

Government of India
Ministry of Rural Development

New Delhi
Dated the October, 2009

To
The Chief Secretary,

Subject: Guidelines for Convergence of NREGS with Programmes of Ministry of Agriculture for enhancing productivity.

Sir/Madam,

In recent years, substantial public investments are being made for strengthening the rural economy and the livelihood base of the poor. To maximise outcome of these investments and effectively address the issue of poverty alleviation, there is need to optimize efforts through inter-sectoral convergence of development programmes. For an agrarian dominant economy, the thrust of efforts have to be towards rural development and agricultural productivity.


2. NREGA offers a major opportunity for leveraging convergence. The Ministry of Agriculture is an important partner for effecting convergence with NREGS, as most of NREGA works relate to strengthening natural resources.

3. The expansion of the scope of individual land holdings from SC/ ST/ BPL/ IAY/ Land reform beneficiaries to include marginal and small farmers provides a large base for convergence in a way that can directly impact productivity and income. Based on discussions with the MOA, Guidelines for convergence between NREGS and schemes of MOA have been developed and are attached.

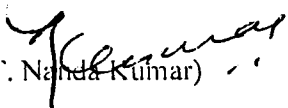
4. These guidelines are meant to optimise synergies between NREGA and schemes of Ministry of Agriculture. They are suggestive in nature and should be used to encourage innovative convergence projects at the district levels.

5. Keeping the above in view, we would request you to convene a meeting of the officers of the concerned Departments in the State to discuss these guidelines. This should be followed by a joint meeting of the districts officers in charge of the NREGA and schemes of MOA. The districts officers' meeting should aim at firming up processes for operationalising the Convergence Guidelines in a time bound manner. Further we request that instructions may be issued to the concerned officials for implementing convergence between NREGA and schemes of MOA and maximize outcome of the investment under these programs.

6. We would appreciate an acknowledgement of this communication and intimation of the action initiated.


(Dr. Rita Sharma)
Secretary,
Department of Rural Development,
Ministry of Rural Development.

Yours faithfully


(T. Nanda Kumar)
Secretary,
Department of Agriculture & cooperation,
Ministry of Agriculture.

Guidelines for Convergence of NREGA with Programmes of Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) for Development of Agriculture and Allied Sectors

The main objective of these guidelines is to provide convergence at the national level of NREGA and various agricultural development programmes. These guidelines provide innovation at the district, block and Panchayat level within the financial discipline envisaged for all the schemes of Ministry of Agriculture and NREGA.

Convergence Between NREGA and Programmes of MOA

1. The schemes and programmes of Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) both operate in rural India and the target beneficiaries are primarily common. Whereas MoRD schemes and programmes focus on employment generation/guarantee, as well as asset creation in rural areas, both for community benefit and individual livelihood support, MoA targets basically the agriculture sector with schemes and programmes which typically benefit individual farmers, though there are certain interventions which are for collective benefit to the farming community. Thus, while both the Ministries are channelising their efforts for the benefit of primarily the same population, currently there exists very limited convergence or meeting point of these two streams. This hiatus needs to be removed and the operations of MoA and MoRD need to be synergised at the implementation level, typically the district level.
2. MoA implements several programmes for accelerating growth in agriculture and allied sectors but to start with the efforts at convergence with NREGA could focus on the National Food Security Mission (NFSM), Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), National Horticulture Mission (NHM), the Integrated Nutrient Programme, National Watershed Development Programme for Rainfed Areas (NWDPA), Soil conservation in river catchment areas and flood prone areas (RFP & FPR), Development of Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture, Development of Brackish Water Aquaculture, Cold Water Fisheries and Aquaculture, Development of Waterlogged areas, Productive Utilisation of Inland Saline/Alkaline Water for Aquaculture, Inland Capture Fisheries (Reservoirs/Rivers) and the Fodder And Feed Development Scheme. However, in case there are any other schemes where convergence is

possible, the district administration need not limit itself to the above schemes alone and innovate depending upon the local needs.

3. In the year 2007-08, the Government had introduced the new scheme RKVY which had, amongst many other objectives, the objective of integrating livestock, poultry and fishery more fully. This resulted in considerable convergence of effort at the district and block level in the activities of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries. The benefits of such convergence were visible in the implementation of the scheme in 2007-08 as well as 2008-09. The guidelines of RKVY had also emphasised integration of multiple programmes that are in operation in the districts, such as the NREGS, Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF), Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY), Bharat Nirman etc. However, this kind of integration is yet not visible. It is felt that it is time that special efforts are made by the State Governments to integrate these efforts and for the works implemented under NREGA to yield durable quality assets that can contribute to sustainable rural development, convergence of NREGA with the above schemes and programmes of MOA as with programmes of other development ministries would produce great synergy.
4. While planning for convergence it may be kept in mind that for all projects, works and activities identified for convergence, the NREGA component must conform to the following parameters;
 - a. The material component of projects including the wages of the skilled and semi-skilled workers taken up under the scheme shall not exceed forty percent of the total project costs.
 - b. As far as practicable, a task funded under the NREGA shall be performed by using manual labour and not machines.
 - c. No contractors to be involved at any stage of implementing the wage project on the site.
 - d. Only registered job card holders to be employed on the NREGA component of the convergence project.
 - e. Muster rolls to be maintained on the worksite with electronic copies loaded on the NREGA websites.

