked me to go home. Instead, I took the money and went to live with a group of hijras in Erode."

There are similar life experiences faced by various others who belong to the transgender community. A survey by the National Center for Transgender Equality states that, "Those who expressed a transgender identity or gender non-conformity reported alarming rates of harassment (78 per cent), physical assault (35 per cent) and sexual violence (12 per cent); harassment was so severe that it led almost one-sixth (15 per cent) to leave a school or in higher education."

i) Denial of Access to Healthcare

Healthcare policies do not recognise transgender identities as a physical disability. Rather, it is often characterised as a mental disability, providing transgender individuals with insufficient care. Healthcare policies do not address the pre and post-operative needs of those individuals who elect to go through sex-change operations. In addition, transgender individuals are disproportionately affected by HIV-AIDS and are more likely to do drugs or

alcohol. Although transgender individuals are more at risk health-wise, 19 per cent of the respondents complained of refusal of medical care and 50 per cent deferral of medical care because of their gender status. Transgender individuals also face discrimination when it comes to government-issued IDs. Only one-fifth of the respondents stated that they were able to update all identification documents. Forty-one per cent of the respondents live without a driver's license that matches their gender identity.

Transgender individuals are at risk of hate crimes, yet they are less likely to report transphobic violence because of their distrust of the police. According to the NCTE, "One-fifth (22 per cent) of respondents who have interacted with police, reported harassment at their hands." Overall, transgender individuals face discrimination by government agencies. Transgender individuals are not categorised into the gender binary; hence, they are not covered by insurance and legal protection. They are not protected by primary healthcare and refuse publicly funded gender-affirming health services. Transformation surgery in the country is expensive but of low quality. Transgender people then turn to use hormones for their transformation. However, inadequate training and knowledge of medical professionals failed to offer appropriate advice and assistance during the process. The surgery and hormone injection are likely to result in permanent injury or even death. Besides physical health, transgender people confront mental health inequality as well. They experienced a high level of stress, which lead to a high rate of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation and behaviour.

ii) Denial of access to Employment

It is difficult for transgender people to receive employment as official identification documents are required when entering the workplace, and they lack the relevant documents. Most transgender applicants are eliminated during job interviews. Those receiving job offers have to work in hostile surroundings and eventually decided to quit. Exclusion from mainstream occupations leads to their engagement in sex work as it becomes a means of income.

iii) Social exclusion

Transgender individuals are usually subjected to enormous social weight to conceal their identity due to their social pressure. The environment is depressive to transgender's visibility as it is considered abnormal. They hesitate to come out due to projected rejection by their family members. The transgender community continues to face discrimination, harassment and social exclusion.

Conclusion

The transgender community is an integral part of Indian society but has continued to be marginalised in terms of education, economic opportunity, and access to quality healthcare. Healthcare professionals are less equipped to deal with the mental health issues pertinent to these communities. In general, the transgender community remains unaware of the

psychological interventions and services potentially available to aid in managing their stress and mental health needs. The abuse continues and they remain unwanted. The main lacuna is attributed to the failure of accepting sexuality beyond certain norms. The third gender is considered by society as an 'abnormality' and societal exclusion happens. Attempts to educate ourselves on issues of sexuality are minimal and consequently, a sustained struggle for transgender acceptance is missing.

A fixed mindset or attitude about transgender people is a false notion. An interaction with them will help us to understand their lives in a better way. The fact is that the moral failure lies in society's unwillingness to contain or embrace different gender identities and expressions, a mindset which we have to change. It's important to respect transgender people at work, at school and in public spaces.

The transgender community lives in isolated areas and was seen as a neglected lot. Since childhood, they suffer humiliation from both the public and family members forcing them to leave the house at a very young age and involving in unlawful activities. These activities include sex work and forced prostitution which results in them contracting sexually transmitted diseases, which leads to serious health problems and ultimately death. Unprotected sex and physical harassment by the other sex partners put them in a state of depression, anxiety and other psychological illness, which makes them more isolated. The insensitivity towards the transgender community in private and public spheres is making them more vulnerable in every sense. Lack of government interventions is making the picture greyer and putting them in exotic pockets of societies. Change of societal attitude is the need of the hour for accepting transgender people as human beings.

Policy Recommendations

After the enactment of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act in 2019, a lot of positive changes have taken place and the society is also slowly started accepting the transgender community. Many multinational companies have opened employment opportunities to them. In a few States, transgender community members have joined government services. There are many success stories, but these successes are just a drop in the ocean. A lot has to be done to bring the transgender community into the mainstream of the society.

1. **Protection:** Transgender community must be protected from violence and abuse. The initiatives taken by the Government of Telangana are the best in this regard.
2. **Protection Cell-Pride Place:** Government of Telangana has created a protection cell for transgender people (LGBTQIA) to protect them from violence and monitor crimes against them and named the protection cell 'Pride Place. Shri. M. Mahender Reddy, DGP of Telangana, while inaugurating 'Pride Place' said that the cell would act as a one-stop solution by offering police and other services through networking and collaboration with other stakeholders. This initiative is to ensure justice for the transgender community. The State-level cell will be operational under Additional DGP (Women Safety). Ms. Swati Lakra,

ADGP (Women safety) termed the cell as an effort to ensure dignity and respect for transgender people. Telangana's effort was a first-of-its-kind initiative to create a protection cell. Every State should establish a similar cell to protect the community from violence.

3. Ensuring the right to get access to education and vocational training is the foremost step needed to address the lack of employment opportunities.
4. Special educational quota or reservation can ensure education and employment opportunities for the third gender without any discrimination.
5. The major issue faced by the third gender is discrimination and differential treatment from family, educational institutions, public places and society at large. The government should initiate programmes and campaigns to create awareness among the public to accept them as part of society. The development programmes to uplift the community should go hand-in-hand with the awareness programmes.
6. Separate labour laws ensuring rights for the third gender are to be implemented. Labour laws relating to sexual harassment should be inclusive of the third gender and free legal aid to those aggrieved need to be provided.
7. Providing separate washrooms for transgender people is the need of the hour. Transgender people confuse themselves in using restrooms. Using either the women's or the men's room might feel unsafe, because they may verbally harass them or even physically attack them. Transgender people may be supported to use the restrooms that they believe will be the safest or they may be provided with separate bathrooms.
8. Free medical facilities at free of cost are needed and their medical needs are different from other gender people, such as sex reassignment surgery, hormone therapy, and mental health counselling. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS among the transgender community is very high.
9. Transgender people experience violence and discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Awareness creation and sensitisation of the police and healthcare providers is the need of the hour.
10. The transgender community should be provided with low-cost housing under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana in a separate colony to reduce the inter-community conflicts between the transgender community and non-transgender community.
11. The transgender community should be provided with small entrepreneur-based livelihood programmes. This will not only give them a decent income but also divert them from becoming a sex worker.
12. Identity cards like voter ID card, health card, smart card, PDS card, and government benefit programs should be made available to transgender people.
13. The transgender community should be given the right to travel in ladies' compartment in the public transport system. This will give them security, protection and identity.

14. The transgender community should be protected from any form of violence and free legal aid should be provided to them. A separate cell should be created to protect them as done by the government of Telangana.
15. All government and non-government application forms for whatever purposes, must have three options for gender, namely male/female/Other or third gender.
16. In order to promote higher education among the transgender community, they should be provided with scholarships and educational fees should be waived.

Third-Party Verification of Geo-tagged Assets under MGNREGS

Dr. P. Keava Rao

Dr. N. S. R. Prasad

Er. H. K. Solanki

Dr. M. V. Ravibabu

Introduction

Creating durable assets to strengthen the rural livelihood base is an important objective under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). However, to ensure the sustainability of these interventions, it was necessary to ensure transparency in its processes by monitoring its work. A technology-based solution was created by integrating space technology and asset tracking management solution to effectively map all the assets created under MGNREGS as part of the Geo-MGNREGA Project.

To ensure further transparency, a third-party verification exercise was envisioned to independently validate the geo-tagging exercise to verify the existing status of the geo-tagged assets. Academy of Management Sciences (AMS) conducted a third-party field verification of the assets by physically visiting the location of the assets and conducting an examination using the Third-party Verification Mobile App provided by NRSC (Hyderabad). The examination included verification of the physical existence of the asset at the respective geo-tagged coordinates as well as a quality check of the asset through the customised mobile interface. Following this approach, a total of 4,44,739 assets were covered in two districts across 29 States and two Union Territories of India as part of the verification. The findings generated from this exercise will not only help in assessing the effectiveness of the existing asset creation process but will also provide inputs for further improvement of the asset monitoring mechanism.

Objectives

- Verification of the physical existence of the asset at geo-tagged coordinates (i.e. latitude and longitude).
- Assess the quality of created assets through a questionnaire by a mobile-based feedback capturing mechanism.

Methodology

A team of trained verifiers were formally registered on the 'Bhuvan portal' and were allotted a Unique ID for his/her mobile device. The third-party verification application installed on the verifiers' devices was used for undertaking a mandated verification exercise which followed these steps:

- Visit the physical location of the asset and conduct verification using the third-party verification mobile app provided by NRSC.
- Compare and verify the type of asset with geo-tagged photographs, its physical existence at the site, asset's name and description, etc.
- Record any mismatch or discrepancy through the mobile app itself, which is to be filled- in as Remarks/Comments.
- Capture two new photographs of the asset in its current condition (if possible, one of them with Citizen Information Board installed at the site) using the third-party verification mobile app.
- Record responses in the Feedback Questionnaire created for the purpose.

Study Area

Twenty-nine States and Two Union Territories, covering 62 districts (Two districts from each State and UT) and 4,44,739 assets.

Findings

Presented ahead is a summary of findings based on an all-India analysis of the results which offers a holistic understanding of the effectiveness of the Geo-MNREGA project.

- ◆ There were 67 types of assets to be verified under MGNREGS, and these were classified **into four broad categories based on the nature of work** associated and the output expected from each of these by the Ministry of Rural Development. The proportion of sampled assets falling in each of the four categories was as under:
 - Watershed Development Works - 43 per cent
 - Rural Infrastructure and Livelihood assets - 30 per cent
 - Afforestation and Plantation - 22 per cent
 - Command area Intervention - 5 per cent
- ◆ Based on the year of completion of the assets, they were classified into three age groups. The proportion of assets in the three age groups was as under:
 - Assets created between 2005-14 – 28 per cent
 - Assets created between 2014-17 – 46 per cent
 - Assets created between 2017-20 – 26 per cent

A. Status of the Assets and their Geo-Tagged Photographs

- Overall, **less than three quarters of the sampled assets matched with their geo-tagged photographs.**

- The State-wise variation in the proportion of assets that matched their geo-tagged photographs ranged from **11.5 per cent in Madhya Pradesh to 99.3 per cent in Meghalaya**.

These variations from the geo-tagged images in the interface could be attributed to natural deterioration (climatic or other factors) or progressive work completion after the process of geo-tagging.

B. Physical Status of the Assets and their Description

- The similarity between physical assets and the description fed in the interface was also examined and **98.8 per cent of the verified assets matched their respective descriptions**.
- Except for Goa, all the other study States exhibited exemplary results with more than 94 per cent of assets matching the descriptions provided in the mobile interface.

C. Status of the Creation Under MGNREGS

- As regards the status of creation of assets through MGNREGS and the nature of assets, it is appreciable that **100 per cent of assets were verified to be created under MGNREGS**.

D. Status of Work Completion of Assets

- **Overall, 98.1 per cent of the assets verified were found to be completed in terms of stage of work.**
- Work completion status ranged from 79 per cent to 100 per cent across the States and Union Territories. Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Tripura and Telangana outperformed their counterparts with most of their assets (>99.9 per cent) verified to be in a completed state.

E. State of Usefulness of Assets

- A particular asset is described as useful if it served a specific purpose at the time of creation and is still found to be serving its purpose, though it may have deteriorated with time. **On the whole, 93.2 per cent of assets verified were found to be useful at the time of the survey.**
- Most of the States have more than 90 per cent of the assets verified to be in useful condition. Assets that were found not useful at present (with more than 20 per cent non-useful assets) were mostly registered from Goa, Puducherry, Arunachal Pradesh and Gujarat.

F. Presence of Citizen Information Boards

- **On an overall basis, just 11 per cent of the assets verified had CIBs installed at the site.**

- All the study locations, except Jammu and Kashmir (90 per cent), Meghalaya (53 per cent) and Andaman (45 per cent), had less than 30 per cent of assets with CIB.

G. Present Condition of the Assets

- **At the time of verification, 91.3 per cent of the assets were reported to be in good condition.**
- The States of Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Punjab and Uttarakhand outperformed their counterparts as evidenced by the optimal maintenance exhibited by more than 96 per cent of their assets.

H. Status of Functionality of Assets

- **Overall, 80 per cent of the assets was serving the assigned functionality at the time of the survey.**
- It was observed that more than 90 per cent of the sampled assets from Punjab, Bihar, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh, Mizoram and Uttarakhand were observed to be functional at the time of verification, depicting very high levels of maintenance of the assets.

I. Deterioration Seen in Assets

- **Overall, one-third (33.8 per cent) of the assets exhibited some deterioration over the previous round of geo-tagging.**
- The overall rate of deterioration varied from 2 per cent in Jammu Kashmir to 99 per cent in Madhya Pradesh. However, out of the 1,49,468 assets which deteriorated to some extent, as many as 1,07,520 (72 per cent) were still functional.

J. Presence of Assets in Geo-Tagged Location

- **Overall, 99.7 per cent of the assets were found in the exact geo-tagged location which points out the effectiveness of the geo-tagging exercise undertaken.**
- All the assets in six out of 31 study States/UTs, namely, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Manipur, Mizoram, Andaman & Nicobar and Puducherry were found to be located at the exact geo-coordinates.
- Only a negligible share - 1259 (0.3 per cent) assets - could not be located at the exact geo-tagged coordinates but were mostly found to be located a few metres away from the location provided in the interface.

Conclusion

The exercise served the vital purpose of tracking the status of these assets, which offered useful insights into the effectiveness of investments made in these assets. A significant proportion of the sampled assets were observed to be complete, useful, and functional at the

time of the survey. Although some assets exhibited a little deterioration with time, most of these were functional and will require minor repair works to make them fully effective, and the remaining which were non-functional would need proper renovation or complete reconstruction to make them suitable to serve their objectives

The study results would be useful for the ministry to devise future strategies for enhancing the quality and utility of assets developed through MGNREGS as well as in upgrading tracking and monitoring initiatives through geo-tagging.

Policy Recommendations

A few action points emerging from the above findings which may help the authorities in optimising the outputs from the investments made under MNREGA are presented hereunder:

- There is a need to build the capacities of functionaries to be deployed for the geo-tagging of assets like Grameen Rozgar Sevaks/Field Assistants and other stakeholders.
- A decentralised monitoring mechanism should be put in place at the State level to keep a tab on the progress of works and its timely completion.
- The authorities may consider strengthening the quality assurance measures to ensure the procurement of good quality raw materials and supply of high-end equipment for producing durable assets.
- A monitoring team may be instituted at the block level to evaluate the assets created in the previous financial years and assess the extent of deterioration suffered by the assets. They can recommend corrective measures required to upgrade these assets.

Spectral library generation and comparison of various crops using hyperspectral and multispectral sensor

Dr. M. V. Ravibabu

Dr. K. Suresh,

Principle Scientist, ICAR-IIOPR, Pedavegi, AP

Introduction

In the present study, hyperspectral data is simulated from multispectral images for the test area using distance functions which is a direct method for the selection of similar pixels. There are two sets of data used as Reference data (Overlapped Sentinel and AVIRIS data) and Test data (Sentinel). Reference data should consist of Sentinel and AVIRIS images of the same study area; the hyperspectral data is simulated using distance functions taking Sentinel data as input. The spectral similarity between the spectra of the test sentinel data and reference sentinel data is compared. After selecting the similar spectra from the reference sentinel data, the overlapped pixel's spectra are selected from the reference AVIRIS data. Each selected similar spectrum is placed in the subsequent position to simulate the whole hyperspectral data.

Objectives

- a. Quantifying the Spectral similarity using distance functions
- b. Generation of Hyperspectral Images from the Test Multispectral Data and Reference Hyperspectral data (AVIRIS Data)
- c. Selection of optimal bands to evaluate NDVI using AVIRIS - NG

Methodology

Objectives (a) and (b): The distance or similarity between two vectors can be verified using distance functions. This workflow includes a selection of the spectra using Chebychev distance and SAM distance functions. There are two sets of images, i.e. the Test dataset and the Reference dataset. The AVIRIS data (Hyperspectral) is 4m resolution and the Sentinel data (Multispectral) is 10m resolution. To overlay the AVIRIS and Sentinel data, the high dimensionality data, i.e. AVIRIS data of 4m spatial resolution is converted to low dimensionality data (Sentinel), i.e. 10m resolution. The Sentinel data and resampled AVIRIS data are reference datasets, Sentinel data of the area to be simulated is the test data. A detailed methodology of work is presented in Figure 1.

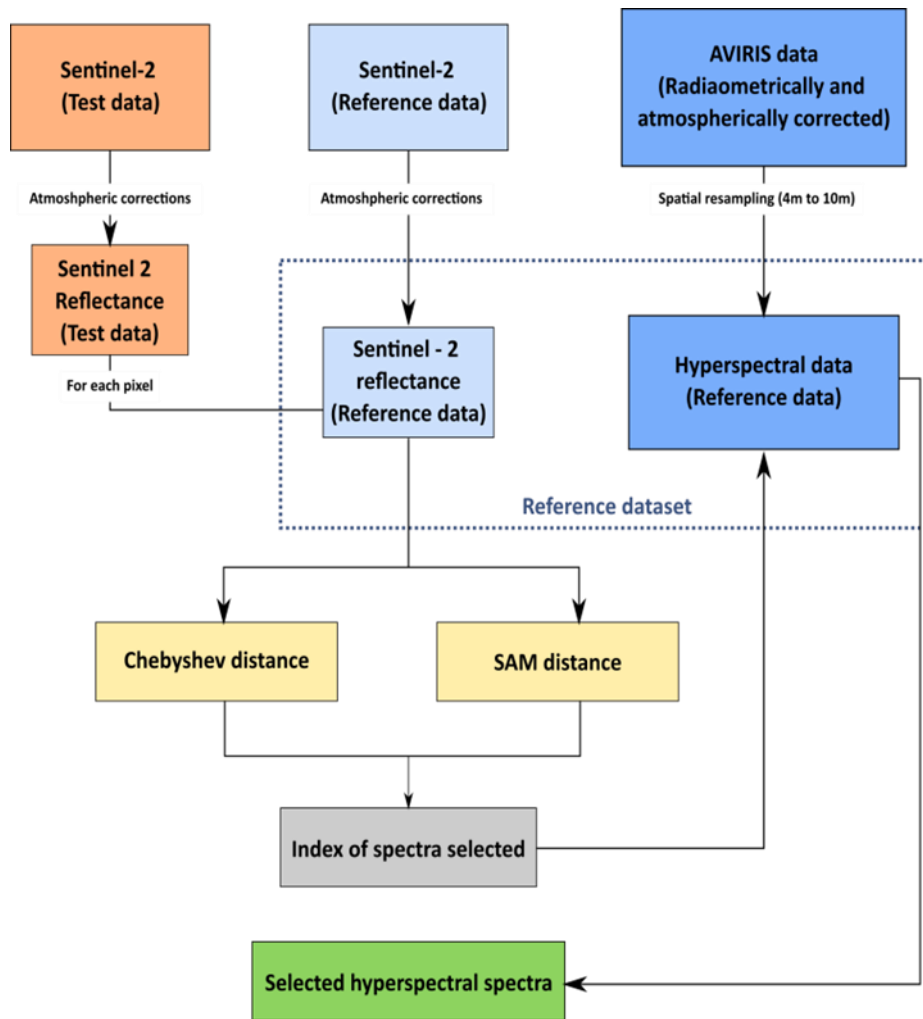


Figure 1: A detailed methodology of work

For each pixel of the test Sentinel- 2 images, the Chebyshev distance and SAM distance are calculated for the whole reference image and temporarily saved like an array. The saved array of the lowest combination of distance value pixel is selected. The lowest distance value means selecting the most similar spectra in the whole reference image.

Objective (c): The study focuses on the selection of the best bands of AVIRIS (hyperspectral) data when NDVI of AVIRIS data is compared with the NDVI of Sentinel-2 data. The NDVI values in different Land Use Land Cover are optimised and selected for the study area for the band selection. All the 154 band combinations NDVI were processed for AVIRIS image (Red band and NIR band) and the field data was collected for the identification of different LULC. The RMSE of 154 NDVI combinations of AVIRIS data was compared with the NDVI of Sentinel-2 NDVI data. To study the bands involved in lower and higher RMSE values, the data was plotted as a density plot and transformed to correct for skewness. Three mean NDVI, i.e. i) NDVI using the mean of all band reflectances ii) NDVI using the mean of the band reflectances involved higher than [Mean + Standard deviation] and iii) NDVI using the mean of the band reflectances involved lower than [Mean-Standard deviation] are compared using RMSE and linear regression. From these datasets, bands of the lower RMSE datasets are

selected for the study and validated with the existing algorithms (studies), the detailed methodology is explained in Figure 2.

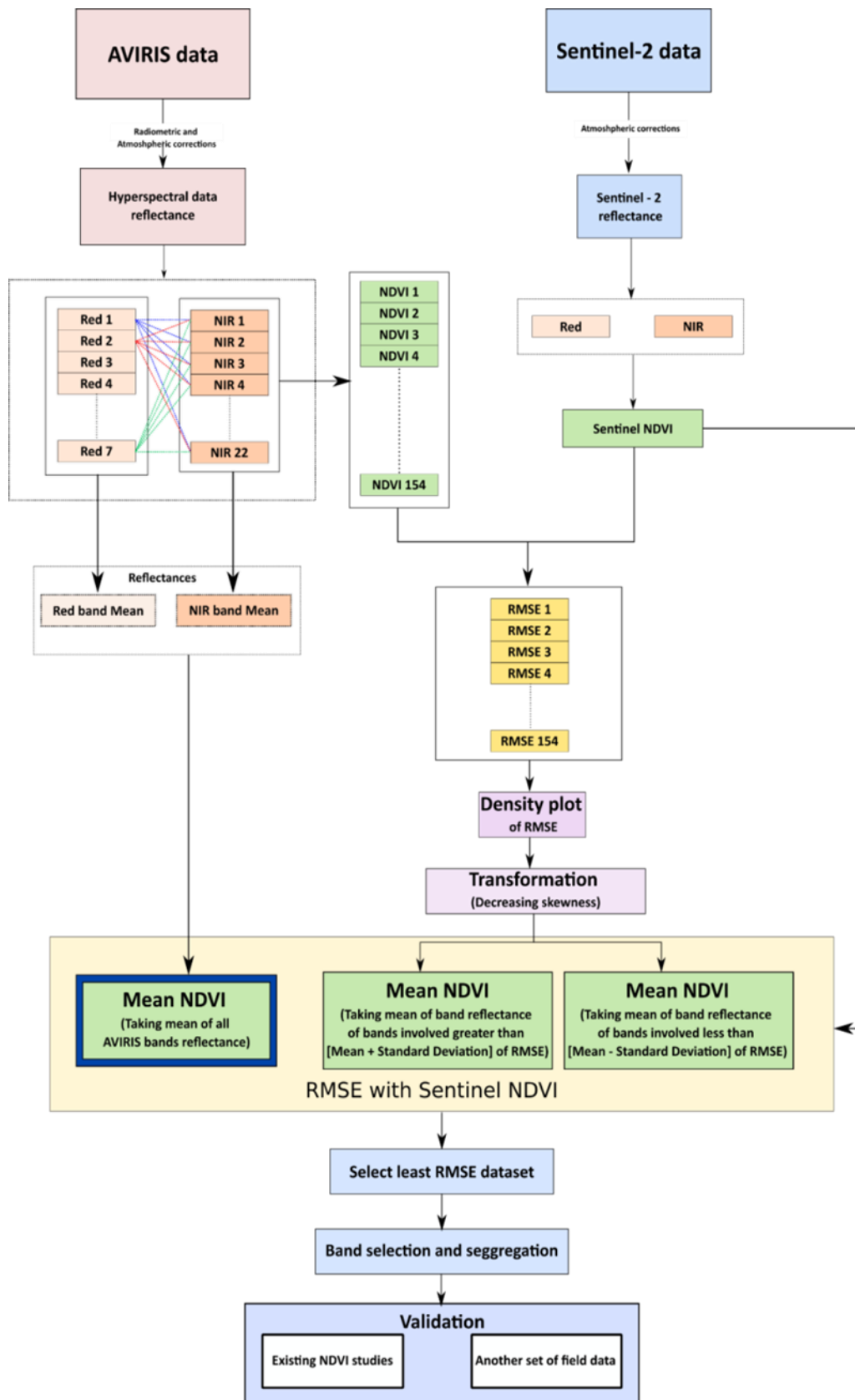


Figure 2: Flow chart of the proposed methodology for band selection

Study Area

The study area is situated in the central part of newly divided Andhra Pradesh and a major portion of the test site is in Vuyyuru, both Guntur and Krishna districts (Figure.1). Both districts are having well-cultivated land with paddy, bajra, red gram, green gram, groundnut, turmeric crops about 50 per cent as acreage and maize, black gram, cotton, sugarcane, under Kharif crops during the rest of seasons. This study area has many other crops to identify various spectral signatures from both multispectral and Hyperspectral images.

