

# RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

## 2022-23



**National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj**  
Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India  
Rajendranagar, Hyderabad - 500 030, India

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Website: [www.nirdpr.org.in](http://www.nirdpr.org.in)

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सत्यमेव जयते

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महानिदेशक

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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 about the requirements of 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 Panchayati Raj, Rural Health, Rural Infrastructure, Rural Livelihoods, Social Development, CSR Initiatives, Education, Employment, Farmer Producer Organisations (Agriculture Sector), Good Governance, Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, Migration of Rural Labour, MKSP, NRLM Training, NSAP, etc. The findings of these studies will be useful for the policy makers, academicians and rural development functionaries to understand the ground realities.

Hyderabad  
August, 2023

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



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## **AN ANALYSIS OF THE ECOSYSTEM OF FARMER PRODUCER ORGANISATIONS (FPOs) OF THE NORTH-EASTERN REGION OF INDIA**

**Dr Ratna Bhuyan**

**Ms Prarthana Arandhara**

**Dr R. Ao**

**Er P. P. Bhattacharjee**

**Dr Surjit Vikraman**

### **Introduction**

India has a population of 93 million farmers; among them, 86 per cent are small and marginal holders, who play a more than significant role in the food and nutrition security equation of the country. Thus, sustainable agricultural growth and food security of the nation are built upon the well-being of small and marginal farmers of the country. As many as 11 of the SDGs can be supported by bolstering the welfare of these small and marginal holders, viz. SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger), SDG 4 (Quality education), SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy), SDG 13 (Climate action), etc., as discussed by many recent studies. The agriculture sector of India, which continues to be pivotal to sustainable growth and development, has been recently mobilising farmers into member-owned producer organisations. These producer organisations, which are geared towards enhancing production, productivity and profitability of the member producers, especially the small and marginal farmers, have been brought in for improved transparency and access to the input and output market relations. As in other regions of India, the eight states of the North Eastern Region (NER) have come up with many FPOs in the agriculture sector in order to facilitate the small and marginal farmers of assured markets for their produce. These FPOs are mostly single commodity FPOs producing vegetables like potatoes, garlic, pumpkin, tomatoes and Naga chillies, fruits like oranges, pineapples and banana, and flowers like marigold. Unlike the single commodity FPOs, a few other FPOs are into more than one vegetable or spice or are concentrating on variegated vegetables together with other products like honey. Promoted by organisations like the SFAC and NABARD, departments like the Department of Horticulture and Department of Food Processing under schemes like Rashtriya Krishi Vikash Yojana (RKVY) and Mission Organic Value Chain Development (MOVCD), the FPOs, which are mostly registered in the FY 2015-16, are at the nascent stage of their operations with shareholder membership ranging from more than 500 to over 1000 farmers. The FPOs are spread across the different districts of the States (NABARD, 2018). With distinctive features, the FPOs in the region are also laden with challenges. Though these FPOs are taking up

business operations, it is found that they require support in technical handholding and provision of adequate capital and infrastructure facilities, including market linkages for sustaining their business operations. Further, attempts are yet to be made to carry out a quantitative assessment of the performance of the FPOs in the region. As sustainability of the FPOs is key to the empowerment of the farmers, especially for the holistic integration of market forces, understanding the performance of FPOs can also help in the promotion of FPOs in a more focussed manner. Being a recent initiative, a search of available literature on FPOs in NER brings to the fore that no study has been so far taken up with respect to depicting or analysing the ecosystem of the FPOs in the region. Further, attempts at quantitative assessment of the performance of the FPOs in the region are also lacking. As there are no specific tools and indicators to assess the performance of the FPOs in the context of the ecosystem governing them in the region, the present study tries to address these gaps.

### **Objectives**

The study has been carried out with the objectives to – (a) Look into and assess the functioning of the FPOs in terms of their ecosystem across the eight states of NER, (b) Explore the challenges of the FPOs in the region, (c) Analyse the performance of the FPOs in the region, and (d) Provide a framework to inform future policymaking targeted at empowerment of small and marginal farmers in the NER through the FPO movement.

### **Methodology**

Given the list of FPOs with the Department concerned, the study follows the uni-stage sampling technique. Depending on the availability, 15 per cent of the FPOs or a minimum of one FPO listed under the different FPO promoting organisations in each state, and which have registered prior to the year 2019, is covered in the study.

The study mostly uses primary information. Both qualitative and quantitative data have been collected for the study. To collect the primary data, an interview schedule with both close and open-ended questions has been developed at the FPO level. The study also draws an open-ended schedule for Focus Group Discussions (FGD) conducted among the member farmers of the producer organisations as an approach to generate qualitative data. To compare the performances of different FPOs across the region, the study has come up with a composite performance index. The index identifies the performance of the FPOs across different dimensions. Each dimension is composed of a set of indicators. The variables influencing the awareness of any organisation are typically believed to have a significant impact on its performance (Mabe et al., 2021; Susanto et al., 2018). A comprehensive evaluation of the effects of awareness on the various dimensions

of an FPO system is attempted by creating an awareness index (AI). Based on responses received during field investigation, seven (7) awareness depicting dimensions are identified for coming up with the AI. It is deemed that the awareness factor always has a role to play in determining the performance dimensions. As envisaged, to assess the influence of FPO Awareness on performance factors, correlation analysis is carried out between AI and PI representing the extent of different dimensions affecting the ecosystem support of the FPOs in the region. A priority ranking of challenges faced by the FPOs across the eight states of NER is attempted. Sixteen critical challenge areas are derived from the responses of the FPOs and converted into priority scores with the high-priority challenge areas getting a score of one and the lowest-priority challenge areas getting a score of 16.

### **Study Area**

The study area comprises all the eight states of the North Eastern Region of India, viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. A total of 25 FPOs from the eight states of the region form the sample size of the study, subject to identifying at least one FPO from each of the promoting institutions/organisations across the region. Accordingly, one from Arunachal Pradesh, six from Assam, three from Manipur, two from Meghalaya, three from Mizoram, four from Nagaland, and three each from Sikkim and Tripura are included in the study.

### **Findings**

The FPOs visited are into variegated produce. The FOs are horticulture and agri-crop based like ginger, turmeric, banana, oranges, maize, mustard, black rice, red rice and some vegetables. In organisational aspects, most FPOs have a Board of Directors and a CEO to carry out the day-to-day activities. However, there is a need to percolate the capacity building initiatives to the members at large. The low education attainment of the members of the FPOs has necessitated more handholding and capacity building for better managerial practices. On management aspects, there is immense scope for resource mobilisation, technology infusion and marketing management. Further, for all FPOs, future trading, product development and direct market linkage with external buyers and exports are yet to come about. The FPOs also lack risk mitigation strategies for coping with vulnerabilities and ensuring sustainability.

There is also a need to percolate the capacity-building initiatives to the members at large to address the issues of non-availability of skilled workers and lack of advanced technology. In terms of capacity building, the FPOs are in need of training in aspects like good governance, sustainability, networking, social capital,

record maintenance, and other managerial, operational and technical skills. Almost all FPOs are found to be lacking in having a business plan in place. On management aspects, there is immense scope to follow a transparent participatory selection process and adopt a participatory business model. Further, for future trading, product development and direct market linkage with external buyers and exports, the FPOs need to work their way out. The FPOs have so far not taken steps towards sharing benefits. The FPOs have some sort of convergence with departments and schemes. However, they need credit linkages both from financial institutions and NBFCs.

Lack of storage and infrastructure facilities are hurdles for the FPOs to increase business volume. Market access is yet another area to be explored for the growth of the FPOs. The FPOs mostly depend on rainfed irrigation. They require more scientific ways of cultivation to cut down the dependency upon nature. The FPOs want timely supply of seeds and climate-friendly production techniques. They need more information on ways and means for scaling up to create micro and small enterprises. The FPOs also aspire for support to come up with processing infrastructure and technology. They have immense scope to improve in areas like business modelling and documentation.

### **Conclusion**

The three FPOs ranked in the top three positions in terms of the performance index have better organisational dynamics by having a regular CEO and board members and organising frequent meetings involving the member producers. The FPOs are highly oriented towards the capacity building of its members. Besides, these FPOs have access to a better market environment, infrastructure and technology. With good organisational performance, market linkages, planned business model and input access, the three FPOs score more in terms of the performance index. On the other hand, the three FPOs that ranked the lowest were found to have low scores in management, organisational aspects, business model, market orientation, infrastructure and input access. The FPOs are also found to be wanting better mechanisms for equitable sharing of benefits and securing sustainability. Overall, the assessment of the performance of the FPOs across the eight states through the performance index shows that the index scores are more or less on the lower side. To ensure sustainability of the FPOs across the region in the long run, there is a need towards capacity building and handholding across all ten dimensions. The majority of the FPOs have, in fact, scored low on management, convergence and sustainability aspects. In the Awareness Index (AI), eleven (11) out of 25 FPOs (44 per cent) scored above 50 per cent. Although it is found that a few indicators under different dimensions like Fertiliser and Pesticides, Branding, Organic Cultivation, Availing Provisions under Schemes, Procurement of Products,

Direct Market Linkage, and Common marketplace score high on the AI, these areas still pose a challenge in terms of reach and access to the same. It is for the parent policies and schemes like MOVCD-NER, RKVY, etc., under which the majority of the FPOs were initially formed that the FPOs are aware of a handful of schemes and policies without actualising their benefits. The correlation coefficients between PI and AI show that there is a strong positive correlation between the two indices. It can, therefore, be inferred that awareness about the different dimensions affecting the ecosystem of the FPO has a significant positive influence on the performance of the FPOs.

### **Policy Recommendations**

The key recommendations based on the extensive field-based study and in-depth discussions with the stakeholders from the region are grouped into different heads with specific needs and recommendations under each head.

- i) The FPOs require financial literacy and awareness to understand the provisions and their responsibilities.
- ii) A provision of exclusive angel funds for the FPOs in NER to run small rural businesses can help them survive and sustain in a business environment.
- iii) It is desirable to come up with a system for assessing the credit worthiness of the FPOs based on performance parameters as highlighted in the present study.
- iv) Like the dedicated SME credit, a separate dedicated wing of financial institutions and banks for delivery of FPO credit may be considered to bring the largest self-employed chunk of the population under the ambit of financial inclusion.

### **A. Organisational Development**

- i) There is a need for specific policy towards regulation of appointing CEOs of FPOs.
- ii) The study reveals that there is a huge lack of participation of members in FPO activities born out of insufficient awareness, motivation and lack of education which has, at times, caused conflict situations and hurdles in management activities. This challenge is structural in nature and will require a mission-oriented policy strategy.
- iii) A mechanism for providing educational training to illiterate members for minimum understanding and better functioning of FPOs needs to be developed.
- iv) Enhancement of soft skills in communication, negotiation, leadership skills, etc., with basic computer orientation, is necessary for farm management, FPO management, and off-farm jobs in logistics and other services in the ecosystem of the FPOs. Such skill development programmes can be introduced in

collaboration with higher educational institutions at the local level.

- v) A one-stop service kiosk/single window as a knowledge centre at the Panchayat/block/FPO level can be set up to provide easy access to information regarding all the schemes and policies. Here, the recognised IT firms of the country like TCS, Infosys, WIPRO, etc., can extend their CSR fund and know-how to facilitate the same. This can be a game changer in the agriculture sector which is in need of digital service and e-marketing delivery.

### **B. Business Model**

- i) To come up with a formal well-built business model, an exercise on business planning and business model canvas similar to a participatory rural appraisal exercise may be standardised and implemented for collective participation in the planning process of the FPOs. Here, institutions like NIRDPR with expertise in PRA exercises can take a lead role.
- ii) An efficient cooperative structure, governance, and management must be developed to create an environment of awareness for collective planning as a crucial component for the success of cooperatives.

### **C. Market Orientation**

- i) Setting up small-scale processing units, with technology easily adaptable to the local community of farmer producers having traditional skills and minimal training, can save wastage of farm produce from excess production and the absence of market linkage for the raw produce.
- ii) A regional training and facilitation centre for packaging in North East India is highly recommended, keeping in mind the formation of a sizeable number of FPOs in the region and the complete lack of knowledge and capacity building on packaging.
- iii) Exclusively designed skill-building programmes targeted at online agri-commodity trading through eNAM for the Northeast FPOs can contribute immensely towards growth in the marketing aspect. Also, forward and future contracts & trading can help the farmers to do away with seasonal fluctuations.
- iv) The USPs of North East in the agriculture sector like organic produce, GI-based and health-oriented products need to be promoted with a focussed vision on the niche markets. For instance, Uttar Pradesh has re-branded its black rice (Kala Namak rice) as Buddha rice and marketed extensively in the East Asian countries which turned out to be a game changer and money spinner in the agri-sector in the state. Such initiatives with professional support may also be taken up for the FPOs of the North-Eastern region with immediate effect.
- v) Institutions like the NERAMAC, APEDA, etc., may play a proactive role in

developing a network with the FPOs for channelising their marketable surplus for better price discovery.

#### **D. Capacity Building**

- i) There is a need to come up with inclusive training for heterogeneous groups of the FPOs.
- ii) Training can be organised on
  - Marketing and agribusiness awareness
  - Value addition & Right price discovery
  - Processing and packaging
  - Financial literacy
  - Climate-smart and scientific farming
  - Soil potentiality assessment training
  - Training on conducting Baseline survey
  - Knowledge building on schemes and policies and convergence
  - Seed production, fertilizer production, vermicompost and vermiwash and other technical training
  - Technology related training
  - Business planning
  - Organisational level training for CEOs and BODs
  - Disease Management and Good Agricultural Practices training, etc.
  - Organic Farming and Certification
  - Packaging, Branding and Marketing
  - Logistics and Supply Chain Management, etc.

#### **E. Infrastructure and Technology**

- i) Policymakers need to pay attention to and come up with a compensatory mechanism to arrange land for common facilities in FPOs.
- ii) Awareness and beneficiary-level motivation besides strict regulation should be put into place for the implementation of the CHC scheme.
- iii) The overall development of transportation facilities in the North-Eastern region should be achieved, especially in the hilly terrains, as it has always hindered business activities and imposed additional costs on the FPO activities.
- iv) The increasing demand for bioethanol and other edible oils can give potential commercial benefits to the FPOs. The same needs to be explored with the FPOs

in the North-Eastern region.

- v) There is a need to create an enabling environment and ecosystem for FPOs by way of taking measures to ensure uninterrupted power supply and creation of adequate power supply infrastructure for processing and other value addition activities.
- vi) Irrigation facilities, including drip irrigation and rainfed irrigation, need to be extended across the region.

#### **F. Convergence**

- i) A directive should be in place for the departments to decide on the convergence of the different schemes and policies with FPOs.
- ii) Preparation of a compendium of schemes, policies, programmes and support institutions for FPOs in local languages is an immediate requirement as expressed by the FPOs. NABARD/SFAC/NCDC may take the initiative on the same.

#### **G. Compliance and Documentation**

- i) The development of a mobile application like Compliance Mitra for FPOs may be explored.
- ii) Dedicated regular conduct of training under NRLM (e.g., Dasasutra under NRLM compliance) must be considered in the case of FPOs as well. A mechanism should be developed to archive the records of the activities of FPOs under different schemes and policies. Here, the experience and knowledge of NRLM in social institution building and record maintenance may be leveraged for effective convergence.

#### **H. Sustainability of FPO**

- i) A mandatory exit strategy of the POPI/RI/CBBO is needed and it should be a continuous process from the first year onwards towards building sustainability instead of the institutions making an exit after a pre-fixed time frame without preparing the FPOs to thrive and sustain independently.
- ii) The studied FPOs have rarely affirmed having an action plan that is revised regularly in the years that follow. In the absence of such plans, the FPOs tend to lose track of their desired activities. Preparation of the annual action plan should be made mandatory for the FPOs. Adopting the performance assessment system (index) as outlined in the present study can help in tracking, evaluating and taking suitable actions based on continuous assessment of the FPO to ensure sustainable FPOs.

**I. Support Institutions**

- i) Under the newly defined guidelines, milestone-based five-year guidance for the FPOs might be more useful; however, issues of convergence and result and a performance-oriented system may be incorporated to make it more effective.
- ii) Many FPOs across the eight states have raised the issues of inefficient input provision by the Departments. This needs to be addressed by bringing in efficiency in the input distribution system.
- iii) Production Incentive Scheme (PIS) as in Sikkim needs to be adopted by other states of the region to practically help the FPOs to gain motivation and incentive to aggregate the produce and go for collective marketing.
- iv) Emphasis should be laid upon the creation of an expert group to frame an agribusiness policy exclusively for organic farming in the region.
- v) Policymakers may look into and take measures for the empowerment of female smallholders and marginal farmers and producers.
- vi) Indigenous knowledge and perception derived from generations of lived experiences of the local communities of farmers of the region need to be incorporated into policies. Further, local and community-level studies on various aspects of FPOs in the region must be taken up for more region-specific policymaking which supports their sustainability and dynamism.

**J. Entrepreneurship and Start-ups**

- i. The startup ecosystem and supporting agencies may be integrated with FPOs across the region on the lines of East Asian countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, etc., where agri-entrepreneurship is a driving force of the economy.

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## **EVALUATION OF SHG-VRP TRAINING IN THE CONDUCT OF SOCIAL AUDITS**

**Dr C. Dheeraja**

### **Introduction**

Social audit gained significance after the 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment of the Constitution. Social audits have been made mandatory in MGNREGS since its inception. As per Section 17 of the MGNREG Act, 'Social Audit of work by Gram Sabha' states that Gram Sabha shall monitor the execution of works within the Gram Panchayat. The Gram Sabha shall conduct regular social audits of all projects taken up under the Scheme within the Gram Panchayat (GP)'.

Social Audits ensure transparency and accountability, inform and educate people, promote people's participation in planning, implementation and monitoring of projects, provide a platform for people to express their needs and grievances, improve the capacity of all stakeholders, strengthen local governance and promote democratic decentralisation and complement formal audits.

To facilitate effective social audits, the Ministry of Rural Development drafted the Audit of Schemes Rules, 2011 in consultation with the Comptroller and Auditor General of India and notified on 30th June 2011. The Rules mandate that the State Government shall identify or establish an independent organisation (Social Audit Unit) to facilitate the conduct of social audit by Gram Sabha. The Social Audit Unit is independent of the Project Implementing Agency. Further, the unit facilitates social audits with the resource persons recruited for this purpose. The resource persons recruited by SAU identify village-level social auditors from the beneficiary families, train them in the process of conducting social audits and take up social audits through them.

One of the most challenging tasks is to create a huge pool of human resources to facilitate social audits at village and Panchayat levels. For facilitating social audit in approximately 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats, a minimum of 25 lakh Village Resource Persons (VRPs) would be needed every six months all alone for MGNREGS. Training such a huge number of VRPs is a gigantic task which can only be accomplished if a large pool of master trainers or social audit resource persons is created at the state, regional level or district levels.

A planned and systematic effort for creating a pool of social audit resource persons at state, district and block levels was taken up by MoRD in association with NIRDPR and TISS by taking up a one-month certificate programme covering all the recruited social audit resource persons in all social audit units of the states in a saturation mode.

Further, the Ministry of Rural Development also emphasised the need for creating a pool of village-level social audit resource persons. One of the strategies planned was involving SHG members as resource persons while conducting social audits at the Gram Panchayat level.

As part of the Annual Action Plan of MGNREGS, this initiative was taken up to train the SHG women as village-level social audit resource persons with the following objectives: i) To capacitate at least three SHG members from each Gram Panchayat on the concept and application of social audit; ii) To generate a pool of village level social auditors (SHG members); iii) To equip the SHG members with the skills to conduct social audit for all development programmes in general, and for MGNREGS in particular.

It was planned that in the first phase, the intensive blocks of NRLM will be focused. In identified NRLP states, both NRLM and NRLP intensive blocks were selected and three active SHG members from each GP were identified for the training. The states were identified by adopting the criteria that they should be basically NRLP states where a Social Audit Unit is established, social audit resource persons are in place and they have undergone one-month training and are certified accordingly. The states identified were Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, MP, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. AP and Telangana are added as per the state's pro-activeness. The main stakeholders in this initiative, at the state level, are SRLMs, SAUs, Rural Development Departments and SIRDs.

In the present study, an assessment was made on the effectiveness of the training provided to SHG-VRP and how the SHGs could use the training inputs in their performance after the training, especially in conducting social audits. Thus, the study was taken up with the following objectives:

### **Objectives**

- To assess the knowledge and skill of trained SHG VRPs
- To analyse the engagement of SHG-VRPs in the facilitation of social audit process after undergoing a four-day training
- To analyse the effectiveness of training in terms of doing the social audit by SHG-VRPs
- To document the experiences of SHG-VRPs in the conduct of social audit
- To analyse the gaps and suggest ways to improve SHG-VRP training curriculum and engagement of SHG-VRPs by SAUs

### **Methodology**

Primary data has been collected from four states covering 274 SHG VRPs. In each state, two districts with the highest number of SHG-VRPs trained as part of

SHG VRP 4-day training were identified. All the SHG-VRPs trained from that district and engaged for 2-3 audits or more were selected as the sample for the study. In Jharkhand, four districts were selected from two different regions due to difficulty in contacting the resource persons for the study.

From three states, except Tamil Nadu (In Tamil Nadu non-SG VRPs are not available) 20-30 VRPs who have the experience of conducting 2-3 audits were selected as the control group for the study. Two FGDs were conducted with the SHG VRPs who have been trained but not engaged in the social audit process and with the resource persons of SAUs.

Mixed methods (both quantitative and qualitative) have been used to collect data from different sources. To evaluate the effectiveness of SHG VRP training in the conduct of social audits, questionnaire method was used to gather perceptions of sample SHG VRPs. The questionnaire was entered into the Kobo Collect mobile app.

The Focused Group Discussion (FGD) method was used to gather information from village resource persons who have been trained but not engaged in the social audit process to understand their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of SHG VRP training and to know the reasons for not getting engaged in the social audits. FGDs using checklists were also conducted with the BRPs, DRPs and other resource persons to study their perceptions of SHG VRP training.

