

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background and Study Objectives

The Karnataka Evaluation Authority assigned the responsibility of carrying out an evaluation study entitled “Evaluation Study of the Performance of Farm Forestry Component under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) Scheme in Chamarajanagar, Chitradurga, Dharwad, Gadag and Raichur Districts of Karnataka in the period 2013-14 to 2015-16” vide its proceeding no. KEA251EVN2016 dated 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2016 to OUTREACH Association of Volunteers for Rural Development, Bengaluru. The primary objectives of this assignment were to:

- Assess the quality of seedlings provided for planting.
- Verify whether beneficiaries were selected as per the MGNREGA statute.
- Understand the survival and growth rate of seedlings as on the date of data collection and the reasons thereof.
- Review the impact of the programme on rural livelihoods with a special thrust on vulnerable groups.
- Evaluate the impact of Farm Forestry Programme and evolve a set of recommendations that could make the programme more effective.

### Policy Framework

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (MGNREGA) is one of the largest rural poverty alleviation programmes incorporating many dimensions of development into it. MGNREGA is being implemented in Karnataka since 2006. The MGNREGA Act provides for the enhancement of livelihood security of the households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

The 2014 Amendment to the schedule I &II of MGNREGA 2005 Act, focused on afforestation and farm forestry activities under the category of Public Works relating to Natural Resource Management. Farm forestry activities were seen as the means of improving livelihood bases of vulnerable communities covered by MGNREGA. The Government of Karnataka vide joint circular no. Gra.Aa.Pa 410 U.KhaYo 2014 dated: 24.11.2014 cited KFD as the implementing department for afforestation and farm forestry works, where in forestry seedlings raised under MGNREGA are to be distributed free for planting on lands owned by specifically identified beneficiaries.

## Methodology

The study was carried out in 5 Districts of Karnataka and the study universe consisted of 14949 beneficiaries in these 5 districts who had received 33.021 lakh seedlings from forest nurseries during the review period as indicated in the TOR. As per the TOR “the size of the sample is fixed at 10 per cent of all beneficiaries in each district and year, with the rider that if/after the data needed to answer evaluation question A is available, 10 per cent of the beneficiaries in each of the 11 categories (the clearly ineligible will not be covered in the sample at all) will be selected to form the meta 10 per cent sample of the district in each year. Selection of sample beneficiaries was done by using the simple random sample method. However, in the case of Raichur district, since the population of beneficiaries in 2015-16 was 47, which is too small, no sampling will be resorted to” (pp.27-28).

As indicated in the ToR ‘In accordance with paragraph 5 of MGNREGA cited above, forestry seedlings raised under MGNREGA scheme were formally permitted, vide joint circular no. Gra.Aa.Pa 410 U.Kha Yo 2014 dated: 24.11.2014 of the Forest Department and Rural Development Commissionerate, to be distributed free of cost to be planted in the lands owned by the following types of beneficiaries **a.** Scheduled Castes, **b.** Scheduled Tribes, **c.** Nomadic Tribes, **d.** De-notified Tribes, **e.** Other Families Below Poverty Line (BPL), **f.** Women-headed households, **g.** Physically handicapped households, **h.** Beneficiaries of land reforms, **i.** Beneficiaries of Indira Awaas Yojana, **j.** Beneficiaries under the scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, and, **k.** after exhausting all the above eligible beneficiaries, on lands of the small or marginal farmers as defined in the Agriculture Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme, 2008, subject to the condition that such households have a MGNREGA job card with at least one member willing to work on the project (planting of seedlings in their lands) or homesteads’ (p 24).

As per the TOR the research team accessed the list of beneficiaries from the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Social Forestry of the concerned districts (ToR pp 28-29). Once the base line data on all the beneficiaries was gathered, the research team realized that the data for many talukas across all the 5 districts did not contain information on all the 10 eligible categories from which beneficiaries had to be chosen. The source data for identification of beneficiaries showed three categories namely ‘Scheduled Castes’, ‘Scheduled Tribes’ and ‘Others’ (A term used by KFD covering Small/Marginal farmers belonging to different caste groups) in all the districts. Thirteen (13) BPL families listed in Chamarajanagar, five hundred and thirty three (533) in Gadag and two (2) in Raichur districts; five (5) Women Headed

Households in Gadag district; one (1) beneficiary under Indira Awaas Yojana in Raichur district; one (1) beneficiary under the Small/Marginal farmer category and one (1) Physically Handicapped beneficiary in Chitadurga district have been included in the study universe. A 10 percent sample of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, category 'Others' and BPL families in Gadag district was chosen. All the 13 and 2 BPL beneficiaries in Chamrajanagar and Raichur districts respectively, 5 WHH beneficiaries in Gadag district, 1 each in IAY in Raichur district and PH and S/MF categories in Chitradurga district have been covered as their numbers were too small. In selecting a beneficiary, it has been ensured that his/her name was shown in the beneficiary list.

