STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT& PANCHAYATI RAJ

(2021-2022)

26

SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA

MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT
(DEPARTMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT)

[Action taken on the recommendations contained in the Twenty-Second Report (Seventeenth LokSabha) On 'Demands for Grants (2022-23)of the Ministry of Rural Development(Department of Rural Development)'.]

TWENTY-SIXTH REPORT

सत्यमेव जयते

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

NEW DELHI

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[Action taken on the recommendations contained in the Twenty-Second Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2022-23)of the Ministry of Rural Development(Department of Rural Development)'.]

Presented to Lok Sabha on 03.08.2022

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 03.08.2022

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NEW DELHI

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* Not Attached

COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYATI RAJ (2021-2022)

Shri Prataprao Jadhav -- *Chairperson*

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2.	Dr. Yumnam Arun Kumar	-	Additional Director
3.	Shri Inam Ahmed	-	Executive Officer

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (2021-2022) having been authorised by the Committee to present the Report on their behalf, present the 26th Report on the action taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the Twenty-Second Report of the Standing Committee on Rural Development &Panchayati Raj (17thLokSabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2022-23) of the Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development).

2. The Twenty-Second Report was presented to the Lok Sabha on 16.03.2022 and was laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on the same date. Replies of the Government to all the recommendations contained in the Report were received on 09.06.2022.

3. The Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their sitting held on 28.07.2022.

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

NEW DELHI;
28 July, 2022
06 Shravana, 1944(Saka)

PRATAPRAO JADHAV
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on Rural Development& Panchayati Raj

CHAPTER I

REPORT

This Report of the Standing Committee on Rural Development (2021-22) deals with the action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in their Twenty Second Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development) for the year 2022-2023.

2. The Twenty-Second Report was presented to the Lok Sabha on 16.03.2022 and was laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on the same date. The Report contained 25 Observations/Recommendations.

3. Action Taken Notes in respect of all the 25 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, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25

Total: 17
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, 5, 10, 13, 14

Total: 06

Chapter-IV

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

Serial No. 18, 19

Total: 02

Chapter-V

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.

5. The Committee will now deal with action taken by the Government on some of their Observations/Recommendations that require reiteration/merit comments or are interim in nature.

I. <u>Liquidation of Unspent Balances</u>

<u>Recommendation (Serial No. 2)</u>

6. With regard to the liquidation of unspent balances, the Committee had recommended as under:-

> One of the permanent malaise associated with the expenditure of allocated funds is the non-judicious approach resulting in huge amounts of unspent balances in almost all the schemes of the DoRD. The Committee painfully note that Rs. 2,524 crores in NRLM and Rs. 2,504.98 crores in DDU-GKY lies unspent as on 31.12.2021 while Rs. 491.28 crores in MGNREGA (as on 28.01.2022) and Rs. 4,860.15 crores (as on 24.01.2022) in PMGSY are the quantum of unspent balances in these major schemes. The Committee, although note the various constraints being faced and measures adopted by the DoRD in tackling and mitigating the issue of unspent balances are still in a quandary on the meagre increase in fund allocation for the Department on one hand, existing pendencies in schemes like MGNREGA as reflected through wage and material component liabilities or delay in installment releases in PMAY-G on the other hand along-with non-utilization of full funds. In situations, wherein beneficiaries are kept awaiting for their wages or installments, the accrual of unspent balances is completely unacceptable. Therefore, the Committee urge DoRD to ensure that unspent balances do not keep piling up in the various schemes and that each penny allocated against the schemes is fully utilized for the welfare of poor and marginalized section of the rural populace.

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

> "All out efforts are being made by the Department to bring the unspent balances to a bare minimum. In this regard, rigorous

examination of fund availability with the States as well as expenditure incurred by the States against the balance funds is done in order to ensure that further funds are released to only those States where the State have expenditure plan in place. While sanctioning the funds, the unspent balances of the previous releases are taken into account. For this purpose, the Programme Divisions of the Department also take the help of Public Financial Management System (PFMS) Portal to know the bank balance of the recipients before making each release. The instructions of the Department of Expenditure regarding the use of PFMS Portal for the use of Central Sector Scheme from time to time are strictly followed by the Department. The principles of 'just in time', is being strictly followed for releases in respect of all payments to the extent possible. The broad principles, like, cash balance at a time should preferably not be more than 3 months of requirements and funds released as per actual requirements, are adhered to. Recent guidelines issued by Department of Expenditure in the month of March 2021, further emphasise the requirement of reduction of float available with States/UTs by following 'just in time release' principle, releases in four installments during a year and efficient and proper use of PFMS Portal by all the stakeholders.

Further, Finance Review Meetings are held with States/UTs to review the progress of expenditure and resolve any impediments in smooth flow of funds and pace of expenditure. Performance review meetings with the States are also held regularly under the Chairmanship of Secretary (RD) which are being attended by the Additional Chief Secretaries / Principal Secretaries of all States/UTs. Video conferences, review meetings, regular follow-up, etc. are being conducted at various levels on regular basis to monitor the performance, progress of the schemes and liquidation of unspent balances in the States/UTs."

8. During the course of examination of Demands for Grants (2022-23), the Committee were dismayed to note the huge accumulation of unspent balances in almost all the schemes of the Department of Rural Development (DoRD). As on on 31.12.2021, NRLM and DDU-GKY had unspent balances to the tune of Rs. 2,524 crore and Rs. 2,504.98 crore respectively. The unspent balance for MNREGA was Rs. 491.28 crore (as on 28.01.2022) whereas for PMGSY, it was as high as Rs. 4,860.15 crore (as on 24.01.2022) . The Committee found the accrual of such unspent balances unacceptable which raised aspersions over the financial management of the Department. While emphasising the need for full utilization of funds in schematic interventions

for the welfare of rural masses, the Committee in their Report had recommended DoRD to ensure expeditious liquidation of unspent balances. The Action Taken Reply submitted by DoRD states that "further funds are released to only those States where the State have expenditure plan in place" and "the principles of 'just in time' is being strictly followed for releases in respect of all payments to the extent possible". The reply also mentions about recent Guidelines issued by the Department of Expenditure in March, 2021 for the redressal of piling up of unspent balances. While acknowledging the various measures that have been put in place by the DoRD, the Committee urge DoRD to avoid letting their 'guards down' and keep accelerating their efforts for complete mitigation of unspent balances .

II. Filling of Muster Rolls at Gram Panchayat Level

Recommendation (Serial No. 3)

9. Regarding the filling of Muster Rolls at Gram Panchayat Level under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA), the Committee had recommended as under:-

> "The Committee took note that the essential pre-requisite for the timely payment of wages to the labourers of MGNREGA was the immediate online filling up of muster-roll after the issue of work order. It is also understood by the Committee through its study visits and the practical experiences of the Members that quite often the rozgarsevaks are in the habit of filling up kachha muster at the start and go to the Block once a week for online uploading of muster-rolls. This practice is having a cascading detrimental effect on the MGNREGA beneficiaries as delay in muster uploading causes delay in the payment of wages. Moreover, in cases where the muster-roll is not updated and uploaded within the stipulated time, the same cannot be filled from back date or of previous week, thus causing loss of number of that many days of work done by the labourers in the calculation for payment. This is a huge anomaly at the ground level fully attributable to the callous approach of the concerned official. The plea of non-availability of internet connection at Panchayat level does not stand firm in the face of the provision of Bharat-Net providing internet to the Gram Panchayats. Thus, it becomes imperative that the lackadaisical approach of grass-root officials associated with MGNREGA be handled

with firmly and no excuse be tolerated any further for non-filling of muster at Gram Panchayat level itself without wasting time. Therefore, the Committee vehemently implore upon Department of Rural Development to make it mandatory for the filling of muster at Gram Panchayat level itself specifically the Gram Panchayats which are connected with Bharat-Net. The Committee may be informed about the efficacious steps taken by the Government in this regard."

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

"As per the provision, e-muster is the norm. Only in exceptional and unavoidable circumstance, paper musters can be issued by State Government after due approval of Central Government. e-Muster has printed names of workers who have demanded employment and are allocated a particular work. In the case of e-muster, muster roll numbers are generated by the NREGASoft and therefore, not required to be entered in the system.

Central Government has made mandatory for capturing of real time attendance alongwithgeotagged photographs of beneficiaries through National Mobile Monitoring system(NMMS) of all worksites wherein muster roll have been issued to engage 20 or more beneficiaries. These captured attendances go directly to NREGASoft for wage list creation. No need to do separate data entry.

State can use NMMS even for the worksite having less than 20 workers.

Schedule-II of the Act has provision for the purpose of ensuring accountability in payment of wages and to calculate culpability of various functionaries or agencies, the State shall divide the processes leading to determination and payment of wage into various stages and specified Stage wise maximum time limits alongwith the functionary or agency which is responsible for discharging the specific function.

Also, the State Government shall pay the compensation upfront after due verification within the time limits as specified above and recover the compensation amount from the functionaries or agencies who is responsible for the delay in payment."

11. The issue of rampant delay in filling up of online muster roll immediately after the generation of work order under MNREGA came to the notice of the Committee during their study visits to various rural locales of the country. Timely payment of wages entirely depends upon the exercise of immediate online filling up of muster roll. Therefore, it warrants utmost alacrity on part of the rozgar-sevaks. However, to the contrary, the Committee found lackadaisical approach in completing this essential procedure which ultimately causes delay in the payment of wages to the beneficiaries . In this

backdrop, the Committee had strongly implored upon DoRD to comply with the mandatory and immediate filling up of muster rolls at Gram Panchayat level itself to ward off any delay in the payment of wages and also to ensure that number of days of work are not lost due to late filling of muster rolls after the stipulated due date. However, from the response of DoRD , the Committee find a complete lack of empathy towards such a serious issue. Rather than specifically responding on the issue of delay in filling of muster roll at ground level, the reply merely indicate about the existing provision of e-muster, National Mobile Monitoring System and Schedule 11 of the Act providing accountability in payment of wages. The Committee are not at all satisfied with the approach elicited by DoRD in addressing the pinpointed recommendation by just mentioning the existing norms mandating e-muster. The Department should have replied specifically upon the delay factor in filling up of muster at Gram Panchayat level . The Committee are not wary about the existence of provision but are deeply pained with the non-compliance factor with the extant guidelines. In view of the foregoing, the Committee while exhibiting their displeasure, strongly reiterate their recommendation for the implementation of prompt online filling up of muster roll at the Gram Panchayat level itself in 'letter and spirit'and exhort DoRD to take up this issue in right earnest.

III. <u>Wage and Material Pendencies under MGNREGA</u>

<u>Recommendation (Serial No. 4)</u>

12. With regard to the wage and material pendencies under MGNREGA, the Committee had recommended as under:-

> "A demand driven scheme such as MGNREGA having a statutory status and aimed at securing some sort of livelihood for the destitute and marginalized having no other 'fall back options' certainly stays defeated in its intent in wake of Rs. 4,060 crore lying as pending

wages. Shockingly, Rs. 9,000/- crores remains pending against the material component. The Committee find these figures alarming in nature more so when both the aspect of MGNREGA, i.e. a demand driven nature of the scheme and creation of assets under the scheme are severely hampered through such pendencies. More startling is the fact that even after such existing scenario, the BE for MGNREGA has been reduced from the Rs. 78,000/- crore as sought by DoRD, to Rs. 73,000/- crores for the financial year 2022-23. Any administrative or procedural lapse causing such delays are completely uncalled for and unacceptable in the context of a scheme of such enormous proportion. Therefore, the Committee strongly recommend DoRD to spruce up its financial management of the scheme and tighten their grip on the fallacies that may have crept in the implementation of MGNREGA at ground level for the earliest eradication of pendencies in wages and material components."

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

"Under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS fund release to the States is a continuous process and Central Government is committed to making fund available to States for the implementation of the Scheme. Under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, States submit fund release proposals to Government of India. The Ministry releases funds periodically in two tranches with each tranche consisting of one or more installments, keeping in view the "agreed to" Labour Budget, demand for works, opening balance, pace of utilization of funds, pending liabilities, overall performance and subject to submission of relevant documents by the State.

