

CHAPTER – 8
ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION
AND SOCIAL ASPECT

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8.1 *Environment protection*

MGNREGS is suppose to address issues of water conservation and water harvesting since it mandates that the works ought to augment the ground water level. Keeping in view the vulnerable hydrological situation of the State, the State Government identified (June 2008) water conservation and water harvesting, as priority works. As per MGNREGA Works Field Manual,¹ a pucca recharge structure should be part of the well estimate and should be constructed at least 5' away from the well. The recharge structure should be a pucca chamber and for filtering purpose, the boulders should be at the bottom, thereafter grit should be put and finally sand on the top.

8.1.1 *Decline in ground water level*

As per information furnished to audit by DPCs in the six test checked districts, 84,294 water conservation works and 1,40,646 irrigation works were targeted for construction under MGNREGS during the period 2007-12, out of which 34,503 (41 per cent) water conservation works and 32,867 (23 per cent) irrigation works were completed after incurring expenditure of ₹ 3.19 crore² (March 2012). Besides providing irrigation facilities, the long term objective of such schemes was to recharge ground water level to improve the depleting water table. Further, according to an independent study published in February 2011 on Jharkhand's water table by an NGO, "Judav", many districts of Jharkhand were facing acute water shortage and the water table had depleted by three meters i.e. from 17 metres to 20 metres between 2009 and 2010 which was also confirmed by the Groundwater Directorate. The main cause was stated to be the adoption of non-scientific methods in construction work which was confirmed by research in 60 villages in Khunti district where drought-proofing measures had failed.

Scrutiny of the model estimates pertaining to construction of wells under MGNREGS in the State revealed that the estimates were prepared without provision of pucca recharge structure. Thus, despite substantial expenditure on water conservation and irrigation works the objective of the scheme to recharge ground water level remained unfulfilled due to non-recharging of ground water level.

During the exit conference the Principal Secretary stated (July 2012) that non-construction of recharge structure along with wells was due to avoiding taking up material intensive works under the scheme.

¹ MGNREGA Works Field Manual of G.N.Sharma, Nodal Expert, Consultant (Works), MGNREGA Division, MoRD, GoI

² Irrigation works ₹ 164.92 lakh and Water conservations ₹ 154.38 lakh = ₹ 319.30 lakh

The fact remains that construction of the recharge structure along with the well was necessary as per paragraph number 4(iv) 1 MNREGA Works Field Manual.

8.1.2 Irregular procurement of materials from illegal mining

As per paragraph 1.2 (b) of the Operational Guidelines, 2008 one of the objectives of MGNREGS was to serve as a growth engine for sustainable development of the agricultural economy by providing employment on works that address causes of chronic poverty such as drought, deforestation and soil erosion.

During scrutiny of records in 47 GPs of Ranchi and West Singhbhum districts we noticed that a sum of ₹ 11.93 crore of MGNREGS fund was spent during the period 2007-12 on procurement of materials such as boulder, metal, chips, *murrum* etc. from unregistered suppliers who supplied the above materials through illegal extraction as evidenced by the fact that they did not submit the Forms O & P³, transport challans, etc. This also resulted in harming the environment due to unauthorised extraction of minerals.

DPC Ranchi accepted the facts and stated (September 2012) that tender has been published in the daily newspapers for procurement of material but no tenderers had turned up. However, the audit observation was noted for future guidance. DPC West Singhbhum stated (August 2012) that since double the rate of royalty amount is being paid to Mining department hence the procurement cannot be treated as irregular.

The reply of DPC West Singhbhum is not acceptable since in terms of Jharkhand Minor Minerals Concession Rules 2004 under section 54 (i & viii) any person transporting minerals from unauthorised quarries would be treated as an illegal miner and he would be liable to pay penalty up to the cost of minerals.

8.2 Social aspects

One of objectives of MGNREGS is to provide a strong social safety net for vulnerable groups like Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). Paragraph 5.5.9 of the Operational Guidelines, 2008 also stipulates priority in provision of employment to women so that one-third of the total beneficiaries are women who have registered for work under the scheme.