The hyperspectral data (site # 114) of the Airborne Visible and Infra-Red Imaging Spectrometer – Next Generation (AVIRIS –NG) campaign under Phase -2A on Jan 26 2018, with ground observations, is used. AVIRIS-NG, of JPL (Jet Propulsion Laboratory), NASA, has been used for the ISRO-NASA airborne campaign onboard an ISRO B200 aircraft. There are about 430 narrow continuous spectral bands in VNIR and SWIR regions in the range of 380-2510 nm at 5 nm intervals with high SNR (>2000 @ 600 nm and >1000 @ 2200 nm) with an accuracy of 95 per cent having FOV of 34 deg and IFOV of 1 mrad. Ground Sampling Distance (GSD) vis-à-vis pixel resolution varies from 4-8m for a flight altitude of 4-8 km for a swath of 4-6 km (Bhattacharya and Singh, 2017). Also, Sentinel-2 of multispectral data (Feb 25, 2018) was collected from the European Space Agency. Sentinel-2 has 13 spectral bands in the visible/ VNIR and SWIR, with 10-metre spatial resolution.

Findings

- a. Quantifying the spectral similarity using distance functions on AVIRIS – NG dataset (Objective -1).
- b. Compared Chebyshev and SAM distance functions (Objective-1).
- c. Developed and simulated hyperspectral data from multi-spectral image (Sentinel-2) (Objective-2).
- d. Developed an optimal band method from AVIRIS-NG data to Sentinel-2 (Objective-2).
- e. Evaluated NDVI-based land use and land cover classes using AVIRIS-NG and Sentinel -2 (Objective-3).
- f. Compared various existing algorithms from developed methodology (objective-3)
- g. Developed codes for above all algorithms using open access Python programming.
- h. Produced three research articles in which one article was published in Journal of Earth Sciences Informatics (by Springer) with a Scopus/SCI impact factor of 2.878, 2nd research paper was submitted after revised manuscript with SCI impact factor of 1.8 and 3rd research paper under review with SCI impact factor of 2.878

Conclusion

The simulated hyperspectral data is derived from the test image. The spectral similarity is verified by calculating the Normalised Cross-Correlation of the simulated and AVIRIS image. For the test site-a, 95.35 per cent of pixels are in Normalized Cross-Correlation values in the

range between 0.9 to 1. The reference (R) image is mostly covered by cropland and water whereas, barren and urban land is very less comparatively. Test site-a mostly consists of crop area and also similar classes (crop type) are present in the reference image; therefore, the correlation is high between the simulated image and AVIRIS. The test Image-b consists larger area covered by barren land, urban and water when compared with cropland. The correlation is less compared to the Test site-a, i.e. 82.28 per cent of pixels are under a Normalised Cross-Correlation value between 0.9 and 1. The developed algorithm is well performed when the reference image consists of a reasonably more number of pixels in the same classes. More accuracy can be achieved if spatial attribute data of area (pixel) class is used while simulating the images.

A methodology is framed for the selection of bands of AVIRIS-NG by comparing with Sentinel-2 NDVI. Different classes such as barren land, river sand, built-up area, vegetation and water bodies are studied using statistical analysis (RMSE, linear regression). The bands which are involved below [Mean- Standard deviation] for every class have better results than the other datasets. The band sets below [Mean-Standard deviation] are separated to form the sets. The sets are validated for the existing studies which are using only one band as red and NIR bands. In vegetation, both the RMSE and R-squared values are outperformed by all the sets. Oppelt et al. (2002) have performed well if only the R-squared is considered for barren land and RMSE for water bodies. Aparicio et al. (2002) have a higher R-squared value for river sand and an almost similar R-squared value for urban. If the study considers RMSE for these classes, it has the highest RMSE for all these classes. The validation is carried out for the field data; set-4 is performing well for the classes of barren land, river sand, built-up area, and vegetation. Set -1 performs well for water bodies, with a performance that is equal to the NDVI when all bands' reflectance is used. Except for the aquatic bodies, the RMSE values have significantly decreased for all sets of all classes.

Policy Recommendations

The study can be useful for hyperspectral image simulation for various natural resource applications.

Preparation of Geo-Database, District Rural Road Plan (DRRP) and Detailed Project Report (DPR) for Rural Roads (PMGSY-II & SFA) of Andaman & Nicobar

Dr. P. Kesava Rao
Dr. M. V. Ravibabu
Dr. N. S. R. Prasad
Er. H. K. Solanki

Introduction

Implementation of the PMGSY scheme poses major challenges. It is very tough to manage this giant project using traditional methods of project management as they are tedious and time-consuming. It is also difficult to retrieve the desired information. The application of geoinformatics will help to overcome these difficulties and also in better planning, decision-making and monitoring of the scheme.

NRIDA/MoRD & Niti Aayog/MoHA awarded administrative sanctions for PMGSY II and SFA projects, respectively, in Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The Administration of Andaman & Nicobar Islands entrusted the CGARD, National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (NIRDPR) for undertaking this project.

Objectives

- To prepare a geo-database of rural roads for the length of 1009 km in Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- Updating the approved Core Network as well as those constructed with the resources of the union territory under different schemes and preparing of Routine Maintenance Priority List for effective maintenance & management of rural roads.
- To prepare the Comprehensive New Connectivity Priority List (CNCPL) and Comprehensive Upgradation Priority List (CUPL) as per the guidelines in the Operations Manual.

Methodology

For the execution of this project, the following methodology is adopted.

- Collection of GIS data at ground level.
- Preparation of Spatial layers using GIS data for all roads.
- Preparation of Road Inventory, BRRP and DRRP.
- Submission of DRRP, and BRRP to NRIDA (MoRD) for scrutiny and approval.

- Preparation/selection of a list of roads for PMGSY II and SFA projects with the road utility value on a priority basis with Hon. MP's concern.
- Road Inspection/Traffic Survey/Soil Sample Collection.
- Road Embankment survey using DGPS/Total Station.
- Transect walk survey/ Gram Sabha Meeting.
- Rate/Data Analysis for each specification of the road from Market rates from A&N Administration.
- Pavement design with respect to Traffic & Soil characteristics.
- Design of Cross Drainage works, RCC Drain, CC Toe wall, etc., as per field requirements
- Preparation of Detailed Estimate/Cost Estimate for Road, Cross Drainage works, Protection works, Road Appurtenances, Road Maintenance (5 years) & Renewal layer (6th year).
- Submission of Detailed Project Report to A&N Administration for preliminary scrutiny.
- Uploading of Scrutinised DPR data on the OMMAS website (NRIDA-MoRD)

Study Area

The study area consists of all districts in the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

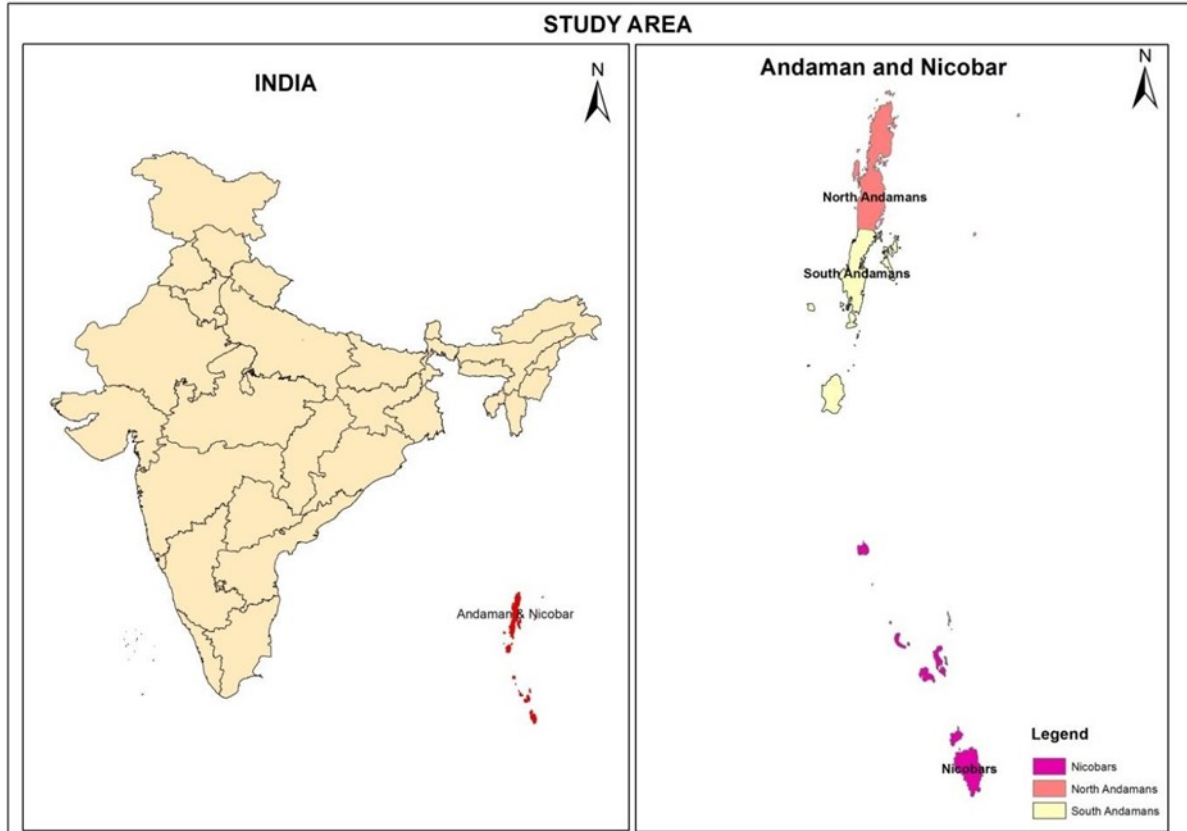


Figure 1: The Study Area

Findings

- Generated Geo Database with codification for 1009 km length of rural roads.
- Prepared DRRP/BLRRP for 256 km length of roads.
- 67 DPRs prepared under PMGSY II with a road distance of 115.8 km.
- 103 DPRs prepared under Special Finance Assistance (SFA) with a distance of 98.132 km.

Conclusion

Since its inception, GIS technology has helped the roadwork industry in enhancing its operational efficiency. Such systems allow you to plan, manage, and maintain road infrastructure using dynamic maps that offer a real-time picture of your geo-data. Furthermore, the inclusion of GIS technology in civil engineering has opened up new avenues for resolving environmental issues, lowering costs, and improving the quality of complex projects.

National Food Security Act among Rural Households in Telangana

Dr. Akanksha Shukla

Introduction

The Indian PDS is a universal solution for guaranteeing essential food grains at cheap prices to needy sections of the population. It stabilises the open market prices of foodgrains and guarantees farmers reasonable remunerative prices. This initiative became all the more relevant in the recent past with the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdown in the country. As schools closed and the mid-day meal program suffered a setback, the PDS remained the only way out for the survival of millions.

Objectives

- The main aims of the study are
- To examine if grains distributed under NFSA are truly being procured by the BPL/AAY HH.
- To examine the performance of NFSA in providing food security to rural households.
- To measure the entitlement - off-take of foodgrains from FPSs under NFSA.
- To measure the diversion and leakage of PDS
- To examine the extent of dependency of HH on NFSA for meeting consumption needs
- To examine the cavity between the actual need for foodgrains and the actual quantity of foodgrains distributed at FCI and fair price shop levels.
- To assess the impact of NFSA on consumption trends of beneficiary HH.
- To examine the reasons for not buying entitled quantity of PDS foodgrains.
- Overall performance of the working of PDS including quality of foodgrains and viability of fair price shops.
- To examine regularity in receiving PDS items - its suitable time of opening of the shop and accessibility of foodgrains.
- To examine regularity in the functioning of FPS as per the prescribed norms.

Hypotheses

- All rural priority and Antyodaya HH obtained the entitled quantity of foodgrains.
- NFSA has ensured a decrease in leakages and diversions of PDS grains.

Methodology

The study has been conducted based on a primary survey among rural households in the State of Telangana. Two backward districts from different geographical locations in Telangana

were selected for the survey - Nalgonda (895), and Medak (328). The number of sample households in each district has been given in the respective parentheses. The study blocks were selected based on a systematic random sampling method. Every fifth block from the list is selected. From each block, Gram Panchayats were selected based on systematic random sampling by selecting every fifth Gram Panchayat. Thus, the study covers two districts, 10 Blocks, 47 Gram Panchayats, 24,603 rural households and 27 fair price shops in Telangana. There are two types of beneficiaries under National Food Security Act. These are priority households (Below Poverty Line) and Antyodaya households. Nearly 15 per cent of the sample is drawn from Antyodaya beneficiaries. At least one FPS from each Gram Panchayat was also selected for the collection of data. The questionnaire for the primary data collection included the fair price shop questionnaire and the household survey. In the HH survey, the main focus was on the parameters such as the information pertaining to ration cards, qualitative aspects of commodities, service delivery and grievance redressal mechanisms, the role played by vigilance committees and the overall feedback.

Study Area:

Table 1: Gram Panchayat-wise list of Sample Households for Survey in Nalgonda

District	Blocks	Gram Panchayats	No. of Households in Gram Panchayat	No. of Sample Households in Gram Panchayat		
				BPL	AAY	TOTAL
Nalgonda	Chinta Pally	Denya Thanda	198	8	2	10
		Harijanapuram	176	8	1	9
		Kurmed	810	34	6	40
		Nelvalapally	500	21	4	25
		Rayinigudem,	105	4	1	5
		Thirmalapuram	79	3	1	4
	Gurrampode	Chamlonibavi	260	11	2	13
		Jinnaichintha	143	6	1	7
		Kothalapuram	153	7	1	8
		Mosangi	490	21	4	25
		Palwai	801	34	6	40
		Tenepally	475	20	4	24
	Marriguda	Vatticode	325	14	2	16
		Konda Bheemanapally	372	16	3	19
		Mcpoor	377	16	3	19
		Shivannaguda	2426	103	18	121
	Yergandlapally	831	36	6	42	

Contd...

District	Blocks	Gram Panchayats	No. of Households in Gram Panchayat	No. of Sample Households in Gram Panchayat		
				BPL	AAY	TOTAL
Nalgonda	Nampally	Devathpally	299	13	2	15
		Mahamadapur	396	17	3	20
		Nampally	1464	62	11	73
		Pasnoor	1112	48	8	56
		Reveeli	239	10	2	12
		Tpgouraram	401	17	3	20
	Peddavoora	Garnekunta	612	26	5	31
		Kunkuduchettuthanda	1439	61	11	72
		Parvedula	410	18	3	21
		Pulicherla	681	29	5	34
		Utlapally	421	18	3	21
	Vemula Pally	Laxmidavigudem	376	16	3	19
		Shettipalem	1485	63	11	74
	Total			18094	760	135

Table 2: Gram Panchayat-wise List of Households for survey in Medak district

District	Blocks	Gram Panchayats	No. of HHS in Gram Panchayats	No. of Sample HHS in Gram Panchayats		
				BPL	AAY	Total
Medak	Kowdipalli	Harichand Thanda	160	7	1	8
		Kowdipalli	900	38	7	45
		Mohammed Nagar	857	37	6	43
		Rajipet	293	13	2	15
		Thimmapur	556	24	4	28
	Narsingi	Sankhapur	460	20	3	23
		Kamalapur	341	14	3	17
	Shankarampet [A]	Baddaram	250	11	2	13
		Madshetpalli	413	18	3	21
		Danampally	98	4	1	5
		Ramojipally	399	17	3	20
	Yeldurthy	Baswapur	257	11	2	13
		Edulapalle	191	8	2	10
		Manepalle	481	20	4	24
		Mohammednagar Thanda	76	3	1	4
		SettipalleKalan	409	18	3	21
		Yesvantharaopet	368	15	3	18
Total			278	50	328	

Findings

Majority of households in both districts belong to the OBC category. There are 60.8 per cent OBC card holders in Medak and 47 per cent in Nalgonda. The percentage of SC card holders in Medak is 32.5 per cent and in Nalgonda, it is 29.7 per cent. In the case of ST population, there are more cardholders (15.7 per cent) in Nalgonda compared to Medak (2.3 per cent). About one-fourth of respondents in both districts are landless casual agricultural labourers and one-fourth are students. In Medak, there are 13,908 AAY cards and 1,02,950 priority household cards totalling 1,16,858 cards under FSA. In Nalgonda, there are 30,170 AAY cards and 2,82,306 priority household cards totalling 3,12,476 cards under FSA. Consumption of rice distributed through PDS is relatively higher among Antyodaya and BPL cardholders belonging to OBC. Nalgonda consumes rice more from the market than Medak. This variation, on average, is about 10 kg per person per household. This also reflects that Nalgonda is paying more for consumption than Medak as its consumption from the open market is at a higher price. Around 50 per cent of sample households in both the study districts were discontented with the quality and amount of foodgrains. Around 68 per cent of sample households in Medak and 42 per cent in Nalgonda were dissatisfied with the quality of the PDS. The list of foodgrains was not displayed in the fair price shops. About 66 per cent of respondents find that the local variety available is different from the PDS variety and they prefer the local variety. About 62 per cent are content with the overall functioning of the FPS. About 78 per cent of respondents were dissatisfied and found irregularities in the PDS like missing entries and illegible entries. Besides 95 per cent were not provided any receipt for the transaction. Despite quarterly checks by the vigilance officials, grievance redressal mechanism was more or less absent. More than three-fourths of the beneficiaries in both districts expressed that PDS was important to meet foodgrain consumption. In both districts, the sample population was found to hold loans. In Nalgonda, about 52 per cent of respondents had taken loans and in Medak, 40 per cent had taken loans. The reasons quoted by 50 per cent of the respondents for availing loan were daily consumption and the rest attributed to production purposes. Mostly (66 per cent) these loans were taken through SHGs or banks, and in the rest of the cases, money was borrowed from friends and family.

Conclusion

In the backward districts of Medak and Nalgonda, 100 per cent of households have ration cards. In Medak, there are 13,908 AAY cards and 1,02,950 priority household cards, totalling 1,16,858 cards under FSA. In Nalgonda, there are 30,170 AAY cards and 2,82,306 priority household cards, totalling 3,12,476 cards under FSA.

The per capita consumption of rice and wheat during the last 30 days was analysed. It is observed that rice consumption in Telangana as well as in both districts is higher as compared to wheat. Consumption of rice distributed through PDS is relatively higher among Antyodaya cardholders belonging to general and OBC categories, and BPL cardholders belonging to ST/SC category in these districts. Consumption of rice distributed through PDS is relatively higher among Antyodaya and BPL cardholders belonging to OBC.

Apart from PDS rice, a high amount of rice in all categories is being purchased from the open market by BPL and Antyodaya cardholders. Nalgonda consumes more rice from the open market than Medak. This variation on average is about 10 kg per person per household. This also reflects that Nalgonda is paying more for consumption than Medak as its consumption from the open market is at a higher price.

Analyses of survey data reveal that around 100 per cent of rural households obtained ration cards in the study areas of both districts. Around 100 per cent of the sample priority and AAY cardholders lifted grain from the PDS. The Antyodaya and Priority households in Nalgonda district obtained 34kg and 24 kg of foodgrains in a month, respectively, from PDS, whereas it was 34 kg and 23 kg, respectively, in Medak district. This figure was calculated from the average of three months' offtake of PDS foodgrains. The Below Poverty Line priority households in Nalgonda district met 52 per cent of their foodgrain requirements from the public distribution system. The corresponding figure among the Antyodaya or poorest of the poor households was 81 per cent. Similarly, 63 per cent of rural households in Medak district met the foodgrain needs from the public distribution system and the corresponding figure among the Antyodaya households was 83 per cent.

Around 78 per cent of sample households in both the study districts were dissatisfied with the quality and quantity of foodgrains. Around 80 per cent of sample households were satisfied with the overall functioning of the fair price shops. Around 90 per cent of the sample households were dissatisfied with the grievance redressal mechanism. More than three-fourths of the beneficiaries in both districts expressed that PDS was important to meet foodgrain consumption. The rural and Antyodaya (poorest of the poor) households obtained around the entire quantity of entitled foodgrains. Leakages and diversions of PDS foodgrains declined substantially following the implementation of the National Food Security Act. The foodgrain consumption of beneficiary households increased substantially following the offtake of PDS foodgrains. Several respondents have taken loans out of which 66 per cent was used for consumption. This reflects that more foodgrains may be allocated to BPL as the PDS rice does not suffice the needs of consumption of the poor.

Policy Recommendations

On 11th April 2022, the Hindustan Times in its Business segment published an article titled "India has almost wiped off extreme poverty: IMF" based on an IMF working paper authored by economist Surjit Bhalla, Arvind Virmani and Karan Bhasin. This study refutes such a claim. The findings of this study reflect that AAY cardholders have surplus ration whereas 40 per cent of BPL houses had to buy foodgrains at market prices to sustain themselves. This reflects that there is a need for customisation of card as per the requirement or swapping of the excess amount for cash. This can be accessed at the GP level by the Pradhans. On the other hand, a first-hand account from PRIs indicates that any change in the alterations of names in the AAY and BPL card category ignites strong reactions and even the undeserving ensure that they enjoy the benefits. As per the NFSA, the population coverage is 85 per cent; hence, a number of people who actually need the card remain without it and extremely well-doing

households also enjoy the privilege of food security through BPL card, job card, etc. This kind of deficit in actual need and projected need leads to a lot of unnecessary procurement, storage, transfer and loss to the exchequer. These anomalies can be addressed only after data collection at the GP level. There is a need to identify the beneficiaries who have cards but actually don't need one and the needy households still awaiting card allotment. A number of such people lost their cards as their finger impressions were not visible due to excessive physical labour. The need for equity and customisation can be met only through a strong multi-State research project. Assessment of need versus greed may set the parameters right for those who truly require the card. Therefore, a bigger study facilitated by the Centre and State, district, block and GP-level officials must be convened to address the above issues. Secondly, a complete absence of a Vigilance committee was found, which is necessitated as per the NFSA. There is a need to revive the vigilance mechanism in the State.

