CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

There has been a world-wide trend towards decentralization in recent years. Decentralization of governance can help mobilize resources, introduces locally and regionally diverse solutions and promote equitable growth by bringing the poor into the mainstream of development. Fiscal decentralization is a sub-set of decentralization defined as fiscal empowerment of lower tiers of government which involves the devolution of taxing and spending power along with the arrangements for rectifying mismatches in resources and responsibilities. It assumes significance because without its proper functioning decentralization becomes inoperative and meaningless. It has particular significance in the context of a multi-level system of governance with fiscal responsibilities vested in the centre, state and local government. The local government should have adequate authority and autonomy in regard to the management of the expenditure and revenue side of its budget.

Poverty reduction means designing, implementing and targeting appropriate methods to ensure that the scarce resources are allocated in such a way to get maximum impact on the poor and decrease their level of deprivation and vulnerability. It has come to be commonly accepted that decentralization can be an effective tool for implementing poverty reduction policies because people at the local level have the information and incentives to design and implement policies that respond to local needs and preferences. It is also important to note that effective implementation of poverty-alleviation policies depends upon the responsiveness and capacity of local government institutions. Governments that are ‘closer to the people’ should in principle, be able to provide services more efficiently and effectively than a remote, centralized authority. The proximity of policy implementers to the target groups reduces information and transaction cost of identifying the poor and help in designing potentially successful ‘capacity improving’ and ‘safety net policies’. These require designing and implementing general purpose and specific purpose transfers to the poorer region.

In India, elimination of poverty has always been on the national policy agenda since the beginning of the planning era and shall continue to do so in future. The Panchayati Raj institutions are considered as local self-government meant for
providing basic infrastructure facilities, empowering weaker sections of the society and initiate the development process at the grass-roots level of rural India, where the sole of India lives. The need for decentralization was realized long back but the recent effort to give constitutional back-up to rural local governments is significant. With the passage of 73rd Amendment Act, in 1992, people’s participation in the process of planning, decision-making, implementation and delivery system in rural India has been recognized. As per the 29 items of the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution, three functions i.e functions, functionaries and funds have to be devolved on the Panchayati Raj Institutions for planning and implementation of schemes pertaining to a particular sector. Panchayat elections have been regularly held in all the States and Union Territories except Jharkhand, reservations have been provided to the women, Schedule Castes, Schedule Tribes and the Other Backward Classes (in some of the states) in proportion to their share of the population in each panchayat area.

During the 17 years since the 73rd Amendment came into force, the process of political empowerment of the Panchayats has largely been achieved. There is considerably difference between what is intended to law and how it is implemented. By all accounts, the States have been reluctant to devolve powers to local governments. However, only ten states have transferred all the 29 functions or subjects to the PRIs. States such as Punjab, Arunachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh have devolved few functions without matching devolution of funds. We note that only Kerala, Karnataka, Haryana, Orissa, West Bengal, Sikkim, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu have completed activity mapping, as envisaged in the 73rd Amendment. PRIs have little control over funds and functionaries. Most of these transfers, however, remain on paper without the support of adequate funding and functionaries. Most of the functions listed in the XI Schedule are shared between the departments and the PRIs and there is no clear demarcation on the functional domain of the two. The functions devolved to panchayats have not been deleted from the list of line departments. The control over functionary and finances has remained with departments. The generic nature of devolution and overlaps with department, DRDA, DPC and other agencies make the process of functional devolution meaningless. Further, many functions are shared between two of three tier of PRIs. These, in turn, have not only adversely affected the efficiency and effectiveness of the panchayats but also enabled them to prepare plan for economic development and social justice as
envisioned by the Constitution. For any devolution of function to be meaningful, it must be accompanied by the devolution of functionaries and funds.

