

Proceedings of the National Colloquium of Lab to Land Initiative held at Guwahati on 8-11, November 2011.

The National Colloquium on Lab to Land Initiative was held on 8-11 November, 2011 at Guwahati to review progress achieved so far and to lay down the strategy to be followed by SIRDs and ETCs/PTCs for scaling up the activities and covering the IAP districts. Before starting the proceedings, a two minute silence was observed on the death of Dr. Bhupen Hazarika. The Colloquium was inaugurated by Shri Arun Kumar, Principal Secretary, Department of Rural Development, Govt. of Assam. He indicated that the Colloquium at Guwahati would enable them to take the learning of the earlier colloquium forward. The idea of BNVs is indeed a very topical and timely idea because there is certainly a need to carry on the voice of the people in the village at large. Though there is the PRI system, but at times the officials and elected members may not have time and energy to be able to mobilise villagers on their own. BNVs would need to work with PRI system and also assist in the sustainability of the programmes.

2. Shri Niten Chandra, Joint Secretary, MoRD appreciated the arrangements made by Director, SIRD, Assam for the Colloquium. The Colloquium would be one step forward in mobilisation of the BNVs under Land to Lab Initiative. He referred to a Conference headed by Minister Rural Development in Vigyan Bhavan on 8.11.2011 with representatives from States on Social Audit under MGNREGA. It was emphasised by the Minister that the cadre of BNVs should be engaged for social audit. A significant number of BNVs are required in each State by the end of March as much more is required to be done and the quality of programmes would depend on the mobilisation of the volunteers and the generation of awareness in the rural areas. Instructions had gone to the different states regarding the use of BNVs for social audit and other programmes of MoRD. There is need to strengthen training infrastructure. Each state should have at least 5000 BNVs with more and more BNVs mobilised in Naxal affected areas. At least 1000 BNVs should be mobilised in IAP districts. Keeping in view the need for increase in capacity building activities, the infrastructural problems faced by SIRDs should be addressed and funds already released for the purpose should be fully utilised. Also the funds already released for the training of BNVs should be fully utilised.

3. The States then made presentations on the Lab-to-Land initiative covering the progress made so far and the strategy proposed for the coming months. The summary of the presentations made is brought out State-wise as under.

Andhra Pradesh

4. The initiative is being undertaken in 79 villages of 71 mandals in all 22 districts involving 2127 Bharat Nirman Volunteers (BNV). Photographs of 1745 BNVs will be uploaded by November 2011. The impact of the Initiative is being assessed through Sundarayya Vignana Kendram, Hyderabad and KPMG New Delhi. The

important contributions made by BNVs include taking up plantation and horticulture programmes, conducting special classes for 10th class students, banning of sale of liquor, Panparag and Gutka and closure of liquor vending shops, taking up shramadan works, replacement of street lights damaged during cyclonic storms, taking over of community hall from unauthorised occupation, banning of use of plastic items, establishment of water treatment plants, conducting health camps for children, facilitating distribution of pattas to landless poor, starting BNV reading rooms, etc.

As a strategy for scaling up, two districts of Chittoor and Rangareddy would be wholly covered. IAP districts would also be covered. NGOs are being roped in for mobilisation of volunteers. The State has also developed a process model to ensure sustainability of the initiative. This includes weekly visits by the core team, feed back through the email and messages by the BNVs.

Arunachal Pradesh

5. The initiative is being undertaken in Drimukh CD Block in Papumpare district involving 178 Bharat Nirman Volunteers (BNV). Photographs of BNVs will be uploaded shortly. The State requested for additional support to SIRD based on local area conditions.

As a strategy for scaling up, in the first phase Papumpare district will be taken up with the other districts covered in second phase with the coordination of PRIs and NGOs.

Assam

6. The initiative is being undertaken in Dimoria block involving 500 BNVs. The photos of 480 BNVs are being uploaded on the website. The State government has issued necessary instructions for the implementation of the Lab to Land initiative. The impact of the Initiative will be assessed soon through third party, though internal assessment is being done by SIRD through case studies. The volunteers are given skill development training for repairs of electric and farm implements. Training was also given through IARI for improved agricultural practices. The community is being given training in association with the volunteers for field level income generation activities. The important contributions made by BNVs include collection of socio economic household information, awareness generation, helping the poor to get works under MGNREGA, mobilising people for Gram Sabha and social audit, formation of a JLG of 4-5 youth for self-employment under SIRD's self-employment projects, mobilising the poor for awareness camps, etc.

