

MGNREGA
Opportunities,
Challenges
and the
Road Ahead



Second Report of the
National Consortium of
Civil Society Organizations on MGNREGA



July
2011

The National Consortium on MGNREGA is a loosely federated collective of civil society organisations (CSOs) that have come together to try and make MGNREGA a success. The Consortium seeks to move beyond the more traditional civil society role of acting as a watchdog for MGNREGA. The idea is to actively participate in making MGNREGA effective and its implementation true to the spirit of the objectives of the Act. This, of course, incorporates the vigilance role but focuses on an integrated approach to planning, implementation and social audit of MGNREGA works. The perspective of the Consortium is to look at MGNREGA as not merely giving rise to wage employment but leading to equity, food self-sufficiency and sustainable livelihoods in rural India. We also believe that MGNREGA affords an unprecedented opportunity for governance reform at the grass roots. Even while recognising the great difficulties CSOs and panchayat raj institutions (PRIs) have faced in working together, a key element of the Consortium's strategy is to facilitate partnerships between grass-roots CSOs and PRIs, given the crucial role assigned to PRIs under MGNREGA.

The Consortium gives greatest importance to work with women, Adivasis, Dalits, landless and small and marginal farmers, the old and the challenged, especially in the rainfed areas of India. Our vision is that work done under MGNREGA would create the necessary water infrastructure on whose basis a whole range of nature-based livelihood opportunities could be created for the disadvantaged. Planning for this convergence needs also to be done co-terminus with NREGA work.

The Consortium believes that a diversity of approaches, which builds on the common ground outlined here, only gives strength to our work. The Consortium's members include grass-roots CSOs working directly with PRIs as also a number of support agencies that provide technical/institutional/logistical backstopping and financial support to these grass-roots CSOs. Different agencies could also combine a range of roles.

Anyone subscribing to what is said here and wanting to contribute in any of these specific respects is welcome to join the Consortium, which is an inclusive entity. The Consortium opposes discrimination of any form based on grounds of region, community, caste, religion, gender or colour. Individuals or agencies engaging in such discrimination are not eligible to be members of the Consortium. Our aim is to enable work of the highest possible quality to take place across the length and breadth of India so that the potential of MGNREGA is realised. The Consortium will help document innovations and good practices. It will promote learning across contexts and facilitate reform of policies and practices at the state and national levels.



MGNREGA:
OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES
AND THE ROAD AHEAD

The Second Report
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It gives me great pleasure to present the second report of the National Consortium of Civil Society Organizations on MGNREGA. Many of the recommendations of the first report, published in 2009, and released to the nation by the Hon'ble Minister for Rural Development, Government of India, have already made their way into the public discourse on reform of MGNREGA. We sincerely hope that this report too will be able to make a similar contribution and help MGNREGA realize its true potential.

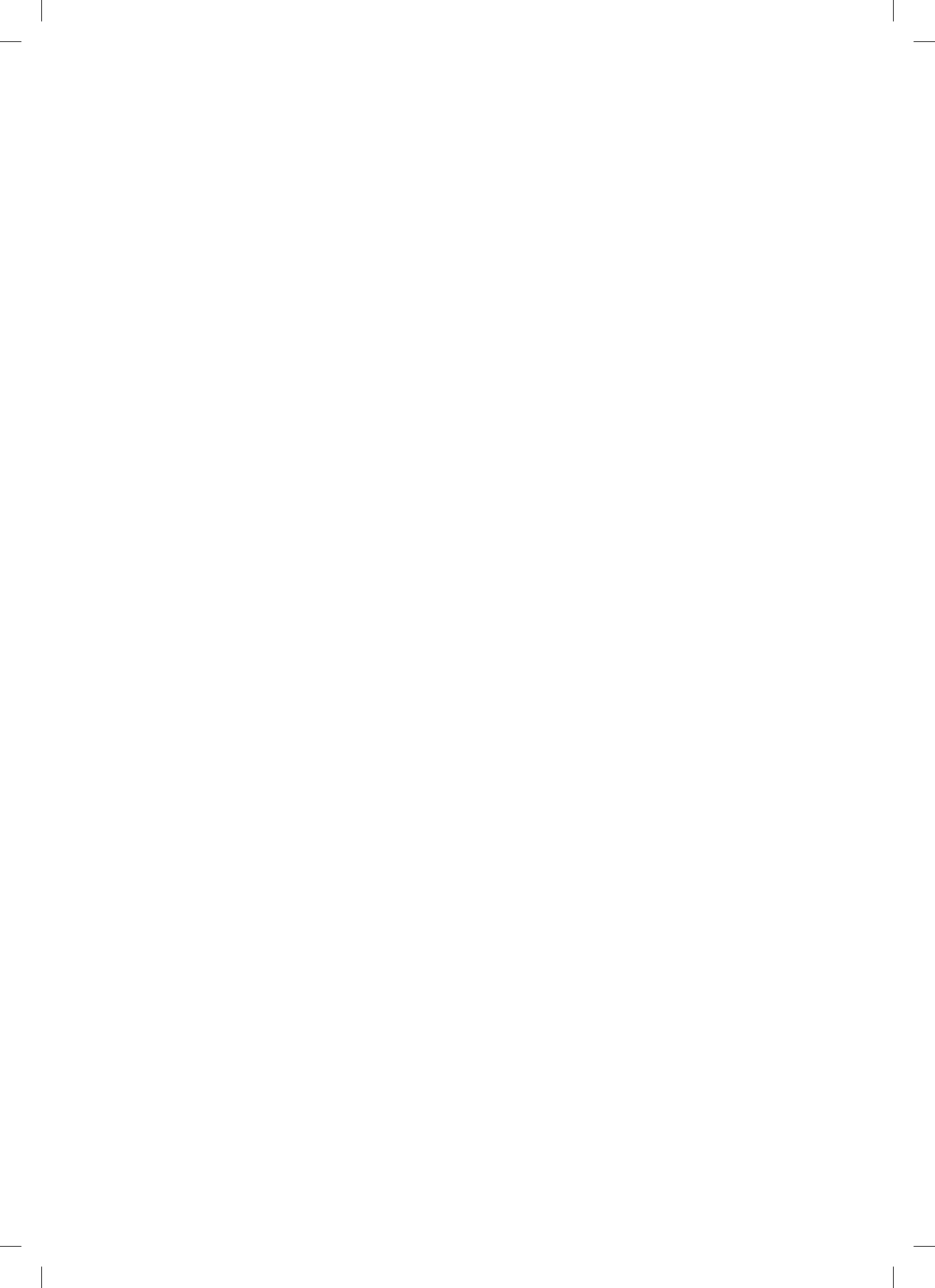
I would like first of all to thank Ravi Kumar and Vanaja of WASSAN, who not only prepared the format for partner inputs into the report but also put together Chapter 2 of this report based on partner experiences.

On behalf of the Consortium, I would like to thank the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, UNDP, New Delhi, the state governments of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand.

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Thanks are also due to my SPS colleagues, Sarat Rath and Praveen S. Thampi, for working with commitment, zeal and conviction for the Consortium. Praveen in particular has spent several person-days refining and re-refining the drafts of this report. Last, but not the least, my friends, Co-Founders of SPS, all of whom have allowed the space for SPS to anchor this Consortium and whose insights have been fundamental to shaping its work.

Pramathesh Ambasta
National Coordinator
July 2011



1. The National Consortium on MGNREGA

1.1 The Context

The last twenty years in India have been characterised by two major themes. The first and foremost amongst these is India's growth story. In the era of market reforms, India's GDP growth has accelerated. During the last two decades the rate of GDP growth has consistently been above 5% (Nagaraj, 2008). India is the 12th largest economy in the world in terms of GDP and is one of the fastest growing economies in the world today (World Bank, 2008).

The other major theme of this period has been the passage of the Constitution 73rd Amendment by the Indian Parliament in 1992, followed by its extension to scheduled areas in 1996, which has been heralded as the largest decentralization project in the world (Widmalm, 2005). The vision informing this decentralization project is that an elected 3-tier local government structure, collectively known as Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI), will take the lead in ensuring inclusion and empowerment (providing the "missing link between accelerated growth and inclusive growth" MoPR, 2008) in an era of high growth. This systemic move towards decentralization has paved the way for a host of people-centred legislations such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the Forest Rights Act and the upcoming National Food Security Act.

Yet the experience of the past decade and more has shown that inclusion remains elusive. To begin with, growth has remained confined to enclaves of prosperity surrounded by vast hinterlands of deprivation, home to 77% of India's population or over 836 million people, with a per capita consumption expenditure of less than or equal to Rs.20 per day (roughly \$2 in PPP terms) (NCEUS, 2007; Sengupta, et.al., 2008). The latest National Family Health Survey-3 of 2005-06 shows that the share of anaemic under-3 children has risen to 79% over the previous (NFHS-2) survey of 1998-99, when it was 74%. Nearly half of India's under-3 year children continue to remain underweight. India has the highest percentage (87%) of pregnant anaemic women in the world (World Bank, 2007). Moreover, as per the World Bank's World Development Indicators of 2005 and 2007, India's infant mortality and under-5 mortality rates (63 per 1000 and 87 per 1000 respectively) are not only amongst the highest in the world but are also substantially higher than that of Bangladesh (46 per 1000 and 69 per 1000 respectively), which has a substantially lower per capita gross national income.

There is also glaring evidence of inter-regional inequalities in these indicators. Thus for instance, states within India are in the same bracket as some of the poorer parts of the world in terms of infant mortality and under-5 mortality and malnourishment. There is also reason to believe that inequities in social sector provisioning such as health, both spatial and inter-group, have persisted, and have probably worsened (Shankar and Shah, 2009).

55% of India's population between 2000 and 2008 were found to be in Multi-dimensional poverty, according to the UNDP's Multidimensional Poverty Index in its Human Development Report (UNDP 2010)¹. The report states that there are 421 million poor people in eight Indian states (Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal), which is more than the number of poor people (410 million) in

¹ The index is based on 3 dimensions – health, education and living standards. There are 10 indicators which feed into these 3 dimensions, viz., nutrition, child mortality, years of schooling, children enrolled, cooking fuel, toilets, water, electricity, floor and assets.

the 26 poorest African countries combined. Of these, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand states have infant and child mortality rates comparable to that of sub-Saharan African countries. There is also evidence that shows that while enrolment for primary schooling has increased in India after campaigns like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the drop-out rates continue to remain high and quality of education has not improved at all.

The tribes of India, who make up only 7% of its population have perhaps taken the brunt of such exclusion and tribal communities occupy the lowest rungs of deprivation. As per the NFHS-3, under five mortality rates, child malnourishment and anaemia in women is higher among scheduled tribes as compared to scheduled castes and other social groups. In absolute terms, the number of people below the poverty line declined between 1993-94 and 1999-2000 for all other groups except the Scheduled Tribes (ST). In terms of the Head Count Ratio and the Poverty Gap Index, both indicators again show significant declines in the case of other groups but marginal decreases only among the STs. The disparity can also be seen in the average monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE) by different social groups as per the National Sample Survey's Report No.514 of 2007. The average MPCE of all classes of households was 1.37 times that of the scheduled tribes in the 55th round of NSS. This ratio further rose to 1.47 times in the 61st round, indicating that the MPCE levels of tribal households have increased at a slower rate compared to the MPCE of all classes of households.

Poverty and distress are thus increasingly concentrated in the drylands of India and its hilly and tribal areas (Shah, *et.al.*, 1998), which are also home to violent expressions of discontent. In the list of "170 most backward districts including 55 extremist affected districts" (Planning Commission, 2005), 118 are located in 5 big states - Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh (Shankar and Shah, 2008). At the other end of this spectrum are thousands of farmers continuing to commit suicide (Ghosh 2005). This is no ordinary crisis but one which reflects the complete breakdown of governance in large parts of the country (Shah, 2007).

At the heart of this exclusion are two sub-themes. First, the last two decades have also coincided with the poor performance of Indian agriculture and deceleration in the rates of growth of irrigated area and output of foodgrains since the 1990s. The major impact of this decline has been felt in the drylands which are home to more than half the workforce but whose share is only 18% of the GDP. The second sub-theme has been that the decentralization vision has been seriously hampered by an ineffective devolution of funds and functionaries to the PRIs.

Poor performance of Indian agriculture

Over the last two decades, the performance of Indian agriculture has been poor. For the first time since mid sixties, the 1990s witnessed a rate of growth in foodgrain production, which was lower than the rate of growth of population. As a result, both per capita foodgrain production and availability were lower in 2000-03 than their pre-Green Revolution (1960-63) levels. The decline has been the sharpest in the 1990s. Consumption data based on NSS surveys show that foodgrain consumption and calorie intake has declined substantially during 1990s, in aggregate and for poorest deciles in terms of expenditure. While irrigated agriculture appears to be hitting a plateau, dryland farming has suffered neglect. Available data shows that the period 1990-2000 was not a happy decade for Indian agriculture. The overall

growth rate of crop production declined from 3.72% per annum of the previous decade to 2.29% in the 1990s and crop productivity fell from 2.99% per annum to 1.21% in the same period (Planning Commission, 2002). Average yield levels of rice and wheat have more than halved between 1986 and 2002, indicating a plateauing of productivity in these two major foodgrains. The output of crops grown and eaten by the poorest of the poor (coarse grains, pulses and oilseeds) and grown largely in the drylands, actually declined during this decade and the rate of growth of their yields decelerated considerably

The worst performers have been those regions where rainfed farming predominates. Rainfed drylands account for 48% of area under food-crops and 68% of the area under non-food crops. In terms of crop groups, 77% of pulses, 66% of oilseeds and 45% of cereals are grown under dryland conditions. More than 90% of the area under sorghum and pearl millet, 57% of maize, 62% of cotton, 76% of gram, 88% of pigeon pea and nearly 80% of groundnut, sesamum, linseed and soybean are located here. Rainfed areas account for nearly 80% of the output of coarse cereals, nearly 50% of maize, 65% of gram and pigeon pea, 81% of groundnut and 88% of soybean.

To compound the above scenario are emerging limits to irrigation development. Gross irrigated area in India went up by over 300%, from 22.56 million hectares (mha) in 1950-51 to 75.14 mha in 2000-01. At present, India has the largest irrigated agriculture in the world. However, a remarkable fact is that since the mid-1970s, the rate of expansion of irrigated area has undergone a decline. Both the rate of growth of irrigated area (1.83%) and average annual increments (1.28 mha/year) were the lowest in the period 1990-93 to 1999-2000, compared to earlier decades².

It is estimated that 4400 (large, medium and small) dams have been constructed in India so far (CWC, 2002). The pace of dam construction reached its peak in the mid-1980s, subsequent to which it slowed down considerably. A severe financial constraint restricts the possibilities of growth in surface irrigation based on big dams³. Evidence of problems such as waterlogging, salinity and alkalinity emerging in irrigation commands point to the ill-effects of over-irrigation. It should also be remembered that the track record of development projects in handling the problem of proper rehabilitation of displaced persons has been extremely poor (ILO-ARTEP, 1993).

Of the addition to irrigated area of 25.7 million hectares (mha) between 1970 and 1990, groundwater accounted for over 85%. The most dramatic change in the groundwater scenario in India is that the share of tubewells in irrigated area rose from a mere 1% in 1950-51 to 40% in 2007-08. Groundwater availability is dependent on the water storage and transmission characteristics of underlying geological strata. About 65% of India (comprising mainly the continental shield) is underlain by formations usually referred to as "hard rocks". Deeper seated aquifers often have good initial yields, but a tubewell drilled here may be tapping groundwater accumulated over several hundreds of years. Once groundwater has been extracted from a deeper aquifer, its replenishment depends upon the inflow from the shallow system. The path

² This is aligned with the global trend (FAO, 2003) since the global rate of expansion of irrigated area, which was 2.17% between 1961-63 and 1971-73, steadily came down in the subsequent decades, reaching 1.23% between 1990-93 and 1997-99. Incremental irrigated area reached its maximum (4.01 mha/year) between 1971-73 and 1981-83, which came down to 3.19 mha/year between 1991-93 and 1997-99.

³ The Steering Committee on Irrigation for the Tenth Plan categorically states that "given the large number of projects taken on hand, the frequent changes in project scope, and the escalation of project costs due to a variety of reasons, there is little likelihood that the outlay in the budgets can ever match the total demand" (Planning Commission, 2002).

this water has to traverse is characterized by relatively unfavorable media, which greatly slows down the rate of groundwater recharge. This poses a severe limit to expansion of tubewell technology to areas underlain by these strata.

Potential of dryland agriculture

It is now well-known that over the last sixty years, the share of agriculture in national income has fallen dramatically (from 54 per cent in 1931 to 18 per cent in 2008), without a corresponding decline in its share in the work force (which was 71 per cent in 1931 and 56 per cent in 2008). This indicates that the labour productivity in agriculture has fallen relative to the average labour productivity in the economy as a whole (Bhaduri, 1993). The continuing inter-sectoral differences in labour productivity, together with the fact that agriculture and related activities are still the major source of livelihoods is among the abiding causes of poverty in India. The flip side of this phenomenon suggests that if we want to raise overall output and employment in the economy, the most effective means would be to raise the productivity of agriculture. Since national per capita income can be expressed as a weighted average of sectoral productivities, it follows as an arithmetical identity that a rise in productivity in agriculture would lead to a greater increase in national output than the same increment in the productivity of the other sectors. In developing economies with a predominant agricultural sector, growth in agricultural productivity and employment is attainable through careful management of natural resources including water. This is also the pre-condition for greater labour absorption in agriculture through greater crop diversification and increased cropping intensity⁴ (Bhaduri, 2005).

In fact, by disaggregating the agricultural sector into a Green Revolution sector and a dryland sector, we could extend Bhaduri's analysis and argue that the maximum returns to a unit rise in productivity (across sectors) are obtainable from the dryland agricultural sector in India. This is because the drylands sector is characterized by the lowest levels of productivity, even while employing nearly 50 per cent of the labour force in Indian agriculture. Thus, both the scope for raising productivity and its potential aggregate impact are the highest in this sector. Since the poorest sections of Indian society live here, a rise in productivity in this sector would have an immediate impact on poverty alleviation, without having to await the rather doubtful and tenuous 'trickle-down' from the core to the periphery. It would also have a positive impact on the pattern of inter-regional inequality by benefiting the most backward areas.

Finally, if we concentrate our investment in these areas on labour-intensive works which raise productivity through the process of environmental regeneration, we could go a long way towards making the overall growth path of the Indian economy both employment-oriented and sustainable in the long run. Data from the Rural Labour Enquiry (Labour Bureau, 2004) reveal that the proportion of the landed among agricultural labour households is very high⁵. The NSS 61st Round shows that in 2004-05, as many as 76 per cent of the rural households in the country were marginal farmers (owning less than 1 hectare of land) and another 13% were small farmers (with landholding size between 1 and 2 hectares) (NSSO, 2007). Thus, small and marginal farmers accounted for nearly 89% of the landholdings. An increasing number

⁴ This path of "extensive growth" has been advocated also by Raj (1984) and Ishikawa (1967).

⁵ The share is around 50 percent in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, 60 in Orissa and Uttar Pradesh and over 70 in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. And if we focus on Adivasis, the proportion shoots up to as high as 76-87 per cent in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Rajasthan (Shah, 2009)

of these small and marginal landowners, operating low-productivity holdings are being forced to enter the labour market. If priority is given to raising productivity in the fields of these landed labourers (occupying an estimated 8 million hectares), it would be a major contribution towards direct poverty alleviation in India.

The decentralisation experience

The other sub-theme can be said to be the very slow progress in actual devolution and democratic decentralization. A major bottleneck in this regard has been insufficient progress in devolution of what is known as the three Fs – Funds, Functions and Functionaries. Essentially, this means that while the legislation has been passed, the actual work of making PRIs in charge has proceeded very slowly and the progress has been uneven across states (Aiyar, 2005, Widmalm, 2005, ARC, 2007, MoPR, 2008). Thus, even if functions have been demarcated to be carried out by PRIs, the requisite funds have not been placed at their disposal but have been diverted by state governments, even if temporarily, to meet their own “ways and means requirements” (Aiyar, 2005, p.65), or the functionaries have not been made fully accountable to them, with line departments still maintaining their stranglehold (Social Watch India, 2009), or there has been a lack of clarity on demarcation of powers and functions to be performed between tiers of the PRI system. An index of devolution, based on scores for different parameters of devolution suggests that while there has been some progress in devolution, this progress has been uneven across states (NCAER, 2009).

A serious consequence of such decentralization without adequate preparation has been on the one hand a universalization of basic social services without sufficient attention to quality (Shankar and Shah, 2009). On the other, such “subsidiarity without empowerment” has also the possible implication of effectively absolving the state of its responsibilities in the social sector (Shah, 2007).

1.2. MGNREGA: Potential, Performance and Problems

The passage of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2005 marks a new chapter in Indian history as well the history of decentralization in India. Through this Act, the state is committed to providing employment (“not less than one hundred days of such work in a financial year”, NREGA, 2005 Ch. II) to every rural family which demands such work and whose adult members volunteer to do such work. Such work will be provided at the minimum wage rate and, as far as possible, within a 5 km radius of the village where the applicant resides. Failure to provide such wage employment within 15 days of the receipt of the application will entitle the applicant to receive a daily unemployment allowance. The Act moves towards ensuring the right to work and lays the basis for development interventions which do not depend on the wilful benevolence of the state but legally bind the state to provide employment for any rural family that demands it. Since April 2008, the coverage of the Act was expanded to all districts of India, making it the largest employment programme in the world. The principal implementing agency under the Act is the Gram Panchayat (GP). MGNREGA is also supported by unprecedented operational guidelines (MoRD, 2005), which give central emphasis to community participation in quality planning, implementation, social audit and transparency. A remarkable feature of MGNREGA through which it makes a decisive break with the past is that it places a complete ban on the use of contractors and also

lays emphasis on labour-intensive work for water conservation, drought- and flood-proofing as priority works under MGNREGA, underscoring water security as the pre-requisite and foundation for rural transformation in India (NREGA, 2005, Schedule I). The transformatory potential of MGNREGA lies in creating sustainable livelihoods through well targeted public investments in rural areas for creation of durable assets in priority works as listed above, thus easing the resource constraints faced by the poor, rural labour households, a very high proportion of whom are actually owners of land (Labour Bureau, *op.cit.*)⁶.

Backed by a constitutional right, it is MGNREGA's mandate of addressing chronic causes of poverty, redressing imbalances and deficiencies in the natural resource base, empowerment of the poor and governance reform that makes it stand apart from all social sector initiatives hitherto attempted.

This acquires particular significance in the light of growing realization in economic thinking about the synergies between equity and growth (see Bourguignon, 2004, Ravallion, 2007 for a discussion of the issues involved). The reasons are for one, in an unequal situation, the impact of growth on poverty would be muted (Datt and Ravallion, 2002, Deaton and Dreze, 2002). And, through a reversal of the growth-poverty linkage argument, on the other, by an understanding that the poor remain poor because of lack of access to productive resources (say for instance due to imperfect credit markets or an unequal distribution of wealth [Bourguignon, *op.cit.*, 2004]), which in turn inhibits their productive growth-oriented potential from being unlocked. Thus, the poor are not simply passive receptors of growth but, as producers, are contributors to it, representing both a "slack" in the system and an opportunity, which, with systematic and well-directed investments (such as the priority activities listed in Schedule I of the MGNREGA), could actually begin to contribute to the growth process itself. MGNREGA funds could be initially utilized to create the basic water infrastructure in villages through proper grassroots planning. Over time this could serve as the basis for a range of income-generating livelihoods interventions. Together, these would ensure that the investments made are productive, put the economy on a sustainable growth path and further that the number of dependents on a state-sponsored guarantee would steadily decline. The recent amendment to allow MGNREGA work on lands of small and marginal farmers (MoRD, 2009), has further deepened the possibilities of working on such activities under MGNREGA.

However, for such possibilities to be fully articulated, the bottom-up architecture of MGNREGA would have to become a reality, the key to which in turn, is a deepening of democratic decentralization. It is to an understanding of these issues that we now turn.

MGNREGA: Performance and achievements

Over the past 4 years or so, MGNREGA's performance according to key aggregate indicators has been quite impressive, particularly when compared with previous employment programmes. For one, budgetary allocation for MGNREGA has expanded steadily from its base of about Rs.11,300 crores in 2006-07 to Rs.40,100 crores in 2009-10. As per data available from the MGNREGA website, the cumulative expenditure under MGNREGA works since 2006-07 has been Rs.1,03,760 crores. The cumulative employment generated has been 8790 million person-days over the same period.

⁶ The intention behind the legislation goes well beyond the narrow goal of providing relief employment or unemployment doles.

Since its launch, the benefits of MGNREGA has reached women, SC/ST families and the poor. Over the last four years, the share of SC/ST families in the work provided under MGNREGA has ranged between 50-60%. The share of women in the employment provided has risen steadily from 41% in 2006-07 to 50% in 2010-11. With nearly 10 crore bank/post office accounts opened for MGNREGA workers, and about 85% of NREGA payments being made through them, MGNREGA has also moved financial inclusion of the poor several steps forward.

A recent study by Chandrashekhar and Ghosh (2011) point to the impact of MGNREGA on rural wages. The study, based on the 64th round of the National Sample Survey Organization's survey data concludes that real wages for casual labour in rural areas have increased between 1993-94 and 2007-08 and the increase has been more rapid for women workers. Further, that between 2004-05 and 2007-08, public works accounted for a greater share of economic activity and this rise was particularly greater for women, with the days of employment of rural women in public works increasing by a factor of 4.4. Finally, average female wages in MGNREGA were slightly higher than average male wages, whereas they were lower in non-MGNREGA public works and even lower in non-public works.

Major issues in MGNREGA implementation

Aggregate figures of achievement however, hide several lacunae in the core MGNREGA objectives of people-centred planning, transparency and bottom-up architecture, even in states which are performing well on the employment generation criterion (see Kumar *et.al*, 2008 for a discussion of such issues related to Andhra Pradesh). It has been observed that wage payments are delayed, works are of a poor quality, there is corruption, contractors tend to find ways to beat the system and planning and social audits do not involve people (see for instance Shah, 2009, Ambasta, 2009, Dreze *et.al*, 2009).

While with the passage of the Act, the bottlenecks of Funds and Functions seemed to have eased up, the lack of functionaries at the cutting edge of implementation has serious consequences for the bottom-up, people-centred architecture of MGNREGA. The shortage of staff has had an adverse impact on key parameters like high-quality people-centred planning and implementation of works, availability of employment on time, timely measurements and hence timely payments, as shown above. It is clear that the sheer size of the guarantee makes it impossible to be carried out on an "additional charge" syndrome. However, this is precisely what has been happening with MGNREGA.

1.3 The National Consortium

It was in such a context that the consortium was born, out of a vision of making NREGA effective by active participation of Civil Society Organizations in planning, implementation and social audit of NREGA works. The National Consortium on NREGA is a loosely federated collective of civil society organisations (CSOs) that have come together to try and make NREGA a success.

These CSOs have developed relationships with Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), including Gram Panchayats (GP) and Gram Sabhas (GS), in some of the most backward and neglected districts of India. Reflecting the immense diversity of this vast nation the strategies adopted by the CSOs for building these partnerships have been different in each case. They have sup-



ported GPs and GSs in various aspects of planning, implementation and social audit of MGNREGA work.

On the foundation of this growing engagement with PRIs, the CSOs have sought to partner the state and central governments, in building training material, mainstream innovative ideas and help build capacities of government functionaries. As the map shows, the Consortium has 72 partners spread over 85 blocks in 58 districts of 11 states of India. The table below gives details of partners and the districts in which they are working:

State	Partners	Districts covered
1. Andhra Pradesh	1. WASSAN 2. REDS 3. EFFORT 4. APMSS 5. PILUPU 6. ARTS 7. Foundation for Ecological Security	1. Anantpur 2. Prakasam 3. Nalgonda 4. Warangal 5. Karimnagar 6. Srikakulam 7. Chittoor
2. Karnataka	1. Samuha 2. Samrasa 3. Ingrid 4. Outreach 5. Foundation for Ecological Security	1. Raichur 2. Gulbarga 3. Bellary 4. Bidar, Koppal 5. Chikkaballapur, Kolar
3. Odisha	1. Lokadrusti 2. Vikalp 3. Bolangir Gramodyog Samiti 4. Bolangir Bikash Parishad 5. Aanchalik Jan Sewa Anushthan 6. Adhikar 7. Shramik Shakti Sangha 8. Jan Mukti Anushthan 9. Foundation for Ecological Security	1. Nuapada 2. Bolangir 3. Koraput 4. Angul 5. Dhenkanal 6. Kalahandi 7. Keonjhar 8. Sundargarh 9. Gajapati 10. Nabarangpur
4. West Bengal	1. PRADAN	1. Bankura

State	Partners	Districts covered
5. Chhattisgarh	1. Lokshakti Samiti 2. Sarguja Gram Vikas Sansthan 3. Margdarshak Sewa Sanstha 4. Vardan Samajik Sansthan	1. Raigarh 2. Jashpur 3. Sarguja 4. Rajnandgaon
6. Madhya Pradesh	1. Sambhav 2. Parhit 3. Niswarth 4. Gram Sudhar Samiti 5. HARD 6. Nirman 7. Foundation for Ecological Security 8. Spandan 9. Samaj Pragati Sahayog	1. Tikamgarh 2. Shivpuri 3. Sidhi 4. Anuppur 5. Mandla 6. Khandwa 7. Dewas
7. Rajasthan	1. SPWD 2. Hanuman Van Vikas Samiti 3. Jagran Jan Vikas Samiti 4. Prayatn Samiti 5. Samarthak Samiti 6. Foundation for Ecological Security	1. Udaipur 2. Bhilwara 3. Pratapgarh
8. Gujarat	1. Anandi 2. Manav Kalyan Trust	1. Dahod 2. Panchmahals 3. Sabarkantha
9. Jharkhand	1. Vikas Sahayog Kendra	1. Palamau
10. Uttar Pradesh	1. Aarthik Anusandhan Kendra 2. Vanangana The PANI Network 3. Grameen Vikas Sansthan 4. Gram Vikas Sewa Sansthan 5. Lok Jagriti Sansthan 6. Grameen Punarnirman Sansthan 7. Bhagwan Manav Kalyan Samiti 8. Mahila Swarojgar Samiti 9. Sadbhawana Grameen Samiti 10. Srishti Sewa Sansthan 11. Jan Gramin Vikas Sansthan 12. DAHA 13. Lokpriya Janhit Sewa Sansthan 14. Janshikshan Kendra 15. Mahila Gramodyog Sewa Samithi 16. Swami Vivekanand Samjik Sansthan 17. Jan Kalyan Gramin Uddhan Sansthan 18. Akhil Bhartiya Jyoti Mahila Sansthan 19. NSCBJSPS 20. NYSSSS 21. Jan Sewa Prashikshin Sansthan 22. Varun 23. Brij Jan Jagran Samiti	1. Mirzapur 2. Chitrakoot 3. Ghazipur 4. Sultanpur 5. Ambedkarnagar 6. Azamgarh 7. Mau 8. Varanasi 9. Basti 10. Maharajganj 11. Bahraich 12. Pratapgarh
11. Bihar	1. Megh-Pyne Abhiyan 2. Samata 3. Kosi Sewa Sadan 4. Gramyasheel 5. Ghoghardiha Swarajya Vikas Sangh	1. Supaul 2. Saharsa 3. Madhubani 4. Khagaria 5. West Champaran
Total: 11 States	72 partners	58 districts

The consortium partners have adopted different approaches to their work, given their own distinct orientation, contexts, experience and capacities. Broadly speaking, the work

done falls into the following categories:

- Mobilization
- Assistance to Gram Panchayats for Plan Preparation and Implementation
- Implementation, where the states allow for such a participation
- Capacity building and support to each other and to other agencies such as panchayat and line department functionaries
- Advocacy of required policy changes at the local, the state and the national levels.

The first annual report of the National Consortium on NREGA was published in Hindi and English and released to the nation by the Minister for Rural Development, Government of India on 14th October 2009 at a special function held in New Delhi. Mr. Nandan Nilekani, Chairperson of the Unique Identification Authority of India was the Guest of Honour. Dr. Mihir Shah, Member, Planning Commission, represented both GoI and the Consortium and was the link between the two. The report has become a major reference document for policy issues in NREGA. Several of its recommendations have found their way into the policy discourse. It is hoped that this will pave the way for eventual implementation of much-needed reforms in the NREGA space. The report listed the following major achievements of the consortium partners in the panchayats selected by them for intensive work:

Worker registration

- In Andhra less than 50% households had job cards, the figure rose to more than 90% (increase of 60%)
- Karnataka registered 80% increase in job card coverage (In Koppal 228% over base)
- In Orissa, 210% rise overall; some partners registered between 300% to 618% rise
- In West Bengal, from no job cards to 15,365 cards
- In Chhattisgarh, 25% increase (Jashpur 87%)
- Madhya Pradesh: 37% overall, in Sidhi and Anuppur 3-fold increase; some partners have obtained 100% worker registration
- Rajasthan: 30% change
- Gujarat: 115% increase in Sabarkantha; In Devgadhi-Baria block of Dahod district, RRLJ led to 28% increase

Work demand

- In Orissa, 182% rise overall from 3183 to 8896; some partners registered 5 to 7 fold increase
- In Chhattisgarh, 34-fold rise from 211 job applications to more than 7000
- Madhya Pradesh: 123% overall increase from 8500 to more than 18000 applications
- Rajasthan: 174% increase
- Gujarat: 273% increase in Devgadhi-Baria block and 124% increase in Dahod district as a result of RRLJ

Work sanctioned and implemented

- In Karnataka, works sanctioned increased from only 10 to 120, value from Rs.28 lakhs to Rs.3 crores (10-fold rise); implemented rose from Rs. 4 lakhs to Rs. 77 lakhs (18-fold)
- In Orissa, works sanctioned increase from Rs.83 lakhs to nearly Rs. 7 crores (740%); imple-

- mented increased from Rs.73 lakhs to Rs.2.1 cr (193%)
- Chhattisgarh 7-fold rise Rs.97 lakhs to Rs.7.04 cr in works sanctioned; 4-fold increase in works implemented
 - Madhya Pradesh: 8-fold increase from about Rs.1.4 crores to Rs.13 crores in sanctioned works, 8-fold increase in value of works implemented
 - Rajasthan: 175% increase in value of sanctioned works
 - Gujarat: RRLJ's impact led to 275% increase in Devgadhi-Baria block of Dahod district and 124% rise in Dahod district

Planning and Implementation Support

- In all states, partners have worked with village communities and panchayats to create detailed micro-plans worth more than Rs. 125 crores
- These plans have been ratified by the Gram Sabhas and are being used by panchayats for implementation
- Impact on incomes, indebtedness and migration have been dramatic.
- In several instances, partners have built upon the water infrastructure created under NREGA to converge livelihoods interventions in agriculture and micro-credit.
- The present report highlights the further work done by the Consortium partners in consolidating the achievements of the previous phase.

The Road Ahead

Given the status of MGNREGA, efforts of the National Consortium gain significance. For they are able to demonstrate what is possible given requisite support to the GPs. This demonstration forms the basis for exerting pressure on the mainstream implementation interface to reform itself.

The Consortium's experience of the previous years has shown that concerted effort at the grassroots is bound to yield positive results. In this sense it has clearly shown what is needed to be done by the mainstream implementation interface to strengthen the functioning of MGNREGA. The process has also strengthened the confidence of Consortium partners since they have gained the necessary experience of making MGNREGA work in what was perhaps its most difficult phase – the beginning.

However, this effort needs to be taken further. The major component of this strengthening strategy is to appreciate the fact that the cutting edge in terms of implementation and monitoring lies at the block, district and state levels. Unless changes take place at these levels, the overall outcomes from MGNREGA will continue to suffer. We plan, therefore, to build partnerships with state governments so that the agenda for MGNREGA reform can be taken deep through participation of civil society.



Dr. C. P. Joshi, Hon'ble Minister for Rural Development, Govt. of India (second from right), Mr. Nandan Nilekani, Chairperson (ICICI) (right) and Dr. Mihir Shah, Member, Planning Commission (second from left) interact with participants at the release of the first report of the Consortium in New Delhi, October 2009

TWO

HIGHLIGHTS OF WORK DONE

2.1 ANDHRA PRADESH

In Andhra Pradesh, the Consortium operates through its two arms – a group of NGOs anchored by Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN) that together covers 6 districts, and the Foundation of Ecological Security (FES) in Chittoor.

WASSAN, drawing from its vast experience in developing watershed projects, worked along with the Union ministry for rural development in the early stages of the MGNREGA programme. It also contributed to the process of evolving operational systems for MGNREGA implementation in AP. Currently, the organisation plays two crucial roles in ensuring successful implementation of the programme in south India's largest state. These are:

1. Continuous research and analysis of different aspects of MGNREGA and providing feedback to the rural development department in particular and various other civil society organisations and political parties in general.

One specific initiative here is the facilitation of an action research project in AP as part of the National Consortium on MGNREGA with 5 organisations in 6 districts. WASSAN coordinates the initiatives at ground level by the respective local organisations and facilitates the sharing of learnings at various levels.

WASSAN's other initiatives include kick-starting pilot projects like the development of commons in partnership with networks like Anantha Paryavarana Parirakshana Samithi (APPS) and FES, productivity enhancement in agriculture, and developing approaches for promoting tribal farming systems through MGNREGA.

2. Engaging with agriculture labour unions and other organisations to promote and strengthen the rights approach to entitlements under MGNREGA. As part of this, the organisation is working closely with various agriculture labour unions, network of organisations and state level forums like Upadhi Hami Hakku Amalu committee. It is also an active participant in forums like AP NGO alliance promoted by the government (APNA) along with various civil society groups like People's Monitoring Committee. The key interventions here include providing need-based technical and backup support in their initiatives particularly related to wage rates, demand-based work commencement, worksite facilities, choice of works, transparency and accountability at all levels etc., and preparation and sharing of IEC material.

The details shared in this report are mostly related to the action research project with the 5 partners in 6 districts and the activities taken up in the years of 2009 and 10.

Organisation	District	Mandal	Panchayats	Villages	Major Communities
REDS	Anantapur	Kadiri	3	5	BC, SC and Muslim minorities
ARTS	Srikakulam	Seethampeta	3	71 habitations	ST
APMSS	Warangal	Mogullapalli	2	5	BC and SC
APMSS	Nalgonda	Kanagal	3	7	BC and SC
APMSS	Karimnagar	Koheda	2	7	SC, ST, BC
EFFORT	Prakasam	Tarlupadu	4	5	SC, BC
PILUPU	Nalgonda	Turkapally	5	5	ST, BC, SC

Status of Securing Basic Entitlements as per the Act

Demand based work (Work application, receipt and unemployment allowances etc.)

MGNREGA distinguishes itself from sundry job guarantee schemes in its provisions for work on demand and assured payment of unemployment allowance if concerned authorities fail to open work within 15 days of receiving job application. However, it is difficult to make the system shift gear to this approach because it is entrenched in the supply-driven mode and adopts a patron-client approach. The rural development department in AP is no exception and it was a long and hard struggle for the consortium members to operationalise the system of work application, receipt and the provision of work within 15 days.

Intensive campaigning and awareness programmes in the project villages resulted in increased awareness on the process and procedure of MGNREGA among wage seekers. Yet, it was not enough for accessing wage employment as per the provisions in the Act. The main hurdle here was the rigidity shown by the implementation machinery in shifting from a supply-driven programme to a demand-based approach. After consortium members helped wage seekers engage with the implementation systems for almost a year, and set up workers' collectives, the number of wage seekers applying for work increased. They started getting receipts against job demand in the second and third years of work (Table 2.1). This system of obtaining receipts against formal application for work was almost absent throughout the state where there are no supportive organisations for wage employment seekers.



Mandal committee training, Tarlupadu, Prakasam district, AP, by EFFORT.

Barring one or two working villages, all the applicants (organised into groups of 5-7 households) received work within 15 days of application adhering to the nonnegotiable provisions of the MGNREG Act. In most cases, almost all the labour groups obtained receipts against their applications. Wherever receipts were not issued because of various reasons, mandal officers ensured that works were opened within 15 days as was the case in Srikakulam district, thus pre-empting any claims for unemployment allowances. The organisations had to pressurise the officials to issue receipts against job applications regardless of the fact that works were opened within 15 days or not.

APMSS in Nalgonda district helped 4 groups (80 members) to apply for unemployment allowance, but mandal officials didn't take any action although the issue was raised several times in EGS meetings at the district as well as state levels. The non-payment was largely on account of a lack of clear guidelines as well as delay in securing necessary approvals at the state level. State-level officials didn't disagree with the argument, but they were inclined to ensuring that employment was generated in time, and were indifferent towards ensuring the payment of unemployment allowance. However, the partners persisted with the demand for unemployment allowance, and after four years of the implementation of MGNREGA, the department formalised the system of work applications and receipts, and made it compulsory. The field functionaries (Field Assistants) are made responsible for conducting periodical meetings of wage labour groups and obtaining work applications in those group meetings as per the need and demand of the members.



Workers meeting at work site, Nalgonda, AP, by PILUPU

Table 2.1: District wise status of work applications submitted, work shown and receipt obtained in the year 2009-10.

District	No. of villages	Total work applications facilitated (in groups)			% of applicants obtained works within 15 days			% of applicants collected receipts		
		2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
APMSS- Nalgonda	4	43	43	61	67	85	85	94	9	7
Pilupu- Nalgonda	6	53	53	151	98	100	90	100	41	60
APMSS-Karimnagar	5	14	14	47	80	100	100	100	57	64
APMSS-Warangal	5	10	10	50	166	80	86	100	-	100
EFFORTS-Prakasam	10	4	4	57	64	100	100	100	100	100
ARTS-Srikakulam	3	18	18	91	110	61	81	87	33	46
REDS-Anantapur	5	33	33	45	61	100	100	100	100	100
TOTAL	38	175	175	502						

Results achieved through the engagement

- Participation in MGNREGA has looked up compared to previous years. In the 33 project villages, the number of households who have accessed wage employment in the year 2009-10 is 64% of the total households registered, higher than the state average of 54% for the year 2009-10.
- Participation of SC/ST households are improving, albeit at a slow pace (Table 2.2). After five years of implementation of MGNREGA and almost three years of continuous work by the consortium members the participation of SC/ST households have crossed beyond 50% in 5 project locations out of 7. The major reasons for relatively low participation of SCs as understood from a rapid assessment were chronic delays in opening works, and more importantly, the delays in payments. Their buffer incomes are very less and they are mostly dependant on daily or weekly wages for their livelihood, hence payment delays of more than 15-30 days make MGNREGA unviable for them. Interactions with wage seekers reveal that continuous employment and timely payment will help stop migration and would encourage them to participate in MGNREGA and avail 100 days of right to work. As a result of this uncertainty, a significant portion of the SC population are migrating out or opting for other secured employment. The consortium members could address this issue only to a certain extent.
- The average number of wage days in the selected 21 villages put together has also increased from 45 days in 2007-08 to 75 days in 2009-10, which is higher than the state average of 64 days for the year 2009-10.



Returning from work; Kadiri, Anantapur



Guiding persons with disability in NREGS work, Kadiri, Anantapur

Table 2.2: Details of participation of registered HHs in MGNREGA in the project villages

District/ Organisation	% of HHs participated in 2008-2009				Total %	% of HHs participated in 2009-2010				Total %
	SC	ST	BC	OC		SC	ST	BC	OC	
REDS- Anantapur	51	35	39	39	41	56	49	52	45	51
ARTS- Srikakulam	28	88	33	47	49	28	87	33	54	51
APMSS- Warangal	79	17	67	48	53	76	33	85	63	64
APMSS- Nalgonda	67	24	139	52	71	67	24	139	52	71
APMSS- Karimnagar	62	68	54	60	61	63	59	68	68	65
EFFORTS- Prakasam	38	34	46	26	36	51	41	58	38	47
Piliupu- Nalgonda	70	22	66	25	46	72	41	71	28	53

Worksite facilities

Drinking water remains the only common worksite facility provided through out the state. Other guaranteed facilities such as shade, first-aid kits, and a maid to look after children below age 5 of the working women are mostly absent on worksites, and wherever they are provided, it's neither regular nor adequate. Even with drinking water, concerns on free access and safety remain to be addressed as well as incidents of caste discrimination.

