

# Interrogating NREGA: Knowledge Dimensions



Employment provided to households:	3.31 Crore
Person days [in Crore]:	
Total:	128.69
SCs:	38.55 [29.96%]
STs:	31.95 [24.83%]
Women:	62.91 [48.89%]
Others:	58.19 [45.22%]
Total works taken up:	20.44 Lakhs.
Works completed:	7.16 Lakhs.
Works in progress:	13.29 Lakhs.

**DRAFT**



Ramasubramanian

Samanvaya Consulting, Chennai

March 2009

## A Note on Policy Engagement

The initial note on NREGA that I had written as a suggestive note<sup>1</sup> resulted in a few very encouraging responses, one of them being from Prof. Shambu Prasad of XIMB. He suggested that I undertake a scoping study on the entire NREGA and try to define a possible scope for a larger study on the Act and its implementation.

I have understand a 'scoping study' meant to be a note that should point to scope and reasons for further research and understanding. This I have retained as my own objective.

I have also come to recognize that there are various hues of policy engagement and that some of the civil society organizations start with the assumption that the policy is sacrosanct while others think policy can be modified and yet others with the assumption that it can be studied and modified. My own position is more simplistic, I think all policies are made for the public and if there were some limitations with them, public finds a way of subverting policies in due course. Also the most subverted policy is the least respected. Our Executive, Legislation and Judiciary are testimonies to this. NREGA as a new policy has already become a victim.

With this understanding, I started to read most of the literature on the NREGA and interact with various stake holders engaged with NREGS implementation including NGOs, labour leaders, politicians, policy analysts, farmers, farm labourers, etc. This provides a glimpse and is rather limited, so cannot be considered exhaustive. I need also mention

---

<sup>1</sup> Appendix - I

as part of the scope limitation that my interaction has been largely within the southern states, and primarily within Tamilnadu.

I present the report the same way as my initial note, as a first person narrative.

I owe this entire effort to the Knowledge In Civil Society (KICS) network, Centre for World Solidarity (CWS) and Prof. Shambu Prasad in particular, for allowing me vast margins to toy around with a germ of an thought and providing the space and support to work on it. There should be a few thousand people like him around for hope.

Ramasubramanian

15<sup>th</sup> March 2009.

## Summary

'I AM NOT AGAINST NREGA or NREGS'. In an environment where political correctness is deemed as a pre-requisite for social discourse in any platform, I have often found myself initiating a discussion on NREGA with the above statement. The political significance of this scheme to the incumbent government or at least as much as it has been made out during election year has also made the entire dialogue on this scheme very politically sensitive. Though I recognize that this starts me off on a defensive mode, I have come to recognize that such a situation is better than an offensive situation where I have already been labeled as 'them' and hence shut off from further engagement.

This report is by no means based on an extensive study of any primary data. It has largely been based on secondary data culled from government sources (highly misleading according to respectable sources<sup>2</sup>) and based on personal interactions with stake holders from different backgrounds and with different agenda. But more importantly this report is based on observations, inferences, reading between the unfinished sentences and ambiguous summaries from many of the stake holders. I also realize that while the key words with which NREGA is being debated are wages, rights, guarantee, assets and accountability, my own analysis fall within the domain of local skills and knowledge, control, ownership, relationships and *Swaraj*.

This report has been structured along the lines of the Summary, a section on re-visiting the earlier propositions, in the process fine tuning them and providing indicators for further scope and study possibilities. This is followed by a large appendix of various documents that have been

---

<sup>2</sup> John Dreze et al. – Annual report on NREGA, 2009: *Frontline Magazine*

cited through this report apart from the online blog maintained during the period Aug 08 – March 09 called NREGA Watch.

I believe it is important that there are many studies undertaken to understand the underlying assumptions of NREGA. Some of these I would like to propose include:

*1. Traditional Social Security Nets:* a detailed study of how traditional societies cope with social security issues, what are their mechanisms and where do they mobilize resources from.

*2. History of engagement of 'development' programmes in a few villages:* This aspect has come up repeatedly in discussions with communities. How many 'development' schemes and projects, concurrently and unconnectedly, run in any village could give an indication as to where the missing links are, on NREGA and many other schemes. A recent consultation found that every third villager was part of one 'development' scheme committee or another.

*3. Job, skill and knowledge profile of BPL card holders who have applied for NREGS:* Though this date may not be too difficult to gather across the country, it is highly unlikely that such a venture will be ever done. However, it is possible that a small NGO in a local area could undertake such a study and try to understand what are the skills, knowledge each of the families employed for manual labour hold and what kinds of jobs / vocation they have held for livelihood previously. In a recent interaction with group of NGOs of the same bio-region in one district of Tamilnadu, we found that the no NGO would rely on the BPL list given by the government as it does not reflect the ground reality.

*4. Asset creation – ownership and sustenance:* One of the major arguments by the NREGA promoters has been that this scheme creates assets in rural areas. However, with the advent of SEZ and its subsequent *avatars*, it would be worth understanding how the community ownership of the assets being created is secured. The

application of the provision to work on SC/ST lands too need be further studied.

5. *Village Micro-Plans and NREGA*: There are many NGOs and in many cases government schemes that have indulged the village communities in what may be called as micro-planning exercise. However, in many cases the plans for the village through NREGS do not relate to or reflect on any such earlier plans. It would be interesting to understand why this has not been done.

5. *Environment, future shape of Economy and NREGA*: Watershed based development, conservation of traditional water bodies, etc. and similar works that are identified under NREGA. These areas are part of local resource management exercise, in particular the natural resource. It would be interesting to study the environmental impact of NREGS. If they works on the field were true to the professed intentions, I think it can create a large carbon credit market of its own. Perhaps such a credit linkage would even subsidize the NREGA scheme.

The issues posed / proposed here could possibly be answered by experienced village level extension workers as precisely as many detailed studies can together eventually provide. However, the data so collected can point out to a few areas of changes / modifications in the manner in which NREGS are conceptualized and propagated.

## Introduction

The Indian village has been a subject of studies, opinions, comments, critique and adulation, much analysis for centuries from scholars far and near. The Indian village life fascinates many, it carries hopes for many and it is a symbol of backwardness for many others. Gandhiji said that India lives in her villages. However, there are fewer and feebler articulations of this vision in the current crowded cacophony for a future rural India. After six decades of Independence, the World Bank says, India lives in the cities. This dichotomy is not merely in the statement. Gandhi's idyllic village was even in his times 'only in my dreams' as he puts it in his writing on Gram Swaraj. World Bank is using its deductions on data, statistics, government records, future trends, market expectations perhaps, many of which would have been anathema for Gandhiji.

The Gandhian dream for the village had a vision for a self-governed, healthy prosperous India in its villages. The Gandhian dream foresaw a village that could be self-sufficient enough to not rely too much on the outside and share its surplus with the outside world with pride. Some activists today do super-impose the idea of sustainability on this vision pointing out that such self-sufficiency would necessarily mean less dependence on non-renewable and highly polluting material sources. Gandhi saw strength in such a village and the resilience to withstand any challenge. Grassroot governance and people participation was essential to this purpose.

NREGA also emphasizes on the same points of grassroot governance structure and people participation. However, it starts emphasis in the context of a programme that has come as a response to a distress

situation, hence lacks a vision for healthy or prosperous village. Obviously, perpetual distress is not a vision. Consequently 100 days of employment cannot be provided by the nation state forever; it is not even required if the community is self-sufficient, has its *Swaraj*.

A Dalit leader during the course of a discussion on NREGA commented, “our youth haven’t owned anything and have only seen oppression, so there is no question of liking this land or the soil or people for them.” There is a need for land reforms in many parts of the country. Without a piece of land in his name, the poor labourer in the village does not see the relation between his / her work and the village welfare. This will prove to be quite costly for NREGA and could also explain the vast difference between the jobs started and those completed in the NREGA website<sup>3</sup>. The same sentiment is reflected in the complaint about the scheme by many farmers regarding the choice of channels cleared through this scheme.

