



Taking the Panchayati Raj

Movement Forward through NREGA

, 2009



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From the Editor's Desk...

Effective use of ICT for Rural Development

Villages epitomize the soul of India and rural India is rich in resources, notwithstanding, it is yet to unfurl its full potential and catch up with the national mainstream. While economic interventions as a part of planned development process continues, empowerment through technology is the urgent need of the hour. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has emerged as an effective catalyst in societal development and one of the main driving forces in the growth of economies worldwide. In a vibrant democracy like ours, with diverse cultures and levels of development, ICT assumes greater significance.

While new and emerging ICT tools are being gradually drafted into the domain of rural development, the application of computers in the process of rural governance had begun in the country with some early and popular initiatives such as the Computerized Rural Information Systems Project (CRISP) by the Ministry of Rural Development. Under this project, every district in the country was provided with computers and CRISP software, (later re-named as 'RuralSoft'), to help District Rural Development Agencies manage programmes more efficiently. Much has changed since; ICT has emerged as a new way of reaching out to people at grassroots level.

The RD domain has come a long way both in terms of ICT infrastructure as well as software solutions. The results have started percolating down even to the common man in the villages. Be it wage payment to NREGA workers through biometric bank account cards, maintenance of operational Management Information Systems (MIS) or obtaining land records by a click of the mouse, just to name a few, ICT has revolutionised the whole perspective of rural communication.

Besides NREGS where the ICT is being used in a big way, it is also being used for other rural development programmes like NSAP, PMGSY and NLRMP. The database of beneficiaries receiving pension under NSAP has been uploaded onto the website and there are already instances of the target groups accessing it. Modernisation of Land Records is a major grassroot level ICT initiative of the Ministry which aims at employing state-of-the-art Information Technology (IT) to galvanize and transform the way of maintaining land records in the country.

Taking ICT to the village level is a daunting task owing to the sheer geographic expanse of rural areas in India, poor infrastructure and vagaries of power supply, etc. Every ICT project should consider the local needs of the intended beneficiaries as a starting point. Transforming government content in local languages and local contexts are of critical importance as the majority of people only use their native language and have little or no exposure to English. Moreover, it is not enough to just provide ICT services. It is equally important to augment human capacity and empower people to utilize ICT to access and use the same to reap full benefits out of it. The PRIs are being suitably sensitized to the benefits of ICT so that they can initiate steps at the micro-level to spread its use on a sustained basis. Another advantage of effective use of ICT is that it ensures transparency which is so very crucial for effective governance and gaining the confidence of citizens on the delivery mechanism, particularly in the context of rural development.

Nilam Sawhney
Editor-in-Chief

NREGA – a need to look beyond the success

Over the last three and a half years, National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) has been the mainstay for poverty alleviation in our vast rural areas. While standing as a testimony to the Government's commitment and concern for the cause of the rural poor, it attracted worldwide attention for its novelty and universal coverage.

No doubt, NREGA has revolutionised the whole concept and approach to governance paradigm and for the first time a rights-based framework has been introduced; the Government abdicated its role as a benefactor and adorned the role of a facilitator. Going by the sheer volume one would tend to get mesmerized - over 4.5 crore rural households as beneficiaries, 10 crore-job cards, more than 7.33 crore savings accounts in banks and post offices. No doubt, the bargaining



power of agricultural labour that was subject to wanton exploitation has substantially increased because of the launching of the NREGA. No longer are they prepared to settle for less than the notified wage. The average notified wage under NREGA has itself increased from Rs.65 per day in 2006-07 to Rs.87 in 2009-10. We have further committed ourselves to providing a real wage rate of Rs.100 under NREGA.

But is it enough for us to drop our guard and be elated that NREGA has achieved its goals? Perhaps we need to pause and ponder. Statistics is always a double-edged sword, and vis-à-vis NREGA it also shows that only 14 percent of rural households have actually got full 100 days work during the last financial year. When contrasted with the total number of rural unemployed and the BPL families, it makes one sit up and ask whether NREGA has really lived up to its full potential? We really need to tighten our belt and re-evaluate our performance and approaches, so that the opportunities are not frittered away. There is an urgent need for enlarging the scope of NREGA. We have started the deliberations and consultation process with experts, stakeholders, States, civil society organizations, so that the scope of NREGA is widened appropriately. One of the issues identified on an immediate basis concern the fact that restricting NREGA to only unskilled manual work has been too restrictive to address the problems of those rural BPL unemployed youth who cannot or do not want to do manual work.

Another factor that needs serious consideration is the alignment of NREGA with agriculture. Agriculture contributes nearly one-fifth of the gross domestic product in India and provides livelihood to nearly 68 percent of our rural

Minister's View point



population. Therefore the growth of agricultural productivity is vital for our national growth. It also is critical for enlarging the food security safety net for the poor and marginalized.

