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**NREG as a Social Protection: Role of Institutions and Governance**

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**Section I**

**Introduction**

In India enactment of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in 2005 marked an important achievement in the social policy. The genesis for such a massive public employment scheme can be traced to the globalisation and concomitant market oriented economic policies of the past two decades that have resulted in increasing income inequality and informal and vulnerable employment in both rural and urban areas. Infact, provision of adequate employment to the vast majority of workforce in the rural areas that are unemployed or mostly underemployed have been a major challenge over the decades of India's poverty reduction and development strategy. While programmes like food for work have been undertaken earlier, with limited success, what is unique about NREGA is that it attempts to fulfil constitutional directives (Art 39 right to means of livelihood and Art 41 provision for securing right to work) by creating entitlements to individuals. NREGS is supposed to be different from several earlier social security programmes in terms of its approach, implementation mechanisms and intended impact, not only in South Asia but probably in the world, for the following reasons: (a) its rights-based; (b) its legal guarantee; (c) its universal coverage of the rural areas; and (d) the intertwining of the development goals and social protection.

At the operational level, implementation of such a programme envisages several pre-conditions and processes that bestow entitlements on the intended recipients. Several supply side factors play critical role, like the preparedness of the government in identification of works, enrolment of job seekers, simple and transparent processes for monitoring, wage payment systems and grievance redressal mechanisms, relationship between the government and civil society etc. Similarly demand generation to seek work, awareness of rights of workers also become important in ensuring an effective implementation. In this aspect role of civil society and the partnership that they build with government becomes critical. Hence, institutional and governance structures and processes determine the trajectory of progress of a programme of this nature. While the programme architecture is broadly same across the country, one finds variations in its effective implementation and it is contingent upon the creation and sustenance of institutional and governance structures at the grass roots level, which vary considerably across different states of the country. The political commitment and leadership,

bureaucratic effectiveness, overall general governance and institutional environment of a particular state influences the implementation of NREG at the field level.

This paper is an attempt to understand institutional and governance apparatus of public employment programme in a comparative perspective in order to draw lessons for its effective implementation. The basic premise is that these factors play critical role and there are several local innovations and adjustments that are made in order to ensure effective implementation. Nature and character of the bureaucracy, its capacities, creation of implementation apparatus, involvement of grass roots institutions (formal and informal) and their participation etc are examined in locating institutional factors for the progress of NREG.

The implementation process of NREGS is expected to unleash a transformative potential in social relations and rural governance. At the center of implementation are three-tier Panchayati Raj institutions and the Gram Sabha (the village community), which play a critical role in identifying and ratifying types of works to be undertaken in a village. Elected representatives of a Panchayat, its official (panchayat secretary) and Rozgar Sevak (a dedicated field worker especially appointed for each panchayat) have important roles in registering job seeker households, issuance of job cards, receiving job requests from workers, proposing suitable works for the approval of the Gram Sabha, monitoring of works and timely payments. Functions at this level are scrutinized through a process of social audits, which again encompasses participation of the entire village community (Gram Sabha). Given the above context, the current research addresses the following key questions;

- How are the current practices of NREGS implementation perceived by various stakeholders such as the community, bureaucracy, and local political leadership? And how different states are implementing the scheme
- What are the political, organizational and administrative apparatus and their constraints in implementation and how can they be addressed?
- How do the various dimensions of larger political processes, decentralization, administrative and bureaucratic reforms affect the NREGS?
- What are the diverse processes and innovations adopted by the various civil society agencies in facilitating the effective realization of the goals of the NREGS at the field level and what lessons can be drawn from such experiences (e.g. the process of social audits etc) ? and
- Finally, what are the appropriate institutional and governance structures and mechanisms for its sustainability and effective implementation?

In order to gather field insights, field work has been undertaken in three states viz., Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan, each representing diverse contexts of institutional and governance. We present in this paper preliminary field results and develop arguments that would facilitate greater understanding of the processes and issues related to governance. The paper is divided into four major sections. Following this

introduction, we present briefly, features of NREG programme, with specific reference to processes and entitlements and establish certain hypothesis. Section 3 discusses in detail the findings of the field survey that has been undertaken as part of the research project. Section 4 identifies implications for policy.

## **Section II**

### **The Programme Intent**

As an Act of Parliament, NREG is a programme that is aimed at meeting the vulnerabilities of the households through creation of unskilled wage work as supplementary employment for a period of 100 days per family in rural areas of the country. It is also universal in a limited sense that it bestows the right to seek work on all individuals (with a norm of one person per family). The programme is also different from earlier 'food for work' programmes that were implemented during the periods of droughts in some parts of India as they were time bound and also meant for identified target groups of population. However, the relationship of government as an employer is a bit amorphous here, as there is no *continuity* in employment, rather it is contingent upon the worker to *seek or demand* work. It is for these reasons that some scholars identify it as a work based social protection programme within the rights and citizenship framework of development.

Through unskilled manual work is a prime form of employment, the programme envisages augmenting and regeneration of vast, untapped natural resources of the country viz., land and water. Land development and conservation, water conservation, rural connectivity etc are the identified works, aimed at rejuvenating the rural resource base. The programme is also implemented through elaborate processes of grass roots level stakeholder participation including that of workers, with guaranteed provisions for wages, transparency and accountability and grievance redressal mechanisms at different levels. All these features essentially reflect the intended development focus of the social protection programme, in a way that is aimed at unleashing the transformative potential. Shah (2009) identifies the 'multiplier accelerator' synergy in the NREGP through the rise in purchasing power of workers that stimulates production. Simultaneously, for example as almost all NREGP works allow for resource development and asset creation, it would enable increasing the productivity of lands of small and marginal farmers, inducing them to invest further. Thus, it can be fairly concluded that as a design, the programme confirms with the notions of developmental and poverty reduction potential of a social protection programme.

### **Programme features**

Under the Act, workers are expected to 'demand' work and the government (in this case district administration) are to provide unskilled manual work within 15 days of making an

application for work. There are provisions of unemployment allowance that the workers are entitled in the event of failure on the part of the government in providing work. The Act also expects equal wage for men and women and statutory minimum wages. The work should also be provided within 5 KM radius of place of residence of worker (if it is beyond 5 KM, workers are entitled to transport costs).

The NREG Act contrasts with previous employment generation schemes with respect to the following elements that constitute the essence of entitlements of the workers.