The Panchayat is firmly under the control of the district governance structures such as the Collectorate and DRDA and dependent on different line departments for their regular work, namely the PWD, Agricultural Department, etc. These in turn are dependent on state level government decisions and policies to set their priorities. The Panchayat is programmatically dependent on departments of the state and their policies while maintaining the farce that all these are actually decided in the Grama Sabha by the village itself. If Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) need to be made completely transparent, this includes their transactions with the Collectorate. However, currently such transactions are often in the dark for the villager. So villagers and Panchayat collaborate to undermine the programme, “our people realize that this

---

<sup>3</sup> According to the data in the NREGA website, less than a third have been shown as completed and the remaining are shown as ‘in progress’

entire scheme is political”, said the Dalit agricultural labourer leader, “So, they also cook up some accounts and work to ensure that easy money is made”.

NGOs operating within some villages also create an alternate power structure challenging the power structure of the Panchayat. If such an NGO does not recognize the local governance structure and also had access to funds, then it becomes detrimental to the strength of the local governance structure and the community in the long run.

The changing face of agriculture and the increasing unreliability of the environment and market conditions are also responsible for the overall sense of helplessness, which a villager is driven to these days. Under the circumstances, the small farmer who loses his labourer to the high paying NREGA is unhappy with the scheme. The labourer in some places makes more than the farmer in a day and this adds to the local social disturbance. As one farmer wryly mentioned, “I wish I can also go and join the labourers for the easy money that this scheme provides, but, many of them previously worked on our lands, the pride doesn’t permit me to go and work alongside them... some of them don’t like it too.”

Attention to the issues that will strengthen the local governance structure, revive / rejuvenate agriculture and also sensitive to the local social issues is essential to address the roots of social security in villages. NREGA does not pretend to be addressing long term issues, but, both the magnitude of its nature and the political pride attached with it (‘the largest employment scheme in the world!’, etc.) seem to influence the debate on it.

## Revisiting Earlier Propositions

The propositions that I had put forth in my initial documents are as follows<sup>4</sup>:

1. The primary hypothesis in this case is that wherever communities have stayed and thrived in India for ages, they have evolved their own social security nets.
2. The inefficiencies of the state delivery mechanisms such as the Collectorate, PRIs, PWD, etc. are being rehashed in all the reports pertaining to this scheme.
3. The reduction of all labour to manual labour alone pre-supposes that all those who cannot render manual labour may not be considered for employment under the scheme, thereby creating a new category of unemployables in the villages.
4. The final proposition is that this scheme in the long run does not arrest rural migration, but places the rural labour employment scheme in direct competition with the urban manual labour opportunities on cash terms.

I had put forward the above as hypotheses or propositions since they were not being made on any evidence except my own experience and observations. Having since then examined news items, government data and other analysis I am emboldened to further strengthen these. There is a definite scope for a large scale study of some of the areas which we will look at in awhile.

1. The prevalence of social security nets in some parts of India where there has been a thriving traditional vocation in existence. This is the primary point I had made and though I have encountered many more

---

<sup>4</sup> The entire note is given in Appendix - I

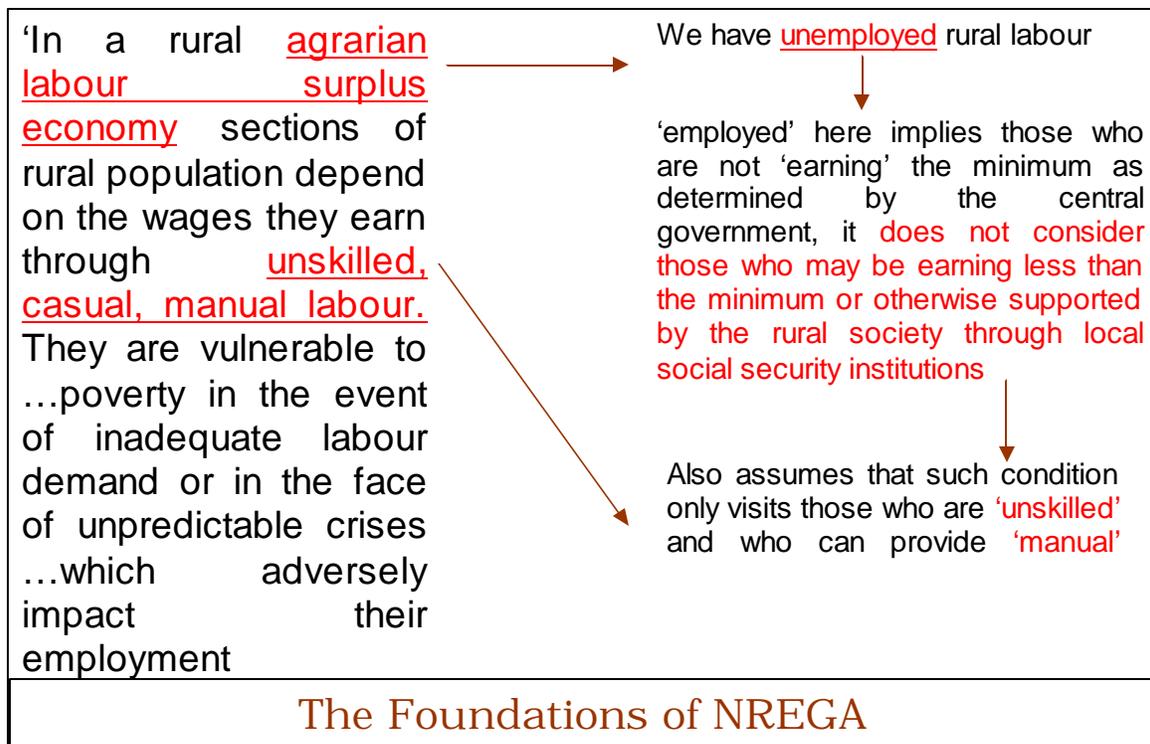
case stories of such institutions since then, there are few studies of how these traditional institutions have addressed social security issues. However, with the currently available data, a corollary to this proposition can be made:

Wherever communities have been involved in grassroots governance structures, their current economic status has shaped the efficacy of the improvement of NREGA

Additionally, if communities were to adopt NREGA as their own social security, then very soon we would see the likes of Dearness Allowance and Health Reimbursements being enjoined along with the NREGA demands. Already Prof. M.S. Swaminathan has suggested that a 'salary' be provided to the farmer on the same lines as government servant to attract younger people to farming.

This leads to a further refinement of the first proposition, to be re-stated as:

Rural social security net being managed by the state machinery without local governance is deemed to fail. The stake holder ownership rather than engagement is necessary for the elimination of the situation that requires an NREGA. This is not synonymously to be assumed because of the engagement of the Panchayats.



