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**A STUDY OF NATIONAL RURAL
EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE PROGRAMME
IN THREE GRAMA PANCHAYATS OF
KASARAGOD DISTRICT**

**K. N. Nair
T.P. Sreedharan
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We are thankful to the elected Governing Body members, NREGA staff and Kudumbasree activists of Madikai, Ajanoor and Trikaripur Grama Panchayats for their co-operation in making available Panchayat level data for our perusal and in arranging the field visits related to the study. The Block and District level officers of Kasaragod District have also been of immense help. We are extremely thankful to Vijayasuryan C.K. and Vibha V for helping us in data collection and their compilation. We sincerely thank Miss. Aparna and Anil Menon for editorial help.

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to study the impact of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme in three Grama Panchayats of Kasaragod District, namely Madikai, Ajanoor and Trikarapur. It also looks into the organizational arrangements for planning and implementation of the scheme. Various institutional aspects in the form of Guidelines, Rules and Regulations brought out by the Government of Kerala have also been examined.

The identification of projects for NREGA is a grass root level activity with Ward Development Committee and Area Development Society of Kudumbasree playing a pivotal role. The role of Grama Sabha in the formulation of a ward level Action Plan is found to be weak.

The worker registration is appreciably good in all the three Grama Panchayats. Registration of SC and ST categories also is impressive. But there is a big drop in the number of people who demanded jobs in 2007-08. It is below one fourth in two Panchayats and just above one third in the third Panchayat. There is a further drop in the number in the succeeding year. The rosy part is that all those who demanded jobs have been provided with jobs. The percentage of man-days generated for SC and ST categories is very low compared to that of the general category. Women of the general category constituted the major beneficiaries of NREGA.

Unskilled wages constituted the major component of expenditure. The number of projects is large, most of them not leading to creation of public durable assets. There is lack of integration with other schemes implemented at local level. The scheme is successful in raising the level of employment and income of the rural household, there by enhancing their purchasing power. Working in groups has empowered the women socially. In some cases NREGA works and agricultural works were operational at the same time aggravating the problem of labour shortage in agriculture.

The study recommends a few changes in the existing operational system to make the programme more effective.

Key words: Kasaragod, Kudumbasree, NREGA, women empowerment.

JEL Classification: E24, J38

1. Introduction

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) is a historic legislation passed by the Government of India in September 2005. It was enacted in order to address the crucial issues of unemployment and poverty in rural India. The NREGA guarantees a hundred days of unskilled employment to each household in every financial year at an equal wage rate for both male and female workers. Additionally, it guarantees the “right to work” as a legal right of every able-bodied adult in rural India. It is fundamentally different from all other wage employment programmes operating since 1980 in that these programmes do not guarantee employment as a legal right.

A well-designed employment guarantee programme can, under favourable circumstances, promote job creation, gender equality and pro-poor development.¹ The NREGA has great potential for increasing the volume of employment among the rural unemployed and under-employed. It provides ample opportunities for creating rural public assets, which has been largely neglected. It helps to enhance the purchasing power of rural households, thereby contributing to poverty alleviation. It also has the capacity to tap the hitherto under- utilized labour of women in developing rural India. By providing equal wages to both men and women, NREGA upholds the social position and

1 Rania Antonopoulos (2009) “The Right to a Job, The Right Types of Projects: Employment Guarantee Policies from a Gender Perspective.”

integrity of women and thus promotes gender equality. M.S. Swaminathan described NREGA as the world's largest ecological security programme, which can successfully strengthen the ecological foundations for sustainable agriculture (The Hindu, June 1, 2009). The NREGA is thus a truly historic opportunity for dramatic socioeconomic transformation in rural India.(Shah, 2004).

NREGA was launched in two hundred selected districts on 2nd February 2006 in Phase I and was extended to 130 more districts in 2007-08 in Phase II. It was further extended to the remaining 285 districts from 1st April 2008 onwards, in Phase III. In Kerala, the program was initiated in February 2006 in the rural areas of two districts – Palakkad and Wayanad. The programme was extended to Kasaragod and Idukki by February, 2007 and to the remaining districts by January 2009. The Government of Kerala has issued detailed guidelines for implementing NREGA. The responsibility has been assigned primarily to Local-Self Governments. In Kerala there are elected Village Councils (Grama Panchayats) for an average population of thirty thousand. The agglomeration of a few neighbouring Grama Panchayats (GP) is called a Block Panchayat. For each revenue district, there is an elected District Council (District Panchayat). Thus there is a three-tier system of Local Self Governments, each one with specific functions and responsibilities.

A number of micro level organisations are involved in the formulation and implementation of NREGA programme at the Panchayat level. The Panchayat Governing Council, which has been strengthened by the decentralized planning introduced in Kerala since 1996 has a pivotal role to play in the smooth functioning of NREGA. It is the Grama Panchayat that takes a leading role in publicizing the novel programme among people. At the Panchayat level, NREGP was given publicity by means of processions, distribution of pamphlets, awareness classes and Grama Sabhas. Kudumbasree is a women's organisation working under a state level poverty alleviation programme (Kudumbasree

Mission). It reaches to all households in the Panchayat through Neighbour Hood Groups (NHGs). In each ward the NHGs are grouped in to an Area Development Society (ADS). At the Panchayat level the Kudumbasree activities are managed by the Community Development Society (CDS), elected from among the ADS. Involvement of Kudumbasree is one of the most important aspects that makes the programme in Kerala unique. Planning starts from NHG and it moves up to the Panchayat governing body. The process of implementation begins from Panchayat and ADS becomes the lowest tier to mobilize workers and supervise the work.

To date, expenditure on the project has reached 221.2 crore rupees in Kerala. So far, 53750 projects have been taken up, out of which 47173 works have been completed and 6577 works are in progress. To date, the programme has provided employment to 6.8 lakhs households and generated 151.6 lakhs person-days of employment. The proportion of Person-days generated for socially deprived and vulnerable groups, namely Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) and “Other Categories” are 19.31%, 9.38% and 71.31% respectively. Women are identified as the largest direct beneficiaries of the project, which generated 126.6 lakhs person-days of employment (83.49%) solely for women. In Kasaragod, Rs.18.31 crores have been spent and 4109 projects have been undertaken. So far, 3902 works have been completed and 207 works are in progress. In this district, 30113 households have been provided employment under NREGS. The programme was able to generate 13.71 lakhs person days of employment; out of which 10.36% of person days have been generated for SC, 7.8% for ST and 81.89% for “Others category” respectively. In Kasaragod, 82.79% percent of total person-days have been generated for women.

An earlier study by Jose Chathukulam and Gireesan (2007) on the impact of NREGS in 37 Grama Panchayats in two Districts – Wayanad and Palakkad – in the state of Kerala points out the active involvement of LSGs in programme planning and implementation. Several micro

level institutions have been formed at the Panchayat level for the smooth functioning of NREGS; but their sustainability has not been ensured. Although the registration of workers and issuance of job cards was accomplished, there have been lapses in providing employment to the registered workers. There is impressive participation of women not only as workers but also as supervisors. Flood control, renovation of traditional water bodies, micro-irrigation works and water conservation and harvesting are the major areas of intervention in NREGS, with lower priority given to rural connectivity. NREGS activities are not integrated with other developmental programmes. Although many workers are eligible for unemployment allowances, they were not paid these allowances. According to this study, in spite of the many problems resulting from NREGS work being executed during agricultural seasons, this scheme has been largely beneficial for socially and financially backward population groups.

