



# MGNREGA AND SHG – A PARADIGM



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**PASCHIM MEDINIPUR, WEST BENGAL**

## **Introduction**

Paschim Medinipur is the second largest district in West Bengal with a total population of 59 lakh. It lies at the extreme South-Western corner of West Bengal and shares its boundary with Balasore and Mayurbhanj district of Orissa, Purba Singbhum of Jharkhand and Bankura, Hooghly, Purba Medinipur districts of West Bengal. It has 29 blocks, 290 Gram Panchayats, 3086 Gram sansads, 8735 mouzas and 10 lakh households. SC and ST consist of 1/3 of total population. 45% of total households are below poverty line and half of total population is either small or marginal farmer. National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 was launched in the district on 02.02.2006. In the initial year we had two major challenges - IEC, i.e. making people aware of their right to employment and the other was scheme implementation part. The biggest hindrance in implementation of schemes was non-availability of job supervisors: Engaging labourers as per allocation of job issued by Gram Panchayat, recording attendance on each morning, demarcation of work site to group of labourers, supervising labourers, arrangement of work site facilities etc were not easy task.

At the beginning of the programme, on an average there were 4-5 persons in each Gram Panchayat who were capable to take responsibility of job supervisors against demand of 10-12 supervisors in each GP. Due to paucity of job supervisors, we had to restrict Gram Panchayats to take 4-5 schemes at a time, though there was huge demand for job. As a result, expenditure and persondays provided per House Hold during 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09 were not substantial.

## **The Backdrop**

Paschim Medinipur district has a rich heritage of SHG movement. There are 28,000 SGSY groups and 20,000 NABARD groups in the district. We thought to harness this huge workforce for MGNREGA. We selected at least one SHG in each Gram Sansad. Criterion was Grade I passed and at least one member of the group had passed class X. Thus, 3086 groups were selected. Instruction was given to Blocks and GPs that 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2009 onwards each and every scheme in the district should be supervised by SHG members. At the initial stage there was doubt in many corners whether SHG members would be able to shoulder this responsibility. But we were firm in our decision and emphasized on training for capacity building of SHG members. We

prepared a movie on duties of SHG members as job supervisor. Also prepared training materials in Bengali language. We trained up Block Development Officers & Joint Block Development Officers who imparted training to SHG members in 2 phases. Management of schemes under MGNREGA by SHG members - was an experiment which was made for the first time in the state.



## **Objectives**

We had four objective behind this decision –

a) **IEC** - In the initial year of introduction of MGNREGA, we did publicity of MGNREGA by means of wall writing, flex, miking, awareness meetings, posters, audio cassettes and so on. But we felt that the crux of the problem lied within the govt.



machinery. PRI members and govt. officials were not confident that if people demanded employment, they would be able to provide job. Thus, they used to suppress the information that MGNREGA provides 100 days guaranteed employment to each household. We wanted to reach each & every HH to make people conscious

about their right to employment and encourage them to submit demand of job. Accordingly, we printed lakhs of Form 4A (demand for employment) and distributed to SHG members requesting them to approach each & every HH and ask whether they were in need of job. Even, we instructed SHG members that if any HH was found to be illiterate, they should help them to fill up application form. Then, SHG members collected all such filled in application forms and submitted to concerned Gram Panchayat. In 2009-10 almost 1 lakh demand for employment were deposited in GPs through SHG. This strategy helped in two ways - to break bureaucracy and making people conscious about their right to employment.

b) **Imbibe dynamism in the programme** - As stated earlier, in the initial years non-availability of job supervisors was the main hindrances in implementation of MGNREGA. Gram Panchayats were not in a position to take up more than 5-6 schemes at a time. This problem made them inconfident that if people started submitting demand of employment they would be able to provide employment. After introduction of SHG as job supervisor in each Gram Sansad, GP is confident that demand of employment can be met up. Now more number of schemes are started at a time which results in more than double expenditure employment per HH in 2009-10 than that in 2008-09.

c) **Transparency** - Dissemination of information to villagers regarding cost involved, expenditure, mandays generation etc is now more smooth through a group of 10/12 persons.

d) **Empowerment of women** - The empowerment of women of these SHGs becomes possible by their strong contact and association with different institutions and Govt. units like Block, Gram Panchayat, Bank and Post Office. Generally women SHGs are working as job supervisor under MGNREGA in our District. These groups are showing tremendous interest for linkage with other organizations and institutions. For their roles and responsibilities as Job supervisor under MGNREGA, they are taking field level decisions regarding scheme execution at Gram Sansad level. This is one remarkable achievement for the society. As economic improvement is happened through

MGNREGA, so their basic needs for livelihood is being fulfilled and they are becoming confident enough to do work after improvement of their standard of living.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

As job supervisor SHG members perform –

1. Distribution of blank application form for demand of job among HH, help them to fill up forms, collect those to deposit at GP office.



