

**Working Paper 483**

**Information Asymmetry,  
Exclusion and Inclusion Errors  
and Elite Capture of MGNREGA:  
Critical Examination of IEC  
Strategies in Karnataka and  
Ways Forward**

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# **INFORMATION ASYMMETRY, EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION ERRORS AND ELITE CAPTURE OF MGNREGA: CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF IEC STRATEGIES IN KARNATAKA AND WAYS FORWARD**

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## **Abstract**

This paper investigates the relationships between inequality, elite capture, and information asymmetry of one of the largest rights-based workfare programme, MGNREGA. Study concentrates on the design of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities, awareness and access level about the programme by all stakeholders particularly poorest, weakest and the illiterate. Using Primary data collected during 2018, from 320 beneficiaries and 160 non beneficiaries and also data collected from implementing stakeholders in Karnataka State, study finds a conclusive evidence of information asymmetry, inclusion and exclusion errors and elite capture of the MGNREGA programme.

## **Introduction and Background**

MGNREGA, being one of the largest rights-based workfare programme s reaching out to 50 million households and spending almost half a per cent of GDP<sup>4</sup> has been studied from different perspectives and many researches and observers have flagged lack of awareness among the stakeholders as a critical limiting factor for it being far from effective. However, the Information, Education and Communication (IEC) strategies planned and operationalised for MGNREGA by the authorities have not been systematically evaluated.

Mere enactment and statutory conferment of rights may not be sufficient to ensure the realisation of those rights and their enjoyment. It may require not only awareness of the rights but also awareness of how to enforce them – the processes and the mechanism, which again is a transaction-rich paradigm and requires higher order awareness and navigation capabilities. Hence, I propose to study the following:

1. Is there a well designed information, education and communication strategy in place with adequate resources? Was it being operationalised effectively to achieve the key goals of the MGNREGA programme?
2. Is there enough awareness about the rights-based programme among all the stakeholders, particularly the poorest, weakest and the illiterate?
3. Are the poorest, weakest and the illiterate able to access the programme satisfactorily and realise their potential rights?

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<sup>4</sup> Author's calculation based on information sourced from MORD, MGNREGA portal and Government of India Finance Ministry website

## **MGNREGA and Awareness Generation**

The NREG Act, 2005 Section 11(2) specifically mentions that the Central Employment Guarantee Council inter alia other functions shall perform and discharge the promotion of the widest possible dissemination of information about the schemes made under the Act. Section 12 3(d) imposes the same responsibility on the State Employment Guarantee Council. It may be interesting to examine to what extent these councils have contributed to the awareness generation about the scheme.

MGNREGA Operational Guidelines 2013 (4<sup>th</sup> Edition) recognises that an important precondition to ensure the effective implementation of MGNREGA is the creation of awareness among rural people and other stake holders, particularly MGNREGA workers, in respect of the scheme provisions as well as their rights and entitlements. It emphasises that IEC activities should aim to ensure that the workers know their right to demand wage employment and exercise their right by applying for jobs as per their needs. Inter alia other aspects, it identified lack of comprehensive knowledge about the scheme, lack of knowledge on how to exercise their rights by applying for the jobs, wage differentials, lack of infrastructure and capacity at GP/block/district level, delayed wage payment, delayed fund release, availability of alternative employment opportunities, low visibility of the programme and lack of knowledge about what all works can be taken up etc. as identified gaps and advised states to develop creative messages and take up the prioritisation of key messages accordingly. It enjoined that a creative mix of interpersonal communication methods, mid media and mass media need to be evolved to disseminate the chosen message and all government publicity agencies may be roped in. Civil society organisations can play a major role. Folk media like puppet shows, folk dance and songs, street plays, focus group discussions, participatory games, wall writing, posters, notice board etc. can be used. It asked the authorities to identify the communication needs of each target group including migrants. It asked them to prepare an inventory of the best practices. Project initiation and other meetings, helplines and common service centres, school and college activities like quiz etc., engaging SHGs and village library etc. were listed as desired activities.

## **A Brief Literature Review of IEC and MGNREGA**

MGNREGA has spawned an enormous amount of scholarly literature and approaching any aspect of it is a humbling experience like the anecdotal elephant being probed by the six visually impaired men in their limited way. I find a catena of studies mentioning lack of awareness among the stakeholders as one of the key limiting factors, but strangely, not a single study examined the MGNREGA IEC strategies, approaches and their operationalisation and its contribution to the success or failure of the programme. Awareness among beneficiaries as an outcome is easier to ascertain through an interview questionnaire, but evaluating the process of awareness generation requires collecting, collating, examining and assessing a chain of activities which may be challenging and fraught with the dangers of lack of information and road blocks from the implementing stakeholders.

IEC activities under MGNREGA will come under the broad discipline of Development Communication. Development communication refers to the use of communication to facilitate social development (Quebral, 1972-73). Development communication techniques include information dissemination and education, behavioural change, social marketing, social mobilisation, media advocacy

communication for social change, and community participation Development communication engages stakeholders and policy makers, establishes conducive environments, assesses risks and opportunities and promotes information exchange to create positive social change in a sustainable development (Mefalopulos, 2008). Carciotto and Dinbabo (2013) studied the role of development communication in fostering social change in Lesotho and found that development communication initiatives are able to foster collective forms of action by increasing the level of self-efficacy amongst the audience, and participatory development communication with an educational aim allowed people to identify issues and to strategise and mobilise resources for collective action.

Organised development communication in India began with public radio broadcasts in the 1950s which adopted indigenous languages to reach the messages of community development projects to larger rural illiterate audiences. The government, guided by socialist ideals, employed field publicity for person-to-person communication. Agriculture universities with multilateral international organisations and NGOs initiated unidirectional generic development communication on agriculture, health, education and community development programmes. Public fairs and exhibitions became infotainment for the masses. Subsequently, public television channels, field publicity multimedia vans and now digital media like smartphones and apps like Whatsapp have become the prevalent media of development communication.

MGNREGA Sameeksha (MORD, 2012) very briefly mentions that awareness about the provisions was vital to exercise the demand to work and other entitlements under MGNREGA. It averred that studies indicated that awareness levels among the potential beneficiaries of provisions of the Act, such as demanding work, unemployment allowance etc. were still low. It quoted a NSSO panel survey on MGNREGA conducted in Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, in their round in 2010-11 which found low awareness about unemployment allowance (Madhya Pradesh – 18%, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan less than 10%), work on demand (Rajasthan – 72%, Madhya Pradesh – 47%, Andhra Pradesh 29%), and low awareness about grievance redressal mechanisms (Andhra Pradesh – 35%, Madhya Pradesh – 28%, Rajasthan – 16%).

UNDP (2010) brought out a discussion paper on Rights-based Legal Guarantee as Development Policy: MGNREGA wherein inter alia other aspects they flagged, 'If the right-based approach has to be followed, the state could have to first create an awareness of the rights.'

Ranjan Rajiv (2016) examined secondary data to study the intended and unintended benefits of MGNREGA and averred that the programme has no silver lining. He concurred that due to the lack of awareness, low literacy levels, absence of social mobilisation and weak presence of civil society organisations (CSOs), MGNREGA remains largely supply-driven and its proper implementation is a matter of concern.

Mani and Krishnan (2014) studied the employment of MGNREGA workers in Erode district of Tamil Nadu, mainly using secondary data. The study found that the MGNREGA to be effective required continuous efforts towards creating adequate awareness amongst the stakeholders. They opined that creating awareness was necessary not only to motivate the people to work under the scheme but also to encourage them to participate in its planning and implementation. They concluded that efficient

utilisation of resources under the scheme required bringing transparency and accountability by proper social audit and putting in place an effective monitoring mechanism.

Shankar and Gaiha (2011) explored the relationship between awareness and socially and politically networked households' capacity to vocalise dis-satisfaction where their entitlements are threatened to seek redress vis-à-vis the institutional design of the programme.

Chandra (2015) discussed the common problems of ineffective targeting, leakages and poor quality of asset creation etc. He averred that in a society beset with deep social and economic inequities, any such act can create an additional space for change. He observed that the NREGA can become a major new instrument for galvanising Panchayat Raj institutions and that will depend a great deal on the mobilisation of the disadvantaged in society – women, dalits, adivasis and the poor.

Datta *et al* (2013), based on a randomised experiment in Bihar, suggested that increasing awareness of workers' rights, including the fact that workers can demand work when needed, does not per se lead to an actual increase in employment, thus suggesting supply side constraints in NREGS employment.

Manjula and Rajshekhar (2015) studied the participation of Scheduled Caste households in MGNREGA in Karnataka and found that they are discriminated against due to lack of awareness, and their participation in planning and social audit is often manipulated by the rural elite. Babu and Rao (2011) studied the impact of MGNREGA on Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes and their agricultural wage, migration, awareness level and found traces of benefits to the deprived communities.

Gaiha, Jha and Shankar (2011) assessed the relationship between possessing information on, gaining access to and the efficacy of delivery of MGNREGA in the states of Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. Their results suggest that the linkage between information, access and the delivery of the scheme was not straightforward. They found that the information increased the propensity of the programme to be accessed by those who were not its primary target population and it was able to enhance the efficacy of delivery to such beneficiaries. Lack of information on the other hand was seen to decrease the ability of citizens, especially the poorest, to benefit from the scheme. Hence, clearly, higher information enabled the beneficiaries to access the scheme.

Raabe *et al* (2010) using Process – Influence Mapping, a participatory research method to examine various issues related to governance challenges related to elite capture, leakages and corruption in MGNREGA, concluded that awareness building, mobilisation of people and capacity building were required for the better implementation of programme.

From the forgoing discussion, it is evident that there is hardly any systematic detailed study and research on the quality of development communication in MGNREGA implementation and our research questions framed earlier are valid and need further investigation.

## **Methodology, Database and Tools for the Study**

MGNREGA is being implemented in Karnataka since 2005 and awareness generation about MGNREGA in some form had been in practice since then. But only after a more detailed instruction contained in 'Reaching the unreached IEC plan for MGNREGA FY 2014-15' by the GOI the strategies were further strengthened. This study uses both quantitative as well as qualitative data at micro and macro level. At

macro level, secondary data for the study is collected based on the availability from the MGNREGS Directorate, district programme officers etc. The micro level data is collected through primary survey of households who are beneficiaries of MGNREGS and also some of those who are not beneficiaries. Implementing stakeholders and others are also interviewed with structured questionnaire and through focus group discussions. Household survey is done in the four districts of Mysuru, Ramanagaram, Raichur and Belagavi in Karnataka State.