Both qualitative and quantitative tools were used to analyse the data. Percentages and averages were used for analysing the data to understand the usefulness of the SHG-VRP training, knowledge and skills gained in terms of facilitation of social audit by SHG-VRPs, engagement ratio of SHG-VRPs, etc. Qualitative analysis was done to document the experiences of SHG-VRPs.

The information collected is grouped into the following sections such as

1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents
2. SHG Profile of the respondent
3. Analysis of SHG-VRP training
4. Levels of MGNREGA awareness
5. Levels of Social Audit Awareness
6. SHG-VRP engagement in Social Audit

The responses received from the SHG-VRPs on various issues ranging from social background to profile of the respondent, VRPs' views on training received, VRPs' awareness levels on MGNREGA, Social Audit and their engagement in social audit process after completion of the SHG VRP training were analysed.

**Study Area**

The study was taken up in four states where a good number of SHGs are trained as VRPs. The states are:

- Chhattisgarh
- Jharkhand
- Odisha
- Tamil Nadu

**Findings of the Study**

- Questionnaires were administered to a total of 274 SHG VRPs in all four selected states. Of the total respondents, 39 per cent were in the age group of 20-30 years, 30 per cent were in the age group of 31-35 years, 27 per cent were in the age group of 36-40 years and the remaining 3 per cent respondents were in the age group of 41-45 years. Across the four states, 44 per cent of the respondents were from the OBC category followed by Scheduled Castes (28 per cent), Scheduled Tribes (9 per cent) and General category (18 per cent). In Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu, more than 50 per cent of the respondent's qualification is Plus Two. In Odisha, 47 per cent of respondents are from graduation background. In all the states except Odisha, postgraduates were around 5 per cent. Most of the VRPs studied up to high school and Plus Two. More than 75 per cent of the respondents from all four states were married. In Chhattisgarh, 18 per cent of the respondents were unmarried followed by Odisha (10 per cent) and Jharkhand (6 per cent). In Odisha and Jharkhand, 5 per cent of respondents were widows.
- Of all the respondents, 47 per cent from Chhattisgarh and 44 per cent from Jharkhand belonged to agriculture labourer families. In Odisha and Tamil Nadu, 61 per cent and 43 per cent of respondents, respectively, were from agricultural background. In Tamil Nadu, 25 per cent of the respondents were from non-agricultural background followed by 13 per cent in Odisha, 11 per cent in Chhattisgarh and 9 per cent from Jharkhand.
- As per the standard operating procedure for the SHG VRP training programme, SHG members should have an active job card and should have worked under MGNREGA. In Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu, more than 80 per cent of the respondents/any other family members have worked under MGNREGA. In Jharkhand and Odisha, 55 per cent and 34 per cent of the respondents, respectively, worked under MGNREGA. Odisha has 66 per cent of the respondents/families who did not work under MGNREGA. Based on the data, it is observed that the SHG VRPs selection process in Odisha is not as per the standard operating procedure released for SHG VRP Training. Similarly, in

Jharkhand, 45 per cent of the VRPs said that they did not work under MGNREGA.

- As per the standard operating procedure for the SHG VRP training programme, SAU shall take the assistance of the State Rural Livelihoods Mission (SRLM) to identify and mobilise three women SHG members from every selected Gram Panchayat. The Village Organisations (VO) should nominate the VRPs. During the study, 53 per cent of the respondents from Chhattisgarh, 41 per cent from Jharkhand, 58 per cent from Odisha and 20 per cent from Tamil Nadu said that SAU person selected them for SHG VRP training through SRLM. In Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, 31 per cent and 25 per cent of the respondents, respectively, said that a person from SRLM selected them. In Tamil Nadu, 64 per cent of the respondents said that they were selected as SHG VRPs through Gram Sabha.
- A comparison was prepared based on the data collected from both SHG and non-SHG VRPs to know whether SHG-VRPs can contribute better as facilitators of social audit in the GPs compared to non-SHG-VRPs. One can see the mixed results - in some aspects, SHG VRPs are better and in some aspects, non-SHG-VRPs are better. It was observed that the “number of social audits conducted” plays a key role in grasping the knowledge of social audit.

### **Suggestions/Recommendations**

- Based on the opinion of the VRPs/BRPs/DRPs, the number of days may be increased for future training programmes. Many respondents expressed their opinion that the number of days has to be increased to cover all the topics comprehensively.
- Social audits of new schemes like NSAP, PMAY-G, and FFCG content have to be included in the training manual.
- The number of days of field visits should also be increased so that VRPs can get practical knowledge along with class room knowledge.
- Auditing standards for Social Audit should be incorporated in the training manual along with the social audit MIS session.
- As per the observations from the FGDs, a session on community mobilisation needs to be incorporated into the training.
- In Tamil Nadu, the SAU is offering the conduct of the social audit in five GPs to one VRP and is giving the chance for all the trained VRPs in a year on a rotational basis. Due to this, efficient VRPs are not getting more chances and are staying out of the social audit and the quality of the social audits also is coming down. Instead, it is recommended to create a pool of efficient VRPs and use them frequently for social audits based on their availability and SAU needs.
- After completion of the SHG-VRP training, no training was offered by the SAUs.

VRPs are requesting frequent training sessions to update their knowledge on different schemes of the social audit.

- Compared to other sample states, respondents from Odisha lack proper awareness of various aspects related to MGNREGS and social audit process. Hence, separate training may be recommended for the Odisha VRPs before conducting the social audits in every block.
- Jharkhand SAU did not have complete data on trained SHG VRPs, and hence, it was difficult to select the VRPs for study without data. BRPs/DRPs called VRPs and collected the data from them. Therefore, all SAUs are recommended to maintain the database of VRPs separately.
- SAUs should provide the updated material to the VRPs. VRPs expressed that they did not get updated material after the training.
- From the Chhattisgarh and Odisha FGDs, the SAU resource persons suggested that the social audit team should be included while identifying the SHG-VRPs.
- An orientation for the NRLM/SRLM needs to be conducted regarding the selection of the SHG-VRPs for the training.
- SHG-VRPs with poor education qualifications find it difficult to understand the technical aspects of the works; hence, it is suggested to give more exposure to the practical approach in the training.
- SAU should inform VRPs about their grades after completion of the training. Many VRPs were unaware of their grades and considered themselves unqualified; hence, they did not contact resource persons to participate in the social audits.
- SAUs should maintain the data of those not participating in the social audits by mentioning the reasons to avoid discrimination by giving more chances to certain people.

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## **ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES AND HEALTH STATUS IN RURAL INDIA WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO MARGINALISED SOCIAL GROUPS**

**Mr Rajesh Raushan  
Dr Rajendra P. Mamgain**

### **Introduction**

In India, various health policies recognise the significance of primary healthcare. There has been visible progress in the delivery of healthcare services, and better access to and utilisation of these services. The global concerns for equality and equity as manifested since the Alma Ata Declaration to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have pushed it further. Despite the positive changes, there have been noticeable differences in health status and access to healthcare services across various groups in the country. The marginalised groups like SC and ST in rural areas lag behind others on several health outcomes and access to healthcare services. The unequal outcomes and access to healthcare services call for special attention in the domains of inclusive development and progressive health policy for rural areas.

### **Objectives**

The study aims to examine the progress on the health status and access to services and associated factors among marginalised groups focused on rural India. Further, it assesses the availability of health infrastructure and manpower gap in the rural healthcare system. In addition, it suggests strategies for the progress of marginalised groups and reducing the gap in health and healthcare, including recommendations for modification in existing health policy and schemes.

### **Data and Methodology**

#### **Data:**

The prominent data sources used in the study are

- NFHS data (unit level records) for 1992/93, 1998/99, 2005/06 and 2015/16.
- 75<sup>th</sup> round of NSS data (unit level records) on social consumption on health, 2018
- Rural Health Statistics (RHS) data
- Health Committee and Health Policy Documents, Govt. of India.

## **Methodology**

Compared to urban areas, rural areas have poor health outcomes followed by low access to services. The study analysed the inter-group differentials on various indicators exclusively for rural India. Those groups in the study are as follows- Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, Hindu Other Backward Classes, Hindu Forward Castes, and Muslims. ST and SC are considered socially marginalised groups in the study. Regional inequality has been examined across states in rural India. For the country average and country rural average, all 36 states/UTs have been included whereas for state-level rural areas analysis, all 29 states and Delhi have been included.

The study used univariate, bivariate and multivariate methods. The descriptive statistics provide a glimpse of status. For the change/progress, the rate of change has been calculated. The annual rate of change was calculated using exponential methods. For the predictors and linkages, multivariate statistical methods, especially logit regression and factor analysis methods, were employed. The logit regression model was elicited to carve out the predictors of health and healthcare-related indicators. Factor analysis was employed to establish a structural relationship between health status, access to services and health system-related variables at the state level for rural areas.

On the factor analysis, five different factors analysis has been employed separately to examine the underlying relationship on the indicators of mortality, malnutrition, anaemia, utilisation of maternal and child healthcare services, morbidity, treatment-seeking behaviour, hospitalisation, hospitalisation expenditure, health infrastructure, human resources and specialised services availability in government health facilities in rural areas.

All the data has been processed and analysed using Excel, STATA and SPSS. Excel and STATA are used for descriptive and inferential statistics. The results are presented in the form of tables and figures/graphs.

## **Study Area and Population**

The study prominently focused on rural part of the country as per the 2011 census. The study population was women of reproductive age (15-49 years), children of up to 5 years of age and the whole population as per the need of the specific indicators under study.

## **Findings**

### ***Progress and Status on Health Outcomes***

- In rural India, child mortality and morbidity have declined much and still have a declining nature. NMR among them is crucial with high among marginalised

groups - SC and ST - reflecting a concern to minimise mortality among such different groups. ARI has reduced much but the episodes of diarrhoea are still high with a large number of untreated cases among children from marginalised groups.

- The severity of malnutrition is still high among marginalised groups within ST followed by SC children. Obesity among children is another emerging concern. Still, close to three-fifths of children are anaemic and one-third are moderate to severe anaemic. Most of the land-locked states ranging from north to central and south regions have emerged with high to highest prevalence of anaemia.
- There is no much progress on women's anaemic condition as still more than half of reproductive age women are found anaemic in rural areas with more among ST and SC. A reduction in the share of underweight women is a good sign but rapidly increasing obesity among women and men are important concern as a risk factor for NCDs, lifestyle diseases and high fatality risk.
- A major share of the increasing prevalence of NCDs in rural areas is borne by respiratory issues (11 per cent) followed by hypertension (11 per cent), diabetes (10 per cent), musculoskeletal (9 per cent) and gastrointestinal problems (5 per cent). Marginalised groups, such as STs, seem still to have a high share of CDs and are facing a 'double burden of diseases.' They need appropriate monitoring and surveillance to overcome and reduce the burden.

#### ***Status of Access and Utilisation of Healthcare Services***

- On access to MCH services, one-fourth of pregnancies still getting registered in the second trimester or later is a notable concern. Importantly, ANC services received by skilled providers are less among marginalised groups. A very low proportion of 'full ANC' is eye-raising as only one in every six women has achieved full ANC in rural India.
- On delivery and post-natal care, an increase in institutional deliveries within public health facilities is a great achievement but the increasing trend of caesarean deliveries (C-section delivery) in rural areas is a grave concern. Assistance during childbirth is found less for marginalised women and is important from a programme point of view on skilled assistance during delivery in rural areas.
- Post-natal care among marginalised women is still less. Even newborn postnatal care is observed for only 37 per cent, which draws attention towards the control of neonatal death among newborns.
- Full immunisation is a grey area for monitoring and surveillance as dropout is still high for immunization. Thirty-two per cent of children in rural areas are partially vaccinated, which is important from programme and policy perspectives.

- Hospitalisation, expenditure and distress financing in rural areas revealed that, of the total expenditure on hospitalisation, the highest of 25 per cent is spent on medicines, followed by the doctor's fee (16 per cent) to non-medical expenses (12 per cent) in rural areas. Close to 20 per cent of households in rural areas bear distress financing to seek treatment.
- The raised concern is that 86 per cent population in rural areas of the country is not covered under any social protection health scheme. Findings reveal a stark reality of high out-of-pocket expenditure on hospitalisation – it either keeps the poor untreated or pushes them into financial distress and poverty trap.

### ***Status on Health System- Infrastructure and Manpower***

- Availability of health infrastructure and human resources reveals the surplus of health facilities- HSCs and PHCs in 20 states/UTs each and CHCs in 16 states/UTs. Importantly, the shortfall of different health facilities is found in most of the Empowered Action Group states, including others.
- Close to one-third of PHCs do not have labour rooms. Only 12 states/UTs found on all functional CHCs with functional operation theatres. Only 41 per cent of functional CHCs have functioning stabilisation units for newborns. Even though many states have such facilities, a functional position is needed for strengthening the health system in rural parts of the country.
- Of the all functioning CHCs, only 6 per cent are working with all four specialists. In 2018, none of the CHCs in 13 states functioned with all four specialists. In only 5 states/UTs, all four stipulated specialists were found posted in all functional CHCs.
- Alarming, government health facilities face the threat and challenges of shortage of human resources other than infrastructural facilities. The issues remained highlighted in the policy domain for a long time. There is much progress after the NRHM, but still more needs to be done in the coming years to reach 100 per cent filled-in positions and to equip rural India with various health services.

### **Conclusions**

- The marginalised social groups were found lagging behind the better-off groups in rural India on most of the indicators of health and healthcare. Most of the indicators were found inter-dependent and progress in one indicator pushes another one. Interlinkages of health status, access to services and health system reveal that non-availability of health facilities due to poor infrastructure, workforce shortages and quality of care pose threats to marginalised population in rural areas. The high negative coefficient reveals that the treatment and

service availability in government health facilities reduced the burden of healthcare expenditure.

- The findings also reveal that the shortfall indifferent health facilities in rural areas are interlinked and interdependent. Lack of human resources in government health facilities increases the chance of either dependency on private facilities or not availing healthcare services, and results in high mortality and morbidity among marginalised population.

### **Policy Recommendations**

- The suggestive measures and policy recommendations emerging from the study pertain to the programme and policy already in existence and can be pushed with more focus on marginalised people. The recently launched '**Mission LaQshya**' can be one such step forward in safe and skilled delivery for such groups of population. Child immunisation perspective as '**Mission Indradhanush**' will possibly overcome the issue of immunisation dropout. Targeted programmatic approach and strategies for reduction in NMR at the facility level and home-based care should be prioritised within **Navjaat Sishu Suraksha Karyakram (NSSK)** with a focus on the states having a high proportion of marginalised population in rural areas. Within the programmatic architecture of **Janani-Sishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK)** and **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritiava Abhiyan (PMSMA)**, component-wise focus on different MCH indicators should be prioritised.
- Malnutrition and anaemia among women and children seek attention in policies and underscore the need for programmes to provide additional important micronutrients. The launch of **Poshan Abhiyaan** is an important step that needs to give more focus to marginalised groups, women and children. Further, **Anaemia Mukh Bharat (AMB)** needs to focus shift to maternal nutrition with implementation, monitoring other than access by needy from the marginalised section.
- Distant health facilities and lack of manpower put an additional burden on availing healthcare services as a low proportion of people is covered under health insurance, which is a concern for rural India. The **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna (PMJAY)** is a timely initiation to expedite universal health coverage, especially for marginalised people. Coverage of more marginalised people will reduce the out-of-pocket expenditure and distress financing in rural areas.
- The increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and high prevalence of some communicable diseases (CDs) among marginalised groups are another concern. Establishing '**Health and Wellness Centres**' will play an active role in preventive measures and promote health behaviours among

remotely accessible marginalised population at the community level. This should be pushed within the context of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) so that many lives can be saved.

- Having the motives of 'Universal access to healthcare facilities' and the aim of 'leaving no one behind', the new National Health Policy, 2017 should prioritise the role of the government in shaping health systems in all its dimensions, such as investments in health, organisation of healthcare services, prevention of diseases and promotion of good health.
- Thus, states having a high share of marginalised population need to draw separate model district health action plans (DHAP) for such groups. The decentralised and micro-level planning has to be divided into small area-based planning for the interventions as per the requirements. In the long run, this policy will help to meet the secondary and tertiary healthcare needs of the population, especially the poorest and marginalised sections.

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## **ACCESS TO QUALITY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN RURAL AND URBAN INDIA**

**Mr Khalid Khan  
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### **Introduction**

The present study has examined the status of school education in rural and urban areas in India. It has explored the demand as well as the supply side of school education at different levels. It reports the availability of different types of schools imparting both elementary and secondary & higher secondary education. Given that resources and infrastructure available in schools also play an important role in developing a conducive environment for learning, the study has also probed the inequality in the availability of those resources and the scope for further improvement. The analysis is undertaken to examine the access to school education and group-based inequality in the access to quality education. Further, the problem of dropouts in school education has been examined in the study. Since household expenditure on school education and availability of financial support plays a crucial role in determining access to and continuity of school education, the study also focused on these two aspects.

### **Objectives**

The study is based on the following objectives:

1. To study the availability of schools at all-India and state levels.
2. To examine the availability of infrastructure and human resources in schools at all-India and state levels.
3. To study the access to school education at different levels by gender, social group, religious group, income and occupational at all-India level.
4. To analyse the dropout rate in school education at all-India and state levels.
5. To assess the disparities in the quality of school education by gender, social group, religious groups and occupational groups at all-India and state levels.
6. To analyse the expenditure incurred by households belonging to different social, religious and occupational groups on school education at all-India and state levels.
7. To examine the status of financial support available for students from diverse backgrounds in school education at all-India and state levels.

## **Methodology**

At the elementary level, enrolment at the school level has reached close to the universal level at least numerically. However, the issue of quality and retention is still a major challenge with regard to school education. Given that the enrolment at the school level has reached the universal level, emphasis has been given to measuring the quality of available infrastructure and learning outcomes. The data for learning outcomes is based on the National Achievement Survey, 2017 conducted by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

The data on availability of infrastructure is based on District Information Statistics of Education (DISE). It covers the availability of teachers and basic amenities in school. The analysis concentrates on the impact of gender, social, religious and occupational backgrounds of households on the learning outcome of children. It also focuses on the availability of the quality of infrastructure as a proxy for the quality of schools across these groups. Dropout is another important aspect that has been analysed in the study. Given the non-availability of data on income and difficulties in measuring different components of income, household expenditure stands as a useful determinant of the economic condition of households. Further, two sets of variables, namely caste and religious identity, are considered. The occupational background of the household is also considered a variable. The National Sample Survey (NSS) data on social consumption, and education, 2017-18 provides information on the households based on self-employed, regular salaried workers, and casual labourers. Self-employment and casual labour are further disaggregated into agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. Gender has also been considered as an important independent variable for the analysis.

## **Study Area**

This all-India level study encompassed both rural and urban areas. The inequality across states in both rural and urban areas and the rural-urban gap in the performance across different indicators are analysed. The performance of the economically backward states is also compared with the economically well-off states. The objective was to identify the different aspects in which rural areas are lagging behind the urban areas.

## **Findings**

The major findings of the study may be summarised as follows:

- The analysis suggests that private schools, though fewer in number than government schools, are better equipped to offer all levels of education. The gap between government and private sector in terms of availability is higher at

the lower level of education while the reverse is true at higher levels of school education. The share of schools offering primary or upper primary level of education is higher in rural areas than urban areas while the share of integrated schools offering all levels of school education is higher in urban areas than rural areas. This problem is further accentuated in government schools. The states with better economies are likely to have larger schools; thus, economically backward states have smaller schools and more schools.

- The analysis also shows that a notable number of schools are single-classroom schools and single-teacher schools. Single-classroom schools and single-teacher schools dominate the elementary level of school education.
- A large number of schools lack facilities related to boundary wall, electricity, and playground, particularly at lower levels of education. The economically well-off states are performing well in terms of most of the indicators related to infrastructure while backward states are among the worst performing states.
- The enrolment in elementary education is close to the universal level at all-India level and across gender, social groups, income groups and occupational groups in both rural and urban areas.
- At the secondary and higher secondary levels, enrolment is yet to reach the universal level. The conventional hierarchy across different groups exists here, and the rural areas are notably lagging behind the urban areas. The females, Muslims and the bottom 20 per cent of income groups in rural areas are way behind their counterparts in urban areas. Most of the economically-backward states are lagging in terms of access. The gender gap at the SHS level is also high in these states. Moreover, inter-state disparity exists among underprivileged groups.
- The high dropout rate is observed among SC/ST, casual labour households and Muslims. A relatively high percentage of student dropout is found in rural areas than in urban areas, and the rate is higher among every group. The pattern across different groups shows that students from privileged sections continue longer in education than their underprivileged counterparts.
- A widespread disparity exists in the quality of school education based on the medium of instruction and access to self-financed institutions. The rural-urban gap exists in terms of access to English medium schools among every group but SC/ST in rural areas are the most vulnerable groups so far as social groups are concerned. The share in English medium schools among Muslims is similar to Hindus possibly due to low-quality English medium private unaided schools.
- A similar pattern across different groups is observed in terms of quality measured by the share of unaided institutions. The share of unaided institutions is higher in urban areas than in rural areas among every income group. The interstate rural-urban gap exists irrespective of the overall performance of the

state. Specifically, the rural-urban gap is high in economically well-off states though it is low in most of the backward states.

- The analysis of household expenditure shows that average expenditure on education is more than three times higher in urban areas than in rural areas. The average expenditure on education is slightly higher for males than females, which confirms the tendency towards higher investment in human capital of males than females within the household. The expenditure across social groups also follows a conventional hierarchy; it is lowest among ST, followed by SC, OBC and 'Others.' The average expenditure among Muslims is the lowest across religious groups. This pattern is seen in almost every state. The urban location improves the expenditure slightly for females rather than males. However, urban location improves the expenditure on education among SC by lower magnitudes than OBC and 'Others' while the improvement in terms of urban location is highest among ST.
- It is also observed that financial support has been progressive in the sense that weaker sections of society are getting relatively higher support than their privileged counterparts thanks to the high share of financial support in government schools. The extent of support is higher in rural areas than in urban areas for every group. However, financial support is lowest among other religious minorities, and relatively lower among Muslims than Hindus which again confirms the relatively higher dependence of minorities on government schools. The state-wise pattern also reveals the progressive nature of financial support as it is higher in the economically-weaker states than in their well-off counterparts.