The interventions of the member organisations regarding worksite facilities are two-fold.

Partners help in widely publicising the facilities the workers are entitled to, organising and enabling the workers to constantly monitor, question and demand the facilities from the field level as well as mandal functionaries. This has led to a marked improvement in the provision of worksite facilities in project locations. For example, a separate labour/person exclusively for arranging drinking water is now ensured without any lapse and in most cases first aid box with medicines are also noticed at worksites along with shade. However, the provision of facilities like shade, first-aid kit, decision regarding appointment of maids, and linkages with Anganwadi centre etc. are dependent on the decisions taken at the state level as they involve additional procurement and availability of funds.

To address this aspect, the partner organisations



Work site meeting at K.N Palem, Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh, organised by REDS

decided to raise the concerns with the rural development department, besides trying out certain innovations in the field level and sharing the learnings to influence the policy and procedures. REDS in Anantapur is a case in point.

REDS brought in Anganwadi centres as crèches for MGNREGA workers, thus ensuring the service of a maid as assured in the Act. REDS has done a pilot in its working village tying up with the Anganwadi centre and also provided ragi malt to the children at Anganwadi centres. AP Rural Development department had issued a circular No. 653/ EGS/PM (T)/2007, dated 20-04-2008 for pilot testing of linking of maids with Anganwadi centres in 5 districts, making it mandatory to provide a maid for every 100 wage seekers either at worksite or at Anganwadi centres along with provision of nutritional food to the children. This year government has issued orders to upscale and mainstream this system.



Creche facilities at K.N Palem, Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh, organised by REDS.

Reflecting on the field experiences, several policy changes with respect to worksite facilities were proposed by the partner organisations in a state level workshop organised by the Commissioner, Rural Development, specifically on the subject in April, 2010. In the workshop, partner organisations insisted that each group be provided with a separate drinking water vessel/pot with a steel glass, first aid box, polyethylene shade with cloth lining from inner side for additional protection from heating up in the shade. As of now only one shade and one first-aid box are available per Gram Panchayat, making it difficult to provide the same to more than one group simultaneously working in a village.

The Government has already taken a decision to engage a woman on a fixed basis for 4-5 months (till her household completes 100 days) for providing drinking water. Drawing from the suggestions in the workshop the government has issued an order (753/PMC/EGS/2010,

dated 30-4-2010) making it mandatory to appoint a maid in every working place where there are 20 women working, irrespective of the number of children brought to the workplace. The ayas are selected from among the elderly or from those with physical disabilities.

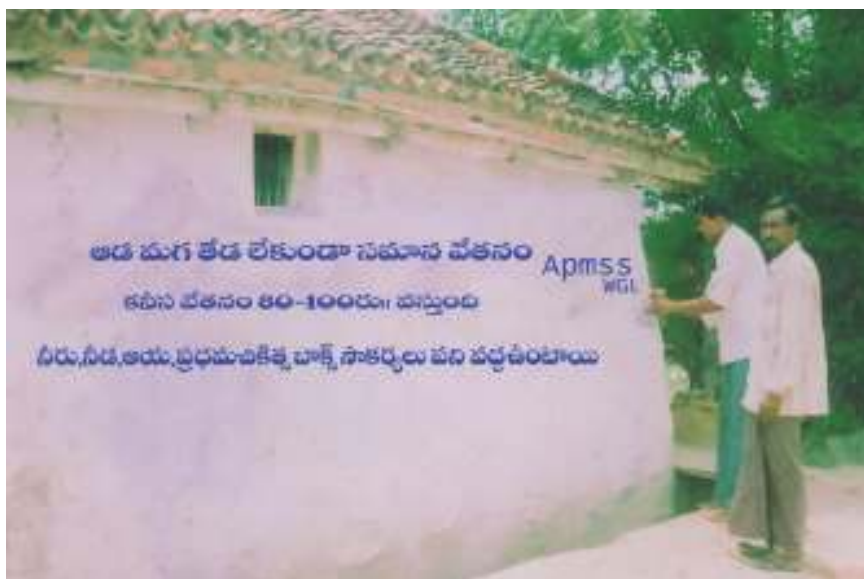
Further, partner organisations have suggested that the mate be made responsible for arranging worksite facilities such as shade, medicines, for which he/she will get additional Rs.20/- (@Rs.1 X No. of wage seekers) for the additional responsibility. The GO in this regard is yet to be released. AP Govt. is also thinking of arranging mineral water @5 litres per person, directly delivered at worksite by the supplier, while the wage labour engaged exclusively for drinking water will take the responsibility to provide water to the wage seekers working at site.

Besides worksite facilities, organisations have also supported the wage seekers in accessing medical facilities/insurance entitled to them. APMSS in Poreddypalli village in Karimnagar district volunteered to do all the paper work, and facilitated the Panchayat and SHG resolutions for accessing exgratia payment of Rs 50,000 to the daughter of a woman wage seeker-cum-SHG member who had died at an MGNREGA worksite. Earlier, local officials had denied the pay out for want of a post-mortem report. After rigorous follow up from mandal to state level by APMSS, the government issued orders for payment based on the resolution of Panchayat in the absence of a post-mortem report. Now this order applies to whole of Andhra Pradesh. This is one classical example of institutionalising the solutions based on the problems/issues identified in the working villages.

Timely payment of wages and wage rates

Ensuring timely wages is a major challenge in MGNREGA. More often than not, the non-availability of funds, chronic delays in issuing pay order to post offices/banks, delay in submission of muster rolls and procedural delays by the post office /banks etc stand between the worker and the final payment, a dilemma that field level organisations cannot resolve on their own. However, the single biggest hurdle in the whole cycle is the process of converting the pay order into cash, from the last mile from the mandal office to post office.

Thanks to the campaigns organised by Consortium partners, wage seekers are aware about their entitlements with respect to payments in the project villages. Organisations are following up instances of delayed payments on a case-by-case basis. Instances of delayed payments were regularly brought to the notice of mandal, district and state administrations demanding appropriate action. Whenever the payments are delayed, organisations support the wage seekers and



Wall writings showing the entitlements of the workers, Mogullapally mandal, Warangal district, AP, APMSS

mandal committee to take up the issue with mandal officials. Through constant vigilance and follow up the local officials were constantly put under pressure to ensure payments in time. This was made possible by putting up a mechanism in the form of regular interaction of wage labour groups and their leadership with the local functionaries/officials.

With the support of APMSS, wage seekers in Warangal district went on a dharna at mandal office protesting delayed payments. The issue was also brought to the notice of the district level project director. In one instance in Prakasam district, wage seekers boycotted the works as the previous payments had been delayed.

To make the payment system more effective and timely, and also to overcome the conundrum of deficit funds in some mandals and excess funds in others, AP state is operationalising Central Fund Management System (CFMS) using IT (G.O.Ms.No.406 of PR&RD (RD.II) Dept, Dt 29.12.2009). The state is operating central accounts in six nodal banks at Hyderabad and the funds are being transferred through Electronic Fund Management System (EFMS) to the nodal banks and thereafter to mandals networked with the Central Server (MGNREGA server). As of now this system is running smoothly and has addressed the issue of funds availability.

Post offices are the existing wage disbursement centres in many parts of Andhra Pradesh including the project area except Warangal and a few project villages in Karimnagar district. In Warangal and a few project villages in Karimnagar district, the payment is made through Biometric Smart Card system. This is expected to ensure weekly payments and will also help eliminate corruption and benami payments. Wage seekers will also be getting exact amount as the system doesn't allow cuts in wages as observed in the case of post office payment system. The process of scaling up of the smart card system in the entire state is in progress. There are still delays in the smart card payment system as it is in the initial stages of operationalisation. Delayed payments have, however, been noticed in the case of non-card members. The issue is taken to district level project director and non-card members will be getting the smart cards shortly. Timely payments would soon be an enduring reality with the introduction of Central Fund Management System coupled with smart card payments. However, this cannot be substitute for constant local action by the workers.

Grievance redressal, transparency and accountability systems

Institutionalised processes of social audit, a 24 X 7 call centre, vigilance cells, district level ombudsmen and an Andhra Pradesh NGO Alliance for MGNREGA (APNA) are the important mechanisms that the state rural development department have set up to address grievances and to ensure transparency and accountability in the implementation of MGNREGA. However, most of these measures are often focussed on implementation of decisions taken at the department level or the implementation of the operational aspects of the Act. Transparency and accountability and greater participation of the workers in decision-making are areas that still need to be worked upon. For instance, decisions related to application-receipt based work provision, unemployment allowance, choice of works to be taken up, mode of payment etc., are still centralised.

All the consortium partners in AP are partners in APNA and are engaging with MGNREGA at ground level besides providing feedback to the department to make necessary modifications in the system through appropriate policy interventions.

In the project villages, the partner organisations are encouraging the workers to extensively use the toll free helpline number (15532) to register their complaints/field level problems. This process helped in making the workers directly represent the issues and own up the process. Organisations are only providing follow up support to these complaints. Several issues related to implementation processes like opening up of work within time, delay in payments, lack of worksite facilities, complaints about field level functionaries etc., are being reported through this number/system.

AP state has established a society named as 'Society for Social Audit, Accountability & Transparency (SSAAT)' exclusively for conducting social audits on MGNREGA in villages. The SSAAT undertakes social audit in each village once in 6 months with the support of State level Resource Persons (SRPs) and District level Resource Persons (DRPs). Trained wage seekers as Village Social Activists (VSA) are also part of the social audit team. The reports of the audit will be read out in the village and also at mandal level public hearings. The district project directors or their nominees also attend the mandal public hearing. Decisions will be taken on the spot against the defaulters. A State Vigilance Officer and a District Vigilance Officer in the each district were also appointed for the follow up of the recommendations and decisions taken in the public hearing.

Partner organisations are helping the social audit team for smooth conduct of social audit process by participating in the process at the village level, mobilising the wage seekers for open forums, creating awareness among the wage seekers and ensuring penalty to the culprits. In several cases, with the involvement of consortium partners, misappropriated money was also returned back to the government. In some instances, criminal cases were also booked against culprits. In the project villages it was noticed that wage seekers (even women wage seekers also) are empowered to fight with the implementing agency for their entitlements.

In Kanagal mandal in Nalgonda district no action was taken against erring persons and the money was not recovered, as mentioned in the social audit report. The APMSS team in Nalgonda approached Lok adalat for follow up action on the social audit findings. After several rounds of hearings and a Lok adalat order, officials had to take action and finally recovered Rs 92,550 against a claim for Rs 36,60,458. However, the mate and field assistants were dismissed from service.

Wage seekers in the Nalgonda district, with the support of APMSS-Nalgonda, took to the streets seeking reimbursement of their long pending medical expenses. With the help of RTI, they obtained the list of wage seekers who received medical expenses. Names of the non-genuine members were highlighted and the list was pasted on the walls of Panchayat office. With this,



Social audit mandal public hearing, Kanagal, Nalgonda - APMSS



Demonstration to lift the cap of 100 days of work, Kadiri, Anantapur, AP



Dharna organised by Kadiri mandal federation and Memorandum submitted to MPDO and MPP

wage seekers in Dorepalli (14 members), Darveshapuram (12 members), Parvatagiri (3 members) and Charlagauvraram (4 members) villages of Nalgonda district managed to secure their reimbursements to the tune of Rs 48,488.

To maintain transparency in the system and to make the information open to public, partner organisations are insisting on maintaining various documents such as job card registers, work register, property register, complaint register, complaint follow up register, work identified register etc. at the local Panchayat office. Consortium organisations are facilitating Panchayat officials in getting the registers and updating the information. Training in this regard has been provided to the Panchayat functionaries and wage labour group leaders/mandal committees. To sustain this process of vigilance the wage labour village and mandal committees are formed and are being strengthened.

Issues and challenges in making the grievance redressal mechanism effective

- Sustaining institutions such as wage labour groups, village and mandal committees as well as maintaining empowered interface with the implementation machinery
- Scope for increasing awareness on 24X7 call centre, social audit procedures etc. among the wage seekers
- Village level politics and interference in smooth conduct of social audit in making recover-

ies and penalising culprits.

- Non-cooperation from Mandal and Panchayat level functionaries in providing required information and registers.
- Difficult to sustain the participation of Wage seekers in the public hearings as long as they are afraid of being witness in fraud cases or when they are not sure of punitive action by the government.
- At times, open forums/public hearings were not conducted or were inordinately delayed, and the reports were not made available for public

Some of the reasons identified for frequent mistakes other than corruption in implementation of MGNREGA are: insufficient deployment of staff and too much work load on staff which is also reflected in poor maintenance of registers and records at mandal office. Further, excessive computerisation is also making the implementation process entirely dependent on computers, delaying the works and leading to excessive centralisation.

Overall efforts and results in securing entitlements

The key activities taken up by the organisations that contributed to the above outcomes are,

- Organising the workers into wage labour groups and facilitating formation of village and mandal level committees and providing them platforms to regularly interface with the implementation machinery. A total of 12,414 wage seekers in 31 project villages were organised in to 635 wage labour groups (20 members in each group) of which more than 50% belong to SC/ST households, while representing 1:1.3 male to female ratio in the groups (Table 2.3).
- Facilitating regular mandal level interface meetings between the job card holders' representatives and the mandal administration as done in Kadiri mandal of Anantapur by REDS.
- Evolving local Community Resource Persons/leadership from the job card holders to engage with the implementation machinery and assert their rights. Besides, 817 Community Resource Persons (Male 448 and Female 369) from 44 project villages were trained to engage with the implementation machinery and assert the rights of workers under MGNREGA (Table 2.4).
- Organising exposure visits to other villages and to field areas of other partners as well as to other states like Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat etc.
- Providing training to Panchayat and mandal level committee members and facilitating regular meetings.
- Conducting Gram Sabha meetings, particularly in adivasi villages in the Seethampet mandal of Srikakulam, to facilitate review and promote local action.
- Participating in social audit exercise, mandal, district and state level interface meetings.

Through these activities, the regular grievances and problems in the implementation of the Act were addressed to a large extent. As part of mandal campaign covering all the villages in the mandal (particularly non-project villages) the wage labour group leaders of project villages toured other villages in the mandal, interacted with the wage seekers in those villages. This helped in motivating the wage seekers of the non-project villages and link up with the mandal EGS committees were formed. This also helped the committee members in the project

villages see by themselves the difference/ impact the constant accompaniment can bring. In addition, the implementation issues identified in the process were brought to the notice of the mandal level administration to solve.

A door-to-door campaign was also done by EFFORT organisation in Prakasam district to ensure increased participation of community in MGNREGA as participation of SC/STs was low in those villages.

Table 2.3: Details of the Wage Labour Groups formed under MGNREGA

District	No. of Panchayats	No. of wage labour groups formed	Caste-wise break-up of labour group members				Total no. of members covered	Gender-wise break-up of labour group members	
			SC	ST	BC	OC		Male	Female
APMSS-N	4	105	650	135	1292	23	2100	932	1168
Pilupu-Nalgonda	6	37	293	210	882	26	1411	464	247
APMSS-Karimnagar	5	21	260	97	3	2	362	161	201
APMSS- Warangal	5	205	1160	0	2500	440	4100	1760	2340
EFFORTS-Prakasam	10	203	1360	60	1220	1420	4060	1790	2270
ARTS-Srikakulam	3	48	0	732	0	0	732	299	433
REDS- Anantapur	4	53	320	80	360	300	1060	454	606
TOTAL	37	672	4043	1314	6257	2211	13825	5860	7965

Table 2.4: Community Resource Persons Developed by the Organisations

Organisation/District	No. of Villages Covered	Community Resource Persons developed by partner organisations								Total CRPs
		Male				Female				
		SC	ST	BC	OC	SC	ST	BC	OC	
APMSS-Nalgonda	4	14	3	12	0	12	2	9	0	52
Pilupu- Nalgonda	8	10	0	25	4	7	1	24	4	75
APMSS- Karimnagar	9	21	5	13	2	60	15	17	2	135
APMSS- Warangal	5	49	0	59	7	22	0	30	4	171
EFFORTS - Prakasam	10	13	0	8	5	0	0	0	0	26
ARTS- Srikakulam	3	0	12	0	0	0	16	0	0	28
REDS Anantapur	5	52	35	55	44	36	32	44	32	330
Total	44	159	55	172	62	137	66	124	42	817

Participatory Planning and Implementation of Works

The planning process, particularly identification of works, has been changing in the state, with the government constantly trying to address the challenges and learnings emanating from the field every year. Apart from a yearly planning process that is generally done during the months of October-December, there was the provision earlier to identify and incorporate new works throughout the year. But in the last two years, this aspect has been minimised and the works are largely limited to the shelf of works identified during the planning process.

Project mode planning

After around 2-3 years of implementation of MGNREGA, the government realised that

large number of works that had begun were yet to be completed and that works in a given village are spread out lacking any significant impact. Based on this feedback the government initiated the concept of project mode planning in later part of 2008 for the year 2009-10. As part of this, various related individual works are clubbed into different projects and they are planned, sanctioned and implemented as individual projects. These projects are taken up on an area-based approach: each project covers around 100 acres particularly of SC/ST communities, and all the works/activities in the project are completed first in that particular location before moving to the next location. This approach tried to address the development needs of an area comprehensively. This process was followed for one year. Along with this, works outside the project mode were also taken up as per need.

Land inventory

For 2011-12, the planning process was initiated in October 2010. This year's planning process was based on a land inventory exercise, particularly of SC and ST communities. As part of this, ownership, cultivation and development status of lands of all the households in the villages are recorded. Based on this exercise works are identified for the development of all the lands. SC/ST lands are given the first priority, followed by those of small and marginal farmers from all communities. Through this exercise it is expected that works sufficient to take up for around two years will be identified. The works thus identified will be placed in the Gram Sabha for formal approval.

Another aspect of identifying and implementation of works that provides for better planning and coordination is group-based approach. Works related to the lands of all the members of each workers group of upto 20 workers (Shrama Sakthi Sanghas- SSS) or other works, if they don't have lands or there are no works in their lands, are identified and are allocated to the group as a whole, so that a one-time allocation of work in a year will be done. The members of the group as per their convenience can take up work at any point of time in the year and can complete it.

Consortium partners facilitated the government in identification of households and formation of groups, building their capacities with respect to EGS entitlements and procedures, facilitated in identification and planning of works.

The key activities taken up by consortium partners for building participatory planning and implementation of works are:

- Conducting regular wage labour group meetings at the village level.
- Supporting Wage Labour Groups in identifying the works in their lands and ensuring their participation, particularly in project mode planning and land inventory processes.
- Participating in the land inventory process and ensuring that the actual status of the lands of the SC/ST are taken and are included for development
- Mobilising wage seekers to participate in Gram Sabha and involving them in identification of works; follow-up with the mandal administration for the implementation of works identified.
- Training wage labour groups on record maintenance at Panchayat level, updating of records.
- Training wage labour groups on sustainable agricultural practices and other household-level income generating activities such as poultry, dairy, and pisciculture.
- Bringing to the notice of mandal/district and state level administration the issues related

to violation of transparent implementation process.

- Encouraging job-card holders to use the toll-free compliant number in voicing their complaints/grievances.

The mandal and village EGS committees of wage seekers formed in the project areas offered good support in planning of works in their respective Panchayats, awareness generation on existing and new programmes/schemes/ GOs/Circulars under MGNREGA, mobilising wage seekers to participate in Gram Sabha/planning meetings etc. The partner organisations have achieved significant success in identification of works through participatory planning. From 2007-08 to 2009-10, they have identified 1,520 works worth Rs 18.90 crore through wage labour groups particularly of small and marginal farmers (Table 2.5). Out of that, the partner organisations could ensure completion of 749 works worth Rs 9.30 crore, and around 275 works worth Rs 6.45 crore are under progress. The works are mostly related to resource development and agriculture that include land preparation, land development, silt application, soil and moisture conservation activities, water harvesting structures like check dam, percolation tank, forest conservation, works to conserve and develop commons etc.



MPT works in CPR blocks,
Anantapur, REDS



CPR block, Anantapur, REDS

Table 2.5: Works (facilitated by organisations) completion status from 2007-08 to 2009-10

Organisation/ District	Mandal	Total Works Identified		In Progress		Completed	
		No.	Value (In lakhs)	No.	Value (In lakhs)	No.	Value (In lakhs)
REDS/ Ananthapur	Kadiri	1056	723.20	138	102.13	515	361.02
EFFORT/ Prakasam	Tarlupadu	163	529.00	43	183	102	414.56
PILUPU/ Nalgonda	Thurkapally	26	39.65	4	7.45	19	21.01
ARTS/ Srikakulam	Seethampeta	120	128.02	3	4.99	88	97.58
APMSS/ Warangal	Mogullapally	67	334.44	54	297.89	1	1.73
APMSS/ Nalgonda	Kanagal	86	136.42	33	49.09	24	34.9
Total		1518	1890.7	275	644.55	749	9308

Priority and development of resources of the poor

More than 8,500 acres were developed of which SC/ST lands account for more than 50% (Table 2.6). The development of fallow or less productive assigned lands of SC/ST into productive land was the priority for the consortium partner organisations who facilitated the process of identifying and developing assigned lands of the poor. There is a significant increase in the percentage of assigned lands brought into cultivation. This is evident from the sample data from the base line in the selected villages (Table -7). Of the selected households (mostly SC and ST), the total percentage of cultivated land in 2007 is around 13% where as it has increased to around 60% by 2010. Land development works such as jungle clearance, deep ploughing, land leveling, tank silt application, contour trenching, pebble bunding, farm bunding, digging of farm ponds, compost pits etc were taken up in these lands to make them productive.



Farm bunding in Ananatapur district, REDS



A wage seeker looking at a poster on MGNREGA entitlements at Kangal, Nalgonda (APMSS)



Works to renovate tank and excavation of silt, Mogullapally mandal, Warangal, APMSS

Table 2.6: Details of beneficiaries of the completed works facilitated by the organisations in the working villages:

Organisation/District	No of beneficiaries				Acres			
	SC	ST	BC	OC	SC	ST	BC	OC
APMSS, Nalgonda	567	161	680	4	654	197	873.5	4.5
REDS, Anantapur	442	613	1920	206	1148	270	497.5	475
EFFORT, Prakasam	446	70	580	450	626	20	661	597
ARTS, Srikakulam	--	2152	--	--	--	803	--	--
APMSS-Karimnagar	113	33	80	--	186	55	77	16
PILUPU, Nalgonda	79	60	201	23	165.5	101.2	345.4	29
APMSS, Warangal	187	--	343	52	290.28	--	584.55	88.65
Total	1834	3089	3804	735	3069.78	1446.2	3038.95	1210.15

Table 2.7: Change in the status of assigned lands of SC/ST farmers as compared to the base line sample

Organisation/District	No.of villages	Total sample HHs (in Acres)			Cultivation status in 2007	Cultivation status in 2010
		SC	ST	BC		
APMSS, Nalgonda	4	18	--	--	0	33.95
REDS, Anantapur	9	670	40	--	0	1345
EFFORT, Prakasam	1	--	262	--	86	284.64
ARTS, Srikakulam	4	140	10	--	20	220
APMSS, Karimnagar	2	39	27	5	72.5	88
PILUPU, Nalgonda	4	62	69	--	110.54	350.44
APMSS, Warangal	1	32	--	--	0	24
Total	25	961	408	5	289.04	2346.03

Issues /problems in planning and implementation of works

- More often than not, farmers' preferences are neglected and priorities are fixed at the state level. In some cases, the organisations managed to revise the list of works to include the most useful works especially in private lands in consultation with land owners.
- In most cases while calculating the wages for MI tank works, lead and lift aspects were not considered leading to fraud and sub-optimal wage to wage seekers. Organisations took special interest in such cases and helped provide appropriate wage rate to wage seekers.
- Organisations took special care to ensure quality in works especially desilting works as reported by APMSS, Warangal.
- Organisations also ensured proper measurements for completed works for calculating the wages. With the support of organisations and mandal EGS committee, went on public action programmes to ensure appropriate wages. The committee also raised such issues in EGS meetings at mandal level and also taking the issues to district Project Director.
- In some cases, works completed were not closed formally as per the procedure. Hence, the lists of such completed works are shown in the 'works in progress list' in AP MGNREGA web site leading to confusion.

Demonstrating innovations and pilots

The partner organisations have mostly initiated pilots related to sustainable agriculture



Fish farming in thier tanks, Srikakulam district, ARTS



NREGS workers learning about inland fisheries work taken up under NREGS in Nalgonda

interventions and livelihood promotion through resource use apart from worksite facilities and tool banks in a few villages. In the last year, all the 7 partner organisations together facilitated creation and filling of 435 compost pits, intercropping in around 850 acres, vegetable cultivation in around 150 acres, green manuring in around 180 acres and fisheries in 10 tanks. Some of the organisations (PILPUPU and APMSS) have promoted backyard poultry units in some of the villages on an experimental basis.

All the above interventions were taken up as part of improving the farming systems of small and marginal farmers who also double up as wage seekers, as well as to enhance additional livelihood opportunities and effectively use the increased wage income from MGNREGA. Several meetings and training programmes were conducted on sustainable agriculture practices, and partners also organised exposure visits and launched public demonstrations. Through these demonstrations and trainings, farmers were motivated and are now being linked with the respective departments and schemes, particularly agriculture department, Krishi Vignan Kendras. Convergence meetings with respective departments were facilitated to dovetail the benefits of the departmental schemes to farmers/entrepreneurs.

REDS, Ananthapur, has demonstrated two pilot models: ‘Tool Bank’ managed by local committee in Bathala pally village, and providing mid-day meals to wage labourers at the worksite in Godduvalagal village in Gandlapenta mandal. These two pilots were successful in the sense that they enhanced the participation in MGNREGA and improved the working conditions

Internal crops, Tarlupadu, EFO



Promoting kitchen gardens, Srikakulam, ARTS





Horticulture, Koheda, Karimnagar, APMSS

of the wage seekers. The outcome of these pilots was shared with the district and state administration and is being considered for scale up.

APMSS in Vemulapalli village in Warangal district facilitated a tank renovation work under

MGNREGA. The EGS works such as desilting, application of silt to SC/ST poor people's land, bund strengthening, revetment, construction of feeder channels and other earthen works resulted in series of benefits such as increased water storage capacity of the tank, brought additional area under cultivation in tank ayacut, and the silt incorporated in the soil improved soil health and yields. The deepening of the tanks also helped in providing drinking water for animals and birds. Besides, tank renovation works also helped 80 fishermen families to take up fish production on their own, avoiding leasing out the tank to contractors. APMSS Warangal organised exposure visit to KVK for training on improved fish production to the community. The fishermen families earned Rs 87,000/- this year on their own, compared to Rs 400-500 in the last year through leasing out the tank to contractor.

Convergence

In Andhra Pradesh, convergence of MGNREGA with various departments/ programmes is put in place through formal agreements with various line departments. On the one hand it can be seen as an effective tool to enhance work quality and to ensure sustainability of the assets developed in the lands of rural poor. Some programmes currently being implemented in state are convergence of MGNREGA with Indira Kranti Patham (IKP) of Rural Development department through Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture (CMSA) to promote sustainable agricultural practices; with Horticulture Department to promote dry land horticulture in the land of the poor and marginalised to obtain sustainable income for longer periods; with Minor Irrigation (MI) tanks for renovation of tanks to bring them back to life; with the forest department to promote forest plantations in the lands given to community under the Record of Forest Rights (RoFR) Act to get sustained income from NTFP and to enhance tree coverage; and with Panchayat Raj Department to provide connectivity to all SC/ST habitations through all weather roads under the execution of Gram Panchayat. With one or two exceptions, these convergence programmes/projects are in being implemented in the project villages.

Partner organisation are supporting the EGS functionaries in the smooth implementation of such programmes, right from the identification of beneficiaries, orientation on programme,

planning and implementation and assuring transparency of works.

Issues in implementation of convergence programmes

- Mandal EGS committee with the support of REDS in Anantapur district helped the implementation agency in orientation and awareness on CMSA project. However, some of the works such as dead furrows and trenching around the fields were not acceptable to the small farmers as part of the land may go waste due to trenching and furrowing. Hence, this programme was abandoned and a few other works are being incorporated in regular EGS work list as advocated by REDS organisation through a study conducted in project area in Anantapur.
- Dry land horticulture programme is successful only when there is assured water supply. In a majority of the project villages the EGS functionaries are not showing any interest in opening up of the scheme as reported by APMSS, Warangal. Further, timely supply of seedlings and other inputs is a problem. Delays in reimbursement of bills with respect to ploughing, purchasing of seedlings, fertilizers etc have also been noticed. Neither Field Assistants (Gram Rozgar Sevak) nor the farmers are aware of all the provisions (subsidies/ grants) of the scheme and procedures for reimbursement of the expenditure to the farmer. Lack of technical persons plagues supervision of plantations.
- As far as MI tank renovations programme is concerned, wages were not paid according to wage rate considering lead and lift. Further, in some case due to lack of technical knowledge, the fertile silt is deposited on the tank bund instead of applying it to soil.
- The main hurdles in road works are political interference and poor quality of roads built. In Warangal CC road were laid in place of earthen roads violating the MGNREGA norms leading to huge frauds. APMSS Warangal brought this issue to the notice of district officials.
- There is a problem of access to information and ensuring transparency and accountability in the programmes of convergence as several nodal points are created and the information is not available at one place. Earlier all the information and accountability was with Programme officer at mandal level. Now there are several nodal points at mandal, cluster or division level as components are outsourced to various departments. Now the workers have to approach several departments at different places for any requisition or grievances.



Convergence meeting on May Day, Anantapur, REDS

Building Partnerships and Engaging with the Implementation Machinery (Government)

Models of engagement of partner organisations with the local government units

Two models of engagement with the implementation machinery were practiced in the last



A labour committee meeting in progress at Koheda, Karimnagar (APMSS)

one year by the consortium members. The underlying principle in these two forms is that the primary responsibility of implementation of the scheme lies with the government but the job-card holders can only do the proper enforcement of the Act by actively exercising their rights provided in the Act. Increasing the interaction between the job-card holders and the implementation machinery can bring these two together. The partner organisations made efforts to build and strengthen those interactive platforms.

The first one is as part of an MoU with the rural development department that was in force from April 09 to February 2010. As part of this the partner organisations were attending weekly review meetings (mostly on Wednesday) of the Mandal officials (Programme Officer) with all the village functionaries (Field assistants, Technical assistants). These platforms helped the partner organisations to regularly bring the field level issues to the notice of the officials and put pressure to resolve those issues locally. As per the MoU these mandal level meetings were supposed to be followed up with District and State level monthly review meetings, but were not operationalised effectively. However, the partner organisations shared the field level problems occasionally with the state level officials, though the process was not institutionalised completely.

The second model was in the form of APNA (Andhra Pradesh NGO Alliance), which came into force from February, 2010. Rural development department issued an order (G.O.No.80) giving the collaboration between the NGOs and the government an institutional shape in the form of APNA. Many more NGOs and their forums were also made part of this GO, which earlier were not part of the MOU. All the consortium members have become part of APNA. This has become an effective forum to discuss the issues of implementation and policy advocacy as the interface meetings at mandal, district and state level are being conducted regularly.

As part of this partnership, the organisations have been asked to form wage labour groups (Shrama Shakti Sanghas), help capacity building of the wage seekers, enabling them to access the wage-entitlements as well as engage with the implementation systems and provide feedback to the department. All the partner organisations are actively participating in the monthly mandal and district review forums and have been raising issues emerging from time to time with respect to implementation of MGNREGA. Some of the organisations are also playing a key role in the state-level sharing forums through monthly meetings/workshops/seminars to share and upscale the learning's/experiences generated at the field level.

The consortium partners are able to effectively use these forums because of their years of field level engagement and creation of wage labour institutions at the ground level in the form of wage labour groups, village and mandal EGS committees and Community Resource Persons (CRPs) developed in the project villages.

Through these interventions and developments, the role of the partner organisations will be limited in the future to providing backup support to the labour group/committee

leadership and CRPs in securing basic entitlements of MGNREGA and in engaging with local administration.

Policy advocacy mode adopted by the member organisations

Experiences and challenges from the field level engagement, sharing and reflection meetings among the partners and periodical rapid assessments on selected topics formed the basis for policy advocacy for the consortium. Regular feedback on the implementation of the scheme is provided to rural development officials (Principal Secretary, Commissioner Rural Development and Director, MGNREGA) through regular meetings as part of and outside the APNA forum.

Through the above means the partners have contributed to the changes in implementation arrangements as well as policy decisions with respect to

- Institutionalising group approach and work application and receipt process (G.O No. 240)
- Improvement of worksite facilities, provision of maid and linkage with Anganwadi centres (Memo No. 753/PM(C)/EGS/2010)
- Reality check and corrective measures related to Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture project taken up by the Department through Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty. REDS had played an active role in highlighting field level problems like undermining the farmer's opinion in taking up certain works like furrows etc., for promoting non-chemical farming etc., by extensive field study.
- Measures to enhance participation of workers with disability (Circular No. EGS/PM(C)/2010 dated 30.4.2010)
- Continuous highlighting of the low level of participation of SC/ST workers in the programme as well as low level of development of lands of SC/ST communities in the meetings and through consortium newsletters. Thanks to this effort, the rural development department has taken up inventory of SC/ST lands in the entire state to include and saturate their development through MGNREGA.
- Involvement in the preparation of training modules

WASSAN has also brought out a handbook for field level practitioners based on the experiences of partner organisations in organising communities and their engagement with the implementation systems of MGNREGA. This was widely circulated among all the organisations that are part of APNA. As part of sharing and advocacy, WASSAN

Mandal interface meeting with officials at Kangal, Nalgonda (APMSS)



has also published five issues of news letter 'Upadhi Maa Hakku' which was shared widely for dissemination of the observations, experiences, learnings as well as successful case examples generated through the collective work of the consortium members.

The social capital built in the last three years in the form of wage labour groups can provide leadership and organisational basis for agriculture, which in the long run can help in securing entitlements under the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act as well as in engaging for land rights apart from MGNREGA.

Challenges

- One of the major challenges here is to ensure that the community organisation at the ground level is not disturbed with the changing ideas/practices of the administration with regard to the organising wage seekers. This is a negative fallout of institutionalisation.
- Another important aspect/challenge that could not be effectively addressed at the policy level is the contrasting demands of wage labourers and farmers on stopping works during monsoon season or linking up MGNREGA with agriculture works.

Further, massive awareness programmes such as door-to-door campaigns, taking up MGNREGA issues in SHG meetings, involving wage seekers and Community Resource Persons in awareness creation campaigns, arranging exposure visits to model works done under MGNREGA, utilising the mass media, organising MGNREGA Day to share the experiences among the wage seekers etc would result in more and more community participation in MGNREGA works. As of now there is no specific effort by the government other than advertising through TV for publicising MGNREGA entitlements. Such efforts may not be enough to benefit the masses, especially those living in the remote villages.

Overall process/policy changes

The wage labour group-based implementation processes and the formation and strengthening of village and mandal EGS committees adopted by the consortium partners played a key role in enhancing community participation. These committees meet once in a month to discuss the issues of MGNREGA and represent them to the village, mandal and district offices. This group-based work approach adopted by the consortium partners is institutionalised in the state now, as AP Rural Development department has broadly adopted this approach through GO MS No. 339 and GO No. 240. These orders envisage formation of wage labour groups of 20 members, each organised into Fixed Labour Groups, now termed as "Shrama Shakti Sanghalu (SSS)". Activities such as conducting monthly group meetings, taking formal written work application and issue of receipt in the group meeting itself by the field assistant, allocation of work to the members as a group, priority to development of the lands of the group members and taking any issues, complaints raised by the members in the group meetings now onwards will be followed by MGNREGA programme personnel.

Table 2.8 Impact of MGNREGA on distress migration

Org./ District	Name of Village	Total No. of Migrating HH	Migration status in 2005 (before MGNREGA)		Migration status in 2010 (After MGNREGA)			
			% of HH on seasonal migration (for few months)	% of HH on continuous migration (cont. for 1 Year)	% HH completely Stopped	% HH Partially stopped (going for few months)	%HH still continuing (cont. for 1 Year)	% of HH participating in MGNREGA
APMSS-Warangal	Vemulapally	68	62	38	32	62	6	94
APMSS-Karimnagar	Chandranayakthanda	15	33	67	66.7	26.7	6.6	73
APMSS-Nalgonda	Dharveshpuram	7	100	0	100	0	0	100
Pilupu - Nalgonda	Turkapalli	19	63	37	32	58	11	74
Efforts-Prakasham	Nathanampalli	72	100	0	93	7	0	100
Arts-Srikakulam	Devanapuram	12	50	50	50	0	50	50
REDS-Anantapur	K.N.Palyam	13	77	23	77	0	23	77

A. Migration status in 2005 (before MGNREGA)

- In the year 2005 (before MGNREGA), of the total 206 traditional migrating households in 7 study villages put together, 75% households used to migrate seasonally for a few months in a year, while 25% households were on migration continuously for around a year at a stretch. Villages in Karimnagar and Srikakulam districts were the exception where a large percentage of households (67% and 50%, respectively) were migrating continuously for more than 12 months.
- In most cases of continuous migrating households, the head of the family (generally male) used to migrate leaving behind the other family members in the village. While in seasonally migrating HHs, women members and children also accompanied male members.
- From the interactions it was understood that, in most cases, households possessing cultivable lands were migrating seasonally for 4-6 month in a year during the non-agricultural season.
- Poor quality of rainfed lands in the village and low water availability provide scope for only single crop thereby forcing the households to migrate for rest of the months in the year.

B. Migration status in 2010

- MGNREGA implementation in the village showed a good impact on migrating households. By 2010, 62% of earlier migrating households of the selected villages had completely stopped migration.
- Seasonal migration has come down from 75% in 2005 (before MGNREGA) to 30% in 2010.
- Continuous migration has also come down from 25% in 2005 (before MGNREGA) to 8% in 2010.
- The drastic reduction in number of migrating households by 2010 can be mainly attributed to implementation of MGNREGA in the village, as it is also supported by the fact that 89%

traditional migrating households are participating in MGNREGA. Across the study villages, household participation in MGNREGA is above 70%, the sample village in Srikakulam being an exception with 50% participation. The households have expressed the fear that MGNREGA could be scrapped after a certain time period, like it usually happens with all government programmes. Moreover, frequently delayed payments are also discouraging the households to stop migration and take up work under MGNREGA.

Reasons, factors shared by the members in stopping migration

- A certain upgradation of social status/dignity of working in cities plus better opportunities for educating children in urban areas are the two reasons exclusively mentioned by households who own land but ended up migrating in 2005. Land-owning households that stopped migrating by 2010 said they could stay back because their erstwhile fallow lands had turned productive.
- MGNREGA income helped many landless households to start small enterprises, which helped them stop migrating.
- A large percentage of households said they chose to migrate in 2005 because of lack of employment opportunities in the villages, whereas cities they shifted to offered jobs and higher wage rates.
- 71% of migrating households in 2005 pointed to dwindling agricultural works in the villages, while 43% cited lack of work during the non-agricultural season as reasons.
- Though the wage rates in MGNREGA are low compared to the wage rates in the cities, both landless and households with lands have completely stopped migration because MGNREGA work helped them to stay back with the family, as expressed by 86-100% households.
- 86% of the land-owning households said that their lands are being developed under MGNREGA, and hence they stopped migration.
- Increase in wage rate for agriculture works in competition with MGNREGA wage rate in the village has benefitted landless households and is the key reason for many to stop migrating. Around 71% of land-owning households also cited the same reason for stopping migration, which shows how important agriculture labour income is for even small and marginal farmers.
- More than 50% of households said that apart from MGNREGA work, the prevailing Rs.2/- kg rice scheme and pension scheme now available in the village and increased financial support (in the form of loans/ savings/ for income generating activities) now available from SHG are the reasons for stopping migration in 2010.
- Above 50% households have gone for other income generating activities such as small enterprises, livestock rearing etc with the support of earnings from MGNREGA. This also stands as a reason for decline in migration. However, unlike landless households, those with lands are utilising their MGNREGA earnings in the right direction and are reaping dual benefits. For landless households, the MGNREGA earnings help fulfil only the basic requirement of food and clothing.
- MGNREGA works provide succour during the non-agricultural season, and land improvement in rainfed terrains plus tank works have brought additional fallow lands in to production. All these have created additional agricultural employment to some extent. These could have helped a large number of households to stop migration in 2010.

2.2 RAJASTHAN

Civil society organisations and community-based organisations (CBOs) working in the Jaisamand catchment area in Rajasthan focus on the various aspects of natural resource management at the basin and sub-basin levels, and strive to bring a certain synergy between the various organisations working at the grassroots level. These organisations came together to form the “**Jaisamand Consortium**” and are working collectively for better implementation of MGNREGA in their respective project areas. The members of Jaisamand Consortium joined the National Consortium of Civil Society Organisations to leverage experiences from different agro climatic regions of the country. Besides the Jaisamand Consortium, the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) is also working on MGNREGA in Udaipur and Bhilwara districts of Rajasthan as an implementing agency.

Partner organisations of the Jaisamand Consortium are:

- Society for Promotion of Wastelands Development (SPWD)
- Prayatna Samiti (PS)
- Hanuman Van Vikas Samiti (HVVS)
- Jagran Jan Vikas Samiti (JJVS)

Society for Promotion of Wastelands Development (SPWD) started working in the Jaisamand catchment area since the 1990s with its partners Prayatna Samiti (PS) and Hanuman Van Vikas Samiti (HVVS). Initially the work was centred on Joint Forest Management and development of pastures but they slowly moved towards watershed development. SPWD provides backstopping support to all the three organisations on various aspects of Natural Resource Management and coordinates activities related to MGNREGA.

Prayatna Samiti (PS) has been active since 1989 in 60 villages, covering 18 Gram Panchayats of the Girwa, Bhinder and Salumber Tehsils of Udaipur District in Rajasthan. It works for the welfare of poor, tribal, and labour communities and has empowered them to assert their legal rights over forest land. PS is also working on various aspects of natural resource management like pasture land development, improvement of agricultural productivity, soil and water conservation activities, vermicomposting and collection of NTFP. It has also organised the local community into Self Help Groups (SHGs) and facilitated the group to collectively take up livestock rearing besides encouraging purchase of buffaloes, goats, and fodder.

Hanuman Van Vikas Samiti (HVVS) began its work in 1986 in Kargate village of Girwa Tehsil. In order to stem illegal tree felling by the resource-rich living adjacent to the forest area, the tribal community was organised into a Van Suraksha Samiti, which was later registered as Hanuman Van Vikas Samiti (HVVS). The organisation also promotes the SHG concept in its operating areas and has so far organised 208 women SHGs and their clusters. HVVS has also organised a Jan Sangharsh Manch with 35 CBOs to take up issues like right to education for children, pollution in the upper catchment of Jhamri due to the tailing dam of Jhamar Kotra Mines, issues pertaining to MGNREGA and labour issues related to mining activities. Apart from these, HVVS is also working on various issues of natural resource

management like pastureland development, watershed development, vermicomposting and joint forest management.

Jagran Jan Vikas Samiti (JJVS) has been working in the Jaisamand catchment area for the last 23 years. Its major work involves reviving the traditional health practices as practiced by the *Gunis* (traditional medicinal men), watershed development work and resistance against polluting factories in the upper catchment area of Jaisamand. JJVS has also developed Gram Kosh in every village and is exploring the possibility of federating them. It has so far organised 125 SHGs in Jaisamand Catchment area.

Samarthak Samiti is a resource agency for the Jaisamand Consortium, with expertise in the collection and marketing of NTFPs. The organisation is spread across the Udaipur Division comprising Udaipur, Dungarpur, Banswara, and Chittaurgarh and also in Sirohi and Jhalawar.

Area profile of the organisations

The Consortium started working on MGNREGA since 2007-08 under project mode. Its objectives include capacity-building of Panchayat raj institutions; motivating wage seekers to enroll all eligible jobseekers (resident as well as migrating population from the targeted GPs) and facilitate smooth and inclusive implementation of MGNREGA. The Consortium also strives to promote sustainable agriculture practices based on low external inputs with backward and forward linkages in place targeting markets that are higher up the value chain besides facilitating collective buying and selling of NTFP and animal products. The chosen villages and Panchayats come under the Jaisamand catchment area, and were hand-picked bearing in mind the need and possibility of integrating natural resource management with MGNREGA.

