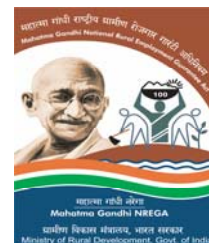


MGNREGS UPDATE

News for Internal Circulation No. 4.1 / April 16 – April 30, 2011
Foundation for Ecological Security



NREGA implementation in State not satisfactory

Special Correspondent/ April 16, 2011

New Delhi: The report card on implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a mix bag for Assam, with at least 62 per cent households being provided employment under the flagship schemes, while ombudsman has not been constituted for any district and State fund.

According to the report card, 24,123 person-days of unemployment allowances were due but no unemployment allowances paid reported on MIS. The period pertains to 2010-2011, as reported up to April 7 on the online Management Information System (MIS), official sources said.

The ruling Congress Government, which gave itself full marks for its achievements in implementation of the social development schemes during the polls, however, fell short in several key areas, according to the report card.

It was reported that there was delayed payment of 51192 Muster Rolls, of Rs 42.35 crore in the State.

Only 42 per cent workers' have accounts, while number of job cards holders with photos is 23 per cent. Only 64 per cent Bharat Nirman Sewa Kendra taken up reported at GP/ Block level.

Only 55 per cent of expenditure reported on wages. Out of total 27 districts, 14 districts including Bongaigaon, Karbi Anglong, Kokrajhar, Barpeta, Darrang, Cachar, Hailakandi, Nalbari, Baksa, Chirang, Dhubri, Golaghat, Jorhat, Nagaon and Udhalgiri reported less than 60 per cent expenditure on wages.

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Out of 27 districts, 10 districts including Kokrajhar, NC Hills, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Jorhat, Kamrup Metro, Nagaon, Sivasagar, Sonitpur and Tinsukia reported more than 6 per cent administrative expenditure, while the State average was 5 per cent.

While only 1397 (3 per cent) works completed out of 47096 works taken up reported on MIS.

<http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr1711/at094>

NREGS: Militancy-Hit Block in Meghalaya Sets Example

Staff Reporter/ April 17, 2011

Shillong: Despite being dubious for militancy related incidents, a block in Meghalaya has set an example by achieving almost 100 person days under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. The Samanda Community and Rural Development Block in East Garo Hills district has achieved the unique distinction of 99.97 person days per household thus becoming the first C&RD Block in the entire state to achieve 100 person days of wage employment per household under MGNREGS.

As many as 149 out of 151 Villages, Employment Councils (VEC) achieved 100 man days. 420 projects were successfully completed in the Block in the financial year 2010-2011 creating 6,40,938 person days for the registered households, deputy commissioner Pravin Bakshi said.

The Block has achieved the results in spite of agitations and law and order disturbances plaguing the district and the block. Last year too, the Block had shown the way with 94 man days per household with several unique experiments like promoting horticultural crops and rubber plantations and had achieved the highest number of person days in the state, Bakshi said.

Ethnic conflict and curfew had paralyzed the block for two months this year even as spread of insurgency in

Initiative towards Energizing MGNREGA.

the interior villages made implementation of this scheme difficult.

Police say militants are active in the areas and villages under the Samanda Block recently witnessed several anti-insurgency operations.

The Deputy Commissioner said concerted efforts were made in the Block to ensure convergence of different schemes with MGNREGS.

"The success of the scheme has pumped a lot of faith and self-confidence amongst the people who are now motivated to take up ambitious projects even with resources channelized by the community and supported by MGNREGS with technical support and handholding with Meghalaya Rural Development Society who are chipping in with material support and community mobilization," Bakshi said.

He said 18 VECs including Nengmandalgre - the native village of Garo National Liberation Army 'c-in-c' Sohan D Shira - across the Simsang river have converged to construct an ambitious causeway from Nokel Awe to Nengmandalgre connecting villages on both sides of the river.

This causeway can connect to Chokpot in South Garo Hills' district thereby facilitating connectivity.

<http://news.outlookindia.com/item.aspx?719161>

Nizamabad slips to 4th position in NREGS works

TNN/ April 17, 2011

Nizamabad: After finishing top in 2010, Nizamabad slipped to fourth place behind Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam districts in the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in the state this year.

The NREGS works suffered a big setback this year due to non-cooperation movement conducted by Telangana employees' association demanding introduction of

separate T state Bill in the Parliament from February 17 to March 4.

Sources said hectic agricultural activity was also one of the major reasons for the poor implementation of the scheme in the district this time round. Almost all the employees, including field assistants, technical assistants, additional programme officers (APOs) and computer operators, who play a vital role in the implementation of the scheme at the grassroots level, took part in the non-cooperation movement.

"NREGS works were almost stalled during the non-cooperation agitation period," sources said. The district, in fact, fell to 22nd rank during April first week but picked up pace to finish fourth in the standings at last. "In the present financial year, works have not started in about 100 villages so far," a NREGS official said.

Speaking to TOI, District Water Management Agency (DWMA) project director M Veerachary said that non-cooperation movement had its impact on the rural job scheme works. DWMA is the monitoring agency of NREGS works in the districts.

According to department statistics, only 36.36% households have been provided 100-day employment. In 2010, the district bagged the first rank by providing 100 days work to about 70,000 households, including Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families.

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-04-17/hyderabad/29427685_1_nregs-nizamabad-district-water-management-agency

Meghalaya block hits job target

-Samanda in East Garo Hills first in state to provide 100 man days

Andrew W. Lyngdoh/ April 17, 2011

Shillong: The Samanda community and rural development block has achieved the unique distinction of 99.97 person days per household and become the first in the state to provide 100 man days for each

registered household under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). As many as 149 out of 151 village employment councils achieved the target.

Samanda is near Williamnagar, the district headquarters of East Garo Hills, and is about 325km from here.

"This was accomplished in spite of the ethnic conflict and curfews that paralysed two community and rural development blocks for two months. The spread of insurgency in the interior villages made implementation of NREGS difficult," East Garo Hills' deputy commissioner Pravin Bakshi said.

