

Report on **Reflections and Policy Recommendations**

Cluster Facilitation Team Project

June 2017





Table of Contents

2	●	Acknowledgements
4	●	Pradan's Approach
6	●	Methodology of Report
7	●	Major Achievements
17	●	Major Challenges
21	●	Policy Recommendations for CFT Project
25	●	Policy Recommendations for MGNREGA
28	●	Conclusion
29	●	Annexures



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Pradan's Approach

The Cluster Facilitation Team (CFT) project initiated by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) in 2013, emerged from the experiences of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working on livelihoods and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) at a grassroot level. Having followed consultative procedures during the conception stage, the project aims to provide much needed, high quality technical expertise to reform MGNREGA processes. Given that quality assets have always been a high priority for the Ministry of Rural Development, this project provided for the human and technical resources to ensure it. Moreover, by focusing on backward blocks, where the need for MGNREGA is highest, this intervention was well designed to improve the programme overall.

Having several decades of experience of working on livelihood security and natural resource management, Pradan was well placed to undertake the project, and did so in thirteen blocks in Jharkhand. Pradan operates in area saturation mode and institutional coverage, via Self Help Groups (SHG) is about 90% in the operational thirteen CFT blocks. The organization has the mandate to work on inclusion and has a constant focus on including the poorest of poor in the institutional coverage of the SHGs. Therefore unlike most areas, the SHG federation promoted by Pradan truly represents the marginalized and the most vulnerable section of the community, i.e. the core base of MGNREGA.

The organisation took a decision that the CFTs would be recruited, paid and monitored by the Block Level Federations. The total Gram Panchayats in each block have been divided into three, and each part is the responsibility of one CFT. Each CFT has an Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM) expert, who is a diploma holder in civil engineering and responsible for the technical aspects of the project. Each of the Gram Panchayats has one Social Mobiliser (SM), who is a local level cadre and resident of that Gram Panchayat. In some areas, where the Gram Panchayat is large, an additional MGNREGA Resource Person (NRP) has been recruited to assist in the work of the Social Mobiliser.

*Bahlen didi from Torpa says “Mai khud ko bhaageshaali samajhti hun ki mere mahila mandal
tatha gaaon ki sabhi didiyo ki pehli pasand mai hi thi aur mujhe bhi aapne gaaon mei
MNREGA ke dwara sewa ka mauka mil raha tha, bhala mai bhi isse peechey kaise hathti?
Mujhe Mahila mandal nei itna shahsakt banaya tha ki mai apne didiyo ke madat ke liye zara
sa bhi nahi hichki”.*

By hosting CFTs the SHG federations, there have been twin advantages. One, of leveraging the link between the Block Level Federations and the Block Administration, and the other is to give workers a platform, via the SHG to collectivize for their entitlements. The result of this has been the Community Based Organisations of women collectives driving this project.

They have been involved in all the major work of the project. This includes planning the work of CFTs, regular monitoring and follow up on the work done by them, awareness generation through collectives, presenting issues in the frequent interface with local administration in Block Coordination Committee meetings, engagement with Block Administration in order to raise grievances, periodic engagement with state functionaries in order to place broad perspective of the program, and promoting Sahayata Kendra as an auxiliary wing of the federation for information and facilitation centres for the citizen.

Presently more than a hundred and eighty CFT staff has been working on ground for better implementation and putting in place processes. We estimate that the efforts of the CFT have positively impacted one thousand one hundred and sixteen villages of one hundred and forty seven Gram Panchayats across thirteen blocks. Nearly a lakh and ten thousand households, and a lakh and a half workers have been reached directly or indirectly through this programme.

The impact of this is documented by our CFTs in detail. These stories from the CFTs form the bulk of this reflection exercise, though some glimpses are offered in this forwarding report as well.

The Rashmi Gram Sagathan of Shikaripara Block who are now regularly interacting with the block are determined to preserve the rights of the MNREGA workers. Sarala Hembrom, Bahamuni Hembrom and other didis are now confident to negotiate with the block administration for people's rights and entitlements.

The story of SHG didis of Goradangal village in Shikaripara uniting to help people get their Job cards back from the contractors is a matter of great inspiration across SHGs of the block. Despite frequent threats from the contractors the didis complained to the BDO and followed up the issue and finally the contractors had to return the job cards while they faced the threat of a legal action against them from the block. 45 job cards were being recovered from the hands of contractors in Goradangal Village of Gandrakpur Panchayat.



Methodology

This report attempts to bring together the myriad experiences of partnering with the Ministry of Rural Development on this project. We have gone through several rounds of self-reflection to distill learning's from our area that would be of practical use for the CFT project overall. We also used interviews as an added tool to put from multiple stakeholders; the Block Programme Officer and Mates. There were also Focus Group Discussions with workers in the village. This was done over the months of April and May 2017, by the CFTs in those blocks. This has provided some rich insight into the value that is placed on this project, as well as the many improvements in processes, but the many challenges that still remain.

The report is structured as follows; first an attempt has been made to critically assess the achievements and progress that Pradan has been able to make in the CFT Project in Jharkhand. Following this, major challenges have been put forward, which have used to articulate recommendations for the CFT project, and finally for MGNREGA as a whole.

This findings presented here, would be of bearing for any initiatives by the Ministry of Rural Development or any State Department to strengthen cutting edge state capacity and engaging with Civil Society Organisations. Having closely and deeply worked on the MGNREGA for three years, we believe there are some important lessons to improve the functioning of this seminal legislation, for the betterment of people.



Major Achievements

The major outcomes of the CFT project are presented in two buckets. The first is the overall framework of the improved partnership between civil society organisations and the government machinery. The second part goes into details of the MGNREGA processes, and the progress that has been made at each stage.

Leanings on partnership of Civil Society Organisations and Government

The MGNREGA has several precedents for engagement with civil society organisations. These include as implementing agencies in certain blocks and districts, representation in the statutory Central and State Employment Guarantee Councils and the Programme Advisory Group, role as trainers and content developers of the Intensive Participatory Planning Exercise and Barefoot Technicians, directly partnering on Kaam Maango Abhiyan and so on. Section 18 of the Annual Master Circular 2017-18, reiterates the need and substance of the engagement with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). However, the CFT project is the first time that the civil society organisations have directly partnered with the Ministry of Rural Development, over a period of time, in the role of facilitators. Thus it is important to reflect on this aspect of the project, which will be of relevance for all such interventions, which the Ministry of Rural Development may choose to take up in the future. It will also be relevant for any Department seeking to involve external agencies to build capacities of state functionaries.

- **Importance of Facilitation:** The first important lesson of this project is the positioning of the CFTs between administration and workers, to reform overall MGNREGA processes. The recognition of the concept of CSOs as facilitators, and not as substitutes for implementing machinery is an important one. The appreciation for the skill sets to work in this positioning, needs to be underscored. The CSOs were provided financial assistance not to supplement any government function, but to complement the existing legal processes under the MGNREGA. CFTs with their varied skill set

of social mobilization, civil engineering and natural resource management, were to function as a technical secretariat to the Gram Panchayat. Given that this is a novel concept, the challenge of creating an appreciation for this positioning required a lot of effort on our part. However, the outcomes have been rewarding, and more sustainable in the long run. This is a mode of engagement that needs to be better understood, documented and advocated for.

■ **National resource pool for MGNREGA:**

Through the intensive and sustained engagement with MGNREGA over a period of time, this project has also built a national resource pool of persons who are now deeply familiar with MGNREGA processes. These are not just people hired by CSOs in the CFTs, but also labour groups, SHG mates, women federations, extension workers, panchayat and block officials. This is not just at the grassroot level, but also at the state level, through the CFT Cell. This is a very valuable resource of people, who can bring these inputs to other such collaborative opportunities between CSOs and government, be it social audits, participatory planning and so on. The building of capacity on MGNREGA, of stakeholders across the board, in this sustained manner has perhaps the first time in the country. This national resource pool must now be leveraged in different modes. These persons at the Gram Panchayat level can be used for community

monitoring, the persons at the Block level can plan and execute works in other backward Blocks, and the capacities at the State level will be essential to continue to steer the right based nature of the MGNREGA.

- **Policy Reform:** Through this project, there are some lessons on wider civil society engagement with the government at all levels; Gram Panchayat, Block, District, State and Centre. By being involved with field level processes, CFTs have been able to effectively and consistently provide feedback to higher-level administrators on the working of the programme on the ground. Over the course of the project period, we have formulated and suggested various minor and major policy reform at different levels of governance, most of which have been accepted and implemented. This report, intended for the Ministry of Rural Development is in this vein as well. Thus the CFT project has not been about just technical support at the cluster level to backward blocks. Through these blocks there have important lessons for MGNREGA overall. This project has demonstrated how the channels of policy feedback from the Gram Panchayat to the state level can be established. Thus one of the significant successes is that the project has not just been about thirteen blocks, but instead through feedback and suggestions at the state level, managed to impact all the blocks of Jharkhand, and to some extent, the country as well.





Strengthening MGNREGA Processes

To achieve the project deliverables meant diving into MGNREGA overall. Through the introduction of nine external people overseeing processes in the block, we can say with reasonably certainty, MGNREGA has been made more people friendly in these areas. This is bound to be the most enduring of the project activities undertaken. The following are some of the improvements in various aspects of MGNREGA processes:

- **Basic Worker Documents:** To start at the very beginning, we realised that several workers were without basic enabling documents to access their legal entitlement to work, including job cards, bank accounts and aadhaar cards. Further, even if these documents were issued, they were rarely updated. Thus all the CFTs have contributed to an updating of these documents for setting up regular use and transactions. The CFTs have assisted in making about twenty five thousand new job cards over the past three years, and opening about forty eight thousand bank accounts, seeding aadhaar numbers, freezing accounts, transferring post office to bank accounts and so on. They have also worked hard to break local nexus's and ensure that these documents remain in the possession of workers and not middlemen. This is the foundation for the entire programme.

Workers in the thirteen blocks, were asked if there were any works ongoing in their village and the answer across all blocks was in the affirmative. This is the surest and quickest sign to take the temperature on the health of the

program, so to speak. The open works, and those that had been created in the previous year ranged from 'dobha', wells, toilets, land development, mango plantations as well as NADEP pits, goat sheds, poultry sheds, cow and pig sheds. This has enabled people to get on an average, forty to eighty days of work.

- **Powers of Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayats:** Through this project, we have also tried to strengthen the basic unit of governance upon which the entire MGNREGA rests; the Gram Sabha and the Gram Panchayats. Building on our women collectives and network of community based organisation, we have increased the participation of women in Gram Sabhas. This has also been particularly crucial for the planning exercise, Yojana Banao Abhiyan which was undertaken in 2015-16. However, given the increasing centralisation of the MGNREGA, we find that it is a struggle to strengthen and keep relevant the role of Gram Panchayats. This is described in detail in the next section.

In Kisko, Torpa, Sunderpahari we now see ward members signing the muster rolls after verification of the schemes, and Mukhiyas also verifying the schemes before signing the FTOs. Across Blocks, Panchayat Bhawans have started to open one day each week for transactional works like work demand, muster roll distribution, collecting grievances, *abhilekh* preparation, receiving applications and so on.

During the interviews with mates, they were asked whether Mukhiyas and Gram Rozgar Sewaks came to the worksite regularly. The majority of the mates reported that the Mukhiyas did indeed visit the worksites regularly and that the Gram Rozgar Sewaks did not. To ascertain worker awareness on the role of the Gram Panchayat, they were asked on what responsibilities the Gram Panchayat had. Amongst them they covered all the points, but no one worker group had a complete idea of all the roles of the Gram Panchayat. Thus we see incremental progress in strengthening this institution.

- **Demand Registration and Rozgar Diwas:** At the start of the project, we found demand registration to be a largely defunct process. There were little or no mechanisms of genuinely taking demand from workers. This was largely done as a formality before the start of a work. From the Focus Group Discussions with workers, they were asked

how they actually got work. There was a wide variation, again reflecting the weakness of the elementary step in the employment guarantee. The answers varied from; some people demand work through the mate, others through the Gram Panchayat, some wait for Rozgar Diwas, others wait for work to be opened, some fill work applications in SHG/VO meeting and give them to Gram Rozgar Sewak and others request the Social Mobiliser and INRM Expert of the CFT for work. Where the demand form is sought from also varied from the mate, the Gram Panchayat, the Gram Rozgar Sewak, Mahila Mandal and the CFTs. Similarly the submission of the forms varied from mate, Gram Rozgar Sewak, Panchayat Sewak and Mukhiya at the Gram Panchayat Bhawan, on Rozgar Diwas.

It is worth noting two things here; one that a multiplicity of modes for putting forward demand for work is a positive development, however, there is still dependence of the mate, CFT and others and it is not yet being done directly by the worker. The second thing that is a credit to the efforts of the CFT is that almost everyone mentioned the Rozgar Diwas and Gram Panchayat Bhawan indicating that these are somewhat functional. Workers were also asked specifically whether Rozgar Diwas happens and workers from all blocks answered in the positive, that it does indeed happen every week.

This has resulted in the increase of the number of person days, work demand and active workers. In 2016-17, one lakh forty eight thousand, one hundred and sixty three workers registered their demand for work. Simultaneously the CFTs have started tracking the cases eligible for unemployment allowance, which further triggered the process of generating muster rolls on time.



- Strengthening Mates:** The community based organisations supported by Pradan provided an ideal foundation from which to select mates for MGNREGA. Through the efforts of the CFT, a large pool of SHG mates has been created. In the thirteen blocks, three thousand two hundred and twenty four women SHG mates have been selected and trained, and out of them two thousand six hundred and fourteen have been registered on the MIS. The CFTs have played instrumental roles in their selection, training and constant support on the ground. Given that they are from SHGs, there is an inbuilt transparency in their selection and work, as they are also overseen by the community based organisation. A network of “honest mates” has de facto emerged through this process. When mates were asked whether they met regularly amongst themselves, the responses revealed wide block wise variation. Some said once a week on Rozgar Diwas, other said in two weeks and others said once a month.

Due to Jamuna didi’s continuous effort we can see beautiful assets being constructed in the village, her impeccable technical knowledge has ensured significant potential livelihood opportunities for people. She had been instrumental in timely filling and submission of the muster roll and has been absolutely spot on with her skills of measurement and documentation.

- Participatory Planning:** The Intensive Participatory Planning Process (IPPE) undertaken by the ministry, coincided with the CFT project. There was a symbiosis between the two. Out of the 6000 blocks in the country, approximately 2500 blocks were selected for this exercise. Within that, the 250 CFT blocks acted as a nucleus. The CFTs provided technical support for the IPPE processes in other part of the state, and at the same time demonstrated the full potential of such a process within their own blocks. Moreover, the project in Jharkhand in specific benefited from the priorities of the state government, through Yojana Banao Abhiyan. The main outcomes were:



Jamuna Murmu a women SHG mate from Boarjore block of Godda district says, **“Maine logo ko nrega mei pareshan hote dekha hai, aur main nahi chahti ki ek mauka milne ke baad bhi log pareshan rehe. Iss kaam mein mera dil lagta hai.”**

- Through the village wise meetings that were held, people are now aware of the variety in the types of works that are available under the MGNREGA.





- b. There have been genuine instances of communities moving past wage employment to building assets through the MGNREGA that would give them more livelihood options. One example of this are the large-scale plantation works that been taken up.
- c. This exercise also created a large pool of resource persons now available at the Gram Panchayat level, including 'MGNREGA Resource Persons', 'Social Mobilisers' and 'Mates.'

■ **Natural Resource Management:** Given the geographic diversities of our country, the ever changing demographic trends and the mounting climate change, there is an urgent need to better use existing resources in a sustainable manner. Integrated Natural Resource Management has been a long-standing approach within Pradhan. We can say with some certainty that there is an increased awareness on the INRM approach among people in these blocks, as well as with field functionaries and technical staff at the block. The kinds of work being taken up under the MGNREGA, has also substantially changed because of these efforts.

■ **Technical support to Block Administration:** Apart from strengthening the institution of the mates, the CFTs have also strengthened

the block level technical resources. The quality of assets depends to a large extent on the ingenuity and dedication of junior engineers and technical assistants. At the start of the project they were often confused, under confident, unavailable and uninterested. Now, with continuous investment in bolstering their skills and providing in ground support. We find that those interested have grown to be confident and knowledgeable about MGNREGA works. This is a gain to the programme from the CFT project.

■ **Work Priority:** The prioritisation of works has been a notoriously ignored part of the MGNREGA. Even where some semblance of participatory planning is followed from the ground level up, these are disregarded at the block and district level. Secondly, even if the works coming from the Gram Panchayat are put on the list, several other works are added at higher levels, this skewing the priority list. Thirdly, as an increasing trend, targets are being set from the top, whether it is the centre, state or district, which then have to be followed. Thus putting works in priority from the Gram Panchayat level is a farce. However, despite this environment, through the efforts of the CFTs, schemes have begun



to prioritised and sanctioned according to the Panchayat Karyakarini Samiti, at least in some pockets.

Hatnatodang panchayat in Chakradharpur has set a precedence in Gram Panchayats exercising its power and right by filing a complaint with the State Department when works as per the Gram Sabha were not sanctioned by the Block Administration. The State Department took cognizance and eventually the schemes were correctly sanctioned.

- **Worksite and Work processes:** One of the most difficult aspects of the CFT project has been to work with incorrect or outright illegal processes going on and attempt to reform them without any implementing powers. Through a variety of techniques, at times support, at times the threat of complaints and so on, the CFTs have managed to bear down upon the administration to follow the prescribed processes to some extent. A simple example is the starting of works without muster rolls which was a prevalent practice. This led to several issues of workers not being sure whether their name is on the muster roll or not, and if not, their payment becomes jeopardized despite them having worked. Now, by and large, through the CFTs presence and vigilance ensures that muster rolls reach the worksite on time, before the start of a work and only those whose names are on the muster roll actually work.

The BPOs were asked what they did for worksite supervision, and their answers varied. Some said they conducted field visits, others said they relied on the mates. Some

said that this was discussed in the weekly Block Coordination Committee meetings, with reports taken from the GRS on each ongoing work, as well as reports from the MIS being analysed. The point to note is that at least they are now answerable for worksite supervision, which was earlier, largely done on paper.

In the Focus Group Discussions, workers were asked a couple of questions on this subject. On being asked whether muster rolls reached the site on time or not, about half said that it did, and others said that it did not. Further, all blocks said that the mate supervised the worksite, sometimes along with ward panches and CFTs. All said that newly women SHG mates are being given work, and not the earlier mates. They were also all well aware of the roles and responsibilities of the mates. However, the majority said that the mates were not being compensated on time, which tallies with what the mates themselves said about the problems faced by them. On worksite facilities, about half said that it was provided and the others said either no, or in an incomplete manner. This should be seen in the context that worksite facilities were once a rarity. All of this reflects some new life in this crucial part of the MGNREGA, i.e. the worksite.

- **Payment Systems:** Of all of MGNREGA, this is perhaps the most important part, which directly affects the demand for the programme. Until workers are paid, they naturally do not demand further work. Timely payments have a huge impact on how people



view this programme, and their capacity to work, and in effect keep it alive. This is also one arena where the CFTs have the least control. Thus as a strategy, we adopted tracking of all the processes involved, so that we could first learn the shortcomings of the payment systems and then try to tackle them. We set up tracking systems, using the MGNREGA MIS as well as documenting field processes. Through this we have been able to make some dent in parts of the payment process, such as the muster roll reaching the block office within a couple of days of work closure, for data entry. However the more systemic issues of adequate and timely funds from the Central Government are of course beyond the purview of the CFTs.

The other aspect that we focused on is opening bank accounts for those who as yet didn't have them. The third aspect has been encouraging the culture of going to the bank to get wages, and not being dependent on others. When workers were asked how they know whether they have been paid or not, all responded by saying that about two weeks after having worked they go the bank and check. Usually the Gram Rozgar Sewak, Social Mobilisor or mate informs them whether their wages have been deposited or not. On being asked whether they complained and filed compensation application on wage delays, almost all said that they did but had got no redress. One worker group responded that after they complained, even though they did not get their compensation, they got their wage payments quickly.

- **Grievance Redress:** No matter how much focus has been put on improving systems, a system will only be as strong as its accountability mechanism. Therefore, Pradan has also attempted to put in place grievance redress systems for the community to easily access and use, that are not dependent on the CFTs. To do this, there has been attempt to enable communities to gain confidence in articulating their grievance, and in taking it to its logical conclusion. The

case of unemployment allowance by the Kisko Sahayta Kendra illustrates this in detail. In interviews with the Block Programme Officers (BPO), we asked three questions; how many complaints they had received over the past three months, the process of resolution and how many of them had been resolved. Almost all had received complaints relating to delayed payments, new job cards, worksite facilities, payments to mates, rejected FTOs, unemployment allowance and account freezing. To resolve these grievances, they claimed meetings were held at the BPO level, the concerned officials were identified and the grievances related to them explained. The BPO then followed up with the said person on whether they had been resolved or not. Some said they used the assistance of the MGNREGA Sahayta Kendra, others said they spoke to higher officials about it, others said the used the MIS to compare muster rolls, FTOs and worker pass books. They self-reported that almost all the complaints had been redressed.

On being asked on their relationship with the MGNREGA Sahayta Kendra, the response was largely positive. Most said that they



met with the MGNREGA Sahayta Kendra regularly, and that it was useful to receive complaints and workers issues, which they then resolved. On the question of whether any Gram Rozgar Sewak's had violated the law, the answers were 50% yes and no. Asked what action was taken in case they had violated the law, the answer was serving show cause notice, conducting inquiries, taking disciplinary action and issuing penalties under Section 25. However, in spite of efforts to collect and file grievances, systems in Jharkhand are still very weak on the redress side.