As a strategy for scaling up, four more blocks would be taken up in three districts by January 2010. The CBOs, facilitators, groups developed by SIRDs would be involved.

Bihar

7. The initiative is being undertaken in three blocks of three districts involving 50 BNVs. The photos of BNVs are being uploaded on the website. The State government has issued necessary instructions for the implementation of the Lab to Land initiative. The impact of the Initiative will be assessed soon through third party. The important contributions made by BNVs include motivation of poor households to come under SHG fold, managing IAY camp, generating MGNREGA job cards for poor households, etc.

As a strategy for scaling up, master trainers and BNVs belonging to Biharsharif will go to other districts for training them.

Chhattisgarh

8. The initiative is being undertaken in eleven blocks of 11 districts. The data entry of the BNVs is under process and will be completed by 31st December 2011. The State government has issued necessary instructions for the implementation of the Lab to Land initiative. Third party assessment of the impact of BNVs will be completed by January 2012. The important contributions made by BNVs include strengthening of Gram Sabhas, introducing SRI method in rice cultivation, introduction of wall magazine, readmission of school drop outs, and attending to seasonal illnesses.

As a strategy for scaling up, exposure visits of existing blocks are planned. For scaling up to all the IAP districts, additional funds are required.

Gujarat

9. Currently the initiative is being undertaken in one Block in one District with 40 Panchayats. The total number of BNVs are 591. The data entry of BNVs has been completed. The Third party assessment of the impact of BNVs is to be taken up. To make the programme successful, local models and general appreciation through social reorganisations are required. Continuous follow up is also required. The important activities taken up by BNVs include facilitating widow pension, inclusion of names in the voter's list, supervision of drainage line for quality and quantity, making of Public Distribution System in 6 days instead of 1 hour, obtaining written consent from parents for the presence of students, Opening of R.C. road by removing encroachment, etc. The other contributions were, opening of Panchayat Office for meeting of BNVs, plantation of trees, proposing name of one lady BNV for GP election, cleaning operations, etc.

From April 2012, 25 blocks in 5 more districts would be taken up by enrolling 3000 BNVs in 200 Panchayats.

Haryana

10. Data entry is being done and all the BNVs are having photographs on the website. The State Government has not yet issued instructions to the districts for the implementation of the initiative. The third party assessment will be taken up shortly. The important contributions made by BNVs include re-verification of BPL Survey, taking up total Sanitation Campaign and Sakshar Bharat Mission, verification of hundred square yard block allotted to BPL families, arranging linkages with banks for SHGs. District Collector would need to be associated in these workshops by requesting Chief Secretary to depute him.

Kurukshetra district would be selected with one block as part of the strategy for scaling up. One or two villages and hundred BNVs are proposed. Different line departments and some selected NGOs would be associated with the programme.

J& K

11. The coverage of this project was initially in Akhnoor block of Jammu district, but is now recently extended to another two blocks i.e. Qazibagh in Budgam district of Srinagar and Phyang in Leh district. The data entry of the BNVs has been done, though the process is slow. The State Rural Development Department needs to be more proactive. Internal assessment is being done. The important contributions made by BNVs include conducting of household surveys, identifying several sectoral and developmental issues pertaining to the village, preparation of village development plan, motivating the rural people to take up challenges, etc. After training and sensitization, the BNVs are well organized and motivated to attain the objectives.

As a strategy for scaling up, the programme would be extended other districts and blocks. The NGOs would be associated for the expansion of the programme.

Jharkhand

12. The initiative is projected to cover 96 Panchayats of 48 blocks in 24 districts by the middle of January , 2012. More than 60% BNVs are not having photographs. Photographs of these BNVs will be uploaded shortly. State Government has issued enabling circulars to all the District Collectors. The impact of the Initiative is yet to be assessed. The important contributions made by BNVs include helping local administration in almost every Govt. scheme like, MGNREGA, NRLM, NHRM, TSC, IWMP, Tribal forest right, Joint forest management initiation, helping rural people in getting old age pension, etc.