Effectiveness of SERP Telangana’s Health/Nutrition Intervention in Improving Women’s Nutrition/Sanitation Practices

Dr. Ruchira Bhattacharya

Introduction

Development models utilising women’s collectives have captured the attention of the government for several decades. Women collective-led interventions have been attractive to both government and private development organisations due to the economies of scope and ease of reaching a large community which is beyond the scope of individually targeted programmes (Díaz-Martin et al., 2022). The SHG programmes have been observed to have a significant impact on women’s access to livelihood, food intake, and social capital (Gash 2017), on household welfare such as reduction of borrowing rates (Hoffman et al., 2018) but also moderate or mixed effects on social empowerment (Banerjee et al.; Brody et al., 2016; Raghunathan et al., 2019) (Hoffmann et al., 2021). Some SHG-led programmes have shown a positive impact on nutrition, health outcomes and quality of service delivery (Mehta et al., 2020), but the pathway of women collectives to nutrition or economic welfare outcome is not straight and is often dependent on other macro and micro social factors (Nicols, 2021). There is also evidence of SHG-led programmes showing counterintuitive relations with gender indicators such as workload or leisure available to women (De Hoop et al., 2014). In many of the studies, the gender and social developmental outcomes such as rejection of traditional gender beliefs have been observed as downstream impacts of collectives (Jejeebhoy et al., 2017). An important question for policy is to thoroughly analyse the link between these SHG-led behavioural change interventions and the development outcomes such as gender attitudes, nutrition knowledge, and health behaviour of women.

This study evaluates the social impact of the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty or SERP (Telangana). SERP SHG-led programme is a mixed intervention model where financial intervention has been combined with social and health interventions with a specific focus on gender attitude, and menstrual health/sanitation behavioural outcomes in women. The Telangana SERP has been working on multiple verticals starting from livelihood, Stree Nidhi (micro-credit), health, nutrition, sanitation and gender. This study evaluated the performance of SERP (T) in the health-nutrition vertical focusing on the menstrual health knowledge, attitude, and practices due to its close link with gender-based restrictions in the society.

Objectives

The study analyses the impact of the Dweetiya (second) SHG Meeting of the SERP (Telangana). The second meeting primarily focuses on the social development objectives of the collectivisation programmes.

Vol 1	Vol 2	Vol 3	Vol 4
Food	Nutrition	Health	Gender
1. Health, nut & hygiene 2. Dietary Diversification 3. Health in your plate 4. Child nutrition 5. anaemia	1. 1000 days approach 2. Feeding practices 3. Hand wash and hygiene 4. Safe food 5. House Hold Waste Management	1. Birth Planning 2. Communicable and non communicable diseases 3. Vaccine preventable diseases 4. Vector borne Diseases 5. Menstrual Hygiene	1. Challenging gender discriminatory norms 2. Girl child education 3. Gender advocacy (PWD)

Figure 1: Dweetiya (Second) SERP Meeting Modules

Source: Pausumi Basu, CEO SERP (Available at: [http://www.mcrhrdi.gov.in/group1-2019/week3/Society per cent20for per cent20Elimination per cent20of per cent20Rural per cent20Poverty per cent20\(Serp\) per cent20- per cent20mcr.pdf](http://www.mcrhrdi.gov.in/group1-2019/week3/Society%20for%20Elimination%20of%20Rural%20Poverty%20(Serp)%20-%20mcr.pdf))

In this study, analysis is undertaken to

- a. evaluate the scope of SERP's work in gender in the selected study sites
- b. measure the status of knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) around gender and menstrual hygiene, sanitation in women
- c. examine the effectiveness of SERP (T)'s 'dweetiya' meetings in terms of gender attitude, and around menstrual health and hygiene
- d. elicit the further steps required to strengthen the nutrition/sanitation KAP through the community.

Methodology

The key research question was to observe whether there is a systematic difference in KAP of women who are exposed to 'Dweetiya' meetings regularly vis-à-vis women who are not exposed to such meetings. The study used a mixed-method concurrent approach by collecting quantitative and qualitative information at the same time using two surveyors concurrently. The quantitative data is analysed using a quasi-experimental method of propensity score matching. A group of **unexposed control units** (counterfactuals) – with similar socio-demographic attributes as the exposed units in terms of confounding factors were identified and surveyed. Since randomisation was not done in including women in treatment and control groups, a quasi-experimental method was applied for comparing the two groups. A **Propensity Score Matching** of SERP women was used to conduct the evaluation study. To ensure that motivation to work with the SHGs is not a confounding factor in the estimation, the study only included women who are registered SHG members or their daughters in the SERP programme. The regularity of attendance (no absence at least for the last 6 months) in the

second meeting (Dweetiya) was used as a treatment. A set of socio-demographic attributes was used to match treated and untreated women within the SERP group.

The responses from the women who regularly attended the second SERP meeting and were trained on health sanitation were compared against those unexposed to the SERP training on sanitation. A propensity score based on logistic regression with nearest neighbour matching was used to examine the average treatment effect of exposure to the second training on women's Menstrual Health Management levels.

Other than the Adjusted Treatment Effect on Treated (ATETs), the elasticity of the outcome variables to the second meeting attendance was estimated using logistic regression.

Study Area

The study used primary data of 299 women in reproductive age in February 2021 in Rangareddy district of Telangana. Women at the study sites were collected in small focus groups and engaged in discussion. During the discussion, the structured questionnaires were also filled out. The study analysed the KAP status around menstrual health in a rural set-up where product utilisation is already high. Selected villages of the Rangareddy district, Telangana were taken where nearly 90 per cent of women use menstrual hygiene products as per NFHS 4 data. The objective was to examine if there are systematic differences in the KAP levels for different socio-demographic attributes. A sample of 300 women from different villages in February 2021 was collected. Additionally, Focus Group Discussions were held to understand the nuances of the quantitative results. The evaluation was conducted in the blocks of Telangana where the health module has been rolled out - Selected women beneficiaries of SERP Treatment Group: SERP women who have received the health/sanitation module, and Control Group: SERP women who have not received the health/sanitation module.

From selected Mandals, 100 women who are exposed to the health module training and 200 women who are part of SERP training but haven't received health training were selected. The study used a mixed method. A structured questionnaire-based survey of women and a Participatory Rural Appraisal will be used to collect information.

Findings

Out of the SHGs that were part of Phase I and Phase II meetings in 2022, 97 to 99 per cent reported completing the hygiene, sanitation and health, nutrition modules. For sanitation hygiene, around 7 VOs, 11996 SHGs in the first phase and 454 VOs, 1003 SHGs in the second phase, and for health nutrition, 7 VOs and 1003 SHGs in the first phase and 15 VOs and 1403 SHGs in the second phase were yet to start the module.

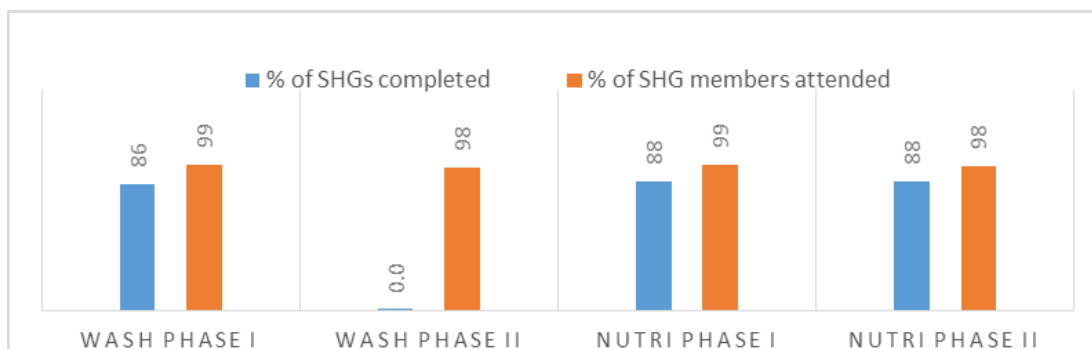


Figure 2: Attendance of SHGs and Members in 2nd Meeting of SERP 2022

Out of the SHGs that were part of Phase I or Phase II of SERP for delivering the modules through Dweetiya Meetings, completion and attendance as per the data were high. Eighty-six per cent of SHGs and within these SHGs 99 per cent of members completed Phase I WASH modules; however, only 4 SHGs were in Phase II, within which 98 per cent of women completed the WASH module. As for nutrition, 88 per cent of SHGs in phases I and II were delivered the module, and within these SHGs 99 per cent of women attended as per reported data. Three villages in the Rangareddy district were surveyed over two administrative units (Mandals): Manchal and Moinabad. The surveyed sample consisted of women in the 15-49 age group who have reached menarche and haven't reached menopause. The average age of the women was 30 years. In the group attending second meeting regularly, approximately 59 per cent were Hindu OBCs, and in the group not attending the meetings, around 39 per cent were Hindu OBCs. Other attributes were similarly distributed in the two groups –did not attend/attended 2nd meeting regularly.

Gender Attitudes and Roles in Sampled Women: The binary distribution of positive gender attitudes and roles revealed that around 41.8 per cent of women had autonomy in making strategic decisions and did not have restrictions or taboos in behaviour around menstruation. More than half of the women reported that domestic violence is undesirable, around 5 per cent reported that they could move freely without any permission at their house and around 62 per cent had access to own finance and resources.

Status and KAP around menstrual hygiene, sanitation in women: Menstruation in the sample started at around 12 years. More than three-fifths of the women experienced normal cycle.

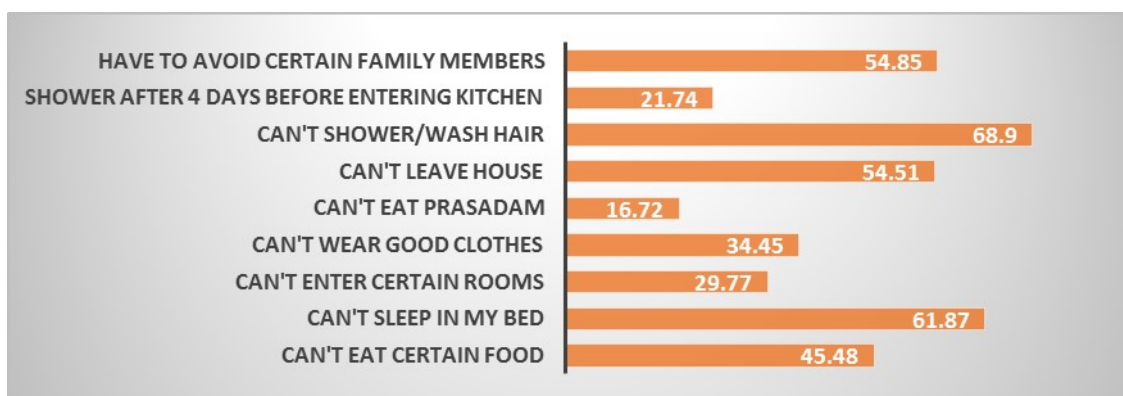
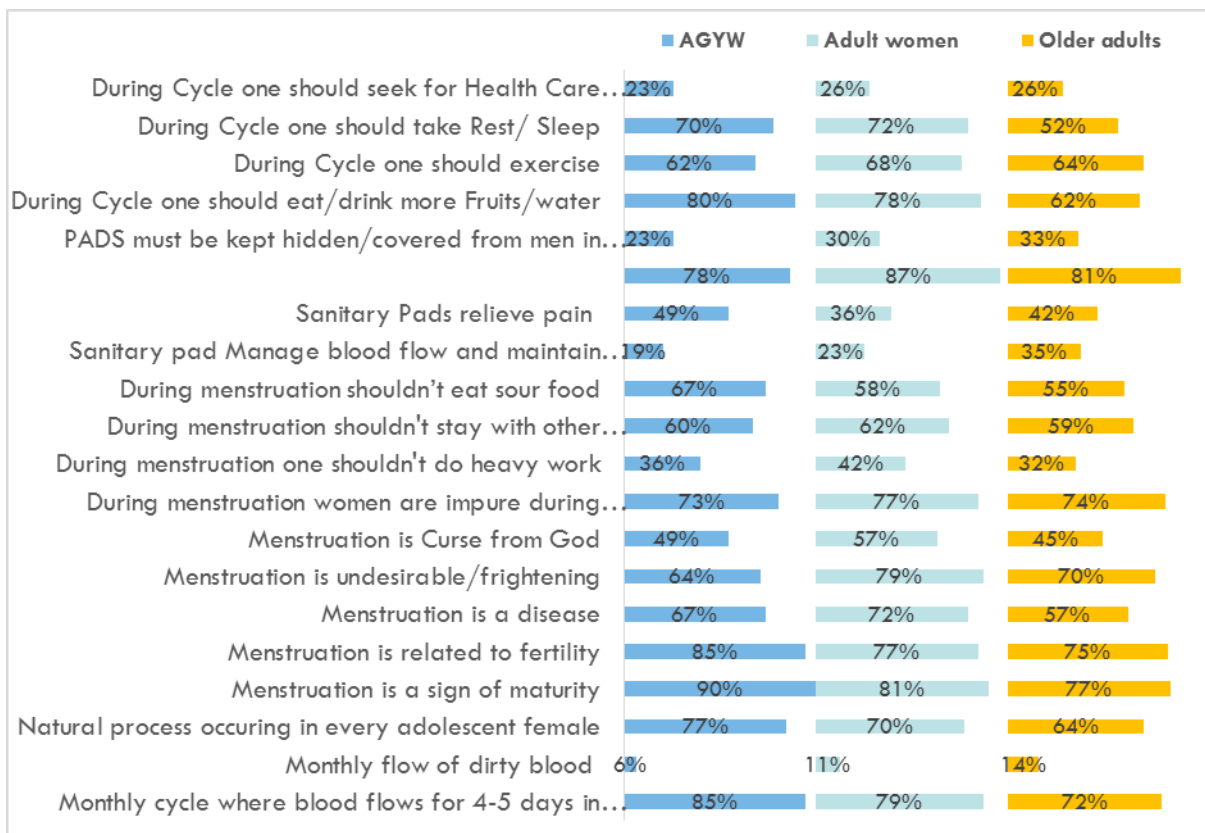


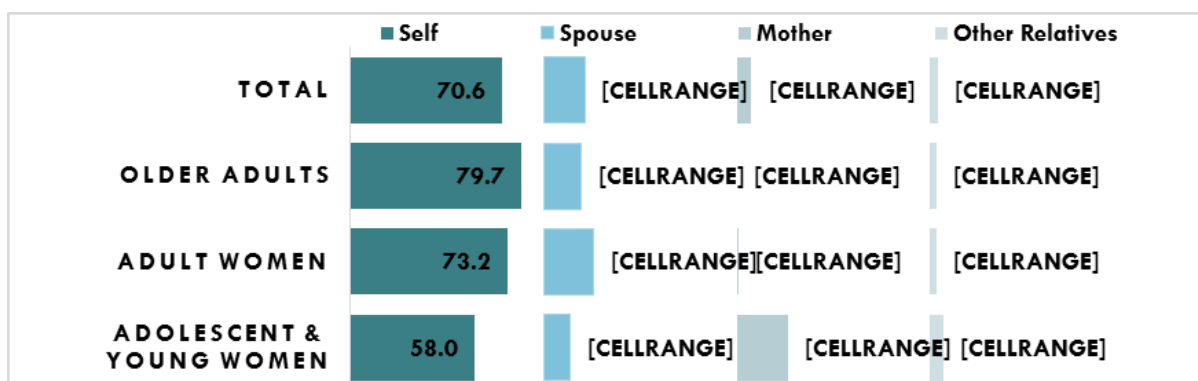
Figure 3: Restrictions during Menstruation

There were some restrictions applicable to women of all ages, however, specific restrictions such as staying away from family members such as husband or other men, and not being allowed to wash hair, sleep in their own bed, or leave the house were highly prevalent in the sample.



KAPA levels in women: per cent of women who answered correctly by age group

Across all age groups, women had the same proportion of misinformation. Women were more misinformed in some facts such as “menstruation is dirty” or “pads manage the flow of blood” compared to statements such as duration of cycle – on which nearly 70-80 per cent had the correct answer.



Percentage of Primary Procurer of Absorbent by Age

In the studied sample, 91 per cent used sanitary napkins, and around 9 per cent, mainly in the older adult age groups, reported using other products. One-third of women did not procure the product themselves.

Effectiveness of the Dweetiya Meeting on the Attitude towards Gender Roles: The propensity score results and adjusted odds were obtained for each indicator of gender attitudes. Although propensity scores did not yield significant differences in control and treatment groups, the women who attended 2nd meeting regularly has higher odds of decision-making than their counterparts.

The Propensity Score Matching did not show a significant difference in KAPA between control and treatment women in SERP meetings. For the self-procurement of menstrual products, multiple socio-demographic factors dominated the effect. Women who never married compared to ever married (AOR: 0.242; $p < 0.005$) had a lower odd, with a high score in decision-making compared to low (AOR: 2.712; $p < 0.005$) and low acceptance of domestic violence than high (AOR: 3.070, $p < 0.001$) had higher odds of procuring the product themselves.

Conclusion

While the recorded official data showed that Dweetiya meetings were occurring at regular intervals, the qualitative discussions revealed that women's participation and enthusiasm in the second meetings were not as much as in the first meeting where finances were discussed. As for the sample, certain restrictions and taboos were more widely prevalent than others – mostly around hygiene behaviour during menstruation. The meetings did not have any specific target on these deep taboos.

Women with regular exposure to the second meeting did show higher odds of own decision-making – which could be a collateral benefit of financial empowerment. But the meetings itself did not show a significant effect on gender attitudes, or KAP around menstrual health.

The menstrual product procurement showed that a significant number of women did not procure the product themselves and were depending on mothers or spouses to get the product. In the qualitative discussion, women recalled that in lockdown, many had to forego safe products due to the closure of local shops and the inability of their procurers to move out.

The results indicate a great variation in women's KAP and taboos around healthy menstruation – which the modules delivered through the second meeting are yet to address. The propensity scores revealed that small scale un-focused discussions in second meetings were not creating significant differences in gender or menstrual health sanitation KAP among the attending women.

Policy Recommendations

The second meetings should target breaking the local restrictions and taboos more intensely. The modules of Dweetiya may be delivered in separate sessions to monitor the absorption of the messages.

Also, caution is needed in placing “Key Messages” for BCC on menstrual products so that scientific facts are reinforced. It may be more effective to sensitise and educate the women with intensive and focused programmes rather than mixed meetings on multiple issues.

Staffing Policy for Panchayati Raj Institutions in UT of J&K

Smt. Radhika Rastogi

Dr. Pratyusna Patnaik

Dr. K.Prabhakar

Dr. M.V. Ravibabu

Introduction

The Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) Panchayati Raj (PR) Act was enacted in the year 1989 and the PR rules were framed in the year 1996. Further, in order to strengthen the Panchayati Raj system in Jammu & Kashmir, the government amended the J&K PR Act in the year 2011 and redefined the role of Panchayats in local economic development and planning. Subsequent to the amendment, elections were held to the Panchayats in the years 2018 and 2019. With the devolution of power with respect to the monitoring and implementation of various Centrally and Union Territory (UT) sponsored schemes, the workload on the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) has increased manifold. The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) at each level require dedicated staff to carry out the implementation and monitoring of various schemes in an effective manner. In the backdrop of the above, the Government of J&K intended to have a uniform staffing pattern for PRIs at various levels with dedicated staff to improve the functioning of the Panchayats and thus requested NIRDPR, Hyderabad to carry out a study. The study required a review of the existing staffing pattern in other States & UTs and provide recommendations for a suitable staffing policy for the Panchayats in J&K in tune with the specific requirements of the UT. It also required a desk research review of various recommendations given by different committees constituted by Central/State governments on the staffing policy for the Panchayats. Geospatial technology was also used for this study to identify the requirement of staff for taking immediate action for allocation/recruitment of staff at the block level using multi-criteria decision analysis (MCDA) models.

Objectives

The broad objective of this study was to provide policy recommendations on staffing pattern for Panchayats in J&K. However, the specific objectives of the study were the following:

- i. To review the staffing policy and various recommendations by different committees for the purpose in other States & UTs
- ii. To examine the existing staffing pattern and assess the actual human resource required in the Panchayats of J&K
- iii. To provide policy recommendations in terms of the mode of recruitment to be followed, career progression, emoluments and scheme for the training and orientation of the staff recruited to the Panchayats of J&K

Methodology

Considering the nature of the study and its relevance for policy formulation, the study adopted both desk research and primary data collection.

Findings

In order to collect relevant secondary data for the study, the desk research included the following:

- Review of literature - Collection of relevant secondary information regarding PR Acts and to understand personnel requirements of Panchayats of other States, i.e. Kerala, Karnataka, Assam, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttarakhand and UT of Andaman & Nicobar Island was carried out as part of the desk research;
- Collection of relevant reports and recommendations of committees related to staffing patterns of other States;
- To review the staffing policy and various recommendations by different committees for the purpose in other States & UTs - Secondary information on PRI personnel staffing pattern, recruitment process, guidelines, pay band and government orders;
- All district-level secondary information (10 districts in Jammu and 10 districts in Kashmir valley) covering existing staff and recruitment process (permanent/contractual/temporary/outsourced -qualifications, pay band, promotion and salaries)
- Primary data collection was carried out through online in-depth interviews and using a structured format for eliciting information on existing staff and the recruitment process for permanent/contractual/temporary/outsourced staff, their basic qualifications, promotion policy and existing pay structures. To understand the requirements of PRI functionaries as specific to Jammu & Kashmir, in-depth online interviews and discussions with key informants of the UT were conducted. Further, online discussions and consultations were held with officials concerned and elected representatives of PRIs of J&K.
- Developed MCDA models using spatial tools to generate staffing requirements as a case study.

Suggestions and Recommendations

- The best practices found in the States mentioned were suggested in the form of recommendations for creating the staffing policy for PRIs in J&K.
- The policy recommendations for creating staff at all levels in Panchayati Raj Institutions of Jammu of Kashmir have been drawn by taking insights from six different States and one Union Territory.
- The structure of PRIs and staffing patterns of States like Assam, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttarakhand and UT of Andaman and Nicobar Islands were reviewed as part of the desk research.

- Further, reports from the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Ministry of Rural Development on the human resource requirements at Panchayats were reviewed and best practices were suggested to be customised according to the requirement of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.
- Suggestions were provided for minimum staff requirement for PRIs, i.e. Halqa (Gram) Panchayat, Block Development Councils (BDCs) and District Development Councils (DDCs) level, and recruitment method to be followed, qualification required.
- The source of funding should be based on the insights drawn from different States where Panchayats are performing better in terms of effective planning, implementation of government schemes and programmes, and service delivery to the citizens of Panchayats.
- Recommendations on the capacity building and training activities for the newly elected representatives and functionaries of Panchayats of J&K have been suggested to strengthen Panchayats.
 - a. The Rural Development & Panchayati Raj Department in collaboration with IMPARD, Jammu & Kashmir needs to conduct/review yearly training need assessment (TNA) to meet the CB&T requirements of the PRIs.
 - b. Accordingly, TNA calendar for CB&T can be scheduled at the beginning of every financial year. Further, the RD&PR Department can allocate and ensure timely release of sufficient funds to incorporate the CB&T in the PRIs of J&K.
 - c. The guidelines of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), which have been extended to all States and UTs for developing and strengthening the capacities of PRIs for rural local governance in order to become more responsive towards local development needs, preparing the participatory plans that leverage technology, efficient and optimum utilisation of available resources for realising sustainable solutions to local problems linked to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be followed extensively for capacity building of PRIs at J&K.
 - d. The key principles of SDGs, i.e. leaving no one behind, reaching the farthest first and universal coverage, along with gender equality should be embedded in the design of all capacity-building interventions, including training, training modules and materials for strengthening PRIs at Jammu & Kashmir.
 - e. The spatial models developed has shown good results; all assigned criterion is very important and the study also presented all model performance as commonly indicated that block Lanjote was coming mostly under highly required from Model 3&4 and Moderately require staff from Model 1&2; therefore policymakers can decide that these blocks need immediate staff to be allocated for the smooth functioning of block-level activities.