2. Scope of the Present Study

Like the Wayanad and Palakkad districts explored in the Chathukulam and Giresan study, Kasargod is both equally underdeveloped as well as culturally diverse. The NREGS in Kasargod district, which has been implemented for more than a year, has not been subjected to a study earlier. The Research Unit on Local Self Governments (RULSG) under the Centre for Development Studies (CDS), which had been involved in an action – research programme in Kasargod District since 2006, decided to undertake a study on the implementation of NREGA in Kasargod District.

The study aims at assessing the impact of NREGS on employment generation and wages of the worker households. It also looks into the assets and facilities created by the NREGS and its potential benefits to the larger society. The organizational arrangements for planning and implementation of the scheme and its strength and weakness are other important parts of the study. Various institutional aspects in the form of

Guidelines, Rules and Regulations brought out by the Government of Kerala also come in the purview of the study. This study also explores the possibility that certain socio-religious factors could limit the participation of workers in the NREGS. Based on the conclusions of the study, we present some policy implications in order to make the programme more effective.

3. Methodology

For the purpose of this study three Panchayats were selected – Madikkai, Ajanoor and Trikarapur. These three Grama Panchayats show distinct variation in political and geographical characteristics as well as patterns of expenditure. Madikkai is ruled by Left Democratic Front (LDF) and exhibits Semi – high land characteristics as well as good performance in NREGS expenditure. Ajanoor with moderate performance in NREGS is an LDF ruled Panchayat, with mid – land characteristics. Trikarapur has comparatively lower performance in NREGS. It is ruled by United Democratic Front (UDF). Geographically, it has low-land characteristics. Secondary data were extracted from NREGA Section, Grama Panchayat and Block Panchayat, Department of Economics and Statistics, District Planning Committee (DPC) and official website of NREGA.

From each Panchayat two wards have been selected on the basis of expenditure criterion – one ward with the highest expenditure and the other with the lowest expenditure. Office records available at each Grama Panchayat were analyzed and informal discussions were conducted with elected representatives and officials involved in NREGS. Four worker households were selected from each selected ward on a random basis and surveyed. Fifteen indirect beneficiary households of two different projects from each Panchayat were selected on a Snowball basis and surveyed. Two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted in two Panchayats – Ajanoor and Madikkai. One worker household and one ADS mate from each Panchayat were selected for

conducting case studies. From each Panchayat, interviews were conducted with an unregistered member in the NREGS, a registered member who had not worked in addition to a registered member who had worked only a few days under the NREGS. A detailed survey of NREGA workers which could not be taken up in the present study will be attempted as a follow up to this study. Governing body members including the Panchayat President, Vice President and different Standing Committee Chairmen, some members of Community Development Society (CDS) and Area Development Society (ADS) of Kudumbasree, NREGA section Officials such as the Engineers, Overseers, Data Entry Operators and the NREGA Programme Officer at Block level were all interviewed personally. Conclusions have been drawn on the basis of these personal interviews and preliminary observations.

4. General Profile of Selected Grama Panchayats

Madikkai covers 51.8 Sq. Km area with two revenue villages viz, Madikkai and Ambalathukara. It comes under Kanhangad Block in Hosdurg Taluk. Madikkai contains 14 wards with 5 wards reserved for women and 1 for Scheduled Caste and Schedule Tribe. As per the 2001 census, total population of the Panchayat is 20584 out of which 52.7% are female and 47.3% are male. Out of the total 4800 households 61% households belong to a group Below Poverty Line*. The SC and ST population in Madikkai is 1.3% and 5.6% respectively.

Ajanoor Grama Panchayat, which comes under Kanhangad Block, consists of two revenue villages viz Chithari and Ajanoor. The total land area of the Panchayat is 27.83 Sq. Km. There are 22 wards in the Panchayat. According to the 2001 census, total population of the Panchayat is 45578 out of which 23702 (52%) are female and 21876 (48%) are male. SC and ST population of the Panchayat are 2.8% and

* Based on nine point indices vulnerable households are included under BPL category.

Table 1: population and households details

Name of GP	Population					Households			
	SC	ST	Others	Women	Total	SC	ST	Others	Total
Madikkai	277 1.3%	1149 5.6%	19158 93.1%	10850 52.7%	20584 100%	62 1.3%	291 6.1%	4447 92.6%	4800 100%
Ajanoor	1258 2.8%	425 1%	43895 96.2%	23702 52%	45578 100%	239 3.1%	92 1.2%	7391 95.7%	7722 100%
Trikarpur	2069 5.8%	Nil 0%	33828 94.2%	19039 53. %	35897 100%	377 6.1%	Nil 0%	5785 93.9%	6162 100%

Source: Census Report 2001.

1% respectively. There are 8262 households, out of which 2746 households are BPL (33%).

Trikarpur Grama Panchayat occupies the southern most part of Kasaragod District. It consists of 2 revenue villages—South Trikarapur and North Trikarapur. Geographically the western zone and some parts of southern zone come under coastal areas. The total geographical area of the Panchayat is 23.31 Sq. Km and it comes under North Zone mid land with respect to Agricultural Zone. Trikarapur Panchayat comes under Nileswaram Block in Hosdurg Taluk. It consists of 20 wards with 7 wards reserved for women and one for scheduled caste. The demographic profile of the Panchayat as per the 2001 census shows that out of the total population 35,897, men account for 46.9% and women for 53.1%. The SC population of the Panchayat is 5.8% with no ST population. Out of the total 6162 households 35% households belong to BPL.

In Madikkai 42 percent of the total population are workers, where as in Ajanoor and Trikarapur it is 32 percent and 27 percent respectively. In Madikkai, 60 percent of the total working population depend on labour for their primary income and therefore expend most time on this occupation (Main Workers). Labourers who are employed for less than six months constitute marginal workers. In both Ajanoor and Trikarapur Main Workers and Marginal Workers constitute 82 percent and 18 percent respectively. The percentage of non-working population is 58 percent in Madikkai, 68 percent in Ajanoor, and 73 percent in Trikarapur (See Annexure I). Among the main workers there is a predominance of males in all the three Panchayats. But among the marginal workers the share of females is almost equal to that of males. In Madikkai, the percentage of Marginal Female Workers is 46.8, in Ajanoor 46.2 and in Trikarapur 41.

5. Planning and Implementation of NREGA in the Grama Panchayats

Though all the three Grama Panchayats have broadly followed the guidelines published by the Government of Kerala, differences are

observed in each Grama Panchayat in planning and implementation of NREGA programme. Kudumbasree meetings were used as the platform for publicizing the programme at the grass root level in all the three Panchayats. The application form for registration of workers is printed by Grama Panchayat, but distributed through ADS and NHGs. Registration is open for all adults who are able and willing to do unskilled manual labour. The completed applications are received by the Panchayat through the ADS members. The photos of the workers to be pasted on the job cards are taken at the ward. Registered households are provided with job cards, which have validity for 5 years. The workers are mobilized at a specific location in the ward by the ward and ADS members for the distribution of job cards.

