

# National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

## MONITORING REPORT ON STATUS IN CHHATTISGARH

*August 2007*



**SAMARTHAN**

Centre for Development Support

**Report prepared by :**

Samarthan Centre for Development Support Bhopal

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This publication has been produced with support from  
PACS Programme

**Published by :**

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Designed & Printed by : MSP OFFSET



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# E L A E E R E

National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is unique because of the demand based approach intended in the National Employment Guarantee Act. The Periodical watch by Civil Society Organizations is needed to understand the loopholes and strengths of the programmes for further rectification and up gradation to reap maximum benefit out of it.

Samarthan has over the last 10 years worked towards strengthening participatory development and governance processes in Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh. Over the last one year, the focus has been concentrated on influencing NREGA implementation and affecting application of Right to Information. The report is in two parts capturing the status of NREGA implementation in Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh. It is an attempt to closely observe procedural bottlenecks as well as impacts of the NREGS in the states.

The primary purpose of bringing out the status of NREGA implementation in the state is not to point out shortcomings, since it is evident, that the NREGA implementation is in its nascent stage. The larger aim of the report is to build joint ownership of the learning' emerging from the report by the civil society and the government to improve the strategy of support at the grassroots. Additionally, it aims to influence the programme design and operational areas in based on the experiences from the grassroots at the state level by establishing regular dialogue process with the senior executive machinery especially in context of entitlement access by the poor.

I would like to acknowledge the support provided to us by PACS programme in conducting this study. I am thankful to the government officials and their official data sources, which helped build macro analysis for the study. I would like to express my gratitude towards the field level CSOs of PACS in Madhya Pradesh & Chattisgarh, state resource organization, communication agencies, State Programme Manager of PACS programmes and grassroots leaders who provided necessary quality data for undertaking the study. I would also like to mention untiring efforts of programme and support teams of Samarthan to bring it out in the best possible manner.

**Yogesh Kumar**

Executive Director

Samarthan, Centre for Development Support

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## 1. Background

Chattisgarh Government implemented the provisions of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 through a scheme called the Chattisgarh Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme was floated by the Department of Rural Development. NREGA was launched in 11 districts of Chattisgarh on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006. These districts were Bilaspur, Dantewada, Dhamtari, Jashpur, Kanker, Kawardha, Koriya, Raigarh, Rajnandagon and Surguja. Another four were added during 2007-08.

The scheme has raised a lot of expectations from the panchayats in particular to provide people with ample opportunities for work. This is perhaps the first time that the panchayats have been provided with the freedom to plan and execute works and is backed by substantial resources, which are at their own disposal. Ideally, the programme is poised to bring about a radical change in the rural areas of the state as far as employment generation and creation of sustainable assets for the villages is concerned.

The programme's efficacy is based on the logic of using the productive capacity of ordinary rural folk to build and nurture assets, while simultaneously alleviating the problem of chronic unemployment and poverty. The Act provides an opportunity to build rural infrastructure through watershed development, restoration of water bodies such as tanks and canals, activities aimed at forestry, land development, and soil erosion and flood control, and construction of roads and institutional facilities. Anyone willing and able to perform unskilled manual labour at the statutory minimum wage can apply for work, which must be met by the panchayat within 15 days failing which an unemployment allowance must be provided.

Some of the salient features of the Chattisgarh Grameen Rozgaar Guarantee Yojana are as follows:

- During the first phase of the implementation of the scheme, 11 districts of Chattisgarh are being covered under the scheme.
- The scheme ensures that any family, living in the rural area (of the selected districts), who are willing to do manual labour would get guaranteed employment of 100 man days per year per family.
- Employment to families is basically demand based, which means that guaranteed employment is given to families that demand employment.
- In case, the panchayat is not able to provide employment within 15 days of the receipt of the application, then the state government is bound to provide the family with unemployment allowance.

- The scheme provides opportunities for the gram panchayats to prepare plans for infrastructure development in consultation with the gram Sabha.

### 1.1 Institutional Mechanism for implementation of the scheme

**State Level:** Chattisgarh has constituted **State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC)** under the chairmanship of Chief Minister and Minister Panchayat and Rural Development is the vice-president of this council. Minister Finance, Forest, Water Resources, Revenue, Agriculture, SC-ST Welfare are the members. Vice president State Planning Commission, Chief Secretary, Secretary Panchayat and Rural Development, Commissioner EGS are also the members. Along with these there are 6 members nominated from PRI institutions and NGOs in this council. This council is responsible for giving advice to State Government for successful implementation of the program as well as for monitoring and evaluation. It is also supposed to prepare annual progress report of the scheme and submit it to Central Government.

**State Govt.** has formulated SEGC State Employment Guarantee Fund to ensure timely resource support to the scheme. It also ensures that State's share of REGS budget is released in time. It takes care of information dissemination at every level. It ensures administrative, technical, financial support to District Program Coordinator, Program Officer, PRIs and all other agencies involved in implementation. It ensures that the implementation of the scheme at all level is transparent and accountable to the public. State Govt. has designated an officer as **State Rural employment Guarantee Commissioner** who is responsible to make sure that all activities required to fulfil the objectives of the scheme are carried out. He is functioning as the Member Secretary of SEGC. He has to ensure that the system of grievance redressal, social audit, application of the RTI, and other measures of public accountability and transparency are effective as well as responsive to the demands of workers and community.

Under SEGC, **Empowered Committee** is also formed being headed by Chief Secretary, Commissioner CGEGS is the Member Secretary and Secretary Panchayat and Rural Development is the Secretary. Commissioner Agriculture Products, Secretary Finance, Forest, Water Resources, PWD, Revenue, Labour, General Administration, Public Relation, Director Panchayat and Social Welfare are the members of this committee. It is responsible for establishing coordination of NREGA with related departments. It has all financial and administrative rights to present council of ministers, to review plans and allocation of funds, to make mechanism for better coordination in all the three tiers of PRIs.

Panchayat and Rural Development Department is the nodal implementation agency for the scheme and had established **Employment**

**Guarantee Cell**, which is being headed by Commissioner Employment Guarantee. Cell is responsible for smooth functioning of the scheme at the State level. According to Deputy Commissioner Staff at present is insufficient and they need at least 4 more staff. At State level every 25<sup>th</sup> of the month review meeting is held. Chief Secretary and Secretary Panchayat and Rural Development, Chief Minister, Panchayat Minister review progress of the program through video conferencing. State govt. has taken a decision that from June 15- Oct 15 no unemployment allowance would be paid because earlier people were not ready to work as agricultural labourer as they were getting less wages there. In CG only single crop is taken at most of the places so govt. had to take such decision for the sake of agricultural productivity. Although no unemployment allowance is given but if demand for job comes it would be met. Council also decided to pay workers through Panchayat because every panchayat is not having bank or post office.

**District Level:** District Panchayats are responsible for finalizing District plans and for monitoring and supervising the program in the district. It can also execute works from among 50% that are not to be executed by GPs. District collector is the program coordinator for NREGA. He is responsible for giving administrative approval for the plans. CEO ZP is the additional program coordinator who is responsible for overall coordination and has the financial power. As per the norms DPC should be responsible for overall coordination and implementation of the scheme but here in CG either DPC is not in existence or is dormant. Special cell for NREGA is also formed in the districts in which district program officer, technical assistant and computer operator are the members. This cell is working under the guidance of CEO ZP and is responsible for preparation of progress report, data entry and compilation, arranging capacity building programs etc. A meeting of Janpad CEO, program officer of NREGA is held every month in the district in which officers of the concerned departments also participate to review the progress of the program in the presence of District Program Coordinator and Additional Program Coordinator. Administrative approval, future plan of action, technical sanction and other related issues are discussed. District Program Coordinator has the power to sanction works up to Rs.50 Lakhs. Signing authority for the project is CEO ZP and accounts officer. By 26<sup>th</sup> of every month Janpad Panchayat has to send progress report to District Panchayat. District panchayat has no authority to recruit any staff, where as all recruitments are done by the state government. It is responsible for preparing annual action plan and labour budget to be sent to State Government.

**Block Level:** Block Panchayat is responsible for planning at the block level and for monitoring and supervision. It also has the power for executing work from among the 50% that are not to be executed by the Gram Panchayat. There is a program officer at the block for coordinating the

program at the block level. He is responsible for scrutinizing village plans matching employment opportunities with the demand for work at the block level, supervising the implementing agencies, safeguarding the entitlements of workers, ensuring that social audits are conducted by the Gram Sabhas, and responding to complaints. CEO Janpad and block program officer are the joint signatories of account.

**Gram Panchayat Level:** Gram Sabha has a crucial role to play in ensuring transparency and accountability. It has the power to decide work to be taken up, supervise these works; conduct social audit etc. but if see field realities it is not like that. No doubt Gram Sabha is active now in most of the places in questioning about irregularities but still it has not taken up the role that is envisioned in the Act. This might be expected with the passage of some more time. Gram Panchayat has a pivotal role in the implementation of program. It is responsible for planning of works, registering households, issuing job cards, allocating employment, executing 50% of the works and monitoring 50% of the work at the village level. Gram Panchayat's Sarpanch, secretary, Rojgar Sahayak, Panch are jointly responsible for implementation of the program. Rojgar assistant is fully responsible for issue of job cards, receiving application for work, maintaining records; ensure social audit, timely payment etc. Gram panchayat sends applications to Janpad Panchayat and ensures that work starts within 15 days of application. But it is generally observed that Janpad Panchayat is reluctant in giving any receipt for applications received. This is because many a times JP is overloaded due to lack of sufficient human resources and they are not able to complete formalities in 15 days. If they give receipt it would then be their liability to start work in stipulated time but they generally don't give so that no proof of submission of applications is there and thus no way to claim any unemployment allowance.