However, official sources today said as far as the implementation of the NREGS at the district level in 2010-11 was concerned, East Garo Hills stood second with an average of 81 man days per household. Ri Bhoi district topped the list with 86 man days.

The NREGS aims at enhancing the livelihood of people in rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of wage-employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

A total of 420 projects were undertaken and successfully completed in the block during the financial year 2010-2011, creating as many as 6,40,938 man days for the registered households.

Bakshi said the block achieved the results in spite of agitation and law and order disturbances plaguing the district and the block.

"Last year, too, the block had shown the way with 94 man days per household with several unique experiments like promoting horticultural crops and rubber plantations. It had achieved the highest number of person days in the state," he added.

Bakshi said the NREGS also provided 80.32 person days per household and 36.80 lakh number of man days in 2010-2011 as compared to 80.41 of the last financial year.

Militants are active in areas and villages falling under the Samanda block, particularly on the other side of the Simsang river, that recently witnessed several police operations.

Samanda block development officer S.K. Momin had received the coveted Meghalaya Day Excellence Award in 2010-11 for his pioneering contribution to the block.

“Concerted efforts were made in the block to ensure convergence of different schemes with NREGS by way of training component support and convergence with schemes like the integrated watershed management programme, repair, restoration and renovation of water bodies scheme, rubber board and others,” Bakshi said.

Training for stakeholders was provided by the fisheries department, soil and water conservation department and irrigation department, including partnership with the Meghalaya Rural Development Society (IFAD project), East Garo Hills.

“The success of the scheme has instilled a lot of faith and self-confidence amongst people who are now motivated to take up ambitious projects,” Bakshi said.

“People in the block are now beginning to realise the benefits of the demand-driven scheme where they can plant rubber, construct fishery ponds, bridges or work on any other project,” he said, while adding that attaining 100 man days work was a great boon to the villagers.

Bakshi said people were also trying to plant titachap — a tree species that grew at a rapid rate and also provided fine quality timber.

He said, “Around 18 village employment councils, including villages like Nengmandalgre, Dura Bawegre, Rapdikgre, Doreng Kidre across the Simsang river, have converged to construct an ambitious causeway from Nokel Awe to Nengmandalgre connecting villages on both sides of the river. This causeway can connect to Chokpot in South Garo Hills, thereby facilitating connectivity.”

Nengmandalgre is the native village of Sohan D. Shira, the self-styled commander-in-chief of the nascent militant outfit, the Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA).

“East Garo Hills has been in the news for all the wrong reasons. However, this accomplishment comes like a whiff of fresh air after the ethnic clashes and a series of law and order and militancy problems,” Bakshi said.

However, he said not all muster rolls could be cleared as funds were not processed from the Centre and provided on time to the district. The January ethnic clash and the subsequent rehabilitation resulted in a delay in the preparation and submission of utilisation certificates. He added that the muster rolls for the last financial year would be cleared this month.

http://www.telegraphindia.com/1110418/jsp/northeast/story_13865337.jsp

Villagers see Red over NREGA

Rakhi Chakrabarty/ April 18, 2011

Gumla: It's that time of the year when Jharkhand celebrates the Sarhul festival. As saal trees sprout new leaves and blossom in leafless forests, tribals troop to the village 'saran sthal' (place to pray) to worship nature. White and red striped flags flutter along a cratered road snaking through Latehar's hilly terrain, from Rajdanda to Barahi.

Construction of this road in Latehar's Mahuadanr block, around 120km from Ranchi, began last year. After villagers complained about the road, a district official asked an activist to check. "The contractor had layered the road with barely half an inch of asphalt," he says.

Will the district administration act against the contractor? "Unlikely. Rogue contractors warn those against them that they would be six-inch chhota (shorter), that is, beheaded," he says.

Villagers allege a nexus between contractors, district officials and jungle sarkar (the Maoists). They have a strong grip on NREGA projects, too.

A recent survey found contractors or middlemen being chosen as NREGA mates due to ignorance and vested interests of the gram panchayat sevak. In many cases, the work remains undone but the money is siphoned off. In Gumla's Helta panchayat, a group of villagers applied to the RTI official in March to know the status of about a dozen unfinished NREGA projects and the money spent on them since 2006. "We are yet to get a reply," says one of them.

NREGA had raised hopes in food insecure rural Jharkhand crippled due to poor road connectivity, electricity and water crisis. Soon reality hit hard. "Earlier, we were like a dheki (used to pound rice), only the administration exploited us. Now, we suffer a drum's fate, the administration beats us on one side and the Maoists on the other," says a villager.

In Latehar's Dohrikona, construction of a check dam was stalled. Maoists allegedly demanded Rs 3 lakh but the villager working on the scheme could pay just Rs 20,000. He can't resume work till he pays up.

At Helta, villagers talk about college student, Arun Kujur. He was supervising the construction of a drainage canal, an NREGA project. "A Maoist splinter group demanded 10% levy. Arun refused to pay," claims a villager. The rebels shot at him. Arun escaped unhurt and left the village. He hasn't returned since then.

The case wasn't reported to the police. "If we complain, the jungle sarkar (Maoists) will kill us for being police informers," says a villager of Gumla's Bishunpur.

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-04-18/india/29443133_1_villagers-maoist-splinter-group-police-informers

Baha scripts water-harvesting success

Sarat Sarma/ April 18, 2011



The 500-metre canal

Morigaon: It may appear to be a mere narrow canal of muddy water to some but it is a stream of hope for thousands of Baha villagers in central Assam's Morigaon district.

The villagers, employed under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) of the local Mayang development block, dug a 500-metre canal to divert water accumulated at the foothills to water their paddy fields.

Baha hills, 10km from Morigaon district headquarters and home to 5,000 people, comprises three conical hillocks. The troughs between the three act as a natural reservoir. In summer, water from this natural reservoir drains out through a narrow valley between two hillocks and submerges the entire village located in the foothills. But in winter, the groundwater level goes down mainly because a natural channel drains the water into the Kopili River.