Table 2.9: Project area of Jaisamand Consortium

Organisation	Working Districts	Working Blocks	No. of GPs	No. of villages
Prayatna Samiti (PS)	Udaipur	Girwa	Phila	4
Hanuman Van Vikas Samiti (HVVS)	Udaipur	Girwa	Bhalo Ka Guda	4
Jagran Jan Vikas Samiti (JJVS)	Udaipur	Girwa	Vali	3

Foundation for Ecological Survey (FES): FES works in close coordination with the state government and demonstrates better landscape planning and management using MGNREGA to improve the implementation of this crucial programme.

Table 2.10: Project area of FES in Rajasthan

Districts	No. of Blocks	No. of GPs	Major communities	Working from
Bhilwara	2	10	SC, ST, OBC	2008-09
Udaipur	2	8	ST; includes Bhil & Garasiaya	2007

Status of Securing Basic Entitlements as Per the Act

Demand-based work (Work application, receipt and unemployment allowances etc.)

In its initial years, people looked at MGNREGA as a 'relief programme' and didn't

show much interest in owning it up. But thanks to the Jaisamand Consortium's continuous efforts over a period of time, they now perceive MGNREGA as a rights-based programme. Regular awareness campaigns by the consortium partners in the project villages to make them aware of their right to work and to organise them to demand work resulted in a rise in work applications by a factor of 2.74. Currently, in all the three Panchayats where the Jaisamand consortium is active, works are allocated within 15 days pre-empting the case for unemployment allowance altogether.

The efforts of the consortium partners are reflected in a gradual increase in the number of job cards issued. The consortium facilitated a separate job card to newly wedded couples so that they can also get 100 days of work. The number of households that worked under MGNREGA has also increased over the period of time; people who managed to land 100 days of MGNREGA work have also increased in the last two years. But the Panchayat elections in January-February 2010 affected MGNREGA works, cutting short the number of households who managed to get employment under MGNREGA in the year 2009-2010.

Table 2.11: MGNREGA Status in Project Panchayats

Particulars	Vali				Bhalo ka Guda				Phila			
	06-07*	07-08	08-09	09-10	06-07*	07-08	08-09	09-10	06-07*	07-08	08-09	09-10
No of HH received Job Cards	785	890	1117	1252	970	994	998	1018	753	801	830	898
No of HH worked under MGNREGA	398	551	701	804	334	517	587	647	463	475	609	510
% HH involved in MGNREGA works	50.70	61.91	62.76	64.22	34.43	52.01	58.82	63.56	61.48	59.30	73.37	56.79
No. of HH completed 100 days	32	272	275	174	105	228	266	22	72	86	146	113

*Figures in 2006-07 are before the launch of the project.

In the project area, participation of women is higher than that of their male counterparts. Gender wise participation in Phila Panchayat is presented in Table 2.12.

Table 2.12: On an average 75% of MGNREGA workers are women.

Village	Male Worker (%)	Women Worker (%)
Ratanpura	12.58	87.41
Jamun	33.30	66.69
Phila	31.28	68.71
Hathida	24.16	75.83

In the project area of Bhilwara district when FES initiated the implementation process, none of the villagers had job cards. FES facilitated the process of providing job cards from Panchayats, following due procedures. During the implementation process, the FES team organised and participated in awareness and campaigning programmes, padayatras and media workshops. The team also facilitated awareness programmes involving local administration,

MKSS, Panchayats, people's representatives, media, CBOs, village federations, civil society forums and other actors to strengthen and build better understanding on the effective implementation of MGNREGA in the district. This in turn helped to build pressure on the Panchayats and hasten the process of issuing job cards. Further, FES reported that the present system of MGNREGA implementation followed in villages by the gram Panchayats does not encourage the wage seeker to apply for work in advance. In general, when a work needs to be initiated, the mate collects interested wage seekers, helps them fill up the demand application forms and deposits the forms with the gram Panchayat. None of the applicants are given any receipts acknowledging their demand, thus insulating the Panchayat authorities from paying any unemployment allowance if there is a delay in opening the work.

However, in the FES Panchayats, the organisation discusses the sanctioned works in village meetings and informs the community about the type, volume and rates of work. FES also tries to chalk out a schedule/calendar detailing when these works can be initiated considering the season, demand of wage seekers, etc. Before initiating the works, wage-seekers are encouraged to submit the work applications in the village meeting. Supervisors in tribal villages are not technically proficient; therefore FES identifies potential candidates within the village and trains them on the different technical aspects of MGNREGA. Even the district administration is making strenuous attempts to address this by organising training for mates on a regular basis at the Block level.

Worksite facilities

Persistent follow-up with the Panchayat samitis helped in ensuring all the assured facilities in the consortium project Panchayats and FES operating Panchayats although there were numerous hurdles during the initial stages. In Phila Panchayat in Udaipur district worksite facilities were not provided when work began on a convergence project with PWD, because the Panchayat washed off its hands claiming that it was the responsibility of the PWD. Later the Phila wage seekers with the support of Prayatna Samiti pressurised Block officials to provide shade at worksite. In the Udaipur project villages of FES, facilities like tent for shade and drinking water are provided on worksite. In certain works being undertaken inside forestlands that have shadow trees, tents are not provided. Worksites in the project villages also employ a person dedicated to provide drinking water. Crèche facilities were provided once in a while but



Work site facilities, Rajasthan

they are not a fixture across all worksites.

In all the worksites in the three Panchayats under the Jaisamand Consortium, muster rolls, measurement tapes/instruments, MB books and trained mates are regular fixtures.

Timely payment of wages and wage rates etc.

Ensuring timely wage payment is a critical component of the programme. In 2008-09, payments were delayed up to two months, mainly on account of the delay in opening bank A/Cs besides delays in measurement of works. FES observed that although payments are being deposited in the accounts of the beneficiaries, on an average it takes a month (after the completed fortnight) for the payments to reach the bank accounts. The main reason for this is delay by concerned authorities responsible for completing measurement books, measuring the completed works and preparing and compiling payments (largely an HR issue). Further, a person seeking to withdraw an amount from his/her account needs to travel more than 20 kms (often spending upto Rs. 50/- for travelling) to places where the post offices or banks are located. Quite often, when the person reaches the designated place, the daily cash transaction limit is exhausted and he/she has to return the next working day. Difficulties also occur in streamlining the payment process, since wage seekers change after every fifteen days. Despite rebates in works (up to 50% during summer) the wage rate in most of the works being implemented by Panchayats (the only exception being Forest department and FES) never reaches the minimum daily wage rate of Rs. 100. Minimum wages in Jaisamand project area has increased from Rs. 88 in 2008-09 to Rs. 93 in 2009-10. This improvement in minimum wages could be due to the system of working in groups and strict monitoring of completion of works within deadlines and accurate measurement by trained mates.

The Jaisamand Consortium and FES team also helped wage seekers in opening bank accounts. Prayatna Samiti sensitised wage seekers on their entitlements with regard to payment systems under MGNREGA. The team is also generating awareness amongst the beneficiaries to benefit from the “MGNREGA Sanwad” initiative of the district administration to address issues related to payments. In most cases the payments are now made in time. In Bhalo Ka Guda Panchayat in the year 2009-10, 95% payments were made in time through Post Offices.

Grievance redressal mechanisms, transparency and accountability practices

The common grievances at Panchayat level are random cuts in wages, benami entries and use of JCB for heavy works that go against the grain of the Act. Gram Panchayats have miles to go to before they become fully transparent. But vigilance committees constituted at the institutional level monitor all the works under progress, ensuring proper record keeping and the timely processing of payments. Records and display boards have been made available on the site; display boards on wage payments and material consumption are discussed during village meetings facilitated by Panchayat representatives. Regular and periodic village level meetings are organised to discuss the issues. Ward or village level grievances are usually resolved in the village or Panchayat level meetings in the presence of Village Committee and general public. Major issues are discussed in the Gram Sabha. To maintain the transparency and accountability at village/Panchayat level, the responsibility of organising Gram Sabha, preparation of annual plans, completion of opened works, ensuring provision of regular employment to applicants besides implementation of other government programmes are entrusted to PRIs.



Work in progress

Introduction of bank/post office payment system has cut down payment-related malpractices to a large extent. The Rajasthan government has also initiated the process to appoint district level Lokpals to address all complaints related to MGNREGA, an initiative expected to make grievance redressal easier and faster. State- and district-level Sanvad are also being organised every month that are attended by government officials, NGOs, community representatives, media, etc. The state level Sanvad is being organised regularly for over a year and is attended by officials from the state secretariat and at times, even by the state rural development minister. The government is strictly monitoring the progress and implementation, and thanks to that the implementation process is now streamlined to a large extent. Further, to control corruption in road works, Jaisamand Consortium partners are striving to give priority to land development and water harvesting structures while preparing the shelf of projects, and road works are included only when they are deemed a necessity.

Overall strategy followed for Jaisamand Consortium in implementing the MGNREGA as demand-driven

After selecting the villages, the Jaisamand consortium launched the project in which all the partners, government officials, sarpanchs, ward members and villagers participated.

A base line survey of households who worked under MGNREGA for at least one day in year 2006-07 was conducted in all the project villages that factored in details about family size, gender issues, beneficiary identification, vulnerabilities, services availability and quality, information requirements, existing support groups, infrastructure available, scope for marketing of non-timber forest produce (NTFP) its processing and forward linkage. The data is analysed and computerised for future use in planning on the basis of available resources & infrastructure and also to monitor the progress. The data is being updated with latest developments/achievements time to time. The trends emerged from the MGNREGA works have also been monitored for the number of days of works, wage rates, asset creation on private and common lands, development of water resources and increase in water levels and the usability of the resources.

Awareness generated by door-to-door campaign by the consortium organisations in the project area has had its impact. The campaign also included workshops/trainings, regular interaction with the local administration, voluntary organisations, media and community

leaders. In the first year (2007-08), the process of raising awareness among the households was carried out on the basis of the MGNREGA manual provided by Samaj Pragati Sahayog, Bagli, Madhya Pradesh.

- The SHG platform was well utilised for generating awareness on basic entitlements among the members (women) and also as a platform for discussions regarding the issues of MGNREGA.
- The educated youth (men and women) from the workers group were trained to become mates and their services were for monitoring and measurement of wages.
- Consortium partners assisted wage seekers and banks/post offices in opening of accounts.
- Backstop support to the wage seekers in protestation for accessing the basic entitlements as per the provisions in the Act.

Suggestions to implement MGNREGA as demand driven:

- Increase the awareness among the community to plan, demand, execute and monitor works.
- The planning process at Gram Panchayat needs to be made more inclusive and participatory in nature.
- The payments to the beneficiaries should be delivered at their doorstep through an appointed bank agent or other people friendly institutional arrangements.
- Inter-departmental coordination is also required till the lowest level of functionaries for effective decision-making and smooth implementation at the ground.
- The proposed Bharat Nirman Rajiv Gandhi Seva Kendra need to be made into an active institutional arrangement promoting inclusion and facilitation for all developmental processes to the highest level.

Participatory Planning and Implementation of Works

Methods of planning adopted (project mode, watershed model etc.)

Methods of planning adopted by the Rajasthan state government and pros and cons of those methods: In general, in the entire state, plans are being prepared in a special Gram Sabha organised every year in every gram Panchayat. Community participation is generally very low in this process, and most of the times people from distant habitations/villages are not even informed about the Gram Sabha meeting. Village and habitation-wise work requirements/needs are listed in the special Gram Sabha that also discuss the plan of the various department/agencies active in the village. However, the list is often prepared without taking in to consideration available wage days/job cards. The prepared list of works is endorsed by the gram Panchayat for its inclusion in the Annual Work Plan. However, it is not necessary that all the suggested works at the Panchayat level are approved at the Zilla Parishad level. Many a time, works outside those proposed by the Gram Sabha also figure in the list of sanctioned activities and are given higher priority at the cost of activities proposed by Gram Sabha. In the initial stage of MGNREGA, a five-year perspective plan for the districts was also prepared in a similar manner. However, this perspective plan is rarely discussed in the Gram Sabha while finalising the annual plan. Further, in the absence of people's participation and quality discussions in the Gram Sabha, no priority is accorded to develop resources of the poor. Review on progress of works never takes place and the experiences gained and lessons learnt

in handling completed works are hardly considered while planning new works.

Lack of people's participation in planning and implementation could be one reason for poor participation and progress in implementation of works in Rajasthan. To make the MGN-REGA more effective and to reach the requirements of the community, Jaisamand Consortium partners proposed "Micro Planning" or "planning at the grassroots level", which ensures

- (a) the participation of the beneficiaries in identifying needs;
- (b) Preparation of village plan keeping in view the available resources;
- (c) Sharing of the village plan with the beneficiaries to identify the priorities based on the villagers' needs.

Micro-planning process includes the following steps

- Formation of Core Team for Micro planning
- Orientation/training of Core team
- GIS-based Cadastral level survey
- Compilation of information
- Cadastral maps were procured
- Digitization of maps – Cartography done in Arcinfo and Cartalinx environment
- Land revenue details were collected from www.apnakhata.raj.nic.in and patwari records (jambandi)
- Data entry and attribute referencing were done in digitised cadastral maps
- Other thematic information (hydrogeology maps, soilmaps, resource maps etc) were overlaid
- Land use/land cover of the village were taken from IRSP6 LISS III imagery of October 2005
- Land use/land cover according to revenue records were analysed
- Sharing information with the community
- Preparation of plan-based on norms; supported by necessary information
- Finalization of the microplan
- Preparation of Village perspective plan
- Preparation of Annual Plan
- List of shelf of activities

To develop a micro plan for MGNREGA, five scalars were identified. They are:

- a) Land-based,
- b) Water-based,
- c) Ecological assessment,
- d) Livestock data and
- e) Livelihood.

On the basis of these scalars the project villages have been surveyed to record the various information. In this survey, Global Positioning System (GPS) played an important role to record and reference the existing resources to geographic coordinates. A list of activities was identified ranging from land development to water harvesting structures and connecting roads etc. A collection of these activities took a shape of Perspective Plan

of the village. From the Perspective Plan Annual work plans as shelf of works / activities were prepared at ward and village level. The Micro plan under MGNREGA for 2009-10 is presented in the Table 2.13 given below

Table 2.13: The Micro plan prepared under MGNREGA for 2009-10 in Jaisamand Consortium area

Gram Panchayat	Bhalo Ka Guda		Vali		Phila			Total
	No. of Units	Cost (Rs.)	No. of Units	Cost (Rs.)	No. of Units	Cost (Rs.)	No. of Units	Cost (Rs.)
Land Development	384	35168000	314	8691000	342	8464000	1040	52323000
Land leveling and Farm Bunding	375	22212000	310	7810000	340	8410000	1025	38432000
Irrigation channel construction	9	12956000	4	881000	2	54000	15	13891000
Water Harvesting	24	9256000	27	7400000	17	6700000	68	23356000
Stop Dam New	11	3700000	26	7200000	11	3700000	48	14600000
Stop Dam repair	2	775000					2	775000
Earthen Dam Repair					1	600000	1	600000
Canal Construction /Repair	7	3900000			4	2200000	11	6100000
Well digging, deepening & renovation	4	881000	1	200000	1	200000	6	1281000
Afforestation, Plantation and Horticulture	1	300000	1	300000	3	1400000	5	2000000
Plantation and common Pasture Development	1	300000	1	300000	3	1400000	5	2000000
Others	12	7400000	22	8300000	20	10000000	54	25700000
CC / gravel Road Construction	12	7400000	22	8300000	20	10000000	54	25700000
Total		52124000		24691000		26564000		103379000

Up-scaling of micro plan exercise role of partners

The state resource group members have also initiated Micro-plan preparation in other eleven Gram Panchayats of four districts in action research mode on the basis of learnings from the pilot exercise conducted by Jaisamand consortium.

IDS, Jaipur, is developing a common methodological framework for sustainable livelihoods with ecological focus in collaboration with FES and SPWD besides facilitating the documentation with respect to baseline monitoring. Aravali organisation is facilitating District agriculture planning on MGNREGA processes.

The Jaisamand Consortium is planning to incorporate sustainable livelihood perspective with ecological focus in MGNREGA planning at Gram Panchayat and Block level in collaboration with primary stakeholders of the programme. To perform functions of design and delivery of the services directly or through facilitation linkages with existing government programmes in general and MGNREGA in particular, a Village Resource Center (VRC) is established each at GP, cluster of GPs and Block level. SPWD and its partner organisations are operating the VRC in Jaisamand catchment area to empower local communities for management of local resources to support their livelihoods. The VRC platform is used to provide technical backstopping to the community members and PRI function-



A field channel (Ghaura) constructed in Bhalokaguda GP in Girwa block in Udaipur district

aries in Jaisamand catchment area. Experiences of the VRC are shared and Micro-Plan preparation is done in action research mode. It is envisaged that VRC acts as a platform to share experiences of micro-planning and provide interactive advisories to local communities for watershed planning, land-use planning, water resources management, wasteland development, soil health management, consideration of ecological

aspects, crops, diseases, fertilizer/pesticide, seeds, organic farming, horticulture, live-stock management, interactions with elected PRI representatives, SHGs, micro-enterprise, marketing, RTI, government schemes etc.

Role of PRIs in planning processes

The involvement of PRIs is limited to organising Gram Sabha to list activities / works for the Annual Work Plans and endorsement of the plans. In order to address the gaps in the planning process, FES team is closely working with the Panchayats in adopting and strengthening bottom up planning process and ensuring people's participation. FES is also organising and strengthening village institutions based on natural resource governance across Panchayats to represent their interests. These village institutions are actively involving themselves in the process towards the Gram Sabha Annual plan. Village institution and Panchayat were also involving themselves in larger discussion forums at various levels and vice versa. During the planning process due weightage is given to the work that restore the ecology, equal weightage to Commons, Equity and gender. FES is also attempting to address the institutional shortcomings of the programme at Panchayat level by promoting and nurturing the latent spirit of voluntarism in the community and capacity building of the Panchayats. Training programmes to rural volunteers and CB of the Panchayats have been conducted covering various aspects centered on green agenda. FES is limiting itself to evolving shelf of activities, which can ensure decentralized planning at habitation level in terms of creating durable assets for the community. FES is seeding the concepts and facilitating the overall planning process to carry out planning through rural volunteers with the support of village institutions at one level.

The Jaisamand consortium members took a lead role in preparing the Annual Work Plans along with Panchayats. Physical survey for resources and socio-economic survey of the community in the project village/hamlet was done by the Panchayats and consortium members. After the analysis of these surveys, meetings were conducted with the villagers. In these meetings the Consortium team members helped the Panchayats and villagers in the

preparation of Annual Work Plans focused on NRM based activities and Labour budget. Consortium team members also motivated communities to participate in Gram Sabha meetings.

Further, capacity building trainings were conducted and support was provided for establishment of management system. The consortium team members also underwent ToT training programme on mate system organised by the Government. The trained consortium partners' in turn trained around 600 villagers to become mates. The staff of the partner organisations was also trained on MGNREGA (at SPS-Bagli), on Agriculture (KVK & Bhuj) activities, measurement techniques, documentation aspects, training for Microplan preparation, use of GPS and GIS software etc.

Up until 2006-07, road construction works were taken up in tribal areas, deemed necessary for future development works. However, after 2007-08, land development works in private lands belonging to SC/ST/OBC were given more preference than any other works. The works taken up in Phila Panchayats in 2008-09 were mostly in private lands --- land development, digging of wells, bunding etc.

Pilots/innovations tried by the organisation in terms of planning and implementation of works.

To demonstrate the possibility and utility of participatory planning, FES is developing Panchayat perspective plans in four Panchayats of Jhadol tehsil. Under this initiative, FES has begun community consultation in all the habitations to assess the situation, needs and opportunities in a Panchayat followed by detailed profiling of natural resource, assets and existing livelihoods. In the second round, participatory exercises were conducted in the habitations to document the need and scope of interventions. Detailed biodiversity assessments, soil profiling, geo-hydrological studies, etc were done to support and cross check the proposed interventions. Thus all the proposed interventions were checked for their technical feasibility. All the information is compiled into a digital database which is further represented on the revenue map of the village /Panchayat, making it into a pictorial description of the status and the plan.

Provision of Revolving Fund by FES

Provision for Revolving Fund was also kept for the selected families to enhance their livelihood through marketing of agri-produce, NTFP and animal products. So far 100 families have been benefited by Revolving Fund and they have purchased 104 buffaloes in total.

Marketing

A survey was carried out in three Panchayats that come under Girwa block of Udaipur district also part of Jaisamand catchment area to understand the agricultural status, consumption habits of cereals and various types of exploitation by local traders in these regions. The exercise was done for marketing of agri-produce (crops) - Maize, Gram and Moong and their value added products. Among the NTFP - Phuhad, Ber, Mahua & Dolma were supported for marketing. Surplus milk producing households were also linked to the market. Marketing in Salumber area was done with the help of Self Help Groups from three villages Gagri, Bedawal & Shailpura.

Animal Husbandry

About 40% of the total milk collected by the Udaipur dairy (SARAS) come from villages under the Jaisamand Consortium. The project villages are well linked with the milk collection centres and other private milkmen. For livelihood assistance through animal husbandry, only those families were selected that owned atleast one buffalo: Rs. 12000/- (on an average) was given to these families as loan through their respective SHGs.

Convergence

In FES operating Bhilwara District, the administration is trying to involve departments like Agriculture, Horticulture, Forest, PWD, and Education for implementation of MGNREGA. In some Gram Panchayats of Gogunda where FES is implementing NABARD- IGWDP sponsored watershed development projects an effort is being made to utilise the synergies of IGWDP and MGNREGA for better results. However, in Udaipur district, the administration is yet to show any interest in these lines.

FES has submitted a proposal to Bhilwara district administration on “Integrated livelihood Intervention strategy for poverty alleviation of poor families of village Bheempura” for convergence in the lines of the MoRD guidelines, which covers:

- Capacity building programmes to improve the capacities for effective planning in the Gram Sabhas
- Improving the participation and involvement of community in Gram Sabha and planning meetings
- Creating awareness about MGNREGA Act
- Make for better supervision of works and accurate measurements
- Asserting 10 rights as per the ACT
- Effective Grievance Redressal
- Sustenance and management of the resource created

The FES team has organised different capacity building programmes for PRI members to strengthen effective planning and implementation of MGNREGA. This will help the Panchayat members to evolve Annual and Perspective Plans for their respective Panchayats.

Suggestions with respect to convergence policy and practice in MGNREGA

The capacity building programmes of Panchayats, Rural Volunteers and Para workers with the development of shelf of activities are closely linked with each other. All the stakeholders involve themselves in decentralised planning and use their knowledge and skills to develop plans realistically. The wide scope of planning at habitation level will not only provide employment opportunity to the local populace but will also help the community to create durable assets. Panchayats would be able to leverage support from resource agencies and would be able to minimise variations in budget utilisation in the forthcoming years. The lucid planning helps community to act according to the plan to achieve their development objectives in larger span of time.

In Vali GP, Panchayat, Panchayat samiti and Zilla parishad are cooperating and coordinating each other in preparing work plans of the Panchayat. But this synergy is missing when it comes to the forest and PWD departments.

Building Partnerships and Engaging with the Implementation Machinery (Government)

Models of engagement with the local government units (block, district and state)

Acting on a request from the district administration, FES utilised MGNREGA funds for implementation of eco-restoration activities on forest, grazing and other common lands. While this has largely been a positive engagement, it has been determined by the willingness of the district administration to engage NGOs in direct implementation. The state has recently sought to address this by calling for applications from interested NGOs. In Udaipur, 88 agencies had applied and eight have been short-listed. FES in Udaipur has been leveraging funds from MGNREGA for undertaking ecological restoration works (soil and moisture conservation works, regeneration works including seeding and plantation, boundary wall repair and making new boundary walls around community protected plots for protection) on forest lands where JFM arrangements are in place. Both the district administration and the forest departments have a role in approving and monitoring the works in addition to the Gram Sabha and the concerned village institutions.

Policy advocacy models adopted

FES takes active part in the Social Audit programmes, facilitates innovative plans during district planning along with the district administration and Panchayats. Marginalized sections have been targeted in 5 villages through provisions of special livelihood programme on private lands. Public Private Partnership, watershed programme and MGNREGA co-exist in the same villages.

An opportunity for scaling up ecological restoration works and convergence in Barundani village

Abstract

This case study documents the FES experience in Barundani village of tehsil Mandalgarh, district Bhilwara, Rajasthan, where the villagers themselves, with funding from FES, carried out initial activities for ecological restoration. And then the MGNREGA arrived helping to scale it all up. The programme was crucial in sustaining people's interest in community-based regeneration of degraded forestland and water conservation.

Introduction

Barundani, a Panchayat village, is located 52 km southeast of Bhilwara. The village was once part of the state of Udaipur. A trading centre, Barundani is populated by around 1,048 families (total population is 6,045) and has a distinct social hierarchy. The main village is dominated by the upper caste Brahmins, Banias and Rajputs who are resource rich while the small and marginal farmers largely from Meena, Gawaria, Gadri and Baret castes apart from Muslims dominate the hamlets. The gap between the different classes

of people have resulted in horizontal and vertical vulnerabilities that usually get reflected in village-level decision making processes and access to resources.

Basic infrastructure including a high school, tube well for water supply, Panchayat Bhawan, Patwar Bhawan, primary school, ayurveda hospital, PHC, bank and bus stand are all in the main village.

Experience

Against this social backdrop, the restoration of natural resources posed a serious challenge for the organisation. FES initiated its work in Bhilwara in 1995 by surveying the villages to get a grip on the institutional process, assess the extent of degradation and check the feasibility of implementing the project.

Barundani was also part of the cluster that FES had finalised for project implementation. Discussions for implementing the project in the village started in 1996 but due to institutional reasons the work could not be started. FES' strategy to work through cohesive village-level institutions to implement the project and ensure management and equitable distribution of benefits delayed the processes. In the mean time, people of Dhamangatti, a revenue village of Barundani Panchayat, organised themselves as "Tree Growers' Cooperative society' in 1997 and was allotted 33.5 ha of non-agricultural revenue wasteland by the District Collector. The village did a commendable job and regenerated the land.

This became a source of inspiration for the other habitations that hastened the institutional processes. A "Shramdan" for construction of a stone-wall around patches of land was set in motion and FES was brought into the picture. The lands that they protected were forest lands and hence the Forest department too was brought in. Village forest protection management committees (VFPMC) were organised in the habitations of Gadri Kheda, Meena ki jhopriya, Nala ka Kua and Talai ka Jhopada and an agreement with forest department (under Joint Forest Management) were signed over 200 ha of degraded forest lands.

Collective efforts

The whole process was not that smooth because the forest department initially posed hurdles. Sustained efforts by the community, PRI members and FES led to the department agreeing to hand over 200 ha of forest land under Joint Forest Management (JFM). Effective soil and moisture conservation work on 200 ha. complimented the regeneration efforts in the form of plantation of 25,000 saplings and sowing of fodder seeds such as Stylo hamata and Cenchrus setigerus. The 6.5 km long drainage line was treated with the construction of 17 small water harvesting structures.

This facilitated the establishment of community governance over these lands as well as adjoining commons lands. The effectiveness in planning and implementation resulted in good regeneration of the resources and ensured that the poor and marginalised reaped the benefits. But the more important benefits were in terms of social recognitions that the villages were gaining in the area. The possibilities of taking up regeneration work under MGNREGA enthused adjoining habitations to organise them as VFPMCs and

they too applied for lands under JFM. Recently six village institutions were formed and an agreement on 300ha of forestland enabled the community to secure tenure and subsequently linked with MGNREGA programme for regeneration and conservation. The benefits of the works accrued not only in terms of fodder but renewed water and nutrients cycle, which were reflected in the downstream lands especially in terms of water recharge in the village wells.

Governance

Efforts were made to sensitise the community over issues of conservation of land and water resources in the entire watershed. People came up with innovative mechanisms of water governance where they stopped using the village tank for irrigation and reserved it for drinking water in the dry months. With already 233.5 ha of land under protected boundaries and another 300 ha to be treated under the MGNREGA programme, one could envisage the future that will not only provide wage employment but also boost the socio-economic-ecological development process of the project villages.

The community governance is being broadbased with people's conceptualization of a Maha Sabha/federation at the watershed level, in line with the Paryavarn Premi Samaj a federation of villages working on NRM in Mandalgarh. This facilitated the discussions on community governance over the natural resources.

Benefits

Tenurial Rights & Agreements for regeneration of 533.5 ha of common lands (Forest & Revenue) through TGCS and JFM has enhanced the social status of the village communities, as they now stand more unified. As a result they fought elections for chairman, water distribution committee, and sarpanch, Barundani Panchayat. They won both the elections. Fodder availability in the village has increased subject to regeneration of the site with grasses such as *Stylo hamata* and *Cenchrus setigerus* which were sown and many which have been regenerated due to effective protection such *Heteropogon Sp.* (surbala). Grass species such as *Aremopogon contortus* (Buari or broom grass), which is both used as fodder as well as broom, is another benefit from the regenerated plots.

The water harvesting structures enhanced the total availability of water and the wells were now useful through out the year, enhancing agricultural production.

The future

Thus the journey that begun from one habitation is getting scaled to 600 ha of degraded forestland under MGNREGA. This has helped in increasing the forest cover in the area thereby reducing the pressure on forests and also restored the forest water linkages. The effort now is to strengthen the institutional framework at the habitation level so as to fortify the Panchayat ensuring effective governance at Panchayat and village level for effective and efficient implementation of MGNREGA work. The organisation also has plans to develop a pool of resource persons in clusters for effective implementation of MGNREGA.

Building institutional resilience: The case of Suliya

Regenerating village commons Panchayat pasture land under MGREGA programme

Suliya, a revenue village of Gram Panchayat Goverdhanpura of the Mandal tehsil of district Bhilwara, has 356 households and is inhabited primarily by Gujjar, Balai, Nath, Bheel and Khatik communities. The village has a large population of Dalits (31%) who have been marginalised over years by the Gujjars who dominate the decision-making process in the village. Communal harmony here had been jeopardized due to conflicts between Gujjar and Balais, which degraded institutional structures. Agriculture and animal husbandry are the primary sources of livelihood here but recurring droughts have dealt a severe blow, forcing people to migrate for wage employment to adjoining areas and even to Gujarat and Maharashtra. A large number youth have of-late started migrating to Maharashtra in search of employment.

In May 2008, work for developing pasture land was initiated on 50 ha under MGN-REGA. The villagers insisted on getting their boundaries demarcated before the execution of work so that the dispute with two adjoining villages viz, Roopura and Raghunathpura of Gyangarh Gram Panchayat could be resolved. This case study shows how the villagers, the village institution and government officials played their role in resolving the conflict thus ensuring smooth implementation of the scheme. The villagers of Sulia approached adjoining village institutions of Bagjana, Garwai, Kangsaka Badia, Roopura where FES was implementing a pasture development project. The local federation comprising of four villages further intervened and then proposed to form a village institution in Sulia. The chairman of Charagah Vikas Samiti, Pokhar Gujjar, along with his committee members is responsible for governance, which is represented by all groups and castes. Three women members are also part of the committee. Panchayat Samiti member Santosh, ward members and deputy sarpanch Meethulal Sen were also part of the governing body. The community now pays a chaukidar Rs 3,000 per month. The village institution charges a nominal amount @Rs5/ animal for the grazing. The village also contributes in cash and kind to manage the pasture land and other collective expenses. The fodder is sufficient for 3 to 5 months.

Situation prior to the implementation

The village had 650 bighas of pasture land, which they had been managing since ages through the services of a watchman (Rs 15,000 for the three months during monsoon); but with time the institutional fabric in the village got weakened, and so did the governance mechanism. Using Panchayat funds, the village had regenerated 40 bighas, which regularly supplied fodder for their animals. In 1998, the watchman was removed and was just appointed for the regenerated plot for Rs 3000/- for the three months in monsoon. This resulted in the charagah becoming open access and the adjoining villages of Roopura and Raghunathpura staking their claims of the charagah. The problems of

institutional degradation culminated in the heavy dispute between the Gujjar and Balais for worshipping in the village temple where the Gujjars stopped the Balais from offering prayers in the village temple. The dispute also got political leaders involved and the issue aggravated. The whole village got segregated on caste lines halting the developmental process.

The process of change

The people had been approaching FES for the past 3 years for working in their village but the institutional issues subject to the conflict between the Gujjars and Balais posed a big hurdle. But to initiate the work there was a need to rebuild the institutional fabric where efforts were made from all sides i.e. community, federation and FES. Success was achieved with improvements in village situation and community members started coming together for the village development and formed a Charagah Vikas Samiti in 2008. With the onset of MGNREGA the community members saw the opportunity of working on pasture land development under MGNREGA, submitted a proposal for taking up Pasture land development on 250 bighas to the Goverdhanpura Panchayat which got approved. But the dispute with the adjoining villages of Roopura and Raghunathpura aggravated with villagers of Roopura as well as Raghunathpura claiming their rights over the land. The members of village institutions requested both the Gram Panchayats to look into the matter. Patwaries of both Goverdhanpura and Gyangarh had come to resolve the matter with the maps and Jarib. It took three days for the Patwaris to demarcate the land. But all the efforts seemed futile as Roopura and Raghunathpura villagers stood their ground. Later the matter was referred to the SDM who referred the old records and deputed two Patwaries with a Tehsildar for resolving the conflict. The old records were taken into account and finally the issue was resolved. The village carried out activities such as building cattle protection trench, stone wall fencing, continuous contouring trench, pitting and plantation of 10000 saplings of *Acacia nilotica*, and *Acacia leucopholea*. The current situation could be summed in the words of village sarpanch Lakha Ram Gujjar: “The work has not only regenerated the pasture but also has improved the social environment.”

Conclusion

The Suliya experience illustrates that when a community is fragmented into isolated groups and individuals, the diversity in the village becomes a source of prejudice and friction. Small institutional adjustments and appropriate systems and mechanisms make the institutions resilient to internal and external disturbances.

2.3 ODISHA

In Western Odisha, home to the chronically drought-prone Koraput-Bolangir-Kalahandi belt, eight NGOs/CBOs from Bolangir and Nuapada districts came together to form the Western Odisha MGNREGA Consortium (WONC), which functions under the National Consortium for MGNREGA. These NGOs/CBOs are:

1. Adhikar
2. Janamukti Anusthan (JMA)
3. Bolangir Bikash Parishad (BBP)
4. Bolangir Gramodyog Samiti (BGS)
5. Aanchalik Jan Sewa Anushthan (AJSA)
6. Shramik Shakti Sanghatan (SSS)
7. Vikalpa
8. Lokadrusti

Besides the WONC members, the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) is also a partner of the National Consortium in the state.

Adhikar was formed in 1998 to promote participatory and people-centred development, with a primary focus on drought and drought-related distress migration. It wants to ensure that children of the area are enrolled in schools and that the predominantly tribal population of the area get to live a dignified life. Adhikar strives to ensure food security in the region through setting up of grain and seed banks, Natural Resource Management and Organic Agriculture. It also works on women's empowerment through SHGs, health, policy advocacy and formation and strengthening of village level institutions.

Janmukti Anushthan (JMA) was established in 1996-97 and works with small and marginal farmers, the homeless, widow-headed households, the disabled and landless, agricultural and unorganised labour. It sees itself as a rights-based organisation with a development perspective.

Aanchalik Jan Sewa Anushthan (AJSA) is a community-based organisation involved in sustainable development initiatives. AJSA was formed by residents of Bangomunda Block in the Bolangir District to work towards the social-economic development of small and marginal farmers, landless labour, agricultural labour, bonded labour as well as women, children and other weaker and deprived sections. Through grass root level workers and volunteers from the oppressed sections of the society, AJSA works towards building awareness for sustainable development.

Shramik Shakti Sangha (SSS) was formed in Bolangir in 1984. It has worked on sustainable livelihood promotion of the rural poor especially women, SC/ST and the economically weak, by building self-sustained people organisations and promoting micro-enterprises. SSS' core activity includes creating community infrastructure (water harvesting structures, tank, ponds, forestry, nursery), ensuring food security, health, checking distress land sales and distress migration from this area.

Bolangir Bikash Parishad (BBP) was formed to promote participatory and people-centred development. It has worked on food security related issues, NRM, advocacy, publication of books, health, women's empowerment and has contributed in setting up village-level institutions.

Bolangir Gramodyog Samiti (BGS) strives to enable poor rural/tribal households and communities to be self-reliant on a sustainable basis. Formed in 1987, BGS has been working in the field of education, health, and natural resource management. During droughts, BGS has worked to check distress migration and create livelihood opportunities for the poor. At the same time it is organising health camps, coaching centres for poor students and training programmes on organic farming as well as sanitation.

Vikalpa was formed by a handful of students from the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, who landed in Nuapada -- the then Kalahandi district -- in 1981, to do ground research on reports of starvation deaths in the region. Over time, this engagement transformed itself into Vikalpa. During 1989-1996, the organisation mobilised people in the Bangomunda and Turkela blocks of Bolangir district through various movements and campaigns on issues like education (literacy), land and water management, and environment. It has worked, *inter alia*, on providing alternative livelihood options for the landless poor, management of natural resources through people's participation, promotion of organic agriculture, women's empowerment through self help groups, health, lobby and advocacy for policy change, formation and strengthening of village level organisations and research and documentation including visual documentation.

Lokadrusti operates in Nuapada district and works on sustainable development, women's empowerment, overall growth in education, health, art and culture. Lokadrusti aims at creating a developed region with the best blend of local resources, traditional methods and modern outlook. It attempts to achieve this with the maximum involvement of youth of the region. The organisation's main areas of work have been strengthening of people's organisation through social mobilisation, NRM, rights of tribals, education and child labour, food security and health.

Area Profile of the Organisation

The Western Odisha MGNREGA Consortium (WONC) works in the districts of Bolangir and Nuapada, covering 6 Blocks, 8 Gram Panchayats and 59 villages.

Table 2.14: The WONC

NGO/CBO	District	Block	GP	No. of villages
Adhikar	Bolangir	Belpada	Juba	8
Janamukti Anusthan (JMA)	Bolangir	Muribahal	Bankel	9
Bolangir Bikash Parishad (BBP)	Bolangir	Belpada	Bagdore	10
Bolangir Gramodyog Samiti (BGS)	Bolangir	Turekela	Kuibahal	4
Aanchalik Jan Sewa Anushthan (AJSA)	Bolangir	Bangomunda	Gandharla	8
Shramik Shakti Sanghatan (SSS)	Bolangir	Turekela	Badbanki	5
Vikalpa	Bolangir	Khaprakhol	Tankapani	6
Lokadrusti	Nuapada	Boden	Sunapur	9

Project area of Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) in Odisha

FES works in close coordination with the Odisha government and has been recognised as resource support team for MGNREGA by the global non-government organisation 'Concern Worldwide-India' and has initiated a collective process with a group of Civil Society Organisations working in tribal districts of Odisha for landscape planning and strengthening socio-technical pursuit of NRM planning vis-a-vis MGNREGA. The Panchayati Raj department, Odisha, has appreciated the efforts of FES and invited the organisation to be a resource agency for developing IEC material and for providing support to the newly constituted State level Advisory committee for enhancing the performance of the MGNREGA. Project area of FES in Odisha is mentioned below.

Table 2.15: FES operations in Odisha

Districts	No. of Blocks	No. of GPs	Major communities working	Working from year
Koraput	2	7	SC/ST (Kondh, Harijan)	2008
Angul	1	7	SC/ST	2007
Dhenkanal	3	9	SC/ST	2007
Kalahandi	2	4	SC/ST	July 2009
Keonjhar	3	4	SC/ST	July 2009
Sundargarh	1	1	SC/ST	July 2009
Gajapati	2	2	SC/ST	July 2009
Nabarangpur	2	2	SC/ST	July 2009

Status of Securing Basic Entitlements as Per the Act

Learnings and experiences of partner organisations including FES in securing wage seekers' basic entitlements as per the Act are discussed under various sub-themes as mentioned below.

Demand-based work (Work application, receipt and unemployment allowances etc.)

Even after five years of enactment of the MGNREG Act, neither the implementing agencies nor the state government are showing any interest in carrying out the programme in its true spirit. The low demand for work under MGNREGA in the state is a direct consequence of the dismal awareness levels about this landmark Act in Odisha. There is no systematic process for accepting, acknowledging and filing work applications. Panchayat functionaries are not equipped enough and the Gram Panchayats are not being able to mobilise communities for participation.

All the consortium partners faced common issues such as households who need work not being able to register, registered households not receiving job cards, and in some cases, job cards being issued without any corresponding entry in the job card register. It has also been noticed that the local administration neither encourages wage seekers to submit work demand applications nor do they give out receipts against applications. And when they do, the Panchayat secretary issues receipts without mentioning the date, thus cleverly pre-empting any future claims for unemployment allowance. It is learnt that the Panchayats are doing so



Village level awareness camp by JMA activists through folk dance. A scene from Muribahal block of Bolangir.

out of the fear of being held liable under the law for not providing employment.

In operating Panchayats of Adhikar, workdays were already entered in the job cards at the time of their issuance, and number of work days mentioned was more than what people had put in. In some Panchayats work demand application forms are not available. There were a few instances where village level leaders or ‘Gram Sevaks’ brought in contractors into the MGNREGA ambit. Bolangir Gramodyog Samiti noticed that in its operating villages, the responsibility to implement the project was left with the rozgar sevak, a task beyond his capacity. In these Panchayats works are opened based on the availability of funds at Panchayat.

In FES operating districts, those who managed to work for 100 days are in a minority. In some cases, families with no job cards adjusted themselves with the work force of families possessing job cards thereby making the cumulative man-days reach the 100 mark. Reluctance of job card holders to tap the MGNREGA channel could be on account of many reasons: projects being implemented far out of their village, types of work that doesn’t suit them, and lack of awareness on fixed wages. Further, there were more projects and investments in road construction/rural connectivity and other infrastructure projects that are not labour-intensive.



GP Level meeting on NREGA facilitated by SSS in Turekela block, Bolangir

A JMA organised job-seekers' union rally by women workers in Muribahal block of Bolangir



After the involvement of WONC in their respective operating Panchayats since 2007-08, the process and procedures have got somewhat streamlined. Consortium partner organisations in their respective operating Panchayats went into campaign mode to ensure that MGN-REGA is implemented as a demand-driven programme. These organisations are playing a key role in mobilising households for registration, getting job cards, providing motivation to submit work demand application in groups, providing assistance in getting receipts for work application, and ensuring minimum wages and equal wages to all. With the efforts of the Consortium partners, noticeable improvement in household registration and participation in MGNREGA works are now being observed in operating Panchayats. The systematic campaign carried out by Vikalpa to maximise the registration of wage seekers resulted in extending the registration to 93% of total households in 5 operating villages. Further, in the current year there is 119% increase in households submitting work applications to Panchayats. Similarly, the eight operating villages of Adhikar in Belpada block recorded 99% household registration in 2009-10 and 131% households demanded for work. Lokdrusti in the current year reported 253% increase in household participation over 2008-09 in its operating area. Bolangir Bikas Parishad, Bolangir Gramodyog Samiti, Anchalik Jan Seva Anushthan (AJSA), Jana Mukti Anushthan (JMA) and Shramik Shakti Sangh (SSS) all reported similar progress in their respective operating areas.

Around 78 women participants under the guidance of Lokadrusti submitted mass work demand applications on Women's day (8th March) and were allocated jobs within 15 days at a water harvesting structure construction site. Intensive campaigning and awareness in the operating area of Lokdrusti resulted in issuing of jobs within 15 days of application. Till now in the operating area of WONC no unemployment allowance has been paid to any of the wage seekers whether or not the job is provided within 15 days of application. Increasing job opportunities within the village, especially in traditionally migration-prone areas, resulted in a decline in the number of migrating households as shown in the Table 2.16. Adhikar stood on top of the list followed by Vikalpa in mobilising the traditionally migrating households to participate in MGNREGA works.

Table 2.16: Impact of MGNREGA on migration

Organisation	Migrating Households in the year 2008-09	Migrating Households in the year 2009-10
Adhikar	686	278
AJSA	580	233
BBP	418	210
BGS	377	188
JMA	729	321
SSS	357	221
Lokadrusti	397	180
Vikalpa	708	306

FES also noticed remarkable progress in the operating districts, mainly thanks to improved co-operation from the part of the administration over the last one-year. On one hand, there has been some pro-active convergence guidelines from the State and on the other hand the involvement of NGOs in creating work demands has increased. This has bettered the equations between the block and the Panchayat although not everywhere in the district.