## Sampling Design

In order to understand the workers' perspective on their awareness level about key MGNREGA aspects and other related parameters in Karnataka, with the purpose of ensuring adequate representation, the study followed a multistage sampling procedure. In the first stage, districts were chosen so as to represent the four administrative divisions in Karnataka. The choice of the districts was based on past performance (one good and another not so good performing based on Poverty Coverage and Intensity Composite Index devised by the authors) in MGNREGA work. The second stage of sampling involved the choice of taluks and two taluks were chosen from each district based on the past performance – one good performing taluk and one not so good performing taluk, thus a total of 8 taluks were chosen. The third stage was the choice of Gram Panchayats and two GPs were chosen randomly from each taluk, totalling 16 GPs. The final stage involved the selection of households. A stratified random procedure was applied to choose 20 beneficiaries and 10 non-beneficiaries from each GP. In total, 320 beneficiaries and 160 non-beneficiaries constituted our sample. Women and SC/ST were given due representation in these samples. Structured questionnaires were canvassed with the heads of those households.

**Table 1: Districts, Taluks and Gram Panchayats Chosen for the Primary Survey**

Sl. No.	Division	District	Taluk	Gram Panchayat	
1	Bengaluru	Rama nagaram	Kanakapura	Kallahalli	
			Magadi	Uyamballi	Kalya Kalari Kaval
2	Mysuru	Mysuru	HD Kote	Padukote Kaval	Hampapura
			Nanjanagud	Kempasidhanahalli	Sindhuvalli
3	Kalaburagi	Raichur	Devadurga	HosuraSiddapura	Mundargi
			Manvi	Vatagal	Gorkal
4	Belagavi	Belagavi	Khanapura	Manturga	Itagi
			Chikkodi	Ingali	Shamanevadi

**Source:** Purposive selection by the Author as per the need of the study.

## Awareness Generation of MGNREGA in Karnataka

### Institutional Arrangement, Personnel and Capacity Building

The Central Employment Guarantee Council at the national level and State Employment Guarantee Council at the state level are required by the 'Act' to promote the widest possible dissemination of information about the scheme. At the state level, an IEC state resourceperson coordinates the

formulation of the IEC plan and facilitates districts to formulate their IEC plan and helps the State MGNREG Commissioner in collecting information regarding the implementation for monitoring and documentation. At the district level, IEC coordinators help the district programme officers to formulate the IEC district plan and assist in facilitating block level IEC plans formulation, collection of data and monitoring etc. In Karnataka at present, 15 district IEC coordinators out of 30 districts and 76 block IEC coordinators out of 176 blocks are working, and the rest of the posts have been vacant for long. This chronic vacancy has affected the quality of IEC implementation in the state. (See Table 2). The state IEC coordinator has a post graduate degree in mass communication and he had never received any training by the GOI at the national level. District IEC coordinators are mostly masters of social work or graduates in mass communication and they also do not have any training on MGNREGA IEC strategies.

**Table 2: Manpower for IEC**

Sl. No.	Level	Designation	Number of Posts	Number Working
1	State Level	State IEC Consultant (MA, Mass Communication)	1	1
2	District Level	District IEC Consultant (MSW or BA Mass Communication)	30	15
3	Block Level	Block IEC Consultant (Graduate)	176	76

**Source:** Constructed by the author from the Karnataka RDPR Archives

Since 2013-14, government of India had a plan of action for IEC and they released the document, 'Reaching the Unreached' IEC Plan for MGNREGA FY 2014-15 and government of India also desired to initiate capacity building of IEC state resource persons. This was the first time any capacity building activity was planned for the IEC coordinators, but unfortunately it could not be taken forward. From the record, it is evident that in Karnataka till 2013-14, there were ad hoc plans under IEC and only in 2014-15, regular planned activities were started as is discussed in subsequent sections.

**Table 3: MGNREGA - Analysis of IEC Expenditure in Karnataka (Rs. in lakh)**

Sl. No.	Year	MGNREGA Total Expenditure	Budget Earmarked for IEC	IEC Expenditure	% of Budget Earmarked for IEC to MGNREGA Total Expenditure	% of IEC Expenditure to MGNREGA Total Expenditure	% of IEC Expenditure to Budget Earmarked for IEC
1	2015-16	182193.20	1071.72	444.44	0.59	0.24	41.47
2	2016-17	330790.81	1213.93	569.14	0.37	0.17	46.88
3	2017-18	299940.46	1733.22	655.36	0.58	0.22	37.81
4	2018-19	360445.12	2049.90	671.23	0.57	0.19	32.74

**Source:** Constructed by the author from the Karnataka RDPR Archives

Karnataka state since 2014-15 kept a target of spending ten per cent of the administrative expenditure on IEC and accordingly planned activities year after year. As per GOI norms, up to 6% of the total expenditure under MGNREGA can be spent as administrative expenses and 10% of the administrative expenses will be just 0.6%. Table 3 gives details of IEC earmarked budget and expenditure during different financial years starting 2013-14. It is evident that barring the year 2016-17 (0.37%) other years' budget allocation was almost 0.6%, but expenditure was not commensurate with

the allocation. The utilisation of funds ranged between 32.74 per cent in 2018-19 to 46.88 per cent in the year 2016-17. Evidently, the implementing agency has not shown adequate interest in utilising the resources made available in the budget. Table 4 shows the bifurcation of expenditure between state and the district plans wherein except for 2016-17 and 2017-18, the state plan expenditure is very low. Higher utilisation of IEC state plan funds in the year 2017-18 is largely contributed by higher expenditure on Wall Painting /Hoarding / Wall Writing etc. (See Table 5). District Plan expenditure is not encouraging except for the year 2018-19 (See Table 4) and mostly due to higher expenditure on mass media, radio, TV etc. (See Table 5). State IEC nodal officer has no answer as to why the utilisation of resources was unsatisfactory under the programme. Although the budget itself was quite moderate and clearly disproportionately lower than what was required to create right awareness among the stakeholders.

**Table 4: MGNREGA - IEC Action Plan Expenditure in Karnataka (Rs in Lakh)**

Sl. No.	Year	IEC	IEC Expenditure	Date of Approval of plan	Approved by
1	2015-16	District level IEC	255.12	04.04.2015	ACS, RD&PR
		State Level IEC	189.33		
		<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>444.44</b>		
2	2016-17	District level IEC	149.52	14.10.2016	Principal Secretary, RD&PR
		State Level IEC	419.62		
		<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>569.14</b>		
3	2017-18	District level IEC	258.63	17.06.2017	Ministry, RD&PR
		State Level IEC	396.73		
		<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>655.36</b>		
4	2018-19	District level IEC	483.80	05.09.2018	Minister RD&PR
		State Level IEC	187.43		
		<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>671.23</b>		

**Source:** Constructed by the author from the Karnataka RDPR Archives

At the state level, there is unusually high allocation as well as utilisation under the heads Mass Media, Radio, TV, Print etc. in the year 2017-18 and 2018-19. This unusual spike is due to it being an election year and mass media were liberally used for free publicity. From the content designs, choice and use of media, it is evident that the emphasis is predominantly on publicity and propaganda rather than hardcore awareness generation of the weakest, poorest and the excluded. There is no specific strategy for any particular target groups like women, SC/ST, people with disabilities and other excluded groups.

**Table 5: MGNREGA - IEC Major Activity in Karnataka (Rs in lakh)**

Sl. No.	Particulars	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19	
		Budget	Expenditure	Budget	Expenditure	Budget	Expenditure	Budget	Expenditure
1	Rojgar Divas	337.74	109.28	361.44	101.86	361.32	108.29	361.44	104.89
2	Wall Painting / Hoardings / Wall Writing	480	85.55	385.72	301.31	382.00	153.90	88.00	22.7
3	Mass media, Radio, TV, Print, Jungle, Video, CD, Documentary, Brochure, etc. Success story, Best Practice, Booklet etc.	169.2	148.42	140.72	71.68	651.26	276.55	1027.16	364.91
4	Jatha, Street Play, Folk Media etc.	24.15	23.79	24	0	20.12	0.24	0	0
5	Other	60.63	77.40	302.05	94.29	318.52	116.38	573.30	178.73
<b>IEC Expenditure in Karnataka</b>		<b>1071.72</b>	<b>444.44</b>	<b>1213.93</b>	<b>569.14</b>	<b>1733.22</b>	<b>655.36</b>	<b>2049.90</b>	<b>671.23</b>
<b>Physical Progress (Numbers)</b>									
		<b>Target</b>	<b>Achievement</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Achievement</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Achievement</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Achievement</b>
1	Rojgar Divas	67000	36700	72228	40216	72264	38194	70665	46098
2	Wall Painting	3500	3567	2829	252	3000	2123	2500	1770
3	Hoardings	300	0	300	300	300	0	300	0
4	Jatha / Street Play	138	138	0	0	115	6	0	0
5	Radio/TV Days Exposure	3 months	3 months						

**Source:** Constructed by the author from the Karnataka RDPR Archives

Rojgar Divas had consistently high allocation every year, but expenditure is generally poor. The physical progress of Rojgar Divas is far from satisfactory. This is the only focused intervention directed towards beneficiaries, but as is evident from the group discussion, it is focussed on mobilisation of workers for work in a supply-driven manner rather than being used as an opportunity for educating and empowering the workers. (See Table 5).

It is surprising that folk media like Jatha, Street Play etc. are hardly planned or used to create awareness whereas there is documented evidence that folk media is indeed effective in awareness generation among the rural illiterate populace.

### **Planning, Monitoring and Operationalisation of IEC Plan**

Planning and Operationalisation of IEC State and District Plan are mentioned in the foregoing paras, hence it is not taken up here. Monitoring appears to be weak at all levels. There is hardly any substantive contribution from the national or state level for content design and media choices, and district level and below have hardly any capacity for such design and choice, so most of the plans are very perfunctory and they are implemented in a lackadaisical manner. Late approval of plans is common (See Table 4) and it is not monitored regularly. State Employment Guarantee Council which is empowered by the Act to create awareness appears to be quiescent and clueless on this count. As a case study, we analysed the three meeting notes of SEGC meetings provided by the authorities to understand their interest and involvement in awareness generation.

