

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recognising the importance accorded by the Planning Commission, Government of India for a district-centric approach to devolution of finances for integrated local area development, a district-centric Performance Audit (PA) of South district was carried out to assess the status and impact of implementation of various socio-economic developmental activities in the district during 2006-11 and also to evaluate whether quality of life of people has improved.

The PA covered key areas of social sector programmes relating to Health, Education, Water supply, sewerage and Urban Development, economic sector programmes relating to Creation of roads and other infrastructure, Employment generation, Energy and power, Tourism and Agriculture and allied services and general sector programmes relating to use of Information Technology to provide better public services, Policing and Provision of basic civic amenities, etc.

While the PA has brought out many positives in the social sector programmes relating to health; there were, however, many other areas where the State/ District administration needs to focus its attention.

Planning

Audit scrutiny revealed that District Planning Committee (DPC) had neither prepared Perspective Plan nor any Consolidated Annual Plan for the district for the period 2006-11 except preparing a statement of targeted number of works and outlay at the level of the GPs / villages, the Blocks and the District. No shelf of projects was prepared at any level on annual basis. The local level of administration like the Blocks and GPUs were not involved in providing any inputs to the planning process. Other line departments got their works sanctioned on an adhoc basis by their head office based on availability of funds and on the proposals submitted by the MPs/MLAs/Other individuals as per perceived benefit to the local populace. In fact, there was no integrated District Plan. District Technical Support Committee (DTSC) and Gram Planning Forum (GPF) were not constituted in the district.

In the absence of perspective plans and annual action plans for the development of the district with inputs from Blocks and GPUs, gaps in various developmental schemes/programmes remained unidentified.

Recommendation

Perspective plan and consolidated annual action plans for the district should be prepared on priority basis to avail the benefit of planned development. Immediate steps may be initiated to revive the DPC to ensure people's participation in the planning process for robust and efficient plan formulation. Further, steps may also be taken to constitute DTSC and the GPF.

Accounting Framework and Financial Management

Neither the district administration nor any other authority was vested with the responsibility to maintain consolidated accounts of the funds inflow to the district and expenditure incurred there against. As a result, total quantum of funds received by the district during 2006-07 to 2010-11 and the expenditure there against was not available centrally with any of the district authorities such as District Collector (DC), District Development Officer (DDO) or District Planning Officer (DPO).

The unspent balances ranged upto 35.24 *per cent* in case of flagship programmes (NLCPR, IAY, NRHM, NREGA, etc.).

Recommendation

DC may be vested with the authorities to exercise control over the receipt of funds and expenditure there against by the various offices of the district through submission of returns to DC on monthly basis.

Social services

Health

The process of assessing the healthcare requirements and gaps in infrastructure, equipment, manpower, etc. as per NRHM stipulation was not completed in the district. The district had one CHC, six PHCs and 39 PHSCs. There was a shortfall of one CHC, one PHC and ten PHSCs as compared to the norms prescribed. The basic health care services required to be provided in the health centres were not available at many of the centres (out of 14) visited by the audit team.

Though the State fared well in various health indicators, separate targets/ health indicators for the district were not prescribed despite the NRHM requirement to do so.

In the absence of proper planning involving identification of gaps in the healthcare infrastructure and non-availability of stipulated facilities and skilled manpower in the health institutions, the aim of providing accessible and affordable healthcare to people remained to be achieved in the district.

Recommendations

The District Health Society should play a more proactive role in commissioning a survey to identify the gaps in healthcare infrastructure and facilities and draw up a specific timeframe as per the NRHM guidelines, to provide accessible and affordable health care to the rural poor and vulnerable sections of the district. Community involvement should be ensured at every stage in planning, implementation and monitoring of the programme. All the health centres should be equipped with adequate and skilled manpower to achieve the objectives of the programme.

Education

A review of status of education in the district, especially in the context of implementation of SSA, revealed that the number of primary and upper primary schools (up to class VIII) increased but enrolment of children in the targeted age group of 6-14 years in these schools decreased during 2006-11.

Status of infrastructure in the Government schools in the district as of March 2011 was not sufficient and in good condition. Out of total 925 numbers of class rooms in primary and junior high schools and 711 numbers of class rooms in secondary and senior secondary schools, 425 class rooms in primary and junior high schools and 245 class rooms in secondary and senior secondary schools required repairs. Beside this, most of the schools were not having sufficient class rooms. Out of 237 schools in all categories in the district, 19 schools were not having separate toilets for boys, 87 schools were not having separate toilets for girls, 20 schools were not having drinking water facility, 96 schools were not having electricity, 52 schools were not having playground and 180 schools were not having boundary wall.