The Ministry seeks additional funds under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS from Ministry of Finance as and when required for meeting the demand for work on the ground.

The Central Government had enhanced the financial allocation under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS for previous financial year 2020-21 from Rs. 61,500 crore at Budget Estimate (BE) stage to Rs.1,11,500 crore at Revised Estimate (RE) stage.

During the current financial year 2021-22 (as on 31.03.2022), an amount of Rs. 98,467.85 crore has been released by Central Government to the States/UTs under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS."

14. The Committee were aghast with revelation that an amount of Rs. 4,060 crore was lying as pending wages while Rs. 9,060 crore remained uncleared against the material component for a welfare oriented schematic intervention like MGNREGA. While being deeply concerned with the adverse impact of such pendency and its impact on upliftment of rural labourers, the Committee

had strongly recommended DoRD to spruce up its financial management to address the lacunas in administration to overcome huge pendencies in wages and material component at the earliest. The response furnished by DoRD is completely bereft of any concrete measure that have been taken and furthermore it is silent upon the existing pendencies. Simply it has again demonstrated the same old stereotypical approach . It is unfathomable as to how a specific query of the Committee can be sidelined and remained silent and evasive on such important matter. The 'need of the hour' is to tighten the Department's grip over the widely publicised shimmering malaise of pendencies and entail all measures for its rectification expeditiously. Therefore, the Committee strongly reiterate their recommendation for the eradication of wage and material pendencies under MGNREGA through robust measures of financial prudence at the earliest.

IV. <u>Widening the Ambit of Permissible Works</u>

<u>Recommendation (Serial No. 5)</u>

15. With regard to the widening the ambit of permissible works under MGNREGA, the Committee had recommended as under:-

> "During the deliberations of the Committee, one of the pertinent issue that kept on coming up was the demand of suitable review and widening the ambit of 'permissible works' under MGNREGA so as to include few contemporary required areas to be covered. One such aspect pertaining to the flood affected regions of country was the construction of 'landspurs' for protecting acres of lands affected with the vagaries of flood every year. These landspurs may reportedly prevent the erosion/cutting of lands during floods causing loss of terrain. Not only this structure, but other notable areas of work like fencing the farmlands and various agricultural activities including agricultural labour also merit a relook for inclusion under permissible domain of MGNREGA. Hence, the Committee strongly urge DoRD to look into the matter of inclusion of 'landspurs', fencing of farmlands, agricultural labour activities under the permissible ambit of MGNREGA to meet the 'need of the hour'."

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

> "There are 262 works permissible under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA which includes Construction of wire crate (gabion) spur, stone spur and earthen spur which can be taken up in the flood affected regions of country.
>
> Fencing of farm land is not a permissible work under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS. However, live fencing can be taken up as an item of work in plantation related works.
>
> As per the Schedule I of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA Section 4 (3), Para 4(3) Works which are non-tangible, not measurable, repetitive such as, removing grass, pebbles, agricultural operations, shall not be taken up. Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is a demand driven scheme."

17. The Committee were apprised of the requirement that was felt from various quarters for further widening of the ambit of permissible works under MGNREGA such as construction of 'landspurs' in flood ravaged areas and inclusion of other agricultural related activities. In that scenario, the Committee had urged DoRD to review the various activities that could be kept under the permissible works under MNREGA. DoRD in their written reply has categorically stated that non-tangible, non-measurable and repetitive works such as removing grass, pebbles, agricultural operations shall not be taken up. However stone and earthen spurs can be taken up in the flood affected regions of the country. Nonetheless, the Committee still cannot comprehend the reason as to why DoRD could not assess some of the works which the Committee had recommended for their inclusion under the permissible domain of MGNREGA. The existing provisions of the MGNREGA have been drafted and enacted upon through the efforts of DoRD and there is every possibility of assessing and addressing the emerging needs and requirements raised by the common masses through the Committee. Possibility of amendments/revision of the scheme is open to the wisdom of the Department and should be explored. Therefore, the Committee while reiterating their recommendation for widening the ambit of permissible works under

MGNREGA to include 'landspurs' and agricultural activities also, implore upon DoRD to review the extant norms and come up with a more practical and need basis solution in this regard.

V. Increase in Accidental Compensation

Recommendation (Serial No. 6)

18. With regard to the increase in Accidental Compensation, the Committee had recommended as under:-

> "The Committee were enlightened with the practice of providing compensation to the labourers under MGNREGA who meet accident on work site resulting in their demise. During the course of evidence, it was averred by the Secretary, DoRD that an enhanced amount of two lakhs were being paid to the victims of accident while working on MGNREGA work-site through the insurance component. The Committee observe that the MGNREGA beneficiaries belong to very poor and marginalized sections of the society who are oblivious to their rights and benefits and are also not very forthcoming in exercising their choice. The Committee were also made aware of the dismal ground reality of non-payment of very less amount to such accidental victims and that the issue required urgent attention. Keeping the stock of situation in light and the strata of MGNREGA labourers in view, the Committee feel that separate two lakhs compensation amount over and above existing provision should be immediately paid to the next of kin of the accidental victims under MGNREGA and call upon DoRD to redress the issue of low payment as per revised provisions and with a humanitarian approach."

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

> "As per the provision in schedule-II of the Act, If a person employed under the Scheme meets with death or becomes permanently disabled by accident arising out of and in the course of employment, he or his legal heirs, as the case may be, shall be paid by the implementing agency an ex gratia as per entitlements under the PradhanMantriSurakshaBimaYojana or as may be notified by the Central Government. This is a very significant enhancement as the maximum amount payable in case of loss of life or both the limbs have gone up from Rs. 1 lac to Rs. 2 lac. Other benefits have also been similarly raised. No further enhancement is under consideration."

20. Instances are galore wherein labourers under MGNREGA meet unfortunate demise while working onsite due to several accidental causes. The

Committee were of the unanimous view that the beneficiaries of MGNREGA belong to the periphery of the economic strata and are from extremely marginalised sections of the rural populace. The loss of life of such 'breadwinners' are irreparable which could throw the remaining family members in the deep caverns of penury. As an act of solace, an increase in accidental compensation through a separate amount paid immediately during those calamitous hour could, perhaps, go a long way in 'hand holding' of the poor by the Government. Keeping in mind the extant provisions as asserted by the Secretary, DoRD during evidence meeting, the Committee still preferred an upward revision and a separate Rs. two lakh compensation payment to the next of kin of the accidental victims of MGNREGA. However, the response elicited by the DoRD only highlights the ex-gratia payment amount as per entitlements under the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha BimaYojana and that the maximum amount payable in case of loss of life or both the limbs have gone up from Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 2 lakh. No further enhancement is under consideration. The Committee have taken due note of the reply and are not completely oblivious of the efforts of the DoRD in this regard. Compensation payment through Pradhan MantrI Suraksha Bima Yojana, though accounted for, the Committee are still wary of the documentary procedures required for such assistance and the lack of knowledge of the labourers to do so, particularly, at the time of being afflicted with tragedy of maximum intensity. The Committee are of the view that an easy and separate provision of compensation payment to the tune of Rs. 2 lakh may be done for prompt help to the needy poor beneficiary, over and above the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha

Bima Yojana corpus, and thus, call upon the Department to relook into the matter with a much more sympathetic approach.

Recommendation (Serial No. 8)

VI. Increase in wages under MGNREGA

21. With regard to the increase in wages under MGNREGA, the Committee had recommended as under:-

> "An oft repeated concern of the Committee pertaining with MGNREGA has been that of increase in wages. Despite several recommendations in this regard, there has been no noticeable change in the stance of DoRD. While DoRD has been always repeating their same routine response of the revision of wages every financial year, but realistically, the quantum of revision, in all earnest, merits a relook. Rising inflation and cost of living, be it urban area or rural setting, has risen manifold and is evident to 'all and sundry'. Even at this moment, going by the notified wage rates of MGNREGA, per day wage rate of around Rs. 200/- in many States defies any logic when the same State has much higher labour rates. It becomes inexplicable as to why the wages under MGNREGA still can't be linked to a suitable index commensurate with the existing inflation. Aware of the demand of increase in wages under MGNREGA from various quarters, the Committee urge DoRD unequivocally to revisit their stand and devise a mechanism for raising the wages under MGNREGA."

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

> "As per Section 6(1) of Mahatma Gandhi NREG Act, 2005 by notification specify the wage rate for its beneficiaries. Accordingly, the Ministry of Rural Development notifies Mahatma Gandhi NREGA wage rate every 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). The CPI-AL index figures are taken from the website of Labour Bureau, Shimla. The wage rate is made applicable from 1st April of each financial year. However each State/UT can provide wage over and above the wage rate notified by the Central Government.
>
> Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is a demand driven wage employment scheme which provides livelihoods security i.e. fall back option for livelihoods for the rural households, in the situation when regular employment is absent. Wage rate for the scheme Mahatma Gandhi NREG A ct is mandated in section 6 of the Act."

23. The Committee are constantly gripped with demand from numerous quarters for the increase in wages under MGNREGA through linkage with suitable inflationary index to provide a buffer against the rising cost of living. Wage rate of around Rs. 200/- in many States is completely unfathomable and surpassing all the logic. In this context, the Committee had recommended DoRD to devise a mechanism for raising the wages under MGNREGA. The same sentiment of the Committee were also echoed through their recommendation in the 20th Report of the Committee (17thLokSabha) on the 'Critical Evaluation of MGNREGA' wherein increase in wage rates and uniform wage rates across the nation have been urged upon. The Committee, as in earlier cases, find the reply of DoRD remaining pretty much the same and the inability of the Department can be noticed for increasing the wages under MGNREGA and linking it to any appropriate inflationary index. The Committee, although have taken note of the stand taken by the Department, yet they are still not in a position to ignore the demand raised from the various 'nooks and corners' of the country. Therefore, the Committee, in all earnest, beseech upon the DoRD to explore the feasibility to review their stand and devise any possible means for the upward revision of wages under MGNREGA by bringing all the stakeholders on-board.

Recommendation (Serial No. 10)

VII. Review of Caste-based Payment Provision

24. With regard to the issue of Caste-based Payment Provision initiated under MGNREGA, the Committee had recommendedas under:-

> "A startling fact that came to the fore during the examination of Demands for Grants 2022-23 pertaining to the mechanism of payment of wages being employed under MGNREGA was the audacious practice of wages being paid to the MGNREGA beneficiaries on the basis of caste, i.e. in the order of priority starting from SC/ST to

remaining others. The Committee were taken aback and aghast on such revelation. Belying all logic and employing such modality, surpasses any prudence whatsoever. The Committee finding themselves at a total 'loss of words' could not fathom the rationale behind such idea. The scheme of MGNREGA draws its origin from a statutory source, i.e. MGNREG Act, 2005. Such absurdity is nowhere mentioned in the Act and digressing from the basic tenets of treating all the MGNREGA beneficiaries at par call for sternest possible criticism. The beneficiaries of MGNREGA cutting across the different sections of society have only one thing in common, i.e. they are poor, destitute and have no other fall back option, but MGNREGA to look upon for their basic source of survival. Thus, they are economically weak populace and can come from any religion/caste, creation of such payment system wherein one specific community is preferred over the other solely on the ground of caste will only give rise to resentment and create rift among the beneficiaries of MGNREGA. The practice which started from 2021-22 itself need to be addressed urgently and not to be encouraged any further by ensuring that each and every labour working under the Scheme, irrespective of caste, get payment within time-frame fixed by the MGNREGA.

In view of such piquant situation, the Committee unanimously recommend DoRD to restore the earlier mechanism of generation of single Fund Transfer Order without any sort of segregation on the basis of caste so that the welfare oriented nature of MGNREGA is not divided on caste basis.**"**

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

"The category wise (SC, ST and Others) wage payment system, as made applicable from the FY 2021-22, has been introduced to accurately reflect on ground flow of funds to various population groups. Its further streamlining has been undertaken. From FY 2022-23 single FTO for wage payment has been started keeping the provisioning for separate budget for different categories to reflect accurate flow of funds on ground."