The key strategy adopted by the WONC partner organisations to ensure mass participation in MGNREGA is by organising them at different levels. The wage seekers were organised in to Wage Seekers' Committee (WSC) at village level and Job Seekers' Federation at Panchayat level (details in Box 1) in order to speed up the MGNREGA implementation and also to address issues related to implementation of work as demanded by the job seekers, timely measurement and payment, ensuring quality of work and social audit processes at Panchayat level. The WSCs and Panchayat level federations are actively involved in awareness and campaigning programme organised by the consortium partners in their respective project villages. All the consortium partners in Western Odisha have adopted the same strategy of organising communities, thus making them stakeholders in the whole process.



Construction of a water harvesting structure at Sunapur in Boden block, Nuapada, a Lokadrusti operating area



Work under progress on a WHS site in Nuapada, facilitated by Lokadrusti

Two-tier system of community based organisations developed under MGNREGA

A. Village level Wage Seekers' Committee (WSC) is formed with all the job card holders of the concerned village as members. From this a core committee is selected by WSC to coordinate regular MGNREGA activities at the village level, which will have a president, a secretary and other three members. Gram Sathi and PRI officials are the ex-officio member of this core committee.

The Wage Seekers' Committee will meet once in a month to review progress of MGNREGA programme at the village level. The micro projects to be implemented will be finalised on a priority basis by referring to the micro plan, and a job demand list will be prepared accordingly. Job demand forms will be filled up and submitted to the Gram Panchayat every month.

The core committee will monitor the implementation of MGNREGA projects to ensure the quality, timely measurement of earth work and payment of wages.

The committee will conduct social audits of MGNREGA projects on a quarterly basis.

The committee will spread awareness on any changes made by the government on MGNREGA.

It will also maintain a register on migration.

B. Jobseekers' Federation at Panchayat level: Taking two representatives from each village level Wage Seekers' Committee, an apex committee will be formed called Panchayat level Job Seekers' Federation to work as pressure group for effective implementation of MGNREGA activities in the concerned Panchayat. Its role is mobilisation, capacity building, lobby and advocacy and liasoning with different line departments for smooth convergence of different schemes.

The Panchayat level federation will engage the Gram Panchayat once in 3 months to review MGNREGA work at Panchayat level.

Undertaking capacity building programmes/initiatives for strengthening of all village level jobseekers' committees. Resolving conflicts that occur at village level WSCs.

Planning and coordinating different MGNREGA activities at Panchayat level based on the village level plan.

Facilitating the registration of migrants in the local labour commission office and also making arrangement for life insurance of migrant groups

Worksite facilities

Sub-optimal levels of awareness among potential beneficiaries regarding the Act and its provisions have resulted in little or no provision of mandated worksite facilities in MGNREGA sites across Western Odisha.

However, there is a slight improvement compared to last year due to the intensive awareness campaigns taken up by the consortium organisations. The issues were taken up during the monthly meetings of Wage Seekers' Associations and the whole process benefitted from the involvement of NGOs in Social Audit. Training programmes given to Panchayat officials regarding payment procedures and other MGNREGA processes have also helped in ensuring worksite facilities.



A self-help group meeting in progress at Muribahal block of Bolangir, a JMA operating area

Before the involvement of consortium members, in almost all cases the only worksite facility available was drinking water. Today, in the operating Panchayats of Bolangir Bikash Parishad, and Jana Mukti Anushtan and Shramik Shakti Sangha, workers seeking first-aid are referred to the village level health worker like ASHA, and ICDS is tapped for crèche facilities. As a result of sustained awareness campaigns in the operating villages of Adhikar, first aid and crèche facilities are now being provided on demand by wage seekers.

Timely payment of wages and wage rates

Timely payment of wages is a major issue in the entire state. In addition to that, non-payment of minimum wages and discrimination against women wage seekers have been reported by FES. Complicating the wage scenario is the fact that village post offices do not have cash holding capacity beyond Rs 20,000/-. Local bank branches are also not very proactive when it comes to dispensing MGNREGA wages, and the administration has failed to influence the banks in this regard. Late closure of muster rolls and delay in measurement by the technical staff of the Block are two major reasons for delayed payment of wages. Although efforts are being taken to increase the technical staff at block level yet there has been no noticeable improvement so far. The technically trained Gram Sanjojaks/Gram Sevaks are not authorised to do the check measurement and close the muster rolls. Although wage rate is strictly adhered to, the State Government has not done yet fixing rates for diverse work types. It is also one of the major reasons limiting the diversity of works under MGNREGA through convergence programmes.

Till the end of the financial year 2008-09, payments were being made at the Panchayat office in cash. It was a difficult matter to monitor the payment process and thus there have been complains of ghost entries, less payment, no timely payment and malpractices. With the strict state directive against payment in cash at Panchayats, opening of pass books was expedited by the administration.

Despite the strict processes of releasing wages on pass books, corrupt practices of fake entries and withdrawals in connivance with the post office were also evident. Lokdrusti complained that a village middleman was collecting all the wages from the Post Office/Bank and distributing them to the wage seekers at worksite after taking a commission. Sure, payment through banks/POs has limited the scope for corruption but the delay factor continues to



Practical training on watershed structures at Bangumunda block, Bolangir, organised by AJSA

remain a major worry. FES reported that there are workers who are still waiting to get their due wages for the work they did about a year ago. Bolangir Gramodyog Samiti reported payments delayed by more than one month, sometimes even two months in their project area. This delay in payment is mainly because of inadequate technical manpower (in most cases the Junior Engineers) at the Block office to check the muster rolls and work volume.

While the scene has improved slightly since early 2010, a lot more needs to be done. Consortium partners are assisting banks to handle the massive task of opening bank accounts for all job card holders. Adhikar is working with post office staff to ensure that there is no delay in payment because of shortage of manpower. Earlier, while calculating the wages the lead and lift aspects of wage calculations were completely ignored, hence wage seekers used to get underpaid. Adhikar intervened in this matter and streamlined the provision of wages in accordance with the lead and lift wage rate. Partners strongly feel that PRI members need to be sensitised on these aspects.

Grievance redressal mechanism, transparency and accountability mechanism

To maintain transparency and accountability in implementation of MGNREGA, the state government has adopted various mechanisms such as construction of “Transparency Pillar/display boards” at the worksite and voluntary disclosure by Panchayats at the GP office regarding shelf of projects, social audit procedures, complaint registration through toll free help line number and through vigilance committees. Transparency pillars stand as witness for transparency and accountability in operating areas of Adhikar, Lokdrusti, Bolangir Bikas Parisad, Bolangir Gramodyog Samiti and Lokdrusti.

In October 2009, the State government issued a public notice for the post of MGNREGA Ombudsman, however, as of now the Department of Panchayati Raj has been able to shortlist candidates for 12 districts only. Ombudsmen selection for other districts is underway. The department sought suggestions/comments from Civil Society Organisations on the selection of Ombudsmen only after selecting the candidates, as a mere formality. FES felt that there is a need to build consensus among local Civil Society Organisations to facilitate the process with Ombudsmen.

Many districts have launched citizen helplines to register grievances regarding MGNREGA works. The District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) is also handling grievances

through their officials at the District and Block level involving Panchayats. FES felt that, given the magnitude of issues/problems that exist, it would not be possible to address them without a system, and dedicated staff assigned to the task. Partner organisations are motivating wage seekers to make use of the toll free number for grievance redressal.

The most effective instrument in ensuring transparency and accountability, the social audit process, has been reduced to a routine with little participation from wage seekers. The process is also marred by lack of enough human resources. According to Adhikar, just one employee at block level was deputed to complete social audits in three Gram Panchayats, all in one day. Public meetings to share and discuss social audit reports are few and far between. PRI members are not aware of the actual process of conducting social audits. Gram Panchayats are neither able to maintain records nor to update them. FES noticed that GP offices don't function except on PDS days and there is no day fixed as Rozgar Dibas. Hence, accessing information at GP level is a difficult task for people. At the block level too those who seek information are asked to log on to the web site.

However, in April 2010, the district administration involved local NGOs in the social audit process following a guideline issued by the state government, leading to mass participation. Partner organisations are also mobilising wage seekers to participate in social audit and are encouraging them to take up their problems with concerned officials. Consortium members also facilitate meetings between wage seekers and PRIs/Block officials to ensure follow up measures on social audit reports. Wage Seekers' Committee and their core committees are also conducting social audit with the support of partner organisations.

Wage seekers with the help of Lokdrusti have conducted four social audits where discrepancies with regard to worksite facilities and problems with the payment system were raised. The Wage Seekers' Committee in Bolangir Gramodyog Samiti operating villages conduct social audits every quarter. Bolangir Bikash Parishad noticed that neither the implementing agencies nor the district administration was making any sincere effort to maintain transparency in MGNREGA implementation. Vikalpa facilitated seven social audits in six operating villages and one at the Panchayat level. Almost all the consortium partners have conducted social audits in their respective project villages and GPs and have forwarded the findings to higher officials for action.

Adhikar went a step ahead and worked to activate the grievance redressal system by pressurising GPs and Blocks to keep complaint register at their offices and ensuring public access of these registers. Further, the Gram Sanjojak and Gram Rojgar Sebak were pressurised to bring muster rolls to worksite and to let the workers access it as and when needed. Steps were also taken to construct display boards at worksite.

Issues emerging and strategy adopted by the organisations in achieving the basic entitlements of the Act

Most of the problems and issues identified are common across the operating Panchayats of the partner organisations. Hence a common strategy has been adopted by all the partner organisations.

Summary of Emerging Issues

- Low work demand because of dismal levels of awareness among communities regarding the

Act, especially regarding the fact that MGNREGA is demand-driven in nature. Even PRI members are unaware of the processes and procedures to be followed. In short, the system yet to be streamlined to meet expectations.

- No pressure from state level officials on implementing agencies regarding the work being carried out grassroot levels.
- Lack of a proper communication and review system for updating latest information such as new GOs, circulars, innovations and new strategies adopted with respect to process and procedures etc.
- Shortage of staff at grassroot and Block level is a major constraint in timely delivery of services.
- Poor maintenance and updating of records, registers at Panchayats and Block level.
- Less transparency, new dimensions in corruption in payment system through Banks/Post Office. As per the Act, the PRIs and Government machinery is accountable to the job seeker. Here they are more accountable to higher officials than the people.
- Lack of proper monitoring mechanism at the Panchayat level. The Grievance redressal is not up to the mark and vigilance committees are non-functional.
- Social audits are not happening as per guidelines. Community participation in social audit is very poor, and the whole process suffers from lack of human resources.
- PRIs don't co-operate with civil society organisations and the government hasn't shown any interest in learning from grassroot organisations that have been working with communities for decades.

Strategy adopted by the partner organisations

Organising wage seekers at village level as 'Wage Seekers Committee' and at Panchayat level as 'Job Seekers Federation'. Building the capacities of such committees and federations so as to demand their right. This organised strength will help them in carrying out those functions in the future that consortium partners are doing for them today.

On behalf of these committees, partners organise mass awareness campaigns through meetings, street plays and other cultural programmes, and wall posters.

FES and other organisations are engaging themselves at three levels: DRDA and Block, Panchayat, and village institutions for awareness building, facilitating collective job demand, and for mainstreaming NRM in the MGNREGA agenda.

Consortium partners are facilitating the monthly meetings of Wage Seekers' Association and Job seekers' Federation. They also keep wage seekers updated with the latest GOs/policies on MGNREGA. They also give guidance in finalising the micro projects and accordingly preparing the job demand list for submission at Block office.

FES is facilitating discussions on MGNREGA issues and prospects in multi-actor platforms, block level nodal meetings and Panchayat nodal meetings

Training Panchayat functionaries on MGNREG Act, its provisions, its implications, role of Panchayats and the systematic processes. Also providing trainings on Social Audit process and procedures.

Assisting communities as well as Panchayats in registering households that need work. Consortium partners are also assisting the wage seekers for all paper works for registration, in filling of work demand applications, getting printed receipts etc. Adhikar in their Gram

Panchayat and at Block have motivated the officials to observe MGNREGA day every week to enable the job seekers demand for work regularly.

Exclusive Palli Sabhas/Gram Sabhas were also organised to sensitise wage seekers about MGNREGA procedures, and participants were encouraged to submit job applications at the meeting itself. Trained village volunteers are motivating communities to participate Palli Sabha/Gram Sabha.

FES is handling advocacy for grievance redressal with use of RTI apart from raising awareness to utilise provisions under the Act. The volunteers conducted a week-long awareness camp prior to Palli Sabha in different villages.

Consortium partners are assisting the Panchayats in smooth conducting of Social Audits and in maintaining transparency. The Vigilance and Monitoring Committee formed by Adhikar at village level were trained to raise alarm over involvement of contractors and deployment of heavy machinery in MGNREGA.

FES organised exposure visits of senior district level officers directly involved in MGNREGA implementation to Rajasthan for a first hand feel on the field realities, and for interaction with the state bureaucracy.

Suggestions by the organisations

- State government needs to accord MGNREGA top priority.
- Panchayat and Block officials need to take up mass awareness campaigns in tandem with Civil Society Organisations. Regular training and capacity building to PRIs and Block level functionaries.
- Institutionalising the committees evolved at village and Block level.
- Maintaining adequate manpower at Panchayat and Block level.
- Institutionalising the involvement of Civil Society Organisations across the spectrum: from implementation to policy advocacy.
- Introducing Biometric system of payments as done in AP to check corruption and for ensuring timely payments.
- Institutionalising the Social Audit system with quarterly audits in villages. Strict action needs to be taken against culprits. Civil Society Organisations need to be given a key role in maintaining transparency and smooth conducting of Social Audit as per procedure.
- The grievance system should start from village to District level through respective vigilance committees. There is a need to activate the Vigilance committees at all levels. Vigilance committee at GP level should comprise of members from different sections of the community, public leaders and members of social organisations. A monthly review has to be done at the block level on a regular basis.
- Third party monitoring may also be (by line departments) arranged.
- Entrusting the responsibility of implementation at grass root level to the beneficiary group, SHGs, Gram Sangathans and ward members for more effectiveness.

Participatory Planning and Implementation of Works

Role of PRIs in planning process

Odisha's planning process includes three steps: Labour budget, preparation of Annual

Work in progress at Muribahal under MGNREGA to construct a water harvesting structure



Action Plan (through Palli Sabha, Gram Sabha and relevant departments) and finalization of Annual shelf of projects through District Planning Committees. The final shelf-of-projects are then shared with the GP and the Block to be followed up for implementation. This circuit gives participatory planning a miss because Panchayats are not equipped enough, and in many cases, they are plain indifferent. Also, the role of PRIs in planning is nominal as the Block office is leading the MGNREGA programme including all the paper works, filing, processing work order etc. Hence, Block officials dominate the planning process and prepare projects in collusion with vested interests, suppressing the participatory mechanism. Gram Panchayats pass resolutions only as a formality as noticed in Bolangir Bikash Parishad's project area. Similar situation persists in almost all the Panchayats of Bolangir district where the plans were prepared by district officials and implemented in the villages.

In the operating villages of FES, the Palli Sabhas used to meet, but there was little forward movement with regard to people's plans. The Block functionaries prepared the shelf of projects, which did not reflect local aspirations. As such the Panchayats are still not being able to influence the authorities.

Reasserting that Palli Sabhas and Gram Sabhas are the primary levels of the planning, the organisations are trying their best to stimulate these institutions and Panchayats to take the lead. Panchayat functionaries are also gradually learning, coming to grip with the fact they too are accountable in the whole process. In the operating blocks of consortium partners, wage seekers are empowered enough to participate in Palli Sabha and suggest works. The suggested works were already included in shelf of works. Vikalpa is taking special interest in encouraging women's participation in Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha.

Representatives of partner organisations regularly attend Gram Panchayat level MGNREGA monthly meetings and guide the Panchayats and Block officials in preparing micro-projects and project planning. They also help out wage seekers with paper works so that they can submit work demand applications in the meeting itself. The core committee of wage seekers at village level are monitoring the implementation of projects and are also trying to ensure quality in works, timely measurement and payment of wages. Many organisations reported that Panchayat functionaries are upset with them for empowering the wage seekers who in turn have started questioning Panchayat functionaries. In this situation, partner organisations are finding it difficult to work with some Panchayats and hence have requested District officials to intervene and ensure Panchayat cooperation in implementation of the scheme.

The Act envisages creation of sustainable assets in the village, which in the long term would strengthen livelihoods and the overall economy of the village. However, in the villages surveyed by Adhikar and Vikalpa this was not a priority while selecting the micro projects. In most cases road construction and renovation works were undertaken on a priority basis since these works are more lucrative to officials. Further, there is an overemphasis on creation of bigger structures in common lands than small-scale land development works in private lands of SCs/STs despite of demand for such works. To avoid these, organisations are encouraging the people to attend the Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha and are motivating them to demand NRM and plantation activities. However, in most cases the officials rejected NRM based proposals.

Adhikar has taken the responsibility of facilitating the preparation of NRM-based Micro Projects at GP level and also prioritised works in the form of a calendar. Adhikar and Vikalpa have revisited Micro Level Plans in four and six operating villages respectively and facilitated preparation of new NRM based Micro projects. They also assisted in securing approval and funds from district to implement the same.

To make the planning process easier, FES is involving itself in preparing village perspective plans with cent percent participation of villagers. It then fixes a priority index for the perspective plan, places the priorities in tune with the approximate labour budget of the village in Palli Sabha and ratifies the same. The organisation learnt that when the priority index of village perspective plan is prepared then people get motivated and become enthusiastic to place their plans properly. The village volunteers also have contributed to this process.

AJSA in their operating GPs has prepared need based Micro Projects such as digging of farm ponds (76), ring wells (184), field bunding, plantations, compost pits (85), WHS (15) and outlets (25).

Various methods of planning adopted (project mode, watershed mode etc.)

Till date project mode of planning is in operation in entire Odisha. Watershed MLP model is also in practice in Bolangir Gramodyog Samiti-operating Panchayats.

In general, in the monthly meetings of Wage Seekers' Association, the micro projects are finalised and accordingly a job demand list is prepared as per the labour requirement of the particular micro project. Labourers fill up the job demand form in the meeting itself and collectively submit to the GP, which forwards the plans to Block and from there to higher authorities. Partner organisations help the Wage Seekers, PRIs and Block officials in preparing the micro projects through a participatory process and also provide technical support.

FES has empowered Palli Sabhas to identify and align priority projects in the MGNREGA Annual Action Plan. It also directly prepares and submits plans that are key to link activities in a watershed approach, and handles necessary linkage with the District Planning Committee to prioritize integrated natural resources development plans in a cluster approach. The FES has also taken steps to develop plans relevant to line departments like soil conservation, irrigation, etc.

Problems/issues in the implementation process (carrying out the identified work) observed by the organisation and the efforts made by them to address those:

The major problem in implementation process as observed by FES is with the technical sanction of the project for which the technical persons from the block need to visit the sites. In many cases technical sanctions are given without visiting the area and without making

impact assessments.

Bolangir Gramodyog Samiti reported that the District Administration is releasing funds without any action plan and releasing budget against utilisation certificates. Neither block level officials nor district level officials are monitoring work progress before releasing the funds.

Further, the organisations complained that measurement is not done on time and thus the closure of muster rolls gets delayed, making workers wait for their wages.

The vigilance committee of Panchayats have their limitations in influencing quick disbursement of payments and for taking steps to complete the works. The organisations are following up with the block authorities with PRIs for settlement of the issues and completion of the work. The organisations are also facilitating collective work demand by the villagers located in proximity to the project.

Priority and development of resources of the poor

The development of resources for poor has remained a neglected lot because of faulty planning process at the Palli Sabha, lesser demand created for the same because of low level of awareness, and because of disputes over land settlement processes. The lack of adequate manpower at the block level to prepare plans and monitor the developments is a reason well articulated by the implementers.

However, with the State giving priority to development of resources for poor the situation is slowly changing. Recently, the state government launched a new programme under MGNREGA entitled “MO POKHARI” Yojana, which had a target of digging 100000 farm ponds during the last financial year in Bolangir district, each costing approx. Rs.45,000, in the lands of small and marginal farmers. Farmers are coming forward to avail the facility, and a few have also gone for plantations with the support of water from the farm pond. Lokdrusti encouraged 52 farmers to take up plantations this year.

Consortium organisations in their respective project areas are mobilising small and marginal farmers to avail this scheme because they were initially hesitant to allocate land exclusively for Farm pond within their small land holdings.

In 2010, 241 farm ponds were sanctioned in the operating area of four organisations of which 97 were completed, while 144 Farm ponds are under construction. Organisation wise progress of the Yojana is presented in Table 2.17.

Table 2.17: Details of Water Harvesting Structures Completed in 2009-10

Organisation	Gram Panchayat	No. of water harvesting structures	New water harvesting structures
Adhikar	Juba	09	04
AJSA	Gandharla	13	06
BBP	Bagdori	11	04
BGS	Kuibahal	09	04
JMA	Bankel	09	03
SSS	Badabanki	12	05
Lokadrusti	Sunapur	12	04
Vikalpa	Tankapani	14	05

Quality as well as productivity of the investment

Bolangir Gramodyog Samiti renovated six WHS and constructed two new structures under MGNREGA. These two tanks help irrigate 7 hectares of land in the current year. Further, farmers have also gone for double cropping with increased water availability in the tank. Under the renovated tanks women groups have taken up fish production in small scale. This has happened in GPs where JMA and SSS are working. Shramik Shakti Sangha facilitated renovation of 10 WHS and construction of 4 new WHS. Further, SSS also facilitated two plantation programmes each costing Rs 10 lakh in convergence with the Forest department. Bolangir Bikash Parishad and Lokadrusti in their respective area also facilitated similar convergence with the Forest department. The partner organisations are also planning for compost preparation for forthcoming season in their operating area.

Table 2.18: Details of Farm Ponds completed in 2009-10

Facilitating organisation	Gram Panchayat	Villages covered	Farmponds completed	Farmponds under construction
Adhikar	Juba	08	35	20
AJSA	Gandharla	08	36	25
BBP	Bagdori	10	32	17
BGS	Kuibahal	04	44	25
JMA	Bankel	09	51	35
SSS	Badabanki	09	49	37
Lokadrusti	Sunapur	05	96	65
Vikalpa	Tankapani	06	77	49

Lokadrusti provided overarching support to small and marginal farmers for the maize crop in 21.5 acres that received MGNREGA investment for land development benefiting 24 farmers. Further, Lokadrusti also promoted SRI (paddy) in 15 small and marginal farmers' fields in 7.07 acres.

Vikalpa, BBP, JMA and SSS, with the financial support of Chetna Organic (CO), promoted organic farming and NPM practices. Organic farmers were organised into groups to form 'Farmers' Cooperatives' for collective marketing of organic produce (Table 2.19). Exposure visits were also organised to motivate farmers to carry out proper integration into organic farming.

Activities taken up by organisations for integrating organic farming

Village levels training programmes on organic farming practices such as organic nutrient management (farm yard manure, general compost, pit compost, vermipost, jeevamrut, vermiwash etc.), bio pest and disease management (chill-garlic extract preparation, top ten, NSKE 5% etc), Organic Certification process and Non Pesticides Management. The agriculture team of Chetna Organics provided technical guidance to the farmers as and when required.

Facilitating monthly meeting and monthly savings as regular activities of farmers' group in the operational area. In the meeting the members discuss organic farming practices and other developmental activities.

Organising exposure visit to learn organic input preparation. Vikalpa arranged one exposure visit to Sambhav, Nayagarh, on Organic Agriculture where 2 agriculture mobilisers and 4 farmers participated. They learnt the preparation of bio-pesticides, bio-fertilizers, vermicompost, SRI paddy cultivation and nutrient management.

Maintaining Organic Farm Diary with information covering land preparation, seed sowing, soil fertility management, pest control input details, crop management and marketing etc.

Cropping plan was prepared for cultivation of different crops throughout the year. Intercrop, trap crop and boarder crop were promoted as part of organic pest management also provided additional income to the farmer.

Farmers are satisfied with the benefits of compost on different crops. Vikalpa promoted 42 such compost pits in the project.

Table 2.19: Organic farmer groups

Organisation	No. of Farmer Groups formed	No. of Farmers organised	Amount Saved by 2009-10 (in Rs.)
Vikalpa	08	85	38,693
JMA	06	71	29522
BBP	06	55	12,212
SSS	5	61	4000

FES had tried innovations in terms of planning and implementation of works in their operating districts as mentioned below:

FES being a technical support team for Concern Worldwide supported partner Organisations, initial knowledge support has been provided for better landscape planning and strengthening socio-technical pursuit of NRM planning vis-a-vis MGNREGA. The major emphasis of the initiative is towards identifying partner wise landscape – covering two to three Panchayats for demonstrating the concept of landscape planning and management in MGNREGA. Continued efforts like demarcation of landscape on Toposheets, resource map preparation on cadastral map were initiated during field visit for developing NRM oriented action plans. There has been greater awareness at the community and landscape level on planning and implementation issues pertaining to MGNREGA. Outsourcing of training programmes like Open Source Gram Panchayat QGIS, organized by IIT-Madras & WASSAN Hyderabad and management of ground water with reference to watershed development organised by ACWADAM has helped selected partners in developing a conceptual understanding of the importance of Geo-hydrology in planning and implementation of Gram Panchayat action plan. Training conducted by FES on ‘an Ecological consideration towards meaningful implementation of MGNREGA’ has helped project partners in bringing out the importance of a sustainable ecosystem while planning and implementing area specific development activities. Training organised by SIRD, Bhubaneswar, in collaboration with NIRD, Hyderabad on “Empowerment of tribals under Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996” helped in developing a critical understanding on the Act, its legal provisions and its link with Forest Rights Act (FRA). Exposure visit for Gaon sathis, and Gram Rozgar Sanjok along with staff members of selected partner Organisations to FES’ Angul project area has helped participants to visualise landscape planning and management of natural resource and



MGNREGA awareness campaign by WONC covered all the six blocks where consortium partners operate in



An MGNREGA rath in Boden block, Nuapada

the institutional mechanisms and processes at the local level. FES as a technical support team for partner organisations, continued efforts like Bio-Physical training follow up, demarcation of landscape on Topo sheets, resource map preparation on Cadastral map, designing format for data collection etc.

Koraput team of FES has been innovatively using Google Earth as a planning tool. The projects are identified and spotted on Google Earth map that helps in assessing technical feasibility and specific impact of the project. In the plans the expected impact of the project is clearly outlined that helps in monitoring the impact and developing project case studies. The district administration appreciated such plans developed by the organisation and the DRDA issued directives to the blocks and line departments to follow suit. The DRDA also asked Block Development Officers to take help of the organisation in developing such plans. Further, the village perspective plans are being considered as a pool of local plans that are referred to before finalising the plans. When peoples' plans are given priority, in a few cases that the organisation has observed, people pro-actively participate in the work.

Angul team of FES has identified 50 villages under 10 Panchayats and supported them to develop habitation level natural resource plans for its inclusion in the Panchayat level MGNREGA plan. So far, the FES team has facilitated the process in 41 habitations and have submitted consolidated plans from 7 Panchayats for its inclusion in the current financial year plan. After several meetings with individuals, groups and opinion leaders, visits to verify field situation, technical survey and conducting sessions of PRA, the team was able to assist the habitation level committee to prepare their plan. The plans included a range of soil water conservation activities like water absorption trenches, canals, water channel construction or reparation, construction or renovation of water harvesting structures, plantation, digging of farm pond, gully plugging structures etc. depending on the priorities of the problems identified. Various projects including farm pond, village pond renovation etc amounting to Rs.101.74 lakh has been approved during the financial year 2009-10 and work is currently under progress.

Apart from facilitating the village level process, Angul team of FES also negotiated with other line departments those who are engaged in implementing MGNREGA. And submitted a technical plan for undertaking SMC work in Rajnagarh Reserve Forests area in Balikuma Panchayat in Kankadahad block, and Rs 17.08 lakh has been approved. KS Gopal, a member of National Employment Guarantee Council, visited Dhenkanal district during this period

and interacted with the district collector about the progress of MGNREGA work and the issues regarding MGNREGA in the district. His visit was organised by the team and during the discussion FES shared its plan of furthering association with the MGNREGA process. The District Collector had assured to sort the issues as much as possible and asked FES to collaborate with the district administration to put up model projects in its operational area. Following the discussion the District Collector and the Soil Conservation Department of Dhenkanal approached the team to provide them technical support to do the soil and water conservation and forest restoration planning in Kapilash and Saptasajya hills.

On request from Koraput Collector FES team organised an awareness programme along with the District Administration. The team facilitated 'MGNREGA Rath' to raise awareness on MGNREGA and ecological issues of the region.

FES, Koraput, has been recognised as a knowledge partner on various aspects of MGNREGA by the district administration on planning and biophysical interventions.

Suggestions for ensuring effective and participatory planning and implementation

- Strengthening Palli Sabhas so that they are able to create priority plans from the perspective plans and with reference to the labour budget
- Empowering PRIs to follow up with the peoples' plans.
- Strengthening the vigilance committees for supervision and monitoring to ensure quality of work
- Facilitating collective work demand by workers.
- Shelf of projects accommodating diverse works, taking into account seasonal changes in labour patterns.
- Avoid delayed payment and expedite the grievance redressal process.

Strategies adopted by the organisations in planning process

FES developed a band of youth and imparted technical skill training (para workers) to map out and plan prospective NRM focused projects for villages. The projects identified by para-workers are aligned to MGNREGA shelf of projects through the Palli Sabha.

FES is working hand-in-hand with a band of village volunteers to broad base the NRM agenda within MGNREGA; streamlining MGNREGA processes at village and Panchayat level; generating work demand; handling advocacy for grievance redressal with use of RTI apart from raising awareness to utilize provisions under the Act. The volunteers conducted a weeklong awareness camp prior to Palli Sabha in different villages.

FES has been acknowledged by the district administration as a resource organisation and is invited by DRDA to facilitate and demonstrate preparation of peoples' plan to block level officers.

All partner organisations are working towards strengthening the Village – Panchayat – Block linkage to increase the performance of MGNREGA, accommodating peoples' priority choices, and livelihood development through sustainable assets.

Facilitating Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha with adequate participation and resolutions by consensus thereby strengthening democratic processes at village and Panchayat level and participatory planning process. Helping in preparation of micro projects and assisting wage seekers in submitting work demand application.

Convergence

Member organisations engagement and experiences with convergence policies

In Odisha, the process is on to make MGNREGA converge with efforts on watershed development. The Project Implementing Agencies under Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme (OTELP) have been asked to create projects for MGNREGA in respective areas of implementation. The Soil Conservation department and Forest Department too are increasingly taking up projects under MGNREGA. The District Administration has also launched new schemes like MO POKHARI - MO BAGICHA (My Pond and My Kitchen Garden) by linking DRDA with Horticulture and Fishery Departments. Taking up drain clearing and drainage works with Rural Water and Sanitation Scheme, prioritising dug wells linking block programmes with MGNREGA, etc. are some of the examples. However, it would be too early to comment upon the financial implications of these convergence plans.

No doubt, convergence is expected to contribute to the value addition of the projects in terms of quality and utility of works. It would be too early to make a note on its impact on the spirit and practice of the Act. Partner organisations are working in close association with government line departments for better implementation of the convergence projects.

Adhikar has developed good linkage with Line departments like soil conservation and horticulture to promote agricultural and forestry related works to provide jobs in rainy season to the potential labourer.

Suggestions in regard to convergence policy and practice in MGNREGA

- Efforts must be made to develop convergence plans factoring in the needs and aspirations of the rural communities. The village level perspective plans must be taken as an important reference for this
- The convergence plans should follow watershed approach as well as a landscape approach and should be realistic and impact-oriented
- Convergence plans should integrate ecology, economy, infrastructure and essentials for quality of life of rural communities
- Convergence cell comprising of line departments, local NGOs and grievance redressal bodies should be formed at district level and function as a wing of DRDA.

Building Partnerships and Engaging with the Implementation Machinery (Government)

Policy advocacy models adopted by various organisations

In most cases policy advocacy work was limited to submitting memorandums to the BDO and District Collector. The job seekers' federations took the lead role in addressing the issues at district level. Issues were mostly related to non-issuing of job cards and receipts, delay in measurement of works and payment, shortage of staff (Junior Engineers) at block and transfer of funds.

The chief of Bolangir Gramodyog Samiti is a member of District Watershed Advisory Committee, chaired by the District Collector. This has helped in pushing policy advocacy agendas with respect to MGNREGA. Three press meets were also organised to highlight the issues, and these meets introduced the consortium to the public.

Consortium partners are organising actual wage seekers into groups to which the Gram

Sathi (Rozgar Sewak) is secretary and an active wage seeker among the group as president. The group works closely with Gram Panchayat and identifies the issues in implementation and take it further to Block office to resolve. This group puts pressure on Block officials for resolving small issues at Panchayat and Block level.

Policy advocacy models adopted by FES

FES conducted an exposure visit of key government officers from Koraput and other districts to MGNREGA in Rajasthan. The group interacted with bureaucrats, block officials, Panchayat functionaries, and workers while visiting field locations. The group also interacted with members of MKSS who championed the Social Audit process in Bhilwara district. After the exposure visit, the group from Koraput shared their observations with the District Administration and key officers.

FES, Koraput, conducted a series of workshops covering various stakeholders of MGNREGA in the district during November 2009 in order to elicit responses that would contribute to designing of future road map for better performance of MGNREGA in Koraput district. The workshops were conducted separately with representatives from Civil Society Organisations; with PRIs; and with village leaders. The workshops emphasized upon the relevant issues and bottlenecks determining the performance of MGNREGA in the district.

The organisation actively participated in the Social Audit process in the receptive blocks and also involved local NGOs in the process. The organisation also volunteered in comprehending the observation on Social Audit done in different blocks for appraisal of the district administration. The district administration took the observations seriously for remedial measures. A presentation on the observations was also made before the Minister of Panchayatiraj and the top bureaucrats and district representatives at Bhubaneswar.

FES is also trying to bring community members/job-card holders to be part of the policy advocacy process through sensitization workshops held with the PRIs, stakeholders meetings and discussions at Multi Actor Platforms, and collective job demands.

Models of engagement with the local government units (block, district and state)

FES is engaging itself at various levels; with the Members from Central Employment Guarantee Council, UNDP, State Administration, NGOs, and District Administration to raise pertinent issues and address the issues systematically towards better performance of MGNREGA in the State. Details are as follows:

Panchayati Raj Department has recognized FES as a resource agency for State Advisory Committee. A ToR has been submitted by FES on the roles and responsibilities of the Committee.

Commissioner- cum- Secretary, Mr. S.N. Tripathi has appreciated the initiative of FES for the fortnightly publication of English e- newsletter- MGNREGA updates. There was also a request from the PR department for a similar e- newsletter in Oriya.

Four small villages i.e. Singhpur, Sirkiheju, Kutrupala, and Dolabahali in Mohangiri Panchayat, a tribal dominated Panchayat in Kalahandi district, has thought of the broader issue of Climate Change and its impact and planned NRM through MLP and linked with MGNREGA. They prepared a report on village resources, history of the villages and the contemporary problems they face. The report was submitted to the Gram Sabha. Seba Jagat, Kalahandi, facilitated the plan at village level and FES provided technical support.

2.4 MADHYA PRADESH

In Madhya Pradesh, there are seven consortium partners working in different districts: Niswarth Sarthak Prayas Evam Parivar Kalyan Samiti, Parhit Samaj Sewi Sanstha, Holistic Action Research Development (HARD), Spandan, Gram Sudhar Samiti (GSS), Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) and Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS).

These partners, depending on their core focus, can be categorised as working primarily on mobilisation issues relating to MGNREGA implementation or working intensively with selected Gram Panchayats to help them prepare micro-plans and implement them. Needless to say, these are not very water-tight compartments so that organisations working on planning issues have also naturally had to move through a process of mobilisation and those working on mobilisation are looking forward to further supporting Panchayats in micro-planning related work.

Niswarth Sarthak Prayas Evam Parivar Kalyan Samiti was formed and is led by a senior activist of the Chambal region who has devoted over two decades to the service of the sahariya primitive tribal group. The sahariyas are perhaps India's most fragile and vulnerable tribal group, whose livelihoods basis is so severely undermined and whose nutritional status so severely threatened that they are now teetering precariously on the edge of extinction.

Niswarth believes in mobilising these tribal groups to get what is their due while at the same time sees itself as engaged in development work on the ground. It engages with PRIs, works with women and children on issues of health, nutrition, education, and empowerment. It hopes that through its work a strong, empowered, self-confident and self-aware community of Sahariyas is established.

Parhit Samaj Sewi Sanstha has been working in Madhya Pradesh for more than a decade. The first few years of the organisation were largely spent in Datia district but it later extended its activities to Shivpuri district also. The organisation is committed to a development process, which is based on the principles of equality, fraternity and empowerment for weaker sections of society. They are currently working on community organisation in Pichhor and Pohri tehsils of Shivpuri district under the DPIP (District Poverty Initiatives Programme/Indira Gandhi Gareebi Hatao Yojana). Its core areas of work include Panchayat Raj and Local Self-Governance, Natural Resource Management and Women's Empowerment and Right to Food.

Holistic Action Research Development (HARD) is based in the Kotma block of the newly formed Anuppur district of Madhya Pradesh. It is also working in Shahdol district. The organisation has been in the area for the last decade, working on the issues of food security, women's empowerment, local self-governance and water conservation among the tribal communities. Development-based on equity is the main thrust of their work. They are working in close co-ordination with the district administration. HARD also believes that in order for the situation on the ground to change, several like-minded organizations and agencies have to come together and work for a common goal. So it strives to maintain a live and organic contact with similar organizations working in the field.

Spandan Social Service Organisation has been working for dalit and adivasi empowerment

in the Dhar and Khandwa districts of Madhya Pradesh for the past eight years. The dalits and adivasis, especially women wage earners, are organised and mobilised to demand their right to work and wages. Spandan has worked to make PRIs and administration more sensitive to the needs of the local communities and to highlight their issues. It has gone through several struggles based on these issues of entitlements and achieved a positive impact. It has been active in issues related to food security and employment guarantee, particularly in keeping an eye on irregularities and malpractices that may have crept in the implementation of MGNREGA schemes.

Gram Sudhar Samiti works in the Riva region of Madhya Pradesh comprising Sidhi, Riva and Satna districts. In the region with a sizeable tribal population, GSS works on issues related to education health, community organisation, land, right to food, women's empowerment, local governance and capacity building. Phagulal Dhamne and his five colleagues, inspired by the Sarvodaya movement of Vinobha Bhave, started GSS in 1987.

GSS works along with the Sidhi district Panchayat in ensuring the success of Rajiv Gandhi Watershed Mission. It assists in the implementation of 3 milli watersheds covering 6,000 hectares in 37 villages. It also works with CAPART in three villages covering 1800 hectares of Sidhi and Machauli blocks. GSS started working on MGNREGA in 2007.

Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) carries out activities to promote the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources, forests and water in particular, through local self-governance institutions. FES has been working in the area of Natural Resource Management since the last fifteen years and its activities have spread to 26 districts in different eco-zones across six states (Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Rajasthan) in the country. FES is engaged in helping communities draw up perspective plans for natural resource management and leveraging the NREGA to systematically implement their plans. With the expansion of NREGA to cover all districts in the country from 1st April 2008, FES is presently involved in facilitating the implementation of NREGA in all its project locations.

Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS), over the last two decades, has grown to be one of India's largest grass-roots initiatives for water and livelihood security, working with its partners on a million acres of land across 72 of India's most backward districts, mainly in the central Indian Adivasi belt. It takes inspiration from the life and work of Baba Amte who rejected charity and successfully empowered even the most challenged. SPS is headquartered in a drought-prone, tribal area in the Dewas district of Madhya Pradesh, which typifies the most difficult problems of the country. It concentrates all its direct interventions in about 220 villages and towns of this area. This work is not so much a model as a living laboratory of learning for others to adapt to their own areas. To facilitate this mutual learning, in 1998 SPS set up the Baba Amte Centre for People's Empowerment in a tribal village called Neemkheda, where it started its watershed work.

Status of Securing Basic Entitlements as Per the Act

State wise achievements in securing wage seekers' entitlements with respect to different themes under MGNREGA are discussed below:

Demand-based work (Work application, receipt and unemployment allowances etc.):

THE level of awareness about the basic entitlements that MGNREGA guarantees continue to be low in the state where many potential beneficiaries are still unconvinced about their right to work for a minimum of 100 days every year – that employment will be provided on demand, and not on availability. Panchayats are yet to take a proactive role in enrolling villagers, and worse, the fact that offices of many GPs don't stick to working hours makes it worse for those who want to demand work. Organisations like SPS report that many a time, the potential beneficiary himself demands the work to be opened and then gathers labourers, often his friends and relatives who don't require MGNREGA employment in the first place.

People are also reluctant to demand work because the measurement process is cumbersome where labourers often fail to qualify for minimum wages. This coupled with recurring delays in payment is taking a toll on MGNREGA works in the region. However, it has been noticed that in works like building new ponds, deepening of existing ones and road construction, people are showing more interest because the measurement process is more transparent.

Factoring in this prevailing reality, consortium partners have taken proactive steps to build awareness among potential beneficiaries regarding their basic entitlements under MGNREGA.

As the "Technical Support Team" (TST) to Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihood Project (MPRLP), SHT Mandla of the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) has been running awareness campaigns in the villages of all the 17 Panchayats where it is supporting MGNREGA implementation and planning. The team has trained village stewards, Panchayat representatives, Mates, Rozgar Sewaks and livelihood promoters of MPRLP towards MGNREGA and its provisions and natural resource management. Increased awareness about entitlements and creation of trained skill base in villages for measurement of work has enabled villages to monitor the activities and also demand for work.

Consortium partner Samaj Pragati Sahayog reports that in Dewas district, no MGNREGA work has been opened based on workers' demands, and the awareness levels among potential beneficiaries regarding this landmark Act remains dismal. And for the few who demand work, it is neither opened in time nor are they given unemployment allowance guaranteed under the MGNREG Act.

In response, SPS has undertaken a campaign through self-help groups to spread awareness about the rights and entitlements under MGNREGA. As a result, 70 families in the Kataphod region in Bagli teshil approached their Panchayats with demand applications for work under MGNREGA, obtained receipts and were allotted work. A similar drive was launched in Bagli and Udaynagar. At the cluster level, SPS is organising camps on how to obtain 100 days of wage employment, how to secure minimum wages, and how to get the wages under 15 days as guaranteed, apart from raising awareness levels on worksite facilities. SPS is currently in the process of organising potential beneficiaries of MGNREGA, so that they can demand their rights collectively. Through cluster-level SHGs, SPS helps spread awareness about the entire MGNREGA spectrum – from how to obtain job cards to how to secure unemployment allowance.

Consortium partner Spandan works in the Khalwa Block of Khandwa district, a Korku tribe dominated block and notified as a Fifth scheduled area. Here, MGNREGA began in its first lap in 2006. Till the year 2010-11, total of 34,668 job cards have been provided across 86 Gram Panchayats in Khalwa Block. Among this, only 2% belong to scheduled castes, while

scheduled tribes make up 32.9%, and others cornered a 65% share. The figures point to a disturbing trend: Scheduled tribes that have a 69% share in the Block's population of nearly 1, 60,000 have barely 33% share in job cards while other communities which constitute 25% of the population possess 65% of all the job cards. This can be attributed to the fact that separate job cards have not been provided for the nuclear families – for instance, although the son is married and has children his name is included in his father's job card.

Official records show that during the current financial year and till November 2010, 14,595 (42%) job card-holding households demanded work. In this Fifth Scheduled area, where most of the tribal families have meagre landholdings averaging 2-3 acres of rain fed land, where 3% of the families resort to distress migration to destinations like Jalgaon or Mumbai or to the neighbouring districts of Harda and Hoshangabad, the reported figure of work demand is not in harmony with the grassroots reality. The fact is are no instruments whereby they can demand work or get the receipt. The reality is that the Panchayat begins a work and announces it (called Dondi in local dialect) and whoever happens to be around or is available goes to work. On the day of first payment the list of workers is prepared and is considered as the work demand form. Spandan introduced a new instrument: a work application with perforated receipt across 50 villages but the labourers are yet to be provided with the receipt.

