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SYNTHESIS OF IMPORTANT DISCUSSIONS ON

Employment, Governance and Microfinance issues under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme



2012

United Nations Development Programme
New Delhi

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Selection and Compilation of Consolidated Replies		
Swati Dogra Resource Person Decentralization Community Solution Exchange, United Nations	Warisha Yunus Moderator Work and Employment Community Solution Exchange, United Nations	Navin Anand Resource Person and Moderator Microfinance Community Solution Exchange, United Nations

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See Hindi Version of the [Query](#)
See Hindi Version of the [Summary](#) (available from 14 March 2009)



Decentralization Community



Solution Exchange for the Decentralization Community Consolidated Reply

FOR COMMENTS: Draft Report of Task Force on Convergence

Compiled by [Joy Elamon](#), Resource Person and [Tina Mathur](#), Research Associate
Issue Date: 09 March 2009

From [Jos Chathukulam](#), Centre for Rural Management, Kottayam
Posted 13 January 2009

I work with the Centre for Rural Management, Kottayam. We are engaged in promoting awareness generation about NREGA. The Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, has constituted a Task Force to explore more comprehensive and effective possibilities of convergence (of programmes/schemes, institutions and funds) under NREGA. The Task Force has submitted its Report and the Ministry has invited comments on the same. (Please see http://nrega.nic.in/Report_TF_Convergence.pdf ; Size: 1MB)

The document is now under public domain. As we all know, convergence is the hallmark of NREGA and majority of stakeholders at all levels are not very clear on it. According to the Task Force Report, convergence through NREGA will have the advantage of:

- A wide range of works
- Untied funds for local area planning
- The provision of decentralized planning which enables comprehensive need assessment at grassroots and greater ownership of projects
- Facilitating sustainable development through natural resource management
- Facilitating effective targeting and development of human capital and physical capital through institutional linkages

No doubt, it is a complex exercise. Convergence has to work out at the Panchayati Raj Institutions' (PRIs) level and the report says NREGA is the entry point for convergence, especially in the context of decentralized planning and the merging of funds available to PRIs from other sources to help create durable assets.

We would request members of the Decentralization Community to provide their comments on the Report, specifically on:

- The Framework suggested for convergence
- Steps suggested for Convergence:
 - formation of Consortium
 - convergence at planning level
 - convergence of specific activities

Your comments would add value to the Report and we would send a compilation of the same to the concerned Ministry for their attention.

Responses were received, with thanks, from

1. [Jyoti Gupta](#), Public Health Consultant, New Delhi
2. [U.C Pandey](#), School of Good Governance and Policy Analysis, Bhopal
3. [Puran Singh Yadav](#), Haryana Institute of Rural Development, Karnal
4. [K. Rajasekharan](#), Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Thrissur
5. [Anshuman Karol](#), PRIA, New Delhi
6. [Oommen John](#), SIRD, Kerala
7. [A.S. Malik](#), Kurukshetra University, Haryana
8. [S. Saheerudeen](#), State Institute of Rural Development, Kerala
9. [K. Gireesan](#), Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur
10. [Ravishwar Sinha](#), Independent Consultant, New Delhi
11. [Jos Chathukulam](#), Centre for Rural Management, Kottayam
12. [Suraj Kumar](#), UNDP, New Delhi
13. [Rajesh Sinha](#), PRIA, New Delhi
14. [H. Vageeshan](#), Centre for World Solidarity, Secunderabad
15. [Ashok Kumar Pathak](#), Development Consultant, Uttar Pradesh
16. [Toms K. Thomas](#), Evangelical Social Action Forum (ESAF), Thrissur*

**Offline Contribution*

Further contributions are welcome!

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Summary of Responses

Members responded enthusiastically to the query inviting comments on the Draft Report of the Task Force on NREGA. They welcomed the creation of a Task Force on NREGA convergence and referred to the Report as a unique exercise undertaken by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) for improving implementation and widening the scope of NREGA. They observed that NREGA could be the entry point for convergence as it covers a wide range of works, funds for local area planning and legal safeguards.

Comments on the Framework

Commenting on the Framework, respondents observed that the suggested convergence model will not only make available funds for creating durable assets but will also help better utilization of available resources under different programmes. The present non-convergence of centrally sponsored schemes with NREGA has been due to lack of a suggested model. Members cited past experience to say that convergence of programmes has been made difficult by structural issues like hierarchical command structure of departments, departmentalism, vested interests, divergent

approaches followed by different development sectors and the culture of development practitioners working in silos.

Contributors felt that the proposal of Technical Consortium is important. They suggested that in addition to the technical experts, specialists for technical guidance, advice, formulation, appraisal and monitoring of the convergence model and all heads of the concerned departments should be part of the Consortium at the state level. Additionally, members suggested that a Technical Support Group be placed under the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), as NREGA has entrusted a pivotal role to these institutions.

Respondents suggested that once the convergence model is put into operation, a compendium containing guidelines of all the suggested schemes (NREGA, Watershed, Backward Regions Grant Fund, Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, National Rural Health Mission etc.) along with the suggested convergence framework could be compiled and circulated to all the districts and put on the website accessible to all concerned.

Importance of Integrated Planning

Contributors agreed that the success of the suggested convergence model will further depend on participatory planning. Members observed that the role of District Planning Committee (DPC) is not mentioned in the Report. This tends to make NREGA a parallel planning process. They felt that even if a Consortium is suggested, the lead role must be played by DPC. This could serve as the single agency that plays a role in planning, implementing and monitoring. Respondents also felt that convergence can truly be possible only at the third tier of governance as the upper tiers have compartmentalized departments under them. For this purpose, said members, DPC would require strengthening and integrated planning would be critical on the following lines:

- a) vertical integration (village plans to intermediate and district level plans),
- b) spatial integration (rural and urban),
- c) horizontal integration (between panchayat plans and departmental plans and the Credit Plan)
- d) systems integration (linkage with budgets, implementation and monitoring).

The [District planning Manual](#) prepared by Planning Commission and Ministry of Panchayati Raj addresses these issues to some extent, respondents felt it would be useful to see how the implementation happens.

Suggesting an operational methodology for integrated planning, members recommended line departments outlining expected expenditure on mandated tasks clearly at district and sub district levels in a given financial year. This could be followed by a rational assessment of what resources local bodies can raise in the given financial year. Technology, felt members, is critical to buttress convergence operationalization. To support their views contributors cited the creation of a participatory planning database from rural-urban ward levels (on the [Cadastro Unico](#) lines) and by provision of data by [National Informatics Centre](#).

Integrated planning would also require large scale training and capacity building which could be carried out by institutions like [National Institute of Agriculture Management and Extension \(MANAGE\)](#), Hyderabad. This could be made part of the Convergence Framework.

Areas of Convergence

Respondents suggested the following specific areas of convergence:

- Convergence with plan funds of Panchayats to bring flexibility in the wage material ratio so that more works could be taken up
- Convergence with Agricultural Department to improve agricultural production

- Convergence with Electricity Boards and Irrigation Department to put idle lands to productive use

Among other Departments and agencies that could have their activities converged with NREGA, members mentioned Fisheries, Soil Survey Department, Health, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Forestry and schemes such as National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, Rogi Kalyan Yojana and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. The Local Self Government department can give guidelines to the PRIs to give priority for the improvement of the Kacha works already done under NREGS when they formulate projects under infrastructure development. Likewise, the projects under production sector can be streamlined towards the value addition of the works already done under NREGS.

Members concluded that implementation of suggested framework would require amendments to guidelines of several schemes/ programmes as also strong coordination among concerned departments.

Comparative Experiences

Convergence possible through District Programme Coordinator, Kerala (from [Oommen John](#), SIRD, Kerala)

The District Programme Coordinator (DPC) is the nodal officer for implementation of NREGA in the district. In Kerala the District Collector is designated as such. In this capacity, the DPC is able to play a crucial role in bringing about convergence of NREGA with other programmes. This could be possible in other States as well.

Integrated District Health Action Plans (IDHAP) under National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) (from [Tarun Seem](#), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, New Delhi)

IDHAP under NRHM are supposed to articulate locally sensitive issues for action under NRHM. Experience of this has been varied, and true integration has been difficult given the limited capacities at various levels. The experience has shown that provision of flexible funds may not always be the answer, what is required is comprehensive capacity building for integrated planning.

Related Resources

Recommended Documentation

Report of the Task Force on Convergence (from [Jos Chathukulam](#), Centre for Rural Management, Kottayam)

Report; Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India; New Delhi; September 2008

Available at http://nrega.nic.in/Report_TF_Convergence.pdf (PDF; Size: 1MB)

Gives the recommendations of the Task Force set up to examine the possibilities of convergence of programmes/schemes, institutions and funds under NREGA

Manual for Integrated District Planning (from [Suraj Kumar](#), UNDP, New Delhi)

Manual; Planning Commission of India, Government of India; New Delhi; 2008

Available

at

<http://panchayat.nic.in/data/1234765558648~Manual%20for%20Integrated%20District%20Planning%20-%20Planning%20Commission.pdf> (PDF; Size: 1.83 MB)

Provides guidelines for integrated district planning and stresses convergent action at individual level as well as of policy formulation, planning and implementation

From [Tina Mathur](#), UNDP, New Delhi

Joint Convergence Guideline : NREGA and Programmes of Water Resources

Guidelines; Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Water Resources, Government of India; New Delhi

Available at <http://wrmin.nic.in/writereaddata/linkimages/Convergence913729635.pdf> (PDF; Size: 100.38 KB)

Identifies the areas and modalities of convergence between NREGA and the programmes under Ministry of Water Resources and provides guidelines for the same

Convergence Guidelines: NREGA and National Afforestation Programme

Guidelines; Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India; New Delhi

Available at http://nrega.nic.in/circular/Guide_con_NAP.pdf (PDF; Size: 18.39 MB)

Outlines the areas and modalities of convergence between NREGA and the National Afforestation Programme and provides guidelines for the same

Convergence Guidelines: NREGA and Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

Guidelines; Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India; New Delhi

Available at http://nrega.nic.in/circular/Guide_NREGA_PMGSY.pdf (PDF; Size: 9.00 MB)

Identifies the areas and modalities of convergence between NREGA and the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and provides guidelines for the same

Convergence Guidelines: NREGA, Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) and Indian Centre for Agricultural Research (ICAR)

Guidelines; Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India; New Delhi

Available at http://nrega.nic.in/ICAR/Convergence_Sgsy.pdf (PDF; Size: 39.39 KB)

Identifies the areas and modalities of convergence between NREGA and SGSY and further with ICAR and provides guidelines and operational modalities for the same

Recommended Organizations and Programmes

National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management, Hyderabad (from [Puran Singh Yadav](#), Haryana Institute of Rural Development, Karnal)

Rajendranagar, Hyderabad - 500 030; Tel: 040 - 24016702; Fax: 040 - 24015388.
helpline@manage.gov.in; <http://www.manage.gov.in/> ; Contact Programme Officer;
vkreddy@manage.gov.in

Apex institution offering training and consultancy in management of agricultural extension, could be useful in training on planning of works under NREGA

National Informatics Centre, New Delhi (from [H. Vageeshan](#), Centre for World Solidarity, Secunderabad)

Department of Information Technology, Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (GoI), Electronics Niketan, 6 CGO Complex, Lodi Road, New Delhi-110003; Fax: 011-24362628;
<http://home.nic.in/>

Provides a network backbone and e-Governance support to Central Government, State Governments, UT Administrations, Districts and other Government bodies

Recommended Tools and Technologies

Cadastro Unico (From [Suraj Kumar](#), UNDP, New Delhi)

Unique Database; Government of Brazil

Consolidates beneficiary lists and unverified household incomes, data collected from municipalities but converged through the system at the federal level in Brazil

Related Consolidated Replies

Methods for Integrating Planning, Implementation and Monitoring at District level, from Suraj Kumar, UN Resident Coordinator's Office, New Delhi. Decentralization Community (with Work & Employment and Water Communities),

Issued 08 July 2008. Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/cr-se-decn-wes-emp-03060801.pdf> (PDF; Size: 468 KB)

Seeks experiences on tools or methodologies for upward integration of local plans to the district level, collaborative implementation of large programmes and their M&E

Inputs to the Task Force on Manual for District Planning, from Rajwant Sandhu, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, New Delhi. Decentralization Community,

Issued 15 September 2008. Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/cr-se-decn-21080801.pdf> (PDF; Size: 194.5 KB)

Seeks suggestions on methodology for consolidation of the plans of gram panchayats, intermediate level panchayats, Zilla Parishads and Urban Local Bodies into District Plan

Responses in Full

Jyoti Gupta, Public Health Consultant, New Delhi

A quick response to the first look of the report:

i) A technical support group has not been mentioned under the PRIs head (ref. Fig 5). This is an important issue that must be resolved as PRI shall be at the centre of NREGA implementation and moreover the capacities and competencies of PRIs have always been viewed with skepticism, and shall be a critical factor in village and block level plans and implementation. Thus, clarity on their roles is important (c.f. Annex. 1) I think the BDO needs a mention here too.

ii) Technical expertise of a Public Health (PH) person would be useful, which as mentioned here (Fig 5) fall within the NRHM.

But, some important aspect of PH that would be helpful in planning of work to be done under NREGA are dealt more by the public works engineers than the Primary health care doctors - so comes the role of PWD department, and again comes the role of BDO office presumably. Providing health care at the construction site is one issue - but how well the construction activity (or such similar activities) is planned also impacts on the health of the people (after the construction is over).

This is actually a slight dilemma with the issue of health - wherein all the issues covered under 'public health' are not linked well with the 'Health and Family Welfare Department' which must be taken into serious consideration when doing developmental planning (especially so when related with infrastructure planning, environmental hygiene and sanitation issues) (In fact these are the convergence issues the H&FW is also trying to deal with through NRHM - but with variable response / questionable success)

Hope this is useful.

U.C Pandey, School of Good Governance and Policy Analysis, Bhopal

For effectively delivering the functional literacy programmes at National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) worksites, we need such ways and means through which such programmes can be provided at a very low cost. Technology enabled ways and means can prove to be very useful here because it will minimize cost and enhance reach simultaneously. It will also have added advantage of providing inputs at the time when the workforce will be free.

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is the largest user of technology in India and has a nation wide infrastructure based on information and communication technology which can be effectively utilized for this purpose. The biggest point of convergence here is that IGNOU has a mandate to reach out to that segment of society. IGNOU has already developed such capacity building programmes which are specifically suited for neo literates. This institution can develop more number of such short term programmes related to agriculture, horticulture and functional literacy etc. Apart from this, capacity building programmes for the Panchayati Raj institutions will also be required under NREGA which can be effectively offered through distance mode of education for which IGNOU, being the largest University of the country, has a very important role to play. I feel that there is a very strong possibility of convergence between IGNOU's operation in rural areas and the NREGA for capacity building in rural areas.

I am writing this feedback based on my old affiliation with IGNOU but I hope that my colleagues from IGNOU may like to comment on this.

Puran Singh Yadav, Haryana Institute of Rural Development, Karnal

Since the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) , GoI has come out with various wage employment programmes from time to time such as Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) , Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), Employment Assurance Scheme(EAS), Jawahar Gram Samiridhi Yojna (JGSY), Sampooran Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) and National Food For Work Programme (NFFWP) to address the problem of rural unemployment and poverty , particularly among the unskilled labour. NREGA is a unique of all the earlier programmes as it provides legal right to employment and has a rights based approach.

A large number of success stories have been created during the last three years. Millions of needy families have got employment and millions of productive assets useful to the community have been created. However, the successful implementation of NREGA in the long run depends on meticulous planning of works at the Village, Block and District level, strengthening of training and capacity building infrastructure at all levels, revamping the delivery mechanism by bringing in dedicated and motivated managers and of course convergence of NREGA with other similar programmes/ schemes. They are very important for sustainable development as it will widen the scope of NREGA.

So far as I have observed during my visits to the villages, interaction with Sarpanches (Panchayats Presidents and cross section of people), Rozgar Sahayaks and job seekers, discussion with Programme Officers(BDPOs), Engineers and DRDA Colleagues and discussion at various forms, delivery mechanism is found to be the weakest area in implementation of NREGA, wherever, the progress is slow. There is a lack of will to implement NREGA, mainly due to the fact that scope of leakages have been almost plugged, which were available in plenty under the erstwhile wage employment programmes.

Common complaint is that kind of works permissible under NREGA are not available in villages. The main reason behind this phenomenon is that the officials are neither aware as to what kind of works are permissible under NREGA nor they try to explore and in turn they are not in position to explain to the Gram Panchayats and job seekers about the importance of the scheme. There is lack of skills about project formulation.

Any kind of framework is successful only when it is supported by proper training and capacity building support. The training programmes conducted by State Institute of Rural Development (SIRDs) for Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) / officials have also not been in position to make a dent to produce desired results as their programmes lack required penetration and ultimately end up just into formality.

Presently (in the name of village planning), the works are listed sitting at home by Sarpanches / Panchayats Secretaries for the sake of requirement with the pressure from above. No Gram Sabha meetings are held for work identification. No PRAE is conducted for planning.

It is also general feeling that NREGA provides scope of kuccha works only and scope of pucca works is very less and hence it is quite difficult to maintain wage material ratio for lack of dovetailing and convergence with other schemes. This is also due to the fact that all the programmes from top to bottom are implemented in water tight compartments. Therefore, the most important aspect for successful implementation of NREGA is i) to strengthen the delivery mechanism with right kind of motivated and dedicated people who take up this programme as a challenge for benefit of the needy and sustainable development, ii) to strengthen the training / capacity building infrastructure at the Central as well as State level by putting right kind of persons for training, iii) to create awareness about the main aspects of NREGA, iv) to create a mechanism for convergence and dovetailing of other schemes with NREGA, and v) strengthening the village level planning through PRA.

The suggested Framework for convergence is a unique exercise, which the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has undertaken to improve the implementation and widen the scope of NREGA. Presently, kuccha works are being taken up under NREGA as the funds available for material component are very little. Experience shows that neither dovetailing has taken place with state sector schemes with NREGA, nor central sector schemes were converged for lack of any suggested model and also for lack of awareness about schemes mentioned for convergence at the DPC level or even at the level of State Governments. The suggested convergence model will not only make available funds for creating durable assets but will also help better utilization of available resources under different programmes. However, the success of suggested convergence model will further depend on village planning, which is supposed to be done through PRA. Planning of works under NREGA through PRA is a million dollar question! The sound planning of NREGA depends upon quality human resource and PRA experts. Planning is done sitting at a place and paper formalities are completed. No Gram Sabha Meetings are held for selection of works. There is absolute lack of people having PRA skills. The existing institutional structure is not in position to take the burden of planning exercise based on PRA. Therefore, large scale Training of Trainers (TOT) programmes through the reputed institutions like National Institute of Agriculture Management and Extension (MANAGE), Hyderabad under the overall guidance and supervision of specialist trainers, should be made part of suggested framework as the NIRD and SIRDs have failed to deliver the required quality inputs for capacity development imparting routine training. It requires a team of dedicated expert trainers. The trainers in turn conduct further training programmes for village planning and create large number of PRA experts. Community mobilization for planning is another area which needs to be strengthened.

The proposal of technical consortium is all the more important. In addition to the technical experts, specialists for technical guidance, advice, formulation, appraisal and monitoring of the convergence model, all heads of the concerned departments like Agriculture, Horticulture,

Irrigation, Forest, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Panchayati Raj, Education, Health, Women and Child Development , should be part of the consortium at the state level. Once the heads of the concerned departments are made part of the State level consortium, the problem of convergence at the lower level is automatically sorted out. Technical experts and specialists in above fields should be involved. But it is very important that the members of the consortium have the grassroots understanding of the problem.

A strong and effective delivery mechanism is all the more important for successful implementation of NREGA at the district level. In addition to the District heads of the departments and technical experts, dedicated and motivated specialists in Planning, social mobilization, capacity building, and human resource development should be part of this consortium along with district heads of the departments and technical experts in the respective field. Leaders of the corporate sector should also be included in this consortium. The district level consortium should be under the umbrella of DRDA.

Besides, a compendium containing guidelines of all the suggested schemes (NREGA, Watershed, RKVY, NHM, ARGW, AIBP, CAD&WM, RRR, BRGF, SGSY, NRHM etc along with suggested convergence framework) for convergence should be compiled and circulated to all the districts and put on the website accessible to all concerned.

BDPO to my mind, as I have observed in Haryana, is absolutely a weak link in the chain for implementation of NREGA. Majority of them are of below the required caliber. Technical support for estimation and measurement of works etc is also very thin. Convergence of schemes with NREGA will solve this problem also, as a large force of technical personnel will be available with different departments which hitherto are not involved in NREGA.

The convergence of activities given in the report will resolve the issue of wage material component too.

In addition to the framework suggested by the Task Force, I would also like to propose a new model of convergence at Central/ State / district level.

i) Convergence of all the above schemes of different ministries and departments of similar nature (natural resources conservation) should be tried at national level. Ministry of Rural Development should be the nodal ministry for this purpose. All the ministries / departments should place their earmarked annual/ five years State wise / District wise allocated funds under all the above schemes at the disposal of the MoRD. MoRD should further release these funds to the States and Districts as per requirements.

or

ii) The convergence model at the district level should be formulated in such a manner that as against the present procedure of release of funds to the departmental district heads under different schemes, the funds released by the Central/ State Government should be placed at the disposal of District Project Coordinator and project wise release by DPC should be on the basis of actual requirements based on action plans and cost estimates to meet the wage material requirements. This model can be better handled if district level administration (concerning above mentioned schemes) for implementation of NREGA is brought under one umbrella to facilitate effective convergence.

[K. Rajasekharan](#), Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Thrissur

The entire set of attributes or advantages cited in the query for NREGS remains best suited to decentralized planning under local governments. For ensuring convergence in development, a holistic, untied, broad-framed local government planning will be the right or best option. Convergence is possible only at the third tier of governance as upper tiers of governments cannot ensure that much degree of convergence due to existence of unduly compartmentalized sectoral departments under them and for historical reasons.

Here, rural employment guarantee is a good concept. It should have been merged with local government plans. But do we need a separate Centrally Sponsored Scheme for rural employment programme from a Ministry that exists as a parallel one to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj?

It seems to me that we are creating unnecessary divide of funds, establishing parallel systems or procedures and fruitlessly thinking of convergence, now by treating NREGS as a programme rather than as an inherent scheme forming part of a local government plan.

When decentralization does not require even a Ministry for long, we have more than two Ministries working on the state subject 'local governance', each of them making its programme larger than the other. One can understand the existence of a Ministry for Panchayati Raj (it should have been the Ministry for Local Governance - for both rural and urban) for facilitating decentralization through policy making in the initial stages of decentralization. The NREGS activities should have formed part of the planning process in our local governments, if any kind of convergence is expected.

[Anshuman Karol](#), PRIA, New Delhi

I have gone through the Task Force report and found that the role of District Planning Committee (DPC) is not mentioned anywhere in the report. It again makes NREGA a parallel planning process. Even if we are talking about formation of consortium at various levels, I think the lead role must be played by DPC. And in this context or for other schemes (for which planning is to be done at grassroots level), there must be a single agency that plays a role in planning, implementing and monitoring through supportive role from other agencies. This may be done like this that DPC must have a panel of experts from various fields who can support the planning under various schemes. This also helps in avoiding duplication and repetition. This is also in accordance with the constitutional provisions.

[Oommen John](#), SIRD, Kerala

Convergence is essential to address the secondary objectives of NREGS – strengthening of the natural resource base, creation of durable assets etc. Through better planning and convergence, it is possible to augment land and water resources of the rural areas and thus assuring better livelihood support to the poor people. Convergence would help in strengthening and stabilizing minor irrigation sources and increasing the productivity of lands. The guidelines state that convergence of the NREGA funds with other sources for the creation of durable assets is permissible.

But, convergence is not something unique to this programme alone. SGRY and other programmes talked about convergence and dovetailing of funds but it is doubtful whether any convergence really took place. When convergence is not possible between different programmes within the same department, one can imagine the difficulties of convergence between different departments. One basic factor that prevents convergence is the departmentalism. No department is willing to give up its right over the scheme/project promoted by it. But, in the changed circumstances of a rights based framework, convergence is possible provided the departments are willing to look beyond the department. The human capital which is the *sin quo*

non of NREGS can be further developed through intersectoral linkages. One conducive factor is the crucial role given to the District Programme Coordinator. The District Programme Coordinator is the nodal officer for the implementation of the programme in the district. It is the responsibility of the District Programme Coordinator to prepare the District Plan for NREGS. In Kerala, the District Collector is designated as the District Programme Coordinator. In the capacity of the Collector, the District Programme Coordinator can play a crucial role in bringing about convergence of NREGS with other programmes. Having an integrated watershed master plan will be another factor that would help in the convergence of development programmes. Under the decentralized planning set up, there are technical advisory groups available at different levels. These groups can be used for monitoring the convergence model.

Areas of Convergence

1. The wage material ratio of 60:40 sometimes hampers certain works being taken up. This can be overcome through convergence with plan funds of the Panchayats. As the unit of planning is the Gram Sabha for both NREGS and Panchayat, this convergence can bring about greater flexibility in the wage material ratio.
2. Labour intensive works can be taken up under NREGS while those which entail material costs can be taken up under other programmes like NWDPPRA etc.
3. Agricultural production has been declining over the years in Kerala. The paddy fields are left fallow which over the years become unfit for agriculture purpose. Agriculture production can be increased through convergence between NREGS and agricultural department. The fallow paddy fields can be rejuvenated for cultivation through one time activities like dewatering, removal of slush, strengthening of bunds, jungle clearance etc through NREGS.
4. Lands lying idle with the electricity boards, Irrigation department can be put to productive use through convergence.
5. There has been a sort of convergence between NREGS and forest department in Kerala. Two government orders – No. 126/07 LSGD dated 7-5-07 and 214/08 LSGD dated 28-7-2008 - have been issued specifying the implementation of the schemes in forest areas.
6. Other area where convergence is possible is fisheries, animal husbandry, irrigation, health, education etc.

In order to bring about more clarity in the convergence approach, State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), Kerala organized a workshop on the convergence of NREGS with other development schemes on 11th November, 2008 at Thiruvananthapuram. Officials from various other departments attended the workshop and examined strategies for bringing about greater convergence between NREGS and other programmes.

A.S. Malik, Kurukshetra University, Haryana

The discussion on NREGA attracted me to write something, particularly the issues raised by Sh. Puran Singh Yadav based on his experience.

First it is quite right that the NREGA has plugged leakages and it is also true the scheme will be successful if there it remains so. Therefore any flexibility in its implementation will not only invite corruption but lead to its failure.

Second, it has been found that the people or implementing agencies at grassroots level indicate non-availability of work in the village. The reality is totally different. Actually, the people who complain so are not interested in implementing NREGA or not motivated to implement as there is no chance for corruption or not efficient to perform administrative responsibilities relating to the implementation of NREGA in stipulated time as envisaged by it. They are also not aware about

the District Planning Committee and preparation of District Vision as envisaged for the Eleventh Five Year Plan.

This problem may be tackled by the administration or otherwise any research institution or academic institution or the social scientist of the area may be asked to perform such function. This may also remove the necessity to wait for the Gram Sabha approval but it does not mean that Gram Sabha need to be ignored but it is a solution only for those states (Haryana) where Gram Sabha meetings virtually do not take place.

There is one more suggestion to earmark the funds for next 4-5 years and after due publicity (mentioning amount of funds, span of time and list of functions), fix a date for the Gram Sabha, not on one day for many villages as in past but on certain day (holiday like Sunday). This may work. The Government can experiment on pilot basis in a block headed by a young BDPO who is educated and smart enough to perform his/her responsibilities. The selection should not be on convenience or purposive rather it should be based on the performance of NREGA in a block during the year 2008-09.

Usually there is a problem that the scheme involves paper work that consumes Sarpanch's time and many times he/she is not literate enough or trained and dependent upon the official but the responsibility may be assigned to the Sarpanch and educated Panch of the Panchayat (the Panch so selected should be the choice of Sarpanch and possessing minimum educational level) and the official. They must be given some financial incentive to them. It will not train them but also involve them and make them capable to implement and supervise the implementation of the Act.

No doubt there have been many suggestions but I am of the opinion let us make efforts with the present institutional set up with little bit very very essential and indispensable changes but not structural changes. It is true that every one will not perform as per expectations and every one can not be motivated but in the process and persistence to implement this for the cause of poverty alleviation and rural rebuilding the concerned people will learn to work with NAREGA and that will also in fruitful. Thus there is a need to send a message that the scheme is permanent and not to be changed.

S. Saheerudeen, State Institute of Rural Development, Kerala

There was a meeting of the state level officers to discuss the possibilities of convergence in NREGS in Kerala. The departments represented include Rural Development, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Soil Conservation, Soil Survey, Clean Kerala Mission, Social welfare, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Continuing education, Jananidhi, Fisheries, Matsyfed, NRHM, Kerala state Youth Welfare Board, Directorate of Panchayats, Scheduled Tribe Development and Public Works.

NREGA will be the entry point for convergence basically because it covers wide range of works, untied and unlimited funds for local area planning and the legal safe guards provided by the Act. Secondly, the NREGA targets on the effective institutional and inter sectoral linkages. Thirdly, through NREGS, substantial public investment is made for the development of human capital and thereby the physical capital. Hence, there is the need for scientific and proper convergence with different development schemes of different departments. This will facilitate Poverty Reduction, develop ecological synergies, mitigate the adverse effects of natural disasters, enhance economic opportunities, and provide social safety services and ultimately to sustainable development.

Based on the deliberations in the workshop the possible areas of convergence were identified. They are as follows:

1. Vast areas of land are available with Kerala State Electricity Board, Irrigation Department, and

Kerala Water Authority etc. These lands are at present highly susceptible to soil erosion, degradation and illegal encroachment. The possibility of giving permission to carryout the NREGS activities in the lands shall be examined, so that these lands will develop and production activities can also be done by SHGs, Kudumbashree units etc. A triple benefit can be derived, if this happens. 1. The land can be physiologically and physically protected. 2. The adverse effects of silting and flooding in the irrigation canals and valley portions, due to soil erosion from these lands can be avoided. 3. By doing Agri /Horticulture activities by SHGs or Kudumbashree units, their income level can be raised and their products can be used by the people of the locality.

2. The wage component of NREGS can be used for the development of ponds available with the Fisheries Department. Subsequently the funds of the department can be used for further value addition of the works done under NREGS and also for its own development activities. Construction of bunds and land development activities can also be taken in the own lands of the department.

3. As NREGA focuses on watershed approach, technical support for the delineation of watersheds and preparation of treatment plans can be done Soil Survey Department. Further analysis of soil structure, soil nutrients and fertility factors of soil are done by taking samples from the lands of individual land holdings and the ideal crops that can be cultivated are suggested. Labor groups in NREGS can be entrusted with the task of soil samples from the fields in an extensive manner and its labor cost can be met from NREGS. Soil survey department can give training to those particular groups.

4. Under NWDPPRA, a number of Macro watersheds were identified and the treatment measures are being done in a scattered manner. These Macro watershed plans can be revisited and redesign the soil conservation interventions. Labor-intensive works can be done under NREGS and material oriented component like reinforcement etc can be done using NWDPPRA funds.

5. Health Department and the activities of NRHM can be dovetailed with NREGS. The department can do outreach programmes like health orientation programmes to the laborers working in different agro climatic and soil conditions especially when works like cleaning of irrigation canals, desalting of ponds etc are undertaken. Special medical camps for the health check up of NREGS laborers and First aid training can also be arranged.

6. The possibility of interventions in the lands of Universities especially the Agriculture Research Stations of Agriculture University can be explored. Agriculture Department can converge their programmes with NREGS in RKY, Fallow land cultivation programmes, Sustainable development of Rice based farming systems, Vegetable Promotion programmes, Agave cultivation in Rain shadow areas, Homestead farming, CDB scheme for integrated farming in coconut holdings and in cashew development programmes. Land development activities of fodder cultivation can be dove tailed with NREGS by Animal Husbandry department.

7. The PMGSY road works identified under Rural Roads Core Net work can be converged with NREGS. The formation works of such roads can be taken under NREGS and the remaining portions that require high material investment can be done using PMGSY.

8. Clean Kerala Mission can formulate a comprehensive project for properly utilizing the fund received through Nirmal Gram Puraskar. The unskilled labor portion of the works identified in this project can be done under NREGS.

9. The possibility of converging the income generation activities identified by NHGs of Kudumbashree, especially the lease land farming, vegetable gardening and horticulture activities can be identified by Kudumbashree Mission.

10. Land Deployment Activities in the individual land holdings of SCs and STs are permitted in the NREG Act itself. The Scheduled Caste Development Department and Scheduled Tribe Development Department can converge NREGS with their programmes like land development activities of SC and ST and food security programmes, comprehensive colony development programmes etc. Works under Special Component Plan can also be dovetailed.

11. Forest department is presently converging their development schemes with NREGS and shall continue as such. The Social forestry Programmes done by the department can also be converged with NREGS.

12. Under SSA, an initiative can be taken to identify the education problems of the children of laborers of NREGS. While facilities development activities are undertaken, the labor component can be converged to NREGS. Tree planting close to the compound walls of schools, drainages to the playgrounds etc can also be undertaken using NREGS and SSA funds.

13. The Continuing education programme can make substantial contribution in the IEC activities of NREGS. The lesson plans may include the various aspects of NREGS, the right based approach of the Act, the importance of participatory planning, implementation, monitoring and social audit can be percolated to the general public, if the activities of Continuing education and IEC activities of NREGS are converged.

14. Jananidhi is implementing community water supply schemes in rural areas. The labor component of the works of community irrigation programmes can be converged to NREGS.

15. The Local Self Government department can give guidelines to the PRIs to give priority for the improvement of the Kacha works already done under NREGS when they formulate projects under infrastructure development. Likewise, the projects under production sector can be streamlined towards the value addition of the works already done under NREGS. This will facilitate agriculture production and productivity. These can be included in plan formulation guidelines.

[K. Gireesan](#), Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur

It is really a path-breaking initiative by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India to undertake a serious exercise of exploring the opportunities and possibilities towards aiming at sustainable development through realizing inter-sectoral convergence of the existing programmes, schemes, institutions and funds.

NREGA has entrusted a pivotal role to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in awareness building, planning, implementation, work supervision, monitoring and social auditing. During its operationalisation, there are numerous opportunities for bringing in convergence at the entry level itself as PRIs are very much involved in the entire process. The institutional linkages of work, wage, workers and area could be facilitated for effective targeting and development of human and physical capital, towards achieving sustainable development with thrust on natural resource management. PRIs can act as the focal points of convergence, if they are adequately supported and guided by people's representatives from other levels of government, government officials, professional institutions, civil society organisations and of course by informed citizens also.

The need for a support system for the PRIs is suggested towards realizing the optimum benefits of inter-sectoral convergence of programmes, institutions and funds at the local level. A pool of professional institutions, research institutions, civil society organizations and experts could be developed, from which the PRIs can seek necessary support/guidance, if required. And for such

consultancy, provision of an honorarium can also be thought out, though willingness, expertise and urge for voluntary support may be the major criterion. I am sure, provision of support system to a PRI will definitely add value to the different levels of NREGS implementation. However, this may be initiated only keeping up the constitutional legitimacy and political primacy of the PRIs and as per the demand/requirement of the local governments. I believe that such an act will empower the PRIs in the long run.

The query raised by Dr. Jos Chathukulam through the Decentralization Community is very much appreciable as it has led to generate a fruitful discussion amongst its members for compilation and submission to the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India for necessary action.

Ravishwar Sinha, Independent Consultant, New Delhi

At the onset a much deserved congratulations are due the authors of the draft report. It is very concise, very readable and I feel covers all the areas.

However, I would like the members to consider the following:-

1. Greater representation of the affecter/ground level service providers and the PRIs - more devolution of responsibilities and accountability with independence of action, supported by regular supportive monitoring and evaluation.
2. The Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and Health components - a safe assumption can be made that the NREGA beneficiaries are the socially high priority groups. If sufficient numbers of ICDS beneficiaries are there, then on demand ICDS centre can be asked for, as per the UNIVERSALISATION of ICDS program initiatives.
3. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) should be joint and so should the voluntary ownership of the project through spontaneous donation of labour and resources that the community would find within its resources. Government and Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) could be encouraged to supplement and appreciate such efforts.
4. M&E should be quarterly and local as per the overall district and state design; appropriate action should be enshrined.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

Jos Chathukulam, Centre for Rural Management, Kottayam

A few of us, members of the Decentralization Community as well as non-members, who were there at the International Conference on 'Rural Poverty: Key Initiatives in achieving Millennium Development Goals and the role of National Rural Employment Gurantee Act' held from 21 to 22 January 2009 in New Delhi met informally to discuss the Task Force report on Convergence in NREGS. The following points and suggestions evolved during the meeting.

Operational Guidelines of NREGA envisage convergence of social sector programmes (Literacy and Rural Health Mission) and centrally sponsored programmes with NREGA with a view to extending greater benefits of these programmes, particularly to the NREGA workers. Past experience is that convergence of programmes has been made difficult by structural issues like hierarchical command structure of departments, departmentalism, vested interests, divergent approaches followed by different development sectors and the culture of development practitioners working in silos.

Convergence can be best operationalized by using it as a tool – as a strategy -for problem solving. The programmes, funds, expertise, facilities of various agencies could be integrated to mitigate development problems (eg. poverty, agrarian crisis, sanitation etc.). There cannot be

one-shot solution for the painful and complex problems of poverty. Conventional poverty reduction strategies consists of a) package comprising wage employment, b) skill development, c) self employment, d) creation of infrastructure having continuing and lasting benefit to the poor e) provision of basic minimum needs like housing, primary education, health care, drinking water etc. and f) social security schemes – like old age pension, insurance etc.

Convergence to be effective should be demand-led. Kerala has developed a demand- responsive framework for the preparation of Anti poverty sub plan (APSP) using Kudumbashree net work (SHGs prepare micro plans which are aggregated at the Area Development Society (ward level) and Community Development Society (Gram Panchayat level) levels to form mini plans which are then used by Local Governments as the base material for the preparation of APSP. The components of APSP could be

- NREGS for wage employment (additional annual income of Rs 12500/-)
- SGSY and Kudumbashree for skill development and self employment
- SSA, NRHM, ICDS for human development of the workers
- IGNDAPS, Asraya , Health Insurance – social security
- IAY, People's Plan- minimum needs infrastructure

Preparation of Anti poverty sub plan can be the entry point strategy for convergence. As the next level of convergence, Natural Resource Management and watershed development could be attempted.

Development practitioners across the country have been talking about convergence from the early 1980s. In order to make this happen, convergence should be used as tool for problem-solving.

Suraj Kumar, UNDP, New Delhi

I have gone through the Task Force Report and have the following points to make:

Convergence with NREGA would also entail an adoption of a guarantee model for other schemes. If a rights-based approach cannot be adopted comprehensively, then NREGA's "guarantee" would contrast with other schemes where the service delivery is not guaranteed. I believe this by itself should justify extension of NREGA's rights-based approach to other programmes and schemes.

The taskforce report takes some steps in these directions, especially in its call to use the NREGA Unique registration number and job card as a general purpose beneficiary. However, as of now it is a bit telegraphic and needs to be fleshed out with evidence and solutions.

With the above objective, we need to address the following specific issues:

⇒ Linking NREGA plans to District Planning – While it may not be necessary to wait for District Planning Committees (DPCs) to fully evolve before linking NREGA Plans to District Plans, we need to meet the following technical issues:

- a) vertical integration (village plans to intermediate and district level plans),
- b) spatial integration (rural and urban),
- c) horizontal integration (between Panchayat plans and departmental plans and the Credit Plan) and
- d) systems integration (linkage with budgets, implementation and monitoring).

While the District planning manual prepared by Planning Commission and Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) addresses these issues to some extent, we need to see how it has actually been

used, to identify both whether the methodology is sound and can be codified, and also what the issues of local comprehension, capacity and internalization are. It would be useful to actually follow the drill of the District Planning Manual in a set of districts, document the experience and then identify the technical issues and capacity development imperatives. Therefore the NREGA Taskforce must work closely with the Planning Commission and State Governments so that its planning objectives are met in an institutionally sustainable manner.

- ⇒ Type of legal framework required to extend “guarantee” model to other social sector programmes, esp. health, drinking water and sanitation – this is a vast new area. I am aware of Education Guarantee Scheme in MP and its national avatar in Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), the type of legislative guarantee that NREGA has would need to be extended to other sectors. In the absence of such a mandate the Technical Consortia at different levels may not be very effective. We all know that institutional reform entails not only changing the “rules of the game” but also ensuring that “enforcement characteristics” are functional.
- ⇒ Type of ICT platform/s for Convergence - Development of Single Registry (for beneficiary databases) and Unique Geographical Identity (for works and projects) – while IT by itself is not a panacea, we cannot do this without IT either. There have been initiatives like Cadastro Unico which consolidate beneficiary lists and manage the beneficiary database, and GramDrishti which provides for resource convergence around beneficiaries using GRAM++.
- ⇒ Crucible - The GOI-UN Joint Programme on Convergence may serve as a test-bed for the Task Force, as many of its desiderata could play out in the 35 districts where the programme is under way. We would be happy to brief the Task Force and identify scope and specifics for working together - all “gung ho” as the Chinese say.

Rajesh Sinha, PRIA, New Delhi

This draft report is a very good effort towards proposing a framework for convergence. Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) and authors deserves congratulations. I have however some comments:

1. Situating DLTC in DRDA will further fuel the debate on relevance of strengthening a parallel body at district level. Even NREGA has centrality of Panchayats in planning and implementation of schemes.
2. As pointed out earlier by Mr. Anshuman, there should not be any overlapping of functions of District Level Technical Committee (DLTC) and District Planning Committee (DPC). DLTC can be a sub set of DPC in it's planning role.
3. Implementation of suggested framework will require amendments to guidelines of several schemes/ programmes particularly participatory provisions. A very strong coordination among concerned departments is also highly desired.

H. Vageeshan, Centre for World Solidarity, Secunderabad

Let there be some clarity about terms used in NREGA itself. Let us not call manual labor as UNSKILLED though it may be hard toil with few tools may be of pre mechanized era. So let us call it HARD LABOUR instead.

The document on convergence is something like a late realization, at best a rediscovery. The task force has reiterated the need for integrated development once again.

NREGA has to be adulated as it gave space to planning by the Panchayats. Beyond that, overplaying NREGA is not desirable. Hence the convergence should keep holistic planning as a starting point. As of now NREGA is one Act, BRGF is a scheme which spoke about planning. But planning should go beyond these. BRGF attempted to bring out the development departmental spending on infrastructure with meager success. NREGA is still grappling.

To begin with from now on, any *Kattcha* work component undertaken by any government department - be it central or state government - should adhere to the norms laid down in NREGA. This should be explicitly expressed in the suggestions.

It is time to take grassroots planning seriously in the context of emergence of District Planning Committees. Let each line department expressly spell out what it is going to spend on their mandated tasks (Showing wage and Non Wage components) clearly at district and sub district levels in a given financial year. Let there be a rational assessment of what resources Local bodies can raise in the given financial year. To start with, let this happen in 50 districts of all States and UTs.

Let there be an attempt to have participatory database from Rural Urban Ward levels (consolidated in respective GPs and Urban Local Bodies) to upwards in those districts (cross checked with existing secondary data). Let the district level Statistics department and National Informatics centre (NIC) district unit work in tandem to use this database. Try to understand the condition of human resources, natural resources and infrastructure in the sub district and district levels. Analyze the caste and class, gender and vulnerability while keeping the facts in perspective.

Let there be participatory prioritization of tasks to be taken up for developing human and natural resources as well as related infrastructure. Link the priorities with the available financial resources. Let there be a debate on allocation, fair use of resources keeping the economic development of the least advantaged first. Let us see the constraints and possibilities of this exercise.

Let us not confine to focus merely on one Act or scheme. It will be like BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT story. Let there be integration for holistic development. Let us attempt this at least now. There is a crying need for this. The hard work of the task force highlights this in its own humble way. Hope there will be some attempt for this. Hope there is no dearth for finer minds and public spirited officers and concerned civil society organizations (CSOs) and last but not most important - CONCIOUS COMMON PEOPLE. Wish we will see these attempts bearing fruits as soon as possible instead of bringing in OLD TRUTHS again and again.

Ashok Kumar Pathak, Development Consultant, Uttar Pradesh

The report of the Task Force on Convergence in NREGS is really a comprehensive document. I want to emphasize a few points for consideration:

1. All the departments must plan their activities in tuning with the NREGS plan for the district, so that funds can be dovetailed for effective implementation of the activities without any duplication.
2. There is more emphasis on kuchcha work. In convergence, we need to focus more on conversion of kuchcha work to pucca work prepare and advocate for the strategy accordingly.
3. Dovetailing of funds available with all the partners for IEC and behaviour change communication.

4. In schedule of planning, there is no mention of the date for District Panchayat plans covering two or more block level activities.
 5. It is a good point that convergence starts at planning level. I also agree that planning at grassroots level should be facilitated in a mission mode involving all the stakeholders.
 6. It seems that all the facilities are expected to be provided at the NREGS worksite. Is it feasible to provide the facilities of line departments at the worksite level? It may happen that there may be more than two worksites in a village. Like, proposal of running literacy classes for labourers at the NREGS worksite for making them understand job cards, measurement, muster roll and their rights and entitlements. Is it possible and will the Mate/Pradhan/ GPVA will allow this to happen? Rather we can think of literacy or play classes for small children of labourers.
 7. It is expected from ASHA to visit NREGS worksite to disseminate health information. We have not been able to provide even first aid kits at all the worksites. How and why dissemination of health information at worksites?
 8. ICDS Anganwadi Worker (AWW) is also expected to provide services at NREGS worksite. If there are two or more worksites in a village, how can AWW provide services at NREGS worksites? We can take the support of AWW for counseling women labourers and adolescent girls on health issues through IPC/Community meetings.
 9. In my view, no other services except worksite facilities given in the guideline are possible at the worksite and this point is raised for further discussion.
-

Toms K. Thomas, Evangelical Social Action Forum (ESAF), Thrissur *

I would appreciate Dr. Jose for circulating the task force report and I read lot with lots of interest. The report has touched many important areas and has raised a number of very important issues.

Probably our country would stand out standing in the number of government offices and departments. For example to have a water connection at home you need to get clearance from at least three departments and more depending of where you live. Even after that we cannot be assured that we will get the connection. I think the presence of too many department makes the decision making slow and I also fear that this is a real block for faster development. Places where development has been faster has greater devolution and stronger interdepartmental coordination. In another words subsidiary is some thing very important and it should be practices at all levels which make the administrative machinery stronger. More over public money will be managed more efficiently and the revenue will increase. I see a strong association between public revenue and regulation. There is an assumption that no law means no revenue / evasion of public payments like taxes. My argument is to the other way. Less regulation means more revenue. I need to do some further research on this to endorse these arguments.

Let me give my thoughts on the issue of convergence. I see NREGA important from the following perspectives

- Decent work
- Effectively addressing of Gender
- Local Economic Development
- Productive Asset Building
- Community Development

To read full response please click <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/res13010901.doc> (Size: 39 KB)

**Offline Contribution*

Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

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Poverty

Work and Employment Community



Gender Community

Solution Exchange for the Work and Employment Community

Solution Exchange for Gender Community Consolidated Reply

Query: Participation of Women in NREGP Works, from ISST, New Delhi (Experiences).

**Compiled by Sumeeta Banerji and Bonani Dhar Resource Persons; additional research provided by Radhika K. Jung and Sarika Dhawan, Research Associates
24 October 2006**

Original Query: Ratna M. Sudarshan, Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi

Posted: 26 September 2006

ISST as a research organization concerned to enhance women's access to productive opportunities is conducting a pilot study, with support from the ILO New Delhi, to understand the nuances of the gender dimensions of NREGA in a few villages. Based on our research and that of others it seems that NREGA has attracted a number of women to the work sites, in fact, it is reported that in Rajasthan as much as 80-90 % of the workers on the work sites are women.

In order to set in motion processes that will help in future planning so as to ensure women's full participation in choice of works and planning processes, and on the work sites, as well as control over the earnings, we need to have information from different places on actual experiences.

In this context, members are invited to kindly share their observations and experiences on issues such as the following:

Worksite issues:

- What is the observed ratio of men to women on the sites?
- Are payments being received by the women?
- How many hours of work per day are women putting in on average, and for what wage?
- Is there flexibility in timings, or are there fixed timings for the work?
- Are provisions being made for drinking water, shade, crèche, first aid at the work

sites? What is the experience with these?

Impact of women’s work on sites:

- Has women being away at the work sites had any adverse effects (such as older girls staying home from school, care of elderly, infants, etc)?

Women’s role in planning:

- Have women had a say in the choice of works?
- How actively are gram sabhas being able to articulate local priorities and relevant works, and how actively are women participating in these discussions?

Responses received, with thanks, from:

1. [Devika Biswas](#), SANCALP, Ranchi
2. [Mohd Adil](#), Self-Reliant Initiative through Joint Action (SRIJAN), Jatara ([Response 1](#); [Response 2](#))
3. [Neelkanth Mishra](#), Centre for World Solidarity, Secunderabad
4. [Arif Hussain](#), Madhya Pradesh- District Poverty Initiatives Project, Bhopal
5. [Seema Kakade](#), Prayas, Pune
6. [Ramit Basu](#), UNDP, New Delhi
7. [K. S. Gopal](#), Centre for Environment Concerns, Hyderabad
8. [Bonani Dhar](#), UNIFEM, New Delhi
9. [Rahul Banerjee](#), Aarohini Trust, Indore
10. [Anurag Mishra](#), Voluntary Action Network India, Lucknow
11. [M. A. Arun](#), Vijay Times, Bangalore
12. [Shambhu Ghatak](#), JNU, New Delhi
13. [Alok Pandey](#), PRIA, Jaipur

Further contributions are welcome!

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- [Summary of Responses](#)
 - [Comparative Experiences](#)
 - [Related Resources](#)
 - [Responses in Full](#)

Summary of Responses

The [National Rural Employment Guarantee Act \(NREGA\), 2005](#) provides guaranteed employment for 100 days a year to adult members of rural households who agree to do unskilled labour at the stipulated minimum wage. It contains several important “women friendly” provisions, including mandating at least one third of its beneficiaries to be women and ensuring locally available employment, thus reducing male rural–urban migration and lessening women’s workload. Members responded to the query requesting information on how these “women friendly” components are being implemented, by sharing experiences demonstrating the variability of women’s worksite issues and involvement in planning, and revealing some clear trends in women’s participation.

Ratio of men to women: Members noted that in most states, there are more men at worksites than women. For example, at worksites in **Andhra Pradesh** the workforce is about 60% male and 40% female. In **Madhya Pradesh**, women generally make up just over a third (33%) of the labour. However, at newer sites in the state, the proportion of women in the workplace has dropped considerably; they now represent less than 10% of the workforce.

Members cited **Jharkhand** and **Bihar** as other states, which tend to have more men than women.

This is not the trend in states with high rates of male migration; in these states, women constitute the main portion of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) labourers. Members specifically cited [Rajasthan](#) and [Maharashtra](#), as states with where women make up the majority of the labourers at most sites.

Wages and timings: Respondents reflected that often women have no idea of their entitled wages and receive wages significantly less than the prescribed minimum wage. They cited an example from **Madhya Pradesh** where women are only paid Rs. 50, not the required minimum wage of Rs. 61.37. To better understand such wage irregularities and the deep-rooted issues affecting women's work participation, one NGO in [Andhra Pradesh](#) recently conducted a social audit across two districts.

Along with payment problems, members pointed out that "how" work is measured and estimated affects the amount a women can earn. Traditionally work contractors divided work by sex- men tend to do the heavier work and women are assigned other "invisible" tasks, which often are not as easy to quantify. For example at a worksite in [Karnataka](#), contracts asked women to come to work with "male partners" and refused to allocate work to single women. Projects measure/estimate productivity based on soil conditions, extent of digging, etc. Average wage rates do not take into consideration differences in soil types, the labourers' sex and/or age, or other factors that have a bearing on productivity. To address this problem, members felt it is important to quantify productivity in every district through work-time-motion studies, and to fix tasks according to sex and soil conditions. Members reported that [Andhra Pradesh](#) has recently revised the schedule of rates on such task-related norms.

Regarding timings, members noted that male contractors generally set fixed timings, with no flexibility. This lack of flexibility doubly burdens women since they have to perform household duties in addition to their work at the sites, often within the same timeframe.

Impact on families: With respect to the impact of women's work on the family, specifically educational opportunities for girls, and care of elderly family members and/or infants members were of the view that additional time is required to assess the situation, before making a determination.

Work-site facilities and equipment: Based on field observations, members noted that even in places where there are more women- drinking water facilities, shade, crèches and first aid equipment are not provided. Moreover, most workers are not even aware the Act mandated them. Additionally, the majority of worksites do not give women tools to reduce the drudgery and difficulty of their tasks, while the men are.

Women in planning: While emphasizing the importance of involving women in planning to inculcate a sense of ownership of the assets created, members observed that in most sites women were not involved in planning of works and therefore had limited understanding of the rationale behind choice of a particular work. Government and civil society need to make women aware of their intended role in the Act, members felt. In few instances where NGOs have involved women through awareness programmes and [padyatras](#), as in **Madhya Pradesh**, they have articulated their needs and priorities to Sarpanches and government officials. In Jalpaiguri district of **West Bengal**, women panchayat members are now responsible for monitoring works and planning employment generation projects.

Women's participation in selection of works is crucial, members stressed, to ensure that works focus on reducing women's workloads and enhance the availability and productivity of local natural resources, which are critical sources of livelihood activities for women. Members noted that in many villages gram sabha meetings are not taking place and where they do meet and deliberate, women are unable to choose the kind of work that they would prefer to

do. Panchayats and women need to be actively involved in the micro- planning processes as envisaged under the Act, members stressed.

Therefore, members felt, facilitating organizations must help create enabling environments for women to play a role in the planning of works. Respondents recommended women headed panchayats, backed by strong women's groups and self-help groups (SHGs); adopt innovative means of involving women in the planning and implementation of works and in implementing gender sensitive measures. Some organizations have tried innovative strategies to improve women's involvement on work-sites and in planning. In [Maharashtra](#) an NGO is working to ensure NREG schemes allow women to participate in land-based income generate activities, by introducing a "livelihood basket" approach; and in **Madhya Pradesh** one NGO used a "model" project to demonstrate how the Act is supposed to work, another NGO helped panchayats to identify and prepare [perspective work plans](#), and a third organized a "walk" to understand the community needs.

Members reiterated that since women constitute the largest potential workforce in NREGA, there is a need to address all of these issues of measurement. They stressed innovative measures are required to ensure that women workers have control over productive assets, enjoy increased opportunities and have a role to play in decision making. Finally, respondents underlined the importance of studying the field situation, as is currently being done in [six states](#), to understand how the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP) is implemented, and share the findings at national level c consultative meetings.

Comparative Experiences

Madhya Pradesh

From Mohd Adil, Self-Reliant Initiative through Joint Action (SRIJAN), Jatara; [response 1](#)

Successful Village Intervention to Demonstrate NREGS Workability

To demonstrate the workability of NREG schemes, an NGO developed an intervention (on watershed management) in one village to serve as model for other communities. The project provided drinking water facilities, a medical kit and a shed for workers to eat and prepare lunch as well as gaining complete participation of women at worksites. Finally, it ensured the women received full payment for their work, which was a landmark achievement for the village.

"Walk With a Purpose" in Seven Villages of Jatara Block

An NGO organized a "Walk with a Purpose" or *Padyatra* to create awareness about the planned NREGS and to assess the situation. The "Walk" gave the organizers an understanding of communities' problems- the need to address drought conditions, migration, and lack of medical facilities, shade and crèches at worksites. In Dungarpur, Rajasthan, an organization carried out a similar campaign to generate awareness about NREGS in 237 panchayats. [Read More](#)

Perspective Plan on Project for Rural Employment *(from Mohd Adil, Self-Reliant Initiative through Joint Action (SRIJAN), Jatara; [response 2](#))*

An NGO is coordinating a unique approach to involve the district administration and Panchayat to develop the perspective works plan under NREGP. The role of the NGO is to assist the Gram Sabhas to prioritize needs and to provide technical support to implement the work project- several ponds and *Jatropha* plantations. This project will create equal employment opportunities for men and women.

Attempts to Increase Women's Involvement in Planning (from [Rahul Banerjee](#), *Aarohini Trust, Indore*)

In the Pati Block of Barwani District, the panchayat did not sanction proposals submitted by women for water and soil conservation works under NREGS. To address this, the organisation Jagriti Adivasi Dalit Sangathan supported them to organize a public hearing with the administration, providing a platform for the women to resolve their grievances. Unfortunately, the problems were not resolved through the hearing.

Andhra Pradesh

Social Audit to Understand Problems (from [K. S. Gopal](#), *Centre for Environment Concerns, Hyderabad*)

An NGO conducted a social audit to understand the deep-rooted issues affecting women's work participation, in order develop a motivational mechanism to retain women and to be able to seek action from local authorities to address the issues. The NGO conducted the audit in Medak and Ananthpur district in the regional language. Its findings highlighted several problems with the implementation of NREGS, such as irregularities in wages.

Karnataka

Division of Labor Norms Limit Women's Earning Capacities (from [M. A. Arun](#), *Vijay Times, Bangalore*)

In Raichur district, contractor's division of labour based on sex- men assigned to digging and women to loading tractors. This practice limits the options of women; they can only work if they have a "male partner." Contractors consider single women to be worksite "liabilities," and do not allow them to work- further deteriorating the economic condition of widows, deserted women, devadasis, and women whose husbands have migrated.

Maharashtra

Livelihood Basket in Drought Prone Areas (from [Bonani Dhar](#), *UNIFEM, New Delhi*)

Drought prone areas like Solapur in southern Maharashtra, organizations have introduced "livelihood baskets" initiative under NREGS. Women sell organic vegetables, which serves as significant source of income. These activities have developed their skills to generate a minimum income of Rs. 12,000/year, enhancing their household's food security. This innovative approach has built the skill of these women to support their families. [Read More](#)

Affect of Women Friendly Provisions in Employment Guarantee Scheme (from [Seema Kakade](#), *Prayas, Pune*)

Women constitute a major portion of EGS labourers, who prefer to work near their villages. However, despite the NREGA, many contractors do not provide the benefits outlined in the Act. For example, few women receive maternity leave. Moreover, the majority of women labourers is single, socio-economically vulnerable and lacks the power to negotiate for their entitlements under NREGA.

Rajasthan

More Women on Work Sites (from [Ratna M. Sudarshan](#), *Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi*)

A recent study by the Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST) revealed that there are more women at NREGS sites than men; because of the mobilization efforts by village groups and word of mouth campaigns. Other aspects of the study pointed out that the level of literacy was low in women from age group 7 to 20 years, which may be a hindrance in women's role in planning and articulating their problems to the village functionaries. [Read More](#)

Multiple States

Assessment Exercise Across Six States (from [Arif Hussain](#), Madhya Pradesh- District Poverty Initiatives Project, Bhopal)

An assessment exercise is being conducted in 150 panchayats and 500 villages in Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. The study objective is to find the best practices and detect loopholes in the programme from the perspective of citizens especially on issues such as awareness and access of women to employment generation programs for effective implementation. [Read More](#)

Related Resources

Recommended Documentation

NREGA-As Main Strategy (from [Neelkanth Mishra](#), Centre for World Solidarity, Secunderabad)

Hyderabad Workshop; July 18-19 2006

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/res03100601.doc>

Document provides recommendations on how to increase women's participation in NREGS activities and how women can gain access to the rights provided under the Act.

From [Shambhu Ghatak](#), JNU, New Delhi

Essentially India-Tech Eye to Keep Track of Rural Employment Scheme: Satyen Mohapatra

Hindustan Times

<http://rural.nic.in/news/0106102006.pdf> (Size: 76 KB)

Article mentions about NREGA soft-unicode enabled software developed to track information on implementation across the country in local languages.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Rules (Central Council Rules 2006)

Ministry of Rural Development; May 25, 2006

http://nrega.nic.in/nrega_council_rules.pdf (Size: 2.1 MB)

Rules published in the Gazette of India- the Ministry of Rural Development, providing details of the duties and functions of the central council on NREGA.

Village Directory-1991 Census Data on Floppies

Census of India, Government of India

<http://www.censusindia.net/dataproducts/floppylistvd.html>

Cites information about the village directory which gives information on the facilities available in the villages pertaining to communication, land use pattern etc.

From [Bonani Dhar](#), UNIFEM, New Delhi

Employment Guarantee — Signs of Transformation

By Nirmala Lakshman; The Hindu; May 11, 2006

http://www.hinduonnet.com/2006/05/11/stories/200605110541100_0.htm

Article reviews the findings of the social audit conducted in Dungarpur, Rajasthan about how the NREGA program has given employment to at least one household member.

Several Problems in NREGS Implementation in Madhya Pradesh

Development Alternatives; July 2006

<http://www.empowerpoor.org/programmereport.asp?report=316>

Article reveals the problems faced by women in NREGA implementation in MP evaluated through participatory methodology like nutaks, campaigns and samelans.

Women and the NREGP, (2006) (from [Ratna M. Sudarshan](#), Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi)

Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi; 2003

http://www.isst-india.org/publications_womens_work.htm

Abstract outlines study sponsored by ILO, analyzing the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) from a gender perspective.

Walking with a Purpose (from Mohd Adil, SRIJAN, Jatara, Tikamgarh; [response 1](#))

By Somwya Kerbart Sivakumar; Frontline, Vol. 23, Issue 9; May 6-19, 2006

<http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl2309/stories/20060519002903500.htm>

"Walk with a Purpose" (Padyatara) was organized by an NGO to spread awareness about the EGS in 237 panchayats of Dungarpur, Madhya Pradesh

Presentation on Implementing Framework for EGA (from [K. S. Gopal](#), Centre for Environment Concerns, Hyderabad)

Centre for Environment Concerns (CEC)

Click [here](#) to view PDF (Size: 2.7 MB)

PowerPoint Presentation describing CEC's activities and issues in EGA that merit attention; like women's work, minimum wages and communities role in monitoring.

In Raichur the Buzz Word is Migration Like Traffic Jams are in Bangalore (from [M.A Arun](#), Vijay Times, Bangalore)

By M.A. Arun; Vijay Times; September 19, 2006 (click on "free access to e-paper")

<http://vijaytimesepaper.com/login.php>

Article cites in-depth analysis of the implementation mechanism of NREGA programme with focus on various problems faced by women in the Raichur district at the field site.

From [Sarika Dhawan](#), Research Associate

Breathing Life into Farming

By Darrel D. Monte; InfoChange News and Features; July 2006

<http://www.infochangeindia.org/analysis133.jsp>

Article provides alternatives to sustainable development by regenerating land and creating permanent rural assets through income generating programs for women.

Job Scheme: Contract Staff Sacked After `Social Audit'

By Staff Reporter; The Hindu; September 25, 2006

<http://www.hindu.com/2006/09/25/stories/2006092506200300.htm>

Article refers to findings of social audit of NREGA scheme in 600 villages of 40 mandals in Ananthpur district and disciplinary action for improving the situation at the field.

Recommended Organizations

Samarthan: Centre for Development Support, Bhopal and Raipur (from [Arif Hussain](#), Madhya Pradesh- District Poverty Initiatives Project, Bhopal)

<http://www.samarthan.org/>

NGO conducts participatory development programmes and is presently carrying out an assessment study of NREGA in six states focusing on women's involvement

Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST), New Delhi (from [Ratna M. Sudarshan](#))

<http://www.isst-india.org/>

Society dedicated to conducting research to promote social justice and equity , which has undertaken a study to assess the participation of women at NREGS sites.

Prayas, Pune (from [Seema Kakade](#))

<http://www.ecc-prayas.org/>

Works to address the needs of disadvantaged society members- trying to use NREGP as a mechanism for enhancing availability of natural resources and women's livelihoods of

From [K. S. Gopal](#), Centre for Environment Concerns, Hyderabad

Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP), Andhra Pradesh

http://www.velugu.org/Features/serp_board.html

Society implementing World Bank supported Andhra Pradesh Poverty Reduction Project focusing on capacity building of poor women's federations.

International Labour Organization (ILO), New Delhi

<http://www.ilo.org/>

Seeks to promote social justice and internationally recognizes human and labour rights with focus on work related issues to maximize benefits for men and women workers.

Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan, Badwani (from [Rahul Banerjee](#), Aarohini Trust, Indore)

Navalpura, Badwani 451551 Madhya Pradesh

People based organisation involved in advocating and supporting the rights of Adivasis, Dalits and women to employment and bargaining power for their economic empowerment.

Uttar Pradesh Voluntary Action Network (UPVAN), Lucknow (from [Anurag Mishra](#))

<http://www.upvan.org/>

Network of 240 organizations working to provide opportunities for women to attain economic security through a campaign in 22 districts implementing NREG schemes

Recommended Websites

From [Shambhu Ghatak](#), JNU, New Delhi

Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India

<http://labour.nic.in/>

Cites information on the structure of the organization and various services offered and other details like labour statistics and wages etc.

Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India

<http://labourbureau.nic.in/>

Provides information about the functions of the labour bureau, list of publications covering latest surveys and studies conducted on different segments of the society

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), 2005 (from [Ramit Basu](#), UNDP, New Delhi and [Shambhu Ghatak](#), JNU, New Delhi)

<http://nrega.nic.in/>

Information on Act's objectives, including eliminating poverty and addressing gender inequalities- lists the programmes being implemented in 200 districts across the country

Recommended Contact

Madhuri Krishnamurthi (from [Rahul Banerjee](#), Aarohini Trust, Indore)

Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan, Navalpura, Badwani 451551 Madhya Pradesh;
madhuri.jads@gmail.com

Working at the ground level in Pati block towards addressing the problems of corruption and gender discrimination in implementation of NREGA.

Responses in Full

[Devika Biswas](#), SANCALP, Ranchi

We work in Jharkhand and Bihar.

We have not come across as yet any substantial changes in the participation of women in NREGP works here in Bihar and Jharkhand although most of the districts of these two states are covered by the scheme.

I have the following observations to make with regard to your query:

Worksite issues:

The ratio of working women is lesser as compared to men and they work long hours similar to men.

About payment of wages and what amount the women are not sure what they are getting hence I cannot comment on this. There are no facilities made available for drinking water, shed, crèche or first aid anywhere so far that has been witnessed.

Impact of women's work on sites:

As these women have been working since a long time, so no new or adverse impact has been seen on their adolescent girls, as they were not going to school earlier before the launching of scheme.

Women's Role in planning:

Women's role in planning is not visible but as in Bihar more than 50% women are today in PRI. We hope they do contribute significantly in planning but this is not so for the women labour force. I hope there would be separate studies for Bihar and Jharkhand as there are significant numbers of households headed by women and the Impact of NREGP is significant.

[Mohd Adil](#), Self-Reliant Initiative through Joint Action (SRIJAN), Jatara (*response 1*)

I am writing you from Tikamgarh District of Madhya Pradesh. Tikamgarh is one of the NREGP districts in Madhya Pradesh. The discussion initiated by you is very relevant to our context where we encounter ground realities. Let me share with you about the background in the context of the Bundelkhand part of Madhya Pradesh. This whole region faced inadequate rainfall like in Tikamgarh it was 500-600 mm though the average annual rainfall is more than 1000 mm. So where nationally people think that MP is flooded by heavy rains we are facing drought in Tikamgarh.

When NREGP was launched we organized a *Padyatra* in 7 villages of Jatara Block. The objective was to create awareness about the scheme and assess the situation of drought, hunger and migration in Tikamgarh. We found many irregularities in the implementation of the scheme like the people were not aware that this is not like other schemes but it is an Act

which ensures 100 days of employment guarantee. The other mandate of the scheme like drinking water, shed and medical facility were like unbelievable things for villagers.

Women participation depended on the village to village context but we found that on most of the sites 33% women were there. In terms of wages in most of the villages, *Sarpanches* were paying only 50 rupees while the minimum wage is Rs. 61.37 paise. No where we found the role of women in planning, in fact in most of the villages there are no gram *sabhas* or village meetings happening to articulate the local needs and priorities.

When we involved our SHG members in awareness generation and in the *padyatra* they articulated their needs and priorities to *sarpanches* and government officials like women always put scarcity of drinking water as one of the important priorities while these *sarpanches* are more inclined towards works like roads and structures where there are less number of man days involved and more money in making these structures.

After observing all these ground realities we (SRIJAN) came up with the idea of an ideal implementation of the scheme in one village and thereby demonstrating the model to other villages. We proposed to the Block Administration that under NREGP we can demonstrate a model implementation with the mandate in the Act and also help the panchayats in planning. We implemented a watershed work in one village with drinking water facility, medical kit, shed for lunch and ensuring participation of women on worksites. Above all, we made the full payment in the hands of women (Rs 61.37). It created history in the village that it is actually possible to get full wage rate.

In conclusion, I can say that from a gender perspective, the ground realities still are not favourable for women and the burden has increased on them. We need to do something so that we can ensure that women should not work only as labourers but they should have control over productive assets, enjoy increased opportunities and have a role to play in decision-making. SRIJAN is trying to do this by providing an enabling environment and voices to these women but we need more number of such grassroots organizations to do this.

Neelkanth Mishra, Centre for World Solidarity, Secunderabad

Gender issue in NREGA is one of the essential areas to be focused by the implementing organisations. We have done some campaigning intervention and field level capacity building of communities on NREGA issue in Jharkhand, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Bihar. Based on our experience and finding of gender concerns in NREGA, a workshop was organised in Hyderabad' 18-19 July'2006 where we identified some issues and probable suggestions/solutions to overcome the problems. Gender-based strategies and interventions to improve women's participation in NREGP have been recommended in three broad areas including ensuring women exercise right to work, entitling women's participation in works, empowering women's participation. These can be read at the following link: <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/res03100601.doc>

I think sharing of field level experiences and its articulation at national level consultative meeting will help group members to formulate gender-based strategies.

Arif Hussain, Madhya Pradesh- District Poverty Initiatives Project, Bhopal

As a member of a team working on a status report of NREGA-being prepared by Samarthan-CDS, Bhopal with support from PACS, I am coordinating an assessment exercise to be taken up across 6 states (Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra) covering 25 PACS-NREGA co-terminus Panchayats (all the villages of each Panchayat) in each state, thus covering 150 Panchayats and approximately 500 villages. The objective of the exercise is to find out the status of NREGA implementation, finding best

practices and detection of loopholes from a citizen's perspective. Points to be covered include, access of disadvantaged segments including women and the elderly.

We will be ready with the report by the end of this month and will be presenting it at the India Social Forum, 2006 at Delhi. I think the report will give you some ideas about the status of NREGA in terms of participation of women and the discrimination and disadvantages, if any, being faced by them.

Since the report is going to be based on quantitative and qualitative analysis, I request all the members to chip in with sources of case studies and reports related to NREGA, which can be analysed and accommodated in the study to make it broader based and reality reflecting.

Seema Kakade, Prayas, Pune

Here are a few observations about the 'gender' aspect of Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) in the state of Maharashtra. There are many 'women friendly' provisions in EGS, which have been adopted in NREGS. In Maharashtra, it is found that women constitute a major portion of EGS labourers. It is observed that where as men prefer to migrate to other parts of the district or state, women prefer to work on EGS in the vicinity of their village. The amenities mentioned in the law are rarely made available on the sites. Very few women are successful in obtaining maternity leave, although they are entitled to it. Women from migratory communities face multiple difficulties, including the questioning of their validity as 'EGS' labour.

Most of the women who work on EGS play the role of breadwinner in their families, majority of these are single women. This socio-economic vulnerability of women seriously affects their negotiating/bargaining power as EGS labourers. Male contractors manipulating women labourers at EGS sites, is not an uncommon situation. Apart from these governance related malpractices, planning of EGS works is also rarely in the interest of women. In Prayas, our position is that EGS should focus on reducing the drudgery of rural women, by enhancing the availability and productivity of local natural resources, which are a critical source of livelihood for women.

It will be worth sharing gender related concerns from various states, and plan strategies for effective utilisation of spaces in NREGS, in the context of such concerns. Maharashtra certainly has many insights and lessons to share on this front.

Ramit Basu, UNDP, New Delhi

Thanks for raising such a critical issue. I think the point of involving women in planning for NREGA works is the most important which in fact develops a sense of ownership and ensures sustainability of assets created.

There have been instances wherein women (who usually outnumber men at work sites) have been found working without understanding the rationale behind taking up that work and most importantly 'how many' in the village will benefit from that work. This is simply because villagers especially those working at the sites (I will restrain from using the word 'labour') are still not aware of the fact that the entire planning for NREGA works have to be done by the Gram Sabha. (Little has been done to make them aware and also the rationale behind this innovative programme.)

Interestingly, women can play a vital role in planning the works especially those leading to water conservation and creation of facilities, which will cater to water availability in the village. They have a complete knowledge of the sources of water for various purposes within and out of the village and hence their collective decision will actually help in creating

structures, which will cater to the needs of the majority of the population, rather than benefiting a handful.

The same can be applied in the case of plantations and land reclamation etc.

Barring a few instances, women are not being properly encouraged in planning for works under NREGA, which not only leads to lack of ownership and a short-term vision (wage centric) but also improper sanction of works thus rendering the entire exercise futile.

NREGA leading to revival of agriculture and food security measures in very backward areas can effectively be achieved if women are allowed to propose works and plan accordingly. This can be started with woman headed panchayats having very strong and active woman's group which can adopt innovative means of involving people especially the stakeholders in planning and implementation of works.

[K. S. Gopal](#), Centre for Environment Concerns, Hyderabad

My response below is focused on what we are observing in Ananthpur district in Andhra Pradesh, as that is where we did a pilot and a major social audit exercise was undertaken. We are accurate on these facts while we know what is happening elsewhere during our field visits. Currently we conducted a social audit on NREGA in Medak district and we will give further clarifications. I could also share our social audit in Ananthpur as that was done in Telugu and is being translated.

At the outset, I would request that Andhra Pradesh experience be seen in a different light from Rajasthan as this state has seen massive food for work schemes and hence many persons in the chain are very smart.

The average men-women at worksites we are observing are about 60% men and 40% women. But, the new dynamics is interesting. One is that in many new sites the women are not even ten percent even though this contravenes the law. In places where more women are working this should not be seen as statistics only, but be seen also from the scope of engagement in employment by being in a family with other male members capable of manual work. There are a lot of complaints that women are increasingly getting excluded from works especially if as a family they are unable to take up work. In Borampalli village of Kalyandurgam Mandal over two hundred women said that they were not being called for work at all. This is worse and clear in the case of single women and they are unable to find work in NREGA as they do not have a family and hence are not able to give the outturn. I suggest you list out single women in any village and check how much wage days and wages they got.

Our feeling is that women will increasingly be edged out unless they are part of the family. This is because a group of workers are taking up one piece of work and largely this involves one or two families or units coming together and doing the whole work. If work is done at the family level it is obvious that equal wages will be on paper as the issue will be resolved at the domestic level. This is happening as women's productivity is low and as the payment is based on out-turn, and so the men are taking over most NREGA works. In fact we now find the average wage being received per day is coming to Rs. 250 and for such wages only men will be preferred because of their out-turn. The Andhra Pradesh government is thinking of doing something to see that such huge daily wage does not occur. It would be useful for the government to analyze the reasons for this. In one village, we got one works especially for women. But here also we had difficulties as the local officials insisted that the law envisages a proportion even though it is being overlooked in places dominated by women. But we overcame this and this work task is being done exclusively by women. Once the payments are made we will advice the outturn and wage received.

Drinking water supply has been given to women but in most places, they have not been paid. This is because the entire work place facility has been entrusted to Velugu, which is a World Bank poverty project in Andhra Pradesh to form women groups and the water carriers do not know who will pay the money. It is unclear whether payment is the responsibility of the Mandal officer or the sub-contractors. So women are dropping out from this task which was considered their monopoly.

I guess the above answers the specific first set of questions raised by Ratna regarding work sites. No flexible timing, wages go inside the family, no crèche anywhere in Ananthpur district or in Andhra Pradesh. Earlier shade was provided and that is no longer there. Only water is being provided in most places but it is caught between two govt. bodies leading to non-payments. No tools given to women while some men got crowbars. SERP, the Andhra Pradesh government NGO implementing the World Bank scheme and entrusted with work place facilities contacted to get figures and the statewide position.

We need time to say what is the impact of women being kept away on others in the family save what has been the experience in earlier employment schemes. We have not closely looked at it, as it is not been our priority and guess too early to make a valid comment.

With regard to women say in the choice of works and participation in gram sabhas, women complain that even in the works listed they are not allowed to make choice on where they want to work. That is the bothering issue for women seeking wages. The selection of shelf of works which is currently being done in a top-down manner could be planned in a more participatory and bottom-up manner.

Finally, I will like to place the issue of injustice to women before Ratna and the ILO to study.

CEC succeed in ensuring the minimum wage in NREGA through a time and motion study and is this recommended for adoption by the central govt. to get parity between SSR and minimum wages. We then tried to flag a debate on the issue of equal wages between men and women and how work is measured and estimated. The payment for a work is based on measurement the work recorded is based what are done by the men. Thus while the extent of digging and soil conditions forms the basis of payment for the work, the task done by women in terms of carrying the load, the extent of this load or the underfoot conditions for undertaking their task does not figure in wage calculation.

So we find two men digging and four women carrying the soil and when the wages are received the men want half the amount divided between the two while the women are left to share the balance between the four. The work of the women is thus "invisible" and seen as "attendant" and almost "dispensable" in nature and not hence meriting measurement. This leads to the wage differential especially as there is a sexual division in such works. We also pointed out that men work with tools while women do not. For instance in NREGA money is payable for purchase and sharpening of shovels used by men but no effort is made to address the drudgery of the tasks done by women.

The issues of gender injustice, especially when women constitute the largest potential workforce in NREGA merits challenging the constructs of measurement, payment and related work place issues. I may further add that the complaint of women is that the design, structure and materials used decide who is seen valuable as a worker. Women loose their self image and have to beg for work and take what is paid because we do not value their work and measure it but also prefer models in our structures that was preferred by contractors as profit was there only motive. So unless all these are equally challenged we will be touching only the surface of gender issues facing NREGA.

Bonani Dhar, UNIFEM, New Delhi

It is interesting to see that the Panchayats are instrumental in implementing NREGS. The question is, the Panchayat leaders may be in the best interest of people's welfare, trying to implement the scheme to the best of their ability, but are they gender sensitive to the actual implementation of the scheme? In several places, women's share of workforce participation has been recorded more than men in NREGS, but do they have facilities to protect their infants, feed them on time, or are there gender supportive attitudes and gender justice ensured?

Several social audits and documentations have been carried out by journals and newspapers to understand the gaps in implementation of NREGS and in particular how the program had been impacting women, or what are the gaps in benefiting women. The studies conducting social audit have documented particularly in Dungarpur District in Rajasthan, where women are in majority in availing the benefits of the scheme as men still choose to migrate in search of jobs and have to face hardships due to lack of gender insensitive support infrastructure and planning. The link below documents the findings in details: <http://www.hinduonnet.com/2006/05/11/stories/2006051105411000.htm>

NREGS has gained popularity over a period of time, however, benefiting population are still ignorant about the Act and their right to information. Program in Action stories launched a series of action stories in spreading information to people, which is a very innovative step. For detailed information, please see the link below: <http://www.empowerpoor.org/programmereport.asp?report=316>

The methods of spreading information by the Program in Action Stories are interesting and have a lot of variety and innovativeness considering the people's literacy level in villages and their social and cultural acceptance. In one of the studies, it has been documented that women form about 73% of the total workforce in NREGS in the area studied, which is an indicator of economic self-sufficiency of women, but the question of sustainability and continuity of employment holds key to economic strength building over a period of time.

The question is whether or not NREGS is sustainable if it is to reconstruct roads year after year. The issue is to utilize this fund to create opportunities for sustainable livelihood options for rural population to enable them to earn their livelihood in their villages so that they do not need to migrate to cities. It is time the Panchayats plan the intervention taking the available knowledge and apply it to provide opportunities to rural population in achieving sustainable livelihood. One of the fine examples of creating the concept "livelihood basket" through sustainable land based interventions, has been found to be successful in Maharashtra's most degraded land sites. For more information, please visit the following site: <http://www.infochangeindia.org/analysis133.jsp>

Hence, to ensure sustainability of the program, to ensure economic self-sufficiency of the rural population and check migration to cities, the Panchayats would need to carry out a more holistic planning, ensuring that the scheme is taken as a support to the most needy and economically backward families, and start building up the economic strength from that level upwards. The tracking of progress through indicators has to be instilled in the Panchayat members. The self help groups support would need to be taken in planning and implementing gender sensitive measures in NREGS application. Gender sensitivity in implementation ensuring adequate support to women is imperative, if a large number of women form NREGS beneficiaries. This means Panchayat members would need to be gender sensitized. The Panchayats would need holistic planning taking the existing knowledge base into consideration. This has to be promoted through district administration.

Rahul Banerjee, Aarohini Trust, Indore

I would like to report in brief, about what has happened in one tribal Fifth Schedule area in Madhya Pradesh regarding the NREGA. In the Pati Block of Barwani district where there is a mass organisation of the dalits and adivasis called Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan, the women of the villages had submitted proposals for water and soil conservation works, but these were not sanctioned. Instead, other works were initiated and in some of them, in contravention of all norms, earth-moving machines were used to do the work while muster rolls were altered to make this possible. Payments were also not being made properly. Protests from the Sangathan led to a public hearing being organized by the administration to resolve the grievances at Pati in which the District Collector was present. When the members of the Sangathan tried to voice their complaints, the sarpanches manhandled the women and men. Several complaints have been lodged with authorities, right from the police station to higher levels; however, the grievances have not yet been redressed. Instead, one of the adivasi activists of the Sangathan is being accused of being a hardened criminal.

Whatever may be the laudable intentions behind the NREGA, at the ground level in Pati block the problems of corruption and gender discrimination continue and attempts to protest this have been repressed. For further information regarding this instance in Pati block please contact madhuri.jads@gmail.com

Anurag Mishra, Uttar Pradesh Voluntary Action Network India (UPVAN), Lucknow

I have been associated with a state level network known as UPVAN with a membership base of more than 240 organizations across 50 districts of Uttar Pradesh. We have been continuously involved with advocacy for various issues that affect the voluntary sector as well as communities at large. From past six months, we have been advocating on various issues of NREGS and its effective implementation. As you, all are aware that NREGA has been one of the most promising Acts since independence which guarantees an unskilled wage full employment to any willing rural family. Since its enactment, it is difficult for us to understand how the Gram Panchayat will take up the issue of creating sustainable and productive assets, which could lead towards sustainable development. In order to fix up the priority under NREGS annual action plan and perspective plan for every Gram Panchayat has become a must.

Our study as well as ongoing campaign in 22 districts of Uttar Pradesh has clearly shown that development works in Panchayats are being initiated without identifying the priorities. Secondly, the Panchayats are totally unaware about the provisions under the Act and that a minimum of 50% of work under NREGS are to be taken up by the concerned Gram Panchayats. To our surprise different types of work that have been undertaken under different Gram Panchayats all across 22 NREGS districts of Uttar Pradesh, the officials sitting at Lucknow play a key role in identifying the work and the work is generally circulated to all the concerned CDOs (Chief Development Officer) for its enactments in different panchayats. The two works undertaken are respectively afforestation (about 560 lakhs of saplings all across 22 districts) and second is of renovation of local ponds in the village. It is really difficult to understand that how the Panchayats are involved in the micro planning process as envisaged under the Act. The gram pradhan just remains as a signatory to different cheque books for the expenditure incurred under the above two schemes without any Panchayat approval for the same.

Under the above given situation it is really difficult to understand how:

- Employment will be provided to the locals as there is no bottom up planning.
- Sustainable and durable assets will be created.
- Gram panchayats will really be empowered to draft out the micro plan and set out their priorities, around which the edifice scheme implementation has been woven.

- Marginalized and other deprived sections of society especially women will get the job security.
- Norms for budgetary allocations by central govt. to the concerned state governments is being done under NREGS.
- The central govt. is monitoring the scheme in context to the provisions of the Act.

I would like all our friends to suggest ways in which we could tackle the above problem and as we are into the campaign with focus on awareness generation to the masses as well as hand holding to Gram panchayats in context to NREGS it will really help us in reshaping our campaign strategy and pressuring the administrative machinery for its rightful implementation.

Mohd Adil, Self-Reliant Initiative through Joint Action (SRIJAN), Jatara *(response 2)*

I am writing to you from the Tikamgarh district of Madhya Pradesh. Here we are doing the same work as Anurag Mishra in one development block and are facing more or less the same issues as those pointed out by him.

In Madhya Pradesh too, it is a top down approach where the administration sitting in Bhopal decides that under NREGA we have to build 'n' number of ponds and have to involve the Panchayats in *Jatropha* plantation in so many hectares. The revolutionary aspects of this Act are not evident here in its application. I would like to share what we are doing so that it may help in your context.

We have proposed to the district administration that we will help the panchayats in identifying work and make a perspective plan at each village level. After generating an inventory, we will help the gram sabhas to prioritize what the Panchayats need to do in the coming years. We also proposed that we will help Panchayats in the implementation of certain works where technical know how is required. Since this area is facing drought since the past 4 years, we are helping the panchayat to demand more watershed works and then building their capacity; as well as demonstrating models through the implementation in a few villages using the watershed and the area treatment approach.

The essence is that if demand would be forthcoming from gram Panchayats that these are the list of works, which the Panchayats would want to do, then this would put pressure on the administration to release the money accordingly.

M. A. Arun, Vijay Times, Bangalore

Based on a 4-day report from Raichur District in Karnataka, which I filed for my paper Vijay Times, Bangalore on NREGS, below, are some observations from the field.

- The demand for work by women in Raichur District of Karnataka is not being met.
- In certain works, such as tank desilting, there is a culturally-set division of labour. Men dig earth and women load them to tractors. So an excess of women creates an imbalance and reduces the output. So, in many villages women are asked to come to work with 'male partners' and single women are turned back as 'liabilities'. This norm goes against widows, deserted women, devadasis and women whose husbands have migrated. These women are also among the poorest individuals in the village; they are near destitute, and hence need the work most.
- Since wages under NREGP are linked to output, women are demanding work such as earthen bunding and afforestation, which they could handle better.
- There is inadequate expenditure of funds allocated to panchayats for NREGP.
- Payment of wages is delayed but workers want continued employment, which strengthens their credibility in the eyes of finance providers/moneylenders.
- Wherever work is provided, it has the potential to curb migration.