There is a high level of dissatisfaction in the community because those works that are being implemented by GP come under the purview of Gram Sabha but those that are being implemented by department gram Sabha has no say in it. No document is made available to the community. It is not mentioned in the act that gram Sabha has no say in department's work rather it is the bureaucratic attitude that is responsible.

In the act it is mentioned that departments, ZP, JP, NGOs, SHGs can also become implementing agency but due to provisions like unemployment allowance, work site facilities, empowerment of community they are not coming up. RES, irrigation departments etc. are happily agree to give the construction of particular pond to a contractor but are not ready to sanction the same under NREGA.

**Funds for Implementation of the Scheme:** A Chattisgarh rank 8th as

far as funds availability is concerned in different states at the national level. The share of funds available in CG out of the total funds at national level is 6.96%. Out of the total availability Central government has released 83.55% and State government has released 92.24%. Rs.4548 is available for each job card holder. National average for the state share released is 8.3% but Chattisgarh is ahead in releasing state's matching share (9.24%).

Total Availability (Year 2006 -07)	84088.78
% of O.B in total available fund	6.87
% of central released in total available fund	83.55
% of state released in total available fund	9.24
% of total released in total available fund	92.79
% of misc. receipt in total available fund	0.34
Per Job Card holder Available fund	4548

## 2. Objectives of the Study

- To review the current status of implementation of NREGA in Chattisgarh.
- To identify emerging strengths and weaknesses for wider dialogue for improvements.
- To evolve strategies for affecting implementation of the programme as a joint initiative of the government, civil society and the Panchayati Raj institutions

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Sampling

Considering the fact that as stated in NREGA operational guideline, Panchayats has been made the principal authority in implementation of NREGA, unit of sampling is Panchayat. Overall 75 Panchayats from different socio-cultural background were selected as sample from 3 districts in Chattisgarh. The data from the field was collected by 6 CSOs working as a partner in the PACS Programme in the NREGA districts.

State	No of CSOs	No of Districts	No of Gram Panchyats
Chattisgarh	6	3	75

### 3.2 Study tools

The study was conducted using structured interview schedules. A set of five questionnaires focusing on different types of respondents was administered. These questionnaires were framed to collect both

qualitative as well as quantitative data with respect to the implementation of the scheme. Case studies were also collected from the field to substantiate the findings from the research. The details of the questionnaire are as mentioned below:

*State Level Data Format:* The state level formats were administered with the state level officials implementing the scheme. The format gathered information on the methods of popularizing the scheme, the arrangements for peoples participation, the state level strategy for implementation of the scheme, and on how the MIS and online monitoring systems are maintained.

*District level formats:* The district level formats were designed to collect information on the aspects of implementation in the districts. The questionnaire focused on the manpower available at the district, the flow of funds from the Central government, the difficulties that the district administration is facing in implementing the scheme and the suggestions from the district administration for improvement in the scheme.

*Gram Panchayat level formats:* The format captures information on the number of families in the village, the BPL families, and the number of families with and without job cards. The format also captures information on the perspective plan prepared in the village, the budget for the year, the targeted beneficiaries, and the man days of work that would be generated. The format collects information on the details of implementation of the scheme in the village and peoples perspective on each aspect.

*Village level formats:* The village level schedule was primarily focused on collecting data from the citizens. The questions included seeking information from labourers on the wage payment, the measurement aspects, the muster roll preparation etc. it also looked into the aspects of worksite facilities available. A section on identifying issues related to women and children was also included in the questionnaire.

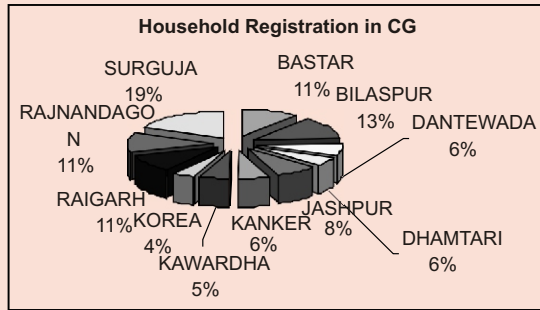
## **4 Status of NREGA in Chattisgarh**

### **4.1 Registration, Job Card Preparation and Distribution**

#### **4.1.1 Household Coverage/ Registration**

In Chattisgarh total 1802348 households are registered, in which 4859987 persons are registered. In the whole state 88.68% households which include 47.5% persons in the rural area are covered under the program. Highest number of households registered out of the total household in rural area of the district is found in Jashpur which is 97% and lowest is found in Bilaspur, which is 79% of the total household in the rural area

of the district. Similarly, Rajnandgaon is leading in highest number of registration of persons (57% of the rural population) and least is found in Surguja (43% of the rural population). If



district wise total household registration is compared with that of total registration at the state level then highest registration is found in Surguja (19%) and least in Korea (4%). Regarding sample districts Surguja, Rajnandgaon and Bastar ranks 1, 3 and 3 respectively as far as household registration is concerned.

In the remote and tribal areas of Bastar block people thought that this is a new scheme and probably they are going to get some allowances. As has been communicated as well as the message that went on easily to the local masses was the provision of the unemployment allowance. That is why they came forward for registration. Even ex MLA's family also found to be registered.

Gita Gill of GP Tumdibod got work in repair and renewal of Mahavir pond without even being registered. When community raised voices against this PRI representatives manipulated whole thing and provided job card to her.

#### 4.1.2 Job Card Preparation and Distribution

At the state level data reflects that 94.85% of families are issued job cards as against the total registration and is quite higher than the national average which is 86.86%. As NREGP is still new thing for the community it is observed in many cases that they still do not know that they need to apply for the registration. Gram Panchayats on being directed by the administration took initiatives in registering and issuing job cards to the families.

In Bilaspur and Kawardha 100% families have been issued job cards as per the data mentioned in the table below. In all the districts of the state on an average 97-99% of the households have been issued job cards except for the Dantewada, which is lagging much behind than the others. Here only 40.31% of the house holds are issued job cards as against the total registration of the families. It is observed from the data available that the household coverage in the district is 84.79 but still job cards are not yet issued. In many places job cards are with Sarpanches as

photo is not attached, entry in the cards requires some rectification etc. Also community is not aware to procure it from Panchayat. Dantewada is a very remote district of the state and high insurgencies by naxalites is evident making the functioning of Panchayats difficult. In some of the places number of copies of job cards is less than the requirement.

**Table: Status of Job Card Preparation & Distribution in Sample GPs**

District Name	Total HH	BPL HH		Job Card Prepared		Job Card Distribution		
		No of Households	% to Total HH	No of Households	% to Total HH	No of Households	% to Total HH	% to Job Card Prepared
Rajnandgaon	13456	5525	41.06	10998	81.73	10954	81.41	99.60
Sarguja	8162	3907	47.87	6534	80.05	6430	78.78	98.41
Bastar	5403	2125	39.33	3142	58.15	3127	57.88	99.52
Total	27021	11557	42.77	20674	76.51	20511	75.91	99.21

In the sampled districts as per the primary data available 42.77% of the households covered under the program are BPL families and the coverage is found to be highest in Surguja and lowest in Bastar. Out of the total number of households, job cards of 76.51% households are prepared. The table given above depicts that percentage for Rajnandgaon and Sarguja is quite satisfactory whereas Bastar is lagging behind. If we take percentage of job card distribution against job cards prepared, it is evident that almost 98-99% job cards are distributed to the concerned families.

The entitlements of REGS workers and other basic features in 11 points are mentioned at the back of the card. But on being asked whether workers ever read them females replied that they are not aware about what is printed and they give cards to Sarpanch whenever he asks. Uma Bai from GP Kopedih said only males of the family know what has been entered in the card and they even do not know about money they earned.

Although preparation and distribution of the card shows very high percentage but in most of the places it is found that card is not in the possession of people. It usually remains with secretary, rojgaar assistant, sarpanch for entry. Daily entry is not being made and also it is not demanded at the worksite. In GP Arjuni Santram Sonkar got his card after 6 months of its preparation and thereby he was not able to apply for the job. Sarpanch of Jantar said cards are in the possession of those who are working and those who simply got it prepared with the hope of getting some benefit in

future, their cards are still in panchayat. They are generally from well to do family.

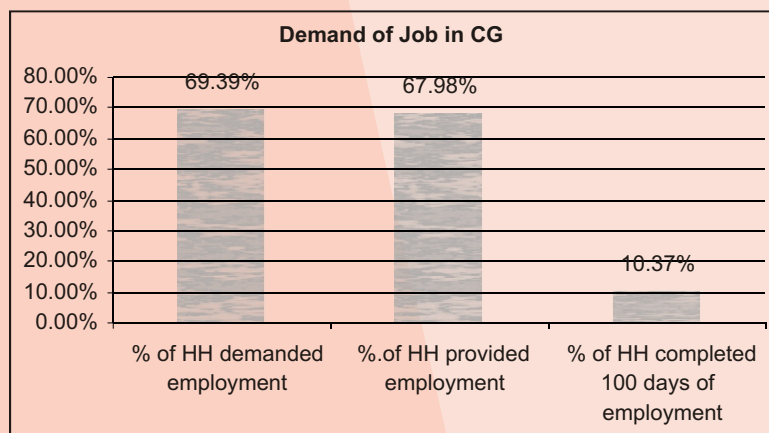
GP Sorgaon is 30km away from the block head quarter and is completely tribal village. People for the first time came to know about the act through kala jattha team of Samarthan. After the show one of the community members informed the team that check dam is being constructed in their village, in which 70 workers are working. But their job cards are with mate and he never gives them back. They also do not know what entries are being made in the card. On being enquired mate told that he retains the card as they might loose it. But when he was told by the community that this is violation of the act he returned back the cards to workers.