Surprisingly, the data shows that families belonging to the Korku tribe, almost entirely dependant on manual labour, are not demanding work. This points to another anomaly in the way the programme is being implemented in the region: Work is not opened when they need it; it usually commences once the Korku families have already migrated to cities.

Parhit Samaj Seva Sansthan that works in the Pohri block of Shivpuri district continued its activities to address the shortcomings in the implementation of MGNREGA in the region, a process that begun ever since it carried out its first job survey in 2007. As part of their campaign, PSS volunteers organised community meetings, rallies, block- and district-level training programmes and media interaction sessions.

The campaign resulted in securing job cards for 5,049 families who were not able to obtain this entitlement despite repeated efforts. Of this 4,705 families demanded work, and all of them were provided work within 15 days. And for the 252 families who were not awarded work, a public hearing organised by PSS saw the SDM, Pohri, accepting the claims for unemployment allowance under the MGNREG Act. In Ahera and Digdoli villages, Panchayat secretaries were removed after complaints of delay in opening works and non-payment of unemployment allowance.

The SDM interfered in the case of 1,105 families whose job cards were being withheld by the sarpanch/secretary. Another signature campaign saw workers in five villages getting their minimum wages for works done under MGNREGA. These people were being paid a pittance till then.

Holistic Action Research Development (HARD) operates in Anupur district, a backward area dominated by tribals. The organisation works in 31 GPs of Kotma block and 9 GPs of Anupur block, both having a tribal population of over 80%. About 20% of the population is landless and many work as bonded labourers. Various central schemes existing to address drinking water and healthcare issues are yet to reach these people. Malnutrition is rampant, and a majority are underweight. Apart from agricultural work, most get by thanks to NTFPs like mahua and tendu.

Ever since HARD became an active partner of the National Consortium for MGNREGA, the organisation has taken up issues like delays in payments through its Jagruti Mazdoor Sangh units. Under the aegis of the Sangh, around 1,800 workers organised protests at the district level and received their entitlements.

The “right to work” campaign meetings at village Beliya Chot saw participants raising the issue of subversion of MGNREGA guidelines that resulted in sub-standard structures. Members raised their voices against deployment of machinery by contractors who don’t have any business to be involved in MGNREGA works in the first place, and complained about lack of worksite facilities such as shade, drinking water, first aid and the like. All this, along with requests to fill muster rolls at the worksite itself and putting up of mandatory boards etc was conveyed to the sarpanch. Finally, the issue was taken up with the district collector and labour courts simultaneously.

In Umerda village where the sarpanch insisted on deploying JCBs for pond digging, wage-seekers shot pictures of heavy machinery at work using their mobile phones and handed them over to HARD volunteers. This was distributed to the local media, and the news got prominent display in local dailies the next day. The CEO of district Panchayat and the SDM rushed to Umerda, stopped the work on the pond, and assured the workers that their payments would be made on time and the sarpanch would be punished. Around 60 people had worked at the site in the first week, and 195 in the second, before the sarpanch decided to call in the JCB citing the hard rock nature of the land.

Niswarth that works towards enhancing sustainable development processes and improving the quality of life of vulnerable people like Sahariya tribals and dalits, reports that the Shivpuri and Sheohar districts where it operates face the same issues as the rest of the state in MGNREGA implementation. For starters, awareness levels about their rights and entitlements under the Act among the people are abysmal, and there is complete lack of co-operation between potential beneficiaries and Gram/Ward Sabhas. None of the Panchayats seem to have drawings and estimates of works (mostly in the range of Rs 3-5 lakh), and needless to say, none of the plans are placed before the Gram Sabhas for perusal. District Panchayats suffer from lack of engineers and they fail to make their presence felt at worksites in villages even once in a month.

In Shivpuri district, only 50% of job-card holding families have been able to avail 100 man-



Earthen dam under construction under MGNREGA in Bagli

days of work. More often than not, especially in those blocks dominated by tribals, Panchayat secretaries and sarpanchs discourage people from applying for work claiming that the Panchayat is yet to receive money from higher authorities. Upon persistent pressure, job applications are accepted but without any written receipt. Till date, not a single family

in Shivpuri district has received any unemployment allowance despite applying for work.

Even after five years of the Act, village monitoring committees are clueless about their duties and the system here is at the mercy of secretary/sarpanch/sub-engineer and programme officer. Works given priority under MGNREGA are often given the go-by. During payments, neither the amount nor the measurements are enrolled in muster rolls. Workers are asked to put in their thumb impression, and the job cards are returned with details entered after a weeks time, leading to grievances and discrepancies.

Worksite facilities

Even after five years of MGNREGA, availability of basic provisions specified in the guidelines such as drinking water, first-aid kit and shade at worksites continue to elude workers in Madhya Pradesh. Muster rolls are often not kept at the worksites that often result in fake attendance being marked by officials when they clear rolls in one go. Wherever Consortium partners have been designated as the PIAs, these facilities are provided meticulously, but the larger picture remains dismal.

In FES operating areas, the only provision so far given is shades for labourers to rest. It's been noticed that attendance is entered into the muster rolls weekly in one go.

SPANDAN reports that the only facility provided by Panchayats at the worksite is drinking water. The Panchayats park a water trolley at the worksite and at many places the wage earners bring their own water. No provision is made for crèche for the infants of workers, neither are there any maids to be seen at worksites. Women who report to work leave the kids at home where they are looked after by elder siblings or neighbours. It is a familiar scene here to witness them rush to home during lunch breaks to breastfeed their babies. The problem is acute for malnourished children who need frequent feedings and care.

Another complaint heard often in Khandwa is that single women are asked to bring a man along, insinuating that that they are not physically strong enough to work at a pace that a specified work requires. The same mindset also denies work to elderly and widowed women. The upshot: Women could access only 41.3% man-days last year; not even half of the total of the 456696 man-days generated. In the first 7 months of 2010-11, only 9 physically challenged individuals received employment under MGNREGA in the operating areas of Spandan.

SPS, by virtue of being a PIA appointed by the state government, was able to reverse this trend in the Bagli block of Dewas where it operates. On all its sites, facilities like shade, first-aid and drinking water were provided. The organisation also tries to provide work tailor-made for the aged, handicapped and women.

In 31 Gram Panchayats in Shivpuri district, where worksite facilities were scant, PSS mobilised the Panchayats to ensure them. Niswarth, another consortium partner that operates in Shivpuri,



Drinking water and first aid at an SPS worksite

observes that worksite facilities are non-existent but surface temporarily when Central observers make a field trip.

Timely payment of wages and wage rates

The single biggest impediment in bringing potential beneficiaries closer to MGNREGA is the delay in payments, and in some cases payment of sub-standard wages. The rural engineering services, overstretched and understaffed, often kicks this trend into motion by delaying measurement processes, and line departments like the forests, with its own bureaucratic mesh, gives it momentum.

SPS reports that in works undertaken by the forest department under MGNREGA to construct farm ponds, payments were made after a delay of 2-3 months. There are labourers who are still waiting for payment in this project. This has been the case with most works undertaken by the forest dept, which follows a cumbersome process for measurement and payment. The deputy-DFO is supposed to do the ground inspection but the payments are made four layers below, at the range level. Officials here are not qualified to deal with earthwork.

Although the minimum wages for MGNREGA work is fixed at Rs 100, since works like well-digging are task-based where the task is not clearly fixed beforehand, workers end up getting Rs 50-70 per day. Other works like deepening of ponds and road construction have tasks fixed beforehand and hence payments are in the Rs 80-100 range.

According to Spandan, undue delays in payments have left workers disillusioned. The payments are made through banks, and the delays have ranged from one day to one week due to unexpected rush at the banks, banks running out of cash and so on. Wage earners from distant villages find it hard and taxing to travel to the town/village time and again where the bank is located. In the last two years, wages estimated at Rs 43,03,986 have delayed beyond 90 days in the villages that Spandan works in, Bagda, Didamda, Fefri Srakar, Jamniya Kalan, Sukwi Raiyat and Patalda being the erring Panchayats. No case of compensation paid for delayed wages have come to the notice of the organisation.

About 59.5% families worked in the band of 1-30 days with most of them for 11-20 days. It needs to be addressed as to why in this Fifth Scheduled area with massive distress migration, the tribal population can't access MGNREGA wage employment beyond one month.

One of the reasons for many people preferring migration or working with big farmers

Deserted row of Sahariya houses in Ranipura, Shivpuri. A pre-planned labour calendar under NREGA will mitigate their distress migration



to MGNREGA has been the undue delay in payments. There have been delays ranging from 16 days to more than 90 days. During the current year 2010-11, there are 2,900 muster rolls wherein wages worth Rs 1,86,97,253 have been delayed beyond the stipulated period specified by MGNREGA Act. The situation was no better in 2009-10 where Rs 5,04,40,786 in wages through 4,699 muster

rolls were delayed.

In areas of Shivpuri district where Niswarth works, delays have worsened since it was mandated that all payments be made through banks and post offices. Half of the job card-holders here don't have bank accounts, and are thus effectively excluded from undertaking any MGNREGA work.

Grievance redressal mechanism, transparency and accountability mechanism

Although delay of payments continue to plague MGNREGA implementation, this problem doesn't seem to have an immediate solution since work often overlaps many levels in a department, and sometimes, spreads across various departments.

MGNREGA lays special emphasis on transparency and accountability, but authorities give priority to ensuring that the allotments are utilised than in guaranteeing that employment demands are met. Sarpanchs play their own politics ensuring that their kith and kin get priority in reaping the MGNREGA benefits bypassing those for whom the programme is designed for in the first place. Vigilance committees exist only on paper and social audits are often outsourced. Panchayats are not being able to provide wages on time because lack of human resources at the district level translates to inordinate delays in measurements often stretching from 2 to 3 months. In some areas, payments have been delayed where the forest department carried out the work. It's been noted that wherever consortium partners are the project implementation agencies, payments have been made on time.

Having exhausted all other means for grievance redressal, PSS took a cue from an earlier Consortium meeting and decided to launch a post card campaign. Around 600 families that had complaints like delayed works, delayed payments et al, sent post cards to the Union minister for rural development. The minister in turn wrote to district collector, Shivpuri, who launched an investigation that saw the grievances being addressed and erring officers punished.

In Khandwa, where partner Spandan operates, social audits are not being conducted in an inclusive manner, and information was hard to come by. Muster rolls are seldom kept at worksites leading to discrepancies in attendance. A disclosure made by the state government shows that no complaints have been filed and the minutes of Social Audit meetings are not uploaded on the site. All this has created a sense of disillusionment among most of the wage earners.

To address this, in the Bagli block, SPS has organised a series of jan sunwais where villagers get to interact with the CEO of the district Panchayat and SDM. In the latest of such meetings, around 1,500 people participated in the session held on December 16 in village Agra, volleying their complaints at the CEO. The official took meticulous notes of the complaints and ensured fast-track redressal of the grievances.

In Shivpuri, grievance redressal mechanisms are honoured more in their breach. Programme officers, who in turn are shielded by district officials, protect Panchayat officials.

Participatory Planning and Implementation of Works

In Kharbar, Chingwah, Dubrikalan and Deva village Panchayats falling under the Kusmi block, GSS assisted villagers in making a shelf of works, which was eventually approved by the Gram Sabhas in 2009-10.

Details of the work are as follows in Table 2.20

Work	Amount	Expenditure (in Rs Lakhs)	Status
Farm bunding	26400 rm	15-585	Completed
Ponds	5 nos	12-088	Completed
Pond deepening	4 nos	4-999	Completed
Waste Weir	2 ux	2-547	Completed
Canal building	500 rm	4-591	Completed
Wells	1 nos	1-285	Completed
Check dam	15 nos	4-515	Completed



Pathadevgaon, where FES facilitated construction of a water harvesting structure



An FES facilitated farm bund at Jhulup, Mandla

FES reports that the MP Rural Livelihood Programme has tried to introduce elements of participatory planning especially in tribal districts like Mandla. The induction of development professionals from the beginning has helped in developing village level perspective plans obtained through a participatory process. In Mandla, FES has been appointed as technical support team and it has supported villages and Panchayats to develop their own micro-plans. The micro-plans for earth works and watershed treatment are depicted on the cadastral maps. These micro plans have been developed with the help of a trained cadre of para workers. Later, these micro plans were presented in Gram Sabha for approval. After getting approved, the plans are submitted for obtaining technical sanction from the Government.

Pros and cons of these method

- a) The focus is still more on utilisation than the quality of work. This is the major criteria for evaluation of project. Utilisation being the major criteria, various development agencies keeps quality on the back-burner, leading to inefficiencies.
- b) Planning is done to ensure 100 days of work. However, it does not ensure all works to be taken up in a year, even though they can be achieved in a single year.
- c) Even though plans are being made at the village and Panchayat level, they are hardly being followed, leading to frustration among villagers. The line departments are asked to sanction works as per the blueprint from the top. For instance, field bunding was major focus of

the State Government in the year 2009-10. Therefore only those projects were promoted which provided for field bunds. The other demands of the people articulated through plans were neglected.

FES observes that PRIs are largely acting as a rubber stamp for line departments' own proposals. The lack of capacity building of PRI representatives also plays its role. Moreover, the power of removing Sarpanch lies with SDM, which makes Panchayats weak in their equations with the bureaucracy particularly in the context of Madhya Pradesh. SHT Mandla has been a part of the planning process at block level that has been initiated by the district in 2009. The team has conducted six trainings of PRI representatives in last three years on the aspects of watershed development in order to improve the technical soundness of planning.

However, the organisation feels that the funds obtained from MGNREGA are not enough to ensure net-planning, which would have covered each and every plot in a watershed approach. Once the plans are approved, there are procedural delays from the Government, leading to slow implementation. As part of a pilot tried by the organisation in terms of planning and implementation of works, FES team has tried to inform the planning process with the help of GIS technology.

In the villages that it operates, SPS helps Panchayats in opening bank accounts, prepare applications, and carry out tasks besides dispensing wages. Imlipura village is a case in point, where people were initially showing scant interest in MGNREGA works being carried out by the Panchayats. Upon a request from the sarpanch, SPS organised a Sarvajanic Sabha where the concerns of workers and the problems faced by the Panchayat were discussed in detail. The sarpanch made a promise of task employment for wages of Rs 100 per day and payment within 15 days. Post this around 70-80 workers turned up for work for three months.

Appreciating SPS' efforts, more Panchayats have approached the organisation to devise micro plans. This process is now underway.

PRIs could play a vital role in bringing workers closer to the administration/government. To ensure the success of MGNREGA, PRIs should:

- a) Build awareness among workers regarding their entitlements under the Act. PRIs could assist workers in getting job cards issued, opening bank accounts, ensuring worksite facilities, training on tasks and keep a regularly updated muster through meetings and rallies.
- b) PRIs should help in the preparation of plans and training. They usually tend to focus roads, wells, and deepening ponds. Panchayats lack the human resources needed to plan and carry out technical works, but can spread awareness among people on works like farm bunding. For instance, while an irrigation pond could benefit 5-6 farmers, PRIs should help Panchayats to facilitate water distribution agreements. PRIs could also train Panchayats on task-based works, and could also help in helping devise plans in villages that intersect with those under the forest department. The plans could be submitted to the forest dept and implemented in line with the Forest Rights Act.

In the Bagli block, SPS has planned works for 10 Panchayats under MGNREGA, valued at Rs 5.08 crore. Of this, projects worth Rs 1.29 crore has been implemented along with the Panchayats. Details of the implemented and planned projects are as follows:

Table 2.21

Item	Unit	Units	Cost (Rs.)	Completed units
Soil Conservation and Land Improvement				
Contour Trench	Ha	160	1230635	
Contour Bunds	Ha	585	3630934	120
Boulder Checks (7m)	No	715	442123	
Boulder Checks (12m)	No	735	562050	71
Farm Bunding	Ha	1780	10167820	667
Composting/Biogas	No	378	1934326	221
Water Harvesting				
New stop dams	No	9	6182191	
Stop dam repair	No	3	832096	
Earthen dams repair	No	4	1572010	
New earthen dams	No	50	13097248	11
Farm ponds	No	56	2730918	18
Plantation, Horticulture				
Ratanjot	No	336500	2251943	566918
Horticulture	No	14800	2899269	3096

Convergence

Convergence in Mandla district is influenced by UNDP's state level project. According to FES, MPRLP and many NGOs are also trying to achieve convergence at state level. But convergence of MGNREGA with other schemes is still an exception rather than a norm. Most agencies including NGOs get co-opted for utilisation of the budget rather than focusing upon justified utilisation. Many a time this works against the very purpose of convergence, which is to ensure maximum benefit with converged efforts and reduced inefficiency. Plans are not being used as instrument for convergence. The sanctions for the same work under MGNREGA are often granted to many agencies, leading to conflicts on ground. Ideally, plans should guide and help in integrating efforts.

Suggestions in regard to convergence policy and practice in MGNREGA

- Efforts for convergence should mainstream community demands. For the purpose, federations of village institutions and Panchayat representatives should be at the centre of convergence efforts.
- Village level plans and Panchayat level plans should drive the convergence efforts.
- Fifty-two NGOs work in the state as programme implementation agencies, on invite by

the Madhya Pradesh government, including SPS. These organisations have been vested with the responsibility of watershed development, Narmada Samagra Cluster Level Micro Plan. The state line departments are implementing these programmes as well.

Implementation of schemes has picked up speed thanks to this convergence. Communities are now closer to the idea of MGNREGA after watershed programmes were implemented with community participation at the village level. As part of this convergence, Samaj Pragati Sahayog is making cluster level micro-plans in two districts – Indore and Khargaon – on invitation by the state government. This process is in its initial stages now.

SPS Convergence Case Study

Name: Mathurabhai Bhajjuram

Village: Borkhaliya

SHG name: Saikrupa Savings Group

Society: Milk Co-operative for Women, Marya

Loan availed through the SHG: Rs 18,000

Loan outstanding: Rs 275

Milk sold: 485 litres

Income earned from Milk: Rs 9622 (Aug 16, 2010 to Feb 10, 2011)

Mathurabhai's family consists of her husband and five children. She inherited 2 bighas of rocky land, unsuitable for cultivation, and for livelihood the couple took to agricultural labour. With the setting up of the SHG, she gained access to credit and the family broke free from the grips of usurious money lenders.

It was then that the SPS-run livestock programme started a milk society in the area. Mathurabhai availed a loan for Rs.8,000 to buy milch buffaloes, and she sold the milk back to the society. MGNREGA had been launched in the district, but the entitlements were not yet secured. In the meantime, collection shortages downed the shutters on the milk society. Her livelihood efforts took a hit, but yet she was able to secure nutritional security in her household thanks to the milch animals. But with incomes drying up, she was finding it hard to pay back the SHG loan.

In April 2007, under MGNREGA, which was being implemented by SPS in the area, Pala Bandi work was undertaken in her land reducing the risk of top soil run off, which enhanced productivity. Now she was able to harvest vegetables like chillies, cabbages and onions besides toor dal. In 2010, under MGNREGA a pucca compost pit was also built in her land.

In this area, cattle is largely dependent on forest grazing while those with



irrigation access used to feed their animals corn fodder. Taking account of this, under NREGA, SPS' livestock department distributed free seeds of corn that can ensure multiple harvests for fodder.

In July 2009, Mathurabai sowed 2 kilos of this seed in her land, and followed that up with 3 kilos a year later, ensuring fodder for her cattle.

SPS' livestock programme re-started the milk society in August 2010 on public demand and with public cooperation. This has gone a long way in ensuring livelihood security of the people.

Between August 2010 and Feb 2011, Mathurabhai, after meeting her family's consumption needs, managed to sell 485 litres of milk to the society raking in Rs 9,622, roughly equal to the Rs 10,000 promised by MGNREGA.

In 2008-2009, her household also landed 76 days of work under NREGA; in 2009-10, 38 days; and in 2010-11, 72 days. Thanks to the combined support of the livestock programme and MGNREGA, the family that was once struggling to make ends is today being able to educate their children. Mathurabhai also managed to marry a son and a daughter off, incurring an expense of Rs 60,000. Another son, and a daughter have passed the 10th standard. The youngest one has appeared for the 10th exam and is funding her own studies by taking up stitching work.

Building Partnerships and Engaging with Implementation Machinery

Under FES, SHT Mandla has been trying to engage with Government machinery, especially in the Niwas cluster. The team has supported Government engineers in planning, monitoring and evaluating watershed interventions. The team has also been convening block level coordination committees with the help of several government departments for convergence as well as for engaging with government machinery in both clusters of Niwas and Bichiya. However, the efforts are yet to bear tangible results.

In MP, the MGNREGA programme revolves largely around watershed development. The state government has made nine sub-programmes for soil and water conservation and plantation. In Dewas district, Panchayats have prioritised digging new wells, rural road connectivity and plantation.

SPS is ensuring that beneficiaries of wells are being provided with bank credit and irrigation facilities like motor pump set, engine set and pipes. Alongside, through line departments, irrigation is ensured, apart from building of stop dams and ponds, and horticulture work.

Village Imilipura

In this village that falls under the Bagli block of Dewas district, MGNREGA works were being initially implemented by the Panchayat. However, workers were not being paid minimum wages because of lack of experience of the Panchayat in undertaking task-based works. Even these wages were being delayed leaving workers disinterested in MGNREGA works. Pressure was also building up from the block level since the Panchayats were unable to spend much on MGNREGA works. In this context, the sarpanch

of the village approached SPS, whose Watershed Committee sat down with both workers and Panchayat office bearers.

Villagers complained that minimum wages were not being paid, task-based valuations were not transparent, wages were being delayed and worksites lacked basic facilities. On the other side, Panchayats complained that workers were not turning up at the site and that group evaluation hindered completion of tasks.

SPS' Watershed Committee took up these issues with the gram Panchayat and the sub engineer who gave details about various kinds of tasks that could ensure minimum wages. It was also decided that instead of group evaluation, every worker's task will be individually evaluated that would ensure minimum wages to those who had completed their tasks. The process took its time, but the upshot was that villagers were satisfied and once again started interest in demanding MGNREGA work. It also brought people and the Panchayat together. In two months, two ponds in Imlipura were deepened under MGNREGA ensuring minimum wages for workers.

A public hearing (jan sunwayi) was organized in SPS work areas to bring MGNREGA beneficiaries face to face with PRI leadership and government functionaries. Around 1500 people participated in this hearing held in village Agra and discussed the problems with the CEO, Zila Panchayat, Dewas



A farm pond constructed under MGNREGA in Bagli, with SPS support. Such farm ponds provide protective irrigation to the fields of adivasi farmers.



2.5 JHARKHAND

Vikas Sahyog Kendra (VSK) has been part of the National Consortium for MGNREGA from 2008. It is a rights-based organisation established in 2000 by a group of young activists in the Palamau district in Jharkhand. VSK's vision is to create a poverty free society and empower the vulnerable and voiceless to assert their rights with respect to food and livelihood security. As part of that mission, VSK is actively engaged in effective implementation of social security schemes such as old age pension, Antyodaya, Annapurna, mid-day-meal scheme and ICDS. It works towards strengthening village institutions such as schools and Anganwadies, and strives to support communities in accessing resources as per the provisions of the Forest Rights Act. VSK also works in the area of health, education and women rights.

Vikas Sahyog Kendra is working on MGNREGA since the inception of the Scheme in the Palamau district from the year 2006. The scheme took another three years to pick up steam. For effective implementation of the programme, the organisation has strengthened the existing local community-based institutions and formed a network to initiate social actions for guarding the rights guaranteed under MGNREGA. VSK is working collectively with this network and also independently through 'MGNREGA Help Centres' exclusively established as Resource Centres for addressing the right based issues of the wage seekers.

Table 2.22: Area profile of the Organisation: The organisation is working in 3 districts covering 8 Blocks and 36 Panchayats.

Organisation	Working Districts	Working Blocks	No. of GPs	Major communities working with
Vikas Sahyog Kendra (VSK)	Palamau	5 Blocks (Manatu, Chhattarpur, Bisrampur, Chainpur, Satbarwa)	20	ST - Kherwar, Oraon, Chero: Primitive Tribes - Parhiya, Korwa. SC - Bhuiyan, Chamar, Dhusad, Dhobi: BC - Muslim, Yadav.
	Latehar	2 Blocks (Manika, Latehar)	8	Do
	Garhawa	1 Block (Meral)	8	Do
Total	3	8	36	

Consortium organisations' experiences and achievements in implementation of MGNREGA is discussed under different themes as presented below;

Status of Securing Basic Entitlements as Per the Act

Learnings and experiences gained by the Organisation in securing the basic entitlements as per the Act are discussed under various sub-themes as mentioned below.

Demand-based work (Work application, receipt and unemployment allowances etc.)

In Palamau, people are aware about the scheme, but only to a certain extent. Many were aware only of the provision of 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in the Act, and were in the dark about their entitlements, minimum wages and other provisions. People are also unaware of the procedural details required for availing rights-based guaranteed employment. A dysfunctional PRI system existing in the state is a major drawback in creating awareness

among people regarding this landmark Act.

VSK started working on MGNREGA since 2005, confronting the challenges associated with its implementation in this backward district. Despite sustained efforts for three years, many issues persisted until 2008. They were:

- No allotment of work within 15 days of request, system dysfunctional at Panchayat as well as block levels
- Not a single complaint was disposed within 7 days
- Panchayat sevak and Rozgar sevak were not coming regularly to the Panchayat office
- The labourers' application for work demand and other complaints were not being accepted
- Wages were not being paid within 15 days
- The muster roll was not being made available at the worksite
- There is no role of Gram Sabha in the selection, implementation and monitoring of the schemes. Middlemen and contractors were involved in each and every MGNREGA work.

With the continuous engagement of Vikas Sahyog Kendra, some of these issues were addressed in the operating Panchayats. Awareness levels among the community with respect to MGNREGA have improved, and household participation has increased. Most of the labourers are now demanding employment within 15 days of application. Wage payment within 15 days is also streamlined in the VSK operating Panchayats. Rozgar sevak is also regularly coming to the Panchayat office to collect work demand applications and is ensuring that the applicants are getting jobs within 15 days.

This significant change was achieved through operationalisation of 'MGNREGA Help Centres', apart from other initiatives, established and run by Vikas Sahyog Kendra at Panchayat and Block levels since 2009. The first Help Centre became operational in May 2009 in the Chhattarpur block. The Help Centres are playing key role in creating awareness on basic entitlements, process and procedures of accessing entitlements under MGNREGA. The organisation through Help Centres so far assisted 3228 labourers including 1610 women and 1618 men in getting 87,703 work days worth Rs 80,20,000 as wages. In 2009-10, the Help Centres helped 435 families including 194 women headed households in getting job cards and employment to 4837 labourers including 2279 women. Further, the labourers received wages to the tune of Rs 47,79,443 between March to July 2010. In the current year on an average 50 to 60 working days per year per house hold were recorded in operating Panchayats which is higher than the corresponding state average. By seeing the performance of MGNREGA Help Centres, 36 more such centres were opened in 36 Panchayats covering 150 villages in the year 2010.

Further, with the help of MGNREGA Help Centre, in the year 2009- 2010 in Meral block in Garhwa district, 51 families availed 100 days of

Rally by women workers demanding work



work (24, 15 and 12 labourers from Karkoma, Tisar Tetuka and Lowadag villages respectively) and 500 families availed 70 days of work in the same year. The organisation has noticed women participation on an average above 60% of total wage seekers at most of the worksites.

Table 2.23 The current status of MGNREGA in operating area of VSK

Particulars	Male	Female	Total
No. of labourers in 172 groups	2300	1600	3900
No. of job card holders	2300	1600	3900
Other than group labourers applied for job cards	580	251	831
No. of labourers applied for work for average 50 days	1800	700	2500
No. of labourers worked average for 40 days	2100	1350	3450
No. of labourers worked for 100 days	42	28	70
No. of labourers having their accounts in P.O./Bank	2300	1600	3900
No. of labourers got dues of pending wages	1274 labourers for Rs.15, 49, 750/		
No. of labourers got unemployment allowance (Rs.1,38,000/-)	55	23	78
Job card released from the Rozgar Sevak			298
Total MGNREGA Help Centres	45 Panchayats		
Land Development Work in the villages	Road=63; Water harvesting structure=95		

Worksite facilities

The follow up efforts made by the Vikas Sahyog Kendra resulted in improved provision of worksite facilities such as provision of drinking water, shade and first aid box. The issue of providing crèche facility was raised in the Social Audit meeting in 2010 and was consistently brought to the attention of block and district level officials but to no avail.

Timely payment of wages and wage rates

Like in many states, delayed payment is a persistent problem in Jharkhand. Shortage of Junior Engineers at the block level to take measurements immediately after completion of works is the main factor for the delay in payments. In some instances, the Junior Engineers keep the MB book with them at their residence causing inconvenience and many of them demand money for entries in MB books. On this issue, social action programs were conducted by the people based organisations like Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (GSA). As a result, 917 laborers belonging to 50 different villages received wages Rs.9,50,230 which were pending since long time. In spite of regular delay in payments, state government of Jharkhand is neither taking any serious action against the issue nor paying the compensation to the wage seekers for delay payments. Vikas Sahyog Kendra is actively working towards streamlining of payments and pressurising the government to provide compensation where ever applicable.

One such success story of providing compensation to 90 labour for delay payment has been reported in Manika Block. Labours in the VSK operating Panchayats are highly satisfied with the support provided by the VSK in accessing the entitlements and guiding them to strengthen their livelihoods for motivating them to take up income generating activities and developing assets.

Labour union victory over delayed payment

In Manika block, 90 labourers who worked under MGNREGA received wages after a delay of 2-4 months. Vikas Sahyog Kendra encouraged the labourers to lodge a complaint with Assistant Labour Commissioner for compensation for delayed payment. The labour commissioner then instructed the District Administration to arrange a labour court in Manika Block on 27-8-2010. In the labour court, both the labour union and the implementing agency were examined and a decision was taken to pay compensation @ Rs. 2000/- to each worker, i.e a total of Rs.180000 to 90 labourers.

Malti Devi is a 45-year-old Dalit woman from Lowadag village in Jharkhand. She and her husband Shrawan Ram worked under MGNREGA for 109 days in a year and together earned Rs 10,172. She feels proud that her earnings are being used for treating her son's chronic illness and also her health problems. They purchased an ox to put to use in their field, thus saving money for hiring ox during agriculture season.

Jagni Devi w/o Ratu Ram is a 44-year-old Dalit woman residing in Lowadag village. Her family completed 100 days of MGNREGA employment in the year 2009-10. The couple received payments through the post office. From their earning, they spent Rs.2000 on family health problems and Rs.3000 towards purchasing of food grains. Jagni Devi also purchased ornaments worth Rs 1500 from her own earnings. The couple are happy with the way the MGNREGA programme is being implemented in their village.

Grievance redressal mechanism, transparency and accountability mechanism

Effective implementation of grievance redressal mechanism is lacking in the implementation of the Scheme by the state government. Social Audits were being conducted once in a while, completely deviating from prescribed schedule. Though government orders are there to involve NGOs in Social Audits, reputed NGOs were not being selected for partnering with government functionaries for conducting Social Audit. State government has also introduced a toll free help line number for lodging complaints. VSK is motivating and training labourers to use the system for complaint booking. However, most of the times the help line number is engaged and doesn't respond. Even if the complaint got registered, it will never be addressed especially at district level. Unlike district help line system, the state help line number responds to some extent.

MGNREGA Help Centres established by Vikas Sahyog Kendra at Panchayat level are playing a key role in addressing the issues of implementation of the scheme in operating area. Wage seekers are lodging complaints with Help Centre that forwards them to Block and District level functionaries. With the support of Help Centre, wage seekers' complaints were resolved within 7 days. If there is a delay in response at the Block level, the Help Centre forwards the complaint to the District Collector, marking a copy each to Secretary MoRD, State Commissioner for MGNREGA and member of MGNREGA Council. This approach of addressing grievances found to be fast and effective. The Help Centre plays the role of

facilitator to both labour and implementing agency in asserting the rights of labourers. Prior to the establishment of the Help Centres, a large number of applications used to get dumped in the Panchayat and Block offices for long time.

In the year 2010, a central enquiry team visited MGNREGA Help Centre and found large number of complaints on irregularities occurred at various steps of implementation lodged by the labourers. The team was surprised to see the role played by the Help Centre in addressing the grievances and also the faith and confidence of labourers in getting quick response for the complaints. The central team directed the District Collector to take strong action against the culprits. As per the directions of the central team, an FIR was booked against a Junior Engineer and the Assistant Engineer. BDO of Manika Block was penalised Rs.1000 as per Article 25 of the MGNREG Act. Further, Panchayat Sevak and Rojgar Sevak were also suspended during the enquiry for the complaints lodged at Help Centre.

Overall Strategy followed and activities taken up by VSK in securing basic entitlements of MGNREGA

- One of the important strategies adopted by the VSK for the effective implementation of MGNREGA is by strengthening the existing local community institutions like Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (GSA), Mahila Adhikar Sangharsh Samithi (MASS), Pahari Kshetra Uthan Samiti (PSUS), Jharkhand Viklang Manch, Banvasi Adhikar Sangharsh Sameti and Jharkhand Garamin Mazdoor Sangh and networking them. They were empowered and capacitated to take social actions for accessing community rights under MGNREGA.

- With an aim to access 100 days of right to employment, genuine labourers were organised in to Labour Groups of 20 laborers in each group. More than one labour group also exists in some villages. VSK built the capacities of the labour groups through special training programs. These Labour groups are exclusive to MGNREGA works. A total of 160 such labour groups have been formed and trained on process and procedures of MGNREGA including planning for works in the Gram Sabha. A total of 3900 labourers of the labour groups across the operating villages have received their job cards. The empowered labour groups are now demanding works.



Banvasi Utthan samethi meeting

- Apart from MGNREGA labour groups, VSK has also formed Labour Unions (Mazdoor Union) with all categories of labour force exist in the village such as casual labours, agricultural labourers, MGNREGA labourers, rickshaw pullers, auto drivers etc. Labour groups in turn become a part of a larger labour union. The idea is to provide collective strength to all categories of labourers including MGNREGA labourers to fight for their rights. VSK

is providing backstop support to both MGNREGA labour groups and labour unions in accessing their rights.

- Provided continuous training to labour groups and labour unions for strengthening them on process and procedures of MGNREGA. Most of the labourers are illiterate, but they are now trained to put their signatures in the muster roll.
- Developed trained workforce to carry forward the programme. Active youth were trained and organised at village, Block and District level. Some of them are also providing services in the form of cadre groups, mate, labourer groups and mazdoor sangh.
- By seeing the performance and success of 'MGNREGA Help Centres' at Panchayat and Block level to act as resource centre for MGNREGA, other social security programmes of the state government such as Antyodaya, Annapurna, Lal-card holder, Emergency food support, Mid Day Meal, Widow Pension, Handicapped Pension, Old Age Pension, ICDS and PHC of the state government were also linked to the centre. The Help Centre is assisting the labour groups in filing of application forms, forms for job cards, applications for demanding jobs, wage dues if any, applying for unemployment allowances and registering complaints etc. Within two months of establishing, the Help Centre facilitated registration of maximum number of households in a Panchayat.
- Conducting awareness creation campaign among the tribals and dalit communities through discussion, posters, booklets and video film. Around 5962 people in the project villages, including 3249 male and 2713 female, are now thus aware about their entitlements under MGNREGA.
- Involving local community based institutions such as labour groups, trained youth cadre and network of peoples' organisation in awareness and campaigning programmes.
- Social action against misappropriation of funds and documentation of experiences

Participatory Planning and Implementation of Works

Role of PRIs

Jharkhand hasn't had Panchayat elections in 35 years. Therefore, there is no Panchayati Raj Institutions in the state. About 75 percent of the MGNREGA projects/schemes are being implemented by the BDO, and respective line departments such as Forest department and Irrigation department through DRDA are executing the rest 25%. Neither the PRIs nor the Gram Sabha are playing any role in planning of works. Respective departments are preparing the work plans at district and block offices and getting the approval for implementation. VSK has been providing training to the communities on the participatory planning process, so that they can actively participate at least in the current process and identify works as per their priorities.

Various Methods of planning adopted (project mode, watershed mode etc.)

In general in most Panchayats, the Block and District officials are preparing the plans at Block office: sometimes the District Collector also interferes with the planning process. However, the community is not involved in identification of works and preparing the projects in any way. A District Perspective Plan for Palamau was prepared in 2006 with the help of NGOs. Based on the perspective plan, annual plans are being prepared. In general, Gram Sabha will be held once in a year to select the schemes as shelf of works. But in practice, the

meeting lasts for one or two hours and is dominated by middlemen while the community is kept away from the planning process. Much deviations in implementation of works from perspective plan and village plan are frequently noticed. The progress in implementation of works is very slow. Many projects are yet to take off and some are left hanging. This is the general scenario regarding the planning process.

In order to motivate people to assume a larger role in the planning process, VSK adopted the strategy for planning of works through 'Lok Adhikar Yojna'. The organisation on their own prepared the Yojna for 50 villages by adopting participatory approach using PRA methods etc. The plans were accepted and finalised in the Gram Sabha specially convened for this purpose. However, as such there is no MoU with the Government to prepare such plans. But the government is bound to accept whatever plans passed and submitted by the Gram Sabha. VSK is hoping that the Yojana will be carried out in 2011.

Priority and development of resources of the poor

This region has been experiencing drought like situation for three consecutive years now. In this situation priority must be given to works related to drought mitigation. Till now, 95 different water harvesting structures have been constructed benefiting ST/SC families. VSK is advocating with the state government to develop private lands of SC/ST s under MGNREGA.

Quality as well as productivity of the investment

Vikas Sahyog Kendra regularly took to the notice of the Commissionerate of Palamau that the quality and productivity of the MGNREGA schemes/works are not satisfactory. So far in the project villages 63 roads and more than 95 water harvesting structures were constructed. However, it was observed that quality wise these structures, except open wells, are very poor. So far, only 'open well scheme' is taken up in individual private lands. Still a lot of work needs to be done on this front.



Women workers at work

Convergence

Member organisations engagement and experiences with convergence policies

The Ministry of Rural Development is preparing guidelines for convergence between MGNREGA and the schemes of Ministry of Environment and Forest in the state. In view of the inter-sectoral nature of MGNREGA, the MoRD had constituted a Task Force to explore effective modalities of convergence with MGNREGA. The Task Force comprised of representative from Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Environment and Forest, Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Human Resources, Ministry of Women

and Child Development. The MoEF was identified as an important partner to MGNREGA and more than 10% of MGNREGA works are being executed by them.

The convergence programs such as afforestation, tree plantation, water conservation, land development and construction of rural roads are about to be operationalised in Palamau district. Organisation as such is not yet engaging with the convergence policies as the status of basic entitlements itself has to be improved.

Building Partnerships and Engaging with the Implementation Machinery (Government)

Models of engagement with the local government units

Vikas Sahyog Kendra regularly organises interface meetings at Block and District level with Block and District level functionaries and also the community to discuss the issues related to MGNREGA.

The people's institution Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (GSA) organises weekly meeting with the BDO and monthly meeting with District Collector to which VSK also attends.

At state level the GSA along with 'JMGNREGA Watch' discuss the major issues regularly. One of the VSK staff is the member of the executive body of the 'JMGNREGA Watch'. The members of the Watch are working as a member of the social audit programme in their respective districts and also participate as a resource person to pressurize the state government for the proper reporting during the social audits. JMGNREGAW is a powerful tool for state level policy advocacy. The achievements of the JMGNREGAW are the regularization of social audit programmes in the state through Gram Sabha; Advocacy for the appointment of JE, Rozgar Sevak and Menth; Implementation of Time-Motion Study (i.e. 78 cft for normal soil and 54 cft for hard soil); Opening of MGNREGA Help Centres at Panchayat level; Release of compensation against the dues wages and accidental death.

(The JMGNREGAW is functioning in Jharkhand since 2006 for the better implementation of MGNREGA in the state with a focus to assert the right of labour. Shri Jawahar Mehata (Treasurer of VSK) is the member of Jharkhand MGNREGA Watch. MGNREGAW is a state level informal group comprising of individual activists, Civil Society Organisations, Community Based Organisations, interested individuals representing from 22 districts. The JMGNREGAW organises its annual meeting every year in February. However, the state government gives due recognition to the Watch group, but till now there is no formal MoU between the state government and JMGNREGAW.)

Two members of VSK are also involved as resource persons in the Social Audit programmes in three districts of Palamau commissionerate.

Policy Advocacy Models Adopted By the Member Organisation and Achievements

The VSK is also involved in the formulation of guide lines/modalities for providing compensation, unemployment allowance, delayed payment, compensation against accidental death of the labourers, fixing of task rates and development of training modules for Social Audit etc.

On behalf of MGNREGA Watch, VSK team participates as an observer in the public hearing during Social Audit. They also submit their reports to the District Collector and the state level authority for action. The MGNREGA Watch put pressure on the government to take action against the culprits as per the decisions taken in the public hearings.



The meeting of a women's self-help group in Palamau organised by VSK

Thanks to VSK's pressure, the government has appointed a Block Programme Officer (BPO) and Rozgar Sevaks at vacant places.

The VSK is involved in the time-motion study with respect to fixing of Rural SSR specific to types of soils against the existing common wage rate to all Soil types. VSK succeed in fixing Rs.54 per cft for normal soil and Rs.73 per cft for hard soil in place of blanket rate of Rs.100 per cft common to all soil types.

The Jharkhand government agreeing to implement the VSK model of 'MGNREGA Help Centre' on a pilot basis in collaboration

with VSK in Manika block in Latehar district is a major achievement for policy advocacy in the state this year.

2.6 UTTAR PRADESH

Dr. Kripa Shankar, an economist, and Justice P.N. Sapru, established Arthik Anusandhan Kendra (AAK) in 1968. In its initial years, AAK's activities were centred on research on poverty and policy advocacy. The organisation studied and analysed several government schemes aimed at the weaker sections of the society and took up policy advocacy with the state government of UP and to the Planning Commission of India.

The goal of AAK is 'to build an exploitation-free society' with the objective of social and economic development of dalits and marginalised sections by creating mass awareness and self-reliance amongst the people through participatory processes. The organisation is building capacities of such communities for collective decision-making.

The organisation works in the Mirzapur district of Uttar Pradesh. MGNREGA was launched in Mirzapur district in 2006, and from June 2008, the organisation has been active on this front in 21 Panchayats of Hallia Block.

Table 2.24: Area profile of the organisation:

Organisation	Working Districts	Working Blocks	No. of GPs	Major communities working with
Arthik Anusandhan Kendra (AAK)	Mirzapur	1 Block (Hallia block)	21	Dalits and other marginalized sections of the society

The People's Action for National Integration (PANI), a leading voluntary development organisation in Uttar Pradesh, works in 16 districts of eastern and central regions of the state directly as well as with partner CSOs. Founded in 1986 by some prominent social workers with a Gandhian perspective of integrated development, PANI has promoted integrated and participatory initiatives for community empowerment and development. The network accords the highest priority to women, children and the dalits and other marginalised sections of the society.

Sashakti, a thematic intervention of PANI, focuses on community empowerment with a special emphasis on women by organising them thus paving way for a people-centred development advocacy. With the launch of MGNREGA in 2005, PANI got a potent tool in its endeavour to empower rural women by building their community-based organisations (CBOs) at different levels and developing leadership to facilitate the realisation of right to work, right to food and right to information. To empower rural women PANI has developed a programme for right to work called Empowering Rural Women (ERW) with the support of Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, Mumbai.

Status of Securing Basic Entitlements as Per the Act

Though AAK is not directly implementing the programme, it supports both the implementing agency in carrying out works as demand driven as well as helps labourers achieve their basic entitlements as envisioned in the Act.

The PANI project to Empower Rural Women (ERW) has been implemented in 10 districts of UP covering 368 Gram Panchayats, with a specific focus on securing right to work under MGNREGA. A total of 83,563 households were given work under MGNREGA in FY 2010-11, and the number of total working days stand at 8,47,510. Total number of average working days per the household is 75 and total wage received stands at Rs 7,15,32,511.

