

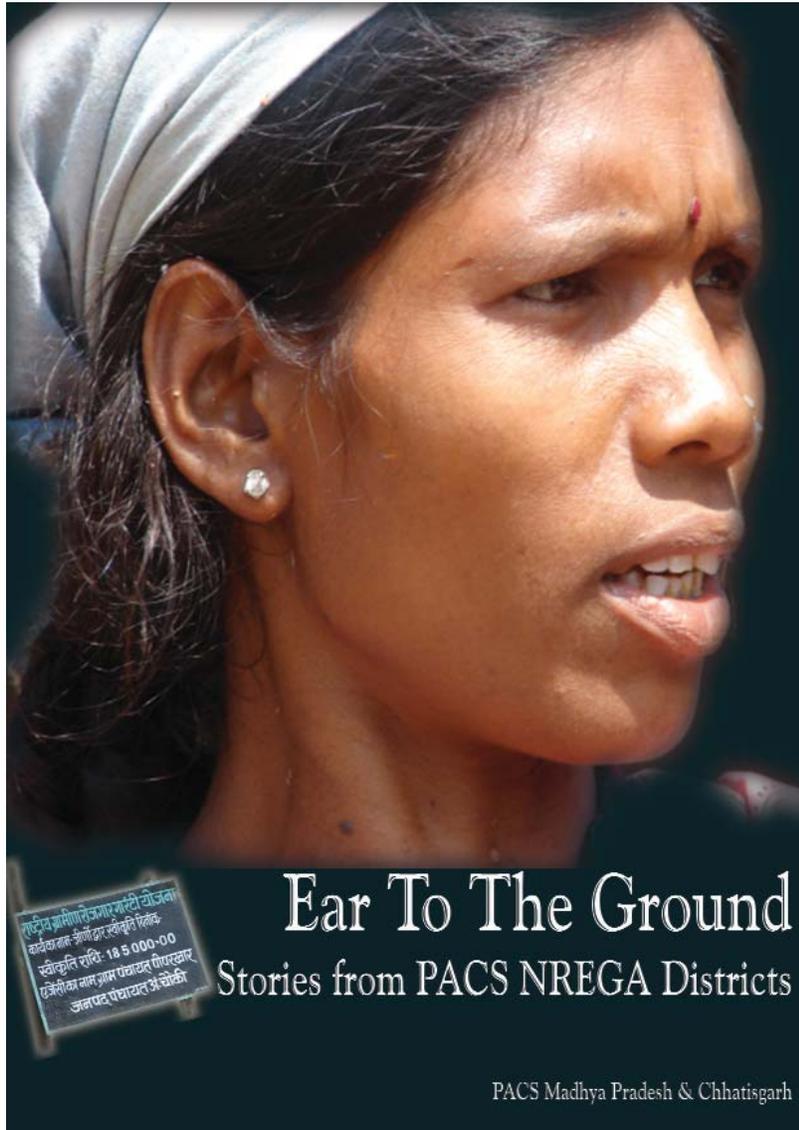


राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण रोजगार गारंटी योजना
कार्यकालास-जीर्णो द्वारा स्वीकृति किंकर-
स्वीकृति राशि: 18 5 000-00
छजेसीका नाम ग्राम पंचायत पीणखार
जनपद पंचायत अंचोकी

Ear To The Ground

Stories from PACS NREGA Districts

PACS Madhya Pradesh & Chhatisgarh



राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण विकास नस्ती योजना
कार्यसूचक-अर्थी द्वारा संकल्पित विधि-
संयोजकता सचिवालय: 18 5 000-00
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Produced as part of the Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) Programme in Madhya Pradesh & Chhatisgarh.

For more information, please contact: The Programme Director, PACS Programme, 111/9-Z, Kishangarh, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070. Or call +91 +11 26890380/26134103; Fax: +91 +11 26130817; email us at pacsindia@devalt.org; URL: www.empowerpoor.org

Madhya Pradesh & Chhatisgarh Programme Support Team Office
E 4/185, Arera Colony, Bhopal-462016 (MP) India. Call us on +91 +755 2402234
email: mpmit@rediffmail.com.

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The Baiga's Dilemma



MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING: Pralad Sahu says he has got work for only 15 days.

For Baiga tribes which walk fearlessly for miles into dense forests of Balaghat in search of fish, honey and rabbits for food and livelihood, their inability to access Government schemes designed and earmarked for them has once again come to the fore with the launch of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS).

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, which promises a guaranteed 100 days of work to rural communities in some of the most impoverished districts of the country, should have come as a boon to the Baigas. Because even today they are

forced to migrate from Balaghat - from August to November and from January to March every year - to work in brick kilns and cotton fields in the adjoining state of Maharashtra.

Pralad Sahu, 36, of Sukri Panchayat in Paraswada block of Balaghat district says in that the last six months, he has got work for only 15 days. He says that for Baigas like him, this is very crucial since, as he puts it bluntly, "We need the money every day". He says that as compared to working with village landlords, the landlords usually pay them far more promptly than what they receive under any government-aided scheme. He suggests that "Since



THE FRYING PAN OR THE FIRE? Hari Singh Baiga says wages paid by landlords are more prompt than by government schemes.

NREGS is a Government scheme, we should be paid at least once a week”.

Little wonder then that 40-year-old Hari Singh Baiga says he did not apply for work under the scheme. “Ever since I was 18, I have been going to Balarpur in Maharashtra to cut bamboo for the paper mills”, he says matter-of-factly.

Now married, Hari Singh migrates with his wife, Parwatiya Bai, and two sons, Mangal (15) and Kamal (12), for two to three months every year, and while Mangal has long given up trying to study, Kamal is studying in Class II. Hari says it takes him approximately Rs 1200 to take the whole family to Maharashtra. There they are paid Rs 9

for every bundle of bamboo they cut, and they are able to put together almost 30 to 40 bundles every day. The family spends about Rs 2,000 on food and other provisions. “The mill provides food, tea, sugar, rice, dal and oil and the amount is cut from the wages we earn,” he adds, which is good enough for him.

However, if it rains or there are festivities, there is no work and sometimes, if the bamboo dries up early, they lose work. The catch to the situation is that when there is not much work available in Balarpur, they are forced to wait for their payment.

Twenty-four old Shivprasad Marawi says he does not have a job card and did not apply for work. Marawi is very disappointed with the system. “For several years I asked for a loan to set up a provision shop under the special schemes that are announced for Bagias. But my effort was in vain.” His experience with the IAY was similar: “I should have got Rs 25,000 but was given only Rs 17,000, and even today, my house is still not complete”. Villagers explain that he and the sarpanch are not able to settle the issue of the ‘No Objection Certificate’. For the father of four children, all between the ages of 2 to 7-years, and his wife, Runiya, expecting their fifth child, Shivprasad is just the kind of person who would have seen a scheme like NREGS as a boon and a lifeline to employment, wages and sustenance. But no, the has-sled youth has to migrate all the way to Bhopal for periods ranging from anything between four to six months to earn



WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT? 60-year old Baiga Sukhal swears by his traditional skills in bamboo rather than chase government schemes.



a livelihood. Grameen Vikas Mandal (GVM) animator Jamuna explains that Shivprasad was not in the village when the NREGA cards were being made, and so he has been left out.

In Sundarwahi village, 60-year-old Baiga Sukhal sits under the shadow of a pumpkin creeper, work-

ing on his bamboo sieve. Asked about NREGS, he simply says that “the sarpanch got the card made and had now taken it to paste the photo”. But typically for a man who has spent his entire life judiciously using jungle produce to earn a livelihood, he is content in the knowledge that the work he is doing has always stood him in good stead, instead of schemes that come and go. Says he: “I know people who had to take up work under this new scheme. They told me that it was very hard work. They had to work the whole day in the sun, and that too nearly one and a half kilometers from the village.”

Apart from this, the tribals seem

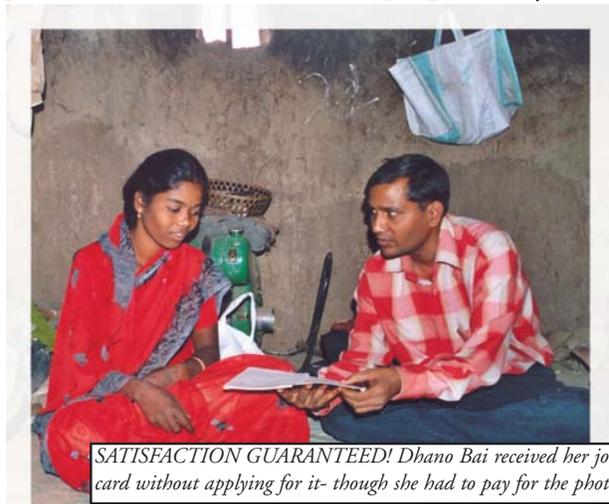


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to be caught in a distorted view that they have seem to have unwittingly created about themselves: Jagantola sarpanch Shiv Kumar Uikey says, “In Baihar block several Baiga families were given Rs 20,000 to start up piggery and goats rearing. Many of them, by virtue of their culture, were not able to take to business and ended up cutting or selling the animals.” He adds, there day generally begins at 6 am and they return home by 8 pm for one meal. Uikey and panchayat secretary Bhajan Walke say that given their lack of understanding and the dissonance between what they really need and what the Government has ‘designed’ for them, there is a ever-widening gulf in perceptions between the two. They point out that the situation has come to such that Government officials no longer have faith in the Baigas to give them insurance cover for their animals and other activities. He also said out of 38 Baiga families, 10 availed of benefits under government schemes, but they were not able to utilise it.

On NREGS implementation in the village, Uikey and Walke say that the Gonds and OBCs in his village have begun to access the scheme, but, predictably, there was no response from the Baigas. Uikey says that even when the Food for Work programme was on in the district, only five Baiga families came looking for work. This, he says, despite having given them ample information about the scheme. He says: “The Baigas are very simple. If you go to meet them, they will listen to you. If you sit and eat

with them, they are extremely happy. But it is very difficult to access if they will do what you have told or suggested to them!” They say the main reason for this is that the Baigas look for work on a daily basis. “They want work for the day, so that they can organise a meal in the evening.” He adds that in Godri tola (hamlet) only two Baiga families came in search of work under the NREGA. The people say ‘We want work everyday, we cannot wait for payments.’ His village got Rs 2-lakh for pond deepening under the NREGA. “125 people got work for 15 days at the rate of Rs 61 per day as wages.” With the little work that has come in under the scheme this year, the payments have been made to people as



SATISFACTION GUARANTEED! Dhano Bai received her job card without applying for it- though she had to pay for the photo!

late as 15 days to a month, which Uikey says, is of no use to the Baigas.

Uikey, who himself has studied till Class X, says that this year he made the applications for the NREGA scheme. “I want people to apply for the 100 days of work that has been promised, but



people do not know.” He said job cards were made on Feb 14, 2006. However, Uikey adds, the photographs came only in October and now he is working to get them pasted. He is aware that even this year, 25 people migrated from his village and he tried his best to convince them not to. This task too is fraught with its own problems. “We called a gram sabha on October 7, but there was no quorum.” He says the reason why people do not come to the Gram Sabha is because of the inherent mistrust that all such schemes are not meant for them. As an example, he adds that out of 150 Gond families, only 38 families have sought work under the NREGA. Uikey says that though he has often taken his problems to the Gram Sachivalaya, he says nowadays no work is being done in the Sachivalayas.

Pralad Sahu of Sukri says that there is another issue. “We are not able to put our problems in front of Government officials. They see that we are poor and shoo us off. Some of them make it a point to make us feel inferior”.

