

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act Maharashtra State: Status Report

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**Report prepared by Sampark, Advocacy & Communication Resource
Organisation, PACS Programme.**

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act Maharashtra State: Status Report

Poorest Area Civil Society (PACS) Programme presents this report to the citizens of Maharashtra. It appeals the policy makers to take note of the recommendations made in report in the interest of the poorest of the poor in the state.

PACS programme aims at improving systems and creating the environment for the poor and the marginalized to access resources, realize entitlements and improve their quality of life. The programme addresses the issues of poverty. Strengthening initiatives at the grassroots and building capacities of development agencies engaged with the poor are direct outputs envisaged of the programme. PACS initiatives are geared towards inclusion of Dalits, tribals, women, disabled, aged and similar marginalized sections in development processes and especially in governance.

It was almost natural for PACS partners to commit themselves to the cause of making NREGA part of their agenda in assisting the needy to make use of this scheme for improving their chances to secure livelihood to augment their living situations. PACS programme advocates for effective enforcement of the RTI and NREGA and supports capacity building of various stakeholders in these areas.

Report prepared by Sampark, Advocacy & Communication Resource Organisation, PACS Programme.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act Maharashtra State: Status Report

“This Employment Guarantee Act is the most significant legislation of our times in many ways. For the first time, rural communities have been given not just a development programme but a regime of rights. This Act will also unlock the potential of the rural poor to contribute to the reconstruction of their environment. The NREGA gives hope to those who had all but lost their hope. It has a clear focus on the poorest of the poor. It seeks to reach out to those in need of livelihood security The NREGA gives employment, gives income, gives a livelihood, and it gives a chance to live a life of self-respect and dignity.”

-Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh at the time of launching of the NREGA

Introduction-

By crafting the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) the union government has given a legal instrument in the hands of the poor based on the demand of the worker. The obligation to respond to demand is a legal compulsion. The NREGA has a universal reach in all the areas where this law applies. India is the first country to offer a legal guarantee like this on such an unprecedented scale & it is going to help us empower the poor to fight poverty, disease and indebtedness.

Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh has expressed that this employment guarantee act must be transparent, peoples’ programme. He envisages a collaborative partnership of the Central and State Governments and of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to translate the spirit of the act on ground. Voluntary sector, welcoming this spirit is getting prepared to support the efforts being made by the state governments, at the same time to keep watch that the Act should not get weak due to the malpractices & corruption at the stage of implementation. This report is also an attempt made by a civil society initiative in the voluntary sector of Maharashtra to see that the Act really gets translated on ground.

Poorest Area Civil Society (PACS) Programme presents this report to the citizens of Maharashtra. It appeals the policy makers to take note of the recommendations made in report in the interest of the poorest of the poor in the state.

Backdrop

PACS programme aims at improving systems and creating an environment for the poor and the marginalized to access resources, realize entitlements and improve their quality of life. The programme addresses the issues of poverty. Strengthening people’s

initiatives at the grassroots and building capacities of development agencies engaged with the poor are direct outputs envisaged in the programme. PACS initiatives are geared towards inclusion of Dalits, tribals, women, disabled, aged and similar marginalized sections in development processes and especially in governance. ([Annexure 1- More about PACS Programme](#))

So it was almost natural for PACS partners to commit themselves to the cause of making NREGA part of their agenda in assisting the needy to make use of this scheme for improving their chances to secure livelihood to augment their living situations. PACS programme advocates for effective enforcement of the RTI and NREGA and supports capacity building of various stakeholders in these areas.

NREGA in brief –

(National Rural Employment Grantee Act / Scheme)

It is the power of People's movement, which made the union government to formulate the Act. It is modeled on Maharashtra's well-known Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS). The Union government's commitments to the *Aam Admi*, UPA's Common Minimum Programme and pressure & contribution from the National Advisory Council were the stimulating factors giving shape to the NREGA.

NREGA came in effect from 2nd Feb 2006.

NREGS - Key features

People get not only guarantee but also the '**right to employment**'.

200 poorest districts identified for the first phase.

There are 12 districts in Maharashtra identified for the implementation of the Act.

Scheme will come in effect in next 5 years all over India.

Each family would get work for **100 days** in a year.

Daily Minimum wages recommended not less than - **Rs 60/-**

Extra wages if the worksite is more than 5 kmts away from village

Unemployment allowance in case work is not provided.

Compensation in case of accident or death of the labourers on site

Onsite facilities as drinking water, first aid, shelter etc

Crèches for children of women labourers

Village development is focused.

Long-term assets are insisted.

Appointment of **Gram Rojgar Sevak** is suggested

Powers to Gramsabha & people

The following 12 districts have been identified in Maharashtra for the implementation of NREGA.

Ahemadnagar, Amaravati, Aurangabad, Bhandara, Chandrapur, Dhule, Gadchiroli, Gondia, Hingoli, Nandurbar, Nanded and Yeotmal.

[Map of Maha showing these 12 districts.](#)

It must be stated that with regard to the NREGA, Maharashtra did not witness as much curiosity & concern as the other states; simply because Maharashtra has been a trendsetter in such progressive policy initiatives & the state has a long experience in implementing the Employment Guarantee Scheme, the first of its kind in the country. It would be appropriate to analyze the NREGA vis-à-vis the Maharashtra EGS.

NREGA vis-à-vis State EGS in respect of Maharashtra

NREGA has noble intentions and any doubt thereon may be construed as ill will towards the *aam aadmi* and as resistance to offering employment to the millions of jobless in the rural areas since it offers relief to the millions of suffering poor in the country.

Though modeled on the EGS of Maharashtra, there are certain gray areas in NREGA as compared to Maha EGS. And certain points make NREGA more powerful than EGS.

NREGA vis-à-vis EGS in a gist	
NREGS	Maha EGS
Purpose	
Alleviate unemployment & poverty	Mitigate drought situation & prevent migration
100 days in a year to a rural family	365 days in a year to each unemployed unskilled person
Meant for Rural area	Implemented in Rural area & Class C of municipal wards in semi urban area.
Nature of job	
Proportion of jobs - Unskilled (60) & Skilled (40) Special attention that women get work.	Proportion of jobs - Unskilled (60) & Skilled (40) Water conservation (51) Roads (49)
Implementing agency	
Jilla Parishad	District Collector & district level administration
Gram Panchayat & NGOs	
Agency responsible for Planning	
Jilla Parishad, Gram Panchayat, Gram Sabha	District & block level administration
Daily wages suggested not less than Rs 60/- (State governments have been asked to fix the wages based on the agricultural wages in the respective areas.)	As per Minimum wages act

Funded by Government Proportion of contribution - Union government- 90% State government – 10%	Independent funds are created. Contribution of people 'having' job to those 'not having' through various taxes & levies
Compensation Rs 25,000/-	Compensation Rs 50,000/-
People's participation	
Councils on National & state level Gram Panchayats, Gram Sabhas & NGOs.	Committees at village, block & district levels. Also at legislative assembly.
Social Audit	
Social Audit through Gramsabha.	Social Audit through attendance sheets at Gram Panchayats
Social Audit in presence of the villagers Yearly report to be tabled in the respective state assemblies Consolidated report to be submitted to Parliament every year.	Social Audit in presence of govt. officers & Sarpanch. Copy to be exhibited at Chavdi (Chaupal).

Though both the schemes address the issue of poverty, there is divergence in delineating the purpose, nature & processes of implementation of EGS & NREGA that is to be understood at length.

Funds

NREGA -Guarantee of employment to poor is solely depending upon the guarantee of funds.

NREGA is government funded whereas Maha EGS is a contribution or a partnership of people & government.