- Awareness amongst labourers of their 'right to work' and application process is low.
- Posts related to NREGP implementation such as computer operator and technical assistant that can be useful in expediting the paper work and payment, need to be filled urgently.
- To check corruption and fake entries in muster rolls NREGA requires government to pay people through cheques. But rural banks have neither interest nor infrastructure to open accounts for a large number of people.
- NREGS has a transparency condition that requires all panchayat offices to display vital data about the programme- works in progress, employment generated, funds spent etc. However, panchayats have violated this legal requirement.
- In some villages, perspective plans have been made with the help of NGOs to identify works that can be taken up to meet the demand for jobs.

The complete article can be accessed at the Vijay Times website <http://vijaytimespaper.com/login.php>. Click on the "free access to e-paper" and search for a copy on the archives (September 19).

Shambhu Ghatak, JNU, New Delhi

This is to mention some of the key factors (given below) to be looked at with regard to the success of NREGA.

- Ratio of men to women as rural manual labourers should be according to the law
- Payment of minimum wages, which is hassle free
- Unemployment compensation
- Presence of first aid in case of minor accidents
- A sexual harassment free environment
- Completion of a particular work with the right kind of material
- Cooperation from the panchayats, district level authorities, and officials
- Presence of some researcher/resource person who can be of help to provide knowledge about the NREGA to the public, particularly through Adult Literacy Campaigns/ Missions.
- Role of IT to feed data into the computers/ intranet facility for NREGA- the software prepared by Microsoft could be an example. Also, GIS/MIS could be of use.
- Provision of incentives--giving the villages/panchayats some kind of monetary compensation, if they have successfully implemented the NREGA, compared to the rest--though identification could be a difficult task here
- Release of timely funds and food grains by the State/Centre
- Seasonality and weather condition
- State of the local economy- multiple cropping; kind of crops grown; alternative forms of employment other than depending on agriculture; kinds of occupation, income and savings
- level; role of micro credit and small and micro enterprises; Successful running of other programmes such as the ICDS .

Important links:

http://nrega.nic.in/nrega_council_rules.pdf

<http://nrega.nic.in/IMPLDIS.asp>

<http://nrega.nic.in/>

www.censusindia.net

www.labourbureau.nic.in

<http://labour.nic.in/>

Some states like Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra are supposed to be performing well in terms of implementing the NREGA. But grassroots level reality needs to be highlighted to substantiate this fact as successful implementation is a difficult task.

Alok Pandey, PRIA, Jaipur

I would like to share some of my observations on this question in the context of Rajasthan's situation.

It is true that in Rajasthan you will find that women are working in large numbers at the work sites under NREGS. However, this opens another dimension of poverty. It shows the vulnerable condition of women in society. The women who are working are mostly coming from the families whose sources of income are almost zero. Most of the women are either pregnant or aged (physically weak). This ultimately converts into low wages for that particular woman or for the group in which she is working.

In most of the cases, the time of work is fixed (mostly decided by the male counterparts). This makes women doubly burdened. She has to perform her household work in addition to the work she is supposed to do at the worksite.

One another thing that I would like to mention is related to the Five year planning of the villages. In the last month, the Government of Rajasthan issued a notice to develop the Five-year plans of the districts. Exercises related to Five Year Plan were supposed to complete in all the villages as well as the municipalities.

During a training programme the Programme Officer posted at Karauli block told us that the Annual Plan under NREGA would be made separately and for that they will call another Gram Sabha in the next month. This reflected the communication gap within the department. We have conveyed this matter to the Principal Secretary (Panchayati Raj and Rural Development). Most of us are aware in which manner these plans are being made.

Most of the experiences show that the works that are identified under the NREGS are in favour of men (socially as well as economically). Women have very limited choice in the kinds of works that they would like to do.

Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Work and Employment Community or Gender Community at se-emp@solutionexchange-un.net.in or se-gen@solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject heading "RE: [se-emp][se-gen] Query: Participation of Women in NREGP Works, from ISST, New Delhi (Experiences). Additional Reply"

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See Hindi Version of the [Query](#)
See Hindi Version of the [Summary](#) (available from 10 December 2008)

Download the PDF version of the Consolidated Reply at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/cr-se-emp-04110801.pdf> (Size: ... KB)



Poverty

Work and Employment Community



Decentralization Community

Solution Exchange for the Work and Employment Community

Solution Exchange for the Decentralization Community Consolidated Reply

Query: Taking NREGA beyond Wages to Sustainable Livelihoods – Experiences; Advice

Compiled by [Ranu Bhogal](#) and [Joy Elamon](#), Resource Persons and [Warisha Yunus](#) and [Tina Mathur](#), Research Associates

Issue Date: 3 December 2008

From [D. Narendranath](#), Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN), New Delhi

Posted 4 November 2008

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) that came into force in September 2005 is a rights based programme, which makes the state legally accountable to provide wage employment to those who demand it. It also aims to strengthen decentralized planning and implementation by making Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), the implementing agency for the scheme.

Unfortunately, the results on the ground are way below expectations. According to a Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) report, a mere 10 percent or 0.22 crore (of 2.10 crore) employed households received full 100 days of promised work. The average employment per household was 43 days in 2006-07 and 35 days in 2007-08; thus the overall impact on the economic well-being of a poor household is clearly small as of now.

One of the areas where NREGS can – and needs to - make a significant difference is where rainfed agriculture is the major source of livelihood. It may be noted that two-thirds of the farmlands in our country are rain-fed. These are also regions with high levels of poverty. Strategic use of NREGS for

comprehensive development of rainfed regions can increase productivity, incomes and reduce land degradation. If used well, it can enable a rural household to come out of social safety nets in two to three years by creating or enhancing productive assets in a planned manner. However, all of this requires participatory planning at village and hamlet level. This poses the following challenges:

- Preparation of participatory peoples' plans especially those that include the marginalized and disadvantaged requires a fair amount of social mobilization that calls for a specific orientation, skills and deliberate effort. Involvement of Panchayats does not ensure this automatically and often they are not equipped to do so in the first place.
- Additionally, Panchayats lack the ability and the resources to undertake livelihood interventions such as land husbandry, in-situ rainwater husbandry, and watershed planning and development, etc.
- Comprehensive natural resource development necessitates work on private lands whereas NREGS guidelines prefer work over community lands.
- Convergence with other area development programmes can create synergy and maximize impact on the livelihood of the poor whereas NREGS operates as a stand-alone scheme.

In this regard I have the following questions:

- How can the NREGS implementation strategies be modified to operate within a comprehensive livelihood framework rather than just generate wage labour?
- Are you aware of any experiences where NREGS resources have been used to promote livelihoods following a comprehensive livelihood framework?
- How can the capacity of Panchayats be improved for better implementation of the scheme?

The one day experience sharing workshop being organized by the National Resource Centre for Rural Livelihoods would deliberate on the above issues. The workshop seeks to examine ways to use NREGS to promote sustainable livelihoods and reconcile the views of practitioners, academics and policy makers.

We look forward to your responses which we want to use as inputs to this workshop.

Responses were received, with thanks, from

1. [A. S. Malik](#), Department of Public Administration, Kurukshetra University, Haryana
2. [Sarit Kumar Rout](#), Population Council, Bhubaneswar
3. [Sridhar Kolluru](#), Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (APMAS), Hyderabad
4. [Ch. N. V. Srinivasa Rao](#), Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (APMAS), Hyderabad
5. [Govind Dhaske](#), Fraternity of Local Knowledge Saviours (FOLKS), Mumbai
6. [Rajesh Kr. Sinha](#), Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi
7. [Vidhya Das](#), Agragamee, Kashipur, Orissa
8. [Samir Garg](#), Adivasi Adhikar Samiti, Chattisgarh
9. [Arun Jindal](#), Society for Sustainable Development, Karauli, Rajasthan
10. [Kris Dev](#), Life Line to Business (LL2B), Chennai
11. [P. Madhava Rao](#), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New Delhi
12. [Ravi Kumar and Kalpana](#), Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN) Secunderabad
13. [Ajay Singh Gangwar](#), Government of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal
14. [Subhash Mendapurkar](#), Society for Social Uplift Through Rural Action (SUTRA), Solan, Himachal Pradesh
15. [P. K. Chaubey](#), Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi
16. [Dilnawaz Mahanti](#), International Labour Organization (ILO) Consultant, New Delhi
17. [Ashok Kumar Pathak](#), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Meerut, Uttar Pradesh
18. [Anshuman Karol](#), Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi
19. [Venkatesh](#), Bangalore Medical College, Bangalore
20. [Subhransu Tripathy](#), Entrepreneurship Development Institute (EDI), Ahmedabad

21. [Shakeb Nabi](#), CARE India, Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar
22. [Rishu Garg](#), Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action and Local Involvement (ARAVALI), Jaipur
23. [Harathi Vageeshan](#), Centre for World Solidarity, Hyderabad
24. [Vinod Kumar](#), Maithri, Palakkad, Kerala
25. [Chandreyee Das](#), INSPIRATION, Kolkata*
26. [Shailendra Nath Pandey](#), Development Alternatives, New Delhi*

**Offline Contribution*

Further contributions are welcome!

[Summary of Responses](#)
[Comparative Experiences](#)
[Related Resources](#)
[Responses in Full](#)

Summary of Responses

Responding to the query on 'Taking NREGA beyond Wages to Sustainable Livelihoods,' members shared their experiences and gave several recommendations for modifying the implementation strategies highlighting the importance of building the capacity of stakeholders in the process, especially panchayat functionaries.

One of the key recommendations mentioned for improving **NREGS implementation strategy** is to **promote the convergence** of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) activities with other programmes, such as Watershed Development Programmes, Comprehensive Land Development Projects (CLDP), Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS), and the National Horticulture Mission, that government functionaries are familiar with and line-departments have the capacity to implement. In addition, convergence can strengthen enterprise promotion, as done successfully in village of [Andhra Pradesh](#) and complement programs like Indira Awas Yojana by "financing" the labour component of house construction. Another idea was to link NREGS works with government social security schemes.

Further, members stressed on creating 'durable assets' which generate wage labour **along with strengthening agriculture**, as done in [Chhattisgarh](#) rather than focusing just on wage generation. In addition, they suggested pumping the wage income back into agriculture and land development for enhanced income on a sustainable basis as happened in [Srikakulam](#), [Prakasam](#), and [Nalgonda](#) districts of **Andhra Pradesh**. Moreover, since NREGS works when executed during peak agriculture season have led to shortage of agricultural labour by virtue of its higher wages, members recommended creating a NREGS activity calendar so farming community is not adversely affected. In essence, they stressed on proper planning so that 100 days of NREGS employment is incremental to the income from agriculture and other sources.

Respondents also highlighted the importance of **decentralized planning** according to region specific needs and taking up activities such as, development of pastureland as in Brickchiawas village of Ajmer district or creating storage facilities for onion producers in Jaipur district of Rajasthan under NREGS to maximize its benefits. However, true decentralized planning, they pointed out is possible only with people's participation mobilized through dynamic individuals at the grassroots working with and for them. They also suggested planning after separate consultations especially with vulnerable groups like small and marginal farmers, women, widows, old and deserted people.

Apart from issues of implementation, members highlighted administrative bottlenecks such as delayed job allocation & payment of wages that have seriously restricted the benefits of NREGS from reaching the poor on time. The absence of above leads to NREGS losing its utility for the 'real' poor with negligible impact in terms of controlling distress migration to urban areas- defeating the very purpose of putting such a scheme in place. In addition, discussants highlighted the need for measures for checking corruption and irregularities by introducing innovative payment system using [biometric cards](#).

Respondents also recommended strengthening the capacities of Monitoring Committees and promoting the role NGOs can play in supporting the Social Audit provision of NREGS designed to ensure accountability and transparency, like some organizations did effectively in [Orissa](#). At the same time, some members pointed to the experience in Kerala, where despite well functioning Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), the implementation of NREGS is poor. One suggestion for addressing this was to remove the implementation of NREGS from the purview of the Rural Development Department, and create a performance-linked system and hire young professionals to do the job at the district and block levels.

While enumerating various problems plaguing the scheme, members nonetheless shared **experiences where NREGS resources have been used to promote livelihoods** through investments in productive assets thus diversifying livelihood sources. For example, in Jhalawar District, Rajasthan people used their increased income to buy land and in Andhra Pradesh, increased income was used to develop and buy land, rear and sell livestock and enterprise promotion. In Chhattisgarh 12,000 farmers got access to irrigation and 18,000 farmers improved their land in addition to creating public assets like village ponds, tanks etc.-all through NREGS activities.

Besides, NREGS work has provided opportunities for women with significant income enhancement; increased bargaining power of the "krishi mazdoor"; increased food security and access to health and education facilities; increased credit worthiness of the poor and reduced exploitative debt and distress migration among other things.

On the question of **building capacities of stakeholders, especially panchayat functionaries**, members stressed on training them to develop 'micro-level livelihoods development plans' based on the natural resources and occupational proclivities of the community. They stressed on the importance of panchayat functionaries having a vision and the requisite skills for planning and executing NREGS to realize the 'sustainable livelihoods agenda'- possibly by focusing on interventions that have the potential for mass replication.

In the absence of capacity building inputs and training, officials would continue taking decisions on behalf of people as in [Haryana](#) and [Orissa](#). Respondents also suggested sharing project reports of innovative projects taken up by Gram Panchayats elsewhere to educate and empower the functionaries to come out of their dependency on bureaucrats for any kind of project development and decision-making.

Commenting on the related issue of lack of adequate staff at the panchayat level, members recommended equipping PRIs with adequate administrative and technical staff like Employment Guarantee Assistants, Secretaries and Junior Engineers- which according to a recent [study](#) done on NREGS in 13 states is inadequate. Armed with technical and administrative support, better skills and information, the increased ability of panchayat functionaries to converge between various government programs can make NREGA function in a comprehensive rather than piecemeal manner. Members also emphasized working simultaneously to make men and women aware of various provisions of the scheme and promote ownership and active involvement in the planning process at the village level.

Finally, discussants highlighted the key **role of civil society organizations** (CSOs) in making NREGS a program for poverty reduction, by generating awareness and mobilizing people to demand 100 days of

work as more wages (or unemployment allowance) provides funds for investing in productive assets (i.e. land, livestock, freeing up mortgaged assets etc.). Further CSOs can play a critical role in demanding greater accountability & transparency, and in pressurizing the government for better monitoring mechanisms.

Overall, members felt a shared understanding and vision is necessary among various stakeholders on the use of NREGS for promoting sustainable livelihoods. They also recommended the guidelines be flexible enough to accommodate variations across states.

Comparative Experiences

Andhra Pradesh

From [Ravi Kumar and Kalpana](#), *Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN)*, Secunderabad

NREGS Employment Generation Allows Supplementary Livelihoods, Magadhara Village, Srikakulam District

Local organizations collected details on all the households that had not received job cards in the village and helped them in secure cards and a post office savings account. As a result, villagers can now take advantage of NREGS work, for example, one woman worked for 56 days and earned Rs. 4,000, an additional income of Rs. 2,500 as compared to earlier, and enabling her to reside permanently in the village and with the surplus income she has undertaken goat rearing and agriculture. Read [more](#)

Increased Productivity and Livelihood Opportunities Results in Asset Development, Mirjapeta Village, Prakasam District

Fallow lands were identified in the village and a sanction obtained from the panchayat for the development of this land. The work involved with developing the lands generated 70-80 days of wage employment for 45 households. Additionally, from the wages generated, each household developed its own lands, resulting in increased productivity and the potential to improve the livestock holdings of each family. Read [more](#)

Increased Wage Income and Job Assurance Enables Loans, Virareddypally Village, Nalgonda District

The NREGA job guarantee enabled villagers to earn Rs 70-80 per day as compared to just Rs. 20-30 earlier, increasing the villagers' credit worthiness and opportunities for better livelihood. This increase in income and assurance of a job enabled one villager to apply for a loan from a cooperative thrift society, which she invested in land for digging a borewell. Paddy has been cultivated on that land which gives her an additional yearly income. Read [more](#)

Convergence of Programmes Promotes Livelihoods (from [Sridhar Kolluru](#) and [Ch. N. V. Srinivasa Rao](#), *Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (APMAS)*, Hyderabad)

In many villages in the state, barren land has been reclaimed through effective coordination between Watershed Development Programmes, Comprehensive Land Development Projects (CLDPs), Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and other government programmes. Such convergence has resulted in generation of wage labour, creation of durable assets and enterprise promotion.

Rajasthan

Comprehensive Livelihood Development Strategies have Limited Impact (from [Arun Jindal](#), *Society for Sustainable Development*, Karauli, Rajasthan)

The Rajasthan government launched the Keshavbadi Scheme under NREGA, which includes components for horticulture development, private land development and water resource development for farmers. However, the scheme could not be effectively implemented with each farmer, as not all of them were interested in these activities. Rather than this comprehensive approach, water conservation activities implemented through NREGA have promoted livelihood enhancement.

Orissa

Village Communities Struggle to Get Work under NREGA, Nawrangpur, Koraput and Kalahandi (from [Vidhya Das](#), *Aragamee, Kashipur, Orissa*)

Many villages in the state did not receive more than 21 days of employment. There have also been huge irregularities like misreporting of the number of cards, and non-payment and under-payment of wages. Mobilized by local civil society organizations, villagers complained to the Block Development Officer and conducted a sit in protest (dharna). Finally, they were paid unemployment allowance and work started under NREGA.

Lack of Awareness of NREGA Potential Limits Benefits, Sundergarh, Jharsuguda, Kandhmal (from [Sarit Kumar Rout](#), *Population Council, Bhubaneswar*)

Awareness generation is a pre-requisite for NREGA to achieve full benefits. In Orissa, it has been found that the concept of livelihoods generation and community participation is missing. The officials prepare projects rather than people and there is little emphasis on creation of durable assets. This has resulted in limited benefits, particularly in the livelihoods aspect of the programme.

Chhattisgarh

Encouraging Livelihoods Promotion in NREGA (from [Samir Garg](#), *Adivasi Adhikar Samiti, Chhattisgarh*)

Work on private lands (bundling, leveling and digging tube well) has the potential for replication and livelihoods promotion. Land leveling has generated an addition of 10-15% to output of the poorest farmers in Chhattisgarh while dug wells have greater potential. The government has generated many works on private lands in the state. This has resulted in livelihoods promotion through participatory means.

Haryana

Peoples' Participation Missing in NREGA Planning, (from [A. S. Malik](#), *Department of Public Administration, Kurukshetra University, Haryana*)

Activities under NREGA are selected by office of the Block Development Project Officer and the panchayat leaders are less involved in Haryana. Many times this happens, as *panchayat* representatives are ill informed. This has resulted in selection of those activities, which are simple to implement, and innovative projects are not undertaken. This points to the requirement of awareness generation before NREGA can promote livelihoods.

Related Resources

Recommended Documentation

Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Implementation of NREGA (from [Rajesh Kr. Sinha](#), *PRIA, New Delhi*)

Report; PRIA; New Delhi; August 2008

Available at http://www.pria.org/NREGA%20Phase%20-%20III_Aug%2008.pdf (PDF; Size: 117.1 KB)

Highlights the gaps in implementation of NREGA and focuses on alternative initiatives to strengthen the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in its implementation.

Illusions of Change (from [Vidhya Das](#), *Aragamee, Kashipur, Orissa*)

Paper; by Vidhya Das and Pramod Pradhan; *Aragamee and Economic and Political Weekly*; 11 August 2007; Permission Required: Yes, free registration required

Available at http://epw.in/epw/user/loginArticleError.jsp?hid_artid=10904

Analyses the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act as implemented in Orissa and its poor outcomes in the State.

Social Security Administration in India: Study of Provident Funds and Pension Scheme (from [P. Madhava Rao](#), *UNDP, New Delhi*)

Paper; by P. Madhava Rao; December 2005

Available at http://mpr.ub.uni-muenchen.de/1919/1/MPRA_paper_1919.pdf (PDF; Size: 1.38 MB)

Discusses social security systems and how to link capacity development, creation of employment opportunities and to develop an enabling environment for utilize of these opportunities.

NREGA is Going Hi-Tech In Bihar (from [Kris Dev](#), *Lifeline to Business, Chennai*)

Article; by Vidya Viswanathan; *Civil Society*; June 2007

Available at <http://www.civilsocietyonline.com/June07/india07ngrea.asp>

Describes how various technologies, like biometric cards are enabling the identification of individuals, marking attendance and tracking job cards in Bihar for NREGS.

Recommended Organizations and Programmes

Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivrudhi Society (APMAS), Hyderabad (from [Sridhar Kolluru](#) and [Ch. N. V. Srinivasa Rao](#) and [Ravi Kumar and Kalpana](#), *WASSAN, Secunderabad*)

Plot 20, Rao & Raju Colony, Road 2, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034 Andhra Pradesh; Tel: 91-40-2354-7952/27; Fax: 91-40-2354-7926; info@apmas.org; www.apmas.org

Aims at Self Help Group promotion, has undertaken several initiatives of convergent livelihoods promotion and has conducted a study on the implementation of NREGS in Andhra Pradesh.

Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP), International Labour Organization (ILO), Switzerland (from [Dilnawaz Mahanti](#), *ILO Consultant, New Delhi*)

4, Route des Morillons, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland; Tel: 41-22-799-65-46; Fax: 41-22-799-84-22; eiip@ilo.org; <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/recon/eiip/>

A unit of the International Labour Organization (ILO) that Promotes infrastructure investments towards creation of employment and access to services for the poor.

From [Sridhar Kolluru](#), *Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivrudhi Yojana (APMAS), Hyderabad*

Ananta Paryawarna Pariraksana Samiti (APPS), Anantapur

Door No. 13-724-39-A, Khajanagar, Near R.T.C. Bus Stand, Anantapur 515001 Andhra Pradesh; Tel: 91-8554-277258; appsatp@yahoo.co.in

Network of organizations working to integrate convergence models into the design and delivery of NREGA.

Jana Jaagriti, Anantapur

Near Weekly Market, P.O. Tanakal, Anantapur 515751 Andhra Pradesh; Tel: 91-8498-232373/234986; jjkdr@rediffmail.com, janajaagriti_kdr@rediffmail.com; Contact: Mr. D. P. Balaram, Executive Director; Tel: 91-9440224274

Organization working with an innovative approach in Andhra Pradesh to integrate other livelihood enhancement programs with the activities planned under NREGS.

Rural Integrated Development Society (RIDS), Ananthapur

13-724-39-A, Khaja Nagar, Near RTC Bus Stand, Ananthapur 515001 Andhra Pradesh; Tel: 91-8551-286473; ridsgrl@yahoo.com, appsatp@yahoo.co.in; Contact: Mr. V. Kristappa, President; Tel: 91-9440528626

Society working for integrated rural development by following the convergence approach, especially with regard to NREGS.

Rural Environmental Development Society (REDS), Ananthapur

1-1160-1E, M. P. Ramachandra Reddy Building, MP Street, Kadiri 515 91, Ananthapur District Andhra Pradesh; Tel: 91-8494-257532; bhanureds@yahoo.com, cbhanuja@gmail.com; Contact: Cheruvu Bhanuja, President; Tel: 91-9440017188

Organization employing a two pronged approach to poverty reduction and environmental protection towards more for integrated rural development.

Centre for Environmental Concerns (CEC), Hyderabad

3-4-142/6, Barkatpura, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh - 500 027; Tel: 91-40-27564959/; 27563017; hyd2_cenvicon@sancharnet.in; cechyd@eth.net

Working for sustainable development, environmental conservation and livelihood enhancement of the poor with a focus on semi-arid regions.

National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad

Rajendranagar, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh - 500030; Tel: 91-40-24008563/560/447; Fax: 91-40-24008560/24016500; dhiraj@nird.gov.in

Focusing on sustainable rural development through action research with a particular focus on marginalized groups and capacity building of rural development officials.

Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes Co-operative Finance Corporation (APSCCFC), Hyderabad

5th Floor D.S.S. Bhavan, Masab Tank, Hyderabad; Contact: Dr N.Nageswara Rao, IAS Tel: 91- 40-23315970; Fax: 040-23301402; vcmd_hyd@ap.gov.in

Set up for overseeing economic development of Scheduled Castes (SCs) in the state, it has worked in collaboration with NGOs implementing NREGS activities.

Andhra Pradesh Backward Classes Co-operative Finance Corporation, Hyderabad

6th Floor, Telugu Sankshema Bhavan, Masab Tank, Hyderabad; Tel: 91-40- 3399094; Fax: 91-40-3319313

chairman_apbccofco@ap.gov.in

Put in place for ensuring economic development of backward classes in the state, it has collaborated successfully with NGOs implementing NREGS activities.

Department of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development- Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad

Secretariat, L-Block, Floor - 8, Room No- 808, Hyderabad; Tel: 91-40- 23454832 (ext: 2328); Fax: 91-40-23450608;

<http://www.rd.ap.gov.in/main2.htm>;

<http://www.aponline.gov.in/apportal/departments/portallistoforgsbydepts.aspx?i=3>
Following the convergence approach several of the department's schemes have been implemented in collaboration with NREGS activities.

From [Vidhya Das](#), Agragamee, Kashipur, Orissa

Centre for Environmental and Food Security, New Delhi

C-5/129, Yamuna Vihar, New Delhi-110053; Tel: 91-11-22914738; cefsdelhi@hotmail.com

Working on research and advocacy on issues related to poverty reduction, sustainable development, food security, it has conducted a study on implementation of NREGS.

From [Rajesh Kr. Sinha](#), New Delhi

Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi

42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi – 110062; Tel: 91-11- 29956908, 29960931/32/33; Fax: 91-11-29955183

Working for empowerment of people at the grassroots through training and research, PRIA has conducted studies to gauge the implementation and impact of NREGS in 13 states.

From [Ravi Kumar and Kalpana](#), Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN), Secunderabad

Andhra Pradesh Mahila Samatha Society (APMSS), Secunderabad

H. No. 12-13-485/5, Nagarjuna Nagar, Tarnaka, Secunderabad 500017 Andhra Pradesh; Tel: 91-40-27150233; apmss_ms@yahoo.co.in; <http://www.apmss.org/>

With the motto of 'education for empowerment of women' through women's collectives, the society is working to promote wage opportunities to a larger target group in NREGS.

Action in Rural Technology and Service (ARTS), Srikakulam District

Peddapet (Village and Post), Burja Mandal, Srikakulam District 532445 Andhra Pradesh; Tel: 91-8941-259046; artssanyasirao@yahoo.com; <http://artsindia.org/home.html>

Working for the upliftment and empowerment of tribals using inter alia NREGS to provide wage employment opportunities to maximum number of people.

PILUPU, Nalgonda District

H.No.1-3-426/6, Opposite Krushi I.T.I., Bhongiri 508116, Nalgonda District, Andhra Pradesh; Tel: 91-8685- 233371/259046; chandu_iru@yahoo.co.in; Contact: Mr. M Janardhan, Executive Director; Tel: 91-9866010092

Focuses on watershed development, and is working to link the efforts of gram panchayats and CBOs with the NREGS to ensure the majority of poor have livelihood opportunities.

EFFORT, Prakasam District

9-241, G.T. Road, Vidya Nagar, Martur 523301, Prakasam district, Andhra Pradesh; Tel: 91-8404-271737; effort@sify.com; Contact: Mr. J. V. Mohan Rao, Executive Director

Working to expand the outreach of employment opportunities generated through NREGS to majority of wage seekers.

Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN), Secunderabad

12-13-452, Street No:1, Tarnaka, Secunderabad 500017 Andhra Pradesh; Tel: 91-40-27015295/6; Fax: 91-40-27018581; wassan@eth.net; www.wassan.org

Working to promote watershed development and livelihood enhancement of the rural poor and using the opportunities offered by NREGS to achieve the goal.

Recommended Portals and Information Bases

Local Economic Development Initiative, International Labour Organization (ILO) (from [Dilnawaz Mahanti](#), ILO Consultant, New Delhi)

<http://learning.itcilo.org/entdev/led/pub/home.aspx?!=Eng&IdSezione=0>

Provides information on promoting participatory planning in local strategies towards sustainable employment initiatives in a given region, such as NREGS

Related Consolidated Replies

Panchayats Implementing NREGA in Backward Districts, from M. Govinda Rao, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), New Delhi (Advice). Decentralization Community, Solution Exchange India. Issued 15 December 2005

Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/cr-se-decn-13120501.pdf> (PDF; Size: 117 KB)

Seeks to find ways of implementing the NREGA, 2005 in backward districts with the involvement of panchayats.

NREGA Vigilance by Local Groups, from Amitabh Mukhopadhyay and Ramit Basu, Lok Sabha Secretariat and Social Watch, New Delhi (Advice). Work and Employment Community and Decentralization Community, Solution Exchange India. Issued 3 April 2006

Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/cr-se-decn-31030601.pdf> (PDF; Size 266 KB)

Advice for vigilance/reporting mechanisms regarding schemes under NREGA, also key indicators regarding implementation of NREGA Act.

Modified Works under NREGS during Panchayat Elections, from Biswajit Padhi, SRUSTI, Nuapada (Experiences). Decentralization Community and Work and Employment Community, Solution Exchange India. Issued 14 January 2007

Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/cr-se-decn-14010701.pdf> (PDF; Size 140 KB)

Seeks to know if new works, included in the revised perspective plan of NREGS, can be taken up under NREGS during Panchayat Elections.

Implementation of NREGS in Panchayats, from Vinod Kumar, Maithri, Palakkad (Experiences; Examples). Work and Employment Community and Decentralization Community, Solution Exchange India. Issued 18 January 2007

Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/cr-se-decn-18010701.pdf> (PDF; Size: 330 KB)

Seeks experiences regarding simplification of measurement of technical work, conducting of social audit and management of labour banks by panchayats.

Handbook on Social Audit of NREGS by Panchayats, from Anurag Mishra, UPVAN, Lucknow (Experiences; Examples). Work and Employment Community and Decentralization Community, Solution Exchange India, Solution Exchange India. Issued 13 February 2007

Available at http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/comm_update/res-10-160207-04.pdf (PDF; Size: 224 KB)

Provides information on important resource material, mechanisms and modalities employed for incorporation in a Handbook on Social Audit of NREGA.

Inputs to the Committee Re-examining NREGA Operational Guidelines, from T. R. Raghunandan, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, New Delhi (For Comments). Work and Employment Community and Decentralization Community, Solution Exchange India. Issued 17 April 2008

Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/cr-se-decn-emp-21030801.pdf> (PDF; Size: 333 KB)

Seeks experiences of implementation of NREGA operational guidelines to prepare a case for revision or retention of the current provisions.

Responses in Full

A. S. Malik, Department of Public Administration, Kurukshetra University, Haryana

There are many reasons for ineffective implementation of NREGS but some of them are given here along with the suggestions for effective implementation:

The awareness of NREGS is essential for effective implementation but people, *Panchayat* members and officials are not well versed about the various provisions of the scheme. Therefore, *Panchayat* and *Gram Sabha* members and officials need to be educated and trained. Although there have been efforts in this direction but they are mostly not interested in getting this kind of education or training as they are waiting for next *Panchayat* election in Haryana.

The implementation of NREGS involves a lot of paper work. This creates unnecessary psychological fear of getting trapped in administrative bottlenecks among the panchayat leaders and officials. It needs to be simplified.

The participation in scheme is viable if people are involved at the planning level. But it is missing in Haryana and the activities to be done are selected by the office of the Block Development Project Officer (B.D.P.O). The village *Panchayat* is considered as an agency to follow them. The *Panchayat* leaders at this level are either illiterate or have minimum level of education. They do not oppose the BDPO who is educated and represents the government, which releases/sanctions/ devolves/ disburses/distributes financial resources.

Therefore, they are less involved in the process. No doubt the *Gram Sabha* sends the request of work to be performed but rather than the BDPO, this function of planning is performed by the *Sarpanch* and the *Panchayat* secretary (administrative officials to assist *Sarpanches*). Only those activities are recommended for financial assistance which are simple to implement and may not face any kind of obstruction or opposition from the villagers as well as administrative superiors.

Innovative projects therefore are generally not undertaken. Hence it is suggested that some innovative project reports of how the activities for constructing sewerage/ sanitation facility, plantation (social forestry/ nursery/ herbal plants etc.), management of common lands (for revenue purposes including installation of tube wells, land leveling/ reclamation etc.), management of schools and infrastructure (shopping mall, fishery ponds, temple, drinking water facility etc.) created by the village *Panchayat* are shared. The sharing of such technical project reports may encourage and empower the *Panchayat* leaders to participate more freely as they then not find themselves ignorant and dependent on bureaucracy.

People believe that Government is ready to finance each activity for which money is demanded but the time frame is not adhered to by the *Sarpanch*, administrative officials (at all levels). In practice no receipt is issued to the people who demand the work and BDPO office also does not issue the receipt to the *Sarpanch* for the demand made to that office. The delay in doing so is also responsible for ineffective implementation. Therefore the block level officials must strictly be asked to issue the receipt. Two dates in a month must be fixed when *Sarpanch* and block officials would get the application for work and demand funds from BDPO office respectively. The report of this activity should be sent by the *Sarpanch* or BDPO to the Deputy Commissioner and agency monitoring at the state level.

The scheme does not allow space for corruption therefore *Sarpanch* and administrative officials may be reluctant to implement it. This may be intentional as ineffective implementation may bring modification and provide opportunities for corruption. Therefore there is a need to keep patience and provide incentive to those who implement it in a desired way.

Referring to the third question I want to say that the village *Panchayat* including *Sarpanch* and secretary neither have a long term plan nor the required skills and experience to undertake work under NREGS. More over, people possessing agricultural land do not come forward to do wage labor unless they suffer from abject poverty. Hence these issues are very much important to my mind to be included for discussion.

Sarit Kumar Rout, Population Council, Bhubaneswar

I got an opportunity to work on NREGA and its impact on creating employment, role of community and *Panchayats* and procedural hassles involved in implementation as part of a study conducted jointly by National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) and the Orissa government. The three districts in which the study was conducted were namely Sundergarh, Jharsuguda and Kandhamal. I have the following observations to share:

- The concept of demand driven approach has still not percolated down. The officials involved are more interested in achieving the targets rather than facilitating the community to own the process. The community is simply a beneficiary like that of any other welfare programme.
- The whole concept of livelihood approach is missing. More than 80 percent of the projects undertaken in last two years in the sample districts are related to construction of roads, or some other kind of rural infrastructure.
- The concept of community participation does not exist in true sense of the term. More than 70 participants, I interviewed were not fully aware of different dimensions of NREGA including the provisions like unemployment allowances, drinking water, and crèche near the work site as also whom to approach to lodge a complaint in case of any discrepancy.
- The officials instead of the community prepare the projects in the tribal pockets because of the target driven approach. In most cases projects did not get approved at the higher tier even if they were approved at the *Pallisabha*.
- On the wage front, no worker was paid a minimum wage on a daily basis instead they were paid on an output basis. Because of very low number of days of employment created in sample districts, the wages have also been low. The average wage rate per man days of employment was Rs. 68.34 for Kandhamal and Rs. 88.60 for Sundargarh. While for Kandhamal this average wage rate is marginally lower than the minimum wage rate declared by the Government, in case of Sundargarh it is slightly higher. Further, the findings reveal that while average number of man-days created for sample villages in Kandhamal is 16.71, it is 23.58 in Sundargarh.
- The programme largely suffers due to inadequate staff particularly the junior engineers (JEs) who play a critical role in the entire process.
- Corrupt practices are also found in terms of false names in the muster roll, false signatures, blank job cards and no proper description of man days created and expenses at the work site. There are many other issues which have been highlighted in the report.

But such a programme can be improved if some of the following issues are taken care of:

- Creation of awareness should be the top most priority so that people can avail the benefits of NREGS.
- Emphasis should be given on creation of durable assets like renovation of traditional water bodies, construction of water canals, development of water logged areas and plantation. It is more important for poor states like Orissa, Bihar etc. where agriculture is the mainstay of the economy. Such issues have been neglected so far. In order to promote livelihood for the poor, agriculture can be developed. Such a strategy benefits small and marginal farmers as well as agricultural labourers. For instance, if a community tank is constructed or traditional water bodies are revived, wage labour can be created and this will supply water for agricultural purposes too.
- The role of *Panchayat* has become minimal so far. It has been largely due to lack of awareness and under capacity of the PRIs. Till the time it remains just a government programme there will be no people's ownership. However, people's ownership can be achieved through awareness generation

programmes. Steps should be taken so that projects approved at the *Pallishaba* or plans of the people are executed and given utmost importance. It is easier said than done. For this, PRI members should be trained in project development for their area. Many a times the micro plans when designed result in a wish list rather than reflecting the need of the area. So if PRI members are trained in preparing micro plans rather than a wish list, it could be a tremendous help.

- Among the districts studied there were no instances of *Panchayats* being involved or having practical experience of preparing livelihood plans for the people. Such can be developed and community orchards, vegetable gardens etc. can be developed with involvement of the community on an experimental basis.
- The above can also be achieved by encouraging development of livelihood plans through the programme implementing authority. For this, integration of the activities of various line departments such as agriculture, soil conservation and PRIs is essential at the field level. Convergence between various schemes and programmes, if achieved can improve results manifold.
- Social audit is one of tools that have been envisaged in the programme guidelines to improve accountability. But this has not been used on a large scale and many a times appropriate action has not been initiated based upon the findings of the audit. So this process should be strengthened further with involvement of civil society organizations.

Sridhar Kolluru, Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (APMAS), Hyderabad

We are happy to know about the workshop on NREGA. We will plan to attend it to share some of our experiences.

Just to highlight some of the experiments that are taken up in Andhra Pradesh (AP), I brief you on the following interventions, which may provide a way forward for the queries put forth by you.

We at APMAS have initiated formation of labour groups in few selected villages at Adilabad, Kadapa and few other Indira Kranthi Patham (IKP) clusters. The main aim is to empower the poor by bringing them together, increase their bargaining power and plan for ensuring sustainable livelihood based on a convergence model.

At Adilabad presently 100 acres of barren land has been identified to be reclaimed through convergence between Watersheds, Comprehensive Land Development Projects (CLDP), Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS), Scheduled Caste Corporation (SCC), and Backward Class Corporation (BCC). After techno-environmental feasibility study, an integrated plan has been prepared for development of natural resources in the area and creating durable assets like community bore wells [from the Andhra Pradesh Ground Water Project (APWELL) experience] for raising "irrigated dry (ID) crops". The plan includes provision of electricity to ensure critical irrigation.

In Hazipur village (Colonel Rayudu of the Central Monitoring Team, Ministry of Rural Development visited the site) – 160 acres of barren land assigned 15 years ago has been treated from 2006-08 under EGS and 68 acres (of 49 families) is made cultivable after land reclamation and rejuvenation activities. Because farmers themselves worked as wage labour for the reclamation work, they earned Rs 6,000 supplementing their income from agriculture, which was in the range of Rs 4,000-6,000 in 2007-08. Post-reclamation, farmers are able to grow cotton, castor and red gram crop in 2008-09. This year we will do intensive monitoring at individual household level to verify the increase of income amongst poor families' resultant of the aforementioned activity.

Convergence in Andhra Pradesh (AP) is brought about through various ways like by incorporating Horticulture as one of the EGS activity where marginal and small farmers have assured irrigation facilities, applying tank silt removed during Micro-Irrigation (MI) Tanks Rejuvenation Program, to farms to improve their fertility. In many villages such convergence has contributed towards supplementing NRM initiatives,

generation of wage labour, creation of durable assets and enterprise promotion through involvement of women members from Village Organizations (VO) etc.

With one group at Vaddegiri village of Aluru cluster of Kurnool district, we introduced a small entrepreneurial service since there was a shortage of implements required for wage labour. The group took a loan of Rs. 10000 from VO in March, 2008 and purchased some implements (80 iron bowls, two plastic drums, 10 crow bars) which they rented out @ Rs. 2 per day/implement. Till date, they have earned a profit of 7000 after paying back Rs. 8000 of the VOs loan. The group is repaying back rest of the loan amount with interest as appropriate with a monthly installment of Rs. 1000.

There are few other organizations viz., *Anantpur Paryawarna Parirakshana Samiti (APPS)*, *Jana Jakrathi (JJ)*, Rural Integrated Development Society (RIDS), Rural Environmental Development Society (REDS) and Centre for Environmental Concerns (CEC) etc. that are working innovatively for bringing required convergence models into the program design and approaches. Hope some of the above experiences are useful contributions to the workshop. Further, if need be, I will be happy to share in detail.

We look forward to attending the workshop and please let us know the date and venue of the workshop.

Ch. N. V. Srinivasa Rao, Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (APMAS), Hyderabad

APMAS has initiated a study on NREGS recently in Adilabad and Kadapa districts of Andhra Pradesh, and what follows below, are some of the issues and findings that surfaced while interacting with the beneficiaries and communities that are involved in the program:

- NREGS seems to be a good opportunity particularly for widows and people who are deserted and aged. These are the people who must be given utmost priority in allotting work, as they are more vulnerable and employment would provide social security for them.
 - Under the Rural Housing Program (Indiramma Housing in AP context), the poor have been sanctioned houses but the subsidy earmarked cannot cover all the costs especially the labour costs. Therefore, the scheme should provide for the labour component of house construction.
 - One of the results of NREGS is non-availability of agricultural labour as the wage rates offered by NREGS are much higher than the agricultural wage. The preparation of NREGS calendar should consider the interests of farming community as well, especially the small holders, so that they can meet their labour requirement.
 - PRI bodies point out that there is inadequate fund support for them to undertake several village development activities such as construction of drainages, roads, avenue plantation, bus shelter, *mandis* etc. They believe that it will help the PRIs to play a meaningful role if these too are provisioned under shelf of works.
 - A comprehensive livelihood frame work is not followed for livelihood promotion but there is scope for integrating different schemes/programs and designing a livelihood framework for instance Watersheds, Comprehensive Land Development Project (CLDP), NREGS, Indira Kranti Pratham (IKP). There should be an integrated approach otherwise; the intervention may not bring in total livelihood enhancement.
 - Wherever the external promoting agencies are involved, they are struggling to bring in convergence but this integration must be done at the apex level otherwise, there is duplication of effort and essential work gets neglected.
 - A wide spread awareness is yet to be generated among rural communities on the NREGS and its optimal utilization by the labour groups. NGOs will have a greater role to play in this area but right now there is no support for them to take up this work.
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Govind Dhaske, Fraternity of Local Knowledge Saviours (FOLKS), Mumbai

There has been significant difference in terms of understanding of NREGA among policymakers, development functionaries and elected representatives.

The need and importance of supportive role played by NREGS to address the distressful migration and provision of income at village level needs some appreciation. But it is merely a supportive programme and lack of planning and allocations for rural diversification (for adequate development of both farm as well as non-farm sectors) have resulted in not having much impact in terms of employment generation. NREGS generates wage labour but lacks a vision and planning for promoting sustainable livelihood. Perhaps the difference between employment generation and sustainable livelihood has not been understood clearly.

Since the 11th plan has done substantial allocation for rural employment, development functionaries need to think innovatively and develop plans keeping long-term welfare of rural communities in mind. Moreover, since all programs/projects affect men and women differently, it is advisable to have a gender sensitive planning so needs and considerations of men and women are taken care of. Livelihood planning should be mindful of women's skills, capacities and needs. It should also ensure women's participation at the village level decision-making bodies.

Training and capacity building of elected representatives on various aspects of village based planning for livelihood is essential. Similarly, rights based training and awareness generation of rural people is critical too. Voluntary organizations can help in creating mass awareness.

There has been a preponderance of activities like road construction, watershed management etc. in rural employment guarantees schemes. But to ensure sustainable livelihood it is important to also support and strengthen the traditional skills and occupations so they don't die for lack of support structures in place. Similarly there has been undue stress on adoption of latest technologies for diversification of employment in rural areas, however only appropriate technologies should be promoted.

Livelihood plan of an area should be based on the natural resource base and livelihood pattern of the concerned community/village and this plan should form the basis of conducting activities under NREGA.

For all this to happen, however all stakeholders (policymakers, development functionaries, elected representatives and the communities) must have shared understanding and vision on what and how NREGA can be used to promote sustainable livelihood agenda.

Rajesh Kr. Sinha, Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi

PRIA conducted a study on NREGS based on sample survey in 468 *Gram Panchayats* (GPs) in 20 districts of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. I am sharing major findings of this study. Entire report is available on ([http://www.pria.org/NREGA%20Phase%20-%20III Aug%2008.pdf](http://www.pria.org/NREGA%20Phase%20-%20III%20Aug%2008.pdf), PDF; Size: 117 KB)

Although GPs are executing 84 percent of work only 63 percent of them have Employment Guarantee Assistants (key staff for implementation of NREGS). Adding to the woes, only 11 percent of the GPs have secretaries responsible for just that one GP. The study also found that elected representatives of 52 percent of surveyed GPs were not given any orientation or training on NREGA.

Lack of adequate staff and capacity building of elected representatives of *Panchayats* has had an adverse impact on the implementation of NREGA.

The study also finds that 60 percent of registered households received their job cards after stipulated 15 days from the application for registration although only 22 percent applied for jobs. Moreover it reveals that only about 42 percent of people who applied for job got it within stipulated 15 days. Interestingly, about 30 percent people reported that they got job without applying for the same. Besides, 32 percent of workers did not receive their wages within stipulated 15 days and 22 percent of them were reportedly given less than the minimum wage applicable in the state.

Delayed job allocation and payment of wages is making NREGS unattractive to poor working class who can't afford to wait endlessly for payments.

To strengthen NREGS, the study recommends strengthening capacities of *Panchayats* by completing the process of devolution of functions, funds and functionary; by providing additional administrative and technical staff and capacity enhancement of elected representatives and key functionaries; by ensuring administrative and technical sanctions of projects and release of funds on time and by involving trained barefoot technicians in estimation and measurement of work under NREGS.

Study also recommends convergence of NREGS with Backward Region Grant Fund, National Horticulture Mission, Watershed Development Programmes, *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana* and Joint Forest Management for maximization of available resources. It is also necessary to strengthen capacities of Vigilance and Monitoring Committees, and set up independent grievance redressal systems like Information Commissions and helplines at block, district and state levels to register complaints.

Vidhya Das, Agramee, Kashipur, Orissa

NREGA has been formulated with an equal measure of vision and foresight on the one hand and loopholes on the other. In the beginning, we all hoped that the vision would prevail and we all worked very hard to help realise the goals of NREGA. However, our experience has been bitter. You can read about our efforts, and hopes in the August 11 2007 issue of the EPW (Illusions of Change Vidhya Das, Pramod Pradhan).

We found out that, in Orissa, even after a year of the NREGS not a single village we had visited had got anything beyond 21 days of employment. And even this paltry wage work had been done with huge irregularities like misreporting in the cards, non-payment, underpayment, denial of cards to some sections and consequent corruption as the functionaries clubbed non-card-holders' wages in card-holder payments creating further confusion and space of misappropriation, signatures taken on blank muster roles, non-acceptance of applications for employment (the Panchayat Secretaries make sure they are very rarely present to receive work applications), etc. I wrote letters to the Panchayati Raj Minister, Secretary, the Chief Minister, as well as members of the Central Employment Guarantee Council (CEGC). There was little or no response.

Then some of the village communities we worked with in Nawrangpur and Kalahandi, in desperation (after struggling for the better part of a year to get work under the NREGA) went and complained to the BDO, saying they would go the Collector, if he did not heed their appeals. Their work applications were accepted, but no work was started 21 days after the submission of the application. They had to sit on *Dharna* for two days outside the Block office to get their appeal heard, while 'Agramee' mobilized several civil society groups, and media personnel to take up the issue. Finally the government paid them the unemployment allowance, and started work in their Panchayat. However, their fellow wage earners in neighbouring *Panchayats* continued to face tremendous hurdles at every step.

In June 2008, the *Sarpanch*, Dumbaguda *Panchayat*, Koraput district along with ward members, and other people of his *Panchayat* went on a hunger strike demanding that the irregularities in the implementation of the NREGA, be rectified. After two days when there was no redressal, they locked the gates of the Block Office. The Sub-collector came, and assured that their problems would be looked into.

However, till date they have received only partial redressal, and political pressure has quite silenced and dampened the spirit of this young leader.

In July 2007, the Centre for Environment and Food Security (CEFS) conducted a rapid appraisal in 100 villages, and exposed a huge scam in the implementation of the NREGA. They followed it up with further inquiries, and confirmed their preliminary findings. This was widely reported in several newspapers, and the findings were supported by independent studies carried out by the GB Pant Institute, as well as the CAG report. And yet, the Government did little to rectify its mistakes, or improve implementation.

As of now, irregularities continue, with complete non-transparency in implementation, including signatures insisted upon blank muster roles, as well as false muster roles.

Marginal improvements have taken place, as in the case of some villages, zero balance accounts have been opened, and job cards have been issued to almost 100% coverage in some of the Panchayats.

As the allocations under the NREGA have increased the budgets of *Panchayats* and *Panchayat Samitis*, stakes have increased manifold, and there is an undercurrent of violence, with even two or three incidents of young idealists who persisted on demanding accountability in NREGA being killed for their foolishness.

Under these circumstances, when people are carefully and consciously excluded from participation in the NREGA works in every way, including knowing how much they are entitled to receive as per the muster role records, **taking NREGA to ensuring Sustainable Livelihoods is a dream too distant to even think of.**

I completely agree that there is huge potential in NREGA, and especially in the areas of rainfed agriculture. In fact, my EPW article covered precisely these points. Yet, there is little effort on the part of Governments to realize or even understand the huge potential and possibilities of the Act.

A radical change of mindset of politicians, and more importantly government functionaries including and in fact beginning with District Collectors, and Department Secretaries is essential to bring even a modicum of justice in the ACT. Till then it is like bashing ones' head against a stone wall (not built under an NREGA scheme), I am afraid.

Samir Garg, Adivasi Adhikar Samiti, Chhattisgarh

I feel NREGS has been one of the most important programmes launched in the country in recent years. We need to compare its performance with the earlier programmes like Food for Work (FFW) and *Swarn Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana* (SGSY). It is quite easy to see that NREGS is a huge improvement over FFW – it is bigger, is backed by legislation, and has stronger implementation & monitoring mechanisms and greater scope for public participation.

The most frequent charge against NREGS has been of widespread corruption. But in this regard too, it is an improvement over FFW. In Chhattisgarh, we have observed it closely and we see the extent of corruption has been low, especially in the works implemented by *Gram Panchayats* (there have been some scams like in Kanker district and overall corruption levels have been higher in works done by line-departments). Like Chhattisgarh, I have seen good performance in Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. In most of these states, the amount of work provided has also been substantial with families getting more than 50 days of work.

In Chhattisgarh, minimum wages have been paid even in the remotest of places. Eighty percent of the villages are happy with the selection of works. The implementation capacity in terms of personnel, transparency measures etc has also been showing slow but steady improvements. Jharkhand and Orissa

represent a more mixed situation where a large number of people have benefited from wage opportunities but corruption levels have been intolerable.

On the ground, there is little doubt that NREGS is a successful income-transfer programme. Average income transfer of around Rs. 2,000 p.a. (it is around Rs. 3,000 p.a. in Chhattisgarh) makes a huge difference to the well being of the family. But it is yet to be established whether NREGS can be a vehicle for creating sustainable livelihoods. Therefore, I feel Narendra has raised an extremely relevant set of questions.

I feel NREGS definitely has a huge potential to influence livelihoods of the poor. It can happen in two ways –

- Families receive substantial income transfer through wages and invest some of it into livelihoods: In districts like Jhalawar Rajasthan (where families got close to 100 days of work), many families have used the earnings to make investments like buying land. In Chhattisgarh, with around 50 days of work, the impact seems to be more protectional (preventing the poor from slipping further down by losing assets etc) rather than promotional. The chances of investments happening increase as the wages paid per family figure goes up. The strategy for civil society therefore should be to keep pushing state governments to reach close to 100 days mark and ensure payment of minimum wages.
- Works taken up (preferably through *Panchayats*) improve the return from natural resources – either private or common: In Chhattisgarh, examples of both exist. In Chhattisgarh, around 12,000 farmers have gained access to irrigation through NREGS works and another 18,000 dalit/advansi farmers have leveled their land through NREGS grants, during last one year itself. The programme has also created very useful common assets like village tanks/ponds, roads etc and of reasonable quality. I am yet to come across a tank constructed under NREGS that did not catch water.

But I feel slightly concerned when we want to promote any 'comprehensive' approach or framework. 'Comprehensive' approaches are difficult to be adopted by any mass programme. When programme approach becomes more comprehensive, it also tends to become less replicable and more dependent upon external support. Therefore, I find it difficult to hope that in near future NREGS will be able to create comprehensive and participatory *Panchayat* level micro-plans for livelihoods promotion across the country. **But NREGS can still promote large number of livelihoods through less comprehensive (but still participatory) strategies.**

One strategy can be to identify (through participatory studies or by simply consulting *Panchayat* presidents) a set of interventions that have potential for mass replication. In Chhattisgarh they have picked up two simple interventions for work on private lands (of advansi and dalit farmers) – land leveling/bunding and dugwells. I have studied the land leveling works and have seen that it generates a minimum addition of 10-15% to farm output of the poorest amongst farmers. Dugwells have even greater potential. The government started with common works like tanks and roads in 2006, but over last one and a half year has implemented many works on private lands (this trend is likely to become stronger in future but the pace of sanctioning works on private lands did receive a setback due to a scam in Kanker district of Chattisgarh). There is unlimited potential in providing grants of (Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 100,000 per farmer) for land improvement and dugwells to tribal farmers.

Another strategy (which can be closer to being comprehensive) can be of advocating with government to take up watershed development through NREGS as well. Watershed based development is already a well established concept in departments. Training capacity also exists in most states to train large number of *Panchayat* functionaries in watershed planning.

There is also a need for pushing the idea of 'participation' in selection of works. The strategy should be to insist upon *Gram Sabha* approval for selection of all works.

Civil society has a huge role to play in this - mobilizing people to demand more work, greater transparency, advocating (with government) solutions for improvements in systems of implementation and monitoring, and to help *panchayats* in gaining greater capacity.

[Arun Jindal](#), Society for Sustainable Development, Karauli, Rajasthan

NREGS and state rural employment schemes developed in the preview of wage labor only. In fact many state governments think that this scheme is for payment of wages to the labor without useful assets or proper work. Lack of planning capacities of *Panchayat* and lower level of competence in the government machinery are responsible for this. Many State governments have not taken help from civil society organizations and other development agencies for planning or capacity development of *Panchayats* or its functionaries.

If the objectives of the scheme put emphasis on livelihood development through wage labor, then overall strategies could be revised. In Rajasthan, water conservation activities have been implemented using NREGS funds. These activities support livelihood enhancement but not under comprehensive livelihood development strategies. Rajasthan Government launched Keshavbadi Scheme under NREGS. It has components of horticulture development (Plantation of fruit trees), private land development (*medbandi* i.e. bunding and land leveling) and water resource development (farm pond and watercourse development) in its preview for each farmer. However this scheme has not been implemented with all farmers because, all farmers neither require nor are interested in all the activities.

Capacity enhancement of *Panchayats* is first and foremost step. The State government has not worked on this issue. There should be a comprehensive plan of action to develop capacities of Panchayat functionaries including elected representatives at ward level to develop micro plan of villages and Panchayats. Many Civil society organizations (CSOs) and government departments have the capacity to develop master trainers from grass root level NGOs and need not depend on retired or working government servants, at central and state level. These trainers can in turn train master trainers at district level and block level for capacity development at *Panchayat* level. Hand holding support will also be required for *Panchayat* for development of livelihood development plan.

[Kris Dev](#), Life Line to Business (LL2B), Chennai

I totally agree with [Vidhya Das](#).

It appears, with the best of intentions on the part of the Government at the highest level to introduce a scheme for long term development of the rural economy of the country, NREGS would end up as a sheer dole programme masqueraded as 'Work for Food Programme'.

NREGA seems to be yet another mega scheme to help amass money right from the grass root level with the *Mukhia* as the main fund collector. It may benefit a few well connected villagers rather than the many voiceless that do not have any connections. There are reports from the field, that a single work done is shown as multiple work done and wages paid for idle hours are blissfully shared between the ghost beneficiaries and middlemen. There is no mechanism to track on real time basis, every activity.

Unless total transparency and accountability is strictly enforced at the implementation stage, NREGP would be yet another mega failed project of the Government. The scheme is fraught with loop holes and has immense potential to divert tax payers' money into the pockets of vested interests. No amount of social audit can fully correct the situation. It can at best help to improve the system in some ways. A mega project of this size covering the entire length and breadth of India needs fool proof working methods.

Biometric identification and tracking of benefits of NREGP and use of multi-purpose Biometric Smart Card as a Debit Card can be a solution. An attempt has been made in Bihar to use this technology. For details click (<http://www.civilsocietyonline.com/June07/india07ngrea.asp>)

P. Madhava Rao, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New Delhi

For any programme to be successful, we need to have relevant capacities in place. NREGS is a very good programme, if properly implemented it can definitely take people beyond wages to sustainable livelihoods. Unfortunately, it has been commissioned without properly looking into the capacities at all levels and areas. At this juncture I do not think that we should try to look beyond wages, instead we need to look for approaches to make the programme sustainable and develop capacities to make the programme fully functional.

Examples of failures and non-performance in Orissa are clear examples of capacity deficiencies; therefore capacity development should concurrently run with programme delivery that has not actually happened. In my view many people misunderstand this. Leakages and deliberate non-implementation or deliberate attempts to make programmes fail is definitely a capacity issue. Capacity does not alone mean some individuals' ability to deliver. It is the enabling environment, it is organizational capacity and ultimately it is individual/human resource capacity. One of the organizational capacities is to have in place delivery mechanism, work processes, monitoring systems, and system sustaining activity.

If some programme is a failure, we should first look from the beginning of policy and programme design, political will, motivation, and incentive system (capacity of enabling environment); then at organizational structures, roles/functions, work procedures and processes, infrastructure, budgets, finances, monitoring and reporting systems, leadership in enforcing the law; and finally at capacity of human resources i.e. project specific knowledge, delivery skills, management skills, leadership skills, attitudes, health, working age, cultural barriers etc. These are all capacity issues. I believe that creation of an enabling environment with relevant political will, policy, motivation, and incentive systems; putting in place programme delivery-specific organizational arrangements, and institutional systems; and ultimately strengthening capacities of individuals engaged at every level right from management to delivery is a prime requisite to make NREGS sustainable and make it a programme that takes people to sustainable livelihoods.

Having legislated, NREGA, now it is time to have in place, NREGA specific systems and procedures with dedicated human and financial resources, and linking up NREGS with Social Security programmes for informal sector. It is also the time to consolidate all the available social security and old age pension schemes currently available for informal sector and address in a comprehensive manner. My paper 'Social security for the Unorganised Sector' and my book 'Social Security Administration in India' - extensively discuss how to organize and link up Capacity Development- Creation of Opportunities- and Creating an Enabling Environment to motivate the individuals use their capacities to utilize the opportunities. I believe that it is possible to use NREGS for creating sustainable livelihoods, by making the programme itself sustainable with funding and other capacity support. Initial failures and non-performance are bound to happen in any programme of this size. There is a need to review and reorganize accordingly.

Ravi Kumar and Kalpana, Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN) Secunderabad

Two years of implementation experience can provide insights into the scope of NREGS in improving livelihood security and opportunities for poor. Accessing wage employment at decent wage rates continuously in a year plugs in several employment gaps and may generate economic surplus at household level. Did this happen? Is there any evidence of such a phenomenon taking place in the field? If in fact, such surplus is generated, how is it impacting on the lives of the wage earners? Where are they

investing? What are the ways in which NREGA opportunity is being used by the wage earning households to negotiate with forces around? Can we draw these 'growth-paths' of labour households from out of experiences observed in the field? Inferences drawn from the successes of few innovative households could provide us a design to plug-in additional resources/ investments/ institutional linkages/ facilitation, risk cover ... so as to see that NREGA opportunities play a critical role in addressing poverty and growth issues much beyond wage incomes.

Some of the experiences from the villages in A.P are presented here to generate lessons and planning steps for broad basing the available opportunities to majority of the wage seekers participating in the program. **These are the villages, where a group of organizations (APMSS, ARTS, EFFORT, PILUPU and REDS) are working as part of National consortium and being anchored by WASSAN in A.P.**

Though limited case studies are presented here, these present a pattern and possibility for several cases across the state and the country.

The areas of impact derived from the field experiences are:

- Significant increase in wages and wage opportunities for women
- Scope for unionization and collective engagement of the poor increased
- Increase in food security of the Household
- Increase in cash availability/investment ability of the households, particularly for initiating agriculture operations
- Land brought under cultivation or productivity of the land is enhanced
- Chances of acquiring new livelihood assets increased
- Better chances of securing children's education and family health
- Decrease in distress migration
- Increased scope for savings and increased creditworthiness
- Reduction in exploitative debt
- Bargaining power of the poor, particularly land less agriculture laborers, increased

For securing the above impacts, the necessary condition is to secure maximum wage employment/entitlement possible in the NREGS. Based on the present asset position, occupation profile and any special characteristics of the respective households/group of households the possibilities of the above impacts vary. The local organizations need to capture those characteristics and accordingly facilitate the linkages and support to the households in achieving the above impacts.

Brief description of the cases where the above possible impacts are realized:

Case 1: Nagamma and Naganna are from Veerepally peta, 30 kms far from Kadiri mandal headquarters in Anantapur district. They belong to Scheduled Caste and Nagamma is the member of women SHG. They have two kids and have land of two acres, which was assigned by the government many years back and was left uncultivated because of lack of investments for the development of land. Their land was developed through a state program called, Comprehensive Land Development program (CLDP). Through NREGS, these two worked for 94 days and secured an additional wage income of around Rs.7, 000. With this additional income and a newly developed and productive asset i.e. land, they got the confidence and Nagamma took a loan of Rs. 30,000 from their Group, for purchase of groundnut seeds and other crop related inputs. This was possible because of her enhanced repaying capacity. Earlier they had stopped sending their children to school as they could not afford it. Now they are able to send their kids back to school. REDS, the local partner supported her in this process.

Areas of impact: Increased productivity of the land, increased credit worthiness and access to less exploitative credit, securing children's education

Case 2: Arike Gangamma, a single women aged 32 years has two children. She resides in Magadhara village, Pedarama *Panchayat* of Seethampeta mandal, Srikakulam District. Her husband died three years back. She has ½ acre Podu land and nearly 1/4th acre plain/wet land. Though she has Antyodaya card she used to lose her rice quota for some months as she used to stay with her parents in another village during crisis/lean periods. She is also a member of SHG, but because of her irregular stay in the village, her savings were also irregular.

She was not available in the village during job card distribution. Similarly 13 households did not get job cards. The local organization, ARTS conducted a meeting, collected details of these people and supported her in securing job card and a post office account. Initially for around 30-40 days other workers refused to allow her to work along with them, as she is a woman and single. The local organization followed up on this issue, enabled her to apply for work, oriented the wage seekers and built pressure to allow her to work. After that she had worked for 56 days and earned around Rs. 4000 @ Rs. 80/day.

Earlier she used to get Rs. 30 in the village for other works. Through this increased wages, she secured at least Rs. 2500 as additional income. As she is now residing in the village throughout because of the availability of work, she is getting antyodaya rice regularly. Through this subsidized price of rice she is benefiting to the tune of Rs. 2000.

With this surplus she purchased one goat, reared it and sold two goats from it @1300 and earned Rs.2600. Also collected straw etc from the forest and strengthened her house. Since they are now staying in the village, children also going to school regularly. She also got 60 kilograms of turmeric from her land this year.

Areas of impact: stability in occupation → diversifies into supplementary livelihoods, → increased income and food security, Acquired new livelihood assets, Secured children's education

Case 3: In Mirjapeta village of Tarlupadu mandal, Prakasam district there are 340 households. Out of this 67 acres were assigned to 45 SC households and till this year it was lying fallow. EFFORT, the local organization facilitated identification and submission of works for the development of those lands to Panchayat and secured its sanction for development of the land as part of NREGS. In December, 07 works started and around 70-80 days of wage employment was generated for all the 45 households in the development of those lands. From these works for each household around Rs.6000-7000 wages were generated apart from the development of their own lands. The lands are now ready for cultivation in the next agriculture season and now each household has 1-2 acres of productive land which can meet their food and fodder needs to a significant extent. This is in addition to their previous family income, and also has the potential to increase the livestock holding of the family

Areas of impact: Increased productivity/use of the household asset, Increased bargaining power for better wages, thus significant additional income to the household

Case 4: In Arepalli village of Koheda Mandal, Karimnagar district there are a total of 335 households (HH) out of which 75 households have migrated. All the HHs depend on Agriculture as their primary occupation. Most of the families are STs. Since there were no other employment opportunities and wages were low in the village, many people migrated to nearby Karimnagar and also to Malaysia, Singapore, Dubai, Muscat etc. With the facilitation of the organization (APMSS), people who had migrated to Karimnagar came back for work within the village. Moreover they are paid Rs 80/- which is much more than what they were paid earlier (Rs 40/- to 60/-). They said that they can stay back in the village only if the payments are made in time without much delay. This has also helped them to continue agriculture as the work force in each household, residing in the village has increased.

Areas of impact: Reduction in distress migration, reduction in chances of keeping land fallow and enhancement of wages within the villages

Case 5: Laxmi of Veerareddy pally village, M. Turkapally mandal in Nalgonda District depends upon the wage labor along with her husband for the livelihood. They have 3 children. She has 2 acres of land

which was kept fallow as it required investment for which she didn't have any money. She was earning Rs. 20-30 per day, two years back but with NREGS she took a job card and is now earning Rs70-80/- per day.

With the increase of wage income and the assurance of getting work she applied for loan from the MACTS (mutually aided co-operative thrift society), in which she is a member and is promoted by PILUPU. She invested that money on land for digging a bore well. They have cultivated paddy in that land and most of the food needs of the family are met from the land. They got 84 days of work with daily wages of Rs.80/day, i.e. they earned around 7000 rupees in a year

Areas of impact: Significant increase in wages and wage days for women, Increase in credit worthiness and ability to invest, Increase in Productivity of land.

Case 6: Wanaparthi Saraiah and Saramma is a couple from among the 100 SC household in Yellareddypally panchayat, Warnagal district. They have 2 children and are solely dependent on daily wage labor for livelihood. Though both of them went for work, the wages were not sufficient to sustain the family. Hence one of their children also used to work.

They took job cards but were not using this since they were not sure of the possibility of getting work and payments in time. With the facilitation support of the local partner organization, APMSS, the family went for NREGS works, worked for around 60 days and earned up to Rs. 4000 to 5000/-. Additional income earned out of NREGS works helped them to stop sending their child to work and send him to school. Finding work at remunerative wages helped them to reduce exploitative dependency for work and enhanced their bargaining power.

Case 7: Balakrishna of Gollagudem village, Turkapally mandal in Nalgonda district is a physically challenged person. He studied up to Xth standard. His family depends on agriculture. With the help of his friends he started to work in an NREGS work site and worked for 63 days from April to September 2008-09 through which he earned a total of Rs.6300. And now he says proudly that with this additional income, his father managed to purchase agricultural inputs and avoided taking a loan.

Areas of impact: NREGA has a scope for increasing the work participation rate by providing opportunity to the vulnerable sections to work independently, and contributing to the family needs. There is a need to sensitize the wage seekers, about the constraints and needs of the persons with disability.

We hope you find these cases useful.

Ajay Singh Gangwar, Government of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal

I have worked in three *Zila Panchayats* as Chief Executive Officer for the last four years. At the time when NREGP was started I was the CEO of Tikamgarh district in Madhya Pradesh. I think that the vision of our government for launching NREGP was to check poverty and distress migration from rural to urban areas. For achieving this we have a clear mandate to provide 100 days of work to people in rural areas.

On the basis of my experience I can say that this programme would not achieve this goal. There is a need to re-frame the policy of NREGP first. We must know who the target families are. For this we must first make a list of those families who are seasonally migrating from villages and then make a plan to provide them 100 days of employment near their villages under NREGP. If we follow this approach then we can track how many people have stopped migrating from villages to city in search of unskilled jobs. The migrant family list can also be made in a manner where BPL families and those from SC/ST caste groups are identified.

If we have no distinction between target families and rest of the population then we cannot make realistic demands at the village level and cannot check corruption and bogus entries in muster roles. For auditing and transparency we need the following steps:

- Make a list of those families whose members are seasonally migrating to urban areas in search of unskilled jobs.
- Present this list of targeted families in *Gram Sabha* for approval.
- When the number of families is fixed, we will make a micro plan to provide 100 days job to these families.
- After getting approval of this micro plan from *Gram Panchayat*, *Zila Panchayat* will provide the requisite funds.
- Local bodies and NGOs will be asked to monitor whether 100% targeted families are getting jobs or not under the scheme? Every *Panchayat* should publish their social report in local newspaper and at public forums about what they achieved under NREGP in one financial year. On the basis of this appraisal, new grants for *Gram Panchayat* should be issued by District /Block level Panchayat.
- At the national level we can also monitor the flow of unskilled people from village to urban areas and if migration reduces this will show the success of NREGP. Metros with less number of migrant people can function well with the existing infrastructure.

Subhash Mendapurkar, Society for Social Uplift Through Rural Action (SUTRA), Solan, Himachal Pradesh

NREGA is in essence a good programme to provide wage labour to certain families who need employment in the lean season. Unfortunately it has been defined very narrowly - what Maharashtra had done in 1970s is repeated in the 21st century without taking into account the national needs that have changed, people's aspirations that have changed.

If NREGA is a rights based approach to provide employment and plans to cover more than 20 million families, then we needed to think bigger and not at micro level where in employment opportunities are very few and are of not much worth to people as at the end of the day, instead of getting 100 rupees, people get anywhere between Rs 7/- to Rs 60/-.

The gigantic program requires gigantic 'thinking' and I have always said that 'big projects' benefiting people at large must be undertaken so that wages are good, impacts are long-lasting and taxpayers money is spent in meeting national needs. We keep hearing about large scale corruption in NREGA and that is bound to happen if we decentralize it too much without creating decentralized monitoring systems. Unfortunately, in the name of decentralized planning, again we have centralized NREGA in the sense that guidelines/instructions for implementing are drawn centrally without taking into consideration the diverse needs of people and areas.

Himachal Pradesh where the daily wages are Rs 200 to Rs 250/- and is a labour scarce state, is considered on the same scale as Chattisgarh or Jharkhand. Each state has different needs. Instead of centralized planning/creating centralized guidelines, the states should have been given a free hand to have their own Guidelines and the Centre should have taken up the role of 'fund provider'.

If the guidelines are centralized then the projects should be such as can be implemented only by Federal Government, e.g. equal amount of funds could have been spent for creating railway lines - laying of railway lines, requires roughly 60 to 65 % labour inputs- every village, tehsil could be connected through railway lines or railway lines could have been laid to connect district/tehsil HQs with State capital. Laying of railway lines, a quick transport can boost not only the rural economy but people can access health and education services quickly and at cheaper rates - the experience of last 60 odd years is that we have failed to provide quality health and education services to rural people and I don't see this being achieved in near future. If that is so, why not provide quick and cheap transport to rural people to access the urban centered services so that at least we can bring down maternal and infant mortality rates. Children from rural areas can access better educational facilities ultimately resulting in improved social capital. Quick transport facilities through railways also can help us to bring down our dependence on auto-based transport resulting in less dependence on oil imports.

P. K. Chaubey, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi

Good! I have long been advising that central guidelines have little meaning but more importantly they are against the federal ethos and counterproductive to the intentions with which the schemes are launched. However, what I once suggested is - let the implementers thank the authorities for sending the guidelines and assert that the guidelines are not rules but suggestions for absorption by the local implementers. If the implementers find them odd, they should prepare their own guidelines and submit to the financiers/ funders. But guidelines must be taken as suggestions rather than as binding rules so that optimum utilization of resources is ensured. Guidelines, if they become fetters, have to be opposed.

Further, economics teaches that scarcer resources get automatically allocated in efficient manner. If Himachal Pradesh is labour scarce then it does not require wage employment schemes. If we get to know the unemployment rate (and also the sections that are unemployed), we can strategize the employment schemes better.

Dilnawaz Mahanti, International Labour Organization (ILO) Consultant, New Delhi

It is indeed heartening to note the increasing recognition for sustainable livelihoods promotion, within the NREGA framework. The ILO views NREGA as a laudable first step, with the potential to evolve towards more sustainable forms of livelihood, based on the durable assets expected to be created in the process of wage employment.

As rightly stated, rainfed agriculture regions need comprehensive development strategies, which are possible through the permissible works already enlisted in the MoRD Guidelines – drought proofing with soil and water conservation, minor irrigation works, etc. While indeed this calls for social mobilization for meaningful participation in the planning process, keeping “people’s centrality” in mind, a watershed calls for spatial planning over an area that may go well beyond geographical territories of more than one *Gram Panchayat* (GP). Hence District level planning needs to be given equal importance. As we know a top down cum bottom up approach, responding to people’s needs, is required to develop an integrated District Development Plan (which is not merely a compilation of individual GP plans/wish lists). Appropriate support towards capacity development is therefore necessary at all levels of functionaries at the *Gram Sabha*, *Gram Panchayat*, and intermediary as well as district levels.

The ILO’s Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme (EIIP) and Local Economic Development (LED) initiatives (to name a few), in various parts of the world, have gained experience and expertise in promoting participatory planning in local strategies towards sustainable employment initiatives in a given region. A step-by-step approach would involve, amongst other things, mapping of the existing resource base, existing local skills and potential for skills upgradation/ development, and market feasibility. Once the economic activities have been identified, in a consultative manner, the relevant infrastructure requirements would need to be identified. This infrastructure development may form part of the initial wage labour component of NREGA, making it a more purposeful intervention, towards establishing long term sustainable livelihoods.

Forms of group enterprise most suited to a given activity and locale and capacities of the people, would also need to be promoted. While there is general support for SHGs, it needs to be recognized that for longer term sustainable self management of their own enterprises, the informal SHGs need to evolve into structures of a more formal nature, under a framework of their own by laws - such as self supporting cooperatives. Relevant capacity building of the members, for democratic and efficient management of their own enterprises, is equally crucial.

The concerns on participatory processes, brings us to the question “how participatory?” As pointed out in your query, as well as generally acknowledged, groups of the marginalized and disadvantaged, including women, the aged, the physically challenged, SCs, and STs, continue to remain without a voice or

representation, and whose particular needs, therefore, need to be heeded. Rural workers' organizations can play a role in mobilizing, organizing and empowering the disadvantaged, for a more inclusive process.

Ashok Kumar Pathak, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Meerut, Uttar Pradesh

I agree with the view that each state should be given powers to formulate its own guidelines with regards to implementation of NREGS. There are state specific variations in demographic profile, livelihood options, source of income, demand and supply relations of labour forces and so on. There are regional level variations within the state too. If everything is decided centrally, we can never plan an effective strategy.

I would like to bring to the kind attention of the members that lack of proper implementation mechanism has resulted in many other problems. For instance, in the areas, where majority of population is dependent on agriculture, the availability of agricultural labourers in the peak season is a great problem. Works under NREGS should be planned in such a way that labourers are available for farming activities during the peak season. Also, the state should, certainly with the help of PRIs, experts, agricultural institutions work out the per acre cost input for *Rabi* and *Kharif* season and finalize the wage rate of agricultural labourers. Only fixing the wage rate is not going to work, because it will only deteriorate the livelihood conditions of small and marginal farmers. The programmes like NREGS can be planned in such a manner that rural poor may get employment in the lean season and may be at a higher wage rate.

Planning at the local level is very crucial. Every activity has backward and forward linkages. So, one activity should not lead to creation of another bigger problem. I agree that NREGS should focus on creation of options for sustainable livelihood rather than just a wage employment programme. PRIs also need to be strengthened to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate the activities under NREGS.

Anshuman Karol, Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi

I also strongly agree with the suggestion for decentralized guidelines or centralized guidelines with flexibility. But we must remember that NREGS is a programme to ensure employment to rural unemployed. The programme targets mainly unskilled, unemployed or seasonally unemployed workforce across the districts covered.

When we talk about labour scarcity or surplus, we need to understand that psychological behavior of the people also matters. For instance in Himachal Pradesh, in some pockets, people will not do manual labour due to social stigmas and esteem. And this is another factor that leads to migration. Generally people will not calculate the cost of doing something at their own place or at some distant place economically and this makes the difference when seen in macro terms. Hence to make such programmes successful it is not only to look into unemployment rates but targeted beneficiaries should also be educated on every aspect of the programme.

Venkatesh, Bangalore Medical College, Bangalore

It is nice to read the opinions of members in taking the NREGS beyond the paying wages. In my view the local unemployed people/youth who are either singly loitering or belong to groups and clubs which are not progressing ahead can be primed and motivated to take up any activity that comes their way irrespective of the nature of work.

For example if these unemployed youth are enabled and motivated to take up works related to village sanitation work, restoration of the village health infrastructure, etc. wherein they would aid in form of support to the institution completing the undone work of sanitation in the village so that both the

sanitation work is implemented and youth have employment, thus striking a win-win situation. This requires a lot of involvement from the *panchayat* representatives, putting aside their selfish motives and bringing the development initiatives at the forefront.

At the same time, the local theatre groups could be roped in to make the elected representatives realize about the betterment of the community and utilization of the service provided. With regard to the monitoring and supervision, the youth employed for the said purpose would be handy to assess the appropriateness of the services provided.

Subhransu Tripathy, Entrepreneurship Development Institute (EDI), Ahmedabad

Seasonal unemployment is vital in rural areas. Accordingly, work execution schedule needs to be prepared. Ability to work is also a major concern, so applications received for employment should address such issues by inserting the nature of job beyond the two fold classifications like skilled and un-skilled. Age-sex and other social considerations could be addressed while generating employment and planning the activities. Large scale training for *panchayat* members need to sensitize them towards the plight of poor.

The investment in agricultural is must be prioritized. Rural infrastructure is improving and there are other schemes, which are implemented for development of rural infrastructure. So NREGS must be focused on enlarging scope of rural employment on a sustainable basis.

Shakeb Nabi, CARE India, Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar

Thanks for bringing forth an issue which concerns the poorest of the poor. The first thing we need to look as far as NREGA is concerned is whether it is being implemented in the right spirit or is it being treated as one of the government schemes.

I have had the opportunity to have a look at the way the scheme is being implemented in various states. I think NREGA can be a very effective tool in addressing the issues related with the food security of the community as well as create public and private assets for the poorest of the poor. I am not sure on the lacunae in designing of this scheme but the way it is being implemented, much is left to be desired.

Wherever it is being implemented, the focus is on 100 days and not where and how to productively use these 100 days. In many places in Bihar some of the informed communities have been able to get the card but getting the work on the basis of the card is still a far fetched dream. In most of the places that I have interacted with the community to find out what kind of work they are doing under NREGA, they have a common answer; they are either constructing the road or repairing the road. I feel that the *panchayat* does not have a very great vision as to how to utilize this scheme more efficiently. But at the same time, what I have seen in Andaman, after the training of PRI from a local NGO, the *panchayat* has been utilizing the money very effectively in creating disaster mitigation structures in the village.

In some of the places like Andaman, based on the discussion with various stakeholders we feel that the labor and materials ratio is not very appropriate as most of the materials are taken from mainland India and things are very costly there. So the labor material ratio should be decided by the individual states/union territory.

Ideally I feel that this is not a long term solution to end poverty and unemployment in India as nobody would like to see majority of the population working as wage labor but this is an interim solution which can create assets thus leading to better livelihood options and self employment also.

It will be good to have further debate on it.

Rishu Garg, Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action and Local Involvement (ARAVALI), Jaipur

At the outset, I compliment you for initiating the dialogue on this important issue both first on solutions exchange and then through a workshop. We have deliberated on these issues in our organization, Aravali, with our partner organisations and at various other forums drawing experiences from the implementation of the act in Rajasthan. What I share also draws on our experiences of preparation of District Agriculture Plans (DAP) for 8 districts in collaboration with the state Agricultural department under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna (RKVY):

- There is a need to develop criteria for assessing the success or failure of NREGS by looking deeper into statistics like average of number of days of employment in terms of aspects like the reaching the poorest and availability of employment in relation to what was required.
- The Act has increased the bargaining power of the "Krishi Majdoor" in the state and this in my view is its single most important contribution. However, at the same time it is also increasing the cost of agriculture (by making labour more expensive) and reducing the already low profits. This has started affecting choice of crops with preference being given to Bt cotton and other species/seed varieties that require little or less manual labour.
- The main bottleneck is the inability of the people to participate and the government machinery to respond to the region specific requirements. People perceive NREGS as an improved version of the drought relief program that has been the only reliable source of wage labour for landless in the past. It is a common sight to find Sahayak secretaries luring people to come and sign on the register and asking them to collect the dues. This also translates into very conventional works like road construction etc being taken up without much thought into using the resources for livelihood enhancement. For example, in Brickchiawas Gram Panchayat of Pisangan block of Ajmer, activities such as road construction and water harvesting structures have been undertaken despite their being tanks (and big ones too) that have not found any run-off water since last one decade. In the same village there are about 400 marginal to small farmers supported by animal husbandry. Most of these households do not have adequate (both in terms of quality and quantity) bada (for pasture), which adversely affects milk production. Despite the need there has not been any initiative to take the activity under NREGA. Initiatives in this direction would help increase livelihood of the poor and help creating sustainable assets.

Similarly, in Jaipur district there is abundance of onion sowing and farmers are forced to sell their harvest during the season at low cost (especially the marginal and small farmers) because of inadequate storing facilities. If these facilities could be developed under NREGA, it would help increasing annual income of these households on sustainable basis.

Another example is the scope of intervention and convergence with the National Horticulture Mission in which 23 districts of the state are covered. But despite the central and state subsidy component small and medium farmers are still not able to reap the benefits because of inadequate funds even for the remaining amount. Some initiatives though have happened in south Rajasthan under the Keshav Badi initiatives but the implementation has been pathetic. Central purchasing and other factors decided the species, which might or might not have economic feasibility for the farmer, were planted and the say of the farmer got lost for fear of transfer of benefit. Even in western Rajasthan the choice of Kundis (in Barmer around 99% of the total works under the Act till March 2008) was not of people.

I have put all these examples from different parts of the state to suggest and highlight upon the fact that there is urgent need to modify implementation of NREGS within the livelihood framework and planning and people involvement would have to be ensured to create sustainable assets and strengthen livelihoods of the rural poor.

I would also take this opportunity to share with the solutions exchange community our experiences and the process adopted by ARAVALI in preparation of district agricultural plans along with the state agriculture department in eight districts of the state. We recognized that the needs, requirement and issues pertaining to livelihoods of the farmer would not be the same for big farmers as compared to those of small and marginal farmers and similarly landless people would have altogether different livelihoods issues as compared to the issues of the small and big farmers. Recognizing this we have established process of separate consultations in the selected gram panchayats with people falling in the four categories namely big farmers, small farmers, landless and women. And then based on these consultations around their livelihood we are trying to assess investments that would be required from RKVY. I think similar processes could be adopted and discussions could be initiated during the planning process in NREGA to ensure activities are selected under livelihood framework.

Hope you find these inputs useful.

[Harathi Vageeshan](#), Centre for World Solidarity, Hyderabad

You have raised appropriate questions in regard of NREGS. It has led to a very informative discussion. At the outset I would emphasize that employment under NREGA is a right and is one among many interventions like quality education for the marginalized, which are required for working under a comprehensive livelihood framework.

One of the challenges is how to employ the manual laborer in a productive way. This needs to be sorted out in an area specific way as one central answer can never be right for a sub continent like India as also emphasized by Mr. [Subhas Mendhapurkar](#) and others in the string of responses. The relation between labor and productive use of the labour is central to place NREGS in a comprehensive livelihood framework. I agree with Mr. [Shakeb](#) that NREGS cannot be a long term solution unless it changes its form and content with changing times.

There are examples of structures for soil and water management coming up under NREGS but they are few. There is a need to have more people's consultation to make the works more productive. Whether the asset is private or public there is fair chance for the small marginalized farmers to improve the soil and water holding condition of their fields. But this has to be supported with more flow of funds to sectors like agriculture. There is a need to think in terms of productive capacity of the rural India and its people in a comprehensive way with a focus on employment oriented productive Systems.

The issue of empowering panchayats is a bigger one. This will need the following:

- The money has to be transferred to the panchayats based on the participatory planning which is well scrutinized and authenticated by the gram sabha and the officials working there.
- A strict accountability regime is also required. In case of misuse and fraud there should be timely and visible action against all the persons involved in it. Develop an in built reward and punishment mechanism within the PR act of every State.
- Stringent decentralized monitoring systems have to be developed involving the community. There are several examples across States that wherever the panchayats are aware and active, NREGS has been relatively more successful.
- Give panchayats the money, information, appropriate technology and personnel and they will definitely perform more diligently and also will show creative ways out.
- Make the Gram Sabhas more powerful and make them participatory and representative of all sections of the community.

Finally, I would emphasize that panchayats have to be empowered for decentralized planning and execution not just for better implementation of NREGS but to realize the constitutionally mandated goal of Economic development with social justice.

Vinod Kumar, Maithri, Palakkad, Kerala

I work in Kerala in Maithri, an NGO associated with NREGS since its inception in various capacities like campaigning, monitoring the out turns, developing perspective plans, watershed plans etc. The following is the gist of my experience:

- Kerala has strong PRIs. Each GP has Agriculture Officers and Engineers and most of the GP s had completed resource mapping and watershed delineation way back in 1998-99. It also has a good network of CBOs and a fair amount of transparency. Despite all of these the state has not realised its potential in NREGS, even up to 10 %.
- The major achievement is that whatever amount was spent there was absolutely no corruption. The scheme has strengthened women further and their wages are becoming at par with men. But most of the works continue to be roads and drainages (resulting in a reduced menace of mosquitoes in many areas). Not much has happened on water asset creation or comprehensive livelihood plans. Basically it is not being done with a demand driven approach. This is happening despite having one of the best frame works possible for smooth and meaningful implementation of NREGS is being developed by Government of Kerala.
- The people actively supporting NREGS are a minority. Further people with a thorough understanding of NREGS are also a minority. Consequently, the critical mass to mobilize community is not achieved so far.
- The politicians/activists are still on side lines. The scheme is controlled by middle level officials. The Engineers are dead against the scheme as they are simply irritated by just observing that so much work is being done without them getting their share. Regarding others, majority of them are cynical with a strong habit if belittling the processes required for taking the scheme forward. There is some kind of a stalemate.
- People who can dream, who can inspire communities at grass root level are either not there in adequate numbers or are side lined. Without a strong campaign spearheaded by such people and Panchayat leaders the goal cannot be achieved.
- There are lot of good practices emerging. Providing horticulture support to SC/ST communities, improving the paddy cultivation by flood/drought proofing, saving the farm land from wild animals, GP President personally leading labour teams, planting of tens of thousands of mango saplings and social auditing are some of the few. But like the people supporting NREGS the good practices are a thin minority.