Conclusion

The Panchayat system as envisaged in the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution in 1993 has ushered in an important chapter in the process of democratic decentralisation in the

country. The PRIs play an important role as institutions of self-government at the local level with a specific role in planning and implementation of programmes for economic development, service delivery and social justice, particularly about 29 matters listed in the 11th Schedule. However, due to several factors like inadequate capacity and capability of the officials and elected representatives of the PRIs and inadequate staff, the Panchayats have yet to realise the full potential of becoming local self-government. In such a context, the insights drawn from different States and recommendations suggested can provide a foundation to customise and create staff at all levels of PRIs of Jammu & Kashmir. The PRIs of J&K can be strengthened with adequate staff and enhanced capability for the effective implementation of programmes and service delivery at local levels. Geospatial models can be adapted for staffing allocation and the developed models may help the staffing policy and local planners to identify the critical demand areas for taking necessary action, which can reduce the time and also provide spatial visualisation. This study includes extending the work from Block level to Gram Panchayat level and considering more criteria/alternatives and infrastructure factors such as road accessibility, etc., by seeking the opinion of experienced personnel and also adoption of other methods of assigning weights to the criteria.

A Research Study on the e-Governance Readiness Index for a Gram Panchayat

Shri K. Rajeshwar

Digital India's goal is to link all 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats with broadband Internet, thereby facilitating telemedicine, tele education, e-health, and e-entertainment. By June 2021, around 1.56 lakh Gram Panchayats were active, and many other villages will follow suit. The government has agreed to invest an additional Rs.19, 041 crore in BharatNet's PPP model, which would help connect all Gram Panchayats and towns. Although many apps have been created, the present environment is not encouraging the Panchayat-level implementation of e-governance. States, however, take different measures to establish e-governance in Panchayats.

Against this backdrop, this study is intended to analyse the capability and readiness of Gram Panchayats to adopt e-governance in a full-fledged manner. This study concentrates on two states, namely Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, where e-governance performance seems to be better through the adoption of their own innovative applications. The selected States have already demonstrated the success of e-governance implementation at the Gram Panchayat level. From each State, four districts were randomly selected and from each district, four Gram Panchayats were randomly chosen based on the data provided by the respective States while collecting primary data on various indicators related to e-governance such as environment, readiness, usage and impact. The primary data was collected from the districts of Thrissur, Palakkad, Ernakulam and Kottayam in Kerala; and Mandla, Panna, Guna and Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh. In total, primary data was collected from 480 beneficiaries of 16 Gram Panchayats in both States.

On the whole, this exercise serves two purposes- first, the total score of the 11 parameters obtained is a clear endorsement of the fact that the indicators selected reflect the status of the e-Governance readiness index for a Gram Panchayat. Second, the implementation status can be viewed and assessed from the viewpoint of all different parameters, such as Political Environment, Regulatory Environment, Business Environment, Infrastructural Readiness, Financial Readiness, Human Readiness, Government Usage, Economic Impact, Social Impact, Transparency Impact and Satisfaction Assessment. The second part will enable the implementing agencies to take appropriate steps in respect of those dimensions yielding high scores. From this point of view, this exercise is useful for adopting these 11 parameters for the successful implementation of e-readiness index of a Gram Panchayat. The resulting benefits could be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and cost reductions.

Finally, the readiness index of e-Governance will generate scores depicting the position of GP, and the e-governance awards presented to GPs by the Government of India will be taken into account. The report will be used for strengthening the public service delivery mechanism at the GP level and also for an appropriate plan for capacity building of Panchayat functionaries and elected representatives.

Salient Findings & Key Success Factors

The study involved a survey of 16 Gram Panchayats of four districts each from Kerala and Madhya Pradesh.

Digital Literacy

The Census data shows that Kerala has a literacy rate of 94 per cent, while Madhya Pradesh has 69.32 per cent. The tele density of Kerala and Madhya Pradesh is, respectively, 129.62 per cent and 67.40 per cent, whereas the respective tele density rates are 25 per cent and 38.3 per cent, according to the TRAI. In Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, 100 per cent and 85.4 per cent of samples, respectively, are literate and more than 90 per cent of recipients possess digital devices. Both the chosen States have significant digital penetration.

On average, 91 per cent of respondents have the ability to use a digital device. However, only 55.4 per cent in Kerala and 42.5 per cent in MP are able to handle digital gadgets nearly every single time. It was also discovered that only 57.5 per cent in Kerala and 28.3 per cent in MP had attended digital literacy programmes, while over 50 per cent have shown interest in attending digital literacy training. This means that the capacity development training courses, which enable rural people to use e-services, must be held at the ground level. The State authorities must focus on gender mainstreaming since just 30 per cent of women respondents have been provided with this service. Only 17 per cent of them have received digital literacy training, while 91 per cent have shown interest in receiving the training.

Essential of e-Panchayat

The uplift of the scheduled castes and backward categories is necessary for the progress of any Gram Panchayat. It is apparent from the gathered data that 60 per cent, i.e. the majority of the sample, belong to this group. A significant sample size of the beneficiaries belong to marginal families (63 per cent) that fall in Rs. 30,000 to Rs.1 lakh income bracket. This implies that the e-services, in fact, serve those who need it the most and cannot afford to visit Tehsil/Sub-division/district offices.

Awareness about e-services

All sample beneficiaries are aware of the use of e-services for different reasons, such as obtaining birth, death, marriage, residence certificates, etc. Only 46.3 per cent of respondents pay their taxes through e-services, which shows the need to launch additional awareness programmes in collaboration with Gram Sabha and wide use of social media to make full use of other services.

Common Service Centres (CSCs) were created at the Panchayat level in Madhya Pradesh in PPP mode whereas all the Panchayats in Kerala have comprehensive facilities to offer digital services to the people. Beneficiaries are satisfied with the services of CSCs and GP offices in Kerala because over 95 per cent find the services are provided without much delay and 70 per cent say they serve within the timeframe.

The State Department of Panchayats must guarantee the sustainability and transparency of the CSCs. Moreover, with better technical assistance and training, the motivating elements must be enhanced. The authorities of the chosen States - Kerala and Madhya Pradesh - take a better approach and encourage the public to use e-services, as per the responses of the sample population.

Accessible of e-services

Data shows that since the Panchayat offices in Kerala and CSCs/LMKs in Madhya Pradesh are located at short distances apart, people can easily access and receive services. Beneficiaries thus do not spend a lot of time visiting the CSCs to avail the services. In Kerala, 73.33 per cent travel for 15 to 30 minutes to avail e-services. In Madhya Pradesh, 64.58 per cent said that they need less than 30 minutes' journey to access e-services. This will make e-services and e-governance at the Panchayat level more accessible to people.

Capacity Building for Panchayat Officials

From the sample data, 78.13 per cent of respondents in Kerala and 46.88 per cent in MP felt that full training facilities are provided for newly elected members in the Panchayat Raj Institutions. A total of 31.25 per cent of electors in Panchayat Raj Institutions have partial and moderate capacity development capability. In Madhya Pradesh, 3.13 per cent of respondents said that PRI has no capacity development facility; hence, the elected representatives and Panchayat secretaries need to undergo additional capacity building activities.

The two States have excellent telecommunication systems and a very high degree of consciousness, i.e. above 90 per cent. But they use the services via CSCs and GP services because of the absence of digital awareness and capacity-building activities. In this situation, awareness and capacity-building workshops on the e-district site, and changing behavioural management training encourage people to make use of the e-services available 24x7. This contributes to bringing down procedural delays in the government set up, thereby adding to its efficient functioning. It is also proposed that people with sophisticated gadgets may serve as master trainers at ground zero.

GP Infrastructure Readiness

All respondents in Kerala and 87.50 per cent in MP said that Gram Panchayats have building infrastructure. However, 75 per cent and 40.63 per cent of GP offices, respectively, in Kerala and MP, do not have AMC services capabilities for the repair and replacement of IT peripherals, and 34.38 per cent of the total respondents believed that AMC services had modest and partial facilities. The State governments must take decision to offer AMC services at the Block level. Engineers will be able visit the GP offices, fix the software/hardware problems to avoid disruption of regular works. The respondents opined that 40.63 per cent of GP offices in Kerala and 62.50 per cent in MP need advanced IT equipment, such as PCs, printers and scanners. While 14.06 of total respondents partially agreed, 10.94 per cent wanted power

supply problems to be addressed, so that e-Panchayat reaches 100 per cent. As stated by the respondents, technical maintenance in both States is high at 37.50 per cent. An average of 51.25 per cent of respondents indicated high and moderate technical upkeep. In Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, 12.5 per cent and 6.25 per cent of the Panchayat authorities, respectively, offer extremely poor technical upkeep.

Human Resources Readiness

The sample data illustrates the readiness indicator of the human resources to operationalise Gram Panchayat e-governance apps. When asked about training the workers on developing problem-solving abilities to operate the applications, the Kerala authorities replied as extremely high and the Madhya Pradesh officials reported as very high and high. This parameter includes level of employee for development of communication skills, training in monitoring and controlling projects, team-building and group dynamics, and realising customer satisfaction, which are important for achieving quality, trust and openness between employees and individuals. This shows that officers dealing with e-governance application are very active at the Panchayat level and can always provide services to people at their doorstep.

Quality Management System

The authorities from both States have the ability to deal with Gram Panchayat e-Governance apps. In Kerala and MP, 63.63 per cent and 75 per cent of officers, respectively, reacted that workers are educated in quality management system. The Gram Panchayat workers in Kerala and Madhya Pradesh responded that they are highly able to detect flaws and faults in the application software. The capacity to rectify mistakes in application software while processing data by GP officials is high at 59.09 per cent in Kerala and 70 per cent in MP. In Kerala and MP, 68.18 per cent and 80 per cent of officials, respectively, responded significantly high occurrence of updating the charter in the GP offices.

It is learned that 93 per cent of both ERs and Panchayat Secretaries are involved in the correction of the system to enhance the e-Panchayat service. On average, 60 per cent said that the current computerisation system is beneficial to people whereas 65.62 per cent approve moderate and partial amendments to the application.

On average, 61.72 per cent of ERs and Panchayat Secretaries have better capability to alter regulations and processes to improve planning and work. More than 80 per cent of officials believe that more funds are required for the implementation of e-government system at the Panchayat level for improving infrastructure and providing seamless services to people.

Revenue generation through e-services

It also has been found that 90 per cent of Gram Panchayats in Kerala and 53.13 per cent in Madhya Pradesh earn income via e-services. At the GP level, human resources are at 68.75 per cent and 62.50 per cent in Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, respectively.

Respondents from both States reported that the average human resource level was 21.31

per cent. A very marginal 3.13 per cent reported of having fewer GP employees in Madhya Pradesh.

Ability of Decision-making

On average, 39.06 per cent of respondents from both States said that electronic governance entirely improved Gram Sabha's decision-making ability. In Kerala and MP, the Gram Sabha's decision-making ability considerably increased to 37.50 per cent and 21.58 per cent, respectively. The State Department of Panchayats must guarantee the sustainability and transparency of the Common Service Centres. Moreover, with greater technical assistance and CSC training, motivating elements must be enhanced. The authorities of Kerala and MP have taken a better approach to encourage the public to use e-services, registering responses as high at 50 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively, .

The programme helps to plan and manage the schemes, as stated by the IT Departments of both States. This also supports data mining and integrated service, and reduces the cost of using the services. This implies that both the government apparatus and the citizens have a win-win scenario. It may be noted that 84 per cent of departmental officials acknowledged a decline in government service set-ups after the launch of e-services.

The officials from both the selected States responded to indicators on the level of use with respect to the government concerning their perception of the overall good governance quality at 95.46 per cent and 95 per cent, respectively, for the implementation of e-Governance. The e-Governance reduced the paperwork by 95.46 per cent and 96 per cent, respectively, in Kerala and MP. All officials from Kerala and 85 per cent in MP replied that they regularly follow and evaluate the crucial procedures by giving 'significantly high' response. The coordinating local, State and national e-government efforts were recorded as 85 per cent and 77.27 per cent, respectively in Kerala and MP.

Portal Features

The applications were deemed user-friendly, responsive and excellent. In addition, 95 per cent of departmental officials rated the overall quality as excellent. The IT department also plans to combine the newest technology to expand the usage of rural masses. It seems that consumers will soon switch over to e-services, resulting in prevalence of paperless services.

Improvement in providing e-services

The elected representatives and Panchayat Secretaries in Kerala indicated 100 per cent readiness and support for the State's e-government efforts, whereas 96.87 per cent of respondents in Madhya Pradesh offered their support for implementation of e-Governance projects at their GPs. However, 71.84 per cent of respondents in Kerala and 68.75 per cent in Madhya Pradesh said that they have taken efforts to provide improved services via e-Governance. This shows their greater interest in encouraging people to make full use of e-services at the Panchayat level.

A Study on the Efficiency of RSETIs in Building Skills and Employment of Rural Youth

Dr. R. Aruna Jayamani
Ms. Senbagavalli, Director, RSETI

Youth and Unemployment in India

The youth population in India in recent times face quite a lot of socio-cultural and psychological problems due to mounting pressure on getting admission and completion of education, especially professional courses. The commercialisation of educational system has made it difficult for the poor and middle-income groups to access professional education. Mushrooming educational institutions are only keen on admitting more students; they are giving the least importance to the quality of education and skills needed by the students and the demanding market. It hinders the majority of the students who complete higher education from finding suitable employment; hence they remain unemployable or unemployed.

In this context, increasing rural unemployment, especially for educated youth, is a great concern for the nation. By means of field evidence, many studies have proved that vocational training in higher studies and trade-based skill building for self-employment gets momentum. In this direction, the RSETIs are given prime importance to conduct more training courses for the educated unemployed youths giving priority to those Below Poverty Line (BPL). The government and many other institutions appreciated the role of RSETIs in skill building and making follow-up actions in terms of handholding support and facilitating the role of credit linkage and absorption of trained candidates in jobs/self-employment. But the report about the performance of RSETIs mentioned above shows that only 68 per cent of trainees got into entrepreneurship activities. Moreover, only 47 per cent of the trained people were given credit linkage by commercial banks. A report shows that around 30 million youths, including the educated, from rural and urban areas in India are unemployed. Another report says at present, the country has around 2.5 million educated unemployed youths. The training performance of RSETIs shows that even though the coverage is almost 3 million youths, the coverage reflected the cumulative training performance of the past three decades. The rising rate of educated unemployed youth resulted in 16 per cent of the above-mentioned figures, which reflects a huge gap in skill building every year. Moreover, the percentage of absorption in jobs/self-employment needs to be looked into the reasons and factors for further necessary policy change. It is also essential to study the reasons for less percentage of credit linkages, which is one of the most important factors influencing the settlement of the trained candidates. Another significant area of concern is the retention of employed candidates and their income levels. Therefore, this study is focused to find out the above-mentioned three aspects linked with the performance efficiency of the RSETIs and the quality of the training programmes. Considering

the severity of the problems faced by unemployed youths and further initiatives required for building the skills need field based-evidence, the study is an essential step towards strengthening the skill-building efforts of RSETIs.

Objectives

- To study the efficiency and effectiveness of the training imparted by RSETIs and the rate of absorption of the trainees in income-generating activities.
- To analyse the rate of retention of jobs and verify the status of absorption related to the trade for which they were trained.
- To analyse the range of income earned by the trainees through jobs/activities engaged after training.
- To analyse the problems in training delivery, absorption and possible suggestions for strengthening RSETIs for performance.

Sample of Selection of RSETIs

The study has selected 24 RSETIs from six study States, namely Assam, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. From each State, four RSETIs were selected for the field study in consultation with the respective State Director of RSETI.

Major Findings

Problems, Challenges and Performance of Businesses of the settled candidates

- Women participation is high among the settled candidates of the RSETI training. In Karnataka, female respondents' participation is 74 per cent, followed by 72.5 per cent in Assam and 65 per cent in Odisha. Overall, the female trainees' participation is 54 per cent.
- The majority of respondents (51.9 per cent) were aged between 26-35 years, followed by 25.4 per cent between 36-45 years.
- Around 73 per cent of trainees belong to rural areas and basically, RSETI's clientele group is rural youth. Though the data reflects the coverage of urban residents, they are rural people located in the urban periphery.
- Only 9 per cent of the respondents claimed that they were supported by NRLM.
- Around 84 per cent of trainees stated that they wish to establish their own business in their area.
- Around 73 per cent of trainees said they get guidance from RSETI even after training. Only 27.3 per cent of respondents reported that after completing the course, they do not receive appropriate help and instructions from RSETIs. In general, RSETIs guide and provide follow-up for trainees for three years. Mainly RSETIs encourage and enable them to access bank credit and entrepreneurship-based advice and it was agreed by 78 per cent.

- Majority of the respondents prefer less capital-intensive trades. Further, it was reported that the existing cumbersome procedures in availing bank finance also prioritises activities of self-employment requiring less capital.
- **Bank finance:** If bank finance is available, the trainees are interested to start self-employment with higher capital investment; vice versa, trainees who could not get bank finance prefer starting small-scale activities and are interested to expand based on the growth of the business. Many candidates thought that though they have approached the bank, various reasons like feasibility of the project, quantum of operation of business, risk factor in repayment of loan, etc., hinder their interest in availing bank finance.
- Most respondents (76.5 per cent) availed MUDRA scheme and invested less than Rs.50,000 for their self-employment. It was reported that cases of more than Rs.1 lakh financial assistance were extended under the PMEGP scheme and also they availed funds from a few other sources.
- Around 44 per cent reported that a month's time is required for sanctioning of loan, whereas 8.3 per cent reported two months, 24.2 per cent reported three months and 23.6 per cent reported four months. Therefore, a delay of 3 to 4 months has been reported by the official mechanism of the financial institutions.
- Around 69 per cent reported of facing difficulties in repayment of EMIs due to lack of stability in the business or service and the COVID outbreak.
- Almost 98 per cent of respondents who availed financial assistance reported that they have got loans only from recognised banks.
- More than 77 per cent altogether from six States responded positively and hopefully expect the expansion of their business activities. Around 15 per cent of cases in Assam, 11 per cent in Karnataka and 18.8 per cent in Odisha reported negatively. These small entrepreneurs needed motivation and further handholding support to strengthen their economic activities.
- As the study has selected 80 settled respondents from each State 71 respondents in Assam, 60 in Karnataka, 32 in MP, 62 in Odisha, 69 in Rajasthan and 6 in UP engage only their family members. A few activities like beauty parlour, tailoring and repairing service units, which are managed by self-employed persons, do not require additional labour. Altogether, one or two workers as supporting manpower were hired for around 151 activities in 6 States. This trend was high in Rajasthan, Odisha and Karnataka.
- Fifty-four per cent of respondents from the sample States started their business within three months, but around 21 per cent of respondents took 3-6 months' time to establish their employment activity.
- **The key challenges faced by setting up the enterprise:** In all the States, majority of trainees expressed lack of capital and difficulties in mobilising capital were listed as major challenges. The data reveals that 49 per cent of trainees did not have initial capital for starting their business, whereas 31.7 per cent reported that the banks showed reluctance to extend financial assistance and showed negligent behaviour to discuss business proposals presented in the banks.

- **Attempts made to resolve the challenges:** Thirty-five per cent of respondents tirelessly approached different finance sources, including private lenders to get initial capital for their business, while 14.8 per cent made continuous attempts with their service area banks and 24.4 per cent sought guidance from RSETIs and also experts on how to mobilise capital and establishing supporting infrastructure to start their business. In the case of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan RSETIs, guidance helped to mould their business.
- Around 70 per cent of the trainees reported skills related to a particular trade, i.e. how to operate selected economic activity.
- **Efficient delivery of training by the sample RSETIs:** On efficient delivery of training, 57.1 per cent 'strongly agreed' whereas 31.2 per cent responded positively. The efficiency of the training deals with the capacity of the trainer, quality of content and method of delivery and the opinion was supported by majority of the respondents from Assam (68.8 per cent) Rajasthan (92.5 per cent), Odisha (78.8 per cent) Madhya Pradesh (53.8 per cent) and Karnataka (41.2 per cent).
- Many RSETIs are not having own buildings for conducting training. They took small buildings on a rental basis, created partitions and accommodated around 30 trainees within the small space, which creates discomfort in the learning situation.
- The **status of the supply of learning kits** shows only 49.4 per cent strongly supported the existing minimum trade-based tool learning kits. In Rajasthan, the ICICI-managed RSETIs are following the good practice of ensuring adequate learning tool kits and supply of minimum service tool kits to start a business after completion of the training.

Impact of RSETI training on various aspects of entrepreneurial functions:

- From the overall responses, majority viewed that the training has enabled them to understand better about their job. In this regard, 58.5 per cent strongly agreed and around 30 per cent simply agreed.
- **Acquired Skills through RSETI training relevant for the operation of trade:** More than 85 per cent of trainees agreed and strongly agreed on better delivery of training and imparted required skills. The State-wise scenario of responses also reflects better performance in skill building as reported by majority of the respondents.
- **Impact on change of Attitude through RSETI training:** The data regarding attitudinal change gives positive consensus with 57 per cent strong agreement and 29.4 per cent agreement. As it has been linked with knowledge and skills, a similar pattern of influence has been noticed in the State-wise representation of responses.
- In all aspects of training impact, RSETIs in UP and Karnataka are lagging behind, which is a concern for improvement. Adequate attention has been given to communication skill development under RSETI trainees with a focus on the local language. However, English communication is not given much importance because a short duration of training will not create much effect in improving the skills.

- The field responses reflect the positive change by the RSETIs irrespective of States as strongly agreed by 66.5 per cent and agreed by around 20 per cent. At the time of completion of training, the trainees go with higher level confidence but its vigour goes down while approaching for capital.
- **Problems Faced by RSETIs:** All the RSETIs in respective sample States face different problems and the major ones were:
 - a) Heterogeneous background of trainees
 - b) Temporary/Contractual Faculty
 - c) Non-availability of guest faculty
 - d) Lack of basic infrastructure
 - e) Lack of interested candidates for certain training programmes
 - f) Lack of assistance of support system.
- Most of the RSETIs in the study States have only temporary/contractual faculty to provide training and instructors lacked the proficiency to impart the training in the local language.

Major Recommendations

- Teaching support and Infrastructure available in the RSETIs were liked only by 3.5 per cent of trainees. Unfortunately, teaching methods and practical exposure were rated least and follow-up guidance was given the least importance by the respondents.
- It is important to note by the RSETIs that most interventions are required to strengthen the teaching methods, infrastructure and extra practical exposure. Most importantly, follow-up guidance is needed for the successful settlement of trainees. In Assam and Karnataka, boarding and lodging facilities attracted trainees. In the case of UP, Rajasthan, Odisha and MP, the location of RSETI influenced more candidates to attend the training.
- The trainees wanted the need for managerial, leadership and motivational sessions to be increased to build confidence in achieving goals and a positive attitude to access and serve society.
- There is a necessity to include minimum financial support as a package of training and ensure minimum financial support and supply of tools for on-start the employment activities.
- There is a necessity to have guidance and handholding support, and if possible, bilateral agreement between RSETIs and banks, to ensure financial assistance for successfully completed and motivated trainees. It is also essential for the RSETIs to extend continuous handholding support to the trainees till the commencement of business activities.
- The finding reveals that RSETI training is extremely effective. To make training more meaningful and long-lasting, trainers should make sure that participants have a clear understanding of the training's goal as well as a vision for the future.