- The Act enables the workers the entitlement to work as a right
- Universality eliminates errors of targeting and ensures only the most needy come forth and claim employment
- The legal guarantee is binding on the State and this ensures the scheme is not *ad hoc* in its implementation (being less prone to phasing out or withdrawal from the Centre)
- Time bound employment guarantee is provided, with work being guaranteed within 15 days of its demand
- Incentive-disincentive structure exists, with the Centre financing the majority of the costs of employment generation and the States being liable to pay an unemployment allowance in case of non provision of employment
- Accountability of implementation agency is ensured through social audit
- Legal sanction is intended to have the effect of strengthening the confidence and bargaining capacity of the workers

(Mehrotra, 2008; Dhavse, 2004)

At the operational level, NREG is intended to be implemented through panchayat raj institutions viz., Gram Sabha (village assembly of all voters), Gram Panchayat (village elected representatives), Block Panchayat (representatives of cluster of villages) and District Panchayat (representatives of cluster of blocks). Each of these structures are bestowed with responsibility of implementation along side respective bureaucratic apparatus. At the grass roots level, special staff is recruited in order to supervise the work and provide technical support for measurement of works. It is to be noted that while an elaborate mechanism of implementation is envisaged in the design and implementation guidelines, substantial variation in actual functioning can be seen especially due to the inability to institutionalise these envisaged mechanisms. These are some of the issues that we dwell upon in the subsequent sections of the paper. The following broad hypotheses are being tested through an analysis of implementation experiences of the programme in three states of India (Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan), where we conducted field work for the past two years.

- 1) Regional variations in the level of implementation and outcomes are contingent upon mechanisms of implementation evolved by different state governments and their local bureaucracy, including their preparedness and institutional capacities (in planning and supervision), political leadership as well as mobilization efforts of other actors like civil society agencies.

- 2) The programme demonstrates the agility to accommodate local level adjustments that reflect inclusion though self selection is envisaged as mechanism for participation by the needy workers as well as reduce potential conflicts and unintended consequences on the labour markets (for example through seasonal calendars for employment generation).
- 3) The programme is flexible and accommodates local level innovation and differential impacts can be traced to such innovations carried out by the implementation apparatus. Institutional (eg. muster roll maintenance, separation of payment from implementation, social audit) and technical innovations (eg. geomatics in planning, studies evaluations) are found to be critical in better implementation.

### **Section III Findings from the Field Survey**

In this section we present findings from our survey and analysis that identifies processes and institutional and governance structures that are available and their effectiveness. We would also indicate the possible changes that are required in order to ensure effective implementation. Such a process diagnostics it is hoped would enable developing policy alternatives for improving the impact of NREG at the field level.

#### **Field Survey data and sample details**

For the purpose of understanding the process dimensions of implementation, we undertook collection of primary data through survey and focus group discussions from worker households, field functionaries, technical and administrative officials at the panchayat, block and district levels and PRI representatives and members from civil society groups. The survey instruments used are, household schedule, village schedule, and check lists for focus group discussions. Using purposive sampling method, a total of approx 480 worker households from each household have been interviewed covering 2 districts with 16 villages from each district in the three identified states<sup>1</sup>. In all the sample districts, blocks and panchayats officials who are implementing the programme and also PRI representatives have also been interviewed. Information about the villages has also been collected through village schedule, which captured the overall socio economic conditions of the selected villages<sup>2</sup>.

#### **NREGS workers Profile**

Firstly, it can be seen that NREGS as a programme is reaching the people who deserve and need such a supplementary employment opportunity. Though level of open rural unemployment is low, it is a known fact that rural labour markets are characterised by persistent under employment. In such circumstances, NREGS appear to have provided much needed scour for those households who are at the margins in terms of social and

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<sup>1</sup> The districts are, Kurnool and Medak in Andhra Pradesh, Gaya and Purnia in Bihar and Tonk and Udaipur in Rajasthan.

<sup>2</sup> Details are provided in Reddy et al (2010)

economic indicators. Participation is high among SC and ST households, agriculture labour households, small and marginal farmers<sup>3</sup>. While the number of employment days per family are inching towards the stipulated hundred days a year for each of the family, there appears to be overwhelming demand for work. It is reflected in the fact that several of those workers who are currently in NREGS programme, would like to continue further and would like to avail more number of days of employment.

An initial analysis of the sampled worker households confirms the scope of NREG as a social protection programme, reaching the most needy economic and social groups of the country (Table 1). Those coming from landless or marginal farmer families, engaging in casual labour, belonging to economic groups below the poverty line (possessing a BPL card or card for the poorest), and hailing from the most deprived social groups (scheduled caste and scheduled tribes) constitute the majority of NREG workers (Table 1). These characteristics impose enormous responsibility on the implementing apparatus in terms of ensuring effective delivery. However, these very characteristics of the participating households may also create the conditions for misuse and neglect of processes, and therefore call for effective institutional and governance structures.

**Table 1: Employment Created and Share of Employment by Social and Economic Categories**

	Andhra Pradesh	Bihar	Rajasthan
<b>A. Average no. of days of Employment per Household</b>	74	24	76
<b>B. Share of employment by social and economic categories (in %)</b>			
<b>(i) Social Group</b>			
SC	45	69	33
ST	5	7	23
OBC	35	23	35
Others	15	0	10
<b>(ii) Gender</b>			
Male	49	71	28
Female	51	29	72
<b>(iii) Economic Status (Ration Card Type)</b>			
Above Poverty Line	3	11	49
Below Poverty Line	89	40	35
Antyodaya card (very poor)	7	36	11
Annapoorna card (destitute/ old age)	0	1	1
Others	1	12	4
<b>(iv) Land Category</b>			
Landless	22	80	20

<sup>3</sup> Similar pattern is observable if one analyses the available secondary data on participation

Marginal	48	19.50	67
Small	24	0.41	9
Medium	5	0	3
Large	0	0	1

Source: IHD Survey 2009

### **Factors affecting Participation**

In the three states where the study is conducted, there are variations in participation by men and women in the programme. These are shaped by the prevailing conditions of labour markets including migration patterns of the households that they have been following from several years. For example in Andhra Pradesh, more women tended to participate in NREGS as the market wages are below the NREG wages and simultaneously market wages are high for men when compared to NREG wages. In places like Bihar men tend to migrate in search of work not only for higher wages but also for seeking work for longer durations, which were not the case with NREG works. (it is noted that these works in places like Bihar are for very short durations like 5 to 6 days and it is intermittent and such a situation does not help arresting migration of men workers, who prefer to have continuous long duration works, which are possible in urban informal sector). Similarly other factors like child care, domestic chores also affect participation of women in NREGS to some extent. Apart from demand side, there are several supply side factors relate to employment creation which also affect the participation.

