

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Recognising the importance accorded by the Planning Commission for a district-centric approach to devolution of finances for an integrated local area development, a district centric audit of West Garo Hills District was carried out to assess the status and impact of implementation of the various socio-economic developmental activities in the District during 2006-11.

The review covered key social sector programmes relating to health, education, water supply and sanitation; economic sector programmes relating to infrastructure development, improvement of road connectivity, provision of employment to the poor and vulnerable sections of society; general sector programmes relating to police, law and order.

While Audit brought out some positives in the social sector programmes relating to health, there were quite a few areas where the State/District administration needs to focus its attention.

Audit Findings and Recommendations

Planning

Government of India envisages an inclusive and participative planning process for the development of districts and mandated the establishment of a District Planning Committee for every district for consolidating and preparing an integrated district plan. As a measure to decentralise the planning process, the State Government constituted District Planning and Development Councils (DPDC) to co-ordinate, monitor and review the implementation of district plans and programmes. Although the DPDC considered and approved the draft annual plans of the West Garo Hills District (except 2007-08), periodical meetings to review and monitor the actual implementation of the schemes/programmes were not held.

Recommendation

There should be regular meetings of the DPDC to monitor and review the progress of implementation of various schemes under the annual district plan.

Financial Management and Accounting Framework

The District receives funds through the State Budget for various development activities. In addition, funds are also released directly to the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) and implementing agencies for various socio-economic programmes sponsored by the Central Government.

The utilisation and accounting of developmental funds were shown on mere release of funds to implementing agencies rather than after their actual utilisation. As such, the reported progress and achievement of various schemes/programmes depicting the outcomes do not reflect the true picture.

Recommendations

- ❖ *A system needs to be evolved for showing actual utilisation of funds as distinct from mere release of funds.*
- ❖ *Direct transfer from the Union to the State implementing agencies runs the risk of poor accountability. As such, a system should be put in place to ensure proper accounting of these funds and the updated information should be validated by the State Government as well as the Accountant General (A&E).*

Social Services

Health

The Department was successful in restricting the diseases like leprosy, tuberculosis and polio. But the health care services through health centres, diseases like malaria, etc. still remained a matter of concern.

The process of assessing the health care requirements and gaps in infrastructure, equipment, manpower, etc., as per National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) stipulation was yet to be completed in the District. The District had six Community Health Centres (CHC), 18 Public Health Centres (PHCs) and 82 Sub Centres (SCs). Except for CHCs, the number of PHCs and SCs was less than the prescribed norms. There was shortfall of manpower in CHCs, PHCs and SCs. Patient care in rural areas of the District suffered due to inadequate infrastructure and equipment like operation theatre, radiology facilities.

The prevalence of vaccine preventable diseases was negligible in the District as no case of infant and child diseases like neonatal tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough and polio was detected during 2007-11. However, 111 to 394 cases of measles were detected during this period.

Though, 1,617 Village Health and Sanitation Committees (VHSC) were formed in the District, as of March 2011, untied fund of ₹ 1.31 crore was lying unspent with VHSCs.

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.

Recommendation

The District Health Society should commission a survey to identify the gaps in health care infrastructure and facilities and draw up a specific timeframe as per the NRHM

guidelines in order to provide accessible and affordable health care services to the rural populace of the District.

Education

School education is being imparted in the District through a network of 2,881 schools. The percentage of children who remained out of school had come down from 3.38 *per cent* in 2006-07 to 0.61 *per cent* in 2010-11. Drop-out rate at lower primary level declined to 8.49 *per cent* in 2010-11 from 10.20 *per cent* in 2006-07 and that of at upper primary level to 14.75 *per cent* in 2010-11 from 20.6 *per cent* in 2006-07.

The District was affected by lack of proper infrastructure and a significant number of schools was running without proper buildings, toilets and drinking water facilities. Besides, 111 primary schools in the District were functioning with a single teacher. At the secondary and higher secondary levels, high percentage of untrained teachers impacted quality of education as evident from low pass percentage in Board examination of Class X and Class XII.

Recommendation

- ❖ *Basic infrastructure/ facilities should be provided on priority in all the schools, especially at the elementary level, to ensure an appropriate environment for teaching and learning. Efforts should be made to impart proper training to the teachers to improve the quality of education.*

Drinking Water

The supply of drinking water remained a problem area in the District. The District Drinking Water Security Plan for 2009-12 was yet to be approved. Only 45 *per cent* of the habitations in the District had access to drinking water facilities as per norms. Besides, quality of water being supplied to the habitations was not being ensured by conducting the required water sample tests.

