

Monitoring Framework for NREGS involving State Level officers and Cell: A Concept Note

Objective and Target

The state level officer's role would be to work as the nodal officer to act as catalyst & as a monitor for the NREGS progress and provide help to district in effective implementation of the scheme. Thus the role would be to work as a mentor. The nodal officer would begin by understanding all the existing processes and present condition of NREGS implementation in the district and then within the act, guidelines and existing G.O. provisions, he would guide the district level officers to follow and adopt the best possible practise so that with the existing resources the district can perform the best. This would require a comprehensive framework about all the issues related with NREGS in the district. The important functions and areas of this framework would be as following:

- Planning of NREGS in Districts
- Financial Devolution or Fund Flow mechanism
- Execution of Works
- Monitoring mechanism
- MIS
- Grievance Redressal
- RTI and Social Audit
- IEC and Documentation of Best Practise.

For all these above mentioned subject areas, the state nodal officer have to work intensively and extensively and the detailed about each subject area is as following:

Planning of NREGS

➤ Job Cards and Bank Accounts :

The primary stake holder of NREGS is the job card holder and thus to begin the process in field a system of proper issuance of job cards has to be put in place. It is required to see that job cards are issued in proper and sufficient manner. There exist a transparent and user friendly window to make the job cards for all those who are willing to register. The job card holders have got their bank account opened without any hassles and the entries (including the photograph of every adult member is pasted) are properly done in job cards.

➤ Sensitisation of Implementing agencies about changing scenario of planning of projects in NREGS

The planning process of NREGS is the most critical component about the scheme. Earlier the scheme had provision of perspective plan but no longer it is relevant as with time the planning processes has changed and with the state providing emphasis for various schemes related with individual beneficiary, with GOI focusing on convergence areas and with the labour budgets increase in districts the overall planning process of projects at districts has now become much more dynamic and innovative.

It is now required to brief the implementing agencies (District/Block and GPs primarily) about this new innovative orientation and focus of the scheme. The planning of the district has to be linked with the objective of the NREGS in creating durable assets.

➤ Record maintenance and time bound planning

Most of the time the entire planning in district is done in ad-hoc manner and so the shelf of projects related with the works is not properly maintained. Often there is no record at district or Block level about what are the projects selected and how the beneficiary (if the projects are related with individual beneficiary) list has been prepared. The executing agencies are supposed to maintain a wage: material ratio in works and the works should be selected in such a manner that it does not violate the spirit of the scheme.

A GP wise planning and preparation of shelf of project should be ready as early as possible at block and district level.

Staffing and Capacity Building

Staffing of personnel is one of the very critical aspects related with Planning of NREGS. Appointment of GRS, technical assistant, computerisation support system for MIS, and work distribution of personnel is extremely important. The nodal officer is suppose to follow up not only on the staffing pattern up to GP level(it may be still possible that there are GPs without GRS or there may be no proper allocation of jurisdiction and work for TAs) but also needs to evaluate the quality and nature of skill development of these staffs.

The training and capacity development programme for all the stake holders of NREGS is a major component of the scheme and the nodal officer will see that a proper planning and calendar of training is made for the district as early as possible. The district is suppose to have a robust training programme for all its functionaries and must prepare a training calendar for stake holders. It also must utilise potential of professional institutions, SIRD and other academic resources available in the district for capacity building, however, there seems to be lack of any proper utilisation of resources in district so the nodal officer will help in formulating the strategies for capacity building of the stakeholders.

The issue of timely payment of salary of staffs and complaints related with staffs needs to be properly followed.

Appointment of Mates has been the newest initiative in staffing and planning process. The government has issued guidelines about it, however, there is much desired to be done at district level in this regard. It is also a danger that in selection of mates because of lack of proper planning and monitoring the undesired (contractor or close relatives of Gram Pradhans) people may start working as Mates in some places. So entire selection process and training of Mates in district is to be done meticulously for each GP. The nodal officer will observer and guide the district in doing this activity as early as possible.

Financial Devolution /Fund Flow Mechanism in District

Who operates the account? Where the accounts are maintained? What are the criteria for allocation of funds? What is general time lag in reaching of money to GP level from district and what are the reasons for that? All these are some of the most critical questions related with fund devolution. It has been observed that often fund is parked unnecessarily at district or block level or there is complain about fund allocation criteria. Due to lack of proper planning and monitoring the delay is caused at district level in transfer of funds immediately after the receipt of the allocation. Lack of proper and timely UC has often caused much delay in release of next trench to the districts.