Secondary and senior secondary schools were not being provided science kits, chemicals and reagents for practical classes for science students. Therefore, practical classes for science students were not being run and laboratories were being used as store which impacted on class XII board results of science stream students.

There was uneven deployment of teachers in the schools as 30 schools were having excess teachers and 112 schools were having shortage of teachers. Due to non-availability of kitchen sheds in some schools, MDM was being cooked in an un-hygienic condition. Dropout rates and rates of out of school children were high in the district. There was shortfall in providing basic training to the teachers and there was diversion of SMs and Primary Teachers recruited from SSA funds to non-SSA schools.

Recommendations

Accommodation and basic infrastructure/facilities should be provided on a priority basis in respect of all the schools to ensure an appropriate environment for teaching and learning. Class rooms and schools buildings should be repaired immediately. All secondary and senior secondary schools should be supplied science kits, chemicals and reagents to have practical classes regularly for science students. Deployment of teachers in the schools should be done as per requirement. All schools should be provided with MDM kitchen sheds to prepare food in hygienic condition. Dropout rates and out of schools children should be monitored and checked. All teachers should be imparted basic training.

Water Supply and Sewerage

Out of 620 habitations in the district, 376 habitations (61 per cent) were fully covered with drinking water facility and remaining 244 habitations (39 per cent) remained partially covered with drinking water facility.

There was insufficient supply of potable drinking water to urban population. There was a loss of ₹ 1.31 crore due to non-metering of urban consumers. An amount of ₹ 35.84 lakh was outstanding as water charges from urban consumers.

Supply of drinking water to urban as well as to rural populace was being done without treatment and testing. As a result, substantial number of cases of water borne diseases was noticed in the district.

None of the 10 towns of the district was having sewerage treatment plant.

Recommendations

The State Government/district administration needs to prepare a strategic action plan to provide potable drinking water to the partially covered habitations in a time bound manner. Water quality testing system should be improved/upgraded to ensure supply of safe drinking water to the public. Effective steps need to be taken to ensure early completion of the sewerage schemes.

Urban Development

The infrastructure like super market at Jorethang, vegetable market at Namchi and pay and use toilets at various places were created by the Department but could not be put to use and remained idle leading to the intended benefits not being provided to the public and also revenue loss to the Government.

Recommendation

Infrastructure created by the Department should be put to use immediately to provide intended benefits to the public and to avoid further loss of revenue.

Economic Services

Infrastructure-Road connectivity

There is no airport and railway connectivity in the district. The nearest airport at Bagdogra (West Bengal) is 108 kms away from the district headquarter. The nearest railway station is Siliguri / New Jalpaiguri (West Bengal) which is 100 kms from district headquarter.

Out of 244 habitations in the district, 209 habitations have been provided road connectivity as of March 2011. Thus, 35 habitations (14 per cent) in the district still remain to be provided with road connectivity.

Out of 52 works at an estimated cost of ₹ 100.71 crore taken up during 2006-11 under PMGSY, only 22 works at a cost of ₹ 25.80 crore were completed during the period and 30 works after incurring ₹ 35.96 crore remained incomplete. The delay in completion of these works ranged between 19 and 31 months.

Recommendation

The present hindrance in coverage of habitations should be identified and overcome expeditiously, so as to facilitate road connectivity to the rural masses. For timely completion of road connectivity projects, mechanism is to be evolved to ensure that contractors are completing works in time. A coordinated approach needs to be adopted by the State/District administration with the executing agencies to ensure that the works are planned and completed in time to ensure that benefits percolate down to the people.

Schemes for other developmental activities

Other developmental activities like construction/renovation/repairs of Government Schools, playgrounds, allotment of land to landless persons, etc. were taken up in the district under Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) and Land Bank Scheme.

Under MPLADS, 46.95 per cent of total funds for the State under MP, Lok Sabha and 27.38 per cent of total funds for the State under MP, Rajya Sabha was allocated exclusively for South district. Of the total available amount of ₹ 7.92 crore for 80 works with the DC, South, ₹ 6.34 crore was utilised and 48 works were completed till October 2011 leaving an unutilised amount of ₹ 1.58 crore for 32 incomplete works of which, 22 works costing ₹ 0.74 crore had not started.