This takes us to the second proposition:

2. Almost all the news reports that have originated, be it from academics or activists, have all in one form or another pointed to the inefficiencies of the government machinery at the local level and its inability to manage the project. The political corruption and nepotism, the criminal infiltration and the bureaucratic indifference are three reasons that have resurfaced repeatedly in these write-ups<sup>5</sup>. Some of them sound mere complaints, while others a cry in desperation<sup>6</sup>. But suffice to say that the NREGA has only highlighted the systemic inefficiency and inability to deliver welfare scheme unless aided from outside through strong civil society groups as it has happened in Rajasthan, parts of Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and other states where NREGA seems to have created many success stories. However, a closer inspection also reveals

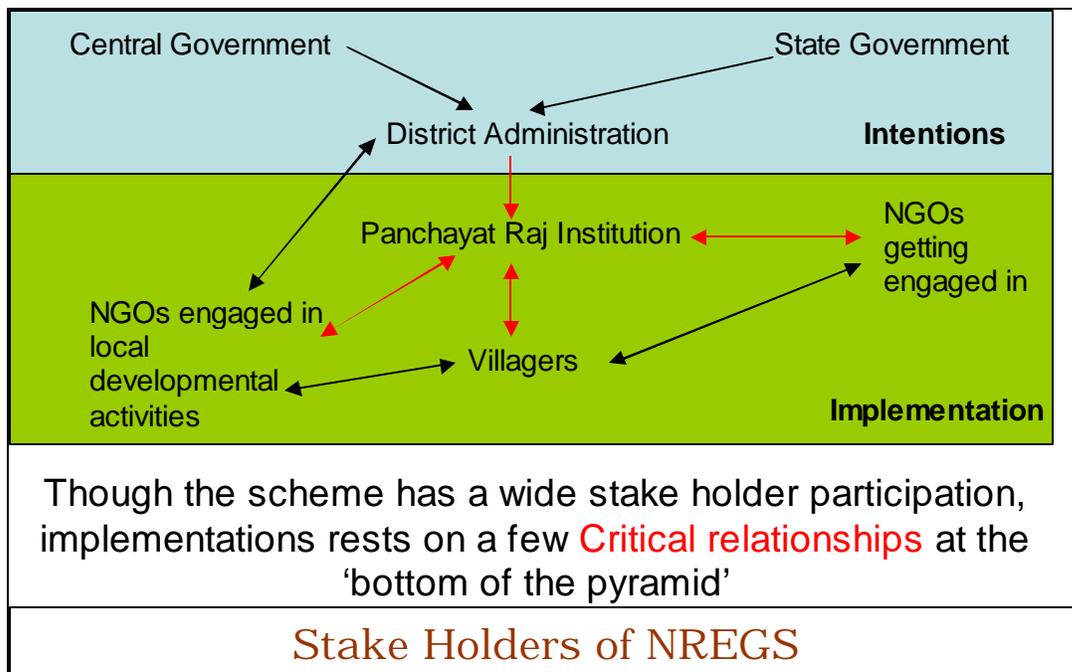
<sup>5</sup> A large list of such articles I have provided in the Appendix of this report

<sup>6</sup> 'Lok Adalat or Joke Adalat' by John Dreze

another interesting fact - the states where there has been a definite earlier (or current) programme for rural areas placing emphasis on rural stake holder participation or ownership, have been the ones where the programme seems to have been most effective.

The above analysis leads us to further clarity on the earlier proposition. the renewed one reads as follows:

If the NREGA is implemented as a stand alone with no integration with other programmes from the state and central government, and if it is misaligned with the rest of the developmental agenda, then all the conflicts are downloaded onto the local governance structures – the collectorate, the tahsil or the DRDO. In such cases, NREGA seems to fail.



The reasons for such failure could be many. The most ironic being the declaration by a UN body that urbanization is to be anticipated within a day of the UPA Chairperson and Congress President Mrs. Sonia Gandhi saying that NREGA has reversed the trend of urbanization<sup>7</sup>. One can say that the UN body may not be aware of the Indian situation, however, they too use and cite extensively from the same government of India data from which the government itself draws its inferences. But, when the urban development ministry too largely projects large scale urban migration and presents plans for the same, it is clear that one arm of the government does not believe in the intentions of another arm of the government, viz., rural development ministry and NREGA.

The skill upgradation in villages through various capacity building programmes that every rural development agency has initiated over the last decade has been in the areas of enterprise, business management, value addition that could provide better market returns for their products / services, etc. Such skill development has been part of every government programme and every department - Income Generation Programme (IGP) as it is popularly known. Most districts have identified some area for such skill enhancement. Many of these rural 'entrepreneurs' have found that their products don't sell; they have found that they need to expand their market knowledge or get further capital in place before they can see any profits from their work. The rural entrepreneurs though not formally trained in any business seem to have adapted to the IGP rather well and there are a large number of success as well as failure stories on rural enterprises in the past decade.

The knowledge and skill bases of rural communities is not compartmentalized in general. The villagers are aware of the market

---

<sup>7</sup> The news clipping of both these news items that ironically appeared within a day of each other are given in the Appendix II consisting of blogs

conditions for their produce as much as they are aware of the implication of a weather forecast on their produce this year. While such is the case, to compartmentalize their work to merely manual labour for money seems to be demeaning to their intelligence. Again if the village were to think and plan its own 'employment' and asset creation, then it only makes sense that we don't cripple them saying whatever may be their asset creation, it should involve manual labour only! So far, no village as far as I know has come forward to pose this question and demand that they be given a different kind of a job.

**2. The main role of the Line Department of the Government is to give technical support in the nature of estimates, measurement and supervision of the works executed.**

*Source: Role of Line Departments, Circular 18<sup>th</sup> June 2008, Dept of Rural Development, GOI*

The role of line departments, assigned to this programme as a technical support is a highly deceptive association. Support on Estimates, Measurements and Supervision is possible if there is a common knowledge minimum base for both. If they both have an unequal relationship, then there is no possibility of a support.

This supports the earlier proposition that there is a definite need to understand the knowledge and skills that are part of the livelihood basket for the rural employed, whether manual or otherwise. If the government thinks that it should provide soft and hard skills together when it trains rural folks through its schemes, it simply doesn't fit if the it feels that the same rural folks will have to only undertake physical labour for them to be guaranteed of their wage labour from the government, even it if were only during distress times.

Negating all knowledge of various kinds that exist in rural India and reducing the wage labour to manual alone does not help in the long run to root out unemployment (nor to re-direct the surplus labour, if such is the case) in villages. Unless the diversity in knowledge is identified and utilized, the NREGS will soon resemble government offices with monotonous jobs, turf wars and self interests.

I agree that the above bears very little resemblance to the earlier proposition. But, this will be the case. The study of the village level knowledge, skills and type of jobs will hold much promise towards this purpose. Several years back, bio-diversity register and indigenous knowledge database have been 'successfully' undertaken as 'projects' by different government departments and NGOs, reference to these could lead to much knowledge and insights about every region.

NREGA provides a wage labour for the unemployed (or under employed) very poor in the village. The minimum wages have meant that only villagers who cannot go out and earn more money stay back and demand NREGA work. Those who can do better and more effective manual labour will always leave the village, unless they have a definite reason to stay in a village. In such cases, NREGS will be left with the unhealthy, elderly and those who are not in the best of the physical condition for its implementation. These would in turn slow down the kind of work undertaken<sup>8</sup>. If the work is important then it is important to hold the capable in the village.

---

<sup>8</sup> ' why can' t they use JCB to do these works? When we would do it that way ourselves' , says a villager in Tamilnadu

'Our labourers now demand that we pay them wages equal to or higher than that of NREGS and they also want us to give them their regular share of the produce', said a farmer from Chengelpettu. 'Even worse, they give their attendance at the NREGS programme at 9 and reach our fields only by 11'. 'We are not against such schemes, I think it has provided good money for the labourers, as they too suffer the same issues of increased cost of living that we suffer from', continued the village elder, 'but, what we are against is that we cannot match those wages at all. City based groups can match such wages so, even on those days when they don't get the NREGS job, they prefer to go off and do wage labour in the city rather than work with us in the fields'. This was in Chengelpet, December 2008. In different way the same story was repeated across 3 more districts where we traveled to understand farming issues. When labourers get used to earning returns higher than what their immediate environment can offer, they do not want to be in that location and prefer to migrate to the nearby urban areas where as security guard outside ATM they probably earn more money.