There is confusion galore at the grassroots. Baiga Dhano bai says she got a job card even without applying. “The Panchayat has made the cards and give them to us.” She, however, paid Rs 25 for the photograph! Dhano is upbeat about the work site facilities, though. She affirms that water was available at the work site, and so was a doctor (who was able to treat coughs and colds!). Also, the work site was only half a kilometer away. However, the young widow raising

three children says: “I got the payment only after a month.” Her brother-in-law, Surendra Kumar, says he worked for five days and was paid only Rs 250. He says his card is now with the Panchayat secretary, who says that he wants to add the photograph.

Other Baigas like Budia Bai and Draupadi Sahu echo the same problem. While Budia says she worked for two days, she was even-



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ALL IS NOT LOST! Dhansingh says there is no cause for despair...

tually made to sign for seven days. Draupadi says she worked for 13 days and, till the middle of October, she had received payment only for seven days and is still waiting for the remaining money to trickle in.

Forty-two-year old Shambu Prasad, an OBC, says there is never any clarity on what the Panchayat is doing. “We never get to know when an *Aam Sabha* or a *Gram Sabha* is going to be held. No *munadi* is ever done.” He also rues that nobody ever asks them about their problems. He says everybody in the village filled in forms for work. But when asked he was not able to say what the form was about. In this confusion Tilak Bali Sahu gives voice to what has



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been going through the minds of numerous fellow villagers: “We have just been waiting for work. I do not know who to give the application to. There are also issues around the ‘pay backs’ to various departments... Panchayats know they have to give a cut to the Janpad. This could be one of the reasons why the Panchayat does not want to face the people. Many panchayats feel the NREGA is a headache, especially given the fact that almost all the money will be going to the public!”

Dhansingh Shayam, panch of Ward No 6 (Photo 02325) of the Sukri panchyat in Paraswada says the panchyat is working towards ensuring 100 days guaranteed employment for the villagers. He claims that Rs. 8- lakh worth of work was carried out in the village under the NREGS, including work on ponds, pond deepening and ‘dabra’ – dabri – personal tanks in farmers land.

Shyam adds, though, that the pond deepening work in his village also ran into trouble because land that people donated for a pond could not be registered. “The engineer is present only on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. And we are hardly able to catch hold of him.” In Bhanderi village too, the panchyat does not have land to dig a pond or go in for any massive public utility work. He also adds that when they go to encash cheques at the bank for NREGS, the concerned bank expresses its haplessness in encashing large denomination cheques, saying ‘bring cheques of 30,000 – 40,000 only. We do not have more

money than that.’ Another issue that is worrying Shyam is that despite the CEO asking for an estimate for work they are doing, the panchayat has not been able to do so because of the complicated process. He says that now onwards, he will try to encourage more and more people in his village to apply for work under NREGS. “People should be able to earn enough here. We would like to stop migration from our village completely.”



The Chada Story



How the Baiga tribe saved its forest from the greedy forest officials is fast becoming folklore in Chada village some 80 odd kilometers from Dindori district. Senior citizens tell how the forest officials had to make a hasty retreat when the villagers opposed cutting of trees and showing presence of mind involved the village women in their protest, for the police cannot take action against

But the tale of struggle continues even today with middleman taking place of forest officials.

The drive from Dindori to Chada has everything except roads. The asphalted road exists only in bits and pieces and

by the time you are about to feel the smooth ride its backs to the rocky terrain. But if you look out the surroundings take you to a different world with ramtila sarson, a local variety of mustard, on the hills. You have entire hills covered

with the yellow crop. You feel you are on location of a typical Yash Chopra film ...! But that's reel life, and this is real and so is the struggle of the people which you see on way to Chada.

The only bus to Dindori is in the morning people and the locals rely on the jeep or like a majority of the villagers, a long walk is the only option. But they are not complaining for over the years walking has become a habit for the tribals.

For farmers like Shyamu and others their main worry is getting the right price for their produce. Though villagers have more information at hand as far as marketing their produce is concerned, they have to sell it for pittance in



ENDLESS WOES: Tribals narrating harassment at the hands of forest officials.

absence of an organized marketing network and unity amongst farmers.

“In afsar logon ne hum logan ko khoob loota. Hamari fasal ke kuch bhi dam lagaye aur khoob paise kamaye. Lekin ab Sanstha ke logon ke karan hamen malum hai fasal ka sahi daam kya hai”. (The government officials exploited us and made money selling our produce. But now because of SHG workers we know the right price for our produce).

After losing their everything to the money lenders who exploited them every which way they can, the farmers have now become smarter. But only just for they still have to encounter the same greedy government officials who do not miss any opportunity to make fast money. The money lenders gave loans to the poor farmers and in return took twice, at times thrice, the amount of crop from the villagers who had no other choice. Almost all the villagers have lost their precious belongings like ornaments, household goods to these people.

“In sahuakar ne hamari auroton ke saare gehne, bartan le liye aur fasal bhi. In logon ke karan bahut zameen vale kisano ke paas ab kuch bhi nahin bacha”, says another villager. (These money lenders took ornaments, utensils of our women and also took our produce. Many rich farmers have become poor because of these money lenders).

But things changed with the arrival of CSO's in the area.

The initial period for the CSO's was not good either as on the one hand they had clueless and terrified villagers, and on the other were government officials who tried their best to dissuade villagers from taking help from these workers.

“Sarkari logon ne sanstha walon ko pehle to kaam nahin karne diya aur hum logan ko kaha ki yeh acheche log nahin hain. Inko gaon mein mat ghusne do. Lekin baad main pata chala ki ye log to hamari bhalai ke liye hi kaam kar rahe hain”, says Lakhia. (Initially the officials did not allow the SHG workers to work portraying them as bad and asked us not to allow them inside the village. But later we realized the workers were concerned about us). They threatened villagers of dire consequences if they joined hands with CSO functionaries and portrayed the workers as Naxalities. But slowly the workers gained confidence of the villagers and told them how the forest officials have been exploiting them over the years. The villagers, after knowing the reality, took help from the workers in



getting their dues from the government and also check the exploitation of the rich forest wealth.

Thanks to SHGs, farmers are now exposed to modern methods of farming. NIWCYD functionaries, a PACS partner, have been diligently helping out farmers in experimenting with new methods like budding, preparing vermicompost, and trying new methods of irrigation like drip irrigation, which has been completely localized.

Exposure visits have resulted in farmers trying out budding method in growing new varieties of mango which will increase their produce and give regular yields. The farmers use the outer covering of Lauki which is put close to the newly planted sapling with a hole at the base. The covering is filled with water which continues to supply the same to the plant for a fortnight. The farmers have also been using natural manure for their crop. Instead of using cow dung they have now learned how to make vermicompost which has started showing results.

“While some villages have turn organic more villages are in the process of adopting this system. The farmers understand the benefits of such farming which not only gives better produce but also does not damage the soil”, says NIWCYD worker Nagesh working in a cluster of villages near Chada in Dindori district. He recalls how the forest department officials exploited the villagers for years and how the scene changed after the CSO’s arrived on the scene. The vil-

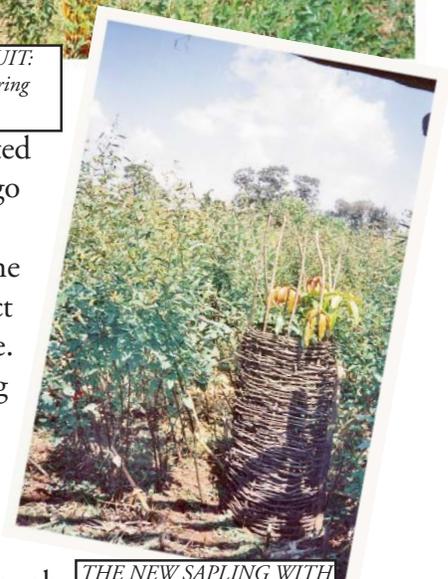


*ENTERPRISE BEARS FRUIT:
Tribal girl showing the covering
around the new sapling.*

lagers have planted saplings of mango and used forest wood to cover the sapling to protect it from the cattle.

According to Collector Dindori E Ramesh Kumar, the NIWCYD has not done enough work but has the ability to do more.

Kumar says NIWCYD lacks convergence of various departments and is focused mainly on agriculture based work. Though dedicated and committed, it should also address non-agricultural related work. He says of the Rs 25-30 crore income generated from the district forest only a fraction of the amount comes back for welfare work. “The local farmers should find ways to approach private companies which require these products to get a better price for their produce”, says Kumar. He is of the opin-



*THE NEW SAPLING WITH
PROTECTIVE COVER
AGAINST CATTLE &
HUMANS.*



COLOURS OF LIFE! The ramtila mustard field.

ion that programmes should be made keeping in mind local needs, like in Dindori, which has a large amount of forest produce which is in great demand. Kumar says agencies like NIWCYD should identify forest produce and activities like honey comb, which give better return to farmers.

In Aloni village in Amarapur block of Dindori district, while development work has taken place under NREGA, the result would have been different if both officials and the people knew what NREGA was all about. Officials initially had no clue what to do with the scheme. By the time they did, they had lost precious time. They approached PACS workers in the area to come up with schemes, which they did easily because they enjoyed the confidence of the villagers and had no difficulty in selecting works which would help the villagers. Having lost faith in schemes, the villagers agreed to work only because of the involvement of PACS workers in the area.

What is interesting is how the tribal dominated villages showed keen

interest in the NREGA projects and made the most of the opportunity. So there are kuccha roads and dabra dabri's. The villagers who relish fish also took up fish ponds and are confident this year they will not only get good fish but good money as well. Due to lack of information the officials asked to start the work first and get the sanction later. But the lack of interest at panchayat level came in way of implementing the NREGA scheme. The sarpanch took more interest in road construction but were not interested in the irrigation and fish ponds, says Ganesh Karvale.

He recalls how when the scheme was announced the officials had no clue how to go about it. Workers like him did all the paperwork for the officials, including preparing files and making maps. The officials, however, got the work approved and also helped in getting



THE SCHEME BEARS FRUIT: The newly-constructed pond in the village.

the payments.

Though a very small amount of the total sanctioned amount was utilized, everybody has learnt something from their mistakes.



Dharna In Balaghat



to

Things have not been the same for women of Karwahi village in Baihar block of Balaghat district for the last few months. During a review of NREGS work in their panchayat areas, they woke up to the fact that their payments had been inordinately delayed. Many of them had taken up work in May and even till September, there was no sign of any payment forthcoming.

Says Phula Wasnik of Karwahi: “I worked for six days in April and May, and I have still not been paid.” She was promised Rs 58 per day. Shanti Bai says she worked for 11 days in April and May and the amount that was paid to her was not only not enough, it is still be be paid

her. As a result, her husband has had to migrate to Gujarat in search of work. While she is very disappointed that the panchayat is not opening more work, she adds that even if it did happen, like many in her village she has no idea how to file her application: who to give it to, how to fill it, who accepts it, and so on. She says: “Even if people in my village have filed their applications, nobody fills in our job cards.”

