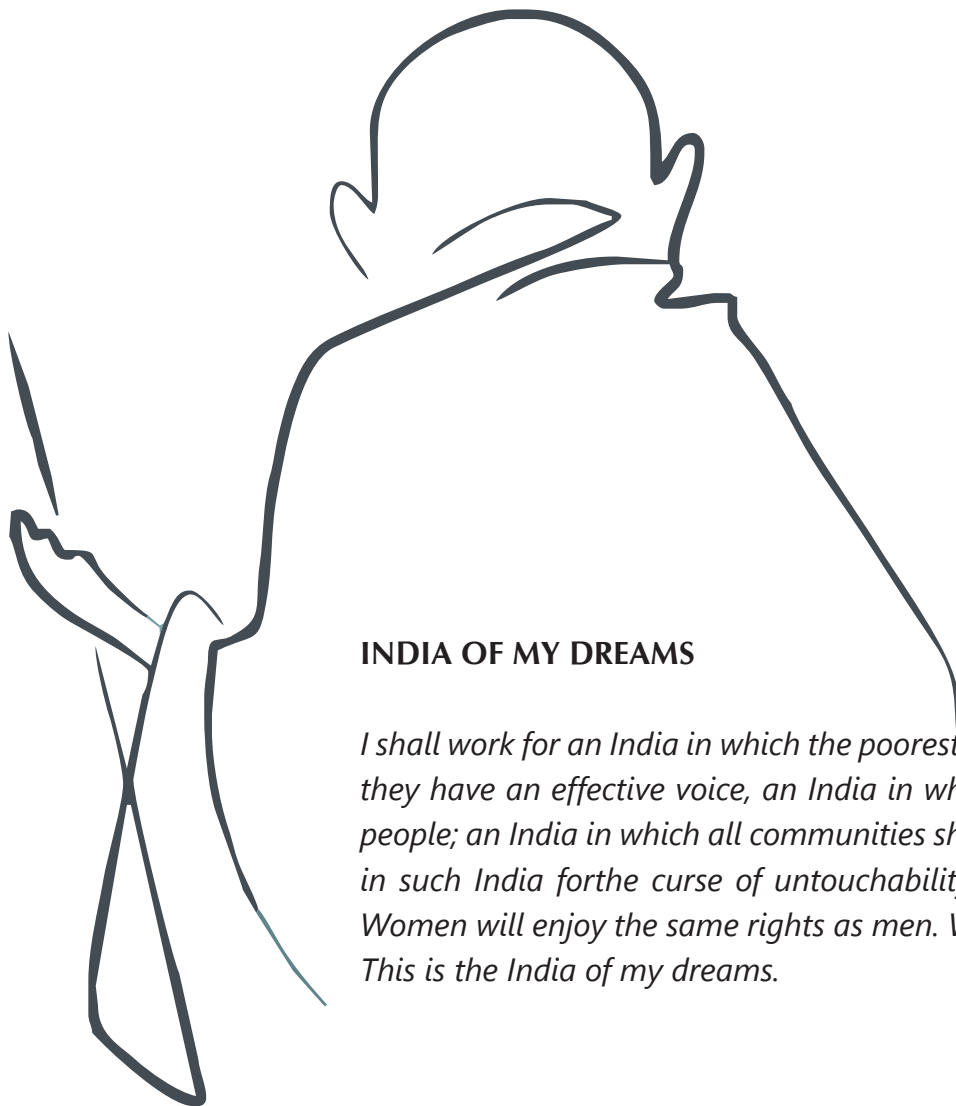


सत्यमेव जयते

Enhancing Sustainable Livelihoods of the poor through convergence of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA with various schemes





INDIA OF MY DREAMS

I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country, in whose making they have an effective voice, an India in where there shall be no high class and low class of people; an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. There can be no room in such India for the curse of untouchability, or the curse of intoxicating drinks and drugs. Women will enjoy the same rights as men. We shall be at peace with all the rest of the world. This is the India of my dreams.

A handwritten signature of Mahatma Gandhi in a cursive script.

M.K. GANDHI



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Jairam Ramesh
Minister of Rural Development
Government of India



MESSAGE

Over the last eight years, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has become an instrument for equitable growth, gender parity and social security. It has effectively targeted the most marginalized sections of society, including women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Infact, some independent studies suggest that MGNREGA has a role to play in the increase in rural consumption expenditure, as shown by the NSSO 66th round.

To strengthen implementation and ensure that the Scheme evolves with the learning and feedback from the ground, the Ministry of Rural Development has instituted several reforms, including the electronic Fund Management System (eFMS), integration with Aadhar, expansion in the scope of permissible works. While MGNREGA is primarily a wage employment programme, in its next level of implementation, the focus has been on the creation of durable assets and sustainable livelihoods.

Recognizing the need for MGNREGA to converge with other Schemes to achieve livelihood security, the Ministry has brought out convergence guidelines, held discussions with State Governments and other Government of India Ministries etc. The Ministry has also taken several other key decisions such as, organizing convergence workshops at national and state level to share best practices, the appointment (by States) of a Nodal Officer for convergence, instituting a 'State Award for Convergence' (to be given every year on February 2 at MGNREGA Diwas), convergence of MGNREGA and National Rural Livelihood Mission in 184 blocks across Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Odisha, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

This book is a compilation of best practices on convergence from across the country. We view convergence as an optimization of resources, technical and/or financial. Thus, several of the included narratives are on technical collaborations of State/district administrations with government, non-government, professional and other institutions, for encouraging creation of durable/useful assets. Institutionalization of convergence in the States' system, as in the case of Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, and innovations by district administrations, were important criteria in the selection of these stories.

From the success stories, it is also evident that MGNREGA, while providing wage employment, has the potential to fill a development gap left by other Schemes. We hope the State Governments and field practitioners will feel inspired and motivated, to upscale and/or adopt some of the mentioned initiatives to their areas.



Jairam Ramesh

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L.C. GOYAL



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SECRETARY
Government of India
Ministry of Rural Development
Department of Rural Development

FOREWORD

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with its grounding on 2nd February, 2006 has come a long way. In the eighth year of its implementation, it can be said with conviction that this programme, unique in its scale and delivery architecture, has become an effective instrument of inclusive growth, women empowerment, livelihood security and regeneration of natural resource base over the years. Since 2008 every year, around 5 crore households and 9 crore rural poor have been participating in the programme. It is heartening to note that of all the expenditure made under the programme since inception, Rs.1,55,000 crore have been credited to the accounts of rural poor as unskilled wage.

Apart from MGNREGA, substantial public investments are being made through other development schemes for strengthening of the rural economy, and the livelihood base of the poor. To effectively address the issue of poverty alleviation, there is a need to optimize efforts through intersectoral approaches. In fact, the very edifice of MGNREGA with its inter-sectoral approach opens up several opportunities for convergence with different programmes. It is strongly felt that convergence of various schemes with MGNREGA will provide coherence across sectors and steer all development schemes towards common and shared goals of empowerment of marginalized communities, and alleviation of rural poverty through creation of sustainable and productive assets.

The Ministry of Rural Development, with its emphasis on 'convergence,' has been taking a series of steps which include encouraging the states to hold state level workshops on convergence with all relevant stakeholders and subsequently draw up a road map firming up potential areas of convergence backed by appropriate Government orders and guidelines, nomination of a senior officer to work as the 'State Nodal Officer for Convergence' and facilitating inputs to states, through the involvement of 'resource persons' drawn from various states. This book, a compilation of successful convergence strategies, is yet another important step in the direction.

Disseminating replicable strategies across the states and providing them a common platform to share and learn with a view to ensuring the emergence of more and more successful models of convergence is a prime challenge of the Ministry.

I am happy to acknowledge the valuable contribution made by various stakeholders from the field in terms of sharing methodologies, challenges, the outputs and the outcomes of their successful interventions. This compilation presents an interesting mosaic of different hues - springshed development in Sikkim and revival of a dead rivulet in Uttar Pradesh to pasture land development in Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

I appreciate the efforts made by the Programme Division (MGNREGA) of the Ministry towards giving this booklet its present shape.

I sincerely believe that this effort will not go in vain. This booklet is expected to go a long way in informing and educating the field practitioners about the 'what' and 'how' of convergence so as to provide even greater resilience and sustainability to MGNREGA in the years ahead.


(LC Goyal)







SIKKIM





Sikkim



Reviving Springs to Mitigate the Impact of Climate Change

Summary

*Springs are the main lifeline of the people of Sikkim. Around 80 per cent of the State's rural households depend on springs for drinking water and irrigation throughout the year. Over the years, several of these traditional water bodies have become either dry or discharge water only seasonally, due to declining natural recharge and ground water table. In order to address this menace of water insecurity, the Government of Sikkim conceptualized and pioneered a Spring Shed Development (**Dhara Vikas**) initiative with an objective to revive springs, streams and lakes in the State. Following a convergence approach, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) provided necessary financial support to the initiative whereas activity-specific technical convergence was ensured through various line departments and leading Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). Using scientific and people-centric approaches, ground water recharge activities were undertaken to*



improve the ecosystem services of the State's mountain forests. In the last four years, this project has improved ground water table, ensured irrigation for cash crops like bananas, oranges, guavas throughout the year. Overall, 40 springs and four lakes have been resurrected covering an area of 400 hectares and more than 15 hectares of horticulture plantations with around 20,000 saplings have been developed.

The Challenge

Climate change factors, land use and demography patterns are adversely affecting the Himalayan ecosystem. The problem of water scarcity is increasingly felt across this region, of which the State of Sikkim is a part. Impacts of climate change on precipitation patterns such as reduced temporal spread, decline in winter rainfall etc are becoming serious challenges. This problem is quite discernible in case of springs as these are either drying up or are becoming increasingly seasonal. Since 80 per cent of the rural households solely rely on springs for drinking water and irrigation purposes, there is a need to revive, restore and recharge these.

Need for the Intervention

Out of a few development schemes that provide for water conservation and restoration of water sources, the MGNREGA ensures funding for innovative projects to be taken up as per local needs. Given this, the State Government decided to focus on spring shed development or *Dhara Vikas*. The prime objective was to rejuvenate water dependent livelihoods by assuring adequate and timely irrigation for agriculture and high value cash crops like oranges, guavas, etc.





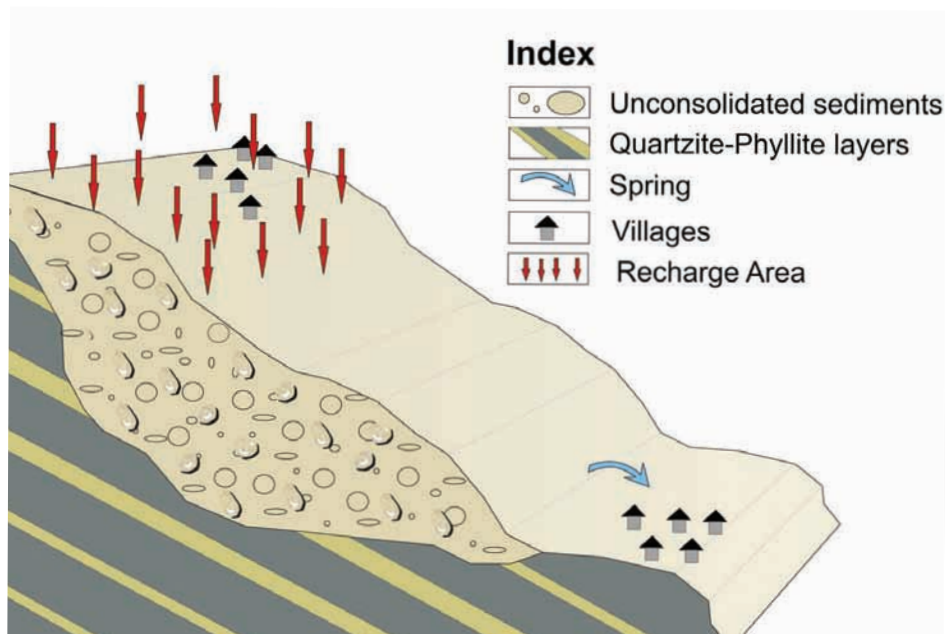
The Intervention

This was a unique concept that required specialized knowledge and skills in the field of rainwater harvesting, geohydrology, spring discharge measurement, use of Global Positioning System (GPS) and laying of contour trenches. There was also a need to ensure technical inputs from Department of Science and Technology, Department of Mines and Geology, Government of Sikkim, reputed NGOs viz. WWF-India, Peoples Science Institute – Dehradun, Advanced Centre for Water Resources Development and Management – Pune, Central Ground Water Board and the G. B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development.

In the year 2009, more than 20 training programs were organised in collaboration with the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) and NGOs to build capacity of the existing functionaries. As a result, seven master trainers were identified as para-hydrogeologist resource persons. GIZ (German Technical Cooperation) partnered with the Government of Sikkim to provide technical support in planning and monitoring of this innovative initiative.

Springshed development uses geohydrology to identify the rechargeable area of the spring. This approach also differs significantly from watershed development (which adopts the catchment approach) in terms of scale, costs, duration, treatment methods as well as success indicators. The first step is to undertake resource mapping by preparation of a Village Spring Atlas. The mapping exercise was conducted on a Geographic Information System (GIS) platform. The data was made accessible online at www.sikkimsprings.org. This database provided information on the location, GPS coordinates, land tenure, catchment status, dependency, discharge (supply / demand) of nearly 700 springs of Sikkim and was also linked to the google earth platform. Following this, a spring shed development plan was prepared with details of recharge area and treatment methods.

To ensure efficient and effective implementation of this development intervention, the initial significant step was to strengthen the delivery systems up to the Gram Panchayat (GP) level. Many GPs lacked basic infrastructure like buildings and equipments. To begin with, the state machinery ensured that these GP offices were well-equipped. There was also a focus on providing adequate human resources which is an oft-neglected component in convergence initiatives. Gram Vikas Kendras (which functioned as a GP Cluster support office) were set up to provide administrative and technical support services.



The presence of infrastructure and staff made it possible to devolve implementation of the programme activities to the GPs. In the State, 100 per cent of the works (as against the suggested 50 per cent by the Government of India) under MGNREGA are taken up by GPs. This ensured appropriate planning, execution and monitoring of converged activities.

The natural ground water recharge in mountain areas is limited and in spite of adequate rainfall, most of it flows away as surface runoff causing soil erosion, landslides and floods. Hence, sloping forest lands above villages were targeted to make ground water recharge structures like staggered contour trenches, ponds and check dams in appropriate locations. Location of these trenches and ponds was vital to ensure that each of them had a micro catchment and captured sufficient surface flow.

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Output and Outcome

This climate change adaptation initiative also helped in disaster risk reduction by reducing landslides and damages to farmer's fields downstream. One specific example of the initiative is the Chukudum spring, the only water source for two GPs - Barfung Zarrong and Kewzing Bakhim. The revival of Chukudum spring ensured water security for 75 rural households. For restoration of springs, various percolation pits and ponds were excavated by following scientific methods. This resulted in an increase of the spring water discharge from 40 liters per minute to 60 liters per minute. Similarly, the resurrection of Deythang Lake in Barfung-Zarrong GP, South district was carried out in convergence with Horticulture department. MGNREGA resources were utilised to construct walls around the lake, plantation of herbs and rhododendrons. Today the lake with a capacity of 84,000 litres of water is sufficient to meet the requirements of 90 households.

The clear impact of *Dhara Vikas* is that, around 400 hectares of land has been brought under the springshed development resulting in an annual ground water recharge of 90 crore litres. This has led to a revival of 40 springs and four lakes in 20 drought-prone GPs. More than 15 hectares of horticulture plantation in the springshed catchment have already been taken up, resulting in plantation of over 20,000 saplings of bananas, guavas and oranges in coordination with the Horticulture Department. In an independent study, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore has measured the impact of the programme and reported that this intervention has led to 15 per cent enhancement in the spring discharge.

This programme has been able to successfully demonstrate the science and practice of revival of dying springs in the drought prone mountainous rural areas. Up-scaling and sustainability of this new program has been ensured by innovatively converging the resources from the national flagship program – MGNREGA, and building a cadre of para-geohydrologists and knowledge base in collaboration with reputed government and non-government institutes of excellence. Documentation of the impact has also resulted in policy advocacy and positive changes in the national guidelines and knowledge sharing with other mountain regions. Based on the experiences of *Dhara Vikas* and the recommendations of the Planning Commission, Government of India, springshed development was included in the expanded list of permissible works under MGNREGA in 2012. This has now paved the way for up-scaling this initiative across the larger Himalayan landscape. Teams from WWF Nepal, Bhutan Government, Arunachal Pradesh Government and others have visited Sikkim to learn more about the spring revival initiative with a view to replicate similar initiatives in their respective areas.

Sources:

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Yesi, D; MGNREGA-Dhara Vikas Programme in Sikkim Villages. <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/efeatures.aspx?relid=101032>; Accessed on 24 Jan 2014







BIHAR





Bihar



Participatory Development through Self Help Groups

Summary

The convergence project of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and JEEViKA was started on a pilot basis in five selected blocks with a view to enhance community participation under the programme and to raise the existing income level of the rural poor through effective social mobilization. The challenges of low awareness and participation were addressed by mobilizing and training the community through Self Help Group (SHG) federations called village organizations. Village organization meetings and cluster level meetings were organized at regular intervals to sensitize the members of SHGs on MGNREGA. Besides strengthening the demand mechanism at the grass-root level of programme implementation, this convergence approach has introduced a concept of bridge financing under which any member of a village level organization (SHG Federation) working under MGNREGA can show a copy of the relevant pay slip/filled-in the



Measurement Book and avail an interest-free loan (up to 3 months) up to 80 per cent of actual wages she/he has earned under MGNREGA. Once she/he gets paid wages under MGNREGA, the loan so taken would be repaid back to the village organization concerned. The whole mechanism was coordinated by the JEEViKA team with the help of Block/ Gram Panchayat (GP) level officials. Institutional accounts of the MGNREGA job-seekers were opened on a mission mode. To resolve any kind of implementation issue under this initiative, review meetings and discussions were held on a weekly basis and follow-up meetings were organized at the district and State levels on a quarterly basis to ensure effective implementation. After one year of implementation these identified pilot blocks of Bihar have witnessed enhanced participation of rural poor under MGNREGA.

The Challenge

The right-based framework of MGNREGA demands time bound provision of work and timely payment of wages. As per the provisions made in the Act, a rural household is entitled to unemployment allowance if the State fails to provide it unskilled work within the stipulated 15 days. As per Section 22 of MGNREGA 2005, the liability of payment of unemployment allowance is on the States. Since the Central Government shares 100 per cent wage cost of the scheme, the State has an incentive to create as much wage-employment as it can. However, the lack of awareness about the demand-driven provisions of the Act along with low community participation in the implementation process has made this wage employment initiative a supply driven one in rural areas of Bihar. As a result, in the year 2012-13, on an average only 35 person-days per household was generated in the State.