Again, there simply exist no transparent procedure about the next instalment to be released to the GPs or executing agencies and thus even if the GP is working efficiently it may not receive the fund when it submits the UC, so a proper transparent fund devolution mechanism has to be in place. Every implementing agency must be aware of the formula of allocation and it must be known to all that how and within what time the next instalment would be released. If there is any delay in allocation of funds then a system of accountability must be there for the same.

Fund management and Banks

Banks now play a crucial role in entire scheme so it is required to hold meeting with LDM and senior bank functionaries to see that the issues related with banks are resolved in timely manner. To begin with it would be better to observe that :

What is the time taken by the bank in transferring of fund? From one branch to the other branch and from one account to the beneficiary accounts

How friendly bank has been in opening of accounts of labourers? Are the passbooks being issued and entries of the passbook being maintained properly?

How computerised (CBS) the banking system is in the district to monitor the fund availability at each level(for how many GP it is available)

Is the bank charging any service fees or forcing any minimum balance to be maintained in accounts?

On all these accounts one can grade the service of the banks and we may issue a ranking of banks(branch wise) on NREGS and created a system of award/recognition for the best 3 bank branches in a district . This will help in creating sensitivity among bankers about the scheme and ultimately help in proper fund devolution.

Project Execution

Some relevant questions and monitoring point for nodal officer on this aspect are to see GP wise and all implementing agency wise processes about :

- How the estimates are prepared? What are the criteria adopted for selection of projects and what projects are preferred?
- Who is preparing the estimates? Is the preparation of estimates done properly?
- Is there any transparent and proper system maintained about role and responsibilities of technical staff (TAs and JE/ AE./etc)?
- What is the process to check that wrong or inflated estimates are not prepared?
- What is the process for administrative and technical sanctions for the submitted estimates of projects? Is it transparent and time bound or ad-hoc and preferential?
- What is the process of issuing of Muster Roll? Who maintenance the muster roll at work site and how it is ensured that muster roll has been received in time after the payment has been passed?
- Who does the MB? What is the process and roaster of doing MB? How the MB book and other records related with projects are maintained? Is the block office having proper system for record maintenance?
- Are the model pit and group task process being followed to facilitate the workers about the knowledge of SOR?
- Are the system of Information boards and photographs of different stages of projects execution being done properly?
- Is the process of appointment of women workers to be included for drinking water and for crèche facility being followed?
- How many projects are completed and if some projects are uncompleted then is there any follow up on the?
- Are there some implementing agencies or line departments who have not being executing NREGS works properly even then money is allocated to them or no action is taken against them?

All these questions just indicative in nature to illustrate a larger issues about the challenge of projects execution in the field and thus it is expected with the nodal officer to see that with the districts adopt a best practise and systematic process for work execution as early as possible.

Monitoring Mechanism

Instructions about Monitoring of NREGS by senior district and block level officers are repeated several times from HQ. However the monitoring mechanism in districts is often not linked to the objective of increase in efficiency of programme implementation. Some of the relevant question is this regard to see may be:

- What is the system of monitoring of the programme in district and block? Is there regular weekly meeting done?
- Has there any format being developed for block and district level meeting? Are the minutes of these meeting issued regularly?
- How many inspections are done by district level and block level officers on an average in a week/ in a month?
- Is any inspection note being prepared? What is the system of follow up of the inspection notes?
- Is there any system developed to see and monitor expenditure GPwise/implementing agency wise in a timely manner(daily/weekly/forth-nightly or monthly)? And what is done to those GPs whose average performance is poor and is there any system to make field visits to those GPs where NREGS progress is not proper?
- What are the subject areas that are monitored while doing the field inspections? Is there any standard format being developed for reporting and inspection from the field?
- Are the other line departments officers also included in monitoring of the scheme?

After assessing the monitoring system of district and block in light of these questions, it is expected of nodal officer to get the district develop a sound monitoring structure immediately in such a manner that all above mentioned points get addressed in a most positive manner.

MIS

Getting MIS done is the key for the progress of the scheme. The nodal officer needs to see following issues:

- What is the level of awareness about MIS process and importance among officials (this may include to see all BDOs, DDO, PD, CDO and DPC)?
- What is the knowledge and skill level of these officials themselves in using computers? How many official of these categories need training and orientation to become computer friendly and understand MIS?
- What is the physical infrastructure related with IT in the district and block?
- What is the use of SWAN and are district/block level functionaries aware about SWAN?
- What is the level of awareness of staff at district and block level related with NREGS? (e.g. is the NREGS clerk know to feed fund module)
- How many trained personal actually exist to operate and work on computers? Is there any incentive being given to these staff performing technical input job?
- What is the planning in district for getting all the data of 08-09 uploaded on MIS? Who is in charge about this and what mechanism is adopted to get it done as early as possible? What are the major constraints for not getting the data uploaded despite outsourcing this work? Is there any constraints being faced by the selected agency (non availability of data) in doing the work.
- How quickly can the district move entirely of MIS from MPR? Is there any deadline/planning or vision in the district about it?

