

PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONAL NETWORK: Integrated Structure for Concurrent Appraisal, Diagnosis, Remedial Action and Capacity Building for NREGA

CONCEPT NOTE & BACKGROUND

- 1. Background & Introduction:** The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) notified on 7th September, 2005, aims at enhancing livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The choice of works suggested in the Act addresses causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation and soil erosion, so that the process of employment generation is maintained on a sustainable basis. The Act was implemented in a phased manner. In Phase one it was introduced in 200 of the most backward districts of the country, an additional 130 districts were included in Phase two 2007-2008 and the all remaining rural districts were brought under NREGA in Phase three 2008-2009.
- 2. Rationale & Objective:** Three years of the programme have indicated a need to evolve the design and lend support to the programme to more effectively address implementation challenges. Thus, a Professional Institutional Network (PIN) has been constituted for steady, sustainable interventions that enhance the quality of the programme. The network will undertake an impact assessment to identify within districts and across states, efficient management practices, procedures, processes, factors that have contributed to good performance and the positive outcome and impact generated. The institution will also indicate interventions and strategies for dissemination of these practices and factors that have or will limit the optimal performance of the Scheme. The main focus will be on strengthening the capacity of the district to implement the programme and create positive impact. Examples of issues for appraisal are at **Annexure I**.
- 3. Scope of Work:** The districts may be identified in consultation with the Ministry of Rural Development and State Governments.

The selected institutes will undertake survey works in the districts as per the appraisal methods, and sampling requirements. The main activities will consist of:

- 3.1 Selecting districts with positive impact and district with constraints, sample blocks, panchayats, works and NREGA workers and other households
- 3.2 Understanding the background, qualitative and quantitative techniques and tools to be used for the study
- 3.3 Planning the study, including logistics
- 3.4 Preparing survey documents, like questionnaires, orientation material

- 3.5 Orienting, hiring and training the field supervisors and researchers
- 3.6 Survey & Supervising survey implementation
- 3.7 Analyzing, compiling data and reporting the findings of the survey based on good practices for replication
- 3.8 Discussion with the State Governments
- 3.9 Outline an action plan/guidelines for districts and state governments to overcome constraints being faced
- 3.9 Mid-term review with the Ministry of Rural Development on draft report
- 3.10 Compilation & submission of final report
- 3.11 Any other activity indicated by the Ministry of Rural Development

4. Methodology

4.1 The impact assessment will be conducted throughout India.

4.2 **District Selection:** The states and districts for the assessment will include districts as identified by the institution and in consultation with the State Government and Ministry of Rural Development. These may include (a) Districts which have experienced significant positive impact under NREGA and (b) Districts which have experienced constraints to the optimal performance of the Scheme.

4.3 **Sample Size:** Sample selected should be significant and adequately representative of the sociological and cultural environment of the State as well as the identified impact. A suggestive sample is at **Annexure II**.

4.4 **Tools:** The qualitative and quantitative techniques and tools should be designed after identifying the different stakeholders and their different perspectives. The questions should aim at providing information on the factors contributing to the impact.

(a) Given the unique rights and demand based framework of NREGA, it may be relevant to stress on qualitative tools like participatory observation and techniques. This may include aspects of design and implementation arrangements, (administrative set up) including staffing, training, systems and procedures, management practices, State Schemes and/or any other special initiatives taken by state (State Scheme) to facilitate the Act. The institution should also use quantitative survey tools.

(b) Appraisal should include primary and secondary data, such as basic physical and financial data of the selected sample area (Monthly Progress Reports I-VII), survey questionnaires, focused group discussions, field visits, interviews with district/block/village level officials, beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

(c) Based on Guidelines, NREG Act, field experiences and state/district specificities, the institutions may evolve questionnaires, in consultation with the Ministry.

(d) Field observations and interactions should be verified from the official records at Gram Panchayats, Blocks and District level, discrepancies, if any should be noted.

5. **Expected Outcomes, Conclusions and Recommendations:** Through intra and inter-state comparison the institute will highlight models, practices for replication. Through diagnosis, in-depth qualitative and quantitative analysis and dialogue with State Governments, the institution will suggest action plan and guidelines for district and state government for remedial action and future interventions.