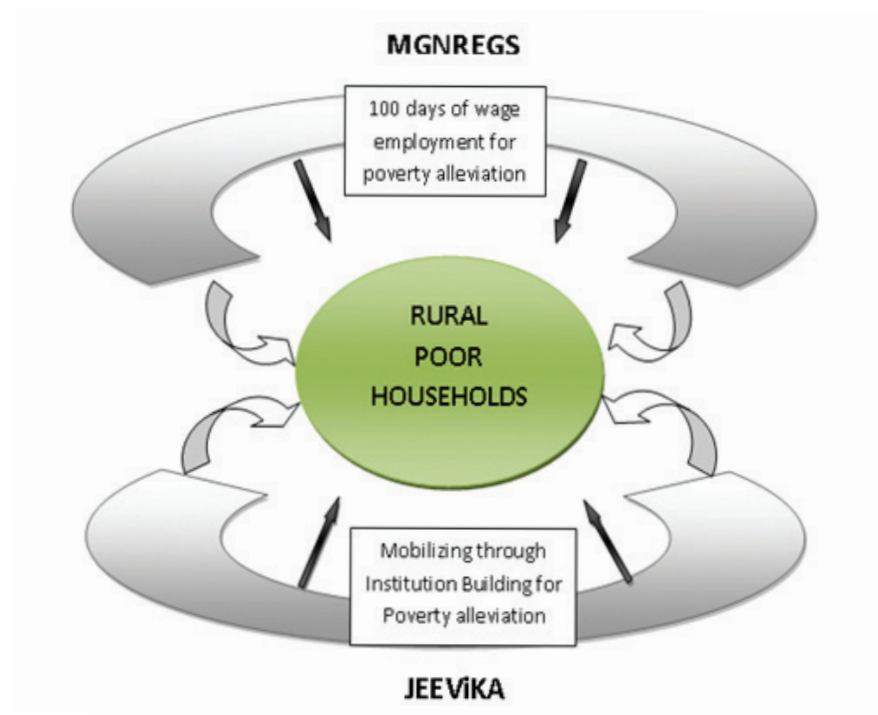
The other challenge was to ensure high women participation rate under MGNREGA. In 2012-13, the State achieved women participation rate at 30 per cent when the national women participation rate was averaging at 53 per cent.

Need for the Intervention

MGNREGA and JEEViKA are two different development interventions with similar objectives of livelihood security and poverty alleviation in rural areas. These two development interventions have great scope of supplementing each other. The only difference is that they share two different strategies of implementation in rural areas. These two programmes can best be described in the diagram below:



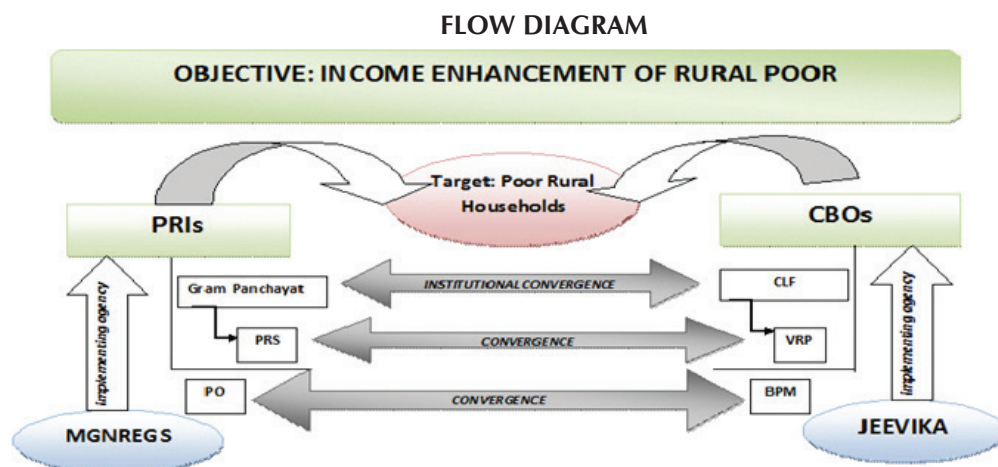
JEEVIKA is a community led development intervention that envisages not only the promotion of community level institutions for the poor but also provides a large canvas to build the capacity of the poor and vulnerable to get all schematic benefits/ entitlements in a rural set up. Till now, this project has promoted tens of thousands of Self-Help Groups (SHG) across nine districts of Bihar. Further, around 5,000 Village Organisations (SHG's Federations) have been formed in these districts. The State, keeping in view the effectiveness in the convergence of self-employment and wage-



employment initiatives, strategized to converge *JEEViKA* with MGNREGA. The objective was to facilitate SHG households in obtaining the guaranteed 100 days of wage-employment under MGNREGA. The guiding assumption was that at least each household, if it availed the stipulated 100 person-days of employment under MGNREGA, would be able to earn an additional income of Rs. 15,000 per annum.

The Intervention

The convergence project of MGNREGA with *JEEViKA* was started on a pilot basis in five selected blocks. These Blocks were Mushahari (Muzaffarpur), Noor Sarai (Nalanda), Lakhnaur (Madhubani), Dhamdaha (Purnia) and Dobhi (Gaya). The goal of the initiative was to enhance the income level of the rural poor by targeting rural households through effective social mobilization in village level organizations. This innovative convergence model can be explained with the help of the flow-diagram given below.



Awareness about the provisions of MGNREGA was found to be low in the selected blocks. In one of the internal studies conducted by *JEEViKA*, it was found that out of 1,201 respondents only 428 respondents have ever worked in MGNREGA. Since awareness generation among beneficiaries on welfare provisions of the development scheme is critical in actualizing the scheme benefits, an intensive effort was made to mobilize and train the community with a view to ensure their active participation. Village Organization meetings and cluster level meetings were organized at regular intervals to sensitize the members of SHGs on MGNREGA's benefits.

Demand registration is the most critical part of MGNREGA. To strengthen the existing demand registration system, demand



registration camps were organized at Village Organization level and GP level. Demand for labour was captured in bulk and submitted to the office of the Programme Officer (PO). A cadre of officials were trained and incentivized to capture labour demand effectively.

A huge disincentive which discouraged potential workers to get involved in MGNREGA was the inordinate delays in wage payment. Being a government intervention, the financial transactions involve certain mandatory processes and paper work; there is a considerable time gap between work done and payment of wages. In most of the cases, this gap is more than a month. To reduce the gap, *JEEViKA* introduced a policy of **Bridge Financing** to its Village Organizations. As per this policy, any member working under MGNREGA can show a copy of the relevant pay slip/filled-in Measurement Book to avail an interest-free loan (up to 3 months) up to 80 per cent of actual wages she/he has earned under MGNREGA. Once she/he is paid wages under MGNREGA, the loan so taken would be repaid to the village organization. The whole mechanism was coordinated by *JEEViKA* team with the help of Block/GP level officials. Institutional accounts of the MGNREGA job-seekers were opened on a mission mode. *JEEViKA* has also initiated organization of workers in the form of Labour Bank which in itself is an innovative approach in ensuring the effective implementation of MGNREGA.

To resolve any kind of implementation issue under this initiative, Village Organization meetings were organized on a weekly basis and block implementation teams reviewed the progress of activities once in each month. Follow-up meetings were also organized at district and State levels on a quarterly basis to ensure effective implementation of this initiative.

Output & Outcome

After one year of the implementation, the rural areas of these identified pilot blocks of Bihar have witnessed enhanced participation of rural poor under MGNREGA. In 2012-13, about 29,000 person-days of demand were registered through this initiative. This year the target is to register at least 40,000 work demands in five blocks. There has been a 50 per cent increment in the overall participation of women in these four pilot blocks. With the increase in awareness level, the person-days of wage-employment have increased from 22 days per household to 43 days per household. The involvement of Village Organizations has resulted in enhancing the participation of the community in village level meetings and discussions.

MGNREGA Division, Ministry of Rural Development expresses its appreciation to Shri A. Meena, Principal Secretary, Rural Development, Government of Bihar and Shri Satish Sinha, OSD, Govt. of Bihar and Shri S. Aggarwal, Financial Inclusion Officer-MGNREGA, Bihar for timely supply of appropriate and adequate information/content.





Optimizing Public Resources and Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods

Summary

*Bihar has successfully leveraged the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) resources with various State and Central Sponsored development programmes with a view to ensure sustainable livelihoods to its rural poor. The main sectors of convergence with MGNREGA cover social forestry, rural housing Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), rural sanitation Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA), Irrigation and Fisheries. With an integrated bottom-up planning, the State has successfully taken up a total of 2,70,427 units of plantations under social forestry comprising 5.4 Crore plants, the convergence between Irrigation and Fisheries departments has productively supported the 'Khet Pokhar' programme. A total of 18,070 units of individual household toilets have been constructed with the convergence between MGNREGA, IAY and NBA. The State through an innovative project of '**Vriksh Samrakshan Yojana**' (tree conservation scheme) has ensured incremental livelihoods for the marginalized asset-less sections of the rural society.*

The Challenge

The implementation of MGNREGA in the State of Bihar has widened the safety net for the poor and vulnerable. However, the guaranteed provision of 100 days of wage employment is not sufficient to bring in an appreciable change in the lives of crores of families reeling under the poverty line. The income so earned from unskilled wage employment does little to protect these families from various risks and uncertainties associated with rural poverty. The real challenge is to enhance the livelihoods of these households through innovative approaches.

Need for the Intervention

With its legal provisions for unemployment allowances and payment of compensation for delays in payment of wages to jobseekers, MGNREGA has empowered crores of poor and socially disadvantaged to avail socio-economic benefits. However, there has been a felt need to undertake MGNREGA projects in convergence with several anti-poverty and livelihood initiatives to ensure long-term returns by creating livelihood supporting productive assets in rural areas.

The Intervention

The convergence approach followed by Bihar called for a collective action by all development functionaries at the district and sub-district levels. A large number of administrative officials in the rank of Senior Deputy Collectors were sensitized about the benefits of such a convergence approach. They were entrusted with the responsibility of supervision in one panchayat each in the district concerned, every week. This not only enhanced the quality of



work implementation but also arrested leakages and irregularities at the grass-root level.

MGNREGA has opened new vistas for the creation of productive and durable assets on private lands as well as on public lands. Some of the innovative strategies followed by Government of Bihar towards convergence of MGNREGA with other livelihoods activities are as follows:

(a) Social Forestry

Bihar is an agrarian State. Barring the canal irrigation system in the south of Bihar, most of the northern region witnesses extreme floods and droughts. This leads to loss of lives and livelihoods. To reduce adverse impact of any such natural disaster, a large number of



plantation schemes were taken up under MGNREGA on public land. Rural Development Department and Department of Social Forestry shared the knowledge and technical skills on the kinds of trees to be planted considering the local conditions and soil balance.

The State Government came up with an innovative strategy known as 'Vriksh Samrakshan Yojana' (tree conservation scheme). Under this scheme, a group of 20 trees (mostly fruit bearing plants) were allocated to each of the MGNREGA worker family who were adjudged as care takers and owners of these trees for 30 years from the date of their plantation. They were given tree pattas to ensure higher survival rates of plants.

(b) Khet Pokhar (Farm Pond)

Bihar, though naturally bestowed with large number of water bodies, is still dependent on monsoon rains for agriculture and related activities. In the southern part, irrigation is mostly rain-fed with a few well-developed canal irrigation systems. The ground water level is depleting and impacting the agricultural outputs. Being an agrarian society, change in rainfall pattern severely impacts the State's people and economics.

In the FY 2013-14, the State decided to focus extensively on Khet Pokhar schemes on private lands. The objectives were to.

- create water reservoirs to augment irrigation,
- improve water table in the region and,
- create sustainable sources of income through fish cultivation.

The Rural Development Department (RDD) prepared standard models and estimates as a ready reckoner for Khet Pokhar scheme. Before the annual planning exercise for FY 2013-14, extensive Information, Education and Communication (IEC) programmes were carried out through print media, pamphlets and local means of advertisement. MGNREGA functionaries organized special camps in villages to educate the farmers on the advantages of taking up this scheme. Every farmer was encouraged to take up this scheme by submitting an application and land details. The only condition was that she/he should be a Job Card holder. In case an interested party did not have a Job Card, she/he could easily obtain it from his local panchayat. The Fisheries Department was also engaged in providing training on pisciculture to the farmer beneficiaries.

(c) MGNREGA-IAAY-NBA Convergence

On 19th December, 2013, which has been recognized by the United Nation as “World Toilet Day”, Rural Development Department along with Public Health Engineering Department organized a workshop in Patna. The Chief Minister of Bihar inaugurated the workshop and announced revolutionary steps towards “Open Defecation Free” (ODF) Bihar. The first among these was the changes in the existing law to enable only those candidates to appear in Panchayat Elections who have a toilet in their houses. To encourage Gram Panchayats and blocks to achieve ODF status, incentives to the tune of Rs. five and 25 lakh, respectively, were announced. Over 1800 people who gathered in the workshop took pledge to work collectively towards a more healthy society.





Other than IAY beneficiaries, whoever is interested can get a toilet built through MGNREGA and NBA funds in Bihar. The Government has decided to enhance its share from Rs. 9,100 to Rs. 10,000 with a view to build 6 lakh toilets through IAY and MGNREGA in the last two months of FY 2013-14

The convergence activity of plantation has enhanced survival rates of the plants. New improved varieties of fruit bearing trees are now being planted on demand and some of the beneficiary families have reported an additional income in excess of Rs. 40,000 per year. There is a positive impact on the quality of life of the people as the increased income of the household is being utilized towards nutrition requirements and children's education and health. Environmentally, the green landscape of Bihar too has also undergone a dramatic makeover. With an integrated bottom-up planning, the State has successfully taken up a total of 2,70,427 units of plantations under social forestry comprising 5.4 Crore plants.

Till the 3rd quarter of FY 2013-14, more than 64,000 ponds/water conservation and harvesting activities have been carried out in consultation with irrigation and fisheries departments.

A total of 18,070 units of individual household toilets have been constructed with the convergence amongst MGNREGA, IAY and NBA. Bihar also expects to reach the Millennium Development Goal of 85 lakh toilets soon.

MGNREGA Division, Ministry of Rural Development expresses its appreciation to Shri A. Meena, Principal Secretary, Rural Development, Government of Bihar and Shri Satish Sinha, OSD, Govt. of Bihar and Shri S. Aggarwal, Financial Inclusion Officer-MGNREGA, Bihar for timely supply of appropriate and adequate information/content.

(Note: Right before the publication of this document, the Ministry of Rural Development took a decision to increase the contribution of MGNREGA to Rs. 5,400 for IHHLs constructed in convergence with NBA and Rs. 10,000 for IHHLs constructed independently i.e. entirely under MGNREGA.)



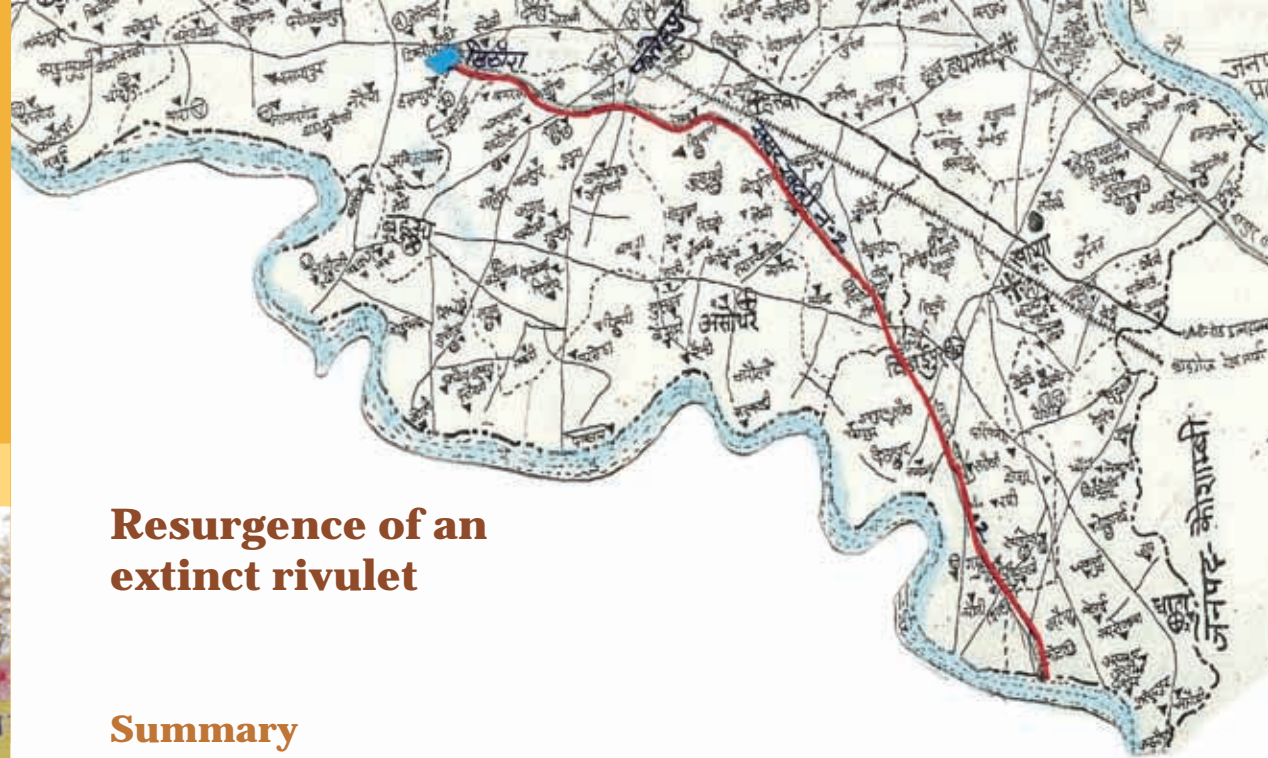




UTTAR PRADESH



Uttar Pradesh



Resurgence of an extinct rivulet

Summary

Sasur Khederi II, a defunct and dry rivulet of 46 kilometers in length in Fatehpur District of Uttar Pradesh was resurrected under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) during April-May, 2013. Enthusiastic community participation in planning and execution, apt and timely interdepartmental co-ordination, judicious mix of sound engineering and local knowledge and ardent administrative acumen of the district implementing authority have led to the restoration in the original shape and flow of the stream. This integrated water and soil conservation project not only provided gainful wage employment to 4,000 job-seekers every day for over two months, but also revived the lake Thithaura – the source point of Sasur Khederi II and saved the catchment areas from the problem of waterlogging.

The Challenge

FATEHPUR

Fatehpur district of Uttar Pradesh is situated about 150 kilometers south of Lucknow, the State capital of Uttar Pradesh. Though the district is situated in the doab region between the Ganga and the Yamuna, the inhabitants of the district used to face acute water crisis. Sources of surface water started drying up due to excessive use, encroachment and steady siltation of the natural drainage system. Two such dried up river drainage systems in the district were *Sasur Khederi* I and II. These are two distinct small rivers but they shared the name and similar problems. The immediate need was to treat the drainage system, catchment areas of the watercourse and massive de-siltation of the lake *Thithaura* – the originating point of one of the rivulets - *Sasur Khederi* II. This led to the conception of an integrated water and soil conservation project for this rivulet. The main challenges of the project were to track the course of the rivulet and to win the confidence of the community for successful completion of the activities proposed for this project.