### **Conclusions**

The analysis shows that the status of access to school education is contrary to the constitutional commitment of equal opportunity for education to all, particularly due to the inadequate facilities in government schools. One of the major concerns related to the policies towards education has been the failure to strengthen public (state-funded) education. Majority of the schools, particularly in rural areas, are less equipped than those in urban areas in offering all levels of school education. This problem is further accentuated in government schools. The heavy load of students on teachers in terms of the high student-teacher ratio, particularly in rural areas, is clearly visible.

Despite universalisation in terms of enrolment in quantitative terms, the quality of education and retention remains a major challenge. The multi-layered school system in terms of level of schooling, management, and infrastructural facilities is also one of the important factors behind the unequal outcomes of schooling. Private schools providing quality education are limited to the economically better-

off sections, thus, reinforcing economic and social inequalities. Low ambition among parents regarding the education of their children, particularly among underprivileged groups, is also an important factor leading to low access and achievement among students from weaker social groups.

One of the major problems with regard to the learning outcome is the unavailability of sufficient data. The limited available information shows low learning outcomes among students in general, and underprivileged groups in particular. Given that the highest share of students from the underprivileged groups attend government schools, their learning outcomes are doubly affected – first, by their weaker background and second, by unfavourable learning environment in government schools.

### **Policy Recommendations**

Based on the findings emerging from the study, the following policy suggestions are made:

- Special attention is needed for the expansion of government schools so as to cover all levels of education. Further, the availability of resources and infrastructure also needs to be improved.
- The access as well as retention of weaker sections, particularly ST, SC, and Muslims, to school education needs to be improved immensely. Special attention is also needed towards casual labour households and the bottom 20 per cent income quintile, particularly in rural areas. Further, special programmes are needed to improve the performance of schools in rural areas, especially in economically backward states.
- Apart from the provision of facilities in schools, these resources should be integrated into the teaching and learning processes at the schools to translate the provision of inputs into effectively improving the learning outcomes among students.
- Support is needed to compensate for the opportunity cost of attending school education up to higher secondary level.
- A special survey on learning outcomes among the students in school is required to examine the underlying difficulties. Special programmes are needed to improve students' learning in government schools with a special focus on English language and numerical literacy. The rural areas lag behind urban areas in terms of quality of education. Students from rural backgrounds must be given priority in such programmes.

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## **SCHEDULED CASTE AND SCHEDULED TRIBES IN RURAL LABOUR MARKETS: A STUDY OF EMPLOYMENT, EARNINGS AND INCLUSION**

**Dr Nivedita Sharma**

**Dr Ankita Goyal**

**Ms Jaya Lekshmi Nair**

### **Introduction**

Indian labour markets are highly segmented in terms of social groups and gender. Differentiation and exclusion lead to disparities in wages and earnings of the labour. Thus, the labour markets on the one hand are a major source of income and livelihoods for the poor, but on the other hand, these have the potential of generating, perpetuating and accentuating inequalities. Despite several initiatives by the government such as reservation policies in educational institutions and public sector employment, the educational and occupational outcomes of women and disadvantaged social groups such as Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) remain unsatisfactory. Thus, it is important to understand the structural changes in the rural economy and related shifts in employment. It is also imperative to look at available work opportunities in the rural regions for the marginalised sections, especially SCs and STs. This study is an addition to the already vast extant literature on employment in the sense that it will explore the recent data trends (2018-19) for all the major states.

### **Objectives**

- To analyse the broad trends in rural employment structure since 2004 and its implications for social and gender dimensions.
- To understand whether there has been any bias in rural areas against SC/ST, particularly SC/ST women, in terms of work opportunities and wage rates.
- To study the impact of MGNREGA on the status and pattern of employment of rural workers, especially women and SC/ST workers.
- To suggest policy measures to promote employment and inclusion.

### **Methodology**

The study is primarily based on secondary data together with the review of existing literature on rural labour markets, particularly focusing on the SCs and STs. The data has been collected for all states from unit-level data of various rounds of NSSO (61<sup>st</sup> Round, 68<sup>th</sup> Round), Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2018-19, and MIS Reports for MGNREGS, etc. The materials and the data collected have been

analysed and synthesised for drawing conclusions and suggesting policy recommendations.

### **Study Area**

The study covered all the states.

### **Findings**

- LFPR for males is higher (55.13 per cent) than females (19.65 per cent) in 2018-19.
- WPR for males has remained at nearly 54 per cent for 2004-05 and 2011-12 and declined by two percentage points in 2018-19. Whereas, for females, WPR which stood at 32.7 per cent in 2004-05 fell to just 18.96 per cent in 2018-19.
- Further, the participation of rural female workers declined with an increase in education, whereas in the case of rural males, it shows a mixed trend. For instance, in 2018-19, women who were illiterate (48.3 per cent) had a high probability of being in the work force followed by middle (35.4 per cent), secondary. In the case of male workers, their representation in the workforce is highest for middle level of education (46.27 per cent) followed by non-literate (22.6 per cent).
- Dependency on agriculture for livelihood is found prominent in 'others' (46.07 per cent for males and 52.39 per cent for females), STs (43.67 per cent males and 55.04 per cent females), OBCs (42.69 per cent for males and 46.6 per cent for females). Participation is found least in SCs with a share of 25 per cent for males and 31 per cent for females.
- The share of male ST population in non-agriculture is quite low at just 5.4 per cent in 2004-05, which rose to 13.21 per cent in 2018-19. The share of female ST population is also low-a mere 9 per cent in 2018-19. Also, among males, 15.4 per cent SCs, 19.5 per cent OBCs and 19.57 per cent 'others' are self-employed in non-agriculture. The figures for females are also similar.
- STs hold the lowest share among regular salaried workers for both males (10.7 per cent) and females (6.95 per cent). The highest share is accounted by 'others' for males (17.89 per cent) and females (16.04 per cent).
- The share of the male SCs (46.13 per cent) and STs (32.41 per cent) is higher than that of OBCs (24.15 per cent) and 'others' (16.48 per cent) in casual labour. The same is the case with females, thus implying that close to 60 per cent of casual labourers belong to SC/ST.
- In 2018-19, it is observed that as the level of income rises, the share of male ST workers declines, while the opposite is true for 'others'. For SCs and OBCs, it is a mixed trend, and the same trend is observed for females.

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- Regarding wages, male wage rates are found to be higher than females. In 2004-05, the female wage rate was lower than the male wage rate by 45.9 per cent and in 2018-19, it was lower by 35.9 per cent.
  - Average wages are lowest for SCs and STs for both males and females while in the case of regular salaried work, 'others' earn the highest average daily wage rate in all the sectors.
  - The LFPR and WPR for all persons taken together declined over the years from 2004-05 to 2018-19 for all states except for a marginal increase in Haryana, Sikkim, Tripura and West Bengal. The states of Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Chhattisgarh and Telangana have LFPRs of more than double the national average while the state of Bihar has the most alarming LFPR of 2.6 per cent, followed by Assam and Uttar Pradesh.
  - Not much bias is seen in the LFPR and WPR of the population belonging to different social groups, except in states where the proportion of ST is slightly higher, like the states of Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and MP. In these states, the LFPR and WPR of ST and SC populations were higher than that of 'Others'.
  - Overall, there has been a shift away from regular and self-employed in non-agriculture towards casual employment and employment in agriculture, mainly those belonging to 'others' caste and the SC. In the case of ST, in the NE states, the movement has been away from agriculture towards regular employment and self-employment in the non-agriculture sector, while in other states with the ST population, the employment has been mainly in agriculture and casual work.
  - More than 60 per cent of the ST workforce in states, namely Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, J&K, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and HP, are engaged in the primary sector while less than 20 per cent work in the industrial sector. As for SC working population, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, J&K, Odisha and Karnataka are the states where more than 50 per cent are employed in the primary sector while Goa, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan have more than 40 per cent of their SC workforce in the secondary sector. In the case of the 'others' category of the workforce, it is seen that in all the states, more than 40 per cent of the workforce is engaged in the tertiary sector, except for J&K, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.
  - For STs in all states, except the southern region, the workforce belonging to the lowest income group has increased. In the case of SC, apart from Haryana, Punjab, Tripura Gujarat and all states of the southern region, the working population in the lowest income bracket has either remained the same or increased over the years. For the 'others' category of workers, the proportion in the highest income category declined slightly in most of the regions but was still higher than 50 per cent in most states.
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- The wage gap has increased between males and females for most of the states between 2004-05 and 2018-19 much more for regular employment as compared to casual employment. The highest difference was visible in Assam while the neighbouring states of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland and Sikkim showed a difference of less than ₹100. Casual wages in both sectors were more or less equal for most states, except in some states like Sikkim and Karnataka.
- The wage difference between the workers of different social groups working in regular employment within a state is strongly towards the 'others' category, with the wage gap increasing in the given period. For casual employment, there is not so much wage difference between the different social classes within a state.

### **Conclusion**

While women workers constitute a marginalised position in terms of works and wages as compared to their male counterparts, the lowest layer is constituted by rural women belonging to SCs and STs. Women also have lower WPRs than men, which have also declined over the years. Much of the workforce is still concentrated in the agriculture sector but rural women are more dependent on it than men. Construction sector is the second major source of employment after agriculture. On the other hand, a much smaller proportion of works in regular salaried jobs points towards informalisation of the economy. The analysis of wage trends shows that the labour markets for casual labour are more affected by discrimination than regular labour. Contrary to the notion that caste would be a major source of discrimination in backward rural areas, most of the discrimination in the analysis has revolved around gender across various sectors, states and types of employment. However, discounting the north-east region, it is obviously seen from the analysis that in the regions where the ST/SC population is comparatively higher, the discrimination is more. There is a bias against them in terms of employment in the secondary and tertiary sectors. Also, in terms of the income groups, it was seen that almost 75-80 per cent of the ST working population belonged to the lowest income group.

Additionally, in terms of wages, there is a clear bias in favour of the 'other' castes. The overall position indicates greater disadvantages for rural women in labour markets and those belonging to SC and ST social groups. MGNREGA, however, has provided a cushion to women employment in rural areas. It makes participation in the scheme logistically feasible for women who may have limited employment opportunities available to them, given their domestic responsibilities. However, discrimination across social groups is observed in MGNREGA with SCs and STs in disadvantaged positions as compared to others. Across states, the performance of MGNREGA has varied.

**Policy Recommendations**

- A major problem of SC, ST and women is inter-generational poverty, primarily because of low education, low skills, low asset base and hence, low mobility. The poverty cycle needs to be broken to ensure that the coming generation has at least better prospects. For that matter, investment in universal education, health, nutrition and skill generation in the upcoming labour force could help break the cycle.
- There are government-sponsored employment and asset creation programmes like MGNREGA. This has invariably reached SC, ST and women in its wage component part. Its asset component part has a space for transferring productive assets to the most vulnerable households. By strengthening the individual assets components, the utility of MGNREGA for these sections of the population can be increased.
- The promotion of overall employment, especially in the non-farm sector, has been found useful for most of the marginalised workers. It has been also observed that an increase in non-farm sector employment has a positive correlation with poverty reduction. By promoting non-farm sector employment, the income and employment levels of these workers can be enhanced.
- Agricultural productivity is in positive correlation with poverty reduction, especially among the rural poor. There is also an observed positive correlation between enhanced agriculture productivity and farm sector wage rate. Since most of the rural SC, ST and women workers depend on agriculture as the primary source of employment and livelihood, enhanced agricultural productivity will create a significant positive impact on their poverty levels and living conditions.
- The absence of any social protection for these workers has aggravated their vulnerability. To some extent MGNREGA is the only social protection available to them; however, as a social protection measure, MGNREGA is inadequate in terms of income security. Further, it is provided at the household level and kept at a maximum of 100 days. As such, it can be supplemented either by providing guaranteed employment at the individual level by extending the coverage from 100 to 150 days or can be supplemented by cash transfer (some form of cash transfer in addition to MGNREGA).

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## **MIGRATION, WELLBEING AND IMPACT OF THE COVID-19: A STUDY OF UTTARAKHAND MIGRANTS IN DELHI**

**Dr Balwant Singh Mehta  
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Mr Prem Kant Mishra  
Dr Alakh Narayan Sharma  
Dr Rajendra P. Mamgain**

### **Introduction**

It is well documented that historically people migrate from backward areas to relatively developed areas for better employment and livelihood opportunities. This is also true in the case of Uttarakhand, where over the years, the nature of out-migration has changed from individual to migration with families. The lack of enough livelihood opportunities, and other social and economic infrastructural problems, especially in the hilly areas of Uttarakhand, have led to huge out-migration from the state. The region which historically attracted people to come as migrants has failed to sustain its population within. The disparity between hills and plains districts has further caused a huge out-migration problem in the state, which is creating an increasing number of ghost villages in several hilly districts.

The COVID-19 outbreak has unveiled the dismal condition of migrants at the destinations, including migrants from Uttarakhand. Low-skilled occupations in the informal sector, low-paid informal jobs, and poor living conditions are the common issues among migrants at their destination places. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the nationwide lockdown forced 3.6 lakh people to return to Uttarakhand. However, there is a dearth of any systematic study on migrants at their destination, and in particular, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their well-being.

### **Objective**

The objective of this study was to examine the migration, well-being and impact of COVID-19 on the lives and livelihood of migrants from Uttarakhand in Delhi.

### **Methodology**

Primary and secondary sources of data have been used to examine the study objective. The primary data was collected by interviewing 400 migrants through a semi-structured questionnaire, while secondary sources of information were gathered from relevant publications of state government, journal articles, books, newspaper articles, etc.

## Study Area

This study was conducted in 13 low-income localities across Delhi. In addition, some interviews and case studies were also conducted in both Delhi and Uttarakhand.

## Findings

- Most of the migrant households belonged to the General category (96 per cent) and Hindu religion (99 per cent), while their family members belonged to the youth and middle age category with an average age of 31 years. Around 67 per cent of the adult members were married, and 56 per cent were highly educated (secondary and above).
- Around 29 per cent of the adult members were working, while 61 per cent were non-working members of the migrants' families. About 10 per cent of the family members were unemployed with a relatively higher unemployment rate (16 per cent) among youth. There was a wide gender gap in employment with males (45 per cent) engaged in economic activities four times higher than females (10 per cent). Whereas, females (63.9 per cent) were involved eight times more in domestic duties than males (7.6 per cent), while males (84.6 per cent) engaged more than twice in studies than females (33.2 per cent)
- More than three-fourths (78 per cent) of the workers were regularly salaried and predominantly engaged in private (58 per cent), and services sectors (73 per cent) such as wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants. However, every sixth out of ten regular workers were engaged in the unorganised sector, and every seventh out of ten were informal workers without any social security benefits. The average monthly income of Rs. 16,449/- also indicates the poor working conditions of the migrant workers.
- More than three-fourths of them (76 per cent) were migrated within the last two-decade (20 years) period indicating that the out-migration from Uttarakhand has gained momentum after its formation in 2000. Additionally, the average age of recent migrants (28 years for up to ten years) was higher than older or long-term migrants (24 years for more than ten years) implying the possibility of longer involvement in former education, which is also revealed from the higher level of educational qualification among the recent migrants.
- More than half (52 per cent) of the migrant left their place of origin in search of employment or better employment. Every fifth, out of ten migrants migrated alone, and every fourth, out of ten migrated with family members. However, the advancement of technology has influenced the medium of job search with increasing use of communication technologies such as mobile phone and social media (23 per cent), which was found among the recent migrants.

- The impact of COVID-19 shows that at least one family member, out of every ten households was infected by the virus. Consequently, they incurred huge out-of-pocket expenditure (Rs. 37, 217 per virus-infected family) for the treatment, which they spent using their savings and borrowing from their relatives/friends. They also received support from non-government organisations, public hospitals, and private hospitals to relatives and friends, which received maximum support from non-government organisations, government medical care, family/home care, and less from private medical care and friends/relatives.
- More than three-fourths (76 per cent) of migrants lost their jobs during the COVID-19 lockdown. However, all of them who lost their jobs received payment from their employers for the lockdown period. On the other hand, around 65 per cent of the rest also faced salary cuts during the same period. In sum, a majority (92 per cent) of the migrant either lost their job or faced salary cuts during the COVID-19 lockdown. The migrants who lost their jobs during the lockdown reported that on average, they lost around Rs 71,000/- per household during the pandemic year. As a result, they along with their family members (including children) were compelled to engage in other low-paid or low-earning informal works for survival after the lockdown was lifted.
- More than three-fourths (76 per cent) of the migrant households resorted to dissaving, followed by 73 per cent, who cut their expenditure on food/essential consumption items to cope with reduced household income due to job or income losses during COVID-19. A few others borrowed money from friends/relatives, sold assets/jewellery, returned to their native place, switched to alternative livelihood options, and their kids withdrew from schools.
- Another, one-third (32.5 per cent) of the migrants reported that they returned to their native places due to various reasons such as loss of jobs or earnings and fear of the coronavirus. They were predominantly (77 per cent) engaged in agriculture, while only a few (3 per cent) were involved in MGNREGA, which is not considered respectable work in most of the villages in Uttarakhand because the majority in the state belonged to upper caste and they hardly go for daily wage work such as casual workers in construction due to social prestige at their native places. As a result, a majority (79 per cent) of the reverse migrants returned to Delhi due to existing push factors in the villages such as lack of employment opportunities, and inadequate educational and health facilities.
- Around 39 per cent of the total migrant households reported having at least one school-going child. However, about three-fourths (73 per cent) of their children could not attend schools and colleges during the pandemic. This was mainly due to lack of internet facility (64 per cent), no smartphone (17 per cent), poor internet connectivity (5 per cent), and high cost of mobile data recharge (8 per cent).

- Majority of the poor migrants' households received government assistance in the form of free-ration (89 per cent), followed by free meals (18.1 per cent), and masks (16.1 per cent), and they also availed transport facility for health emergencies. Some others also received assistance through Jan Dhan account, old age pension, free gas cylinder, and counselling and guidance. While others did not get any government assistance mainly because of lack of ration card, and other eligibility documents. On the other hand, only around one-fourth (26.5 per cent) of the return migrants received some assistance at their native places. In addition, the returned migrants also revealed that their relatives (44 per cent), family members (32 per cent), and villagers (12 per cent) provided enough support/assistance during their stay at the origin.

### **Conclusion**

The overall impact of the outmigration in Delhi has been positive with the improvement of migrants' economic conditions (84 per cent), development in education and skill level, access to healthcare (78 per cent), and children's education. But the COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on their lives and livelihood, especially in terms of loss of household earnings and livelihood sources, children's education and health of the family members, which forced them to either exhaust their past savings or seek institutional/non-institutional loans as a survival mechanism. Probit regression result shows that the impact was relatively more severe on migrants having lower levels of educational qualification, engaged in informal jobs in manufacturing, trade and hospitality sectors in Delhi, who have a higher probability of job or earnings losses than others during the pandemic.

Majority of the migrants do not see any future or potential to return to their places of origin due to lack of employment opportunities, education for children, medical facilities, road connectivity and hard living conditions in the villages. However, some of them (4 per cent) expect a good potential for employment and income opportunities in the near future in Uttarakhand if proper support and steps are taken by the state government. They would like to engage in either agriculture/horticulture activities or small trade, and business, while some others wanted to enjoy the village life and environment with government support in the form of finances, social support of villagers, and technical guidance/handholding.

### **Policy Recommendations**

- *Migrant workers are often denied entitlements at their destination places, and they form the poorest and disadvantaged sections of the society, and are mostly neglected in policy discourse. There is a lack of any credible data on migrants, which hindered efforts to organise welfare measures such as the distribution of essential items and relief material to distressed migrant workers and their*

*families, both at destinations and origin, in case of any adversities such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, there is an urgent need to prepare a national and state-level database on migrant workers, including records of returning migrants, which should be updated on a regular interval both at places of origin and destinations. The data should include details of their gender, age, current employment status, sector of employment, education and the nature of their skills.*

- There is a need for universal access to welfare schemes, as the central government has already introduced a one nation-one ration card policy, and the study also shows that the majority of migrants have identification documents, but are unable to access the benefits of welfare schemes given the absence of local documents. Most of them have identification documents either from their place of origin or destination places, and unable to access the benefits in the absence of local documents.
- *Majority of the migrants were employed at their destination in the low-paying unorganised private sector without job security and social security benefits. The study shows that almost eight out of ten have lost their jobs during COVID, which indicates the vulnerability of their employment. Therefore, there is a need to introduce universal social protection and minimum income guarantee schemes for migrant workers.*
- Since the migrants incurred huge expenditure on healthcare during the pandemic, the initiation of health insurance scheme for them by the state may be helpful. For instance, the Awaz Health Insurance Scheme introduced in Kerala aims to support migrants with insurance and also help them with valid documents along with supporting the government to maintain records of migrants.
- The Uttarakhand government has introduced several self-employment schemes such as Veer Chandra Garhwali Yojana, which offers microcredit aimed at creating sustainable employment opportunities in tourism and establishing facilities to run taxis, buses, restaurants, and tourism information centres. Since the effective implementation of such schemes plays a key role, the state government needs to showcase some success stories to develop trust and attract the out-migrants to return. Following the development model of Himachal Pradesh, the Uttarakhand government can help to generate employment as well as restrict huge out-migration of youth.
- The pandemic brings the issue of migration and migrants to the forefront for policymakers and governments both, at the place of origin and destinations. In particular, there is a need to assess the well-being and aspirations of migrants, especially youth, for effective policy formulation and implementation in future.

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENT ON THE MAJOR CSR INITIATIVES OF COAL INDIA LIMITED (DURING FY 2014-15 TO 2019-20)**

**Dr R Murugesan  
Dr Ruchira Bhattacharya  
Dr Pranab Kumar Ghosh  
Ms. Ritu Batra**

### **Introduction**

Coal India Limited (CIL), a Public Sector Enterprise of the Ministry of Coal, Government of India has been implementing many developmental initiatives under its corporate social responsibility. The focus of the company is to make a sustainable impact on human development of under-served communities through initiatives in the fields of Education, Health, Environmental Protection and Livelihoods aspects. As special initiatives, CIL has implemented six major projects in three states, viz. Bihar, Haryana, and West Bengal. CIL has assigned the task of conducting an Impact Assessment on their CSR Initiatives to the North Eastern Regional Centre of the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR-NERC), Guwahati.