26. The examination of Demands for Grants (2022-23) brought to fore a deeply disturbing and compelling fact associated with the introduction of an audacious practice of wages being paid to the MGNREGA beneficiaries on the basis of caste (SC/ST and remaining others). The Committee were completely taken aback and were at 'loss of words' to even respond to such an unbelievable practice, more so when call for equality is ever more deafening from various quarters of the country. Defying any logic, such practice seemed

to be in complete contradiction to the sentiments of the Act itself which talks about only one category i.e. poor rural masses. Thus, the Committee had unanimously recommended for reviewing the caste based payment provision under MGNREGA and restoring the earlier practice of payment. Surprisingly, the response elicited by DoRD in this regard is non-yielding, which only states that from the financial year 2022-23, single Fund Transfer Order (FTO) for wage payment has been started while "keeping the provisions for separate budget for different categories to reflect accurate flow of funds on ground". The Committee are not satisfied with the response enumerated as above wherein separate budget for different categories have been talked upon. The intent of the Committee through their recommendation was to 'nip in the bud' any rift created among the rural masses due to caste based payment under MGNREGA which could defy the spirit of a welfare scheme. Therefore, the Committee are still of the firm opinion that such practice needs to be done away with completely and payment under MGNREGA should be done only in consonance with the provisions enshrined in the legal statute. Hence, the Committee vehemently call upon DoRD for ending this practice on an immediate basis.

VIII. Increase in per-unit assistance under PMAY-G

Recommendation (Serial No. 13)

27. With regard to the Increase in per-unit assistance under PMAY-G, the Committee had recommended as under:-

> "The Committee note that the deadline of PMAY-G has been extended to March, 2024 with the target of 2.95 crore houses. All necessary formalities also reportedly seem to have been completed to ensure that the list of beneficiaries are updated. The per unit assistance under PMAY-G for plain areas is Rs. 1.2 lakh and for hilly areas is Rs. 1.3 lakh which has remained static for quite a while now. With rising inflation having detrimental effect on the cost factor associated with the raw material, transportation cost, labours cost et.

al., constructing a new house of the requisite area under PMAY-G for the poor and needy beneficiary with such assistance amount seem to be an arduous task. The vision "Housing for All" may not reach its envisaged culmination until and unless the beneficiaries are provided with proper 'hand-holding' in terms of financial assistance of right value and at right juncture. Moreover, instances are galore wherein houses remain incomplete for want of finance and the target keeps on lagging. In view of the foregoing, the Committee find it utmost necessary that a review of per-unit assistance be done on priority basis, more so when the scheme has been extended to March, 2024. Therefore, the Committee recommend the DoRD to revise the per unit assistance under PMAY-G through suitable hike in the assistance component for the much required augmented help to the needy beneficiaries."

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

"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 Swacch Bharat Mission – Gramin (SBM-G), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) or other dedicated source of funding. It also provides 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 JalJeevan Mission (JJM) of Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti.

The unit assistance under PMAY-G is as per the approval of the Union Cabinet. At present, there is no proposal for revision in unit assistance under PMAY-G."

29. Increase in per-unit assistance under PMAY-G has also been a long standing demand brought before the Committee on numerous occasion during their deliberations. The Committee resonated with the idea of hike in per unit assistance from the existing Rs. 1.20 lakh in plains and Rs. 1.30 lakh in hilly areas considering the ever increasing cost of logistics and materials required in the construction of houses by the rural poor. The Committee had also taken

note of the fact that the deadline for the scheme of PMAY-G had been extended to March, 2024. Keeping in view this development, the Committee had recommended DoRD to make an upward revision in the per unit assistance being provided to the beneficiaries. Responding to the recommendation, DoRD in their Action Taken Reply have detailed the existing provision under the Scheme and have submitted that at present there is no proposal for revision in unit assistance under PMAY-G. The Committee having gone through the brief response of the Department feel that a genuine demand of the beneficiaries who are facing hard time to construct a house with such meagre assistance amount under PMAY-G has not been addressed. The Committee are fully aware of the backlog in the status of completion of houses under PMAY-G and also about the substantial remaining target of about 80 lakh houses finalised for completing the target of 2.95 crore houses by March 2024 under PMAY-G. Therefore, the Committee strongly believe that revising and raising the per unit assistance under PMAY-G from the existing Rs. 1.2 lakh/Rs. 1.3 lakh at this juncture could still be a boon for large number of beneficiaries and would help them in completing the construction of their houses at a faster rate. Thus, the Committee reiterate their recommendation for the hike in per unit assistance under PMAY-G.

IX. Parity in PMAY-U and PMAY-G

Recommendation (Serial No. 14)

30. With regard to the Parity in PMAY-U and PMAY-G, the Committee had recommended as under:-

> "The Committee observe the disparity in the financial assistance provided under the urban component and rural component of Pradhan Mantri AwaasYojana - Gramin (PMAY-G). While the per-unit assistance amount in the rural sector ranges from Rs. 1.2 lakh to Rs.

1.3 lakh for plain & hilly areas respectively, the assistance amount under the urban component lies in the region of about Rs. 2.5 lakh through subsidy on loan component. This approach is very intriguing and Committee are unable to grasp the rationale behind keeping the assistance amount in rural sector substantially less than its urban counterpart. The challenges faced in construction of houses in rural areas are far more both in terms of logistics and cost factor while the organized parameters of urban sector is not a hidden fact. Among the rural sector too, the hilly regions require a completely different approach for the construction and vagaries or rural system throws unprecedented bottlenecks ranging from non-availability of labours for bringing raw materials from far flung areas. It is high time that the DoRD undertake an objective assessment of the financial aid under the two sister schemes of PMAY and bridge the divide between the two in a suitable and rationale manner. Therefore, the Committee recommend the DoRD to bring a semblance of parity between the assistance amount under PMAY-U and PMAY-G."

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

"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 Swacch Bharat Mission – Gramin (SBM-G), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) or other dedicated source of funding. It also provides 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 JalJeevan Mission (JJM) of Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti.

The unit assistance under PMAY-G is as per the approval of the Union Cabinet. At present, there is no proposal for revision in unit assistance under PMAY-G."

32. The rationale behind the disparity in the per unit assistance being provided under PMAY-U and PMAY-G had always flummoxed the Committee . The Committee believe that amount of assistance for construction in rural areas where infrastructure logistics and material/labour cost have a much more telling effect on the budget of a beneficiary as compared to their urban

counterpart needed to be addressed wisely. Considering such difference in the two counterparts of PMAY, wherein rural beneficiaries are entitled to Rs. 1.2/1.3 lakh assistance per unit, while the urban beneficiaries' assistance component reaches upto Rs. 2.5 lakh, the Committee had recommended DoRD to bring about parity in the assistance amount through upward revision of per unit assistance under PMAY-G, to create a semblance of equality between both the schemes of similar nature. However, the reply submitted by DoRD lacks any substance as it clearly states that there is no proposal for revision in unit assistance under PMAY-G. The Committee are extremely dissatisfied with the stand of DoRD and feel that the Department need to chalk out a proper proposal and move it forward for consultation with the Ministry of Finance regarding additional budgetary requirement to meet any genuine demand. Merely stating the fact about 'no proposal' smacks of an indifferent attitude completely oblivious to the concern and need of the poor beneficiaries of the scheme, more so during the times of heavy inflation. The Committee find such callous approach of the Department bereft of any empathy and thus, urge upon DoRD, while reiterating their recommendation, to review their stand and carry out an effective exercise for the hike in assistance component of PMAY-G by bringing it at par with PMAY-U.

X. Strictures to National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)

Recommendation (Serial No. 18)

33. With regard to the the damages caused to the roads under PMGSY by the vehicles of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), the Committee had recommended as under:-

> "The Committee were informed during the deliberations through the ground experience of Members of Parliament (MPs) that the roads

constructed under PMGSY with an optimum weight bearing capacity were witnessing load carrying heavy vehicles of NHAI upto the tune of 50 tonnes plying on them. Such enormous weight causes damage to the roads under PMGSY and the matter needed to be looked upon seriously. Even though, provision exists for the roads damaged by the plying of NHAI vehicles to be repaired by them, still no one pays heed to them. This is a blatant violation of norms creating damaging effects on the roads of PMGSY which need to be resolved at the earliest. In view of such conflicting situation, it is perhaps appropriate if the Department takes up the matter sternly with the NHAI and thus the Committee recommend DoRD to ensure a result oriented dialogue process with the NHAI for stricter compliance of the norms of PMGSY."

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

"As recommended by the committee, the matter is being taken up with Ministry of Roads, Transport & Highways for better appreciation of this issue."

35. The Committee took note of the blatant flouting of norms associated with the repairs of rural roads that are damaged by the plying of heavy vehicles involved in the construction of highways under NHAI. The Committee, therefore had recommended DoRD to take up the matter with the NHAI so that the extant provisions of PMGSY are complied and the rural roads damaged through their vehicles are repaired and not left in a non-transportable position defying the objective of PMGSY roads. The Department in their reply have submitted a miniscule response stating that the matter is being taken up with the Ministry of Roads, Transport and Highways for better appreciation of the issue. The Committee find this reply incomplete and interim in nature as it does not provide any concrete action that have been taken by the Department at this juncture. Instead of dilly-dallying and treading slowly, the Department need to address such issues promptly to stop further damages to PMGSY roads. Finding the nature of reply incomplete, the Committee urge upon DoRD to take some tangible efforts and apprise the Committee accordingly at the earliest.

XI. Prioritizing of Roads under PMGSY & construction of roads according to population density

Recommendation (Serial No. 19)

36. With regard to prioritizing of roads under PMGSY and construction of roads according to population density, the Committee had recommended as under:-

> "Another serious concern that arose before the Committee during their deliberations pertained to the issue of change in prioritizing of roads earmarked for construction in the villages. Normally, routes are selected keeping in mind the important landmarks they devise to connect such as school, hospital etc. However, routes more often than not require land which the landowners are not ready to let go in the absence of any compensation mechanism for land transfer under the scheme. Thus, the project gets stalled due to conflicting opinion and interest at the local level. Thus, arises the necessity to change the priority which is dependent upon the Gram Panchayats. The conflict goes on, simply lingering the construction work. Hence, the Committee recommend that the need of the hour is to ensure that prudence may be applied in cases where change in priority is required and a mechanism or authority may be appointed for taking unbiased decision immediately so that rural connectivity projects are not hampered."

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

> "As per PMGSY guidelines, providing land for the construction of roads under PMGSY is the responsibility of concerned State Government. A certificate to the fact that land is available has to be submitted by the state along with the proposal.
>
> The representatives of the Local Gram Panchayat are also involved in the transect walk for deciding the alignment of the roads. This situation regarding non-availability of lands in some cases mostly happen at the time of execution of PMGSY-I works, where the new roads were being constructed first time for providing connectivity to habitations. Since construction of most of the sanctioned works have been completed under PMGSY-I and states had tackled the issue relating to acquisition of land in some cases, Ministry does not foresee any requirement for putting in place any new system at this juncture."
>
> Ministry is now primarily sanctioning works of PMGSY-III which are upgradation and consolidation of the existing roads. The issue relating to land disputes have not been brought to the notice of Ministry yet. However, the concerns of the committee have been noted and will be taken up with the concerned State Government."

38. One of the issues hindering the progress of projects under PMGSY that was brought to the attention of the Committee revolved around the change in priority of the routes owing to the non-availability of land. The Committee were

concerned on the non-serious in addressing this issue, which more often than not stalled the projects and thus recommended DoRD to wisely handle the cases where change in priority was required. In their written reply, the Department have submitted that land acquisition cases primarily across the wider PMGSY-I which had been duly tackled by the States and that the Ministry was now primarily sanctioning works under PMGSY-III which were upgradation and consolidation of the existing roads. It has been further averred that land dispute cases have not been brought to the notice of the Ministry yet but the concerns of the Committee had been noted and would be taken up with the concerned State Government. The Committee find the reply being ill informed on the part of DoRD and are surprised at their ignorance regarding a much prevalent issue on the ground level. The Committee expected that DoRD must have been seized of the matter and some concrete reply would have been given. However, the reply speaks about a future course of action with no time limit for such deliberations. Therefore, the Committee finding the reply interim and incomplete in nature stresses upon DoRD to take stock of the situation State-wise surgicallyand bring an early solution for handling of such cases under intimation to the Committee.

