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LEAD STORY:

Connecting the Dots: A Roadmap for Rural Development Amid Climate Change and Poverty

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“There is a ring of fire stretching around the world where conflict and climate shocks compounded by COVID-19 and rising costs are driving millions of people to the brink of starvation — threatening to increase migration and instability globally this year.”

–David Beasley (Executive Director of the World Food Programme)



Image created using openart.ai

Introduction

Climate change is one of the defining challenges of our time, with far-reaching consequences for global poverty and development. The effects of rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and more extreme weather events are already being felt worldwide, with the poor and marginalised being hit hardest.

This article examines the complex linkages between climate change and poverty in India, particularly emphasising rural areas and development policy implications.

India is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to its large population, high poverty levels, and reliance on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture. The essay argues that climate change is exacerbating existing inequalities and pushing more people into poverty while undermining efforts to achieve sustainable development. Urgent action is needed to build resilience, particularly among the rural poor who depend heavily on climate-sensitive livelihoods.

Climate Change and Global Poverty

Climate change is a global phenomenon with profoundly unequal impacts. While the primary drivers of climate change – greenhouse gas emissions from human activities – are concentrated in the industrialised nations, developing countries and the world's poorest populations feel the consequences most acutely. This is because these countries and communities often lack the resources, infrastructure, and institutional capacity to adapt to the changing climate effectively.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

Change (IPCC), the impacts of climate change are expected to push an additional 100 million people into poverty by 2030, with the majority living in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The World Bank estimates that climate change could force over 216 million people to migrate within their own countries by 2050, further exacerbating poverty and inequality.

The pathways through which climate change affects poverty are manifold. Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and more frequent and intense extreme weather events can devastate agricultural productivity, disrupt livelihoods, and destroy critical infrastructure. This leads to loss of lives, assets, and incomes, pushing vulnerable households deeper into poverty. Climate change also contributes to food insecurity, water scarcity, and the spread of diseases, all of which disproportionately impact the poor. Moreover, the impacts of climate change often intersect with and exacerbate existing socioeconomic inequalities. Marginalised groups such as women, ethnic minorities, and indigenous communities are more vulnerable due to their limited access to resources, services, and decision-making power. Climate change can also drive conflict and displacement, further undermining development and trapping people in poverty.

Addressing the climate-poverty nexus is, therefore, crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development

Goals and ensuring a just and equitable future for all. This requires a concerted global effort to mitigate climate change, build adaptive capacity, and support the world's poorest and most vulnerable populations.



Photo by Pixabay from Pexels: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/photo-of-brown-bare-tree-on-brown-surface-during-daytime-60013/>

Climate Change Impacts on Poverty in India

India is one of the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to its large population, high poverty levels, and reliance on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture. Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and more extreme weather events are already taking a heavy toll on lives and livelihoods, with the poor being the most affected.

■ Extreme Weather Events

Extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, and cyclones are becoming more frequent and intense in India, causing widespread damage to homes, infrastructure, and agricultural lands. This leads to loss of lives, assets, and incomes, pushing many vulnerable households deeper into poverty. For instance, the devastating Kerala floods in 2018 affected over 5 million people and caused an estimated \$3 billion in losses. Similarly, the 2019 Cyclone Fani in Odisha destroyed over 200,000 homes and damaged critical infrastructure, with the poorest communities bearing the brunt of the devastation. These extreme events not only disrupt livelihoods in the immediate aftermath but also have long-term consequences for poverty and development. Households often have to sell productive assets, take on debt, or withdraw children from school to cope with the shocks, further entrenching their poverty.

■ Agricultural Impacts

Climate change is also significantly impacting agricultural productivity in India, with crop yields declining due to heat stress, water scarcity, and pest infestations. This is especially problematic given that 70 per cent of Indians depend on farming for their livelihoods. Falling incomes from agriculture are forcing many small and marginal farmers to take on

debt or migrate to cities in search of work. The situation is particularly dire for rainfed farmers, who rely on unpredictable monsoons for their crops and have limited access to irrigation and other adaptive technologies. Climate change also affects the availability and quality of water resources, which are crucial for agricultural production. Droughts and erratic rainfall patterns deplete groundwater levels and reduce surface water supplies, leading to crop failures and livestock losses.

- **Food Insecurity and Rising Prices**

The impacts of climate change on agricultural production contribute to food insecurity and rising food prices in India. Disruptions to food supply chains and crop failures due to extreme weather events can lead to spikes in food prices, squeezing household budgets and disproportionately affecting the poor. They spend a larger share of their income on food and are particularly vulnerable to these price shocks. Rising food prices can force households to reduce the quantity and quality of their food intake, leading to malnutrition and other health problems, especially among children. Climate change-induced food insecurity can also have broader socioeconomic consequences, such as increased conflict, migration, and political instability, further exacerbating poverty and inequality.



Photo by Chris John: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/houses-near-concrete-road-2783232/>

- **Urban Poverty and Vulnerability**

The urban poor in India are also highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Many live in informal settlements that lack basic services and are prone to flooding and heat waves. Slum dwellers often work in the informal sector, which is highly exposed to climate risks and lacks social protection. For example, the 2022 heatwaves in India led to widespread power outages and water shortages, disproportionately affecting the urban poor who lack access to cooling and reliable water supplies. These climate-related shocks can undermine livelihoods, disrupt essential services, and increase the risk of disease outbreaks,

further entrenching urban poverty.

- **Intersecting Vulnerabilities**

The impacts of climate change often intersect with and exacerbate existing socioeconomic inequalities in India. Marginalised groups, such as women, Dalits, tribal communities, and religious minorities, are more vulnerable due to their limited access to resources, services, and decision-making power. For instance, women in India are more likely to experience poverty, own fewer assets, and have less control over household resources. They also face higher risks of gender-based violence and health problems during and after climate-related disasters. This heightens their vulnerability and undermines their ability to cope with and recover from the impacts of climate change. Similarly, tribal and indigenous communities, who often rely on natural resource-based livelihoods, are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity due to climate change. Their traditional knowledge and coping strategies are also being eroded, further exacerbating their poverty and marginalisation.

- **Implications for Rural Development**

The rural poor, who make up three-quarters of India's poor, are on the frontlines of climate change. Their livelihoods depend heavily on climate-sensitive

sectors like agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. They also have limited access to resources, services, and social safety nets to cope with climate shocks. Climate change is undermining hard-won development gains in rural areas and making it harder to achieve goals like food security, poverty reduction, and sustainable livelihoods. It is also exacerbating existing inequalities, with marginalised groups like small farmers, landless labourers, and tribal communities being disproportionately affected.

- **Impacts on Rural Livelihoods**

The impacts of climate change on agriculture, as discussed earlier, are a major threat to the livelihoods of rural households in India. Declining crop yields, livestock losses, and reduced access to natural resources can lead to falling incomes, food insecurity, and indebtedness, pushing many families deeper into poverty. Climate change also affects other rural livelihood sources, such as forestry and fisheries. Changing rainfall patterns and rising temperatures are altering the distribution and productivity of forest resources, while ocean warming and acidification are depleting fish stocks. This can undermine the incomes and food security of communities that depend on these natural resources. Moreover, climate-induced migration from rural to urban areas is on the rise, as people seek alternative sources of income and livelihood. This can lead to the breakdown of social

support systems, increased urban slum populations, and further marginalisation of the rural poor.