The primary data for the study have been generated with the help of an interview schedule which was constructed by keeping the evaluation questions in frame. The field investigators personally met all the beneficiaries in the course of interviews. Focus group discussions were also conducted with the participation of both representatives of KFD and community members. The data have been analysed district wise and year wise and presented in the form of tables and diagrams.

#### **Major Findings of the Study**

- Of all the beneficiaries covered by the study in the 5 districts in each of the years, i.e. 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16 the majority belong to the category 'others'. This is primarily because categories such as 'BPL families' (except in Gadag district), 'Women Headed Households', 'Beneficiaries under Indira Awaas Yojana' have hardly been represented in the list of beneficiaries procured from the DCFs, Social Forestry in the 5 districts. Categories such as 'Nomadic and Denotified Tribes', 'Beneficiaries of Land Reforms', 'Beneficiaries under the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers Act 2006' are not at all represented in the list of beneficiaries.
- 70 percent of the beneficiaries in the study sample possessed job cards and of the total seedlings distributed in the 5 districts, those with job cards received 69.42 percent of the seedlings.
- For the purpose of identifying beneficiaries, in the maximum number of cases RTCs were used as the base. The other documents used for verification were voter ID, job card, Aadhar card, ration card and driving license (in that order).

- 70 percent of all the beneficiaries under study had a job card. In the category ‘others’ nearly 68 percent possessed job card but only 52 percent reported that they had produced the job card for verification.
- Men constitute the single largest majority among the beneficiaries, their proportion being 87 percent.
- On the quality of the seedlings, the perception of the majority of the beneficiaries was that, it was ‘good’ (59 percent). The remaining 41 percent said that it was ‘moderate’.
- In each of the 5 districts and during all the three years all the beneficiaries have received ‘revenue yielding’ seedlings. In addition 8 percent have received ‘fruit yielding’ species.
- There was a reduction in the supply of seedlings of revenue yielding variety in Chitradurga, Dharwad and Gadag districts. In Chamarajanagar and Raichur districts the demand for the revenue yielding variety was higher. The supply of fruit yielding variety of seedlings showed an increase in all the four districts except in Dharwad.
- All the seedlings considered for evaluation were distributed to beneficiaries from forest nurseries in the respective regions only.
- Of all the seedlings distributed to the beneficiaries for planting, all were planted in the lands belonging to beneficiaries.
- Of the seedlings distributed and actually planted in the beneficiary’s land, where only seedlings were distributed, 10 percent, 24 percent, 52 percent, 47 percent and 11 percent of the seedlings were surviving and healthy in Chamarajanagar, Chitradurga, Dharwad, Gadag and Raichur districts respectively. In the barely surviving categories 0.24 percent, 4 percent, 11 percent and 0.69 percent were seen in Chitradurga, Dharwad, Gadag and Raichur districts respectively.
- For all the 5 districts put together, of the total seedlings distributed 34 percent were ‘surviving and healthy’, 4 percent of the seedlings are ‘barely surviving but existing’. Whereas 62 of the seedlings were dead.
- As many as 90 percent in Chamarajanagar district, 75 percent in Chitradurga district, 44 percent in Dharwad, 42 percent in Gadag, and 87 percent of the seedlings in Raichur district were dead.
- The most important reason cited by both KFD sources and beneficiaries for the low survival rate in all the five districts is scanty rainfall. The fact that these districts have been experiencing drought is in itself the primary cause for the death of seedlings.

The other reasons cited for low survival rate are excessive dependence on rainfed agriculture, subsidiary importance given by farmers to farm forestry activities, neglect of farm forestry seedlings by farmers because of migration and other economic hardships and excessive grazing by live stock.

