

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING ON CONVERGENCE IN MAHATMA GANDHI NREGA

9TH Floor Conference Hall, P&RD Department, Joint Administrative Building,
HC-7, Sector-III, Salt Lake, Kolkata-700106

1. Backdrop

Mahatma Gandhi NREGA in West Bengal had been trying to develop synergy in rural development through convergence with different Departments and programmes within the broad framework of the MGNREG Act, 2005. While providing 100 days of assured employment to the willing rural households possessing job cards was the primary objective under the central legislation, the thrust in programme implementation had, over the years, shifted to creation of productive assets for the villages as a whole and the vulnerable households in particular. In creation of productive assets, again, the thrust is on Integrated Natural Resource Management, activities in the core areas of agriculture and allied activities. Livelihood supportive activities too have emerged as priority activity in Mahatma Gandhi NREG Scheme. These are the areas where a number of government departments implement their own programmes for the same set of people. Naturally, convergence is the key to success of all these initiatives and provides some kind of a win-win situation to all the stakeholders.

Till 2014-15 financial year, Convergence used to be mostly local initiatives where an enterprising District Magistrate (District Programme Coordinator), a Block Development Officer (Programme Officer) brought multiple stakeholder departments under the canopy of MGNREGA and demonstrated how focused interventions with multiple departments converging can bring about changes in the lives of the rural people. In 2014-15, for the first time Convergence was taken up as a national strategy and the states were asked to prepare their State Convergence Action Plan (SCAP) and implement the same in course of the year. The comprehensive SCAP developed by West Bengal was nationally appreciated and based on objective data on implementation of the SCAP, the State was awarded by the Union Government on the MGNREG Day 2016 (2nd February 2016).

The SCAP 2015-16 was an improvement over the SCAP 2014-15, both in physical and financial terms. In 2016-17 SCAP, there was further improvement and the Plan involved 25 Departments and 32 programmes as part of the convergence initiative.

It is in this backdrop, a series of interactions with the converging departments over the last couple of months and the initial planning exercises in the district and sub-district levels, the Draft State Convergence Action Plan was developed and placed before the State Convergence Committee headed by the Chief Secretary to the Government of West Bengal.

The platform was also used to have an in-depth discussion on Mission Water Conservation, a special Mission jointly launched by the Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development and the Department of Land Reforms) and the Ministry of Agriculture to undertake convergent activities for conservation of water, especially in irrigation deprived districts, rainfall deficient districts, critical blocks (critical in terms of water availability) and blocks with over exploitation of ground water.

2. Discussions on Convergence in Mahatma Gandhi NREGA

Shri Basudeb Banerjee, Chief Secretary to the Government of West Bengal presided over the meeting.

Additional Chief Secretary/ Principal Secretary/ Secretary and other senior Officers of the following Departments were present in the meeting:

- 1) Public Health Engineering
- 2) Tribal Development and Backward Classes Welfare Department
- 3) Irrigation & Waterways Department
- 4) Department of Forest
- 5) Department of Fisheries
- 6) Water Resources Investigation & Development Department
- 7) Department of Food Processing Industries & Horticulture
- 8) Department of Agriculture
- 9) Department of Agricultural marketing
- 10) Department of Animal Resources Development
- 11) Child Development Department
- 12) Sunderban Affairs Department
- 13) School Education & Higher Education Department
- 14) Land & Land Reforms Department
- 15) Urban Development & Municipal Affairs Department

16) Environment Department

17) Health & Family Welfare Department (represented by the Secretary, State Medicinal Plant Board)

The P&RD contingent, headed by the Additional Chief Secretary had the CEO, WBSRLM and Secretary (Smt. Choten Lama), the Commissioner, MGNREGA (Commissioner in the Department), the Additional Chief Executive Officer, WBSRDA looking after PMGSY, the Joint Secretary and Deputy Secretary in the MGNREGA Cell of the Department.