- **Challenges to Rural Development**

Climate change poses significant challenges to achieving sustainable rural development in India. It undermines investments in areas like agriculture, infrastructure, and basic services, which are crucial for improving the lives and livelihoods of the rural poor. For example, climate-related disasters can destroy rural roads, irrigation systems, and other critical infrastructure, disrupting access to markets, healthcare, and education. This can set back development progress and make it harder for the rural poor to escape poverty. Climate change also threatens the effectiveness of many rural development programs and schemes, such as those focused on improving agricultural productivity, natural resource management, and social protection. Interventions that may have been effective in the past may no longer be suitable in the face of a changing climate.

Policy Responses and Interventions

Addressing the climate-poverty nexus in India requires a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach that integrates climate adaptation and mitigation into development planning and

implementation at all levels. This includes a range of policy responses and interventions targeting both the drivers and impacts of climate change.

- **National Policies and Strategies**

At the national level, India has taken several steps to address climate change and its impacts on poverty and development. The National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and the State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs) outline India's strategies for climate change mitigation and adaptation, focusing on vulnerable sectors and communities. The NAPCC includes eight national missions, such as the National Solar Mission, the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture, and the National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change. These missions aim to promote clean energy, improve agricultural resilience, and enhance the understanding of climate change impacts. India has also launched several flagship programmes and schemes to support rural development and poverty alleviation, such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), and the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN). While these initiatives were not initially designed with climate change in mind, there is a growing recognition of the need to integrate climate considerations into their implementation.

MGNREGA: A Pathway to Climate Resilience

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) – India’s flagship social protection programme – has emerged as a crucial tool for building climate resilience and supporting the rural poor in the face of these mounting challenges. While the programme’s primary objective is to alleviate poverty and provide income security, its climate co-benefits have gained increasing recognition in recent years. MGNREGA’s focus on activities like water conservation, land development, and afforestation not only generates immediate employment and income but also enhances the long-term adaptive capacity of rural communities.



Women engaged in plantation works under MGNREGS; Image credit: Dr Surjit Vikraman

Carbon Sequestration and Climate Mitigation

One of the vital climate co-benefits of MGNREGA is its potential to contribute to climate change mitigation through carbon sequestration. A study by researchers at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) found that the scheme captured 102 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (MtCO₂) in 2017-18 through its plantation and soil quality improvement activities. The study estimates that MGNREGA's carbon sequestration capacity could rise to 249 MtCO₂ by 2030, significantly contributing to India's climate action goals. The scheme's focus on natural resource management, particularly through activities like afforestation, watershed development, and land restoration, plays a crucial role in enhancing carbon sinks. For instance, the 'Usharmukti' river rejuvenation programme in West Bengal, implemented under MGNREGA, has helped bring 30,000 hectares of land under plantation with over 15 million trees since 2017. These nature-based solutions sequester carbon and provide a range of co-benefits, such as improved soil fertility, groundwater recharge, and biodiversity conservation. By integrating climate change mitigation into its core objectives, MGNREGA can help India achieve its target of creating an additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030, as per its commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Enhancing Climate Adaptation and Resilience

Beyond climate mitigation, MGNREGA's focus on natural resource management and rural infrastructure creation also enhances the climate adaptation and resilience of vulnerable communities. The scheme's works, such as water harvesting structures, land development, and drought-proofing measures, help strengthen the adaptive capacity of rural households and local economies. For instance, a study by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) found that the deepening and widening of a local river and drainage channel in Rushikudda village of Andhra Pradesh, carried out under MGNREGA, helped reduce the impact of Cyclone Hudhud in 2014. The improved drainage system allowed floodwaters to flow back into the ocean, preventing damage to nearby households.

Similarly, in Dhank village of Gujarat, ten ponds created under MGNREGA have helped recharge groundwater, enabling farmers to grow multiple crops throughout the year. This has reduced their vulnerability to droughts and erratic rainfall patterns, which have become more frequent due to climate change. Across many rural communities, MGNREGA works have helped improve water security, soil fertility, and access to productive assets – all crucial for enhancing climate resilience. By creating climate-resilient infrastructure and natural capital, the

scheme strengthens the ability of the rural poor to prepare for, cope with, and recover from climate-related shocks and stresses.

Livelihood Diversification and Social Protection

MGNREGA's role in providing guaranteed wage employment and creating productive assets also contributes to livelihood diversification and social protection, which are essential for building climate resilience. The scheme's focus on labour-intensive works, such as constructing irrigation structures, land development, and afforestation, generates immediate income for rural households. This helps them smooth consumption during lean seasons and cope with the income shocks caused by climate-related disasters. Moreover, the assets created under MGNREGA, such as water harvesting structures and improved agricultural lands, enhance rural livelihoods' productivity and climate resilience. This, in turn, reduces the dependence on climate-sensitive activities like rainfed agriculture, which are highly vulnerable to climate variability. MGNREGA also serves as a crucial social protection mechanism, providing a safety net for the rural poor during distress. The scheme's guaranteed employment and wage payments can help households absorb the impacts of climate-related shocks, such as crop failures or livestock losses, and prevent them from falling deeper into poverty. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance,

MGNREGA played a vital role in providing a cushion against economic distress, with a significant increase in the number of households seeking work under the scheme. This highlights the scheme's potential to serve as a shock-responsive social protection program in the face of climate-induced crises.

Despite MGNREGA's significant potential in building climate resilience, the scheme faces several critical challenges that need to be addressed. One of the key issues is the inconsistent and often inadequate funding for the programme, as seen in the recent budget cuts. This raises concerns about MGNREGA's ability to meet the growing demand for employment and climate adaptation works. Additionally, the quality and sustainability of the assets created under the scheme have been uneven across different states and regions due to weak monitoring, lack of technical capacity, and poor maintenance.

To harness MGNREGA's full climate co-benefits, there is a need to more explicitly integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation into the design and implementation of the programme. While the scheme's works have inherent climate-related impacts, a more systematic and targeted approach is required. This could involve developing frameworks to quantify the climate benefits, aligning work plans with local vulnerability assessments, providing climate information services to communities, and

incentivising climate-smart activities. Crucially, ensuring the equitable distribution of MGNREGA's climate resilience benefits is important, particularly among marginalised groups like small farmers, landless labourers, women, and tribal communities who face disproportionate climate risks. By addressing these challenges and seizing the available opportunities, MGNREGA can be leveraged as a powerful tool for building a more climate-resilient and equitable rural India.

