The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme was launched on 02.02.2006. It guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to any rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is an important step towards the realization of the "right to work".

The core objective of this scheme, as per the revised schedule-I of the MGNREG Act

- Providing not less than one hundred days of unskilled manual work as a guaranteed employment in a financial year to every household in rural areas as per demand, resulting in creation of productive assets of prescribed quality and durability;
- Strengthening the livelihood resource base of the poor;
- Proactively ensuring social inclusion;
- Strengthening of Panchayat Raj institutions.

*SALIENT FEATURES OF THIS MGNREG ACT*

- Provision of 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to each registered household in the Village Panchayat, whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled labour
- The Central Government bears 100% wage cost of unskilled manual labour. Material cost including wages of skilled and semi-skilled workers is borne by Central Government and by State Government in the ratio of 75:25.
- No contractors or machineries are allowed.
- The wage and material components have to be maintained at 60:40 ratio for all the works undertaken by Village Panchayat and other implementing agencies at the District level.
- Out of the total works sanctioned, 50% should be allotted to Village Panchayats.
- Adult members of rural households willing to do unskilled manual work may register orally or in writing with the Village Panchayat.
- Every rural Household is entitled to a job card so that they can apply and receive work.
- In order to facilitate registration of new job cards and redressal of the grievances of workers, Rozgar Diwas (Velaivaippu Dhinam) is organised in all Village Panchayats once a month.
- All workers shall have a right to participate in the Gram Sabha and decide the Shelf of works and the order of priority of works to be taken up under MGNREGS in their Village Panchayat.
- If the distance of worksite exceeds 5 kms, additional wage of 10% of existing wage rate is payable to meet the cost towards additional transportation and living expenses. However, in Tamil Nadu, worksites are being fixed in such a way that works are available within a radius of 2 kms.
- The wages for unskilled labour has been fixed based on the Rural Schedule of Rates. As per the revised Schedule-I of MGNREG Act, the Schedule of Rates for wages of unskilled labourers is so fixed that an adult person working for eight hours which include an hour of rest (i.e., 7 hours of work) will earn wages equal to wage rate.
- Wages are equal to both men and women and the notified wage rate for 2016-17 is Rs.203 per day.
- Disbursement of wages is done through Public Financial Management System (PFMS) and wages credited to the workers accounts within 15 days.
- One third of the beneficiaries should be women.
- Work site facilities such as drinking water, first aid kit, shade etc., shall be provided.
- Grama Sabha conducts the social audit in respect of MGNREGS through Village Social Auditors.
- A Toll free Help line (1299) has also been provided in each district as part of Grievance redressal mechanism.
- Under Section 12 of the MGNREG Act, Government of Tamil Nadu has constituted the State Employment Guarantee Council to advise, evaluate and monitor the implementation of the scheme.

**ROLE OF GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU IN IMPLEMENTATION**

This Government has taken various measures for the effective implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, thus making Tamil Nadu stand in the forefront of the scheme implementation at the National level. A unique initiative, viz., the introduction of the special Schedule of Rates for the benefit of physically and mentally challenged people has enabled the participation of such people in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, and for this initiative Government of Tamil Nadu had been lauded and awarded the National Award in the category of “Social Inclusion” during the year 2012-13. The engagement of MGNREGS workers as „Thooimai Kavalars” for the daily collection of domestic waste from the rural households is 6 another unique initiative of this Government. Compost pits are dug under MGNREGS and the collected waste is segregated into biodegradable and non bio-
degradable waste, which are composted and recycled respectively. In order to mitigate the ill-effects of environmental degradation, the department continues to enlarge the green cover in the State. Afforestation on a massive scale is being taken up under MGNREGS with the objective of combating global warming, soil erosion and environmental pollution besides preserving biodiversity and ecological balance.

These Afforestation activities are taken up both independently under MGNREGS and also in convergence with the Forest Department. Plantation works are taken up on Panchayat / Revenue / Common lands, and on road margins as Avenue Plantation. This Government is well aware that Sanitation is the bedrock of the well being of the rural people and that sanitation facilities have direct correlation with various socioeconomic and health indicators.

Therefore the 7 strong Social Capital available in the form Women Self Help Groups have been actively involved in promoting Sanitation at Village Level. A major push is being given to intersectoral convergence approach, whereby the field functionaries of Health, School Education and Social Welfare Departments are now involved in Behavioural Change Communication.

These initiatives have contributed in the increase of rural sanitation coverage from 62% to 73% in the last one year. The innovative model of the State’s Solid Waste Management Systems in Rural Areas by engaging “Thooimai Kaavalar” in convergence with MGNREGS has received the Hon"ble Chief Minister’s “Best Practices Award for improvement of Quality delivery Systems ensuring Good Governance” on 15.8.2016. This model has earned appreciations at National Level and Government of India has circulated Tamil Nadu Model to other State Governments for replication. These initiatives will usher the State towards the goal of “Muzhu Sugathara Thamizhagam - Munnodi Thamizhagam”.

