

## **Tour Note to Jharkhand (District Gumla) from 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2009**

Jharkhand was visited to review the status of implementation of NREGA with special emphasis on convergence. In district Gumla, on the basis of performance, Jurmu village in block Dumri was selected for visit and intensive interaction with the NREGA beneficiaries was ensured. After it, a discussion was held with district level officers and BDOs of all the blocks within the district. Interaction with District Forest Officer (DFO) having concurrent jurisdiction in District Gumla was undertaken to discuss their role in implementation and convergence of forest department's schemes with NREGA.

Jharkhand was created in the year 2000 from the erstwhile State of Bihar. As per census 2001, the population of Jharkhand is 2.18 crore out which 28% is STs population while 12% is the SCs population. It is a poor state with per capita income of Rs. 4,161 per annum. The density of population is 274 person per sq. km. The total number of districts are 24 which is under the coverage of NREGA:

Phase-I	20 districts
Phase-II	02 districts
Phase-III	02 districts

The total geographical area is 970 lakh hq. while cultivable land is 38 lakh hq. and only 8% of the total sown area is under irrigation with the productivity of the land is low.

Significant part of population is poor farmer practicing subsistence agriculture using traditional technology and family labour. Use of modern inputs like seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, machinery is not very frequently used especially in case of SCs/STs farmers.

Gumla district was carved out of Ranchi district in the year 1983. It is covered by dense forests, hills and small rivers. It has a population of 8,32,442. Comprising of male: 3.55 lakh, female: 3.50 lakh, SCs: 25,000, STs: 4,87,000, backward castes: 1.32 lakh, others: 61,000. It has sex ratio: 987, literacy rate: 52.53%. There are 11 number of blocks having 159 panchayats covering 948 villages. Cultivable land is 3.29 lakh hq. and only 9129 hq. is irrigated land, thus giving lot of scope for work under water conservation/irrigation facility on individual lands. In fact, 50% of the work accounts for the works under Schedule I (4) of NREGA.

### **Performance report of Dumri Block**

During the visit, it was found that in general certain non-negotiables, as provided in the NREG Act and Guidelines, were not adhered to.

**Schedule-I (9)** which states “The cost of material component of projects including the wages of the skilled and semi-skilled workers taken up under the Scheme shall not exceed forty per cent of the total project costs”.

The district was not maintaining the wage and material ratio for the year 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09. Due to nature of works undertaken under NREGA. During the year 2009-10 wage material ratio is 49:51.

There is a clear cut instruction (Notification No. S.O. 324 (E) dated 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2007 issued from the Ministry of Rural Development) indicating that there should be a minimum of 10 workers. In fact this circular has lowered the limit from 50 works to start NREGA work to a minimum of 10 workers.

In most of the working sites visited, it was found that there were less than 10 NREGA workers at that particular point of time. In case of completed works, few muster rolls were checked and it was found that there were less than 10 NREGA workers at any point of time in execution of digging of a well.

**Para 6 of Schedule-II provides:** “The Programme Officer shall ensure that every applicant referred to in paragraph 5 shall be provided unskilled manual work in accordance with the provisions of the Scheme within fifteen days of receipt of an application or from the date he seeks work in case of advance application, whichever is later:

Provided that priority shall be given to women in such a way that at least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested for work under this Act”

Except one site where work was in progress for rural connectivity, other work sites didn't have women representation.

**Para 14 of Schedule I** provides for: “Provisions for regular inspection and supervision of works taken up under the Scheme shall be made to ensure proper quality of work as well as to ensure that the total wages paid for the completion of the work is commensurate with the quality and quantity of work done”.

**Para 10.3.1 of the Operational Guidelines** provides for: “The following targets are fixed for internal verification of works at the field level by the official functionaries to be achieved within a quarter:

100% of works at the Block level.

10% of works at the District level.

2% at the State level.