#### 4.2 Demand of Job

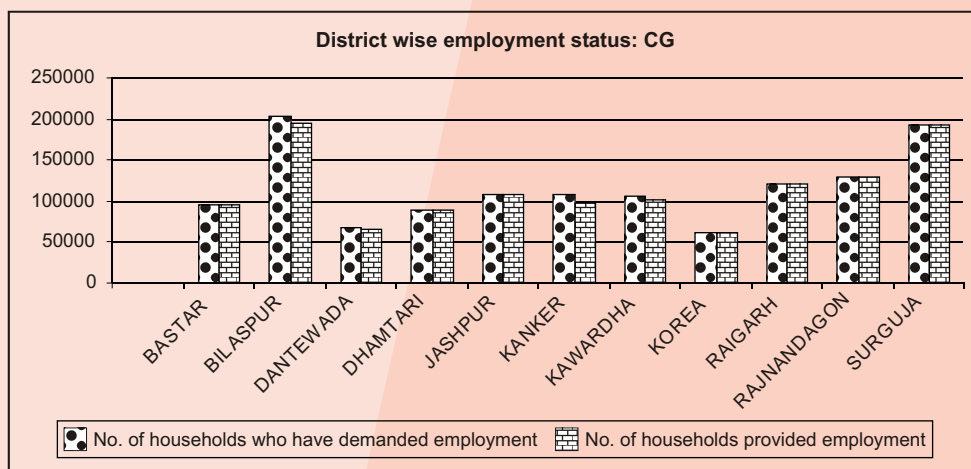
At the national level 99.18% households have been provided employment against the applications given and the contribution of Chattisgarh state in it is of 5.98%.

	No. of households who have demanded employment	No. of households provided employment	%	Person days In Lakhs
Chattisgarh	1282794	<b>1256737</b>	<b>97.97</b>	<b>691.43</b>
India	2118 8126	2101 5411	99.18	

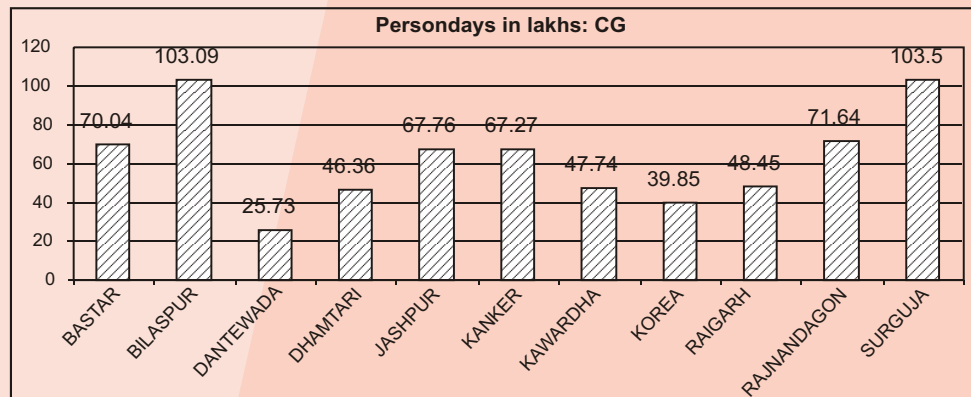
The chart depicts that out the total households covered in CG, 69.39% made a demand for job and 67.98% have been provided job. However percentage of household who got 100 days of employment is very low, which is only 10.37%.



As per the secondary data in Bastar, Dhamtari, Jashpur, Raigarh and Surguja 100% employment is given to those who demanded for it. But at the same time if we go through the MIS data available on the web site in these 5 districts employment provided against applications given is 90.58%, 37.59%, 4.55%, 0.21%, 42.99% respectively, which is much less than 100% as mentioned in earlier lines. One of the possible causes for such data gaps might be that MIS records are muster roll based whose entry is not yet completed. Secondly, there are some discrepancies even in the government's secondary data because as per the primary data, whose analysis is mentioned in the later paragraphs, it could be said that in none of the districts 100% employment is yet provided against the employment demanded. It must be the case for some of the Gram Panchayats but it is not true even for the blocks completely.



In the state 691.43 Lakhs person days is generated in the fiscal year 2006-07. Highest is seen in Bilaspur district which is 103.09 lakhs person days and the lowest in Dantewada district which is 25.73 lakhs person days. Probably Dantewada being naxallite effected the pace of work is slow.



In the sampled households as per the primary data total of 41.48% job card holders applied for the job. Out of these 12.48% are SC, 42.13% are ST and 64.58% are other. If we compare cast wise distribution in Job Card issued and applying for job, then we can say that job card holder of other cast are more active in applying for job. As far as activeness of BPL families is concerned, it was found that they are not much capable in applying. Out of the total sample households 42.77% families belongs to BPL category and 32.33% BPL families got the job cards but only 11.68% families applied for the job. It is commonly observed that people are not aware that they need to apply then only they are eligible to get work and mere possessing job card is not enough. Although those who are near and dear, will able to apply. It was very strange that in predominant area of scheduled tribe & scheduled caste, other caste was more active.

State	Chattisgarh	State	Chattisgarh
Job Card Issued to Sample Total HH (%)	75.91	% of Job Card Holder applying for Job	41.48
SC	19.65	% of SC Job Card Holder applying for Job	12.48
ST	57.28	% of ST Job Card Holder applying for Job	42.13
Others	23.07	% of Others Job Card Holder applying for Job	64.58
BPL HH covered in sample GPs (%)	42.77	% of BPL Job Card holder applying for Job	11.68
% of BPL Households issued Job Cards	32.33	% of BPL Households in total application	21.63

Source: PACS CSOs Field Survey 2007

Last year as there was incomplete knowledge in the community people didn't make demand for work and they thought panchayat's responsibility to provide work. Pressure at block level was too much as funds were not getting utilised so even without demand works were provided but from March 2007 onwards when inspection started in Dongargaon Block of Rajnandgaon District, then the concerned authorities realised their mistake and started collecting applications for work from workers in the back date. Even till date 100% applications against job provided is not available at the block.

WBM road construction was going on in GP Gondiapal and 50 workers were working there. Some of the labourers submitted their application to start work but they didn't get work even after 15 days. When Samarthan's field worker visited the place they started shouting at him for misleading them as he informed the community that it's their right to get work within 15 days of applying. He asked them whether they have proof that they applied for job, do they have receipt of the same or not. They said Panchayat never give any receipt and they do not know that it is mandatory to take and retain the receipt. Then Sarpanch was asked why he is not taking initiative for

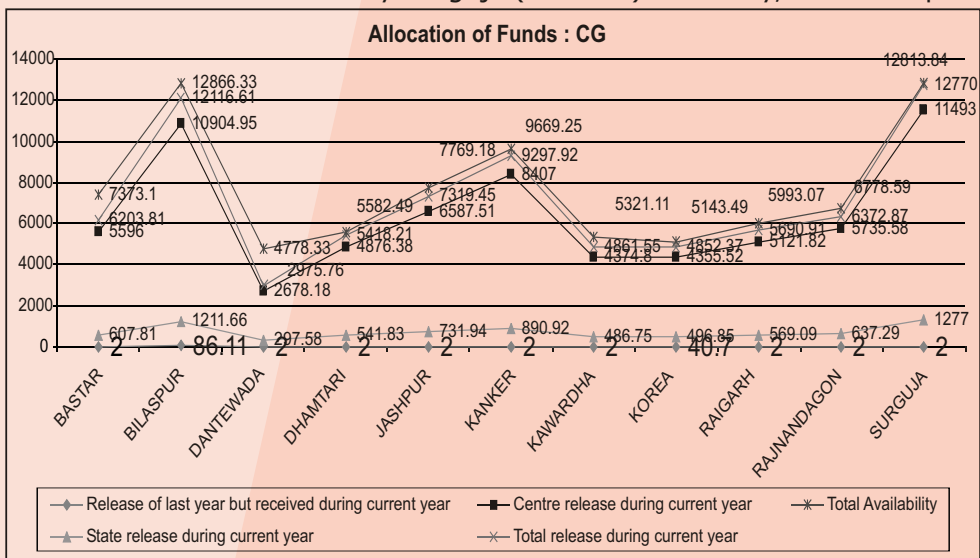
starting work when application is submitted. He informed that he submitted in Janpad but again he was not provided any receipt for the same. Next day sarpanch met program officer at the block office and informed about the agitation in the community. Immediately the work was sanctioned.