At the very outset, the Chief Secretary outlined three major focus of convergence

- A. Creation of quality assets by sharing resources (including physical, financial and technical resources) of multiple programmes,
- B. Need for enhanced convergence in critical areas of the Jungle Mahal, Sunderbans and the Hills to bring sustainable development and
- C. Multi-sectoral and multi-layer convergence where multiple departments would converge to provide value addition. He cited a couple of examples to explain his observation. If a pond is excavated under MGNREGA on a part of the farmland, and fish cultivation in the pond is promoted it will be convergence between MGNREGA, Agriculture and Fisheries Departments. Like-wise he cited the example of development of the ferry ghats for river transport, there the Transport Department, the Department of Sunderban Affairs and MGNREGA can converge.

He also suggested that to promote effective convergence, the District Magistrates may be periodically called to show case the innovations in convergence initiated in respective district. He cited the example of construction of Aganwadi Centres by following the 'Bala' concept where excellent learning centres were coming up. He expressed his desire to see some demonstration of an ideal Primary School.

Chief Secretary released a booklet showcasing innovations in Mahatma Gandhi NREGA in West Bengal.

After the initial exposition by the Chief Secretary, detailed discussion on different aspects of convergence and the scope and present/ proposed extent of convergence was initiated by Dibyendu Sarkar, Commissioner, Mahatma Gandhi NREGA by following a structured presentation. The first two slides of the presentation gave an

overview of the scale of MGNREGA implementation in West Bengal. Over the years, there was steady growth in generation of person-days as from 15.04 Crore person-days in 2011-12 the State reached 28.65 Crore person-days in 2016-17. In financial terms too there was substantial growth, from Rs.2927 crore in 2011-12 to Rs.4853 Crore in 2015-16. If the pending liabilities were added, it was pointed out the financial portfolio of the programme might have reached around Rs.8000 Crore.

Then there was a slide on the **overall architecture of convergence in MGNREGA**, especially in the context of West Bengal, overarching expectations from the stakeholders in convergence followed by Department-by-Department identification of the present and future scope of convergence. Following are the basic tenets of Convergence:

- Mutually supportive programmes
- Special thrust on Natural Resource Management, livelihood supportive activities, development of social infrastructure, productive assets
- Line Departments often act as Programme Implementing Agency
- If so, there is also a concept of Programme Officer, Line Department (POLD) who is authorized to generate muster rolls, as in case of PO (BDO)
- Expenditure from multiple sources, following respective procedures

Following are some of the identified **roadblocks to convergence**

- Substantial mismatch between commitment in Convergence Plan and actual release of Departmental fund
- Late release of Departmental fund
- Lack of commitment among the Departmental functionaries in the field
- Irregular fund flow from Mahatma Gandhi NREGA
- Crunch in material fund in MGNREGA
- Lack of initiative in entering data in the convergence sub-portal of the NREGA portal, especially by the Line Departments
- Despite huge scope, lukewarm attitude of some of the major development departments

In course of deliberation it was decided that, effective steps would be taken to remove the roadblocks.

Then followed Department-wise discussions of the scope, status and proposal for convergence. There were 30 identified Departments capable of initiating convergent development activities with Mahatma Gandhi NREGA. In addition, convergence could also be made with 7 different programmes of the Department of P & RD and also 6 central agencies ready to converge their activities as in the following lists:

List-1: Departments having scope of convergence

1. Agriculture
2. Animal Resources Development
3. Irrigation & Waterways
4. Water Resources Investigation & Development
5. Fisheries
6. Forest
7. Environment (Pollution Control Board)
8. Child Development
9. School Education
10. Public Health Engineering
11. Municipal Affairs & Urban Development
12. Disaster Management
13. Agricultural Marketing
14. FPI & Horticulture
15. Health & Family Welfare (State Medicinal Plant Board)
16. Commerce & Industries (Tea Garden Initiatives)
17. Sunderban Affairs
18. Paschimanchal Unnayan
19. North Bengal Development
20. Power & Non-Conventional Energy
21. Housing
22. Sports
23. Tourism
24. Home (BADP)
25. Land & Land Reforms
26. Library & Mass Education Extension
27. Minority

