

Convergence of MGNREGS with Indian Railways

Abstract

This paper is to bring to light as to how Convergence between two central government departments has resulted in better and effective utilization of resources. It also charts the course on how policy was initially formulated by the top management and there after implemented and then evolved after feedback from site. The site under discussion is the jurisdiction of Assistant Divisional Engineer, Ongole Sub-division (ADEN/OGL) which falls under the Vijayawada Division of Indian Railways. This case also elaborates on monitoring systems which have been developed and streamlined to ensure both transparency and accountability of public functionaries.

Keywords –

Alternate Source of Funding, Convergence, Public Policy, Railways, Rural Development.

Introduction –

The two departments in conversation are Ministry of Railways and Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development and the scheme is MGNREGS. A small brief on the two departments and the scheme is elucidated below –

Ministry of Railways -

Indian Railways (IR) is India's national railway system operated by the Ministry of Railways. It manages the fourth largest railway network in the world by size, with a route length of 67,368-kilometre and total track length of 121,407-kilometre as of March 2017.

Indian Railway (IR) runs more than 20,000 passenger trains daily, on both long-distance and suburban routes, from 7,349 stations across India. In the freight segment, IR runs more than 9,200 trains daily. As of March 2017, IR's rolling stock consisted of 277,987 freight wagons, 70,937 passenger coaches and 11,452 locomotives. IR owns locomotive and coach-production facilities at several locations in India. The world's eighth-largest employer, it had 13.08 lakh employees as of March 2017.

In the year ending March 2018, IR carried 8.26 billion passengers and transported 1.16 billion tonnes of freight. In the fiscal year 2017–18, IR is projected to have revenue of Rs. 1.874 trillion (US\$27 billion), consisting of Rs. 1.175 trillion (US\$17 billion) in freight revenue and Rs. 501.25 billion (US\$7.3 billion) in passenger revenue, with an operating ratio of 96.0 percent.

Termed rightly so as the “LIFELINE OF THE NATION”

Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development -

Ministry of Panchayati Raj is responsible for the work of advocacy for and monitoring of the implementation of Constitution 73rd Amendment Act the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996. A New Ministry of Panchayati Raj has been created w.e.f. 27 May 2004. As per the amended allocation of Business Rules, "all matters relating to Panchayati Raj and Panchayati Raj Institutions" will be looked after by the newly created

Ministry. The State governments/Union Territory Administrations, at present, are at varying degrees of the implementation of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts. The Ministry, inter-alia, would ensure that they hold timely elections, set up State Finance Commissions and implement their recommendations, constitute District Planning Committees and empower them suitably to ensure grass-root level planning to feed into State and Central level Planning effectively. One major task of the Ministry will be to ensure that the State Governments/UT Administrations devolve funds, functions and functionaries on the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the spirit of the Constitutional provisions.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj will also be responsible for formulation and implementation of an Action Plan for seeing PRIs to emerge as "Institutions of Local-Self Government" securing economic development and social justice in their respective areas.

The Ministry of Rural Development, a branch of the Government of India, is entrusted with the task of accelerating the socio-economic development of rural India. Its focus is on health, education, drinking water, housing and roads.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme -

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 is an Indian labour law and social security measure that aims to guarantee the 'right to work'.

It aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

The act was first proposed in 1991 by P.V. Narasimha Rao. It was finally accepted in the parliament and commenced implementation in 625 districts of India. Based on this pilot experience, NREGA was scoped up to cover all the districts of India from 1 April 2008. The statute is hailed by the government as "the largest and most ambitious social security and public works programme in the world". In its World Development Report 2014, the World Bank termed it a "stellar example of rural development".

The MGNREGA was initiated with the objective of "enhancing livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year, to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work". Another aim of MGNREGA is to create durable assets (such as roads, canals, ponds and wells). Employment is to be provided within 5 km of an applicant's residence, and minimum wages are to be paid. If work is not provided within 15 days of applying, applicants are entitled to an unemployment allowance. Thus, employment under MGNREGA is a legal entitlement.