**Case Study 1: State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC) and IEC in the State: Analysis of Three Meeting Notes Made Available**

Sl. No.	Item	Meeting Dates		
1	Date of SEGC Meeting	26.06.2012	30.10.2014	23.07.2016
2	Meeting Note Para on IEC	Para 5.6	Para 7.5.10	Para 13
3	Pages	107 (one page)	123-127 (5 pages)	158-162 (5 pages)
4	Does it give earlier year details	No	Yes 2013-14 Rs.317.37 lakh spent mostly on Wall Painting etc.	Yes 2015-16 Rs.740.45 lakh spent out of Rs.1071.72 crore earmarked
5	Does it place current year plan	No	Yes 2014-15 Plan Worth Rs.1888.56 lakh placed.	Yes 2016-17 Plan worth Rs.1152.93 lakh out of which Rs.30.82 lakh spent
6	Main components mentioned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Kala Jatha</li> <li>❖ Street Play</li> <li>❖ Balad Songs</li> <li>❖ Achievements on AIR</li> <li>❖ Quiz</li> <li>❖ Essay</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Ask For Work Campaign (Rojgar Diwas) Every Thursday</li> <li>❖ Wall Writing on Job Card and Expenditure details</li> <li>❖ State Level AIR Jingles thrice a day</li> <li>❖ Phone-in operational Since last one month</li> <li>❖ Hoardings in problem villages</li> </ul>	2015-16 – report says 36,700 Rojgar Diwas and Wall Painting etc. executed And 2016-17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Rojgar Diwas</li> <li>❖ TV Video Spot (Advertisement)</li> <li>❖</li> </ul>
7	Progress of Current year plan given	No	Yes Progress report given	Yes Progress report given.
8	Earlier Meeting Proceedings: Does it give details of IEC and decisions on IEC	10.09.2009 Meeting Proceedings have no mention of IEC	Meeting Proceedings of 03.10.2013 are available but no mention of IEC	Yes at Para 7.5.10 of meeting dated: 30.10.2014 decision. It does not mention any discussion just notes the item placed before the committee
9	Is compliance to Earlier Meeting relevant	No	No	Compliance given saying out of Rs 1071.72 lakh earmarked Rs 740.40 lakh spent. But no other details given.

**Source:** Constructed by the Author from the Karnataka RDPR Archives

Three State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC) meeting notes were made available (dated 26.06.2012, 30.10.2014 and 23.07.2016) by the state government. Details were scrutinised as to what extent they have contributed to awareness generation on MGNREGA as it was one of their statutory responsibilities. Comparative details are given in Case Study 1. It is very evident from record that till 2012 June, there was no plan of action for IEC. The document mentions about use of Kala Jatha, Street Play, Ballad Songs, Achievements broadcast on AIR, Quiz and Essay etc. clearly their emphasis then was on folk media. But SEGC was not consciously aware of its responsibility about awareness generation and none of the members had ever raised any issue pertaining to IEC.

In 2014 October meeting, detailed five page note on IEC is annexed. It gives some progress details of 2013-14 and plan details of 2014-15. It gives Rojgar Diwas, Wall Writing, AIR Jingles, Phone-in and Hoardings as key strategies. But it has no mention of earlier compliances and in earlier

03.10.2013 meeting proceedings, there was no mention of IEC. From the record it is evident that the council has not discussed or given any suggestion on IEC.

In 2016 July meeting, there were 5 page notes on IEC and details of 2016-17 plan and its implementation are annexed. It provided a brief summary of 2015-16 progress. This plan emphasises Rojgar Diwas, TV Video spot and Newspaper advertisement etc. This note mentions proceedings of 30.10.2014 wherein some decisions on IEC are there and some compliance details are included. There was a clear shift to Rojgar Diwas and use of mass media over the years from the earlier emphasis on folk media. Lots of details were placed before the SEGC on the IEC plan and achievement but unfortunately in that meeting also, there was hardly any response or discussion and the council did not contribute much to improve the strategy and to make it worker-oriented. From the record, it is evident that since 2016-17, a programme called Rojgar Vahini was introduced which was for hiring publicity vans in selected blocks to show a 30 minutes video film on MGNREGA which was prepared by SIRD in 2014. This film is quite illustrative and gives a good idea of many of the rights which are part of MGNREGA, but it also does not give any details of how to enforce the rights. It is not clear from the record how successful this programme was. From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that the State Employment Guarantee Council has hardly contributed to the awareness generation and IEC of MGNREGA. IEC monitoring is also very poor and is restricted to the collection of monthly progress reports.

## **Data Analysis and Appraisal of MGNREGA Awareness Generation Activities in Karnataka**

### **Analysis of Primary Survey Data: Awareness among the Beneficiaries**

For the purpose of understanding the awareness level of beneficiaries regarding the MGNREG Act, Scheme, rights and the mechanism to enforce their rights, a primary survey of 320 beneficiary and 160 non-beneficiary households were done through structured questionnaire in the 16 selected GPs. The results are tabulated and analysed in this part. For understanding their awareness, they were administered 15 different questions mostly related to rights conferred under the MGNREG Act and these tables show segregated comparative responses based on their geographical location (district), education level, income group, land holding and social categories. There is great variability in responses based on those five listed criteria, and these responses show variations in their awareness levels which are clearly influenced by their location, education level, income, land holding and the social category they belong to.

**Table 6: Awareness about the process under MGNREGA (District Wise)**

		Rama nagaram	Mysuru	Raichur	Belagavi	Total
1	Awareness on indent of work and issue of acknowledgement	65.0	25.6	28.5	48.8	39.8
2	Awareness on giving work within 15 days of indent	41.3	20.3	25.2	52.0	34.2
3	Awareness on 100 days of work in a year a person is entitled to get under MGNREGA	58.8	14.9	22.8	65.9	38.9
4	Awareness on the wage rate a person is entitled to	41.3	28.1	87.8	85.4	62.6
5	Awareness on are men and women paid different wage rates	62.5	28.9	56.1	18.7	39.6
6	Awareness on unemployment allowance if work is not allotted within 15 days of applying	7.5	10.7	27.6	19.5	17.2
7	Awareness on if employment is not provided within five kms, are the workers entitled to travel expenses up to 10% of the wage	7.5	9.9	30.1	16.3	16.8
8	Awareness that at least one-third of the jobs under the MGNREGA scheme should be allotted for women	13.8	10.7	19.5	19.5	16.1
9	Awareness on timely payment of wages	61.3	28.9	36.6	35.0	38.5
10	Awareness on payments through bank	91.3	81.8	75.6	78.0	80.8
11	Awareness on interest payment for delayed payment	7.5	9.9	15.4	21.1	14.1
12	Awareness on benefits related to work place	26.3	21.5	22.8	31.7	25.5
13	Awareness on involvement of contractor	23.8	16.5	17.1	18.7	18.6
14	Awareness on complaint to ombudsman regarding difficulties connected with MGNREGA	10.0	11.6	13.0	16.3	13.0
15	Awareness on social audit of the work	16.3	9.9	11.4	20.3	14.3

**Source:** Author's calculations based on primary data

Table 6 compares the responses on fifteen questions in four sample districts. It is surprising to note that after 13 years of implementation of MGNREGA and initiatives taken to generate awareness, only for one question related to awareness on payments through bank were 80.8 per cent of the respondents aware of the facility. Ramanagaram has the highest awareness (91.3 per cent), followed by Mysuru (81.8 per cent), Belagavi (78.0 per cent) and Raichur (75.6 per cent) respectively. The second highest awareness was overall (62.6 per cent) for the wage rate a person is entitled to under MGNREGA. For this question, Raichur (87.8 per cent) showed the highest awareness followed by Belagavi (85.4 per cent), with Ramanagaram (41.3 per cent) and Mysuru (28.1 per cent) having the least.

It is difficult to comprehend why for all other thirteen questions, the awareness level is much less than fifty per cent. For five questions regarding indent of work, 100 days of work entitlement, giving work within 15 days of indent, equal wages for men and women and timely payment of wages, two-thirds of the respondents are unaware, and awareness level varies between 34.2 to 39.8 per cent only. Three-fourth of the respondents were unaware about the benefits related to work place. The response to the rest of the seven questions was still poorer, with less than 20 per cent of the respondents being aware of unemployment allowance (17.2 per cent), getting allowance if work is not given within 5 km of their residence (16.8 per cent), one-third reservation for women in work (16.1 per

cent), provision for interest if payments are delayed (14.1 per cent), and awareness about social audit (14.3 per cent) and ombudsman (13.00 per cent). In essence, there was hardly any perceptible awareness about the basic rights conferred by the MGNREGA Act.

**Table 7: Awareness about the process under MGNREGA (Education Wise)**

		Illiterate	Primary	Secondary	Higher Sec (PUC)	College & above	Total
1	Awareness on indent of work and issue of acknowledgement	34.0	36.4	42.4	46.7	100.0	39.8
2	Awareness on giving work within 15 days of indent	28.7	29.9	36.9	44.4	75.0	34.2
3	Awareness on 100 days of work in a year a person is entitled to get under MGNREGA	27.7	37.7	44.3	55.6	75.0	38.9
4	Awareness on wage rate a person is entitled to	48.4	79.2	64.6	75.6	75.0	62.6
5	Awareness on are men and women paid different wage rates	37.1	45.5	39.2	35.6	62.5	39.6
6	Awareness on unemployment allowance if work is not allotted within 15 days of applying	13.8	15.6	17.7	31.1	12.5	17.2
7	Awareness on if employment is not provided within five kms, the workers are entitled to travel expenses up to 10% of the wage	11.3	16.9	17.7	31.1	25.0	16.8
8	Awareness that at least one-third of the jobs under the MGNREGA scheme should be allotted for women	8.8	15.6	19.0	31.1	25.0	16.1
9	Awareness on timely payment of wages	33.3	29.9	41.1	55.6	75.0	38.5
10	Awareness on payments through bank	79.9	76.6	80.4	88.9	100.0	80.8
11	Awareness on interest payment for delayed payment	9.4	13.0	13.9	31.1	25.0	14.1
12	Awareness on benefit related to work place	18.9	22.1	29.7	35.6	50.0	25.5
13	Awareness on involvement of contractor	15.7	19.5	16.5	31.1	37.5	18.6
14	Awareness on complaint to ombudsman regarding difficulties connected with MGNREGA	10.1	14.3	14.6	15.6	12.5	13.0
15	Awareness on social audit of the work	11.3	13.0	16.5	17.8	25.0	14.3

**Source:** Author's calculations based on primary data

Table 7 tries to capture the impact of educational attainment on awareness levels of the respondents. Clearly, from the table it is evident that persons with higher secondary, college and above levels of educational attainment have distinctly higher awareness about the processes under MGNREGS and illiterate individuals have distinctly the lowest level of awareness. Persons with primary and secondary level attainments have intermediate level of awareness. The most fundamental MGNREGA right that is, '100 days of assured employment to a family in a year' follows the same awareness pattern with college and above (75.0 per cent), followed by higher secondary (PUC) (55.6 per cent), secondary (44.3 per cent), primary (37.7 per cent) and illiterate (27.7 per cent) respectively. These correlations cannot be casual but show the clear impact of educational attainment on awareness levels about the processes under MGNREGA.