- **Sectoral Interventions**

Beyond national policies, various sectoral interventions are being implemented to address the climate-poverty nexus in India's rural areas. These include:

Opportunities for Climate-Smart Rural Development

Despite the significant challenges, climate change also presents opportunities for more sustainable and equitable rural development in India. By integrating climate adaptation and mitigation strategies into development planning and implementation, policymakers can build the resilience of rural communities while also addressing the root causes of poverty and inequality. Some key areas of focus for climate-smart rural development include:

1. **Climate-smart agriculture:** Promoting drought-resistant crops, efficient irrigation, and sustainable farming practices can boost productivity and incomes while reducing environmental footprint.
2. **Diversified livelihoods:** Supporting non-farm employment opportunities and skills training can reduce dependence on climate-sensitive sectors and provide alternative sources of income.
 - **Renewable energy access:** Expanding access to clean, decentralised energy solutions can improve energy security and reduce reliance on fossil fuels while supporting rural development.
 - **Ecosystem-based adaptation:** Investing in the restoration and sustainable management of natural ecosystems, such as forests and wetlands, can enhance climate resilience and provide livelihood opportunities.
 - **Strengthening social protection:** Expanding coverage of safety nets like crop insurance, employment guarantee schemes, and cash transfers can help the rural poor cope with climate shocks and stresses.
 - **Improving access to services:** Ensuring universal access to essential services like healthcare, education, clean water, and sanitation is crucial for building adaptive capacity.
 - **Empowering local communities:** Involving communities in planning and implementing

adaptation strategies and strengthening local institutions can ensure context-appropriate and sustainable interventions.

- **Disaster risk reduction:** Strengthening early warning systems, improving emergency response capabilities, and building resilient infrastructure can help rural communities prepare for and cope with climate-related disasters.
- **Capacity building and knowledge sharing:** Investing in training, extension services, and knowledge-sharing platforms can empower rural communities to understand and respond to the impacts of climate change.

By adopting a holistic, climate-smart approach to rural development, policymakers in India can address the interlinked challenges of poverty, inequality, and climate change while promoting more inclusive and sustainable growth.

- **Multilateral and Donor Initiatives**

In addition to national and sectoral interventions, India's efforts to address the climate-poverty nexus are also supported by various multilateral and donor-funded initiatives. These include:

1. **Global Climate Fund (GCF):** India has accessed funding from the GCF to support projects focused on climate change adaptation and mitigation, with

a focus on vulnerable communities and sectors.

2. **World Bank and Asian Development Bank:**

These multilateral development banks have provided financing and technical assistance for climate-smart rural development projects in India, covering areas such as sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and disaster risk management.

3. **Bilateral and multilateral partnerships:**

India collaborates with various countries and international organisations, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), to share knowledge, mobilise resources, and implement joint initiatives on climate change and poverty alleviation.

4. **Civil society and community-based initiatives:**

Non-governmental organisations, social enterprises, and community-based groups are also crucial in developing and implementing innovative, locally-appropriate solutions to address the climate-poverty challenge.

Conclusion

Climate change poses a serious threat to poverty reduction and sustainable development in India, with the rural poor being especially vulnerable. Urgent action is needed to build resilience and promote inclusive, climate-smart growth in rural areas. This requires a comprehensive approach integrating

climate adaptation and mitigation into development planning and implementation at all levels. Investing in rural development has multiple co-benefits – it can enhance food and livelihood security, reduce inequality, and contribute to climate change mitigation through sustainable land use practices. Targeted interventions to support the rural poor and global efforts to limit warming are critical for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring a just and equitable future for all. The policy responses and interventions outlined in this article provide a roadmap for addressing the climate-poverty nexus in India. By adopting a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach that empowers rural communities, leverages innovative solutions, and mobilises resources, policymakers can build a more resilient and sustainable future for the country's rural poor.

(Ms Pavit was a participant in the 5-day training programme conducted by the Centre for Entrepreneurship Development & Financial Inclusion (CEDFI), NIRDPR on 'Rural Development: Issues, Challenges, Interventions and Impacts' for Officer Trainees (OTs) of Indian Economic Service (IES) – Batch 2024, from 01st – 05th July 2024 at NIRDPR, Hyderabad).

Poverty-free Village is My Dream: Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan

The Hon'ble Minister for Rural Development and Agriculture & Farmers Welfare visited the National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj on 13th August 2024

Poverty-free village is my dream, said Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Hon'ble Minister for Rural Development and Agriculture & Farmers Welfare. The Minister was addressing the gathering after attending the 66th General Council meeting of the National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj on 13th August 2024.

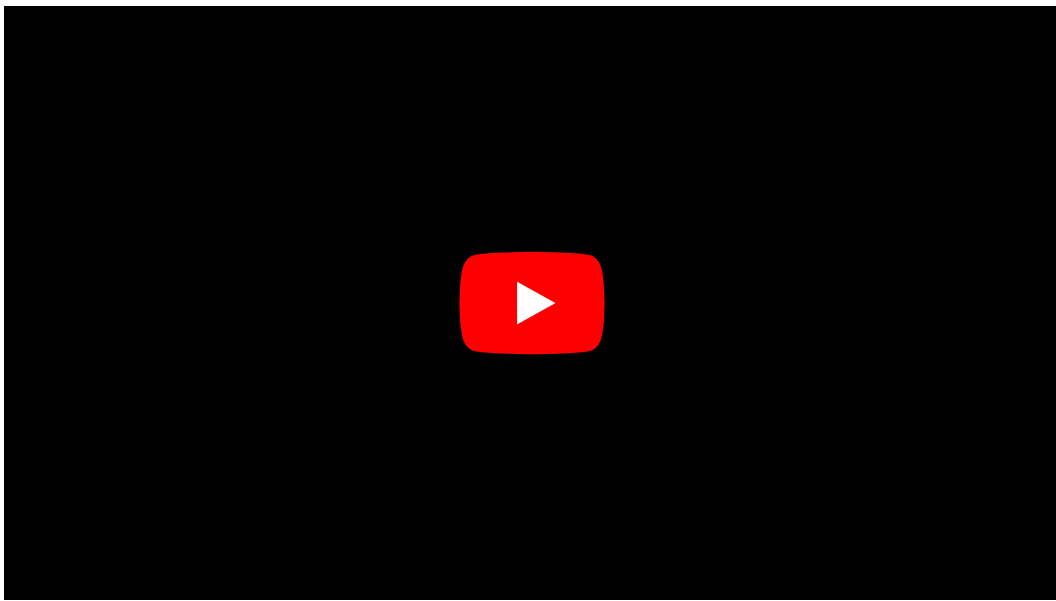


Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Hon'ble Minister for Rural Development and Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, addressing the gathering at Vikas Auditorium in NIRDPR

Shri Kamlesh Paswan, Hon'ble Minister of State for Rural Development; Dr Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani, Hon'ble Minister of State for Rural Development and Communications; Shri Shailesh Kumar Singh, Secretary, Rural Development; Dr G. Narendra Kumar, Director General, NIRDPR; Ms Tanuja Thakur Khalkho, JS & FA, MoRD; Ms Caralyn Khongwar Deshmukh, Additional Secretary, MoRD; Prof. Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit, Vice Chancellor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and Prof Nupur Tiwary, Professor, Indian Institute of Public Administration, were also present.

“Nobody should be poor in villages, and everyone should be employed. Mahatma Gandhi’s vision was

Gram Swaraj; when we talk about the development of villages, infrastructural development takes the front seat. The villages need proper road connectivity, potable water, strong and spacious school buildings, Panchayat Bhawan, health facilities, etc. Hon'ble late Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee launched Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) in 2000, and the projects are taken forward by our visionary Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. When rural infrastructure development is discussed, Jal Jeevan Mission is another scheme worth mentioning," he said.