Fiscal decentralization to rural local governments in India is meaningful only when the panchayats have adequate untied funds to provide public services assigned to them which requires assignment of tax powers to them. The panchayats do not have enough money to carry out the functions assigned to them in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution. These institutions should not only have the power to raise resources but also the right to use the funds as per their need and priorities. The taxes, duties, tolls and fees to be levied by them and assigned to them and the grant-in-aid to be given to them are left to the discretion of the state governments. They did not indulge in transferring more buoyant and elastic issue of tax generation to PRIs and did not build any supportive structures to collect taxes. A Third Round of State Finance Commission has been constituted only in 18 States, of them only sixteen have been laid before the state legislatures. But all these recommendations given on panchayat’s finance from time to time by the State Finance Commissions are not mandatory. The SFCs themselves are hampered by the lack of data. Limited capacity and poor ownership by State Governments compounds their problem. Further the recommendations of the SFCs do not follow a uniform pattern. The most important recommendation of the Thirteenth Finance Commission is its decision to relate grants to local government to a share in the divisible pool of the Union tax revenue. The criteria used by XI, XII and XIII Finance Commission in arriving at the state share include population, area, income distance, revenue effort, deprivation index, decentralization index, SC/ST population and Finance Commission local body grant utilization index. It is evident that population is accorded the highest weightage i.e 50 percent by the THFC. If we include the SC/ST population, the aggregate weight of population in the case of PRI rises to 60 percent. The THFC gives only a smaller weightage of 15 percent to the index of devolution and a still smaller weightage of 5 percent to the Finance Commission grant utilisation index. Given the extremely poor and uneven progress in implementing the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, a largest weightage to the devolution of decentralization index is justifiable. In the devolution index, Karnataka tops the list of allocations with 20.93 percent share, followed by Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. But the THFC Criteria are really unfair, for example, the horizontal formula with 50 percent weight for population and
10 percent weight for area shifts the scale in favour of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and so on against states like Kerala, which has imposed five taxes and has very high per capita tax revenue. These are strictly relevant for gauging devolution or decentralization. A wrong policy can lead to very unfair results.

The panchayats are mainly entrusted with the implementation of different Centrally Sponsored Schemes such as MNREGS, PMGSY, IAY, SGSY TSC, NRHM, NRDWP etc. administered by various Ministries of Government of India. Around 11 CSSs account for more than 70 percent of funds under CSSs flagship programmes are in the domain of subjects devolved to rural governments as per the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. Depending upon the nature of the schemes panchayats at all the three levels are involved, though to varying degrees, in the planning, implementation and monitoring activities under these schemes. However, the involvement of panchayats is either non-existent or minimum. Involvement of local people can enhance accountability and quality implementation, but local performance depends on the institutional and political environments in which the decentralization process works. The MoPR has been making concerted efforts to persuade the Central Ministries for amending the scheme guidelines to provide central role to the PRIs in the implementation of CSSs. These efforts have not provided the desired result.

Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state of the country, with a population of 16.62 crore as per 2001 Census. About 79.2 percent of the state population resides in rural areas spread over 97942 inhabited villages. It is estimated that 30.74 percent of the state population were living below poverty line in 2004-05 (URP). Administratively the state is divided in to 72 districts, 312 tehsils and 821 development blocks and 51,914 gram panchayats. The majority of villages are small, with an average rural population of around 2536 per gram panchayat. Following the Constitution’s (73rd) Amendment Act 1992, the U.P. Panchayati Raj Act and the U.P. Kshetra Samiti and Zila Parishad Adhinium, 1961 were amended and came into force in 1994. The Amended Act of 1994 has incorporated changes of far reaching importance with respect to the structure and composition of the panchayats at all the three levels viz. gram panchayat, kshetra panchayats and district panchayat. As a measure to strengthen the poverty alleviation programmes, the government of Uttar...
Pradesh is constantly endeavouring to empower panchayati raj institutions in terms of function, powers and finance. State Government began the process of decentralization of power to the panchayati raj institutions in the year 1999-2000 and transferred 3Fs (Funds, Functions and Functionaries) of different department to the gram panchayats. In order to operationalize the functioning at gram panchayat level, Gram Panchayat Adhikaris of the Department of Panchayati Raj and Gram Vikas Adhikaries of the Department of Rural Development have been deputed as the secretary to gram panchayat. Although, a number of functions are devolved to the panchayats by various legislative measures after 1994, yet these exist only on paper and they do not have any control over district level officials of the departments to which such functions belong. In spite of various recommendations of Committee and Commission, Uttar Pradesh government issued orders only for the transfer of 16 subjects with the funds of 10 activities have been devolved to gram panchayats, without effective transfer of funds and functionaries and only nominal transfer of functions.

