The Role of E-Government implementation of MGNREGS in A.P.

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Abstract--- E-Government (electronic government, digital government, online government, or connected government) consists of the digital interactions between a government and citizens. The MGNREGS successfully implemented in rural areas with the help of Management Information System and NIC, along with Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) and other stakeholders MIS known as NREGASoft to address the problem related to delay in payment of wages and real time capturing of the MGNREGS transactions. (G2C) Issue of job card Acknowledgement of dated receipt of demand Work site allocation slip Pay slip Redressal of grievances (G2B) Data from NREGA is shared with bank/post offices, E-Lekha, GRS, RSBY, BPL Census (C2G) A local language enabled sound and icon based Kiosk model has been developed for workers to use the system and exercise their rights by their own. Demand for job Lodge grievance (G2G) all transaction between all NREGA stakeholders is captured in the system. So all (G2G) services are IT enabled NREGASoft has been serving direct transfer of payments to bank/ post office accounts of beneficiaries electronically resulting in reduction in delays in crediting the bank/post office accounts of the workers and hence the delays in payment of wages. To address this need of direct transfer of wages to worker's account by electronic means, a Direct Benefit Transfer System (DBTS) has been developed for MGNREGS This system leverages payment gateways such as Aadhaar Payment Bridge (APB)/ NEFT/ RTGS/ NECS/RECS and Core Banking Solution of banks. The Reserve Bank launched the facility to make payments to the beneficiaries of MGNREGS electronically through public sector banks State Bank of India (SBI) implementing the electronic benefit transfer (EBT) scheme for MGNREGS beneficiaries and Customer Service Points (CSPs). The Zero Mass Foundation (ZMF) has been roped in as a Business Correspondents (BC) to pay wages under MGNREGS
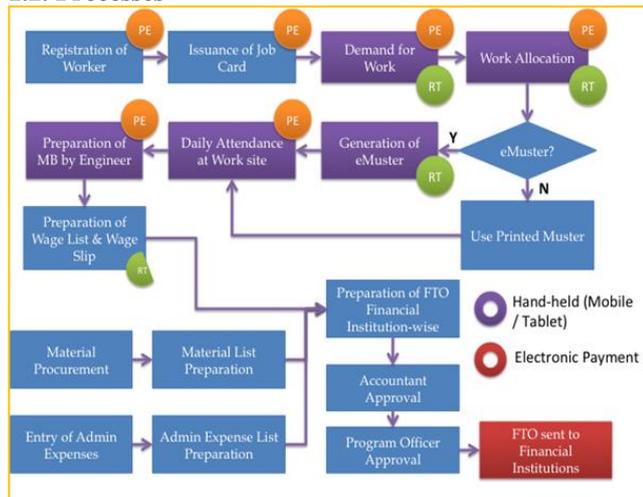
I. INTRODUCTION

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was notified on September, 2005. The Act provides a legal Guarantee of 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work at the minimum wage rate notified for agricultural labour prescribed in the State or else an unemployment allowance. The objective of the Act is to supplement wage employment opportunities in rural areas and in the process also build up durable assets.

Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP) launched MGNREGS on February 2, 2006 in 13 districts of the state. The scheme was subsequently expanded to all the districts by April 2008.

Phase-wise Coverage of districts under MGNREGS-AP:

Andhra Pradesh has entered into the seventh year of its implementation of MGNREGS. For effective implementation and greater transparency of the scheme, GoAP has made necessary changes, based on its experiences, within the purview of the Act. MGNREGS is in implementation in 21862 Gram panchayats of 1098 mandals with 1.3 Crore registered rural households.

Phase-I (w.e.f.2.02.06)	Vizianagaram; Chittoor; Kadapa; Ananthapur; Mahabubnagar; Medak; Rangareddy; Nizamabad; Warangal; Adilabad; Karimnagar; Khammam and Nalgonda
Phase-II (w.e.f.1.04.07)	East Godavari; Guntur; Kurnool; S.P.S.Nellore; Prakasam and Srikakulam
Phase–III (w.e.f.1.04.08)	West Godavari; Krishna and Visakhapatnam