"First, we plugged the gaps of the natural reservoir with stones. Then we built a dam at the mouth of the valley from where water used to flow down into the village and cause floods. Next, we dug the 500-metre stream to channel the water from the reservoir to our paddy fields. Now in summer, the water flows directly to the fields causing no harm to the village. Reserved water is used in winter for cultivation," said Dipok Bordoloi, a villager of Baha.

According to Bordoloi, as water is stored in the reservoir throughout the year, the water table is not affected even in winter.

“So far, Rs 36 lakh has been spent on the scheme. The rest of the work, including an approach road and a garden, will be done next year,” said a local panchayat leader.

The soil conservation department of the district said it was the most successful water-harvesting project in central Assam.

“We have found a lot of potential in micro water-harvesting projects in Morigaon where there is adequate waterbodies. So far, nine water-harvesting schemes have been commissioned in the district till this year under the soil conservation departments. We have three Integrated Watershed Management Programmes projects in the district which would cover altogether 13,636 hectare area,” said senior soil conservation range officer C.R. Gogoi.

Morigaon DRDA project director Ali Askar said including the Baha project, altogether three such water-harvesting programmes have been taken up in the district under NREGA till this year.

“After the success in Baha, Silchang and Lakhimijar water-harvesting projects, we will take up a fourth one in the Gobha area in Jagiroad,” Askar said.

http://www.telegraphindia.com/1110419/jsp/northeast/story_13871029.jsp

Congress demands Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik's resignation over MGNREGS irregularities

Orissa Diary correspondent / April 19, 2011

Bhubaneswar: Congress has demanded resignation of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, the then Panchayati Raj Minister Raghunath Mohanty, Sanjib Sahoo and present Panchayati Raj Minister Prafulla Samal for corruption in MGNREGS projects in the state.

Initiative towards Energizing MGNREGA.

In a press conference on Tuesday senior leader of Congress and former Chief Minister Giridhari Gomango expressed that the MGNREGS projects has not been implemented as per the guidelines of the project. Crore of Rupees has been misappropriated. The state government has violated the NREGS Act. Another senior leader of the party and former Union Minister Chandra Sekhar Sahoo expressed that the centrally sponsored scheme has not been properly implemented in the state.

The Chief Minister himself is the Head of the state level committee. The MGNREGS projects are being done by machine instead of the poor people. The then Minister and present Minister including the Chief Minister may try to mislead the CBI probe. They should resign before CBI probe. They have demanded to extend CBI probe in all 30 districts of the state, instead of 8 districts.

The President of Rajib Gandhi Panchayati Raj and former Minister Sarat Rout expressed that a special shell of Rajib Gandhi Panchayati Raj has been created to collect information regarding corruption in the MGNREGS in the state. Vice President of the Party Sivananda Ray expressed that the present Minister has indirectly admitted regarding corruption in the MGNREGS project in the state.

<http://www.orissadiary.com/CurrentNews.asp?id=26121>

MG-NREGA Funds Not Spent in Bihar: Paswan

Staff Reporter/ April 19, 2011

Patna: LJP president Ramvilas Paswan today criticized Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for his failure to utilize funds for MG-NREGA in the state and asked him to bring separate status reports on implementation of MG-NREGA, power and water crisis, education and health.

Paswan said the MG-NREGA was demand based and funds were released by the Centre to the states based on the labour demand arising at the field level.

The NDA government in Bihar had failed to utilize MG-NREGA funds of Rs 471.66 crore during 2007-08, Rs 871.38 crore and Rs 541.33 crore during 2008-09 and 2009-10 respectively, the former union minister claimed.

"One can well imagine the status of MG-NREGA progress in Bihar for providing 100 days of wage employment to every rural household in every financial year for doing unskilled manual work," the MP said and alleged that there was rampant corruption in execution of MG-NREGA.

The state government was also a total failure in tackling power and water crisis, ensuring quality education and health, he alleged and said the state government was busy in highlighting its achievements though there is nothing visible on the grounds.

Paswan announced that the LJP would seek status report from the state government to substantiate as to what were the major changes seen on the front of electricity, health and education compared to the 15 year-rule of RJD.

"We don't see any change in the state's position," he said and added that the LJP would launch intensive awareness campaign among the people against the failures of the state government.

Referring to the Right to Service Act being implemented by the Bihar government for weeding out corruption in providing public utility services, Paswan said if at all any legislation needed to be brought, it should be Right to House bill.

"Every homeless family in the state and the country should be covered and a house be made available for stay," he said, adding there should not not be any facility for reservation under the bill.

Paswan also accused Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh of threatening LJP leader Vijay Singh, who had lost to his son Sumit Kumar Singh by a margin of less

than 200 votes in the Assembly elections from Chakai in 2010.

"The minister is threatening my party leader and asking him to take back the writ petition filed by him seeking to countermand the election to Chakai seat," he said.

Paswan alleged that the Jamui district administration too was 'acting in connivance with the minister and planning to withdraw Vijay Singh's bodyguards. Chakai falls under Jamui district.

"We request Chief Minister to take necessary step in this connection," the LJP supremo added.

<http://news.outlookindia.com/item.aspx?719397>

GoM to check NREGS implementation

TNN/ April 21, 2011

Hyderabad: The state government on Wednesday constituted a group of ministers to examine the current system for implementation of MGNREGS in the state and suggest suitable modifications to protect the interests of rural poor labourers, apart from considering other demands of the field functionaries.

Ministers who are part of the GoM include D Manikya Varaprasada Rao (rural development), V Sunitha Laxma Reddy (pensions & women development), Vatti Vasant Kumar (tourism), B Satyanarayana (transport), N Raghuvveera Reddy (revenue), D Sridhar Babu (civil supplies) and S Sailajanath (adult education). These ministers have been asked to take up deliberations at the earliest and finalise their recommendations at an early date for submission to the government.