There are initiatives to use this opportunity of 100 days in tandem with another 100 days of routine agriculture labour and 50 days from PRI's earth work to ensure the job security of the ordinary labourer and introduce him/her to other social security benefits. Now the frame work is ready, there is at least one successful model but taking it forward needs a committed, process oriented team with a vision at the grass root level. But such a team is yet to emerge. We often feel that it will be better if we can do away with the whole Rural Development machinery and have a performance linked, hire and fire mode where young professionals can do the job both at the District and Block levels. The cynics have to go.

Chandreyee Das, INSPIRATION, Kolkata*

Glad to know that such a workshop is being organized which would provide a platform for sharing experiences.

We are handling the Research and Analysis wing of NREGS in Bardhaman District in West Bengal. Apart from the routine analysis we are into an impact assessment study primarily to gauge the effectiveness of NREGS in terms of sustainable livelihoods enablement.

Bardhaman, comprising 31 Blocks and 277 Gram Panchayats (GPs) depict significant diversities in economic patterns. The coexistence of the strong coal economy on one hand and the rich agricultural economy on the other adds to the diversities in outcomes in different GPs.

It would be nice to learn, share, and come to an understanding to propose modifications.

Shailendra Nath Pandey, Development Alternatives, New Delhi*

I agree with Mr. [Ajay's](#) suggestion on the NREGA. This programme is excellent but due to the poor governance at the Gram Panchayat level it fails. Again, the job cardholders are not included in the skill development programme through the NREGA.

The training and skill mapping in the intervention area will certainly help the community in getting assured livelihood. Again, the micro planning at the village level helps to identify the real needs of the community and provide job opportunities to the poor.

**Offline Contribution*

Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Work and Employment Community in India at se-emp@solutionexchange-un.net.in and/or Solution Exchange for the Decentralization Community in India se-decn@solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject heading "Re: [se-emp] [se-decn] Query: Taking NREGA beyond Wages to Sustainable Livelihoods – Experiences; Advice. Additional Reply."

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Food and Nutrition Security Community



Poverty

Work and Employment Community



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Consolidated Reply

Query: Integrating Sustainable Agriculture and Asset Building within NREGA, from the SARD Initiative, FAO Rome (Advice)

Compiled by Gopi N Ghosh and Sumeeta Banerji, Resource Persons; additional research provided by Bidisha Pillai, Shavika Gupta and Ruchi Khurana Research Associates
18 May, 2006

Original Query: Elisa Distefano, SARD Initiative, FAO Rome

Posted: 1 May 2006

The Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) Initiative is a project led by Major Groups of Civil Society and facilitated by FAO to reduce hunger and poverty and contribute to environmental, social and economic well being by building the capacity of poor rural producers, disadvantaged groups, and the governments and civil society groups that support them, to become aware of and adopt good practices that facilitate the transition to SARD.

The concept of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) is a major initiative of Government of India towards poverty reduction and income generation among rural poor families. Solution Exchange has already given members the space to discuss different aspects of the Act. In the context of an initial brainstorming session on possible modalities for implementation of the SARD Initiative in India, held in Delhi in February this year, the observation was made that in many rural communities in tribal areas, EGS resources could be used to provide work opportunities that can enable indigenous people to invest in infrastructure for natural resource management and agricultural productivity enhancement (e.g. water harvesting, check dams, biofencing), as well as for road construction and maintenance activities that could increase their access to markets and services. The SARD Initiative in FAO would like to explore this possibility in more depth, in order to ascertain whether local stakeholders could

exercise leadership for implementation of the employment guarantee schemes in ways that contribute to the achievement of more adequate and sustainable livelihoods for the target groups in the pilot districts.

In this regard, we would like to pose the following questions to the Food and Nutrition Security and Poverty, Work and Employment Communities:

- How can local communities play a role in ensuring that sustainable agricultural and NRM practices are adopted while planning works under EGS? What are the ways to enhance the capacity of local communities and workers to play this role?
- How could laborers and community-based groups influence the identification and planning process for projects under the employment guarantee scheme, to ensure that they are demand driven and result in the creation of productive and durable assets of utility to the communities?

Responses were received, with thanks, from:

1. [Ramit Basu](#), National Social Watch Coalition, New Delhi
2. [K.S. Gopal](#), Centre for Environment Concerns, Hyderabad ([Response 1](#); [Response 2](#))
3. [Nivedita Varshneya](#), AFPRO, New Delhi
4. [Amitabh Mukhopadhyay](#), Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi
5. [D K Ghosh](#), NRC for Citrus, Nagpur
6. [Sanjeev Kumar](#), Krishi Bharati, Lucknow
7. [D K Mohanty](#), Jyotirmayee Mahila Samiti, Orissa
8. [Asmita Kabra](#), Samrakshan Trust, New Delhi
9. [A. Bandyopadhyay](#), ICAR, New Delhi
10. [Barenyo Chowdhury](#), OLIVE, Kolkata
11. [Subhadra Channa](#), University of Delhi, New Delhi
12. [Jyotsna Bapat](#), UNDP, New Delhi ([Response 1](#); [Response 2](#))
13. [K V Peter](#), Kerala Agricultural University, Thrissur
14. [P. V. Thomas](#), Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals, New Delhi
15. [Sanjiv Kumar](#), ILO, Bangalore
16. [Abdul Rahman Ilyas](#), Dr.Reddy's Foundation, Hyderabad
17. [L.P.Semwal](#), Shri Jagdamba Samiti, Uttaranchal
18. [Uma Shankar Sharma](#), Jaipur Zila Vikas Parishad, Jaipur
19. [Susanta K. Roy](#), Ex-Emeritus Scientist, New Delhi
20. [G V Ramanjaneyulu](#), Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, Secunderabad

Further Contributions are welcome!

[Summary of Responses](#)
[Related Resources](#)
[Responses in Full](#)

Summary of Responses

Members recommended several ways local communities can adopt sustainable agriculture and natural resource management (NRM) practices, and participatory planning when implementing the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). Members also discussed other important points, which communities need to consider when carrying out Employment Guarantee Schemes (EGS) projects.

Members felt that in order for the durable assets created, to be truly beneficial, communities must play a role in identifying projects. Towards that end, respondents stressed the need for **ensuring inclusive and participatory planning processes**. Members contended public works must be demand driven, thus guaranteeing community ownership and maintenance of the asset. Otherwise, developing assets would serve no purpose beyond a temporary source of income during the period of construction. EGS have a dual purpose, members pointed out (particularly for landless households). In the short-term, projects provide wages and in the long run, give the community a valuable asset.

Some of concrete suggestions, given by members, on how to integrate participatory planning into EGS included:

- **Community Participation:** The respondents pointed out that active community participation and effective use of the Gram Sabha (GS) and Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) are both pre-requisites for successful participatory planning. While the NREGA guidelines call for the GSs to provide the 'social space' for participatory community decisions, other local citizen groups or community-based organizations may also be involved. Organizations or groups, like local vigilance and monitoring committees, self-help groups and/or labor societies, could facilitate the collective decision making process.
- **Social inclusion:** As communities are rarely homogeneous (comprised of men, women, Dalits, landowners, landless agricultural laborers, etc.), all the voices within a community need to be consciously included. Members suggested several mechanisms to ensure social inclusion during the decision making process. Their ideas included assigning quotas for disadvantaged groups and employing traditional concepts like "[Kuudam](#)."
- **Local needs-assessment and resource mapping:** Members proposed conducting a pilot study to identify local needs, existing resources, and the community's cultural values. This exercise would be an indirect way for the community to influence the selection of works.

In addition, respondents cautioned against government or non-government agencies, advocating projects or activities, which are in their interest and not necessarily the community's. They also stressed that the selection of works should be location specific rather than a one-size fits all approach.

To create employment opportunities and ensure proper management of natural resources requires awareness building, members explained. Respondents argued that building the awareness and capacity of GSs, PRIs, and communities using the [Right to Information Act](#) and various technical inputs, would **ensure adoption of sustainable agricultural and NRM practices**.

An experience cited by a member from [Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh](#), highlighted the importance of capacity building in order to manage natural resources successfully. The GSs and PRIs received training to manage natural resources, enabling them to prepare a micro plan for the EGS public work projects in each village. They even secured additional funds for their own projects.

Another innovative project mentioned in the responses, was about a community, which was able to [generate electricity from biological waste](#). The project created additional jobs within the community. Members put forth, that under the NREGA, similar innovative community led and owned projects are possible as well.

In addition, respondents listed several other possible sustainable agriculture and asset building projects for EGS. These included enhancing the livestock and dairy sector; creating permanent water bodies; developing the skills of local communities on sustainability issues; [revamping traditional water bodies](#); soil enrichment works; [water source recharge technologies](#); introducing [dryland farming techniques](#); promoting rural artisans through [eco-tourism](#); and introducing low cost food processing centers.

Members also highlighted several **other areas** requiring attention when planning and implementing EGS projects. These included:

- **Risk of mismanagement-** All aspects of the projects require good management, to guard against misappropriation of funds and to ensure that the projects are truly in the community's best interest.
- **Importance of monitoring-** Involve local organizations and citizen groups (such as local NGOs, CBOs and students) to serve as a local vigilance mechanism.
- **Accuracy in registration of workers-** Accurately maintaining the list of job seekers and payment of wages are crucial to proper implementation of EGS projects.
- **Ensuring regular employment and payment-** Ensure that during the lean season projects are implemented and paying workers on a regular basis to provide families food and income security.
- **Completing projects on time-** EGS projects have the dual purpose of providing employment while an "asset" is being developed, however since the asset is also designed to benefit the whole community completing projects on-time is essential.
- **Creating a 'shelf of works'**- A list of key assets, that have been identified as priority by the local the community, could be created, which the Gram Sabhas could refer to when selecting works.
- **Collaborative process for identifying works-** Agricultural technology management agencies, private players, banks, NGOs, and community members could jointly work to identify possible projects.

Members reiterated that the NREGA is landmark legislation, with clear implementation guidelines. However, they stressed that communities must first be empowered and have developed the necessary capacity in order to play their intended role. As active participants, they will be able to influence the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the entire process.

Related Resources

Recommended Organizations

Centre for Environment Concerns, Hyderabad (from [K.S. Gopa!](#), CEC, Hyderabad)

Contact: 3-4, 142/6 Barkatpura, Hyderabad 500027; Email: cechyd@eth.net

CEC works on soil technologies towards creating sustainable agriculture methods for dryland farmers, which could be recommended for the NREGA as well.

AFPRO, New Delhi (from [Nivedita Varshneya](#), AFPRO, New Delhi)

<http://www.afpro.org/programs.htm#10>

AFPRO supports capacity building of communities in NRM, soil and water conservation, silvipasture, sustainable agriculture etc to be taken up as works within the NREGA.

Samrakshan Charitable Trust, New Delhi (from [Asmita Kabra](#), Samrakshan Trust, New Delhi)

http://www.ashanet.org/projects-new/documents/samrakshan_trust_details.doc

Samrakshan promotes sustainable livelihoods of forest-dwelling communities through effective NRM and community participation; an example for implementing NREGA.

Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA), India (from [A. Bandyopadhyay](#), ICAR, New Delhi)

<http://www.manage.gov.in/NATP/atma.htm>

ATMA is a society of key stakeholders supporting sustainable agricultural development in districts, which may be involved in selecting works under the NREGA at the district level.

From [Abdul Rahman Ilyas](#), Dr.Reddy's Foundation, Hyderabad

Naandi Foundation, Hyderabad

<http://www.naandi.org/Healthcare/safeWater.asp>

The organization's community based project which uses a water purification model that provides affordable water to the poor could be an option for works under the NREGA.

Dr Reddy's Foundation, Hyderabad

<http://www.drreddysfoundation.org/#>

Addresses the issue of safe drinking water through a project "Aarogya" to ensure healthy food practices and safe drinking water; can be replicated within NREGA.

Development Alternatives, Delhi (from [Jyotsna Bapat](#), UNDP, New Delhi)

<http://www.devalt.org/mission.htm>

Community based power plant project using agricultural perishables as fuel. It created 50 plus jobs and provided electricity to the village, which EGS could use.

Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN), Secunderabad (from [Bidisha Pillai](#), Research Associate)

<http://www.wassan.org/apregs/default.htm>

WASSAN is piloting the Andhra Pradesh Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, under the NREGA including awareness building and planning and implementing shelf works.

Directory of technical organizations (from [Consolidated Reply](#): Work and Employment Community)

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/res18010602.doc>

List of organizations which can be helpful for preparing works manuals for NREGA. Many of these also conduct training programs.

Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, New Delhi (from [Consolidated Reply](#), Decentralization Community)

<http://www.rural.nic.in/>

The ministry has piloted the NREGA and is now finalizing the modalities of its implementation.

Recommended Documentation

Presentation on Implementing framework for EGA (from [K.S. Gopal](#), CEC, Hyderabad)

K.S. Gopal, CEC, Hyderabad

http://planningcommission.nic.in/data/ngo/csw/csw_7.pdf

The presentation provides guidelines on appropriate selection of works within the NREGA, and ways to encourage community participation in monitoring the EGS.

World's Dryland Farmers Need New Agricultural Technology - "Green Revolution" Never Reached Them (from [K.S. Gopal](#), CEC, Hyderabad)

Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, World Bank, June 1997

<http://www.worldbank.org/html/cgiar/press/dryland.html>

A CGIAR release on various dryland technologies and practices that could be included to promote sustainable agricultural practices within the NREGA.

Right to Information and Employment Campaign, Dungarpur (from [Amitabh Mukhopadhyay](#), Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi)

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/food/cr/res12050601.doc>

Account of a social audit process conducted under NREGA, demonstrating how to facilitate community participation in selecting, executing and monitoring works.

Total Community Water Management (from [Jyotsna Bapat](#), UNDP, New Delhi)

Worldwaterday.org, 21 March 2005

<http://www.worldwaterday.org/page/332>

A project to develop a situation of "total community water management" in rural areas of Tamil Nadu, this initiative could address NRM issues through the NREGA.

Media campaign brings hope to desert (from [Ramit Basu](#), National Social Watch Coalition, New Delhi)

By Ramesh Menon, India Together, May 2006

<http://www.indiatogether.org/2005/jul/env-rajpatrik.htm>

Tells the story of revival of water bodies (suggested works for NREGA) through traditional practices and wisdom in Rajasthan through active community participation.

Land, Water, Food, Environment and Survival of Agriculture (from [L.P.Semwal](#), Shri Jagdamba Samiti, Uttaranchal)

Pgs 65 - 99, Citizens Global platform, April 2005

<http://www.globalplatform.fi/doc/1115621922.56>

A series of articles on the aspect of land and water resource management in the Himalayan ecological region including their use, sustainable agricultural practices etc.

Endogenous Tourism (from [Uma Shankar Sharma](#), Jaipur Zila Vikas Parishad, Jaipur)

Ecotourism News, July 2003

<http://scstsenvis.nic.in/news2003jul.htm>

An example of how Culture and Craft based Eco-Tourism (suggested for the NREGA) can be promoted for Sustainable Livelihoods and Integrated Rural Development.

From [P. V. Thomas](#), Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals, New Delhi

Sampoorna Grameen Rojgar Yojana (SGRY)

<http://angul.nic.in/sgrj.htm>

The SGRY specifies works to taken up including soil and moisture conservation works, watershed development, construction of village infrastructure and link roads etc.

Employment Assurance Scheme

<http://rural.nic.in/eas.htm>

A predecessor to the SGRY, the objective of the EAS was to provide gainful employment during lean agricultural season and create assets for sustained employment.

Sustainable Agriculture Programme, Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (from [G V](#)

Ramanjaneyulu, Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, Secunderabad)

[http://www.csa-india.org/downloads/downloads-](http://www.csa-india.org/downloads/downloads-CSA%20related/final%20annual%20report%20hivos02-03.pdf)

[CSA%20related/final%20annual%20report%20hivos02-03.pdf](http://www.csa-india.org/downloads/downloads-CSA%20related/final%20annual%20report%20hivos02-03.pdf) (Size: 269 KB)

Develops alternative strategies to using modern chemicals, market dependent agriculture through works on Non-Pesticidal Management towards sustainable agricultural practices.

From [Bidisha Pillai](#), Research Associate

Integrating Dryland Agriculture Support Systems with NREG, WASSAN

http://www.wassan.org/apregs/dry_ag%20with%20nreg.htm

Suggestions to extend support to dryland agriculture through works undertaken within the NREGA, including composting manure, pest management, livestock rearing etc.

Piloting Andhra Pradesh Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (APREGS) – 2005,

Cluster Level Livelihoods Resource Center, WASSAN; March 2006

<http://www.wassan.org/apregs/document/APREGS%20Report%20-%206.pdf> (File Type .PDF, 668KB)

The report gives the progress of implementation of the first round of works undertaken under the NREGA in AP, which included farm pond, bunding and percolation tank work.

NREGA Guidelines

http://nrega.nic.in/Nrega_guidelines.pdf (Size: 565KB)

Gives details of the NREGA, including permissible works for building sustainable assets, procedures for sanctioning works, implementing agencies and their roles etc.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act - A Historic Opportunity

by Mihir Shah, Economic and Political Weekly, December 2004

<http://www.epw.org.in/showArticles.php?root=2004&leaf=12&filename=7998&filetype=html>

The article reviews the NREGA's opportunity to revive public investment in sustainable agriculture and tackle the prevailing environmental crisis that is gripping rural India.

The Big Hope: Transparency marks the NREGA in Dungarpur

by Anosh Malekar, InfoChange India, May 2006

<http://www.infochangeindia.org/features359.jsp>

The article covers a social audit of NREGA across 800 villages showcasing how communities could actively participate in successful implementation of the scheme.

India's Employment Guarantee: an Antidote to Neoliberalism?

By Praful Bidwai, ASED, September 2005

http://www.ased.org/artman/publish/article_719.shtml

Covers the NREGA's potential to provide work during periods of agrarian distress, revive the rural economy and village infrastructure and strengthen organizations of rural labour.

from [Consolidated Reply](#): Work and Employment Community, January 18, 2006

Providing Employment Guarantee in India: Some Critical Issues

By Indira Hirway, Economic and Political Weekly, November 2004, Available at:
<http://www.epw.org.in/>

The article can be accessed by searching for 27.11.04 issue under the EPW Archives section, available after a free online registration on the EPW homepage.

Enhancing Livelihood Security Through the National Employment Guarantee Act: Towards Effective Operationalisation of the Act

By Indira Hirway,

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/res18010606.doc>

Addresses involvement of local organizations and people and capacity building of concerned agencies with respect to NREGA.

Employment Programmes For Protecting the Vulnerable Poor: Lessons from the Past Experiences in India

By Indira Hirway, 2004,

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/res18010607.doc>

The paper looks at the need for wage employment programs in India and looks at various issues like asset ownership, involvement of women etc, useful in selecting works.

Towards Employment Guarantee in India: Indian and International Experiences in Rural Public Works Programs

By Indira Hirway and Piet Terhal; Indo-Dutch Studies on Development Alternatives Series, Volume 14; Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd.; 1995

Ordering info at: <http://www.sagepublications.com/faq/sageFAQ.htm>

Features experiences and case studies of special employment programmes implemented within and outside India, that may be useful while selecting works under the NREGA.

from [Consolidated Reply](#), Cross Posting with Work and Employment and Decentralization Communities, April 3, 2006

Recommendations for Strengthening the PRIs

By Venkatrao Ghorpade, Sep 2005, Available at [link](#)

Proposed recommendations to strengthen PRIs for involvement in the NREGA enabling them to assess training needs of human development departments at state-level.

Check-list for NREGA

Prepared by Nidhi Prabha Tiwari and Mathew V., Available at [link](#)

Check-list of elements for monitoring of NREGA at the district, block & panchayat level, contains sections on transparency in works, wage payments, etc.

Recommended Websites

Right to Information Act, India (from [Nivedita Varshneya](#), AFPRO, New Delhi)

<http://persmin.nic.in/RTI/WelcomerTI.htm>

A comprehensive site providing the guidelines and procedures of the Act, which could be effectively used to build capacities for selecting works under the NREGA.

NREGA (from [Bidisha Pillai](#), Research Associate)

<http://nrega.nic.in/>

A website of Ministry of Rural Development, Govt of India, provides comprehensive information, data and circulars related to NREGA.

Related Past Consolidated Replies

NREGA vigilance by local groups, from Lok Sabha Secretariat and from Social Watch, New Delhi

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/cr-se-emp-decn03040601.doc>

Advice on the role of alternate vigilance/reporting mechanisms, tools and methods for vigilance and key indicators to monitor implementation of EG Schemes.

NREGA Training for Different Stakeholders, from SIRD, Ahmedabad, 18 Jan 2006

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/cr-se-emp-18010601.htm>

This Work and Employment Community CR gives advice on components for the design of training modules for the different stakeholders involved in the implementation of NREGA.

Panchayats implementing NREGA in backward districts, from NIPFP, New Delhi, 13 Dec 05

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/cr-se-decn-13120501.doc>

This Decentralization Community CR offers valuable ideas regarding implementation of NREGA in different parts of the country, with special reference to the backward districts.

Database of resource support institutions for EGS, from UNDP, New Delhi, 16 May 2006

Cross-posted with the Decentralization and Gender Communities.

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/cr-se-emp-decn-gen-15050601.htm>

Recommends organizations with experience and expertise on specific aspects of EGS such as monitoring, social audit, capacity building, communication, ICT etc.

Experiences with Employment Guarantees, from UNDP India, 18 Aug 2005

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/res18010605.doc>

This global Poverty Network CR gives examples and GLOBAL experiences of rural wage employment/ self employment schemes run by governments.

Experiences with Employment Guarantee Legislation, from UNDP, India, 13 Oct 05

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/res18010604.doc>

This global Poverty Reduction Network & Democratic Governance Network CR gives examples of food-for-work and employment Guarantee schemes in various countries.

Responses in Full

Ramit Basu, National Social Watch Coalition, New Delhi

Thanks for raising this query and I would rate it as perhaps the most important query till date especially in the present times when NREGA has become the buzzword amongst the civil society and other actors. We need to understand the reason why such an Act had to be enacted and the rationale behind the same and there is no doubt that it is because we are losing our agriculture which used to take care of the livelihood of millions across developing countries like India. Agricultural lands are fast turning barren with decreasing productivity, limited resources and limited market access which have forced people to look out for alternate means of livelihood like labouring.

I strongly feel that while discussing about the Act there is too much emphasis on wages and amount of work and equity which is quite significant in its own way but we need to think much

beyond that.

I mean to indicate means to strengthen Local Self Governance through this Act and while doing that identify the works which would lead to benefits for the majority in the region. It is very important to note that the works are necessarily to be selected by the Gram Sabha (the common group of villagers eligible to vote) which has the complete understanding of what type of resources need to be created in the village so as create sustainable means of livelihood.

This preferably need to be done in consultation with the Gram Panchayat but the GP or for that sake any higher authority can not dictate the nature of work that need to be taken up in a village.

For this process, there need to be a proper awareness campaign in the region which could be facilitated by NGOs / CSOs. Possibly a perspective planning wherein there are discussions on how to restore the lost resources. For example: In a place like Rajasthan, revamping traditional water bodies or creating new ones would be worthwhile which will help the villagers revamp their lost agriculture which could mean additional income and ensuring food security. Ofcourse there may be discourses on agricultural market mechanisms, WTO etc. impacting the sale of agricultural produce or the question of the landless but these factors should not be impediments as an overall growth would invariably lead towards increasing the resource base of panchayats which could also be used to create alternate employment opportunities for those not having access to agricultural land. Water structures could also be used for pisciculture etc.

The gist of any such out-of-the box initiative would be to properly counsel and make the gram panchayats aware of such opportunities which should be decided at the village level. Proper orientation of the Gram Sabha by CSOs and NGOs could very well lead to identification of durable assets of utility and economic empowerment to the communities.

[K.S. Gopal](#), Centre for Environment Concerns, Hyderabad

Response 1

In planning the works to be taken up the guidelines places this task with the community. But in practice it does not work because governments officials believe they know what works are assets. Most work that departments take up are now being pushed under NREGA and they use known technologies of soil and moisture conservation. I am not finding evidence that this makes any real impact on livelihoods while some ground water improvement has been observed in some places because of watersheds. There is a need to move along with water on soil enrichment and attendant drought proofing but this has not happened. It would be good if SARD could provide technologies and support for re-directing the NREGA "works" that can benefit the dry land farmer. We at CEC have done some work on this and can share our experience some of which has been very successful as seen by the enthusiasm generated among farmers.

On your second query, what we at CEC advocate is that all "works" in NREGA should be based on the criteria of additional private/public investment will follow on taking up a so called "asset". This could be in the form of finance capital or social capital. So we feel the assets to be developed must be vetted by farmers along with bankers/investors and buyers in the market yards as then it would lead to creating an infrastructure that is need based and leads to other people making full use of the potential of the asset. We cannot assume that what is being currently done is leading to any use or triggering enthusiasm among the people.

SARD must lead by example and only then can we influence officials to really go in for real assets while people will come forward with their proposals on infrastructure development only when they understand that their proposals are taken seriously. I would also suggest SARD to consider making NREGA meet the objective of addressing hunger which is very high in tribal areas.

[Nivedita Varshneya](#), AFPRO, New Delhi

As Mr. Basu has pointed out, working through the community for reviving fast depleting common property resources is the only way to ensure that the benefits of NREGA accrue not only to individuals in the form of wages but to the community as a whole in the form of natural capital.

I would like to cite two SDC supported projects being implemented by AFPRO as examples. In the first project implemented in the ravines of the Chambal area of UP & MP, AFPRO and its partner organizations are building up the capacity of the Gram Sabha and the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in managing natural resources of the region and undertaking soil and water conservation works as check dams, gully plugging, de-silting ponds, silvipasture, farm bunding, sustainable agriculture etc. With initial support from the NGOs, the Gram Sabha prepares a micro plan for each village, to be put up to the local Panchayats for implementation under the forthcoming NREGA. Instances of self management are reflected in cases where the communities have managed to procure funding support from the Irrigation Department for works in their Micro Plan, and in another case a check dam being constructed under a watershed project was stalled as it was felt that it would not provide the desired benefit to the village.

The other project in Ananthpur, Andhra Pradesh aims at organizing and building up the capacities of the landless laborers to form local Labor Societies (*Sanghas*) and a District level Federation which works for a comprehensive data base, training, capacity building and inclusion in the planning process for works to be taken up under NREGA.

Intensive capacity building of the Gram Sabha & PRIs, using the Right to Information Act where required and socio-technical support by NGOs does offer hope of achieving positive results through NREGA.

[Amitabh Mukhopadhyay](#), Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi

I participated in the Right to Information and Employment campaign in Dungarpur, April 2006, with social audit as its core.

The most important issue in NREGA is that it is supposed to be self-targeting. This means that only manual workers will apply for and get employment; no Below Poverty Line list will be used. Now this is fine as an assumption on paper, but non-workers apply and get paid due to the fact that records of work done etc. are often misrepresented at the ground level through collusion between certain vested interests. The only safeguards against anti-social appropriation of the guarantee for work cannot be record-keeping and book-keeping alone.

Works to develop land/water bodies owned by weaker sections, as provided for by NREGA guidelines, would also provide a safeguard because the concerned land-holder will have a stake. Works for developing common property resources such as ponds, anicuts etc. should, as far as possible, be *pucca* works i.e. with a materials component to build a permanent or quasi-permanent asset. The active interest of persons with technical knowledge to help develop watershed projects, on SC/ST own lands as well as commons, village by village, will add value to NREGA.

I am attaching, for the benefit of readers, the [impressions I gathered](#) during my 5-day participation travel and discussions as a panelist in Dungarpur.

[D K Ghosh](#), NRC for Citrus, Nagpur

Followings are my comments in response to Elisa's questions:

Participatory identification of problems i.e. identification of works to be taken up should be need based and location specific which involves intensive participation of local people. Prioritization of the identified work and projects in NRM and infrastructure should certainly be for the larger well being of all communities involved. Rural food / fuel / fodder / seed banks as contingency measures should be created and local representatives should be empowered to manage them. Local communities should be increasingly encouraged to participate actively and intensely in SARD. Opinion of local share holders and the grass root leaders should be given more importance for constructive outcomes. The community leadership should be guided to focus on a well defined goals and purposes rather than on preconceived social conflicts. Outsiders should only help and motivate them in implementing the task.

Incentives and recognition of the best performers based on sincere and unbiased evaluation will help to increase the output. Identification of new skills and capabilities should be encouraged while implementation is in progress. The community should feel the sense of responsibility and accountability in the maintenance and upkeep of the assets created. The durable assets created should be under a shared responsibility and the access and benefits from the assets should be equitable. Last but not the least, the delivery and the benefits of the development should reach to the target group with in shortest possible time frame.

[K.S. Gopal](#), Centre for Environment Concerns, Hyderabad

Response 2

For building "assets" in NREGA we must do the following:

1. The power of deciding works must shift from engineers and bureaucrats to other interest groups.
2. All works identified, in which the labour component is less than ten percent must be decided on the basis of additional investment that the farmer, banker or the private sector is willing to

invest upon taking up the works. Each Mandal or block must have a committee involving farmers, merchants, development NGOs and bankers to decide and make choices. This is the best and only way that "assets" can be created. Let us not confuse structures with assets or infrastructure. Time horizon for such works must be three to five years, with the investors making their committed investments parallelly from year two as the task proceeds.

3. Quotas in panchayati raj works must be provided to various groups who alone will be allowed to make the choices, such as small farmers, women, dalits, handicapped, artisans, fisherfolk, cattle grazers etc. Experience shows that they come up with interesting, value adding and quality of life improving works that we cannot think of. But these ideas work and show good promise and in such works maintenance is a non-issue as the community makes the effort.

4. In NREGA payments need not wait until work is done. The services of the worker household must be made bankable wherein each month they would receive a specific amount of money with more being given during the lean season. This approach was adopted in AP for drought mitigation and Tsunami to ensure food security, and has worked very well. This provides workers with confidence and addresses their problem; a good well fed worker must also be seen as asset creation by NREGA.

5. At our centre all the above have been attempted and we are willing to share our experiences in detail with anyone interested.

Sanjeev Kumar, Krishi Bharati, Lucknow

I am contributing to this query based on the learning I have gathered, analysed, and applied in my 18 years of work as a field based (Village/ Tehsil/ District) facilitator and researcher across different states of India.

How can local communities play a role in ensuring that sustainable agricultural and NRM practices are adopted while planning works under EGS? What are the ways to enhance the capacity of local communities and workers to play this role?

- The "local communities" are heterogeneous in nature, character, and need. Like national identities, the communities should be organised on livelihood identities like, farm labour organisations, farmers' organisation, women labour organisation, official governance structures, etc.
- We have to enable differentiated end-to-end solutions for the livelihood needs of the community segments. Transfer the onus of thinking through the local schemes/activities on to these CBOs - they will never stand up on their own if this onus is not transferred.
- Apart from the existing skill set, a mobilisation and networking index of individual families should be developed. This will enable the prediction about the family's chances of climbing out of the poverty trap successfully. This index can provide the family's access to membership of CBOs and its relations with other socio-economic institutions.
- There are no shortcuts to poverty removal- you cannot make a BPO worker out of a 30year old Vth grader having manual labour skills even in 5 years with the kind of per capita resources being made available through such schemes. There is a clear need for intensive application of resources (e.g., teaching new skills) for sustainable results.

How could laborers and community-based groups influence the identification and planning process for projects under the employment guarantee scheme, to ensure that they are demand driven and result in the creation of productive and durable assets of utility to the communities?

- Choices of implementation institutions- farm labour organisations, farmers' organisation, women labour organisation, official governance structures, etc.
- Let there be two identities viz. family and institutional on job cards.
- Let these CBOs come out with alternatives on the kind of works/activities that can be taken up
- Make it mandatory for various institutions of higher learning to send their students for concurrent monitoring of such schemes instead of making bureaucrats and CSOs the sole guarantors of corruption free operations. The demand for such works peak during the summer period- a period that also coincides with the summer trainings for such institutions. The involvement of CBOs will facilitate the placement of students across the breadth and length of the country.
- Stop excessive standardisation in such schemes just to enable comparison through neat excel charts regarding utilisation progress of the scheme across regions. This is the single largest contributor to making the scheme lose its relevance for the community.
- The Centre and State should set an example for the 3 tiers of Panchayati Raj to play their roles in a responsible manner. Let the concurrent monitoring mechanism be used as a more overriding supervision/ guidance/ management tool instead of an administrative tool in this context.

[D K Mohanty](#), Jyotirmayee Mahila Samiti, Orissa

Greetings from Jyotirmayee Mahila Samiti, Orissa, India. Creating "assets" through NREGA at the village level is a good idea and will be helpful during the lean season for land less labourers as well as labourers in the un-organised and agricultural sector. Some of the works undertaken for asset creation could be creating new ponds and asset building in the livestock and diary farming sectors through which beneficiaries can raise their income in sustainable way and can also work in an organized manner with optimum utilisation of the funds being sanctioned.

[Asmita Kabra](#), Samrakshan Trust, New Delhi

The query is extremely pertinent, especially as ground conditions in many of the poorest areas of the country are absolutely the opposite of what is desired. For instance, in the Vijaypur subdivision of district Sheopur, where my organization (Samarakshan) works, the local people regularly engage in or allow lifting valuable topsoil from their agricultural fields for wage employment activities like road construction. In this semi-arid, low rainfall area (a part of the Chambal division of MP), which is marked by heavy soil erosion and desertification, one can come across repeated instances where Adivasi (tribal) landowners allow topsoil from their fields to be used for making roads, leaving their own agricultural fields exposed to further erosion during the next rainy season.

Instances like these are a measure of the degree of apathy of the district authorities, Panchayati Raj institutions and the local people themselves towards long term livelihood security issues. In the case of the local community, the apathy is undoubtedly fuelled by extreme disempowerment and a feeling of hopelessness, generated by the fact that this is a community recently resettled at this location by the MP Forest Department after being displaced from their home in the Kuno wildlife sanctuary).

Given the extent of mis-management prevailing in the implementation of rural development works, and in view of the extreme fragmentation of the local community and breakdown of its traditional institutions, it is truly an uphill task for our field team to motivate the local community (a majority of which consists of the Sahariya Adivasi) to use opportunities like NREGA to overturn the factors causing poverty. Also, vested interests within the region are violently opposed to any monitoring of government works. The level of acceptance within the community of the situation is also alarmingly high. Moreover, the presence of grassroots civil society organizations is extremely small in this district, thereby limiting the possibilities of forming viable coalitions for such monitoring. It would therefore be relevant, in the context of community participation in the NREGA, to explore how grassroots organizations working in similar conditions balance the needs of physical security of their field teams with the urgency of monitoring government works.

A. Bandyopadhyay, ICAR, New Delhi

A very important and practical question has been raised. An option that comes to my mind is to explore the possibility of involving the Agricultural Technology Management Agencies (ATMA, the well known acronym now) in various Districts by the way of involving the stakeholders in planning for the work to undertaken under the NREGA. There are block level technology advisory groups also under the ATMAs, which involve various stakeholders who could help identify possible works to be undertaken as part of the NREGA.

Barenyo Chowdhury, OLIVE, Kolkata

Thanks for initiating such an interesting discussion. I propose the following to share my views:

How can local communities play a role in ensuring that sustainable agricultural and NRM practices are adopted while planning works under EGS?

Experiences show that problems of development of new project ideas or uncertainties regarding the viability of such projects often lack support at district or grassroots levels.

Creation of an easily accessible repository of successful / sustainable agricultural and NRM practices related projects to refer while developing the shelf of projects would be useful. As agro climatic data is available for all the districts of India, it may also be possible to create region specific options of projects meeting the macro requirements. Net savvy community members would be able to chose and modify these as per their requirement.

What are the ways to enhance the capacity of local communities and workers to play this role?

The gram sabha member can be trained to access such projects profiles from the portal. To address the language issue the local school teacher or any other knowledgeable person in the village can be motivated to assist the gram sabha member if he requires support.

How could laborers and community-based groups influence the identification and planning process for projects under the employment guarantee scheme, to ensure that they are demand driven and result in the creation of productive and durable assets of utility to the communities?

The GS member may be requested to maintain a register to record local demands expressed by the laborers from time to time. While preparing the shelf of projects this register can be referred to, by the approving authority. The creation of productive asset may be built into the proposed project profile listed in the portal. Further an online project viability check format can be developed within the portal which would help the BDO, SDO or DM to accept / reject the proposal.

Subhadra Channa, University of Delhi, New Delhi

The question of involving the local communities is very sensitive as in many cases one is faced with a number of problems in this regard. As a field anthropologist who has worked extensively with local people, both rural and tribal I have the following suggestions. Whenever a project is to be implemented it must be preceded by a pilot study to identify the needs of the community, the local resource base, the values and cultural commitments of the people and their perception of what is to be implemented.

Quite often projects that appear meaningless in the local context are implemented in a way that they make no difference to the lives of the people and are a waste of resources for the implementing agency. For example I found that there were a number of shops allotted to various people by the state sponsored Jawahar rojgar yojana in a remote mountain village in Garhwal. The shops were lying locked and were not used by the allottees. The reason being, these people are seasonal movers between their high and low altitude villages and are primarily pastoral. They hardly buy or sell anything in the local villages, especially in the high altitude for there is hardly any one to buy or sell to. Within the village there are a few provision shops and there is no public demand for anything.

Like wise a road to no where built on the steep mountain side was also in the nature of a farce. The people who did it made it only for the daily wages and not because they saw any particular use for it. The mountains sides are far too steep for any vehicles to come up and the people are extremely sure footed on the natural landscape to need any roads to climb up and down.

I quite often found that the programs introduced by outsiders according to their own perceptions are either ignored by the villagers or misused by them. For example giving milk cows to tribals who do not drink milk at all, will not make them use them for milk and long term profit. They would slaughter them and eat them as beef and it would be a short term gratification only and not an income generating scheme as intended

What was a more successful program, introduced by a local and not any outside agency, was the cultivation of apples as a commercial enterprise. This was catching up and providing a good source of cash income. Thus I would strongly urge the use of some basic ground work before any such schemes are implemented.

Other dangers are that only some members of the community are consulted even if some consultations are made. The marginal sections and the women are generally left out of the discussion. Thus most of the outside schemes tend to benefit the already dominant sections of the rural communities, like land holding groups, dominant castes and men. One must also be sensitive to the fact that the rural and tribal communities have their internal differences and every one may not have the same needs and requirements. The needs of the most deprived and vulnerable sections must be kept in mind while implementing any program.

[Jyotsna Bapat](#), UNDP, New Delhi

Response 1

I would like to share with you a recent initiative on the outcomes of a three year long project 'democratization of Water management' initiated by Change Management Group Tamil Nadu Water and Development Board, Chennai. The project trained engineers to 'talk' to the villages where they supplied drinking water. This change in role from mere water supply providers to being concerned about the communities' plight for water in the village settlements was a major trigger for change.

It allowed for the villagers to talk openly with the engineers about their long term concern about sector as a whole. This whole process allowed for revival of traditional water sources and rain water harvesting and creation of multiple check dams in existing streams and rivers, repair of existing facilities and make them fully functional. These included traditional and modern water systems, like temple tanks and overhead tanks and bore wells respectively. Thus these 500 odd villages across 28 districts were able to have water in summer in spite of severe draught condition in the state.

The used the traditional concept 'Kuudam' a cultural space that existed within the village for inclusive decision making. The differences and consensus were discussed being closed doors between the engineers and the community and the joint decisions for action were implemented. This process led to the public sector employees changing their attitudes and behaviors in the long term interest of the water sector as seen by the community. This has been a great success and is now being tried by other state governments and other public sector service providers to bring about change in the sectors. Thus this becomes one way of changing the attitudes and behaviors of existing public sector department employees to motivate community to manage their natural resources and come to a consensus on sharing them equitably. A similar process could be adopted while identifying works for the NREGA as well.

[K V Peter](#), Kerala Agricultural University, Thrissur

Local communities can play decisive role in deciding critical gaps in infrastructure vital for sustainable agriculture. Selection of crops, varieties, season of growing, choice of cattle/poultry/fishery and sericulture based on natural resources available are important factors deciding sustainability. Rural work guarantee programme aims at critical infrastructure development along with wages to the community. Educating about the programme to community leaders first and then to members at large would reduce corrupt practices. There has to be community auditing to ensure quality of work and cost of work. During construction of Rajasthan Canal immediately after independence, there was massive involvement of local communities which ensured employment to people in addition to accomplishment of work well in time. Social auditing is needed to ensure transparency and accountability.

[P. V. Thomas](#), Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals, New Delhi

This is with reference to your query on 'Integrating Sustainable Agriculture and Asset Building within NREGA, from the SARD Initiative, FAO Rome'. In the guidelines of poverty alleviation and employment generation Programme, stipulation has been made that local communities have to be involved in planning various developmental Programmes. Guidelines also contains provision for taking up demand driven works while implementing employment generation programmes. For

e.g. in the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) which was a predecessor of Sampoorna Grameen Rojgar Yojana (SGRY) provision was made that only such work should be taken which will be useful for the community and other works were banned. Similarly in SGRY also the type of assets to be created were indicated and the execution of work was to be taken up by the beneficiaries committees.

The major objective of the NREGA is to enhance livelihood security of the people in rural areas by generating wage employment through works that develop the infrastructure base of that area. The choice of that work suggested addresses causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation, soil erosion etc.

The Gram Sabha is the statutorily mandated institutional mechanism for eliciting community participation. In addition, other methods of community participation could be evolved such as local vigilance and monitoring committees, local beneficiary committees, local Self Help Groups, user group and other grass root structures to broaden base of participation so that the implementation of the Act has transparency and public accountability. The panchayats at different levels have been given vast responsibilities in respect of planning & implementation of the works programme under the EGS. In particular the Act authorises the Gram Sabha to recommend works to be taken up, monitor, supervise and undertake social audit of the implementation of the scheme. It is also suggested that the institution of Gram Sabha be used extensively for facilitating implementation of the scheme. Needless to mention that the Gram Sabha consists of all adult members of the rural community and therefore community participation is an essential feature of the scheme. As a matter of fact, the scheme is intended for the village communities many of which may be located in remote or isolated areas and the Gram Sabha could be the most effective institutional vehicle for reaching out to them. The Gram Sabha should be used as a forum for sharing information about the scheme particularly for reporting on each aspect of implementation of the scheme.

Every district implementing the programme is required to prepare a perspective plan to enable them to analyse and to assess the causative factors of poverty in their area and identify appropriate intervention to address them. All the districts where the National Food for Work Programme was being implemented were also required to prepare such perspective plan. The district perspective plan will have the component of annual action plan which gives shelf of projects and works to be taken up for execution. Some of the features of the perspective plan are that they are village based, holistic covering socio-economic aspects of development and diagnostic. This will include a causal analysis of poverty which will help identifying gaps and needs and nature of inputs required. The draft perspective plan should also be discussed and approved by the Gram Sabha, the Gram Panchayats, the intermediate and the district panchayats. At the village level, efforts need to be made to ensure the participation of the work force of the village likely to seek work under the scheme. Their demand for work as well as their preference for nature and time of work should be elicited so that the plan becomes an instrument to give them employment according to their need. Each village need to develop its perspective plan so that it can bench mark the incremental improvements consequential to EGS. The district perspective plan should be flexible enough to respond to the new emerging needs of the area, the experience of implementation and the new works to be taken up.

Thus there is ample scope for the local community to play an important role in planning & implementation of the employment guarantee scheme.

Sanjiv Kumar, ILO, Bangalore

In Karnataka state, where panchayati raj movement is very strong, the selection of shelf of project for EGS or its earlier versions (employment generation schemes) is very much by the communities, through the gram panchayats and gram sabhas. If community participation is fully representative and complete, the prioritisation of work is such that everyone benefits from the same, otherwise the work may be reflecting the priorities of the few privileged who were instrumental in selecting the same. Drought proofing, sustainable agriculture and NRM practices are essential but may benefit the land owners disproportionately when compared to the actual target group of EGS, the landless wage earners. Sustainable agriculture has an element of private enterprise. How much it should happen at public funding and how much by private investment can be debated. Earlier when panchayats were dominated by the landed leaders such work would have been in the priority list but not today, unless everyone is convinced that they all will benefit from the same. And it is probably the most rightful decision.

The question, 'How local communities play a role in ensuring that sustainable agriculture and NRM practices are adopted while planning work under EGS,' pre supposes that such works are in the best interest of all, which may not be the case. It should be left to the local communities to decide their priorities. Legislation, administration and civil society movement should strengthen the hands of communities and facilitate participation of the weakest, poorest and the voiceless, so that such decisions are beneficial to all.

Abdul Rahman Ilyas, Dr.Reddy's Foundation, Hyderabad

Greetings from DRF!

The time has come for the Governments having made a stride in policy making to enact in sustainable development activities especially in the rural areas through credible agencies in PPP approach or project approach that have proven innovative concepts. Today, our people are not geared for "Right to Information Act" and "EGS", they really don't know what to ask the Government and what to expect. Even the learned class would relate EGS to Road works and watersheds, whereas lot can be done in each vertical - Health, Education, Water & Sanitation, Agro Processing, etc.

One such initiative I would like to share on Water. Safe water distribution and related infrastructure still remain a question, which is repeatedly debated for policy making. Naandi Foundation, Hyderabad is working on a similar model of creating Safe Water distribution at the Village level in collaboration with Water Health International, wherein the infrastructure created with a Bank Loan which will be an asset of the Village. The reason for creation of such infrastructure is to ensure safe drinking water as most of the existing infrastructure (tanks and pipe lines) are defunct which will only add problems to safe drinking water. Naandi Foundation is targeting 100 villages and such learning should percolate through various such NGOs in different areas. Another such initiative is being taken up by Dr.Reddy's Foundation which is addressing the issue of safe drinking water through their project called "Aarogya - safe food, safe water" wherein the street food vendors (push carts) are rehabilitated with awareness, training and capacity building and handholding to ensure healthy food practices and safe drinking water. More details can be had from me. This is one of the service delivery points wherein employment and entrepreneurship can be created.

L.P.Semwal, Shri Jagdamba Samiti, Uttaranchal

Application of SARD would be the best module for planning and productive results of EGS especially in the case of community land management and productive use of this land by the laborers. In our state (Uttaranchal) each hilly village has more community land than the net cultivated area which is lying barren at present in most of the villages. Although the state forest department formed Van Panchayats to utilize this land but there are lack of integrated approach of NRM practices by these bodies.

Plantation of medicinal plants (this is quit possible as per agro ecological situations) with provision of land stabilization, water source recharge technologies etc. could be taken under the EGS. Our organization trying to initiate this type planning with 10-15 Panchayats in Tehri Garhwal district including supportive activities for organisation development and institution building, resources mapping and comprehensive planning for area specific development which unfortunately can not accessed through EGS. Capacity building of PRIs, labour cooperatives local CBOs for above two aspects would be helpful to develop the demand driven area specific prospective plans of EGS.

Uma Shankar Sharma, Jaipur Zila Vikas Parishad, Jaipur

Namaskar

For the query our response is given as under:

During our DPIP work in rural sector, it has been noticed that some pockets are famous for some rural work and even their products are being exported, but we are not giving any attention towards such artisans even after passing more than 58 years of independence.

For an example in Dausa district following works are famous for the last so many years:

1. Sandstone carving - Sikrai block of Dausa
2. Leather - Bhandarej in Dausa
3. Durry - Lawan in Dausa
4. Carpet - Bahrawanda in Dausa.

In addition to the above, Abhaneri (Bawadi), is also a famous district where "Paheli" film was shot.

In my view, we should develop tourist centers connected with the highway so that tourists (local and international) may visit such center and after enjoying rural products they may purchase instantly or the orders may be placed. In this way rural artisans will be able to ensure sale of their products and get the sale amount instantly and some firm orders may be taken for future delivery.

In the above manner rural people will be able to get permanent employment and more and more people will be attracted to involve themselves in such rural activities and migration from villages to cities will also be minimised.

Susanta K. Roy, Ex-Emeritus Scientist, New Delhi

If we have to make our agriculture sustainable and boost rural development then our motto should be 100% utilization of production in one form or the other and nothing should go waste.

Proper post harvest management (PHM) and agro processing can achieve this. Both PHM and Food Processing provide great opportunity for employment. It is suggested that every villages should have a low cost food-processing center primarily involving village women. Investment on such infrastructure will provide lots of employment opportunity a source of income generation, which finally helps in removing poverty and hunger from the rural community.

G V Ramanjaneyulu, Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, Secunderabad

Shift towards sustainable agriculture definitely provides immense opportunities for the agricultural workers and landless. The Non-Pesticidal Management program implemented through SERP during 2005-06 some options like talking land lease, contracting pest management activity and setting up micro enterprises which provide inputs (like neem solution and other decoctions) value added services (pest surveillance etc). This year there would be more focused work on these. This year, possibilities of providing more opportunities to agricultural workers is also being explored at other locations.

**Jyotsna Bapat, UNDP, New Delhi
Response 2**

Infrastructure and sustainable agriculture has linkages that are not fully explored for ensuring storage of agricultural products and generating local jobs. I can share one example that the Development Alternatives have presented when I was looking at Rural electricity while co - coordinating India Rural Infrastructure Project at NCAER.

The idea was simple: set up an independent power plant using local biological waste like twigs and shrubs which have not alternate use except fuel. This production unit will produce enough electricity for meeting the needs of one light bulb and a fan per household for a small village of say 2000 households. The base load that the power production unit needs to use can be supported by a cold storage plan that can store local fruits berries, milk and vegetables. They estimate a production of 50 jobs for keeping the power plant running and additional jobs in production of agricultural perishables.

Linking it with local markets will develop the forward linkages and more jobs. The Development Alternatives have the technology and experience in operating and running such a power plant in Madhya Pradesh. But the legislation does not permit this Independent Power Production so they are using the power to dry hand made paper.

Thus providing infrastructure connectivity will provide jobs and employment in the local economy. The stumbling block now is regulations that permit this in rural infrastructure sectors of power and roads and transport.

Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Food and Nutrition Security Community or Work and Employment Community in India at se-food@solutionexchange-un.net.in or se-emp@solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject reading '*Integrating Sustainable Agriculture and Asset Building within NREGA, from the SARD Initiative, FAO Rome (Advice)*'

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Poverty

Work and Employment Community



Food and Nutrition Security Community

Solution Exchange for the Work and Employment Community Solution Exchange for the Food and Nutrition Security Community Consolidated Reply

Query: Revival of CPRs – Convergence with NREGS and Sustainable Use – Experiences; Examples

Compiled by [Radhika Desai](#) and [Gopi Ghosh](#), Resource Persons and [Warisha Yunus](#) and [T. N. Anuradha](#), Research Associates

Issue Date: 31 March 2010

From [N. Sudhakar](#), Oxfam India, Secunderabad

Posted 17 February 2010

OXFAM India is working on a project with Ananth Paryavarana Parirakshana Samithi (APPS) - a network of 13 NGOs in Anantapur District of Andhra Pradesh (AP), on the **regeneration of Common Property Resources (CPRs) in convergence with the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)**. We have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the office of Commissioner Rural Development AP for this.

Historically the CPRs available in Anantapur District such as revenue forest land, tanks, traditional *kuntas* (small water harvesting structures), and pastures provided 31-42% of the total farm inputs of small and marginal farmers and were a source for grazing of livestock and collection of fuel and fodder for small and marginal farmers and the landless. Studies suggest that of late though, due to erosion and land degradation 40% of the potentially productive CPRs are either not productive or producing well below their productive capacity. Thus, focused efforts are needed to improve these CPRs.

The APPS promoted village level Paryavarana Parirakshana Samithis and networked them into a district level samakya (Vedika). They facilitated acquiring usufruct rights for the people with an agreement from village panchayats and developed Village Development plans. Village

Development Plans integrated with the NREGS activities were also developed in consultation with Gram Panchayats. But the project had to contend with many challenges such as

- Lack of proper awareness among the Gram Panchayats on the process of extending usufruct rights to the CPRs;
- Lack of proper understanding among the district administration in linking the CPRs revival/regeneration and post revival maintenance mechanisms with the NREGS works;
- Lack of proper provision for repair and maintenance of the assets (CPRs) regenerated; and
- Inadequate attention to sustainable utilization of developed resources post implementation.

Given this background, I would like to know from members:

- What are your experiences around CPR revival and sustainable utilization of various kinds of CPRs in your areas (including but not restricted to NREGS convergence)?
- What are the potential ways in which NREGS can be used for revival of CPRs?
- What are the legal authorizations (such as of Central and State Government orders and MoUs); and operational procedures and processes needed (formal and informal; with local state functionaries, Gram Panchayats, users groups, etc.) for the convergence of CPRs revival with NREGS?

Your inputs will help us in developing a complete operational cum process manual on revival of CPRs. This will be useful for developing need based Village Development Plans in the NREGS implementation by incorporating CPRs regeneration. The contribution of members will be duly acknowledged.

Responses were received, with thanks, from

1. [Abha Mishra](#), Disaster Management (DM) Unit, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New Delhi
2. [Ardendu S. Chatterjee](#), Development Research Communication and Services Centre (DRCSC), Kolkata
3. [Arun Jindal](#), Society for Sustainable Development (SSD), Karauli, Rajasthan
4. [Sridhar Kolluru](#), Mahila Abhivrudhi Society Andhra Pradesh (APMAS), Hyderabad
5. [Radha Gopalan](#), Rishi Valley Education Centre, Madanapaltee, Chittoor District
6. [Prasen Raptan](#), Janakalyan, Raichur
7. [S. K. Khanduri](#), AMITY, Environment Management Agency, Trivandrum, Kerala
8. [Subhransu Tripathy](#), Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), Gandhinagar, Gujarat
9. [Ashwini Kulkarni](#), Pragati Abhiyan, Nashik
10. [P. K. Thampan](#), Peekay Tree Crops Development Foundation, Kochi
11. [Ch. N. V. Srinivas Rao](#), Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivrudhi Society (APMAS), Hyderabad
12. [Mukul C. Gogoi](#), District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Tinsukia, Assam
13. [Vidhya Das](#), Agramee, Kshipur, Orissa
14. [Purushothaman P.](#), Centre for University Industry Interaction, Periyar Maniammai University, Vallam, Thanjavur
15. [Rahul Banerjee](#), Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath, Indore
16. [Tushar Dash](#), Vasundhara, Bhubaneswar
17. [Ajay Kumar](#), CARE India, Patna
18. [Amitabh Pandey](#), Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), Bhopal
19. [Rishu Garg](#), Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action and Local Involvement (ARAVALI), Jaipur
20. [Jos Chathukulam](#), Centre for Rural Management (CRM), Kottayam, Kerala

21. [N. Satish Chandra](#), Society for Social Services Madhya Bharat, Bhilai
22. [Dinabandhu Karmakar](#), Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN), Purulia, West Bengal
23. [Debasish De](#), Society for Natural Resource Management & Community Development (SNRMCD), Ghaziabad
24. [Radhika Desai](#), International Labour Organization (ILO), New Delhi
25. [Netra Prasad Osti](#), Nepal Agricultural Research Council (NARC), Kathmandu*
26. [Pramel Kumar Gupta](#), Vrutti Livelihood Resource Center (VLRC), Bangalore*

*Offline Contributions**

Further contributions are welcome!

[Summary of Responses](#)
[Comparative Experiences](#)
[Related Resources](#)
[Responses in Full](#)

Summary of Responses

The discussion strongly highlighted the importance of Common Property Resources (CPRs) for livelihoods of the poor and the local eco-system. It shared various examples and experiences of use and revival of CPRs as a source of livelihood and enabling food security of the poor.

[Agramee](#), has helped village women's groups to regenerate commons to meet their needs of fodder and firewood, food and additional income in [Orissa](#). Jankalyan, Raichur has proposed a composite approach for augmenting food resources through CPRs in convergence with NREGS. It includes development of irrigation assets, approach road to the farms, land reclamation activities such as sub-surface drainage and widening-deepening of drainage lines, and planting biomass generating tree-species. For creation of food forests, [Development Research Communication and Services Centre](#) (DRCSC), Kolkata has used Permanent Fallow lands and wetlands.

Plantations of various species on different kinds of terrains have been a common feature of CPR regeneration. DRSC has created strip plantations along irrigation channels, and pond bank plantations in [West Bengal](#), and the Horticulture Department of [Orissa](#) planted long stretches of coconut palms in 1970s. [Society for Sustainable Development](#) (SSD) has implemented works with the active involvement of the local Panchayats and government departments in forest area, common land i.e. pasture & revenue wasteland and on water issues in [Rajasthan](#).

Afforestation has been promoted on Revenue forests and in degraded forests. In Sehore district of [Madhya Pradesh](#) large scale afforestation of degraded forest and revenue areas has been done under the National Afforestation Program (NAP). Common pasture lands have been rejuvenated through afforestation in Dudu block of Jaipur with Mahila Evam Paryavaran Vikas Sansthan (MePVS). The Sonbhadra district administration, [Uttar Pradesh](#) has allowed the use of Forest Department land for the plantation of trees under the NREGS.

Water bodies have also received attention as CPR. In Palakkad and Wayanad districts of [Kerala](#), traditional water bodies are being regenerated under NREGS. A pond was de-silted through NREGS in [Amithanallur village in Tamilnadu](#). The strategy of construction of weirs across

rivulets to hold excess water flow experienced in monsoons has been adopted by many farmers in [Dakshina Karnataka](#) and [South Andamans](#).

[PRADAN](#) has adopted an alternative approach for augmenting water. In convergence with NREGS, they have promoted small water harvesting structures, land development, and/or plantation of fruits plants in the farm lands owned by small and marginal farmers; this has resulted in significant recharge of shallow ground water in [West Bengal](#).

In addition to the tried and tested methods of CPR rejuvenation such as land development, plantation, afforestation, bio-mass generation, and water harvesting structures, members also made other novel suggestions for CPR rejuvenation in conjunction with NREGS. These were:

- Regeneration of grasslands adding tall trees such as Albizzia Lebeck and Planting of mixed grasses and shrubs
- Development of living fence of multipurpose trees, shrubs including medicinal plants and palms that produce craft materials, construction material etc.
- Using organic paddy fields supplying edible weeds, fish, crab, shrimp etc. as they are part of and connected to wetlands especially during the rainy season
- Development of agro-forestry with multipurpose native tree species
- Setting up nurseries and seed banks as part of the NREGS-Horticulture convergence initiative
- Development of at least one grove of two hectares comprising of multiple species of trees and shrubs in each Panchayat
- Establishment of a central vermicompost unit for processing village waste into organic manure
- Promotion of mangrove rehabilitation programmes for stabilizing the coastal agro-ecosystem
- Treatment of existing 'Jhum' areas as CPRs (after negotiating with the Tribal Council – Autonomous District Councils) in Northeastern states with negligible CPRs such as Tripura.
- Development of small water bodies on degraded Jhoom lands to promote fish cultivation
- Land development of undulating lands in the Northeast

NREGS could play an important role in the maintenance and sustainability of the rejuvenated CPRs as the guidelines mandate convergence of Natural Resource Management (NRM) and NREGS. The Madhya Pradesh (MP) NREGS has issued a document illustrating the way for management of such NRM commons. In line with 73rd constitutional amendment, social forestry wings of the forest administration of the states are supposed to assist/ provide technical help in establishing the biomass production in the fallow/ underutilized lands in the villages. The [Forest Rights Act \(FRA\)](#) 2006 also lays emphasis on co-management approach of resource management. The government of **Orissa** has issued a circular for development of forest land recognized under FRA through NREGS. The NREGS has provision to work with NGOs. Andhra Pradesh has issued a Government order on convergence of NREGS with Horticulture Department. The Gram/Panchayat Van Yojana has been proposed in the 11th Plan (yet to take effect) for afforestation and management of existing tree lands as CPRs. In Lakshwadeep Islands, the regeneration of CPRs has been included as a critical component of the NREGS District Perspective Plan as part of climate change mitigation and disaster management.

However, working on CPRs is fraught with problems because of issues of ownership and encroachment, and the hurdles in implementation. The Gram Panchayat and the Revenue Department have to play a key role in defining ownership/rights issues and stopping encroachments. The different tiers of PRI setup have to undertake various measures to conserve CPRs. The conservation/restoration measures can be handled by the village/block/district Panchayats without attracting administrative hurdles from other departments.

The Gram Sabha can play a critical role in stopping encroachments, in resolving social conflicts over CPRs, and in the ratification of the village development plans for NREGS. Community sensitization and awareness is required. Community ownership also has to be engendered as was

done by [Ananth Paryavarana Parirakshana Samithi](#) (APPS), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and some other NGOs in Andhra Pradesh.

Training and capacity building inputs for the community are also required for the effective convergence of the CPRs with NREGS. Orientation and skill training is important as well, as the experience of Technology Demonstration Units at, Nagapatinam , [Tamil Nadu](#) suggests.

Comparative Experiences

West Bengal

Communities Regenerate CPRs (from [Ardhendu S. Chatterjee](#), *Development Research Communication and Services Centre (DRCSC), Kolkata*)

DRCSC works with landless families and small peasants by providing training to map all land and water resources around their village. They identify unused/underused land/water bodies and facilitate utilization rights over unused/fallow lands through lease and rental arrangements. They have been successful in developing food forest with strategic crops and fruit trees for supply of food during and after the disaster period. Read [more](#)

Water Resources Restored through NREGS, Bankura District (from [Dinabandhu Karmakar](#), *Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN), Purulia, West Bengal*)

Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) is collaborating with District Administrations to standardized processes to implement NREGS where The activities being primarily promoted here are either small water harvesting structures or plantation of fruits plants / timers and land development. The result is significant recharge in shallow ground water - one of the most important common property resources. Read [more](#)

Community Tank Excavated and used for Livelihood Generation, Bankura, and Paschim Medinipur (from [Debasish De](#), *Society for Natural Resource Management & Community Development (SNRMCD), Ghaziabad*)

A community tank was excavated under NREGS and the tank is being used by the community for fish culture and vegetable cultivation. Both are rendering good income generating activities in these dry tracts and helping the communities in resource generation apart from earning some extra money for their livelihoods.

Rajasthan

Community Conflicts and CPR Development (from [Arun Jindal](#), *Society for Sustainable Development (SSD), Karauli, Rajasthan*)

SSD encouraged villages to undertake pastureland development activities. It was suggested that the people agree to enclose their common grazing ground (locally referred to as Gauchara) and take responsibility for its protection. The land enclosed by the villagers Chaudia Khata for pasture development, has been the bone of contention between the villagers. The conflict has not only marred the pastureland activities but also has raised several crucial questions on issues inter-community disputes over natural resources, issues of rights to livelihood of people. Read [more](#)

Andhra Pradesh

Stakeholder Participation key for Revival of CPRs (from [Sridhar Kolluru](#), *Mahila Abhivrudhi Society Andhra Pradesh (APMAS), Hyderabad*)

Ananth Paryavarana Parirakshana Samithi (APPS), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and some other NGOs across the state work towards obtaining the user, usufruct rights over the CPRs. They

entered into a contract or agreement with the local administration to use the CPR lands for productive use. This was done with the intention of sensitizing the local people to safeguard these commons and revitalise their land use capability. Read [more](#)

Orissa

Landless Workers Engaged in Tree Planting (from [P. K. Thampan](#), *Peekay Tree Crops Development Foundation, Kochi*)

Planting of tree species of economic importance on long stretches of irrigation channels was done by the Horticulture Department. Long stretches of irrigation channels were planted with coconut palm and landless workers were organized for maintenance and protection.

Women Group Help in Regeneration of Commons (from [Vidhya Das](#), *Aragamee, Kashipur, Orissa*)

Aragamee has helped several village women's groups to regenerate commons, for the wellbeing of the whole community. These regenerated commons thus meet the essential needs of fodder and firewood of the community. They also help to produce rainfed crops, and nurture perennial income generating plantations. They help enhance the social capital within a community, providing demonstration models, and increasing the organized cohesiveness of the community. Read [more](#)

Karnataka and Andaman

Livelihoods through Water Conservation (from [P. K. Thampan](#), *Peekay Tree Crops Development Foundation, Kochi*)

In many Panchayats rivulets or nallahs are available. Construction of weirs across such rivulets holds excess water, which otherwise gets lost. This water is used during months of water scarcity by the local people. The impounded water also helps in raising the ground water level. The proper maintenance and regulation of the water was assigned to a local group of men or women. Similarly, farmers of Mannarghat Village (Andaman) have constructed a weir across the Bhagavan Nallah through community effort using the water for irrigating their paddy fields

Tamilnadu

From [Purushothaman P.](#), *Centre for University Industry Interaction, Periyar Maniammai University, Vallam, Thanjavur*

Participatory Approach Gives better Results for Managing Commons, Vettaikaranirrupu, Nagapatinam

A community hall was built under Technology Demonstration Units for tsunami affected people. In this project, village youth and workers were mobilized ranging from educated/uneducated to skilled/unskilled ones. Both skilled as well as unskilled youth received training and orientation. The worker group particularly that of the uneducated, unskilled ones was more duty bound and well integrated. This could happen only because of following a participatory approach.

NREGS Supports Desilting of Ponds, Amithanallur Village

A pond was de-silted through NREGS. The approach was to motivate the NREGS workforce and plan something that can be useful for the entire community. The motivation for the community was that if they worked within budget they could get a better pond. De-silted ponds could store more water and hence useful in recharging the underground aquifer. This was critical since in the last five years ground water level had gone down by more than 70 feet.

Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan

Selection of Right Species in Afforestation Process , Sehore district of Madhya Pradesh and Dudu block of Jaipur (from [Rishu Garg](#), Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action and Local Involvement (ARAVALI), Jaipur)

ARAVALI has been working on afforestation of degraded forest and revenue areas covering 2500 hectares of degraded forest area. They also undertook rejuvenation of common pasture land in with Mahila Evam Paryavaran Vikas Sansthan (MePVS) in Rajasthan. In degraded forest area, plantation of Jatropha species was undertaken whether or not it was recommend in the working plan. This was unacceptable by people due to its low use for fodder and loss of grass production

Kerala

Exorestorement Works under NREGA, Palakkad and Wayanad Districts (from [Jos Chathukulam](#), Centre for Rural Management (CRM), Kottayam, Kerala)

Since Kerala has limited public land, MGNREGS decided to take up ecorestorement works in degraded forest lands. It is significant to note that Village Panchayats implement the programme in forest areas with the technical supervision being done by field level officials of the Forest Department. The traditional water bodies and sacred groves are being regenerated and attempts are being made to cover all activities of watershed management . Read [more](#)

Maharashtra

Water Conservation leads ot Improved Cropping Systems, Ralegan Siddhi (from [Abha Mishra](#), Disaster Management (DM) Unit, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New DelhiName, Organization, Location)

The ridge to valley programme involved structures like gully plugging, loose boulder structure to collect rain water so that through seepage the water would be available to surrounding plantation. This resulted in increase in plant survival and their vigorous growth. The villagers decided to form cooperative societies well-wise bringing more land under cultivation and developments like double cropping, change of farming system. Read [more](#)

Uttar Pradesh

Afforestation under NREGS, Sonebhadra district (from [Debasish De](#), Society for Natural Resource Management & Community Development (SNRMCD), Ghaziabad)

The Sonebhadra district administration has allowed the use of Forest Department land for the plantation of trees under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). There are about one lakh saplings planted in the forest fringe areas which can be a good Common Property Resource (CPR) for the forest fringe dwellers under NREGS. For raising the plantation, the villagers not only received wages from the authorities as per norms they will be the owners of the plantation as well. The Forest Department is coordinating the entire work and it is a success.

Chandigarh

Community Protects Watershed and Forest Resources, Sukhomajri village (from [Abha Mishra](#), Disaster Management (DM) Unit, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New Delhi)

A joint forest management programme, developed by the Central Soil and water Conservation Research and Training Institute, helped in four tanks built by the villagers. These tanks successively created an increased storage capacity for rainwater which in turn, increased crop yields. Since then the villagers have built a few more tanks and have protected the heavily

degraded forest that lies within and around the catchment of its minor irrigation tanks. Read [more](#)

Related Resources

Recommended Documentation

From [Abha Mishra](#), Disaster Management (DM) Unit, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New Delhi

Study on Joint Forest Management (JFM)

Study; TERI; Ministry of Environment and Forests

Available at <http://envfor.nic.in/divisions/forprt/terijfm.html>

Mentions it is difficult to generalize the JFM concept and approach in the light of variations across the nation with respect to geography, resource base, socio-economic status, cultural diversity and pressures on forests

Watershed Development

Note; by Anna Hazare; Ralegan Siddhi

Available at <http://www.annahazare.org/watershed-development.html>

Cooperative societies were successful in bringing more land under cultivation and developments like double cropping, change of farming system under the ridge to valley programme

Forest and watershed protection in India

Case Study

Available [here](#)

Case shows the local initiative of Sukhomajri Village where the community has worked together in protecting watershed and forest resources

Pastureland Development Conflict in Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan (from [Arun Jindal](#), Society for Sustainable Development (SSD), Karauli, Rajasthan)

Case Study; by Author's title. Name; Society for Sustainable Development

Available [here](#)

Has been working towards enhancing agricultural productivity and improving the fodder availability by pastureland development activities.

A.P. Comprehensive Land Development Project (Indira Prabha) (from [Sridhar Kolluru](#), Mahila Abhivrudhi Society Andhra Pradesh (APMAS), Hyderabad)

Note; Watershed Support Services and Activities Network

Available at <http://www.wassan.org/cldp/cldp.htm>

The programme aims to provide integrated sustainable and Comprehensive Livelihood options, through the development of compact block of assigned / surplus lands owned by the poorest of the poor.

Leveraging NREGA Funds to make Agriculture Profit-making & Sustainable in Raichur, the last ranked district of Karnataka (from [Prasen Raptan](#), Janakalyan, Raichur)

Note; Janakalyan

Available [here](#)

Plans to make the lives of tail end farmers sustainable in next 5 years using the resources available at their disposal and by also making use of the provisions of NREGA.

Panchayat Van Yojana (from [S. K. Khanduri](#), AMITY, Environment Management Agency, Trivandrum, Kerala)

Note; Plan and Coordination Division; Ministry of Environment and Forests

Available at <http://envfor.nic.in/report/0708/chap15.pdf> (PDF Size: 109 KB)

Notes provision of central funds for revival of CPRs through Panchayats under the name Panchayat Van Yojana made in the 11th plan

Convergence of Forest Rights Act and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (from [Tushar Dash](#), Vasundhara, Bhubaneswar)

Presentation; Vasundhara

Available [here](#)

Provides step wise approach for Forest land recognized under FRA to be developed under NREGA

Implementation of NREGA - Experience of Kerala (from [Jos Chathukulam](#), Centre for Rural Management (CRM), Kottayam, Kerala)

Article; by S.M.Vijayanand, IAS, Principal Secretary [LSG], Government of Kerala and V.N.Jithendran, IAS, Mission Director, NREGA, Kerala.

Available at http://www.crd.kerala.gov.in/nrega_feature.pdf (PDF Size: 100 KB)

Since Kerala has limited public land, under NREGA it has been decided to take up ecorestoration works in degraded forest lands.

Recommended Organizations and Programmes

Anantha Paryavarana Parirakshana Samithi (APPS), Anantapur District(from *N. Sudhakar, Oxfam India, Secunderabad and [Sridhar Kolluru](#), Mahila Abhivrudhi Society Andhra Pradesh (APMAS), Hyderabad*)

Anantapur District; Tel: 91-8554-277258; Fax: Fax No. appsatp@gmail.com;
<http://appsatp.org/index.asp>

Strives to strengthen the natural resource base for sustainable livelihoods of the rural poor with focus on socially and economically marginalized communities in the district.

Development Research Communication & Services Centre (DRCSC), Kolkata(from [Ardhendu S. Chatterjee](#))

58A, Dharmotola Road, Bosepukur, Kasba, Kolkata-700042, West Bengal; Tel: 91-33-24427311, 24411646; Fax: 91-33-24427563 drcsc@alliancekolkata.com; <http://www.drcsc.org/index.html>

Strengthens communities to be able to produce fodders, firewood, small timbers and food and generate some off-season income through community based natural resource management in degraded/fallow land

Agragamee, Kashipur, Orissa(from [Vidhya Das](#))

At/P.O-Kashipur, Dist.-Rayagada, Orissa 765015; Tel: 91-6865-285174 ; Fax: Fax No. info@agrgamee.org; <http://www.agrgamee.org/sectionprojects.htm>

Has helped several village women's groups to regenerate commons, for the wellbeing of the whole community

Vasundhara, Bhubaneswar(from [Tushar Dash](#))

Plot No. A/70, Sahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Orissa; Tel: 91-674-2542011/12/28;
vasundharanr@satyam.net.in; <http://www.vasundharaorissa.org>

Supports and strengthens community-based initiatives to protect and conserve forests in the state of Orissa

Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action & Local Involvement, Jaipur (from [Rishu Garg](#))

Patel Bhawan, HCM RIPA, Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg, Jaipur-302017 Rajasthan; Tel: 91-141-2701941, 2710556, 5105498; aravali-rj@nic.in; <http://www.aravali.org.in/livelihoodnrm.html>

Through a process of training, exposure and organisational development helps understand the context of livelihoods based on natural resources.

Society for Social Services Madhya Bharat, Bhilai (from [N. Satish Chandra](#))

G- 128, Ethiraj Towers, G.E. Road, (Opp. Maurya Cinema), Bhilai, Durg (Chhattisgarh)490023 ; Tel: 91-788-4030584; Fax: 91-788-2294089 sossmbc@gmail.com; <http://www.sossmbc.org/index.aspx>;

Is conducting Social Audit of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) and other rural development interventions in the entire state of Tripura

PRADAN, Purulia (from [Dinabandhu Karmakar](#), Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN), Purulia, West Bengal)

Lal Mohan Trivedi Lane, Nilkuthi Danga, Purulia-723101, West Bengal; Tel: 03252-223144; purulia@pradan.net; <http://www.pradan.net>; Contact Bankura; rajeshmit@pradan.net; bankura@pradan.net.me; Team Leader

Have worked significantly on recharge in shallow ground water - one of the most important common property resources under NREGA.

Recommended Portals and Information Bases

From [Abha Mishra](#), Disaster Management (DM) Unit, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New Delhi

Social Forestry, Conservator of Forests, Shimoga

<http://www.shimoga.nic.in/zpshimoga/social.htm>

Social Forestry is community involvement project, through which day to day requirement of common people such as fuel, wood for basic needs and minor forest produce are grown.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Ministry of Rural Development

<http://www.nrega.net/>

Aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing hundred days of wage-employment in a financial year to a rural household

From [Mukul C. Gogoi](#), District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Tinsukia, Assam

Hariyali, Ministry of Rural Development

<http://dolr.nic.in/hariyaliguideelines.htm>

Aims to involve village communities in the implementation of watershed projects under Integrated Wastelands Development Programme (IWDP), Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP) and Desert Development Programme (DDP)

Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP), Ministry of Rural Development

http://www.dolr.nic.in/iwmp_main.htm

The main objectives of the IWMP are to restore the ecological balance by harnessing, conserving and developing degraded natural resources such as soil, vegetative cover and water.

The Forest Rights Act (from [Tushar Dash](#), Vasundhara, Bhubaneswar)
<http://www.forestrightacts.com/>

This Act recognises forest dwellers' rights and makes conservation more accountable.

Related Consolidated Replies

Responses in Full

[Abha Mishra](#), Disaster Management (DM) Unit, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New Delhi

Please look at some of the initiatives taken under the Social Forestry and Joint Forest Management to see how degraded forestlands have been regenerated through community participation. I am attaching a case study (Interested Members may write to us; we will email them the file) which may be useful to provide some insights. You could also look at another very successful experiment by Anna Hazaare in Ralegaon Siddhi which is an excellent example of how work related to water harvesting can change the economic status of the villagers.

These examples highlight that some activities that need funds like plantation, regeneration of traditional water harvesting structures, building of earthen check dams, etc. can be taken up under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS).

[Ardhendu S. Chatterjee](#), Development Research Communication and Services Centre (DRCSC), Kolkata

The Common Property Resources (CPRs) are very important for the poorest of the poor and their regeneration can ensure sustainable livelihoods for millions.

We have tried the following ideas:

- Creation of food forests on permanent fallow lands/wetland; this was group based work.
- Creation of strip plantations along irrigation channels where food, fodder firewood trees and shrubs are interplanted.
- Reforestation of degraded land mixing local species with fast growing Nitrogen fixing species that produce fodder, firewood, craft material etc.
- Working with groups to develop water harvesting along with pond bank plantations.

Other suggestions are as follows;

- It will also be possible to regenerate grasslands by adding tall trees such as Albizzia Lebeck and creating small ponds, and planting of mixed grasses and shrubs. It will also be good to create a living fence of multipurpose trees, shrubs including medicinal plants such as nirgundi, vasaka, castor etc. and palms that produce craft materials, construction material etc.
- Creating a live fence around a degraded natural forest could also be feasible.
- Finally do remember, if Paddy fields are cultivated organically, they too can be CPRs supplying edible weeds, fish, crab, shrimp etc. as they are part of and connected to wetlands especially during the rainy season. This I saw in Cambodia, Bangladesh and remote regions of India where not much fertilizer and pesticides are used.

But before we do anything, we have to help the community to form self-help groups (SHGs) to

negotiate a lease agreement with local authorities (Panchayats). The community will also have to draw up a regeneration and management plan with advice from formal/non formal experts.

Please feel free to get in touch if you need to train your trainers/organizers in sustainable design/Permaculture.

Arun Jindal, Society for Sustainable Development (SSD), Karauli, Rajasthan

Our organisation Society for Sustainable Development (SSD) is working on Natural Resource Management (NRM) issues since last 15 Years. We also have some experience of working on Common Property Resources (CPRs).

We worked on forest area, common land i.e. pasture & revenue wasteland and also water issues. These projects had different donors but have been implemented with the active involvement of the local panchayats and government department. The revival of CPRs and their sustainable utilization is today's need. Local community's ownership on the CPR is critical to sustain their interest in them. While communities utilize CPRs often this use is not done in sustainable way. We have to promote sustainable practices of CPR use.

We have experiences in which community started working to conserve forest land. We are enclosing the case study (Interested Members may write to us; we will email them the file). Community gets interested only if the activity is need based. Water conservation has been done best in the water scarce of Daang. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) can converge in CPR protection activities especially water conservation and land development activities.

Projects should be developed with community and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) under NREGS for need based revival of CPRs. The NREGS has the provision to include NGOs in its implementation. The projects undertaken should not only be construction activities. Other activities like protection and watering of plants, maintenance, fencing, soil conservation etc. should be a part of the project.

State government has rules under revenue department to manage CPRs; one has to understand those rules. Forest Departments, Joint Forest Management (JFM) committees and Eco Development Committees can work as they have rights to forest produce. If anyone wants to work on forest land they must have information about these committees and their management plan for effective implementation.

At many places Local Panchayats have control over pasturelands. To develop these resources Panchayats can be a good institution to focus on, but many of such CPRs are under threat of encroachments, and panchayats are not willing to remove encroachments. So community has to mobilize first to free the encroached resources and then work on it. A case study is attached on one such conflict (Interested Members may write to us; we will email them the file).

On planning, the Society for Promotion of Wasteland Development (SPWD) is also working on developing village plans for conservation of natural resources.

Sridhar Kolluru, Mahila Abhivrudhi Society Andhra Pradesh (APMAS), Hyderabad

I am sure that you will all agree with me if I say, "Commons play a major role in maintaining the local economy and ecology." Management of the Common Property Resources (CPRs) involves two major issues viz., ownership and their continued development & management. As far as the present status of CPRs is concerned, they are either under the control of respective Gram Panchayats or

Revenue Departments. None of these two constitutionally and administratively recognized institutions are playing the key role expected of them in safeguarding and upgrading the use of these commons. Even when they do so they do not create an appropriate stake in it for the local communities. **Any kind of intervention in reviving the CPRs needs the consent, involvement and full stake of communities and authorities alike.**

In Andhra Pradesh (AP), efforts were made by Ananth Paryavarana Parirakshana Samithi (APPS), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and some other NGOs across the state to obtain the user, usufruct rights over the CPRs. They entered into a contract or agreement with the local administration to use the CPR lands for productive use. This was done with the intention of sensitizing the local people to safeguard these commons and revitalise their land use capability. Past history reveals that all these lands used to feed the community as well as the livestock during droughts, lean season through its vegetative cover and canopy that exists with some bushes and native forest species. But gradually with the negligence and greed of the people these CPR lands became barren.

Efforts from local level NGOs and communities such as in AP (mentioned above) must be further strengthened. **To some extent CPRs could be protected by the enforcement of social norms social regulations by the local communities.** It will speed up the work and create a sustainable mechanism for maintenance etc. it will also reduce the political/ administrative hurdles and speed up the intensive efforts required to augment the land capability and help natural rejuvenation of these commons within a shorter period.

Government intervention in CPR lands has not improved matters. The government distributed some of the common lands to the poor but these lands could not be utilised in a productive manner for the most part. Such is the case in AP as well where the Government took some special initiatives in collaboration with other NGOs in implementing the Comprehensive Land Development Program (CLDP), National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), Watershed Development and Management programs. But positive results have been few, and are limited to improved productivity of the lands of some families to whom land was distributed.

Programs like the NREGS may help in CPR rejuvenation by providing funds but there are ownership/rights issues which need to be defined before these interventions take place to avoid future conflict and degradation. To avoid the latter appropriate community owned institutional structure need to be put in place. **The government should take appropriate measures in supporting the community by creating user, usufruct and management rights. It should also take a stand in leasing the commons to community based institutions.**

Some of the measures for CPR rejuvenation include improving the soil fertility status, water holding capacity, improving the flora and fauna through afforestation, development of agro-forestry with multipurpose native tree species and may include in-situ conservation. The management part should include the plan to utilize the resources only to its optimal level, such that its regeneration capacity holds good.

Coming to the **specific challenges that were mentioned as part of the query**, I feel strongly that the local community members rather than GP as a constitutional body and the district administration need that kind of awareness. One needs to sensitize the community leaders and members to fight for their rights and safeguard the local environment. I thin that the sustainability of the rejuvenated CPRs depends as much on the process and regulations during their development as after the completion of the works. Hence, all the programs that have as their prime objective just conservation and development of resources but do not assign an important role to the local communities during this process are flawed in design to begin with. **The post implementation issue of repairs, maintenance and similar others will not be a problem if we ensure a stake of the community in managing the CPRs.**

Their should be convergence of the various schemes like NREGS; Watershed Development etc. launched by different departments to have maximum positive impact on CPRs rejuvenation. The word 'convergence' has broader meaning by itself to come together as well as continue the same efforts together for longer time period to sustain the process. Further, in most of the cases, **the designed schemes are 'closed' to changes/improvisations**. Even if the scheme does not have such clauses, the so called authorities who implements and facilitates the process, would formulate and keep such restrictions by themselves to show their supremacy, but without knowing the intension of the program or scheme. Hence, **the planners, administers, facilitators must open up their thinking as per the context and really facilitate the process of adopting local improvisations**.

The recently created Focussed Labour Groups (FLGs), formed of poor SHG members who belong to SC/ST communities in AP may provide an opportunity to create user, usufruct stake on the commons. The FLGs (20 members each) are to be strengthened further by federating them at the Village, Mandal and District levels. This institutional structure may serve the purpose of creating rights and responsibilities and ensuring entitlements of CPR lands.

Not only land but natural resources like water and bio-mass also fall within the purview of CPRs. Some of the Joint Forest Management (JFM), and Community Forest Management (CFM) experiences of development of commons and other forest, forest fringe areas have to some extent been successful in protecting the forests through creation of user and usufruct rights. **But user and usufruct rights are not given to JFM and CFM members for all forest products**. Rights with respect to timber continue to be with the Forest Department; communities oppose this control of timber by Forest Department. **Such contested issues need to be looked into and dealt with appropriately if community stake in CPRs is to be developed a win-win situation to become a reality**.

There are **other conflicts that need to be resolved** in protecting and managing the forest and other bio-mass which are part of CPRs. Some of them may include **strictures such as no open grazing in commons, no cutting of trees both in forests as well as outside the forests without obtaining the permission, etc**. Enforcement agents of these may vary. For example, within the revenue village, GP is supposed to be the institution that is vested with the authority to act as a watchdog.

With regard to **water** that comes under CPRs there is need for even **more delicate handling**. Countries, states, districts, communities are fighting against each other for the usage of surface water. Quarrels, fights against each other, even among the neighbours in the command areas are a big (unresolved) issue that exists, even after 15 years of Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) introduced in AP. Fortunately, in the recent past, government of AP had taken an initiative to consider and bring the ground water also in to the arena of CPRs and thus would like to keep the momentum of safeguarding the natural resources. Managing these resources that exist on the land would definitely contribute to the better management of another CPR i.e., Air.

I eagerly look forward to hear on the topic in different other dimensions and perspectives from eminent practitioners, implementers, administrators, scientists that helps me to learn, understand more on the subject. I am sure all the learning, experiences shared by members will show us a way forward and that their suggestions can be incorporated into the process guidelines and operational procedures for CPRs in general, and the specific type of CPR and its resource output.

[Radha Gopalan](#), Rishi Valley Education Centre, Madanapalle, Chittoor District

We are in Chittoor district and are in the process of putting together a proposal for Common Property Resources (CPR) revival. We are also trying to integrate the National Rural Employment

Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) component in the most efficient way possible. It would be really helpful for us therefore to be in touch with you and possibly learn from your questions and experiences as well.

In this context I was wondering if you have seen the Government Order (G.O.) regarding convergence of NREGS-AP with the Horticulture Department. I think this would be helpful in setting up nurseries/seed banks for CPR revival. We hope to engage shortly with the Horticultural Department, particularly for revival of threatened and vulnerable local species useful for fodder, fuel as well as medicinal purposes for our communities.

Prasen Raptan, Janakalyan, Raichur

Janakalyan has done some works on Sustainable Agriculture and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in Raichur district of Karnataka. A brief note is attached for your kind reference (Interested Members may write to us; we will email them the file). Please see if these strategies also work in the case of Common Property Resources (CPRs); I believe the components of Sustainable Agriculture also fall under CPRs.