Employment creation is the responsibility of the government functionaries who are implementing the programme. Several administrative and bureaucratic hurdles appear to be affecting employment creation, which is not uniform across the three states studied. Ability of creation of employment is a critical factor which would involve administrative where withal and adequate trained staff. Other requirements like administrative and technical sanctions, fund release, planning processes appear to be influencing the number of days of employment created. Extraneous factors like weather and seasonality (agriculture peak season) would also affect the number of days of employment created. Infact in several field locations studied, there appears to be an informal seasonal calendar prepared to suit the agriculture so that supply of labour for agriculture operations are not hampered due to NREGS. Such local arrangements are arrived at, as NREGS is affecting the local labour market conditions.

Often there appears to be mismatch between of employment need and availability, a mismatch that would also affect overall participation rates. Workers' preference in all regions is for longer duration of work without too many breaks. But in reality, shorter duration and frequent breaks are usual and both discourage participation and encourage migration seeking continuous work for longer period.

### **Pre-Job institutional arrangements**

It is to be noted that NREGS is designed as a demand based programme. It would mean technically, the workers have to seek work from the authorities and within a stipulated

period they are to be provided with work. Even prior to this, a process of registration of workers has been set in motion, which would entail provision of family details and workers are entitled to have a job card. In all these processes, workers are exposed new forms of participation in the sense that it demands awareness and understanding of the entitlements and provisions. NGOs, SHGs and other civil society groups, PRIs and government machinery are expected to provide awareness.

From the field observations it can be inferred that there is still a need for creating awareness systematically among all the stakeholders on the programme. Information dissemination about the Act, its provisions and entitlements, is necessary and appropriate processes are needed to ensure messages reach workers as well as implementing officials, Panchayat leaders and other important stakeholders.

Awareness of NREGA and its entitlements was created in Tonk District of Rajasthan by an NGO from Jaipur. Puppetry was used to communicate with workers about their rights and the details of the employment programme. In Udaipur, focus group discussions revealed that 'role-playing' as a method was also used to create familiarity among prospective workers with the specifics of the scheme.

In Bihar the role of NGOs and SHGs in awareness creation about the programme is more an exception. However, officials in the village of Dobhi, Gaya district, reported that the Gautam Budh NGO is creating awareness about NREGS, as is Jeevika, an SHG, in two or three villages of Purnia district. Additionally, villagers in Neema in Gaya district claimed that the local cadre of left wing party was creating awareness among its members, who are now well informed about the NREGS. Few local officials said that mahila samitis (women's groups) were creating awareness among women.

Women's SHGs facilitated by the Indira Kranti Patham (IKP), a government-led poverty reduction and women's empowerment programme in Andhra Pradesh, play an important role in NREGS. SHG members and leaders and the cadre of community workers facilitate awareness, job card access, and the work application process. Leaders of federations of SHGs at the Panchayat and Mandal levels and field workers also play important roles in facilitating payment transactions and social audits. Recently, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Department of Rural Development and NGOs in Andhra Pradesh to facilitate proactive participation in NREG projects like development of degraded common lands under NREG.

Thus, social mobilisation at the grassroots level appears to be a *sine qua non* for the effective realisation of rights. It was also found that wherever civil society agencies played the role of facilitators, there were more effective processes in place. For example, The Right to Information (RTI) has been invoked by NGOs in some instances in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh as a corrective instrument to check corruption, where through demand for proactive disclosure of NREG-related documents by workers, leakages have been exposed.

It is interesting to note that awareness on entitlements among workers varied across the three states. While in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan majority of workers are aware of

certain basic entitlements, the same was not the case with workers from Bihar. Similarly, outcomes of pre-job processes like the request for works, planning for works, participation in gram sabha for planning, development of shelf of works varied across three states with AP and Rajasthan demonstrating higher levels of performance compared to Bihar.

Reasons for such a situation are not far from our understanding. It can be seen that there are certain preparatory capacities that would become pre-requisites for grounding programme of this nature. Rajasthan has the previous experience of managing drought relief programmes, in which food work is one of the important interventions. Hence the bureaucracy has well versed with certain processes of recruiting workers in to the programme etc. Similarly the bureaucracy of Andhra Pradesh has over a decade long experience of implementing poverty reduction programme which has institution building as its central foci. Such experiences come in handy for grounding programmes at the district level. Also states like Rajasthan have institutionalised a mechanism of 'mate' (helper, who is also worker) from among the workers who undertake certain responsibilities under the guidance of the field worker. In AP too, system of 'mate' is institutionalised.

### **Processes for Securing work**

NREG Act envisages several processes that are in conformity with the notion of work on demand. However, there are several contextual and local adaptations for such processes which enable smooth functioning of the programme. While the Act prescribes the job seekers to 'apply' for works (either through written or oral), most often the practice is that 'works' are identified and workers are asked to participate. At the most potential workers 'ask' for work informally. At one level such informality is due to the illiteracy of workers and their familiarity with the local personnel and implementation apparatus, often such a informality is encouraged as it would enable the bureaucracy to skirt the provisions like giving unemployment allowance, if they fail to provide jobs within stipulated period. Informal application also would mean that the bureaucracy can by-pass the stipulated time period, as they can fill in the forms related to application for works at their own convenience. Even the provisions of unemployment allowance itself is not clearly articulated and does not confirm to the notion of 'unemployment allowance' prevalent in western welfare states; it is seen merely as a deterrent against possible lapses by the bureaucracy, which in anyway identifies ways of skirting the same. The procedures related to securing unemployment allowance are also cumbersome and to that extent unemployment allowance is a notional entitlement. It is to be noted that there were very rare instances of securing unemployment allowance by workers through out the country.