NREGA asks central (90%) & state governments (10%) to provide money. That means the guarantee of employment to poor is solely depending upon the guarantee of funds. State governments are in no position to bear even 10 per cent of the burden and that could prove to be one of the weak links of the scheme.

Maha EGS is a contribution or a partnership of people & government. And people who have work support those who don't have.

In Maha EGS, in order to raise resources for the implementation of the scheme, the State Government has levied following special taxes -Tax on profession, trades, callings and employment /Additional tax on motor vehicles for EGS/Additional tax on Sales Tax for EGS/ Special assessment of irrigated agriculture land/ Surcharge on land revenue for EGS/ Tax on non-residential urban lands and buildings under Maharashtra Education Cess Act for EGS.

The State Government has to make a matching contribution equal to the net collection of taxes and levies as mentioned above every year.

During last four years (Since 2002) State Government has not contributed its contribution in EGS funds. Yet, there is money to run the EGS due to these taxes, as the financing is not dependent on the political instability or economic uncertainties. (Same as the NREGA, Maha EGS has been accepted across the political parties.)

Management for implementation

NREGA provides funds & job work options in various categories such as drought proofing, water conservation, village development, aforestation etc. It also offers job of irrigating own small pieces of land to SC/ST individuals or families who are the beneficiaries of Indira Awas Yojana. **It is a great offer indeed!**

But all these options should come through the Gramsabhas & Grampanchayats.

Can poor SC/STs really voice their demands there?

NREGA -Danger of doorway for a ‘third party’

It asks the Gramsabhas & Grampanchayats to choose option, make a project proposal along with budget etc to submit for getting work. In a way, it is good to have the decision making power at the ‘bottom’ level instead of all decisions to come from the ‘top’. But then there is a danger of doorway for a ‘third party’ with vested interests who would make proposals on behalf of villages. And again ‘contract Raj’ starts that already exists as backdoor entry in Maha EGS though contractors are NOT allowed on paper.

(However, let us wait till we get the final roadmap of implementation of NREGA in Maharashtra. Presently, implementation of NREGA is not being given any special consideration & it is implemented almost in the same EGS way)

Maha EGS – well designed three-tier set up

In Maha EGS act, three-tier administrative set up has been evolved to ensure close and effective liaison and continuous supervision over the programme. Committees for planning, direction, control and co- ordination have been set up at the State, District and Panchayat Samiti level.

At the State level, the Planning Department is the overall in-charge of the scheme covering all aspects of planning, administration, provision of funds, monitoring, control and evaluation of the programme.

The District Collector is overall in-charge of implementation, supervision, co-ordination and control of the programme at the district level. At Panchayat Samiti level the Tahsildar has been assigned for the functions of the assessment of demand for employment and deployment of labourers on different works in the Panchayat Samiti area.

The Planning Department makes a budget provision and releases the Quarterly Credit limits to the Collectors. The Collectors have discretion power to make further releases to the implementing agencies at the district level who in turn release funds to the implementing officer for payment of wages and expenses incurred on implementation of the works. An account of expenditure is required to be maintained by the implementing agencies at the primary and district units in accordance with the normal procedure laid down by the State Government.

Maha EGS -Legislative Committee

The State Legislature has a special Legislature Committee constituted to examine, assess and evaluate the working of the State's employment guarantee scheme, with special reference to benefits accrued to and the impact made on the people employed under the scheme, and to find out the deficiencies and shortcomings if any and to suggest measures to remove them and to improve the said scheme.

These are some of the observations & recommendations tabled on 18th July 2006 on the floor of assembly in the 5th report (2005-06) of the EGS Legislative Committee of the 11th State Assembly –

The high rank officials as District Collectors while planning budgets & demands of funds for EGS do not maintain financial discipline. At the first place, unreasonable funds are demanded. (Three times higher than the actual estimation) Then the funds are not utilized in the planned manner. And lastly, most of the funds are surrendered at the end of financial year.

Simple facilities such as shade, drinking water, amenities for pregnant women etc are not provided to the labourers. And officers often ignore instructions given by respective authorities. The committee has taken serious note of this negligence on part of the administration.

The said committee has expressed suspicions over work like road construction which is done time & again at the same locations by submitting demand of funds recurrently. Committee also found many critical & 'mysterious' gaps in the budgetary plans & expenditure reports, which remained unexplained in a meeting held with the top-level district officers.

The said committee expresses concern over the action to be taken time to time on the EGS committee reports. It also demands speedy execution of recommended actions on the identified guilty officers responsible for malpractices & fake reports by the earlier committees.

How this administrative indiscipline and very grave lapses create imbalances & keep the poor deprived of the benefits of the government-made good schemes has been illustrated in the said report referring to the EGS plans & ground realities in Thane, Solapur & Nanded districts.

The action taken report on these recommendations is awaited.

Maha EGS – Village level Committees

At the District and Panchayat Samiti levels, District and Panchayat Employment Guarantee Committees, respectively, are appointed. In such committees, persons belonging to the backward classes, labourers and the representatives of registered unions of the agriculture labour are appointed. Adequate representation to women is also provided on these District and Panchayat Committees.

NREGA Councils & Gram Rojgar Sevak

NREGA asks state governments to table the yearly report in legislative assemblies & union government in parliament. The NREGA councils are introduced from village to the state level. Considering the difficulties at Panchayat level to discharge assigned tasks effectively with regular ordinary staff of the Gram Panchayats, the central guidelines suggest appointing the Gram Rojgar Sevak, an 'Employment Guarantee Assistant' in each Gram Panchayat for this purpose.

Idea of appointing one more Gram Sevak is feared to create two centers of powers in the village. It would make *babu raj* at village level tougher.

NREGA - 100 days work. Maha EGS - whole year relevant scheme.

NREGA guarantees 100 days of work for every household. It specifies that the wages will not be less than Rs. 60/- per day with special emphasis on the poorest of poor and women who must form at least 1/3rd of the beneficiaries. The Act specifies that at least 14 continuous days of work must be created. It also lists out in detail facilities like crèches, drinking water, medical facilities and insurance cover for labourers etc.

Under Maha EGS a poor couple is guaranteed 624 days of work in a year (assuming work for 6 days a week for both for 52 weeks a year). The NREGA guarantees only 100 days for that couple.

There is need to treat individuals as separate units rather than families. There are large and small families. The scheme would work to the disadvantage of joint families & the 'second' wives of men. This could also lead to family quarrels and divisions.

Unemployment Allowance – NREGA offers more

There is a provision of an unemployment allowance for those who cannot be provided work in spite of a proper demand being made in both the schemes. The unemployment allowance has been pegged at 1/4th the wage rate (Rs. 15/-) for the first 30 days and then ½ of the wage rate (Rs 30/-) for the remaining 70 days.

Maha EGS offers only Rs 10/- per day.

Backdoor entry of Machines?

It is mentioned in NREGA that 'As far as practicable, a task funded under the Scheme shall be performed manually. Does it mean machines 'could' be allowed? In Maha EGS machines are banned by rule. Yet JCB owners are getting guaranteed work while poor labourers don't.

EGS Review Committee, Maharashtra – The Advocacy

Maharashtra government had set up the EGS Review Committee in 2004, which came up with several recommendations about the EGS to the government. *Sampark*, the Advocacy & Communication Resource Organization after analyzing those recommendations of EGS review committee raised voice against some of the harmful recommendations detrimental to the basic purpose of EGS. As a result, government has held back the committee's recommendations.

The following recommendations were unfavorable to the people –

A. Maximum money in EGS to be diverted to the watershed development projects as constructions of reservoirs, barriers etc.