XII. Provision of Assistance under NSAP

Recommendation (Serial No. 24)

39. With regard to the provision of assistance under NSAP, the Committee had recommended as under:-

> "A scheme of wide outreach aimed at the poor and destitute population of society need a better assistance component for providing real succor to its beneficiary. The Committee feel that the upward revision of assistance amount ranging at present from Rs. 200/- to Rs. 500/- per month under the different components of the scheme is much awaited. The Committee had recommended for the same earlier also in their Thirteenth Report (Seventeenth LokSabha) and reiterated it in

their Seventeenth Report (Seventeenth LokSabha), but still no augmentation of pension amounts have been noticed on the ground. Much time has elapsed and the Committee find that the assurance of DoRD regarding the ongoing consultation is not taking desired shape. So, the Committee strongly recommend DoRD to take the issue of increase in pension amount under NSAP seriously and concretize the result on ground level as soon as possible."

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

"Under NSAP schemes, financial assistance ranging from Rs.200/- to Rs.500/- per beneficiary per month is being provided. Apart from this assistance, States/ UTs are adding top-ups ranging from Rs.50 to Rs.2,700 per month under the NSAP schemes. The issue of revamping the NSAP Scheme through changes in acceptable rates and parameters was considered at the highest level in Government and it was decided to continue with the existing system."

41. National Social Assistance Programme caters to poor and destitute section of the society and monetary help being provided to them through the scheme of DoRD for uplifting the living standards of the needy. However, the prevalent assistance amount to the tune of Rs. 200/- to Rs. 500/- per month under the different components of the scheme is extremely meagre and demands for its revision had been made from long back. The Committee, seized of the relevance of such demand had urged DoRD to take note of their earlier recommendation made in this regard in the thirteenth report of the 17thLokSabha in response to which it had been stated by DoRD that the Report of 3rd Party evaluation of NSAP had been submitted and that the further action with regard to increase in the amount of pension/assistance will be taken in consultation with the States/UTs and other stakeholders. The recommendation for faster implementation and going beyond providing only assurances by taking some concrete action for the revision was reiterated in the seventeenth report of the 17thLokSabha, but to no avail. In the present instance, the reply submitted by the Department have clearly expressed their

inability in carrying out revision of the scheme in wake of the decision taken at the highest level in Government to continue with the existing system. The Committee note the response and also take into account the submission regarding the top ups made by the State Government ranging from Rs. 50/- to Rs. 2700/- per month under the NSAP schemes. Acknowledging the fact, the Committee are still of the view that NSAP being a Centrally Sponsored Scheme merits a revision at the central stage also so that the base assistance amount get increased for providing further relief to the beneficiaries of this scheme. The Department need to relook at their stand and should not rely at the discretion of States for the success/progress of their scheme. So, the Committee beseech upon DoRD to review its stand and once again explore the feasibility of revision of assistance given under NSAP.

CHAPTER II

RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

Recommendation (Serial No. 1)

Department of Rural Development (DoRD) have a huge responsibility upon them to nurture, nourish and create an atmosphere wherein the vast rural populace living in the nooks and corners of the country realise the succor of holistic development. The areas of concern range from Rural Development, Rural Housing, Rural Connectivity to Rural Livelihoods to name a few. For a nation of such rich heritage as ours, the rise from ‘developing’ to ‘developed’ status is not at all feasible until and unless the majority population of the country residing in villages march side by side with their urban counterparts. The Committee resonate with this idea and acknowledge the paramount importance of rural development in the country. However, in this scenario, the Committee is not able to reason the approach of the Department in seeking/obtaining funds which prima-facie do not seem to be adequate enough to fuel the sustainable momentum of the rural progress. While the Budget Estimate (BE) for 2021-22 was Rs. 1.31 lakh crores which rose to Rs. 1.54 lakh crores at Revised Estimate Stage, the budgetary allocation sought for the financial year 2022-23 stands at Rs. 1.35 lakh crores, a meagre hike of 3.36%. The Committee specifically note the case of MGNREGA, wherein the BE for 2022-23 has been kept static at Rs. 73,000/- crores, similar as that of 2021-22 even when the RE for MGNREGA rose to Rs. 98,000/- crores in the ongoing fiscal. The Committee are perplexed at this situation and are concerned for the pace of implementation of rural development schemes with such funds. Therefore, the Committee recommend the DoRD to relook at its calculation and suitably approach the Ministry of Finance for higher allocation of funds in order to speed up the pace of rural development schemes for dearth of budget.

Reply of the Government

MGNREGA:-Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is a demand driven wage employment progamme and funds are released to the States/UTs on the basis of agreed to Labour Budget and performance of the States during the year. Funds release to States/UTs is a continuous process and central Government is committed in making funds available keeping in view of the demand. The Ministry seeks additional funds from Ministry of Finance as and when required for meeting the demand for work on the ground. Details of funds provided during last two Financial Year is as given below:

(Rs. In crore)

Financial Year	BE	RE
2020-21	61500	1,11,500
2021-22	73000	98,000

PMAY-G:-The Budget Estimate under PMAY-G for the Financial Year 2021-22 was Rs. 19500 crores which increased to Rs 20389.84 cr at RE stage. As per the EFC Note for continuation of PMAY-G, an amount of Rs. 21373 crores was projected as the amount under Extra Budgetary Resources. However, during the Financial Year 2021-22 approval for availing EBR was not received from Ministry of Finance. Therefore, during the Third Batch of Supplementary Demand for Grants the Division had availed additional funds over B.E for an amount of Rs. 9668 crores. Further, as per the EFC Note dated 29th November, 2021, the total cost to the Government of India for FY 2022-23 is Rs. 48422 crores, out of which Rs. 20000 crores would be met from GBS and Rs. 28,422 crores shall be sought as additional funds over and above GBS from Ministry of Finance as Ministry of Finance had directed for phasing out of EBR during its approval for continuation of PMAY-G till March, 2024.

PMGSY:-Budget allocation for the year 2021-22 under PMGSY was Rs.15,000 crore which was revised to Rs.14,000 crore at RE stage.

The Budget Allocation for PMGSY has been increased to Rs. 19,000 crore for the Financial year 2022-23. PMGSY will require continuous budgetary support of Rs 19,000 crore/ year up to 2024-25 to complete all the interventions of the Scheme and this issue was brought to the notice of the CCEA while getting approval for PMGSY-III. Currently, the scheme has sufficient allocation of funds.

DAY-NRLM:-As far as DAY-NRLM is concerned, the provision of Rs. 13336.42 Crore in BE 2022-23 is adequate to meet the programme requirement for the year 2022-23. If any requirement of additional funds arises during the current year, the same will be sought at the time of RE for the year 2022-23.

DDU-GKY SKILLS:- The BE for DDU- GKY in FY 2021-22 was Rs. 2000 crore, however, due to reasons such as covid impact, non fulfilment of SNA guidelines by States/UTs maximum funds could not be utilized. Hence, the BE for the upcoming FY 2022- 23 has been reduced to Rs 1000 Crores.

NSAP:- The Budget Estimate (BE) for FY 2021-22 was Rs. 9200.00 crore for National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP). The BE for FY 2022-23 is Rs. 9653.31 crore for NSAP, which shows around 5 percent increase in the Budget Estimate over BE 2021-22.

SPMRM:- The Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC), in its meeting held on 26th August 2021 has suggested for discontinuing the scheme. Since August 2021, fund releases were held up due to the EFC decision. On the repeated requests of Ministry, the Department of Expenditure granted permission to release funds for FY 2021-22 on 22nd March 2022, allowing releases against the ongoing work liability as on 26th August 2021 only. Due to this only Rs. 150.10 crore could be released by 31st March 2022.

In order to complete all the Mission activities, Ministry is seeking extension for the programme till March 2024. Out of the approved outlay of Rs. 5142.08 crore, till 31st March 2022, Rs. 2445.02 crore has been utilized. The Cabinet Note for seeking extension till March 2024 is currently under submission, pending final decision. Ministry is also seeking exemption from the Department of Expenditure to allow expenditure from the budgetary allocation for 2022-23.

Also, earlier the funds used to be released to each cluster in three installments, where the release of Second and Third installment of CGF used to depend on fund utilisation on ground and preparation of Spatial plans. Due to this, the fund release to States was held up. Ministry had taken course correction, and fund release conditions were modified to ease the fund release proposal submission by States/UTs to the Ministry, in order to expedite the works on ground at fast pace.

Ministry had implemented fund pooling mechanism since January 2021, after which, all the funds allocated to the State/UT are maintained in a single State Nodal Account (SNA). This helped States by providing flexibility to manage fund limits among various clusters within State, thereby easing implementation. This is also helping in liquidating the high unspent balance lying with the States. Therefore, the fund releases in FY 2020-21 were limited.

As per the extant guidelines by the Department of Expenditure, funds are being released to States on achieving 75% of funds as against the earlier release condition of 60%. Further, the funds are released in two tranches of 50% each since April 2020. Due to this, the releases to States have been constrained. As the unspent balance lying with the States and UTs is being utilized first, further releases are being done only on fulfillment of conditions stated above. This has limited the releases to States/ UTs in the last two years. Meanwhile, the States/UTs have been consistent in speeding up of activities undertaken which are being monitored through Monthly Progress Reports and timely UC submissions.

(DoRDO.M. No.G-20011/3/2021-B&Adated 09/06/2022)

Recommendation (Serial No. 2)

One of the permanent malaise associated with the expenditure of allocated funds is the non-judicious approach resulting in huge amounts of unspent balances in almost all the schemes of the DoRD. The Committee painfully note that Rs. 2,524 crores in NRLM and Rs. 2,504.98 crores in DDU-GKY lies unspent as on 31.12.2021 while Rs. 491.28 crores in MGNREGA (as on 28.01.2022) and Rs. 4,860.15 crores (as on 24.01.2022) in PMGSY are the quantum of unspent balances in these major schemes. The Committee, although note the various constraints being faced and measures adopted by the DoRD in tackling and mitigating the issue of unspent balances are still in a quandary on the meagre increase in fund allocation for the Department on one hand, existing pendencies in schemes like MGNREGA as reflected through wage and material component liabilities or delay in installment releases in PMAY-G on the other hand along-with non-utilization of full funds. In situations, wherein beneficiaries are kept awaiting for their wages or installments, the accrual of unspent balances is completely unacceptable. Therefore, the Committee urge DoRD to ensure that unspent balances do not keep piling up in the various schemes and that each penny allocated against the schemes is fully utilized for the welfare of poor and marginalized section of the rural populace.

Reply of the Government

All out efforts are being made by the Department to bring the unspent balances to a bare minimum. In this regard, rigorous examination of fund availability with the States as well as expenditure incurred by the States against the balance funds is done in order to ensure that further funds are released to only those States where the State have expenditure plan in place. While sanctioning the funds, the unspent balances of the previous releases are taken into account. For this purpose, the Programme Divisions of the Department also take the help of Public Financial Management System (PFMS) Portal to know the bank balance of the recipients before making each release. The instructions of the Department of Expenditure regarding the use of PFMS Portal for the use of Central Sector Scheme from time to time are strictly followed by the Department. The principles of 'just in time', is being strictly followed for releases in respect of all payments to the extent possible. The broad principles, like, cash balance at a time should preferably not be more than 3 months of requirements and funds released as per actual requirements, are adhered to. Recent guidelines issued by Department of Expenditure in the month of March 2021, further emphasise the requirement of reduction of float available with States/UTs by following 'just in time release' principle, releases in four installments during a year and efficient and proper use of PFMS Portal by all the stakeholders.

