



# NREGA

BEYOND WAGES TO SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS





## Salient Features of the NREGA

- Adult members of a rural household may apply for employment if they are willing to do unskilled manual work.
- Such a household will have to apply for registration to the local Gram Panchayat, in writing, or orally.
- The Gram Panchayat after due verification will issue a Job Card to the household as a whole. The Job Card will bear the photograph of all adult members of the household willing to work under NREGA. The Job Card with photograph is free of cost
- A Job Card holding household may submit a written application for employment to the Gram Panchayat, stating the time and duration for which work is sought. The minimum days of employment have to be fourteen.
- The Gram Panchayat will issue a dated receipt of the written application for employment, against which the guarantee of providing employment within 15 days operates
- Employment will be given within 15 days of application for work by an employment seeker.
- If employment is not provided within 15 days, daily unemployment allowance, in cash has to be paid. Liability of payment of unemployment allowance is of the States.
- At least one-third of persons to whom work is allotted work have to be women.
- Wages are to be paid according to minimum wages as prescribed under the Minimum Wages Act 1948 for agricultural labourers in the State, unless the Centre notifies a wage rate which will not be less than Rs 60 per day
- Disbursement of wages has to be done on a weekly basis and not beyond a fortnight.
- Panchayati Raj Institutions [PRIs] have a principal role in planning and implementation.
- Each district has to prepare a shelf of projects. The selected works to provide employment are to be selected from the list of permissible works The different categories of permissible works are:
  - Water Conservation
  - Drought Proofing (including plantation and afforestation)
  - Flood Protection
  - Land Development
  - Minor Irrigation, horticulture and land development on the land of SC/ST/ - BPL IAY and land reform beneficiaries
  - Rural connectivity
- The shelf of projects has to be prepared on the basis of priority assigned by Gram Sabha. At least 50 per cent of works have to be allotted to Gram Panchayats for execution. A 60:40 wage and material ratio has to be maintained. Contractors and use of labour displacing machinery is prohibited.
- Work should ordinarily be provided within 5 km radius of the village or else extra wages of 10 per cent are payable.
- Work site facilities such as crèche, drinking water, shade for periods of rest, first-aid box have to be provided
- Social Audit has to be done by the Gram Sabha.
- Grievance redressal mechanisms have to be put in place for ensuring a responsive implementation process.
- All accounts and records relating to the Scheme are to be made available to any person desirous of obtaining a copy of such records, on demand and after paying a specified fee.

# **NREGA**

## **BEYOND WAGES TO SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS**

**Report of the Workshop  
organised by  
National Resource Centre for Rural Livelihoods**

**21 November 2008**

New Delhi





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# Introduction

**“ In terms of time, space and units of planning covering economic, human and infrastructural aspects, the NREGA makes a very good anchor for sustainable development.”**

**Amita Sharma**

**T**he National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) came into force in September 2005. The guidelines issued by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) emphasise that it is a rights-based programme, which makes the State legally accountable to provide wage employment to those who demand it. The Act provides a social safety net to the rural poor by providing wage employment in times of dire need. The various provisions in the Act - such as, legally binding the State to provide employment, total ban on the use of contractors, transparency and accountability at all stages through social audit, unemployment allowance if employment not given - are path breaking in the history of rural development in India. The Act also aims to strengthen decentralised planning and implementation by making Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) the implementing agency for the schemes. NREGA also recommends that the works taken up to create employment give priority to development of natural resources and creation of livelihood assets.

Unfortunately on the ground the results have not met the enormous expectations. According to MoRD's own reports, a mere 10 per cent or 0.22 crore out of a total of 2.10 crore employed households received full 100 days promised under the Act; average employment per household was 43 days in 2006-07 and 35 days in 2007-08. Independent reports on NREGA implementation have commented on, among other things, lack of manpower, inadequate plans, and the need to improve maintenance of records, etc.

It is clear that if NREGA has to move beyond wages, things need to be done differently. The same systems of service delivery and programme implementation and the usual wage oriented public works like roads, ponds, etc., would not suffice. Centrality of people and their choices must become a key to NREGA implementation strategies. Peoples' choice on creating durable assets is also linked to community's vision and availability of support systems; for example, horticulture is unlikely to be proposed by people in NREGA

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**There is clearly an urgent need to re-envision NREGA, and provide a comprehensive livelihood framework, which alone would create a durable impact on the poverty in India.**

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in the absence of requisite backward and forward linkages and adequate training, advice and information.

There is clearly an urgent need to re-envision NREGA, and provide a comprehensive livelihood framework, which alone would create a durable impact on the poverty in India. How can local communities play a role in ensuring that sustainable assets are created and Natural Resource Management (NRM) practices are adopted while planning for works under NREGA? What are the ways to enhance the capacity of local communities and PRIs to play this role?

The National Resource Centre for Rural Livelihoods, hosted in Pradan, held a one-day experience-sharing workshop on 21 November 2008 in Delhi to deliberate on the different issues that have been raised regarding NREGA and examined ways forward to use NREGA to promote sustainable livelihoods. The workshop was organised by Pradan, with support from the Aga Khan Foundation through the European Commission co-financed SCALE programme. This workshop was the second of its kind organised by Pradan. The first was on 'Linking Small Producers to Markets through Producer Companies' in December 2007 and offered an opportunity to learn about the experiences of practitioners working with producer companies.

The NREGA workshop sought to reconcile the views of practitioners, academicians and policy makers, the various provisions in the employment guarantee programme, to identify the areas of resonance and find ways forward. It had eminent resource persons, with experience of working in the sector, sharing their understanding of the opportunities that the NREGA makes available; in particular, innovations that have potential for creating sustainable livelihoods for the poor.





The opening session saw presentations by Mr Chinmoy Basu, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development; Mr Ram Lubhaya, Principal Secretary, Rural Development, Government of Rajasthan; Ms Amita Sharma, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development; and Mr Deep Joshi, Development Consultant. In the session on 'Experiences of Practitioners', the panellists were Ms Rashmi Shami, Director NREGA, Government of Madhya Pradesh; Mr P.S. Vijay Shankar, Samaj Pragati Sahyog; Mr A., Ravindra WASSAN; and Ms Madhu Khetan, Pradan. The post-lunch open discussion focused on 'Lessons Drawn'. The panellists were Mr Prabhu Ghatge, Development Consultant; Mr K. S. Gopal, Centre for Environmental Concerns; Mr Deep Joshi and Mr Ram Lubhaya.

There were about 90 participants in the workshop drawn from different fields, many of them practitioner NGOs from the States. The States that were represented were Jharkhand, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Assam, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. There were also participants from academic institutions, donors, multi-lateral and bilateral institutions.

The discussion was focused on the workshop topic, "NREGA: Beyond Wages to Sustainable Livelihoods". This report seeks to synthesise the collective learning and inquiry that took place at the workshop. It collates the views presented at the workshop on the basis of issues and concerns to reflect collective perspectives rather than individual views. The suggestions and recommendations that emerged during the workshop are to be presented to policy makers.

**“ If we are competent, capable, and equipped with the technical competency, we would be able to draw on this programme and transform rural India's economy.”**

**Deep Joshi**



# Providing Employment Guarantee

**“If you utilise all the investment to trigger economic and agriculture growth, all the people who are now currently seeking work can withdraw to their own farms and demand for work will actually go down in a period of time.”**

**P.S. Vijay Shankar**

**T**he National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) 2005 is a landmark legislation in the history of social security legislation in India after independence. Enacted after a successful struggle for a comprehensive employment guarantee law, this legislation is a partial victory towards a full-fledged right to employment. The essential feature of this legislation which separates it from any other public service provisioning scheme is its enactment through the Parliament of India. Coupled with the Right to Information Act, this legislation has been bringing about a silent revolution in rural areas of the country.

The Programme sponsored by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India has several unique features. These include, time bound employment guarantee and wage payment within 15 days, unemployment allowance in case employment not given, and onus on the State Governments for providing employment even as 90 per cent of the cost for employment is borne by the Centre because the unemployment allowance is to be paid by the State Governments.

NREGA provides for employment to those who demand it. Notified on 7 September 2005, NREGA aims at enhancing livelihood security by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The Act covered 200 districts in its first phase, implemented on 2 February 2006, and was extended to 330 additional districts in 2007-2008. All the remaining rural areas have been notified with effect from 1 April 2008.<sup>1</sup>

The scale of operation of NREGA increased from a coverage of 330 districts to 614 districts in 2008-09. NREGA is likely to provide employment to 5 crore households in this year with an estimated expenditure of Rs 30,000 crore out of

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<sup>1</sup> For more details, see [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

which 70 per cent shall be spent as wage payment to labourers. This has also been the basis of a major momentum towards financial inclusion by opening workers' accounts in post offices and banks.<sup>2</sup>

The NREGA is admittedly an important step towards realisation of the right to work. It is expected to enhance people's livelihood security on a sustained basis, by developing economic and social infrastructure in rural areas. One of the most distinguishing features of the NREGA is its approach towards empowering citizens to play an active role in the implementation of employment guarantee schemes, through gram sabhas, social audit, participatory planning and other activities.

According to the data compiled by rural development ministry, in states like Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Orissa, there has been significant rise in prescribed daily wage rates given to agricultural labourers following the introduction of the Act. The data revealed the average daily manual wage has risen from Rs 65 two years back to Rs 85 at present. The states are forced to revise the prescribed daily wage rate as there has been acute shortage of labour in taking up agricultural activities, specially during sowing and harvesting months.