We advocated that only watershed development in form of 'constructing' barriers in farms wouldn't meet the purpose of creating livelihood for the poor. The projects as land treatment, developing habitat etc should be made part of EGS.

B. An idea of 'land army' to be introduced. The labourers to be allowed to go away from own villages as part of land army to work in one of the recommendations.

Our plea was it was adverse to the main objective of EGS of preventing migration & was allowing backdoor entry of contractors taking the labourers from one place to other in the name of land army.

Corruption disconnects the scheme from its spirit

The Maha EGS was introduced during the outbreak of acute drought of 1972 with the purpose to fight the calamity by creating livelihood assets with ensured employment provided to the unskilled rural poor in or nearby their villages that would also prevent their migration to the cities. It is pointed out rather naively that rural unemployment in Maharashtra has been amongst the highest in India, although Maharashtra has installed an employment guarantee scheme for a long time. This argument is immature because rural poverty in Maharashtra would have been substantially higher in the absence of the EGS.

There is a considerable potential in NREGA to make a dent on poverty and unemployment. The Act makes it mandatory on the part of the government to provide employment to job-seekers according to the terms of the Act / Scheme. It ties down the hands of the government completely. It cannot advance any reason at all to escape this legal responsibility. In other words, the government will be 'pre-committed' to providing some kind of unemployment insurance. The Act provides the rural poor with the assured guarantee of at least a limited degree of employment & also the unemployment insurance. NREGA is a safety net for the unskilled unemployed poor.

But, the typical argument against the NREGA is that while it is desirable conceptually, it is not implementable. In particular, it has been experienced that all such schemes are characterized by huge leakages — only a minuscule amount of the total outlay actually reaches the intended beneficiaries. Unfortunately, this is not a wild allegation. People have witnessed absence of muster rolls in food-for-work programmes in several states. Obviously, absence of such rolls means the middlemen are seizing most of the grants.

The Maha EGS has suffered the same malpractices by unscrupulous elements in the bureaucracy. Otherwise the scheme would be effective in bringing change in rural economy. Over decades of its working, the Maha EGS has produced few permanent assets. And it has become synonymous with corruption.

In Marathi, Employment Guarantee Scheme is Rozgar Hami. The common saying goes: *Ardhe Tumhi; Ardhe Amhi - Rozgar Hami!* (Sharing spoils is the EGS).

Performance Accountability

In view of this, some kind of performance accountability must be placed with implementing agency. Whenever *Sampark* has raised corruption issues in assembly, action had been taken against the lower level officers, which is a very temporary remedy. Also there are cases pending for several years in court and the labourers neither get work nor unemployment allowances yet.

Therefore criteria for measuring performance accountability may be drafted and it must be insisted to create permanent livelihood resources by using this huge money.

After all there is a vast difference in living with dignity by earning through long-lasting source and living on someone's (it may be the government) mercy through some 'scheme'.

NREGA in PACS Programme

Maharashtra government has very recently drafted guidelines for the NREGA. Even after finalization of the guidelines, their implementation on the ground will take some time, as the officials of the line departments concerned would be trained and thereafter the members of the PRI would be oriented. The process of orientation would be time consuming. Therefore, it is unlikely that something substantially would be visible in the form of job creation (or wage employment) in the near future. The two Government Resolutions dated Dec 12th 2005 & Jan 10th 2006 do explain the modalities of NREGA in state. ([Annexure 2- Key points in GRs](#)) However, the picture about the course of implementation is not so clear. Yet the PACS Programme initiated the process of creating awareness & dialoguing with the government about the NREGA.

Fortunately all of the 12 districts covered by NREGA, but for one, fall in the group of the very districts where the PACS program for poverty alleviation is being implemented.

NREGA week –

The idea of the NREGA Awareness Campaign emerged in a meeting of Communication ROs of PACS programme in the month of May 06 in Delhi. And it was decided to run a campaign in PACS programme across the states on NREGA. The last week of June or the first week of July was identified for the campaign. It was also discussed in meeting that it being the sowing season, it would be difficult to catch the villagers & the real beneficiaries during the campaign. However it was decided to go ahead with the idea and try to catch as many villagers as we could. PACS partners in Maharashtra identified four districts for this campaign.

NREGA Awareness Week – 3rd - 9th July 2006

Participant CSOs – 12

Districts covered – Aurangabad & Nanded in Marathwada region.

Gadchiroli & Yeotmal in Vidarbha region

Number of Villages covered – 180 - 200

Population covered – Around. 1,20,000

The objectives

- ✓ Orient PACS partners about NREGA

- ✓ Create awareness about NREGA among beneficiaries
- ✓ Make efforts for effective implementation of the new scheme
- ✓ Make labourers get their “right” to employment
- ✓ Generate MIS from villages
- ✓ Develop linkages with government agencies at block, district & state level
- ✓ Sensitize mainstream media
- ✓ Make PACS programme visible
- ✓ Encourage policy makers, opinion makers & media to get involve in PACS Programme

The activities

Common actions-

Information distribution (Handbills, posters, banners)

Develop linkages with government officials.

Broadcast of public interest spots on the respective AIR stations.

Encourage involvement of policy makers, influential persons & media persons in campaign & PACS Programme.

At village level-

Each CSO to identify 15 villages for campaign. Considering the engagement of villagers in sowing activity, it was decided to catch them either in early morning or late evening in villages.

Hold Gramsabhas, Chavdi Vachan (Public reading at Chaupals)

Pass resolutions in meetings demanding job cards & jobs etc

Set up information stalls at prime locations on weekly bazaar day.

Encourage maximum number of villagers make registration

Gather MIS track sheets.

At Block level –

Hold meetings with Block level officers

Submit charter of demands to Tehsildar

At District level –

Hold meeting with Commissioner, District Collector

Organize Press Conferences

Communication with MLAs / MLCs

NREGA Status in Maharashtra

Brief Study of the status of NREGA in four PACS districts vis a vis twelve districts in Maharashtra identified for implementation of NREGA.

The CSOs participating in NREGA Awareness Week made visits to villages & gathered MIS data. They faced many challenges. The identified period of campaign was busy farming season. It was not the opportune time to meet the unemployed labourers as most of the people were engaged in farming activities either at their own small farms or as the employees of the land holders.

The planning of the campaign was made hurriedly. A training module on NREGA in respect to Maharashtra was straight away prepared & imparted to the key persons in CSOs.

The training should have been reached properly up to the village animators, felt the CSOs. The campaign material reached the CSOs at the last hour as designing, planning & decision-making took time. The actions were planned under pressure & in hesitation.

Though it was a functional study, a sort of action based research and not a very scientific one; the trends revealed do throw light on the gaps in the implementation of the strong willed Act & scheme.

Table : 1

Profile of the 12 districts identified for the implementation of NREGA.

NREGA districts population scenario along with BPL families					
District	Population	Females	Males	No. of Families	No. of BPL Families
Dhule	1708993	830455	878538	259731	131013
Nandurbar	1309135	646371	662764	221137	166799
Ahmednagar	4088077	1981576	2106501	602305	150825
Aurangabad	2920548	1398916	1521632	293555	76342
Hingoli	986717	481529	505188	-	-
Nanded	2868158	1391857	1476301	378020	110741
Amravati	2606063	1262491	1343572	360658	184932
Bhandara	1135835	562651	573184	443998	2291002
Gondiya	1200151	601704	598447		
Chandapur	2077909	1018034	1059875	316892	148697
Gadchiroli	969960	479151	490809	180117	99389
Yeotmal	246048	1193365	1267117	423641	184801
Total	21871546	10654735	11216811	3056413	3359740

Source: Maharashtra Human Development Report, 2002.