and forwards the Mandal Plan to the Zilla Parishad. District Programme Coordinator prepares 'labour budget' by the December end for the district.
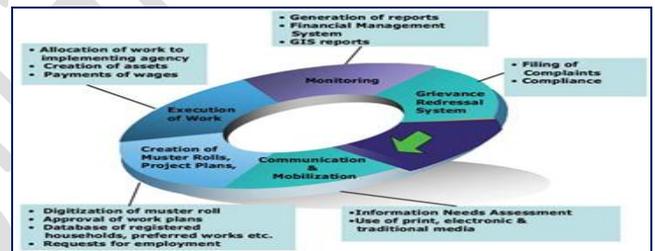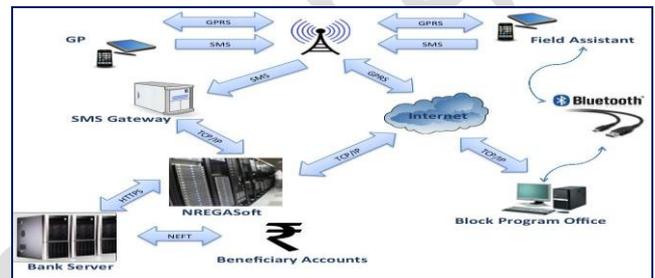
1.2. Processes

Planning Process – Development Plan: The objective of the planning process is to ensure that the district is prepared well in advance to offer productive employment on demand. The need to coordinate different levels of planning and to prepare a 'shelf of projects' to provide wage employment on demand requires preparation of an Annual Plan for the District. This is done before the commencement of the financial year so that the shelf in each Gram Panchyat is sufficient to meet the demand of wage seekers in the financial year.

Each Gram Panchyat will have a labour budget for the financial year to meet the demand of all wage seekers. Consequently, the Programme Officer matches the demand for work for all the Gram Panchyat s in the Mandal with the employment opportunities arising from MGNREGS-AP projects. The prepares a plan for the Mandal by consolidating proposals of Gram Panchayats and Mandal Panchayats. Subsequently, The Mandal Panchayat approves

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY
To study the role of E-system in MGNREGS implementation

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
survey method from past seven years Data (2006 to 2013) implementation of E-Systems in MGNREGS and beneficiaries survey.

Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Mgnregs-AP

The objective is to achieve complete transparency in implementation of MGNREGS by obtaining LIVE data from the Worksite to the Website on a daily basis. The mobile technology is customized and deployed for the MGNREGS field functionaries through different mobile

applications like e-Muster, e-Measurement, e-muster verification and e-check measurement. E-MMS is designed to arrest distortions in the programme like Muster Fudging; Delays in Payments; Binami Wage seekers; Fake Measurements and Work Duplication. Andhra Pradesh is the first state to introduce a comprehensive IT software that provides end-to-end IT solution in MGNREGA the transaction based software issues job cards, maintains shelf of projects, generates estimates, issues work commencement letters, updates muster rolls and generates pay orders. The software is being constantly upgraded to suit the changing requirements of the programme. At each Mandal level (25 villages) there is one Mandal computer center (MCC) manned by 2 computer operators. On each convergence department, there is a Departmental computer center (DCC) at Mandal / cluster of Mandals.

RAGAS: (Rashtriya Grameena Abhivruddhi Samacharam): A highly comprehensive and end-to-end transaction based application that provides convenience for the field staff and makes the work of the administrative officials easier at the same time is used in MGNREGS. RAGAS is capable of handling all key steps in the implementation of MGNREGS-AP namely registration of wage seekers, issue of job cards, preparation of work estimates, generation of pay order etc.

MIS Reports: MGNREGS-IT initiative has a web based data center to help in monitoring and review of the Scheme. The MGNREGS Portal: www.nrega.ap.gov.in provides detailed data which can drill down to the fundamental transaction relating to every wage seeker and provides comprehensive reports to track the performance of the Scheme.

Electronic Fund Transfer System (e-FMS): Electronic Fund Transfer system (e-FMS) has been established with the objective of putting in place an efficient mechanism to generate transmission of funds through online money transfers. This system helps in avoiding the parking of funds in some places and empowers all blocks and Panchayats to access funds uninterruptedly. By means of a central server, e-FMS enables all the Mandal Computer Centres (MCCs) and the District Computer Centres (DCCs) to be networked to a Central fund in which all the MGNREGA funds are lodged.

Electronic Muster and Measurement System (e-MMS): e-MMS is introduced across the State in MGNREGS-AP with a view to improve the transparency and efficiency in implementation of the programme. E-MMS enables to capture the GPS coordinates and hence the field staffs are forced to go to the work site for recording and check measurement of works. E-MMS helps in arresting various distortions in the programme like Muster Fudging; Delays in Payments; Binami Wage Seekers; Fake Measurements and Work Duplication. This has ensured transparency in the system.