MGNREGA is to be implemented mainly by gram panchayats (GPs). The involvement of contractors is banned. Labour-intensive tasks like creating infrastructure for water harvesting, drought relief and flood control are preferred.

Apart from providing economic security and creating rural assets, NREGA can help in protecting the environment, empowering rural women, reducing rural-urban migration and fostering social equity, among others.

The law provides many safeguards to promote its effective management and implementation. The act explicitly mentions the principles and agencies for implementation, list of allowed works, financing pattern, monitoring and evaluation, and most importantly the detailed measures to ensure transparency and accountability.

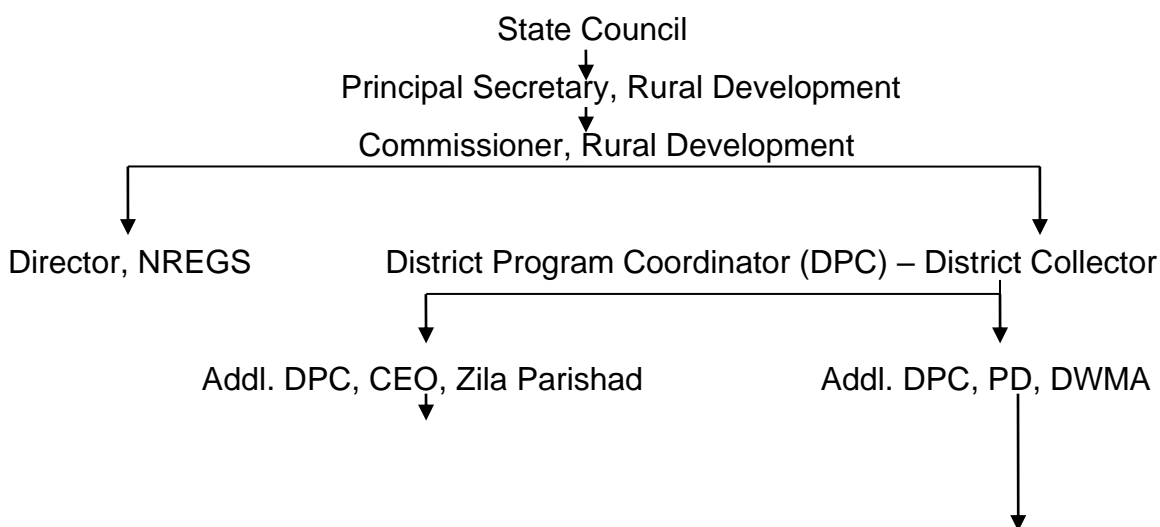
The Beginning –

From 2014 till 2018, there have been exchange of letters between the two ministries trying to finalise the type of works which could be undertaken under the Convergence Scheme. Also communication was in progress to finalise the financing of this scheme and guidelines for execution of the same. Finally, on 06.04.18, a letter was issued by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development (Letter No. J-11017/42/2013-MGNREGA (UN) dated 06.04.2018) which elaborated upon three important items –

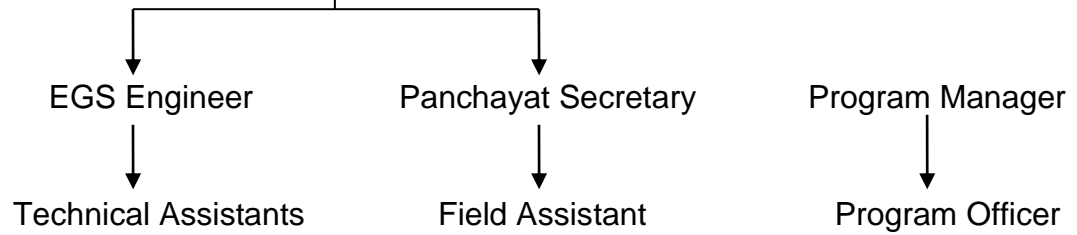
- a. The list of works which could be carried out under this scheme which are listed below –
 - i. Construction and Maintenance of Approach Road to Level Crossings.
 - ii. Construction and Maintenance of Approach Road to Railway Stations.
 - iii. Developing and cleaning silted waterways trenches and drains along the track.
 - iv. Repairs and widening of existing railway embankments/cuttings with clearing of vegetation growth.
 - v. Plantation of trees at extreme boundary of railway land at such location, where sufficient land is available.
 - vi. Protection work of existing railway embankments/cuttings/bridges.
- b. Labour and Material Component of the works will be met from MGNREGS
- c. Gram Panchayat will be the Principal Implementing Agency.