The financial situation of PRIs reveals an unsatisfactory situation of PRI finances in the state of UP. Only the gram panchayats have been assigned the power to levy, collect the appropriate revenue. Among the all taxes only one tax, namely cess on land revenue is obligatory but the revenue potential of this tax is small. All the tax and non-tax revenue powers of kshetra panchayats in U.P. remained discretionary in the new act. As a result all the kshetra panchayats at present did not levy any tax. There is no obligatory tax provided for zila panchayats. However the zila panchayats may impose or continue to impose a tax on circumstances and property to be called C & P tax. Besides the above, there is provision of imposing license fees and interest receipts. There is no uniform rate of taxes and non-taxes imposed by the panchayats in U.P. Own revenue of PRIs was constituted 11.49 percent in 1998-99 which declined to 3.72 percent in 2007-08 shows decreasing trends over the period. It means that own financial resources of the panchayats are highly inadequate to meet out the fiscal needs. There is an overwhelming dependence on transfer of outside funds either as Central and State Finance Commission recommended devolutions or Central and State Plan Grants or other transfers. Taking the recommendation of Third State Finance Commission, into consideration the State Government has decided to devolve 5.5 percent of the total tax net receipts to the PRIs. But the allocation is inadequate
taking into consideration the activities to be managed by the PRIs. It was observed that resource raising powers, as envisaged in the enabling acts, have not been largely exercised by the panchayats. No concrete steps seem to have been taken to impose the taxes and fees which they are authorized to levy and also to recover fully the taxes or fees presently levied. Efforts in the direction of increasing the fiscal autonomy of PRIs through enhancing their resource base and motivating them to utilize their revenue powers more effectively are urgently required.

Most of poverty programmes are Centrally Sponsored Schemes, which are implemented by Uttar Pradesh Government through District Rural Development Agencies, but are largely funded by the Central Government with a defined State Government share. Each of the schemes operates under a number of set guideline. The Government of Uttar Pradesh is constantly endeavouring to empower panchayati raj institutions in terms of functions, powers and finance. Panchayati raj institutions have been accorded adequate role to make participatory democracy meaningful and effective. These programmes have not succeeded in achieving the desired goals because of many systemic and operational problems. Top-down planning apart, it has been identified that these programmes suffer from many other serious limitations, such as lack of people’s participation, faulty design, high target orientation inadequate forward and backward project integration and excessive bureaucratic control coupled with lack of effective accountability. Panchayati raj system in UP lead to greater corruption in which monitoring and auditing are relatively poorly developed at the local level and also lead to poor selection of beneficiaries and non-utilization of available funds.

The study has been conducted in the Aligarh district for empirical investigation. From the administrative point of view, the district has been divided into 5 tehsil and 12 development blocks with 853 gram panchayats. There are 1210 villages of which 1180 are inhabited and 30 are uninhabited. The discussion on the basis of available data and observations is indicative that the representation of OBCs and general caste has increased from the gram panchayats to zila panchayat level. The percentage of illiterates or literates without educational level of the elective representatives has declined from gram panchayats to zila parishad with an increase in the proportion of representatives having education upto higher secondary and above.
It is observed that the proportion of SC pradhans is higher than the proportion of seats reserved for them at gram panchayat level. The highest percentage of SCs pradhans have been observed in Ambedkar gram panchayats because of higher proportion of SCs population to total population. Surprisingly, highest educational levels of pradhans i.e more than intermediate level have also been observed in Ambedkar gram panchayats. The distribution of Pramukhs by the social identity reveals that the highest percentage of the Pramukhs belongs to the other backward classes (OBC) followed by general category and schedule caste. The majority of the Pramukhs are educated up to intermediate level or more. When these figures are compared with those for the gram pradhans a sharp increase in the percentage of literacy among pramukhs at kshetra panchayat level can be seen. The Adhyaksha of Zila panchayat of Aligarh district belongs to OBC category and his education level is graduation.