Rural development principal secretary has been appointed as the convenor of the group of ministers, according to an order issued by chief secretary S V Prasad.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/GoM-to-check-NREGS-implementation/articleshow/8041880.cms>

Police rider on NREGS FIRs

Bhanu Pratap Singh/ April 22, 2011

Jaipur: The Sirohi police have decided not to register FIRs over irregularities committed in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Schemes (MGNREGS) unless the complaint is backed by an audit report.

Superintendent of police for Sirohi, Vipul Chaturvedi passed a written order to this effect for all police station in-charges in the district during a law and order meeting held on March 13, 2011. "Cases shall not be registered against people who commit irregularities under the MGNREGS unless the FIRs are accompanied by reports of clear embezzlement established by the audit teams concerned," reads the order.

Even as the social organisations working in the field of MGNRES have deplored the order, the senior police officer insists his order was "in accordance with the law of the land". "There is no provision under the Indian penal code (IPC) for registering FIRs over complaints of irregularities'. It is a job of the government departments concerned, and not the police, to investigate irregularities," Chaturvedi says.

The cop differentiates between an "irregularity" and a "crime" while considering whether an FIR can be registered related to the employment scheme. "The audit report should first establish that an irregularity has been committed, then only the police can act," reasons Chaturvedi. He adds, "Complaints of irregularities can be investigated by the anti-corruption bureau but certainly not by the police."

The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan's (MKSS) Nikhil Dey, on the other hand, believes the police officer's order was wrong. "How can he pass such an order? There are hundreds of irregularities that won't come up in the audit report. The police cannot decline to register FIRs in such cases," says the member of the MKSS, which played a key role in shaping the MGNREGA.

Pointing out some of the most common irregularities committed under the MGNREGS, Dey says, "Wages released against fake signatures in a muster-roll is an irregularity that cannot be detected in an audit report. But the police have to register an FIR against such a complaint and carry out investigations." Similarly, fake accounts opened to embezzle MGNREGS money cannot be detected by an audit report. "An audit, at best, can tell whether an expenditure that is being claimed have been incurred or not," he says.

The district SP, however, maintains that irregularities going undetected by audit reports need to be inquired and established by the departments concerned. "There are thousands of signatures on the muster-rolls and the police cannot be expected to cross-check them. Either the MGNREGS department or the panchayati raj department should establish such irregularities. The police can register an FIR only after that," asserts Chaturvedi.

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-04-22/jaipur/29462543_1_audit-report-irregularities-audit-teams

NREGS: Orissa gives nod to CBI probe

Press Trust of India/ April 24 2011

Bhubaneswar: The Orissa government on Saturday gave its consent for a CBI inquiry into the multi-crore NREGS scam in the state. The Supreme Court had directed the government to issue a formal notification for a CBI probe by April 25, the next date of hearing of the civil writ petition filed by an NGO alleging misappropriation of NREGS funds in the districts of Kalahandi, Keonjhar, Naurangpur, Bolangir, Raygada, Malakagiri and Koraput.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/The-Latest/780476/>

Odisha: Job Seekers Action against irregularity & corruption in MGNREGS

Mati Maa Mahila Morcha/ April 24, 2011

Nayagarh: It is well known to all that lots of irregularity & corruption is being done in NREGS in Orissa. So that the Supreme Court decided to C B I probe on MGNREGA, which is a challenge to Govt. of Odisha. We can find the irregularity & corruption in Gania Block of Nayagarh District.

There is lively news on MGNREGA corruption. On 19th April, 2011 around 200 nos. of job card holders from Kalasimili & Gaudatumandi village of Karadapada GP in Gania Block GHERAOD the Block Office demanding to provide them 100 days works under MGNREGS instead of using JCB machines.

Village Scenario:

Kalasimili & Goudatumandi, both the villages are purely depending on daily wages. The total no of Job card holders in Kalasimili & Goudatumandi is 49 & 44 respectively. They are from deprived & marginalized living with poverty.

Detail Case story:

The total job card holders of two villages have worked from 14/02/11 to 18/04/11. On 19/2/11, when the labours went to work to the site with their instruments at that time by the direction of block administration the concerned JCB owner denied them to leave the work site without delay.

The labours came to village & discussed about the issue & took decision unanimously to discuss with BDO of Gania about the issue.

On dated 19/04/11, around 200 job card holders Gheraod the Gania Block office demanding their rights on MGNREGS. But none of the Govt. official of Block administration came to discuss with the hesitated labours though 4 hours have gone. In order to avoid the issue, BDO went away from office to his residence. When the hesitators came to know that he is went away

to his race at that time people gathered him on the way & countered seriously. Then he came back to office & discussed with hesitators & accepted the memorandum prepared by the labours. Finally he gave an assurance to investigate the matter & will take disciplinary action against the vested groups.

Unfortunately, on dated 20/04/11 all the staff members of the block sit together & declared as KALAM CHHAD ANDOLAN (Leave the pen) before the block office against the hesitation of job seekers.

On dated 21/04/11 Sub Collector, Nayagarh Mr. Manas Ranjan Devata, Tahasildar, Daspalla Mr., Kailas Chandra Jena along with OIC, Gania Mr. Pratap Chandra Behera came to the block office & discussed in detail with them & requested to call off & join in the official duty. Also they told that the CBI inquiry is going on in the state of Orissa about the irregularity & corruption in NREGA. So it is not good time to do such type of work as an employee of State Govt.

On dated 22/04/11 the job seekers could not get any positive response from the Block & concerned G.P. by which once again around 100 labours sit together before G.P. office. A charter of demand presented to Naveen Pattanaik, Chief Minister of Orissa through Bidyadhar Rout,

Sarapanch of the concerned G.P. Sarapanch accepted the memorandum & admitted the irregularity happened in NREGS. Again he told that all the illegal activities have been done by the direction of political leaders & block officials without my knowledge. I do agree to support you in each & every step of your problem.

The demands are as follows:

« We want to work in our village under MGNREGS instead of machine.

« Pay the wages within 15 days regularly.

« Release the pending wages as soon as possible.

« Maintain our Muster Roll & job cards daily at work site without delay.