Since this was a letter issued from the ministry, guidelines from the corresponding state government needed to be issued in order to enable the corresponding state officials to act on the same. South Central Railway managed to secure the same via letter no. Memo.No. 28028/152/RD.II/A1/2018 dated 10.09.2018 issued by the government of Andhra Pradesh. The content of this letter was an exact copy of the letter issued on 06.04.18.

The Engineering wing of South Central Railway Administration (in particular Assistant Divisional Engineer, Ongole) now began the exercise of informing each and every individual of the state about the circular. To understand the structure of MGNREGS at state and appreciate the mammoth exercise undertaken, given below is the structure of MGNREGS at state –



Mandal Parishad Development Officer (MPDO)



The Ongole Sub-division is spread over two districts namely Prakasam and Nellore. The officer and staff of the office of ADEN/UGL met almost all officials listed in the above hierarchy of the two districts. Trust Building exercises were also in motion wherein appropriate representation was being made by the railway officials at Gram Panchayat meetings and Zila Parishad meetings. All the six pictures attached below i.e. from Pic. 1 to Pic. 6 reflect upon the trust building exercises as discussed above.



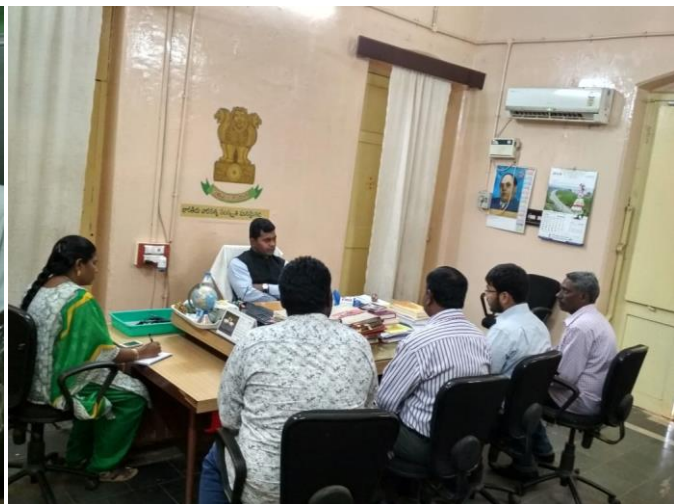
Pic. 1 - Meeting with MPDO/Singarayakonda



Pic. 2 - Meeting with MPDO/Ulavapadu



Pic. 3 - Meeting with MPDO/Ongole



Pic. 4 - Meeting with Sub-Collector/Kavali



Pic. 5 - Meeting with Tehsildar/Kavali



Pic. 6 – Zila Parishad meeting at Tanguturu

During the course of such meetings with numerous officials, good rapport was developed with one official in particular – Mr Jameel Ullah, who was Mandal Parishad Development Officer at Singarayakonda Mandal (Refer Pic. 1).

This scheme was to be implemented for the first time on Indian Railways and hence there was apprehension about its applicability. Also safety aspect is of paramount aspect in Indian Railways and any mishap would have shut down this scheme instantly. Hence a pilot project was undertaken wherein 168 labour were allotted for three weeks (by the support of Shri Jameel Ullah) to test the applicability of the six listed works.

Before commencing such works, a safety seminar was conducted wherein all workers were lined up and counseled on safe working beside the track (Pic. 7 and 8 reflect upon the same).



Pic. 7 – Aligning labour beside the track and counseling them about protection rules



Pic. 8 – Labour listening to track protection and safety rules

Post work, a review of the work done along with attendance was conducted (See Pic. 9 and 10).