The MNREGS flows to all selected gram panchayats. Other programmes are also operational at all GPs are NOAPS and NRDWP. Indira Awas Yojana and Total Sanitation Campaign are operation in 22 and 23 GPs respectively out of 72 selected GPs. However more than 60 percent of selected gram panchayats was found in the lowest range of below Rs. 300 per capita central scheme transfers. Of the three sets of selected GPs, the per capita share of Central schemes as well as Central Finance Commission transfers of least populated GPs is higher than their counterparts. However the Centrally Sponsored Schemes have a higher incidence of operation in the Ambedkar GPs followed by highly populated and least populated GPs. It shows the large variation between the two sources of Central government transfers. However, in case of Central as well as state schemes, no fund, have allotted to kshetra panchayat at block level. The district has also been selected for major Central Government programmes. However, the Zila Panchayat does not receive any funds under Central as well as State Government schemes except MNREGS. In 2010-11, the Zila panchayat has not received funds under NNREGS. The pension scheme of the state flows to all selected GPs. CM Maha Maya Garib Arthik Madad Yojana is also visible in almost all of the selected GPs. About 70 percent of GPs are found in the range of below Rs. 75 per capita state schemes transfers. It is also evident that there are large disparities among all selected GPs in per capita State Finance Commission allocation driven by the erratic nature of the transfers over time. It is observed that higher per capita share of least populated GPs in comparison to their counterparts in
Central transfers as well as state transfers was due to lower population in these GPs. Though on an average highly populated GPs have received higher total funds as compared to least populated and Ambedkar GPs. Per capita total fund received in a district as a whole was Rs. 573.3 in which largest share constituted by per capita Central Schemes (62.9%) followed by per capita State Schemes (17%) per capita SFC (15.3%) and per capita CFC (4.4%). Per capita total funds received in 5 blocks exceeded the district average, the highest share was recorded in Bijauli followed by Akrabad, Gangiri, Khair and Atrauli blocks. The inter-block disparities in Aligarh district among the all blocks are not only high but also have shown increasing trends in regard the per capita funds received by sources. This was due to imbalanced growth rate of population in all the blocks. The rise imbalance between rural local bodies of various population sizes and even within the almost same population size similar tax base/rates etc. It was observed that utilization rate of SFC funds is much better than CFC funds. Majority of highly populated GPs shows better performance in the utilization of CFC funds, whereas Ambedkar GPs have performed exceptionally in terms of SFC funds. This is because government of Uttar Pradesh have emphasized about the utilization of funds under SFC/ State schemes particularly in Ambedkar GPs.

Gram panchayats are not properly utilizing either obligatory or optional sources of tax and non-tax revenues as a result per capita tax collection is insignificant in Aligranh district. The survey reported that only 11 percent of the GPs collect some taxes. The non-tax revenues are the dominant sources of own revenue at GPs level. About 38.9 percent of GPs raise revenue from their non-tax sources in which interest receipt play important role. Therefore, per capita own revenue (tax + non-tax) have been observed at a very low level in all the selected GPs. The majority i.e about 85 percent of GPs per capita own revenue averages below Rupee 1.00 in all the selected GPs, whereas only 2.8 percent of GPs have recorded per capita own revenue above Rs. 20. The Ambedkar GPs were slightly better placed to collect own revenue through taxes than highly and least populated GPs. Across all the GPs in Aligarh District, the share of own revenue in total revenue received is negligible. Further kshetra panchayats do not raise own revenues, neither from tax sources nor from non-tax sources. Zila Panchayat income consists of its own revenue, share in Central and State Finance Commission transfers. However, Zila Panchayat do raise some own revenue,
from license fee, income from disposal of dead animals and rent from panchayats building etc. The proportion of Non-tax revenue in total income received by zila panchayat during 2010-11 was just about 2.35 percent. The efforts of zila panchayat to raise their own resources have not been satisfactory. There is need to put in place a system of incentives and disincentives to motivate ZP to increase income from their own revenues.

Main reasons for lower revenue receipts are inadequacy of staff and their inefficiency, non-availability of requisite infrastructure and lack of initiatives by local leaders and their will to do so. Many gram panchayats do not possess computers and some of the gram panchayats do not have building. Besides, gram sabha is not activated to use it as a forum for building up awareness among villagers so that full support of people can be enlisted in these matters. Also, there is no effort made by the government of Uttar Pradesh to assess the resources of tax revenue and suggest suitable measures for augmenting receipts of PRIs. It is also evident that Ambedkar GPs are in better position to provide the basic needs to their villagers than least populated GPs and highly populated GPs GPs. Infrastructure created by GPs during last 5 years were satisfactory, however there is a gap between needs and availability of basic facility at gram panchayat level. It is required to provide medical facility, sanitation and community centre in almost all selected GPs. Block-wise distribution of villages according to the availability of different amenities show almost similar pattern.