Given that the local officials are 'expected' to provide works, several pre-requisites are to be in place to ensure timely works are started. They are within the realm of the local functionaries and communities of workers have little say on these. For example, lack of shelf of projects (identified works), delays in sanctions, lack of staff, work pressure on functionaries, are some of the reasons cited for delays in starting works. Even in case of

delays of works, there are no instances of workers' claiming unemployment allowance (an entitlement in the event of a failure to provide jobs within 15 days) were found in the field.

**Table 2: Application Process Related Dimensions**

	<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	<b>Bihar</b>	<b>Rajasthan</b>
<b>I. "Application" Mode</b>			
Yes	71	22	91
No	29	78	9
<b>All</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>II. Kind of "Application"*</b>			
Individual written Application	1	31	28
Individual informal request	60	54	54
Collective written application	4	7	10
Collective informal request	35	7	8
<b>All</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>III. Receipt with Date</b>			
Yes	16	4	21
No	84	93	77
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100**</b>	<b>100**</b>

Source : IHD Survey 2009. \*Of those who "applied"/ "requested" for work \*\*Do not add up to 100. Some unclear cases

### **Work related entitlements**

As far as workers are concerned, two important parameters determine their participation. One, availability of work and second, it should be properly and fairly accounted for payment of wages that they are entitled to within stipulated time. However, there are several other intermediary processes that are equally important to reach to this objective. Traversing those processes involve several issues of transparency and accountability and institutional and governance aspects come to play at this juncture.

In fact in realisation of their right to work and wages that are due to them, workers undergo several processes that are critical to ensure transparency and accountability in the process. Violation of several of such intermediary processes is reported from the field which seriously compromise their ability to secure fair wages and on timely basis. Recording the attendance on the job cards and 'muster roll', measurement of works, calculating wages based on scheduled of rates and finally completion of all paper work related to wage payment are some of the steps that the field functionaries have to undertake with due diligence. Failure in any of these aspects would jeopardise the

workers claim over the wages for the period that they have worked. Performance of the three states varies in meeting these process related requirements.

On the whole, it was found that in only about one fourth of the cases were there complete entries made in the job card. Only partial entries were made in job cards across the three states – Andhra Pradesh in 32% cases, in Bihar in about 22% cases and in Rajasthan in about 66% cases. (IHD 2009) Such a situation seriously violates the entitlements of workers and provides scope for corruption and other malpractices, as workers are not then in a position to contest any discrepancies in payments.

Apart from entries on the job cards of workers, more critical process is recording attendance of workers in ‘muster roll’, which would form basis for calculating the wages for workers. It is supposed to be signed by the workers on a daily basis. It is found that there are variations across the three states studied in maintenance of this critical record. It is found that in Bihar, attendance is taken on a informal note book (in hindi called Kachcha katha), which would ostensibly be transferred on to a prescribed form. Only just over a third of sample worksites in Bihar reported the use of muster rolls. Also *in both Bihar and Rajasthan, nearly half the sample workers did not sign the muster rolls at all and in majority of cases these rolls were not kept up to date.* These deficiencies deny transparency and create room for tampering, which is most often cited irregularity in implementation of NREGP.

Mandated work site facilities are also area of contention vis a vis fulfilment of entitlements of workers. While several social and cultural reasons are cited for absence of several work site facilities, the bottom line is that the administration at the district and block levels compromise severely on creation of adequate work site facilities. Facilities like drinking water, shade, first aid kits and a crèche (if there are six or more women with children below the age of five years) are supposed to be provided at the work sites. However, it was observed that the status of worksite facilities was uniformly poor across the three states studied.

Drinking water facilities are provided at some places, but caste prejudices appear to be playing a role in inadequate provision of such facility in several cases. Workers also justify non availability of drinking water by mentioning that they bring water from their respective homes and such a facility is not necessary. There appears to be no mechanism of ensuring such facilities are provided which would adhere to the norms of decent work.

### **Wage Calculation and Payment process**

Wages are expected to be paid on a fortnightly basis i.e within a time frame of fifteen days after completion of the work, failing which the concerned officials are liable for penal action. The Act also provides for minimum wages and equal wages for men and women workers. Wages are calculated based on the quantum of work done (called piece rate) and this would involve measurement of actual work undertaken by workers and accounting the same against each worker (or group of workers) and applying schedule of

rates (bench mark rate for different works/tasks undertaken) to arrive at what is due for workers.

Payments based on the work measurement was followed in AP and Rajasthan. However in Bihar, about half respondents reported payment on a daily wage basis, which implies that measurement of work is not taken seriously. Technical staff at the panchayat and block levels are expected to take measurements and such a practice was visible in AP and Rajasthan in contrast to Bihar where no such practice was reported. Such variations in measurement processes seriously compromise the wage calculations and what is due for workers. Officials in Bihar cite inadequate staff as one of the reasons for not undertaking measurements.

Measurement based payments appear to be shrouded by complex processes of benchmarking the quantum of work and appropriate compensation for undertaking the work. Given that NREG works are 'manual physical labour' mostly involving digging of earth and moving it, quality of soil, seasonality and altitude etc play important role. Benchmarking standards for different conditions and ensuring that the workers understand the same is an enormous task. Our field interactions bring to the fore such issues like allocation of work at worksites (with typically hard work given to most marginalised groups), work output, work measurement and the payment of corresponding wages where in considerable clarity and equity is required. For instance, time-motion-and-work studies conducted in Andhra Pradesh found that labourers had to work almost three times more under the standard Schedule of Rates (SOR) to get the basic minimum wage, owing to the observed difference between the wage promised and the actual wage received by the worker under the task rate formula (CSE 2008: 33-35). Based on the recommendations of this study, the Andhra Pradesh government issued orders in April 2007 modifying the wage entitlements of workers in various NREGA works. In October 2008, Bihar too adopted a new schedule of rates based on time and motion studies and is considered to be more gender friendly. But in practice there have been several approximations made undoing the considerations of productivity norms. Often considerable delays in the payment of wages in Rajasthan are attributed to measurement delays. There appears to be insidious discrimination as instances of difficult works (like digging of well) given to most marginalised groups, who are paid less wages, compared to 'lighter works' given to others who were paid more wages. Such instances, found in Andhra Pradesh reflect the extent of discrimination that is possible in awarding public works as social protection programme.

