STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYATI RAJ

(2022-2023)

33

SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA

MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT
(DEPARTMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT)

[Action taken on the recommendations contained in the Twenty-Ninth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2023-24) of the Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development)'.]

THIRTY THIRD REPORT

सत्यमेव जयते

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

NEW DELHI

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[Action taken on the recommendations contained in the Twenty-Ninth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha)on 'Demands for Grants (2023-24) of the Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development)'.]

Presented to Lok Sabha on 27.07.2023

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 27.07.2023

सत्यमेव जयते

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
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Smt. Kanimozhi Karunanidhi -- *Chairperson*

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3. Shri A.K.P Chinraj
4. Shri Rajveer Diler
5. Shri Vijay Kumar Dubey
6. Shri Sukhbir Singh Jaunapuria
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Rajya Sabha Members

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29. Shri Naranbhai J. Rathwa
30. Shri Ajay Pratap Singh
31. Shri Bashistha Narain Singh

SECRETARIAT

1.	Shri D.R. Shekhar	-	Joint Secretary
2.	Shri C. Kalyanasundaram	-	Director
3.	Shri Inam Ahmed	-	Executive Officer

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (2022-2023) having been authorised by the Committee to present the Report on their behalf, present the 33rd Report on the action taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the Twenty-Ninth Report of the Standing Committee on Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (17thLok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2023-24) of the Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development).

2. The Twenty-Ninth Report was presented to the Lok Sabha on 14.03.2023 and was laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on 15.03.2023. Replies of the Government to all the recommendations contained in the Report were received on 07.06.2023.

3. The Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their sitting held on 25.07.2023.

4. An analysis of the action taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the Twenty-Ninth Report (17th Lok Sabha) of the Committee is given in **Appendix-II**.

NEW DELHI
25 July, 2023
03 Shravana, 1945 (Saka)

Kanimozhi Karunanidhi
Chairperson
Standing Committee on Rural Development & Panchayati Raj

CHAPTER I

REPORT

This Report of the Standing Committee on Rural Development (2022-23) deals with the action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in their Twenty Ninth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development) for the year 2023-2024.

1.2 The Twenty Ninth Report was presented to the Lok Sabha on 14.03.2023 and was laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on 15.03.2023. The Report contained 21 Observations/Recommendations.

1.3 Action Taken Replies in respect of all the 21 Observations/Recommendations contained in the Report have been received from the Government. These have been examined and categorised as follows: -

(i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government:

Serial Nos. 1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21

Total: 16

Chapter-II

(ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of replies of the Government:

Serial No. NIL

Total: NIL

Chapter-III

(iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee:

Serial No. 3, 4, 6, 7, 14

Total: 05

Chapter-IV

(iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which final replies of the Government are still awaited:

Serial No. NIL

Total: NIL

Chapter-V

1.4 The Committee trust that utmost importance will be given to the implementation of the recommendations accepted by the Government. In case where it is not possible for any reasons to implement the recommendations in letter and spirit, the matter shall be reported to the Committee with reasons for non-implementation. The Committee desire that Action Taken Notes on the Observations/ recommendations contained in Chapter I of this Report may be furnished to the Committee within three months of the presentation of this Report.

1.5 The Committee will now deal with action taken by the Government on some of their Observations/Recommendations that require reiteration/merit comments.

I. <u>Reduction of Funds in MGNREGA</u>

<u>Recommendation (Serial No. 3)</u>

1.6 With regard to the reduction of Funds in MGNREGA, the Committee had recommended as under:-

"The Committee are concerned to note that the Budget Estimates for MGNREGS has been reduced by Rs. 29,400 Crore for 2023-24 when compared to Revised Estimates of 2022-23. The Act governing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme provides 'Right to Work' to such deprived sections of the rural populace who are willing to work. It is a last resort of succor for the jobless section who don't have any other means to feed them and their family members. The role and importance of MGNREGA was visible during the corona pandemic times when it acted as a ray of hope for the needy in times of distress. The importance of the scheme itself got highlighted through the substantially huge increment at the RE stage in 2020-21 and 2021-22 from Rs. 61,500 Crore to Rs. 1,11,500 Crore and Rs. 73,000 Crore to Rs. 99,117.53 Crore respectively to meet the increase in demand of work during corona pandemic. Even during the ongoing Financial Year 2022-23, the funds for MGNREGA has been increased to Rs. 89,400 Crore at RE stage from Rs. 73,000 Crore at the BE stage. However, for the Financial Year 2023-24, at the starting stage itself, MGNREGA has been allocated Rs. 60,000 Crore against the proposed demand of Rs. 98,000 Crore by the Department of Rural Development. The Committee are unable to comprehend the rationale for reduced allocation of fund under MGNREGA. Since it is very much necessary that adequate Budgetary Allocation ought to be made for the effective implementation of the Scheme, the Committee strongly feel the requirement for the matter of decreased fund allocation to be looked afresh. It is an established procedure that MGNREGA being a demand driven scheme, the funds can be raised at RE stage accordingly. However, Ministry of Finance should have been impressed upon as to how the Department of Rural Development arrived at the calculation of Rs. 98,000 Crore at proposal level for MGNREGA. Had it not been the projections received at the ‘agreed to Labour Stage’, such proposal would not have been mooted at the outset by the Department of Rural Development. Therefore, the Committee strongly recommend that the Department of Rural Development apprise themselves of the still existing high demand for job under MGNREGA at the ground level more realistically and utilise their communications and administrative skill to press upon the Ministry of Finance for increased allocation to MGNREGA.”

1.7 The DoRD in their action taken reply have stated as follows:-

“In the FY 2019-20, BE was Rs.60,000 crore which got revised to Rs.71,001.81 crore, for the FY 2020-21, BE was 61,500 crore which increased at RE to Rs.1,11,500 crore and for the FY 2021-22, the BE of Rs.73,000 crore has revised been to Rs.98,000 crore and during the last Financial Year 2022-23, the BE was Rs.73,000 crore, which has been revised to Rs.89,400 crore. Whenever, additional fund is required, Ministry of Finance is requested to provide the funds. Govt. of India is committed to release funds for wage and material payments for proper implementation of the scheme, as per the provisions of the act and guidelines applicable for Central Government as well as State Governments.”

Further Observations/Comments of the Committee

1.8 During the Examination of Demands for Grants (2023-24), the Committee found that the funds allocated to MGNREGA at B.E stage was Rs. 60,000/- Crore , i.e. a steep reduction by Rs. 29,400/- crore from the RE stage of FY 22-23. Taking into account the increased demand shown by the Scheme at RE stage during 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 and also considering that the proposed demand made by the Department of Rural Development (DoRD) for the FY 2023-24 was Rs. 98000 Crore, the Committee had strongly recommended the DoRD to not only assess the ground situation regarding demand for job under MGNREGA realistically but also impress upon the Ministry of Finance for increased allocation to MGNREGA. In the action taken reply submitted by the DoRD, numerical facts regarding the funds allocated to MGNREGA at BE&RE stage from 2019-20 onwards have been enumerated, and further clarified that the Ministry of Finance is requested to provide the funds whenever additional fund is required and that the Government of India is committed to release funds for wage and material payments. Taking stock of the situation, the Committee find such reply of the Department extremely stereotypical and routine in nature. The Department of Rural Development neither provided concrete reply to the query of the Committee as to how the

DoRD arrived at the calculation of Rs. 98,000/- Crore as the BE for MGNREGA at the proposed demand stage, nor it is able to put forward any concrete mode of action to deal with the probable dearth of funds under MGNREGA at this point of time. The Committee are not satisfied with the approach elicited by the DoRD in handling an issue of such importance which could lead to the hampering of the work being done under MGNREGA due to fund shortage. Such a scenario will not augur well for the poor rural workers under MGNREGA as want of funds could stall the projects creating pendency of wages, etc. In view of the above, the Committee strongly reiterate their recommendation and urge upon the DoRD to handle the fund related aspect of MGNREGA with a much informed and robust financial pragmatism through better coordination with the Ministry of Finance for seeking requisite allocation at BE stage every year rather than resorting to allocation of required funds at RE/supplementary stages which may hamper timely payment of wages and other payments under the Scheme.

II. Pending liability of Wages & Material

Recommendation (Serial No. 4)

1.9 On the aspect of Pending liability of Wages and Material under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the Committee had recommended as follows:-

> "The Committee are concerned to note the continuous pendency in disbursement of Centre's share of funds under wages and material components of the Scheme in respect of many States/UTs. Through the information received from the Department of Rural Development it has been observed that as on 25.01.2023, Rs. 6,231 Crore in wages and Rs. 7,616 Crore in Material component is pending liability on the Centre's Part. The Committee find accrual of such liabilities as severe impediments hampering the beneficiaries' plight. The Committee take into account the plausible reasons that have been time and again cited by the Department of Rural Development for such types of pendencies such as non-receipt of documents etc. However, a scheme of such huge proportion like MGNREGA which caters to the nook and corners of the country and has millions of beneficiaries enrolled as job card holders, such delay in wage payments and material fund release would only deter the needy person from availing the benefits under MGNREGA and would also cause them further turpitude for non-receipt of money when the sole intent of the scheme was to provide timely relief to poor in times of duress. Hence, the Committee beseech upon Department of Rural Development to ensure timely release of Centre's Shares in wages and materials through effective measures and better coordination with States. The progress made in dismantling liabilities of the Centre towards wages and material components in

respect of each State/UT should be furnished to the Committee within three months."

1.10 The DoRD in their action taken reply have stated as under:-

"Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is a demand driven wage employment program and the release of funds to the State is a continuous process. The ministry releases funds to states based on the approved labor budget, opening balance, pending liabilities of the previous year for the financial year, if any, and overall performance. The release of material and administrative item funds is done in accordance with the smooth compliance of the financial management by the State Government.

After the due financial prudence and compliance by the State, funds are released."

Further Observations/Comments of the Committee

1.11 Taking due cognizance of the pendency in the liability of wages and material share of the Centre under MGNREGA, the Committee had observed that, as on 25.01.2023, Rs. 6231/- Crore in wages and Rs. 7616/- Crore in material component was pending liability on the Centre's part. The Committee having noted that such delay in wage payments and material fund release would act as deterrence to the needy beneficiaries of MGNREGA from getting some sort of relief from their penury, the Committee recommended to DoRD ensure timely release of Centre's shares in wages and materials through effective measures and better coordination with the States. The Committee had also desired to be appraised of the progress made in dismantling the liabilities of the Centre towards wages and material component in respect of each State/UT within three months. However, to the utter surprise of the Committee, the reply furnished by the DoRD is completely silent and no specific information regarding the progress made by the Department in the reduction of pending liabilities has been furnished in the Action Taken Reply as had been sought by the Committee. Instead of elaborating upon the real cause and remedy to the problem, the effort solely seem to 'pass the buck' on the State as it has been submitted that "After the due financial prudence and compliance by the State, funds are released." The Committee find such reply evasive in nature and may lead to lopsided implementation of MGNREGA. Therefore, the Committee once again urge the DoRD to not shy away from their responsibility and initiate concrete measures to reduce and finally end the existence of pendency in the release of wage/material share of the Centre through result oriented and concerted efforts. The latest progress/status of pending liabilities in terms of wage/material component pertaining to each State/UT should be provided to the Committee at the earliest.

III. Modification in Attendance System

Recommendation (Serial No. 6)

1.12 In the context of modification in Attendance System under MGNREGA, the Committee had recommended as below:-

> "The committee note that, in their constant endeavour to usher greater transparency and weed out alleged malpractices associated with the process involving attendance of genuine beneficiaries under MGNREGA, the Department of Rural Development have implemented a new provision of capturing of real time attendance at worksite. This is being done through a Mobile App (national Mobile Monitoring System App: NMMS) with two time-stamped and geo-tagged photographs of the workers in a day. The Committee is not oblivious to the facts surrounding the necessity felt by the Department of Rural Development for the introduction of a new real-time attendance capturing app and are in consonance with the intention of the Department of Rural Development in bringing in much required improved governance of the scheme. However, the flip side of the innovatory exercise should not remain unnoticed and unaccounted or else the intended relief to the beneficiaries may not reach them. The entire exercise of capturing two real-time photographs in a day hinges upon few key factors such as availability of smart-phones, proper internet connectivity and the presence of MGNREGA workers on both stipulated times for proverbial 'in' and 'out' attendance. Needless to say that the MGNREGA beneficiaries belong to extremely deprived sections of the society, belonging to different linguistic milieu. Expecting the MGNREGA workers to be well versed with the functioning and language of app or for that matter even depending upon a nodal human intervention perhaps adds to their woes. Moreover, often the fluid timings of work site necessitate the workers to keep on waiting there even after the completion of work for their image capturing. Adding to this conundrum is the issue of availability of internet connectivity at far flung locales of MGNREGA work site. In view of the foregoing, and with utmost concern, the Committee urge upon the Department of Rural Development to review the implementation of attendance app holistically while taking into consideration the ground reality and challenges being faced by MGNREGA workers and come out with an acceptable provision at the earliest."

1.13 The following Action Taken Reply has been given by DoRD:-

> "NMMS has been introduced for real time attendance at worksites of all the beneficiaries present there. As per the provision,

after the four hours of gap from taking attendance along with first geo-tagged photograph, second photograph can be taken.

The App is available in five languages which includes English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam. There is an exemption provision for taking attendance without using NMMS App in case of internet connectivity issue, device malfunction related issues, has been made available for District Programme Coordinator. The Ministry takes every possible step to resolve the technical issue if any reported, in a real time mode. During the Month of April'23 out of the total eligible worksites in second fortnight: 4.23 lakhs, attendance using NMMS App has been captured in: 3.83 lakhs worksites (90.54%). For remaining muster rolls, exemption provision has been made available."