Impact assessment is nothing but a means of measuring the effectiveness of interventions and judging the significance of changes brought by CSR initiatives. It is organically linked to the mission of implementing agency for its contribution towards the overall goal. Assessing the impact of CSR initiatives of Coal India Limited can help to design and implement better policies, plans, programmes, and projects that will meet important challenges such as eradication of poverty, social inequality, unemployment, health issues, climate change, biodiversity losses and new technological avenues or opportunities to inclusive growth, etc. By critically examining the developmental actions, while they are still being conceptualised, impact assessments contribute to fostering a balanced and sustainable future of society. Obviously, impact assessment has the capacity to magnify the positive effects of development by converting problems into opportunities. Hence, the study is conducted in the operational areas as desired by Coal India Limited in three states.

### **Objectives**

The overall objectives of the study are to examine direct and indirect outcomes and impacts and to assess the effectiveness of the complete range of CIL's interventions, the role of stakeholders in the maintenance of assets created under various CSR projects and the status of target groups in the programme areas.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To understand the management practices and project implementation
2. To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the interventions
3. To assess the impact of project interventions on the target groups
4. To evaluate the overall performance and outcomes of the project with reference to the project objectives, and
5. To bring out best practices and suggest effective developmental alternative models, if any.

### Methodology

The purpose of this impact assessment study is to understand the real impact made by the CSR programmes on the target communities over the years and to suggest further improvements to strengthen the programme. Accordingly, data collection for this assessment has been done in various ways. Both primary and secondary data have been collected from various sources, including the staff of CIL and the communities, with which CIL is working. The data collection tools used and the methodology adopted are as under.

To attain the objectives, the researcher has glanced through the range of economic, social, and cultural aspects with feasible representatives of the community and beneficiaries in the sample project areas. For the suitability, the researcher adopted the convenience sampling method to collect information from the universe (infinite) of these projects. However, the researcher also adopted Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to obtain fair data/information from the sample respondents. Finally, the collected data was analysed by collating various statistical techniques to analyse and describe different indicators in the study areas.

### Study Area:

The letter of reference from CIL indicates that the company has undertaken the following six major CSR activities during the year 2019-20 to the volume of Rs.78.83 crore in their project areas/specified schemes.

S. No.	Project Name & Area	Project Location	Cumulative Budget Allocation (in Crores)
1	Construction of Premashraya – a home for outpatients of Tata Medical Centre, Kolkata	Kolkata	41.11
2	Financial assistance for purchase of 3 Electric Buses & 1 Electric Car for Newtown, Kolkata	Kolkata	5.00

*Contd...*

S. No.	Project Name & Area	Project Location	Cumulative Budget Allocation (in Crores)
3	Financial assistance for procurement of ICT Scan Machine and Cath lab equipment to provide affordable healthcare at Indian Institute of Liver and Digestive Sciences (IILDS), Kolkata	Kolkata	5.44
4	First phase of Thalassemia Bal Sewa Yojana (Kolkata and/or Delhi)	Kolkata	20.00
5	Construction of 100 bedded charitable Eye, ENT and Dental Hospital-cum-diagnostic Centre in Muzaffarpur, Bihar	Bihar	4.88
6	Training of 400 youth in plastic engineering trades at CIPET, Murthal.	Haryana	2.40

### Findings

- *CIL is playing a pivotal role in developing socio-economic conditions of rural poor in the operational areas through its focused thrust area-wise CSR initiatives. Majority of these CSR initiatives are operational in health-related aspects. This apart, vocational and skill development subjects were given priority to provide assured employment to the rural youth. In this context, the efforts of the company to reach out to the rural communities and to encourage their participation in the developmental processes are commendable.*
- *It was observed and felt that projects are designed as targeted approaches and therefore, this issue needs to be addressed in cooperation with the local communities, while collaborating with implementing agencies/institutions and other civil society organisations.*
- *Even though there is a huge risk involved in maintaining the continuity of these CSR initiatives, the stakeholders within the company as well as outside of it are doing a noteworthy job and deserve high appreciation. A dedicated team of CSR officials across all operational areas are instrumental in the successful implementation of various CSR activities as planned within the stipulated time.*
- *The study also found that there is an effective monitoring mechanism adopted by the company that stimulates all the stakeholders for speedy implementation of the CSR projects which also ensures timely deliverance of their services with full strength.*

Apart from these general annotations, specific thrust area-wise findings are also presented below:

### **Health and Hygiene**

- *Several health problems are observed in rural communities but cancer is predominant among them. Ailments like anaemia and other communicable diseases are also common in the region. Supply of safe drinking water is inadequate as observed by the research team. Hence, the communities residing in the study area are also prone to waterborne diseases as informed by the stakeholders. Consumption of alcoholic products was another concern raised by the visiting medical practitioners in the project regions. The existing government healthcare centres in the region lack basic and advanced medical equipment, and its infrastructure is also in poor condition. CIL is significantly contributing to improving the health systems in the region by providing financial assistance to procure quality equipment and medicines as well as strengthening the infrastructure of the healthcare institutes, providing adequate drinking water facilities, constructing toilets for maintaining sanitation, providing medical facilities to improve health and hygiene, etc. Overall, availability and easy access to medical facilities is highly appreciated by the common public and observed in every stakeholder/beneficiary.*
- *CIL's special initiatives on health and hygiene deliver a positive impact on the patients and their family members. This could be realised from the inspiration and the confidence developed among the patients while receiving quality medical support with extra care. In general, CIL has succeeded in bettering the lives of the poor and downtrodden with their fullest support for healthcare.*

### **Skills Development & Education**

- *Education and skill are considered as the major determinants for decent earnings of any individual in the labour market. Education improves productivity and prosperity, and also enriches life experience. It not only contributes towards the growth of the people but also the development of society as a whole. So, education increases national income and other cultural richness. Coal India's initiative of providing quality education with appropriate skills by involving technical institutions in the area has delivered an overwhelming response from the students, particularly those from vulnerable communities. The study witnessed that a large number of unemployed youths are transformed into entrepreneurs through their start-ups and retail businesses in plastic and allied enterprises. Obviously, this project provided decent livelihoods to the rural youth through their skill development curriculums.*

- *Further, teachers also expressed their satisfaction because of the increasing number of students' enrolment every year, and high attendance despite many socio-economic factors in the vicinity. Since a majority of them are first-generation learners, special attention, guidance and counselling are given to them. The company's constant support provides energy to the training institution (CIPET) not only for strengthening infrastructure but also for building students' knowledge base through various skill development programmes with internships. In order to ensure employment and livelihood opportunities, the vocational training and technical institute arranges placement offers by connecting various industries. The overall effectiveness of CSR project has been realised from the positive impacts reflected through various locally manufactured products that are made by converting waste into wealth in Murthal region.*

### **Conclusion**

Though the concept of CSR has been prevalent in India since time immemorial, it has recently picked up with all the companies. The CIL, through its excellent CSR initiatives, is addressing the issues of the communities in the thrust areas of health and medical education, skill development, infrastructure, etc. Even though it is a challenging task, the CIL team is converting the risks into reality and the contributions made are highly commendable for empowering the people by building their capacities and strengthening the public infrastructure facilities. To address the issues of common public, their initiatives focus on improving the health status of the entire community. The skill development programmes are providing better income generation opportunities, particularly to the youth community, whereas the infrastructural development initiatives are improving the access and connectivity of the people, thereby opening doors for holistic development in the region which is also highly appreciable.

### **Policy Recommendations**

Based on the observations of CSR initiatives and overall findings of the evaluation study, a set of specific recommendations are made as below:

- *CIL's CSR activities received positive feedback from various stakeholders at different levels, viz. patients and their family members, and society elsewhere. Hence, it is suggested that the CSR programmes should be continued in the study areas in future as well. Further, as the health development programmes are greatly contributing to the beneficiaries, particularly poor rural communities, these medical and health programmes need to be scaled up at different levels and areas.*

- *Awareness creation is an important component of CSR initiatives. Hence, awareness programmes need to be conducted very frequently informing about various CSR programmes and policies targeted at the needy and rural population.*
- *Access to transport facilities is either limited or not available for many of the patients. Therefore, it is necessary to extend more transport facilities to the patients in the hospitals, thereby improving the connectivity to avail the medical facilities and healthcare services.*
- *There is a strong need to encourage and promote existing education infrastructure facilities that boost traditional artisanal skills like woodcraft, terracotta art, etc. Hence, skill development programmes need to be conducted in collaboration with other skill development agencies to facilitate and connect them with the market so as to keep this art of the soil alive and to connect on par with the market requirements as well as to increase the demand for these products.*
- *Promotion of sports and outdoor games, including physical fitness and personality development of the students, is need of the hour. For that reason, it should be strengthened with the provision of infrastructure facilities like a dedicated auditorium/space/ground for their regular practice wherever possible.*

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## **EVALUATION STUDY OF AAJEEVIKA GRAMEEN EXPRESS YOJANA [AGEY] SCHEME**

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**Dr. Surjit Vikraman**

### **Introduction**

Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana (AGEY), a centrally sponsored programme of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) was launched in the year 2017. The members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Groups from CBOs are the beneficiaries of the AGEY scheme. The vehicles under the scheme operate in backward and remote rural areas for the transportation needs and demands to cater services to local commuters and carriage of goods. The scheme has the provision for purchasing either 3-wheelers or 4-wheelers with interest-free financial support and has provision for loans from the Community Investment Fund [CIF]. The scheme intends to play a critical role in improving the rural economy and creating better and more efficient transport facilities in rural areas to increase household income through sustainable approaches. Since its inception, a total of 1811 AGEY vehicles have been distributed to the beneficiaries across 26 states/UTs. The scheme has not been operational since March 2021; hence, the present evaluation study was conducted in 18 states to understand the impact of the AGEY scheme and its further scope of continuation by the Government of India.

### **Objectives**

- To understand the outreach of vehicles in connecting rural places with urban centers
- To evaluate benefits received by the stakeholders at various levels
- Understand and analyse the overall impact of the scheme on livelihoods of the targeted communities
- Identify implementation gaps and provide recommendations for improvement

### **Methodology**

The study was conducted from February 2022 to July 2022. It encompassed a mixed method using qualitative and quantitative approaches to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the AGEY scheme as outlined in the objectives. A sample of 285 beneficiaries (both Individuals-169, and CBO Groups-116), 304

consumers, and 18 responses from all 18-study state SRLMs were considered for the study. The questionnaires were administered through KoBo collect software. The study used descriptive analysis to provide the overall impact of the scheme on the livelihoods of the targeted communities, outreach of vehicles in connecting remote areas, and also identify the implementation gaps.

### **Study Area**

The study was conducted in 18 sample states, viz. Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

### **Findings**

- The scheme is found impactful in the rural areas among the beneficiaries (both Individual and Group) as well as with the consumers.
- Unique outreach in remote villages (48 per cent), the positive impact on improving access to facilities (health, social and economic) for the targeted communities, support for marketing, employment generation, and access to opportunities in areas of economic growth make the scheme incredibly effective.
- The scheme was instrumental in augmenting the monthly income of both the beneficiaries of 3-wheelers and 4-wheelers and provided various benefits/ services to the stakeholders at different levels.
- The scheme has been successful in improving the rural economy to assist the rural women with an alternative source of income, particularly for the SHG women.
- The scheme has given an opportunity for CBOs to work in a new domain to support livelihoods through public transportation services
- Vehicles were well accessed and distributed to the targeted beneficiaries and majority of the vehicles were allocated to the backward and socio-economically poorer section of society.
- The scheme also provided an opportunity for women to develop their capacities and harness their driving skills.

### **Conclusion**

The AGEY scheme contributed to improving rural livelihoods, creating an alternative source of income for the targeted community, improving the rural connectivity in remote rural areas and accessing services. However, there is a need

to give more emphasis on structuring the implementation part backed by knowledge development. Also, it is important to incorporate appropriate training and capacity building to overcome the existing challenges and make the scheme more effective and sustainable. Convergence with other departments/projects/programmes with focussed IB&CB support has the potential to boost the rural economy significantly and strengthen new businesses along with adding value to existing services.

Despite having successful outcomes, outreach and a positive impact on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries, the study also identified certain gaps and challenges in the implementation process, operation, recordkeeping and documentation. No SOPs were designed and available for the implementation of the AGEY scheme at the district/block level. Lack of monitoring systems with regard to tracking AGEY vehicles for recording their performance was observed. Therefore, log books of the vehicles are to be maintained for a better understanding of the performance of the vehicle and also annual kilometre utilisation against capital investment on the vehicle. There were no dedicated persons at the state level to monitor and handhold the project. It has been also observed that high dependency on hired drivers for commercial use of their vehicles has emerged as one of the major challenges in the study area. There has been no planned training & capacity building of the beneficiaries (driving skills, vehicle service & repairs, bookkeeping, etc.) and institutional tie-up to upgrade driving skills among the beneficiaries.

Furthermore, any proposal for purchasing a vehicle and obtaining a loan must be treated as an enterprise. Hence, it is important to have a business plan and submit the respective CLFs or BLFs for a round of appraisal. Unfortunately, the study found that no such appraisal-based mechanism is in practice for evaluating the potential of existing business opportunities in transport-based services or proposed revenue models at the CBO or BMMU level while allocating the AGEY vehicle to the individuals and groups. Therefore, there is a need to consider and ensure the preparation of complete business plans from owners and its appraisal by competent authorities or community institutions.

### **Policy Recommendations**

- The programme needs to be continued and scaled up preferably in all the CLFs.
- To the extent possible, group beneficiaries are to be encouraged with 4-wheelers and individual beneficiaries with 3-wheelers.
- Caution has to be taken while encouraging 3-wheeler e-rickshaws in terms of the availability of other support services.
- E-rickshaws may be promoted in the areas of rural tourism, pilgrimage centres, etc.

- Capacity-building programmes for bettering driving skills, safety and management of vehicles should be done.
- For the selection of beneficiaries, identifying the route map should not be limited to remote area selection, but connectivity and proximity with growth centres should be considered.
- Mandatory training has to be imparted for CLFs on (i) bookkeeping (ii) loan portfolio management (iii) tie-up with government departments for vehicle services, and (iv) business plan preparation.
- SRLMs have to maintain MIS data on beneficiaries, loan recovery, ownership of vehicles, etc. Socio-economic data of the beneficiary has to be collected at the time of selection.
- Keeping in view of the requirements, DAY-NRLM EC may consider any relaxation in the case of LWE districts and other difficult areas.

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## **INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN INDIAN AGRICULTURE: NEED FOR COMMERCIALLY VIABLE AND FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE FPOs**

**Dr M. Srikanth**  
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**Dr K. Jayashree**

### **Introduction**

It is simple economics. If the farmers' income is doubled, India's economy would achieve double-digit growth in due course, since India still lives in villages and farmers are the major stakeholders. Though the sector's contribution to gross domestic product has been declining since 1947, the performance of the agriculture and allied sectors has been resilient to the COVID-19 shock, as their gross value added grew at 3.6 per cent in 2020-21 and further improved to 3.9 per cent in 2021-22 (Economic Survey, 2021-22). However, the Indian agriculture sector has been saddled with underemployment and disguised employment for quite some time. Further, the changing structure and characteristics of agricultural landholdings make Indian farmers more vulnerable and risk prone. According to the 2016 agricultural census, 86.08 per cent of the total farm holdings in India belong to small and marginal farmers. Hence the farmer, the virtual Anna Data, in India is becoming the victim of indebtedness, poverty, and hunger. India loses 2035 farmers every day to other sectors, according to the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies; and over three-fourths of the farmers are ready to quit agriculture for better jobs. By recognising the challenges faced by the small and marginal farmers, and also the lacklustre performance of the traditional cooperative societies, the Government of India decided to introduce a new business model in the name of Farmers Producers Organisation (FPO) in 2003. Though FPOs are considered as a channel to ameliorate farmers' distress by improving their collective bargaining power, it is yet to be proved through empirical evidence. In view of the above, a research study on "Commercial viability and financial sustainability of the FPOs in Telangana, Karnataka, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal" was entrusted by CICTAB and NAFED to NIRDPR. The FPOs collectivise farmers and foster penetration of technology, improve productivity, enable enhanced access to inputs and services and increase the incomes of the farmers, thereby strengthening their sustainable rural livelihoods.

### **Objectives**

The study attempted to understand whether the FPOs are involved in real 'value addition' activities, i.e. having presence in entire supply chain activities from 'farm

to fork', thereby enhancing the marketable surplus to farmer members. The study also evaluates the commercial viability and financial sustainability of FPOs in India by examining whether the FPOs in India addressed the farmers' distress and enhanced their income. Key indicators of commercial viability are size of landholdings of farmer members, cropping pattern, costs and prices of agri-produce, agricultural value chain activities including market linkages, etc. Variables of financial sustainability are sources of finance, total income, net profit, liquidity (net working capital and current ratio), solvency (debt-equity ratio), net worth, and credit linkage with banks. Also, a few case studies are presented in the report to highlight the success stories as well as key learning points from the field.

### **Methodology**

Both primary and secondary data have been collected as part of the study. Also, a few case studies are presented in the report to highlight the success stories as well as key learning points from the field.

### **Study Area**

The study covered 60 FPOs located in five states, namely Telangana, Karnataka, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. As such, primary data was collected from 357 farmer members (Group A respondents). Besides, the study collected primary data from 71 office-bearers of FPOs (Group B respondents) located in the sampling states.

### **Findings**

- The data indicates that the sample consisted of 88.34 per cent male farmers and 11.66 per cent female farmers. As per the sample, a majority of the farmer members belong to Other Backward Classes (71.16 per cent), followed by Scheduled Tribes (11.76 per cent), Scheduled Castes (10.64 per cent), and General Category (6.44 per cent). While over two-thirds of the sample (66.95 per cent) studied up to 10<sup>th</sup> standard, 13.73 per cent studied up to intermediate. Around one-tenth of the sample studied up to degree. While 2.52 per cent of the respondents studied up to post-graduation, approximately 2 per cent of the farmer members pursued vocational education. It is noticed that two-thirds of the respondents are aged between 36 and 55 years, followed by youngsters in the age group of 18 to 35 years (26.89 per cent). The average age of the farmers in the sample is 40.98 years and the average family size is 4.5. The average landholding size is 3.81 acres in five sample states, which is higher than the national average of 2.67 acres. It is reported that marketable surplus is higher in the case of cash crops when compared to food crops due to consumption of the latter by the farmer members. While Kharif crops are predominantly cotton and

paddy, Rabi crops are skewed in favour of vegetables and pulses in the study states. It is noticed that output per acre for each crop varies from one state to another, both in Kharif and Rabi crops. This variation occurs due to inadequate agricultural extension services, poor quality of seeds, soil infertility, lack of irrigation facilities, non-availability of pesticides and chemicals, etc.

- From the primary data, it is noticed that after becoming members of FPOs, majority of the farmer members could access these value-added activities, which they were not able to do in the past. It is evident that a higher proportion of the farmer members located in Karnataka, Telangana and West Bengal are availing storage, grading, processing, packing, certification, and branding facilities through FPOs when compared to the other two study states. It is observed that majority of the farmer members (88.23 per cent) are able to access finance from formal sources, i.e. banks and financial institutions after joining the FPOs, more so in the case of Telangana, Odisha and West Bengal in this context.
- It is observed that the farmer members in FPOs received higher average prices to the extent of 43.05 per cent after joining FPOs, both with respect to Kharif and Rabi crops. It is also noticed that 100 per cent of the sample farmer members in five study states contribute to FPOs' business through their subscription fee as well as equity capital apart from receiving subsidy/matching equity grants from the government/promoting agencies of FPOs.
- The primary data show that four out of five farmer members in these states insure their crops to cover various risks. Three-fifths of the farmer members in the five sample states receive agricultural extension services. Majority of the sample farmer members in the study states stated that they have a better awareness of technological advancements (89.10 per cent), access to market intelligence (78.40 per cent), and weather forecast and agri-advisory services (56.90 per cent) after joining the FPOs.
- Further, the study team conducted interviews with 71 office-bearers (Group B respondents) belonging to 60 FPOs in five states to obtain primary data on certain aspects. It is witnessed that majority (93.73 per cent) of the farmer members in FPOs are small and marginal farmers who own less than five acres of landholding. It is observed that the average number of farmer members in the 60 FPOs is 797, which is fairly a good number to reap the economies of scale. As per the responses from Group B, all 60 FPOs in sample states have office premises. Majority of the FPOs have office furniture as well as computer equipment (94.37 per cent). However, nine out of 10 sample FPOs have conference halls to conduct their meetings. It is good to note that annual reports of all FPOs are audited. Besides, all of these FPOs are credit-linked with banks/FIs to mobilise debt and working capital from formal sources of finance. Further, 10 out of 71 office-bearers of FPOs confirmed that they have arrears in

repayment of principal/interest to banks/FIs. Further, it is observed that majority of the FPOs in the study states depend on the local market for selling their agricultural produce.

- It is noticed from the secondary data of FPOs that there is a slight reduction in their average income in the five study states (-0.51 per cent) during the period FY2020-21. While sample FPOs in Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh witnessed a growth rate in average income to the extent of 10.45 per cent and 3.62 per cent, respectively, during FY2020-21, FPOs in the other three study states experienced a decline. The 60 sample FPOs conducted 750 field/exposure visits during the last three years, and the FPOs in sample states conducted 341 training programmes during the study period. The sample FPOs conducted 666 board meetings during the last year with an average figure of 9.38 per annum.
- It is seen that the average net profit margin of all FPOs was -0.16 per cent for the financial year 2020-21 as against -0.70 per cent during the previous financial year. While FPOs located in Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh are making profits, FPOs in Odisha, Telangana and West Bengal are incurring losses during the study period. As the sample FPOs incur net losses during the study period, their financial sustainability is less than satisfactory. However, it is a consolation that the sample FPOs recorded average cash profit during the study period. The average current ratio of 2.04 times of all sample FPOs in the study states as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 is satisfactory to meet their working capital requirements. Further, the average net worth of FPOs in study states stood at Rs.4.19 lakh as of March 2021. It is also observed that the average solvency ratio is 0.35 times as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, which indicates that the sample FPOs in the study states availed lower long-term debt. It is observed from the secondary data that the financial position of most of the FPOs in the sample states is not satisfactory and the best performance of these collectives is yet to come.