Pic. 9 – Review of Field Assistant/Singarayakonda



Pic. 10 – Reviewing Musters

They entire labour unit was split into 3 groups –

1. 50 nos. were deployed for desilting of Bridge no 525A which is an Road Under Bridge (RUB) located at railway chainage 265/6-8 of Vijayawada-Gudur line.
2. 18 nos. were directed for jungle clearance.
3. 100 nos. were instructed to conduct cess repair work.

Pic. 11 and 12 reflect upon the site conditions before the work of desilting was taken up.



Pic. 11 – Silted up bridge



Pic. 12 – Raincuts resulting in silting up of bridge

BEFORE TAKING UP WORK PHOTOS

Pic. 13 and 14 reflect upon the site conditions during which the work was under progress.



Pic. 13 – Labour clearing silt



Pic. 14 – Desilting of bridge under progress

DURING EXECUTION OF WORK PHOTOS

Pic. 15 and 16 reflect upon the work of cess widening/strengthening.



Pic. 15 – Cess repair under progress



Pic. 16 – Digging of soil to repair cess

Among the six listed works, the top two required policy formulation which is under progress. The next three works could be undertaken with ease. The last listed work of Protection work of existing Railway embankments/cuttings/bridges could not be undertaken as the work required hard physical labour (lifting of 35 kilogram stones and placing them on cess) which could not be undertaken by such workforce.

The challenges and learnings during conducting such works are as follows –

1. This is a voluntary and untrained work force whose work ethics and discipline are very different from the Railway working. They need to be not only counseled but trained a great deal which will involve practical demonstrations before they can be put to work for safety related works.
2. They are generally illiterate and are in tremendously large numbers and hence lot of supervision is required to manage them during their work.
3. They are not at all aware of any safety rules and were found resting/sitting on the track as it is on an elevation and enjoying the panoramic view of the area.

This was the first milestone in the quest for achieving Convergence of MGNREGS with Railways.

The entire exercise was documented and brought to the notice of other state officials of all other mandals. After witnessing the works conducted, a green signal was obtained from all the mandals and thereafter the exercise of conducting joint surveys with state officials of the entire jurisdiction of ADEN/OGL began. Pic. 17 and 18 reflect upon the joint survey undertaken with state officials.



Pic. 17 – Inspection with state officials



Pic. 18 – Geo-tagging photos being clicked

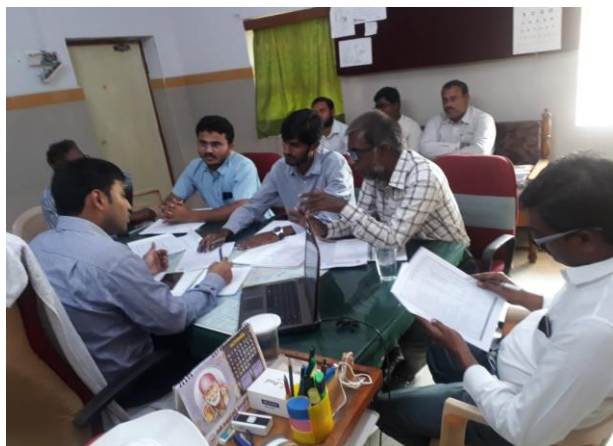
During inspection of the section and on repeated conversations with state officials, realization came that new type of works could be undertaken. Thereafter a site visit (Refer Pic. 19 and 20) and a joint meeting (Refer Pic. 21 and 22) was conducted in the office of ADEN/OGL which was attended by Additional Commissioner, MGNREGS, Government of Andhra Pradesh Shri Balasubramanyam, Project Director, DWMA, Prakasam District, Government of Andhra Pradesh Shri Venkaeshwarlu, Program Managers, Plantation Managers and TCS Officials.



Pic. 19 – Site visit of senior state officials



Pic. 20 – Joint inspection with state officials



Pic. 21 – Discussion on new policy



Pic. 22 – Discussion on software

In this meeting,

A new policy was formulated – Circular No. 2777/EGS/SPM(T)/2018 dated 24.11.2018 highlights of which are listed below –

1. All the works were renamed as per Railway terminology.
2. Softwares were developed in consonance with Railway.
3. Four new works were incorporated in this new policy and a previous work was dropped making a total of nine works.
4. Technical details pertaining to all listed works were discussed in detail. Also guidelines on quality of works were elaborated in detail.