Demand-based work (Work application, receipt and unemployment allowance etc)

Before the involvement of Arthik Anusandhan Kendra in Hallia Block, MGNREGA implementation here was mired in several problems. Even the non-negotiable aspects of the Act were being ignored during implementation. The ground realities with respect to implementation of MGNREGA in the year 2008 are mentioned below;

- Very few Gram Panchayats were receiving work demand applications from labourers. Majority of the Panchayats refused to accept the work applications claiming that they don't have funds to take up the works. For instance, in the Kotaar Gram Panchayat in Hallia block, the Pradhan refused to accept the applications of the workers saying there were no funds with the Panchayat. Angry workers took their applications to Block level and submitted it to the BDO. The BDO accepted their application but didn't give them receipts saying that work would be provided only after the receipt of funds. But no person was given any work in that Panchayat for two months.
- Panchayats were neither accepting applications nor providing receipts out of fear of providing unemployment allowance.
- Most of the time wage-seekers were not provided work within 15 days and no labour has received unemployment allowance.

Arthik Anusandhan Kendra (AAK) took this as challenge and pulled out all stops streamlining the implementation of MGNREGA in the Panchayats in Hallia Block and over the last few years the organisation has been able to bring about some remarkable changes. Several meetings with labourers and campaigning programmes in the Panchayats were taken up by AAK, and wage-seekers were organised in to group (Sangathans) of 25-30 each. One of the active members of the group acts as the president. AAK built the capacities of Sangathan with respect to MGNREGA entitlements, procedures and process, and today, the Sangathan



A PRA in progress led by AAK volunteers at Halia



Work at a PANI operating village

is playing key role in securing the basic entitlements of labours.

AAK has also established 'Community Based Information Centres' in 21 Gram Panchayats. These centres are playing key role in implementing the MGNREGA as demand driven scheme. The labourers' group (Sangathans) is running the centre by entrusting the day to day responsibility to one of the active members of the group. Work application forms, a copy of Muster Roll (as model to show fellow labourers), Right to Information application forms, posters, pamphlets and books regarding MGNREGA are available at these centres. Through all these efforts, the community is now empowered enough to demand their rights.

Major achievements up to 2009-10 are:

- Around 1 lakh people benefitted from the MGNREGA awareness campaign conducted by the organisation.
- Helped in issuing job-cards to 90% households.
- Almost 90% of all households have taken back their job-cards that were in the possession of Gram Pradhan and implementing agency.
- On an average, households have got 42 days of work in a year. Though this figure is small, is still higher than the state average of 29 days of work per household in the year 2009-10.
- Savings bank accounts have been opened for 70% of registered households.
- Successfully curtailed migration of traditionally migrating households from 22% to 16%.

Average working days under MGNREGA in Uttar Pradesh is 27.90 days, but in the PANI project areas, this stands at 75 days, a clear indication that the strategy of forming women's groups at the grassroots level has paid off.

In the PANI project areas, all payment of wages is through cheque and 1,129 households have applied for unemployment allowances directly to the person concerned.

Worksite facilities

Labourers are now aware about the worksite provisions and are demanding the same. Shade, water and medicines are now made available atleast at a few worksites. So far crèche facility is not being provided at any of the worksites in Hallia Block. *Sangathans* with the support of AAK are putting pressure on the District and Block officials in this regard. The issue has also been brought to the notice of Secretary, Rural Development, during his visit

to Hallia Block in August 2010.

Safe drinking water is available in the ERW project areas of PANI and mates have been appointed by the Panchayat. First aid box with adequate material for emergency treatment for minor injuries and other health hazards too have been provided at the work-site.



Shade at an NREGA worksite in Hallia

Timely payment of wages and wage rates

Timely payment of wages is a state level problem in UP. Generally the payments are delayed by 2-3 months. The reasons for delay are due to shortage of bank branches available in rural areas and non-updating of Muster Roll and Measurement book from time-to-time etc. Even this situation is an improvement in a state where MGNREGA payments used to suffer an average delay of six months to one year. Banks being located at distant places cause inconvenience to the labourers in getting their wages immediately. However, labourers are still happy with the bank payment system as they are receiving actual amount without any cuts in wages by implementing agencies as was the case earlier. A point to be noted here is the wage parity that women enjoy with men when it comes to MGNREGA works. One of the greatest achievements of AAK is to ensure minimum wages of Rs. 100 per day to the labour, which was not the case earlier.

Grievance redressal mechanism, transparency and accountability mechanism

There is no concrete arrangement by the department at Gram Panchayat level to address grievances of wage seekers. As per the rules of State government of UP, MGNREGA day has to be organised every month both at Tehsil and Block level. However, till date no such day has been earmarked in Hallia Block as *Rozgar divas*.

Wage seekers are putting pressure on the District, Tehsil and Block level functionaries to resolve the issues cropping up from time to time in effective implementation of MGNREGA. AAK is supporting the community for such protests/representations, which has started yielding positive results. In response to the protests, Block level officials have started updating job-cards and now the muster roll is kept at the worksite etc. However, transparency with respect to financial matters is still lacking. In some places Gram Pradhans offer 30% commission to higher officials to get work approval. So far Social Audit was not being conducted in any of the Panchayats in Hallia Block. Neither people nor the functionaries are aware of Social Audit procedures.



A capacity building session for panchayat functionaries organised by AAK

The following table provides clear picture of the status of securing basic entitlements before and after the intervention of AAK in 21 villages of Hallia Block.

Table 2.25: Status of MGNREGA before and after the intervention of AAK in Hallia Block

Details	Status before intervention (2008)	Status after intervention (2009)
Job-cards	3336	7634
Bank Accounts	00	6414
Participatory Planning	Nil	In 16 GPs
Wage Rate	Rs 60- 70	Rs 100
Time taken in payment of wages	1 to 2 years	1 to 2 months
Work Applications	00	86 group applications
Village level Sangathans	00	40
SHG	00	44

Strategy followed by the organisation in securing basic entitlements

- Village level ‘sangathans’ have been formed among wage seekers in 120 villages. AAK built the capacities of the labourers and enabled them to fight for their entitlements.
- Tehsil and District level advocacy is being done by the ‘sangathans’, with the support of AAK.
- Panchayats are being persuaded to maintain transparency by ensuring weekly updating of job-cards, to keep Muster Roll at worksite and also in financial matters. Twenty-two wage seekers took recourse to the Right to Information Act collectively demanding the details of income and expenditure with respect to works completed. In response, block officials handed them over the Muster Roll of 12 worksites in 6 Gram Panchayats of Hallia block.
- MGNREGA awareness rally was taken out in March 2009 in which a 10-day campaign was launched in 100 villages belonging to 40 Gram Panchayats under Hallia Block. Campaigning was done through stage performances (Nukkad Natak), songs, wall writing, posters and pamphlets. A memorandum was submitted to the District Magistrate regarding the issues related to MGNREGA.



An NREGA rights awareness padayatra taken out by AAK

Suggestions of the AAK to secure basic entitlements of the Act

- Massive awareness programmes have to be taken at the community level.
- Some Panchayats in the Block may be developed as model Panchayats to demonstrate the procedures and process in implementing the MGNREGA, which could act as role models for neighbouring villages to follow.
- Vigilance committee may be formed at the Gram Panchayat level comprising of members from different sections of the community, public leaders and members of social organisations. Regular monthly review at Block level will help in solving block level issues.
- Third party monitoring (by line departments) may be arranged.
- There should be quarterly Social Audit in the villages and strict action should be taken against the guilty.
- Strict insistence for Public Forums. Action may be taken against Social Audit team for not conducting Public Forums; and participation of District level functionaries need to be ensured.
- Entrusting more responsibilities to the labour groups, SHGs, Gram Sangathans and ward members regarding the implementation of works.

Participatory Planning and Implementation of Works

Role of PRIs

AAK has noticed several irregularities with respect to planning of works. In general, Village Development Officers (VDOs) are facilitating the planning process. Wherever the Panchayat members are illiterate, their role in the planning process is limited. On the other hand, educated Panchayat representatives tend to dominate the planning process and plan works that suit the interests of their kith and kin. In some cases a top down approach in planning process is still continuing with Block or District level officials are preparing plans. The role of community in planning process is limited to that of a worker, and Gram Sabhas are not conducted in their true spirits. It was observed that, neither government functionaries nor the elected representatives are aware of the concept of Participatory Planning. Further, the officials involved in planning of works have little idea of the village situation, the upshot being that the works planned don't match the villagers' requirement. In many cases, technical aspects were ignored while preparing projects especially in designing water harvesting structures. Proper quality is also not being maintained in construction works hence, and long-term benefits may not be expected from such investments. In most cases cost incurred on the structures are much higher than the benefits realised from that particular work. Transparency remained on paper, and no vigilance committees exist at village level to monitor the quality of works being carried.

AAK intervened in the planning process and carried out participatory planning in 14 Gram Panchayats. A consensus was evolved after discussions with the community and the Gram Panchayats. After that, capacity building of the community members and Gram Panchayat representatives was carried out. Every mohalla of the village and every section of the community including women were involved in preparing the work plans of each Gram Panchayat. For technical matters, support was taken from technical experts from AAK. PRA techniques were adopted in planning of work. While planning the works, priority was given to land & water conservation works that are expected to benefit large number of poor and

marginalised farmers. The work plans were formally approved in village level meeting of labourers before submitting the same to the Block office.

Organisation's achievements with respect to planning of works under MGNREGA

- Community-based planning was carried out in 14 Gram Panchayats and steps were taken for its effective implementation.
- Formation of CBOs at the village level.
- Co-ordination at the Gram Panchayat and block levels and sensitisation of all Gram Panchayats towards participatory planning.
- Pressurising the district and state level officials to implement the plans.
- Capacity building and field visits regarding participatory planning of the community and Panchayat representatives.

Type of Works completed during 2009-2010

Construction & Repair of pond	- 27
Construction & Repair of earthen dams (bandhi)	- 64
Contour Terracing	- 445
Flattening of Fields	- 35 hectare
Farm Ponds	- 22
Construction of Wells	- 47
Construction of Check-Dams	- 15
Construction of Kharanja	- 12 km
Construction of Drains	- 3 km
Construction of Road	- 57

Big farmers benefited more from the above-mentioned works as only they can allocate land for some of these constructions. Availability of public land in the village is very limited to take up such works in public land. Farm ponds, contour terracing and construction of wells though in small quantity were taken up in the small farmers' fields. All the categories of community have benefited from the above works.

Suggestions for effective participatory planning

- A team may be formed comprising of organisations, SHGs, ward members, participatory planning experts and technical experts for planning.
- Sensitising and building capacities of the officials and Gram Panchayat representatives regarding participatory planning.
- Participatory Planning should be made mandatory and a definite time frame should be set up regarding its implementation. The whole process should be made public and suggestions of the community should be incorporated.
- Technical aspects and watershed principles should be incorporated in the participatory planning.
- Regarding the monitoring of participatory planning, a team comprising of voluntary organisations and experts may be set up at the Block level.

MGNREGA works improved tribal livelihoods

In the year 2008-09 under MGNREGA, a check-dam and an earthen dam were constructed in the Phuliyari Gram Panchayat in Hallia Block, to provide irrigation to nearby lands belonging to tribals, which were of poor quality. Here the usual practice was to grow linseed, mustard, kodo millets etc. during the rabi season. In the kharif season, the communities used to migrate to other places as agricultural labour and also for other works. Now with the availability of water from check dam and earthen dam farmers are growing paddy in the kharif season and wheat in the rabi season. Approximately, 15 bighas land belonging to 5 tribal households have benefited from the works. This has helped ensure food security in the village through out the year. The community has stopped distress migration, as MGNREGA works are now available in their village besides agriculture works in their own lands.

Munni Devi became an entrepreneur

Munni Devi w/o Savid Ali belongs to a very poor family in Sikta village in Hallia Gram Panchayat. Ensuring two square meals per day to her four children was a big challenge to Munni and her husband. The couple started working under MGNREGA since its inception in the village. She has joined SHG named 'Shradha' and regularly attends the group meetings. Being literate, she got elected as secretary to the group. She started saving Rs. 30 per month. AAK has provided training on various income generating activities to the group members. Munni Devi took Rs. 500 as loan and started a business to sell ladies fancy items in nearby villages. There seems to be a good demand for her bangles during the wedding season. Their family income has now increased considerably. She would be able to clear the loan within six months from the earnings, and is planning to expand her small business. Her husband continues to work on MGNREGA projects; these days the couple uses their MGNREGA earnings to meet their day-to-day expenses including food. They are also constructing a small pacca house in place of their hut.

PANI observes that there are major gaps in planning and at times even Pradhans, Secretaries, BDOs and CDOs seem unclear about the provisions of this landmark Act. Many are in the dark about how to create person days required to provide minimum 100 days of guaranteed job to all job card-holders in a GP. Social audit is another provision where there is hardly any clarity among the stakeholders. Preparation of a perspective plan for five years is very necessary for ensuring 100 days wage employment to all rural HHs. This too is lacking here.

However, through its Nari Sanghs founded under the ERW project, PANI has been able to address these issues to a certain extent.

Convergence

The convergence policy of the UP state government is not being implemented in the right spirit in Hallia block where AAK operates. As per government directives, the convergence works with line departments (Line departments as implementing agencies) are to be planned collectively by the respective line department and Gram Panchayat and should be executed in accordance with MGNREGA requirements. Unfortunately, this is lacking mainly because of zero coordination among the line departments. Line departments viz., Forest, Land Conservation and Irrigation etc, are working in the Gram Panchayats, but each have their own work plans and are executing the same as per their convenience without consulting the Gram Panchayats.

For the last two years, AAK is working with both Forest department for convergence works and Gram Panchayat for independent works under MGNREGA. Wherever AAK is involved, all the procedures of MGNREGA were invariably followed. In AAK's operating area, the Forest department is more attentive in fast execution of works and sticks to the procedures laid down under the MGNREG Act.

Around 15-20% households working under convergence projects with irrigation department have completed 100 days of work and more wage seekers have submitted work applications and got receipts. Job-cards are being updated, Muster Roll is kept at the worksite, worksite facilities are also being provided, and quality of work is taken care of.

Building Partnerships and Engaging with the Implementation Machinery (Government)

- In the current year AAK has conducted coordination meetings with Government officials twice at District level and four times at Block level.
- Since last two years, AAK, acting as third party, monitored and evaluated the convergence projects implemented by the Forest department in 4 Blocks in Mirzapur District and 2 Blocks in Allahabad District.
- '100 Days Work for Vulnerable Community of U.P', a campaign run by State government is facilitated by AAK.
- AAK has organized Jan Sunwai on issue of MGNREGA with the help of local MLA and Block Development Officer at Block level twice in this year.
- Every month on Tahsil divas and MGNREGA divas, AAK brings various issues related to MGNREGA to the notice of government functionaries.
- A study on 'current status of MGNREGA' carried out by AAK is shared with community, Panchyat and Block officials

Problems and Challenges According to PANI

	Systems in Place under MNREGA	Challenges
1	Most Panchayats are able to issue Job card when demanded	Married children living with their parents are not issued a separate card as per provision, which means the 100 days per job cards being divided among more people than intended.
2	A help line and a grievance redressal cell have been put into place at the state level.	Such a facility exists in UP, but most of the rural people are unaware of the facility.

3	In order to create sustainable assets, perspective plans have been developed for most of the districts.	The adoption of these plans is variable and in many cases, the communities are not involved in developing plans, which is mandatory under the Act.
4	The administrative procedure for submission of work plan by the Panchayats for the next year is established.	The Panchayats do not get information regarding approval of the plans. Fund flow to the Panchayats remains erratic and hence the pace of execution of works gets affected.
5	In Oct 2009, the minimum wages for 8 hours of work was applied to all states.	In UP, workers are still being paid as per schedule of rates, which differs state wise, without considering the differential rates for hard soil and soft soil.
6.	Payment of wages is done through bank accounts or post office account.	Bank and post offices in rural areas are not equipped to deal with such large number of accounts and wage payouts. This results in delay of payment of wages.
7.	An allocation of 6% of the total works is made to provide for training and additional staff.	Very little is being spent on training, there are no standard training modules and very little is spent on additional staff at the village or block level.
8.	A social audit is to be conducted each year in each Gram Panchayat	The process has been government driven with very little people's participation and in some villages the reported expenditure in conducting the social audit is as low as Rs 149, an indication of the shabby manner in which the whole process is conducted.

Women power through collectives: A PANI Project

Empowering Rural Women (ERW) is a unique programme in the context of Uttar Pradesh. The key focus is on leadership development among Dalit women and women from other excluded sections of society so that they are able to secure their rightful entitlements. The programme started in December 2007 with 6 small grants and is currently being implemented in 253 Gram Panchayats of 10 districts with 13 partners. It envisages reaching out to 100,000 women and collectivising them for realisation of entitlements in eastern Uttar Pradesh. The intervention is focussed on the leadership development of women through collectivisation and providing a platform in the form of CBOs, strengthening women's informed participation in local governance and ensuring entitlements related to right to work/livelihood and right to food for the most poor. The basic structure in the form of women's collective, Nari Sangh, has helped in layering the intervention with various other programmes such as women's literacy.



A meeting of PANI's Empowering Rural Woman collective

Under this programme, 40,313 women have come together to form GP level Nari Sanghs. These CBOs advocate their issues related to entitlements

at PRI level and also with block/district level administration. The action of these women has a deep impact on the economic well being of these households.

Some of the achievements of the programme are:

- 1) 3,030 women have assumed leadership to take forward the CBOs in their respective GPs to advocate securing of entitlements and rights. These women leaders are characterised by their understanding of issues, initiatives, and ability to give strategic direction to the group besides active involvement in planning.
- 2) Nari Sangh women have activated open meetings of Gram Sabha in 225 GPs and raised agenda and issues related to their entitlements. A total of 24,756 Nari Sangh women actively participated in the open Gram Sabha meetings with a written agenda.
- 3) 21,857 Nari Sangh women availed job cards in their name through direct intervention of Nari Sangh and out of which 20,983 women got work under MGNREGA.
- 4) 216 PDS shops were regularised with direct intervention of the Nari Sangh.
- 5) Women in the Nari Sanghs have made considerable progress in building relationship with the local administration. The block/ district level administrations are cooperative and recognise the Nari Sangh's contributions. Women in these areas have shown independent initiatives to address issues such as alcoholism and violence against women.
- 6) In 5 districts (Ghazipur, Pratapgarh, Varanasi, Mau and Azamgarh), literacy classes cum resource centers are adding newer skills to these women.
- 7) A main objective of the programme has been to build community based leaders. In each locality five to ten leaders have been identified and efforts to develop their capacities have been made. These women leaders are confident and articulate, and have understood the merit of collective activity.
- 8) Since their inception, the Nari Sanghs have been focusing on obtaining two entitlements: Right to work under the MGNREGA and right to food grains through the Public Distribution System. Both of these are dire livelihoods needs.
- 9) Today, around 3,030 women leaders with basic leadership qualities are in leadership position with a clear understanding of their issues and entitlements. Their block-level Confederation is emerging as an advocacy group
- 10) Literacy and capacity building of CBO women has happened through Community Resource and Education Centre (CREC). CBO women became literate on set indicators.
- 11) Open Gram Sabha meetings were organised many times in all 253 GPs because of the Nari Sangh's initiative. Nari Sangh's women participated in the open GS meetings with their pre-decided agenda. Some CBO meetings have been converted into open GS meetings.
- 12) Women CBOs inter-facing with block/district administration and advocating their issues of entitlements

- 13) 2,804 CBO women filed RTI applications about their rights and entitlements and 772 CBO women followed up the response of RTI application and got required information.
- 14) 3,954 CBO women used NREGA helpline of which 2,168 CBO benefitted; 9,889 CBO women went to NREGA Diwas and NREGA Shivar and raised their issues.

2.7 CHHATTISGARH

MGNREGA was launched in Chhattisgarh on February 2, 2006, in 11 districts. Four more districts were brought under the programme's ambit in 2007, thus covering the entire state.

Lok Shakti Samiti (LSS), Raigarh, strives to build awareness among potential beneficiaries on the radical provisions of the MGNREG Act, and has been assisting them in demanding employment. Last year, the organisation also conducted orientation and training programmes, and study tours besides lobbying with the state government on various issues. LSS' target area is 8 kms away from district head quarters – covering 6,538 people including 3,265 women. The main source of income here is agriculture or agro based activities.

In 2009-10, LSS carried out activities under MGNREGA like plantation works, pond deepening, land levelling, and stop dam and approach road building. Its social activities include training PRI staff, rojgar assistants, SHGs and surveillance committees. The organisation also carried out social audits, conducted village level labour group meetings, besides preparing action plan for Gram Panchayats.

The sustained efforts put an end to migration at the Panchayat level, and women became self-dependent thanks to the wage parity provided by the MGNREGA. This increased the participation of women in the decision-making process of Panchayats.

Margdarshak Seva Sansthan (MSS) that works in the Premnagar block of Sarguja district, has been working with the MGNREGA implementation ever since the programme was launched in the state. The organisation has so far conducted workshops on strengthening of PRIs, setting up of vigilance committees, and capacity building under MGNREGA in 46 villages in the Premnagar block.

A PRA in progress in Premnagar assisted by MSS volunteers



A people's rally organised by MSS demanding protection of livelihood resources through NREGA



Status of Securing Basic Entitlements as per the Act

In the 9 Gram Panchayats that LSS operates in Pusore and Pathalgaon blocks of Raigarh district, LSS took it upon itself the responsibility of building awareness among potential beneficiaries regarding the special entitlements that MGNREGA guarantees.

An interactive session organised by MSS found that many registered villagers are yet to get job cards and that issuance of receipts against work applications were the exception than the norm.

Worksite facilities

During the initial years of the Act, provision for facilities for drinking water, shade and dedicated maids for children were unheard of here. Today, these are a reality in Raigarh. In MSS operated areas, the organisation is continuing to pressurise Panchayats in ensuring that mandated worksite facilities are provided.

Timely payment of wages and wage rates etc.

Payment delays here range from 15 days to two months and are mainly because of delays in monitoring and measuring the work, delays at the post office since there is a per-day cap on payments. Raigarh labourers manage to get 100/- per every man day.

Grievance redressal mechanisms, Transparency and Accountability practices

It's been noticed that Panchayats are yet to wake up to the action plans prepared under MGNREGA, and administrative approvals are at best random. The families here who are fully dependent on manual labour get to complete 100 days of guaranteed work, but can't manage enough owing to the large number of dependents per family. It's been observed that after the 100 days of work, they plunge back into abject poverty.

LSS also observes that the Gram Panchayats are given a go-by whenever the state appoints an external agency to implement the MGNREGA programme. Approvals of GP/Gram Sabha are rarely asked for and the agency straight-away starts its work.

Transparency and Accountability

In Raigarh social audit processes are done every six months, and are publicised through wall writings/posters. This has helped bring transparency to the works, however, PIAs other than the Panchayats have evaded this process. In effect, none of the other PIAs seem in anyway accountable to the Gram sabha/GP or the people.



A pond in LSS project area of Jhalmala, which was regenerated through NREGA

Building partnerships and Engaging with the Implementation Machinery(Government)

LSS's intervention in the target area is organisational. Hence the activities spread across a spectrum, including awareness on MGNREGA, health issues and education. As a result,

the TSC programme benefited 1,322 families while 882 families submitted applications at Panchayat for toilets.

Throwing light on emerging issues and further areas to work

The partners feel that MGNREGA may not be enough to ensure food security in backward areas. Hence they should be implemented in tandem with other schemes of govt.

In the annual plan preparation process, peoples' participation is not satisfactory as the plans are not usually prepared in the Gram Sabha. Also, it has been observed that Panchayats are not getting enough backing from other implementing agencies like PHED, forest department, RES etc. This needs to be corrected in the interests of better implementation and greater transparency.

As of now, PRI members are not so much focused on their roles and responsibilities for their villages. More orientation and capacity building programmes are required to make them active.

Landless people will be involved in other IGAs with MGNREGA. The partners will work as a bridge between administration and beneficiaries and will provide trainings on IGA programmes.



Traditional water conservation method on display in Ketla village, an MSS operating area.

2.8 KARNATAKA

In Karnataka two organisations /networks associated with National Consortium support and monitor MGNREGA implementation. The Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) has been working from 2008 in Chikkaballapur and Kolar while the Samuha network comprising four organisations, SAMARAS, INGRID, SAMUHA and OUTREACH has been working in Bidar, Raichur and Bellary districts. The details of their coverage areas are as follows in Table 2.26:

Organisation	Names of the Working Districts	No.of Blocks	No. of Gram Panchayats	Major Communities Working (SC/ST/BC)	Working from the Year
FES	Chikkaballapur, Kolar	3	15	Adi Karnataka, Nayakas, Gollas, Valmiki, Vokkaligas	2008
SAMARAS	Bidar	1 (Bidar)	36	SC/ST	2005
INGRID	Raichur	1 (Gillesugur)	10	SC/ST	1987
SAMUHA	Raichur	1(Dedourga)	7	SC/ST	1987
OUTREACH	Bellary	1(Harapanhalli)	1	SC/ ST, BCM	2002

The efforts, experiences and learning generated of the above organisations are presented below

Status of securing basic entitlements as per the Act

Work demand

FES reports that demand based work has still not got institutionalised to a large extent in two districts the organisation operates in. Only a few Panchayats follow the due process, as is warranted by the Act – starting from submission of Form 6 by the worker to allotment of work by the Gram Panchayat. The main constraint(s) with regard to the same is lack of adequate staff at the Gram Panchayat level, the total lack of interest/seriousness with respect to MGNREGA work among the implementing agencies (including the PRIs) and absence of a strong forum/group which could represent the interest of the beneficiaries/workers under the act at GP level

Worksite facilities

As per the Act, workers shall be provided with worksite facilities like safe drinking water, shade for children and periods of rest, first-aid box with adequate material for emergency treatment of minor injuries and other health hazards connected with the work. But none of the worksites in the two districts where FES operates can boast of these kind of facilities forcing workers to make their own arrangements for drinking water.

Timely payment of Wages and Wage Rates etc.

There are hardly any cases where the workers are paid within the time limit prescribed under the Act. On an average it takes a minimum of a month for the payments to be deposited into the worker's bank account and there are many cases where it has been delayed by around 3-4 months. A reason for this is lack of adequate number of engineering staff at the taluka level, which could prepare estimates (initial and final). Another big constraint has been the lack of adequate data entry operators who could feed the data into the MIS. And the biggest being the lack of a pressure group of workers at the village level, which could ensure the same.

Grievance Redressal Mechanisms, Transparency and Accountability Practices

There is a committee at the district level for monitoring the disposal of complaints. This committee would review the progress of the disposal at least once in a month. The member Secretary shall place any reports on the failure at any level in disposing of the complaints before the committee. This committee¹ after following the procedure has powers to impose fines under section 25 of the MGNREGA Act.

Grievance redressal officers have been nominated at various levels: the secretary of the Gram Panchayat at the village level, Programme Officer at the Block level, District Programme Co-ordinator at the district level and Commissioner of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act at the State level. But follow up actions at different levels have not been satisfactory at

¹ The committee is headed by the Deputy Commissioner of the District with the Chief Executive Officer, (Zilla Panchayat), Member Secretary (District Legal Services Authority), Assistant Commissioner, a Tahasildar (nominated by Dy Commissioner), Executive Officer of the district (nominated by Chief Executive Officer) acting as members. Also any one voluntary organisation involved with NREGA is also nominated as a member. The Deputy Secretary of Zilla Panchayat acts as the member secretary

all. In GP offices, neither complaint registers nor complaint boxes are kept, a situation that repeats itself as one ascends the ladder.

Suggestions

Given the above scenario, there should be much better coordination among different voluntary organisations working on MGNREGA so that they can act as a strong policy advocacy group. There is a very strong need to build up workers' groups, which can articulate their interests better.

Participatory Planning and Implementation of Works

There is only a single method of planning adopted by the state government. And that also cannot be described as planning, for, the process involves only the preparation of a shelf of works at the village level, which is then compiled at the Gram Panchayat level. From there it is sent to the Taluka Panchayat and further to the Zilla Panchayat. Though the process is supposed to be completed by October of every year, in actual reality it starts only then and goes right up to Feb-March causing further delays. The Village Monitoring Committees hardly get to play any role post-execution of works and they exist only in paper.

Pros and cons of the planning methods adopted

- To some extent there is involvement of people in the process but not at a level, which could have brought in some meaningful change. Also the participation of the line departments in the whole process is next to nil, because of which there is a possibility of works that are not technically feasible getting incorporated in the plans. Since they are not part of the process there is that much less involvement with people at the village level.
- Key aspects of the Act like according priority to development of resources of the poor, ensuring quality of the work and utility/productivity of the investments et al is being realised only to a certain extent leaving much to be desired. Currently, the only benefit accruing to the community from the whole MGNREGA chain is the wages. The effort needs to be focussed on developing the quality of assets (land), which they own. The state government has come up with a policy that, from this year onwards work on other lands would be taken up only after works on SC/ST lands have been exhausted.

Role of PRIs in the planning process

- In Karnataka the PRIs are yet to play the role that they are expected to. The ward and Gram Sabhas are plagued by lack of participation of all the sections due to meeting dates being notified at very short notices. That the Gram Panchayats sweat very little on building awareness doesn't help this situation.
- Regarding improving the process of the planning, FES' effort has been directed specifically towards securing the participation of maximum number of people in the said planning process by generating awareness about the same. In select Panchayats where the organisation is working the effort has been to train a group of people in processes related to village level planning, which will add value to MGNREGA. One of the specific aims has been to see that planning component addresses issues related to prioritisation of works as mandated under the Act.

Implementation of works

There are multiple problems associated with the implementation with quality of the work being the top most concern, caused by inadequate monitoring of the works by both the concerned departments. As the payments are getting delayed workers are getting disillusioned by the whole process and not showing that much interest. Though contractors are banned under MGNREGA, in Karnataka they get into the picture in collusion with government officials. Maintenance of records and MIS updating are getting delayed due to inadequate number of staff at the Gram Panchayat level and the need to go to Taluka for the same where again there are problems like inadequate number of systems etc. Also there is inadequate focus towards drought proofing related works while the thrust is more towards cement masonry structures, which means lesser labour payments and more material costs. As mentioned above, the grievance redressal mechanism is non-functional at different levels, which has eroded people's faith in the system.

Pilots/innovations tried by FES in terms of planning and implementation of works

The organisation has been involved in training of a group of people at the village/ Panchayat who can play a key role in the implementation/planning process of NREGA. Paraworkers who are trained in eco-restoration aspects such as soil and water conservation, re-vegetation etc are playing a key role during implementation of works. They are also trying to facilitate the planning process as per the stated guide lines and procedure.

Suggestions for ensuring effective and participatory planning and implementation

- Resource Persons at the Village Level who can facilitate MGNREGA process
- Better coordination among various line departments and the PRIs
- Group of workers/villagers to be trained who can articulate their interests better
- Planning process need to start well in time. Currently, it's done at the end of the year
- Grievance Redressal Mechanism be strengthened at all levels
- Carrying out Social Audits in letter and spirit

Convergence

There has been no operationalisation of the convergence policy of the MoRD in the working area of the organisation. No processes have been initiated in this regard by the Zilla Panchayat. One of key requirements for this would be participation of all concerned departments like watershed, forestry and animal husbandry among others in the whole process but their involvement is not seen in practice.

Building Partnerships and Engaging with the Implementation Machinery (Government)

As mentioned above, a voluntary organisation is part of the Grievance Redressal Committee in one of the districts. Save that, there have been no other formal roles given to voluntary organisations in the state. FES has been facilitating planning process on our own in the 15 Gram Panchayats though the organisation has not got any formal sanction from either the Taluka or Zilla Panchayat.

The experiences of SAMUHA network regarding its engagement with MGNREGA can be summarised theme-wise as below:

- SAMUHA identifies the following as the key features of its engagement with MGNREGA, particularly regarding planning and implementation of works.
- Over three years it has raised Rs 2.44 crore in public resources.
- 84% of the MGNREGA resources raised were spent on private lands.
- The intervention helped 1,349 farmers in drought-proofing their land. Around 3419 acres have been made more productive.
- Approval from the district MGNREGA authorities to accept the Trench-cum-Bund as a NREGA approved work. The TcB has been main driver for developing private lands under NREGA norms

Status of Securing Basic Entitlements as per the Act

- According to the SAMUHA network, in their work area, in spite of 5 years of operationalisation of the Act, there are still many challenges in its proper implementation. Some of them are, reluctance from the Gram Panchayat Secretaries to accept applications from the community as work has to be provided within 15 days of submission of the application as per the norms. NREGA works are being awarded as contract to Gram Panchayat member/s thereby denying employment to deserving applicants.
- The member organisations of the network are facilitating the application process in their respective work areas. Also the network members had supported the workers in taking the village level issues to the notice of block level officials. The action of the block level officials was just limited to serving the notices, but not any corrective action. In one case by INGRID, the organisation supported the labour group in applying for work and they were provided work but the payments were not made for a long time. As this has been a major issue with the workers, the groups from different villages come together and sat on Dharna in front of the District Panchayat C.E.O office continuously for five days.
- Most of the worksites were provide with only drinking water. Other facilities like shade, crèche etc., are not being provided in many work places.
- The payment of wages was not being done timely and one of the major reasons is technical problems like non-functioning of computers at the Gram Panchayat level. Gram Swaraj sevak has to travel to taluka head quarters and key in the data. As per the existing system, each work has to be entered in the computer and payment voucher has to be generated after data entry which is difficult due to mal functioning of computer or non-availability of computers on time for the Gram Swaraj Sevak. In the two Gram Panchayats in Raichur Block where INGRID is active, the team of labourers working on an MGNREGA project had gone on strike for 12 days on account of delay in payments. An intense agitation followed and the Taluka Panchayat yielded, releasing the unemployment allowance.
- There is also a confusion created related to the issue of job cards and the entry of names of the family members in the job card. Government is cancelling cards of those single households with two members enrolled under MGNREGA. Now members belonging to one family will have one account and passbook instead of separate individual accounts. The working members in the household registered under NREGA will be listed in this passbook and a total of 100 days will be provided to a family.

- Government did evolve a grievance redressal mechanism in which all grievances have to be addressed to the Gram Panchayat Secretary who is responsible to tackle issues. In addition, Social Audit team and the Village level Monitoring Committee ensure transparency through regular audit and monitoring. These in turn ensure accountability of the involved government bodies. Free legal support to take action against deceit too was made part of the monitoring system. However, the functioning of these systems is not satisfactory.
- The member organizations are playing the role of a facilitator and mainly working with Gram Panchayat members and community in general. Some of the organisations have taken the responsibility of training at Taluka and District level. These training sessions are conducted to increase awareness level of the communities on land development activities and employment generation under NREGA. However, there are no specific initiatives regarding policy advocacy or engagement at the state level. One of the key features in Karnataka is that the facilitation process has been given as a resource contract to the NGOs since last year. These resource contract NGOs are providing their staff to the department on deputation. Since these staff is accountable to both sides there are issues of coordination, accountability. In this whole process the quality of works is being given less importance. The overall argument is that the state government is not playing any pro-active role in the implementation of the Act. Also there is no meaningful engagement with the civil society. One of the network member, SAMARAS, has become part of this process and has been appointed as a resource agency in Bidar district . However, the role is mostly limited to sending their staff on deputation to work under BDO. However, the organisation is yet to received any honoraria for this work.
- As there is a constant change among directors and the secretaries of the programme at the government level, the network feels it could not successfully take up any demonstration of pilots and mainstreaming regarding planning and resource development in the NREGS.
- The Network believes that the current wage rate in the scheme, i.e Rs. 100/day is not sufficient as the current local rate for manual work is Rs. 150 and the labourers are opting for other works. As per the seasonal analysis the labour availability or the need for work under NREGS will be high from the month of February to April. Also the lands will also be available for taking up development works during that time.
- One of the key issues in the implementation of NREGA is that the the implementation machinery has not yet come to terms with the demand based work provision and rights based implementation of the programme.

Community monitoring Systems

The SAMUHA team has organized a community monitoring structure with group of representatives of labour groups to monitor the land development activities. As part of this, land maps were drawn in 7 villages and the works have been identified in that map. The labour group will monitor these identified works. The major redressal mechanism has been developed by the state government through provision of one social auditor to each block. His basic role will be monitoring of the work and conducting Gram Sabha to review implemented programmes and inform the concerned office at Mysore. The department with support from the village Panchayat secretary also formed a village monitoring committee with village wise members. This committee monitor and report to the State Institute of Rural Development

section at Mysore. Due to inadequate staff at Gram Panchayat, institutionalizing the concept of Village Monitoring Committees is not being carried out successfully. Though a major component, it is yet to be established.

Participatory Planning and Implementation of Works



Resource map on the wall - depicting the identified works under NREGS

- Regarding planning and implementation of works, PRIs are involved in developing action plan and obtaining approval from the GP and ZP. Project mode with work focused on nine priorities as per the norms is being adopted. However, regarding development of resources of the poor the process is inadequate in the state. There is a need to concentrate on land development and water conservation. At present infrastructure development is undertaken as priority. The overall productivity of the investments is low due to focus on road laying, jungle cutting etc. Panchayat members were participating in developing Action plan, and the members monitored it. However, active involvement of people representatives is low and this is one of the areas that need to be strengthened. This is reflected in the delay in approval of action plans, in initiating activities by concerned departments after approval. Line Departments were not interested as this programme is implemented through Gram Panchayats.
- The biggest problem with implementation is that the implementation machinery at the ground level does not understand the process and priorities properly. The prevalent assumption is that MGNREGA works can be contracted to GP members, an idea which violated the spirit of the programme. They also assume that the programme has to be implemented by the Panchayat members.
- SAMUHA is intervening with local Gram Panchayat for planning, implementing and monitoring of the works. SAMUHA has been promoting Trench cum Bund (TCB) as an innovative soil and moisture conservation model. Each TCB have a holding capacity of 540 litres of water and conserves 2 ton of mud (over the year). In its working area SAMUHA was successful in incorporating TCB in the action plan of all the seven Panchayats of Deodurga taluka of Raichur districts and five Gram Panchayats in Gangavathi taluka of Koppal

district. Through sharing and demonstration of this model, farmers in these villages as well as other villages are getting inspired and are showing interest in taking up this work in their lands. Some has already done this. An example is Nagoli village where a patch of 27 acres was lying barren and one of the land holders came forward to make a TCB in his land. After that the land has been brought under cultivation fully and this year he has got 4 quintal tur dal in his portion of land.

- Another focus area of SAMUHA is social forestry, which complements land and water conservation activities. 20% has been earmarked for planting forestry species on bunds. If Government or Gairana land is available then, land development activities could be implemented to the maximum extent possible.
- The major achievement in the work area of the partners is that the concerned Gram Panchayats have accessed significant amount for the NREGA work on Land development through Trench cum Bund. In the year 2007-08 the total amount allocated was Rs.16 lakh and by the year 2009-10 it has increased to around Rs. 7 crores. Out of this, work estimated at Rs. 4.2 crores of work was completed; in here the NRM related budget was Rs. 2.2 crores.
- SAMUHA was recognized as a resource agency in this aspect and the Zilla Panchayat invited the organisations to conduct training sessions to the programme implementation machinery in including TCB and water and land development activities in the action plan.
- SAMUHA has also promoted as a pilot intervention, the preparation of compost in the farms. With the facilitation of SAMUHA, Narsappa from Bhumangunda Village is preparing compost in his village and using this to his own land. Around 200kg of compost from



Preparing compost for increasing soil fertility

these pits can be obtained . It is a very important cycle for the compost preparation. Based on this experience it advocates that the human resource for compost pit filling should also be included as NREGS work. The ideal model for the workers who have their own land is to work in their land for TCB and compost preparation and this need to be supported as part of NREGA. Both the activities in combination have good potential for land improvement. The TCB will hold water from June to September. The empty TCB can be filled up from the month October to January. The enriched farmyard compost will be available in their own land.

Table 2.27: SAMUHA's Achievements

Gram Panchayat	New Registered cards	Applications	Person days provided	NREGA Approved budget	NREGA works completed	NRM works budgeted	NRM works completed upto Jan-10
Alkod	100	650	45819	7514252	3757126	3757126	1892827
Arakera	90	815	58092	5936204	4763572	1172632	519541
Galag	100	535	36616	6005060	3002530	3002530	202376

Gram Panchayat	New Registered cards	Applications	Person days provided	NREGA Approved budget	NREGA works completed	NRM works budgeted	NRM works completed upto Jan-10
J Jadaladinni	40	650	32097	5263832	2631916	2631916	3256916
Kothadoddi	150	285	13827	2267568	1133784	1133784	666216
Kyadigere	60	923	75658	9907940	6203970	3703970	609654
Palkanmardi	87	790	41737	4844820	3422410	1422410	5072941
Tawargera	28	312	25610	13645000	2100000	12448000	5310073
Chikmadinal	496	402	32926	17921000	2699932	12784600	4344194
Total	1151	5362	362382	73305676	29715240	42056968	21874738

Convergence

- In the state of Karnataka, most of the MGNREGA works have been integrated in existing development works. But the drawback is that convergence of MGNREGA works with line departments is not operational except for the department of Horticulture and Soil conservation department.
- Though convergence of MGNREGA works with department of watershed, Horticulture and Social forestry is in progress, the quantity of work is not large. In small irrigation and irrigation development, work has been undertaken but quality and utility is not as expected. Overall value addition is very less. The member organisations are trying to provide innovative ideas to Taluka & Gram Panchayat members with regard to type of works that can be taken up under MGNREGA.
- The convergence approach in Karnataka has resulted in both subsidization of department as well as mobilisation of additional resources from departments. The convergence has increased mobilisation of the resources wherever proper convergence has been taken up. A few departments like Soil and Moisture Conservation Department were making part payments and for MGNREGA the amount needs to be released by Gram Panchyat.
- Also there are experiences of both value addition as well as adverse effects. A few initiatives such as social forestry have received good response while the convergence related to Soil and Moisture conservation received adverse effect as the department was compelled to take up the work which does not belong to them as funds are released by the GP. With specific interventions initiated by the member organisations, three priorities were incorporated in the system.
 - Soil and Moisture conservation through water harvesting. This has made an impact and has brought in some learning's and generated experiences. The department making this as mandatory wherever the land development is initiated.
 - Social forestry department has planned appropriately for implementation through proper utilization of resources.
 - Department of Horticulture has developed few pilot plots accessing resources from MGNREGA.

The network has conducted two workshops as part of promoting engagement with the implementation machinery as well as promoting convergence. These have helped in building relationship with the local administration. One is a district level workshop, where the Raichur Zilla Panchayat has asked to share the work of the organization in Arakera area with president /vice president and government officials/functionaries of the district. A total of 754 members were present from the 5 Blocks. The groups consists of Gram Panchayat presidents and vice presidents, secretaries and bill collectors, Taluka Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat members. SAMUHA has presented the works which has been carried out in the area, particularly in relation to the MGNREGA.

The second workshop was organised for the presidents, vice presidents and secretaries on the importance of social audit and major concerns about the usage of resources of MGNREGA on Natural Resource Management. A judge from the local court had attended this meeting and various issues related to securing entitlements as per the Act were discussed.

Building Partnerships and Engaging with the Implementation Machinery (Government)

In contrast to various other states, the Panchayat raj institutions at various levels play more active role in the implementation of the programme. The work at the village level is planned by Gram Panchayat members with Consultation with Gram Sabha and consolidation of works takes place with proper authorisation by the President and Secretary. This will be approved by Taluka Panchayat and Zilla Parishad.

The present engagement of the organisations with these bodies is limited to supporting the wage seekers in representing their issues, participating in the training programmes. However, SAMUHA has been consistently working with these institutions to integrate the Trench cum Bund model in a big way into NREGS. This is has been tried out with department of the soil and moisture conservation in 7 Gram Panchayats. Also linking up with Horticulture department was successful to an extent.

The organisation has been organising the community members in two forms. One in the form of labour groups for accessing wage entitlements under the programme and the other is in the form of Private Property resource group demanding their land development through adopting models like TCB in their lands. .

However, the network feels that the partnership of the member organisations need to increase at all stages of programme implementation like, Identification of the work, Timely approval from GP, Timely approval from TP, Timely approval from ZP and developing action plan and implementation of programmes on time, Providing training to the members to improve the capacity which in turn supports proper implementation of the programmes.

It also identifies two key areas for strengthening the programme. One is sufficient and regular fund flow for the programme and strengthening of Social audit and monitoring from the department.

