

**Record of discussion of Central Employment Guarantee Council (CEGC)
held on 19th September, 2008 in Unnati, Krishi Bhavan, New Delhi**

A meeting was held of the Central Council on 19th September, 2008 in Unnati. The list of participants is attached. The record of discussion in the meeting is as follows:

1. **Confirmation of the Minutes of the last meeting:** The 6th meeting of the Central Employment Guarantee Council was held on 5th June, 2008 to discuss the issues of fixing of wage rate under Section 6 of NREGA and the Minutes were circulated on 20th June, 2008. No comments were received from any Hon'ble Member of the Council. The Minutes were confirmed.

2. **Review of the Action taken on the issues discussed in the last Meetings:**

The issue of notification of minimum wage rate under Section 6(1) was taken up in the last meeting and it was decided that the States may be taken on board before issuing a notification under Section 6 (1) of NREGA. The Council was apprised of the decision in the meeting with State Secretaries.

3. **Implementation status of NREGA and Key initiatives:** Status of implementation of NREGA programme for the year 2008-09 was presented. The Council noted the implementation status and key initiatives undertaken by the Ministry mainly in terms of Financial Inclusion, inclusion of NREGA worker under Janshree Bima Yojana, setting up a Toll Free helpline and the progress in finalization of draft Transparency Rules.

The Central Council was also apprised that the Expert Committee under the Chairmanship of Shri Moolchand Sharma had met and the Ombudsman rules are in the final stage of finalization. The Central Council noted that the EFC memo for enhancing expenditure from 4% to 6% has been circulated to other Ministries for their comments before taking it to Cabinet Secretariat. The Central Council was also informed that dates have been sought from CAG for 2nd round of performance Audit for 2nd phase districts.

4. Main observations and suggestion made by Members:

a) Hon. Minister (RD) welcomed the Council Members and made the following key observations.

- ◆ Central Council has been meeting regularly which has proved to be very beneficial to the programme. States have also been advised to have regular meetings of State Council
- ◆ NREGA has had a positive impact. Deficiencies noticed are being addressed and remedial/corrective action being initiated
- ◆ Emphasis is now towards extensive financial inclusion by way of wage disbursement through Post Offices and Banks. Efforts are on to cover unbanked areas through the business correspondents model
- ◆ On the directions of Ministry of Finance, LIC has notified inclusion of NREGA workers under rural poor category of Janashree Bima Yojana. Andhra Pradesh has initiated enrolling NREGA workers

- ◆ Ministry of Health has also been requested to extend health insurance to NREGA workers
- ◆ Grievance redressal mechanism needs to be strengthened at all levels. Toll free helpline has been installed and about 100 complaints per day are being received. States asked to open helpline also.
- ◆ Rules on transparency and public accountability have been formulated and referred to Ministry of Law for vetting
- ◆ Financial and social audit rules have also been formulated and shared with State Governments
- ◆ Vigilance and Monitoring Committee meetings should be held regularly at district, block and Gram Panchayat levels
- ◆ Muster Roll Verification, works inspection must be carried out on regular basis
- ◆ Rozgar Jagrukta Puraskar to recognise outstanding contributions by CSOs at State, District, Block and Gram Panchayat for CSOs has been announced
- ◆ A roundtable was held with IITs, IIMs and Agricultural Universities for technical support in the fields of research, impact assessment studies, collaboration etc.
- ◆ Ministry of Finance has been approached for supplementary grants

b) Secretary Rural Development Dr. Rita Sharma informed the Council that in view of the grim flood situation in Bihar, amendment in Schedule of the NREG Act had been effected to allow displaced persons to apply for registration and employment at the place of temporarily location

c) Ms. Subhashini Ali made the following suggestions:

- Visit to West Bengal may be undertaken preferably in October.
- Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region should be requested to ensure regular meeting of Gram Sabhas in NE States

d) Shri Devi Dayal observed that there were several problems in U.P. Job cards had not been issued in many places and no work was available for want of inadequate projects. Banks/Post Offices were far away resulting in delay in payment of wages. Funds were not being released by the districts to Gram Panchayat on time. He suggested that NREGA works may be permitted on big farmers' land

e) Shri Bandhopadhyay emphasized that it was necessary to allow flexibility in Labour budgets as they respond to fluctuating labour demand.

It was clarified that the principles of labour budget include the flexibility required for realistic projections as well as revisions based on previous and current empirical trends.

f) Ms. Annie Raja made the following observations:

- 15 days notice should be given for the Council meeting. Once the visit of Central Council decided, visit should not be postponed.
- Work should not suspended due to elections
- Special preference should be given to women in appointment of administrative staff
- Amendment issued regarding registration and employment in the event of National calamities should also be extended to relief camps

- Cases of malnutrition in Madhya Pradesh were coming to notice. In Dantewada there were instances of non-issue of job card and non- payment of wages
- Performance Audit should be conducted after discussion with Audit party

g) Shri B D Sharma highlighted the growing corporatisation and Mechanization of agriculture and the decline in the labour base. Centrality needs to be given to Gram Sabhas which alone can ensure transparency in the NREGA processes.

h) Shri Ashk Ali pointed out that States were taking credit for the national programme. Primitive areas problems should be clubbed with NREGA.

It was clarified that there were several schemes intended for primitive areas.

i) Shri Gopalakrishnan, JS, PMO drew attention to PMO's suggestion that had been sent to the Ministry for amendments in the Act to strengthen PRIs at all levels. His other suggestions included:

- Persons with integrity be posted for implementing NREGA in States. For this purpose, amendment in NREG Act be considered
- Labour should be mobilized and organized. Gram Rozgar Sahayak should be appointed by labourers and not by State Government
- Quarterly report on NREGA may be considered. Media should be actively involved for this purpose

j) Shri Santosh Mehrotra, Adviser, Planning Commission made the following observations:

- With the increase in quantum of funds, there was an imperative need to ensure
- NIRD study on Orissa should be examined
- NREGA process needs to be strengthened to more demand based.
- Workers were still not aware of their rights, entitlements and TV Spots and radio jingles should be modeled on an FAQ format.
- Greater flexibility is required in the policy approach to works as in some places there was a limited scope for earthworks listed in Schedule 1.

k) Shri Thampi, Ministry of Environment and Forests indicated that issues pertaining to forest were being discussed with the Ministry. He pointed out that agriculture rates were lower than forestry rates. This required looking into

5. Secretary (RD) assured that the issues raised would be taken up by the Ministry for further action wherever necessary. JS in charge of NREGA thanked all Members for the suggestions and participation.

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

Participants

1. Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh
Minister (Rural Development) Chairman
2. Dr. Rita Sharma
Secretary
Ministry of Rural Development
3. Smt.Subhashini Ali
Member (Central Council)
4. Shri Kumar Shiralkar
Member (Central Council)
5. Dr. Bandopadhyay
Member (Central Council)
6. Shri B.D. Sharma
Member (Central Council)
7. Shri Ashk Ali Tak
Member (Central Council)
8. Shri. Devi Dayal
Member (Central Council)
9. Smt. Botcha Lakshmi Jhansi
Member (Central Council)
10. Smt. Annie Raja
Member (Central Council)
11. Shri Mahendra Boudh
Member (Central Council)
12. Shri. R. Gopalakrishnan
Joint Secretary (PMO)
New Delhi
13. Shri. Sontosh Mehrotra,
Advisor (RD),
Planning Commission,
14. Shri. N.C. Sinha
Commissioner & Secretary
Govt. of Tripura

