IV

Rural Development in West Bengal

4.1. Introduction:

West Bengal is situated in 21° 25’ 24” and 27°13’ 15” north latitudes and 85°48’ 20” and 89°53' 04” east longitudes, the State shares its borders with three different nations – Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal – and four other Indian States, viz. Orissa, Jharkhand, Assam and Sikkim. The climate of the State is tropical and humid except in the northern hilly region which is close to the Himalayans. It is one of the major states in India which takes an important role in the country’s socio-economic development. Its geographical location has made it gateway for the entire north-eastern part of the country. In comparison with the other states of India, in terms of per-capita state domestic product (SDP), West Bengal had been the richest state in India in 1960. At the time of independence (1947) the share of the state in the total industrial production of the country had been 24% (Dey, 2010). Up to mid 60’s it played an important role in providing employment opportunities to the people living throughout the country. It is the state, which has the glorious record of implementing Panchayati Raj System. The functioning of three-tier Panchayati Raj system was instituted in the State since 1978, well in advance of the 73rd Constitutional Amendments in the early 1990s which mandated such a system throughout India. In contrast to most other states significant responsibilities were devolved to West Bengal Panchayats including implementation of land reforms, selection of beneficiaries of various Government funded development scheme and administration of local infrastructure building programs (Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2007). Implementation of systematic Panchayati Raj system and land reform has resulted in good track record of success in agricultural production as well as rural development. In 1970’s the state was in the group of states with slowest growth rate in agricultural production in the Country, but in 1980’s it reached to highest growth rate particularly in case of food grain production. There was a switch to high-yielding varieties, a shift towards cash crops like oilseeds and vegetables, and a substantial expansion of multiple cropping (Banerjee et. al.,2002).

Historically partition of India imposed a tremendous pressure on the socio-economic structure of the state. Particularly at the time of partition of the country and afterwards infiltration of uncountable number of refugees from East Bengal particularly in the districts, situated near the Indo-Bangladesh border has caused a serious challenge before the state to control its population.
expansion. As a result of which it had become a state with highest population density in the year 2001 (Census, 2001). At present it is the second largest state in terms of population density (Census, 2011).

This increase in population along with lack of adequate employment opportunities has resulted in chronic problem of unemployment and poverty in the state. Larger population puts more pressure on basic infrastructure as well as on the provision of health, education and other services. The extremely high population density obviously has affected per capita resource allocation and hence negatively affected economic development in spite of its remarkable success of the State in decentralization of power and land reform movement (WB Human Development Report, 2004).

4.2. Rural West Bengal
About 68 percent of total populations of the state live in rural areas and about 56% of total population depends on the agriculture for their livelihood, but agriculture contributes only about 15% of the Net State Domestic Product of the state (Bengal Chamber of Commerce, 2012). Out of the total population that depends on agriculture about 57% are agricultural labourers and rests are the cultivators. Again West Bengal is dominated by the marginal and small farmers with 96 per cent of the cultivators belonging to this group. Small and marginal farmers operate in 81 per cent of operated land (Govt. of West Bengal, 2011). In addition to this about 30 lakh landless families have earned the right to cultivate and grow crops on their own land after enactment of Operation Barga system (NABCONS, 2009). As a result, the per capita cultivable land holding is steadily declining. There has been continuous marginalization of operated area in the state during last three decades. The average size of the operated area was only 0.79 ha in West Bengal in 2005-06 which further declined to 0.77 ha in 2010-11. As a result while there was no net increase in the area under cultivation during 1960-61 and 2000-01, the number of agricultural workers per thousand hectares of arable land in the state increased from 1107 in 1960-61 to 1513 in 1977-78 and further to 2213 in 2001 (Chattopadhyay, 2005). Thus overdependence on agriculture coupled with comparatively no increase of alternative source of livelihood has resulted in a large amount of seasonal unemployment, disguised unemployment and under employment in rural West Bengal.

