

Report of Working group on Strengthening Monitoring and evaluation system for the social sector development schemes in the country

Summary of Recommendations

1. Monitoring of Programmes should be purposeful. Professionals need to be associated with the monitoring team to raise the quality of monitoring and evaluation of social sector programmes. Economists, engineers, sociologists and accountants should form part of monitoring teams.
2. For effective monitoring, diversion of staff sanctioned for monitoring to other divisions/sections of the Ministries and the State Governments should be stopped. All vacant posts of the monitoring units should be filled so that monitoring does not suffer on account of inadequate manpower.
3. It is desired that District Collector, who is responsible for implementing social sector programmes in a district, should have minimum stay of three years in district so that he concentrates fully on the implementation of social sector policies and programmes. This transfer rule can be applied to the other subordinate staff and heads of the monitoring units.
4. Communication with the current and potential beneficiaries is presently very poor. Delivery system designed for the social sector schemes should provide for inherent monitoring system envisaging transparency in discussing reactions, clarifying doubts, etc. through face to face communication, strengthening the understanding and motivation of field workers at the village level through training and appropriate incentives with promotional opportunities should also be ensured.
5. Micro level planning may be strengthened. Individual and family based plans need to be formulated keeping in view their distinct interests and talents. Comprehensive village plans should play an increasingly important role in the process of socio-economic development. Participation of people at the grass-root level would help resolve the problem at that level only. Provision of monitoring of the

programmes/schemes commensurate with village plans would bring in concurrent cross-checking of benefits and their impact on the beneficiaries.

6. Currently, follow-up action by the functionaries at grass root level leaves much to be desired. They focus more on the achievement of allocated financial and physical targets. What is urgently required is to make them pay attention to the actual outcome benefits derived by the beneficiaries. The performance evaluation of the functionaries should be based, to a much greater degree than at present, on the actual gains made by the beneficiaries.
7. Under social sector programmes, like, Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana, Swarnjayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana, Employment Assurance Scheme etc. creation of assets takes place through construction of roads, watersheds, panchayat ghars, etc. The programmes have not earmarked funds for maintenance of these assets. Moreover, there has been no monitoring by the Ministries and the State Governments of the conditions of such assets created through implementation of social sector programmes. There is a need to have an effective monitoring of the conditions of the assets created.
8. The air of secrecy that very often prevails in Government functioning needs to be lifted if monitoring of programmes is to be effective. There is a need to share information and make the system more transparent. Transparency would facilitate faster reforms and make the administration more responsive and performance-orientated. Transparency in development activities would help ensure better implementation and improve monitoring at all levels. For implementation of the social sector programmes, several State Governments have been compiling and preparing village level/block level/district level lists of beneficiaries and the number of works completed. These lists should be readily available at village/block/district levels which would help promote effective monitoring by the officials and even by the people at these levels.
9. Accountability in the monitoring process is very weak. The fear of adverse remarks has prevented officials from reporting poor performances. Concealment of shortcomings and manipulation of data have been resorted to, to cover poor performances. Due to concealment of weaknesses in programmes, appropriate

corrective actions are not taken. Monitoring units tend to shift responsibilities for poor performances to line departments. Monitoring Units and the Departments furnishing data and reports are not held accountable for false pictures created by them. To project a correct image of the programmes a clear picture of the performance of the programmes is necessary. Monitoring units should be held accountable for reports and data submitted by them on performances of schemes and programmes monitored by them. Accountability of performance-monitoring will eliminate false reports and would help the Government. to take corrective measures. At the State level there is not much initiative for monitoring and identifying programmes in which the performance has been poor. It is desired that the monitoring units of the State should take self-initiative to accelerate the performance of the line departments and regularly give feed back to the line departments on their performance.

10. Monitoring of programmes must be supplemented by monitoring of action taken on recommendations made by the monitoring and evaluation units. Corrective measures suggested by the monitoring and evaluation units should be monitored to improve the implementation of the programmes. Each State should constitute a committee headed by the Chief Minister or the Chief Secretary to monitor and review the follow-up action on the monitoring and evaluation reports.
11. Preparation of social maps (i.e. poverty, illiteracy, inverse sex-ratio, morbidity, mal-nutrition etc. severally and by superimposition) – scheme-wise and their integration (on selective basis) for visual effect and scrutiny by the lay public and elected representatives for debate, discussion, verification and validation, need to be introduced to improve monitoring of social sector programmes.
12. Generalized objectives of all programmes and schemes being implemented need to be broken down into specific goals from the point of view of evaluation and monitoring. Care should be taken to see that the evaluation and monitoring groups take note of them from the data generated by other agencies, both official and non-official, in the same or allied sectors. Primary data generated by different agencies should be used to cross-check the progress as well as the impact of these schemes.