- In Chamarajanagar district 95 percent, Chitradurga 7 percent, Gadag 55 percent and Raichur 37 percent of the beneficiaries got the cost of pitting and planting. In Dharwad not a single beneficiary had received wages for pitting and planting.
- There is no significant relationship between payment of pitting and planting charges and survival rate of seedlings. This is corroborated by the fact that in Chamarajanagar district where 95 percent of the beneficiaries had been paid pitting and planting costs 90 percent of the seedlings were dead. In Dharwad district where not a single beneficiary had received wages for pitting and planting 52 percent of the seedlings were surviving and healthy.
- Not a single beneficiary in the study sample has received maintenance costs.
- The computation of the survival percentage of the seedlings planted in beneficiaries' land, district wise and year wise shows that Chamarajanagar district for the year 2013-14 records a survival rate of 23 percent and for the years 2014-15 and 2015-16 it was 14 and 2 percent respectively. The forest officials and the beneficiaries noted that inadequate rainfall was the major reason for loss of seedlings. The farmers noted that providing water to the primary crop and for their personal use was more important than watering the seedlings procured under the farm forestry programme. In Chitradurga for the year 2013-14 the survival percentage was 16 per cent, followed by 36 in the year 2014-15 and 30 in the year 2015-16. In Dharwad district survival percentages for 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16 were 52, 54 and 52 respectively. In Gadag the figures were 44 percent in 2014-15 and 50 percent in 2015-16. Raichur district recorded 07 percent in the year 2013-14 and 09 and 14 percent respectively in the consecutive years.
- Since the farm forestry programme under MGNREGA was introduced only in the year 2013-14 it is too early to assess its impact on enhancing the livelihood bases of beneficiaries.
- The Farm Forestry programme under MRNREGA is expected to address the issue of obtaining long term returns from trees sold as timber and also providing immediate financial support through payment of wages for pitting and planting. The study data

however show that not a single person got maintenance cost whereas nearly 53 percent who did the pitting and planting work themselves did not receive the payment for pitting and planting. Thus the programme has a long way to go in addressing livelihood issues of the rural poor.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the inputs from the study data and interactions with different stakeholders of the farm forestry programme the following recommendations are made for making farm forestry programme under MGNREGA a more effective and inclusive:

- It must be ensured that all records of the KFD that document the list of beneficiaries must include beneficiaries of all categories identified by the MGNREGA statutes. The list also must contain information on the number and type of seedlings provided to each beneficiary and records verified at the time of distributing the seedlings.
- Selection of beneficiaries without verifying eligibility criteria and category specifically laid down by the MGNREGA guidelines must be discontinued.
- Conscious efforts must be made to disseminate information on the farm forestry programme and its benefits to different groups through media, written sources and weekly farmers' markets so that people from all the categories mentioned in the statute would come forward to access the programme.
- Seedlings must be supplied in locations close to planting sites or at the village weekly market place. The beneficiaries have indicated that payment of transportation charges turn out to be an additional burden on them. If KFD could arrange to identify and notify distribution points for a cluster of villages and give wide publicity to the date and timing of the distribution, the survival rate of seedlings would definitely improve.
- The beneficiaries must be helped to ensure that seedlings are planted with early monsoon, so that plantations get enough back up showers and show good growth.
- As the programme in its present form is not so successful, it is necessary to provide technical guidance by providing at least 1 extension motivator for 5 villages.
- The after care of the planted seedlings and its protection is the key to success. It is important to provide information to farmers on innovative water conservation methods such as check dams, water soak pits and trench bunds, to name a few.
- Additional ground level staff for monitoring farm forestry activities must be appointed in KFD.

- As the Act specifically indicates, the programme must be based on the needs of the communities to whom seedlings are being distributed. Since people demand bigger size seedlings the scheme should be recast to include a provision for providing bigger size seedlings.
- In order to increase the revenue of the rural poor it is suggested that grafted fruit yielding seedlings be supplied. Of course grafted seedlings require intensive care, which must be built into the scheme.
- NGOs and locally active civil society groups such as SHGs, Yuvaka and Yuvati mandals must be involved to make the programme inclusive and fruitful in the long run.
- Timely release of funds to the nurseries must be ensured.
- The scheme can be integrated with CSR programmes of industries working in the area. It is expected that paucity of funds for maintenance and protection can be made up from CSR funds.
- The present programme has two components – one, distribution of seedlings which is assigned to KFD and the other payment for pitting, planting and maintenance, which is the responsibility of the Gram Panchayat. There is often lack of coordination between the two institutions. In order to set this anomaly right, a single window which manages both the distribution of seedlings and payment of wages must be created to ensure that the system runs without a block.

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