

MADHYA PRADESH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Status of Securing Basic Entitlements as Per the Act

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



NREGA work in bagli

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

not a single family in Shivpuri district has received any unemployment allowance despite applying for work.

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

Worksite facilities

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

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

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

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

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

In 31 Gram Panchayats in Shivpuri district, where worksite



Worksite facilities at an SPS project area

facilities were scant, PSS mobilised the Panchayats to ensure them. Niswarth, another consortium partner that operates in Shivpuri, observes that worksite facilities are non-existent but surface temporarily when Central observers make a field trip.

Timely payment of wages And wage rates

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

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

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

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

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

Members of Sahariya tribe at Ranipura Village, Shivpuri



One of the reasons for many people preferring migration or working with big farmers to MGNREGA has been the undue delay in payments. There have been delays ranging from 16 days to more than 90 days. During the current year 2010-11, there are 2,900 muster rolls wherein wages worth Rs 1,86,97,253 have been delayed beyond the stipulated period specified by MGNREGA Act.

The situation was no better in 2009-10 where Rs 5,04,40,786 in wages through 4,699 muster rolls were delayed.

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

Grievance redressal mechanism, transparency and accountability mechanism

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

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

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

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

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

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

Participatory Planning and Implementation of Works

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

Details of the work are as follows in Table 2.20

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



Organisation FES pathadevgaon



farm bund Zulup

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

Pros and cons of these method

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 2.21

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

Convergence

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

Suggestions in regard to convergence policy and practice in MGNREGA

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

Madhya Pradesh government, including SPS. These organisations have been vested with the responsibility of watershed development, NARMADA SAMAGRA AND SANKUL ST-HARIYA MICRO PLAN. The state line departments are implementing these programmes as well.

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

SPS Convergence Case Study

Name: Mathurabhai Bhajjuram

Village: Borkhaliya

SHG name: Saikrupa Savings Group

Society: Milk Co-operative for Women, Marya

Loan availed through the SHG: Rs 18,000

Loan outstanding: Rs 275

Milk sold: 485 litres

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

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

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

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



In this area, cattle is largely dependent on forest grazing while those with irrigation access used to feed their animals corn fodder. Taking account of this, under NREGA, SPS' livestock department distributed free seeds of corn that can ensure multiple harvests for fodder.

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

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

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

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

Building Partnerships and Engaging with Implementation Machinery

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

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

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

Village IMILIPURA

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

chayats were unable to spend much on MGNREGA works. In this context, the sarpanch of the village approached SPS, whose Watershed Committee sat down with both workers and Panchayat office bearers.

Villagers complained that minimum wages were not being paid, task-based valuations were not transparent, wages were being delayed and worksites lacked basic facilities. On the other side, Panchayats complained that workers were not turning up at the site and that **GROUP VALUATIONS OBSTRUCTED COMPLETION OF TASKS**.

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

AGRA village

SPS Micro Watershed Committee in Agra has been working in this village that comes under the Bagli block for two years now. In 2009-10 SPS has worked with the Panchayats in farm bunding (upto 54,000 running metre), farm ponds and canal building. The works were undertaken during the months when villagers had no other avenues of employment. In the 2-3 month period, 250-411 people secured employment under MGNREGA, earning them enough to buy seeds for the next crop season – around this time every year, they used to go to the village money lender for seed loans.

Individual successes

Bharat Pita Ter Singh was orphaned in his infancy and was brought up by his uncle Dunda, who was a day labourer in the Malwa region. Once an adult, Bharat ended up being a bonded labourer there taking care of his aged uncle and aunty.

It was during this period that SPS started its MGNREGA works through its Watershed Committee. Bharat's case came to the panel's notice and he was made aware of his rights and entitlements under the Act. Works were opened to build water-harvesting structures like **MED BANDHAN**, Farm pond and **NALA BANDH** in his and his aunt's fields. The pond now holds water through out the year, and Bharat now does pisciculture in the pond, and thanks to the irrigation made possible by the pond, he sowed chana (bengal gram?) in 2 bighas and wheat in 1.5 bighas ensuring good returns. During the summer, he grew vegetables for home consumption.

Bharat also secured 100 days of wage employment in the year, and bid adieu to his bonded labour days. That he gets to stay in his farm for these three months also ensured that the farm land – which was lying barren after years of neglect – was also taken care of. In fact, the MP electricity board had disconnected the power connectivity to the field, which Bharat is now trying to restore.

