

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)

It is a path-breaking initiative to provide legal guarantee to work and to transform “the geography of poverty”. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) 2005 envisages securing the livelihood of people in rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of employment in a financial year to a rural household. The Act provides a social safety net for the vulnerable households and an opportunity to combine growth with equity. In the first phase of implementation, 200 districts are to be covered. This programme was launched on February 2, 2006. Additional 130 districts were brought under NREGA during 2007-08 in its second phase making a total of 330 districts under the act. The remaining districts where NREGA will come into force w.e.f. 1st April 2008 have been notified on 28th September 2007. As such the statutory provision of the Act to cover the entire country within five years of its notification has been fulfilled. The main provisions of the Act are:

1. Employment to be given within 15 days of application for work
2. If employment is not provided within 15 days, daily unemployment allowance in cash has to be paid
3. Employment within 5 kms. radius, else extra wages to be paid.
4. At least one-third beneficiaries have to be women.
5. Gram Sabha will recommend works
6. Gram Panchayat to execute at least 50 per cent of works.
7. PRIs have a principal role in planning and implementation
8. Transparency, accountability and social audit would be ensured through institutional mechanism at all levels
9. Grievance redressal mechanism to be put in place for ensuring a responsive implementation

NREGA marks a paradigm shift from all earlier and existing wage employment programmes because it is an Act and not just a scheme. It provides a Legal guarantee to work.

The rural households in the notified districts will have the right to register themselves with the local Gram Panchayat as persons interested in getting employment under the Act. The Gram Panchayat upon verification will register the household and issue a job card which is a legal document entitling a person to ask for work under the Act.

NREGA programme has been launched by the Government of Puducherry to provide employment to unskilled manpower by direct wage employment in the rural areas of Puducherry and Karaikal regions.