

Minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held on 29.9.08 at 2:30 PM at Unnati, Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi on MIS operationalization under NREGA.

Participants:

- 1) Sri Jainder Singh, IAS, Secretary, Department of IT, GOI
- 2) Dr Rita Sharma, IAS, Secretary, Department of Rural Development, GOI
- 3) Sri. R. Chandra Shekhar, Special Secretary, Department of IT, GOI
- 4) Dr. B.K. Gairola, DG, NIC
- 5) Smt. Amita Sharma, Joint Secretary (NREGA), Department of Rural Development, GOI
- 6) Sri Y.K. Sharma, DDG, NIC
- 7) Sri Niten Chandra, Director (NREGA), Department of Rural Development
- 8) Smt. Madhuri Sharma, Director (NIC), MoRD, GOI.

Secretary Rural Development welcomed everyone and highlighted the need to focus on priority on ICT issues relating to NREGA in view of the large scale volume and programme. The programme covers 615 districts of the country and provided employment to 2.8 crores households in the current financial year. This is likely to go up to four crores by the year's end. About 100 crores persondays has been generated up till August, 2008 by taking up about 18 lakh work. Almost Rs. 20,000 crores have been available for the programme and against which about Rs. 11,000 crores has been spent up till August, 2008. About 70% of the funds are spent on wages of workers. For greater transparency; wages are being routed through Banks/ Post Offices accounts. So far 3.8 crore institutional accounts of NREGA workers have been opened in Banks/Post Offices. A brief presentation was made on NREGA status and critical issues specially those pertaining to ICT.

2. Based on preliminary remarks and issues highlighted the following decisions were taken:

Issues discussed and decisions taken:

1. Computers and connectivity

It was submitted that 2762 out of 6203 blocks do not have computers and internet connectivity. MoRD is assisting the State Governments in procuring the hardware and connectivity. SS, DIT stated that the problem of connectivity will be resolved in the States by middle of 2009 as the SWAN project is likely to be completed by that time. Currently, States like Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Haryana have already put the SWAN infrastructure in place.

Action required: MIS operationalization under NREGA to be monitored in tandem with the completion of SWAN projects in the States. This work can be immediately taken up in Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Haryana.

2. **ICT in Gram Panchayats**

It was stated that the Gram Panchayats should also be IT enabled. SS, DIT suggested that Ministry of Panchayat Raj, GOI is formulating and implementing computerisation programme for the Gram Panchayats. Ministry of R.D. could also join hands in this programme. With the establishment of SWAN, it will be possible to provide connectivity to Gram Panchayats also.

Action required: Coordination with ICT plan of MoPRIs

3. **CIC in North Eastern States**

SS, DIT stated that the management of CIC in North Eastern States will be done on a PPP model under the CSC programme of DIT.

Action: Clarification to be issued by DIT

4. **Smart Cards**

It was suggested that Smart Cards could be used for capturing details of work, workers and wages, including the muster rolls and the job cards.

Action: A pilot initiative may be taken up in Orissa and Andhra Pradesh to test the feasibility of the Smart Card application under NREGA. With the use of ICT all transactions can be captured and be made available to workers and the public.

5. **Use of modern hand held instruments**

DG, NIC suggested use of modern hand held instruments to take measurements and upload the information on the website. These instruments could be used by junior engineers.

Action: It was agreed to pilot this initiative in a few districts.

6. **GIS**

It was proposed to develop GIS for use under NREGA. SS, DIT suggested that GIS development should be taken up for projects being implemented. At

a later stage GIS for capturing the impact on natural resources may be developed.

Action: This may be taken up as a pilot in some districts.

7. **People's Information System**

It was suggested that ICT could prove to be significant intervention for enforcing the Right based framework of the Act demediating several agencies and making the workers choice, the basic trigger of programme activities. This could be possible if the workers largely none or semi – illiterate could be facilitated to directly register, obtain job cards, apply and obtain a receipt for employment, marking attendance on the muster rolls and receive due payment through ICT enabled systems at village levels. Appropriate technology and software needs to be developed so that the vertical MIS become also a lateral peoples information system that can be directly accessed and used by workers to register their demands and avail of their entitlements.

Action: It was decided that this could be piloted in select districts.

8. **Capacity Building Availability of IT Professionals**

The problem of shortage of IT personnel in the blocks was recognised. It was suggested that NiC should help in organising training of trainers at the state level.

Action: Training of trainers will be undertaken at the State level. This should be started in five to six laggard states. This will be done by the State's MIS Cell of NREGA in close coordination with NIC. The training of trainers will include trainers from within a system as well as from among the agencies to whom the NREGA MIS may have been outsourced by States to ensure standardised level of competence

9. Preparing a panel of agencies and prototype documents for ICT services. DIT may provide a panel of agencies who can provide the service of data entry and training. Prototype documents may also be formulated. The prototype documents will be available for the states to use as a data base. States will

have the option of using these according to their needs. This list of agencies could be shared with the States and placed on the website. Professionals can be taken on both outsourcing and contractual basis. The drafting of the terms of the contract should be done carefully.

Action: A Group especially constituted for this purpose consisting of representatives from MoRD, DIT and States, will be set up to implement this task.

Secretary (RD) also suggested that BPL youths may be provided training for deployment as data entry operators in the Blocks and Districts. MoRD can fund such training programmes under the Rural Development schemes. SS, DIT suggested that there should be proper certification of these persons before they are permanently inducted in service.

Action: Details of RD scheme on skill building be shared with DIT for their consideration for identifying collaboration areas.

10. **Strengthening of NIC**

Secretary, DIT suggested that the District NIC Unit does not have adequate staff to supervise. The District Administration should take the responsibility of training of data entry operators. NIC requires technical strengthening as it has to cope with the demands from various quarters including State Governments and GOI. He suggested that posts could be created in NIC which could be filled up by induction of IT professionals by the NIC. These persons will be dedicated to the work of NREGA.

Action: Secretary (RD) suggested that DIT may formulate proposal for this purpose for consideration of the State Governments. She highlighted that many State Governments are wary of creation of new posts.

11. **Working Group at the Central level**

Monthly coordination meeting at the level of Secretary Rural Development and Secretary, Ministry of Communication and Information Technology would be held to follow up the decisions taken to expedite.

12. **Working Group at the State level**

It was agreed to set up a Working Group consisting of the representatives of Department of Rural Development, NIC and Department of I.T. at the State level to coordinate the implementation of MIS strategy for NREGA.

13. **Standing Group for pilot projects**

For formulation, implementation and monitoring of pilot projects under NREGA, such as use of Smart Card and modern instruments for measurement and uploading, GIS and Peoples Information System, Standing Group consisting of representatives of MoRD and DIT would be set up.

14. **Summary of decisions taken**

- (i) Tracking progress in Block level and connectivity will be done by both Ministries and information shared through the website.
- (ii) Monthly coordination meetings will held between Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Communication and Information Technology at the State level between Department in charge of NREGA and NIC for MIS coordination for NREGA.
- (iii) Shortage of IT professionals for implementation of NREGA MIS in all Blocks will be met by outsourcing IT services or engagement of personnel on contractual basis by the States
- (iv) Training of trainers at the state level will be undertaken by NIC in coordination with State Rural Development Department.
- (v) DIT will provide panel of IT firms and prototype documents indicating TOR for deferent services. NIC to provide training of trainers at the State level. A Group will be set up to draft the terms of contract for engagement of IT firms by the States consisting of representatives from DIT, MoRD and States.
- (vi) A Standing Group for pilot projects on Smart Card, use of Modern hand held GIS and Peoples Information Systems will be set up with TORs to operationalize the pilots.