### 4.3 Work Undertaken

Total availability of funds in Chattisgarh under NREGA for the year 2006-07 is Rs.84088.78 Lakhs, which is 6.97% of the total funds available at the national level. If we compare the availability of funds with that of total number of households registered in the state then per family availability is coming to Rs.4548. Of the total availability 6.87% or 5776.8 lakhs is the opening balance, 83.55% is the fund released by Centre, 9.24% of the funds is released by State. Status of State's matching share contribution can be said to be good as it is almost approaching 10% of the central released. The table below presents a comparative picture of Chattisgarh State with that of National data Among the districts of the state highest

	Total Availability (Year 2006-07)	% of O.B in total available fund	% of central released in total available fund	% of state released in total available fund	% of total released in total available fund	% of misc. receipt in total available fund	State matching share	Per Job Card holder Available fund
Chattisgarh	84088.78	6.87	83.55	9.24	92.79	0.34	11.06	4548
India	1207250.90	17.00	74.20	6.73	80.93	2.06	9.07	3190

availability of funds is for Bilaspur which is 15.30% of the total available funds at the state followed by Surguja (15.24%). Similarly, least receipt is



for Dantewada which is only 5.68% of the total availability. Although Bilaspur is having the highest share of funds but if we go by the household coverage then the district is lagging behind. Reason behind highest availability for Bilaspur is last year's fund received during current year (86.11 lakhs).

#### 4.4 Status of Plan Preparation, Work Selection and Sanction

As per the requirement of the Act first of all a panchayat level plan is prepared regarding works to be undertaken in the coming financial year as per the need of the community. It is then sent to block/ Jnapad office where technical and administrative sanction is given if it matches all the required criteria.

Particular	Primary (Sample)	Work/Activities	Secondary (CG)	Primary (Sample)	
Five Year Perspective Plan Prepared	95%	Water Conservation and Water Harvesting	14%	29%	
Average Cost of Proposed Annual Plan	1234582	Renovation of Traditional Water bodies	8%	4%	
Average No of Expected Families Benefited by Proposed Annual Plan	275	Provision of Irrigation facility to Land Owned by	2%	0%	
Average Expected Employment Generation by Proposed Annual Plan	9049	Micro Irrigation Works	2%	0%	
Per Family Amount Covered under Plan	4482	Drought Proofing	13%	0%	
Per Family Expected Employment Generation	33	Flood Control and Protection	1%	1%	
Response on Plan Sent to Block Office	91%	Rural Connectivity	27%	54%	
Duration of technical Sanction is before 15 days	41%	Land Development	29%	2%	
Duration of technical Sanction is after 15 days	59%	Any Other activity Approved by MRD	6%	10%	
Mode of Information	By Gram Sabha meeting	13.93	% of wages in total expenditure	67.37	58.93
	By Munadi	52.42	% of material in total expenditure	31.06	41.17
	by Sarpanch	10.63	% of contingency expenses in total expenditure	1.57	-
	by Sachiv	13.11	Total Works	32463	136
	by each other	7.44	% of completed works	49.61	43.4%
	Other mode	2.48	% of ongoing works	50.39	56.6%

As per the primary data almost 95% sample GPs reported that they have prepared five year perspective plan under NREGA, but at the grass root level these plans were failed. According to primary data Surguja has got its plans prepared and the responses of the community in Rajnandgaon and Bastar is 0. The probable reason is that people are not aware that any plan is being prepared for NREGA. The general feeling is it is the relief works and as per the wishes of panchayats works are being done. This feeling is the result of non participatory mode of plan preparation by the concerned authorities. Among the sample districts Bastar is leading in average cost of plans prepared. Cost of these proposed annual plans varies from Rs.11 lakhs to 15 lakhs. By this 275 families are being benefited by generating 33 days of employment per family in a financial year. Each of the registered family who got employment is supposed to get Rs.4482 in the financial year. The NREG Act clearly mentioned that 100 days guaranteed employment is provided to every registered family and wage rate should not be less than Rs.60 per day. The share of wages and material should be in the ratio of 60:40 respectively. But the analysis of annual plans revealed that no such provision followed. Regarding submission of plans to block office the data presents a satisfactory picture that 92% plans are submitted.

In other hand 91% GPs reported that they have sent their annual plan for technical sanction to block office. An analysis on duration of technical sanction & allocation revealed that two out of five will get technical sanction before 15 days while three out of five GPs stated that they received technical sanction after 15 days. As per the rule technical sanction should not take more than 15 days but in majority of cases (44%) it is stated that it takes 16-30 days. Similarly duration between technical sanction and allocation too is 16-30 days. This might be because due to non availability of sufficient staff at the block and district level. Overall among the sampled districts status of Bastar is better than other two as far as duration for technical sanction and allocation and technical sanction is concerned. It is done within 15 days according to majority of respondents.

**Table: Responses on Preparation of Five Year Plan under NREGA**

District Name	Status of Five Year Plan			Coverage of Proposed Annual NREGP Plan					Plan sent to Block Office
	Preparation			Average Cost of Proposed Annual Plan	Average No of Expected Families Benefited by Proposed Annual Plan	Average Expected Employment Generation by Proposed Annual Plan	Per Family Amount Covered under Plan	Per Family Expected Employment Generation	
	NR	NO	YES						
Rajnandgaon	5%	95%	0%	1311838	286	8758	4580	31	
Sarguja	0%	81%	19%	1157327	264	9340	4385	35	81%
Bastar	0%	100%	0%	1511427	206	14945			100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1234582</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>9049</b>	<b>4482</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>92%</b>

**Table: Status of Duration of technical sanction & allocation in Sample GPs**

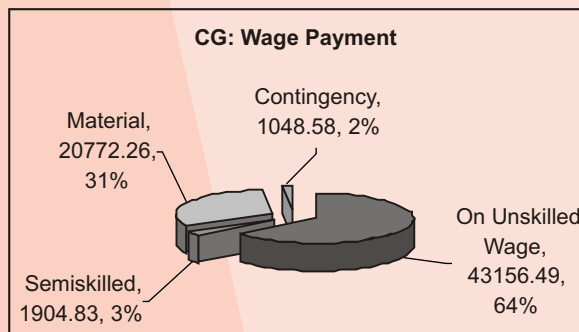
District Name	Duration of technical Sanction					Duration between allocation and technical sanction				
	Not Reported	7 to 15 Days	16 to 30 days	31 to 60 days	more than 60 days	Not Reported	7 to 15 Days	16 to 30 days	31 to 60 days	more than 60 days
Rajnandgaon	20%	16%	55%	2%	7%	11%	30%	48%	9%	2%
Sarguja	0%	57%	38%	0%	5%	0%	38%	52%	10%	0%
Bastar	0%	80%	10%	0%	10%	0%	70%	20%	0%	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>3%</b>

As far as type of works/activities taken under NREGA implementation is concerned, secondary records stated that majority of works is related to land development (29%) and it is followed by rural connectivity (27%), then water conservation & water harvesting related works (14%), while primary data revealed that majority of works taken was rural connectivity (54%) and water conservation & water harvesting related works (29%). Overall completion & ongoing status of works are more or less same.

#### 4.5 Wage Payment

As far as expenditure is concerned at the national level Chattisgarh ranks 7<sup>th</sup> and among the sampled states it ranks 4<sup>th</sup>. Again when percentage of expenditure against total availability is concerned at the national level Chattisgarh ranks 8<sup>th</sup> but among the sampled states it ranks 2<sup>nd</sup>. Till April 2007, 16105 (49.61%) works were completed and 16358 (50.39%) works were ongoing.

Of the total funds available in Chattisgarh, 79.54% is utilized whose district wise break up is mentioned in the table below. If we compare the total expenditure of the state with total expenditure in all the states at the national level, it is coming to 7.59%. In Chattisgarh expenditure on skilled and unskilled wage is 64.53%



and 2.85% respectively and together the wage expenditure is 67.37% of the total expenditure. On material 31.06% and on contingency 1.57% is spent. Expenditure on wages is high because soil based and labour intensive work has been undertaken. *But the experiences says that in the*

coming years there would be very less soil based and labour intensive work in the Panchayats. In such cases either the wage material ratio needs to be altered or unemployment allowances have to be paid.

Among all the districts of the state, Bastar shows highest expenditure, which is 91.43% of the total available funds and Kawardha and Dantewada are the districts with lowest expenditure in the State, which is 61.91% and 61.98% respectively. Expenditure in the other sample districts is Rajnandgaon 82.64% and Surguja 80.08%.

S.No.	District	Cumulative Expenditure (lakhs)					%age of Exp Against Total Avl. Funds
		On Unskilled Wage	On semi skilled and skilled wage	On Material	Contingency	Total	
1	BASTAR	4189.15	97.51	2339.56	114.77	6740.99	91.43
2	BILASPUR	6541.63	951.77	3149.08	77.25	10719.7	83.32
3	DANTEWADA	1611.33	446.2	693.56	210.59	2961.68	61.98
4	DHAMTARI	2869.95	0	1828.72	94.08	4792.75	85.85
5	JASHPUR	4620.14	68.01	1590.22	68.48	6346.85	81.69
6	KANKER	4820.12	137.28	1769.41	53.61	6780.42	70.12
7	KAWARDHA	2432.13	36.1	735.29	90.98	3294.5	61.91
8	KOREA	2496.09	22.46	1620.51	21.09	4160.15	80.88
9	RAIGARH	3034.06	52.24	1984.9	151.22	5222.42	87.14
10	RAJNANDAGON	4227.14	53.19	1218.41	103.15	5601.89	82.64
11	SURGUJA	6314.75	40.07	3842.6	63.36	10260.8	80.08

In the State out of the total employment generation of 700.21 lakhs person days, 12.01% is of SCs, 45.55% is of STs, 39.32% is of women and 42.44% is of others. National average for these heads is 25.39%, 36.38%, 40.63% and 38.24% respectively. Expenditure incurred per work is Rs. 2.06 lakhs. Hence except for SCs employment generation in all other heads CG's data is above the national average.