720 BPL household of the 72 selected gram panchayats have been selected to assess their socio-economic condition and their perception on the functioning of rural local governments. The survey found that poverty is rampant among the SCs. The share of SC BPL households in the selected BPL households was highest in the least populated GPs as compared to their counterparts. Educational level among the BPL households is not found to be very satisfactory. Majority of the BPL population are illiterate or literate without educational level and drop-out rates are also high among them. MDM scheme does not really contribute much as far as improvement in enrolment, retention and drop-out is concerned. Majority of households in the study area either marginal farmers or engaged in wage paid employment. Numbers of livestock and other productive assets owned by them is also relatively lower. More
than half of the households have houses under semi-pucca category. Highest percentage of pucca houses are found in Ambedkar GPs whereas highest kutcha type houses are found in highly populated GPs. The data shows that the condition of houses of BPL households are good in Ambedkar GPs as compared to other GPs. Under IAY, the cost of Rs. 45,000 is inadequate to construct a house in view of the rise in the cost of material and labour. It is also observed that the beneficiaries are not getting allotted funds for IAY unless they pay money to Pradhan and officials involved in providing funds to the beneficiaries. Very low proportion i.e one-fourth of rural BPL households have electricity in the selected gram panchayats. Under RGGVY, electricity connection to BPL families are provided free of charge. But the selection of BPL households is rather faulty and those who are not eligible are being included while genuine households are being left out. Majority of households depends upon the public hand pumps. Peoples are unable to have hand pumps in their house because cost is too high as water level is too low in Aligarh district. The benefit of piped water supply in all selected gram panchayats is almost negligible. It is observed that about 60 percent of households have no latrine. Even those who have been assisted by the government to construct a latrine ends up with pit latrine instead of flush/Septic tank latrine because only Rs. 1500 and Rs. 2250 are provided to APL and BPL households respectively to construct a latrine in their house under TSC. Latrines with septic tank/flush are maximum in Ambedkar GPs and minimum in highly populated GPs. Non-availability of PDS items and unavailability of sufficient quality are the two major factors, which are making the PDS system ineffective. People complained about the non-availability and less quantity of PDS commodities. Serious gaps are evident in the availability of different health facility of the sample gram panchayats, so much so that the people generally travel more than 2-3 kms from their GPs to access health centres.

After knowing about MGNREGS, only 35 percent of households demanded employment in selected GPs in Aligarh district. The main reason is that the wage rate under MNREGS is low as compared to market rate for the unskilled labour in Aligarh district. It is evident that prevailing wages are 50 percent higher than the wages given under MNREGS. As a result demand for work under the programme is low. It is observed that if regular work is not provided typically 15-20 days a month, labourers will migrate. Majority of days the respondent worked under MNREGS varies between
1 to 25 days over the 12 month. A significant number of households did not get full 100 days employment. Those who have worked under MNREGS they did not receive payment as per rule. So majority of households denied that there is transparency and accountability in this scheme. The Pradhan are mainly conducting the different works of MNREGS as per their requirements instead of the needs of the people. It is also observed that employment is not provided to needy households but mainly to those households associated with the pradhan. The staff available at gram panchayat level is not sufficient, on an average, only one Gram Vikas Adhikari (Secretary) is appointed in implementation of poverty alleviation programmes including MNREGS.

Majority of the households feel that they visualize some positive changes after implementation of panchayati raj institutions. Households are quite appreciative of the role of poverty alleviation programmes in rural areas wholeheartedly. However, only about 60 percent of households have some knowledge about the poverty alleviation programmes. Majority of the households reported that they received assistance under poverty alleviation programmes in last 3 years. More than 80 percent of households accepted that panchayats can play promoting role in GPs. In democratic planning, people’s involvement and active participation is crucial. However, it is observed in the field that gram sabhas are not attracting the desired number of people. Due to the non or less participation of people, especially of women; government efforts for eradication of poverty from rural areas by implementing several schemes are not leaving the impact efficacious in the rural areas. As a matter of fact the gram sabha meetings are attended by those who are supporters of Pradhan. During the discussion it was observed out by some members that the people from scheduled caste (SC) group do not get proper voices in the meetings and also the panchayat is not able to address their problems like education to their children, small land holdings etc. Besides, the dominance by the upper caste people in the village meeting was visible. Due to that the real objectives of the decentralization are not being achieved.

