



## MGNREGA and Good Governance

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## KEYWORDS :

MGNREGA is a radical departure from other wage employment programmes in terms of its legal and demand-driven framework. Observers agree that there is a critical lacuna in scheme implementation due to shortage of dedicated human resources with an overloaded bureaucratic structure given additional charge leading to delay and poor quality output. (\*38)

Indian state, for the first time has legally mandated the implementation mechanism that strengthens transparency and accountability at every step of the delivery chain, by creating platform for citizens to articulate their voice & choice and directly interact with the state. In order to innovate the tools for strengthening accountability Gram Panchayat has been declared the primary implementation agency of the scheme along with other tiers of PRI bodies & Line Deptt. Agencies. MGNREGA is, incidentally the first development legislation which assigns a definite role to PRIs to act as "Principal authorities for planning, implementation and supervision" [Sec-13]. For realising the rights & entitlement & broadening the capacities of the disadvantaged, democratizing, participation are essential which can be effectively handled by PRIs. (\*39)

**Implementation Structure**

MoRD is the nodal department for implementation of MGNREGA. It ensures timely & adequate resources support to State Govts. It ensures regular review, monitoring & evaluation of processes & outcomes. It has developed a Management Information System (MIS) and assess utilization of resources.

Central Employment Guarantee Council (CEGC) advises the central Govt. / Ministry on MGNREGA matters, responsible for monitoring & evaluation of implementation. It shall prepare annual report on implementation of the scheme and submit the same to parliament.

State Govt. Firstly, it frames the Employment Guarantee Scheme & other rules, guidelines apropos of the Act. It sets up State Employment Guarantee Council which advises the Govt. on implementation matters, evaluate & monitor the scheme. It appoints Employment Guarantee Commissioner to ensure that activities as per codal provisions are carried out. It prepares REGS budget promote IEC activities for creating awareness amongst stakeholders. It ensures administrative technical & financial support to lower level functionaries like DPC, PO, PRIs & implementing agencies.

State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC). It recommends to Govt. on preferred works & other policy matters & submits report annually to state legislature on implementation.

Zilla Parishad, It is responsible for preparing & approving district plans & take up supervision, monitoring & evaluation of the implementation.

District programme coordinator (DPC) is responsible for overall implementation, coordination of the scheme and preparation of Labour Budget.

Panchayat Samiti & Programme Officer. PS/Block prepares Block Plans, can execute works, supervise, monitor them. PO is responsible for coordinating the works taken up by GPs/ implementing agencies and responsible in providing work to the job seeker by deadline.

Gram Panchayat-The GP is responsible for implementing works minimum 50% in terms of cost. It is also instrumental for planning of works, registering households issuing job cards, executing works, al-

locating employment, monitoring executing works & facilitating payment of wages.

Gram Sabha-The Act mandates the GS to pick & choose works for planning as per local needs, monitor and supervise implementation and conducts social audit, generates awareness on scheme information.

Other implementing agencies besides PRIs :- Line Deptts., Central/ State undertakings, SHGs, NGOs can act as implementing agencies.

**Good Governance**

Governance is defined as process of decision making and process of how it is implemented. Good Governance is participatory, transparent, accountable, effective, equitable and it upholds rule of law. It ensures that political, social & economic priorities are based on broad consensus and voices of the poorest, vulnerable & disadvantaged are reflected in decision making & in allocation of development resources (UNDP-1997) so that best benefits reach a large number of people. UNDP defines 9 core characteristics of good governance participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus oriented, equity effectiveness & efficiency, accountability & strategic vision. Good governance is once again, dependent on good institutions, committed to economic development, measured in terms of outcomes.

**MGNREGA-a sign of good governance**

**Participation**-MGNREGA is a people's Act, the result of a wide range of consultation, with peoples organizations. As a first step towards right to work, it has ensured a dignified means of livelihood. The Act addresses itself chiefly to the working people and their fundamental right to life with dignity. It has ensured participation of all men/women in decision making either directly or through legitimate intermediary elected institutions that represent their interests. Nature of work is determined by Panchayat Sabha, approved in Gram Sabha and accordingly shelf of projects are prepared through decentralised and participatory participation of people. Besides Gram Sabha approving the works, it also conducts social audit. Social audit is a continuous process through which people can participate in the monitoring, implementation of the scheme which raises their awareness by community participation ensures transparency & accountability. However, due to infrequent meetings and low participation in Gram Sabha, there is low awareness of beneficiaries as a result they can not avail full benefits of the Act. Planning of works, social audit are not successful to desired extent.

**Transparency & accountability**

It was believed that decentralisation of governance through Panchayati Raj system will pave the way for more accountable governance where power will be in the hands of the people and they will be capable to wield against erring elements. But in due course the system has become less responsive towards this decentralization and people are still subject to corruption and deficient of effective service delivery. Viewed in this angle, transparency & accountability are the buzz words of present day development administration. Transparency connotes free flow of information on processes, procedures institutions to stakeholders directly. Approval of plan of works in Gram Sabha, functioning of vigilance & monitoring committees, social audit are the built-in mechanism to ensure transparency. Social audit is an ongoing process through which stakeholders will be appraised of details of execution, the defects & strengths therein, remedial measures which will also raise their level of awareness. The act & guidelines make it mandatory to disclose voluntarily all sorts of scheme implementation data for public domain and nothing can be kept hidden

from the purview of public. The implementation data is fed into MIS online as a result any person of the country/ world can have access to minor details-like execution of works at the village level, workers engaged, wages earned. Besides RTI Act 2005 is 100% applicable for eliciting information on the scheme and Sec 8 is not attracted to hide any data from public view.

The central Govt. (MoRD) through CEGC submits Annual Report to Parliament on implementation of MGNREGA and thus remains accountable to the nation.

The State Govt. through SEGC submit Annual Report to State legislature on implementation of the scheme/Act in the State & thus held responsible for any lapse.

The PO/DPC/GP as per provisions of the Act are accountable and responsible for compliance to the provisions of the Act/Scheme or else stringent action can be taken against them including criminal action also.

All implementing agencies stakeholders are subject to Sec-25 of the Act (Rs.1000/-fine) for any lapses/ shortfalls. Amount shown as irregularity in social audit are recovered from the defaulters through appropriate procedure.

### **Effectivity in Administration**

To check out corruption, institution of Ombudsmen, SLM/NLM, SQM are in position. Over and above dealing with general grievance & objections, they also investigate on corruption matters and suggest remedial measures to govt.. State Level Vigilance Cell has been strengthened to keep a tap on corruption.

### **Devolution of Financial Powers to GPs:**

Even after 23 years of 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, 29 subjects as contemplated for devolution to PRIs have not been possible due to reluctance of State Govts.. But the MGNREGA-2005 by providing 50% scheme funds to GP/PRIs has made this possible. Now development activities at GP/Block level have been stepped up in a big way. The Act has worked out the real devolution of financial power to GP/Blocks.

### **Equity**

Equality of men & women in decision making to improve their well being is inherent in the MGNREGA. The act stipulates that wages of men & women will be equal. At least 1/3 of the workforce will be women. By generating employment at village level that to at fair wage, it is empowering women economically & socially and their independence and self-esteem have been raised in the society & intra family. Besides, women participation in Gram Sabha, Social audit and other social forum has raised their awareness, brought a significant change in their status in community & in their own lives. Due to their economic empowerment from MGNREGA earnings they spend for household food consumption needs, health care & education of children. With a national participation rate of 47% women are participating in the scheme more actively (quota-1/3 =33%) than in other works. Up to 2011-12 Rs. 53000/-crores have been spent on wages of women which shows that the scheme has provided the most important opportunity for women to work for in want of which they would have remained unemployed or underemployed.

Likewise, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes which are at the lowest rung of social and economic hierarchy constitute about 23% of the Indian population. Poverty & vulnerability are high amongst those groups. At the national level participation of SCs showed an increasing trend from 25.36% in 2006-07 to 30.62% in 2010-11. But further declined to 22.60% in 2013-14 with wider variation for states. Likewise ST participation was 36.44, 29.27, 25.43, 20.71, 20.85, 29.27, 16.60, 17.19 respectively from 2006-07 to 2013-14 (website-nrega.nic.in) at the national level with interstate variations. (\*40).

MGNREGA Sameekshya MoRD, Gol between 2006-07 to 2011-12 reveals that SCs & STs accounted for 51% of the total person days generated (against 23% of population ratio). Thus the scheme has facilitated financial inclusion amongst vulnerable sections by providing employment proving itself by far the best public works programme in India, in spite of its pitfalls, weaknesses etc.

### **Reference**

1. \*38 - \*40 : MGNREGA – Provisions, Implementation & Performance by Azeez & Aktar, New Century Publication, New Delhi (2015)