The rural relationships (at least in some parts) are deep rooted and recognize other forms of transactions beyond money, this ensures their immediate social security. When these relationships get disturbed through a higher wage (or a 'easy money' job as most farmers see it), it disturbs the entire village society. Competing wages on money terms rather than other ways of ensuring security become the alternative to this.

When I look back at the above comments and the possible areas of further study I have mentioned earlier, I realize that it is possible to construe this as a critic on the scheme. However, that has not been the intention. As mentioned earlier, this has been an attempt to look at the

entire issue of rural employment from a different perspective. NREGA has provided a context for the same. The scope for a study (and collating earlier studies) are enormous and it would certainly give us much more clarity and provide us the kind of programmes and policies that can eventually lead rural areas to be self-sustaining societies that contribute to national productivity, peace and strength.

## Appendix – I: The Original Note Circulated

### **Background**

Social security practices are not new to rural communities in India. These include systems and practices in place to take care of the elderly, disabled, unemployable, apart from support during difficult times. Some of the well known practices include community loans for enterprise and education, community help during times of personal disaster, the philanthropic and social institutions set-up through community entities, etc. These have emerged over a long period and are embedded among community practices as social, cultural, livelihood and governance functions. These practices may vary in each region and state. Such practices have been recorded and published and may have been recorded in other places. But there are no concrete nation-wide studies that have specifically looked at such practices as the social security net of communities. Such practices may have eroded due to the break away of traditional community systems and which has accelerated as a consequence of the exponential growth of urban-centric development programmes. Some of these practices have morphed themselves into urban practices and survived while others have become redundant.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was introduced in the Parliament with much fanfare in 2004-5 and since then has generated much literature around the intentions and implementation of this scheme. The scheme has been extended from the initial pilot phase of a few districts across the country, to all the districts in the country as on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008.

The NREGA has evolved as a combination of, and from earlier rural development schemes. The unique, salient aspects of NREGA are 'work on demand' and transparency through involvement of many NGOs on the field. The efficacy of the scheme, corruption in the Panchayat Raj Institutions(PRI) that implement the scheme and the insufficiency of the scheme in realistically addressing the unemployment issue have been discussed *ad nauseam* in the media. Transparency and wide civil society engagement with this scheme has meant that there is a consistent reporting of instances of malpractice and corruption. Such issues that have emerged are similar to other government scheme; more often than not these refer to the limitations of the organization of our state machinery.

The various terms and their meaning that have emerged as part of NREGA, such as, 'social security net', 'guarantee of work', 'expert' and cash compensation even in the case of non-availability of jobs, has largely been taken as granted by those discussing the Act and its implementation.

### **A Study Proposal:**

While the delivery of NREGA against its promise are being discussed and the shortcomings of the scheme and its implementation mechanism have been amended, there has not been any serious look at what NREGA is replacing and what are the 'social security nets'<sup>9</sup> of people institutions and initiatives that are being uprooted / threatened in the process<sup>10</sup>. This is particularly so when all labour is reduced to highly generalized manual labour<sup>11</sup>.

It is proposed that a study will look into these aspects to interrogate the knowledge dimensions of NREGA. The objective of this study would be to

- understand how these poor communities were employed before NREGA was implemented; what were the people initiatives (both individual as well as collective) in this context?
- were these completely manual labourers or were these also knowledge workers?
- who were the 'experts' within the community in the areas of NREGA work?
- what would be the priorities of the community if they were provided with a scheme and asked to prioritize the village needs?
- were there other practices to help unemployed women, elderly and disabled within the community prior to the implementation of this scheme and if so what were these based on?

The study will consist of the following components:

1. Analysis of existing NREGA studies being conducted by different agencies across the country
2. A short survey among grass root NGOs involved in NREGA implementation that would gather qualitative issues from the knowledge perspective and

---

<sup>9</sup> Across India, there is significant amount of knowledge available on the practices and institutions among traditional and modern people institutions that provide security net to rural and urban population

<sup>10</sup> In Chittoor region of Andhra Pradesh, a prominent NGO engaged with rural communities Timbaktu Collectives reports that the overall productive capacity and enterprise nature and diversity has come down since the launch of NREGS in that region

<sup>11</sup> An informal enquiry with the Neerkattis (traditional irrigation managers in southern Tamilnadu) reveal that NREGA implementation in their village does not recognize their knowledge in irrigation management and they too ought to provide only manual labour. About 1000 functioning Neerkattis have been recorded as recently as 2003-4 by DHAN Foundation, Madurai

3. Understanding social security nets that have been established among people organizations already through a few examples

The outcome will provide some insights on how social security net is defined and understood among people institutions across the country and how NREGA could benefit from such learnings.

### ***Propositions***

1. The primary hypothesis in this case is that wherever communities have stayed and thrived in India for ages, they have evolved their own social security nets and these processes and systems have to be understood as they are value specific and knowledge specific.
2. The inefficiencies of the state delivery mechanisms such as the Collectorate, PRIs, PWD, etc. are being rehashed in all the reports pertaining to this scheme, despite the fact that these are neither new nor to be surprised about.
3. The reduction of all labour to manual labour alone pre-supposes that all those who cannot render manual labour may not be considered for employment under the scheme, thereby creating a new category of unemployables in the villages. Conversely, it also supposes that there were no knowledge work possibilities and opportunities within the village<sup>12</sup>.
4. The final proposition is that this scheme in the long run does not arrest rural migration, but places the rural labour employment scheme in direct competition with the urban manual labour opportunities on cash terms<sup>13</sup>.

### ***Possible Outcome and Future Directions***

People knowledge systems and practices in India in recent times have been most visible in areas which have a commercial value enjoined to them. Hence practices in traditional health system and knowledge of local flora, etc. which can be easily encashed in the globalized market place have gained much attention whereas other practices that pertain to governance and social structuring have either been condemned *en masse* or have been dismissed as being insignificant. In contexts such as

---

<sup>12</sup> The Anthropological Survey of India's, 'People of India' project that profiles all the communities in India through a mammoth documentation effort of over 70 volumes has recorded that among communities we possess 5.3 skill sets in India out of which 1.8 is traditional and 3.5 is evolved

<sup>13</sup> Since this note was first written in May 2008, this tendency has been already reported in parts of Andhra Pradesh

formulation of government schemes such as NREGA with newer concepts and terms, people institutions are not even considered. The context of NREGA provides an opportunity to understand one dimension of the people's knowledge and organization, to do with the way they define their social security. It would provide the underlying philosophical bases of such a practice. Future direction could include a detailed study on social security net practices across the country. It could also reveal fool-proof methods of implementing social security practices and even a newer definition of social security in the Indian context.

## Appendix – II: Categorizing Responses

The following table presents the responses people have shared during personal discussions or have pointed out as an issue during an interaction on the scheme. These have been categorized. These are presented here without indicating sources so as to not cause any prejudice and in cases to protect the person's identity.

