Enhancing Transparency and Accountability through DISHA Committee Meetings:

A Case from Bolangir, Odisha

CBGA

TATA TRUSTS

Introducing District Development Coordination And Monitoring Committee (Disha)

Every year, a large number of welfare programmes and schemes are introduced in our country. In order to ensure that adequate attention is given to timely execution of these schemes, the Constitution of India gives authority to the District Planning Committees (DPCs) and local Panchayats for planning and implementation at their respective levels.

In July 2016, Ministry of Rural Development, announced the formation of District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DDCMC), termed as "DISHA". The purpose of this committee is to promote effective coordination between elected representatives, executing officers of various development schemes, and local government representatives at the district level. In addition, it is intended to monitor the implementation of schemes in accordance with prescribed procedures and guidelines and facilitate convergence between on-going programmes.

According to DISHA guidelines, quarterly meetings must be convened by the local Member of Parliament (MP) of Lok Sabha, who is also the Chairperson of this committee. Usually, the District Collector / District Magistrate / Deputy Commissioner is the Member Secretary of the DISHA committee.

All elected representatives of the district and the implementing agencies and officers are members of the DISHA committee. Prior to these meetings, the District Authority [for instance, Project Director of District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) in Bolangir, Odisha], prepares a handbook containing the financial and physical progress of 41 Central Sector Schemes listed under the DISHA guidelines. Necessary supporting statements, which include Physical and Financial performance of the schemes, are to be provided to the committee members well in advance. A suggestive list of schemes and programmes that are reviewed and discussed in the DISHA committee meetings is provided in Table 1 (Page 4).

I. Why We Did It

The Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) in collaboration with Tata Trusts, had undertaken a two-year project, whereby fund flow and utilisation in select development schemes across five districts in four states were analysed. While carrying out the project, we realised that DISHA committee proceedings could potentially help in collating evidence related to the progress and implementation of various development schemes in the district. In a situation where there is a high degree of opacity of data below state-level, access to district level data through the DISHA reports could enable analysis of fund flow, the extent and quality of fund utilisation and overall implementation of schemes.

However, we observed that there is no uniform format for compiling data related to the financial and physical progress of schemes. The content and structure of DISHA committee reports, prepared by the district administration, were complicated and lacked comprehensiveness in terms of data. They did not enable evidence based discussions which could potentially lead to meaningful policy decisions.

Without a standard structure of recording and presenting information regarding scheme implementation, it is difficult to understand the specific requirements of districts over time and across blocks. Additionally, performance assessment is seriously limited due to the lack of training of line department officials to draw linkages

Table 1: Schemes and Programmes Reviewed in DISHA Committee Meetings

1. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)
2. Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana – (Erstwhile National Rural Livelihoods Mission-NRLM)
3. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)
4. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)
5. National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)
6. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana -Housing for All (Urban)
7. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G)
8. Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)
9. Swachh Bharat Mission - Gramin (SBM- G)
10. National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP)
11. Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) - Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP)
12. Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP)
13. Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY)
14. Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission - National Rurban Mission (NRuM)
15. Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY)
16. Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)
17. Smart Cities Mission
18. Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)
19. National Health Mission (NHM)
20. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
2I. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)
22. Mid Day Meal (MDM)
23. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)
24. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)
25. Digital India - Public Internet Access Programme - Providing Common Service Centre in each Gram Panchayat
26. Infrastructure related programmes like telecom, railways, highways, waterways, mines, etc.
27. Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY)
28. Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS)
29. Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR) scheme
30. Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)
31. Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)
32. Soil Health Card (SHC)
33. National Agriculture Market (eNAM)
34. Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana PMKSY (Har Khet ko Pani)
35. Surface Water Minor Irrigation Scheme
36. Repair, Renovation and Restoration (RRR) Scheme of Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation
37. Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAGY)
38. Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)
39. Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan
40. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao
41. Implementation of the National Food Security Act, 2013

between quarterly / monthly progress of schemes. The lack of proper data and assessment hinders effective engagement of elected representatives with the district. It is essential to take appropriate policy measures to improve this situation to enable better planning and utilisation of funds and enhance the impact of public spending.