- **Interface with Administration:** As per the guidelines, Block Coordination Committees were intended to provide a platform for the CFTs to have an interface with the Block Administration, to sort out issues as and when they arise. After initial hiccups, Block Coordination Committees have largely begun functioning. These platforms are useful for information exchange and to regularly resolve issues. It has also been an opportunity for the Block Administration to recognise the work of the CFTs, and on their prodding, enhanced monitoring over field functionaries. This platform has been essential for the smooth functioning of the project. If the Block Coordination Committee is functional, then matters are resolved at the block level itself. This allows the CFTs to only raise more serious concerns, or suggested policy reforms to higher level. Daily matters are addressed at the block itself.

The role of the CFT in the Block Coordination Committee was also universally acknowledged by the BPO's in the interviews, as a platform to receive complaints and present them in front of all the field staff.

A related question asked to the BPOs was whether there was a method for the Gram Rozgar Sewak to plan his or her daily work schedule. The answers to this varied. Some said, "based on the orders received from the district via Video Conference, MGNREGA







Major Challenges

Although there have been substantial achievements, there are also several gaps in the project. These issues throw up important lessons for the CFT project in particular, and for the MGNREGA overall. A closer look at these issues is as follows.

- **Ownership of CFT:** Due to the limited focus initially by higher administration to clarify the positioning of the CFTs, there was lack of complete ownership of CFTs by the Gram Panchayat and Block Administration. Further, the guidelines while stating that the CFTs are a technical secretariat to the Gram Panchayat did not specify the interaction between Gram Panchayats and CFTs. Thus a lot of time and energy went into understanding, de constructing and gaining acceptance for the positioning of the CFTs.
- **Wide Variation:** There has been wide variation between blocks on the uptake of the project. While some of it is desirable, to account for the flexibility of approach and geographic terrain, it is also reflective to lack of periodic monitoring from the State Government. Those individuals and organisations that wish to take initiative do so, and have made the project some amount of a success. However, there is need for steady and uniform monitoring from the state government, and visits to blocks by state officials for review.

This also has bearing on policy suggestions made by CFTs. Given the variation, there will be a diversity of suggestions that emerge from the experiences of CFTs. Therefore there should be a uniform platform where all such suggestions can be made. This will prevent CFTs speaking at odds with each other and leading to more confusion in suggested policy reform. Moreover, once suggestions are accepted and policies have been changed, it is not translating into action because of information gaps, between the state administration and district and block administration, as well as between administration and CSOs.



- **Lack of use of Resource Pool:** Although a wide resource pool has been created, there is not enough in the CFT guidelines to ensure that they are used to the best of their capabilities to improve the system. Such human resources can be used to ensure quality training to mates, to barefoot technicians, and to be part of MGNREGA Sahayta Kendras at the block office, even after the closure of the project.
- **Undermining of Gram Panchayat:** Working closely on MGNREGA has revealed the inherent contradictions in the programme, viz a viz the role of the Gram Panchayat. Although the Gram Panchayat is an implementing agency under the Act, through the new fund flow systems that have little or no control over funds in their Panchayat. Further, they are tasked with myriad other responsibilities, such as planning, sanctioning and monitoring. There is clear unbalance between the authority vested in the Gram Panchayat and the responsibilities expected of it. Although an important role has been played through facilitation by the CFTs, there is need to establish processes at the level of

the Gram Panchayat, especially with respect to monitoring of field functionaries by them, i.e. the mates and Gram Rozgar Sewak. While the collectives have established processes, these same processes are not established at the Gram Panchayat level. There should be a mechanism to flag issues relating to the bypassing of the processes of the Gram Panchayat. Panchayat Samiti as well as Karyakarni Samiti are posts that can be focused upon and built up as institutions.

Over the past three years we have observed a growing trend of the increasing centralisation of the MGNREGA, which is reinforced by the use of various technologies, including the MIS. This has led to the undermining of the considerable powers of the Gram Panchayat as envisaged in the Act. This has led to their disinterest in running the programme, and lack of valuable oversight and monitoring, which could have been provided by the Gram Panchayat. Moreover, the MIS has become the main authority as far as implementation goes. Decisions are taken without any process or transparency. There are several examples of this, the most recent



being the job card verification drive initiated by the Ministry of Rural Development. Why then should the Gram Panchayat try and ensure everyone has their job card, when it can easily be struck off or modified on the MIS, without any consultation, thus affecting their ability to access their legal right to work.

- **Not Demand Based:** Despite our concerted efforts, demand, remains still a concept rather than an actuality. Given that the Ministry of Rural Development records demand registration, and monitors the achievement of labour budget, we would like to underscore, that the programme is not running in a demand based manner, save for a few exceptions. It is still, largely supply driven. Even after much effort, we have made some dent in the existing processes, and some mates are now recording demand for workers. However, genuine demand driven would imply workers being able to approach the Gram Panchayats directly for their MGNREGA work, and not be shooed away because of alleged technical difficulties such as “inadequate shelf” or “link fail.”

- **Challenges with Mates:** There was a huge need to build the capacities of first time SHG mates. Secondly, the payment systems for mates are yet to be streamlined. The Annual Master Circular allows for a couple of options, but given that their payments are booked under ‘material costs’ as pointed out earlier, their payments can arbitrarily stopped by the Centre at any point via the MIS. Thirdly, hand-holding the mates, to navigate an entrenched system has required a lot of skill and hard work on the part of our CFTs. On being asked what difficulties they faced at work, most of the mates we interviewed, said they had problems. The issues ranged from not being paid on time, to being dependent on the Social Mobilisor for information, to being stopped by contractors and middlemen from doing their work, to delays in the muster roll reaching the worksite and finally to workers holding mates responsible for wage delays.

BPOs and workers, in their interviews universally said that work orders were being given to mates. On the question of whether mates are provided with the approved technical estimate for the work they are overseeing, the answers varied. About half the mates said that they did, either from the INRM expert of the CFT, the Rozgar Sewak or the Block. Others said that they didn't receive this. As for the mates receiving technical estimates, the responses of the workers were similar to that of mates, i.e mixed. The majority said they did not get this as a matter or routine, but were provided it by the CFTs.

On being asked what information would enable them to do their job better, almost all the mates said three things; more information from the MIS, regular trainings on technical aspects as well as MGNREGA wage payment processes.

- **Work Sanctioning:** With respect to participatory planning, while the bottom up approach had huge benefits, it was undermined by the setting of targets from

the State Dept (dobhas) and the Ministry of Rural Development (anganwadi centre etc). The priorities set up the Gram Sabha were largely disregarded. The capacity of the Block Administration to challenge dictats from above remains weak. They are prone to following orders rather than adopting creativity and decentralisation for planning and executing works.

In terms of the processes of work sanctioning, all BPOs reported the same process, i.e. the legally mandated one; works are selected by the Gram Sabha, the summary is provided to the Mukhiya and Panchayat Sewak, the Panchayat Executive Committee approves it, and it is then sent to the Block for the estimates to be prepared, then the work order is generated and finally the work starts.

However, an interesting contrast to this stock answer, were those answers provided to the question on 'who decides which workers will work on which work?' In this a variety of answers were provided revealing the lack of process and arbitrariness. Some said that "SHG mates allocate workers to the concerned work and then fill in the demand application of those workers," others said, "once the work order comes, work starts in the village, and then workers demand is taken." One BPO said "depending on the seasonal calendar, the Gram Rozgar Sewak and Panchayat Sewak allocate work," another said that "it is decided by the Mukhiya and ward members" and one lone BPO said "the workers decide." This reflects that there is in fact no demand-pull, and work is still opened as per sanctions and administrative orders. The second thing is that work allocation is not regularised, with little clarity on whose role it actually is. As per the MGNREG Act, works should be opened in the priority decided by the Gram Sabha.

Similar to the responses to the BPO on being asked who decided who would work on which scheme, the responses from the workers also greatly varied, indicating a lack

of process. The two common responses were either the mate didi who has submitted the work demand, or the GRS depending on where work is available. Some said the SHG didis have a meeting and then decide, and others said that the Mukhiya decides.

Similar responses came for the question on who decides which works will be opened in the village. The following were some of the responses; Gram Sabha, Gram Rozgar Sewak, Mukhiya, Ward Members, Panchayat Executive Committee, VO and SHG and BDO. One response was "Even though works are selected from the Gram Sabha, ultimately depending on the pressure on the block, only those works are opened. So the block decides." This is the case despite the fact that the majority of blocks said that wall writings of the list of sanctioned works had been done in the Gram Panchayat.

- **Payment Systems:** While from the worker point of view, banking systems remain unfriendly, from the programme point of view, there have been continuous policy changes at central level including on aadhaar, PFMS, Ne FMS etc. which has caused havoc on fragile systems. CFTs have been on the back foot keeping up with the changes, even as field functionaries are unaware and poorly trained in the new systems. The majority said there were delays at the field level because of Internet connectivity. This is compounded by the delays in fund release from the Ministry of Rural Development and the errors and opaqueness of these new fund flow systems.
- **Weak Monitoring:** While there has been some strengthening of the worker rights and Gram Panchayats as an institution, the redress mechanisms are still either weak or nascent. Their real use by workers without the facilitation of CFTs remains to be seen. While Block Coordination Committees function to some extent, District Coordination Committees have largely not been formed. Oversight by Gram Panchayats on CFTs is also largely absent.



Recommendations for CFT Project

1. **Improve convergence with National Rural Livelihood Mission:** NRLM convergence via Section 7.5.7.7 of the Annual Master Circular 2017-18 stated that “NRLM will facilitate in operationalizing this convergence through the State Rural Livelihood Missions and the Civil Society Organisations already working under Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP).” This has largely not happened. While expanding or taking forward the project, we recommend that institutional convergence be taken up in a tangible way, as has been demonstrate through the lessons from Pradan in Jharkhand. These include; SHG mates, using SHGs for awareness, demand, mobilization and so on.
2. **Strengthen the weak monitoring mechanisms:** As per Section 7.5.7.9 of the Annual Master Circular 2017-18, the monitoring structure for the project is outlined. This includes; “Civil Society Organisation/Community Based Organisation along with Programme Officer will prepare an Annual Action Plan for each block for each year. The same is to be submitted to the State Government and the Ministry at the beginning of the financial year.” This has largely not happened. “Block Co-ordination Committees, District level steering committees and State level steering committees are to be formed with representatives from CSOs and concerned officials.” There have been several issues with the formation of these steering committees. “Ministry will review the project on a quarterly basis based on Annual Action Plan and project deliverables.” This has also stopped happening in the final year of the project. The formation of a Panchayat Co-ordination Committee (PCC) that can be setup for co-ordination and monitoring may be considered. Not activating the various steering committees under the project guidelines, we believe is a lost opportunity on part of the Ministry of Rural Development These could have been useful platforms for feedback on policy reform, which the programme would have benefited from.
3. **Financial Fund Flows:** Section 7.5.7.8 of the Annual Master Circular 2017-18 lays out clearly the financial support norms and the support that is to be provided by the Ministry of Rural Development to CSOs. Given that almost all of the funds are for the hiring of human resources, it is particularly important that funds

are available in a predictable and timely fashion. Otherwise, we have situations where we lose good technical resources on the ground because of this reason. While Pradan can still weather temporary storms, smaller CSOs with less liquidity would have a much harder time. The Ministry of Rural Development may consider implementing its own guidelines viz a vis fund releases. Further, given the nature of the project, there may be several states, which do not own the project or give it high priority. In these cases, it is doubly important to follow up with states on submitting required documentation to receive funds, rather than wait for them to submit the same.

4. Housing of CFTs at the Gram Panchayat:

Since the CFTs are intended to be technical secretariats to the Gram Panchayat, the funding for the CFTs too should be routed through the Gram Panchayats. Mechanisms may be devised, where the sanction orders are made directly to the Gram Panchayats and based on verification of the work; they in turn pay the CFTs. This will go a long way in increasing the role of the Gram Panchayats and their interest in monitoring the CFTs. It is a point to note that the powers of the Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat were absent from the design of this programme. This may be rectified by giving them an explicit role in the project design in tune with their powers in the MGNREGA.

5. Sanctity of Block level processes:

Supplementary guidelines to the CFT project stated that all plans prepared by CFTs would be automatically accorded administrative sanction. This largely did not materialize on the ground. Further, there is a sense of difference between “CFT plan” and “Gram Panchayat plan” which could actually be damaging to MGNREGA in the long run. However, all of this has been superseded with the fact that plans in CFT blocks have largely followed priorities and targets set by the State Department

and Ministry of Rural Development. The commitment to participatory planning has been shown to be false, and this has led to a sense of despondency and distrust amongst MGNREGA workers. Therefore, it is imperative that the processes put in place of participatory planning are duly honoured in CFT blocks.

- 6. Setting up block level MGNREGA Sahayta Kendras** may be considered to be a part of this project. Over the three years, the Sahayta Kendra can be built up as a functioning entity. After the closure of the project, State Government may consider MoU's, as have been issued in Jharkhand, which may be entered into directly with the Sahayta Kendra.

- 7. MIS Training and Consultation:** Since the MGNREGA MIS is so crucial to implementation, major policy changes should not only be communicated to CFTs, but they should be regularly given training on the new systems as well. Only then is the role of a facilitator possible. In fact, since the CFTs are so closely associated with ground level implementation, they should be consulted on the MIS changes that are continuously made.

- 8. CFTs to be used to build capacity of state functionaries:** We feel that the role of the CFT is to put in place and strengthen systems. Therefore the monitoring indicators of the project should also appreciate and reflect this. This could include the content development for training's and the capacity building of mates and so on. Alongside CFTs, State Departments should also be monitored on their support extended for building such capacities. The substantive functioning of the Block Coordination Committee meetings needs to be closely monitored at the district and state level. The minutes of these meetings should be uploaded under the CFT MIS Reports. Similarly, Block Administration should be monitored on the grievances that they are able to redress.

9. **CFT MIS:** The MIS for the CFT project needs to be looked at. The MIS report on the CFT personnel, while useful has been glitches and is not easy to use. These may be revamped so that it is easier for both state and central government to monitor the programme better.
10. CFT engagement at the district level was largely absent. This is a huge loss to the project because there could have been substantial concurrent cross learning for other blocks.

For all the reasons listed above, we strongly feel there is need for both a third party concurrent review processes, such as through the Central Employment Guarantee Council as well as independent evaluation into the project. We recommend that this should be done by an independent agency under the aegis of the Central Employment Guarantee Council. Substantial financial and human resources should be put aside for such a study, and its results should be a lesson for further such policies in the arena of external technical support.







Recommendations for MGNREGA

1. **Substantiate role of Civil Society Organisations in MoRD Annual Master Circular:**

Given the rich experience that has emerged from the CFT project over the last couple of years, the lessons for institutionalising the role of CSOs in MGNREGA may be acknowledged in the Annual Master Circular issued by the MoRD.

2. **Technical Secretariats to Gram Panchayats:**

The role that the CFTs have played in the backward blocks should be brought into the main structure of the MGNREGA. All Gram Panchayats can benefit from expert external technical expertise brought in through CFTs and Barefoot Technicians. The Ministry of Rural Development has repeatedly acknowledged that one of the reasons of wage delays is lack of adequate number of technical functionaries. Apart from the number, the quality of staff also greatly matters. The CFT project has shown how CSOs can be used to technically support and groom the frontline functionaries. Building on the national resource pool created by the CFT project, MoRD may consider further guidelines on leveraging their expertise to build up technical capacities of field functionaries across the country.

3. **MGNREGA Sahayta Kendras:**

In Jharkhand, MGNREGA Sahayta Kendras have been set up and supported by CFTs. A similar model for facilitating worker entitlements may be considered for other backward blocks in the country. The resource pool thrown up from the CFT project can assist in facilitating this in other blocks. Further, while these are at the block level, the MoRD may consider a mechanism for each Gram Panchayat to have dedicated officials for addressing citizen grievances. This can be built into the CBO-PRI integration approach.

4. **Consultative Platforms:**

Statutory platforms such as the Central Employment Guarantee Council (CEGC) and State Employment Guarantee Councils (SEGC) may be used to systematically incorporate lessons from this project. For the duration of the project, implementing partners of the CFT project may be special invitees to the council meetings to put forward their suggestions.

5. **Independent Evaluation of CFT by CEGC:** As stated in the earlier section, the CEGC may anchor an independent evaluation on the effectiveness of this project, lessons learnt and scale up to other backward blocks. The findings of such a study may be presented at a national level workshop. They should also concurrently review the project as per its guidelines.
6. **Revive work demand:** Work demand generation needs to be a reality for workers and not simply routed through mates and CFTs. It has essentially died as a concept, and through this project has been revived, albeit through mates. Workers need to be empowered enough to directly demand for work. There should be more emphasis on the training to workers and not mates. This may be explored through forming and capacitating labour groups. The Ministry of Rural Development may consider activating the multiple modes of demand registration that are detailed in the Annual Master Circular 17-18. Suppressed demand is common knowledge on the ground, but its true extent is not being estimated. Although we have repeatedly attempted to use 'online demand' and 'worker module' they have not been effective, as the back end of this demand module appears to not be tied up. This may be rectified, and then this mode may be widely publicized.
7. **Physical Records:** There is an urgent need for maintaining and updating physical records, even as more and more of MGNREGA becomes dependent on IT and other technologies. Such exercises should be down in a transparent and bottom up manner, and not electronically via the MIS. Ministry of Rural Development may consider instructing State Governments to undertake document updating drive, with suitable checks, balances and monitoring mechanisms.
8. **Role of Gram Panchayats:** We recommend that there be a comprehensive audit of the powers of the Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat on MGNREGA processes.

Based on the results, states should be monitored on the same, in collaboration with Ministry of Panchayati Raj. Even as the MGNREGA gets more and more dependent on technology, Gram Panchayats are not provided with adequate basic, let alone IT infrastructure. Thirdly, no grievance redress structure will function without involving the Gram Panchayat in a fundamental way. Building up the authority, responsibility and the capacities of the Gram Panchayat for MGNREGA fund structures, implementation and grievance redress is the only way to ensure its long-term sustainability.

9. **Mates:** Given that there is wide variation of the institution of mates across states, a comprehensive evaluation of their role and functioning will greatly benefit the programme. Further, reporting systems on the MIS on the number of mates employed and payments will greatly assist all stakeholders. State governments should also be incentivised to take up the training of mates on a systematic basis. Like calendars for social audit and barefoot technician trainings are developed and shared with the Ministry, similarly training calendars for mates may be shared with the Ministry as well.
10. **No Targets:** Setting of targets, for any work, at any administrative level is in violation of the Act. Based on the CFT experience, this is severely detrimental to ground level processes. Ministry of Rural Development may consider not setting any further such targets, no matter what the intention, or asking State Governments to do so.
11. **Increase Wage Rate:** The consistently low MGNREGA wage rates are a deterrent no matter how much systems are streamlined. MoRD may consider setting transparent norms for wage revision, including indexation to inflation and linking to minimum wage rates.
12. The constant tinkering and reforms with the fund flow systems of MGNREGA, causes

nothing short of disaster on the ground. Some recent examples have been the introduction of the e-FMS system, linking to aadhaar, and the routing through Public Fund Management Systems. With respect to changes of the Management Information System and fund flow systems:

- a. Such decisions should be taken consultatively, involving all stakeholders.
 - b. The MoRD should anticipate the transition costs, and put in place systems of alternatives and troubleshooting.
 - c. At the field level, MIS data entry operators should be regularly trained and all instructions to them should be publicly available.
 - d. Practical primers and manuals of using the MIS from a worker point of view should be developed and disseminated.
13. A comprehensive evaluation on the recent reforms in fund flow systems may be taken up by an independent agency to assess their effectiveness. The Central Employment Guarantee Council may oversee this exercise. CFTs and CSOs should be included as a stakeholder to consult as part of such an evaluation.
14. While State Governments are to set up grievance redress systems and ombudspersons, the Ministry of Rural Development may consider monitoring these mechanisms more closely. Apart from asking states on the status, spot checks may also be conducted by Ministry officials on the working of these mechanisms. The imposition of fines via Section 25 of the MGNREGA may be used as a parameter. In this architecture, the incorporation of Gram Panchayats and its standing committees must also be involved.
15. The following additional MIS reports may be considered:
- a. Wage delays of the entire payment cycle and the corresponding compensation due should be calculated and displayed.
 - b. Mate and BFT specific job cards, showing the number of days worked, the work code, payment received and so on.

- c. Report on payments for worksite facilities, including the material component for procurement for first aid kit etc. and the wage component to the mates





Conclusion

To bring together the experiences from the CFT project, we would like to know put forward a vision for the MGNREGA, as has been articulated by the various CFTs we have engaged for this project, as well as through Focus Group Discussion with countless workers and women collectives. The following emerge are the core areas for this programme:

- a. Panchayat Bhawan should become the heart of MGNREGA again, wherein the demand based nature of the programme is revived and Gram Panchayat members take renewed interest in monitoring the programme, particularly the work of the Gram Rozgar Sewak.
- b. Technical support to Gram Panchayats needs to be institutionalized to ensure sound planning and execution, and people's entitlements.
- c. Wage rate of MGNREGA must be increased and revised annually as per transparent norms.
- d. Payment systems should be simplified, and compensation should be paid automatically along with wages, which have been delayed. Further, wage payments should be decentralised through the Gram Panchayat and not centralized payment systems, to bring back accountability in this matter.



Annexure-I

CBOs Role in Activating MNREGA at different Levels

Introduction

Union is a powerful word in the context of socio political and economic development in India. Over the years, it is the people's collective struggle and action which has helped the weak and marginalized fetch their dues from the state. Power of collective action has been demonstrated many-a-times in the nation where community organizations, common interest groups, workers unions, civil society organizations and even political forces have joined hands to ensure pro-poor policies, schemes and laws in the country. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is also a result of vigorous public dissent and joint struggle. The people's unions have always worked as a bridge between the citizen and the policy makers.