**Table 8: Awareness about the process under MGNREGA (Income Wise)**

		Lower <sup>5</sup> Middle Income	Middle Income	Upper Middle Income	Total
1	Awareness on indent of work and issue of acknowledgement	27.9	39.3	66.2	39.8
2	Awareness on giving work within 15 days of indent	29.9	31.3	52.9	34.2
3	Awareness on 100 days of work in a year a person is entitled to get under MGNREGA	28.6	38.4	62.0	38.9
4	Awareness on wage rate a person is entitled to	62.6	60.7	69.0	62.6
5	Awareness on are men and women paid different wage rates	32.0	37.6	62.0	39.6
6	Awareness on unemployment allowance if work is not allotted within 15 days of applying	15.0	13.5	33.8	17.2
7	Awareness on if employment is not provided within five kms, the workers are entitled to travel expenses up to 10% of the wage	10.2	14.4	38.0	16.8
8	Awareness that at least one-third of the jobs under the MGNREGA scheme should be allotted for women	10.2	14.4	33.8	16.1
9	Awareness on timely payment of wages	21.8	40.2	67.6	38.5
10	Awareness on payments through bank	77.6	78.6	94.4	80.8
11	Awareness on interest payment for delayed payment	6.1	16.6	22.5	14.1
12	Awareness on benefits related to work place	12.9	27.1	46.5	25.5
13	Awareness on involvement of contractor	12.2	17.9	33.8	18.6
14	Awareness on complaint to ombudsman regarding difficulties connected with MGNREGA	8.2	11.4	28.2	13.0
15	Awareness on social audit of the work	11.6	12.7	25.4	14.3

Source: Author's calculations based on primary data

Table 8 shows awareness about the processes under MGNREGA of individuals of different income class which is constructed based on their asset holding. Upper Middle Class in general are the most aware followed by Middle Class and Lower Middle Class being least aware. Awareness about 100 days guaranteed employment per year per family is the highest for Upper Middle Class (62.0 per cent), followed by Middle Class (38.4 per cent), and Lower Middle Class (28.6 per cent) respectively, showing high correlation between income level and awareness. Higher the income level, more aware is the person or the household.

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<sup>5</sup> Asset index is created by the authors based on data on HH ownership of certain consumer durables, house ownership, ration card etc. through data reduction by Principal Component Analysis. Scores upto 0.33 is termed as Lower Middle Income, 0.33 to 0.66 Middle Income and above 0.66 as Upper Middle Income.

**Table 9: Awareness about the process under MGNREGA (Land Holding Wise)**

		Landless	Marginal [ <1 hec]	Small [1 to 2 hec]	Semi Medium [2 to 4 hec]	Total
1	Awareness on indent of work and issue of acknowledgement	33.9	40.8	51.5	43.6	40.0
2	Awareness on giving work within 15 days of indent	31.8	34.7	36.4	41.0	34.4
3	Awareness on 100 days of work in a year a person is entitled to get under MGNREGA	33.3	44.4	36.4	46.2	39.1
4	Awareness on wage rate a person is entitled to	57.3	63.3	71.2	71.8	62.9
5	Awareness on are men and women paid different wage rates	31.6	41.4	48.5	53.8	39.8
6	Awareness on unemployment allowance if work is not allotted within 15 days of applying	14.6	14.8	24.2	28.2	17.3
7	Awareness on if employment is not provided within five kms, the workers are entitled to travel expenses up to 10% of the wage	13.5	15.4	21.2	30.8	16.9
8	Awareness that at least one-third of the jobs under the MGNREGA scheme should be allotted for women	13.5	15.4	22.7	20.5	16.2
9	Awareness on timely payment of wages	30.4	43.8	43.9	43.6	38.7
10	Awareness on payments through bank	79.5	79.3	89.4	82.1	81.1
11	Awareness on interest payment for delayed payment	13.5	13.0	13.6	23.1	14.2
12	Awareness on benefits related to work place	22.8	21.3	36.4	38.5	25.6
13	Awareness on involvement of contractor	17.5	14.8	25.8	28.2	18.7
14	Awareness on complaint to ombudsman regarding difficulties connected with MGNREGA	15.2	10.1	10.6	20.5	13.0
15	Awareness on social audit of the work	11.1	14.2	18.2	23.1	14.4

**Source:** Author's calculations based on primary data

Table 9 tries to understand the impact of land holding on awareness about the processes under MGNREGA. By and large, for all the fifteen questions, the trend appears to be similar with the highest awareness for the persons with semi-medium holdings and the least awareness among the landless. Small and marginal farmers fall somewhere in between. Awareness about work to be given within 15 days of work indent follows a regular pattern with semi-medium land holders (41.0 per cent) showing the highest awareness, followed by small holders (36.4 per cent), marginal holders (34.7 per cent) and the landless (31.8 per cent) having the least.

**Table 10: Awareness about the process under MGNREGA (Social Group Wise)**

		SC	ST	OBC	Others	Total
1	Awareness on indent of work and issue of acknowledgement	39.0	20.2	52.6	34.1	39.8
2	Awareness on giving work within 15 days of indent	29.0	16.0	44.0	37.5	34.2
3	Awareness on 100 days of work in a year a person is entitled to get under MGNREGA	31.0	16.7	58.3	30.7	38.9
4	Awareness on wage rate a person is entitled to	64.0	60.7	64.6	59.1	62.6
5	Awareness on are men and women paid different wage rates	35.0	45.2	42.3	34.1	39.6
6	Awareness on unemployment allowance if work is not allotted within 15 days of applying	8.0	16.7	22.3	18.2	17.2
7	Awareness on if employment is not provided within five kms, the workers are entitled to travel expenses up to 10% of the wage	11.0	16.7	19.4	18.2	16.8
8	Awareness that at least one-third of the jobs under the MGNREGA scheme should be allotted for women	10.0	13.1	21.7	14.8	16.1
9	Awareness on timely payment of wages	31.0	35.7	47.4	31.8	38.5
10	Awareness on payments through bank	79.0	81.0	81.1	81.8	80.8
11	Awareness on interest payment for delayed payment	8.0	8.3	20.0	14.8	14.1
12	Awareness on benefits related to work place	14.0	19.0	36.6	22.7	25.5
13	Awareness on involvement of contractor	14.0	14.3	22.9	19.3	18.6
14	Awareness on complaint to ombudsman regarding difficulties connected with MGNREGA	9.0	9.5	16.0	14.8	13.0
15	Awareness on social audit of the work	13.0	8.3	21.1	8.0	14.3

**Source:** Author's calculations based on primary data

Table 10 compares awareness of persons belonging to various social groups about the processes under MGNREGA. Social groups also followed a pattern for all the fifteen questions, barring minor variations here and there. By and large for most the questions, OBCs showed the highest awareness, followed by Others, then SC and the least ST. Awareness about right to get work within fifteen days of indent adheres to this trend, with the highest awareness among the OBC (44.0 per cent), followed by others (37.5 per cent), SC (29.0 per cent) and ST (16.0 per cent) respectively.

**Table 11: Awareness about MGNREGA Ombudsman (in %)**

Social Group	Have you heard of Ombudsman	Have you approached Ombudsman	Has ombudsman system helped you or any of your friends (Among those who approached)
SC	5.1	4.1	50.0
ST	6.3	6.3	60.0
OBC	16.0	10.5	72.2
Others	14.3	11.9	70.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>67.6</b>
<b>Land Classification</b>			
Landless	9.8	9.1	60.0
Marginal [<1hec]	10.8	7.9	84.6
Small [1 to 2 hec]	15.2	10.8	57.1
Semi Medium [2 to 4 hec]	15.4	5.1	50.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>67.6</b>
<b>Based on Asset Index</b>			
Lower middle income	7.5	6.8	60.0
Middle income	9.8	7.2	68.8
Upper middle income	25.0	16.7	72.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>67.6</b>
<b>Education level</b>			
Illiterate	7.8	6.6	70.0
Primary	9.1	6.5	100.0
Secondary	12.3	9.8	60.0
Higher Sec(PUC)	18.2	11.4	60.0
College & above	50.0	28.6	50.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>67.6</b>
<b>Districts</b>			
Ramanagara	8.8		
Mysuru	6.3	4.5	
Raichur	13.0	10.6	69.2
Belagavi	16.3	15.4	84.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.40</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>67.6</b>

**Source:** Author's calculations based on primary data

Table 11 explores beneficiaries awareness about MGNREGA ombudsman which is an important grievance redressal institution and can support enforcement of rights conferred under the Act. Overall, only 11.4 per cent households are aware or acquainted about the MGNREGA ombudsman. Scheduled Caste households show the lowest acquaintance (5.1 per cent) followed by ST (6.3 per cent), OBC (16.0 per cent) and others (14.3 per cent) respectively. Out of 11.4 per cent households aware of ombudsman, only 8.5 per cent have ever approached the ombudsman but two-thirds of those who approached were happy about their going to the ombudsman.

This table (11) further explores the effect of land holding, asset holding, educational level and geographical distribution (district) on awareness levels of households. Land holding had perceptible bearing on awareness with Landless households (9.8 per cent) showing the least acquaintance, followed by Marginal (10.8 per cent), Small (15.2 per cent), and Semi Medium (15.4 per cent) respectively. Asset holding also shows the same trend, with lower asset households having the lowest awareness and households with higher assets having more awareness. Lower Middle Class (7.5 per cent) had the lowest awareness followed by Middle Class (9.8 per cent), and Upper Middle Class (25.0 per cent) having the highest awareness. Educational level also showed a clear correlation, with persons with higher educational attainment having better awareness and persons with lower attainment having lower awareness. Illiterate (7.8 per cent) were the least aware followed by Primary (9.1 per cent), Secondary (12.3 per cent), Higher Secondary (18.2 per cent) and College and Above (50.0 per cent) respectively. Among the districts, Belagavi (16.3 per cent) had the highest awareness followed by Raichur (13.0 per cent), Ramanagaram (8.8 per cent) and Mysore (6.3 per cent) respectively.