Suggestions

Policy suggestions based on the findings from the field survey are presented for consideration:
• Further Amendments needed in U.P. Panchayat Act for making panchayats viable development units with a focus on people’s participation and institution building for good governance.

• Numerous Central and State Acts, regulations, manuals and government rules and orders going against devolution of powers and functions to panchayats require to be identified for appropriate remedial legislative and executive actions by the Central and State governments. This task should be done by the Law Commission or other Expert Body on priority basis.

• State Election Commission of Uttar Pradesh should be given more powers. So an effective measure to empower the weaker sections and women economically and educationally for their meaningful participation in rural local self government should be taken.

• The elected representatives of the panchayats should exercise superintendence and control over government officials, i.e. serving the panchayats instead of playing a subordinate role. Membership of the panchayat bodies also should be only for the elected members of the panchayats.

• Functions should be transferred fully as per 73rd Amendment to panchayats and suitable administrative and financial powers should be transferred for their execution. Department should stop its execution at its level.

• There should be three lists, instead of two: central list, state list and local list. The subjects falling in the local list should be in exclusive domain of the PRIs. The Finance Commission at the central and state level should divide the revenues between the state and the PRIs following certain formulae and it is done between the centre and the state.

• The District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) and other parallel bodies should be brought under the control of respective zila parishad with the chairperson of the parishad as head.

• Single ministry i.e. Ministry of local bodies at central as well as state level for both the panchayats and Nagar palikas (Municipalities) is suggested.
• Functions should follow the financial assignments. So there is an urgent need to broaden the tax base for gram panchayats in UP, improve the design and collection of property taxes and increase the capacity to generate user fees for services.

• Very often the elastic revenue sources are retained by the higher level of government and consequently panchayats are left with inadequate resources which need to be supplemented so as to enable provide required services at the village level.

• As per some other states, house tax and building tax which has provision only at gram panchayat level should be provided in the state of U.P.

• As far as user charges are concerned, there should be provision for levying user charges for drainage, pilgrim (sanitation tax/fee) hospitals or schools and common resources at the gram panchayat level in the U.P.

• The ad hoc levies such as tax on construction as public work, betterment levies, octroi on animals on goods or both brought for sale, tax on advertisement and lump-sum levy on factories should be levied properly at gram panchayat level. Panchayats must be given power to levy taxes on commercial crops like sugarcane and potato etc. on the basis of their commercial potential.

• Kshetra panchayats should be given powers to collect tax and non-tax revenue in their jurisdiction.

• For improving the financial position of panchayats efforts should be required in deepening the present tax and non-tax income base through revision and rationalisation of rates of taxes, levies and fees.

• Proper tax collection machinery at panchayat level is required. Panchayats should get a share of more elastic and productive taxes like sales tax and they may be assigned all or part of sales tax proceeds of the area within their purview.

• There is considerable need to rationalize the assignment system to enable the decentralized governments to raise revenues and incur expenditure according to the preference of their citizens.
• The state government should ensure that the overall system of government finance imposes ‘hard budget constraints’ on local decision makers so as to make them fully accountable for their decisions.

• There should be re-orientation of financial system for self-regulating and accountability transparency and responsibility may be ensured in the panchayati raj system.

• There is need of greater devolution of untied resources to state from centre in order that the state may devolve more untied resources to panchayats.

• The government of Uttar Pradesh should give high priority to establishing a PRI fiscal analysis unit in either the Department of finance or the Panchayati Raj Department. This unit should provide technical support to the State Finance Commission.

• The government must collect comprehensive and timely information on PRI finances. It also must recruit and train the necessary staff and acquire the necessary hardware and software to analyse these data. The matrix also should include details about the responsibility for financing each function.

• Besides developmental functions, the judicial system may also be decentralised for setting disputes arising in the course of implementation of different schemes and programmes connected with the subjects at the local level.

• There should be administrative directive to the GPs for following 12 GPs meeting in a year. More frequent meeting of the GPs will improve its functioning.

• The proposed programmes and budgets should be approved within a specified time period and the funds should be released timely so that they can be executed properly.

