

# Participatory Planning in MGNREGS

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## Introduction

Participatory development is a new paradigm of development. In India, the experience of centralized planning has led to dismal performance primarily on two counts: (i) the fruits of development have not reached the lowest level of the social structure - a failure of so-called trickle-down approach to development. (ii) People's participation in the development process has been largely lacking. In India, Local Governance Institutions, called 'Panchayats', in rural areas were given importance through 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment (PRI Act) which came into force from 24<sup>th</sup> April 1992 to give constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions at the district and below. These institutions are responsible for ensuring economic development and social justice to the rural populace.

Participatory Planning is an approach through which the planning process is brought close to the people. It provides a framework in which planning is attempted at different politico-administrative levels so that there is greater integration between the developmental needs and priorities of smaller areas (micro-region) and different socio-economic classes of people with regional, sub-national and national level development policies and goals. Participatory Planning is a process of preparing an integrated plan for the region taking into account available natural, human and financial resources and covering the sectoral activities and schemes assigned to the unit at district level and below and those implemented through local governments in a state.

The concept of grass root level planning is a recent addition to the strategies of micro planning for development. It might be considered as a logical extension of the national planning scheme promoted by most countries. An alternative explanation of its emergence, however, might be traced to the failure of both the national and regional plans to adequately respond to the needs of the people at the grass root level. After the Community Development Programme, which was launched in 1952, it was realized that without an agency at the village level, which could represent the entire community, assume responsibility and provide the necessary leadership for implementing Development programmes, real progress in rural Development could not take place. In India grass-root planning has received much attention after effective enforcement of 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendments of the Indian constitution in relation to empowering of local

bodies. Frequently, the conditions necessary for the success of such planning are not well understood as can be seen from several attempts made in this respect in our country. The local self-government institutions having an effective strategy for preparing micro planning, with focus on mobilization of target people for effective participation in the process of planning at the grass root level, to attain greater success in the field of rural development. Any strategy of planning should rely on the availability of local resources to attain sustainable development. Participatory planning implies that the “planning for a smaller region, like, for a village, block or district, for optimum utilization of locally available resources, by the local people, priority in order to satisfy their own needs, by adopting appropriate technologies without disturbing environment”.

One of the initiatives of the government of India for poverty reduction is provision of manual employment for the interested families in the rural areas with the objective of increasing income and thus strengthening rural infrastructure by selecting the works through participatory planning, the scheme is called MGNREGA.

### **MGNREGA**

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, the flagship programme of the UPA Government was passed by the Parliament in August 2005 and came into effect on 5th September 2005. It provides a legal Guarantee for 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work at the minimum wage rate notified for agricultural labour prescribed by the State or else an unemployment allowance.

The objective of the Act is to supplement wage employment opportunities in rural areas and in the process to also build up durable assets. Creation of durable assets and strengthening the livelihood resource base of the rural poor is an important object of the scheme.

Planning is critical to the successful implementation of the Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). A key indicator of success is timely generation of employment (within 15 days) while ensuring the process of selection of works. The need to act within a time limit necessitates advance planning and budgetary allocations. The basic aim of the planning process is to ensure that the District is prepared well in advance to offer productive employment on demand. The Act under section 16, mandates the formulation of a development plan by the Gram Panchayat on the

recommendations of the Gram Sabha. The development Plan will be an Annual Plan that consists of a 'shelf of projects' to offer employment on demand.

In order to implement the provisions of the act, a self of projects or annual plan has to be prepared and the Gram panchayat has to implement the plan. Very recently Government of India insisted the districts to entrust the preparation of plan on participatory mode with the help of local people and institutions on integrating the various sectors and sections by conducting Intensive Participatory Planning Exercise (IPPE) at the village/ward level and consolidation at the Gram Panchayat level.

### **Intensive Participatory Planning Exercise (IPPE) in MGNREGS**

The unique feature of MGNREGA is its demand-driven character. But before begin to record demand, it is need to make a prior assessment of the quantum of work likely to be demanded as also ascertain the timing of this demand. This matching of demand and supply of work is the process of planning under MGNREGA and this is to be achieved through the preparation of a Labour Budget, which has two sides –one, assessment of quantum and timing of demand for work and two, preparing a shelf of projects to meet this demand in a timely manner. This process is crucial for the timely generation of employment within 15 days while ensuring the selection of works. This process is called Integrated Participatory Planning Exercise (IPPE), it is reinforcing the preparation of labour budget formulations through the use of strategies such as: intensive door to door survey of all vulnerable households, participatory identification of works, outcome orientation of works, close monitoring of this process by functionaries at the State and Central level. The IPPE is a national initiative by the Ministry of Rural Development in 2500 identified backward blocks in the country with financial allocation of Rs. 1 lakh per block for training. It aims to ensure that people from socially excluded communities are included in their village's annual MGNREGA plan. The IPPE aims to ensure everyone in a community participates in the MGNREGA planning process and that their voices are heard.