Biometric Muster and Measurement System (B-E-MMS): B-e-MMS enables attendance of wage seekers through bio-metric authentication along with GPS coordinates using Point-of-Sale (POS) devices. This helps in arresting distortions in the programme like Muster Fudging; Delays in Payments; Binami Wageseekers; Fake Measurements and Work Duplication. B-e-MMS enables effective program monitoring and improves efficiency in the implementation of MGNREGS.

Payment of wages through Smart Cards: Disbursement of wages is done at the pre-designated Government premises (usually the Gram Panchayat building) by a Customer Service Provider (CSP). The enrolment is in progress to cover all the gram panchayats in the State. Presently, payments through smartcards started in more than 90% of GPs. 95 lakhs smart cards issued so far and steps have been taken to issue smart cards to all the beneficiaries by the year end.

Distribution of wage slips: Wage slips are provided to the wage seekers for the work done and based on the payment generated. Wage slips carry details like no. of days worked, wage amount etc. Pay Slip system brought transparency to payments. Since labour know how much is credited to their account and for how many days, etc. leakages in the payment system are minimized.

Ensuring wage payments within fortnight: To ensure payment of wages within fortnight to all labourers, a fixed payment cycle is adopted as shown below: The fixed payment cycle begins with the opening of muster on Day-1, which is on a Monday and Thursday to denote the starting of the week. Attendance of the wage seekers and the work done by them is collected by the Field Assistants (FAs) and are reported to the administrative authorities throughout the

week. At the end of every week, the muster rolls are closed. The next phase in the payment cycle involves the measurements of the works with respect to the muster rolls which is done by the Technical Assistants (TAs). After the measurements are done, the Technical Assistants pass on the muster rolls to the Engineering Consultants (ECs) who check the measurements to eliminate discrepancies, if any. Once the measurements are validated completely, the muster rolls are sent to the Additional Project Officer (APO) for his/her perusal. The data is then entered into the system at the Mandal Computer Centre (MCC) by the Computer Operator (CO) and the pay orders and related Fund Transfer Orders (FTOs) are generated. All the FTOs and in turn the funds are then transferred electronically to the paying agencies / banks in the following 3-4 days. The wage seekers present their Smart Cards to the Customer Service Provider (CSP) to establish their identity and the disbursement of wages is done.

Compensation for delay in wage payments: Compensation for delay payments is introduced with an objective to ensure that wage payments are done within a week and in any case not later than fortnight from the day the work was done (closure of muster) as mandated in the Act. The compensation is paid @ 0.1% per day of delay based on the approval and recovery from the functionaries' salary/paying agency's commission. Till date, 8.9 lakh beneficiaries were paid Rs. 3 Cr as compensation for the delay in wage payments.

Srama Sakthi Sanghas: To ensure that all the demanding poor rural households are provided with continuous assured employment of 100 days, labour groups with 15 to 20 labourers were formed which helps in providing work to the groups easily and also helps in effective monitoring. The formation of labour into a fixed group helps in worksite management and also for provision of worksite facilities to the labourers. Till date, 7.5 lakh SSSs are registered consisting of 1.3 crore labourers so far.

Social Audit: Andhra Pradesh is pioneer in the implementation of Social Audit in the country. Social Audits of the MGNREGS-AP was taken up by the Department of Rural Development, since the inception of the Scheme as a means to set the baseline for accountability through the process. Social Audit is conducted once in 6 months in all the gram panchayats by inspecting all the worksites and musters. The findings are read out by the Social Audit team in the Mandal level hearing where the Presiding Officer takes the decisions in the hearing.

Grievance Redressal: A 24x7 Call Centre with a toll free number 155321 and 1800 200 4455 has been established to register and monitor complaints under the programme. After a compliant is registered in the call centre, SMS is sent to the officer concerned for redressal. The system automatically escalates the complaints to the higher levels if appropriate action within the stipulated time is not taken at lower. As on date 28307 complaints were registered, out of which, 27672 complaints were redressed.

Quality Control Cell: A Quality Control Cell has been established with a view to improve quality of works, to review the plans monthly, computerization of filed level observations, capacity building to the filed level functionaries and creation of durable assets under the programme.

