Chapter VII
Role of Non-Government Organizations in Awareness Generation
CHAPTER-VI

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Introduction

Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) can be engaged with the issues and processes of MGNREGS for undertaking the task of capacity building of local rural communities to access their entitlements and assert their rights under MGNREGS. Panchayati Raj Institutions have a pivotal role to play in the execution and implementation of the scheme. Earlier experiences show that the main reason for failing the schemes and programmes related to rural development was that community mobilization and capacity building of elected representatives was not done in proper manner. For that reason, but it is imperative that people should know about MGNREGS and its salient features. In addition to this, they should be aware about their rights in MGNREGS. A proper capacity building of elected representatives is also required for successful implementation of the scheme.

In this context, Non-Government Organizations have an important role to play in social mobilization, awareness generation, capacity building of the functionaries and social audit of the scheme. This should be carried out in a systematic and in decentralized manner.

Role of Non-Government Organizations

As mentioned above, NGOs can play a vital role in awareness generation among rural masses. Keeping in view the same, it is very essential to understand the role of NGOs in the implementation of MGNREGS at grassroots level. NGOs can build the capacities of the community based organizations working at the grassroots level. NGOs can also make efforts in building the capacity of the various Sarpanches who are engaged in the implementation of
MGNREGS by providing them technical assistance. Not only that, NGOs can have a vital role in the areas of transparency, workplace facility, payments on time, ensuring that all applicants find work within fifteen days and each household reaches the hundreds days target and on minimum wages. “The accountability and credibility of the voluntary sector has been questioned time and again. It is believed that there is a need for accreditation of voluntary organizations, which will lead to better funding decisions and make the funding process more transparent” (Syeda Hameed). Let us see, how an NGO ensure 100 days employment at the village level which are described as below:

**Ensuring 100 Days Employment**

The aim of NGOs involvement and mutual agreement is that in the identified villages, 100 days of employment to each willing household is ensured during the periods and season preferred by the wage seekers, ensure minimum wages and payment within a specific period, proactive information sharing and public display of all financial matters, provision of tools including maintenance and work place facilities.

- Social Mobilization and awareness generation through door to door, contact campaigns, village conventions, personal contacts programmes.
- Enabling local community to apply under MGNREGS for various entitlements covered under its legal guarantee.
  Enabling MGNREGS workforce to verify the benefits due to them, which includes their muster rolls, job cards entries etc.
- To spread the awareness about the act among the people through social mobilization so that participation of the people particularly marginalized or weaker section of the society may be ensured for effective implementation.
- To enhance the capacity of elected representative of Panchayats, government functionaries and rural masses in terms of building their confidence, leadership
knowledge and skills so as to enable them to discharge their responsibilities related to MGNREGS.

To impart training to the MGNREGS workforce including the members of vigilance and monitoring committee, members of Gram Panchayats and Gram Rojgar Sevak so as to sensitize them on various aspects of MGNREGS.

- NGO must galvanize the gram Panchayat, local officials and the community to develop the annual employment budget and help the community to plan on when such work should be grounded. It must develop work team and help them to know what wage they would receive for what output and ensure work place facilities and payment for the maintenance for the tools.

- After the work avenue and the wages are in place, the NGO move into the next agenda of ensuring work for those currently excluded, because it is centered on unskilled manual labour. Everyone realizes that the artisans are the worst sufferer in the emerging economy and ways can be found to ensure them employment with a new generation of works.

- The local bank or NGO can provide the group with credit and help make commodity purchase in bulk and where the prices are lower. Once the workers are assured of food and employment, they would see the value of MGNREGS. These groups should be mobilized in influencing the type of works to be taken up. They should be able to place them in Gram Sabha and ensure inclusion. They must propose in consultation with other needy person such as physically handicapped, artisans and other valuable people, and if needed, the NGO must form group of such people and for now articulate such works that are within the framework of MGNREGS. (K S Gopal)

**Strategies of Awareness Generation**
Following strategies may be adopted by Non-Government Organizations for creating awareness generation among rural masses.

(1) Awareness level

NGOs are also playing an important role in creating awareness amongst the rural masses with respect to various flagship development programmes of the government through advocacy, dissemination of information as well as sensitization of the rural population (Chatterjee and Dar).

It is important that people should know their rights under the act. Critical aspect of the act such as process of registration and application, the entitlements of the workers, social audits and grievance redressal system and the role of different stakeholders must be clear. Following strategies may be adopted awareness generation programme in the rural areas.

Nukad Natak (Street Plays) and Kala Jathas (Cultural Shows) may be performed in local language for target group. Massage about the importance of this act may be convened to the community using these art forms based on dance and music.