Similarly the SHG movement in India is now going beyond its regular saving-credit model of growth in the rural pockets to a larger canvas of collective growth, through joint planning and action. Over the years, the Self Help Groups have demonstrated the power of united actions to ensure broader social and economic changes. Their role in livelihood enhancement, and streamlining government schemes through negotiation with administration has been evident. In Jharkhand, PRADAN's long association in the grass roots has ensured the presence of a large social capital base in the form of SHG federations. These have successfully managed to execute programs, negotiate with local administration on issues, deal with social grievances, and manage economic activities. Thus, the role of community based organizations in activating MGNREGA is a key aspect, as identified by PRADAN.

CORE Idea

By nature of being an act, MGNREGA requires constant public monitoring and action in order to help citizens fetch their due rights. Being both, the monitors and the beneficiaries of the scheme, the control needs to be with people rather than the politicians and the bureaucracy. The structure and approach have to be decentralized and democratic in order to effectively preserve its universality.

Since its inception, MGNREGA has surely benefited the masses in rural areas in terms of creating an option for employment, but it never really became a true people's program wherein citizens decide and control. It was never implemented in its true spirit and as a result- huge leakages, deprivations, and exploitation took place, which is a common thing for schemes in India, more so in tribal dominated pockets. Jharkhand is no exception and is struggling with many issues like non-allotment of work, non-payments, delayed payments, Act violations, and corruption. With time, people began losing interest working in MNREGA schemes due to the hassle, trouble, and uncertainty involved with it.

The key idea of having the SHG Block level federations hosting the CFTs was aimed at creating mass participation, to ensure frequent monitoring and action towards a controlled shift of the program, and establishing accountability of the administration. The idea was to incorporate more and more people into the program and its decision making. This would involve the planning of work and demand-side activities, aiming to trigger quick actions in the supply-side from the administration- through frequent monitoring and seeking accountability from administration.

PRADAN operates in area saturation mode and the institutional coverage is about 90% in the operational 13 CFT blocks. The organization has as its mandate, to work on inclusion and mainstreaming approach, alongside a constant focus on including the poorest of poor in the institutional coverage. Unlike a lot of cases, the SHG federations promoted by PRADAN truly represent the marginalized and the most vulnerable section of the community and therefore have an advantage in working on the issues of the poorest.

By hosting CFTs, the SHG federations have ensured their linkage with the local administration in strategizing, planning and monitoring the program. Additionally, they have been claiming their space as an organized forum for raising people's issues with the local administration. This interface between the CBOs and the local administration is an important aspect of the program, since the execution of schemes under



MNREGA has numerous uncertainties due to the unorganized nature of its workforce. This further results in gross exploitation of worker's rights under the Act. The inclusion of SHG federations, by design, into the program, asserts an organized voice for the unorganized work force. It provides the MGNREGA workers a ready union-like platform where people can speak, discuss, and decide on various aspects of work and also raise their issues and grievances for deliberation with the administration. A collective voice for the unskilled worker is what such an arrangement ensures, thus narrowing the gap between the state and its people.

CBO Engagement

Planning, strategizing CFTs work:

The block level federations in their monthly governing body meetings discuss the broad strategies and plans for the CFT program. The CFT staff being employed by the federations are regularly reviewed in such fora as well.

Regular Monitoring and follow-up of CFTs work

The BLF members regularly follow-up and monitor the CFT teams against the set parameters. They engage on the field to monitor the on-going work, including SHG mates' grooming and strengthening SHG systems (to strengthen the demand side).



Awareness Generation through Collectives

The federation members in the recent past have executed mass awareness generation activities around MGNREGA, through street plays, rallies, meetings, trainings etc. Through their network and coverage across different tiers, they have been engaged rigorously in orienting, educating community through mass communication media and IECs.

Frequent interface with Local administration in Block Coordination Committee meeting for progress review of the programme

The BLF members have been party to the decisions made in Block co-ordination committee meeting, they have been adding valuable inputs in these meetings regarding operating strategies, engagement of mates, awareness generation and training plans etc. This interface has opened up a window for the administration to operate with a proper grass-root engagement methodology which the bureaucracy has always lacked. The inclusion of federation in these strategic and review meetings has ensured pro-community discussions, relevant agendas for discussion in the area, and feasible plans.

Engagement with block in order to raise grievances, seeking accountability and trigger redressing of issues timely

The most important and significant part of the SHG federations engagement in the program is creating a space and platform for workers to raise their voice and generate an environment of negotiation with the administration. The lack of negotiation skills and bargaining power have always been factors furthering their exclusion from the mainstream. Unheard voices, unaddressed issues, unnoticed grievances are problems that state has been struggling with all these years, but there is no encouragement from the state to promote such platforms for citizens to raise issues and grievances.

This interface has established a platform wherein the network of the SHG federation would be involved in collation of grievances, orienting and educating workers in making complaints and applications.

Periodic engagement with State functionaries in order to place broad perspective of the program, outcome, and cross cutting issues:

The State SHG coalition formed with the representatives of various block level federations, is a key factor in influencing and advocating with the state level functionaries of the department. The collectives earlier used to engage with the administration at the block and district level, but a state level platform was always missing.

Experience tells us that in MGNREGA and other major central schemes, the grievances are numerous. The system is such that despite interventions from blocks and districts, issues are unable to be resolved. At these points, intervention from the state is a key factor in addressing such issues. The SHG level coalition has recently taken affirmative action in linking with the state government functionaries, in order

to take up long pending issues from blocks, cross cutting Act violations, sharing experiences and suggestions for building up on the positives. Many serious grievances have been resolved through the engagement of the coalition. Hence, considering the inaction at the local administrative levels, such an interface between the representatives of collectives and the top administrators is a must.

This, we believe, is the way forward for making the unheard voices heard, and for the people in the lowest subsistence levels to be addressed by the government. Such a democratic platform, which is engaged in constant question-raising and accountability seeking to the very top level of the bureaucratic structure to ensure services and deliveries at the grass-root, is a unique example set by the collectives of the state.

Promote and strengthen Sahayata Kendra as an auxiliary wing of the federation for information and facilitation centre for the citizen:

The Federation has promoted 11 Sahayata Kendras across eleven blocks as wings of the SHG federations to deal with MGMNREGA grievances within the respective blocks. The government has recognized these Sahayata Kendras as people's fora for dealing with issues and grievances, and to negotiate with the local/state administrations, so as to ensure timely redressal of people's issues.

The Sahayata Kendras work as community facilitation and information centers creating awareness about MGNREGA and its provisions. They take care of people's queries regarding the schemes and their due entitlements, apart from the collation of grievances and engagement with bureaucracy. The network of the SHG federations works for raising the significant issues which otherwise go unnoticed, unheard and unaddressed, at various levels.

These Sahayata Kendras, boosted by the knowledge and experience of the functional SHG collectives in the region, have been going through various trainings and awareness programs for their own capacity building; and have been nested in the Block Office premises so that a permanent linkage with the block administration can be established. These institutions work as citizens forums and help people demand their dues from the government, in an organized manner.



The Case of Kisko Unemployment Allowance Triggered by the Sahayata Kendra

Twenty four workers of Kisko block of Lohardaga were paid an unemployment allowance of Rs. 40,748/- for getting work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with a delay of over a month. This amount, which was recovered from the Gram Rozgar Sewak (GRS), was distributed by the Deputy Development Commissioner, Lohardaga in a programme organised by the block administration. The event was attended by many NREGA workers & functionaries from the district and block, including representatives from NREGA Sahayata Kendra, women led SHG federation and CSO PRADAN.

Amongst the 24 workers of Teesiya village of Pakhar Gram Panchayat who were given unemployment allowance, 20 of them had demanded work on 6 September and the remaining four on 24 September, 2016. As per NREGA, workers demanding employment are to be allotted work within 15 days, failing which, they become entitled to an unemployment allowance of not less than one fourth of the prevailing NREGA wage rate for the first 30 days, and at least half of the wage rate for the remaining period of the financial year.

The workers were helped by the NREGA Sahayata Kendra, Kisko in demanding unemployment allowance. NREGA Sahayata Kendra in Kisko is an auxiliary wing of the women Federation in the block, working to secure rights and entitlements of MNREGA workers under the ACT. The federation in Kisko is promoted and strengthened under NRLM Scheme. MoRD is running a nation-wide program called CFT for ensuring smooth and leakage free implementation of MGNREGA by partnering with CSOs, for the last couple of years. In this case, PRADAN- a reputed CSO working nationally, is facilitating the CFT project in the block.

Twelve days after the workers submitted their application to the block administration, the BDO instructed recovery of the amount to be paid as unemployment allowance from the GRS and the Panchayat Sewak of Pakhar. After the



GRS attempted escaping payment by trying to prove the demand for work as fake, the Sahayata Kendra submitted complaints to the district and state administration. This resulted in two visits by the Deputy Development Commissioner of Lohardaga to Teesiya in which he found the claim for unemployment allowance to be legitimate. Left with little choice, the GRS finally coughed up the unemployment allowance amount on 27 December.

There was visible elation amongst the workers who finally won their struggle for compensation for not getting work on time. Fulo Devi from Salaiya, one of the workers who was paid Rs. 2400 as unemployment allowance said, 'ahaut sangharsh karnei ke baad yehhaa silhui hai, hum bahaut khushhai'. Savitri Oraon, an SHG mate working in Salaiya said, 'Sangharsh kebagair koi adhika rhaasil nahi hoti hai'. Mamta Lakda of the Sahayata Kendra said that this victory is

not going to deter workers from continuing to agitate for their NREGA entitlements. She added that most workers are still not given receipts for work demand applications, and wages of many workers are still pending for months, despite repeated assurances of payment by the block administration. The DDC, Daniel Kandolna said, "The district administration is ashamed and sorry that we could not perform our duties and provide timely work to the workers". The BDO Surendra Oraon, said, "It is a bold step by the NREGA Sahyata Kendra and the workers in accessing worker's rights."

Although workers in Jharkhand are routinely denied work, they are almost never compensated for the violation of their legal right to timely employment under NREGA. In Jharkhand, unemployment allowance was last paid over two years ago to 336 workers of Bengabad block of Giridih. Latehar is the only other district of Jharkhand where workers have been given unemployment allowance.

This incident, on the one hand, has shown the indomitable spirit of the laborers, but on the other hand, it exposes the flawed governance system in the state, which denies basic rights to the citizen. Even though the state has stepped-in on this matter, yet it took almost one and a half months for the final action. The dreadful situation of the state in preserving the rights of laborers under MGNREGA has manifested in this case.



The Case of Collective Protest in demand of pending Wages triggered by Federation

Mahila Vikaas Mandal Kisko, decided to hold meetings in some of the villages for understanding the current issues in MGNREGA functioning, and were quite astonished by the fact that in almost every village of the block, they found people still reacting very negatively when it comes to working in MGNREGA. They had also sensed that the person-day generation in the schemes is decreasing, and people are continuously getting de-motivated to work under the schemes in MGNREGA.

While on the one hand, quality farm ponds were visible across the block and apparently everything was going fine, this ground situation reflects a different story altogether. When the Federation members further delved into the matter and engaged in a more organized way, shocking revelations were made about MGNREGA wage payments in the region.

Worker's payments have been due in almost every hamlet. From 2013 uptil now, huge payments have been denied to wage seekers and the administration seems to be doing nothing about it. There is no pro-action by the government to ensure payments, and the major focus is on assetization and completion of assets within timeline. Despite the workers' pleas to the Gram Rojgar Sewaks, Panchayat Sewaks, and other block functionaries, no steps have been taken by the administration to ensure payments. There was very little initiative taken to preserve the workers' rights, which is ideally the basic responsibility of the administration under MGNREGA ACT.

These communities often have no other choice apart from working in MGNREGA schemes, but are uncertain if and when the payments will be made. Such a situation also results in the decreasing popularity of the scheme. This can be seen through the fact that the person-day generation of late has taken a huge blow in the block.

With the leadership of the Women's federation, on 10th January, the workers decided to step out

मजदूरी के लिए प्रखंड कार्यालय किस्को को घेरा

बीडीओ, बीपीओ व प्रमुख ने भुगतान का आश्वासन देकर मजदूरों को शांत कराया

भास्कर न्यूज़ किरावा

मनरेगा की योजनाओं में लंबित मजदूरी भुगतान की मांग के लिए मंगलवार को प्रखंड की नौ पंचायत की करीब 300 महिला मजदूरों ने महिला मंडल के नेतृत्व में रैली निकालकर दोपहर एक बजे से दो घंटे तक प्रखंड कार्यालय का घेराव किया। इस दौरान मजदूरों ने प्रखंड प्रशासन के खिलाफ जमकर नारेबाजी करते हुए मजदूरी भुगतान और मुआवजे की मांग की।

बीडीओ सुरेंद्र उरांव, बीपीओ रघुनाथ मुंडा, प्रमुख सरिता देवी व उपप्रमुख अशोक अंबारी ने मजदूरों को समझा-बुझा कर व मजदूरी भुगतान करने का आश्वासन देकर मजदूरों को शांत कराया। घेराव के बाद मजदूरों ने बीडीओ सुरेंद्र उरांव को मजदूरी भुगतान के लिए 1090 मजदूरों की सूची सौंपी। मजदूरों ने बताया



बीडीओ को झुपड़ा सोफ़ते मजदूर।

कि वित्तीय वर्ष 2014-15, 2015-16 व 2016-17 में मनरेगा में काम करने के बाद भी मजदूरी का भुगतान नहीं किया गया है। बीडीओ व बीपीओ ने कहा कि काफी समय पहले की मजदूरी भुगतान की मांग है। मामले की जांच कर मजदूरों की समस्या का समाधान किया जाएगा। मनरेगा के तहत मजदूरों को मजदूरी भुगतान 15 दिनों के अंदर नहीं होने पर मुआवजे देने का प्रावधान है। मजदूरी भुगतान की मांग करने वालों में ललितमा भगत, सुधा कुजूर, शीला उरांव, बसंती उरांव, सुषमा देवी, प्रांति देवी, रेखा उरांव, फुली उरांव, रीमा कुजूर, शीला कुमारी, पिकी कुमारी, सोनामनी उरांव, सुनीता उरांव सहित काफी संख्या में महिला मजदूर शामिल थीं।



of their homes, to demand their wages from the block. A sea of 1090 workers gathered in front of the block office and conducted a block-gherao campaign, in demand of their pending wages. They dissented until the BDO officially received their demands and ensured that affirmative actions would be taken within one month and all pending wages would be paid. Nonetheless, the federation was aware that the struggle won't be easy and such promises can't be believed merely on face value. So they further ensured that a formal letter regarding this is submitted to the MNREGA commissioner and Principal Secretary (RD) of the state.

Relentlessly, the mates had been putting in work to make the people's experience with MGNREGA better. They had regularly been following up and flagging the issues themselves, along with the Sahayata Kendra. After a couple of months' struggle, when nothing was done on the

administration's end, they decided to meet the Principal Secretary(RD) to deliberate on the issue, and speak about their grievances in detail. The intervention of the state ensured some proactive work by the local administration and the BPO soon reported that payments have been made to workers in a couple of Panchayats, and rest are also being addressed.

The story of the mates' struggle in the block and district is an inspirational one. It re-affirms the need for a people's platform in demanding rights, when it is not on offer from the supply side. Constant struggle in organized manner and relentless strategic moves have been the key in Kisko MVM's story of success.

The Impact in Blocks

There has been unprecedented local impact on MGNREGA due to the constant efforts by federations in different blocks. They have worked towards addressing issues of Act violations, preserving workers' rights, and act against corruption in the area. The Basia federation had constantly been writing to the block regarding the payment of the women mates, ensuring worksite facilities which finally got resolved due to such immense pressure from the collective. Various such cases have come up where the federation's efforts have helped people reclaim their rights.

The Raidih federation had taken up cases of four workers whose payments had gone to other people's bank account due to wrong AADHAR seeding. The block had been deferring action and the workers had stopped working in MGNREGA when the federation decided to escalate the issue to the state for redress. The intervention from state has now ensured the block move on this and all the payments were recovered and paid to the correct account numbers.

Similarly, the Sonua federation has been instrumental in writing to the administration regarding the pending wage payments, unavailability of mate kits and worksite facilities, and non-generation of muster roll on time in their region. The block administration has been

made to address such issues and are ensuring the service delivery impeccably. These cases show that the government machinery is equipped to deal with all issues, but it requires constant monitoring and seeking of accountability to make them do so.

The CKP federation had been pro-active in ensuring sanctioning of goat sheds in the season of monsoon. Despite regular communications and correspondences to the block, the block was not sanctioning schemes, thus re-establishing a top down method of working in MNREGA. The federation members along with help from CFT engaged with the Gram Panchayat and wrote to the State regarding the violations of Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayats' legal rights. The block administration was made to sanction Goat sheds and other schemes across panchayats in a span of 3 days.

The Navjyoti Mahila Mahasangh in Sunderpahari have been reporting cases of use of machine in MNREGA schemes to the block, but inaction from the local administration impelled them to take up the matter to the MNREGA commissioner of the state. The intervention by the state has resulted in action against the people responsible and ensured a strict monitoring by the block in this regard. The Sunder pahari SHG federation is actively monitoring too and have been reporting violations regularly to the block. Most cases have now been solved at the local level, without requiring to be escalated to the next level.

The struggle of Anita Devi of Nari shakti Mahila Sangh of Shikaripara block in the Dumka district against the corruption and violation of the Act shows us how an Act empowers even a single person to take on the system on its wrong doings. Her struggles towards establishing NREGA Sahayata Kendra in the block premises, mate kit availability and proper delivery of services have ensured the block to act upon all the issues that were being raised.

The SHG-State Coalition Interface with the State Functionaries

The State-SHG coalition has been making a wonderful effort to establish a regular periodic interface with the top level state functionaries. It meets once in a couple of months and collates all the cross-cutting and specific issues that they come with. They discuss strategies to engage with the state functionaries, and meet the bureaucrats with specific agenda and demands. Demands and grievances are given through written official letters and follows-up with the state via mail too. This has, for the last couple of times done wonders in terms of ensuring grievance redress, delineating strategies etc.

The department for the last couple of occasions, has been issuing letters to the districts and blocks based on complaints and demands raised by the collectives. Majority of the issues are getting redressed in time and the block feel a constant supervision and a sense of being frequently monitored, which is a self sustaining mechanism of the whole CFT idea. The positives of such an interface has made the state issue a letter to the blocks and ordered the block functionaries to have a meeting with SHG federation once in

a month regarding the issues, grievances and demand and supply related discussions.

The representatives from the SHG coalition have been pro-active in convincing the state on NREGA Sahayta Kendras' engagement in the block. They have been promoting the idea of the state having a direct MoU with the Sahayata Kendras in order to create a direct interface, and avoid unnecessary hassles at the block and districts. The state seemed to have bought the idea and are in process to prepare such an arrangement.

It is a significant upward mobility when in a meeting with the state MGNREGA commissioner and BPOs of respective blocks, a federation member is given equal space to deliberate on the strategies. Planning and issues of the block and the collective's feedback are being addressed with utmost sincerity by the state. It signifies a vast change in the discourse of the method of how MGNREGA is run in the state. This might be a step towards making MGNREGA a people's scheme with community based organizations having a greater say in the program implementation.







Annexure-II

SHG Mate-a ray of hope-An article from Basia Block

Introduction

“Kahanchale Taramuni? Moi? Moi to jaat ho napikari la.”

Taramuni was walking through the woods when someone called out to her, and asked her where she was going. She replied that she was going to the field for the dobha measurement. Dobha is a farm pond like structure which acts as a water harvesting tank, and is dug by the workers doing labor work under MGNREGA. Taramuni Kacchap is a member of an SHG based in Lohdih village in Basia block of Gumla district in Jharkhand who also works as a mate under MGNREGA. Taramuni Kacchap, like many other such SHG mates have been hugely influential in improving the implementation of various schemes under MGNREGA. Taramuni had a life that an ordinary tribal woman lives. Her day started with household chores and ended with feeding her family. Taramuni's husband had to migrate to Goa for work and worked in Goa with construction companies as a laborer. Three years back, in 2013, she joined an SHG that was formed by the professionals of PRADAN. She expected to improve her financial situation by being a part of the SHG.

In 2014, the CFT (Cluster Facilitation Team) project came about. The project was meant to improve the implementation of MGNREGA, and required for the mate to be a member of the SHG. This was done so that the mate could be held accountable by the women collectives, and in turn, be accountable to the Gram Sabha where women collectives voiced their issues in unison. Taramuni remembers the one time when she was working as a laborer under MGNREGA, and a thekedar had harassed her on the work site when she had demanded him for her rightful entitlement. She, since the time of the incident had wanted to teach that thekedar a lesson. Taramuni saw this as an opportunity not just for employment, but also for the development of her village, by eradicating thekedari system in the implementation of schemes under MGNREGA. Therefore, given this context, Taramuni stood for the mate selection process in Gram Sabha. She was widely supported by the women collectives of the village and Taramuni, along with 5 other SHG women, became mates. After she became a mate, a job card renewal drive was started whereby job cards of MGNREGA workers were renewed. Earlier, thekedars used to keep all the cards and pass book of workers with themselves.



Job cards in the hand of worker

To kick-start the process, a large-scale awareness drive was taken out in the village with the help of CFT staff and mates. This work gave Taramuni an opportunity to venture out of the village for training, and other project related activities. Taramuni was starting to be recognized by the people of her village by this time. Everyone understood that she was working for the welfare of the workers. She became the “go to” person for the workers of the village as and when they had any queries regarding MGNREGA. The same thekedar who had once insulted her was now out of work, because the workers were now demanding work from the Panchayat rather going to the thekedar. As a result of this, the workers procured their rightful entitlements under the various schemes and assets were created with relative ease and transparency. The SHGs also helped the mates as and when required, be it with field measurement or mobilization of workers. SHGs also kept a close look at the way the mate was working and made her accountable to the collective as well as the village. In 2015, a group of bureaucrats from 14 different states visited Lohdih. They had come to see and learn from the work that had happened under this project. Additionally, they were to assess the quality of assets that were created in the process. Taramuni interacted with these bureaucrats personally, shedding aside her inhibitions and later, also featured in an interview conducted by the Times of India. The project has changed the life of Taramuni almost irreversibly and in turn changed the life of a number of workers under MGNREGA in her village.