Need for the Intervention

Acting on a remote sensing report published in 2012-13, the experts of the district resorted to a detailed water criticality analysis. Six Community Development Blocks (CDBs) of the district were found to be critical and it was semi-critical in seven others. The report also categorised four CDBs as dark zone where the ground water level could not be replenished. After the identification of problem areas, the district authorities decided to plan and execute the first phase of an integrated soil and water conservation project in these four CDBs. The prime objective of the project was to revive the *Sasur Khederi* II rivulet.





Renovation of traditional water bodies and soil and water conservation activities are permissible activities under MGNREGA. Thus, the district authorities decided to revive this 46 kilometers long rivulet that sourced from a lake in *Thithaura* village. Since the rivulet carves out its course through four blocks of the district and touches 42 villages before meeting the Yamuna, the project was aimed at providing a new life to the stream and to the inhabitants of 42 villages. The objectives of the project were to:

- restore the original shape and flow of the rivulet
- revive and restore the lake in *Thithaura* village which is the source of the rivulet
- save the adjoining villages from water logging

- de-silt the lake and ensure retention of water by making a gated check dam.
- plant trees around the source lake and the river so as to prevent further silting back.

The Intervention

The integrated project under MGNREGA was prepared by the lower Ganga Canal Division of the irrigation department. This project was discussed threadbare in an inter-departmental expert committee consisting senior officers from Departments of Revenue, Irrigation, Social Forestry, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj. As per the plan estimate made for execution of first phase of the project, Rs. 12 Crore was to be used with a labour material ratio of 75:25 to revive the rivulet *Sasur Khederi* II. The task was to revive 7.4 hectares of the lake area and 38 kilometers of the watercourse of the rivulet. Though the initial plan was to treat the whole breadth of the river among its entire length, the interdepartmental committee discussed the planned course of action. The committee decided to modify the plan to work on one third of the breadth of the rivulet which ranged between five meters to 38 meters at different places. The aim was to clear the path of the rivulet and let the rivulet take its own course. Systematic and scientific reviews were also made after the first spell of the rain to gauge the locations which required more deepening and widening.

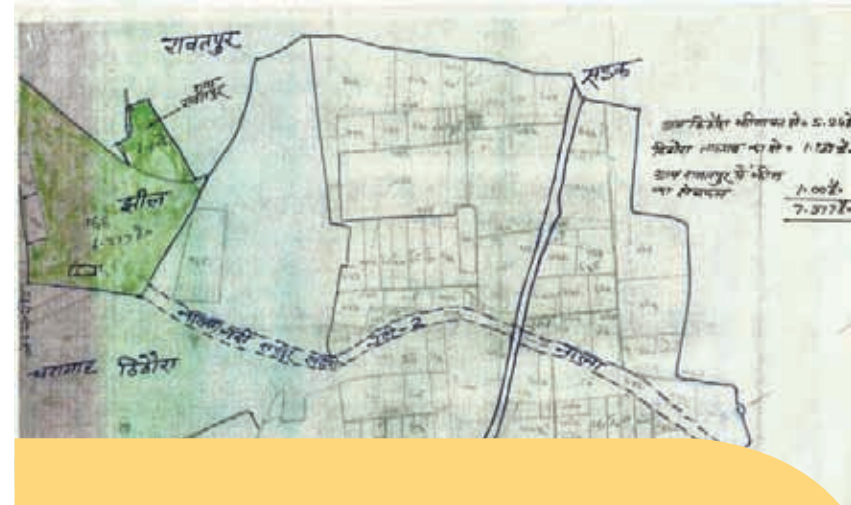
The activities under the project were taken up on a mission mode. Extensive community level meetings and discussions held in all the four blocks. *Pradhans* (Presidents of Gram Panchayats) were requested to support this

mission by motivating unskilled labourers who could come to the worksite. Block Development Officers (BDOs) organised village level meetings at every village alongside the river to sensitise the community about the benefits of this mission. To effectively disseminate the objective (s) behind this task of rejuvenating a dry rivulet, meetings and discussions with college principals, industries, social workers and media were organised regularly.

The estimated quantum of work was 500 meters cross sections with a natural gradient of 20 cms per Km. The work on the rivulet was divided into small stretches of one km each and was allotted to a team comprising of Secretary, Rozgar Sewak and Technical Assistant. At every stretch of one km, worksite facilities viz. drinking water, crèche, shade etc. were ensured. About 1,86,400 cubic meters of soil was excavated during the process of the work on the watercourse of the rivulet. This activity successfully generated 96,900 person-days. Further, about 78,200 cubic meters of mud was excavated out of the source lake *Thithaura* by generating 38,000 person-days.

Output and Outcome

The focus of this integrated project was on reducing the vulnerability and natural resource management through MGNREGA works to mitigate climate change issues. The resurrection of the rivulet has not only resulted in the generation of 1,34,900 person-days but also successfully revived the rivulet through scientific treatment of the entire watercourse. The activity has ensured sufficient water in the catchment areas by recharging the water aquifer. People have started cultivating water-intensive crops which they never did due to chronic shortage of water. The source lake of the rivulet has started retaining water. As on 16th July 2013, the lake had



90,000 cubic mtrs. of water. At one point, the discharge of water from the lake was estimated to be 600 cusecs. Today, this successful rivulet rejuvenation effort has brought in great cheers to the villagers in the catchment areas of *Sasur Khederi II* as the villages are free from the fear of getting marooned due to overflowing in the monsoon.

Source:

Verma, Kanchan; District Magistrate, Fatehpur, Uttar Pradesh: Presentation made at the National workshop on Convergence on September 17, 2013, Organized by Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, New Delhi



Ensuring Dignity and Safety for Women

Summary

Around 80 per cent of the population of Barabanki district of Uttar Pradesh is dependent on agriculture. A social sector scheme like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), with its scale of funds and flexibility, provided a great opportunity to take up development works. Open Defecation was serious problem in the district, both from the perspective of health as well security of rural women. The district developed a model design in collaboration with UNICEF for toilets. As a pilot, toilets were taken up on mission mode. Generating awareness and demand from field through Information Education and Communication (IEC) activities was a huge part of this exercise. The district has also tried to initiate other convergence projects with the Agriculture Department, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) etc.

BARABANKI

Open defecation is a serious problem in Barabanki district. While the MGNREGA provides for convergence with the *Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan* (NBA) for the construction of toilets, the district administration believed it was important to ensure a good design for toilets within the unit cost of Rs.10,000 (as specified by the Ministry of Rural Development). For this, collaboration was initiated with UNICEF and a model cost structure and design for the toilet was finalized.

An intensive information campaign was undertaken in around 100 targeted villages. The campaign included rallies, nukkad nataks (street plays), *Nari Swabhiman Yatras* (campaign on ensuring dignity of women). In addition to this, over 300 students went door to door in these villages distributing literature and educating villagers on the health and hygiene issue related to open defecation.

Since this was a pilot project, five Gram Panchayats (GPs) from each of the 15 blocks were selected. Toilet construction was taken up in mission mode over a two week period.

Another project to promote hygiene and sanitation in the district was also taken up in convergence with the Agriculture Department. 50 Compost units and 20 Vermi-Compost units for each GP were targeted. By concerted efforts 1413 Vermi-Compost units and 5640 Compost units have been completed. This has also given a huge fillip to Organic Farming. Further, these Compost pits also ensure that agricultural and animal waste get effectively utilised.





Apart from above mentioned initiatives other convergence programs undertaken are as follows:

- The district has already constructed 632 goat keeping shelters. A tie up for aiding the beneficiaries to finance goats through loans has been established with NABARD and local banks.
- More than 70000 person-days were created through work on major demarcation, plantation of neem, kadam, seesam, wherein the plants were provided by the Forest department etc.

Through these efforts the issues of sanitation, particularly with regard to women dignity are being addressed. The Compost units and Vermi composts have also addressed the issues of over-use of chemical fertilizers and consequently the degradation of soil. The women have also started earning by selling earthworms to other users.

The initiatives by the district show how MGNREGA can be used not only for generating employment but also for creation of tangible assets, empowerment of women, placing emphasis on organic farming, dovetailing of banking schemes for livelihood activities for women; in other words, to bring about a change in the lives of people.

Source:

S, Ministhy; District Magistrate, Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh

(Note: Right before the publication of this document, the Ministry of Rural Development took a decision to increase the contribution of MGNREGA to Rs. 5,400 for IHHLs constructed in convergence with NBA and Rs. 10,000 for IHHLs constructed independently i.e. entirely under MGNREGA.)







RAJASTHAN

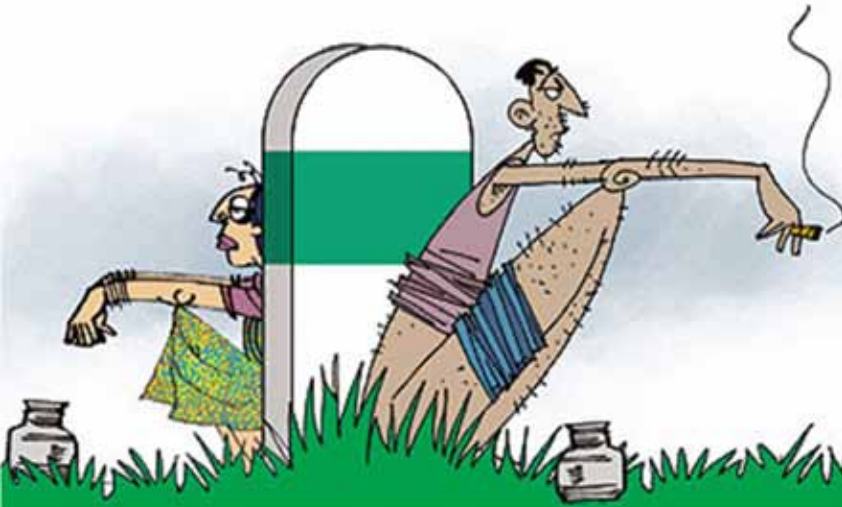
Rajasthan



Achieving an Open Defecation Free district

Summary

Rajasthan ranks among the worst States in terms of sanitation in India. However, it is making progress in implementing convergence between the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA). Within the State, the focused and results oriented sanitation initiatives taken by Churu district administration are of particular note. Taranagar block of the district, has become the first Open Defecation Free (ODF) block in the State. In addition to this, a verification process is under progress for declaring Sardarshar block as ODF as well. Overall, there are 55 Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the district that have been declared as ODF. The district administration hopes to make Churu the first ODF district in Rajasthan.



CHURU

60 per cent of all open defecation in the world takes place in India. Poor sanitation causes serious health and hygiene hazards. It also leads to infant mortality, malnutrition and deficiencies in cognitive and development ability. Thus the challenge for Churu, with its main city ranked as the dirtiest city in India by a Government of India (GoI) survey in 2009-10, was considerable. Since then the district has made significant progress. The district started its focus on sanitation under Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC). However, it is the convergence of MGNREGA with *Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan* (NBA) that has provided the real impetus.

Among MGNREGA's other works, it is possibly sanitation that most requires a genuine demand generated right from the ground. In other words, in the absence of an ownership and a felt need, the constructed toilets remain unused. With this in mind, the district administration started a concerted campaign for raising community awareness on sanitation and the health hazards of defecating in the open. In addition to the *ratri chaupals* (night meetings with villagers), meeting with officials, trainings and other awareness programmes were carried out.

While the total GoI and State contribution to an Individual Household Latrine (IHHL) was set at Rs. 9,100 and beneficiary contribution was kept at Rs. 900, the district administration realized that individuals were willing to put in more of their own contribution to ascertain quality. This would not have been possible without the villagers comprehending the real need for sanitation. (Note: Right before the publication of this account, the Ministry of Rural Development took a decision to increase the contribution of MGNREGA to Rs. 5,400 for IHHLs constructed in convergence with NBA and Rs. 10,000 for IHHLs constructed independently i.e. entirely under MGNREGA.)





The supply side also required an equal push to streamline processes and ensure result oriented and efficient implementation. Some of the steps taken are outlined below.

In the regular MGNREGA process a technical sanction (a technical approval of the work by an engineer) for every work is issued separately after a verification of the preliminary estimate prepared, normally, by a Technical Assistant/Junior Engineer. However, for toilet construction, model estimates were prepared outlining the number of person-days (days of work) to be generated and other technical specifications. Technical sanctions were issued on the basis of these model estimates to save time for financial sanctions

- A simplified performa for valuation and issue of utilization (expenditure) certificates was developed for reducing lengthy paper work and ensuring early payment
- An incentive amount is being paid to field functionaries after declaration of their GP as ODF; Gram Rozgar Sahayak are paid Rs. 50 per IHHL, Technical Assistant are paid Rs. 25 per IHHL, Block Coordinator are paid Rs. 2000 for GP of 300 households and Rs. 3000 for GPs above 300 households
- A mate has been engaged for 20-25 households for construction of IHHLs. The mate will be primary person responsible for monitoring the day to day progress of these toilets and for filling Muster Rolls (attendance sheets). The mate will be provided an incentive of Rs. 50/- per IHHL from NBA

- The State Government has also tried to introduce systemic changes to encourage sanitation. For instance, the State has set a target to provide a toilet in around 10 lakh rural Below Poverty Line (BPL) houses that are being constructed under Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) and other State Government initiatives, through convergence of NBA and MGNREGA.
- At the time of writing this account, a total of 6.2 lakh toilets have been sanctioned under NBA and MGNREGA convergence and several of them were under construction. Taranagar block of the district, has become the first ODF block in the State. In addition to this, verification process is going for declaring Sardarshar block as ODF as well. Overall there are 55 GPs in the district that are ODF. The district is well on its way to become the first ODF district of Rajasthan.

Sources:

Gupta, Rohit; District Collector, Churu District, Rajasthan: Presentation made at the National workshop on Convergence on September 17, 2013, Organized by Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, New Delhi







KERALA



Kerala



The Missing Piece of the Development Puzzle

The *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme* (MGNREGS) is the first programme of its kind and scale that views entitlements under the programme, not as a limited benefit to be dispensed with, but as a matter of right for anyone willing to do manual labour. The influx of funds for work in every panchayat opens up possibilities for local planning and assetisation in favour of the poor. These possibilities have not been fully realised on account of many reasons – which mainly stem from the inability of the poor to exercise their citizenship and make local governance responsive.

The Aajeevika – the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) sees the Community Based Organisations (CBOs) of poor women as a tool that enables the poor to access micro credit, as well as manage capital for livelihood and social security planning. The wage based employment offered



through MGNREGS becomes a strong complement to the initiative for self employment and skilling that NRLM engages with. Collectivisation is seen to help the poor channelise public service delivery, and the core activity of the NRLM is to create and support strong institutions of the poor. It would be interesting to see whether having a strong and vibrant CBO involved in the planning and implementation of MGNREGS could change the terms of engagement of the programme.

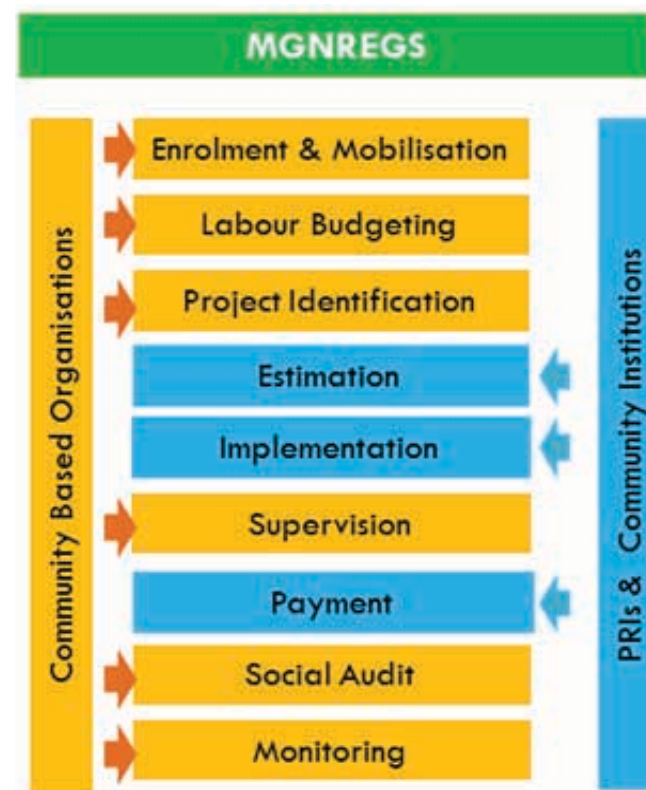
The CBO interface with MGNREGS in Kerala

Kudumbashree, the State Rural Livelihood Mission of Kerala under Aajeevika, has federated Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) of poor women into ward level and panchayat level citizen bodies that work for poverty reduction and local governance. The ward level federation is called Area Development Society (ADS) and the panchayat level federation is the Community development Society (CDS).

The typical dynamics of CBO participation in MGNREGS in a Gram Panchayat (GP) is as follows:

I. Awareness and Mobilisation

- conduct of awareness and publicity campaigns –ward (ADS) level conventions of the neighbourhood groups (NHGs), house visits etc
- Special grama sabhas to discuss MGNREGS in all wards - active involvement of CDS members
- Facilitation of registration of workers and distributing job cards





A study by the Centre for Development Studies found that after the involvement of Kudumbashree, the registration in MGNREGS in a panchayat went up from 30 to 4607 people. In the panchayat under study, Aryanad, 90 per cent of the workers were seen to be members of the Kudumbashree network.

II. Provision of mates

The State government took the initiative to train 1.2 lakh women mates (from the ADS) who then proceeded to identify work opportunities, mobilise SHGs for work, and prepare estimates in consultation with the overseer or engineer. The mates from the ADS also supervised work and were made responsible to provide amenities and work implements at the worksite, prepare and submit muster rolls, and handle emergencies at work. It was the responsibility of the CDS to coordinate the work of the mates. Nearly every panchayat in the State tapped into the resource pool of mates offered by the CBO, and used it to develop projects, coordinate workers and make necessary arrangements at the worksite. The pressure of the SHGs ensured that these mates followed up on field checks and measurements, sanctions and release of wages. The work they did was regularly reviewed by the CDS.

