

TWO

HIGHLIGHTS OF WORK DONE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Status of Securing Basic Entitlements as per the Act

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

District	No. of villages	Total work applications facilitated (in groups)			% of applicants obtained works within 15 days			% of applicants collected receipts		
		2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
APMSS- Nalgonda	4	43	43	61	67	85	85	94	9	7
Pilupu- Nalgonda	6	53	53	151	98	100	90	100	41	60
APMSS-Karimnagar	5	14	14	47	80	100	100	100	57	64
APMSS-Warangal	5	10	10	50	166	80	86	100	-	100
EFFORTS-Prakasam	10	4	4	57	64	100	100	100	100	100
ARTS-Srikakulam	3	18	18	91	110	61	81	87	33	46
REDS-Anantapur	5	33	33	45	61	100	100	100	100	100
TOTAL	38	175	175	502	646	626	642	681	340	477

Results achieved through the engagement

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



Returning from work; Kadiri, Anantapur



Guiding persons with disability in NREGS work, Kadiri Anantapur

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

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

Worksite facilities

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

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

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

To address this aspect, the partner organisations



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

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

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



Creche for worksite meeting at K.N Palem, Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh, organised by REDS.

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

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

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

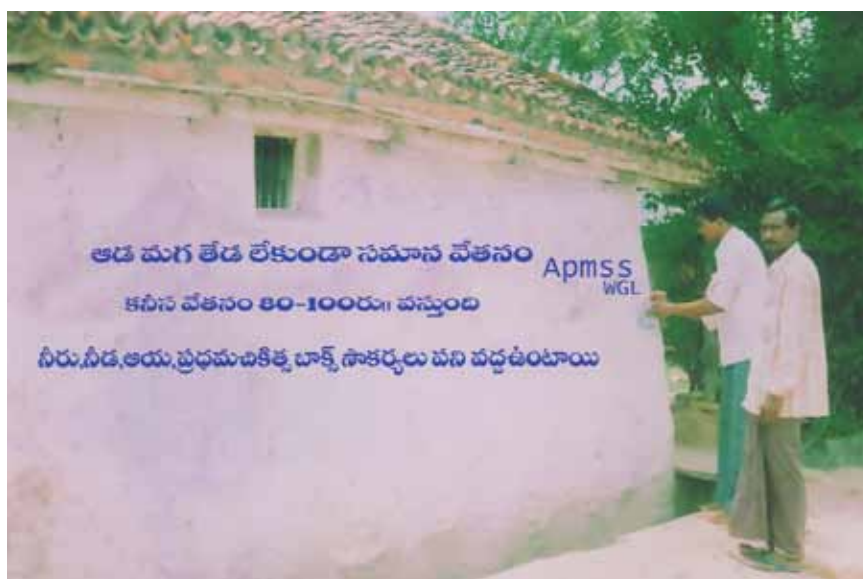
Further, partner organisations have suggested that the mate be made responsible for arranging worksite facilities such as shade, medicines, for which he/she will get additional Rs.20/- (@Rs.1 X No. of wage seekers) for the additional responsibility. The GO in this regard is yet to be released. AP Govt.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

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

Timely payment of wages and wage rates

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Grievance redressal, transparency and accountability systems

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Social audit mandal public hearing, Kanagal, Nalgonda - APMSS



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



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

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

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

Issues and challenges in making the grievance redressal mechanism effective

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

ies and penalising culprits.

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

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

Overall efforts and results in securing entitlements

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 2.4: Community Resource Persons Developed by the Organisations

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

Participatory Planning and Implementation of Works

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

Project mode planning

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

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

Land inventory

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

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

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

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

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

to violation of transparent implementation process.

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

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



MPT works in CPR blocks,
Ananatapur, REDS



CPR block, Ananatapur, REDS

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

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

Priority and development of resources of the poor

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



Farm bunding in Ananatapur district, REDS



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



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

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

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

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

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

Issues /problems in planning and implementation of works

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

Demonstrating innovations and pilots

The partner organisations have mostly initiated pilots related to sustainable agriculture



Fish farming in thier tanks, Srikakulam district, ARTS



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

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

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

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

Internal crops, Tarlupadu, EFFO



Promoting kitchen gardens, Srikakulam, ARTS





Horticulture, Koheda, Karimnagar, APMSS

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

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

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

Convergence

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

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

planning and implementation and assuring transparency of works.