For implementing MGNREGA, the mate plays an important role in carrying out the process. They help smoothen the process by gathering labour into groups, laying out the work site, filling

the muster roll and job card at work place etc. The CFT staff has provided constant support to the mates, both, with training, and with advice regarding the processes and steps that need to be taken in reporting anomalies and discrepancies. For instance, recently a mate from Turbunga panchayat had written to the BDO regarding inadequate worksite facilities.

Since its inception, the trend in MGNREGA had been such that usually the selected mate was either a powerful person, or someone close to PRI representatives or block officials. Moreover, most of them were male members. Earlier the muster roll was filled by the mate who was selected either by the Rojgar Sewak, or was the mukhiya’s relative, at their respective house. Misusing the position, they would keep the job card and bank account details of laborers with themselves and use it for their own gain. The attendance roll generated by the middleman did not show the same number of person days as the time spent by workers on the field. Neither could the workers tell as to how many days they had worked on the site. Workers didn’t know whether their names appeared in the muster roll. No supervision was done by the contractor. Due to this, MGNREGA ended up becoming a few people’s program instead of a people’s program, with little accountability to the Gram Sabha or villagers. Since the involvement of the SHG mates, the job cards are in the hands of the workers themselves, and are filled on-site by the SHG mate. The deputation of trained SHG mates by Gram Sabha has led to the muster roll being timely filled on the work site, thus bringing people a step closer to their rightful entitlements.

After the intervention of CFT, the idea was to select SHG members as mates, because these

mates were supposed to be accountable to the SHG and the federation. The selection process had to be carried out through the Gram Sabha where the SHGs would participate in the selection process so that the powerful people, who were earlier working as mates, would be replaced by common people of the village. However, this idea was not readily accepted by the block officials and PRI members, the reason being that the contractors and middlemen were very active, and had a great deal of influence on the entire system. They understood that the selection of SHG mates would lead to disempowering them. So they resisted the process and started questioning the women's ability to do this job. As per them, women were only good at managing their homes but not MGNREGA. They questioned how women would be able to form labor groups and deal with the Rojgar Sewak. Further, the block wouldn't allow them to do any work, their small children would limit their mobility, and they would be unable to deal with the Naxal issues. In essence, they were raising questions on the capacity and capability of a woman. In most of the villages these middlemen boycotted the Gram Sabha process and started threatening the SHGs.

After this initial resistance, all the SHG members discussed the issue in their respective village organizations and decided to continue their

fight through their combined support. They started rallying to create pressure on the Block officials and Gram Sabha, to initiate the process of selection of SHG mates. CFT also raised this issue in the Rural Development Department in Jharkhand, which resulted in the MGNREGA commissioner issuing a circular directing the selection SHG members as MGNREGA mates. Initially, the circular was issued only for the CFT panchayats but later on it was issued for all the Panchayats of the block.

After the selection of mates, a two-day training session was organized for them. The training module encapsulated NREGA as an act, and went over the guidelines that lay within its ambit. Subsequently, their roles and responsibilities were also taught to them. They were also trained on natural resource management which included layout planning, importance of water harvesting tank (dobha), shed model for livestock, land levelling, plantation etc. This was a great learning experience since the mates did not have such grounding and access to information previously.

The selection of mates from SHGs and their subsequent work helped bring down corruption in a big way. We recall an incident from 2015,



Layout and measurement training of SHG Mate



where a 'training of trainers' program was being held in the village Tangarjariya. Mates were being given information and training on how to prepare the layout for dobhas. A man on a motorcycle was passing by the site who on seeing that something is going on, suddenly stopped. He stood and observed for a while and then suddenly spoke out of turn, "Ee mahila-mandal walan mate sabse kucchoni howeke paari". He meant that these SHG mates are going to be good for nothing. Mate didi replied, "Jawa dada, jawa apan kaam kara, mahila mandal ke shakti tohre ni janba". She meant to say that the person should go do his own work since he doesn't understand the strength and resolve of an SHG. After asking the people around, we got to know that he was a thekedar who had also protested against the selection of SHG mates. However, the same thekedar continued to harass the newly selected mates by threatening them and calling them names. In spite of these threats, SHG mates continued to show courage and continued working for the welfare of their communities. There are numerous such examples where mates have gone against the tide and carried on with their jobs. As the thekedars were an important link in the corruption chain which included the Mukhiya, Rojgar Sevak, Junior Engineer and even the BDO in some cases, getting rid of them disrupted the entire chain. This was immense, in the sense that, it really helped bring down thekedari and corruption, not just at the grassroots, but also at the level of block administration.

Earlier, the Rojgar Sevak or the Junior Engineer never used to go the field. Mates raised the issue in their respective SHGs, which was then taken up in the village organization. VOs then filed a complaint to the block. To add to that, if the mate showed any lacunae in her functioning and work, VOs had the authority to release them from the job by holding a Gram Sabha meeting. This resulted in forming an environment where the mates became more accountable, and the monitoring system became more rigorous and authentic. For instance, SHG members in Lohdih reviewed the mate's work as part of the nigrani samiti that was formed through the gram sabha.



SHG members also helped the newly selected mates in mobilizing workers, and regularly visited the work site to assess mate's work. In Sonmer, the SHG members found out that the mate didi had gotten involved with the thekedars. When this issue was taken up in the VO, it was decided that a Gram Sabha would be called and that a new mate would be selected. Eventually, that is what happened. In another instance, a mate had illegally withdrawn money from a worker's account. When the CFT team learnt about this, they decided to talk to the VO and the PRI representatives. After a long deliberation, the VO decided that this particular mate would be removed from the post and that a new one would be selected in the Gram Sabha.

Earlier, the Rojgar Sevak would go straight to the thekedar after he got the muster roll. He used to fill fake attendance entries and they would split the profits they made. Soon after the selection of mates, Rojgar Sevaks tried fooling the mates by lying that the muster roll hadn't been uploaded on the system, or that it had not been released, whenever they asked for it. However, after training, the mates understood the process and started demanding the muster roll with a greater vigor. Henceforth, Rojgar Sevaks became more accountable and had to now regularly bring the muster roll to the mate. Therefore, the proper muster rolls started reaching the work sites.

In an incident in the village Lohdih, when the mate asked a worker for his job card, he replied,



“didi job card mor thinna kheouta Sunil thin aahe, ohe sab kagaj pattar ke kaamkari la moke ta sirf kaamkari laabe”. He meant that his job card was with a person named Sunil, who takes care of all the paper work whereas he just does the work. The mate explained to the worker that keeping the job card with himself was his right, and that he could only work on the site if he had his job card. As a result of such experiences, the workers started to understand the function and significance of a muster roll and a job card. This also helped the workers in enhancing and bringing back a sense of faith in the system. Since issues related to MGNREGA were constantly raised at the VO level by the mates and other members, it helped spread awareness about the scheme, and the rights that it gave to a common worker.

Earlier, thekedars used to employ the laborers they knew, and often, other eligible workers in the village did not get any work. With the creation of SHG mates, this changed and the transparency in the process increased. It was also clearly explained to the people that MGNREGA work was supposed to be given to every last person in the village. Therefore, the number of workers also increased, resulting in a sharp rise in the number of person-days.

MGNREGA experience for the villagers had drastically changed for the people by now. The same mates who were once questioned over their capabilities and capacity to work, were now

viewed as courageous and bold villagers. This brought them a lot of respect and dignity as they were bringing in employment, helping in creating assets, and in turn, changing the landscape of their village.

There have been numerous impacts of the focus on SHGs with regard to MGNREGA. The inception of SHG mates has brought down corruption in a big way as the accountability of mates has increased. Monitoring systems have become more rigorous due to the involvement of women collectives. Alongside, the Thekedari system has been reduced to a minimum, and transparency in muster rolls and job card filling has increased. MGNREGA related awareness initiatives by the mates have boosted job demands and the workers have found a new faith in the system. They now feel secure about getting the right wage for their work, unlike earlier, where the payment was often delayed, incomplete, and contingent on the whims of the thekedaars. In the process, asset creation has also increased with the increase in person days in MGNREGA in the last few years. Didis have also gotten respect and dignity that they so deserved through this program.

Given the impact of the intervention, it is clear that women collectives have played the most important role in spreading awareness, and in bringing out a sense of citizenship and ownership among the workers. SHG mates, who used to be scared of the thekedars, PRI members, Block

Officials etc. have now become fearless. Clearly, this has happened because of the strength that collectives have been able to exercise and the way they have rallied behind SHG mates in times of need. However, this fearlessness can also be viewed from two different perspectives. On the brighter side, fearlessness can allow these mates to work honestly and in tune with the values carried by the collectives. But fearlessness can also be a precursor to dishonesty and corrupt practices, and a situation can definitely

arise where these mates themselves turn into thekedars. Consequently, this would turn the biggest strength of the people into a weakness. Therefore, collectives must remain the most important cog in the wheel of this initiative and commit themselves to constant monitoring, and unbiased involvement. The sustainability of this initiative should be ensured by keeping strong these fiduciary ties and ownership, without allowing for exploitative elements to take root.





Annexure-III

Beneficiary to Citizen... A journey unfolding (A story of Peterbar Block)

A story of collective struggle and public action

"Nai dada sarkar hamni khatir nai banal ho, hamni ke kucho yojna nai milto, sab kuch to bada logak khatir banal ho"- Dukhni Didi, Laxmi Mahila Mandal.

In a discussion in Chatugadda village, Devki Didi had this to say about MGNREGA-

"Narega to chalta hai, par paisa nahi milta hai. Job cards to Iswar dada (mate)ke pas hai. Hum log to unpadh hain is liye wohi samhalta hai aur dada log hi gram sabha me jate hai, hum jake kya karenge?"

"Nrega Karega to jarur marega" was the common saying of people of Peterbar.

As time changed and the CFT project was introduced in the block, the scenario gradually changed. The community of Peterbar decided to battle for their rights, and managed to get their dues from the administration. This created a positive spiral in the block regarding MGNREGA implementation. They raised their voice in an organized way and found their path of success. The community has been able to access their right by fighting with the contractors, linking with PRI Members, and questioning Block officials. The journey was not a smooth one at all and seemed like a roller coaster ride. SHGs helped each other through their network and collectives jointly claimed their entitlement in MGNREGA by making people aware about the different provisions of the Act. The women led collectives engaged in enabling mode with the community, and helped them prepare their village plan, demand for work, and raise voice against corruption. Gradually, all of these became common practices in the community and created enhanced ownership of the community in the MGNREGA implementation. For example- The people of Ordana and Arjua Panchayats came out of their houses and placed a Dharna in Peterbar Block office for sanctioning the MGNREGA works. The community understood that they are not only beneficiaries of government schemes, but they are citizens who are entitled to these basic rights.

Talent is not latent

Just as talent is not latent, in a similar way capabilities are also not hidden. The collectives of Petarbar re-established this common saying once more when they engaged in the CFT program for ensuring smooth and transparent implementation of MNREGA. Today most of the SHG members have an urge to do something more for each other and for the village, but this motivation did not come in a single day. It is the collective effort of the women's collectives for generating awareness and motivation among the community, which brought about this rigor in the people and triggered a gradual change in the mindset of the local denizens.

The first level of awareness started with training in villages. Most people were not interested in it and a number of them did not take part in it initially. Lila didi of Ordana said, *"Training se hume kya fayda hai, log training dene aate hai or paisa loot ke chale jate hai, hum log to garib hain, kuch kar bhi nhi pate"*. It was then felt that interactive sessions and problem-solving through focus group discussions were the only ways to address such mindsets, which had been established due to poor functioning of the scheme over the years.

The process was initiated I community listing out problems persisting in the village, and then exploring ways to deal with the current situation. This helped people link their need with the program, and relate with it more. Some of the main issues in the village- as identified by the people, were related to water-scarcity and irrigation. Being farmers, they were unable to cultivate throughout the year due to scarcity of water. Additionally, issues of low income, migration, improper access to government schemes etc. were also tangible. In order to alleviate these, the CFT team engaged the community in the envisioning process for how to resolve their problems themselves. The community was engaged in root cause identification of the issues, and in discussions on how to break the nexus of corruption through collectives. In a number of trainings, the villagers said, *"Hum aage to badhna chahte hain, lekin hum to anpadh hai, humein to kissi cheez ki*



jaankari nahi hoti". Hence clearly, awareness and information gaps about procedures were absent among the citizens.

The need to make the community capable through knowledge building and hand holding support was identified in order to establish processes. It was understood that only collective effort can resolve the persistent issues. The MGNREGA Act itself has enough provisions which if actively recognized and followed by collectives could act as checks and balances to current problems. The dominant situation with the state and the administration's monopoly in MGNREGA can only change when demand-based functioning is established through collective actions.

Different modes of awareness like video shows, songs, rally, and training were followed to make the community aware about the program. The people realized their own capability to bring about change and fight for their rights. The collectives also understood that they had a complex job in hand and that they would have to fight with powerful systems and people. A single SHG group or a single village could not bring about this change; every SHG member and labourer will have to come together for it to be impactful. Hence the SHG groups, Vos, and Federation governing body members, through their network, started functioning together to organize a collective struggle and action, for ensuring smooth functioning of the program.



The community, especially SHG members, were charged up and motivated through concept sessions where they would visualize the ideal state of their region once the proper processes are established in running the schemes. They were now able to understand the value of a job card which they had earlier deposited in the hands of the mates who misused it. The collectives initiated this process with small steps- like demanding for job cards collectively from the people the cards were deposited with. These people, who liked to call themselves the well-wishers of the community, were now adversely affected by the community's unity. This caused disturbance and panic in them and they started demoralizing the community. But unity has strength, and since the collective won its first small battle to bring a big change, their confidence was touching the sky. This was the ice breaker, and the collective now started believing that they have the capability to bring change with some proper guidance and timely hand holding.

During Oct –Nov 2014, the participatory planning exercise was to be done in the villages. For this, revenue maps were arranged by the community and they themselves made different maps, e.g.- resource map, drainage line map, social map etc. According to the villagers, especially the didis, they saw their village map for the first time. Planning was done by a transect walk and all the villagers participated in it with enthusiasm. All

types of plans were taken this time – plantation in uplands, water conservation structures, land leveling, field bund, sheds, etc. Before this, didis used to say that NAREGA me to *kuwa, talab aur raasta milta hai*. Just after planning, a hamlet level consolidation took place and then Gram Sabha was organized in the month of December. Participation was also quite high in the Gram Sabha, and now the Gram Sabha really became about the Gram. All male and female members were present, and in fact, females were more in number. Prior to this, only a few members used to come with almost no women present; nobody was informed in the village and big plans were made by the strongmen.

Things changed a little this time in the Gram Sabha, and SHG didis were selected as mates. Most importantly, their selection was done by the people in the Gram Sabha. This was frightening for the nexus web formed by thekedars, power mongers, and strongmen in the village. After the Gram Sabha meeting, the plans were submitted in the block, and they waited for almost 6 months for the plans to get sanctioned by the block and district. Then the women collectives sat on adharna in block for the timely sanctioning of the plan. This was the first time that the community reached out to the block office for their rights. The block officials were aware that this was not just the voice of 2 or 3 villagers but over 5000 people from the federation. Pressurized by the community, the block administration took only a week and the plans were sanctioned. It gave more strength and confidence to community, and the didis started to reach to the block for their right and for any information, regularly. By this time, a relation between villagers and block officials had been established. Regular interaction between villagers and Block officials, PRI members started taking place and the community started to understand the role of everyone. The distance between the bureaucracy and the people was thus minimized, and may help create a more transparent system of welfare.

Initially, it was a challenge to start the MGNREGA work because some villagers were against the initiatives. They began threatening and abusing

the SHG MGNREGA Mates during meetings. During this phase, a few SHG members got bogged down by the pressure and took a back seat. Similarly, the block was also not supportive of the female collectives since they were constantly questioning the administration on supply side issues. But their struggle continued and after coming across major obstacles, work was initiated in mid of January'16. The workers received payment within 10 days. In villages Chatugadda and Merudaru, even after demanding work, people were not ready to work. But when they started working and received the payment promptly within 10 days, their energy boosted up and now, many people wanted to work. It was the remarkable mobilization work done by the SHG didis and support from Dadas that made this shift possible. The journey had started, the journey from being a beneficiary to the citizenship.

During the Yojana Banao Abhiyan, the federation of Peterbar took active part. The whole YBA journey had started with the positive experiences of planning- starting from awareness in all the SHGs, hamlet/village level rallies, video shows etc. Every person took active part in YBA, and also supported the PPT (Panchayat Planning Team) members. During YBA, a rozgar sewak said, "Hum log ko to sab log chor samjhate hai, lekin ab hamare paas mauka hai, apna izzat wapas pane ka". This statement was due to the love, respect, and confidence shown by the villagers for the Rozgar Sewak. It was also the time of self-realization of GRS, Ward member, Mukhiya, and BPO&BDO, too.

People's plan: hamari yojna hamara vikas.

During the process, it was seen that large numbers of job cards were not made, and women members had no bank accounts in their names, despite massive campaigns of Jan Dhan Yojana by the Govt. of India. Thus, issues were shared at different forums, including banks, and it was concluded that camps should be held for opening accounts. These camps were subsequently organized with support from the Block Office and banks across all panchayat, and approximately 2000 bank accounts were opened. This helped

the women receive their payments in their own account, instead of being reliant on the male members. This was a victory of sorts for the women. They could now plan to spend their money as per their wishes. Earlier, doing so was a challenge for them as most of the male folk were not supportive and demoralized their financial independence.

Additional Initiatives

Weekly I Divas were also organized in the Panchayat Bhawan which led to a huge surge in work-demand applications. At these gatherings, numerous demands for new job cards were made, and the women received platform to talk about other entitlement based schemes such as ration cards, Indira Awas, old age pension etc.

In the village Obra, 10 dobhas were created and most members from 10 out of 11 SHGs (barring older women) came forward to work on the dobhas. They all earned around Rs. 2000 per member and for the first time, they celebrated the festival of Teej together in a grand manner. The expenses were borne by them. This type of change occurred across 12 panchayats, though the intensity vary. This provided the women an opportunity to be a part of the development of both their village, as well as, individual economic prosperity.

The mates were selected on the basis of their talent and interest in and by the Gram Sabha and are working for the people now. This has challenged the MGNREGA functionaries and men who were exploitative of women. Every structure made by laborers in the CFT villages is a reminder of the spirit hidden in SHG collectives.

For the first time, all the works were initiated and completed by SHG members with a sense of ownership. Around 1136 laborers worked in schemes planned and received a total amount of Rs. 36.38 lakh in their respective accounts. Of the 900 dobhas sanctioned, 250 were started, and 165 were completed. For once, this was not the effect of any project or organization, but happened due to the self-realization, self-confidence, and awareness of the community,

with a little guidance from the CFT team. Their unity increased the confidence levels of the people, and of the federation of Peterbar “Bharti Mahila Sangh”.

The SHG members and the village organization saw it as a great success, so in the federation meeting, they decided to celebrate it with the different stakeholders at Panchayat levels. This was so they could be further motivated to continue this work. All the stake holders, like PRI, I Sewak, Banks, Block level office etc. were recognized and a one day event was organized to thank them and ask them for continued support. Now that the SHG women understand their rights and have started raising voices, continuous training and capacity building will not only help them to recognize their strength, but also help them to come out of poverty and claim their identity.

Conclusion

A single person cannot make a big change. A collective voice makes a bigger voice, which is capable of changing the whole system, through fighting and struggling with them. Mere investment in a project or scheme is not sufficient, it is also important to think about collectives seriously and invest on them. Collective approach towards problems can change the mindset of community. After a long struggle, the collective has now started believing that they have the capability, but they just require proper guidance and timely hand holding. Community has now started frequenting the block office for their rights and have started to understand the role of everyone i.e PRI Members, Block administration and also their own, and additionally forcing them to work according to their role. Dadas have now begun to trust Didis and have realized that they are not mere beneficiaries. This is the time of self-realization for GRS, Ward members, Mukhiya, BPO & BDO too, due to the citizenship approach of the community, and the direct involvement of the federation.







Annexure-IV

Visible change in the process of MGNREGA through Awareness and Community Mobilization

The Khunti Experience

Introduction

A decade after coming into force, MGNREGA has suffered from a decline in employment, budget caps, delays in wage payment, and rampant violations of workers' entitlements. However, some initiatives taken by the state government and civil society in the recent past have opened up new possibilities for improving the situation, and the scenario has changed because of the effort of PRADAN, CFT, SHG, and the community. There is a famous saying that goes, "Rome was not built in a day", as is the current condition seen in khunti block. It took almost two years for the metamorphosis to happen and this took place only because of community mobilization and active participation by SHG members, in the struggle of establishing key processes in MNREGA implementation in the block. This experience also re-established the core belief that when the community takes charge, visible changes take place.

The Genesis

Initially in the year 2014, when the CFT project started in three panchayats of Khunti block namely Darigutu, Tilma, and Bhandra panchayat, the responses from the community were not very encouraging and workers seemed livid with the supply mechanisms of the schemes. They did not want to take part in the concept meetings, since MGNREGA for them had become useless. They felt that MGNREGA gave them only hassles and pain. The condition was alarming as MNREGA was dying a slow death, and people had already concluded the fate of it by the famous saying that "NREGA Karega to Marega". They were of the opinion that the schemes under MNREGA were only benefitting the administration and the extension workers were illegally exploiting the workers, resulting in huge leakages in the system. The team was hassled since they could not find ways to move forward.