- Massage of MGNREGS may be recorded in the forms of songs, slogans and narrations on audio cassettes and the same may be distributed in the rural areas.
- Local media may be used for disseminating the features of the act in the form of publishing the success stories of MGNREGS.
- Open forum and meeting should be invited which include discussion on the features of the Act.
- Door to door campaigning will be done for direct contact with the target group.
- Information resource centers and public relations centers at strategic locations should be established.
A verity of methods such as pasting and distributing posters and pamphlets, wall writing and awareness rallies, Padyatras on MGNREGS Exposure visits to successful sites where MGNREGS work has been effectively implemented so that replication may be done in the other areas.

Grassroots organizations like SHGs, Village development committees, Cooperatives, associations and CBOs may also be utilized for awakening the people about the act. In MGNREGS, the NGO role listed as capacity building awareness generation, and social audit. Experts and resource through agencies are envisaged to provide services on soft inputs human resource through training and capacity building preparation of district resource and development plan, village micro plan, process documentation and social audit.

NGO’s task in MGNREGS must be to inspire the stakeholders to concrete outcomes for the community. The NGO task must therefore be credible practice centric enabler and an intermediary between the rural communities and officials with the objective of negotiating current practice and power equations in favour of the people and in the spirit of law.

(2) Training on MGNREGS Workforce

NGO can impart training to the elected representatives of Gram Panchayats, member of village vigilance & monitoring committee and Gram Rojgar Sevak on MGNREGS procedures and their roles. The focus of the capacity building may be on preparing and maintenance of records, planning, financial management, procurement procedure, e-governance and maintenance of created assets. NGOs can impart training to the same at the village and cluster level. Elected representatives of Panchayat have to play the pivotal role in the execution of scheme. Capacity building agenda is the priority of NGO for making aware of rural masses on the following issues;
Organize Gram Sabha meeting for MGNREGS
Prepare a list of works on priority basis of village
Execution of the work and its monitoring
Determination of budget.

(3) Advocacy

NGOs have been addressing the social service issues and empowerment related advocacy efforts have been increasing. The favorable disposition of the government and the political will to involve NGOs is more pronounced in implementation of the welfare schemes addressing causes of women and children. (Asif Mohammed)

NGOs have not been involved in implementing employment schemes except undertaking “works”. Project mode of work and the premium for advocacy among donors has downsized NGO activism, shifted from its traditional role and to some extent lost societal recognition and legitimacy. This calls for a shift in the way NGOs work when being involved in MGNREGS and one way out is to strengthen its activist profile. Facilitation rather than management assumes prime importance while working on MGNREGS. “The challenges and the difficulties being faced by the voluntary sector are many. Highly committed people in this sector have to work with rather limited resources which makes their task even more difficult. Despite of all odds, this sector has always shown tremendous enthusiasm and resilience in fighting for various social and developmental causes.” (Spokes Hameed).

According to Harish Jatli, that there are some voluntary organizations that play vital role as advocacy groups. They conduct research on the key issues affecting the country and engaged with government on policy dialogue. The NGOs have benefit of their outreach on one hand and also availability of technical expertise on the other hand. The NGOs are also
involved in formulation of five year plans of planning commission. The voluntary sector is also engaged in providing critical input to the policy makers within government.

(4) Role of Catalyst

NGO must be process-wise catalytic and strategy wise value adding. Meaningful NGO involvement calls for innovation, intermediation, transparency, outcomes, assertion by workers, synergy and relationship management. To perform these functions, it must have solid field presence and acceptance of communities. It should clear in its role and tasks, develop the requisite technical and organizations skills, commitment to empowerment as the approach and capabilities to network and management relationship with other individuals, agencies and institutions working in MGNREGA’s area.

Outcomes Expected from NGO’s Intervention

- Capacity building of MGNREGS beneficiaries, village monitoring committees G P members.
  - Information awareness about MGNREGS features, procedures, management system
  - Ability to use information relating to MGNREGS
    - To access rights under MGNREGS and claim Entitlements inter alia apply for job cards, apply for employment, ensure appropriate wage remuneration, participate in village level planning, avail of work site facilities, enforce employment allowance.
    - To enforce transparency and accountability, which include use of Right to information Act, understand and scrutiny vital records like muster rolls, measurements books, job cards do social audits and enforce grievance redressal system.