Material viz wage ratio	In the sampled villages of the three districts 136 works have been undertaken whose total expenditure is Rs.12594841. Out of the total expenditure 58.93% is on wages and 41.07% is on materials.
Mode/Place of Payment and mode of information used	Only few respondents said that pre-information is given for wage payment and the mode of information is Gram Sabha meetings (13.93%), by munadi (52.42%), through Sarpanch (10.63%), through Sachiv (13.11%), through each other (7.44%). Wages are paid in cash but in Surguja in few places payment is also made in kind. In all the sampled districts place of payment is panchayat building or worksite. However, residence of sarpanch is also observed as place of payment in 6% cases.

Duration of wage payment & unemployment allowance	It is observed that in most of the cases (44%) payment is made between 7-14 days. 34% of the respondents said payment even takes 15-30 days and 15% said that it took more than 30 days. Only 7% got payment within a week. 2.27% of the respondents received additional 10% amount for working long distance worksite and 2.78% received unemployment allowance.
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GP Guria is about 40km away from the block head quarter. Due to its remote location people hardly are able to get any kind of information. Construction of road under NREGA was going on in which 65 labourers were working and were informed by the Sarpanch and Sachiv that they would get wages on the monthly basis. When they were informed by the Samarthan field worker that under the Act they have the right to get wages within 15 days and if they don't get they can demand for compensation, they raised their voices against Sarpanch and Sachiv and this way got success in getting payment in due time.

However it is commonly observed that in most of the cases payment is not being made within the stipulated time due to delay in valuation of the work. Sometimes valuation gets effected by relations of Sarpanch with the administration too. Payment is supposed to be made in the presence of vigilance committee but it is being hardly followed. Sarpanch of Kokpur Girdhari Thakur mentioned payment of WBM road of Arsitola is made partially in Panchayat bhawan and partially at residence of Sarpanch.

In GP Aasra Sukrin Bai was supposed to get Rs.187.89, for which she was paid rs.187. She asked Sarpanch to pay 0.89 also for which she was asked to give 11paise. This was the common practice that workers were paid in round figures only and there was no account of paisa.

#### 4.6 Worksite Facility

NREGA in a way is known for worksite facilities which had never been provided in any scheme so far. At the worksite crèche for small babies, drinking water for labourers, first aid box for any injury and shelter for having rest is supposed to be provided. According to

<b>Availability of Work Site Facility</b>	
Crèche	12.68%
Drinking Water	91.57%
First aid Box	66.67%
Shelter	57.50%
Reporting Accident at worksite	6.02%
Benefit Received on Accident	2.22%
<i>Source: PACS CSOs Field Survey 2007</i>	

primary data in CG 12.68% worksites crèche is available in which one of the female worker takes care of babies and she too is paid minimum wage. At 91.57% places drinking water is made available at the work place and the person responsible for it is paid daily wages. At 66.67% places first aid box is kept in which general medicines are kept. At the worksite 6.02% accidental cases have been reported but only 2.22% cases got compensatory benefits. At 57.50% places tent is provided for shelter.

If we go through the district wise it is quite evident that Bastar is leading in providing worksite facilities where as the situation in Sarguja is not satisfactory. The table below presents a comparative picture of the sampled districts.

**Table: Responses on getting worksite facility in Sample Villages**

District Name	Crèche	Drinking Water	First aid Box	Shelter	Accident at worksite	Benefit Received on Accident
Bastar	30.00%	90.00%	90.00%	90.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Rajnandgaon	2.08%	93.75%	54.17%	50.00%	10.42%	2.08%
Sarguja	16.67%	73.33%	63.33%	43.33%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Total</b>	10.23%	86.36%	61.36%	52.27%	5.68%	1.14%

Except for the availability of crèche state level data regarding worksite facilities is some what satisfactory. However following cases were also observed:

**Drinking Water:** In GP Arjuni drinking water was only available in the name of worksite facilities. But during the initial days workers use to carry their own drinking water with them as Sarpanch and rojgaar assistant said there are no orders from block office. Where ever land improvement/development work was sanctioned there it became difficult to make available this facility as simultaneously it goes on at 4-5 sites in different directions, not necessarily at one place, where workers in the group of 5-6 work. Making drinking water available at all the sites becomes unfeasible.

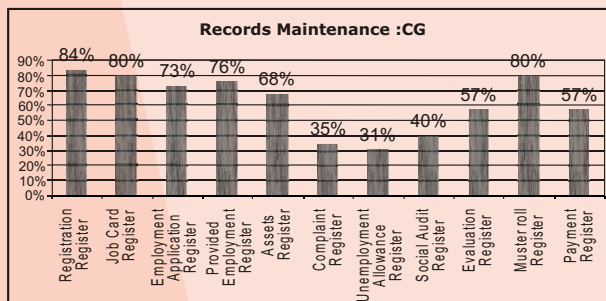
Generally water is kept in the bucket or the earthen pot at a place and workers are supposed to go and take. However workers even say when person responsible for bringing water is paid minimum wage too he/she should serve water even to them at the place of their work.

**First aid box:** In GP Aari Panch Toran sahu use to keep first aid box in his bike. When Kumari Patel got injured at the work site another panch brought medicines after an hour. Similarly there is a provision of free medical treatment for the major injuries but only in government hospitals. Generally in those hospitals medicines are not available. In such circumstances patient has to go for private treatment. Gita Sahu and Santa bai of GP Tumdibod spent Rs.1800 and Rs.700 respectively from their own pocket.

**Shelter:** Regarding shelter response of Sarpanch was that there is no order from Block office to arrange for it where as tent was kept at the block office. There was no clarity regarding transportation of tent from block office to field sites. During the work of land improvement people use to take rest in the shade of walls of houses. Alternate arrangements for shelter were also made like temporary shed using branches and leaves.

#### 4.7 Records Maintenance

As per the guidelines of NREGA to maintain the transparency certain records are to be kept at the worksite, Gram Panchayat etc. details of these documents and their availability is presented in the graph.



As per the primary record again Bastar is quite ahead as compared to other sampled districts in maintenance of records. Registration register, job card register, employment application and provided register, asset register, evaluation, muster roll is found at 100% places. On the other hand Rajnandgaon even after having highest literacy in the state is lagging behind in record maintenance.

**Table: Status of availability of records in Sample GPs**

District Name	Registration Register	Job Card Register	Employment Application Register	Provided Employment Register	Assets Register	Complaint Register	Unemployment Allowance Register	Social Audit Register	Evaluation Register	Muster roll Register	Payment Register
Rajnandgaon	77%	73%	68%	75%	64%	30%	25%	32%	52%	73%	43%
Sarguja	90%	86%	71%	67%	62%	38%	43%	48%	48%	86%	81%
Bastar	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	50%	30%	60%	100%	100%	70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>57%</b>

In majority of the places records are being maintained by panchayat secretary where as he is not responsible for maintaining all records. Rojgar assistant, members of vigilance committee also has role to play in it.

#### 4.8 Transparency and Accountability

In the program every care is taken to maintain transparency at each level. For this various records are being maintained at panchayat level and community has the power to verify them. Every panchayat is supposed to have monitoring and vigilance committee to monitor the ongoing work, check availability and maintenance of records, issue work completion certificate etc. At 81.08% places this committee is formed in Chattisgarh and among the sampled districts in Bastar at 90%, Rajnandgaon 62.50% and Surguja 70% places it is formed. At the state level training to this committee is imparted at 40% places and among the sampled districts in Bastar at 60% places training has been given where as in Rajnandgaon only at 10% places training is given. Similarly at the state level work completion certificate is issued by this committee in 45% cases and in sampled districts in Bastar in 80% cases, Rajnandgaon 20% and Surguja 30% cases.

**Transparency & Accountability**

	Chattisgarh	Reading Muster roll in Gram Sabha	64.63%
Monitoring & Vigilance Committee Formed	81.08%	Information display on display board	38.27%
If "Yes" Training imparted to committee members	40.00%	Any dispute on NREGA	31.33%
Work completion certificate issued	45.00%	If Yes Complaint send to Project Officer	38.46%
Social Audit	30.14%	If Yes Complaint recorded in Complaint Book	26.92%

District Name	Monitoring and vigilance committee formed	Training Imparted	Work completion certificate issued	Social Audit	Muster roll reading	Information display board	Any Dispute on NREGA
Bastar	90.00%	60.00%	80.00%	20.00%	80.00%	60.00%	30.00%
Rajnandgaon	62.50%	10.42%	20.83%	25.00%	72.92%	31.25%	22.92%
Sarguja	70.00%	43.33%	30.00%	26.67%	33.33%	33.33%	40.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>68.18%</b>	<b>27.27%</b>	<b>30.68%</b>	<b>25.00%</b>	<b>60.23%</b>	<b>35.23%</b>	<b>29.55%</b>

At the state level social audit for the completed works held at 30.14% places and in sampled districts in Surguja at 26.67% places, Rajnandgaon at 25% places, Rajnandgaon at 20% places. In Bastar transparency regarding muster roll reading is reported in 80% cases, in Rajnandgaon in

72.92% cases and least in Surguja i.e. 33.33% cases. There is a provision to display all information regarding work on the display board which is being done at 60% places in Bastar, 33% places in Surguja and 31% places in Rajnandgaon.