The team had decided that it would conduct an initial orientation with the women collectives and see if this agenda appeals to them, and we soon started orientation with the SHGs and VOs. PRADAN's reputation helped in orienting them about CFT MGNREGA Project. Many issues and concerns emerged while discussion. The community finally showed interest after the self help groups took initiative in orienting people about the issues. Not everyone was happy to see the progress as there were people who derived their livelihood by acting as agents and thekedars. These middlemen opposed this project, created hassles, and even tried to mislead the community.

As discussions started and people gradually started participating in the events, intricate details and facts came up to reveal the shocking condition of the administration. None of the villagers had ever seen their Rozgar Sevak and didn't know who they were and what they were designated to do. Most of the villagers' job cards were not with them and instead were with some other person who technically and lawfully had no business with those cards.

To begin with, the self help groups used this issue as a weapon and the villagers were made aware of their exploitation. They were told about the value of their job card, and the fact that a handful of people are misusing the document, and denying people their rightful entitlements. This realization was the first victory, and when the people snatched their cards back from the middle men and thekedars, it was their first collective struggle. This resulted in most job cards being returned to the respective families, who still had a long way to go in their fight.

The next step was planning about the schemes. Villagers did not know how schemes were planned and sanctioned. Over the years, the right of the members of the Gram Sabha to plan their own activities has been violated. People have become mere takers of what is given to them by the choice of the administration. Owing to their financial and social clout, the thekedars would decide what schemes to get sanctioned and planned, and the people believed that it would continue this way. This dependency was not created in a day, it was gradually injected into the system so that the bureaucrat-thekedaar nexus



could have a greater say in the planning and implementation of the schemes, thus catering to their vested interests.

The people were told about the ideal processes of participatory planning and how these schemes are ideally to be sanctioned. They were made aware that the Gram Panchayats play a major role in the planning and sanctioning process. Decentralization is often hard to understand in the rural micro environment, since over the years, no processes have been established, and no steps have been taken to make people aware of their rights and establish the decentralized process of governance. Jharkhand with its nascent and immature Panchayats has been more vulnerable in this regard.

Timely and fair payment was a prominent issue in all the villages. Another major issue was about work demand. Villagers said that since they don't get work in MGNREGA, so they have to go to town for work. Upon asking for work, the Block officials would dismiss them by saying that there was no scheme running, and that they would get work once these schemes came about. The awareness drive repeatedly

informed the people that work was their basic right which cannot be denied; additionally, the block administrations must allot work within 15 days from the generation of work demand, as per the convenience of the workers. Through rigorous grass root processes, awareness drives were conducted in the villages. The drive focused on making people aware of their rights under the Act, work demand processes, due recourse in case of violation of processes, and the corrective rights of the workers.

In one instance, Ramlal Munda of Barbanda village of Bhandra Panchayat released his frustration with MGNREGA on PRADAN practitioners. The workers had not received their payment in 2 years, and so, he along with other villagers didn't want to work under MGNREGA schemes. Similar situations occurred in most of the villages during the concept sharing and orientation meeting. Since people were very cynical about the payment system under MGNREGA, the work had been adversely affected. When met with anger, the PRADAN team needed to show maturity and was required to handle such issues with great caution. Ramlal was asked few questions like, 'what is the proof that you have worked, do you have a job card, did you apply for work' etc. Most of the people, including Ramlal, had no proof that they had worked. Ramlal did not even have a job card, nor had he applied for work. Our formula was to make him and the others realize, that it was because of this lack of knowledge and awareness on MGNREGA that the people were cheated. The lack of proper information, paperwork, and proof was a major cause for why he did not receive his payment, and now, he had no chance of getting his money. When informed of this, Ramlal was silent for few minutes, his face got pale and his lips shivered, as if he was feeling very cold. He then uttered a few words in Mundari which we did not understand. Later, we found out through Ladulal, one of our CSPs, as to what Ramlal had said. He had said, "We are illiterate and we did not know about NREGA. The only thing I knew was that we get work in NREGA for hundred days and are paid on daily basis." That day, Ramlal realized the importance of awareness towards MGNREGA and his rights.

He now works as a MGNREGA resource person in the CFT project, and spreads awareness about MGNREGA so that people are not cheated again. The team also realized the importance of awareness and knowledge in a person's life.

The First Step

After all this, the villagers were very excited but they requested PRADAN to be by their side. On this positive note, the SHG members started discussing MGNREGA within their group and fixed the date for INRM based planning for the village. The five day planning process started in ten villages of three Panchayats. Initially the planning process started in four villages of Darigutu Panchayat, Darigutu, Dulli, Habuidih and Garamara. The villagers participated with great interest and enthusiasm. The villagers requested their mukhiya, Lalita Devi, to participate in the planning process, but she did not show any interest and refused to come. The villagers reminded her of the role and responsibility of a Mukhiya and repeatedly told Lalita Devi that she had been elected by the villagers. This was the first result of community mobilization.

On the first day of the planning, the villagers were told about MGNREGA, the concept of CFT, and they were oriented on the key concepts of INRM based planning. On the second day, the villagers prepared a social map of their village and held discussions. On the third day, they prepared a resource map and a problem map of the village. The latter was in reference to the resource map and the corresponding issues were discussed. On the fourth day, the villagers did a transect walk, visited all the problematic patches, and discussed the suitable solution for treatment of these patches. On the fifth day, the villagers prepared the final plan and lay down their priorities of the schemes. After the plan was completed, the documents were signed by the Mukhiya. The villagers went to the block along with her for submitting their plan and duly asked for a receipt. The BDO, however, seemed to be unaware of his duties and questioned the need for a receiving copy. The community told him of the rules under the scheme, and reminded him of his duties. Eventually, the villagers were issued

a receiving copy of the plan. This was the first occasion when such accountability was sought, and the proper governance was demanded from the administration.

The community, led by the women collectives, were regular in following up the sanctioning of their plan. It was nearly February end and yet, the plans had not been sanctioned. People from different villages went to the block and questioned the BDO on the delay in sanctioning process. The BDO said that he had forwarded the schemes to the district long back, and that the delay was at the district's end. The villagers went to the D.C to enquire about the same. The D.C said that he had no idea about this and asked the DDC for updates. As per the DDC, the delay was because the district did not have enough budget, and the budget of the plan submitted was exceeding the district budget. Hence, it would have to be sent back to the block for shortening the plan. The villagers went back to the block and discussed this with the BDO. With constant follow-up and struggle of the people, finally the schemes got sanctioned. The process of seeking accountability from the administration was demonstrated successfully through the community collectively raising their voices to demand their rights. Investing in collectives and mobilization of the community brought about this positive change which led to a democratic struggle for state-citizen accountability. The core idea of decentralization was yet to be established, but the centralization and power dynamics in the rural governance structure had already been questioned and shaken, through this struggle.



Second Step

The SHG members organized an awareness campaign for their village and during this campaign invited their PRI representatives, BDO, BPO, R.S, P.S and A.E . In this campaign, the SHG members held a rally and raised slogans on MGNREGA rights for the people. The villagers presented a skit on problems with MGNREGA, and also questioned the BDO on various issues. The BDO got angry and said, "You all only show the problems, but what about the solution." At this point, one SHG member replied that "Sir we have presented whatever happens in MGNREGA, now you tell us about the solution." The BDO kept silent for some time and then replied that he did not know these things had been happening. He asked the villagers to directly report such issues. Since the cards of the people were also with the Rozgar Sewak/thekeedaars, they demanded for those to be returned. The energy among the people could be seen and the BDO had to answer their questions. On the same day, the BDO instructed the Rozgar Sewak to return the job cards within a specific deadline. The confidence of the villagers could be seen as they claimed their rights from the state. This was all because of the mobilization and collective action, along with proper hand holding support.

Role of SHG Mate

The selection of SHG mates was a revolutionary step in breaking the nexus of thekedars and agents. When the SHG mates were selected through the Gram Sabha, some people in the village were not happy and said that women are meant for household work. The SHG members called them on their discriminatory understanding, and gave them examples of the work they do outside homes. They maintain the cash book of their SHGs, and maintained all the accounts of the work under the SGSY project. The people who were against the SHG Mates were quietened and the SHG mates were selected through a participatory process in the Gram Sabha. After the selection of the Mates, these people continued trying to de-motivate them by passing comments and making rude



statements. It was initially a great struggle for the women mates to ignore such comments, and avert such a negative environment in their hamlets, in their society. The role of mate like many other societal myths was seen as a man's job and small mistakes could completely go against them and even could create issues in their societal existence. The women showed great maturity and rock-solid temperament to deal with the nuisance created to hassle them. When the work started, the mates went for the layout. Those people followed the mates waiting to intimidate them by catching small mistakes, but the SHG mates did not give them any chance, as they were diligent and transparent in their work through out.

Threats were issued frequently and issues were often created since those with vested interests in the failure of MGNREGA feared that their role in the process would end. As the women mates continued performing their duties flawlessly, they proved the thekedars wrong time and time again. The SHG mates had exposed the earlier mate-munshi system which exploited the workers and created huge leakages in the system, but there were a few women who were coerced into discontinuing their work. Nonetheless, on seeing the other women continue their hard work, they were motivated again.

On one occasion, the payment was delayed and this created a havoc among the mates. But they said that the work which they did was for the community so they would work even if no payment came along. In fact, some of the mates have not yet received their full dues but continue to work tirelessly. The SHG mates did not only do their duties, but also helped the workers in filling their work demand, applying for job card, and follow up of their payment.

These were the activities and process followed during the initial days of CFT and when I look now, the picture is somehow different. Now, the villagers apply for work whenever they require and they ensure that they get a receiving. They took back their job cards from the people they had given them to, be it the Rozgar Sevak, Panchayat Sevak, or thekadar/contractor. Now, they participate in the planning process and

question their ward members on various issues. Rozgar Sevak and Panchayat Sevak regularly visit the villages and villagers recognize them now. Villagers frequently visit the block office for updates about their payment, and if needed also go to the D.C.

It has been observed that since the CFT-MGNREGA Project, the manner of working of the MGNREGA worker has changed. Earlier, they used to take their work very lightly and took their own sweet time finishing it, but nowadays they have gained some seriousness. Earlier, the middlemen used to harass villagers by asking them for additional documents, but nowadays, the villagers know what documents are required and the harassment level has come down.

Villagers often follow up about their applications with the block. This change has been major since they totally depended on agents and thekaders/contractor earlier. During these past two years, the chain of thekaders/contractor has been weakened. Even though their nexus has not been totally broken, but the dependency level on them has come down. Earlier, people were asked for money by the agents for sanctioning work, making MB, and by the operators for various MIS related information. The scenario is now different such that the villagers question them openly, and deny to give money.

Conclusion

The metamorphosis of community has been initiated- from a beneficiary of the state to an aware citizen. The situation has changed considerably only because of the community, who were mobilized around their rights and entitlement on MGNREGA. The movement should continue to move further ahead in the coming days and the processes need to be strengthened, established, and continued. There are still miles to go before we see MGNREGA as a programme fully owned by people.

"Success is not measured by what you accomplish, but by the opposition you have encountered, and the courage with which you have maintained the struggle against overwhelming odds."

Orison Swett Marden



Annexure-V MGNREGA- enhancing rural livelihoods and empowering women

Cases from Basia

“Joharkari la”, the sound of 40 women all dressed uniformly in pink sarees echoed in unison. They were performing their traditional tribal dance, as they welcomed the entourage of senior bureaucrats to their village. As part of an official one-day visit, bureaucrats from 14 different states were visiting Lohdih village in Basia block in Jharkhand. They had come to see and learn from the experiences of women collectives and to understand their role in helping implement MGNREGA in a transparent and effective manner. They were also to see how MGNREGA is changing the landscape and economy of the village, by empowering women and enhancing livelihood opportunities for the marginalised and underprivileged.

The CFT project came to Basia in 2014. It was meant to improve the systems and processes in place for the implementation of MGNREGA. MGNREGA at that time was crippled by corruption, and workers did not have any faith in the system. The Thekedari system was rampant; as a result of which workers could not get their rightful entitlements as enshrined in the act. Participation of women in the workforce was very less since thekedars preferred men over women while delineating work. However, with the coming of this project, participation of women in the workforce has increased many fold.

Yojana Banao Abhiyan was launched in 2014. The aim of the campaign was to enable villages to conduct Gram Sabhas where the villagers would give their names and the schemes they needed to be implemented under MGNREGA. Earlier, schemes to be implemented under MGNREGA were not selected in the Gram Sabha. Therefore marginalised sections never got their schemes passed. However, this has changed drastically in the last 2 years. Currently, various schemes are being passed under MGNREGA which are aimed at enhancing the livelihoods of villagers. For e.g. water harvesting tank, goat shed, pig shed, cow shed, mango plantation, land levelling etc.



Taramuni Kacchap is a member of an SHG promoted by PRADAN in Lohdih village. Taramuni didi says that before joining the SHG, she used to be busy doing the household chores and helping out her husband in the farm. Her entire day used to be consumed doing this. Then one day a professional from PRADAN visited the village and suggested Taramuni didi to join the SHG. After great deliberation she decided to join the SHG. SHGs of Lohdih became a major point of discussion in the village. In 2014, Lohdih was selected as one of the villages from where CFT project was to be piloted. This greatly inspired Taramuni didi. She understood that along with agriculture, MGNREGA would bring prosperity in her life as well as in the life of other villagers by creating livelihood opportunities within the village. During Yojana Banao Abhiyan, Taramuni didi actively took part in patch selection and planning, by going around the village. Once the planning and patch selection got over, a Gram Sabha was called which was attended by all the villagers, the Gram Rojgar Sevak, Mukhiya, ward members and Panchayat Sevak. Through a systematic process, schemes were selected in the Gram Sabha and it was ensured that the schemes go to the most needy and marginalised. However, a question still remained as to who would take the responsibility of implementing the schemes on the field level. A Mate was to be selected who would be responsible for this, and also had to be a member of the SHG. After deliberating on the selection of mate, it was decided unanimously, with Taramuni didi's consent that she would be one of the mates of the village. This was a new responsibility for Taramuni didi who understood that it was a big task which she would take up for the betterment of her life, as well as, for the village at large.

Didi's husband used to migrate for work and she was alone during this time. She was scared about how she would manage the work. What if she committed errors? However, she went for training and gained confidence with time. At that

time, 11 dobhas were passed, of which she also had one. Didi could now do farming in the patch where she had a dobha. She planted 4 kgs of hybrid paddy in 2 acres, and harvested close to 1.8 tonnes of paddy. Earlier, didi couldn't even grow enough paddy for her family's consumption but now, not only did she have food sufficiency, but she could also earn by selling the produce. Didi sold about 8 quintals that brought her an additional income of Rs.9600. Earlier her husband used to migrate to Goa but now, he also started working under MGNREGA. He had found work in the village itself which assured both income and employment. Taramuni didi's life had changed drastically. She was now engaging confidently with the panchayat and block administration bureaucrats. In addition to that, she got a lot of respect and admiration from the villagers.

Similarly, Rameshwari didi planted pumpkin around the dobha. She sold approximately 180 pumpkins in the local market at the rate of Rs.20 per pumpkin. This brought her an additional income of Rs.3600. A scheme of mango plantation was also passed in 2016. Currently, 21 families are doing mango plantation in Lohdih under MGNREGA, in an area of 20 acres. Sarojini didi has planted 230 saplings in 1.5 acres of land. Ideally, the tree will start giving fruits in 3 years. If all the plants survive and are taken care of, then it would bring a lot of income to the household. One tree would yield 10 Kg which would sell in the market for Rs.40 per Kg. Therefore, Sarojini didi would earn an estimated amount of Rs.92000. For a poor family, that is a significant amount. Presently, there are 27 dobhas that have been completed (out of the total 54 sanctioned dobhas), along with 12 goat sheds. Looking at the above experience, we can safely say that the CFT-MGNREGA convergence has brought positive changes in enhancing the livelihoods of villagers. It has also helped include women in the whole discourse, by giving them space and a voice in decision making and implementation. Having said that, the state also needs to look at this change and figure out ways and means to sustain it once the CFT project is over.



Annexure-VI

OASIS-Narega Sahayta Kendra in MGNREGA

The Kisko Experience

How often do we see a government functionary returning a bribe to people? How often have you witnessed the state bowing down to the marginalized people in society?

Yet, this has happened, and that too, in a remote tribal block- Kisko in Lohardaga district of Jharkhand.

Jean Dreze, an eminent economist cum social activist, said, “*Humein aasha hai Kisko me Sahayta Kendra majduron ko adhikar dilane me madad karenge aur Narega me badlav layega*” at the inaugural ceremony of MGNREGA Sahayta Kendra in Kisko. The Kendra is now proving his statement to be correct, and is helping make the state accountable to the people. As a path-breaking support system for the SHG-federation (Mahila Vikas Mandal (MVM)), as well as through raising voice for the rights of the workers in MGNREGA, at the block, the Sahayta Kendra has been an impactful step.

The federation MVM in Kisko starts its annual planning every year to identify their area of work and to make an action plan. In the annual action plan 2014-15, MVM Kisko identified the need for availability of employment in the village as a prime area of focus. They foresaw MGNREGA as the ideal opportunity for employment, as it guarantees 100 days of work per household to every household with a job card.

The first step was to generate awareness in the villages about the rights guaranteed in the MGNREGA. For that purpose, awareness rallies, audio-visual tools, classroom training, pamphlets, books etc. were used. The people soon started demanding work, applying for job card, asking queries about mates, schemes sanctioned etc. But work demands were rejected, job card applications were not accepted; job cards were lying in the hands of mates and they were reluctant to give it to labourers. The workers were facing disappointment everywhere. But it is rightly said, “Every crisis has an opportunity”. So, the Federation sat to discuss this crisis and realized that there is a need to devise a mechanism which will prudently address these issues. The

million dollar question before the Federation now was-What kind of a system can address these?

After rounds of discussion they decided to consult James Herenge-Convener of NREGA Watch and then came the "Narega Sahayta Kendra".

James shared his experiences of the NREGA Sahayta Kendra in Manika block of Latehar district, which was facilitated by James himself. Federation received a 2 day orientation on the role of Sahayta Kendra in helping labors access their rights. Then a 2-day exposure was organized at Manika, for Didis from the Federation to learn the operation, functioning and work of Sahayta Kendra. After coming back, they shared their experiences, discussed and took the decision to initiate Sahayta Kendra.

The Federation was divided when deciding the location for operating the Kendra. One view was to open it in the Federation office since Didis frequently visited it and access would be easier. The other suggestion was to open it at block premises. After several round of discussions, it was decided that the operating center of the Kendra would be at the Block office, since Narega Sahayta Kendra was not only for rising voice for rights of labor, but also to create a space for MVM, and to help build a relationship with the block.

Federation held a meeting with the block officers to introduce the idea of Sahayta Kendra and explained to them how it can help the block in ensuring labor rights. But this did not convince them about giving the federation any space at the block premises. They cited reasons such as, lack of space & infrastructure, and also sought directions on this from the district administration. A number of discussions were held for this purpose but most of them seemed to fail. By this time, a circular had been issued from the state to set up Sahayta Kendra in CFT blocks and signed MOU with district. The circular was discussed in district but since they were not very clear about the idea, roles, and responsibility of Kendra, they were not in favour of signing the MOU. The strategy settled on was to give another space to the Kendra, observe the work and then negotiate with block and district on the basis of the same.

The agenda of the Sahayta Kendra's location was discussed regularly in the block coordination committee (BCC). The Federation is also a member of this committee, which meets weekly to discuss the status of MGNREGA in the block and district coordination committee (DCC) meeting, which sit monthly to discuss status of MGNREGA on monthly basis.

Meanwhile, two months since the exposure passed and things about the Kendra had not moved forward. Efforts were made at the district level to initially, at least provide the space for the Center. Federation members met the DDC and explained to him, the importance of Narega Sahayta Kendra. Eventually, the district administration half-heartedly agreed and asked the block officers to provide the space. This was the first big breakthrough and opportunity that proved the mettle of the Federation.

An area between the BDO and BPO chamber was selected for the Center. The Federation selected three Didis for sitting in the Kendra. They were given training on MGNREGA and were regularly guided and provided with hand holding support by professionals. Thus, with the three Federation didis, a Sahayta Kendra was setup. It was decided jointly by the Sahayta Kendra and the Block administration to open the Kendra on market days i.e. Tuesday and Saturday, so that people could coordinate their visits.

An opening ceremony was organized by the Federation at the block premises. Around 1000 labourers from across all nine Panchayats of the block, attended the ceremony. Jean Dreze- Eminent economist, James Herenge-Convener of NREGA Watch and social activist, Balram Jo- State Advisor to Supreme Court, BDO, PRI representative, NREGA functionaries, and Federation members attended the ceremony.

Awareness and information about the Sahayta Kendra and its functions was spread to villages via SHG/VO/Federation. After the awareness campaigns, higher work demand, and applications for job card and bank account opening, started coming to the Kendra. There were initial difficulties for the Kendra in understanding the roles and responsibilities of various NREGA functionaries. They were introduced to the

NREGA functionaries and slowly started getting familiar with the people around.

Kendra maintained registers, and filed application forms which were forwarded to the relevant person. It was found that a large number of people denied work, there were cases of not issuing the job cards, and many bank accounts were not frozen in NREGA which led to non-payment of labours. With this evidence in hand, the Kendra start exposing the administrative loopholes. This opened the gates for the Kendra to exert pressure on the administration. Regular follow upon the cases and bringing up the village level issues caught the attention of administration too. This resulted in the administration inviting Kendra didis in weekly block coordination committee (BCC) meetings. They started putting forward their voice, with evidence. The discussion over grass root problems, backed by evidence, helped hold the concerned NREGA person accountable.

Since didis have direct interaction with the labourers, they bring the picture from the ground and at times have to counter the BDO as well. This is a very heartening change to witness.