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1 Based on Agriculture Census Report 2010-11 (West Bengal), Government of West Bengal.
This has been one of the important causes behind the failure of rural West Bengal to capitalize on the benefit of decentralization of power and land reform. Therefore, rural unemployment situation reached at a worse position as compared to national average. It has been revealed that 3.3% of total rural labour force in West Bengal remained unemployed in the year 2013-14 whereas the corresponding figure at the all India level was 2.9% (GOI, 2014).

In this context it should be mentioned here that since the rural economy is dominated by self employment, the best measure of the level of employment can be obtained form the Workforce Participation Rate (WFPR) and its sex wise composition. In rural West Bengal 43.2% of rural male workers, 57.7% of female workers and 46.4% of total workers were self-employed during the year 2011-12 (NSSO, 2014).

The following table (Table-4.1) as well as the related figure (Figure-4.1) depicts a picture of the rural workforce participation rate of West Bengal and India during the period 1961-2011. It is evident from the available data that WFPRs in West Bengal are always lower than that of National Average during the period 1961 to 2001 and the differences are more acute in case of female WFPR than their male counterparts.

**Table 4.1: Rural Workforce Participation Rate in West Bengal and India**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>West Bengal</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>India</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>32.67</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>27.19</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>28.03</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>39.74</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>37.92</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>57.2</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ghosal (2005) and Census of India, 2011

The above table clearly reveals that while Work force participation rate in West Bengal in 1961 was about 33, it was 45 at the all India level. The gap was somewhat bridged during 1991 and 2001 (figure 1) but it remained below the national level in 2011. For the female labour force,
the difference is more striking. The average difference in the work force participation rates of female workers between West Bengal and all India level remained more than 13 percentage points during the entire period (1961-2011). The difference was highest in 1961 (about 21 percentage points) and was lowest in 2001 (about 2.5 percentage points).

Figure: 4.1: Rural Work Force Participation Rate (Person) in West Bengal and India during 1961-2011

Thus it may be argued that despite remarkable steps in the field of democratic decentralization of power through successful adoption of the Panchayati Raj institutions, West Bengal failed to improve its overall WFPR of rural workforce during the entire period under consideration. This is also manifested in terms of the number and percentage of rural population living below the poverty line in West Bengal.

Traditionally a large part of the rural population lived below poverty line. In 1973-74, about 73 percent of the rural population was below poverty line which declined to about 41 percent in 1993-94 and further declined to about 32 percent in 1999-2000. The corresponding figures at the all India level were about 56 percent, 37 percent and 27 percent respectively. Therefore till the turn of the century, Rural West Bengal had always proportionately more people below

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2 Economic Survey, 2002-03, Government of India.
poverty line compared to the same at the all India level.

However, the scenario has changed somewhat in the last decade. In 2004-05 the percentage of rural population below poverty line at the all India level was 42 percent which declined to about 26 percent in 2011-12. The corresponding figures for West Bengal were lower; 38 percent in 2004-05 and 23 percent in 2011-12. However, it may be noted that 16 states of India had lower level of rural head count ratio compared to West Bengal. These states include Punjab, Kerala, Rajasthan, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, etc.\(^3\)

4.3. **Rural Development Programmes in West Bengal:**

From the preceding sub-section it is clear that economy of West Bengal is a rural-based economy. The State also occupies a leading role in introduction of Panchayati Raj System towards ensuring rural development. A large number of rural development schemes have been implemented through Panchayats in the rural areas in the state for alleviation of rural poverty, providing social security to the poor and also for development of rural infrastructure. Panchayats contributed to the growth process of the rural economy directly by implementing those schemes for improvement of the rural infrastructure and by providing various services (GOWB, 2010a).

Panchayats played important role in improving road connectivity, developing social forestry, improving small irrigation systems, providing water supply and sanitation facilities, executing schemes on universal education and health system improvement and optimum utilization and conservation of natural resources and for the development of the regions, which are comparatively less developed.