Further Observations/Comments of the Committee

1.14 The Committee had noted the introduction of National Mobile Monitoring System App, NMMS aimed at the capturing of two time-stamped and geo tagged photographs of the MGNREGA workers in a day. It was understood that through the introduction of a new attendance system, the Department of Rural Development wanted to usher in increased transparency, however, the Committee found that the actual success of this app depended upon various extraneous variables like availability of smartphones, proper internet connectivity and the mandatory presence of MGNREGA workers at both the specific times to name a few. Taking note of these areas of concern, the Committee had urged upon the DoRD to review the implementation of attendance app holistically and after ascertaining the issues being faced by the workers, come out with an acceptable provision at the earliest. The perusal of replies submitted by the DoRD reveal that exemption provision is also present for taking attendance without using NMMS app, in cases of internet connectivity issue, device malfunction related issues, and is made available to the District Programme Coordinator. The Committee while taking note of this provision would like to put forth the apprehension regarding the actual enforcement of this provision at the ground level in view of the contradictory information shared with the Committee by various stakeholders. Despite the submissions of the DoRD regarding the effectiveness of this app, the Committee are concerned to note the complaints from various quarters highlighting numerous difficulties being faced by MGNREGA workers in making their attendance on this app. So, in the fitness of things, the Committee reiterate the recommendation and implore upon the DoRD to have an holistic review of the ground reality regarding the effectiveness of NMMS and also ensure that the exemption provision is being complied with in 'letter and spirit' so that no genuine beneficiary is left behind.

IV. <u>Increase in Wages and bringing Parity in Wages</u>

Recommendation (Serial No. 7)

1.15 Concerning the increase in Wages and bringing Parity in wages under MGNREGA, the Committee had made the following recommendation:-

> "The Committee note that in accordance with the Section 6(1) of Mahatma Gandhi NREG Act, 2005, the Ministry of Rural Development notifies Mahatma Gandhi NREGA wage rate every year for States/UTs. For providing cover against inflation, the Ministry of Rural Development revises the wage rate every year based on the change in the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPIAL). The Committee take into account the modalities enumerated under the MGNREG Act, 2005 and have also gone through the notified wage rate for the Financial Year 2022-23. It has been observed that there is no uniformity in the wages across the States/UTs and the rate differs from Rs. 204 in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh to Rs. 315/- and Rs. 331/- in Goa and Haryana respectively. The Committee on earlier occasion also have observed categorically about the utmost necessity to increase the wage rate commensurate with the inflation and rectify the disparity in wages by notifying a uniform wage rate across the country. The stance of Department of Rural Development as evinced on these issues have pretty much remained the same as produced here that "However each State/UT can provide wage over and above the wage rate notified by the Central Government". Such responses are adept at typically passing the onus on the State Governments, while over a period of time it has been witnessed that the wage rates under MGNREGA have hovered on an average between Rs. 200/- to Rs. 300/- per day in the different States/UTs. It is necessary that the Department of Rural Development examine this issue with humane approach and initiate measures for increasing the wages in an appropriate manner befitting the rising cost of living. Moreover, linkage with the CPI-AL perhaps does not serve the purpose of ascertaining the real effect of inflation and the index for calculation needs to be changed on an urgent basis for looking at the real picture. It is also unfathomable as to why the Ministry is not able to notify a unified wage rate under MGNREGA across the country to end the disparity across States/UTs for good, particularly when the Scheme is mostly funded by the Centre. Therefore, the Committee strongly recommend that the Department of Rural Development should increase the wage rates under MGNREGA by linking it to a suitable pricing index and explore the feasibility of notifying a uniform wage rate under MGNREGA for the entire country."

1.16 In regard to the above recommendation, the DoRD in their action taken reply have stated as below:-

> "As per Section 6 (1) of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (Mahatma Gandhi NREGA), 2005, the Central Government may by notification specify the wage rate for unskilled work for its beneficiaries. Accordingly, the Ministry of Rural Development notifies Mahatma Gandhi NREGA wage rate for every financial year for States/UTs. To compensate the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA workers against inflation, the Ministry of Rural Development revises the wage rate every year based on change in Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL). However, State Government can provide wage over and above the wage rate notified by the Central Government from its own resources."

<u>Further Observations/Comments of the Committee</u>

1.17 Regarding the disparity in wages under MGNREGA in different States/UTs and the existence of meagre wage rates ranging from Rs. 204/- to Rs. 331/- in different parts of the country, the Committee had noted the long standing stance of the DoRD that the State/UTs were allowed to provide wage over and above the wage rate notified by the Central Government. The Committee did not subscribe to the logic of the DoRD in this context and had recommended that the Department should increase the wage rates under MGNREGA by linking it to a suitable pricing index while exploring the feasibility of notifying a uniform wage rate under MGNREGA for the entire country. However, the action taken reply furnished by the DoRD in this regard is still of the same mould as earlier and does not deviate from their rather rigid stand. The Committee find the mere mention of Section 6 (1) of MGNREGA and the procedure for the calculation of present wage rates based on Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL) a repetitive approach bereft of any application or rationale. The Committee do not find their reply befitting the pertinent nature of conundrums surrounding the issue of wage rates under MGNREGA and expect a much more cogent response from the DoRD. Disparity of wages and non-increase in wages commensurately with inflation is perhaps the most discouraging aspect for labourers to undertake MGNREGA works. Therefore, the Committee strongly reiterate the earlier recommendation regarding the 'wage rates' and disparity of wages in the States/UTs of country and beseech upon DoRD to empathetically look into this issue for a positive revision of the wages under MGNREGS.

V. <u>Increase in Number of Days of Guaranteed Work under MGNREGA</u>

Recommendation (Serial No. 8)

1.18 With regard to the increase in Number of Days of Guaranteed Work under MGNREGA, the Committee had recommended as under:-

> "The Committee note the another pertinent demand, that has been time and again made, is that of increasing of days of guaranteed work under MGNREGA from the existing 100 days. The Committee are seized of the sentiments of MGNREGA beneficiaries and resonate with the pressing need felt by them for increasing the number of guaranteed days of work under MGNREGA equitably. MGNREG Act was notified in 2005 and the entire country was covered by April, 2008. Almost 15 years have passed since the full implementation of the Act and "much water has flown under the bridge" by now. With each passing year, the need for change has been felt in the Act so as to keep pace with the changing demands of the time. The burgeoning population of the country with majority residing in the villages and a huge number of rural populace still trying to fulfill the basic necessity, guaranteed days of work, perhaps, is a huge solace for such class of society. The Committee also find during the examination of Demands for Grants 2023-24 that Government of India has constituted a Committee under Shri Amarjeet Sinha to study the performance of States and the governance issues under MGNREGS, which in itself is a clear cut indicator that review of basic features of MGNREGS is a long felt demand. Increasing the number of days of work at the Central level itself will certainly go a long way in providing a stable source of income to such poor and destitute class of beneficiaries who don't have any other resort but to take up unskilled work under MGNREGA for their survival. Hence, the Committee, with utmost empathy, recommend that the Department of Rural Development should relook into the possibility of increasing the number of guaranteed days of work under MGNREGA and come out with some concrete measures in this regard."

1.19 The DoRD in their action taken reply have stated as follows:-

> "Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (Mahatma Gandhi NREGA) is to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household in rural areas of the country whose adult members volunteers to do unskilled manual work. In addition to this, there is a provision for up to additional 50 days of wage employment in a financial year in drought/natural calamity affected notified rural areas. **As per Section 3 (4) of the Act, the State Governments may make**

provision for providing additional days of employment beyond the period guaranteed under the Act from their own funds.

The Ministry mandates the provision of additional 50 days of wage employment (beyond the stipulated 100 days) to every Scheduled Tribe Household in a forest area, provided that these households have no other private property except for the land rights provided under the Forest Rights Acts(FRA),2006."

<u>Further Observations/Comments of the Committee</u>

1.20 During the deliberations on Demands for Grants 2023-24, the Committee had noted that the Government of India had constituted a Committee under Shri Amarjeet Sinha to study the performance of States and the governance issues under MGNREGS, which in itself vindicated the long felt demand for the review of basic features of MGNREGS. In this context, the Committee had resonated a wide spread demand of the possibility of increasing the number of guarantee days of work under MGNREGA from the existing hundred days. It can be seen from the action taken reply submitted by the DoRD, that there is provision for additional 50 days of wage employment in a financial year in drought/natural calamity affected notified rural areas and that as per Section 3 (4) of the Act, the State Government may make provision providing additional days of employment beyond the period guaranteed under the Act from their own funds. Moreover, provision of additional 50 days to every Scheduled Tribes households in a forest area having no other private property except for the land rights provided under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006 is also there. The Committee while noting the above submissions made by the Department still are of the firm view that since MGNREGA is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme and is governed through a legislation which is being monitored by the Central Nodal Agency, DoRD, the 'wind of change' must flow from Centre and the onus should not be shifted to the States. The yardstick needs to be rationalised through the efforts of DoRD and considering the long period since the enactment of MGNREGA, perhaps an upward revision in the guaranteed number of days of work is much due at the Central level itself. Therefore, the Committee reiterate the earlier recommendation and call upon the DoRD to relook in the issue and suitably increase the number of guaranteed days of work under MGNREGA from the present 100 days.

VI. <u>Issue of Landless Beneficiaries</u>

<u>Recommendation (Serial No. 12)</u>

1.21 On the pertinent issue of Landless Beneficiaries under MGNREGA, the Committee had recommended as under:-

"The Committee are perturbed to find that even at this juncture when the scheme is approaching its last stage after getting extension to March, 2024, there are still 2,93,598 beneficiaries remaining to get land/assistance from the State/UT to construct their house under PMAY-G. It has been highlighted by the Department of Rural Development that it is the responsibility of the States/UT to provide land to landless beneficiaries and that the Department of Rural Development has been in constant touch with the States/UTs for ensuring availability of land to the landless. Despite the efforts of Department of Rural Development being cited in the replies to the Committees, the Committee find the pace of reaching a logical culmination to such issue quite slow. Not much time is remaining for the scheme to reach its deadline and impediment of such nature needs to be taken care of as early as possible for the successful realisation of the target of the scheme. The 'need of the hour' is to further press upon the State Machinery with a sense of greater clarity and increased coordination with all the Stakeholders for expediting the mitigation of pendency. Thus, the Committee urge Department of Rural Development to increase their momentum of persuasive efforts with the concerned States/UTs on 'war footing' for attaining timely resolution of the issue of allocation of land to the landless beneficiaries under PMAY-G."

1.22 The DoRD in their action taken reply furnished to the Committee have stated as follows:-

"Providing land to the landless PMAY-G beneficiaries for the construction of the houses is of utmost importance since they are the most deserving beneficiaries in the Permanent Wait List (PWL) of the scheme. Further for achieving the year-wise sub-targets and cumulative targets under PMAY-G providing land to such beneficiaries is very crucial. As per the Framework for Implementation of PMAY-G, it is the responsibility of the concerned State/UT to provide land to the landless beneficiary from the government land or any other land including public land (Panchayat common land, community land or land belonging to other local authorities).

The matter of providing land to landless beneficiaries is reviewed regularly with the States/UTs and taken up by the Government of India with the States /UTs at the highest level. Further, the issue of providing land to landless beneficiaries under PMAY-G is being regularly taken up with States/UTs in the Review Meetings, Zonal Workshops, PRC meetings, EC meetings, Video conferences, etc.

This Ministry is considering the withdrawal of the target associated with landless beneficiaries who have been not sanctioned houses as of now. Further, the withdrawn target would be re-distributed among the well-performing states. In this case, the liability of providing land and fund for the construction of houses to such beneficiaries existing in PWL of PMAY-G would then entirely be shifted onto the concerned State/ UT.

To efficiently monitor the progress in providing land to landless beneficiaries under PMAY-G, an IT module for tagging the landless beneficiaries has been developed in AwaasSoft. The construction of the multi-story building is allowed under the PMAY-G and the same is being encouraged at least where the land is scarcely available or the cost of the land is very high."

<u>Further Observations/Comments of the Committee</u>

1.23 Issue of landless beneficiaries under PMAY-G has been a perennial challenge since the inception of the Yojana and in this context, the Committee, surprisingly found that still 2,93,598 beneficiaries remained to get land/assistance from the States/UTs to construct their houses under PMAY-G even when the yojana is nearing completion date, i.e. March, 2024. Considering paucity of time, the Committee had recommended to DoRD to increase their momentum of efforts with the concerned States/UTs so that a timely resolution of the issue is brought about and the landless beneficiaries also reap the benefits of PMAY-G. In their Action Taken Reply, the Ministry have reiterated their stand, as in earlier cases too, that providing land to the landless beneficiaries from the Government land/any other land is the responsibility of the concerned State/UT and that the Government of India had been consistently taking up the issues with States/UTs at the highest level. It has been further stated that the Ministry is considering the withdrawal of the targets associated with the landless beneficiaries who have not been sanctioned as of now and that the withdrawal target would be distributed among the well performing States so that the liability of providing land and the fund for the construction of houses to such beneficiaries existing in Permanent Wait List (PWL) of PMAY-G would then entirely be shifted onto the concerned State/UT. Moreover, it has also been submitted that the construction of multi-storey building is being encouraged where the land is scarcely available. The Committee find the exploration of feasibility of multi-storey building is in consonance with the recommendation of this Committee on Rural Development in the 26th report (16th Lok Sabha) on PMAY-G (recommendation no. 11) which ought have been encouraged on a larger scale by now so as to mitigate the issue of landlessness to the beneficiaries. On the consideration of the withdrawal of the target associated with the landless beneficiaries, the committee are apprehensive of future of such landless beneficiaries who could remain languishing forever due to the inaction on the part of the concerned State/UT Government and recommend that this retrograde step should be reconsidered and instead possible ways should be

found in coordination with those States/UTs for the allotment of land and construction of houses for landless beneficiaries. Thus, the Committee, while taking note of the efforts of the Ministry in this regard urge them to keep on expediting their consultative machinery with the States/UTs and also devise innovative strategies like multi-storey buildings so as to resolve the issue of landlessness for the ultimate benefit of the poor beneficiaries under the Yojana.