« Pay the revised wage rate Rs.125/- from 1st Jan 2011 as per the notification of Central Govt.

« Ensure other facilities at work site (Drinking water, Rest Shed, Instruments) which should provide by the Block/G.P. as per the provision of MGNREGS.

« MGNREGS work cannot be done in our village by third party or contractors promoted by the officials & political leaders.

« Include CBI inquiry to Nayagarh district in corruption of MGNREGS.

<http://www.orissadiary.com/ShowDistrictNews.asp?id=26217>

Govt to take a call on health cover for NREGS workers today

Chetan Chauhan/ April 28, 2011

New Delhi: Continuing with its social sector agenda, the Union Cabinet is expected to consider a proposal to provide health insurance to all workers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). The Cabinet will on Thursday consider a proposal to extend the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana to MGNREGS.

The scheme, as of now, is applicable only below the poverty line families. Under the scheme implemented in Public Private Partnership mode, 2.33 crore BPL families have already been enrolled.

Now, the government wants to extend the scheme to about 10 crore MGNREGS workers, who will have to pay a premium of R30 for getting health insurance cover of R30,000 per annum. The insurance is for existing and new diseases and also covers surgical costs.

The RSBY is different from other health insurance schemes as it covers the cause of pregnancy and provides for automatic cover to newborns till the policy is valid.

It provides cost of transportation to and fro from the empanelled hospitals, which includes private hospitals in each district.

The government officials say the final aim of the scheme is to provide a health insurance to all Indians for basic health facilities under the scheme.

The Cabinet will also consider proposed amendments to the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, to check poaching.

Hindustan Times had reported in detail the proposed amendments which include manifold hike in penalty for killing endangered species of animals.

Another Environment ministry proposal of allowing World Bank to fund cleaning of River Ganga under the National Ganga River Basin Authority is also coming up for the Cabinet consideration.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/Govt-to-take-a-call-on-health-cover-for-NREGs-workers-today/Article1-690511.aspx>

‘NREGS card valid for opening accounts in rural banks’

Express News Service / April 29 2011

Ahmedabad: THE Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to accept NREGS job cards or Aadhar letter as official documents for opening accounts in rural cooperative banks for persons covered under the scheme.

This will enable the job card holders or the workers to keep their money in safe custody.

An RBI communique to the state and district cooperative banks has said that the accounts can be opened with certain conditions attached as per the RBI rules regarding prevention of money laundering as laid down in 2005.

The apex bank has put a condition that only ‘small’ accounts can be opened against the production of NREGS job cards or Aadhar letter, duly signed by an officer from the Unique Identification Authority of

India. The card should contain details like name and address of the applicant.

According to RBI rules, small accounts means savings accounts where the aggregate of all credits in a financial year does not exceed Rs 1 lakh; the aggregate of all withdrawals and transfers in a month does not exceed Rs 10,000; and the balance at any point of time does not exceed Rs 50,000.

RBI has further advised that in cases where the banks have relied exclusively on NREGS job cards or Aadhaar letter as complete Know Your Client (KYC) document for opening accounts, the said accounts will be subjected to all conditions and limitations prescribed for small accounts as notified by RBI.

All accounts opened only on the basis of NREGS card or Aadhaar letter should be treated as “small accounts” subject to the relevant rules, the notification added.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/nregs-card-valid-for-opening-accounts-in-rural-banks/783299/>

Abysmal implementation of MGNREGA in Assam

TCN/ April 15, 2011

Guwahati: The status of implementation of India's flagship rural job guarantee scheme MGNREGA was very poor in Assam during 2010-11. More than 24 lakh households (65% of the total registered MGNREGA card holders in the state) did not get job in the entire 2010-11 under MGNREGA. While only 16,473 households got job for 100 days in the year, 611,032 households got job for less than 15 days.

North East Social Trust (NEST) is working in the north-eastern states of India for strengthening of rural livelihood opportunities and local governance in the region. In collaboration with Centre for Microfinance and Livelihood (CML), NEST carried out the research to understand the rural livelihood status under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in the state of Assam on completion of financial year 2010-11.



Women working under a MNREGA program at Malir Alga village, Dhubri district of Assam.

Highlights of the findings on NREGA implementation in Assam in 2010-11 depict very abysmal implementation. Total No of Households that got job card in Assam is 3,749,672. Out of this the number of BPL Families Registered in NREGA – 25,616 (25+ thousand) which is 0.67% of total registered Household.

District with highest percentage of BPL inclusion in NREGA is Dhubri with 1.53%. This figure implies a very poor implementation. It is also found that the total 6% of the job card holders belong to SC, 16% ST and 78% belongs to other categories.

A total of 24,36,848 Households (65%) did not get job in the entire year under NREGA in the year 2010. While only 16,473 numbers of house hold got 100 days employment in the year which is 0.56% of the total Job card holding House hold. 611,032 numbers of household got less than 15 days employment in the year which is 21% of the total Job card holding HHs

What is more worrisome is that 28,635 numbers of registered families are not given job card in the year and 29,331 person days of unemployment allowances are not paid in the state during the period.

Percentage of workers having bank account numbers is 41.13%. Work Execution Level Analysis for the Financial Year 2010-2011 shows that 42.9% of the work is being executed through GPs violating the norm of minimum 50% execution through the GPs.

Tasaduk Ariful Hussain, director of NEST said, 'Our findings are an assessment only. It is hard to pinpoint the causes behind the poor implementation. NREGA is a very transparent process. May be government failed to have a clear vision about the implementation of MNREGA in the state. Also proper supervision for the MNREGA implementation is lacking. In Assam, till date no program officer is appointed as per the NREGA Act 2005. The Act says that there shall be program officer in every district whose position will be equal to the of BDO. Another factor is that out of 2021 gram panchayats in Assam, 1700 has no approved project. Without approved project, it is difficult to allot work.'

