

Evaluation of Local Economic Development Initiative in Hazaribagh

The Local Economic Development (LED) initiative, by Grant Thornton (GT), funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), aimed to bring about regional economic development in Hazaribagh district of Jharkhand state through a market system development. The intervention focused on strengthening local institutions to continue value addition post-project period.

The initiative targeted farm and non-farm value chains with growth potential and identified key constraints to each value chain's growth, which were reduced to unlock opportunities. Following sustainable market system development practice, the initiative aimed to capitalize on the presence of government initiatives that enhance access to productive economic infrastructure.

Furthermore, the initiative worked towards building upon existing local institutions, such as women's self-help groups (SHGs), Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), and Industry Associations (IAs) promoted by the government as well as non-government interventions.

The overall evaluation approach was based on three core components:

- summative evaluation of outcomes,
- tracking implementation pathways, and
- generating learnings for action.

Within the summative evaluation component, a quasi-experimental research design was located at the two sectors (farm and non-farm) to help establish causal linkages with each industry. The evaluation was carried out for the direct beneficiaries of each sector over the implementation period through multiple measurement rounds. The evaluation also aimed to understand the outcomes created by indirect beneficiaries' level through light-touch interactions. In addition to measuring outcomes, Sambodhi also conducted a concurrent analysis of program data to track outputs.

The process tracking component concurrently studied the process implementation to understand better why some indicators progressed quicker than others. This component drew upon realist evaluation to understand the diverse action mechanisms employed under differing contexts and their influence over the program strategy.

The third component focused on leveraging data and insights and synthesizing evidence on key interventions' processes, contexts, and impacts. The learning agenda answered questions about change drivers, mapping expectations of implementing agencies, and refining program strategies for scaling up and replication.