

Nagendra Nath Sinha
Secretary
Government of India
Ministry of Rural Development



Ajay Tirkey
Secretary
Government of India
Department of Land Resources

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September 21, 2022

Dear Chief Secretary,

You may be aware that India has almost 30% of its total geographical area under the category of degraded lands as per the Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas published by Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change in November, 2021. It requires very substantial investment, therefore, there is a need for convergence of all possible resources including CSR and voluntary efforts. Therefore, Government of India has been impressing upon for effecting convergence among the Central and State Governments' Schemes.

2. It is in this context, we are writing this letter to give effect to the concept of convergence between activities of Mahatma Gandhi NREGS and Watershed Development component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (WDC-PMKSY 2.0). This has in principle been agreed upon by both the departments i.e. Department of Rural Development (DoRD) and Department of Land Resources (DoLR) under the Ministry of Rural Development that mapping of all activities under both these schemes may be done while preparing the DPRs of projects on saturation basis. Watershed based NRM treatment plans have been drawn for almost all the Gram Panchayats and ported into Yuktdhara, therefore, identification of potential works have become easy. Among these set of works, the Gram Sabhas can identify the works, which could be taken under these schemes as also any other scheme such as FC Grants, community contributions. Scheme-wise mutually exclusive lists, so drawn, may be implemented may be prioritized following ridge to valley principles and taken up following the extant Guidelines. It is heartening to note that majority of states/ UTs have prepared their DPRs accordingly.

3. It is contextually important to mention that Hon'ble Prime Minister while receiving Presidency of United Nations convention on combating Desertification COP 14 (UNCCD COP 14) during 2019 raised country's target of restoration of degraded land from 21 million ha to 26 million has by 2030. Though the Ministry has been making sincere efforts to contribute towards meeting the international commitment; nevertheless, the constrains posed on economy by the Corona Pandemic restricted WDC-PMKSY 2.0 target to 4.95 million ha by 2025-26. Therefore, there is compelling reason for the ministry to explore alternative opportunities to fulfill the commitment.

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4. Our instant suggestion opens up a new opportunity to converge the funding mechanisms of Schemes of MGNREGS and WDC-PMKSY 2.0 within the scope of their respective Guidelines. To avoid duplicity of any kind, it would be advisable that these activities may be geo-tagged on the portal with separate code colours. It may also be ensured that one work should invariably be taken up under one Scheme only. This would substantially scale up the area taken up for the development of degraded land in the country than possible with an allocation of Rs. 8134 crores under WDC 2.0 (4.95 million ha).

5. We would like to suggest that the avenue available should be availed of with proper planning for both the Schemes for (a) exclusive geo-tagged mapping of activities, (b) exclusive funding for all activities, (c) following the ridge-to-valley approach strictly, (d) following Mahatma Gandhi NREGS approaches for planning through community engagement. It is our assessment that such an approach may accommodate taking up treatment **over approx 30 % more area** than feasible with the current scheme size. In order to ensure clarity in execution and implementation of field activities, an SOP will be issued subsequently.

With warm regards,



[Nagendra Nath Sinha]

Secretary,

Government of India

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To

The Chief Secretaries/Advisors to Administrators in States/UTs