According to the Planning Commission these are the poorest districts of Maharashtra.

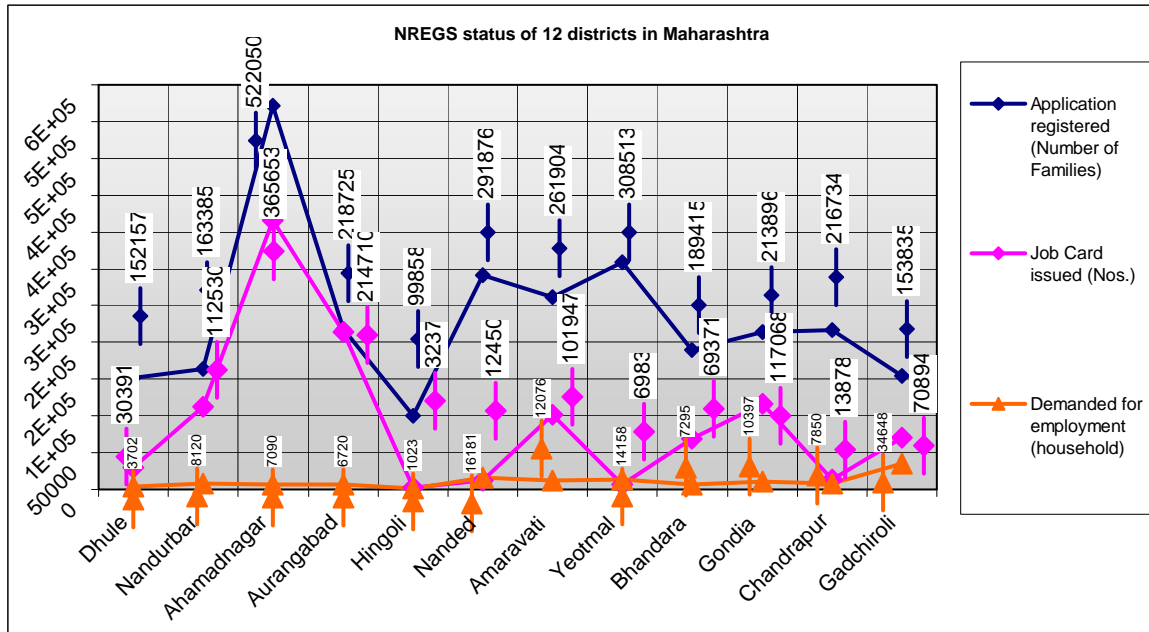
Table : 2
NREGA Progress Report – Up to May 2006

Sr. No.	Name of the District	O.B. as on 1/4/06 (Rs. In Lakh)	Allotment received in 2006-07 (Rs. In Lakh)	Application registered (Number of Families)	Job Card issued (Nos.)	Expenditure (Rs. In lakh)	Employment Provided (Nos.)
1	2	3	4	5	6	13	15
1	Dhule	1,921.13	975.68	152157	30391	114.94	7404
2	Nandurbar	2,301.08	1,725.44	163385	112530	605.86	23100
3	Ahamadnagar	2,886.49	859.77	522050	365653	52.24	7090
4	Aurangabad	1,184.17	1,409.26	218725	214710	434.26	16800
5	Hingoli	2,100.00	1,617.60	99858	3237	514.87	3237
6	Nanded	2,450.49	1,830.38	291876	12450	1773.85	50079
7	Amaravati	535.00	2,000.00	261904	101947	164.76	36228
8	Yeotmal	2,375.87	1,729.77	308513	6983	56.11	28316
9	Bhandara	1,233.17	-	189415	69371	66.07	18238
10	Gondia	1,346.30	1,584.39	213896	117068	15	10397
11	Chandrapur	2,341.45	1,756.04	216734	13878	29.07	12543
12	Gadchiroli	1,588.00	1,223.67	153835	70894	462	78554
	Total	22,263.15	16,712.00	27,92,348.00	11,19,112.00	4,289.03	2,91,986.00

**Source: EGS Department, Maharashtra Government
(Provisional report prepared on 7th July 0006)**

According to this table less than 50% families have got the job cards out of those registered. Government also indicates the expenditure on work done under NREGA. However, there is a discrepancy in the figures quoted by the state & central government. According to the figures quoted by the central government, job cards have been provided to 10,94,659 out of 41,39,778 households registered in Maharashtra. (Annexure 3 – NREGA Progress Report dated 21st Aug 2006, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India)

Graph : 1
Status of the registration and job cards

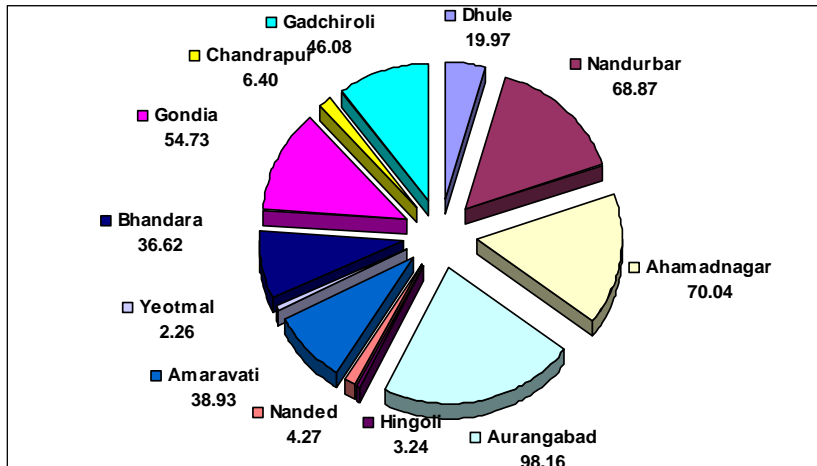


Source : EGS Department, Maharashtra Government

- We can see the difference between the distribution of job cards and registration.
- No district has provided job cards to all those who have registered, except Aurangabad. Yeotmal, Gondia, Amaravati are the most critical districts where the people are fired with demanding jobs. However during the six months since the launching of the NREGA, job cards have not been distributed in proportionate to the registration.
- If the number of the families registered for job cards as mentioned in Graph 1 is compared with the number of BPL families in the same districts as mentioned in Table 1, we can make out that all the intended beneficiaries have not registered their names yet though the Act is not meant for only the BPL population.. The reasons could be –
 They are not aware of the scheme. The people could have migrated in search of work.

Graph: 2

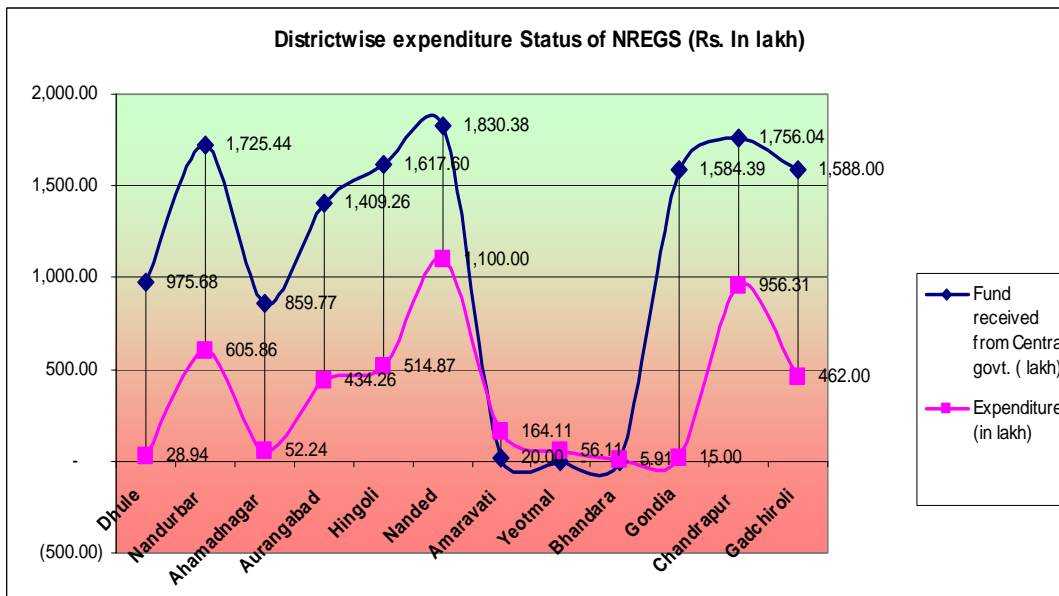
District wise percentage of received job cards of registered households.



