

Chapter V

SUGGESTIONS

1. NREGS, conceptually envisages a higher degree of maneuverability but the three tier Panchayati Raj, System has distorted the original priority of Panchayats, which were planned by them. The sanctioning of the schemes which match the monetary requirements of the work demanded, infact has resulted in the centralization of the scheme and has come around to the same centralization stage referred to by Maheshwari(1985). The blocks demanding the works should indicate the priority of the work also and the District Officer should not have the authority to change the priority. The accounting process need to be modified in accordance with this, rather than the other way round.
2. The selection of the schemes needs to be drastically improved unless and until those schemes are executed which would serve as productive assets, the mere construction of say bridal paths etc. may not add to the poverty reduction efforts. Schemes like land improvement and addition of irrigation facilities could be helpful and may fulfill the desired results by serving the purpose of supplementary doles advocated by Ghose(1986).
3. The existing staff of the blocks, Panchayats and even at the district level needs to be properly trained, their approach barring a few exceptions at the higher levels remains more of ensuring quantitative targets and thus moves towards centralization. The assumed mantle of ensuring the proper accounting has resulted in ignoring the felt needs even. To set right, what Sinha (1986) has termed as the “wrong at a multitude of levels” a comprehensive training programme basically emphasizing on adherahance to the felt needs brought out through the schemes of the Gram Sabha and the attitudinal changes required for achieving the same should be formulated. The attitude of higher officials reflected in “Me-

- know all” and the consequential modeling of the executions on the individual whims, needs to be properly tempered in accordance with the objectives of the scheme.
4. The scheme affords a large role to the PRI's, in Sirmour district individual Pradhan's have outgrown the panchayats, which they represent and they litterly have trampled upon the expected initiatives and leaderships emerging amongst the beneficiaries and has resulted in virtual no involvement in decision-making and the feeling of alienation and powerlessness, squabbles over the ward wise execution of schemes is also a pointer towards the same. The role of the district administration is subtle but firm enforcement of “social-audit” which uptill now is not seen anywhere in Sirmour, becomes more important. The involvement of the NGO's will also prove beneficial. In case, the ongoing schemes of other Government departments are brought under the execution the insistence of the villagers for executing schemes wards wise (mostly the repeated construction of bridal paths) may also become less.
 5. The age profile of workers apart from other social indicators point towards the house holds getting additional amount which will only go towards the improvement of the life standards if the market price of the essential items remains under control or the PDS functions properly. There were no signs indicating any of these and points towards the issues raised by Singh & Lal (1987). This may have to be ensured by the district administration.
 6. As pointed out in No.2 and as indicated by the list of works annexed in the end, the assts created under the NREGS have not strengthened the economic infrastructure which may result in long term income employment generation effect leading to greater Labour absorption, Srivastava and Singh (1987) is repeated time and again in the district.
 7. NREGS has not been linked with any social services or other Government programme Viz. Sarv Saksarta Abhiyan, family welfare etc, in fact the

only conclusion is the total absence of all other Government departments in all the Panchayats. The experiences narrated by Sharma (1988) are reflected in totality in Sirmour Distt.

8. The publicity aspect of the NREGS is far from satisfactory. The publicity at best can be termed as 'Raw publicity'. Everyone has perceived the scheme in a manner where one tries to fit in. The publicity was carried out by the district administration without any involvement of any of the NGO's and this was a considered decision of the district administration, borne out from the interaction, which the survey team had with the ADM, the Project Officer and a couple of other functionaries of the district administration. There were not many hoardings throughout the district unlike the Chamba district. The functionaries of the ruling party propagated the scheme as the fulfillment of the promises made by the party in the elections of 2003- where in the popular perception had been raised to the extent of providing one job from each household. The majority of the youths who have done their matriculation and beyond were made to believe and at most of the places they were clamoring for 'white - collar' jobs. This false impression while could not be fully countered by the district administration, the problems were compounded with the lower wages, 'only the supporters of the ruling party would be adjusted on office jobs' was the refrain at most of the places, in Panchyats like Dugana, Ludhiana and Habban and a couple of other panchyats, the publicity aspect remains no better then that of IRDP publicity as had been pointed out by Mohansundaram (1988). The over exuberance of the ruling party to bask in the glory of the 'revolutionary scheme' has not helped the implementation. The impending election have not in anyway added to the quality of the mouth publicity, infact a report in a local vernacular daily "Amar Ujala' on June, 2006 under the head line 'Rojgar Grantee Yojna Se Bidke Shikisht Verojgar,' reports about the field realities, it states, that despite the low interest of the educated youths, the State government

was extending the schemes to other districts also. This fact of low interest of the educated young has been admitted by the Revenue Minister of the State. The publicity should be handled professionally. The motivational levels of those who are in the thick of the executions, continues to be that of the typical govt. employees. The number of periodical returns meant for the monitoring of the scheme needs to be drastically reduced, not even a single report had been commented upon by any of the authorities.