Lack of adequate supervision at departmental level and at required frequency, delayed the completion of schemes on time and proper maintenance of completed schemes. Thus, the targeted beneficiaries were denied adequate and safe drinking water.

Recommendation

- ❖ *The State Government/District administration needs to prepare a strategic action plan to provide potable drinking water to the uncovered habitations in a time bound manner.*
- ❖ *Water quality testing system should be improved /upgraded to ensure supply of safe drinking water to the public.*

Economic Services

Infrastructure – Roads and Bridges

Out of the total 1,537 villages in the District, only 749 villages have been provided road connectivity as of March 2011. Thus, 51 *per cent* of the villages in the District were yet to be provided with road connectivity.

As of March 2011, 31 projects covering 113.35 km were completed under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. However, none of these roads was ‘all weather’ roads, but constructed up to sub-grade stage (*kutchha*/fair weather road) only.

Further, 73 out of 93 incomplete works in the District remained incomplete even after delays ranging from one year to 13 years.

34 road works and four bridge works were pre-closed after incurring an expenditure of ₹ 7.03 crore rendering the entire expenditure wasteful.

Thus, delay in completion of road works resulted in denying the benefits of providing road connectivity which would have contributed to the economic growth of the District.

Recommendation

- ❖ *The State/District administration should ensure greater coordination with the executing agencies to ensure that the works are planned, taken up and completed within the specified timeliness and accountability should be fixed for delay and slippages in this regard.*

Employment Generation

The three important schemes for providing employment in the rural areas are the Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) and Indira Awas Yojana (IAY).

A review of status of these schemes revealed that though the objective of SGSY was to bring the assisted below poverty line (BPL) families above the poverty line, only 464 out of 51,400 BPL families in the District were brought above the poverty line till March 2011, which indicates that the SGSY had failed to achieve notable success even after 12 years of implementation.

Under MNREGA, the Department could not provide the legally guaranteed 100 days wage employment to 5,127 households. Though as per guidelines of MNREGA, these households were to get unemployment allowances, such allowances were not paid.

Basic facilities of a clean environment and sanitation were not provided in 4,694 houses constructed with the financial assistance provided under IAY thereby frustrating the objective of the scheme.

Recommendation

- ❖ *The State/District administration should provide employment opportunities as envisaged under MNREGA and make all possible efforts to provide minimum guaranteed wage employment of 100 day in a year to all beneficiaries who demand employment.*
- ❖ *It should also take appropriate steps to ensure the poor families assisted under SGSY are brought above the poverty line by identifying the problem, if any, faced by the beneficiaries and offering a tangible solution to it.*
- ❖ *Basic facilities such as sanitary latrine and smokeless chullahs should be ensured in the houses of beneficiaries constructed under IAY so that a clean environment is provided.*

Power

As of March 2011, 649 out of 1,537 villages in the District did not have electricity. Project taken up for providing electricity to all households and free electricity to all BPL household remained incomplete. 127 villages in the District were de-electrified which indicates that due to poor maintenance, infrastructure created in these villages were wasteful.

Recommendation

- ❖ *Proper planning and survey should be done before taking up projects. Time schedule for a project should be strictly adhered to so as to ensure that the project is completed within the scheduled date so that the goals of the projects are achieved.*

General Services

Law and Order

The District Police Force has been functioning with shortfall of manpower. Not only the crime cases reported during the period 2006-11 has more than double but also pending cases had also increased significantly.

Recommendation

Effective steps should be taken to fill up the vacant posts of the police force and to bring down the number of pending crime cases.

Management of Waste

The basic objective of scientific disposal of solid municipal waste as well as bio-medical waste for preventing environmental pollution remained largely unachieved owing to various operational deficiencies. Landfills had not been established and the municipal board was dumping the solid waste in the open with consequent adverse results on human health and the environment.

- ❖ *Bio-medical waste management and disposal systems should be streamlined. Landfill sites and waste disposal facilities should be set up on priority basis to avoid open dumping of wastes.*

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring of the progress of implementation of various schemes/programmes 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, significant number of works in the social and economic sectors remained incomplete thereby depriving the people of the District of the benefits envisaged under these developmental schemes.

Recommendation

- ❖ *Monitoring mechanism needs to be strengthened at all the tiers of local administration to ensure that the schemes/programmes are executed on time and within cost and timely corrective action is taken in cases of slippage. A system of evaluation of the completed schemes/programmes should be evolved to assess the impact of implementation of the same.*