In Haryana, the official minimum daily wage has been revised from Rs 90 two years back to Rs 135 at present. Uttar Pradesh has also revised the minimum daily wage from Rs 58 to Rs 100 while states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Orissa have revised their daily wage upward. In Jharkhand the daily wage has been revised from Rs 78 to Rs 85 per day. Maharashtra also has revised the daily wage rate from Rs 55 to Rs 75. Gujarat is also learnt to be in the process of revising the wage rate.

One example cited was that of Rajasthan. Rajasthan has been one of the leading states in the implementation of this programme because off-season wage employment demand is very high as it is located in that part of the country where there are recurring droughts, and 60 per cent area is desert. In 2008, employment has been provided to about 52 lakh households out of total rural 92 lakh households. So it is one of the high performing states as far as wage employment is concerned.



**“NREGA has demonstrated that its important wage giving aspect gives people hope.”**

**Amita Sharma**

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<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the Round Table on NREGA with IITs, IIMs, Agricultural Universities and other Professional institutions held on 1 August 2008, Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.



NREGA is the first ever law internationally, that guarantees wage employment at an unprecedented scale. The primary objective of the Act is augmenting wage employment. The choice of works suggested in the Act addresses causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation and soil erosion, so that the process of employment generation is maintained on a sustainable basis. The Act is also a significant vehicle for strengthening decentralisation and deepening processes of democracy by giving a pivotal role to local governance bodies, that is, the Panchayati

Raj Institutions.

**“The success of NREGA will perhaps lie in making the act itself redundant someday when the scheme is or the act is no longer required.”**

***Chinmoy Basu***

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NREGA is also a social safety net. In the process of creating sustainable assets, the idea is not to change its character from a social safety net programme to a livelihoods programme. There are other programmes for that. So we need to explore, within its outlined dimension, what all can be done. It should not be forgotten that this is also a demand-based programme. There needs to be convergence in the planning process and the demand process. Planning based on demand requires the PRIs to display a lot of vision and skills.

NREGA has clearly changed the domain from a welfare approach to rights based approach. The success of NREGA will perhaps lie in making the Act itself redundant someday, when the scheme is or the Act is no longer required.



# Issues and Concerns

**W**ithin a short span of time since its inception, there have been various studies on the NREGA, involving secondary but primarily using field surveys in various parts of the country.

Participants at the workshop agreed that lot of people still do not know everything about the scheme. They know of NREGA through different names but they don't know all the intricacies of it. They know they can ask for work, but the procedure is not known.

The effective implementation of NREGA is consequent upon greater awareness and participation of beneficiaries and PRIs, since they have a greater role to play according to the Act. However, technicalities apart, effective implementation of the Act is also conditional on the effort of the state governments by simplifying the implementation design alongwith the political will to ensure its successful implementation.

The relatively better implementation of NREGA compared to previous rural wage employment programmes also owes itself to certain constitutional provisions within the NREGA which are crucial for effective implementation of the programme. While, greater involvement of PRIs is certainly a first step in this regard, its effective use is conditional on the functioning of PRIs in the States which varies a great deal. An important tool in this context is the inbuilt mechanism of social audit within the NREGA.

There are still many administrative and political issues of implementation which have an important bearing on the overall design of the programme. Specifically, the division between the centre and the states in financial, implementation and monitoring processes poses challenges in the present structure. For example, a large part of the expenditure of NREGA is covered by the central government but the crucial penalising provision of unemployment allowance is burdened on the States. These become crucial in the context of States where the political alignment of governments at the central and the State level do not

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**They know of NREGA through different names but they don't know all the intricacies of it. They know they can ask for work, but the procedure is not known.**

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match. Yet recent experiences of NREGA also suggest that some of the better doing states are mostly States which are ruled by political parties which are not in alignment with the ruling party at the centre.

### Who holds the job cards?

There are many instances where job cards are not issued to all the eligible people. An instance was quoted of the Bundelkhand area, both on the Madhya Pradesh side and the Uttar Pradesh side, where villagers revealed that the NREGA is not working. The situation was the same, in Hamidpur, Mahoa and Banda in Uttar Pradesh and also in Chhattisgarh. The job cards of the poorest people were in the pockets of the Sarpanch. This information was collected in an informal manner, and in nearly all the cases the Sarpanch was to blame. The poor people said that the Sarpanch kept the cards so that he could avail their services for his own lands when required. As the Ahirwars said, for instance, if they began to get their own land developed and got an assured source of income, why would they work for the Sarpanch at all?

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**There are many instances where job cards are not issued to all the eligible people.**

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### 100 days or more?

It appeared that there might be merit in keeping some elbow space in the guidelines as we target the very poor areas and people, instead of spreading our resources thin. For example, in Udaygiri block in Gajapati district of Orissa (this is a Maoist area as well), the headquarter Panchayat has 15 villages under it. On enquiry, by and large, in almost all the villages, the maximum number of people who exclusively depended on more than 100 days work would not



cross 1,000. In fact, large numbers of people had been provided jobs for more than 100 days. When asked how work for more than 100 days was given in violation of the rules, the Panchayat said that it happened because the people needed the work. This fact has a bearing on how convergence takes place as discussed later.

## Lack of capacity within Panchayat

Existing human resources and other infrastructure in the Panchayats is not equipped to do technical planning. The programme budgets are in thousands of crores. How can one handle that kind of a budget with the Gram Rojgar Sahayaks who are paid Rs 2,500 or an engineer whose market value today is Rs 35,000 but is paid only Rs 10,000 to Rs 12,000. Now if it is thought that rural development or NREGA does not require professional competency or professional support and half-baked solutions can work, then creating sustainable livelihoods will be a very distant dream.

The issue is that more people are needed. Today, if one asks another department to collaborate, they say they do not have the staff to do so. A programme like the NREGA, which has so much potential and which is considered to be revolutionary in intent and purpose, is being implemented by what we normally call part-timers; the Collector is doing this apart from his other duties as is the BDO. In fact, this understanding even percolates to the worker.

The guidelines state that the project officer for the NREGA should be somebody equivalent to the rank of a BDO. What has been done in many places instead is that the BDO has been made the project officer. The BDO has been given an

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**Existing human resources and other infrastructure in the Panchayats is not equipped to do technical planning.**

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**“If it is thought that NREGA does not require professional competency or professional support, and that half-baked solutions can work, then I think livelihoods will remain a very distant dream.”**

**Ram Lubhaya**

additional charge and he executes it as if he has been burdened with additional work. So, there is a human resource constraint. An employment creating programme also needs a lot of people to be employed and at least 10 per cent of the project cost need to be allocated to put in place the necessary human resources.

One view was that if we depended on the Panchayats, it would be very difficult to create sustainable assets through NREGA. In Rajasthan, 60 percent of the representatives are illiterate even now. They are paid only Rs. 250 for the work they do. Yet these Panchayats are also subjected to multiple types of audits - the CAG audit, the local fund audit, the Chartered Accountant (CA) audit, social audit and then scrutiny by the grievance redressal mechanisms. How can they manage? There is no department in the government which is subjected to more than one audit. These issues need to be sorted out in case durable assets are to be created.

If the Panchayats constructed roads that one could not drive on, it is not enough just to blame the Panchayats. Their mandate is to give employment to workers within 14 days in case there is a demand. So their priority is to provide work, not necessarily ensure quality of the asset. Thus we get *talabs* or water harvesting structures where water cannot stand. Workers just dig various pits and get paid. Panchayats do not have technical know-how to plan or to ensure quality. In such a scenario who would plan these works and execute them successfully? Most of the people are not even aware of what outcomes mean. We don't know if a pond was dug, what would be the outcome, leave alone measure it.

Then there is this whole related dynamics of human resources, empowering communities and making people participate. Efforts are being made in many parts to ensure that people come to the Gram Sabhas, they participate in social audits, in the planning process, etc. However, evaluation studies done by the Indira Gandhi Panchayati Raj Institution in Rajasthan found that in 90 per cent Gram Sabhas, one had to re-convene meetings because not even 10 per cent people come, which is a minimum quorum for a Gram Sabha. One common reason was that they found it difficult to leave their work to attend meetings again and again



The Panchayats and the people who are at the helm of affairs really don't represent the view of the people. There are hordes of examples where Sarpanches have taken works that benefit them. For example, one of the Sarpanches in Rajasthan constructed a 5 km road to his field and constructed three wells near his land and nobody questioned it. How do we make people participate? Transparency and community participation are laid down in the Act, but not practised at the village level. Data relating to selection of works showed that many Panchayats in the past two years had not planned any work on the lands of SC/ST beneficiaries in their plan of action.



## Redefining livelihoods

It was felt that the definition of livelihoods should not be confined to just natural resource management. In the dry land areas, for instance, even if one were to harvest all the water available, the amount of water that can be collected is not much due to poor rainfall. That is not sufficient to ensure sustainable agriculture. One size fits all cannot be the strategy. One has to look at other alternatives such as animal husbandry, skill building for urban and rural services, etc.

The example of Sangli district in western Maharashtra was cited, which is one of the most agriculturally prosperous districts in the State. This particular district used Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) in the 1970s and 1980s to very dramatic effect. A look at EGS fund utilisation during the last 30 years reveals that all the western Maharashtra districts were using EGS in a big way during that period for water conservation works. The strengthening of farming infrastructure led to a fall in demand for EGS works. Subsequently there was no demand from these districts for EGS, for almost 15 years. Severe drought for three consecutive years recently changed the picture again. From 72 people registered in the entire district for EGS, there were 75,000 people working per day.