Referring to the Aajeevika scheme, the Hon'ble Minister said due to the training and capacity building given to women across India, they are emerging as leaders. "Women play a key part in contributing to the economy of the nation by performing a multitude of roles. We are striving hard to bring all the necessary

facilities to villages. Apart from the significant role played by NIRDPR in the form of a think tank to the Ministry, more capacity building and training activities are needed,” he said.

Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan further urged the students doing postgraduate programmes in NIRDPR to work for rural development.

The faculty of JNU and IIPA with NIRDPR officials during the signing of MoUs

On the occasion, two MoUs with JNU, New Delhi, for the Ph.D. program and Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi, were signed in the presence of the dignitaries. The Hon’ble Minister for Rural Development also launched the online course for Gram Rozgar Sevak (GRS).

Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Hon'ble Minister for Rural Development and Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, inaugurating the PMAY-G Model House at RTP in NIRDPR; Dr Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani, Hon'ble Minister of State for Rural Development and Communications, is also seen.

Later in the day, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan visited the Rural Technology Park on the campus and inaugurated the PMAY-G Model House (Double Bedroom). The house was constructed in 409.5 sq.ft. at a cost of Rs.4.04 lakh, which comes to Rs.987 per sq.ft. The house is constructed using technologies such as random rubble stone for the foundation, brick columns and RCC beams, Bamcrete walling using chemical-treated bamboo strips, conical tiles roofing, locally available stones for flooring and painted with cow dung-based paint.

*Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Hon'ble Minister for Rural Development and
Agriculture & Farmers Welfare and Dr Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani,
Hon'ble Minister of State for Rural Development and Communications,
planting a sapling at RTP, NIRDPR*

The Hon'ble Minister and other dignitaries planted saplings at RTP and also visited the Mud Block making unit in the Park.

NIRDPR Celebrates India's 78th Independence Day

The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj celebrated the 78th Independence Day of the country on 15th August 2024.

Dr G. Narendra Kumar, IAS, Director General, NIRDPR, was the Chief Guest of the celebrations in front of the Mahatma Gandhi block on the Institute premises.

*Dr G.
Narendra
Kumar, IAS,
Director
General,
NIRDPR,
hoisting the
National Flag
during the
Independence
Day
celebrations*

Wishing the faculty, non-academic staff, their family members, participants and students on the occasion of the Independence Day after hoisting the National Flag, the Director General recollected the contributions made by NIRDPR towards the development of rural areas in the country.

“The Economic Survey 2023-24 tabled in Parliament shows that 13.5 crore Indians are believed to have escaped multidimensional poverty between 2015-16

and 2019-21. They were pulled out of multi-dimensional poverty in five years on the back of improvements in parameters of nutrition, sanitation, years of schooling and access to cooking fuel, among others, according to a report by NITI Aayog. The rural areas witnessed the fastest decline in poverty, from 32.59 per cent to 19.28 per cent. NIRDPR has significantly contributed to this cause by its relentless efforts towards improving quality of life in rural India,” the DG said.



On the occasion, the guards serving in the Security wing took out a march past. The Director General, along with senior officers serving in the Administration and Accounts sections and faculty members, distributed prizes to winners of various sports competitions organised as part of the Independence Day celebrations.

ToT on Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Livelihood Models for Rural Communities

The Centre for Entrepreneurship Development and Financial Inclusion (CEDFI) at NIRDPR, in association with the Centre for Innovations and Appropriate Technology for Skills and Jobs (CIAT&SJ), successfully conducted a five-day Training of Trainers (ToT) programme from 26th to 30th August 2024. This programme aimed to enhance the capacity of trainers in the development sector, focusing on promoting

entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihood models in rural areas.

*Participants posing for a group photo with the programme coordinators,
Dr Partha Pratim Sahu and Dr Ramesh Sakthivel*

The training was attended by 28 participants from 13 states representing a diverse range of sectors, including State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs), officials implementing schemes including Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme, Lakhpati Didi, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), aspirational block fellows, and CSR leads.

The 5-day Training of Trainers began with a pre-training quiz to assess the baseline knowledge of the participants. Following this, a comprehensive session

on inclusive and sustainable rural enterprise development was delivered. The focus was on fostering entrepreneurial growth in rural areas through inclusive practices and sustainable business models. The training aimed at creating opportunities for marginalised communities, including women, tribal groups, and differently-abled individuals, by ensuring access to resources, markets, and training. The sessions were a blend of expert knowledge sharing, exposure visits, group activities, and discussions.

On the first day, the concept of inclusive and sustainable rural enterprise development was thoroughly explored. It focused on promoting entrepreneurial opportunities by harnessing local skills, integrating eco-friendly practices, and incorporating modern technology into traditional crafts and agriculture. Challenges such as infrastructure limitations and lack of market access were discussed, along with ways to overcome these barriers. Participants were encouraged to explore possibilities like community-based enterprises, sustainable agriculture, and renewable energy solutions. The day's highlight was the visit to the Rural Technology Park (RTP), where Dr Ramesh Sakhtivel, Associate Professor & Head, CSR and Public-Private Partnership at NIRDPR, introduced participants to various technologies and livelihood models, including beekeeping, honey processing, biogas products, and

eco-friendly crafts.

On the second day, gender mainstreaming in rural livelihood scenarios was discussed, with a particular focus on MGNREGA. Through group discussions, participants explored the challenges and opportunities for women and men entrepreneurs, the roles of government bodies and community leaders, and the support required from investors. Public employment programmes like MGNREGA and their relevance to rural livelihood were also analysed. A field visit to Winning Fins, an aquaculture farm in Shadnagar of Telangana, exposed participants to aquaculture and a thriving ecosystem integrating livestock, organic farming, and pond management.

The third day centred on value chain analysis, packaging, and storage techniques, as well as mushroom cultivation and aromatic crop cultivation as potential avenues for rural entrepreneurship. Participants learned about the importance of packaging in ensuring product safety and marketability. Techniques for proper storage to avoid spoilage or contamination were demonstrated. Mushroom cultivation was explored as a highly profitable venture that could empower rural entrepreneurs due to its low capital investment and high nutritional demand. Aromatic crop cultivation was discussed as an alternative to traditional crops, offering a lucrative market for essential oils and other

by-products.

The participants with programme coordinator Dr Ramesh Sakthivel during their visit to Winning Fins

Day four revisited the importance of value chain interventions in improving rural livelihoods and income levels. Discussions emphasised the role of community-based enterprises run by Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) in poverty alleviation.

Entrepreneurial opportunities in the WaSH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) sector were discussed on the fifth day. Participants engaged in group activities, identifying key entrepreneurial avenues within the WaSH sector. The training concluded with a group exercise focused on the role and potential of rural

enterprises in achieving a 'Viksit Bharat.' This interactive session sparked dynamic conversations, with participants raising questions and proposing innovative ideas to support rural development.

As the training concluded, there was a deep sense of camaraderie among the participants. Many expressed how the training had not only enriched their knowledge but also fostered lasting connections with both professors and fellow participants. The certificate distribution ceremony saw the trainees sharing their appreciation for the transformative experience, acknowledging the invaluable learning they would take back to their respective fields.

The 5-day ToT was jointly conducted by Dr Partha Pratim Sahu from CEDFI and Dr Ramesh Sakhtivel from CITA&SJ, who played pivotal roles in making their sessions deeply engaging and insightful. The training left participants inspired and equipped with the skills necessary to bring about meaningful change in rural enterprise development.