As a strategy for scaling up, two State level one-day workshops have been chalked out each covering 12 districts. One district level official and 2 BDOs per district would be participating in this workshop. District Collectors are being requested to nominate NGOs for the Programme.

Karnataka

13. The initiative is being undertaken in three blocks namely, Harihar in Davangere, Karkala in Udupi and Sringapatna in Mandya districts. The data has been uploaded in the Rural diksha website along with the photographs. The State Government has issued enabling circulars to the Districts for implementation of the programme. The third party assessment is yet to be taken up but it will be completed by January, 2012. The important contributions made by BNVs include helping in the construction sanitary latrines, school enrolment drives, gram panchayat resource mobilization and facilitating the implementation of social security schemes. They also motivate the villagers to adopt environmental cleanliness. It was suggested to set up a cell in SIRDs for dealing with BNVs.

As a strategy for scaling up, it is proposed to take up the programme in one Gram Panchayat per Taluk in all the 176 Blocks of the States.

Kerala

14. The initiative is being implemented in Sasthamcotta Block in Kollam District with 1000 BNVs. While data entry is being made, around 175 volunteers do not have photographs. The Mynapally Gram Panchayat and some villages are not listed in the Diksha portal. One comprehensive order regarding composition of Committees at State, District and Block has been issued. The third party assessment is to be undertaken. The BNVs have created awareness about development programmes especially regarding solid waste disposal and are taking up issues/problems with the officials. Through their cleanliness drive, the number of cases of hospitalisation have decreased. There is also greater synergy between Panchayats and the CBOs. More staff are needed to upscale the initiative to other blocks.

The State government has been addressed to select one more Block in Northern part of Kerala. Currently the NGOs are not associated with the programme.

Madhya Pradesh

15. Currently 8 Panchayats in 4 blocks of 4 districts are covered under the Initiative. The number of BNVs are 3182. By Mid January 2012, 12 blocks are expected to be covered with 4482 BNVs. Data entry of 1080 volunteers has been done in the website. The State Department of Rural Development has issued circulars to districts regarding the implementation of the programme. For the third party assessment of the impact, the SIRD is discussing the matter with School of Good Governance. The important contributions made by BNVs include formation of SHGs and their training, plantation, assisting for MGNREGA applications, organising camps for solving problems, facilitating TSC Scheme, and organisation of health camps. It is proposed that additional funds may be provided to SIRDs for meeting the cost of air travel of participants of the workshop. A Technical Support Unit, as in the case of BRGF, is proposed for Lab to Land Initiative.

The strategy for scaling up to other districts includes, TOT for trainers, involvement of Government officials, and others for motivation and training, utilisation of the facilities at ETCs and PTCs for expansion of the programme, exposure visits of promising BNVs to other blocks as role model and campaign for Gram Sabha for strengthening the village.

Maharashtra

16. Three districts, Sangli, Wardha and Gadchiroli (IAP district) are covered under the programme. The data entry is being done on the website. There is a technical snag regarding the uploading of photographs, which would be sorted out. The SIRD is pursuing with the State Government for issuing the necessary Government instructions. The third party assessment would be taken up and report submitted by January 2012. The important contributions by BNVs include obtaining basic socio-economic information from the allotted households, creating awareness about Government programmes, and facilitating income generation activities. The BNVs are also helping the rural needy people to get work under MGNREGA, promoting participation in Gram Sabha, and conducting social audit and other social activities.

The strategy for upscaling would be in phases. In the phase I, one village in each Prabhag of ZP constituency would be covered. In the second phase, the entire block would be covered. In phase III, another block of the same district would be covered. Proposal would be sent for additional funds for new blocks and for setting up a unit in SIRD.