In the initial phase of registration, the process of registration and distribution of job cards was more or less similar, with some slight variations, in the selected Panchayats. In Madikkai and Trikarapur, applicant photos for the job cards were taken by giving the contract to a video shop familiar to the Panchayat at a nominal rate. But in Ajanoor Grama Panchayat, the Panchayat purchased a digital camera using its own funds and workers from each ward were asked to assemble at a place in the ward where the photos were taken. In Madikkai and Trikarapur, job cards were distributed at a public place in each ward, and in the case of Ajanoor, these cards were distributed through different counters for each ward at a common place in the Panchayat. It was also observed that in some of the wards in Madikkai, work started even before the job cards were distributed. In Trikarapur, there were instances in some wards, where some people started working even before receiving job cards.

The NREGS project was identified at the ward level by the Ward Development Committee in consultation with the ADS members. The list of projects is organized for NREGA and presented before the Gramasabha either by Ward Development Committee (WDC) or ADS. The Gramasabha played a great role in eliciting the opinions of citizens

of the ward, who would be able to contribute on the importance and feasibility of works suggested by ADS and members of Ward Development Committee. In the Gramasabhas, the participants also suggested additional works to be taken up in NREGA. All these steps contributed to the creation of a ward-level plan. The works identified by different stakeholders from different wards were consolidated to form a Panchayat level NREGA action plan by an expert group of engineers and Panchayat officials. Printed copies of this action plan were distributed in a workshop, which was organized by the Panchayat for finalization of the Panchayat Action Plan. In the workshop organized to give the final touch to the projects, governing body members of Grama Panchayat, ADS and CDS members, technical and agricultural experts all participated. Projects were prioritized at this workshop, after which the action plan was forwarded to the Panchayat governing body for approval. The Grama Panchayat governing body approved the Grama Panchayat action plan and sent it to the Block Programme Officer for verification. After verification and approval of the Block Panchayat governing body, the action plan was sent to the District Programme Coordinator for verification and the administrative approval of the District Panchayat. Then the Action Plan was sent back to the Grama Panchayat. After getting administrative sanction from the Grama Panchayat, Block Panchayat and District Panchayats, a detailed primary survey is conducted by an expert group in each Grama Panchayat. The survey team consists of the agricultural officer, agricultural assistants, Assistant Engineer, Overseer and officers from the soil and water conservation departments from the Panchayat. The survey was completed with the help of the ward member and ADS members.

This study observed that the Ward Development Committee (WDC) in consultation with the ADS members identified projects in the primary stage of the programme in Madikkai Panchayat but in Ajanoor and Trikarapur, ADS members & Kudumbasree members identified the project. The study also revealed that the processes outlined in the guidelines,

such as the preparation of comprehensive action plan at the Kudumbasree level, the formation of clusters for the creation of an action plan in the Grama Sabha, were not followed strictly by any of the three panchayats.

After this primary survey, detailed estimates of each project were prepared by the overseer or the assistant engineer appointed for NREGA in each Grama Panchayat. There is a Technical Sanction Committee (TSC) at the Panchayat, with three engineering experts nominated by the district collector. This committee verified the estimate and gave technical sanction stage wise based on a work calendar. It is the responsibility of the Panchayat governing body to provide financial sanction for the projects approved by the TSC and give as much publicity as possible for the proposed works. The implementation of NREGA work is the prerogative of Grama Panchayat, but there is also participation from a number of micro level organizations other than the Kudumbasree, such as Advisory Council, Task Force, Monitoring and Vigilance Committee and a Purchasing Committee at the Panchayat level. The implementation of work begins with preparation of a proper work calendar by the Panchayat secretary in consultation with each ward member, overseer, and other engineering experts. This work calendar spells out the details of each work to be done, including the requirement of labour and materials, the timing of the work, all organized according to priority for a financial year. The ADS mate plays a very significant role here. Women from the ADS are trained by the Grama Panchayat and the Block Panchayat and are nominated for each project in the wards. The ADS committee meets to select the person who would act as a mate for a particular period. The ADS mate collects details about work from the overseer and engineer. This ADS mate and her team mobilize the workers and collect all the materials and implements necessary for the work from the Panchayat. She is responsible for storing the implements and making them available at the worksite. This supervisor arranges all the required facilities such as drinking water, and emergency medical care for the workers at the worksite. It is she who maintains the muster rolls as well.

There is a Panchayat level Advisory Council to monitor the participation of registered workers in the ongoing works. This council consists of the Panchayat president, secretary, different standing committee chairmen, CDS chairperson, engineer, agricultural officer and representatives of political and cultural organizations. Any disagreement in the work sites is handled by this Advisory Council, which provides necessary advice for the successful implementation of the NREGS. The Monitoring and Vigilance Committee formed in each ward by the Gramasabha oversees the implementation and progress of work. This committee comprises of five to seven members and there is usually representation by women as well as Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes. The materials and tools required for the works are also purchased and distributed by the Panchayat level Purchasing Committee. The Panchayat president (Chairman), standing committee chairmen, secretary, Village Extension Officer (VEO), Assistant Engineer and two prominent public men are members of the purchasing committee.

After the completion of the work or a day before the completion of the work, the ADS mate informs the engineer regarding the measurement and preparation of bills. After these procedures are over, the work completion certificate, monitoring committee report, statement of measurement, the prepared bill, check measurement certificates along with the muster roll are taken to the Panchayat secretary for verification. It is the Panchayat secretary who prepares the proceedings stating the name, account numbers of the workers and the amount to be transferred to each person's bank account.

For smooth and successful implementation all the three panchayats constituted Advisory Council, Vigilance and Monitoring Committee and Purchasing Committee; but none of the three Panchayats formed a task force. This study also observed that in all the three Panchayats the work implementation began with the preparation of a proper work calendar by the Panchayat secretary in consultation with the ward

member and engineering experts but in the focus group discussion conducted at Nattakallu in Ajanoor Panchayat it was revealed that works have been delayed here for two months because of the absence of a proper work calendar. At the same time, works had been progressing in many neighbouring wards.

The guidelines also require that at the beginning of a work, a meeting of all the workers should be called under the supervision of the Panchayat secretary, to inform the workers of the details of the works. This was not observed in all the three Panchayats. The ADS mate has to maintain muster rolls everywhere, but in Trikarapur Panchayat it was observed that ADS mate does not maintain muster rolls properly.

6. Performance of NREGS– Analysis of Secondary Data

In Madikkai, 66.1 percent of the total households were registered, whereas in Ajanoor and Trikarapur the percent of total households registered were 30.8 percent and 40.1 percent respectively. The extent of SC households registered in NREGA in Trikarapur is 54.9 percent of the total SC households whereas in Madikkai and Ajanoor the percent of SC households registered were 41.9 and 23.8 respectively. Madikkai has the highest ST registration with 73.8 percent and Ajanoor stands second with 66.3 percent. Out of the total individuals registered in Madikkai, 60.8 percent are women. In Ajanoor and Trikarapur, women registration is 62.1 percent and 54.1 percent respectively. (See Annexure II)

In Madikkai, all registered households have been provided with job cards. In Ajanoor out of the 2543 total registered households, only 2100 households have received their job cards. In Trikarapur, 2470 households have received job cards and 4 households are yet to receive. In Ajanoor, 443 households have not come for receiving their job cards. The reason probably is that the registration and job card distribution were done at a single place and not in their respective wards (Annexure III).