(Note: This report is prepared by training participants Ms Grisha Mathur and Ms Meghshree Mathpal, with inputs from Dr Partha Pratim Sahu)

Training for the Officials of Local Government Authority of the Republic of Maldives

The Centre for Panchayati Raj, Decentralised Planning and Social Service Delivery (CPRDP&SSD) organised an international training programme on Land Use Planning, GIS & Urban Development Planning for the officials of the Local Government Authority (LGA) of the Republic of Maldives from 21st July to 3rd August 2024.

Dr G. Narendra Kumar, IAS, Director General, NIRDPR, Dr Anjan Kumar Bhanja, Associate Professor & Head, CPRDP&SSD, Dr P. Kesava Rao, Associate Professor & Head, CGARD, and Dr NSR Prasad, Assistant Professor, CGARD and the training team members with the officials of the Local Government Authority of the Republic of Maldives

The inaugural address was delivered by Dr Anjan Kumar Bhanja, Course Director, Associate Professor & Head, CPRDP&SSD, NIRDPR. Welcoming the participants, he briefed them about the background of the two-week training programme. He added that NIRDPR has completed five training programmes for the presidents, vice presidents, and members of Atoll Councils, as well as the Women Development Committees of Maldives. Dr Bhanja asked the delegates to visit other centres at NIRDPR to have a broad understanding of the canvass of the organisation and its core functional aspects in the rural development space.

Dr P. Kesava Rao, Associate Professor & Head, CGARD, NIRDPR, gave brief insights on geo-informatics and the Indian satellite programme for land use and urban planning. Dr Mariyam Zulfa, CEO of the Local Government Authority, delivered a special address emphasising the importance of integrated urban development and the pivotal role local governments play in sustainable planning. This was followed by a keynote address from Dr G. Narendra Kumar, IAS, Director General of NIRDPR, who outlined the strategic vision for combining land use planning with cutting-edge technologies.

Duly keeping in view the broad and specific objectives of the programme, duration and expectations of the participants, methodologies such as lectures and

interactive sessions, video clips, short films and discussions, recap sessions, and hands-on practice on QGIS software and applications were used.

This training programme covered various aspects, viz. Geo-informatics and Indian Satellite Programme for Land Use Planning & Urban Planning, Applications of Remote sensing including for Land Use Planning and Urban & Infrastructure Planning, GIS and its applications in Land Use Planning and Urban & Infrastructure Planning, Demonstration on ISRO-Bhuvan Geo-Portal for Land Use Planning, Use of Drone Technology for Survey of Villages Abadi and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Area (SVAMITVA), Aerial Surveys and Digital Terrain Models (DTM) for 2D/3D Mapping in Urban areas for Infrastructure Planning, Use of GIS and High resolution Satellite data for Urban & Infrastructure Planning- Good practices of India including AMRUT & Smart Cities Programmes, Global Positioning System (GPS)/GNSS Principles, Concepts and Applications in LUP & UP, Introduction to QGIS Software and applications of its modules, Scope for emulating innovative and appropriate rural technology in Maldives, based on a few good practices including the RTP (Rural Technology Park), vision of developing the City Councils of Maldives as institutions of self-governance with reference to the systems India, Best Practices in Solid Waste Management in Urban Local bodies, Hands on QGIS with Maldives dat, Urban

Management – Challenges in service delivery and urban finance – optimising resources and urban management and citizen participation, Role of Remote Sensing and GIS for Soil Survey & Land Use Planning, demonstration on applications of Geospatial Technologies for Urban local bodies (xxii) Rural Transformation and Spatial Planning & Formulation of Model Act and Role of Remote Sensing and GIS for Disaster Management.

Visits to
the
Indian

The participants interacting with the officials at INCOIS,

Hyderabad

National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Indian Resources Information & Management Technologies Ltd (IN-RIMT), and Visvesvaraya Industrial & Technological Museum were also organised.

A total of 30 participants from various councils of Local Government Authority Officials, including the Director Generals, Director, Senior Council Executives,

Council Executives, Assistant Council Executives, Planning Officer, Senior Council Officers, Assistant Council Officers, Assistant Architect and Assistant Computer Technician from the Republic of Maldives participated in the programme.

The resource persons included CPRDP & SSD, CGARD and NIRDPR's in-house faculty members and select guest faculty as subject matter specialists cum practitioners with rich experience and expertise in the areas of GIS and land use planning, urban development planning, drone technology, remote sensing, aerial surveys and digital terrain models, etc.

The participants also visited the National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning in Karnataka as part of the programme. The Bureau collect soil from different areas of India, conducts research, and provides scientific information on soil and land resources to support sustainable development and agriculture.

At Karnataka State Remote Sensing Application Centre, which specialises in using remote sensing and GIS, participants learned about the basics of remote sensing, how satellite imagery is used, and the applications of GIS. The scientists demonstrated to the participants the application of geospatial technologies for urban and local bodies.

They also visited the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Center (KSNDMC), where the staff demonstrated the technology and tools for data collection and analysis, weather monitoring system, sensors and flood forecasting tools. Participants learned about how data is collected, processed and disseminated, and about predictive models and early warning system. The visit provided valuable information about how disaster management is implemented at a state level and the role of technology and coordination in mitigating disaster impacts.

Dr Anjan Kumar Bhanja, Course Director, Associate Professor & Head (CPRDP&SSD), NIRDPR, handing over certificate to a participant; Dr Chinnadurai, Associate Professor and Dr Mr Dilip Kumar Pal, Project Lead Consultant, are also seen.

The training programme enhanced the participants'

understanding of geo-informatics, the Indian satellite programme, and remote sensing applications for land use planning, urban planning, and disaster management. It increased their awareness of ocean information services and their applications and exposed them to India's cultural heritage and its relevance to urban and rural development. It provided them with an understanding of urban development amenities, innovative rural technology, GIS-based land use planning; QGIS software applications, urban management and service delivery, solid and liquid waste management, soil survey and land use planning, geospatial technologies for urban local bodies, and drone and smart technologies in planning and disaster management.

The programme was a success, as per the feedback received from the participants. All the participants felt that the programme was organised in a systematic manner. Further, they felt that the serene training ambience, clean and hygienic surroundings, and the infrastructure facilities led to its success.



[The monthly newsletter of Swachh Bharat Mission – Gramin,](#)

GENDER KALEIDOSCOPE: ‘Common Woman’: A New Voice for Women’s Empowerment

Dr Vanishree Joseph

Assistant Professor & Head, CGSD

Inspired by the legendary cartoonist R.K. Laxman and his iconic ‘Common Man,’ the Centre for Gender Studies at NIRDPR is delighted to introduce the ‘Common Woman’ in the *Pragati* Newsletter’s “Gender Kaleidoscope” segment. This new character represents the everyday Indian woman, embodying the spirit, struggles, and strength of women across rural India. With her keen observations and sharp wit, the Common Woman will bring to life the complexities of gender dynamics, social norms, and women’s empowerment.

Much like
the
'Common
Man'
served as
the silent
observer
of
societal
quirks,
the
'Common
Woman'
stands as
the voice
of
women
who play
multiple
roles —

managing homes, workplaces, societal expectations, and their aspirations. Dressed in a simple saree, wearing round spectacles, and carrying a modest bag, she walks through our segment to shed light on women's everyday challenges, all with a touch of humour and irony.