NEST findings made public recently carry some statistics of concern and are as follows:

List of registered families who were not issued job card in 2010-2011	
District	No of Registered families
Baksa	9226
Barpeta	298
Bongaigaon	0
Cachar	4
Chirang	4
Darrang	861
Dhemaji	2361
Dhubri	0
Dibrugarh	432
Goalpara	415
Golaghat	651
Hailakandi	1111
Jorhat	2
Kamrup	0
Kamrup (Metro)	0
Karbi Anglong	0
Karimganj	3034
Kokrajhar	0
Lakhimpur	206
Marigaon	0
Nagaon	1157
Nalbari	6835
North Cachar Hills	0
Sivasagar	37
Sonitpur	18
Tinsukia	1
Udalguri	1982
Total	28,635

Unemployment Allowances for the Financial Year 2010-2011		
	Unemployment Allowance Due	Unemployment Allowance Due
District	No. of Days	Amount
Baksa	5186	0
Barpeta	1693	0
Bongaigaon	265	0
Cachar	141	0
Chirang	682	0
Darrang	166	0
Dhemaji	2939	0
Dhubri	862	0
Dibrugarh	215	0
Goalpara	600	0
Golaghat	462	0
Hailakandi	2608	0
Jorhat	11	0
Kamrup	814	0
Kamrup (Metro)	0	0
Karbi Anglong	2578	0
Karimganj	49	0
Kokrajhar	1166	0
Lakhimpur	551	0
Marigaon	270	0
Nagaon	1122	0
Nalbari	131	0
North Cachar Hills	253	0
Sivasagar	14	0
Sonitpur	1125	0
Tinsukia	0	0
Udalguri	5428	0
Total	29331	0

http://twocircles.net/2011apr15/abysmal_implementation_mgnrega_assam.html

Where wells get stolen & babus insist on cuts

Rakhi Chakrabarty/ April 17, 2011

Latehar: Poonam Nagisia's well was stolen last year. She has none to complain to. The wiry, dark woman is distraught. A bicholia (middleman) stole my well, she says.

Poonam's story goes like this. Last year, when she was pregnant, the authorities cleared her proposal for a well under the NREGA scheme. With the work just about to begin, she delivered her son.

This was when Vinod Nagisia from the neighbouring village came with an unusual request. "He told me he would dig the well for 15 days and hand the work over to me, thereafter," she said nursing her baby inside her mud hut.

As per NREGA rules, Poonam was to get an amount to dig the well. But the deal she struck with Vinod meant 15 days payment for work done would go to him and the rest to Poonam, a trained mate who supervises NREGA work.

Poonam had agreed. But, Vinod forgot his promise. He refused to hand the job back to Poonam. She pleaded with him and officials at the panchayat office. Her pleas fell on deaf ears. "I was told to apply for the same job again. I did, but nothing happened." The well remained unfinished and Poonam got nothing out of the work.

Senior state government officials concede that ignorance about NREGA such as this is widespread, even though the scheme came into force more than five years ago.

Economist Jean Dreze says, "Vulnerability of the programme to corruption and abuse begins with this lack of awareness of their rights among NREGA workers. This powerlessness is also due to the absence of any effective grievance redressal system for MNREGA."

Take Stella Nagisia's case. From Mirgi village, Stella sells dried mahua flowers for Rs 15 per kg at a market

about 12 km away. The village, like others in Latehar's Mahuadanr block, is water-starved. Farmers can cultivate only one crop a year because there's no irrigation facility.

Stella trained as a mate at a camp organized by a Jesuit priest Father Savari Muthu in Mahuadanr. The gram sabha selected her mate for the construction of a check dam in Saro Jharia. The Rs 22-lakh NREGA scheme was approved in 2009-2010. Besides trapping rain water, check dams help in irrigation.

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-04-17/india/29427471_1_nrega-scheme-nrega-work-check-dam

NREGA - The Great Job Robbery Programme

"The objectives of NREGA were to economically empower the poor communities and ensuring Food Security by providing 100 work to each job card holder with 100 days of work. But the objectives lost importance for the implementers who rather focused on making a profit out of it leaving the poor families jobless as always. Large scale corruption from Gram Panchayat to Block, District and State Headquarters took the programme in a direction putting its objectives aside. Even though government of India started the programme for the benefit of the poor, no proper monitoring system was set to see that the programme remains committed to its objectives which ultimately converted NREGA from a job guarantee programme to a Job robbery opportunity. Here is how, in Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Bundelkhand, the programme benefited the contractors and people in power leaving poor as it is."

Parshuram Rai

It is now well known that Madhya Pradesh has secured top position in spending NREGS (National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) funds during last year (2007-8). What, however, is not so well known is that about 75 percent of the NREGS funds have been siphoned off by Percentage Raj prevailing in the State? The modus operandi of participatory loot of NREGS funds by sarkari babus is very well organized.

As per the data posted on the NREGA website of the Union Ministry of Rural Development (<http://nrega.nic.in/>), Madhya Pradesh (MP) was

provided a total amount of Rs. 3288 crore under the NREGS and was able to spend a total amount of Rs. 2891 crore during 2007-08 . With this amount of expenditure, 2753 lakh persondays of wage employment was given to 4346916 households of the state during this period. To put it differently, 43,46,916 households of Madhya Pradesh were given 63 days of average employment during 2007-8. The total employment given to the Schedule Caste (SC) workers was about 491 lakh persondays and that figure for Schedule Tribe (ST) workers was 1342 lakh persondays . What a terrific performance!

However, a study carried out by Delhi-based Centre for Environment and Food Security (CEFS) gives a totally different and dismal picture of the performance of the NREGS in MP. The following findings of our study reveal the ground reality and actual performance of the NREGS in Madhya Pradesh.

During first 10 months of 2007-8(April 2007-January 2008), the sample households have got only 10.61 days of average employment and just 2.36 percent of the sample households have got 100 days of wage employment. It is shocking to note that 65.39 percent of the sample households have not received even a single day of employment during the year (April 2007-January 2008). Moreover, 38.49 percent of the sample households have never got any employment under the NREGS.