II. How We Did It

Based on a preliminary survey of the most important schemes that are being implemented in the district and careful study of the DISHA guidelines, the team at CBGA developed formats to compile data pertaining to financial and physical performance of schemes. In consultation with the officials in charge of scheme implementation in the district, a preliminary mapping of data sources was undertaken. Formats were designed accordingly to capture relevant data that would help in monitoring and evaluating the performance of these schemes in the district.

In order to monitor progress and for better implementation of schemes, layers of disaggregated data points were incorporated in the formats in line with the Monthly and Quarterly Progress Reports of schemes. Data on schemes were collated and grouped under various disaggregated sub-sets.

Prior to CBGA's initiative, the DISHA committee of Bolangir used to review about 10-12 schemes / programmes as per the perceived requirement of the district. Compilation of financial and physical information pertaining to the listed schemes was not done in a set format regularly. As a result, deliberations could not be had on the other schemes that might have needed attention.

The Chairperson and Member Secretary of the DISHA committee of Bolangir were approached with these formats. They were informed about the importance of compiling data in this manner, which would be useful for both reporting as well as reviewing the progress of schemes in the district. With their consent, the benefits of systematic

and on-time reporting of various aspects of fund flow and utilisation of schemes that are being implemented in the district were discussed with various stakeholders of the district involved in scheme implementation. Data for various schemes collated in these formats were presented and analysed at various DISHA Committee meetings of the district in order to facilitate informed discussions.

The DISHA Committee in Bolangir, Odisha, is currently using this format for compiling data pertaining to financial and physical performance of the schemes. Having data for reference can make discussions in DISHA committee meetings more informed and meaningful.

Four types of data collection formats were developed, each capturing a specific category of information pertaining to the schemes. It also shows the method by which required information is tabulated as well as some of the inferences that can be drawn from this information.

III. What They Say

As per some district officials of Bolangir, the strength of the format lies in its ease of understanding and the usability of information compiled. Even persons with limited understanding of the budgeting processes of different government departments can be trained to collect and capture data in this format. Officials can easily compare the data of one quarter with the previous quarters, enabling them to understand and locate gaps or grey areas in fund flow and the extent of fund utilisation in schemes.

The perceptions and working guidelines of the line departments significantly improved after CBGA's intervention. Previously, DISHA Committee report was prepared in haste and was submitted to the Chairperson of the Committee and the Member Secretary just a day prior to the meeting. Lack of time to process the report coupled with the focus on physical progress alone made it difficult to come up with useful feedback during the meetings.

Table 2: Data Collection Formats

Name of the Data Table	Quarter-wise / Month-wise breakup of budget allocation for Schemes	Component-wise breakup of budget for Schemes	Block-wise / breakup of budget for Schemes	Physical Progress of the Schemes
Method to Tabulate the Required Data	Fund available for expenditure in current quarter is calculated by adding: (i) Previous quarter's closing balance; (ii) Interest earned; (iii) Fund released in the current quarter. All the information is recorded.	Fund available for expenditure in current quarter is calculated by adding: (i) Previous quarter's closing balance; (ii) Interest earned; (iii) Fund released in the current quarter. All the information is recorded.	Information pertaining to: (i) The previous quarter's balance; (ii) The amount demanded by the block in the current quarter; (iii) Expenses reported by the block; (iv) Utilization Statement furnished by the blocks to the district are recorded.	Physical progress of schemes against the target set for various sub-components of the Scheme has been recorded.
Inference Drawn	The quantum of allocated funds and pace of utilisation of funds can be gauged and relevant policy actions can be taken accordingly.	Gives an idea of the priorities of budget allocation across various components of a scheme.	Helps understand priority of fund distribution across various administrative units within a district.	Helps understand the status of implementation of the programme on the ground and the achievement of the scheme implementation.