VII. <u>Increased Load-Bearing Roads and Plying of Heavy Vehicles</u>

<u>Recommendation (Serial No. 14)</u>

1.24 In the context of PMGSY, wherein increased Load-Bearing Roads were required on account of plying of heavy vehicles on the rural roads constructed under PMGSY, the Committee had recommended as below:-

> "The Committee note that PMGSY roads are generally low volume roads and were never meant to bear the load of heavy vehicles. The specifications which govern the construction of roads under PMGSY did not fathom that heavy vehicles plying on NHAI roads would also use the PMGSY roads as last mile connectivity to meet the ever growing needs and expansion of industrial projects to the rural areas as well. The Committee have taken the cognizance of such changing scenario wherein it is almost a necessity for even the heavy vehicles to utilise the PMGSY roads. Thus, it becomes absolutely essential to devise measures to protect the PMGSY roads from getting damaged due to the heavy vehicles that ply on them. Either suitable modification of the specifications of PMGSY for constructing heavy load bearing roads is done at the earliest or the provision of getting the damaged roads repaired by the NHAI authorities is ensured to be strictly complied with, else the PMGSY roads would keep on getting damaged and will get non-transportable, defeating the intent of the Yojana. The Committee also find from the reply of the Department of Rural Development that Ministry of Road Transport and Highways have been communicated in this regard on 2nd November, 2022 but response from their end is still awaited and any further action would be taken by Department of Rural Development on the receipt of reply from the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. The Committee are not at all satisfied with the existing situation and lack of concrete action being taken/planned by the Department of Rural Development as the ongoing practice of plying of heavy vehicles on PMGSY roads would keep on damaging the PMGSY roads as reported from different quarters. Therefore, the Committee recommend that the Department of Rural Development should take serious view of this matter and come out with some concrete and effective solution at the earliest to protect the PMGSY roads from getting damaged by heavy vehicles."

1.25 In their action taken reply to the above recommendation, DoRD have stated as follows:-

> "PMGSY roads are generally low volume roads and are constructed as per the specifications based on the traffic survey of the particular roads and the projections of the traffic during its design life. Further maintenance/ repair of roads constructed under the programme is the responsibility of the State Governments. All PMGSY road works are covered by initial five year maintenance contracts to be entered into along with the construction contract, with the same contractor, as per the Standard Bidding Document.
>
> With regard to taking action against heavy vehicles plying on NHAI roads which also use PMGSY roads as a last mile connectivity and cause damage to PMGSY roads, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has been communicated the recommendations of the Standing Committee and has been asked to submit Action Taken Report (ATR) in this regard, vide communication dated 2nd November, 2022. No response has been received from NHAI. Further action will be taken on receipt of ATR from Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. Further it is the responsibility of the district administration to ensure that such heavy vehicle which causes damage to PMGSY roads are not allowed to ply on the road and if any damage is caused the same may be repaired at the cost of the party who causes such damages."

Further Observations/Comments of the Committee

1.26 The Committee had noted that PMGSY roads are generally low volume roads which are not meant to bear the load of heavy vehicles. Despite this fact, it has become the practice that heavy vehicles plying on NHAI roads also use the PMGSY roads as last mile connectivity and in the process, more often than not, caused damage to the rural roads constructed under PMGSY. The recommendation of the Committee had on previous occasion also highlighted this issue to the DoRD which was communicated to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways on 2nd November, 2022, but response from them was still awaited. Since the protection of PMGSY roads from getting damaged by heavy vehicles was of utmost importance, the Committee had recommended to DoRD to come out with some concrete and effective solution at the earliest. However, the Committee are constrained to note the reply of the Department that no response has been received from NHAI and that further action will be taken on receipt of ATR from Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. Further, it has also been submitted that it is the responsibility of the District Administration to ensure that plying of heavy vehicles on the PMGSY roads are regulated. The committee find such response completely bereft of any understanding of the gravity of situation and also lacks accountability towards

maintenance of quality of roads under the Scheme which is aimed at the upliftment of the rural masses through proper connectivity to the main stream. The concerned Ministry/Organisations is responsible for furnishing Action Taken Reply within three months. Reply may be sought from NHAI on the delay in furnishing Action Taken Reply without further delay even by using good offices. In this regard, Committee, while reiterating their recommendation beseech upon the DoRD in all earnest to shed their lackadaisical approach in the matter and handle the same with utmost alacrity so that the PMGSY roads, which are solace for poor rural masses, do not get hampered due to unauthorised practices and dilly dally approach of all the stakeholders involved.

VIII. Increase in Assistance Amount under National Social Assistance Program (NSAP)

Recommendation (Serial No. 17)

1.27 Increase in assistance amount under NSAP has been long overdue, the Committee in this regard had recommended as under:-

> "The Committee note that National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) is a 100% Centrally Funded Centrally Sponsored Scheme which has been continued for 15th Finance Commission Cycle (2021-26) also. NSAP caters to 3.09 Crore BPL beneficiaries with a scheme-wise ceiling/cap for each State/UT on the number of beneficiaries (recently revised in September, 2022). Termed as a Social Security Programme coming to the aid of old aged, widows, disabled persons and bereaved families on death of primary bread winner, the amount of assistance in the Components of Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS) and Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) ranging from Rs. 200/- to Rs. 500/- per month lefts much to be desired. The meagre assistance amount has been a cause of concern to the Committee for a long period of time and the Committee find this abysmally low amount, when the cost of living has increased substantially, not acceptable at all. It is beyond comprehension as to how can such low assistance provide any sort of relief to beneficiaries who belong to extremely marginalised and economically distressed section of the society. From the replies of the Department of Rural Development, the Committee also observe that Task Force under Dr. Mihir Shah (2012), Expert Group under Sumit Bose (2016), Evaluation Studies by NITI Aayog (2020) and Department of Rural Development (2021) have also emphasized on the need to enhance the Pension amounts and a proposal was submitted to the Cabinet for the revamp of NSAP, however, the approval for continuation of NSAP in its current form was given. The Committee feel

that there is an urgent requirement of the upward revision in the assistance component of NSAP and all efforts should be taken for carrying out revamp of the programme. Therefore, with deep concern, the Committee recommend that the Department of Rural Development should submit a new proposal for the consideration of the Cabinet and also utilise their convincing ability in coordinating with the Stakeholders involved so that the sentiments of needy beneficiaries do not remain unheard of and an upward revision of assistance under all the components of NSAP is materialised."

1.28 The DoRD in their action taken reply have stated as below:-

"The Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution enjoin upon the State to undertake within its means a number of welfare measures, targeting the poor and the destitute in particular. Article 41 of the Constitution of India directs the State to provide public assistance to its citizens in case of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement as well as in other cases of undeserved wants, within the limit of State's economic capacity and development (7th Schedule). National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) came into effect in the direction of fulfilling this Directive Principles of the State Policy.

Currently, the eligible old aged, widows, and disabled persons of BPL families are provided monthly pension ranging from Rs.200/- to Rs.500/- p.m. and in the case of death of the breadwinner of such family, a lump sum assistance of Rs.20,000/- is given to the bereaved family under schemes of NSAP. The programme has undergone many changes since inception in terms of the composition, eligibility criterion and funding pattern. The last revision in amount was done in 2012.

In this regard, it is pertinent to mention that social security, invalid and old age pensions figure as items 23 and 24 in the Concurrent List (7th Schedule) of the Constitution and therefore, both the Central Government and States/ UTs have the responsibility for working in tandem in rolling out a comprehensive social security framework for the country. Accordingly, the State/UTs are encouraged to provide top up amounts at least an equivalent amount to the assistance provided by the Central Govt. so that the beneficiaries could get a decent level of assistance. At present, apart from the aforesaid central assistance, the States/UTs are adding top up amounts ranging from Rs.50 to Rs.3200 per month per beneficiaries under pension schemes of NSAP, as a result, on an average, the NSAP beneficiaries are getting monthly pension of Rs.1000 per month in several States, making the assistance amount satisfactory one.

Further, based on various recommendations/ evaluation studies, the Department submitted the proposal for revamping of NSAP including revision in amount of pension and coverage of beneficiaries. The Cabinet, while deciding continuation of the NSAP for the 15th Finance Commission cycle (2021-26), has recently considered the same. Considering the available financial space, the Cabinet in its meeting held on 19th January 2022 approved continuation of NSAP in its present form. Hence, it may not be appropriate to bother the Cabinet by submitting a new proposal on the same issue on which a considered view has recently been taken by it."

Further Observations/Comments of the Committee

1.29 The continuation of NSAP for 15th Finance Commission Cycle (2021-26) was noted by the Committee. Considering the nature of this Social Security Programme, which aim at providing aid to old aged, widows, disabled persons and bereaved families on death of primary bread winner, the Committee found the assistance amount ranging from Rs. 200/- to Rs. 500/- per month under IGNOAPS, IGNWPS and IGNDPS very less and requiring upward revision. The Committee had also taken into account the views of the Task Force under Dr. Mihir Shah (2012), Expert Group under Sumit Bose (2016), Evaluation Studies by NITI Aayog (2020) and DoRD (2021) which also emphasized the need to enhance the pension amounts. Consequently, a proposal was submitted to the Cabinet for the revamp of NSAP, which was not agreed upon. Therefore, the Committee had recommended the DoRD to submit a new proposal for the consideration of the Cabinet and also coordinate with all stakeholders for effecting an upward revision of assistance amount under NSAP. From the Action Taken Reply submitted by the DoRD, the Committee find that the last revision in amount was done in 2012. Also, the Department have detailed about the existence of social security, invalid and old age pensions figuring as items 23 and 24 in the concurrent list (7th Schedule) of the Constitution and therefore both the Central Government as well as State Governments have the responsibility to work in tandem for rolling out a comprehensive social security framework for the country. It has also been furnished that it may not be appropriate to bother the Cabinet with a new proposal on same issue on which a view has recently been taken. The Committee take into account the submissions of DoRD and are also in complete agreement with the provisions of Directive Principles of State Policies (DPSPs) and the concurrent list wherein the role of States cannot be left unaccounted in ensuring social security to the poor and destitute. However, NSAP is a 100 percent Centrally funded, Centrally Sponsored Scheme which provide the Committee the prerogative to suggest and recommend the changes required in the programme at the Central level. The Sentiments of the Committee can also be conveyed to the States/UTs by the nodal agency, DoRD. Passing the buck

to the States alone would not suffice the matter as the Committee's recommendations are aimed at increasing suitably the subsistence allowance for old aged, widows and disabled persons belonging to below poverty line. In this regard, the Department should not shy away from placing the proposal before the Cabinet for increasing financial assistance under the Scheme according to the recommendation of this Committee. Further in the light of pandemic faced by the whole India and world at large in the recent past, it has become inevitable to reconsider and revise National Social Assistance funds under the Scheme to extend financial benefits to old, vulnerable and bereaved families. Thus, the committee reiterate the earlier recommendation and urge the DoRD to relook in the matter of upward revision of the assistance amount under NSAP with a fresh perspective and place a new proposal before the Cabinet for the upward revision of Central assistance under all the components of NSAP.

CHAPTER II

RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

Recommendation (Serial No. 1)

2.1 The Committee noted that the Department of Rural Development (DoRD) under the aegis of the Ministry of Rural Development have been entrusted with a huge responsibility of implementing and overseeing plethora of schemes of the Government of India which are aimed at the upliftment of rural masses of our country. It is pretty evident that vast population of our country still reside in the villages among which a substantial quantum belongs to marginalised and economically downtrodden section of our society. Thus, it becomes imperative on the part of the Department of Rural Development to ensure that the visionary flagship schemes of the Government of India are not left in the lurch for want of better manoeuvering and are provided with ample fuel power in terms of finances for keeping the schemes healthy and running. The Committee find that Rs. 1,57,545 Crore have been allocated to the Department of Rural Development at the BE stage for 2023-24 which, although is 15.89% more than the funds at BE stage in Financial Year 2022-23, it is still much lower than the funds allocated at RE stage of 2022-23, i.e. Rs. 1,81,121.80Crore. Moreover, the Department of Rural Development demanded an amount of Rs. 1,97,233.34Crore for allocation at BE stage of 2023-24, which has been reduced by a substantial volume to the present allocation of Rs. 1,57,545 Crore at BE Stage by the Ministry of Finance. It has also been observed the fund for a Major Scheme like MGNREGA has been drastically reduced and barring PMAY-G, fund for other schemes by and large is kept static. Even in terms of GDP, the share of Rural Development stands at 0.8% at BE stage for 2023-24 which is less than the actual expenditure reported in 2020-21 (1.1% of GDP), 2021-22 (1.0% of GDP) and at the RE stage of 2022-23 (0.9% of GDP). Role of the Department of Rural Development is very vital for the holistic development of rural areas of the country and for that purpose adequate budgetary allocation is necessary particularly when the popular schemes like PMGSY, PMAY-G are also not immune to the inflation and rising cost of raw materials involved. More often than not, the reasons cited for stalling of Projects under various schemes emanate due to the shortage of funds generally by the second quarter of the Financial Year. By the time the funds are replenished to a certain extent, the Schemes and the beneficiaries suffer from delays. Therefore, the Committee recommend that the Department of Rural Development should chalk out quarterly and monthly expenditure plans well in advance in consultation with Stakeholder particularly the State Governments in respect of all of its schemes/programme and should undertake all possible measures for the adequacy of fund at each stage of the scheme implementation and ensure that no scheme of rural development gets hampered due to shortage of fund while also keeping a close monitoring on the availability of funds so as to raise supplementary demands or re-appropriate at opportune moment in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance.