Source: EGS Department, Maharashtra Government

Graph shows that in Aurangabad the highest number of families (98%) have received job cards. In receding order Ahemadnagar (70.04) and Nandurbar (68.87) districts come next. The situation in Yeotmal, Nanded, Hingoli and Chandrapur districts is serious where below 7% have received job cards. To analyze the reasons behind this unevenness, we need to examine the block wise figures & look into various factors as the demographic profile, functioning of government administration at districts & blocks level, role of NGOs, period of registration etc which is not in the purview of the present study.

**Graph 3:
Status of expenditure in 12 Districts**



Source: EGS Department, Maharashtra Government

This graph reflects the expenditure status of the NREGS work. The figures of an amount received from Central govt for Amaravati, Yeotmal & Bhandra districts are not available. Hence the expenditure in these three districts cannot be compared. But those districts that have received funds have not been able to spend more than 30% amount. Thus the needy poor are deprived from the work & wages.

Moreover the allotted funds are not at all sufficient to implement the provisions of the Act.

E.g. Gadchiroli district has 99 thousand families under BPL (Table 1-MHDR, 2002). If all these 99 thousand families are to be offered 100 days work @ Rs. 50 as the average minimum wage, the amount of Rs.50 crores is required to provide work only to the BPL families. And the Act is not meant only for the BPL families.

Please refer to Table 2 - If the government is to provide 100 days work to the registered families with the average minimum wage i.e Rs 50/-; Gadchiroli district requires Rs 77 crores. And Gadchiroli district has received the amount of Rs 15 crore 88 lakh from Central govt.

Present status of NREGA in PACS area: Analysis of MIS

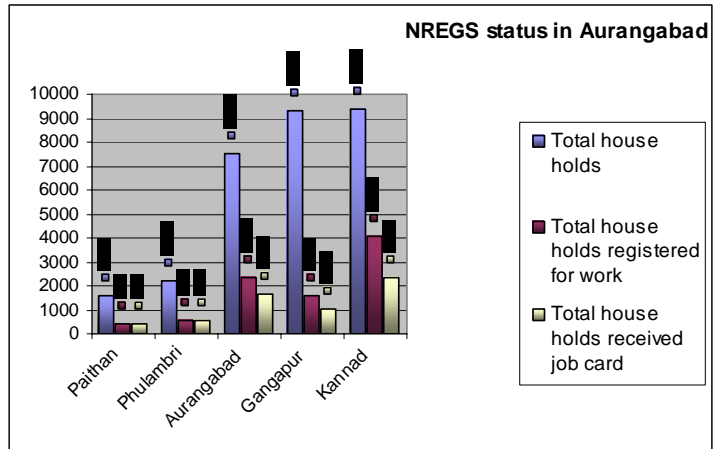
The MIS compiled & analyzed in this report has been gathered by the activists of the PACS partners in Nanded, Aurangabad, Yeotmal & Gadchiroli; the identified districts for NREGA awareness week campaign. Gathering MIS was one of the activities during the campaign.

The main purpose of the said campaign was to create awareness about the new Act among the intended beneficiaries in the identified districts of Maharashtra. During the week, when MIS was gathered along with awareness campaign, a sample survey was conducted. MIS was discussed & prepared in the NREGA campaign orientation meeting of the partners. All these 12 partners & all the ROs gave inputs for MIS preparation.

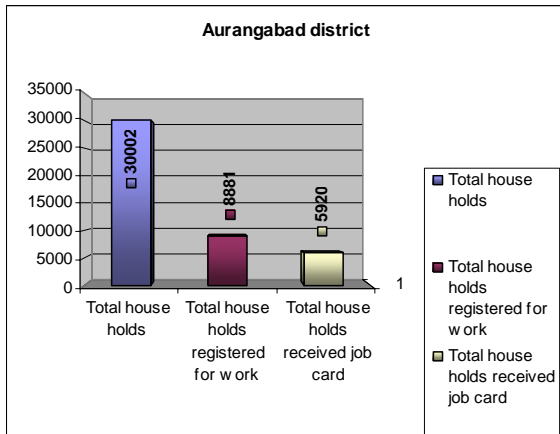
Main criterion to select the villages in above four districts was that in those villages the PACS program was being implemented since 2002. The collected data represents only few numbers of villages & not the entire block.

Graph: 4 – Aurangabad : Overview of 6 blocks
 Source: Data collected by PARYAY, GRASP & IGSS

100% job cards have been given in only two blocks out of five In remaining three blocks the difference between the registration & provision of job cards could be made out. It means a large number of people are not aware about the scheme whereas the state govt claims that in Aurangabad district 100% job cards have been distributed. (Please refer to Table 2)



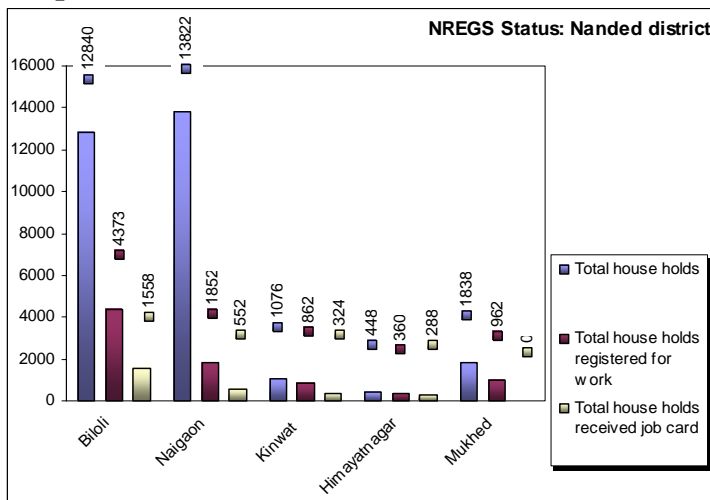
Graph 5: Aurangabad - Overview of 30 villages



28% of the households in identified villages have registered for work and only 12% have received job cards whereas govt claims that in Aurangabad district 100% job cards have been distributed. (Please refer to Table 2) Some of the villages in Phulambri and Kannad blocks have prepared micro plans and gramsabhas have accepted those.