Further, Finance Review Meetings are held with States/UTs to review the progress of expenditure and resolve any impediments in smooth flow of funds and pace of expenditure. Performance review meetings with the States are also held regularly under the Chairmanship of Secretary (RD) which are being attended by the Additional Chief Secretaries / Principal Secretaries of all States/UTs. Video conferences, review meetings, regular follow-up, etc. are being conducted at various levels on regular basis to monitor the performance, progress of the schemes and liquidation of unspent balances in the States/UTs.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 8 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 6)

The Committee were enlightened with the practice of providing compensation to the labourers under MGNREGA who meet accident on work site resulting in their demise. During the course of evidence, it was averred by the Secretary, DoRD that an enhanced amount of two lakhs were being paid to the victims of accident while working on MGNREGA work-site through the insurance component. The Committee observe that the MGNREGA beneficiaries belong to very poor and marginalized sections of the society who are oblivious to their rights and benefits and are also not very forthcoming in exercising their choice. The Committee were also made aware of the dismal ground reality of non-payment of very less amount to such accidental victims and that the issue required urgent attention. Keeping the stock of situation in light and the strata of MGNREGA labourers in view, the Committee feel that separate two lakhs compensation amount over and above existing provision should be immediately paid to the next of kin of the accidental victims under MGNREGA and call upon DoRD to redress the issue of low payment as per revised provisions and with a humanitarian approach.

Reply of the Government

As per the provision in schedule-II of the Act, If a person employed under the Scheme meets with death or becomes permanently disabled by accident arising out of and in the course of employment, he or his legal heirs, as the case may be, shall be paid by the implementing agency an ex gratia as per entitlements under the PradhanMantriSurakshaBimaYojana or as may be notified by the Central Government. This is a very significant enhancement as the maximum amount payable in case of loss of life or both the limbs have gone up from Rs. 1 lac to Rs. 2 lac. Other benefits have also been similarly raised. No further enhancement is under consideration.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 20 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 7)

As part of green initiatives and utilizing the barren areas of land alongside roads on highways, provision exists for the plantation of trees and their maintenance. However, the ground reality throws a picture reflecting non-application of wisdom with such provision. The provision holds potential for revenue generation and maintaining greenery both through a single step only if the current norm is tweaked to allow the plantation of revenue yielding trees. The Committee unanimously feel that it is only prudent if trees bearing fruits are planted at such sites so that a source of income is also generated as a corollary effect which can only aid the local authorities in utilizing the fund for maintenance of public properties and other welfare measures. Therefore, the Committee recommend DoRD to modify the provision for mandatory plantation of revenue yielding trees along the roads through MGNREGA works.

Reply of the Government

The approval of self of works is done by Gram Sabha. However, there is a provision for taking up Horticulture plantation, Road side plantation under the Scheme. To provide focus on Road side plantation, Horticulture plantation including nursery raising, Moring Plantation including moringa nursery raising, an advisory has been issued to engage Cluster Level Federation (CLF) as Programme Implementing Agency (PIA).

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

Recommendation (Serial No. 8)

An oft repeated concern of the Committee pertaining with MGNREGA has been that of increase in wages. Despite several recommendations in this regard, there has been no noticeable change in the stance of DoRD. While DoRD has been always repeating their same routine response of the revision of wages every financial year, but realistically, the quantum of revision, in all earnest, merits a relook. Rising inflation and cost of living, be it urban area or rural setting, has risen manifold and is evident to ‘all and sundry’. Even at this moment, going by the notified wage rates of MGNREGA, per day wage rate of around Rs. 200/- in many States defies any logic when the same State has much higher labour rates. It becomes inexplicable as to why the wages under MGNREGA still can’t be linked to a suitable index commensurate with the existing inflation. Aware of the demand of increase in wages under MGNREGA from various quarters, the Committee urge DoRD unequivocally to revisit their stand and devise a mechanism for raising the wages under MGNREGA.

Reply of the Government

As per Section 6(1) of Mahatma Gandhi NREG Act, 2005 by notification specify the wage rate for its beneficiaries. Accordingly, the Ministry of Rural Development notifies Mahatma Gandhi NREGA wage rate every 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). The CPI-AL index figures are taken from the website of Labour Bureau, Shimla. The wage rate is made applicable from 1st April of each financial year. However each State/UT can provide wage over and above the wage rate notified by the Central Government.

Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is a demand driven wage employment scheme which provides livelihoods security i.e. fall back option for livelihoods for the rural households, in the situation when regular employment is absent. Wage rate for the scheme Mahatma Gandhi NREG A ct is mandated in section 6 of the Act.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 23 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 9)

The Committee are anguished to note a social welfare scheme of unmatched rivalry, MGNREGA, being riddled with issues of malpractices ranging from fake job cards, irregularities of funds, unfair practices in usage of machines to name a few. Genuine labourers not getting their dues while money keeps changing hands due to collusion of unscrupulous elements surrounding the implementation of scheme at ground level is a bitter truth of the time. The Committee were informed of the non-availability of actual labourers working in MGNREGA site while on-paper the number of labourers stayed intact and full. Such unfair activities need to be strongly handled with to prevent the scheme going completely haywire in the hands of a few.

Although, the Department boasts of several monitoring mechanisms of the scheme but observing the ground reality from closer proximity divulge a different picture. Instead of ‘passing the buck’ each time on the States for implementation of the scheme, the DoRD should also come out with some concrete measures to ensure a hawkish mode of surveillance of the scheme to weed out the unfair practices associated with the scheme. Therefore, the Committee strongly recommend DoRD to create and implement stricter mechanism of monitoring incorporating accountability of every officials and penalty provision for the violators for the actual benefit of genuine MGNREGA beneficiaries.

Reply of the Government

The National Mobile Monitoring Service (NMMS) was launched on 21st May 2021. The National Mobile Monitoring System App permits taking real time attendance of workers at Mahatma Gandhi NREGA worksites along with geo-tagged photographs. This NMMS app aids in increasing the citizen oversight of the programme and is one more step towards transparency and accountability.

The Mobile Monitoring system has enabled real time attendance capturing for NREGA workers. The attendance is uploaded on daily basis by 11:00 am along with photograph of the workers on work site and the second photograph in between 2:00 to 5:00 pm. The vigilant groups can verify the attendance in real time. The morning attendance along with first Photograph can be captured in offline mode and to be uploaded once the device comes in network.

Area Officer Monitoring Visit App was also launched on 21st May 2021. The purpose of the App is to make real time inspection & evidence-based reporting of RD scheme.

The Ministry has been constantly reviewing various aspects of the monitoring through the Area Officer Monitoring Visit Application. Moving forward with this endeavor, the Ministry has directed the States/UTs to register their senior officers to this App and start monitoring through this App. The minimum nos. of visit of ongoing work to be conducted by the Commissioner, DPC/ ADPC, in charge Mahatma

Gandhi NREGA and Project officer (PO) per month regularly and visit report may be uploaded by using the App which could be seen by any citizen on the link https://ruraldiksha.nic.in/areaofficerwebnew/login.aspx.

This App will facilitate the officials of the State/UT to record their field visit findings online. The App will also allow the officials to record time stamped and geotagged photograph for all the schemes launched by Department of Rural Development. This App will help in developing hassle-free reporting of field visit. The provision to view the field visit outcome report by the senior officials is also there in the App.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

Recommendation (Serial No. 11)

The Committee note the procedural constraint being experienced by the Members in exercising their desire of providing push to the works under MGNREGA in their constituency by converging their funds from MPLADS with the material component of ongoing projects locally. More often than not, the ongoing projects under MGNREGA get stalled due to non-release of adequate fund component, specifically due to the delay in the release of material component under the 40% ratio of the funds. The idea of convergence of funds is indeed a noble approach on part of the Members and need to be encouraged and facilitated by smoothening the procedural steps. Therefore, the Committee urge the DoRD to take into consideration the vision of Members of Parliament and issue necessary instruction at State/District level for easing convergence modalities and utilization of funds redirected by Members for better and faster momentum to the stalled projects.

Reply of the Government

Convergence at both Centre/State scheme including MPLAD is permissible under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA. This Ministry would work with Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation and the States to streamline modalities for convergence.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

Recommendation (Serial No. 12)

As per the information furnished by the DoRD, the realization of 'Housing for All' vision under PMAY-G has been extended from March, 2022 to March, 2024 due to various reasons. Moreover, the data of Awaas plus survey for the inclusion of leftover eligible beneficiaries have been also compiled and after all formalities, final figure of new beneficiaries have been identified. The steps of the Department seems to be in right direction for the identification and addition of leftover beneficiaries to the Permanent Wait List. However, a pertinent issue that have engulfed the yojana since its start has been that of the challenges faced in the identification of genuine beneficiaries/real needy homeless or kaccha home occupants. The study visits undertaken frequently by the Committee to see the actual implementation of the schemes of Department of Rural Development have time and again revealed a dismal scenario wherein such beneficiaries availing the benefit of assistance through PMAY-G have emerged who are already well off and have built expensive houses, belying their claims of being a genuine beneficiary. The Committee were flabbergasted at witnessing such occurrences, but instances were galore of such events. The discretion employed at grass root level at the time of preparation of lists, addition/deletion of beneficiaries to the list seem to be governed through vested interests perhaps fuelled with local biases, prejudices and politics. Thus, to assuage the ambitious approach of few in serving their own self-interest, the very purpose of the scheme meant for the really genuine and needy persons get defeated as they get deprived of the benefits of PMAY-G. Moreover, the Committee also feel that there is an utmost necessity of increasing the target of number of houses from the existing 2.95 crores to include the entire homeless rural populace. Therefore, in the larger interest of common masses and real beneficiaries, the Committee vociferously appeal the DoRD to ensure all foolproof corrective measures for identification of genuine beneficiaries under PMAY-G alongwith increasing the target of beneficiaries from the existing 2.95 crore.

Reply of the Government

In order to achieve "Housing for All", the overall target is to construct 2.95 crore houses under the PMAY-G in rural areas. The beneficiaries under the scheme are identified from Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) 2011 and new survey "Awaas+" conducted to identify eligible households subject to due verification by

Gram Sabha and completion of appellate process. The number of eligible beneficiaries available through SECC 2011 database currently stands at 2.15 crore (approx.). In order to fill the gap of 80 lakh houses (2.95-2.15), Awaas+ data is being utilized. Awaas+ currently has over 2.7 crore eligible beneficiaries claiming for a house against only 80 lakh houses (approx.) that can be sanctioned from this database in order to fill the gap.

Further, based on the recommendations of Expert Committee, the target from Awaas+ list is allocated to the States/UTs on the basis of 50% weightage given to number of households in PWL and 50% to households living in kutcha house as per NSO survey. Thus, an upper ceiling of targets to be allocated is fixed for each State/UT with a cumulative ceiling of 80 lakh houses to be allocated across the country from Awaas+ list, irrespective of number of households registered by the States/UTs under this survey. The allocation of targets to Gram Panchayats is done by the concerned State Governments. Accordingly, a target of 63.76 lakh houses has already been allocated to 28 eligible States/UTs from Awaas+ who have saturated their SECC based PWL.

Under PMAY-G, the States/UTs have been directed for wall painting of the Permanent Wait List of PMAY-G on the Government buildings so that the beneficiaries are aware of their selection under PMAY-G and also regarding their ranking/ priority. Various campaigns through print media and electronic media are organized by the Ministry of Rural Development for dissemination of information in respect of PMAY-G. Also, in the Serial “GaonVikaski Ore” being telecasted on Doordarshan in 20 regional languages, many episodes were related to scheme of PMAY-G highlighting its features and the success stories. Also, The Ministry time to time undertake other activities to ensure that the information on benefits/ disbursal under PMAY-G reaches the rural population/ beneficiaries of the scheme.

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 DoRD. In cases where the complaint against the Officials/ PanchayatAdhikari/

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 publicise widely the action taken in the matter including on social media

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 09/06/2022)

Recommendation (Serial No. 15)

The documents of DoRD reveal that out of the total 4.46 lakh landless beneficiaries identified in the entire Permanent Wait List of PMAY-G so far, only 2.05 lakh (46%) have been provided land for the construction of houses, issue of landlessness is a glaring bottleneck affecting the progress of PMAY-G and delaying the completion of target. The Committee also note that the States/UTs were also requested by the Department to constitute a Committee under the Chief Secretary, comprising the Secretary (Revenue) and Secretary dealing with PMAY-G so that the land is allotted to the landless beneficiaries under PMAY-G in a time bound manner. The Committee acknowledge the effort elicited by the Department being in positive direction, but also feel that the deliberations may linger for too long causing undue agony to the landless beneficiaries. In this context, the Committee recommend DoRD that in order to ensure land to landless people for their own house, policy be framed in public interest within a specified period so that land must be allotted to identified persons to expedite the timely construction of houses in their respective States under PMAY-G.

Reply of the Government

The Ministry has already requested the States/UTs to resolve the issue time and again and provide land to all the landless beneficiaries on priority basis. The States/UTs were also requested to constitute a Committee under the Chief Secretary, comprising the Secretary (Revenue) and Secretary dealing with PMAY-G, so that land is allotted to landless beneficiaries under PMAY-G in a time bound manner. This matter has also been taken up at the level of Minister (RD) with the Chief Ministers of the States with highest number of landless beneficiaries under PMAY-G awaiting allotment of land to them.

Further, a landless module has also been made live on AwaasSoft thus moving forward towards adoption of better monitoring mechanism and timely provision of land to landless beneficiaries under PMAY-G.

Important communications regarding availing land to landless beneficiaries are detailed below -

i. The Hon'ble Minister of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj in his letters (D.O.No.13011/05/ 2013-LRD dated 5th September 2018 and D.O.No. J-11014/01/2016-RH dated 30th April 2021) requested Hon'ble Chief Ministers / Administrators of the States/ UTs were requested to assess landless status in the States/ UTs and constitute task force committee to expedite availing land to the landless beneficiaries.

ii. The Joint Secretary Rural Housing, in his letter (D. O. No. J- 11 060/07/2018-RH (M&T) dated 4th January 2019), requested concerned States/ UTs to take necessary steps in time bound manner for availing land to landless beneficiaries in the time bound manner.

iii. The Hon'ble Minister of State for Rural Development in her letter (No. J-11060/07/2018-RH(M&T) dated 16th September 2019) shared details of the Bihar state's scheme for assistance to the landless.

iv. The Hon’ble Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj in his letter (No. M-12018/2/2016-RH(M&T) dated 10.08.2020) to the Hon’ble Minister of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) requesting financial assistance for availing land to the most deserving landless PMAY-G beneficiaries belong to the Schedule Tribe (ST) category under any of the suitable scheme of the MoTA.

v. The Hon’ble Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj in his letter (No. M-12018/2/2016-RH(M&T) dated 10.08.2020) to the Hon’ble Minister of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE) requested for financial assistance for availing land to the most deserving landless PMAY-G beneficiaries belong to the Schedule Cast (SC) category under any of the suitable scheme of the MoSJE.

vi. The Secretary Rural Development in his letter (No. J-11014/01/2016-RH dated 9th April 2021) requested States/ UTs to constitute task force under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary of the State comprising of State RD Secretary and State Revenue Secretary as members to expedite provisioning of land to the landless beneficiaries.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

Recommendation (Serial No. 16)

A flagship programme like PMGSY is affected with malaise of poor maintenance post construction and handover to the States. The entire effort of constructing quality roads providing rural connectivity gets marred in the aftermath of poor maintenance aspect. The Committee note the concern raised from various quarters and through their own experiences during study visits that the roads constructed under PMGSY at various places suffer from poor maintenance and start getting degraded from early stage itself. It has been noted that there are provisions for maintenance in the guidelines but the adherence to them and with no accountability at all. The wherewithal for honesty and transparency seems to be missing in the implementation of such an important scheme. Even the monitoring mechanism is also elaborately laid down the maintenance aspect of roads constructed under PMGSY remains a cause of concern. It has been also noticed that the contractors after the stipulated time under their supervision hand over the roads by carrying out cosmetic patch works on the damaged roads. Therefore, the Committee are of the firm opinion that the evaluation of roads be done on periodic basis even after completion of construction both physically and through utilization of virtual techniques, geotagging etc. so that the real picture post construction emerge in front of everyone and accountability of erring contractors may be fixed. Thus, DoRD is recommended to earmark specific teams for periodic and mandatory physical inspection of roads under PMGSY.

Reply of the Government

Ministry is in agreement with the concerns of the committee with regard to poor maintenance of roads constructed under PMGSY. In order to strengthen the quality of roads being constructed under PMGSY, Ministry has taken many steps which are as under-

1. The number of NQMs has been increased from 98 to 156 in the last one year. The percentage of satisfactory works is increasing continuously, in the inspection of ongoing works in the last two years

2. Total number of SQMs has been increased from 872 to 1,332 in last one year (53% increase), selection process for empanelment of new SQMs has been initiated by states

In 2021-22, 9,416 NQM inspections and 59,255 SQM inspections have been conducted. There has been an increase of 71% in no. of NQM inspections and 53% in no. of SQM inspections over the last year.

3. Intensity of SQM inspections has been increased. Now every 5 km section length is inspected

4. Verification of field laboratories is ensured.

5. Payment of CC roads is done only after verification of core test results.

6. Quality monitoring inspection format has been broadened

7. In order to reduce the pendency of Action Taken Report (ATRs) of NQM observations in their inspection report, Ministry has issued guidelines dated 17th February 2022, that pending ATRs will have bearing on the release of 2nd installment of programme funds.

As a measure of further enhancing the focus on maintenance of roads during the defect liability period and also streamlining the delivery of routine maintenance of PMGSY roads, Electronic Maintenance of Rural Roads under PMGSY (eMARG) has been launched in all the states.

Conceptualized on Performance Based Maintenance Contracts (PBMC), eMARG sets up a blue-print on how maintenance of infrastructure can be solved across government departments with smart IT & Contract Management. PBMC is a type of contract in which payment to the contractor is made based on the minimum condition of road, its cross drainage works and traffic assets that have to be met by him/her. Payments are based on how well the contractor manages to comply with the performance standards or service levels defined in the contract, and not on piece work.

eMARG is a GIS-based Enterprise e-Governance solution to aid and assist the officials, Contractors, Banks and general public. It is an end-to-end solution, which provides restricted role-based access via internet.

Prior to making payments to the contractor, bi-monthly inspections are carried out by engineers for every 1 km section of the road in which they click two photographs at randomly generated locations through the mobile app to capture the actual condition of roads as evidence. Thereafter, they give a grading of Satisfactory/ Unsatisfactory based on the condition of road. Furthermore, based on these photographs and grading, the condition of the road is evaluated on a scale of 100 based on pre-defined performance standards (as explained in Figure 1). Finally, on the basis of marks obtained out of 100, a proportional payment is made. The bi-monthly inspections ensure that the road is maintained throughout the year. Furthermore, eMARG allows contractors to submit e-bills in one click on the system and auto-generate vouchers based on the result of the performance evaluation.

End-to-end processing of bills is achieved through the system, thus drastically reducing the administrative friction. At the same time, it ensures complete transparency and provides accountability analytics for each bill against every rural road through a plethora of reports and dashboards that aid in monitoring at various levels. (DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

Recommendation (Serial No. 17)

An important and practical situation that emerged before the Committee during the deliberations was concerning with the non-uniform nature of distribution of target of roads to the districts by the States. No fixed parameter is seen to be utilized in allocation of targets to the districts and discretionary approach of States in this regard cannot be ruled out. The Committee also find the same issue afflicting the phase-III of PMGSY wherein every district is allegedly no being given their rightful target of roads. The Committee find such happenings as a blot on the scheme causing the failure in achievement of desired target in uniform manner. In this connection, the Committee strongly recommend DoRD to bring onboard all the stakeholders involved in the allocation of targets of roads in the State Governments and coordinate with necessary dialogue or through preventive measures so that the broader goal of PMGSY is not defeated.

Reply of the Government

In PMGSY-III, as per the decision of the CCEA, targets have been allocated to the state as a whole. District-wise distribution of targets is to be done by the state and it is expected that equitable distribution of district wise and block wise targets will be ensured by the concerned State Governments. During the examination of the proposals in the Ministry, this aspect is examined and necessary advise/ directions are given to the states, where Ministry feels that equitable distribution has not been made among districts and blocks.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

Recommendation (Serial No. 20)

One of the loopholes associated with the rural connectivity projects through linkage of habitations with roads came to the fore was that of roads reaching quite far away from the actual population density. The Committee note that in various cases, the roads touch the periphery of village and get counted in the achievement of target for connecting habitations but in actual the habitation residing in majority lies at least 2-3 km inside the periphery. This defeats the purpose behind habitation linkage. So, the Committee finding it a practical need recommend the DoRD to review the policy of road connectivity more accurately and create means so that the roads constructed under PMGSY actually reach the habitation and are not merely touching the outskirts of villages.

Reply of the Government

As per PMGSY guidelines, if the road is constructed prior to 500 m to reach the habitation it is treated as connected. Further, providing all-weather road connectivity to the eligible habitations was the mandate of PMGSY-I, which is targeted for completion by September 2022. As on date, 99% of the eligible and feasible habitations have been provided all weather road connectivity. Since, the scheme is on the verge of its completion, it would not be appropriate to review the PMGSY guidelines at this stage. However, if any new vertical under PMGSY is launched in future, the recommendations of the committee will be taken into account. The Gram Panchayats would be also advised to take up such last mile gaps through funds available with them.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

Recommendation (Serial No. 21)

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) under the scheme of DAY-NRLM are a boon to the rural women who work together for means of livelihoods. However, the Committee note that the women of SHGs may be better served in terms of generating revenue for their livelihoods if products prepared by them like dairy, agriculture, handicrafts etc. have a proper platform for their marketing and income. Although they get access to the village mandis but the number of days of such mandis are limited and perhaps a source for continued marketing is required for providing them a much needed opportunity of flourishing, like free connectivity of their product for online marketing on platforms like Amazon, Flipkart etc. They also need to be imparted special computer training to launch their local products online through websites utilizing social media so that these women SHGs can really get revenue of their sincere efforts and skills. Therefore, the Committee recommend DoRD to come up with a robust structure of marketing wherein the products of SHGs get an opportunity for better advertisement resulting in wide local/international customer-base ultimately causing increased revenue generation and sustainability of income.

Reply of the Government

The following efforts are being made for marketing of SHG products under NRLM.

- Periodic organization of Saras Fairs at State and National level where SHGs are invited to showcase and sell their products.
- Saras Gallery at New Delhi has been renovated and curated SHG products are being showcased for wider marketing to elite class at National capital. This is being managed professionally through FDRVC (Foundation for Development of Rural Value Chains), a joint initiative of MoRD and Tata Trust.
- Alliance with Flipkart (an online portal for retailing of variety of products to consumers) for online showcasing and marketing of SHG products. Similar alliance is being proposed with Amazon.
- Dedicated e-Commerce platform for SHG products is also being developed through DIC (Digital India Corporation, a not for profit Company set up by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Govt. of India).

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

Recommendation (Serial No. 22)

During the course of evidence, it came to light that the SPMRM programme may not receive further extension and could be wound up as the Expenditure Finance Committee had initiated. However, the matter is before the Cabinet and a decision is awaited so further expenses have been stopped in this scheme. The Committee find this information discomforting as SPMRM has always been looked upon with high expectations considering its novel approach of creating unbiased clusters in the country which could act as a model of villages with urban facilities act as a model of villages with urban facilities and would not only aid in curtailing migration to the cities but also had enormous potential for employment generation at village level. The Committee are of the firm opinion that the Mission should get appropriate extension so that at least the ongoing projects do not suffer and are completed for the benefit of rural population. Thereafter, a proper review may be done on holistic basis weighing the benefits of the scheme for a longer run.

Reply of the Government

The Cabinet Note for seeking extension till March 2024 is currently under submission, pending final decision. Meanwhile, Department of Economic Affairs has disallowed utilization of allocation(BE) for 2022-23, vide OM dated 28th March 2022 considering the 31st March as 'Sunset Day' for the Mission. Therefore, the States/UTs have been intimated the same for strict compliance.

Ministry had written to Department of Expenditure dated 18th October 2021, 06th December 2021, and 24th February 2022, to allow release of funds and continuation of activities until the Cabinet Decision on continuation/ discontinuation of the Mission. Vide OM dated 22nd March 2022, DoE had allowed release of funds till 31st March 2022, only for the projects that had started on ground on or before 26th August 2021 (i.e. the date of EFC meeting). Ministry has also written to DoE on 19th April, 2022 for allowing expenditure during FY 2022-2023 against BE of Rs.550 Crore for specific works those have already been started on ground (to avoid unproductive spending under the Mission). If only ongoing works as on 31st March 2022 are allowed to be completed, the total outlay (central share part) for the Mission would be limited to Rs. 3335.57 crore (against the approved outlay of Rs. 5142.08 crore).

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

Recommendation (Serial No. 23)

The Committee are hopeful of the completion of ongoing projects of SPMRM and its continuance so they are of unanimous view that for the effectiveness of the programme, quality of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) was of paramount importance and DPRs should prepared meticulously through consultation with all the stakeholder so that the local acumen is brought onboard for a fool-proof strategy before initiation of projects under SPMRM. Moreover, the Committee also feel that Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) be actively involved in the setting up of mills under the projects of SPMRM for better convergence and coordination. Therefore, the Committee recommend DoRD to spruce up its DPR preparation work with active utilization of FPOs for relevant projects under SPMRM.

Reply of the Government

The views of the Committee are noted. Ministry, in its various interactions with States, Districts and PRIs, has requested the functionaries to ensure participation of all stakeholders including Self Help Groups (SHGs)/ Village Organizations (VOs)/

Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) while preparation of DPRs, implementation, operations and maintenance. Ministry has also written letters/ advisories to States/UTs in this regard.

The Ministry as its major action step, finalized State as final approving authority for DPR approval of cluster for expediting works on the ground in the given time-frame. An advisory has also been issued to States/UTs to make desired changes in DPRs on account of Covid-19, and rebooting the rural economy through the inclusion of more economic activities for providing employment and livelihood opportunities to the rural citizens. Thus the States/ UTs can carry out necessary review and modifications in DPRs at their end, without any intervention from the Ministry.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

Recommendation (Serial No. 24)

A scheme of wide outreach aimed at the poor and destitute population of society need a better assistance component for providing real succor to its beneficiary. The Committee feel that the upward revision of assistance amount ranging at present from Rs. 200/- to Rs. 500/- per month under the different components of the scheme is much awaited. The Committee had recommended for the same earlier also in their Thirteenth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) and reiterated it in their Seventeenth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha), but still no augmentation of pension amounts have been noticed on the ground. Much time has elapsed and the Committee find that the assurance of DoRD regarding the ongoing consultation is not taking desired shape. So, the Committee strongly recommend DoRD to take the issue of increase in pension amount under NSAP seriously and concretize the result on ground level as soon as possible.

Reply of the Government

Under NSAP schemes, financial assistance ranging from Rs.200/- to Rs.500/- per beneficiary per month is being provided. Apart from this assistance, States/ UTs are adding top-ups ranging from Rs.50 to Rs.2,700 per month under the NSAP schemes. The issue of revamping the NSAP Scheme through changes in acceptable rates and parameters was considered at the highest level in Government and it was decided to continue with the existing system.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 41 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 25)

The Committee have time and again echoed the sentiments of the MPs regarding the better utilization of their acumen and wisdom of ground reality in the monitoring of schemes. DoRD have submitted before the Committee that regular inspection teams visit the districts and sites of implementation of various schemes of the DoRD. The Committee in this regard feel that availability of the local MPs of concerned district well in advance where the inspection teams of DoRD propose to visit is of vital importance. By engaging the local MPs, the inspection teams would not only be made aware of the ground realities for settling local issues affecting the schemes but would also provide with an indepth insight of local situation for the success of the scheme, so, the Committee urge DoRD to devise a mechanism for the prior information and active involvement of local MPs at the time of field visit/inspection of the teams of Department.

Reply of the Government

MGNREGA:- The recommendation of the committee noted for further deliberation with States.

PMAY-G:- The Framework For Implementation (FFI) of PMAY-G issued by the Ministry of Rural Development provides an important role in the implementation and monitoring of the Scheme for the Members of Parliament. According to provisions, district DISHA committee headed by Member of Parliament will also monitor the progress and implementation of PMAY-G. The Hon'ble Minister of Rural Development, Government of India has also written letter dated 8th November, 2021 to the Hon'ble Members of Parliament (Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha) for monitoring and supervision of the scheme as per the provisions.

PMGSY:- The PMGSY has an inbuilt mechanism for consultation with public representatives at various stages of implementation of the programme. Following are the main provisions in the PMGSY Guidelines for consultation with Members of Parliament: -

i) The priorities of elected representatives including Members of Parliament and Members of Legislative Assemblies are expected to be duly taken into account and given full consideration while finalizing District Rural Roads Plan (DRRP) and Core Network (CN).

ii) The Comprehensive New Connectivity Priority List (CNCPL) and Comprehensive Upgradation Priority List (CUPL) will be prepared after consultation with MPs and taking their suggestions.

In preparing Annual proposals for road works to be undertaken under PMGSY-III, role of Members of Parliament have been envisaged as follows:-

- CUPL should be sent to each MP with the request that their proposals on the selection of works out of the CUPL should be sent to the District Panchayat. It is
- In order to ensure that the prioritization has some reference to the funding available, the size of proposals expected may also be indicated to the Members of Parliament while forwarding them the CUPL list. District / Block-wise allocation may be indicated to enable choice with the requisite geographical spread. It is expected that such proposals of Members of Parliament which adhere to the order of Priority would be invariably accepted subject to considerations of equitable allocation of funds.
- The proposals received from the Members of Parliament by the stipulated date should be given full consideration in the District Panchayat which should record the reason in each case of non-inclusion, and the Members of Parliament should be informed of the inclusion / non-inclusion of their proposals along with the reasons in each case in the event of non-inclusion. It would be preferable if the communication is issued from the Nodal Department at a senior level.

While Lok Sabha Members would be consulted in respect of their constituencies, Rajya Sabha Members will be consulted in respect of that District of the State they represent for which they been nominated as Co-Chairman of the District Vigilance & Monitoring Committee of the Ministry of Rural Development.

In order to ensure that the State Government give due attention towards this aspect of the guidelines while submitting the proposals to the Ministry of Rural Development for sanction, the Ministry has issued a fresh advisory to the States on 2nd June, 2020. The State Governments have been advised, inter-alia, to communicate the final list of proposals in the order of priority to the Member of Parliament with the reasons for non-inclusion of certain roads in the proposals and incorporate their recommendations with the proposals sent to NRIDA/Ministry for approval.

Further, 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.

Further, to promote transparency and effective monitoring, the Superintending Engineer concerned of the zone/region has been asked to request the concerned Member of Parliament and Zilla Panchayat Pramukh representing the zone/region, once in six months, to select any PMGSY project(s) for joint inspection.

As regards prior information to the Members of Parliament regarding visits of DoRD team, it is submitted that, whenever any complaint is received from Member of Parliament, Ministry constitutes a team of NQMs to enquire into the issue and prior intimation is given to the concerned member about the proposed visit of NQMs and request is made that, either the concerned MP may remain present or depute his/ her representative. Moreover, the observation has been noted and will be complied with in future cases.

DDU-GKY SKILLS:- The schemes of Rural Skills Division namely DDU-GKY & RSETI both are covered under DISHA and the same is being monitored at District level by Honourable Member of Parliament.

Regular inspection teams goes as National Level Monitors(NLM) for Common Review Missions (CRM) on periodic basis and coordinating division may take suitable action regarding informing Local MPs of the visit, as per availability & requirement.

SPMRM:- The views of the Standing Committee are noted. Hon’ble Minister (RD) has written letter (dated 18th Nov 2020 and 08th Nov 2021) to all MPs having Rurban clusters in their constituencies, seeking cooperation in developing the clusters in their constituencies and their active involvement in the Mission's activities. Also, the field visit/ inspection schedule of the teams of the Department of Rural Development will be intimated to the State/ District Administration for active involvement of local MPs during the visits.

SAGY:- Saansad Adarsh Gram yojana (SAGY) envisages the holistic development of Gram Panchayats through convergence with existing schemes under the complete guidance and leadership of Hon'ble MPs.

A village development plan (VDP) is prepared for every adopted SAGY Gram Panchayat (GP) which serves as a blueprint to develop the model GP. The objective of Village Development Plan is to develop the selected village in an integrated manner including economic development, infrastructure development and other aspects of human development. For better involvement of community in the development process, before the formulation of the Village Development Plan (VDP), systematic environment creation and social mobilisation is spearheaded by the MP himself/herself. VDP is prepared with the involvement of the Gram Sabha and further approved by the District level committee headed by the District Collector, in the presence of the concerned MP, duly considering his/her comments and suggestions.

To ensure transparency and accountability, MPs can visit the GPs anytime and monitor the progress of projects approved under VDP and take the lead in sorting out issues and problems in the programme implementation and public grievances. Simultaneously, they can coordinate with the community to achieve the desired, non-tangible outcomes, particularly the social ones.

As per SAGY guidelines, the District Collector is the nodal officer for implementing SAGY. A monthly review meeting is organized by the District Collector with representatives of the participating line departments and the Members of Parliament concerned chair the review meetings. MPs can provide their valuable feedback and suggestions for betterment of development work. Continuing leadership and guidance of the MP plays a major role in sustainability of projects post implementation of VDP.

To facilitate the monitoring process, an MP Dashboard has been developed on SAGY website where the Hon'ble MP can log in and check the progress of the selected GP, and review it with States and Districts so that projects planned under VDP can be implemented successfully at the grassroot level. This serves as an interface enabling the MP and other key stakeholders to tog-in and give suggestions/comments, and even raise queries or complaints, which should be promptly responded to by the implementing authorities.

It has been requested by the Minister, Rural Development to all Members of Parliament to visit their identified SAGY Gram Panchayats to monitor the activities/projects that are being implemented. It has also been communicated by the Minister, Rural Development to include and review SAGY during DISHA meetings.

In addition, the Ministry organized orientation workshops for newly elected 17th Lok Sabha Members and the representatives of MPs for ground insights, cross-learning and feedback so that better coordination can be established at State. Districts and GP level.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

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 09/06/2022

CHAPTER IV

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

Recommendation (Serial No. 3)

The Committee took note that the essential pre-requisite for the timely payment of wages to the labourers of MGNREGA was the immediate online filling up of muster-roll after the issue of work order. It is also understood by the Committee through its study visits and the practical experiences of the Members that quite often the rozgar sevaks are in the habit of filling up kachha muster at the start and go to the Block once a week for online uploading of muster-rolls. This practice is having a cascading detrimental effect on the MGNREGA beneficiaries as delay in muster uploading causes delay in the payment of wages. Moreover, in cases where the muster-roll is not updated and uploaded within the stipulated time, the same cannot be filled from back date or of previous week, thus causing loss of number of that many days of work done by the labourers in the calculation for payment. This is a huge anomaly at the ground level fully attributable to the callous approach of the concerned official. The plea of non-availability of internet connection at Panchayat level does not stand firm in the face of the provision of Bharat-Net providing internet to the Gram Panchayats. Thus, it becomes imperative that the lackadaisical approach of grass-root officials associated with MGNREGA be handled with firmly and no excuse be tolerated any further for non-filling of muster at Gram Panchayat level itself without wasting time. Therefore, the Committee vehemently implore upon Department of Rural Development to make it mandatory for the filling of muster at Gram Panchayat level itself specifically the Gram Panchayats which are connected with Bharat-Net. The Committee may be informed about the efficacious steps taken by the Government in this regard.

Reply of the Government

"As per the provision, e-muster is the norm. Only in exceptional and unavoidable circumstance, paper musters can be issued by State Government after due approval of Central Government. e-Muster has printed names of workers who have demanded employment and are allocated a particular work. In the case of e-muster, muster roll numbers are generated by the NREGASoft and therefore, not required to be entered in the system.

Central Government has made mandatory for capturing of real time attendance alongwith geotagged photographs of beneficiaries through National Mobile Monitoring system(NMMS) of all worksites wherein muster roll have been issued to engage 20 or more beneficiaries. These captured attendances go directly to NREGASoft for wage list creation. No need to do separate data entry.

State can use NMMS even for the worksite having less than 20 workers.

Schedule-II of the Act has provision for the purpose of ensuring accountability in payment of wages and to calculate culpability of various functionaries or agencies, the State shall divide the processes leading to determination and payment of wage into various stages and specified Stage wise maximum time limits alongwith the functionary or agency which is responsible for discharging the specific function.

Also, the State Government shall pay the compensation upfront after due verification within the time limits as specified above and recover the compensation amount from the functionaries or agencies who is responsible for the delay in payment."

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 11 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 4)

A demand driven scheme such as MGNREGA having a statutory status and aimed at securing some sort of livelihood for the destitute and marginalized having no other 'fall back options' certainly stays defeated in its intent in wake of Rs. 4,060 crore lying as pending wages. Shockingly, Rs. 9,000/- crores remains pending against the material component. The Committee find these figures alarming in nature more so when both the aspect of MGNREGA, i.e. a demand driven nature of the scheme and creation of assets under the scheme are severely hampered through such pendencies. More startling is the fact that even after such existing scenario, the BE for MGNREGA has been reduced from the Rs. 78,000/- crore as sought by DoRD, to Rs. 73,000/- crores for the financial year 2022-23. Any administrative or procedural lapse causing such delays are completely uncalled for and unacceptable in the context of a scheme of such enormous proportion. Therefore, the Committee strongly recommend DoRD to spruce up its financial management of the scheme and tighten their grip on the fallacies that may have crept in the implementation of MGNREGA at ground level for the earliest eradication of pendencies in wages and material components.

Reply of the Government

Under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS fund release to the States is a continuous process and Central Government is committed to making fund available to States for the implementation of the Scheme. Under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, States submit fund release proposals to Government of India. The Ministry releases funds periodically in two tranches with each tranche consisting of one or more installments, keeping in view the "agreed to" Labour Budget, demand for works, opening balance, pace of utilization of funds, pending liabilities, overall performance and subject to submission of relevant documents by the State.

The Ministry seeks additional funds under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS from Ministry of Finance as and when required for meeting the demand for work on the ground.

The Central Government had enhanced the financial allocation under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS for previous financial year 2020-21 from Rs. 61,500 crore at Budget Estimate (BE) stage to Rs.1,11,500 crore at Revised Estimate (RE) stage.

During the current financial year 2021-22 (as on 31.03.2022), an amount of Rs. 98,467.85 crore has been released by Central Government to the States/UTs under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS.

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 14 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 5)

During the deliberations of the Committee, one of the pertinent issue that kept on coming up was the demand of suitable review and widening the ambit of 'permissible works' under MGNREGA so as to include few contemporary required areas to be covered. One such aspect pertaining to the flood affected regions of country was the construction of 'landspurs' for protecting acres of lands affected with the vagaries of flood every year. These landspurs may reportedly prevent the erosion/cutting of lands during floods causing loss of terrain. Not only this structure, but other notable areas of work like fencing the farmlands and various agricultural activities including agricultural labour also merit a relook for inclusion under permissible domain of MGNREGA. Hence, the Committee strongly urge DoRD to look into the matter of inclusion of 'landspurs', fencing of farmlands, agricultural labour activities under the permissible ambit of MGNREGA to meet the 'need of the hour'.

Reply of the Government

"There are 262 works permissible under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA which includes Construction of wire crate (gabion) spur, stone spur and earthen spur which can be taken up in the flood affected regions of country.

Fencing of farm land is not a permissible work under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS. However, live fencing can be taken up as an item of work in plantation related works.

As per the Schedule I of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA Section 4 (3), Para 4(3) Works which are non-tangible, not measurable, repetitive such as, removing grass, pebbles, agricultural operations, shall not be taken up. Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is a demand driven scheme."

(DoRD O.M. No. G-20011/3/2021-B&A dated 09/06/2022)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 17 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 10)

A startling fact that came to the fore during the examination of Demands for Grants 2022-23 pertaining to the mechanism of payment of wages being employed under MGNREGA was the audacious practice of wages being paid to the MGNREGA beneficiaries on the basis of caste, i.e. in the order of priority starting from SC/ST to remaining others. The Committee were taken aback and aghast on such revelation. Belying all logic and employing such modality, surpasses any prudence whatsoever. The Committee finding themselves at a total 'loss of words' could not fathom the rationale behind such idea. The scheme of MGNREGA draws its origin from a statutory source, i.e. MGNREG Act, 2005. Such absurdity is nowhere mentioned in the Act and digressing from the basic tenets of treating all the MGNREGA beneficiaries at par call for sternest possible criticism. The beneficiaries of MGNREGA cutting across the different sections of society have only one thing in common, i.e. they are poor, destitute and have no other fall back option, but MGNREGA to look upon for their basic source of survival. Thus, they are economically weak populace and can come from any religion/caste, creation of such payment system wherein one specific community is preferred over the other solely on the ground of caste will only give rise to resentment and create rift among the beneficiaries of MGNREGA. The practice which started from 2021-22 itself need to be addressed urgently and not to be encouraged any further by ensuring that each and every labour working under the Scheme, irrespective of caste, get payment within time-frame fixed by the MGNREGA.

In view of such piquant situation, the Committee unanimously recommend DoRD to restore the earlier mechanism of generation of single Fund Transfer Order without any sort of segregation on the basis of caste so that the welfare oriented nature of MGNREGA is not divided on caste basis.

Reply of the Government

”The category wise (SC, ST and Others) wage payment system, as made applicable from the FY 2021-22, has been introduced to accurately reflect on ground flow of funds to various population groups. Its further streamlining has been undertaken. From FY 2022-23 single FTO for wage payment has been started keeping the provisioning for separate budget for different categories to reflect accurate flow of funds on ground.”

(DoRDO.M. No.G-20011/3/2021-B&Adated 14/06/2021)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 26 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 13)

The Committee note that the deadline of PMAY-G has been extended to March, 2024 with the target of 2.95 crore houses. All necessary formalities also reportedly seem to have been completed to ensure that the list of beneficiaries are updated. The per unit assistance under PMAY-G for plain areas is Rs. 1.2 lakh and for hilly areas is Rs. 1.3 lakh which has remained static for quite a while now. With rising inflation having detrimental effect on the cost factor associated with the raw material, transportation cost, labours cost et. al., constructing a new house of the requisite area under PMAY-G for the poor and needy beneficiary with such assistance amount seem to be an arduous task. The vision “Housing for All” may not reach its envisaged culmination until and unless the beneficiaries are provided with proper ‘hand-holding’ in terms of financial assistance of right value and at right juncture. Moreover, instances are galore wherein houses remain incomplete for want of finance and the target keeps on lagging. In view of the foregoing, the Committee find it utmost necessary that a review of per-unit assistance be done on priority basis, more so when the scheme has been extended to March, 2024. Therefore, the Committee recommend the DoRD to revise the per unit assistance under PMAY-G through suitable hike in the assistance component for the much required augmented help to the needy beneficiaries.

Reply of the Government

"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 Swacch Bharat Mission – Gramin (SBM-G), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) or other dedicated source of funding. It also provides 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.

The unit assistance under PMAY-G is as per the approval of the Union Cabinet. At present, there is no proposal for revision in unit assistance under PMAY-G."

(DoRD O.M. No.G-20011/3/2021-B&Adated 14/06/2021)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 29 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 14)

The Committee observe the disparity in the financial assistance provided under the urban component and rural component of Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G). While the per-unit assistance amount in the rural sector ranges from Rs. 1.2 lakh to Rs. 1.3 lakh for plain & hilly areas respectively, the assistance amount under the urban component lies in the region of about Rs. 2.5 lakh through subsidy on loan component. This approach is very intriguing and Committee are unable to grasp the rationale behind keeping the assistance amount in rural sector substantially less than its urban counterpart. The challenges faced in construction of houses in rural areas are far more both in terms of logistics and cost factor while the organized parameters of urban sector is not a hidden fact. Among the rural sector too, the hilly regions require a completely different approach for the construction and vagaries or rural system throws unprecedented bottlenecks ranging from non-availability of labours for bringing raw materials from far flung areas. It is high time that the DoRD undertake an objective assessment of the financial aid under the two sister schemes of PMAY and bridge the divide between the two in a suitable and rationale manner. Therefore, the Committee recommend the DoRD to bring a semblance of parity between the assistance amount under PMAY-U and PMAY-G.

Reply of the Government

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 Swacch Bharat Mission – Gramin (SBM-G), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) or other dedicated source of funding. It also provides 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.

The unit assistance under PMAY-G is as per the approval of the Union Cabinet. At present, there is no proposal for revision in unit assistance under PMAY-G.

(DoRDO.M. No.G-20011/3/2021-B&Adated 14/06/2021)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 32 of Chapter I of the Report)

CHAPTER V

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

Recommendation (Serial No. 18)

The Committee were informed during the deliberations through the ground experience of Members of Parliament (MPs) that the roads constructed under PMGSY with an optimum weight bearing capacity were witnessing load carrying heavy vehicles of NHAI upto the tune of 50 tonnes plying on them. Such enormous weight causes damage to the roads under PMGSY and the matter needed to be looked upon seriously. Even though, provision exists for the roads damaged by the plying of NHAI vehicles to be repaired by them, still no one pays heed to them. This is a blatant violation of norms creating damaging effects on the roads of PMGSY which need to be resolved at the earliest. In view of such conflicting situation, it is perhaps appropriate if the Department takes up the matter sternly with the NHAI and thus the Committee recommend DoRD to ensure a result oriented dialogue process with the NHAI for stricter compliance of the norms of PMGSY.

Reply of the Government

As recommended by the committee, the matter is being taken up with Ministry of Roads, Transport & Highways for better appreciation of this issue.

(DoRD O.M. No.G-20011/3/2021-B&Adated 14/06/2021)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 35 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 19)

Another serious concern that arose before the Committee during their deliberations pertained to the issue of change in prioritizing of roads earmarked for construction in the villages. Normally, routes are selected keeping in mind the important landmarks they devise to connect such as school, hospital etc. However, routes more often than not require land which the landowners are not ready to let go in the absence of any compensation mechanism for land transfer under the scheme. Thus, the project gets stalled due to conflicting opinion and interest at the local level.

Thus, arises the necessity to change the priority which is dependent upon the Gram Panchayats. The conflict goes on, simply lingering the construction work. Hence, the Committee recommend that the need of the hour is to ensure that prudence may be applied in cases where change in priority is required and a mechanism or authority may be appointed for taking unbiased decision immediately so that rural connectivity projects are not hampered.

Reply of the Government

"As per PMGSY guidelines, providing land for the construction of roads under PMGSY is the responsibility of concerned State Government. A certificate to the fact that land is available has to be submitted by the state along with the proposal.

The representatives of the Local Gram Panchayat are also involved in the transect walk for deciding the alignment of the roads. This situation regarding non-availability of lands in some cases mostly happen at the time of execution of PMGSY-I works, where the new roads were being constructed first time for providing connectivity to habitations. Since construction of most of the sanctioned works have been completed under PMGSY-I and states had tackled the issue relating to acquisition of land in some cases, Ministry does not foresee any requirement for putting in place any new system at this juncture.

Ministry is now primarily sanctioning works of PMGSY-III which are upgradation and consolidation of the existing roads. The issue relating to land disputes have not been brought to the notice of Ministry yet. However, the concerns of the committee have been noted and will be taken up with the concerned State Government."

(DoRD O.M. No.G-20011/3/2021-B&Adated 14/06/2021)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 38 of Chapter I of the Report)

NEW DELHI;
<u>28 July, 2022</u>
06 Shravana, 1944(Saka)

PRATAPRAO JADHAV
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on Rural Development& Panchayati Raj

ANNEXURE I

ANNEXURE- II

[*Vide* para 4 of Introduction of Report]

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

I. Total number of recommendations: 25

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

Serial Nos. 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25

Total:17
Percentage:-68%

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, 5, 10, 13, 14

Total: 06

Percentage:-24%

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

Serial No. 18, 19

Total: 02

Percentage:- 8%