- The trainees felt that the training courses were too short, thus it may be proposed that the development of a training app or software transferable smartphones be tried to prevent waiting for systems and equipment for the exercises.
- The trainees strongly agreed that if the RSETI or the government ensures minimum equipment requirement even minimal learning kits, it will boost the morale of trainees and enable them to start businesses immediately.
- Most RSETIs only have temporary/contractual staff to impart training; however, permanent faculty is required to ensure the success of skill development programmes. Instructors must also be capable of delivering the training in the local language.
- According to the findings of this study, RSETIs can improve the business performance of trainees upon completion of training by procuring raw materials and providing financial support, more business information, and marketing support by hosting local and regional market fests and exhibitions.
- The current study found that majority of respondents had received training in a specific module; however, it is recommended that all RSETIs give equal weight to all modules, including product, process, and agriculture, in order to close the skill gap in these areas as well.
- While selecting candidates for training at RSETIs, special attention should be devoted to finding candidates with the necessary ability and mindset for launching a business.
- For all RSETIs, a uniform HR policy is required. In terms of faculty appointment, remuneration and regularisation, it varies from bank to bank at the moment.
- RSETIs must update its course content every year and ensure that the most up-to-date technology tools and equipment are used in all EDP training modules.
- To assist early settlement, banks should give sufficient credit linkage to deserving candidates after the training. The terms of the loans should be simple, and the interest rates should be lower than those of conventional commercial loans.
- According to the findings of this study, RSETI-trained individuals started their businesses with a low investment between Rs.10,000 and Rs.1 lakh, ensuring low risk. Due to the scale of their businesses, they make less money and create fewer jobs. Hence, it is advised that the government must ensure more credit for larger investments to generate more revenue and jobs in various sectors.
- According to the report, majority of the women candidates attended RSETI training as many could start home-based enterprises after the training. It is suggested that more rural men entrepreneur networks be formed to assist and encourage them to start micro-businesses to address the problem of unemployment and underemployment in rural areas.
- According to the study, the settlement rate is lower in study States and sample districts. Therefore, the government and other stakeholders must take steps to enhance the settlement rate in these districts.
- The study also recommends that a better placement cell be established for beneficiaries to discover job prospects.

- The study recommends that the government and policymakers offer adequate funding through appropriate channels, with a minimum 5-year payback period and reasonable interest rate so that people can manage their spending.
- The loan should have simple terms and a lower interest rate than typical commercial loans for women.
- To build appropriate entrepreneurial development training programmes, a proper need assessment and market opportunity survey must be undertaken.
- Through stronger financial connectivity, there is a need to strengthen handholding support as well as on-campus loan grants to needy and intended recipients, which would aid in the development and fostering of more first-generation entrepreneurs.
- The 'Make in India' initiative has provided tremendous prospects for skill development, particularly in the small-scale sector, which must be exploited in collaboration with RSETI programmes.
- It is necessary to introduce integrated reforms in the form of establishing nodal authority or advisory to executive bodies with a view to coordinating and governing various skills development and policymaking initiatives. The interlinkage of the SSDMs with the industry, training providers, Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), and National Skill Development Authority (NSDA) should be maintained at the policy formulation and implementation level. The Sector Skill Councils should assist the States to align training programmes with National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF). If required, a working group could be constituted with SSC representatives for this purpose.
- The policymakers must focus on providing the required infrastructure and equipment such as computers, software, tools, machines, etc., besides qualified instructors to provide high-quality skills and relevant practical exposure to the trainees. Appraisal of institutes against standard norms and guidelines needs to be conducted regularly and ratings should be based on outcomes assigned to every institution.

Engagement of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) with Social Audit Unit (SAU) of Jharkhand: A Case Study

Dr. Rajesh Kumar Sinha

Introduction

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have played a key role in advocating piloting and institutionalising social audit in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and later expanding it to other schemes/programmes. However, their engagements with the Social Audit Units (institutions set up in States which facilitate social audit) vary across States. Central Operational Guidelines for implementation of MGNREGA 2013, MGNREG Audit of Scheme Rules 2011 and Auditing Standards for Social Audit 2016 assign important roles to CSOs in social audit.

Jharkhand is one of the leading States where CSOs have worked with SAUs at different levels and different processes of social audit. CSO representatives are members of the SAU Steering Committee (Governing Body) involved in the recruitment of SAU staff and are members of a panel of juries at GP, Block, District and State level hearings. They are also part of special social audit, disciplinary committee, Action Taken Report (ATR) Review Committee, and monitoring of social audit. Periodic suggestions from CSOs are taken to improve the process of social audit in the State.

As Jharkhand is a pioneering State in CSOs engagement with SAUs and the social audit process, this study has been taken up by the Centre for Social Audit, NIRDPR with the purpose to document the good practices and to gauge the perceptions of CSO representatives and social audit resource persons on such engagement.

Objectives

- i. Process document CSOs engagement with SAU in Jharkhand
- ii. Capture perceptions of CSO representatives and social audit resource persons on CSOs engagement with SAU in Jharkhand

Methodology

For process documentation of CSOs' collaboration with SAUs in Jharkhand, secondary information from the Minutes of Steering Committee of the SAU, Human Resources Policy of SAUs, and various Government Orders on social audit have been gathered. In addition, during personal interviews with the State Coordinator, representatives of CSOs and social audit resource persons, information with regard to the process, advantages, challenges, and suggestions for strengthening CSOs- SAU collaboration was gathered.

Primary data on the profile and perceptions of CSO representatives as well as social audit

resource persons of CSOs-SAU collaboration has been collected with the help of interview schedules administered between June to November 2021. Separate interview schedules were used for CSO representatives and social audit resource persons.

Study Area:

Jharkhand

Findings

- Convener, NREGA Watch Shri James Herenj and Prof. Ramesh Sharan (Ex-VC, Vinoba Bhave University) have been included in the Steering Committee which serves as Governing Board for the SAU
- SAU organises periodic consultation meets with CSOs to review the social audit process, formats for data collection and report preparation
- Steering Committee has constituted an independent Action Taken Report (ATR) Review Committee. This Committee has three CSO representatives
- CSO representatives have been included in the selection committee for hiring SAU staff and resource persons.
- Majority of SAU staff and resource persons are from CSO background.
- SAU uses the expertise of CSOs in capacity building of resource persons on new schemes/ programmes being socially audited.
- CSOs have also been helping SAU to organise cultural workshops for social audit resource persons.
- CSO representatives are members of the Grievance Redressal Committee.
- Among the respondent CSO representatives, 77 per cent are engaged with SAU for more than three years.
- Most of the CSO representatives (approximately 62 per cent) are engaged with SAU as members of jury panels at block, district and State level public hearings for social audit and review of actions taken on findings.
- Sixty per cent of CSO representative respondents are fully satisfied with the social audit process, 34 per cent of them are moderately satisfied, 2 per cent are partially satisfied and 04 per cent of them are not satisfied.
- Eighty-three per cent of CSO representatives felt that they have fully performed the tasks assigned to them while the remaining 17 per cent said they have partially performed.
- Eighty-four per cent of CSO representatives shared that they get full support from SAU, 11 per cent have said they get only partial support and 5 per cent have shared that they have got no support.

- Sixty-one per cent of CSO representatives interviewed have shared that they have received full support/cooperation from functionaries of implementing agencies in performing their assigned responsibilities, while 34 per cent of CSO representatives have received only partial support/coordination from them.
- Ninety-five per cent of CSO representatives want to remain associated with the social audit process and SAU in future too.
- Seventy-six per cent of CSO representative respondents accepted that meetings between CSOs and social audit resource persons are organised for better coordination.
- Fifty-three per cent of social audit resource persons have responded that CSOs representatives are fully performing their expected role.
- Seventy per cent of resource persons have responded that CSO representatives in the jury panel attend the public hearings always or frequently.
- Seventy-seven per cent of social audit resource persons interviewed told that they get support from CSOs or their representatives in mobilising the community to participate in social audit exercise.
- Social audit resource persons have shared several benefits from CSOs' engagement. Important among them are increased community participation, proper decisions and effective actions on the issues identified, and logistics support to the social audit team.

Conclusion

CSOs encompass a wide range of registered and unregistered organisations and activists. A large number of CSOs are operating in India. Government's relations with CSOs have been changing according to the prevailing political scenario. Government has been involving CSOs in consultative processes and also in the delivery of developmental programmes. However, with tightening regulatory measures, currently, there is a trust deficit between CSOs and the Government.

Jharkhand is one of the underdeveloped States with a large tribal population. The State faces many challenges including land alienation, displacement, Left-wing extremism, out-migration for employment, social evils such as alcoholism, witch-hunting, and lack of modern infrastructure. Due to these challenges, political instability and lack of good governance, a large number of CSOs and social activists have been active in the State.

In Jharkhand, CSOs have been at the forefront in piloting and institutionalising social audits in MGNREGA and making efforts to expand it to other government programmes. Recognising their experience in and commitment towards facilitating social audit, CSOs have been engaged by SAU at various levels and capacities in the State. Majority of SAU staff and social audit resource persons are from CSO background.

CSOs' engagement with SAU and the social audit process in Jharkhand has been mutually beneficial. The SAU has been able to access the thematic expertise of CSOs in capacity building of resource persons, development of formats for data collection and report, as a member of the jury to deliberate upon and decide on issues involved in the implementation of various

schemes being audited. Most importantly, SAU has got an ally in the form of CSOs whose support is needed to win over open and subtle resistance from vested interests in the administration and the community. On the other hand, CSOs have got opportunity and platform for representing the voice and issues of poor and marginalised sections of society for which they have been working. They also get recognition and acceptance from administrative officials as well as the community.

To further strengthen CSOs' engagement with SAU and social audit process in the State, certain actions on the part of State government and SAU have been suggested both by CSOs and social audit resource persons. Important among them are passing a law of transparency, accountability and social audit by the State Legislature, making SAUs more independent and locating it in a department which does not implement any scheme/programme, timely and adequate follow-up actions on findings of social audit and reporting back to CSOs and community about action taken, regular coordination meeting between SAU and CSOs at different levels; orientation and capacity building of CSO representatives in general and members of the jury in particular, and orientation and sensitisation of government officials and elected representatives on role and contributions of CSOs so that they are not seen as adversaries.

Jharkhand is the pioneering State in CSOs engagement with SAU and social audit process. The need for such engagement has been appreciated by the Operational Guidelines of MGNREGA, Auditing Standards for Social Audit and Annual Master Circular. Few academic studies have also recommended CSOs-SAU partnerships. The Jharkhand model may be studied by other States and adopted with necessary adaptation as per local contexts. However, for such adoption, it is important that the supportive as well as critical roles of CSOs are recognised and CSOs are involved in the social audit process without any predilection or bias. CSOs and SAU collaboration in some States does not develop and become vibrant as only pro-government CSOs are partnered with those who do not give free, frank and fair opinions to the SAU.

To facilitate such engagement of CSOs with SAU and social audit process in other States, guidelines for CSOs' collaboration with SAU or CSOs' policy for social audit may be developed by Government of India and circulated. Meanwhile, successful models such as the ATR Review Committee, Jury System, etc., of Jharkhand may be adopted by State governments through GR/GO. Government of India may promote test audits to be conducted by a group of CSOs from other States. This will not only help independent evaluation of the social audit process but will also serve as an exposure to CSOs from other States.

Policy Recommendations

- State Legislature may enact a law on transparency, accountability and social audit, covering all development schemes/programmes. Such an Act may provide a role to CSOs.
- SAU may prepare a database on CSOs working in different thematic areas and geographical regions of Jharkhand.
- CSOs that have conflict of interest may not be engaged in the social audit.

- Periodic coordination meetings of SAU with CSO representatives at regional and State levels may be organised.
- More independence to SAU with no control of implementing agency over SAU. A department, which is not implementing any scheme, should be the nodal department for locating a social audit unit within it.
- Enhanced security arrangements on the day of public hearing so that anti-social elements do not interfere in the decision-making on the issues identified by the social audit team.
- To further strengthen participation in Gram Sabha, wage-seekers may be given one day's wage for attending Gram Sabha.
- Recovery of misappropriated amounts must be quick and adequate. Information about the follow-up action taken needs to be shared with all resource persons, from the State level to VRPs.
- Government officials and elected representatives need to be sensitised on the role of CSOs in social audits.
- Training of social audit resource persons should be more intensive for deeper understanding, enabling them to facilitate social audits more effectively.
- CSOs need to be oriented on the theoretical/ideological basis of transparency and accountability as a process to deepen democracy.
- Provisions for paying honorarium, reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs, and other logistics support to participating CSO representatives may be made by the SAU.

Making of a Child-Friendly Panchayat - Challenges and the Way Forward

Dr. Pratyusna Patnaik

Introduction

India has one of the largest proportions of population in the younger age groups in the world. As per Census 2011, India, with a population of 121.1 crore, has 16.45 crore children in the age group of 0-6 years and 37.24 crore in the age group of 0-14 years which, respectively, constitute 13.59 per cent and 30.76 per cent of the total population. Nearly, 48 per cent of the child population in the age group of 0-14 years are female (Census 2011, MoSPI 2018). Although the definition of a child varies according to different sources, International and Indian law has defined a child as a human being below the age of 18 years who needs care, protection and entitlement (MoWCD, 2013).

The development of a child can be measured through social, physical & cognitive developmental milestones. Children failing to develop properly may not be able to reach their full potential. India has made significant economic and social progress over the years since independence. However, a large number of children are still living in apathetic conditions. It is evident from the crime witnessed every day that children are subjected to abuse and exploitation. They are deprived of basic services and forced to drop from school and work. Trafficking of girls, child labour and forced child marriages continue to be a serious problem in India. The Constitution of India has guaranteed Fundamental Rights to all children of the country belonging to every caste, community or religion on an equal basis. To make sure that children enjoy these rights, the government has provided special laws and schemes for their protection and welfare. Further, civil society organisations have taken several efforts for the protection and development of children in rural areas. Despite the laws and provisions, we still see many children working as labourers, being deprived of education and facing violence and abuse in their families, schools and within society. Furthermore, they are also targets of religious and caste discrimination. In rural areas, children, especially girls, are engaged in household activities and are denied schooling. Keeping in view of these, it is the responsibility of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), more specifically the Gram Panchayats (GP) as the basic unit of local self-governance, to ensure the protection of the rights and development of children. The Gram Panchayats should be responsive and accountable for the better upbringing of the children to grow up as responsible citizens. The challenge and solution lies in changing the mindset, behaviour and priorities of the village community.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act has mandated the Gram Panchayats to prepare local plans for economic development and social justice, implement schemes and perform functions for 29 subjects listed in the 11th Schedule (Article 243G) of the Constitution. Point 25 in the Eleventh schedule lists 'Women and Child Development' as the subject that is now within the domain of Panchayats. This enables all schemes and programmes of government

that deal with women and child development are now the responsibility of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Thus, planning for a Child-Friendly Gram Panchayat to undertake the responsibilities and measures for the development of children within its arena has become the requirement of the local self-government.

Objectives

The broad objective of the study was to document the process and igniting factors contributing towards the Panchayat in developing the Child-Friendly Gram Panchayat. a) To illustrate the successful initiative taken by the Gram Panchayat (GP) to become a child-friendly Panchayat and document the successful initiative for scaling up and replication in other Panchayats of the country.

Methodology

Case study method was adopted for eliciting relevant information from the key informants. Besides, focus group discussions with the elected representatives, Panchayat functionaries and local citizens were carried out to bring out the successful initiatives taken up by the Gram Panchayat.

Study Area

The selected Gram Panchayat has received the National Award for Child-Friendly Gram Panchayat in the appraisal year 2018-19 for its contribution to the overall development of children. Based on different criteria, Mulastanam Panchayat of Alamuru Mandal of East Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh was selected for a detailed case study.

Findings

Owing to the proximity of the Mulastanam Panchayat to the urban space, people from different parts of the State have flooded the Panchayat for livelihood opportunities and started informal settlements in its vicinity. People in large numbers are working in brick-kiln industries and nurseries that are spread over 6000 acres in the National Highway (NH) corridor. Grabbing the opportunity, parents started encouraging their children to work to supplement the economy rather than sending them to school. Due to this process, majority of the migrant labourers' children started working in the brick-kiln industries as child labourers. This distressing process led to an increase in the dropout rate. Moreover, this escalated to child abuse, early marriage and health hazards. These circumstances in the Panchayat triggered the exploration of many developmental gaps related to children in the Panchayat.

Steps towards achieving a Child-Friendly Panchayat: Taking into account the dropout rate from school and the increasing rate of child labour, a few volunteers approached the Panchayat Secretary to intervene in the matter in the early part of 2016. The first step was taken to constitute a 'Sishu Surakhsya' (Child Protection) committee to identify the factors that push the

children for dropping out of school and work in the brick-kiln industry. The committee consisted of eight members chaired by the Sarpanch. Members from the Anganwadi centres, schools, health workers, CBOs, SHGs, and community were chosen to be part of the Child Protection Committee. Secondly, the GP framed certain guidelines to institutionalise and strengthen the framework for protection and development of children.

The Panchayat resolved to conduct 'Bal Sabha' whenever necessary. Integrating the youth of the village, women's group, health workers, teachers, ASHA & Anganwadi workers, the GP initiated the process of Bal Sabha meetings.

Information-cum-resource centre: The GP established a resource centre to disseminate information on various schemes ranging from health to unemployment and made it available to the children.

Child Information Board: The GP placed an information board to disseminate information related to higher education, scholarship, and employment opportunity.

Child Protection Committee: The GP formed a Child Protection Committee to formulate plans and programmes related to the development of children. The committee ensured periodic meetings with the stakeholders and discussed various issues pertaining to the children. It further ensured the participation of children in the decision-making of the matters related to them in the Panchayat.

Different IEC and awareness campaigns were organised by the Panchayat. The GP took the help of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) and college students to create an awareness programme. Efforts were put through several awareness drives to sensitise the parents, migrant labourers and local community, especially women, regarding the protection and development of children.

Safe drinking water and sanitation: In the GP, the schools and Anganwadi centres have been installed with safe drinking water facilities. In the schools, separate toilets for girl children have been established. In the strategic corners of the village and schools, sanitary napkin vending machines have been installed so that the adolescent girl child can avail the facilities without any hesitation. The schools organise health camps for children every month.

Health and nutrition: Iron and vitamin supplementation are provided to children and girls aged 14 years through the Anganwadi/ASHA/health workers. In the AW centres, for early childhood care and education, facilities for the growth promotion of the children are provided.

Eliminating child labour, child abuse and child marriage: Child labour was found to be very high in the studied Panchayat. However, due to the intervention of the GP, it has been reduced to a great extent. In a protective measure, Panchayat made stringent resolutions against the parents whose children worked as child labour in the brick-kiln industries. Panchayat made the door-to-door awareness drive with the help of ASHA, Anganwadi workers, health workers and SHG women. Panchayat also facilitated the parents through counselling. Cases of child abuse and child marriage in the Panchayat were resolved through the intervention of Mahila Police.

Conclusion

Panchayat, as local self-government, has an important role in providing the needed infrastructure for promoting education, health and environment for child development. It is very much necessary for the decentralised local government to monitor the activities to achieve the holistic development of children and to make the Panchayat child-friendly. A comprehensive understanding of child protection and development is not only the responsibility of the parents but also of the teachers and healthcare providers. As an institution of government, Panchayats must ensure development. The successful initiatives and holistic approach made by the Mulastanam Panchayat helped in escalating the overall development of children and preventing child labour, child abuse and child marriage. The process adopted by the GP has set an example for other Panchayats to replicate and work towards the protection and development of children by making child-friendly Gram Panchayats. The Panchayat is progressively moving towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Decentralised Service Delivery: Case Study of Nandagad Gram Panchayat in Karnataka

Dr. Pratyusna Patnaik

Introduction

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), the units of local self-government, act as the most accessible form of governance for people living in rural areas. The landmark 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1993 in India witnessed a democratic revival of local government institutions, which once conceived as the edifice of governance structure by Mahatma Gandhi. The aim of the decentralisation process is not just to transfer the power and responsibilities from centralised authority to local institutions, but to promote a governance system, where citizens at the bottom level will claim a greater stake in government by way of involving themselves in the local decision-making process. The constitutional amendment, in the Eleventh Schedule, has listed 29 subjects which may be devolved to the Panchayats. However, wide variations exist across States and UTs in the devolution of powers and functions to the Panchayats. As institutions of local government, Panchayats are responsible for the delivery of basic services to local citizens and addressing vulnerabilities of poor and marginalised sections. The Panchayats intended to improve the delivery of basic services including water supply, sanitation including sewerage and solid waste management, stormwater drainage, maintenance of community assets, maintenance of roads, footpaths, streetlights, burial and cremation grounds and other basic functions assigned to them under their basic statutes.

Objectives

- a. To depict the effective implementation of the Gram Panchayat Development planning process towards the holistic and sustainable development of the Panchayat;
- b. To illustrate the successful initiative taken by the Gram Panchayat (GP) for improved delivery of basic services.

Methodology

Case study method was adopted for eliciting relevant information from the key informants. Besides, focus group discussions with the elected representatives, Panchayat functionaries and local citizens were carried out to bring out the successful initiatives taken up by the Gram Panchayat.

Study Area

To document the case study, Nandagad Gram Panchayat of Khanapur block in Belagavi district of Karnataka was chosen as the study area.

Findings

Nandagad Panchayat is situated in Khanapur Taluk in Belagavi district of Karnataka:

- Total population of the GP is 9297 (4715 males and 4582 females)
- The social composition of the GP - Scheduled Castes (628), Scheduled Tribes (635), OBC (3255) and General caste (4779)
- The GP has taken various development initiatives in convergence with different schemes and programmes. The GP building comprises a state-of-the-art conference hall with cutting-edge communication technology to hold regular meetings.
- The proceedings of the meetings are being telecasted through a large television screen fixed outside the GP building for public viewing.
- The GP has set up CCTV cameras at strategic locations. The Panchayat staff have each been given a walkie-talkie for efficient communication among themselves.
- The GP managed to construct many infrastructural facilities such as garden, LED streetlights, digital library, pucca roads, water pipelines, and rainwater harvesting structures in the GP office.
- Rajiv Gandhi Seva Kendra, having a conference hall and separate rooms for President, Vice-president and members, was built by integrating funds from NREGA and own resources of the Panchayat.
- **Anand Jal:** The GP provides safe drinking water to all households, supplies water through pipelines and public stand posts, has RO plants and a battery-operated vehicle for providing safe drinking water to every household, and a water ATM which provides 10 litres of filtered water at the cost of one rupee;
- **Streetlight provisions in the GP:** The GP has provided streetlights with 534 LED lamp posts. Besides, there are seven high mast lighting poles on the crossroads and chowk with six LEDs bulbs per post;
- **Garden and Children's Park:** The Panchayat has built a garden at the cost of Rs. 8 lakh in convergence with MGNREGS (Rs. 5 lakh), Central Finance Grant (Rs. 2 lakh) and own source revenue of Rs. 1 lakh. Built-in an area of 6000 square metres, the garden also has a children's play area, swimming pool, green gym, and walking tracks for senior citizens;
- **Digital Library:** In the year 2018, the GP established a digital library with a cost of Rs. 3 lakh. The digital library provides free internet browsing for school children. Digital copies of more than 3500 books, school textbooks and several books for competitive exams are available in this library for citizens to access. School children have been provided basic computer training at the digital library.
- **Santhwana Scheme:** Under the scheme, the GP provides an assistance of Rs. 2500 to the family for the cremation in case of the death of family members. The GP has generated its own source revenue to provide assistance under the Santhwana scheme to the beneficiaries in the villages.

- ***Solid and Liquid Resource Management Unit:*** In 2018, the GP initiated an SLRM project under the Gram Panchayat Development Plan costing around Rs. 65 lakh. The resource envelope for the developmental work was created by converging funds from the State, Central fund, and own source revenue of the GP.