### **Payment agencies**

One important feature which is perceived to be a mechanism to address payment related malpractices that were associated with public works programme, is that of separation of payment with that of implementation apparatus. It is sought to be achieved by arranging the payment through banks and post offices. Almost all households surveyed in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan had individual Post Office or bank accounts through which they were paid NREGS wages. However, in Bihar, only a little more than half (52 per cent) of workers have bank accounts, indicating that payment of wages through bank or post-

office accounts has not yet been institutionalised. Payment through banks and post offices is also part of the process of financial inclusion of large sections of population who are presently outside formal financial system. Proactive banking system and work load and accessibility of post offices (handling such large number of transactions is new to post offices) are some of the factors that determine effectiveness of these payment systems. However, payment by cash even in the presence of officials and panchayat representatives appear to be wrought with manipulations as evidences from Bihar indicate. In Bihar, there is an overwhelming support for payments through post offices as they are more accessible than banks in rural areas. Operational difficulties like under staffing of post offices are identified as a major constraint in this aspect.

Another important entitlement that is routinely violated is payment within a time period of 15 days from the completion of certain period of work. Delays in wage payment appear to be acute in Rajasthan compared to other two states. These delays are linked to delays in measurement of work completed, opening of post office and bank accounts for workers, work load at post offices, sharing of reports and data at the higher levels and delays in data entry process etc. Typically a one month delay is reported by respondents in Rajasthan and in some cases it reached to over 60 days. Use of IT facilities appears to have reduced the delays in Andhra Pradesh to a larger extent. Such large delays were not reported in Bihar (where payments are made by cash in some cases) and even in Andhra Pradesh.

#### **Cutting leakages - wage payment using ICT and biometric smart cards**

An innovative feature of the NREG programme in Andhra Pradesh is wage payment through banks and post offices, with the use of ICT and transaction-based Monitoring and Information Systems (MIS). A strict payment cycle is supposed to be followed, with work measurement being completed by day 6, after which preparation of cheques, the transfer of cash, and the final disbursement to post offices occurs by day 13, well within the stipulated 15 days for payment of wages.

Further, after a recent pilot study testing its efficiency, Financial Information Network and Operations Ltd (FINO), a technology solutions provider, is paying wages to NREGS workers through biometric smart cards (using fingerprint authentication) in 259 villages in five districts of Andhra Pradesh (93 in Karimnagar, 17 in Medak, 53 in Chittoor, 55 in East Godavari and 41 in Mahaboobnagar). This is aimed at reducing transaction time as well as costs to workers and also enabling transparent payments.

#### **Types of works and their selection process**

As mentioned at the introduction, NREG works are primarily aimed at augmenting natural resource base in rural areas. In conformity with such objectives, it can be seen that most works undertaken in Andhra Pradesh were land development works (45 per cent), followed by other works (29 per cent)<sup>i</sup>. In Bihar, most are rural road connectivity works (65 per cent) while a few involved the renovation of traditional water bodies and irrigation works (Table 3). In Rajasthan similarly, most involved rural road works. Some renovation of traditional water bodies was also undertaken, mostly in Tonk, Rajasthan.

The process of selection of works is meant to be participatory and the works selected should reflect local development needs. The process involves Gram Sabha meetings in

which members of the village community assemble to discuss and select the nature and location of works to be undertaken under NREG. Though different local level actors were reported to be present at the time of selection of works, suggestions from people as to what works to be taken up were not paid very much heed, and it largely emerges that scheme selection ultimately comes 'from above', usually drawn from a ready-made shelf of works (list of works), resulting in ad hoc scheme selection. Further, a disturbing feature of some works in Rajasthan was the violation of the guidelines that labour cost should be at least 60 per cent of the project cost and the material cost should not exceed 40 per cent. In most of the works the material cost was in the range of 60 to 80 per cent. It is observed as a deliberate ploy to misappropriate by inflating the procured material cost.

The allocation of funds for NREG consists of three levels of works: at least 50% of the funds are to be used by Gram Panchayat (taking up village level works), 30% funds by Panchayat Samiti (taking up inter Panchayat works) and the remaining 20% by Zila Parishad (taking up inter block works). A slew of administrative sanctions and technical sanctions are also needed for the works to be passed, with the works employing greater amount of funds needing sanction from correspondingly higher local level authorities. However, it was often found to be the case that proposals for some of these larger works languished in the offices of the higher level functionaries, awaiting their sanction, thereby delaying their commencement.

**Table 3: Nature of NREGS Works Undertaken  
(% share of each type)**

Type of Work	Andhra Pradesh	Bihar	Rajasthan
Water Conservation	11	0	0
Drought Proofing	-	3	2
Irrigation Works	-	7	3
Irrigation on Individual Land	15	0	3
Renovation of Traditional Water Bodies	-	10	30
Land Development	45	3	2
Flood Control	-	10	0
Rural Connectivity	-	65	57
Other Works*	29	2	3
Total	100	100	100

IHD Survey 2009 \*Other works include silt application, percolation tanks, earthen bunding etc.

Effective planning of works is an important prerequisite for the quality of assets created through NREGP. There seem to glaring gap in this aspect, as currently most of the works are identified by the officials which are endorsed by the political leadership at different levels. This could be due to lack of capacities at the PRI levels in order to participate in the processes of planning for works. However some of the works though initiated from the top but received approval of local panchayats, like the development of lands

belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribe households and other households below the poverty line appears to have tremendous potential in unleashing productive capacities in rural areas, wherein hitherto non-arable lands can come into cultivation, as the study found in Andhra Pradesh. Such works would also trigger a multiplier effect. It is imperative to identify and prioritise such works through a process of village-level resource planning. Mechanisms for the equitable benefit-sharing of assets also need to be developed, especially in cases such as land and water related works, where in the post-construction phase benefits often accrue to land owners rather than the landless.

While NREG is a rights based demand driven programme, at the operational level the demand is influenced by the seasonality of agriculture's demand for labour. As a social protection programme it is expected to meet the employment requirement of workers during the slack season of employment. If NREG work could meet the slack season demand, it is considered to be not only optimal but also one that avoids clash with agricultural demand for labour. Thus there is a need to develop an NREGP calendar of works. In an exercise conducted by the Centre for Environment Concerns (CEC), an NGO in Andhra Pradesh, farmers and NREG workers were brought together to devise an agricultural employment calendar, resulting in the identification of a shelf of works wherein small projects could be taken up any time during the year and large ones with high employment potential were slated only during the non-peak agricultural season (CEC: 63-68). Such a calendar is being implemented in Andhra Pradesh and a similar approach may be adopted by other states as well. Given that NREGP wages are on par with wages in agriculture, such a seasonal calendar is expected to ensure continuous employment throughout the year for workers. Additionally, the domino effect of minimum wages offered under NREGA on agricultural wages has been welcomed for establishing a much needed wage floor for rural labour.