III. Demand generation and work implementation

The role of the CBO in the implementation of works included

- Identification of works and sites for MGNREGS
- Preparation of rough cost estimates by the mates - size up projects, gauge the number of person days required and prepare estimates for the work.
- Participate in labour budgeting, and in the preparation of the CDS action plan that identified convergence opportunities for livelihood augmentation in agriculture

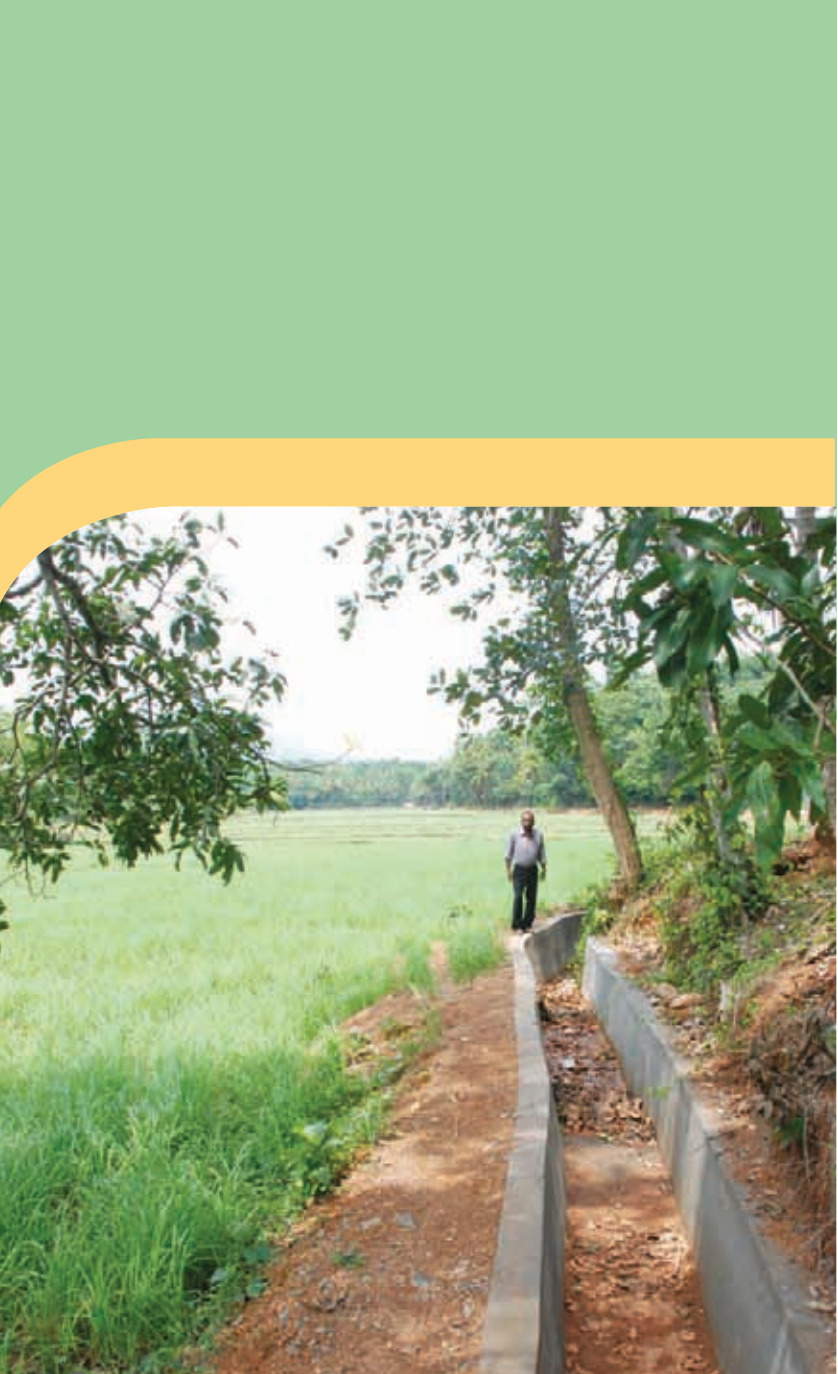
- Participation in project meetings and taking up work as per muster roll.
- Providing facilities at the site.
- Participation in preparation of the Watershed Masterplan

In many panchayats, involvement of the CBO with the implementation of MGNREGS led to the conversion of fallow lands for cultivation and creation of Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) of women farmers who cultivated both public and private tracts of land. Convergence platforms were set up at the panchayat level that enabled the poor to access schemes (like Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) and services. Today there are 59769 JLGs of women farmers in the State.

IV Social Security and Inclusion

In panchayats with extremely vulnerable population, transitional support was provided by the CDS by way of a corpus fund that was used exclusively as part wage payment, to tide over the delays that stood in the way of participation of tribal and migrant families in the programme. Yashoda, a Scheduled Tribe (Mavilan Community) Kudumbashree member from Ballal panchayat, who had availed of the Corpus advance payment bears testimony to its impact. She says not only did it draw her into MGNREGS, but it also helped her to become regular in putting in her weekly thrift. Surprisingly she used the money to buy provisions for the ultra poor in her group who were not Scheduled Tribes. She later became mate. An exclusive ADS for Scheduled Tribe was formed in her ward in addition to the regular ADS, and she notes that the participation of Scheduled Tribes in the programme perceptibly improved after the exclusive ADS for Scheduled Tribes became functional.





V. Skill development and the labour market

The interest in the woman labourer skilled through MGNREGS has led to the creation of another instrument – the women's labour collective. The estimation and accounting skills of the mate have also come in handy. Across the State the workers of MGNREGS have been coming together on their own to form labour groups that take on agricultural work and work on homesteads and plantations. This work is also supported and coordinated by the CDS.

One of the thematic modules of the gender self learning programme of Kudumbashree was on women and work in the context of the MGNREGS programme. It touched on matters like entitlement to equal wages and safety and hygiene at the work place, and helped cement the understanding of the SHG network on the rights aspects of MGNREGS.

Lessons for convergence

The space for the CBO in MGNREGS has played its part in evolving economic identity of the poor woman as skilled labourer and farmer cultivator, and in creating a development interface for women to negotiate with local governments and power structures, giving new meaning to participatory governance. The nature of this dynamics has certainly played a central role in the effort to realise the objectives of MGNREGS.



There are lessons to be learnt about the opportunities for community organisations to strive for organisational empowerment through participation in governance - lessons that could have far reaching implications for improving the quality of life of the poor, for transforming agriculture and the labour market, and for ushering in a new dialogue of women empowerment.

Source:

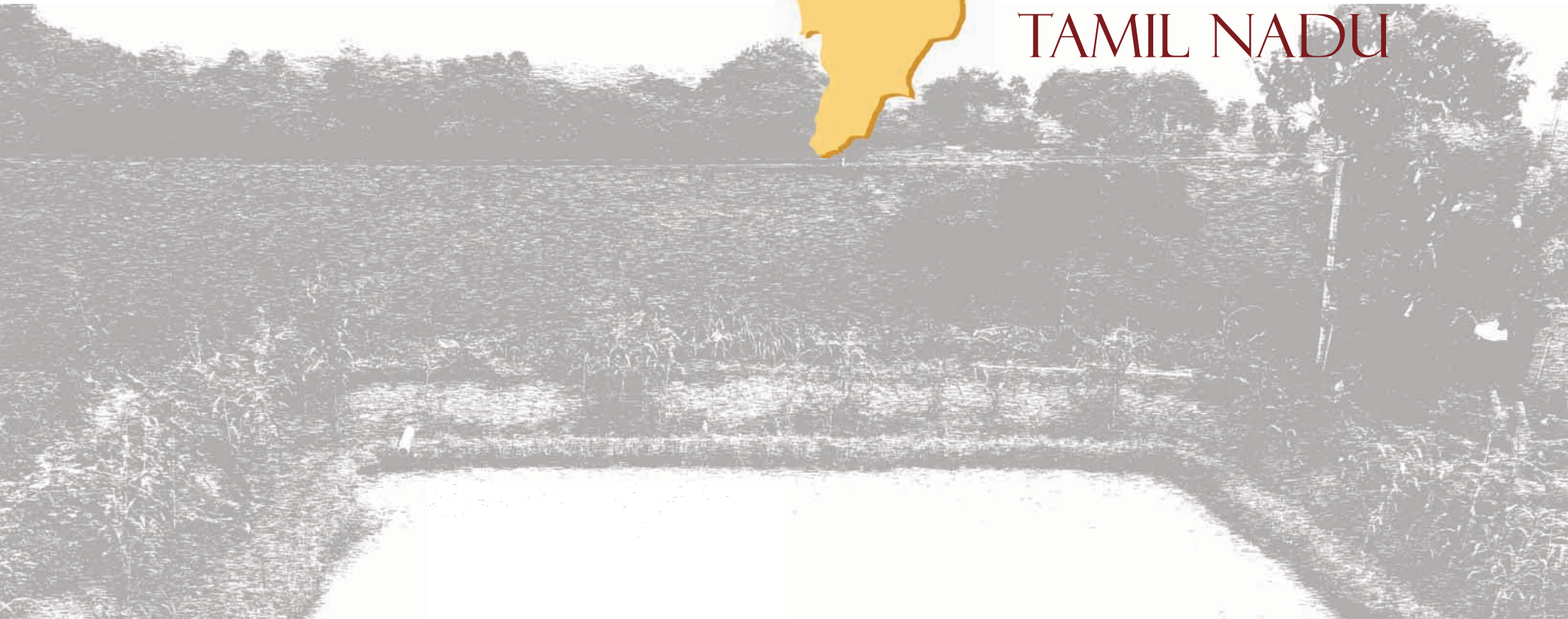
Muraleedharan, Sarada; Chief Operating Officer, NRLM, New Delhi







TAMIL NADU





Tamil Nadu



Institutionalizing Converge Systems in the State

Summary

As a policy decision, the schemes implemented under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Tamil Nadu ensure 100 per cent unskilled manual works. To improve the quality of assets created under MGNREGA and to enhance the livelihood opportunities of the rural masses, the State has institutionalised an approach of resource convergence by inter-weaving MGNREGA with other public works programmes. The prime objective behind this approach is to create assets which could ensure livelihood security to beneficiaries and to help in the regeneration of the natural resource base of the rural economy concerned. On the basis of State level inter-departmental meetings, detailed action plans have been prepared on convergence, clearly delineating roles and responsibilities of participating line departments. The State has successfully implemented MGNREGA in collaboration with Agriculture, Fisheries, Horticulture and Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA) etc.



Why **Dr. ChiChi Chollappa** is telling
ChiChi along with your village name ?



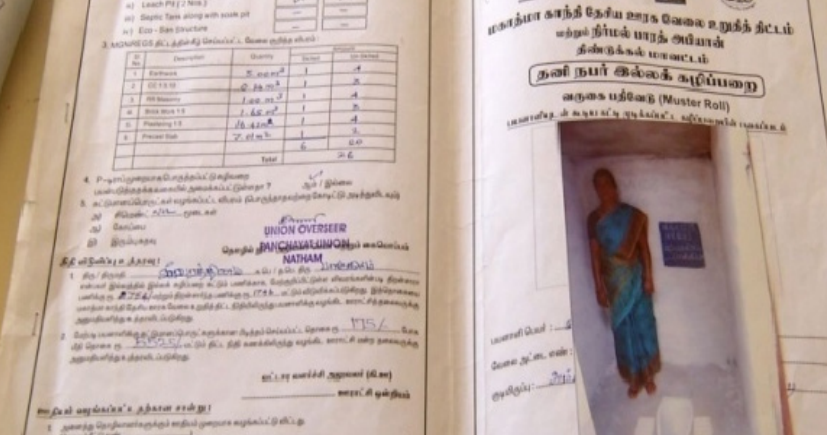
The Challenge

Tamil Nadu State Government has introduced several innovations in the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to maximise its wage-employment objective. These innovative approaches range from ensuring gender sensitive tools for workers to laying renewed focus on provision of child care and other worksite facilities. As a policy decision, the State implements such schemes under MGNREGA which ensures 100 per cent unskilled manual works. This is a positive step towards maximising the welfare provisions as laid down under MGNREGA 2005. Upto 2010-11, the major works taken up were large water bodies and community assets. The impact of these works were realised by the entire community. However, focussed attention to individual needs was not addressed. Irrigation facilities to individual farmers and sanitation facilities to the households were also not addressed.

Need for the Intervention

The Government of Tamil Nadu desired to institutionalize convergence of MGNREGA resources with other development programmes. The prime issue was to realise the impact of the programme by the people by ensuring durability and productivity of the rural assets by implementing an appropriate convergence approach between MGNREGA and other works implemented by various line departments. The plan was to use MGNREGA's resources for unskilled component and funds available with the line departments for material expenditure. The main objective of this approach was to optimize resources of all departments to create productive and durable assets, which





will be useful to individual families. The assets so created were expected to ensure livelihood support to beneficiaries and to help in the regeneration of the natural resource base of the rural economy concerned.

The Intervention

In a convergence project, effective co-ordination and ownership of the implementation are vital. At the State level, inter-departmental meetings were held to discuss and decide convergence methodology and implementation procedure. Detailed action plans were prepared clearly delineating roles and responsibilities of participating line departments. Further, the decisions have been institutionalized through formal orders and directives to districts.

Some of the convergence initiatives are:

(1) *Convergence with Agriculture, Fisheries and Horticulture Department*

The Agriculture Department was given the responsibility of identifying lands of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) farmers, Small and Marginal Farmers (SMF) for taking up works relating to excavation of farm ponds. The objective was to use these farm ponds for irrigation as well as for livelihood activities through convergence with departments like Fisheries etc. Till date, out of 24,684 farm pond related works started around 17,164 have been completed.



For interested farmers, pisciculture on farm ponds is being taken up with the Fisheries Department. Fisheries Department provides subsidy and training to farmers on the methodology for Fish Fingerling Culture. For example, for growing around 45,000 fish fingerlings, the Fisheries Department provides a 50 per cent subsidy on an estimated cost of Rs.60,000. At a survival rate of 40 per cent, 18,000 fish fingerlings could be obtained in 60 days. This would mean, an annual income of around Rs. 70,000-80,000 could be ensured. So far, 2396 farm ponds have been stocked with fingerlings. In fact, multipurpose farm ponds have also been developed by involving fish rearing, gardening etc.

(2) Convergence with Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA)

Low cost toilets under Total Sanitation Campaign in Tamil Nadu were facing issues of poor maintenance and inadequate waste disposal. Thus, the resource convergence between MGNREGA and NBA looked at as a useful opportunity by the State.

The main objectives of converged project on sanitation were to:

- bring about an overall improvement in the health status and quality of life in the rural areas



- generate bottom up demand for sanitation facilities through awareness creation and health education
- eliminate open defecation to minimize risk of contamination of drinking water sources and food
- convert dry latrines to pour flush latrines and eliminate manual scavenging practice, wherever in existence in rural areas

To operationalise this, the State prepared extensive guidelines for convergence of NBA with MGNREGA including model estimates and costs. As per field assessments, the average

person-days involved in the construction of an Individual Household Latrine (IHHL) were calculated to be 20 unskilled person-days and six skilled person-days and were funded under MGNREGA. The material component of Rs.6,600 (with a State share of Rs. 2,500) was supported under NBA. It is relevant to note that Tamil Nadu has increased the State Contribution to IHHLs from Rs.1400 (as suggested by the Govt of India) to Rs.2500 – a forward looking initiative.

To begin with, the State administration undertook public campaigns to disseminate information and generate demand. Besides wall paintings and radio messaging, a door to door campaign was undertaken to expand the outreach of this initiative. A beneficiary list was prepared and got approved by respective Gram Sabhas.

Besides constant monitoring, appropriate policy decisions of the State ensured that administrative delays are avoided for timely execution of this initiative. First, the entire IHHL unit is treated as one MGNREGA work and given a unique work identification number and a Muster Roll. Second, the Muster Rolls are designed exclusively for use in the execution of IHHL works. Third, on completion of each such work, a certificate is required from the worksite facilitator and a technical completion certificate from the overseer for release of funds by the block authorities. Fourth, a worksite facilitator is appointed for every 15-25 IHHL units. Fifth, in several districts a target oriented 15 day period is given for the completion of the toilet from the start date. Lastly, the District Programme Coordinator/ District Collector is directed to issue administrative sanctions under MGNREGA for all the

IHHLs that got approved by Gram Sabha for that year, clearly indicating (a) the labour portion under MGNREGA and (b) the material portion to be converged from NBA.

Output and Outcome

At the State level, around six lakh such toilets have been sanctioned and 1.5 lakh toilets have been completed so far. Out of 11,304 compost pits sanctioned in 766 GPs for maintenance and waste disposal activities, 1,889 works have been completed. These compost pits would be used for converting bio-degradable wastes into manures.

The Government of Tamil Nadu has not only ensured dissemination of core message of convergence to the lowest level of project implementation but also stressed on community-centric convergence planning, execution and monitoring of public works. The State's keen interest in fine tuning the process and streamlining this convergence approach has ensured efficient and effective implementation of all convergence projects.

(Note: Right before the publication of this document, the Ministry of Rural Development took a decision to increase the contribution of MGNREGA to Rs. 5,400 for IHHLs constructed in convergence with NBA and Rs. 10,000 for IHHLs constructed independently i.e. entirely under MGNREGA.)

Source:

Muralidharan, Jayashree; District Collector, Trichy, Tamil Nadu and Sreedevi, Assistant Director (MGNREGS), Department of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Govt of Tamil Nadu







WEST BENGAL



West Bengal



Green Jobs for Greening Sundarbans

Summary

Villagers in South 24 Parganas district have successfully restored the mangrove forest cover in Sunderbans region. This was under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in collaboration with the Forest Department. The prime objective was to eliminate the ill-effects of 'Cyclone Aila' of 2009 on this UNESCO heritage site which had witnessed vast depletion of forest cover. The target was to restore mangrove cover in 6,000 hectares of forest area in the Sunderbans by planting various species of mangrove seedlings. So far, this unique convergence project has successfully restored the glory of Sunderbans with the plantation of over one crore mangrove seedlings in an area covering about 2,485 hectares. This initiative has not only arrested distress migration of labourers from the area by successfully generating more than 3.5 lakh persondays in the lean season of agriculture but also secured the lives of 25 lakh people in the remote riverine habitats.



The Challenge

South 24 Parganas, spread across an area of 8,165 square Kilometers, stretches from metropolitan Kolkata to the remotest riverine villages up to the mouth of Bay of Bengal. 84 per cent of the population in the district lives in rural areas. 13 out of the 29 Community Development Blocks (CDB) in the district fall within the Sundarbans – the largest single block of tidal mangrove forest. The mangrove forest in the district was on the verge of extinction due to cyclone Aila in 2009. The depleting mangrove forest cover started impacting adversely the lives and livelihoods of 25 lakh people in the remote habitats of the district. Further, the risk from resurfacing of such flurries or similar natural calamities loomed large in this tidal mangrove belt. The unprotected river embankments and earthen dams aroused fears about the loss of lives and property and destruction of crops. These issues provoked distressed migration from the district. Depletion of mangrove forest, loss of lives and property and crops attracted the attention of district administration to arrive at a permanent solution.

Need for the Intervention

The devastating Cyclone Aila in 2009, served as a wake-up call for the residents of this region. Post 2009, the inhabitants of this vulnerable delta region slowly realised that global warming would drastically change their way of life forever, as the slowly rising sea levels start engulfing the islands. The fragile ecosystem had caused the influx of saline water rendering the soil unfit for agriculture and forced the rural families to migrate to Kolkata and other urban/metro cities in search of livelihood.





Acknowledging the need of the hour for timely and adequate protection of mangrove forest cover across the coastline and provision of livelihood opportunities to local people, the District Administration undertook a unique initiative - “Green Sunderbans for ecological balance and employment generation through MGNREGS” in convergence with the Forest Department. Mangrove forests play an important role in mitigating the risk related to climate change in coastal areas. Plantation of mangroves was one of the suggestive mitigating measures to address the ill-impact of climate change as it creates a protection wall against cyclones and soil erosion related problems and also helps in maintaining the ecological balance.