Major rural development programmes, which are being implemented in the state, are inter alia-

1. **The Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY):** The *Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana* (SGSY) aims at alleviating rural poverty by facilitating creation of self-employment opportunities for the poor. Organizing poor in general and poor women in particular, in self-help groups is the priority under this scheme. The main objective of the groups is to mobilize savings of the individual members with a view to ensuring availability

of need-based financial services and to take up income-generation activities. When the groups seek to undertake any economic activity, SGSY assistance is provided to them in the form of bank credit and subsidy (Singh, 2009).

During the year 2002-03 total number of Self-Help Groups in West Bengal were 58,708 which increased to 2,76,152 in the year 2009-10. Out of total groups about 83% were formed by the women (GOWB, 2010a). This increase in SHGs and spread among the rural women indicate success of the program for which it was adopted.

2. **Indira Awas Yojana**: Poor housing condition is also a major concern of rural people of West Bengal. It has been known that in the year 2005 out of total rural households about 4.5% were houseless and about 43% lived in kuchha houses (West Bengal Rural Household Survey, 2005). Indira Awas Yojana is rural housing project for the poor. It seeks to assist the houseless living below the poverty line to construct their own houses or upgrade their dilapidated houses. The cost of IAY is shared by the Central and State Government in the ratio of 75:25. Funds under the scheme allocated to the States/UTs is further distributed to the districts in proportion to the SC/ST population in the district. A minimum 60% of the funds are allocated for construction of houses for the SC/ST living below the poverty line in rural areas. The fund is operated at district level by the Zilla Parishad.

With a view to ensuring transparency disbursement of the fund under the scheme is made through account payee cheques to the beneficiaries. The concept of Permanent Wait List (PWL) came into effect from the year 2006-07. The permanent waiting list of the eligible households is prepared by each Gram Panchayats for selection of the beneficiaries of the scheme. The list is generated from the existing BPL list and includes only those families, who apart from being BPL have scored rank in respect of the status of housing in household survey and beneficiaries of each of social category have separate lists (GOWB, 2009).

The progress of construction and upgradation of houses under the scheme in the state has not been satisfactory at all. During the year 2004-05 construction of 101358 new houses were sanctioned as against the target of 103505 beneficiaries and the figures were reached to 117541 and 153697 respectively in the year 2008-09. Regarding upgradation of the situation is also unsatisfactory (GOWB, 2010a). Non-availability of land for the poor households who are listed in the PWL is a major problem. There is a provision for providing fund up to
Rs.10,000/- per family for purchasing land. Land is also provided under the programme “Chas O Basobaser Bhumidan Prakalpa” (GOWB, 2009).

3. **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana**: The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, which was launched in December, 2000 has been included in the Bharat Nirman Programme of Government of India. Under PMGSY all habitants having a 1000 more and incase of hilly or tribal areas 500 or more are to be connected by all weather roads. In order to ensure implementation of the scheme an agency known as the West Bengal State Rural Development Agency (WBSRDA) has been set up (GOWB, 2009). The agency works in close collaboration with Zilla Parishads. In every district there are one or more programme Implementation Units (PIU). In order to provide technical expertise, the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India has identified four institutions in State as Technical Agencies viz. IIT, Kharagpur, Bengal Engineering and Science University, Jalpaiguri Government Engineering College and NIT, Durgapur.

The pace of implementation of scheme has increased in recent years. During the year 2002-03, 578.29 km of all weather roads were constructed in state and that was followed by 748.78 km in the year 2003-04, 657.92 km in the year 2004-05, 1220.02 km in the year 2005-06, 1197.58 km in the year 2006-07, 1573.81 km in the year 2007-08 and 1877.11 km in the year 2008-09(GOWB, 2010a).

4. **Natural Resource Management**: Two centrally sponsored programmes are in operation in the state for opening up livelihood opportunities through sustainable development of natural resources. These are Integrated Wasteland Development Programme (IWDP) and Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP). The Schemes are meant for in the district of Purulia, Bankura, Birbhum, Panschim Medinipur and Burdwan. Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP) is meant for all the blocks of Purulia, seven blocks of Bankura and Paschim Medinipur and two blocks of Birbhum.