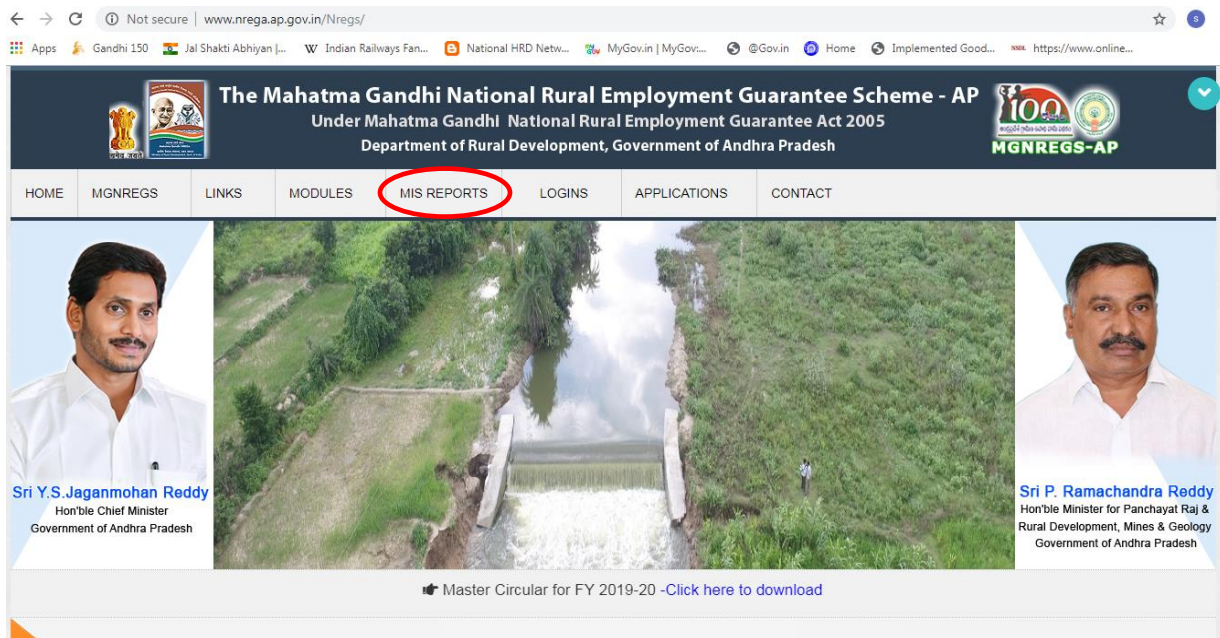
The works listed in the new policy circular are –

1. Desilting of waterways of bridges/RUBs/Pipe culverts/Box culverts.
2. Strengthening/widening of Railway Embankment.
3. Trench cutting along railway boundary.
4. Recharge structures to functioning bore wells/dried up bore wells.
5. Desilting of Open wells.
6. Block Plantation.
7. Village Parks in railway colonies.
8. Linear Plantation
9. Connecting Roads to level crossings upto Bitumen level.

This was the second milestone in the quest for achieving Convergence of MGNREGS with Railways.