## Convergence with Forest Department

There is a lot of potential for NREGA work in the forest areas. The forest department should be persuaded to

**“The user perspective and user involvement is very critical in the entire process of livelihood generation which is not only just creation of assets.”**

**Madhu Khetan**



converge with NREGA in some way. All work in Madhya Pradesh, for instance, has completely stopped in the forest area. The forest department has a plan, called the working plan. How this working plan is made, what are the activities that will be taken up and what are the other operational details and so on, are not known to many outside the department. So when a watershed plan is made, nobody knows if it is in conflict with the forest department plan. One comes to know only when the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) says that the project does not fit into the working plan.

## Social audit process

NREGA has a very powerful thrust towards not only people's planning but also people's monitoring of the work through social auditing, which has been mandated in the Act.

Effective social audit of schemes under NREGA has been an important instrument of ensuring effective implementation in many states, most notably in Rajasthan. However, this process in itself has not been a self-starter in most other States. This in itself raises the important issue of the effectiveness of using social audit as a tool for monitoring NREGA implementation or for that matter other government programmes. So far, the experience has been mixed in this regard. However, it is an important issue that needs to be explored in greater detail.

## Issue of the Schedule of Rates

NREGA is supposed to pay minimum wages, but these are not being paid "and this is a universal complaint" – and that is why people are not turning up for work. A fundamental reason why this discrepancy between the minimum and the actual wages occurs is because of the way in which the work is evaluated. The work executed is evaluated using the Schedule of Rates (SoR), which are the government-approved rates for work done mainly through contractors. How is the rate arrived at? The rate takes into account an average worker working under average circumstances. Now working conditions are not average, people are not average, geology is not average, and climate is not average. So the average for Rajasthan

**“The issue at stake is how do we build NREGA into a system that complements the existing production systems, the small farmers and the livestock traders and improves their productivity and net incomes.”**

**A. Ravindra**

may not work for Madhya Pradesh. The SoR does not take into account local specificity.

Schedule 1 of the Act clearly says that the labour rates and work norms have to be fixed in such a way, that the labour is able to get minimum wages for working for seven hours in a day. In most states, they calculate their work norms accordingly. There are separate SoRs for NREGA because this is a programme where one cannot reject an 80 year old person who comes and says he wants to work.

Some of the workers are very weak physically; one cannot expect the same outcome from them as would be delivered by workers who are stronger. In Rajasthan, special SoRs were detailed. But the Government of India directive promptly said that the same SoR has to be adopted for all workers. It took the Rajasthan government nearly three years to convince the Government of India that the same SoR can not be applied. Now the central order is that whatever SoR is being applied in special cases should also be applied to normal cases.



**“We badly need redressal mechanism like RTI Act outside the structure of NREGA so that penalties and fines can be imposed.”**

***Prabhu Ghate***

## Experience from Rajasthan

If we have to think of building durable assets and if we expect the Panchayats to do all these works, then they will have to be provided with support in making the master plan of the village. If we focus the discussion on natural resource management, there are only 7-8 types of works which village requires in terms of infrastructure, both as social and economic infrastructure. The first is related to water conservation; there is a pond or irrigation channel that needs to be built or repaired, provided there is a flow of water. Then there is pasture development work. The third is sanitation work in which you can take up pucca drainages, household latrines, etc. Then we require school buildings. At this point we still have not come up to a level, where we think that children in rural areas should have a room for each classroom. The SSA guideline only says that you have to have minimum two classrooms. Still we expect that the other three classes, if it is a primary school, will sit outside the two rooms and study under the trees. And then you have the anganwadi centre or the health sub-centre. Finally you have village road or a village storage structure. Including all of these, I made out a list of 7-8 items which are very necessary village infrastructure in rural areas.

For Rajasthan I made calculations that even with SSA, if it continues in its present form, where you are constructing schoolrooms, it will take another 15 years to provide one room per class. If you are thinking of providing two rooms in a school then you have to reconcile to the idea that there is only one teacher available! Two teachers is luxury! But experts in making education

curriculum have laid down that so many classes are to be taken in a particular year so that the students come up to a level to move on to the next class. We need more teachers, and more class rooms. We have to be very clear about what we want deliver to our people in rural areas—whether we want to deliver quality, whether a minimum infrastructure needs to be created and what the timeframe is. Similarly, under the National Rural Health Commission, NREGA can provide the 60 per cent labour component for the sub-centres whereas the material cost can be provided under NRHM.

I have listed 27 schemes, with a budget of Rs 2500 crore available under all these schemes, all aiming at the above listed 8 items in rural areas. Let us take these 8 items from whichever scheme and try to find convergence. For example, you tell a BPL family to construct an individual household latrine worth Rs 2,200 and give them Rs 1,200 to do so. If the additional Rs 1,000 required is paid as labour from NREGA, the project looks more plausible.

But how do we converge? Maybe you plan at the state level and say, this is the money coming from all the schemes for these 8 things and this is how we can break it up. Then you authorise the Collector to issue sanction of that work. There will be an NREGA component, and a scheme component. You can keep NREGA at the core because it is a major chunk and bring in money for materials and other components from the other schemes. This is a practical kind of thing to do or there is going to be lot of duplication and replication. Coming back to natural



resource management, one way is through the mechanism of district plan. But no district has an inventory of natural resources at the district level and hence they cannot plan effectively. So to create durable assets it may be required that we spend some money in making a technical assessment plan. We have waited for 60 years, those people have waited 60 years, and there is no harm in waiting for another six months if you carry out this kind of scientific survey.

For example, take the case of roads in Rajasthan. The road construction cost under PMGSY in Rajasthan is 50 per cent lower than that compared to the neighbouring states. This is because we have done the entire earthwork under NREGA. We have now decided to construct the core network for all the villages below 500 population under NREGA. We will do the tarring under PMGSY. We will be saving huge money on this account. But when the Centre was informed that we are making PMGSY roads with NREGA funds, our funds were stopped. It took a lot of time for me to explain to them, that this is in national interest. The argument put forth was that the Panchayat had not planned it. There are roads which are inter-connecting various Panchayats; some Panchayats may like it, some may not, it may not be in their priority of things. It can be certified that the process is very scientific. We are going to construct 2,000 km of roads through NREGA which can connect rural areas that are not yet connected. So there is potential provided that we have that kind of planning and that kind of resources. My colleague in PWD is my batch mate, so he

was kind enough to agree that he take up the survey and did it for us. But when it came to implementation, he sent me a letter that unless we gave him staff he would not be able to help any more.

I think the most important thing which is emerging from poor people is that they want education for their children. When I asked them why they thought they were poor, they said that they were poor because they were not educated, and their children were not educated. Now we are not looking at their needs. This is why I say that SSA should not be limited to construction of schoolrooms or ensuring one teacher in a school. It has to become a larger programme and where the NREGA can come in to provide the basic infrastructure. SSA can focus on bringing and retaining the child in school. We are looking at these reasons in greater detail in a UNDP project in Dungarpur. For the last several months, we have engaged specialised organisations to prepare a village plan. Even they are finding it difficult to identify the real issues that are pinching the rural areas at the household level. They have done all the surveys, analysed all technical data and still we have not reached the crux of the problem. So it's a complex issue, all these things have to be looked at in a holistic manner. If we talk of health, if you don't have a sub-centre, you don't have a place for the ANM to sit, how can you carry forward the programme. If we can provide that from NREGA, we should not hesitate.

***As told by Ram Lubhaya,  
Principal Secretary, Rural Development,  
Government of Rajasthan***

## Experience of Samaj Pragati Sahyog

**T**here is a lot of possibility of convergence. NREGA, if it is utilised well, can actually be used to create useful assets at the village level, say, irrigation infrastructure leading to more cropped area and increase in agriculture productivity “which can be an opportunity on which a host of livelihoods can be built up, including livestock development. The task force on convergence talks about all these things; schemes like the National Horticulture Mission can be merged together with NREGA.

The Samaj Pragati Sahyog has also made some efforts in this direction and I would like to talk about two or three examples from our NGOs own experience, a kind of practitioners’ view of things. One is where we have undertaken watershed programme on our own, independent of NREGA. Wherever we have undertaken watershed projects, agriculture production has picked up and farmers now have some surplus to sell. We have now tried to link them to the market through our network of over 900 SHGs, whose members are themselves farmers. The Federation of SHGs or the group of SHGs buy the produce of their own members. For this, they use their own money. What we believe is in the bank linkage approach and not the micro-finance model. Under the bank linkage approach, the bank gives them the credit limits which are used for making such purchases. Some of the groups have a limit of Rs 2-3 lakh which is used to buy the produce of their members which is then stocked. Soyabean is the crop that they are mainly

dealing with now and if its prices are low, there is no need for distress sale unlike what the practice was earlier. This is the kind of convergence that can happen: water to agriculture to savings and then to market linkage. This is the kind of linkage that can be envisaged. On the SHG platform, we have also tried to do similar linkages around livestock.

So, these are all the possibilities and the potential of NREGA. I think it is a historic opportunity. What I am trying to say is that before we reach the point of convergence—we are probably jumping a couple of steps—a lot more needs to be done to tighten the programme, the way it actually works in places. So convergence is a theoretical possibility but a lot more needs to be done.

