



MARCH 25, 2023

STATE RURAL EMPLOYMENT SOCIETY
COMMUNITY & RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT,
GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA

# DAY 1: SUNDAY, 5th FEBRUARY 2023

# Meeting and interaction with State Level officials

An introductory meeting with state officials was convened on the 5<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at 4:00 PM. It was chaired by Shri. Amarjeet Sinha, former Secretary MoRD and Advisor to PM, and attended by other members of the committee. The Principal Secretary, C&RD, Meghalaya, Secretary C&RD and SRES team were present. The State made a comprehensive presentation on the performance of MGNREGA in the State both in terms of persondays generated and funds received/ utilized. The types of works taken up under the programme was also highlighted, with rural connectivity being the leading work with 78,644 out of 338,141 works taken up in total since inception.

In addition, the State presented on the FOCUS AREAS, ACHIEVEMENTS and INTERVENTIONS under MGNREGA, which are summarized below:-

#### Activation of inactive VECs

Through constant community dialogue and capacity-building initiatives, and with the introduction of the eFMS and NeFMS system of payments, more than 4500 inactiveVECs were revived in FY 2015-16 and FY 2016-17. The activation of the dormant VECs took place through community leadership and institutional building programmes (CL&IBP) to build capacities of functionaries.

# MGNREGA as a solution for Climate Change and Sustainable Eco-system

Through Natural Resource Management and Natural Resource Management Committees (NRM and NRMCs), the focus is on leveraging MGNREGA to address a range of climate change-related issues including water shortage, deforestation, spring-shed management etc., to introduce interventions that tap the run-off and recharge underground water-table such as water harvesting structures, trenches and plantation, rejuvenation of spring-sheds, etc. Village Community Facilitators (VCFs) trained by the Soil & Water Conservation Department are made an integral part of the NRMCs to assist in planning such interventions. The CLART application is being rolled out on pilot mode to assist VCFs and Technical Assistants (TAs) of MGNREGA to identify suitable NRM works as per the ground requirement.





## Addressing Poverty through the Bottom 20 Approach

Utilizing the Individual Benefit Scheme (IBS) under MGNREGA, the Bottom 20 Approach aims at targeting the poorest 20% household in every VEC through works that improve livelihood security such as piggery sheds, poultry sheds, etc. In total, 72,026 livestock shedshave been constructed under MGNREGS since its introduction in 2015. The livestock sheds contribute to 21.3% of the total works in the State under MGNREGS.

## Addressing Community Needs at the Last Mile

Through proper planning and prioritization of works by the community and envisioning local solutions for local problems, the urgent and immediate needs of the community were met. Several 'iconic projects' have been taken up which involve mobilization of multiple villages and VECs and convergence of both technical and financial resources in order to initiate big projects which meet important community requirements such as connectivity, drinking water, etc., particularly in the context of hill terrains and hard-to-reach rural hamlets. These are in the form of footbridges and suspension bridges to connect far-flung villages with the marketplace or block offices, water reservoirs for harnessing drinking water, tourism projects to supplement community livelihoods. Convergence with other departments such as PHE, Soil & Water Conservation ensures viability and technical soundness of the projects.

# Towards Greater Gender Equality

50% women reservation for women to the posts of Chairperson and Secretary of VECs was made functional with the notification in December 2020. Currently, there are 3007 female Chairman/ Secretaries in the 6396 VECs. Ensuring a place for women in the executive positions of the VEC has a positive impact and women are seen to participate better in the decision-making processes.

#### Convergence with Social Sector

Under Early Childhood Development, a State Mission to cover children between 0-3 years, the RD Department intends to construct and renovate about 2300 Anganwadi Centres in convergence with Social Welfare Department to improve health and nutrition outcomes.

