

## Community as the Third Party Quality Monitor – Case of Odisha

### Introduction:

The roads under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY) are designed and executed as per the standards laid down by the Indian Roads Congress (IRC). A 3-level quality control framework has been mandated to guarantee quality of the works. While the concerned Executive Engineer and the Project Management Unit comprise the principal level, all the states have been mentioned to take the services of a State level autonomous agency to check the quality of the roads through State Quality Monitors and on its part, the NRIDA appoints retired senior technical officers as National Quality Monitors to review the roads. The roads constructed under the PMGSY are to be maintained by the contractor for a period of five years from the date of completion after which they would be handed over to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) (local self-governing bodies at the village level) for further maintenance.

### Background:

In the year 2012, Youth for Social Development (YSD), an independent social research and development organisation as a part of promoting social accountability had undertaken citizen monitoring of rural roads in Gajapati and Ganjam Districts of Odisha. YSD as a part of its commitment towards promoting accountability and empowering citizens had undertaken the rural roads monitoring. As a part of the programme, community members living in the habitations, where rural roads were constructed, were trained through rigorous classroom and field trainings. The main objective of the programme was to promote accountability by empowering communities vis-à-vis quality of rural roads.

### Details of the intervention:

The Monitoring of roads involved a set of customised instruments for monitoring the quality of on-going PMGSY works, auditing the performance of completed PMGSY roads. Young people with basic education were selected from habitations, where the PMGSY roads were being used or under construction. They were given three -day training and were formed into Citizen Monitoring and Audit Teams (CMATs). Each CMAT was given necessary toolkits for monitoring the roads. The CMATS were trained on quality and quantity parameters through both classroom and field training.

The methodology involved actual observation of roads for drains, traffic furniture, heavings, cracks, pits and boulders among other things. The technical monitoring involved measuring road width, width and height of milestones, measuring thickness of the road and camber of the road among other things. Apart from doing quality check using the basic customized toolkit, the study also considered visual observations of the road. Visual observations included free flow of side drains, heaving's, cracks, potholes, surface bleeding, spoiled edges, traffic furniture, etc, to name a few.

Additionally, the monitoring steps involved the monitoring of contract agreements signed between the rural development department and contractors. These contracts were obtained and reviewed for understanding the deliverables. Similarly bill of quantities/estimates were reviewed for understanding the procurement process, quality aspects and quantity of various components.

**Impact:**

The citizen participation in road monitoring is encouraging. Community people without any technical know-how about the roads were able to monitor the rural roads with providing proper capacity building training. The CMATs could actually find the discrepancies from the scheme guidelines or quality parameters. This ensured accountability at the grassroots level on the part of the contractors and Rural Development Department engineers apart from improved quality and maintenance of roads.

*Source: Youth for Social Development, Brahmapur, Odisha. (2012). Citizen Monitoring of Public Procurement ensuring accountability in Rural Roads.*