There are practical problems. Now as you all know that working in Madhya Pradesh has its own disadvantages. But there are very strong advantages also. The first advantage is that MP has already made the first attempt at convergence Madhya Pradesh has a history of undertaking water conservation and harvesting programmes and there is some understanding on these issues in the State. It is in this context that the State Government has attempted some linkage between watershed programmes and the NREGA, which is a good thing for us.

The second good thing is that it also allows civil society organisations to do NREGA implementation, enabling them to do some innovative work. We are doing this in Dewas district where we are the implementing agency for NREGA work in

8,000 hectares. Now I am not saying that this is the correct model, but it is one that allows scope for innovation. As a model I would still say Panchayats should be the implementing agency and the role of NGOs should be limited to training and supporting the Panchayats towards capacity building.

The third good thing is that the administration also has some sensitivity towards the problems, i.e. the human aspect of the NREGA. The scheme is not just looked at as a programme; it also has a human dimension to it. I do not think any other State has issued orders for taking care of the disabled under NREGA. I have the orders with me and they mention the disability, the types of disability and what that person can do. This is a good thing as here we are not talking to machines; we are actually talking to humans. This also gives us a lot of space to try and push for reforms.

For NREGA to realise its full potential it actually needs to be reformed. The way it is thought of currently, the way the processes are built into it and the kind of implementation mechanism all need to be reformed. Here, I would like to mention that I am not trying to offer an NGO perspective. This is not an NGO-Government issue. This is about a programme that everyone accepts as a historic opportunity and therefore should be made to work well. We are not trying to blame the government or the government is not trying to show the other side down. The opportunity is there and it should be utilised. What all has to be done for this? The NGOs on their part must get into creative engagements with the government, criticising the government where needed and collaborating with it where needed.

***As told by P.S. Vijay Shankar***

## Experience of WASSAN

What NREGA is essentially doing is providing wage incomes outside the production systems and at a rate that is higher than the prevailing local rates for agricultural or construction sector labour. What this is doing, and this is visible in several states, is that it is pushing up the local wage rates and rightly so. As a result, substantial wage income transfers are happening to wage labour. This is an opportunity that the wage labour had been waiting for years and it is taking place now. Simultaneously, what is also happening is that this high wage rate is rendering several existing production systems unviable. This is because the implicit cost of wage rate in the production system has gone up.

So over time, this could lead to a collapse of the production systems or result in the moving away of wage labour from the production systems. The basic indicators of these changes are already visible across the country. Therefore, we need to look at NREGA in a different context and not one as only an infrastructure programme as we have been doing so far.

Whenever we talk about convergence, we talk about convergence of schemes, e.g., the construction of which school building should be funded by NREGA, etc. But this way of looking at wage employment will not go a long way because it may in the course of time bring distortions in the rural economy, distortions in the production systems there. Today, there are indications of rabi agriculture in some parts of the country suffering from high wage labour costs.

At the outset, let me however, clarify that we at WASSAN welcome this scheme as it is resulting in huge income transfer to the labourers, which is something that is desirable. On the other hand, one also has

to see what is happening to sectors like agriculture.

So the framework we have to evolve now is how to link the employment guarantee scheme with the existing production systems and not continue to lay emphasis on infrastructure. This is because if we continue to dig and fill the way we are currently doing, all the works will be exhausted in a couple of years. In fact, the existing work is a repetition of the same thing being undertaken under several names. So this is a point of departure that we have to note now.

The issue at stake is how we build NREGA into a system that goes hand in glove with the existing production systems, complements them, complements the small farmers and the livestock rearers and improves their productivity and their net incomes. It is in this context that I am trying to articulate some of our experiences from Andhra Pradesh.

There are four experiences which we would like to share. One is the Andhra Pradesh Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. The second is the Andhra Pradesh Drought Adaptation Initiative (APDAI). This apart we are working on two other programmes Engagement with EGS and Revitalising Rainfed Farming.

WASSAN is piloting the Andhra Pradesh Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, under the NREGA including awareness building and planning and implementing shelf works. The experience is that the NREGA can leverage support for livelihoods of poor by giving priority to regenerating agriculture (not just lands) of the wage seekers. The wage seekers could produce some 'common good' products and sell them at a subsidised rate to say, the dry land farmers. In the context of fast declining soil fertility in



these regions, restoring soil fertility would be a public good. A group of wage seekers can come forward to produce say, manure, under the NREGA.

Some labour groups could take contract of pest management in the better-off farmers' fields at some commonly agreed rates. The labour group could use several labour intensive plant products like neem extract and pest-surveillance to control pests. The technology is adequately demonstrated in several villages in Andhra Pradesh. In one Mandal (about 25 villages) the scope for such employment would be about Rs 2-5 crores. This is also environmentally beneficial.

In essence, the suggestion is to use NREGS as an entitlement to the poor to access rural markets. This in anyway is in tune with the objective of 'building livelihood assets for poor and drought proofing'. The subsidies will be self-targeting (to poor, degraded lands etc.), which is a major concern. The programme on the above lines can be dovetailed into the community based institutions like SHGs and MMs (Mahila Mandals).

Seven key areas are: continuous wage income, improving common assets, improving private assets, creating natural resource access for poor for specific production systems, labour subsidies in production, using labour subsidies as a driver for equitable access to resource for poor and promotion of sustainable agriculture, and provision of critical services for improving the production systems. These are the seven areas where we can look at NREGA contributing to the production systems. While the first three areas are quite common, the fourth involves creating some kind of an asset base for the rural poor so that they can build some kind of a production system. The fifth is the most important one and it presents a unique opportunity. We all know that the green revolution has distorted the whole agriculture system in the country. In fact the distortions are very deep. If you take the annual fertiliser

subsidy, it is Rs. 120,000 crore. And as was pointed out earlier, the whole investment in NREGA in the last two years has been just 14,000 crore. So, what is it that we are talking about? There is a huge distortion. Very little of the fertiliser subsidy is going to the rainfed areas where the traditional farming practices and soil fertility management systems are disappearing because the farmers cannot afford the wage labour required. It is time that we correct these anomalies in the agriculture support systems.

Currently, the paradigm of the agriculture support systems is built around external input subsidies. Now an historical opportunity before us is to bring in labour subsidy into the rural production systems. Labour subsidy is one area that we need to open up and brainstorm upon and see how we can build upon it. If you have labour subsidies as a point of leverage, you can actually open up several resource areas, you can push it in terms of getting access to land, access to fodder and access to water. It can open up a negotiating platform.

Today, the services for the production systems are abysmally poor. In case of a dam, we have the command area development authority that provides the extension services but in case of the rainfed area, there are no services worth name. In fact, whatever extension services are being provided, are all based on paradigm of services in the irrigated areas, including water intensive agriculture, intensive fertiliser use and even deep bore wells. The whole paradigm is taken from the irrigated system or a water rich area to a rainfed area. These do not consider the services needed by a rainfed area, for example, for goats, which are the major assets of the poor in such areas, there is no support scheme for them from the animal husbandry department. Clearly one has to plan for improvement of commons so that the people are empowered rather than just work in a project mode.

***As told by Mr A. Ravindra***

# Going Beyond Wages

**N**REGA in its design displays an effective platform for sustainable development because it looks at the human element; it looks at the work, the natural or infrastructural element; it looks at wages which is the economic element; and it looks at an area, so there is an element of local area planning. So in terms of time, space and units of planning covering economic, human and infrastructural aspects, it makes a very good anchor for sustainable development. This radial structure and its effective self-targeting design make the NREGA an ideal kick-off base for other development activities.

The Act allows a wide range, and not just 6 -7 categories, of defined works. It also has a caveat to include other works also. Importantly, it is the only programme which gives untied funds for local area programme. Hence it is possible to match the finance according to the needs at the local level.

Another thing worth noting is the effort to ensure greater institutional linkages. Many professionals are getting involved. The IIMs and IITs, and 20-30 universities are willing to work with the government. This can be termed both as a private initiative and a community initiative. Either way, what is important is that many actors are coming in to play. There is a clear clause in the Act which says that NGOs can be implementing agencies.

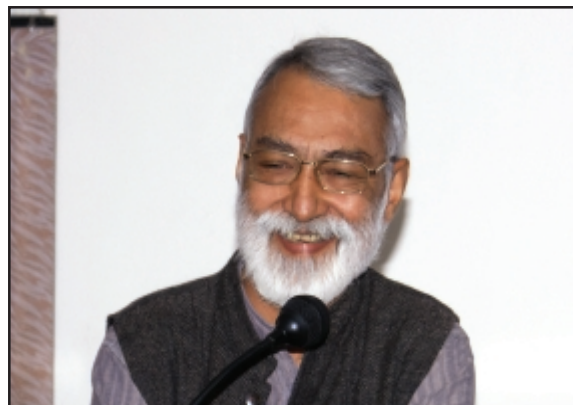
**“It is the only programme which gives untied funds for local area programmes”**

**Amita Sharma**

The Act specifically provides eight categories of works which can be undertaken:

1. water conservation and water harvesting;
2. drought proofing, including afforestation and tree plantation;
3. irrigation canals, including micro and minor irrigation works;

4. provision of irrigation facility to land owned by households belonging to the SC/ST, or to land of the beneficiaries of land reforms, or to land of the beneficiaries under the Indira Awas Yojana;
5. renovation of traditional water bodies, including de-silting of tanks;
6. land development;
7. flood-control and protection works, including drainage in waterlogged areas;
8. rural connectivity to provide all-weather access.