The Intervention

The initiative was taken under MGNREGA in convergence with the Forest Department to restore mangrove forests through a massive plantation exercise. Out of 29 CDBs of the district it was implemented in eight Blocks namely, Gosaba, Basnti, Kultali, Joynagar-2, Mathurapur-2, Patharpratima, Namkhana and Sagar. In order to ensure the ownership of Panchayati Raj Institutions, 64 Gram Panchayats (GPs) in these eight Blocks were identified as Programme Implementing Agency (PIA). The basic objectives of this convergence project were to:

- a. Restore 6,000 hectares of mangrove forests
- b. Secure the life of 25 lakh people in the remote habitats against the natural calamity
- c. Arrest outward migration during the lean season.

To start with, an integrated plan following a participatory approach was prepared in collaboration with Forest Department. The Project was included in the annual action plan for the year 2012-13. Gram Panchayats took up schemes consisting mangrove nursery and plantation activities under the active supervision of Forest Department.

To ensure the systematic implementation of the project, field survey, demarcation and alignment of sites were undertaken during March-April, 2012. Trenches and pits were dug during May-June 2012. After completing preparatory activities, plantation of mangrove seedlings was undertaken

during September-October 2012. Simultaneously the collection of seeds for raising mangrove nursery and sowing were also done during September-October 2012. Members of the women Self Help Groups (SHGs) worked under the project as MGNREGA workers.

Output and Outcome

The convergence intervention has successfully restored the forest cover of the Sunderabans by planting a total of over one crore mangrove seedlings covering an area of approximately 2,485 hectares. It has successfully restored the ecological lifelines of river embankments and earthen dams with mangrove plantation. The intervention of the district has witnessed participation of a very large number of women drawn from local women SHGs. Not only are the women getting paid for rearing mangrove saplings, they are also getting 100 days of assured employment as they plant them. This initiative has not only arrested distress migration of labourers from the area by successfully generating more than 3.5 lakh person-days in the lean season of agriculture but also secured the lives of 25 lakh people in the remote riverine habitats.

Source:

MGNREGA Division, Ministry of Rural Development expresses its appreciation to Shri Dibyendu Sarkar, Commissioner (MGNREGA), Govt. of West Bengal for timely supply of appropriate and adequate information/content at a very short notice.





The Journey from Wastelands to Green Orchards

Summary

The neatly outlined convergence approach initiated during 2009 in Bankura district of West Bengal has transformed nearly 392 hectares of non-productive wasteland into productive agricultural land. The planned convergence effort successfully established an integrated horticulture by developing mango orchards, excavating small farm ponds (Hapas – as these are locally called) and cutting cattle-proof trenches. While plantation of 400 mango saplings per hectare ensured arrest of large scale soil erosion of the area, the Hapas and cattle-proof trenches helped in retaining surface runoffs leading to adequate water percolation and ground water recharge. This plantation initiative has not only made the wastelands productive but also assured the beneficiary families with incremental income through intercropping. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) workers who were instrumental in implementing this initiative, have now started managing the mango orchards and

intercropping activities within these orchards by constituting themselves into Self Help Groups (SHGs). This initiative has provided the SHGs an additional income of Rs 20,000 per annum from one orchard. Considering the rising productivity of the orchards, it is expected that not only the additional income will mark an upward trend but also a few agro-based fruit processing industries would come up in and around these orchards guaranteeing various other backward and forward linkage benefits.

The Challenge

Bankura, one of the backward districts of West Bengal is located in the western part of the State. Agriculture and allied activities are the main source of livelihood for around 36 lakh inhabitants of this district. Undulating topography, low Irrigation potential, erratic rainfall and heavy surface run off during monsoon have made agriculture in this area less productive. The agriculture being primarily rain-fed and not so remunerative, people used to migrate to the neighbouring districts in search of alternative livelihoods.

Need for the Intervention

The district has ample fallow, barren and waste land resources which remained unproductive and unutilised. Though the region was suitable for the plantation of fruit bearing trees, the real challenge was to devise an appropriate plan of action for transforming these lands into productive assets. The need was also to outline an integrated convergence framework consisting various development oriented programmes viz. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), National Horticulture Mission (NHM), National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM).





The Intervention

An integrated plan was prepared for converting waste and unproductive lands into productive assets by pooling resources from MGNREGA, NHM and NRLM. The technical team of NHM identified this area suitable for cultivating various varieties of mango crop viz. Amrapali, Mallika, Pusa Arunima and Alphanso.



The next important step was to socially mobilise the MGNREGA Job Card holder families to form Self Help Groups (SHG) under National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM). The SHGs so formed were oriented about horticulture plantation and intercropping. The Gram Panchayat (GP) discussed the matter in detail and agreed to be the programme implementing agency of this initiative. The SHG members got village wastelands on a 30 year lease on an agreement that profit derived from mango plantation would be distributed between three stakeholders – 30 per cent to the landlord, 60 per cent to SHG group members and 10 per cent to the GP. The GP was urged to utilize its share of profit towards maintaining mango plants and other administrative expenses.

The SHG members placed their schematic action plan with the document showing land lease agreement in respective Gram Sabha meetings for approval. Upon inclusion of such schemes in MGNREGA Annual Action Plan, the SHG members placed demands for work to the GPs concerned to improve the land and execute mango plantation activities at their leased land. The saplings were purchased from Krishi Vigyan Kendra, designated Government Horticulture Farms and the State Agricultural University to ensure the quality of the input and future productivity of the crop.

The cost of saplings was provided out of a pool of resources jointly contributed by NHM and MGNREGA. After pit cutting in April-May, transplantation process was completed in early monsoon. Horticulture department provided inputs required for inter-culture crop to the MGNREGA Job Card holders. Inter-culture and land improvement works were carried out till the first commercial harvest in the third year of transplantation i.e. in the year 2012.

Output and Outcome

The mango crops are now harvested in the orchards created in the year 2009. MGNREGA workers who were a part of the SHG group to raise and maintain the orchard are earning an additional income of Rs 20,000 per annum. It is expected that this income may rise to Rs. 80,000 per orchard in a year once the mango plants get more matured. Further, the families, through intercropping activities within the orchard area could also earn an annual additional income up to Rs 1,20,000 per orchard.

The convergence initiative in raising mango orchards in Bankura district has not only provided unskilled wage employment to wage seekers but also has created durable assets. Long term economic returns have been assured to families associated with it. All the orchards in Bankura district have been created on the fallow wasteland following the convergence approach. In this way, nearly 392 hectares of non-productive wasteland have been transformed into productive assets so far. While plantation of mango trees ensured arrest of large scale soil erosion of the area, the small ponds (Hapas) and cattle-proof trenches in this integrated horticulture initiative have helped in retaining surface runoffs leading to adequate water percolation



- **Total of Orchards :- 138**
- **Area Covered :- 330 ha**
- **Total Plants :- 130000**
- **Total person-days created :- 4.7 lakh**
- **Total Households involved :- 2042**
- **SGSY Groups tagged :- 180**
- **Total Expenditure :-Rs. 8.9 Crore**
- **Wage Component :- Rs. 6.4 Crore**
- **Expected Production at mature stage :- 13000 metric tonnes/Year**
- **Expected Returns at mature stage :- Rs. 26 Crore/Year**
- **Per family income from mango fruits only :- Rs. 1.27 lakh/Year**



and ground water recharge. Post-implementation, the programme received substantial support from the Department of Food Processing Industries & Horticulture, which came forward to provide drip irrigation facilities to the orchards under the National Mission for Micro Irrigation. The growth has also developed potential for investment for the food processing industries, which might develop the local economy further by developing agro-based industries and expanding the market by way of export.

What is unique in this initiative?

The activities pertaining to development of mango orchards in Bankura district have certain distinctions from other initiatives of similar nature:

1. Forming Self Help Groups of poor rural women through SGSY
2. Leasing out of barren, uncultivable land by the land owners to the members of the SHGs
3. By signing long-term lease giving usage rights to the SHGs for the purpose of horticulture thereby creating a win-win situation for the landowner and SHG members
4. Post-implementation convergence with the Horticulture Department, especially the National Mission for Micro Irrigation for arranging drip irrigation facilities in the orchards

Source:

Bharti, Vijay; District Magistrate, Bankura, West Bengal



Saving Lives and Redefining the (River) Course

Summary

Floods and soil erosion along the banks of the river Damodar were serious problems facing certain villages of Burdwan district. A convergence project was undertaken to provide livelihoods for rural households and to build embankments to prevent floods and erosion. Lower Damodar Irrigation Division of the Irrigation and Waterways Department in convergence with the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) implementing department prepared a shelf of 28 schemes, spread over the jurisdiction of four Gram Panchayats (GPs) of Jamalpur block. Implementation of this project has increased the level of the left embankment and reduced the threat of floods for this region. In the process it has also generated around 12 kilometres of roads.

The villagers living along the banks of Damodar river faced a perpetual threat from floods and rampant erosion of river embankments, particularly during the rainy season. This also affected their livelihoods. On close technical assessment, it was found that the level of river embankments of Damodar River was lower than that of the train line and the national highway. This made the surrounding areas flood prone due to an inflow from the river resulting not only into a loss of assets of rural people but also loss of human lives.





A comprehensive flood proofing project was designed based on a demand by more than one lakh inhabitants residing in four gram panchayats surrounding the left bank of the Damodar river. The project was to be implemented in a phased manner with the aim of restoring rural livelihoods by constructing sustainable flood proofing structures and strengthening agricultural irrigation channels. It was also envisaged that the roads built in the process would help promote agriculture, micro-business and provide greater accessibility to education, health facilities.



Through participatory planning a project was developed with an estimated expenditure of Rs. six Crore and 2.8 lakh person-days. The core objectives were:

- Ensure gainful wage employment for all rural Job Card holders demanding employment in the four gram panchayats in Jamalpur block.
- Explore greater scope of rural livelihoods by saving livelihood assets, human lives from recurrent flood and expand irrigation potential.
- Improve height of river embankment above the train line and national highway level.
- Connect rural people of Burdwan and Hooghly Districts through 12 kilometers. long morrum road for providing market linkages, thereby strengthening the overall economic activities of the area.

The technical support for the project was provided by the Irrigation department. The functionaries have also been closely involved and have contributed to the project being implemented without delay. The work has been intensively supervised by the Engineers from the irrigation department and also MGNREGA functionaries. Women participation in the project has been notable at 50 per cent of the total person-days.

The project work is still in progress, and till October 2013, Rs.4.60 Crore has been spent and 1.55 Lakh person-days have been generated.

At the time of writing about this project, the work was still in progress. The constructed Morrum road has benefitted more than one lakh people who reside in the adjoining areas of Jamalpur block by providing linkage with other rural & urban markets. The raised height of the embankment will also protect more than 7500 hectares of land with paddy and other agriculture crops.

Source:

Mohan, Soumitra; District Magistrate, Burdwan, West Bengal





Building Livelihoods around a Pond

Summary

In FY 2012-13, Eruar Gram Panchayat (GP) of Bhatar block in Burdwan District took up a Scheme named 'Re-excavation of Ban & Bel Ponds, land development and plantation of fruit saplings in Sripur Village'. With this Scheme, the size of existing ponds was increased from 0.2 hectare to 0.8 hectare. The land surrounding the pond, owned by the GP was also developed under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Following this, fruit saplings including Banana, Guava and Mango, were planted in the area. On completion of the scheme, the GP handed over the asset to 40 rural Job Card holders of Sripur village who worked on the project. At present, these 40 rural households are not only maintaining this asset but also earning their livelihoods through fruit orchards and pisciculture. These farmers are planning to form a cooperative for harvesting and selling the produce from their lands.

Residents of Sripur village recall that once this place was barren and there were only two small ponds with no water holding capacity. The surrounding agricultural land was also underdeveloped and had low productivity.

At a Gram Sabha, the villagers placed a collective demand for better irrigation facility for their agricultural land. Responding to this, the functionaries of Eruar GP developed an integrated plan for sustainable development of that area and meeting the employment demand. As per the plan, it was decided to merge two abandoned ponds i.e. 'Ban' & 'Bel' and convert them into a one large water conservation & harvesting structure. The large water intake capacity would ensure that maximum rainwater could be harvested.

With the deliberate aim of dual use of Ban & Bel, water conservation and harvesting structure for horticulture and agriculture development of Sripur village; functionaries of Eruar GP and block development officials took joint initiative for supervision of the scheme during excavation, land development and plantation activities under the leadership of Block Development and Programme Officer of Bhatar block. A total of 15150 person-days were generated through this scheme and the wage material ratio was 96:4. In other words, the work was labour intensive and provide employment to hundreds of households.

The integrated plan also involved the development of the surrounding land with technical support from the Agriculture and Horticulture Department (AHD). The aim was that, the surrounding 0.8 hectare would be levelled to ensure effective water intake capacity. The tree plantation would not only prevent soil erosion but also provide livelihoods to families living around the area.



The work was initiated on 24th May, 2012 and completed on 21st January, 2013. On completion of the work, Eruar GP handed over the asset to 40 Job Card holders, who also worked on the pond. The pond has become a source of livelihood for these households, who are also benefiting from the horticulture crops grown in the area and pisciculture. The households also hope to form a cooperative for better access to market and credit support from Government for expanding their livelihood opportunities.

Source:

Mohan, Soumitra; District Magistrate, Burdwan, West Bengal





ODISHA





Odisha



Securing Livelihoods of Forest Rights Act Beneficiaries in Koraput District

Summary

Koraput, one of the backward districts of Odisha, has successfully implemented a convergence project of land development and commercial plantation during the year 2012-13. Under this initiative, hilly tracts, ie land of Forest Rights Act (FRA) beneficiaries were collectively developed to suit the cultivation of high value crops. Efforts were made to make the community aware of the expected benefits of this intervention and its positive impact. While cluster approach was followed for the effective implementation of this convergence intervention, active community participation was ensured at every stage of its implementation – from planning, execution to monitoring and community evaluation of the project activities. Today, the beneficiaries of this project have successfully moved



from subsistence agricultural crops viz. finger millet and pearl millet etc. to high value crops viz. vegetables, ginger, paddy and maize. This has ensured an additional family income of around Rs. 12,300/- per hectare in one season for one crop. Increased income from high lands of Koraput district has enhanced the purchasing power of the people and improved their standard of living.

The Challenge

Koraput, a land dominated by Scheduled Tribes (STs), spreads across an area of 8,379 square kilometers consisting of a total population of 11,80,637 (2001 census). Percolation of benefits out of several welfare and development intervention in the district has remained a major challenge as the STs stay in isolated remote hills and forests. Agriculture is the prime occupation of the inhabitants of the district. Even after implementing a series of planned development schemes, this district follows primitive and subsistence agricultural practices. Thus, the real challenge under this project was to implement an integrated development programme with a view to bringing in sustained modifications in the socio-economic behaviour of the rural populace. The task was also to enhance the produce and productivity of agriculture by ensuring a converged development intervention.

Need for the Intervention

The immediate need was to transform the existing age-old agriculture into a profiteering commercial agri-venture as agriculture is the mainstay of the population in this district. This was possible only when the existing agriculture practices in this area would be brought at par with the agriculture



in irrigated plain areas. The cropping style and cropping pattern were to be modified by shifting the ST farmers from subsistence agriculture to the high value cash crops. In order to bring about any breakthrough, it was felt necessary that the hilly tracts in the district should be developed to suit the cultivation of crops that were not practised in the hills, viz. vegetables, ginger, maize, etc. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) offered an opportunity to initiate land development activities in the hills in collaboration with line departments. With a view to diversifying crops through appropriate treatment of land, it was felt that the resources of other line departments (soil conservation and horticulture) could be converged with MGNREGA.



The objectives of this convergence experimentation were:

- to transform sloppy hilly patches of land of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006 beneficiaries into cultivable agricultural land resources.
- to change the existing cropping style and cropping pattern and promote high value cash crops
- promote plantation of commercial horticulture species like cashew, mango, coffee, aromatic crops.

The Intervention

The integrated convergence initiative was devised after a detailed discussion with the community, experts from line departments and MGNREGA functionaries. The principal goal was to ensure a shift of focus from “community benefit projects worked upon by an individual wage earner” to - “individual benefit projects worked upon by the community”. Efforts were made to make the community aware of the expected benefits and its positive impact on the community as a whole. The individual benefits so planned were expected to ensure a sense of belongingness of each member towards effective implementation of the components of the scheme. For example, instead of awarding plantation activity to a community, the same was planned in identified individual lands adopting a saturation mode.

Though the plantation was made in patches of individual FRA lands, the plantation planning, however, was holistic. Plantation was planned for the entire cluster of individual patches of FRA land. An inter-departmental meeting brought in clarifications on duties and responsibilities of various line departments and staff engaged at different tiers of work implementation.

The procedural aspects of MGNREGA were dealt with by the block level teams facilitating free-flow of technical inputs from respective line departments. This removed the hesitation among the field functionaries of line departments which helped them to undertake convergence activities as per the approved plan.

Cluster approach was followed for effective implementation of this convergence intervention. Group-specific and cluster-wise case records were managed at the point of the activity intervention. Timely record keeping, monitoring and measurement of all the project activities became possible with the active supervision of Junior Engineers or any other delegated official. Land development was supplemented by plantation. The line department implemented plantation activities effectively and efficiently in a sizable area due to the cluster-orientation of the project management.

Active community participation was ensured at every stage of the project implementation – i.e. from planning to execution and monitoring to community evaluation of project activities. This was very important as the effort under this convergence approach was to transform the agri-practice followed by the ST farmer households.

Output and Outcome

The beneficiaries of the project have successfully shifted from subsistence agricultural crops like finger millet and pearl millet to fruits, vegetables, ginger, maize and even paddy in newly developed terraces in high land. This initiative has helped in developing 1,940 hectares of forest land of 2,220 MGNREGA worker households for raising high value crops ranging from mango and cashew to aromatic plants and coffee. For the first time, the beneficiaries



have been able to reap on an average of Rs. 12,300/- per hectare in one season from one crop. The additional surplus income has helped the ST beneficiaries to overcome the mental barrier that kept them isolated from others. The ST beneficiaries of commercial plantation are now ready to export their produce. One such beneficiary expressed his desire to go for hybrid mango plants since he has understood the price difference between local and hybrid variety of mangoes prevailing in the market. Increased income from high land under the project has improved the standard of living of these FRA beneficiaries of Koraput district.

Source:

Jadhav, Sachin; District Collector and DPC, Koraput district, Odisha



Integrated Natural Resource Management in Kandhamal District

Summary

In the year 2009-10, a project titled “Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM) under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)” was pilot tested in Kandhamal district of Odisha. This initiative under MGNREGA was the first of its kind in the district that aimed at ensuring integrated land and water management for securing livelihoods. With the active involvement of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), 300 villages were identified for implementing this innovative initiative. Vigorous social mobilization processes were adopted and mass public campaign about the initiative were carried out not only to generate awareness about the benefits of the project but also to ensure active participation of local community. Considering the socio-economic situation of the potential beneficiaries, the initiative envisaged to ensure

participation of about 60-70 per cent of the rural families spread across 300 selected villages and to help secure the completion of 100 days of wage employment per household for at least 30 per cent worker households. The villagers, who were initially unconvinced about the benefits of this integrated initiative, through relentless social mobilization and sustained awareness generation campaign, could show their unflinching interest in identifying appropriate INRM related works and could come forward to involve them in planning, execution and monitoring of such works. This initiative has opened rightful avenues for sustainable livelihood by creating productive assets in one of the most backward districts of Odisha.