There is also a need to integrate NREGA with the proposed National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) by bringing persons who have worked under NREGA over the past three years under the ambit of proposed NRLM to develop their skills and make them self

employed. The integration of NREGA and NRLM with skill development would go a long way towards mitigating the problems of the rural poor so that they can lead a life with dignity.

We also need to reassess the governance and implementation process under NREGA. The PRIs have to play a bigger role in NREGA governance. For creating the next stage of transparent effective governance in NREGA, we are in the process of integrating NREGA with the UID (Unique Identification) initiative. Lack of awareness, inability of workers to submit written (job) applications, delayed payment of wages, non-maintenance of muster rolls and inferior quality of assets created under the programme are some of the implementation issues that need to be addressed to weed out corruption.

We need to work earnestly by addressing these issues; our efforts will undoubtedly help to rejuvenate NREGA and make it more vibrant to enable it to be a real and path-breaking change maker for millions of people.



Taking the Panchayati Raj Movement Forward through NREGA

NREGA is poised to benefit millions of rural poor with the inclusion of new works under its ambit and the convergence with other flagship programmes. Efforts are on to bring in more transparency and accountability to ensure that the benefits reach out to the poor and the needy villagers. To this end, several workshops have been organized by Ministry of Rural Development as discussed in the article below.



NREGA Workshop



In his address, Dr. Joshi underlined the need to ensure effective implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and its processes. Spelling out NREGA as the new model of E-Governance he stressed the need to integrate technology for the benefit of the rural people. The Minister called for timely payment of wages, to leverage the potential benefits of NREGA and to strengthen the role of Panchayats as the principal authorities for planning and implementation of the Act. He announced that a consensus has been arrived over the following

All the Gram Panchayats across the country would be having a Panchayat Ghar and a Bharat Nirman Rajiv Gandhi Sewa Kendra over the next three years. This was announced by the Union Rural Development Minister, Dr. C.P. Joshi, at a National Workshop on “**NREGA: A step towards Governance Reform, Transparency and Accountability**” which was organised by the Union Ministry of Rural Development on the occasion of the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on 20 August 2009. Sh. Rahul Gandhi was the Guest of Honour at the Workshop which was attended by the Ministers of State for Rural Development, Shri. Pradip Jain Aditya, Shri. Shishir Adhikari, Ms. Agatha Sangma, and others.

There are 2.52 lakh Gram Panchayats across the country. The Panchayat Ghars have been envisaged as a mini secretariat – as a forum for the rural people to meet, share and discuss their issues, to provide logistic support and as a record keeping facility center. The Bharat Nirman Rajiv Gandhi Sewa Kendra shall be a single window for providing the information on the NREGS and shall provide feedback on the quality of implementation of the programme. The idea is to slowly move from wage employment to self-employment by providing skill development facilities to the rural people and in the process give a fillip to the rural economy.

issues by the four working groups on decentralization, sustainable development, role of technology and public accountability:

- Every Panchayat to have a Panchayat Ghar and Bharat Nirman Rajeev Gandhi Sewa Kendra over the next three years.
- Ensuring 100 days of work on demand
- Timely payment of wages
- Addressing the issue of uneven payments in different states
- Enforcing the accountability more effectively
- District level ombudsman
- Involving citizens in monitoring NREGS by setting up a group of 100 eminent persons from among the media, law and social activists
- Creation of a National Employment Guarantee Mission to provide technical support to NREGS
- Replication of Andhra Pradesh Model of Social Audit on a larger scale
- Priority to water harvesting on a large scale in ponds and water bodies constructed under NREGS in rainfall deficient areas.

Another highlight of the function was the announcement

Sulabh Founder and Social Reformer Awarded 2009 Stockholm Water Prize



Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak, founder of the Sulabh Sanitation Movement in India, was named the 2009 Stockholm Water Prize Laureate. Dr. Pathak formally received the 2009 Stockholm Water Prize at a Royal Award Ceremony and Banquet during the World Water Week in Stockholm this August. First presented in 1991, the Stockholm Water Prize is the world's most prestigious prize for outstanding achievement in water-related activities. The annual prize, which includes a USD 150,000 award and a specially designed crystal sculpture, honours individuals, institutions or organisations whose work contributes broadly to the conservation and protection of water resources and to improved health of the planet's inhabitants and ecosystems. An international nominating committee appointed by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences is responsible to review the nominations and propose a candidate.

The Founders of the prize are Swedish and international companies in co-operation with the City of Stockholm. The prize programme is administered by the Stockholm International Water Institute.

As the founder of the Sulabh International Social Service Organisation, Dr. Pathak is known around the world for his wide ranging work in the sanitation field to improve public health, advance social progress, and improve human rights in India and other countries. His accomplishments span the fields of sanitation technology, social enterprise, and healthcare education for millions of people in his native country, serving as a model for NGO agencies and public health initiatives around the world.