28. Tribal Development & BCW
29. PWD
30. Planning (BEUP/MPLAD)

List 2: Central Government Agencies having scope of convergence

1. Coconut Development Board
2. Tea Board
3. Rubber Board
4. Coffee Board
5. KVK
6. National Resource Centers under ICAR

List 3: Other programmes of the P&RD Department having scope of convergence

1. PMAY
2. PMGSY
3. NRLM
4. CADP
5. ISGPP
6. Finance Commission Grants
7. Own Source Revenues of the Panchayats

Over all the draft Convergence Plan for the State for 2017-18, as proposed, reflected Rs. 535595.95 crore in terms of financial resources out of which the departmental contribution was shown to be Rs. 418053.22 crore and the remaining Rs. 117542.73 crore coming out of MGNREGA. It was decided in a meeting that the proposed plan could be revisited by respective departments and finally a revised proposal could be put up to the Chief Secretary for approval for subsequent transmission to the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.

Department-wise details of the areas of focus and proposed resource sharing was discussed in details. Following are the proposals:

Department of Agriculture

- Specific investment sharing for every watershed taken up under IWMP in 2017-18, may be 70:30 basis (MGNREGA : IWMP)
- One Poly shed/ shed-nets for improved cultivation/ nursery raising in every block with investment sharing (may be 30:70) (MGNREGA: Departmental)
- Land development, irrigation channels, salinity check
- Shared investment in land based infrastructure development in all Agriculture Farm (may be 50:50) (MGNREGA : Departmental)
- Shared investment in Seed Farms
 - MGNREGA supports in land development (one time)
 - The Department provides fund for operational expenses (may be 70:30 basis) (MGNREGA : IWMP)

Department of FPI & Horticulture

- Fruit nurseries with indigenous varieties (80:20 share between MGNREGA and Department)
- Saplings to be given to MGNREGA for plantation with usufruct rights
- Drip / Sprinkler irrigation facilities in MGNREGA orchards by the Department
- In MGNREGA orchards, additional saplings and other planting materials provided by the Horticulture Department

Water Resource Investigation & Development Department

- Implementing 'Jalathirtha' through MGNREGA set up in the districts
 - Departmental: MGNREGA (80:20)
- Construction of 'Check Dams'/ 'Earthen Dams'/ Gully Plugs etc. in identified areas through MGNREGA
 - Departmental: MGNREGA (80:20)
- Excavation of 'Farm Ponds', especially in the laterite zone (no re-excavation/ repair/ renovation on ponds belonging to individuals)
- Minor/ sub-minor field channels for cultivation

Agricultural Marketing Department

- Convergence in 'Amar Fasal Amar Gola' and 'Amar Fasal Amar Chatal'
 - Sharing between Department, MGNREGA and the beneficiary
 - In MGNREGA these are yet to be made approved activities

- Can we consider releasing departmental money to SHGs for specific clusters?
- Land development and wage based activities in developing infrastructures for the Regulated Market Committees
- Land development and wage based activities in developing infrastructures for the 'Kishan Mandis'

Forest Department

- MGNREGA support for watershed development in the forest areas
- Development of water bodies within forest with MGNREGA support
- Nurseries raised by the Forest Department and saplings to be supplied for plantation under MGNREGA
- MGNREGA support for new plantation in the forest areas
- Cattle trenches, vegetative fencing in forest/ forest fringe areas through MGNREGA funding
 - Sharing pattern may be decided

Irrigation & Waterways Department

- Extension & renovation of field channel with existing canal (MGNREGA: Departmental 70:30)
- Renovation and extension of Canal (MGNREGA: Departmental 70:30)
- Construction & Renovation of check dams (MGNREGA: Departmental 30:70)
- River Rejuvenation (Gandheswari river in Bankura district) (MGNREGA: Departmental: Other sources = 50:30:20)
- Planting 'Vetiver' in conjunction with other embankment strengthening measures by the I&W Department