Two kinds of reviews are available today on the progress of NREGA and the issues in its implementation:

- i. Review of the implementation of the NREGA by the Comptroller and Auditor General (2007) and
- ii. Review by certain NGOs, especially the National Consortium of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

Though the NREGA specifically provides for the creation of durable productive assets, in the form of roads, improving rural infrastructure, drought-proofing, watershed development, water conservation etc., the above reviews found that the focus is just on rural connectivity and wells.

The main deficiency is the lack of adequate administrative and technical manpower at the Block and Gram Panchayat level. The lack of manpower adversely affects the preparation of plans, scrutiny, approval, monitoring and measurement of works, and maintenance of stipulated records at the Block and Gram Panchayat level. Besides affecting the implementation of the scheme and provision of employment, this also has an adverse impact on transparency, and makes it difficult to verify the provision of the legal guarantee of 100 days of employment on demand. Planning is inadequate and delayed, which results in poor progress of works. Systems for financial management and tracking are deficient, with numerous instances of diversion and misutilisation, and delay in transfer of State share. Maintenance of records at the block and gram panchayat level is poor, and the status of monitoring, evaluation and social audit is also not up to the mark.<sup>3</sup>

**“It is a challenge for civil society both in terms of our technical capability as well as our engagement with the people.”**

**Deep Joshi**

<sup>3</sup> CAG, 2007, Draft Performance Audit of Implementation of NREGA, p. 95.



**“...the issue is - where are the knowledge sectors who will really be bringing creativity into these works.”**

**K.S.Gopal**

In the discussion on why we are not able to create durable assets and what we should look at when we are talking about sustainable livelihoods, several issues cropped up.

The first major issue is with the planning process itself. A natural resource framework has been provided in the guidelines of the Act itself. Rajasthan’s experience with this kind of planning has not been encouraging. The hurry to deploy more labour coupled with the lack of capability to plan those kinds of works which can have the desired livelihood impact, ensure that the works selected are just digging and filling works. Even if it is a water harvesting structure, say a pond, nobody looks at whether there is a catchment area from which the water is to come. Local conditions also have to be considered in planning. For example, 60 per cent of the area in Rajasthan is desert. It is an inland drainage system. Whatever little rain there is, goes into the ground. The old structures which were used by the local population have broken down even as the amount of rainfall has decreased. For that matter, the type of *kuchcha* roads one can construct in sandy areas leave much to be desired. So prioritising and planning of works should be done at the local level. There is a capability gap.

That having been said, the question arises whether that kind of flexibility for local planning is available. There is tremendous time pressure to plan and execute the works immediately, and quality suffers in such a situation.

Secondly, whether the agencies or the institutions, doing this planning, have enough technical support to plan such works, which can ultimately become sustainable and become a way for sustainable livelihoods. Irrigation or water conservation works cannot be done without engineers. But when it comes to Panchayat at the grassroots level, the guidelines simply say that a junior engineer will service 10 Panchayats on the average and they should do all this planning with the help of that person. This is very inadequate allocation of technical support. How can the Panchayats do such specialised kind of works even if they put into their plan?

But large amounts of money are being channelled into NREGA. If we generate the demand for work and if one wants to employ all the employable people in the country, the expenditure of the programme can even go up to Rs 50,000 crore. This is not a small amount. Never in the history

of independent India, has so much money been committed by the State to rural areas and that's why it is a historic opportunity. If one looks at data for the last 60 years of expenditure on health, it has never been more than 1 per cent of the annual budget. Investment in education has never more than say 3-4 per cent before 1986 when Operation Blackboard was initiated and now it has gone up to 4.5 per cent but it is still way below the 6 per cent the Kothari Commission recommended. The NREGP is one concrete occasion when the government physically has committed so much money to be availed as a matter of right. This opportunity would be utilised fully and properly only when it is linked to the creation of development assets. If one utilised all this investment to trigger economic growth resulting in agriculture growth, all the people who are now currently offering to work could withdraw to their own farms and the demand for work will actually go down in a period of time.

Some two-thirds of the farmlands in India are rain-fed and need comprehensive development in order to reduce degradation and increase productivity and carrying capacity. Development of these through appropriate rainwater husbandry and diversification of farming systems would make a huge dent on rural poverty which is now concentrated in the rain-fed regions with a majority of the rural poor being farmers. Such a strategy would alone bring about equitable and sustainable economic growth and ensure aggregate food security for the nation.

The water harvesting systems built through NREGA can help in wasteland development. Once a water-harvesting system is built and equitable sharing of the water evolved, the local community becomes involved in protecting and re-greening the catchment area. In economic terms, this regeneration will aid in soil and moisture conservation, increasing crop production, rejuvenating forests, grasslands and water bodies to support dairy development and fisheries.

This clearly requires participatory planning at the level of hamlets and villages to draw up appropriate plans that meet people's aspirations and take on board the varying local contexts. Once plans are prepared by the participating families themselves it is not difficult to organise them into worker groups to put the plans into action. The enhanced



**“The NREGA represents the one concrete occasion when the government physically, as a matter of right, has committed so much money. This opportunity can be utilised fully and properly only when it is linked to the creation of development assets.”**

**P.S. Vijay Shankar**



**“We have to look at whether flexibility for local planning is available and whether the agencies or the institutions doing this planning are competent.”**

***Ram Lubhaya***

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productivity of resources would provide the workers with a more robust source of livelihoods than having to resort to measures like NREGA perpetually. The idea is that engagement with NREGP should enable a rural household to come out of the social safety net in two to three years by creating or enhancing productive assets in a planned manner.

Innovation, undoubtedly, plays a key role. A BDO in Sonbhadra district of UP got mud bricks made out of the earth excavated and then he sold it. The revenue earned was deployed for building community assets. Success stories of NREGA provide opportunities for mainstreaming and legitimising the struggle for other social security legislations.

## Experience from Madhya Pradesh

**M**adhya Pradesh is one of the first states to fully design the state Employment Guarantee Scheme in such a way that we take NREGA beyond wage employment, so that people are not dependent on the social safety net 3 years or 5 years down the line. By then, they would have certain assets, which could be used to enhance their livelihoods. NREGA was launched in MP in 18 districts initially in February 2005 and in the next year it was extended to another 18 districts and finally this year, it has been extended to all the districts. So in the preparative phase, a massive awareness generation campaign was carried out and we set up the State Employment Guarantee Council to ensure effective planning, monitoring and implementation coordination.

In MP, it was decided that every family living in rural area has to be given a job card so that no person, disadvantaged or needy should be left out. Village wise perspective plans were prepared for each district and a lot of groundwork was done for the districts starting in the second phase. The Panchayati Raj Institutions were involved in a very big way and in MP we have ensured that the 70 per cent of the work is given to the village Panchayats and the remaining is done by the various agencies. We have also extended some technical and consulting support to the Gram Panchayats in helping them plan and execute the works. So convergence for livelihoods was an approach that was taken right from the very beginning. NREGP became the bedrock upon which could build a lot of other things. So we looked at agriculture, forestry, health, sanitation and tried to identify the gaps. So convergence was ensured in planning,

execution, quality monitoring and resource pooling. Several sub-schemes were designed within larger programmes with the objective of helping poor families graduate from wage employment to self-sustaining income generation.

Given the fact that a majority of the agriculture is rainfed and there are recurrent droughts, the Kapil Dhara scheme focuses on creation of irrigation facilities in the form of wells, farm ponds, dugout ponds, masonry check dams, stop dams, etc. Technical support was extended to the Gram Panchayat in planning and execution of works by outsourcing the same to a resource agency or individual. The Bhoomi Shilp sub-scheme promotes land development in the form of field bunds and land levelling on the lands of poor and marginalised farmers on priority.

There was need to diversify the farm income of the small holders. Tree-based farming and agro forestry have increased farm incomes and enhanced productivity of land. So the Nandan Phalodyan sub-scheme was envisaged in which horticulture plantation could be taken up on the lands of poor farmers. It was also felt that alternative livelihood opportunities could be created in the form of sericulture, lac rearing and fisheries. The Vanya sub-scheme focuses on promotion of Tasar sericulture on community land wherein plantations of Arjun and Saja are done using NREGP funds and onward sericulture development is proposed using funds from Sericulture Department, SGSY, MPRLP and DPIIP. Similarly, the Resham sub-scheme promotes mulberry sericulture. The Lac sub-scheme looks at the plantation of various other plants on

which lac can be cultivated through NREGA funds on both individual and community land and the rest of the convergence comes through the SGSY, MPRLP or DPIP.

The Meenakshi sub-scheme focuses on creation of fisheries related livelihoods so that the tanks are constructed under NREGA and the onward fisheries development is done through the help of fisheries department and other agencies. The Nirmal Vatika sub scheme focuses on increasing the outreach of the Total Sanitation Campaign by promoting digging of pits to channel wastewater to fruit trees in the backyards.

Another major sub-scheme is the Sahastra Dhara sub-scheme. Currently, irrigation projects implemented by the irrigation department are not used up to their full potential as they have provision for construction of canals only up to the capacity of 1 cusec. Beyond this, the arrangement of taking the water to the field is done by the farmer. We focused on the tail-end of the distributary from where it claims to irrigate 40 hectares of land. In the absence of field channels,

the 40 hectares which had to be irrigated would not always be irrigated to its full potential. Under Sahastra Dhara the field channels are constructed. There is also the Shail Pern scheme which promotes water conservation, water harvesting and drought proofing by construction of contour trenches, gully plugs and contour bunds. Another small scheme promotes construction of a series of check dams on the same stream or nala, so that there is always a supply of water available.