### **Conclusion**

Agriculture is the key to fulfilling half of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Green Revolution 1.0 transformed India from a food deficit to a food surplus country; from subsistence farming to sustainable agriculture; consumption-based economy to an export-oriented economy. The Green Revolution 2.0 may be achieved through policy focus on collectives like FPOs, conservation of water, disaster management through insurance and climate-resilient technologies, formal credit, and (export) markets through value addition. The power of innovation coupled with the power of aggregation is the panacea for most of the problems in agriculture. Therefore, strengthening FPOs by ensuring their commercial viability and financial sustainability has the potential to improve the lives and livelihoods of 12.6 crore small and marginal farmers across India.

**Policy Recommendations**

- Farmers need to diversify their cropping pattern to crops such as millets, oil seeds, pulses, fruits and vegetables, and adopt integrated farming along with dairy, poultry, and fisheries. However, diversification should not happen at the cost of food security of the nation.
- Policymakers may focus on the creation of an entire agri-value chain infrastructure, access to formal finance by FPOs, and undertake awareness campaigns among the farmer members in this context.
- As the farmer members in the study states resort to informal sources of finance, namely moneylenders, traders, commission agents, etc., at relatively higher interest rates and reduce their marketable surplus, there is a need for counselling in respect of financial prudence.
- As majority of sample FPOs in the study states have not shown long-term liabilities on their books of accounts, there is a need to enhance access to credit, mainly institutional finance, to FPOs so as to enable them to invest in fixed assets and transform them into commercial entities.
- It would be a good idea if FPOs are allowed to list on the Social Stock Exchange to mobilise risk capital. Here, the compliance framework for FPOs may be made simple given their resource crunch.
- Small and marginal farmers should be encouraged to be active members of FPOs to enhance their income and ensure their food, nutritional, and financial security.
- The farmers should be encouraged to mobilise higher equity that will take FPOs to the next level in terms of mobilisation of loans from banks/FIs, and large-scale operations, and ensure their presence in the entire agricultural value chain activities. As majority of the FPOs continue to be dependent on their promoting agencies for strategic, financial and operational aspects of management even after the handholding period, there is a need to bring in professionals to manage their business.
- CBBOs should ensure the transfer of knowledge base and key business skills to office-bearers of FPOs by the time their handholding period is completed. The board of directors should be imparted training on financial as well as digital literacy apart from managerial and strategic aspects.
- There is a need to explore export markets too by FPOs to double the farmers' income.

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## **NATIONAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (NSAP) AND STATE-SPONSORED SCHEMES IN THE STUDY AREA AND EXTENT OF DBT-AN 8 STATES STUDY**

**Dr S. N. Rao**

### **Introduction**

Article 41 of the Constitution of India enshrines States with the responsibility to 'provide public assistance to its citizens in case of 'unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement and other cases of undeserved want within the limit of its economic capacity and development'. The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) is an indicatively organised programme to address this concern of all those living below the poverty line. NSAP is thus a 100 per cent Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Government of India launched in the year 1995 that provides financial assistance in the form of social pensions to the destitute who are classified as elderly, widows and persons with disabilities. These persons have little or no regular means of subsistence from either their own source or through any other support from family or other sources. NSAP interventions are covered in five components: Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS), Indira Gandhi National Disability Scheme (IGNDPS), National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) and Annapurna Yojana. NSAP being a centrally sponsored scheme, states are authorised to release a matching grant to the beneficiary. The Government of India has also urged State governments to make their matching contributions so as to double the monthly pension amounts.

A review of the literature shows that states like Andhra Pradesh, Delhi and Haryana have paid the highest pensions while Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh have been paying much less against the matching grant provided by the Central government. In the central grant, an amount of Rs.200 per month is paid as social pension to beneficiaries aged 60–79 years and Rs. 500 per month for those who are 80 years and above under IGNOAPS. In IGNWPS, widows aged 40 years and above living below the poverty line are paid Rs.300 per month and Rs.500 for those above 80 years. In IGNDPS, individuals aged 18 years and above with more than 80 per cent disability and living below the poverty line are given a social pension of Rs.300 per month and Rs.500 for persons who are 80 years and above. In the National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS), in the event of the death of a breadwinner in a household, the bereaved family receives a lump sum assistance of Rs.20,000. Here, the breadwinner should be between 18–60 years of age and assistance is provided in the event of his/her death. While Annapurna Scheme is

aimed to provide food security to meet the requirements of those senior citizens who though eligible, have remained uncovered under IGNOAPS. Under the Annapurna Scheme, 10 kg of free rice is provided every month to each beneficiary. These social pensions are extended to the ruralpoor only to cover the risks of slipping into poverty traps and to accord a minimum standard of living.

Though the Government of India has made many provisions for providing social security to the poor, implementation of social security schemes varies from state to state across the country. Many state governments have expanded social security pensions for BPL households at their level by relaxing eligibility criteria; however, this has been expanded to non-BPL categories by increasing the monthly pension by making additions to the centrally sponsored pension. States/UTs like Delhi and Haryana have covered all those people under the old age pension scheme who are above 59 years and whose annual income does not exceed Rs. 2 lakh.

While other states have initiated schemes for non-BPL households who are not covered under NSAP like Odisha, which drafted schemes for all the elderly persons above 59 years and widows whose annual income is less than Rs.24,000. Similarly, in IGWPS, only women in the age group of 49-59 years are considered while in states like Chhattisgarh and Bihar, all widows in the age group of 18-50 years whose annual family income is below Rs.60,000 (UA 890 \$) are benefited. In IGNDP, individuals with more than 80 per cent disability are considered but in states like Bihar and Rajasthan persons with more than 40 per cent disability have also been covered. Apart from National Social Assistance programmes, the States also have their social assistance programmes. For instance, in Tamil Nadu, social security has been at two levels - nutrition and financial assistance for the unorganised poor. In Kerala, disability pension is administered by the Department of Rural Development which is a fusion of state and central level contributions. A disability pension of Rs 700 per month is granted to those with 80 per cent to 100 per cent of disability and Rs 525 per month to those with disability below 80 per cent. The Government of Kerala has also introduced Sevana Pensions online for the distribution of social security pensions to beneficiaries. Presently, six types of social security pensions are distributed through local bodies (GramPanchayats, Municipalities and Corporations) - National Old Age Pension, Widow Pension, Pension to Unmarried Women above 50 years, Pension to the Physically Challenged Persons, Pension to the Mentally Challenged Persons, Agriculture Labour Pension and Unemployment wages (Previously handled by Training and Employment Department).

In order to facilitate an efficient and effective transfer system the **direct benefit system** was introduced by the Government of India on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013 with the aim of transferring subsidies efficiently to people's accounts with a strategy to reduce leakages and delays.

Therefore, a question arises whether the social pension so accorded is adequate for meeting the basic needs of the beneficiaries in terms of food, shelter and medical aid. There has been severe criticism of the Government of India for the low rates of monthly social pension payments made to the poor, the elderly, widows and persons with disability in India.

The harshest criticism on this aspect came from the then Minister of Rural Development, Shri Jairam Ramesh, who described the low monthly pension amounts as 'an insult to the dignity' of the elderly. Though the Government of India has given directions to the State governments for organising a matching contribution to social pensions, the amount still seems to be inadequate to meet the living costs of the beneficiaries over the past decade. The Pension Parishad (an initiative to ensure universal pension to all workers in India) also demanded that the government should raise the monthly pension to half its minimum wage or Rs.2,000, whichever is higher. Similarly, the Task Force which was set up to review NSAP also recommended that pensions be indexed to inflation and increased using a similar method of calculating dearness allowance. Therefore, the present study is designed to explore in detail the implementation of NSAP and state pensions schemes, and DBT and its efficiency and adequacy, income, consumption, social pension received, its efficiency and adequacy in meeting the basic demands of the beneficiary and its role in protecting them from slipping into poverty traps and their social development.

### **Objectives**

1. To analyse the implementation and impact of NSAP, state pensions schemes and DBT, on the social development of the poor (beneficiary)
2. To study the efficiency, adequacy, delivery and impact of social security schemes and their extent in providing social security to the people.

### **Methodology**

As this study documents the effectiveness and adequacy of social pensions in high-paying and low-paying states, a sampling of beneficiaries availing social pensions for 10 years (2006) was selected for the study.

Eight states were selected for the study, and 150 beneficiaries, who benefited from five NSAP schemes, were chosen. For Annapurna schemes two beneficiaries and for National Family Benefit Schemes, 25 beneficiaries were selected. For the Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGWPS) and Indira Gandhi Old Age Pension (IGOAP) Schemes, 39 and 46 beneficiaries, respectively, were selected. For Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension (IGNDP) schemes 38 beneficiaries were picked, and for State pension schemes, 61 beneficiaries were selected. In all, 211

beneficiaries were selected for the study. In addition to questionnaire canvassing, informal personal interactions were held with the beneficiaries to achieve the objectives proposed for the study.

### **Study Area**

The study areas selected for the research activity are Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Assam and Kerala. These states were chosen keeping in view the highly-paid and low-paid social pensions for the poor in terms of NSAP.

An analysis of the social pensions accorded in various states reveals that the Central government is granting a fixed amount as a social pension to the poor under various schemes, and against it, the state governments are paying a matching grant. Social pensions are higher in the case of Andhra Pradesh, Delhi and Haryana, while other states like Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala have been paying low social pensions but have designed many schemes for social security of the poor.

These variations in the pension payments may be arrived upon considering the cost of living in the area. However, the payments have remained inadequate in meeting the basic demands of the poor. Against this factor, the protection of the poor against slipping into poverty traps is an intriguing question and achieving social development is a million-dollar question. However, the amounts so considered for social pensions are paid through Direct Benefit Transfers and these transfers have been inefficient in meeting the needs of the beneficiary in scheduled time. Therefore, the research studies various contours of social pensions which have a role to play in meeting the basic minimum needs of the people and in achieving social development.

### **Findings:**

#### **Impact of Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)**

The pension amount of IGNOAPS differs from state to state. According to the above data, the economic status of the majority of beneficiaries of IGNOAPS are poorest of the poor. They suffer more financially, and as they age, health problems also increase.

Analysis of the occupation of beneficiaries of IGNOAPS shows that most of the beneficiaries depend upon the pension received from the government. The old age pension helps the aged people to be financially independent; although the amount is meagre, it helps with the immediate needs of the people. The aged people are interested in contributing to the economy and nation-building. The elderly can build an ethical society and can guide the young in building a better society. The

government should utilise their knowledge, experience and skills. Local government plays a vital role in the awareness and implementation of government welfare schemes. The data explains that the local governance should be strengthened.

#### **Impact of National Family Benefit Scheme:**

National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) provides Rs. 20,000 to the family in the case of the abrupt death of the bread-earner. This is an immediate financial help to the family members, which is a one-time assistance. Among the 25 beneficiaries interviewed, 24 informed that they have received Rs. 20,000. A female beneficiary from Odisha, aged 53, mentioned that she has received Rs. 10,000. This shows the prevalence of corruption that prevents the assistance from reaching the beneficiaries. Most of the beneficiaries are the poorest of the poor, and a majority of them are women. In most of the poor families, the bread-earners are males. Their abrupt death brings financial disaster to the families. The data explains that the women bear the financial brunt after the death of the male bread-earner of the family. Families have turned woman-headed and maintenance has become their responsibility.

According to the available data, NFBS has benefitted the poorest of the poor. Most of the beneficiaries are daily wage labourers and they have opined that NFBS has helped in clearing the debts and attending to the immediate needs of the family. A few beneficiaries said that it also helped the need for children's education. Requesting the government to disburse the amount immediately after the death of the bread-earner, they said the delay should not be more than 10 days.

#### **Impact of Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme:**

The pension amount of IGNWPS differs from state to state. Majority of the beneficiaries are the poorest of the poor. They opined that the widow pension helped them in fulfilling the immediate needs of the family. The beneficiaries informed that the amount is meagre but helps in dire need.

#### **Impact of Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme:**

The disability may occur at any period of life. Few people are born with disability. It may create obstructions for some time, but cannot deter them from living their life. Many people with disability have become especially able people. The beneficiaries have opined that the Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) provided them with financial help to attend to family needs and health issues.

The pension amount of IGNDPS differs from state to state. The beneficiaries

informed that they are regularly receiving the pension. Being the poorest of the poor, they suffer financially, along with their disability. According to the data, most of the disabled people depend upon pension or others. Disabled people are especially able people, and given an opportunity, they excel in every activity. The government should utilise their special skills for nation-building.

### **Impact of Annapurna Scheme**

The beneficiaries of the Annapurna scheme are aged 65 years and belong to the below-poverty line category. They are getting 35 kg of rice every month. According to the beneficiaries, this scheme has helped them to survive for 30 to 35 days. It helped many senior citizens, as they did not have to depend upon their children for food. Sometimes, these food grains helped the family members in times of dire need. The beneficiaries expressed satisfaction and requested that the food grains should be provided by the 10<sup>th</sup> of every month.

### **Impact of State Pension Schemes**

The states are implementing several social security schemes. The amount of pension differs from scheme to scheme and differs from state to state – i.e. Rs.300 to Rs.2,500. The state governments are providing social security measures, particularly to the disabled, widows, unmarried women and senior citizens. This is a great help to the people who are suffering financially. Most of the beneficiaries are the poorest of the poor and rely on pensions provided by the government. Many beneficiaries mentioned that although the amount is very low, it helps to meet the emergency needs of the family.

The local governments played a vital role in awareness creation and reaching the people. In Delhi, honourable MLAs played a key part, as there is no local governance. According to the data, the Sarpanch, Gram Sabha, Village Secretary and MLAs are instrumental in creating awareness about the government schemes. Since local government plays an important role in the awareness and implementation of government welfare schemes, local governance should be strengthened for the benefit of schemes reaching the right beneficiaries.

### **Conclusion**

Global goals aim well-being of people of all categories and ages. It has brought focus to the social security system for disabled people, widows, unmarried women and senior citizens. The pandemic (COVID-19) has taught many lessons and has imposed unprecedented economic and health challenges. It has declared a worldwide economic and health emergency. COVID-19 has destroyed many poor families as bread-earners succumbed to it. Many poor families have lost livelihoods

and are trapped in constant poverty. The pandemic has brought the focus of social security, and helping the poor has become the need of the hour. The Government of India and provincial governments have launched many social security schemes for the welfare of disabled people, widows, unmarried women, and senior citizens. The Ministry of Rural Development has implemented schemes, such as 1) Annapurna Scheme, 2) National Family Benefit Scheme, 3) Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme, and 4) Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme.

The state governments have also launched many social security schemes. Andhra Pradesh is executing three social security schemes - 1) Weaver Pension scheme, 2) Toddy Tappers pension scheme and 3) For AIDS (HIV) patients. Delhi is launching two social security schemes - 1) Widow Daughter Marriage Scheme, and 2) unmarried women pension scheme. Kerala is implementing two social security schemes - 1) Unmarried women pension scheme (above 50 years of age), and 2) Agriculture labour pension scheme. Odisha is implementing the Madhu Babu Pension Yojana (MBPY), while Rajasthan is implementing the Chief Minister Old Age Pension Scheme, and Tamil Nadu is launching the Indira Gandhi National Disabled Pension Scheme.

### **Policy Advocacy**

The beneficiaries have expressed happiness for the financial help to the people in need. They have made the following suggestions to improve the schemes.

1. Awareness of social security schemes is minimal and not known to many. Very few people are aware of the schemes from different sources. The beneficiaries have felt the need to generate awareness through multimedia. In rural areas, strengthening of local government is required to create awareness and benefits reach the right beneficiaries. Display boards may be put up at different places in the village and the list of schemes may be provided at the entrance of Gram Panchayat.
2. Beneficiaries felt that health problems related to ageing, such as blood pressure and blurred vision, are the main problem. The beneficiaries requested free health facilities and medicine for the aged and specially-abled.
3. The beneficiaries of NFBS demanded that the benefit should be increased from Rs. 20,000 to 50,000.
4. The beneficiaries felt that the government should provide economic activity to earn their livelihood.
5. The beneficiaries from Kerala requested for monthly payment of pension, instead of quarterly payment.
6. The beneficiaries of IGNPDS requested an increase in disability pension to 5000.
7. The beneficiaries requested the government for pucca houses, educational

- assistance for their children, livelihood activities for women members, and employment opportunities for their children.
8. The physically disabled students requested free education as they were depending on their parents and were not able to earn.
  9. The beneficiaries requested skill training to earn their livelihood, which disabled and senior citizens can perform.
  10. Few beneficiaries have complained about the rude behaviour of Gram Panchayat and bank staff. The beneficiaries requested for change in attitude towards disabled and senior citizens.
  11. The ageing process brings health and financial problems and makes people depend on family members. According to the studies, ageing reduces mobility. Disintegration of the joint family system has created a gap between the children, young and aged people. However, the aged people have skills, knowledge, and experience that can contribute to the family and nation-building as well. In the countries like China, Japan and European countries, the aged people are actively involved in nation-building.
  12. In India, skills may be provided according to the age and ability of individuals. This makes them contribute to the economy and nation-building.

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## **SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS AND DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES: A STUDY OF WADI PROGRAMME IN SELECT DISTRICT OF KARNATAKA**

**Dr Raj Kumar Pammi**

### **Introduction**

Population growth demands the basic needs in most of the developing countries. The growing populations need food, clothing, shelter, fuel and fodder for their livestock. In the absence of adequate employment opportunities, rural people, particularly the disadvantaged communities, are unable to generate enough wages to sustain their livelihood. The concept of sustainable livelihoods is a major challenge in rural areas. Livelihood is defined as adequate stocks and flows of food and cash to meet basic needs. In India, over 80 per cent of the rural income is generated from agriculture, which spends about 75-80 per cent of their earnings on food. Agriculture is the major source of livelihood but most of the illiterate farmers, particularly in the absence of an assured source of water and external inputs, have not been successful in cultivating their lands economically. They have been treating agriculture as a family tradition, following age-old practices and have adopted new changes only after observing the success of their neighbours. Over 12-15 per cent of the rural families are landless, and among the landholders, 69 per cent are marginal farmers with <1 ha and above 21 per cent are small farmers. A major portion of these lands are in arid zones, which are mostly owned by poor families. As the chances of crop failure on these lands are very high, the farmers generally do not invest in external inputs like improved seeds, fertilizers and plant protection measures and end up with poor crop yields, even during normal years.

Water is a critical input for human consumption as well as for crop production but is grossly neglected by the community. The major sources of water supply are rainfall, lakes, rivers and underground storage. Except for wells and small tanks, the communities own the other sources of water collectively. However, the powerful lobbies and those with vested interests have been taking advantage of these water resources for their benefit, while the poor have no means of utilising their share. This has been accelerating the economic imbalance between the small and large landholders. Forest has been providing many direct and indirect benefits to rural communities. Ill effects of deforestation are evident in the form of shortage of fodder, fuel, timber, non-wood forest products and medicinal herbs. Deforestation has been directly suppressing agriculture production, which is yet to be realised by a major section of society.

Poor productivity of the land and livestock, and inefficient use of forest are the causes of seasonal employment of villages. Small farmers have to work for only 100 odd days and grow only one crop in a year, which is not adequate to sustain their livelihood. The poorest families, particularly the landless and marginal holders owning poor-quality land, tend to migrate with the entire family. Such migrations severely affect the quality of life due to poor health, lack of education and social pressure leading to erosion of moral values.

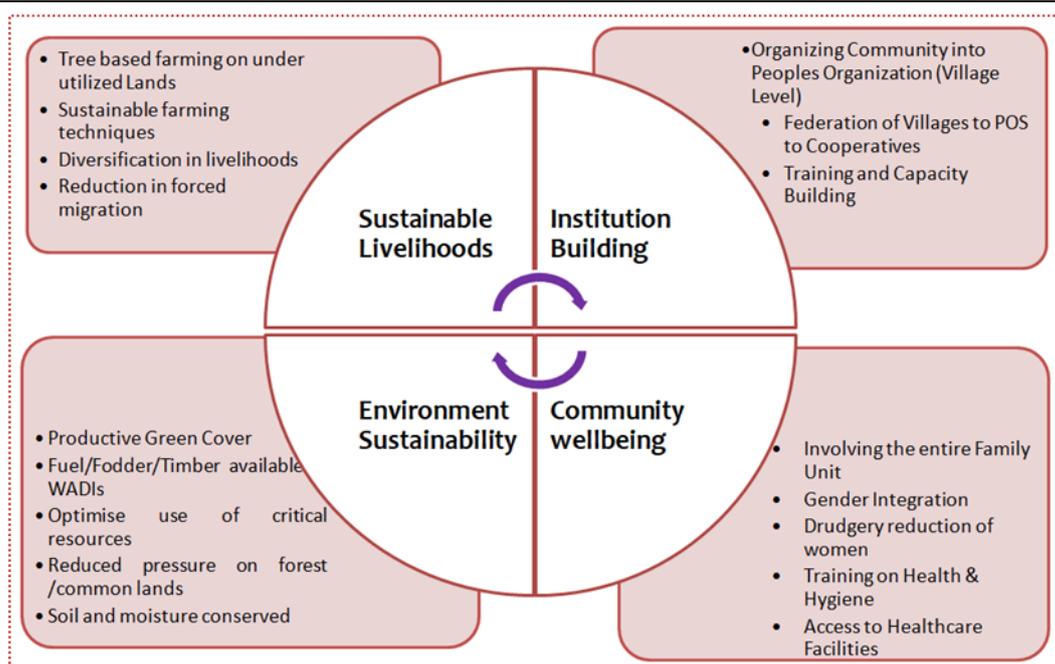
To address the problems of poor families, especially the disadvantaged communities, Bharatiya Agro Industries Foundation (BAIF), a voluntary organisation, has set its mission to create opportunities for gainful self-employment for rural families by ensuring sustainable livelihood, enriched environment and improved quality of life and good human values. The BAIF aims to achieve its goals through the effective use of local resources, extension of appropriate technology and upgradation of skills and capabilities with community participation.