Our study suggests that actually not more than 16 days of average employment was given to the needy households during 2007-8. When we compare the Government figures with the figures of CEFS survey, we get the true picture of the NREGS in MP. According to CEFS survey, during first 10 months of 2007-8, the sample households in MP were given only 10.61 days of average employment. So, the average employment during 12 months of the financial year 2007-8 comes to about 13 days. Even if we add 3 days

more on account of margin of error, the average employment figure for the year comes to only 16 days. Therefore, the average employment figure of 63 days claimed by the Government of MP is about 4 times more than the CEFS figure of 16 days.

This difference arises because all the facts and figures given by the Government of Madhya Pradesh are apparently based on faked job entries in the job cards and muster rolls of the state. Only about one-fourth (25 percent) of the job figures are actual and the remaining three-fourth (75 percent) of the job figures are based on faked job entries in job cards and muster rolls of the state . So, it is obvious that only about 25 percent of the NREGS funds have actually reached intended beneficiaries and the remaining about 75 percent of the NREGS funds in Madhya Pradesh have been siphoned off and sucked by the “black-holes” of the prevailing Percentage Raj . To put this in figure, of a total amount of Rs.2, 891 crore spent on NREGS during 2007-8, about Rs 2,100 crore has apparently been siphoned off and misappropriated by executing officials of the implementing agencies. We found irregularities as the only regular thing in the NREGS of Madhya Pradesh.

This open loot of the NREGS funds in Madhya Pradesh has been truly participatory. A certain percentage of the booty has gone at every level of sanctioning and executing authority starting from the district to block to Grampanchayat. The percentage varies from district to district, block to block and Grampanchayat to Grampanchayat. But this participatory loot is very well organized and institutionalized. There may be isolated cases of certain honest officials not taking any percentage from this loot, however, it is absolutely impossible that even a single district, block or Grampanchayat level functionary is unaware about the shocking , outrageous and scandalous scale of the prevailing percentage raj in the NREGS of Madhya Pradesh .

We were told by many Sarpanches, Panchayat Secretaries and local activists that the NREGS projects are sanctioned and funds released by concerned authorities only after they receive their pound of flesh (a certain percentage of money from project fund) in advance. Unless a Sarpanch or Panchayat Secretary is able to make advance payments of percentage money to various senior officials, the NREGS funds are not released. Many Panchayat functionaries on condition of anonymity narrated their harrowing experiences of the prevailing percentage raj in the NREGS. One Sarpanch of Chattarpur district told us that 3 NREGS projects were sanctioned for his Grampanchayat but funds were not being released because he did not have sufficient money to make percentage payments in advance.

We saw innumerable tree plantation projects executed under NREGS without a single surviving sapling or plant. You can see hundreds of miles of tree-guards on either side of roads without a single plant or sapling inside them. We also came across many ghost NREGS projects. We saw job entries and project entries on job cards without any project of that name ever executed in the village. We also saw many already existing roads, ponds and tanks converted and shown as fresh NREGS projects with just nominal earth work or minor modifications. You can see muster rolls with 60-100 days' of faked job entries in the name of government servants and their family members, dead persons, prosperous families, businessmen, teachers, army soldiers and also in the name of family members of journalists.

You can see thousands of Grampanchayats in MP where big NREGS projects with costs ranging from Rs. 25 lakh to Rs. 1 crore have been executed by the line agencies like RES (rural engineering services) and Irrigation Department. Local activists told us that bigger the project cost higher the level of corruption. Moreover, since most of the big cost

projects are executed directly by line agencies like RES, there is hardly any one who could really monitor or question any thing about these projects. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have no role in the implementation and monitoring of big projects executed by line agencies. Most of these big projects engage contractors in one form or the other and use labour-displacing /cost-saving heavy machinery. These big projects completely negate the spirit and objectives of NREGS. The big NREGS projects executed by the line agencies are more of income guarantee schemes for urbane engineers and very less of employment guarantee schemes for the rural poor.

Line Agencies: Main architects of NREGS scam

What is the modus operandi of the great job robbery in Madhya Pradesh?

First, the officials give hugely inflated cost estimates of the NREGS projects, in many cases 2 times more than the actual cost.

Second, most works in the projects executed by line agencies like RES have been done by banned heavy machines like dumpers and JCBs and very few labourers have been engaged in these projects. This brings down the labour cost to less than one third. Is NREGS employment guarantee scheme for dumpers and JCBs or employment guarantee scheme for poor labourers?

Third, since the line agency has to mandatorily show 60 percent of the project expenditure on account of wage employment to labourers, this forged employment is shown through faked job entries on job cards and muster rolls.

Fourth, shoddy quality of work has been done with very poor quality of material used in the projects; inflated bills and forged vouchers being an essential part of the game.

Fifth, complete secrecy of the project related documents and non-sharing of the project related information with

the PRIs, civil society groups or citizens. The RES cares two hoots about the RTI (Right to Information Act). It blocks information at every level, being well aware that its game plan might be exposed if all project related documents are put in public domain . There is hardly any information about these projects posted on the NREGA website. Most online job cards are blank. So much in the name of transparency and public scrutiny!

Nine months of our intensive research and investigation on the implementation of the NREGS in Madhya Pradesh has led us to conclude that there has been not only very high level of financial bungling and various irregularities in the projects executed by line agencies like RES, but also that very little actual wage employment has been given to labourers and most works have been done by heavy machines like JCBs and dumpers. Transparency safeguards in these projects are absolutely non-existent. If an independent enquiry is conducted on all the NREGS projects executed by the line agencies like RES, a huge NREGS scam would come to the fore. We firmly believe that the moment RES makes public the entire job related documents; most officials of the RES would immediately go behind the bars. Unfortunately, they are unlikely to make public the actual documents because they are acutely aware about the fatal implications of this disclosure. But where are social audit and other transparency safeguards of the NREGS? The Government of Madhya Pradesh owes an explanation to the nation.