The Challenge

Kandhamal, a central Odisha District, lies in a high altitude zone, inter-spread with inaccessible terrain of hilly ranges and narrow valley tracts. The remoteness of the district is responsible for its low socio-economic progress vis-à-vis other districts. The district was not only witnessing vast depletion and degradation of its natural resources but also suffering from low agricultural productivity due to ineffective management of soil, water and vegetation resources. The immediate need was to bring in a community culture of effective natural resource management and to improve the productivity of agriculture and allied sector in the district.





Need for the Intervention

The district was home to a large number of landless wage-earners. An integrated approach to natural resource management was necessary not only to focus on the restoration of degraded and depleting natural resources but also to ensure optimal and efficient use of scarce natural resources for securing livelihoods of the rural wage earners sustainably. With this innovative integrated management approach, it was expected that the landless wage earners would get benefited from non-farm activities following appropriate restoration and management of natural resources.

The Intervention

The district administration, after a detailed inter-departmental meeting decided to pilot test an INRM project in select 300 villages with dense Scheduled Tribe (ST) population. It was decided to socially mobilise the inhabitants of the villages on the initiative coupled with intense awareness campaign disseminating right-based provisions under MGNREGA. Since the potential beneficiaries were either illiterate or less literate, support from reputed NGOs were taken to take this initiative forward.

PRADAN was selected as Nodal NGO for implementing this initiative as this institution had adequate experience in working mostly with STs and poor people who live near forests and for whom forests and natural resources in and around forests have, traditionally, been an important source of livelihood. Seven other local NGOs viz. SWATI, PRADATA, JAGRUTI, KALPAVRUKHYA, SEVA BHARTI, CPSW and SAMANWITA were selected to supplement the nodal NGO.

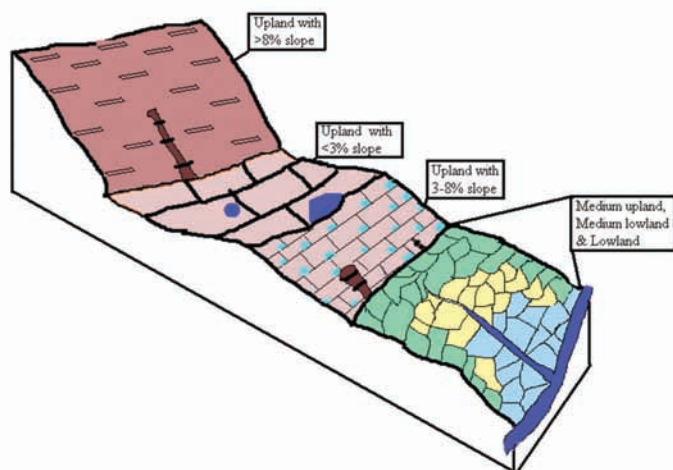
The NGOs were asked to adopt on an average 40 villages for proper implementation of the activities of the project. Considering the socio-economic situation of the potential beneficiaries, the initiative envisaged to ensure the participation of about 60-70 per cent of the rural families spread across 300 selected villages and to help secure the completion of 100 days of wage employment per household for at least 30 per cent worker households. The NGOs, after due survey of the villages, prepared micro plans comparing the survey data with the baseline data collected earlier from these villages. Here, a comprehensive micro-plan each per village was prepared taking into account all the available physical, financial and natural resources. Ridge to valley approach was adopted while treating the lands so identified in villages. The works that are taken under INRM were – Plantation, Water Harvesting, Staggered Trenching, Gully Plugging, Diversion Channel, Field Leveling and Bounding, 30 x 40- model irrigation well, Seepage Pond and Low Land Pond etc. On an average, the estimated cost of one project ranged between Rs. 10-15 lakh per village for 2-3 years covering about 40 families and ensuring wage employment generation of about 10,000 person-days in a village.

The next step was to orient the village household on the right based provisions of MGNREGA. The stake holders viz. Block Development Officers (BDOs), Assistant Engineers (AEs), Junior Engineers (JEs), project staff of NGOs, Gram Sanjojaks (coordinators) were also oriented about the benefits of INRM in a district level workshop. During the process, role clarity emerged and all the stakeholders in the project could know the tasks for which they were responsible for.





Index	
Staggered Trench	
Gully Plug	
Field bunding	
Water harvesting structure	
Dug well	
30 X 40 model	



As per the design, the progress of INRM was monitored at different levels. The progress of work was reviewed fortnightly at GP and block level in a meeting represented by all block officials, Village Level Workers (VLWs), Gram Rozgar Sewak (GRS) and NGOs. In the block level review meetings, all senior officials consisting Project Director, Assistant Project Director, Sub-collector, Executive Engineer etc. participated to make this initiative a success.

Output and Outcome

Though the work is still in progress in about 100 out of 300 selected villages, the people who were unconvinced about the effectiveness of the initiative, have shown their interest to be a stakeholder in executing INRM related work under MGNREGA. Continuous social mobilization and relentless awareness generation campaign has made the community conscious about democratic decentralized planning of development works and their effective implementation. In Mahasingi, Bataguda, Barkhama Gram Panchayats (GPs), all the villages have developed their own plans, got these approved in palli sabha and gram sabha before finally executing these on ground. This initiative has attracted attention of willing wage earners as 70-80 per cent of wage seeker households are now working for more than 80 days per household in a financial year. Villagers have changed their cropping style and cropping pattern and now are resorting to cultivation of vegetables in their 30 x 40 model plots and fishery in their farm ponds. This initiative not only has helped the community in promoting execution of INRM related works under MGNREGA but also has opened rightful avenues for sustainable livelihood by creating productive assets in one of the backward districts of Odisha.

Source:

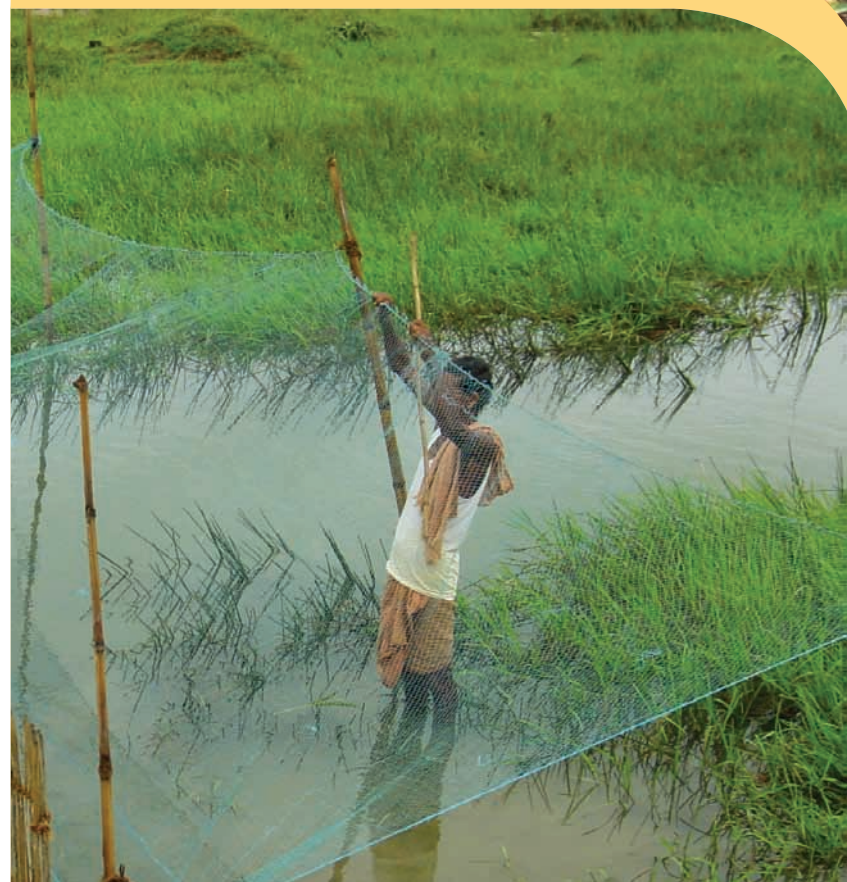
Naik, Thirumala; District Collector and DPC, Kandhamal district, Odisha

Collective efforts bring fruits of success

Summary

The focus of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Mayurbhanj district, has been on creating sustainable livelihoods in convergence with the Horticulture Department, Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), schemes like the National Horticulture Mission (NHM), Jalnidhi etc. Developing horticulture activities in the district was the biggest challenge since 58 per cent of the population is tribal, 47 per cent of the total cultivable land is upland. However, since horticulture is taken up on the private land of poor tribal community who are not exactly agriculturist in all cases and thus require intensive hand holding at every step -training, information about plant rearing and marketing etc.

However, due to the determined efforts of the district administration, the initiative has met with considerable success; mango and other fruits have been planted in around 8226 hectares area, on the lands of 12556 number of individual beneficiaries under MGNREGA. The district has also ensured regular irrigation for most of these areas through bore wells, farm ponds, drip irrigation etc. These plantations were taken up in the year 2011-12; the survival rate is 96 per cent The average estimated income per beneficiary from these plantations is Rs. 30000/annum from fourth year.





The real challenge for Mayurbhanj district was ensuring that the wage employment under MGNREGA created sustainable assets that also generated livelihoods. A regular source of income close to the houses of the beneficiaries would also minimize migration to other villages and cities. Most importantly, MGNREGA also provided an opportunity to develop barren lands of the tribal community.

Before taking up the activity, enough awareness was generated in Gram Sabhas about the benefit and mode of execution by the Horticulture and Soil Conservation Department. Cultivable wasteland patches were identified in consultation with the Gram Sanjojaks. Finally, beneficiaries were identified through Palli Sabha organised during Gram Sabha Shashktikaran Programme(GSS). Technical sanction and financial sanction of the project was done well in advance and the work of land clearance, development and pit digging was taken up from the month of April to complete the plantations before the end of August. For every patch of 50 hectares one paraworker was identified as Udyan Sathi for co-ordination and execution of work in time.

Following the land development and excavation activities, commercial crops like mango, cashew, bamboo and rubber were planted in this area in convergence with the Horticulture, Soil Conservation and ITDA Departments. While these plants would provide sustainable income for several years to the beneficiaries, the immediate challenge was to find a way to generate livelihoods for them in the gestation period.

To provide regular income vegetables and cash crops like Maize and ground nut were planted in the patches where plantation work had been taken up. Agriculture department was involved for planning the intercropping in plantation patches. The Odisha Livelihood Mission (OLM) also lent complete support to this project. OLM helped build social capital and organize tribal population into producer groups to train the beneficiaries on crop rearing etc. It also provided the remaining infrastructure that was required as well and identified avenues to market the produce from these lands.

A perennial source of irrigation was the next issue for these lands. The district administration in convergence with Lift Irrigation Departments under the State Scheme of Biju Krishak Kalyan Yojana having 90 per cent subsidy for the cluster of bore wells . Thus bore wells are provided with drip irrigation. Wherever bore well failed, dug wells were provided under State scheme named Jal Nidhi.

Due to concerted efforts of the district administration, the initiative has met with considerable success. Mango and other fruits had been planted in around 8226 hectare area on the land of 12556 MGNREGA beneficiaries. The district has also assured regular irrigation for most of these areas through over a 130 bore wells, farm ponds. Drip irrigation in convergence with the horticulture department was provided in around 1400 hectares. These plantations were taken up during 2011-12 and 2012-13 and the survival rate currently is 96 per cent. The average estimated income per beneficiary from these plantations is Rs. 30000/annum from the fourth year.

Source:

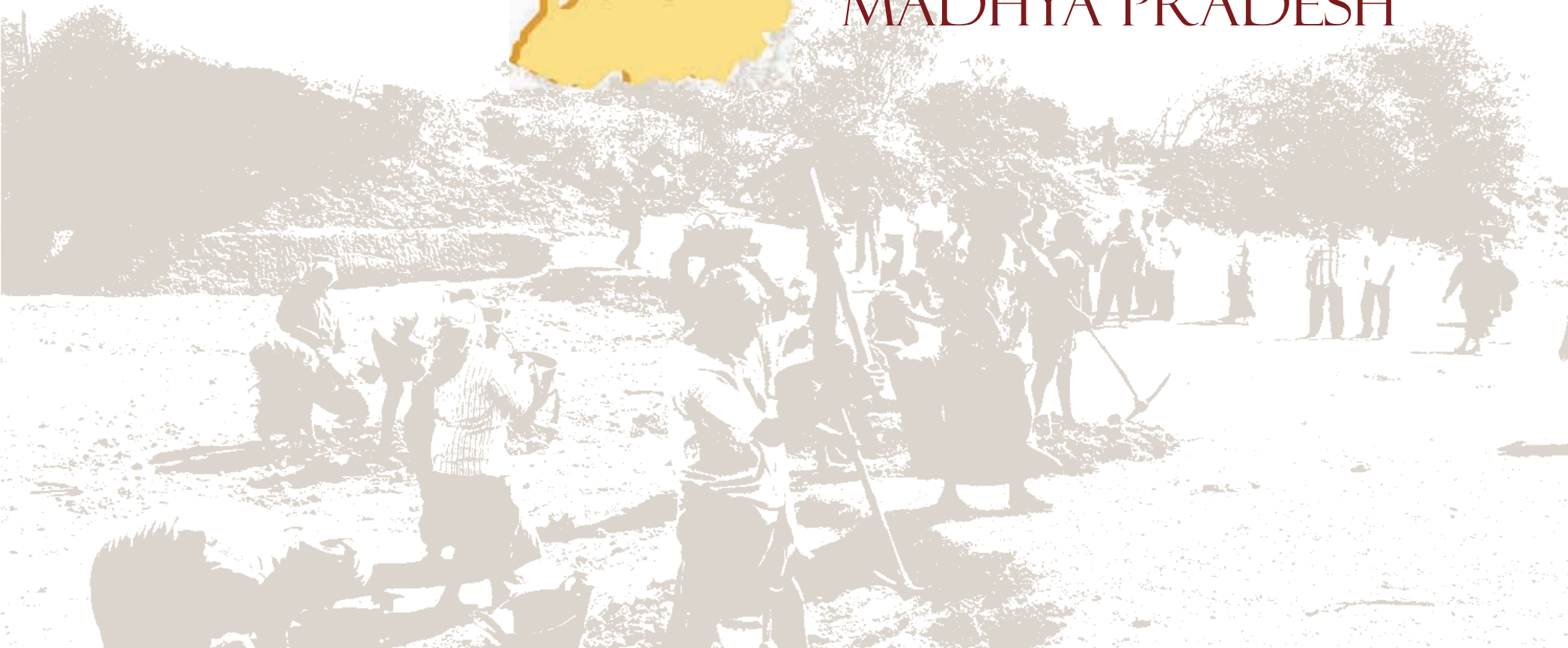
Patil, Rajesh; District Collector, Mayurbhanj, Odisha







MADHYA PRADESH



Madhya Pradesh



Prosperity and (Wishing) Wells

Summary

Madhya Pradesh was one of the first States in the country to conceptualize and implement an integrated area development approach for convergence of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with other Government Schemes. The State has convergence programmes for rural infrastructure, Integrated Natural Resource Management which aids with climate change adaptation, livelihood generating activities, rural sanitation and drinking water. In other words, MGNREGA funds have been combined with, Backward Region Grants Funds (BRGF), Mandi (agriculture retail market) funds, Finance Commission, Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA), Panchayat funds and funds of various other line department like those of Women and Child Development Department, Agriculture Department, Fisheries Department, Water Resource Department, Rural Engineering Services etc. The strategy involved identification of each sub-scheme



according to specific livelihood of the region. The Kapil Dhara programme is one such successful sub-scheme that has shown a clear impact and has contributed to an increase in area irrigated. It has also ensured perennial water supply for the beneficiary farms and has generated livelihood sources.

The notable aspects of MGNREGA convergence initiatives by Madhya Pradesh are not so much in the processes but in the scale of implementation and the support provided by the State government. The State has conceptualized several convergence schemes with different government departments for building rural infrastructure, regenerating natural resources, and providing livelihoods.

Kapildhara is one of the convergence schemes launched by the Government of Madhya Pradesh for the creation of durable assets and to improve the quality of lives of farmers and make their agriculture lands more productive. The beneficiaries under this scheme are Small and Marginal Farmers (SMF) whose lands required irrigation facilities such as dug wells, check dams, farm ponds etc.

For Kapildhara, land development and dug wells are provided under MGNREGA. While several other State Governments have provided farm ponds in SMF land, the crucial factor of formulating convergences to allow for water lifting pumps for irrigation has not been as frequently implemented. In Kapildhara, water lifting devices (run on diesel) for each farm were provided from schemes of Swarn Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, Bundelkhand Package and Agriculture Department. As of Dec 2013, over 2.7 lakh dug wells have been completed and lifting devices





have been made available to over 80,000 beneficiaries. It is estimated that the sub-Scheme has led to an increase of around four lakh hectares in the irrigable area. Large parts of these areas have moved from single crop to double crop.

Of course, implementation of the scheme has been a constant learning process. For instance it was found that, as per field reports, Kapildhara was lowering the water table in areas of implementation. Following this, the State placed an increased focus on water conservation works including ponds, percolation tanks etc.

An evaluation* looking at the impact of water related works across the four States of Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh found that the increase in the number of water availability days was the highest in Madhya Pradesh. This was mainly attributed to the Kapildhara Scheme. The evaluation also mentioned that in the villages which were the subject of study, the percolation tanks, stop dams, ponds, and plantation works have contributed to ground water recharge.

Other convergence schemes of Madhya Pradesh are:

- **Sericulture:** Field preparation activities, digging of pits, planting, weeding and watering are provided for under MGNREGA, on lands of individual beneficiaries. Convergence is made with the Department of Sericulture to ensure technical inputs, capacity building, forward-linkages. Subsidy of Rs. 1.2 lakh is provided to every individual beneficiary by

the Sericulture Department for purchase of saplings, fertilizers, drip irrigation and sprinkler and related infrastructure. The MGNREGA part covers land development and excavation. The sub scheme was started in the State during 2007. The families that have benefited from this have an average annual income of Rs. 40000 per year.

Horticulture: A similar type of convergence has been initiated for horticulture. Land development, pits etc. are funded through MGNREGA and convergence is made through National Horticulture Mission (NHM), Rashtriya Krishi Vigyan Yojana (RKVY) for technical inputs, training beneficiaries, and selection of fruit-bearing plants suitable for the respective agro-climatic zone. As of December 2013, about 31,000 beneficiaries and 30,000 hectares of land have been covered under this scheme.