Reply of the Government

2.2 MGNREGA:-Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is a demand driven wage employment Scheme and funds are released to the States/UTs on the basis of “agreed to” Labour Budget (LB) and performance of the States/UTs during financial year. An allocation of Rs.60,000crore has been made under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA during 2023-24. Fund release to the States/UTs is a continuous process and Central Government is committed in making funds available keeping in view the demand for work on the ground.

Whenever, additional fund is required, Ministry of Finance is requested to provide the funds. Ministry of Finance allocates additional funds for the scheme.

PMAY-G:-In order to achieve the target of “Housing for All” in rural areas, the Ministry of Rural Development is implementing Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) with effect from 1st April, 2016 to provide assistance to eligible rural households with overall target to construct 2.95 crore pucca houses with basic amenities by March, 2024. The B.E for the Financial Year 2022-23 was Rs. 20,000 crore and the RE approved was Rs.48,422crore. As per the approval of Cabinet for continuation of PMAY-G beyond 2021 up-to March 2024, the total financial implication for Central Government during the FY 2023-24 is Rs.54,487.00 crore, which has totally been approved as BE for the FY 2023-24.

PMGSY:-The budget estimate of PMGSY for the Financial Year 2023-24 is Rs. 19,000 crore. This amount along with the corresponding state share would be enough to meet the expenditure on PMGSY works to be carried by states/UTs during the current Financial Year. No reduction in BE(23-24) has been made over BE & RE of 2022-23.

Further, the allocation/release of funds to the States for implementation of PMGSY is made on the basis of the fund release proposals received from the states/

UTs and it depends, inter-alia, on works in hand, execution capacity of the States/ UTs and unspent funds available with the States/ UTs. Quarterly and Monthly Action Plans are chalked out in advance in pursuance of the guidelines of MoF and the states are regularly followed up for requirement of funds. State/ UTs have been provided with sufficient funds well on time for implementation of PMGSY scheme.

NRLM:-As far as DAY-NRLM is concerned, BE for the year 2023-24 has been increased to Rs.14129.17 Crore from the BE 2022-23 of Rs.13336.42 Crore. This Division will closely monitor the expenditure during the current financial year. Annual Action Plans for the year 2023-24 of all the States/UTs has been approved by this Ministry and quarter-wise physical targets to be achieved during the financial year 2023-24 has been finalized. This quarter-wise physical targets set to be achieved will aid to booking of expenditure on time and claim further instalment from Ministry. Therefore, situation like shortage of funds at the State level can be circumvented. The increased budget demand for 2023-24 is Rs.14129.17 crore because of following interventions is to be carried out during 2023-24.

i. DAY- NRLM aims to cover 10 crore rural households in SHGs under DAY- NRLM by 2024;
ii. Under programme, Capitalization Assistance Fund (Revolving Fund and Community Investment Corp.) of Rs. 9564 crores are to be provided
iii. Start- up Village Entrepreneurship Program (SVEP) promotes entrepreneurship through capacity building and financial support - 57808 enterprises to be supported
iv. Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) has been implemented for identification and training of women farmers on sustainable agro-ecological practices (AEP); - Will train 75 lakh SHG members under AEP.
v. Integrated Agriculture Cluster (IFC) promotion activities are important for achieving high level of economic activity; -1500 IFCs to be developed
vi. Producer Enterprise (PE) / Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) / Producer Group(PG) - 13 lakh women farmers to be mobilized in PE/ FPO/ PG.
vii. 3572 crores will be provided as interest subvention to SHGs on bank loans taken by SHGs across all districts of States except Delhi and Chandigarh.

DDU-GKY:- Under DDU-GKY scheme, the total budget provisioned for the FY 2023-24 is ₹400 Crores. The quarterly and monthly expenditure plans, as suggested by the Committee, for the DDU-GKY scheme have been chalk-out in close consultation with all relevant stakeholders viz. States/UTs, etc. The Monthly Expenditure Plan

(MEP) with Quarterly Expenditure Plan (QEP) for the DDU-GKY scheme for the FY 2023-24 are presented below in tabular format:

MEP and QEP for the FY 2023-24 -Rs. In Crores																
Total	Q1			**Total**	Q2			**Total**	Q3			**Total**	Q4			**Total**
BE	April	May	June		July	Aug	Sep		Oct	Nov	Dec		Jan	Feb	Mar	
400	0	5	10	**15**	5	12	11	**28**	72	79.2	88.8	**240**	46.8	58.5	11.7	**117**

It may be noted that the funds have been earmarked for each quarter under DDU-GKY scheme only after the consultation with states/UTs and according to their probable demand of fund quarter wise under the scheme DDU-GKY for FY 2023-24, so that the implementation of the scheme DDU-GKY will not get hampered due to the shortage of the funds.

Under the scheme of DDU-GKY a close monitoring via. PFMS is being done through the concurrent monitoring of expenditure incurred under the scheme at the State/UTs level and as well as through the monthly review meeting of the State/UTs enabling the Ministry to track the fund utilized and unspent balances lying with the State/UTs and forecast of the fund demand to be raised by the State/UTs for the relevant quarter.

RSETIs:- Under RSETI scheme, the total budget provisioned for the FY 2023-24 is ₹250 Crores. The quarterly and monthly expenditure plans, as suggested by the Committee, for the RSETI scheme have been chalk-out in close consultation with all relevant stakeholders viz. States/UTs, Sponsoring Banks, NAR, NIRD&PR etc. The Monthly Expenditure Plan (MEP) with Quarterly Expenditure Plan (QEP) for the RSETI scheme for the FY 2023-24 are presented below in tabular format:

MEP and QEP for the FY 2023-24													₹ in Crore			
Total BE	Q1			**Total**	Q2			**Total**	Q3			**Total**	Q4			**Total**
	April	May	June		July	Aug	Sep		Oct	Nov	Dec		Jan	Feb	Mar	
250	0	0	30	**30**	15	30	35	**80**	20	25	35	**80**	20	20	20	**60**

It may be noted that sufficient funds have been earmarked for each quarter under the RSETI scheme so that the scheme doesn't get hampered due to paucity of funds during the FY 2023-24.

Under RSETI scheme, demand of stakeholders, funds availability and release of funds to eligible claims are closely reviewed/monitored at JS/DIR-level on monthly basis and at Secretary-level on quarterly basis.

NSAP:- The total approved budget outlay of NSAP for five years (from 2021-22 to 2025-26) i.e. upto 15th Finance Commission cycle is Rs.47,808.31 crore. The budget allocation for 2022-23 was Rs. 9652.31 crore at BE stage which was kept at Rs. 9652.00 crore at RE stage. The full amount of the allocation has been utilized. This Department proposed BE of Rs.9652.31 crore for FY 2023-24. However, Ministry of Finance has approved allocation of Rs.9636.32 cr. In case of any inadequacy of the funds, the demand would be raised at RE stage. Also based on the pace of submission of proposals from States/UTs, MEP/QEP has already been prepared for NSAP schemes for FY 2023-24.

NIRD&PR:- BE for FY 2022-23 for release of Grants in aid to NIRD&PR was Rs. 135.46 crore, whereas the BE for this FY 2023-24 is Rs. 115.00 crore. Further the BE of Rs. 135.46 lakh for FY 2022-23 was reduced to Rs. 114.59 crore at its RE stage and 100% of the RE was utilized in the FY 2022-23.

In so far adequacy of funds is concerned, it is stated that BE for grants in aid to NIRD&PR for FY 2023-24 is Rs. 115.00 crore and it appears to fulfill the requirements of NIRD&PR keeping in view the funds released in previous years (as mentioned in table below).

S. No.	Financial Year	Funds released towards Grants in Aid to SIRDs/ETCs under MSRDP Scheme (In Crore)	Funds released towards Grants in aid to NIRD&PR (In Crore)
1.	2019-20	45.23	80.42
2.	2020-21	28.25	80.43
3.	2021-22	48.32	105.48
4.	2022-23	61.92	114.59

SIRD/ETC:- BE for FY 2022-23 towards release of funds to SIRDs/ETCs under MSRDP Scheme was Rs. 95.00 crore, whereas the BE for this FY 2023-24 for same Head is Rs. 51.24 crore. Further, in respect of adequacy of fund, it is informed that the BE towards release of funds to SIRDs/ETCs under MSRDP Scheme for FY 2022-23 amounting Rs. 95.00 crore was reduced to Rs. 60.50 crore at RE stage. All the proposals received in te Division were considered and GIA was released. There was a shortfall of appox. Rs. 2.00 crore at the fag end of the FY 2022-23, which was met by re-appropriation of funds of Rs. 2.00 Crore from the available saving within the Scheme. Out of the available fund of Rs. 62.50 crore, this Division utilised more than 99% of the grant.

The BE for release of fund to SIRDs/ETCs under MSRDP scheme is Rs. 51.24 crore in this FY 2023-24. Keeping in view the demands received from SIRD/ETC in the previous years. It appears that the BE amounting Rs. 51.24 Crore shall be sufficient to fulfil the requirements of SIRDs/ETCs (as mentioned in the table below). If additional funds shall require, it would be demanded at RE stage.

SPMRM:- So far SPMRM is concerned, the allocation for BE 2023-24 is NIL. The Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance has given 31/3/2022 as the sunset date of the Mission. Further, Department of Expenditure (DoE), Ministry of Finance vide letter dated 30/11/2022 has given permission for release of funds up to 15th March, 2023 and extended till 31.03.2023 vide OM dated 17th March, 2023, only for those works which were ongoing as on 31/3/2022. The deadline for all fund releases under SPMRM is over and no further funds are to be released in 2023-24.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021- B&A Dated 07.06.2023)

Recommendation (Serial No. 2)

2.3 The Committee note with concern the omnipresence of unspent balances across all the schemes of rural development. The huge volume of unspent amount that has accrued so far under PMGSY (Rs. 2,269.631 Crore), DAY-NRLM (Rs. 4,717.56 Crore), NSAP (Rs. 83,536.39 Lakh), SPMRM (Rs. 664.35 Crore) PMAY-G (Rs. 15,50,898.91 Lakh) among others throws a dismal picture of the financial prudence of the Department of Rural Development. The storyline has been similar over the period of years and a robust mechanism for handling such piquant situation is yet to be seen. The Committee take note of the fund sharing pattern between the Centre and State in the implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes which has its own pitfalls, viz. dependency on timely submission of Utilization Certificates and other mandatory paper works for release of tranches of money, non-timely release of State Share et. al. Although the Committee acknowledge the gradual reduction in the unspent balances over a period of time, still non-liquidation and accrual of huge sums does not augur well for the smooth implementation of schemes for desired results. Therefore, the Committee, while expecting Department of Rural Development to come out with 'out of the box' and innovative strategies recommend them to devise a more pragmatic approach and a much better fiscal prudence to tide over the issue of Government money getting tied up and remaining unspent.

Reply of the Government

2.4 MGNREGA:-Under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, fund release to the States/UTs is a continuous process depending upon the demand on the ground. Funds released towards Material & Admin Component of the programme particularly in the terminal month of the financial year becomes unspent balance in some States due to delayed available of funds to the State Govt. through RBI, subsequent delay in release by

State Finance Department to Bank Account of Implementing Agency at State, some technical issues come up during the funds transfer order generation at field or administrative issues at field.

Ministry ensures release of next instalment, only after utilization of funds against pervious central release.

PMAY-G:- During the Financial Year 2022-23, the Ministry of Finance provided Rs.13,000 crore as advance from Contingency Fund of India in the month of November, 2022 at the request of the Ministry to PMAY-G in addition to BE of Rs.20,000 crore. The total funds released under PMAY-G up-to 31.12.2022 was Rs.28, 279.12 crore. The unspent balance also includes interest accrued during the FY 2022-23, which shall mandatorily be remitted to the respective consolidated funds on pro-rata basis. The unspent balances are also due to delay on the part of State Government to transfer the corresponding State share in to the respective State Nodal Accounts.

In order to promote utilization of funds and promote construction of house, proactive monitoring has been adopted. The following initiatives are taken:

i. Regular review meetings of progress achieved.
ii. Launch of PMAY-G Dashboard for monitoring and supervision of the scheme.
iii. Regular follow ups with the State to ensure release of central and state share of funds and provision of land to landless beneficiaries in rural areas.

PMGSY:-Ministry has been regularly reviewing the position of unspent balances with the States in various monthly review meetings. States are not being released further central funds unless they spend the funds already available with them up-to a reasonable limit which is 75%. States are also being encouraged to speed up the pace of works so that funds available with them are utilized in a time bound manner. Letters have been written from Hon'ble Minister of Rural Development to Chief Ministers of States to speed up the work and complete all pending works.

Due to all these efforts unspent balance has been reduced drastically. At any point of time, States/UTs may have some amount of unspent balances as PMGSY is neither a DBT scheme nor for reimbursement of expenditure already incurred by states. Works taken up under the scheme are deposit works where money is placed in the State Nodal Account as an advance for the works to be carried out in the coming days. Further, if release of Central Share and corresponding State share from State treasury to single nodal account takes some time, States/ UTs have always some funds available in their nodal Account so that no project is hampered due to shortage of funds. Hence a minimum balance fund is required to be maintained in the single nodal accounts of States/ UTs.

NRLM:-With the implementation of guidelines on “Procedure for Release of funds under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and monitoring utilization of the funds released” by Ministry of Finance, Government of India (GoI), each instalment is now limited to 25% of the allocation and proposal for next instalment can be raised only on spending of 75% of the available funds including State Share. In case State share is not released, proposal for next instalment cannot be processed. All the sub-schemes of DAY-NRLM has been on boarded at PFMS platform in all states and all the expenditures is being done through PFMS. This enhances transparency in transfer of fund and unspent balances at all levels.

