

SOCIAL OBSERVATORY RURAL LIVELIHOODS PROJECT IN INDIA



All effective projects require effective data for action – data that is accurate, indicators that are relevant, and analysis that leads to action. This is particularly true of livelihoods projects, which are very complex making it difficult to obtain accurate information for project decision-making on a regular and actionable basis.

Principles

- 1 Real Time learning from MONITORING
- 2 Long term learning from periodic quantitative and qualitative IMPACT EVALUATIONS
- 3 QUALITATIVE TRACKING AND SPECIAL STUDIES to understand key issues for project implementation and design.

The Social Observatory is an integrated learning system – incorporating various monitoring and evaluation tools – to measure change, assess the effectiveness of the project, and pinpoint design and implementation challenges. This comprehensive learning system will be driven by the following principles:

- (i) Real time learning from monitoring
- (ii) Long term learning from periodic quantitative and qualitative evaluations and
- (iii) Special studies to understand key issues for project implementation and design

The core organizing hypotheses of the Social Observatory are built around the impact of the project on:

- (a) reducing poverty
- (b) reducing indebtedness
- (c) expanding the livelihoods portfolio and
- (d) empowering women.

In addition, the principle of randomized pilots will be followed for all related “vertical” sub-interventions such as food security, nutrition, skills development, and livelihoods interventions.

The National Social Observatory will be housed in the National Project Implementation Unit of the National Rural Livelihood Mission, which is implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development of the Government of India. The State Social Observatories will be similarly housed in the state level project implementation units.



Monitoring

Careful attention needs to be placed on monitoring systems (Indicators + MIS + analytical dashboards + process monitoring + community based monitoring) because they facilitate internal feedback and learning-by-doing.

Data for Action and MIS

Objective: To collective useful indicators on a real-time basis, make the data accessible and useful to project staff at all levels (VO, Cluster, Block, District, and State) for everyday decision-making.

Key Elements:

- Clear conceptualization of data to be collected and entered
- Using best practice methods to minimize time between data collection and data entry
- Putting a system of data validation in place, to minimize errors in collection and entry
- Developing user friendly and effective dashboards at every level of the project

Process Monitoring

Objective: To examine the effectiveness of NRLM implementation, implementation challenges and roadblocks; and changes in livelihoods and wellbeing

Key Elements:

- Qualitative data collection from a rotating random sample of GPs
- User-friendly quarterly reports based on this data
- 2 page executive summaries of these reports prepared for project staff at the block, district, and state level.
- A feedback system at the block and district level.

Community Based Monitoring

Objective: To use community organizations to monitor the quality of their inputs, assess outcomes, audit funds, and validate data.

Special Studies

Objective: To understand key issues for project implementation and design

Key Elements:

- **Case Studies** of specific issues conducted on a needs based basis
- **Qualitative studies** to understand processes of change in depth
- **Participatory Studies** for rapid assessment
- **Artefactual Labs** using behavioral experiments to measure outcomes such as agency and empowerment that are difficult to measure in surveys.

Qualitative Tracking and Special Studies

Impact analysis and monitoring need to be supplemented by qualitative tracking and special studies to understand the mechanisms underlying the impact, and to gain insights into challenges of implementation.



Impact Evaluations

Projects require a scientific impact evaluation system that can provide rigorous estimates of the impact of the project on a multi-dimensional set of outcomes: empowerment, agency, human development, as well as income and wealth; and to test various experiments.

Impact Evaluations

Objective: To understand the impact of a specific intervention with a long-enough time lag to allow outcomes to be observable. Impact evaluations can be used to assess both the impact of the core SHG intervention, and the impact of interventions beyond the core SHG intervention, e.g.: Intensive cultivation (SRI and MKSP), Resource Blocks, Financial Literacy, Nutrition, VO-Headed PDS Shops in Bihar etc.

Key Elements:

- a) **Design** to allow comparable "treatment" samples where the intervention will be administered and "control" samples, which are as similar to treatment samples but where the intervention is not administered. The most effective way to generate comparable treatment and control samples is randomized assignment, where the sample where the intervention is administered is randomly selected from a list of villages, and with another randomly selected set of villages assigned as control areas.
- b) **Measurement** to measure relevant outcomes that the intervention is expected to produce. This requires the development of questionnaires that generate useful data on key indicators of interest, and collecting accurate data on these indicators from households and communities
- c) **Analysis** Analyzing the data generated by the surveys to measure the impact of the intervention, and interpreting the results in a manner that is useful for project learning.



CONTACTS

Vijayendra Rao, Lead Economist
Upamanyu Datta, Economist
Nethra Palaniswamy, Economist and Coordinator

vrao@worldbank.org
udatta@worldbank.org
npalaniswamy@worldbank.org

SO ACTIVITIES

	Monitoring	Impact Evaluation	Innovations/Special Studies	Capacity Building and Outreach
Ongoing	Bihar - MIS - Food security - System for Rice/Crop Intensification (SRI/SCI)	Andhra Pradesh - Nutrition centres - Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture (CMSA)	Bihar - Using behavioral science to design better interventions for flood affected areas, and for the ultra poor - Village Organization headed PDS	Bihar - MIS - Special studies - Behavioral studies
	Madhya Pradesh	Bihar - Core evaluation - Qualitative evaluation - Retrospective evaluation - Behavioural experiments - Food security - System for Rice/Crop Intensification (SRI/SCI)	Orissa - Mid-term review - Community seeds initiative	National Rural Livelihoods Project - Technical assistance for impact evaluations (tracking surveys)
	North East Rural Livelihoods Project	Tamil Nadu - Core evaluation - Qualitative evaluation - Retrospective evaluation	Tamil Nadu - Skills - Sustainability of CBOs and other institutions	
	Tamil Nadu		Resource block study	Cross Cutting - Building links with key policy makers across sectors - Outreach to India and international academic community - Creating networks of monitoring and evaluation
	Process Monitoring - Bihar - National Rural Livelihoods Project		Orissa Impact Evaluation	
	Forthcoming	Bihar - Nutrition - Community based monitoring system	Tamil Nadu - Tracking survey - Village Panchayats - Gram Sabha recordings - Health card initiative to track anaemia - Skills - Women's empowerment	Tamil Nadu - Mental health study - Sanitation
Tamil Nadu - Health card initiative to track anaemia		Madhya Pradesh skills		Cross cutting - Sharing knowledge across the South Asia region
National Rural Livelihoods Project		Community monitoring		
Maharashtra Impact Evaluation				
North East Rural Livelihoods Project Impact Evaluation		Rajasthan Impact Evaluation		