

Implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and training programs under it in Gujarat

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NREGS launched on 2nd February 2006, by the union Government can be described as a landmark initiative to create a regime of rights for the rural community to earn a livelihood with self respect.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to any rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. The basic aims of the scheme could be enlisted as follows:

- ❖ *-Reducing rural urban migration by providing employment to every household*
- ❖ *-Boosting rural economy.*
- ❖ *Fostering social equity*
- ❖ *Empowering rural women*
- ❖ *Strengthening democratic process by entrusting principal role to panchayats at all levels of its implementation*
- ❖ *Ensuring transparency through involvement of community at planning and monitoring stages*
- ❖ *A provision for social audit to rule out scope for irregularity and corruption.*

Gujarat state has been implementing this National Flagship employment scheme since its inception in 2006. However it was adopted in a phased manner. In the phase -1, the six B.R.G.F. dist. of Gujarat-Banaskantha, Sabarkantha, Dang, Dahod, Panchmahal and Narmada during the F.Y. 2005-06. were covered under the scheme.

During the year, 2006-07 another three districts, Bharuch, Valsad and Navsari were added for implementation of this scheme.

Whereas, in the third and final phase, the remaining districts were brought in the ambit of NREGS and thereby it was ensured that the scheme started being implemented in the whole state with effect from 1st April 2008.

Permissible works

- *Water conservation*
- *Drought proofing-afforestation and tree plantation*
- *Irrigation canals, including micro and minor irrigation works*
- *Provision of irrigation facility to land owned by house holds belonging to the SC/ST, or to land of beneficiaries under the Indira awas yojana*

- *Renovation of traditional. water bodies,-desilting of tanks*
- *Land development*
- *Flood control and protection works including drainage in waterlogged areas*
- *Rural connectivity to provide all weather access*
- *Any other work that may be notified by the central Government in consultation with the state Government.*

Commissionerate Rural Development and the State Institute of Rural Development-S.I.R.D.an apex training institute for rural development in Gujarat have prepared a well planned training schedule with a meaningful module for all those who are associated with implementation of the scheme.

Taking into consideration, “comfort level” of the administrative and technical staff associated with the scheme, the training material, guidelines, Rules and other paraphernalia have been published in the vernacular language. The following stakeholders have been identified by S.I.R.D.for imparting training on critical aspects of NREGA.

- *Govt. Officers*
- *Elected representatives of Panchayati Raj*
- *Village monitoring committee members*
- *Members of self Help Groups*
- *Academicians.*

Off campus training programs as well as training through SATCOM are conducted frequently for convenience of the stakeholders.

*Progress at a glance
(January 2010 ending)*

- *House hold registered 3398601*
- *Job cards issued 3398601(100%)*
- *Demand for employment 1413161 Households*
- *Employment provided 1413161 Households*
- *Total person days generated 436.89(in LAKHS)*
- *Works completed 249352*
- *Works in progress 30799*
- *Fund available in the year 64541.96 Lakhs*
- *Total expenditure 49984.55*

Thus NREGS is being implemented in Gujarat in letter and spirit thanks to diligence and dedication on the part of the concerned Govt. Officers, technical staff and Panchayat representatives.

Impediments in Implementation

There are some thorny problems faced by the implementing agencies at the zero ground level. Some of the obstacles which come in the way of a proper implementation of NREGS could be identified as follow:-

Even unskilled laborers are offered a higher quantum of a daily wage from the private contractors engaged in building construction, road construction, and colour work besides, electrification and cable laying etc. The laborers inhabiting in the rural areas adjacent to towns and big cities are provided to and fro transport facilities at the work site which prevent them from availing benefits under NREGS. This trend is prevalent in the villages of North Gujarat.

The routine paper work essential for wage payment to the beneficiaries is found to be tedious, tiresome and cumbersome by both the staff and the beneficiaries not to talk of the panchayat representatives some whom are neo literate. This results into either delay in preparing the muster rolls or improper/incomplete filling of muster rolls. Naturally the wage payment is delayed because of these factors and ultimately this welfare scheme loses its popularity. and acceptability

It is also observed that the bank and postal staff are overburdened and they have to carry out this “extra work” Willy nilly.

A quality control in the works undertaken as part of this scheme is perhaps the biggest casualty, since there seems to be more concern for timely utilization of grant rather than ensuring quality.

A well dug under the scheme in a village in Lunavada tehsil of Panchmahal dist of Gujarat was found to be without a drop of water indicating that such works are carried out without technical scrutiny.

A study summery report on NREGA prepared during the period between November 2006 to Jan 2007, by Anshuman Jaswal a PhD STUDENT, IIM Ahmedabad and MS Pualomee Mistry of Disha-an NGO contained observations on some lacunas in implementation of the scheme in Gujarat; which are as follow:-

- *No work demanded by the people*
- *Job card issued per ration card instead of per Household.*
- *Job card mentioning less number of members than the actual number of family members in case of a large family.*
- *Job cards retained by either Sarpach or by talati.*
- *Corruption by talati in issuing job card*
- *Even Govt. officials felt they had not been adequately briefed.*
- *The Postal dept. staff is over burdened and consider this work to be their extra responsibility and a thankless job*
- *Lacks of awareness among the eligible persons, some of the laborers at the site do not know even the nomenclature of the scheme.*
- *Higher wages offered by labor contractors*
- *Muster rolls are not filled up resulting in to delay in payment and subsequent unpopularity of the scheme.*

Most of these points have been taken care of after this study of 2006-07 by organizing a number of training programs during the year 2008-09 and 2009-10 for the officers and all those associated with implementation of the scheme.

Despite odds, it will not be an exaggeration to assert that NREGS is being implemented all over the state and it has, contributed, in making rural women, economically self reliant and also considerably brought down unemployment among the unskilled laborers in rural areas.