### **Implementation Personnel and their capacities**

District administration is the responsible agency for implementation of the programme. Separate and dedicated cadre of personnel are created for the programme i.e. a District Programme Coordinator, a Block Programme Officer and a Panchayat Rozgar Sewak. While such a uniform structure is available across the three states studied, there are variations in terms of availability of personnel (deployment) and their capacities. For example, during the field survey period in the state of Bihar, large number of vacancies are reported within this implementation structure in the districts studied. In several places, officials are made in-charge of the programme. Similarly, abilities of the officials, their prior experience and knowledge plays crucial role. The grass roots level functionaries in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan appear to have considerable prior experience of handling programmes of this nature as both the states have intensively implemented similar poverty reduction programmes over the past several decades. Work load of staff, delays in salaries, inadequate transport facilities are some of the grievances reported by field functionaries during our interactions. However, there are several innovations which have been spearheaded by officials in some locations.

### **Grievances of NREG functionaries**

Interviews in Bihar revealed the following:

- At the Panchayat level in particular, Rozgar Sewaks received a consolidated salary of Rs 3000 per month, nearly a subsistence wage. Further, salaries for NREG personnel were often delayed by 3-6 months.
- Understaffing of functionaries at each level meant that they were often given additional charge of Blocks or Panchayats beyond their designated ones.
- Despite being appointed specifically for the NREG, officials complained of being burdened with non-NREG work such as preparing BPL lists and serving during election duty, resulting in less attention to NREG work.
- No travel allowance or transport facility was provided to them despite their having to oversee multiple worksites, for which they had to cover their own expenses.

Personnel issues appear to be having a bearing on the delays in payment of wages to workers as well. For example, absence of adequate number of technical supervisors and assistances has resulted in delays in measurement and subsequently delays in payment of wages. Political interferences in appointment of staff (and their transfers) also play a role in creating hurdles for effective implementation.

It is found that field functionaries lack technical knowledge and there is a need to provide technical assistance at the time of design and allocation of works for workers. In absence of such a process, often the physical structures created or the works undertaken by the workers found to be of inferior quality (and often does not even confirm to simple logic of slope in case of some of the water harvesting structures like trenches!). There is a need to invest in capacity building of field functionaries in some of the basic technical aspects related to unskilled manual work.

### **System of monitoring of NREG works**

A web enabled Monitoring and Information System (MIS) has been initiated ([www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)) in order to track the entire NREG implementation process, with the aim of inducing transparency by placing all relevant programme related information in the public domain.

Andhra Pradesh has taken this initiative a step further. While all other States have MIS developed by the National Informatics Corporation (NIC), Andhra Pradesh developed its MIS to suit the State specific needs with the help of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). This is modeled in a manner such that each mandal office has a client-server system where all data and work/wage related entry is done by a computer operator. The system provides details regarding registration of wage seekers, management of shelf of works, work progress, monitoring and payment, management of funds and shares reports and analysis. All the data from the blocks is later integrated at the state level. Each step of transaction in the implementation of the NREG is computerized, and data is updated on a daily basis, thereby allowing for 'real time' monitoring, rather than aggregate data cumulated over a period of a month as in the national MIS, allowing for time lags and not being able to arrest deficiencies as and when they arise. Further, special mechanisms that flag anomalies such as workers without bank accounts, wage delays as and when they

occur exist, besides also granting of automatically generated pay slips to workers for wage payment (Ngo 2010). The software has been designed to be worker centric, enabling for use of images and voice speech to reach out to illiterate workers wanting to know their work and wages status.

In other states, however, filling up of the MIS datasheets has proven difficult, in part owing to the lack of awareness of NREG functionaries of the practice, lack of personnel to conduct data entry, infrequent access to the internet at the Block level for uploading the relevant information and yearly changes in formats relating to information to be filled. For instance, in Bihar, these detailed records are available only for the financial year 2008-09, though programme implementation has been ongoing in some districts since 2006.

Taking cue from the example of Andhra Pradesh, the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) at various stages of NREG may be considered, for example in the identification of NREG workers and keeping records of their payments. For example, biometrics for attendance (as elaborated earlier), use of smart cards, use of handheld devices, electronic payments and appropriate tracking software are some pilots in these directions and the need is to identify replicable processes for extension in different institutional contexts.

### **Mechanisms for accountability**

The Act and subsequent notifications provide elaborate grievance redress mechanisms and ombudsmen at different levels to provide remedial measures for any grievances from workers. However, they remain conspicuous by their absence at the district and sub-district levels, and through discussions with the NREG workers it emerged that this proves very costly for them, as they remain powerless in exposing any irregularities. Often, as was reported in numerous cases in Bihar, workers are at the mercy of locally powerful groups or actors, also in charge of scheme implementation (sometimes by misappropriation), who are able to manipulate scheme benefits to their gain. They interfered at the time of wage payment and siphoned cuts from the wages due to the workers. However, the NREG workers could not turn to an independent third party to expose this infringement of the programme's rules. the situation is perhaps slightly better in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan where some of the issues are being raised through invoking Right to Information Act.

In fact, other accountability mechanisms are built into the NREG programme such as social audits (see box below); the demand for proactive disclosure of NREG-related documents through display boards or using the Right to Information Act; and public scrutiny of accounts, vigilance and monitoring committees to oversee the quality of implementation of the scheme, existed on paper but not in practice, save in Andhra Pradesh and to a limited extent in Rajasthan.

#### **Box**

#### **Accountability through social audit in Andhra Pradesh**

In Andhra Pradesh, social audits have been instituted through a state-led initiative, and are conducted by an independent group – the Society for Social Audit, Accountability and Transparency (SSAAT), Department of Rural Development, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh. Social audits as designed in the NREG are intended to serve as a platform for the redress of grievances. The audit exercise involves public hearings which act as a forum for exposing discrepancies in government records of programme implementation. This occurs through the testimonies of workers and opportunities given to officials to publicly defend their actions (Aiyar and Samji, 2009). As part of the social audit, state and district resource persons train village social auditors, who in turn are involved in monitoring and evaluating scheme processes. They also play a key role in raising awareness of beneficiaries through discussions and dialogue about the NREG programme and its provisions. The social audit as conducted in Andhra Pradesh has developed into a best practice in terms of public accountability, serving as a model to be replicated in all states. Audits have been conducted in 7,000 households in all 22 districts of the state, with the involvement of more than 150 NGOs and civil society organisations. As a result, there have been a number of instances of corrective action such as initiation of departmental enquiries, dismissal of erring officials due to their malpractices and voluntary recovery of up to Rs. 30 million from NREG-related misdeeds (Rajshkhar, 2009).