There was a significant increase in the numbers of households who demanded jobs in 2008-09 compared to the previous year in Madikkai. In Madikkai, 738 households had given applications for jobs in 2007-08 and this number increased to 1592 people in 2008-09 (115 % increase). This increase in demand for jobs can be attributed mainly to the significant increase in the demand for jobs by 'other categories' (people other than SC and ST). Jobs demanded by SC and ST category have shown a decline over the year in Madikkai. In Ajanoor, there was a significant decline in the number of people who demanded jobs in 2008-09 compared to the previous year; decreasing from 810 to 404- a decline of 50.12%. In Trikarapur, 630 households demanded jobs in 2007-08, which decreased to 600 households in 2008-09 (4 % decline). There was a 17 percent increase in the demand for jobs by SC households and a decline in the demand for jobs by the category 'Others' by 8 percent. When we compare demand for jobs and jobs provided, there is greater parity observed in Madikkai and Ajanoor. In Madikkai and Ajanoor, all the households who demanded jobs were provided jobs in both years. In Trikarapur of the 630 households in 2007-08 that had demanded jobs, only 299 households were provided jobs (47 %) and in 2008-09 out of the 600 households that demanded jobs 595 households were provided jobs (99 %). (See Annexure IV).

Comparing the number of job cards provided and the number of households who demanded jobs in 2007-08 in Madikkai, 23.2 percent of the total job card holding households alone demanded (applied) jobs. In Ajanoor and Trikarapur, the percentage of households demanding jobs was 38.6 percent and 25.5 percent respectively. But in 2008-09, the percentage of households demanding jobs increased to 50.1 percent in Madikkai. In Ajanoor there was a significant decline in the number of households demanding jobs, which decreased to 19.2 percent from 38.6 percent of 2007-08. In Trikarapur, there was a marginal decline in the number of households demanding jobs; it fell from 25.5 percent to 24.3 percent. There was a significant decline in the percentage of households demanding jobs

in the SC and ST categories in Ajanoor and Madikkai Panchayats. The percentage of SC households demanding jobs declined to 15.3 percent from 69.2 percent in Madikkai and to 38.6 percent from 49.1 percent in Ajanoor during the two years. In Trikarapur it has increased to 48.3 percent from 41 percent over the year. In Madikkai and Ajanoor the percentage of ST households who demanded jobs have decreased to 47 percent from 54.9 percent and to 14.2 percent from 30.3 percent respectively.

When we take into consideration the number of man-days generated by the NREGS, to date, 0.29 percent of the man days were generated for SC, 5.94 percent for ST and 93.77 percent for 'others' in Madikkai. In Ajanoor 3.5 percent of the total man-days were generated for SC, 1.77 percent for ST and 94.73 percent for 'others'. In Trikarapur, the man-days generated for SC and "others" are 9 percent and 91 percent respectively. The man-days generated for women are 94 percent and 95.1 percent respectively in Ajanoor and Trikarapur. In all the three Panchayats the number of workers who got hundred days of work is pathetically low. (See Annexure V)

Unskilled wages constituted a major component of total expenditure in all the three Panchayats. In 2007-08, unskilled wages constituted 87 percent in Madikkai, 88 percent in Ajanoor and 64 percent in Trikarapur. The costs of materials bought for the NREGS (purchase of Stones, sand and soil) was 3 percent of the total amount spent in Madikkai, 9 percent in Ajanoor and 18 percent in Trikarapur. In Madikkai, 4 percent of the total amount spent is on semi-skilled wage. In Trikarapur, material costs were much higher when compared to Madikkai and Ajanoor because of the nature of the soil. In coastal areas more materials were required for canal and drainage construction. Administrative expenditure /contingencies (Salary of overseer and Data Entry operator) formed 6 percent of the total expenditure in Madikkai, 3 percent in Ajanoor and 18 percent in Trikarapur. The administrative expenditure stands out as very high in Trikarapur compared to Madikkai and Ajanoor because the total amount spent is very low here. The salary component

is a fixed cost in NREGA and the share of the salaries in the total expenditure becomes high. In 2008-09 unskilled wages, semi skilled wages, material cost and contingencies comprised 89 percent, 4 percent, 3 percent and 4 percent of all expenditures in Madikkai. In Ajanoor, unskilled wages constitute 82 percent, supervision 4 percent, material costs 11 percent and contingencies 3 percent. In Trikarapur, unskilled wages was to the extent of 83 percent, supervision 5 percent, material cost 3 percent and contingencies 9 percent. (See Annexure VI.)

7. Governance of NREGA - Institutional aspects

The programme guarantees hundred days of employment a year to each family and not to the individuals. Within 15 days of receiving the application, the programme guarantees that a job should be provided failing which unemployment allowances should be paid. Our enquiry in the three Panchayats revealed that not a single person had been paid unemployment dole. The workers are unaware of the provision of unemployment allowance and hence they did not claim it. Moreover, no receipt is issued when the worker puts in application for job. Hence there is no proof for the date of application.

The jobs should be provided within a 5 Km radius of the household, otherwise a travelling allowance of 10 percent of the wage is to be provided. In some of the wards in Ajanoor Panchayat, the jobs were provided outside this 5 km radius, and travelling allowance was provided to the workers in these instances.

The statutory minimum wage under NREGS is Rs. 125 in Kerala. The law makes it mandatory that at least 33% of the works should be allocated to women and there is no difference in wages irrespective of the sex of the worker. In all the three Panchayats, this study observed that there was actually a predominance of female workers who benefited from the NREGS.

As per the NREGA guideline, estimates should also be prepared in Malayalam but this was not done in all the three selected Panchayats. This guideline was not followed owing to the heavy workload of the engineering staff. And in the case of technical sanction, it was observed that in Trikarpur Panchayat TS was given without taking proper evaluation and technical advice. More over, there were even projects which were implemented without the signatures of any of the TSC members, but only with that of the overseer. Projects are to be implemented by the Grama Panchayat, and no contract work is allowed in the implementation process. Projects which are complementary to agricultural development such as Micro Irrigation works, Renovation of Traditional Water Bodies, Water and Soil Conservation Activities and Land Development, are to be given the highest priority and rural connectivity was to be given the least priority. The act stipulates that while implementing the projects, labour cost and material cost should be in the ratio 60:40. For smooth implementation, the engineer is required by the law to visit the work site at least once in two weeks and the overseer is to visit every day. In spite of this guideline, the overseer did not visit the work site as stipulated, and the visits of the engineers were also very few and far in between. When assessing the work, the law makes it clear that overseer can measure only those works estimated up to Rs. 50000 and an Assistant Engineer should measure any work exceeding this amount. All works measured by the overseer are to be checked by the Assistant Engineer and works measured by Assistant Engineer are to be checked by the Assistant Executive Engineer.

Wages are to be distributed exclusively through banks, preferably within a week; but at least in fifteen days after completion of the work. It is also mandatory that wages are to be distributed within three days after receipt of bill and muster roll in the Panchayat. But it is permissible for wages to be paid either on a piecemeal rate, or as daily wages. If the wages are delayed for any reason, workers are eligible for compensation as per the section IV of the Payment of Wages Act 1936. In spite of these

guidelines, this study observed that the wages were delayed in all three panchayats under study. In Madikkai and Ajanoor, the wages were delayed by two months, and in Trikarapur Panchayat, workers had not yet received the wages for works completed three months ago. But none of these workers were awarded any compensation.