Issues / Responses	Categories
1. Soil conservation and water conservation are the primary areas for which NREGA is supporting. Out turn based wage has not penetrated.	nature of job
2. Today in rural agriculture only small farmers remain, large farmers have long since left the scene and don't exist any longer. The conflict between the small farmer and labourer has been pegged up unnecessarily too much and made into an issue that is being addressed by the NREGA.	farmer problem
3. There are quite a few discontent notes between traditional social security nets and NREGA. These cannot be reconciled.	traditional ssn
4. Assumptions for the act has been that there is lot of rural unemployment. Articulating the same addressing this is fine. Root cause for the un-employment has not been looked into as part of this scheme.	unemployment
5. How do we get the rural economy back in its feet? The circle of the rural economy has to be completed, currently it has become like the economy flows in an uni-direction. All money leaves villages and heads towards towns and cities, this scheme seems to want to reverse the trend by sending money to the rural economy, but it is being done in a rather constricted way.	economy
6. There are also threats and inequalities in the traditional Indian society, these need to be discounted too, one cannot be too much caught up with traditional Indian society.	traditional ssn
7. Inter-dependent society and a holistic dependency existed earlier, currently this doesn't exist.	traditional ssn
8. Right for work is a function of the state, that NREGA is concentrating on building assets is good. But it ought to expand its understanding and definition of assets. Currently social assets are not included. For example if a school requires better teachers or there is a need to clean up a school infrastructure these are not considered as fit jobs in NREGA these should be brought in too. There needs to be place to accommodate these schemes.	nature of job
9. It is the only scheme that is addressing the rural agricultural labourer community currently in the country, hence it ought to be taken advantage of by the community to negotiate its way.	labour

10. Agricultural labour is not doing a single job in the rural society nor or they dependent on the single skill for their livelihood, they do have multi-various skills and do have a few options for livelihood on their own. This needs to be recognized.	labour
11. Adequate enabling of the return of investment as well s diverse rural investment portfolios for the rural poor family has to be enabled.	economy
12. It is a distress / starvation death addressing scheme, it cannot be taken as an employment guarantee scheme in situations where there is no distress or starvation.	concept
13. The more NREGA days the worse is the village economy, we cannot say that the village economy is any healthy based on the number of working days in the village generated through this scheme	economy
14. The entire thing is also getting target driven which brings its own dangers	programme
15. Case: warangal – people had cards issued didn't turn up for work as they got busy with other things, because the collectorate had issued enough cards already it didn't issue any fresh ones and those who did not have jobs and could not get new cards issued to them were stranded	programme
16. Case: Lambadi villages – these villages consist of hardly about 20 families living together. As there is a restriction that at least 50 people in a village should seek work under the scheme, when a part of this village wants to get jobs done for themselves it becomes very difficult as they don't have the required 50 numbers – NEED TO CHECK WHETHER THIS NO. IS UNIQUE TO SOME PLACE OR WHETHER THIS IS GENERIC SITUATION	programme
17. The traditional society is not a homogenous society, there are no equal rights for everyone there is no equality, there is no point in trying to take it as a model	traditional ssn
18. 'people's right to work' is a function of the state, it has to ensure that there is adequate amount of working days and work provided for the poor people in the country. Indeed why should the state talk about 100 days, it should try to provide employment for the labourers all the year through	
19. Why is manual labourer mentioned as an unskilled labour? Why should we consider it thus?	
20. if the fruits of the scheme goes to the labourers perhaps we will know of it in the next three years	
21. what are we spending these funds on?	
22. Can government provide NREGA work to tap skill s in the village is a good question that needs to be asked	
23. The trouble is with the panchayat rights, we need to provide the panchayats with enough rights to ensure its right implementation	
24. NREGA is a programme that aggregates the rural distress, unfortunately it dis-aggregated as a programme, we need to concentrate this in the study	
25. We also need to look at what is the traditional methods and tools available for social security in the study	
26. Can we redesign the programme with lessons from the traditional system? - The study needs to throw more light on the issue	
27. To look at NREGA as a political tool for negotiation significant politicalvisibility not there for agricultural labourer	

28. Capture the political imagination (visuals) of those waged labourers as far as NREGA is concerned	
29. In the 1980s there was a upgrade the women in rural areas with skills scheme, this scheme folded up because they were based on unsustainable livelihood or unviable business propositions	
30. AP rural development minister in a meeting on the 30 <sup>th</sup> of June 2008 mentioned that a village calendar is to be prepared noting the lean parts of the year when there is no work in the village and only on those days the NREGA work would be taken up for execution. But this is bound to be controversial as the calendar will represent the interest of those who contribute towards the development of the same	
31. There minimum wages board in AP has not met in 4 years and hence the min wages that are being talked about in this state are at	
32. least 4 years old, demand for work would not be an indication of the poverty issue in the villages at all and cannot be considered thus	
33. Labourer is not the culprit, the small farmer is not been able to articulate their problem and has not been understood, everyone either blames the small farmer or the labourer as a victim of the small farmer. What are the troubles that he undergoes is not clearly understood and if this is the root cause of the problem of unemployment there is no question being asked as to what are his options and how can he continue to survive in such a condition	
34. The policy environment all other rural unfriendly policy – a political game where it is a largesse to keep the rights to work people happy and engaged; what about right to land? If these people can be given employment they can as well be provided land in the villages and provided help to do their own agriculture	
35. How does the transformation of rural labour take place? Do we have any knowledge of this?	
36. People are happy to escape from the traditional social security nets, they don't want to be part of this unequal system; they would rather be in a completely different environment	
37. Questions being asked by coastal dalit workers in AP: Why not provide employment for the 360 days, why should the employment be restricted to just 100 days? Why not convert the agricultural labourers to agriculturists?	
38. I see a parallel in the power project that the government has implemented, the Rajiv Gandhi rural vidyut yojna, while we all know all the problems that any programme has in the system, Prayas decided to engage and provide inputs to the government on this scheme and we can say that we have managed to do some work on this scheme. Similarly we need to engage rather than criticize the NREGA from the civil society side	
39. None of this can sustain unless there is a grassroots level empowered institution which addresses people's needs in the locality	
40. Case: Chengelpet – the labourers are digging up a channel that has been long since given up by the village; some of the farmers have not gone for a second crop as they know there will be no labourers available	
41. Case: Thanjavur / Tiruvarur: The farmers here are all upset about the government going back on its promise that NREGS will not be implemented during the peak agricultural season. The government had declared that 40% of all villages (approx. the entire BPL population) need to be brought under NREGS and there need to be jobs created for them. The state government felt that it was behind 'target' on NREGA implementation.	

## Appendix III: The NREGA Watch Blog

Blog Location: <http://nrega-watch.blogspot.com/>

### 1.8.08 / Introduction

NREGA is a major step in Social Security Net in India. Perhaps the first time the SSN being openly spoken about by the Government.

It encourages local administration participation in employment guarantee. However, the local administration's efficiency is based on the local political and structural factors. Which differ from State to State.

Due to its large scale disbursement of funds as well as need to achieve targets forced by the state and central governments, it has created large opportunity for village level corruption.

It its not recognizing 'knowledge labour' in rural areas it is stereotyping all village labour as manual labour.

In certain parts of the country, by fixing a much higher price than what is locally relevant it aids artificially to boost the local rates, particularly in agriculture without ensuring equivalent increase in agricultural procurement price. Small and medium land owners are the most affected as they cannot compete with this scheme to pay more for labourers doing less work.

In its emphasis on transparency, this scheme is unique and has created a welcome change. However, in placing the onus of the transparency at the implementation level and not at the planning stage, it has created a imbalance in power.

'Social Audit' being organized by NGOs and activists has distributed the power of management and governance of a government scheme perhaps

like never before, however, this has debased the avowed grassroots empowerment of the Panchayats that the scheme so much envisages.

Across rural India, this scheme has infused fresh easy funds for spending among rural masses. This has created a new market for FMCGs. Financial services targeting either large volume or rural populis are tempted to piggy back on this scheme.

NREGS implementation is closely watched by many to remind us of our systemic corruption, here we try to keep a close watch the entire scheme.

#### [EAC on NREGA being unbudgeted liability](#)

"There are serious fiscal risks arising from growing off-budget liabilities on account of fertiliser, food and oil, along with unbudgeted liabilities arising out of the farm loan waiver and NREGA schemes and the implementation of the Sixth central Pay Commission. These liabilities could amount to 5 per cent of the GDP in 2008/09, over and above the budgeted central fiscal deficit of 2.5 per cent." - [Economic Advisory Council](#) (<http://eac.gov.in/>)

18.8.08

[Rural, HRD ministries owe Rs 22 k crore to FCI - The Financial Express](#)  
[Rural, HRD ministries owe Rs 22 k crore to FCI - The Financial Express](#)  
(<http://www.financialexpress.com/news/Rural--HRD-ministries-owe-Rs-22-k-crore-to-FCI/347061/>): "“ In case of rural development ministry, 90 % is principal and 10 % is interest, while in case of HRD ministry, it is the opposite,” Sinha said. The FCI’s monthly disbursement of rice across India is 20 lakh tonnes and wheat 10 lakh tonnes. Out of this, 10 % is meant for NREGA and MDM programmes."