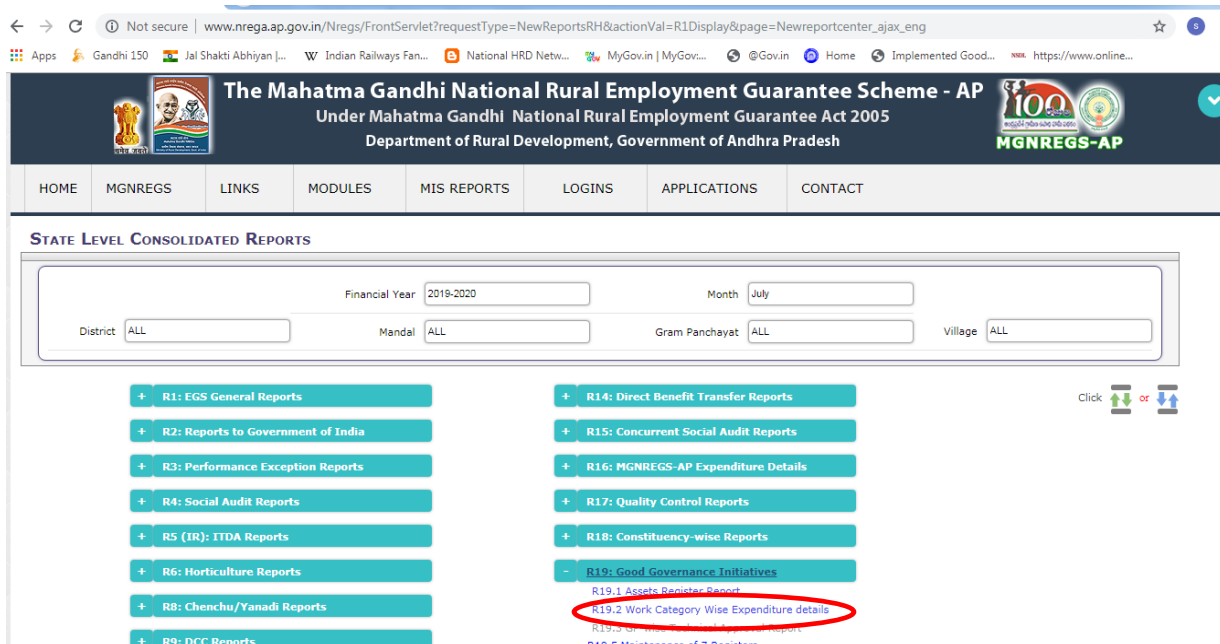
Softwares for the above works were created in the meeting and they have been integrated to their mobile application named Planning 2019-20 which can be downloaded from the website - <http://emuster.in/ap/m/NregsApps.htm> . The application is linked to the Engineers CUG number. All data has to be fed from site along with Geo tagged photos.

The third and most significant milestone in this journey has been the creation of a centralized dash board for monitoring all railway works which is elaborated below –



Pic. 23 – Main web page of MGNREGS, Andhra Pradesh

1. The above web page opens up (Refer Pic. 23) when we go to www.nrega.ap.gov.in which is the official NREGA website for the state of Andhra Pradesh. This website is being maintained by TCS.



Pic. 24 – Web page of MGNREGS, Andhra Pradesh

2. On clicking the tab – MIS Reports, the above window opens up (Refer Pic. 24). On clicking the R19: Good Governance Initiatives, a drop down menu appears. On clicking R 19.2, a new window opens up (Pic. 25) which is shown below.

S.No.	Sub Category Name	11702	14272.5	3757.28	18029.78	67.88	1231	245.49	3.26	246.74	1.19	11	0	0.08	0.08	0
4	CHENCHU PROGRAM WORKS															
5	Fisheries work	5072	21475.11	3937.16	25412.27	100.15	2807	3976.38	122.18	4096.56	19.68	35	12.74	2.59	15.33	0.06
6	Greenary works (Chettu)	243165	169520.01	183654.88	353174.59	895.55	183290	2427.02	6490.06	8917.08	12.21	9045	1.18	187.97	189.15	0.01
7	Housing	308052	32252.02	1434.13	33886.15	153.11	177813	4076.7	155.72	4232.42	19.32	38079	827.22	180.85	1008.07	4.01
8	IJP PROGRAM WORKS	4134	0	1474.5	1474.5	0	528	0	0	0	0	24	0	0	0	0
9	IWMP PROGRAM WORKS	39433	45664.43	12604.67	58289.1	233.99	14479	536.28	20.42	556.7	2.63	1348	22.35	2.35	24.7	0.1
10	Institutional Development Works	37007	48712.91	98978.9	147891.81	234.97	11182	557.19	2929.6	3486.79	2.74	369	1.08	197.23	198.31	0.01
11	OTHERS	43768	23840.23	12069.99	35910.21	128.68	20262	2564.91	26.67	2591.59	12.18	13	0	0.77	0.77	0
12	Railway Project	733	4013.86	60.08	4073.94	19.03	103	263.34	0.93	264.27	1.32	0	0	0	0	0
13	Road Works	158477	156078.14	857264.36	1113828.69	734.39	68849	314702	31880.89	37166.11	28.63	11559	10.22	4050.22	4060.44	0.05
14	Rural Sanitation Works	180511	7181.61	71817.89	79009.5	34.86	36406	75.1	1578.12	1653.22	0.37	18984	138.16	1565.9	1704.06	0.7
15	Sericulture Works	9059	9269.04	13629.38	23098.41	44.04	6210	338.97	269.91	608.88	1.76	197	1.18	2.6	3.78	0.01
16	Soil Moisture Conservation works (Neeru)	64583	81636.82	2112.19	83749.02	383.65	26756	8046.99	77.38	8124.34	39.03	745	95.74	5.64	101.37	0.48