In addition to the above, this Division is now rolling out of a new electronic fund management system namely e-FMAS (e-Financial Management and Accounting System) through which expenditure position of the State can be monitored daily-wise. It will help this Division to monitor State-wise expenditure and unspent balance position more vigilantly and guide lagging States for timely utilization of funds.

Further, to control the unspent balance, Finance Review Meetings are held with States to review the progress of the expenditure and resolve any impediments in smooth flow of funds and pace of expenditure. Performance Review Meetings with the States are also held regularly at highest level under the Chairmanship of Secretary (RD) which are attended by the Additional Chief Secretaries /Principal Secretaries of all States.

With all the above measures being implemented, it is expected that liquidation of unspent balances lying with the States and implementing agencies is certain and unspent balance getting accumulated will shrunk.

NSAP:- The actual expenditure under NSAP schemes as on 31.03.2023 is Rs.9652.00 crore which is 100% of RE (Rs.9652.00 crore). There is an inbuilt mechanism of monitoring unspent balances with States/UTs in NSAP guidelines where the unspent balance is reduced from the first instalment to be released to States/UTs. Now, since grants are released in four tranches of 25% each on reporting expenditure of 75% of earlier released funds instead of two instalments of 50% each on reporting 60% expenditure, the issue has largely been addressed. Besides, since pensions are released by most of the States/UTs on monthly basis, hence there is very little possibility of building up of unspent balance with States/UTs. The unspent balance reported for NSAP is mostly the last month releases made to the States/UTs.

SPMRM:- The States started FY 2022-23 with the unspent balance from the funds released in the last nine days of the previous financial year 2021-22 after permission of DoE. Therefore States had Rs. 887.16 crore unspent balance of previous years. (this includes Rs. 211.64 crore (central + state share) worth funds released in the last week of FY 2021-22). Thereafter in compliance to the DEA order regarding sunset date, the States were not permitted to spend funds till July 2022. Department of Expenditure (DoE), Ministry of Finance vide letter dated 12/07/2022 and 30/11/2022 gave permission for release of funds up to 15th March 2023. Therefore till date Rs. 820.66 crore have been released to States / UTs till date. Now the States are utilizing the funds towards completion of ongoing works as on 31.03.2022, and achieving completion of clusters. It is also submitted that Rs. 664.35 crore unspent balance for 276 cluster with ongoing works works out to average Rs. 2.40 crore per cluster, which will further drop as works are completed.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

Recommendation (Serial No. 5)

2.5 The Committee are also constrained to note that the non-adherence to the provision of delay compensation has cropped up frequently. The provision entailed in the MGNREG Act is legally binding and should be mandatorily complied with. In this context, the Committee, through their experiences of ground reality and the facts and figures apprised to them during study visits are seized of the situation that the State Machinery has time and again failed in providing the delay compensation due to being late in the payment of wages to the beneficiaries. Schedule II, Para 29 of the MGNREG Act categorically outlines the provisions for the wage payments and speaks about compensation factor in cases of delay in the payment of wages after 15 days from the closure of muster roll. Since such delays in timely payment of wages to the beneficiaries defeat the very objective of the Act, the Committee strongly recommend that timely and hassle free wages to MGNREGA beneficiaries should be ensured by the Department of Rural Development. Moreover, the Department should ensure stricter execution of the provision of payment of compensation in case of delay in the payment of wages and bring onboard all the stakeholders for the compliance in 'letter and spirit'.

Reply of the Government

2.6 The Programme Officer will ensure that compensation claims are settled during the prescribed time, i.e. within 15 days of compensation being due, and such claims will not be allowed to be accumulated without any decision of acceptance or rejection. In all cases of rejection, the Programme Officer shall give detailed reason(s) for rejection on NREGASoft and maintain record of the same, in her/ his office for future verification.

District Programme Coordinator will monitor this regularly. The State Government (District Programme Coordinator and Programme Officer in particular) shall be responsible for operationalising the system for payment of compensation for delayed wage payments. The details are to be uploaded on NREGASoft so that the liability of each functionary/ agency can be determined in case of a delayed payment.

Besides, systematic solutions are also being taken to ensure that wages are paid on time. Continuous efforts are being made by the Central Government to ensure adequate number of servers for the States. The States/UTs have also been directed to ensure the following as well:

a. Timely submission of Labour Budget, which in turn will affect fund release and flow of funds to the States/ districts
b. Universalisation of e-FMS for booking all types of expenditure (viz. wages, material and admin)
c. Identification of issues relating to internet connectivity and other infrastructural bottlenecks and accordingly working out a strategy to remove the bottlenecks in a specified timeframe.
d. Deployment of adequate technical personnel/ Bare Foot Technicians so that measurements are taken at the worksite by the authorized personnel within three days of closure of the muster roll.

In addition, the issue of timely payment is regularly discussed by this Department with the States/UTs during various meeting and they are also sensitized in this regard through letters issued by this Department. It always remained an endeavour of this Department to ensure timely payment to the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS workers.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

Recommendation (Serial No. 8)

2.7 The Committee note the another pertinent demand, that has been time and again made, is that of increasing of days of guaranteed work under MGNREGA from the existing 100 days. The Committee are seized of the sentiments of MGNREGA beneficiaries and resonate with the pressing need felt by them for increasing the number of guaranteed days of work under MGNREGA equitably. MGNREG Act was notified in 2005 and the entire country was covered by April, 2008. Almost 15 years have passed since the full implementation of the Act and “much water has flown under the bridge” by now. With each passing year, the need for change has been felt in the Act so as to keep pace with the changing demands of the time. The burgeoning population of the country with majority residing in the villages and a huge number of rural populace still trying to fulfil the basic necessity, guaranteed days of work, perhaps, is a huge solace for such class of society. The Committee also find during the examination of Demands for Grants 2023-24 that Government of India has constituted a Committee under Shri Amarjeet Sinha to study the performance of States and the governance issues under MGNREGS, which in itself is a clear cut indicator that review of basic features of MGNREGS is a long felt demand. Increasing the number of days of work at the Central level itself will certainly go a long way in providing a stable source of income to such poor and destitute class of beneficiaries who don't have any other resort but to take up unskilled work under MGNREGA for their survival. Hence, the Committee, with utmost empathy, recommend that the Department of Rural Development should relook into the possibility of increasing the number of guaranteed days of work under MGNREGA and come out with some concrete measures in this regard.

Reply of the Government

2.8 Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (Mahatma Gandhi NREGA) is to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household in rural areas of the country whose adult members volunteers to do unskilled manual work. In addition to this, there is a provision for up to additional 50 days of wage employment in a financial year in drought/natural calamity affected notified rural areas. **As per Section 3 (4) of the Act, the State Governments may make provision for providing additional days of employment beyond the period guaranteed under the Act from their own funds.**

The Ministry mandates the provision of additional 50 days of wage employment (beyond the stipulated 100 days) to every Scheduled Tribe Household in a forest area, provided that these households have no other private property except for the land rights provided under the Forest Rights Acts(FRA),2006.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 1.20 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 9)

2.9 The Committee note that PMAY-G is one of the marquee scheme of the Government of India with the commitment to provide "Housing for All" by 2024. To fulfil the objective, under PMAY-G, assistance of Rs. 1,20,000/- in plains and Rs. 1,30,000/- in hilly States, difficult areas and IAP districts is provided for the construction of the house. The scheme has been extended beyond March, 2022 till March, 2024 to complete the remaining houses within the cumulative target of 2.95 Crore houses. It has also been observed that 2.15 Crore houses have been completed as on 07.02.2023 and still large number of houses are to be completed by the target date. In this context, the Committee have been frequently enlightened about the ground reality during their course of examination that the unit assistance provided under the scheme is not sufficient and is also one of the reasons for the non-completion of houses within time. The inadequacy of assistance component comes under the lens more so, due to the rising cost of raw materials and infrastructure logistics required for construction of house. It is not a hidden fact that inflation does have a telling effect on cost factors and severely hampers the budget of beneficiaries under PMAY-G. Thus, it becomes all the more imperative to take into account the requirement of increasing the unit assistance under PMAY-G. The Committee also find that the hilly terrains are even more challenging for construction works and transportation costs are an additional burden at such places. Moreover, till the time assistance was rendered under PMAY-U, the amount totalled around Rs. 2.5 Lakh which reflected non-parity between assistance component of PMAY-G and PMAY-U, and belied any logic for such difference in rural and urban sectors. Keeping all the considerations under view and taking into account that still a large chunk of house is to be constructed, the Committee recommend that the Department of Rural Development should revise the per unit assistance under PMAY-G to such tune which would cover the rising cost of construction in present times.

Reply of the Government

2.10 The scheme provides financial Assistance of Rs. 1.20 lakh in plain areas and Rs. 1.30 lakhs in hilly states (including North Eastern States and UTs of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh), difficult areas and Integrated Action Plan (IAP) districts. Additional assistance of Rs. 12,000/- is extended for construction of toilets through convergence with Swachh Bharat Mission – Gramin (SBM-G), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) or other dedicated source of funding. It is mandatory to provide support of 90/95 person days unskilled wage employment at the current rates to a PMAY-G beneficiary for construction of his / her house in convergence with MGNREGS. There is also provision of convergence with other schemes for provision of basic amenities to beneficiaries of

PMAY-G:- electricity connection through SAUBHAGYA scheme of Ministry of Power, LPG connection through PMUY of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas & Supply of drinking water through Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) of Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti.

In addition, the Ministry has got the approval of the Union Cabinet for continuation of the scheme beyond March, 2021 till March, 2024 for completion of remaining houses as per existing norms of PMAY-G. The financial implication for continuation of scheme till March, 2024 was estimated on basis of the unit assistance of Rs. 1.20 lakhs for plain areas and Rs. 1.30 lakhs for difficult areas, IAP districts, NE States, H.P., Uttarakhand and UTs of J&K and Ladakh.

At present, there is no proposal for revision in the unit assistance under PMAY-G.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

Recommendation (Serial No. 10)

2.11 The Committee note that the Department of Rural Development at present is focussing on achieving the target of 2.95 Crore houses by March, 2024. For the remaining households in the finalized Awaas+ lists over and above the target of 2.95 Crore houses, there is no proposal now. The Committee find such reply devoid of any empathy and future vision on the part of Department of Rural Development. Awaas plus Survey was carried out to ascertain the quantum of leftover eligible beneficiaries and no roadmap planned for such households would indeed serve as a deterrent in realising the actual objective of “Housing for All’’. Since the scheme started with an initial goal of 2.95 Crore houses, realisation of such target would theoretically complete the scheme but the future of remaining leftover households would be left undecided. The Committee are of the view that since the scheme has already received extension to March, 2024 from earlier date of March, 2022, it would be perhaps appropriate if efforts are remodelled and strategies revisited to include the leftover households also in the ambit of target so that the grievances of leftover households are also met. Therefore, the Committee recommend that Department of Rural Development should recalibrate their target in consultation with the Ministry of Finance and other Stakeholders for the timely inclusion of leftover eligible beneficiaries so that the real objective of “Housing for All” is achieved.

Reply of the Government

2.12 The Union Cabinet in its meeting held on 8th December, 2021 has approved the continuation of PMAY-G beyond March, 2021 to complete the remaining houses within cumulative target of 2.95 crore houses by March, 2024. At present, there is no proposal for revision in target of 2.95 crore houses under PMAY-G.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

Recommendation (Serial No. 11)

2.13 The Committee note that a common grievance associated with PMAY-G which keeps on cropping up through the ground level experiences of the Members and observations during the study visits of the Committee, is that of selection of wrong/ineligible beneficiaries under PMAY-G. The base upon which the beneficiaries under PMAY-G were identified was the housing deprivation parameters of Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC), 2011. Much time has elapsed since the base year and it has been widely observed that many eligible beneficiaries have become ineligible while a whole lot of eligible beneficiaries have surfaced. Inordinate delay in the completion of target of the scheme within the deadline would definitely give rise to such precarious situations which would challenge the administrative acumen and farsightedness of the Department of Rural Development. Alleged instances of arbitrariness at the Gram Panchayat level on issues ranging from fiddling with the definition of 'Kuccha' & 'Pucca' houses on flimsy and whimsical grounds for partiality in allotment to the possession of equipment of basic needs as exclusion criteria begets anomalies in the inclusion of genuine beneficiaries. Such complaints are galore at the ground level and should not be left unheard. The Committee opine that there is still ample time-left for the Department of Rural Development to iron out the rough patches in the implementation of PMAY-G and create a robust mechanism for the redressal of grievances associated with the identification of genuine beneficiaries at ground level. Hence, the Committee recommend that the Department of Rural Development should adopt stricter measures to earnestly examine the issues surrounding eligibility of beneficiaries under PMAY-G so that genuine beneficiaries do not remain deprived of the benefits of such a visionary scheme of the Government of India.

Reply of the Government

2.14 The beneficiaries under PMAY-G are identified on the basis of housing deprivation parameters and exclusion criteria prescribed under Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC)-2011. The target of 2.95 crore was arrived at on that basis. The auto generated priority list of households from SECC, 2011 database was provided to the States/Union Territories for conducting verification by Gram Sabhas followed by an appellate process. The number of eligible beneficiaries thus made available through SECC database currently stands at 2.08 crore (approx.). Thereafter, the Government conducted Awaas+ survey to identify those beneficiaries which claimed to have been left out under the 2011 SECC and thus prepared an additional list of potential beneficiaries. In order to fill the gap between overall target of PMAY-G and beneficiaries available through SECC 2011, Awaas+ data is being utilized.

