



Press Release

MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT OUTLINES GREENING AGENDA FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES

4th Jan 2012, New Delhi, India:

The Ministry of Rural Development, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) today released a report “Greening Rural Development in India”. The report presents strategies for inclusive rural development embodying the principles of environmental sustainability. The Report assumes particular significance in the light of the Twelfth Five Year Plan, which has as its objective, ‘faster, more inclusive and *sustainable* growth’.

The Report was released jointly by Shri Montek Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Shri Jairam Ramesh, Minister of Rural Development, and Ms Jayanthi Natarajan, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Environment and Forests.

Releasing the report, the Minister for Rural Development, Mr. Jairam Ramesh said: “With an annual budget of around Rs 75,000 crore, the Minister of Rural Development’s Schemes have an immense potential to contribute to the goal of sustainable poverty reduction and efficient use of natural resources. Each of the Ministry’s Schemes needs to incorporate a set of green objectives in its implementation and make delivery of green results a part of policy and guidelines”.

Ms Lise Grande, United Nations Resident Coordinator for India, also emphasized the importance of greening in the context of building the capacity of rural populations, “Greening development schemes make good economic sense. Evidence shows that done the right way, greening will create jobs, stimulate rural economies and help build the resilience of poor communities to withstand natural disasters”.

The report has examined six flagship Government of India (GoI) schemes, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MGNREGS); National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM); Integrated Watershed Development Programme (IWDP); Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY); National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDP) and Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA) to recommend actions and measures to achieve greening outcomes. In specific it looks as improving quality of ecosystems, enabling sustainable livelihoods, strengthening resilience of local communities to enable them to recover from extreme weather events and reducing ecological footprint through efficient use of energy, material and natural resources.

The report recommends that the Ministry identify a set of green outcomes and prepare green guidelines that include a set of non-negotiation principles. The findings also call for greater flexibility so that people and institutions adopt creative and innovative approaches to achieving green outcomes. A support organization formed through designated civil society can facilitate implementation of green guidelines. A dedicated Green Cell would enable the Ministry to guide the greening agenda and implementation of guidelines. The Report also recommended an annual Green Report by the Ministry to summarize major green achievements and outcomes during the year.



Programme Specific Recommendations

Greening rural development refers to five broad green outcomes:

- (1) Improved natural resource conservation
- (2) Increased efficiency of resource use
- (3) Reduced negative environmental impacts
- (4) Strengthened climate resilience of communities
- (5) Contribution to climate change mitigation

The Report outlines specific recommendations for flagship schemes.

Priority Recommendations for MGNREGS:

- Prepare Perspective Plan for every Gram Panchayat on the basis of landscape, watershed or aquifer based planning
- Strengthen capacities of Gram Panchayats to develop green proposals and monitor green results: develop and utilize appropriate toolkits for this purpose
- Strengthen block level capacities to support implementing agencies to deliver green results
- Develop an MGNREGS green index as a part of the scheme monitoring system to track green impacts at the Gram Panchayat level
- Incentivize Gram Panchayats to achieve and surpass the threshold level on the MGNREGS green index; this incentive may be drawn from the budgetary provision for administrative expenses
- Increase focus on treatment of forest land in convergence with joint forest management and the Green India Mission

Priority Recommendations for NRLM:

- Include as 'essential' outcome in Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) guidelines, a result each on sustainably harvested produce and sustainable agricultural practices (in addition to current one on soil health) for all initiatives
- Develop protocols for sustainable harvest of non-timber forest produce and sustainable agriculture and livestock management, and facilitate their adoption by SHGs
- Earmark 2 percent of overall budget (or 10 percent of provision for infrastructure and marketing) for work at meso level on developing niche markets for sustainably harvested produce and for green input supply chains
- Provide backloaded 'labour subsidy' to SHGs for adoption of sustainable practices to compensate for lower labour productivity (in current guidelines, there is provision only for capital subsidy or revolving funds for SHGs)



Priority Recommendations for Integrated Watershed Development Program:

- Specify environmentally sustainable resource management and production systems in the work plan, with convergent support from other schemes, and develop capacities of community institutions to adopt the systems.
- Use the budget allocated for 'production systems and microenterprises' to support key aspects of sustainable production systems.
- Establish indicators for soil health, biodiversity and water resource sustainability and set up resource sustainability targets using these indicators.
- Formalize usufruct rights and legal entitlements to promote sustainable use practices through community involvement. The 5 percent budget provision for the 'consolidation phase' must be released only after these measures are adopted by the community.
- Encourage support organizations to take on action research pilots to enhance green results.

Priority Recommendations for National Rural Drinking Water Programme:

- Ensure source sustainability is built into the Resource Development Proposals from Gram Panchayats while sanctioning projects.
- Institutionalize participatory water quality monitoring and reporting by Gram Panchayats.
- Ensure safe disposal of contaminants after the water treatment process • Dedicate additional funds for use of green technologies.
- The Water Security Plans must take into account all relevant water demands.

Priority Recommendations for Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan:

- Establish a Green Home Protocol and a Green Panchayat Protocol to be implemented in a phased manner across the country.
- Enhance the budgetary share of solid and liquid waste management component.
- Increase emphasis on solid and liquid waste management in the eligibility criteria for the Nirmal Gram Puraskar.
- Prepare an inventory of solid and liquid waste management technologies and disseminate widely.
- Launch a campaign for highlighting the tangible benefits of rural sanitation on health and livelihoods.

Priority Recommendations for Indira Awaas Yojana:

- Prepare region-specific Handbooks of Green Building Designs including green construction materials that cover the life cycle of an IAY house.
- Support district level Building Resource Centres to promote green technologies and designs; link financial support to quantity and effectiveness of green services provided.
- Develop an IAY Green Index to measure, monitor and report on green results on a regular basis.
- Provide additional subsidy (20 percent) to families building housing units that score above threshold on the green index.
- Provide additional funds to districts committing to specified number of green housing units under IAY.