BAIF has developed the Village Cluster Development Approach to reach the poorest of the poor. This facilitates identifying the problems and needs of poor families and the introduction of appropriate technologies and services to solve them. To facilitate backward and forward development and ensure sustainability, self-help groups of men and women of homogeneous socio-economic status are being promoted. These groups have identified various on-farm and non-farm income generation activities to boost their income further.

***The WADI Programme:***

The WADI concept is a holistic development approach that takes into account all aspects of rural life. This concept can be viewed from different levels or perspectives. Viewed through a wide angle, it covers the development of a designated area of land and its inhabitants in the form of a WADI cluster. It has dimensions of farm production, natural resource management, social mobilisation and economic growth from an individual farm perspective; it is a tree-based farming system, more specifically a WADI system, in which the physical unit interacts with other production components of the farm such as annual crop fields and livestock.

The WADI programme is a development strategy aimed at smallholders in dry areas who cannot take the risk of investing in high-input intensive agriculture because of poor land quality and limited water availability. A comprehensive approach to rural development was designed and implemented by the BAIF Development Research Foundation.



**Figure 1: Essence of the WADI**

## Objectives

The main objective of the proposed study is to understand the strategies and approaches of the 'WADI Programme' in the study area due to an initiative by BAIF and establish a sustainable model for the development of small holdings in dry areas. However, the specific objectives of the proposed study are as follows:

- To study the 'WADI Programme' in Karnataka state
- To investigate the strategies and approaches of the 'WADI Programme' for the promotion of livelihoods
- To analyse the effect of the 'WADI Programme' on the socio-economic development of disadvantaged communities
- To suggest measures for the improvement of the Programme

## Methodology

The subject of the proposed study is very important for the livelihood development of disadvantaged communities. Therefore, keeping in view the importance of the subject and other constraints, the study proposes to select 30 samples HHs from each Gram Panchayat, the required sample of the proposed study. Thus, a total of 120 sample HHs were selected for the study were selected through the purposive sampling method. Selection of HHs will be done through the help of officials from BAIF. BAIF has its outreach in almost all blocks of Haveri district and is well aware of the place of residence (localities). The study also proposes to conduct in-depth interviews with stakeholders of the WADI

Programme. The in-depth interviews will be done to know the process, execution and challenges in BAIF's WADI Programme. A few individual-level successful cases will also be documented for a deeper understanding of the socio-economic development of disadvantaged communities.

### **Study Area**

The proposed study was conducted in the state of Karnataka. Within the state, one district (Haveri) was selected. Within the district one block (Shiggoan) and within that four Gram Panchayats - Hirebendigeri, Mamadapur, Kadahalli, Kengapur and Attigeri - were selected for the study.

### **Findings**

- The total geographical area of Haveri district is 4,85,156 hectares, out of which the area sown is 4,13,769 hectares. The total net irrigated area is 95,324 hectares. The area not available for cultivation is 39,275 hectares. Majority of farmers (about 88 per cent) have dryland. Whereas, in the case of study area, the geographical area is 58,920 ha; this was about 12.14 per cent of the total area of the district. The forest area was about 20.97 per cent of the total forest area, followed by 10.90 per cent in case land is not available for cultivation, and fallow land was only 3.75 per cent of the total fallow land. The geographical area of study area accounts for 12.14 per cent of the Haveri district area. The number of hoblies is 15 per cent of the total district and the number of villages accounted for 13.9 per cent and 11.9 per cent, respectively, of district population in the study area. The population density of the study area is low when compared to the district. However, decadal change in per cent, actual annual rainfall and rainy days were high in the study area when compared to Haveri district.
- The result shows that the average age of farmers was 42 years with four family members. Majority of the population belonged to three caste categories such as Scheduled Tribes (49.08 per cent), and Scheduled Castes (35.00 per cent) followed by other backward communities (11.67 per cent). The income of households per year was Rs.18,000 and the major occupation was agriculture (86.67 per cent), followed by the small micro rural business enterprises (8.33 per cent). The least was agricultural labour activities (3.33 per cent).
- Since majority of them were farmers, agriculture was the main occupation. They can adopt new crop technologies if assistance is provided through the WADI programme. Besides, they belong to socially disadvantaged groups. All these factors will help the funding agencies to contribute to the development of the WADI programme in all related sectors.

- The area under principal crops in the cases of cereals, pulses and oil seeds were 26,981, 1737 and 9203 hectares, respectively. Among cereals, maize accounted for 57.64 per cent of the total area under cereal cultivation followed by jowar (18.94 ha) and paddy (18.93). Similarly, in the case of pulses, green gram (53.28 per cent) was the highest, followed by Bengal gram which accounted for 368 ha (21.18 per cent) and Tur (5.41). Among oil seeds, the highest area was observed for groundnut (5963 ha), soya bean (3066 ha) and safflower (116 ha) accounting for 64.79 per cent, 33.32 per cent and 1.26 per cent, respectively, of the total area. The least was observed in the case of linseed, which was only 5ha.
- The average age of the sample farmers in Haveri district was 43 years with literacy of 96.77 per cent and illiteracy of 3.33 per cent. In Haveri district, 20.00, 15.33, 58.33 and 3.33 per cent of the farmers, respectively, have studied up to primary, secondary school, intermediate and degree levels. Regarding occupation in the study area, about 93 per cent of people were involved was agriculture and the rest of 7 per cent were engaged in vocations other than agriculture as a subsidiary occupation. The average family size of sample farmers was four. Majority of them own dryland, which accounts for about 90.47 per cent, and the average area under the WADI programme was about 0.4ha.
- Most of the farmers were educated and literate; they were youth and had a nuclear family. All these factors helped the sample farmers in Haveri district to undertake WADI programme activities as remunerative enterprises. This enabled the respondents to allocate a manageable size of the total area under the orchard to get higher returns.
- The distance of market influences major decisions for the farmers in the study area, especially for perishable products, if farmers are engaged in the sale of horticultural produce in nearby markets. In marketing-related aspects, farmers revealed that they have to move about 5 to 10 kilometres for sale in different markets of nearby areas. About 23.33 per cent of farmers stated that they travel 10 to 15 kilometres to sell their produce. Only 5 per cent of the total sample farmers travelled for more than 15 kilometres. Cereals and pulses require almost care for marketing, particularly maize as it is considered for the processing industry.
- The major livelihood activity was rearing dairy animals and growing vegetables such as green chillies, brinjal and tomato, which accounted for 58 per cent of the total samples. The next best intervention through the WADI programme for livelihood was rearing animals and growing crops such as maize, green gram, and Bengal gram accounted for 22 per cent of the total samples. In the study, only 6 per cent of farmers were engaged in growing vegetables and fodder crops and 4 per cent were vegetable growers and small rural enterprises.
- The majority of farmers who adopted groundnut and millet combination

accounted for 28.33 per cent of the total samples. The next crop was maize and millet combination adopted by 20 per cent of farmers. Groundnut and millets were the third major combination adopted by the farmers which was introduced by the WADI programme in the study area.

- The majority of the sample farmers (36.67 per cent) demanded processing and storage facilities in the study area, followed by marketing (21.67 per cent) and availability of market information (15 per cent) on an urgent basis for the benefit of the farming community.
- The findings show that the majority of farmers, who undertake horticulture + forestry + vegetable growing option in their orchard, accounted for 23.33 per cent, followed by 31.67 per cent who undertake horticulture + forestry + fodder. Women development activities like self-help groups (SHGs) accounted for 18.33 per cent of the total sample farmers in the study area. This clearly indicates that the WADI programme can increase awareness about soil conservation measures and also support landless farmers.

### **Conclusion**

In the study area, the income of households per year was Rs.11,000 and the major occupation was agriculture (86.67 per cent) followed by the small micro rural business enterprise (8.33 per cent) and the least was agricultural labour activities (3.33 per cent).

- Among agriculture production activities, maize accounted for 57.64 per cent of the total area of cereals followed by jowar (18.94 ha) and paddy (18.93). The average age of the sample farmers in Haveri district was 43 years with literacy of 96.77 per cent and illiteracy of 3.33 per cent.
- Among marketing facilities, about 23.33 per cent of farmers stated that they move a distance of 10 to 15 kilometres for selling their produce and only 5 per cent of the total sample farmers travelled for more than 15 kilometres.
- The major livelihood activity was rearing dairy animals and growing vegetables such as green chillies, brinjal and tomato in the study area which accounted for 58 per cent of the total samples.
- Among suggestions, 36.67 per cent of farmers cited the non-availability of processing and storage facilities in the study area, followed by lack of marketing (21.67 per cent) and non-availability of market information (15 per cent).
- The horticulture+ forestry+ vegetable growing option was undertaken by 23.33 per cent of sample farmers, followed by 31.67 per cent who opted for horticulture+ forestry+ fodder. Women development activities like self-help groups (SHGs) were undertaken by 18.33 per cent of the sample farmers.
- All these activities underline the importance of rural infrastructure and rural

model functionaries for the development of rural masses characterised by economically poor and backward classes. These communities need financial as well as technical support for their well-being to bring in sustainable overall development without harming the natural resource base of awardees (land) to the farmers through the WADI programme.

**Policy Recommendations:**

- Farmers should be given requisite processing and storage facilities.
- Farmers should be given access to marketing-related infrastructure and mini-processing industry, which can boost income and create employment opportunities.
- Farmers should have equal access to resources such as markets and market-related information.
- The focus should be on capacity building of farmers on various farm techniques and methods for better development of crops at the cluster level.
- Interactive dashboards may be created at the cluster level so that farmers can easily utilise digital resources to manage and plan different activities for the betterment of their livelihoods.
- Farmers should be allowed to express their needs at Gram Sabhas, and accordingly, GPDP should be developed.

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## **INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF ONGOING PROJECTS UNDER MAHILA KISAN SASHAKTIKARAN PARIYOJANA (MKSP)**

**Dr Nithya V. G.  
Dr Surjit Vikraman  
Dr Ch Radhika Rani**

### **Introduction**

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana (DAY-NRLM), one of the nation's major flagship programmes for improving rural livelihoods, has made good progress in putting various livelihood-related activities into action across the states. Over the years, DAY-NRLM has established reliable self-help organisations for the poor, particularly women, giving them access to sources of income. Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) has been strengthening livelihoods through interventions in SRLM agroecological practices, organic cluster and Value Chain Development components. The focus of the programme is on the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and has supported 90 lakh Mahila Kisan through its farm livelihoods initiatives and 98,000 enterprises under the SVEP programme. The Centre for Agrarian Studies of the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (NIRDPR) has conducted an independent evaluation of the ongoing MKSP projects in 10 states to understand the activities implemented in different states for evaluating the project activities for efficiency and effectiveness in line with the MKSP targets/ guidelines and to suggest appropriate measures and recommendations for scalability of projects.

### **Objectives**

The specific objectives of the evaluation study are to come out with an appraisal on

- Efficiency and effectiveness of the MKSP projects' implementation
- Assess the success of individual projects in terms of their outcomes, and
- Suggest appropriate measures and recommendations for the scalability of projects

### **Methodology**

The study involved in-depth discussions with various stakeholders through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) conducted at the village level for collection of data for the group-based activities. Field verifications on the performance of the assets created and their impacts were documented through interviews with the Mahila

Kisans. Also, lessons learnt, best practices, and success stories were captured to highlight the importance of suitable decisions and to document case studies.

**Table 1: Evaluation Approach**

Projects	Individual interviews		Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	
	Number of villages (5 villages per project)	No. of MKs interviewed (5 MKs per village)	No. of FGDs (5 per projects)	No. of MKs in FGDs (8 MKs per FGD)
15	75	375	75	600

The study encompassed both qualitative and quantitative approaches using primary and secondary data through desk review, interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), field observations and stakeholder consultations to enable an in-depth understanding of the performance of the projects. The primary data was captured through interviews and FGDs with Mahila Kisans (MK) and implementing agencies. The secondary data was based on the approved proposals, sanction orders, Detailed Project Report (DPR), inception report, baseline survey report and other project documents. From each project, five villages comprising 25 MKs were selected for the individual interviews and five FGDs were conducted involving eight MKs for each FGD (Table 1). The final report is based on the analysis of primary and secondary data, and the discussion. The study uses descriptive analysis to assess the success of individual projects in terms of their outcomes.

### Study Area

The evaluation study was conducted for 15 MKSP projects in 10 states as depicted in Table 2 by engaging the National Resource Persons (NRPs).

**Table 2: Details of the Projects**

S. No	State	Name of the MKSP PIA	Name of the Project
1	Andhra Pradesh	Krishna Zilla Samakhyta	MKSP for Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture
2	Andhra Pradesh	Nellore Zilla Samakhyta	MKSP for Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture
3	Andhra Pradesh	Srikakulam Zilla Samakhyta	MKSP for Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture

*Contd...*

S. No	State	Name of the MKSP PIA	Name of the Project
4	Telangana	Khammam Zilla Samakhya	MKSP for Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture
5	Telangana	Medak Zilla Samakhta	MKSP for Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture
6	Telangana	Ranga Reddy Zilla Samakhya	MKSP for Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture
7	Meghalaya	Meghalaya SRLM	MKSP AAP on sustainable agriculture
8	Bihar	ASA (Action for social advancement)	Enhancing status of small women farmers by improving their strategic role in agriculture through building two tier women led collectives, increased agriculture productivity and ensuring efficient backward and forward market linkage systems, in Purnea, Khagaria, and Jamui Districts of Bihar
9	Odisha	Odisha SRLM	MSKP AAP on medicinal plant
10	Odisha	Odisha SRLM	MKSP AAP on Tasar
11	MP	MP SRLM	MKSP AAP on sustainable agriculture
12	Kerala	Kerala SRLM	MKSP AAP on Value chain intervention
13	Tamil Nadu	Tamil Nadu SRLM	MSKP AAP on sustainable agriculture
14	Puducherry	Puducherry SRLM	MKSP AAP on sustainable agriculture
15	West Bengal	WBSRLM	MKSP AAP on Tasar

### Findings

- The MKSP programme has been well conceived and structured involving the community stakeholders and has the ability to customise to suit the requirements of the state's priorities for livelihood promotion.
- All the projects achieved physical targets in terms of covering villages, number of MKs, PGs, CHCs and agroecological practices such as crop planning, seed treatment, soil health management and water management, pest and disease management and value chain interventions.
- The project components were implemented by working in convergence with various technical partners.
- The Community Resource Persons (CRPs) were able to impart the necessary skills to promote agroecological practices
- The scheme interventions have enabled significant societal impacts and have been able to make substantial improvements in the incomes of MKs.

## **Conclusion**

The MKSP programme has been well conceived and structured involving the community stakeholders and has the ability to customise to suit the requirements of the state's priorities for livelihood promotion. The Community Resource Persons (CRPs) were able to impart the necessary skills to promote agroecological practices. The Project components were implemented by working in convergence with various technical partners. Need-based engagement with other line departments (agriculture, animal husbandry, marketing federation, municipal corporation, silk board, horticulture and MGNREGS) was done by the PIAs to achieve the project objectives. The projects had a strong community extension system and the programme management was done by the SHG women who formed into producer groups which are informal groups of less than 20 members. Producer groups were formed on a cluster approach and started functioning.

Capacity building activities have been the core of most of the projects. The PIAs laid a lot of emphasis on capacity building and training programmes, and have leveraged the ICT development tools to enhance the capacities of the Mahila Kisans. The projects have used different approaches to strengthen the capacities of MKs such as community-based videos, field demonstrations, farmer field schools, and exposure visits to model farms and farmers where the best practices and improved technologies are in place. Significant efforts have been made by the PIAs for knowledge repository and dissemination. The village immersion programmes adopted by a few states wherein the community stakeholders and project implementation staff discuss the progress and share learnings with others on a regular basis. To reinforce the knowledge of best practices and ensure wider reach, wall writings displayed at prominent places were considered to be a good approach. A mobile extension tool was developed to monitor the programme outputs by uploading data by different functionaries.

MKSP programmes implemented by the PIAs were well planned but there has been a delay in executions and this may be due to lack of coordination, proper monitoring and shortage of project staff. MIS is the backbone of reporting, so timely updating of MIS is very essential in all themes of NRLM. The MKSP projects were well conceived and planned to meet its intended objectives but were delayed owing to administrative reasons in some states due to state bifurcation or delay in contribution of the state share. The implementation structure of the state's contribution to the total project cost to ensure commitment from the state in participation has met with some challenges, as there have been severe lapses in the contribution, which led to delays in the implementation of the project. Further, it is observed that a few of the activities are still in place while the majority have been discontinued. MKSP projects could have been more effectively implemented and the resources efficiently utilised with greater commitments from all the stakeholders.

**Policy Recommendations**

- Impart business skills to CRPs to enable micro-enterprise development and effective market linkages.
- There is a need for constant updates of the MIS to ensure that the interventions and best practices made are well captured, secured and made available to the succession in the case of staff transfers.
- The potential scope for value addition is enormous and there is a huge opportunity for product development and the establishment of micro-enterprises.
- There is a felt need for more training, exposure & workshops for the women farmers and CRPs to improve knowledge for effective implementation and adoption of sustainable agricultural practices, convergence, participation in Gram Sabha and other platforms.
- There is a necessity to conduct more demonstrations for good agriculture practices with some new varieties to improve resilience to climate change.
- There is a greater need for good coordination with various departments to promote convergence so that the MKSP platform can be leveraged to bridge the gap for sustainable livelihoods. Effective convergence is needed from different departments for different schemes, especially for the MGNREGA scheme for NRM-based asset creation.
- SRLMs could draw on linkages either with existing government or credit facilities to facilitate tractors/machinery for using tools of Custom Hire Centre to the targeted families. Strengthening CHCs with machinery, making CHCs revenue generation centres and deploying VA as its manager under the overall ownership of communities may be explored.
- Formation and strengthening of new Farmer Producer Organisation/federation toward taking a lead role in providing end-to-end services, including capacity building.
- The promotion of an 'Agri-Service Centre' with multiple products (NPM materials, expert services, vegetable nursery, tools on hire, etc.) and services has been proved to be a very effective revenue model.
- There should be a regular and strong system for monitoring and documentation of the project activities.

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**AN ASSESSMENT OF YSR PENSION KANUKA –  
A SOCIAL SECURITY SCHEME OF NATIONAL POLICY FOR  
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE IN THE STATE OF ANDHRA PRADESH**

**(Sponsored by Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP),  
Govt. of Andhra Pradesh)**

**Dr K. Prabhakar**

**Dr S. N. Rao**

**Mr Rajeshwar**

**Introduction**

The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) is a welfare programme administered by the Ministry of Rural Development and is being implemented in rural areas as well as urban areas. NSAP represents a significant step towards the fulfilment of the Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Constitution of India, which enjoin upon the state to undertake within its means a number of welfare measures. These are intended to secure adequate means of livelihood, raise the standard of living, improve public health, provide free and compulsory education for children, etc., for the citizens. In particular, Article 41 of the Constitution of India directs the state to provide public assistance to its citizens in the event of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement and other cases of undeserved want within the limit of its economic capacity and development.

**NSAP in Andhra Pradesh:** According to the NSAP database, the state of Andhra Pradesh has a total of 15,40,456 beneficiaries covering all five NSAP components with a state cap of 9.51 lakh pensioners. Out of the total beneficiaries, 58 per cent are female and the rest are male. On average, 84 per cent of pension (12,94,619 beneficiaries) disbursement is done every month through direct cash disbursement (Pension's at door delivery system) and the rest of 16 per cent through DBT (bank account which includes three members through post office account).

**YSR Pension Kanuka in Andhra Pradesh:** The Andhra Pradesh government has implemented 'Navarathnalu,' which consists of several welfare and developmental projects for the public to further its commitment to the welfare and development of all facets of society. On average, every month, the Government of Andhra Pradesh disburses Rs.1765.05 crore to 64.06 lakh beneficiaries under 27 different schemes of YSR Pension Kanuka of Social Security Scheme of National Policy for Social Assistance (including 9.32 lakh NASP pensions). It is a massive social security programme with vast coverage across the state and involves direct cash disbursement (84 per cent).

**Need:** There is a need to assess the 'YSR Pension Kanuka' scheme/programme implementation process in terms of programme access, process, usage, leakages, time-bound service delivery, and beneficiaries' satisfaction for further betterment and effective implementation of the YSR Pension Kanuka.

### **Study Objectives**

The study assessed the entire programme implementation process of 'YSR Pension Kanuka' in Andhra Pradesh by considering the experiences of the YSR Pension scheme stakeholders to cover the following objectives:

- To review the implementation of the 'YSR Pension Kanuka' scheme
- Obtaining beneficiaries' feedback about 'YSR Pension Kanuka' services delivered in terms of accessibility, reliability, disbursement process, benefits, leakages, time-bound service delivery and satisfaction
- To examine the process and beneficiaries' experiences of direct door delivery cash disbursement YSR Pension Kanuka
- To provide policy recommendations on direct door delivery cash disbursement pensions based on stakeholders' responses
- To suggest measures to improve the initiatives in the direction of achieving the goal of 'YSR Pension Kanuka'

### **Methodology**

The methodology for the study involved the collection of primary data from the actual beneficiaries of 'YSR Pension Kanuka' covering service delivery aspects of accessibility, reliability, disbursement process, benefits of direct door delivery cash disbursement, leakages, time-bound service delivery and their level/extent of satisfaction towards the programme. It also covered service providers' responses (official) from all levels to understand the programme implementation process, benefits of direct door delivery cash disbursement and issues, if any at the field level, for further betterment of the scheme.

**Methods of data collection:** Two different survey instruments, including beneficiaries' interviews along with officials implementing YSR Pension Kanuka, were developed. The entire data collection has been completed through an electronic data collection process, i.e. both the questionnaires are entered in ODK collect data collection software and complete data is collected through smartphones.

### **Questionnaire Design**

Two basic questionnaires were designed/developed for the study and details of the questionnaires are given below.

1. Beneficiary questionnaire for cross-checking/verifying deliverables of 'YSR

Pension Kanuka' by implementing authority/agency, covering service delivery aspects of accessibility, reliability, disbursement process, benefits of direct door delivery cash disbursement, leakages, delays, time-bound service delivery and their level/extent of satisfaction toward the programme, etc.