#### [Bihari labourers leaving J & K, but not stopping in Punjab](#)

[Bihari labourers leaving J & K, but not stopping in Punjab](http://bihartimes.com/newsbihar/2008/Aug/newsbihar19Aug2.html)

(<http://bihartimes.com/newsbihar/2008/Aug/newsbihar19Aug2.html>):

"Ironically labourers are fleeing Kashmir when neighbouring Punjab is facing acute shortage of hands, both in agricultural fields and industries. That these migrant labourers are not stopping in Punjab but coming back home suggests that there is something seriously wrong with the food basket of India. Why is it that the labourers from different states still opt for strife-torn Kashmir but are not going to peaceful Punjab now?"

The Kashmir story proves that labourers from Bihar are certainly going out, even if they are not getting job. NREGA is not preventing them from going out in a large number. The only thing is that the labourers are not going to Punjab while they are migrating to all the other states. Is it because of the better wages elsewhere or repeated violation of the minimum wages in Punjab? Or is there some other factor?"

[Hip Celeb: 6th pay commission 2007](http://hipceleb.blogspot.com/2008/08/6th-pay-commission-2007)

that would make it about 212,336,600 days of manual labour has been successfully completed in our rural areas. If only this entire effort was directed towards a sincere effort to either rejuvenate or revive a knowledge that is already available in the village, just this effort would have been adequate to take care of some part of poverty, however, this labour will be ready for another government patronage next year and the year after and the year after that.

[Hip Celeb: 6th pay commission 2007](http://hipceleb.blogspot.com/2008/08/6th-pay-commission-2007)

(<http://hipceleb.blogspot.com/2008/08/6th-pay-commission-2007.html>): "NREGA: Over 21 lakh households have completed 100 days of employment under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005.

Rural Development Minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh said as per reports provided by states, so far 21,233,66 households have completed 100 days of employment."

19.8.08

[Good Read: India - Interview C.Rangarajan](#)

This is an excerpt from an interview with C. Rangarajan, outgoing chairperson of Advisory Council and now a Rajya Sabha member (also earlier Reserve Bank Chairman)...

[Good Read: India - Interview C.Rangarajan](#)(<http://spoonfeedin.blogspot.com/2008/08/india-interview-crangarajan.html>): "You have highlighted the undesirability of off-budget liabilities.

Indeed, we will have to proactively decide on how to deal with the practice of issuing oil and fertiliser bonds. In fact, the government should not resort to such bonds to finance subsidies. We will have to phase this (practice) out and bring complete transparency into the subsidy financing. The (growing) incidence of off-budget liabilities and some under-budgeted commitments like farm loan waiver, NREGA and the Sixth Pay Commission would mean that fiscal deficit, broadly defined, would be much higher than budgeted figure of 2.5% at the end of the fiscal."

20.8.08

[The Statesman](#)

its not just Bihar or Jharkhand or other 'corrupt' states, but, corruption is reported even in W.Bengal

[The Statesman](http://www.thestatesman.net/page.news.php?clid=23&theme=&usrsess=1&id=218954)

(http://www.thestatesman.net/page.news.php?clid=23&theme=&usrsess=1&id=218954): "CPM tall claims over job cards at poor man's cost

Statesman News Service  
TAMLUK, Aug. 19: At a time when the Marxists controlled state government has made a claim of issuing the highest number of job cards in the country and holding the top position in relation to the number of families who have been given work under NREGA schemes, a CPI-M dominated panchayat has allegedly been profiting from the wages proposed to be earned by the poor people under the SGRY schemes two years ago."

[MORUNGEXPRESS.COM](http://www.morungexpress.com) - [LATEST NEWS FROM NAGALAND, ASSAM, MANIPUR, ARUNACHAL, INDIA & WORLD - RAJIV GANDHI RENEWABLE ENERGY DAY IN NAGALAND](#)

many uses of NREGA

[MORUNGEXPRESS.COM](http://www.morungexpress.com) - [LATEST NEWS FROM NAGALAND, ASSAM, MANIPUR, ARUNACHAL, INDIA & WORLD - RAJIV GANDHI RENEWABLE ENERGY DAY IN NAGALAND](#)

(http://www.morungexpress.com/localnews/1983.html): "Renewable energy day run, essay and painting competition marked the observance of Rajiv Gandhi Akshay Urja Diwas celebration (Renewable Energy Day) here today under the aegis of the district administration in collaboration with the State Nodal Agency (NREGA). The day was observed in commemoration of the birth anniversary of late Rajiv Gandhi and to propagate the message and popularise the use of Renewable Energy based devices and technologies."

21.8.08

[Branchless banking in India- Editorials-Opinion-The Economic Times](#)

this article talks about how india is learning from brazil a model of representatives reaching out to do bank transactions with poor people to cut back on low value transactions for banks. it talks about how though NREGA may provide more accounts, most of the account holders are unlikely to use the entire banking services as they are too poor for using most of the services and the entire money deposited would be withdrawn by them immediately leaving the bank with near zero account balances for a large number of bank accounts. it would be interesting to see how banks respond to such accounts, there is a maintenance cost and increasingly high service cost being levied on even simpler services by banks (including nationalised ones), so, how much of the NREGA account can they handle without complaining of dud accounts and huge transaction cost for very low or negative value?

[Branchless banking in India- Editorials-Opinion-The Economic Times](#)

([http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/Editorials/Branchless\\_banking\\_in\\_India/articleshow/3386737.cms](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/Editorials/Branchless_banking_in_India/articleshow/3386737.cms)) : "In locations not served by banks most users open an account primarily to access welfare payments, or because their employer deposits their salary directly into their account. Apart from withdrawals, the most frequent use of the accounts is for making utility bill payments. The vast majority of clients do not use the full range of financial services on offer, such as makings small savings deposits, or availing of credit. This is analogous to the situation in India where NREGA and pension payments are increasingly being deposited directly into bank accounts in Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere"

[NREGA needs Rs 8,000 crore more, but monsoon session delay creates roadblock - The Financial Express](#)

interesting news item about the funds allocation for NREGA

[NREGA needs Rs 8,000 crore more, but monsoon session delay creates](#)

[\(http://www.financialexpress.com/news/NREGA-needs-Rs-8-000-crore-more-but-monsoon-session-delay-creates-roadblock/352142/\)](http://www.financialexpress.com/news/NREGA-needs-Rs-8-000-crore-more-but-monsoon-session-delay-creates-roadblock/352142/) :

"The government allocation towards the mega National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) may rise to more than Rs 24,000 crore by the end of current fiscal. This is more than 44% rise over the allocation of Rs 16,000 crore made under Budget 2008-09.

The allocation for NREGA has been hiked to Rs 12,000 crore during 2007-08 and to Rs 16,000 crore during the current fiscal as the flagship scheme was extended to all the 596 districts from 330 districts earlier.

However, the delay in convening the monsoon session of Parliament may put hurdle in the implementation of NREGA, as supplementary demand has to be moved in the Parliament for the increased budgetary allocation, rural development minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh said this on Friday.

