

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At both the State and Central levels substantial funds are allocated to social and economic sectors through State Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS). In order to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of these services and to ensure that the local Governments at the District, Block and Gram Panchayat level are empowered to discharge the functions that are constitutionally assigned to them, funds are being provided to these entities directly by the Government of India, instead of being routed through the State Government. In the State of Jammu & Kashmir, Panchayati Raj System is still not implemented.

Recognising the importance accorded by Government of India for a district-centric approach to devolution of finances for an integrated local area development, a district centric audit of Rajouri district was carried out to assess the status and impact of implementation of various socio-economic developmental activities in the district during 2004-09 and to evaluate whether quality of life of people has improved.

To assess the impact of the various social and economic developmental programmes undertaken under the State Sector and CSS, an analysis carried out in audit to assess the impact of implementation of various social and economic sector programmes relating to Education, Medical, Public Health Engineering (PHE), Rural Development, Road, Forest and Industries during the period from 2004-05 to 2008-09.

While audit brought out many positives in the social programmes relating to health and education, the objective was also to highlight the achievements and flag the deficiencies, wherever noticed, for redressal.

Planning

In the absence of perspective plan and integrated annual plan for the development of district with inputs from various stakeholders, gaps in developmental schemes/programmes remained unidentified with the result that the felt needs of the weaker section of the society within the district could not be addressed.

Recommendations

For a more realistic assessment of the needs of the district, a holistic perspective plan should be prepared for the district involving representatives of the district administration, implementing departments of the Government and beneficiaries of the programmes.

Accounting Frame work and Financial Management

For the developmental activities, funds are allocated through State Budget and also released directly to implementing agencies by the Government of India for various socio-economic programmes. The funds received directly by the implementing agencies are shown as utilized as soon they are released even though the bulk of the funds may not yet have been expended. There was rush of expenditure in the closing months of the financial year to avoid lapsing of grants which implies imprudent management of finances.

Recommendations:

Financial management, in general, needs improvement, and funds provided for various socio-economic developmental programmes need to be efficiently and effectively utilised. A robust and reliable system should be put in place for receipt, utilisation and accountal of funds. The system so evolved should show actual utilisation of funds distinct from mere releases. Efforts should be made to bring down the administrative charges on developmental works.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Education

During the period covered in audit, the number of schools in the District had increased but their enrolment had decreased. The progress in the development of infrastructure of the education sector was tardy despite considerable spending. The pass percentage of students was satisfactory up to the upper primary school level but attention is required for increasing the pass percentage at the high school level. The targeted infrastructure could not be provided depriving even basic amenities to school going children.

A significant number of schools were without kitchen-sheds and drinking water facilities. The lifting and consumption of food grains was also not up to the mark.

Recommendations:

Programme funds should be released timely to ensure efficient programme implementation and avoid building up of un-utilised funds. Adequate infrastructure/amenities should be provided at schools and school buildings lying incomplete need to be completed on priority. Adequate number of teachers should be posted at schools to impart quality education and improve pass percentage. If need be, proper reorientation training should be given to the teacher so that they can acquire latest methods of teaching skills.

Health

The achievements under National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) had not been up to the desired level. Despite availability of funds, the implementation had been tardy and deficiencies in basic health facilities existed at village level. There was uneven distribution of health care facilities in the district due to failure of the Department to conduct household and facility survey. There was shortage of Medical officers in the PHC's and specialist Doctors in the CHC's.

Recommendations:

The gaps in health-care facilities should be prepared after conducting baseline household surveys with adequate community participation. Basic infrastructure/health facilities with adequate number of doctors/paramedical staff need to be provided at the all levels. Immunization and maternal health-care facilities need to be strengthened by involvement of ASHAs/ANWs. Health planning and monitoring committee need to be formed to ensure the desired level of stakeholder participation.

Drinking Water

The number of habitations for providing drinking water had increased but tardy/unplanned implementation of schemes had resulted in time and cost overruns. Despite spending ₹125.80 crore the department had been able to complete only 24 schemes out of 102 schemes taken up during the review period and the remaining 78 schemes had not been completed as of March 2009. Unplanned execution rendered an investment of ₹ 2.18 crore on three water supply schemes unfruitful. The duration of piped water supply was also far from being satisfactory. Against ARWSP norms of 4 hours of water supply per day, the duration ranged between 10 minutes to 2 hours.

Recommendations:

Perspective plans should be formulated so that water supply schemes are taken up for execution in a phased manner. The schemes should be prioritized keeping in consideration the availability of funds to avoid delays in completion thereby avoiding time overrun, cost overrun and the risk of obsolescence. Before taking up the works for execution it should be ensured that the sources of the schemes are perennial, developed and free from encumbrances so that the envisaged benefits are derived.