2. Questionnaire to verify and track functional-related issues from state, district, mandal and village levels. The same questionnaire had different sections for different levels.

**Study Area & Sampling:** A total of 1023 YSR Pension Kanuka beneficiaries and 146 officials were interviewed from six selected districts, namely Chittoor, Sri Sathya Sai, Annamayya, Bapatla, Visakhapatnam and Srikakulam based on simple systematic random sampling method. In each selected district, around 170 YSR Pension Kanuka beneficiaries and 25 officials were interviewed.

### Major Findings

**Type of Pensions:** Almost one-third (32.6 per cent) of respondents reported that they were availing old age pension, followed by widow pension (25.9 per cent), and disability pension (8 per cent). The remaining were availing other pension schemes, namely Single Women Pension, Dappu Artists Pension, Weavers Pension, Fishermen Pension, CKDU Pension, Traditional Cobblers Pension, Toddy Pension, Transgender Pension, Art Pension and Health Pension.

**Awareness about YSR Pension programmes:** The communities were made aware of YSR Pension mainly through Gram Sabha meetings (55.8 per cent), neighbours/relatives (25.9 per cent), other beneficiaries (23.8 per cent), notices/signboards at GP/mandal (22 per cent), wall paintings/posters/brochures (20.7 per cent) and print & electronic media advertisements (8.3 per cent). This shows that a good campaign is going on in the state to make effective use of the programme. Almost 94 per cent of the beneficiaries said that they were aware of the process of submitting their application to avail the pension scheme.

**Awareness, Availed amount & Process of cash disbursement of YSR Pension Kanuka:** More than 94 per cent were aware of the entitled monthly YSR pension amount. With regard to the process of pension amount disbursement, all the interviewed beneficiaries reported that on the first day of every month itself, they were receiving the full entitled amount via direct cash distributed by the volunteers at their doorstep. Almost 95 per cent reported that they never paid any amount to the persons who distribute cash (volunteers) while receiving the pension. But, after receiving the pension amount, they haven't received an 'alert message' on their registered phone number. The beneficiaries felt that such a practice would avoid any misuse of the pension distribution process.

**Officials' response on Delivery of YSR Pension Kanuka:** A total of 146 officials from all levels were interviewed and they responded that the department has been receiving sufficient funds to distribute pensions regularly without fail. Also, 98.4 per cent of officials reported that they have a designated section to look into the YSR Pension Kanuka programme.

**Preferred Mode of Pension Disbursement:**

	Beneficiaries	Officials
Current mode of pension disbursement	Almost all (99.1 per cent) of beneficiaries said that their preferred mode of pension distribution is direct cash distribution by volunteer at their doorsteps.	The entitled amount is completely distributed as a direct cash distribution mode through village volunteers every month without fail
Responses towards DBT Vs in favour of direct cash distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pension amount will be received on the 1<sup>st</sup> of every month (98.9 per cent).</li> <li>• Pension amount will be received to the actual (36.4 per cent).</li> <li>• Pension amount will receive pensioner's door steps (39.3 per cent).</li> <li>• Pensioners need not wait long hours in the banks (35.4 per cent).</li> <li>• The old age and disabled persons are unable to go to banks (60.7 per cent) &amp; operate ATMs (62.3 per cent)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pension amount will be handover on the 1<sup>st</sup> of every month (97.2)</li> <li>• Pension amount will be received by the actual pensioner (87.3 per cent)</li> <li>• Pensioners will receive pension at doorsteps (90.8 per cent)</li> <li>• Pensioners need not wait long hours in the banks (88.7 per cent).</li> <li>• The old age and disabled persons are unable to go to banks (97.1 per cent)</li> <li>• Bank branches are not located in their villages (76.3 per cent).</li> <li>• Unable to operate the ATM (85.6 per cent)</li> </ul>

**Problem Incidence & Grievance Redressal System:** A very minimum number of beneficiaries (4 per cent) reported that they faced problems in dealing with YSR Pension Kanuka. In most of the cases, the problem was related to getting entitlements of 'YSR Pension Kanuka-NSAP and poor service of the staff. To address these issues, they complained to higher officials and problems were resolved in a couple of days.

**Overall satisfaction with YSR Pension Kanuka:** Majority of the YSR pension Kanuka beneficiaries are satisfied with the pension system in the state. The overall satisfaction with the YSR Pension Kanuka across all six districts was more than 97 per cent.

Majority of the YSR Pension Kanuka implementation officers are totally satisfied (97.9 per cent), while the rest were partially satisfied. Notably, no one was found dissatisfied with the programme.

**Usefulness & Suggestions for Improvement:** Remarkably, all the interviewed beneficiaries reported that the pension amount received every month is mostly supporting their lives in terms of self-respect (87.0 per cent), non-dependent on basic needs or daily expenditures (39.4 per cent), supporting family needs (50.5 per cent) besides covering monthly medical expenditures (49.4 per cent).

### **Conclusion and Policy Implications**

As per the feedback obtained from all the stakeholders, the 'YSR Pension Kanuka' scheme is reaching its designed objectives, especially disbursing the full entitled pension amount on the first day of every month itself. Both the beneficiaries as well as officials expressed their complete satisfaction.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are made for the betterment and effective reach of the programme.

- As anticipated by the beneficiaries, direct cash distribution should be continued, which is the more useful and preferred mode of distribution of pension.
- Bringing a mechanism like 'Alert message and Voice call' to the beneficiaries' phone numbers immediately after receiving the cash, which alerts and informs the beneficiaries that they have received their pension, will counter any misuse of pension disbursements.
- As reported, on average, it takes four months to get approval for a new pension application. This duration needs to be reduced and the process should be completed at least within a month.
- Measures are to be taken for further betterment of the programme at the beneficiary level, additional support needs to be provided to the field functionaries by supplying additional devices, login credentials, proper data connectivity during pension distribution days, recruiting additional staff, etc.
- Allow portability model so that beneficiaries can take their money within state limits wherever they are present.
- Data updation/mapping of the households should be done timely and frequently to identify the right beneficiaries.
- Continue the old model so that the beneficiary can withdraw pension amount for up to three months.

- It was found that a few Panchayat officials were unaware of the pension scheme and the entitlements of all pension schemes. So, it is better to provide capacity building training programmes on pension schemes and policy matters.
- DBT mode of pension distribution should be adopted for special cases like eligible disabled pensioners who are studying or have migrated to different places or other states as it is difficult for them to collect pension in person every month.

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## **TRANSFORMING INDIA THROUGH STRENGTHENING PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS BY CONTINUOUS TRAINING AND E-ENABLEMENT' (TISPRI) - PHASE II (2020-2022)**

**Dr C. Kathiresan,  
Dr Pratyusna Patnaik  
Dr Vanishree Joseph**

### **Introduction**

In order to build the capacities of Elected Representatives (ERs) and strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) across the country in a continuous manner, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) sanctioned an innovative study project 'Transforming India through Strengthening Panchayat Raj Institutions by Continuous Training and e-enablement' (TISPRI) to be implemented by NIRDPR during 2017- 2020. Based on the outcomes and report of the study of Phase-I, the Ministry in the 2nd meeting of the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) of RGSA held on 19th May 2020 sanctioned the study project for the TISPRI Phase II for the years 2020-21 and 2021-22 to be implemented by Centre for Panchayati Raj, Decentralised Planning and Social Service Delivery of NIRDPR, Hyderabad. Accordingly, the following components were approved under the second phase of the TISPRI project:

1. Certification of Master Resource Persons (MRPs)
2. Conducting Training of Trainers for the Certified MRPs for building the capabilities of Elected Representatives and functionaries on -
  - a) Effective utilisation of 15th Finance Commission grants
  - b) Ward members to act as 'Agents of Change or Sector enablers'
  - c) Panchayati Raj functionaries to deliver on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
  - d) Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) on Panchayat Governance
  - e) ERs & functionaries on e-Enablement of Panchayats (Unified Portal, PFMS)
3. Online Certificate Programmes for ERs, PR functionaries and MRPs
4. Distance Mode Diploma Programme on Panchayati Raj Governance & Rural Development (DPPRGRD)
5. Documentation of success stories
6. Support to MoPR in Gram Panchayat Development Plan campaign

## Objectives

The key objective of this study project was to orient the Panchayati Raj Institutions in achieving the objectives of RGSA, and achieve the Panchayats Vision 2024.

## Methodology

For the study project, capacity building and training activities were taken up across the SIRDPRs/ETCs/DPRCs. For the case study documentation, the case study method was adopted to elicit 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 TISPRI Phase – II study project has covered all the states in the country except Delhi and Chandigarh. The implementation of different components of the study project spreads across the country. The successful case studies were documented in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu.

## Key Findings

**Certification of Master Resource Persons:** Over the years, training institutes across the country have created a pool of master trainers. However, there was a huge gap in terms of quality. Under the TISPRI study project, the existing trainers are being oriented, assessed and certified to act as Master Resource Persons (MRPs) in PRI training programmes. From the commencement of the TISPRI study project, a total number of 7204 trainers have been assessed in 184 Batches and 5073 Master Resource Persons have been certified under different thematic areas till March 2022.

**ToTs for the Certified MRPs for building the capabilities of PRIs:** To enable the certified MRPs to impart quality training, advanced ToT programmes have been conducted under TISPRI phase II to build their capacities in the latest developments in their domain. There were in total 118 ToTs, covering 11,113 participants, organised during the year 2020-22 under the TISPRI – Phase II study project.

**Online Certificate Programmes for ERs, PR functionaries and MRPs:** There are more than 60 lakh functionaries, including elected representatives and officials, who need to be continuously trained in all aspects of local governance, providing basic services, and implementing rural development programmes. One of the

components of the TISPRI project is developing e-learning material and offering online training through a web-hosted Learning Management System (LMS). Therefore, to simultaneously offer training to a large number of functionaries in Panchayat governance and service delivery, NIRDPR established an e-learning lab and Audio-Visual studio. To bridge the knowledge gap and to provide an opportunity to learn from anywhere, anytime and from any device, NIRDPR designed and developed an LMS 'eGramPrashikshan' (<http://egramprashishan.nirdpr.in/>) in September 2021 using Moodle platform compatible with mobile, tab, laptop & desktops.

**Awareness Films:** In addition to online courses, NIRDPR has also developed 21 awareness videos and films on containing the COVID-19 pandemic at the Panchayat level and SVAMITVA scheme, and shared the materials through various social media platforms. The main objective of these films is to demonstrate how Panchayats are achieving better outcomes from development schemes and how service delivery has improved through better planning and good governance.

**Distance Mode Programs on Panchayati Raj Governance & Rural Development:** To address comprehensively the learning needs of ERs and other PR functionaries/stakeholders, NIRDPR under the TISPRI project launched a one-year UGC-approved Diploma Programme on 'Panchayati Raj Governance and Rural Development' in distance mode in collaboration with the University of Hyderabad in 2019. The aim of this programme is to enable interested officials and non-officials, including youth, to acquire new knowledge and skills on Panchayat governance so that they can provide better local leadership and contribute to better service delivery in rural areas. NIRDPR has developed 72 standardised modules which are used as learning material in this programme. In total, 306 students have enrolled in the diploma programme since 2019. The NIRDPR Diploma programme is serving as another channel for building the capacity of the PRI functionaries.

**Documentation of Success Stories:** Under the TISPRI project, case studies are being documented and the same are made available in the public domain. A total number of 10 case studies have been completed under TISPRI Phase II. These case studies show the innovative approaches and best practices in public service delivery and in reaching out to the marginalised sections. The success stories help other Panchayats to learn from such best practices. The success stories are also being made part of training modules, depending on the suitability for the area and local relevance.

**Development/Updation of Learning Materials:** During TISPRI Phase II, 11 training modules have been developed and shared with different SIRDs. The same are also used to impart national-level ToT by NIRDPR.

**Support to MoPR in the GDP Campaign:** Every year MoPR organises People's Plan Campaign (PPC) for formulating GDP, from 2<sup>nd</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> January as 'Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas', throughout the country. NIRDPR has been supporting MoPR in organising national-level orientation training and regional thematic workshops to provide handholding support to stakeholders during the campaign. During PPC 2021, NIRDPR has organised two national-level orientation training and five regional thematic workshops to provide handholding support to stakeholders under the TISPRI Phase -II study project.

### **Conclusion**

The Centre for Panchayati Raj, Decentralised Planning and Social Service Delivery has successfully implemented the study project and supported the overall objectives of RGSA. Further, as requested by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) from time to time, various concept notes on the Monetisation of Property Ownership Cards in Rural Areas, optimal size of Panchayats, suggestions for revamping RGSA and policy advocacy have been prepared by CPRDP&SSD and shared with the Ministry. The final report and the utilisation certificate of the TISPRI Phase -II study project have been shared with the MoPR, New Delhi.

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## SHG PATHWAYS PROJECT

Dr S. K. Sathyaprabha

### Introduction

Women development and empowerment have been playing a vital role in rural development. Its significance has been well realised and recognised in the developmental programmes of India. Though there were many rural development programmes to improve the status of women in different sectors like education, health, employment, etc., the formation of self-help groups (SHGs) in the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) has brought a rapid and tremendous improvement in the status of women. Economic, social, political and psychological empowerment are the various dimensions observed in the rural self-help group women. Rural development programmes on Food, Nutrition, Health and Sanitation have been implemented through various ministries. Ministry of Rural Development brought an initiative to give more awareness about FNHW to women through the National Rural Livelihoods Mission, and a part of the Population Council's research project on SHG Behaviour Change Pathways was undertaken by NIRDPR. This broader study of the Population Council intends to understand SHGs and other women's collectives, behaviour change in improved health, nutrition, and other development outcomes. The delivery of key health messages through the National Rural Livelihoods Mission's health training to self-help groups was a significant part of the research. Thus, the study is expected to provide more training inputs for the National Rural Livelihoods Mission.

### Objectives

- To understand about SRLMs' training on FNHW and behavioural change among SHG women
- NIRDPR and NRLM to use this training tracer study to strengthen its processes, training and teaching pedagogy

### Methodology

The study followed qualitative research methodology with a stratified purposive sampling method. Primary field data was collected in the audio format. All the field data, interviews, focus group discussions and observations were translated and transcribed into English language. Data analysis followed the method of content analysis where the major themes of analysis and components of themes were categorised and used for analysis and interpretation. Thus, the study on NRLM-FNHW followed qualitative methodology with stratified purposive sampling method.

## **Study Area**

The areas chosen for the study were Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. In each state, two districts were identified for the field data collection. Accordingly, Kanker and Bastar districts in Chhattisgarh, and West Singhbhum and Pakur districts in Jharkhand were selected. From each district, two blocks were identified, and from each block, two villages were chosen. So, eight villages were covered in each district, and thus total of 16 villages were identified in both states. The details of the blocks and villages are given below.

### ***Chhattisgarh Study Areas***

Kanker district: Gitapahar and Khairkheda villages in Charama block, & Sarona and Basanwahi villages in Narharpur block.

Bastar district: Mathota and Sonarpal villages in Bastar block, & Badekilepal and Kodonar villages in Bastanar block.

### ***Jharkhand Study Areas***

**1. West Singhbhum district: Bhoya** and Matkobera villages in Khuntpani block, & Beranga and Dhipa villages in Manoharpur block.

**2. Pakur district: Monglabandh** and Fuljhinjhari villages in Pakuria block, & Baraghaghri and Ranga villages in Littipara block.

### **Findings:**

The following were the major findings about Chhattisgarh SRLMs (Bihan) FNHW Training.

- i) At Chhattisgarh, Bihan FNHW Training programmes were organised for 3-4 days.
- ii) Stories, games, songs, pictures and posters were some of the tools used during the training programmes. Kitchen gardening, sanitation, handwashing, pregnant women and childcare, adolescent girls and lactating mothers care, and record maintenance of newly married couples were some of the subjects of training provided by Bihan in study villages. Pre-training assessment of trainees and the practice of collecting feedback after the training were also pointed out by the respondents.
- iii) Bihan provided the training in Hindi medium but Chhattisgarhi, Halvi, Gondi and some tribal languages were spoken by the study villagers. VO members convey the FNHW messages in the local language.

### **Behavioural Changes at Chhattisgarh Study Villages**

The following are the major findings about the behavioural changes noticed in the study villages of Chhattisgarh.

- i) Awareness and behavioural change in the habits with regard to personal hygiene, surrounding cleanliness, purity in cooking and maintaining food, intake of iron tablets, enrolling for vaccination, hospital delivery and its monetary benefits were noticed in almost all the self-help group members.
- ii) Next to the above factors, many SHG women were aware of the components of tricolour food, steps in hand washing, and the ill-effects of open defecation. The change in the attitude towards the intake of freshly cooked food and avoiding stale food was noticed in all villages of Chhattisgarh. They said that they were eating tricolour food and regularly washing their hands with soap, besides having individual toilets and using them.
- iii) The provisions available in the Anganwadi centre like Ready-To-Eat (RTE) /Take-Home Ration (THR) supply timings, frequency and beneficiaries were known to all the respondents of Chhattisgarh. Some of them were receiving and utilising the Anganwadi-supplied food items whereas some did not receive or consume.
- iv) All the respondents of the study villages of Chhattisgarh have adequate knowledge of kitchen gardens except Basanwahi, where some SHG members were aware and some had little idea.
- v) Knowledge about menstrual hygiene was found among all SHG women but its practice was unknown.
- vi) The belief and practice of visiting Sira or Gunia for health treatment was found among most of the self-help group members. VO members suggested meeting both Gunia and doctor in the hospital to satisfy their beliefs.
- vii) In Chhattisgarh, other than Badekilepal and Kodonar, all other non-SHG respondents have contact with SHG members. Except for Badekilepal PRI member respondents, all other frontline workers were either members of SHG or had contacts with SHG members.

### **JSLPS TRAINING**

- i) Three-day residential training with accommodation was provided by JSLPS.
- ii) Tri colour food, kitchen garden, Anganwadi benefits, pregnant women and child care (hospital delivery & its benefits, malnutrition, vaccination), early marriage and adolescent girl's menstrual hygiene, hand wash, sanitation (ODF), personal hygiene and surroundings cleanliness were some of the subjects of JSLPS training.
- iii) Flip charts, games, stories, street play/dramas, demonstrations, role play, songs, mapping and videos were tools/methods used in training sessions.

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- iv) FNHW training programmes of JSLPS were conducted in Hindi medium. But Munda, Ho, Oriya, Bengali, Santhali and other tribal languages were prevalent in villages.

### **Behavioural Changes at Jharkhand Study Villages**

The behavioural changes noticed among the villagers at Jharkhand study villages are listed below.

- i) Delivery at hospitals and availing its benefits, vaccination, hand washing and cleanliness (personal hygiene, food & surroundings) were the subjects in which Jharkhand self-help group members had complete understanding through training and they were regularly following it in their life.
- ii) After the training, most of the SHG members were aware of the services available at the Anganwadi centre and they were not only receiving RTE/THR but also consuming them.
- iii) Next to Anganwadi was the reach of tricolour food. Though the respondents were aware, in practice, few of them face difficulty in accessing different vegetables and fruits. Poor economic status is also a hurdle for the daily intake of tricolour food by SHG members.
- iv) Many SHG members knew about kitchen gardens but some of them were not growing vegetables if they didn't have land or had water problem.
- v) Most women did not consume iron and calcium tablets as they felt a vomiting sensation. They also believed that the tablets would give a dark complexion to the child in their womb.
- vi) Traditional belief in Jharphuk or Ojha was found existing in the village as many women were visiting Jharphuk as well as the doctor for health treatment.
- vii) SHG women were least aware of menstrual hygiene. Though they have little awareness, change in practice was not found partial among women and adolescent girls.
- viii) The lowest practice was found in the usage of toilets. The reasons quoted by respondents were unconstructed toilets, and quick filling up of pits.
- ix) In Jharkhand, other than Monglabandh, all village non-SHG respondents have contact with SHG members. Except for ASHA, ANM of Monglabandh and Baraghari, and PRI of Baraghari, all other frontline workers were either members of SHG or had contacts with SHG members.

### **Conclusion**

As most of the women in the village were SHG members, including frontline workers, the awareness and practices had a greater influence on their families, which in turn, reflected in the community. Hence, the inclusion of FNHW components in NRLM has to be further strengthened with a rational approach.

Geographically specific, theme-based quantitative research would support NRLM not only in addressing wider problems but also in paving the way for achieving wholesome village development.

### **Policy Recommendations**

The following were the suggestions of respondents.

1. Separate committee of SHG members apart from the Social Action Committee to give specialised training in collaboration with respective departments.
2. Apart from VO members, special training programmes may be conducted for SHG members who know the local language which may support SRLMs to reach wider different language-speaking villagers, particularly in tribal villages, without diluting the essence of the FNHW messages.
3. Booklets and flip charts may be distributed to each self-help group to enable FNHW discussions in the group meetings. It may also be made available at government institutions like Village Office, Anganwadi, Primary Health Care Centre, Schools, etc.
4. Periodical activities other than rallies and campaigns related to FNHW may be planned at the village level to sensitise the community.
5. Both Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand respondents suggested increasing the frequency and number of FNHW training for them so that FNHW messages can be retained in their memory for a longer time.
6. Similarly, in both states, it was observed that they were not discussing FNHW subjects during regular meetings of SHG members. Hence, some initiatives to make the members recall and remember the FNHW messages may be included as an integral part of SHGs' regular meetings.
7. In both states, SRLM officials were given FNHW as an additional activity, and hence specific attention and priority for FNHW were found missing. Lack of enough staff at different levels contributes to the above matter. Though there is a provision for engaging external partners in the FNHW implementation process, for some administrative reasons (expiry of contract duration for Swabimaan in Chhattisgarh), they were not found during our field study. Hence, strengthening of human resources is much needed to give better focus to FNHW training in NRLM.

8. Regular process evaluation of FNHW training by both Bihan & JSLPS and updating of training modules would greatly help to increase the intensity of reach of FNHW messages.
9. Though the NRLM training module prescribed for FNHW-related vulnerability reduction plan (VRP) to Gram Panchayat (GP) was discussed with Gram Panchayat for inclusion in the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), it was not mentioned either by the respondents from PRI or SHG/VO. Hence, PRI-SHG convergence may be further strengthened by the inclusion of SHGs in preparation of GPDP with a theme-based vision for reaching 100 per cent (e.g. Malnutrition-free village). This suggestion was informed to NRLM during the study dissemination workshop.