S. K. Khanduri, AMITY, Environment Management Agency, Trivandrum, Kerala

In case of the Common Property Resources (CPRs), what is important is the mechanism that is in place for their maintenance and management. However, having mechanisms in place figures low in the priority list of the local self-governments; as a result there are virtually no mechanisms.

When I was in the Planning Commission, I worked on the issue of CPRs and mechanisms that need to be in place for their sustainable management. A concept note was prepared in 2004-05. It was approved by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) was entrusted to launch the scheme with central funds for revival of CPRs through Panchayats. The MoEF has given it the name Panchayat Van Yojana. Although provision for it has been made in the 11th plan (<http://envfor.nic.in/report/0708/chap15.pdf>; Size: 109 KB) it has yet to be launched.

The concept suggested was exactly as being discussed here with the variation that in line with 73rd constitutional amendment, social forestry wings of the forest administration of the states were to assist/ provide technical help in establishing the biomass production in the fallow/ underutilized lands in the villages.

Subhransu Tripathy, Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), Gandhinagar, Gujarat

One of the major challenges is taking stock (listing and enumeration) of the actual and "on-record" Common Property Resources (CPRs). A consensus through Gram Sabha (GS) may be developed in reaching a decision. Before undertaking any activity under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), both **legal and social conflicts with respect to access/possession to/of CPRs need to be cleared**. Records of CPRs are confusing in many cases – GS land is distributed amongst landless but the records are not updated. Undisputed CPRs must be considered for development under NREGS in the initial stage. Encroached CPRs may be considered in a later stage. Common grazing land can be used for livelihood promotion with suitable planning.

Ashwini Kulkarni, Pragati Abhiyan, Nashik

This is a topic where those of us who have had experience of working on the NREGS and/or Panchayati Raj Institutions/CPRs need to contribute.

The **NREGS certainly has the potential to rejuvenate the CPRs**. The agro-climatic region and the needs of the community can form the basis of planning. Soil and Water conservation structures are needed everywhere. But the kind of agro forestry (for fuel, fodder etc.) would depend on the agro climatic conditions and community preferences.

The **Gram Panchayat (GP) can implement** these as part of NREGS if these issues get **discussed thoroughly in the Gram Sabha and if it ratifies the decision**. Then the **fund** for actual programme implementation **can come directly from NREGS** and even the subsequent maintenance and repairs can be part of the long term plan under NREGS.

P. K. Thampan, Peekay Tree Crops Development Foundation, Kochi

The different tiers of Panchayati Raj organizational setup can undertake various measures to conserve Common Property Resources (CPRs). The CPRs render social, economic and ecological benefits to the local communities. The conservation/restoration measures can be handled by the village/block/district panchayats without attracting administrative hurdles from other departments. A few of the feasible operational measures are listed below:

- ❖ Even in States which receive heavy rainfall annually, water scarcity is a problem during the summers when wells and ponds go dry. Through waste land development and construction of weirs across rivulets the productive resources such as soil, water and biodiversity can be regenerated. In each Panchayat at least one grove of two hectares must be developed, depending on the availability of Panchayat or revenue lands. These groves may comprise of multiple species of trees and shrubs. They must be left undisturbed to perform important ecological functions. As the groves get established they will reduce soil and water loss through runoff and prevent early drying of water in the wells and ponds in the vicinity. The trees and shrubs will also function as effective sink for carbon and other atmospheric pollutants, both gases and particulates, thereby improving the quality of local environment. In addition, the groves will eventually prove to be a valuable source of medicinal trees and shrubs besides providing diverse species of microflora for being utilized in pharmacological and biological research. When such groves are developed, small but compact blocks of trees may be assigned for maintenance to selected poor and landless agricultural workers who can be paid regular wages besides being allowed to enjoy the usufructs.
- ❖ Long stretches of irrigation channels are available in many states. The concerned Panchayati Raj body may organize planting of tree species of economic importance on the bunds either in single or double rows. The trees not only stabilize the bunds but also perform economic and ecological functions on reaching maturity. The planting and maintenance of trees may be assigned to poor families who may be allowed to enjoy usufructs in addition to wages for the work put in. A similar activity to cover long stretches of irrigation channels under coconut palm by engaging landless workers was organized by the Horticulture Department of Orissa with Central support during the first half of 1970.
- ❖ In many Panchayats rivulets or *nallahs* are available. While excessive water flow is experienced during monsoon, in most cases these water bodies do not sustain adequate flow during summer months. Construction of weirs across such rivulets will hold excess water, which otherwise gets lost. This water can be used during months of water scarcity by the local people. The impounded water also helps in raising the ground water level and preventing the drying of water in the ponds and wells in the surrounding areas. The proper maintenance and regulation

of the water use could be assigned to a local group of men or women. Many farmers in the Dakshina Karnataka are the beneficiaries of such a strategy. In the South Andamans the farmers of Mannarghat Village have constructed a weir across the *Bhagavan Nallah* through community effort in as long ago as 1958 and used the water for irrigating their paddy fields in an area of about 10 hectares.

- ❖ Creating mangrove coastal barrier is an important step to dampen storm surges and conserve the soil along the coasts. Mangroves covering the banks of rivers also help in preventing the erosion of the river banks. Unlike man-made coastal protection barrier, mangroves even if battered and damaged in severe storms have the capacity to grow back naturally. The mangrove ecosystem also sustains diverse community of flora and fauna by providing them with habitat, energy and nutrition, which is of considerable significance to the coastal population. The Panchayati Raj Institutions can promote mangrove rehabilitation programmes for stabilizing the coastal agro-ecosystem as an employment generating activity.
- ❖ In each Village Panchayat one central vermiculture unit may be established for processing the village waste in to organic manure. Through this activity substantial amounts of organic sources of nutrients become available for crop production besides improving the quality of local environment by preventing the pollution of soil and water bodies. The regular collection of the waste and the processing may be assigned to viable groups of women. The women involved may be allowed to enjoy a percentage of the sales proceedings of the manure in addition to daily wages.

Ch. N. V. Srinivas Rao, Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivrudhi Society (APMAS), Hyderabad

My perspective is based on my visits to a number of Common Property Resources (CPRs) and Natural Resource Management (NRM) development sites, and my interactions with the user groups there.

I strongly feel that there is a critical element missing in this whole approach of CPR development for ecological regeneration and livelihood promotion of dependent communities - **the market has not been adequately focused on.**

The following aspects relevant to the market must be taken care of so that the CPRs bestow optimal commercial gains on the community. They are:

- ❖ Types of produce, quantity, seasonality
- ❖ Possibilities of value addition
- ❖ Requirement of skills and technology for value addition
- ❖ Storage infrastructure
- ❖ Market linkages
- ❖ Capacity building of user groups (skills & markets)
- ❖ Market intelligence

The manual should have an exclusive chapter on market development for products of CPRs. Necessary skills and technical knowledge on markets ought to be imparted to the members of user groups so they can access better prices for their produce. The business activity in turn will give a fillip to members to participate actively and thus help in building ownership.

Mukul C. Gogoi, District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Tinsukia, Assam

The Common Property Resources (CPRs) available in villages are generally Government waste lands, village grazing reserves (VGRs), professional grazing reserves (PGRs), traditional water bodies, streams, swampy lands, hills and those areas which do not belong to any individual. All these are traditionally utilized by villagers/communities for different activities. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) gives us tremendous opportunity to revive them and make them more profitable for common good of the villagers. Condition of all these places in almost all the villages are not as they were before due to pressure of increased population and other factors. The NREGS and Hariyali which is the Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) are the two best programmes which can revive these common resources for the benefit of all the villagers and also to bring back greenery.

We have the traditional *Sumoni* - the Mulberry forest in the village which is utilized by the villagers to rear silk worms and the *Beels* – the large water bodies, which are commonly utilized for fishing and minor irrigation in our side of the region. We also have the PGRs which are utilized for raising cattle and dairy, the VGRs with forest and groves which provide vegetables, medicinal plants and firewood to the community. However these traditional CPRs are not in great shape now. Certain steps have to be taken to protect and revive these traditional CPRs. They are:

- ❖ Encroachment has to be stopped through Government intervention and creating public awareness and ownership.
- ❖ Only traditional vegetation must be developed in these areas; no new varieties should be introduced.
- ❖ Discussion on these matters has to be initiated in the Gram Sabha by the Government as well as non-governmental agencies.
- ❖ Small industries for processing, packaging and manufacture of various products depending on inputs from such CPRs may be encouraged.

Vidhya Das, Atragamee, Kashipur, Orissa

I am indeed happy that this crucial question has been raised and is being debated with much interest.

Common Property Resources (CPRs) are essential support systems maintained by rural women, to meet the essential non-commercial needs of the family. They are also used in the tribal regions of Orissa, by the landless villagers to produce food. Properly managed, CPRs can provide a huge range of essential services, and help to strengthen the role of women.

Atragamee has helped several village women's groups to regenerate commons, for the wellbeing of the whole community. These regenerated commons thus meet the essential needs of fodder and firewood of the community. They also help to produce rainfed crops, and nurture perennial income generating plantations. Further, they help enhance the social capital within a community, providing demonstration models, and increasing the organized cohesiveness of the community overall.

Unfortunately much of the CPRs now are in a highly degraded state, providing neither the livelihood services, nor the options of food production for the landless. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) programmes can do much to change this, if used innovatively, and with community planning. Even as we face a funds crunch for the hugely challenging task of regenerating commons, in the upland, fragile ecosystems, women have contributed significantly to reverse the environmental degradation. This is a tremendous strain on the scarce physical resources of tribal women, and even a small set back like a broken fence can undo years of effort. The NREGS

programmes can buffer and subsidize these efforts and hence bring about an overall reclamation of degraded commons.

This should also go hand in hand with institutional measures to recognize the rights of local communities, especially women over the commons. Measures would also be required to keep them out of the control of vested interests.

Purushothaman P., Centre for University Industry Interaction, Periyar Maniammai University, Vallam, Thanjavur

I want to share two examples with you all:

- ❖ A community hall was built under Technology Demonstration Units – under a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) sponsored program at Vettaikaranirrupu, Nagapatinam for tsunami affected people. With some difficulties, the project could eventually be completed. The process, however offers few insights into how Common Property Resources (CPRs) and National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) can be combined. In this project, village youth and workers were mobilized ranging from educated/uneducated to skilled/unskilled ones. This heterogeneous group was given training at Gandhigram Rural University.

Both skilled as well as unskilled youth received training and orientation. The worker group particularly that of the uneducated, unskilled ones was more duty bound and well integrated than the rest and performed well as a team and in productive out-turns. This could happen only because of following a participatory approach. If communities and groups can be trained they could as well take up works under NREGS for regeneration of the CPRs.

- ❖ A pond was to be de-silted through NREGS in Amithanallur Village. The approach was to motivate the NREGS workforce and to plan something that can be useful for the entire community. The focus group discussed at length how to regenerate the CPRs. The motivation for the community was that if they worked within budget they could get a better pond. This was critical since in the last five years ground water level had gone down by more than 70 feet. De-silted ponds can store more water and hence be useful in recharging the underground aquifer.

Training and capacity building inputs are required for the community to function cooperatively and do technical planning, management and implementation in an effective manner. But in the long run it leads to empowerment of the community. We are mostly tempted to take short cuts and easy methods of contracting system which does not have any long-term impact on the community.

Rahul Banerjee, Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath, Indore

The convergence of natural resource management (NRM) activities and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is mandated by the guidelines issued from time to time and so policy wise there is no issue here. The problem is at the implementation level. With the initiation of direct payments into bank accounts of workers, the scope for defalcation of funds from the 60% allotted to wages has been considerably reduced; the implementers of the programme however ensure that the 40% is majorly defalcated. This means that there is a tendency to undertake projects like road laying and building construction which have little to do with NRM which is primarily labor intensive.

Even when the workers are organized to demand NRM works, mainly soil and water conservation works, the bureaucracy has its ways of by passing or stalling these demands. Thus what is required

is that there should be stronger guidelines making it mandatory to undertake NRM works with a higher labor component. There should also be stricter monitoring of this work.

A better grievance redressal system than the one that is in place at the moment would also go a long way in improving the implementation of the NREGS and contribute to conservation of natural resources.

[Tushar Dash](#), Vasundhara, Bhubaneswar

As you know the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers [Recognition of Forest Rights Act (FRA)] 2006 is now implemented by the government. This law secures tenurial and access rights of scheduled tribes and other forest dwelling communities over forest land and forest resources. The law also suggests an empowered framework for management of community forest resources recognized under the Act by Gram Sabha.

Vasundhara has been working on the implementation of the FRA in Orissa. The process of recognition of rights under this law has thrown up new possibilities for management and development of Common Property Resources (CPRs) like land, community forest, water bodies etc. There are already some field level experiments converging FRA and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS).

I am sending here a presentation on the aspects of convergence of FRA and NREGS for development of CPRs (Interested Members may write to us; we will email them the file). This presentation is based on our field work in some districts. We are working on a detail paper on this. The government of Orissa has also issued a circular for development of forest land recognized under FRA through NREGS. Please contact me if you want to discuss more.

[Ajay Kumar](#), CARE India, Patna

The discussion is useful in moving a step further in creating an opportunity for perspective building from Demand Driven Approach to Institution Building Approach. The approach is very much helpful for optimum utilization of the resources, because the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) helps to build the community assets at village level.

Institution building is a process and it only works when we follow the process guidelines for effective and efficient implementation of the program.

People centered approach is hardly followed in the implementation of the NREGS program, and people in the program are confined to the role of being "wage laborers". This will definitely add to the income of the family, but due to lack of thrust on institution building the assets created will not be properly maintained. There is a provision for forming Vigilance and Monitoring (V and M) Committees at the planning stage in NREGS but it hardly came into existences at the implementation level.

I think convergence of the Common Property Resources (CPR) principle is not only helpful for managing the resource, it also helps to generate the "we" feeling within the community.

[Amitabh Pandey](#), Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), Bhopal

Firstly, this is a very relevant topic for discussion as the activities of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) are framed around collective asset building at rural level though as of now NREGS focuses on traditional employment pattern of activities and aims to provide livelihoods

to poor. Secondly, NREGS needs to generate recurring work for poor every year. The present pattern of activities focusing on asset building will lead to stagnation and lack of asset building opportunity in coming years.

But if we see the issue of Common Property Resources (CPRs), about 30 percent of Indian villages are in and around forest, known as forest fringes villages. Villages in lower Himalayas have commons exclusively meant for local needs and the remaining 70 percent of the villages have CPR areas of one or other form. Therefore it can be assumed that every village in India has about 30-40% of its area as CPR, (ranging from common land, water bodies, forest, etc.) but they either are not managed properly, or encroached upon by the elites. The traditional institutional mechanisms have become defunct. Restoration of property rights of CPR of villages will help in finding out the areas for interventions for NREGS. The NREGS design also talks about intervention through "commons management approach". The Madhya Pradesh (MP) NREGS has come out with a document illustrating the way for management of such natural resources which are in one way or other commons.

It is a well known fact that CPRs provide about 55% of the livelihood needs of poor. Therefore village CPR provides huge potential for generating work like plantation, restoration and management of village ponds: *Charnoi* Lands in MP; *Samlayat* in Himachal Pradesh (HP) and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), Van Panchayat Lands in Uttarakhand, Irrigation Tanks in Tamil Nadu, and Inland Fisheries in some states. Such commons need annual maintenance work. The NREGS can have a planned effort at village level so that it generates employment and also resources needed by poor like grass, water, fishes which can supplement their needs.

The improvement of such commons will help in restoration of village ecosystems as well. Under present stress of climate change such improvement in micro ecosystem will help in overcoming environmental stress generated due to rapidly changing rain patterns and temperature. It was observed in one of my research works in Rajasthan that management of CPR has benefitted the members and also improved the water availability during drought period and helped in restricting migration of poor in search of work under such vulnerable situations.

If possibly such invention can be planned and executed keeping carbon trade in mind it may prove even more beneficial to the village poor. The recent Forest Rights Act 2006 also lays emphasis on co-management approach of resource management; this can be utilized in tribal areas and agency areas for NREGS work.

Rishu Garg, Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action and Local Involvement (ARAVALI), Jaipur

I think this is one topic that should receive more attention at Solution Exchange. I had earlier raised a similar query some two years back but the query couldn't elicit much response. Since then a group has been actively debating and working on the issue through state sub-group on addressing environment concerns in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). It's a consortium of four organizations - Foundation for Ecological Securities (FES), Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Society for Promotion of Wastelands Development (SPWD) and Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action and Local Involvement (ARAVALI) working now on a project across different regions of the state on planning natural resources.

Though, the findings from the project are at a nascent stage for any significant learnings, I would share my own experience of working on afforestation of degraded forest and revenue areas in the National Afforestation Program (NAP) in about twenty different locations. The project covered about 2500 hectares of degraded forest area in Sehore district of Madhya Pradesh. Another source of experience comes from undertaking similar rejuvenation of common pasture land in Dudu block of

Jaipur with Mahila Evam Paryavaran Vikas Sansthan (MePVS). So in a way this response is limited to suggestions on rejuvenation of common pasture lands or for afforestation work on degraded areas through NREGS.

There are few considerations that I think must be discussed before we can move on to possible opportunities:-

- Need to make the work labour intensive: By undertaking activities that require engagement of labour for longer duration and therefore selection of silviculture practice becomes important. Engagement of labour should therefore be planned with smaller size of labour and taken in parts.
- Need for at least one full time chowkidaar round the year: It is important because dependency on common pastures also depends on its size and that of the population dependent on it. Also important is the level of importance the immediate community is willing to give and sacrifice in the long run. To ensure protection (even when social fencing is there) and avoid any free riding, it becomes imperative for the situation to be highlighted before significant damage is done. This aspect is specifically important in Afforestation initiatives.
- The entire area should ideally not be taken: Only say one fourth or one fifth of the area should be closed. Afforestation or other activities could be taken up in subsequent years.
- Avoiding damage to existing vegetation: the most important aspect that any work on Common Property Resources (CPRs) should ensure is that it must not damage the existing vegetation. Whether it is road construction, structures in soil and moisture conservation or tank construction or even clearing of area for afforestation- from ecological perspective any damage to existing vegetation can not be compensated and therefore must be avoided.
- Watershed approach: Since last two to three decades there was a lot of focus on this, especially on the need to follow ridge to valley approach. In NREGS it has just been totally neglected? Despite all the labour opportunity it offers, NREGS also risks huge soil erosion activities if not implemented carefully. Therefore, for all the activities – Natural Resource Management (NRM) activities (classified under any watershed program), must be part of larger treatment plan of the area and not in isolation and be in no way determined by village political compulsions.
- Selection of structure: Because of the pressure of providing adequate work opportunity and also because it appears to benefit both the community (in terms of availability of wage labour in vicinity) and the Gram Panchayat, the appropriate selection of structure gets jeopardized. Inadequate understanding of the Panchayat representatives about the ecological consequences of the work or the immediate need to overlook it, and the indifferent attitude of the concerned departmental staff about following the technical norms, together lead to selection of structures that in the immediate context seem beneficial for all. But words of caution - yesterday's trenches are already today's gullies and in process would definitely be tomorrow's *Nallas* to be plugged in again day after tomorrow under the same source of work opportunity. I am sure there are better ways of investing in our natural resources and yet creating incremental labour opportunities!
- Selection of species: *Jatropha* is one species that is widely undertaken for Afforestation under NREGS in Rajasthan and my surmise is that it is so in other states as well. Afforestation works under drought proofing ranks second in the list of priority of work and is also ranked higher up by the community in this part of the country. But Afforestation of *Jatropha* species was totally inconceivable and unacceptable to the people because of its low use for fodder and loss of grass production because of the same. Even in degraded forest area, plantation of this species was undertaken whether or not it was recommended in the working plan. The point of highlighting it here is to raise the issue of dearth of choices people are left with when it comes to selection of species. Whether the species are selected because of nation's commitment to some important and larger global agenda or for inadequate local ecological concerns is just inconsequential.

- **Institutions:** The point is very valid, why do they come last? And when everything has already been decided? So if the species gets decided at the state level, structures by the quantum of requirement of work and location by village political compulsions, is there a need for institutions around NRM? If we can rectify the situation discussed above, we would definitely help these committees and institutions, if they are already present, to raise and tackle ecological concerns. If they are absent, then the concerned departments such as forest department, agricultural department and the soil and moisture department could work to show Panchayats the way through the remaining 50% of the works.

Some of these concerns draw from my inherent apprehension that eventually our treatment of natural resources will remain the same as it has been thus far. Rachel Carson had, about five decades ago in the Preface of her book 'Silent Springs', expressed her fear of arising one morning only to see all animals dead and vegetation gone. I also have a similar apprehension of waking up one day to see failed *Jatropha* plantations and holes and *Nallas* dug all around with no soil left on commons of the rural areas. Today's generation can reverse the process - the only uncertainty is about time. How much time do we need to reverse this self-annihilating process? Would it take too long? No perhaps not! But this would happen only when we make people understand and broadbase the issue that is so important yet not given adequate attention.

Thanks to Sudhakar for initiating the reversal process by posting this query.

Jos Chathukulam, Centre for Rural Management (CRM), Kottayam, Kerala

The guidelines of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) are in favour of taking up activities related to the regeneration of Common Property Resources (CPRs). I have prepared the MGNREGS' District Perspective Plan (DPP) for Lakshadweep Islands in which major attention has been given to regeneration of CPRs for climate change mitigation and disaster management. Seashore, satellite islands (uninhabited islands) sea mouth, beaches and territorial water are the major items under CPRs in the Islands.

In the case of Kerala, though CPRs are very limited in variety and coverage, the existing CPRs are covered under MGNREGS. In Palakkad and Wayanad Districts of Kerala, traditional water bodies and sacred groves are being regenerated under the MGNREGS. All over Kerala, attempts are being made to cover all activities of watershed management under MGNREGS.

In the case of Anantapur District, my suggestion is that development activities related to revenue forest island, tanks, traditional *kuntas* and pastures can be included in the DPP of MGNREGS. If the perspective plan is under preparation, it would be easy to include as a major area for intervention. Even if the plan is ready, the activities under CPRs can be included by revising the existing perspective plan of MGNREGS. The convergence between CPRs and MGNREGS may address the issues of food insecurity and climate change.

N. Satish Chandra, Society for Social Services Madhya Bharat, Bhilai

Society for Social Services Madhya Bharat Chapter is conducting Social Audit of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) and other rural development interventions in the entire state of Tripura - four districts, 40 blocks and 1040 Gram Panchayats (GPs) and Autonomous District Council (ADCs).

This assignment has been awarded by the Department of Rural Development, Government of Tripura for four years from financial year 2008-12. The vision and mission behind the whole exercise is to empower the members of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) on the salient aspects of

Social Audit, empowering them to carry out the exercise on their own once the facilitating agency withdraws after four years. The whole exercise is carried out in two phases:

- Phase I entails intensive interactions with the PRI members, Gram Sewaks and NREGS Secretary plus other office bearers posted at the GP/ADC level.
- Phase II involves quick analysis of the data generated during Phase I for conducting a Special Gram Sabha involving majority of the villagers including the beneficiaries under every scheme.

The special emphasis is on NREGS to address issues linked to: Registration for Job Cards; Distribution of Job Cards; Work applications; Distribution of works; Selection of works; Estimation of works; Allotment of work; Implementation of work; Payment of wages; Payment of unemployment allowance; Evaluation of works; Vigilance & Monitoring Committee; Complaint Box / Registers and Record keeping cum Display of information on works achievements etc.

NREGS: Our Experience of Two Years of Social Audit

- ❖ The beneficiaries view the scheme as a guarantee for wage employment with or without delivering the desired outcome.
- ❖ The work output does not commensurate with the funds utilized for the same.
- ❖ The work output is not more than 50% primarily because women comprise majority of the main work force as men attend to other lucrative jobs in the vicinity i.e. brick kilns; road work etc. where wages are higher.
- ❖ The emphasis is on wage employment and not on creating durable assets, hence the sense of ownership and belongingness is low.
- ❖ Tripura has negligible Common Property Resources (CPRs) hence there is an urgent need to address the same through innovative ideas.
- ❖ Tripura has negligible land resources hence addressing the issues linked to CPR become further complicated.

However, some of the following measures can be tried:

- ❖ The existing 'Jhum' areas can be treated as CPRs (after negotiating with the Tribal Councils – Autonomous District Councils) for creating durable assets – Rain Water Harvesting structures; Plantation of bamboo and other viable species on the foot hills etc.
- ❖ Tripura imports 70-75% of the fish consumed locally, hence small water bodies even on private land holdings can be encouraged to promote fish cultivation aggressively.
- ❖ Instead of Rubber, Bamboo plantation can be encouraged for promoting household handicraft industry in a big way for ensuring sustainable livelihoods for the poor.
- ❖ Existing agricultural lands are undulating hence land leveling and bunding on private land holdings can also be encouraged for improving the productivity in the area.
- ❖ Awareness and concern for creating durable assets on the existing CPRs is very low – community's awareness on the same can be generated.

[Dinabandhu Karmakar](#), Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN), Purulia, West Bengal

Most of our work on the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) has happened in some districts of West Bengal. I am relating in brief what we are doing in the District of Bankura for the last two years and what we have recently started in West Medinipur and Purulia district of West Bengal.

Conventionally Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) were involved in rejuvenating Common Property Resources (CPRs). Most significant was big Tanks construction and repairing. We found that existing common properties (say volume of water available with existing dams in village) are inadequate even if rejuvenated, to meet the growing demand for irrigation and the small and marginal farmers

have little control and access over these big sources. Provision for creating more common properties is also limited. Thus we thought of promoting creation of infrastructure on individual farm lands owned by small and marginal farmers. This initiative got significant positive responses from Ministry of Rural development, local administrations and PRIs.

We have got into collaboration with local governments/ administrations to reorient NREGS processes and activities to promote livelihoods for small and marginal farmers in addition to create jobs, which anyway is the core agenda. There are now elaborate and standardized processes to implement NREGS where Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) is collaborating with District Administrations. The activities being primarily promoted here are either small water harvesting structures or plantation of fruits plants / timers and land development.

Comprehensive village level plans are developed following the principles of Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM) through a participatory process. Village level planning process is anchored by the Women Self-help groups (SHGs) Gram Sabha while Gram Panchayats coordinate the entire process across the Panchayat. PRADAN along with the Block Panchayat provides the support necessary to the process.

Apparently it looks as if only individual resources are being developed, but those who understand can easily relate to the local hydrology and discover the entire moisture regime of the local area is being rejuvenated and more greenery is created to enhance and sustain the carrying capacity of the area. The result is significant recharge in shallow ground water - one of the most important common property resources.

For further details you may please contact our Team Leader in Bankura at the following email addresses: rajeshmit@pradan.net; bankura@pradan.net.

A similar process is on in Kandhamal, Keonjhar, Mayubhanj districts of Orissa; there it is at very early stage.

Please let me know if this response is useful to you. I welcome any kind of clarification required for better my communication on the subject.

[Debashish De](#), Society for Natural Resource Management & Community Development (SNRMCD), Ghaziabad

I have been visiting Renukoot Division of Sonebhadra district of Uttar Pradesh and had a detailed discussion with the Subdivisional Forest Officer and Divisional Forest Officer. The Sonebhadra district administration has allowed the use of Forest Department land for the plantation of trees under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). There are about one lakh saplings planted in the forest fringe areas which can be a good Common Property Resource (CPR) for the forest fringe dwellers under NREGS.

Basically this plantation raised and protected by the Forest Department with the help of Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMC) reduces the demand for fuel wood for the villagers and also of small wood used in their homestead. For raising the plantation, the villagers not only received wages from the authorities as per norms they will be the owners of the plantation as well. The Forest Department is coordinating the entire work and it is a success.

This common property is worth few million rupees. This can also help India in carbon trading in future and the benefit will go to the villagers/ JFMC members.

Another example of CPR under NREGS is community tank excavated in Bankura, and Paschim Medinipur of West Bengal where the tank is being used by the community for fish culture and vegetable cultivation. As per discussion with the communities I have come to know that both the activities are income generating activities in these dry tracts and help them in resource generation apart from earning some extra money for their livelihoods.

These kind of examples are available everywhere and are heartening.

But NREGS, as per the beneficiaries, has one drawback in its payment system. Paying the wage by cheque is very hard to digest for the villagers. They are daily wage earners and cannot afford to waste a day. Collecting cheque from the paymaster, depositing it in the bank and drawing the amount from the bank after three days is not only a lot of work but also causes monetary loss for them. The bank is far off from their villages and it needs one day for depositing the cheque and another day for collecting the amount from the bank. They lose a total of Rs. 200-300 per transaction as wages for the two days and an additional Rs. 100 on transportation. The Rs. 300 thus spent is usually good enough to support their household for a week. I suggest that Ministry of Rural Development should think over it.

Radhika Desai, International Labour Organization (ILO), New Delhi

Brief Note on Gram/Panchayat Van Yojana (GVY): Under the proposed Gram/Panchayat Van scheme, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) may be strengthened with adequate allocation of resources for afforestation and management of existing tree lands as common property resources. It is proposed that Panchayati Raj Institutions be used for creation and management of multipurpose bio-resources by raising nurseries and plantations in vacant and underutilized lands. This will also provide employment opportunities to the villagers through value addition and marketing of economically important forest produce.

The proposed scheme is designed to utilise the productive potential of the vacant/underutilized lands for ecological as well as socio-economic benefits. The scheme is not just for afforestation but for sustainable livelihoods as well. It is aimed inter-alia at poverty alleviation through tree planting. Besides reversing land degradation and augmenting the soil carbon stock, this would also improve farm production, enhance bio-diversity conservation, help carbon sequestration and environmental health through increased flow of local ecological services.

The scheme is proposed to be implemented through State Forest Departments by involving the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The scheme is proposed as a centrally sponsored scheme to be shared by the Central and State Governments/ Panchayat.

Netra Prasad Osti, Nepal Agricultural Research Council (NARC), Kathmandu*

People centric ideas are very effective tools for community development; we can see the successes of community forestry in Nepal. Before community forestry started, government enforced protection of forest and invested hugely for plantation of forest trees but without people's interest there was limited success. With the introduction of community forest development concept, people themselves have started protecting and rejuvenating the forests.

Therefore before taking up any program or activity in a program, people's needs and voices should be incorporated for better results.

Pramel Kumar Gupta, Vrutti Livelihood Resource Center (VLRC), Bhopal*

Vrutti is a centre of excellence contributing to livelihoods promotion and improving the quality of life of disadvantaged groups. It works with development partners towards developing effective strategies, processes, models and support systems; through participatory action research, management services, sector and policy level initiatives. I want to share the initiatives of Vrutti, Madhya Pradesh under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) for development of Common Property Resources (CPRs) for livelihood enhancement.

Machlikho village is a 100% tribal village in Pili Karar Panchayat of Budhni block. Vrutti team along with Business Development Services (BDS) provider in NREGS – the livelihood mitras - facilitated the development of a convergence plan for better use of CPRs, which among other things looked at how NREGS investments can be better leveraged. As per implementation of this plan, Meenakshi, a sub-scheme of NREGS for pond excavation was linked to benefit fisheries group of 12 households with seeds and training provided by the fisheries department.

Another 12 households were linked with Nandan Phaloudyan, another sub scheme of NREGS for orchard development on Panchayat land. Another sub-scheme of NREGS – Bhumishilp – was identified for soil and conservation work around the hills which will benefit 40 households.

For establishing the linkages, Vrutti and BDS providers sensitized Panchayat Secretary, line departments and other important stakeholders. The linkages with appropriate target groups could materialize with appropriate interventions as a result of process facilitation. Similar interventions are initiated in about 10 other villages of Budhni block. All this work is under process. Technical and administrative sanction by the Panchayat has already been granted to most of these interventions.

In our experience, this is the best way to utilize the CPRs for the benefit of the small and marginal farmers and landless poor.

Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Work and Employment Community in India at se-emp@solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject heading "Re: [se-emp] Query: Revival of CPRs – Convergence with NREGS and Sustainable Use – Experiences; Examples. Additional Reply."

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Poverty

Work and Employment Community



Solution Exchange for the Work and Employment Community Consolidated Reply

Query: State-specific Policies and Practices in NREGS and their Impact – Experiences; Examples

Compiled by [Warisha Yunus](#), Research Associate

Issue Date: 30 June 2010

From [Seema Kakade](#), Prayas, Pune

Posted 4 May 2010

Dear Friends,

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) has been an important area of intervention for us. We take up three types of activities: (a) documenting practice level issues in NREGS for the use of grassroots activists (b) strengthening the capacities of grassroots organizations through training programs and preparation of study material, (c) ongoing analysis of policy developments from the viewpoint of poor and initiating/facilitating state-level advocacy events on the basis of analysis.

We have found that a number of policy decisions are being made in NREGS that include: convergence with other departments and schemes (e.g., water, forest, SGSY), use of ICT for enhancing its effectiveness, package for farm-ponds through it, revision in work hours from 7 to 9 hours, appointment of Ombudsman, appointment of Eminent Civil Society Persons for independent monitoring and so on. We feel that any policy decision in NREGS needs to be scrutinized closely for risks as well as opportunities, as it has direct or indirect implications for labourers who depend on the scheme for survival during times of crisis.

In this context we would like to know the following from across the various states:

- What are the state-specific policy developments (such as convergence of NREGS with other departments and programs, appointment of Ombudsman in each district for grievance redressal, appointment of eminent civil society persons, farm-pond package and increase in working hours in various states) and special initiatives (such as publishing material, inviting grassroots organizations/other civil society groups) to improve the implementation of NREGS?
- What processes/steps have been adopted so far to put these in practice?
- What are the positive/adverse implications on labourers of the policy decisions that have come into practice?
- What is the unfulfilled potential of the scheme? What are the possible risks?

We have organized a [Consultation on NREGS](#) on 21 and 22 May 2010 in Maharashtra, to discuss policy developments along with field-level issues. We would like to get your inputs for sharing and learning in the Consultation. The Consultation we believe will lead to insights, which will help us initiate/speedup our intervention in a proactive and informed manner.

Responses were received, with thanks, from

1. [N. Sudhakar](#), Oxfam India, Secunderabad
2. [T. Gangadharan](#), Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), Kannur
3. [Rahul Banerjee](#), Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath (KMCS), Indore
4. [Bedprakas Syam Roy](#), Government of West Bengal, Kolkata
5. Seema Kakade, Prayas, Pune ([Response 1](#); [Response 2](#); [Response 3](#))
6. [Tapas Kumar Dalapati](#), M. P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain
7. [Ashok Kumar Sinha](#), Karma Consultants, New Delhi
8. [Arun Jindal](#), Society for Sustainable Development (SSD), Karauli, Rajasthan
9. [Jagdish Sharma](#), State Planning Department, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh
10. [K. S. Gopal](#), Centre for Environment Concerns, Hyderabad
11. [Sandeep Khanwalkar](#), Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project (MPRLP), Bhopal
12. [Sridhar Kolluru](#), Mahila Abhivrudhi Society, Andhra Pradesh (APMAS), Hyderabad
13. [Maroti A. Upare](#), Independent Consultant, Mumbai
14. [Mihir Kumar Jena](#), Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), Orissa
15. [D. Narendranath](#), Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN), New Delhi
16. [Surendra N. Tripathi](#), Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar*
17. [Vinod Kumar](#), Maithri, Palakkad, Kerala*

**Offline Contribution*

Further contributions are welcome!

[Summary of Responses](#)
[Comparative Experiences](#)
[Related Resources](#)
[Responses in Full](#)

Summary of Responses

Responding to the query 'State-specific Policies and Practices in NREGS and their impacts' members shared about the policy decisions implemented in various states. The successful experiments have the potential to be replicated all over the country for positive impacts on the lives and livelihoods of the poor.

For improving the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), members shared about the significance of having a '[structured engagement mechanism](#)' with the NGOs as well as the Community as was done by the Office of the Commissioner Rural Development in Andhra Pradesh. This mechanism helped in involving the community in planning the development agenda based on their specific needs and requirements and made the work of District Administration easier. Other State Governments

could issue similar circulars for making the involvement of NGOs and Community mandatory in the planning process to ensure participatory need based planning.

Another good practice shared by the members was to **implement the scheme through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Women's Self-help Groups (WSHGs)** as done in [Kerala](#). This resulted in better quality of work, enhanced transparency, inclusion of high percentage of women laborers, lack of corruption and women's empowerment.

Members also discussed implementing the MGNREGS through **sub-schemes** as done in [Madhya Pradesh](#). This involved identification of each sub-scheme according to specific livelihood of the people of the region – horticulture development, water harvesting, soil conservation, pisciculture, sericulture, agriculture development, irrigation etc. Implementation through sub-schemes gave positive results as evident from the impact of the [Kapildhara Irrigation Structures Scheme](#). Since these schemes followed set models and estimation, implementation through such schemes helped in smoothening workflows and acquiring scale in a short period of time.

Members further stressed on leveraging other developmental schemes for impact maximization through **Convergence with MGNREGS**. Depending on the livelihood of the people in the region, State Governments could declare **specific areas of convergence** between Line Departments and MGNREGS as done in [Madhya Pradesh](#) for the benefit of the small and marginal farmers. The States could also issue **process and operational guidelines** for systematic and smoother collaborations across departments and schemes.

Special measures like **holding special MGNREGS Gram Sabha on the first day of each month**, especially for the review of works done under it were also shared. Such measures helped in garnering people's support for the project as well as in preventing corruption. Other measures that members found helpful were **setting up helpline centers for grievance redressal and using technologies like smart cards** to record attendance, work done and payments made. Using the same card to provide workers with social security benefits is another good practice shared by members. Use of technology may lead to reduced corruption as well as in overcoming the problems that exist due to staff shortage, members shared.

Further, use of **web based software** was recommended for tracking and updating information and putting a **Social Audit Process** in place. This helped in better monitoring of the project's performance and in curbing corruption. Making **special provisions** for the marginalized groups like Tribals, differently abled people and other such marginalized groups was also suggested. Members also highlighted the role that NGOs could play in strengthening these groups and ensuring their participation in the works of the project.

The importance of having an **institutional mechanism in place** for effective implementation of the scheme as planned by [APMAS](#) was also highlighted by members. They also recommended **establishing a group of eminent persons from civil society** as an advisory group as facilitated by Foundation for Ecological Security ([FES](#)) in Orissa.

On the unfulfilled potential of the scheme, members shared the need to do more to ensure MGNREGS's convergence with Line Departments especially Agriculture/Irrigation/Horticulture/Irrigation/Forests Department, since most of the rural poor were dependent on agriculture for subsistence or works as labor. Members also discussed the issue of **delayed and reduced payment of wages** which invariably happened because of inadequate number of technical staff at the ground level as evident from the experience in [Madhya Pradesh](#). This resulted in failure of the scheme to check distress migration as people preferred migrating to places that offered them better and timely pay. The MGNREGS could also

focus on **restoration of traditional/ ancient structures** like Nayanjuli in Maharashtra which are the traditional drainage system.

Further members pointed to the need for having a **new wage structure** in place for people in-charge of taking care of assets created under MGNREGS. They also pointed to the need for revising the modalities of evaluation from time to time.

The risk of course is that despite the best of intentions and Government circulars and involvement of PRIs, things on the ground may still not be very promising. This is evident from experiences in Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh where despite the implementation being done by PRIs there is lack of convergence, proper monitoring and social audit of the works done.

Overall, members stressed on the need to have better strategies to implement the scheme. Good policies may fail for lack of effective strategy at the field level. The need of the hour is to have effective field level strategies to ensure better implementation.

Comparative Experiences

Andhra Pradesh

Structured Mechanism to Involve the Civil Society helps in Better Planning and Smoother Implementation of MGNREGS, Ananthpur District (from [N. Sudhakar](#), Oxfam India, Secunderabad)

For better planning and implementation, the office of Commissioner Rural Development developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a network of NGOs. As a result of the coordinated efforts of the NGOs, Community and the District Administration 70% of the poor were able to engage in MGNREGS works earning Rs. 10000 which made their farming viable. More coordination between Agriculture Department and NREGS can give better results.

Kerala

Involvement of PRIs and SHGs Gives Good Results, (from [T. Gangadharan](#), Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), Kannur)

The MGNREGS is implemented through Kudumbashree which is a Government sponsored women's network for poverty reduction. The scheme is implemented totally under the control of local governments. In the initial phase works for creating durable assets were avoided. As a result of these policies - quality of work improved, more women laborers got involved helping in women's empowerment, productivity in paddy increased etc. [Read more](#)

Successful Convergence Leads to Productive Results, Wadakkanchery Block (from [Vinod Kumar](#), Maithri, Palakkad, Kerala)

The Gram Panchayats in Kerala are having successful convergence with the Departments of Agriculture, Forest and Irrigation. Although each Gram Panchayat has its own model of convergence, in Wadakkanchery block, 2500 workers labored for three weeks to desilt an irrigation canal of 47 km. This canal has brought assured irrigation to 3000 hectares of paddy under MGNREGS.

Madhya Pradesh

Inadequate Technical Staff Leads to Delayed and Reduced Payments, Indore (from [Rahul Banerjee](#), *Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath (KMCS), Indore*)

Most programs face problems when implemented at the grassroots level and the biggest hurdle in smooth implementation of MGNREGS is delayed and reduced payments. This is the case because of too few sub-engineers per block for measuring, approving and evaluating work. As a result, the workers in western M.P. migrate to Gujarat since they are able to earn Rs. 130 per day and the payment is on time. More technical people should be appointed in MGNREGS.

From [Tapas Kumar Dalapati](#), *M. P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain*

Kapildhara Sub-scheme Changed the Life of the Marginal Farmers

For creation of durable assets through MGNREGS, the Government of M.P. introduced 11 sub-schemes. The Kapildhara scheme under which dams, ponds & 1103 dug wells were constructed helped the marginal farmers. It improved the livelihood security of the marginal farmers through increased productivity and diversity of crops. Through SGSY, the Kapildhara beneficiaries were also given diesel pump sets. It has also checked distress migration from the villages.

Need for Introduction of a New Wage Structure

Plantations done under Vanya scheme were protected with wire and stone fencing but they died either because of lack of watering or destroyed by stray animals. Some villages kept a chowkidar for Rs. 500 a month but they soon quit for lack of payment for months. It is important that appropriate wages are paid on time and a new wage structure is put in place for people like chowkidar responsible for taking care of assets created under the MGNREGS.

From [Sandeep Khanwalkar](#), *Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project (MPRLP), Bhopal*

Implementing MGNREGS through Sub-schemes has Yielded Positive Results

Government of M.P. used the strategy of implementing NREGS through 12 sub-schemes under which land of 103 families has been developed, 232 households supported in orchard activities, 316 households supported to produce silk, watercourses developed/canals repaired to benefit 159 families including 85 tribal families and 1103 wells constructed with water-lifting devices provided to the farmers. All these have impacted farmers' livelihoods very positively.

Convergence Leading to Positive Impacts

For better results, MPRLP converged with MGNREGS in the past four years making the outreach to 26867 households and generated more than six lakh person days of work for the people. MNREGS was also converged with the Narmada Valley Development Authority (NVDA) for canal repair. The MPRLP has so carried out a net planning of 41,472 households and projects worth Rs. 2249 have been sanctioned and 4485 households have been benefitted.

West Bengal

Successful Collaboration Models Have a Snowball Effect and Result in Faster Replication, Bankura District (From [D. Narendranath](#), *Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN), New Delhi*)

PRADAN trained 156 local youth who were PRI functionaries and District Officials in Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM) planning. The youth helped the villagers in planning & implementing INRM activities in one panchayat. Seeing the positive impacts on livelihoods, villagers from other blocks got interested. Today PRADAN works in five blocks & has mobilized Rs. 55.79 million for INRM work from MGNREGS only & 2500 families got productive assets.

Related Resources

Recommended Documentation

From [Mihir Kumar Jena](#)

State Level Workshop on MGNREGA

Report; by Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)

Available at <ftp://ftp.solutionexchange.net.in/public/edu/resource/Proceedings%208th%20meet-1.pdf> (PDF; 1796)

The report is on the workshop organized by Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) in Orissa on the macro issues related to the implementation of the MGNREGS in the State.

Challenges and Opportunities in MGNREGS

Powerpoint Presentation; by Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)

Available at <ftp://ftp.solutionexchange.net.in/public/edu/resource/MGNREGA8th%20of%20May%202010.pdf> (PDF; 401 KB)

Presents the issues in the implementation of the MGNREGS in the State; informs on the positive steps taken by the Government and identifies the gaps that still exist.

Observations on Social Audit in Koraput

Powerpoint Presentation

Available at ftp://ftp.solutionexchange.net.in/public/edu/resource/Social_Audit_Observations_Koraput.ppt

Presents gaps/concerns that are impeding the smooth implementation of MGNREGS in the start and suggests ways for improvement in the same.

From [Warisha Yunus](#), Research Associate

Microplans to be Chalked out for Rural Development

Article; by Central Chronicle; 23 June 2010.

Available at <http://centralchronicle.com/viewnews.asp?articleID=39474>

Informs about the development of micro plans for using natural resources for livelihood enhancement of the poor through the MGNREGS.

UNDP Hails MGNREGS

Article; by The Hindu; 18 June 2010.

Available at <http://beta.thehindu.com/news/article469933.ece>

Informs about the important role that MGNREGS has played in reducing poverty and inequalities by providing employment and social protection to the poor.

Plug Holes in NREGS and PMGSY

Article; by Indian Express; 28 June 2010.

Available at <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/plug-holes-in-nregs-pmgsy/639218/0>

Gives detail about the Planning Commission asking the Ministry of Rural Development to take corrective measures for better implementation of MGNREGS and PMGSY.

NREGS Funds Misused by Panchayats?

Article; by The Times of India; 25 June 2010.

Available at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/City/Hubli/NREGS-funds-misused-by-panchayat/articleshow/6092232.cms>

Reports on the corruption charges raised against a Gram Panchayat for works done under MGNREGS by a community based organizations.

Recommended Organizations and Programmes

Anantha Paryavarana Parirakshana Samithi (APPS), Andhra Pradesh (from [N. Sudhakar](#), Oxfam India, Secunderabad)

Anantapur District; Tel: 91-8554-277258; appsatp@gmail.com

Signed a MoU with the office of the Commissioner Rural Development to conduct micro-planning exercises to identify common property resources for works under MGNREGS.

Andhra Pradesh Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (APREGS), Andhra Pradesh (from [Seema Kakade](#), Prayas, Pune)

Department of Rural Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh; Tel: 91-40-23241227; http://nrega.ap.gov.in/Nregs/works/workcenter_eng.jsp

The State version of MGNREGS that provides 100 days of employment to the rural poor by implementing programmes in convergence with the Agriculture Department also.

From [Ashok Kumar Sinha](#), Karma Consultants, New Delhi

Rural Development Department, Bihar

Old Secretariat, P. O. Box Sachivalaya, Patna 800015; <http://rdd.bih.nic.in/nregsbihar/index.htm>;

Contact Mr. A. Santosh Mathew; Principal Secretary; Tel: 91-612-2217496; rlrsec-bih@nic.in

Plays an important role in ensuring efficient implementation of works under MGNREGS by issuing instructions for special Gram Sabha meeting for MGNREGS for planning & review.

Jan Shree Bima Yojana (JSBY), Bihar

<http://handicrafts.nic.in/welfare/welfaremain.htm>

Provides insurance coverage to unorganized sector workers; the smart card issued in Bihar would double up as insurance card to provide social protection to the workers.

District Rural Development Agency, Himachal Pradesh (from [Jagdish Sharma](#), State Planning Department, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh)

drda-shi@nic.in

Manages the poverty alleviation schemes of the Government; is not working in convergence with the MGNREGS implementation in the State.

Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project (MPRLP), Madhya Pradesh (from [Sandeep Khanwalkar](#))

3rd Floor, Beej Bhawan, Arera Hills, Bhopal; Tel: 91-755-2766812; Fax: 91-755-2766815; mprlp@mprlp.in; <http://www.mprlp.in/strategy.htm>

Works for poverty reduction through village-specific livelihoods promotion plans; also implements MGNREGS in project districts for livelihood enhancement of the poor.

Narmada Valley Development Authority (NVDA), Madhya Pradesh

Narmada Bhavan, 59, Arera Hills, Bhopal 11; Tel: 91-755-2677591; Fax: 91-755-2677535; nvdabpl@mp.nic.in; <http://www.nvda.nic.in/obj.htm>

Entrusted with the task of harnessing and using the water resources of the Narmada river; converged with MPRLP for irrigation management.

From [Sridhar Kolluru](#), Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (APMAS), Hyderabad

Andhra Pradesh Micro Irrigation Project (APMIP), Andhra Pradesh

<http://www.aphorticulture.com/apmip.htm>

Launched to bring 2.5 lakh hectare of land under micro irrigation, it can converge with the MGNREGS in the State for the livelihood enhancement of the rural poor.

Comprehensive Land Development Programme (CLDP), Andhra Pradesh

<http://www.peaceap.org/cldp.html>

Works for development of land of the rural poor including women for their livelihood security through improved agricultural productivity.

Orissa Community Tank Development and Management Project (OCTDMP),

Location (from [Maroti A. Upare](#), Independent Consultant, Mumbai)

Agriculture Production Commission, Department of Agriculture. Rajiv Bhawan, Bhubaneswar 751001; Tel: 91-674-2394935

Mandated to work on the deepening/desilting of tanks for water storage to provide irrigation for increase in agricultural productivity; no work done under MGNREGS on this.

Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (APMAS), Andhra Pradesh

Plot 20, Rao & Raju Colony, Road 2, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034; Tel: 91-40-23547952; Fax: 91-40-23547926; info@apmas.org; <http://www.apmas.org/lh.aspx>

Works for poverty alleviation by strengthening the capacities of SHGs; also works for bringing about the required changes in MGNREGS through policy decisions.

Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), Orissa (from [Mihir Kumar Jena](#))

B-2, Baramunda Housing Board Colony, Bhubaneswar 751003, District Khurda; rceast.fes@ecologicalsecurity.org; <http://fes.org.in/includeAll.php?pId=Mi00LTI> Contact Mr. Sisir Pradhan; Tel: 91-9437002194

Works for restoration of forests and promotion of sustainable livelihood and better implementation of the MGNREGS in the state through policy recommendations.

From [D. Narendranath](#), Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN), New Delhi

National Horticulture Mission (NHM), Delhi

Government of National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, 5/9 Under Hill Road, Delhi 110054; Tel: 91-11-23930783; Fax: 91-11-23957289; dev.com@nic.in; <http://www.nhm.nic.in/>; Contact Ms. Nutan Guha Biswas; Development Commissioner

Launched to promote holistic growth of horticulture sector; funds from it are used in convergence with MGNREGS to promote mango plantation in West Bengal.

Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN), Delhi

3, Community Shopping Centre, Niti Bagh, P. B. No. 3827, New Delhi 110049; Tel: 91-11-26518619; Fax: 91-11-26514682; headoffice@pradan.net; <http://www.pradan.net/>

Works for poverty alleviation and livelihood promotion; implementing MGNREGS in convergence with PRIs, District Administration and the local groups and communities.

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Maharashtra

Plot No. C-24, "G" Block, Bandra-Kurla Complex, P. B. No 8121, Bandra (E), Mumbai 400051; Tel: 91-22-26539244; Fax: 91-22-26528141; nabmcd@vsnl.com; <http://www.nabard.org/development&promotional/developmentalinitiatives.asp>

Apex institution that also provides funds for undertaking livelihood enhancement activities under the MGNREGS among other things.

Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), Delhi (from [Tapas Kumar Dalapati](#), M. P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain)

Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi 110001; Tel: 91-11-23782373; Fax: 91-11-23385876;
<http://www.rural.nic.in>

Poverty alleviation programme that provides micro-credit and group insurance services to the poor; diesel sets were provided to MGNREGS farmers through convergence.

Kudumbashree, Kerala (from [Surendra N. Tripathi](#), Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar)

State Poverty Eradication Mission, 2nd Floor, TRIDA Rehabilitation Building, Chalakuzhy Road, Medical College P. O. Thiruvananthapuram 695011; Tel: 91-471-2554714; Fax: 91-471-2334317;
info@kudumbashree.org; <http://www.kudumbashree.org/?q=localecodev>

Women's network for implementing developmental programmes under PRI leadership; has improved quality of work & women's participation due to policies for MGNREGS.

Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Delhi (from [Warisha Yunus](#), Research Associate)

Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi 110001; Tel: 91-11-23782373 Fax: 91-11-23385876;
<http://www.rural.nic.in>

Initiated MGNREGS, a poverty alleviation programme that guarantees 100 days of employment each year to a rural poor household.

Recommended Portals and Information Bases

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Ministry of Rural Development, New Delhi

(from [Warisha Yunus](#), Research Associate)

<http://nrega.nic.in/>

Provides complete details on the NREGA Act its implementation and different sectors covered including natural resource management and agriculture development.

Recommended Tools and Technologies

RAGAS Software (from [Sridhar Kolluru](#), Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (APMAS), Hyderabad)

Software

Available at <http://event.stockholmchallenge.se/project/2008/Public-Administration/RAGAS-ict-tool-implement-NREGS-benefitting-bottom-most-layer-pyramid-Andhra-Pradesh>

The software developed by Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is helping in auto generation of estimation of the works under MGNREGS and thereby helping in tackling corruption.

Responses in Full

[N. Sudhakar](#), Oxfam India, Secunderabad

There are three to four very important initiatives from Government of Andhra Pradesh (A. P.) to ensure smoother and effective implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). They are as follows:

- Have evolved a structured engagement mechanism with the civil society and community based organizations (CBOs). The Commissioner Rural Development (CRD) office developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a network of NGOs. It directed the districts

towards appending need based shelf of projects suitable for their specific villages, allocating the funds on that basis.

In this line CRD, A. P. had a MoU with Anantha Paryavarana Parirakshana Samithi (APPS)) which is a network of 13 NGOs in Ananthpur to take stock of the Common Property Resources (CPRs) based on the micro-planning exercise conducted in each village.

- Based on the micro-planning, the estimates were developed along with the NREGS team and allocations were done by the district. The APPS provided the required field facilitation support. Very importantly, a CBO called Vedika, a district level apex body with its strong grass roots presence as Paryavarana Parirakshana Samithis (PPS) was involved in field level monitoring and social audit processes.
- At the district level, the collector has initiated a fortnightly Steering Committee Meeting to review and resolve different field level problems along with the NGOs and CBOs.

Potential use of NREGS: Given the current level of engagement between Government and civil society organizations, much closer integration of NREGS with departments working on Watershed/ Agriculture/Horticulture/Forest etc. is very important. So far the physical assets are created by NREGS, but the real productivity of these assets will be seen only once the assets are utilized for biomass production, afforestation etc.

In Ananthpur at least 70% of the small holders are also involved in the NREGS work, through which the small holders are able to earn up to Rs. 10,000 which really makes their farming viable. More needs to be discussed on how agriculture department can work for small farmers' farm development under NREGS.

T. Gangadharan, Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), Kannur

I think this is a very important area for discussion which will lead to a better understanding about the way MNREGS is developing in state specific scenarios, and its positive and negative impacts in the field for providing employment guarantee.

In the context of Kerala the following are the most important decisions taken in this regard:

- The scheme is implemented totally under the control of Local Governments.
- It is implemented totally through Kudumbasree, the Government sponsored women network for poverty reduction.
- Works for creating durable social assets were avoided in the initial phases and started in a controlled manner in the next phases.

Impact of the above state specific policies is tremendous:

- Improved Quality of work
- Enhancing transparency
- High percentage of women labourers
- Lack of corruption
- Amount of women empowerment etc.

It has had a good impact on the productive sector, especially agriculture. After a long time, there is a slight improvement in the area of paddy cultivation in Kerala. This is attributed to NREGS and efforts of Kudumbasree.

The success of of some of the state innovations has led to their replication in other states.

Rahul Banerjee, Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath (KMCS), Indore

There are many problems with regard to NREGS but the most intractable one that is very difficult to tackle even through good grassroots mobilization (which can eliminate corruption almost totally) is that of delayed and reduced payment of wages-

- There are too few sub-engineers in a block as compared to the volume of work in progress and so the evaluation of the work done gets inordinately delayed.
- The sub-engineer invariably under evaluates the work done and so the workers get much less than the stipulated daily wage.
- Even after this there are more delays in the sanctioned payment being deposited in the accounts of the workers.

The net result is that workers in areas like western Madhya Pradesh who have the option of migrating to Gujarat and other areas for employment prefer to do so as despite the inconvenience of migration they get more than Rs. 130 per day and the payment is on time.

Thus, more technical persons have to be appointed and the modalities of evaluation revised so that people do get Rs 100 for a day's work on time.

Bedprakas Syam Roy, Government of West Bengal, Kolkata

I would request the Consultations Meet in Maharashtra to take up one scheme seriously through out the country under NREGA. This is about re-excavation of NAYANJULI, the roadside drains that collect the spill -over and inundated water. The channel as formed served historically as drainage way and stood as a cushion against water logging and localized flood. The human encroachments' and settlements on such roadside drains over the years together with lack of required fund for re-excavation explain the derelict status of the drainways and be directly instrumental for water logging . NREGA can take up such works in a big way, provide space for works, restore the ancient drainways and regenerate the environmental friendly roadside.

Seema Kakade, Prayas, Pune (response 1)

The Andhra Pradesh (A. P.) experience shared by Sudhakar is indeed very attractive. It would be worth learning from this experience. Success stories as well as their critique are available in the media. However, I have not yet come across an objective understanding about the potential and challenges in GO-NGO partnership in A.P. Do forward some documentation of experiences if available.

About convergence of agriculture department with Andhra Pradesh Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (APREGS), Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), A. P. has declared the following areas for convergence in the following districts:

Karimnagar: Fishery, seed production, vermicompost, production and management of backyard poultry

Karnool: Seed production, vermicompost, biopesticides and biofertilizers

Nalgonda: Seed production, sericulture and vermicompost

Chittoor: Seed production, sericulture, vermicompost, aromatic & medicinal plants, and protective cultivation.

These seem to have good potential for ensuring benefit to the small farmers. What is the status of these in the above mentioned districts? How is the idea of convergence being materialized in these districts?

It would also be interesting to learn from the Kudumbashri model from Gangadharan. The positive impacts you have mentioned are known to us through media. What we would really like to know is - how this could materialize on ground? Were there not hurdles, challenges, which most of us undergo, while initiating and establishing innovations in the mainstream? How is the issue of dilution of quality with up gradation handled? What are the current challenges faced by the model? What is the future thrust?

This will help us gain insights from the Kerala experience.

Tapas Kumar Dalapati, M. P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain

I agree with the observations of Rahul Banerjee regarding implementation related bottlenecks in Madhya Pradesh (MP). Although, it is mandatory in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) to have a full time Programme Officer (PO) and adequate number of Sub-engineers at the block level and Gram Rojgar Sahayaks at Gram Panchayat level, the reality is that there is a severe dearth of these people which is hampering the proper implementation of MGNREGS in the state. Lack of people's participation compounds the problem.

Regarding the creation of valuable assets through MGNREGS, Government of Madhya Pradesh (GoMP) has introduced eleven sub-schemes namely:

- Kapil Dhara irrigation structures (dug well, check dam ,masonry dam, farm pond on private land)
- Nandan Phalodyan (horticulture on private land)
- Bhumi Shilp (farm bunding on private land)
- Shail Pern (soil conservation and plantation in degraded hills)
- Vanya (plantation in community waste land)
- Resham (sericulture in community as well as private land)
- Nirmal Neer (well and tank construction for community drinking water)
- Nirmal Vatika (construction of leaching pit and fruit tree plantation)
- Meenakhi (pisciculture)
- Sahasradhara (micro irrigation structure with canals)
- Srunthalabadh Jal Sanrachana (construction of series of stop dams in rivers)

In our evaluation study, we have found that Kapildhara wells have really improved the productivity, intensity and diversity of the crops, where ground water availability is good and tube well irrigation minimal. This scheme has improved livelihood security of the marginal farmers and land reforms beneficiaries to a great extent. This programme has been converged with Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) and diesel pump sets are provided to Kapildhara beneficiaries for irrigation. Wherever the programme has been implemented sincerely, the impact has been excellent. These irrigation structures have changed the life of the marginal farmers and land reforms beneficiaries and checked distress migration from villages. However certain irregularities like corruption and lack of payment to family members of beneficiary is reported. If adequate measures are taken to curb these irregularities Kapildhara can contribute in improving the livelihoods of the small and marginal farmers.

Vanya is another important sub-scheme under MGNREGS. In several villages, plantation has been done along with wire and stone fencing to protect it. However, due to lack of adequate surveillance, they have died either because of lack of watering or destroyed by straying animals. In some villages, a chowkidar was appointed for a mere Rs. 500 per month (in MGNREGS wage is Rs. 100 per day) but left the job due to lack of payment for months. For such cases, a new wage

structure should be introduced applicable to the people responsible for taking care of the assets created under MGNREGS.

The most important of all is participation of people at all levels:

- Participation in MGNREGS
- Participation in planning of MGNREGS activities
- Participation in monitoring and implementation of MGNREGS activities and
- Participation in sharing benefits of MGNREGS activities

Though, Madhya Pradesh is the first state to introduce convergence of the different rural development programmes, no significant backup is witnessed from civil society groups (CSOs) to make it more fruitful. It is the need of the hour that GoMP chalks out innovative practices to invite participation of community as well as CSOs to make its sub-schemes the actual livelihood base for the poor.

Ashok Kumar Sinha, Karma Consultants, New Delhi

Though efficient governance and development delivery is a challenge in Bihar but the State Government has undertaken progressive efforts for effective and transparent implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

- Provisions of Special Gram Sabha (GS) on MGNREGS every month – The Act authorize the GS to recommend works to be taken up under MGNREGS, to monitor and supervise these works, and to conduct social audits. Accordingly, Rural Development Department (RRD) of the State has taken proactive action by issuance of instruction letter to all district level authority for conducting GS on the first day of every month. This GS will be centered on MGNREGS issues only.
- Help Line Centre – State Government has also started HELP LINE CENTRE for resolution of concerns related to implementation of MGNREGS in the state.
- Hi-tech MGNREGS - Bihar is taking lead in making MGNREGS hi-tech. The State Government is going to roll out a pilot programme in one gram panchayat. It is planning to implement an e-muster system. Groups' members will be identified using fingerprints through a hand-held device. Attendance will also be marked on the card using thumbprints and payments will be made on that basis. The card will also record the number of days worked. Issuance of e-shakti card is a positive step and it will also double up as an insurance card for the holder under the Jan Shree Bima Yojna.

Arun Jindal, Society for Sustainable Development (SSD), Karauli, Rajasthan

It is very good to see that Prayas is scrutinising policies to facilitate better implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

Policies are good but not implemented in the right way. All new initiatives of the Central Government are fruitless if the State and its "Babudom" are not willing to implement them for their defined purpose i.e. labour welfare.

In Rajasthan, this scheme is in complete control of village Panchayat Secretaries, Sarpanches, District and Block level administrators and engineers. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) specifically Gram Panchayats are implementing 90% of the activities of the MGNREGS. Other departments

are not willing to participate fully. The NGO's are not involved yet. State has just issued a circular last month to involve NGOs in the scheme as implementers.

Ombudsmen are appointed in the District but they don't function because a person residing in Udaipur 600 kms. away is appointed in Karauli district. These kind of mindless appointments have been done in many districts. A "Help line" has not been established in many Districts, and wherever it has been established, it is not functioning. Convergence is not happening with other departments or schemes. Separate plan is developed. District Planning Committee is helpless because the District Collector is also working as District Program Coordinator. No new initiative is launched.

Rajasthan started Social audit in MGNREGS, but that is also only on paper. Some organizations were trying to conduct social audit in Panchayats, but State Government has stopped them because of political compulsions.

A very good scheme is getting a bad name because there is no monitoring at the field level. Other stakeholders like NGOs and Civil Society Organization (CSOs) are not included purposefully.

Seema Kakade, Prayas, Pune (*response 2*)

Rajasthan experience is alarming, and it makes one aware of the urgent need to influence these policy developments in a proactive manner.

Jagdish Sharma, State Planning Department, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

I am a retired Deputy Director of the Planning Department of Himachal Pradesh (H.P.). Last year I had been managing some part of the trainings imparted to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in two/three blocks of Mandi District. I got to see how the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is being implemented at the Panchayats' level.

I fully endorse the views expressed by Arun Jindal about MGNREGS. In fact the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) is functioning in isolation and no convergence with schemes from the Department of Agriculture, Horticulture, Forest etc. is taking place resulting in duplication of work. At the same time, there is complete lack of Monitoring and timely release of funds resulting in delayed payments to the job card holders. Monitoring and timely release of funds to the Blocks are the need of the hour.

K. S. Gopal, Centre for Environment Concerns, Hyderabad

Your reply is good Sudhakar. I suggest we/you could ask them to look at CEC book "Delivering NREGS: Challenges and Opportunities" which is available on our website www.cechyd.org.

Sandeep Khanwalkar, Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project (MPRLP), Bhopal

I work for Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project (MPRLP), Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Government of Madhya Pradesh (GoMP).

The MPRLP is recognized as the implementing agency for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGS) in project districts. The MPRLP project team has carried out Net Planning exercises and detailed Planning Processes under the Watershed Approach in the project villages. Based on this, a shelf of projects was prepared and incorporated in the district

plans after approval from a three-tier Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) system. The MPRLP is implementing MGNREGS with two different approaches:

- Sub-schemes crafted under MGNREGS and
- Watershed Development in selected clusters with the help of the Technical Facilitation Team (TFT) appointed through partner Non Government Organizations (NGOs).

In M.P., 12 sub-schemes have been created Impact can be seen by making visits to the field. We have so many success stories. Each success story will tell a different approach. However, there are issues at the field level; therefore it is essential that **vision building is done at the field level.**

Details of activities executed under various sub schemes are as follows:

- Under the Shail Parn sub-scheme, land of 103 families is being developed.
- In Nandan Phalodyan, 232 households are being supported in orchard activities.
- In Resham, 316 households have been supported in producing silk. These families will be linked with the Department of Sericulture, Government of Madhya Pradesh.
- In Sahastra Dhara, watercourses have been constructed under the MGNREGA to divert water from natural sources to the agricultural land of 85 tribal families in Shahdol district. A total of 150 households have benefited.
- In Kapil Dhara, 1103 wells were constructed and water-lifting devices were provided for farmers to irrigate their land.

Mr. Tapas has given details of most of the sub-schemes. One that he missed is *naharo ka rakhrakhav* – repair and maintenance of minor in the command areas of irrigation projects. These sub schemes have set criteria, models and estimates, so it becomes easy to prepare proposals and get sanctions. This strategy was adopted by the GoMP to reduce the procedural delays at the field level. Smooth implementation is possible only if all the blockades are removed in one go - approval, release of funds, bank support and human resource support to Panchayats.

In MPRLP we are converging with MGNREGS for the past four years and reached more than 26867 household under various sub schemes. This way we generated more than six lakh person days. This wouldn't have been possible without convergence and creating positive environment at field level. Another good example of **convergence** is of Irrigation Management with Narmada Valley Development Authority (NVDA) in two irrigation projects. The most important task which we executed with the help of Water Users Associations (WUAs) is the repair and maintenance of canals using MGNREGS funds and construction of water courses in field. This brought ownership. The Chairmen and the Technical Committee (TC) members of the WUA are managing the physical works with assistance from DSC, MPRLP and NVDA in getting the necessary documents from the PRIs. The NVDA engineers trained the farmers on how to execute physical works.

The GoMP also developed guidelines to implement Watershed Development activities under MGNREGS which is unique in itself. This can be replicated throughout the country. One can visit Rajiv Gandhi Watershed Mission website (<http://www.watermissionmp.com/>). Following the Watershed Development concept, MPRLP is executing activities in 122 villages of 15 clusters and blocks. The MPRLP has carried out net planning of 41,472 households and submitted proposals to Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Zila Panchayats for various sub schemes of MGNREGS. So far projects worth Rs. 2249 lakhs have been sanctioned and 4485 households have benefited.

We need **better strategies** to implement this act rather than policies. Most of the policies cannot be implemented due to lack of strategy and plan at field level.

Sridhar Kolluru, Mahila Abhivrudhi Society, Andhra Pradesh (APMAS), Hyderabad

The Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP) had taken appropriate measures in enacting the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

As a preliminary step, A.P. Government has prepared state specific **Process Guidelines** to ensure appropriate steps are followed at different levels in generating job cards, do required process and provide employment to the stakeholders who get enrolled at the Gram Panchayat (G.P.) level.

Followed by this, detailed **Operational Guidelines** were framed incorporating different principles, management practices required for better execution of the scheme. This document comprises of various procedural issues starting from planning, registration of job-seekers, work allocation and execution. They also mention about making payments in a systematic way and disbursement of unemployment allowance, in time, wherever applicable.

Taking the advantage of information technology, the State Government took appropriate steps in creating **Web-based Software** for tracking and updating information which helps in monitoring. This software had received the best software award in Rural Development (R.D.) activities at South Asia level. For auto generation (error free) of estimations of the works proposed at different places, RAGAS software was designed with the help of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). This ensures corruption free estimate generation.

As the Government had created web based information system, one can drill down the information both vertically and horizontally along with all the relevant information related to the circulars, GOs issued while implementing the program. This way the Government has taken appropriate measures and is further improving in making sure the real beneficiaries are served better by the scheme.

Initiatives were taken in broadly **classifying different kinds (eight) of activities** that could be taken up under the NREGS program. Under each broad activity, sub-activities that could be taken up were incorporated. There were 85 kinds of works that were enlisted under the broad eight categories of activities in A.P. with their priority mentioned against each of them. This exercise brought different stakeholders with required clarification and execution of works without any ambiguity. Lot of effort is put into the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRM plan) with a clear cut five year plan for execution of different works within each G.P.

After two years of execution, in 2008 the State Government adopted the project mode of work execution to ensure:

- Sustainable assets creation
- Ownership among the asset owners
- Saturation of a particular geographical area/s with suitable activities to turn the natural resources into productive assets. Gradually this also lead to development of horticulture under dry land and dry irrigated horticulture species.

Convergence with the line departments viz., Agriculture, Andhra Pradesh Micro Irrigation Project (APMIP), Horticulture etc., could be ensured through these initiatives. Convergence with other schemes like Comprehensive Land Development Program (CLDP) and Watershed Programs wherever they are under implementation has been optimized for better results. Specific Government Organizations (GOs) and circulars can be found on the web based software.

In the implementation process, the State Government has made **special provisions** by issuing circulars for providing employment throughout the year in specific areas – which are drought stricken, affected with more migration (Districts like Mahboobnagar) and advance wage payment

in remote tribal areas to attract people to the scheme. Special provisions were also made for the **differently able persons**, thus ensuring their livelihood. Continuous efforts are on to provide work site facilities with innovations and modifications for the benefit of wage labour. **Risk mitigation mechanism** is also ensured by the Government by creating special provision for such mishaps at work, thus securing the lives of the poor. With the help of different stakeholders involved both in government and NGOs, it took special initiatives to conduct work motion studies and revising the cost norms as appropriate. **Social audit** process is being improved with the stakeholders' involvement which will help in execution of the scheme, in continuum.

There is a **grievance redressal system** that is in place, effectively functioning since the past six to nine months. This has different levels viz., Mandal, District and State, which is also being linked to the web based information system on NREGS-AP. There is a periodic review of this system to monitor its effectiveness. Few of the **best practices** were also put on the website which one may refer to, for getting an understanding of the impact of the program at different levels.

Few constructive efforts have been put on reducing the corruption at different levels. Taking the **advantage of the technology** (introduction of smart card, finger print, Smart VM technology for biometric recognition) few initiatives that were piloted at different places, which may come up with leading solutions in addressing the corruption and do justice to the primary stakeholders. These initiatives will also lead to convergence of different departments and NGOs.

During the year 2009, circulars were sent to ensure the participation and development of the land belonging to the poor. This reoriented the labour groups with specific association with the Self-help Groups (SHGs), Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) communities (GO 339 for the formation of fixed labour groups). These groups were also to be strengthened in terms of better awareness, development of their assets into more productive ones. The GO 80 had been issued to get A.P. NGOs Alliance (APNA) in strengthening these groups.

Continuing its efforts, the State Government is taking appropriate measures in not only updating the job cards but also in making sure that the assets being created are fruitful and sustainable. Still, there are **few unresolved issues** like payment of wages. The efforts made by the GO-NGO forum has really lead to some achievement in favour of the poor in availing their right to work.

In the process, APMAS had taken different initiatives by organising brainstorming sessions, contributing in different forums (at state and national level) for required changes – based on the field level observations, organising state specific events like Andhra Pradesh Livelihood Learning Group (APLLG) workshops for sharing and learning on different elements of NREGS. It involves different stakeholders to place their recommendations and concerns with the policy makers at the State level. APMAS is planning to organise few stakeholder level meetings and contribute in a larger way to come up with an institutional mechanism - for effective implementation of the program. (Please check www.nregs.ap.gov.in for different references mentioned in this article).

Maroti A. Upare, Independent Consultant, Mumbai

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is a flagship programme of Government of India implemented through State Governments. The idea of providing jobs to rural poor for 100 days in a year is very novel. The NREGS provides people with the right to work.

Most of the states are finding it difficult to implement it except Andhra Pradesh (A.P.). The NREGS is having more negative than positive impacts. Some of them are:

- NREGS has resulted in non-availability of labour for agricultural operations which has consequently affected its production.
- The reputation and quality of NREGS work is very low. It is said that a work not implemented properly must have been done through NREGS.
- Inappropriate selection of works under NREGS has been done at many places. In Yeotmal District of Maharashtra people are facing a drinking water problem; yet deepening of tanks under NREGS has not been taken up in many villages. Tanks can be deepened to store more water to overcome the problem of water scarcity in these villages.
- In Orissa under the community based Tank Management Project funded by the World Bank, tanks below 40 ha need to be excavated under NREGS but there is no progress made on this front.

The whole programme needs soul-searching to make it more effective by involving village functionaries properly. Present approach is top down which needs to be reversed.

[Mihir Kumar Jena](#), Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), Orissa

Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) organized a state level workshop on MGNREGS in Orissa on 8th may 2010. We would like to share the [report](#) of the workshop with you. During the workshop there was a presentation on MGNREGS in Orissa; we also share that [presentation](#) with you. Please note that this presentation focuses on macro issues in the state on MGNREGS and deliberately does not include quantitative data.

After the workshop there has been an increased level of activity at the state level on MGNREGS. A meeting was organised on May 17th by the Panchayati Raj Department, Orissa Government in Bhubaneswar on Social audit . We made a [presentation on social audit](#) at the time. For example, the Orissa government has decided to establish group of eminent persons from civil society to provide advice and guidance to the political class and the bureaucracy on social audit.

Those interested may write for further information on the workshop and MGNREGS in Orissa to me.

[Seema Kakade](#), Prayas, Pune (response 3)

I feel, MPRLP experience is indeed very interesting. It would be worth learning about the systems and procedures charted out by the M.P. government, especially to see how they provide a cure on procedural field level delays.

It would also important to learn from the success stories, especially to assess their replication potential. I am also curious to know how usual hurdles in GO-NGO partnership are addressed by MPRLP.

Finally it would be interesting to know what challenges does MPRLP see in terms of strategizing?

[D. Narendranath](#), Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN), New Delhi

We in PRADAN would like to share how the developmental role of Panchyati Raj System in West Bengal served as the basis for convergence of MGNREGS using the strategy of INRM at Gram

Panchayat level. The strategy has led to improved INRM and livelihood promotion among the poor.

Work on INRM with District Authorities and Panchayati Raj System:

In 2005 PRADAN initiated its work in integrated natural resource development in Bankura district in Saltora block at the invitation of the district authorities. PRADAN started helping the community in planning of INRM based livelihood plans.

As in other places of West Bengal Panchayati Raj System plays a key developmental role in Bankura district also. Gram Samsad, consisting of 1-2 villages, is the lowest level where village level plans are made. Elected members from Gram Samsad constitute Gram Panchayat. These elected representatives, called Gram Panchayat members, are accountable for preparation and implementation of Annual Plan for the entire Gram Panchayat area (consisting of 12-15 villages).

PRADAN supported the district administration in implementing the INRM activities by giving training to the villagers, local PRI functionaries and government officials. A total of 156 local youth, who were PRI functionaries, got trained in INRM planning and helped the villagers in planning and implementation of INRM activities.

Implementation of the Strategy of INRM in MGNREGS in collaboration with PRI:

PRADAN had a firm belief in the potential of INRM to improve livelihoods and the ability of PRIs to replicate INRM using MGNREGS in other areas once their capacities were improved. But, PRIs and the district administration were looking at MGNREGS in the context of employment generation. Livelihood security and poverty alleviation were secondary.

Thus PRADAN approached the local leadership of the Hirbandh Panchayat Samity (HPS) and shared the ideas and experiences of land and water resource development activities which are being implemented in Saltora and Purulia. Following some exposure of Gram Panchayat members, G.P. Pradhan, technical staff and secretary of the G.P. and some influential political leader of the area G.P. agreed to take PRADAN's help in promoting women's SHGs and strengthening old SHGs promoted by G.P. The idea of creating number of decentralized water bodies (as appropriate key component of INRM for the area) and using the unused uplands more productively (through promotion of orchard or timber plantation) had been given significant importance to start with. The H.P.S. agreed to try these ideas in three villages as a pilot. PRADAN conducted training for local people and provided field level support in preparing the plans for those three villages.

Impact of INRM:

A small part of these plans was implemented to create small water harvesting structures (5% model / Hapa) in the summer of 2008 in Elora village spending about Rs 4, 00,000. *About 30-40 models* of in-situ rain water conservation were demonstrated in one patch of 20 ha of Arjuna plantation of the same G.P. Impact of these simple technologies had been significant enough to excite the local Panchayat leader and officials in the block and district administration.

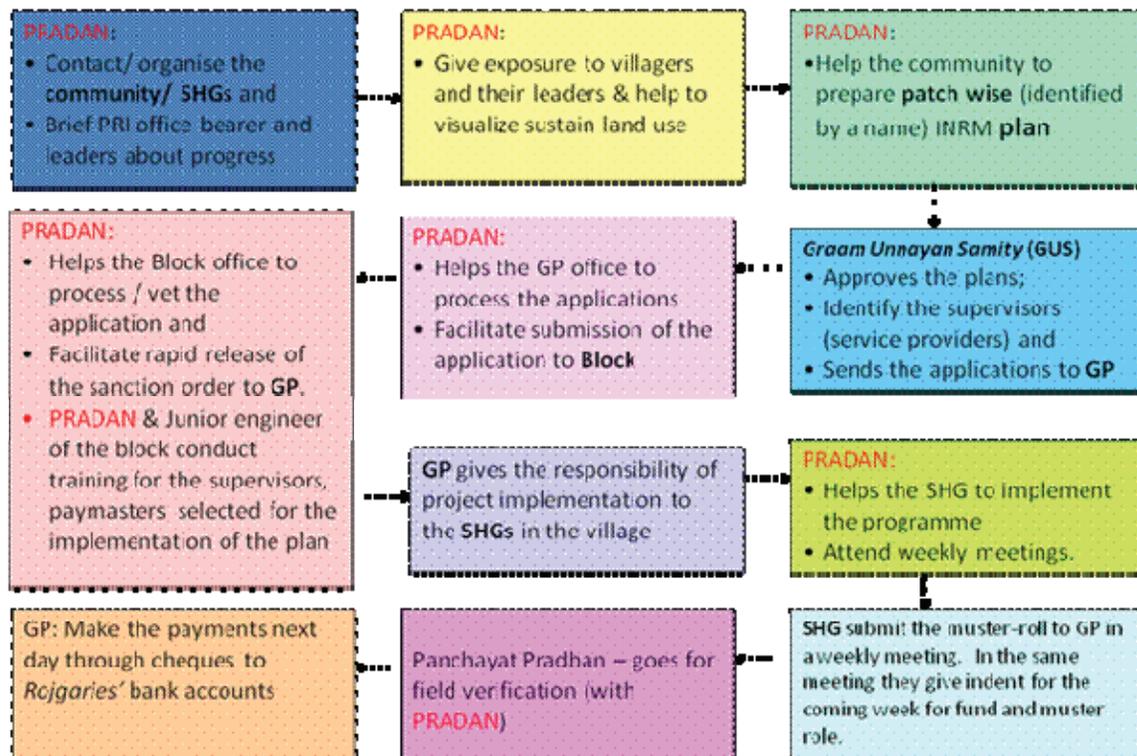
Seeing the impact, the Panchayat leaders requested PRADAN to help them in preparing such INRM plan for all the villages of Gopalpur G.P. In Gopalpur G.P. PRADAN arranged exposure visit for village resource persons (RP) selected by SHG or Gram Samsad to Purulia. Following the exposure these RPs were imparted training on planning process of INRM. The trained RPs started helping the villagers in preparing INRM plan. At the same time PRADAN helped the Gram Unnayan Samity and Gram Panchayat to set systems and processes so that they can quickly and effectively respond to the villagers' demand which was getting generated through the planning process.

Process of Implementation of INRM through MGNREGS:

The steps followed are given below:

1. Facilitating SHGs/Gram Samsad to select people to work as village level Resource persons (RP)
2. Giving exposure and training to RPs
3. Helping RPs in campaigning to build awareness in the villages
4. Helping the SHGs to organize village level planning event involving all the households
5. Giving input in the field to ensure poorest biased livelihood centric plan
6. One SHG is given responsibility to implement work in one patch to avoid any confusions (As several SHGs will be working in same villages but in different patches)
7. SHGs are pay masters. Payments are extremely regular in a weekly cycle.

The diagram below outlines the role played by different actors in the collaboration.



Planning and implementation started in several villages simultaneously. Other than that, a patch of 2000 Ha area had been selected where the comprehensive INRM treatment would be done on a priority basis to see the impact on the area. Mango plantation had been done in two huge patches of 27 ha within this area by convergence of different fund sources from MGNREGS, National Horticulture Mission (NHM), Zilla Parishad fund, district agriculture fund etc. For rest of the activities funds are being mobilized from different agencies like NABARD and Panchayat (MGNREGS). NABARD has already sanctioned a watershed development programme for 557 ha area within this 2000 ha and the implementation work is going on.

The Snowball Effect: Extending to Purulia and Pashchim Medinipur:

After seeing the impact at Gopalpur G.P. two other Gram Panchayats, called Moshiaara and Molian, came forward to PRADAN to do the same thing in their area. One of these Panchayats, Molian, could spent only Rs 3.27 lakh from MGNREGS before December 2008 when PRADAN started working in the Panchayat in INRM. After PRADAN's involvement the G.P. could spent another 82 lakh rupees in next three months of the financial year. Presently in addition to

Saltora, PRADAN works on INRM using the strategy of convergence with NREGS in the Hirbandh, Baharamuri, Ranibandh, and Indupur Blocks of Bankura district. So, over all in Bankura district PRADAN is now working in five blocks. In these five blocks in the last 3 years PRADAN could **mobilise Rs 55.79 million** for INRM work from NREGS only. A total number of around **2500 families got productive assets**.

Up to 31st March 2010 under NREGS					
Particulars	No of family	No of structures	Area (Ha)	Fund spent from NREGS (Rs. Million)	Mandays generated
Water harvesting structure	1668	1651	382.78	28.85	335,153
Mango orchard	2145		150.31	25.89	176,614
Forestry(timber plants)	61	0	12	0.45	3,540
Soil & moisture conservation	291	0	48	0.6	7,584
Total	4165	1651	593.09	55.79	522,891

Now, the State Government has agreed to provide us 60% of PRADAN's support cost for enhancing awareness within the community regarding NREGS, building village based resource persons for planning and implementing INRM based plan under NREGS, and installing the process and systems in these five blocks for implementing INRM based activities under NREGS

The Principal Secretary of Panchayat & Rural Development Department, Government of West Bengal, after visiting PRADAN's work in Bankura and Purulia issued a letter to all the blocks of Purulia and Bankura to replicate the PRADAN-PRI-Administration collaboration model for implementing INRM work through MGNREGS. Following this letter the district administration of Purulia showed huge interest in collaborating with PRADAN. PRADAN started with Matha Gram Panchayat of Baghmundi block; Tumrasol, Bansbera, Berada and Sindri Gram Panchayat of Barabazar block.

PRADAN has extended its support to West Medinipur district also from late 2009. Now PRADAN is implementing INRM based livelihood in Nayagram block of the district in collaboration with the local PRI. Here PRADAN is following watershed approach for planning and implementing the INRM activities.

In these two districts also PRADAN is following the same process of planning and implementation as they are doing in Bankura.

Surendra N. Tripathi, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar*

I attended one workshop in which a suggestion came up to "allow wage-payment of brick-kiln units as part of NREGA."

The logic is that Self-help Groups (SHG) of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

(NREGS) workers can dig and use the earth dugged out during deepening of ponds/community tanks etc. for brick-making. The workers who work in brick kilns are migrants and work in subhuman conditions in other states. They are underpaid and their payment is often paid in lumpsum in advance as a strategy to ensure their return to worksite.

Allowing them to set up brick kilns in their own villages and using the NREGS funds for wage employment will help them immensely. The bricks may be sold to the beneficiaries of Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) at a very low price. They can also be used for improving village road, boundary wall of schools and even for toilet construction.

We are already funding nurseries for wage employment and allowing free distribution of seedling to school anganwadi centres and for back-yard plantation etc. This may engage NREGA-labour during rainy season also.

Kindly offer your comments on allowing brick-making as admissible work under NREGS.