Issues on which complaint recorded								
District Name	Un success in providing employment	Not payment of unemployment allowance	not received of un employment allowance	less labour payment received	facilities were not available on worksite	use of machine & contractor	inequality with women	Other Issues
Bastar	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Rajnandgaon	8.33%	6.25%	10.42%	8.33%	2.08%	2.08%	2.08%	0.00%
Sarguja	16.67%	13.33%	23.33%	16.67%	16.67%	10.00%	10.00%	3.33%
<b>Total</b>	10.23%	7.95%	13.64%	10.23%	6.82%	4.55%	4.55%	1.14%

Complaint register is kept on the work site and mainly complaints regarding lack of success in providing employment in stipulated time, non payment of unemployment allowance, non receipt of unemployment allowance, less wage payment, lack of facilities at the work site, use of contractor and machine etc. were written. If we compare level of maintaining transparency and accountability in all the sampled districts, Bastar is quite ahead of others and the position of Surguja is not satisfactory.

GP Chapka is 13km away from block head quarter. Here vigilance committee formed under NREGA is quite active and playing very important role in the implementation. Members meet every fortnight and on the same day in their presence they make payment to workers, ensure right entry in job cards, and verify the work done. If any balance amount is left to be paid to worker then it is written at the back of the card and next time it is paid.

#### **5 mates for 120 workers...**

In gram panchayat Jantar, which is 15 KM from block headquarter Dongargaon, all ward panch were violating rules of NREGA according to their wish. There is a provision of keeping one mate/ supervisor for 50 workers and that too not necessarily any person of key position. But in Jantar renewal of pond was going on in which 120 workers were working and along with 5 mates. When community came to know about the provision and its violation by the gram panchayat they objected but nothing happened. Sarpanch and secretary denied any such provisions and ward panch continued to work according to their choice like as mate, making available drinking water etc.

which does not involve hard work. Reason for all these was that due to their power of position they side lined rojgar assistant and were maintaining all registers so that they can do manipulations. In gram Sabha meeting of April 20, 2007 two of the community member Brij kavar and Gowardhan raised these issues and objected for 5 mates for 120 workers. Whole community supported them and a resolution was passed to follow the norms of the Act and not to give choice of job to panch or any special person.

## 5. Major Bottlenecks

### 5.1 High Registration but Low presence in the Field

Although 88.68% of households are registered in the whole State but the motivating factor behind such large scale registration was the message that went on easily to the local masses- the provision of the unemployment allowance and registration cannot be denied to any one who is residing in the village. But when actual work began number of interested people substantially decreased.

In gram panchayat Kolchoor 200 families are registered under the program. Out of these only 50 families demanded for work and renewal of pond was taken up. Sarpanch wants to take up more work but people are not interested as in this village big farmers grow vegetables and keep workers on the annual basis. So people are not interested in leaving their job just for 100 days. Sarpanch is carrying out activities by calling workers from nearby villages.

Milo Bai, Panch of GP Devda, replied when only she is going to get 100 days of work what is the use of registration. Instead of facing long queue for registration and that too for 100 days it is better to keep doing what they had been doing.

Bastar region has NTFP produce which spreads across the year. The major ones among them are mahua, imli, tora. A substantial section of the village population is busy collecting these in the forests and is unavailable for work, which decreases the attendance at the work site. At the same time tribal festivals that are celebrated all the year round too take lots of time of the people.

### 5.2 Delayed Evaluation

In most of the places due to shortage of staff in Block office generally

evaluation of the completed work is delayed. Under such circumstances either wages are not paid within the stipulated time or wages are paid without waiting for evaluation. In the later case if the evaluation comes out to be less than the actual payment done for the work, then it becomes the responsibility of the Sarpanchs and Sachiv to compensate for the deficit in the evaluated work, which opens an arena for manipulations of the records. Valuation is supposed to be done in 3 phases right from the commencement of work but it is never followed and ultimately community had to suffer.

In GP Aasra evaluation of pitching work was delayed by 1 month, in Arjuni evaluation of CC road was delayed by 2 months, in GP Tappa evaluation of land improvement work was delayed by 1.5 months and also payment was not made. This brings dissatisfaction among the community along with the violation of Act. Sarpanch of those panchayats who have good relations with Block CEO and engineer successfully get the works valued in due time.

In Buddhubharda Gram Panchayat WBM road has been constructed whose payment is made without valuation of the work.

In GP Semelnaar and its dependent village Besrapal construction of pond and WBM road started respectively. Evaluation of both the works was given to an engineer whose records were not good. Without evaluation Sarpanch made partial payment within 15 days. When the work was evaluated its value came out to be even less than the partial payment. Sarpanch is held responsible for the whole matter and the balance amount of workers is not being paid.

### 5.3 Construction of Roads- Still People's Priority

The point that has come across from the action plan and the perspective plan of the Panchayats is the very fact that, the stress is primarily on the rural connectivity. As per the guidelines from the Government of India it is obligatory for the District administration to not spend more than 20% on the rural connectivity.

Mr. Bagai, ex Chief Secretary, Chattisgarh issued orders not to sanction roads under NREGA because it could be taken under BRGF. This was mainly to divert money to some other productive work.

### 5.4 Non-issuance of Receipt/Written Communication

It is a general practice not to provide receipt for applications and in some cases it is found that works are even being sanctioned verbally. This is

done so that no unemployment allowance could be claimed on being failed in presenting receipt as a proof of submission of demand for work. There are instances when works had been sanctioned verbally and community had to suffer ultimately.

In GP Bhamnibhata, District Collector during Gram Suraaj sanctioned construction of WBM road (Rs.4 lakhs) verbally and no written orders were given. Work continued for 2 months during which Collector got transferred and till that time Sarpanch failed to procure written sanction order. As a result when he approached Block CEO for evaluation and payment, evaluation was delayed for 5 months. Relation between Sarpanch and CEO was not good and CEO always demanded written orders. Scene at the panchayat level was totally against Sarpanch as payment was delayed for 5 months. When new collector joined Sarpanch presented the whole case and got Rs.2.71 lakhs but still balance amount is pending and wage payment is not complete.

Gram panchayat Aasra is about 14 KM from block head quarter Dongargaon. 264 job cards are issued here. Community got opportunity here to understand the provisions of NREGA, like demand for work, work site facilities, 14 days work at a stretch etc., through awareness generation campaigns organized by Samarthan in various phases. 247 people applied for the job and construction of road in its dependent village started within 15 days of application. Panchayat received funds only for 9 days and on 10<sup>th</sup> day work stopped. There was an agitation in the community and they started blaming sarpanch and secretary for violating the rules of the Act as they are supposed to get 14 days work at a stretch. Meanwhile, due to by elections CM and CEO ZP visited the place and when people brought this matter in their notice CEO ZP ordered to provide remaining 5 days work also with the verbal assurance that panchayat would be sanctioned remaining amount for 5 days soon. Work was over on May 07 but till June 3<sup>rd</sup> they didn't get further amount sanctioned and whenever they visited block office they were asked proof for extension of work from 9 days to 14 days. Community created pressure on block office and warned for mass agitation on 6<sup>th</sup> of June. Looking into the seriousness of the matter block office sanctioned the balance amount within 2 days.

### 5.5 Departmental Works vs. Panchayat's Work

In the works that are being implemented by departments no transparency is being maintained. Community is not aware of the muster rolls and other records. Timely payment is also not done. Copy of the muster roll is neither

kept in gram panchayat nor in block office. Department has no experiences of working with community in any of the government's program earlier. They are not accustomed to participatory approach. They still have bureaucratic attitude of working.

Sarpanch Bhuneshwar Sahoo of GP Tappa said that those works that were implemented by panchayat, payment was made within 15 days but that which was done by department it took 1 month to make payments. Even then community didn't say anything because if they come across faults of department they ignore but if they come across panchayat's fault they start blaming Sarpanch. Sarpanch of Tilairawar Mrs. Anita Kshtriya said engineer always do less valuation of the works done by panchayats whereas he do over valuation of the works done by departments.

In gram panchayat Bastar WBM road construction, Naai pond deepening and Kokamunda pond repair and renewal was going on simultaneously. First two works was being done by panchayat and third one by irrigation department. Road construction was successfully done and labourers were also satisfied as they were paid on daily basis and there was no standard fixed for the daily work. But when pond deepening started at both the sites people were interested in Kokamunda pond as it was being done by irrigation department and there also they were paid on daily basis. But in Naai pond they were supposed to get wages based on godi they dig. Godi is the unit of land that has to be dug for getting one day's payment. Its measurement differs depending upon the strata of soil. There at Naai pond the stratum was hard as compared to kokamunda pond and they were required to dig and deposit soil at the periphery of the pond. This was taking more than a day and this way they were not getting per day payment of Rs.62.63. On the other hand in Kokamunda pond which was also being carried out under NREGA, department was not following the godi system and was making payment on daily basis. There was agitation in the community why rules get changed with different implementing agencies although the Act remains same for every one and as a result no one was interested in working in Naai pond.

This particular case reveals that department was target oriented and doing the work in its own way salvaging the norms of the Act. Secondly, panchayat is either not aware of the different pay structure according to soil strata or intentionally they are making less payment for any monetary agenda.

When the work was stopped by the labourers department decreased the size of godi and people came for work.

## 5.6 Choice of Work

It is usually seen that those holding important positions are given priority in choosing work. Most of the panch prefer to take up job of mate and most of the female panch prefer to fetch water for the workers. Although the Act does not discriminate on any ground but at the field level it is a very common observation.