Intervention of NGOs in Sirsa District in the Implementation of MGNREGS.
Interaction held during field survey with government officials like District Programme Coordinator (DPC), Programme Officer (PO), opinion leaders, elected representatives of Panchayats, community based organizations, and Sarpanches of Gram Panchayats, it has been observed that no NGO was found in the district who is playing a pivotal role in the awareness generation, social mobilization, capacity building, social audit and to support the implementing agencies for the operationalisation of the scheme. Even, it came to know some of the NGOs are working for the social issues like women empowerment, female feticide, save girl child, sanitation, formulation and strengthening of self help groups, health issues, primary education etc.

When the interaction held with the DPC of MGNREGS, he hold the view that an organization called Centre for Research in Rural & Industrial Development (CRRID), Chandigarh who is working in the area of rural development and other development issues for conducting research on rural development programmes, development issues and other policy making issues helped Sirsa district administration to prepare five year perspective plan for MGNREGS and suggest some tools and ideas for making MGNREGS a fruitful scheme for the rural poor.

In addition to this, HIRD also took the initiative for conducting the interface programme for mobilizing the district officials who were directly involved in the execution of the scheme and elected representatives of Panchayats on one platform at the district headquarter Sirsa for discussing on the various issues of implementation and planning of the scheme. In this forum, the various issues regarding effective execution of scheme was discussed and plan was done for the effective implementation and the coordination between the officials and Panchayats was also discussed in details.

Apart from this, when the interaction took place with the DPC and officials of DRDA, Sirsa, they shared their views that Haryana Institute of Rural Development (HIRD), Nilokheri,
Karnal, who is working on research and training on rural development and Panchayati Raj Issues (PRIs) and undertaking the research on various rural development programmes and Panchayati Raj helped a lot to the district administration for the effective implementation of scheme in the form of providing training to the government officials who are directly involved in the implementation of the schemes.

HIRD, Nilokheri imparted training to the government officials and elected representatives of Panchayat in its Nilokheri campus and sent its faculty and training teams to the districts, blocks for imparting training, awareness building and strengthening the support system to the implementing agencies and officials.

In addition to this, Institute after imparting training to the local resources persons belongs to Haryana only and university research scholars from the social sciences departments, youth volunteers, members of community based organizations, social scientist, activities, persons from NGOs were sent in the villages of district for building awareness, capacity building, social mobilization, demanding their legal rights under the scheme, work site facilities, procedure of demanding for work, accountability of Panchayats conducting Gram Sabha for MGNREGS, social audit etc. for the rural masses. The training imparted in the village was given through nuked natak, posters, pamphlets, wall writing, folk media in the local language which was easily understood by the villagers.

One of the hypothesis of the research study was that NGOs played effective role in the capacity building of Gram Panchayats and awareness creation among rural about scheme.

There is no doubt that NGOs can play an effective role in the capacity building of Gram Panchayats and awareness creation among the rural people. Non-Government Organizations have also an important role to play in social mobilization, awareness
NGOs also make efforts in building the capacity of the various Sarpanches who are engaged in the implementation of MGNREGS by providing them technical assistance. Not only that, NGOs have a vital role in the areas of transparency, workplace facility, payments on time, ensuring that all applicants find work within fifteen days and each household reaches the hundreds days target and on minimum wages. But it was found in the sampled district i.e. Sirsa that no NGO was found working in the awareness generation and to support to the implementing agencies for operationalisation of the scheme. Even, it was found that some of the NGOs in Sirsa district were working for the social issues like women empowerment, female feticide, save girl child, sanitation, formulation and strengthening of self help groups, health issues, primary education etc.

On the basis of above findings, hypothesis related to NGO’s playing effective role in the capacity building of Gram Panchayats and awareness generation among rural people about the scheme was found false in the field.

**Summing Up**

NGOs can contribute towards effective implementation of MGNREGS through building capacity of rural masses and other stakeholders involved in the implementation of the scheme apart from these NGOs have a role in advocacy, monitoring and evaluation, research, and the information dissemination of the scheme.

NGOs can play an important role towards socio economic upliftment of rural poor. The NGOs have been accepted by the rural masses as well as by the government in making them socially and economically strong. The increasing number of NGOs is a clear indication of how people all over the world are demanding their participation in the rural development.
At the same time it is also true that NGOs have some weakness such as lack of good governance, inability to reach the poorest, shortage of funds and lack of effective control besides true commitments. There is no doubt that the NGOs have taken many roles of advocacy, campaigning of rights, and have been perceived or presented themselves as representatives of poor. They

There is no doubt that NGOs can play a vital role in awareness generation, building capacity of rural masses, social mobilization and to support the implementing agencies in the effective implementation of MGNREGS. Need of the hour is that NGOs should work in coordination with government sector which will facilitate their efforts in a more positive manner.
REFERENCES