A grievances redressal mechanism has also been set up under PMAY-G for redressal of grievances relating to bribe seeking, ineligible households being provided assistance under the scheme, etc. The Ministry gets these grievances checked through State Government Officials and/or National Level Monitors of MoRD. In cases where the complaint against the Officials/ Panchayat Adhikari/ Pradhan etc. is found to be true during enquiry by Central Government/ State Government team, prompt action is taken against the erring Officials. Following actions are suggested by Ministry to the States for immediate action against the erring Officials:

i. FIR be filed against the erring Officials immediately.
ii. Action to be taken against the concerned BDO, who is second signatory of the FTOs under PMAY-G and other supervisors who would have certified and inspected the works.
iii. Show cause be served against the Officials and other concerned officials in cases where there is delayed action against the erring Officials.
iv. State/UT to publicize widely the action taken in the matter including on social media.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

Recommendation (Serial No. 12)

2.15 The Committee are perturbed to find that even at this juncture when the scheme is approaching its last stage after getting extension to March, 2024, there are still 2,93,598 beneficiaries remaining to get land/assistance from the State/UT to construct their house under PMAY-G. It has been highlighted by the Department of Rural Development that it is the responsibility of the States/UT to provide land to landless beneficiaries and that the Department of Rural Development has been in constant touch with the States/UTs for ensuring availability of land to the landless. Despite the efforts of Department of Rural Development being cited in the replies to the Committees, the Committee find the pace of reaching a logical culmination to such issue quite slow. Not much time is remaining for the scheme to reach its deadline and impediment of such nature needs to be taken care of as early as possible for the successful realisation of the target of the scheme. The 'need of the hour' is to further press upon the State Machinery with a sense of greater clarity and increased coordination with all the Stakeholders for expediting the mitigation of pendency. Thus, the Committee urge Department of Rural Development to increase their momentum of persuasive efforts with the concerned States/UTs on 'war footing' for attaining timely resolution of the issue of allocation of land to the landless beneficiaries under PMAY-G.

Reply of the Government

2.16 Providing land to the landless PMAY-G beneficiaries for the construction of the houses is of utmost importance since they are the most deserving beneficiaries in the Permanent Wait List (PWL) of the scheme. Further for achieving the year-wise sub-targets and cumulative targets under PMAY-G providing land to such beneficiaries is very crucial. As per the Framework for Implementation of PMAY-G, it is the responsibility of the concerned State/UT to provide land to the landless beneficiary from the government land or any other land including public land (Panchayat common land, community land or land belonging to other local authorities).

The matter of providing land to landless beneficiaries is reviewed regularly with the States/UTs and taken up by the Government of India with the States /UTs at the highest level. Further, the issue of providing land to landless beneficiaries under PMAY-G is being regularly taken up with States/UTs in the Review Meetings, Zonal Workshops, PRC meetings, EC meetings, Video conferences, etc.

This Ministry is considering the withdrawal of the target associated with landless beneficiaries who have been not sanctioned houses as of now. Further, the withdrawn target would be re-distributed among the well-performing states. In this case, the liability of providing land and fund for the construction of houses to such beneficiaries existing in PWL of PMAY-G would then entirely be shifted onto the concerned State/ UT.

To efficiently monitor the progress in providing land to landless beneficiaries under PMAY-G, an IT module for tagging the landless beneficiaries has been developed in AwaasSoft. The construction of the multi-story building is allowed under the PMAY-G and the same is being encouraged at least where the land is scarcely available or the cost of the land is very high.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 1.23 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 13)

2.17 The Committee note that Full Depth Reclamation (FDR) Technology is one of the new initiatives being undertaken by the Department of Rural Development in the construction of roads under PMGSY in order to achieve the twin target of being economical and reduction in carbon footprint of road construction projects. The Committee further note that 7,669 km of roads have been sanctioned under FDR technology in which 5,459 km is allotted to U.P. alone. Other States are also gearing up for the use of this technology. Rural road is a State Subject and PMGSY roads are constructed by the State Governments. Although, the role played by State Governments in carrying out PMGSY works is paramount, however, PMGSY, being a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, the role of Centre goes beyond only the issuance of notification and guidelines. The Committee have been apprised during the course of their deliberations that usage of FDR technology at ground level is extremely poor owing to various shortcomings such as unavailability of sufficient number of machines and inordinate delay in the soil testing procedures employed under the said technology. The concept envisaged for FDR technology was never meant to stall the projects under PMGSY but to hasten the completion of road construction projects by the usage of a new and innovative method. Department of Rural Development need to have a hawkish mode of surveillance on the actual implementation of their methods and technique and not remain satiated only by theorising new concepts. Therefore, the Committee strongly recommend that the Department of Rural Development should ensure that the usage of FDR technology takes place as envisaged, and does not remain unimplemented due to lack of intent and wherewithal required for availing the benefits of new technology so as to ensure speedy completion of road construction projects under PMGSY.

Reply of the Government

2.18 Right now FDR technology is under implementation mainly in the State of Uttar Pradesh at a large scale. Other states such as Jharkhand, Bihar, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh Assam, Tripura & some NE States have also been sanctioned works under FDR. Since FDR has been introduced for the first time under PMGSY, some teething problems were bound to happen. However as the work progresses, adoption of the technology will stabilize and the experiences gained will become helpful in ruling out similar problem in future. The experiences gained from implementation of FDR in Uttar Pradesh are being shared with other States. Regular handholding for FDR is undertaken for the States. Workshops having been organised in the State capitals and officials implementing the FDRs have also been exposed to FDR works through regular on site visit. Also many good quality contractors have shown interest in FDR works, and equipment and machinery is not an issue as many equipment being used in FDR works have been mobilised by the concerned parties doing the FDR works.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

Recommendation (Serial No. 15)

2.19 The committee is fully aware of the mandatory inbuilt mechanism in PMGSY for consultation and consideration of the suggestions of the concerned Members of Parliament during the finalization of road plans. Despite the strong theoretical provision laid down under PMGSY, the Committee find themselves gripped with regular complaints from the Members of Parliament regarding the non-compliance of the consultative procedures in 'letter and spirit'. Various type of aberrations are noticed which inter-alia comprises of blatant floundering of norms at certain places involving non-consultation to merely completion of formalities by obtaining consent of the Members without providing proper details/inspections of the ground locations. Members of Parliament are single point source of remedy for the grievances of local population at the grass root level in constituencies and are fully equipped to provide valuable insight and apprise public demands to the nodal authorities who construct the roads under PMGSY. Thus, it becomes all the more important to ensure that Members of Parliament are always kept informed and their suggestions, even at a later stage for inclusion of new roads are required to be considered on merit gauging the local needs/demands. Therefore, the Committee in all earnest recommend that the Department of Rural Development should ensure the strict compliance of all the consultative provisions with MPs while finalizing the road projects under PMGSY by impressing upon the States the necessity of the same.

Reply of the Government

2.20 As per the extant guidelines of the scheme, the proposals received from the Members of Parliament by the stipulated date is to be given full consideration in the District Panchayat which would record the reason in each case of non-inclusion. Such proposals that cannot be included would be communicated in writing to the Members of Parliament with reasons for non-inclusion of such proposals in each case. The same has been reiterated to the state Governments vide this Ministry's advisory dated 2nd June, 2020. While forwarding MP references to the states, the said advisory is quoted every time and the states are asked to consider the proposals following the guidelines of PMGSY and the advisory dated 2nd June, 2020.

In order to make sure that the guidelines have been adhered to, the consent of MPs and the duly filled MP-I & MP-II proforma are checked by NRIDA and only after that, projects are sanctioned by the Ministry. If any complaint is received regarding non adherence of the guidelines, immediate action is taken by the Ministry to make the concerned state government comply with the relevant provisions of PMGSY guidelines regarding consultations with the Public representatives.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

Recommendation (Serial No. 16)

2.21 The Committee are concerned to note that the non compliance with the provision of inviting all elected representatives of the concerned area to the foundation laying and inauguration ceremonies of PMGSY roads. Reportedly, the explicit guidelines that the foundation stone for a PMGSY road should be laid and the road should also be inaugurated by the Members of Parliament (Lok Sabha) does not seem to be adhered to by the concerned authorities at many-a-times. The Committee are of the firm view that the presence of Member of Parliament at such events are one of the means of ensuring accountability of the executing authorities of projects of a Centrally Sponsored Scheme like PMGSY which are aimed at public welfare and are constructed through the Government coffers. Representing sentiments of large masses of public, the Members of Parliament should never be by-passed or neglected. The role of State Government is no doubt much more in ensuring non-deviation from the protocol provisions mandated under PMGSY, but, the Yojana being a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, the nodal implementing body, Department of Rural Development cannot shy away from their responsibility. In view of the ongoing deviation from extant provision, the Committee recommend that the Department of Rural Development should go beyond citing theoretical provisions and look into the matter with utmost seriousness so that Members of Parliament are given due recognition befitting their privileges.

Reply of the Government

2.22 With a view to ensure effective participation of Hon'ble Members of Parliament, the following stipulations have been made with regard to laying of foundations stone and inauguration of PMGSY works: -

a. All elected representatives associated with the programme should be duly invited to the foundation laying and inauguration ceremonies;
b. The function should be held in a manner befitting social functions with due regard to protocol requirements, particularly in relation to Hon'ble Union Ministers and Hon'ble Ministers from States; and
c. The foundation stone for a PMGSY road should be laid and the road should also be inaugurated by the Hon'ble Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) with the function presided over by the local Hon'ble Minister or other dignitary, as per the State Protocol.

The above guidelines issued by the Ministry clearly mention that the foundation stone is to be laid and the roads are to be inaugurated explicitly by Hon'ble MPs.

These stipulations have been time and again reiterated to the States/ UTs, most recently on 3rd February, 2022.

However, the department has been in receipt of complaints regarding Hon'ble MPs not being invited in Foundation Stone/ Inauguration ceremonies of PMGSY works. Such complaints, whenever received are taken very seriously. Comments are sought from the respective States and they are asked to follow the PMGSY guidelines regarding inauguration and foundation stone strictly and rectify their mistake by holding the ceremony again in presence of Hon'ble MP. In the various review meeting with States issues relating to non-adherence of instructions are taken up and States are requested to follow the guidelines in letter and spirit.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

Recommendation (Serial No. 17)

2.23 The Committee note that National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) is a 100% Centrally Funded Centrally Sponsored Scheme which has been continued for 15th Finance Commission Cycle (2021-26) also. NSAP caters to 3.09 Crore BPL beneficiaries with a scheme-wise ceiling/cap for each State/UT on the number of beneficiaries (recently revised in September, 2022). Termed as a Social Security Programme coming to the aid of old aged, widows, disabled persons and bereaved families on death of primary bread winner, the amount of assistance in the Components of Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS) and Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) ranging from Rs. 200/- to Rs. 500/- per month lefts much to be desired. The meagre assistance amount has been a cause of concern to the Committee for a long period of time and the Committee find this abysmally low amount, when the cost of living has increased substantially, not acceptable at all. It is beyond comprehension as to how can such low assistance provide any sort of relief to beneficiaries who belong to extremely marginalised and economically distressed section of the society. From the replies of the Department of Rural Development, the Committee also observe that Task Force under Dr. Mihir Shah (2012), Expert Group under Sumit Bose (2016), Evaluation Studies by NITI Aayog (2020) and Department of Rural Development (2021) have also emphasized on the need to enhance the Pension amounts and a proposal was submitted to the Cabinet for the revamp of NSAP, however, the approval for continuation of NSAP in its current form was given. The Committee feel that there is an urgent requirement of the upward revision in the assistance component of NSAP and all efforts should be taken for carrying out revamp of the programme. Therefore, with deep concern, the Committee recommend that the Department of Rural Development should submit a new proposal for the consideration of the Cabinet and also utilise their convincing ability in coordinating with the Stakeholders involved so that the sentiments of needy beneficiaries do not remain unheard of and an upward revision of assistance under all the components of NSAP is materialised.

Reply of the Government

2.24 The Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution enjoin upon the State to undertake within its means a number of welfare measures, targeting the poor and the destitute in particular. Article 41 of the Constitution of India directs the

State to provide public assistance to its citizens in case of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement as well as in other cases of undeserved wants, within the limit of State’s economic capacity and development (7th Schedule). National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) came into effect in the direction of fulfilling this Directive Principles of the State Policy.

Currently, the eligible old aged, widows, and disabled persons of BPL families are provided monthly pension ranging from Rs.200/- to Rs.500/- p.m. and in the case of death of the breadwinner of such family, a lump sum assistance of Rs.20,000/- is given to the bereaved family under schemes of NSAP. The programme has undergone many changes since inception in terms of the composition, eligibility criterion and funding pattern. The last revision in amount was done in 2012.

In this regard, it is pertinent to mention that social security, invalid and old age pensions figure as items 23 and 24 in the Concurrent List (7th Schedule) of the Constitution and therefore, both the Central Government and States/ UTs have the responsibility for working in tandem in rolling out a comprehensive social security framework for the country. Accordingly, the State/UTs are encouraged to provide top up amounts at least an equivalent amount to the assistance provided by the Central Govt. so that the beneficiaries could get a decent level of assistance. At present, apart from the aforesaid central assistance, the States/UTs are adding top up amounts ranging from Rs.50 to Rs.3200 per month per beneficiaries under pension schemes of NSAP, as a result, on an average, the NSAP beneficiaries are getting monthly pension of Rs.1000 per month in several States, making the assistance amount satisfactory one.