Under Land Bank Scheme, an amount of ₹ 11.60 lakh (excluding the interest earning of ₹ 4.10 lakh) for 18 beneficiaries (04 nos. upto 2005-06, 04 nos. of 2006-07, 06 nos. of 2007-08, 02 nos. of 2008-09 and 02 nos. of 2009-10) could not be utilised and objective of providing land to landless Sukumbasis to raise the income of such Sukumbasis was not achieved.

Recommendations

A coordinated and equitable approach needs to be adopted by the MPs/DC, South while recommending and sanctioning the works. A coordinated approach needs to be adopted by the State/district administration with the executing agencies to ensure that the works are planned and completed in time to ensure that benefits percolate down to the people. A tangible approach needs to be taken to allot the land to landless Sukumbasis and for the older cases approach should be made for getting additional amount at revised rates.

Employment Generation

Under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), the legally guaranteed 100 days wage employment to card holders increased from 3.38 per cent in 2007-08 to 34.35 per cent in 2010-11. No unemployment allowance was granted to any job card holder. More efforts need to be made by implementing agencies for ensuring effective implementation of the scheme.

Recommendation

Under NREGA, district authorities should plan and execute the works ensuring 100 days guaranteed employment.

Housing

The district had not maintained list of houseless people to facilitate allocation of appropriate funds, selection of genuine beneficiaries, etc. Non-completion of houses under IAY by 15 per cent beneficiaries (262 nos.) despite availing the first instalment not only blocked ₹ 0.88 crore but also did not contribute towards providing housing facilities to houseless. Even in case of Rural Housing Scheme, completion of houses by the beneficiaries was not ensured by the Department and second instalment was released to new beneficiaries instead of to earlier beneficiaries indicating that the scheme implementation process was fundamentally defective.

Recommendations

Profile of houseless people in the district may be maintained to facilitate selection of genuine and deserving beneficiaries. Proper monitoring of construction of houses by the beneficiaries may be taken up to ensure completion of houses in a time bound manner by the beneficiaries and check on misuse of public money. Allocation of funds should be based on requirement to ensure equitable distribution of funds.

Tourism

The district attracted only 0.35 per cent to 9.90 per cent of domestic tourists that visited the State during the last five years. However, there was an impressive increase in flow of domestic tourists to the South district in 2010-11 compared to the previous years.

In respect of foreign tourists, the growth percentage of tourist flow in the State ranged from 14.83 per cent to 27.72 per cent. However, the figure of tourists who visited the South district was very dismal ranging between 1.63 per cent and 14.69 per cent of the total foreign tourists who visited the State.

Energy and Power

Under Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana, works were taken up in two packages in South district during February 2009. In respect of Package I, there were huge shortfalls in achieving the target for completion of work in time. Out of three 11 Kv Control rooms, not even a single had been completed, the work for drawing of 11 Kv HD Transmission line was also not completed and there were shortfall in completion of other works such as drawing of 2 Phase and 3 Phase transmission lines. Likewise, there was huge shortfall in Package II also. Out of coverage of 15 villages and 11 kms of LT 3 Phase line, only nine villages and 3.9 kms were covered. Similarly, out of 130 villages and 120.90 kms of LT 1 Phase line, only 113

villages and 107.20 kms of length were covered till September 2011.

As per the objectives of the scheme, electricity was to be provided to all the rural households within a period of five years (i.e. by August 2010). However, it was found that only 4676 households out of the total un-electrified households of 8110 in the district had been electrified. Further, out of total 3062 numbers of BPL households to be covered by August 2010 only 1533 BPL households were covered till September 2011.

Thus, non-completion of the works in time and delay in awarding the work (more than one year) resulted in failure of the objectives of the scheme and deprivation of intended benefits to the rural people including people of BPL category.

Irrigation and Flood Control

A comparative scrutiny of productivity with area under cultivation of agricultural produce in South district indicated that there were neither any increases nor consistency in area under cultivation, in production and productivity in any of the agricultural crops. Even after spending an aggregated amount of ₹ 6.87 crore (₹ 3.67 crore under AIBP, ₹ 2.04 crore under NABARD, ₹ 0.46 crore under FC&RT and ₹ 0.70 crore under Minor Works) during 2006-11, the Department neither could ensure increase in yield per hectare nor increase in the overall area brought under cultivation.