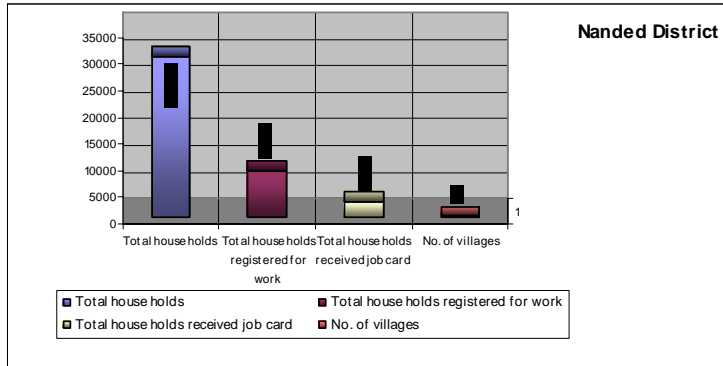
Source: Data collected by Paryay, GRASP & IGSS

Graph 6: Nanded – Overview of 5 blocks



Biloli and Naigaon blocks have a sizable population whereas the tribal and nomadic population, the most deprived community lives in split tandas in Kinwat, Himayatnagar and Mukhed blocks. According to the graph 6, only 20% families in Kinwat & Himayatnagar blocks have received job cards and in Mukhed it seems no one has received job cards.

Source: Data collected by Sandhiniketan, Sipra, RDC & STCI

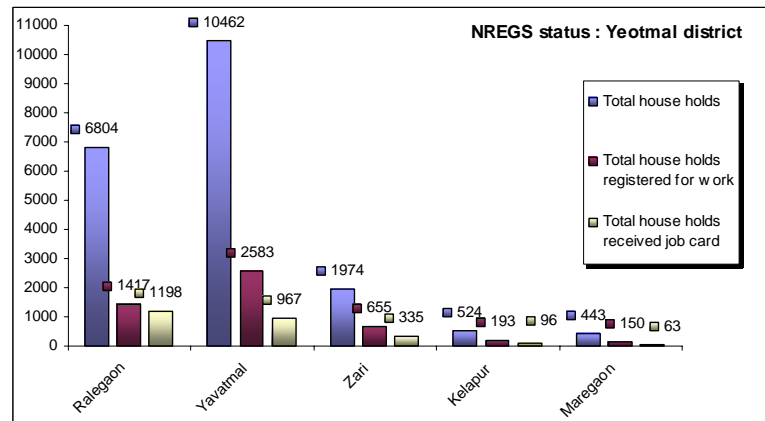


Graph 7: Nanded - Overview of 46 villages
 Around 30% have registered for work in these 46 villages out of which 25% households have received job cards. Not a single village has prepared micro plan.

Source: Data collected by Sandhinetan, Sipra, RDC & STCI

Graph 8: Yeotmal – Overview of 5 blocks

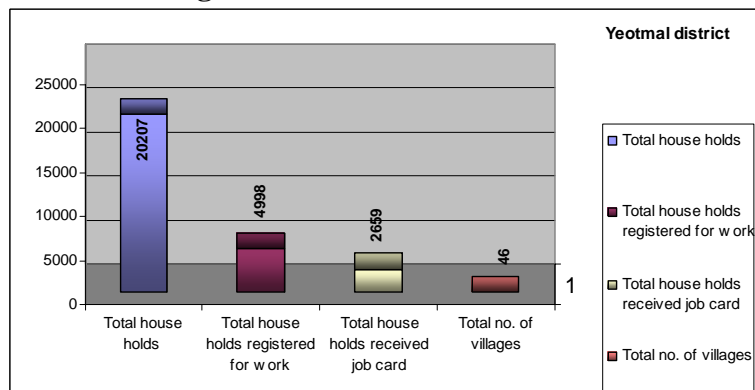
Comparatively in Yeotmal district there is not much difference in the numbers of registration and job cards given except for the Yeotmal block.



Source: Data collected by Asmita, GSMT & IYW

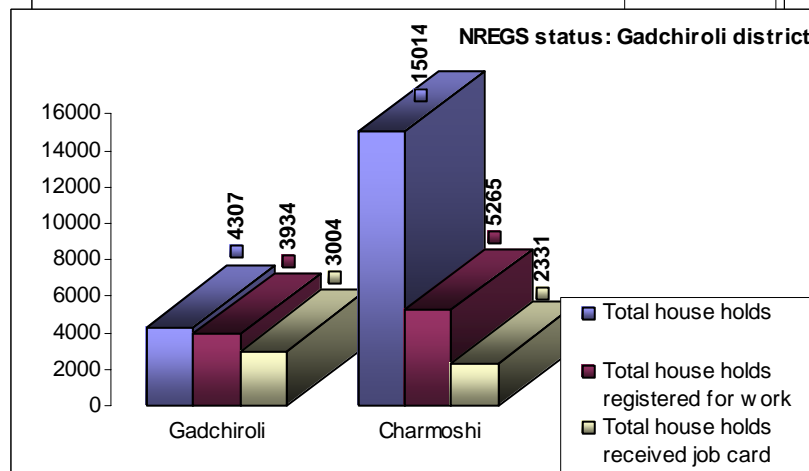
Graph 9: Yeotmal – Overview of 46 villages

Around 50% have registered for work in these 46 villages out of which 25% families have received job cards. Around 50% villages have prepared micro plans.



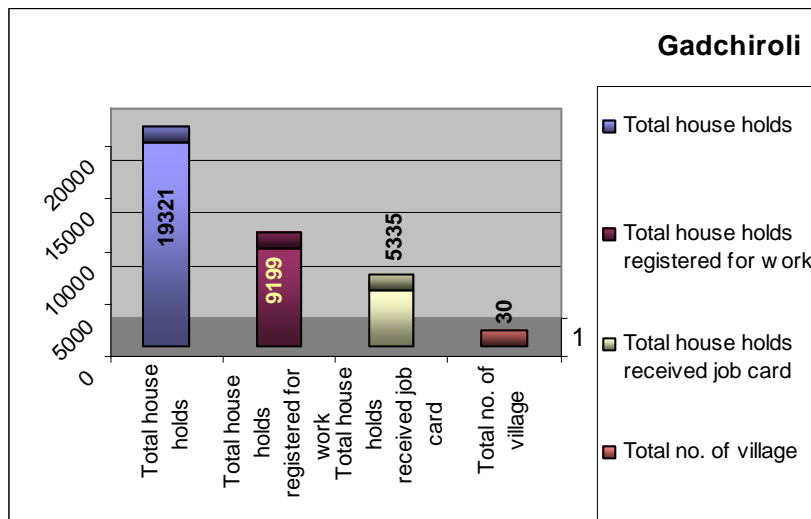
Graph 10 : Gadchiroli – Overview of 2 blocks

In the identified villages of Gadchiroli block there seems a better performance. However in the Charmoshi block more than 50% households have not received job cards.



Graph 11: Gadchiroli – Overview of 30 villages

Source: Data collected by Yelgar & IIYW



More than 50% of the registered households have got job cards.

The upbeat experiences during the campaign

It became a very striking campaign

though the selected period was not suitable.

Planning, organizing & executing at CSO level was quite good. There was incredible response from the people, especially the proposed beneficiaries of NREGA even though it was a rain drenched week. CSOs earned more goodwill by providing the valuable information to the villagers, as people were ignorant of the same. Lakhs of people were made aware of the NREGA.

Block & district level government officers were made responsive to the efforts made by the CSOs. Otherwise they would have covered up the information. District level media was made sensitive about the NREGA & the efforts of the CSOs. The harsh ground realities regarding the implementation of NREGA came to fore. The presence of PACS programme in state was felt.

Synthesis of the ground realities regarding the implementation of NREGA as reported by the NGOs participating in campaign¹

The truth came out of the bag that Government of Maharashtra; especially the administration has not given enough time and thought for implementing NREGA in the state. And they are (non) implementing the NREGA as any other government scheme without realizing the spirit of the Act.