The network suggest following measures to be taken for improvement with regard to strengthening the implementation of the Act:

The programme has to extend its understanding of ‘development’

1. The programme needs to be implemented in consultation with the community.
2. Action plan to be prepared with support of members and line department for suitable convergence of activities.
3. Proper monitoring of the programmes need to be concentrated.
4. A proper plan needs to be developed and sent to the TP and ZP level and once it is approved the Secretary and the President should immediately initiate implementation of works as per the action plan. GP members along with Line department personnel should be involved.
5. Appointment of required staff at Gram Panchayat level exclusively for implementation of NREGA to be done
6. The basic entitlement of 100 days of work should be ensured resulting in the development of the productive assets
7. The State Government needs to plan comprehensive capacity building strategy from Gram Panchayat level to Zilla Panchayat.

2.9 WEST BENGAL

Description of Organisation

Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) is a voluntary organisation that works with 1.25 lakh rural poor spread over selected villages in 28 districts across 7 states in India. The organisation through small teams, based close to the villages, comprising professionally trained people, motivated to change the qualities of life of rural poor. PRADAN recruits such people from campuses, provides them year-long apprenticeship in its teams. There are 427 personnel in PRADAN of whom 250 are trained in professions like agriculture, engineering, management, rural management and social work at reputed institutions in India and abroad. The 177 support staff provide office, logistical and implementation support.

Table 2.28 Outreach of INRM activities through MGNREGS at Bankura

Item	2008-2009	2009-10	2010-11
Name of the Block	Hirbandh, Bankura-1	Hirbandh, Bankura-1, Ranibandh	Hirbandh, Bankura-1, Ranibandh, Saltora, Indpur
No of Gram Panchayats	6	8	11

Table 2.29 Activities done from April 2010-December 2010

Activities	No
Block level orientation	4
GP level orientation	11
Number of mouza where INRM concept seeding done	126
Number of mouza where INRM activities started	122
Number of LRPs trained	200
Number of persons exposed to INRM activities	233
Number of supervisors' training meetings conducted	91

Table 2.30 Achievements in INRM activities through MGNREGA at Bankura

	Name of the Activity	No. of family benefited directly	Area covered/ command area (ha)	Expenditure (Rs Lakh)
1	Small water harvesting structure (Hapa)	2931	666.25	543.39
2	Mango Orchard with 30x40 & CPT	2348	227.03	221.7
3	Social forestry	575	60.75	22.82
4	Land development (field bunding)	36	4.5	15.85
Grand Total		5890	958.53	803.76

Table 2.31 Year wise Progress of INRM activities through MGNREGA at Bankura

Details	Amount (Lakh)	Amount (Lakh)	Amount (Lakh)	Cumulative (Lakh)
	[FY 2008-09]	[FY 2009-10]	[FY 2010-11]	
Water harvesting structures	73	185	285	543
Mango Orchard with 30X40 model	23	141	58	222
Forestry and land development	9	7	23	39
Total Expenditure	105	332	367	804

Table 2.32. Work done so far at Paschim Medinipur

Name of the Block: Nayagram

Name of the GP	No. of Villages where INRM planning done	No. of WHS sanctioned	No. of WHS completed	Orchard completed (Ha)	Amount spent (Lakh)	No. of families who got livelihood assets	Mandays created
Chandrarekha	19	74	18	39	44.5	133	18646
Arrah	12	211	57	21	28.3	145	15084

Major Achievements of Paschim Medinipur

- INRM plan made in 22 villages involving all the families of the village irrespective of SHGs.
- 85 hapas (small water bodies) completed
- 60 ha of upland treated with mango and cashew orchard.

Work Done and Major Achievements (Highlights) of Bankura work

- a) 300 Ha barren uplands have been treated with in-situ soil and moisture conservation measures, which are transformed into green patches. Microenvironment within this area has changed and rabbits have been seen taking shelters in these patches
- b) Under Agro horticulture, fruit plantation has been done in 227 hectare of upland benefiting 2,300 families (Mostly scheduled tribe and schedule caste) in the past three years. This has not only reduced soil erosion but has created regular source of income for the poor. The economic return per hectare of mango orchard would be Rs. 1.75 lakh from the fourth year onwards.
- c) Around 2,900 small water bodies have been created in crop lands, which will harvest 11.5 lakh cubic metre of water. This harvested water recharges ground water and also provides life-saving irrigation to 666 Hectare of land and can provide irrigation in 266Ha for second crop.

Impact of our initiatives

At community level

- a) Women are now aware and are taking initiatives to implement their INRM based plan by mobilising fund from local Gram Panchayat and Panchayat samities. They themselves are implementing the plan.
- b) Seeing the utility of small water bodies people from surrounding villages and blocks are demanding the same.
- c) Thanks to the green patches of mango orchard, villagers are coming forward to do agro-horticulture in the remaining fallow barren land.
- d) Farmers were able to save their kharif paddy last year and have earned Rs.2,500 to Rs.15,000 through vegetable cultivation and fish rearing.
- e) Around 5000 familes have been directly benefited from these activities.

At the PRI level

- a) The Gram Panchayats (GPs) have found a way to provide large scale wage employment under MGNREGS through INRM activities that are very much relevant for the people and the area. This provides a wage employment opportunity besides creating large scale livelihood assets for the poor.
- b) The system of Village Resource Persons (VRP) for assisting SHGs and Gram Panchayats for planning and implementation of INRM work has been widely accepted by the Gram Panchayats and has increased the pace of work. Now GPs have created a forum of VRPs who sit weekly in the Gram Panchayat to monitor the work progress. Since the VRPs are from the same locality they are closer to the people and bridge the gap between PRIs and people.
- c) PRADAN has introduced a simplified computerised process of making proposal for the schemes, which has come handy for the GPs' technical persons.
- d) Every GP where PRADAN works has incorporated a large number of INRM based activities in their annual action plan 2011-12.
- e) Seeing the widespread success of the work other government departments like National

Horticulture Mission (NHM) and Agriculture department are willing to converge their fund in these activities.

- f) Other GPs and Panchayat samities are inviting us to collaborate for large scale replication
- g) The Zilla Parishad of Bankura took the help of PRADAN for preparing an INRM-based five-year district agriculture plan.

At the Government level

- a) The state government has widely accepted PRADAN as an NGO to collaborate with for further replication of INRM work under MGNREGA
- b) The District magistrate (DM) entered into an agreement with PRADAN to facilitate the PRIs and government to implement the same model in other five blocks of the districts. Both the state government and DM office have agreed to provide us 60% of our support cost for installing the process and systems in these blocks.
- c) Seeing the good effect of NGO and Government collaboration the district administration of Purulia and West Medinipur invited PRADAN to collaborate for replication of INRM model under MGNREGS.
- d) NABARD (National Agricultural bank for Rural Development) organised exposure visits to our INRM work twice for local bankers. Now the bankers are keen to provide agriculture credit to farmers

The brief description of process followed for planning and effective implementation of the MGNREGA

The process kicked off with intensive and prolonged engagements with political functionaries and government officials to generate minimum required trust that would smoothen the process of working with Panchayats. That engagement still continues. The other steps are as under:

- a) Organised inception/ orientation workshops about livelihood oriented and Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM) based NREGS programme for:
 - district NREGA programme co-ordinators, block programme officers and other stakeholders at Zilla Parishad, district administration, Panchayat Samiti and Block administration
 - Gram Panchayat Pradhans, Panchayat members, Panchayat secretaries and other stakeholders
 - Participating villagers
- b) Developed, tested and applied appropriate INRM based livelihood prototype plans, systems and processes in all participating Panchayat Samities and Gram Panchayats
- c) Conducted events for the Gram Panchayats on selection of village youth to be trained as Local Resource Persons (LRPs) and trained them in:
 - Defining their roles, responsibilities, accountabilities, reporting relationships
 - Developing selection criteria
 - Conducting tests for selection
 - Role of groups of primary stakeholders in selection of LRPs
 - Fixing remuneration for their services and identifying sources of fund for their payments
- d) Organised two-phase training programmes on Integrated Natural Resource Management-

based NREGS programme for LRPs along with the Panchayat functionaries covering the following aspects:

1. Ability to form groups of primary stakeholders (SHGs etc)
 2. Understanding about the components of INRM and interdependence between people and natural resources.
 3. Abilities to help the community to diagnose problems faced by families with respect to optimum use of their natural resources
 4. Ability to help the community to design interventions; and to help the community to prepare five years perspective plans (as detailed out below)
 5. Ability to create awareness of the community about the rights guaranteed by NREGA and
 6. Anything else that might crop up as significant training needs.
- e) Conducted events for the community leaders to:
- Build their vision around their groups and their future roles
 - Make them aware about NREGA: their role and responsibility in utilising NREGA to improve their socio-economic conditions and boost the local economy.
- f) Demonstrated Participatory Planning Process:

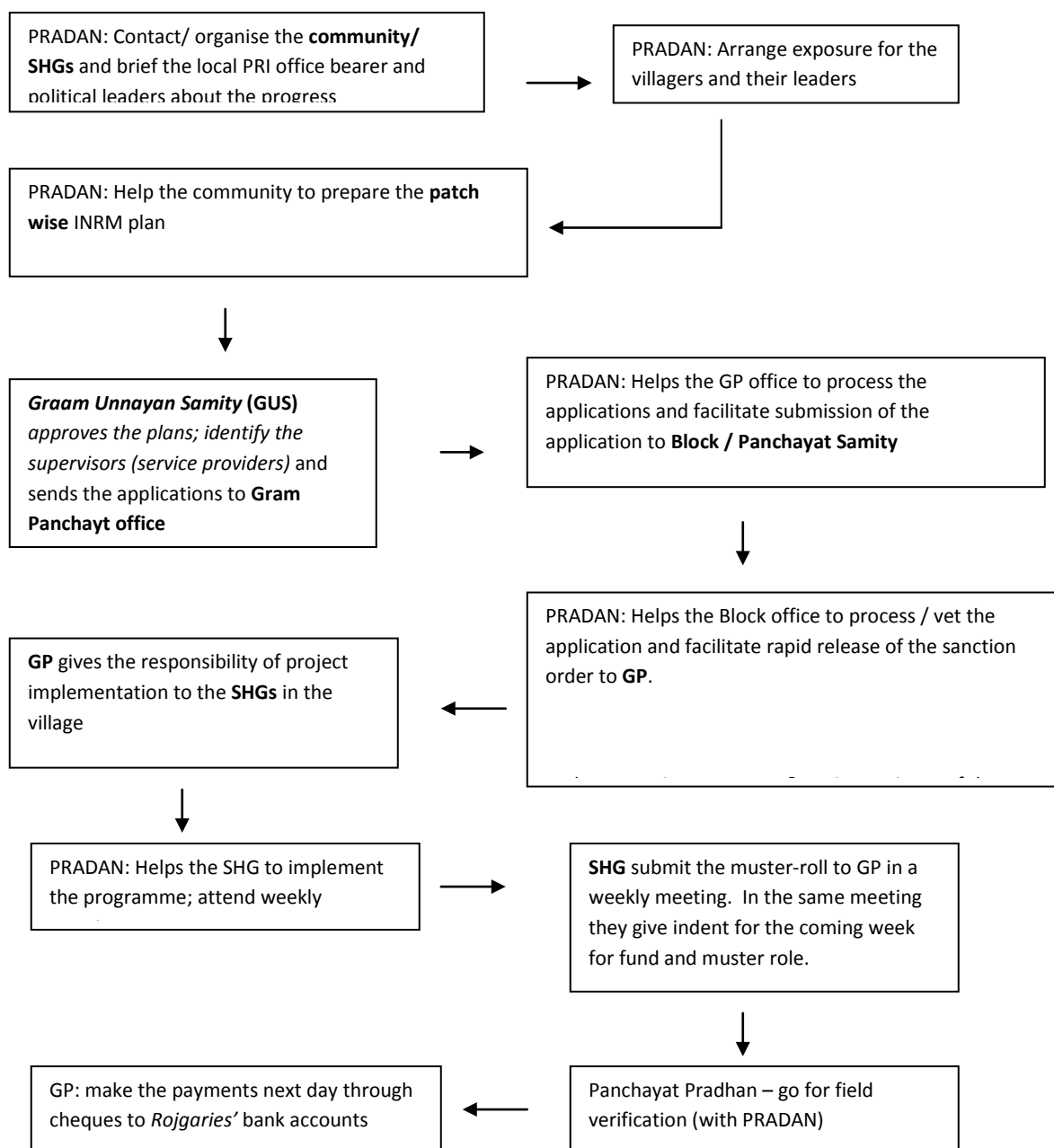
PRADAN has facilitated a hamlet level planning exercise. This was done after exposing the villagers to certain good practices. The entire community as primary stakeholders was facilitated in drawing up their plans following the steps detailed below. Gram Panchayat members and LRPs were involved to observe the process and learn.

1. Delineation of ridgeline and drainage points
2. Mapping resources
3. Mapping land ownership in each patch
4. Conducting wealth ranking
5. Preparing land use map
6. Mapping problem and generating options for development
7. Prioritisation and action plan preparation
8. Proposal preparation and Implementation
9. Checking whether all families are adequately addressed
10. Drawing implementation and follow up plans

Specific efforts and achievement in ensuring

- a) A pool of Village Resource Persons groomed
- b) Active role of Panchayat
- c) Effective participation of women
- d) System set up to smooth fund flow and implementation of NREGS works

Diagrammatic depiction of the system to ensure timely execution of works



Key issues in the EGS emerging from the field experiences

- Making participatory comprehensive integrated village development plan taking land, water and vegetation into consideration for each village and incorporating those in NREGS plans.
- Setting effective systems at GP and PS level to ensure participatory planning and smooth implementation of the plan.
- Orienting PRIs and Government towards low cost effective models related to land and water development linked to livelihoods of poor

Details of Innovations made, feedback given to the District State administration from the project experiences and changes effected

- a) Several district officials including the DM of Bankura district visited works like mango orchard with 30 x 40 model and cluster of Hupas created under NREGS and they appreciated the effort made by PRADAN. Now the NREGS cell, Bankura is advocating the same model to be replicated in other blocks of the district. In fact they have incorporated the model in their NREGS guidelines.
- b) Dr. M.N. Roy, the principal secretary of PNRD, Govt. of West Bengal visited the NREGS work done in Hirabndh block and in response he issued a letter to DMs of other districts like Purulia and Medinapur to follow the PRADAN, Bankura, model for planning and implementation of the NREGS.
- c) We made a presentation about our Bankura model to Dr Rita Sharma, Secretary, MORD, GoI, and to other planning commission members. They appreciated and suggested it be replicated in other parts of the state.

Suggested procedural changes for improving the implementation process of EGS

Suggested policy changes for strengthening EGS

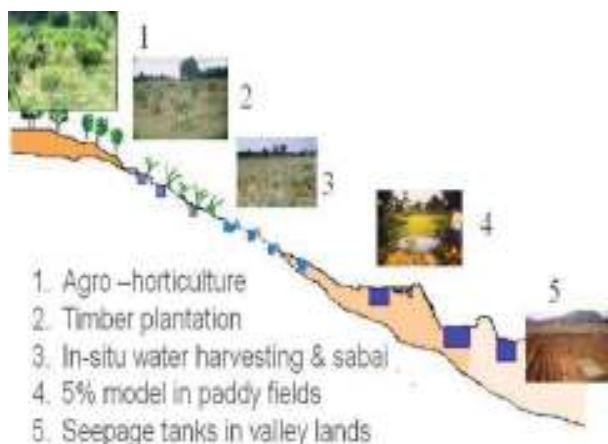
- a) Preparation of participatory peoples' plan requires a fair amount of social mobilisation. Specifically effective participation of the very poor, marginalised sections and small holders in the planning process has to be done to ensure their interest.
- b) How do we create space for extensive development work on private lands? There is an understandable preference for working on community lands under NREGA, but it is important to take up works on private lands as well. Only this can lead to creation of long-term livelihood assets. The Act does provide for works to be taken up on SC and ST lands, but if comprehensive natural resource management activity has to be taken up, this restriction may have to be amended
- c) There is also the issue of the limited ability of Panchayats to undertake livelihood interventions such as land husbandry, in-situ soil and moisture conservation, watershed planning and development, horticulture plantations and so on. Building their capability and equipping them adequately is big area to intervene. More so as the success of livelihood interventions often require up-stream and down-stream linkages.
- d) The Act is quite silent on the roles of CSOs in implementing NREGA although some state governments on their own have evolved schemes for involvement of CSOs. Their experiences needs to be studied carefully and if found feasible, should be replicated in other states.

Model for promotion of INRM based livelihoods

The topography of Bankura district is undulated, hilly and mountainous. The following are the INRM based interventions taken up with marginal and small farmers for enhancing the farm productivity and thereby enhancing income of poor in sustainable way.

At family level our interventions are as following:

1. Creation of horticulture/ timber plantation with soil moisture conservation in uplands:
The area has a large chunk of uplands which remains fallow through out the year, and



only a few farmers take pulses or maize during kharif in that land. Over the years these lands have been degrading due to top-soil erosion. In order to conserve soil and moisture as well to provide regular income to the families, agro horticulture works like creation of mango orchards have been done in the upland. The orchard is also treated with soil moisture conservation measures like 30 x 40 models. Farmers are also growing vegetables as intercrop during kharif. Timber

plantation like teak, Sal, Akashmoonni etc has been planted with 30 x 40 model in the most degraded uplands to meet timber and fuel needs of the community.

2. Creation of small water harvesting structures (WHS) in medium upland, medium low land and low land: Paddy is the major kharif crop grown in the area which is dependent upon the monsoon. Although the annual rainfall average is above 1200mm erratic rain fall and small dry spells leads to failure of the paddy crop mainly in medium upland and medium low land. Most of the small and marginal farmers suffer the most every year. Hence a series of small WHS (5% model) have been created in a decentralized manner to ensure life-saving irrigation to paddy. Farmers are growing kharif vegetables in bunds of water bodies, rearing fishes for a short period, growing mustard, pea etc as second crop in the medium low land. In the low land these water bodies act as seepage tank and water remains available for longer period. Farmers grow vegetables in the winter around the seepage tank.

The livelihood impact out of NREGA work is described below

Three types of activities, namely, creation of mango orchards and timber plantations, construction of soil and moisture conservation structures (30 x 40 model) in the plantation area and creation of a cluster of small decentralised water bodies (5% model) locally known a Hupa were taken up before last year (2008-09) monsoon under NREGS.

Plantation: The survival rate of plants is more than 90% and SHGs (Self Help Groups) of the villages have taken responsibility of nurturing and protection of it.





Soil and moisture conservation: The visible impact of 30 x 40 model constructed in 25 ha of old Arjuna plantation (tasar silk host plant) in village Tilabaid, Korapara, Lochipur of Hirbandh block is very good. More foliage with bigger leaves are found in the plants this year unlike other years. Farmers hope to have a good harvest of tasar silk this year. Moreover, the crop field in the lower region now remains moist for longer periods because of sub-surface flow of water which would be helpful for the paddy crop this year.



Construction of Hupas: The many ways in which the present intervention has contributed to diverse benefits is further elaborated with the help of the three cases of Bodonda, Parangope and Uttam Bauri, presented below:



Case of Bodon Mandi, Kasakendi

Bodon is an ST farmer of Kasakendi. He owns about 3 bigas (0.50 ha.) of land in two patches: One plot is all of 1 biga, and the other 2 bigas. He has excavated two happas in his plot of 2 bigas. One of the happas measures 50 x 60 feet, while the other is 30 x 24 feet, thus amounting to about 5% of the total land held. The two happas on his farmland generated about 50 days of employment for the household,

alleviating the need to migrate in summer. Prior to the construction of the two happas, Bodon used to undertake short duration paddy on about 1 biga of this plot, and the remaining land would normally go unutilised. The bit under paddy would yield anything between 3 to 4 quintals and was almost always retained for household consumption.

The happa came as a timely intervention. Thanks to the smaller pond (30 x 24 feet) he was able to salvage his paddy crop despite the drought (2009, kharif). Assured irrigation through the happa made it possible for him to obtain a commendable yield of 5 quintals despite the vagaries. On the other hand, the water stored in the larger happa helped him undertake maize and bitter gourd in the initial rabi months. This was followed through with the cultivation of other vegetables such as radish, tomatoes, cabbage, cauliflower and green leaves. By relying on the water of the happa, Bodonda was also able to prepare jeevamrita – an organic supplement that is readied by mixing cow urine and jaggery with water in the required proportion. The application of Jeevamrita to the radish crop yielded a prize winning size that weighed between 3 to 5 kgs.

Apart from household consumption Bodonda was able to sell a significant quantity of his vegetables in the local market. He also undertook fish propagation in the happa and apart from the vegetables he has sold about 5 kgs of fish in the market so far. After accounting for all costs, Bodonda estimates that he has been able to earn at least Rs. 15,000 from vegetable and fish sales in the local market. Seeing the benefits Bodonda is enthusiastic to deepen the happas on his land by a couple of feet. He says that he'd rather get busy deepening his happa than wait for the clouds.

Case of Parangope, Damodarpur

Parangope is a general caste farmer of Damodarpur who owns about three-fourths of a hectare across two separate plots. Parangope has made a happa that measures 36x40 feet on one of the plots that measures nearly half a hectare. Parangope says that he was been able to save his kharif crop of paddy last year with the aid of water conserved by the happa. Keeping the better portion of his lands reserved for cultivation under conventional methods, Parangope had allocated a small degraded patch on his plot for experimenting with the technique of System of Rice Intensification (SRI). And this degraded patch yielded the best results. Parangope is now convinced that a combination

of SRI methods with the 5% model is sure to double his yields. It is also bound to create surplus water for the cultivation of vegetables during rabi.

In a seemingly innovative way, Parangope has laid a trellis atop his happa, with the aid of bamboo poles and GI wire. The creepers that have been allowed to grow on the grille, providing fresh vegetables and gourds for household consumption. They also shade the water beneath and reduce the loss of water due to evaporation. Parangope has also undertaken small quantities of cabbage, cauliflower and potatoes on his farm land besides the happa. After accounting for all expenses he has saved Rs 2,000 from the sale of these vegetables.

Apart from the vegetables, Parangope had also released 3 kgs of fingerlings in the happa. Though the fish produce had mainly been availed for household consumption, small quantities were sold in the market place. This earned him Rs. 1,200. Since the water in Parangope's happa is likely to last only for a few weeks more, he plans to connect the surplus of a nearby village tank (pukur) to his happa with the aid of a diesel pump. This would save the last remaining fish in his happa that are under threat on account of the receding waters. Parangope estimates that he would earn another Rs. 2,000 from the sale of the remaining fish in the happa. Being close to the beginning of the academic year he says would use this amount to pay for his children's school fees.

Case of Uttam Bauri, Bada Aral

Uttam Bauri is an SC farmer of Bada Aral. He owns a small plot of land, measuring about three quarters of a hectare at a distance of about 500 feet from the village Pukur. Uttam says that in the past, only those who had land close to the Pukur grew vegetables during rabi. He says that the happas have made it possible for many farmers, like him, to grow vegetables through rabi. Uttam has excavated a happa measuring 36 x 40 feet, and has been able to cultivate vegetables such as tomatoes, cabbage, brinjals, radish and cauliflowers. Uttam estimates that he spent about Rs. 200 as input cost in growing the vegetables. On occasions he relied on a diesel pump to lift water from the happa to the vegetable plots. Considering all such expenses, Uttam estimates that he has made a profit of Rs. 800 to 1,000 from the sale of vegetables. Significant quantities of vegetables were also retained for household consumption.

Uttam says that the water of the happa saved his kharif crop of paddy. If not for the water of the happa he would have lost his standard crop of 4 quintals to the drought. Apart from saving his paddy from drought, the happa also supported fingerlings released by Uttam Bauri. Unfortunately, the fish was stolen. Uttam Bauri says that unlike the bigger structures and water bodies in which fisheries are promoted on a commercial basis, the smaller happas remain unguarded during the nights. Besides, Uttam Bauri's plot is flanked by wastelands on one side. The wastelands make it easier for the thieves to steal away the produce by night. Nevertheless, the cattle which graze on these adjoining wastelands avail the water of Uttam's happa during the the day. Uttam is fine with another's cattle deriving benefit from his happa, because many a time, his own cattle drink the water of someone else's happa.

2.10 BIHAR

Khagariya, a flood-prone district in North Bihar surrounded by rivers, is also one of the state's most backward districts. With a population of 12,76,677, this district has a sex ratio of 890 females to 1000 males, and literacy is at a dismal 41.56%.

Khagariya and Gogri are two anumandals in the district while 7 prakhand kramas Alauli, Khagadiya, Gogri, Chowdham, Beldor. Agriculture is the main occupation and the people are either farmers or agricultural labourers, many of them mahadalits or dalits and even among other castes, most are classified as BPL.

That the district is flood-prone masks the serious and chronic shortage of drinking water in this area, mainly sourced from rivers and handpumps. During floods the district also suffers from water-borne diseases, ravaging families and pushing the already indebted into deeper traps of debt. Studies have shown that in those families that have debilitating health issues triggered by recurring floods, the womenfolk are pushed into prostitution for livelihood, and the children take to begging or crime.

The Megh Pyne Abhiyan

Taking lessons from the horrific floods of 2007, and accepting the challenges involved, the campaign was launched to ensure drinking water security to the people of Khagariya. Pamphlets were distributed and volunteers discussed various methods of mitigating the wrath of chronic floods with the people.

In the relief camps organised the Megh Pyne Abhiyan, various methods of harnessing rainwater and purifying it were explained. The efforts helped bring down the occurrence of water-borne diseases like diarrhoea and other stomach-related ailments, fever and cough. This was particularly evident in the Khatta Tola village of Sarsaba panchayat, where the predominantly mahadalait population was able to take the sting out of *kala azar* and other diseases that used to haunt this area year after year.

After the Flood

Post the flood of 2007, the campaign focussed on the quality of drinking water and found the levels of iron and arsenic much above desired limits. This led to a multi-pronged approach of rejuvenating the traditional sources of water – wells – and introduction of filters to bring down the iron content in potable water.

MGNREGA came as a shot in the arm for the campaign with the panchayats agreeing to channel its resources towards rejuvenating existing wells and building new ones. The focus was now on providing safe drinking water during the days of the flood and the days that followed. Two villages were taken up for MGNREGA work and *matka-filters* and *Jal Koti* were provided as part of the MPA campaign.

Works begin

- 1) A survey of drinking water sources
- 2) Identifying wage seekers
- 3) Status of job cards
- 4) Survey of households
- 5) Village meetings that ensured 100% participation of people in the campaign

- 6) Selection of work and storage sites.
- 7) Artisans of Kajichak village were given the task of manufacturing matka-filters to ensure iron-free drinking water. In this area where agricultural labour was the only source of livelihood, MGNREGA thus made its entry offering a fall back option for the first time.



In Khagaria, the ongoing collaboration between the district administration and Megh Pyne Abhiyan partner Samta in leveraging MGNREGA for designing and executing innovative water and sanitation solutions for flood-hit areas finds its way into the Republic Day parade in 2011. Presently, two Mahadalit hamlets - Nepal tola and Railway tola have been identified for the pilot. MPA will develop *matka filters*, *jal kothis* and *phaydemand shauchalays* (useful toilets) locally by involving *kumbhaars* (potters) *dabiya* and *raj mistris* (bamboo artisans and masons) and unskilled labour for this work. This is for the first time that an attempt is being through a joint collaboration between the district administration and a civil society group to undertake drinking water and sanitation works under MGNREGA.

Participatory planning and implementation of works

With support from Samaj Pragati Sahayog, the MPA partners in Samta in Khagaria and Savera in W.Champaran, MPA partners are involved in preparing plans for leveraging MGNREGA for flood mitigation and livelihoods in selected panchayats. These plans will hopefully become a rallying point for the community and the administration on what needs to be done in such conditions.

Khagaria

The target panchayats are adjoining the district headquarters of Khagaria. Most of the districts lies in the flood prone area of seven small and big rivers – Kosi, Kamla, Balan Kareh, Bagmati, Burhi Gandak and Ganga. Of these, five rivers (Kamla, Balan, Kareh, Kosi and Baghmati) are covered by the large embankment known as Karachi Badla bund of 47.50 km long, to check the spread of flood and the other two rivers Ganga and Burhi Gandak have been covered by other embankment known as Khagaria Protection bund of 3.00 km length.

In case of normal rains the area in between these two bunds which is nearly 75 sq.km, gets flooded due to lack of proper drainage and the agriculture fields gets submerged. Due to plain topography and absence of well defined drainage network, and a relatively high water table, the area remains under water for nearly two to three months. Due to this, farmers are unable to take the first crop. Two sluice gates are made in the Karachi Badla Bund to release the water of this area in the Bagmati River after lowering of water level in the river.

Most of the area has very good fertile land, but only one crop is taken due to the flood problem. There are some fishermen families also in the area. They are involved in fisheries in the area under submergence. These fishermen obstruct the opening of sluice gates so that they can derive maximum benefits from fishing. Basically these fishermen are working for

contractors who get the contract for fishing in the area. These contractors are powerful and influential. Due to the obstructions created in the timely opening of sluice gates, the possibility of agriculture activity for the second crop is delayed and this delay affects the yield of the crop. Another problem aggravating the picture is that most of the roads constructed in the area have very few culverts, obstructing the free flow of water across the road bunds. For example the main road of the selected area from Khagaria to Sonman ki ghat has only two culverts across a length of 7 kilometers and the sill level of all the culverts is above ground level or the bed level of the stream. This is also obstructing the early release of water from the area. As per the village community, this type of culvert is made to provide extra benefit to the fishermen.

Local farmers and villagers expect that if these culverts are made as per requirement and the gates are operated on time, flood waters can be discharged at least one month earlier than it is now.

There is one channel in the area about 7 km long to release the flood water towards the sluice gate. This drain is also silted up and has been encroached by the nearby farmers reducing its width.

Another problem of the area is the breach of embankments (*tatbandhs*), when due to heavy rains in the catchments, extra water is released in the rivers and the embankments get breached. Due to these breaches, the area gets flooded with 10-20 feet extra depth of water, endangering the life of habitants. This type of flood occurs mostly every two to three years. In flood situations, most of the population takes shelter on the embankments of *tatbandhs*, roads and railway tracks.

Plan of Action

In Khagaria, the activities for which MGNREGA funds can be leveraged are as follows:

- One more sluice gate of at least the same dimension near the existing Madura sluice gate is essential for speedy discharge of the water.
- Deepening the discharge channel, which is badly silted up. This is a must for free flow of



Floods in Khagaria. People shift to embankments or *tatbandhs* during the flood season. Aside from the Mahananda, all other major rivers of North India – Kosi, Kamla, Balan, Kareh, Baghmata, rivers of the Adhwara group, Burhi Gandak and Ganga, all make this district their route every year, causing dislocation, disease and distress

the water.

- Provision of more culverts on the roads, at least 2 culverts per km length of all the roads coming under the submergence area. (IRC guidelines suggest 5 cross-draining structures for every 2 kms). These will help storm water flow off rapidly.
- While making new culverts the sill level of the culverts should be kept below the ground level or at the bed level of streams. If possible the sill level of existing culverts should be lowered down to the bed level of streams.
- Ponds beside the road should be deepened and properly shaped to provide livelihoods for landless fishermen. Deepened and properly designed dugout ponds have the potential for fisheries through out the year. This will ensure that fishermen get their fish from these ponds rather than through the pondage created by keeping the sluice gates closed even during floods. It will also help poor fishermen get out from the control of contractors. The potential for conflict arising due to timely opening of sluice gates, can be avoided.
- Generating awareness amongst farmers of the area to form groups to influence the administration so that the timely opening of the sluice gates can be decided as per the ground conditions.
- Renovation of the tatbandhs, that are in very bad shape. These bunds are not only used for movement by local villagers, but also become shelter points during floods, so the width of these bunds has to be increased.
- In addition to all of the above the annual maintenance of the tatbandhs, discharge channels and sluice gates are critical.

At current estimates, an action plan of Rs.2.9 crores is needed for Sannhouli, Bachhouta, Bhadas, Ranko, Bishanpur, Chatar, Dehmakhedi Khutha, South Madar and North Modar panchayats of Khagaria district to counter the flood threat.

West Champaran

The selected panchayats in W.Champaran are nearly 30 kms from the district headquarters. Most of the area of target panchayat of South Telwa of Nautan Block, comes under the flood prone area of Chanderavati River. The panchayat has a population of about 15,000 and is spread over 1266.68 ha.

One tatabandh is made along the river to protect the area but due to lack of maintenance it is in a bad shape and gets breached in case of heavy rains, damaging crops and houses. One sluice gate is made in the tatbandh to release the storm water of the area into Chanderavati but this gate is also badly damaged.

Most of the area of Gram Panchayat lies in the command area of Chanderavati diversion, but due to floods and absence of cross drainage mechanism like aquaducts and syphons, the canal network is badly damaged and presently unable to serve the area.

There are so many low lands locally known as chours which cover a large area.

For West Champaran, the following activities are being proposed at an estimated cost of Rs.2 crores:

- Repair of the breached canal from diversion of Chanderavati has to be taken up on priority as this will improve the irrigation potential of the area.
- One aquaduct of 20m length is required in the canal near Barham Tola. A few small cross-

drainage structures are also required at different points for releasing storm water safely.

- The main sluice gate of Chandravati River needs immediate attention.
- One small sluice gate is also required at Dabriya chour to release storm water safely.
- There are seven big chours covering nearly 30 acres of land in the panchayat area. According to the villagers these chours can be converted into dug out ponds to enhance the irrigation potential of the area. It is a feasible suggestion to deepen these ponds through NREGA funds where the excavated earth could be utilised to raise the bunds which can support plantation and also provide short time shelter during floods.
- Renovation and increase in the width of the old tatbandhs, so that local villagers can use them as roads and shelter points during floods.
- In addition to all of the above, the annual maintenance of the tatbandhs, discharge channels and sluice gates is must. The maintenance work has to be done from January to April, to stabilise the earthwork before the onset of monsoon.
- Plantation should be done on all on embankments for erosion control.



THREE

MGNREGA: NEEDED REFORMS

As the operational guidelines to the MGNREGA state the legislation is intended to go well beyond the narrow goal of providing relief employment:

- a. Strong social safety net for the vulnerable groups by providing a fall-back employment source, when other employment alternatives are scarce or inadequate
- b. Growth engine for sustainable development of an agricultural economy. Through the process of providing employment of works *that address causes of chronic poverty such as drought, deforestation and soil erosion, the Act seeks to strengthen the natural resource base of rural livelihood and create durable assets in rural areas.*
- c. Empowerment of rural poor through the processes of a rights-based law
- d. New ways of doing business, as a model of governance reform anchored on the principles of transparency and grass-root democracy. [MoRD (2008)]

In order to realize the above goals that MGNREGA has set out for itself, there need to be first and foremost human capacities. As studies and performance audits of the flagship scheme have pointed out, human resources have not been deployed adequately. Even if these resources were present in adequate numbers, their capabilities need to be developed so that they are able to discharge their responsibilities. Human resources need to be backed by proper supporting institutions, which act as decision support systems. It is with this framework in mind that the present chapter seeks to look at needed directions for MGNREGA reform¹.

3.1 Human Resources

3.1.1 Dedicated Implementation Team at Cluster Level

A real bottleneck in MGNREGA implementation is a lack of functionaries at the cutting edge of implementation, with serious consequences for the bottom-up, people-centred architecture of MGNREGA. The shortage of staff has had a serious impact on key parameters like high-quality people-centred planning and implementation of works, availability of employment on time, timely measurements and hence timely payments. It is clear that the sheer size of the guarantee makes it impossible to be carried out on an “additional charge” syndrome. However, this is precisely what has been happening with MGNREGA². In addition to impacting the quality of work under MGNREGA, such an inadequate provisioning of hu-

¹ In the light of the above discussion, it is interesting to note that the Working Group on Capacity Building of the Central Employment Guarantee Council¹ observes that barring few exceptions, a lack of pro-active dedicated teams at the cutting edge of implementation, ad-hoc appointments of “low quality staff” leading to low employee morale and job satisfaction and high rates of attrition, lack of coordination between “horizontal and vertical tiers of the government”, “poorly crafted administrative systems” and lack of strong governance systems at national and state level and absence of a proper capacity building plan strike at the very root of MGNREGA (CEGC 2010[a])

² This has been corroborated by several independent assessments from the field. See for instance, CAG (2008), Ambasta et.al. (2008), Samaj Pragati Sahayog (2008)

man resources at the disposal of the Gram Panchayats also means that the genuine democratic decentralisation and devolution remains incomplete³.

It is obvious that the level of professional support to GPs has to be stepped up. Not only should there be dedicated staff for a programme with new, radical demands but also the number of such staff need to increase to set up a proper implementation team. Such a larger team size naturally suggests that each block is broken down into implementation clusters to ensure proper division of responsibilities between different POs in the same block.

Such a cluster-based implementation unit would also become the cutting edge of implementation, instead of the block. This can be seen as an innovation in governance delivery in rural India, as decentralization is deepened further beyond the current District, Block, GP model (See National Consortium on NREGA [2009] and the CEGC [2010a]). This intermediate layer for implementation is not to be confused with an elected Panchayat layer or an administrative unit. It may simply be seen as a unit for which a team of human resources for planning and implementation is deployed.

On an average there are about 90 villages per block in India. We may divide the block into 3 parts, each to be called the Village Development Cluster or the Gram Vikas Sankul, comprising 30 villages each or about 15 GPs. This middle tier GVS will be the cutting edge level of MGNREGA implementation between the GP and the Intermediate Panchayat. Such a layer will be co-terminus with optimum deployment of personnel, and will ensure:

- proper planning
- greater cohesion and coordination between GPs and within project teams
- time-bound sanctions and releases, smoother functioning, through a reduction in the critical distance between GP and MGNREGA implementation hub
- timely measurements and valuations of work
- social mobilization and social audit.

Apart from increasing human resource allocation at the cutting edge of implementation, the Gram Vikas Sankul also ensures a level of efficiency of use of such resources since they are collectively used by several GPs. Along with this decentralization of implementation, a fully dedicated professional support team for MGNREGA needs to be placed at the Village Development Cluster. This team, which we can call the Project Facilitation Team (PFT) is recruited from the open market through a rigorous selection and screening process. The team members should be recruited on contract for a period not exceeding 3 years. The team should be led by a Project Officer and should comprise at the very minimum one person in-charge of social mobilization and 3 technical assistants and one community level mobilizer for each Gram Panchayat (GP) (CEGC 2010a).

The above provisions call for an increase in the personnel deployed for MGNREGA. They further indicate that these personnel need to be dedicated to the task rather than placed on an “additional responsibility” basis. The estimated costs of such human resources (there are several, see Ambasta et.al., 2008, National Consortium on NREGA, 2009, Ambasta, 2010, CEGC 2010b) indicate that they are well within the 6% allocation for administrative costs currently allowed. What is required is that most of this 6% is spent at the sub-block level, or

³ See Ambasta (2010 and 2011), for a discussion of the 3 Fs – Finances, Functions and Functionaries in the context of MGNREGA

the cutting edge of implementation.

A very strong PFT will almost on a daily basis, can easily reach out to, mobilise and empower the poor, wage seekers to make demands on the system. Such a dedicated PFT will prepare an annual micro-plan for each Gram Panchayat each year resulting in shelf of works and annual budget estimates (material and labour budget both). The PFT will train Gram Panchayat representatives and functionaries and also village-level workers, and work with them on all aspects such as implementation, asset verification, measurement and payment, and monitoring and evaluation, MIS maintenance, and social audit. Such a PFT will address the needs of a population of about a third of a block, or 30 to 35 villages, and in terms of geographical area a maximum of 15,000 hectare. This is a large enough area to employ and distribute the cost of hiring quality staff. Thus there would be three PFTs in a block each led by a PFT team leader and reporting to the Programme Officer at the block level⁴. This is also roughly the area on which the cutting edge of NRLM implementation is proposed to rest. This gives grounds for convergence and pooling of human resources at the disposal of PRIs.

3.1.2 Human Resource Policies

In order to attract the best professional talent for MGNREGA implementation, the recruitment of professionals also has to be done in a professional manner. This will need innovative criteria for selection of the right person for the right job and transparent and appropriate human resource policies which build in performance assessment and incentives for good performance, while clearly placing disincentives on non-performance.

Such recruitments could be outsourced to credible agencies, backed by administrative and political support. Such innovations in the contexts of specific projects have been tried by the state governments of Bihar, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu with good impacts⁵. There is a need to lay down uniform guidelines under the MGNREGA for recruitment of staff particularly at the levels of Field Assistants, Technical Assistants and Additional Programme Officers who lead the project at the Block level. The terms of contract are not uniform among states or even staff categories. Job descriptions are not clear for positions filled up both by contractual employment and deputation from other state departments. In essence, while studies have preceded organisational changes in DRDAs, MGNREGA has not had the benefit of a comprehensive HR policy for project staff. The systems of recruitment, appointment, remuneration, termination and terms of service, where on contract are also either absent, or have not been able to sustain themselves after the initial round. By allocating a very low administrative expenditures, governments have tended to incentivize ad-hoc appointments, in an era where the job markets have opened up and become fluid. Problems commonly found in state NREGA systems are the following: (a) compensation structure indicating ad hoc nature of employment such as lump sum monthly payment; (b) much of the responsibility to hire staff is left to the DPC without specifying “how” or to the Mukhia/Sarpanch; and (c) high turnover.

However, without a cohesive organizational vision, mentoring, proper job descriptions, systems of incentivizing performance and disincentivizing non-performance and grievance redress, mere contractual employments are not going to serve the purpose.

⁴ The recommendations of the report of the CEGC Working Group on Planning and Execution (CEGC 2010b) are in convergence with the above. The working group has suggested that the delineation of this cluster or GVS may be done on the principle of area and distance rather than administrative boundaries and recommends a delineation limit at about a population size of 40,000. In terms of national averages, this coincides with roughly one-third of the block.

⁵ See Arya and Shubham (2009) and CEGC (2010a)

- To sum up, therefore we need a system in place which satisfies the following principles:
- it must be objective and transparent in terms of selection and recruitment, eliminating biases in selection. Credible agencies with a track record in recruitment for the social sector may be considered for the job.
 - recruitment and selection for MGNREGA should begin by clearly creating a job profile for the desired candidate.
 - selection methodology must focus on multiple formal tests for selection – psychometric, sociometric, interviews and village immersion
 - administration of the tests must be outsourced and formalized rather than be left to chance and vague. A selection panel should be formally constituted to oversee the process. Clear, unambiguous and transparent criteria for selection or rejection of candidates should be placed.
 - a system of performance management that grades the performance of staff and rewards or punishes them by linking performance to salary and non-monetary awards, and to promotion or termination⁶. The system should follow a 360 degree evaluation method, incorporating field visits, review of records, assessment of wage seeker participation, factoring in feedback from village communities and PRI leadership.
 - a clear cohesive organizational vision is required to iron out issues relating to implementation particularly arising between the PFTs and the PRIs
 - a human resource policy for contract staff also needs to be worked out with well defined criteria specifying compensation structure and career growth path possibilities.

3.2 Capacity Building

The operational guidelines of MGNREGA envisage the setting up a chain of resource centres from the national to the state to the district level [Chapter 13], with the cutting edge in terms of training and capacity building has correctly been envisaged at the district level [Section 13.4.1.e]. However, capacity building is an aspect of rural development which has suffered neglect over the decades. There are gaps in terms of training infrastructure, training material, resource-persons and so on and also variations across states in each of these aspects. There is also a lack of a training plan or strategy at the state and national levels, with natural implications for quality. It is clear that there is a lack of cohesion and shared sense of purpose across the board. This is seriously impacting the quality of outcomes on the ground.