Since he established the Sulabh Sanitation Movement in 1970, Dr. Pathak has worked to change social attitudes towards unsanitary traditions in slums, rural villages, and dense urban districts, and developed cost effective toilet systems that have improved daily life and health for millions of people. He has also waged an ongoing campaign to abolish the traditional practice of manual "scavenging" of human waste from bucket latrines in India while championing the rights of former scavengers and their families to economic opportunity, decent standards of living, and social dignity.

Ensure Monitoring of Land Records says Dr. C.P. Joshi at NLRMP Workshop

The Government has asked the States to ensure the monitoring of National Land Record Modernisation Programme (NLRMP) and also to see that the funds are properly utilised. Addressing a follow-up workshop on NLRMP organised by the Department of Land Records in New Delhi on **18 August 2009**, the Union Minister for Rural Development, Dr. C.P. Joshi, said that the heavy investments that India is making in modernizing its land records system should be commensurate with the benefits it hopes to reap for its citizens. These records will be continuously updated, will be tamper-proof and will be available in the public domain. A modern Land Information System (LIS) will enable citizens to obtain other land based data such as certificates, cropping patterns, ownership details, etc. quickly, correctly and conveniently.

The Ministry has committed an expenditure of Rs.3098 crore for completion of the scheme by end of the 12th Plan. This time-frame requires great efficiency on the part of the State Governments as well as the Department of Land Resources. Maintaining an LIS is now a highly technical task. The personnel involved in computerizing the land records, in digitizing them, in conducting surveys with ETS and DGPS and in using aerial ortho-photos and satellite imagery should be well-trained. The target is to complete the NLRMP in all the districts of the country by the end of the 12th Plan. Dr. Joshi said with the spread of awareness about the scheme there will be high expectation in the public that they will always have real-time records accurately and easily available rather than the tedious system that prevails at present. He said to avoid future litigations and land disputes maintenance of accuracy in the correct format of records is a must.

South Asian Countries Meet on Sanitation

A two-day meeting of the Inter Country Working Group for South Asian Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN) was inaugurated in New Delhi on **19 August 2009** by the Union Minister of Rural Development, Dr. C.P.Joshi. Addressing the delegates, Dr. Joshi stated that 'Sanitation has a strong connection not only with personal hygiene but also with human dignity and well-being, public health, nutrition and even education'.



Country delegates from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Bhutan, Nepal and India participated in the meeting. Delegates / experts from UN, International Agencies like UNICEF, Water-AID and others also participated in the meeting.

The Inter Country Working Group meeting was organized in pursuance of one of the commitments made in the Delhi Declaration adopted by the Third South Asian Conference on Sanitation held in New Delhi last year. It deliberated upon various steps taken by member countries as a follow up of the commitments made in the Delhi Declaration. The next South Asian Conference on Sanitation is scheduled to be held in Sri Lanka in 2010.

The meeting also explored ways to build solidarity, resources networks and institutions and to promote inter Governmental and cross country co-operation to develop capacities to achieve sustainable sanitation.

Central Employment Guarantee Council Discusses NREGA Works

The reconstituted Central Employment Guarantee Council held its first meeting under the Chairmanship of Union Rural Development Minister, Dr. C.P. Joshi, on **18 August 2009**. The members of this council include representatives from the Central Government, the State Governments, Panchayati Raj Institutions, organizations of workers and disadvantaged groups with the representatives from women and members of Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, the Other Backward Castes and Minorities. The members discussed at length the issues related to the administrative and technical capacity building under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. Another important issue deliberated upon during the meeting was the inclusion of new works under NREGA.

The Minister of Rural Development, Dr. C.P Joshi, called upon the members of the council to undertake field visits in different states to review the performance of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and other implementation issues. He apprised members of the fact that NREGA will continue to augment the economic security of the rural poor thereby enabling them to graduate from wage earning to more sustainable forms of employment and livelihood security and this indeed would be a significant step towards their empowerment.

The Central Employment Guarantee Council is mandated to perform the following functions and duties: (a) establish a central evaluation and monitoring system; (b) advise the Central Government on all matters concerning the implementation of this Act; (c) review the monitoring and redressal mechanism from time to time and recommend improvements required; (d) promote the widest possible dissemination of information about the Schemes made under this Act; (e) monitor the implementation of this Act; (f) preparation of annual reports to be laid before Parliament by the Central Government on the implementation of this Act; (g) any other duty or function as may be assigned to it by the Central Government. In addition, it is authorized to undertake evaluation of the various Schemes made under this Act and for that purpose collect or cause to be collected statistics pertaining to the rural economy and the implementation of the Schemes.

Road Map for a New CAPART

The first meeting of the newly constituted Executive Committee and the General Body of Council for Advancement of People's Action and Technology (CAPART) was held under the Chairmanship of the Union Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister, Dr. C.P. Joshi, in New Delhi on **24 August 2009**.