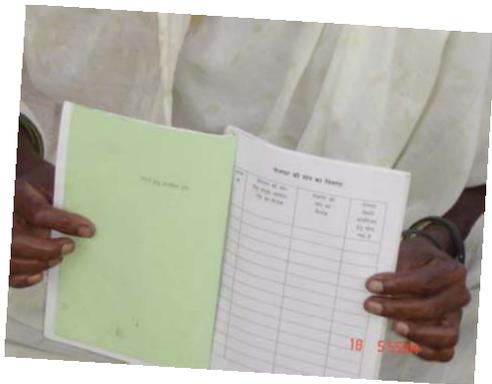
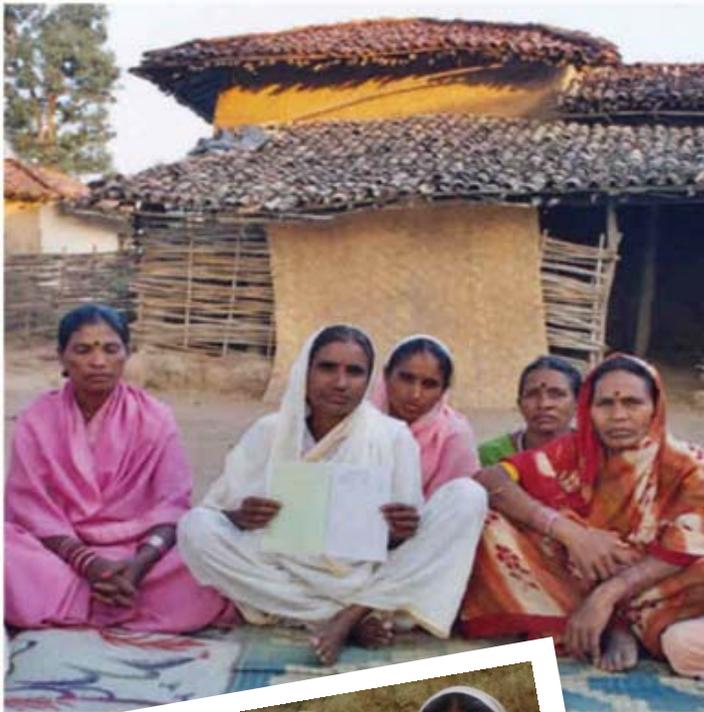
In one particular case, when CSO field workers pressurised the sarpanch for payment to be made, women were paid – but for two working days while entries were made for payment made for six



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Some snippets...

- ▶ Shivalal Adivasi from Rewa district says that it is a shame that even after 60 years, people in the country are having to fight for their rights., there is wide-spread unemployment and illiteracy.
- ▶ In DPIIP district of Rewa, benefits have been cornered by those who are close to politically well-connected people.
- ▶ In the 18 NREGS districts of the state, the Kols and the adivasis have had to migrate in search of work to neighbouring Uttar Pradesh.
- ▶ After the bifurcation of the State, only 36 per cent adivasis remain in the state. Now poverty, illiteracy and unemployment amongst Adivasis are at very high, with all this leading to food security problems; Government's will have to face the consequences of creating such a situation – people are dying of hunger!
- ▶ Ganesh Bai from Tikamgarh has more horrifying incidents to relate: “We did not get work under NREGS and one day, when we went to demand work, we were beaten up. She also says poor people in her village do not have job cards. Ganeshi's experience in the six days that she worked under the NREGS have been harrowing. “Many of us (women) had to work from 7 am to late evening and most had children with us, but no child-care facilities were available.”
- ▶ For Janpad member Shyma Bai, when she went looking for work, she faced caste-based abuse from people in the panchyat. Hoping for redressal to the insults, she approached the Collector and SDM, but there was no hearing. “Nobody considered it important,” she says.
- ▶ Jagdeesh Yadav, who has been working in Bundelkhand and Baghalkhand regions of the State, says people were getting only seven days of work. In Shadhol and Sidhi, the job cards were with the sarpanch or the secretary.
- ▶ In Shivpuri, work has been done without the approval of the gram sabha- government officials have planned and supervised land and water conservation works. By linking other Union Government schemes (PMSY) to the NREGS, work has been handed out to contractors, thus depriving many poor people of work.
- ▶ In some areas where plantation work was taken up, upto 3 to 5 lakhs saplings were planted and tractors were used; ninety-five percent Kharanja work was given to contractors.
- ▶ Sarpanch of village Amagoan in Seoni village, Shiv Kumar Barghot, points out that another stumbling block is the verification process of work done under the NREGS. He says the SDM and other officials often hold up the process of verification, thus delaying payments to people indefinitely.
- ▶ Another interesting thing that people point out is that when officials come for verification to the village, they first go to the sarpanch's house. Often, the officials are offered liquor and other goodies...
- ▶ Perspective plans have not been made. Schemes do not reflect people's aspirations.
- ▶ Despite demand there is no work; no long-term or even short-term work for women is available most of the times.
- ▶ People do not know about Government schemes and they need support from NGOs and CBOs.
- ▶ In Padakhedha, Betul district, plantation work was taken up NREGS work. The only problems says Rekha Gujre, was the ancestral land of adivasis were taken up for this work! “The plans were made by officials, we did not know until work started on our land!” is the usual outcry.



working days!

Barwahi resident Shanti Uike refused to accept the money, which led to a heated argument with the sarpanch, Anita Khuamu's husband, threatening villagers and refusing to make further payments.

Says she: "They were trying to make me accept payment for five days when I had worked for six, and it is recorded in the muster roll." When they did not listen to her, Shanti gave them back the money, took the muster roll from them and struck her name out.

Phoolwati, who worked for 12 days, was paid only for two days, and is still waiting for the balance to be paid to her.

Sugni Bai of Balaghat says that work in her village was carried out by a contractor. This is not all: several women complained they were given only two or three days work but were asked to sign the roster for payment made for six days' work. Although the villagers continued to work, no payments were cleared.

In the given scenario, the women concur that the panchayat secretary made the most of the opportunity and there were irregularities in the working of the Panchayat. It was thus decided to hold a panchayat level meeting to discuss the problem. When panch Satwanti Pander said she had not received her cheque, she decided to take people's help and bring a no-confidence motion



against the sarpanch, Anita Khuamu. Says Satwanti: “Anita Khuamu would not speak to us properly. One day when we had gone to ask her about pending payments under the Food-for-Work programme, she threatened us saying “who are you to ask?””

Field workers from Community Development Centre (CDC) and Shri Mahavir Shiksha Evam Jankalyan Samiti were regularly requested by their SHG groups to help them. Maya Rahagnadale of CDC, who facilitated the Sangini SHG, says that the Kshetriya Mahila Jan Sangharsh Samiti, and after several rounds of consultations with other SHGs, began meetings to decide how to take up this issue. By now, about 120 women had joined the issue.

Finding strength in numbers, the women took up their grievances first with the Janpad panchayat and then the Zila Panachyat officials, and a no-confidence motion was passed against Anita Khuamu.

While hopeful that things would change, the women were struck by another pitfall: the no-confidence motion had failed to bring any improvement in the working of the panchayat as Anita Khuamu refused to hand over official documents. “This in turn delayed



payments to villagers who had taken up work under NREGA,” says CDC’s PACS project coordinator, Ameen Charles.

With no payments being made, villagers were forced to start looking for work in nearby areas, and some found work at a site 5-km from the village.

Meanwhile, some workers found out from the newly-appointed sarpanch, Satvanti Pande, and other office bearers that the former sarpanch, Anita Kumre, had not cleared payment of labourers who worked during April-May. However, the women were not keen to give up the fight so easily. They went to the SDM, who told them to go to the Zila Panchayat CEO. Amen decided to launch a post-card campaign in support of their demands. A total of 40 postcards were sent to the CEO, but in vain. There was still no response, no assurance.

Often the women would have to pay Rs 15 going to and fro from the vil-



lage to Baihar tehsil. Satwanti laughs as she recalls: “When we went to complain to the CEO again on October 14, 2006, the officials told us that the tehsildar was supposed to come look into the matter on October 7!”

Later, a meeting was convened on October 13, 2006, to decide the future course of action. It was decided to stage a dharna to draw the attention of officials towards their demands. A memorandum listing their five demands and carrying information about the October 17 dharna was handed over to the CEO and other officials.

To make the dharna a success, a door-to-door contact campaign was carried out in the village to mobilise the villagers. After running out of options, and still unable to have their grievances address, in September the women finally went to the Collector to complain that they had not received their money.

By now the women’s desperation was beginning to gain attention- the movement was not only gaining momentum but also the empathy of other women and their families who too were faced with a similar situation in their villages. Slowly, a group of 12 SHGs got together and it was decided that they would hire a tractor and stage a dharna. One hundred and twenty-five women from Jata, Menedeki, Bhanderi, Gogatola, Barwahi, Karwahi and Baigatola pooled in Rs 2,000 from their respective SHGs to hire the tractor.

At the dharna, the village women raised their united voice in support of

their pending demands, seeking the intervention of administrative machinery. The women put forth a list of their demands, including release of Food-for-Work payment, removal of sarpanch, demand work under NREGS, and payments to be made within 15 days of work, amongst others.

Today, the small movement has given women a feeling of empowerment. Says Sushila Wasnik: “During the dharna, officials repeatedly pleaded that any one (of the women) could come to the office as a representative and meet them inside.” By now, the women were totally resolute.

On October 17, 2006, from 2 pm to 8 pm, the women shouted slogans for hours, before the CEO was forced to invite the deputy sarpanch and other panchayat office bearers for talks. But the women refused to allow any talks and asked the CEO to come out and talk with all of them. The women were aware that there was something fishy in the deal and they did not hesitate in targeting the officials, saying: “You have given money to the CEO, you have taken money, now you dance.”

Following this, the CEO accepted their memorandum and also agreed to take action on all their demands. Taking immediate action, the CEO visited the former sarpanch’s home with the tehsildar. However, she had fled from the village by then.

Later, a notice was sent to the former sarpanch asking her to hand over all official documents to the new sarpanch



or face stringent action.

The women were successful in their struggle as the CEO agreed to ensure that payments would be made the next day at the Panchayat office. He also assured that the payment of new work will be cleared within a fortnight. Satisfied, the women finally called off the dharna at 8.30 pm. Though it was dark when the agitation ended, it had given a ray of light to village women.

The women are more confident these days after their October 17 protest and they are aware that if it was not for the dharna, the Janpad officials would not have accepted their demands.

“We have made the SDM, CEO walk out of their offices to come and meet us. Soon it will be the Collectors turn to come and meet us.”

Nirmala Sonkar, 35, from Pind Ka Paar was paid for 29 days work at the rate of Rs 61.37. Basanti Baisakhu, 36, and Sukwaro Jethulal, 40, also got their payment for 29 days. Jamuna Bodram, 38, was also paid for her work for 20 days.

Navjeevan Samaj Vikas Samiti's Utkal Nanda says, now the women are very happy, because this time round when NREGS work was opened after Diwali, the women got work and they were paid the week after they completed their work.



Living on *Latar* Grass !



THE MEASURE OF A NATION: Woman with handful of latara grass flour in the village.

Village Tanga, Tikamgarh:
Driving through Madhya Pradesh's drought-hit Bundelkhand region patches of green fields are no longer just a relief to the eye. They tell a straight story. The green fields belong to farmers who have access to a water source, the remaining fields belong to people who have not been able to till their land for the last five years, people

who have been forced to migrate and yes in Bundelkhand, people who are feeding their children 'Latar' grass to satiate their hunger.

Two days after Diwali this year, 28-year-old Bhagwati Barar's husband Purmua Barar left for Gwalior in search of work. Their one acre land yielded its last crop in 2004. She says if he gets work for 15 days, he may be able to bring home Rs 300 - 400 because that is just about all that he can earn. 'He is very weak' she says by way of explanation.

For Bhagwati and her son Brijendra, 10, and Sangeeta, 8, depending on others in the village even for food has become a way of life.