# "MGNREGA brings 108 to our village"

(The voice of the people on being connected with proper roads through MGNREGA)

#### **Discussion and Decision**

During the course of discussion, the following observations and decisions were made:

- With 70% of households being provided with livelihood assets, the Chairperson advised the State to further leverage the synergy between NRLM and MGNREGA to improve livelihood assets and to increase financial inclusion of rural households, particularly women members.
- Market infrastructure and another permissible works under MGNREGS need to be explored for greater improvement in the Agri and Allied Activities sector.
- Appreciating the efforts made for rural connectivity especially in challenging areas of Garo
  Hills and areas previously infected with militancy, the Chairperson shared cases that were
  recorded in the State of Odisha as a learning experience
- There is requirement for community-level facilitators who will advise and assist the various line departments involved in NRM works so there is better coordination among departments and to ensure a holistic action plan is in place for NRM at the village level.
- The Chairperson advised on better evaluation studies to be carried out on the key thrust areas.

"There is not enough appreciation on the contribution of MGNREGA to communities and societies."

Chairperson, EC

# DAY 2: MONDAY, 6th FEBRUARY 2023

Field visits and interaction with beneficiaries and communities

- 1. Mawlasnai, Umsaw and Umtong VECs, Bhoirymbong C&RD Block, Ri Bhoi
- 2. Mawlai Mawtawar AEC, Mawlai C&RD Block, East Khasi Hills

The tour of the Empowered Committee team of MoRD for inspection of MGNREGA works in the State was conducted on the 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 at Mawlasnai VEC under Bhoirymbong C&RD Block, Ri-Bhoi District.

Following a warm reception from the VEC, the tour began with an inspection of three projects taken up, i.e.,CC Motorable Road from PWD to Ummutha, Construction of the Flood Control &Protection Wall with RCC Railing and the Extension of Flood Control around the paddy field. These projects were up as part of flood control measures since the location is prone to flooding during rainy seasons. The projects connect the villagers to their agricultural fields and also link few households located on the other side of the paddy fields.



The second site inspected was the PMAY-G house located in the village. The target was sanctioned in FY 2020-21 to Shri. Ribal Shadap. With the sudden demise of both parents, the children were left orphans. The community stepped in and completed with the support of the Dorbar Shnong and contributions from different sources. The six siblings now stay in the house. As part of convergence, a toilet through SBM was also constructed within the premises of the house. Electricity connection has also been provided. LPG connection will also be provided as part of the remaining convergence component.



The ongoing Amrit Sarovar project at Pdeng Um, Mawlasnai was also inspected. The site is a BISAG-N identified site which is still ongoing. Alongside the project is the construction of the washing platform. The area identified has a perennial source and the anticipated water area is **1560 cubic metre**.





The EC team inspected a fourth site i.e. the CC motorable road from PWD to Madan Parish, Umsaw. The project is completed and it connects the village to the playground of the Parish which is used as a multipurpose ground for the youth of the VEC and the village as a whole.





The final project visited at Mawlasnai VEC was the VO shed. This project is an ongoing project which is to be completed soon. The VO shed will serve as a meeting place cum working shed for SHGs of the VEC and it will be utilized for other purposes as needed from time to time by the VEC. The cost of the project is Rs. 800,000/- and constructed on standalone mode under MGREGA.





#### Interaction with the SHGs and villagers of Mawlasnai and Umsaw VECs:

The interaction was held at the playground of Mawlasnai VEC wherein approximately 50 Job Card Holders, SHG and VO members attended. The interaction stared with an introduction by the Joint Mission Director, SRES about the purpose of the visit and the meeting.