Line department officials have shared that using these formats and working in close partnership with a think-tank, has helped them prepare a finer account of their expenditure and performance. The simplicity of these formats has been lauded, as is the fact that one can register changes / delays and bottlenecks in fund flow and utilisation across quarters.

"Earlier, there was no specific format and officials used to provide the data based on their assessment of the requirements of a scheduled DISHA meeting. Now, whenever a question arises during a meeting, we have a readymade tool to refer to and answer the questions in detail. We are able to provide both the financial as well as the physical performance data related to any scheme in a systematic and comprehensive manner. Since the formats have been fixed, the Child Development Protection Officers (CDPOs) have been instructed to collect ground-level data in the same format, which is very useful as they collect data on time and reports are made as per plan,"

District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO) of Bolangir

> "The format which has been prepared is very useful. Earlier, there was no systematic format for reporting or recording data on financial and physical performance and we were providing data (mostly raw data) as per our convenience. We often faced problems in responding to questions from the Chairman and the Members of the DISHA Committee on budget allocation and on data disaggregation at various levels during the meetings. This format can also be used for verifying data since it is collected and presented every quarter. It also gives the physical and financial data or information in a single format, which is very helpful. We are currently using this format not only for preparing the report for the DISHA Committee, but also for the internal reviews and reporting,"
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> District Social Security Officer (DSSO) of Bolangir

IV. Important Takeaways

- Introducing the formats has led to increased effectiveness and meaningfulness in the participation of the members of the DISHA Committee, who can now evaluate and monitor the financial and physical performance of schemes on a quarterly basis. The district now has a greater capacity for evaluating the impact of schemes as well as to inform the planning and budgeting needs for the future.

- The formats create a data repository in a way that government functionaries can understand and access the information, making it more transparent and accountable. Since the information has been collated and reported in a tabular form, it can save time in responding to the needs of various stakeholders.

- The simplicity of the formats encourages the public, who is a vital stakeholder at the local level, to engage and intervene in planning, budgeting and monitoring of schemes.

V. What Needs To Be Done

1 Information collated for reporting on scheme performance in the form of monthly and quarterly progress reports should be made available in the public domain. This will enable the public to have meaningful discussions with their local representatives and elected representatives will be more prepared to participate in these meeting, else these meetings will end up discussing political issues and the true purpose of DISHA would be defeated. Along with the notification and agenda for the upcoming DISHA committee meetings; physical and financial performance progress reports of schemes should be made available in the DISHA portal and Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India should instruct the district administration to upload these on a regular basis.

2 Standardised formats should be developed for those schemes which are implemented pan India for bringing data consistency and providing comparable analytics to feed into policy action. To begin with, formats for Centrally Sponsored Schemes should be developed and

implemented to collate relevant information for each quarter, components and across various sub-districts for quick policy action. Developing standard formats for collating relevant physical and financial performance data, across schemes would help synthesise data and evidence, which can be used for policy actions at state and national level as well. Hence, respective administrative ministries / departments at the Union level should prepare these formats and send them across to the district implementing authorities for collating relevant information.

3 Availability and accessibility of relevant information can improve effectiveness of public engagement, which in turn can enhance budget transparency. Hence, priority should be given to the use of advanced technology to collate and make relevant information available in public domain. In order to make this relevant data available to the policy makers in real-time and to strengthen the effective monitoring of programmes, DISHA meetings should be the starting point at the level of districts. Further, while making the collated information available in the public domain, opinions can be sought from the public for further improvement. In order to deepen the quality of discussions in the DISHA meetings,

online platforms should be created whereby public can share their feedback. District authority should create a web enabled platform to get public feedback.

4 Regular training and orientation programmes should be convened by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India for the newly elected members of Parliament to play effective oversight role.

5 Lastly, shortage of infrastructure, technical staff and programme staff at the district and sub-district level should be addressed urgently in order to strengthen institutions of accountability in those levels. This requires support from Union and State Governments.