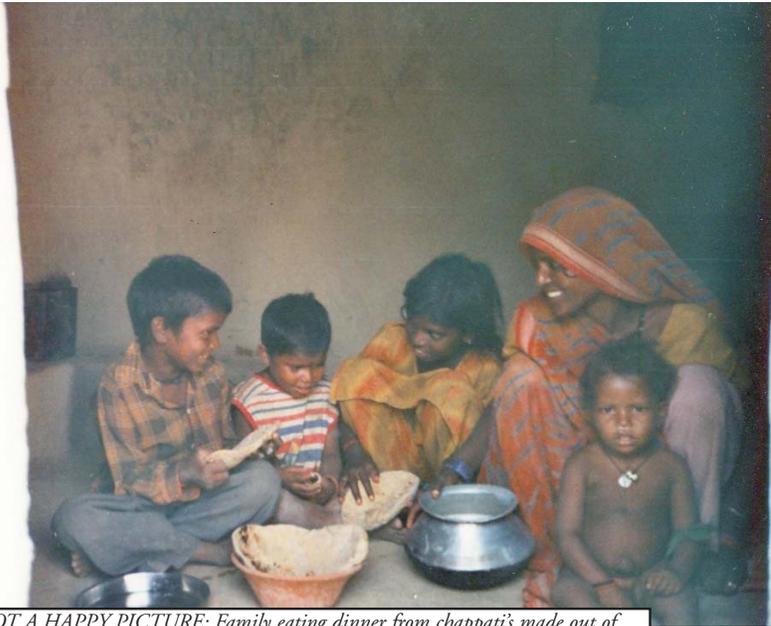
Bhagwati says, "I am a member of Geeta SHG. I take help from other women in the group for grains and other essentials or money to buy the same. When my husband returns with some money, I will repay



ISN'T ANYONE LISTENING?: Woman holding a handful of latara grass flour before cooking it for her children.



NREGA Case Studies
PACS Madhay Pradesh & Chhatisgarh



NOT A HAPPY PICTURE: Family eating dinner from chappatis made out of latar grass flour.

the amount.” Other members of her group Geeta Baskar and Sunita say that they help Bhagwati with grains when she is faced with such a situation and add what Bhagwati is unable to talk about-



ANYONE HOME? With men having migrated, most homes wear a deserted look.

that often not wanting to seek help, she makes Latar grass chappatis and the family survives on that.

Bhagwati says her family is faced with such a desperate situation and if there was work

in the village her husband would never have gone in search of work.

It is not only Bhagwati’s family that is faced with such desperation. In the same village, Sheela Baskar and Rati Ram have two bigha land, however, since there have been no rains they have not been able to till their land for the last five to six years. Rati says, “I do not have a well on my

land.” The couple, their three daughters and son depend on Rati Ram who makes his way to Gwalior for much needed cash to be able to buy food.

The large ungainly man, however, confesses that he manages to make only Rs 50 a day and sometimes returns only with Rs 200 even after working for 15 days because “people do not feel confident to give me work, they think I will not be able work”

If able bodied people are unable to find work, the situation of those with disabilities and ailments is almost on the brink of being wretched. Yamuna Barar, 40, lost her vision a few years ago. After a fall from a roof her left hand has been paralysed, today she depends on her 15-year-old son, Alam, to bring home some money, while her other children Badami,



LOCKED! Homes lie locked with entire families having migrated for work.

8, and Manish 5 beg their way around the village for their daily subsistence.

Dayaram Baskar, too, has four bighas of land but since he does not have a well, for the last six years he has not been able to sow crops. Dayaram has since been going to Gwalior in search of work, “Sometimes I get regular spells of work, sometimes not. When I do I am able to earn Rs 60 to 70 a day.”

However, Dayaram has been forced to leave the work that he had managed to get and has had to return to the village after his wife Medha was paralysed. With no other support, today Dayaram spends his day looking after her. Recently he took a loan of Rs 10,000 from the village Patel, he has taken Medha to Gulganj and Malahera and says, “For every Rs 100 that I have taken from the Patel I have to pay back Rs 3.

For Nand Ram and Ramwati and their seven children, the drought in their village has changed

their dietary intake. Finding it difficult to support the large family, Ramwati says they collect Latar grass, wash it, pound it and remove the kernel to mix it with wheat flour to ensure that there is sufficient food in the house.

Since their son Umesh was down with chikungunya the family were consuming wheat atta for the last few days. Ask 12-year-old Sabita about the

latar roti and she says, “I don’t like it. It is difficult to digest and my stomach hurts. It causes constipation too.”

Her older sister Lad Kunwar who studies in Class VI, says that they have a meals consisting of chappatis, moong dal, rice and daliya but she says that she prefers meals if the chappati is made of wheat flour.

Ramwati is now worried that their supply of latar grass will soon be exhausted. “With consecutive



LOOKING FOR SUCCOUR: Dayaram has come back because his wife is paralysed; he has taken a loan to subsist.



NREGA Case Studies PACS Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh



THE SCHEME BEARS FRUIT: Yamuna lost her vision a few years ago. Today, her young children beg on the streets of the village to eke out a living.

years of drought, the grass too is now not easily available,” she says.

Sarpanch Champa Ray’s son Babloo Ray says “I am aware that people are dying of hunger. But what can I do. After the recent NREGS work, Rs 4,00,000 is pending in the janpad. Why should I begin any work.” He adds, “My village needs 400 cards out of which 200 will be Antyodaya cards, but who is listening.”

Champa is more compassionate when asked how she deals with a situation where a large population in the village are faced with near starvation, she says, “We give grains to feed people who are in need.”

In village Bamore in the same district Firan Yadav, says many people who did not need BPL cards some years ago, today need it. Ramswaroop Ahirwal says there have been no rains in the last five years. Ramdevi Ahirwal says of the 200

families in the village, 600 people have migrated to Delhi, Agra, Gwalior and Bhopal in search of work.

In village Morhapurwa, in adjoining Chhattarpur district, Shanti says there was no water in the village well by early November forcing two people from every household to

move in search of work. She adds,

“In another 15 days, there will be nobody left in the village,” she says.

Circumstances have brought couples like Ganpat, 60, and Rambai Ahirwar, 55, who have 5 acres of land as part of a joint family, to wait on the fringes of the fair price shop, hoping that if some rations are left behind, it will be issued to them.

She says: “I do not get anything from the ration shop”, which Nonibai contests, saying she has to ensure that people who have cards are also given their quota. Says she wearily: “It is not as if I don’t know the situation in the village; I try my best... but the circumstances are so trying that I find it very difficult at most times”.



Soon The Sarpanch's Will Also Have To Migrate!



UNEASY LIES THE HEAD...: Mintram Yadav, Sarpanch of Heera Nagar, is a much troubled man.

Sarpanch Mintram Yadav of Heera Nagar village in Tikamgarh district, is a man with a mission.

He began work as early as January, 2006, when the one year shelf of project was planned. "this planning helped us decided what work to take up during the various seasons – rains, summers and the winters. After the micro

planning was done, it was shared in the Gram Sabha and additions were made and the work to be take up was decide by the people. He had the scheme announced in the village through wall paintings, beating of drums and posters from the Janpad, with assistance from Sarthak, a PACS CSO based in Tikamgarh district.

He is very disappointed that even though his village has 650 job card holders and he should have been able to leverage Rs 40 lakhs worth of works, he was given only about Rs 4-5-lakhs to take up work. In a lighter vein he says, 'Until now you heard of people migrating; very soon you will hear of sarpanchs migrating!'

Yadav says that every morning people come to him in search of work. "What can I do, in the first phase of work, I have paid close to Rs 2 lakhs to labour. However, payments for cement and gravel remain. I can't clear these payments, and I certainly cannot start any new work. I have starting taking the applications to the Janpad Panchayat and recently they told me, if you keep taking the applications, you will have to provide work (compensation)". A worried Yadav says the situation is such that "I fear one day I will have to sell my property".



MANY HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE! Mintram Yadav confers with fellow villagers on the action plan to-be.

He adds wearily: “There are only a few months left - November to March - and how will I be able to generate the remaining of the 100 days work for people, there is no question of my panchayat getting the remaining funds”, questioning, “Where am I expected to adjust and juggle all this?”

Over the last few months, he has been strongly advocating for Government to route money directly to the panchyats. Till August, 2006, he was able to generate 125 days of work for 5,280 people, of whom 1,900 were women and 3,380 were men. “On an average, 20 to 25 women were getting work”

His panchayat got job cards by March and Yadav said he registered and signed the same and gave it back to the applicants. He admits that some people

are yet to get the card.

“Since the BPL survey was the basis for job cards, 60-odd people who have job cards are people with Government jobs or are influential people who do not need work.”

The names of children who are two-year-old and seventy-years-old are on the job card list also. Whenever there were more than five children in the worksite, a woman was employed to look after the children and she was paid Rs 61. Since work has topped and we are now not able to provide work, we are not able to check migration, because people need regular work.

Yadav also points out that people think that it is better to chase Rs 100 that is irregular, rather than wait for Rs 61, which is rotated among villagers with each family getting (?) how much work. “Wheat today costs Rs 12 a , what will



people do with Rs 61 especially if the families are large.”

The last lot of work was done in August, and since September and October, there has been no work, forcing people to leave the villages. The situation has further been precipitated by the fourth consecutive drought that the district is faced with.

Says Manoj Choube of Sarthak: “It is the planning for the crucial period that needs to be looked in the micro planning: what is the desperation that people are facing”.

Given the situation in the village, Yadav tried to ensure that all people in the village got work.

Thirty-two-year old Raju Charar, a Scheduled Caste, said when he got to know about the scheme he applied for work and he and his wife got six days’ worth of work and wages - both got Rs 61 each. He, however, pointed out that he had the capacity to dig more khantis but was restricted to three a day. During the summer, people worked between 4 am to 8 am and after 5 pm. He also suggested that people working would be given grain at work.

Kalu Prajapat, applied for 14 days of work. He has been taking his daughter-in-law and three children to Delhi or Gurgoan to work as construction labourers. “If we find work, it is regular for a only few weeks. I will have to go back to search for work”.

And while Rambharose Dryath, 22, says it was very hard work under the NREGA, Bagirathi asks “What will I do

with Rs 61?”. Ghajshan Dasrajak however, says “We want work, for any work is better than no work”.



Mohan Bhai

Taking Charge

The Maharashtra EGS Experience

*Mohan Hirabai Hiralal
Convener, Vrikshamitra,
Chandrapur/Gadchiroli*

*An experience sharing with 60 Poorest
Areas Civil Society (PACS) programme
partners of Madhya Pradesh and
Chhattisgarh*

“

The Employment Guarantee

Scheme (EGS) has been on in Maharashtra from 1975, became an Act in 1978 and was implemented only after a long drawn struggle in 1979.

When it was launched there was immense optimism among people.

However, it was a task to create awareness among people that this was a basic right, because the right to employment is merely an extension of the right to live.

Thus, despite it seeming that the EGS would help people, for us it was actually a fight for a right because there was no work for people working in the unorganised sector.

The significance of the scheme is that it is not to be seen as relief work, it is right by law. Thus, when the NREGA was implemented there was a lot of enthusiasm, which is good, because in essence this is no longer relief work and the right to employment is now a law. This is a wonderful opportunity for the unorganised sector.

While I share the Maharashtra experience here, I want to do so without creating disappointment among civil society in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. We should learn from Maharashtra's experience so that these States can move ahead. If the Union Government had taken into consideration the Maharashtra experience on EGS, other States would not have been losing precious time by making same mistakes in the implementation of the scheme.

Maharashtra Government had made provision of a EGS fund which can be used only for the EGS by collecting professional and some other taxes. To this, the Maharashtra Government added matching grants. The process was given support by all political parties in the State. Today, the State has more than Rs 9,000 crore in balance for the EGS, but claims the money is not being spent because there is a low demand for work.



Apart from this, since the Government was providing work in 15 days' time, there was no question of paying unemployment allowance. Thus, with all systems in place, the Maharashtra Government has been generating a very positive picture which is not true. Another thing that was not going down very well with many of us was, when you are giving guarantee for work, there should not be provision for unemployment allowance. This is a very Western Capitalist concept of "Dole" that there will be phases of unemployment.

Unfortunately, people are failing to understand that the NREGA is the only rights-based scheme, which will be able to remove poverty. At present people are more attracted to the NREGA's unemployment allowance, instead of demanding work as right.