**OUTCOME AND BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTATION**

During 2011-12 this Government able to generate 33 crore mandays as against the target of 30.02 Crore. Prior to October 2011, only one worksite was permitted in each Village Panchayat at any given time. This has led to: Huge assemblage of workers at a single worksite, Difficulties in supervising the workers and prevented the workers coming from far off habitations to the worksite. A system of Rotation of habitations was practiced which has resulted in the family availing only 54 days of employment on an average as against an entitlement of 100 days.

In order to provide more employment opportunity to MGNREGS workers, the present government have committed to take up more number of workers in a Village Panchayat based on the number of habitations and number of workers regularly attending the MGNREGS works. Hence, the habitations in a Village Panchayats are grouped in to clusters in such a way that whenever the work is being executed in a habitation of a particular cluster, and the workers can come to the worksite from the habitaions of that particular cluster. Thus the number allowed works in a village Panchayat is equal to the number of clusters

During 2012-13, as a measure to mitigate the drought situation, the number of days of employment provided to a family had been increased from 100 to 150 days. During the period from 21.02.2013 to 31.03.2013, nearly 12.73 lakh households were provided employment beyond 100 days. These households received an additional wage of Rs.271 crore. With the help of Institute of Remote Sensing (IRS), Anna University, Resource maps have been made available to all Districts.

Based on these satellite maps, works have been taken up, to restore the original capacity of the water bodies and to increase the water storage and recharge. Concerted efforts have been taken up by the Department to increase the average wage rate which includes revision of Rural Schedule of Rates based on detailed Time and Motion Study and training to the Worksite Supervisors regarding these to educate the workers.

Provision of land development activities on the lands belonging to Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, Small and Marginal farmers etc. have been permitted from the year 2012-13 onwards. Afforestation activities have been taken up on the identified Government / Common Lands, Village Panchayat lands and also on individual lands of the farmers so as to increase the green cover. Avenue plantation on both sides of Panchayat / Panchayat union roads and the roads laid under PMGSY/ NABARD and also on roads laid down by Highways Department have been taken up. To enable the Village Panchayats and Panchayat Unions to take up afforestation activities, raising of nurseries by the Panchayats/ Panchayat Unions themselves have been encouraged. As an initiative to empower rural people, construction of Village Panchayat Service Centres and Block Panchayat Service Centres have been taken up.

The latest 2016-2017 implementation was published in the policy note of 2017-18 from Rural development and Panchayat raj department of Government of tamilnadu.

**Scheme implementation during 2016-2017**

MGNREGS activities have been taken up in convergence with schemes of Rural Development Department such as Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana , Chief Minister's Solar Powered Green Housing scheme and other Line Departments, such as Agriculture, Horticulture, Forest, Sericulture, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry etc. Labour Budget has been approved for generating 31.55 crore person days during the year 2016-17. During the Central Empowered Committee meeting on MGNREGA Labour Budget held at New Delhi during March, 2016, the following focus areas have been proposed for implementation for the year 2016-17.

1. 7,500 Farm ponds and 10,000 ponds and Ooranies
2. 385 Vermi-Compost units
3. 7.50 lakh Individual Household Latrines
4. 1000 Anganwadi Centres
5. Roadside plantation to a length of 10,000 Km

Based on the above commitments, the following major activities have been proposed for implementation during 2016-17. (1) Asset creation for individual beneficiaries like construction of farm ponds on lands belonging to Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes, Small and Marginal Farmers and 7.5 lakh Individual Household Latrines. (2) In order to continue the increase in the Green cover initiative started during the year 2013-14, plantation activities have been proposed on Village Panchayat lands, Common premises and on the road sides. Nurseries to cater to the supply of seedlings are raised in all 385 blocks in the State. (3) Water Harvesting works like renovation of traditional water bodies including desilting of irrigation tanks and other water bodies like Ooranies, Ponds, MI Tanks, Supply channels and Farm Ponds are proposed to be taken up. Such water harvesting and irrigation works are proposed to be taken up approximately at an estimate cost of around Rs.1000 crore during the Financial Year 2016-17.

CONCLUSION

The programme is monitored by a concept called social audit. Social Audit is an audit by the people rather than by officials or external agencies. In addition to financial aspects, it looks at processes and social, equity & performance aspects. It is Information, Education & Communication (IEC) tool, which enforces transparency and accountability and promotes participation of stakeholders in all stages (planning, design, implementation and evaluation) of development initiatives. Recognizing its importance, MGNREGA mandated Social Audit by the Grama Sabha and the MGNREG Audit of Scheme Rules 2011 laid down the procedure for systematic conduct of Social Audit. The impact of Social Audit both among the beneficiaries and the implementers has been tremendous.

The stakeholders have been sensitized on the importance of the Social Audit; the workers are aware of their rights & entitlements. ‘Creation of awareness’ among the villagers has been a successful endeavour on the part of Social Audit unit. Besides, maintenance of records at Village & Block levels has improved and the importance of Social Audit Grama Sabha has been realized by all.

Reference
4. www.tnrd.gov.in