

Analysis of Devolution of Funds to Panchayats under 14th CFC and 4th SFC and their Impact on Outcomes for Social Sector with reference to Women and Children in Odisha

Dissemination cum Advocacy Workshop

Hotel Excellency, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

08 August, 2018

A Report

A Dissemination-cum-Advocacy workshop on the study ‘*Analysis of Devolution of Funds to panchayats under 14th CFC and 4th SFC and their impact on outcomes for Social Sector with reference to women and children in Odisha*’ was held at Hotel Excellency, Bhubaneswar on 8 August, 2018. The workshop was jointly organised by UNICEF, Odisha and CBPS, Bengaluru as a follow up of the completion of the study to share the findings of the study with the representatives from Planning and Convergence Department; and officials and elected representatives from the three study districts of Balasore, Keonjhar and Koraput. The objective of the workshop was twofold: a) to disseminate and validate the findings and b) to derive suitable policy recommendations for consideration of Government of Odisha.

The Dissemination-cum-Advocacy workshop was inaugurated by Mr. GB Reddy, Officer on Special Duty, Planning and Convergence Department, Government of Odisha. Mr. Reddy in his remarks drew attention to the fact that impact of investment in social sector made by Odisha Government is evident in the latest NFHS data. He pointed out that studies such as the one carried out by CBPS in collaboration with UNICEF were important as their findings can inform the state’s policies. Earlier Ms. Lalita Patnaik, Station Head, UNICEF Odisha office while welcoming the participants thanked Mr Reddy personally and the Planning and Convergence Department for facilitating the study and the workshop. She expressed the willingness of UNICEF to take the study forward in



Mr GB Reddy, OSD, Planning & Convergence Department inaugurating the workshop

every way possible. Mr. Srinivas Alamuru, Adviser, CBPS presented a brief overview of the study, which was followed by presentation of the study by Mr. Madhusudhan Rao, Research Adviser, CBPS. Mr Soumen Ray, Social Policy Specialist, Ms. Lopamudra Tripathy, C4D Specialist (both from UNICEF) along with Mr. S C Dash Consultant engaged by CBPS for the study facilitated the discussion.

Participants included senior officials from the Departments of Women and Child Development and Planning and Convergence; and elected representatives and officers from three study districts viz. Balasore, Keonjhar and Koraput.

The study aimed at understanding the impact of 14th CFC funds and 4th SFC funds spent by panchayats on social sector outcomes especially on women and children. Although GPs do not have an explicit mandate to spend on social sector expenditure, improvement of anganwadi centres, schools and health centre by building compound walls, toilets and supplying running water, repair and improvement of approach roads to school, health centre and anganwadi are included as social sector expenditure relating to women and children. The finances of state, social sector expenditure and the process of planning at the panchayats were analysed.



A section of participants

The first part of the presentation focused on the public finance for social sector. The important findings included the need for increasing the share of social sector expenditure in the total expenditure which hovered around 37 percent over the last six years. It also highlighted the fact that the state had been consistently recording revenue surplus, which along with increased borrowings, it has been ploughing into capital

expenditure. It was noted that despite increased capital outlay going largely to economic sector, there was no commensurate improvement in own source revenue, which has remained around 6 percent. Considering the challenges that still lie ahead in terms of poor social indicators, the government needs to spend more on the social sector, particularly on important rural development schemes such as Indira Awas Yojana, Biju Ghar Yojana, Gopabandhu Grameen Yojana, National Rural Livelihoods Mission and along with the expenditure on basic services incurred by GPs by curtailing the revenue surplus.

The second part of the presentation focused on Gram Panchayat Development Plan processes, utilisation of funds from 14th CFC and 4th SFC at GPs, priorities reflected in the plan and issues of governance at GP level. The presentation was also summarized by Subash Chandra Dash at frequent intervals in Odia for the benefit of the participants to reflect upon the study.

The presentation was followed by a discussion of findings in groups. The groups summarized the pertinent issues around GPDP processes that needed immediate attention and also stressed the need for intense capacity building activities. The discussion points summarized included:

- a. It was clarified that the lower utilization of 14 CFC funds was due to delayed release of funds and as a matter of fact the releases were less than allocations.
- b. The shortage of staff, delay in payment of honoraria and allowances to the elected members, dwindling attendance of palli sabha and grama sabha has affected the GPDP processes.
- c. Monitoring of GPDP projects has been adversely affected by i) lack of clarity about the GPDP projects and ii) cost involved for supervision (e.g. travel expense) which is not provided / budgeted. Besides, the GP elected representatives / officials are not empowered enough to suggest remedial measures let alone ensure that they are carried out.
- d. The funds remaining after undertaking the mandatory projects (e.g. crematoria, bathing ghat, kalyana mandap, etc.) are insufficient for undertaking infrastructure works at GP level. This also had reduced the scope of planning at GP level.
- e. There is a need for GP wise database of infrastructure i.e. roads, streetlights, water supply (public taps, piped water supply), solid waste management, schools, anganwadis, health centres etc. It is very critical for the planning purposes to assess the existing infrastructure as well as the gaps. A systematic assessment of status and gaps and its compilation at block level would pave way for better planning and resource utilisation. The block which has the knowledge of resources across programmes and schemes can plan meticulously for filling the infrastructure deficits through GPDP and other schemes. This can also be used to monitor progress on bridging the infrastructure deficits through GPDP and other schemes.
- f. There is a need for strengthening the standing committees at the GP level for them to be able to supervise and monitor development programmes. An orientation / capacity building exercise is required to the GP members and staff to understand their critical role in monitoring the aspects of nutrition and education in anganwadis, enrollment and mid-day meals in schools, services of health sub centres and their supervisory role in implementation of schemes. The orientation should also cover the aspect of effective communication to the line departments or block offices.
- g. The need to build capacities and strengthen the GPs as a unit of governance through intense capacity building and hand holding activity was underlined during the discussion. This would help them in discharging their responsibilities towards planning effectively. Aspects such as how to supervise anganwadi - whether to inspect records, or serving of food, what should / could GP do if it found the services unsatisfactory; and so on. This is critical for GPs to be effective in monitoring the social sector programmes.

Ms Lopamudra Tripathy, C4D specialist, UNICEF Odisha reiterated the need for strengthening the GPDP process and working at the GP level for furthering the agenda of improving the social sector outcomes with reference to children.

The workshop came to end with vote of thanks from Mr. Soumen Ray, Social Policy Specialist, UNICEF, Odisha.