The reality is that even today there is mass rural unemployment in Maharashtra which leads to poverty and mass displacement of people. Which means, even if there is a law it is not being used. So the question that is raised why?

Our experience says, that the intricacies of legal provisions have been the biggest obstacle for this scheme. Nobody wants to go to court because they are aware of lengthy legal procedures. People are overwhelmed by the series of forms that have to be filled up, keeping track of receipts. For people in the unorganised it is a difficult situation. Also, the Maharashtra Government issued an oral order saying that receipts

should not be issued. If people who were demanding work sought a receipt, they were threatened that they would be given work far from their villages. To confuse people, they were asked if they wanted work or wanted compensation. By doing so they were being denied their right, because if they opted for the unemployment allowance, they would get less work also and lot of harrasment.

This led to the pertinent issue that if the poorest person was to benefit from the scheme, then their capacity to understand legalese would have to be increased. This task can be taken up only by civil society, because the Government will not/ does not want to do it. Thus, the challenge ahead of us was can civil societies take up this task of strengthening capacities of poor people to understand the procedures and demand their rights?

This led to exploring the possibility of using the Right to Information to empower civil society to work with people to make them take the benefits to this scheme. With this rose questions, if civil society organisations (CSOs) were not empowered, how could their capacities be built? It is fact that even today, people look to CSOs and Government for their existence. Then there is the question of disseminating the information so that people could use that information.. CSOs will have to work with the people to disseminate information because of the years of conditioning among people that they are capable of doing only manual labour



Thus, there was an urgent need to convert information to knowledge for people. People had to be told which forms they had to fill, that they should take receipts with sign, date and stamp of officials, fill up relevant sections about when they wanted work etc.

In Wadasa tehasil of Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra it took us a year to empower people through an educational process named as “We Find Our Ways Our-self” which leads the unorganized workers towards “organization through education” to take the advantages of employment guarantee scheme as right.

In 1981 in villages - Kurud, Visora and Shankarpur of district Gadchiroli 1,000 –1500 labourers had gone to submit an application demanding work to the patwari. The patwari instructed them that if he took each application, one by one, it would take too much time, so why didn't the people collect all the applications and hand them over to him.

However, at the next level, the SDO refused to accept the applications saying they were not submitted according to the rules – that each person had to submit only one application. This was only a move to systemically diffuse people's rights.

The issue was taken up to the Nagpur High Court by their trade union- “Bandhakam Va Lakud Kamgar Sanghatana”. The challenge faced was getting a good lawyer who would take up the work without taking money.

Legal activist from Nagpur advocate Subodh ghing Dharmadhikari took up the case and fighting from 1981 at no cost.

In what can only be termed a twist in the tale, when the High Court declared that the SDO's decision was incorrect, the court also returned the case to the same SDO.

The SDO took up the issue and tried to make people see reason as to why they were fighting for Rs 50? Meanwhile, in the 23 years that this case has dragged, of the seven labourers who had registered a case, one had already died and six were given notice.

By now, many of the people who were associated with the movement replied that they were now fighting not for the money but for the rights of their children. Annoyed that people were not willing to listen to him and take his orders, the SDO told these people to produce their receipts. Stunned, the labourers told him that the receipts were with the court and he should take it from there. The SDO let things lie, and after a while when there was pressure on the SDO to respond on the progress of the case, he simply said the labourers had been given sufficient time and they had not submitted their receipts as proof for not getting employment within fifteen days as per law so he was rejecting the claim.

The people again go to the High Court. Court admitted the case which is running. How many years it will take to get justice, don't know. This was the



story of experiences of the old EGS in Maharashtra.

Now let us see the recent one after NREGP in 2006 . On February 2, 2006 when the NREGS was launched, in Maharashtra the NREGS has been merged with the EGS in selected 12 districts giving new name MREGS. During this period we visited villages, we found that the Gram Panchayat was using this opportunity to collect arrears of house tax. People were being told if you paid your arrears you would be registered under MREGS and get a job card otherwise not. A question was raised.

How influential rich people are not asked pay up their taxes and unemployed people who were in need of work were asked to pay their taxes for the job card!

It was also brought to our notice that if the poor person finally managed to file an application for a job, he was asked to leave the space for the date. Filling this date in the form of application for the demand of work is very necessary to count the period. In short people were just being tricked. A NGO working in the area educate the Gram Panchayat and the poor unemployed workers and fill the dates in the form.

So coming to the situation in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, CSOs have a very crucial role to play here because the Government cannot cover the scope of the scheme. They will have to help the people to convert information into knowledge, work with the

people, and be able to answer their questions.

To ensure that the poorest person can take the benefit of the scheme there has to be a sustained effort to increase the capacity of people to understand the importance of legal procedures. This is vital because, once again I stress, this is no longer relief work – it is a right work.

Only if there is a demand in the villages, then in the block, then in the district will the State Government take up the need. This has to be done with the help of political leaders and in the current Indian scenario, civil society organisations will have to play a very important role mainly because the only representative Government cannot do it on its own without a active participation of a unit of a real Govt. as “Village Community” in the process.

Only if these issues are taken up there will be a feedback from the grassroots to the policymakers and back. This is the gap that CSOs will have to fill- converting information into knowledge for people in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The procedure for the CSOs is very clear. They should be equipped with the instruments of educational process like “We Find Our Ways Our-self” to change information to knowledge and use it effectively with confidence. They will have to change their roles, use tools of knowledge and along with increased capacities be able to answer people’s questions.

This is a programme in which we are participating and the situation needs



to change for people. The CSO intervention will have to be a continuous process of learning from experience – from the village, to the cluster, to the block, to the district, and the State and back, because knowledge is power.

This process, is a capacity building exercise for all stakeholders and all sections of society should join. CSOs, media and intelligentsia should come together once a month to share their experiences and learnings and thus contribute to a continuous capacity building of all stakeholders.

A forum has to emerge which will be able to question government. Citizens will have to be empowered to question. After all there is a power in asking their representative Govt. as a right as citizen. And the very obvious question-“why are you not giving work as a right?” will be raised.

The representative Governments have their own weaknesses and CSOs will have to step forward. All the work will have to be backed with participatory studies and action research groups.

During our struggle in Maharashtra we learnt that people have equal capacity to think and continue the knowledge process themselves and after a certain level they are not depended. If we look back into the country's history, JP Naryana had appealed for a limited representation in Parliamentary democracy. From the theoretical stand, Mahatma Gandhi and Vinobha Bhave were for people's consensus. While most

of the situations are still utopia- there is a possibility that people can take these decisions in village community level meetings with consensus.

For Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh- water and forest management are major issues. There have to be structures of village community below the Gram Panchayat, at the hamlet level. This is necessary because the Gram Panchayat is not sufficient to bring in the benefits.

I end by saying the EGS in Maharashtra has benefited the development of villages, and more specially women and has brought down caste differences. It has brought relief to people especially the down trodden, but people are yet to get their rights. Relief was not the objective of scheme, it was to empower people towards their rights and eradicate poverty. This is yet to happen. We must accept this challenge as a civil society

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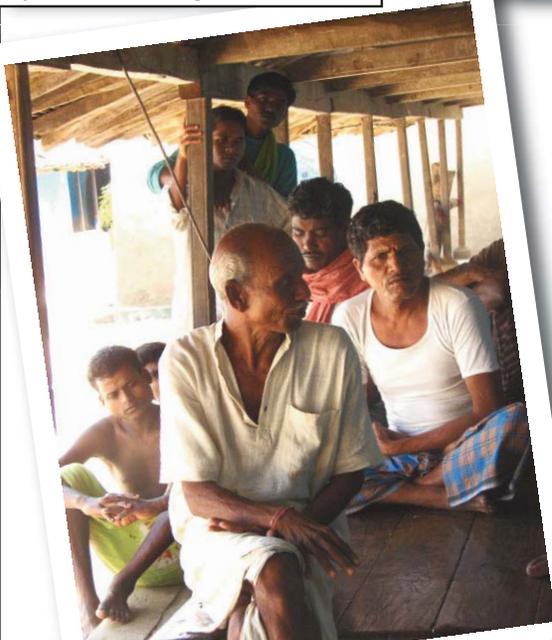


Kunjam Goes To The Police!

Finds Disparities in CGREGS



RELENTLESS WATCH: Phitaram Kunjam took recourse to law and set a precedent in the village against fraud in NREGA implementation.



UNITY OF ACTION: Kunjam in discussion with village fellow-men.

Village: Goplingchua

*District: Rajnandgaon
Predominantly tribal village
with 95% people are tribal.
Comes under PESA village*

Total households: 70

*Work carried out under
CGREGA: Road develop-
ment between villages
Kalkasa and Kaudikasa.*

Phiratram Kunjam, Chhaganlal Sinha, Joharsingh Kunjam, Rohitram Sahu and Korbahraram Sinha, all residents of village Goplingchua in district Rajnandgaon in the state of Chhatisgarh were fed up with the lies. They knew that people were being taken for a ride when they were told that they would be paid official rates for manual labour, but were in fact, never paid so. They knew that people were shown getting work and receiving payment - for work they had never even done in their lives. All in all, lies and more lies.

Villagers began to talk amongst themselves and realised the extent of foul play by officials engaged in providing employment under NREGA in their



casual look at one job card revealed the mischief made in the book. Then I took the lead in checking all the job cards that were taken from us by the engineer (allegedly for checking), and we detected what the extent of the fraud that had been carried out on us by misusing these job cards," he adds.

This infuriated the villagers. They went to the Sarpanch to get the matter checked. Upon verification by the village head, the complaint was found to be true.

"We then decided to take up the matter at the Gram Sabha. The meeting was attended by a large number of villagers, and the Sarpanch and panchayat secretaries pleaded that they had no knowledge as to what the engineer had done with the cards. And then we decided to take up the matter with the administration,"

Korbahraram Sinha, another villager says.

The villagers, along with the Sarpanch, Puralal Juresia, then went to the police station and lodged a case for fraud and forgery. As per police records, cases under section 409/420/467/468 and 471 of IPC were lodged against the Junior Engineer (Mr. Kulhara) on Sept 07, 2006. The assistant sub-inspector of police at Kaudikasa, Gajanand Sahu, said initial investigations indicate forgery in the documents by the officials con-

district. Phiratram says that the junior engineer had once taken their log books for checking and upon return, there were entries of work carried out under the road development project for 14 days. In fact, it was also entered into the book that those who had done labour on the road construction project had actually been paid the government rate of Rs.706 per person.