A case was taken up by the s, Kendra in a village named Bagdu where the Gram Rojgar Sevak (GRS) took Rs. 2500 for making job cards, from 3 households. When this was brought to the notice of NAREGA SAHAYTA KENDRA, they immediately called the GRS and asked him for the reason for charging the money. The GRS had no answer and promised to return the money to the respective households. The very next day he returned the money to the households.

The NREGA Sahayta Kendra was supposed to sign an MOU with the district administration.

But eight months later the MOU remained unsigned since the district authorities were not convinced about the need for a NREGA Sahayta Kendra. After analyzing the work of NREGA Sahayta Kendra, they were finally convinced after 8 months of opening of Kendra, finally it was signed in April 2016. In a meeting called by the district when the MOU was being signed, the block administration heaped praise on the Kendra's work.

The signing of the MOU enabled Kendra members to sit in the block premises on all working days, except Sundays and holidays. They were now to be directly paid by the block administration on a monthly basis. One member is to be paid skilled wage, and two members receive semi-skilled wages, as per MOU guidelines.

Now, after they had settled into their new roles, the Kendra members started making field plans. They identified the Panchayat Rojgar Diwas and village organization meeting as their primary nodes for engagement. They began to influence the Rojgar Diwas (a weekly event organized at panchayat level where work demands, job card making, issue of labour, allocation of work to mate etc. takes place), and most NREGA related problems were now getting resolved at Panchayat Rojgar Diwas itself. This helped in streamlining the processes at the Panchayat level and ensured regular opening of Panchayat Bhavans.

On 06/09/2016, 20 laborers demanded work and took a receipt from the Gram Rojgar Sevak and on 24/09/2016, 4 laborers demanded work and took a receipt from GRS. After waiting for about 2 months, the laborers lodged a complaint in NREGA Sahayta Kendra on 21/10/2016.



The work done by Kendra is shown in the table below

Activity	Number
Work Demand	1589
Work allotted	1550
Job card application	104
Job card made	98
Bank Account application	182
Bank Account Opened	170
Bank account frizzed in MIS	170
Complain resolved	20
Mate registered	194
Mate allotted work	101
Mate Paid	99

The Sahayta Kendra took this case very seriously as it was in violation of NREGA. Kendra sent an application to the BDO but no action was taken from the Block administration. So, the NREGA Sahayta Kendra forwarded this case to the district and state authorities. State took cognizance of the case and directed the district to look into the matter. Thereafter, DDC Lohardaga, BDO, and the Sahayta Kendra jointly enquired in the field and the case was found to be genuine. The DDC then directed the block to take immediate action and as per MGNREGA act, an unemployment allowance was provided to the laborers by deducting the amount from the GRS and Panchayat Sevak's salary i.e. Rs.50267.

After the establishing of the NREGA Sahayta Kendra, the laborers now had a trusted platform where they could come and share their grievances. Unlike previous experiences, when laborers had to take many pains to access their rights in the block, the scenario has started to change. The laborers feel comfortable accessing the Kendra, and quick, effective action by the Kendra is making it popular among laborers. None the less, the present situation of MGNREGA needs to be further streamlined and strengthened in order to make MGNREGA a pro-labour policy. For this, there is a need for strong linkage of the village to the Kendra. A sound interface is needed between Kendra and the labourers, and the role of SHG/VO is very

important in enabling this interface. Also, the sustainability of Kendra is a big question which needs more deliberation.





Annexure-VII

Stories from Raidih

ASSETS FOR CHANGE

“Naalok sabha naa Rajya Sabha Sab sei Upar Gram Sabha”

People chanted loudly, till one could hear nothing but this slogan. The people had planned their assets for MNREGA in the Yojna Banao Abhiyan and in anticipation of a huge turn around in terms of their resource scenario they shouted hard. It was as if they wanted their voices to reach the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.

A Farm Pond for Dignity

Dulari Minj is a resident of Turidih of Raidih block (Gumla). They are five members in her family. Due to very low income, every year they reach a stage where they have to borrow from others for sustenance. Dulari Didi has a piece of land, but has no facility of irrigation there. So while her family was only dependent on wage labour for income, work was not always available at village. She had started thinking about migrating to other places for a living, when she heard that there would be bulk work in MGNREGA this year. She worked in MGNREGA and earned wages, which according to her were easy to get this time around, unlike her earlier bad experience in fetching MNREGA wages.

She had also given her asset plan of a farm pond of size 30'X30'X10', during the newly launched Yojna Banao Abhiyan, but did not have much hope that the plans would materialize. Later, when the scheme started and she herself worked in it, she could not believe that such a convenient arrangement was possible, where she could earn money and own an asset, simultaneously. She received all her wages on time and her farm pond was soon completed without any hassle. To her, it was a matter of disbelief that things were done so fast.

The family had taken up a second crop last year around the farm pond and were also rearing fish. Cumulative cash earnings of Rs. 6000/- helped them purchase the necessities for running the family, which otherwise they needed to borrow from others. Dulari didi could now

live with dignity, as they did not have to ask for money from their neighbours. She says that it felt good and they would work 100 days this year, considering there is not much hassle in getting wages anymore.

Goat Sheds...Not Just Sheds But Hope

Hum bakri ko jaise taise rakhte the, Mal mutra sei bimari hota tha, NREGA ketahat maine bakri shed liya aur ussmei kaam kar khud paisa bhi kamaaye aur mera shed bhi ban gaya.

Machan ke upar mei rakhne sei koi bimaari nahi lagaa hai ab tak, use pehle bael ke saath rakhte the, Dus bakri mar gya tha mera, Thanda aisei bhi marta hai aur dast hone sei bhi mara, Pet kharaab hone sei bhi maratha. Abhi mera 10 bakri hai.

Anup Toppo was visibly happy when he shares the story of his new asset. He had given his preference for a goat shed in MGNREGA asset planning, and finally, it was constructed with the family too working as laborers in the scheme. He was happy that he could manage to earn wages, while his asset got constructed too.

While describing how vulnerable his goats were when they did not have a shed, he shares that the number of his goats went up from 2 to 10 in the past year. The mortality rate fell after they started keeping the goats inside the sheds and taking proper care of them. He elaborated about how after the construction of the shed, the family realized the need for good care for the goats. They could now visualize assured income from the activity and felt that economic vulnerability and uncertainty has reduced for them.

"Saal mei do yaa chaar mar jaata tha, abhi tak shed banne ke baad sei to nahi mara hai dada, jaldi badh tabhi hai abhi dekhte hai. Mai 2016 mei ek khassibech k 6000/- kamayaa bhi tha kareeb 17kg katha. Bakri ghar hone sei aaram sei saaf saaf air akhtehain, aur khaad kabhi kaam aata hai bakri theek rehne sei, kheti mei kaam aata hai"

The family, comprising of only husband and wife could not afford to take up vegetable farming due to low family strength. But they are planning to take up more such Dobhas in the next Gram Sabha planning so they can take up fisheries. They feel that the activity is low investment and high return, since they only have to spend about Rs. 1000/- for 2kg fingerlings and Rs.50-60/- for feeding purpose. The return is hefty with minimum effort and labour.

This goes to show the potential of a farm pond of the above mentioned size, which if utilized optimally, can ensure a return of almost the same amount as its cost of construction, in a single year. Considering its significant role in paddy irrigation, bund crops, command area, second crop, and fisheries, one pond can create multiple new avenues for income. This year the family has already earned Rs2000/- from kaddu in the bunds of the structure, and are waiting for their return from the 220 fingerlings that they had kept.

They aspire to have more farm ponds, which suits their family of two. With minimum effort, they wish to engage in fisheries at a larger scale to ensure additional income.

Conclusion

While it cannot be claimed from these stories that MGNREGA has entirely changed lives, it can be said that it has opened a horizon of possibilities. Smooth implementation of the existent schemes can offer solutions to the basic livelihood plight that rural Jharkhand is struggling with.

We now await to hear from the people again next year, with their enriched experiences of working in MGNREGA, and creating more assets for their potential use in economic activities.



Annexure-VIII

Effectively leading the implementation of MGNREGA helps enhance the profile of the federation as a partner in development

*An article by the federation members of Mahila Vikas Mandal, Kisko.
(Translated in English by Ram Mishra, PRADAN)*

Introduction

“Pranam didi aaiye bathiye”, has now become the customary greeting of BDOs (Block Development Officer) for members of the federation. This is a stark difference from earlier when women from the village did not imagine interacting with bureaucrats. The work of the federation, whether it be the planning process, or the implementation process, or successfully lobbying at the block or the panchayat, has resulted in a new found respect in BDOs towards the women of the federation.

In 2013, MVM Kisko had 46 SHGs in 10 villages of 4 panchayats of Kisko block under its umbrella. The Federation sees the NRLM- which primarily focuses on universal social mobilization of women and creating sustainable livelihood for households- as an opportunity to collectivize women and attain its vision of empowering the women in the society.

It all started in 2014 when the CFT project was taken up in the Kisko block. The Federation’s efforts towards implementing the NRLM project in the whole block led to brisk paced social mobilization. Initially in 2014-15, only 6 villages were taken up in 3 panchayats for CFT. Comprehensive INRM based planning was done and 997 schemes were identified. The SHG/VO mobilized the villagers in the planning who enthusiastically responded, and the villagers were pleasantly surprised to learn that such planning could take place under the scope of MGNREGA.

The unawareness about MGNREGA has been detrimental for the ability of the people to reap the benefits of MGNREGA. The Federation decided to raise awareness via rallies, videos, camps. The efforts of the Federation bore fruit and led to an increase in the number of applicants for job cards and bank accounts, as well as an increase in the awareness levels among the people about job availability. The Federation identified raising awareness about the planning stage of MGNREGA, as one of its primary objectives. The majority of the villagers in Jharkhand have remained oblivious about the planning stage of MGNREGA. The schemes were sanctioned only

for those who were either active participants in village affairs or politically well connected. The State government termed the planning process as **“Yojna Banao Abhiyan”**.

A panchayat planning team, which includes two SHG members provided by the Federation per team, was created to help the Panchayat in effective planning. This team is supposed to spend three days in every hamlet for planning. The SHG/VO took this as an opportunity and participated in huge numbers across the block. Many plans were facilitated solely by the SHG members. A concrete plan was made in every village with a special focus on the extremely poor. This planning process went for almost two months, covering every hamlet of block. A wide variety of schemes were identified, such as, farm ponds, land leveling, goat sheds, vermin pits, irrigation channels, horticulture & plantation etc, which broke the practice of identifying conventional schemes like Mitti Morung Road, wells, and big ponds in MGNREGA. This gave the community a new hope in MGNREGA.

Implementation- The entire process awareness and planning would be jeopardized into redundancy if its implementation was ineffective. For this purpose, the VO took charge and influenced Gram Sabha to select an SHG member as a mate. Finally, 224 SHG mates were identified in 52 villages across Kisko block. They were trained by the CFT team, in coordination with block administration. A total of 184 mates received training and 101 mates were deployed at work.

At the same time, a regular Rojgar Diwas was scheduled, by influencing and discussing with the Panchayats. It started taking place weekly, in all of the nine Panchayats where Gram Rojgar Sevak, ward members, and the Mukhiya had held unwarranted power. Labourers started demanding work, applying for job cards, discussing their issues of non-payment, delayed payment etc. in the Rojgar Diwas. The Panchayat Bhawans which usually remained closed, were now opening and operating.

Once the work started, pressure for effective implementation was exerted by SHGs at the hamlet level, VOs at the village and Panchayat level, and MVM at the block level. The Muster-rolls were being filled in time; MGNREGA

functionaries started visiting the villages and work sites, and the distant dream of an effective NREGA in Jharkhand slowly began to take shape.

Having witnessed the callous approach of the administration towards the rights of the labourers in MGNREGA, the Federation set up a NREGA Sahayta Kendra at the block premises. The Kendra was to be a room in front of the BDO chamber, where three SHG members were trained and placed by the federation. Their main function was to address the various grievances of the labourers and also act as a watchdog. Any discrepancy at the village level was brought directly to the Sahayta Kendra, who brought it to the notice of the administration. This gave a fair opportunity to the people, and they could now raise issues in writing and take formal receipts. The confidence of labourers and villagers in the SHG Mahila Mate increased tremendously, even though they were very skeptical during the initial days of induction. Nowadays, the administration tells everyone about the strength of the SHG Federation and even invite them for all relevant meetings.

Since the Panchayat's role is very important in the implementation of MGNREGA, the focus shifted to strengthening the role of the PRI representative. Two rounds of a three day training program were conducted for all ward members of the Kisko block. It focussed on increasing their knowledge of MGNREGA, outlining their role in monitoring the MGNREGA, and importance of Karyakarini Samiti meeting. This exercise had a very positive effect in monitoring and implementation, such that, now ward members verify the work demand and sign the muster roll in approx 80% of the cases. But, a lot is still to be done in defining their end to end role and responsibility

While the changes that have come with YBA have helped re-establish the people's faith in MGNREGA, the work needs to be sustained and the momentum needs to be utilised if we are to bring long-term change in rural Jharkhand. Additionally, the media is unaware of the role played by Federations and their support will be needed for changing discourses around MGNREGA. With proper channels of communication, and support from government, bureaucracy, and the people, MGNREGA can be a success in Jharkhand.



Annexure-IX

Women collectives leading MGNREGA towards the right Track ...The Torpa experience

Introduction

मैं खुद को भाग्यशाली समझती हूँ की मेरे महिला मंडल तथा गाँव की सभी दीदियों की पहली पसंद मैं ही थी और मुझे भी अपने गाँव में मनरेगा के द्वारा सेवा का एक मौका मिल रहा था, भला मैं भी इससे पीछे कैसे हटती / मुझे महिला मंडल ने इतना शाशक्त बनाया था की मैं अपने दीदियों के मदद के लिए जरा सी भी नहीं हिचकी / When Bahlen didi was saying these words, the joy and confidence I could see in her face was really overwhelming but this change didn't come suddenly and there were a lot of reasons which made this change necessary. This story is about how the women collectives played a major role in changing the MGNREGA implementations in urikel Panchayat of Torpa block. Now they have become source of learning and motivation for the larger community in the region. Officials from 30 blocks headed by MNREGA commissioner came to visit Torpa to learn and observe their appreciable work. Joint secretary PRI Sarda Murlidhran also visited to this Panchayat and got inspired after listening to the stories of struggle of these women collectives and she had loudly appreciated their work and asserted every support from her end in their journey.

Background

'NREGA to Marega' is a famous saying in Jharkhand. Things were no different in Torpa too and was even worse in Urikel anchayats of Khunti district in Torpa Block. The delay in payment or no payment to the labourers, corruption, incomplete assets were among many reasons why MNREGA has been a failed dream for the community. The workers generally used to avoid working in MNREGA and according them it is a wastage of their time and energy since payments are mostly delayed and even not done at times.

Urikel is one of the 16 panchayats in Torpa block. Urikel too having a nascent gram panchayats which was mostly ineffective and oblivion of it's duties like most panchayats in the state. The anchayats bhavans hardly opened, Mukhia, rojagar sevak, anchayats sevaks were rarely seen in anchayats office. The community had no faith on PRI representatives because of their unavailability in the time of crisis. The community had no idea where they could raise their grievances regarding NREGA and since MNREGA became a hassle for the

workers people finally rejected the scheme saying “ NREGA to MAREGA”. Such was the experience of workers that they preferred sitting idle rather than working in MNREGA.

Roles of women collectives and CFT team in planning

In 2014, Under CFT-MGNREGA program 250 most backward blocks in the country were selected where 76 blocks were selected only from Jharkhand state and Torpa was among them. In Torpa block 3 panchayats were chosen under CFT MGNREGA which are Urikel, Husir and Fatka. These are the remote panchayats of the Block. So, PRADAN, Torpa team planned to engage in the programme strategically to strengthen the system of MGNREGA. PRADAN with the help of women federation, Vos and Gram Sabha selected NREGA resource persons, social mobilisers and INRM consultant and then, formed a CFT team to provide technical support to the block and provide basic information about MGNREGA to the community by rally, wall writing, nukkad acts, video demonstration and MGNREGA awareness programme in the village and the anchayats. This helped the community to build a basic understanding on MGNREGA act and developed a little faith on it. Further regular follow ups, training, exposures and workshops helped the VO, SHG and Gram Sabha to build a better understanding and trust on it. This mobilized the community to attend the NREGA related meetings and to do INRM based planning to ensure their livelihood in their village. It was five days planning processes and the following aspects have been covered:-

- Objective CFT- MGNREGA, provisions of MGNREGA act, its evolution and relevance in the community, power of gram sabha, rights of a mazdoor. And ways for putting work demand and getting wages. Issues in MGNREGA and collective action to overcome the issues. Coordination with PRI and block functionaries.
- Concept of INRM base planning, what is INRM, its importance. And tried to cover around 90 percent families under the village

development planning process, specially focused on livelihood base and water recharge structures like Dobha, bunding, land leveling and orchard. And types of structures interventions required in this area for water and soil conservation. Village development plan under NREGA and impact on livelihood to combat poverty.

- Mapping and proper record keeping of plans, its importance, plan prioritization and its parameters, season based plan, proceeding of meeting, prioritization of family and its criterion.

Finally they planned for their villages and submitted it in their gram sabha as per the MGNREGA.

Collective action in strengthening the system

In 10th of January 2015 people of Urikel and Bishrampur village submitted their plan in Block after following the whole procedures of gram Sabha for technical and administrative sanctioning. The communities of these two villages were very excited and were eagerly waiting for the plan to get sanctioned because this was the first time that they planned for their own village as per their need and requirements and they were hoping that this time they will work in their own village and they wouldn't have to go other village or place for labour work in this season.

As per MNREGA ACT plan should get sanctioned within one month after submission of plan in the Block but it was the end of March 2015 and the plan was not getting sanctioned as yet due to the poor administrative functioning and ignorance of the implementing agencies. The panchayats too had no supervision of the whole thing and the accountability of the executives never established towards it's citizen Things were hugely getting delayed and the people of the villages were losing hope, given the situation and mindset of people such delay could not be afforded as people would soon lose interest seeing things not moving at all. The workers started migrating as well sensing the uncertainty

of allocation of work and with the fear that such a delay would mean no income for them in the time of crisis.

The women collectives of these villages were oriented on MGNREGA provisions and series of training and workshops organized at anchayats and village level by PRADAN and CFT team. These kinds of investment in social capital made them aware of the issues and made them capable to take strategic actions. And they started discussing around the issue and they planned to take some immediate action around it and they started visiting the block and anchayats office to follow up the status of the submitted plan but they didn't get any positive response from the block or anchayats representatives and even they were not accepting their work demand application. Vos (Suku Jidan Gram Sangathan, Bishrampr and Premlata Gram Sangathan, Urikel) and Gram Sabha of this two villages decided to take a collective step together and all the villagers collectively decided to go to anchayats bhavan and call the rojgar sevak and anchayats sevak so they could pressurize them to accept their work demand application. Eventually more than 200 people gathered in the anchayats bhavan and pressurize the rojgar sevak and anchayats sevak to accept their work demand but initially they were not ready to accept their application but because of the pressure created by women collectives they finally accepted and gave the receiving of the work demand application.

Impacts of collective action

This large scale work demand application created a huge pressure on the block and district office to sanction the plans of the respective villages.

These needful taken steps of women collectives not just only helped their villages but also helped other panchayats and blocks to get sanctioned their plans. The plans got sanctioned in the first week of May 2015 and villagers started working in their plan.

Also finally when the gram sabha plans got sanctioned, it was due to huge pressure from the women lead collectives and also due to CFT intervention people were ecstatic and for the first time such a participatory planning had been sanctioned as per people's choice and preference.

Impact within the collective

- Collectives of urikel anchayats, Senhora jidan VO of Bishrampur and Jyoti VO of urkel villages spreaded a message of change in the surrounding and became role model for others.
- Created a self sustaining system of reflection and monitoring where the labour groups demand for works in anchayats bhavan and take receiving, timely muster roll generation and received by the mate through Rodger Sevak, attendance maintenance by the mate on work place, regular follow of work by anchayats anchayats es, fortnightly formal meetings with SHG mate members to address the issues related MGNREGA in Panchayat Bhavan.
- 90 % participation of women in gram sabha in the village of Bishrampur and urikel where gram sabha is now recognizing the solidarity of women collectives and inviting them to

Kam ke aavedan ke liye jama gamin aur aavedan dekar receiving lete gamin, urikel anchayats



participate in the regular meetings of the gram sabha which is unprecedented in the area.

- Intermediaries and contractors are off from the NREGA process in the Panchayat.
- Enhanced job opportunities.

Women collectives have impacted the NREGA system, its functioning and malpractice. Now the Rodger Sevak, and other stakeholders are adhering to the norms and provisions of the act. The more interesting thing is that whole system became more transparent because this is monitored by women collectives and even all working trained mates are selected from the SHGs through Gram sabha. Now, certain things are running in proper way like work demand application, on time e-muster roll generation, timely wage payment, weekly and monthly rojgaar diwas in anchayats and block. Nowadays the rojgaar sevak, anchayats sevak and mukhiya regularly follow up of the running schemes in the village. Because of the timely payment of the labourers a large no. of plans were completed in short period. All the running schemes were completed and good quality assets were generated. This change in the village has not only created employment in the village but also created useful assets which now has potential to change the economic scenario of the villages further. We had also observed encouraging facts that people who earlier used to migrate during specific seasons are now engaged in MNREGA work in their own village and demanding and getting work as per their convenient time. These workers therefore having control of their livelihood cycle as they could now decided their employment and not dependent on external factors. This has reduced the uncertainty and vulnerability of these workers.

Conclusion

The collective supportive and successful implementation of MGNREGA has really changed the thought of the community towards MGNREGA. It has become hope and opportunity for community to change their village.