Pic. 25

3. In this new window (Pic. 25), S. No. 12 titled Railway Project needs to be clicked.

R19.2 Work Category Wise Expenditure details
Report During Financial Year 2019-2020
Report as on Date : 23/03/2020
Last Updated : 22-Mar-2020 02:13:09
State Level Report

Broad Category Name : Railway Project State : Andhra Pradesh

S.No.	Sub Category Name	Administratively sanctioned					In Progress					Completed					Cumulative
		No. of Works	Unskilled (in Lakhs)	Material (in Lakhs)	Estimation Amount (in Lakhs)	Mandays (in Lakhs)	No. of Works	Unskilled (in Lakhs)	Material (in Lakhs)	Total Expenditure (in Lakhs)	Mandays (in Lakhs)	No. of Works	Unskilled (in Lakhs)	Material (in Lakhs)	Total Expenditure (in Lakhs)	Mandays (in Lakhs)	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
1	Desilting of Open Wells	2	0.38	0.41	0.79	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
2	Desilting of water ways of bridges/RUBs/Pipe culverts/Box culverts	140	99.77	3.5	103.26	0.47	25	7.52	0.12	7.64	0.04	0	0	0	0		
3	Recharge structure for dried up bore well	2	0.06	0.47	0.52	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
4	Strengthening/widening of Railways embankment	77	582.57	8.42	590.99	2.75	19	80	0.67	80.67	0.42	2	29.8	0.3	30.1	0.15	
5	Trench cutting along Railway boundary	417	2528.68	38.89	2567.56	11.98	96	202.94	2.02	204.96	1.02	21	61.22	0.88	62.11	0.29	
Total		638	3211.45	51.69	3263.14	15.21	142	290.46	2.82	293.28	1.48	23	91.02	1.18	92.21	0.44	

Pic. 26

4. The following screen now opens up (Refer Pic. 26). This is the **Central Dashboard** for monitoring all works.

The system of monitoring as totally absolute and complete. All required information can be extracted from it.

As of today (12.12.2020), 964 number of works amounting to Rs. 47.89 crores have got sanction and 175 number of works are in progress amounting to Rs. 2.54 crores. 72 works amounting to Rs. 1.62 crores have been completed.

With this edifice, works are in progress in entire Andhra Pradesh. In the jurisdiction of ADEN/OGL, works are in progress with close to 6000 labour working every day. A few snaps are attached below (Refer Pic. 27, 28, 29 and 30) –



Pic. 27 – View of finished site



Pic. 28 – Another view of finished site



Pic. 29 – View of work under progress

As can be seen from the above photo (Pic. 29), the works are being synergistically carried out with all the works being linked together to ensure effective utilization of resources. The earth excavated from trench cutting work which is being cut along the railway boundary is being utilized for strengthening/widening of Railway embankment. The work of embankment is being carried out in a step formation in order to ensure better retentivity of cess. The trenches serve as water harvesting pits which will help in enhancing ground water. Adjacent to the railway boundary, farmers have their fields and they have expressed tremendous happiness over this work as ground water recharge will help them in better yields.

Railway suffers from a huge problem of encroachments i.e. the farmers have a tendency to uproot the boundary pillar preferably in the middle of night and place them inside railway land. The trenches which have been cut along the railway boundary will serve as boundary protectors. Also owing to the trench cutting exercise, the railway land will not be easily accessible/tresspassable resulting in reduced cattle run-over cases.