- **Complete convergence for the construction of roads at every level** Convergence with MGNREGA provides support and gap filling for vital rural infrastructure. The interesting part of this convergence is that while line departments use convergence at the district level for building roads, Gram Panchayats are involved with construction of roads at the village level.
 - (i) Convergence of MGNREGA with the Chief Minister Gram Sadak Yojana (CMGSY) is undertaken for construction of gravel roads in areas that cannot be covered under PMGSY till FY 2013. These areas have a population of less than 500 (in general area) and 250 (in tribal notified area). Convergence plans are drawn





up involving funds from MGNREGA, BRGF and State Plan. MGNREGA provides construction of embankment, sub-grade and shoulders. BRGF provides for construction of pipe culvert, vented cause-way, slab and box culvert upto six metre span. Around 1,436 works constituting a length of 3,464 km have been completed upto FY 2012-13.

- (ii) Construction of internal Cement Concrete (CC) roads in convergence with MGNREGA and State Government's Schemes is being taken up by line departments. MGNREGA share constitutes around 40 per cent of the total cost of the road, as per the permissible works. The remaining 60 per cent is among between 13th Finance Commission (23 per cent), State Finance Commission (55 per cent) and stamp-duty, mining royalty and Panchayat Fund (22 per cent). Around 18,000 roads of 3,000 kilometers length have been completed.
- (iii) The State Government has recently initiated a Scheme for the construction of gravel roads in those villages which are not covered under PMGSY and CMGSY. In this sub-scheme, gravel roads with top-width of four meters are constructed. The ratio of wage and material (60:40) is maintained by the convergence of the funds of other schemes like, BRGF, Performance Grant, Infrastructure Development etc.

Apart from the initiatives outlined above, there are several other sub Schemes that Madhya Pradesh has instituted in convergence with MGNREGA. Recently, the State has prepared a 'Vision Document – 2018'. As part of their future strategy, several of the activities in this document are planned to be implemented in convergence with MGNREGA.

Sources:

Pastor, Ravindra, Secretary, Panchayat & Rural Development and Commissioner, MGNREGS at Government of Madhya Pradesh Presentation made at the National workshop on Convergence on September 17, 2013, Organized by Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, New Delhi

*Tashina Esteves, K V Rao, Bhaskar Sinha, S S Roy, Bhaskar Rao, Shashidharkumar Jha, Ajay Bhan Singh, Patil Vishal, Sharma Nitasha, Shashanka Rao, Murthy I K, Rajeev Sharma, Ilona Porsche, Basu K, N H Ravindranath: Agricultural and Livelihood Vulnerability Reduction through the MGNREGA, Economic and Political Weekly, vol xlviii no 52 December 28, 2013







TRIPURA



Tripura



Convergence for sustainable livelihoods in Unakoti

Summary

Unakoti district in Tripura has taken up convergence of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with Departments like Animal Husbandry, Tribal Welfare, and other State Schemes. The main objective of these Schemes is to ensure sustainable livelihoods for tribal families. The district administration has also been successful in dovetailing funds from different sources to create income earning opportunities for beneficiary families. This narrative includes two successful pilot projects, one related to cattle rearing and the other to pisciculture. Both these pilot projects demonstrate the success of the district administration in providing sustainable livelihoods to targeted families. Both these models are now being scaled up.



Under the cattle rearing pilot project, tribal families were provided subsidies to purchase milch cows with building of cattle shelters and fodder development taken up under MGNREGA. The project has shown visible results; a beneficiary family is now earning close to Rs. one lakh per annum, on an average, by selling milk. Last year 66 families benefited from this initiative, the current year's reach had been expanded to include 200 beneficiaries and 4000 beneficiaries are to be targeted in the subsequent year. The district is also implementing pisciculture related convergence projects. Around 150 families have benefited from this initiative with each family earning around Rs. three lakh per annum.

In Unakoti, animal farming is a traditional activity that provides livelihood as well as sustenance in the form of meat and milk supply. Nearly, all families living in rural areas, including the landless, own poultry or livestock which includes ducks, goats, cows, buffaloes etc. Thus, the district administration believed that animal farming could play a significant role in increasing income generation and reducing poverty, especially that of the landless and those who had no formal skills to participate in income earning activities. Augmenting the earning capacity of landless and those with no income generating skills would also have the benefit of reducing their vulnerability to a life of marginal sustenance. Besides, field experiences and reports from the district also suggested that income from the sale of animal products could be used to finance children's schooling, begin the process of asset accumulation and make investment in other village enterprises like production of crops, purchase of additional livestock etc. This would not only augment their income but also ensure a better standard of living to their families.





A pilot convergence project under MGNREGA was initiated with the line departments of Animal Resources Development Department (ARDD), Tribal Welfare, Industries and other State departments. The objective of this initiative was to ensure sustainable livelihood to the selected tribal households. This particular project focused on providing milch cows to targeted beneficiaries. The average cost of a milch cow was estimated to be around Rs. one lakh with the beneficiary contribution being 50 per cent and the Government subsidy for the remaining 50 per cent. It was also felt that many tribal families may not have ready cash to contribute their share of 50 per cent to avail of the initiative. To address this issue, beneficiaries were linked with banks through the District Industries Centre (DIC), in consultation with the ARDD. This helped the beneficiaries get loans

for buying the cows. The government's share in form of subsidy for purchase of the milch cows was provided through funds available under the Prime Minister's Employment Guarantee programme (PMEGP) and Swavalamban funds under Department of Industries. The Panchayat Development Fund and 13th Finance funds were also used for increasing the outlay for the purchase of the milch cows.

To provide sustainability to the initiative and to ensure success, the targeted households were trained in cow rearing through the Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI), in consultation with the District Rural Development Authority (DRDA) and ARDD. Funds for the training were dovetailed from ARDD. The beneficiaries were also encouraged to develop fodder on their land with funds from MGNREGA and construction of shelters for cows was taken up under MGNREGA. As the average cost of building good quality shelters was high, funds from MGNREGA were combined with funds from Tribal Welfare Department to stay within permissible norms. The selection of the beneficiary families was done by the Panchayati Raj bodies and each beneficiary was given milch cow at a public function in the Panchayat.

Milch cows were provided to 66 beneficiaries in 2012. According to field reports, the average income of these families has increased to Rs. 500 per day or Rs. 1.8 lakh per annum. This year, the district administration plans to expand the reach of this initiative to include 200 beneficiaries and to 4000 next year. To ensure success of this initiative and its viability, ARDD is trying to develop a Model cattle farm which will provide inputs to the beneficiaries for better management practices. The ARDD is also trying to set up a dairy processing unit to help expand the market of milk produced as a result of this initiative in this area.

The district administration had also taken the initiative of implementing pisciculture related convergence projects. Development of the Pukur pond in Kaulikura Gram Panchayat in Gournagar block is one such example. In this case, the Gram Sabha approved digging of a pond under MGNREGA. The total project cost was Rs. four lakh, out of which Rs. 3.5 lakh were spent under MGNREGA, the remaining amount was provided by the Horticulture and Fisheries Departments. The Horticulture Department also provided banana saplings to be planted along the banks of the pond; this would prevent erosion as well as provide revenue to the villagers. The Fisheries Department supplied around 400 fingerlings after excavation of the pond was done. Around 150 families have benefited from this project. The income from pisciculture is close to Rs.3,50,000 per annum. At the level of the district, pisciculture has been undertaken in an area of around 2000 hectares at a total expenditure of Rs. two Crore; wherein Rs. one Crore has been provided from MGNREGA and the remaining amount has been availed under different programmes like Rashtriya Krishi Vigyan Abhiyan (RKVY), State Plan, DRDA etc. Thus, the district administration has been successful in dovetailing funds from different sources to create income earning opportunities for beneficiary families. The fish production from these sources has been close to 4000 metric ton (MT) and around 13,591 households have benefited from this intervention.

Source:

Chandra, Abhishek; District Magistrate, Unakoti, Tripura.







GUJARAT



Gujarat



Converging MGNREGA for Eco-Tourism in Narmada District

Summary

Narmada district, once known for its backwardness has been transformed into an eco-tourism hub by implementing an Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) convergence project supported by Departments of Forest, Tourism and Land Resources. The district, which once experienced degradation of forest cover and suffered from acute water scarcity, loss of livelihoods and distress migration, could take an appropriate step to put the district in the map of tourism. Under the project, four sites viz. Sagai Samot, Vishalkhadi, Zarvani and Vajiriya were identified for conversion into the hubs for eco-tourism with the help of technical expertise of line departments. The intervention also included contribution from local citizens in terms of labour and thereby confirming participatory action and ownership of the local community. In the process of making the district a spot for eco-tourism, the convergence activities have successfully limited



rapid degradation of forest areas. In total 21 villages and 230 households have benefitted. The intervention has successfully proved that eco-tourism is not only a catch phrase for nature loving travel and recreation, but also it plays an important role in providing livelihood opportunity with a sense of ownership by protecting the environment.

The challenges

Narmada, a Scheduled Tribe (ST) dominated backward district of Gujarat, spreads across a geographical area of 2,742 Square Km. As per 2011 census it is the third least populous district of Gujarat after Dang and Porbandar. The lack of alternate livelihood opportunity compelled the inhabitants to remain dependent on the forest resources. Excessive dependence on forest led to the rapid degradation of the forest cover. Further, high grazing pressure on the forestland made the forests vulnerable. The district was suffering from water insecurity due to over-exploitation of water resources and the absence of adequate water harvesting infrastructure. This impacted the livelihoods of the people and caused distress migration to cities and other districts. Though the district was suitable for tourism, lack of planning, community participation and effective management of tourism related activities have limited the progress of this sector. The twin challenges before the district administration were to protect the forest cover and provide sustainable livelihood to the people.





Need for the Intervention

Characterizing the situation in the district as 'alarming', the District Administration desired to explore various possible options to converge resources of MGNREGA and other development schemes for conserving the forest and ensuring livelihoods. In the given situation, promotion of eco-tourism was identified as one of the appropriate solutions to address the prevailing problems. Eco-tourism not only accommodates and entertains visitors which is minimally intrusive or destructive to the environment but also sustains and supports the native cultures in the locations it is operating in. In the process, it helps in conserving the natural resources available locally. In light of this, a convergence intervention of MGNREGA in collaboration with the Forest Department was undertaken for the promotion of eco-tourism. The objectives were to:

- a. Conserve forest resources
- b. Ensure livelihood opportunities
- c. Promote eco-tourism

The Intervention

To start with, a blueprint for convergence between institutions was prepared and brain storming discussions were held with different line departments viz. Forest, Tourism and Land Resources (Integrated Watershed Management Programme). Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) were also invited to support this innovative initiative. During the discussion, different aspects of the project i.e., planning, prioritisation, sanctioning and implementation of activities were deliberated at length. Available resources were mapped and accordingly, an integrated convergence project for eco-tourism was prepared.

Resources of different schemes which were converged under this integrated project were MGNREGA, 12th Finance Commission and State schemes (Sujlam Suflam and Gujarat forestry development project (GFDP)). The project also had a component under which local people made contribution by providing 20,000 person-days. The total cost of the project was Rs 1,02,35,540.

The contribution of MGNREGA in the project was 26.44 per cent. In total, 68,899 person-days were generated. Out of which 19,620 person-days were generated utilising MGNREGA funds. MGNREGA resources were used for land development through plantation, landscaping and beautification. Community contribution constituted 0.99 per cent of the total project cost. Convergence with Land Resources was able to resolve the problem of water scarcity.

Under the project, four sites viz. Sagai Samot, Vishalkhadi, Zarvani and Vajiriya were identified for turning these into the hubs for eco-tourism. Residents of respective GPs worked towards ensuring their involvement in ownership of the assets so created.

Output

The convergence initiative has been successful in making the district a focal point for eco-tourism. Twin huts, rest huts, boating facility, shops etc. were created to make this venture attractive. In the process it has successfully restricted gradual degradation of forest areas, created social fencing for safe upkeep of forest resources. In total 21 villages and 230 households have benefitted with this venture at the four eco-tourism sites.

Due to forward and backward linkage effects of eco-tourism, the local ST households are now able to earn Rs 20,000/- per year. The number of visitors has increased and it stands at 3,00,000 visitors per year. The influx of tourists has given a new lease of life to the families. It has not only provided them permanent shelter but also given them opportunities of self-employment. It is one of the unique convergence projects in which local people have also made contribution in form of Shramdan which is valued at 0.99 per cent of the total project cost. This has inculcated ownership of public assets among the local community. To carry it forward and sustain it in a more lucrative way, a perspective target for ten years has been planned with a view to increasing the annual income of local ST household to Rs 1,00,000/- per year. The expected increase in the number of visitors are estimated at 6,00,000 per year.

Source:

Department of Rural Development, Government of Gujarat: Presentation made at the National workshop on Convergence on September 17, 2013, organized by Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, New Delhi





Converging MGNREGA for Socio-Economic Development in Tapi District

Summary

An integrated cluster level Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) project undertaken in convergence with line departments and technical institutions in Tapi district of Gujarat has transformed the life of beneficiaries. With the active support of Irrigation Department, Agriculture Department, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) and other community based government development agencies, a host of activities were undertaken starting from the identification of land to the selection of beneficiaries and from the construction of community well to the marketing of agri-produce. Micro-irrigation through community wells facilitated the plantation of cash crops, vegetables etc. on 724 hectares of land identified and developed for the purpose. So far, a total return of Rs. 598.56 lakh has been ensured by producing 2,881 tons of different cash crops, vegetables etc. viz. cotton, tuer, bottlegourd, bittergourd, tomato and okara. This initiative has been successful in bringing in the socio-economic development of the inhabitants of this district.

The Challenge

Tapi district, which was carved out from the erstwhile Surat District of Gujarat in 2007, comprises five Talukas - Vyara, Songadh, Valod, Uchhal and Nizar. The total area of the district is 2,951.10 Square Km. The district has predominantly rural population. Out of a total population of 7,19,634, rural population constitutes 90 per cent. As a newly created district it faces a host of problems while trying to secure livelihoods of the rural poor. Land, though abundantly available, was not productive due to the want of adequate irrigation facility. The challenge before the district administration was to judiciously exploit the available physical and financial resources to bring in all-round socio-economic development.

Need for the Intervention

District administration undertook an initiative by integrating the resources available under different schemes and prepared an integrated cluster level convergence project. The integrated project ensured convergence of MGNREGA with Irrigation Department, Agriculture Department, SGSY/NRLM, Tribal Areas Sub-plan (TASP), Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA), etc.

The Intervention

The project had several components starting from land levelling to marketing of the final produce. To start with, the land for community well was identified and beneficiaries selected after a detailed discussion in the Gram Sabha. The processes adopted for planning and execution of the



integrated project ensured active participation of the community and government stakeholders. As the project involved groups of beneficiaries, user groups were formed and agreements were made for sharing water and quantum of the proposed users' charges.

MGNREGA fund was utilised for land leveling, boulder bandh, check-wall and community well. Once the base work was completed, lift irrigation along with drip and sprinkler were provided from pooled resources from TASP, schemes of Irrigation Department and State schemes like Ayojan grant. Check dams were constructed in convergence with TASP and Irrigation department. Community wells were provided with motor pumps and pipelines in



convergence with TASP and Agriculture Department. Electrification of community well was ensured in convergence with TASP and Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam Limited (GUVNL).

As per the integrated project, the approximate cost of community well was Rs. 3.1 lakh. On an average, 10 beneficiary households got benefits from each such well. One community well had an irrigation potential of upto 4 hectares i.e., 0.4 hectare per beneficiary family. The cost of electrification per well was Rs 1,50,000 and the estimated cost for electric motor with all accessories was Rs 18,000 and pipelines for distribution of water was Rs 70,000.

TASP, Agriculture Department and RKVY funds were converged for agricultural diversification and Wadi developments with improved cereals, pulses, oilseed, horticulture, vegetables and floriculture. Beneficiaries were also provided agriculture inputs like seeds and fertilizer. Institutional credit was facilitated by providing loan to beneficiaries by Gujarat Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC) for micro irrigation. The training and capacity building were done by utilising funds from RKVY, ATMA, SGSY and TASP. In order to ensure the judicious use of water and optimise outputs, the beneficiaries were sensitised and imparted training.

With the creation of community well and irrigation facility, high value crops viz cotton, tuer, bottlegourd, bittergourd, tomato and okara were undertaken. Other agri-inputs like seeds and chemical fertiliser, electricity etc. were assured. NGOs were engaged to ensure that the produce fetch remunerative price. NGOs act like a marketing medium by collecting the farm produce and selling it outside the local market to ensure considerable profit to the beneficiaries.

Output & Outcome

The project has been successful in raising the living standard of people by enabling them to change their cropping style and pattern. The beneficiaries have been successful in generating an income of Rs 598.56 lakh through the project with the production of 2,881 tons of cash crop and vegetables. Micro irrigation through community wells facilitated plantation of cash crops, vegetables etc. on 724 hectares of land identified and developed for the purpose. So far, a total return of Rs. 598.56 lakh has been generated by producing 2,881 tons of different cash crops, vegetables etc. viz. cotton, tuer, bottlegourd, bittergourd, tomato and okara. This initiative has been successful in ensuring the socio-economic development of the inhabitants of this district.

Source:

Department of Rural Development, Government of Gujarat: Presentation made at the National workshop on Convergence on September 17, 2013, organized by Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, New Delhi







ANDHRA PRADESH



Andhra Pradesh



Mainstreaming the Marginalized

Summary

The State of Andhra Pradesh, like Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, has taken several steps to institutionalize convergence in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). The State has also systematically planned strategies for convergence with different departments and issued detailed executive instructions to implement these at field level. A saturation approach has been adopted, in other words the lands of marginalized communities including Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are taken up on priority. An integrated development approach is followed wherein the lands are not only cleared and levelled but also made commercially viable through convergence with Horticulture Department, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), schemes of the Tribal Welfare Department. Horticulture plantations on the individual lands of vulnerable sections have

been initiated with an objective of enhancing rural livelihood security and generating sustainable source of income. 100 per cent subsidy for 3 years is given to the beneficiaries for crops including Mango, Sweet orange, Sapota, Acid lime, Guava, Tamarind and Custard apple. The cost of pitting, planting etc. is paid from MGNREGA funds. For drip/micro- irrigation, 30 per cent of the cost of installation is paid from MGNREGA and 70 per cent is provided in convergence with other Schemes.

Ambedkar colony in Yerravaripalem Mandal of Chittoor and Thippayiguda a small village in Rangareddy district are examples of convergence taken up with Horticulture, NABARD and Integrated Water Management Programme (IWMP). Ambedkar colony and Thippayiguda village both had over several hectares of fallow land with thick jungles. The households in these areas did not have enough money for clearing the land. However, the development of these lands was a frequent demand made by these households to the administration. MGNREGA proved to be a crucial and long awaited intervention. The fallow land was cleared and levelled under MGNREGA. To ensure sustainable livelihoods, dry land horticulture and mango/teak saplings were planted in the developed area. Assured Irrigation sources were also provided in convergence under “Indira Jala Prabha” Programme with NABARD - RIDF-XVII funds.





Ambedkar Colony in Chittoor District

Most of households in Kuraparthivaripalle Gram Panchayat(GP) of Yerravaripalem Mandal are dependent on agriculture and related works. Ambedkar Colony is one among the habitations in this GP. In this colony, 34 poorest of the poor families were assigned 45 hectares by the Revenue Department. This area is locally known as “Erragutta Block”. Development of the assigned land for creation of an income generating asset for the poor beneficiaries was the main challenge.