JHARKHAND

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

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

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

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

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

Status of Securing Basic Entitlements as Per the Act

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

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

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

among people regarding this landmark Act.

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

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

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

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

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

Rally by women workers demanding work



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

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

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

Worksite facilities

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

Timely payment of wages and wage rates

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

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

Labour union victory over delayed payment

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

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

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

Grievance redressal mechanism, transparency and accountability mechanism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Banvasi Utthan samethi meeting

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

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

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

Participatory Planning and Implementation of Works

Role of PRIs

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

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

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

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

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

Priority and development of resources of the poor

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

Quality as well as productivity of the investment

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



Women workers at work

Convergence

Member organisations engagement and experiences with convergence policies

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

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

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

Building Partnerships and Engaging with the Implementation Machinery (Government)

Models of engagement with the local government units

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

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

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

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

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

Policy Advocacy Models Adopted By the Member Organisation and Achievements

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

UTTAR PRADESH

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

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

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

Table 2.24: Area profile of the organisation:

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

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

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

Status of Securing Basic Entitlements as Per the Act

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

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

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

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

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

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



A PRA in progress led by AAK volunteers at Halia



Work at a PANI operating village

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

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

Major achievements up to 2009-10 are:

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

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

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

Worksite facilities

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

to Hallia Block in August 2010.

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



Shade at an NREGA worksite in Hallia

Timely payment of wages and wage rates

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

Grievance redressal mechanism, transparency and accountability mechanism

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

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



A capacity building session for panchayat functionaries organised by AAK

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

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

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

Strategy followed by the organisation in securing basic entitlements

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



An NREGA rights awareness padayatra taken out by AAK

Suggestions of the AAK to secure basic entitlements of the Act

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

Participatory Planning and Implementation of Works

Role of PRIs

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

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

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

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

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

Type of Works completed during 2009-2010

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

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

Suggestions for effective participatory planning

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

MGNREGA works improved tribal livelihoods

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

Munni Devi became an Entrepreneur

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

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

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

Convergence

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

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

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

Building Partnerships and Engaging with the Implementation Machinery (Government)

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

Problems and Challenges According to PANI

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

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

Women power through collectives: A PANI Project

Empowering Rural Women (ERW) is a unique programme in the context of Uttar Pradesh. The key focus is on leadership development among Dalit women and women from other excluded sections of society so that they are able to secure their rightful entitlements. The programme started in December 2007 with 6 small grants and is currently being implemented in 253 Gram Panchayats of 10 districts with 13 partners. It envisages reaching out to 100,000 women and



A meeting of PANI's Empowering Rural Woman collective

collectivising them for realisation of entitlements in eastern Uttar Pradesh. The intervention is focussed on the leadership development of women through collectivisation and providing a platform in the form of CBOs, strengthening women's informed participation in local governance and ensuring entitlements related to right to work/livelihood and right to food for the most poor. The basic structure in the form of women's collective, Nari Sangh, has helped in layering the intervention with various other programmes such as women's literacy.

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

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

Some of the achievements of the programme are:

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

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

CHHATTISGARH

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

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

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

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

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

A PRA in progress in Premnagar assisted by MSS volunteers



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



Status of Securing Basic Entitlements as per the Act

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

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

Worksite facilities

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

Timely payment of wages and wage rates etc.

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

Grievance redressal mechanisms, Transparency and Accountability practices

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

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

Transparency and Accountability

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



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

Building partnerships and Engaging with the Implementation Machinery(Government)

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

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

Throwing light on emerging issues and further areas to work

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

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

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

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



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

KARNATAKA

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

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

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

Status of securing basic entitlements as per the Act

Work demand

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

Worksite facilities

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

Timely payment of Wages and Wage Rates etc.

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

Grievance Redressal Mechanisms, Transparency and Accountability Practices

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

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

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

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

Suggestions

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

Participatory Planning and Implementation of Works

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

Pros and cons of the planning methods adopted

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

Role of PRIs in the planning process

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

Implementation of works

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

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

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

Suggestions for ensuring effective and participatory planning and implementation

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

Convergence

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

Building Partnerships and Engaging with the Implementation Machinery (Government)

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

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

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

Status of Securing Basic Entitlements as per the Act

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

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

Community monitoring Systems

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

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

Participatory Planning and Implementation of Works



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

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

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

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



Preparing compost for increasing soil fertility

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

Table 2.27: SAMUHA's Achievements

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

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

Convergence

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

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

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

Building Partnerships and Engaging with the Implementation Machinery (Government)