The 'Common Woman' will not be a regular feature in every edition of the newsletter, but when she does

appear, she will provide a fresh, witty perspective on issues such as economic independence, gender biases, invisible labour, health, education, and more. Her humorous commentary aims to engage our readers while encouraging them to reflect on the norms and structures that impact women's lives.

Through her stories, we hope to spark conversations and inspire action toward greater gender equality. The 'Common Woman' makes us think, laugh, and question — one clever observation at a time.

Keep an eye out for her appearances in the 'Gender Kaleidoscope' segment of *Pragati*, and join us in celebrating the strength and resilience of women everywhere!

UBA COMMUNITY PROGRESS REPORTS

Review Meeting on Unnat Bharat Abhiyan

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) is a flagship programme of the Ministry of Education. The Centre for Rural Infrastructure (CRI) of NIRDPR is a Regional Coordinating Institution (RCI) under the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan.

A review meeting with all the Participating Institutions (PIs) was organised on 30th July 2024 on the NIRDPR campus, and the Participating Institutions working under NIRDPR presented their activities under the UBA.

One of the Participating Institutions, Vishnu Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (VIPER), Narsapur, Medak district, made a presentation on their adopted five villages, namely Avancha, Chennapur Ibrahimbad, Moosapet and Rustumpet of Medak district.

The rural development workshop conducted by VIPER for villagers

The UBA team of VIPER conducted a participatory rural appraisal. The PRA began very informally by explaining the purpose of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan, and was followed by a freewheel discussion with the villagers. The villagers highlighted several issues, such as malnutrition among the children, lack of transportation in Avancha village, possible chemical contamination in drinking water because of the industries nearby and health concerns due to dependence on unsafe water for drinking, inadequate healthcare facilities, issues in farming and livelihoods, schools not having toilets or safe drinking water, etc.

A brainstorming session was conducted on possible solutions to the problems and how VIPER could support the villagers if they were willing to take the initiative to solve the issues they raised. The Institution identified problems and discussed probable solutions, which eventually became awareness programmes in all five villages. Gram Sabha meetings were conducted at Ibrahimbad and

Chennapur villages, and the UBA team held meetings with the Sarpanches of Avancha and Rustumpet.

With the identified problems, the following programmes/activities were conducted in the adopted villages.

- An awareness programme was conducted on alternative crops with the support of Mr Sitha Rama Rao, District Rural Development Officer, Medak.
- A workshop on 'Recent Advances in Science and Technology Innovations' was conducted in collaboration with ICAR.
- Empowerment and eradication of malnutrition with Spirulina cultivation and fortification in adopted villages.

Inauguration of Spirulina Cultivation at Tuniki in collaboration with KVK

The UBA team organised a free medical camp in

association with Apollo Hospitals. Disease awareness programmes, patient counselling sessions and cancer awareness and screening camps were conducted in the service villages.

Under the perennial assistance award offered by IIT Delhi, the Institution could donate school benches at Chennapur village and install a water purifier in Ibrahimbad village, satiating the students' appetite and their quest for knowledge and development by conducting scientific experiments through the knowledge centre.

Training Programme on Mastering Content Creation with Artificial Intelligence

The Centre for Development Documentation & Communication (CDC), National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj hosted a three-day training programme, 'Mastering Content Creation with Artificial Intelligence' from 27-29 August 2024, on the Institute's Hyderabad campus. Nearly 40 participants attended the programme.

The participants with Mr JRK Rao, IAS (Retd.), Former CEO of National Institute for Smart Government, Course Director Dr Jyothis Sathyapalan, and resource persons Mr Sunil Prabhakar, Ms Anjali Chandran & Dr M. V. Ravibabu

The programme aimed to help staff from government and private organisations, NGOs, self-help groups, and small-scale entrepreneurs become acquainted with the latest trends in content creation using artificial intelligence.

Dr Jyothis Sathyapalan, Prof. & Head, CDC & Course Director, welcomed the Chief Guest, resource persons and participants at the inaugural held in SK Rau Hall.

Mr JRK Rao, IAS (Retd.), Former CEO of the National Institute for Smart Government, was the Chief Guest of the inaugural session. Delivering the inaugural speech, Mr JRK Rao said many start-ups are ruined as youngsters focus on technology rather than developing a proper business model.

Mr JRK Rao, IAS (Retd.), Former CEO of National Institute for Smart Government delivering the inaugural address

He further spoke about the introduction of AI and the research paper 'Attention Is All You Need' published in 2017 on machine learning that eventually led to the evolution of GPT. He asked the participants to read the books 'Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach' by Stuart Russell & Peter Norvig, and 'How To Think Like Leonardo Da Vinci' by Michael Gelb.

"AI has been trained on data, and so have prejudices attached to it." Mr JRK Rao added that every tool has its own advantages and disadvantages.

Mr Sunil Prabhakar, Consultant, Mathrubhumi Online, started the technical sessions 'Fundamentals of Content Creation' and Introduction to AI in Content

Creation' by explaining the concepts of artificial intelligence, generative AI, LLMS, etc. He also explained the art of prompting, besides introducing various AI tools for content creation.

Mr Sunil Prabhakar & Ms Anjali Chandran leading a session

Post-lunch, Ms Anjali Chandran, Founder of Impresa, lectured on Social Impact Entrepreneurship: Making a Difference. She explored how women can start businesses with a positive social impact, such as non-profits, social enterprises, and businesses with a strong community focus. She also discussed how to identify social issues and create business models that address them while being financially sustainable, highlighting examples of successful social impact entrepreneurs and their journeys. Further, the participants visited the Rural Technology Park on the campus.

On the second day, Dr Partha Pratim Sahu, Associate Professor & Head, CEDFI, NIRDPR, lectured on 'Rural Entrepreneurship: Policies, Programmes & Interventions.' Dr Sahu touched upon topics like entrepreneurial ventures, bankable business proposals, sources of finances, schemes/programmes of departments and ministries, progress of scheme-induced enterprises, etc.

*Dr Partha Pratim Sahu delivering a lecture on Rural Entrepreneurship:
Policies, Programmes & Interventions*

Mr Sunil Prabhakar took two sessions on Generative AI in NLP (Natural Language Processing) and Generative AI in Multimedia. He demonstrated how to create images and videos using AI tools like Chat GPT, Leonardo and Kling. Post-lunch, the participants went on a local visit.

On the final day, Ms Anjali Chandran started the

technical sessions with a lecture on ‘Leveraging Social Media Tools for Entrepreneurial Success.’ She told the participants how to harness technology to scale their businesses, including e-commerce, digital marketing, social media, and other tools. Highlight the importance of staying updated with technological trends and adopting innovative solutions.

This was followed by two sessions by Mr Sunil Prabhakar – ‘Current AI Generative Tools’ and ‘Ethics and Future of Generative AI.’ He demonstrated product photography using mobile phone, setting up a studio at home using paper and clips, and creating social media posters using AI tools like Canva.

Dr M. V. Ravibabu, Associate Professor & Head, CICT, led the post-lunch session on ‘AI in RD&PR.’ He explained various AI tools used in the rural development sector, as well as the activities undertaken to establish a Centre of Excellence on AI in RD&PR at NIRDPR.