Vinod Kumar, Maithri, Palakkad, Kerala*

Sorry for the late response. It is really interesting to understand all the variations and subtleties in implementing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) across India. From Kerala, I would like to add few points stemming from the experience of developing Perspective Plans for two District Panchayats:

- In Kerala, women and Gram Panchayats (G.P.) are in the fore front. Wherever the local wages were below Rs 125, it reached or even crossed Rs. 125 irrespective of all complaints of undervaluation, delayed payment etc.
 - The MGNREGS prompted more people to come out and do the manual work as it enables people to work and earn without losing self-respect. This had one more desirable impact - in most areas the availability of labour for other works is increasing contrary to the heresies.
 - The relation between labourers and the farmers is changing. Earlier the laborers were at the mercy of farmers, now the tables are turned.
 - The earning from MGNREGS goes in to the bank accounts of labourers and random surveys are indicating most of the funds are being spent on productive investments, most importantly children's education.
 - Convergence is taking place since the G.P. in Kerala is different and equipped to do this. Successful convergence has taken place with Agriculture, Forest and Irrigation Departments. Every G.P. is having some model of convergence. In Wadakkanchery block, 2500 workers joined hands for three weeks to desilt 47 km. of an irrigation canal assuring water to about 3000 hectares of paddy under MGNREGS.
 - It is transparent and issues are resolved in an exemplary manner.
 - Social auditing is a ritual. Now NGOs are being called in to facilitate. We have to wait for the results.
 - The rights based approach has not taken root.
 - The availability of Common Property Resources is very limited. This is limiting the expenditure severely and the scope of the present work is limited to constructing road sides and embankments of streams and other water bodies.
 - Even though the watershed approach and planning has been attempted, the successes are very few. Historically Kerala did not follow the watershed approach. There was lot of watershed planning without much action during the last decade. At the grassroot level, people do not know the word 'watershed'. Breaking this barrier is very important now.
 - In addition to this, there is an acute shortage of people who can visualize programmes on SC/ST/BPL land and have the will to implement the vision into action.
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Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Work and Employment Community in India at se-emp@solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject heading "Re: [se-emp] Query: State-specific Policies and Practices in NREGS and their Impact – Experiences; Examples. Additional Reply."

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See Hindi Version of the [Query](#)
See Hindi Version of the [Summary](#) (available from 21 April 2008)



Decentralization Community



Poverty

Work and Employment Community

Solution Exchange for the Decentralization Community Solution Exchange for the Work and Employment Community Consolidated Reply

For Comments: Inputs to the Committee re-examining NREGA Operational Guidelines

Compiled by Alok Srivastava and Ranu Bhogal, Resource Persons and Tina Mathur
and Arif Hussain, Research Associates

Issue Date: 17 April 2008

From [T.R. Raghunandan](#), Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj,
New Delhi

Posted 21 March 2008

Dear Friends,

The Ministry of Rural Development (Government of India) has constituted a Committee to re-examine the NREGA Operational Guidelines [see [Act](#) (5.29 MB) and [Operational Guidelines](#) (565 KB)]. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has nominated me as its representative on the Committee.

The Committee will look in to the existing guidelines and, taking into account the experiences in implementation from all over the country; suggest any changes that are required for more effective implementation of NREGA. If the members of Solution Exchange have any views on the guidelines, any changes you want made, or any provisions that you insist must be retained, it would be useful to compile them and present them before the committee.

The first meeting of the Committee is on 1st April 2008. I will be grateful for your views before that date to be able to compile the views of members of this network and present them before the Committee. In addition to sending your comments to all the members of this network, you could also send them to me directly at ttraghu@yahoo.com.

It would be invaluable if those of you who are Panchayat representatives, or are in touch with Panchayat representatives, could also send me your views based on what you've seen or experienced in the field.

Responses were received, with thanks, from

1. [Himanshu](#), PRajak, Kharagpur
2. [Abhishek Mendiratta](#), Consultant, New Delhi
3. [Dr. Megha Phansalkar](#), Development Professional, Mumbai
4. [Ashwini Kulkarni](#), Pragati Abhiyan, Nashik
5. [Kris Dev](#), ICT and e-Gov Consultant, Chennai
6. [P.Lakshmanan](#), KILA, Thrissur
7. [B.K Joshi](#), Doon Library and Research Centre, Dehradun
8. [D. Narsimha Reddy](#), Centre for Handloom Information and Policy Advocacy, Prakasam
9. [P.P Balan](#), CRRID, Chandigarh
10. [J.C Sharma](#), Shimla
11. [Rishu Garg](#), ARAVALI, Jaipur
12. [Rajaratnam Abel](#), Independent Consultant, Chennai
13. [Subhransu Tripathy](#), Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India, Gandhinagar
14. [Prakash Bacharwala](#), SIRD, Ahmedabad
15. [K.S Gopal](#), Centre for Environment Concerns, Hyderabad
16. [Ajay Singh Gangwar](#), Government of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal
17. [D. Narendranath](#), PRADAN, New Delhi
18. [Sachin Mardikar](#), Development Consultant, Nagpur
19. [B.P Syam Roy](#), Government of West Bengal, Kolkata
20. [Vinod Vyasulu](#), Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, Bangalore
21. [Tankadhar Parida](#), People Centered Development Council, District Kandhamal, Orissa
22. [Rajeshwar Mishra](#), Center for the Development of Human Initiatives, Jalpaiguri
23. [Pradip Pradhan](#), The Humanity, Bolangir
24. [Pravas Ranjan Mishra](#), CYSD, Bhubaneswar
25. Jos Chathukulam and K. Gireesan, Centre for Rural Management (CRM), Kottayam ([Response 1](#), [Response 2](#))
26. [Vinod Kumar](#), Maithri, Palakkad
27. [Devanshu Chakravarti](#), Intercooperation, Hyderabad
28. [Sumit Jha](#), National Real Estate Development Council, New Delhi
29. [Lolichen P.J](#), The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore
30. [Harshavardhan](#), IT for Social Change, Mumbai (presently in New York)
31. [Neha Sakhuja](#), Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi
32. [P.S Yadav](#), Haryana Institute of Rural Development, Karnal
33. [K. Rajasekharan](#), Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), Thrissur
34. [Om Kumar](#), UPVAN, Lucknow
35. [Viren Lobo](#), Society for Promotion of Wastelands Development, Udaipur
36. [Surojeet Chandan](#), Ranchi
37. [Anjana Dube](#), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, New Delhi
38. [Keya Chatterjee](#), ACTIVE, Ranchi
39. [Banku Bihari Sarkar](#), Grameen Development Services, Lucknow

Further contributions are welcome!

[Summary of Responses](#)
[Comparative Experiences](#)
[Related Resources](#)
[Responses in Full](#)

Summary of Responses

The query poser sought members' feedback and suggestions on the Operational Guidelines of the NREGS in order to present them before a committee constituted by the Ministry of Rural Development for reviewing the guidelines. Members, while welcoming the constitution of operational guidelines review committee as presenting a great opportunity to make amends in guidelines to make NREGS an employment generation programme and simultaneously create durable assets, provided suggestions on various aspects of operations.

Types of works/Shelf of Projects

Respondents emphasized the desirability of identifying the shelf of projects for each village to help create long term assets. These could be given wide publicity through notice boards, local newspapers, and internet and in gram sabha meetings, could cover newer areas and could include (but not restricted to) the following:

- Craft work with raw material provided by government, and expanding the type of works covered to include artisanal work to benefit people not fit for manual labour
- Infrastructure development (such as road links, community halls, sanitation, water storage and supply, construction of schools, dispensaries, check dams on *nallahs* and rivers in the district)
- Priority to drought-proofing works (as has been mentioned in Schedule II) with clarification about the role of state government; discourage the tendency to take up such works for which ready-made technical sanctions are available (like tank deepening)
- Convergence between NREGS, SGSY and other employment generation schemes, and creation of a shelf of projects comprising of SGSY and NREGS works, thereby establishing a relationship between ongoing unskilled wage employment works and NREGS in terms of wages and livelihood opportunities

Planning of Works, Awareness Generation and Capacity Building

Members underlined the importance of taking the proposal through the Gram Panchayat - an elected body - regarding the works to be taken up, the sequence, and the timing etc. These proposals could then be placed before the Gram Sabha. There is also a need to build in greater flexibility in the NREGS to address the seasonality connected with rural employment (i.e. post sowing season till harvesting which is critical from the angle of unskilled workers). Respondents underlined need for bringing clarity on the role of Block Panchayat (not very active in some states), and the possibility of involving CSOs and academic institutions in the preparation of perspective plans, awareness generation and capacity building.

Target Beneficiaries

Members were emphatic regarding the inclusion of elderly, infirm, physically challenged persons and women, who are incapable of manual labour—a strong requirement for participation in the present day NREGS. They pointed out that the scheme leaves out 'skilled' workers in rural areas (e.g. handloom workers, spinning) and proposed that a certain percentage of funds should be earmarked for non-manual labour activities. Some members wanted the scheme to be restricted to landless people, small and marginal farmers.

Operations, Monitoring and Evaluation

Members provided specific suggestions regarding various paras of the Guidelines:

- Para 2.2.2: The required staff to run the scheme at the village level to be appointed by the GP with the Block Panchayat authorized to designate/appoint the Programme Officer.
- Para 2.2.3:
 - A District Level Employment Guarantee Council (DEGC) to be set up by the District Panchayat, to advise it on the implementation of the scheme, and evaluate and monitor it.
 - The District Panchayat to designate the District Programme Coordinator (DPC) who will assist the District Panchayat in its functions and delegate administrative powers to DPC and Programme Officer
 - Only Panchayats to be identified as implementing agencies. In the absence of Panchayats, the task may be assigned to Line Departments/NGOs/ and
 - The District Programme Coordinator, under section 15(4), shall consolidate the proposals of the GPs and the Block Panchayat, and the District Perspective Plan should be put up to the District Planning Committee for approval.
- Penalty for non-implementation of NREGA or for irregularities. The Grievance Redressal and Monitoring System should separate the redressal authority from the authority which is responsible for delivery. Make gram sabha the main forum for grievance redressal
- Provide receipts of applications so that the payment of unemployment allowance does not remain a functionally defunct provision, and provide every needy citizen 100 days of employment (rather than a family getting 100 days of employment)
- Follow the material-labour ratio criterion very strictly, or clarify whether the wage-material ratio should be maintained activity-wise or gram panchayat wise. Network activities from village to national level and use single open source software for introducing transparency and accountability. Train members of Mahila Mandal/SHG Federations/CBOs /Youth/Individuals/ Media persons to access web pages which contain details of the village wise works and related information for better accountability
- Focus on verification of muster rolls – third party to do verification. Remove difficulties in registration and distribution of job cards; check retention of job cards by pradhan/block official, Monitoring by CSOs/NGOs, and provide honorarium and conveyance allowance for members of *Nigrani Committee*
- Social audit as a process needs to be owned by the community – need to take it beyond Gram Sabha and need to provide incentives to Gram Panchayat to encourage them to perform better – e.g. incentives to make a village “*BPL mukt (free)*”

Finally, respondents suggested registration of citizens uniquely using biometric smart cards, and arrangement of daily payment of wages. They mentioned that the guidelines stipulate payments to be either task-based or time-bound. The Guidelines could mention how the wage rate should not be less than the amount defined in the Act and the responsibility/role of the state government to amend its task requirement for seven hours for the workers to claim at least the minimum wages. Members also highlighted the shortage of staff like junior engineers, leads to delays in inspection of works and payments.

Comparative Experiences

Maharashtra

Tanta Mukti Yojana proves merits of incentivization (from [Megha Phalsankar](#), *Development Professional, Mumbai*)

Tanta Mukti Yojana of the Government of Maharashtra is a programme where petty issues and land issues are sorted out amicably in the Gram Panchayats. This incentivisation programme of the Government of Maharashtra has provided decision making powers to gram panchayats, strengthening panchayati raj. Similar campaigns on NREGA could achieve the objective of poverty reduction.

Related Resources

Recommended Documentation

From [K.S. Gopal](#), Centre for Environment Concerns, Hyderabad

Suggestions to make NREGA to work and succeed

Note; by Dr. K. S. Gopal; Centre for Environment Concerns; Hyderabad

Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/res21030801.pdf> (PDF; 27 KB)

Note lists key issues regarding implementation of NREGA and offers suggestions to improve NREGA processes to serve its intent and meet expectations of the people

Capturing Stakeholder Imagination – NREGA

Book; by Dr. K. S. Gopal; Centre for Environment Concerns; Hyderabad; March 2007; Permission Required

Available at: Centre for Environment Concerns, 3-4-142/6, Barkatpura, Hyderabad-500027

Book reviews employment in India, endowments, engagement, empowerment, education and experiences in the context of NREGA.

NREGA Guidelines – Comments on Guidelines Drawing on Experiences from the Bonthi PRI Pilot Project (from [Devanshu Chakravarti](#), Intercooperation, Hyderabad)

Note; by Devanshu Chakravarti; Unpublished

Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/res21030803.pdf> (PDF; 15 KB)

Comments on the NREGA implementation guidelines based on the experience of Bonthi Panchayat, District Bidar, Karnataka

Unlocking Human Capital: Entitlements and Governance- A Case Study- Second Report of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (from [K. Rajasekharan](#), KILA, Thrissur)

Report; Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Government of India; July 2006

Available at <http://arc.gov.in/2ndrep.pdf> (PDF; 2.7 MB)

Report reviews the institutional, administrative and financial management systems of NREGA and makes recommendations to ensure better implementation and results

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme- Some Issues in Implementation (from [Anjana Dube](#), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, New Delhi)

Paper; by Anjana Dube; Unpublished; 2006

Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/res21030804.pdf> (PDF; 124 KB)

Reviews the issues in National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme including funding issues, benefits and transaction costs involved

How is NREGA doing?-(200 districts, 2006-7) (from [Arif Hussain](#), Research Associate)

PowerPoint Presentation; by Jean Drèze and Christian Oldiges

Available at www.righttofoodindia.org/data/dreze-oldiges07how-is-nrega-doing.ppt (PPT; 340 KB)

Presentation on NREGA implementation; takes into account the overall implementation status as well as survey conducted in Jharkhand during May-June, 2007

(From [Tina Mathur](#), Research Associate)

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005

<http://nrega.nic.in/rajaswa.pdf> (Size: 5.29 MB)

The Act provides for enhancement of livelihood security of the households in rural areas by providing 100 days guaranteed employment in every financial year

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)

Presentation; Ministry of Rural Development; Government of India; New Delhi; 6 July 2006

Available at <http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/233770/Sharma.pdf> (PDF Size: 113 KB)

Highlights the legal design of NREGA- the rationale, critical issues in designing and implementing the scheme, including a range of labour intensive activities

Recommended Organizations and Programmes

Hariyali Programme, New Delhi (from [P.S Yadav](#), Haryana Institute of Rural Development, Karnal)

Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development, NBO Building, Nirman Bhavan, New Delhi; Tel: 91-11-23062460; jswd@nic.in

Provides for the involvement of panchayats in watershed, wasteland and desert development programmes across India

Recommended Portals and Information Bases

Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, New Delhi (from [Sachin Mardikar](#), Development Consultant, Nagpur)

<http://nrega.nic.in/>

An elaborate website covering various aspects of the Act and state schemes formulated under the act. Also provides status of program implementation under NREGA

CSE India, Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi (from [Neha Sakhuja](#), Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi)

<http://cseindia.org/>; Contact: Richard Mahapatra; Tel: +91-11-29955124/29956110/29956399; richard@cseindia.org

Website of Centre for Science and Environment, provides information on NREGA through its recommendations based on a study spread over 12 districts across nine states

Recommended Upcoming Events

Workshop on NREGA, India International Centre, Lodi Estate, New Delhi, 5-6 May, 2008 (from [K. S. Gopal](#), Centre for Environment Concerns, Hyderabad) Information available at

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/res21030802.pdf>; Contact Dr. K. S. Gopal; cechyd@eth.net

Workshop will bring together officials, academicians, policy makers, NREGA council members and activists to discuss the future direction of NREGA

Related Consolidated Replies

Afforestation Works under NREGA, from Rishu GARG, ARAVALI, Jaipur (Experiences; Examples). Decentralization Community and the Work and Employment Community, Issued 28 December 2007. Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/cr-se-decn-28120701.pdf> (PDF; 116 KB)

Seeks experiences and examples on undertaking afforestation works through NREGA and mechanisms for management of natural assets created in the manner.

Use of ICT for NREGP Implementation, from Mandakini Devasher, New Delhi, (Examples). Work and Employment Community and ICTD Community Issued 30 May 2007. Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/cr-se-emp-ictd-12050701.pdf> (PDF; 271 KB)

Provides examples of use of ICT in implementation of different government programs from point of view of potential applicability to NREGP, including tools to support NREGP

NREGA Works for Natural Resource Management, from Ramit Basu, United Nations Development Programme, New Delhi (Experiences). Work and Employment Community Issued 24 April 2007. Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/cr-se-emp-02050701.pdf>, (PDF ; 111 KB)

Provides examples of initiatives improving livelihoods through integrated Natural Resource Management and effective planning of works and durable assets under NREGP

Handbook on Social Audit of NREGS by Panchayats, from Anurag Mishra, UPVAN, Lucknow (Experiences; Examples). Decentralization Community and Work and Employment Community Issued 13 February 2007. Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/cr-se-decn-07021301.pdf> (PDF; 224 KB)

Provides information on important resource material, mechanisms and modalities employed for incorporation in a Handbook on Social Audit of NREGA.

Implementation of NREGS in Panchayats, from Maithri, Palakkad (Experiences, Examples). Decentralization Community, Work and Employment Community Issued 18 January 2007. Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/cr-se-decn-18010701.pdf> (PDF; 274 KB)

Seeks experiences regarding simplification of measurement of technical work, conducting of social audit and management of labour banks by panchayats

Participation of Women in NREGP Works, from Ratna M. Sudarshan, ISST, New Delhi (Experiences). Work and Employment Community and Gender Community Issued 24 October 2006. Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/cr-se-emp-gen-24100601.pdf> (PDF; 180 KB)

Gives member experiences on women's worksite issues, their involvement in planning and discusses the extent of women's participation under the NREGA

NREGA vigilance by local groups, from Amitabh Mukhopadhyay, Lok Sabha Secretariat and from Social Watch, New Delhi (Advice). Decentralization Community, Work and Employment Community Issued 03 April 2006. Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/cr-se-decn-31030601.pdf> (PDF; 265 KB)

Advice on the role of alternate vigilance/reporting mechanisms, tools and methods for vigilance; key indicators to monitor implementation of Employment Guarantee Schemes

NREGA training for different stakeholders, from Balvantsinh Chawda, State Institute of Rural Development, Ahmedabad (Advice; Examples). Work and Employment Community

Issued 18 January 2006. Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/cr-se-emp-18010601.pdf> (PDF;153 KB)

Advice on components for the design of training modules for the different stakeholders involved in the implementation of NREGA.

Responses in Full

Himanshu, PRajak, Kharagpur

I think that this scheme can be a good way for getting craft-work done on the raw material provided by the government. This will help to keep the crafts alive, eliminate the middleman, and the produce will be a tangible proof of the work that has been done. This will lead to mass production of crafts, which can be exported. This can be worked to be a profitable and sustainable movement only if governance is good.

Sadly, i think we all are unanimous that we have seen this scheme fail miserably in areas where governance has not been good. If this scheme is of utmost importance as it is portrayed, then the governance has to be absolutely world class to ensure that the scheme succeeds.

This is a scheme which has immense potential. Sustainability should be made a major objective. Crafts and agri processing seem to be nice options. In addition, funding should not only be devoted to hard cash given out but also to infrastructure which creates jobs as the effects will then be long lasting.

Abhishek Mendiratta, Consultant, New Delhi

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), launched two years ago in 200 districts, is going through a critical learning phase. During this period there are bound to be many procedural problems, all the more so as the NREGA guidelines are very exacting. This does not detract from the fundamentally positive nature of this initiative, or from the possibility of making it a success.

The question remains whether NREGA funds actually reach the poor. NREGA guidelines should focus on verification and methodology of verification of muster rolls. A third party agency should be appointed for verification of muster rolls. Peer group audit and social audit are the good auditing strategies. Audit frequency should be increased and audit should be complemented with social research.

Dr. Megha Phansalkar, Development Professional, Mumbai

The sole objective of the NREGA is to improve the living of the poor rural households by providing them gainful employment for at least 100 days.

With the successful implementation of Clean Village Competition (Govt. of Maharashtra) and Nirmal Gram Puraskar (Govt. of India), it has been proved beyond doubt that incentivisation to Gram Panchayat is a better policy for sustainable development. On similar lines, *Tanta Mukti Yojana* has been launched by Govt. of Maharashtra, where petty issues, land issues are sorted amicably in the Gram Panchayats. Barring a few exceptions, it can be admitted that these campaigns have strengthened the 72nd amendment of decentralization by providing decision making powers to the Gram Panchayats.

Learning from the same experience -- would it not be could to explore a new campaign with the objective that NREGA has to achieve ..." *BPL mukt Gaon* ".

The idea would be to give an open invitation to Gram Panchayat to ensure that not a single family remains BPL in the village. This would call for the village to come together and think how they could provide sustainable employment to the BPL families, either on village fields, through SHGs, in activities related to watershed development , through skill building, in rural Activities or whatever the village feel in context to the natural resource and raw material available in the vicinity .

This will automatically ensure that the funds of other development schemes would reach right people , the community will monitor the BPL households for ensuring that the village gets the title of " BPL Mukh Gaon " and the related prize and other benefits after performance . This title can be given every year or after two years with a prize money for utilizing the amount for village development. Villages which don't have BPL households can also be provide priority on other government projects.

In NREGA, today we struggle for monitoring the funds, ensuring right people get employment and related things. When this would be left to the Gram Panchayat to decide -- many would come with innovative ideas of making their village BPL free. Is it not high time that we get rid of the word **BPL** and take care of the needs of these households. Not all the states are progressive, hence this scheme can be floated as an option for the villages to chose between NREGA or "*BPL mukt Gaon*"-- let this process also be demand driven -- am sure a lot of learning can be generated to provide a conclusive end to NREGA

Ashwini Kulkarni, Pragati Abhiyan, Nashik

(This is an unpublished article on this subject by me)

Experience of NREGA implementation and the issue of Governance:

It is more than two years that NREGA started; initially in some parts of the country and now poised to be implemented across the entire rural India. Probably, this is the most talked about rural poverty program especially in such a short span of its existence. Such enthusiasm from Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and media is not common to other programs.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is the flagship program of the UPA Government. It is not just another Scheme since it is embedded in law. It has the potential to trigger development in the most backward areas through creation of much needed infrastructure and by providing productive employment to the poorest and the most vulnerable.

Many CSOs and Media have taken up systematic studies as part of monitoring of the program. There have been regular articles, reportage and columns in the state and national and state dailies .However much of these reports sound more like fault finding exercises rather than a monitoring exercise. This is not to say that there is no need to do fault finding or that there are no faults. But there is a rush to show that there are many problems.

Of course, there are many problems. There are problems which could be common to all the states and there are problems particular to a state or a region.

This is a different kind of a program. It is an Act. Enforcement of this Act is good implementation. The usual rural development machinery so far has been into different kind of programs and the

same system is gearing up to take up this programs. The administrative, implementation and other systems and mechanisms are not yet entirely in place.

Many serious lapses in enforcement of this Act have come under the scrutiny of the CSOs and the media. Difficulties encountered by the laborer in getting registered, getting job card, putting demand, getting work, getting timely and correct payments, getting correct information about the facilities and getting facilities are being sighted. The problems have also been traced, to some extent to under utilization of funds, non-existence of appropriate personnel and systems in place and such. But even a momentary reflection makes us realize the intrinsic association of these issues with any rural development program of the Government. The issues in the implementation of NREGA are highlighted as it is considered the most ambitious and much debated program of the UPA government for the poorest.

It is important that programs meant for the disadvantaged, the marginalized, the poor be monitored by CSO. Monitoring Reports with advocacy for change can generate pressure for corrective measures. But this depends on the initiative of the CSO. CSOs with required resources and commitment can make NREGA a great success. This is very well demonstrated but expecting the presence of such CSOs on the entire rural landscape is a absurd.

Drawing from the experience of the Right to Information Act (RTI) would be insightful here. Both these acts came into existence nearly at the same time. But enforcement of RTI has proved to be quite successful. Citizens from different sections of the society are using this vital instrument for transparency with increasing effectiveness. This empowerment of the ordinary citizens against the mighty Indian bureaucracy is the result of an effective grievance redressal mechanism built in the RTI. Refusal to provide the information sought or even delay penalizes the concerned official.

But nobody is penalized for the non implementation of the NREGA or the irregularities in it.. What is offered instead is an unemployment allowance and Social Audit respectively, and to get this ridiculously low amount poor have to struggle through a complicated process of complaining to the higher authority. So the poor cannot afford to spend their time and energy to get this compensation. The compensation is in a sense acceptance by the state that the right to work was denied but personnel responsible for this denial are not penalized at all. And with Social Audit, it is evident that it has been primarily taken up with initiative of CSOs only. So this has not proved to be useful where the CSOs are not active, and in absence of CSOs, if we assume (an absurd assumption indeed) for the sake of argument that the poor go through the complicated and painstaking process of putting in complaints, their efforts don't make any effect on the delivery mechanism. The reason being, the individuals concerned are untouched by the redressal mechanism at all. Nobody is penalized. RTI is effective because the responsibility and penalty of the concerned officials are clearly mentioned. The guilty of non-implementation is not on the system in general. Can't we have a simple redressal mechanism to address the non-compliance of the NREGA? If we can do it for RTI, why not here where the aggrieved party is by definition vulnerable.

The Grievance Redressal and Monitoring System of the NREGA has an absurd foundation. Complaint against the non-implementation of the act is made to the very delivery system which is responsible for its implementation. So the very system which has denied the right to work is now expected to make ruling against itself! This does not fit into the principle of natural justice.

Aren't we aware of the hand in gloves interests at work in such cases? The complaints received against one's subordinates sometimes, even get used to settle personal vendetta. Isn't it mockery of the principle of right to work? The redressal system by definition has to be an independent body. Or else it defies the logic of redressal. Thus in the present system of NREGA the redressal system is completely absent.

NREGA has elegantly combined the principles of growth and concern for equity in a right based approach. This is the humane face of liberal economic policy. We need to make it work. Merely criticizing NREGA for its lack of affectivity without addressing the vital issue of redressal mechanism would be like throwing baby with the bathwater. We should not let it happen if we care a fig for the rural poor.

[Kris Dev](#), ICT and e-Gov Consultant, Chennai

It is a well-known fact that NREGA benefits a few who have the connections with the *Mukhia* [headman] and officials and denies benefits to the majority who do not have connections.

Many observations such as individual not registered, job card not issued, works not assigned despite request from citizens as approval not received, favouritism in job allotment, *Mukhia* retaining all job cards and making entries at will and pleasure, jobs not having true value to community to create long term assets, works not being assessed in time, paying less than what is entitled, etc. are noticed.

To make NREGA truly meaningful to the rural poor and marginalized, the following actions are recommended:

1. Every citizen must be registered uniquely using their biometric and biometric smart card cum debit card linked to a money account in a post office or bank issued, and should be utilisable as a debit card in any kirana shop.
2. Every citizen must be entitled to 100 days work instead of a family (which is not clearly definable and enforceable).
3. Various shelves of works to be identified in every village that can create assets of long term value to the community for sustained living, This must be widely communicated thro' the net, noticeboards, local newspapers and thro' gram sabha meetings.
4. Citizens to be assigned jobs irrespective of if they want or not. This must be widely communicated thro' the net, notice boards, local newspapers and thro' gram sabha meetings. It is up to each citizen to take up the work or not.
5. Citizens to be encouraged to come and work similar to the Shramdhan practised by WOTR, Ahmednagar. The gram sabha to be the main forum for communication and grievance redressal.
6. A separate e-Governance fund of Rs. 20,000 crores (Rs. 2 lakhs per village to cover 6,50,000 villages and balance for servers, networking and implementation) under NeGP, to be made available per year for networking all NREGP activities from the village to national level and a single open source software utilized for introducing transparency and accountability to track all activities by officials and citizens.
7. Every village gram sabha to have 3 sets of solar powered laptops, battery backup, webcams, standalone biometric devices, card readers, printers, etc.
8. Single point responsibility to be fixed at the national, state, district, block and village level for successful implementation of NREGP.
9. Independent local NGOs to be appointed to support NREGP implementation and make transparent all activities, for a reasonable fee.
10. Independent outside NGOs from other states to be appointed to conduct social audit on NREGP implementation and make public their report for a reasonable fee for response by citizens and officials.
12. Use of machinery should be strictly prohibited to encourage greater employment opportunities. Materials locally available at no cost to be used for development work.
13. Development of community infrastructure facility such as road links, public halls, sanitation, water storage and supply, drainage works, construction of schools, dispensaries, etc. to be encouraged.

14. Failures and grievances under NREGP to be tried by special adjudicators and compensation settled within 30 days.

These are only a few suggestions and many more can be added to the list.

P.Lakshmanan, KILA, Thrissur

I am a social activist associated with decentralized governance in Kerala since 1997. I got the opportunity to work with local governments at grassroots level and also as a trainer at state level. Ever since decentralization started in Kerala I have been talking and teaching a lot about social audit, but the idea always remained utopian. Last February I witnessed a Social audit Gramasabha in Vellamunda Gramapanchayat in Wayanad district of Kerala. It was almost a dream come true. Now I am convinced about the efficacy of social audit as a tool to ensure transparency and root out corruption in local governance. Certain crucial issues regarding the implementation of NREGS emerged in the social audit. Some of them are:

1. The question of equal wages for men and women. Theoretically very sound, but how far is it practical. The daily wage of a man in the district is between Rs.150 and 200 whereas for women it is Rs. 70 to 100. That accounts for the higher participation of women in the scheme.

The minimum wage fixed is Rs125. If other employment is available men will not turn up for NREGS work. This is going to be a problem when the initial enthusiasm generated by the campaign mode gets exhausted.

Men may not turn up for NREGS work.

2. The Scheduled Tribes (STs) of the district want daily payment of wage and they cannot and will not wait a week for the wages. In the present system wage earners have to wait at least a week for the wage to get credited in their bank account. The system of paying through bank account is very effective and has helped to reduce corruption. A way has to be found to give on-the-spot payment to STs; otherwise they will not be benefited by the scheme.

3. So far, the Contractors' lobby and the nexus between local political leadership and the contractors have not influenced the implementation of the scheme. But how long can the panchayat and the implementing machinery resist their pressure? If the present social audit system continues there is no doubt that the pressure can be checked. But considering the experience of the Beneficiary Committee system in implementing the development projects of panchayat in Kerala, during the 9 Five-Year Plan, I have apprehensions about the continuation of the present system.

4. The question of labour - material proportion and the selection of works to be implemented under the scheme. At present only works suggested by the Gramasabha - that too watershed - based development projects - are taken up and the material content is kept minimum. But there is strong pressure to do away with such restrictions by lobbies having vested interests. Unless the present norms are strictly followed there is a possibility of manipulation in every stage of the scheme. The ultimate result will be the NREGS following the fate of other centrally sponsored schemes implemented in the state before.

5. The Community Development Society, the apex body of the Women Self Help Groups of the panchayat helps in the implementation of the scheme in the panchayat. In Wayanad the CDS is performing commendably. In the absence of such an organization an alternative has to be found in other states. One reason for the success of the scheme in Wayanad is the active intervention of the ADS i.e. ward level organization of CDS. In the case of other states one viable substitute is an NGO.

If found useful I can give more information and suggestions.

B.K. Joshi, Doon Library and Research Centre, Dehradun

This is in response to Mr. Raghunandan's request for suggestions for revising the Operational Guidelines for NREGA.

A programme like NREGA assumes that the poor are exclusively those who engage in manual labour and "employment" or "work" means physical labour, which is all that the the poor are capable of doing or perhaps should be doing. While this may be true of a vast majority of cases, it certainly leaves out of its purview a number of people in who are poor, have no means of sustenance and yet are incapable of putting in manual labour: the elderly, infirm, women especially single women heads of households, people with disability etc. Many of them may be people with special skills and a certain level of education. In order to include such poor people within the scheme the Operational Guidelines should make provision for earmarking a certain percentage of funds for supporting non-manual labour activities.

One of the criticisms leveled against nationally formulated programmes and guidelines is their "one size fits all" approach, which completely overlooks the special circumstances and problems of a State. Perhaps it may be worthwhile to experiment by earmarking 20 percent of the funds under NORIEGA for non-manual activities to be decided by each State opting for the scheme. Release of these funds could be made contingent on the approval of the scheme formulated by a State in this regard by a committee appointed for this purpose by the Ministry of Rural Development. In fact, if this experiment is successful it could also be extended to the main scheme by stages.

Incidentally, some years back I was involved as a consultant in preparing such a scheme called "Food for Work for Human and Social Capital Formulation" for utilization of SGRY funds in Uttarakhand at the behest of the World Food Program. The scheme had the support of the State Government, but it did not make any headway.

D. Narsimha Reddy, Centre for Handloom Information and Policy Advocacy, Prakasam

For long, I was puzzled by the name NREGA. There is the word 'rural' in the name, but it excludes many rural activities, and includes other activities which are related to urban or urban-kind of development - roads, etc. It beats me to see the exclusion of 'skilled' rural people whose employment is also important. Handloom sector, next to agriculture, and umbilically linked to agriculture, is completely missing. One is not sure why.

Secondly, most of the works listed require hard labour. That means, NREGA excludes people who cannot do hard labour, and yet who need employment, especially women. If one looks at the NREGA, or even EGA experience, NREGA participants would want less taxing work. Old, infirm, differently abled, women and many others presently cannot get the benefit of NREGA. The choice seems to be hard work or no work.

In this scenario, we feel that inclusion of semi-skilled or skilled works, which enable people to do work, but not necessarily hard labour under the sun , would help. Gandhi talked about integration of rural works. Spinning is one such activity, which helps people to work in non-agricultural seasons. There are other activities, before weaving, and after weaving. Even simple weaving can also help.

My suggestion is to expand the type of works in the NREGA to include artisanal work, so as to benefit people who do not have physical stamina to participate in NREGA activities.

P.P Balan, CRRID, Chandigarh

The worst thing that has been happening in NREGA is the tendency on the part of the departments to outsource the scheme beginning from plan preparation to social audit. Even technically competent organizations are left out of the fray. One may not wonder seeing such advertisements in the dailies. In such cases people are forced to accept action plans prepared by the “outsiders” defaming the very spirit of the scheme. Such tendency should be nipped in the bud itself. Wherever elected representatives are keen to implement the NREGA, they are fed with the “dangers” ahead. Still people are not aware of their entitlement under the Act. Emphasis on capacity building is no doubt the pre-requisite of its success. There must be conscious efforts for building a cadre of enlightened professionals at the Gram Panchayat level. Absence of proper grievance redressal mechanisms badly affects the scheme, as there are a large number of complaints to be addressed. Setting up of cost-effective institutions like Ombudsman for each district can be thought of. An online corrective mechanism of Performance Audit can help the local governments put the scheme in proper order. If this is done at regular interval, the report can be placed before the Gram Sabha and the social audit team.

J.C Sharma, Shimla

I was looking at the implementation aspects of the scheme and the kind of schemes that were put in to execution in the rural areas. Of course, this is one of the best programmes designed by the government. But many links and loose ends are there if one sees the actual targeted group of stake holders that have been covered. From my experience, I can say that due to over emphasis on including the targeted groups, even non eligible people have been given employment under NREGA. I was told that in some cases, even retired persons have been engaged for employment, I suppose such cases should not be there under the scheme. There are also instances where payments to the workers have not been released on time. Therefore, intensive monitoring is the need of the time. I agree that many other works should be included under NREGA so that genuinely needy people get benefit for longer period.

Rishu Garg, ARAVALI, Jaipur

I think it is a great opportunity to make amends in guidelines to make NREGA an employment generation program and create durable assets, as well. Some of the issues that I would be raising here have already been discussed through this community earlier in response to a query on afforestation in NREGA. Schedule II defines very categorically, activities and their priorities and Drought proofing -afforestation and tree plantation-is ranked two on priority list. But despite this there has hardly been any significant investment into it. Circulars from the Ministry have time and again (three such correspondence have been quoted in response to NREGA afforestation query) pointed to the states to give priority to drought proofing. Cost of maintenance such as keeping a chowkidaar would also be covered besides raising nurseries. The Act also states that “the state council shall prepare a list of preferred works for different areas based on their ability to create durable assets”. But only the state government of Kerala (as per responses on the query) has so far come up with instructions on how drought proofing activities should be taken up under NREGA. **The guidelines should be clearer on the role of the state government in this regard.**

In Rajasthan the focus is on water conservation. The following figures present the status in Rajasthan in the financial year 2007-08 (Status as on 4th March'2008; Source: Website of NREGA). The highest percentage of water conservation works as against total works is 92.65 percent for Barmer. Whereas, the corresponding figures for Jalore, Karuali, Dungarpur, Jhalawar, Chittorgarh and Sirohi, are 87.62, 87.52, 85.53, 81.16, 82.05 and 80.76 respectively. The figures for Udaipur were not available.

Each of the districts has joined the bandwagon it appears for undertaking water conservation activities. Whether or not it is the requirement of the household (in case of tanka for example in Barmer) or of the village in case of village pond, is a different question altogether. Readymade technical sanctions are available only for tankas and road repair in one of the districts and therefore most of the proposals are for them. The onus of increasing activities (as mentioned in the 2005 guidelines) and sticking to the defined activities (at the same time) should rest entirely with the state and district administration respectively. **The role of the state and district administration in this regard should be more proactive and therefore the new guidelines could suggest a modus operandi for this.** The veneer most of the times are that the choice of the activities is as decided by Gram Sabhas while preparing village plans. However, the reality is obvious to one and all. Therefore, till a more informed decision and participation could be ensured at the GP in preparation of village plans, perspective plans should/could guide choice of activities and availability of technical sanctions (pun intended). Guidelines (2005) do provide a few points on this but it's not adequate. Guidelines for preparation of perspective plans were issued by the Ministry some time back but the state governments have hardly made concrete steps towards such planning (if I may judge). Whether or not the guidelines for perspective plan are adequate (both qualitative and quantitatively) or not is again a different question altogether. And more important than that is the question of selection of agency for preparation of perspective plan. The guidelines should come out very clearly on this. As most of the implementation under NREGA is done by the district administration (intermediately) and Secretary of the GP also being part of the system, **there is need to involve civil society and academic institutions in a more constructive way. Perspective plan could be one such area.** The amended guidelines should state this very categorically.

Another issue is that people are not provided receipts of applications for work and this is the main reason why the provision of un-employment allowance is functionally a defunct provision. I am sure, **the guidelines need to tighten the noose around the PO and Sarpanch for acceptance and issuing of receipt of application of work.** At the same time provisions that act as deterrent to this should be taken away, at least for some time till people are more aware of their rights under NREGA. To support my argument, I would like to present latest figures from NREGA web site. Chittorgarh is the only district which has not been able to provide employment against demand. Its achievement was 99.4% and corresponding figures for all other 11 districts of the state were 100. It is so because applications were not accepted (based on experiences shared by some organisations) and there were also reports from Chittorgarh that people were even beaten up while they pushed for applying for work.

The guidelines, 2005 clearly defines that payment of wages should be made either on task basis or should be time bound, not both. However, in contrast it is both time- bound and also task based. Yet another related issue is whether it is minimum wage or maximum wage. Sarpanch and Secretary have inhibitions regarding this and at times when more work has been done payment of wage hardly exceeds minimum wage. Even after completion of task the labourer is not allowed to leave the site and the reason offered is that, because if the person has reported for work and if an accident occurs it would be difficult to provide for claims under NREGA. Changes in guidelines could include provisions to strengthen these provisions further.

We also need to look into the reasons as to why such a work opportunity is not prioritised by the people and is only taken as stop-gap or for non-migrating members or old aged members of the household. The following figures would highlight the severity of issue in the state of Rajasthan. Only 2.2 percent of the families completed 100 days against employment provided. Corresponding figures for other districts in the state are Sawaimadhopur (5.3), Tonk (9.3), Sirohi (9.7), Barmer (9.4), Banswara (10.8), Jaisalmer (11.1), Karuali (21.3), Jalore (24.6), and Jhalawar (32.8) and for Dungarpur is 58.2. This is partly because of low wages (minimum wage was 73 and wages varied between 40 and 50) and partly because of inadequate planning and less involvement of people. The most insecure are the ones to migrate first and therefore do not get benefitted. **The guidelines should therefore mention how the wage per day should not be less than 60 (as defined in the act) and role of the state to rectify/amend its tasks requirement for seven hours to claim at least the minimum wages. Furthermore, there is desperate need to make it a peoples program.** Rural people still think of it as yet another drought relief programs-it is time now for NREGA to be owned up by the people. Role of civil society that has been working in the region on issues around livelihoods could be given the responsibility for awareness generation and capacity building. **Provisions in the amended guidelines should have scope for such roles for non-government organisations.**

It would not be possible for members of the nigrani committee to honestly do the tasks assigned. Therefore, contingency funds shall include honorarium/conveyance allowance etc For example in a district like Barmer/Jaiselmer/Banswara etc settlements are not concentrated but are spread over a large area (in GP) and for members of nigrani samiti would require use of two-wheelers. Provision for such expenses should be made in the guidelines.

Another issue that should be looked into is 60:40 wage and material ratio. Amended guidelines should provide for how it could be better planned. Whether the ratio has to be maintained activity wise or GP wise needs to be clarified. Perspective plans of the district, in my opinion, could solve the riddle. **Amended guidelines could provide for such provisions in the perspective plans.** Another issue to be pondered upon is whether **skilled labour is part of material cost and that payment for crèche and water arrangements shall be made from an altogether different fund or from material cost.** So that it is not compensated from wages.

Lastly, there could also be provision for **convergence** to meet the material ratio so that more and most of the funds under NREGA are utilised for unskilled labour work.

Rajaratnam Abel, Independent Consultant, Chennai

Thanks for the opportunity to share my experience on NREGA. Just today I visited some villagers and asked them about the working of this scheme. The immediate response was that it works in the villages. Then they started adding some of caveats. In some villages there is a muster roll of people who do not work but get some money. Those who work a full day do not get the full money. Since the money they get is better than what they would have otherwise got in the village they keep quiet. In one village I was informed the president gets JCBs to do the work quickly and gives only a part of the money to the beneficiaries. A good scheme is being misused by few vested interests. Better monitoring and evaluation systems are needed to check this type of malpractice.

[Subhransu Tripathy](#), Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India, Gandhinagar

Let me share some practical problems, which I found to be quite important from the point view of implementation. Job cards are issued to many individuals belonging to high class families and their connection with PRI functionaries has helped them to obtain the cards. The card is obtained not for being engaged with the works undertaken under NREGS, but just to claim unemployment allowances. Shortage of man-days is very well managed for keeping these job card holders out of employment provision and with sole intention of claiming unemployment allowances their applications are processed carefully.

[Prakash Bacharwala](#), SIRD, Ahmedabad

The types of works suggested by [D. Narsimha Reddy](#) falls under self employment, which are already there under schemes like SGSY. While as far NREGA is concerned it is related with wage employment. Skilled jobs should be linked with self employment and unskilled with wage employment.

I fully agree with the view "NREGA excludes people who cannot do hard labour". If God has not given strength then what can be done? One is poor so he/she can't have nutritious food so he/she is not capable to do hard work and he/she cannot get work under NREGA so he/she will remain like that.

[K.S. Gopal](#), Centre for Environment Concerns, Hyderabad

The Centre for Environment Concerns, in association with select voluntary organizations is assisting officials in select districts in implementing the NREGA. This is facilitated by a voluntary work and offer of services with the Department of Rural Development, Govt. of AP. The motivation for over two hundred activists being engaged in a voluntary capacity in reaching NREGA is because of our firm collective belief on its value and potential to address the immense and chronic problems facing the poor in drought prone and agriculturally backward areas. We have a vibrant civil society initiative - Upadhi Hami Hakku Amalu Committee involving a wide range of academics, activists and campaigners in human rights and entitlements of workers, dalits and women and by campaigning and monitoring NREGA in our state.

We place key issues and our suggestions to tackle help NREGA serve its intent and meet expectations of the people. Members may read them in my Note on '[Suggestions to make NREGA work and Succeed](#)'

We will be pleased to provide further information detailing our proposals and place our field experience for its learning value in order to make NREGA serve its intent. I have also authored a book titled "Capturing Stakeholder Imagination – NREGA" which was originally published in English but now available in Telugu while the Hindi version is under production. You can obtain copies of the same by writing to us. Also on 5th and 6th May 2008 a two day workshop on NREGA is being organized by some of us at the India International Centre, New Delhi bringing together officials, academics, policy makers, NREGA council members and activists and members are welcome to provide the inputs. The tentative schedule and purpose of various sessions may be viewed [here](#). On 4th May the activists will meet to share experience and plan networking to deepen practice.

[Ajay Singh Gangwar](#), Government of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal

In my opinion this scheme in field is utterly failed to provide jobs to the needy people. It is very vague to say that any body who wants to do unskilled work can ask for job and government will provide maximum 100 days job to him. In the previous scheme SGRY also the mandate was to provide jobs to people not as per right but as per demand depending on available budget. In new

scheme only positive is this that now getting 100days job is your right and money is not scarce. But still we are not in a position to say that no one will migrate from rural area in search of job without doing 100days job in his Panchayat .After spending cores of rupees migration pattern is the same, there is no visible change. This is only due to the fact that we do not target our needy families. First we must restrict this programme only for landless people, small and marginal farmers and family on the BPL list. If we make these provisions then we can claim and will monitor among these targeted families how many get jobs of 100 days.

Secondly, all BPL or SC/ST families who have some land should get wells and land improvement works should be done on their lands without fail. All connecting roads should be taken for road side plantation programmes so that we can see improvement in rural area. Thirdly, under this scheme all small nalas or rivers of districts should be checked by a series of check dams. Some thrust area of work should be taken in each district and then progress should be placed before people- that we have achieved this during particular year. Today there is too much leverage and corrupt system is spending a lot of money without any achievements. Can we say that in a district where this program is launched migration is reduced? Definitely no.

In my opinion first families should be targeted and marked and then types of works should be chosen which help in reducing poverty in future in a particular area. Then this yojana can make an impression in the hearts of people. After spending crores of rupees people are migrating in search of unskilled work .After constructing worthless structures if we are not able to empower the people, tax payers will feel themselves cheated.

D. Narendranath, PRADAN, New Delhi

The contributions have shown up some of the issues in NREGA which had been anticipated and safeguards built in, but our system being such, the vested interests always find ways of bypassing the law. In case of the payments, there is a provision for the payments to be made into the bank accounts of the workers, at least then they cannot be paid what is less than stated. Better monitoring is required to restrict mal practices but the issue is who will monitor?

This is where serious civil society involvement is necessary, to ensure that the processes are transparent, job cards are issued only to the needy, and the works that are taken up are of good quality and are implemented properly. The implementers need to proactively involve NGOs and build in facilitation costs into the programme. We experience that, from our experience in West Bengal, even well-intentioned Panchayats face a dearth of good ideas for generating wage employment on a continual basis. The Panchayat office bearers and officials also need help in generating ideas and preparing good quality plans for NREGS implementation. The Block/district administration should proactively look for NGOs, and involve them and also pay for those services.

A major issue that I think is the way we look at the scheme. NREGS works are being looked at as a wage labour generating activity. What this does not quite capture is the idea of livelihood generation; wage employment is only one way of livelihood generation. Wage employment generation by the State ad infinitum is not the best of way of planning for promoting livelihoods. What we need is a livelihood focus in NREGA and creation of livelihood opportunities in the local economy using NREGA funds. NREGA projects should not merely generate wages but should build livelihood assets for the community as well as the individual families that will make them self reliant over the short to medium term rather than be dependent on State doles year after year.

There are large pockets in the country especially in the dense poverty pockets such as Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh etc where the cause of poverty is not lack of

natural resources but the lack of proper management and development of these resources. There is tremendous scope for the same to be developed by utilizing the NREGS resources so that the poor families who otherwise are dependent on wages take up agriculture more seriously. The land and water resources owned and accessed by these poor families will need to be treated and developed, irrespective of whether they are in common property resources or private property. But again, pulling these families back to agriculture would need much more than just treating their natural resources. It would need bringing in new technologies, creating market linkages and extensive capacity building. These require financial resources that go beyond the purview of the NREGA. These are resources that can be mobilized from other schemes such as SGSY.

Thus the argument is that we need to judiciously and deliberately plan for convergence between NREGA and SGSY and other schemes. What this will require is to develop an integrated development plan for a given geographical area, where the natural resource development would be achieved through NREGS funds. The utilization of these assets and the transformation of the families to producers and self employed using these assets will be achieved through SGSY. Many a time this may not be just one Panchayat. It could be a Block or a large cluster of villages, which share some common resource characteristics, thus offer similar livelihood opportunities to a large number of poor families. Then the resources would be allocated across the various schemes, which would complement each other, all contributing to the achievement of a common vision and plan.

The scenario today where the different schemes are being conceptualized by different departments, without much of integration with each other, is not a healthy scene. It divides energies, and may even work at cross purposes. Convergence means coming together, planning and implementing together but if done can lead to building on each others' ideas and achieving synergy

Concrete suggestions – Convergence of NREGA and SGSY around a comprehensive development plan for a Block/a given geographical area; creating a shelf of projects to be divided between SGSY and NREGA and generating livelihoods for a large number of poor families putting them on a path to self employment; involvement of NGOs/facilitators to work with the NREGA implementing machinery and the village community.

Sachin Mardikar, Development Consultant, Nagpur

One of the most fascinating aspects of the scheme has been the use of Information Technology. The website www.nrega.nic.in contains a wealth of data that we could use in conjunction with the RTI provisions to question, confirm what is being reported under NREGA.

Scanning the website one is able to generate gram Panchayat wise details of work allocated/cards filled etc. For example there is one provision where one can simply enter her/his job card number to know the status <http://nrega.nic.in/workers%5Cwrkinfo.asp> .There are similarly many web pages which one can use to know what's happening in ones own village/Panchayat/block or state.

While there will always be issues related to corruption, one has to go beyond. One of the ways in which the government or the civil society can contribute to further strengthen NREGA is to train Mahila Mandals/SHG Federations/ CBOs/Youths/Individuals/Press etc on how to access these web pages at a local internet café to know about the work that is being proposed and completed in their villages.

One does not need an externally driven "project" to do this. What is needed is an effort to seriously engage in community education and empowerment, for once that happens they can ask the right questions.

B.P Syam Roy, Government of West Bengal, Kolkata

The statutory NREGP has come to stay in our country as the flagship programme for rural employment. The following aspects may be given due consideration:

- i) Seasonality factor connected with rural employment: post-sowing season till harvesting (August end – early November) is critical from rural unskilled wage employment point of view. The current NREGP programme does not have much flexibility to address the situation
 - ii) Availability of space (land etc.) for work under NREGP programme and its linkage with opportunities for NREGP programme – unmet needs of rural employment to be addressed through different mix of programme design
 - iii) Tailor-made programmes for livelihood opportunities for physically and mentally challenged rural work force
 - iv) Relationship between other ongoing unskilled wage employment related works (e.g. irrigation works, road related works etc.) and NREGP in terms of wages and opportunities
 - v) Scope of tailor-made livelihood opportunities for elderly male and female of the age group of 45 – 60 years of age
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Vinod Vyasulu, Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, Bangalore

In some states like Karnataka, where we conducted a small study in one district, we found that the PRIs had effectively no role in NREGA implementation. It was being implemented by the district administration like any other central scheme. A shortage of staff like the junior engineer was a problem-many have commented on this.

I find that the Guidelines are very detailed in some ways but vague when it comes to panchayats. Also, it makes the approval of the Gram Sabha mandatory, but does not specify that the proposal must come through the Gram Panchayat. While every citizen has a right to bring up issues in the Gram Sabha, it is also important that the Gram Panchayat, as an elected body meet and discuss the local issues of the NREGA-what works will be taken up, in what sequence, when/which days of the year-NREGA should not be offered and so on. These proposals should then go to the Gram Sabha.

There has to be clarity on what the Block Panchayat must do. In many states one level of the PRIs is inactive. Can a debate on the social audit be a subject that the Block Panchayats debate and make recommendations?

Tankadhar Parida, People Centered Development Council, District Kandhamal, Orissa

In my opinion the concept of NREGA is highly appreciable and it has more potential to address the issues related to food security of the marginalized sections. But like other government schemes, this scheme also does not make much difference while being implemented. The

outcome of the scheme, after its implementation is yet to be realized by the rural poor masses. From a secret and critical observation a lot of irregularities have been marked especially in tribal belts like not giving receipt to the job-card applicant, not giving job-card in time to the applicant and neither providing work to the applicants in stipulated period, nor the unemployment allowance. Most of the job cards are kept with the executive officer of the scheme at G.P. level throughout the year and the card holders do not know about the number of days of jobs written against their name in their card and muster roll. In other places job cards are done in the name of the unwilling persons to do unskilled work, by the village tout in order to pilfer some fund and they also make forgery in maintaining job card and muster roll. These are a few examples of malpractice. Can the entire process of implementation with mal practice help the poor community to get justice under this scheme?

Hence in my opinion instead of providing 100 days job for unskilled work in a year to the willing families, it should be restricted to provide 100 days job for unskilled work in a year to the *needy and deserving* families. The families belonging to BPL, landless, marginal farmers, small farmer's categories and ST / SC communities must get this benefit. The funds under the scheme should be utilized for soil, environment and water conservation which must encourage agricultural operation. Immediate food security of the needy families should be treated as their basic right. Under this scheme action plan should be made in such a way, so that land and small water body development could be done on the identified government land which ultimately could be provided to the landless families. Keeping in view the global warming situation much attention should be given on wide range of plantation work under this scheme. This works should be done with full participation of the rural poor communities and utmost care should be taken to emphasize the legal responsibilities of the rural poor mass for its survival.

The most important factor in my opinion which needs to be considered very carefully is the enforcement of the Operational Guidelines of this scheme. Mechanisms should be developed to ensure the role clarity, transparency, accountability and trusteeship of functionaries at different levels. Monitoring responsibilities should be assigned to a trained different body with involvement of civil society organizations. Then we can be assured to get the expected outcomes of this scheme.

Rajeshwar Mishra, Center for the Development of Human Initiatives, Jalpaiguri

The discussion around NREGA, having been brought up by Mr.T.Raghunandan is timely and appropriate. The Act formulated in 2005 has come long way and it is high time that learnings are critically analyzed and reflected upon. There have been useful inputs so far.

I consider NREGA as a land mark initiative toward employment and poverty reduction. Utmost care has been taken to ensure transparency and fair play. The fact that implementation has been tardy and fallacious in states like West Bengal and Maharashtra offers good reason to see the ingeniousness, in us, to innovatively flout good intentions and hence this debate.

First let us see the perceived domain of activities under NREGA-the emphasis is more on wage generating activities which is one of the several aspects envisaged under NREGA. The NREGA objectives envisage generating productive assets, protecting the environment, empowering rural women, reducing rural urban migration and fostering social equity. Planning for the above would call for a structured thinking with strong sense of integration. In practice we have found emphasis on wage employment which is not to say there is no scope for development following the above objectives. My experience from North Bengal suggests that planning at the Panchayat level misses on the required orientation and capacity to think logically with a strong sense of integration. I will not blame the intellectual endowment and intentions of the Panchayat functionaries. They insensitivity among the bureaucrats who plan and implement their (PRI

functionaries) orientation has a lot to do with the inapt planning and implementation. The activities are to be planned at the Panchayat level and move up-to the block and the district. The capacity to deal with such intricate subjects as environment, gender equity and inclusion are very limited. We interacted with several PRI functionaries in West Bengal and Bihar and found that they are eager to learn but the training inputs are either non-existent or notional.

Recently we undertook a micro-planning exercise in one of the Gram Sansads in North Bengal. The entire village, including members of the Gram Unnayan Samiti and Gram Sabha, was involved and offered innovative inputs. Compare this with the plan prepared by the Gram Unnayan Samiti, a seemingly professional arm of the Gram panchayat. The plan represented a wish list of activities to be carried out. During a public consultation the Gram Unnayan Samiti and Panchayat Samiti members appreciated the differences between the two plans the former being quite realistic and representative of the village context and the latter being mechanical. They pointed out that capacity development of the PRIs could help them come to terms with the needed expertise.

I agree with [Narendranath](#) that professional support to the PRIs could help the PRIs circumvent the issues of incompatible planning process and outcome. Offering a few days of lecture based training would not do-it has to be iterative with further scope for hand holding. In West Bengal NGOs, usually, are not warmly welcomed but are gradually showing their relevance and professional clout. The NREGA offers a good ground for effective and functional collaboration which needs to be built into the program implementation strategy.

[Pradip Pradhan](#), The Humanity, Bolangir

I am quite delighted having seen such voluminous recommendations for incorporating in Operational Guidelines of NREGA. While organizing campaigns, programmes and training on NREGA for Panchayat representatives and the people at large in Bolangir, one of the most drought-prone districts of Orissa, I have come across a lot of operational issues at field level. I put these issues along with my recommendation to streamline implementation of NREGA.

1. To maintain transparency in payment of wages, the Govt. of Orissa is making Cheque payments to the labourers. But the cheque clearance takes a lot of days starting from 5 to 10 days for which the poor labourers suffered a lot. There should be mandatory provisions for Bank or post office to ensure clearance of the cheque in the same day, so that the labourers will not suffer.

2. Similarly, there is provision that the payment to the labourers will be within 7 to 15 days {Section 3(3) of the Act}. But in Orissa it is different. It takes months together to make payment to the labourers. The work measurement is done by the Junior Engineers in the state. These Junior Engineers work on their own wishes and take a plea that they are over-burdened. Though there is no such provision of measurement by Junior Engineer in the Operational guideline, it happens in Orissa. So there should be clear provision for punitive action for violating the provision of the guideline. Otherwise, it will not be effectively implemented.

3. Grievance Redressal Mechanism is operating in reverse trend without helping the people. If a complaint is lodged, it is not at all responded to within time limit as mentioned in Operational Guidelines by the concerned authority. There should be an independent mechanism like the Information Commission under RTI Act to deal the case within stipulated time period, so that the poor labourers can get the benefit. Making so many high profile provisions in the operational guideline without seeing how it will be implemented will no way help the people. Rather it will confuse the people- what the bureaucracy honestly wants.

4. On line Computer system is big melodrama. The information available in the NREGA website and the on line entry of information does not match with the information at grass-roots level. In the states like Orissa, even one percent of the Panchayat representatives do not have that skill or opportunity to see the on line figure put by Block officials. The lack of knowledge of the people in general and Panchayat representatives in particular have provided ample opportunity to the state bureaucracy to put false figures in the website. For example, Muster roll put in the website where on line entry is made by the State officials is totally different from the Muster Roll used in the NREGA work. This vandalism is deliberately orchestrated by state bureaucracy. So there should be strict instruction or provision to observe the mandate of the Act.

The Govt. should come forward for massive training on computer for panchayat representatives and NGOs working closely with the people.

Pravas Ranjan Mishra, CYSD, Bhubaneswar

Thank you (Mr. Raghunandan) for inviting suggestions from different clusters. Hope this nice opportunity will be used by the citizens of the nation. While looking at the operational guideline of NREGA, I find two important concerns and hope you will put these issues before the relevant authority.

1. Social Audits have been very extensively spelt in the document and more specifically in Chapter 11 of the guidelines. But who will do social audit needs to be clarified in the guidelines. Though it is mentioned that Gram Sabha is responsible in conducting social audit, I think, as per the findings from my field interaction, it is not working at all because social audit is a process which needs to be owned by the community. Again, NREGA implementing stakeholders (government, PRI members etc) are not positive towards this process. So if all the players are not well convinced about the process how will they carry it out. So this needs clear responsibility on how to facilitate the community.

2. Regarding wage rate , though it is mentioned that effort should be made in ensuring minimum wage rate, this is not working properly due to the fact that when people work on piece rate basis, the calculated amount becomes less than the minimum wage rate declared by the Government.

3. Lastly, the district and the block administration are overburdened with these responsibilities. There needs to be a separate (interconnected) structure to implement this programme. For example, work estimation and site inspection is much delayed as the engineers are pre-occupied with other programmes. Similarly, senior level officials are crazy on increasing spending (as it is not possible to look into the quality of work). So, it is very difficult to get the quality result by using the existing administrative structure for such a huge programme.

Jos Chathukulam and K. Gireesan, Centre for Rural Management (CRM), Kottayam
(Response 1)

This is in response to the query posed by T.R Raghunandan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayat Raj, Government of India, seeking comments on the NREGA Operational Guidelines.

While revisiting the Operational Guidelines of NREGA from the perspective of decentralization activists, we would like to put forward certain suggestions to be considered by the Committee for review of NREGA Operational Guidelines. It is viewed that the NREGA has been formulated keeping the centrality of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the planning, implementation and

monitoring of the scheme and we understand that the scheme has the potentials to strengthen the PRIs in general. What is needed is a strict vetting of the Operational Guidelines of the NREGA on the basis of the core principles of decentralization as mentioned in the Sixth Report of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) on Local Governance.

Considering the state of underdevelopment and backwardness of the rural areas, added with the capacity issues, we apprehend that certain provisions of the Operational Guidelines may be misinterpreted by the adversaries of decentralization and Panchayati Raj, at certain instances. To avoid such misconceptions, we are citing some changes in the existing provisions of Operational Guidelines.

Table 1: Changes proposed in the Operational Guidelines of NREGA

Operational Guidelines Para	Existing Provision	Proposed Provision
2.2.1 (b)	Not existing	The required staff to run the scheme at the village level to be appointed by the GP.
2.2.2 (b)	Not existing	The Block Panchayat will designate/appoint the Programme Officer.
2.2.2 (b)	He/She will be answerable to the District Programme Coordinator (DPC).	Programme Officer (PO) will be answerable to the Block Panchayat.
2.2.3	Not existing	A District Level Employment Guarantee Council (DEGC) is to be set up by the District Panchayat. The DEGC will advise the District Panchayat on the implementation of the scheme, evaluate and monitor it.
2.2.3 (b)	The State Government will designate a District Programme Coordinator (DPC)	The District Panchayat will designate the District Programme Coordinator (DPC).
2.2.3 (b)	Not existing	The District Programme Coordinator (DPC) will assist the District Panchayat in its functions. He/She will be answerable to the District Panchayat.
2.2.3 (c)	In addition to Panchayats, Line Departments, NGOs, and central and State Govt. undertakings, SHGs can also be identified as Implementing Agencies.	Only Panchayats will be identified as implementing agencies. If Panchayats do not exist in an area, the task may be assigned to Line Departments/ NGOs/Other agencies.
2.2.3.(d)	The State Government shall delegate financial and administrative powers to the District Programme Coordinator (DPC) and the Programme Officer (PO), as is.....	The District Panchayat shall delegate financial and administrative powers to the District Programme Coordinator (DPC) and the Programme Officer (PO), as is....
3.1.3For this purpose, he/she is expected, under Section 15(4), to prepare a plan for the Block by consolidating.....For this purpose, he/she is expected, under section 15 (4), to consolidate the proposals of the GPs and the Intermediate Panchayat.
3.2	Not existing	District Perspective Plan should be put up to the District Planning Committee for approval.

Vinod Kumar, Maithri, Palakkad

My name is Vinod Kumar, working with Maithri in Kerala. The note is compiled by me with the help of Radhakrishnan, President, Kannadi Grama Panchayat and Krishnan, Former President and Current Development Standing Committee Chairman, Perumatty Grama Panchayat

I am writing this note by interacting with a large number of Grama Panchayath Presidents and NREGS officials in Kerala regarding this specific query. The observations are summed up here.

1. The present guideline is good in paper in most of the aspects, but many are *yet to be fully operational* for various reasons. How to ensure it may be the challenge.
 2. The preparation of *seasonal calendar* dove tailing with agricultural activities, preparation of comprehensive watershed plans etc. are still in paper. A step by step procedure with non negotiable features and penal clauses may be required.
 3. The *case of perspective plans*. One scathing remark is that there is neither perspective nor plan in the documents prepared at a large cost. A clear procedure and methodology for developing the same along with a list of key features is required.
 4. There is a *delay of several weeks* between the actual work, preparation of bills and the payment. Stringent clauses for penalizing the guilty are a must. This very fact impedes the smooth implementation and reduces the transparency since the poor are not able to relate the actual work with payment.
 5. There is a doubt about the *availability of cash* at the field level to pay. Ensuring smooth cash flow is another must.
 6. Most of the *earth work is now being done by machines* in all works other than NREGS whereas the rates are as per manual work. There the contractors are having a windfall. But when it comes to the poor laborers the story is different. Their output is not matching with the prevailing rates. So the payment is becoming below the much publicized minimum wages. Either the rates should be modified as per the field conditions or the payment should be independent of output but as per the time.
 7. The specific *field conditions* like clearing of areas strewn with glass shards, human excreta, wastes, thorny bushes etc. are not addressed in measuring the outputs and the poor are being penalized.
 8. The *bulk of the workforce is women* - underweight women. But the tools and implements that they are using is fit for men of higher weight and size. Why we should cause this kind of suffering?
 9. The *entire work is being controlled by the officials* at various levels. In fact the engineers - fresh people with certificate / diploma qualifications in engineering without any exposure to the field conditions and devoid of empathy- are the masters, where as the GP Presidents and other elected members are at their mercy. Hence the case of three weeks time for the preparation of a bill worth one or two lakhs. Unless the elected leaders and CBO people can not lead the effort in the field level, the NREGS is going to suffer much since the initial hype is already over.
 10. Any work needs an organized effort and a specific goal. Here a bunch of people with *incompatible (size and number) tools* are thrown in to the field. The work is not clearly defined, tools or skilled manpower is not matched, no organization of the team to achieve goals. Hence the output is going down along with payments and interest. Capacity building efforts at this cutting edge is not sufficient.
 11. The NREGS had resulted in increasing wages in many areas. But this also had *increased the input costs of the farmers* who are already operating with a thin margin. If this is not corrected by subsidizing labor to such distressed farmers, the whole effort may become detrimental to the farming sector
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[Devanshu Chakravarti](#), Intercooperation, Hyderabad

Please find attached a [document](#) (PDF; 15 KB) containing comments on the NREGA Guidelines and sharing relevant field experiences from a Pilot Project working with a Gram Panchayat in Northern Karnataka.

[Sumit Jha](#), National Real Estate Development Council, New Delhi

As all of us know, the key provisions of NREGA are:

1. Works be given on demand
2. No contractors and any machinery be recruited for carrying out the works
3. Muster rolls of work be maintained on the work site itself
4. Payments should be made on every seventh day
5. The social audit should be carried out by people's involvement and facilitated by administration.

Clearly, the above provisions have been thought of in order to check the corrupt practices, usually associated with CSS schemes. But, notwithstanding with the above provisions, corruption has already pervaded through this scheme. The fundamental problem with regard to NREGA today is that none of the stakeholders, associated at the implementation level, even thinks of the above provisions in normal circumstances. Some of the problems, which I notice, are:

- **Job Card:** Job cards in the name of minors have been issued at many places.
- **Absence of Basic Facilities at Worksites:** Basic facilities such as safe drinking water, shade for children, periods of rest, first-aid box etc. are simply not available at worksites.
- **Muster Roll:** Temporary muster roll in use.
 - Fake names in muster roll.
 - Non-availability of muster rolls at the worksite.
 - In case of any inspection, muster roll is filled over night.
- **Delay in wage payments; Payment of less than the minimum wage.**
- **Workers not achieving daily targets:** considering that once they get their job card, it is mandatory for authorities to make payments of daily wages, even if they don't achieve their daily earthwork target. In case of any problem,(for example due to late arrival) workers resort to fake complaints.
- **Total disregard to the system of Social Audit.**
- **Presence of Middlemen/Contractors:** Middlemen/ Contractors are playing key roles NREGA development programs, right from planning till completion and disbursal of payments.
- **Shortage of staff at all levels and delay in appointments.**
- **Roles/Powers/Powers of PRIs:**
 - a. **State governments are diluting powers of Panchayats under the Act-** Political intervention at local level is taking a toll on the authority of PRI's.
 - b. **Reduced/Curtailed roles of PR Representatives at block level:** In most of the case, PR representatives are only required to make proposals. Once proposal is accepted, block program officer/block development officer; make final payments without any information to these representatives. Infact, once development proposal is accepted, PR Representatives, who actually represent the area as well as people, do not have any role/responsibility/power to check the quality/process of the work. Also, in most of the states, NREGA Program Officers have been appointed on contract for a limited period, they are more interested in short-term gain and therefore make payments after their own considerations, without bothering to physically check the work completed, for which final payment is done.
 - c. **Perspective and Annual Plans:** Lack of knowledge, skill & resources at Gram Panchayats level to prepare perspective and annual plans.

- **Exaggerated Project Estimates:** In most of the cases, project estimates are exaggerated and are based on the status/reach/contacts and commission paying capacity of middleman /contractors.
- **Productive Assets:** Practically, completed works cannot be considered productive assets, limiting its impact on local development.

Lolichen P.J, The Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore

I am providing feedback for NREGA Scheme from some of the Labourers, Panchayat Presidents, Secretaries, Officials of Taluk Panchayat, of Udupi District, Karnataka.

- People find Rs.74 for the day's (7 hours) work as very low. They opine that minimum wage for a day's work should be at least Rs.125. This is because in this region the average daily wage is Rs. 150.
- At presently to get the wages people have to wait for 15 days. Normally, wage is paid either on daily or weekly basis. However, here the wage is given at the end of the project work. Wages have to be paid either daily or weekly as most of the people who participate in the scheme do not have much to save up for a week.
- The wages are credited in the bank account. Crediting to the bank is no doubt avoids corrupt middlemen; but people find bank procedures tedious.
- The Gram Panchayat requires a minimum number of people; say 5 to 10 to give employment to those registered. There are cases where the minimum required of labour do not turn up and hence even those who turned up for work, have to return jobless.
- It is positive to note that there is equal wages for all, both men and women, though there is some resentment about it among some men. However, this equal payment should be continued.

Some of the positive aspects: Decentralization is one of the positive aspects of the scheme wherein Gram Sabha approves the plan for the project. The kinds of works mentioned in the scheme are developmental in nature, besides creating/generating employment. Moreover, this has created a right for people to demand work from Gram Panchayats; the work schedule is flexible; a group of people can come on their own time (together). They can come either early morning or after their work. However, they have to work for 7 hours a day. Due to this people may be able to manage multiple works. They are assured facilities such as medical, toilets at work place, facility to look after children of labourers, drinking water, etc. However, they are not always ensured.

Harshavardhan, IT for Social Change, Mumbai (presently in New York)

I believe the primary stakeholder of NREGA has to be a social movement which organizes the end beneficiary (rural communities) around their right to work. So the policies and strategies should be devised to create, innovate and sustain the social movement for NREGA by all means.

If the political will is assumed to stay, we should start treating the government resources like venture capital for socio-political entrepreneurship by all the strategic stakeholders of NREGS. We have to recognize these stakeholders with their strengths and weaknesses as they stand today and empower them strategically according to their abilities to perform.

The Social organizations, Political organizations, rural administration, Panchayat Raj Institutions, ITeS providers and Media Institutions are strategic action agents in the success of NREGA. The Social movement (in few pockets) and Admin (reforming itself at its own pace) have moved a bit in last three years. We need to get better at managing the change as envisaged by creators of this act.

Keeping this perspective in mind, here are few suggestions:

1. Wherever social grass root movements have performed well – either in conducting social audits or partnering with administration to accelerate the implementation, they should be recognized and given speedy access to the resources in transparent and accountable manner with the objective of increasing the impact of their work. The stronger movements (like MKSS) should promote their funded bodies through the government money and take the larger responsibility of making the initiative a success. This will promote local leadership and the chain of young social entrepreneurs. The social movements also need to be changed and encouraged to take on larger responsibilities.

2. Knowledge Dissemination and Information Exchange have been (and will remain) the main hurdle for a while. The whole operation of NREGS has to happen through the portal for social movement, designed for providing all the solutions. This portal should have a smart and usable design considering the existing usage and the user profiles. All the processes should go through this portal, at the level of operations agreed upon by NREGS community on this portal in each case. [One important segment of this portal will be rural e-governance.] The portal should be run by smart operators having their interest in its implementation.

The end objective should be 'Each village maintaining a picture database of job seeking families (or unemployed villagers seeking employment) and the information should be available online creating mirror image of the NREGS implementation process. We should set 1 year deadline and appoint a technology research committee for creating the tech resources – with unique perspective of catalyzing IT driven Social movement. We might have successfully used technology in several cases and created the models, but we are falling short in developing the online NREGS community. Once we are sure of IT taking over NREGS, we can enforce a rule that all the processes will have to go through this portal.

3. Non resident Indians should be involved in NREGS in a big way. Their impact on social development may be limited to their charity work at this point, but they are putting in money in villages, they are willing for knowledge exchange of all sorts and they have the brand identity of being "successful Indians abroad". They, too, like being part of this 'financial rewarding to poor agenda' of NREGS; where the direct impact of their involvement can be visible. There should be collaboration with the NRI ministry to get them involved in all the possible ways and campaign especially targeting NRIs for NREGS.

4. a. At the level of a district we should have the whole team of folk artists promoting NREGS - Replicating successful campaign like Shakar Singh (MKSS) Katputhali Show.
- b. At the level of mass media, we have to identify ambassadors for NREGS and recruit them to promote NREGS.

Every time we talk about act like NREGS, it is a triumph of hope over experience and that is the best thing about it.

[Neha Sakhuja](#), Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi

On the eve of NREGA becoming a pan-Indian programme from April 1, 2008, the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) releases its assessment of two years of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA); study looks at the Act's implementation across 9 states and 12 districts. NREGA is not just about drought relief but relief against drought, says CSE. Wants programme strengthened but revamped so that it provides not just wages for work done but 'work' that will make ecological regeneration possible.

NREGA has huge potential for regenerating village economy in India, but only if its focus remains on the creation of productive assets, the study argues. The Act brings with it huge possibilities of making a difference to the lives of 45 million rural households of our country. Over the two years that it has been in existence, NREGA has already created half-a-million assets and provided jobs to around three per cent of India's population.

CSE study shows that people essentially want two things – productive assets and regular wages. Wherever the Act has failed to meet these needs, its implementation has collapsed.

Article I. Key findings

Creating productive assets, ecological regeneration for economic change

The CSE study finds that despite NREGA's official focus on jobs, the programme is witnessing a dipping demand for employment under it. This is not because rural India does not need jobs any more, but because of the Act's lopsided focus and its imperfect wage-for-jobs scheme. To begin with, governments have failed to articulate the Act's development potential. Instead of implementing and evaluating the Act purely in terms of employment creation, the focus should have been on the real impacts on local development through productive assets creation.

In terms of assets creation, finds the study, most of the NREGA money has gone to road construction projects, instead of works related to water conservation and harvesting. Of the 27 states where the NREGA was implemented, only five have made substantial allocation to water conservation. During 2006-07, Andhra Pradesh alone accounted for about 67 per cent of the total water conservation works under NREGA in the country. This has happened as irrational wage calculations have made projects like water conservation less lucrative. Panchayats are increasingly demanding more road and other construction works because road construction gets them the minimum wage and sometimes even more than that. The nexus of local government officials and contractors is also a reason behind building works getting priority.

Bad planning, no maintenance

The programme is also plagued by another set of problems, finds the CSE analysis – that of incomplete and abandoned works, and lack of maintenance of completed works. Out of a total of 769,582 works under progress, only 158,277 (20.56 per cent) have been completed. Till August 2007, only about 14 per cent of water conservation works under NREGA had been completed. In fact, road construction projects were getting done at a faster rate. The study has found that bad planning for water conservation structures is putting a large number of the assets created into disuse. For instance, water harvesting structures have been created without any provision for catchment protection. On top of this, 'maintenance work' does not come under the ambit of NREGA as a permissible activity. As a result, districts, which already have large numbers of water harvesting structures and want to use NREGA money for their maintenance, can't do so.

The way ahead

The CSE study lists a set of steps that will ensure that impact. These include:

1. Measure not just the wage provided but also the asset created and its effectiveness. This will make village development, through productive assets creation, the primary objective.
2. Make wage payment people and development friendly, Provide a premium wage for development programmes, which will ensure that work done is completed and is useful.
3. Continue to emphasize water conservation works under NREGA by providing additional incentives
4. Make the completion and maintenance of works under NREGA mandatory.
5. Give importance to afforestation under NREGA by linking it to other forestry programmes – Joint Forest Management or watersheds.

6. Do more to strengthen village-level planning and decision making by revamping the current operational structures.
7. Equip panchayats with the necessary personnel and funds for effective implementation of the programme.

The following material is available for free download at www.cseindia.org:

- Recommendations
- The CSE policy paper on NREGA
- CSE's base paper on NREGA
- Press release
- Maps and key information on all the 200 NREGA districts

For more details, please contact:

Richard Mahapatra: 098110 54063, 011-29955124, 29956110 or 29956399, E-mail: richard@cseindia.org

Jos Chathukulam and K. Giresan, Centre for Rural Management (CRM), Kottayam

(Response 2)

On the basis of our field experiences and interactions with the elected members and officials of the Panchayats and other stakeholders, we have noted that the NREGA and its Operational Guidelines have been widely appreciated by all. However, they have one major suggestion as "to include the agricultural sector and all type of agricultural activities in the type of works". This was commented by M Chandran, President of Koduvayur GP in Palakkad District. Similar views were expressed by A Surendran, President, Kollengode GP; PS Sivadas, Vice-President, Pattencherry GP; and, K Babu, President, Nemmara GP from Palakkad District in Kerala. Zakir Hussain, Vice-President, Vadavannur GP in Palakkad District and Gagarin, Vice-President, Kalpetta Block Panchayat in Wayanad commented that "more autonomy in selection of works be given to the Panchayats while making projects from the type of works under NREGS, as per the local situations". We have also interacted with KM Prabhakaran, President, Vellamunda GP; KM Varkey, President, Mananthavady GP; Justin Baby, President, Edavaka GP; Gagarin, Vice-President, Kalpetta Block Panchayat, all from Wayanad District. MS Vasu, President, Kumily GP in Idukki District made a comment that "the Act and the guidelines are relatively liberal and progressive. However, the major issue lies with the mindset of the officials who are in charge of NREGS administration. Their interpretation restricts the flexibility and progressive nature of the Act and Guidelines, in many cases". Other issues projected by the key functionaries of Panchayats broadly pertain to the difficulties while operationalising the scheme at the field levels. Since they can be settled at the State and District levels within the Act and existing Guidelines, we are not highlighting them here. However, some of the significant comments made by them are given below:

- (a) Conduct of Social Audit at the Gram Panchayat level organized in addition to work level/ward level social audits, as more qualitative inputs would be available at that level with representation from various departments/agencies/other stakeholders
- (b) Provision for taking up watershed activities be permitted at private property as well, after getting their formal consent
- (c) Priority for works on rural connectivity need to be changed from the third year of scheme implementation.

Based on our interactions with the key functionaries of Gram Panchayats in Kerala, it is noted that in general, all of them are satisfied and comfortable with the existing Act and Operational Guidelines of NREGA.

P.S Yadav, Haryana Institute of Rural Development, Karnal

NREGA was launched in 200 most backward districts from February, 2006. The NREGA is a most comprehensive Act, which provides all kind of guidance to the implementers. Some improvements like requirement of minimum number of 50 workers for starting a new work have already been relaxed to 10. Inclusion of Plantation work on private lands has been allowed. The NREGS is doing well and have shown good results where the DPCs have shown the keen interest in the scheme, where Programme Officers have been appointed separately to implement the scheme, where proper technical and administrative support has been provided to PRIs and where proper and correct publicity has been done about the scheme. I have been instrumental in grounding of NREGA in Sirsa District of Haryana during the month of May, 2006. It is the joint will the people and the administration, which makes a programme success. Besides I have seen the Implementation of NREGA in Keela Parasalur Panchayat of (Block Sembanarkoil), District Nagapattinam of Tamil Nadu. The implementation of NREGA is very systematic. I have also been highlighting success stories and also bungling taking place under NREGA. On the basis of my experiences, I suggest the following points to make NREGA more effective:

1. Presently, in most of the states the NREGA is being coordinated by the already overloaded Block Development Officers. The provision of appointment of separate PO is not being utilized by the States. There should be clear cut provision of separate Programme Officers to implement NREGA by the States for implementing NREGA
2. It should be made mandatory for the states to deploy other support staff mentioned in the guidelines to implement NREGA
3. Though there is provision of at least 100 days employment, but presently the employment provided to a family is restricted to 100 days only and not above 100 days. There should be express provision of employment for more than 100 days to the needy
4. Minimum wages should be Rs.100/- in place of present Rs. 60/-
5. A provision should be made for disqualification of such GPs, which fail to implement NREGA
6. In order to avoid duplicity of works, Hariyali (Watershed Development) should be considered to be merged into NREGA as the nature of admissible is almost same under both
7. Just like Nirmal Gram Puraskar under Total Sanitation Campaign , a similar award should be instituted for best implementing Gram Panchayats

K. Rajasekharan, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), Thrissur

The neatly drafted 192 page **Second Report of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission** titled '**Unlocking Human Capital**' available at <http://arc.gov.in> is exclusively on NREGS reforms and contain worthy recommendations. The consolidated recommendations are there from pages 96-111 in the document. This is a must-read for all those who want to learn further about NREGS that is being implemented in the entire country from today.

The most important problem in making the high potential NREGS an amazing success in India is the keeping of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj as separate Ministries. Both should be combined together for efficient and effective implementation of the scheme.

प्रिय महोदय,

राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण रोजगार गारण्टी योजना का संचालन अपने तीसरे वर्ष में प्रवेश कर चुका है। इस अधिनियम की धारा-4 के अन्तर्गत इस बात का स्पष्ट उल्लेख किया गया है कि अधिनियम के लागू होने के 8 माह के अन्दर सभी राज्य सरकारों द्वारा एक कार्ययोजना बना ली जायेगी किन्तु व्यवहारिक तौर पर अधिनियम के नियमों का बनाया जाना भी अपरिहार्य था जिसे अधिनियम की धारा-31 एवं 32 के अन्तर्गत क्रमशः भारत के ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय एवं प्रदेश सरकारों के ग्राम्य विकास विभागों द्वारा नियम यथाशीघ्र बना लिये जाने थे। किन्तु अभी तक किसी स्तर पर भी नियम नहीं बनाये गये हैं। केवल कार्ययोजना बनाने के लिए भारत सरकार द्वारा वर्ष 2006 में दिशा-निर्देश जारी किये गये थे। जिनमें स्पष्टता नहीं आ सकी है। जिसके कारण समय-समय पर योजना के कार्यान्वयन में दिक्कत महसूस की जा रही है। एक शोधकार्यकर्ता के रूप में एक प्रदेश व्यापी स्वैच्छिक संस्था के नेटवर्क से सम्बद्ध होने के फलस्वरूप मुझे कुछ समस्याएँ अनुभूत हुई हैं, जिसे मैं आप जैसे सुविज्ञ विचारक के विचारार्थ संक्षेप में प्रस्तुत कर रहा हूँ-

1. अधिनियम की धारा-2 में कार्यान्वयन इकाई के रूप में ग्राम पंचायत के अतिरिक्त स्वैच्छिक संगठनों का भी उल्लेख किया गया है, किन्तु अभी तक यह स्थिति उभर कर नहीं आ सकी है कि किन शर्तों के साथ स्वैच्छिक संगठनों को इस योजना में कार्यान्वयन इकाई के रूप में सम्बद्ध किया जायेगा।

2. मजदूरी के लिए निबन्धित मजदूरों द्वारा कार्य की मांग किये जाने के 15 दिन के अन्दर कार्य न दिये जाने पर बेरोजगारी भत्ते का उल्लेख अधिनियम के अन्तर्गत किया गया है। किन्तु नियमों के अभाव में यह स्पष्टता नहीं है कि बेरोजगारी के लिए अर्ह मजदूरों को बेरोजगारी भत्ता न मिलने का दायित्व किस अधिकारी का होगा और उसके लिए किस प्रकार के दण्ड का प्रावधान है। यद्यपि अधिनियम की धारा-25 में इस बात का उल्लेख किया गया है कि अधिनियम के अनुपालन न करने वाले पर 1000 रुपये तक जुर्माना किया जा सकता है, किन्तु इसमें स्पष्टता नहीं है।

3. अधिनियम की अनुसूची-दो के बिन्दु 26 में केवल इतना कहा गया है कि कार्य करते हुये किसी मजदूर की मृत्यु अथवा अपंग हो जाने पर 25000 रुपये अथवा भारत सरकार द्वारा निर्धारित दर पर नकद सहायता दी जायेगी। किन्तु इसमें यह स्पष्ट नहीं किया गया है कि पूर्णतया अपंग न होने की स्थिति में केवल एक हाथ या पैर कट जाने या टूट-फूट जाने पर कितनी धनराशि हर्जाने के रूप में दी जायेगी। क्षेत्र स्तर पर अधिकारियों में भी इसकी स्पष्टता न होने के कारण चोटिल मजदूरों को सहायता उपलब्ध नहीं करायी जाती है।

4. विकलांगों के लिए विशेष व्यवस्था की मांग क्षेत्र स्तर पर उठती रहती है किन्तु अधिनियम में अथवा दिशा-निर्देशों में इस बात का स्पष्ट उल्लेख नहीं है। भारत सरकार द्वारा जारी किये गये दिशा-निर्देशों में अध्याय-4 के प्रस्तर 4.6.10 में इस प्रकार का उल्लेख (अगर कोई ग्रामीण विकलांग व्यक्ति काम के लिए आवेदन देता है तो उसे उसकी शारीरिक क्षमता और योग्यता के हिसाब से काम दिया जायेगा) से स्थिति और भ्रामक हो जाती है। अधिनियम के प्रस्तावना (Introduction) में भी इस बात का उल्लेख किया गया है कि परिवार के कम से कम एक able bodied person को 100 दिन का रोजगार दिया जायेगा। इसमें इस बात की स्पष्टता आवश्यक है कि विकलांगजनों को शारीरिक श्रम वाले कार्यों में किस स्तर तक आरक्षण दिया जा सकता है।

5. कार्य के मापन के लिए कोई स्पष्ट दिशा-निर्देश नहीं है। भौगोलिक विषमता की दृष्टि से अलग-अलग क्षेत्रों के लिए कार्य मापन के मानक निर्धारित किये जाने चाहिए अथवा कड़ी भूमि वाले क्षेत्रों कार्यरत मजदूरों को न्यूनतम दर पर मजदूरी भी सम्भव नहीं हो पाती है।

6. अधिनियम में 33 प्रतिशत महिलाओं के लिए आरक्षण की व्यवस्था रखी गयी है और उन्हें किसी भेदभाव के बराबर दर पर मजदूरी देने की बात कही गयी है किन्तु समान कार्य के लिए समान वेतन का सिद्धान्त ही यह बात सामने लाता है कि कम कार्य करने वाली महिलाओं को पुरुषों के बराबर वेतन दे पाना सम्भव

नहीं है। इस सम्बन्ध में स्पष्टता होना आवश्यक है। इसका एक विकल्प यह हो सकता है कि मजदूरों को कार्य का आवंटन कर दिया जाये जिसे एक परिवार के अथवा नजदीकी परिवार के महिला पुरुष एक साथ मिलकर कार्य करें और कार्य के मापन के पश्चात दी गयी मजदूरी को वे आपस में बांट लें।

ओम कुमार
उपवन लखनऊ

Viren Lobo, Society for Promotion of Wastelands Development, Udaipur

Jaisamand consortium has been working on the issue of NREGS in Jaisamand catchment of Udaipur district, Rajasthan for the last one year. Jaisamand consortium is comprised of five members ie Society for Promotion of Wastelands Development, Jagran Jan Vikas Samiti , Prayatna Samiti , Hanuman Van Vikas Samiti and Samarthak Samiti . During the last one year we have noticed the following:

- About 40 - 50 % of the rural communities in the villages we are working require employment. Out of these 10 % require more than 100 days employment
- The practice of accepting requests from the local community is significant by its absence.. In its place people are kept on the job as and when the government can make it available. This might not match with the time when people are interested in wage employment
- This year we have facilitated the preparation of the annual plan for next year. However after it has been passed in the Gram Sabha and forwarded to the block level, nothing is known to the local community. It would greatly help the local community if there is transparency in the entire process so that proper planning of natural resource management work on farmers own fields and village resources can take place
- We are tracking the payments made to the local community as also the reasons for the low payment on many activities, despite a minimum wage norm. One suggestion that has emerged is to have groups of five people working on each task, so that the work of each individual can be easily measured and monitored
- A number of people have been trained as mates from among those associated with those working in the NGO sector; some have them have actually been engaged as mates in some of the works. If further facilitation is possible to ensure the employment of such mates, it will facilitate to have a group of people who can monitor the programme at the day to day implementation level (such people have also been trained in proper measurement as well)

In terms of the activities some suggestions are:

- Provision for rain shelters for goats as a number of goats get sick during the monsoon
- How activities related to conservation/ biodiversity development, maintenance and management can figure in the annual plans made. These are essential activities, but are not profitable and hence tend to get neglected when looked at with the lens of markets
- We have studied the profile of the NREGS activity and we find regional specific components have been added. However how do they fit into the rainfall pattern and whether the structures suggested are at the optimum level? Unless there is systematic NRM based planning it is unlikely that the adhoc process followed under NREGs will lead to very systematic development of natural resources. SPWD is working on the model for large scale natural resource panning using GIS techniques based on satellite imagery and will be able to get back on this very soon

- The whole issue of institutional development requires a process orientation which will involve a large segment of the local population. This year, SPWD will be tracking the implementation of the annual plans for the start itself and hopefully will be able to facilitate the involvement of a large segment of the local population in the social audit which is expected to take place between October - December this year. We will keep you posted.