The land assigned to the villagers was full of shrubs and boulders and thus could not be cultivated by the beneficiaries. This land had been left fallow for years. The MGNREGA proved to be a crucial and long awaited intervention for the development of these lands.

Based on the demand of the villagers, project proposals for taking up various activities under fallow land development i.e., jungle / bush clearance, stone bunding, silt application, trench cutting etc., were designed. Accordingly, works were executed by incurring an expenditure of Rs. one lakh for jungle clearance, Rs.20,000 for stone and pebble bunding, Rs. 2.4 lakh for silt application, Rs.1.2 lakh for boundary cum trench cutting works and Rs. 34,000 for rock filling dam works.

After completion of the land development works, mango saplings were planted in the area. The saplings were procured from the Horticulture Department; around 33 mango saplings were raised per hectare. The developed lands were provided irrigation facilities i.e. bore wells, under

the Indira Jala Prabha, a Scheme developed for convergence of MGNREGA - NABARD - RIDF-XVII funds. The beneficiaries formed Bore well User Groups for sharing the water. Submersible pump sets were also purchased and installed under NABARD – RIDF-XVII. Drip irrigation facilities amounting to Rs. 11 lakh were also provided by the Andhra Pradesh Micro Irrigation Project.

In addition to this, IWMP projects were also sanctioned in the block to ensure irrigation for farms. The IWMP field functionaries conducted capacity building activities and aided in the formation of Watershed User Groups of beneficiaries. The project staff identified locations for six Farm Ponds, four Percolation Tanks and 15 Rock Fill Dams. The Watershed User Groups executed all these works themselves.

The Erragutta Block has become a model block for entire District. By dovetailing funds from MGNREGA, Indira Jala Prabha, Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) and A.P. Micro Irrigation Project, the entire extent of barren land of 45 hectares has turned into a well-developed mango orchard. Each of the beneficiary derived benefit of Rs. 8,000 to 10,000 by the first year's yield. Inter crops like ground nut, millets, watermelons, tomatoes, etc., have also been taken up. These provide an additional income of around Rs. 10,000 to 1,30,000 to each beneficiary. The project is proof that MGNREGA has been a boon to the SC, ST and Small and Marginal (SMF) families in the area. It has transformed lives of the poorest of the poor by changing their status from agricultural labour to proud owners of orchards.





Thippayiguda in Rangareddy District

Thippayiguda is a small village in Rangareddy district where 12 of poorest families were assigned 0.4 hectare of land each, in 1988. This land remained fallow since the families did not have adequate resources. The land was comprehensively developed under MGNREGA.

For the development of fallow land, various works like removal of thorny bushes, weeding out, removal of boulders, border trenches, land leveling, ponds etc. were taken up. Following this, rain-fed crops were taken up in these lands. In the year 2009, all the 12 beneficiaries collectively took up a motor on lease at the rate Rs.500 per month for taking up irrigation.

The beneficiaries were sanctioned mango saplings in the year 2010 in convergence with the NHM and MIP. The orchard was provided with drip irrigation facility for ensuring water availability for the mango saplings planted. The beneficiaries made every effort and succeeded in ensuring a close to 100 per cent survival of the plants in their fields.

Without disturbing the regular agricultural crops and to provide supplementary income to the farmers, plantations on field bunds were initiated in the year 2010-11. Teak and Red Sanders species were primarily promoted. The seedlings are raised in convergence with the Forest Department, in the Forest Nurseries and also in other nurseries. Maintenance costs are paid by paying Rs. 50 per year for every plant that survives for 2 years.

For generating an assured income for the landless vulnerable sections, plantations in the vacant government lands by way of Usufruct Rights on the trees has also been initiated in the year 2013-14 under Indiramma Pachha Toranam in convergence with the Revenue Department and Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP), which identifies the beneficiaries of the programme. The identified beneficiaries are granted usufruct rights (chettupatta) and 100 to 200 number of grafted horticulture plants are planted. Mango, Coconut, Sapota, Guava, Seethaphal, Tamarind, Jamun, Jackfruit, and Cashew are promoted. The cost of plants, pitting, planting, fertilizers, fencing, watering charges and monthly maintenance charges are paid to the beneficiary through MGNREGA and other Schemes.

The beneficiaries of the fallow lands developed in Thippayiguda have started cultivating cucumber, ridge gourd, beans, tomato, chillies, horse gram and kidney beans as mixed crops in the lands developed. Each of these 12 families is earning more than Rs.10,000 per annum from the mixed crops. Apart from the income earned from mixed crop, the mango orchard have started generating returns at the rate of around Rs 7400 per hectare.

Overall, in Andhra Pradesh, plantations have been taken up in 2.8 lakh hectares in last seven years of implementation benefitting around 3.6 lakh SC / ST/ Small and Marginal farmers. The programme has positively impacted the income from the mango harvest esp. in districts like Chittoor and Anantapur where horticulture has been promoted on a large scale. 14.4 Crore seedlings have been planted on the 4.5 lakh hectares field bunds belonging to 7.83 lakh beneficiaries. As plantations promoted are Teak and Red Sanders, income will be generated after 20 years. Usufruct tree rights have been issued for 31482 beneficiaries who are landless. Linear plantations have been taken

up in 7491 Kilometers and block plantations have been taken up in 3545 hectares by planting 17.6 lakh plants.

The impact of the horticulture related programmes has generated a sense of pride and happiness in the lives of millions of beneficiaries who barely had anything to survive. The MGNREGA has been successful in ensuring that the plantations provided are a sustainable income generating source as well as a green asset that helps in arresting soil degradation and in protecting the environment.

Source:

Vakati, Karuna; Director (MGNREGA), Department of Rural Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh





CHHATTISGARH

Chhattisgarh



Individual Household Toilet through Convergence in Korba District

Summary

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act's (MGNREGA) convergence with the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA) provided an opportunity not only to take up sanitation at scale in Korba district but also to ensure that the toilets built are of good quality. Korba district administration has also made significant attempts to simplify the administrative processes to fasten the pace of toilet construction. With all these efforts, 5010 toilets have been sanctioned, and 855 toilets completed so far.



Sanitation in Korba faces a particular challenge since 60 per cent of the land is covered with forests and open defecation is a common practice. In addition to this, there are cultural issues and lack of information among the tribal population on the hazards of defecating in the open. Further, the Total Sanitation Campaigns (TSC) subsidy had proved to be inadequate as only the construction of toilets up to the plinth level was subsidized and the beneficiary had to complete the superstructure of the toilet on his/her own.

Given this, bringing about an attitudinal change in the habits of households was the first step and possibly, the most important step since it would also guarantee use of the constructed toilets. The second part of the new strategy (that MGNREGA and NBA convergence provided for) was ensuring the construction of complete toilets alongwith the superstructure.

To begin with, it was absolutely vital to streamline the role and responsibility of the two departments involved in the convergence and also to have a collective ownership of the project between them. The district administration organized a joint consultation between the Rural Development Department representing MGNREGA and Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department representing NBA.

The MGNREGA processes for approval of works are elaborate and may not have worked well for taking up small individual works consisting only of a few person-days. Thus the administrative and approval processes were simplified in the following way:





1. The Gram Sabha in consultation with Swachchata Doot or the village level NBA representative would collectively approve a list after identifying the beneficiaries who have already been provided a toilet under NBA. This was important to avoid duplication.
2. Thereafter, such village-wise list of beneficiaries is sent to District Water and Sanitation Committee (DWSC) under PHE department towards releasing money Rs. 4600.00 for material component to the concerned Gram Panchayat (GP).
3. Subsequently, a technical sanction and administrative sanction is given from district level based on a model estimate prepared.
4. Work Order is issued to the concerned GP from Janpad Panchayat level
5. The beneficiary is informed of the sanction through the Gram Panchayat and begins work on digging the pits for septic tank as well as soak pit.
6. Village level water and sanitation committee (VWSC) and NBA representatives/ Swachchata Doot monitor the work. This is important as the MGNREGA staff may not be technically equipped to handle these works
7. A single unit of IHHL gets completed within 15-20 days of starting the work. The labourers get their payment through Bank or Post Office on the basis of e-muster roll
8. The individual contribution of Rs. 900 is taken from the beneficiary either in the form of cash or in the form of manual labour, whichever works better for the beneficiary

Payment in time for the work done was an aspect which the administration paid great attention to. Since the work under MGNREGA is always time-bound i.e. to start any work, the demand note of labour is entered in MIS and then an e-muster roll for a fixed period of 6 days is generated. Therefore, it is necessary to sensitize the NBA team working in the GP to procure required construction material simultaneously so that the work does not get stopped and a timely completion and wage payment of IHHL can be ensured.

Due to these efforts, Korba district has thus far been able to construct 855 toilets. This has been a boon especially for the women and there are several accounts of Tribal women beneficiaries who found it a safety problem to defecate in the open and are now relieved to possess a toilet in the vicinity of their own homes.

To sum up, the MGNREGA and NBA convergence not only provided a new vigour for the construction of toilets at scale but it also provided adequate funds for creation of quality and sustainable toilets

Source:

Kumar, Rajat; District Magistrate, Korba, Chhattisgarh





Spreading Optimism by Developing Livelihoods in Dantewada District

Summary

The focus of converging Schemes with the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was to provide better livelihood opportunities to the tribal communities of Dantewada. An integrated approach from land development, provision of irrigation facilities to horticulture was adopted. Over 1545 hectares have been developed and many farmers are taking up double crops and cultivating vegetables. In an independent study carried out by an organization Samarthan, it was found that there has been an increment of 50 per cent in the yield of the farmers who are the beneficiaries of land development carried out through MGNREGA. The farmers who cultivated rice through System of Rice Intensification (SRI) have seen their production increased by around 50-60 per cent. It is also estimated that 161 families who are the beneficiaries of community mango farming project and 60 beneficiaries of agro-forestry based farms will earn 80,000 to 1,00,000 in coming 3-4 years. Due to the demonstrative impact of this project, even the hesitant and uninterested tribal households have begun to come forward and demand these works on their land.

Dantewada is one of the most under-developed districts in India. With an increasing population and depleting natural resources, the traditional livelihoods (mainly dependent on rain fed agriculture and minor forest produce) of tribal communities is under threat. Further only 2 per cent of the land is under irrigation and single crop, low productivity practices are dominant in the area. The district administration thus decided to emphasize on strengthening and managing the natural resources. The objective was to achieve a socially and environmentally sustainable development model to bring a long lasting impact.

Convergence has been taken up with Integrated Water Management Programme (IWMP), National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF) and Integrated Area Plan (IAP). Because of lack of general awareness and socio-cultural factors, to begin with, it was difficult to get households to participate. The focus of the efforts was thus on successful models on individual farms that would serve as demonstration farms.

The key focus areas for intervention were management of natural resources, development of irrigation, promotion of agriculture based and other livelihoods like fisheries.

Management of Natural Resources: The undulating terrain in the district was impacting productivity of crops. Land development was therefore taken up in mission mode with a special focus on the beneficiaries of Forest Rights Act (FRA). As a result 5371 hectares of land were developed for 6275 beneficiaries of FRA.





Development of irrigation: It was identified that there are various irrigation tanks, canals and lift irrigation systems present in Dantewada, which have become dysfunctional due to lack of maintenance. Initially two major irrigation tanks in the villages of Karli and Kumharras were identified and the works of de-siltation, repairing of the tank and lining of irrigation canals were carried out through MGNREGA. With a minimum investment, these works have brought an area of around 178 hectares under irrigation. Looking at these results similar works are being carried out on five more irrigation tanks which will bring 666 hectares of land

under irrigation. Additionally 66 water tanks and 13 stop dams have been constructed through MGNREGA which have brought total of 300 Ha of land under irrigation.

Development of Agriculture Based Livelihood: Subsequent to the development of land and irrigation facilities, projects such as, organic System of Rice Intensification (SRI) cultivation, community mango farming, agro-forestry based farms, mocho badi and dairy development are being implemented through the convergence of MGNREGA with BRGF, IAP, NRLM etc.

- **Organic SRI Cultivation:** The technique of SRI was taught to 270 beneficiaries of land levelling and was implemented on 70 hectares of land on trial basis. The farmers were encouraged to use organic methods and traditional seeds and were provided with required trainings through Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA), Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and experts invited from outside the district.
- **Community Mango Farming:** In order to bring the vast tracts of barren land under cultivation, community mango farming project was started in which mango plantation is done on the combined land of 5-10 farmers. Apart from plantation, various other facilities are provided to the farmers such as fencing, well, pump, bore-well etc. through the convergence of various schemes. 23 such projects have been implemented bringing 221 hectares of land under cultivation and benefitting 161 families.

- **Agro-Forestry Based Farms:** Under this project around 30-40 varieties of plants, vegetables, spices and trees are planted per hectare of land in a mixed plantation pattern which will give an income of around one lakh per farmer after 2-3 years of implementation. The project is being implemented on trial basis on 50 hectares of land benefiting 60 farmers through the convergence of MGNREGA and schemes of Agriculture and Horticulture department.
- **Mocho Badi:** This project, which means “My farm” in English, provides irrigation and fencing to the farmer on the land of 0.8-1.2 hectares through the CSR funds of National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) and Bank finance to encourage vegetable cultivation. The farmers are encouraged to practice organic farming and are provided with NADEP, Vermi Compost Pits and Urine tank in these farms through NMDC. 1000 such beneficiaries have been identified across the district and the project is under implementation on their farms.
- **Dairy Development:** The guidelines of MGNREGA-2 permit various works related to livelihood. Based on this, an innovative project of dairy development was developed by appending schemes of Animal Husbandry and Agriculture department and bank finance. A comprehensive package of facilities has been developed considering all the needs of a small dairy under this project. 31 such dairies are under implementation benefitting 186 families.

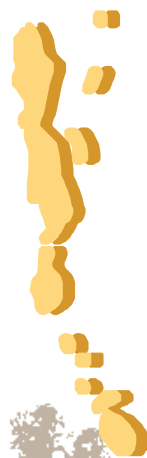


Of course the long term benefits of many of the initiatives mentioned above will start appearing after a few years. In the short term due to the demonstrated impact of these projects, several beneficiaries are coming forward to demand these works on their lands. Besides, more than any visible impact, these efforts have brought a wave of hope and optimism in the region of Dantewada affected by the violence of Left Wing Extremism for long.

Source:

Devasenapathi, K C; District Magistrate, Dantewada, Chhattisgarh and Akash Badave, Prime Minister's Rural Development Fellow (PMRDF)





ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS





Andaman & Nicobar Islands



Development through MGNREGA till the farthest tip of India

Summary

The district administration of North and Middle Andaman has developed 60 hectares of settlers' land for horticulture and 90 hectares of grazing land for fodder and mixed plantation and Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through convergence of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with other Schemes. The GPs earn income by selling the produce from these lands.

In this way, MGNREGA has proved to be a boon for the inhabitants of the district, particularly in remote areas where were severely constrained for financial resources. MGNREGA has provided the inhabitants of these areas with liquid cash and thus with the opportunity to further develop their households.



The North and Middle Andaman district consists of 37 Gram Panchayats and around 40,000 households. As part of land distribution policy, each settler in the district was given 2 hectares of paddy and 2 hectares of hilly land by the Government of India. The district also has around 2000 hectares of unused grazing land. However due to lack of financial resources the large tracts of land was not being used. To make matters worse, people started selling these lands to land sharks from mainland at any given price.

Against this background, the administration decided to prioritize land development of private households including development of grazing/pasture lands and horticulture related opportunities under MGNREGA. The objective of the initiative was to utilize the grazing land and convert it into revenue generating assets for Gram Panchayats (GPs) and also be able to generate MFP. The development of these lands of settlers would also de-incentivize any distress sale of land.

The district administration planned an initiative to leverage existing resources such as, the undeveloped grazing land. Rough calculations revealed that every GP become financially independent by earning around 1 Crore from grazing land and getting the mandated matching grant from the government.

The first task was to motivate farmers to understand and own the idea. This proved to be a significant challenge for the administration as people were apprehensive to let their land be used for any purpose. Through a steady information campaign, households were made aware of the proposed project and its benefits.



Water scarcity was the next issue that needed to be addressed for proper implementation of the project. For this, water conservation projects such as farm ponds were taken up in MGNREGA. Agriculture Department lent complete technical support for preparing design and estimated for cutting terraces and digging trenches, based on the slope of land. The Agriculture Department also made a demonstration project on its own land in Diglipur. Members from Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and public were taken to the farm for spreading awareness. Vermi-compost/manure that had been produced under different schemes of agriculture department, was procured from Small and Marginal Farmers (SMF) and used in these lands. As a result of this, around 60 hectares of unused land was converted into productive land. Inspired by



the success of this project, other farmers also came forward to participate and demanded the development of their fallow lands.

A similar strategy was followed for the development of pasture land in the district. Under the initiative mixed/multi-plants for grazing, MFPs, plantations such as cane, bamboo, thatching leaves, jungle posts etc., horticulture plants such as coconut, banana, pineapple, orange, cashew etc., fodder grass for livestock, was developed; vermi-compost was used as a fertilizer. Livestock shelters were also built under MGNREGA. The initiative has helped in reducing the encroachment in remote areas that was earlier taking place (because of the vacant grazing land). Till date, an estimated 90 hectares of grazing land development has already been taken up. Another advantage of the

whole project was the protection of grazing land from animals and even encroachment. Bunding and plantation of shrubs (called Jinda Bulley in local language) was taken up under MGNREGA. This kind of fencing has also helped GPs to have better accounting of Panchayat's assets.

The projects were planned in an integrated way such that the fodder grass developed in these lands would have a demand base in the open market. It is important to give a brief background of this demand. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands face a milk shortage. Infact most of the milk reaches Port Blair from the mainland in powdered form. The administration of North & Middle Andaman district saw this as an opportunity to provide a local supply of milk. In 2011, a new project was taken up wherein the milk would be procured by district administration and sent to Port Blair for processing and packaging. The packaged milk would be brought back to the district for sale. With the starting of this project, more and more rural households started taking an interest in rearing livestock which in turn increased the demand for fodder. Presently, the district's fodder project is doing well and there are examples like that of RK Gram GP that have begun selling the fodder at the rate of Rs. 12 per bundle.

Development of grazing land that could not be used for pastures was also taken up. The district faces a shortage of MFPs such as bulleys, posts, bamboos, 'sillai patti' (for thatched leaf roof). It was decided to use this land to generate MFPs.

Notably, it has not been a smooth ride throughout. Initially there were failures where the survival rate of plants was as low as 35 -45 per cent. However, the administration learnt and involved more experienced farmers

and experts to provide advice. Gradually, the success rates went up to 70-75 per cent. Given the difficulty of the terrain and hostile environment, this success rate is an achievement. The success of the project has also contributed to increasing the political participation of Sarpanches (GP head) and other PRIs members.

In this way, MGNREGA has proved to be a boon for the district. There are encroachment pockets in dense forests and several extremely remote revenue villages where people can only afford to buy salt and nothing else for their survival. But MGNREGA has provided the inhabitants of these areas with liquid cash and thus with the opportunity to further develop their households.

Now the latest initiative of district administration is to make GPs Open-Defecation Free. All thanks to MGNREGA!!

Sources:

Kumar, Sanjay; District Commissioner, North and Middle Andaman







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