General Services

E-Governance

As regards the e-governance activities, 12 e-governance projects in nine departments were implemented, out of which, two projects were not operative and computers were being used as standalone computers and all the departments had not been covered under the project. Gram Suchana Kendras had neither been installed with required software nor internet facility been provided.

Recommendation

All departments may be covered under e-governance. Required software may be installed in all the GSKs and may be provided with internet facility.

Waste Management

Waste management would indicate collection, transport, recovery and disposal of waste, including supervision of such operations and after-care of disposal sites. Municipal solid waste, hazardous wastes and biomedical wastes were the most common wastes generated in the towns in South district. The responsibility of waste management was assigned to Urban Development and Housing Department (UDHD).

Due to non-completion of solid waste treatment plant, untreated garbage was being dumped on the banks of river Rangeet. There was usage of open vehicles for transportation of waste. Garbage was being thrown by the public here and there in the market areas creating health hazards for the public. The UDHD in the district did not have an integrated waste management plan for collection, storage, segregation, transportation, processing and disposal of municipal solid waste thereby exposing the public to the dangers of untreated waste and pollution.

Recommendations

Solid waste treatment plant should be completed immediately to avoid exposing the public to the dangers of untreated waste and pollution. Waste management plans also need to be developed in an integrated manner to ensure proper management of disposal of municipal solid waste.

Increase in crime rate

Increase/decrease in incidence of crime indicate the performance of police force. Scrutiny of records of Superintendent of Police, South district revealed that the crime rate in the district for the last six years had been fluctuating. Compared to the base year 2006, the rate of crime had decreased by 6 per cent during 2007. However, in the subsequent years the gain could not be sustained as there was again an increase of 9.95 per cent in 2008, 20.81 per cent in 2009 and 0.75 per cent in 2010.

Very high suicide rate

During 2006 rate of suicidal death in the district was 90.34 per lakh as compared to national rate of 10.50 per lakh. Similarly during 2008 and 2010, rates of suicidal death in the district were 88.22 and 116.45 per lakh as compared to national rates of 10.80 and 11.40 per lakh respectively, which were highest as compared to any State in the country during the years. Further, the rates of suicidal death had been fluctuating during the years 2006 to 2010 between 86.10 and 116.45 per lakh which were about 9 to 10 times more than the national rates. Reasons for such significantly high rates of suicidal death in the district were stated (August 2010) to be due to socio-economic changes and disintegration of joint families into nuclear families.

Monitoring Mechanism and Impact Evaluation

Monitoring and supervision of the progress of implementation of various schemes at all tiers of local administration in the district was perfunctory which impacted the progress of developmental works/ projects undertaken by various departments/ implementing agencies. Consequently, there were number of works in the social and economic sectors which were plagued by time overruns thereby depriving the public of the benefits of these developmental schemes.

Recommendation

Monitoring, inspection and supervision needs to be strengthened at all the tiers of local administration to ensure that the programmes are executed on time and within cost and timely corrective action is taken in cases of slippage.

Conclusion

There are multiplicity of programmes and schemes and even larger number of implementing agencies, making it difficult for the district administration to effectively monitor and supervise the developmental activities. While almost all the developmental programmes are targeted at the same set of beneficiaries, the existence of numerous programmes without an integrated focus, has led to each of them being implemented in a standalone mode.

To ensure efficiency and effectiveness in delivery of key services like education, health, employment, etc., the GOI has increasingly been entrusting the responsibility at the local level, especially the PRIs. This is also intended to ensure that the local Government at the district, block and GP level are empowered to discharge the functions that are constitutionally assigned to them. It was observed that absence of adequate participation from these levels in the planning process is hindering the planned progress of the district and address the felt needs at the grass roots level. Though the PRIs were empowered to prepare specific plans for integrated development of their area, they had not prepared structured annual action plans.

Monitoring mechanism was either not instituted, or was not functioning as envisaged, with regard to execution of schemes. No plans had been formulated for providing integrated development of a sector/service. Good governance, effective and efficient delivery mechanism and sustainable development strengthens high level of performance and play a crucial role in the overall socio-economic development of the District by providing essential and quality public infrastructure and services. The State Government would have to address these serious issues in order to achieve real development of the district at the desired pace.