Dr Jyothis Sathyapalan, Dr M. V. Ravibabu, Mr Sunil Prabhakar, and Ms Anjali Chandran handing over certificates to a participant

Dr Jyothis Sathyapalan addressed the valedictory session and sought feedback from participants. They opined that the programme opened numerous options before them to explore AI tools to make their day-to-day work easier. Expressing extreme satisfaction over the choice of topics, course content, and the mode of delivery by resource persons, they wanted more hands-on sessions in future programmes and an extension of the programme for more days.

Dr Jyothis Sathyapalan, Dr M. V. Ravibabu, Mr Sunil Prabhakar, and Ms Anjali Chandran handed over certificates to the participants. The programme ended with a vote of thanks from the Course Director. Mr Krishna Raj K.S., Assistant Editor, CDC, coordinated the programme with the assistance of Mr Venugopala Bhat, Artist; Dr Umesha M.L., Assistant Librarian; Mr S

A Hussain, Senior Assistant; and Mr Harilal, MTS.

Training Programme on Planning and Management of RD&PR Programmes

CSR projects are gaining importance in the rural development sector due to their potential to promote effective model creation, convergence with government schemes and flexibility in choosing projects, beneficiaries, and locations. However, CSR projects, which focus more on short-term projects and infrastructure creation, can be improved to implement more effective projects that help the beneficiaries and create sustainable benefits for the planet and people. The lessons captured from well-developed CSR projects can be scaled up successfully to improve the quality of implementation of CSR Projects in the country. Along these lines, a training programme on Planning and Management of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Programmes was conducted from 22nd to 26th July 2024 at the National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Hyderabad. The training emphasised the government's interventions and their alignment with various stakeholders, including Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Non-Governmental

Organisations (NGOs), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and philanthropic institutions.

*Participants visiting the NATCO Pharma-supported Zilla Parishad School
Building at Kothur*

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and its role in understanding ground realities through community engagement were emphasised. By involving the local population in decision-making, CSR initiatives can turn negative perceptions into positive outcomes. Effective convergence between the government and CSRs can lead to innovation, better resource use, cost reductions, and improved public service delivery. The benefits of such partnerships include reduced costs, risk mitigation, and increased revenue while offering

opportunities for CSR projects to involve the community as vendors establishing local market linkages.

There is a need for conducting research on CSR initiatives and highlighting the importance of data collection and analysis. Primary and secondary data collected should complement each other, with the results being well-documented and disseminated to stakeholders. Projects must focus on long-term sustainability and cultural sensitivity, ensuring they are adaptable to different regions. CSR initiatives were shown to have the potential to address key development challenges in agriculture, such as diversification, productivity improvement, and the sustainable management of natural resources.

With its broad scope across 29 sectors listed in the Eleventh Schedule, the Panchayati Raj system offers vast opportunities for convergence with CSR projects. The training explored the potential of Gram Panchayat Development Planning (GPDP) to promote economic development and social justice.

Additionally, the training emphasised the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aligning them with nine Localised Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs) and integrating them with the GPDP to promote thematic growth.

The participants, during their visit to LV Prasad Eye Institute to understand its CSR activities

Key tools like Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) were highlighted for their role in designing, managing, and evaluating projects. LFA, in particular, ensures that every project element is analysed systematically, making it easier to identify challenges and solutions early on. The bottom-up approach of involving local stakeholders in decision-making ensures projects are comprehensive, inclusive, and effective. Gender equality was also discussed as a critical aspect, with an emphasis on closing the gaps between resource access and opportunities for men and women.

Social audits were stressed as an essential component for transparency and accountability in rural development. Communities play a crucial role as social auditors, and CSR funds can be better utilised through community-driven audits. Social audits not

only help identify issues early but also provide valuable case studies and lessons for future projects. Monitoring and evaluation ensure that progress is systematically tracked and resources are used efficiently, which is crucial for long-term project success.

Participants taking part in a group activity as part of the training

The training further explored the synergies between CSR initiatives and the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM). The alignment between NRLM's principles and CSR projects provides opportunities for improving livelihoods at the grassroots level. Government schemes at the village level offer avenues for CSR initiatives to target specific communities,

while government frameworks and tools provide guidance for people-centric projects. The partnership between CSR and the government can ensure better strategic management of resources, with CSR handling the minute details and the government providing long-term support. Moreover, the discussions underscored the importance of market linkages, capacity building, and community engagement for CSR projects. Corporate gifting was introduced as a new concept, where CSR initiatives facilitate community development through resources, infrastructure, skills, and efficient exit strategies.

(The report is prepared by a participant, Mr Shubham Kumar, Key Account Manager, HDFC Parivartan – End Poverty, Gurgaon, with the guidance of Dr Ramesh Sakthivel.)

NEW COLUMN: NRLM CASE STUDY SERIES

Empowering Rural Change Agents: the West Bengal SRLM Experience

Mr Ashutosh Dhami, Young Professional, NRLMRC,

Mr Ravi Naidu, Mission Executive, NRLMRC, NIRDPR

Mr K. Venkateshwar Rao, Mission Manager,
NRLMRC, NIRDPR

Introduction

The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) is a flagship programme of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, aimed at improving the livelihoods of rural women through community-driven development. This initiative promotes self-employment and organises the rural poor into self-help groups (SHGs) to enhance their socio-economic conditions. The National Rural Livelihoods Mission Resource Cell (NRLMRC) of NIRDPR plays a crucial role in this endeavour by providing strategic support and capacity-building initiatives. It plays a key role in developing and implementing training programmes, facilitating workshops, and ensuring that trainers and resource persons are well-equipped to advance the mission's objectives.

This article highlights recent activities in West Bengal related to the grading and training of state and district resource pools empanelled with West Bengal SRLM.

The comprehensive training and grading system implemented in West Bengal aims to enhance the skills and effectiveness of these resource pools, ensuring they can effectively support and drive the success of DAY-NRLM's community-focused initiatives.

Background

The NRLM Resource Cell (NRLMRC) understands the necessity of tailoring the DAY-NRLM initiative to meet the specific needs of states. Recognising this, the NRLMRC has prioritised state-level customisation to effectively address regional challenges and opportunities. In West Bengal, the State Rural Livelihoods Mission (SRLM), known as Anandadhara, rolled out a plan to orient and assess the capabilities of its District Level Trainers (DLTs), which is crucial for the effective implementation of DAY-NRLM in the state. This system was designed to enhance the skills and effectiveness of the DLTs. The initiative involved a thorough assessment of current competencies, the development of targeted training modules, and the execution of a structured training programme to equip DLTs with the necessary tools and knowledge to perform their roles more effectively. By focusing on these enhancements, the programme seeks to ensure that DLTs are well-prepared to contribute to the broader goals of DAY-NRLM, thereby strengthening the overall impact of the mission in West Bengal.

Methodology

The methodology for enhancing the capabilities of District Level Trainers (in a few states, they are also known as District Resource Persons (DRPs)) involved a systematic approach encompassing needs assessment, training design, and execution.

In February 2024, a consultative workshop organised by the IBCB team of the NRLM Resource Cell (RC) evaluated the specific needs of Anandadhara. This assessment identified critical areas for development among the DLTs. Subsequently, from March to April 2024, these needs were consolidated and prioritised to create a focused training plan.