In general, the problems that have beset capacity building efforts with respect to rural developments can be seen as arising from the following:

- Training institutions for rural development are often found to be lacking in in-house hands-on experience of rural development itself.
- They also tend to be geographically removed from the areas where proposed development interventions are supposed to take place
- Training needs to be located in a larger programme of handholding support for proper transfer of skills to take place. If it is treated as a one-off affair, or is seen as confined to the class room or training course, it will not have the desired impact.
- There is as yet no system of certification for the training

⁶ The experience of VKP, Tamil Nadu and that of anti poverty project Gemi Dirya of Sri Lanka indicates that such systems can be very effective in incentivizing performance and disincentivizing non-performance (CEGC 2010a)

3.2.1 Network of Capacity Building Institutions

There is need to identify at the national level, a network of organizations which can perform the role of creating multiplicity of nuclei of empowerment across the country⁷. Such a training strategy could have at its apex a national level anchor. Such an organization will provide oversight and review of the capacity building effort and discharge a very important and needed coordination role between different state level resource centres. It would also:

- help to set out a training policy at both state and national levels and make training needs assessments
- be actively involved in production of high quality training material and be a clearing house for such material
- identify, mobilize and empanel institutions which can play the role of training institutions for MGNREGA across the country, through a rigorous process
- define training content and syllabi for different stakeholders
- draw up a national level training plan for different stages of MGNREGA implementation and for different stakeholders, factoring in state level training plans
- identify and induct capable CSOs with proven track records, professional agencies, technical institutes and other institutions who can play the role of Lead Resource Centres or Anchor Organizations (AOs) for MGNREGA in different states, with the active participation of the state level training and support organizations
- ensure that training requirements for MGNREGA are actually being fulfilled across the country as per the training plan
- monitor the quality of training imparted and make specific, germane recommendations for improvement of the same
- give clear recommendations and set clear deadlines to state governments who are not acting complying with the training road map to bring them on track

Such a network of institutions at the national level could train further organizations and district level technical support resource groups (envisaged under the Operational Guidelines) to provide training and support to implementation teams as well village level workers.

At the district level there is need to set up a District Training and Support Organization, an idea already mooted in the Operational Guidelines (Section 13.4: District Technical Agencies). This district-level organization will act as a master trainer organization which imparts training to block and sub-block implementation teams and may be formed by states by inducting full-time dedicated resource persons who will act as master trainers for MGNREGA. The organization will also provide support to PFTs at the VDC level under MGNREGA.

The recruitment of such resource persons may be undertaken through the same channels as that of the project implementation teams at block and cluster levels. The district-level organization can be a CSO provided one of high quality, impeccable credentials and some experience of planning and execution or working on nature-based livelihoods is available. The district-level training team will be trained by the network of institutions identified at the national and state level and depending on the level of capacities already existing, a suitable course can be designed catering to their needs (see CEGC 2010a for a discussion). After the

⁷ See GoI (2006) for a list of such institutions and also the Common Guidelines for Watershed Development of the DoLR. The list contains technical institutions and civil society organizations of repute with track-record and experience of working on NRM issues closely with the community.

training course and a course-end evaluation (including an examination) a certificate should be awarded to the trainers clearly indicating that the team members are capable of becoming master trainers at the district level.

The costs for such an arrangement would come to below 1% of the total cost of the guarantee, as can be seen from the calculations below. Given that there are about 6,000 blocks and 600 districts in India, we have 10 blocks on an average in a district. Under the human resource deployment scenario outlined earlier, we would have 3 Village Development Cluster (VDC) teams, each with 6 members. The combined strength of these teams at the block level comes to 18. This implies that a district-level master trainer team would have to cater to training and support requirements for 180 persons.

A system can be visualized of Basic Training Programmes of 20 days' duration to be imparted by these district organisations to freshly inducted VDC team members in the first year, followed by shorter duration courses and field-based support in subsequent years (in subsequent years, given normal staff turnover, the requirement of a BTC will automatically come down). If the 180 team members of the 30 VDCs in the 10 blocks were to attend the BTC at the DMTSC in batches of 36 (which is an ideal number in terms of trainers being able to attend to trainees), at least 5 batches will have to be trained, implying about 100 days basic training in the first year. Assume about 50 days of holidays. This leaves about 315 days in the year. After the first year, the number of days available for field support will go up since the training programmes will be of a shorter duration.

The table below attempts a 5-year estimation of training and support at the district level.

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
1	Average Number of Blocks per district	10	10	10	10	10
2	Average no. of VDCs in a block	3	3	3	3	3
3	Approximate strength of one VDC team	5	5	5	5	5
4	Strength at Block Level	3	3	3	3	3
5	Total Strength of VDC teams at block level [4] + ([3] x [2])	18	18	18	18	18
6	Total no. of VDCs in one District [1] x [2]	30	30	30	30	30
7	Total Team Members to be trained by district-level team [1] x [5]	180	180	180	180	180
8	Basic Training Courses of 20 days in first year (@36 trainees per course for 180 trainees)	5	0	0	0	0
9	Refresher/specialized training courses (5 batches, 6 days per course)	0	5	5	5	5
10	Training Days	100	30	30	30	30
11	Days available for field support (leaving aside about 50 days for holidays)	210	283	283	283	283
a	No. of days per visit	7	4/5	4/5	4/5	4/5
b	No. of visits	1	2	2	2	2
12	No. of days of support per VDC per annum If each VDC has to be visited twice a year for 4-5 days per visit	7	9	9	9	9

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
12	No. of VDCs that can be visited twice in a year by this team for at least 4 or 5 days per visit [11] / [12]	30	30	30	30	30
13	Total No of visits by one team in a year [12] x [11(b)]	30	60	60	60	60
14	Strength of District Support Team	3	3	3	3	3
15	Average Salary of training and support persons (Rs.pm, 8% escalation per annum)	30000	32400	34992	37791	40815
16	Salary Bill for district level training staff (Rs.p.a.) [14]x[15]x12	1080000	1166400	1259712	1360489	1469328
17	Travel Allowance for Support Team Travel (average pm):					
a	Per visit local travel	5000	5400	5832	6299	6802
b	Total local travel for 60 visits [17(a)] x [13]	150000	324000	349920	377914	408147
c	Per Board/lodge and per diem (@Rs.500 per person per day, 3 persons) 500 x 3 x [11]	315000	424500	424500	424500	424500
18	Travel and Board/Lodge for team at district-level per annum [17(b)] + [17(c)]	465000	748500	774420	802414	832647
19	Office Costs (all costs escalated at 8% pa):					
a	Rental of Office premises (including training hall) (@Rs.10,000 pm)	120000	129600	139968	151165	163259
b	Office accountant's salary	90000	97200	104976	113374	122444
c	Office Support Staff Salary	60000	64800	69984	75583	81629
d	Other Office Expenses @Rs.10000 pm)	120000	129600	139968	151165	163259
20	Total Office Costs for Team at District Level [19(a)] + [19(b)] + [19(c)] + [19(d)]	390000	421200	454896	491288	530591
21	Cost of Training Programmes organized by district-level team:					
a	No. of Days of training	100	30	30	30	30
b	No. of People to be trained	180	180	180	180	180
c	Person-days of training [21(a)] x [21(b)]	18000	5400	5400	5400	5400
d	Cost per trainee-day (including board/lodge/training material) (Rs. 8% escalation pa)	200	216	233	252	272
22	Cost of training programmes (Rs.) [21(c)] x [21(d)]	3600000	1166400	1259712	1360489	1469328
23	Costs of Training Programmes Organized by VDCs:					
a	No. of VDCs	30	30	30	30	30
b	No. of Barefoot Mobilizers and Barefoot Engineers and PRI leaders	300	300	300	300	300
c	Training days for this target group per annum	30	30	30	30	30
d	Person-days of training [23(b)] x [23(c)]	9000	9000	9000	9000	9000
e	Cost per person-day (including board/lodge/training material)	150	162	175	189	204

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
24	Total [23(d)] x[23(e)]	1350000	1458000	1574640	1700611	1836660
25	Total Annual Budget for district-level training team (Rs.) [16] + [18] + [20] + [22] + [24]	6885000	4960500	5323380	5715290	6138554
26	Total Annual Budget for district-level training team (Rs.Cr)	0.69	0.50	0.53	0.57	0.61
27	Average no. of districts in 2000 backward blocks	200	200	200	200	200
28	Total Training Budget for 200 districts (Rs.Cr) [26] x [27]	138	99	105	112	120
27	Total Estimated Cost of Employment Guarantee (Rs.Cr) (see below)	18105	27118	38007	42615	43003
28	Training and Support Budget as % of Employment Guarantee Cost	0.76%	0.37%	0.28%	0.27%	0.29%

Given 10 blocks in each district on an average and 3 VDCs within a block we have 30 VDCs to cater to at the district level. If each VDC has 5 members and at the block level, 3 personnel are pooled, we have about 18 persons in each block or 180 persons in a district whose training and support requirements have to be met.

In the first year, a BTC of 20 days' duration will be held for all team members. If each batch of BTC trainees is of 36 persons, training of 180 persons will be completed in 5 batches amounting to 100 days in the first year. In subsequent years, we visualize 6-day refresher/specialized courses for 5 batches every year amounting to about 30 days of training. In the first year, the district team will make one support visit to each VDC for 7 days. In subsequent years, there will be two such visits each for 4 to 5 days. The support visits will also double up as hands-on training programmes. Training programmes for village level barefoot personnel will be held by the VDC team members. The estimated costs at the district-level for salaries, travel, board/lodge, office costs and training comes to about Rs.0.69 crores in the first year and remains between Rs.50 lakhs to Rs.60 lakhs even after accounting for inflation driven escalation. For 2,000 blocks, the cost will come to R138 crores in the first year and between Rs.99 crores to Rs.120 crores in subsequent years.

Estimated Cost Employment Guarantee in 2,000 most Backward Blocks

		Unit	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
1	Total no. of Rural Households in 1999-2000: 13.71 crores	Cr	13.71				
2	Total no. of projected Rural Households in 20011-12 @1.93% per annum rate of growth of population	Cr	17.24	17.58	17.92	18.26	18.62
3	Rural Labour Households [RLH] @40% of Rural Households (0.40 x [2])	Cr	6.9	7.03	7.17	7.31	7.45
4	No. of blocks in India	No	6495	6495	6495	6495	6495
5	No. of RLH in 2,000 most backward blocks [3]/[4] x 2000	Cr	2.12	2.17	2.21	2.25	2.29
6	Households offering themselves for NREGA work @1 adult in 70% of RLH in 2,000 most backward blocks (0.70 x [5])	Cr	1.48	1.52	1.54	1.57	1.61

		Unit	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
7	Days of work demanded	No	60	80	100	100	90
8	Person days of employment per year ([6] x [7])	Cr	89.04	121.24	154.48	157.46	144.45
9	Wage rate (Rs.122 per person per day, 10% escalation pa)	Rs	122	134.2	147.62	162.38	178.62
10	Wage bill per annum	Rs. Cr	10863	16271	22804	25569	25802
11	Material Cost assuming 60:40 wage to non-wage cost ([9] x 4/6)	Rs. Cr	7242	10847	15203	17046	17201
12	Total Cost of guarantee (Rs.Cr) for 2000 most backward blocks ([9] + [10])	Rs. Cr	18105	27118	38007	42615	43003

The table above calculates the estimated cost of the guarantee in these 2,000 most backward blocks for five years. Given 13.71 crore rural households in 1999-2000, and a 1.93% pa growth rate of rural population we have 17.24 crore rural households in 2010-11. Of these assuming 40% are rural labour households we have 2.12 crore rural labour households in 2,000 most backward blocks in year 1 rising to 2.29 crore rural labour households by the fifth year. We assume only 60% of these offer themselves for employment and avail only 60 days of work in the first year. Work demand slowly peaks, as a result of better human resource deployment at the sub-block level, reaching 100 days per rural labour household by the third year. It remains at this level in the fourth year. As the dependence on the guarantee decreases, the number of days of work demand also starts falling by Year 5. Given an average wage rate of Rs.122 per person per day, the total wage bill comes to Rs.10,863 crores in the first year. The wage rate escalates at 10% per annum to index it with price levels. At a 60:40 labour-material ratio, the total cost of the guarantee comes to Rs.18,105 crores in the first year and rises steadily thereafter but the rate of increase falls after the third year, in recognition of the fact that the dependence on the guarantee slowly reduces as better livelihoods opportunities are created. Under these assumptions, the training and support budget per district is 0.76% of the total cost of the guarantee in the first year but falls below 0.5% from the second year onwards. The scenario does not change drastically if we reduce the percentage of rural labour households participating in MGNREGA to 60% of all rural households. Even as the cost of the guarantee goes down, the share of capacity building and support allocations remain well below 1% in all years and from the second year onwards remains below 0.5%.

The above exercise is an indicative one but nevertheless points to the fact that the magnitude of allocation required to increase capacities at the cutting edge of implementation is not much. The absolute need for this minimal investment in human resources cannot be overstated in order to bring about the needed change in quality of outcomes. We would recommend that upto 1% of the cost of the guarantee is made available for MGNREGA capacity building and support provisioning, in addition to the costs of professional support. Such an allocation has the potential for dramatically changing quality of outcomes w.r.t major programmatic expenditures. The share of allocation for this purpose is expected to fall over the years but can be seen as a one time investment in creating the vital human resource capacities that are needed not only for MGNREGA but for all rural development. Convergence with NRLM

and other similar programmes (where possible) should also be explored, in terms of sharing capacity building resources and costs. CSOs identified through a rigorous process may also be formally recognized as Training Institutions for MGNREGA, with the provision that they can organize and carry out diploma courses for MGNREGA, which are recognized.

3.2.2 Issues in Civil Society Participation

Several Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) across the country have done exemplary work on MGNREGA and they represent a pool of learning and accumulated experience which must be harnessed for MGNREGA. As the experience of the National Consortium on MGNREGA shows, civil society organizations have supported gram panchayats and gram sabhas in planning, execution, social mobilization, work demand and vigilance functions with remarkable results. States such as Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have already taken several steps to enlist the participation of CSOs in MGNREGA implementation. The Andhra Pradesh NGO Alliance (formed vide order GOMS No.80, dated 19-2-2010 of the GoAP), envisages a clear role for CSOs to be involved in ensuring the rights and entitlements of MGNREGA workers. It lists the CSOs identified for the purpose and spells out reciprocal responsibilities to be maintained through MoUs. However, there is need to ensure the highest standards of CSO accountability, a concern often voiced by state governments⁸. However, this could also be in part due to an apprehension that their own systems are not geared up enough to keep undesirable elements out of the process. On the other hand, CSOs who have experience of working on MGNREGA also point to the difficulties of challenging local vested interests especially when entitlements are violated, given that their role is not mandated and there is no commitment of any type of reciprocal backing by local administrations. They also point to the fact that the agency which is supposed to give them such backup support may be influenced by local vested interests sabotaging the very purpose of MGNREGA.

Such concerns may be best addressed by adopting an approach which puts premium on quality and provides an autonomous and institutionalized space for the selection and functioning of CSOs. In the light of the danger that MGNREGA rights-based activists have subjected themselves to (see for instance Shah [2008]), such a space is long overdue to ensure to high quality CSOs a playing field where they can work smoothly and will also ensure a fallback mechanism for them if and when local conditions turn “difficult” for no fault of theirs. The process will also facilitate and strengthen the selection process of CSOs by state governments. This can be done by the national level body responsible for training leading a joint, two-stage selection and evaluation process, wherein the first round of screening and shortlisting is done by the concerned state level agency and the final round of screening is done by the body with oversight by its Steering Committee.

In order to arrive at such a decision, a panel of carefully selected evaluators who evaluate the work of these CSOs should be used. A high-level search committee may be formed which looks into the issue of empanelment of evaluators. In this entire scheme of things, CAPART could also potentially play a role. However, for this fundamental structural changes will have to take place in the institution in order for it to do justice to this role.

⁸ See for example, Nair (2010), for a news report on the Government of Kerala's response to the proposed Lok Karmi scheme of the Gol.

3.3 Governance Reforms

3.3.1. Management Support Systems for MGNREGA

Anchoring at the National Level

MGNREGA has assigned several responsibilities of steering and guiding the programme to the central government. The MGNREGA also assigns oversight powers to the Central Employment Guarantee Council (CEGC) vide Section 11 of the Act:

- a) establish a central evaluation and monitoring system;
- b) advise the Central Government on all matters concerning the implementation of this Act;
- c) review the monitoring and redressal mechanism from time to time and recommend improvements required;
- d) promote the widest possible dissemination of information about the Schemes made under this Act;
- e) monitoring the implementation of this Act;
- f) preparation of annual reports to be laid before Parliament by the Central Government on the implementation of this Act;
- g) any other duty or function as may be assigned to it by the Central Government.

(2) The Central Employment Guarantee Council shall have the power to undertake evaluation of the various Schemes made under this Act and for that purpose collect or cause to be collected statistics pertaining to the rural economy and the implementation of the Schemes.” [MGNREGA, Section 11].

The Act also provides for establishment of similar State Employment Guarantee Councils in each state to oversee and monitor the MGNREGA implementation.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Supreme Court of India’s recent orders (Supreme Court, 2010) also point to the very powerful oversight role of the Central government. Pointing to the provision under the Act of Central Councils and State-level councils for review, monitoring and oversight, the Supreme Court has observed *“In other words, this whole machinery has been set up to ensure smooth and effective implementation of the provisions of the Act”* (emphasis added). The Supreme Court, in the context of commenting on the provisions under Sections 27 of the Act further observes that:

“the powers of the Central Government are very wide. They have to ensure that there is proper utilisation of funds allocated and in the event of any misappropriation or siphoning of such funds the Central or the State Governments shall not only to examine such complaints but is commanded by law to stop the financing to such scheme and take remedial measures immediately.”

Our discussions on human resources, capacity building and civil society involvement earlier indicate that there is need for cohesion across the board and shared sense of purpose as well as (to the extent possible) a uniform strategy in MGNREGA implementation. Uniformity should not mean an absence of diverse approaches but should be seen to be a unity of framework and ground rules of operation which are complied with. In ensuring this, the oversight role at the central level indicated by the Supreme Court becomes essential. The true potential of the Operational Guidelines can be realized if a proper organizational structure and business plan

is in place. Such an organizational structure needs to be accountable, flexible, highly professional and open. MGNREGA represents a set of constitutional obligations, which leave little room for slack in the delivery mechanism, since such a slack would mean legal entitlements being denied to the poorest. Thus a strong and proactive oversight mechanism is critical. While Section 11 of the Act, cited above, points to the powerful oversight functions of the Central Council, which is the apex body for MGNREGA, it has also been pointed out that:

“ . . . it is interesting to compare the facilities and structures that are available for NREGA at the centre with those of say, the Election Commission, the Census of India, or Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan – other national programmes with a much smaller budget and mandate. The NREGA cell at the Ministry of Rural Development is a dwarf in comparison . . . ” (Dreze *et.al.* 2009)

and that:

“NREGA is a complex legislation with many different actors. The Central Government has wide powers to define the implementation framework of NREGA through Guidelines, Rules and other means (including amendments in the Schedules of the Act). The state governments are responsible for implementing state-specific “employment guarantee schemes” within that framework. And the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), especially the Gram Panchayats, are the main “implementing agencies” of NREGA works on the ground, though the Act also allows other implementing agencies such as Line Departments. In this operational maze, clear principles and guidelines are essential. This requires, in particular, close coordination between the Central and state governments.”

In a detailed two-volume report submitted to the Prime Minister of India, based on intensive field surveys, the NCEUS recommends for MGNREGA that :

“ . . . a full fledged Employment Guarantee Mission (on the lines of health and education missions) should be created in order to provide adequate support structures for the Central and state governments.” (NCEUS 2009, pg 227)

Indeed, for a national level programme such as the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), whose budgetary outlay is about a quarter of that of the MGNREGA, a well structured implementational scheme has been envisioned with a national level mission governed by a proposed apex NRLM Council at the national level. Under the circumstances, it is unclear why a similar strengthening of the MGNREGA has progressed much more slowly, if at all.

It is clear that the largest employment programme in human history requires a dedicated anchoring structure at the national level to fulfill the mandate of the Act and to strengthen the functioning of the apex council, the CEGC. The precise form of such a structure may emerge through wider debate. The idea of this anchoring structure can be seen as an elaboration and enlargement of the scope of the Technical Secretariat proposed under Section 11 of the Central Council rules. Such a structure should be a dedicated structure which will take the responsibility of overseeing the following most important functions to make MGNREGA effective:

- a) Human resources and Capacity Building
- b) Monitoring
- c) Information Technology
- d) Social Audit and Evaluation
- e) Grievance Redressal

Such a Secretariat (or Authority/Mission) should be a dedicated structure (see National Consortium on NREGA, 2009 and Ambasta 2009 for an elaboration). Setting up of such a structure will also help to separate the functions of executing the programme from those of evaluation and grievance redressal, since as a matter of principle, the agency executing the programme should not be the one also assessing its own work. Either a fully autonomous structure may be adopted wherein the Chairperson of the Central Council and key executive functionaries of the Secretariat are in-sourced from outside or, until such time as the full implications of such a structure are worked out a hybrid system are worked out, a hybrid structure may be adopted with the CEGC and Chairperson remaining as they are, and key positions in-sourced through external channels.

In both cases, all key positions of accountability should be filled in after a due high-level search and screen process. Serving government officers may also be identified and placed through such a screen process. The process should shortlist potential candidates from within the government or outside. The Council Secretariat should be headed by a CEO or Director General (DG). She is the executive through whom the will of the CEGC is expressed in action.

The Executive Secretariat should have the following departments:

Monitoring: Headed by a Deputy CEO (DCEO) or Deputy Director General (DDG), responsible for concurrent monitoring of work under NREGA and establishing and refining systems of monitoring the work under MGNREGA

Evaluations and Social Audit: Mounting evaluations through a carefully selected panel of experts and consultants from across the country, ensuring that social audits are undertaken and monitoring the action taken on the findings of such social audits;

Grievance Redressal: Headed by another DCEO, the department will be a window for complaints made by wage-seekers, lay citizens, representatives of wage-seekers, organizations working with wage-seekers or any other agency or institution wishing to bring to the notice of the CEGC any violation of the Act or its operational guidelines in any part of the country. The Ombudsmen throughout the country will work as the eyes, arms and legs CEGC.

Information Technology: Also headed by a DCEO, who will report to the CEO, this department's role will be to:

- assess ICT needs, in terms of both hardware and software, for providing a proper ICT backbone for NREGA implementation and come up with a blueprint for effective ICT deployment for NREGA which caters to information needs vis a vis transparency, monitoring and grievance redressals
- deploy the best possible expertise available in the country to advise it on ICT deployments
- ensure that the ICT blueprint is deployed once it has been ratified by the CEGC
- ensure ICT deployment across the country, conforming to the best standards anywhere in the world
- ensure that states are complying with the ICT requirements of data returns and updation
- ensure that latest developments in ICT which are potentially beneficial for use in NREGA implementation and monitoring are screened, piloted, developed further and disseminated

- pro-actively set up a coordination mechanism with other major ICT-centred initiatives of the government such as the UIDAI
- NREGA implementation personnel are trained in use of ICT

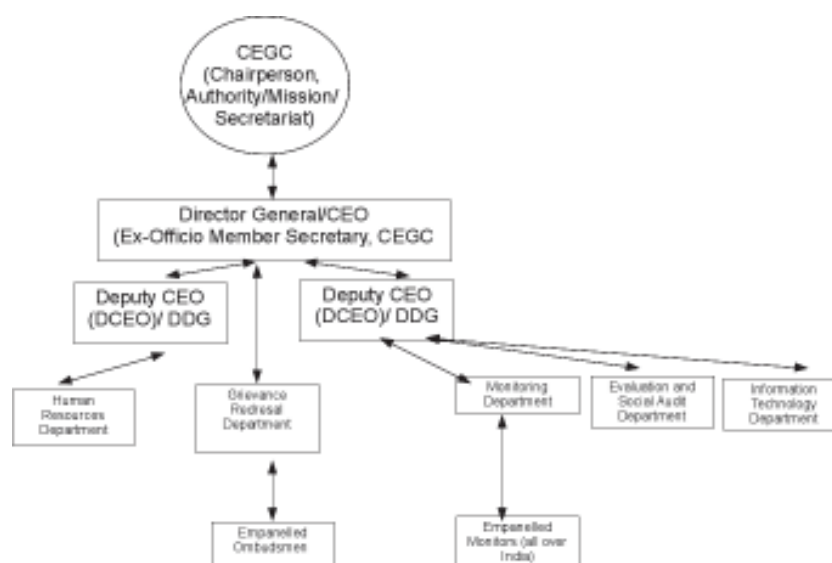
Human Resources Department: Also headed by a DCEO, who will report to the DG, this department's primary responsibility will be

- to work out standards for human resources recruited for NREGA implementation,
- to work out recruitment processes, human resource policies, performance evaluation criteria and so on
- to assess gaps, (including region-specific gaps) in human resource deployment and availability and to work out short-term responses and medium-term and long-term mechanisms for ensuring a steady source of human resources for MGNREGA
- to widely promote a gender-sensitive, pro-poor and pro-active work culture down the line
- to work out a system of certification for human resources, which all implementation structures have to comply with,
- to identify and set standards for identifying training institutions across the country who can discharge the responsibilities of capacity building for NREGA
- to work out syllabi for training courses that NREGA personnel should go through,
- to arrange for trainings for these personnel
- to network with professional and technical institutions, Civil Society Organizations, subject matter specialists and experts to create the necessary human resource infrastructure for effective capacity building
- to assess training material available, to ensure its wide dissemination across the country and to promote the production and dissemination of high quality resource material (print and electronic) for MGNREGA

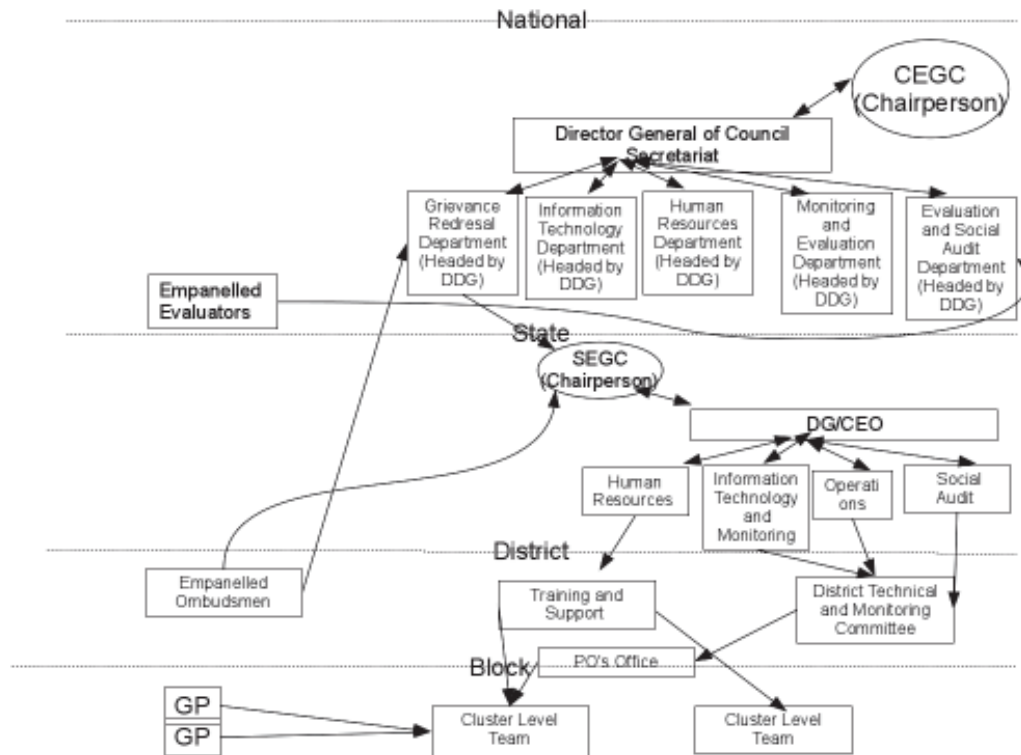
Each of these departments may induct and in-source professionals from across the country for their functions. Such a fully empowered Secretariat will report to the CEGC from time to time. Each of these departments may also be steered by Standing or Empowered Committees set up by the CEGC, headed by a CEGC member and optionally inducting experts of impeccable integrity and standing.

Here is an indicative diagram of such a structure at the national level:

Currently, in most states State Employment Guarantee Councils function minimally and are largely limited to giving approvals to administrative actions carried out by the concerned department.. Therefore, governance reforms in



the existing administrative arrangements for implementing at the state level are urgently needed by way of a dedicated structure. Bihar is actively pursuing this approach in setting up the Bihar Rural Development Society as a dedicated structure responsible for bringing in the best professional talent into rural development. Attached is an indicative diagram outlining the structures and their interconnections at different levels



3.4 Information Technology

3.4.1. Information Technology for Management Support

Apart from implementation, a critical role in ensuring entitlements under MGNREGA is that of monitoring. To ensure timely delivery of deliverables in any e-governance initiative, concurrent monitoring is a must. In this endeavour, apart from professional assistance that IT for MGNREGA becomes crucial in ensuring best results. Already, the IT system for MGNREGA is a pioneer in terms of the huge amount of information that it has warehoused and made available. We look at how this good start could be made better. The potential advantage of using IT systems for governance lies in:

- the speed with which data can be processed and made available in meaningful forms
- the availability of data nearly concurrently with its online updation/entry through networks, so that information is available pro-actively and to a larger audience (in a paper system, this information would have to be dug out to become available)
- the breaking of artificial barriers of geography, boundaries etc. to flow of information (in paper systems such boundaries do not automatically break there therefore a systemic support for information suppression)

Of these, the last two are key to engendering transparency and together all three make for contributions in governance which only IT make. In turn, these may be treated as fundamentals, adherence to which will determine whether the full capabilities of an IT system from the point of view of monitoring for governance is being harnessed. Thus, IT systems can become tremendous potential allies in concurrent monitoring, enabling preventives to be placed in line before situations deteriorate. They can also directly enable attaining entitlements and finally, they can become potent tools for grievance redressal

We look at the present status of IT systems in the MGNREGA context and discuss how it can be improved. The following table illustrates the broad stages of MGNREGA workflow and the requirements of different stakeholders.

MGNREGA Workflow and Stakeholder Expectations from IT

	Stakeholders and Objectives of IT Use		
	Wage Seekers	Implementors	Monitors/ Grievance Redressers
	Primary Objective: Getting Entitlement in the Act	Primary Objective: Implementing and Planning Work to Fulfill Legal Mandate	Primary Objective: Monitor Programme for Quality, Smooth Out Bottlenecks and Ensure that Entitlements Reach Wage Seekers on Time
Stages of MGNREGA Workflow *	What IT must Help Enable to Fulfill these Objectives		
Work demand	Demand for work must reach implementor Work must be provided within the stipulated time	Flag work demand (make it visible) Demand for work must reach implementor so that they know where and when to start work	Flag work demand (make it visible) Flag delays in start of work (measured against receipt of work demand)
Planning and estimation**		Help in standardizing estimates for most activities, including material requirements and develop a standard basket of activities***. Help in making estimations, drawings etc. fast and within reach of even non-technical members of implementation team so that work demand can be responded to Allow requests to be made for approval of non-standard activities Enable speedy approvals of such non-standard activities	Standardization of estimates helps in broad-basing estimation capabilities beyond a narrow subset of technical human resources and also curbs financial misuse issues (bloated estimates****) Shelf of Works registered with MIS will help ensure smooth and timely supply of work Flag delays in approval of non-standard activities Online approvals to shelf of works, annual plans based on shelf of works cuts out delays in sanction
Start of Work	Work must be provided within the stipulated time Failing which unemployment allowance must be paid	Record start of work by online issue of work order	Monitor gap between demand and work start

	Stakeholders and Objectives of IT Use		
	Wage Seekers	Implementors	Monitors/ Grievance Redressers
Daily attendance/ muster rolls	Attendance should be recorded properly and fairly	Reduce time taken to record attendance so that wage payments can be made in time	Monitor work actually provided against work demand, including gap between the two Ensure reduction/ elimination of “ghost” workers, “dead” men etc.
Wage payments	Should be paid within stipulated time Wages paid should be fair There should be no fraud in their name	Reduce overheads in terms of permissions, approvals, money transfers	Ensure that wage entitlements are not denied and wrongful inclusions/exclusions do not take place
Social audit	MIS must help them redress their grievances in social audit fora		Updated and detailed information must be available

To sum up

Wage Seekers want:

- their work demand to be registered and made visible. System should not be able to deny them making the demand
- work to be provided on demand within the stipulated time
- fair wages to be paid for work done within the stipulated time

Implementation Agencies want:

- demand for work to reach them
- estimates and work plans are made fast
- work is started without delay
- work payments are made without delay

thus, any approvals/sanctions/reviews needed should take place fast

Those monitoring the programme want:

- access to latest information making it possible to track any entitlement in the danger of being violated and take pro-active corrective action
- that this information should be disaggregated so that the status of entitlements anywhere can be ascertained
- that a store of information is created which enables for them medium to long-term analyses on the causes of slow performance and take necessary action

However, for IT to be able to deliver along the above lines a necessary condition is that it becomes central to the workflow and is tightly integrated end to end. In addition, for maximization of benefits, it requires a system that is real time and online. The first is a case for better use of IT. The second requires better connectivity backbones and hardware and innovations.

In mixed mode systems, IT often ends up being an appendage to the main workflow which is carried out through the normal channels of paper. Thus, the information provided on the MIS is not the latest but is already old and maybe useful for ex-post action but not

for concurrent correctives. An often voiced critique of the MIS is that muster roll data or wage payment data are entered much after the event has occurred. From the point of view of ascertaining whether the 15-day legal entitlement of wage payment has been met or not the delay is fatal. Another critique is that work demand is always equal to work supplied. Because work demand data are entered after the system has provided work and those who get work are also shown as those who demanded it (done partly to get over the stringent provisions in the act with respect to unemployment allowance). Many system administrators working for the MGNREGA MIS often raise the issue of double work when it comes to filling up muster rolls - fill up paper musters and then also fill them online. Yet others talk of the time it takes for approvals to come in after muster rolls have been filled before payments can be made.

We discuss below some possible directions in which IT systems need to move (and are already moving in some states), with the recommendation that the MGNREGA implementation and monitoring system is strengthened by mainstreaming these. Where needed, the MoRD needs to build partnerships and common steering groups in order to enable this.

Online real time systems

- As stated above, a common issue with work demand is that work demand is not immediately visible on the MIS. In terms of IT for monitoring, the issue is to make this work demand visible as soon as it arises. If MGNREGA correspondents with a handheld or a computer are available even within the perimeter of the GVS or the Block, the application can be made online. For those monitoring the system, this is enough information to trigger needed oversight functions. A cellphone based online work demand application system can be worked out wherein a short message from a wage seeker's cellphone in a pre-defined format lodges itself on a server at the state level. The PO's office, which is also part of the network takes cognizance of the application and ensures that employment is provided.
- It needs to be emphasized here that from the viewpoint of IT for monitoring MGNREGA, the sanctity of the work demand application is unquestionable. Since this is the demand which the entire system is geared to provide and is thereby a monitoring yardstick against which the sluggishness of the delivery system needs to be measured.
- Similarly, the opening of works is again an event which is recorded post-facto along with wage payments. If the initial work demand is visible, the system will be able to flag any delays in subsequent stages and raise the necessary alerts down the line.
- A similar system can be visualized for complaints and their redressal. Either they are entered through handhelds or directly by the wage seeker through her cellphone and the complaint is lodged to a central server. A recent move in Uttar Pradesh to enable a cellphone based complaints and grievance redressal system is on similar lines
- The major contribution of such IT reforms will be to ensure greater and tighter monitoring of MGNREGA work so that essential parameters of timely delivery are ensured. It will also support, by making available current information for public scrutiny such as social audits. Together with decentralisation of implementation, this is the second step in ensuring that the core objectives of MGNREGA are met.
- A system can be visualized whereby handhelds are issued to field workers under MGNREGA, and muster rolls are directly updated online to the state-level servers by biometric identification of the workers who are present on site. Such an immediate updation will go

a long way in aiding concurrent monitoring. In fact, the paper muster roll can be a print out of the online muster. Equipped with a non-repudiable authentication mechanism, the muster roll print outs are authentic enough records to be kept at the panchayat level. Fitted with GPS and webcam facilities, the system should further aid in verification of the work being done on the site at which is reportedly being done. It seems that this has also already been piloted in different states by the MoRD. The results of this pilot should be made public and appropriate policies framed on the feedback.

- Each technical assistant responsible for taking measurements is given a mobile phone where measurements are recorded and sent by compressed SMS to the central server along with GPS coordinates. This will ensure that the TAs visit the work site and avoids delay in processing the payments at the mandal computer centers
- Each of the online systems referred to above can use well designed non-repudiable, de-duplicable and possibly bi-directional⁹ authentication mechanisms, with a facility for beneficiaries locking their identification information¹⁰. This has the potential of engendering far greater transparency than a paper based system which is far more susceptible to identity fraud. Simultaneously, this mechanism can also ensure that crucial data are concurrently available for monitoring. For this, however, steps will need to be taken to ensure that the needed connectivity backbone is in place.

3.5. Work in Forest Areas

It is well known that obtaining permission to work in land under the control of the forest department is extremely difficult for any implementing agency, whether government or non-government, due to the provisions of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 (FCA). The FCA is invoked even for work such as low-cost soil and moisture conservation measures which have proven themselves to be beneficial to the micro-level flora and fauna of the forest. This poses a bottleneck, particularly in MGNREGA interventions on the watershed development approach, where the ridge area of the watershed is typically located on land in the control of the forest department. And since India's adivasis are normally concentrated in villages close to the forest, it becomes difficult to carry out such NRM-focussed development activities in adivasi villages. A conflict is also often created with the very basic provisions of employment guarantee, since long delays in obtaining necessary permissions for working in forest areas translate themselves into inordinate gaps between work demand and work initiation, thus nullifying the very purpose of the employment guarantee.

It is in this context that the provisions of the Forest Rights Act of 2006 (FRA) seek to inaugurate a new chapter in the history of India's forests and scheduled tribes. As the preamble to the FRA clearly says, the Act is a long overdue attempt to undo the historical injustices done to scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwelling communities.

The Act has enabling and empowering provisions in terms of work in the forest areas

⁹ A bi-directional authentication mechanism can potentially prevent identity fraud made possible through system crackers cracking the handheld device used for authentication and using it to spoof identity. Consider the following: a MGNREGA worker authenticates against authentication servers through her biometrics. The equipment used to facilitate this authentication may be a handheld device. The underlying technology used in the device may be cracked by malicious crackers to spoof the identity. Under the circumstances, a bi-directional authentication mechanism also authenticates the handheld device for its genuineness and integrity.

¹⁰ Once the authentication transaction is over, the beneficiary, using her identification mechanism, locks her identity data. Essentially, this means that only she can herself unlock it, thus preventing unauthorized access, misuse and possible encroachments on privacy.

in Chapter II, Section 3(2) which states clearly that “*notwithstanding anything contained in the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980*, the Central Government shall provide for diversions of forest land” for various facilities such as schools, dispensaries, tanks and minor water bodies etc, which involve felling of trees not exceeding seventy-five trees per hectare. Provided that the forest land to be diverted for the purposes mentioned in this sub-section is less than one hectare in each case; and the diversion is recommended by the Gram Sabha.

When the Forest Rights Act has given such a clear and overwhelming mandate to the Gram Sabha to take decisions relating to work in the forest areas, it is disturbing that no move has been made to roll this out on the ground. Works such as rain water harvesting structures, irrigation canals, tanks and minor water bodies belong to the set of priority areas for MGNREGA work, as listed in Schedule I of the Act. They are also critical components of ridge area treatment measures in most watershed interventions, which in turn are crucial in ensuring that a certain level of livelihood and food security is ensured for India’s adivasis. Efforts of this kind which bring the adivasi community and other poor forest dwellers out of their absolute levels of poverty are important not only in economic terms, but also in laying the foundation for genuine governance reform for rural areas, as well as saving the forests themselves. Work on MGNREGA in forest areas could hold the key to tackling thorny problems like naxalism. The FRA provides a facilitating framework which helps overcome the difficulties apparently arising out of the FCA.

What is needed is a way of fast-tracking forest clearances. At present the system of clearances set out by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs vide its order dated 18th May 2009 mentions clear time limits for clearances to be accorded by the forest department in case the gram sabha passes a resolution for such diversion. Provided the land to be diverted is not more than 1 hectare, the order states that the proposed site should be surveyed by the Forest Department and a clearance accorded on the basis of this survey. The order prescribes time limits for both the survey and the clearance. What is needed is to strengthen this order by clearly specifying a mechanism by which the time limit is strictly adhered to or clearly specifying what should happen if the time limit is not adhered to. The other important concern is to use the architecture of the FRA’s system for individual settlements in the case of proposals for diversion of common forest lands also. This will enable the entire process of clearances to become even more transparent and broad-based. Finally, it will be useful to think of a “perspective plan” for forests, which is worked out with inputs from subject matter specialists invited by the Forest Department and is prepared for an agreed unit of area. Such a plan should spell out the framework for conservation for the area it is meant for. Community needs under FRA could be articulated within the framework of this perspective plan, with all stakeholders coming to a clearer understanding on how they should reconcile the conflicting requirements, if any, of the FRA and the FCA. A good starting point for this would be to make forest working plans available in the public domain.

3.6 Planning and Implementation Issues

As part of the MGNREGA policy reform initiated by the Central Employment Guarantee Council in 2010, a Working Group on Planning and Execution in the context of MGNREGA was formed. A thorough examination of the issues and bottlenecks related to MGNREGA

implementation were discussed in the report of the working group (CEGC 2010b) which also spelt out recommendations for change.

Presented below is a summary of the recommendations of the Working Group which will have far reaching impacts on planning and implementation in the context of MGNREGA. The recommendations are divided into three categories: recommendations w.r.t provisions which are present in the Operational Guidelines but are not effective and need to be made effective; recommendations which require a modification in the guidelines; and, issues which need to be examined more thoroughly and in the case of which options need to be examined:

3.6.1. Currently Included in the Guidelines but not Effective

- Preparing shelf of projects on the basis of priorities identified in the Perspective Plan
- Granting Technical sanction to the shelf of projects
- Administrative sanction to annual plan and budget on the basis of the shelf of projects prepared.
- On the basis of approved budget, GPs and other PIAs can prepare a definite time table for execution of works. Work Orders can be issued by PIAs to commence works. This provision makes it easier for PIAs to respond to demand for work.
- Role of GP in raising community awareness, facilitating entitlements of workers and monitoring quality of work.
- Developing a wide range of permissible works for every agro-climatic region within a state on the basis of local conditions.
- In case of incomplete works, the DPC must proactively allocate the approved work to another technically qualified PIA.

3.6.2 Modification/Addition to Current Provisions in the Guidelines

- Establishment of team at the village cluster level to support the GP as PIA and in other roles under MGNREGA
- Preparation of a Perspective Plan for MGNREGA at the level of the village cluster; based on a bottom up process.
- Establishment of a Technical Committee at the district level to support the DPC in technical evaluation of perspective plans and shelf of projects.
- Clear definition of the role of an implementing agency
- Defining shelf of projects as collection of works to be executed over two years instead of one year. Provision for annual addition of newly proposed works to shelf of projects to replace those works already executed.
- Preparation of Labour budget with estimation of demand for work from job card holders; an initial base line budget to be prepared by GPs on the basis of survey of all job card holders, baseline to clearly indicate demand for work on a seasonal basis. Subsequent Annual Labour budgets may be prepared on an incremental basis taking into consideration contemporary economic conditions
- The baseline Labour Budget to be prepared by GP with assistance from cluster level team and to be ratified by GS.
- 6% of overall budget on MGNREGA works to be allocated for expenses at the block level

and below on community mobilisation, support for planning & execution and monitoring of MGNREGA works. An additional 2% of the overall budget on MGNREGA works may be allocated for meeting administrative expense above the block level and for capacity development at all levels.

- Inclusion in list of permissible works of specific activities on private land for soil fertility enhancement and livelihood support. The works should represent investment which is real, additive, measurable and verifiable.
- Convergence projects should be identified and driven by priorities in the perspective plan and must be ratified by the respective GS.
- Need for SoR at the level of a cluster of districts in the same agro climatic region for common tasks on the basis of time and motion studies
- For differently abled workers earmark specific tasks with specific SoRs to ensure gainful employment
- Provide facility for creche in villages for children of MGNREGA workers
- Establish State level Task force to suggest ways of increasing works on forest land.
- To facilitate timely release of wages, the pay order may be prepared by the PIA after internal measurement by the PIA itself. This should be delinked from necessary verification by the PO.
- Use of appropriate software to assist PIAs in estimating costs for standard menu of works
- DPC must give AS to revised estimates for works once there is a revision of base rates for labour or material. Software should be adopted by the DPC to generate revised estimates.
- Appointment of one mate for every 30 workers instead of existing 1:50 ratio

3.6.3. Identification of Issues which Need Solutions

- Institutional mechanism for convergence
- SoRs for MGNREGA is different from departmental SoRs
- SoRs to ensure minimum wages for women workers
- Institutional mechanism for executing works on forest lands

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