Support to Operationalization of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme

Millennium Development Goal:  
Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Relevant India Development Goal:  
Reduction of poverty ratio by five percentage points by 2007 and 15 percentage points by 2012

Background

According to Government estimates, 239 million people lived below the poverty line between 2004 and 2005. During the same period, 34.74 million people were unemployed. To address the rising challenge of unemployment, most acute in rural areas, the Government of India launched the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP) in February 2006, after passing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in September 2005. This landmark legislation provides legal right of at least 100 days of employment in a year to each rural household that demands it.

UNDP collaborates with the Government of India in addressing some of the challenges in implementing this programme, such as low levels of awareness among rural poor about entitlements under MGNREGP, weak social audit processes, low capacity among communities for planning projects, and weak monitoring and evaluation systems.

Objectives

- Support improved implementation of MGNREGP through technical expertise, communication strategies, management information systems, training, etc.
- Institute a model for a third-party concurrent monitoring of MGNREGP.
- Demonstrate innovations to enhance human development outcomes aimed at addressing next generation challenges of MGNREGA such as skills, livelihoods, health and literacy of workers.
- Demonstrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) models to improve transparency and accountability in MGNREGP processes.
- Develop models for enhancing capacities of communities to undertake social audit and local planning.
- Support for developing models of Information and Communication Technology-based management information systems and monitoring and evaluation systems.

Targets:

Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than a dollar a day.

Project Information

Area: Democratic Governance

Budget: US$ 5.5 million

Duration: 2008-2012

Implementing Partner:  
Ministry of Rural Development

Other Partner(s):  
Several state governments, networks of NGOs and resource agencies including IIPA, Institute for Human Development, Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, Centre for Development Alternatives, Indian School of Women’s Studies and Development, PRADAN, OneWorld, SEWA, Seva Mandir, Administrative Staff College of India, Samaj Pragati Sahyog National Film Development Corporation and a network of professional institutions, e.g., IIMs, IITs, and other academic institutions.
Results so far

- Technical expertise provided to the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India has informed policymakers at national level and implementers at state and district levels through regular monitoring, management information systems and data analysis, development of guidelines and capacity development
- Professional Institutional Network model comprising 37 reputable institutions established for concurrent monitoring of MGNREGP and for providing feedback to national and state governments
- Fourteen innovation pilots demonstrated at village level in areas such as using ICT for transparency, financial inclusion, skills, livelihoods, literacy and community-based planning
- Convergence with other government programmes enabled through support in 50 districts in partnership with 17 institutions
- Knowledge sharing on MGNREGP’s best practices facilitated in the country and internationally
- Effective use of ICT for transparency and rights assertion by MGNREGA workers through an interactive people information system: A touch screen, sound and icon-based system for workers to enable them to exercise their rights. The biometric-based ICT pilot to facilitate transparency in wage payment is being upscaled by the Government of India at national level
- Resource materials for capacity development of workers at all levels developed—work manuals for afforestation, rural roads, watershed for rural users (engineers, PRIs), literacy primer for workers, Sarpanch Manual, knowledge dissemination through films and publications
- In November 2011, UNDP India and the Ministry of Rural Development jointly organized a high-level consultation on the Ministry’s Reform Agenda for MGNREGA. Findings and recommendations from UNDP-supported concurrent monitoring studies and innovation pilots informed the reform agenda and guidelines for MGNREGA 2.0

Looking to the Future

- Upscale and replicate models and prototypes developed within the project framework at state and district levels including technical support systems, concurrent third-party monitoring, innovation pilots, ICT and strengthened social audit processes
- Test, document and share models to build climate resilience of rural poor through MGNREGP
- Provide the Ministry of Rural Development technical support and share national and international experiences on ‘greening’ of public works and employment programmes to inform the ‘greening’ of MGNREGP and other government rural development programmes

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