Punitive actions for addressing deficits in entitlements may need to be established in earnest. Such measures will enhance transparency as well as responsiveness among officials to check incomplete entries in job cards, measurement delays and delays in payment, which need to be purged. Additionally, instituting of a grievance redress agency or actor, independent of scheme stakeholders, would help in ensuring transparency. Such measures are being contemplated and there is a need to undertake steps in that direction. The establishment of district ombudsmen is one step in this direction. Social audit mechanism, as instituted in Andhra Pradesh, can be replicated in other states, though attention is needed to ensure that such an exercise may be adapted to local contexts so that NREG workers can voice their grievances without fear.

#### **Section IV**

##### **Summary and Conclusions**

It is observed that as a right based programme, NREG is identified with its transformative potential in addressing various socio-economic conditions of the poor in the rural landscape. Implementation architecture is aimed at creating conditions for responsible and responsive governance and institutions that would meet the demands of the poor. However, field evidences point towards several gaps in entitlements as well as gaps in institutional and governance structures. One important and central message of NREG so far is that, three inter-related aspects viz., participation, decentralisation and governance play important roles in determining the trajectory of success. Mechanisms for participation of the workers in the process, decision making at the local level and creating conditions for transparency and accountability would improve effectiveness of the programme in terms of creating lasting impact on the rural poor households.

From the analysis of the data and interactions with key functionaries, an attempt has been made to develop certain typologies vis a vis implementation of NREGS across the three states.

## **Andhra Pradesh**

Implementation is vested mostly with supply side factors, especially proactive bureaucracy who strived to provide employment. Demand side processes and entitlements have not been exercised by far in a systematic way by the communities. Though community awareness is on the rise, they have not been able to completely exercise provisions rather it is officials who take lead in job creation. Post work processes institutionalised, such as use of IT for bank payment (allows for timely and accurate payment of wages), MIS, social audit have been institutionalised in a more rapid and sustained way in the state in comparison to other states

## **Rajasthan**

With the state having experience of implementing such public employment programmes Rajasthan has been able to provide large scale employment in terms of person-days. There is also high awareness on the part of workers and also better worksite management with institutionalisation of systems like 'mate' etc. However, post work processes, especially wage payment related measurements, time-delays appear to be the hurdles for realisation of full benefits to the workers.

## **Bihar**

Bihar shows a picture of nascent implementation status. The number of days of employment generated is low in comparison with other states. Low absorption capacities and absence of institutionalised implementation mechanisms appear to be major drawbacks. Works are not regular and supply lags demand for works. Such a situation in a most needy state results in distress migration and which in turn affects the participation of the most needy households. Lack of institutions of governance (Panchayat raj) is also a factor that hinders the implementation.

An important lesson emerges from the study is that state-led institutionalised innovations appear to be the trajectory to move towards success vis a vis implementation. Experience from Andhra Pradesh illustrates this point. While the results of such experiments are yet to be crystallised, what is heartening to see is that there are set mechanisms evolved for implementation and the processes have in-built sustainability with institutional partnerships. Similar approach is currently being advocated at the national level.

Although it was envisaged as a rights based and demand driven programme that is universal and self-selecting in terms of participation, the implementation of NREG, however, appears to be similar to the typical bureaucracy-driven public employment programmes that have been in place for many years in India. This is due to the weakness of Panchayat Raj institutions at the grassroots level, which need strengthening through the addition of adequate supporting staff, and capacity-building of both elected representatives and supporting institutions. However, evidence does indicate the fulfilment of certain entitlements of workers to varying degrees in the three states covered in the field study.

While several entitlements are not yet completely fulfilled, the most important one has been, i.e. the provision of at least 75-100 days of work, as promised, to at least half the participating households in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan (though Bihar still remains nowhere near this achievement). In most cases, the payment of statutory minimum wages is also occurring (with the exception of delays in Rajasthan), and wages appear to be reaching those workers who have worked under NREG. Systems related to this aspect of the programme still have teething problems (especially in Bihar) in terms of inadequate capacities of banks and post offices, yet there is an overall positive response in this respect by the workers. One of the reasons for this situation is that there is intended to be a complete separation between the implementation and wage payment apparatuses. Such a separation has some potential for lessening delays and minimising malpractice.

The other important aspect of the programme is the type and quality of works created and their contribution to the rural economy. While feedback is positive overall regarding the types of works, there appears to be little focus on the quality of assets due to inadequate technical capacities at the field level in terms of providing design and technical inputs while executing the works. Interactions with the field functionaries revealed this critical gap. Furthermore, consensus-based decisionmaking regarding the selection of assets to reflect local development needs has a long way to go.

### **Policy implications**

As a rights-based programme NREG envisages certain prerequisites in terms of enhanced awareness and understanding of the nuances of rights and entitlements and the processes of their realisation. At this juncture, there still appears to be much scope for creating awareness systematically among all the stakeholders. Information dissemination about the Act, its provisions and entitlements, is necessary and appropriate processes are needed to ensure messages reach workers as well as implementing officials, Panchayat leaders and other important stakeholders. The Right to Information (RTI) has been invoked in some instances in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh as a corrective instrument to check corruption, where through demand for proactive disclosure of NREG-related documents by workers, leakages have been exposed.

The role of civil society agencies and NGOs in scheme delivery has also become important for this reason. In Andhra Pradesh, the pre-existing cadre of community facilitators of the SHGs of the Indira Kranthi Patham (IKP) has been tapped to facilitate mobilisation under NREGA. Thus, social mobilisation at the grassroots level appears to be a *sine qua non* for the effective realisation of rights. It was also found that wherever civil society agencies played the role of facilitators, there were more effective processes in place.