The Government of Kerala has published detailed guidelines on the preparation of projects, technical and Administrative sanctions and monitoring, evaluation and social auditing. Separate organizations are envisaged for each of the functions and a separate wing consisting of an Engineer/Overseer and Data Entry Operator is established in each Grama Panchayat. The office is networked with the Block and District levels. In chapter IV, section 17.1 & 2 & 3, of the Guide Line of Government of Kerala, it is stated that all projects undertaken at the Panchayat level must be subjected to social audit by Grama Sabha. The Social Audit team is to be formed in the Grama Sabha with approval of all the members attended. Panchayat should make available muster rolls, bills, vouchers, measurement book, and other related records to the Grama Sabha for Social Audit. However, the social audits have not been undertaken in any of the three panchayats under study here. In addition, it was also observed that not even a single record necessary for the social audit was complete.

Section 19, Chapter IV of the NREGA necessitates the need for formation of a Grievance Redressing Cell at the Block and District level. The Grievance redressing cell at the Block level has not received any complaint so far. At the district level many complaints regarding delay in wage payments and muster roll manipulation by the supervising women have been received and it is reported that necessary action has been taken against all these malpractices. The Government of Kerala, in its guideline (*Deseeya Grameena Thozhilurappu Padhathi*, chapter 6, P-49, KILA), stipulates the formation of Monitoring Committees including 5 to 7 members at the ward level and their reports are to be discussed in the Grama Sabha. But this survey found that in all three

Grama Panchayats, the Monitoring committees were constituted only on paper, and no significant monitoring was accomplished

8. Nature and Composition of the Projects- Action plan Vs Implementation

Analyzing the action plan it was observed that Madikkai had a comprehensive action plan addressing its major issues of flood control and protection, which includes renovation of small canals, drains and construction of sidewalls on the sides of rivers for protecting them (289 projects), Water conservation and Water harvesting (100 projects). Water conservation and Water harvesting work mainly includes the renovation of ponds and other water conservation measures. Ajanoor had an action plan with comparatively fewer projects, which primarily addressed the issue of flood control and protection (148 projects). In Trikarapur Panchayat the action plan addresses the major issues of the Panchayat such as flood control and protection activities (79 projects) and the need for renovating traditional water bodies (74 projects). This last item has included the deepening of canals and the cleaning of ponds and other traditional water sources.

While Madikkai was able to prepare an action plan of 623 projects for 2 years, in Ajanoor and Trikarapur the number of projects included in the action plan are 381(for two years) and 229(for two years) projects respectively. The number of Projects in Madikkai included under water conservation and water harvesting, drought proofing, micro irrigation, renovation of traditional water bodies and land development are 100, 20, 25, 30 and 44 respectively. Works such as tree planting in public lands giving importance to the contour model cultivations in hill areas are included under Drought Proofing. Micro irrigation works include the creation and renovation of small irrigation canals in different '*Padasekharams*'* of the Panchayat.

* *Padasekharams* are collections of different individual paddy fields. It is intended for promoting collective farming.

Rural connectivity (100 projects) has also been given more priority than it deserves under NREGA in Madikkai. The formation of new roads and footpaths are included under rural connectivity. In Ajanoor, 159 projects are included in the category 'Any Other Activity' and 148 projects are included under Flood Control and Protection, 55 projects under Water Conservation and Water Harvesting, 4 under Land Development and 15 under Rural Connectivity projects. Land development activities in the action plan include activities for soil and water conservation in the fields of SC and ST households and general category households with less than 5 acre land holdings. Such activities on private lands are allowed if it is part of a comprehensive watershed action plan. But Panchayats have tactically included many rural connectivity works such as the maintenance of roads under Land Development. In Trikarapur, 79 projects coming under the category of Flood Control and Protection and 74 under that of Renovation of Traditional Water Bodies, are intended to address crucial problems of Trikarapur like flooding, soil and water erosion. More over, 14 projects are included under Rural Connectivity, 32 under Micro Irrigation Works, 19 under Land Development Activities, 12 under SC, ST Land Development. (Action plan project categorization is shown in the Annexure VII).

Among the three panchayats, Madikkai has undertaken the largest number of projects and has spent Rs. 81,02,810 during 2008-09. In this Panchayat, 10 projects have been undertaken under the category of Rural Connectivity, on which 13 percent of total expenditure has been spent. Under Flood control 60 minor projects were undertaken and spent 18% of the total amount. Under water conservation and water harvesting 19 projects have been undertaken spending 16%. 20 minor projects have also been undertaken under Renovation of traditional water bodies with an expenditure of 9% of the total. Land development Activities are the thrust areas of work in which 57 projects have been undertaken by spending 42%.

Ajanoor has undertaken 101 projects during 2008-09 and spent Rs. 4681300. In Ajanoor Flood Control has been given the highest priority. There are 64 projects under the category of Flood Control and Protection and spent 64% of the total. Under rural connectivity, 11 projects have been undertaken spending 7.5%. There are 21 projects undertaken under Land Development Activities with an expenditure of 25%. Four projects have been included under Renovation of Traditional Water bodies with an expenditure of 1.25% and one project under 'Any Other Activity' with an expenditure of 1.2% of the total.

In addition to being a coastal area, Trikarapur Panchayat is hampered by various limitations such as the difficulties attendant on identifying potential projects and undertaking these projects without higher material costs. As a result of this, only few projects have been undertaken here. In Trikarapur, 76 projects have been completed and Rs. 1489661 has been spent during 2008-09. Twenty-eight projects have been undertaken under the category 'Land Development', which accounted for around 44 percent of all expenditure, 10 projects under Water Conservation and Water Harvesting, which accounted for 19%, 14 projects under Micro Irrigation accounting for 17%, 9 projects under the category Renovation of Traditional Water Bodies accounting for 12% of all expenditure. There are also 15 micro projects under Flood Control and Protection for which 6.2% of the total have been spent. No work on rural connectivity has been included in the categorization. (Annexure VIII).

In Trikarapur, out of the 76 projects; only 7 are leading to asset creation- 3 canals, 3 drainages, and 1 road. The majority of the works— 69 projects—done are asset renovation activities. This observation becomes all the more striking if we consider that the expenditure on asset creation, asset renovation and expenditure on Land Development Activities did not lead to asset creation in a substantial way. In fact, out of the total expenditure only 16% has resulted in asset creation, and the

remainder (46%) was spent on renovation and another 38% on land development activities. In reality, rural connectivity was given greater importance under the NREGS than its recommended limit of 10 percent of all expenditure—in Trikarapur, expenditure on Rural Connectivity accounts for 28% in 2008-09.

9. Externality Effects of NREGS

Certain externality effects of NREGS are observed in the agricultural sector. Labour shortages in the agricultural sector have already been a problem resulting in a decline in agricultural production. Frequently, replanting and harvesting in rice fields are delayed by shortage of labour. The NREGS works were observed to exacerbate these agricultural labour shortages in all the three Panchayats. This has had the added effect of pushing up wages in the agricultural sector, moving slowly towards the NREGA wage rate. In all the three Panchayats, wage rate for women workers in agricultural works has shot up from Rs. 80 to Rs. 110 for a full day's work. Even though many new workers are coming into the rural labour market as a result of the NREGA, many of them are young workers, who are not willing to work in the agricultural sector. The unwillingness of workers to come for agricultural works is mainly due to low wages with more efforts in agricultural works. But in the case of young women, it is due to the lack of skills in doing agricultural works, especially works related to replanting and weeding. In some cases it was noted that agricultural works and NREGA works were operational at the same time, which resulted in deficit of labour in agricultural sector. A proper work calendaring is required in identifying the works to be done during agricultural lean season, there by reducing the problem of labour shortage in agriculture.

