

Minutes of the First Meeting of the State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC) held on 7th May, 2008 in the Conference Hall of RM&DD in Gangtok, Sikkim under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Minister RM&DD.

The first meeting of the State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC) was held on 7th May, 2008 in the conference hall of the RM&DD head office under the chairmanship of Hon'ble minister RM&DD under the NREG Act, 2005. The participants included the members of the SEGC, Additional Secretary, Project Director (SRDA), Director Panchayat, Director SREDA, Joint Secretary, DPC (N), DPC(E), DPC(S), APO (M), SSA (NIC) and AO(West). The attendance list of the meeting is also enclosed.

At the outset, the Secretary RM&DD welcomed all the participants and briefly explained about the purpose of the meeting and the agenda points. After this the Hon'ble Minister RM&DD gave the introductory remarks and mentioned about the functions and role of the SEGC. This was followed by a detailed introduction and performance review of the NREGS-Sikkim program by the Secretary RM&DD. He briefed about the salient features of NREGA, introduced NREGS-Sikkim programme and dealt in detail on the performance of the program since inception during 2006-07 and 2007-08. The problems and concerns were also identified and the plan of action for 2008-09 was also laid out before the council (presentation enclosed)

This was then followed by detailed comments by the members which are summarized as below:

A. Permissible Item of Works

1. The SEGC after presentations by the Zilla Adhyakshas of all the four districts and detailed deliberations, prioritized the permissible list of works. It was decided that income generation activities like horticulture (rejuvenation of large cardamom, ginger, orange, floriculture, vegetables etc), land development and minor irrigation need to be taken up on top priority. Adequate care should be taken to ensure that duplication does not take place by converging the schemes with the concerned line departments.
2. The Joint Director (Social Forestry) of Forest Department indicated that forestry related activities can be taken up for the socio-economic upliftment of the people. For this the Forest staff posted in the BAC can be engaged for taking up forestry works.
3. The Soil Conservation wing of the Agriculture department informed that they have been receiving a large public demand for "water harvesting structure" but it does not have sufficient funds. If NREGA funds could be used for water harvesting then that would help solve this problem. This should be given top priority specially for drought prone areas of the state. DPC-South informed that in the drought prone areas in the lower belt of the state, water is the main necessity, and for these areas household level water harvesting structures is needed. The SEGC recommended that this can be taken up at the community level and in the drought prone areas at the household level provided that the 60:40 ratio is maintained at the block level. For household level

water harvesting structure, the beneficiary households should belong to SC/ST, land reforms or the Indira Awas Yojana scheme. Dovetailing of NREGA works with income generation related horticulture works is needed, this will result in diversification of the type of works being taken up under this program.

4. The upper limit placed on the Rural Connectivity works not exceeding 25% of the value of all types of works taken up at Block level by the state government was endorsed by the SEGC. This will ensure that other items of works related to income generation are also taken up. The SEGC also instructed that CC Foot Path have to be taken up on last priority.
5. DPC-East informed that there is a large public demand for a new category of work namely – “waiting sheds” and “crematorium sheds” which needs to be permitted keeping in mind the heavy rainfall received by the state. The SEGC recommend that though this is a material intensive work, this can be taken up while ensuring that the 60:40 ratio at block level is maintained and also this along with CCFP does not exceed 25% of the value of all types of works taken up at Block level.
6. The SEGC also decided that the list of permissible works under NREGS-Sikkim should be pasted in all Gram Prashashan Kendras as per priority.

B. Implementation Procedure

1. Material supply like cement, rod, sand, stones through the well performing Multi Purpose Cooperative Society (MPCS) of Cooperation Department could be explored. Presently material is procured from the empanelled suppliers of the department, wherein rate of materials is fixed by RM&DD headoffice. A meeting with the Cooperation Department will be organized subsequently to discuss this matter in detail.
2. The SEGC also recommended that the 60:40 wage-material ratio should be made 50:50 since in mountain areas, material is expensive due to high transportation costs.
3. The DPC-East also informed that for workers traveling more than 5km to the work site there is a provision of 10% travel and living allowance. However traveling 5 km in mountain terrain takes atleast 2 hours, and hence is not possible. The SEGC also recommended that mountain perspective is needed and minimum distance for eligibility of the travel and living allowance should be reduced less than a radius of 2 km for mountain states.
4. The measurement of works should be strictly carried out before releasing any wage payments. The quantum of wage payment should be as per the physical progress of work
5. The Vigilance and Monitoring Committee at the GPU level should be fully empowered to monitor all the schemes being taken up.

6. The monitoring and evaluation procedure of the programme should be simplified.

C. Appointment of additional Manpower

1. Gram Rozgar Sahayak is needed at the GPU level at the earliest to support the RDA who is overloaded. Assistant Programme Officer, Junior Engineer, computer assistant and Accounts staff is needed at the block level to assist in the implementation. At the district level an Assistant DPC is also needed. The SEGC recommended that the funds needed for the appointment of the additional manpower deployment should be permitted over and above the permissible list of 4%.
2. DPC East informed that frequent transfers of RDAs and JEs has taken place and that this is hampering the progress of work. The SEGC recommended that since this is affecting the work progress, this practice of frequent transfers should be immediately controlled.

D. Wage Payment

1. The muster roll workers in the state enjoy the following concessions as per the notification of the Labour Department under the Minimum Wages Act 1948. Are the wage seekers under NREGS-Sikkim entitled to the same benefits, or should they be paid only on the day they come to work. This issue was also discussed.

The meeting concluded with summarization by the Hon'ble Minister RM&DD on the decisions taken in the meeting and the vote of thanks was proposed to the chairperson and members.

Joint Secretary – RM&dD