Reforms in governance and ensuring transparency, accountability and responsiveness in the working of CAPART are to be ushered in. A high powered committee headed by Shri Mihir Shah of the Planning Commission is to prepare the blueprint to revitalize the premier organization to introduce reforms in its action, activity and governing structures enroute to build partnership with the civil society for implementation of various programmes of Ministry of the Rural Development such as NREGA. The Committee will be submitting its report over the next three months. In his address, Dr. Joshi stressed the need for the reforms in the existing governing structures and practices of CAPART to ensure that it is able to fulfill its mandate to build up partnership with the voluntary sector with innovation as the key element. He underlined the need to introduce reforms in the current management processes and systems, capacity building and monitoring and evaluation in addition to ensuring transparency, accountability and responsiveness. He emphasized that there is need for CAPART to modernize its functioning by applying more ICT interventions.

The Minister not only assured the audience that the culture of inefficiency and wastefulness in the functioning would be eliminated, he also invited civil society to play a more proactive role in making CAPART a true catalyst for unleashing a new energy in the voluntary sector.

The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Rural Development, Mr. Pradeep Jain, Secretary, Rural Development, Mrs. Rita Sharma, and several prominent civil society activists such as, Shri Rajender Singh, Mr. Aloysius Fernandes, Mrs. Neelima Khaitan, Ms. Nafisa Barot and Shri Ravi Chopra.

'Sadhbhavna Diwas' Pledge



The birth anniversary of the late Prime Minister of India, Shri Rajiv Gandhi on 20 August is observed as "Sadhbhavna Diwas", nationwide every year. The theme of 'Sadhbhavna' is to promote national integration and communal harmony among people of all religions, language and regions. The idea behind the observance of 'Sadhbhavna Diwas' is to eschew violence and promote goodwill among the people. The Ministry of Rural Development, led by the honourable Minister for Rural Development, Dr.C.P.Joshi, took the 'Sadhbhavna Pledge' on **20 August 2009**, at the Ministry.

Landmarks of the Month

Meeting of the Group on Direct Transfer of Social Security Pension



A meeting of the task force was held on **28 August 2009** at the Vigyan Bhavan Annexe to discuss the direct transfer of Social Security Pension into the bank/post office of the beneficiaries. This was the first meeting of this specially formed Group and was chaired by Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development. The meeting was attended by all the members of the Group, including Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of India and DG, NIC. The administrative and technical issues involved in achieving the objective were identified and thoroughly

discussed. After deliberations, it has been decided to constitute two sub groups to go into the administrative and technical issues in detail and recommend suitable measures. The meeting of the sub groups is proposed to be held in the third week of September 2009. The reports of the sub groups will be thereafter considered by the main group.

National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) includes three pension schemes namely, Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) and Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS). The Central Assistance is provided through State Governments @ Rs. 200 per month per beneficiary. The Union Government recently decided that payment under disability and widow pension schemes has to be made only through post office/bank accounts and in the case of old age pension this mode of payment has to be adopted where feasible.

Workshop on Consolidation and Innovation for Enhancing People's Participation and Promoting Sustainable Development in NREGA



Addressing the participants at a day long workshop on Consolidation and Innovation for Enhancing People's Participation and promoting Sustainable Development in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) on **17 August 2009**, Dr.Joshi said it is critical to look at the recommendations made by the participants as these recommendations will be considered in a way that does not compromise the non-negotiable provisions of the Act. He emphasized that the use of IT is central to facilitating transparency and accountability. Highlighting the need to ensure timely payment of

wages, to leverage the potential benefits of NREGA and to strengthen the role of Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis as the principal authorities for planning and implementation of the Act the Minister said that the groups of women workers and Self Help Groups should be encouraged under the Programme. He stressed the need to gradually move towards semi-skilled employment from unskilled employment and the fact that the Scheme should also consider individuals incentives for functionaries at the field level.

The participants discussed ways and means to implement NREGA more effectively and made recommendations on issues relevant to the next phase of NREGA including legal provisions of the Act, securing workers' entitlements and rights, capacity building of functionaries and workers, local expertise required at Gram Panchayats and quality of works and sustainable development.

Every month we focus on a significant aspect of the Ministry of Rural Development's flagship programme, NREGA. We have already featured articles on 'Job Cards', 'Social Audits', 'Muster Roll', 'Financial Inclusion', 'Phases of Implementation', 'ICT and others. In this issue, we take up a case study of NREGA.

NREGA has improved the lives of thousands of agricultural labourers across the country. **Ms. Yasmeen Akhtar (Consultant-NREGA)** sends us one such case study of Hemraj Dhave from the Betul district of Madhya Pradesh.

With the scarcity of potable water as well as water for agriculture, the people of Betul District were facing many hardships in their daily life.