ECONOMIC SERVICES

Road connectivity

The district has a total of 375 villages out of which 151 villages had road connectivity by 2004-05. Despite an expenditure of ₹110.84 crore during the period 2004-09 on the road sector, no additional villages had been provided road connectivity.

Out of 23 rural roads taken up under PMSGY for execution during 2005-08, only five roads had been completed up to fair weather level. 13 road works were abandoned midway due to non-settlement of disputes relating to land compensation and approval of forest department, resulting in unfruitful expenditure of ₹12.16 crore incurred so far on them.

Recommendations:

A coordinated approach needs to be adopted by the State/district administration with the executing agencies to ensure that the works are completed in time to ensure that the benefits percolate down to the people. The unconnected villages need to be provided with all weather roads on top priority. Adequate State share funding needs to be provided to avoid delays in construction of roads taken up under District Plan/NABARD.

Other Development Schemes

The achievements under Prime Minister Reconstruction Programme and works undertaken under 11th Finance Commission was dismal. No benefits have accrued to the people of the district from the funds spent on these schemes as the assets created under them are either incomplete or not put to use.

Recommendations:

The District administration should take up the issue with the Government for getting the funds released for completion of schemes which have been left half way due to non-release of funds.

Housing

The achievements under Indira Awas Yojana was quite good in the district, though there was shortfall in the construction of new houses under the scheme.

Employment Generation

Targets under SGRY/NERAGA have been claimed as achieved during the review period. This was despite the fact that there was not only short release of funds but also savings in the funds allotted. Achievements in respect of SGSY in respect of both physical and financial targets registered steep decline from 2005-06 to 2008-09. Employment generation under Pradhan Mantri Employment Guarantee Programme showed shortfall ranging between 22 and 100 percent. Monitoring mechanism for ensuring loan disbursement in all sponsored cases did not exist.

Recommendations:

Works for creation of infrastructure should be planned and undertaken on the basis of available resources so that they are completed within the stipulated time. Monitoring committees should be set up at the district level to oversee the implementation of employment generation and poverty alleviation programmes and report deviations, delays, financial constraints, etc. to an apex authority for necessary interventions. The District administration should take up the issue with the Government for getting the funds released for completion of schemes which have been left half way due to non-release of funds.

Industry

In 46 industrial plots lessees had committed breach of terms and conditions of lease deed against whom no action was taken.

Recommendations:

The industrial assets created need be monitored so that these assets are used for bonafide purposes and not misused.

Forest

No concrete efforts were made to increase forest cover during the review period. The funds available under compensatory afforestation fund were not utilised, as a result forest cover in the District could not be increased.

Recommendations:

The State Government/District administration should take appropriate steps to compensate for the area transferred for non-forestry purposes by raising plants in other identified area from the funds available under compensatory afforestation, so that the depletion in the forest cover does not take place.

GENERAL SERVICES

Law and order

There was huge shortage of housing infrastructure and weaponry in the District. The overall deficiency of vehicles in the district was 30 percent. The response time of police station Sunderbani, Kalakote and Nowshera was encouraging while in police station Rajouri there was no improvement.

Recommendations:

Adequate housing units need to be provided to the officers and personnel of the police force to motivate them. Infrastructure in Police Stations/posts needs to be augmented. Deficiency in weapons, mobility, trainings and communication equipment needs to be made good on priority so as to make the Police Force capable of meeting any eventuality in future. Priority also needs to be given for deployment of vehicles at the Police Stations so as to increase the mobility of the force and improve the average response time. Backlog of investigation cases needs to be cleared on priority.

Internal control

The internal control was weak and an issue of great concern. Internal control weaknesses had manifested in the form of absent perspective plans, incomplete Administrative Approvals (AA) and Technical Sanctions (TS), non-prioritization of projects, delayed release of funds, rush of expenditure, and poor control environment. The monitoring of projects had been deficient and there was no monitoring of the schemes during execution at the district level.

Recommendations:

A proper internal control mechanism should be set up and all controls provided under financial rules and other departmental regulations adhered to scrupulously.

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. 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. 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 root level.

Adequate monitoring mechanism is either not instituted, or is not functioning as envisaged, with regard to execution of schemes. While plans have been formulated for providing integrated development of a sector/service, these could not be executed in a time bound manner due to non-compliance with the required formalities like obtaining clearance for forest land or clear title to land. The State Government will have to address these serious issues in order to achieve real development of the district at the desired pace.