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## **MAPPING SUCCESS STORY OF RURAL COMMUNITY RADIO: (RCR) – A CASE STUDY**

**Dr Akanksha Shukla**

This study maps out the success story of Sangham radio, Pastapur, initiated by the Deccan Development Society and proves beyond doubt that due to technological convergence, the radio can easily be accessed through free apps which can be downloaded and saved. Android phones with data or internet connections can access a canvas of entertainment and information; still, there is ample scope and relevance of community radio to fulfil the agenda of dissemination of information.

### **Objectives**

- To study the programmes of RCR of DDS
- To analyse the aspects of management, including operation and maintenance, finances, human resources, etc.
- To study the factors contributing to the sustainability of RCR

### **Methodology**

The study was conducted in 10 Gram Panchayats, which fall within a 5-km radius of RCR located in two blocks- Jharsangham and Zaheerabad. Random and quota sampling methods were used for primary data collection. In each village, 25 respondents were selected and interviewed with structured interview schedules, taking into consideration their age, gender, occupation and educational qualifications. Besides, PRA tools like focus group discussions, group discussions, and personal interviews were adopted for collecting qualitative data from various stakeholders of sample villages. Further, secondary data was collected from the office of DDS.

### **Study Area**

The field survey covered SangaReddy district and initially two blocks, namely Zaheerabad and Jharasangam, with 100 respondents across different GPs in each block. Besides the listeners, a survey of the eight DDS staff members and seven radio station management staff in Telangana state was conducted. The blocks and GPs were selected on the basis of reachability, coverage of radio up to 5 km, and best and worst GPs from each block based on the Antyodaya survey 2019.

**Findings:**

**DDS Sangham Radio:** The earliest objectives of DDS were to combine environmental and occupational parameters to revive the livelihoods of the people in the area through a string of activities like ensuring 100 days of employment per year per person. It must be pointed out that NREGA was launched only in 2006, whereas DDS has been implementing this in the selected blocks as early as 1983. The idea was to utilise these employment days to work on their lands to enhance the productivity of soil through bunding, trenching, topsoil addition, etc. Secondly, to galvanise communities of women to lease lands from large farmers and work on it collectively and plant trees. An associated objective was to transfer people-oriented technology, such as housing technologies, use of solar energy, permaculture way of organic farming, etc. For this, DDS had to explore various tools of expression with which people can communicate with the outside world. It was with this motive that DDS Sangham radio was established. Funded by UNICEF, it is a 100-watt radio with a coverage radius of 30 km. Launched in Andhra Pradesh on the International Day of Rural Women (October 15) 2008, DDS Sangham Radio is a community radio station owned, managed, and operated exclusively by women from rural marginalised communities (the Dalit caste).

The station broadcasts on 90.4 FM, every day from 7 PM to 9 PM. This woman initiated, all-Dalit sangham (community) radio station, with the signature tune, "akka chillelu kudi podame (come sisters, let us go to the sangham radio)", is seen as the first 'audible' voice of the state's Dalit women. Female reporters journey daily into various villages within Medak district. The channel airs a two-hour package of local news and views regarding herbal medicines for animals, reports on farming tools, and folk songs and stories. The women want to use this new media space to save their dying language and cultures, spread their message of sisterhood, ecological agriculture, women's control over seeds and a host of other issues. They work only for Rs.15000 for 6 to 8 hours a week with a focus on information specific to agricultural needs of semi-arid regions like education and literacy - both formal and non-formal, public health and hygiene, environmental and ecological issues, biodiversity and food security, gender justice, local/indigenous knowledge systems, local cultures, etc., with emphasis on the narrative traditions of song and drama. The knowledge of local herbs is at times aired with the guest presence of karyakartha of Sangham who gives medicine for fever, cough, cold, headache, stomach ache and other gynaecological problems in the village.

The members maintain a seed bank in the village which gives seed for cultivation to women, and in return, they take double the amount of millets after the production. Under non-formal education, DDS trains women in life skills like pottery, permaculture, tailoring, bookbinding, herbal medicine, carpentry, masonry and para-veterinary sciences. The major funding for DDS is from international NGOs from

Germany, Sweden, Canada and the USA. Indian Council for Agriculture Research is one of the funders for the Krishi Vigyan Kendra wing of DDS and the salaries of its staff. The recruitment process in DDS is controlled by DDS founding members and directors.

**DDS Staff:** The DDS has 44 members covering 75 villages within a 10-km radius. From different places, they implement the daily activities. The NGO has offices in Begumpet Hyderabad, Zaheerabad which is 130 km away from Hyderabad, and in villages in Sangareddy district. Every sangham has supervisors and they will be part of the same village only. They have to conduct weekly meetings in villages with members of sanghams. One supervisor has to monitor four villages (four sanghams). Based on the information collected from websites and physical visits to the offices of DDS at Zaheerabad and Begumpet, the survey schedule was filled and analysed by three types of respondents- the DDS office staff, the radio staff and the listeners.

**Radio staff:** There are eight members, including six women, in the RCR who work on a regular basis. There are two managers – Narsamma, General Manager and Algole Narsamma, Co-manager working for a remuneration of Rs.18,000 and Rs. 15,000, respectively. Apart from them, three more staff are working in this radio station as coordinator, reporter and editor. They collect stories from adjoining villages, edit them and air them. These stories cover agricultural practices, health issues, seed preservation, land issues, health and hygiene for women, seasonal diseases, educational programmes, local food habits, children's issues and songs. The main programs aired are:

*Man oori pantalu-* our village crops

*Mana bhasha* – our language

*Mana ruchulu-* our recipes

*Oori varthalu-* village news

*Arogyam* –health

They enlisted the most popular programs as follows:

*Anitamma-* Pastapur screen free story

*Anitamma-* Pastapur screen free story

BT Cotton programmes

Folk songs, stories, health and agriculture

Milletts, health, and family concerns

Songs, stories, and talks on agriculture

These programs are voluntary and contribution and participation are done by experts from all adjoining villages.

Mostly, the members belonged to the SC category and were aged between 35-45 years (six persons), and all except one were married. Their education level varied from primary (three persons) to graduation (one). The families were earning Rs.10,000 to Rs.30,000 per month. Only one RCR airs programs at 90.4Hz between 7 PM-9 PM every day. There is confusion on the range of coverage as six members rightly said that the range is up to 5 km whereas two others assume it to be more. The RCR staff are sure that the radio is being listened and they have maintained a listenership register. The programmes benefit farmers (50 per cent) and DDS Sangham member-farmers, covering a population of 20,000 across two blocks of Jharsangam and Zaheerabad.

A survey is generally done to check the capacity of the transmitter and also to collect feedback and suggestions, and based on the feedback, they improvise programmes. No regular surveys can be done due to paucity of funds. Communication via phone is adopted to assess the reach and clarify doubts regarding the information shared in programmes. The RCR has been functional since 2008, and about 5000 or more programmes aired over the past years have been stored by the staff. Mostly dominated by agriculture talks, stories, folk songs and rural development issues are some of the often repeated programmes of the RCR. Strict attention is given to doing away with any programme related to politics, religion and caste. The radio functions without any management committee to cater to the day-to-day management of the RCR but the typology of programme, duration theme, etc., are finalised by the RCR staff.

The advisory committee, which meets once in six months, mainly looks at the financial outliers if any. RCR staff enjoys complete autonomy in the day-to-day operation of the radio and the usual financial, administrative and subject specification of programmes. The DDS ensures that all programmes aired do not involve religion, caste and politics. They chose Pastapur area as it was backward, less expensive and did not have any media outlets around it. The general programme length does not exceed 30 minutes. Most programmes revolve around agriculture, health, livelihood, culture and folk, education, and rural development in the order of preference. The dramas are also played regularly connecting social themes. The RCR, which primarily aims at the empowerment of women, does not have exclusive women-centric programmes. The contention is that as the RCR is run by women, no special programmes on women are needed.

As there is a clear guideline of not being involved in politics, the radio does not conduct interviews of elected representatives of PRIs and Panchayat Secretary. Although programmes for information on certain government schemes are done, it is purely for information purposes. Resource persons like doctors from Primary Health Centre, Anganwadi workers and school teachers are invited regularly. It is

pertinent to point out that although the PRIs are supposed to be the implementing agencies, they are neither invited nor questioned on these schemes since they contradict the guidelines of community radio.

### **Conclusion**

The study proves that community radio can best be used as a tool for the dissemination of authentic information for all 29 subjects related to rural development. RCR is a platform which has brought about wide enlightenment on issues of agriculture, health and home remedies, medicines and organic farming for the community. It can play an effective part in various government schemes of farmers' welfare, education, health, employment generation and other local development schemes in the local language. In fact, the compendiums released in 2017 and 2020 enlist areas of intervention where CR are already functioning in addition to their success stories. The areas identified are

- Response to Disaster & Conflict Situation
- Justice for marginalised community
- Livelihood & Agriculture
- Empowerment & Engagement of Women
- Innovation through Community Radio

### **Policy Recommendations**

Based on the study, secondary data and wider consultations with stakeholders working on this platform of community radio, the following are suggested in sync with M I & B for attaining SDGs. It is proposed to facilitate CBOs/NGOs for taking license for community radio.

- A costing benchmark is identified from secondary data of Rs14,55,000 for setting up community radio. There are two funding bodies- the Ministry of Agriculture supports Community Radio under ATMA (Extension Reforms (Setting up + 3 years agriculture content) @ Rs.65 lakh. Details are in the link below. (<https://extensionreforms.dacnet.nic.in/PDF/atmaguid23814.pdf>)
- Ministry of I & B also supports 50 per cent of the setting cost for a maximum of Rs.7.5lakh (10 lakh for NE states). It can be a joint venture too. ([https://mib.gov.in/sites/default/files/Guidelines\\_per\\_cent20for\\_per\\_cent\\_20the\\_per\\_cent20\\_Scheme\\_per\\_cent\\_20Supporting\\_per\\_cent20Community\\_per\\_cent\\_20Radio\\_per\\_cent20Movement\\_per\\_cent\\_20in\\_per\\_cent\\_20India\\_30.11.2021\\_signed.pdf](https://mib.gov.in/sites/default/files/Guidelines_per_cent20for_per_cent_20the_per_cent20_Scheme_per_cent_20Supporting_per_cent20Community_per_cent_20Radio_per_cent20Movement_per_cent_20in_per_cent_20India_30.11.2021_signed.pdf))
- First, it is proposed to help the Gram Panchayats procure licence for CR through the Youth Sabha/ NGOs/SHGs, etc. The moderated cost for a community radio is Rs.15 lakh. Since each NGO/CBO has a different thematic area of work, the

guidelines of the I&B Ministry may be amended to accommodate all relevant issues of MoRD.

- The content cost depends on the time of the narrowcasting. As expected, the range of FM is 10 km. Hence, at least a two-hour programme should be narrowcasted and training should be given to NGOs to manage the CR through existing RCRs. There are guidelines for monitoring the content of the program; hence, if content can be created in the local language and accessed through Android phones and loudspeakers installed at specific points (temples), then passive/active listening can be ensured.
- As CR cannot be the mouthpiece of PRIs, unlike the state-funded media in states/Centre, this arrangement must ensure regular interviews and feedback between the community and the PRIs through CR, including social audit announcements of dates, Gram Sabha announcements and advertisements funded by PRIs.
- The procedure for establishing a Community Radio Station is very lengthy and has a lot of steps which is not required in this digital era. This lengthy procedure must be shortened into the following at a single window:
  - ◆ First Phase: Application, LOI, GOPA, Payment in Bharat-Kosh (1 Month)
  - ◆ Second Phase: SACFA Clearance (1 Month)
  - ◆ Third Phase: Allotment of License( 1 Month)
- Similarly, in the application process for CRS, if the District Administration fails to provide its reaction/response within the allotted time frame, then it should be deemed as consent.
- As per DAVP rates, CR as media should be involved in IEC campaigns. It should be recognised as media. Ministry of I&B/Tribal Development/Culture Affairs should have support plans for a time frame of at least two hours every day to prepare broadcasting programmes. The subsidy amount must be distributed within a month after submitting the broadcasting certificate.
- As per the government thrust of "One District Five CRS" can be provided. But considering the climate change and post-pandemic scenarios, additional frequencies should be allotted to states, which are prone to natural disasters.

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## **E-PANCHAYAT IN JHARKHAND- CHALLENGES AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS**

**Mr Anil Kumar Yadav**

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### **Introduction**

The 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act provided a constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and prescribed a minimum common framework. The Act also inserted the Eleventh Schedule in the Constitution, listing the subjects that may be transferred to Panchayats. However, the same cannot be achieved in the true sense unless the Gram Panchayats are empowered to execute all the Panchayat-related development activities in transparent and accountable architecture despite inadequate human resources at the GP level. To overcome the challenge of inadequate human resources at the GP level, the Government of Jharkhand issued a notification in the year 2016 to constitute Gram Panchayat Sachivalaya (GP Secretariat). The State Project Management Unit has been set up at the state level while District Project Management Units have been set up at all the districts to ensure proper functioning of the e-Panchayat applications. Similarly, one computer operator cum accountant has been appointed for every 3-4 GPs and two Junior Engineers have been appointed for each block in order to ensure geotagging and work-based payment for Finance Commission works, and effective implementation of e-Panchayat applications developed by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India. All the 4351 GPs are required to be onboarded in the e-Panchayat applications and carry out all the development activities under the Finance Commission online. No study has been done to document the status of e-Panchayat in Jharkhand and examine the challenges of such initiatives. The study has attempted to document the Government of Jharkhand's initiative for deploying e-Panchayat applications in all 4351 GPs in an effective and transparent manner. It aimed to study the status of implementation of e-Panchayat Applications to augment socio-economic reforms in GPs.

### **Objectives**

Jharkhand is among the best-performing States in the country as far as the implementation of e-Panchayat is concerned. To understand the status of e-Panchayat and challenges during the implementation of e-Panchayat, the study had the following major objectives.

- i) To analyse the present status of e-Panchayat in Jharkhand.
- ii) To find out the problems faced in the implementation of e-Panchayat.

- iii) To suggest methods for solving the problems faced in the implementation of e-Panchayat.

### **Methodology**

#### ***Data Collection:***

The present study is based on quantitative as well as qualitative data collected from primary and secondary sources. To collect data/information from secondary sources, review of existing literature/secondary sources on e-Panchayat status in Jharkhand such as guidelines, formats, executive instructions, online reports, etc., was undertaken. In addition, data from the records of GPs, e-Panchayat GP/Block/District offices and respective administrations were obtained. For primary data, interview of key stakeholders, i.e. State e-Panchayat Officials, District Panchayati Raj Officers, District Project Managers (DRPs), Block Coordinators, Village Resource Persons, elected representatives, Secretaries of GPs and Gram Panchayat Computer Operators with the help of interview schedule were conducted. In addition, focus group discussions (FGDs) with the officials of Panchayati Raj Department and elected representatives were conducted with the help of a list of identified questions. During the field visits to sample GPs, the process of data entry was studied along with the visit to the worksites. To study the status of e-Panchayat, ongoing work was observed along with its entry into the e-Panchayat application.

#### ***Data Collection Methods:***

The case study documented the process of e-Panchayat application in the State of Jharkhand and studied the performance of e-Panchayat applications. Qualitative and quantitative research techniques were used to collect secondary and primary data. Primary data was collected with the help of two questionnaires: the first one administered to the district and block level officials of CSC and the second one for the district and block level officials of BharatNet. The current status of e-Panchayat application in assisting GPs with online applications in accessing public services and benefits was also assessed through focus group discussions with villagers.

#### ***Study Area:***

The objectives of the case study were to analyse the status of the e-Panchayat in Jharkhand, find out the challenges faced by the state in the implementation of e-Panchayat and come up with the proposed solutions, a large canvass of data collection has been chosen. The data from eGramSwaraj portal has been utilised for analysing the status of e-Panchayat in all the districts of Jharkhand. The State

Panchayati Raj officials along with all the district/block level officials were extensively interviewed, and one-on-one discussions with all the officials were also done on a systematic basis over the virtual platform. The status of the e-Panchayat Offices in GPs was analysed by the field team in the GPs along with the state team monitoring it through Webex meetings by randomly selecting three GPs from each district on each working day for three weeks, thus covering 45 GPs from each of the 24 districts.

In order to gather specific issues faced by GP offices for the implementation of e-Panchayat, GPs from Bokaro (08), Chatra (09), Deoghar (11), Dhanbad (62), Dumka (02), East Singhbhum (42), Garhwa (40), Gumla (13), Hazaribag (151), Jamtara (02), Khunti (16) Koderma (100), Latehar (18), Lohardaga (04), Pakur (42), Palamu (23), Sahebganj (03), Simdega (01) and West Singhbhum were selected for data collection in the form of responses of questionnaire.

Besides these data sources, data was collected from Jharkhand Communication Network Limited (JCNL) and Jharkhand Community Service Centres (CSCs) officials at state and district levels.

### **Findings**

- Districts have been proactive in uploading the Panchayat Development Plans.
- Remote districts like Jamtara, Pakur and Dumka have been torch-bearers.
- A more inclusive Panchayat Development Plan needs to be developed by the Panchayats.
- Allocation of funds has increased nearly four times since 2015-16; accordingly, the results need to be ensured.
- Jharkhand needs to put in efforts for the geo-tagging of assets in Chatra, East Singhbhum, Garhwa, Giridih and Hazaribagh, Gumla, Ramgarh and Palamu districts
- Training by NGOs should be monitored.
- Good online expenditure is observed in Pakur, Jamtara and Sahebganj
- Dumka, Gumla and Koderma recorded poor expenditure
- Swamitva Yojana has been notified in 757 villages out of a total of 32,712 villages of Jharkhand and drone survey has been completed in 204 villages.
- Performance of Jharkhand in the Panchayat Citizen Charter was appreciated by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Gol.
- BharatNet has not been functional in most of the GPs of Jharkhand
- The functional Bharatnet connections were with the VLEs and were not available for the GP Office.

**Conclusion**

Various types of social security and pension schemes are also running successfully in the state. About 24.9 lakh registered beneficiaries are benefiting from these schemes regularly. The progress in local self-governance and Panchayati Raj Institutions has been quite satisfactory. About 92 per cent of the total grants under the 14th Finance Commission have been received and about 583.1 crore rupees of payments have also been initiated from the grants of the 15th Finance Commission to the Gram Panchayats. Progress under the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan and Gram Panchayat Development Plans is also encouraging. The progress in the last two financial years was largely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic but now its impact is diminishing and the coming financial years will bring an incremental pace of economic development in the rural areas of the state. Jharkhand is currently in a very good position in the overall ranking of the country. This is indicative of good project management in the state. In order to keep the ladder ever progressive, Jharkhand will need to reward good performers across the state.

The success of e-Panchayat would largely depend on the participation of the elected representatives. With the Panchayat elections in the state pending for almost a year, temporary arrangements have been made, but in a democratic government, such temporary arrangements do not get much likes from the rural community. Panchayati Raj Department should conduct the Panchayat elections as soon as possible. The State should also come up with PESA guidelines in the earliest possible time period. It is only when these basic requirements are met, we may taste the success of e-Panchayat in toto.

**Policy Recommendations**

Based on the above, the following policy recommendations are being suggested:

1. Active participation of the stakeholders, viz. citizens, elected representatives, government officials, etc.
2. Deployment of new technologies in the Panchayats and motivating the elected representatives and rural communities to embrace these new technologies.
3. Emphasis on educating and imparting training on these technologies to the rural stakeholders and the officials of the Panchayats.
4. The vacant positions in the Gram Panchayats should be filled up as early as possible.
5. Findings are indicative that the remote nature of the GP or lack of amenities are not the bottlenecks. If remote districts like Jamtara and Pakur can outperform districts like Gumla and Ramgarh, it reflects that willingness and awareness

among the rural community are equally important for the success of e-Panchayat. The rural community should be made aware of how successful implementation of the e-Panchayat application can uplift the face of their Gram Panchayats.

6. With time, the applications of the e-Panchayati have shifted from standalone to web portals to mobile applications. Initially, all the payments were made using cheques, but since the financial year 2019-2020, the payments have become compliant with PFMS (Public Financial Management System) through which the funds are directly being transferred from the state to the Gram Panchayats. Even the payments made against schemes are done online using PFMS, the amount gets directly debited to the vendors' accounts. All these technological advancements need to be absorbed by the rural masses. We have a big iceberg to melt so that the technology serves the purpose for which it has been designed.
7. Panchayati Raj officials need to be regularly updated on new technological interventions of e-Panchayat.
8. Sahebganj and Khunti districts face many problems but they have not only performed well but also bagged the National Panchayat Awards instituted by the Ministry. Rural community needs to be made aware of the latest developments and be involved in all development activities.
9. State should also devise a mechanism to award the Panchayats at all three tiers in various categories.
10. The major factor in good performance of Districts' e-Panchayat performance has been the quality of the Panchayati Raj officials involved in the entire process. We need officials who are committed towards their work and are smart enough to check any misuse of the system. The government needs to be proactive in gathering real-time feedback.
11. Districts that could not perform well had vacant posts of Panchayat Secretaries or had one Panchayat Secretary assigned to more than one GPs, and this lowers e-Panchayat functioning. The Panchayats should have enough human resources.
12. Increase local community participation in the GP Bhawan Administration, especially via the participation of members of local women SHGs.
13. Training materials need to be developed in the local languages of the state.
14. Audio-video clips on e-Panchayat may be developed in local languages so that rural communities can learn the methods to check online details of funds and schemes related to their Gram Panchayats.
15. Regular monitoring of assets at the grassroots level.

16. Utilising Finance Commission funds for activities like creation of libraries and old-age homes on the lines of Jamtara district may be replicated in other districts of Jharkhand.
17. The State should also come up with PESA guidelines.
18. For successful e-Panchayat implementation, cybercrime awareness programmes for the rural community and Panchayati Raj officials should be conducted on a regular basis.

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