**Table 12: Awareness about MGNREGA Social Audit (in %)**

<b>Social Group</b>	<b>Have you heard of Social Audit</b>	<b>Have you Participated in Social Audit</b>
SC	9.0	6.2
ST	9.8	8.8
OBC	29.1	25.0
Others	16.1	14.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>15.8</b>
<b>Land Classification</b>		
Landless	13.0	12.0
Marginal [<1hec]	19.0	14.6
Small [1 to 2 hec]	27.3	26.2
Semi Medium [2 to 4 hec]	25.6	20.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>18.9</b>
<b>Based on asset Index</b>		
Lower middle income	9.6	6.9
Middle income	19.3	16.7
Upper middle income	34.3	31.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>15.8</b>
<b>Education level</b>		
Illiterate	7.6	7.1
Primary	20.8	15.6
Secondary	21.7	18.8
Higher Sec(PUC)	31.3	27.3
College & above	75.0	71.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>15.8</b>
<b>Districts</b>		
Ramanagara	26.3	24.7
Mysuru	2.5	2.4
Raichur	14.6	13.0
Belagavi	32.5	26.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>15.8</b>

**Source:** Author's calculations based on primary data

Table 12 explores the beneficiaries' awareness about the Social Audit Process, which is again an important accountability tool and can be used for grievance redressal and voicing and supporting enforcement of rights conferred under the MGNREGA. Overall, only 18.5 per cent of the people were aware of Social Audit and out of those aware, only 15.8 per cent had participated in the Social Audit process. Scheduled Caste (9.0 per cent) showed the least acquaintance, closely followed by ST (9.8 per cent), Others (16.1 per cent) and OBC (29.1 per cent) respectively.

This table (12) further explores the impact of landholding, asset holding, educational level and geographical location (district) on awareness levels of the households. Landholding shows again a perceptible correlation, higher the landholding, higher being the awareness and with lower land holding denoting lower awareness. Landless families (13.0 per cent) were the least aware followed by Marginal (19.0 per cent), Semi Medium (25.6 per cent) and Small (27.3 per cent) respectively. Asset holding also showed the same trend with higher asset holding people having a higher level of awareness. Lower Middle Class (9.6 per cent) had the lowest awareness followed by Middle Class (19.3 per cent) and Upper Middle Class (34.3 per cent) having the highest awareness. The same was true of educational attainment, higher the educational attainment higher being the awareness and lower the educational attainment, lower being the awareness. Illiterate (7.6 per cent) had the lowest awareness, followed by Primary (20.8 per cent), Secondary (21.7 per cent), Higher Secondary (31.3 per cent) and College and above (75.0 per cent) respectively.

Among the districts, Belagavi (32.5 per cent) had the highest awareness and participation in Social Audit, followed by Ramanagara (26.3 per cent), Raichur (14.6 per cent) and Mysuru (2.5 per cent) being the least aware.

**Table 13: % of respondents who are aware about the planning process in MGNREGA**

Districts	Percent	Social Groups	Per cent
Ramanagara	40.0	SC	17.0
Mysuru	3.4	ST	8.5
Raichur	22.8	OBC	32.6
Belagavi	26.0	Others	17.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>21.6</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>21.6</b>

Source: Author's calculations based on primary data

Table 13 explores the awareness of households about the planning process in MGNREGA. The highest awareness of 40.00 per cent is in Ramanagara district, followed by Belagavi (26.00 per cent), Raichur (22.8 per cent) and Mysuru (3.4 per cent) having the least. Social group wise, OBC (32.6 per cent) households had the highest awareness of the planning process, followed by Others (17.2 per cent), SC (17.00 per cent), and ST (8.5 per cent) households having the least awareness.

### **Characteristics, Awareness and Predicament of Non-Beneficiaries**

The following paragraphs explore some of the comparative characteristics of MGNREGA beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries to assess the differences and similarities between the two populations.

**Table 14: Percentage of Non-beneficiaries not aware about MGNREGA programme**

SC	68.8
ST	65.4
OBC	66.0
Others	60.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>65.0</b>

Source: Author's calculations based on primary data

Table 14 explores the awareness level of non-beneficiaries about MGNREGA. Overall, 65.00 per cent of the non-beneficiary households are not aware about the MGNREGA programme. There are slight variations among non-beneficiary social groups' awareness, with 68.8 per cent Scheduled Caste households being unaware, followed by OBC (66.0 per cent), ST (65.4 per cent) and Others (66.05 per cent).

About 67.8 per cent of beneficiaries hold land compared to 51.4 per cent on non-beneficiaries. The average land holding of beneficiaries (1.8 acres) is higher than that of non-beneficiaries (1.1 acres).

About 33.4 per cent of land held by beneficiaries is irrigated land when compared to 24.9 per cent of land held by non-beneficiaries. Across social groups, OBC (72.0 per cent) have the largest proportion of households holding land, followed by ST (60.7 per cent), SC (55.0 per cent) and Others (53.4 per cent) respectively. The average amount of land possessed also showed a similar variation, with OBC (1.9 acres) having the largest holdings followed by ST (1.4 acres), Others (1.3 acres) and SC (1.2 acres) respectively. The percentage of area held being irrigated is the highest for Others (35.00 per cent), followed by OBC (33.1 per cent), ST (29.0 per cent) and SC (25.2 per cent).

In 16 sample villages, out of the 26,659 households listed, only 20,694 (77.62 per cent) had MGNREGA Card. From the foregoing discussions, it is evident that 22.37 per cent of non-beneficiary households were relatively more needy, vulnerable, poorer and weak. A large number of them represent the 'exclusion error' which was being avoided through the enactment of MGNREGA by introducing a rights-based, demand-driven, universal programme, but evidence is overwhelming to show that MGNREGA in operation is like any other rationed, budget-bound and supply-driven development programme.

**Table 15: Distribution of households according to socio-economic characteristics**

			Beneficiary		Non-beneficiary		Total	
			Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1	Educational Level	Illiterate	113	34.9	61	37.1	174	35.6
		Primary	52	16.1	32	19.6	84	17.2
		Secondary	114	35.2	58	35.7	172	35.3
		Higher Sec(PUC)	37	11.5	11	7.0	49	10.1
		College & above	7	2.3	1	0.7	9	1.8
		Total	324	100.0	164	100.0	488	100.0
2	Asset Category	Lower middle income	90	27.6	72	44.1	160	32.9
		Middle income	173	53.3	77	46.9	250	51.2

		Upper middle income	62	19.1	15	9.1	78	15.9
		Total	324	100.0	164	100.0	488	100.0
3	Land holding category	Landless	108	33.4	80	49.0	188	38.4
		Marginal [<1hec]	124	38.4	61	37.1	185	38.0
		Small [1 to 2 hec]	58	17.9	14	8.4	72	14.8
		Semi Medium [2 to 4 hec]	33	10.3	9	5.6	43	8.8
		Total	324	100.0	164	100.0	488	100.0
4	Social Category	SC	68	21.0	42	25.6	110	22.5
		ST	58	17.9	35	21.3	93	19.1
		OBC	142	43.8	48	29.3	190	38.9
		Others	56	17.3	39	23.8	95	19.5
		Total	324	100.0	164	100.0	488	100.0
<b>Source:</b> Author's calculation based on primary data.								

Table 15 enumerates the distribution of households according to socio-economic characteristics for both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. To understand the similarities and differences, the two populations tabulated above were subjected to chi-square test.

From the chi-square test, it is amply clear that except for educational background, the two groups are different and distinct as far as land and asset holdings and social group categories are concerned. Further on, on all the comparative parameters, the non-beneficiaries are worse off and deserved a programme like MGNREGA. Clearly, MGNREGA was not reaching those poor and vulnerable non-beneficiary households.

**Table 16: Source of Information about MGNREGA**

<b>Beneficiary</b>	<b>Ramanagara</b>	<b>Mysuru</b>	<b>Raichur</b>	<b>Belagavi</b>	<b>Total</b>
Not answered	13.8	52.5	0.0	0.0	13.8
GP	77.5	40.7	48.1	90.5	66.1
Friends	0.0	0.0	17.3	1.2	4.9
Mate	3.8	1.7	18.5	3.6	7.2
Others	5.0	5.1	16.0	4.8	7.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Non-beneficiary</b>					
Not answered	27.3	62.9	0.0	0.0	27.3
GP	44.8	30.6	38.1	74.4	44.8
Friends	11.9	0.0	31.0	10.3	11.9
Mate	2.8	0.0	7.1	2.6	2.8
Others	13.3	6.5	23.8	12.8	13.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Not answered	18.8	57.9	0.0	0.0	18.1
GP	65.3	35.5	44.7	85.4	59.3
Friends	4.4	0.0	22.0	4.1	7.2
Mate	3.4	0.8	14.6	3.3	5.8
Others	8.1	5.8	18.7	7.3	9.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

<b>Beneficiary</b>	<b>SC</b>	<b>ST</b>	<b>OBC</b>	<b>Others</b>	<b>Total</b>
Not answered	23.5	20.7	6.3	12.0	13.8
GP	58.8	46.6	77.3	70.0	66.1
Friends	2.9	12.1	3.1	4.0	4.9
Mate	10.3	10.3	3.9	8.0	7.2
Others	4.4	10.3	9.4	6.0	7.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Non-beneficiary</b>					
Not answered	18.8	34.6	19.1	39.5	27.3
GP	59.4	19.2	51.1	42.1	44.8
Friends	12.5	19.2	10.6	7.9	11.9
Mate	0.0	7.7	2.1	2.6	2.8
Others	9.4	19.2	17.0	7.9	13.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Not answered	22.0	25.0	9.7	23.9	18.1
GP	59.0	38.1	70.3	58.0	59.3
Friends	6.0	14.3	5.1	5.7	7.2
Mate	7.0	9.5	3.4	5.7	5.8
Others	6.0	13.1	11.4	6.8	9.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Source:** Author's calculation based on primary data.

Table 16 gives the details about source of information about MGNREGA as narrated by the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Overall, 66.1 per cent of beneficiaries and 44.8 per cent of non-beneficiaries got it from the Gram Panchayat. About 13.8 per cent beneficiaries and 27.3 per cent non-beneficiaries did not answer. Raichur was the only district where 17.3 per cent beneficiaries got it from friends and 18.5 per cent from mate. Among non-beneficiaries, it was 31.0 per cent from friends in Raichur and 11.9 per cent in Ramanagara and 10.3 per cent in Belagavi. For social groups, SC (10.3 per cent) and ST (10.3 per cent) had it from mate. Overall, it gives an impression that SC/ST had less access to Gram Panchayat and they depended more on mates. Non-beneficiaries (44.8 per cent) also had less access to GP when compared to beneficiaries (66.1 per cent). Strangely, no one remembers about any IEC activities except some wall writings near the GP office.

Labour history shows that beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries both do manual work and generally beneficiaries do higher number of man days of manual work in a year per household when compared to non-beneficiaries. Beneficiary households in a year do 209 days of other work and 54 days

of MGNREGA work whereas non-beneficiaries do only 150 days of other work as they do not participate in MGNREGA.

