

# MGNREGA- A Way to Livelihood in Khamdong Block Sikkim

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The Centrally sponsored poverty alleviation scheme, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has found diverse uses during its successful implementation in Khamdong block of East Sikkim. The MGNREGA implementation is not confined only to land development, footpath construction but extends to water source development and plantation in the drought prone Khamdong block.

Though MGNREGA works have been carried out in all the five Gram Panchayat Units (GPUs) under the Khamdong block, one can assess that the Martam Nazitam GPU is the best gram panchayats based on their contribution in implementing this scheme. The GPU has 1106 households with a total population of 5298, out of which 230 household are listed as BPLs as per records of Census 2011.

As the Khamdong Block is Drought Prone area, Dhara Vikash Programme was undertaken under MGNREGA in 2010-11 on pilot basis at Patim Panchayat Ward, under Martam-Nazitam GPU targeting the 130 households. The work was carried out in 2 hectares of land at an estimated cost of Rs 1, 32,000/- and executed in different phases.

The main objective of this program is to conserve moisture in soil in order to achieve the target of maximum discharge of springs. Keeping this in mind, saplings of various water conserving plants were planted during the month of May 2011. Now it is observed that more than 90% of saplings have survived in the field. As a result, the discharge of the water has seen a handsome increase as compared to since its inception in October 2010 with 11 ltr/min to 15 ltr/min till July 2011.

According to the villagers, the programme has been very successful and beneficial to them. This is serving as a very important water source in areas where there is shortage of water source or where the existing water source is near to exhaustion, the villagers said.

Besides this, with an objective to uplift the economic status of the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and families living in Below Poverty Line, the grafted guava plantation were taken up in the three wards under Martam Nazitam GPU during the last financial year covering an area of 10 hectares of land. The total numbers of 8250 guava saplings were planted in private holdings of the beneficiaries selected in the Gram Sabha. To ensure good quality and better productivity, the guava plants (L-49) were procured from Banaras, Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh and the fruiting is expected within three years.

The returns from guava plantation would be an extra source of income for the beneficiaries improving their living standards considering the demand and readymade market for guavas in the state.

The implementation of MGNREGA in Khamdong Block has seen land development, construction of footpath and protective work and fencing at Lingtam. The project was taken up in and around Sekewa Bazaar. The Rural Produce Marketing Centre is where local villagers used to come to sell their produce and livestock on

every Sunday in a sloppy terrain area measuring 0.2340 hectare, surrounded by rocks. Therefore under MGNREGA, works like construction of retaining wall, development of footpath and fencing of complex were taken up with an estimated cost of Rs 18.63 lakhs.

With the creation of such assets, now the complex is helping the villagers to supplement their livelihood income. The scheme has also provided wage employment to job seekers and such a durable and permanent asset to the society.

*\*Disclaimer: The views expressed by the author in this feature are entirely her own and do not necessarily reflect the views of INVC*

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