" We had never expected any foulplay by the engineer. However just a



प्रति,
माननीय सुब्बानेजी जी
कॉन्सिडरेशन - रायपुर
छत्तीसगढ़

विषय :- राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण रोजगार गारंटी योजना के कार्य में फर्जी भुगतान की जाँच बाबत।

मान्यवर महोदय,

उपरोक्त विषय में निम्नांकित तथ्यों पर आपका ध्यानाकर्षण कराते हुए त्वरित कार्यवाही हेतु निवेदन है।

1. यह कि हम समस्त प्रार्थीगण ग्राम गोपलीन चुआ एवं जिरांटोला, विकासखंड / तहसील अम्बागढ चौकी, जिला राजनांदगांव निवासी हैं।
2. यह कि राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण रोजगार गारंटी अधिनियम के अंतर्गत हमारे ग्राम में संबंधित परिवारों को परिहार कार्ड जारी किया गया। रोजगार योजना कार्ड माह जनवरी 2006 को पंचायत द्वारा तैयार किया गया पंचायत ने हमें माह जून 2006 में दिया गया।
3. उक्त कार्ड का अवलोकन करने पर उसपर मजदूरी भुगतान का उल्लेख होना पाया गया। उक्त भुगतान (WBM सड़क निर्माण कौड़ीकसा - कलकसा) डिमान्ड न्यूमेरो एजेंसी RES द्वारा MFFWP काम के बदले अनाज योजना अंतर्गत मस्टरील क्रमांक 430056/57 से होना उल्लेखित है जिसमें दिनांक 1-14 अप्रैल 2006 तक कार्य होना व 708 रु . का भुगतान किया जाना उल्लेखित है।
4. अम्बागढ चौकी विकासखंड अनुसूचित आदिवासी विकासखंड है। जहाँ पंचायत सज अधिनियम अंतर्गत वेत्ता कानून लागू होता है। अर्थात् ग्राम में किये गये विकास कार्यों पर हुये व्यय का सामाजिक अवेक्षण एवं अनुमोदन किया जाना ग्राम सभा का कानूनी अधिकार है इस केसले पर स्थानीय कर्मचारियों - अधिकारियों की मकसूर्यमक टिप्पणी बेटव दुर्भाग्य पूर्ण है।
5. उपरोक्त मामले में दिनांक 29/8/2006 को ग्राम सभा की बैठक में प्रस्ताव क्रमांक 1 के तहत विचार किया गया एवं ग्राम सभा ने उक्त भुगतान को गलत पाया गया, जिस पर शासन द्वारा कार्यवाही कराये जाने का निर्णय लिया गया। इसी कड़ी में ग्राम सभा की कार्यवाही पंजी में पंचायत निरीक्षक द्वारा की गई टिप्पणी को वेत्ता निरस्तता एवं औचित्य की भी जाँच की जावे। यदि ग्राम सभा में गणपूर्ति / कोरन का अभाव था तो ग्राम सभा की कार्यवाही का संपन्न ही नहीं होनी थी।
6. उक्त भुगतान को हमने गलत पाया है तथा इस मामले को रिपोर्ट स्थानीय पुलिस थाना अम्बागढ चौकी में किया है जिस पर थानेदार ने हमारे द्यान दर्ज कर लिया है। आगे कोई कार्यवाही होनी की जानकारी नहीं दी गई है।

7. अतः उपरोक्त विषय में निम्न जाँच कार्यवाही कर दोषियों का कड़ी सजा दिये जाने की कार्यवाही हेतु यह आवेदन प्रस्तुत है।

प्रार्थीगण
 ग्राम गोपलीनचुआ / जिरांटोला
 विकास खंड - अम्बागढ चौकी
 जिला - राजनांदगांव (छ.ग.)

परमानंद
 कर्णमाला
 भानुप्रिय

रजनीक शर्मा
 तरेक कुमार
 परदेशी राम
 श्रीराम

THE DOCUMENT THAT SHOOK THE VILLAGE: Copy of complaint submitted to police against erring NREGA officials.

सब इंजीनियर, एसडीओ ने दिए बयान

रोजगार गारंटी योजना में गड़बड़ी के मामले में आरईएस के एसडीओ व सब इंजीनियर ने सोमवार को थाने पहुंचकर अपने बयान दर्ज कराए। इन अधिकारियों ने प्रकरण को राजनीतिक हथकंडा बताया है।

भारकर मज. अंबागढ चौकी

पूर्व में यहां पदस्थ रहे सब इंजीनियर पीसी कुल्हार ने सोमवार दोपहर कॉन्सिडरेशन से आकर थाने में पुलिस के समक्ष स्वीकार किया कि छोट कलकसा-कौड़ीकसा तक 10:69 लाख रूपय की लागत से डब्ल्यूबीएम सड़क उन्नी की देखरेख में बनी है। रोजगार गारंटी योजना से कलकसा इस काम में गड़बड़ी की शिकायत को उन्होंने गलत बताया है।

पुलिस के अनुसार सब इंजीनियर ने बयान दिया है कि गोपलीनचुआ व जिरांटोला के जिन ग्रामीणों ने काम दिए बगैर रोजगार पंजीयन कार्ड में मजदूरी व भुगतान की प्रविष्टि की शिकायत की है, वे वास्तव में निर्माण में ट्रेक्टर से मुहम दुलाई के कार्य में लगे थे। उनके मुताबिक मुहम सड़क के लिए गोपलीनचुआ निवासी शिवचरण अमरिया को काम दिया गया था। शिवचरण का नाम रजिस्ट्रार के पास ट्रेक्टर पर काम करते थे। उनके मुताबिक ट्रेक्टर मालिक की मजदूरी का भुगतान हो चुका है। उनका कहना है कि यह पूरा मामला भ्रम व नाममात्री का है। ट्रेक्टर में ग्रामीणों ने काम किया, इसलिए रोजगार पंजीयन कार्ड में मजदूरी दिए जाने व भुगतान किए जाने की प्रविष्टि इंद्राज को गई है।

व्या कहते हैं अधिकारी

मामले में थानाप्रभारी वीएस मराठी का कहना है कि दोषियों को बख्शा नहीं जाएगा। श्री मराठी ने बताया कि शिवचरण व ट्रेक्टर मालिक का बयान लेना बाकी है। इसके बाद ही पुलिस किसी नतीजे पर पहुंच पाएगी। आरईएस के एसडीओ वीएस सिंह ने थाने पहुंचकर पुलिस को बताया कि हाल ही में यहां पदस्थ होने के कारण उन्हें अपने पूर्व के इस कार्य की जानकारी नहीं थी। पुलिस को सहयोग का आश्वासन दिया।

राजनांदगांव कवर्धा उपयंत्री के खिलाफ जुर्म दर्ज

राष्ट्रीय रोजगार गारंटी योजना में गड़बड़ी के मामले में पुलिस ने उपयंत्री पीसी कुल्हार को खिलाफ जुर्म दर्ज किया। आरोपी की गिरफ्तारी नहीं हुई है।

अतिरिक्त सड़क काम में स्टॉपकर बयान किए हैं। पुलिस ने सुधार को पंचायत अधिकारियों को बताने व ट्रेक्टर पूरा करने के बाद उपयंत्रियों के बयान सुनने का फैसला किया। थाना प्रभारी पर इस बात के समझ है कि उपयंत्रियों की गिरफ्तारी के लिए पुलिस को पंचायत अधिकारियों के सहयोग की आवश्यकता है। पुलिस को बताने के लिए उपयंत्रियों को पंचायत अधिकारियों के सहयोग की आवश्यकता है। पुलिस को बताने के लिए उपयंत्रियों को पंचायत अधिकारियों के सहयोग की आवश्यकता है।



NREGA Case Studies PACS Madhya Pradesh & Chhatisgarh



TAKING A STAND! Gajananand Sabu says the police has a virtual air-tight case against the accused.

cerned. Looking at this the police is looking into all the aspects to prepare a air-tight case against the culprits”.

The documents have been sent to the forensic laboratory for verification of handwriting and other clues. The erring officials

were called to the police station and their version of the story recorded, but Sahu says that the documents say another story altogether. “It is only a matter of time before we issue and arrest warrant against the officials. We want to be sure in our investigation, that is why we are being absolutely thorough and moving carefully”, he adds.

According to Phiratram, they had a pretty good idea about the concept of Rojgar Guaranttee scheme, before the NREGA actually come into being, thanks to the stream of inputs given by Jagriti Seva Sansthan (JSS). " We really appreciated the efforts of K.P. Sinha (of JSS) and his team in providing us information about the Rojgar Guaranttee scheme and other nitty-grities, like application writing for work, how to select work and whom to approach, etc. This helped us in ensuring complete job card preparation for all people above 18-years-

of-age and approaching the panchayat for opening works soon after the scheme was operational in the state," Phiratram Kunjam said.

And who suggested them to go to the police station? "Our Sarpanch is an Engineering graduate and we are educated. Besides, we knew the processes to be followed in the scheme. All this helped us in verifying the various work being carried out under the scheme, and also ensure our participation in these," Phiratram, the senior but most active person of the village, with a wistful gleam in his eyes.



Making Opinions Heard!

Women Take Up Cudgels in CGREGS



Village:
*Babarti, some
30 kilometers
from district
headquar-
ters, Kanker.*

CSO: *Parivartan Samajsevi Sansthan*

Issue: *NREGA work*

Main profession: *Agriculture*

Education: Education facilities are avail-
able; some are graduate-level educated.

Population: *4500, Tribal dominated vil-
lage with 600-odd households.*

District: *Kanker*

This is the village where people
actually went to the district collector to



change the existing work structure to suit their capability.

It so happened that the opening of road development work co-incided with the CGREGA coming into effect. As people applied for - and were allotted work - all work was automatically and very conveniently described as work given under the (NREGA) scheme.

The villagers had an idea about applying for work under the CGREGA scheme, which they did. However, they also had no problems in getting their names registered for the road development work either, automatically included under the NREGA scheme. Everyone from the village who applied for work got work.

When we visited the village and spoke randomly to about 20-25 persons, we realised that all those who had applied for work had indeed received work, and also had been paid as per the norm (*see inset photo on page 35*).

However, the issue arose when those who were allocated digging work (*khantis*) were not able to finish their daily quota of work because they found it very tiring: only two persons were allowed to work on a single khanti, instead of the normal four they were used to. This was why they were repeatedly pulled up for lagging behind their quota of work everyday - the 'two person *Godi*' system. As per prevalent labour system in these tribal areas, earth work is usually carried out under the *Godi* system, in which one male and one female are assigned work of digging, collecting



and dumping the soil, especially when digging for road construction or wells. Upon completion of that particular work, they are paid their dues accordingly.

In this village, the women protested against the two person *Godi* system. According to them, they are not physically powerful enough to carry the soil to the road while male members were digging the land. Keeping this in view, they demanded that another male/female be included in each *Godi* so that he/she could compliment the effort of the women carrying the soil to the road.



“Today I Feel Cheated!

No Money In The Panchayat



Consider this...

- Heera Khageger has 24 days entered in his NREGS job card says - he got work only for three days.
- Bhagwan Das has 72 days - says he got work only for three ...

- Sukha Khuswaha has 48 days - says he got work for only 7 ...
- Babulal Khuswah has 72 days - says he got work only for four...
- Puntu Adivasi has 24 days - says he got work for only six...
- Ram Charan Khuswaha has 72 days - says he got work only for nine....
- Raju Khangare has 36 days - says he got work only for five ...
- Guby Khangare has 48 days - says he got work only for seven ...
- Janaki Khuswah has 60 days - says he got work only for four ...
- Ramkuwar has 24 days - she says her husband went for work for five days and she went for a day.
- Rajkumar Khangri has 12 days - he says he got work only for two days

Just 11 people you might say, but a small and fair representation of dozens



like them in the village of Gopalpurabhata in the drought-hit district of Tikamgarh in Madhya Pradesh.

They all have the same things in common: while their job cards under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) show them having done 24 to 72 days of manual labour, they all contest the entries as wrong.

Guby Adivasi of the village says when he heard about the scheme, “I was

very excited that I would be getting work at home, and I kept waiting for work to begin.” Work did begin, and with raised expectations, Guby did not migrate to Delhi in search of work.

In return, he says, he got work for seven days, which was barely sufficient for him to manage his affairs, leaving him in a bind. But what has distressed not only Guby but a whole lot of people in his village is that Guby’s NREGS job card shows an entry of 48 days work. “Today I feel cheated,” he says.

When the issue is raised with people in the village, there is divided opinion about who got how much work, they however are unanimous that the job cards are kept with the sarpanch.

Whenever people inquire about their cards, they are told that they are being updated in the janpad office. Sarpanch Purashuram Khuswaha, who stays in the same Gopalpurakhas, denies allegations being made by the people, saying that the job cards were with the Janpad so they could be updated, and insists that the amount that is marked on the job is the correct number of days that people have worked.

To the people’s complaints that when they approach sarpanch, he says there is no money in the panchayat and that is why he cannot give work, Khuswaha accepts the allegation, saying “I have not been able to offer any work since August 15, 2006, because there is no money in the Janpad.”