## **Analysis of Awareness Generation on State Plan and District Plan and their Implementation**

After the year 2013-14, Karnataka state has consistently come out with an annual IEC plan and as a sample, the plan for 2015-16 at Annexure 1 is taken for examination. A plan of Rs. 1071.72 crore is exactly 0.59% of the total expenditure under MGNREGA that year, hence it is as per the stated policy of 10 per cent of the administrative expenditure. That year Rs. 508.25 lakh (47.42) per cent was earmarked for the mid-media (wall writing, poster, leaflet, hoardings, exhibitions, publications, booklets etc.) followed by Rs. 407.52 lakh (38.02) per cent for interpersonal communication (Rojgar Diwas, toll free number, door-to-door campaign, theme-based awareness and Kala Jatha etc.) and least for mass media (TV, AIR, phone-in, jingles and newspaper etc.). Among the individual items, the largest allocation was for Rojgar Diwas with Rs. 337.74 lakh (31.51%) allocation, followed by Rs. 300.00 lakh (27.99%) for hoardings and Rs. 180.00 lakh (16.79%) for wall writing followed by Rs. 55.10 lakh (5.13%) for AIR and Rs. 42.00 lakh (3.91%) for jingles.

State plan essentially means only budget allocation for different heads and subheads. The IEC state nodal officer has limited capacity on IEC designing and the technical aspects of communication, and have not put any effort to rope in any expert on development communication to plan and design specific strategies under different items of expenditure. There is no defining of focussed target groups and identification of vulnerable groups needing special strategy. There is no content planning strategy and no consultation with the stakeholders on these issues. There is no effort to design and run pilots to test new communication contents and tools. There is no strategy to document and evaluate the operationalised strategy to draw lessons for the future.

It is surprising that the district level plan allocation broadly under heads and subheads are done at the state level and the districts are directed to implement them. On the file, the plan is approved at the level of the minister and if that year subsequently any State Employment Guarantee Council meeting is held, the same plan is placed before the council for approval, but since 2016, no such meetings have been held. It is evident from the record that IEC plan approval is generally delayed and it may be one of the reasons why the IEC amount remains unspent. At the district level also there is no effort to get expert help in designing content or stakeholders inputs to refine the strategy. Otherwise also, capacities of design and conceptualisation of a communication campaign at the district level will be limited. In a routine manner, most of the activities are carried out perfunctorily. The key job of IEC personnel is bifurcating resources item wise and producing a plan of action and collecting the data about implementation and compiling them.

Rojgar Divas was planned every Thursday, but since 2015-16, it is reduced to monthly once only, but it is seldom used for communication. It is used to mobilise workers for work and they are initiated into work as elicited in the group discussion. In 2015-16, out of the total Rs. 444.44 lakh spent in the state, the largest sum of Rs. 148.42 lakh was spent on Mass Media (radio, jingles, newspaper ads etc.) followed by Rojgar Divas (Rs. 109.28 lakh, 24.28%), Wall Painting (Rs. 88.55 lakh, 19.24%),

Others (Rs. 77.40 lakh, 17.41%) and least on Folk Media (Rs. 23.79 lakh, 5.35%). The most default in fund utilisation is for Rojgar Divas as they utilised Rs. 109.28 lakh (32.35%) against the earmarked Rs. 337.74 lakh (See Table 4). The explanation given is that it was not required as workers were coming to work without it. It is also said that there is a tacit state policy to gag the administrative expenditure and apply economy measures and in most of the financial years, the state has utilised half the administrative expenditure earmarked (3%).

The content of wall paintings, hoardings, mass media insertions, jingles etc. was examined. Most of them had very little content space for worker's education on rights and how to enforce those rights. They were mostly in the nature of casual publicity or introductory acquaintance with the MGNREGA programme or statistics highlighting the achievements. There was no content on Social Audit, Vigilance, Ombudsman, Grievance Redressal Mechanism, Transparency and Accountability Mechanism etc. Some traces are seen regarding Gram Sabha, but mostly these media publicise the work plan and general statistical and descriptive information about the programme considered to be achievements. Except one rare 30 minutes video produced by the Karnataka State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) which has some contexts about rights and their enforcement mechanism and is useful for creating awareness on those issues, all other materials are not very relevant. MORD has also not provided any such material.

### **Analysis of Case Studies on Documentation of Success Stories**

Capacity building of potential beneficiaries required success stories of toil of the poor, illiterate workers who in spite of all odds could negotiate with the system to get NREG Card and were able to indent work, obtain work and payments in time, and in default obtain unemployment allowance or interest as applicable for delayed payments. Such success stories and sagas of arduous endeavour in multimedia will be inspirational for new potential beneficiaries.

Nearest to what could be of some use to the beneficiaries were collection of selected stories of asset creation and its multiplier effects. We have examined the MORD and Government of Karnataka (GOK) best practices documents. GOK's 'Success Stories Under MGNREGS in Karnataka' (2011) documents 25 selected write-ups on best practices with 24 positive stories and the remaining one negative story. Positive ones are by and large publicity material without any process insight. They all show some good asset and try to praise its utility and multiplier implications. They may be used as an example to facilitate choice of a shelf of project but it may not help any beneficiary in learning the ropes of rights-based workfare programme access, employment and enjoyment.

Similarly 'Sankalan II: 101 stories of Rural Transformation', is an excellent documentation of immaculate assets with possible multiplier effects but its utility as an awareness material is limited although it may serve as a publicity material.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

### **Why MGNREGA Needed High-pitch IEC**

MGNREGA, being a rights-based universal workfare programme, has a unique requirement for awareness generation among the stakeholders, particularly the poor, weak and the illiterate

beneficiaries and prospective potential beneficiaries. Mere conferment of right and making the programme universal may not be a sufficient precondition to reach the programme to the poorest, weakest and the most needy who are often illiterate, least informed, least organised and least politically connected and hence left out of the programme.

Self selection may envisage any beneficiary indenting work and being able to enter the programme at will. For self selection to happen efficiently, the beneficiary must be fully aware of the programme and its processes and should be organised enough to negotiate with the entrenched Panchayat Raj System and the implementing stakeholders to wrest his/her rights and access the programme as and when needed. In addition, they should be aware of and capable of dealing with every breach of the right in the manner laid down by the law and the rules.

Workfare schemes compared to asset and skill transfer programmes are a transaction rich, multi cyclical engagement wherein from registration and obtaining a card, indenting work to getting work, participating for days, attendance recording, measurement, payment processing, payment and facilities at worksite etc. there are multiple points of contact and the same is repeated with every cycle of new indent. The beneficiary must be fully aware of the nuances and should be organised enough to deal with multiple contingencies.

Moreover, a rights-based programme should have a credible and effective mechanism to remedy the breach of any of the rights. Furthermore, a self selecting rights-based universal programme is essentially a passive programme from the perspective of the implementing stakeholders, who may not take initiatives to identify, mobilise and enlist beneficiaries and explain away the programme as having no demand and hence no progress.

All these foregoing characteristics imposed a high order information, education and communication need for the MGNREGA programme and in this study, we have explored and appraised the efforts made by the programme authorities to create awareness. We have also assessed the awareness levels of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries by interviewing them through structured questionnaire.

### **Beneficiaries' Awareness Level**

First, we will take up the beneficiaries' perspectives and what we learn from their questionnaire. It was a very representative stratified sample spread across all the four divisions and with good representation of social groups proportionate to their population. Comparative responses based on their geographical location, educational level, income group, land holding and social categories were analysed. There were a great variability in responses based on those five criteria showing diversity in awareness levels based on location, educational level, income level, land holding and social group of the beneficiary households. All the tables uniformly show extremely poor awareness levels among almost all beneficiaries. As table 6.1 to 6.5 indicated, barring the awareness about scheme payment through bank (80.8 per cent) and wage rate (62.6 per cent) for which there was uniformly higher awareness, for all other rights and their enforcement mechanism, the awareness levels were very poor, ranging between 13.00 and 39.8 per cent. After 13 years of implementation of MGNREGA and the wide range of initiatives taken, still the level of awareness among the beneficiaries were poor.

For five key questions on indent of work and getting acknowledgment, 100 days work entitlement, giving work within 15 days of indent, equal wages for men and women and timely payment of wages and entitlement of interest on default, almost two-thirds of the respondents had no awareness (as the awareness level varied between 34.2 and 39.8 per cent). Three-fourths of the respondents were unaware of the benefits at the workplace. The response to the other seven questions were still poorer with less than 20 per cent of beneficiaries knowing of unemployment allowance (17.2 per cent), getting allowance if work is not given within 5 kms of their residence (16.8 per cent), one-third reservation for women in work (16.1 per cent), provision for interest if payments are delayed (14.1 per cent), social audit (14.3 per cent), and ombudsman (13.00 per cent). In essence, there was little awareness about the basic rights conferred by the MGNREGA. Table 7 clearly shows some correlation between educational attainment and awareness level – higher the educational attainment, higher were the awareness levels. Table 8 showed a high correlation between income level and awareness levels, with households having higher income having better awareness. Table 9 showed the impact of land holding on awareness level with households having higher land holdings having higher awareness about various rights and their enforcement mechanism.

Table 7 explored the beneficiaries' awareness about ombudsman and this also followed the same general trend of awareness differentials based on social group, land holding, assets held and educational level of the household etc. Table 8 had almost the same trend of awareness of social audit. Table 9 explored awareness about planning and ST (8.5 per cent) households' awareness was lower than Others (17.00 per cent) and SCs (17.00 per cent), and OBCs (32.6 per cent) were most aware.

By and large, these tables draw a dismal picture of awareness among the households about the rights and their enforcement mechanism. This may be either due to lack of awareness generation efforts or their ineffectiveness. We will examine this with reference to the actual awareness generation strategies and plans chalked out and operationalised and try to assess the effectiveness of various institutional mechanisms to generate awareness.

### **Predicament of Non-beneficiaries**

The characteristics and awareness levels and predicament of non-beneficiaries were also examined at length through structured questionnaire. Overall, 65.00 per cent of the non-beneficiary households were not aware of the MGNREGA programme and variations across social groups were minimal (see Table10). We tried to examine the differences between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Non-beneficiaries turn out to be having lower land holdings. There were very minor differences between educational level of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were marginally less educationally attained. There were perceptible differences between asset ownership of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were having less asset ownership. The population of SC/ST was marginally higher in the non-beneficiaries population. On chi-square test, one can conclude that educationally, the beneficiary and non-beneficiary populations are not distinguishable, but they were very different as far as land and asset ownership and social group categories were concerned and distinctly the beneficiary group were having better land and asset holdings and fewer SC/ST members among them.

From these data, one can safely conclude that the non-beneficiaries were poorer, weaker, more socially excluded and vulnerable and required the benefits of MGNREGA much more, but unfortunately were less aware, and hence the consequent benefits have not reached a large chunk of very needy stakeholders (exclusion error).