The scheme was successful enough in raising the level of employment and income of the rural households, there by enhancing their purchasing power. It has substantially increased their credit worthiness. Workers get commodities on credit from the nearby grocery

shops because sellers are aware of the assured income from NREGA (Focus Group Discussion, Ajanoor). Working in groups empowers the women workers socially. Food and personal problems are shared and discussed at the worksite, which, workers stated, offered them much relief.

The NREGA earnings were spent on everything from food items to the payment of old debts. Significantly, the workers were also able to spend some amount on the education and health of their children. Some repairs and maintenance on their homes was also financed. Many workers came across banking experiences only through NREGA, and many of the women workers, in particular, expressed that having some savings in the bank was a matter of great confidence to them, which enhanced their dignity. Now Panchayats have started integrating NREGA with other programmes like watershed activities. Madikkai has already begun along this track. Ajanoor and Trikarapur are planning to integrate NREGA with watershed activities. In Trikarapur, there are places where certain watershed activities can be undertaken, especially in South Trikarapur. It was observed that the Panchayat had not taken sufficient initiative in the identification of such watershed activities. Ajanoor has already identified twelve watershed areas and the appropriate management activities in each watershed. Madikkai was able to implement many productive works in private land holdings under NREGA by integrating it with watershed activities based on a comprehensive watershed plan.

10. Impact on Beneficiary Households

NREGA has benefited the social and financial status of the poor households. Discussion with workers revealed that there was an increase in food consumption expenditure and a marginal improvement in savings. The workers regarded NREGA income as a substantial supportive income supplementing other sources of irregular earnings. Due to NREGA, women have also started shouldering household expenses and responsibilities. In Trikarapur, many women pay electricity

bills out of their earnings. Experience with banking has changed their perceptions and attitudes. In the case of the female-headed families the delay in wage distribution creates problems in meeting their daily needs and the educational expenditure of their children.

NREGA has brought many new faces to the work force. According to the Census data for 2001, the number of Marginal Female Workers in all the three Panchayats is substantially large. Since only a few Main Female Workers are likely to shift from their present work to NREGA work, it is probable that majority of NREGA female work force is drawn from Female Marginal Workers. Thus NREGA has been able to bring some dormant labour force into the labour market.

Many factors influence the participation of worker beneficiaries in NREGA works. In general, it was observed that number of projects undertaken determined the participation of worker households. The huge gap between the number of registered households and the number of households demanding jobs is sometimes misleading. It was observed that the ADS mate collects the application from the Panchayat and distributes it among the workers when the work is ready for implementation. Hence the number of projects becomes the crucial factor determining their participation. Jobs are not provided based on the demand of workers but also at the convenience of the authorities. Many instances were observed in some parts of Trikarapur when the workers had asked the ADS mate why they are not getting jobs. It is also observed that socio-religious factors have influence over the participation of women workers in Trikarapur. Many female workers from the Muslim community are withdrawing from the NREGA work sites mainly because of the reason that outside work is not encouraged by their community. Non-participation in manual work is regarded as a sign of prosperity within Muslim society (also in other societies) and this could be part of the reason why women desist from joining the labour force.

To assess the utility of the projects undertaken, three categories of projects - renovation of irrigation canal, land development of SC and ST households and rural connectivity – were selected from the Panchayats on a snowball basis and surveyed. In general, the beneficiaries said that the projects are beneficial to them. Many people have experienced the benefits; some others are expecting benefits in the near future. In Madikkai beneficiaries opined that the canal named ‘Peralam – Karuvalapu – Nara – Kaneekal canal’ (ward V), has been made suitable for irrigating both dry and wet lands. In Trikarapur, the Kuttichi – Ravanamkai canal (Thekkevalappu, ward XIII) is not used for irrigation purpose but for the movement of small boats from the river to inland water bodies by the fishermen community. Canal renovation in this instance has benefited the people in a number of ways. The agriculturists have gained because the flow of saline water to their land has been curbed after the deepening and widening of canal. It has also benefited those who reside along the banks of the canal—the canal renovation has reduced the risks of flooding during the rainy season, in the absence of which these residents’ houses would have been flooded.

However, beneficiaries are not completely satisfied by the work that has been done. Many opined that the project has been undertaken without their input and opinions and that the work could have had better outcomes with higher utility. In general, rural connectivity was useful for those people whose land lacked road connectivity. It was observed that in Trikarapur the condition of the roads had become worse because they had not been built with sufficient materials. In all Panchayats, road repair and maintenance work is clearing of weeds on roadsides, making drainage canals and putting earth on either side of the road. These are carried out without proper technical inputs; hence all the earth deposited during this year will be washed off in the next rains. The beneficiaries of earthen bund work in Ajanoor generally opined that the work was not undertaken at the right time and hence it does not serve the purpose of prevention of soil erosion.

11. Factors Influencing Performance – An Inter-Panchayat Analysis

Variation could be observed in the performance of NREGS among the three Panchayats. Madikkai, which has identified and successfully implemented a large number of projects undoubtedly, stands first among the three Panchayats. Ajanoor and Trikarapur are at second position and third position respectively. The differences in performance between the three Panchayats could be attributed to a number of factors. The efficiency of micro level organizations like Kudumbasree-ADS and NHGs could be identified as a major factor in identifying the projects and implementing them successfully. In Madikkai a large number of projects (623) could be identified. Madikkai Panchayat has utilized the micro level organizations like ADS and WDC in identifying the projects by giving them training. In Ajanoor the ADS members identified most of the projects. Beneficiaries also suggested some projects. In Trikarapur micro level organizations are not properly utilized in the identification process. Only a fewer number of projects are identified and the details of primary survey are not seen in the Grama Sabha minutes. The efficiency of Kudumbasree also makes differences in implementation. Often the overseers in Trikarapur returned incomplete muster rolls to the ADS as these things were not done at the work site. This type of inefficiency is not reported in Ajanoor and Madikkai.

The Comparative advantage arising from topographical differences plays a crucial role in performance difference. When it is an advantage for Madikkai and some parts of Ajanoor, it is a limiting factor for Trikarapur. In Madikkai and Ajanoor a large number of projects could be undertaken because of the peculiarity of the terrain with hills and valleys. In Madikkai and Ajanoor, a number of canals, traditional water bodies and micro irrigation plots are available that significantly raises the scope for identifying and implementing potential projects. Being a coastal area Panchayat, only a few numbers of projects are identified and undertaken because of the high population density and lack of public land. Moreover, the normal works undertaken in Ajanoor and Madikkai could not be

undertaken in Trikarapur because of high relative material cost. In NREGA there is a stipulation to limit the material cost of a project to below 40%. In coastal areas, the Public Works Department (PWD) rate of materials is much lower than the local cost which makes some of the works like formation of canal, bund formation for preventing soil and water erosion most difficult to be undertaken without a proper assistance from plan fund to cover some parts of material cost. Many projects included in the action plan could not be undertaken because of this reason.