The ongoing works during 2008-09 were 11,156 while the number of completed works was 6,787. The total number of ongoing works since inception of NREGA (February, 2006) in the district Gumla was reported to be 26,809. It was reported that the district was undertaking physical verification of all the ongoing works to ascertain whether these works are already completed-physically and financially or completed

physically and not completed financially or whether they have started at all or not. A group of officers were earmarked for it and were on the job to carry out the same.

It was found that since 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09, there was a rampant practice to give advances to the Labhuk Samiti constituted to carry out works ranging from 30-50% of the estimated cost. As a result, a very high number of works were initiated and at present there are 26,809 ongoing works with which district is struggling to complete.

In few cases, it was found that advances were given in the year 2007-08 but muster rolls indicates that works were taken up in the year 2009-10. Though the effort of district and block is commendable to complete the works in the year 2009-10 which were put in the shelf of works in the year 2007-08. In a sample of 7 works undertaken for study, 2 works fall into the category. This raises a question mark on the preparation of a feasible labour budget by district itself. In these cases, advance was given and it is not understood how these advances were accounted for against expenditure. Similar instance was found in case of works undertaken in Gumla block wherein it was reported that a few families have completed 100 days. Here, also the advance was tendered in the year 2008-09 but work was done in 2009-10.

Still there were instances of job cards without photo of the eligible members of the household.

**Para 30 of Schedule II** provides for: "In case the payment of wages is not made within the period specified under the Scheme, the labourers shall be entitled to receive payment of compensation as per the provision of the Payment of Wages Act, 1936 (4 of 1936)".

It was a common grievance among the villages of Jurmu that either they have not been paid wages or it is highly delayed. In fact, there was a common feeling among the villagers that if we work in execution of NREGA works either we would not

be paid or it will be very much delayed. The apathy among villagers is really very concerning and needs to be addressed. The response from district and block officials was that the Labhuk Samiti has been given advance and payments have already been made for the wage component and payment for material component is left. It was pointed out that they are miserably short of zonal engineers which acts as strong impediment in measuring works and preparation of MB.

There were cases where the households has been issued job card in the year 2006 but there was no detail of work given or done in the job card (No. JH-100204010040002).

There were cases in Gram Panchayat, Jurmu where a work was taken into shelf of works and advance for the work was sanctioned and disbursed but location of the work was not mentioned at all in the records. It makes feasible verification difficult.

A work for repair of pond (41/06-07) was approved on 13-03-07 while work started from 27-02-08. In the muster roll, it was found that 2 pages (No. 305847 and 48) were not on authenticated by any official but had the names and thumb impressions of the workers. One of the workers', namely, Sh. Chaitu Ahir, employment details were checked from MIS and it was found that he has not worked as per the true above mentioned muster rolls.

### **Payment through individual accounts**

The post office catering to Jurmu village was at a distance of around 4 kms. I interacted personally with the Post Master and it was found that the payments were being made without any inordinate delay. In fact, no work was going on at that point of time so no payment was being made to the individual accounts. In the block Bharno again post office in the village was visited and interactive with the post master. From the postal records it was apparent that the payments are being made in time.

### **Problems faced by the District**

There is shortage of manpower at all the levels. In fact the junior engineers were very few and it always led in delay in measurement of works and filling of measurement books. Thus it was bound to be some delay in wage payment. The strength of junior engineer is needs to be augmented immediately.

Certain area of the District Gumla is affected by LWE and the officers posted there do get threats from such organizations. As a result either nobody wants to be posted there or to get out transferred out immediately. It affects planning and implementation of schemes under NREGA.

In the year 2006-07, 2007-08 the number of works taken under NREGA were disproportionately high and could not be completed within the scheduled time frame. The present DPC is taking keen interest in completing and finalizing the carry forward works of past.

### **Convergence**

The District is yet to take steps to initiate convergence with different schemes of other Ministries and NREGA. But they had identified the possible areas of convergence with the schemes of minor irrigation.

I tried to contact Secretary (RD), Shri S. Mohanty, but he was busy with the meeting of Governor (Jharkhand) and Cabinet Secretary. The issues were briefed to Secretary (RD), Government of India, who was in Ranchi for the meeting with Cabinet Secretary.