Surojeet Chandan, Ranchi

After more than 2 years, an initiative has been taken by the Central Government to look into the past of NREGA and its implementation in 330 districts of India. It is indeed a commendable step and for that I would like to extend my best wishes to all the concerned authorities. Secondly, I am really thankful to r. T. R. Raghunandan for giving us this opportunity to share our views and concerns regarding any 'possible' changes in NREGA's central Operation Guidelines.

I had been associated with this program as a part of civil society organization called PRIA, which is working on NREGA since its inception. My association has been very close to the people from both side – those who are directly working in different worksites and those who are responsible for its better implementation at different hierarchy (panchayat to state level administration). Let me take this opportunity to count those instances first, which has forced us to discuss on bringing some change in our operational guidelines:

- At the beginning of this program- cum- Act, functionaries at Block and Panchayat level were saying that laborers had not been turning up to take the task in their hands. They had enough works (schemes) to adjust a large number of laborers but nobody had turned up for the work. Infact, the authorities were banking upon the reason that people were not very well informed, hence the number of laborers were very less at the worksite
- Registration process was not taken up seriously and people were registered but could not get job card. Official figures showed that an entire village had been possessing job cards but when our team surveyed the village then it came into limelight that no body had their own card
- There was no provision for issuing dated receipt against the job demand. Infact, officials denied to take any kind of job application. When the villagers wanted to submit application, then officials denied accepting the applications just because the applicants were not in a group of 50 people. Another reason, which was stated, was that there wasn't any printed receipt available with them. Hence receipt could not be made available. Moreover when the things started gripping on officials, some Panchayat Secretaries took the thumb impressions of labourers on blank job demand forms and accordingly they used it as per their convenience. It was simply a predetermined act to avoid giving labourers unemployment allowances. If the information from a very reliable source is believed then officers of higher ranks deliberately pushed this issue of avoiding job applications and issuing dated receipt to labourers. It was clearly ordered that if anybody becomes bounded to pay the unemployment allowance, then it will be paid from his pocket only
- Regarding measurement of work at work site and payment of wages to labourers, it is our experience that responsible officer for measuring earth cutting work does not visit regularly at the worksite. Due to this kind of negligence, payment of wages gets delayed. Secondly, it has been observed that muster rolls are not kept at worksite and measurement column is not there in muster rolls, which could depict the measurement of earth cutting done by a labourer. Payment through accounts has now been started in many districts and State Administration has already issued a circular to make it mandatory for every district administration. Despite this effort,

payment has not been done within 15 days although muster rolls used for such schemes show that payment of wages had been done on time and that too each labourer had been paid amount equal to minimum wage (how can it be if work is being done at Piece Rate?). Infact, Jharkhand's many districts don't have their District Schedule of Rates notified for the area. Hence dissatisfaction is increasing at a high speed and it is forcing the labourers to migrate in search of better wage employment options

- When different CSOs raised voice against the anomalies found in NREGA implementation, administration started showing reason that they were running short of capable employees. Training and capacity building was another issue, which played a major role in deterioration of performance in the districts, blocks and Panchayats. Officials at higher position showed their inability to check the differences although they had the fair amount of knowledge and information regarding the functioning of lower level officials, as if they are put in the chair without giving them an idea about their own responsibility / authority.
- As per the act, a separate implementing structure has to be formed at each level but due to misinterpretation of act by the state administration, state guideline was made and no scope of separate implementing structure was left in it and it was clubbed with existing structure especially at block level and at district level. Like, there are two posts created at Block for Program Officer – one will be Principal Block Program Officer (PBPO) and other (which may be more than one also?) will be Block Program Officer (BPO). The major concern in this subject comes at the point that all BPOs will be working under PBPO, who will be the Block Development Officer (BDO) of that block
- In Jharkhand State guideline, it is clearly manifested (NREGS Jharkhand Page 23, point (d) (v)) that there will not be any compulsion to provide employment during Monsoon and during Crop cutting season for either state administration or District Program Coordinator. It means that an estimated period of almost 4 months will be deducted from one financial year deliberately and labourers won't be able to use their entitlement of getting unemployment allowance in case they are not provided job in time (so called 'Guarantee' stated in Act)
- Government has taken various initiatives to strengthen the Vigilance and Monitoring system and has also conducted Muster roll verification and social audit etc in order to bring more transparency and accountability in the implementing structure. But the grassroots experiences show that initiatives had been taken only on records / papers. Social audit had been conducted by local NGOs rather than Gram Sabha (which eventually is the violation of the act). Monitoring and Vigilance committee had been formed only on papers and even members of the committee did not know about their membership. When Government initiated muster roll verification was conducted, no forgery case was found regarding payment of wages but when the same process was convened by Gram Sabhas with the help of CSOs, innumerable cases of forgery and fake payments came. Then question struck that what was the process of government initiated verification work and how it was completed without getting any complaint from the labourers / gram sabha members?
- It was also observed that administration was maintaining the ratio of wage and material cost at district level for NREGA works (60:40). Under this provision, many PCC roads were constructed by using NREGA money. The entire ratio had been balanced through fake muster rolls, which includes 'Ghost Labourers' and 'Dead People' as the recipient of wages for the work done in villages.

In light of such situation stated above in bullet points and other experiences of NREGA, I would like to suggest the following things, which need attention from the concerned people who are at

high spirit to bring forth the best possible ways in NREGA's successful implementation in our country by making certain changes in Operational Guidelines:

1. State should be given autonomy to certain extent but neither for misinterpreting the act nor to dilute the constitutional spirit embedded in the act itself. And further adding to this point, there should be **criteria checklist** for deriving state guidelines and making the implementing structure lawfully functional. The states should be given autonomy in prioritizing the work based on the geographical and demographical condition of the states, fixing wage rates and managing the entire system of implementation. Ultimately role of state should be fixed / designed within the boundary, keeping the act as a foundation of such boundary
2. A **separate column of Measurement of Earth cutting** should be included in order to provide a transparent wage payment system. Moreover, allocation of fund for repairing tools of earth cutting should be clearly mentioned and apparently it should be given to states to bear the cost
3. Since NREGA is an act but there is no concrete provision mentioned in the guideline regarding **punitive actions** against the agencies / authorities, who does not follow this act. It should be mentioned at least in the operational guideline in order to check the flawed practices
4. Number (Frequency) of capacity building initiatives (at least) should be **fixed** and it should also be **stated mandatory** for block officials to conduct it (as a structured training program) for Panchayat and village level workers
5. **Recruitment of women staffs** at block and panchayat level for the implementation of NREGA must be included in the operational guideline as an obligatory provision
6. **Monitoring and vigilance mechanism** should be revised and its status (who are the members, what are their roles, how many times they will have to do their task in a period of time, what are their authorities, structure and representation etc) should be made public as early as possible. Reports of different M & V committee should be made public through local newspapers and local channels. Grievance redressal mechanism should also be strengthened by incorporating representation from NGO members, Academia and Media people in it
7. Ratio of 60:40 (wage component: material component) should be maintained at **village level** rather than at district level. If possible, then make it 70:30
8. **MIS entry of data** should be first checked and approved and then it should be entered into the website. For that, report of Gram Sabha on such data should be based to perform this activity. Gram Sabha should verify the entire generated data of NREGA in their own villages and after completion of verification work, it should be entered into MIS. In this way, two things will be addressed at once: regular Gram Sabhas and social audit and Correct Data entry in the website. I know this will be a tough situation, but for that MIS entry should be done at quarterly basis after getting consent of Gram Sabhas (4 Gram Sabha meetings per year as the base). In that way complaint against heavy work load may also be addressed
9. **Planning process** should be started from the grassroots. Gram Sabhas should be strengthened through various activities to make them self reliant in undertaking planning process for NREGA and to put control over the panchayats, who are working as Principle agency of Planning and Implementing of NREGA
10. Finally, **Role of Civil Society Organizations** should be kept in line to these activities – facilitation in planning, capacity building and orientation of Gram Sabhas regarding planning, selection of beneficiaries and social audit, awareness drives etc.

I do hope that I could keep the things clear and it will serve your purpose to some extent.

Anjana Dube, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, New Delhi

I am attaching a copy of my paper (unpublished) written in 2006 regarding the NREGP. The paper has not been updated. The conclusion in this paper (pasted below) is my personal views:

"Conclusion: The emphasis of the scheme is in creation of durable assets and not on generating livelihood skills or broader social development, though strengthening livelihood resource base of rural poor is an important stated objective. Hence these need to be addressed by the government

The guidelines for implementation of NREGP are comprehensive. They have addressed the issues regarding weaknesses in management, by identifying vulnerabilities and strengthening implementation through:

- creating information systems and quality monitors
- transparency in exchange of information
- social accountability and community vigilance

The emphasis on transparency through display of report cards and social audits is the key to build adequate moral and social pressures to check vulnerabilities and leakages. However, the vigilance role of the villagers would suffer from collective action problem and social audits could easily become non-starters or just any other gram sabha ritual. Thus the government needs to be extremely committed at all levels regarding creating capacities through training, strengthening institutional mechanism, creating e-governance, ensuring accountability and encouraging independent audits and involvement of NGOs. In short, in the words of Shri C.K. Prahalad, the government needs to create 'transaction governance capabilities' for the success of the scheme.

Keya Chatterjee, ACTIVE, Ranchi

NREGA in Jharkhand is facing the given problems:

- a. People are not aware that they have to apply for work, so they do not apply
 - b. Even when a person goes to submit application for work, they are turned away at Block Office, with the statement that " There is no work in the offing- we will call you once there is some work"
 - c. The Non employment compensation is (1) very low (2) Very difficult to avail as there are no records of applications submitted. Also a person has to travel down to Block Office daily. This has virtually made it impossible to avail of the compensation amount
 - d. BDO is looking after NREGS as well as no BPOs have been appointed so far
 - e. Social Audit is being given to NGOs. No guidelines have been laid down for selection of such NGOs. Thus NGOs with doubtful credibility are also being given contracts
 - f. The amount sanctioned for conducting social audits is too low
 - g. In most cases, NGOs have carried out awareness campaigns in name of Social Audit, rather than the Social Audit itself, making the entire thing an absolute sham
 - h. Women's work is not being enumerated separately. Thus payment is being made on "Chouka" (sq ft) basis- and not on man-day basis
 - i. No worksite facility is available anywhere
 - j. No clear guidelines for providing work to disabled has led to almost no disabled person being given any work. The officers at implementation site also lack imagination how these persons can be gainfully employed
-

Banku Bihari Sarkar, Grameen Development Services, Lucknow

Here is suggestion for using NREGS in disaster prone (flood as well as drought) areas for reducing the disaster vulnerability as well as generate gainful employment for disaster stricken people:

- In drought affected areas, work under NREGS could be used for soil and water conservation measures like bunding and trenching of field plots, construction of check dams, dugout ponds in the fields; rehabilitation of traditional water conservation structures and plantation
- In flood prone areas NREGS should be used for raising of village with appropriate drainage, raising of houses, construction of raised platform for temporary shelters for human as well as livestock during flood and improving drainage system in flood affected areas. After the flood, when people have no work, NREGS could be used for repairing of damaged roads, buildings and other infrastructures, cleaning of villages, desilting of fields and removing water hyacinth from fields/ponds

Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Decentralization Community at se-decn@solutionexchange-un.net.in or to the Work and Employment Community at se-emp@solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject heading "Re: [se-decn][se-emp] For Comments: Inputs to the Committee re-examining NREGA Operational Guidelines - Additional Reply."

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Decentralization Community



Poverty Work and Employment Community

Solution Exchange for Decentralization Community Solution Exchange for the Work and Employment Community

Consolidated Reply

Query: Implementation of NREGS in Panchayats, from Maithri, Palakkad (Experiences, Examples).

**Compiled by Alok Srivastava and Sumeeta Banerjee, Resource Persons and Jeevan Mohanty and Nupur Arora, Research Associates
18 January 2007**

**Original Query: Vinod Kumar, Maithri, Palakkad
Posted: 18 December 2006**

I work in Maithri, an NGO based at Palakkad in Kerala. We are focusing on the capacity building of Grama Panchayths and Natural Resource Management in a participatory manner. I am raising a query to get comparative experiences from other states regarding some of the operational aspects of NREGS.

The annual plans of Gram Panchayths, Block and District Panchayths are prepared and Administrative Sanction is given at the district level. Technical Sanctions are also being issued. There are about 12500 proposals from 91 Gram Panchayths in Palakkad District (Kerala) alone. Most of them involve earth work. As per the existing guidelines of PWD, for every earth work exceeding 300 cubic meters, pre work levels have to be taken, the same should be forwarded to Chief Technical Examiner and then wait for a period of 15 days before commencing the work. After the completion of the work, post levels should be taken to assess the volume of work.

I request members to provide me with experiences on the following issues:

1. All these procedures involving measurement of levels etc. require a large set of instruments, skilled persons and time. The shortage of all this is greatly delaying the implementation of the scheme and making the whole affair complex. All of the earth works in the proposed scheme, like renovation of existing water channels and ponds, the work done can be measured using a tape, but the existing rules prevent it. Is there any way out?
2. The NREGA stipulates social audit. How it is being conducted at different levels of Panchayats?
3. The routine agricultural activities should go side by side with NREGS work. How is this being managed? Is there any experience of organising labour banks by panchayats and other organizations (NGOs)?

Responses received, with thanks from:

1. [D. Narendranath](#), PRADAN, New Delhi
2. [Pravas Ranjan Mishra](#), CYSD, Bhubaneswar
3. [Pramod Kumar Pradhan](#), Agragamee, Bhubaneswar
4. [S.N. Pandeya](#), MPRLP, Bhopal
5. [Pramel Gupta](#), Samavesh, Society for Development & Governance, Bhopal
6. [Krishna Srinivasan](#), ECONET, Pune
7. [Kris Dev](#), Lifeline to Business, Chennai
8. [Vinod Vyasulu](#), Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, Bangalore
9. [Krishna Kumar](#), CECOEDECON, Jaipur
10. [Debasis Mohapatra](#), OXFAM (India) Trust, Kolkata
11. Banamali Dash, NIPDIT, Phulbani ([Response 1](#); [Response 2](#))
12. [Mandakini Devasher](#), UNDP, New Delhi
13. [Ramit Basu](#), UNDP, New Delhi
14. [Subhankar Tripathi](#), CYSD, Bhubaneswar
15. [Rahul Banerjee](#), Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangathan, Indore
16. [Dr. Ashok Sircar](#), Loka Kalyan Parishad
17. [Chhaya Kunwar](#), HARC, Dehradun
18. [Soumen Ray](#), World Food Programme, Bhubaneswar
19. [Puran Singh Yadav](#), Development and Panchayats Dept., Govt. of Haryana, Chandigarh
20. [Mahi Pal](#), SIRD, Karnal
21. Shalini Kumar, PARD, Nawadah ([Response 1](#); [Response 2](#); [Response 3](#))
22. [Anurag Mishra & J.N. Singh](#), UPVAN, Lucknow
23. Manju Panwar, ESDI, Nilokheri, Karnal ([Response 1](#); [Response 2](#))
24. [Dr. V.D.Sharma](#), VBS Purvanchal University, Jaunpur
25. [Dr. Nilakantha Panigrahi](#), ICSSR Institute (NCDS), Bhubaneswar
26. [Gyanendra Mishra](#), UDAAN, Aligarh
27. [Amlan Biswas](#), Deputy Commissioner, Haveri

Further contributions are welcome!

[Summary of Responses](#)

[Comparative Experiences](#)

[Related Resources](#)

[Responses in Full](#)

Summary of Responses

Responding to the query on the technical and measurement issues in implementation of NREGS, social audit mechanics and the issue of labour banks members shared varied experiences and practices, highlighted problems and suggested measures.

NREGS and Major Issues in implementation

Members stated that NREGA's objective is to create sustainable assets, while providing employment to the rural unemployed and listed main issues in implementation of NREGS:.

- Lack of bottom-up planning by Gram Sabha, regular monitoring and, identification and prioritization of works, formulation of perspective plan
- Ensuring transparency and accountability through [social audit](#) and lack of awareness (see [MP](#) experience) work selection according to seasonal requirement
- Policy and practice gaps and expanding the list of projects permissible under the scheme poor record keeping
- Work selection according to seasonal requirement, age discrimination in assigning work, delayed release and lack of transparency in payments, collective approach to wage distribution (as in [MP](#)), little emphasis on Gram Sabha participation in social audit/public hearing and work selection (see experience in [UP](#)), joblessness among job card holders, and unavailability of basic provisions, like crèche, drinking water, at worksite (see [MP](#) experience).

Technical Issues in Measurement of Works and link with Wage Payment

Members mentioned that majority of works pertained to road construction, which are moderated by contractors. The practice of evaluating works, post completion, leading to payments on collective basis, resulting in equal payment for unequal work and wage difference between male-female worker was another important factor in wage payments (see [more](#)). They also dwelled on issues like timely and transparent measurement of work at site, as engineers/panchayat nirman sahayaks who take measurements are handicapped due to high workload and geographical factors causing delay in payments Issues relating to schedule of earth removal for different types of soil, height of lift and distance of transportation which are to be dealt in the preparation of technical estimates and sanctions vide para 3.3.8 of the Operational Guidelines of NREGS (see [Document](#)).

Suggestions to facilitate Measurements and resolution of Technical Issues

- Use of accredited engineers for measurements and estimation and execution of works. They suggested post execution measurements through Employment Assistant or accredited engineers for timely payments (see [Haryana](#) experience), and constitution of a cadre of animators (barefoot technicians) with adequate capacity/training
- Preparation of technical estimates and sanctions in accordance with para 3.3.8 of Operational Guidelines, and devising measurement norms, cutting delays in execution and measurement as para 6.3.1(d) of Operational Guidelines
- Matrix of rates for similar tasks to cut delays in sanctions etc. for smooth working (para 6.3.3 of [Operational Guidelines](#)) and rationalisation of rates (as done in [Orissa](#))
- Wage payments through post office account, avoidance of cash handling, wage advance and keeping an imprest amount with the Panchayats could be tried out

Social Audit

Viewing social audit as NREGS' lifeline, contributors pointed towards the importance of sorting and analysis of information, compilation, sharing and presentation of findings, collection of opinion, feedback and reaction in social audit process. They claimed that social audit rarely took place as envisaged in the scheme, and the causes ranged from lack of awareness about the process and modalities, uncertainty about who will steer this process (as Gram Sabha is a weak institution to do this presently-see [Uttar Pradesh](#) experience), their lack of knowledge, time and resources. They averred that there is confusion about the constitution and role of Social Audit Committee and cited the case of a women-dominated *nigrani samiti* in Uttaranchal who have devised their own ways for doing social audit.

Members suggested that a proper understanding and environment for conducting audit is necessary with the need of forming social audit groups at each block with NGOs, college students, teachers, instituting concurrent social audit process by the government, support by CAPART (Under the RD Ministry), organizing mock social audit for learning, facilitation of audit by experienced NGOs and village level organizations, preparation of IEC material in pictorial form in local language (see [MP experience](#)) and use of RTI Act to facilitate information. Members referred to verification of necessary public document such as: copy of case records, work order, budget allocation and plan estimation documents, sanction letter, muster rolls, bills and vouchers, circular orders, list of beneficiaries, details of schemes, provisions and persons given allotment, and verification of muster rolls/sheets of worksites and labour statements and involvement of job seekers.

Issues related to Agricultural Activities and Labour Banks

Members contended that work under NREGS needs to be provided during the lean period of agriculture. Terming, labour banks as a new concept, contributors opined that formation of labour committees and forum at village level would help assess availability and requirement of labour, and work as pressure group to check quality of work, exploitation and corruption to bring transparency.

Suggestions for Effective implementation of NREGS

Planning and Implementation

- Planning with important stakeholders (see [Uttaranchal](#) example of planning with women), convergence of development programs and implementing programs that help to increase assets for community and farming
- District Project Coordinator be provided necessary manpower support for preparing technical estimates and perspective plan involving junior engineers and block level officials
- Using People's Biodiversity Registers ([PBR](#)) for planning eco-restoration work, and including NRM works in perspective plan (as in [West Bengal](#))

Awareness Generation, Training/Capacity Building

- Separate line of training, involving civil society organizations, *mahila mandals*, youth clubs, SHGs; use NGOs in training people and PR representatives
- awareness generation about the larger perspective, effective community mobilization, through posters and pamphlets

Technical Measurements and Payment of Wages, Social Audit and Accountability

- Involve people and credible NGOs in social audit and not leave it to Gram Sabhas; 15-20% budget earmarked for CSOs, who would contribute towards NREGS implementation
- Check corruption and contractor involvement in construction works
- Creation of unique citizen ID with biometric registration and authentication
- Using ration cards for giving fixed ration of one month to ensure timely payments and rations

Comparative Experiences

Madhya Pradesh

Issues confronting the implementation of NREGS (from [S.N.Pandeya](#), *MP Rural Livelihood Project, Bhopal*)

In Madhya Pradesh, where NREGS is under implementation in 18 districts, it was found that people's awareness about the scheme is low, NREGS is seen by people as providing labour locally, whereas decisions are taken by Sarpanch and Secretary. There is lack of transparency, jobs cards are kept by Secretary and people above 60 years have not been provided job cards.

Formation of women SHGs and issue of corruption in NREGS (from [D. Narandranath](#), *PRADAN, New Delhi*)

An intervention of nine months resulted in the formation of SHGs by involving community members and further rapport building with them helped in formation of women SHGs. The SHGs participated in NREGS in full strength and got their job cards. While, inspecting the job cards, it was found that against work of 15-20 days, the job cards were filled for 95-100 days. Children below 4-7 years were shown as workers while people aged 18-24 did not get to work.

Tribal Baiga community opts out of NREGS (from [Pramel Gupta](#), *Samavesh, Society for Development & Governance, Bhopal*)

Households of Baiga tribal community in Balaghat district have been provided job cards, yet they were not found working under NREGS. These people need daily wages against the work done, but delayed release of payment discouraged them from joining NREGS works. Hence there is a need to mainstream such households into the scheme by assuring timely payments of wages.

From [Rahul Banerjee](#), *Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath, Indore*

Importance of Awareness in Demand for Employment

The data on NREGS implementation reveals that in MP, a small number of applications are being made for demanding work and the number of works taken up as compared to the number of job cards are small. Some districts do not have any work at all. The Madhyanchal Forum conducted a Padyatra, called Rozgar Samvad Yatra for generating awareness on social audit, a key instrument for implementing NREGS.

Social Audit through Rozgar Samvad Yatra throws up issues in Job Card distribution

In some districts, there were cases of more job cards than number of families. At some places people were asked to pay money for job cards and photographs to be pasted on the job cards. Again at some places, panchayat functionaries and staff keep the job cards with them instead of giving them to the beneficiaries. Lack of timely measurement and estimation of work by accredited engineers also led to payment delays.

Few Applicants, no Acknowledgement of Applications and other Violations

People in some districts had not received acknowledgement of their application for work. It was also found that no unemployment allowance were not paid, few workers were engaged in view of harvest season, and filing application for the work was done after completion of work. High use of machines, absence of muster rolls and attendance on loose sheets of paper, and absence of mandatory facilities like drinking water, first aid box, crèche at the worksites was also observed.

Payments on Collective Basis lead to equal wages for unequal work

Social auditors found a practice, where without measuring the work of individual labourers, they were given wages on a collective basis, resulting in equal wage distribution. This was despite the fact that certain labourers deserved more as they work harder compared to others. There are issues in measuring earth work on individual basis which is causing such problems.

Samvad Yatras with Chants in Hindi generate Awareness (from [Mahi Pal](#), Haryana Institute of Rural Development, Karnal)

During Rozgar Guarantee Samvad Yatra, chanting in Hindi was adopted to create awareness about the functional aspects of NREGS. The [chant](#) [transcribed in English] reads: provision of work, it's a right to work, every family to get work for 100 days, and NREGS intends to develop local resources like water and forest. Submitting application for job cards to the Panchayats, get job cards to apply for work, and provision of basic facilities be made at the worksite.

Orissa

Structural problems in implementing NREGS (from [Pramod Kumar Pradhan](#), Agragamee, Bhubaneswar)

In some surveyed districts, problems in measurement of volume of work has led to loss of due wages to the labourers. Measurement has been the monopoly of professionals and general people have been kept uninvolved in this aspect. In view of workload and geographical factors, it is natural that inadequate number of engineers are unable to perform their job well.

Wage fixation under OREGS for earth work and information percolation to the community level (from [Debasis Mohapatra](#), Oxfam (India) Trust, Kolkata)

Under the OREGS, the government has enhanced the minimum wages. For 100 cubic feet soil digging, the rate has been revised to Rs. 100 from Rs. 50 for normal soil, for compact soil, it has been revised to Rs. 135 from Rs. 67 and for hard soil it is Rs. 210, a double of the earlier rate. This vital information needs to be percolated and advocating their rights would bring change.

Distance being an impediment to avail work (from [Soumen Ray](#), United Nations World Food Programme, Bhubaneswar)

Though the NREGA act provides, the labourers would get work within five kms. from their home, without the knowledge of measuring distance they travel around 7-8 kms., some even travel for about 15 kms. to get work. Traveling to such a distance becomes tougher than the job itself. It is felt, the labourers could get a better wage, if they migrate to a nearby town.

Role of NGOs in issue of Job Cards in Keonjhar district (from [Dr. Nilakantha Panigrahi](#), ICSSR Institute (NCDS), Bhubaneswar)

In Keonjhar district, out of 112 households, 21 BPL card holders received NREGS job cards. Efforts by NGOs to improve ground situation in relation to NREGS is on. Though the act stipulates social audit, the ground situation has to be made conducive by preliminary work by NGOs. RTI also has to be used to create right conditions for implementation of the NREGS.

Rajasthan

Wages from NREGS and achieving Millennium Development Goals (from [Krishna Kumar](#), CECOEDCON, Jaipur)

Eradication of poverty is unachievable in the framework of wage rate fixed by NREGS. As the sole source of guaranteed employment for poor families, it is therefore necessary to increase the wage rate. Calculation of minimum wages in Rajasthan shows that one family gets Rs. 7300 for 100 days employment and averaging it per day comes to only Rs. 20, which is far below the average income of Rs. 45 (one dollar) per person, a stipulation of UN MDG 1.

West Bengal

From [Dr. Ashok Sircar](#), *Loka Kalyan Parishad, Kolkata*

Issues in NREGS implementation

The incidence job cards holders is 85-90%, people seen to be renting job cards to get a share of the earning, in some districts number of people applying for job is less, Panchayats have failed to make action plan on execution of work, manipulation of job cards with respect to man days done by political leaders, no clarity over earth works, and unemployment allowance not being paid.

NREGS implementation in Bankura, Birbhum, N. Dinajpur, Murshidabad & Jalpaiguri

These districts have made good progress by undertaking works such as pond re-excavation, nursery and social forestry and repair of village roads. In Murshidabad, availability of work was less, in Jalpaiguri, identification of work became a problem due to concentration of privately leased tea gardens. Surveyors also found little concern for work quality, un-involvement of Gram Sansad in work identification, and lack of awareness about the work volume vs. wage.

Seasonal nature of works in NREGS implementation

In S. Dinajpur, Malda and Murshidabad, Purulia, Birbhum, W. Midnapore and Bankura districts the timing of the work under NREGS coincided with monsoon thus badly affecting earth works. In districts where the rainfall was less, earth work was undertaken to provide employment to the people. In no instance, people were found to be keeping track of the man days they have worked under the NREGS.

Uttaranchal

From [Chhaya Kumar](#), *HARC, Dehradun*

Himalayan Action Research Centre (HARC) intervention in perspective plan formulation with involvement of women

HARC experimented and facilitated the preparation of perspective plan by involving Panchayat and women, NGOs and government representatives. This participatory exercise identified problems, set priorities, and assessed technical feasibility of the work. The plan was approved by Gram Sabha and included work estimation, cost and man days involved. The women's demand for water tank construction to solve water problem was taken up as a priority in Siroli Panchayat.

Women involvement in NREGS Implementation and Vigilance in Chamoli

In Pursadi village, woman Pradhan has taken initiative to form a *Nigrani Samiti*. This women majority committee has developed a mechanism for social audit and it looks after the work being done and the payment to the workers is being done after the approval of the *Nigrani Samiti*.

Haryana

From [Puran Singh Yadav](#), *Development and Panchayats Department, Government of Haryana, Chandigarh*

NREGS implementation in SIRSA district

An important aspect of NREGS implementation in Sirsa district of Haryana has been timely disbursement of wage to labourers, as in the 70 works undertaken there, timely (weekly) disbursement was done by adopting due procedure of estimations, sanctions and measurements.

Role of State Government in removing Technical Difficulties

Haryana government has allowed Deputy Commissioners to prepare a list of 50 engineers to assist GPs in implementation of RD projects. These engineers are to assist in preparation of estimates, execution, measurements and wage distribution. Junior Engineers and SDO (PR) at the block level and Executive Engineer (PR) at the district level are to extend all help to the District Project Coordinator.

Use of folk media to generate awareness about NREGS ([Manju Panwar](#), ESDI, Karnal)

Folk media (*nukkad natak*) has been an effective medium to generate awareness among the illiterates, as they easily understand and enjoy it. This medium was used to make people aware about Gram Sabha meeting. It led to a rise in women participation and even the women raised social issues like decline in sex ratio, bad quality of ration and anganwadi centres. This has helped people in differentiating between Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat.

Bihar

NREGS implementation in Bihar ([Shalini Kumar](#), PARD, Nawadah)

In Bihar, Panchayati Raj functionaries especially women are very less informed about NREGA. Initially, the act covered 23 districts for NREGS implementation, while the need was for 38 districts. The NREGA guidelines were in English, which took time to be published in Hindi and caused delay in implementation.

Uttar Pradesh

From [Anurag Mishra and JN Singh](#), UPVAN, Lucknow

NREGS implementation in 22 districts

There is lack of commitment in the implementation of NREGS, state level guidelines have not been issued, 75 per cent work under NREGA is being implemented by the government officials. The need for the work is identified by government officials, perspective plans have not been prepared by PRIs, PRIs are unaware of their role in the NREGS and are following the instructions by respective district authorities.

Work under NREGS and the problems encountered

The re-excavation and construction of ponds was undertaken at Panchayat level on orders of the state government without consulting the Gram Sabha or the Panchayat. Shortage of technical personnel leads to measurement delays, and late payment of wages. Now state government has initiated appointment of technical personnel at GP level but their training is still an issue to be dealt with.

Little role for Gram Panchayats in Planning and Social Audit

In Uttar Pradesh Gram Sabha is only a recommendatory body rather than being 'mandatory' one with little or no authority to enforce its decisions. Panchayats are not substantively involved in perspective planning, and are not empowered to take important decisions. Since Gram Sabha works as a recommendatory body the Gram Pradhan takes little interest in attending/conducting meetings. In such a situation Social Audit is a mock exercise.

Karnataka

Shortcomings in Biometric Registration and Authentication (from [Amlan Biswas](#), Deputy Commissioner, Haveri)

Application of biometric devices in tracking the workers involved in NREGS is a way of increasing transparency and reducing leakages. In Haveri, as an innovation, biometric device is being used

to improve the health care facilities and map the requirement of medicines and vaccines during emergencies and to control epidemics.

Related Resources

Recommended Documentation

People's Biodiversity Registers (from [Krishna Srinivasan](#), ECONET, Pune and [Jeevan Mohanty](#), Research Associate)

http://www.enviswb.gov.in/ENV/env_drupal/?q=node/254

PBRs are documents of people's knowledge of biodiversity and their knowledge of its usage, trade, besides efforts for its conservation and sustainable utilization

Citizen ID with Biometric Registration and Authentication (from [Kris Dev](#), Lifeline to Business, Chennai)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biometric>

Citizen card to prevent identity theft using technologies that measure and analyze human physical and behavioural characteristics for authentication

From [Debasis Mohapatra](#), Oxfam (India) Trust, Kolkata

Orissa Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (OREGS)

<http://orissagov.nic.in/panchayat/oregs-2006.pdf> (Size: 106 KB)

OREGS, created under NREGA 2005, aims to provide guaranteed 100 days work, to create durable community assets and strengthen livelihood resource base of rural poor

Orissa Rural Employment Guarantee Act (OREGA)

<http://orissagov.nic.in/panchayat/oregs%202006-1.pdf> (Size: 216 KB)

OREGA stipulates not less than 100 days guaranteed employment to every household in rural areas whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work

Right to Information Act, 2005

<http://persmin.nic.in/RTI/welcomeRTI.pdf> (Size: 389 KB)

The Act provides for citizen to access information under public authorities in order to promote transparency and accountability in the working of public authorities

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (from [S.N. Pandeya](#), MPRLP, Bhopal)

<http://nrega.nic.in/rajaswa.pdf> (Size: 5.29 MB)

The Act provides for enhancement of livelihood security of the households in rural areas by providing 100 days guaranteed employment in every financial year

Muster Roll (from [Mandakini Devasher](#), UNDP, New Delhi)

http://nrega.nic.in/MRD/MR_watch.htm

It is essentially a labour attendance register, pertaining to a particular worksite and a particular period, also used as a receipt to claim funds and for the payment of wages

NREGS Operational Guidelines (from [Puran Singh Yadav](#), Development and Panchayats Dept., Govt. of Haryana, Chandigarh)

http://nrega.nic.in/NREGA_guidelines.pdf (Size: 565 KB)

The guidelines are a descriptive document detailing the basic tenets, scope and approach for scheme's implementation, and also describes work related stipulations

Rozgar Samvad Yatra (from [Rahul Banerjee](#), Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangathan, Indore)
<http://www.righttofoodindia.org/data/madhyanchal06rozgarsambadyatraconceptnote.doc> (Size: 85.5 KB)

The campaign aimed to strengthen implementation of NREGA through mobilizing and informing people about rules, provisions and the relationship between NREGA and RTI

Recommended Organizations

From [Debasis Mohapatra](#), OXFAM (India) Trust, Kolkata

Panchayati Raj Department, Govt. of Orissa

<http://www.orissagov.nic.in/panchayat/default.asp>

It is the support department of Govt. of Orissa for PR and is also responsible for the overall planning and implementation of Rural Employment Guarantee Programme

Ministry of Rural Development (MORD), Government of India, New Delhi

<http://www.rural.nic.in/>

This Ministry is responsible for rural development programmes and has enacted NREGA and has issued Operational Guidelines and instructions for the implementation of the Act

Council for Promotion and Advancement of Rural Technology (CAPART), New Delhi,

(from [Dr. Ashok Sircar](#), Loka Kalyan Parishad, Kolkata)

<http://capart.nic.in>

CAPART, an autonomous body, facilitates government-NGO partnership, coordinates anti-poverty training programmes, promotes community initiatives.

Himalayan Action Research Centre (HARC), Dehradun, (from [Chhaya Kunwar](#), HARC, Dehradun)

<http://www.harcindia.org>

Promotes sustainable development, facilitates local capacity building to bring self-reliance & entrepreneurship, empowers CBOs to regenerate eco-systems.

PRADAN, New Delhi (from [D. Narendranath](#), PRADAN, New Delhi)

<http://www.pradan.net>

Follows a broad "area saturation approach", promotes, strengthens livelihood for rural poor, enhancing their capabilities and linking them with markets and banks.

AGRAGAMEE, Bhubaneswar (from [Pramod Kumar Pradhan](#), Agragamee, Bhubaneswar)

<http://www.agragamee.org>

Initiates people-centered, self-sustaining development along with issue based approach, aims total human development, and social change.

CASA, New Delhi, (from [Mahi Pal](#), SIRD, Karnal)

<http://www.casa-india.org>

It has pan-Indian presence, and focuses on building indigenous people's organizations, promotes people-centered, people-owned, participatory development.

Madhyanchal Forum, Madhya Pradesh (from [Rahul Banerjee](#), Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangathan, Indore)

<http://www.righttofoodindia.org/data/madhyanchal06rozgarsambadyatraconceptnote.doc>

A platform for collective action, comprising of 18 organizations working in 11 districts in MP and focuses on human rights, governance, livelihood, and disaster management.

Recommended Past Consolidated Replies

Implementing NREGA in Backward Districts, from NIPFP, New Delhi, 15 December 2005
Available at: <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr-public/cr-se-decn-13120501-public.pdf> (Size: 166 KB)
Seeks to find ways of implementing the NREGA, 2005 in backward districts with the involvement of panchayats

NREGA vigilance by local groups, from Lok Sabha Secretariat and from Social Watch, New Delhi, 3 April 2006
Available at: <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr-public/cr-se-emp-decn-03040601-public.pdf> (Size: 252 KB)
Advice for vigilance/reporting mechanisms regarding schemes under NREGA, also key indicators regarding implementation of NREGA Act.

Database of resource support institutions for EGS, from UNDP, New Delhi, 16 May 2006
Available at: <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr-public/cr-se-emp-decn-gen-15050601-public.pdf> (Size: 323 KB)
Referrals of institutions having experience and expertise in supporting the implementation of employment programs.

Responses in Full

D. Narendranath, PRADAN, New Delhi

I write from PRADAN. We work to promote livelihoods for the rural poor and work in MP, Chhatisagrh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Orissa, Bengal and Bihar. A major chunk of the 200 NREGA districts fall in these States. I got this mail a couple of days back from my colleague who is the Team Leader of a PRADAN Project and thought that it might be relevant to the general discourse here.

The village cum panchayat in question is about 10 kms from the Tehsil head quarter in a district in MP. The village has geographical spread of over 14 kms (diameter). In a total population of 3000 of which more than 80% of the population belongs to SC-ST community, and the backward communities have 100-150 households. The STs are Gond, Kol, and Baiga. The SC mainly consist of Kori, Kumhar, Cobbler and Mehtar castes. The spread of households is such that the village looks sparse and at a time only 3-4 houses can be seen. It is hard to listen to neighbours in critical times because of the distant and dispersed housing pattern. It is a remote village and mostly people travel on foot to attend market nearby. Its village boundary starts from a kachcha road, which joins National Highway to its north.

The main occupation of the village community in general, and SC-ST in particular, is farming which supports their life for 4-5 months. For rest of the period they rely on wages available in villages and adjoining areas. Wood cutting and selling it in the nearby small town @ Rs 10/- per head load also contribute to their livelihoods in a significant manner. For this they travel 15-25 kms daily. The topography of the village is highly undulating and many hillocks are seen in village making the land slopy and unproductive. They take rainfed wheat and maize in the sloppy land.

A large area of the village land is wasteland along with barren hillocks. The Sarpanch is from the Gond tribe who is not literate while the Secretary is from a general caste.

PRADAN intervened in this village 9 months back and gradually formed 10 SHGs. Before entering the village we had not consulted the Sarpanch as we usually do. The villagers were relatives of women from other villages where we have been working for last 2 years we did not face much difficulty in SHG formation. Gradually we developed a good rapport with the village community and formed women's SHGs. When NREGS started our SHG members participated in full strength. Most of these families got manual work for 15-20 days only. They were made to sign on the muster rolls simultaneously and promised wages. After 2-3 months they got their job cards and wages. All the SHG members showed the job cards to us. Along with villagers we found that almost all the job cards were filled and they showed that the household has already been provided 95-100 days of work. The work has been done only for 15-20 days but in records full working days have been shown and money is shown as utilized. The job cards are showing payment made for 95-100 days to the cardholders. The children in some of these families of ages 4, 6 and 7 years have been shown as having worked but with ages 18, 20 and 24 years of age.

The SHG leaders along with some male members of the village lodged a complaint with the local SDM and met him in his office chamber. The SHG members showed their job cards to the SDM. He listened to them and personally consoled them and promised to take stern action against the culprits. For 15 days he kept quiet, but when the problem appeared in local newspaper he constituted an enquiry committee headed by an officer to look into the matter. As per the villagers the concerned officer is one of the culprits. The committee headed by him along with others like the Sarpanch visited one member's house and threatened to put her and similar families in jail as they had lodged a written complaint with the SDM. The same complaint letter was also sent to the CEO, Jila Panchayat, Collector and Commissioner. The CEO of Zilla Panchayat also did not pay much attention to this and only said that he would look into it. After two months nothing has been done in this regard and villagers feel threatened by Sarpanch and also frustrated.

This is the first time that villagers under the leadership of SHGs lodged written complaint about anything with the SDM. But with no concrete action on their complaint they are losing hope. The local media is also with the administration as they also enjoy the benefits of all the development programmes.

Pravas Ranjan Mishra, CYSD, Bhubaneswar

In response to the query of Vinod Kumar on NREGS, my experience in the field shows:

- The works are mostly road construction and very little attention is given to creation of community assets
- Works are moderated by outside contractors
- Social audits are very rarely taking place.

The question is who will facilitate the process of social audit and do the panchayat members have knowledge on social audit process. I think this social audit in NREGS is becoming a dream for the community.

Pramod Kumar Pradhan, Agragamee, Bhubaneswar

I am working with Advocacy and Action Research Unit of Agragamee, Orissa and sharing my personal experience on implementation of NREGS in Orissa. Mr Vinodji from Maithri has raised some pertinent points on this issue. In fact, in Orissa, we have lots of structural problem at various problems in implementing NREGA. One of the major problems at field level, especially on worksite is measurement of volume of work. The executive engineers/ engineers working under this scheme would be able to perform the task given to them properly because of workload as well as geographical factors. This has led to severe problems and people are loosing their due wages due to lack of timely measurement. That too, this measurement/ technical part has been the main domain of monopoly for these so called professionals and people are kept in distance. So also budgeting part of the self of works/ project, I would like to put forward following suggestions:

1. To reduce the workload and make technical part within the reach of common people, a cadre of animator chosen from the community at GP level should be groomed and necessary training and capacity building inputs should be given. By this way we can create a group of barefoot technician at village level who would help their community in various way. If they will work for NREGS, their remuneration could be covered from the concerned project.
2. Social audit is a process and not an even or postmortem work. It must be an empowering tool at peoples hand. There should be proper awareness programme for people along field exercise (may be mock social audit to learn...) regarding the process of social audit. In initial phase voluntary organisations/ CSOs can facilitate this process with community so that people themselves could be able to perform this process on a regular basis. Simple IEC materials should be developed in preferable pictorial form.
3. If possible, labour committee/ forum should be formed at village level on broad consensus basis. They will assess availability, requirement of labour for both demand and supply side. They can also work as a kind of pressure group at field level to check quality of work, check exploitation, corruption; and represent and take active role in social audit process.

S.N. Pandeya, MPRLP, Bhopal

If we look at the laudable objectives of the NREGA, it has the mandate to provide 100 days minimum employment to a member for each household, whoever demands work. Within the idea of providing labour employment to the poor community there is a much larger concern i.e. to generate assets which help people in improving their livelihoods. Nevertheless, the ground reality is quite different, if we look into whether the programme is really taking place in the true spirit or not. There are certain issues which we are coming across in Madhya Pradesh, where the programme is under implementation in 18 districts, and may cover many more in the coming financial year. These are:

1. Identification and priority of works is not as per the need of the Gram Sabha
2. People's awareness regarding the provisions of the act is quite low; villagers only see it as an opportunity to provide labour locally, with most of the decisions being taken by the Sarpanch and Secretary
3. Transparency at various levels is not visible as intended under the Act
4. Poor record keeping, thereby invisibility or low visibility of issues like demand of work vs. supply, compensation for the unemployment etc.
5. In many cases people above the age of sixty years have not been provided job cards
6. There are cases where the Job cards are kept by the Secretary

7. Lack of transparency in payments to the workers/labour
 8. No facilities to the workers like provision for first-aid, drinking water facilities etc.
-

Pramel Gupta, Samavesh, Society for Development & Governance, Bhopal

The main focus of NREGS work is mainly based on creation of employment to poor and vulnerable, with developing panchayat infrastructure and productive assets for community.

I want to share my experience which I had during visit of Balaghat district of Madhya Pradesh, where I visited some remote area households of Baiga(primitive) tribal community. I found that all Baiga families have Job Cards, but they didn't work under NREGS programme, even though they belong to poorest category. The reason behind this is they need daily work and also payment against that work. According to them panchayat releases payment after 20-25 days of work completion, sometimes even after more than a month for the work done.

During household visits I found very little grain (2-5 Kg.), malnourished children, poor health status in majority of the families. Their main occupation is hunting and selling of Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP), mainly items made out of bamboo. From this they earn daily Rs.10-15 but get payment as per their requirement.

This community is not benefiting from NREGS. I am therefore interested in knowing as to how these kind of households all over India can be mainstreamed into above scheme, such types of communities are not working in NREGS just because of delay in payment. Is there any provision or can be made to protect the right of such community so that they can get payment against their work weekly or daily?

One example of flexibility given by Panchayat is - Baiga community has ration cards from which they can avail fixed ration of one month, many times in small quantities as per their convenience.

Krishna Srinivasan, ECONET, Pune

I have been following this discussion on NREGS. I would also like to bring in one more question vis-à-vis the same issue. One of the ways of helping the community, especially the Gram Sabha to plan the work under the scheme, is to utilise People's Biodiversity Registers (PBRs). I was wondering whether anyone in this forum has any experiences in this, and also whether PBRs would be a tool to utilise for planning eco-restoration work.

Kris Dev, Lifeline to Business, Chennai

Pramel's points are very valid. The poorest of poor, expect daily payment for the work done, for their daily survival and not after 30 days.

Tracking of work and automatic payment for work done on a daily basis (even if as part advance) is possible, thro' post office account. Full payment settlement can be done, after completion of the work. Cash handling must be avoided to eliminate graft.

For this creation of unique Citizen ID with biometric registration and authentication is a must, to avoid siphoning of funds. Successful pilots have been done and feasibility demonstrated (Manthan Award 2006 has recognised this initiative - www.manthanaward.com).

Vinod Vyasulu, Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, Bangalore

In our study in Karnataka, we found that panchayat members advance the salary--a lower rate--and they pick up the wage when it is received--often after a delay. Why cannot an imprest amount be kept with the Gram Panchayat for such purposes?

Krishna Kumar, CECOEDECON, Jaipur

1. The key words are MINIMUM of 100 days of employment and MINIMUM wages - then how come even minimum wages are being denied (or delayed) in NREGS. My assertion is that minimum wages MUST be PAID and on time.
2. How would a salaried person, whether in private or public sector react if his/her monthly salary is delayed or deducted salary at the end of the month on the grounds of quality or quantum of the work?
3. NREGS would not help India reduce poverty or hunger in the context of goal no 1 of UN MDG whose Target 1 is to: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day

Indicator:

1. Proportion of population below \$1 (1993 PPP) per day (as per World Bank)

The goal would not be met even in those districts where NREGS is currently operational. A simple back of the envelope calculation would prove this point in an area where NREGS is the sole source of guaranteed employment. This is further constrained by the fact that NREGS provides job to only one individual in the family and poor governance of the scheme makes matter worse (delayed /deducted payments and the works!)

100 days x Rs 73 (minimum wages in Rajasthan, for instance) = Rs. 7300

Average per day income: Rs 20 (even if full wages are paid!)

(UN MDG no.1 target is to halve the proportion of people with earning of Rs 45 or 1 dollar by 2015). This is possible only when daily income is increased!

Debasis Mohapatra, OXFAM (India) Trust, Kolkata

Govt. of Orissa has come out with a new policy OREGS (Orissa Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme)

1. This OREGS has been created under NREG Act 2005, section-4.
2. It is for providing guaranteed employment opportunities of 100 days to all families residing in villages. It is right of every family to get the employment opportunity.
3. Village infrastructure development like road, irrigation (pond etc.), tree plantation, drought proofing are the focus of this initiative.
4. Each family has to register at Gram Panchayat (GP) and will be eligible to get a job card. Every major of the family will request Gram Panchayats for non- skilled works. After 15 days of

giving application to Gram Panchayat / Programme Officer, if they can not provide job then unemployment allowance will be available.

5. This will be carried out by GP/ Panchayat Samiti/ Zila Parishad & 50% undistributed money has to be spend by GP.

6. All works to be carried out in Panchayats has to be finalized in Pallisabha & works to be carried out by Panchayat samiti/ Zila Parishad/line department has to be finalized meetings of Panchayat samiti/ Zila Parishad.

7. For making the works transparent, free from corruption & responsive the accomplished work will have social audit as per law.

8. Details of all accomplished work will be displayed & made public by the executing authority/institution & RTI Act will be eligible at each level to get information on execution.

9. All information about the programme is available at Panchayat Raj Department website of the Govt. of Orissa (<http://www.orissagov.nic.in/panchayat/default.asp>)/Ministry of Rural Development (MORD), Govt. of India (<http://www.rural.nic.in/>)

Nineteen out of 30 districts of Orissa are part of this initiative, covering a population of 43 lakhs approx..

In recent past Govt. of Orissa has also enhanced the minimum wages. for 10'x10'x10' = 100 cft (2.83 cum) soil digging existing rate was Rs.50.00 which enhanced to Rs.100.00 for normal soil, existing rate was Rs.67.00 which enhanced to Rs.135.00 for compact soil, existing rate was Rs.105.00 which enhanced to Rs.210.00 for hard soil.

The above information is very vital, but information percolation to community and advocating for rights can only bring change in life of poor.

Banamali Dash, NIPDIT, Phulbani (*response 1*)

Most of us have noticed the real policy practice gap and ground realities in implementation of NREGS. No doubt the NREGS is an appropriate tool/stepping stone for Poverty Reduction, ensuring Food Security, generating employment to unemployment people, help people in improving their livelihoods and reduce the distress migration. etc. In short, it is very much focused towards Reduction of Poverty- Reduction Gender Disparities - Checking Migration - Prevention of HIV/AIDS spreading

Unless regular and close monitoring the laudable objectives of NREGA will double the drudgery of people and increase the level of corruptions. I think, SOCIAL AUDIT at Village, GP, Block and District level are the only answer.

Mass awareness about the changed wage rate, distribution of benefits among men and women including equal wage , formation of social audit team and building their capacity for social audit - are some things that are very much required. The team needs to be equipped with some tools and made aware about their role etc.

Role of Social Audit Committee in the process:

The committee will only play the role of facilitation and compilation. It will not take any decision or influence any views of any people. It is expected to play the following role:

- Environment building on social audit
- Collect and prepare list of information people need from time to time (any thing any person may demand)
- Facilitate to collect information from concerned department, office or agency using RTI Act.
- Facilitate transparency in programme implementation (display of as much information as possible, keep the records for public inspection at any point of time and collect feedback from the people)
- Transcribe the information into people's language (many times it is difficult for the people to understand government language or technical words)
- Sorting and analysis of information
- Sharing the findings with respective person and collect his/her opinion, feedbacks and reactions. This may be done collectively in small groups or with individual if the person wants
- Compilation of all findings (this may be done work wise, head wise or group wise as decided by the people)
- Presentation of findings (a particular day may be decided to present the findings before all including implementing agency, administration, people's representatives and other stake holders. This is called Social Audit day.
- Record their views and suggestions and help implementer to rectify or change the process wherever required and sort out if there is any discrepancies in the work as per suggestion

Public Documents for Social Audit

- Copy of case records including work order, budget allocation, sanction letter, muster roll, MB book, bills and vouchers, plan and estimate etc.
- Copy of circulars, orders, list of beneficiaries, detail of schemes, provisions and person wise allotment
- Copy of registers and records maintained, copy of minutes of meetings held
- Papers in support of any decisions taken and selection made
- Copy of detail of process of work to be followed

Mandakini Devasher, UNDP, New Delhi

As you all know, social audit by Gram Panchayats of all NREGA works is a key requirement of the Act, aimed at ensuring accountability and transparency in the implementation of the scheme. Verification of muster rolls is the first and most vital step in the social audit process. The Ministry of Rural Development has posted guidelines for Muster Roll Verification on their official website at http://nrega.nic.in/MRD/MR_watch.htm. The Guidelines provide step by step instructions for the verification of muster rolls on a completed worksite include formats for verification sheets of work sites, labour statements, and 'live' muster rolls.

Ramit Basu, UNDP, New Delhi

I would again like to take this platform to raise a very pertinent concern regarding the nature of social audits being conducted. I strongly believe that more than social audits (which is certainly vital), awareness generation and effective community mobilization should be the area of focus right now.

I have not seen people discussing anything during social audits except wages and wages. Is it only wages that NREGA is all about? We have to understand the rationale behind the Act which

enables people to take charge of their future and create sustainable assets in their region which would help them regain their lost livelihoods.

If it has to be only wages then why would a villager wait for Rs. 50 or 70/- in a village which again is uncertain and why not would he or she migrate to the nearby town or city to fetch a slightly more amount. Hence if it has to curb seasonal migration (which is one of the most important objective of NREGA) and encourage people to stay in their villages, then they need to be made aware about the larger perspective of the programme. Certainly it may not be possible for the Government machinery to go into the nitty gritty and hence the development agencies need to play a more vital role. There has to be every effort to make people aware about the economics behind it and build an amicable relation between the Gram Sabha and the Gram Panchayat.

No where in the social audit or during any public hearing, Gram Sabha participation in selection of works is emphasised or even if it is, there is no follow up on that. Whereas the NREGA guidelines states very clearly that Gram Sabhas are supposed to approve the shelf of work and it will be a participatory approach. I do recognize that there are teething problems but then they need to be overcome, if NREGA is supposed to prove itself as radically different from the others. The promptness of the Government machinery in ensuring hassle free distribution of wages is also important and some amount of autonomy as well strengthening of the Gram Panchayat administration in this regard is urgently required.

The next important issue is that through asset creation, there has to every effort to revitalise sustainable agriculture which have been the source of livelihood and most importantly food security for marginal communities.

[Subhankar Tripathi](#), CYSD, Bhubaneswar

Benefits of social audit process are clearly delineated by Mr. Das (NIPIDIT, Orissa) but my concern still persists regarding the issues raised by Mr. Pravas Mishra (CYSD, Orissa) that who will steer this cumbersome process of social audit in the community. The onus lies on the Panchayati Raj representatives to carry out this process. Do the Panchayat Raj representatives have the essential prerequisites i.e., knowledge, time and resources to do the needful and more over gain the support of the bureaucrats? Without taking these facts into consideration it would be anomalous to say that social audit is the only way out.

[Rahul Banerjee](#), Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangathan, Indore

Banamali's point about the importance of social audits is well taken. Such audits will bring out the reasons for the NREGS not achieving its goals. For instance, the data uploaded to the NREGS website reveals a woefully small number of applications being made for work and an even smaller number of works actually being started in Madhya Pradesh as compared to the large number of people registered and issued job cards. Four districts in fact do not have any work at all. The Madhyanchal Forum, a federation of NGOs and mass organisations in Madhya Pradesh recently conducted a padayatra and social audit of the NREGS implementation in the 18 districts of the state in the first fortnight of December 2006 to unearth the reasons behind this anomaly. The results summarised in a brief preliminary report of this social audit provide a shocking picture of the reality that actually prevails on the ground.

The social audit conducted during the Rozgar Samvad Yatra brought out some alarming findings like:

1. Lack of information and awareness on NREGA among the community. The labourers at some worksites did not even know that they were working under NREGA.
2. Lack of information on provisions of NREGA among the sarpanch and panchayat representatives. A need was felt in many places for training and capacity enhancement programs for the sarpanch and the secretary.
3. In most of the districts people have not received the receipt of their application for work.
4. Out of the 100 days as stated in the Act people have been able to receive only 10 -25 days work in many districts.
5. In a district the Yatra found that people were asked to pay Rs 100 for the job card which as per the Act is to be provided free.
6. Again in some places people complained that they even paid Rs.25/- for the photograph to be pasted in the job card which as per the Act was to be taken free.
7. In most of the places the Sarpanch kept the job card of the beneficiaries instead of issuing the job card to them.
8. As per the provisions of the Act information pertaining to the Act has to be displayed at the panchayats and worksites. However during the yatra no such information display boards were seen both at the panchayats and the worksites.
9. In most places the works undertaken under the act were not as per the priority and were not decided by the people as per the provisions stated in the Act.
10. As per the Act provisions the payment is to be made within a week and should not exceed fortnight, however, in most of the places the payment was due for more than 15 days.
11. In most of the places there was no timely estimation and measurement of the work by the accredited engineers panel constituted by the state government.
12. In many places attendance was marked on loose sheets and muster rolls were absent from the worksite.
13. In many places evaluating engineers demanded commissions from the Sarpanch particularly in Raipura village in Dindori.
14. In violation of the provisions of the Act there was absence of mandatory facilities like drinking water, crèche, and first aid box at the worksite.
15. As per the provisions of the Act when wages are directly linked with the quantity of work the wage shall be paid as per the task rate fixed for the different types of work in accordance with the statutory minimum daily wage for an unskilled worker of Rs 61.37. In most of the places it was seen that the workers were working under a task rate that gave them daily wages that were between Rs 13 to 22 which is far lower than the statutory minimum wage.
16. In Barwani and Khandwa districts contractors were hired for execution of projects taken up by the gram panchayats, rather than executing the project under NREGA.
17. In Umariya district the allocation under the NREGA has been completely utilized and no fresh allocation has been made since June '06.
18. The unemployment allowance was not paid.
19. In a district incidence of fake job cards was witnessed. The number of job cards was more than the total number of families and there were cases of sale of job cards as well.

20. In Umariya district, the work started during the harvesting season due to which fewer workers were involved.

21. In some worksites machines were being used for 80% work which is much higher than the stipulated maximum of 60% labour to 40% machine ratio.

22. At some places the process of application filing for the work was done after the completion of work.

23. In Nalcha Block in Dhar district instead of individual measurement of work labourers were given wages on collective basis.

24. The work in most of the districts was not as per the priority in the Act. In many districts road construction was given more priority than NRM works.

25. The evaluation of the work in most of the places was done after the completion of the work on collective basis and equal wages were paid because of which labourers who actually worked harder suffered.

LEARNINGS FROM SOCIAL AUDIT

1. The entire process was the first of its kind in the state and attracted huge attention.
2. The Samvad Yatra was an eye opener for the community as well as the authorities. It raised the awareness among them to stand up for their rights.
3. The process brought out the collective spirit and voluntary efforts of all the stakeholders
4. The entire process witnessed effective participation and cooperation of the Panchayat and Rural Development department especially the circle officers.
5. The entire process witnessed effective participation and cooperation of voluntary organizations working in the state.
6. Both the print and electronic media effectively covered the entire event and promptly disseminated the findings for strengthening the implementation.
7. The communication team was very effective in communicating the provisions to the community through puppet shows and nukkad nataks.
8. The community showed keen interest in knowing the provisions and participated enthusiastically in the rallies to celebrate the coming of the NREGA.
9. All the stakeholders participated in the whole process and ownership was developed among them to strengthen the implementation process.

Dr. Ashok Sircar, Loka Kalyan Parishad, Kolkata

NREGA is implemented in 10 districts of West Bengal. These are N. Dinajpur, Purulia, Malda, S. Dinajpur, Murshidabad, Jalpaiguri, Bankura, Birbhum, West Medinipur and S. 24 Parganas. Various organizations are on the job to find out what is going on, and already a number of public hearings have taken place. the general findings are as follows:

1. Most (85-90%) of whoever has applied have received job cards. There has been no report of not knowing about the job card. And about 15-20% job cards are of people who would require them. They are "renting" the cards for a share of money.

2. There is a general feeling that getting a job card is all they have to do. In West Medinipur, Purulia, Malda, Murshidabad, and to some extent in other districts as well, number of people applying for job is less. There is a clear awareness gap.
3. In hundreds of instances, the Panchayats have failed to make a action plan of the works they want to execute. So the money has not come to the GPs. The Panchayat members do not know what they have to do in this regard.
4. Another often found observation is that the Job cards are kept with the local political leaders and it is they who show more number of days than has actually been worked by the person concerned.
5. There is a general delay in getting the wage, mostly due to lack of measurements in time. In many Panchayats Nirman Sahayak, a diploma engineer and a staff of the Panchayat is in charge of two Panchayats, that is causing delay.
6. Those Panchayats who have vigorously taken up implementation of NREGA find themselves on the receiving end since only Nirman Sahayak (a diploma civil engineer and a staff of the Gram Panchayat) is entitled to make measurements and he-she is finding it difficult to make so many measurements every week.
7. There has been tremendous lack of clarity on the schedule of earth removal for different types of soil, male-female worker, height of lift and distance of transport. Now this has been made clear but will take time to reach all concerned.
8. Very few Panchayats have made arrangements for baby keeping (creches), first aid, etc.
9. No news of any employment allowance paid yet by any district so far. At least few hundreds such applications have been made.
10. Three districts namely Bankura, Birbhum, and N. Dinajpur have made good progress so far in implementation. They have taken up in large numbers, pond re-excavation, nursery and social forestry and repair of village roads. However, Murshidabad having very little surplus land, and Jalpaiguri having very large concentration of tea gardens could not find what sorts of works to be considered.
11. There is absolutely no concern for quality of work particularly the aspect of generating productive assets.
12. Identification of works have not been done in Gram Sansad as was mandated. This is possibly another reason why understanding on NREGS is still quite low at the village level.
13. It is quite interesting that tea garden workers (750,000+) particularly sick and closed tea garden workers (100,000+) know and understand much more clearly about their rights under NREGA than others where as under the present system, all tea gardens are privately leased land where no such activity could be taken up.
14. People at work know that they are working under 100 days, and also know the wage but do not know how much work (volume) in a day would fetch them the wage.
15. In districts like N. and S. Dinajpur, as well as parts of Malda and Murshidabad, the shortage of normal availability of work is at time during July to November. This is also the time of monsoon, when doing any earth work is actually next to impossible. This year there has been nearly 30% less rainfall in these districts, so not much of a problem, but uncertainty remains. Purulia, Birbhum, West Medinipur, and Bankura may be a bit luckier in this respect, where despite monsoon, earth work could be done to shorten the crisis.
16. Not a single instance have been reported where people know about the particular scheme they are working and total number of person days allotted for it.

Lessons

1. The issue of social audit can not be left only to the Gram Sansad- Gram Sabha which are weak institutions at the moment. Social Audit Groups needs to be formed at each block with NGOs, College students, teachers etc. GOI has to consider a separate line of programming to institute such social audit processes. CAPART, an organ of MoRD (NREGS is also a programme of MoRD) should consider this as a programme intervention support. Only concurrent social audit could bring in desired results. The ACT should also be modified to include other process of social audit.
2. The scope of works under NREGA needs to expand to include other possibilities.
3. Focus of creating productive assets is totally missing except a lip service in the ACT. This needs to be brought in.
4. Panchayats' capacity building on NREGA needs to be supported. A separate line of programming could be thought of in this regard. This is going to be necessary for first two-three years or so.

Chhaya Kunwar, HARC, Dehradun

As Vinod Vyasulu rightly points out that bottom-up planning through the gram panchayat, with mandatory gram sabha approval is not in practice under NREGS. According to NREG Act, the perspective plan of each panchayat must be formulated to prepare the shelf of works and after the approval of gram sabha the annual plan should be prepared out of this perspective plan. Preparation of perspective plan is very important aspects of NREGA, as it promotes the bottom up planning and gives the opportunity to gram sabha members to prepare the plan according to their needs and priorities.

In Uttaranchal, Himalayan Action Research Centre (HARC), a voluntary organization, has done an experiment with 3 gram panchayats (Siroli, Rauligwad and Pursadi of Chamoli district) and facilitated the preparation of perspective plan of a panchayat for 5 years with active involvement of panchayat representatives, gram sabha members, CSOs and Govt depts.

The entire exercise was very participatory. Gram sabha members, gram panchayat members, technical staff of government and related line departments collectively prepared this perspective plan. Two gram sabha meetings were organized by panchayat to prepare this plan. Gram sabha members identified the problems and set the priorities for five years. The technical staff of the Govt. assessed the technical feasibility of the work to be undertaken and final plan was approved by gram sabha in second meeting. All the three panchayats finalized the works, on priority basis, to be done in the first year. The technical staff prepared the project after estimation of work to be done, total cost and man days involved. The gram sabha approved the annual plan and work has already been started in two projects in these panchayats. The participation of women in perspective planning was very enthusiastic and their demand for construction of water tank to meet the drinking water problem was the first work to be started by Siroli Panchayat.

Social audit is also one of the important issues, which needs to be clarified at every level. There are lots of ambiguities among citizens and panchayat representatives regarding the role of social audit committee. For e.g. who will be the members of this committee, will the members of this committee be paid for monitoring the work etc. In Pursadi village of Chamoli district in Uttaranchal, woman pradhan has taken the initiative to form a Nigrani samiti (monitoring committee) consisting of 05 members. More than 50 percent of committee members are women. They have developed a mechanism for social audit themselves. This nigrani samittee [*vigilance committee*] looks after the work being done and after getting the approval of all the members of nigrani samittee the payment is done to workers.

As there is still a lot of confusion and misunderstanding about the scheme at grassroot level, our experiences and learning suggests that Civil Society Organization (CSOs) can play a very important role in generating awareness among the gram sabha members and panchayat representatives. The CSOs can mobilize and educate them about their role in smooth implementation of NREGS, in facilitating the perspective plan preparation and in monitoring the implementation of NREGS. It's the state Govt's duty to organize orientation and training program for panchayat representatives of all the three levels and Govt functionaries involved in the implementation of the scheme to build their capacities in preparation of the perspective plan by involving civil society organisations.

Soumen Ray, World Food Programme, Bhubaneswar

As per the NREGA, the Gram Sabha should be used as a forum for sharing information about the scheme. It should also play a vital role in ensuring transparency and accountability. This includes verifying applications for registration, conducting social audits, verifying different records, etc. However it has been seen in Orissa that most of the villagers, and even the Gram Sabhas in some of the villages, are not aware about their role and about the scheme. These villages are basically hamlet villages and access to these villages is very difficult. The "demand and supply relationship" works where the information flow is clear. The problem with the villagers is that they are still not aware about certain norms of NREGA and that is the reason they don't demand. The scheme lays down that the basic features of the Act and the Scheme should be widely publicized in local languages. Special attention should be paid to the deprived areas and marginalized communities, critical aspects of the Act such as the process of registration and application, the entitlements of REGS workers, social audit and grievance redressal procedures, and the roles of different agencies must be communicated in clear and simple language. In real practice this is not happening in all parts of Orissa, especially in the western part.

It has been observed that some of the villagers are still not aware that they should get a job within five kms. Even if they know they do not have any way to measure the distance. In that case some of them travel around 7-8 kms to get the job. The question is that, if they will travel 7-8 kms for a job, why should not they migrate to a town, where they can get a better amount with the same labour. Some of them even complain that traveling 15 kms on a daily basis is a tough task and sometime it becomes tougher than the job itself. The women of the villages are even not aware about the crèche facilities under the scheme. Until and unless these nitty gritty things are not taken cared of, it will become difficult to get a better result from the scheme. The experts have to really think of solutions in this regard.

In Orissa there has been a lot of confusion in the village level about the norms of the scheme. The Civil Society Organization (CSOs) should play a vital role in creating awareness among the villagers in general and gram sabha members and panchayat representatives in particular.

Puran Singh Yadav, Development and Panchayats Dept., Govt. of Haryana, Chandigarh

The basic objective of NREGS is to enhance the livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The most important task is timely disbursement of wages to the labourers. Here, the intention and dedication of implementers in providing employment to the needy is important than the typical procedures of cost estimations and measurements. If we possess that all delays are cut.

I have personal experience of about one month of implementing NREGS in District Sirsa of Haryana .We could start some 70 works and ensure timely (weekly) disbursement of wages by adopting due procedure of estimations, sanctions and measurements.

The question raised by Mr. Vinod Kumar regarding procedures of cost estimations, administrative and technical sanctions thereby leading to the delays in implementation and wage payments is practical and very pertinent in the context of NREGS where delay in wage payments can lead to payment of compensation.

In this regard I would like to say that District Project Coordinator is responsible for coordinating the preparation of technical estimates and Sanctions vide para 3.3.8 of the operational guidelines of NREGS. The preparation of perspective plan is a detailed exercise which contains details of cost estimates, demand of labor and everything. The cost estimates are prepared after taking levels etc. The Junior Engineers and SDO(PR) at the Block level and XEN(PR) at the district level are to extend all help and programme officer have to coordinate. The post execution measurements can be done by the employment assistant to avoid the delays in payment of wages. Secondly, to facilitate the smooth implementation of NREGS, there is provision of accredited engineers for the purpose of assisting with estimation and measurement of works. It helps expedite cost estimations, execution, measurements and wage disbursements. Haryana Government has further allowed the DCs to prepare a panel of 50 engineers to assist the GPs in implementation of rural development projects. Therefore, the state government has very important role to play .It should also devise measurement norms, time lag between execution and measurement in order to reduce corruption and under payments and also to cut delays {para 6.3 1(d)}.The states should devise matrix of rates for the same task to cut delays in sanctions etc(para 6.3.3).For example the works related to digging of ponds, channels , plantation have very simple calculations and do not involve very high technical measurements. Estimation and design procedures should be standardized for the same kind of such to facilitate the expeditious implementation.

Social Audit is the lifeline of NREGS. The Gram Sabha is the forum of periodical social audit. The job seekers should be involved in it. All details pertaining to registration, issue of job cards, allotment of work, are discussed in this forum. The details pertaining to work executed, expenditure incurred, wage payments made, worksite facilities provided is given to ensure transparency and accountability. I observed the social audit procedure in District Sirsa.

When wages are paid on a piece rate basis, no time requirement is imposed and daily attendance should not be the condition for payment of wages{para 6.2.4(d)}.It means that NREGS can go side by side with agriculture activities. A labor can finish his/her share of work at any time of the day. However, the concept of labour bank has not yet taken roots in this part of the country.

The success of NREGS lies in intensive and wide publicity of various aspects of the scheme, capacity building of all stakeholders including PRIs, deployment of separate PO, empanelment of accredited engineers and employment assistant, dovetailing and convergence with the developmental programmes. Last but not the least the dedication and motivation of DPC/PO and PRIs is key to generation of employment opportunities for the rural people.

Where there is a will there is a way!

Mahi Pal, Haryana Institute of Rural Development, Karnal

Mr. Vinod Kumar has, inter alia, desired to know as how the shortage of staff is managed and other activities taken up along with the work of the NREGA. I would like to bring to the notice of members the fact that the Guidelines of the Scheme has answers to his concerns and subsequent instructions issued by the Ministry of Rural Development clarify most of the points. In fact, the perspective plan to be prepared under the Scheme is the *terra firma* of the activities to be undertaken by the Panchayats. The selection of the time of work is very important which has to be reflected in the Plan. If work is available in agricultural or other activities for the unemployed, then this Scheme does not have much significance. It is, among other things, meant to overcome stresses in terms of unemployment and poverty.

Personally, I feel that grey area is ignorance among the stakeholders about various aspects of the scheme. Hence, awareness generation has to be taken up in mission mode. This task, as mentioned by Mr. Soumen Ray, may be taken up by civil society organisations, Panchayats leaders, etc. Among many such efforts, one such effort has been made by CASA, New Delhi in association with its partners and others in MP. They have conducted Rozgar Guarantee Samvad yatra. A sample chant [*in Hindi*] during the yatra is as follows:

*"Har hath ko kaam do kaam ka pura daam do",
"Hum apna adhikar mangte nahi kisi se bhik mangte"
"Har parivaar ne thana hai sau din rozgar pana hai",
"Jal, jangal jameen ka vikas , rojgar guarantee se hai aas"
"Panchayat me arji lagao job card ki arzi lagao"
"pahle job card banao fir kaam ki arzi lagao"
"chaya pani aur dawai ho baccho ki dekhbhal wahi"*

[Provide work to all the hands at full wages; We demand our right, not any charity; Every family has resolved to get employment for a hundred days; Employment Guarantee has kindled hope for the development of water, forest and land resources; Submit application for job card in panchayat; Get your job card before putting an application for employment; Shade, drinking water, first aid and crèche are provided at the work site]

In addition to above, their awareness strategy is three- pronged:

1. Awareness: Our need
2. Information: Our Right
3. Participation: Our Duty

To get more information on these issues, members of this Community from MP, AP, Rajasthan, Maharashtra could provide more information on the implementation of the NREGA, which could in turn be used by development practitioners in other states.

Shalini Kumar, PARD, Nawadah (response 1)

It is good to discuss the matter and keep posting advices and suggestions to each other who do not need them so much as the people working in the field. The key to NREGA implementation lies in virtually moving physically to the villages and share everything with them. Traditional knowledge is in ample quantity but they have to fight babudom with limited written skills.

District officials will invest maximum time in implementing those programmes which are contract oriented and not to be too much bothered about NREGA implementation. It has to start from bottom of the society and awareness to the masses is the best way of its social audit. At this stage we should be more bothered about making the programme known to the people. I can

vouch for villages in Bihar those Panchayati Raj functionaries especially women are very less informed about the NREGA. The Panchayat election and the new Government had some teething problem initially. The problem was further compounded as it was to be implemented in all the 38 districts of Bihar where as Central Govt had passed the scheme only for 23 Districts. The guidelines passed were available in English which took time to be published in Hindi. NREGA stands passed as Act in the Parliament and poor people can not be denied the right to work because Panchayat election, State Election and the Parliament Election will be on due to democratic set up. It is high time that such routine matter of development should go on and working days available should not be wasted. I have few suggestions to make

(a) Existing SHG of BPL should be used for programme planning, job application in bulk of 14 to 15 and then payment in cheques through the bank to avoid any kind of cut/commission by any one. Every district as on today claims of large no of these SHG on ground which will make them further sustainable for livelihood. It will also give further impetus in forming more of these groups and reach more no of poor people.

(b) ATMs to pay the wages of NREGA could only be implemented in the particular district of a certain Minister as pilot project and it is a distant dream for other villages.

(c) There will be no need of jargons like social audit, but group will ensure that programme which helps them to increase assets for farming gets implemented.

(d) Registration of all work and details of muster rolls and other work should be clearly defined and responsibility laid out rather than using in generic terms that NGOs to implement and see to it. What/which work should be implemented by the NGOs so that we go and ask rightfully to the District authorities for its implementation.

(e) Website of NREGA in Hindi will of a great help in programme implementation.

Anurag Mishra & J.N. Singh, UPVAN, Lucknow

You have very rightly pointed out the underlying problems in NREGA and I feel that more or less the same problems exist across all the districts. I have been associated with a state level campaign on NREGA for creating awareness in all the 22 NREGA districts of Uttar Pradesh. The situation here is much worse with lack of commitment among the state machinery and no state level guidelines yet having been formed. About 75% of work under NREGA is being implemented at the behest of state government officials in accordance with the need identified by them. Hardly anywhere have perspective plans been prepared by PRIs and Gram Panchayats are unaware of their role in the scheme and are thus following the instructions given by the respective district authorities.

The scheme of renovation and construction of ponds at Panchayat level has been taken up although the GO in this regard has been issued by the state government and allocation of funds as well as number of ponds to be taken up during the period has been done by state government officials without any consultation with the Gram Panchayat or Gram Sabha. This completely defeats the philosophy of NREGA. The acute shortage of technical personnel and the approval as well as measurement of work done is delayed, resulting in delayed payment of wages to the workers. Although the state government has initiated the appointment of such technical personnel at the GP level but training of the same is still a big question.

The process of social audit also seems to be somewhat tricky as far as Gram Panchayat involvement is concerned. In the state of U.P it is difficult to pinpoint the Panchayats where perspective plans have been prepared in an open Gram Sabha meeting. Gram Panchayats are not empowered enough to take important decisions and forward the same to the administration. It is also important to mention here that in Uttar Pradesh the Gram Sabha is only a recommendatory body (rather a mandatory body) for any decision and under this situation neither the Gram Sabha nor the Gram Pradhan is interested in attending/conducting the meetings. As the decisions taken or the questions raised under the process will not be much authoritative, the process of social audit seems to be a mock exercise.

The management of agricultural activities side by side the NREGS will remain within limits, so long as NREGS works do not cross 100 days of employment. It must always be kept in view that works under NREGS are provided only during the lean period of agriculture as most of the cultivators and agricultural laborers are quasi-unemployed and not fully unemployed.

Manju Panwar, ESDI, Nilokheri, Karnal (*response 1*)

This is with reference to the query by Mr Vinod Kumar on the implementation of NREGS by Panchayats. There is a mushrooming of schemes and programmes that Central as well as State government keep on taking up. But the important question that needs attention is: to what extent rural people particularly women are aware of these schemes and programmes. We talk so much about the concept of sustainable development in seminars and conferences but after working in the field in Haryana, I have realised that there can be no development without the active participation of people. We do not need the quantitative participation but qualitative participation where people question the authorities if work is not done in a proper way.

The need of hour is the qualitative participation of people for the proper implementation of programmes. Qualitative participation of people is only possible if we adopt effective strategies for communication. The problem of ignorance of schemes can be rooted out if we adopt such kind of communication which is in their language and easy to understand. *Nukkad Natak* (Folk Media) is one such medium in which illiterate people not only understand the message but also enjoy it. In this way, participation of women can also be ensured. I have used this medium for making people aware about the importance of Gram Sabha meeting. Result is rewarding because not only men but women also participated in Gram Sabha meeting and raised social issues like declining sex ratio, bad quality of ration in aganwadi centres etc. After the nukkad natak, rural people can make out the difference between Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat.

NREGS is no doubt a good scheme but it can be implemented in a better way if we educate the people about this scheme. In this context, *nukkad natak*s could be performed. Apart from this, pasting posters and pamphlets on which message of NREGS is printed should be distributed at the grassroots level. This work can be done by NGOs, community based organisations like Self-Help Group, Mahila Mandals, Youth Clubs and Panchayats leaders.

Dr. V.D. Sharma, VBS Purvanchal University, Jaunpur

I would like to make some comments and suggestions. This is according to my opinion, and also contains the views of Dr.BD Sharma (who resigned from a senior position in the IAS). Insofar as NREGS is concerned, it really is a feeble attempt in the name of employment guarantee scheme, due to the following reasons:

1. It provides job or wages only for 100 days out of 365 days. The scheme is silent about the rest 265 days. How is it rational as an employment guarantee scheme?
2. It provides jobs only to single wage earners in a poor family. Then what about other members? Can the expenditure of the entire family be met out with this little earning that is 60/- per day? I don't think so. The amount of the wage has to be raised to more than 130/- per day.
3. Indian system has become corrupt in many instances and at many places. Therefore until corruption and mafia involvement in construction works are controlled such schemes will not generate the desired impact.
4. The scheme should be more and more productive and remunerative. Skills training should be extended and a package of raw material should be provided to the needy people for them to produce and take care of their livelihood.
6. The practice of SEWA and LIJJAT papad and China's model of town Village approach can be the model to raise the growth rate of villages to the level of above 40%.

[Dr. Nilakantha Panigrahi](#), ICSSR Institute (NCDS), Bhubaneswar

I was going through the views on NREGA implementation which are reaching me through 'Solution Exchange'. It is enriching the knowledge stock. Recently I had been in a tribal research study in one of the most un-reached pockets of Bhuiyan Pirhaa of Keonjhar district under SRTT Fellowship (sponsored by ISEC, Bangalore and Sir Ratan Tata Trust). I would like to share my experiences on the functioning of NREGA in a couple of villages. In one village where I did intensive field research, the survey shows that out of 112 households only 21 households who had BPL card have got NREGA card. This is the status of issuing job card even after a long period of time since the start of the scheme. However, NGOs' efforts in a network approach to create/improve ground realities is going on but it is still to achieve momentum. Under government functioning, it is not very useful to think of social audit if there is no sufficient ground improvement created by NGOs to achieve that stage. NREGA as a means to right to work assured by the government as a part of its Constitutional obligation has to be inculcated in the minds of people through sufficient awareness, and also using RTI as a means of achieving this.

NREGA has to touch multiple areas to create sufficient work to meet the demand of work in the villages. In this context it is appropriate to diversify the intervention areas, and quite obviously agriculture sector in rural India.

[Gyanendra Mishra](#), Unified Development Association for the Amelioration of Neglected (UDAAN), Aligarh

I am referring to the response of Manju Panwar to the query posted by Vinod Kumar of Maitri. Your [*Manju's*] ground level experience and exposure is now giving fruits in development arena. She is quite correct in raising the question of people's participation in any development issue and at the same time on the use of folk media as a medium of message dissemination.

Do we think that by only informing the people on any issue and creating awareness is the answer to underdevelopment & improper implementation and it is the duty of government to inform people. Whether people should not stand on their own feet and question the government or any implementing agency regarding the whole scenario of mismanagement, corruption, mishandling

of issues and issues concerning the underserved and neglected. If they should not question the government or any of the agency on their meager condition and the vicious cycle of poverty, in which they are from the time immortal. I think people should take initiative themselves and we (working in NGOs) have to show them the way.

[Manju Panwar](#), ESDI, Nilokheri, District Karnal (response 2)

I agree with Gyanendra's views [see above] to some extent that people should take initiative and assert their rights. In my opinion they can only do so if they are aware about the same. Right to Information Act has been implemented but how far are people using it? In fact, this Act is being misused by the dominant class. People want to stand on their feet but due to poverty, dominance of powerful people and other such factors do not allow them to take action against corruption. Apart from this, some people who are well off are not interested in involving themselves as they do not want to waste their time and energy in such activity. They have their mindset that by their initiative nothing is going to improve, but yes there are people who have courage to question the government that after so many years of independence why we are still grappling with the problems like poverty and unemployment. I think the answer to such problems is increase in awareness and change in the mindset of people.

[Shalini Kumar](#), PARD, District Nawadah (response 2)

I would like to raise the issue of purchase of items for implementation of projects under the NREGA.

It is expected from the Panchayat functionaries to carry out micro-planning and forward to the higher level the annual budget for the coming year. The project planning, project writing, maintaining of assets register, muster rolls, board for displaying list of work available in the Panchayat, computer needed to work online and offline, maintenance of all relevant data from the primary source, large amount of stationary requirement, establishment of crèche, office furniture, and creation of awareness on the NREGA in local language and by involving experts will cost money and resources. It is not clear as to whether these costs have to be billed on the programme itself and will the Gram Pradhan be right in booking these expenditure under NREGA account.

I look for answers from experts and district authorities who are implementing on ground. You may like to quote the experts/rule position from the REGA manual/operational guidelines. Can Gram Pradhan spend the amount from the account of NREGA?

Expecting every work to be executed through volunteers and that too the writing part and maintenance of records and linking them with all relevant vouchers would be a somewhat difficult task. Giving employment only for manual labour in NREGA is being too harsh (on the part of the Government) towards SC/STs who have been well educated due to presence of Navodaya Vidyalayas, Kasturba Gandhi Vidyalaya and other initiatives of NGOs like ASHA and Pratham. About 15 to 20% of the budget should have been earmarked for these people also who would contribute towards programme implementation.

Social audit will only be spoken of and at ground level it will be difficult unless this job is handed over to local well-trained NGOs who have experience in monitoring, evaluation, and documentation process. The NREGA is well planned and very clear in its aims and objectives. The

Government shifts from one programme to another programme with long and detailed guidelines which is actually required and it takes time to get implemented.

[Amlan Biswas](#), Deputy Commissioner, Haveri

The suggestion by Kris Dev is interesting. While tracking the entire population through biometric devices may be futuristic, in Karnataka attempts are on to convert BPL cards to smart cards based on biometric devices. These devices however are notoriously failure prone and can easily be tampered with (as happened in some hostels in AP). We are attempting a small innovation in Haveri's district hospital. A long time back, on a routine visit to an orthopedic, I saw an old villager with a severe back problem, unable to tell the doctor when he had the problem and what medication he had been taking. His answers were vague and contradictory. Actually the problem with the poor and the illiterate is that they have a very event accentuated sense of personal history and relate their personal past to specific events not dates.

One important way that health care for the poor can improve is by having biometric devices attached to computers at PHC level and above. On average 30 patients come to a PHC in a day. If each patient is made to initially register himself/herself and his/her thumb impression is recorded linked to basic health data, every time the patient comes in, the data would pop up and continuous treatment history could be fed into the format. Treatment would be much more informed and based on the prescription and ailment history. The information could be shared with higher referral hospitals in soft or hard copy as and when the patient is referred. Also, the PHC could provide monthly reports on the total no of persons who have come for treatment, the typical diseases, treatment given, age profiles of afflictions and medicine requirements etc. As this data would be dynamic, over a period of time, by aggregating the data at various levels, we could map the health profile of the villages, blocks, districts, plan for emergencies and stock medicines in advance and also have horses for courses IEC. Child immunization, other kinds of vaccination, epidemic control would be prompt.