When construction of cc road started in GP Arjuni, two of the old ladies were given the responsibility for fetching water and making it available to workers. On one hand this is good example that old ladies were given task on the basis of their capacity but on being enquired their identity they were the panch of the panchayat. There were many other old ladies who were needy and really wanted this task but they were not given chance. In the muster roll of GP Aasra panch Ramdin and Chetan were registered as mate but they were actually found making entries in the registers. On being enquired why they are not in the field they said entry is most important and they got registered as mate not for supervising but for getting payment for maintaining records. In the Act there is no provision to pay to the person who volunteers for record keeping however it is the joint responsibility of representatives, rogjaar assistant and secretary. But they complained that when workers are being paid for physical labour why should they maintain records without taking any payment.

## 5.7 Lack of Awareness

May it be community, panchayat or department awareness regarding the program is not sufficient. Many misunderstandings are there which are giving rise to inefficient work. Moreover, at gram panchayat level and janpad level there is a lack of technical expertise. No role of PRI representatives at the Janpad level is clear. They feel dormant in the whole program as no power is delegated to them.

In village Tara Gram, which is dependent village of GP Phaphni, de-silting of pond was going on under NREGA. Community reported here that Sarpanch and secretary are not paying wages according to the prescribed norms. On being enquired they replied that workers are not digging land according to measurement fixed by the government and even then they want full payment. When engineer will come for evaluation sarpanch and secretary would be held responsible not the community. There was a misunderstanding in the community that when they work for the whole day they have the right to be paid the minimum wage no matter they dig according to standard or not. When they were conveyed the provisions they realized and started working properly.

Due to incomplete information there is a feeling at the community level that its government's liabilities to provide 100 days employment no matter they perform their duty at their end or not.

### 5.8 Poor Maintenance of Records

Panchayats are supposed to keep systematic records of different types, which they are finding it difficult. Persons responsible for record keeping are generally not capable of doing that. Provisions like filling of muster roll at the worksite becomes difficult and to avoid any kind of overwriting or alteration it is preferred to take rough entry first, which is finalized later on in panchayat or else where by the concerned person either daily or weekly basis. If any mistake is seen in records Sarpanch secretary, rojgaar assistant is held responsible.

Rojgaar assistant of GP Machaanpar was making entries in muster roll at his home on the basis of rough note prepared at the worksite. In Block office he was scolded for such neat work as the authorities suspected that it is not being maintained at the worksite with the intention of manipulation. From the next time onwards after making entries at home he made the page appear dirty by putting mud and by tearing ends of the pages. By this dual purpose was served pages were looking as if prepared at the worksite and entries were also neat.

### 5.9 Inactive Vigilance Committee

Although separate committee is to be formed for each work who has to monitor the progress as well as ensure smooth implementation, wages are to be paid in the presence of committee but in most of the places this committee is not even formed and if it is appearing on paper, members are not aware. This committee is also supposed to issue work completion certificate then only payment is to be released. But no such certificates are being issued. In Dongargaon block of Rajnandgaon District 56 works were completed in the year 2006-07 but only certificates for 13 works were issued. In 2007-08 471 works are completed for which no certificate is issued yet.

Besides some of these major bottlenecks there are other problems also like:

- ✍ Community has to make a demand for work for which most of the people are not aware.
- ✍ Role of NGOs, CBOs are not clear

- ✍ Making available 14 days work at a stretch is not feasible in many cases.
- ✍ Generally sanction of work, release of money depends upon nexus of Sarpanch and department.
- ✍ Social audit for each work is not being done according to the norms. Willingness in the community is not there.
- ✍ Although perspective plan is prepared but works are sanctioned as per the wishes of the administration.
- ✍ Inspection register, complaint register, muster roll is not being kept at the worksite.

## 6. Impact of NREGA

The basic objective of the Act is to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose members willing to do unskilled manual work. This work guarantee can also serve other objectives: generating productive assets, protecting the environment, empowering rural women, reducing rural urban migration and fostering social equity, among others.

Beside employment the other aspects of NREGA are:

### 6.1 Development of Infrastructure and Productive Assets

NREGA provided an opportunity to develop many sustainable and productive assets. Although major emphasis of the community was on the construction of road but this has enhanced the rural connectivity. This has made approach to the villages even in the remote areas easy and now goods related to daily needs as well as agriculture etc. are available at the cheaper rate. Construction of road has made possible for girls to go schools even in other villages.

Water conservation and water harvesting, minor irrigation network, and renovation of traditional water bodies helped in improving ground water level and also helped in increasing the irrigated area. All this was meticulously planned so that better results could be seen all across the State resulting in more of natural resource management gradually over a period of time. Many such assets were identified which remained idle for years but has now made useful.

Land development work proved to be panacea for small and marginal farmers, who got success in making their land cultivable after several

years. Earlier under none of the schemes land development had ever been taken.

People's livelihoods on a sustained basis are getting enhanced by developing the economic and social infrastructure in rural areas. The choice of works seeks to address the causes of chronic poverty such as drought, deforestation and soil erosion. Effectively implemented, the employment generated under the Act has the potential of transforming the geography of poverty.

## **6.2 Strengthening of PRI System**

For the first time gram panchayats are made centre of the development as they are involved from process of registration, preparation and distribution of job cards etc. as well as in implementing the work. More than any other law, NREGA is an Act of the people, by the people and for the people. The Act empowers ordinary people to play an active role in the implementation of employment guarantee schemes through Gram Sabhas, social audits, participatory planning and other means. Interface between departments and panchayats is increased. It provided an opportunity to representatives to interact with the government functionaries regularly. On the other hand representatives of the panchayat also started meeting regularly. Panchayats have now started feeling sense of responsibility and accountability and started maintaining records. If we ask any record of any scheme for the last 10 years they hardly have maintained any. It is improving their capacity as well. As compared to works being implemented by departments panchayats are much ahead in maintaining transparency and accountability in spite of lack of technical expertise.

## **6.3 Empowerment of Community Especially Women**

One of the major impacts of NREGA is community empowerment. Through the provisions like worksite facilities, equal wages for men and women, no discrimination on any grounds, right to verify any record, right to do social audit etc. community became vocal. Information regarding equal wage passed well in the community. Gram Sabha has the full right to keep track of all activities with the help of vigilance committee going on and if they come across any discrepancy they can lodge their complaint to higher authorities. Social audit and reading of muster roll prevents corruption. Community got opportunity to interact with government officials for their rights. Community now stopped looking for Sarpanch's mercy for providing them job.

SHGs are also given the right of implementation if they want. This is proving very effective in women empowerment and moreover prior to this program woman was always underpaid.

#### 6.4 Human Resource Development

As the scheme is too decentralized it necessitated interaction of the line departments with the Panchayats like never before and this was one of the biggest challenges. Training has been the most important component which was given due importance right from the very beginning. This was done keeping in mind the very fact that, apart from being a new scheme it was also a little complicated for the people to understand it at the ground level. The training was very meticulously planned. The Scheme needed not only the awareness for the Panchayat functionaries but also for the line Department officials who are responsible for implementing the works which are above Rs. 5 lakhs. Trainings for Rojgaar Assistant, Sarpanch, and Secretary also organised.

#### 6.5 Checking Migration

Since in the whole state except for some areas only single crop is taken people generally use to migrate from December till April. Due to availability of work under NREGA in these months too migration has stopped to certain extent.

##### **Some of the successes...**

In GP Tappa, Block Dongargaon- District Rajandgaon, community identified a pond at the outskirts of the village which was not being utilised for any purpose since it was filled with many aqua plants. It was constructed in 1967 and since then no de-silting was ever done. As a result it was neither used for fishing nor for irrigation. Also many years back channels were made for taking water to the fields. Work was taken under NREGA and Rs.290000 was sanctioned in which 50 workers worked for 20 days and cleaned the pond. Some of the work is still pending which is supposed to be completed soon. Once this is completed 11 villages are going to be benefited and even during summer in 500 acres of land second crop could be grown. In this way micro planning exercise not only helped the community to prepare plan and get it implemented but it also enabled them to identify resources within their village, which could be developed further for better utilization.

##### **Checking migration**

In gram panchayat Bahmnibhata, block Dongargaon, District Rajnandgaon, due to heavy down pour 60 families lost their home and crops too in the year 2006. Under such situation NREGA proved blessing for them. On January 16, 2007 construction of pond started, which was completed after 14 weeks on April 4, 2007. During this period 15 labourers worked per day and 5401

person days were generated of which share of women person days was 64.48%. After completion of this construction of WBM road started by which 1072 mandays were generated and by construction of CC road 6811 man days were generated. In this way 11455 man days were generated which means 76 workers worked daily for 5 months. Every year about 55 families use to migrate for 4-5 months from January onwards in search of employment but this year due to NREGA they didn't migrate.

#### **SHG AND LAND DEVELOPMENT: District Bastar**

SHGs have been made implementing agencies for the land development of BPL/SC/ST household's land as per the guidelines of Government of India with respect to NREGA. This was done to increase the awareness level as well as to empower the women. The total number of SHGs in Bastar District is 10,000. Bastar district administration had taken an initiative to sanction land development work to them. Presently the total work sanctioned under land development is 281 covering 294.70 hectare of land and it accounts for Rs 3245785, thereby generating 100 days of guaranteed employment for at least 519 households.