8.2.1 Representation of SC, ST and Women to foster social equality

Representation of SC, ST and women in implementation of MGNREGS in the State as per information furnished by the Department is given in **Table 14**:

³ As per Jharkhand Minor Minerals Concession Rules 2004 any person transporting minerals from authorised quarries is liable to furnish an affidavit in form "O" and details of supply in form "P" prescribed by the Mining department to implementing officer/agency for verification by Mining Department.

Procurement of material was from unregistered suppliers who supplied minerals extracted illegally

Table 14: Representation of SC, ST and women in total person days generated during 2007-12

(Number in lakh)

Year	Total person days generated	SC person days with percentage	ST person days with percentage	Women person days with percentage
2007-08	754.46	155.34 (21)	316.99 (42)	204.62 (27)
2008-09	755.25	137.35 (18)	300.31 (40)	214.99 (28)
2009-10	842.47	135.15 (16)	362.12 (43)	288.53 (34)
2010-11	830.77	111.70 (13)	349.57(42)	278.05(33)
2011-12	470.90	59.52 (13)	182.36 (39)	145.80 (31)

Source: RDD

It was evident that representation of SCs and STs was 13 to 21 *per cent* and 39 to 43 *per cent* of the total person days of employment generated during 2007-08 to 2011-12 which was encouraging, considering the fact that SCs and STs constituted 11 *per cent* and 27 *per cent* of the population of the State. However, the percentage of SC, ST and women getting employment has registered a decline since 2010-11 and women who got employment were less than the stipulated one-third of the total beneficiaries in 2011-12.

8.2.2 *Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana*

MoRD, GoI advised (September 2008) the Government of Jharkhand to ensure that the MGNREGS workforce is covered under the 'Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)' as physical health is their basic capital and bodily labour is their instrument for livelihood. RSBY is a scheme of the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The main objective of this scheme was to provide health insurance cover to the below poverty line (BPL) workers and their families in the unorganised sector, and to improve cashless access of BPL families to quality medical care for treatment of diseases involving hospitalisation and surgery, through an identified network of health care providers.

There was inadequate coverage of MGNREGS workers under Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana

We noticed that the Secretary, RDD, GoJ directed (October 2008) the DPCs to provide the list of MGNREGS workers who work for at least 14 days in a financial year, as they become entitled to health insurance under Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY), to the Department of Labour and Employment so that they can be benefited under RSBY.

According to the information furnished by the Department of Labour, Employment and Training, GoJ, the number of households enrolled under RSBY till March 2012 was 41,343 in four⁴ test checked districts out of 1.90 lakh MGNREGS households in these districts. Thus only 22 *per cent* of the households was covered under RSBY. We further noticed that no household was covered under RSBY in the remaining two districts (Gumla and Palamu) against 0.90 lakh⁵ MGNREGS households.

⁴ Dumka (Enrolment 25971: Household 61590), Pakur (Enrolment 1242: Household 41329), Ranchi (Enrolment 13953: Household 30622) and West Singhbhum (Enrolment 177: Household 56136)

⁵ Gumla (Enrolment Nil: Household 41946) and Palamu (Enrolment Nil: Household 48432)

In reply, the State Rural Employment Guarantee Commissioner, Jharkhand stated (June 2012) that directions to all districts have been given by his office many a time to provide a list of such NREGA workers. The districts were again being informed for furnishing such information and the same would be provided to audit after compilation.

The reply itself indicates that RDD, GoJ was also not aware about the number of registered households covered under RSBY. Thus, due to inadequate coverage the objective of covering MGNREGS workers under health insurance scheme was defeated.

8.3 *Conclusion*

Construction of wells without recharge structure and non-adoption of scientific methods in construction works were reasons for depleting ground water level in the State. Further, coverage of MGNREGS households under RSBY health insurance scheme was inadequate.

8.4 *Recommendations*

- MGNREGA Works Field Manual may be adhered to for preparing estimates and in construction works; and
- Adequate coverage of MGNREGS households under RSBY may be ensured.