13. Rationalization of objectives, specification of goals/sub-goals, their operationalisation in terms of variables, preparation of a base-line/ preparedness profile, identification of target group, existing or new organisation of people at the local level, process of intervention or service delivery, beneficiary and citizen participation, change over time in the socio-economic status of target groups (outcome/impact), conflicts and their resolution during implementation of a scheme, bottlenecks and their correction, transparency of results and future leads, comparison of this data with those of other schemes in terms of opportunity, access, input, use, client satisfaction, social environment and strains, cost-effectiveness, created assets infrastructure/equipment) and impact etc. should deserve attention.
14. The State Plan Division of the Planning Commission, who recommends release of funds to the States and Union territories should, before releasing funds in a financial year to the States, should thoroughly monitor and evaluate the programmes implemented by the State in the preceding year to a financial year. Similarly, the other Sectoral Divisions of the Planning Commission should thoroughly monitor and review the performance of the administrative Ministries before recommending release of funds to the Ministries for a particular scheme. Moreover, these Divisions should also monitor and ensure that the plan goals formulated by the Governments are being achieved through the implementation of social sector schemes.
15. Performance-based system of releasing funds to States needs to be in place if monitoring is to play a role in improving implementation of social sector schemes. Release of funds must be linked with performance in the field. Budget of departments needs to be reviewed based on the performances of the schemes rather than expenditure incurred on these schemes alone. The present practice of fixing budget based only on expenditure of the last financial year should be given. This practice has prevented Ministries from curtailing grants to non-performing States on the ground that non-expenditure of budget would curtail their budget the following year. Flexibility to award additional fund for better performance of the States/UTs should be considered by the Planning Commission/Ministries. Financial monitoring to prevent diversion of development funds to non-developmental activities may be made a part of review when releasing funds to the States.

16. To improve flow of information to the monitoring agencies statutory provisions requiring Ministries/States to supply the requisite information to them may be envisaged. This would ensure that monitoring units get the required information and time is not wasted in collecting data from the Ministries/States on the schemes being implemented by them.
17. To make monitoring of the social sector programmes/anti-poverty programmes more meaningful, the expenditure incurred on each programme by the implementing agencies should also be monitored so that the unit cost of delivery is ascertained and comparison between States and various implementing agencies can be worked out. The monthly ranking of the State Governments in effecting delivery of the programmes should also take into account their unit cost.
18. There are a number of social sector programmes/schemes being implemented by the State Governments and administered by the Central Ministries. It is suggested that all the social sector schemes before the start of the Tenth Plan should be reviewed by the Planning Commission. Schemes which have become outdated or schemes which are duplicate in nature being implemented by more than one Ministry for the same goals should be scrapped/ amalgamated. We should have very few schemes in the social sector so that their monitoring and evaluation can be done focally and thoroughly.
19. For successful implementation of social sector programmes, participation of various stakeholders is essential. Wide spread awareness about the programmes among the voluntary agencies, groups of beneficiaries, etc. would be desirable. The top down approach in Planning and Implementation has led to formulation of schemes without assessment of the need of the people. Thus the interests of the people in these programmes have declined. Stakeholders would, therefore, need to be actively involved in the formulation and planning of all schemes. This would facilitate not only better planning but also better monitoring of the programmes.

20. States should delegate more powers to the Panchayats for successful implementation of the programmes at the village/block level. Similarly, the Nagar Palikas in the towns should also be empowered to implement social sector programmes in towns and cities. Monitoring should be made an essential feature in the working of these local bodies, which would ensure that programmes are implemented properly. These bodies may be made accountable for monitoring all programmes in their respective areas.
21. Participation of Subordinate and attached Ministerial Institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations, Universities and Research Institutions in formulation and monitoring of programmes may be encouraged. They may be allowed to contribute their views in designing the programmes which they have reviewed. Importance may be attached to monitoring reports of these bodies by the various ministries/departments of the Government.
22. The tentative targets for the programmes should be fixed by the respective Ministries by the end of March preceding the onset of the financial year so that the State Governments can further work out and plan their actions to achieve the State-wise / District-wise / Block-wise and Village level targets. The targets should be realistic and match with the financial allocations made to the States/UTs. Moreover, the final targets for the States and the UTs should be confirmed and conveyed by the administrative Ministries by 31st May of the financial year. In no case, the final targets should be revised and changed to suit the achievement of the States for the various programmes.
23. Scientific method is central to all innovation and progress. This essentially means experimentation, i.e., ceaseless trial and many an error. If we punish honest error sooner rather than later, all efforts for improvement will also cease. This is one of the major maladies of our delivery systems. A positive attitude to error and to failure in the genuine pursuit of perfection, must therefore, be appreciated, encouraged and publicly and positively reinforced if we want the entrepreneurial courage to take risks in the mission to provide excellent service to the citizen – the courage to try and try again, for better results in the future.