Government functionaries were inactive in their job, rather in observing the ‘duty’ of implementing the NREGA and they were confusing people, even the activists. There were lots of confusions among the villagers regarding the forms, registration

¹ The reports of all the 12 NGOs in four districts are available with Sampark & the respective NGOs.

mechanism, identity cards etc. Government officials making fool of the innocent people while issuing of identity cards, photos, etc....by demanding unusually a lot of money. E.g. over Rs 100 for a simple photographs!

People were under the wrong impression that an identity card will ensure them a job. They have no idea that it would be the demand form is to be submitted to get the work identified by the Gram Panchayats. Gram Panchayats didn't have the necessary forms to forward the applications of the public works to obtain sanction to work at hand. Gram Sewaks, Talathis and Tehasildars themselves lacked 'will' to inform people about the act & the scheme. They didn't have complete information so as to give the correct picture about NREGS to the people. As the government's campaign for registration was held in the month of Feb, the names of the migrated villagers & their families were missing from the lists made by the Gramsevak

Some villagers not dependent on the scheme as NREGS & having their own livelihood resources were also registering their names with expectation that they may get the unemployment allowances if do not get work. The women members in SHGs were strongly demanding work & wages under the NREGS in place of the loans. According to them, work for wages has been a more dignified way of living instead of depending on loans.

Landholders were aggravated as they were worried if they would have to pay more than Rs60/- to the labourers once the NREGA is functional.

As reported by SOS Network in all the 15 villages covered in the blocks Biloli & Naigav, not a single labourer had got the job under NREGS.

Same case was in the following 15 villages covered in Maregav, Ralegav, Kelapur & Zari blocks in District Yeotmal

The CSOs received some positive responses also from government officers at district & block levels. Some officers praised the campaign. They enquired about where the work is going on, how many job cards were given etc.

In Aurangabad district mostly the landless, the labourers & the dalits voiced their demand for registration & work. Males dominated the demands. Few jobs as road constructions, Nala bunding etc was in progress.

In Nanded as Banjara community was busy in farming activities, they were not much fired with the campaign for registration etc.

In Yeotmal the Gonds & the Kolams were assertive about registration & jobs. And women were on the forefront. The response of block & district level administration was prompt obviously by the pressure of issue of farmers' suicides. Jobs such as farm tanks, contour bunding, Nala bunding etc were offered under NREGA there. Workers were getting money at the rate of minimum wages.

In Gadchiroli the tribal women had registered their names on a larger scale compared to men. There were farmers holding very small pieces of land among the job seekers. In four villages (out of the 15 identified) the jobs as road constructions, farm tanks had been offered. Labourers were getting minimum wages in the range of Rs 51 – 60/-

No village micro plans were seen in all four districts in the identified villages. However, there has been offers from the agriculture department to the local NGOs to come

forward to make village micro plans. And some non-PACS NGOs are involved in this activity. Yet, substantially the NREGA is being implemented in the same old manner as EGS has been implemented. It will have to be examined how government handles the process of village micro planning which is the real core of the NREGA.

From the pages of the campaign dairies of the partners

Aurangabad

Paryay –

Programs such as visits to the villages, public announcements, meetings with the Sarpanchas and Gramsevaks were conducted in villages of Kalki / Khoodiganjan / Sire Saygaon / Ambelah / Tolgaon in Khultabad and Aurangabad blocks.

Meetings were conducted with officers in Aurangabad and Khultabad blocks. These officers praised our campaign. They enquired about where the work is going on, how many job cards were given etc. Also meetings with the BDO & the Tahsildar were organized.

50 people demanded work in the village of Suliganjan in Khultabad, out of which 40 acquired jobs. Villagers of Sire Saygaon from Gangapur Taluka arranged a village meeting and demanded a road for the village. Rains have washed away the road in the village. It was then decided to make a proposal under NREGS to construct the same road.

A number of people registered for identity cards. But they were unaware of the fact that they had to demand jobs.

Presently it is raining in Aurangabad. It has become really hard to reach the villages. Yet, the Awareness Week is advancing successfully. The volunteers remain in the villages till 11 in the night.

Grass root action for Social Participation (GRASP) -

A meeting was conducted with Vikas Kharkhe, the District Commissioner, regarding the NREGA. The commissioner made a few suggestions during the meeting. He said, the guide lines from the government of Maharashtra are not yet prepared, we would work together when they were ready, do not publicize these issues right now, you will get the co-operation from the officers in all village-level programmes, orientations etc.

Meetings were arranged with the BDO.s & the Tahsildars of Fullbara / Kannada / Paithan blocks. They were given information about the campaign and also about PACS. The officers informed that the original Employment Guarantee Act of Maharashtra government is being executed in this area. According to them, no proper training was given, nor a proper direction to the work to implement the new Act.

The campaign has reached 12 villages through Grasp. Village meetings have been emphasized. Orientations are being conducted for the Sarpanchas / Gramsevaks & members. Filling up of forms has been given a lot of importance. Participation of women is noticeable. People / officers on village level were quite ignorant about this act.

Indira Gramsudhar Sanstha (IGSS) -

The campaign is going to be run in 15 villages including Georaigungi, Georaiparamba, Marsavli, Jirsavli, Jalegaon, Peergavda, Dhamangaon, Picholi, Fulambri, Beelda and Murshidabad. It has been completed in 6 of these. Events such as proclamations, meetings, putting up of posters, distribution of handbills, filling up forms are currently in progress.

The participation of governments is good in these campaigns. The Upa-Sabhapati of the Panchayat Samiti of taluka Fulambri, Sri Vishnu Appa Gavandar participated in our campaign. Meetings were arranged with BDOs and Tahsildars.

30 to 40% workers in the village are not registered yet. Their registration is going on. Some have received the job cards, some haven't. Some village councils have created proposals to ask for jobs under NREGA But the work has not started so far. The villagers are waiting.

Orientation of 14 volunteers of IGSS is completed. It has been decided that the NREGA will be followed up by conducting two meetings every week.

Nanded

Sandhi Niketan –

Cultural programs, marches and village meetings were conducted on 10 habitations in the Mukhed. Banjara community inhabits these areas. Registration was organized in colonies including Suranura, Damla, Koba, Rokdoba, Bhamla, Melghootad, Kanapuna Tanda, and Mansing. The members of the village council were present here.

Mr. Kadam, the Tahsildar of Mukhed, inaugurated this campaign. A press conference was arranged in Mukhed. It was observed during the campaign that the inhabitants of the colonies were migrating. It was decided that they would be registered when they would come to the village. Not all people have received the job cards yet.

Social Institute Programme for Rural Area (SIPRA) -

A march across the village was organized in 5 villages. Villagers participated in it on a large scale. The Sarpanchas, the Police Patils took part in it as well. Handbills were distributed, posters put up, and registration forms given. But according to the people, they didn't get job cards. Jobs were not created. A large number of women were seen participating. Job cards were not given in the Takrala village, because the people were

told that only when they had paid the house tax would they be given job cards. There hasn't been micro planning in any of the villages. The Sarpanch and the Gramsevaks have not been properly trained either.

The activists have precisely got the idea of the NREGA by the means of this campaign, which will prove useful in future.

Village & block officials are being extremely helpful to the activists. They have assured that they will continue helping in future too. People are getting the right information through the campaign.

Save the Children India (STCI)-

Village level volunteers of STCI had an orientation. The campaign is being run in the villages of Dhuppa, Kinal, Ramtirtha, Keur, Aadampur, Galegaon, Ikalimot, Gaglegaon, Vijaynagar & Sutatpur. Distribution of handbills, putting up posters are few examples of the programmes that were carried out. 80 to 100 people were present in every village. This campaign has moved the system on village and block level. The participation of Sarpanchas, Gramsevaks Tahsildars was quite satisfactory.