- f. Wage payments to the wage seekers will be directed through banks/ post office savings accounts and social audits through gram sabhas will be an integral feature.
5. It may also be noted that the MORD by Notification dated 22nd July, 2009 have permitted that works on individual land holdings can also be undertaken under NREGA and specifically permits “provision of irrigation facility, horticulture plantation and land development facilities to land owned by households belonging to the Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes or below poverty line families or to beneficiaries of land reforms or to the beneficiaries under the Indira Awas Yojana of Government of India or that of the small farmers or marginal farmers as defined in the Agriculture Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme,2008.”. This further would assist convergence efforts between NREGA and MoA programmes.

Nodal point for Convergence

6. For convergence to be effective, there has to be at least one link in the two separate hierarchies of (a) MoRD - State Department of Rural Development - **District Collector**/DRDA - Zila Parishad - Gram Panchayat and that of (b) MoA - State Department of Agriculture/Animal Husbandry/Fisheries - **District Collector** – Block Agriculture Officer - Gram Panchayat. The obvious common link is the District Collector. Therefore, the District Collector should be the nodal point for conceiving and implementation of all convergence efforts. The District Collector being the District Programme Coordinator for NREGA as well as responsible for District Agriculture Planning Unit for RKVY, convergence of the plans at the district level would be easier.
7. Programmes of MOA have been examined for convergence suitability with NREGA and following convergence parameters emerge broadly:
 - a. Convergence of resources available under MOA programme for public lands and NREGA will be very useful. Labour component of these programmes and material component to the extent available of the approved unit cost can be funded from NREGA and the remaining material component can be funded from MOA programme.

- b. MOA programmes on individual farmers, which satisfy the conditions of eligibility under NREGA i.e. small and marginal farmers, farmers belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) families etc. where labour component is identifiable can also be converged with NREGA for meeting the cost of labour and material component, to the extent permissible. Remaining part of the unit cost can be funded from MOA programmes.
 - c. Any other programmes of MoA in which the District Collector feels it would be feasible to converge efforts with NREGA.
8. To illustrate, establishment of new gardens envisaged under NHM involves soil testing, cleaning and ploughing of land and excavation of pits. For an acre of mango orchard, the expenses on the above would be around Rs.4000/- which can be entirely dovetailed with NREGA. Similarly, where an NREGA work site has dug up a pond of 3,000 cubic meters, the same could be used for scampi farming under the inland fisheries development project as value addition, or used in conjunction with MoA Programme of Micro Irrigation and Horticulture to provide sustainable livelihood to small and marginal farmers.
9. Since more than half of 2009-10 is already over, it may not be feasible to take up convergence activities in a major way in the current financial year. However, in order to make a beginning, the District Collector may identify at least five convergence projects in the District and implement them within the current financial year. They may either choose to target MoA schemes for beneficiaries of some completed NREGA projects or vice versa, in order to achieve quick results this year. From the year 2010-11, the convergence attempts should be planned at the beginning of the year and expanded to include much more beneficiaries by planning for convergence at the project formulation stage itself for NREGA and MoA schemes.

Monitoring Convergence

10. The District Collector would primarily be responsible for monitoring the convergence efforts. At the end of the financial year, the District Collector should send a report to the Department of Rural Development/Department of Agriculture of the State Government on the convergence efforts, indicating the specific schemes/projects on which convergence has been achieved between NREGA and any project of MOA, the

number of beneficiaries, and the specific output and outcome of this convergence effort. The State Government in turn should send a report to the MoRD/MoA by the 15th May of the following financial year.

11. The convergence project(s) would be subject to social audit on the same lines as the stand-alone NREGA works. Following a baseline assessment, an independent evaluation of the impact of converging MOA programmes with NREGA could be assigned to an independent institution, two years down the line.

Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing

12. Convergence involves a massive programme of managing change across several departments and ranks which can be facilitated through a comprehensive capacity building effort with the support of a group of learning partners. While that would be a long drawn effort, to begin with, each state would organize a state level workshop on convergence to be followed by at least two district level workshops. Similar workshops would be organized at the block level. The workshops should aim at sensitizing the participants to the need for knowledge sharing and cross departmental communication as the basis for forging convergence and also the synergies accruing there from. Behavioural inputs and exercises should be part of the proposed workshops to impact mindsets and influence individual as well as group think.