Pic. 30 – Another view of work under progress

Geo tagged snaps of work under progress in ADEN/OGL sub-division (Refer Pic. 31 and 32) –



Pic. 31 – Geo-tagged photo of site



Pic. 32 – Another Geo-tagged photo of site

Potential/Achievements -

1. The state administration takes up all the works listed above in a very different manner as the objectives are very different. Example to elaborate upon the same - In case of plantation, in railways, the target is to achieve the number planted without much thought about their survival. Also it is not the core activity and hence gets sidelined. As per the plantation policy adopted in the state, a 3 year maintenance period is there wherein the state will deploy a watcher to ensure that it is protected from grazing and also watered regularly. The policy also stipulates an 80 % survival rate. The thought is to develop it as an asset.

Now taking forward, one of the works identified was Linear Plantation in which, in consultation with MGNREGS officials, Railways has decided to execute 50 % plantation with timber trees and 50 % fruit bearing. Thereafter, contact has been made with ITC Bhadrachalam and Delta Paper works for utilizing this wood after maturity for commercial purpose. The firms have responded positively and preparation of MOU is underway. This can be further developed as a means to generate Non-fare Revenue for Railways.

2. Trench cutting along railway boundary is an item which was introduced as a means to mitigate cattle run over cases and to reduce trespassing incidents.
3. In case of bitumen road construction, the policy states that for every Rs. 100 spent, Rs. 90 will be sanctioned under MGNREGS and the rest Rs. 10 has to be financed by the converging department. Railway has now begun working on mixing crushed and granulated class 3 rubber pads and putting them as part replacement for bitumen i.e. the 10 % cost will be financed by utilizing class 3 rubber pads thereby enabling cost savings and better waste management.
4. Close liaisoning with state government has resulted in beginning of the closure approval process of 7 level crossing gates in ADEN/OGL section.

Vision –

As per the details shared by the state government, Railways was the 24th department to secure convergence under MGNREGS. Now the vision was to make Railways stand no. 1 in priority for fund allocation and to that effect various initiatives have been undertaken in Ongole sub-division which are listed below –

1. As per the Constitution of India, the Right to Work has been identified as a Fundamental Right and to that effect work has been done to provide facilities which enable Right to work with dignity. All level crossing gates in Ongole sub-division jurisdiction (38 nos.) have been provided with a toilet which is in addition to all station building (9 nos.). The magnitude of this exercise can be appreciated from the fact that approximately 105 kilometer of railway line passes through Prakasam District and 48 LC gates and 18 station buildings have been provided with a toilet which means a toilet at **every 1.5 kilometer from the initially one in every 10 kilometer** (Refer Pic. 34 to 42).

2. First aid safety kit boxes (Refer Pic. 33) have been provided to all Level Crossing gates and station buildings including ORS (Oral Rehydration Salts) packets.
3. Water supply provision is there at all Level crossing gates and station buildings in the form of either bore well or municipal supply (Refer Pic. 34 to 42).
4. Gate men work round the clock at Level Crossing gates in shifts and hence in case of any emergency, the gateman can ferry the labour/patient to the nearest district or railway hospital (Refer Pic. 34 to 42).

As can be seen from the above, tremendous support system in terms of better worksite management has been developed over time which will help in seamless integration of MGNREGS with Railways.

A few photos have been attached below -



Pic. 33



Pic. 34

The above are first aid kit safety boxes supplied at each and every LC gate

The green colour structure is Fibre Reinforced Plastic toilet which is installed at each and every LC gate.

Behind is a septic tank.



Pic. 35

LC 148 having toilet and hand pump for water



Pic. 36

LC 153 having toilet and hand pump for water



Pic. 37

LC 155 having toilet and hand pump for water



Pic. 38

LC 156 having toilet and hand pump for water



Pic. 39

LC 173 having toilet and municipal water supply



Pic. 40

LC 174 having toilet and hand pump for water



Pic. 41

LC 175 having toilet and municipal water supply



Pic. 42

LC 180 having toilet and hand pump for water

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