Hunger, poverty and distress migration

The level of hunger, poverty and human deprivation in the sample districts (Shivpuri, Chhattarpur, Tikamgarh, Dhar and Jhabua) is comparable to only KBK (Kalahandi-Bolangir -Koraput) region of Orissa. Last year, CEFS had carried out a similar study in the KBK region of Orissa and found that about 70-75 percent of

the NREGS funds in Orissa were siphoned off by sarkari babus while most population of the region is living a life of semi-starvation and extreme poverty. The living condition of the people in sample villages of MP is almost similar to that of KBK people.

The level of poverty and deprivation , especially in 3 Bundelkhand districts-Shivpuri,Chhattarpur and Tikamgarh , is dehumanizing and unconscionable . We found large number of families, especially adivasis in Tikamgarh, Shivpuri and Chhattarpur, literally surviving by eating chapattis made of wild grass like jathara . Many adivasi families brought out from their homes and showed us these wild foods. Where is emerging India and its 9percent of GDP growth? We owe an explanation to our starving compatriots.

The current level of hunger, poverty and deprivation in MP's rural areas is as deep, demeaning and dehumanising as ever despite the so- called successful implementation of the NREGS with the highest expenditure of funds (Rs 2891 crore) anywhere in the country. The Rural Employment Scheme has made virtually zero impact on the livelihood security of MP's rural poor. There is no let up in the level of distress migration of adivasis and dalits from MP's Bundelkhand region in search of livelihood in other parts of the country. Hunger and abject poverty are widespread in all the 125 sample villages we visited. Large number of children in these villages is suffering from severe malnutrition. Hunger and abject poverty are apparent and writ large on the hollowed cheeks, sunken eyes and distended bellies of the children.

Most dalit and adivasi families of 3 sample districts of Bundelkhand are living a life of chronic hunger and semi-starvation .The prevailing drought has only exacerbated the livelihood crises in Bundelkhand region . Most traditional sources of water (old tanks, open wells and hand pumps) had dried up, cattle were

dying, agricultural fields were barren and villages looked deserted due to out-migration of laborers.

The level of distress migration was very high in Chhattarpur, Tikamgarh and Jhabua districts. Over 70-80 percent working population of these 3 districts have migrated out to cities and towns in search of wage employment. We saw dozens of villages in these 3 districts where only old, infirm and children have been left behind in the villages and every adult person has migrated to cities and towns in search of wage employment. In fact, the problem of distress migration in Chhattarpur, Tikamgarh and Jhabua district is much worse than that in Kalahandi and Bolangir districts of Orissa. Most workers of Tikamgarh and Chhattarpur have migrated to Delhi and its suburbs, and Jhabua's Bhil adivasis have migrated to brick-kilns in Gujarat. We found many villages facing acute distress migration not getting any NREGS employment at all or getting just nominal jobs for few days. Any one visiting these villages can see that there has been absolutely NO impact of the NREGS on distress migration.

Is this the kind of wage employment and livelihood security the NREGS is supposed to provide to the rural poor of India?

(Parsuram Rai is a Development Activist and the Director of Centre for Environment and Food Security (CEFS), New Delhi)

http://hotnhitnews.com/NREGA_The_Greatest_Job_Robbery_Programme_in_Madhya_Pradesh_Orissa_Bundelkhand_Parshuram_Rai_CEFS_270411019.htm

Work better

The Indian Express/ Apr 28 2011

As one of the largest job programmes in history, NREGA often gets a bad rap from those who think it does not contribute to growth — that it amounts to giving people fish, rather than teaching them to fish, to use the Chinese expression.

Initiative towards Energizing MGNREGA.

Now, there's an interesting proposal in the works, floated by the Prime Minister's National Council on Skill Development, to impart greater sustainability to NREGA employment by investing in skill-formation. However, to make sure that the original intent of the scheme is not diluted, it's going to be rolled out in a calibrated way and meant for those who have already completed the required number of days of unskilled manual labour. Also, it will focus largely on artisan skills, because NREGA was felt to have unwittingly contributed to a de-skilling as many craftspeople abandoned their work to shovel soil and build ditches, because it was a reliable source of income.

Meanwhile, as far as the skill development mission goes, hitching its wagon to NREGA is a great idea, giving it a country-wide horizontal reach to scale up. Apart from the major crafts clusters, like weavers in Varanasi or Chanderi, brass workers in Moradabad, etc, we don't know the dimensions of our artisan community. NREGA has phenomenal scale and covers all the districts across India, and will help provide a real database so that the skill development programme can have greater range and depth. This will add greater heft to the programme, which aims to massively expand the skilled pool of workers in health, information technology, tourism and hospitality, with private sector cooperation. So this plan would not only raise the NREGA profile and make it a productivity-enhancing scheme rather than simply welfare, it would also make a huge difference to the skilling project, so crucial if India is to make use of its demographic advantage. At a less abstract level, it could stop the free fall of Indian craftsmanship, the slump in self-belief among our artisans who now feel that digging a well gives them greater returns and security.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/work-better/782734/2>

F. No. J-11060/41/2010-MGNREGA
Government of India
Ministry of Rural Development
The Mahatma Gandhi NREGA Division

Date: 26th April, 2011

To:

All Principal Secretary/ Secretary in-charge of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA
All States/UTs

Sub: Request for submitting Performance Output Matrix (POM)

Sir,

I am directed to say that the POM for the year 2010-11 may be emailed to the undersigned at fanail@ias.nic.in and to Shri R. Gopinath, consultant at gopinath.r77@gmail.com on or before 10th May, 2011.

Thanking you,

Yours Faithfully,



(Lalrinliana Fanai)

Deputy Secretary – Mahatma Gandhi NREGA

This information bulletin is a part of our initiative towards energizing NREGA. This initiative is supported by Concern World Wide, India.



FOUNDATION FOR ECOLOGICAL SECURITY

The Foundation for Ecological Security works towards the ecological restoration and conservation of land and water resources, in the uplands and other eco-fragile, degraded and marginalized Zones of the country and to set in place the processes of coordinated human effort and governance to this end.