The funding for the IWDP is borne by the Central and State Governments in the ratio of 11:1 and in respect of DPAP the ratio is 75:25. As on 31.03.2009, 11 projects in Birbhum and 8 in Burdwan, 6 in Panschim Medinipur and 4 in Bankura district have been sanctioned under IWDP. As on that date 304 micro watersheds for a total area of 18743 hectares have been sanctioned under DPAP in four districts. Till 31.03.2009, a sum of Rs.1352 was spent in 29
5. Rashtriya Sam Vikash Yojana: The Rashtriya Sam Vikash Yojana (RSVY) is a special development programme, meant for backward districts. Presently there are eight districts of the state viz. Jalpaiguri, Purulia, Paschim Medinipur, South 24 Paraganas, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur, Bankura and Birbhum. The main focus of the programme is to increase agricultural productivity and to generate employment opportunities. So far as the available reports are concerned, as on 31st March, 2009 out of total fund received about 84% utilized for the scheme (GOWB, 2010a).

6. Programme for Backward Areas: With a view to addressing the problem of regional imbalances the Government of India launched Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF) in the year 2006-07. Assistance from the fund is meant for supplementing the development funds received from different sources by the identified regions. Total 11 districts viz. Malda, Murshidabad, Purba Medinipur, Purulia, South 24 Parganas, Daskshin and Uttar Dinajpur, Birbhum, Paschim Medinipur, Bankura and Jalpaiguri have been brought under the roof of BRGF, where funds are provided on the basis of plans prepared by at three tiers of Panchayats and Municipalities, consolidated at the district level. As far as the available reports are concerned till 31st March, 2009 about 64% of fund released have utilized under this scheme (GOWB, 2010a).

7. Area Development of North Bengal Districts: With a view to providing focused attention to the development of six North Bengal Districts Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar, Malda, Uttar and Dakshim Dinajpur Uttar Banga Unnyan Parshad (UUP) was formed in the state in the year 2000-01. The Parshad formulates developmental plans and implements them through Panchayati Raj Institutions, urban local bodies, other government and non-government institutions. The schemes are meant for various sectors like agriculture, minor irrigation, soil conservation, small scale and agro based industries, infrastructure development, education and health etc. Official reports show that total amount of Rs.26690.86 lakh has been released for the purpose and 2801 schemes have been taken up till 31.07.2009. Out of these only 1876
schemes have been completed and 231 schemes are in progress (GOWB, 2010a).

8. **Total Sanitation Campaign:** West Bengal is also a leading state in implementation of Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC), a centrally sponsored programme, launched in 1999. The State Government provides subsidy to below the poverty line households wanting to set up sanitary latrines. However, the TSC is primarily driven by the need to improve sanitation practices as well as to ensure privacy and convenience particularly for women. The success of the programme depends on several factors of which the most crucial has been the quality and interest of the leadership of the panchayats in implementing the programme. As per the available reports are concerned by the end of 2008-09 about 62 lakh households’ toilets were constructed in the state as against the target of 92 lakh toilets in the state under this programme (GOWB, 2010a).

9. **Social Security:** The main objectives of Panchayati Raj Institutions as per provision in the Article 40 of the Constitution of India are to uphold economic development and social justice. In order to realize these objectives, the Government of India on 15th August 1995 included the National Social Assistance Programme in the Central Budget for 1995-96. The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) then comprised of National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS), National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) and National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS). These programmes are meant for providing social assistance benefit to the aged, the BPL households in the case of death of the primary breadwinner and for maternity. Subsequently, the National Maternity Benefit Scheme was renamed as *Janani Surakshya Yojona* and the implementation of the scheme was transferred to the Health and Family Welfare department with effect from 1st April, 2001.