“Today I Feel Cheated! **No Money In The Panchayat**



CLUTCHING AT STRAWS: Village women of village Bhamori Abda who have not got any loans.

In vil-
lage
Bamohi
Abada the
same dis-
trict, peo-
ple’s dis-
satisfac-
tion is
palpable.
After a
series of
attempts
to get
work
under

The desperation in people’s lives in the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh is beginning to manifest itself in different ways.

While wall paintings across Chhattarpur and Tikamgarh districts screech out the launch of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), extreme anxiety in these drought-hit districts hits you not only from the poorest households, but now from families that have traditionally been affluent and have been able to support marginalized farmers and labour.

the NREGS people in this village are particularly unhappy with the sarpanch.

Raja Yadav, Yasoda Yadav, Ramlali Yadav, Manoj K Rajak Suresh K Namdeo Sheela Devi Yadav, are among a large number of people who say that despite requesting work they received no response from the panchayat and they were either abused or told to return another day. When this continued for a long time, with the help of a local CSO Parhit, people filed their applications in the Janpad and marked a copy to Collector.

Following Parhit’s awareness cam-
paign on the NREGS in July, all these



HOPE TURNS TO DUST: Women looking at land that has turned parched because of the drought.

people had expected some work to come their way. Raja Yadav, remembers getting work only on November 6 and 7. Pointing out to her parched land Raja says, “There is no drinking water in the village, and left with nowhere to go, 90 per cent of the villagers have left in search of work.”

Even today, people in the village are still waiting for work. “The sarpanch has been giving work only to people who are close to him,” says Manoj K Rajak, leading to a debate and squabble amongst villagers.

In an extremely feudal region Parhit’s animator Anita Namdeo says that people in the villages do not dare to talk to the landlords, thus even if they are forced to desperation there is no question of demanding something from the Thakurs. Since the sarpanch is a

Thakur “Nobody has the courage to go and face the sarpanch.”

Amidst the utter chaos that the babble on NREGS raises amongst the people we spoke to, tribal women like Davasi, Kashi Bai, Dasrath, Bhagwanti have bewilderment writ large on their faces, but they still manage to raise their voice to demand their job cards. When asked why they do not have job cards, they say, “The poor are left out.’ Anita explains, “There are at least 15 poor families in the village who desperately need to be enlisted.” Villager Sukanydoya says that atleast 50 more cards are needed.

When the women are asked if they know what benefits the card will give them, there is a resounding “NO”.

In the same district, in village Tanga, sarpanch Champa Ray’s son Babloo Ray says his panchayat was given



NREGA Case Studies
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SHOULDER TO SHOULDER! Paan Bai (centre, in green sari), and below, with women from her village.



work worth Rs 17-lakhs under the NREGS to build two wells, stop dams, and two

cement-concrete roads. “I was able to provide work to 150 people at a time.”

Elaborating on the people’s wait for work and the ensuing allegations and counter allegations, he says after the first round to work under the NREGS, Rs 4,00,000 is pending in the janpad and he too has been waiting for two months for budgets to come from the Janpad.

Apparently caught in a very tight spot, Babloo says, “I want anybody who wants to come and work in this village to come and do so. It is not necessary that the work is routed through the panchayat.” He then says his panchayat had given a proposal for a Rs 25-lakh stop dam under the NREGS and till date, he has not heard from the engineers. “They do not give importance to proposals from the sarpanchs,” says Babloo, hinting possibly to the reality that to get the engineers clear proposals is not without tra- vails- and possibly, cuts. In fact, some people allege that work under the NREGS has not been cleared because the engineers are demanding a cut.

Babloo also points out that his panchayat has a ceiling on the quantum of work they can take up - upto Rs 4.99- lakhs only. He says he has 900 job cards in the vil-



lage, but points out that like the Antodaya cards, many have been made in the name many well do families and he insists, attendance is being taken on the muster roll and on the day the payment is made.

A sad reality that is affecting the programme is people's indifference and suspicion. Mahila Samiti's field worker Ram Rati in Morhapurwa says, "People do not believe that a woman will be paid full rates just for feeding and looking after other people's children."

In this village, there is confusion about the work that has come to the village. While Nonibai, who is a member of Asha SHG, says that she supervised work digging khantis (for roads) and worked for five days at Rs 100 a day, another resident, Ajoda Prasad Ahirwal, says he has no knowledge about any NREGS work being undertaken in his village!

Ten kilometers away from Chhattarpur in her village Morhapurwa, Nonibai says while she worked for five days under the NREGS, many people in the village have not sought work under scheme mainly because they are able to earn up to Rs 80 if they go to the city. "That work is more regular and pays more," says Raja Ram Ahirwal. In village Brijpura of Chhattarpur district, Paan Bai Ahirwar, who belongs to the Indra SHG, says that the sarpanch gave the villagers job cards in July, but without any photos. She says when work on the village road began in the village, she got 13 days work at the rate of Rs 50 and was paid 15 days later. She says she did not

have to apply for the work.

However, she points out that although she is illiterate, she knows that while the muster roll has Rs 60 against her name, she was paid only Rs 50.

Another villager, Afsar says, "The sarpanch and secretary, Mahadev Richariya, are not sure how to carry out this new scheme. First, they kept all the job cards with themselves. Now they have given them back to people".

People point out that Bhoomandi Mishra, the husband of woman sarpanch, Kishori Bai Mishra, looks after all the panchayat related work.

Paan Bai says she got all the information from Mahila Samiti field worker, Usha Tamkar during the NREGS week campaign which carried out from July 3 to July 9, 2006, by all teh PACS partners working in NREGA districts of the two states of Madhya Pradesh & Chhatisgarh. The campaign was part of the endeavour to create awareness to help the poorest of the poor access the scheme by the Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) programme across all the NREGS districts that it is operational in the six states.

Phula Bai says she and her husband, Ramlal Ahirwal, worked for a month on the village road. While he was paid Rs 60, she was paid Rs 50. Did she sign on any document after the day's work and when she was paid: "No. One day, the sarpanch's brother sent for us and paid us off," she explains. Benni Bai Ahirwar, too, agrees that no entry is made on their job cards when they are paid.



Caselets From The Field

Is Anyone Listening?

Mohanpura

If villagers of Mohanpura under Mamon Gram Panchayat in Tikamgarh district no longer trust the NREGS, the blame lies on the Janpad Panchayat which has failed to give jobs to the villagers.

All the 50 families in this tribal village are depend on labour jobs. The workers interested in getting work had submitted 50 proposals in July. They also submitted a proposal for CC road to the Janpad Panchayat secretary on July 27. But they were not given any work neither a receipt of the applications.

The situation of the job card holders is no different. Since there was no work in the Gram Panchayat they were asked to work in Lakhora Panchayat to build a stop dam. They worked for 20 days but entry for 132 days was made in the job cards. Similarly there were irregularities in the payment which is to be done through Panchayat accounts.

According to Sarpanch Goribai Chadar the Janpad Panchayat does not sanction projects citing lack of funds. Though the tribals wanted to work they did not get any. The villagers due to drought have been searching for work. The administration has reportedly given

instructions not to accept any application for work.

According to Panch Bhagirath and Mindiya earlier they used to get work elsewhere but not anymore as the workers from the local Panchayat are being given work. Mamon Gram Sabha panch Munna Ahirwar says no work is available and this was a big challenge before the government.

Maadhumar, Gopalpura Tikamgarh

Commissions are never out of fashion in our country. But for the Self Help Groups in Tikamgarh Janpad Panchayat, it was a first when they had shell out money to get their dues. What's more they were given only a part of the sum and even today they are running around to get their payment in contrast to another SHG which has been given the funds for the next financial year also!

The Tikamgarh Janpad Panchayat allegedly collected commission between 10 to 15 per cent from the SHG's to give them work and clearing first installment of funds.

Take, for instance, the afforestation work in 5 hectare given to Dashrath Self Help Group in Gopalpura Gram Panchayat. Even before giving the job



Tikamgarh Janpad Panchayat took Rs 3,000 and sanctioned the Rs 4.10 lakh project. However, only Rs 49,000 was sanctioned as first installment. What's more Janpad took Rs 5,000 to withdraw this first installment. Even the Patwari took Rs 1,500 to mark the area selected for the job.

But even after making payment of Rs 9,500 the SHG has been working under pressure. Not all SHG's are complaining though. Like Maa Gayatri Self Help Group which has been sanctioned Rs 2 lakh for plantation along the road. That the funds are to be utilized till the next financial year is another story and even one year is not complete. Of the 103 groups, 35 have been formed recently for this job only.

A majority of the groups were given Rs 50,000 initially. The groups took loan hoping to get the next installment of funds. But when the funds were not sanctioned they took loans to make payment to the workers as a result the financial position of the SHG's has further weakened. Some of the SHG workers have gone underground because of the loan.

This shows how the money is being distributed under the NREGS. Even the trees planted were dying a slow death for want of water as there are no funds to pay the workers to water the saplings. The story of irregularities does not end here as in the job card a worker has been shown working at two places, on a single day.

Hazurinagar, Tikamgarh

Almost all the Gram Panchayat in Tikamgarh block are not getting their funds on time. Almost half of the funds is yet to be received. It's because of this reason most of the work is incomplete and the workers are not getting work as there is no budget.

	Gram Panchayat	Amount Sanctioned	Amount Received
1	Mammon stop dam	Rs 4.5 lakh	Rs 2.95 lakh
2	Pahadikhurd stop dam (Rs 2.5 lakh), CC road (Rs 4.99 lakh), Patti construction (Rs 0.85 lakh)	Rs 8.34 lakh	Rs 4.64 lakh
3	Badmarai Rigora stop dam	Rs 3.21 lakh	Rs 1.60 lakh
4	Hiranagar CC road	Rs 5 lakh	Rs 2 lakh
5	Hazurinagar stop dam (Rs 4.5 lakh), road (Rs 4.56 lakh)	Rs 8.61 lakh	Rs 4 lakh

According to Janpad secretaries loans have been taken to make payment to workers while payment for material was not yet cleared. Lack of funds has affected work on Hazurinagar, Mammon stop dam. Though there is shortage of water gates have not been installed at stop dams due to shortage of funds. With nothing to stop the water flow whatever little water has been collected too will flow away.

Tikamgarh

Under NREGS, there is a provision to form vigilance committees at the Gram Panchayat level to keep a check on various works being carried out under



the scheme. But Panchayats have formed this committee just for formality's sake – the villagers have no idea who the members are of the committee and what their role is. Not only this, even members are not aware they are members of such a committee! None of the Panchayats have asked for work completion certificates nor do panchayat representatives have access to the muster roll of work done by the Gram Sabha.

This actually beats the whole purpose of the NREGS, which lays emphasis on villagers taking a collective decision on taking up works in a village on a priority basis.

The scheme also gives them the power to keep a check on the quality of the works, on the expenses and strengthen local resources to enable permanent employment to local villagers. But Janpad Panchayats are deciding what jobs the panchayat will take up and accordingly, funds are distributed.

The Janpad panchayat also has a say in accepting applications for job. This shows that the provisions of NREGS are not being followed.

Village Khargaon

Village: Khargaon, some 80-kilometers from district headquarter, Kanker.

Tehsil/Block: Keshkal

District: Kanker

CSO: Parivartan (Ekta Parishad)

Population: Approximately 2000; voters: 1500; households: 200 +.

Population composition: Tribal

Main livelihood: Agriculture, daily manual labour and minor forest produce collection.

School: Middle level school in the village; for higher studies, students go to the nearby High School, some 12-kilometers away.

As the Chhattisgarh Rojgar Employment Guarantee Scheme (CGREGS) did not allow any work under the scheme to start between June 15-Oct 15, 2006, people of this village could not find enough time after the scheme came into effect to apply for work.