Manipur

17. At present 3 districts namely Jhombal, Churachandpur and Imphal East are covered under the programme. The blocks are Jhombal, Lamka and Jiribam. 750 BNVs are currently in position. It is projected to have 10,000 BNVs. As no data-entry is being done in the web-site, one training programme is required for uploading. The state department of Rural Development has not issued any enabling circulars to the districts. The third-party assessment of the impact of BNVs is to be undertaken. The BNVs have ensured unity in the villages and serve the poor people

As part of the strategy for scaling up, it is proposed to involve an NGO called UFO (Universal Friendship Organisation). About one lakh members are ready to join as BNVs. A proposal for Rs 50 lakhs has been sent to the Ministry.

Meghalaya

18. The Lab to Land initiative and enlisting of BNVs is currently being taken up in the 266 villages of Umsning Community and Rural Development Block of Ribhoi District. 652 BNVs have been enlisted as per the recommendations of the village heads. Registration and form filling by volunteers is in progress and will conclude on 15 November 2011. The data-entry for BNVs is yet to be taken up as data is being compiled. The assessment is yet to be taken up. Efforts will be made by carry out the

assessment at the earliest. Currently the BNVs are being trained and the work would be allotted to them only at the end of November, 2011. The NYK volunteers would be engaged as BNVs and one programme for 31 NYK volunteers have been organised and the another one is planned.

The State Government has accorded approval for implementation of Lab to Land in two more Blocks namely Amlarem and Rongara Blocks of Jaintia Hills and South Garo Hills Districts respectively. NGOs involved in the implementation of Lab to Land are Bosco Reach Out and Meghalaya Rural Development Society. An amount of Rs 1 crore is required for scaling up the implementation of the Lab to Land Initiative.

Mizoram

19. At present Thingdwal Block in Kolasib District is covered under the programme with 143 BNVs and 5705 households. Five more blocks in five districts are proposed to be covered. They are Bilkhawthlir Block in Kolasib district, Thingsulthliah Block in Aizwal district, Lunglei Block in Lunglei district, Lawngtlai Block in Lawngtlai district and Saiha Block in Saiha district.

Particulars of BNVs have been entered in the rural diksha website. However, photographs of BNVs could not be uploaded along with the BNVs information. The State Government has issued instructions for formation of four committees at the district and block levels. The third-party assessment would be entrusted to Mizoram University or other suitable agency. The BNVs actively participated in dissemination of information about the development programme and importance of Gram Sabha. As a result, the Gram Sabhas were conducted in a more meaningful and effective manner in Thingdawl Block. Presidents of village councils, after having being trained have become more open to convene Gram Sabhas. IAY list was prepared and approved by Gram Sabhas in Kolasib District for the first time. The BNVs strongly act as catalyst to guide the Gram Sabhas decisions. The Annual Shelf of Works under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA for 2012-12, in Thingdawl Block, now give development of individual lands an important place in every village. Nowadays the SIRDs are maintaining their respective databases with user ID and passwords allotted to them. It was suggested that separate user ID, apart from the ones allotted to the SIRDs, may be necessary for the Lab to Land Blocks separately maintaining their respective databases on the ruraldiksha website. Such UIDs and Passwords may also be intimated to the SIRD for monitoring and assistance as may be necessary.

As strategy for scaling up to other districts, apart from SIRD, ETCs, the facilities under BRGF would be utilised. The five NGOs available for RD programmes would be involved after giving proper training. Additional funds would be required for which proposals would be sent to the Ministry.

Nagaland

20. The initiative is being undertaken in one block in a district covering 12 village councils and 157 BNVs. Upto mid-January two districts and two blocks are projected. The proposal for the proposed districts, Tuensang and Phek is under consideration of the Government. The State has associated National Youth Corps, the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan to cover more districts and blocks. All the 157 BNVs have been enrolled. However, details are yet to be uploaded on the website. The State Government has issued enabling circulars to the districts. The third party assessment is yet to be undertaken. The BNVs have made the rural people aware of their rights and duties and about all the development programmes.