Hemraj Dhave

Hemraj Dhave was an agricultural land owner in this district, whose land was barren and served no purpose. He has four children who are studying. As he was the sole breadwinner in his family it was with great difficulty that he was able to sustain his family. He worked mostly as a labourer on other people's land and elsewhere in his village. Hemraj did not mind the kind of work that he was doing as at that point of time it was important for him to earn enough so that he could feed his family members. On some occasions his wife would also accompany him

for work in order to earn enough for the family. Thus, life was a desperate struggle for Hemraj.

Hemraj regularly attended the Gram Sabha meetings and through such meetings he got to know about the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). He applied for a Job Card and got himself and his wife enrolled in the scheme. In three months a well was constructed on his land in which he along with his wife and 12 others worked. The equal and sufficient wages have brought a ray of hope in their dark lives. He started growing vegetables and food grains. He



Well constructed by Hemraj and 12 other workers

took care of the plants wholeheartedly and this can be seen in the growth of the plants. This has increased the financial capacity of the family.

Hemraj is also happy about his bank account which was opened under NREGA. This has uplifted his social status and he has also started to save money. He says, 'This scheme has provided me work in my village and has assured food for the unfortunate people like me. I wish that this scheme should continue forever so that our lives could change for the better'.



Hemraj tending to his land

Silver Filigree

Swarnjayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana (SGSY) is a self-employment programme of the Ministry of Rural Development which aims at providing assistance to the rural poor living Below the Poverty Line (BPL) for establishing micro-enterprises with the help of bank credit and Government subsidy.

Filigree is a craftsmanship of a delicate kind made with twisted threads, usually of gold and silver or stitching of the same cursive motif. It often suggests lace and involves threads being soldered together to form an object. Filigree work is considered to be an ancient form of art which originated in Greece. It is probable that in India and various parts of central Asia, filigree has been worked since ages without any change in the designs. Asiatic jewellers were probably influenced by the Greeks settled on that continent and the Indian filigree workers, till date, retain the same patterns as those of the ancient Greeks.

The Craft

Filigree is an ancient art of metal work practiced in the traditional way. Wandering workmen were given a certain amount of gold, coined or rough, which was weighed, heated in a pan of charcoal, beaten into wire, and then worked in the courtyard or verandah of the employer's house according to the designs of the artist, who weighs the complete work on restoring it and is paid at a specified rate for his labour. Very fine grains or beads and spines of gold, scarcely thicker than coarse hair, projecting from plates of gold are methods of ornamentation still used. The created articles have a trellis-like appearance.

In India, filigree artifacts are made of alloy which contains over 90% of silver and to compete with the changing times new methods are being used. The artists have maintained the craft by keeping themselves updated with the market requirement. Platinum polish is also used which leaves a glare on the item. The silver is extracted through a series of consecutive smaller holes to produce fine strings of silver threads. The string is the specialty in the filigree jewelry.



Filigree Brooch

The styles of filigree work are categorized in three kinds of patterns ie – “meenakari”, “khulla jaal” and “flowers and leaves”. Traditional items include figures of animals, birds and flowers. Konark Chakra and temple motifs are favourite mementos while a still depicting the chariot of Arjuna driven by Lord Krishna is quite popular. Brooches, ladies bags, pendants, earrings and hairpins and other utility items like the trays, plates, cups, candle stands bowls, ash-trays, incense containers, animals, birds, flowers, peacock and many more are also made.

Filigree Centres in India

Silver filigree is famous in Cuttack, in the eastern India state of Orissa. The silver filigree craft is locally known as ‘tarkashi’ in Orissa. Due to lack of patronage and modern design ideas this is a dying art. Most filigree work revolves around images of Gods and Goddesses. The anklets from Cuttack remain evergreen. Some fine filigree is also being produced.

Karimnagar in Andhra Pradesh has highly skilled artists practicing the delicate craftsmanship of filigree. These include spoons, buttons cigarette cases, boxes, ashtrays, buttons pill boxes, jewellery, paandans and perfume containers. Designs of peacocks, parrots and fish are depicted in the perfume containers. The artisans display mastery is twisting the fine silver wire into delicate loops knitted in a zigzag pattern resulting in an intricate lace like appearance.

Calcutta is another famous place for filigree work, traditionally known as Calcutti Work.

The silver filigree work, practiced in some parts of India, is considered as the source of livelihood to the artisans in those areas. The work needs much effort and concentration to meet the present demand of the market. SGSY provides succor to these artisans to develop this craft further and generate income for themselves.

Disaster Resistant Housing in Rural Areas

Out of all the natural disasters the earthquakes are the most dangerous and unpredictable. With regard to cyclone, flood and drought the onslaught can be predicted beforehand and the other disasters, except earthquakes, are manmade which can be prevented with precautions. In order to be better prepared and minimise the disastrous aftermath of earthquakes, the **Department of Rural Housing** has come forward with the following suggestions on Disaster resistant housing in rural areas.