Conclusion

The Nandagad GP in Belgavi district of Karnataka portrays a successful model which can be replicated elsewhere. The different successful initiatives, including the Solid and Liquid Resource Management unit in Nandagad, depict the process of convergence, participation of the community and holistic development. The GP, by initiating the process of SLRM, created a culture of waste management among the villagers which would lead to sustainable development. This can be considered an important milestone for any such developmental work in the Panchayats. The capacity building and training activities for PRI members, use of the mass media interventions to make villagers understand the importance of sustainable use of resources, mobilising the community to participate in holistic development, and envisioning effective decentralised service delivery and planning created a successful ambience for the Nandagad Gram Panchayat. The Panchayat is progressively moving towards achieving different Sustainable Development Goals.

Strategies, Opportunities and Problems in Achieving Responsive Governance at the Grassroots during COVID-19: A Study of Selected States

Dr. R. Aruna Jayamani

Responsive Governance and COVID-19

Panchayats are vital establishments to follow and regulate the spread of COVID-19 infection in rural areas. The responsibilities of Panchayats have even expanded during this pandemic since countless workers from urban communities reverse migrated to their native villages. The emergency has positively strengthened the Gram Panchayats by expanding their role in mobilising resources, overseeing complicated assignments and shouldering responsibilities that no other institution can supplement.

Responsiveness is a core value of governance that ensures equal, participation, equal treatment and equal rights before the law. All people, including the poor, women, ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous people and other disadvantaged groups have the right to participate meaningfully in governance processes and influence decisions that affect them. It also means that grassroots institutions and its policies are accessible, accountable and responsive to its citizens, protecting their interests and providing diverse populations with equal opportunities for public services such as justice, health and education, etc.

This research analysed the strengths and weaknesses of selected Gram Panchayats in different States. Analysing and understating the patterns of development and practices of responsive governance will help to create a common 'Frame Work of Success', which is needed to sustain the approach and also for consideration for replication by other Gram Panchayats.

Objectives

1. To study the strategies of responsive governance adapted at the Gram Panchayat level to protect their citizens during COVID-19.
2. To study the practices of responsive governance in delivering basic services during critical period.
3. To study the supportive mechanism, resources and opportunities available for GPs to manage COVID-19 Situation.
4. To identify the problems encountered in maintaining transparent administration and responsive governance at the GP level.
5. To verify the link between devolution of powers and responsive role of actions.

The study was conducted in 10 States., including better-devolved States of Kerala, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Sikkim and Karnataka and lower-devolved States of Goa, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Assam and Odisha.

Major Findings and Recommendations

Strategies adopted at the Gram Panchayat level to protect their citizens during COVID-19

1. All the GPs, especially in the States of Gujarat, Karnataka and Sikkim, have installed CCTV cameras covering every region of the villages, monitored the mobility of people and instructed them to follow the COVID protocol. Gram Panchayats also ensured adequate care through appropriate decisions.
2. On the performance of Panchayats in conducting IEC activities related to COVID spread and controlling measures, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Sikkim performed better. But Kerala ranked least among the better-devolved States due to the code of conduct of State Assembly election before the start of the second wave of COVID. Even among the lower devolved States, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha and Goa were ranked better performing and Jharkhand & Assam were ranked least performing.
3. WhatsApp groups along with local volunteers, NGOs, SHGs, and other community-based organisations were utilised for information sharing. These groups were also used to check the spread of rumours and false information through social media by providing authentic sources of information.
4. Majority GPs in the study area utilised the services of trained SHG manpower for dissemination of information on the preventive measures and activities after infection and also protection of people from new faces of infection. It was evidenced by the responses of around 35 per cent as 'good' and 55.6 per cent reported as 'very good' among better devolved States. But in the case of lower devolved States, efforts to train SHGs were reported as 'very poor' by 23.2 per cent and 10.8 per cent as 'poor'.
5. Training was organised for frontline workers, health workers and COVID task force committee members. Altogether, the training performance has been appreciated by the respondents with the majority views giving positive answers as 'good' (31.8), and 'very good' (51.8). The comparative performance of both the group of States also reflects similar features, i.e. more than 85 per cent of the respondents have appreciated their GP's efforts in building the capacity of the health workers as well as frontline workers. Even though it was difficult to have physical training, online training also yielded good results in awareness creation for the general public with priority to vulnerable groups.
6. Around 97 per cent of respondents have given positive responses, which showed the formation of task forces and ranked in the order Karnataka, Maharashtra, Sikkim, Gujarat and Kerala. Similarly, among the lower devolved States, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Assam, Jharkhand and Goa are in the higher order of rank.

7. Regarding the status of Gram Panchayat's provision of immunity boosters in the sample study, around 41.2 per cent of respondents confirmed the delivery of immunity boosters to people. In terms of better-devolved States, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala and Sikkim ranked as higher-order States. Among the lower devolved States, Goa, Odisha and Assam scored higher ranks, while Jharkhand scored the lowest.
8. The majority of respondents in each State people appreciated the performance of the Gram Panchayat except Jharkhand in the creation of shelters for in-migrants and quarantine centres to isolate infected and also for suspected cases of COVID infection.
9. Mobile clinics conducted door-to-door screening and verified every member of each household with the help of community volunteers and collected swabs from symptomatic persons and their close contact.
10. Majorly Gram Panchayats supported the immunisation for infants in rural areas. GPs in Maharashtra scored better rank and took first among the better devolved States as it was supported by 96 per cent of respondents.
11. Gram Panchayat effectively served and controlled the physical movements of people by establishing a schedule for receiving essential services ward-wise. These actions of GPs were appreciated in better devolved States by 50.8 per cent of respondents rating it 'Very Good,' and 42.4 per cent rating it 'Good.'

Practices of Responsive Governance in delivering basic services during critical period

1. In Gujarat, GP service delivery was rated 'fully satisfied' by 66 per cent and 'satisfied' by 22 per cent. A similar pattern has been noticed in Kerala and Sikkim. Similarly, among the LD States, Himachal and Odisha have got more than 70 per cent fully satisfied responses and in Goa and Assam, around 70 per cent of the respondents reported 'satisfied' and around 22 and 26 per cent, respectively, reported 'fully satisfied.'
2. An extra intervention was also made by announcing a relief package under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana for the poorest of the poor and supplied an additional five kg of wheat or rice and one kg of pulses for three months. The government has announced five kilograms of foodgrains for individuals listed under the National Food Security Act, 2013, through the public distribution system.
3. The functioning of PDS system during the COVID lockdown was positively reported by 87 per cent from all 10 study States with the split of responses as fully satisfied by 44.4 per cent and satisfied by 42.8 per cent. Comparative analyses of the regulation of PDS system during the COVID period are ranked based on the weighted average score which reflects all the States listed. The better-devolved States have scored more than 4 to 4.82, which reflects the best performance. In the case of lower devolved States, Himachal Pradesh and Odisha scored 4.62 & 4.38, respectively.
4. The role and performance of the Gram Panchayats in implementing the MGNREGA for providing employment and wage to the labourers had been verified and the overall performance among 10 sample states having appreciation by 79 per cent of respondents of

the sample GPs. Out of it 34.4 per cent reported they were fully satisfied and 44.6 reported as satisfied. As in the case of better-devolved States, 91 per cent of respondents reported positively compared with lower devolved states of 66.8 per cent. The performance level was very high in the states like Karnataka, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha and Kerala. Altogether Gram Panchayat became a saviour of people during the crisis.

5. In the study states, support of in-migrant labourers for employment under GP infrastructure during the COVID lockdown was verified. Comparative analysis between LD and BD states are ranked based on the weighted average score which reflects Himachal Pradesh (4.50) Gujarat (4.44) Odisha (4.38), Maharashtra (4.10), and Sikkim (4.02) performed better in terms of employing return Migrants. GPs have managed well in accommodating migrants and extending required services.
6. Moreover, GPs also had their own financial assistance from own source revenue through the most vulnerable in the panchayat. NGOs' intervention was highly appreciated for their services in the state of Kerala. CSR-based services were appreciated in the Panchayats in the state of Himachal Pradesh. Gram Panchayat Own Scheme financial assistance to people was appreciated in the states of Sikkim and Odisha.

Supportive Mechanism, resources and opportunities available for GPs to Manage COVID - 19 Situation

1. Enforcement directions from the State government during lockdown like wearing facemasks, controlling people's mobility, regulating transport and the places of supply of essential items were properly maintained by the local police in coordination with the Gram Panchayats. The Police coordination was highly appreciated by the majority from all the states.
2. The support of local formal and informal institutions like NGOs, VOs and CBOs was unequivocal and these institutions contributed in many forms like physical contribution in coordinating the services, financial contribution in terms of aid and awareness generation in terms of organising camps. These services were highly appreciated in all sample states by the majority of respondents.
3. In addition, educational department's infrastructure available at every village was used as quarantine centres, vaccination centres, supply of essential commodities, information display centres, etc. Teachers were also involved in the coordination and advisory committees to work out local strategies for addressing the issues of COVID in the villages.
4. Proactive leadership of the sarpanch/president of the Gram Panchayat along with his team undoubtedly noted, without a proactive attitude of the sarpanch it could not able to achieve success in managing the pandemic situation. It was appreciated by the majority of the respondents on supporting their sarpanch on their involvement. It can be understood, in all the states except Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim, more than 80-90 per cent accepted the pro-active involvement of the sarpanch/president.

Problems encountered in maintaining transparent administration and responsive governance at the GP level

1. While interacting with the elected representatives and official mechanisms of the GPs, they were in a critical situation because for them everything was a problem in organising and coordinating various initiatives because of lack of understanding of the virus outbreak and the speed of spread.
2. Strengthening the GPs and their infrastructures to deliver required services based on the field situation was important and needs attention.
3. Therefore they expressed the need for adequate funds to panchayats to strengthen the infrastructures with a priority on dealing with health-related issues.
4. Non-availability of adequate manpower and fund in the panchayats was also highlighted as a major problem.
5. In a few states, they considered health system has to be brought under the control of GPs to render regular health services with close monitoring.
6. Another important problem which was raised in all states was the non-availability of official vehicles for the Panchayat which hinders mobility of approaching different institutions for collaborative actions and can be used for the public during emergencies. Less availability of OSR and untied grants also hinder the making responsive action on the problems raised in the region. It can be concluded more devolution and freedom to fund utilisation and also strengthening basic infrastructure and administrative system will be much beneficial to adopt responsive governance.

Recommendations

- **Domains of Panchayats:** Though PRIs are a three-tier integrated arrangement of the village, block and district level, they have remained largely ineffective as a consequence of ambiguous jurisdictions and unclear linkages. Even in respect of the National Disaster Management Act 2005, the powers and responsibilities of panchayats are inadequately defined and left to be determined by respective state governments.
- **Complete Autonomy:** Due to multiple limitations placed by district administrations and state governments, panchayats lack the structures, resources, and capacities to operate independently. It is the need of the hour to think and realise the role and responsibility of the GPs and enable them to make individual decisions and implement as a responsive unit of governance.
- **Permanent collaboration or joint playing with Health Department:** Understanding the immense importance of working together by the Gram Panchayat and Health Department learning from the current disastrous situation needs to carry forward for the protection of people from dissuasive attacks.
- **Institutional Strengthening:** The Gram Panchayat has been constitutionally recognised as a unit of bottom-most democracy, entrusted to take forward the change and development

with the ultimate goal of making people happy living. Therefore, the GP needed to be strengthened with adequate manpower, resources and administrative infrastructures.

- ***Devolution of Core services to Local self-government:*** Instead of becoming ‘institutions of local self-governance’, as envisaged by the constitution, panchayats mostly act as field implementers of decisions made by state and central governments. The state governments have to consider decontrol of certain core areas of subjects like agriculture, health, women and child development to local bodies with friendly monitoring systems. These are vital areas affecting rural people at any point of disturbance either from natural or man-made disasters.
- Need for Reserve Resources at GP in the form of mobilisation of contributions from individuals, organisations, philanthropists and also through Own Source of Revenue (OSR) can be encouraged and enable the GPs to create reserve funds for use in emergencies.
- ***Empowering local bodies:*** Local governance, local leaders and local communities, when empowered, respond to any disaster rapidly and effectively. This will ensure citizen-centric mapping and planning of resources.
- ***Need for Quick Response:*** The local bodies require information, guidance, resources, capacities and systems to act with confidence, without waiting for instructions from above.
- ***Shift in Disaster Management Paradigm:*** There is an urgent need for a shift from a risk mitigation cum relief-centric approach in disaster management into an integrated plan for economic development with social justice.
- Early warning systems, preparedness, preventive measures and awareness among people are as much an important part of disaster management as recovery planning, rehabilitation and other relief measures.
- ***Collective Participation:*** Conducting regular, location-specific disaster-management programmes for the community and organising platforms for sharing best practices will strengthen individual and institutional capacities.
- ***Local Institutional Collaboration:*** The joint efforts have achieved good results in controlling the coronavirus. Similar efforts with additional unification of institutions can be streamlined to deliver coordinated services to control any kind of natural disaster.

Assessing the Impact of Poshan Abhiyaan among Tribal Population in Gudur Mandal, Mahbubabad district, Telangana

Dr. Sonal Mobar Roy

Introduction

The Poshan Abhiyaan programme was launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister in 2018 as an intervention to mitigate malnutrition in the country. The programme focuses on reducing stunting, undernutrition and anaemia in women and adolescents. It is based on "Poshan ke paanch sutra," namely the first 1000 days of a child, diarrhoea management, locally available nutritious food, sanitation and hygiene and anaemia. Malnutrition poses to be a major challenge in India and more so in tribal hamlets.

Demographically, in India, there are about 940 females per 1000 males, in the population as a whole. While with 1.21 billion people, the child population represents 39 per cent of the total population (Census, 2011). Though they are the most vulnerable sections of society, the impact of susceptibility increases manifold in case they are tribals or belong to the marginalised sections of the society, such as SC, ST and OBC. With distraught conditions, including poverty, the direct impact is evident on their health. The women in the country struggle to get even the basic supplements, such as iron and folic acid, which can potentially negatively impact the health of the mother, help her during pregnancy and also in fetal development. According to National Family Health Survey (III), more than half of women in India (55 per cent) have anaemia, including 39 per cent with mild anaemia, 15 per cent with moderate anaemia and 2 per cent with severe anaemia.

It is seen that health indicators, especially those related to anaemia, malnutrition, stunting and wasting are more commonly found in tribal communities. Tribals are people living in the hinterlands, away from the mainstream population. Under Poshan Abhiyaan, an attempt has been made by the Government of India to tackle the issue of malnutrition. In this study, the researcher explores this issue in hand among three tribal communities, namely the Lambadas, Koyas and Chenchus.

Objectives

This case study would aim to suggest evidence-based recommendations, responsive to the local context and identify gap areas and key constraints that might hinder the successful implementation of the said programme. The main objectives of this case study are:

- Firstly, to see the implementation of the Poshan Abhiyaan programme in the selected Gram Panchayats in Gudur Mandal, Mahbubabad district, Telangana.
- Secondly, the study would look at the impact of the Poshan Abhiyaan on the sample populations, with Koyas, Lambadas and Chenchus and assess whether improvement concerning health indicators has taken place.

Overall, the study would see the reach and effectiveness of behaviour change communication efforts and challenges faced by frontline workers.

Methodology

Using a case study approach, it was hoped to tease out common themes around the ecosystems of tribals, especially Koyas, Lambadas and Chenchus and their various dimensions of health. The mixed-method approach was applied. Three Gram Panchayats, one with Koyas, one with Lambadas and one with Chenchus in Gudur Mandal were identified and data was collected through a semi-structured interview schedule. The ANM, ASHA and Anganwadi centre staff along with beneficiaries that included pregnant and lactating mothers and parents of children enrolled in Anganwadi Centres and a Child Development Project Officer were interviewed for covering their roles and perspectives in the implementation of Poshan Abhiyaan programme. Altogether, twelve Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) were randomly selected for the study. Verbal informed consent was obtained from respondents, and all ethical measures were taken care of while collecting the narratives. This case study examines multi-factorial determinants (personal, family, community and health services) associated with maternal and child nutrition practices in Gudur Mandal. The researcher took note of the cultural factors to analyse the impact of the programme. The indigenous culture and practices of the communities and availability of health systems were considered while assessing the impact of the scheme on the overall malnutrition situation in the tribal areas. Here, the impact was assessed on health variables collected from records available at Anganwadi centres and primary data collected through ethnographic research. Narrative analysis and content analysis were done to draw conclusions.

Study Area

For this case study, the Gudur mandal of Mahbubabad area was selected.

Findings

The key findings are listed below:

1. Data collected from the three tribal communities revealed that while Lambadas were socio-economically well-off, the Koyas and Chenchus were still very much below poverty line and had a hard time arranging for two square meals a day.
2. Regarding their livelihoods, it was observed that Lambadas have some landholdings and the men work as contractors, drivers or small-time vendors. Koyas generally depend on agriculture, working in fields. However, the Chenchus neither own any piece of land nor are interested in taking up jobs. Rather, they wish to continue their indigenous practices of singing and dancing during festivals and Jathras.
3. Poor diet intake and anaemia were more frequent in Koyas and Chenchus. Institutional delivery was now popular in all three tribes though.

4. Adolescent girls in all three tribal communities are married off even before they attain the age of eighteen leading to early pregnancy and related complications.
5. Until the beneficiaries came in touch with ASHA and ANM, they were following the traditional dietary pre and post-natal practices as per their cultural norms.
6. Literacy levels are very low in all three tribal groups. However, in comparison, Lambadas fair well, followed by Koyas and lastly Chenchus.
7. None of the beneficiaries knew the programme as Poshan Abhiyaan though they were drawing benefits for more than six months. They called it by the CM's name or "Srimanthudu Abhiyaan". However, the Koyas and Chenchus were more satisfied with the benefits drawn under the Poshan Abhiyaan as compared to those of Lambadas.
8. It was observed that all ASHA and ANM were IT-enabled and were well-trained in using tablets. They were storing and updating data on the tablets provided to them under ICDS-CAS.
9. Poshan Vatikas or Nutri- Gardens is a wonderful initiative taken under this programme and all Anganwadi Centres had been maintaining such gardens and using the fresh produce in the lunch prepared.
10. All Anganwadi Centres were functioning well as far as the following were concerned: distribution of IFA tablets, immunisation, vaccination, counselling, 100 per cent institutional delivery, house-to-house survey during COVID-19 times, etc. No cases of Severe Acute Malnutrition or SAM were reported.
11. Delay in the distribution of Take-Home Ration or THR was observed.
12. The infrastructure of many Anganwadi Centres, especially those in Chenchu hamlets, was in bad condition. Poor infrastructure soaked thatched roofs and poor storage of ration leading to the spoiling of contents; lack of electricity and LPG connection was also observed in various Anganwadi Centres.
13. Those Anganwadi Centres that did not function from their "owned" building were in severely bad condition. Some of them had been shut down and beneficiaries were merged with the closest Anganwadi Centre.
14. As for the preference for food and assessment of the quality of food provided under the Poshan Abhiyaan, the three tribal community respondents expressed desire for "natukodi chicken" and "adavi pandi", polished rice, spicy tangy curry, better quality eggs, preferably country chicken eggs, etc. They expressed that they preferred indigenous preparations that included moringa and millets which would also help in curbing anaemia.
15. The Lambadas can afford good food with fruits and vegetables included in their diet. However, Koyas and Chenchus depend on this one-time meal served at AWC more than the Lambadas.
16. Regarding education, it was observed that the young girls of Lambadas and Koyas have started going to schools and also to nearby colleges but those of the Chenchu tribe refrain from doing so as they do not appreciate the medium of instruction.

Conclusion

Through this case study, the researcher has drawn some conclusions based on narrative analysis and content analysis. Though the AWCs are functioning well, certain implementation challenges need to be addressed. One such major challenge is related to infrastructure. The infrastructure and provision of basic facilities such as availability of drinking water, toilets, storage area, Teaching and Learning Materials (TLM), mats, and gas cylinder connections at the AWCs in tribal areas need immediate attention. The delay in transferring ration from the depots to AWC and finally to the beneficiary needs to be monitored. Apart from the infrastructure that needs improvement, the ASHA and ANM need their work to be regularised and incentives are required for Supervisors to be able to meet up expenses to visit AWCs located in the interiors. The interventions proposed should be in alignment with the cultural values and ethos of the tribal communities. Awareness generation is required among tribal people regarding government interventions and the subsequent benefits they can draw from them. Overall, it is seen that the Poshan Abhiyaan has been implemented well at Gudur mandal. The study reveals that there are no cases of Severe and Acute malnourished (SAM) children and all tribal communities are drawing benefits under the programme, though differing in scale.

Policy Recommendations

The policy recommendations are hereby listed:

1. AWC should operate in owned buildings rather than on the premises of existing Primary Schools. Convergence with MGNREGA may help in the construction of buildings.
2. The Supervisors should be given the TA for travelling to interior villages/Tandas. This was discontinued in 2016.
3. Staff should be from the same tribe as that of the community in question for better communication and understanding of ethnic values.
4. Food served under the scheme should align with the local cuisine.
5. More Poshan Vatikas/Nutri-Gardens to be initiated.
6. The quality of THR needs to be improved.
7. Sanction of electricity connection and gas cylinders to newly formed centres.
8. Awareness among tribal communities to be raised regarding the age of marriage and childbirth.
9. More Nutrition Rehabilitation Centres (NRCs) to be planned.
10. Better monitoring system of delivery of rations from godowns to empty stomachs.
11. Certainly, there is a need for higher investment and greater commitment at all levels besides application in terms of design, delivery and deployment of, both human and financial resources to restore the overall growth and development of children.

Analytical and Scientific Study to Determine the Mindset and Institutional Structural Conditions of the Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat Members in Relation to Levy of Taxes under the Panchayati Raj System of Madhya Pradesh

*Shri Sanjay Kumar Rajput
Shri Kapil Kumar Rajak
Shri Jaidev Sen Gupta
MGSIRD, Adhartal, Jabalpur, MP*

Introduction

Gram Panchayats are unable to develop the expected sources of income from compulsory taxes, optional taxes, fees, etc., which restrain them from becoming financially strong. In our view, there is a need to reconsider the present legal provisions and their implementation to increase the sources of income through compulsory taxes, optional taxes, fees, etc., imposed by the Gram Panchayats. This study was completed with the involvement of Gram Sabha members, and Gram Panchayat representatives associated with the process of levying compulsory taxes, optional taxes, fees by Gram Panchayats, obstacles in the process of implementation of legal provisions and measures to overcome these obstacles.

Objectives

- To find out the perspective of Gram Panchayat officials regarding levying of tax.
- To find out the viewpoint of Gram Sabha members with respect to payment of taxes.
- Compilation and analytical study of the elements of success of taxation.
- To study the possibilities of implementing the taxation system of Municipality and Nagar Panchayat in a rural environment or becoming a model.
- To study the challenges of the division of powers and assigned duties in relation to taxation to Gram Panchayat Sarpanch and Secretary.
- To study the possibilities of determining the baseline or minimum rates in the determination of tax rates.
- Studying the possibilities of managing the financial burden of servants, agents, and agencies in the tax system structure by the Gram Panchayat through its own tax income.

Methodology

Case study, observation method, schedule, questionnaire, interview, informal conversation

Study Area

Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh was chosen as the study area. From the district, eight Gram Panchayats of Panagar District Panchayat and eight of Kundam District Panchayat, i.e. 48 villages of 16 Gram Panchayats in total, were selected.

Findings

- Gram Sabha - Gram Panchayats to increase their sources of income, the elements to be included in determining tax-related procedures and policies have been clarified.
- Obstacles coming in the way of the expected participation of Gram Sabha members and Panchayat Raj representatives in the implementation of decisions related to taxes have been identified.
- Measures to remove the root causes of obstacles in role performance have been given in the form of conclusions and suggestions.
- The findings and suggestions of the research will help refine the concept (*Vadabanchanansadh*) basis for the creation of legal, structural framework of Panchayat Raj related to taxation.

