

# **NREGA AND FORESTRY -The Experience of Kerala**

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# FEATURES OF NREGS IMPLEMENTATION IN KERALA

- Policy priority for NRM
- Convergence attempted from the inception
  - Institutional
    - PRIs especially Village Panchayats
    - Kudumbashree
  - Intersectoral
    - People's Plan
    - Forestry
    - Agriculture
    - Poverty Reduction
    - Water Resources

# Features (contd.)

- Capacity Building
  - All partner departments and institutions included
  - Trainers from all agencies
- Demand-led convergence
  - Demand creation through
    - Kudumbashree network
    - NREGA workers Labour Bank
    - Watershed User Groups
    - VSS and EDC

# CONVERGENCE WITH PRIs

- All works planned and implemented by PRIs
- Processes and procedures of NREGS harmonised with PRI processes and procedures
  - Participatory Planning
  - Role of civil society activists in plan-preparation
  - Works execution
    - Administrative Sanction by PRI
    - Technical Sanction by Committees
- Leadership of PRIs accepted by departments
  - approval of work
  - payment approval and funds release

# CONVERGENCE WITH KUDUMBASHREE

- Extensive network of women only Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs)
  - 1.87 lakh NHGs covering 37.69 lakh families in rural areas
  - Entire BPL population barring a few exceptions brought in to the Kudumbashree net work

# Engendering NREGS

## – role of Kudumbashree

- IEC and Canvassing registrants
- First level in identification of works – Labour budgeting
- Exclusive agency for organization of work through “*women Mates*”
- Providers of facilities to workers
- Suppliers of implements – as Micro-businesses
- Facilitating financial inclusion and inculcating thrift habit

# NREGS AND FORESTRY

## Background

- Severe shortage of public land
- Sharp policy focus on eco-restoration
- Demand from people living on forest fringes
- Proactive response from the Forest Department  
↳ at all levels

# INITIAL STEPS

- Detailed policy decisions at the level of the Ministers and Senior Officials
- Decision to take up work within forests as well as Social Forestry activities
- Developed framework for convergence
  - Issued comprehensive Guidelines
  - Roles and responsibilities of all actors spelt out in the Guidelines
  - Joint training of senior officials
  - Developing SoR not covered by PWD

# METHODOLOGY

- Broad list of works identified
  - Weeding
  - Pitting
  - Planting
  - Bund construction
  - Trenching
  - Gully plugging
  - Fire line tracing
  - Construction of roads/trek paths

## **METHODOLOGY** (Contd...)

- To be in harmony with approved Working Plan/Management Plan and the key principles of NREGS
- Preparation of Shelf of Projects by Vana Samrakshana Samithis (VSSs) and Eco Development Committees (EDCs)
- Place before Grama Sabha by the Village Panchayat

## **METHODOLOGY** (Contd...)

- Integrating with Village Panchayat Annual Work Plan
- Estimates prepared as per normalised Schedule of Rates by Range Officer
- Different rates for ordinary, difficult and very difficult areas.

# **METHODOLOGY (Contd...)**

- Administrative Sanction issued by Village Panchayat
- Technical Sanction issued by Committees headed by Range Officer at the Village level or District level headed by DFO consisting of officials and civil society activists

## **METHODOLOGY** (Contd...)

- Mates provided by Kudumbashree
- Execution of works by registered NREGS workers from the VSS
- Technical supervision by Forest staff
- Measurement by subordinate officers of the Forest Department

# **METHODOLOGY (Contd...)**

- Passing of Bills by Village Panchayat
- Payment through individual bank accounts of workers
- Included in the vigilance and social audit process

# FEATURES

- Intense coordination between LSG and Forest Departments
- Harmonisation of processes and procedures
- Adhoc standards and specifications for works
- Empowerment of VSS
- Supremacy of Village Panchayat

# NEXT STEPS

- Launching massive social forestry programme- '**Harita Keralam**'
- District level meeting of Forest and RD officials by Principal Secretary (LSG) and Principal CCF
- Setting up of permanent coordination arrangements
- Preparation of detailed technical manuals

# ISSUES

- Agricultural Minimum Wages Vs. Forest Minimum Wages
- Small projects Vs. large projects
- Need for modification of permissible list of NREGS works for implementation of the Forests Rights Act- public buildings, houses for tribals

# CONCLUSION

- Preparation of detailed Technical Manuals
  - ↳ Role of MoRD and MoEF
- Need to unlock the potential of NREGS for upgradation and ecorestoration of forests















*Thanks*