9. Hirway (1988) had advocated for wage employment, in his recommendations after studying IRDP, NREGS has substantially fulfilled this need but the implementation has not been in consonance with the spirit of the act. Instead of intermediaries in some other programmes, the Pradhans in the most remote of the areas have assumed the mantle of mini-kings, the execution especially the social audit' part needs to be firmly put in place the total absence of discretion in the scheme has not made this scheme as 'discretion-free'. The pick and choose still remains. To under take those works in which the beneficiaries have an individual vested interest may be taken up more frequently 'Land improvement of the individual beneficiaries may be much better as compared to some other work.
10. The district administration would be doing a great job if a study of social indicators is carried out by them as there is scope for ensuring additional enrollments under Sarv-Shiksha Abhiyan and enforcement of family welfare measures in respect of NREGS beneficiaries, similarly other rural development programmes can get a fillip if the cluster of NREGS beneficiaries are properly tapped.
11. A parallel could be drawn with the IRDP execution in the field, while the World Bank had pointed out to the failure of sustained finance as a major bottle neck, the availability of only 100 days for a whole family in the absence of creation of such assets, which may absorb the labour

- farce, the gains of NREGS would also be short lived, and the gains may be frittered away.
12. NREGS supplements each family with Rs. 7000/- which in real terms may not be sufficient to ward off the poverty completely. Taneja (1989) had questioned the designing of the poverty reduction programmes, the insufficiency of NREGS may not be able to sustain the beneficiaries. The kind of assets creation as had been carried out under TRYSEM is being repeated under NREGS.
 13. NREGS is not a remedy for all the unemployment problems. Casualisation of employment as has been pointed out by Ramanujam (1998) has resulted in a lower scale and poor quality of work. In fact some of the labourers had to work twice and were paid only once to make up for the deficiency in the output. The tragedy of the scheme would be compounded if the females are involved in the same manner as has been the case up till now. Karunakaran (1998) has arrived at the conclusion that poverty and employment in the agriculture and non-agricultural sectors are co-related. Promotion of agricultural growth in the form of irrigational facilities through water shed development programmes result in non-agricultural growth. Saxena (1998) has also advocated the same. It holds good for Sirmour district also irrigational facilities ought to be increased and simultaneous non-agriculture avenues need to be explored.
 14. Not many works on afforestation have been taken up, primarily because of the lack of the trained staff. The NREGS is virtually tapering off as another function of the blocks only. There is virtually no involvement of any other department. In case the on going Govt. works being executed by other departments are dovetailed into NREGS like, the on going, say school building etc. which may be converted into a work under the NREGS under the supervision of the local Panchayats---- shortage of technical staff and equipment etc. would have been solved to a large extent. The non-availability of adequate workers on a particular site

- would be minimized. The statutorily fixed non-material ratio could be easily met and above all the spreading of resources, on too many a schemes would have been avoided. More schemes, complete in all respects would be available to the villagers.
15. Too many works are undergoing in any block, to quote an example in Paonta block only 3 JEs are looking after around 2500 hundred works spread in Panchayats of the block. To assess and ensure payments within the statutory time period is almost an impossibility. Either part payments are released to the NREGS beneficiaries pending the assessment etc. or in some of the cases the Panchayat Secretaries have been paying to the beneficiaries before the actual measurements are taken so as to ensure the same within the prescribed time framework, not only this, some times even the payments have been made from the Heads other than the NREGS, whose funds are either lying with the District Administrations/Blocks.
 16. Himachal has three tier Panchayati Raj---- with the merging of Swarn Jayanti Rozgar Scheme with the NREGS there has been a need for the Zila Parishad and Blocks Samities to look out for the avenues for executing their plans, now even the plans of Zila Parishad/Block Samities are be executed out of NREGS funds - while the involvement of these two tiers of Panchayati Raj is welcome--- the individual authority of the gram Panchayats has definitely been eroded. For catering to the needs of more than one ward/one Panchayats, works which have a presence in all the wards rather than which are the field needs, are creeping more and more into the shield. Construction of bridal paths, mule tracks are some of the few being executed on such like compulsions in Sirmour district.
 17. The perceived inadequacy of wages, may be an avoidable phenomenon. The publicity of the scheme through the hoardings etc. is not as visible as it ought to be. The popular perception that the work would be allotted automatically needs to be dispelled with alongwith the

impression that photographs etc. are to be paid for by the beneficiaries. Some of the formalities may have to be reduced.

18. The Panchayats are not very enthusiastic about the hoardings detailing out the name of the schemes and other relevant details of the schemes, in fact no hoardings were found by the survey team at any of the sites. The 'social audit' aspect of the scheme is totally absent and muster-rolls were available on majority of sites---- in some of the cases where the muster-rolls could be laid hands, the entries did not match with the ones in the jobs cards. Social audit may require what may be called as trust building in the Panchayats. The prevalent atmosphere in the Panchayats which is a manifestations of the prevailing social-cultural-economic conditions warrants: -
 - i) Erection of hoardings.
 - ii) The availability of muster rolls at the site - some of the literate individual could be handed over these documents.
 - iii) For ensuring the involvement of SC/ST and women beneficiaries the point at number (ii) may be taken resort to.
 - iv) Positive publicity in respect of those Panchayats which did good work ought to be given by the district administration.
19. Local technologies are conspicuously absent.
20. The panchayat Pratinidhis/NGOs/Government officers,all have suggested that the man and material ratio should be 40-60 and the works should be executed by the staff appointed exclusively for the scheme alongwith increase in the wages and working days.

