



**RURAL MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
GANGTOK**

MGNREGA Sikkim Innovations

State Policy of positioning MGNREGA as a nation building activity

For the proud indigenous people of this state, unskilled labour work would not appear very attractive and for some would have demeaning connotations as well. To make the Scheme popular and mass-based, the Chief Minister – Shri Pawan Chamling gave the maxim “*Afno gaon, Afai banaun*” (lets build our village, ourselves). This State Policy of positioning MGNREGA as a nation building activity resulted in a dignity of labour and ensured large scale participation of the rural folks. Not only BPL, even APL households actively took part in large numbers in this social movement. Consequently while the poverty rate of the State is only 20%, as many as 60% of the rural households, participated in this programme.

Giving primacy to elected representatives at the grassroots

Though the guidelines permit 50% of MGNREGA implementation to be taken up by line Departments, in Sikkim, the State Government devolved 100% implementation of the program to Gram Panchayats. Giving primacy to the PRIs at the village level, helped in making the administration of this programme people-centric and also ensured a wide outreach. Hence the Scheme grew on the foundation of the strong social-cultural fabric at the village level, and took the form of a community led social movement.

Creation of Block Administrative Centers (BAC)

Though the State has a two tier PRI at the village and district level, BACs were established (at around the same time when MGNREGA was launched, and were designated as the Programme Office) in 2007 to provide administrative, accounts and technical support to a cluster of Gram Panchayats. Boasting of state-of-the-art infrastructure, a BAC with its battery of officers, provided support to a population of about 15,000. 27 such centers were created to cater to the needs of the 165 Gram Panchayats in the State. These centers have greatly helped to decentralize administration and in strengthening the last mile outreach of the developmental programs.



Proactive, gender sensitive strategy of facilitating demand by promoting micro-works in mountain terrain

As a strategy to facilitate demand, the program shifted from planning just a few macro-works per village to promoting several micro-works across the mountain terrain to encourage involvement, especially of the rural women who may not want to be too far away from their family. On an average, annually 10 works were taken up per Gram Panchayat, thus making the shelf of works planning under this Scheme gender sensitive.

Quality Social Audits:

The District and Block teams as well as reputed local NGOs were trained in a regional workshop organized by NIRD by various experts and social activists from Andhra Pradesh and MKSS, Rajasthan. Consequently these NGOs facilitated detailed social audits in all the Gram Panchayats. A unique feature of these social audits, was that the original expenditure vouchers were read out by these NGOs work-wise, covering not only the wage component but the material component as well for validation by the Gram Sabha. These quality social audits helped in making the functionaries and the system accountable to the people who are the real stakeholders of this path breaking legislation.



Simplifying estimation process

In MGNREGA, similar kinds of works are taken up repeatedly. Software – “Estimation Automation Software for You (EASY)” was developed inhouse in MS-Excel which automates the estimation process and prepares site specific estimates based on standard Schedule of Rates (SOR). The functionalities include automatic preparation of the technical estimate, social estimate and theoretical consumption as well based on input parameters. This tool has helped in reducing the delay in estimation, improved the quality of technical planning and also aided in enhancing transparency.



Impacts

- Wide extent (60% of rural households covered), high intensity (80 persondays per household) coupled with stringent levels of transparency.
- Enhance the accelerator effect by investing in durable livelihood assets like MIC, Flood control works, Water source development, Horticulture, Fodder and Timber plantations and Terracing of barren land. These assets have resulted in additional income to the rural households other than wage employment due to increased productivity of land, better irrigation, safeguard against landslides and increased farm based production.
- Findings of independent impact assessment studies by IIM Shillong, IRMA-Gujarat and others indicate that this additional income mostly earned by the mothers is being used to purchase better food, clothes, household items, in health treatment and in quality education of their children. Thereby resulting in a jump in the Human Development Indicator (HDI) in the rural areas thus promoting inclusive growth.

Formidable constraints

Sikkim is the highest, steepest, remotest and wettest State in the country with formidable mountain specific constraints of remoteness, fragility and marginality being acutely visible here. Tough terrain, heavy monsoons and frequent landslides make any development work during the five monsoon months a daunting task, with an adversely impact on the ICT infrastructure as well.