"We are comfortably meeting the demands from the states for NREGA implementation till now. But if the Parliament is not convened before October, we may face crunch," Singh told FE. Period from October to February is considered as the peak season under NREGA, when more people demand work due to harvesting time. According the Singh, more than five crore families would get employment by the end of the current fiscal. Till now, close to 17 lakhs works mostly relating to water conservation have been taken up under NREGA. While 5 lakhs works have been completed, there are still about 12 lakhs still to be completed.

In the current fiscal, 2.52 crore families have been provided employment under NREGA. 90% of the allocation under NREGA is from the centre while the rest is put in by the state governments.

The scheme, which guarantees 100 days of manual work in a year to each family, was initially launched across 200 backward districts in

February 2006. During 2007-8, the scheme was extended to 130 more districts. However despite opposition from Planning Commission, the government decided to extend it to rest of the country.

Besides, providing employment, the scheme has managed to include large number of rural people under the formal banking system. After reports of irregularities and delay in the wage payment under NREGA, the government made it compulsory that all the wage payment will be made through savings accounts held with banks and post offices.

Till now, a massive 3 crore savings accounts have been opened for workers under the scheme. Experts have been terming the initiative as significant step towards financial inclusion. During 2007-8, Rs.10,738.47 crore was paid as wages under NREGA to more than 3.3 crore households out of the total expenditure of Rs 15,856.89 crore. ..."

5.9.08

#### [Sonia talks NREGA and N-Deal together](#)

wonder what is the connection between the N-Deal and NREGA. As soon as the former is mentioned, the later is also done? Is it salvaging their pride or something? any critic on NREGA this way becomes even more difficult as it ought to justify the need for everything .

Erode, Sept 4 (PTI) Congress President Sonia Gandhi today justified the Indo-US nuclear deal, saying nuclear power was crucial for the country's development even as Opposition parties targeted the UPA Government over US disclosures on the controversial pact. "It is imperative for the country to have nuclear power for its development," she told a rally in this town, located in Western Tamil Nadu.

"We are a big country, with over 100 crore people. We need energy. We believe that nuclear power is crucial. More the power, quicker the development," she said.

This power could be sufficiently supplied to both households and industries as well as farmers, she said.

Referring to the construction of two nuclear reactors at Koodankulam in Tirunelveli district, she said Tamil Nadu will start receiving power from the plant soon.

Listing out her party's priorities, she said the people and country came first.

"Our UPA government introduced the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which assured 100 days of employment to the rural people during the lean period and NREGA had been extended to all the the districts in the country', she said. PTI

9.9.08

[CAG raps Karnataka for delay in implementing NREGA - The Financial Express](#)

interesting to see that Karnataka government had implemented the scheme ahead of its own notification to that effect. it is also interesting to see the CAG rap the government on this scheme 'implementation'. why do people apply for this scheme, on who's guidance and with what reasons would be worth looking into.

[CAG raps Karnataka for delay in implementing NREGA - The Financial Express](#) (<http://www.financialexpress.com/news/CAG-raps-Karnataka-for-delay-in-implementing-NREGA/358910/>) : "The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has pulled up the Karnataka government over the delay in notification and overall sloppiness in implementing the UPA government's flagship national rural employment guarantee (NREG)

scheme. Surprisingly, the state government had notified the scheme only in February 2007, almost 17 months after the NREG Act coming into effect in 2005. The scheme was however, implemented from February 2006.

Till March 2007, the state government succeeded in giving around 40 days jobs to just about 0.70 lakh households (of a total of 5.45 lakh households) in the five zilla panchayats (ZPs) of Bidar, Chitradurga, Davanagere, Gulbarga and Raichur, against the 100 days jobs guaranteed under the NREG Act.

The CAG found that several gram panchayats (GP) under the Chitradurga ZP and Hiriyur taluk panchayat did not issue job cards for over 2500 households even after the households had applied for them, thus flouting one of the major guidelines of the scheme and denying the rural labourers its benefits.

It is mandatory for the GPs to issue job cards within a fortnight of receipt of application from households for registration under the NREG so that in case they do not get jobs, they are paid the unemployment allowance.

"

[Re-discovering what the NGOs had done 10 years back?](#)

[Employment Opportunities in the Country: Oscar Fernandes](#)

(<http://www.myiris.com/newsCentre/newsPopup.php?fileR=20081023124043198&dir=2008/10/23&secID=livenews>) : "Minister of State for Labour and Employment Oscar Fernandes on Thursday said that two most recent quinquennial rounds of surveys of National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) on employment and unemployment, had estimated employment opportunities on current daily status basis to be at 338.19 million in 1999-2000 (55th round) and 384.91 million in 2004-2005 (61st round), thus, generating 46.72 million job opportunities during this period.

Fernandes further said that the 11th Plan document approved by National Development Council has projected that 58 million job opportunities on current daily status were likely to be created during the 11th Plan period. He also added that the government of India was implementing various special employment generation and poverty alleviation programmes in both rural and urban areas to increase employment opportunities.

He noted the employment generation and poverty alleviation programmes like National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (NREGA), Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY) , Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana and Rural Employment Generation Programme (REGP) had undergone major changes during the current financial year.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005, enacted on Sep.7, 2005 which earlier enhanced the livelihood security of the households in rural areas by providing at least 100"

[NREGA scheme to popularise banking services \(or a safe captive group to collect service charges?\)](#)

[Banking now made simpler-Bangalore-Cities-The Times of India](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Bangalore/Banking_now_made_simpler/articleshow/3630369.cms) (http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Bangalore/Banking\_now\_made\_simpler/articleshow/3630369.cms): "A correspondent going door-to-door will distribute money or collect deposits. He will also spreads awareness about other services offered by banks among villagers. Smart cards will be distributed to clients to facilitate the transactions.

The government aims to target 5 lakh pensioners and NREGA labourers. As a pilot project, the cards will be distributed in Chitradurga, Bellary and Gulbarga. Chief minister B S Yeddyurappa released biometric smart cards after the SLBC meeting on Wednesday. He said he was fulfilling a promise made in the budget."

23.10.08

[Here is a success story!](#)

[Ministry recognises NREGS achievements of CCpur : 21st oct08 ~ E-Pao!](#)

[Headlines](#) (<http://www.e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=10..211008.oct08>) :

"Ministry recognises NREGS achievements of CCpur

Source: The Sangai Express / S Singlianmang Guite

Lamka, October 20 2008: With the Union Rural Development Ministry recommending the benefit of conducting a peer workshop session to Sumant Singh, Deputy Commissioner of Churachandpur, the Ministry has formally recognized the outstanding feat achieved by the district in implementing NREGA.

In his intimation, Alok Kumar, Executive Director of National Institute of Administrative Research (NIAR), Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) said, acknowledging the outstanding work of DC Churachandpur on NREGA, the Ministry of Rural Development has made the recommendation.

The workshop meant for Principal Secretaries, Commissioners of Rural Development and DCs of Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal will be held at Lucknow on October 23 and 24 .

Singh is to conduct a session on, 'Impact of NREGA: A District Perspective'.

Talking to the media he said, he will be elaborating on the methods and practices initiated and adopted in Churachandpur under NREGS and the impact and changes brought about by NREGS in the rural economy, particularly in the lives of the district's rural poor.

NIAR has been selected by RD Ministry as National Resource Centre for capacity building under NREGS, and it was under the... "

29.10.08

### [CAG on NREGA again](#)

Last year CAG had severely criticized the NREGA scheme in its report. This year too it seems to have made similar critical statement squarely blaming the RDM for the inefficiencies and inadequate funds utilization through the scheme.