However, given the fact that job cards were ready by then, all the job-work done by these people under various government schemes was counted as work allotted under CGREGA. This was the reason why job cards of most people carried a mention of seven-days' work in plantation activities.

According to Ramesh Markam, they worked for teak/Koha plantation work for seven-days, and were paid at the rate of Rs.58 a day. However, he added, only four days' payment has so far been made. To this, the Sarpanch, Chedilal Markam, resident of Amadih, a nearby village, and a highly qualified person who had completed his MA in Political Science, says that the rest of the payment will be released "soon".



Lachhram of the same village complained that half the people are yet to get their job cards and thus may face a problem in getting work soon after their seasonal agriculture-related activities are over.

On enquiry, Chedial said the process was stopped due to the monsoons and as and when works under the scheme will open again from Oct 15, job cards for the rest will be completed.

Meanwhile, the people of the village have made up their mind on what works they will carry out when the CGREGA will become operational again (on October 15).

According to Budhram and Mayaram, it was decided during the village meeting itself to create a demand for work on development of connecting roads from Khargaon to other nearby villages, as well as for an Anganwadi building and a school building, so that higher classes can also begin in the school.

When informed that the scheme promotes earth and manual work, the villagers said they have decided to take a collective decision at the Gram Sabha and then ask the Sarpanch to get necessary funding for construction material, and only then start work on the school building.

The Sarpanch has assured that he will take necessary action in this regard.

Village Dhora Bhatta

Village: Dhora Bhatta

Tehsil/ Block: Keshkal, Dist: Kanker

Population: 41

CSO: Parivartan (Ekta Parishad)

Livelihood: agriculture, daily labor and collection of minor forest produce.

Job cards prepared for 15 people so far.

According to the villagers, neither do they have any information about CGREGS nor has anyone informed them about the scheme. No work has been carried out so far, nor has any entry been made in their job cards.

However, the villagers have decided to attend the Gram Sabha this time and ask the Sarpanch to open works under the scheme.

Village: Baijanpuri

Village: Baijanpuri, some 100 Kilometers from district headquarters, Kanker.

Tehsil/ Block: Keshkal

District: Kanker

CSO: Parivartan (Ekta Parishad)

Like other villagers in the area, job cards for half the population have been completed, whereas the rest are yet to be made. According to the large number of residents we spoke to, including Daimati, Faguni, Devati, Brindabai, Ramdayal, Kansiram, Tiharuram, Shivilal, Gandarai, Soni and Ram, Sarpanch Phulobai is not doing enough for their



development.

They allege that not a single work under CGREGS has been opened so far, even though people have repeatedly asked her to take the initiative.

According to them, the village had never had a successful Gram Sabha so far and thus, they have not been able to zero in on the works they would demand for under the Rojgar Guarantee scheme.

Besides, it was the poor showing of the Sarpanch and the Panchayat secretary that half the people are yet to get their job cards.

Meanwhile, the villagers have now resolved to take up the issue themselves and take the initiative in getting job cards as well as jobs under the scheme soon after completing their agriculture-related work on their lands.

Sarpanch Phulodevi was not available for comment.

Village Bahritola

Village: Bahritola, (PACS village; comes under PESA)

District: Rajnandgaon

The village with about 160 habitations and 750-odd population was amongst the few villages in the district which had effectively used NREGA for the benefit of the village. Coming under the PACS programme area, the villagers were well aware about the scheme even before the actual Act came into force!

According to Kaushalya Bai, Kaveri Bai, Kunti Bai, Devnath, Devki, Phool Kumar and Kedar Nath (a Panch) they had applied to the block for work but never specified it. The opening of road concreting work in the village absorbed all those who had applied for work, and entries were made in their job cards that were specially prepared for NREGA work.

However, the villagers have no complaint. They are now getting ready to apply for work soon after the agriculture season is over. And what are the works they would be seeking? According to Nath, the villagers will now demand work to deepen the village pond as well as for construction of a new road. Besides, the villagers have also planned to develop a new cricket field in the coming days.

The sarpanch, Iswariram Sonwani (telephone: 07747-276497) was not available for comment.

Village Metapar-Ghorda

Village: Metapar-Ghorda, under Goplingchua Panchayat

District: Rajnandgaon (PACS village; comes under PESA]

Total habitation: 100 plus; over 60 percent people belong to the Halva tribe.

Sarpanch: Rusauram Bhuria

Secretary: Hemraj Sarva

According to Bhagat Ram Bhurre, Chaman Singh Bhurre and Maniram Bhurre all residents of this predominantly tribal village, they got work under



NREGA for pond deepening in village Ghorda. They admitted that though they were aware about the scheme, they had never applied for any work.

However, the opening of pond deepening in Ghorda offered work to all those who went there. There were no restrictions. And on completion it was noted in their job cards. “We have got 28 days’ work in the project as the work was completed by that time”, says Chaman Singh Bhurre. Did they get the right payment? All of them say they did.

The villagers also admitted that there was no rush for work at that time since every one was engaged on their own lands for the seasonal agricultural work.

The villagers have so far not chalked out any plan for the type of work they want next under the NREGA. They are, however, thinking of apply for road development and watershed work under the scheme once the crops are safely in.

Neither the Sarpanch nor the secretary were present to give their comment.

Village Piparkhar

Village: Piparkhar, Panchayat: Piparkhar

District: Rajnandgaon (PACS village ; comes under PESA)

Sarpanch: Nar Singh

Panch: Dukaloram

Sidar and Gond tribal-dominated village with about 160 habitations and 700-odd voters.

According to Dukaloram (a panch), the villagers had applied for work but not under NREGA. However, when work for Samarbandha Road was opened, villagers got work and it was included in the NREGA job cards. A large number of villagers like Chandra Kanwar, Mahavati, Parvati, Sukhia, Phuleshwar, Santosh and others admitted getting work at the road development site.

They also admitted that they have heard of the NREGA but have so far not gone into the details of the scheme. In fact, farm-related activities during the rainy season and the Chhattisgarh Government’s policy on non-implementation of the NREGA scheme between June 15-Oct 15 have also played a crucial role in not allowing them access the scheme.

The villagers are now planning to apply for another road development work, pond deepening and sports field work under the NREGA once they complete their farm activities. The villagers have also admitted that they were paid in accordance with NREGA provisions.

EXPERIENCES OF NON PACS DISTRICTS in CHHATISGARH

CASE: 1

District: Kabirdham

Blocks: Bodla – 14 Panchayats & Pandaria – 4 Panchayats



Declaration of Scheme: 5th February, 2006

Work Started: 5th May, 2006

Type of Work: Road Construction, Pond digging & Pond renovation

Work Implemented by: Panchayat

The Gramodaya Kendra, Kavardha, says that the communities of both blocks face the following problems:

1. There are irregularities in wage payments. Till date, the Panchayat has not made the payment.

2. Malpractices:

Ø **Less Payment:** In Kukrapani Panchayat ,Rs. 58/- per day is paid against Rs. 58.83 mentioned in job cards.

Ø **False signatures in job cards:** There are false signatures made by the panchayat in village Raali, and the wage amount has been siphoned off by the panchayat.

Ø **No T.A. and extra amount:** It is clearly mentioned in the Act that if the concerned department can not provide work within a 5-km. radius, the applicant is entitled to be paid T.A. and extra amount for workers who are working outside the 5-km radius. It is seen in Kukrapani Panchayat that the distance of the working area is more than 5-km but the workers are not being given any monetary compensation as given under the Act.

3. No wage payments have been made within 15 days of completion of work, which against the Act.

4. Shortcomings in the implementation of the programme:

Ø Many people are not aware of the programme since the concerned department/agency has not organized awareness programmes at the village or panchayat level.

Ø No officials are appointed to look after NREGP eg. District Programme Officer, Block Programme Officer, etc.

Ø Delay in job card distribution and obtaining jobs.

Ø The minimum wage is mentioned Rs. 60/- per day in the job card but members are getting less than the mentioned amount.

Ø Working sites facilities: It is observed that drinking water is provided in the working area but other facilities such as first aid, shade, crèche etc. are ignored.

Ø It is also seen that persons both below the age of 14-years of age and above the age of 60 -years are engaged in manual work, which the Act does not allow.

Ø The responsible agency at the



block level has ignored collecting applications for work from villagers; similarly, sarpanches at the panchayat level do not see the importance of the application for manual employment.

CASE: 2

District: Bilaspur, Panchayat: Kala

Village: Takhatpur

Nos. of families: 07

Job Card Issued: 0

Type of Work: Fencing by Panchayat

Bharatlal Suryavanshi, s/o Chaitram Suryavanshi did not get a job card but got work under the NREGA scheme. However, at completion of task, he was paid five days' wages as against 11 days work.

According to him, the Sarpanch first conducted a survey of the village to provide job cards. After completion of the survey, Bharatlal approached the Sarpanch and submitted an application for a job card. But he did not get one. Despite this, he got 11 days work carrying out fencing work.

Upon completion of work, Bharatlal received wages for 5 days work and the rest of the amount still remains with the sarpanch!

Now Bharatlal has appealed to officials concerned at the block for issuance of a job card to him as well as release of his remaining wages.

CASE: 3

District: Kabirdham, Block: Bodla,

Panchayat: Piparkhunta

Nos. of families: 223

Job cards issued: unknown

Work Started: May 2006

Type of Work: Renovation of 2 ponds by the Panchayat

According to Sawailal, s/o Shri Dharam Singh, he, alongwith his wife, worked at the two pond renovation work sites under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Both worked for 20 days (40 man-days) in the month of May and June, 2006. In the month of August, Sawailal was paid Rs.1006/- only and the rest of the amount - Rs. 1347.20/- - was not paid to him.

At the next payment date on 19th October 2006, his request for payment of the balance amount did not yield any result from the village head and the Panchayat Secretary. Sawailal further says that the Pradhan and Secretary denied having to pay him at all, saying that all his dues had already been paid.

Now Sawailal is appealing against the officials at the block for:

Ø Payment of his balance amount as well as to ensure that every bit of work he does is written clearly on the job card, so that people like the Sarpanch and the Panchayat secretary do not manipulate the figures.



CASE: 4

District: Kabirdham, Block: Bodla,

Panchayat: Murghunsari

Nos. of families: 282

Job cards issued: 247

Work Started: May 2006

Type of Work: Pond Renovation by Panchayat

Jagdish Markam, alleges that he was not paid for manual labour during pond renovation work in the panchayat.

According to him, he worked for eight days in the aforesaid work, and before he began work, he remembers that the sarpanch had declared that the wages would be Rs. 58.83/- per day as fixed under NREGA.

Jagdish says that on 17th July, 2006, the Sarpanch paid him Rs. 398.64 at the rate of Rs. 49.83/- per day. Upon enquiry, the Sarpanch reasoned that the lower payment was due to negative evaluation of the work.

Now Jagdish is appealing against block officials to ensure that he is paid his justified wages on the ground that labourers are not responsible for negative evaluation.

CASE: 5

District: Kabirdham, Block: Bodla,

Panchayat: Kesmarda

Nos. of families: 306

Job Card Issued: 0

Work Started: May 2006

Type of Work: Pond renovation in Baki vil-

lage by Panchayat

Ramkishore, s/o Dhodha worked for 18 days during the pond renovation work in Baki village, but at the end he was paid wages for only 6 days. Till date, his wages have not been paid.

Besides, it is alleged that all the job cards in the village are with the Sarpanch. Whenever villagers ask for their job cards, the Sarpanch reportedly threatens them, saying he will return the job cards to the government.

It is now also feared that the Sarpanch might even make false entries in the cards.

Ramkishore is now demanding that:

Ø The Sarpanch and Secretary must pay him his remaining 12 days of wages due to him.

Ø The Sarpanch should distribute job cards to the applicants/villagers immediately..