Name: Nilima Bhattacharya

SHG: Tara Ma SHG

Village: Khasbazar,

Radhachandanpur

GP: Radhamohanpur I

Block: Debra

“ These work not only enhance my income but also provide financial support to my other family members. It's being a honour for me to be a part of the development activities of my village & society. Apart from that the payment of wages to the wage seekers through accounts in Bank & post offices enhances the transparency as well as Savings habit of the wage seekers. ”

2. Collection of Muster Rolls and allocation of job form from the PIA
3. Meeting the Gram Unnayan Samiti ( beneficiary committee)
4. Examining Job Cards of the workers
5. Writing their names, job card Nos, payment A/c Nos in the muster Rolls.
6. Marking the working area of the workers group
7. Intimation regarding date of measurement to the members of the Gram Unnayan Samiti, workers etc.
8. Help technical staff to take measurement.
9. Fill up the Muster Roll as per instruction of the NS / TA
10. Submitting the Muster Rolls to the PIA

In lieu of the above duties they receive one semiskilled wage against 25 persondays.



### **SHG and Individual Benefit Scheme**

When the AAP of 2009-10 was prepared, it came into notice that only 2% of total plan was for IBS. Then, we decided to involve SHG for identification of IBS. We printed application forms and handed over to SHG members requesting them to visit houses of SC/ST/BPL/Small & marginal farmers, get forms filled up and submit to Gram Panchayats. Within few months 55000 applications were received for IBS.

Then plenty was the problem. We had to think how these huge schemes would be implemented and expectations of such huge numbers of poor people would be fulfilled. We realized that if role of technical persons can not be minimized in the implementation part, no substantial progress can be expected. We developed model estimate in MS-Excel for excavation/re-excavation of ponds, land leveling so that dependence on technical persons for preparation of estimates can be dispensed with. We issued instruction to Blocks and GPs that there was no need of measurement of schemes under IBS by technical persons. SHG members were

trained up to record measurement and based on their measurement payment is released.

Then the scenario changed. Already 7000 schemes under IBS has been implemented and total expenditure incurred for this is Rs. 30 crore.

### **Outcomes**

Participation of SHG members in NREGS has made sea change in many aspects like – awareness of people, women participation, transparency and accountability. These positive changes are reflected in terms of expenditures, average persondays generated per HH, implementation of IBS.

Year wise comparison of some aspects will indicate that improvement of performance is mainly due to participation of SHG members in NREGS.

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Aspects of</b>	<b>2006-07</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>2009-10</b>
1.	Expenditure (in lakh)	5037.72	8474.15	10600	23397.73
2.	Avg. Mandays per HH	16	24	27	52
3.	No. of HH provided 100 days job	158	1210	2027	10315
4.	Women participation	14%	18%	25%	30%
5.	Participation of SC	27%	28%	30%	30%
6.	Participation of ST	26%	25%	24%	25%
7.	Exp. On IBS (in lakh)	NIL	NIL	NIL	2400

Apart from this, impact on women empowerment can be assessed after few years. During 2009-10, SHG members across the district earned Rs. 9.25 crore as remuneration for supervising schemes. Such a big amount is going in the hands of women belonging to SC/ST/BPL/Small & marginal families which are used for basic minimum needs like child education, nutrition, livelihood development. Women from backward section of the society are now regularly visiting Block & Panchayat offices, Banks, Post offices and interacting with Govt. officials, PRI members which gives them self confidence and self reliance.

## Conclusion

Though significant improvement has been made in implementation of MGNREGA by involving SHGs but there is no room of complacency. Still there are some bottlenecks which we need to remove. In some pockets of the district there is mental block among PRI members to involve SHG in NREGS. Also, we feel to intensify capacity building of SHG members which can be achieved through phases of training. We are giving kits to SHG members containing calculate, measurement tapes and measurement sheets.

Hope our relentless effort will bring smile in shy, introvert faces of thousands of women.

**Name: Jharna Das**

**SHG: Mother Terisa**

**Village: Kalyanpur**

**GP: Nij Narajole**

**Block: Daspur-I**



I was an educated unemployed housewife. There was no opportunity for me to get employment and to earn for my family. I was disappointed. Now along with other members of our SHG I am supervising schemes of NREGS and able to earn for my family. Income of my family has increased. I am able to make our livelihood much better than the previous.

Now, I am interacting with my neighbours, GP functionaries and the Block functionaries. I am confident and able to take part in the decision making in village development committee & GP. Being able to implement NREGS as per rules and guidelines I along with my group is confident enough to take more social responsibilities.

