

National Mission for a Green India



Mission Brief prepared as part of the Study: Implementation of the National Action Plan on
Climate Change (NAPCC) - Progress & Evaluation

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About the Study

This Study has been undertaken to provide pointers to facilitate effective implementation of the National Missions under the NAPCC, as well as to highlight key policy aspects that augur well to further this national mandate. Specifically, the Study has sought to track the progress achieved by each of the National Missions since their launch up to March 2015 and also evaluate them through the lens of core policy implementation functions.

Using a combination of desk research and expert interviews, the Study has consolidated informed insights on strategies to accelerate and enhance the efficacy of the Missions' implementation, apart from documenting details of their progress. The Study team has interacted with key Government officials, domain experts in affiliated technical and academic institutions and independent research organizations to gain perspectives from all relevant stakeholders in this context. A distinct format has been followed for reviewing the Missions which have achieved quantifiable progress against their targets.

The findings of this Study were disseminated at a policy workshop, hosted by IFMR LEAD in June 2015 at New Delhi, bringing together policymakers from the concerned Union Ministries, bilateral agencies and other relevant stakeholders. The event marked a focused dialogue on the progress of the NAPCC thus far as well as the way forward for the Missions. Inputs from the workshop have been incorporated into the Study report. While the Study objectives, methodology adopted and findings across Missions have been summarised in this report, detailed findings on each Mission have been elaborated in individual Mission briefs.

Introduction

The GIM was envisaged as a comprehensive participatory Mission for greening India and was launched in June 2010. The Mission (The National Mission for a Green India, 2010) adopted scientific and inclusive methods of implementing conventional afforestation programmes using decentralized governance frameworks necessitating community participation. In its attempt to break down a policy of such enormous scope into actionable projects and activities the Mission had proposed a comprehensive yet ambitious framework of landscape level implementation. The Mission document attempted at compartmentalizing the concept of greening into streamlined programmes by first outlining its objectives and targets and then highlighting its strategies to achieve them through sub-missions. The way forward for this Mission would be to convert the sub-Missions into actionable projects either through ongoing or fresh programmes with a clear mandate.

The key objectives that the Mission seeks to achieve are as under:

- Increased forest/tree cover on 5 million hectares (ha) of forest/non-forest lands and improved quality of forest cover on an additional 5 million ha of non-forest/forest lands (a total of 10 million ha)
- Improved ecosystem services including biodiversity, hydrological services, and carbon sequestration from the 10 million ha of forest/non-forest lands mentioned above
- Increased forest-based livelihood income of about 3 million households, living in and around the forests
- Enhanced annual CO₂ sequestration of 50 to 60 million tonnes by the year 2020

The Mission attempts not only to increase the forest cover across different types but also enhance their quality over different canopy layers. Another important feature of this Mission is its emphasis on reducing the vulnerability of forest-based communities to climate change by enhancing their livelihoods through alternate strategies. Achieving such targets could be easier due to its focus on participatory management of forests through local governing bodies, forest management committees, Self Help Groups (SHGs) and communities. This further inculcates ownership of forests into communities living in the fringe areas. The Mission also acknowledges the importance of using advanced technology and scientific methods to not only implement its programmes but also to monitor their progress.

The success of this Mission largely depends on how effectively it achieves the proposed decentralized management of forests in the long run. If not empowered sufficiently with resources, capacity and authority, both the governing bodies and community groups could fail to perform activities to this effect.

Tracking the Mission's Progress

In the context of this Mission, it is important to understand its distinguishing factors from other conventional greening programmes in terms of its design and implementation. Key aspects to be focused on while implementing the schemes on a Mission mode would be to ensure the following:

1. Design of a financing mechanism that would be adopted to fund them (convergence with ongoing schemes' financing channel or exclusive financing mechanism);
2. Institutionalization of responsibilities through relevant bodies at different tiers of governance (State Forest Development Agencies (SFDA), Gram Sabhas, Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs), District Planning Authorities, etc.) and empower them with adequate resources and technology;
3. Provision of appropriate guidelines/mandates to supervise the programmatic implementation and facilitate its monitoring & evaluation (Implementation¹ and Convergence Guidelines (MoEF&CC, 2015), legal framework, etc.);
4. Periodic review of the programmes after which corrective action needs to be taken keeping in mind the final targets (mid-course corrections, revamping of budgets and imposing penalties for deviation in performance).

The Mission's progress has been tracked through information² on the four core functions of policy implementation namely, *Finance, Policy Administration, Monitoring, Reporting, Evaluation & Revision* and *Compliance & Enforcement*.