From November, 2007, the National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS) has been renamed as Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS). The benefit of pension has been extended to all individuals who have attained the age of 65 years and are enlisted in the list of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families. In the year 2002-03 total number beneficiaries under IGNOAPS in the state were 3,32,876 and the same was reached to 10,33,587 in the year 2009-10 (GOWB, 2010a). Therefore, within seven years the number of beneficiaries has increased by more than three hundred percent.

10. **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS):**

    In the context of rural development the MGNREGS is the most important flagship
programme to ensure socio-economic transformation of rural people in India. The scheme was introduced in the State of West Bengal in 2006 primarily in 10 backward districts with a great deal of optimism and expectation. Now it has 19 MGNREGA districts (excluding Alipurduar). Since inception the scheme has generated as many as 124 crore person days and about 48 lakh rural households have been brought under safety net of the scheme in the state\(^4\).

However, the performance of the state in terms of generation of average person days per household as per the Government of India administrative report is dismal, which may be discerned from Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Average Person days per Household created by the MGNREGS in West Bengal and India:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average Person days per Household (in days)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Official website of the MGNREGA [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

The Table 4.2 as well as the figure-4.2 clearly show that West Bengal always lagged behind all India average in terms of the average person days per household created against stipulated 100 days of work in a financial year. Thus, in the inaugural year while at the all India level on an average 43 days of work could be created, it was an abysmally low 14 days in case of West Bengal. The difference was the lowest in 2009-10 as well as in 2014-15 when the difference was 7 person days per household. Thus, it may be concluded that West Bengal experienced a comparatively poor performance in this regard.

\(^4\) Official website of the MGNREGA: [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in) last accessed on 15.10.2015 at 1.00 pm.
4.4. Social Audit of the MGNREGS in West Bengal:

The problem of acute rural unemployment has no doubt made the employment generation programmes like the MGNREGS highly significant for the interest of socio-economic transformation of the rural masses of the state. In this context it should be mentioned here that West Bengal is one of the states of India which has glorious records of implementing Panchayati Raj institutions. It is one of the states of India, which encouraged our former Prime Minister late Rajib Gandhi to pass Panchayati Raj bill in Parliament (Singh, 2010). Moreover, the performance of the state in the context of land reform is also worth mentionable. Despite such successful records in the field of rural development there were some loopholes in implementation of various rural development programmes. There were evidences of political
bias of higher level officials in inter village allocations in lieu of need based allocations of resources for rural development in the state (Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2003).

Moreover, literature also shows some deficiencies in the implementation of the MGNREGS in the state. CAG Report (2007) shows some loopholes in the implementation of the scheme of the state. There are also evidences of political interference in issuing job cards, registration of families, which may be identified as the major problem in utilization of full potential of the scheme for the interest of ensuring livelihood of rural West Bengal (Mohanty, 2008). So, the provisions of the MGNREGA relating to mandatory biannual social audit have equal importance in this state at par with the other states.

In West Bengal there is a system, as prescribed in the West Bengal Panchayat Act, of reporting to the village assembly of all works under any programme twice a year for ensuring transparency and accountability in the implementation (GOWB, 2009). In context of the MGNREGS there is an in-built mechanism for conducting social audit of the MGNREGS in state. A team comprising of an official from the Block, an elected member of the Gram Panchayat, two representatives from Gram Unnayan Samiti, one member each from two Class I self-help groups, a representative from a registered NGO working in the locality are entrusted with the responsibility of performing social audit. The calendar of the dates of social audit of each gram panchayat is announced publicly, approximately one month in advance. The report of social audit are to be submitted in a prescribed proforma (GOWB, 2010b).

Official data of Government of India shows that out of 19 MGNREGA districts (excluding newly created Alipurduar) in the state 18 districts have conducted social audit of their MGNREG projects in the year 2009-10 and 2010-11. In the years 2011-12, 2012-13 2013-14, 2014-15 all the 19 districts have conducted social audit (details are given in annexure-IVA).