The possibility of integrating the NREGA with other projects like watershed projects also contributes to a larger extent to the success of implementation. A lot of productive works in the private land holdings have been done in Madikkai. Since such an approach is lacking in the other two Panchayats, the number of projects in the private lands is limited in these Panchayats.

The difference in public participation and the support from the beneficiaries also contributes to the difference in performance. Participation has been higher in Madikkai and comparatively less in Ajanoor and very little in Trikarapur. Beneficiary support was also high in Madikkai. In Trikarapur, Muslim communities are observed to be keeping aloof from NREGA works. There were instances of withdrawal of Muslim women from the NREGA works site because they feared hostility from among members of their own community. In addition, within the Muslim community, outside work for women is not encouraged.

The differences in efficiency of political leadership and support also make difference in NREGA implementation. An efficient leadership successfully gathers a good political support from other members and that makes the implementation of NREGA more participatory and efficient. Madikkai is fortunate to have a dynamic Panchayat leadership, adequate political support and a good quality administration. In Ajanoor a good support from the different party members is a contributing factor for the success of NREGA. Cooperation from different party members is less in Trikarapur compared to the other two Panchayats.

12. Discussions

Kerala government has designated Kudumbasree as an important actor in planning and implementation of NREGS. The manifold functions taken up by Kudumbasree members range from identification of projects to supervision of works and submission of records for wage disbursement. This arrangement has two positive aspects; 1) since the Kudumbasree has grass root level reach through NHGs, the projects identified by them would reflect the needs and requirements of the people and 2) the involvement of women in NREGS is a capacity building process for them. Though designed well, lack of adequate training in conceptualizing watershed development programme, supervision of works and maintenance of records has placed the Kudumbasree office bearers in a difficult position. If they are given proper training in conceptualizing the programme and implementation, more innovative projects can be identified and implemented.

The shortage of manpower to manage the activities at the Grama Panchayat level is an important limiting factor. Panchayats have hundreds of small projects to be taken up in their annual Action plans. Sites have to be visited, detailed estimates are to be prepared, and works are to be monitored, measured and counter-measured before the eventual preparation of the bills. There is only an engineer and overseer at the Grama Panchayat for all of these activities. The result is that detailed estimates are made without site visits, there is only a single visit by the engineering staff to the work site and the bill preparation is delayed by a few weeks. Kodattu-Edappany canal deepening in Ajanoor Grama Panchayat was estimated at a cost of Rs. 412,000, but could be completed for Rs. 113,089 indicating that the detailed estimate was prepared in a casual manner.

The engineer in Ajanoor Grama Panchayat complained that the work proved a heavy burden, as there was no adequate supporting staff. The Data Entry Operator (DEO) is a provisional employee who is not trained in NREGS, as a result, the DEO's work is quite mechanical. The

DEO also has to perform the duties of an accountant and verify financial transactions. Additionally, the temporary staff is free to quit at any time, which could plunge the programme into jeopardy. A well-trained five-member team with sufficient engineering personnel would have taken the programme to newer heights.

The state government could have utilized the 6% managerial cost allowed by GOI in setting up a separate unit at Grama Panchayat level as in Rajiv Gandhi Drinking Water Mission (RGDWM). This is especially important, as the GPs have not taken the NREGS as their flagship programme in providing employment and alleviating poverty. The Grama Panchayats are so involved with decentralized planning activities that they do not have the time or inclination to focus on this national programme. Further, conferring the duties of registration, preparation of the work calendar, fund management and wage distribution to the Panchayat Secretary is saddling him with an additional burden.

The right for work as guaranteed by the NREGA has been restricted to households, rather than to each individual of the household. As Mihir Shah points out, this is especially important in view of intra-household gender discrimination (EPW, December 2009). The limiting of work to hundred days a year is also a lacuna in the Act. Although there is a provision in the Act to raise the household work entitlement beyond 100 days or extend it to every adult, unfortunately this has not been given due attention. As Mihir Shah says there could be seasons and areas when and where the requirement of work would be more or less. Each state should ideally be allowed to dovetail the financial allocation for annual schemes to suit specific needs. The GOK insists that 10 percent of the funds should go towards rural connectivity. This study has attempted to assess whether this focus on rural connectivity was strictly followed by the Grama Panchayats. The Grama Panchayats have skillfully included the maintenance of drainages and roads in flood control and land development categories and the construction of new roads alone

has been categorized as rural connectivity. Hence the use of the categories to justify expenditure is often misleading.

Another important lacuna in the NREGS is the complete lack of integration with any other scheme for which money is available at the local level. The Panchayats are implementing each of its programmes in a discrete manner, as if in watertight compartments.

The quality of the works taken up is also doubtful in many cases. The Grama Panchayat lacks a long-term perspective and vision on how to utilize the NREGP funds for rejuvenating and enriching the soil, water and biomass. The projects taken up are of a cursory nature, often short term in perspective and do not become part of a larger and longer term development plan. In addition, the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are very weak. As a certificate from the committee for Monitoring and evaluation is mandatory for release of wages, the ADS members obtain this from the committee. There is neither any social audit from the Grama Sabha nor any external evaluation. The external evaluators are expected to work on a voluntary basis and this is one of the reasons for the absence of even perfunctory programme monitoring and evaluation.

13. Policy Recommendations

The study, though limited in its scope, brings out some important flaws in the Programme, which need immediate correction to make it more efficient and responsive to the needs of the poor.

- 1) The projects under NREGA are planned by LSGs in a casual manner. There is considerable necessity for meticulous planning which takes into consideration the need for creation of durable assets, conservation of water, soil and bio-mass, avoidance of conflict with farmers, synchronization with other Governmental schemes and integrating with Panchayat plans under decentralized plan. This calls for the pooling of human resources

from government Departments and private institutions, in addition to utilizing the services of retired officials for preparing a comprehensive Action Plan for at least three years.

- 2) Rigorous training should be given to the Kudumbasree-ADS members in conceptualizing watershed programme for identifying innovative projects. So far, the majority of the projects identified and implemented are mainly related to drainage formation and roadside cleaning. The lack of truly innovative projects is pointing towards the lack of a proper and scientific primary survey by conceptualizing watershed development activities.
- 3) The NREGA cell at Grama Panchayat should be strengthened by providing sufficient staff. A well-trained five-member team with enough engineering personnel as in RGDWM is suggested to take the programme to newer heights. In RGDWM each Grama Panchayat has a Grama Panchayat Action Team (GPAT) consisting of an Engineer, Overseer, Accountant and two Social Mobilizers. The finances for this could be met from the managerial costs available with the Grama Panchayats.
- 4) The cumbersome procedure to be followed by the Grama Panchayat in giving TS and AS to the projects could be made simpler. The practice of forwarding the projects to Block and District Panchayat for approval is not only time consuming but is also a negation of decentralization. A more effective and speedy procedure at the Block level for verifying the projects would have served the purpose better.
- 5) A proper and more systematic work calendar is needed at the Grama Panchayat level for planning works strictly in the agricultural lean seasons. In the absence of this calendar, the ability of the scheme to strengthen the agricultural sector is adversely affected. Labour shortages in agricultural sector have also been aggravated due to NREGA works.