After examining the progress of MIS on these accounts the nodal official will help in adopting and preparing of strategic planning for getting the MIS done in swift and effective manner so that within a time bound manner (we may fix the target 31st August), the district may be shifted to MIS mode from MPR.

Grievance Redressal

Grievances redressal rules and provisions of NREGA are such that it provides a system of timely response to all grievances received. The nodal official must see following issues related with grievances:

- Are the officers aware about the relevant provisions and rules related with grievances? Has any initiative being taken to educate and empower people about their rights under NREGA and the commitment of department in timely disposal of complaints?
- What is the existing mechanism in the district and block to receive the complaints? Is it user friendly and accessible to people?
- What is the mechanism existing in the district to monitor and dispose grievances in a timely manner? Who is the officer in charge at district and block level to see the complaints are redressed properly and has there been any system maintained to monitor the complaints?
- Are the officers aware that web application and helpline system can be used not only to know the current status and detail about the pending complaints but also they can send solutions by using these methods?
- In MPR and rural soft format the district are reporting complaints filled and solved. Is this done in mechanical manner or there is actually a process adopted to monitor this aspect?
- What are the natures of complaints in the districts? Are the disposal being done qualitatively? If there are complaints related with corruption or misappropriation of funds found true whether proper penal action has been ensured against the erring officials or there is a leniency in taking penal and timely action on complaints.

RTI and Social Audit

- Who works as PIO and APIO for the NREGS in the district and block? Is the person in-charge fully aware about provisions of RTI and its application in NREGS?
- Is the record and registers of RTI references related with NREGS in the district maintained properly and is there any undue delay in providing any information to the queries related with RTI?
- Are the officials at senior level and field level aware about relevant provisions of NREGA and operational guidelines in ensuring transparency and RTI?

Social audit: In MPR the districts have been filling the data about social audit being conducted, however, it appears that the data is being filled mechanically so it would be pertinent to observer that:

- What is the system adopted in the district for doing SA?
- Are the officials aware and following the latest instructions issued by government and MORD in this regard? What is the activity done in pursuance of these latest instructions?
- Is there any calendar of activity being prepared to conduct SA and how the publicity is ensured for the same?
- What are the procedures adopted in conducting social audit? (for example: Are the muster rolls and job cards entries being read to people?)
- How the process is recorded and documented?
- Who follows the SA reports? Is there any process adopted to take corrective action on the basis of SA reports?

IEC and BEST Practice Documentation

IEC component of the scheme is quite critical for success of scheme. There has been consistent instruction issued from the state to districts for IEC activities, however, it is not clear how districts are planning and executing IEC. It would be relevant for nodal officer to see:

1. What are the efforts being done at district level for IEC? Has there been any well thought strategy or planning about it?
2. What are the medium adopted for IEC?(news paper, leaflet, posters, wall painting, hoardings)? A critical factor in choosing these medium of IEC is to see that they reach to maximum number of people, so it is required to see if the decision regarding medium of IEC has been well thought on this account and has been cost effective in reach out to people? Often there are complaints about spending IEC money on low circulation newspapers or nonexistent shows and performances, the nodal officer may examine the facts from this perspective as well and should guide the district level officials in adopting the more effective medium of reach.
3. What has been the content management and focus of IEC activities is also an important aspect? An effort should be made to plan the IEC with content management and focus to particular aspects of NREGS so that the use of IEC can be more effective for example: the latest SOR must be known to each labourer, the right to get receipt of work from GRS is the latest instructions and can be highlighted for present months campaign theme.

Best Practice Documentation:

There are various pockets of excellence being in existence, however, lack of proper documentation is there in popularising them. In the district a proper mechanism must be built to document the best and innovative performance/practise. The nodal officer will ensure that the news about their districts better performance is covered widely news and other media. MORD has introduced an award of excellence for better performing functionaries. The districts must be made fully aware about the scheme and the nodal officer will ensure that as many nominations from his district are done as possible for the award scheme.

Conclusion:

The above mentioned points and issues are few of the significant present day concern in implementation of NREGS. The list of task to monitor and perform is just illustrative and indicative and it is not all and not exhaustive. It is proposed that as nodal official the nominated officer will visit the district twice in each month (during first week and in last week) and spent there at least two days to monitor the progress on indicated points. The reports and progress of each district will be submitted and compiled at Additional Commissioners office who will prepare a summary report to be presented at higher level.