We are attempting this at the District Hospital on a small scale because as Deputy Commissioner I have control only over the district hospital, but I appeal to the Decentralisation Community members from the Health Ministry to consider this for inclusion in the NRHM. The cost per PHC would be Rs. 1 lakh for equipment and monthly Rs. 4000/- for a qualified DEO.

[Shalini Kumar](#), PARD, District Nawadah (response 3)

NREGA being an Act empowering people to get job as a right should be taken by the Government and all implementing agency in the same spirit. Orissa is one state where there is good awareness, and the main reason for the awareness is that in Orissa district administration has been able to use Management Information System (MIS) to a large extent. Bihar has recently started recruitment drive for various appointments like rozgar sevaks, programme officer and technical staff. No training of PRI has been conducted so far in the state of Bihar and very less amount of contents available at the website of Rural Development Ministry on NREGA. Two months back RD Ministry had sent representatives to Hyderabad to get trained as social auditors and we were able to send two of our field workers to get trained on the same. Officially they have not been sent to carry out any social audit so far as they are busy with recruitment of manpower to implement NREGA. Mr Nishant ketu of PHE, Patna and Mr Jitendra Kumar of PARD are available to carry out social auditing in Panchayats on the work under NREGA.

We have our presence in Shekhpura and Nawadah districts in Bihar and since all the districts enjoy work under NREGA we experienced following pitfalls and problems.

- General awareness for greater information about entitlements among poor people
- Pricing of / Delay in Job card with photographs.
- No dated receipts for employment application because PRI thinks it will be failure on their part if they do not give job within 15 days.
- Employment provided in more than 15 days
- Kachcha muster rolls
- Timely measurement & payment not done
- Inadequate shelf of projects
- Poor documentation
- States yet to take up regular monitoring & Social Audit.
- No grievance redressal system

We are very happy to know that contents on NREGA is available in Hindi on the site of MP.

Banamali Dash, NIPDIT, Phulbani (*response 2*)

No doubt we all are experiencing that the implementation of NREGS have interpreted differently by different people. Further more implementation of NREGS (in Orissa OREGS) became a big challenges for Local governance, Govt. and NGOs etc. There are some myths and also some realities in relation to N(O)REGS.

I agree with the study findings of Rahul Banerjee and also experience of Shalini Kumar about irregularities. I also have the same experience while interacting with people in the community. We always project bad practices scheme - why don't we capture the good practices around us ? I hope sharing of good practice in different districts will be encouraging to others.

On 29th Dec 2006, I interacted with 20 Animators (Local youth appointed under Rural Decentralization project implemented in 20 GPs of Phiringia Block of Kandhamal District of Orissa. Supported by UNDP)

Following are some good practices captured through focused group discussion (FGD)

- Presently all labourer are getting their wage Rs 55 per day.
- Both men and women are getting equal wages, which is changing the history of wage discrimination issues.
- Payment is done by Village Level Leaders in presence of villagers.
- Work measurement is done with the presence of labourer, committee member.
- Animators are invited during payment to labourers .
- Payments given to labourer maximum within 12 to 14 days.
- Display board is prepared before beginning of works.
- Advance payments to labourer is given in case daily in payment.
- Job cards are maintained by VLL which ensured the transparency
- Muster rolls are maintained and it also ensured the transparency .
- Villagers got work/job at their village and the place as per their convenient.
- Village committee are involved in monitoring and supervision process.
- Functioning of monitoring and supervision team.
- People are demanding for the job and also job cards .
- Priority has given to all wards (distribution of work)
- Palli sabha approved the plan and Work order given to the villagers which discourages the out side contractor.
- Work qualities are mentioned which are monitored in case of any problems.
- No use of machine in NREGS.

- Almost all work are best on the Micro Level Planning which were prepared under UNDP supported Rural Decentralization Project.

Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Decentralization Community in India at se-decn_se-emp@solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject reading 'Re: *Implementation of NREGS in Panchayats, from Maithri, Palakkad (Experiences, Examples) Additional Reply*'

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Poverty



Work and Employment Community

Solution Exchange for the Work and Employment Community Consolidated Reply

Query: Grievance Redressal Mechanism in MGNREGS - Experiences; Examples

Compiled by [Warisha Yunus](#), Research Associate

Issue Date: 15 September 2010

From [Ashwini Kulkarni](#), Pragati Abhiyan, Nashik

Posted 7 July 2010

Dear Members,

I work with Pragati Abhiyan, Nashik, Maharashtra. We have experience of implementing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) for almost five years now. As you all know, the MNREGS has included Grievance Redressal as detailed out in the tenth and eleventh chapters of the Operational Guidelines available at http://rural.nic.in/NREGA_guidelines.pdf (PDF; Size: 576 KB)

Some of the ways of putting in a complaint include traditional methods of complaining to higher authorities, lodging complaints through websites and toll-free phone numbers, Social Audits, and Lok Ayukta. We at Pragati Abhiyan have been trying to use one and all of the above to get the local administration to work more effectively and efficiently, but none of these have been found to be really meaningful.

In this context, I request members to share the following:

- What is the experience of using grievance redressal mechanism by laborers or agencies on behalf of laborers? Please provide details like what was the complaint, where was it lodged, by whom, and what all happened since then.
- What relief did the complainant receive and what change did the complaint bring in the implementation system?

Your responses will help in developing effective strategies for grievance redressal and consequently making MGNREGS have a better impact on the lives of the poor.

Responses were received, with thanks, from

1. [K. S. Gopal](#), Centre for Environment Concerns (CEC), Hyderabad
2. [Mukul Chandra Gogoi](#), District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Tinsukia, Assam
3. [Kalika Mohapatra](#), Independent Consultant, Bhubaneswar
4. [Puthumai A. Nazarene](#), Independent Consultant, Kolkata, West Bengal
5. [Rahul Banerjee](#), Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath (KMCS), Indore
6. [Umesh Chandra Gaur](#), Confederation of Community Based Organizations of India, New Delhi
7. [Vinod Kumar](#), Maithri, Palakkad, Kerala
8. [Thamanna and Hanumantha Reddy](#), Anantha Paryavarana Parirakshana Samithi(APPS), Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh
9. [Mihir Kumar Jena](#), Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), Koraput, Orissa
10. [Ashok Kumar Sinha](#), Karma Consultants, New Delhi
11. [Binu K. Puram](#), UNDP – GoI, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Programme, Kerala*
12. [Sanjay Singh](#), Parmath, Orai, Uttar Pradesh*

**Offline Contribution*

Further contributions are welcome!

[Summary of Responses](#)
[Comparative Experiences](#)
[Related Resources](#)
[Responses in Full](#)

Summary of Responses

Responding to the query, members shared their successes/failures in using the grievance redressal mechanism in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

Members found holding **weekly meetings** attended by District level officials, Panchayat functionaries, Villagers as well as local NGO/CBO staff for grievance redressal as an effective way of resolving the problems and complaints as done in [Andhra Pradesh](#). They also found holding **Gram Sabhas every week** for reviewing MGNREGS as a successful way to redress grievances in a timely and efficient manner as done in [Assam](#). Since these Gram Sabhas were attended by District Officials, they helped in worksite inspection as well as grievance redressal on the spot.

Further they suggested **organizing the women Self-Help Groups** (SHGs) and building their capacity to handle issues like delay in payments, wage difference between male and female workers etc. as done in [Orissa](#). They also recommended **organizing dharnas and rallies** if complaints filed failed to get any response from the District Administration as done in [West Bengal](#). Members also suggested creating an MGNREGS Union that helped in resolving issues by holding protests and demonstrations outside of the District/State Department as done in [Uttar Pradesh](#).

Besides mass mobilization, it was also critical to **mobilize the media** to highlight the complaints. It helped in speedy redressal by the District/State Departments in [Madhya Pradesh](#). The work there now begins on time and the wages are paid on time as well. It also led to payment of unemployment allowance to members.

It was important to make the laborers' groups aware about the scheme, their rights, and entitlements so they are well versed with where and who to complain to and get the grievances redressed as done by the Anantha Paryavarana Parirakshana Samithi (**APPS**). Members also suggested **creating awareness and providing knowledge and information** to not only laborers but to all stakeholders involved including the Panchayat functionaries.

They further suggested laborers to approach the State Departments with the help of NGO/CBO in case the Government Platform at the District level didn't respond to their complaints. The prompt response of the State level officials is helpful in getting the matters resolved at the earliest as happened in [Bihar](#).

Besides the above mentioned measures, members also suggested conducting regular **Social Audit** within the villages as an effective way to maintain transparency. It can also be used for resolving issues which largely are about non-availability of work, delay in payment of wages, bogus names in the muster roll and the quality of work. Dialoguing with Panchayat representatives and district collectors also helped in resolving the issue, respondents noted.

Through all these measures, laborers received a number of reliefs including opening of shelf of work for them, inclusion of more number of laborers, payment of pending wages and setting up of a Committee for inquiry of the work implemented under MGNREGS and action taken against the representative of implementing agency.

Some other measures that members suggested for effective grievance redressal are setting up of Citizen Helpline, having people friendly officials, adopting better technologies for measuring work and verifying attendance, conducting social audit in a way that political leadership sees values in terms of drawing political mileage by ensuring transparency. They also suggested including the issue of 'exclusion' as a grievance.

Leadership of community based organizations and community's ownership of the programme were critical in making the programme successful, members noted. They also emphasized that grievance handling required structural arrangement as well as commitment at the highest level in the District and the State for effective functioning of the programme.

Comparative Experiences

Andhra Pradesh

Grievance Redressal Once a Week Shows Good Results, Ananthpur District (from [K. S. Gopal](#), Centre for Environment Concerns (CEC), Hyderabad)

In order to deal with the grievances of people under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the District Collector has fixed one day each week to hear and redress the grievances. This practice showed good results and helped in ironing out the complaints/grievances on time. Read more

Involving NGOs in Reviewing MGNREGS is Effective

To facilitate a smoother grievance redressal mechanism an organization had a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the State Department of Rural Development. According to it, the personnel from the organization could attend the weekly Mandal level meetings when MGNREGS is reviewed. Given the effectiveness of this mechanism in handling grievances, all CSOs are now allowed to work on voluntary basis to assist the Government in MGNREGS.

Awareness Generation amongst the Labour Groups Helpful in Redressing Grievances

(from [Thamanna and Hanumantha Reddy](#))

To build the capacity of the workers, an organization works with them to generate awareness amongst them on the MGNREGA Act. For any problem that arises, they are told to complain at the Mandal Parishad Development Officer (MPDO) office which holds meetings once a week. They also conduct a village level Social Audit every month and ensure that the worksite facilities are adequately provided. If they are not, then complaint is made at the MPDO office.

Assam

Gram Sabhas are a Useful Forum for Grievance Redressal, Tinsukia District *(from [Mukul Chandra Gogoi](#))*

For grievance redressal, in Assam Gram Sabhas are held in all Gram Panchayats every Thursday of the week. All matters including MGNREGS are discussed in these Gram Sabhas which are also attended by Heads of the Departments of the Districts. They interact with the public and get their ideas and feedback and inspect worksites with the complainant wherever necessary. This way grievances are redressed in a timely and systematic manner.

Orissa

Organizing and Training People/SHGs to Tackle Grievances is Helpful *(from [Kalika Mohapatra](#), Independent Consultant, Bhubaneswar)*

To address grievances and other practical problems, an organization has organized and trained tribal women to become involved in the MGNREGS programme. They have trained more than 100 women on women's work in MGNREGS and use of RTI for resolving problems that arose during the implementation. These trained women are taking care of issues like wage difference between men and women, delay in payment, work within periphery of the village etc.

Madhya Pradesh

Mass Mobilization and Media Advocacy Effective in Getting Grievances Redressed *(from [Rahul Banerjee](#))*

For grievance redressal, an organization first filed written complaints with the administration at various levels. But when they did not make much of an impact, they organized massive rallies and dharnas to put pressure on the administration. They also filed the complaints with the higher authorities at the State level and mobilized the media in a big way. As a result of media advocacy and mass mobilization, the administration now responds to every application made. Read more

West Bengal

No Heed is Paid Sometimes to the Complaints by District Administration *(from [Puthumai A. Nazarene](#), Independent Consultant, Kolkata, West Bengal)*

When work was not made available to the workers despite submitting the Form-4, the NGOs complained to the Block Administration. They even refused to take the Form-4 saying that they were not in a position to do much. This for them was a way of not paying the 'unemployment allowance'. No amount of complaining could extract any action from the Block Administration.

Bihar

The Proactive Role of State Department Helps in Speedy Redressal of Grievances *(from [Ashok Kumar Sinha](#), Karma Consultants, New Delhi)*

Despite submitting the work applications, when work was not provided to the workers then complaints were made at the Tehsil and Block level. After they got no response from there,

complaints were filed at the State Rural Development Department which issued instruction letter promptly for the Block office. Finally all the 40 respondents got work and BDO told villagers to talk to him directly about the progress of work or any complaints too.

Uttar Pradesh

Making MGNREGS Union is Good for Getting the Grievances Redressed Jalaun District (from Sanjay Singh)

When workers were not paid their wages for three months, the MGNREGS Union prompted the workers to present a *Dharna* at the District Headquarters. As a result of the *Dharna*, the District Administration gave in before the MGNREGS Union and paid the pending wages to the workers. The MGNREGS Union has resolved many such problems/grievances which is involved from the planning to the Social Audit process.

Related Resources

Recommended Documentation

From [Warisha Yunus](#), Research Associate

Establishment of Grievance Redressal Mechanism under NREG Act

Report; by Ministry of Rural Development

Available at http://nrega.nic.in/Final_Expert_Report.pdf (PDF 435 KB)

The report documents the deliberations and recommendations of the expert group set up for examination of institutional mechanism for management of grievances.

Draft - NREGA: Transparency and Public Accountability Rules

Brief

Available at http://nrega.nic.in/circular/draft_transparency_rules.pdf (PDF 64 KB)

Provides details of the transparency and accountability rules that are to be followed during the implementation of the MGNREGS.

NREGA - Back to Basics

Webpage; by Association for India's Development (AID); New Delhi; 10 August 2009

Available at <http://aidindia.org/main/content/view/1013/377/>

Documents the concerns of peoples' organization regarding MGNREGS who organized a gathering called 'People's Action for Employment Guarantee'.

MGNREGS - Online Public Grievances Redressal System

Webpage; by India Development Gateway

Available at http://indg.in/agriculture/rural-employment-schemes/nergs/copy_of_nrega

Online system to lodge complaints and grievances on MGNREGS which are related to issues faced by people in their area.

Recommended Organizations and Programmes

Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Delhi (from [K. S. Gopal](#), Centre for Environment Concerns (CEC), Hyderabad)

Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi 110001; Tel: 91-11-23782373; Fax: 91-11-23385876;

<http://www.rural.nic.in>

Is responsible for implementation of various poverty alleviation schemes of the Government for the rural areas including the MGNREGS.

Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD), Orissa (from [Kalika Mohapatra](#), Independent Consultant, Bhubaneswar)

Development Resource Training Centre (DRTC), E-1, Institutional Area, Gangadhar Meher Marg, Bhubaneswar 7510013; Tel: 91-674-2301725; Fax: 91-674-2301226; <http://cysd.org/aboutus/aboutus>; Contact Prasanna Kumar Das; Programme Manager; prasanna@cysd.org

Works for the marginalized communities in the remotest areas of Orissa through issue based research to influence policies from a pro-poor and rights based perspective.

Anantha Paryavarana Parirakshana Samithi (APPS), Andhra Pradesh (from [Thamanna and Hanumantha Reddy](#))

13-735, Revenue Colony, Anantapur 515001; Tel: 91-8554-277258

A collective of 13 activist-cum-development organizations that work to organize the poor to enable them to get access and control over the common property resources.

Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath (KMCS), Madhya Pradesh (from [Rahul Banerjee](#))

74, Krishnodayanagar, Khandwa Naka, Indore 452001; Contact Rahul Banerjee; Activist; Tel: 91-9926791773

Works for development of marginalized tribal communities and with Panchayat representatives and District officials to make the MGNREGS function properly since 2007.

From [Warisha Yunus](#), Research Associate

Vrutti - Livelihood Resource Center, Madhya Pradesh

E 2/244 Arera Colony, Bhopal; Tel: 91-755-4202234; Fax: 91-80-23417714 Email; Website; Contact Pramel Gupta; Job Designation; Tel: 91-9893464296; pramel.gupta@yahoo.co.in

Works for livelihood promotion of the rural poor through MGNREGS through promotion of microenterprises.

Vazhndhu Kattuvom Project, Tamil Nadu

Vazhndhu Kattuvom State Society, 91, St. Mary's Road, Raja Annamalaipuram, Chennai 600028; Tel: 91-44-43511104; Fax: 91-44-24616373; vkpstate@gmail.com; <http://www.vazhndhukaattuvom.org/liveskilltrain.html>

Works inter alia, for livelihood promotion of the most poor and marginalized women through MGNREGS.

Andhra Pradesh Mahilabhivruddhi Society (APMAS), Andhra Pradesh

Plot 20, Rao and Raju Colony, Road 2, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034; Tel: 91-40-27547952; Fax: 91-40-27547926; info@apmas.org; <http://www.apmas.org/>

Works extensively for promotion of livelihoods of the poor and marginalized; it has conducted a study on implementation of MGNREGS in Andhra Pradesh.

Society for Social Services Madhya Bharat, Chhattisgarh

G- 128, Ethiraj Towers, G.E. Road, (Opp. Maurya Cinema), Bhailai, Durg 490023; Tel: 91-788-4030584; Fax: 91-788-2294089; sossmbc@gmail.com; <http://www.sossmbc.org/index.aspx>

Conducts Social Audit of the MGNREGS and other rural development interventions in the entire state of Tripura that helps in checking corruption and grievance redressal.

Kudumbashree, Kerala

State Poverty Eradication Mission, 2nd Floor, TRIDA Rehabilitation Building, Chalakuzhy Road, Medical College P. O. Thiruvananthapuram 695011; Tel: 91-471-2554714; Fax: 91-471-2334317; info@kudumbashree.org; <http://www.kudumbashree.org/?q=localecodev>

Implements developmental programmes under PRI leadership; has improved quality of work & women's participation under MGNREGS by taking suitable measures.

Recommended Portals and Information Bases

From [Warisha Yunus](#), Research Associate

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Ministry of Rural Development, Delhi

<http://nrega.nic.in/>

Provides complete details on the MGNREG Act, its implementation and different sectors covered including grievance redressal.

National Information Centers (NICNET), Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Delhi

<http://home.nic.in/>

An e-governance support to the Central and State governments, keeps updated information on the progress made on various schemes including MGNREGA.

Responses in Full

[K. S. Gopal](#), Centre for Environment Concerns (CEC), Hyderabad

Last year the **Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) communicated to the States to appoint Ombudsman at District and State level** for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). This is important avenue as it tackles grievances related to denial of the rights and the provisions of the Act. Some states recently have appointed such authority but largely at the State level whereas its need is at the district level. The Ombudsman get only a sitting fee of Rs. 500 per day and travel costs is to come from concerned MGNREGS implementing authority. Where they are appointed, one is yet to see its working, let alone its performance and effectiveness. However this mechanism must be strengthened to correct bureaucratic intransigence or favoritism, as it handles the grievances as a statutory independent authority with powers to penalize and their verdict cannot be challenged. But to reach to the communities it must be proactive and visit villages to hear the complaints. Unless handicaps of dependence on the very officials whose work is to be scrutinized such as transport and office space etc. are addressed, their functional value could get constricted.

Andhra Pradesh (AP) has just started accepting grievances to designated personnel that is sent by emails. It earlier had call centre for it. As the e-mail one is yet to get functional to know its value, call centre was shut down for not being functional. The MoRD had a call centre but language available was only Hindi and hence of no value to Southern India. Understand its contribution to grievance hearing was not of any hope. In Ananthpur, AP **the district collector has fixed a day each week to hear and redress grievances**. This showed demonstrable good results. In our case the Centre for Environment Concerns (CEC) and its activists have a memorandum of understanding with State Department of Rural Development wherein our personnel could attend the weekly Mandal level meetings when MGNREGS is reviewed. This mechanism was found to be quick and effective in grievance handling. This is now extended to all civil society organizations working on a voluntary basis to assist the Government in MGNREGS.

In grievance mechanisms only certain types of complaints that are worker centric such as employment or wage is the focus. There are other complaints - failure to provide agreed services or of poor quality etc. Or where the Gram Sabha decides certain works but those taken up emerge from elsewhere while they ornate the shelf of works. Complaints we get include works

taken up in MGNREGS, especially on those related to land development or horticulture. People here run after officials or pay bribes. These matters are not even treated as complaints, as they have no written documents; are not entitlement of the Act; is not a task for the Ombudsman and attending to them is not on the radar of officials. It is crucial that all tasks emerging in MGNREGS must be capable of being addressed for grievances as stipulated under the Act as the starting point.

In our view grievances handling needs both a structural arrangement and commitment at the highest level in the District to ensure its effective functioning. The AP arrangement with civil society along with the one implemented in Ananthpur offers the way forward to tackle worker grievances. But equally important is to have mechanisms for real time feedback for proactive corrective measures that can bring down the grievances, as many are systemic and repetitive. The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can address this issue. Towards this we at **CEC have developed a product that provides for authenticated real time low cost community feedback** and we can provide details on its use for those who are interested.

Mukul Chandra Gogoi, District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Tinsukia, Assam

Conditions of work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) are different in different regions of the country. In our region we get seasonal workers in dry season and during monsoon, workers are engaged in their own work like wet cultivation, tea plucking etc. Also earth works under MGNREGS become almost impossible due to continuous rainfall.

For Grievance Redressal, we have a system of holding Gram Sabha (GS) in all Gram Panchayats (GPs) on every Thursday of the week. All matters including MGNREGS are discussed there. Worksite is also inspected by officials along with the complainant wherever necessary. About 99% MGNREGS works are implemented by the GP with help and guidance of the Line Departments. Some bigger works are implemented by intermediate Panchayat. Every Thursday, Departmental Head of the District attend one such GS. Thus the Heads of Departments attend 52 GS in a year. They get feedback and share information and ideas by interacting with the public. This process of holding maximum GS is besides the statutory Social Audit done for every work and area.

The institution of Ombudsman has also been introduced recently. Panels of well known social workers, academicians have already been prepared. They will take up work soon. Complaints can also be submitted through our official website www.drdatinsukia.com. However, all said and done it is felt that it is not enough to get genuine grievances from the villagers. Our website complaint section is blank since last year. Complain boxes put up in the offices of the GP, Block Development Officer (BDO) and District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) also are empty.

Grievance that we personally receive from public is about not getting job even after applying for the same and of bad quality work. Such grievances are immediately redressed on the spot in most cases. It may however be so that a large number of such grievances are not reported or not detected. One solution could be that an evaluation may be done by a third party evaluation. There is still scope for educating Panchayat members about the details of the scheme.

I think that more than provision of Grievance Redressal System (GDS), awareness and providing knowledge and information to the stakeholders is the need of the hour. When people are aware and knowledgeable there would hardly be any scope for corruption and laxity on the part of the implementing agencies. This is however not to deny the necessity of having a GDS in place. I am saying that awareness and knowledge building are more important aspects for success of MGNREGS.

Kalika Mohapatra, Independent Consultant, Bhubaneswar

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) provides opportunity to both women and men to enhance their livelihood. In many parts of Orissa, MGNREGS is now working and people are becoming aware of their rights and entitlements.

The payment system is regulated and most of the people are being paid wages through cheques. Some NGOs/Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are helping the community directly or indirectly to get work in MGNREGS. Government of Orissa (GoO) also looks upto NGOs/CSOs for social audits and development of works plan at Gram Panchayat (GP) levels. The NGOs/CBOs are involved in awareness creation on MGNREGS, demand of work by community people at GP level and women's participation in Pallisabha (Village Meeting) and Gram Sabha (GS) for MGNREGS work plan finalization. An NGO network is also helping poor people in getting work in MGNREGS in Orissa.

Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD) is one of the leading agencies in Orissa helping tribal women to become involved in MGNREGS programme. They trained more than 100 tribal women on women's work in MGNREGS and use of RTI in addressing practical problems in MGNREGS programme. Alongside, they help women in opening bank accounts in their name to get work under MGNREGS. Here most of the bank accounts are in the name of men and women are unable to get work.

These trained women are looking after the issues related to the MGNREGS like wage difference between male and female workers, delay in payment, work within the periphery areas of the villages for women etc.

Social Audit is a technique of ensuring accountability of public servants and work to the public. RTI Act and Section 17 of MGNREGA clearly state that the GP should make available all relevant documents of the works done with the GS for social audit. The Orissa Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (OREGS) under Section 31.1, also has a provision for a Vigilance and Monitoring Committee in every village comprising of beneficiaries of the scheme to monitor the progress of work. Under section 4(b) of RTI Act, an individual citizen can inspect the public documents held by any public servant/authority and can take extracts and photocopies after paying requisite fee. The CSOs are keeping a vigilant eye on the implementation of the Act/scheme in Orissa.

If CSOs/NGOs and Government work together then we may achieve the objectives of MGNREGS.

Puthumai A. Nazarene, Independent Consultant, Kolkata, West Bengal

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) has done more benefit to the rural poor than most other programs. None can doubt that. Since the initiation of MGNREGS, we had brought out a handbook in Bengali [(on Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ))] available to the poor at a cost of Rs. One. It also included some of the requisite forms. From the Bengal experience I can say the following: the democratic practices (red tape, delay, rejection) are more at work than democratic principles of accountability, promptness and response. Let me explain.

Context 1 - Delay in giving jobs. Most part of Bengal followed and still follows the given procedure: work is identified, plan is made, approval is done, and then the people are given Form – 4 to apply for the job! Totally going against the spirit of the MGNREGS! What is supposed to be

"demand driven" had been subtly pushed to look like a "cash for work" scheme. When we worked with the people, prepared Form – 4 and the people submitted the form at the Panchayats, the Panchayats refused to accept the forms saying "there are no works available at the time!". In Kumarganj block of South Dinajpur district, in 2007 – 2008, we took this issue up with the Block Administration but to no avail. We asked the people to submit copies of Form – 4 at the Block level as well. But the Block officials said that they cannot do much. Simply put, no one wanted to risk paying the "unemployment allowance". And so, in spite of poorer performance, there has been no report to the best of my knowledge of Bengal having ever paid "unemployment allowance". Even deputation with the Panchayat presidents did not bring in the benefits intended under the Act.

Context 2 – Delay in Payments. From the initial days of MGNREGS, this has been the key issue. Improving food security and controlling migration have not been achieved due to this one fact! If you find a poor person from West Bengal working in your vicinity, it is partly because of delay in payments in MNREGS. The delay in payments has been anywhere up to even nine months in some cases, although there has been some remarkable improvement in recent past. In a recent study we conducted, we found that most Panchayats are making payments in about three weeks, although the entire time taken from planning of the work to payment took an abnormally long time – eight months. In the post-Aila recovery program, many of the ECHO partners have taken strengthening MGNREGS as an advocacy issue; several round of discussions have been held with the District Collectors and other officials, giving a boost to quicker release of funds. **However, the overall background seems to be that people's agitation in several places against delayed payments has worked better than the Grievance Redressal Mechanism (GDM).** Although once we had almost thought of taking legal action against delayed payments in one of the Panchayats, we withdrew considering that such action could generate conflict between families and communities living in the Panchayat.

Context 3 - Inclusion and Participation. Though implementation of additional services such as travel allowance, crèche, drinking water facility, first aid etc. gets more prominence in discussion, the issues of inclusion or exclusion are glaring. In a recent study in February 2010 in North Dinajpur district, West Bengal, it was found, among the poor Mahali tribe people (almost 100% of them have job cards) that the utilization was only about six days on an average, although people of other community were well above 20%. There are multiple factors causing this anomaly. These people do not have bank/postal account, they do not understand the announcement, they need money on a day to day basis to keep the family going and adult illiteracy is extremely high. This exclusion has social and developmental implications; thus it is not considered a problem requiring redress. But these are serious issues and aberrations that could topple the program into a wagon of rural middle class leaving out the extreme poor. But unfortunately, exclusion is not considered in "grievance redressal mechanism".

Rahul Banerjee, Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath (KMCS), Indore

The main problem with the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Panchayats and Bureaucracy to implement it properly. Our organization Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath (KMCS) has been engaging with Panchayat representatives as well as District level officials to make the scheme function properly since 2007. Initially there was reluctance on the part of the administration to start work when applications were made and even if work was started payments would not be made. In certain cases payments were withheld for as long as a year.

Our organization first filed written complaints with the administration at various levels but when this did not make much of an impact, massive rallies and *dharnas* were organized to put pressure on the administration and complaints were filed with higher authorities at the State level. The

media was also mobilized in a big way. As a result of this mass mobilization and media advocacy, the administration in Alirajpur now responds to the applications made by the KMCS quite promptly. Work now begins on time and payments also are made on time. Panchayat functionaries have been pulled up for misuse of funds and in one case where work was not started unemployment allowance was paid to the applicant.

Thus, our experience is that the workers must be organized and constant pressure should be put on the administration through public demonstrations and media advocacy for the MGNREGS to work properly. The huge participation of women in our public demonstrations also served to put added pressure on the administration to deliver. All this, however, has not been achieved in a day. The KMCS has been fighting for tribal rights since 1982 and has a wide mass base. It is this history of struggle that has provided the organization with the mass and moral authority to make the administration and recalcitrant Panchayat functionaries work properly.

Umesh Chandra Gaur, Confederation of Community Based Organizations of India, New Delhi

In my opinion financing strategies need to change to respond to the changing agri-food systems. Product markets have restructured, driven by changing consumer demand due to increasing income, changing lifestyles and government policies. As a result, value chains have become more coordinated, integrated, concentrated, interdependent, complex and global. Standards have changed and have become more stringent in terms of quality and food safety. More recently, there is more emphasis on marketing than production, product differentiation and niche marketing.

Due to the restructuring of agricultural value chains, all actors in the chains must adjust to be able to respond to the changing rules of the game. This includes not only input suppliers like financial institutions but also producers, marketers, Government and development agents. Adjustments however, may be difficult for small scale enterprises who have limited resources and access to assets like finance. They face the possibility of being excluded in the chain if they are unable to adjust to challenges or tap opportunities brought about by these changes in the chain.

Integrated and strategic approach is necessary in value chain financing particularly in dealing with small scale enterprises. Financing alone may not be enough. In many cases, underlying issues are multi-dimensional and therefore solutions or strategies are also multi-dimensional or integrated. These include technical assistance to meet market requirements, private sector involvement, product differentiation, development of small scale producer groups, use of information and communications technology and effective coordination in the chain are essential in ensuring success. Moreover, these strategies are constrained if the enabling environment that includes policies and institutions is not conducive to the development of agricultural value chains.

In addition, it should not be always the case that financing programs that target small scale producers as beneficiaries should give finance directly to these producers. Other actors that are in the strategic position to enhance linkage with small scale enterprises may be directly tapped to ensure sustained benefits to target beneficiaries. Lead firms for example are in a better position to manage risk in providing financial assistance to their suppliers than traditional financial service providers such as banks as they have a better understanding of the requirements of the chain they operate in.

The APPS is not only working on the above activities but also focusing on the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) to give better understanding and awareness to the wage laborers regarding the MGNREGS Act, transparency, delay in payments, worksite facilities, village level social audit, fake names in muster roles, providing work to the single and disable people. This process has been followed ever since the scheme was launched. The Act guarantees to provide:

- 100 days employment for a household in a year.
- Payment of wages through Bank/Post office within fifteen days.
- Worksite facilities including shade, safe drinking water, medical kit and *aya* (attendant) for kids of the workers.

Provide Work on Time:

Awareness has been created in labour groups on MGNREGS Act. They know that they need to submit the Form-4 at Assistant Programme Officer (APO) in a Group. Each group contains 20 members. They also know that they have to get a receipt for the application submitted so that they are able to get work without delay. Meanwhile the field assistant and technical assistant identify the works and get administrative sanctions.

Delay in Payments (Issue)

Awareness must be generated within all labour groups. Then this issue is be raised at Mandal Parishad Development Officer (MPDO) office in Wednesday meetings which are held every week. When this issue is not resolved there then we take it to District level Convergence meeting until it gets resolved. The convergence meeting takes place on first Tuesday of every month.

Bogus Names in Muster Roles (Issue)

Sometimes names of non-workers are added in the muster rolls and paid wages too. Besides, muster roles are also prepared without having any work going on. This kind of work is mainly done by the field assistants. They affect the workers adversely as they work hard and get fewer wages.

To overcome this problem, we ensure that first of all, the names on the muster role are announced in front of laborers. A village level Social Audit is conducted every month on first Saturday. The names of the workers are announced and also stick the pay order on the wall of the main circle/area. This should be done in every village. Villagers must also be given a copy of all documents by the concerned NGOs.

Worksite Facilities [include shade, safe drinking water, medical kit and *aya* (attendant) for kids of wage seekers]

Shade, Safe Drinking Water, Medical Kit and *Aya* which are provided to the laborers in the Act must be implemented properly. In case any facility is not provided then the issue is brought to the notice of the concerned MPDO.

We found that by providing *Aya* at worksite area who look after the Children at Creche centre, 20% of laborers increased. These were all breast feeding mothers.

It is observed in the many of the habitations:

- The average daily wage is Rs. 95.57 (as on 8th May 2010)
- People above 50 years are registered as wage seekers and are also working. High temperature and humidity in the summer drains their energy and they are not able to work for a longer time.

Nutritious lunch at worksite, the benefits to the wage seekers are:

- Saves time, means more production / opportunity to earn more.
- Quality and nutritious food means more energy.

- Reduces the financial burden, as wage seekers have to wait for more than 2 weeks for wages.
- Procurement process of large quantity of grains / ingredients can provide employment to at least one person.
- Direct purchase from the farmers helps in avoiding middlemen and farmers getting the right price.

Provide Work to the People with Disability (PWD) and Single Women (Issue)

We conduct village level meetings with laborers, discuss about the single women, PwD and make a list to submit to the PO. They can also be given the opportunity to work as water women or *aya*.

Payment Delay at Post office

But the services are not reaching the wage seekers in time because of the procedural gaps, particularly the payment disbursal. Even now, it takes more than 15 days to get the wages and it is due to the delay by the Postal Department. The officials of the postal department have their own reasons like lack of safe lockers in the branch post office, hence they cannot draw huge amount and amount disbursed is limited to Rs. 20,000 per day.

If a person engaged in agriculture or other works, he gets paid on the same day. Though, it is less compared to MGNREGS wages but at least he is able to get the wages on time. Under the prevailing circumstances the wage seekers are switching over to other works or taking loans till they get the payment.

Mihir Kumar Jena, Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), Koraput, Orissa

In Orissa, the Grievance Redressal Mechanism (GDM) doesn't seem to be doing well. Odisha has a bad history and a promising future regarding the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MGNREGS). The low level of awareness; at least in the areas where job demand is low because of lack of awareness or too much submissiveness to Government systems, to me is the single largest factor for which the redressal system looks defunct. Grievances, no doubt is a big score but redressal is equally shy.

Recent developments in Odisha seem promising for those actively participating directly or indirectly to help MGNREGS perform, deliver and move at par with the objectives. The Government is also realizing that to make MGNREGS perform for the State and its people, it is important that each grievance irrespective of how small/grave, must be promptly addressed. The State decided to appoint OMBUDSMEN to help redressal of grievances in local areas/Districts.

In October 2009, the State government issued a public notice requesting people to opt for the Ombudsman in MGNREGA and also published a qualifying criterion for the position and the rate of honorarium, etc. Certain Districts got good number of applications and in certain districts very less number of applications. However, after three quarter of the year already passed since October, on 26 June 2010 the Department of Panchayati Raj has been able to shortlist candidates to work as ombudsmen for 12 Districts only. After selecting the candidates the Department has sought suggestions/comments from civil society organizations on the selected Ombudsmen. The Districts for which Ombudsmen have been selected are: Angul, Bolangir, Bhadrak, Baragarh, Cuttack, Keonjhar, Deogarh, Khorda, Kalahandi, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj and Puri. Ombudsmen selection for other Districts is underway.

The Panchayati Raj Department is also developing mechanisms and guidelines for the Ombudsmen and is also looking for appointment of Ombudsmen in other Districts. At the District Administration level, many Districts have launched citizen helpline to register grievances of local

people. To the extent possible, the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) is handling situations through their Officials at the District and Block level involving Panchayats. But given the magnitude of issues/problems that exist, it would not be possible to address them without a system and people assigned to the task. There is also a need to build constructive dialogues among local Civil Society Organizations to facilitate the process with Ombudsmen.

Ashok Kumar Sinha, Karma Consultants, New Delhi

During my course of action in Jharkhand, Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar on the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), I realized that the presence of civil society organizations (CSOs) has contributed in achieving progressive results in terms of ensuring wage work opportunities in favor of the poorest sections including women and persons with disability (PWD).

The CSOs pursue twin strategy of mobilizing community to demand work while also working closely with the Government towards its successful implementation. But when CSOs follow the rights based approach then the situations become unfavorable and more challenging. in the interest of the poorest community groups.

Using Grievance Redressal Mechanism (GDM) such as social audit is one separate issue and use of GDM by laborers, community based organizations (CBOs) of laborers and NGOs is another issue.

I share here my experiences of facilitating social audit exercise in coordination and leadership of laborers, CBO of laborers and NGOs.

What is the experience of using grievance redressal mechanism by laborers or agencies on behalf of laborers? Please provide details like what was the complaint, where was it lodged, by whom, and what all happened since then.

Sequence of event of Social Audit:

- Introduction about the social audit programme and announcement of the name of Jury Members
- Explanation about the detail process of audit at the community level
- Cultural Programme at the community level
- Explanation about the finding of analysis of social audit
- Presentation of facts by testimonies
- Statement by Government representatives and peoples representative for mitigation of problems
- Announcement of the resolution taken by the Jury members
- Vote of thanks by the organizing team
- Preparation of charter of demand
- Preparation of report of social audit
- Organizing public meeting and consulting government official for presentation of social audit report

And finally after all above-mentioned events, follow ups were planned in cases of non-adherence. By following above sequence of events, successes have been achieved. The major factors that have made the efforts successful are leadership of community based organization and community's ownership of the programme.

The other set of strategy is effective use of Government platform for placing forward the concerns of/by the victims. Government Platform is Block Diwas and Tehsil Diwas in Uttar Pradesh, Janta Darbar in Bihar, etc. The following steps can be followed:

- Preparing a cadre from the community for utilizing the platform of Tehsil Diwas, Block Diwas and Block and District administration.
- Preparation of application with the support of CSO members – clarity about the issues, demands and complaints – mentioning of time duration in the application (give date by which the issue should be resolved etc.).
- Presentation of complaints to the relevant officials / authority by the affected person.
- Keeping a track of the complainant. Many a times the complainant may be lured into coming to an agreement by vested interests. One should make strategies for minimizing this.
- Follow up with the concerned department/person till the redressal.

Another set of strategies followed in GDM:

- Providing project facilitated platform to cadre and community for raising the agenda of MGNREGS and other entitlements.
- Preparing the cadre and community for use of Right to Information.
- Preparing cadre and community for using Gram Sabha (GS) as a platform for raising the issues of MGNREGS – like in Bihar special GS are organized on every first day of month to deal specifically with MGNREGS issues.
- Preparing cadre and community for mobilizing MNREGS for promotion of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) i.e. scope for inclusion of diversified shelf of work including work related to water conservation and protection.
- Preparing cadre, community and CBO leaders for developing linkages with Government Department at Block and District level.
- Mobilization of media functionaries on MGNREGS and its GDM.
- Sensitizing political and administrative forces including panchayat functionaries and leaders for taking up agenda of MGNREGS on priorities basis – this encourages the different stakeholders to take action, support the complainants in grievance redressal.
- Taking receipt of complaints is another important aspect. In the absence of this one can't do much in case of non-adherence.

Lastly one should be very clear in terms of what is expected from the system of grievance redressal. It was observed that written application and regular follow up ultimately helped in securing entitlement of right to work under MNREGS.

Though the processes of grievance redressal are challenging but by following the above-mentioned strategies/approaches/steps, successful results have been gained in favour of the laborers.

What relief did the complainant receive and what change did the complaint bring in the implementation system?

- Shelf of work open for the laborers under MGNREGS.
- More number of laborers including women, dalits and PwDs has got wage work opportunity.
- Pending payments were made to the laborers.
- Committee was set up for inquiry of the work implemented under MGNREGS and action was taken against representative of implementing agency.

Case study 1:

In one village, members of CBO collectively demanded for wage work for 40 job cardholders under MNREGS from the *Rojgar Sewak*. Application for work was made but work was not provided to them. Further they placed the complaints at Tehsil Diwas and Block Diwas. Again work was not provided to them. They then placed their concern of non-availability of wage work under MNREGS to Rural Development Department. The representative of State Rural Development Department took immediate action and issued instruction letter to Block Development Officer (BDO) for taking the issues on priorities basis. In response, BDO invited village leaders and requested them to report to him directly about the progress of the work. Finally all the 40 applicants have received wage work and community leader has coordinated the work as mate. He has positively discharged his responsibility as mate.

Case study 2:

Rammohan demanded information under Right to Information about the progress of MGNREGS in the village, but the affected stakeholders (dominant groups, gram pradhan, gram secretary, rojgar sewak) put pressure on Rammohan for withdrawing his complaint. Rammohan has accepted compromise theory for progress of the village and interest of the community members. After this, job cardholders have received wage work under MNREGS for construction of ponds in the village.

For any clarification, please write to me.

Binu K. Puram, UNDP -GoI Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Programme, Kerala*

I would like to share some observed things before you to have a serious thinking in the implementation of MGNREGS. As a most effective state in our country in terms of PRI system the strategy to spend NREG fund is beyond our imagination. In several occasions I have seen these alarming scenes.

- Majority of the workers engaged in the NREG work has taking rest in the worksite for more than 4 hours in a 6 or 7 hour (?) working system.
- Majority of the ladies working in NREG scheme is comes from financially stable families and unenthusiastic to work in the SUN.
- The relatives and dear and near to political leaders are more compared to others who needs a job or income.
- The supervisors are always from elites and very close to concerned political personals.
- No work has been doing with a time limit and the workers are spending the time on conversation and visiting nearby houses.
- About 6.95 % of the workers are carrying very less head load and number working days are increasing.
- Complaints from other political parties are almost zero and if it comes it is being hid by paying some amount.
- Most of the works are carrying out in small and narrow roads and only doing some grass removal.
- The machinery to monitor and fund release is acting as hand and glove with politicians.
- Political anarchy is in its highest peak in NREG scheme.
- Very elder people are participating in works just for the sake of maintaining attendance.

I personally believe that this will not be agreeable by the stakeholders but it can be seen in the rural areas of Kerala. Unfortunately it is not in less number.

Sanjay Singh, Parmath, Orai, Uttar Pradesh*

Parmarth Sama Sevi Sansthan (PSSS) is regularly making efforts for effective implementation of NREGA. In this direction, Parmarth has formed a NREGA Labor Union within Jalaun District and has also formed some cadres. The organization is continuously building the capacity and understanding of cadres on different social issues. When any job card holder face any problem regarding NREGA implementation, such as work unavailability, wrong entry on job cards, not getting timely and accurate wages, unavailability of facilities a work site etc., cadre immediately establishes contact with the Panchayat *Pradhan* and Secretary and if they don't resolve it then the cadre goes up to the Block level, and if the Block officials do not respond then they plan unanimously for a joint effort and present *DHARNA* at the District Headquarters. During *Dharna*, they also put forward the technical problems that took place at the work sites.

CASE STUDY:

Gopalpura village is in Jalaun district. Once the wages of the workers were held for more than three months and despite laborers' complaints to Block office many a times, there was no action taken. The MGNREGS Union promoted job card holders for presenting a *Dharna* at the District Headquarters. On 25th May, almost 60 job card holders presented a *Dharna* at Vikas Bhawan Sabhagar, Orai. As the result, District Administration surrendered before NREGA union and at last, they paid the accurate wages to laborers. This is not only one case, so many such type of cases have been resolved by MGNREGS Labor Union. This Union is involved in the entire process right from planning to Social Audit.

Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Work and Employment Community in India at se-emp@solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject heading "Re: [se-emp] Query: Grievance Redressal Mechanism in MGNREGS - Experiences; Examples. Additional Reply."

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Poverty



Work and Employment Community

Solution Exchange for the Work and Employment Community Consolidated Reply

Query: Improving Muster Roll Design and Measurement Procedures in NREGA – Experiences; Examples

Compiled by [Ranu Bhogal](#) and [Radhika Desai](#), Resource Persons and [Warisha Yunus](#), Research Associate

Issue Date: 30 June 2009

**From [Samir Garg](#), Adivasi Adhikar Samiti, Raipur
Posted 13 January 2009**

Dear all,

I work in Chattisgarh with a tribal organization called Adivasi Adhikar Samiti. Being part of the Right to Food campaign, our work is focused on promoting grassroots mobilization around Food and Work entitlements. We are also engaged in advocating related policy solutions with the state government.

In this context, I have a query related to a very specific aspect of NREGA. The bulk of the NREGA work in Chhattisgarh is manual earthwork that is being done on a task rate basis. Unfortunately, the muster rolls are designed only to record attendance. Further, there is no system of daily measurement and recording of each individual labourer's work. This results in significant loss of wages for workers in many cases.

This is a common and longstanding problem in many other states as well. I would like to know if a solution has been attempted in other states. I also request members to help us in accessing the improved designs of muster rolls and copies of government orders/guidelines on measurement procedures.

Your inputs would help us in approaching the Chhattisgarh government with a workable and proven solution to this critical problem.

Responses were received, with thanks, from

1. [Sunil Kaul](#), the action northeast trust (ant), Bongaigaon, Assam
2. [Seema Kakade](#), PRAYAS, Pune
3. [Ashwini Kulkarni](#), Pragati Abhiyan, Nashik, Maharashtra
4. [Bhushan Ambadkar](#), Software Institute for Rural Development (SIRD), Pune
5. [Nitin Bembalkar](#), Development Research Services (DRS), Pune
6. [Dhruva Tiwari](#), Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), Bhopal
7. [Kris Dev](#), ICT & e-Gov Consultant, Chennai
8. [Ashok Kumar Pathak](#), Government of India (GoI) – United Nations (UN) Joint Convergence Programme, Uttar Pradesh
9. [Anonymous Contributor](#)
10. [Pradosh Ranjan Jena](#), Government of India (GoI) – United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Disaster Risk Management Programme, Balangir, Orissa
11. [Samir Garg](#), Adivasi Adhikar Samiti, Raipur
12. [Nikhil Dey](#), Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) and Suchana Evam Adhikar Abhiyan
13. [Vinod Kumar](#), Maithri, Palakkad, Kerala

Further contributions are welcome!

[Summary of Responses](#)
[Comparative Experiences](#)
[Related Resources](#)
[Responses in Full](#)

Summary of Responses

Responding to the query on 'Improving Muster Roll Design and Measurement Procedures,' members gave a few suggestions and shared examples of improvised versions used in some states like Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

Members shared the format used in **Maharashtra** for [Attendance Sheet](#), [Payment Sheet](#) and [Measurement Sheet](#), for details. They also sent format of Muster Rolls used in **Rajasthan** ([Dainik Karya Maap Proforma](#) (Daily Work Measurement Proforma); [Karyasthala Diary](#) (Worksite Diary); [Napti Board](#) (Measurement Board); [Nirdesh](#) (Guidelines); [Saamagri Sandharan Register](#)). In addition, members shared muster roll formats from [Kerala](#) and [Andhra Pradesh](#)

Muster Rolls in **Maharashtra** record attendance and not the work done. The implementing agency takes the baseline measurement and subsequently records weekly measurements of the work done in a separate Measurement Sheet. Laborers work in groups, hence measurements are taken for the work done by a group. The basis of payment is the volume of the earthwork completed by a group. The volume of earthwork is calculated based on the record in the Measurement Sheet for that group. The attendance sheet forms the basis of the number of workdays calculated for each worker. Therefore, if a member has worked for seven hours in a day then he/she is able to earn the minimum wage of the area.

Rajasthan has the most comprehensive and transparent system for measurement of individual's work. They have a proforma for recording daily work. The format came into being due to the persistent advocacy efforts of workers' organization and various campaigns.

The above examples show that it is possible to institute recording and measurement systems for individual work rather than basing it on attendance alone. The other states can innovate on the experience from these states. Members also gave suggestions on required improvisations so that the laborers get their due wages. Guidelines with regard to design of recording systems should be implemented with greater flexibility to allow the states to innovate.

The logic of the recent [Ministry of Rural Development \(MoRD\) guidelines](#) on mandatory work hours for laborers is questioned widely. The fact that wage calculation is done on a task rate basis and not on the basis of the work hours was the reason for questioning the guidelines. Besides, suggestion came for putting a display board near the work site as done in [Maharashtra](#), depicting clearly, how a sample of work is measured and wages calculated. Such a measure would be helpful for workers to counter any miscalculations regarding their wages. Laborers need to learn to keep a daily record of their work to be able to counter implementing agency's calculations. For this, a 'measurement workshop' must be conducted with the laborers before commencement of any work. This will empower them to keep a record of their work and calculate their wages.

To overcome these measurement procedure related problems some members also suggested fixing a district or block wise wage at a flat per day basis and not keep it output based. Such a measure involving removal of task-based payment would make the measurement procedures redundant.

One of the biggest problems that members have mentioned is the inadequate staff for carrying out NREGA works. If there is more staff (technical as well as non-technical), then several delays can be taken care of. With sufficient staff, measurements can be taken daily. In addition, training of mates is also critical to have successful measurement and recording systems.

In response to the specific query on a better format to ensure correct measurement of work and payment of wages, the improvised format recommended is to have six columns under each day for the following heads:

- recording attendance
- measured length
- breadth
- depth of the earthwork done
- total volume of earthwork done
- total calculated wage

Apart from improving the muster roll format, some members also suggested making changes in the job card format by adding two more columns after the column on 'total days of employment' i.e. a column on measurement of work for each day and a second one on wage rate applied.

Besides, suggestion for making signature of government functionaries mandatory for each set of entries was also made. Members also suggested calculating outturns for all the 30-40 types of works that can be undertaken under NREGA using the systematic Time and Motion studies. This can simplify the estimation and measurement greatly.

Comparative Experiences

Maharashtra

Simple Measures Help Ensure Transparency (from [Seema Kakade](#), PRAYAS, Pune)

To ensure transparency in the measurement procedures, a provision in Maharashtra makes it mandatory for the implementing organization to put up a display board in a local language near the work site clearly depicting the way a sample of work is measured and wages calculated. This provision helps the labourers in keeping a record if their work and counter any miscalculations done by the implementing agency and hence prevent any potential loss of their wage.

Related Resources

Recommended Documentation

From [Warisha Yunus](#), Research Associate

NREGA is Going Hi-Tech In Bihar

Article; by Vidya Viswanathan Civil Society; June 2007

Available at <http://www.civilsocietyonline.com/June07/india07ngrea.asp>

Describes how technologies, like biometric cards are enabling the identification of individuals, marking attendance and tracking job cards in Bihar for NREGS.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)-Implementation in Tamil Nadu-Revision of Rural Schedule of Rates for the Year 2008-2009

Government Order; by Rural Government and Panchayati Raj Department;

Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/res13010916.pdf> (PDF 26 KB)

Orders to continue the 60% increase over the PWD schedule of rates for wages in NREGS for the year 2008-2009.

Watershed Works Manual

Training Manual; by Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS); Permission Required: Yes [will have to buy]

Available at <http://arghyam.org/content/view/15/82/>

Developed by SPS on the request of the Union Ministry of Rural Development, it is a guidebook for different stakeholders in NREGA with detailed instructions.

NREGA - A District's Initiative

Report; by Anoop Kumar Agrawal and Saequa Monazza

Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/res13010915.pdf> (PDF 1203 KB)

Documents some of the innovative initiatives undertaken in the District of Purba Medinipur, West Bengal under the NREGS.

Delivering NREGS - Challenges and Opportunities

Book; by Centre for Environment Concerns (CEC); Hyderabad; March 2009; Permission Required: Yes [will have to buy]

Available at 3-4-142/6, Barkatpura, Hyderabad 500 027

Documents a practitioner's experiences and the process of development of NREGS while capturing its impacts on livelihoods, poverty, migration and food security.

Recommended Organizations and Programmes

From [Warisha Yunus](#), Research Associate

Samal Pragati Sahayog (SPS), Madhya Pradesh

Bagli, District Dewas, Madhya Pradesh 455227; Tel: 07271-275757; Fax: 07271-275550;
<http://home.nic.in/#>

A grassroots people's organization implementing watershed projects in the drought prone areas of Dewas district.

Centre for Environment Concerns(CEC), Andhra Pradesh

3-4-142/6, Barkatpura, Hyderabad 500 027; Tel: 91-40-27564959/3017 cechyd@eth.net; Contact Mr. K. S. Gopal; hyd2_cenvicon@sancharnet.in

Works for sustainable development, environmental conservation and livelihood enhancement through NREGS in drought prone areas of Andhra Pradesh.

Recommended Portals and Information Bases

National Information Centers (NICNET), Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (from [Sunil Kaul](#), the action northeast trust (ant), Bongaigaon, Assam)

<http://home.nic.in/>

An e-governance support to the Central and State governments, keeps updated information on the progress made on various schemes including NREGA.

Recommended Tools and Technologies

Watershed A to Z (from [Bhushan Ambadkar](#))

Software; Owned by Software Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), Location. Permission Required: Yes .

Contact Mr. Bhushan Ambedkar; Director; Tel: 91-9850037817;
bhushan.ambadkar@sirdpune.com

A software that can prepare technical reports including sketches and graphs required for watershed projects.

Responses in Full

[Sunil Kaul](#), the action northeast trust (ant), Bongaigaon, Assam

The muster rolls I have seen in Tripura are printed in a landscape format with the first column for names of workers followed by columns for each weekday. A person signs against his name for the days he has worked. There are two more columns to the right, one for recording total money to be paid to the person at the end of the week and the last right side column, which records the signatures of the worker on receipt of weekly wages. The table looks like the following:

Name of the worker	Signature or Left Thumb Imprint						Total amount to be paid	Signature of the worker on receipt of wages
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday		

On top of each bundle of muster rolls, three photographs are attached recording the – before, during and after - work situation. All this information is feeded into the online record by the weekend. The information can be accessed from the National Information Centres (NICNET) and the amount paid to each labourer can be traced.

Moreover, Tripura has rebudgeted all developmental work with labour coming from NREGA and material from the State government. Besides, they calculate the wage and material ratios not per the work, but according to Block and District totals, which I find makes more sense. Further, each state has decided the amount of earthwork that can be handled by one labourer in working hours of a day depending on the soil type in each area. There is a problem in that as well because the amount of earthwork seems to be high, but at least the process is transparent.

Too good to be true?! Even Mizoram is great but they are not very good with paper records. May be because of cultural reasons - it is a very believing and trusting society. I have seen some very honest work there in one of the blocks. In fact by 30 Nov 2008, 50% of the employment had already been provided and the village development plans for 2009 are now being consolidated.

Seema Kakade, PRAYAS, Pune

You have pointed out one of the key bottlenecks in effective execution of NREGS. However, I think it will be more useful to introduce some changes in the job card rather than the muster roll since job card stays with the worker. Let me share the context of my opinion:

Wages calculated on output basis depend on the measurement of each sub-task done. In Maharashtra, there is a Schedule of Rates for Employment Guarantee Schemes (EGS), which prescribes rate for each type of task and sub-task. Measurement is done on a weekly/monthly basis by the implementing agency and the quantum of work done is measured and recorded in the 'Measurement Book (MB)'. MB can be a powerful tool during social audit of the works done under EGS.

After measurement, wages are supposed to be calculated according to the Schedule of Rates. However, labourers cannot crosscheck whether they are calculated the right way since they themselves are unaware of the standard measuring procedures.

In Maharashtra, a provision makes it mandatory for the implementing agency to put a board near the work site in the local language before commencement of any work depicting clearly how a sample of work is measured and wages calculated for it. This useful provision helps labourers keep a daily record of their work. At places with strong presence of non-governmental organizations' (NGOs), labourers keep a daily record of measurements and successfully counter implementing agency's calculations if found faulty. This provision could be made mandatory in all states However, these are just a few examples which do not provide a systematic answer to the problem.

It will also be useful to make some additions in the job card. There could be two additional columns after the 'total days of employment' column (i) Measurement of Work, and (ii) Wage Rate applied. In addition, signature of the government representative who records these details should also be made mandatory for each set of entries. This provision can be further strengthened by making one more provision in the law - implementing agencies should organize a 'measurement workshop with the labourers' before starting any work.

Ashwini Kulkarni, Pragati Abhiyan, Nashik, Maharashtra

In Maharashtra, attendance record is separate and is taken twice a day- morning and afternoon. So a labourer can plan his/her day as per their comfort and convenience. We have seen that labourers start early in the day, take a long lunch break with rest at around noon and then continue till sunset.

In the measurement book (MB), the implementing agency like the Agriculture Department or the Public Works Department (PWD) take the baseline measurement and then they are supposed to take measurements every week. Here labourers work in groups, so the work done by each group is supposed to be measured every week. Based on these measurements and the rates assigned for each tasks, wages for each worker are calculated. The payments are supposed to be disbursed every fortnight.

The task rates are given in the Schedule of Rates. The rates are so kept that if a labourer works diligently for seven hours then he/she can at least earn the minimum wage of that area.

In our experience, the MB and the Muster Records are very crucial, most of the fudging is found in these two books.

Bhushan Ambadkar, Software Institute for Rural Development (SIRD), Pune

We have excellent software to remove the bottlenecks to get Design and Estimates in a short period of time.

In response to requests from Shri Anna Hazare (Padmabhushan) and Dr. Mohan Dharia (Padmavibhushan), we developed the software during 2003 - 2004 for preparing technical reports including sketches and graphs as part of the action plan required for watershed projects. It was observed that at the ground level, the project implementing teams found it extremely difficult to prepare the technical reports as it required experienced person to do so. There is a great shortage of such people throughout the country. Moreover, it has been observed that it takes several months to prepare the same. Our Watershed software is widely in use in Maharashtra and throughout Karnataka.

The "Watershed A to Z" software was further enhanced to include other works taken up under NREGS. Some districts in Maharashtra - Nanded, Osmanabad, Solapur, Gadchiroli have started receiving the benefits of the same with requests from other districts coming in on a regular basis. Under NREGS, execution of activities like soil conservation and water harvesting, drought proofing, land development, rural connectivity work, flood control and renovation of traditional water bodies require design and detailed costing of each activity.

The above mentioned software provides all design and detailed costing reports including that for skilled and unskilled labour, material cost, work generated from each activities in man-days etc. in a very short period of time.

Soil Conservation and Water Harvesting

Continuous Contour Trench	Brush Wood Dam
Vegetative Contour Hedges	Vegetative Filter Strip
Live Check Dam	Loose Boulder
Earthen Structure	Farm Pond
Dug Out Pond	Sunken Pond
Vanarai Bund	Earthen Nala Bund
Cement Nala Bund	Diversion Bund

Drought Proofing including Afforestation and Plantation

Teak Plantation	Acacia Mangium Plantation
Mixed Plantation	Eucalyptus Plantation
Plantation on Bund	Fodder Development On waste Land
Bamboo Plantation	Jatropha Plantation

Provision of Irrigation Facility to Land Owned by SC/ ST Community

Dug Well

Renovation of Traditional Water Bodies

Desilting of Tanks

Land Development

Vegetative Contour Bunding	Vegetative Graded Bunding
Terracing	Compartment Bunding

Rural Connectivity Works

Road Construction

Flood Control and Land Protection Works

Nala Bank Stabilization	Nala Training
Drainage Open Trench	Drainage Close Trench

Forest Development Activities:

Artificial Regeneration
Bamboo Plantation
Industrial & Commercial Bamboo Plantation
Medicinal Plantation(Mixed)
Non Timber Forest Produce
Fuel Wood & Fodder Plantation
Reforestation Of Degraded Forest
Deep CCT
Seed Sowing Work
JFM Pre-monsoon Work
Medicinal plantation
Compensatory Afforestation

The main advantages of the software

- Possibility of preparing the Watershed Project Action Plan in a period less than one week as compared to six to eight months when manually prepared.
- Possibility of preparing the Design and Estimates in less than one hour as compared to several days when manually prepared.
- For a particular Project Implementing Agency (PIA) executing ten projects, the average savings in costs could be to the extent of Rs. 75,000 per project since the software cost is only a one time expenditure.
- It would overcome the difficulties faced by several offices on account of great shortage of technical manpower to carry out this critical work.
- The sanctioning authority officer could also use this software to clear proposals in a very short time.
- It would enable the PIAs to implement the projects ahead of schedule giving further economic benefits.
- It would lead to uniformity in reports generated by several offices in the state.

- Direct saving at national level could be over Rs 200 crore per annum.
- User friendly interface with no previous computer knowledge required

After making presentation to Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, in collaboration with National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad, part development for additional 11 states has been completed by us. It is our dream to see it being used throughout the country and help bridge the digital divide we discuss at various forums.

We do not have any emails contacts of the users. However, enquiries with the office of Deputy Collectors (EGS) can be made to collect relevant feedback. We also have some feedback letters from them. Please let us know if you need any additional information. Check out the NREGS system flow and screen shot at (<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/res13010901.doc>) and (<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/res13010902.doc>).

[Nitin Bambalkar](#), Development Research Services (DRS), Pune

I think if the muster rolls are designed only to record the attendance and not the work measurement then you can refer to the watershed development projects in Maharashtra.

In Maharashtra and may be practiced in other states also, the basis of payment is the volume of the completed earthwork.

Generally the rates range between Rs. 27-30 per cubic metre depending upon the soil type. One person completes six cubic metres per day on an average. The muster rolls are designed to compute the depth, width and length of earthwork, which are then used to calculate the total earthwork and the wages. The muster roll is signed and countersigned by both the supervisor and the labour.

Hope the above information will be useful. For more information contact any NGO working on watershed projects in Maharashtra.

[Dhruva Tiwari](#), Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), Bhopal

A big problem is lack of awareness amongst labourers of how the work is measured and how their wages are calculated. They need to be trained and educated.

To tackle loss of wages, electronic thumb impression machine can be introduced. This may increase cost but would provide more transparency because then labourers will press the button only if they get full wages.

One more problem in measurement of work is lack of Junior Engineers (JEs). Government should provide more JEs to NREGA.

[Kris Dev](#), ICT & e-Gov Consultant, Chennai

The issues raised by Samir Garg are valid.

To my knowledge, there is no scientific and objective way of measuring the group activity, leave alone individual activity. Hence it is left to the mercy of the officials who have to certify the work. Instances have come to light, that a single work is shown as multiple works in collusion with

officials and machines have been used to get the work done with wages shared between the workers, contractors and officials. Cheap migrant labour is also used to get the work done for a lower cost. It is also reported people expect to be paid without doing any job, as is the practice in most welfare schemes/doles of the government!!

Biometric smart card tracking can track attendance effectively provided done sincerely. But no proof of progress of job is possible, except to take daily photograph and post in on the website.

Ashok Kumar Pathak, Government of India (GoI) – United Nations (UN) Joint Convergence Programme, Uttar Pradesh

Improving Muster Roll Design and Measurement Procedures in NREGA is the need of the hour. I have seen that muster rolls as well as job cards are kept at Sarpanch's house. The Sarpanch gives the reason that muster rolls are huge in size and so it's not possible to always carry them to the sites.

Not a single labourer was confident in calculating his/her wages. There weren't any boards put up in the village that displayed the wage rate for different kind of activities. I looked at a job card of a labourer and found that the number of days worked was entered as 15 when they were actually seven for which the labourer received his wages in full. But being illiterate, he didn't know that the entry in the job card was for 15 days.

There are massive organized misappropriations taking place in NREGS. One Junior Engineer (JE) looks after 7 - 10 village panchayats. How it is possible for a JE to remain present at all sites at one time? There is no dearth of money in NREGS. But proper planning at the grassroots level and monitoring from Block and District level along with social audit is necessary. Improvement in muster roll design and measurement procedures will certainly reduce the loopholes.

Technicalities in measurement procedures should be made simple. A solution may be fixing district or block-wise wages at a flat rate (per day basis). Assessing wage rate in this manner may involve massive and intensive work, but it will be a one time exercise, which may be useful in future. This will lessen the burden of JEs and reduce dependency on them. Mechanism for verification of muster rolls and job cards on a sample basis at regular intervals by outside agencies may also help in checking irregularities.

Anonymous Contributor

I think this is one of the most important aspects in the implementation of NREGA. I have read several articles on NREGA but have never come across any suggestions to improve the muster roll design and measurement procedures in NREGA.

I work as a Programme Officer implementing NREGA in one of the blocks in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The NREGS was introduced here in April 2008.

Based on the field experience, I would like to share my insights on the issue. To begin with we have no clear cut guidelines as to how to measure the output. There is one Assistant Engineer (AE) doing everything from conducting surveys and preparing estimates to monitoring and preparation of bills for wage payments based on Delhi Schedule of Rates (DSR), Analysis of Rates for Earthwork and Central Public Work Department's (CPWD's) Manual. The measurement taken by AE is recorded in a Measurement Book as there is no provision in the muster rolls to record the same. The first wage bill we prepared, the output fell way short of the attendance, which is discouraging and demotivating for the workers considering that 80 percent of the workers are

women along with the aged people. Despite having the best minimum wage of Rs 130 per day for unskilled workers, a few more bills like this and the workers will lose interest in NREGA.

Besides, recent MoRD guidelines state that the workers should work for eight hours excluding the lunch break. When measurement and payment is done on the basis of earthwork, why is there a need to specify work hours when it is extremely difficult in a hot and humid climate like that of Port Blair? How does it make sense to ask people to hang around for eight plus hours and still pay them on output basis? I think there should be some flexibility allowed in the norms/guidelines set for NREGA.

Lack of adequate staff - technical as well as non-technical - has compounded the implementation related problems. The staff at the panchayat and district level is inadequate and already overburdened. The gram sevaks who are posted at the panchayat level are not technical people. As it is they are already over-burdened with multifarious tasks right from doing household survey work, registering workers, opening bank accounts, issuing job cards, receiving job applications, submitting weekly reports, maintaining records and even supervising the works. Gram Panchayats' treat these gram sevaks as staff of the Programme Officer of NREGA and are not of great help to them.

The Executive Engineers at Zila Parishad who give technical sanction to any work of over one lakh rupees should be made more involved and accountable as their indifference leads to slowing down of our work since the proposal once submitted takes ages to get sanctioned.

We feel there should be more engineering or technical staff appointed at the Gram Panchayat level or Block level atleast. Staff strengthening can resolve lot of our issues.

I too share Samir's concern and would like to see how things work elsewhere especially in states where NREGA is doing well.

Pradosh Ranjan Jena, Government of India (GoI) – United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Disaster Risk Management Programme, Balangir, Orissa

One thing must be added [here](#) that if specified date of sanction is not mentioned in the guidelines for PRI members, then plan and estimate sanction will get delayed. The design of Muster Roll and Measurement Book (MB) is very simple but the fact is that it has to be easy enough for the person who handles it.

I have also worked for the watershed programme and on data entry of NREGA and in both I have not faced any difficulty. Rather the issue is different - the Technical Assistant or Junior Joint Engineers (JJEs) who take measurements make fake entries. It is for this reason that the Muster Roll and MB do not reconcile.

Samir Garg, Adivasi Adhikar Samiti, Raipur, Chattisgarh

I am elaborating the problems that the current design of muster rolls leads to and commenting on the design of muster rolls used in Maharashtra sent very kindly to us by Mr. Nitin Bembalkar.

Currently, most states do not have a system for recording the amount of work done by individual workers on NREGA worksites. This causes problems typically for earthwork (which forms a significant proportion of works taken up under NREGS). The individual worker gets paid based on a task rate but the actual amount of work done by him/her does not get recorded in the muster

rolls. The muster roll records only attendance. The National Guidelines on NREGS (2008) are ambiguous on the issue of measurement of individual work and the suggested Muster Roll format has no place for recording it. This causes several problems for the workers as well as the implementing agencies.

Taking Chhattisgarh as an example, the minimum wage here is Rs. 75 per day and the worker is supposed to dig and throw 62 cubic feet (a pit of 10 feet x 10 feet x 7.5 inches) of normal soil to earn the full amount. Orders issued by the state government allow the worker, at least on paper, to dig more or less and be paid proportionately as per the task rate. Thus, the payment is based on the amount of work done by an individual but without any system for recording it!

In most places, the mate (site supervisor) measures the work done by each worker (but does not record it) each day and marks attendance in the muster roll (Chhattisgarh uses the same design of muster roll as suggested in the National Guidelines) after ascertaining that the worker has dug a pit of 10 feet x 10 feet x 7.5 inches. The Engineer (or Technical Assistant) comes every 2-6 weeks, measures the collective work done on the worksite, and decides the payment. All workers get equal per day wage (Rs. 75) but are not able to avail their choice of earning more (by digging more). Worker also loses the flexibility to dig less and go home early.

Secondly, there is always a possibility of 'free riding' behavior as a result of which the workers who dig the right amount suffer. The implementing agency (especially the mates) also land up in trouble as the possibility of free riding leads to more workers giving less output. The worst form of free riding happens when fake attendance is marked (by the implementer) in the muster roll. As a result, the collective quantum of work when measured by the engineer does not add up. In such a situation, all genuine workers also end up getting less than Rs. 75 even though they did the correct amount of work individually but of which no record exists. Similar problem arises if it rains before the measurements have taken place. The engineer then cannot measure the exact work and most workers end up getting less than the right wage as there are no records of individual work to fall back upon.

The above problems can be avoided if daily record of quantum of work done by each individual worker is entered in the Muster Roll as well as the Job Card. The muster rolls apart from attendance should also record output. For this, muster roll should have six columns under each day (for attendance, actual measured length, breadth, depth of pit dug by individual worker, calculated volume and calculated wage respectively). Similar changes should be made in the Job Card too. The mates then should be trained to record the work and compute the volume and wages.

A variant of this seems to be in practice in Maharashtra, as we can make out from the muster rolls sent to us by Nitin Bembalkar. The system in Maharashtra is to have a three-part muster roll – a) [Attendance sheet](#), b) [Measurement sheet](#) c) [Payment sheet](#). Apparently, in Maharashtra, each worker's daily attendance as well as output is recorded in two separate sheets. Payment is calculated based on the Measurement sheet and has the worker's signature. The attendance sheet helps in counting the number of days of work provided to each worker (and thus the household). The payment sheet has reference numbers of the other two sheets. The disadvantage in having three sheets is that it becomes very tedious job for the mate to do. This can pose difficulty in convincing other states to adopt this model.

A filled set of sheets and interview with some mates from Maharashtra can help us in understanding their system better. **Looking at other variants possibly in practice in a few more states can also help in reaching the best design.** Then an advocacy effort will be needed at the national level to include such systems of measuring and recording as recommendations in the National NREGS guidelines.

I think we are making some progress on the issue, thanks to your persistent efforts.

[Nikhil Dey](#), Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) and Suchana Evam Adhikar Abhiyan

In Rajasthan, there is a great dependence on the "mate" who is now being upgraded to a "work site supervisor", and will be paid semi skilled workers wages. The attached formats have been approved and issued by the Rajasthan Government. They are:

- [Dainik Karya Maap Proforma](#) (Daily Work Measurement Proforma)
- [Karyasthala Diary](#) (Worksite Diary)
- [Napti Board](#) (Measurement Board)
- [Nirdesh](#) (Guidelines)
- [Saamagri Sandharan Register](#)

They were prepared by many people from workers' organizations and different campaigns, and approved and adopted by the Rajasthan Government. Gireesh Bhugra, an engineer in government who works closely with the employment guarantee campaign in Rajasthan, has been the biggest contributor to the final design of the formats.

I have attached a number of formats, which are in Hindi. They also give an idea of the detailed new requirements from "semi skilled" work site supervisors. For them to carry out this kind of responsibility requires training, follow up, and political will, but we have seen that in the unlikely event when these three difficult requirements are met - it works.

[Vinod Kumar](#), Maithri, Palakkad, Kerala

The issues are complex and should be dealt in detail. In Kerala, the Gram Panchayats (GP) are the *de facto* implementing agencies for the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). Each GP has an accredited engineer and data entry operator specifically for NREGS, in addition to the Assistant Engineer (AE) of GP and the Village Extension Officer (VEO), which is placed under GP.

The muster roll is maintained by VEO and the field measurements are taken by the accredited engineer, which is super checked by the AE or Engineers at the Block level depending on the size of the work. There are Technical Committees at GP, Block and District level to give technical sanctions. The system is working sans corruption so far.

The attendance is recorded against each member of a team and the output is measured for the team. For measurement purpose, Public Works Department's (PWD) Schedule of Rates (SoR) is followed diligently. However, wages barely touch Rs. 125, the minimum wages for the state despite a liberal, labor friendly measurement. So NREGS is not able to attract the men and subsequently not able do many of the works visualized under NREGS.

The problem is with the PWD data. It reflects the output produced by able-bodied men under competent leadership using appropriate tools. When malnourished women using tools mainly

suited for men with out proper leadership, the output will naturally drop. So the data has to be generated reflecting the actual field conditions. The output also varies substantially between monsoon and summer conditions.

Another obstacle is the items generally used under PWD - SoR like earth removal, grass clearing etc. Each work visualized under the scheme is divided in to these separate items for estimation and measurement. This makes the measuring, recording and valuation of each work incomprehensible even to a learned man. Then what can be said of the poor and illiterate women?

Each possible work under NREGS - about 30 to 40 types - can be defined separately and possible outturns for all of them can be found out by using systematic Time and Motion studies. This will simplify the estimation and measurement greatly. Government of Kerala is in the process of finalizing the above-mentioned procedure in the pilot districts of NREGS.

Moreover, each labor team may be assigned a work in total and record the muster role as per field conditions. The team may be given intermediate milestones to self-monitor the progress. After the completion of the work, divide the valuation amount as per attendance even when the wage exceeds the minimum wage. But limit the payment of each family to hundred days of minimum wages as per the act. This will give incentive for more people to join the scheme and larger assets can be created.

Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Work and Employment Community in India at se-emp@solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject heading "Re: [se-emp] Query: Improving Muster Roll Design and Measurement Procedures in NREGA – Experiences; Examples. Additional Reply."

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Poverty

Work and Employment Community



ICT for Development Community

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Consolidated Reply

Query: Use of ICT for NREGP Implementation- Examples

**Compiled by Sumeeta Banerji and Sajan Venniyoor Resource Persons and Arif Hussain and Gitanjali Sah, Research Associates
30 May 2007**

From Mandakini Devasher, UNDP, New Delhi

Posted 12 May 2007

It has been over a year since the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) 2005 was launched in 200 of India's poorest districts. The Union Government has recently announced its intention of extending the scheme to another 130 districts bringing the total number of NREGA districts to 330. With this expansion there is a pressing need to focus on more effective communication to ensure that new beneficiaries under the scheme are well versed with their rights from the very beginning.

Simultaneously, there is a need to review existing infrastructure for collection and analysis of data generated with the implementation of the scheme. The Ministry of Rural Development Management Information System (MIS) software developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) provides users with a snapshot of the status of NREGA implementation against various parameters. Meanwhile, states such as Andhra Pradesh have developed detailed MIS capable of capturing data right down to the village level.

UNDP has been supporting the efforts of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India in operationalising the NREGA since April 2006. Our efforts have focused on building institutional capacity within the Ministry in certain key areas i.e. communications, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation etc. One of our objectives under this project is to devise strategies for innovative use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to spread greater awareness about the NREGA and strengthen its implementation amongst different stakeholders.

In this context, I would like members to:

- Share innovative ideas/models for the use of ICT for replication under NREGA
- Give examples from other sectors where such technologies have been used for effective implementation of on-going government schemes
- Suggest gaps in the overall implementation of the scheme where MIS technologies could be harnessed for better results

We would like to share your ideas and suggestions with the Ministry of Rural Development and integrate them into our on-going programme.

Responses received, with thanks, from:

1. [Bhushan Ambadkar](#), Software Institute for Rural Development, Pune
2. [T. N. Anuradha](#), UNDP, New Delhi
3. [Ramesh S. Arunachalam](#), Micro Finance Consulting Group, Chennai ([Response 1](#); [Response 2](#))
4. [D. K. Raju](#), Tenet Group, IIT-M, Chennai
5. [Kamal Kumar Gaur](#), Statistical Observatory, Gurgaon
6. [Vineeta Dixit](#), National e-Governance Plan, New Delhi
7. [Surendra N. Tripathi](#), Rural Development and Information Technology, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar
8. [G. V. Krishnagopal](#), Access Livelihoods Consulting India Private Limited, Hyderabad
9. [K. Rajasekharan](#), Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), Thrissur
10. [Kris Dev](#), International Transparency and Accountability Network, Chennai
11. [Subhransu Tripathy](#), Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India, Gandhinagar
12. [Lingaraj Panda](#), National United Nations Volunteer (UNV), Gumla, Jharkhand

Further contributions are welcome!

[Summary of Responses](#)
[Comparative Experiences](#)
[Related Resources](#)
[Responses in Full](#)

Summary of Responses

Responding to the query on using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in implementing the National Rural Employment Guarantee Program (NREGP), members examined the topic from different angles, generated a broad range of ICT options and discussed some basic questions related to the use of technology. Respondents also cited specific instances where government programs are using ICT and shared information on useful ICT tools/measures for implementing NREGP on a large scale.

Members discussed in detail the **utility of ICTs** in general and in government programs in particular. While accepting the need for ICT applications, given the large-scale implementation of NREGP, they noted the importance of thoroughly analyzing the requirements and benefits of a particular ICT solution before recommending its application for any program listed a few possible questions to test the appropriateness of a specific ICT application, notable among them were:

- Is there any value addition through ICT adoption?
- Is the quantum of training/handholding and resources required for ICT application justifiable?
- Is it financially feasible to maintain in the long run and on a large scale?

Respondents opined that **ICT** has a whole range of **applications in NREGP**, starting from dissemination of information on the program to better targeting and delivery of benefits, planning and measurement of works and finally execution and monitoring. They suggested various ICT tools and mechanisms that have the potential to make NREGP implementation more people friendly, faster and more effective. In terms of applicability, suggested tools can be categorized into two broad categories- system tools and people tools.

Under **system tools**, which can be defined as “tools making the system faster and smoother,” they suggested the following:

- [Cost estimation software](#)- to reduce the time taken to prepare estimates
- [GIS based technology](#)- for monitoring of activities and data analysis
- Panchayat accounting software PRIA Soft- already being used, into which NREGP activities can be integrated
- Video conferencing as a tool for review and monitoring of NREGP implementation

Members mentioned three **people tools** that along with time-tested instruments like radio, television and film could disseminate information (i.e. clarify doubts, address grievances, answer questions) and generate awareness on NREGP:

- [Interactive Voice Response System \(IVRS\)](#)- answers queries through phone
- Phone help lines and internet kiosks- for two way communication
- [Bio-metric devices](#)- for finger printing to identify workers when tracking work and making payments

In addition, respondents shared **experiences with different ICT initiatives** from across the country. For example, in [Kerala](#) a state institution is using a tele-information service to clarify doubts and provide information on decentralization issues. Another example from southern and western **India** outlined an initiative using the [Internet](#) to connect rural people to services related to education, healthcare and income generation and in [Andhra Pradesh](#) to enable better target and wage payments, members cited a NREGP project using biometric identification cards to ensure transparency in payments. Similarly, in [Jharkhand](#), an NGO is promoting the use of a SHG accounting software as a basic tool for monitoring NREGP funds for works executed by the group.

Members also shared a number of examples from other sectors, particularly from the microfinance sector, to demonstrate the efficacy of ICT in delivering services to the poor. In the Indian context, discussants referred to a ICT based insurance premium collection system and an Internet Kiosks network to disseminate agricultural information in rural areas and experiences of many banks running pilots on using ICT for small deposits, disbursals and loaning.

In addition, respondents shared several international experiences from the microfinance sector that, they felt, are applicability in delivery of employment programs. These examples included a project in **Tanzania** using a “Smart Card” to offer ATM services to the poor, the M-PESA system from [Kenya and Tanzania](#) for people who do not have access to banking services, Teba Bank in **South Africa** that provides financial services in rural and peri-urban areas as well as the **Botswana** Savings Bank offering banking services to remote rural communities through electronic passbooks.

Examining **potential gaps in implementation** of NREGP, participants emphasized the need to use computerized Management Information Systems (MIS) in government programs as analytical tools. Currently MIS is used more as “information software” whereas, it has the potential to serve as a trigger for change, only if the MIS data is utilized to study programs in order to reorient and improve their functioning, and if negative performance information is not suppressed.

In general, members agreed that using ICTs has great potential in terms of increasing the effectiveness of government programs like NREGP, and it is just a matter of time before ICT will be used at large scale. At the same time, they cautioned that while ICT can be very effective for disseminating information and monitoring payments, it is not an end in itself and shall be used to

facilitate effective functioning of implementing agencies, whose primary role is to focus on other key aspects of NREGP like targeting, worksite facilities and payment of unemployment wages.

Comparative Experiences

Kerala

Phone-in Service for Doubt Clearance on Local Governance Issues (from [K. Rajasekharan](#), Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Thrissur)

Kerala institute of Local Administration (KILA), Thrissur has been operating a Phone-In service for the past six years to clarify doubts and provide information on decentralization to local government functionaries and citizens. The service has received very positive responses from the public. Read [more](#)

Andhra Pradesh

Use of Biometric Device for Beneficiary Tracking (from [Kris Dev](#), International Transparency and Accountability Network, Chennai)

A stand alone bio-metric device was used in Jakulla Kutha Palli in Andhra Pradesh to track beneficiaries of the NREGP. The process involved recording fingerprints of beneficiaries through a simple device. This procedure ensures that there is minimal chances of duplication once the recording has been done, thus muster role maintenance and wage payment can be carried out in a foolproof way. During the procedure 100% success rate was achieved in terms of registration. Read [more](#)

Jharkhand

Integration of SHG Accounting System with NREGP Work (from [Lingaraj Panda](#), NUNV, Gumla Jharkhand)

An SHG accounting software system is being used for monitoring the disbursement under the NREGP. SHGs are executing work through their members. Funds are being transferred to the SHG account and as per the work carried out and wages are paid to the members through their individual passbook, which is reflected in their digital accounting formats. This ensures correct payments and timely disbursements. The response has been good and there are plans to upscale the initiative.

Multiple States

NREGA Software for Cost Estimation (from [Bhushan Ambadkar](#), Software Institute for Rural Development, Pune)

Based on "Watershed A to Z" software for watershed applications, developed by SIRD in collaboration with National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad, SIRD has developed NREGP specific software, which can make cost estimates in a short time. With some upgradation, the software can also be used for maintaining and managing Muster Rolls. The cost is reasonable and the design is replicable across different states. Read more

Phone Based IVRS for Query Response (from [T. N. Anuradha](#), UNDP, New Delhi)

A service launched by OneWorld South Asia, Lifelines India is a phone based Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) aimed at answering farmer's queries. The process entails a farmer calling up a number and leaving a query that is answered after a specified time. Read [more](#)

Internet Connectivity as Change Agent (from [D. K. Raju](#), Tenet Group, IITM, Chennai)

In an initiative covering states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, Internet connectivity points have been developed as information centers for various government services and schemes. These connectivity points or Kiosks are managed by an entrepreneur. The response has been good and so far, 4000 information kiosks have been set up. Read [more](#)

From Ramesh S. Arunachalam, Micro Finance Consulting Group, Chennai; [response 2](#)

Use of Point of Sale (PoS) Devices and ATMs for Delivering Financial Services

Megatop/ITC in collaboration with UTI Bank is using mobile ATMs to deliver insurance services in the rural areas of Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. ICICI Bank's loan officers are using PoS devices on a pilot basis in Uttar Pradesh. UTI Bank is using ATMs to deliver a range of financial services to tribals and poor farmers in Andhra Pradesh. These initiatives are getting good response and can be explored further to check their feasibility and utility for use in various processes of NREGP.

International

Kenya, Tanzania and Botswana

Use of ICT for Delivering Financial Services

In Kenya and Tanzania M-PESA system supports mobile phone based banking services for the poor. Similarly in Guatemala Foundation for International Community Assistance (FINCA) and VISA are piloting the use of pre-paid cards for loan disbursement. In Botswana, a bank has introduced an electronic, card-based passbook that, supported by satellite technology, provides banking facilities in the remote rural areas. Initial responses are encouraging and these models could be applicable to NREGP.

Related Resources

Recommended Documentation

Estimation Software for NREGA Program (from [Bhushan Ambadkar](#), Software Institute for Rural Development, Pune)

By Nanasaheb Jadhav; Software Institute for Rural Development; 2006

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/res12050701.doc> (Size: 44 KB)

Note on NREGP design and estimation software for implementation in districts of Maharashtra

From Ramesh S. Arunachalam, Microfinance Consulting Group, Chennai; [response 2](#)

Technology Pilots in Delivery Financial and Other Services to Low Income People, Lessons from Experiences in Asia, Africa and Latin America

By Ramesh S. Arunachalam *et al.*; Unpublished Internal Paper, Microfinance Consulting Group, Chennai; 2007

To avail of a copy contact Ramesh S. Arunachalam at r_arunachalam@hotmail.com

Paper discusses the lessons learnt from introduction of technology in Asia, Africa and Latin America, lessons could be used for NREGP implementation

Talking about a Revolution

By Maya Fisher-French; Maverick Magazine; November 2005

<http://www.wizzit.co.za/media/revolution.pdf> (Size: 3.14 MB)

Article discusses how technology has been used to improve operational efficiency of micro finance programs- suggested as a possible application to NREGP implementation

Catching the Technology Wave: Mobile Phone Banking and Text-a-Payment in the Philippines

Chemonics International Inc.