Further, based on various recommendations/ evaluation studies, the Department submitted the proposal for revamping of NSAP including revision in amount of pension and coverage of beneficiaries. The Cabinet, while deciding continuation of the NSAP for the 15th Finance Commission cycle (2021-26), has recently considered the same. Considering the available financial space, the Cabinet in its meeting held on 19th January 2022 approved continuation of NSAP in its present form. Hence, it may not be appropriate to bother the Cabinet by submitting a new proposal on the same issue on which a considered view has recently been taken by it.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 1.29 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 18)

2.25 The Committee note that one of the key components of the DAY-NRLM is the creation of Self Help Groups of women for the achievement of Universal Social Mobilization of rural poor households. The idea of SHGs is indeed a very noble one at core with upliftment and empowerment of rural women being the target. However, the Committee note that during the ongoing financial year 2022- 23, the number of households mobilized into SHGs upto December, 2022 stands at 50% of the annual target and the other key performance indicator like number of Mahila Kisans Supported (65%), amount of bank credit accessed (68%), number of entrepreneurs supported (66%) are also observed to be lagging behind. The Committee is aware of the importance of the objectives of DAYNRLM and desire that a scheme of such importance does not fall back, rather, picks up the momentum and move forward in achieving the target of Social Inclusion and human development. Therefore, the Committee recommend that the Department of Rural Development should spruce up their efforts and ensure that all corrective methods are taken for expediting the performance of the scheme so that the noble aim of development of rural women keep on marching forward.

Reply of the Government

2.26 The progress on Household mobilization and SHG formation for FY 22-23 till March 23 against the annual plan is as follows -

Indicator	Annual Plan 22-23	Progress till March 23	% Achievement
HH Mobilization	10677916	8173293	77
SHG Formation	826690	844502	102

NRLM has taken several efforts to expedite the mobilization and SHG formation. All States has been asked to plan and prepare strategies to complete saturation by the end of the FY 23-24. In this regard, fortnightly review is being conducted by JS,RL and monthly review is being done with Principle Secretaries of all States by SRD, Secretary, DoRD Further, Social mobilization campaign has been launched from 18th April – 30th June, 2023 to be conducted in all States in order to expedite mobilization.

- In the financial Year 2022-23, the achievement of Mahila Kisan is 100% against the target.

- SHG Bank Linkage progress in FY 22-23: Against the annual target of 42.67 lakh SHGs, 51.11 lakh SHGs were provided Bank credit. An amount of Rs. 1.55 lakh crore was disbursed against the target of Rs. 1.39 lakh crore. The achievement against the targets is more than 100%.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

Recommendation (Serial No. 19)

2.27 The Committee acquainted during the course of examination of Demands for Grants (2023-24) that the reason for zero allocation at BE level to SPMRM for 2023-24 is that the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance had declared 31st March, 2022 as the closing date for the Mission and as per the DoE OM dated 12.07.2022 and 30.11.2022, permission has been granted only for the completion of already committed liability as on 31.03.2022 through one time permission for the release of funds till 15th March, 2023. At this point, the Committee reminisce that SPMRM was launched in 2016 to develop 300 Clusters in 28 State and 6 UTs which would act as rural growth centres having urban amenities and services. However, only 3 clusters have been completed as on 31.01.2023 (Revapar, Gujarat; Vevaji, Maharashtra and Aibawk, Mizoram) while 270 cluster completion target is to be achieved till March, 2023. The Committee are not happy with the manner with which the Department of Rural Development is handling such a visionary programme that there is a probability of vast majority of the clusters remaining incomplete. It seems extremely difficult to complete the pendency within such short span when the funds are available only till 15th March, 2023. It is a matter of concern that the goals for which the Scheme was mooted remain unfulfilled. Thus, the Committee feel that the Department of Rural Development should take concrete steps for the completion of targets. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Department of Rural Development to act on 'war footing' for the utilisation of funds against SPMRM while also initiating their diplomatic channels for obtaining some extra time for the completion of projects.

Reply of the Government

2.28 "In line with the one-time permission by DoE for release of funds under the Mission only upto 31st March 2023, Ministry has released Rs. 820.66 crore to all States/UTs against the permission for release of Rs. 986.56 crore. Some of the States have confirmed that they do not require more funds for completion of works. The States are allowed to utilize the released funds for completion of works and achieving cluster completion. Ministry is closely following up with all States for faster completion of works. However, owing to the nature of works such as long gestation civil works, long lead time procurement, quality considerations for works, weather related constraints States have requested for more time for completion of works. The States have committed to completed the 278 clusters with ongoing works by December 2023. Ministry will continue to closely track progress with States for faster completion." (DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

Recommendation (Serial No. 20)

2.29 The Committee are concerned to note that only 60.82% of the projects are shown to be completed under SAGY. The primary reason has been stated to be loss of interest in the programme due to lack of special funding and that of district administration being not so proactive in the implementation of the programme. The Committee note that SAGY was launched on 11 October, 2014 with the aim of creating developed model gram panchayats across the country which would act as a guiding light for the other gram panchayats to follow, leading to a holistic development across the country. No special funding mechanism was envisaged for this Yojana as it has to be run through prioritising and convergence of already applicable welfare schemes of the Government of India. The Committee have been highly impressed with the concept of SAGY and are surprised to observe the sort of bottlenecks being faced by the Yojana. Such futuristic vision which incorporates dovetailing of various ongoing schemes and expedites their prioritisation, needs to be actively pursued with, so that a definite Gram Panchayat develops into a model one without any extra funding. In view of the foregoing, the Committee urge upon the Department of Rural Development to increase their effort for revitalizing the concept of SAGY through effective coordination of all Stakeholders involved at State/District level and also try to popularise the concept even further for the concrete utilisation of Government fund of different Schemes through prioritisation in a specific channel.

Reply of the Government

2.30 1 Under Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY), the Gram Panchayats (GPs) prepare their Village Development Plans (VDPs) containing various activities for the holistic development so as to transform the GPs into Adarsh Grams and also inspire the neighbouring GPs. The Activities proposed/included in VDPs are implemented through various schemes of the Government of India as well as the State Governments in convergence mode. Some of the major activities that are required to be saturated in the SAGY GPs are as under:

i. Total Road Connectivity
ii. Complete Digitization
iii. Water connection and self sufficiency
iv. Organic farming
v. Solid Liquid Waste management
vi. Renewable Energy
vii. 100% enrolment in school education
viii. Access to Health service
ix. 100% enrolment under social security schemes
x. Afforestation programme

2. As on date, 3176 Saansad Adarsh Grams (SAGs) have been identified by Hon'ble MPs, out of which 2,655 SAGs have uploaded their VDPs on the SAGY portal (www.saanjhi.gov.in). Further, a total of 2,35,305 projects have been planned under the VDPs, out of which 1,68,272 projects (70%) have been completed. The Ministry has taken various measures for implementation of the Scheme. The details of these measures are elaborated as under:-

i. The Ministry has brought out a compilation of 127 Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored and 1806 State Schemes for convergence under SAGY. This document serves as a ready reckoner especially for the Members of Parliament, District and Village level officials about the different schemes for possible convergence at the GP level. This document is available on SAGY website (saanjhi.gov.in) and is updated periodically.
ii. 17 Ministries of Government of India have issued appropriate advisories to accord priority to SAGY in 26 Schemes administered by them.
iii. Further, the Ministry has issued advisory to States /UTs on 1st March 2023 to add / saturate ten major activities for holistic development of SAGY GPs.
iv. SAGY is reviewed by the National Level Committee (NLC) on Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) headed by Secretary, Rural Development with representatives from 20 Ministries/Departments to identify bottlenecks, monitor, review, facilitate cross-learning and initiating remedial action wherever necessary including changes to the guidelines of their respective schemes/ programmes. In the fourth meeting of NLC held on 28th June, 2021, the representatives of the concerned Ministries/ Departments were requested to saturate SAGY GPs, while implementing their schemes.
v. The States are required to conduct the State Level Empowered Committee (SLEC) meetings headed by the Chief Secretary, once in a quarter, to review the implementation process and to ensure seamless

convergence of schemes among different State Government Departments.

vi. The Ministry organized an orientation programme for the newly elected MPs of 17th Lok Sabha on SAGY on 3rd December, 2019. The Minister of Rural Development has also written to all Chief Ministers vide letter dated 17th June, 2021 to organize similar Workshops for orientation of MPs in their States/UTs.

vii. The Ministry provides training to the Charge Officers and other stakeholders of the State on preparation of VDP and the various approaches of convergence of schemes. Capacity building programmes for the State Nodal Officers, State Team of Trainers and Charge Officers of SAGY Gram Panchayats are organized periodically through National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Hyderabad.

viii. At the national level, a separate web-based MIS is made available at SAGY website http://saanjhi.gov.in for scheme monitoring by stakeholders and regular update of implementation of VDPs by States/ UTs.

ix. The SAGY website has also been revamped with more pertinent information related to the scheme for comprehensive view by the public. The website contains detailed information, extensive reports, graphs and maps on the progress of the scheme. Also, the portal is linked with Mission Antyodaya website through API to provide ranking and gap of SAGY GPs with regard to public service delivery systems and availability of infrastructure facilities.

x. An exclusive MP Dashboard has been developed on SAGY website wherein centrality of Hon'ble MPs is more visible. They can log-in and check the progress of the selected GPs and review it. They can also access the MA score to assess the progress. Further, the concerns/views given in the comments section by the user from the GP will be visible to the Hon’ble MP, District Collector, Charge officer for necessary action.

xi. The dynamic ranking of SAGY Gram Panchayats on the basis of parameters relating to scheme implementation process has been developed and placed on the portal so as to instill competition amongst the selected SAGY GPs.

xii. MoRD has organized five batches of orientation workshops (held on 21st and 22nd December 2021, 27th January 2022, 4th and 5th August 2022) of representatives of Hon'ble MPs to build their capacities for better coordination with State Governments in implementation of SAGY programme.

xiii. The Ministry has organized a CSR conclave on 20th December 2022 with Corporates and PSUs in collaboration with Transforming Rural India Foundation (TRIF) to leverage funds for SAGY GPs.

xiv. The Ministry organized AchhiAadat Campaigns in 5 SAGY GPs in Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand since February 2023 under the Chairmanship of concerned Hon'ble MPs and JS (SAGY) to inculcate hygienic behaviour and practices among the villagers of SAGY GPs.

xv. The Ministry has also started periodical bulk SMS service to remind all stakeholders of SAGY about their respective responsibilities in implementation of the programme.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

Recommendation (Serial No. 21)

2.31 The Committee are aware of the fact that the District and State level DISHA meetings are to be conducted once in 3 months and 6 months respectively to keep an hawkish eye over the implementation of various schemes of the Government and to have a close-up of their progress through the interaction of public representatives and the Government Officials. The sole aim of such meetings is overseeing the effective utilisation of Government money for the welfare of the commons masses and as such these meetings assume paramount importance and a tool of great value. However, on umpteen occasions, the Committee have been made aware of the glaring irregularity and casual approach elicited by the District/State authorities in the mandated regular holding of DISHA meetings. The Members of Parliament are left ‘high and dry’ on various occasions as their repeated plea for holding DISHA meetings and their effective follow up falls on ‘deaf ears’. Moreover, concerned Officials also bypass these meetings and instead send junior level officers in their place who are not much aware of the developments around the schemes being implemented in the area. As on 30th January, only 937 meetings at District Level, while as low as only 10 meetings at the State level have been conducted for the year 2022-23. Since it is very much necessary the Members of Parliament review the status of implementation of schemes of the Government of India in their constituencies, the Committee strongly recommend that the Department of Rural Development should devise a robust mechanism for holding of DISHA meetings on regular basis with the attendance of concerned Officers and accountability may be fixed on the erring officials.

Reply of the Government

2.32 Department is actively pursuing with the State Governments and district administrations to convene meetings as per the Guidelines. In addition, follow-up action with states/ districts has also been undertaken at other levels such as reminding nodal officers at district level about overdue DISHA meetings through social media groups, message services and phone calls. As a result of such efforts, the frequency of DISHA meetings has improved in 2022-23 as compared to the previous years. Following remedial measures have been taken to increase and optimize the number of DISHA meetings:-

(i) Department of Rural Development has setup a National Level DISHA Monitoring Cell which is proactively pursuing on daily basis with the State Governments and District administrations to convene meetings as per the Guidelines.

(ii) Letters have been written from Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development to the Chief Secretaries of the States on 31.08.2022 and 07.12.2022 to constitute State level DISHA Committees where they have not yet been constituted and also to increase the frequency of DISHA meetings at both State and District levels.

(iii) A letter from Hon'ble Minister of Rural Development has been written to 29 M.P.s on 15.02.2023 to hold District level DISHA meetings in the Committees in which they have been appointed as Chairperson as no meetings have been held in these Districts.

(iv) A letter from Hon'ble Minister of Rural Development has been written to 58 M.P.s on 16.11.2022 to hold meetings of the District level DISHA Committees in which they have been appointed as Chairperson as no meetings have been held in these Districts.

(v) Chairpersons have been nominated with the approval of Hon'ble Minister of Rural Development in 53 newly formed districts vide letter dated 8th February, 2023.

(vi) DISHA Guidelines has been amended to increase the participation of elected representatives in State and District level DISHA Committees.