Punjab

21. The initiative is being undertaken in block Khera in Fategarh Sahib district and with 583 BNVs. Though these volunteers have been enrolled, they are yet to be uploaded on the website. The State Government has issued the necessary circulars to the district chosen for the initiative. The third party assessment of impact of BNVs is yet to be undertaken. The MoRD is requested to appoint a third party. The BNVs are making efforts to make the people aware regarding the various programmes. Due to efforts of BNVs, 8 sanitary latrines were constructed. Under IAY one house was constructed and another repaired due to the efforts of BNVs. The other contributions of BNVs are issue of job cards, training of social audit forum under MGNREGA, providing pure drinking water, enabling the old age persons to get pensions, organisation of blood donation camps, health camps etc.

22. It is proposed to take up another block viz. Khanna in district Ludhiana, before mid January, 2012. The district officials of Ludhiana have already been informed about the initiative. The other district collectors would also be informed in November-December, 2011. Resource persons of SIRD, youth clubs and SHGs are being associated. Additional funds would be required to cover remaining districts.

Rajasthan

23. Currently 33 Gram Panchayats in 11 blocks in one district are being covered with the total number of 1167 BNVs. Decision regarding further projection is yet to be made. Data regarding 1050 volunteers have been uploaded along with photographs of 600 BNVs. The process is continuing. Enabling circulars have been issued to districts. The third party assessment to determine the impact of BNVs is yet to be undertaken. The important contributions made by BNVs include getting social security pension sanctions, organising medical camps, conducting household service and anti-alcoholic drive, Ensuring job cards, participation in panchayat meetings and gram sachivalaya meetings, sanitation drive in villages and motivating people to attend gram sabha.

The decision regarding scaling up to other districts will be taken by the state level coordination and monitoring committees. The Government of India should

sanction a consultant in SIRD and Zilla Parishads for monitoring the Lab to Land initiative. Exposure visits of CEO, ZP and BDOs must be undertaken.

Sikkim

24. At present the block, Tinik-chisopani, Poktok-Denchong and Salgari, under Jorethang has been taken up. 75 of BNVs were trained so far.. It is projected to take up 4 Blocks, one in each District. The BNV data are uploaded in the website. However, there are several problems in view of which they were unable to enter data in the metric system. A Committee has been finalised at the State, district and block level. Third party assessment is yet to be undertaken. The important contributions made by BNVs include organisation of livelihood development camps through horticulture and animal husbandry department, prevention of open defecation by migrant labourers, monitoring of the free uniform scheme and monitoring drug addiction and alcoholism in the village.

As part of the strategy for scaling up to other districts, it has been decided to take up 4 blocks, one in each district. A one day workshop would be organised on 24-11-2011 at SIRD for BDOs, ADCs and other district officials. Additional funds would be required for scaling up the activities.

Tamil Nadu

25. One block namely Olakkur in district Villupuram with 52 village panchayats and 736 BNVs is currently taken up. By mid January 2012, 6 districts and 8 blocks will be covered with approximately 5,000 volunteers. The data entry of 1000 BNVs is done on ruraldiksha. The photos could not be uploaded since the resolution of the photos had to be brought down. It would be done soon. The State Department has issued letters enabling SIRDs to take up new blocks. The third party assessment on the impact would be undertaken. The important contributions made by BNVs include, helping to organise health camps, spreading awareness on HIV, HINI etc., facilitating settlement of public grievances, summer camps/tuitions for children, re-enrolling school drop outs, organising cultural programmes for children and assisting in the formation of SIGs. They also helped in getting the aged old age pension, ration cards/certificates for the community, promoting modern agricultural practices, adoption of rain water harvesting, preparation of village development plan etc.

As a strategy for scaling up, services of facilitators who are resource persons trained by SIRDs would be engaged. Exposure visits of the SIRD faculty to Andhra Pradesh and other States, a State level workshop for the officers of new blocks, TOT for facilitators area also proposed. Additional funds would be required for scaling up activities.

Tripura

26. Kathalia RD block of West Tripura District is taken up for implementation of the initiative. The data entry is being done, though there are difficulties. The State RD

Department has issued the necessary circulars. No third party assessment of the impact of BNVs has been undertaken. BNVs have reported that they have facilitated access to birth certificates to some households attached to them. Participation of people, especially women in Gram Sabha meetings has increased. Complaints and grievances of households are addressed promptly by the officials now.