Evidence supported through data for decision making would always result in better outcomes. Appropriate and reliable data can help improve the system of governance. A good governance system demands effective participation in the policy discourse. To make DISHA framework work effectively, a robust architecture at the level of districts should be created in close collaboration with local knowledge and technology partners.

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Fiscal Governance Reforms at District Level for Improving Fund Flow and Utilisation in Development Schemes

Fiscal Governance Reforms at District Level for Improving Fund Flow and Utilisation in Development Schemes:
Full List of Outputs

Policy Briefs

1. Extent of Fund Utilisation in Social Sector Schemes: Does It Conceal More Than It Reveals?
2. Factors Constraining Fund Utilisation in Social Sector Schemes: An Overview
3. Delay in Fund Flow: Consequences, Causes and Remedies
4. Fund Flow Mechanisms of Centrally Sponsored Schemes in Social Sectors
5. Availability and Capacity of Human Resources for Implementing Social Sector Schemes
6. Rigid Norms and Guidelines Affecting Utilisation of Funds in Social Sector Schemes
7. Strengthening Budget Information Architecture at the District Level

Notes from the Districts

1. District Mineral Foundation Trust (DMFT) Fund-A Potential Source to Address Resource Gaps in Development Schemes: A Case from East Singhbhum, Jharkhand
2. Revolving Fund Mechanism Can Address Problems Relating to Delayed Fund Flow in Schemes: A Case from Krishna, Andhra Pradesh
3. Unspent Funds Utilised by Expanding Beneficiary Coverage: A Case from Balasore, Odisha
4. Coordination Among Multiple Agencies at the District Level Can Deliver Better Results: A Case from East Singhbhum, Jharkhand
5. Enhancing Transparency and Accountability through DISHA Committee Meetings: A Case from Bolangir, Odisha
6. Online Treasury Portals Can Enhance Fiscal Transparency at the District Level: A Case from Chandrapur, Maharashtra

Summary Report

Fiscal Governance Reforms at District Level for Improving Fund Flow and Utilisation in Development Scheme

All outputs are available at
www.cbgaindia.org

To know more about Tata Trusts' role and approach to district budgets, visit
https://www.tatatrusts.org/our-work/digital-transformation/data-driven-governance

About the Project

CBGA and Tata Trusts have carried out a two-year project focusing on fiscal governance reforms needed at the district level to improve fund flow and utilisation in development schemes across sectors. It focused on 10 social sector schemes (viz. SSA, MDM, NHM, ICDS, SBM, NRDWP, MGNREGS, NSAP, PMAY, PMFBY) in five districts across four states: Balasore and Bolangir in Odisha, Chandrapur in Maharashtra, East Singhbhum in Jharkhand, and Krishna in Andhra Pradesh. The project assessed the pace of fund flow, and the extent and quality of fund utilisation in select development schemes in the five districts; it has generated a host of policy suggestions to improve planning and budgeting at the district level, and improve the processes of fund flow and utilisation in social sector schemes.

About CBGA

CBGA is an independent, non-profit policy research organisation based in New Delhi. It strives to inform public discourse through rigorous analysis of government budgets in India; it also tries to foster people's participation on a range of policy issues by demystifying them.

For further information about CBGA's work, please visit www.cbgaindia.org or write at: info@cbgaindia.org

About Tata Trusts

Since inception in 1892, Tata Trusts, India's oldest philanthropic organisation, has played a pioneering role in bringing about an enduring difference in the lives of the communities it serves. Guided by the principles and the vision of proactive philanthropy of the Founder, Jamsetji Tata, the Trusts' purpose is to catalyse development across various sectors. The Trust's work on data driven governance focuses on "strengthening rural & urban decision making systems, and associated stakeholders to leverage data and technology and move towards a more informed and participatory approach to decision making, that supports improved development outcomes for all."

For further information about Tata Trusts' work, please visit www.tatatrusts.org or write at: talktous@tatatrusts.org