During 2022-23 total of 1076 meeting held at District Level, however Ministry has noted the concern raised by the Standing Committees and make efforts at the highest level to achieve better results in this direction.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

CHAPTER III

RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE IN VIEW OF REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT

NIL

(Department of Rural Development O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

CHAPTER IV

RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE

Recommendation (Serial No. 3)

4.1 The Committee are concerned to note that the Budget Estimates for MGNREGS has been reduced by Rs. 29,400 Crore for 2023-24 when compared to Revised Estimates of 2022-23. The Act governing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme provides 'Right to Work' to such deprived sections of the rural populace who are willing to work. It is a last resort of succour for the jobless section who don't have any other means to feed them and their family members. The role and importance of MGNREGA was visible during the corona pandemic times when it acted as a ray of hope for the needy in times of distress. The importance of the scheme itself got highlighted through the substantially huge increment at the RE stage in 2020-21 and 2021-22 from Rs. 61,500 Crore to Rs. 1,11,500 Crore and Rs. 73,000 Crore to Rs. 99,117.53 Crore respectively to meet the increase in demand of work during corona pandemic. Even during the ongoing Financial Year 2022-23, the funds for MGNREGA has been increased to Rs. 89,400 Crore at RE stage from Rs. 73,000 Crore at the BE stage. However, for the Financial Year 2023-24, at the starting stage itself, MGNREGA has been allocated Rs. 60,000 Crore against the proposed demand of Rs. 98,000 Crore by the Department of Rural Development. The Committee are unable to comprehend the rationale for reduced allocation of fund under MGNREGA. Since it is very much necessary that adequate Budgetary Allocation ought to be made for the effective implementation of the Scheme, the Committee strongly feel the requirement for the matter of decreased fund allocation to be looked afresh. It is an established procedure that MGNREGA being a demand driven scheme, the funds can be raised at RE stage accordingly. However, Ministry of Finance should have been impressed upon as to how the Department of Rural Development arrived at the calculation of Rs. 98,000 Crore at proposal level for MGNREGA. Had it not been the projections received at the 'agreed to Labour Stage', such proposal would not have been mooted at the outset by the Department of Rural Development. Therefore, the Committee strongly recommend that the Department of Rural Development apprise themselves of the still existing high demand for job under MGNREGA at the ground level more realistically and utilise their communications and administrative skill to press upon the Ministry of Finance for increased allocation to MGNREGA.

Reply of the Government

4.2 "In the FY 2019-20, BE was Rs.60,000 crore which got revised to Rs.71,001.81 crore, for the FY 2020-21, BE was 61,500 crore which increased at RE to Rs.1,11,500 crore and for the FY 2021-22, the BE of Rs.73,000 crore has revised been to Rs.98,000 crore and during the last Financial Year 2022-23, the BE was Rs.73,000 crore, which has been revised to Rs.89,400 crore. Whenever, additional fund is required, Ministry of Finance is requested to provide the funds. Govt. of India is committed to release funds for wage and material payments for proper implementation of the scheme, as per the provisions of the act and guidelines applicable for Central Government as well as State Governments."

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 1.8 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 4)

4.3 The Committee are concerned to note the continuous pendency in disbursement of Centre's share of funds under wages and material components of the Scheme in respect of many States/UTs. Through the information received from the Department of Rural Development it has been observed that as on 25.01.2023, Rs. 6,231 Crore in wages and Rs. 7,616 Crore in Material component is pending liability on the Centre's Part. The Committee find accrual of such liabilities as severe impediments hampering the beneficiaries' plight. The Committee take into account the plausible reasons that have been time and again cited by the Department of Rural Development for such types of pendencies such as non-receipt of documents etc. However, a scheme of such huge proportion like MGNREGA which caters to the nook and corners of the country and has millions of beneficiaries enrolled as job card holders, such delay in wage payments and material fund release would only deter the needy person from availing the benefits under MGNREGA and would also cause them further turpitude for non-receipt of money when the sole intent of the scheme was to provide timely relief to poor in times of duress. Hence, the Committee beseech upon Department of Rural Development to ensure timely release of Centre's Shares in wages and materials through effective measures and better coordination with States. The progress made in dismantling liabilities of the Centre towards wages and material components in respect of each State/UT should be furnished to the Committee within three months.

Reply of the Government

4.4 "Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is a demand driven wage employment program and the release of funds to the State is a continuous process. The ministry releases funds to states based on the approved labour budget, opening balance, pending liabilities of the previous year for the financial year, if any, and overall performance. The release of material and administrative item funds is done in accordance with the smooth compliance of the financial management by the State Government.

After the due financial prudence and compliance by the State, funds are released."

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 1.11 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 6)

4.5 The committee note that, in their constant endeavour to usher greater transparency and weed out alleged malpractices associated with the process involving attendance of genuine beneficiaries under MGNREGA, the Department of Rural Development have implemented a new provision of capturing of real time attendance at worksite. This is being done through a Mobile App (national Mobile Monitoring System App: NMMS) with two time-stamped and geo-tagged photographs of the workers in a day. The Committee is not oblivious to the facts surrounding the necessity felt by the Department of Rural Development for the introduction of a new real-time attendance capturing app and are in consonance with the intention of the Department of Rural Development in bringing in much required improved governance of the scheme. However, the flip side of the innovatory exercise should not remain unnoticed and unaccounted or else the intended relief to the beneficiaries may not reach them. The entire exercise of capturing two real-time photographs in a day hinges upon few key factors such as availability of smart-phones, proper internet connectivity and the presence of MGNREGA workers on both stipulated times for proverbial 'in' and 'out' attendance. Needless to say that the MGNREGA beneficiaries belong to extremely deprived sections of the society, belonging to different linguistic milieu. Expecting the MGNREGA workers to be well versed with the functioning and language of app or for that matter even depending upon a nodal human intervention perhaps adds to their woes. Moreover, often the fluid timings of work site necessitate the workers to keep on waiting there even after the completion of work for their image capturing. Adding to this conundrum is the issue of availability of internet connectivity at far flung locales of MGNREGA work site. In view of the foregoing, and with utmost concern, the Committee urge upon the Department of Rural Development to review the implementation of attendance app holistically while taking into consideration the ground reality and challenges being faced by MGNREGA workers and come out with an acceptable provision at the earliest.

Reply of the Government

4.6 "NMMS has been introduced for real time attendance at worksites of all the beneficiaries present there. As per the provision, after the four hours of gap from taking attendance along with first geo-tagged photograph, second photograph can be taken.

The App is available in five languages which includes English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam. There is an exemption provision for taking attendance without using NMMS App in case of internet connectivity issue, device malfunction related issues, has been made available for District Programme Coordinator. The Ministry takes every possible step to resolve the technical issue if any reported, in a real time mode. During the Month of April'23 out of the total eligible worksites in second fortnight: 4.23 lakhs, attendance using NMMS App has been captured in: 3.83 lakhs worksites (90.54%). For remaining muster rolls, exemption provision has been made available.."

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 1.14 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 7)

4.7 The Committee note that in accordance with the Section 6(1) of Mahatma Gandhi NREG Act, 2005, the Ministry of Rural Development notifies Mahatma Gandhi NREGA wage rate every year for States/UTs. For providing cover against inflation, the Ministry of Rural Development revises the wage rate every year based on the change in the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPIAL). The Committee take into account the modalities enumerated under the MGNREG Act, 2005 and have also gone through the notified wage rate for the Financial Year 2022-23. It has been observed that there is no uniformity in the wages across the

States/UTs and the rate differs from Rs. 204 in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh to Rs. 315/- and Rs. 331/- in Goa and Haryana respectively. The Committee on earlier occasion also have observed categorically about the utmost necessity to increase the wage rate commensurate with the inflation and rectify the disparity in wages by notifying a uniform wage rate across the country. The stance of Department of Rural Development as evinced on these issues have pretty much remained the same as produced here that "However each State/UT can provide wage over and above the wage rate notified by the Central Government". Such responses are adept at typically passing the onus on the State Governments, while over a period of time it has been witnessed that the wage rates under MGNREGA have hovered on an average between Rs. 200/- to Rs. 300/- per day in the different States/UTs. It is necessary that the Department of Rural Development examine this issue with humane approach and initiate measures for increasing the wages in an appropriate manner befitting the rising cost of living. Moreover, linkage with the CPI-AL perhaps does not serve the purpose of ascertaining the real effect of inflation and the index for calculation needs to be changed on an urgent basis for looking at the real picture. It is also unfathomable as to why the Ministry is not able to notify a unified wage rate under MGNREGA across the country to end the disparity across States/UTs for good, particularly when the Scheme is mostly funded by the Centre. Therefore, the Committee strongly recommend that the Department of Rural Development should increase the wage rates under MGNREGA by linking it to a suitable pricing index and explore the feasibility of notifying a uniform wage rate under MGNREGA for the entire country.

Reply of the Government

4.8 "As per Section 6 (1) of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (Mahatma Gandhi NREGA), 2005, the Central Government may by notification specify the wage rate for unskilled work for its beneficiaries. Accordingly, the Ministry of Rural Development notifies Mahatma Gandhi NREGA wage rate for every financial year for States/UTs. To compensate the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA workers against inflation, the Ministry of Rural Development revises the wage rate every year based on change in Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL). However, State Government can provide wage over and above the wage rate notified by the Central Government from its own resources."

(DoRD O.M. No.G-20011/3/2021-B&Adated 07.06.2023)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 1.17 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 14)

4.9 The Committee note that PMGSY roads are generally low volume roads and were never meant to bear the load of heavy vehicles. The specifications which govern the construction of roads under PMGSY did not fathom that heavy vehicles plying on NHAI roads would also use the PMGSY roads as last mile connectivity to meet the ever growing needs and expansion of industrial projects to the rural areas as well. The Committee have taken the cognizance of such changing scenario wherein it is almost a necessity for even the heavy vehicles to utilise the PMGSY roads. Thus, it becomes absolutely essential to devise measures to protect the PMGSY roads from getting damaged due to the heavy vehicles that ply on them. Either suitable modification of the specifications of PMGSY for constructing heavy load bearing roads is done at the earliest or the provision of getting the damaged roads repaired by the NHAI authorities is ensured to be strictly complied with, else the PMGSY roads would keep on getting damaged and will get non-transportable, defeating the intent of the Yojana. The Committee also find from the reply of the Department of Rural Development that Ministry of Road Transport and Highways have been communicated in this regard on 2nd November, 2022 but response from their end is still awaited and any further action would be taken by Department of Rural Development on the receipt of reply from the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. The Committee are not at all satisfied with the existing situation and lack of concrete action being taken/planned by the Department of Rural Development as the ongoing practice of plying of heavy vehicles on PMGSY roads would keep on damaging the PMGSY roads as reported from different quarters. Therefore, the Committee recommend that the Department of Rural Development should take serious view of this matter and come out with some concrete and effective solution at the earliest to protect the PMGSY roads from getting damaged by heavy vehicles.

Reply of the Government

4.10 "PMGSY roads are generally low volume roads and are constructed as per the specifications based on the traffic survey of the particular roads and the projections of the traffic during its design life. Further maintenance/ repair of roads constructed under the programme is the responsibility of the State Governments. All

PMGSY road works are covered by initial five year maintenance contracts to be entered into along with the construction contract, with the same contractor, as per the Standard Bidding Document.

With regard to taking action against heavy vehicles plying on NHAI roads which also use PMGSY roads as a last mile connectivity and cause damage to PMGSY roads, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has been communicated the recommendations of the Standing Committee and has been asked to submit Action Taken Report (ATR) in this regard, vide communication dated 2nd November, 2022. No response has been received from NHAI. Further action will be taken on receipt of ATR from Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. Further it is the responsibility of the district administration to ensure that such heavy vehicle which causes damage to PMGSY roads are not allowed to ply on the road and if any damage is caused the same may be repaired at the cost of the party who causes such damages."

(DoRD O.M. No.G-20011/3/2021-B&Adated 07.06.2023)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 1.26 of Chapter I of the Report)

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH FINAL REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT ARE STILL AWAITED

NIL

(Department of Rural Development O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 07.06.2023)

NEW DELHI
25 July, 2023
03 Shravana, 1945 (Saka)

Kanimozhi Karunanidhi
Chairperson
Standing Committee on Rural Development & Panchayati Raj

ANNEXURE I

STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYATI RAJ (2022-2023)

EXTRACT OF THE MINUTES OF THE ELEVENTH SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY, 25th JULY, 2023

The Committee sat from 1500 hrs. to 1520 hrs. in Committee Room No. 3, Parliament House Annexe Extension, (EPHA), New Delhi.

PRESENT

Smt. Kanimozhi Karunanidhi - *Chairperson*

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Shri A.K.P Chinraj
3. Shri Rajveer Diler
4. Shri Vijay Kumar Dubey
5. Shri Sukhbir Singh Jaunapuria
6. Dr. Mohammad Jawed
7. Prof. Rita Bahuguna Joshi
8. Ms. S. Jothi Mani
9. Shri Janardan Mishra
10. Shri B.Y. Raghavendra
11. Dr. Talari Rangaiah
12. Smt Gitaben Vajesingbhai Rathva
13. Smt. Mala Rajya Laxmi Shah
14. Shri Vivek Narayan Shejwalkar
15. Dr. Alok Kumar Suman
16. Shri Shyam Singh Yadav

Rajya Sabha

17. Shri Dineshchandra Jemalbhai Anavadiya
18. Smt Shanta Chhetri
19. Shri Dharmasthala Veerendra Heggade
20. Shri Iranna Kadadi
21. Smt. Ranjeet Ranjan
22. Shri Naranbhai J. Rathwa

Secretariat

1. Shri D. R. Shekhar - Joint Secretary
2. Shri C. Kalyanasundaram - Director
3. Shri Vinay P. Barwa - Deputy Secretary

2. At the outset, the Hon'ble Chairperson welcomed the Members to the sitting of the Committee convened for consideration and adoption of draft reports on XXXXXX XXXXXXX XXXXXXX XXXXX Action Taken by the Government on the Recommendations contained in the 29th Report on Demands for Grants (2023-24) pertaining to the Department of Rural Development (Ministry of Rural Development) XXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. The Committee considered and adopted the draft reports without any amendment and authorized the Chairperson to present the Reports to the House.

3. XXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXX.

The Committee then adjourned.

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ANNEXURE II

[*Vide* para 4 of Introduction of Report]

ANALYSIS OF THE ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE TWENTY-NINTH REPORT (17TH LOK SABHA) OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYATI RAJ

I. Total number of recommendations: 21

II. Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government:

Serial Nos. 1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21

Total:16
Percentage: - 76%

III. Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of replies of the Government:

Serial No. NIL

Total: NIL

Percentage:- 0%

IV. Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee:

Serial No. 3, 4, 6, 7, 14

Total: 05

Percentage: - 24%

V. Observations/Recommendations in respect of which final replies of the Government are still awaited:

Serial No. NIL

Total: NIL

Percentage:- 0%