

Ensuring effective convergence with other government Programmes like MNREGS at Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh

Problem statement: The CAD guidelines have proposed executing works in convergence with existing watershed programmes and MGNREGA schemes; however the extent of actual convergence achieved was reported to be quite low due to absence of any detailed enabling policy guidelines and tardy implementation of the same by the implementing authorities.

Intervention: In 2008, the MP Panchayat and Rural Development department formulated two schemes for facilitating development and management of irrigation infrastructure using MNREGS funds. Some of the key features of the implementation strategy is highlighted below:

- Enabling policies: MNREGS funds used for canal rehabilitation and construction of field channels under Sahastradhara scheme.
- Joint planning: Joint walk-throughs conducted with farmers by NVDA to prepare detailed estimates of minor canal repairs followed by submission of technical sanction plan by Executive Engineer to the Panchayat.
- Faster fund disbursement: Funds were directly transferred to the WUA's account by the Jilla Panchayat (thus bypassing the Gram Panchayat)
- Hand-holding by specialized agencies: NVDA together with the appointed NGO Development Support Centre (DSC) provided technical support to the WUAs in relation to technical planning and estimation, MNREGS labour orientation, training of supervisors (/ mate), preparation of job cards, bookkeeping and accounting. Exposure visits for WUA members were arranged by DCS to successful projects in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. 20 local youths were trained as Kolaba Sahayaks/ mate of MNREGS works. IEC and awareness campaigns involving graphic and visual shows were arranged to sensitize the villagers.
- Implementation by WUAs: The WUAs got the opportunity to carry out the R&M under the MNREGS assisted canal repairing works themselves, thus obviating the need for appointment of departmental/ private contractors.

Impact:

- 147 km of canal network was repaired and 93 km of earthen field channels were created in Maan and Jobat projects. New field channels facilitated water access to tail end users in Kukshi block.
- Direct transfer of MNREGS funds to WUAs instilled a sense of ownership and accountability among the members.
- 6,500 ha of additional area was brought under irrigation. Irrigated area in Maan and Jobat projects increased from 7000 ha and 5000 ha in 2007-08 to 11,400 ha and 7,700 ha in 2009-10 respectively.
- The farmers reported increase in net income by Rs. 10,000/ ha. Majority of the farmers were able to irrigate more than 50% of their land and sow two crops in a season by adoption of new crops like wheat, cotton, chilly, pulses, etc.
- Substantial increase in groundwater was reported in areas where field channels have been constructed.

(Reference: Tapan Patel et. al. (2010), "Best Practices on MNREGS Assisted Canal Rehabilitation under Participatory Irrigation Management in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh).