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Subject: Mahatma Gandhi NREGA Operational Guidelines, 2013, Fourth Edition

As you may be aware, Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, which seeks to empower poor rural communities through its rights based framework has delivered the largest employment programme in human history. Not only is its scale unprecedented, but the delivery architecture also is unique.

2. With the objective of attaining the true potential of the Act and to ensure that the programme delivers its rights based character, enhances livelihood security of rural poor and strengthens decentralised decision-making, the Ministry has revised the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA Operational Guidelines. The Fourth Edition of the Operational Guidelines was released on 2nd February 2013 on the occasion of the 8th Mahatma Gandhi NREGA Diwas. A copy of the Operational Guidelines is enclosed (also available on Ministry's website www.nrega.nic.in).

3. Important areas for intervention as highlighted in the revised Operational Guidelines are as below:

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- (i) *Institutional Architecture, Capacity Building and partnering with CSOs:* - Chapter 4 details the required human resources from national to GP level. While the Central Govt is making efforts to strengthen organisational support at the Ministry level, the major contribution of human resources will need to come from the State Governments. A framework for Cluster Facilitation Teams and State Employment Guarantee Missions for providing assistance in planning of works, implementation and monitoring of the Scheme has also been suggested in this chapter. A template for training curriculum for different levels has been suggested in Chapter 5. In addition, in Chapter 17, it has been suggested that appropriate partnerships are built with CSOs and network of Institutions for building the capacity of MGNREGA functionaries and for engagement of CSOs in awareness-building, mobilization, support and strengthening capacities of wage-seekers.
 - (ii) *Planning:* - The need for habitation-based planning with stronger focus on Natural Resource Management has been included in Chapter 6 of the revised guidelines. Likewise, a framework for "convergence" with schemes of line departments for maximising the returns from investment has been highlighted in Chapter 15.
 - (iii) *Capturing demand for work accurately:* - In Chapter 3, it has been proposed that applications for work may be registered through telephones including mobile phones for better capture of demand. To make this system convenient to illiterate workers, Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) and voice-enabled interactions have been suggested. A "Baseline survey" to assess quantum and timing of demand for work has been proposed in Chapter 6.
 - (iv) *Strategy for vulnerable groups:* - An exclusive chapter (Chapter 9) is devoted to strategies for inclusion of vulnerable groups such as disabled, widowed women etc. to enhance their livelihood security.

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- (v) *Organising workers in Labour Groups*: - In Chapter 16, the need to organise workers in Labour groups, and the function and obligations of Labour Groups have been outlined.
- (vi) *Strengthening Panchayats*: - In Chapter 18, the mode of strengthening panchayats is clearly suggested.
- (vii) *Negative list*: - In Chapter 7, para 7.3 provides details of non-permissible works under MGNREGA.

4. In addition to the above, some changes from existing norms as listed below have been effected:-

- (i) *Gram Sabha/Ward Sabha to decide priority of work*: Priority and approval of all works to be decided by Gram Panchayat in meetings of the Gram Sabha and the Ward Sabha.
- (ii) *Wage material ratio*: The 60:40 ratio for wage and material costs should be maintained at GP level for all works to be taken up by GP and for works to be taken by all other agencies it should be maintained at the Block/Intermediate Panchayat level (*will come into effect from 1st April, 2013*).
- (iii) *Wage payment on work out-turn basis*: It has been further clarified that wages to be paid to workers shall be calculated on the basis of work out-turn (piece rate basis).
- (iv) *Time Lines*: Time lines for various steps involved in preparation and finalization of Labour Budget have been revised. The revised schedule is given in para 6.10.

5. Further, the following critical aspects that need to be addressed for enhancing the efficiency of delivery have been detailed in the Operational Guidelines:-

- a) Quality management of MGNREGA works
- b) MIS including e-FMS
- c) Social Audit
- d) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for handling complaints/Grievances
- e) Strategy for timely payment of wages
- f) Provision for maintenance of assets and strategy to address incomplete works.

6. While the major role is that of the Rural Development Department in your State, many other Departments of the State Government will be involved in specific activities, including the Line Departments implementing NREGA works, and those involved in convergence activities and of course the Panchayat Department. It may therefore be useful if you could convene a meeting of the Departments concerned at your level to ensure coordinated implementation of the guidelines. In case you would like to hold a Workshop of Stakeholders, the Ministry would be happy to provide resource persons to facilitate the workshop.

encl: as above

All Chief Secretaries of States/UTs

Yours sincerely,



(S Vijay Kumar)