Finance

As in the case of other Missions, the GIM too had envisaged a massive Rs. 46,000 Crores to complete all its proposed activities. The first phase of the Mission has been approved for Rs. 13,000 Crores³ for activities whose implementation is to span over the 12th and 13th Five Year Plans. The Ministry plans to acquire this funding through the following:

TABLE 1: SOURCES OF FUNDS FOR THE GIM

Source of Funds	Amount (Rs. Crores)
Budgetary support from the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC)	2,000
Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management & Planning Authority (CAMPA)	6,000
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS)	4,000
Finance Commission grants	600
National Afforestation Programme	400

Source: Implementation Guidelines for the GIM

¹ Implementation Guidelines for National Mission for a Green India (GIM), released November 2014 by the MoEF&CC

² Information published till March 2015 have been collected for the purpose of tracking this Mission.

³ Press release by the Ministry of Environment and Forests on the GIM dated 28 December 2013

Till 2013-14, an amount of approximately Rs. 63 Crores was released to the States to prepare their Bridge and Perspective Plans, indicating their landscapes for implementation. For the year 2014-15, Rs. 80 Crores was initially approved for funding Perspective Plans submitted by 11 States. Owing to non-adherence to Implementation Guidelines which were released only in November 2014, States were asked to rework on their respective plans, due to which the annual budget was downsized to Rs. 3 Crores. It is also perceived that several ongoing schemes under the MoEF&CC could potentially be used as a financing route for implementing the Mission activities. Hence, no alternate financing channel is expected in this regard.

Policy Administration

The Mission was initially proposed to be spearheaded by a Mission Directorate to be housed in the National Afforestation and Eco-development Board (NAEB) but currently is placed within the MoEF&CC. In February 2014, the GIM was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs to be treated as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS). At the State level, it is to be housed within the State Forest Development Agency (SFDA) in the Forest Department as an exclusive body for GIM activities, but no such arrangement has been created so far in most States. At the District level, the Mission activities are to be coordinated through the existing mechanism of District Planning Committees (DPCs) and Forest Development Agencies (FDA). The Gram Sabhas and the Committees set up by them, including the JFMCs, Community Forest Management (CFM) groups, Van Panchayats, Village Council etc., are to play vital roles in implementation at the village level. But since the Mission has not yet reached a stage of active implementation, it is too early to evaluate their roles.

Two sets of guidelines have so far been released as part of the GIM. First, the Implementation Guidelines were released by the MoEF&CC in November 2014 to all the States to guide the preparation of the Perspective Plans. Secondly, the Convergence Guidelines, released in March 2015, aim to facilitate convergence between MNREGS and the GIM. The Implementation Guidelines discuss providing a policy and regulatory framework for smooth implementation of the Mission after identifying the difficulties faced by farmers in participating in the agro-forestry programmes. Hence an exclusive set of guidelines to ease out the regulatory regime for harvesting and transit of agro-forestry species is expected to be released by the MoEF&CC. These aside, there has not been any substantive restructuring between coordinating nodal agencies/institutions for the purpose of the Mission.

Monitoring, Reporting, Evaluation & Revision

The Mission proposed a Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) framework at four levels. It involves different agencies conducting M&E operations⁴ at multiple levels as shown below:

- Level 1: On ground self-monitoring of the region by the local community, implementing organization and the Forest Department
- Level 2: Field review by an external agency of both random and selected sites will be taken up. This will be primarily for Mission-financed activities
- Level 3: This will use remote sensing based forest cover monitoring by the Forest Survey of India, supplemented by boundaries of areas covered under the Mission
- Level 4: In addition, a few pilot areas will be intensively monitored to assess the impact and efficacy of different old and new practices.

Lastly, a social audit by the Gram Sabha and an audit by the Comptroller and Accountant General and the Accountant General in the States will also be undertaken.

The Implementation Guidelines provides a very comprehensive framework proposed to be followed for any activity taken forward under the GIM. They include a Performance Monitoring Framework (PMF) template that all monitoring agencies are required to adopt while tracking the progress of Mission activities. The adherence to this framework can be evaluated only after the Mission advances into a stage of active implementation.

Compliance & Enforcement

The Implementation Guidelines has identified potential areas which require regulatory support to further enhance their effective implementation. One such area is the agro-forestry component of the Mission where it seeks to bring 1.5 million ha of degraded agricultural and fallow lands under agro-forestry programmes. The Mission identifies the barriers and cumbersome regulatory practices that the farmers face w.r.t. acquiring permissions for harvest, commercial use, own use, transit of forest produce as well as conversion of land use while taking up agro-forestry. Hence the MoEF&CC has drafted a set of guidelines to ease out the regulatory regime for harvesting and transit of agro-forestry species and the same will be issued separately.