Animal Resources Development Department

- Poultry
- Duckery- duck cum pisciculture units
- Cow Shed
- Goat Shelter

(in all these cases, infrastructure is developed through MGNREGA and the ARD Department will supply birds/ animals)

- Azolla Cultivation: Azolla pits by MGNREGA, azolla supply by the ARD Department

Department of Fisheries

- Extension of pisciculture in ponds excavated through MGNREGA (forward linkage)
 - (If agreed, GP may give list of ponds to the local officer and fish fingerlings and other inputs may be given to those people)
- Fish Drying Yards in the coastal areas (70 (MGNREGA): 30 (Department)
- Fish Landing Stations/ Ghats in larger water bodies: 30 (MGNREGA) : 70 (Department)
- Pond excavation/ re-excavation and related infrastructure in Government/ FFDA fish farms

Child Development Department

- Covering all Anganwadi Centres having no building, in a phased manner
- Toilets in AWCs, still an area of concern
- Special initiatives for the households having malnourished children

School Education and Higher Education Department

- Development of Playground
- Vegetative fencing
- Backyard orchards, where land is available with usufruct rights to the SHG job seekers, preferably those associated with cooking of Mid Day Meals
- Compost pits for the food waste generated from MDM

Environment Department

- Rooftop Rainwater Harvesting
- Solid & Liquid Waste Management

Environment Deptt, proposes to support only Bankura, Purulia, Paschim Medinipur and Birbhum Districts, while the districts of Birbhum, Purulia, Murshidabad, Hooghly and South 24 Parganas are proposed to be included in the SCP for 2017-18

Power & NRE Department

- Fly Ash Brick Manufacturing Units

Sports Department

- Development of Sports Complexes

North Bengal Development Department

- Special Initiatives in Tea Gardens

HEALTH & FW Department (State Medicinal Plant Board)

- Nurseries for raising medicinal plants
- Plantation

Housing Department

- 90/95 days of wages for all rural housing beneficiaries

MSME Department

- Sericulture Plantation
- If through SHG, common Work shed for processing work

PHE Department

- Rain Water Harvesting
- Platform, drain, soak pits for Tube wells and other water sources

L & LR Department

- Nijo-Griha Nijo-Bhumi
- Development of Micro Plots and agricultural land given to the landless as 'patta'

Tourism Department

- Eco Tourism Parks
- Land based infrastructure for the tourist places

Sunderban Affairs, Paschimanchal Unnayan Affairs, North Bengal Development Departments

- Mangrove plantation in Sunderban areas for SAD
- Crab cultivation
- Poultry, Piggery, Goat shelter
- Plantation
- Fish Drying Yards
- Betel vine
- Roads
- Culverts, Jetty Ghat (SAD)
- AWC
- Eco Park
- Azola
- Sericulture (for PUA)

Different Programmes of the P&RD Department

- ▶ IAY
- ▶ CADDC
- ▶ WBSRLM (ANANDADHARA)
- ▶ Finance Commission Grants
- ▶ PMGSY
- ▶ ISGPP
- ▶ Own resources of the Panchayats

Different Programmes of some of the National Organizations

- ▶ Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK)
- ▶ NRC
- ▶ National Bamboo Mission
- ▶ Tea Board
- ▶ Coffee Board
- ▶ Rubber Board
- ▶ Coconut Development Board

In course of the detailed presentation, ACS/ Principal Secretaries/ Secretaries of the converging Departments provided their inputs on the proposed State Convergence Action Plan and it was decided that the Plan would be finalized after obtaining further feedback from the Departments. However, the final date for receiving such feedback was kept at 10 March 2017 so that the State Convergence Action Plan, with approval of the Chief Secretary can be placed in the meeting of the National level Empowered Committee for consideration of the Labour Budget and Annual Action Plan scheduled on 22 March 2017.

Chief Secretary advised the Department to organize review meetings on convergence on a quarterly basis so that there is increased synergy between the programmes and the bottlenecks in implementation, as and when identified midcourse could be addressed.



Chief Secretary to the
Government of West
Bengal