Table 12 examined the source of MGNREGA information among beneficiary and non-beneficiary households. Both the groups largely depend on the Gram Panchayat for their information, but beneficiaries (66.1 per cent) had better access to GP compared to non-beneficiaries (44.8 per cent). Only in Raichur district, the Mate system had some influence with 18.5 per cent beneficiary households obtaining their information from them. Overall, the table gave an impression that SC/ST had less access to GP and they depend more on Mates. Similarly, non-beneficiaries (44.8 per cent) had less access to GP when compared to beneficiaries (66.1 per cent). Strangely, no one remembers about any IEC activities except some wall writings near the GP office.

The labour history of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries clearly showed that both the groups equally depend on wage labour. In Ramanagara, due to proximity to Bangalore city, they have better availability of Non-MGNREGA work (347.1 days per household per year) but they also utilise on an average (73.7 days per household per year) more work days under MGNREGA. Beneficiaries show higher availability of private work compared to non-beneficiaries. Better asset and land holding families and better educated families show slightly better availability of private work to them. One can safely conclude that there was a bias towards elites among beneficiaries when compared to non-beneficiaries and households with more assets, land holdings and better education are more likely to have information as well as membership of MGNREGA and will access the MGNREGA programme and private works better. Data clearly shows that a large proportion of beneficiaries are very well off and may not require a poverty elimination programme to support them. About 19.1 per cent of beneficiaries belonged to the upper middle class as per their asset holdings and 10.3 per cent households were semi medium farmers as per their land holdings. These two groups are definitely creamy layers and represented the 'inclusion error' in the programme. Another 17.9 per cent households having one to two hectares of land (small farmers) (and beneficiaries having 33.4 per cent of their land area irrigated) are also having characteristics of creamy layer and may represent 'inclusion error' in the programme. Hence, there was conclusive evidence of information asymmetry, inclusion and exclusion errors and elite capture of the MGNREGA programme, and lots of effort was required to mobilise the poor, illiterate and socially backward households to break this nexus to facilitate them to join the programme.

But among those who are in the programme as beneficiaries we do not find any discrimination of any particular group based on either their social or educational or land or asset holdings etc. as there was little variation between average number of days worked per household per year for all the categories. But there are clear geographical variations. Ramanagara, in spite of being near Bangalore city and having the largest private employment opportunity with much higher private wage rate, was also having the largest utilisation under MGNREGA, and Raichur with the largest number of poor with much less availability of work and lower wage rate of private employment was having the least. Awareness generation endeavours have failed to reach the poorer, more illiterate and socially deprived and vulnerable households. Reasons for these variation may need further study.

## **Awareness Generation Efforts, IEC Activities and Institutional Mechanism**

In this part, we are examining the awareness generation efforts under MGNREGA. As this is demand driven, self selecting (passive programme), rights-based, multi cyclical transaction-rich programme required a higher pitch Information Education and Communication campaign, the standard earmarking of a mere 0.6% of the budget for this programme awareness (IEC) was probably an under provisioning, and the programme was underfunded. It appears that the emphasis of the awareness programme under MGNREGA was showcasing achievements rather than creating awareness about rights and their enforcement. Guidelines and the annual circulars etc. Gave a vague outline of the content of the communication campaign. No professional is hired to analyse and identify key requirements of the campaign and to develop creative content etc.

The administration's effort is focussed on bifurcating the budget in subheads and sending them to the districts for expenditure. From the content design and use of media, it is evident that the emphasis is predominantly on publicity and propaganda rather than hardcore awareness generation of the weakest, poorest and the excluded. There is no specific strategy for any particular target group like women, SC/ST, persons with disabilities and other excluded groups.

Institutional arrangement for the IEC is weak and there is a chronic vacancy at district and block level which has also affected the quality of IEC (see Table 2). There is no capacity to conceive creative contents and design them for effective communication. National level and state level supports are minimal. In 2013-14, the government of India released a document, 'Reaching the unreached' IEC plan for MGNREGA FY 2014-15 and they had planned to initiate capacity building of IEC state resourcepersons, but no such training was imparted and the plan remained on paper. Till 2013-14, Karnataka state had ad hoc plans under IEC and only in 2014-15, a regular plan of action was drawn up, but its implementation remained lackadaisical at best. Till 2013-14, there was some emphasis on folk media but after that year, the Rojgar Divas and mass media (particularly AIR and print) were the focus. Ten per cent of the administrative expenses were earmarked in the IEC action plan, but utilisation ranged from 32 to 46 per cent only. The budget earmarked for IEC was quite moderate and disproportionately lower than that required to create right awareness among the stakeholders. But what was allocated was also not utilised, and what was utilised was not properly deployed. State level involvement in planning, designing creative content and monitoring was minimal and it appears to be limited to budgeting, tendering and accounting.

Rojgar Divas had a consistently high allocation every year, but expenditure was generally poor. Although this was the only intervention focussed on workers, as evident from the group discussion, it was rather used for mobilising workers for a new work in a supply-driven manner rather than being used as an opportunity for educating and empowering workers.

Monitoring appears to be weak at all levels and largely restricted to mere monthly data collection. There is hardly any perceptible contribution from the national and the state levels for content design and media choices. Late approval of plan is common (see table 4) and it is hardly monitored while being implemented. The State Employment Guarantee Council which is empowered by the MGNREG Act to create awareness appears to be quiescent and irregular and clueless about their

responsibility of IEC, as the case studies of three meeting notes amply substantiate. It never went into the quality of IEC or related compliances.

The district plan allocation under subheads is done at the state level, and the same is taken up as a district IEC plan. Initially, Rojgar Divas was planned for every Thursday, but later on, it became a monthly ritual which is performed in a routine manner like other activities. The key job of IEC personnel is bifurcating resources item wise to make a so-called 'plan of action' and collecting monthly data of physical and financial progress. It is a matter of concern that in some of the financial years, a substantial portion of the district IEC budget is spent on printing of job cards and procuring stationery etc. which should have been printed under general administrative expenses.

It is said that there was a tacit state policy in Karnataka to gag the administrative expenditure by applying economy measures and in most of the financial years, the state had underutilised the administrative expenditure (less than 50 per cent) as well as IEC expenditure.

There is no initiative to involve civil society organisations or trade unions in the awareness generation process. There is no effort to rope in a professional agency to research on the matter and come out with a focussed IEC strategy for each pertinent stakeholder. There are no evaluation studies commissioned to understand this subject at depth to get insights to design and draw up a creative plan of action with relevant content.

The content of various IEC materials were examined and most of them had very little space for worker's education on rights and their enforcement. Most of them were in the nature of casual publicity or introductory acquaintance with the MGNREGA programme or statistics highlighting achievements. There was nothing on Social Audit, Vigilance, Ombudsman, Grievance Redressal Mechanism, Transparency and Accountability Mechanism etc. Although some traces are seen of Gram Sabha, mostly the contents publicise the work plan, and general statistics highlighting so-called achievements. Analytical case studies on the documentation of success stories further substantiate these points. Overall, IEC efforts under MGNREGA are far from satisfactory and amply complement the findings of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries survey questionnaire. There is an urgent need to initiate a systematic, well-planned and well-designed IEC strategy with the involvement of all the stakeholders so that it reaches the poorest, weakest and the most needy.

### **Is Awareness Generation Sufficient or Capacity Building Needed?**

A rights-based programme requires clear knowledge of rights as well as mechanism to enforce them. This cannot happen by mere casual acquaintance about the existence of the programme. As it was clear from all the interviews of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, most of them had a very vague idea of the MGNREGA programme and would not be in a position to assert their rights, whenever such a contingency arises. The best of the IEC material available cannot substitute for formal training on the matter as is done for the implementing stakeholders. Workers' organisations and the Central Board for Workers' Education (see the case study 2) are the best agencies to do capacity building of the workers on such subjects.

**Case Study 2: MGNREGA and Central Board For Workers Education, Ministry of Labour and Employment GOI**

In the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), the first ever scheme launched by the government of India which guarantees wage employment, the primary objective is to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

The new scheme under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been implemented by the board starting from 2011-2012.

The special programmes for the beneficiaries of MGNREGA are being conducted by CBWE to enlighten the rural masses about the benefits under the Act.

Village-level programmes are being conducted under the project.

To initiate the things, a national level workshop on "Training of Trainers on MGNREGA" was organised on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2011 for the Education Officers, Regional Directors and Zonal Directors who are actually in the field and doing a noble job of imparting training to the workers to empower them towards their duties and responsibilities.

**Source:** From the website of the Central Board of Workers Education, Ministry of Labour & Employment, Government of India.

### **Awareness of Other Stakeholders V/s Workers' Awareness**

IEC in any programme essentially has a dual purpose. Although always its primary purpose remains creating awareness and capacity among the target beneficiaries for whom the programme was designed, secondarily, it also intends to give information about the programme and its achievements to the other stakeholders and tax payers at large. This study is focused and concerned about the awareness raising activities for the workers and not other stakeholders, but tries to understand the predicament of others as we come across on the way and glean through the sidelines.

From the detailed examination of IEC strategies at the state and district level and evaluation of context and media deployed, one could find enough evidence that the IEC strategy of MGNREGA in Karnataka has equally failed beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Moreover, it has not created any consistent and credible awareness of the achievements, success or limitations of the programme among any of the stakeholders.

Today in India, we have too many development programmes focused on the poor and some of them are rights-based. There are a multiplicity of institutions implementing and enforcing them. All programmes have their own IEC and capacity building strategies and in their complex cacophony, an illiterate and poor beneficiary or a citizen observer is completely confused. Some researches may go deeper and try to understand the nuances of the programme but even policy makers and political executives and intellectuals are vaguely aware of its true achievements, anomalies or failures.

There is enough evidence to conclude that there is hardly any well designed Information, Education and Communication strategy in place with adequate resources for MGNREGA awareness generation. Whatever rudimentary strategy and action plans that existed also are perfunctorily operationalised, without achieving the key goals of the MGNREGA programme. There is little awareness about the rights-based programme among the stakeholders, particularly the poorest, weakest and the illiterate. As a large chunk (22.37 per cent) of households in the sample villages are non-beneficiaries and two-thirds of them are not aware about MGNREGA and from the chi-square test it was amply clear that they were a different and distinct population based on their poorer land and asset holdings, and relatively vulnerable social groupings, we can safely conclude that the poorest, weakest and the

illiterate are not able to access the programme satisfactorily and not able to realise their potential rights.