Earthquake Control Measures

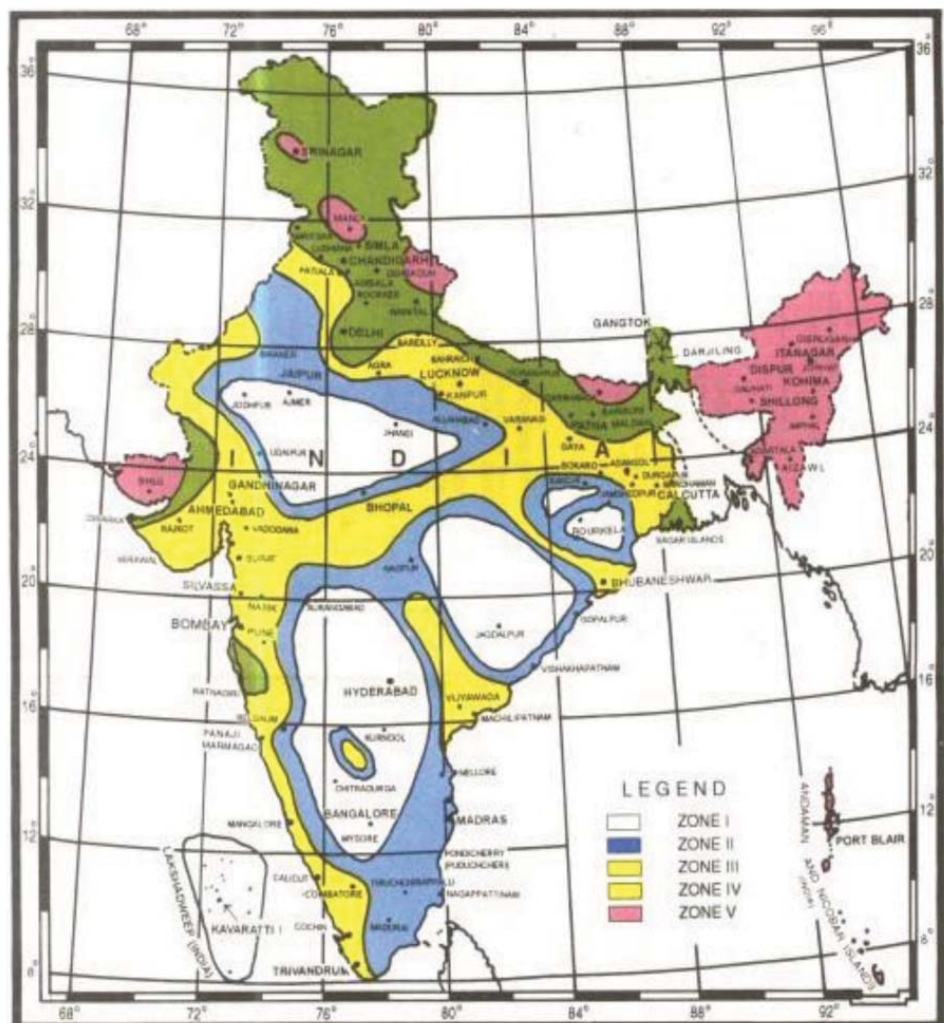
There are two primary factors to be considered while designing the building. The first one is that either the structure should be able to sustain the intensity of earthquake, or if at all the structure collapses, there should not be any casualty. The major damage to the inhabitants of a building occur when the building is constructed with the available random rubble stones without following the preventive norms of earthquake resistant features.

It is necessary to indicate broadly the seismic coefficients that could generally be adopted in different parts or zones of the country though, of course, a rigorous analysis considering all the factors involved has got to be made in the case of all important projects in order to arrive at suitable seismic coefficients for design.

How to Build Earthquake-Resistant Housing

Earthquakes hit strongly in earthquake prone zones and therefore, more builders, architects and property owners look for ways to build earthquake-resistant housing. Many construction companies specialize in building these types of structures. While no design can totally prevent earthquake damage, certain building systems can lessen it. The following guidelines can be followed to build earthquake-resistant housing.

- ❖ Design ground beams for earthquake-resistant housing in such a manner that steel beams are joined together by the feet and are allowed to go outside the line of the building to decrease the chance of the structure overturning.
- ❖ Light material should be used for floor and roof. Use of plywood, chipboard or plain timber with joists bolted firmly to the floor is effective for earthquake-resistant housing.