They are yet to complete training of BNVs under Kathalia Block. So strategies for scaling up to other districts and blocks would be considered later. No NGOs have been associated with the programme.

Uttar Pradesh

27. At present, one Gram Panchayat in Mau block of Chitrakoot district is taken up with 1000 BNVs. By mid January 2012, 40 blocks are projected to be taken up in 40 districts with a total of 40,000 BNVs. Partial data entry has been made. Photographs of all BNVs have been collected and would be uploaded shortly on the website. There is need for training on data entry. The State RD Department has issued circulars to the districts for implementation of Lab to Land Initiative. The third party assessment is yet to be undertaken. The important contributions made by BNVs are sensitization of Government programmes, community resource persons and identification of real information/ constraints.

As strategy for scaling up the initiative, a workshop would be held on 8-12-2011 to extend the programme in 40 districts through 40 RIRD/ DIRD. No other agencies like NGOs are being associated with the programme. Additional funds would be needed for setting up a PMU at SIRD and for training of BNVs and others.

Uttarakhand

28. The initiative is being taken up in Rudrapur block in Udham Singh Nagar District with 474 BNVs. 41 panchayats are covered. Upto mid January 2012, 45 panchayats will be covered. Data entry of 373 BNVs is in progress. The State Department of RD has not yet issued the circulars. The assessment of impact of BNVs would be completed by January 2012. The BNVs are helping in grievance handling and they also take into account the perceptions of people. Different rural development schemes/ works are being done in time by the intervention of BNVs.

As a part of strategy for scaling up, a letter has been addressed to Chief Development Officer of each district to select the block. No other agencies like NGOs are being associated with the programme.

West Bengal

29. The initiative is being undertaken in 10 Gram Panchayats of Santipur block in Nadia district. One more district of Paschim Medinipur with 2 blocks of Medinipur Sadar and Gopiballabpur would be covered by mid January, 2012. Data entry of BNVs was done but photographs of BNVs could not be uploaded due to software problem.

The matter would be sorted out. State and district committees had been formed by orders of State PR and RD Department. No third party assessment of BNVs has been undertaken. The important contributions by BNVs include making people aware of the programmes, distribution of 2300 books prepared by SIRD for awareness generation to the educated village people, survey of households in the village, helping the people for obtaining benefits, IEC and printing works. Funds are required for payment of the bills of survey format printing and data entry, mobility support and IEC and printing works.

Strategy for scaling up to the Naxalite affected 2 districts is yet to be decided. The SIRD would assist the district magistrate in the formation of strategy, training, survey and software for data entry.

30. Concluding the discussions, Shri Niten Chandra, Joint Secretary, listed the following points for further action.

- The BNVs should be involved in the Socio-economic Caste Survey. They can assist in the validation of the data collected.
- The BNVs should be involved in the Social Audit.
- The States may consider selecting the blocks taken up under NRLM for the implementation of the Lab-to-Land Initiative
- As often senior officers at the State level are not aware of the programme, the SIRDs should brief them as and when necessary. There should not be any communication gap.
- Most SIRDs are yet to fully utilise the funds already released. The Utilization Certificates may be submitted so that further funds could be released as needed.
- The enabling circulars to the districts by the State RD department for implementation of the Lab-to-Land Initiative should be issued before the PRC Committee meeting scheduled for 17-18th November 2011 in the Ministry. The Secretaries should be made aware of the progress made under the programme.
- Clear orders should be issued before the end of November 2011 regarding the scaling up of the Initiative and the blocks selected for expansion.
- The State-wise targets for BNVs to be mobilised by 31.3.2012 would be communicated to the States by the Ministry. (The list is enclosed)
- Assistance would be provided to SIRDs for setting up units for implementation of the Initiative.
- A software would be installed in the website for reducing the resolution of photos to enable easier uploading of the photos of BNVs.

The participants also had field visits on 10th November 2011 when they interacted with over 500 BNVs in Gomorio Block of Assam. Joint Secretary, MoRD and the representatives of SIRDs and District officers shared their experiences with the BNVs and other officers of the State.

It was also decided to organise the next Colloquium at Pune or Aurangabad on 17-19 January 2012. Necessary arrangements would be made by YASHADA, Pune.