

Interventions for the timely delivery of employment and wages in public employment programmes

Introduction:

Timely delivery of employment and wages is essential to the effectiveness of public employment programmes. This is because the targeted population tends to be the most in need of resources to cover basic necessities. Inefficiency in availing jobs and making payments to the poorest and most vulnerable have significant negative impacts on their livelihoods. Consequently, the performance of programme implementation in this matter is crucial to guarantee sustainability of employment and wage disbursement. In this regard, Uttarakhand has been making relevant interventions under MGNREGS, which in turn are showing results in timely delivery of employment and wages.

Background:

The implementation of MGNREGS in Uttarakhand is particular to its socioeconomic and geographic conditions. The State is predominantly rural, with almost three quarters of its population scattered around more than 15,000 settlements across a mix of hilly and plain areas; as much as 80 per cent of villages have less than 500 inhabitants. Only a quarter of villages have a population of more than 500 people and 10 per cent within 500 to 1,000. This affects the nature of works offered in the States and the particular conditions in the delivery of employment and wage.

In the launching of MGNREGA, districts were notified in three phases and the entire State got covered in 2008. All villages in all districts have the same mechanisms in place to provide employment. Works are assigned to groups formed by the beneficiaries enrolled in the scheme; assignment of work happens in a rotational manner and the Gram Sabha guarantees that employment is delivered to all groups multiple times in a year.

Details of the Intervention:

Interventions under MGNREGS have been showing good performance in community participation, monitoring and fund flow.

First, implementation of the scheme is efficiently conducted with close involvement of Panchayat Raj institutions. They rely on community participation in regular Gram Sabhas, where work proposals, approvals, budgetary provisions and field implementation is made; works are duly displayed in villages through Public Information Boards. While participating in the Gram Sabha is a part of the guidelines, vulnerable communities are not regularly participating in Gram Sabha's events. High participation in Gram Sabha can however yield significantly positive impacts.

Second, Gram Panchayats ensure that progress in monitoring follows the requirements of the scheme guidelines, with due registration and updating of proceedings happening during Gram Sabhas. In addition, the State trained female auditors to conduct internal auditing of the scheme.

Third, allocation of funds was made available in the GP level, which helped in its timely utilisation. In addition, despite existing challenges in geotagging of assets, usage of grievance redressal mechanisms and convergence, relevant achievements have been witnessed and further efforts are being made to improve these features.

Impact:

Such interventions resulted in relevant impact in the performance of the scheme in Uttarakhand. In an assessment of eight States across the country, namely Assam, Telangana, Maharashtra, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu and Tripura, the Fifth Common Review Mission ranked Uttarakhand top performer on various parameters of the scheme. The State was placed number 1 in Aadhaar seeding and verification of job cards, and number 2 in timely payment and work completion. Also, no major delays were reported in digital payment of wages and some delay in material payments was seen.

Constructions under the scheme were also noted to be of high quality. No major issues were reported by beneficiaries in terms of getting employment, with relevant benefits enjoyed by Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe persons due to the inclusion in the scheme. Overall, direct impacts of the scheme in the economic scenario in rural Uttarakhand were noted. This comes as a success case showing the positive influence of community participation and empowerment of local institutions in implementation, monitoring and use of funds in the performance of the scheme.

Source: Ministry of Rural Development. (2019). Fifth Common Review Mission. Government of India.