[NREGA being diluted: CAG](#)

([http://draft.blogger.com/goog\\_1225273553216](http://draft.blogger.com/goog_1225273553216))

[Vinay Kumar](#)

[NEW DELHI: The Comptroller and Auditor-General of India has criticised dilution of the scheme under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act due to poor record maintenance, delayed payment of wages and non-payment of unemployment allowance.](#)

[Enacted by the United Progressive Alliance government the NREG scheme was launched to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year.](#)

[In its performance audit report on implementation of the NREGA the CAG noted that of the Rs.12,074 crore funds, including the States' share of Rs.813 crore up to March 2007, the State governments could utilise Rs.8,823 crore.](#)

[It held that the NREGA being a Central law, the Ministry of Rural Development should accept the overall responsibility for coordinating and monitoring its administration and ensuring economical, efficient and effective utilisation of funds provided by the Union government. The Act initially came into force in 200 districts from February 2, 2006.](#)

According to the Ministry, 3.81 crore households had registered under the Act. Of these, 2.12 crore households had demanded employment and 2.10 crore households were provided employment during 2006-07. The report noted that there were several cases of delayed payment of wages, for which no compensation was paid.

31.10.08

TN dismal NREGA postal accounts record

recently in a NREGA review (last month), the government of TN reported how it will try to improve its dismal record of NREGA money being distributed through post offices (I think it is less than 10% now and an official was quoted as saying that it was 'only deposited in the postal account if the person fails to receive money within 15 days'), however, this morning's newspaper states that TN has the largest number of postal saving accounts in India!

31st October 2008

7.11.08

The government wants propoganda, so this scheme...

Somasekhar, 60 has been a farmer all his life in a small village in the Chengelpettu district of Tamilnadu. He cultivates paddy, pulses and vegetables in his borewell irrigated 4 acre land as he has been doing for more than 40 years. This year part of his land is fallow and he is in no mood to cultivate this land.

Lack of adequate labour is his major problem. Most of the agricultural labourers prefer to work for the 100 day job scheme (nooru naal velaivaiippu thittam) as it is called, NREGS in the neighborhood as it is easy money. 'They reach the work site by around 9 o'clock', he narrates,

'and are marked and given an area to dig by the government people, these people dig a small part of that for an hour at the most and collect the money in the evening when the government man comes to inspect and determine whether they have earned their daily wage'.

'We don't see the reason for some of the work they do and it is absurd and unnecessary most times, now they are going to clear a river channel that has long since been forgotten because it is dried upstream and there has not been water in it in living memory', adds Mohan, 68, the village head man.

'The labourers now want to schedule their work after they have earned the Rs.80/- and don't want to work for more than the 2 hours with us also', says Somasekhar echoing the sentiments of farmers from across Tamilnadu who have all become victims of the NREGS. The agricultural labour cost has gone up everywhere, in Somasekhar's village, a man laborer demands Rs. 250/- per day and a women Rs. 80/- to Rs. 100/-. 'Nothing wrong with their aspirations to earn more and partly it is our own laziness that we can't physically work in our fields, but, where is the equivalent growth in returns for the farmers?', asks Mohan. 'We still are struggling with the same government fixed procurement prize for our produce'.

Despite repeated assurances that during agriculture intense seasons, the NREGA will not be implemented the target driven scheme with the looming election in the horizon has meant no stopping the forced disbursement of easy cash for laborers in villages through this scheme. Unfortunately, the day after the minister announced the 'successful implementation of the scheme and disbursement of cash to the poor', a revenue official announced how the revenue from consumption of alcohol has gone up by almost 40% across the state!!

As Somasekhar summarized, 'the government wants propaganda, so they

are particular to implement this scheme, but, they really don't care for the farmers and hence are destroying farm labor by artificially creating a different labour cost and standard of operation. We cannot compete with this scheme, so, many of us have not cultivated part of our land and have allowed it to lie fallow this season'.

Rural Employment Guarantee is today a Risk for Rural Livelihood.

7.1.09

[A Dalit leader's view](#)

'I enquired about this scheme among our people in the villages, they say, this entire scheme is for the corrupt government people to make money. So, people also have figured out methods by which they can make some quick money through this scheme. No one is taking this seriously', said a Dalit political leader from rural Tamilnadu on the NREGA few days back.

I had enquired about what the agri-labourer community (largely dalit in his district) felt about this scheme and what they spoke of this within their own community.

5.2.09

[Reality Check on NREGA](#)

Two news reports:

1. Claim that urban migration has been reversed by Sonia Gandhi
2. Increase in urban poor population as per UNDP new report

[United Progressive Alliance chairperson Sonia Gandhi on Monday credited the government with the success of the scheme under the](#)

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and said its implementation proved its critics wrong.

The scheme underlined the UPA government's commitment to reach out to the masses and provide them with all basic amenities, she said.

Addressing an NREGA conference here, Ms. Gandhi said the common minimum programme policies were intended for the uplift of the poor, especially in rural India, and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh acquitted himself well in implementing the schemes aimed at ensuring equitable growth and distribution. The NREGS stopped the exodus of labour, empowered women, provided basic facilities in many sectors, including education and health, and transformed life in the rural belt. "Only when the common man prospers will the country prosper."

([http://draft.blogger.com/goog\\_1233825878799](http://draft.blogger.com/goog_1233825878799))

Increase in urban poor population as per UNDP new report Urban India has a high incidence of poverty despite being hailed as an engine of growth and instrument of globalization. Eighty-one million people subsist in urban areas on incomes that are below the poverty line. The pace of urbanization in India is set to increase, and with it, urban poverty and urban slums. However, public policy measures for urban India have lacked focus and proper allocation of funds. There is thus an urgent need at the national level to document the key issues in urban poverty, to assess the tasks at hand, and plan for the future.

([http://www.undp.org.in/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=540&Itemid=646](http://www.undp.org.in/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=540&Itemid=646))

## Appendix – IV: Wages NREGA Vs. available data on wages for unskilled and skilled agricultural labourers in different states

Selected State-wise Prevailing Wage Rate under National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in India (2007-08)					
States/District	2007-2008 Prevailing Wage Rate under NREGA (Rs./Day)	Non-agricultural (unskilled) wages offered to men	Agricultural (unskilled) wages offered to men	difference b/w nrega wage rate and non-agri unskilled wage rate	difference b/w nrega wage rate and agri unskilled wage rate
Assam	66	73.00	68.75	-7.00	-2.75
Andhra Pradesh	80	69.36	64	10.64	16
Arunachal Pradesh	Area-I				
	65				
Arunachal Pradesh	Area-II				
Arunachal Pradesh	67		55	67.00	12
Bihar	77	63.32	66	13.68	11
Gujarat	50	63	50	-13.00	0
Haryana	92.21	112	98.21	-19.79	-6
Himachal Pradesh	75	122.72	75	-47.72	0
Jammu & Kashmir	70	115.44	66	-45.44	4
Karnataka	74	56.85	63	17.15	11
Kerala	125	174.79	125	-49.79	0

Madhya Pradesh	67	44.12	61.37	22.88	5.63
Maharashtra	Rs. 72, Rs. 70, Rs.68 & Rs. 66 Respectively for Zone I, II, III, IV	60.99	51, 49, 47, 45 respectively for zone I, II, III, IV		
Manipur	81.4	59.45	72.4	21.95	9
Meghalaya	70	80.84	70	-10.84	0
Mizoram	91		91	91.00	0
Nagaland	100		66	100.00	34
Orissa	70	58.39	70	11.61	0
Punjab					
Hoshiarpur	95				
Jalandhar	93				
Nawanshar	94.91				
Amritsar	95	101	98.61	-6.00	-3.61
Rajasthan	73	89.81	73	-16.81	0
Sikkim	85			85.00	85
Tamil Nadu	80	91.11	70	-11.11	10
Tripura	60	90	60	-30.00	0
Uttar Pradesh	100	73	58	27.00	42
West Bengal	70	63.5	69.42	6.50	0.58
Chhattisgarh	66.7			66.70	66.7
Jharkhand	76.7			76.70	76.7
Uttaranchal	73		73	73.00	0