<http://www.chemonics.com/projects/content/GCash.pdf> (Size: 252 KB)

Project document illustrates use of technology to improve operational efficiency of micro finance programmes; looking at possible application to NREGP implementation

A New Model for Rural Connectivity

By Al Hammond and John Paul; World Resources Institute; March 2006

Click [here](#) to read (Size: 232 KB)

Discusses Motorola's telecommunications innovations piloted in Latin America to increase greater access to financial services in remote areas, can address similar issues in NREGP

Microfinance through the Next Decade: Visioning the Who, What, Where, When and How

By Elisabeth Rhyne and María Otero; ACCION International, for the Global Microcredit Summit; 2006

<http://www.microcreditsummit.org/papers/Plenaries/RhyneOtero.pdf> (Size: 113 KB)

Paper highlights how technology has been used to improve operational efficiency of microfinance programmes- has implementation possibility in NREGP

Brokering Change in the Low-Income Market

FinMark Trust and the Ford Foundation; October 12, 2006

http://www.finmarktrust.org.za/documents/2006/OCTOBER/R_intermediaries.pdf (Size: 638 KB)

Report covers various intermediary microfinance models, highlighting the experience of Megatop/ITC's e-choupals; looking at a possible application to NREGP implementation

From [Kris Dev](#), International Transparency and Accountability Network, Chennai

The 'BSC' of Identity

By Paromita Pain; The Hindu, Business Daily; Monday, Mar 19, 2007

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/bline/ew/2007/03/19/stories/2007031900110300.htm>

Informs of Biometric Tracking of Payments under NREGP where transactions can be seen on the Internet, citizens can track, the progress of complaints, schemes and payments

TN Villagers Get Digital Identity

By Jaya Menon; The Indian Express; January 28, 2007

<http://www.indianexpress.com/story/21904.html>

Informs about a project in Andhra Pradesh, that used a biometric device to authenticate the beneficiaries of NREGP; this device gives a tamper proof identity to villagers

The 'e' in Employment- ICT for Rural Income Generation and Poverty Alleviation in India

(from [Sumeeta Banerji](#), Resource Person)

International Labour Organization Publication (paid publication)

http://www.ilo.org/global/What_we_do/Publications/lang--en/docName--WCMS_071645/PDF (Size: 288 KB)

Report examines the impact of ICTs on the rural poor in India and studies the contribution of ICTs to Government schemes aimed at employment generation and poverty alleviation

From [Gitanjali Sah](#), Research Associate

ICT in NREGP Implementation

Article in i4d Magazine; August 2006

<http://www.i4donline.net/aug06/778.pdf> (Size: 688 KB)

Article examines the role ICTs can play in crossing some of the hurdles NREGP faces in order to realize its full potential.

Operationalising NREGP

Ministry of Rural Development, Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi

<http://nac.nic.in/concept%20papers/nrega13jan.pdf> (Size: 322 KB)

Presentation discusses wage employment programmes, identifies generating awareness as a critical issue in NREGP implementation and suggests communication strategies to address this

Recommended Portals and Information Bases

From [Subhansu Tripathy](#), Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India, Gandhinagar

Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, New Delhi

<http://rural.nic.in/>

Home portal of Ministry of Rural Development, GoI, contains detailed information and progress reports of various rural development programs including NREGP

Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, New Delhi

<http://panchayat.nic.in/>

Parent portal of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, GoI has information on various schemes and programs for Panchayats and Rural Development, including NREGP

Recommended Organizations

From [Bhushan Ambadkar](#), Software Institute for Rural Development, Pune

Software Institute for Rural Development, Pune

Vanarai Foundation, 498, Parvati, Pune 411009 Maharashtra; Tel: 91-20-24445251/0351; Fax: 91-20-24445299; bhushan@sirdpune.com; www.sirdpune.com

Institute has developed Information Technology solutions in watershed programmes and a similar package for NREGP programmes

National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) Hyderabad

Rajendranagar, Hyderabad 500030 Andhra Pradesh; Tel: 91-40-24008448/472/473/466/526; Fax: 91-40-24015277/6500; anil@nird.gov.in; <http://www.nird.org.in/>

Supports rural development initiatives through professional and academic support, involved in NREGP process reviews and implementation tools development.

Lifelines India, New Delhi (from [Anuradha](#), UNDP, New Delhi)

OneWorld South Asia, C-5, Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi 110016; Tel: 41689000; Fax: 41689001; owsa@oneworld.net; <http://southasia.oneworld.net/article/view/142298/1/1893>

Uses ICTs (Interactive Voice Response System to answer farmer's queries) to promote sustainable development & poverty alleviation, could be used for NREGP grievance redressal

From [D. K. Raju](#), Tenet Group, IITM, Chennai

The Telecommunication and Computer Networking Group (TeNeT), Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT-M), Chennai

Department of Electrical Engineering IIT-Madras, Chennai 600036 Tamil Nadu; Tel: 91-44-22575475/4408; Fax: 91-44-22570120; office@tenet.res.in, <http://www.tenet.res.in/>

Has set up Kiosks to provide services in the field of education, health care and income generation, has the potential to incorporate information on NREGP with the existing model

n-logue, Chennai

Old 54, New 2/2, Balaraman Road, Adayar, Chennai 600020 Tamil Nadu; Tel.: 91-44-24455212; Fax: 91-44-24455335; info@n-logue.com; <http://www.n-logue.com/index.html>

Established under the aegis of TeNeT to fulfill the need for internet and voice services in towns and villages in India; can be utilized for NREGP communication

Librarian, Library and Information Division, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), Thrissur (from [K. Rajasekharan](#))

Mulagunnathukavu P.O, Thrissur 680581 Kerala; Tel: 0487-2204097/0244/208; librarianskila@hotmail.com; <http://www.kilaonline.org/html/library/phservice.html>

An example of how ICTs can be used to provide information on government schemes and procedures; KILA experience can be replicated for NREGP information dissemination

From Ramesh S. Arunachalam, Micro Finance Consulting Group, Chennai; [response 2](#)

Citibank India/Citigroup Microfinance Group, Mumbai

7th Floor, C-61, Bandra Kurla Complex, G Block, Bandra (E), Mumbai 400051 Maharashtra; Tel.: 91-22-4001-5757; <http://www.citigroup.com/citigroup/press/2006/061201d.htm>

Example of how technology has been used to improve operational efficiency of micro finance programmes; looking at a possible application to NREGP implementation.

TATA-AIG Life Insurance Company Ltd., Mumbai

Peninsula Towers, 6th floor, Peninsula Corporate Park, Ganpatrao Kadam Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai 400013 Maharashtra; Tel.: 1-800-11-9966; info@tata-aig.com;

http://tata.com/0_our_commitment/community_initiatives/articles/20050122_tata_aig.htm

Example of how technology has been used to improve operational efficiency of micro finance programmes; looking at a possible application to NREGP implementation.

Financial Information Network and Operations Ltd (FINO), Mumbai

Ground Floor, South Tower, East Wing, ICICI Towers, Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai 400051 Maharashtra; Tel.: 022-26538060; info@fino.co.in; <http://www.fino.co.in/index.htm>

Example of how technology has been used to improve operational efficiency of micro finance programmes; looking at a possible application to NREGP implementation.

Institute for Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT), Hyderabad

Castle Hills, Road No.1, Masab Tank, Hyderabad 500057 Andhra Pradesh; Tel.: 91-40-23534981; Fax: 91-40-23535157; http://www.idrbt.ac.in/research/ongoing-projects/smart_cards/index.html

Example of how technology has been used to improve operational efficiency of micro finance programmes; looking at a possible application to NREGP implementation.

Financial Deepening Challenge Fund, United Kingdom

Enterplan, 1 Northfield Road, Reading, RG1 8AH, UK; Tel.: 44-0-118-956-6066; Fax: 44-0-118-957-6066; jmr@enterplan.co.uk; <http://www.financialdeepening.org/default.asp?id=694&ver=1>

Example of how technology has been used to improve operational efficiency of micro finance programmes; looking at a possible application to NREGP implementation.

WIZZIT, South Africa

4th Floor, South Tower, Nelson Mandela Square at Sandton Cit, Sandton, South Africa; Tel.: 0861 949 948; wizzinfo@wizzit.co.za; www.wizzit.co.za

Example of how technology has been used to improve operational efficiency of micro finance programmes; looking at a possible application to NREGP implementation.

Uganda Microfinance Limited (UML), Uganda

Head Office Plot 49/51 Bukoto Street, P.O. Box 10184, Kamwoyka, Kampala, Uganda; Tel.: 256-41-531-377, 256-31-262-436; Fax: 256-31-262-436; ugandamu@umu.co.ug

Example of how technology has been used to improve operational efficiency of micro finance programmes; looking at a possible application to NREGP implementation.

Globe Telecom, Philippines

<http://www1.globe.com.ph/default.aspx>

Example of how technology has been used to improve operational efficiency of micro finance programmes; looking at a possible application to NREGP implementation.

SMART, Philippines

SMART Tower 6799 Ayala Avenue, Makati City, 1226 Philippines; Tel: 63-2-8881111; Fax: 63-2-8488870/30; customercare@smart.com; <http://www.smart.com.ph/>

Example of how technology has been used to improve operational efficiency of micro finance programmes, looking at a possible application to NREGP implementation.

Recommended Tools and Technology

Panchayati Raj Institution Accounting Software (PRIAsoft) (from [Subhransu Tripathy](#), Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India, Gandhinagar)

<http://crisp.nic.in/guestsign.asp?flag=PS>; <http://crisp.nic.in/priasoftware/default1.htm>

Allows administrators to monitor at all levels of the three-tier administrative set up of PRIs. Has been suggested that NREGP implementation could be integrated into PRIAsoft

"DevInfo" Geographic Information System (GIS) based software (from [Kamal Kumar Gaur](#), Statistical Observatory, Gurgaon)

www.devinform.org/pdfs/articles/div50_digital_mapping_technical_note.pdf (Size: 1.34 MB)

DevInfo includes advanced functions for providing geospatial analysis of the data, can be used in designing and monitoring of works under NREGP

Related Past Consolidated Replies

ICT and Livelihoods, from **Anita Gurumurthy, IT for Change, Bangalore (Experiences)**

(Size: 195 KB). ICT for Development Community. Issued 22 January 2007

Experiences on the socio-economic impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) interventions in livelihood programs

Responses in Full

[Bhushan Ambadkar](#), Software Institute for Rural Development, Pune

Our organization has developed customized version of Watershed Design and Estimation software with local language interface for 11 states so far as per sanction from Ministry of Rural Development, New Delhi. This is being done in collaboration with National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad. Work on remaining states and union territories have already begun.

In fact, during the Brain storming session on formulation of new Watershed guidelines, Mr. Bhaskar Chatterjee, Additional Secretary (LR), Ministry of Rural Development has accepted our suggestion to make a mention of use of Information Technology solutions in Watershed programs. As a sequel to this effort, we have now developed similar innovative package for National Rural Employment Guarantee Program (NREGP), which can be easily replicated to other states on the lines of success achieved for "Watershed A to Z" software. Mr. V S Sampath, Director General, NIRD has also shown keen interest in this new NREGP software developed by us as the same can be made available to each district at a one time cost less than Rs. 1 lac only including some costs toward training. This software can be further upgraded to include Muster Roll, etc.

Estimates worth Rs 20 - 25 Cr can be completed in a matter of 2-3 weeks, which generally may take several months.

In view of this experience, we have received requests from few districts in Maharashtra as well as some states to help them with a special package for NREGP. As per the note enclosed we have already developed the Maharashtra version. We could make a presentation of the same to you for taking this software to other states.

Enclosed please find:

1. Note on NREGA - Design and Estimation software (<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/res12050701.doc>)
2. Organization Profile (<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/res12050702.doc>)

Anuradha, UNDP, New Delhi

Lifelines India, which is phone based Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) system, answering farmer's queries through phone could be adopted for awareness generation on National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). A service launched by OneWorld South Asia, I was involved in its initial stages of implementation and during the process of feedback on the service, communities had exactly suggested using the same system to answer their queries regarding NREGA. They felt though they knew such a scheme exists but were not aware about how to go about using it. They had many basic questions like who are entitled, the age group, kind of work etc.

This could be a viable intervention using this simple tool, wherein the caller calls a designated number, leaves a query for which a query ID is given and answers are made available within specified period of time. Such a system does not require someone at the backend regularly answering calls and but gives the information provider some time to provide appropriate answers and conduct enquiries where required.

I think phone which is simple communication medium and accessible to all can be best medium for clarifying the scheme among masses and M&E during implementation of NREGP

Ramesh S. Arunachalam, Micro Finance Consulting Group, Chennai (response 1)

I share below some thoughts on use of technology in National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP) and essentially, these are based on my experiences of working with technology related projects globally, for over a decade. Please take them for what they are worth and what they are not.

Introducing Technology in Development Projects like NREGP?

Let me start with two caveats based on my own experience in working with several technology solutions in India and abroad for over a decade. These are mere words of caution from my own experiences and so, please do not feel that I am discouraging any of you from using newer but relevant/useful technology. Technology could be used in NREGA (NREGP) but care must be taken to evaluate the need for technology before using it – In many projects and contexts in Asia, Africa and North/South America, technology (ICT) has been introduced for sake of introducing technology (ICT) rather than it serving a real purpose or function and in the end, it has been sadly withdrawn at significant cost. Also, the technology must be piloted properly and re-oriented based on piloting feedback before it is introduced. Otherwise, it could turn out as a recipe for disaster.

That said, before introducing technology, please examine the following (compiled from several sources including my own experiences, lessons from other projects and stakeholders etc) general aspects while thinking of technologies in development projects:

- Whether there is any value addition through the use of the said technology. This could be examined for the process or intermediary or end-user in terms of features, accessibility, cost and affordability, ease of use and several other aspects. This has great significance and is often the most recurring cause of failed technology initiatives for low income people worldwide. Sometimes, newer technologies compete with tried, tested, flexible and acceptable solutions (an Example as E Banking competes with cash!!!)
- Whether the technology calls for significant departure from existing practices and if so, whether this change would be feasible

- Whether a large amount of training is required for the staff or end user on how to use the technology and whether low income end-users may have some fears of it (like planning to use using a technology introducer (person) next to an ATM originally for the first two weeks but doing it still after four months in helping low income clients use the cards on the ATM – then the technology sort of becomes redundant).
- Whether there is a business case of the technology for the institution/project (Many times, the technology continues to be subsidized and/or cross-subsidized)
- Whether the technology is in line with regulatory aspects – in the context in question

While the above are general aspects to consider, I am also enclosing some specific criteria (first cut) for use in NREGP. The following criteria could be (adapted and) used to select technology for use and deployment in NREGP. (Source: Adapted from Ramesh S Arunachalam et al, (2007), "Technology Pilots in Delivery Financial and Other Services to Low Income People, Lessons from Experiences in Asia, Africa and Latin America ", Life at Bottom of Pyramid, Forthcoming).

Basically, this entails asking the following questions prior to piloting or introducing a technology:

Value Addition:

- Does it add value to the produce/product/services of the low income people?
- Does it utilize otherwise unproductive assets
- Does it facilitate building long-term sustainable livelihoods for specially disadvantaged groups of low income people?
- Does it tackle issues of lower output (per unit of input) through productivity and/or skills enhancing practices?
- Does it innovatively utilize existing stakeholders/resources and enhance value consistently across supply chain?
- Does the technology help in overcoming market imperfections (labor, finance, produce etc)?

Implementation:

- Can it be implemented easily and quickly and in an affordable manner?
- Technology that requires many stakeholders, as a result of which implementation and coordination could be difficult on the ground
- Financing could be a problem for the technology (as the business model may not be viable and risks are too unmanageable)
- Technology that requires deep pockets and strong facilitation for a long period of time is usually unsuitable and also perhaps unsustainable
- It is also useful to check whether the use of the technology requires structural changes that mandates wider (government or community or other) support, which may not be forthcoming
- Some technology may be very high maintenance and thereby have recurring costs and hence, may not be suitable or sustainable
- Whether the technology is likely to produce any inconsistency in supply and quality – these could be real problems due to use of technology
- Whether there could be a Transportation/Mobility disadvantage with regard to technology?
- Whether the technology is safe from different perspectives?

Impact:

- What is the likely Impact from use of technology?
- Does it solve a national problem?
- Does it have potential to generate wealth at the grass-roots for low income people?
- Does it have potential to impact large numbers of specialized groups of disadvantaged and low income people?
- Does it good potential for scaling-up and wider replication? (Technology that has not been tried on a large scale means that large scale operations could turn out different/adversely)
- Are projected returns to the society/country quite significant?
- Does it have potential for development of regionally backward areas?

- Does it have potential for development of regionally backward

Competition:

- Whether the technology has competing or substitute technology that could leap frog it (the current technology) - this could affect project costs, outputs and impact

I will send a separate post on technologies available with details of pilots and also some information on MIS aspects for NREGP.

[D. K. Raju](#), Tenet Group, IITM, Chennai

I work with Tenet group at Indian Institute of Technology- Madras (IITM) under Professor Ashok Jhunjhunwala. We have been working towards taking the benefits of technology and services to rural people. Through N-logue, we already have infrastructure, providing internet connectivity to many rural villages. We have 27 access centers; 12 in Tamil Nadu, 3 in Karnataka, 7 in Gujarat, 3 in Maharashtra and 2 in Andhra Pradesh. Almost 4000 kiosks have been set up as self sustainable models. With the experiences gained over the last 4 years, we are aggressively trying to provide services in the fields of Education, Health care and Income generation through our kiosks.

While promoting the kiosk owner as a successful entrepreneur, we are also trying to make him as a change agent in rural developmental process.

I personally have taken over Tiruvallore Access centre as an entrepreneur and am working towards making all welfare schemes of central and state governments reach the needy in the rural areas. I am aware of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) being implemented in Andhra Pradesh. I would like to know names of the districts now selected for NREGS in the State so that I can think of a mechanism to ensure people under each of our kiosks benefit from this scheme.

[Kamal Kumar Gaur](#), Statistical Observatory, Gurgaon

It's an interesting idea of application of Information Communication Technology (ICT) for the NREGP. Lots of applications are readily available and more can be developed with specific requirement.

But I would also like to suggest about the available GIS based technology "DevInfo". The technology is being used globally for various purposes including developing data repository, monitoring existing programmes / projects, analyzing data, creating new variables and much more.

The application has tremendous potential to be used in case of NREGP also. Should you need more information, please do let us know.

[Vineeta Dixit](#), National e Governance Plan, New Delhi

As we are aware, use of technology in any project, let alone a development project is not a simple issue for technology alone can never be the sole solution to any problem especially those related to development.

Having said that, I believe that technology can go a long way in identifying beneficiaries and ensuring appropriate access to benefits.

As far as NREGP is concerned, from my perspectives there are several things that can be done and are already being done. For example, technology can make creation of basic list of beneficiaries an easier task. For this purpose, either the Below Poverty Line (BPL) List or the election data base can

be used. While I concede that neither are perfect, but they make a good beginning and can be further improved by public display and feedback session on the list thereby ensuring transparency.

There is still the issue of accountability though. The implementers may choose to use biometric technology such as fingerprinting along with a photo ID for disbursement of benefits. For the moment, the biometric technology is expensive, but given the vast amount of money being allocated under the scheme, it is but a drop of water in the ocean.

The second part of accountability is ensuring that the work actually gets done. For this purpose, photographic evidence through hand held webcams can be provided.

Govt. of Orissa as well as Andhra Pradesh are using technology in limited way for better targeting and delivery of benefits under NREGP.

We must however, keep in mind that the aspects mentioned above address only a small part of the scheme. There are other issues such as inclusion of staff salary in the outlay of scheme, provision of appropriate childcare facility near the habitat/work area, and even the basic awareness about the scheme as right to work. And of course nothing can beat human ingenuity in finding loopholes in best of schemes!

Additionally, as part of the awareness creation plan for NREGP, I am collating database of examples of good practices. I will be using case studies shared by members in this discussion while compiling the database. These could be either innovative use of technology in health, education, agriculture or even development programmes. The purpose of collation is to create a database of case studies that can then be represented in the audio-visual as well as print format and shared with the implementers to foster sharing and learning through vicarious experiences.

[Surendra N. Tripathi](#), Rural Development and Information Technology, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar

ICT in NREGA is not a matter of whether rather how soon. We have used it for transparency but we must go beyond it and must cover what is being told as PLAN PL: US. Plan for NRM (sustainable natural resource management). We have to integrate other infrastructure development schemes to tell the stake holders about actual quantum of fund being invested in the region and generate demands for questioning the rationale of all of them for really integrated development. This can happen faster only by Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) in National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP) /Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF)

[G. V. Krishnagopal](#), Access Livelihoods Consulting India Private Limited, Hyderabad

One simple way to look at the possible technological applications is to identify where the present linkages and gaps are in the entire scheme and then look at potential technological applications -

- In disseminating the scheme - Telephone help lines, Radio & Television Programs, Film shows Will be useful
- In availing rights - centralized automatic registration of complaints using telephone call centers, internet kiosks where ever possible and mobile SMS
- For planning and allotment of work - it can also be proposed through various means and not only through the staff. The means could be through postal department e-centers
- For wage collection - biometric identification, NREGA credit cards technology
- For complaint registering - as mentioned above
- For regular review - computerized MIS, video conferencing for review, and other applications, automated tracker for processing any requests registered
- Work identification can be done with some geo referencing and markings

I am sure there are more applications possible than the ones I have enlisted.

K. Rajasekharan, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), Thrissur

It seems that Phone-in-Service on NREG for doubt clearance is a good suggestion and that can be done with or without an answering machine, if any knowledgeable person can be engaged for the purpose from a training institute or a development office. It would be useful for implementation in states where density of phone is high.

To cite an experience on such a service, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), Mulagunnathukavu is operating a Phone-in-Service (a tele-information service) for doubt clearance on decentralization for the past six years and that serves as a useful information service to many. Any institution engaged in information dissemination can handle such a service for clearing the emerging doubts. The details of our service are as follows.

The purpose of our service is to clarify the emerging doubts of practitioners of local governance/ other citizens over phone. The practitioners of decentralization have to confront many doubts/problems in the course of operationalising the very complex state-guided decentralization efforts. The Phone-in-Service is meant to address those issues by providing reasonable information. The institute's access to experts, officials and documents serve as the enabling factor in this knowledge dissemination service. An Officer coordinates the service and utilizes the services of experts / officials accessible to KILA. It is now offered as an extended information service of KILA Library & Information Division, so as to reach out many people who require information through the phone network. The doubts can be for a fact, information or a piece of knowledge or on Acts, rules, orders, procedures, formalities etc. governing the process of decentralization

Anyone can ask a doubt to a specified phone 0487-2204097. Answer will be given outright, if the answer is known. Or else, it will be noted with phone no of the caller. The coordinator will then obtain the answer and later the answer will be informed to the caller over the phone number provided by him. Records of the questions & answers are maintained in KILA for important ones.

The service provides a good feedback. It gives a clear understanding about the issues that needs to be addressed in the field and the status of understanding of the practitioners so as to design capacity development programmes. The feedback can be a good input for policy making on decentralization by the Government.

KILA cannot answer every doubt. In such cases, the caller will be informed about it. Specific answers will be given on doubts, which are very clear. Otherwise, possible optional answers will be given in cases that can be interpreted differently and allow the clientele to decide himself the right course of interpretation. The answers provided from KILA will be a guiding expert opinion and may not be treated as a substitute for official clarifications

Kris Dev, International Transparency and Accountability Network, Chennai

I am glad to inform you that a pilot project undertaken to track beneficiaries under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP) using biometric authentication of workers (male and female) was successfully carried out on Thursday, April 27, 2006, at Jakulla Kutha Palli (JK Palli, a remote hamlet of about 200 families, under the Amadugur Mandal, about 35 kms from the town of Kadiri, about 95 kms from Anantapur District Headquarters) in Andhra Pradesh.

The bio-metric tracking was 100% successful, with no failures, using a stand alone bio-metric device and a 12 volt car battery, as there was no power supply for the whole day in the entire Mandal.

Probably, this is the first time such a biometric tracking of payments under the Work for Food NREGA has been successfully carried out. The minutes of the meeting of the local committee for payment disbursement done in JK Palli elaborates the details of biometric tracking and payment, after verifying the ID Card issued for the purpose. 50% of the beneficiaries are women.

The biometric authentication was not without its own problems, as some of the women came directly from work, with cement / lime mortar coating on their fingers. Some fingers were very rough and a second registration had to be taken. Nevertheless, 100% success rate was achieved, out of which, 80% in the first attempt and 20% in the second attempt.

The biometric tracking can be easily replicated all over India and anywhere in the developing world, to ensure fool proof tracking mechanism of citizens. In addition to finger printing, the photo of the individual can also be incorporated.

We have recently carried out successfully, another biometric tracking with a low cost device in a remote hamlet near Rekha Palli in V.R. Puram Mandal of Khammam District in A.P.

To know more, follow the links given below:

http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/ew/2007/03/19/stories/20_07031900110300.htm

<http://www.indianexpress.com/story/21904.html>

Ramesh S. Arunachalam, Micro Finance Consulting Group, Chennai (*response 2*)

I am responding to your request for examples of technology and also some comments on MIS. Hope this is useful and apologies for a rather longish posting but cannot be helped!

1) Alternative Technologies from Other Sectors

Here are some alternative technologies under development and piloting in the Microfinance sector and many of them can be integrated into the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP) as it expands:

- South Africa: the Wizzit banking facility allows low-income account holders to use their mobile phones to remit money to a friend, buy airtime, or pay accounts.
- Philippines: Globe Communications and SMART have introduced cell phones to store and transfer electronic cash for payments. Being introduced to Rural Bankers' Association of Philippines.
- Pakistan: Union Bank – Agricultural Credit Card - This project contributes toward the rural economy of Pakistan through a credit-card based financing scheme, in collaboration with farm input companies, that enables small farmers to purchase high certified quality crop inputs at affordable prices, leading to improved crop yields and incomes – Department for International Development -Financial Deepening Challenge Fund (DFID-FDCF)
- Tanzania: CRDB – SMART Card - Offline debit/smart card payment system for the domestic market, that is also affordable for the majority of poor people, using Automated Teller Machines (ATMs)s, Broadband Telecommunication Technologies (BTTs) and Point of Sale (POS) located at merchant premises throughout Tanzania; and capable of linking with other local banks through a shared switch. Additional applications to include salary payments through payroll software supported by smart card core application software. Strategic alliances with MFIs will also enable/facilitate provision of financial services such as savings, fixed deposit, contract accounts, school going children's account, micro loans and transfer of funds to disadvantaged poor women living in rural areas. Services provided by MFIs with the help from the bank will in turn support and promote the development of the private sector, small and micro-enterprises and small-scale farmers. Disadvantaged groups have access to micro credits and stimulates economic activities and generates employment - DFID FDCF

- Latin America: Motorola recently unveiled M-Wallet, a downloadable software application that allows users to pay bills, purchase products, and/or transfer money using their cell phones. The company is targeting the remittance market between the U.S. and Latin America.
- Kenya and Tanzania: The M-Pesa system supports money transfers, cash withdrawal and deposits at retail outlets, and disbursement and payment of loans. This is being commercialized in Kenya and other countries. M-PESA is aimed at mobile customers who do not have a bank account, typically because they do not have access to a bank or because they do not have sufficient income to justify a bank account. All they need to do is register at an authorized M-PESA Agent by providing their Safaricom mobile number and their identification card. Once registered, customers can:
 - Put money into their account by depositing cash at a local Agent
 - Send money to other mobile phone users by SMS instruction, even if they are not Safaricom subscribers.
 - Withdraw cash at a local Agent
 - Buy Safaricom airtime for themselves or other subscribers

Only Safaricom subscribers can send M-PESA, but anyone who can receive an sms can receive money by MPESA. Customers do not need to have a bank account to benefit from M-PESA services. Cash is paid into M-PESA and withdrawn at M-PESA Agent outlets. These outlets are typically local Safaricom Dealers, but can also be other kinds of retailers such as petrol stations, supermarkets and local shops. There is currently a large network of M-PESA Agents across Kenya who has been trained to use the service. It is planned to grow this network significantly in the coming months. The M-PESA service was originally created as a pilot funded, jointly by Vodafone and the UK Department for International Development [DFID] Financial Deepening Challenge Fund. The pilot ran for over 6 months in Kenya from October 2005 in partnership with Faulu Kenya, a local Microfinance Institution.

- Guatemala: FINCA and VISA are piloting the use of pre-paid cards for loan disbursements by collaborating FINCA Guatemala and Nicaragua with VISA member banks.
- Peru: Mibanco has become a VISA member bank, and has introduced VISA products including: Miahorro (a savings account with debit card), VISA Empresarial card which can be used at ATMs and a credit card, all launched in 2006
- South Africa: Teba Bank – A Card - The project provides affordable and accessible financial services to communities previously denied access, with particular emphasis on rural and peri-urban areas, by means of a Point of Sale (POS) device, which enables the customer to access a transactional banking account. POS devices will be installed at up to 20,500 retail outlets throughout four key provinces and will be owned and serviced by 22 newly established franchise companies. The primary banking products and services include standard savings and credit accounts, as well as providing the option for state social grants to be deposited directly and safely into the customer's bank accounts - DFID FDCF
- Kenya: Equity Building Society – Mobile Banking - The project provides commercial banking services to more than twenty rural village satellite centres through mobile banking units attached to existing branches. The project aims to prove that commercial banking services can be provided to Kenya's rural poor in a profitable and sustainable way, using appropriate information technology. The mobile units serve each area once or twice a week providing their customers in the remote areas with financial services like those in the branches such as banker's cheques, remittance processing, loan applications and many more. This service helps to reduce congestion in the banking halls, increase penetration, and profitability. The customers pay the same rates for their transactions and are charged a small fee for the mobile access. The mobile banks consist of an all terrain 4-wheel drive vehicle that is manned by two or three bank employees as well as hired government security forces that meet the customers at the designated market places on the bank days. Once there, they remove the vault, their paperwork and their laptops and serve the customers from satellite offices that have been rented out at the market places. The mobile

banks use solar power to run the computerized MIS systems, the printers, and the scanners that are used to take the photos for the accounts. The mobile banks are in constant communication with the branches via GPS and VHF radio communication – DFID FDCF

- Botswana: Botswana Savings Bank (DFID FDCF) – Electronic Passbook - Botswana Savings Bank (BSB) has introduced an electronic, card-based passbook, supported by satellite based telecom technology which:
 - Provides banking services for disadvantaged and remote rural communities
 - Offers a secure service safe from fraud
 - Reduces transaction costs and improves service
 - Extends the range of banking products available in rural areas
- Uganda: Uganda Microfinance Limited is piloting the use of POS devices to extend rural outreach.
- Colombia: 45 co-operatives with different core banking systems are using a single POS solution.
- India: Tata AIG is conducting a pilot with CRIG Agents for insurance premium collection – under the DFID FDCF projects. The use of technology should scale up operations (under new, more flexible micro insurance regulations), enhance controls, and improve front-end processes (cash collection and receipting) - DFID FDCF

Megatop/ITC current experiment with a kiosk (choupal) network and likely future experiment with UTI Bank using mobile ATMs under the DFID FDCF project - The project delivers a range of insurance products such as endowment, term and pension policies to afford protection and provide avenues for savings. The target customers are marginal, small, medium and large farmers from 9,000 villages in Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh with a primary focus on remote villages.

ICICI and some MFIs are said to be conducting a pilot whereby loan officers use POS devices at group meetings.

Citi Bank is using bio-metric ATMs for rural conservers to collect savings using Business Correspondent/ Business Finance Channel

ICICI Bank Fino Smart Card Technology pilots in India with some MFIs

IDRBT Smart Card Technology Experiment in AP involving some public sector and private sector banks

UTI Bank is using ATMs/other technology to deliver a range of Financial Services to low income tribal and other farmers. UTI Banks is also likely to get into using a mobile ATM network for farmers - DFID FDCF

Aspects of MIS based on Lessons from Similar Government Programs

First, MIS in most government programs report on more of good/outreach data rather than analytical/impact information and especially, the indicators on not – so – good information is minimal. The MIS should therefore be oriented to provide more 'not-so-good' rather than mere good information. An MIS that gives more 'not-so-good' information affords great avenue/scope for change/improvement. Not-so-good news is actually GOOD news as it helps reorient projects. I am refraining from giving examples but can do so in context of NREGP as well as other government programs

Second, MIS is not just software – it is a complete system required for managing information (at various levels) and making appropriate decisions. This information has to flow logically and feed relevantly into lateral/hierarchical levels with avenues for summary information to flow and loop back and more. Therefore, before rolling out to other districts, it may also be useful to map existing NREGP processes through "as is" and "could be" maps to derive process improvement and efficiency/risk mitigation gains. This will help orient MIS to providing information/data pertinent to

each level of analysis as well as make the processes more efficient. Again, I am refraining from giving examples but can do so in context of NREGP as well as other government programs

Will send a post on MIS later (if possible) giving key issues for MIS with regard to Government programs.

[Subhransu Tripathy](#), Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India, Gandhinagar

Introduction of E-Governance for NREGP implementation could be integrated into Panchayati Raj Institution Accounting Software (PRIAsoft) and computerized job cards should be issued. As NREGP is not too old, data entry work is not a big task. First of all data entry work should be completed and regularly updated thereafter. Main problem is infrastructure and personnel cost, and the question is who is going to bear this cost? If Ministry of Rural Development (Govt. of India) does this, just like Computerization of Land records (CoLR), it is well and good. Additionally, as literacy level among the stakeholders is very low, there is a need of facilitating agents. MoRD and Ministry of Panchayati Raj may jointly take up this task.

[Lingaraj Panda](#), National United Nations Volunteer (UNV), Gumla

An NGO, Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN), is facilitating Self Help Group (SHG) formation and functioning in Gumla district of Jharkhand. For account maintenance purposes, these SHGs are linked to a computerized accounting System (MC Financer Software) operated at Block level by a single Computer *Munshi* (clerk) appointed by the SHGs functioning in the block. As the accounting database is updated daily, the SHGs can see individual member's ledger of savings and loan outstanding at the weekly group meeting. The accounting software produces all reports in tune with the formats maintained by commercialized banks.

Some of these SHGs, facilitated by PRADAN, have undertaken Mango plantation activity under NREGP. Under the mechanism evolved, sanctioned amount is transferred to SHG's bank account and wages are paid weekly in the SHG meetings through individual member passbooks. As the accounting system is computerized, all the wage payments and expenses by SHGs are recorded in the digital database. This system ensures that there is a proper accounting and tracking of all payments, wages and otherwise.

I think such a system would serve as a good example of use of SHG mode and ICT in NREGP, where SHGs maintain transparency in labour payments, ensure effective utilization of funds through computerized accounting software and monitor development works taken up in NREGP, and at the same time motivate members in SHGs to take up works to build income generating assets.

Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Work and Employment Community at se-emp@solutionexchange-un.net.in or Solution Exchange for the ICT for Development Community at se-ictd@solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject heading "RE: [se-emp][se-ictd] Query: Use of ICT for NREGP Implementation- Examples. Additional Reply"

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See Hindi Version of the [Query](#)
See Hindi Version of the [Summary](#) (available from 06 February 2012)

For PDF Version of this Consolidated Reply, please click [here](#)



Decentralization Community

Poverty



Microfinance Community



Solution Exchange for the Decentralization Community

Solution Exchange for the Microfinance Community Consolidated Reply

Query: Innovative ways for Wage Payments under MGNREGA - Experiences; Examples

Compiled by Navin Anand, Resource Person and Monika Khanna, Research Associate
Issue Date: 30 January 2012

From Nilay Ranjan, UNDP - India, New Delhi
Posted 09 December 2011

I work for a joint programme of UNDP and Government of India on MGNREGA.

The 11th Five year plan has given due importance to sustainable poverty alleviation strategy, based on increasing productive employment opportunities, to ensure a more inclusive growth process. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was identified as one of the key flagship programmes to address the problem of employment in the rural areas.

While MGNREGA is a landmark legislation that promotes decentralization, transparency, accountability and participation of marginalized sections, it also faces challenges due to its large scale focus and spread across the country, and other institutional constraints, depending on the state/district of implementation.

Since the inception of MGNREGA in 2005, UNDP has supported in improving service delivery, among other activities, successful implementation of this programme through ICT based innovations, monitoring and research, fostering community awareness to create a more informed and energetic demand side, as well as capacity development for an effective decentralized delivery mechanism.

Looking at increasing efficiency and strengthening institutional systems relating to wage payments, Government of India and state governments have been making concerted efforts to minimize gaps in the terms of ensuring timely wages to the beneficiaries as well as transparency in the payment of these wages.

In some areas, where banks and post offices have poor coverage or limited branches, Government of India has allowed cash payment of wages and in some area part payment to workers. This will also address a demand side issue where the workers may have been hesitant to take MGNREGA jobs due to delayed payment of remuneration. As per existing practice in some state governments, Government of India also proposes to introduce videography during the process of payment to ensure proper and timely payment. Banks are also taking initiatives to ensure transparency and timely payment through better record maintenance, opening of no-frill accounts etc.

In other words, there are various options that are coming forth to ensure timely, efficient and transparent wage payment mechanisms such as, using ICT enabled models like Business Correspondent, Rural ATM, handheld devices, smart cards, bio-metrics and mobile banking.

With this background, I request members of Decentralization Community and Microfinance Community to share their knowledge, experiences and also suggestions on the following –

- Innovative ways of making timely wage payments to the MGNREGA workers in the most transparent manner
- Technology based simple and sustainable options for wage payments
- Possibilities and prospects of using Business Correspondence model in MGNREGA

Your valuable inputs will help GOI to make feasible and cohesive suggestions to state governments and banks to adopt suitable innovative mechanisms for the payment of wages to MGNREGA workers.

Responses were received, with thanks, from

1. [Bidyut Mohanty](#), Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi
2. [Kashi Metya](#), Action for Social Advancement, Bhopal
3. [Nalini Ranjan Kumar](#), Central Institute of Fisheries Education, Mumbai
4. [Teki Surayya](#), Adikavi Nannaya University, Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh
5. [Rajesh Kumar Verma](#), Vananchal Gramin Bank, Jharkhand
6. [Sumeeta Banerji](#), UNDP – India, New Delhi
7. [Anshuman Karol](#), PRIA, New Delhi
8. [Dhirendra Krishna](#), New Delhi
9. [Amit Choubey](#), SSNM Trust, Bihar
10. [K Rajasekhar](#), National Informatics Centre, Hyderabad
11. [Rajpal](#), Poorest Areas Civil Society Programme, Raipur, Chhattisgarh
12. [Kris Dev](#), Life Line to Business, Chennai
13. [Ashok Kumar Sinha](#), Karma Consultants, New Delhi
14. Tomojeet Chakraborty, Kolkata, West Bengal ([Response1](#); [Response 2*](#))
15. [Ravishwar Sinha](#), New Delhi
16. [Sanjay Bedi](#), MMIMS, Amritsar, Punjab
17. [Niranjan Upadhyay](#), Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology, Sikkim

18. [Ranjit Kumar Maiti](#), West Bengal
19. [Megha Phansalkar](#), Consultant, Mumbai
20. [Subhransu Tripathy](#), Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India, Gujarat
21. [Ritesh Dwivedi](#), Amity University, Uttar Pradesh
22. [P.Mohammad Nizar](#), Kudumbashree, Kerala *

* *Offline Contributions*

Further contributions are welcome!

[Summary of Responses](#)
[Comparative Experiences](#)
[Related Resources](#)
[Responses in Full](#)

Summary of Responses

MGNREGA has ensured livelihoods to millions of marginalized and poor across the length and breadth of the country, during the last five years. However, there are various challenges in the implementation of MGNREGA including delays in the payment of wages to the workers. While Government is making efforts to streamline the process, members of decentralization and MF communities also revealed some of the actual problems faced by the MGNREGA workers and suggested ways for ensuring timely, efficient and transparent wage payment.

Besides late wage payments, practitioners also enumerated other challenges such as issue of fake job cards and muster rolls, less human days of work allocated than the mandatory 100 days work and showing more workers than actually benefitted. Discrimination in access to work and payments for socially excluded groups like dalits, adivasi, minorities, women and person with disability (PwDs) is also identified as another major challenge.

Reasons of delays in wage payments

Delays in wage payments takes place at two places – One at the level of measurement, processing of bills and submission of utilization certificate by the respective authorities and second at the level of the Bank or at the level of disbursement of wages. Members felt that delay at the bank level can be tackled by adopting innovative money transfer mechanisms. Besides this, members also realize that location specific solutions for payments are required as problems faced in naxal areas, drought and flood prone areas are different than in other areas. Often, poor in these areas need immediate cash payments.

To address the problems related to MGNREGA, members primarily suggested three broad actions – Introducing e-governance and pushing IT in every process; Running capacity building and advocacy programs; and adopting a regular monitoring and feedback Mechanism. Specific suggestions on wage payment include the following -

- **Payment of wages in advance and Use of ICT and Biometrics:** While payment of wages in advance will increase satisfaction and productivity of the members, use of ICT and Biometrics enabled payments will reduce the overheads costs and time required for management of various activities of the MGNREGA wage payment chain. These activities include registration of workers, issuance of job cards, demand for work with generation of dated receipts, attendance at the work sites and wage payments. UNDP supported ICT based

innovative initiatives in selected states including payments through Business correspondents using biometric information and mobile phones also confirms this fact.

- **Fifty per cent payment: on the spot, in cash:** Partial Payment of wages (at least 50 percent of the minimum wage) can be paid weekly, on the spot and in cash by the implementing agency. The remaining amount which is based on the measurement can be credited in their respective accounts.
- **Weekly payment:** Implementing agency should be made responsible for payment of wage work on weekly basis and they can use the report for making payment as well as verification of muster roll – muster roll verification should be linked with payment system.
- **Suspend MGNREGA work during peak farming period:** The MGNREGA work may be suspended during peak farming period as there is no dearth of work during that period. This will help in getting more period of engagement for the farm laborers.
- **Using Mobile Phones for Disbursements:** Money can be disbursed using mobile phone through mobile service provider. The money can be withdrawn from the mobile recharge point. Almost every remote village is now connected with mobile phone service.
- **Small bank branches at Panchayat Level:** Small bank branches at the panchayat levels can be organised with full ICT support. Panchayat Bhawans can be used for the purpose and through online portals immediate crediting and subsequent payments can be made.
- **Issuance of the coupons for wage payments:** The MGNREGA workers could be provided with the coupons of the denomination equal to the wage guaranteed for the period of minimum job guarantee i.e. 100 days, at certain fixed intervals of time. These coupons could be redeemable at the Public Distribution System (PDS) outlets, banks, post offices etc. The wage earner can purchase his/her daily consumption items by using wage coupons.
- **System of Tokens/Cards:** Based on the initiative of Centre for Civil Society about the use of tokens in schools instead of cash payments, payments made to the MNREGA workers can be divided among various components such as health, education, travel, food, clothing etc. and token can be used for availing particular services.
- **Banking Correspondents (BC) Model:** Where there is no bank branch or branch is far away from the residences of the workers, BCs can function like an extension counters of the banks and weekly payment of wages can be made at gram panchayats level. These correspondents will have the database regarding amount of work done, job card and muster roll details and payments to be made. They will track the correct beneficiary and deliver the money to them through their handheld machines.
- **Keeping some Seed Money for emergency payments:** Some amount of 'Seed Money' may be kept in the Banks /Post offices/Panchayats for emergency / contingency. This amount can be used to make payments to extremely poor workers in case of emergency.
- **Using School Teachers and Students:** School teachers may be trained and students from class VIII- X can be associated to support in providing services related to the payments of wages to the MNREGA workers.
- **Revolving fund for Payment Agency:** Advance payment to Post Offices/ Cooperative Banks by DPC could be a decentralized solution for timely payments.

- **Payment list on the notice board:** Payment list with details should be placed in the local language on the notice board of the gram panchayat and in banks / post offices as well (following section 4 of RTI Act)

For keeping transparency, members suggested a number activities related to wage payments - stopping payment to a worker who has not attended duty; authenticating the Attendance Register and confirming about attendance after cross checking; monitoring the progress of the work done in the field; calculating the wage accurately based on the actual work done; delivering the payment to the right worker/ employee in right time.

Besides the abovementioned recommendations members also suggested to explore possibilities of involving local community in finding out schemes to be taken up under MGNREGS. They also recommended systemic changes like – introducing provision for “payment audit gram sabha”; introducing inclusion audit in context of SC/STs; promoting participation of public including beneficiaries in monitoring and evaluation and social audit; deploying full time programme officer and technical staff for MGNREGA; establishing a feedback mechanism at each and every level; fixing accountability in the whole machinery; strengthening grievance redressal mechanism with community involvement; developing a work calendar, based on the seasonal variability; and introducing a MIS system that can track demand and supply of work.

Examples quoted by the Members

- **e-Sakthi project of Government of Bihar:** Unique biometric identification, issue of smart card as debit card linked to a single account and use of card for tracking all transactions are the key elements of the project.
- **Kudumbashree (State Poverty Eradication Mission- GoK), Kerala:** For the benefit of Scheduled Tribes a system is developed wherein the wages will be paid in advance by the Community Development Society (the panchayat level federation of SHGs) to the members. It functions like credit to the member. On getting the wages from Panchayats the amount will be reimbursed without interest. For this, Kudumbasree Mission gives revolving fund to CDS.
- **Mobile Money Transfer system developed by EKO:** Disbursement of incentive to field staff of ASHAs in Sheikhpura district under Norway-India Partnership Initiative (NIPI) has been done through a mobile based user friendly total banking ‘EKO Platform’. Through the introduction of MMT, ASHAs can withdraw cash without being physically present in the bank branch thus saving time and reduction in commuting expenses. Under the process, no frill mini accounts of ASHAs are opened with SBI over mobile phones by Eko Aspire Foundation. A pin Code is provided to all the ASHAs. Through the network of Customer Service Points (CSPs) in the PHC area, ASHAs can withdraw or deposit money using their pin codes. These CSPs could be grocery shops, pharmacy stores or entrepreneurs.
- **Pilot initiatives with UNDP support :** Pilots are initiated to field test a variety of innovations in Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Kerala and Orissa including (i) Development and field testing of low cost ATMs, biometrics and smart cards for distribution of wages to workers under NREGA (ii) Development and field testing of the NREGA People Information System - a biometric touch screen, sound based and icon based system that captures all NREGA processes like registration, job cards, demand for work with generation of dated receipts, capturing attendance at work sites and payment of wages. It uses ICT technologies like hand held devices, mobile phones, smart cards etc. Biometric information is being used by village based business correspondents to pay workers through a mobile phone containing information on workers savings accounts. This successful pilot

directly helped to improve transparency in the delivery and payments to workers, and strengthened the quality of implementation and accountability.

- A generic [integrated field-based solution](#) : This is comprised of a web-based application and hand-held device (Laptop) which can directly be linked to MB recording and subsequent wage payment. The arrangement includes Biometric device for verifying attendance and capturing lat-long of work location; facility to capture images (pictures) of the work place along with lat-long of work location to monitor the work progress and transfer the image data to central server; Web-based MIS reports of measurement book & attendance of the workers in the worksite; Web-based photo gallery to showcase the work in progress of the various prescribed worksites; and links to wage payment details.

Besides the problem of wage payments, members also mentioned that the wage rates in MGNREGA are abysmally low compared to other alternative avenues of employment. However due low relevance in term of proximity and limited availability of social security, rural poor opt for MGNREGA. Another challenge to be addressed in MGNREGA is limited employment potential for skilled workers. Members find convergence as an option for these people, provided limitations in terms of coordinating and finalizing the convergence activities under MGNREGA are removed.

Special Recommendations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

Some key recommendations made specifically for SC/STs include - providing constitutional quota to SC & ST in MGNREGA employment; forming a district or state level resource group for capacity building of SC & ST wage workers and members of Gram Panchayats; providing at least 20-25 days of additional work to SC & STs for minimizing their food insecurity; mandatory provisions for involvements of SC & ST in planning, asset registration & verification; making provisions for promoting the cooperatives of SC & ST and MGNREGA workers (Job Cardholders); strengthening of grievance Redressal mechanisms, treating simple verbal complaint from MGNREGA workers as written complaint by the competent authorities and ensuring action within 15 days; making denial or delay in providing the work and delay in wage payments to SC & ST workers a punishable offence under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989; and ensuring Department to Department coordination under convergence approach of MGNREGA for ensuring maximum benefits to SC & ST, women and socially excluded groups.

In the nutshell, members could elaborate and enumerate problems faced at the workers' level at one side and also provided innovative options for inclusive, transparent and faster disbursement of wage payments under MGNREGA.

Comparative Experiences

National

Bihar

E – Shakti Project providing ICT based Solutions in MGNREGA (from [Kris Dev](#), *Life Line to Business, Chennai*)

E-shakti project is an initiative by the Department of rural development for successful implementation of NREGA. The project has digitalizes the processes of registration, receipts, job demand, muster rolls, works, attendance, calculation and disbursement of wages. The registration process for these cards is free of cost. The cards are used with hand held machines for authentication, attendance and other transactions, using secure biometric technology.

Withdrawal of Cash using Mobile Money Transfer (from [Ravishwar Sinha](#), New Delhi)

Eko Aspire Foundation along with State Health Society of Bihar, District Health Society and State Bank of India initiated mobile money transfer (MMT) for payments to the ASHAs. The initiative was facilitated by NIPI – UNOPS LFA Program Unit. Through the introduction of MMT, ASHAs can withdraw cash without being physically present in the bank branch thus saving time and reduction in commuting expenses. [Read more](#)

Multiple

ICT based innovations for increased transparency and accountability in NREGA implementation (from [Sumeeta Banerji](#), UNDP – India, New Delhi)

UNDP supported pilots in Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Kerala and Orissa for development and field testing of low cost ATMs, biometrics and smart cards and NREGA People Information System - a biometric touch screen, sound based and icon based system that captures all NREGA processes. This successful pilot directly helped to improve transparency in the delivery and payments to workers.

Using Biometrics to Deliver Payments in MGNREGA (from [Monika Khanna](#), Research Associate)

In 2007, FINO collaborated with state government of Andhra Pradesh and launched a project to deliver payments from NREGS and Social Securities Pensions (SSP) Scheme. The usage of biometric technology has reduced possibilities of misuse and malpractices in payments to the workers. FINO has distributed NREGA/SSP benefits in more than 12 states for more than 11.5 million customers.

International

From [Monika Khanna](#), Research Associate

South Africa

Sekulula cards - reaching out to welfare recipients

Absa Bank with the product innovation from Barclay has specifically designed - Sekulula debit card for social transfer recipients. It has no minimum balance requirement and it permits two free withdrawals a month. The card provides recipients of social welfare funds with an easy way to receive their payments from the South African government's Social Security Agency, and also to pay for goods and services. Till January 2009, ABSA has 742,000 Sekulula account holders. [Read more](#)

Kenya

M-PESA providing Branchless Banking

Largest mobile phone network (Safaricom) has established more than 11,000 agents across the country for its M-PESA service, a mobile-phone based wallet that enables users to send and receive money transfers. It targets mobile customers who do not have a bank account. The registered customers can avail of banking facilities (deposit/withdrawal, etc.) using SMS. [Read more](#)

Namibia

Usage of Biometric Smart Cards in Basic Income Grant Project

Delivery of the Basic Income Grant is made through the use of smart card-based savings accounts issued by the state post office, NamPost. On 15th of every month accounts are credited with the N\$100 transfer after which recipients can access their funds through the local NamPost by presenting their card (for insertion into a POS) and having their fingerprint verified against the one stored on the smart card's chip. One free transaction is provided to recipients per month.

[Read more](#)

Ghana

A Payment System that Offers Interoperability

e-zwich payment system is an innovative method for improving accessibility to banking and retail services. The e-zwich system offers Deposit Taking Financial Institutions (i.e. Universal Banks, Savings and Loans and Rural banks) a platform that enables them to interoperate, and therefore enable e-zwich cardholders of any of these banks to perform both banking and retail transactions at the outlets of any other e-zwich financial institution. [Read more](#)

Tanzania

Mobile Phones Provide Access to Deposit and Saving Services

The Mobipawa helps subscribers to open an account where money can be deposited and accessed easily. It provides a wide range of financial services such as money transfers, which are accessible through mobile phones. The Mobipawa account is designed specifically for the African market. Mobipawa also plans to launch new services that will incorporate microfinance institutions, bill payments etc.

Related Resources

Recommended Documentation

National Framework - Biometric enabled for People's Empowerment under the MGNREGA (from [Sumeeta Banerji](#))

Framework; Ministry of Rural Development – Government of India; August 2010

Available at http://nrega.nic.in/circular/National_framework_for_these_of_ICT&Biometrics_english.pdf (PDF; 930 KB)

With this Framework, MoRD envisaged to use ICT devices to improve the overall delivery system in the implementation of the MGNREGA

Workshop on Social Audit – Roadmap for Effective Public Accountability (from [Dhirendra Krishna](#), New Delhi)

Report; Institute of Public Auditors of India; New Delhi; 26 – 27 July 2011

Available at <http://www.ipaiindia.org/files/WorkshoponSocialAuditFinalProceedings.doc> (MS Word; 565 KB)

Shares the experience and views of participants on conducting social audit primarily in the context of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

Documentation on Empowering ASHAs – Mobile Money Transfer (from [Ravishwar Sinha](#), New Delhi)

Report; NIPI Secretariat; New Delhi; 25 May 2011

Available at <http://sheikhpura.bih.nic.in/CSP.pdf> (PDF; 776 KB)
Shares the experience of providing the wage payments to the ASHAs through Mobiles

From [Monika Khanna](#), Research Associate

Banking the Poor via G2P Payments

Focus Note; by Mark Pickens, David Porteous and Sarah Rotman; CGAP; December 2009
Available at <http://www.cgap.org/gm/document-1.9.41174/FN58.pdf> (PDF; 635 KB)
Examines the potential of government-to-person (G2P) payments in extending financial inclusion and improving the welfare of poor people

M-Money Channel Distribution Case – Kenya: SAFARICOM M-PESA

Case Study; International Finance Corporation; 2010
Available at [http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/gfm.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/Tool6.7.CaseStudy-M-PESAKenya+/\\$FILE/Tool+6.7.+Case+Study+--+M-PESA+Kenya+.pdf](http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/gfm.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/Tool6.7.CaseStudy-M-PESAKenya+/$FILE/Tool+6.7.+Case+Study+--+M-PESA+Kenya+.pdf) (PDF; 1.80 MB)
Shares the case study of M-PESA, it identifies key success factors, challenges in implementation of the service and lessons learned from the experience

Technology Program Country Note – Ghana

Report; by Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP); June 2011
Available at http://www.cgap.org/gm/document-1.9.51464/cgap_technology_program_country_note_ghana_public_rev.pdf (PDF; 756 KB)
Captures key challenges and opportunities of branchless banking scenario in Ghana

NREGS wages: Jharkhand banks on Adhaar, micro ATMs

Article; Indian Express; 30 January 2012
Available at <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/NREGS-wages--Jharkhand-banks-on-Adhaar--micro-ATMs/905407/>
Article reports that on a pilot basis, 500 NREGS workers have drawn their wages utilising the UIDAI Adhaar, a micro ATM and biometric data

Recommended Organizations and Programmes

United Nations Development Programme - India, New Delhi (from [Sumeeta Banerji](#))

Post Box No. 3059, 55 Lodhi Estate, New Delhi - 110003; Tel: 91-11-46532333; Fax: 91-11-24627612; info.in@undp.org; <http://www.undp.org.in/>
Since 2006, has been supporting ICT based innovations for increased transparency and accountability in NREGA implementation

SSNM Trust, Bihar (from [Amit Choubey](#))

Choubey Tola, Nawada, P.S. Gobindganj, Block: Areraj, East Champaran - 845419; Tel: 91-6252-235992; ssnm.trust@gmail.com; <http://www.ssnmtrust.org/>
Grassroots organization working closely with the poor people of East and West Champaran

Eko India Financial Services Private Limited, New Delhi (from [Ravishwar Sinha](#), New Delhi)

547 Mandakini Enclave, Alaknanda, New Delhi 110019; Tel: 91-11-26278267; Fax: 91-11-40533092; <http://eko.co.in/index.php>
Aims to build a low cost financial services infrastructure to increase the reach of financial institutions to the un-banked areas

Micro Technologies India Private Limited, Mumbai (from [Megha Phansalkar](#), Consultant, Mumbai)

C-46, Electronic Sadan 1, 3rd Floor, Electronic Zone, MIDC, Mahape, Navi Mumbai – 400709; Tel: 91-22-27686687; Fax: 91-22-27620688; besecure@microtechnologies.net;
http://www.microtechnologies.net/CorporateInfo/company_overview.aspx

Provides integrated field-based solution comprising of a web-based application and hand-held device directly linked to MB recording and subsequent wage payment in NREGA

Kudumbashree, Thiruvananthapuram (from [P.Mohammad Nizar](#))

State Poverty Eradication Mission, 2nd Floor, TRIDA Rehabilitation Building, Chalakuzhy Road, Medical College PO, Thiruvananthapuram 69501 Kerala; Tel: 91-471-2554714; Fax: 91-471-2334317; <http://www.kudumbashree.org/concepts/html/general.html>

Multi sectoral poverty alleviation programme, for the benefit of the members transfers the wages to the panchayat level federation

Responses in Full

Bidyut Mohanty, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi

Nilay's query is indeed very timely. Since wage payment is not done on a regular basis, many beneficiaries don't opt for MGNREGA. Rather the laborers move out of the district on the basis of Dadan or bonded labour. One was hoping that the flagship programme would slow down the process of out migration. But the Census of 2011 has belied that hope.

Given the seriousness of the problem it is high time to find out ways and means to generate effective demand for the above work. In this context it is worthwhile to study the experiment of Tamil Nadu as to how that government has generated so much enthusiasm among the women who flock to the work site and clamour for work.

Kashi Metya, Action for Social Advancement, Bhopal

Yes, we can think of innovating new ways to make timely payment, but this would take another decade (optimistic) and still we would have the same problem and then more innovations.

I feel sad for this because the needy people do not get paid even after putting hard work, in most cases its earthwork requiring real physical strain, and that is the reason why not many people now are turning up for MGNREGA work.

I was thinking if the Officer- In-charge can somehow be motivated to take delayed / forgo salary till 90% of workers in their jurisdiction have been paid. If we fail to motivate, we can think of other means to comply.

Nalini Ranjan Kumar, Central Institute of Fisheries Education, Mumbai

With my limited exposure to the functioning of MGNREGA, I would like to put forward my views for reducing the delays in payments of wages to the workers. There are two parts where delay in wage payments takes place - One is at the Bank level that can be taken care of by the use of various methods already referred in the background of the query. The second reason is due to the delay in measurement and processing of bills. To take care of delay and ease the problem of wage earners, at least 50 percent of the minimum wage needs to be paid in cash on the spot by the implementing agency at the weekend. The remaining amount which is based on the measurement can be credited in their respective accounts. This segregation is useful as payment

of the amount based on measurement takes a little more time. The time period for the payment of this 50 percent amount can be reduced with increase in efficiency of system and banking facilities. Also to avoid stress on farmers during peak farming period, the MGNREGA work may be suspended as there is no dearth of work during that period. The work through MGNREGA should be provided when there is dearth of job opportunities in agriculture. This will fulfill the requirement of job guaranty under the Act. Through this arrangement there will be no negative affect on agriculture sector, which is the main source of job for these poor people.

Teki Surayya, Adikavi Nannaya University, Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh

Thanks to Mr. Nilay Ranjan for initiating the query. Most of the viable options have already been identified to deliver wage payments effectively. You may also consider disbursement of wages through mobile phones. Money may be disbursed through mobile service provider. The money can be withdrawn from the mobile recharge point. Almost every remote village is now connected with mobile phone service.

Rajesh Kumar Verma, Vananchal Gramin Bank, Jharkhand

As I understand the real culprit is the sheer number of the transactions that a financial unit has to perform to make the small amount of daily wages payment and I presume that this very factor has been hindering the active support of the banking sector.

The online facility has not been activated in the post offices of date and therefore in spite of their deeper reach in the countryside they are not effective in the timely execution of the services demanded.

One innovative suggestion may be to organise small bank branches at the panchayat levels with full ICT support in the panchayat bhawans itself as an outfit working under the aegis of the Mukhiya or Surpanch which may through online portals activate immediate crediting and subsequent payment thereafter.

Sumeeta Banerji, UNDP – India, New Delhi

As mentioned by Nilay in his query, UNDP has been supporting ICT based innovations for increased transparency and accountability in NREGA implementation since 2006. While Nilay and Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) are aware of these innovations, I would like to elaborate a bit on these pilots for information of network members.

Recognizing the role of ICT as a growth trigger for rural development, Ministry of Rural Development envisioned a reliable, standardized and scalable technological solution for MGNREGA to be delivered at the field level across the country. In this regard, pilot initiatives were undertaken with UNDP support to field test a variety of innovations in Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Kerala and Orissa including (i) Development and field testing of low cost ATMs, biometrics and smart cards for distribution of wages to workers under NREGA (ii) Development and field testing of the NREGA People Information System - a biometric touch screen, sound based and icon based system that captures all NREGA processes like registration, job cards, demand for work with generation of dated receipts, capturing attendance at work sites and payment of wages. It uses ICT technologies like hand held devices, mobile phones, smart cards etc. Through biometric technology integrated with this people's information system, workers are able to access information on their entitlements at the village council office. Beyond accessing and tracking information, the innovation support from UNDP is also furthering the agenda of financial inclusion. Biometric information is being used by village based business

correspondents to pay workers through a mobile phone containing information on workers savings accounts.

This successful pilot directly helped to improve transparency in the delivery and payments to workers, and strengthened the quality of implementation and accountability. The pilot supported by UNDP is poised for scale up at national level by the Government using its own resources. To enable this, in August 2010, GOI released a National Operational Framework on biometrics enabled ICT for people's empowerment under MGNREGA. The ICT solution was demonstrated live on 20 August 2010 and on 2 February 2011 in the presence of Honourable Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson, National Advisory Council (NAC). The scale was to be effected within 18-21 months time in all the districts under MGNREGA.

With this scale up, it is expected that the use of ICT and biometrics for authentication will bring in transparency. Geared towards real time capture of the processes involved in MGNREGS such as registration, demand of work, issue of dated receipt, allocation of work, attendance at worksite with GPS coordinates, measurement of work, wage payments, etc. it would be instrumental in ensuring accountability, strengthening MIS reporting and tracking and reducing delays in measurements and payments.

A major challenge in implementation of this model is the linkage with banks and availability of a business correspondent. In the draft Reform Agenda released by MoRD in September 2011, there is recognition that the business correspondent model needs to be strengthened. MoRD has proposed to states that Rs. 80 be paid per active account per year (under the 6% admin expenditure head) to appoint business correspondents or to postal department to manage accounts.

It would be useful to hear from members, what are their experiences with using business correspondent model for MGNREGA wage payments and also other innovative ways of ensuring timely and transparent payments to workers

Anshuman Karol, PRIA, New Delhi

It is an established fact that MGNREGA has ensured livelihood of millions of marginalized and poor, across the length and breadth of the country during the last five years. But on the other hand, the programme also suffers from various constraints and one of those constraints is the timely payment of wages to the scheme beneficiaries. There are two issues which often have resulted in delaying the payment to the workers. The first is, non- submission of utilization certificate on time by the respective authorities. Second reason is due to various discrepancies in the system. So we need to look into both of these aspects while dealing with the issues of delay in payment of wages. Firstly, timely submission of UC needs to be ensured and second, keeping in view the poor outreach of ICT enabled services to the last corner in the country I would like to suggest following model for the payment of wages.

Since payment to the beneficiary is ensured under the MGNREGA right from the beginning of the process when the job seeker registers for the job card and apply for the job. And the state government also knows in advance the total wages to be paid. Hence, the job seekers could be provided with the coupons of the denomination equal to the wage guaranteed for the period of minimum job guarantee i.e. 100 days. These coupons could be made available to the beneficiaries at certain fixed intervals of time. For example, 20 percent, when job seeker applied for the job; 30 percent, when beneficiary initiated the work or lapse of 15 days after the job seeker applied for the job and remaining 50 percent, immediately after the completion of the work. These coupons could be redeemable at the Public Distribution System (PDS) outlets,

banks, post offices etc. I think this will give some buffer to the poor irrespective of the period up to which remaining wage payment is delayed.

Dhirendra Krishna, New Delhi

Legal and administrative framework for ensuring timely payments under MGNREGA lies in:

- Social Audit, to enable beneficiaries to hold grass-root public authorities accountable to them.
- Disclosure and dissemination of information by grass-root public authorities, under section 4 of RTI Act.

If timely payments are not being made and there are other irregularities in execution of MGNREGA, the root-cause lies in non-implementation of these legal provisions. These issues were examined in a Workshop arranged by me and [Proceedings of Workshop on "Social Audit-Road Map for Public Accountability-held on 26-27 July 2011"](#) are available at the web site of the Institute of Public Auditors of India at <http://ipaiindia.org>. Several recommendations have emerged, that have been conveyed by the Institute to the Planning Commission, concerned Ministries of Central Government, Chief Secretaries of State Government and Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG). It is my sincere hope that some one would examine the recommendations and act on them.

Effective accountability of the public authorities at the grass roots to the beneficiary of centrally sponsored schemes is essential for their successful implementation. Existing structure of accountability is inadequate, for ensuring successful implementation of all schemes for socio-economic development. In the specific context of MGNREGA, (i) Timely payment of wages and (ii) Creation of durable assets can not be ensured without effective public participation in monitoring and evaluation, by social audit enabled by public disclosure and dissemination of critical information to the beneficiaries to enable them to verify the authenticity of information in public records.

There are rampant irregularities in execution of centrally sponsored schemes way beyond the audit "radar" of C&AG and administrative control of concerned executing agencies. These can be addressed only by effective social audit by the beneficiaries of these schemes.

Amit Choubey, SSNM Trust, Bihar

I am associated with a grass root organization called SSNM Trust, which works for Disaster, Youth development, Awareness and Livelihood and various advocacy programs. We (SSNM Trust) closely working with BPL and downtrodden people of East and West Champaran. Based on our experiences we have identified some flaws in the smooth functioning of the MGNREGA. Some of these are mentioned below:

- More workers than actually benefitted are shown in the records by taking the names from voter list. In this way more claims are availed than the actual job done
- Gram Sabha is not called and the approval is taken by meeting the people of Panchayat at the individual level.

How to address this issue?

- By e-governance and pushing IT in every process.
- Running capacity building and advocacy programs

- Payment made to the MNREGA Workers can be divided among various components of their need like: Health: 10%, Education: 20%, Travel 10%, Food: 50%, Cloth 10%, (we can work upon the sharing Percentage: this is just quoted as an example) Payment must be paid through non transferable tokens/Cards and entitled to avail these services against their tokens/cards. These tokens/cards must be valid with their BPL Card/Voter ID.

As we already have PDS, Hospital, Schools, Transport and other departments in running condition so it won't be tough to regulate and implement the above mentioned token/card payment system. We need to have regular Audit about projects completed, number of beneficiaries, actual beneficiaries, and utilization of Tokens/cards.

You may be aware about the initiative of centre for civil society about the use of tokens in School instead of cash payments. I understand the implementation part is tough but it can be achieved.

We have started working on this and we are doing survey/Audit of each and every house of village with all possible information of each individual in the family with the accordance to the central and state government schemes. This will give us all true information at our finger tip such as how many will have to get old age pension next year, how many will get disability benefit ? Who all were affected by long term diseases, who all worked in MNREGA, etc. May be in next one month we will be able to complete one Panchayat.

Such IT based innovative ideas will play a major role in controlling the mishandling and failure of MNREGA.

K Rajasekhar, National Informatics Centre, Hyderabad

The problems involved in wage payments under any project are

- How to stop payment to a worker who has not attended duty?
- How to authenticate the Attendance Register?
- How to confirm who has attended the duty on any particular day?
- How to monitor the progress of the work done in the field by individual team in?
- How to calculate the wage accurately based on the actual work done?
- How to deliver the payment to the right worker/ employee in right time?
- How to reconcile the wages paid to and wages received by worker?

We have developed state-of-the-art Mobile, GIS, GPS, GPRS based IT solutions to address such questions efficiently and effectively.

Rajpal, Poorest Areas Civil Society Programme, Raipur, Chhattisgarh

Think about the organizations where we all are working, how we get our salaries that too on time. But we are working in an organised sector and MGNREGA is for unorganized sector.

If a family is registered and supposed to get 100 days work every year, why can't we institutionalize the process of providing work and making payments. Payment of wages can not be seen in isolation rather part of implementation. Hence there are number of issues attached to this -

- Streamlining the work allocation process which is linked to effective planning. If 12 works are to be done in a Gram Panchayat, a calendar based on the seasonal variability can be prepared by Gram Panchayat.
- Timely assessment or measurement of the work done by a worker is the responsibility of the panchayat or other institutions responsible for implementation.
- If the payment has to be done weekly, payment voucher should be prepared every Monday and amount should be transferred to the accounts of worker every Tuesday. If there are some problem / issues in the name of a particular worker that can be de-linked for the time being but payment to others should be made.

Now the problem arises how the worker will get the payment if bank is away from the residence of the worker. So there can be a weekly payment day at Gram Panchayat. It can be every Saturday or any other day convenient for workers as well as banks. Here adoption of the Business Correspondent (BC) model will be useful. Business Correspondents can come to Gram Panchayat office for making payments on behalf of the bank with which they are associated. Business Correspondent will function like an extension counter of the bank. Banks can be reimbursed from MGNREGA account on monthly basis based on the payments made by the banks to the workers. Gram panchayat which has bank branches near their office may not require this facility.

ICT based solutions can also be used by the Business Correspondents.

Kris Dev, Life Line to Business, Chennai

MGNREGA was envisaged not as a permanent labor generating scheme, but more to create community assets to prevent migration of male workforce and to create long term opportunities for survival of communities. MGNREGA has increased the list of labour in villages and acute shortage of farm labour as people who return after migration claim 100 days wages without doing genuine work. The entire scheme needs to be replaced by more realistic genuine employment generation and survival schemes for the genuinely needed people. Unique biometric identification, issue of smart card as debit card linked to a single account and use of card for tracking all transactions can be the panacea. Such ICT solution has already been envisaged in the e-Sakthi project of Govt. of Bihar. If required, more can be shared on the possible ICT based solutions

Ashok Kumar Sinha, Karma Consultants, New Delhi

MGNREGA aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

The implementation of MGNREGA was facing challenges due to corruption and late payment of wages - the issue of fake job cards and muster rolls, less human days of work allocated than the mandatory 100 days work and enhancement of minimum wages to the workers. Other than these technical problems, social problems are also affecting in effective implementation of the MGNREGA in favour of the needy Dalits / Adivasi / Minorities/ Women / Persons with disability. Discriminatory access is major problems in MGNREGA for socially excluded group. The socially excluded groups like Dalits / Adivasi / Minorities / Women / Person with disability are facing problems not only in getting wage work but also in receiving payment. First of all we all have to understand that for whom we are looking for – a person who is victimized and resentful by our

local governance processes in different ways / a person who do not have respect in the society and face discrimination in accessing their rights / entitlements - It is payment of an individual who face multiple range of exploitation in the villages. Demand for payment after work and asking directly for fair wage is dream for poorest & marginalized community groups and one can imagine for say of women and person with disability.

Delay in payment of wages to workers is the biggest problem facing the scheme and we should consider this problem differently for different location like naxal affected areas have different problems, drought & flood prone areas have different problem as they need immediate cash to cope up with disaster and as many.

Suggestions

- Weekly payment should be ensured for the wage worker under MGNREGA – implementing agency should be made responsible for payment of wage work on weekly basis and they can use the report for making payment as well as verification of muster roll – muster roll verification should be linked with payment system
- Provision should be made for “payment audit gram sabha” for tracking the payment of the wageworker – demanding open transparency will help in taking side of poorest & marginalized
- Payment list with details should be posted in the local language on the notice board of the gram panchayat and similarly it should be mandatory for the bank / post office that payment list and details should be posted in the notice board
- Effective deployment of dedicated staff, more coverage of banks and post offices and the lab-to-land initiative should be ensured
- Revolving fund for Payment Agency - Advance payment to Post Offices/ Cooperative Banks by DPC - A decentralized solution for timely payments
- Separation of backend process of Payment Agency for Payments
- Close Co-ordination with Authorities of Postal, Co-operative Banks & Other Banks
- To avoid delay in payment of wages each block should have a full time programme officer and technical staff for MGNREGA rather than the current additional charge syndrome and transferring of responsibility
- Gram Panchayats will be able to request for a second installment for the annual plan after they utilize 75 percent of their first installment. In order to reduce the delay in payment states may switch over weekly muster rolls
- Proactively seek and rigorously record the demand for work and provide worker dated receipts for their application asking for work - MIS system will record the demand for work and will then track the gap between the date of application for work and date of opening of work
- Ensure regular flow of funds
- Strengthening of grievance redressal mechanism with community involvement

- Panchayati raj system should be used to keep a watch on the working of MNREGA as well as payment for the wageworker

The proposed suggestions will provide solutions to reducing delay in payments to workers and providing requisite number of days of work as per demand.

Lastly through this response, I would like to share following Charter of Demand with a hope that this will be reached to policy makers. This charter of demand was prepared under the leadership of CADAM / NACDOR under PACS phase-2 Programme.

Charter of Demand

- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act has no provision for employment quota to SCs & STs under the Act, which is contrary to the constitutional provisions. We urge the government to amend this Act and provide constitutional quota to SC & ST in MGNREGA employment as per the proportion of these community in the village, taluka, districts and state.
- Awareness should be done of the demand driven nature of people entitlements under MGNREGA especially for SC & ST, women and socially excluded groups
- A district or state level resource group be formed for capacity building of SC & ST wage workers as well as the SC & ST members of Gram Panchayats
- MGNREGA works should be critically reviewed towards engagement and benefitting in favour of the SC and ST needs and Benefits to SC & ST families should be the prime criteria of performance evaluation
- SC & ST should be provided at least 20-25 days of work additionally for minimizing their food insecurity
- Ensure demand driven legal entitlements to victims/survivors of disasters especially to SC & ST and Women
- Ensure additional payment of wages as stipulated under MGNREGA for workers who are victims of disasters especially to SC & ST
- Gram Panchayat should create space for the SC & ST so that SC & ST will get wage work on priorities basis and demand cycle of SC & ST should be recorded
- Application Demand for getting wage work of SC & ST and women should be registered without any ignorance formally by Gram Pradhan and Panchayat Rojgar Sewak
- Mandatory provisions should be made for involvements of SC & ST in planning, asset registration & verification
- Percentage allocation should be done under shelf of work for assets creation and maintenance in favour of SC & ST under MGNREGA and it should be ensure that assets will have complete access and control of SC & ST
- Land improvement work should be undertaken of lands of SC & ST only in the village - no land development work should be undertaken on the lands of other castes

- Provision should be made for Inclusive Planning under MGNREGA
- Inclusion audit / Social audit should be done for the MGNREGA as well as third party evaluation should be introduced. Provisions should be done for ensuring engagement of Dalit organizations in the monitoring of MGNREGA
- MIS formats should be modified to track the benefits accruing to the women and SC/ST from MGNREGS
- Caste and social barriers need to be addressed under MGNREGA and government should make provision for promoting the cooperatives of the SC & ST and MGNREGA workers (Job Cardholders) to undertake the work
- Strengthening of grievance Redressal mechanisms should be done to take up humanitarian needs, context and inclusion & gender issues as well as simple verbal complaint from MGNREGA workers shall be treated as written complaint by the competent authorities and action should be taken within 15 days
- Denial or delay in providing the work and delay in wage payments to SC & ST workers should be punishable under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989
- A small and separate cell may be created at the State level and positioning of one official at district level to periodically monitor the provision of the facilities and enforcement of rights and entitlements for the women and SC & ST workers
- The scheme needs to bring in higher accountability of the higher and middle bureaucracy, as only lower level employees are penalized
- Department to Department coordination should be ensured under convergence approach of MGNREGA for ensuring maximum benefits to SC & ST, Women and socially excluded groups

Tomojee Chakraborty, Kolkata, West Bengal (*response1*)

I am a state civil servant and administrator of a block as well the Executive Officer of an Intermediate Panchayat in West Bengal. The challenges being faced by me in implementation of MGNREGS are manifold but I would like to mention about the two key problems-

- The wage rate under MGNREGA is abysmally low compared to the alternate avenues of employment available for rural poor in the villages. The rural poor opt for MGNREGA due to the fact that often the options of employment available elsewhere are not relevant for these people as these are offered at a far away places from their villages. Often these jobs do not provide any social security at the work place.
- As MGNREGS is an employment guarantee scheme that focuses mainly on unskilled workers and accordingly works are being taken up under MGNREGA therefore there is limited potential available for employment opportunities. Also, there is dearth of activities that requires technically skilled workers in the rural areas. It is quite possible that the initiatives of convergences will enhance the potential of employment to a large extent but there are limitations in terms of coordinating and finalizing the convergence activities under MGNREGA.

Ravishwar Sinha, New Delhi

I compliment my colleagues for their inputs. I would like to share an experience of setting up a mobile money transfer (MMT) for payments which I had the privilege to coordinate and oversee as a UNOPS staff member in 2010.

On a platform developed by EKO, we took through the concept of solving different issues relating to the Norway-India Partnership Initiative (NIPI) supported disbursement of funds for incentive payments to ASHAs in Sheikhpura district. (For more details please visit - <http://sheikhpura.bih.nic.in/CSP.pdf>)

All the issues related to disbursement of incentives to the field staff in rural areas were reported in the initial assessment. Through persistent efforts and lots of support from Mr. Sanjay kumar Executive Director, State Health Society (SHS) we were able to overcome the hurdles. We were able to start disbursements in a backward district - Sheikhpura through the state bank of India on 31-12-2010 just eight months from the initial conceptualization of the proposal.

I have moved on, but was very pleasantly surprised through newspaper reports that the Bihar's Dynamic Chief Minister actually saw this activity going on. He was impressed to see its physical demonstration. He has asked for the replication of the same in other programs.

One of the very good aspects of this EKO platform is that it is a mobile based total banking platform and very user friendly to the user. Details could be had from the NIPI website

Sanjay Bedi, MMIMS, Amritsar, Punjab

We need to look at the experience of Grameen Bank where 95 per cent poor people repay the loan in small installments. Giving wage payment one week in advance in MNREGA will not have much impact as more than 95 percent people work more than one week. It will be useful to give wages in advance as it will increase satisfaction, productivity of the members. Additionally, it will also reduce unnecessary administrative overheads in maintaining attendance etc. Hundred days of work is anyway assured. Transfer this salary to bank accounts worth a try. It will reduce overheads cost when coupled with IT/Biometric enabled payment delivery.

Niranjan Upadhyay, Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology, Sikkim

Indeed it is matter of concern that the poorest of poor are in urgent need of money immediately on completion of the work. I would like to suggest the following as remedial measures -

- Seed money has to be kept in the Panchayat. One member of the Panchayat and the Secretary shall have the money in the form of IMPREST Account. Only in emergency / contingency, extremely poor worker shall get money from Panchayat office occasionally.
- All the workers identified under MGNREGA shall have their accounts in the post offices where the money will be transferred
- Some amount of 'Seed Money' may be kept in the Banks /Post offices so that the poor can be paid
- There is no alternative to Panchayat hence institutional mechanism need to be reviewed
- DMs/SDOs/BDOs along with Zila Parishad and Panchayat offices must evolve the procedure in their respective places
- School teachers may be trained and students from class VIII- X be associated to render services at least two class periods one in the beginning of the class and the other in the end. At least an attempt can be tried. These students shall be a very great force as they have service motto.

Cardinal principle is to create a new culture

Ranjit Kumar Maiti, West Bengal

It is heartening and encouraging for me to see the response from Tomojeet. It is good that he has thought of something innovative for providing works to the rural people at least during peak season of six months.

I think West Bengal, Orissa, Assam and some other similar states are in a precarious situation for works under MGNREGA because we have to plan for works only during December to May due to rains and cultivation season. Hence unless works of departments like PWD, Roads, Irrigation & Waterways, Fishery, Forest, Sericulture, Water Investigation & Minor Irrigation etc. are taken up under MGNREGA, the work days in the State will not increase from an average of 25 days or so.

The present system of placing one Deputy Magistrate as the Nodal Officer at the helm of affairs at District level is a good thing but he/ she should have more experience and command and also coordinating ability with other departmental officers at District level. So my suggestion is to place a senior officer (at least 15-16 years experience) so that the District level officials of other departments can be better coordinated.

Moreover, all departments mentioned above should be briefed from their vertical hierarchy to get in touch with their district / Block level officers and by April/ may they should give their specific proposals for utilizing MGNREGA fund to a great extent. For such purpose District Collector must have rapport with such district level Engineers and Officers so that delegated power can be utilized by the Nodal Officer.

Besides such management matters, it is also imperative to explore possibilities of involving local community to find out schemes to be taken up from MGNREGS. Many innovative works are possible from that fund only when we reach out to the villagers and involve Panchayat members. When I was involved in UNICEF supported Action Research Project (popularly known as Convergent Community Action) I was surprised to have so many innovative activities at the village level from the villagers through motivating them to do something of their own.

However, you may find out ways and means for getting more innovative schemes.

Megha Phansalkar, Consultant, Mumbai

A generic integrated field-based solution comprising of a web-based application and hand-held device (Laptop) was developed which was directly linked to MB recording and subsequent wage payment. The uploaded web-based application in the laptop will be duly filled in by visiting field-based Technical Assistants for maintaining MBook, attendances verification from Bio-metric devices and web cam. In addition, this application will help monitoring the current status of the work that completed on work sites by verifying the location co ordinates of the work sites by using hand-held GPS device during the survey. The web-based solution will facilitate various aforementioned important work-centric information to be sent to the central server as inputs to generate various reports for the end users by using various technologies. Some of the important points are summarized below:

1. Biometric device for verifying attendance and capturing lat-long of work location and upload the same to the central server.
2. Facility to capture images (pictures) of the work place along with lat-long of work location to monitor the work progress and transfer the image data to central server.
3. Facility to capture Measurement Book recording at each work place and upload to the central server.
4. Web-based MIS reports of Measurement book & attendance of the workers in the worksite.

5. Web-based photo gallery to showcase the work in progress of the various prescribed worksites.
6. Linking to wage Payment

For more information on this, please visit:

<ftp://ftp.solutionexchange.net.in/public/decn/cr/res09121102.pdf>

Subhransu Tripathy, Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India, Gujarat

High rate of illiteracy is one of the constraints to use technology based solutions/bank/post offices, etc. We can have an additional way to issue wage coupons (Optional), which can be accepted by the local shopkeepers for redemption. The wage earner can purchase his/her daily consumption items by using wage coupons. These coupons can be submitted by the shopkeepers to banks/post offices for realization. Wage coupons should be used only to purchase consumption items and the shopkeepers should maintain a register to manage the records with job card number for the use of banks/post offices.

Ritesh Dwivedi, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh

Wage payment should be ensured as quickly as possible and it is badly needed at the village level workers. In today's scenario information technology machinery has so much innovation that early delivery mechanism can be designed with help of different stakeholders.

For this, Banking Correspondents model can be adopted where two separate agencies can work with government machinery with the online database/other acceptable ID proof on the spot. These correspondents will have the database regarding amount of work done, job card and muster roll details and payments to be done. They will track the correct beneficiary and deliver the money to them through their handheld machines.

Second agency will be responsible for all the connectivity and online system requirements. They will establish a very robust network among government department, Business correspondents and Banks (if needed). Agency has to constantly update its mechanism to cope with the ongoing changes in the MGNREGA and its MIS.

There should be a feedback mechanism at each and every level starting from the village level up to the government level. Any false transaction cannot be done because of real time data monitoring and accountable delivery mechanism. NGOs, PRI representatives and beneficiary can put their complaints with appointed authorities.

Work done and benefitted worker's list should be posted on the Panchayat Notice Boards on weekly basis. Local Post offices and cooperative banks which have good reach in rural areas should be encouraged to play major role in this model. Advance payment should be done by government to first agency whether it is any Private Company, Post Offices and Cooperative Banks etc.

MGNREGA official at each block monitor the ongoing work and any malpractice should be tracked and solved immediately so that no beneficiary should suffer due to long chain of administrative investigation and punishment. Specific powers should be given to these Block officials to deal with the local transaction related problems.

Gram Sabha should be empowered and mobilized to discuss development work plan and way of its implementation. For improving the system most important change is fixing accountability in

the whole machinery and timely grievance redressal. Without these systemic changes no system can fulfill the aspirations of our poor villagers.

P.Mohammad Nizar, Kudumbashree, Kerala *

In Kerala for the benefit of Scheduled tribes, Kudumbashree (State Poverty Eradication Mission-GoK) has established a system. The wages will be paid in advance by the Community Development Society (CDS- the panchayat level federation of Kudumbashree sponsored SHGs) to the member. It will be like credit to the member. On getting the wages from Panchayat the amount will be reimbursed without interest, Kudumbashree Mission gives revolving fund to CDS to facilitate this.

Tomojeet Chakraborty, Kolkata, West Bengal (response2) *

In course of working at the grassroots level on MGNREGA ,I have been working on issues that I thought I may bring to the attention of all here for deliberation here. I am presenting these in a tabular form:-

Issues	Remarks
1. Difficulty in opening of accounts. Many documents asked for by banks from the wage earners which are difficult for them to produce.	RBI/2004-05/368 dated Feb18th, 2005, Annex-II and RBI/2010-11/389 dated January 17th,2011 states that for "Small Account" <u>NREGA Job Card</u> can be exclusively relied upon and in absence of that <u>Letter from recognized public authority</u> will serve the purpose for Legal Name & Address requirements. But it has come to our notice that inspite of having a valid NREGA Job Card with photograph and/or Pradhan's certification to these end, accounts are not being opened resulting in unnecessary troubles for the citizenry.
2. Lack of Manpower in the branches cited for slow pace of opening accounts.	DCC or BLBC meets produce no result as to deployment of staff

For the above mentioned issues my query is:-

1. How to solve the issue of Customer Identification Procedure as delineated above. If any bank refuses to toe the RBI circular then what should be the steps to address the situation.
2. Whether the three private banks Axis Bank, HDFC and ICICI has been authorized by RBI and Government of India to open the accounts of the Job Card holders, because increased competition will naturally serve the ends in a better way.
3. Regarding staff shortage as the banks keep stating, is there really no way out .If yes ,then what should be the measures adopted.
4. Many Branch managers dodge the Block Level Bankers Committee (BLBC) meetings. What should be the measures adopted as the Convener also pleads helplessness at times.

Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the for the Decentralization Community in India at se-decn@solutionexchange-un.net.in or to the Microfinance Community in India at se-mf@solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject heading "Re: [se-decn][se-mf] Query: Innovative ways for Wage Payments under MGNREGA - Experiences; Examples. Additional Reply."

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