Workers have been registered but they haven't yet received the job cards. They don't know where they would work or whom they should meet. An appeal of 1000 people from the Nagaon and Biloli Talukas, demanding work, was presented to the government.

Rural Develop Center (RDC) -

The NREGA campaign has reached 12 villages in Deglur taluka. Marches, village meets, posters, handbills& other such events were conducted. Participation of the government officials & the public was favourable.

Jobs were taken up in the villages of Daregaon, Pedpalli, Jari & Takli in May, '06. The workers have not been paid their wages for that work yet. Jobs like cleaning of drains, digging trenches were taken up by the agricultural department. The minimum wages for these job shave been fixed to Rs. 25 for women and Rs. 40 for men.

The registration by the government for jobs is currently in progress. The residents of the villages of Markel, Jari, Takli and Karadkhed have not been given job cards yet, as they are asked to pay their house taxes first.

The BDO of Deglur issued an order asking to give job cards immediately, after the movement under Pacts commenced in that area. This is an upshot of our campaign. People from the 90 villages of RDC told that they would want this campaign run in their areas as well.

Yaotmal

Asmita –

The campaign was carried out in 14 villages. Leaflets were distributed, posters put up, village meetings and proclamations conducted. Meetings were held with the Sarpanchas of every village.

The meeting with the officers of Yaotmal block could not be carried out properly due to rains. It was noticed that the Gramsevaks in Dharamgaon, taluka Kalamb, demanded money from the people to get them the job cards. Such incidences occurred in 7 villages.

Gramin Samsya Mukti Trust (GSMT) -

A meet was organized with the District Collector, Harshdeep Kamble. He agreed to co-operate. Officers from were also helpful.

GSMT developed a street play on NREGA. It proved quite effective. The response to village meets is quite satisfactory. Presence of women and workers is noticeable. People remark that they are getting this kind of information for the first time. They are facing hindrances like not getting job cards or forms for demanding work, not crating adequate work etc. It was found out that money was demanded in exchange of giving job cards in the village of Bhimnala.

Gadchiroli

Yelgar -

A training programme was conducted of 40 people from 15 villages on 3rd July. These included activists, Sarpanchas & members of the village councils. A troupe of artistes singing songs was also arranged along with it. An assembly of 500 people was organized in the village of Murakhada, Chamurshi. Information about NREGA was given & the difficulties of the people discussed. People say that agricultural chores are presently in progress, they cannot set them aside to go to the jobs of NREGA they asked why this wasn't organized when they really needed it. People have applied for allowances. Tribal women and workers are participating on a large scale.

Councils of some villages have demanded work. But jobs have not been created. Follow up is going on.

Indian Institute of Youth Welfare (IIYW) –

Rallies on NREGA were conducted in 6 villages in Gadchiroli – Gogaon, Mahadwadi, Maradbodo, Dibna, Navegaonrai & Pardi. 60 to 70 people were present for every rally. Also, prominent persons from the villages were invited. Explaining the role of PACS, informing about NREGA and distribution of forms were the programmes conducted through these rallies.

Marches were arranged in the villages of Mahadwadi, Dibna, Navegaon and Pardi, where school children participated on a large scale. The children performed an important role by informing their parents about the NREGA

Village meetings have been organized in 9 villages so far. Important village personalities like Sarpanchas, Gramsevaks, and Talathis were present for these meetings. Information about the campaign was given; residents of the village of Pardi called a village assembly immediately and demanded that the work of roads be taken up by NREGA. Many of the people have not acquired the job cards.

An orientation was conducted for PASC and other activists on 7th July. The Collector of Gadchiroli was present for this event.

The Frequently Asked Questions by the villagers

What is the eligibility for registration?

What is to be done for demanding work?

Is there any specific period for registration of names?

Who is responsible in government machinery for giving information about this scheme to us?

What type of work do we get?

Is there any difference between I-card & Job-card?

Where we could get the work? In our village or elsewhere?

What is to be done if the Gramsevak doesn't accept our forms?

What is the minimum number of villagers to make a demand for work?

How many would actually get the work?

What next? And how?

PACS partners have identified 100 villages across the districts for facilitating implementation of NREGA. The efforts should be concentrated & consolidated on the backdrop of the experiences during the campaign. We would continue to give out related information for a sustained period of time and facilitate beneficiaries. In-depth training on NREGA & RTI Act is to be offered to the CSOs. Considering the gaps at ground level a mechanism of ensuring implementation / getting prescribed minimum wages, on site facilities, unemployment allowances etc has to be developed with the support of SHG members or other groups / committees formed by the CSOs in villages under PACS programme. Efforts could be made to solicit pro-active and explicit involvement of the Gram Panchayat officials in order to get their committed response.

There is a need to use RTI Act for the right implementation of the NREGA. A strong Policy Advocacy at every level in Government Administration is required. Reorganizing the more powerful campaign at an opportune hour when the farming activities are over & people start migrating in search of job. could help.

Recommendations

The stakeholders have to keep watch on proper implementation of NREGA before it is attacked by the corrupt practices. For this advocacy from village to state & national level should be designed. There is a lot of space for the NGOs, opinion makers & mainstream media to play the role as pro-active watch keepers so that the NREGA is implemented in its true spirit according to the guidelines set by the union government. Such role would complement to the efforts made by the government.

Action plan suggested

At village level –

Create awareness

Organize Gramsbhas to discuss NREGA

Motivate villagers to register names for job cards.

Make efforts for getting job cards.

Encourage villagers for filling forms for demand of work

If work is not provided within 15 days insist for the Unemployment Allowance

Keep watch that contractors don't enter & grab the work (Maha experience).

Insist for minimum & equal wages to men & women.

Form committees at village level to pursue the NREGS.

Make CSOs (SHGs / Mahila Mandals / Yuvak Mandals etc) representatives to be part of the village committees.

Facilitate villages to make micro plans & proposals.

District level -

Follow up of proposals sent by villages with local government.

Form committees at district level.

Make NGOs representatives to be part of committees.

Sensitize mainstream media & people's representatives.

State level

State level Advocacy group representing the 12 NREGA districts to be formed to establish dialogue with the state government.

Keep vigilance that 100% budget is be utilized

Create pressure for implementation

Create pressure through assembly

Sensitize mainstream media

Nation level

Inter-state Advocacy group to be formed to establish dialogue with the union government.

Make efforts for increase in minimum wages all over.

Try to convince the policy makers to include urban area also in the jurisdiction of NREGA, step by step over a period of time.

Recommendations based on Maha EGS

As Maha EGS, the NREGS could be made a 'Government – People partnership' instead of 'funded scheme' of government. If so, we could make it a whole-year-relevant scheme instead of offering work only for 100 days in a year. And work can be offered to every adult labourer member in family instead of each family unit.

Conclusion

The quality of implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 in its initial phase is crucial in all respects and the role of State Governments critical," Prime Minister has said in a letter to all Chief Ministers, seeking their cooperation in the effective implementation of the Act.

"While the Centre will ensure timely resource support to the programme, the State will have to ensure that wage employment is given within 15 days of demand for work, failing which it will be liable to pay Unemployment Allowance at its own cost," he has said in the letter.

Asking the Congress Chief Ministers to make the employment guarantee Act a 'laboratory' for right to information and enhancing transparency and accountability, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said the Central Government was committed to end the era of 'jobless growth' and revive employment.

Can we expect Maharashtra to take a lead in generating employment & creating productive assets through the implementation of the Act?