All these initiatives are specially targeted towards SC/ST families, small and marginal farmers and BPL families. So the NREGA in Madhya Pradesh is not just looking at how many days of employment and how much wages, but also about what is going to happen to these people ten years down the line. We do not want people to come in for wage employment all the time. We would like them to have certain assets of their own so that they don't have to keep coming back to the State for social safety nets; they can do things on their own.

***As told by Rashmi Shami,  
Government of Madhya Pradesh***

## MP relies on Net Planning Tool

**T**he scale of NREGA is so huge, that compiling and maintaining such information for each and every individual farmer would be difficult. So Madhya Pradesh devised a single page format that captured all the information right from the current resource condition to what needs to be done to bring the farmer out of poverty. The idea was again to graduate the worker from a wage earner to a sustainable livelihood earner. Within this planning approach, every family was considered as a unit of planning. The plan covered all the poor families whether or not covered under NREGA, who we felt needed some sort of support or the other. Like, for example, a landless family not covered under NREGA could be linked to some other related programme.

We can describe it as a “NREGA plus” approach because we not only concentrated on NREGA funds but also those funds beyond NREGA. For example, if there is a Kapil Dhara well constructed but after the well is constructed that family or that farmer would also need a pump to bring that water to his field. So we would capture that bit of information within the planning tool and see where the additional funds would come from.

Net Planning is a participatory tool in which we first formed a Sahyog Dal (support team) for a cluster of 5-10 villages comprising among others one sub-engineer, community organiser, and the Sarpanch. Each day, the team used to cover about 10-15 hectares of land. On a particular day, the Sarpanch would inform the Gram Sabha as to when would the team visit their lands. And when the team visited a particular site, the owner along with family would be present on the farmland. The Sahyog Dal first assessed the quality of the land in terms of slope, erosion, irrigation potential, number and kinds of crop, and then try to come out with a list of activities/project works permitted within NREGA in terms of irrigation facilities, land development facilities and other additional livelihoods that could be generated for that particular farmer. For example if a farmer has 2 hectares of land, he may need field bunding; and a well; he may also be interested in doing some amount of fishery and wants a farm pond constructed. He could also go in for lac cultivation through host tree plantation. In normal circumstances, one plan would be made for well construction, then another plan for field bunding, another plan for lac cultivation related activity.

So when this planning takes place, the team suggests to the farmer that these are the alternatives that could be taken on his land. The farmer may agree or disagree. If he agrees, the information is filled up in the Net Planning format and then the farmer's signature is taken and submitted to the Gram Panchayat. It goes to the Gram Sabha for the approval.

Within this planning tool, there is a separate column in the end which mentions all the funds that can come from convergence. For example, if a farmer who has got his field bunded may need an irrigation source on his land and he may require improved seeds, farm equipments or even a pump to take out the water from the source. Where will these funds come from because NREGA cannot provide for all this? In the last column, we try to identify all such sources of funds. It could be from schemes like SGSY, MPRLP or DPIIP. This plan after approval is also placed before the District Planning Committee to ensure convergence with other departments.

*As told by Ritu Bhardwaj*

## Experience from West Bengal

**I**n West Bengal the Panchayat system is well in place. When NREGA was introduced, the NGO Pradan came and approached the Block Panchayat Samiti and the Gram Panchayat. Initially, they were apprehensive about the NGO. They were not confident what this NGO would do; they had a very different kind of perception about NGOs. Then, when they visited some place where Pradan had done some good work on INRM, they got convinced. They sat together and decided to develop some local resource persons who would help the village Self Help Groups (SHGs) to make the perspective plan around INRM in their own village and then will jointly execute that. The Panchayat selected the resource persons and Pradan gave them three-month training.

These resource persons went back to the villages and consulted with all the villagers, including landless persons and SHGs. They went from plot to plot and they made an action plan about what is to be done on those plots. And after this plan they got it up to the Gram Sansad (Gram Sabha) and then the Gram Panchayat. Initially, the engineer there was hesitant to do this kind of estimation. So the Panchayat requested Pradan to prepare the estimation and Pradan helped to do so. And after the approval, the Panchayat with the resource persons implemented the plan. Initially, there was no hard and fast rule for institutional payment but later on when government ordered for

institutional payment, the workers opened accounts in post offices — they are very fortunate to have enough number of post offices in those areas. The villagers have constructed a number of decentralised small water harvesting structures. This is helping them in saving their Kharif paddy as well as for taking a second crop. Some of them are even doing some fishery. People are getting income from that. Also, in the upland which was degrading day by day they planted Arjuna, after construction of some soil moisture conservation structures. Now there is good growth of plants. Because of that, this time they had a very good harvest of tasar cocoons. They have also created mango orchards in a big area following scientific methods with the help of NREGA. By doing that, the survival rate has become quite high.

Now they are also making SHGs as a paymaster. That is another achievement. My Gram Panchayat has got the award from President for becoming the first in India for achieving the highest spending under NREGA. We spent two crores in a year, which is our biggest achievement. We have opened bank accounts, not only for the head of the family but for every worker. Now there is demand for such work in the adjacent Panchayats, and they are hoping to replicate our experience elsewhere also.

***As told by Deebakar Maji,  
PRI representative from West Bengal***



# Experience of PRADAN

Pradan's operational area is the central and eastern Indian plateau region which has a major concentration of the country's poverty. The major cause of extreme poverty in these areas is not the lack of livelihood resources but rather the lack of quality of these resources. Landlessness is not as rampant as in some other parts of the country, but there are millions of poor people who are not food sufficient. Rainfall is quite high in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Orissa, yet water is not available for irrigation. High rainfall and a complex ecology make these regions potential engines of future growth as a wide variety of trees and crops can be grown and complex farming systems are feasible. But this requires an integrated approach to resource management. We need to take a more comprehensive approach to natural resource management and treat the area as if the entire area is one.

At Pradan, we have gone in for the INRM (Integrated Natural Resources Management) approach, which involves resource optimization as per carrying capacity and land use for livelihoods. And the land use would further need to build upon resource-resource, resource-people and people-people relationships. Here, resource-resource relationship means what is the relative position of the land with respect to the entire terrain, while resource-people involves people's aspirations vis-à-vis that land or what is the present use of that land and what are the people-people relationships impacting on the land use.

Resource restoration and enhancement of carrying capacity are important so that we pass on the resources to the next generation in a better condition. And the approach is family-based which is also harmonised with an area perspective. A typical terrain in this area has varying types of lands - upland, low land, mid land- each of which needs to

be seen in its own perspective and treated accordingly.

INRM combines managing the use of natural resources along with their conservation and sustenance. INRM recognises the links between natural resources (soil, water, vegetation) within a natural boundary called watershed. Action in one part affects the others. For example, deforestation in the upper catchment areas increases soil erosion, reduces moisture conservation, and increases runoff in the lower valleys. The movement of water across time and space is a key factor in this concept. Therefore, managing natural resources calls for their rational resource utilization to optimize production and minimize risk.

This involves proper land use for protecting it from all forms of erosion, enhanced productivity while maintaining soil fertility and water harvesting and conservation for effective use (domestic, irrigation, etc.).

Following such an integrated approach, Pradan has demonstrated ways to develop natural resources leading to household food security and eliminating mass poverty. Such an approach requires participatory planning at the level of hamlets and villages, to develop production and management systems suitable to the resource endowment to meet people's needs and preferences. The technologies that Pradan has evolved are simple, labour intensive and, therefore, suited to the requirements of NREGA in order to generate wage employment opportunities while creating livelihood assets.

Pradan has developed a bundle of technologies keeping in mind the requirements of NREGA for building livelihood assets as well as generate wage labour. These technologies such as the 30 X 40 model, 5% model, gully plugs, staggered trenches, dug wells, and field bunds, when implemented in consonance with appropriate

farming technologies and crops can lead to sustained enhancement of the livelihoods of the poor families .

PRADAN has had considerable experience in working with NREGA in different States. One is the work with Panchayats in Bankura in West Bengal, the second is in Madhya Pradesh where we are working as a Project Implementation Agency; and the third is a pilot with Ministry of Rural Development which was aimed at sensitizing and building capacities of the community and planning for INRM investments. Then we have also some experiences in involvement in schematized programmes like MPRLP in Madhya Pradesh.

In Bengal we worked in 6 Gram Panchayats in Bankura district. We facilitated the Gram Sabha to come up with a Village Development Plan under NREGA. We also identified and trained villagers as Resource Persons. They were trained in dialoguing with the community to come up with a livelihood plan for resource optimization and then actually help the families translate the plan on the ground. Once the plans were executed, the beneficiary families were facilitated to take up improved agriculture, fish rearing in ponds created, vegetable cultivation and plantation of tasar host trees or timber or fruit tree plantations. This resulted in reducing the vulnerability in the existing agricultural systems, and also in diversification of agriculture.

In Madhya Pradesh, we are involved as watershed Project Implementation Agency (PIA) in Betul and as a Technical Facilitation Team, (TFT) in MP Rural Livelihoods Programme (a DFID assisted programme) to implement NREGS in 26 villages in 16000 hectares. All these villages are where PRADAN has already mobilized women in the form of SHGs. The hamlet level planning process facilitates participation of the poor. The funds flow directly from Zilla Panchayat to the bank account of the Village Watershed Development Committee (VWDC), a programme execution committee at village level and our role is basically to mobilize and help the community to resource

planning and also in implementation. The watershed approach in Madhya Pradesh brings up the possibility of large scale creation of livelihood assets.