Scope for the simplification of procedures and processes may be explored, as this was one of the concerns of field officials who often spend considerable time meeting procedural requirements. Technical support for field functionaries and panchayat representatives on the planning and monitoring of works appear to be another important

need at the field level. The absence of this support appears to be leading to suboptimal results as far as quality of works is concerned. To provide these inputs, resources may be allocated from within the administrative and capacity-building funds. Furthermore, the shortage of technical staff, their work load, multiple responsibilities of staff, training, delays in appointments and incentive structures are some of the human resource issues that need immediate attention, as was particularly observed from the lacunae in scheme implementation in Bihar.

Effective planning of works is an important prerequisite for the quality of assets created through NREGP. The shelf of projects may be expanded and works need to be prioritised based on need rather than the limits of the implementing structures. The current approach of having limits to sanction works at various levels of the panchayat raj structure appears to be negatively affecting the quality of assets. Bureaucratic hurdles in sanctions also need to be addressed. The development of lands belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribe households and other households below the poverty line appears to have tremendous potential in unleashing productive capacities in rural areas, wherein hitherto non-arable lands can come into cultivation, as the study found in Andhra Pradesh. Such works would also trigger a multiplier effect. It is imperative to identify and prioritise such works through a process of village-level resource planning. Mechanisms for the equitable benefit-sharing of assets also need to be developed, especially in cases such as land and water related works, where in the post-construction phase benefits often accrue to land owners rather than the landless.

While NREG is a rights based (demand led) programme, at the operational level there appears to be some element of seasonality in the demand for works. As a social protection programme it is expected to meet the employment requirement of workers during the slack season of employment. Thus there is a need to develop an NREGP calendar of works. In an exercise conducted by the Centre for Environment Concerns (CEC), an NGO in Andhra Pradesh, farmers and NREG workers were brought together to devise an agricultural employment calendar, resulting in the identification of a shelf of works wherein small projects could be taken up any time during the year and large ones with high employment potential were slated only during the non-peak agricultural season (CEC: 63-68). Such a calendar is being implemented in Andhra Pradesh and a similar approach may be adopted by other states as well. Given that NREGP wages are on par with wages in agriculture, such a seasonal calendar is expected to ensure continuous employment throughout the year for workers. Additionally, the domino effect of minimum wages offered under NREGA on agricultural wages has been welcomed for establishing a much needed wage floor for rural labour.

The use of ICTs at various stages may be considered, for example in the identification of NREG workers and keeping records of their payments. For example, biometrics for attendance (as elaborated earlier in Andhra Pradesh), use of smart cards, use of handheld devices, electronic payments and appropriate tracking software are some pilots in these directions and the need is to identify replicable processes for extension in different institutional contexts.

Issues of division of work at worksites, work output and work measurement and the payment of corresponding wages for the work done needs greater clarity, as brought to the fore especially in Rajasthan. For instance, time-motion-and-work studies conducted in Andhra Pradesh found that labourers had to work almost three times more under the standard Schedule of Rates to get the basic minimum wage, owing to the observed difference between the wage promised and the actual wage received by the worker under the task rate formula (CSE 2008: 33-35). Based on the recommendations of this study, the Andhra Pradesh government issued orders in April 2007 modifying the wage entitlements of workers in various NREGA works. Thus it emerges that some standardisation in these processes is urgently needed across the states.

Another possible scenario that has been suggested is to de-link wages from output and to replace this with daily wages in order to simplify processes (there has been an announcement in this direction; but it has not yet been clearly spelt out by the central government). Links between the mode and frequency of wage payment also needs to be explored to minimise delays in payment to NREG workers, and depending on the handling capacities of banks and post offices, these institutions may be seen as a pivotal mechanism (though not foolproof) in plugging such delays. Incentivising panchayats for improving work-site facilities may also be considered.

Finally, punitive actions for addressing deficits in entitlements may need to be established in earnest. Such measures will enhance transparency as well as responsiveness among officials to check incomplete entries in job cards, measurement delays and delays in payment, which need to be purged. Additionally, instituting of a grievance redress agency or actor, independent of scheme stakeholders, would help in ensuring transparency. The establishment of district ombudsmen is a step in this direction. Social audit mechanism, as instituted in Andhra Pradesh, can be replicated in other states, though attention is needed to ensure that such an exercise may be adapted to local contexts so that NREG workers can voice their grievances without fear.

While the above simplified analysis is tenable at this stage of our research, more detailed explanations are warranted in order to inform policy on the role of institutions and governance aspects for enhancing effective implementation in different states. However, we propose the following tentative policy implications based on our field study, which would be further scrutinised with fresh data which is being currently analysed.

### **Policy Implications**

First and foremost, there is a need to safeguard entitlements of the workers in a programme of this nature, which is demand based. This would mean, creating awareness on the rights of workers and ensuring that they are fulfilled by the duty bearers, viz., field level functionaries and administrative set up at the cutting edge level.

Given that there is overwhelming demand for works, NREG work entitlement may be made on an individual basis instead of the current practice of providing job to a family for 100 days. Such an approach may help in enhancing the poverty reduction potential of

NREG as families would be able to work intensively and earn incomes. Relaxing the cap on the number of employment days so that works may be available for the needy throughout the year, and for any number of days, especially given the demand for works from certain locations (e.g arid zones which face recurrence of droughts).

Entitlements like payment of wages within stipulated time period, payment of minimum wages etc are important as workers look for public employment, in absence of any other productive employment and it is lifeline for them to survive especially during lean seasons. Violations of any such entitlements would mean, the inability of the programme to meet desired objective.

Strengthening and rationalising systems appear to be one of the critical aspects for enhancing effectiveness. Given that most of the works are given, a more proper process of identifying shelf of works may be adopted through gram sabha and the same may be prioritised so that there would not be any shortage of works. Similarly wage payment delays, measurement delays, facilities at the work site are all contingent upon systems. Incentives and dis-incentives for bureaucracy would also help in addressing some of the systemic failures.

Participation, transparency and accountability are three important elements which need to be adhered to in order to enhance effective implementation. Towards this end, planning for works at the local level through decentralised and participatory systems becomes necessary. Meetings of gram sabha (meeting of entire village) are necessary. Similarly formation and effective functioning of vigilance committees are *sine qua non* for transparency.

Need for massive capacity building activities at all levels of functionaries and institutional structures (in terms of advisory boards, ombudsman for grievance redressal etc.)

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