Seismic areas in India

Innovations & Improvements

- ❖ **Brace the building diagonally** to ensure that buildings resist sideways pressure and loads of debris.
- ❖ **Construct wood-frame housing** as it is not only lightweight, but also provides a strong resistance to earthquakes. Tie wall wells to the house foundation and nail wood firmly to studs to increase the earthquake resistance of the structure. Use a shear wall construction with studs forming the wall's shell and horizontal joists making up the floors and rafters supporting the roof.
- ❖ **Establish a large panel system for residences.** Set up concrete panels vertically and horizontally to surround the rooms in an apartment building. These panels uphold the building's structural integrity along with vertical and horizontal floor panels.
- ❖ **Use a modular building system.** Stack ready-made boxes and connect them together. The walls thus formed resist shaking caused by earthquakes from both directions. Pipes as well as wall and floor finishes fit in an earthquake-resistant concrete box.
- ❖ **Make buildings of regular shape.** Cylindrical structures perform better in high-wind areas.
- ❖ **Design buildings as aerodynamic as possible.** This reduces the effect of wind load on tall structures.
- ❖ **Avoid odd shapes** in elevation and the whole building should be in balance. The center of gravity of building should not move.
- ❖ **Minimize cantilever projections** and their length should not be more than 3 to 4 feet.
- ❖ **Keep the span between columns as small as possible.**
- ❖ **Avoid point loads on load-carrying beams.**
- ❖ **Avoid unnecessary increase in dead loads on the cottage-building.** For example, provision of terrace garden or terrace swimming pools etc. should be avoided.
- ❖ **Minimize The length of sunken portions of WC and bath.**
- ❖ **Provide buildings with vertical and horizontal bands** with minimum reinforced concrete to make the structure laterally stable to resist the earthquakes.
- ❖ **Place cottage-building's foundations on hard and level ground.**
- ❖ **Avoid very large overhead water tanks.** If it is required to have water tanks with larger capacity, then it should be divided into two or three smaller tanks and should be kept at different locations to maintain balance of cottage-building.
- ❖ **If the column length is more than 12 feet, then provide bracing beams** in between the column at regular intervals. Bracing beams strengthen a column, and allow construction of multistoried buildings with lateral support.
- ❖ **The columns should be connected at each level.**
- ❖ **Strengthen the brickwork,** by providing a sill or a lintel at every 3 feet level, and R.C.C. wall should be taken where it is possible.
- ❖ **Avoid very large and heavy windows** as these are bound to weaken the structure.
- ❖ **Install in the cottage/ building's electrification a main switch and circuit breakers** so as to avoid fire hazards because of short circuit during earthquake.
- ❖ **Use new and better materials** like fiber-reinforced concrete and fiber-glass where possible. These new materials decrease the dead load and increase the structure's strength.

IAY providing homestead sites to rural BPL households

This brief note from by Smt. Khurana (Director, Rural Housing) on the Scheme for providing homestead sites to the rural BPL households as part of Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) reiterates the Ministry's commitment to provide the basic needs of home and shelter to India's rural needy.

Rural Housing aims to provide homestead sites to all by 2012 and to step-up house construction for the rural poor, so as to cover all the poor by 2016-17. According to the estimates made by the Ministry on the basis of the NSSO Report (58th & 59th round), there are 7.7 million rural BPL households in the country, who do not have a house. For the poor and landless who do not have houses, provision of homestead plot is essential to enable them to fulfill their need for shelter and to avail of the benefits under IAY.



The Planning Commission had earmarked Rs.100 crore out of the total IAY outlay during 2008-09 for incentivising States to provide homestead plots to the landless rural BPL households. Based on the feedback received from the State Governments and other Ministries, as well as from the recommendations of the Expenditure Finance Committee, the following basic parameters of the scheme were submitted for consideration of the Cabinet and were approved. Orders are under issue requesting to (i) identify the land to be purchased or acquired and (ii) to intimate the number of BPL households for whom the land is to be purchased or acquired.

- (i) The beneficiaries will be selected only from the permanent IAY waitlists as per their priority in the list. Only those BPL households, who have neither land nor housesite, will be eligible.
- (ii) The State Government will regularise the land as a homestead site if it is presently occupied by a BPL household and if regularisation is permissible as per the existing acts and rules.
- (iii) If this is not the case, State Government will allot suitable government land as homestead site to the eligible BPL household. The government land includes community land (gocher, etc.), land belonging to panchayats or other local authorities.
- (iv) If suitable government land is not available for allotment as homestead sites, private land may be purchased or acquired for this purpose.
- (v) Before taking up land purchase or land acquisition, a competent authority will certify that it was not possible to regularise occupied land, if any, or that there is no suitable government land for allotment as homestead sites.
- (vi) Financial assistance of Rs. 10,000/- per beneficiary or actuals, whichever is less, will be provided for purchase/acquisition of a homestead site of an area around 100-250 sq.mt.
- (vii) Funding will be shared by Centre and States in the ratio of 50:50; for UTs, Central Government will fund 100%.
- (viii) If the amount per beneficiary falls short, the balance amount will be contributed by the State Government.
- (ix) First installment of the funds will be released only after the State certifies that it has no land to provide to the rural BPL either through regularization or through transfer and that it has identified the land meant for acquisition /purchase. Subsequent installments would be released when the States take possession of the land.
- (x) BPL families allotted land through purchase would be provided house construction assistance in the same year.
- (xi) The States will be expected to provide funds for the proposed scheme for similar initiatives. This is also subject to the condition that the States should continue to budget for the Scheme an amount not less than their previous year's budget.