Additionally, the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DAC) has developed a comprehensive agriculture policy (National Agroforestry Policy, 2014) which is expected to facilitate easing the regulatory formalities to augment the uptake of agro-forestry practices amongst States.

These policies, along with the Mission, are expected to provide support in assessing the investment climate to help identify best practices, constraints and regulatory lacuna to address them through appropriate legal frameworks.

In addition to these, the regulatory framework under CAMPA through the National CAMPA Advisory Council and Steering Committee of State CAMPA will oversee the allocation, disbursement and utilization of funds under this programme. The guidelines (The Guidelines on State Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (State CAMPA), 2009) issued in this regard are expected to play a vital role in supervising the distribution of funds.

⁴ Implementation Guidelines for National Mission for a Green India (GIM), released November 2014 by the MoEF&CC, pages 17-22

Key Observations

1. **Mainstreaming of Mission activities:** Mainstreaming of Mission activities with departmental programmes could be easier since the activities proposed by the Mission are of similar nature (with certain overlaps) but with more scientific and comprehensive designs and a fresh implementation outlook.
2. **No exclusive financing and institutional framework:** No separate financing and institutional mechanisms have been proposed for implementing the Mission activities. In certain areas, it proposes coordinating with exclusive forest management agencies, but they are existing bodies consisting of SHGs and District Planning Offices (DPOs) and other decentralized governing agencies.
3. **Need for greater coordinated efforts:** Apart from Centre and State governments managing harmonized efforts, there is a need for utmost coordination between SFDAs, village level governing bodies, JFMCs, DPOs and local communities. The Mission largely depends on convergence between its activities and ongoing flagship programmes and CSS. There is no system in place to ensure coordination between these departments except for recent Convergence Guidelines released by the MoEF&CC which seeks to facilitate convergence between MNREGS and GIM.
4. **Inadequate Compliance and Enforcement mechanisms:** As in the case of a few other Missions, the GIM does not include any legal or regulatory framework through which strict adherence to its guidelines or design can be ensured. Currently, it is dependent on existing agencies like MNREGS, DAC and CAMPA for their compliance mechanisms.

Mission Summary

The Mission, through its initial document, proposed a comprehensive set of targets, strategies to achieve them and the financial requirements for the same. The relevant advisory committees were actively assembled in 2011-12 to design and agree upon acceptable frameworks for identifying landscapes for Mission implementation. The major outcome of these meetings was to promote the States to prepare their Bridge (One Year) and Perspective (Five/Ten Year) Plans and identify funding sources for the same.

The next chronological step to implementation was to release Implementation Guidelines for States to follow while preparing their Perspective Plans. While the States, since 2012, simultaneously worked on preparing these plans to indicate their landscapes and strategies to take forward the GIM, the Implementation Guidelines were released as late as November 2014. During the consultations that ensued the release of these guidelines, the States were required to rework on their plans to adhere to them. This was a task being repeated due to the delayed release in the Implementation Guidelines. Going forward, financing the chosen programmes as well as projects at different landscapes as part of the Perspective plans would be key in deciding the progress achieved by the Mission. Additionally, empowering decentralized bodies with adequate capacity and regulatory powers would enhance the Mission's achievements.

Recommendations

1. **Distinction between Mission and Departmental Schemes:** There is a need to maintain a distinction between ongoing schemes and additionally funded schemes specifically to benefit India's stance and financing options in the context of International Climate negotiations. This would highlight better, the efforts being dedicated towards climate mitigation and adaptation by the government.
2. **Specialized capacity building:** The thrust on specific skill and capacity building across State and village level bodies needs to be further reinforced since the Mission heavily depends on decentralized governance. Harmonized efforts between village bodies with specific climate change expertise and local communities with traditional knowledge may together prove beneficial to enhance the effectiveness of Mission implementation.
3. **Need for coordinated efforts:** Although coordinating agencies and programmes like CAMPA, DAC and MNREGS have their own mechanism and guidelines in place, synergy between the Mission and such programmes cannot be overlooked. Convergence guidelines recently issued need to be applied with utmost efficiency and in a transparent manner.
4. **Climate Orientation:** Although the traditional knowledge and capacity of local governing bodies in implementing existing schemes cannot be undermined, renewed orientation towards forest management with the objective of mitigating and adapting to climate change could make the Mission more impactful.
5. **System of incentivizing governance and ownership:** A robust system of incentivizing decentralized governance could further increase the efficacy of the Mission implementation. Although the local communities and governing bodies are forthcoming in taking up such activities they are overburdened with responsibilities. Hence the uptake of this additional layer of Mission activities could be further enhanced through appropriate incentives. Mechanisms like the Payment for Eco-system Services (PES) could be explored for their relevance in certain areas.

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