### **Role of Panchayat Raj Institutions and Civil Society Organisations**

Panchayat Raj Institutions are the cutting edge delivery agents for the MGNREGA programme and some of the key IEC strategies. Table 12.4 gave the source of information about MGNREGA and overall 59.3 per cent of the households got their awareness on MGNREGA from the Gram Panchayat and for the beneficiaries it was 66.1 per cent and non-beneficiaries it was 44.8 per cent. Hence non-beneficiary households in general had lower access to the Gram Panchayat. OBCs (77.3 per cent) and others (70.0 per cent) had better access to GP when compared to SC (58.8 per cent) and ST (46.6 per cent) among the beneficiaries. So it is amply clear that Gram Panchayats play a vital role in creating awareness about MGNREGA and their potential has to be tapped better. GP level political leaders should see opportunity and synergy in their political interest in terms of publicity of their work and achievement and awareness generation of the beneficiaries. Hence the IEC programme should have enough space for the needs of the PRI political leadership to create political will and empathy for the programme among them.

Civil Society Organisations' (CSO) involvement in MGNREGA is minimal in Karnataka. Two identified members of CSOs are nominated to the state EG council and the district committee but they have not been entrusted with any executive role either in awareness generation, capacity building or mobilising beneficiaries. In some of the districts, on their own accord, some of the CSOs are taking up the initiative to mobilise beneficiaries and create awareness among them. As is clear from the data, about 3.8 per cent of households are members of trade unions, 45.2 per cent are in SHGs and 10.1 per cent are having membership of cooperative societies. Self Help Groups as an institution have a great potential to support education, awareness, mobilisation and convergence, but they have not yet been fully tapped.

One of the sources of information (see table 16) about MGNREGA among beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike was 'Mate'. Overall, 7.2 per cent of the beneficiaries and 2.8 per cent of non-beneficiaries sourced their information from Mates. Reorienting Mates as leaders and mediators of trade unions would have a great potential for organising and mobilising the poor and the needy. As per the workers' perception, trade unions have the best ability to improve MGNREGA (64.7 per cent), protect workers' rights (52.9 per cent) and promote collective action (35.3 per cent).

## **Policy Implications, Suggestions and Ways Forward**

### **Requirement of High Intensity IEC and Capacity Building**

MGNREGA being a rights-based workfare programme, with self selection of beneficiaries, and implementing partners having a passive role in selection, it required a higher order awareness need so that workers knew not only their rights but also how to enforce them. Furthermore, it was a transaction-rich, multi-cyclical engagement, and hence beneficiaries had to know the process and remedies beyond mere acquaintance. Hence the IEC needs of MGNREGA workers required not just awareness building but formal capacity building comparable to how we train our implementing partners.

Such extensive, persistent and effective training on a large scale (MGNREGS having some 50 million beneficiaries) could be possible through trade unions and the Central Board of Workers' Education, who have experience in doing capacity building of workers on labour issues. MGNREGA conferred rights and laid down the mechanism to enforce them and those were essentially labour rights. Hence unless we formally promote 'trade unions' and encourage them to organise labour and enhance their capacities, a workers' rights based programme may remain unenforced. The programme should formally earmark an amount for organising labour and all 'Mates' should be the foot soldiers of the 'trade union' as they were the second largest institutional source of MGNREGA information among the workers.

### **Clarity of Purpose of IEC**

In the currently used IEC strategy, there was little clarity on the purpose of IEC from top to bottom. General guidelines were ambivalent on the awareness needs of the beneficiaries to know their rights and the redressal mechanism and the awareness needs of the general public to know about programme success. When there is no distinction between empowering awareness and publicity of achievement and success stories, the latter is easier to venture into and IEC is dominated by it. About 80 per cent of the IEC budget should be spent on awareness need of workers and the remaining 20 per cent should only be spent on publicity of achievements and success stories. These two items should be monitored separately.

### **Clarity on Target Group**

The IEC strategy should clearly spell out target groups and identify vulnerable, weak and illiterate groups who require a more focussed approach. For each target group, after researching their needs and predicament, the appropriate IEC content and media may be chosen to reach them.

### **Clarity on Content and Professional Designs**

For each identified target group, content should be chosen meticulously and professionals and stakeholders should be involved to design communication material.

### **Selection of Media**

Selection of media for communication has to be done by professional agencies. National level focus may be the use of mass media like radio and television etc. There was a need to have a full-fledged Doordarshan channel for development communication focussed on poverty elimination programmes. State level focus may be mass media, mid media and digital media and local level focus may be folk media and using local communication resources like community radio etc.

### **Professionalisation of IEC Manpower**

There was a need to augment the capacity of IEC manpower and inject professionalism among them. Their compensation and service conditions should be improved and they should get better creative space to come up with better content, design and media choices.

### **Making Available Adequate Budget**

Ten per cent of the administrative expenses (a mere 0.6 per cent of the annual expenditure under MGNREGA) is not adequate resources for high intensity IEC under MGNREGA. As this programme is unique and required clear knowledge of rights and their enforcement mechanism among the workers, it required at least 2 to 3 per cent of the programme cost earmarked for awareness generation and more than 80 per cent of that budget should be spent on capacity building of workers and organising them.

### **Timely Planning and Closer Monitoring**

Planning for IEC has to be more professionally done and it should not be restricted to mere splitting of budgets and allocating resources. It should be done after the stakeholders' consultation and clear identification of target groups, content, design ideas and media etc. There should be enough flexibility to reorient the efforts at the decentralised levels and to use locally available resources. Planned predetermined allocation at the national level (60%), state level (30%) and local level (10%) is a good idea.

### **Strengthening the Central and State Employment Guarantee Council**

Central and state councils are empowered by the MGNREG Act to create awareness. In both the committees, at least one specialist on IEC should be coopted, who had the interest and capabilities to understand the technical aspects of IEC.

### **Convergence with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)**

CSOs have their own strength and outreach among a large number of poor families who require to be empowered. CSOs like Self Help Groups (45.6% of beneficiaries were members of SHGs) with field presence should be coopted for creating awareness and programme implementation.

### **Reduction of Schemes, Simplifying Guidelines and Optimising Institutions and Decreasing Clutter**

Today, there are too many poverty elimination programmes run by different agencies. Each programme has complex guidelines and a multiplicity of institutions like their own grievance redressal mechanism, ombudsman, social audit, quality control mechanism etc. Each have their own IEC etc. It is a good idea to merge such functions and try to develop common external agencies like the Controller and Auditor General, Lokayukta or Information Commission etc to deal with such contingencies so that their roles are better understood and utilised by the needy stakeholders.

Common external agencies will be stronger, more visible and professionally better equipped to discharge the functions of grievance redressal, quality control, ombudsman and auditors.

### **Strengthening and Reorienting Panchayat Raj Institutions and Enhancing Political Will**

At the cutting edge, the MGNREGA is implemented by the PRI institutions and their political will is critical for its success. Twenty per cent of the budget earmarked for publicity and propaganda of success stories and achievements at the PRI (GP) level has to be creatively used to keep alive political interest and will, so that they find enough fulfilment and commitment to vigorously take the programme forward.

### **Need for Further Research**

The programme showed immense interstate and intrastate variation with richer states, and within states richer parts of the states gorging MGNREGA resources and poorer states and poorer regions within states were utilising less resources and having larger unmet demands. There was an urgent need for interstate investigation on the subject to learn lessons from both failures and successes.

All the foregoing actions are required to eliminate the information asymmetry between different target groups, without which both exclusion and inclusion errors could not be removed and the programme may remain infested with 'elite capture' without reaching to the intended beneficiaries, the poor, the illiterate and the socially excluded.

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## Annexure 1

Karnataka State Plan of IEC Activities of MGNREGA for the year 2015-16							
Category	Sl. No.	Activity	Unit Cost (Rs.)	Physical (in numbers)	Financial (in lakh)	Description	
IPC (Inter Personal Communication)	1	Rozgar Diwas	500/- Month/GP	5629 GPs	(31.51%) 337.74	For 5629 GPs for 12 months @ 500/- per month. Each GPs monthly 1 meeting	
	2	Toll free number	14,000/- per seat	12	16.80	In Call Centre 10 persons for call receiving and reporting Rs. 14,000/- per person for 12 months.	
	3	Campaign					
		a)	Door to Door campaign for IPPE/Labour budget planning	1,000/- per GP	2133 GPs	21.33	In 2133 GPs in IPPE Blocks during September to December @ Rs. 1000/-
		b)	Theme based Awareness programmes	25,000/- each	30 No.	7.50	On Environment, Afforestation, Water Harvesting & River Rejuvenation and Borewell recharge structure etc.
		c)	Mass campaign (Kala Jatha)	17,500/-	138 GPs	24.15	2 selected GPs in each of the 69 IPPE Blocks @ Rs. 17500/- for one programme
<b>Total</b>					<b>407.52</b>	<b>(38.02%)</b>	
Mid - Media	1	Wall Writing	3,600/-	5000 Nos.	(16.79%) 180	1000 GPs @ Rs. 3600/- per 100 sq. Feet wall writing	
	2	Poster	40/- each	10000 Nos.	4.00	(Kannada 8000 Nos. and English 2000 Nos.	
	3	Leaflets	125/-	100000 Nos.	1.25	For Leaflets printing for 100 copies @ Rs. 125/-	
	4	Hoardings	1,00,000/-	300 No.	(27.99%) 300	10x20 Feet size Hoarding erection and display cost @ Rs. 100000/- per hoarding of MGNREGA programme display in IPPE GPs and all Taluk and district HQ.	
	5	Exhibition	5,00,000/-	3	15.00	For Dusshera/other State level/District Exhibition	
	6	Publication/News Letter	50/-	10,000	5.00	Success stories of MGNREGS in Karnataka Vikas News Letter of RD&PR in April 2015	
	7	Booklets (Best Practices/Success Story)	10,000/-	30 Dist. X 1 No. Each	3.00	Best practices / Success Stories and Photo documentation of works	
<b>Total</b>					<b>508.25</b>	<b>(47.42%)</b>	
Mass Media	1	TV Documentary	2,00,000/-	1	2.00	Documentary film production & telecast for MGNREGA progress	
	2	TV Spots	2,50,000/-	4	10.00	TV Spots production and telecast	
	3	AIR programme	29,000/-	190	(5.13%) 55.1	Success stories to be recorded and telecast in the AIR	
	4	Phone-in-programme	1,14,167/-	6	6.85	Hon'ble Minister RD&PR, Addl. Chief Secretary, Commissioner / DCP's Phone-in-programme will be arranged bi-monthly	
	5	Jingles	22,000/-	3 Months	(3.91%) 42	6 jingles for 60 Sec. @ Rs. 22,000/- per jingle to be telecast over 3 months (April - Sept - Dec 2015)	
	6	News Paper Ads	20,00,000/-	2	40.00	Advt. reg. Achievements and progress of MGNREGA programme will be given	
<b>Total</b>					<b>155.95</b>	<b>(14.55%)</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>					<b>1071.72</b>		

Source: Constructed by the author from the Karnataka RDPR Archives

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