The status of the state in terms of coverage of Gram Panchayats in regard to conduct of social audit is presented in the Table 4.3. It may further be interesting to note that the experience of West Bengal in regard to conduct of social audits by Gram Panchayats is better than the same at the all India level (Figure 4.3).

Table 4.3: Gram Panchayats in West Bengal conducted Social audit during 2009-10 to 2014-15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>No. of Gram</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Gram Panchayats</th>
<th>Panchayats Conducted Social Audit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>3354</td>
<td>3149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>3354</td>
<td>2945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>3349*</td>
<td>3249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>3349</td>
<td>3140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>3349</td>
<td>2959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>3349</td>
<td>3315</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * Number of panchayats decreased due to conversion of some Panchayats into Municipalities. Source: Official website of the MGNREGA www.nrega.nic.in

Fig 4.3: Comparative position of West Bengal and India in conducting social audit of the MGNREGS by Gram Panchayats

Figure 4.3 clearly shows the success of West Bengal in terms of the occurrence of social audits. In 2009-10 about 97 per cent of the gram panchayats of West Bengal conducted social audits. But at the all India level only 73 percent of the Gram Panchayats are found to have
organized Social audits. Further, while Gram Panchayats in West Bengal have improved over the years their success. National average shows clear declining trend. Thus in 2014-15 while only 45 percent of Panchayats at the national level are found to have conducted social audit against West Bengal’s 99 percent.

So, we may summarise performance of the MGNREGS in West Bengal as well social audit in terms of the following:

1. Among the prevailing rural development programmes in West Bengal, the MGNREGS is the most important programme for the purpose of ensuring socio-economic transformation of its rural masses.

2. In terms of generation of additional person days, which is the main indicator of performance of the MGNREGS the position of West Bengal is not satisfactory as compared to national average.

3. In terms of organization of social audit of the scheme by the gram panchayats, West Bengal stands at better position as compared to national average.

Despite aforesaid satisfactory position of West Bengal in terms of organization of the social audit of the MGNREGS by the gram panchayats, our review of literature\(^5\) found that there are some procedural loopholes in organization of social audit of the scheme in the state, which are as follows:

i) The Department of Panchayat and Rural Development of the state seems to be overburdened with their own task and without any extra staff at their disposal at state level finds it virtually impossible to handle, mentor or monitor the processes happening in the districts.

ii) There has not been any notification or MOU and thus fund flow remains an issue for other activities too.

iii) The social audits are being conducted through the support of rural development department at local level.

\(^5\) Centre for Wage Employment and Poverty Alleviation (CWEPA)(2014), ‘West Bengal Visit Report’ 7-8\(^{th}\) November, 2014 retrieved from -164.100.129.6/netnrega/SocialAudit/guidelines/West%20bengal.aspx on 18.08.2015 at 10.00 pm.
iv) Selection of social auditors, payment of social audit functionaries and training of teams are all happening through the support of Implementing agencies and thus their influence is felt on the amount and quality of grievances recorded and entered in MIS.

v) The presence of MGNREGA officials in public hearing at cluster level is not ensured and often leads to trust loss amongst villagers.

vi) The action taken reports are not provided on time and things do not normally improve in the field.

4.5. Conclusion:

In this chapter we outlined some important features of rural economy of West Bengal and state of its rural development. We have also analyzed critically the on-going rural development programmes including MGNREGS on the basis of available secondary data. We have also made comparative analysis of West Bengal and India as a whole regarding performance in social auditing under MGNREGS. In the next chapter we will make an analysis based on primary data collected from different gram Panchayats in West Bengal based on the methodology discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter-III). We will also discuss results derived from the analysis of the primary data in Chapter-V.
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West Bengal Rural House Hold Survey, 2005, retrieved from www.wbprd.nic.in, on 18.04.2012 at 2.00 pm.
Annexure-IVA

Overview of Social Audit of the MGNREGS in West Bengal during last five years (2009-10 to 2014-15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total GP</th>
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Source: Official website of the MGNREGA- [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in) last visited on 15.10.2015 at 1.00 pm