

Tour Note to Khunti Block in District Khunti (Jharkhand) on 5th September, 2009

In light of letter from Dr. Jean Dreze, Member, Central Employment Guarantee Council, highlighting certain discrepancies in implementation of NREGA works in Bhandara and Birhu (Khunti Block, Khunti), as directed, S. K. SINGH, Director (NREGA) visited District Khunti of Jharkhand on 5th September, 2009.

(a) Construction of Pond on the land of Shri Bhola Munda, Gram Panchayat Bhandara

In the letter from Member (CEGC), it was pointed out that NREGA Sahayata Kendra has investigated and has reported:

- a. Delay in Wage Payment: NREGA workers who have got work on this site in 2008 are yet to receive their wages till June, 2009.
- b. Inflated payment to NREGA workers as per Muster Rolls which does not correspond to the payment made to workers as per testimonials of workers.

The undersigned visited the work site and interacted with a few workers who had worked on the site. It was found that the work is yet to be completed. Hardly, 3 feet land was dug on the location of pond. The location of pond was not suitable for construction of pond at all and in all probability, it would not be able to store water because of its location.

According to the Muster Rolls Rs. 36,174.60 has been paid as wages but it could not be cross checked with the workers figuring in Muster Roll as all the workers, who had worked on the site, were not available and were working away from village. On enquiry with villagers it was found that there was no ongoing work in the village. It was a common complain that wages were neither paid on time or paid in full.

Prima facie, it appears that the finding of the NREGA Sahayata Kendra is correct and suitable action should be taken against erring persons involved in implementation of NREGA.

(b) Construction of Pond on the land of Shri Dondo Pahan, Siladaon Village, Gram Panchayat Birhu

The NREGA Sahayata Kendra investigated the complaint and found that many workers were not fully paid, inconsistency in measurement book, Muster Rolls were fudged. There was illegal embezzlement of NREGA funds on the basis of testimonials provided by the NREGA workers to the tune of Rs. 10,000/-.

The work site could not be visited due to heavy rain. The Muster Roll available was checked and it was found that the findings of NREGA Sahayata Kendra is in order as the Muster Rolls have same name appearing more than once on Muster Roll pertaining to the same week of work. Apart from it, job card numbers of the NREGA workers were not filled

in or randomly filled in for a few workers. In fact, Muster Roll 129399 has only one job card number. The Junior Engineer available has agreed to the discrepancies in the Muster Roll. The Muster Roll does not contain signature of the Abhikarta for payment to NREGA workers. These cases belong to the period prior to amendment making payment to workers through accounts in Post Offices/Banks statutory.

Prima facie the findings of NREGA Sahayata Kendra is in order and suitable action should be initiated.

Despite of visiting twice to the office of DC (Khunti) for discussion on these issues, DC was not available. So the opinion or the action taken in this regard could not be ascertained.

The NREGA Sahayata Kendra has done serious effort and such non-Governmental effort be lauded and replicated elsewhere. The initiative of Council Member, Dr. Jean Dreze and his team, i.e. formation of Sahayata Kendra, is worth replicating in other States.