Now these women have started demanding work as implementing agencies earlier they use to request Sarpanch and secretary to give them work. They are now well aware of muster roll filling, making wage payments etc. on their own. The SHGs have successfully completed the work of land development as per the scheduled guidelines, the testimony to which is Gayatri Mahila SHG, Jaitgiri Panchayat in Bakawand block of Bastar district. There are numerous such examples where the women have done exemplary work. The women have started experiencing a sense of responsibility that they had earlier realized just for their households. These women have now become more vocal and aware of their rights after working as an agency. It is an interesting situation where they themselves are workers and agency as well. The real decentralization seems to have made its way in Bastar. The women who had not seen the official intricacies were now handling their visit to the Tehsil office and the Janpad office and are interacting with sub-engineers.

#### **SHG AND JATROPA PLANTATION**

Jatropha plantation was done on a large scale but due to lack of post plantation care it does not survive. To deal with this problem Jatropha plantation has been handed over to the SHGs in Bastar district. Till now 51,07,723 plants have been handed over to 304 SHGs and the budget for maintenance of

these plantations has already been sanctioned. The training for pruning and weeding has already been provided to the SHGs and in the very second year the women will be ready for doing the business. This will ensure that the maintenance of the plantation is taken care of and the SHGs will gain employment while doing the maintenance activity in terms of weeding and other activity needed to keep the plantation in a proper shape.

**Economics of Jatropha plantation: -**

After two-three years per plant yields seed amounting to	= 2kgs.
Rate per kg/-	= Rs. 5/-
Income per plant	= Rs. 10/-
Income from a plot having plantation of 10,000	= Rs. 1,00,000/-
Expected Gross income of the SHG's in Bastar District	= Rs. 7,00,00,000

This has been done keeping in view the role of women in Bastar District in the day to day life. They have proved themselves to be able and hard working, and are the pillar of the households, especially in this area by their manifold activities. This will certainly have a long term effect on the status of women which has been stagnant over centuries and especially very limited in the tribal culture.

**Some of the Innovations in Implementation Process...**

**Public grievance redressal / help line**

**District Bastar**

A proper and sustainable grievance redressal mechanism has been developed, so as to receive feedback not only from the affected community but also from the other concerned stakeholders. Apart from the open system of sending letters to the District administration which no doubt sometimes gets neglected due to unavoidable circumstances like the complaint not falling in the right hands. To tackle with this, a special helpline has been opened, for which a special wing has been created. This wing will receive all the complaints or information with regard to NREGA and will try to sort out the problem within a maximum period of three days depending upon the number, and the urgency of complaints being received from all across the district. This will ensure maximum transparency in the system and people will be getting maximum benefit. The helpline number is 226546.

### **District Rajnandgaon: Block Dongargaon**

In the block Dongargaon, District Rajnandgaon, there was no mechanism of sharing between Sarpanch, Sachiv, Rojgaar Assistant, Block Administration, and District Administration. Due to this there was communication gap and field level realities were not reaching up to administration. For the first time in April 2007 Samarthan organised a joint meeting of all these covering whole block. Sarpanch, Secretary, Rojgaar assistant shared their problems and district program officer, collector and CEO ZP tried to solve them by taking necessary actions. All the participants realised that this joint meeting should be organised on the regular basis once in a month at the block level and 20<sup>th</sup> of every month was fixed by CEO. Since then this is being organised regularly, which got replicated in all the blocks of the district.

## **7. Challenges in Implementation of NREGA**

### **7.1 Unwanted delays in implementation**

The time gap between demand for work and providing work is the most critical point in NREGA. Earlier just the obligation of completing the work ensured that labours will be getting the employment. But now it is totally the other way round, and in a way this has speeded up the momentum of works in the villages. But there is other way of understanding the same scenario, and that is too much of stiffening of the whole system has made the agencies as well as the Gram Panchayat in taking any work. The need of the hour is to make the people aware of their rights to ask for employment. Though we may claim that people are aware of their rights, but even then do not apply in some of the cases. And as soon as the work starts more of people start coming up for the work.

### **7.2 Maintenance of the assets**

The sense of community ownership can create wonders for the infrastructure developed in the Panchayats. The loss in plantation can be reduced by a substantial amount if the community starts taking care of these assets. Loss of plantation in Panchayats in many of the cases have been because of the fact that people from the villages take their own cattle to these plots, and do not take the pain of irrigating these plantation spots, nor do they bother to inform the concerned authority of the same. Though Money is allocated for the maintenance of these plots or for keeping the guards, they seem to be less concerned once the plantation has been done. The successful approach to this has been handing them over the SHGs, thereby ensuring some sense of community ownership. This

process can also be done during the monitoring of these sites by the officials. Similarly if sense of ownership is not developed in the times to come the assets created like ponds, water shed structures etc. would not last longer posing a question mark on the sustainability of the program.

### **7.3 Need for Sticking to a fixed Timeframe**

The quality of some of the works suffers due to extension of the completion time. This also ensures that new works can be started without much haste and the quality is not affected because of delay.

## **8. Ways Forward**

### **8.1 Increasing Demand for work**

A close look on the state data on 'job demanded' and job 'provided' clearly indicates that those who are provided job are reported as those demanding job. There is a huge unmet demand which is not getting adequately articulated in the official performance monitoring system. There is a need to initiate large scale citizen's awareness campaigns for generating demand for work under NREGA. The awareness campaigns should not only provide basic information about the act as well as card holder's rights for 100 days employment, but also provide guidance in exercising their rights. The ongoing efforts of the Government to popularise the scheme as well as of the civil society to reach out to the potential families need to be up scaled and intensified. The success of the programme will largely depend on the effectiveness of demand raised by the citizens. The civil society organizations should be involved by the Government to widespread the intent of the Act at the grassroots so that really needy families should feel confident to demand job. If job is not provided, they should ask for unemployment allowance as a right.

### **8.2 Improve institutional capacities of Gram Panchayat**

The panchayats has been identified as the key implementation organization for NREGA. Panchayats need greater capacity building support to improve their knowledge and skills to keep their accounts, muster rolls, measurements of works, maintenance of records and conducting social audits. The current level of capacity building support is far inadequate to the expected roles, complexity of works and volume of resources available with the Panchayats. In order to build Panchayats as an effective executing agency for NREGA, it is an essential pre-requisite to invest heavily on strengthening their perspective, knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- Developing perspective/ development plans of villages with Gram Sabha participation

- Basics of civil engineering and preparing cost estimates of works
- Perspective on relevance of social audits/ transparency in business transacted
- Sensitivity and vision in involving the disabled, women and other disadvantaged sections
- Skills in book-keeping and accounts, maintenance of created assets, including tax collection.

### **8.3 Greater autonomy to Panchayats**

The scheme still has quite top down orientation. The perspective plans have been prepared hiring agencies to complete plans of every Panchayat of a district in a short span of time. Therefore, real needs of the Gram Sabha have not been considered in perspective plans. There are many state led campaigns determined by the political leadership, which are pushed by the district level officials overruling the priorities of the Panchayats. Similarly, technical sanctions by the engineers and evaluation of works are also designed in such a manner that twists the arm of Panchayats for bribing or accepting the commands of the Government officials. Greater autonomy to panchayats would ensure that the panchayats plan and execute the works as per the needs of the gram Sabha.

### **8.4 Engaging Higher Tiers of Panchayats Effectively**

A clear role must be carved out for Zila Panchayats and Janpad Panchayats in order to involve them under NREGA. The higher tiers of PRIs need to be more actively involved in NREGS implementation for visioning districts as a unit of development. The higher tiers of Panchayats have a more important role in receiving funds for multi-Panchayat projects, and will have to actively engage households in partnership with the concerned village Panchayat. Their role as a monitoring agency also needs to be clearly spelled out. An active block or district Panchayat will also ensure that there is greater accountability and transparency at the gram Panchayat.

### **8.5 Improved Monitoring Mechanisms**

The website of NREGA is not regularly updated and provides inadequate information on employment generated, funds allocated, state-wise average utilization etc. It is necessary to expedite the establishment of computerized system of data recording and enable its access at the district level as well as keep information below the district level so that more transparent ways of functioning may be developed at the lower level of decentralized governance.

Besides, the current parameters, which are prescribed in the Monthly Progress Reporting (MPRs) by the Government of India to the states and the district, miss out on many important parameters. It is pertinent to incorporate parameters like proportion of works done by the departments and Panchayats to know whether at least 50% works are being done by Panchayats or not. Similarly, there is a need to monitor the number of Panchayats/villages where no works have been started or where less than Rs.1 lakh has been transferred in any quarter. There are many Panchayats which are unable to receive adequate funds under NREGA to initiate works under NREGA.

Apart from the MIS level monitoring there is also a need to strengthen the monitoring mechanism at the Panchayat level. At the Panchayat level Village monitoring committees need to be formed as per the guidelines of NREGA in the panchayats. The members of such committees need to be oriented towards their role and should be empowered to make their panchayats display basic information of NREGS implementation in the Gram Sabha.

The monitoring system also does not capture the data on the available human resources placed at different level. Moreover, details of expenditure of contingency fund are also not published/monitored. Similarly, there is no data available on the trainings conducted to strengthen capacities of staff/panchayat at different levels.

### **8.6 Promoting large scale support in social audits**

With greater resources being spent in every panchayat, it is high time to establish a norm for effective social audit by Gram Sabhas. Most of the states have been busy establishing implementation mechanism by recruiting staff and developing norms for expenditure. The attention now should be to mainstream social audit process.

It is fortunate that many kinds of methodologies of social audit by various social activists, action groups and Government field level functionaries have been attempted. There is a need to systematically review and decide on a 'common minimum' steps and processes that must take place in every social audit. Organizations may add on new dimensions based on their capability and commitment to social audit process.