The experience of schematized sub-schemes (like Bhoomishilp for land development activities, Kapildhara for wells, Nandan Falodyan for orchard plantations etc.) under NREGA in Madhya Pradesh definitely helped in addressing the felt needs of community. Replication of that in other states also would also be very helpful. An issue here is related to balanced INRM plan – extraction vs. conservation which needs more hand holding. Integration with other Livelihood activities for proper utilization of assets that are created, lots of sectoral linkages –knowledge, market, input linkages – all this needs to be built in.

We also undertook a pilot project with Government of India aimed at sensitizing and building capacities for mobilizing the investments for INRM under NREGA. The objectives were enhancing capacity of the NREGA implementation machinery (the Panchayats) and to demonstrate INRM based livelihood enhancement.

As a result of the pilot project there have been significant outcomes at the level of households, community and panchayat levels as far as awareness on NREGA is concerned. The district, block and Gram Panchayat officials who saw our work appreciated the INRM approach for livelihood asset creation for poor under NREGA. Awareness of Gram Sabha members on their privileges under NREGA and INRM based livelihood generation activities have remarkably gone up which is quite evident from the kind of actions they started taking to claim what they deserve. Attendance in Gram Sabha meeting, 3specially of women workers went up considerably increased which resulted in participatory planning and transparent practices. Now people are not only planning for tanks and roads, but also for plantation, land leveling, soil-moisture conservation works, diversion channels, small farm ponds and so on to ensure better return from their lands.

One of the issues here is the limit of 100 days per job card, which may not be sufficient for

total treatment of watersheds. Another issue is the task based system of wage payment which is sometimes discriminatory against women and the very poor in hotter regions with harder soils where it is more difficult to do earthwork compared to other areas with softer soils.

In all the three experiences mentioned above, SHGs took the lead in the entire process, marking existing resources, identifying constraints and problems and then making the village development plan. This brought in the user perspective and user involvement in planning for livelihoods, which otherwise is difficult to come when the Sarpanch plans. But the current provisions are about PRIs doing the entire process. In that sense there are valuable lessons from the pilot project.

We need to create a cadre of local youth who would be different from the current Rojgar Sevak who has the role of accounts keeping only. The local resource persons should be equipped with a different skill and sensitivity to facilitate plan-making, rather than just supervise implementation. The Rozgar Sewak today is accountable to only the Sarpanch. Unless they are made accountable to the community, it would be

difficult to build community ownership and stake.

Strengthening the social audit process for better quality of works, ensuring fund transfer on demand to the Gram Panchayat and reducing procedural delays through use of ICT could be concrete ways ahead. The minimum number of days allowed for employment should be increased as per the needs of the plans and the labour available. Up-scaling CSO involvement in planning and implementation as well as in capacity building for INRM is another need. A number of Pilot Projects should be taken up in different agro-climatic zones to demonstrate convergence of INRM and NREGA.

More focus need to be given for works on private lands, because that would build on community aspirations, and provide sustainability to the works undertaken. We need to also think about the non-eligibility of non - BPL families in a watershed area. When we take an area perspective and treat a large area, it is difficult to distinguish between a poor and non-poor. There is suboptimal impact if we just treat the lands of only poor families.

***As told by Madhu Khetan***

## Regenerating the village economy

NREGA can regenerate the village economy through productive assets on water conservation and afforestation and not just wages for the people. To begin with, governments have failed to articulate the Act's development potential. Instead of implementing and evaluating the Act purely in terms of employment creation, the focus should have been on the real impacts on local development through productive assets creation.

A study by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) finds that most of the NREGA money has gone to road construction projects, instead of works related to water conservation and harvesting. The programme is also plagued by another set of problems, finds the CSE analysis – that of incomplete and abandoned works, and lack of maintenance of completed works.

Out of a total of 769,582 works under progress, only 158,277 (20.56 per cent) have been completed. Till August 2007, only about 14 per cent of water conservation works under NREGA had been completed. In fact, road construction projects were getting done at a faster rate. The study has found that bad planning for water conservation structures is putting a large number of the assets created into disuse. For instance, water harvesting structures have been created without any provision for catchment protection. On top of this, 'maintenance work' does not come under the ambit of NREGA as a permissible activity. As a result, districts, which already have large numbers of water harvesting structures and want to use NREGA money for their maintenance, are not able to do so.

NREGA's development impact could be enhanced by:

- putting emphasis on water conservation
- giving importance to afforestation
- making completion and maintenance of works compulsory
- focusing on village level planning

Source: <http://www.cseindia.org/programme/nrml/nrega.htm>

# Creation of Assets & Livelihoods: Recommendations

The challenge of NREGA is not only to provide 100 days of work but to serve as a first step towards the creation of sustainable livelihood and secure the right to work and social security for all the people in the rural areas across the year. Even though the NREG Act emphasises creation of water harvesting structures and similar durable assets, its implementation today is a long way from doing so systematically, that too in a participatory manner. The workshop threw up several suggestions on the way forward.

## Social Mobilisation

Preparation of participatory plans requires a fair amount of social mobilisation, which calls for a specific orientation, skills and deliberate effort. Involvement of Panchayats is deemed to be a proxy for people's participation, which is not always the case, especially with respect to the very poor and marginalised sections who constitute the bulk of NREGA workers. The nature and quantum of works are more or less decided by the Panchayat and Block functionaries and the participation by the people is minimal. This warrants a greater role of civil society in social mobilisation and generating community awareness.

When the choice is between large, standardised works at discreet locations, such as large ponds and roads and decentralised works such as bunding and levelling of fields and *in situ* water harvesting in each plot of land, it is obvious that the planners and implementers would choose the former if for no other reason than the ease of measurement, record keeping and supervision. The primary objective after all is to generate wage employment. Not surprisingly, there is a preponderance of conventional civil works such as construction of kuchha roads, large ponds, social forestry, etc. under NREG schemes. Building of community assets requires community participation, both in terms of future usage patterns and maintenance.

**“Resource restoration and enhancement of carrying capacity are important so that we pass on resources to the next generation in a better condition.”**

**Madhu Khetan**

## Strengthening Gram Panchayats

A lot of capacity building of PRIs has to take place to enable real planning from below. Panchayats have been given the constitutional authority to rule as part of the government and now they have been given finances as well. But they have not been taught to plan or how to utilise that money properly, even for creating work 'least of all for creating assets.' This capability is not there and needs to be built up. NGOs should work with the panchayats to create the demand and to actually execute the project, thereby making the NREGA project a success.



The NREGA guidelines do list out a series of works that can be taken up at the Gram Panchayat level but a synergistic linkage needs to be made between the works to prevent the onslaught of recurring droughts and floods. Further, the works should also be able to revive agriculture and prove to be effective means of food security. Such an approach, which will shift its focus from wages and address the root problems in consultation with Gram Sabhas and Gram Panchayats, will cater towards revenue generation and better livelihood options and will help in strengthening the revenue base of Panchayats. In addition, the assets created under NREGA (and maintaining those created under earlier schemes) with proper planning and consultation can actually help in benefiting those who usually get excluded. For instance, the development of ponds and cultivable wastelands will not only enrich the GPs with productive assets but would also generate employment opportunities for the villagers.

In order to strengthen the planning process for works at the local level, capacity building is required for Gram Panchayats to develop appropriate and sustainable models with a focus on NRM. This would ensure that the natural resources available with the GPs are preserved and gainfully utilised.

## Maintenance of Assets

The most critical factor in most natural resource related works is post-project maintenance of the assets and physical works. Under NREGP, asset building has been done by many state governments like Andhra Pradesh; however, NREGP only funds the wages, there are no allocations for

**“Convergence for livelihood was an approach that was taken right from the very beginning in Madhya Pradesh. We are using NREGA and drawing from the resources of other schemes to create sustainable opportunities for the poor.”**

**Rashmi Shami**



**“We have to strengthen the panchayati raj system; we have to strengthen the implementation mechanism in planning as well in execution if we really want to have livelihoods.”**

**Ram Lubhaya**

sustaining assets after they are created. To resolve this, it is recommended that institutional mechanisms be developed for large projects involving natural resource-related works to enable regular transactions with potential beneficiaries of the works. In addition, mechanisms are required for ongoing cost sharing for future maintenance. A long-term strategic intervention suggested was to invest in developing public institutions to manage natural resources in an integrated way.

Another observation was that works involving earthen structures like earthen check dams and *kuccha* roads are unable to withstand the impact of monsoons and floods. Local governments while planning and designing works need to consider sustainability factors. Governments could design activities under NREGP to stabilise productive resources along with restoration of ecosystems even while enhancing carrying capacity. Increased investments are required in common property resources and collective assets, which would be more durable and allow people to move away from ‘manual labour’ as a primary source of employment.

## Convergence Mechanisms

There are various estimates: one says that under Gram Panchayats, there are activities of about 35 departments and around 150 schemes are going on simultaneously, each with its own guidelines. According to another estimate, about 2,000 different programmes with a total outlay of Rs 800-1,200 crore a year annually goes to the districts under various programme heads.



Substantial public investments are being made for strengthening the rural economy and the livelihood base of the poor, especially the marginalised groups like SC/STs and women. To effectively address the issue of poverty alleviation, there is need to optimise efforts through inter-sectoral approaches. The convergence of different programmes like, Watershed Programmes, National Agriculture Development Programme (NADP), National Horticulture Mission (NHM), Scheme of Artificial Recharge of Ground Water through Dug Well (ARGW), Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP), Command Area Development and Water Management Programme (CAD & WM) and Scheme of Repair Renovation and Restoration of Water Bodies (RRR) of Water Resources Department, Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF), with NREGA will enable better planning and effective investments in rural areas.