Issues in implementation of convergence programmes

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



Convergence meeting on May Day, Anantapur, REDS

Building Partnerships and Engaging with the Implementation Machinery (Government)

Models of engagement of partner organisations with the local government units

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Policy advocacy mode adopted by the member organisations

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Challenges

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

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

Overall process/policy changes

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

Table 2.8 Impact of MGNREGA on distress migration

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

A. Migration status in 2005 (before MGNREGA)

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

B. Migration status in 2010

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

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

Reasons, factors shared by the members in stopping migration

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

RAJASTHAN

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

Partner organisations of the Jaisamand Consortium are:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Area profile of the organisations

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

Table 2.9: Project area of Jaisamand Consortium

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

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

Table 2.10: Project area of FES in Rajasthan

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

Status of Securing Basic Entitlements as Per the Act

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

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

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

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

Table 2.11: MGNREGA Status in Project Panchayats

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Worksite facilities

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



Work site facilities at work place, in Rajasthan

they are not a fixture across all worksites.

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

Timely payment of wages and wage rates etc.

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

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

Grievance redressal mechanisms, transparency and accountability practices

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



Work in progress

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Suggestions to implement MGNREGA as demand driven:

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

Participatory Planning and Implementation of Works

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

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

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

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

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

Micro-planning process includes the following steps

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Up-scaling of micro plan exercise role of partners

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

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

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



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

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

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

Role of PRIs in planning processes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Provision of Revolving Fund by FES

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

Marketing

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

Animal Husbandry

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

Convergence

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

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

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

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

Suggestions with respect to convergence policy and practice in MGNREGA

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

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

Building Partnerships and Engaging with the Implementation Machinery (Government)

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

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

Policy advocacy models adopted

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

Case studies from project villages

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

Abstract

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

Introduction

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

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

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

Experience

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

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

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

Collective efforts

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

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

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

Governance

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

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

Benefits

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

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

The future

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

Building institutional resilience: The case of Suliya

Regenerating village commons Panchayat pasture land under MGREGA programme

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

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

Situation prior to the implementation

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

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

The process of change

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

Conclusion

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

ODISHA (Orissa)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Area Profile of the Organisation

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

Table 2.14: The WONC

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

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

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

Table 2.15: FES operations in Odisha

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

Status of Securing Basic Entitlements as Per the Act

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

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

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

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



Village level awareness camp through folk dance.

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

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

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



GP Level Meeting on NREGA; Empowering people through sharing of information

Women workers in the
Rally of Job seekers
Union



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

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

Table 2.16: Impact of MGNREGA on migration

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

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

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



Caption



Caption

Two-tier system of community based organisations developed under MGNREGA

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

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

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

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

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

It will also maintain a register on migration.

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

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

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

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

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

Worksite facilities

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

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



Caption

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

Timely payment of wages and wage rates

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

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

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



Caption

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

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

Grievance redressal mechanism, transparency and accountability mechanism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Emerging Issues

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

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

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

Strategy adopted by the partner organisations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Suggestions by the organisations

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

Participatory Planning and Implementation of Works

Role of PRIs in planning process

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



Caption

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

impact assessments.

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

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

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

Priority and development of resources of the poor

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quality as well as productivity of the investment

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

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

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

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

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

Activities taken up by organisations for integrating organic farming

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 2.19: Organic farmer groups

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

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

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



Caption



Caption

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Suggestions for ensuring effective and participatory planning and implementation

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

Strategies adopted by the organisations in planning process

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

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

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

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

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

Convergence

Member organisations engagement and experiences with convergence policies

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

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

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

Suggestions in regard to convergence policy and practice in MGNREGA

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

Building Partnerships and Engaging with the Implementation Machinery (Government)

Policy advocacy models adopted by various organisations

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

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

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

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

Policy advocacy models adopted by FES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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