Vigilance Cell: A vigilance cell has been established with an aim to take follow up action on complaints having a vigilance angle and to ensure transparency and accountability under the programme. A senior officer is appointed as Chief Vigilance Officer with supporting staff for the follow up action of Social Audit.

Ombudsmen: As per the provisions U/S 27(1) of the MGNREG Act, 2005 the State Govt. appointed Ombudsmen for adjudicating disputes regarding entitlements under the Act. The responsibility of the Ombudsmen is to examine all complaints of irregularities pointed out by the social audit and passing awards expeditiously. Ombudsmen will attend the mandal public hearing and entertain all irregularities found out by the social audit as a complaint, conduct enquiry then and there and pass award within (7) days from the date of completion of mandal hearing.

Mobile Courts: For trial of offences brought out in the Social Audits and speedy adjudication of justice, the Government sanctioned 13 special Mobile Courts initially and launched a special Mobile Court in Sanga Reddy for Medak and Karimnagar districts. Total no. of cases filed in 2 districts are 76.
Services provided

G2G All transactions between all NREGA stakeholders are captured in the system. So all G2G services are IT enabled.

G2B Data from NREGA is shared with bank/post offices, E-Lekha, GRS ,RSBY, BPL Census 2002 etc

G2C A local language enabled sound and icon based Kiosk model has been developed for workers to use the system and exercise their rights by their own. Demand for job, Lodge grievance, Benefits accrued E-Governance for Masses Enforcement of right based framework of law Creation of directory of assets created under NREGA Bringing all documents e.g. 4.7 crore Muster rolls, 11 crore job cards and 24 crore worker's information in public domain Strengthening the record keeping and financial accounting Assists Gram Panchayats in NREG Scheme Implementation, Assisting the officers, Administrators, Programme Managers

NREGASoft It was first of its kind e-Governance solution attempt which took data management practices below block level in online mode across the country in absence of e-Governance infrastructure availability at Gram Panchayat level where actually majority of events related to NREGS implementation takes place. The data management of NREGS, in majority of states is being done at block level. The majority of states started managing data using offline and a few with online. As connectivity scenario is improving further, some of the states are switching over to use online system. The states have adopted various kinds of models (in house using its own staff, using contract data entry operator, outsourcing data entry, arranging entire ICT infrastructure at block level through private parties etc.) to address the need of content management.

Benefits accrued
- E-Governance for Masses
- Enforcement of right based framework of law
- Creation of directory of assets created under NREGA
- Bringing all documents e.g. 4.7 crore Muster rolls, 11 crore job cards and 24 crore worker's information in public domain
- Strengthening the record keeping and financial accounting
- Assists Gram Panchayats in NREG Scheme Implementation
- Assisting the officers, Administrators, Programme Managers

Recognition
It is unavoidable to share some of the moments when collective work done by the Ministry, NIC and other stakeholders were recognized on various platforms and won appreciation. The package has been demonstrated to Hon'ble Prime Minister and senior functionaries of Government, Planning Commission officials, State RD secretaries. The package has also won several awards:
- Microsoft e-governance award 2006
- Skoch Challenger Award 2007-National Significance Category
- Dataquest e-Gov Champions award 2008
- e- Asia award 2009
- National award for e-governance2009-2010 for Best government website.

Also, it is satisfying to note that package has demonstrated that the data management could be done effectively from Blocks online now. This has inspired & encouraged the design of many other e-governance projects that are in pipeline.

CONCLUSION
The use of information technology in MNREGA at many levels has helped making governance better and increase accountability and transparency in government work. This will help prepare the labour budget truly as per the local development plan and will facilitate the inclusion of all possible resources. Besides, this will also strengthen the PanchyatiRaj institutions and increase people's participation in development works,"

There are other projects like Common Service Centres, e- Panchayats, etc., which are planned to be implemented in the coming months and years. In al- most every state computers are slowly but surely percolating down to the panchayat level and it is only a matter of time before the State-Wide Area Networks are also available at the panchayats' doorsteps. The use of ICT in NREGA implementation should be seen in synergy and complementary to all these initiatives that are contemplated or in progress. Then only can the full potential of ICT be harnessed for empowering the common citizen.

The great significance of MGNREGS comes from its potential in reduction of poverty and its continuous income. As it is an employment guarantee focused on asset creating works that are labour intensive. Thus it can deal

with problems of employment, rural development and agricultural growth simultaneously.

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