NREGA does allow the programme to be linked with other centrally sponsored social sector programmes of Government of India like National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and Literacy Mission, Sarva Siksha Abhiyaan, (SSA), etc.

In other words, NREGA work can become a subset of all those schemes/programme which have a (*kuchcha*) component of work that can be taken up under the NREGA permissible works. Convergence also brings synergy between different government programme/schemes in terms of planning, process and implementation of programmes/schemes. Decentralisation is the only way through which convergence is possible.

In April 2008, the Ministry constituted a Task Force consisting of various department officials to look at

**“ We should identify 4-5 villages where people will need more than 100 days wage support. That is the area where all the convergence needs to take place.”**

**Chinmoy Basu**



**“ The challenge before the civil society is how to organise the people. Since NREGA is law, they will get the money; you don’t have to plead on their behalf. ”**

**Deep Joshi**

inter-sectoral convergence with NREGA schemes. The report has just been published.<sup>4</sup> It has to be studied carefully and examined to see whether the genuine concerns that have been raised about the NREGA in its current form have been substantively addressed. (See box)

Another suggestion related to adopting an area approach by identifying villages, i.e., concentrated pockets, where people need more than 100 days wage support from the government under the NREGA. Such areas possibly could get priority while making a convergence plan. Thus, we can have an NREGA programme, added to which is the watershed programme and the SGSY for these five villages using the area approach, where all such convergence takes place. This will gradually ensure that the efforts of the system, of the programme, of the government, of the Panchayat or even the whole establishment lead to sustainable development in a synergistic manner.

### Why NREGA as entry point for convergence

Convergence through NREGA will have the advantage of:

- A wide range of works; almost all works required for watershed development in rain-fed area, for command area development in irrigated areas and fair weather road for rural area connectivity
- Untied funds for local area planning
- The provision of decentralized planning which enables comprehensive need assessment at grassroots and greater ownership of projects
- Legal safeguards through Act
- Facilitating sustainable development through natural resource management
- Facilitating effective targeting and development of human capital and physical capital through institutional linkages

*Source: Report of the Task force on Convergence, Ministry of Rural Development, September 2008.*

<sup>4</sup> Report of the Task force on Convergence, Ministry of Rural Development, September 2008. Draft report is posted on the NREGA website, [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in). It is also available at [http://www.empowerpoor.org/downloads/Report\\_TF\\_Convergence.pdf](http://www.empowerpoor.org/downloads/Report_TF_Convergence.pdf)

## Challenge for Civil Society

NREGA is not like any earlier programme. It's a matter of right. People are getting employment or work as a matter of right. It is a constitutionally enshrined right, and it is not a programme.

The challenge before the civil society is to organise the people so that they get their rights. One doesn't have to plead on their behalf, and doesn't need to go to the DRDA chief or the Collector or the State Secretary. If poor people are organised, they can make the demand for developing their land. For example, a village with 100 families can get Rs 10,00,000 per year for as long as it takes to develop the land and water resources. All this is because it is a law.

There is no such other country which has something like NREGA, with a budget of Rs 30000 crore a year that is only going to increase. And the only way by which civil society organisations can do it is by organising people, by making them aware. Therefore, in some ways, the NREGA actually is a test for civil society in this country, especially for those who are working in rural areas for promoting livelihoods. Civil society should be able to draw on this programme so as to transform rural India as far as the economic front is concerned.

## Directing NREGA investments for Asset Creation: Key Recommendations

- A comprehensive participatory plan for each Panchayat should be prepared. Creating a 'shelf of works' or a list of key assets that have been identified as priority by the local community, could be created, which the Gram Sabhas could refer when selecting works. The shelf of works must not be *ad hoc* but emerge as a roll-out plan for the next few years for implementation. Demand should be the basis for implementation, not for planning.
- An area based approach would go a long way in meeting people's demands.
- As the success of livelihood interventions often require upstream and downstream linkages. Convergence mechanisms need to be institutionalised and reviewed periodically.
- Forest protection and conservation should be made part of NREGA. Plantations useful for community in degraded

**“The idea of Net Planning as a participatory planning tool is to graduate the worker from a wage earner to a sustainable livelihood earner. We can describe it as a ‘NREGA plus’ approach.”**

**Ritu Bhardwaj**

forests should be made part of NREGA and usufructs to be provided for the poor.

- Pure labour works must be described and displayed at the block level. A ratio of 60:40 should be allowed for some works, the other works should be allocated at the rate of 90:10.
- The Act mentions SHGs/user groups. However, their role in the absence of specific guidelines has remained marginal. In the absence of specificity, the initiative has been left to line departments and the results have expectedly been poor.
- There is an urgent need to review the guidelines to create space for extensive development work on private lands in the rain-fed regions. There is an understandable preference for working on community lands under NREGA, but it is important to take up works on private lands as well if one is concerned about creating durable productive assets in the hands of poor people and thus remove poverty.
- The Act provides for works to be taken up on private land owned by SC, ST and BPL families. However, if comprehensive natural resource development has to be taken up, this restriction may have to be amended. Most farmers are poor in the rain-fed regions as the productivity of land is low due to absence of water security. Yet, given the vagaries of the enumeration process many poor families may not be listed as BPL. Inclusion of farmers owning up to 5 ha of un-irrigated land (per *chulha* rather than per patta as many families do not go for mutation even when the land is divided between adult inheritors) would go a long way

**“If you want stakeholders to participate, people’s ideas should be central and technical people should be there to just assist them for the change.”**

**K.S. Gopal**





to promote comprehensive development of rain-fed areas using a watershed approach.

- Capacity enhancement of PRIs: Firstly, capacity building of PRIs is required for both planning and execution as demonstrated by West Bengal's experience in creating village based community resource persons trained by CSOs who can help people in planning and generating works. Secondly, the approach of planning also has to be shifted from Gram Sabha level to the hamlet level. The Gram Sabha is conducted at the revenue village level comprising of many hamlets which are unable to relate with each other socially and physically and their realities are many a times quite different.
- Labour subsidies in production: Opportunities do exist in improving private assets, creating common assets for specific production systems and providing critical services for improving these production systems. Such labour subsidies through NREGA wages will help in establishing sustainable production systems, promote agriculture and reduce further dependence on safety net programmes.
- Creation of social and human capital: NREGP investments may also enhance social and human capital needs by creating trained dais, para-vets, literacy workers and providing wages to them which are as much durable assets as physical and natural resources.
- There is need to document concrete examples of such initiatives carried out under earlier NRM programmes in different parts of the country, which have led to revival of agriculture and have addressed issues like drought proofing and flood prevention

**“If you have labour subsidies as a point of leverage, you can actually open up several resources areas, you can push it in terms of getting access to land, access to fodder and access to water. It can open up a negotiating platform.”**

**A. Ravindra**



**“Integration with other Livelihood activities for proper utilization of assets that are created, lots of sectoral linkages – knowledge, market, input linkages – all this needs to be built in.”**

***Madhu Khetan***

- Explore additional measures, state and region-specific, to make Integrated Natural Resource Management effective under NREGA.
- More technical support institutions may be identified at district level as happened in case of BRGF to support PRIs in making estimates, plans, evaluation of works executed etc. which can help in operational level bottlenecks.
- EGS projects have the dual purpose of providing employment while an “asset” is being developed. However, since the asset is also designed to benefit the whole community, completing projects on time is essential.

In sum, it was widely felt that though the immediate objective of NREGP is to provide employment to rural unemployed people; it is in the best interests of the rural poor to create as many durable assets (i.e. water resource development, agro forestry, micro watershed, ground water development and recharging) as possible. Since NREGP will be implemented over a few years, it allows for long-term planning and incremental improvements. It is hoped that the early stages of implementation of NREGP has been a phase of learning and reflection and the next phase will see a greater focus on NRM and strategies to ensure creation of durable assets.

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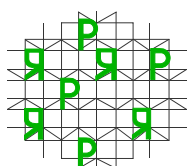






Pradan was registered as a society in 1983 by a few young professionals inspired by the belief that well-educated people with empathy towards the poor must work at the grassroots to remove mass poverty. Over the years, Pradan has emerged as one of the largest NGOs in India engaged in livelihood promotion. It has been able to attract, groom and retain a large number of development professionals at the grassroots. Over 300 PRADAN professionals are now engaged with disadvantaged communities in 36 of India's poorest districts spread across eight states. We currently work with nearly 200,000 families. Besides discovering and putting into practice new approaches and prototypes that enhance poor people's livelihoods on a large scale, we have also been striving to influence public policies with inputs from our grassroots work.

The PRADAN Research and Resource Centre or RRC was set up to meet the knowledge need of professionals, both in terms of facilitating reflection as well as bridging knowledge gaps; and in utilising this knowledge to inform external stakeholders. The RRC aims at enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of practice, developing methodologies for scaling up and setting systematic processes for policy advocacy. The RRC has been supported in the past by the Ford Foundation, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, The United Nations Development Programme and Sir Ratan Tata Trust. In 2007 we entered into a partnership with the Aga Khan Foundation for the RRC to set up a National Resource Centre for Rural Livelihoods under the SCALE outreach programme. This initiative seeks to enrich the resource for livelihood related knowledge and create a forum for knowledge exchange between practitioners.



**AGA KHAN FOUNDATION**

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