- 6) This study recommends a relaxation of the 60:40 cost ratios. Many works have not been undertaken in coastal areas due to this hard and fast regulation on expenditure. For taking up works requiring materials, local rates should be made applicable.
- 7) The 60:40 ratios for wage and material components insisted in NREGS could have been easily overcome if the plan grant available to the Grama Panchayat was utilized for bridging gaps, which should be made compulsory. We also need stronger and more comprehensive monitoring of ongoing works. Evaluation of NREGA works by external agencies at the Block or District levels should be mandatory and their expenses should be met by the NREGA.
- 8) The Grama Sabha should be made more participatory and strengthened to take up social – auditing.

K.N. Nair is Professor & Director at the Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram. His research interests include Agriculture, Rural Development, Decentralisation, Science and Society.

Email: knn@cds.ac.in

T.P. Sreedharan is Programme Officer, Research Unit on Local Self Governments, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram. His research interests include Decentralisation, Poverty Alleviation.

Email: tpspnr@yahoo.com

M. Anoopkumar is an M.Phil/PhD Scholar at the Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram. He worked as a research Assistant in the Research Unit on Local Self Governments (RULSG) CDS at Kanhangad.

Email: anoop09m@cds.ac.in

ANNEXURES

Annexure I: Industrial classification of labour

	Madikkai	Ajanoor	Trikarapur
1. Population	20584	45578	35897
2. Working population	8565 (42%)	14619 (32%)	9945 (27%)
a. Main workers	5107 (60%)	11995 (82%)	8132 (82%)
b. Marginal workers	3458 (40%)	2624 (18%)	1813 (18%)
3. Non working population	12019 (58%)	30959 (68%)	25952 (73%)

Source: Panchayath level statistics-2003-04.

Annexure II: Details of Registration (2008-09)

Name of GP	No. Of registered Households				No of individuals in registered families				
	SC	ST	Others	Total	SC	ST	Others	Women	Total
Madikkai	26	215	2933	3174	42	427	5436	3592	5909
Ajanoor	57	61	2425	2543	157	133	4695	3098	4985
Trikarapur	207	Nil	2271	2474	653	Nil	4575	2832	5228

Source: NREGA section, Grama Panchayath and Block Panchayath

Annexure III: Details of job card distribution

Name of GP	No. Of job cards issued				No of individuals issued job cards				
	SC	ST	Others	Total	SC	ST	Others	Women	Total
Madikkai	26	215	2933	3174	42	427	5436	3592	5909
Ajanoor	57	56	1987	2100	157	89	3722	3010	3890
Trikarpur	207	Nil	2267	2470	653	Nil	4575	2832	5213

Source: NREGA section, Grama Panchayath and Block Panchayath

Annexure IV: Details of Job demanded and job given

Name of GP	No of Househs job demanded				No of Households job given				No of individuals given jobs					
	SC	ST	Others	Total	SC	ST	Others	Total	SC	ST	Others	Women	Total	
2007-08	Madikkai	18	118	602	738	18	118	602	738	18	119	1295	1112	1451
	Ajanoor	28	17	765	810	28	17	765	810	35	17	798	820	850
	Trikarpur	85	Nil	545	630	49	Nil	250	299	49	Nil	250	279	299
2008-09	Madikkai	4	101	1487	1592	4	101	1487	1592	4	101	1468	1422	1573
	Ajanoor	22	8	374	404	22	8	374	404	22	8	376	389	406
	Trikarpur	100	Nil	500	600	95	Nil	500	595	110	Nil	811	885	921

Source: NREGA section, Grama Panchayath and Block Panchayath

Annexure V: Details of man-days generated

Name of GP	SC	ST	Others	Women	Total	No of workers received 100 days
Madikkai	2007-08	2238	15885	11665	18255	3
	2008-09	72	55603	N.A	57967	30
	Total	224	71488	NA	76222	33
Ajanoor	2007-08	550	21100	19408	22073	Nil
	2008-09	1436	32473	33739	34488	30
	Total	1986	53573	53147	56561	30
Trikarapur	2007-08	307	2010	2137	2317	Nil
	2008-09	615	7390	7681	8005	Nil
	Total	922	9400	9818	10322	Nil

Source: NREGA section, Grama Panchayath and Block Panchayath

Annexure VI: Expenditure classification

	Programme expenditure in Rupees							Contingencies	Grand total
	Total fund	Unskilled wage	Super-vision	Semi-skilled wage	On material	Total			
2007-08	Madikkai	3000000	2178036 (87%)		107500 (4%)	57126 (3%)	2342662 (94%)	142484 (6%)	2485146 (82%)
	Ajanoor	3300000	27377301 (88%)			279833 (9%)	3017134 (97%)	102313 (3%)	3119447 (94%)
	Trikarpur	300000	188190 (64%)			52652 (18%)	240842 (82%)	51530 (18%)	292372 (97%)
2008-09	Madikkai	8092153	7171089 (89%)		375545 (4%)	219922 (3%)	7766556 (96%)	290353 (4%)	8056909 (99%)
	Ajanoor	5042466	3911395 (82%)	194885 (4%)		523491 (11%)	4629771 (97%)	149306 (3%)	4779077 (94%)
	Trikarpur	1219350	1004375 (83%)	56115 (5%)		37069 (3%)	1097559 (91%)	113200 (9%)	1210759 (99%)

Source: NREGA section, Grama Panchayath and Block Panchayath

Annexure VII: Project classifications in the action plan

Name of GP	Rural connectivity	Flood control and protection	Water conservation and water harvesting	Drought proofing	Micro irrigation works	Land development of SC& ST households	Renovation of traditional water bodies	Land development	Any other activity	Total
Madikkai	100	289	100	20	25	15	30	44		623
Ajanoor	15	148	55					4	159	381
Trikarpur	14	79			32	12	74	19		229

Source: NREGA section, Grama Panchayat and Block Panchayat

Annexure VIII: Classification of completed projects and expenditure in Rupees

Name of GP	Rural connectivity		Flood control and protection		Water conservation and water harvesting		Micro irrigation works		Land development SCST households		Renovation of traditional water bodies		Land development		Any other activity		Total	
	No	Exp	No	Exp	No	Exp	No	Exp	No	Exp	No	Exp	No	Exp	No	Exp	No	Exp
Madikkai	10	1085948	60	1471339	19	1371085					20	762319	57	3412100			166	8102810
Ajamoor	11	355693	64	2996425							4	58900	21	1213105	1	57177	101	4681300
Trikarapur			15	93071	10	291655	14	260015			9	177776	28	667144			76	1489661

Source: NREGA section, Grama Panchayath and Block Panchayath

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Abbreviations

ADS	Area Development Society
BPL	Below Poverty Line
BPO	Block Programme Officer
CDS	Community Development Society
DEO	Data Entry Operator
DPC	District Planning Committee
EPW	Economic and Political Weekly
GOI	Government of India
GOK	Government of Kerala
GP	Grama Panchayat
GPAT	Grama Panchayat Action Team
KILA	Kerala Institute of Local Administration
LDF	Left-Democratic Front
LSG	Local Self-Government
NHG	Neighborhood Groups
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NREGS	National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
PWD	Public Works Department
RGDWM	Rajeev Gandhi Drinking Water Mission
RULSG	Research Unit on Local Self-Government
SC	Scheduled Caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TS	Technical Sanction
TSC	Technical Sanction Committee
UDF	United Democratic Front
VEO	Village Extension Officer
WDC	Ward Development Committee

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