Though the collectives have got the victory in some stages of the struggle of the system but there are multiple challenges which they have to be engaged in continuous fight like How it will come in their regular practices so it will sustain for longer period and how to strengthen sense of citizenship? How it will spread in large area? ... off course they have miles to go in the journey of struggle...this is a mere initiation.





Annexure-X

Women SHG Mate in NREGA- A noteworthy initiative

Stories of Boarijore SHG women Mates

"Have you even seen a woman, holding notebook, folder file filled with some documents & measuring tape in her hand addressing a 15-20 labours at Work Site and facilitating them about NREGA? This is the present situation in Boarijore block, under Godda District".

Introduction

"Maine logo ko nrega mein pareshan hote dekha hai, aur main nahi chahti ki ek mauka milne ke baad bhi log pareshan rahe. is kaam mein mera dil lagta hai." (Actually I have seen people to get disturbed in NREGA and I don't want to people will get disturbed for a long time after having such opportunity to make in a better way. Moreover, I do work by heart), stated by Jamuna Murmu, SHG Mate from Hethbandha Village of Boarijore block.

Although for the proper implementation of NREGA, a Mate has been deployed to look after the activities and it is experienced that being an SHG member as a Mate has more accountability towards community and she facilitates for the effective implementation of NREGA at field as well. Therefore, to pursue that experience, an initiative taken by Rural Development Department, Jharkhand to include SHG women as Mate for NREGA schemes.

Experiences in NREGA Implementation

After 10 years since inception of NREGA, there was an assumption among the community and administration as well, that NREGA supervision work only belongs to the Men and there is less space for women into that. Although it was an assumption that NREGA comprises the earthen work and only men can do such hard labour, Women involvement was less into this program and somehow they had felt that NREGA work is only related to men.

Moreover, for the looking after of the NREGA scheme implementations, Male Mates used to be deployed, but mostly the owners of the scheme or some contractors used to occupy these positions and great exploitation and corruption took place because of

this. It had been expected that these mates will extend their support to labours at work site and will be accountable for NREGA activities, but it didn't happen. Gradually these mates went on a superior position, just to dictate labours and their engagements were mostly that of a contractor who exploited workers and gained illegal benefits.

Why Women SHG Mate into NREGA

Over the period, it was experienced that NREGA Mate concept was only in wave, because the persons like intermediaries or contractors used to hire some village level person to work as Mate, only in the name of Munshi.

Before the inception of CFT in block, generally immense schemes for pond (100 x 100), earthen road, well etc had been sanctioned and being implemented by those intermediaries. Moreover, in those schemes, firstly, they had to invest some working capital to start the work and after that, they used to pay the wages to labours on daily basis, which initially attract the workers to continue work, oblivious and unaware of the fact that ultimately they were being exploited, not getting their full wage at hand, not getting the last payments. Essentially, there were many issues related to labours, like less information or knowledge regarding NREGA act, its provisions, and the channelization process. Moreover, there was no information to villagers regarding the sanctioned schemes and its expenditure. Somehow, it led to a non transparent process which neither gave out any benefit to the worker nor created quality assets. In addition, it had also experienced that there were no any accountability of such mates towards the community.

Therefore, due to such bitter experiences at field, the need was felt to have a support function at village level to assist the labours for accessing their rights momentarily. In order to have such transformation, it was decided that, gram sabha will deploy women Mates, who will be accountable to the community for and it will facilitate to have a smooth and transparent implementation of NREGA schemes on ground.

An SHG member has gone through many exposures, trainings programs and she has developed a perspective & long-term vision for the betterment of society. After getting into SHG, she also develops a sense of mutual help and empathy for others and society, assist and support community at every level. Being an SHG member as a Mate, community can believe on her to have a better transparency and more accountability towards them. Among SHG members, there is cohesiveness, social bonding and a kind of affinity towards each other and towards the group. Moreover, they all are owners of their group and accountable to their group members.

Due to regular interaction with SHG members, the mate provides all related information regularly to the group. Members can ask her, discuss her on the running schemes status, work site facilities, labour payment status etc. SHG members will monitor the mate to extend their support to her to have a smooth implementation of NREGA. SHGs can recommend to Gram Panchayat Execution Committee for her dismissal, in case of dissatisfactory engagement of such SHG mate.

Therefore, the time came to include the women collectives into this massive program in the form of Women SHG Mate.

Selection process of Women SHG Mate and training & capacity building for them

Due to having only 27.35 % women literacy in block, it was a major challenge to identify such women from SHG's, who could work as a NREGA Mate and accomplish all the required activities, especially mathematical calculations.

Therefore, initially, with the help of CFT, information has circulated among the community through SHG's, VO's and federation regarding the women SHG mate. Moreover, it has also communicated them regarding the major three criteria for mate identification & selection, first one is, mate should be from same village/hamlet, for that mate has being selected, second one is

that mate should be at least 7th pass and last one is that mate should be from SHGs.

Although it was a very significant initiative of Rural Development Department of state to include, Women SHG mate into the NREGA Implementation. Moreover, to making it more emphasized, a circular had issued regarding the Mate selection criteria, roles & responsibilities of Mates, engagement process, monitoring & evaluation of Mates, and training module.

Although it was greater challenge to identify SHG mates from villages firstly. In very first time, when the information spread out into the villages regarding the deployment of women mates into NREGA and emphasized on the mate selection through SHGs, then a bit sarcastic reactions was among the male counter parts of the villages. Actually it was a question mark on the capability of women to carry such big responsibilities. Moreover, there was also a fear feeling among the SHG women, as whether they will be able to fulfil their roles & responsibilities into the implementation of NREGA.

It was pretty obvious that to involve into NREGA, seems a massive program, was a very big challenge for them to face the forthcoming issues. Therefore, CFT conducted a village meeting to put the concept of mate and why SHG members will be deployed as Mate. After the continuous 4-5 meetings, later SHG members could understand the need of SHG mates into NREGA. After having such those meetings, SHG came into a position to understand the core belief of selecting SHG women as Mates. Then SHG has identified few of SHG members, who were eligible for mate as per the criteria.

Later, through gram sabha meeting in the presence of Panchayat Mukhiya, Gram Pradhan, ward member and villagers, identified SHG women for mate has finally selected.

After the selection of women SHG mate, the training process has started. With the help of CFT, a three days residential training has imparted to selected mates on the inception of MGNREGA, detailed information of NREGA act & its provisions, roles & responsibilities of different

functionaries engaged with NREGA at Panchayat level and block level as well. There was a two-day classroom session on NREGA and their roles as mate. Last day was field exercise session to learn design & layout of structures like WHT, Shed etc.

In this 3 days training session, they got learned about the history of NREGA, norms, all the channelization procedure, payment flow and their roles & responsibilities.

After the training event, the registration process for SHG mate into NREGA MIS has started. A total of 120 women SHG mate has registered into NREGA MIS till date.





Engagement of SHG Mate

There were some specific engagements into the NREGA Implementation as a Mate as follows

- **Informing Labours for the beginning of the work:** After the Muster roll came to villages through GRS, then it became a prior duty of mate to inform labours as per the name written on muster roll. Therefore, labours would reach the work site timely on first day of work.
- **Layout of the site for daily work excavation:** Mates make the labours understand regarding their work like how much cubic feet they have to excavate in a single day, where the excavated soil will placed.
- **Ensuring the work site facilities:** Mates are also responsible to ensure the work site facilities like drinking water, scheme signboard, crutch, medical kit, and shed. She also inform to Panchayat for ensuring all this, in case of non-availabilities at work site.
- **Checking the detailed of Labours into Muster Roll:** Before the work started , it became necessary to check, whether all the details printed on muster roll are correct or not like, name of labour, job card no, bank

account no etc. For this, Mates check the details and make corrections, if required.

- **Documentation:** On end of each day work, Mates need to fill the Muster Roll and job card of individual labour. Moreover, the last of workweek, she needs to read out the attendance, and then take signature of all labours. Mates will also ensure that there should be not any mismatch between the attendance taken into Muster Roll and work done.

Issues, Challenges faced by SHG Mate during her engagement

It is obvious that when some short of transformation occurs in any system and when people started negotiating with the stakeholders, then some resistance popped up during the process. Moreover, the same situations happened, when SHG women started working in the NREGA implementation as a mate. Even though due to being very new in this field, they have faced many challenges and they struggled to accomplish the task.

In present status, there are a total of 229 SHG mates trained on the basic NREGA functioning and the structure related from 17 Panchayts



and now 88 SHG mates has engaged into 121 schemes into 17 Panchayat.

Here are few points, which have faced by the SHG mates during their engagement into NREGA:

- **Labours started recognising them as a new contractor:** Even though labours had a practice to demand wages from the contractors, that is why after the first week of work completion, usually they had started demanding wages from mate and they had an assumption that now she seems to be a contractor and she will provide the wages.
- **Difficulties to make the labours understand regarding the digging:** When SHG mates have started working at work site, then it was the very prompt challenge for them to make them teach about the process of digging WHT (Water Harvesting Tank), i.e., step cutting. However, labours had practice to dig the WHT maximum up to 6 inch into each step, instead of 2 feet. Moreover, labours were also compelled to dig amount of Cubic Feet (100 Cubic Feet) greater than the actual Cubic Feet (73 Cubic Feet). Therefore, SHG mates tried hard to get them streamlined with the actual process of digging and they

will dig Cubic Feet as per the guidelines, not more than that.

After engaging with labours continuously, then they could realize that they were working more than the actual work requires. Now the situation is that, Labours do actual work as per the guidelines.

- **No specifiable time schedule for labours for digging:** Actually, it has experienced that labours work at work site with their own preferred time. Some of labours work at morning; some of them work at evening. Some of them work half of Cubic Feet in morning and rest in evening. Therefore, due this work schedule SHG mates had to spend work site almost full day. So it became difficult for a Mate to visit all work sites simultaneously, in case of looking after more than one scheme at a time.

This challenge persists, however Mates are managing their time to visits sites and extend their support to labours.

- **Delay in wage payment through ICICI bank (BC Model):** Most of the time the issues related to delay in wage payment through ICICI bank occurred due to some reasons like, card tampering, no fingerprint is matching; account no is wrongly freezes etc. For all this, Labours had gathered at their home and asked to Mates about the payment status. Therefore, SHG mates had to take responsibilities to settle down the payment related issues. It had become a practice for mates to do contact with agent and get the status. Moreover, Mates get agitated with such practices, leads to having frustration within them.

Delay in payment through ICICI bank, still is an issue.

Although these all above issues and experiences have faced by all SHG mate during their first hand engagement. Being a very new player into such massive program, it became a knotty situation for them to address the issues, concerns at one short. And it was expected that gradually or over the period of time all SHG mates will able

to get involved into the entire processes through some on field support at work site by CFT , refreshers training & capacity building to them, and regular interaction to CFT through some fortnightly meetings

Learning's & Experiences

During this course of action there has been worthy experiences to SHG mates and got some significant learning's as well.

- **Self-confidence enhanced** - Somehow, this concept of including SHG mates into NREGA implementation helps SHG women for being more confident and able to speak out to externals regarding any issues related for. Now they are becoming more vocal and clearly putting their views, opinions, and understanding in front of the stakeholders and negotiating with them. It is obvious that they have also secured a dignified position at their family and at village as well.
- **Familiar environment at Village:** Gradually a kind of cohesiveness, affinity and a social bonding has ascertained among the community, especially among the labours. After getting proper knowledge and channelization process, labours became confident about that. Moreover, due to that they have developed a kind of belief, faith on such collectives and visualized a ray of hope for getting benefits from NREGA.
- **NREGA Functionaries Accountability enhanced towards community:** Eventually, SHG mates started encouraging labours/ SHG members to raise their issues to related functionaries. It has seen that accountability of NREGA functionaries towards their roles, responsibilities and duties to accomplish the activities enhanced and gradually these functionaries became a co- creator with community for the smooth implementation of NREGA at ground level.
- **SHG members engaged into review, monitoring and evaluation of program:** It has also experienced that being a mate in this program; SHG members has engaged

into the review and monitoring of the ongoing activities. SHG members have been also engaged to ensure the proper facilities at work site as per the guidelines. They have started negotiating with Panchayat, block, banks, and agents for the timely payment and other related issues. Moreover, they have also actively engaged into the evaluation of the program on different requirements for the scheme as timely materials procurement; ensure good quality of materials, timely muster roll coming to villages, and timely measurement book completion etc.

After getting involved in this program, it was a challenge for CFT to make them accountable towards community and women collectives. And it was not an easy task to make them accountable overnight.

Even though during very first engagement of these SHG mates, they were not able to articulate the things, lack in clarity of their roles & responsibilities, not able to support labours at work site and not able to negotiate with NREGA functionaries. Moreover, some of these mates have also faced the wrath from their husbands too which added to their pain. Some of the earlier male mates felt that their source of income generation through NREGA will demolished in coming days, if such women would work as mate. For instance, one SHG mate from Lilatari- (I) Panchayat has beaten by her husband due to working as mate into NREGA. He stated that" if you will work as mate into NREGA, then you will follow the norms & provisions as per the act of NREGA and in that case, contactor likes me, where we will go and how our house will run to feed our children".

And in that situation, SHG members talked with her husband and tried hard to make him understand the logic behind the women involvement into NREGA as Mate. However this was not enough to make him understand immediately. And it will come through further deliberations, discussions with the community around all aspects of NREGA and the involvement of SHG collectives into this program.

Case study of one SHG mate

Self-esteem is not everything; it is just that there is nothing without it. – Gloria Steinem

This is the story of Jamuna Mumru, Vill-Hethbandha, Panchayat- Lilatari-(II), Boarijore, Godda, belongs to Ekta Mahila Mandal. Previously, during the 1st phase of CFT program, she had worked as NRP (NREGA Resource Person) to extend her support to community regarding awareness generation, hand holding for the NREGA implementation. After that, she has developed a sense of engaging herself into this massive program at extent level.

After the evolution of 2nd phase of CFT program, she expressed her willingness to work as SHG mate, as she had experience as well as great interest to do supervision work under MNREGA.

When she got engaged with NREGA activities, gradually she started negotiating with other stakeholders like, bank, ICICI agent, block functionaries i.e., BPO, JE, MIS officer etc, for the smooth functioning of NREGA at Field. Alike there were any issues related to delay in wage payment, late arrival of Muster Roll at work site, delay in MB preparation, delay in entries of labours to NREGA MIS, bank account freezing, job card entries, job card correction etc. It was also difficult to access block always for resolving any burning issues, which is 17 KM far from her village and having no proper communication to reach over there.

Gradually she has started initiating the discussion on NREGA and the current status of ongoing activities in their village. SHG has started keeping NREGA as a fixed agenda in every meeting, so that they could understand the need of it and they could involve into that. Therefore due to this practice, SHG members have started putting the queries to SHG mates regarding the ongoing schemes into their village and taking the data from her. Somehow this process helps them to have a transparency of running work and it also contributed to engage more labours for the schemes with the effort of SHG members. However it also motivated them to visit work sites frequently to have all information and progress status.

Even though when SHG members started getting the information on the issues and concerns at work sites, like less number of labours are coming for work, no work site facilities, no monitoring by Panchayat representatives through the mate and by visiting the work sites, they had started raising or flagging it to Panchayat through weekly Rojgar Diwas or to block through Federation. Also the SHGs initiated mobilizing community towards panchayats monitoring role in the processes too.

Moreover, during the entire processes, SHG Mate played a very crucial role to mobilize them and help them build their confidence, so that they could raise issues, interact and negotiate with Gram Rojgar Sewak. Eventually, the engagement of mates with collectives also led to have accountability of GRS and other NREGA functionaries towards community.

On all above, when she was asked , why she has been doing all this without any payment, then she had a smile on her face and a very lucid reply *“Maine logo ko nrega mein pareshan hote dekha hai, aur main nahi chahti ki ek mauka milne ke baad bhi log pareshan rahe. is kaam mein mera dil lagta hai.*

Moreover, due to her continuous effort towards those issues, now the situation is that Hethbandha village has 100% bank account of labours and now labours are accessing their wages through own without any external help.



According to her, working in NREGA is a dignified option for villagers to get livelihood opportunity at their own villages and Somehow after getting full wages and also on time, it gives them a kind of confidence and extended level of aspiration not to migrate to some other place, having option to live a dignified life and being with the family.

Now she feels proud to being a part of such movement and she has strapping aspiration to have such transformation, so that people could access those without any fear, hesitation and frustration.

Conclusion

After the involvement of SHG Mates, transparent processes have been established in scheme implementations. Moreover, due to that, SHG members have started questioning to Panchayat NREGA functionaries like Gram Rojgar Sevak & Panchayat Sevak and their accountability enhanced towards the community also for another program/schemes like IAY (Indira Aawas Yojna), WPS (Widow Pension Scheme), and OAPS (Old Age Pension Scheme) etc. Now Collective has a conviction that they can support to accomplish any issues, concerns and problems related to NREGA Implementation.

During this course of engagement with stakeholders through CFT program, it has been realized that it will take a long time to make them accountable towards the community. Along with that it has been also experienced that a strong administrative will is required to build a permanent interface between community and administration.

Women collectives are playing a very important role to build relationships with relevant stakeholders but it requires a regular engagement significantly and regularly through weekly meetings at block, weekly Rojgar Diwas and inviting the representatives into their VO/Federation meetings. Moreover, PRI representative's active participation is also very crucial to address the ground level issues related to NREGA implementation and

such idea to include the women as SHG mate has a very positive outcome, and somehow collective's involvement strengthens the entire implementation process. In case of strengthening the accountability of stakeholders, Women collectives' play a very significant role in initiating interaction to concerns and this regular questioning compelled them to have a smooth association with community.

I remember here one statement of an SHG member *"Nit to rojgar sevak khoye bang botor hui kaan giyaa, Rojgar sevak do in lagi kami kaan giya"* (Now we don't need to be fear from Rojgar Sevak, as he/she works for us), stated by Marangmay Hembrom, one SHG member from Raat Raani Mahila Mandal from Hethbandha Village.





Annexure-XI

Strength of unity –for implementing MGNREGA

Shikaripara Story

Introduction

The unity among women, & the changes within the life of members of Roshni gram sangathan in Goradangal village of Shikaripara block is an example to all. Most of the time, we as practitioners, tend to facilitate the villagers to only prepare an INRM-based village development plan. Here we had to build the concept of rights and entitlement among the villagers, rather than pushing the villagers only to prepare the INRM plan.

Formation of women collectives

Seven years back when PRADAN had intervened in the Goradangal village, there was only one SHG namely Shanti mahila mandal. In the year 2014, with the help of Narishakti Mahila sangh (Block level SHG federation), another 7 groups were promoted in the village. Later, the women from all SHGs decided to further organize themselves in the village, by forming a village organization which they named Roshni gram sangathan.

At the infant stage, this village organization conducted its meeting twice a month, to discuss the developmental agenda for their village, but they could not figure how to translate these plans into action. Assessing the situation, we conducted a three-day visioning exercise with VO members. After the exercise they identified rights and entitlements which the government has enabled them to access through different laws and provisions, and their problems with accessing the same. As per the relevant issues, they divided their VO into four small sub committees. One of them was called “nyaye vamadhi karsamiti” which was set-up for dealing with rights and entitlement issues. This samiti is responsible for discussing and acting upon different rights and entitlements-related issues in their village.

The CFT worked to train and educate the “nyaye vamadhi karsamiti” and other VO members, through different means like classroom training, pamphlet distribution, audio-visual media, distribution of government circulars, and other IEC material on NREGA.

Collectives taking action to strengthen system

In the year 2015, the government initiated a village level planning programme called Yojna Banao Abhiyan (YBA), which was aimed to enable the Gram Sabhas to prepare their own plan, according to their resource scenario and economic situation. The idea was that through practice and praxis based exercises, the Gram Sabha would be able to understand and exercise their right in planning for their village under MGNREGA.

YBA gave the women from collectives an opportunity to work in a systematic approach for their village. In their periodic VO meetings, the women had decided to take active part in the Abhiyan. This time around the SHG women took great initiatives to prepare the plan of their village. Firstly, the Community based organizations (CBO) took part in various events, awareness rallies to make the locals aware of YBA and, they discussed in the hamlets how to make holistic plan for the village. Gram Sangathan, popularly called VOs (village Organization), invited CFT members to spread awareness about the planning process.

On the first day of YBA planning, all didis and dadas sat together to prepare a resource map, social map, and utilisation maps of the village. At the closing of the day these maps are presented to the Gram Sabha. On the second day, they did a transect walk to all the patches together. The purpose was to select suitable schemes for each place and prepare a land wise treatment plan. At the end of the transect walk, everybody sat together for documentation of the plan. Lists were made as per ownership and all related documents were collated. On the third day, the planning team conducted a survey as per the SECC list, to locate deprived and marginalized families. After these families were recognized, the village plan was finalized and then prioritized on the basis of deprivation and vulnerability.

Sunita Soren, a member of the Gram Sangathan told us that the Gram Sabha this year was different from the one in 2014. Earlier, only male members were allowed to participate in the

Gram Sabha, and wells and ponds were the most commonly demanded schemes. In 2016, female participation exceeded male participation. This year the village plan was captured in detail in a separate register, and the panchayat secretary was made custodian of this register. An understanding was developed among all stakeholders that the plans made by the gram sabha were final and must not be tampered.

After the completion of YBA, women in the VO started learning more about MGNREGA. Initially, CFT members held a one day training session for members of the "Nyayevam Adhikar Samity" through a designed module which led them through a job card application format and bank account application format; educated them about the importance of the Job card and work-demand and the process involved. At that time, job cards of all families were with some petty contractor. Now aware about various provisions in the Act, the VO members decided to raise their voice against the contractor, in order to get back their Job Cards.