The institution will share and discuss the findings with district and state officials

6. **Stakeholders:** The Ministry of Rural Development, State Governments, the district administration, Panchayati Raj Institutions, the NREGA workers and the members of the Gram Sabha are important stake holders. The study should be conducted by having detailed discussion with representative sample of the stake holders. Attempt should be made to visit as many States and Districts as possible within the prescribed time. The visits and interactions may be planned in consultation with the Ministry.
7. **Periodicity and Time Frame:** The selected institute would be required to visit each selected district once or more depending on the issues identified and need for follow up visit.
8. **Reporting and Deliverables:** A hard and soft copy of the compiled report should be submitted to the Ministry of Rural Development. The report should be submitted in a standardized format given by the Ministry at **Annexure III**.
9. All the data collected, findings and report from the Appraisal may not be shared or published without prior consent and authorization of the Ministry of Rural Development.

ANNEXURE I: Suggestive list of topics

- *Supplementing Employment and Livelihood Opportunities:* The basic objective of NREGA is to provide a fall- back employment source, when other employment alternatives are scarce or inadequate. By providing up to 100 days of employment NREGA provides an additional source of income during lean seasons.
- *Economic and Social Women Empowerment through equal wages, greater work opportunities:* The Act encourages participation for women and adds a dimension of equity to the process of growth. Narratives of workers indicate that NREGA has not only proved to be an independent employment source for women but also given them a greater role in decision-making within the household.
- *Increase in Income and wages:* Over the past three years there has been an increase in minimum wages for agriculture labourers across the country, and the average wage per personday at the national level has increased from Rs. 65 in 2006 to Rs. 83 in 2008.
- *Inclusive Growth particularly for disadvantaged groups- BPL/SC/ST/disabled:* Experience has shown that it is the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable groups who seek employment under NREGA. The participation of SC and ST is 55% and near equal women workforce participation. Thus, NREGA is self targeting in a way.
- *Financial Inclusion-Bringing the marginalized into the formal banking system:* Under NREGA, around 5.7 crore (upto December 2008) bank and post office accounts have been opened. Feedback from districts point towards greater savings for the workers, greater transparency in wage disbursement as well as an increased access to the formal banking system and facilities.
- *Creation of Durable & Productive assets & Effective Convergence practices:* Through its emphasis on water conservation, NREGA has not only proved to an important Scheme for drought prone areas but it has also created durable and productive assets for years to come. For instance the ponds created under NREGA are being used for pisciculture, the roads constructed have only increased access to markets.
- *Increase in Agricultural Productivity:* Districts have noted a significant rise in water level and agricultural productivity. The resultant increase in small and marginal farmers income is also contributing to better input for farming.
- *Regeneration of natural resource base through plantation, afforestation, water conservation and other activities:* The auxiliary objective of the Act is to strengthen natural resource management through works that address causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation and soil erosion and so encourage sustainable development.
- *Quantification of Environmental Services, Adaptation and Mitigation of the Effects of Climate Change:* NREGA workers through different permissible activities like water conservation, drought proofing are rendering environmental services. These are also helping in adaptation to

climate change. The impact of NREGA works on climate change and benefits like carbon credits that can be accrued to the rural people need to be studied.

- *Stemming of Migration (at the level of the village, district and/or state):* Reports have indicated that by providing employment on demand within 5 kms of the village, NREGA has aided in the stemming of migration from villages to cities as well as inter-state.
- *Strengthening of Panchayati Raj Institutions:* Under the Act, the shelf of projects has to be prepared by Gram Sabha. At least 50% of works have to be allotted to Gram Panchayats for execution. Panchayat Raj Institutions [PRIs] have a principal role in planning and implementation.
- *Ensuring transparency & accountability through Information Technology* for example, MIS, Smart Cards for wage disbursement
- *Building social capital formation through awareness generation/ social mobilization, social audits*
- *Impact of NREGA in left extremist districts* such as, in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa
- *Other Multiplier effects of NREGA:* Apart from being a path breaking wage employment programme, NREGA has become a transformative vehicle of empowering local communities to enhance their livelihood security and to renegotiate their Rights with institutions of governance. Other multiplier effects include, better village development through participatory planning and convergence practices.
- *Any innovation/best practice/case studies/beneficiary narratives:* The design of the Act is encouraging the State Governments and districts to evolve innovative solutions to the infrastructural or procedural constraints.