• There is still scope for training and sensitizing both the elected leadership and the bureaucracy. Capacity building of the entire elected team should be a major focus of policy.
• No of Ambedkar gram panchayats should be increased not only on the basis of SC population but also on percentage of BPL households to total households in the gram panchayats.

• A fresh and accurate survey of BPL households needs to be carried out and followed properly so that the deserving people become beneficiaries of the scheme.

• Poverty alleviation programme are marred by a high incidence of corruption, poor selection of beneficiaries and non-utilization of available funds. Corrective measures should be taken in this regard.

• The designing of the schemes should be able to address the local priorities of the people. This is only possible if there is flexibility in the design of the scheme to cater to the ground realities of the specific area of implementation.

• All Centrally Sponsored Schemes as well as state schemes should be operationalised in all the gram panchayat to avoid unequal distribution of funds among the gram panchayats in the Aligarh district.

• The entire poverty alleviation programmes may be handed over to gram panchayats and for better implementation of these programmes it is strongly recommended that gram panchayats should own unions for consultative purpose.

• There is a need for greater coordination and convergence between MNREGS and SGSY on the one hand, with programmes for poverty reduction undertaken in states through state plans or externally aided efforts.

• Monitoring system of MNREGS and SGSY will have to be closely related, particularly at the outcome assessment level, so as to get a total picture of their combined effect on poverty.

• The GP level committees and programme implementing authorities should be made accountable for ensuring the maximum participation of BPL households and women and other marginalized segment of people in MNREGS and providing employment to needy and job card holding households, timely
payment of wage, maintaining the quality of work and other related essential aspects.

- The village water and sanitation committees can be assigned special responsibility by conceiving them as standing committees of the gram panchayats. Through the standing committee model, VWSCs would draw their powers and resources from panchayats. The autonomy of VWSCs could be protected, even being accountable to panchayats.

- The Department of drinking water supply needs to be proactive in the devolution of total sanitation to panchayat, just as they have been taken action in ensuring the centrality of panchayats in the implementation of drinking water schemes.

- In view of rising cost for the maintenance of rural drinking water scheme and increasing number of such schemes, it is very difficult to sustain the work of NRDWP in the state in general and Aligarh in particular. So there is an urgent need to enhance the central assistance for the same. In the quality affected areas deep tubewells are the only solution.

- Total Sanitation Campaign programme should be given high priority by the state per unit cost of IHHL (BPL) needs to be revised upto Rs. 2500 in view of the rise in construction and material cost in the district.

- There are a variety of programmes for housing each with its own ceiling and subsidies. This often results in duplication and misuse of funds. Panchayats need to be empowered to pool the resources for housing and adopt a single scheme with a narrow band of parameters.

- The provision should be made to include remaining BPL households in the list of eligible beneficiaries of IAY. Emphasis should be put on identification of beneficiaries in the meeting of the gram sabha to control favouritism by pradhans. There is need to enhance the budgetary provision under the scheme.

- As PMGSY aims at facilitating provision of essential public services through rural road connectivity, it is necessary that panchayats fully participate in planning and implementation.
• Action could be taken by state governments to transfer rural roads to the appropriate level of panchayat alongwith funds and functionaries, in accordance with activity mapping.

• The rural road network needs to be increased in the district. In this context, BPL dominated villages should be identified and rural roads should be constructed.

• The extension of electrification at the household level in rural areas should be given the top most priority. The subsidy for providing connection to BPL households should be revised upwards.

• Provision of healthcare facilities is also the important priority identified in the rural areas. Number of primary health centers and child/women welfare centers need to be increased in the study area. Health insurance scheme should cover BPL households at minimum charge and the treatment card also be provided.

• Various non-farm activities are also being carried out in the rural areas of the district. There is need to identify such activities and plan for their development should be recognised.

• The enhancement of literacy level among the rural population in general and among BPL households in particular needs to be accorded the priority in the educational development programmes. Efforts should be initiated to sensitize the village education committee towards the education in the district.

Finally, it is suggested that panchayat should be accorded functional, financial and administrative autonomy so that they can prepare plans for economic development and social justice. In such a plan, access to basic needs and service should be an integral part. All the schemes which pertain to 29 subjects listed in the Eleventh schedule should be transferred lock-stock and barrel to the panchayats.