The Media...on the Ministry

Now, health on NREGA card

Vineeta Pandey, NEW DELHI

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) beneficiaries will soon get free healthcare and insurance cover against serious ailment, as the government is planning to extend the benefits of Rashtriya Swasthya Beema Yojna (RSBY) to all NREGA beneficiaries.

The decision, taken during a high level meeting at the prime minister's office last week, would cover over 40 lakh NREGA beneficiaries and their family members, taking the total number of actual beneficiaries to roughly 1.5 crore.

The NREGA beneficiaries will be issued a biometric smart card for cashless trans-

actions up to Rs30,000 so that the workers have to pay nothing against medical treatment. The portable card will carry a unique identification number. The insurance will not only take care of hospitalisation charges but also all pre-existing diseases. RSBY is a unique health insurance scheme for below poverty line (BPL) families. There are about 55 lakh RSBY beneficiary families in the country, covering roughly 2 crore people.

However, senior officials said the government now wants to extend this benefit to NREGA workers living above poverty line (APL), the only criteria being the NREGA beneficiaries should have been employed for at least 15

SMART CARD

Centre plans to extend Rashtriya Swasthya Beema Yojna benefits to National Rural Employment Guarantee Act beneficiaries

Beneficiaries will get a biometric smart card for cashless transactions up to Rs30,000 for medical treatment

The portable card will carry a unique identification number

days or more in the last financial year.

Also, the scheme will cover only those NREGA workers who are otherwise not covered by RSBY in the BPL list.

The ministry of rural development has been asked to prepare a village-wise data of all NREGA beneficiaries who are not in the BPL list already prepared by RSBY.

The list will be passed on to the labour ministry, that runs RSBY, to compare with the existing list of BPL data and flag the non-BPL families based on the common family identity. The consolidated list will be placed on the website for subsequent use by the selected insurance company.

While the government is working out the financial liability, it has been decided that the annual premium amount for the insurance will be shared 75:25 between the Centre and states and the worker will have to pay a token Rs30 as registration or renewal fee.

Deccan Herald, Bangalore
Tuesday, 25th August 2009

NREGA disbursement for unskilled workers up 78%

Anwesh Koley & Arindam Ghosh

NEW DELHI

THE drought and failed rains in July 2009 has increased the disbursement of wages to unskilled workers by around 78% to Rs 1,600 crore in July, 2009 as compared to Rs 900 crore in the corresponding period previous year, under National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), the flagship scheme of the UPA government.

The scheme has received an allocation of Rs 60,350 crore since it became operational in 2006 and around 70% of this has gone in to disbursement of wages to the beneficiaries under the scheme. The rest has gone into the procurement of raw materials and infrastructure development.

Since the inception of the NREGA programme in 2006, a total of 7.18 crore accounts have been opened under the scheme and the department of post handles around 3.34 crore accounts which is around three-fifths of the total accounts opened.

The ministry of rural development is the nodal agency that monitors NREGS. Under this scheme, the postal department gets the money from states in the form of cheque or rolling funds. A list of beneficiaries under the NREGS is prepared and is sent to the postal department along with the money, which is required to be transferred to their accounts within three days. The state governments, on their behalf, try to ensure that the funds reach post offices within 12 days of claims being made.

Deccan Herald, Bangalore
Sunday, 23rd August 2009

All-party meet to review performance of NREGA

AGE CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Aug. 26: Acknowledging the impact of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in the rural areas, an all party meet convened to review its performance said there is still considerable scope for improvement in the implementation of the Act at different levels.

Congress MP Sandeep Dikshit said since farmers had to pay more wages to their workers due to the impact of NREGA, it is necessary for the government to write to the Agricultural Costs and Prices Commission, asking them to take this into account while fixing procurement

An all party meet convened to review its performance said there is still scope for improvement in the implementation of the Act

prices for the crops. While RJD leader Lalu Prasad Yadav advised the government to set up vigilance and monitoring committees to ensure accountability, BJP representative Rajendra Agarwal said the NREGS was not reaching the poor to the extent required. He suggested the government should go in for afforestation

in a big way under the scheme, in view of global warming.

The CPI (M) representative Ram Chander Dome suggested that the government should make spot payments by banks in areas which do not have bank branches. Samajwadi Party representative D.D. Tiwari said that the state governments are more interested in their own programmes rather than a national scheme like NREGS. NCP representative Ramrao Adik said it was necessary to expand the type of works permitted under the scheme, as the usual works such as building of village roads and de-silting of ponds have already been carried out.

The Asian Age, Delhi
Thursday, 27th August 2009,

Please contribute to Grameen Bharat. Articles of upto 400 words in English or Hindi and photographs can be sent to Neena Thomas at neena04@gmail.com

If undelivered please return to : IEC Section Ministry of Rural Development Basement Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi-110003