Conclusion

- Most of the Panchayats are unable to perform the role of taxation.
- No organisational structure related to taxes has been created in Panchayats.
- No planning of taxation is done in Gram Panchayats.
- The cooperation of Gram Sabha members is unavailable in Gram Sabha meetings on the issue of taxation.
- Lack of understanding of taxation subject has also been seen in the implementers.
- In most of the Panchayats, no targets related to taxes are fixed.
- No specific strategy related to taxes is made in Panchayats.
- All the taxes are not being levied in the Panchayats as per the provisions.
- In most of the Panchayats, the collection of taxes is done by the Secretaries of the Gram Panchayat. In some Gram Panchayats, market tax is collected by the agent of the Gram Panchayat. Taxes are not collected by an outside agency.
- Taxes levied by the Panchayat/Gram Sabha are not being paid on time by most taxpayers.
- Most taxpayers do not pay taxes on time voluntarily. The biggest problem in getting the amount of taxes deposited is that Gram Sabha members think about why they should pay the tax.
- Most of the Gram Sabha members believe that there is no need to pay taxes to the Gram Panchayat. Quality services or facilities are not provided by the Gram Panchayat. Gram Sabha members are not even aware of paying taxes and the amount. Gram Panchayat is

levying additional amount as tax. Lack of funds to pay taxes, not knowing the method of paying taxes, etc., are important.

- Many taxpayers lack the financial ability to pay taxes.
- Lack of work efficiency to provide service in lieu of taxes is visible among the officers/employees of Panchayats.
- In most of the Panchayats, no special arrangements have been made for the assessment of taxation.
- A year-to-year survey of properties is not done.
- There is a lack of up-to-date maintenance of property records by the Panchayats.
- There appears to be a lack of awareness among taxpayers and implementers.
- Taxpayers wish for getting services free of cost.
- The vacant residential plots which are converted from agricultural to residential lands come under the category of property. Due to lack of provision in the Act, their property tax is not recovered.
- Basic facilities are not provided in the colony being built by the coloniser in the Gram Panchayat area.
- Many commercial establishments operating in the Panchayat area generate huge amounts of garbage every day. Management of this waste poses trouble for the Gram Panchayat.
- Gram Panchayat faces difficulty in collecting tax from industries established within its limits.
- Additional grant-in-aid is given to the best Panchayats who develop their own sources of income under the Self-Taxation Scheme, which is a good step taken by the Madhya Pradesh government.

Policy Recommendations

- A separate cell related to taxation should be made for Gram Panchayats.
- Members' active involvement in tax planning at Gram Sabha meetings is required.
- There is a need to set targets at the Gram Panchayat level and make a strategy to meet these targets.
- The taxes of Gram Panchayat must be reviewed.
- The difference between the taxes prescribed in the provisions and the taxes levied by the Panchayat should be marked. A strategy should be made to bridge this gap.
- There is a need to fix the baseline or minimum rates in the Panchayat similar to determining the tax rates.
- A survey of taxpayers needs to be conducted every year.
- Services of tax collectors should be taken on a commission basis. Self-help group members can be appointed as tax collectors.

- The list of certificates issued by Panchayats has to be prepared.
- The services rendered by servants, agents or any agency for collecting tax need to be incentivised. If the Panchayat officials concerned are given incentives, they will show extra interest in tax collection works.
- The tax rates of taxes should be fixed with the consent of the Gram Sabha/taxpayers. This will make people willing to pay taxes without reluctance.
- Gram Sabha members should be associated with various income-generating activities. This will increase their means of income and they will have the ability to pay taxes.
- There is a need to appoint persons, and service provider agencies from within or outside the village to provide the service. With this, quality service can be made available to the villagers through service providers. When the taxpayers get good service, they will also pay the tax amount on time.
- Panchayats provide various services to the villagers for water supply, sanitation, etc. The fee charged for them is generally kept very low in comparison to the cost of providing the service. This imbalance of income-expenditure needs to be removed gradually.
- Rates for services provided to commercial and industrial establishments can be set higher to some extent, due to which the expenditure on domestic services can be met to some extent.
- “Monitoring Mechanism” should be made at Gram Panchayat and Janpad Panchayat levels.
- The details of taxation should be maintained in a separate register in the Panchayats.
- The accounts registered in the property tax list should be matched with the house numbers registered in the voter’s list prepared for the Gram Panchayat elections. This will help to identify the ‘missing’ taxpayers.
- Format of tax return should be prepared for each taxpayer of Gram Panchayat area. Bills should be prepared according to tax assessment and its copy should be given to the taxpayers. Taxpayers who fail to pay tax on time should be served notice and necessary action should be taken.
- Records related to the licenses and permits issued by the Panchayat need to be maintained and updated. Before the expiry of the licence or permission, a notice for renewal to the person concerned should be issued.
- Awareness campaigns, camps, publicity campaigns, training, etc., should be organised for the implementation officers and villagers on the subject of taxation.
- The Gram Panchayat should be authorised to collect the permission and development fee of the colony.
- Vacant residential plots converted from agricultural land to residential land come under the category of property. Due to lack of provision in the Act, their property tax amount is not recovered. Therefore, there is a need to make provisions in this regard.
- Dairy industry, big restaurants, dhabas, big showrooms, establishments, wedding halls,

petrol pumps, educational institutions, etc., do their activities or business within the Gram Panchayat area; in return, they do not pay any tax or fee to the Gram Panchayat. This needs to be addressed.

- Service charges should be levied for the collection and disposal of garbage from private hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, pathology labs, schools, hostels, lodges, hotels, eateries, restaurants, dhabas, barat ghars, marriage gardens, dharamshalas, community halls, etc.
- There should be a compulsion for carrying out social development activities in the Gram Panchayat under Community Social Responsibilities for business, and industrial activities.
- Various types of clearance certificates are issued by the Gram Panchayat such as electricity connection to houses, changing agricultural land to residential/commercial plots, construction works, etc. The fees for these services should be fixed at the government level.
- In the Gram Panchayat area, mobile towers and various types of publicity materials like hoardings, flex, banners, etc., are installed. Given the difficulty in collecting tax from them, the imposition of advertisement fees by the Panchayats can be considered.
- There is a need to create a local fund in the Panchayats based on contingency fund/ recurring item, in addition to various plan allocations.
- The 'Online Taxation and Management System' (Self-Taxation System) created, developed and implemented by Gwalior District Panchayat is a good effort. A similar online taxation system should be developed in rural areas.
- A taxation system of urban bodies needs to be adopted in view of the requirements of Panchayat Raj Institutions.

Assessment of Institutionalisation and Functioning of Gram Sabha and Participation of Women in Gram Sabhas

Shri Surendra Prajapati

Dr. Uma Saha

Shri Hemant Kumar

Shri Saurabh Sabhlok

MGSIRD, Adhartal, Jabalpur, MP

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi was a firm believer in the concept of decentralisation of political decision-making at the grassroots levels. He was of the view that the concentration of either economic or political power would interfere with the critical principles of participatory democracy. To check the centralisation and concentration of economic power, he suggested the establishment and empowerment of the institution of village republics which are known as “Gram Panchayats”. After Indian independence, through various committees, the Indian Government tried to give a proper structure to the Panchayati Raj in India. These are:

- Balwant Rai Mehta Committee, 1957
- K. Santhanam Committee, 1963
- Ashok Mehta Committee, 1978.
- G.V.K. Rao Committee, 1985
- L.M. Singhvi Committee, 1986

As a first step towards representative and participatory democracy, a three-tier Panchayati Raj System was granted constitutional status through the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, which came into force on 24th April 1993. This Act directed the State Legislatures to form laws that not only facilitated the establishment of Panchayats but also conferred in them such power and authority as was indispensable to make them institutions of self-government. The provisions of the Act, however, did not cover the tribal areas declared in the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution. The system of Panchayats was extended to these Scheduled Areas through the enactment of the Panchayats Extension to the Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act on 24th December 1996.

Article 15 (3) of the Constitution of India empowers the State to make special provisions for women. This constitutional mandate of India provides recognition of the fact that women in India need to be empowered socially and economically so as to ensure their full participation in social and economic matters. Madhya Pradesh has been a pioneer in framing legislation for 50 per cent women reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions and is also one of the States that has framed and implemented a Women Policy for gender mainstreaming and empowerment.

Objectives

1. To understand the institutional process of the Gram Sabhas in the selected villages.
2. Highlight the bottlenecks for Gram Sabha to function as governing institution.
3. To assess the engagement/participation of women in Gram Sabhas.

Methodology

(A) **Research Design:** The present study is based on the descriptive research design to ascertain the objectives of the study. Further bivariate analysis would help to understand the impact of background variables of the respondents on their basic knowledge of Gram Sabha, its functioning, its bottlenecks and its initiative in improving women empowerment.

(B) Universe of the Study

The universe of the present study includes 40 Gram Panchayats of Beejadandi block, Mandla district of Madhya Pradesh.

(C) Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Out of 40 Janpad Panchayats of Beejadandi block, five Panchayats comprising five villages were randomly included in this study. A total of 107 respondents were covered in the present survey.

(D) Research Questions

1. Are the Gram Sabhas institutionalised enough to function as per the provisions laid in PESA Act?
2. Why institutionalisation of Gram Sabhas is essential?
3. What are the bottlenecks/challenges of the Gram Sabha to realise its full potential as governing institution?
4. What are the blocks/gaps for women participation in Gram Sabhas?
- 5.

(E) Research Tool

The research tools for the present study included an interview schedule with both structured and unstructured questions. Besides, a checklist for qualitative assessment and observations was also provided to the investigators.

(F) Methods of Data Collection

Gram Sabhas will be attended to and examined to assess their functioning and compliance with the provisions made under the Panchayati Raj Act, 1993 and PESA Act. The observed data

will be recorded on certain indicators designed to assess the institutionalisation and functioning of Gram Sabha. One-to-one data will be collected from women, youths, senior citizens, and all vulnerable groups from the five Gram Panchayats about their understanding of the importance and knowledge of Gram Sabha.

Study Area

The Mandla district is situated in the east-central part of Madhya Pradesh. Mandla has nine Janpad Panchayats and 488 Gram Panchayats, nine Blocks, four Tehsils and 1214 villages. One of the districts with high populace of Schedule Tribes (57.23 per cent). The district lies almost entirely in the catchment of river Narmada and its tributaries. The extreme length of the district is about 133 km from north to south and the extreme breadth is 182 km from east to west. It covers a total area of 8771 sq.km. and consists of a total population of 7,79,414. Beejadandi is one of the 9 blocks positioned in Mandla district in Madhya Pradesh. Positioned in the rural part of Madhya Pradesh, it is located 57 km north of the district headquarters Mandla. As per the government records, the block number of Beejadandi is 229. The block has 137 villages and 40 Gram Panchayats, and a total of 17,332 households.

Findings and Conclusion

The Gram Sabha plays a major role in promoting democratic village development and local self-governance at the grassroots level. It is a forum where all the people of a village can attend, voice their opinions and have a say in the matters that have an effect on their life. The study shows that people are unaware of the Gram Sabha and its role and responsibilities, etc. However, there is still a lack of active participation from all members due to a number of reasons. There is also scope for a more active role of women members in the Gram Sabha. But, empowering Gram Sabha and increasing the participation of women would require efforts at the mobilisation of the village community. Further, a massive awareness generation programme needs to be taken up to inform women members of the Gram Sabha about their rights in respect of planning and implementation. Audit of development programmes with respect to control over natural resources, land records and conflict resolution has to be taken up on a massive scale.

Policy Recommendations

The major issues which emerge from the discussion in this study lead to the following recommendations:

- Gram Sabha institutions should be developed as institutions of self-governance and not treated merely as institutions of local governance.
- The required administrative structure and machinery should be provided for making Gram Sabha an effective body of local self-governance
- There is a need for awareness generation among the tribal community on the provisions

provided in PESA Act. There is a need to mobilise Gram Sabha and build their strength to deal with tribal issues.

- Government should support awareness generation among women about the schemes launched by the government for rural development.
- Training programmes should be organised for enabling locally elected women to work efficiently
- Exposure visits of Gram Panchayat should be organised to generate awareness among Gram Panchayat members about the rights and duties of the elected members.
- Training programmes should be scheduled for the members so that they can know their roles and responsibilities.
- Women should be made aware of the role of Panchayat in village development, budget preparation, resource mobilisation, organising community programmes, etc.
- Women should be made aware of the responsibilities in Panchayat Samiti, Zilla Panchayat, Zilla Parishad and other village organisations.

Socio-economic Status of the Beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin in Kundam Block, Jabalpur, MP

Shri Pankaj Rai

Dr. Uma Saha

Shri Kapil Kumar Rajak

Shri Rajesh Kumar Raidas

MGSIRD, Jabalpur, MP

Introduction

Providing shelter for the poor has been a colossal challenge for India, and the problem is more prominent in rural areas. Various international resolutions such as International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Change Rights, Vancouver Declaration on Human Resettlements, etc., have recognised adequate housing as a part of the right to an adequate standard of living. In 1985, Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) was launched to provide houses for SCs/STs and freed bonded labours and later extended to non-SC/ST families. In an effort to overhaul the programme and for accomplishing its target of 'Housing for all by 2024', IAY was restructured and transformed into Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) in April 2015 to provide a pukka house, with basic amenities like piped drinking water, electricity connection, and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) connection by the convergence of different schemes and programmes run by the government to all homeless and rural poor households living in kuccha and dilapidated houses by 2024. The scheme is aimed at providing affordable and accessible housing units to eligible beneficiaries in rural regions of India.

Objectives

- To assess the personal, social, and economic status of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin beneficiaries in the target area
- To assess the status of socio-cultural, religious sentiments, house ownership before PMAY-G & after PMAY-G
- To understand the difficulties faced by the personnel responsible for the implementation of the scheme.
- To check the respondents' awareness of the scheme
- To identify different best practices adopted in the implementation of PMAY-G

Methodology

Based on the objectives outlined for the present study, different statistical tools and techniques were used whenever necessary. The study is based on both qualitative and quantitative data. As per the need in the field, various methods were followed and different

research tools were used for the data collection. To verify the accuracy of data collection, post-interview quality control measures are strictly followed, which include editing of the questionnaire by the field executive, and logical checking by the faculty member.

The analysis of data was done using SPSS 8.0 for coding, decoding and displaying the results in tabular form. Also, MS Excel was used for presenting the information in graphical form.

Study Area

The universe of the present study is Kundam Block (CD) in Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh. Twenty villages were selected randomly from the sample frame and five beneficiaries were randomly chosen from each village. These 100 respondents were interviewed with the help of structured schedules and focus group discussions to fulfil the objectives of the study.

Findings

- The socio-economic status of the sample population can be categorised as well-developed, with the majority of respondents being female compared to males, and females making decisions on an equal footing.
- Majority of the respondents belonged to the age group of 41- 50 years and all of them were daily wage earners. The average family size is 3 to 5 members, and the majority of the sample population belonged to Scheduled Castes.
- Regarding land for construction of pucca house, most of the respondents said they own land, whereas a few responded that they procured patta from the government.
- Regarding subsidies for the construction of houses, toilet construction and water connection, the response of less than 50 per cent was 'not very satisfactory', whereas more than 80 per cent were found to have electricity and gas connections.
- During the study, respondents have mentioned difficulties in getting instalments and water connection, construction of toilets, while few cited hassles in procuring materials for construction. It has already been mentioned that the sample population consisted of daily wage earners, so it was quite difficult for them to collect the fund to overcome all these difficulties.
- PMAY-G is found to be an important scheme through which the objective of providing shelter to poor people and improving their standard of living can be achieved. It was found that the scheme was properly implemented in the research area.
- The beneficiaries who construct houses own land, hence it can be assumed that they need not purchase land for this purpose. A few of them have procured land on patta.
- To purchase the construction materials, the beneficiaries were approaching shops in their village. They need not visit the nearby cities.
- The study found that the PMAY-G scheme is reaching out to the poor and needy people even though they experienced some difficulties.

- The cross-tabulation analysis reveals that getting a house had a positive impact on people's lives, especially females and those belonging to backward classes, as it significantly improves their social status and health.

Conclusion

Shelter is one of the three basic human requirements, besides food and cloth. Even after 70 years of Independence, a large chunk of the rural population is deprived of the same.

- Most of the rural and backward population is very vulnerable when it comes to housing as most of them were living in huts or kutcha houses before the implementation of the project. Hence, in this report, an attempt has been made to understand the benefit of getting a house under PMAY-G and its impact on the beneficiaries.
- The current analysis reveals that PMAY-G housing scheme had a substantial impact on employment and income generation as well as the social and health improvements of the beneficiaries, especially the women and people belonging to backward classes and lower income groups.
- It can be concluded that PMAY-G has made a significant impact on the lives of beneficiaries in terms of the physical facilities provided and their well-being.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Monitoring of households.
- Convergence with the line departments.
- Imparting skill-related work.

A Study on Panchayat Darpan Portal with Special Emphasis on Knowledge, Awareness and Practices of the Functionaries of Jabalpur District (M.P.)

Shri Ashish Kumar Dubey

Dr. Uma Saha

Shri Raghvendra Prasad Choudhary

Shri Amit Kumar Sony

MGSIRD, Jabalpur, MP

About Panchayat Darpan Portal

The Panchayat DARPAN app is an m-Governance platform of the Panchayat and Rural Development Department of Madhya Pradesh Government. It was designed and developed by the National Information Centre (NIC), MP. This facilitates the collection and dissemination of real-time and reliable information on all aspects of governance in the Panchayati Raj and rural development sectors, such as financial transactions, e-payments, receipts, development work, civil servants, salary payments, bank statement details, etc. It made easy for the general public and residents to see the details of bank passbooks, funds received from Gram Panchayats, construction costs, etc. Working with the Gram Panchayat became easy, transparent, reliable and accountable. As part of this campaign, information about all Panchayats will also be available through digital media. To this end, the MP Panchayat Darpan Portal was launched by the Madhya Pradesh Government.

All records associated with Gram Panchayats may be visible through this portal. You could additionally see records associated with the developmental works in your village and records approximately the initiatives being run within the village also can be acquired through MP Panchayat Darpan Portal. Now you'll no longer want to go to any authorities' workplace to get any records associated with Panchayat thru this portal. You may be capable of getting essential records associated with Panchayat thru MP Panchayat Darpan Portal through the Internet sitting at home. Through this portal, you could get records associated with e-price status, task lists, and revenue slips. MP Panchayat Darpan Portal is operated through Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Madhya Pradesh.

Purpose of MP Panchayat Darpan Portal

The main purpose of the MP Panchayat Darpan Portal is to provide citizens with all information about Panchayat in Madhya Pradesh through digital media. Through this portal, you can get all the information about Gram Panchayat, District Panchayat, etc., from your home. This portal saves both time and money and makes the system more transparent. You can also get information about village development from the MP Panchayat Darpan Portal.

Objectives

The overall objective of the present study focuses on Panchayat Darpan Portal with special emphasis on knowledge, awareness and practices of the functionaries of Jabalpur district in MP. Although, the specific objectives are as follows:

- To understand the basic demographic parameters of the PDP functionaries
- To understand the infrastructural facilities available for the smooth functioning of the Panchayat Darpan Portal
- To assess the extent of awareness and knowledge of the functionaries of the Panchayat Darpan Portal
- To find the differences in infrastructural facilities of the seven Janpad Panchayats of Jabalpur district and asses the level of satisfaction
- To understand the ways of improvement of the portal as suggested by the functionaries.

Methodology

- For the purpose of research, 15 Gram Panchayats were selected and from each block primary data was collected from 105 (7x15) Gram Panchayats of seven development blocks of Jabalpur district.
- Data was collected through questionnaire.
- Gram Sachiv and Gram Rojgar Sahayak, the working functionaries in the field, filled out the questionnaires.

Study Area

The area of the study is Jabalpur district which has seven development blocks, namely Jabalpur (Bargi), Kundam, Majholi, Panagar, Patan, Shahpura, and Sihora.



Figure 1: Map of the Study Area

Findings

- It is found that the maximum number of people joined from 2011 to 2020 to familiarise with the portal. All those who assist in the work being members of Gram Panchayat, they are supposed to be familiar with the digital governance. The government need to provide them training at regular intervals in order to help them upgrade their skills and familiarise with the digitalised system.
- Under this study, maximum responses were received from the graduate level respondents, which shows that they have an active role in the performance of activities related to Gram Sabha in the respective Panchayat.
- Technical qualification of the respondents was also given due importance and it was found that a maximum of them completed PGDCA. The technical qualification was enquired about because one should have command over understanding the technicalities of computer proficiencies to work on Panchayat Darpan.
- During the study, it was found that maximum responses were received from the respondents in the age group of 31-40 years. This shows that the responses were not merely given, and it carried the weightage of maturity and experience.
- e- Bhawan is considered as a platform for Panchayat representatives to connect with the rest of the world. E-Bhawan came into existence after the MoU between CSC E-Governance Services Limited & Ministry of Panchayati Raj. So, in this study, an enquiry into the availability of the platform was made and it was found that e-Bhawan is available in most of the Panchayats.
- It was found during the study that electricity and computers are available in e-Bhawan but there is no power back facility, which can be a hindrance to its proper functioning. The availability of UPS helps in saving data during power cuts.
- Gram Sachiv and Gram Rojgar are available to monitor the proper functioning of the system in the e-Bhawan and they have adequate knowledge about the working of the Panchayat Darpan portal.
- The members said they require training even though few are well acquainted with the digital format of Panchayat Darpan. They know how to login into the portal, and open the portal via browsers. etc. It was also found they are unaware of all the modules of the portal.
- They have a proper understanding of the EPO system; they said that EPO can be sanctioned by the Panchayat Darpan portal.
- They are aware of Digital Signature Certificate (DSC); but for DSC, JAVA does not support all browsers.

Conclusion

- The present study narrated the extent of the functionaries' knowledge about the Panchayat Darpan Portal and how they utilise it.
- It depicts the availability of infrastructural facilities required for the smooth functioning of

the Panchayat Darpan Portal and also proposes ways for its improvement based on the suggestions made by the functionaries.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion with the respondents and observations on the functioning of the Panchayat Darpan portal, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Proper Training:** During the discussion with Panchayat Sachiv and Rojgar Sahayak, the most common suggestion made by most of the respondents was the requirement of proper training on the functioning of various modules of the portal, especially when there are software updates. There was also a suggestion to prepare a manual so that Panchayats can use it as a reference guide in case of any difficulties.
2. **Clarity on financial aspects:** The respondents needed clarity in certain financial aspects like head-wise display of expenses and income and transfer of amounts along with the dates of the transactions displayed, auto-generation of cash book, tax receipts, updating of passbook, etc.
3. **Technical Issues:** Sometimes the functioning of the portal is affected due to technical issues pertaining to the browser and Java settings, errors while scanning the bills and vouchers, generation of one-time password (OTP), server speed, etc. Such issues need to be sorted out or a helpline should be provided for resolving it.
4. **Functional Aspects:** Apart from the above recommendations, 9 per cent of respondents had no computer, 15 per cent have no electricity, 77 per cent have no backup options, 40 per cent have no UPS, 59 per cent have no internet, 9 per cent were unaware of Panchayat Darpan Portal, 52 per cent were not trained, 16 per cent had no knowledge of Login and Password, and 65 per cent are unaware of modules in Panchayat Darpan portal. The competent authorities have to take serious note of the above-cited problems and come up with provisions to rectify the shortcomings. Some other problems identified in the functional area are regarding the printing of bills of Nal-Jal Yojana, non-display of property tax amount and balance, and editing of tax amount in the module. These functional issues are needed to be sorted out at the State level.