The following were the key points discussed with the community:-

- There are 20 SHGs and one (1) VO in the VEC. The VO members meet once a week for discussions on the works that can be taken up towards development of their VO and the village as a whole. Currently, the prime activity of the VO is towards cleanliness for which they conduct cleaning drives every month.
- Each member of the group saves and contributes Rs. 40/- on a weekly basis. However, the savings in the groups do not help at times when they require larger amount for meeting emergencies. They tend to avail loan from local money lenders and friends with high interest rate i.e., 10% as compared to the minimal rate whenever internal lending is done within the SHGs and VOs.
- One of the purposes for availing loan is for ginger cultivation. The members purchase rhizomes for planting. At times, the produce fetches a high value while sometimes, they run on a loss. Besides ginger cultivation, the members also stated that they cultivate broomstick and generate income from the product once it is collected and sold to the markets. The State officials present suggested that they can start some additional income generating business with their SHG funds so that they can generate more income and profit which will be helpful to them.
- In a nearby village, a mixed SHG was formed for differently abled persons with six members overall. The representative who attended the meeting expressed the need to assist one of its members who is economically very backward. The Mission Director asked the Block officials and the VEC Chairman to look in to the matter and propose action to assist the member.
- The Chairman of the Empowered Committee said that there is a need to stress on Individual Benefit Scheme like rearing of livestock, etc., as no such works were taken up in the VEC. When inquired if they are interested in availing such projects, they replied saying that they do want the projects as it will augment in income generation to sustain the needs of the families.
- The Chairperson EC inquired about the prevalence, if at all, of domestic violence in the village, to which the members stated that cases are not many. However, they informed that alcohol consumption amongst the menfolk has an overall negative impact on the family and also affects the family income. In some families where the father is the bread earner, chronic alcoholism even affects the capability of the family to procure adequate food. In unison, the female members expressed the need to discourage the opening of liquor shops.
- The Secretary also inquired about the medical facilities available whenever any resident falls sick. The members present stated that they visit the PHC located in the village and sometimes they do visit CHC if need arises. One member stated that medicines are not for free and this is at times a burden to them as they expect free medicines from the PHC when suffer from minor ailment.





The team then proceeded to Umtong VEC to inspect the piggery shed of a Bottom-20 beneficiary under MGNREGA. At present the beneficiary is keeping 3 piglets in the shed constructed which are expected to grow in a few months' time. The beneficiary stated that she will be able to sell the grown pigs at a beneficial price. This will therefore help her financially in supporting her family.

It was noted that she has not availed any loan as yet even though she is a member of an SHG. The Team was asked to initiate SHG linkage and educate the beneficiary on the process of availing loan so that she can take up additional activities to supplement her income.





The tour concluded with a visit to the Multipurpose mini gravity storage dam at Mawlai C&RD Block, East Khasi Hills district. The work was implemented under MGNREGA during FY 2019-20 and 2020-21 at an amount of Rs. 90,57,800/-. The project was implemented by four (4) VECs and the storage capacity is about 3,925 cubic metre or approximately 40,00,000 litres.

#### The highlights of the project are:-

- · Addresses water insufficiency of the area
- Convergence with Forest/MBDA for convergence works on plantation and fisheries

- Source for PHE to implement Jal Jeevan Mission
- Eco-walks under Tourism



## **Action Points Based on Learnings and Observations:**

- For addressing livelihood challenges and poverty reduction amongst the poorest of the poor, there is need for better linkages between Bottom 20 and NRLM. Bottom-20 households who have received assets for livelihood supplementation need further support through SHG loans.
- There is need to prioritize Bottom 20 households and assess the impact of poverty reduction schemes. For this, a systematic review of all bottom 20 beneficiaries of last three years may be initiated to check the extent to which their socio-economic condition has improved or otherwise. The Animal Husbandry and Veterinary/Fisheries departments will help to assess the impact of assets provided under Bottom 20 and provide further support to the beneficiaries. A system to monitor the progress of the Bottom-20 households may be instituted and SHGs may be trained to give support and counselling.
- SHGs need to be trained and encouraged to increase incremental savings.
- Disabled MGNREGA Job Card Holders need to be given more support in the community
- To enable better identification of NRM-related works, trained VCFs to work closely with NRMCs and to be monitored by TAs to make use of theCLART application.
- Greater synergy between all Rural Development components and cross-departmental convergence is required in order to achieve better outcomes.
- There is need to address knowledge gaps in the community, sincemany headmen and VEC functionaries are unaware about the norms and guidelines for the various social assistance programmes.
- The Block functionaries require more capacity building in order to be able to train, hand-hold and mobilize communities for greater participation in rural development.

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Printed and published by:

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