The legal mandate of adhering of IPPE is mentioned in the sub-section 6 of section 14 of the MGNREG Act 2005 and it mandates that the District Programme Coordinator (DPC) under MGNREGA shall prepare, in the month of December every year, a Labour Budget (LB) for the next financial year containing the details of anticipated demand for unskilled manual work in the district and the plan for identification of need based works and engagement of workers in the

works covered under the programme. The para 7 of schedule I of the act mandates that there shall be a systematic, participatory planning exercise at each tier of panchayat, conducted within the specified period of time. All the works to be implemented by the Panchayats, have to be identified and placed before the Gram Sabha and such works to be implemented in the intermediate Panchayats or other implementing agencies are to be approved by the intermediate or district Panchayats. The chapter 6 of the MGNREGA operational guidelines, 2013 contains details about the procedure to be followed in planning for works and preparation of labour budget. Under the Act every Gram Panchayat (village council) should have an annual plan that includes enough money to pay every MGNREGA-registered family, a list of all the projects that need to be carried out in the community along with project plans.

Thus through IPPE, a development plan consisting of i) Assessment of labour demand, ii) Identification of works to meet the estimated labor demand and iii) Estimated Cost of works and wages is to be prepared.

This process of planning and identification of projects must be in a participatory manner at the habitation level, reflecting the needs and aspirations of the local people, while ensuring maximum participation of women, SCs/STs and the poor. These habitation level proposals are collated at the GP level, incorporating inter-habitation works that are identified, again in a participatory manner. Individual works are logically sequenced and packaged together on the principles of NRLM, to form projects. The GP is the custodian of the SoP and all PIAs working within the GP are reporting their plans to the GP, which are incorporated into the Annual Plan for MGNREGA after the approval of the GS. The order of priority of projects is determined by each GP in meetings of the GS and the Ward Sabha and is reflected in the Annual Plan.

### **Steps in the Preparation of the Development Plan**

- ❖ GPs are assisted by CFT (wherever positioned) and For remaining GPs, Task Force consisting of officials, stakeholders, experts, representatives of Civil Society Organisations etc for a cluster of GPs are formed.
- ❖ Task Force members are responsible for the preparation of Development Plan are trained on the basic principles of INRM.

- ❖ Consultations with stakeholder groups especially MGNREGS workers, SHGs, small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers etc are organised for the preparation of Development Plan
- ❖ To ensure that, views of all stakeholders are incorporated in the Development Plan, watershed approach using participatory techniques like mapping of onsite works, priority setting, key informants interviews, focus group discussions etc. are adopted.
- ❖ Gram Sabha meetings are held in which, presentations of draft development plan by key members of the Task Force are made, it is followed by discussions and suggestions. In the meeting itself, suggestions including modifications are incorporated and the development plan to be finalized.

### **Major impact of Participatory Planning Exercise in MGNREGS**

The Job card holders were aware about the IPPE process and awareness levels on the IPPE were high. The main focus of the exercise was to understand about the process of IPPE and its impact on the process of participatory planning in preparation self of projects under MGNREGA. Many Job card holders are understood the planning process and Block planning team members have conducted meetings with villagers before starting the IPPE and explained the importance of planning. In the process of IPPE, planning through participatory exercises is specified, identifying the permissible works under MGNREGS using techniques like social mapping, resource mapping, transect walk. Planning for convergence possibilities through discussion with people also to be explored. Block planning team members were conducted the participatory exercises. In this process of planning, identification and planning of works were done with discussion with villagers and the planning process was done at the GP level. Due to the IPPE process, demanding of individual works found reasonably good in many states.

Inclusion of vulnerable sections like SCs, STs, houseless, landless, women headed households, physically and mentally challenged is one of the most important objectives of the IPPE. Thus the IPPE provided an opportunity for the marginalized to join with the gram panchayats in the decision making process and getting better access to the benefits of MGNREGS. Overall impact, the IPPE conducted in the Gram panchayats have created better impact on mobilization of people for planning, encouraged people in intellectual discussion and demanded works to fulfill their needs. The process of conduct of IPPE was done as per the guidelines prescribed by the government.