The Role of MGNREGA Scheme in Curbing Migration of Labourers from Rural Areas of Seoni & Mandla (MP)

Shri Neelesh Kumar Rai

Dr. Uma Saha

Shri Jaydev Sengupta

Shri Amit Kumar Sony

MGSIRD, Jabalpur, MP

Introduction

The service-led growth progress witnessed in India for several decades reveals that the pattern of income generation has changed considerably away from agriculture in favour of the services sector. Yet, agriculture and allied sectors continue to employ close to half of the labour force. While the open unemployment rate is not high, underemployment has prevailed extensively. In order to spread the benefits of the growth process widely, several measures aimed at the generation of employment opportunities for the rural poor and vulnerable groups have been adopted by the government. Named differently under different regimes, these programmes have primarily aimed at providing the rural poor with wage employment opportunities through community works. The programmes went through a paradigm shift in early 2006 with the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA or renamed later as MGNREGA after Mahatma Gandhi), having several legally binding provisions, including a guarantee of up to 100 days of work a year on demand to every rural household willing to do unskilled manual work. Covering 685 districts across the country, the programme generated 235.76 million man-days for 7.67 million people in the financial year 2016-17. More recently, Natural Resource Management (NRM) has been a key component of the MGNREGA, which aims to promote sustainable livelihoods for the poor. Approximately 60 per cent of spending was allocated to the creation of natural resource assets (community and individual assets) in the financial year 2016-17. Although some valuation studies have been conducted on the issues such as the scale of employment demand, wage income generation, social protection and safety net aspects of MGNREGA, the impact of recent emphasis on the NRM component has not yet received sufficient attention from the research community.

Objectives

- To study the awareness level of villagers about the provisions of MGNREGA
- To study the role of MGNREGA in curbing the migration
- To study the measures taken by the government to curb the migration

Methodology

The study will be conducted in the areas of Bijadandi Block in Mandala district and Lakhnadon Block of Seoni district, which are tribal-dominated areas with high levels of poverty and backwardness. Monsoon-dependent agriculture is the main occupation in both areas. The labour class from these areas migrates to the nearest districts for agricultural labour and other work and they return to villages at the time of harvesting. In the present study, temporary migration is defined as the movement for a short period with the intention of returning to the place of usual residence. A great portion of the temporary migrants consists of seasonal migrants, who move for farm or non-farm labour work to several places as per the requirement of the season and then return to the place of origin (Keshri & Bhagat, 2012).

Study Area

Due to lack of time and resources, it was not possible to cover all the labourers in Mandala and Seoni districts. Hence, for the study, the Bijadandi and Lakhnadon Blocks were selected. From these blocks, 10 Gram Panchayats will be covered, and from each Panchayat, 25 respondents from registered families with the Gram Panchayats who worked for a minimum of 80 days in a financial year will be interviewed. Therefore, from both blocks 250 respondents will be interviewed, thereby covering 500 respondents to study the temporary migration.

Findings

- The beneficiaries of the study area were found to be knowledgeable about MGNREGS.
- They know about the least number of days of employment offered under the scheme.
- The equality in the distribution of wages among the men and women of the study area shows a positive sign of non-discrimination.
- The population of the study area has considered MGNREGA as an appropriate measure to control the migration of rural people.
- The study revealed that the scheme helped to better the economic status of the people in the area as they get the job as per their skill and payment was also made on time.
- The people of Seoni & Mandla know other employment schemes apart from MGNREGA.
- The standard of living in the area was enhanced due to the effect of the MGNREGS. The beneficiaries even mentioned some of its sub-schemes such as *Mer Bandhan*, SBM - Construction of toilets, *Kapil Dhara Coupe/well*, *Med Bandhan*, *Khet Talab*, *Nandan Faludan*, land reclamation work, farm pond construction, etc.
- They gave a few suggestions like increase in the number of days of working days, wage hike, work throughout the year, no education break & separate job cards for all.

Conclusion

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 was framed with the objective of providing proper employment and enhancing the standard of living of the rural people, by providing at least 100 days of work with guaranteed wages to every rural adult labour. It was enacted on 7th September 2005 and was implemented in 52 districts, 313 Blocks & 22,777 Gram Panchayats of Madhya Pradesh. In 2015, Madhya Pradesh won the 10th National Award for excellent work in MGNREGA. It aims to work on achieving the right to work in Madhya Pradesh as per an article published by the Government of India on 3rd February 2021, so it can be said that the State has performed well on this employment scheme.

Policy Recommendations:

The following are the measures to be undertaken to improve the scheme:

- Training of functionaries
- Regular monitoring
- Strategic issues
- Regulation of job cards offences
- Participation of women
- Technical assistance to Rojgar Sevak
- Payment of unemployment allowance

A Study of the Impact of Complete Digitalisation of MNREGA with Reference to Jabalpur (Bargi - Rural) & Kundam Block of Jabalpur District

Shri Jay Kumar Shrivastava

Dr. Uma Saha

Shri Jaydev Sengupta

Shri Amit Kumar Soni

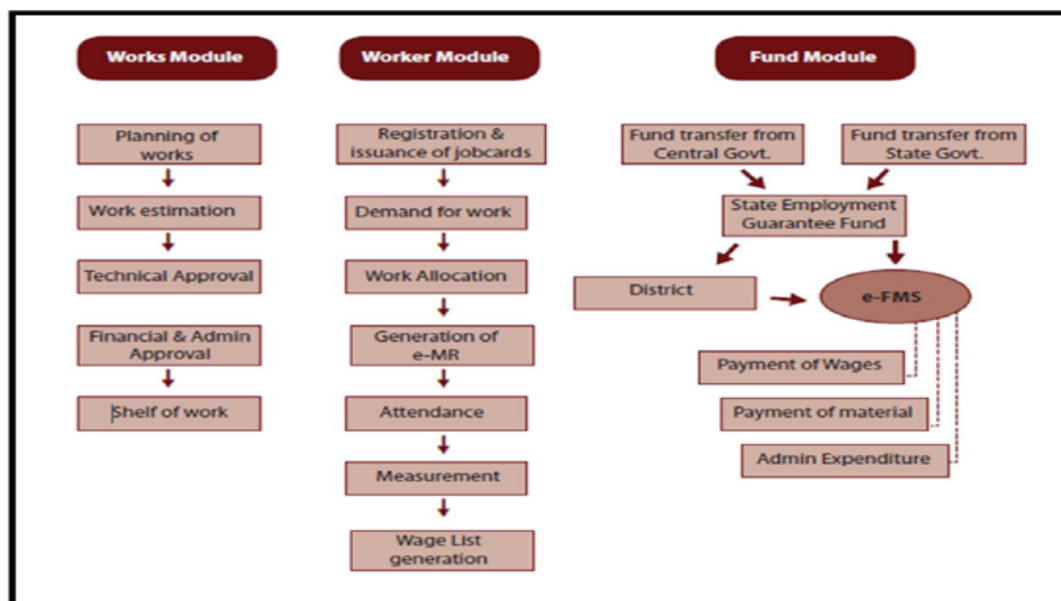
MGSIRD, Jabalpur, MP

MGNREGA SCHEME:

India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) is the country's largest workfare scheme. Started in 2006, it provides a legal guarantee of 100 days of employment in public works per year to members of rural households who demand it. Based on the principle of non-excludability of the right to work, NREGA has yielded positive effects on income generation for below poverty line households, whose members are guaranteed minimum-wage work towards the improvement of local infrastructure. The programme also has significant effects on labour markets, through wage increases and reduction of distress migration to urban areas.

MGNREGA MIS:

The online **Management Information System (MIS)** of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is one of the most impressive initiatives of the Central government to bring transparency. Details of all job cards, muster rolls and wage and material payments can be found on the MIS. A graphic representation of the core modules is as below:



Objectives

- The study aims to analyse the positive and negative impacts of the digitalisation of the MGNREGA, the users, Government servants, Public representatives and beneficiaries.
- It tries to find out problems with the computerisation and issues which can be improved upon to make it more effective.
- The study also aims to find the effects of digitalisation of MGNREGA on Productivity, Authenticity of data, Monitoring and Transparency.

Methodology

Different tools and techniques will be used in the research which includes the collection of primary data through

- Personal interviews
- Observation and collection of secondary data through baseline reports, articles and literature.
- Personal survey with the help of questionnaire and responses will be analysed by using appropriate statistical tools.

Study Area

The research area of the study is two Blocks - Jabalpur-Bargi and Kundam - in Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh.

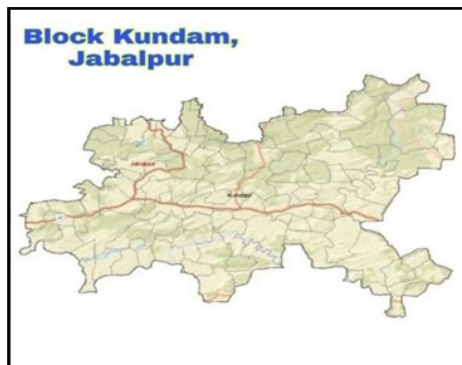
About Bargi

Bargi is situated in Jabalpur Block of Jabalpur district in Madhya Pradesh. Located in an urban region, it is one of the five towns of Jabalpur Block. According to the government records, the town number of Bargi is 490024 and it has 1661 houses.



About Kundam Block

Kundam Block is located in an urban region and, it is one of the 7 blocks of Jabalpur district. According to the administration records, the block number of Kundam is 215. The block has 180 villages and there are a total of 28716 houses in this Block.



Findings

- The opinion of the respondents regarding the digitalisation of MGNREGA was found to be satisfactory; only five respondents were neutral towards it.
- When asked about the speed of the portal, most of them said it was normal while 10 per cent said the speed was not enough.
- When enquired about problems related to payment under MGNREGA, the sample population cited technical issues and problems related to fund transfer in MGNREGA.
- Regarding collection of data and information through questionnaire, they dismissed any problem in operating through geo-tracking under MGNREGA.
- MGNREGA has been launched with a view to generating a source of earnings among the rural people. Digitalisation has resulted as value added feature of MGNREGA.
- It becomes easy to transfer funds through electronic mode to their respective account. The only problem found during the study was the expiry of session during fund transfer.
- When asked about muster for wage payment under MGNREGA, they said sometimes job card is not shown in the MGNREGA portal.
- At times, they find it difficult to upload job completion documents, prepare staff payment sheets and make wage list.
- The main problems with respect to clearing rejections were lack of proper files, filing of FTO cases by beneficiaries and Aadhaar card linking.
- Panchayat-level staff was found 100 per cent competent in handling MIS-related work, whereas the Gram Rojgar Sahayak was found knowledgeable for data entry work.
- Training sessions were organised for new applicants in the MGNREGA portal.

Conclusion

- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005 is a shining example of a radical and rational systemic change. The Act is radical because it transferred power to the poorest of the poor and enabled them to escape hunger and deprivation. It is rational because it puts money directly in the hands of those who need it the most. The idea was simple - any citizen in rural India now has the legal right to demand work and be guaranteed 100 days of work with minimum wages provided by the government. And, it proved its worth very quickly as a grassroots, demand-driven, right-to-work programme, unprecedented in its scale and architecture, and focused on poverty alleviation. Millions have been saved from hunger and worse situations in the 15 years since its inception.
- Based on the analysis of data from the respective study, it can be said that the sample population of the study area have sufficient knowledge about the Act. Kundam & Bargi blocks were covered by asking questions to the residents about the scheme and they responded positively. It was found that they have full knowledge of the wage rates paid to them, number of working days, sub-schemes of MGNREGA, eligibility criteria to be a part of

this scheme, etc. The sample population was found beneficiaries of the scheme and they suggested measures for improving it.

- The sample population was found satisfactory with the digitalisation in MGNREGA scheme and has even suggested corrective measures to improve the same. They were found slightly discontented over technical issues and problems related to the portal.

Policy Recommendations

- Along with the digitalisation of the sub-processes, the information generated must be entered on the MGNREGA website and processed as a "report" generated by the 'MIS'.
- Every bit of data associated with every rupee spent on every work project must be scrutinised through the website - opening the entire programme to strict public scrutiny and control.
- Unemployment benefit data could be compiled easily, but the facility is not available; currently, data per Gram Panchayat is only available .
- The site, which many of us call the "gold standard" for displaying information, is rich in content. However, due to poor presentation and organisation, it is really difficult for an average person to extract the required information. So knowledge of using the computer and a basic understanding of websites are required.
- Digital India needs to be redesigned from the point of view of the working class and ordinary citizens, not only in MGNREGA but also in all other programmes the government runs on behalf of the people of this country. It's not about ability - it's about intention.
- Other measures could also be taken such as government-run information and operations centres, where people can go to ask for help to find required documents. There should also be digital platforms that can be transparently reviewed and consulted, consistent with the disclosures required under the Right to Information Act.
- The government has started a mobile monitoring system (MMS) for better implementation and monitoring of MGNREGA works. The pilot project should cover Gram Panchayats and the amount should be allocated for the same.

Analysis of Implementation & Best Practices of NRLM: A Case Study of Kalahandi District of Odisha

*Dr. Sanjit Kumar Swain,
(Faculty Member, ETC, Kalahandi, Odisha)
Shri Amresh Jally*

Introduction

The programmes of Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India that directly target poor families for the creation of assets and self-employment started with Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP) in the year 1980. A major reform took place in 1999 when IRDP was transformed into Self-Help Groups (SHGs), which became the cornerstone of the new strategy. In the States, there is now widespread acceptance of the need for the poor to be organised into SHGs, as a prerequisite for their poverty reduction. Close to 2.5 crore rural BPL households have been organised and brought into the SHG network.

A systematic review of Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) has brought into focus certain shortcomings like vast regional variations in the mobilisation of rural poor, insufficient capacity building of beneficiaries, insufficient investments for building community institutions, and weak linkages with banks leading to low credit mobilisation and low repeat financing. Several States have not been able to fully utilise the funds received under SGSY. The absence of aggregate institutions of the poor, such as the SHG federations, precluded the poor from accessing higher-order support services for productivity enhancement, marketing linkage, risk management, etc. Several evaluation studies have shown that the SGSY scheme has been relatively successful in alleviating rural poverty wherever systematic mobilisation of the poor into SHGs and their capacity building and skill development has been taken up in a process-intensive manner. In other places, the impact has not been significant to that extent.

The magnitude of the unfinished task is enormous. Out of the estimated 7 crore rural BPL households (2010 projections of BPL households), 4.5 crore households need to be organised into SHGs. Even the existing SHGs need further strengthening and greater financial support. It was in this context the Government approved the restructuring of SGSY as the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), to be implemented in a mission mode across the country.

NRLM's mandate is to reach out to all poor families, link them to sustainable livelihood opportunities and nurture them till they come out of poverty and enjoy a decent quality of life. Towards this, NRLM puts in place dedicated and sensitive support structures at various levels. These structures work towards unleashing the innate potential of the poor and complement it with capacities to deal with the external environment, enable access to finance and other resources, and with their own institutions play the roles of initiating the processes of organising them in the beginning, providing the livelihoods services and sustaining the livelihoods outcomes subsequently. The support structures need to work with the unemployed rural poor youth for skilling and providing employment either in jobs, mostly in high-growth sectors, or in remunerative self-employment and micro-enterprises.

The National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) is a Centrally sponsored programme launched in June 2011, after restructuring Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY). The Mission is implemented by the Rural Livelihood Division of the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India (GoI) with the support of the State Rural Livelihoods Missions (SRLMs). The Mission has since been renamed as 'Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana' (DAY-NRLM).

The Mission aims to "reduce poverty through promotion of diversified and gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities resulting in an appreciable increase in incomes of the rural poor on a sustainable basis." The Mission seeks to adopt a strategy of promoting and strengthening community institutions, which in turn, are expected to mediate the livelihoods of the rural poor.

The DAY-NRLM seeks to reach out to all poor households in a phased manner and impact their livelihoods significantly by 2022-23. More specifically, the mandate of DAY-NRLM is to impact 70 to 80 million poor rural households spread across more than 647 districts, 6,559 Blocks, 2,38,000 Gram Panchayat and about 6,40,000 villages across 28 States and seven Union Territories.

In Odisha, a research study 'Analysis of implementation and best practices of National Rural Livelihoods Mission in Kalahandi district of Odisha' has been undertaken. The proposed study is related to the livelihood facility of the beneficiary households and the execution of NRLM in Kalahandi district of Odisha. Our study may through some light on the problems, issues, constraints and limitations. Also, the study may help us in the formulation of better programmes and the implementation of such programmes in future.

Objectives

- To study the implementation procedure of NRLM by the District/State.
- To find out the socio-economic conditions of the beneficiaries assisted under NRLM.
- To assess the bank credit and other financial, technical and marketing services of the beneficiaries.
- To assess how NRLM would look at the entire portfolio of livelihoods of each poor household and work towards stabilising and enhancing the existing livelihoods and alternative livelihoods.

Methodology

In this study, the data will be collected from two sources - Primary data through interview method with the help of well-structured schedules and secondary data from the published and unpublished literature, viz. official records of the GP office, Block office, Government publications and annual reports of State Project Management Unit (SPMU) and District Project Management Unit (DPMU).

A three-stage design is adopted for the study with the first stage as the Gram Panchayat Level Federation (GPLF), the second stage as the SHG and the third stage as the Members of

SHG. Forty SHGs (i.e. 10 SHGs in each block) were selected in four intensive blocks, i.e. Bhawanipatna, Jaipatna, Kesinga and Th. Rampur block of Kalahandi district. Four out of 36 GPLFs of Bhawanipatna, 5 GPLFs out of 22 GPLFs of Jaipatna, 4 GPLFs out of 26 GPLFs of Kesinga, and 3 GPLFs out of 24 GPLFs of Th. Rampur blocks were selected as shown in Table 1.

By using random sampling method, we selected 418 SHG beneficiaries of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) from the years 2016-17 to 2019-2020 to conduct focus group discussions and discuss the strategies adopted to enhance their livelihoods under NRLM.

Table 1: Distribution of the Number of Sample Respondents Covered Under NRLM during 2016-2020 in Kalahandi District

S. No.	Name of Blocks Selected	No. of sample GPLFs selected	No. of sample SHGs selected	No. of sample Beneficiaries
1	Bhawanipatna	4	10	109
2	Kesinga	4	10	102
3	Jaipatna	5	10	102
4	Th.Rampur	3	10	105
	Total	16	40	418

Study Area

Efforts were made to study the impact of various schemes as well as the shortfalls in the implementation. The present study contemplates supplementing the implementation and best practices of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) to bring about livelihood support to the rural poor. To begin with, Kalahandi district of Odisha is chosen as the study area. In Kalahandi district 1,55,582 households, in Odisha 41.5 lakh households, and in India, 707.7 lakh households are mobilised into SHGs as on 25th July 2020. Since 2016-17, intensive implementation of the scheme has been reported in a total of 254 GPs in 10 blocks of Kalahandi district. Of the 7802 SHGs, 40 groups covering 418 beneficiaries were selected from four intensive blocks, i.e. Bhawanipatna, Jaipatna, Kesinga and Th. Rampur.

Findings

The major observations and findings of the study are as follows:

- A higher percentage of the respondents (50.24 per cent) belong to OC, 28.95 per cent to ST and 20.81 per cent to SC categories in the selected respondents of NRLM. The highest percentage of OCs, SCs & STs has been covered in the blocks like Bhawanipatna, Th.Rampur & Jaipatna, i.e. 75.23 per cent, 32.33 per cent & 44.12 per cent, respectively.
- The distribution of the respondents in four blocks indicates that the majority were in the age group of 33-47 years (47.85 per cent), and in the age group of 48-62 years (27.85 per

cent) of the total respondents. Block-wise analysis indicates that in the case of Bhawanipatna, 29.36 per cent of the respondents belong to the younger age group of 18-32 years. Whereas in Kesinga, the respondents were mostly from the elderly age group with 12.75 per cent falling in the age group of 62 years and above.

- The study reveals that 100 per cent of respondents were females.
- The average family size of the NRLM beneficiaries of the district is 4.03 per cent.
- Regarding the educational status of respondents, 35.41 per cent were illiterate and 64.59 per cent were literate. The literate percentage is as such capable of reading & writing, i.e. 33.73 per cent have education up to primary level, 10.77 per cent have education up to middle school level, 14.35 per cent have education up to matric level and only 5.74 per cent have education up to plus two and above.
- The occupational distribution of the respondents has been examined, and most of the respondents were non-agricultural labourers, i.e. 37.5 per cent. Farmers and agricultural labourers were 23.0 & 15.0 per cent, respectively, whereas the traders & artisans represented 5.5 & 5.5 per cent, respectively.
- In the sample population, 58.85 per cent of respondents were landless and 41.15 per cent of respondents were landholders among the NRLM respondents. The number of landless respondents was highest in Kesinga (75.5 per cent) & Th.Rampur (58.0 per cent). Also, the landholder respondents in Bhawanipatna & Jaipatna, i.e. 51.4 & 46.1 per cent, respectively, were reported to have owned marginal agricultural land.
- It is observed that 65.3 per cent of the respondents of the sample population reported having pucca houses and 34.7 per cent possessing kutcha houses. The highest number of respondents reported having pucca houses were in Kesinga & Th.Rampur, i.e. 76.4 & 71.4 per cent, respectively.
- For drinking water, majority of the respondents (68.9 per cent) of the sample population were depending on tube well whereas 28.2 per cent on pipe water and 2.0 per cent on well. The highest, i.e. 47.7 per cent of respondents in Bhawanipatna & 27.6 per cent in Th.Rampur, were using pipe water.
- In this study, 79.66 per cent of respondents constructed toilets under Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) whereas 20.34 per cent did not construct toilets. In the case of Bhawanipatna, Kesinga and Th.Rampur blocks, 91.7, 89.2 & 84.75 per cent of the respondents constructed toilets, respectively.
- As per the investigation, 45 per cent of the respondents received better benefits from NRLM and they have increased annual income of above Rs. 40,000 per household.
- However, 26.8 per cent of the respondents marginally benefited from the scheme. Their annual income level ranges between Rs. 30,000 and Rs. 39,999. Also, 28.2 per cent of the respondents slightly benefited from the scheme.
- Regarding the capacity building of respondents, all were found to be receiving both thematic and skill development training on different subjects of NRLM.

- The study also reveals that loan and revolving funds were sanctioned and disbursed to the respondents for different alternative livelihood activities like cultivation of mushroom, vegetables, paddy and maize, fish farming, Badi pampad, Chhatua making, tent house, dairying, goat farming, etc.

Conclusion

In the survey, it has been observed that many group members have received benefits and their income levels have increased. Out of 418 respondents, 188 (45.0 per cent) crossed the poverty line, and 230 (55.0 per cent) improved their income level to some extent, which shows that the programme has a positive impact on the respondents. It is observed that the standard of living of the respondents, such as consumption of food, clothing, education, health and entertainment, etc., has improved. It shows that NRLM has made an impact in developing their social awareness and living conditions.

Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for better implementation of NRLM:

- All the members of SHG, elected representatives and officials should be trained at the time of inception of the scheme.
- There is a need to plan for convergence with other development programmes which will help in income-generation of SHG members.
- Activities under the scheme should be selected by keeping in view the local needs and maximum utilisation of local resources, subject to the inclination, managerial capabilities and skill of the SHG members.
- As per the needs and choice of beneficiaries, adequate e-training on skill up-gradation, maintenance of records & bank correspondence, etc.
- Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
- Technology options in the areas of processing, value addition, packaging, cost-effectiveness and drudgery reduction in respect of the identified activities should be explored.
- Empowerment of women enhances the quality of human resources available for development.
- Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.
- Livelihood activities to be included in Gram Panchayat Development Plan.
- Strong marketing support makes SHGs' income-generating activities viable and sustainable. The groups may also make advantage of various Government Line departments for marketing the products of SHGs.



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National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj

Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India

Rajendranagar, Hyderabad - 500 030, India

www.nirdpr.org.in