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

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

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

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

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

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

The programme has to extend its understanding of ‘development’

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

WEST BENGAL

Description of Organisation

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

Table 2.28 Outreach of INRM activities through MGNREGS at Bankura

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

Table 2.29 Activities done from April 2010-December 2010

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

Table 2.30 Achievements in INRM activities through MGNREGA at Bankura

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

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

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

Table 2.32. Work done so far at Paschim Medinipur

Name of the Block: Nayagram

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

Major Achievements of Paschim Medinipur

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

Work Done and Major Achievements (Highlights) of Bankura work

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

Impact of our initiatives

At community level

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

At the PRI level

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

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

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

At the Government level

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

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

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

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

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

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

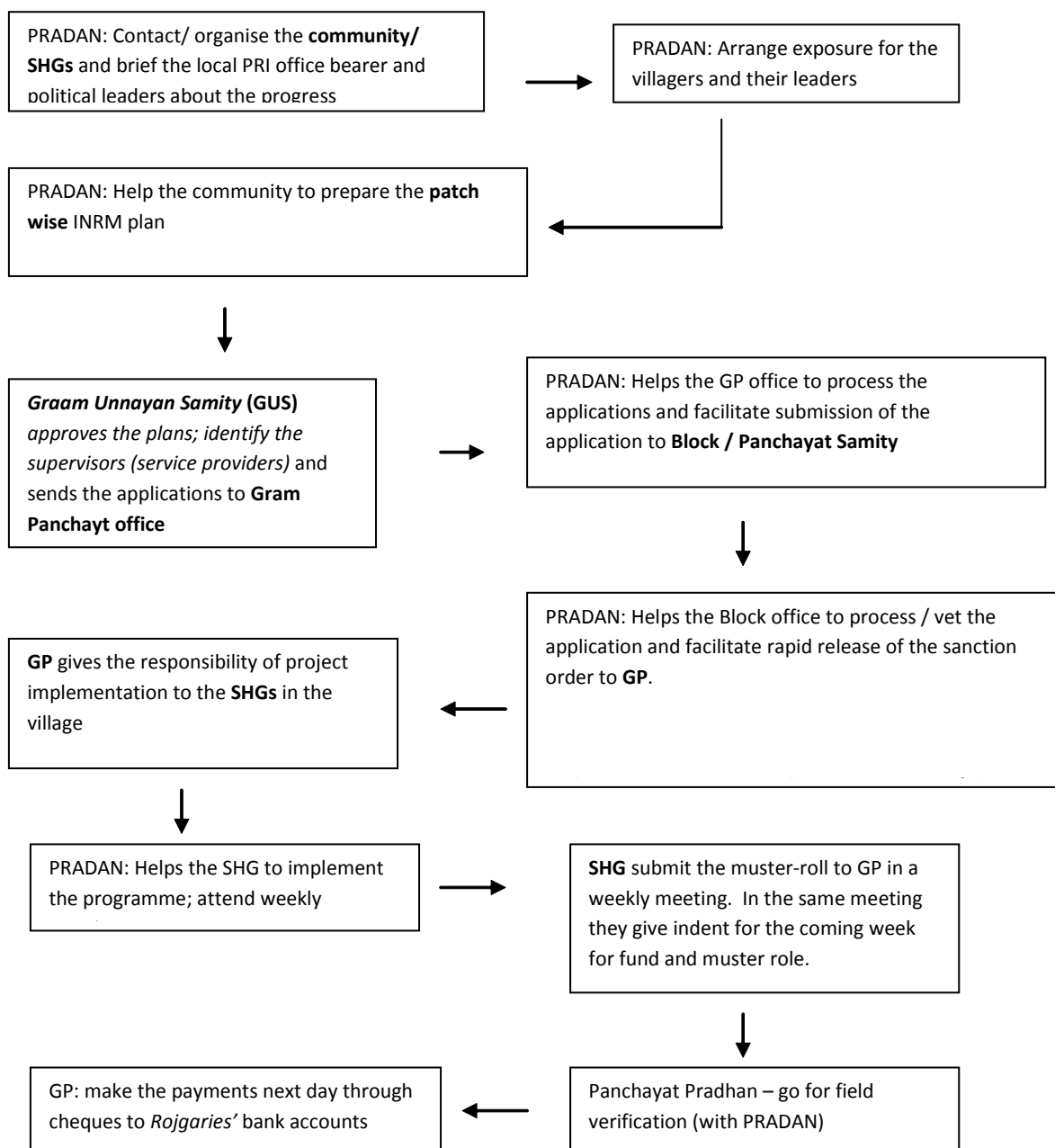
PRADAN has facilitated a hamlet level planning exercise. This was done after exposing the villagers to certain good practices. The entire community as primary stakeholders was facilitated in drawing up their plans following the steps detailed below. Gram Panchayat members and LRPs were involved to observe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