Training Materials

In May 2024, a workshop was held to design a comprehensive training programme for the orientation & assessment of grading of 625 DLTs. This programme comprised a six-day training module divided into three segments: two days dedicated to Participatory Training Methodologies (PTM), which involve training on the learning cycle, designing a

session plan based on participants' knowledge, & how to make the sessions more engaging, two days for DAY-NRLM orientation of participants on DAY NRLM components in the context of West Bengal, and two days for DLT assessment. Training course materials were developed in English and Bengali, and the programme was organised into 24 batches, each with 25 participants and engaged 50 NRPs.

Training sessions in progress

From May 22, 2024, to July 23, 2024, the training programme was executed, covering topics such as participatory training methodologies, institutional building, social inclusion, financial inclusion, and livelihoods. The training included practical evaluations, such as mock assessments and group presentations, culminating in a written test to grade the DLTs.

The training team members with participants

The six-day Training of Trainers (ToT) cum Assessment Programme, organised by NIRDPR and NRLM RC, aimed to achieve several objectives: revisiting DAY-NRLM aspects, providing an overview of thematic areas, enhancing knowledge and awareness of PTM, and assessing the DLTs. Sessions covered various topics, including poverty and social mobilisation, the philosophy of PTM, group processes, roles and qualities of trainers, social inclusion strategies, and livelihood concepts. Interactive methods such as group discussions, role plays, case studies, and presentations were used to engage participants effectively. The training concluded with an assessment phase over days five and six to evaluate and grade the DLTs' performance. This structured approach was designed to significantly improve the skills and effectiveness of the DLTs, ensuring they are well-prepared to support the successful implementation of DAY-NRLM's initiatives in West Bengal.

Assessment and Grading

The training programme, which spanned four days, was attended by a total of 595 District Level Trainers (DLTs). The effectiveness of this training was assessed through the scoring performance of the participants, reflecting their knowledge and skill gains. The analysis of the participants' performance is detailed as follows:

- **High Proficiency (Above 80%):** Of the 595 participants, 92 DLTs (18%) scored above 80%. This indicates a strong grasp of the training material and an exceptional understanding and application of the skills and knowledge imparted during the sessions.
- **Moderate Proficiency (Between 65-79%):** A significant number of 275 participants (53%) scored between 65% and 79%. This range

demonstrates a solid understanding and competence in the core areas covered in the training. While these DLTs may not have reached the highest scoring bracket, their performance suggests a competent application of the training content.

- **Below Proficiency (Below 65%):** The remaining 178 participants (30%) scored below 65%. This suggests areas for further improvement and indicates the need for additional support or follow-up training to enhance their understanding and application of the material.

This scoring distribution reflects the overall impact of the training programme, showcasing that a considerable proportion of the participants achieved high proficiency. At the same time, a larger group exhibited a solid understanding of the material. This progress is a positive indicator of the training programme's success in enhancing the capabilities of the DLTs, ultimately contributing to the effective implementation of the DAY-NRLM initiative.

Expected Outcomes

- **Enhanced Skills and Knowledge of District Level Trainers (DLTs):** The primary objective of the training programme was to improve the skills and knowledge of the DLTs significantly. By equipping them with advanced training methodologies,

subject matter expertise, and practical tools, the programme aims to enhance their overall effectiveness in delivering high-quality training to others. This improvement is expected to lead to more competent trainers who can effectively support and guide their peers.

- **Cascading Impact on Block-Level Trainers:** The enhanced capabilities of the DLTs are anticipated to have a substantial cascading impact. With their newly acquired skills and knowledge, these DLTs will play a pivotal role in upgrading the attitudes, skills, and understanding of over 15,000 block-level trainers. This multiplier effect ensures that the benefits of the training programme extend well beyond the initial cohort, facilitating widespread improvements in training quality across various levels.
- **Development of a State-Level Pool of Skilled Trainers:** The training programme is designed to create a robust pool of skilled DLTs who can support and drive state-level initiatives. This pool will be strategically utilised to address various thematic needs across the state. By organising DLTs based on their expertise and regional requirements, the programme aims to enhance the effectiveness of state-level interventions and initiatives, ensuring a well-distributed and competent team to address diverse challenges and opportunities.

Replication to Other State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs)

The successful implementation of the District Level Trainer (DLT) grading and training programme in West Bengal has demonstrated a replicable model for other State Rural Livelihoods Missions (SRLMs). This programme's structured methodology, practical training modules, and comprehensive assessment system offer a proven framework that can be adapted and implemented in various states to enhance their training capabilities. The West Bengal programme's success lies in its well-organised structure, which includes a detailed needs assessment, tailored training modules, and a systematic grading system. This structured approach provides a clear roadmap that other SRLMs can follow. States can customise the programme based on their specific contexts and requirements, ensuring that the training aligns with local needs and challenges while maintaining core principles and methodologies.

The training modules developed in West Bengal encompass a range of practical elements designed to enhance trainer skills effectively. These modules include participatory training methodologies, institutional building, social and financial inclusion, and livelihood strategies. Other SRLMs can modify these modules to suit regional contexts. By leveraging these practical training elements, states can ensure

that their trainers gain relevant and actionable skills directly applicable to their roles. The grading and assessment system employed in West Bengal offers a robust framework for evaluating the effectiveness of training and the competencies of DLTs. This system includes various assessment tools such as mock evaluations, group presentations, and written tests. Others can implement similar assessment mechanisms to evaluate their trainers consistently and comprehensively. This approach helps not only maintain high training standards but also identify areas for improvement and ensure ongoing skill development.

Conclusion

By replicating this model, SRLMs can contribute to a uniform enhancement of trainer capabilities nationwide. A standardised approach to trainer development ensures that the quality of training is consistent, leading to a more effective and cohesive implementation of the DAY-NRLM initiative nationwide. The replication of this programme is expected to strengthen the DAY-NRLM initiative by creating a network of well-trained and skilled DLTs across various states. This network will enhance the programme's capacity to address local and regional challenges effectively while contributing to the overarching goals of DAY-NRLM. By scaling this successful model, the initiative can achieve broader

reach and more impactful results, thereby advancing its mission of improving rural livelihoods nationwide. West Bengal DLT grading and training programme offers a successful model that other SRLMs can replicate and adapt to their contexts. This can facilitate a consistent and enhanced capability among trainers nationwide, thereby reinforcing the overall effectiveness of the DAY-NRLM initiative and driving significant progress in rural development efforts.

Plant4Mother Campaign: Plantation Drive at NIRDPR

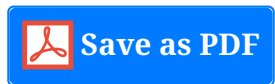
The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Hyderabad, undertook a plantation drive as part of the Plant4Mother (एक पेड़ मां के नाम) campaign launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on the occasion of World Environment Day.

*Dr G. Narendra Kumar, IAS, Director General, NIRDPR, planting a sapling
as part of the Plant4Mother campaign*

In alignment with this national initiative, the officers and staff members of NIRDPR, led by Dr G. Narendra Kumar, IAS, Director General, took part in the event held near the Mahatma Gandhi Block of the Institute on 5th August 2024.

The participants, including faculty, non-academic staff, and students, planted saplings to contribute to greening efforts and support environmental causes.

PHOTO GALLERY





National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayathi Raj - Hyderabad