24. Reorientation of present monitoring system from quantitative to qualitative has to be made in order to capture the complete picture of development in the social sector. Development of appropriate indicators is necessary for making the impact of a programme visible in various stages of the programme cycle. Indicators should comprise input indicators, output indicators and impact indicators. Each social sector needs to develop appropriate indicators to assess the qualitative changes made by different programmes. Care should be taken to choose the indicators and they should be applied in a flexible fashion, selected to fit the programmes designed. Indicators should be used to link the programme objectives with expected outcomes and use of minimum number of indicators should be made to allow a reliable estimate on the efficacy and efficiency which the project is implemented for.
25. Training should be made an important organisational aspect of monitoring development. All staff should be adequately trained, particularly in modern methods of information-management. Training in information technology significantly raises the computer capabilities of monitoring staff. Training of monitoring officials should be a mixture of training in technology as well as in aspects of general management. It is suggested that in the 10th Plan a training institute on monitoring and evaluation should be set up at the national level.
26. Increase in the number of social sector schemes being implemented by the Ministries/State Governments has given rise to the need to have effective information system to monitor these programmes. Use of computers in information management has, therefore, become essential. Use of information technology would speed up information between field units and the nodal Ministries, thereby improving the monitoring of the programmes. Investment in development of computer network and training of staff in the use of IT needs to be given continued importance during the 10th Plan period.
27. Effective monitoring depends on timely and correct information flow from the primary source to the monitoring unit. To enable a speedy flow of information, network covering all the villages and blocks of the country needs to be developed. Networking of all villages and blocks would help improve monitoring of all social sector schemes at grass root level. Development of an Internet backbone in the

10th Plan should be given importance to introduce on-line monitoring during the Plan period.

28. Data collection on paper formats has to be replaced by computerised formats to enable instant data transmission and bring down time spent in entering data into computers. Computer compatible formats have to be designed so that information can be transmitted instantly.
29. Introduction of hand held computer like Palmtop to monitoring units in the field to improve data collection and transmission may be actively considered to improve monitoring at the grassroots level. Such appliances would help the monitoring units gather and store data and be able to transmit them to the Head Offices without delay.
30. Local participation in monitoring and evaluation is suggested to counter the traditional top down approach to monitoring and evaluation. It has been seen that the traditional approach does not give a clear picture of the various schemes and projects being monitored. The conventional monitoring technique have proved costly and ineffective in terms of measuring and assessing programme achievements. Bottom up strategy that employs participatory methodologies should be encouraged.
31. The decentralization of planning envisaged with the implementation of the 73rd and 74th Constitution (Amendment) Acts empowering Panchayats and local bodies must be implemented in letter and spirit. These bodies must be actively involved in the planning, designing and monitoring of all programmes at the grassroots level for better delivery.
32. Panchayats and urban local bodies may be empowered to plan, implement, supervise and coordinate subjects falling in the 11th Schedule of the Constitution. All appropriate powers may be delegated to these bodies to make them effective in their working. Monitoring reports from these bodies should be given due importance and recognition by the implementing agencies. All information regarding programmes may be furnished to these bodies to allow them to monitor these programmes effectively.

33. To ensure monitoring at the grassroots level Panchayats and local bodies need to be in existence. Elections to these bodies should be held timely and fairly. Release of funds meant for programmes implemented through these bodies must be released only to these bodies. Funds should be curtailed to states where elections to these bodies have not taken place.
34. To strengthen participatory monitoring at the grassroots level, Non- Governmental Organizations may be included in the monitoring process. Official recognition may be granted to reports submitted by these bodies. Funding of these bodies to undertake monitoring may be made a regular feature by Ministries involved in social sector programmes.
35. It is high time that the huge expertise and academic manpower available with Universities, Research Institutions, etc. are utilised for monitoring the social sector programmes. Professionals/academics from various fields should be involved in designing the monitoring systems and carrying out evaluation studies. Research in social sector programmes may be encouraged in these Institutes. Monitoring and evaluation studies carried out by the Universities/ Institutes should be funded by the concerned Ministries/State Governments.
36. To have an effective monitoring and evaluation system it is necessary that a Central institution to coordinate between the different agencies should be in place. Presently, monitoring is being done by the nodal Ministries, Planning Commission, Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation and monitoring bodies at the State level. There is no coordination among these various monitoring bodies. Reports and evaluation studies done by various monitoring bodies are not shared among themselves. This lack of communication amongst them has led to duplication of work and given rise to conflicting reports. To improve the quality of monitoring and evaluation the central agency could act as 'Monitor of Monitors'. This agency will help coordinate monitoring work. This nodal agency will hold review meetings periodically with Central nodal Ministries and the State Governments and UT Administrations to evaluate performance of various programmes. The decisions taken in the review meetings should be binding on the Central Ministries and the State Governments for improving their performance.

37. The existing arrangement of setting targets by the Planning Commission and release of funds by the Ministry of Finance has led to confusion among most Ministries. Targets are fixed without taking into consideration the funds available for the programmes. This has led to Ministries/States not achieving their targets due to paucity of funds. A suitable mechanism may be evolved to ensure that adequate funds are made available for achieving the targets.
38. The State Governments should have review committees at State, district and block levels to assess the performance of the social sector programmes. Invitation to such meetings should be extended to the Central nodal Ministries also.
39. Review of all programmes through monitoring should be made compulsory before Annual Plan meetings. Each programme should be properly evaluated before the new budget estimates for these programmes are approved. Monitoring should be made a essential part of all programme reports. Targets for all programmes should be fixed based on the reports of the monitoring bodies so that realistic targets are set.