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

Specific efforts and achievement in ensuring

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

Diagrammatic depiction of the system to ensure timely execution of works



Key issues in the EGS emerging from the field experiences

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

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

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

Suggested procedural changes for improving the implementation process of EGS

Suggested policy changes for strengthening EGS

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

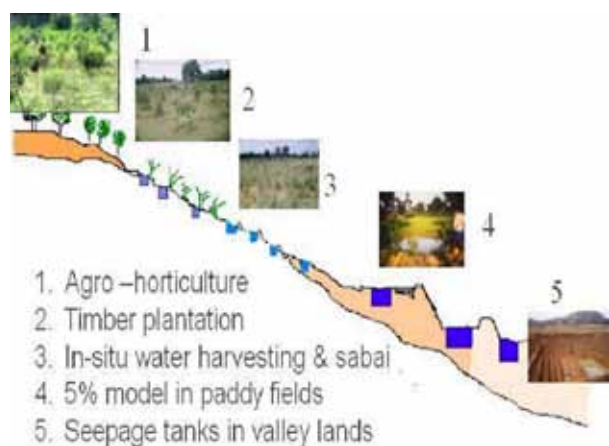
Annexure-1

Model for promotion of INRM based livelihoods

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

At family level our interventions are as following:

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



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

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

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

Annexure-2

The livelihood impact out of NREGA work is described below

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

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





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



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

Case of Bodon Mandi, Kasakendi

Bodon is an ST farmer of Kasakendi. He owns about 3 bigas (0.50 ha.) of land in two patches: One plot is all of 1 biga, and the other 2 bigas. He has excavated two happas in his plot of 2 bigas. One of the happas measures 50 x 60 feet, while the other is 30 x 24 feet, thus amounting to about 5% of the total land held. The two happas on his farmland generated about 50 days of employment for the household, alleviating the need to migrate in summer. Prior to the construction of the two happas, Bodon used to undertake short duration paddy on about 1 biga of this plot, and the remaining land would normally go unutilised. The bit under paddy would yield anything between 3 to 4 quintals and was almost always retained for household consumption.

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

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

Case of Parangope, Damodarpur

Parangope is a general caste farmer of Damodarpur who owns about three-fourths of a hectare across two separate plots. Parangope has made a happa that measures 36x40 feet on one of the plots that measures nearly half a hectare. Parangope says that he was been able to save his kharif crop of paddy last year with the aid of water conserved by the happa. Keeping the better portion of his lands reserved for cultivation under conventional methods, Parangope had allocated a small degraded patch on his plot for experimenting with the technique of System of Rice Intensification (SRI). And this degraded patch yielded the best results. Parangope is now convinced that a combination of SRI methods with the 5% model is sure to double his yields. It is also bound to create surplus water for the cultivation of vegetables during rabi.

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

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

Case of Uttam Bauri, Bada Aral

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

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

BIHAR

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

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

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

The Megh Pyne Abhiyan

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

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

After the Flood

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

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

Works begin

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

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



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

Participatory planning and implementation of works

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

Khagaria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Plan of Action

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

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



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

the water.

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

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

West Champaran

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- The main sluice gate of Chanderavati River needs immediate attention.
- One small sluice gate is also required at Dabriya chour to release storm water safely.
- There are seven big chours covering nearly 30 acres of land in the panchayat area. According to the villagers these chours can be converted into dug out ponds to enhance the irrigation potential of the area. It is a feasible suggestion to deepen these ponds through NREGA funds where the excavated earth could be utilised



to raise the bunds which can support plantation and also provide short time shelter during floods.

- Renovation and increase in the width of the old tatbandhs, so that local villagers can use them as roads and shelter points during floods.
- In addition to all of the above, the annual maintenance of the tatbandhs, discharge channels and sluice gates is must. The maintenance work has to be done from January to April, to stabilise the earthwork before the onset of monsoon.
- Plantation should be done on all on embankments for erosion control.