ANNEXURE II: Suggestive Sample

- *Blocks and Gram Panchayats:* The sample will consist of two blocks from each district, four Gram Panchayat, four villages (one in each GP) from each block.
- *Works:* One work should be surveyed per Gram Panchayat. Out of the total 4 works per block, 3 should be ongoing and 1 should be completed.
- *Workers/Non-workers:* The method of cross verification and indepth analysis should be applied. Sample could include ten workers per work

ANNEXURE III

(Cover Page)

**PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONAL NETWORK
National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)**

Name of Districts:

State (s):

Month:

Name & Address of Institute:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Table

S.No.	District	Phase	Selection Criteria				Sample Size					Tools Used	Practices for Replication	Remedial Action & Recommendations
			Significant Positive Impact Identified (detail)	And/ or Constraints Identified (detail)	Discussed with State Government	Other Indicators Analysed	Block Surveyed (Total Number of Blocks in the district)	Gram Panchayats Surveyed (Total Number of Gram Panchayats)	Villages Surveyed	Works Surveyed	Number of Workers/ Non-workers			
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	(j)	(k)	(l)	(m)	(n)

Executive Summary (contd.)

The executive summary should clearly sum up the objective of the appraisal, districts selected and selection criteria, significant positive impact observed, implementation practices and procedures for appraisal, designed and contributing to the positive change, findings and conclusions through inter/intra state comparison and recommendations.

CHAPTER I: Background

Background and Context of NREGA in the State

The context, including the socio-economic profile in the State, in which the Scheme is being implemented.

CHAPTER II: District Selection Criteria & District Profile

The institution should also mention in detail the criteria, that is, the significant positive impact or constraints, outcome variables being assessed. The positive impact should be identified against the objectives of the Programme and the benefits to the targeted population. The impact could also include multiplier effects or auxiliary outcomes.

District profile should include, the socio-economic context in which NREGA is being implemented, district administrative set up, processes and procedures

CHAPTER III: Sample Size & Research Methodology

Sample Size: It should be indicated to the extent to which the sample selected is significant and adequately representative of the sociological and cultural environment of the State as well as the identified impact.

Research Methodology & Tools: The qualitative and quantitative techniques and tools should be designed after identifying the different stakeholders and their different perspectives. The questions should aim at providing information on the factors contributing to the impact.

The institute may also list constraints and limitations in the study, such as, insufficiency of available data and lack of random assignment.

The research/survey methodology should be described in detail

Field observations and interactions should be verified from the official records at Gram Panchayats, Blocks and District level, discrepancies, if any should be noted.

All collected data and information should be consolidated and provided in tables/figures in the report for reference.

A sample of the category-wise (based on stakeholders) Questionnaires used for the Survey should be attached

CHAPTER IV: Findings & Analysis

The analysis should focus on identifying and appraising the conditions under which the significant impact/results were obtained. The analysis would include efficient management practices, procedures, processes, factors that have been designed or have contributed to the good performance and factors that may limited performance.

If more than one site is implementing a project, the evaluation should describe each site and the anticipated variation that may be expected across sites

The analysis should indicate how and when the data was collected and the different sources used. The findings should compare and contrast findings across blocks, panchayats and sites.

CHAPTER V: Inferences

Inferences from the findings should be balanced and objective. Through intra and inter-state comparison the institute will:

- (a) Verify the authenticity and extent of the indicated impact.
- (b) Highlight models, practices that have lead to the significant impact
- (c) Lessons learned and good practices that may be replicated within the state and other states should be identified. Issues for further research and analysis may also be indicated.
- (d) Constraints that limit the effectiveness of the Scheme and optimal performance should be indicated

CHAPTER VI: Remedial Action, Recommendations & Future Interventions

Through diagnosis, indepth qualitative and quantitative analysis and dialogue with State Governments, the institution will also suggest action plan/guidelines for the State and the district for remedial action and future interventions.

It is critical that recommendations of the institute be based on empirical data and findings. The findings of the research should be pragmatic and directly relevant to the improving the efficiency of implementation of the Scheme and intended use of results to the beneficiaries.

REFERENCES

All sources and references should be listed in alphabetic order. Citations should clearly mention author, publication year, name and volume.