Initially, the contractor didn't want to return job cards to the villagers. The Didis didn't lose hope and complained to the BDO against the contractor, and followed up regularly to ensure that due action was taken. Despite continuous threats from the contractors, the women stood firm and strong, and fought so families got their job cards back. BDO Amit Besra from Shikaripara block along with Rojgar sewak of Gandrakpur Panchayat, visited Goradangal village to resolve the issue, and the contractor did return 45 job cards, eventually.

The following month, a Job-card application camp was held through the Gram Sangathan, where 52 out of the 96 families of the village filled up the Job card application form, and submitted them to the Rojgar Sewak. Thereafter, many SHG women started visiting the Panchayat office on Thursday- during Rojgar Diwas. During their initial visits they observed that the Panchayat Bhawans don't open on Rojgar Diwas, as they should. They immediately took this matter to the BDO and asked many questions- like, Why was the Panchayat closed on Rojgar Diwas? Why was there no one at Panchayat Office? This was the

first time the BDO was listening to women make complaints. He suggested them to call the Rojgar Sewak & Panchayat Sewak instead of asking him directly. But the Didis reminded the BDO that it is his responsibility to call Panchayat officials & to regularize the opening of the Panchayat. In this manner, the Didis were able to compel the Block and Panchayat officials to ensure regular opening of Panchayat Bhavans on Rojgar Diwas.

Role of VO for SHG mate selection

Meanwhile, the VO had selected Bahamuni Hembrom and Fulmuni Hansda as SHG mates at the Gram Sabha, to work in MGNREGA schemes. In this whole process of selection of SHG mates, the Didis were threatened directly by Contractors & Rojgar Sewak. Negative comments were passed by the Gram Pradhan & ward member who said that the illiterate women know nothing about mate's work. The VO members, despite all the intimidation, stood strong. With a Government circular on mate selection in their hand, they eventually ensured that all the mates selected were SHG members.

This initial struggle ensured that the SHG mates could now work without any fear. But when SHG mates started working on the pond schemes in the village through MGNREGA, at the same time, one of the contractors started to construct a culvert in the same village. All the SHG members

then raised their voice at Gram Sabha to stop the work which was being done by the contractor (not by the selected SHG mate) & also complained to the BDO. After a number of attempts, the contractor was finally made to stop the work, but this was momentary. In the month of September, with support from the ward member and gram Pradhan, he re-started the work. This further infuriated the VO members and they filed a written inquiry about the sanction of the culvert scheme. The new BDO ultimately promised to give them information about the work, and again, instructed the Panchayat to stop the ongoing work by contractor.

Conclusion

The struggle continues for VO members, but they are now determined to persevere. "Roshni Gram sangathan" of Goradangal village is now confident enough to interact with the Block and Panchayat administration. Seeing their active participation, other VOs from Shikaripara and nearby districts came for exposure to our VO. Sarala Hembrom and Bahamuni Hembrom are now aware, confident, visit the Panchayat at the time of Rojgar Diwas, and also negotiate with Block administration when required. They are pleased to learn about the strength of unity and community from their experience with Roshni Gram Sangathan.







Annexure-XII

Impact of opening bank account in MGNREGA and how it helps to betterment of a woman's life

“MGNREGA neigaaon mei parivartan lane mei bahaut madad kia hai, nahi to hum log abhi bhi 10 saal pehle paderahte, yeh dekha kar accha lagta hai aur garv hota hai ke issnei purusho jaisa samman aur paisa mahilaon kobhi diya hai” Malin Munda (Federation Leader).

In our country, the wage sector had little financial security and has continued as an unorganized sector for decades after independence. After a long fight by many organizations, people's bodies, political parties etc. a historical decision was made during winter 2005. MGNREGA came as an act for the rural areas of the entire nation. Finally, wage-laborers from the entire country saw a ray of hope to secure and organize themselves. But a number of instances of corruption came into focus across the country and the dream was broken within the first year. No significant shift of developing an organized understanding of wage sector had happened across the nation.

Being the most vulnerable section of our society, women remained out of focus in our country's largest employment scheme too. Women participation in MGNREGA can be measured by women person days out of total percentage of workdays generated in the program. According to this parameter, in Jharkhand, women participation in FY 2014-15 and 2015-16 are 32.05% and 32.74% respectively. In our block Sonua, it is 34% and 40% in '14-'15 and '15-'16 respectively. So the question is, being a gender balanced Act according to wage rate, why is the women participation in MGNREGA so less? I believe that the data does not show us the actual ground picture, since in reality, women participation is much more than above data. But a major part of this female workforce is working in a hidden manner. Let me clarify, if a woman is working, but her name is not entered in the muster roll, she is working on behalf of her husband or somebody else whose name is present in MIS. In that case, she will definitely not get her earned wage in cash, although on ground she worked hard. We all know that until the participation of women and SHG collectives is increased, chances of corruption will be higher year by year. A fair system will only happen if the women workers get the full and timely wage in their

own hands. Through frequent field visits by CFT staff, we experience widely that on practicality, women workers engage in heavier numbers than male workers. On the day of writing this piece, the percentage of women participation (as per MIS) in Sonua is 45%, and we are expecting it to increase to more than 50% at the end of this FY. Let us discuss in detail how women participation can be increased in MGREGA.

Impact of MGNREGA in women empowerment is a very important aspect of development. If we see MGNREGA as an effective tool to stop migration in our country, then it directly impacts a woman's life. Also, MGNREGA plays a significant role in meeting the practical as well as strategic needs of women's participation. It has become a beacon of hope in the empowerment of the rural women, and has contributed substantially for the better living and economic conditions created through equal wages to male and female workers. The role of MGNREGA on women's participation can be examined through the following parameters:

- i. **Income-Consumption:** By income-consumption effect we mean an increase in income of women workers and as a result, their ability to choose their consumption baskets. MGNREGA empowers women by giving them a scope of independent earning and spend some amount for their own needs.
- ii. **Intra-Household:** Women play a major role in raising the economic resources for their family but their contribution remains uncounted because they perform a significant amount of unpaid work. In rural areas, the dominance of males in intra household decisions has been seen. MGNREGA has significant impact in converting some unpaid work into paid work and widen the scope of decision making role of women in household matters.
- iii. **Community-Level:** A large number of women workers attended the Gram Sabha meeting held in connection with MGNREGA. Community level empowerment of women is one of the great achievements of this Act.

Issues Related to Women Participation in MGNREGS

- i. **Non-availability of Child Care Facilities:** One of the major shortcomings of the Act is non-availability of proper crèche facilities at the work site even though the Act includes this provision. Different studies show that women remained worried about their children while they are working at MGNREGA worksite even some women do not accept the job facilities of MGNREGA because of non-availability of proper child care facilities.
- ii. **Low level of Awareness:** In many states women participation is low because of low level of awareness about the process and entitlements of the programme.
- iii. **Poor Worksite Facilities:** MGNREGA funds have been allocated for the provision of safe drinking water, resting place and first aid. But most of the studies reported that all facilities are generally absent.
- iv. **Delay in Payments:** Delay in payments is actual responsible for poor participation of women, particularly in case of single women if they are the main earners in the family. Because the Banks are far from the village, it becomes difficult for the women to open Bank Account and draw cash which discourage women participation.
- v. **Name missing in MIS-** It is a wide experience that the names of many women are missing from the Job card. The Act gives us the right that every willing adult member's name should be on the job card, so that he/she can demand work on their own and she/ he should get full wage in their own hand only. Very commonly we see that the women worker's name is not present in MIS and instead, she carries out the work in place of husband or in-laws.

As a result, although she is working at the field, but she is not eligible to get the wage. The wage can only be transferred to the account of the laborer whose name is present in the muster roll. My notion before identifying the issue was that

when a group of labourers work, men generally perform digging work and women perform soil-carrying task. But in practice, women percentage in the actual workplace is higher than men. They carry out all kinds of tasks. But at the end of the day, the master roll is filled in the name of her husband or in – laws, because she doesn't have her name in MIS, and she doesn't have any bank account. After completing 15 years of journey, many interventions have been made by the government, many suggestions and questions have come from expert civil society organizations and activists. Are these questions solved? How will the female worker get her right? What kind of authenticity is maintained on the ground? The fact of the matter is that the vulnerable sections of our society remain vulnerable after all these interventions, Most of the acts are based on targets, and as long as the numbers are achieved, the nuances are ignored. As a result, the identity of women as a worker is not established. In fact, often, the female worker doesn't have any existence or recognition on official papers.

Now, it is obvious to say that this discrimination should not happen, and nobody should get violated of their rights. This scenario needs to change and the identity of women-workers has to be established. The only thing that change the scenario is the existence of women in Job cards and MIS, with separate bank accounts in their name. With this idea, we started to intervene in our operational block. Opening of bank accounts is a ground level task. In our block Sonu a, when we started engaging in MGNREGA, we found that only 12% of labourers had bank accounts, and among them only 3% were women worker. However, this block was among the best performing blocks during the last two years. But a major portion of the work was being carried out by machines. Despite this, the muster roll was being filled on time and great expenses were made at the MIS level.

How they addressed the issue...

At first, we identified the issue that people are not getting their wages. Various cases of funds' mis-management came up at the ground level and the demand for work began decreasing day by day. It was very hard to believe that our

country's largest employment Act was totally failing to get people to believe in it at grassroots. Nobody wanted to make demands for work. Everybody had reasons that were more or less similar and often said= "Nothing improved at the village-level and we have been cheated number of times".

Our main focus was to open a large number of bank accounts in the name of women. Our block level federation played a marvelous role to carry forward the campaign.

Survey-SHG wise survey was done in every Panchayat. For that we made a format that includes some simple data collection, like- how many members have bank accounts in their name? How many members' name is present in job card? How many of them did work during last one year?

Then four important areas of information were captured i.e. job card number, account number and its details, Aadhar number. SHGs began keeping the data sheet in their box so that they could make demands on their own and every member could memorize their job card number and account details.

Prepare Action point- After completing survey, we prepared an action plan to cover all women. Federation members negotiated with banks to organize camps Panchayat-wise. Initially, it was difficult and most of the bank branches refused to organize the camp due to lack of manpower. But after we assured the bank managers that we will support to fill formats and organize camps, the camp was held.

Organized camps at village-After deciding on the dates, the details were shared with all SHGs and through them, the message was conveyed that everybody needed to bring a copy of their ID proof along with original.

Prepare list and submit for account freezing- Lastly, the final list was prepared village wise and submitted to the block office for account freezing. The original letters were submitted with a request letter, and another copy was kept with the SHG, so that at a later stage, they can verify whether details entered in MIS are right or not, by themselves.

Financial Year	2014 - 2015			2016 - 2017		
Panchayat	Total	Individual women worker account	Women Work days in MGNREGA	Total	Individual women worker account	Women Work days in MGNREGA
Asantaliya	618	370	2136	818	576	9092
Dewanbir	344	170	840	444	325	5612
Lonjo	612	259	2623	612	434	3417

From this table, we can see that women participation in MGNREGA has increased in three Panchayats. I talked with many workers and got to know that they are more interested to work in MGNREGA now. Receiving the wages directly in their own hands helps increase their confidence in MGNREGA.

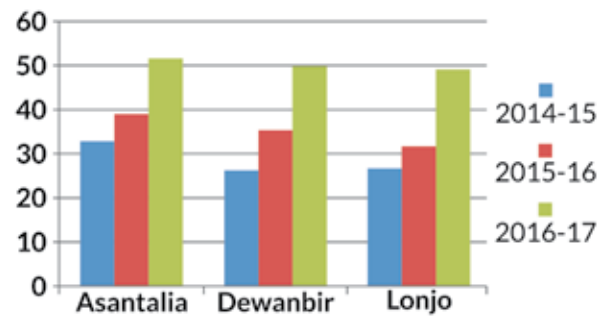
Panchayat	2014-15		Percentage	2015-16			2016-17 (Till December)		
	Total		Women person days	Total	Women person days		Total	Women person days	
Asantalia	5857	2136	36%	22019	8593	39%	17532	9092	51%
Lonjo	8241	2623	31%	10974	3430	31%	6938	3417	49%
Dewanbir	2412	840	34%	6541	2317	35%	11255	5612	49%

Case Study–Village Raghoi

Changing Beliefs. Increasing Confidence

Our challenge was to identify the issues and make interventions to ground the Act properly. After a lot of discussion, we realized that payment is the major reason why people felt cheated and mistreated by MGNREGA. So, if we intervened or addressed that particular issue, people's belief in MGNREGA could be restored. While we started with 8 villages, our main focus to convert bank accounts was in one village called Raghoi. Out of 114 households, 84 job card holders opened their bank account, and put pressure on the block administration to unfreeze previous post office accounts and convert them to bank accounts. All the old passbooks were kept by mate and the kedar, so the people were refused. It took a while, but after 3-4 rounds of letter writing and filing complaints, the people were able to achieve success. After 2-3 weeks of work, they now started to hold their entire wage in cash, through the bank. This motivated them and 56 out of 84 HH completed 38 days of work during this FY. On average, they received their payment within a week.

Keeping in mind all of the above aspects, we can say that the women's participation in these



areas increased in a significant manner. Women workers were now getting their wage in a fair and timely manner by accessing their right to work. I am sure that across the country, participation of women is more or less similar, with maybe a few exceptions. The opening of women's can be one of the biggest tools for this and also reduces chances of corruption. Whenever collectives have claimed their space, the gap between demand and supply side has been reduced. It is very pleasant to see that in a worksite, all the members now have correct name on job card and bank accounts. When a didi hold her job card in her hand, she can feel a sense of ownership and say proudly -'It is my Job card'. This builds a sense of ownership, and makes them feel that they matter personally. In some houses in our block, women's names have come as head of the households, and they are now eligible to claim their rights while their contribution is treated as more worthy by her and her family.



Annexure-XIII

Raidih's Story of Change

Collaboration of different stake holders (Block, Panchayat, CFT, Nrega Sahayata Kendra & collectives) – To Make NREGA from Government's Programme to Peoples' Programme

Introduction

In Gumla district and may be in entire Jharkhand, the most common NREGA slogan used by community is “नरेगा, मरेगा” it means if somebody is involved in this programme, s/he will die. But the walls of District administrative office and block campus or Panchayat building say different words. These are like “नरेगा में आवा, काम पावा” (Come to NREGA and get employment), “हर हाथ को काम मिलेगा, काम का पूरा दाम मिलेगा” (Every hand will get employment and every employee will get payment). In one side administration, bureaucrats and NREGA functionary says that today there is no need for employment, people are no more interested in NREGA, and New Panchayati Raj System is creating the problems... The other side is from community and labor; they say untimely payment, no clear idea about the scheme plan or implementation, contractor & middleman's interference, Panchayat is inactive and corrupted... The third one is elected representatives of Panchayat. They say that we are powerless, we want to do NREGA perfect but front line functionary is dishonest & not supportive. In each level always, Blame–Blame–Blame.

“I am going to share my experience how MGNREGA changes it's face when people started participating and understanding their rights in NREGA. Other stakeholders also realize their role and responsibility”.

A ray of hope came in deep dark MGNREGA when CFT program started at Raidih block in 2014. PRADAN (CSO), CBO, Panchayat, Block and District involve in this program. CFT had started work from 6 villages of 3 Panchayat. CFT started awareness generation among all stakeholder around MGNREGA act, processes of implementation and role of different stakeholder in this program. There were large gap among all stakeholder, we activate such platform to interact and discuss issues of workers in MGNREGA like weekly Rozgar Diwas at Panchayat

sachivalaya, Block coordination committee meeting at block, District coordination committee meeting at district and establish Nrega Sahayata Kendra at Block. When each stakeholder starts playing their roles and responsibilities properly the scenario have been changing now the mentality or way of thinking of stakeholders changed. Those people who used to migrate to other places throughout the year now are working as MGNREGA labors and living in their home with his family and friends happily.

Involvement of Block, Panchayat, CFT, Nrega Sahayata Kendra & Collective in

Awareness Creation: The primary problem of NREGA is the fact that the community has been left unaware for such a long time resulting existence of middleman, delay in payment, corruption in system etc. PRADAN first took step to make them aware about the fact that NREGA is not merely a scheme but it is an act. So, if somebody is not getting the benefit from NREGA that does mean violation of the law under which the citizen is entitled to access their entitlements from the government. Organizing NREGA awareness rally, NREGA workshop, Campaigning, Promoting NREGA/ other entitlements related book stall etc was the initiatives taken to build confidence among people about NREGA.

In awareness rally and campaign the participation in each Panchayat was not less than thousand. In this gathering different villagers came from different places with a rally and get assembled

in a common place of Panchayat where they met PRI representatives, front line functionary and officials of block & district administration. Here they asked questions, took commitments and shared their problems. In few gathering some social activists were also present to make people aware about rights and act. Along with that there were lots of street plays, songs, slogans related to NREGA. The concept of book stall was completely new for this area. It was unbelievable that communities are investing money to purchase books which will help them to understand NREGA and other entitlements. But it is the fact that total 1300 books has been sold in this book stall of Nrega Sahayata Kendra. This was the first event organized in Raidih block where more than 5000 people at least came to know the basic understanding about the NREGA as an act and may be this was the first time when PRI, federation, administration, PRADAN and common people came in a common gathering to discuss NREGA and explore way out to make it successful.

There are a lots of new initiatives taken by CFT Raidih like awareness rath, mela/gathering etc. although these initiatives were not guided by state for such types of innovation but block administration always appreciate such interventions and participate in this types of events and motivate people to get there right said in NREGA Act. Some of the innovations were also adopted by state and make this necessary for entire district of Jharkhand.



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There are a lots of new initiatives taken by CFT Raidih like awareness rath, mela/gathering



MGNREGA Awareness Campaigning at Uparkhatanga Panchayat with the help of PRI, CFT



Training on "MGNREGA is an Act" to SHG women at Mariyamtoli.

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Participatory planning in Gram Sabha

The scenario of Gram Sabha in Raidih block was just a document made by some powerful and locally influential people. If somebody asks a question to a common villager that where or when Gram Sabha took place in your village? The answer might be "I do not know".

“ना लोक सभा ना विधान सभा, सबसे बड़ा ग्राम सभा” (Gram Sabha is more powerful than parliament or state assembly). Yes, it is true that Gram Sabha has lots of power, but for that at least Gram Sabha needs to be occurred. The toughest thing in it is to get the original Gram Sabha minute register. Because lots of duplicate Gram Sabha register was move in that Panchayat. Powerful person sign from villagers in original Gram Sabha register but schemes noted in the duplicate Gram Sabha register so that they can mention schemes according to them in the original register.

The problem is also not from one side. The villagers are also not interested to attain the Gram Sabha. They say, we do not get benefit from it, so why will I join Gram Sabha. Then PRADAN along with federation started encouraging villagers especially SHG women to attain Gram Sabha to at least understand the problem. Gram Sabha started with a good number of participation. But still it was an issue that what Gram Sabha decides, that do not get implemented. For example, if Gram Sabha decided or planned few structures to be implemented under MGNREGA the plan do not get sanctioned. The plan got sanctioned is different than the plan prepared by Gram Sabha.

When YBA started, there was certain prescribed guideline regarding Gram Sabha

1. Gram Sabha register should be issued and signed by BDO
2. CFT would closely monitor the Gram Sabha process
3. There is role of Panchayat to conduct Gram Sabha with help of CFT
4. Most important there were planned document of all revenue village with preferential order. This Gram Sabha has played major role to make this becomes people's programme. People understand their presence is important. They read their village level plan in their respective group, satisfied that all plans are ok then Panchayat consolidated the whole plan and again read back the final plan. This is happened because everybody obeyed their responsibility

i.e. Panchayat conducted Gram Sabha, people participated, CFT helped Panchayat to consolidate the plan, PRADAN and federation motivate people to attend Gram Sabha, Block administration helped to follow all prescribed guideline.

Work Sanctioning Process

After conduct of gram sabha the further work is to analysis of plan by panchayat executive committee and send it block for technical and administration sanction. Jharkhand had a culture in MGNREGA that target is finalized from state or block accordingly gram sabha decides. CFT gives training to panchayat representative around their role, responsibility and rights of gram sabha. Same time PRADAN also empowered federation around role of different stake holder in MGNREGA. Panchayat realises their rights and act accordingly. The plans prepared by gram sabha were submitted to block by panchayat representative. Panchayat representatives oppose the culture of top down approach where state decides the target instead of peoples plan. They write letter to NREGA commissioner to stop such kind of culture. After this opposition state realises and every time issues send to state they act upon it and issue letter to district and mail group (CFT Jharkhand) that helps other. Earlier what was happening a letter issued by state against complains but no one knew about? Now block administration have to act upon this because federation is active and act on this letter. They are visiting to block with issues and with letter to notify block about the action. Also started asking question if problem not get solved and forward it to state for further action.

Demand for Work

Earlier a concept frozen in the mind of community that work demand will only be accepted when work is sanctioned and opened at village by the block. The major role of CFT and CSO was to break this mind set and motivate people to place work demand instead of wait for the scheme opening. CFT with the help of women's federation seed the concept of labour group. They meet every week and

place work demand with the help of SHG mate in Rojgar Diwas. Panchayat gives platform to labour group as a Rojgar Diwas once in a week. Where panchayat representative, panchayat staff, NSK representative and CFT staff will be available and help labour for demand of work and carry forward all these demand to block for generation of e-muster roll by panchayat staff. Block administration ensure timely e-muster roll generation and conduct regular review meeting to ensure thing is going properly or not. Those labour who have any issue regarding MGNREGA they will also lodge complain or ask question in Rojgar Diwas.

Selection of SHG members as Mate: In reference to letter from state regarding selection of women SHG mate, federation discussed in their monthly meeting then federation representative carry forward this message to SHGs. There were strong believe in community that women can't do work of MGNREGA mate. Our patriarchy society believes women should work in home because they are weak. Somewhere women also accepted these societal norms. There were tola sabha organised by CFT and PRADAN at different village and hamlet level to built confidence among women that they would be the best person as a mate. Then middle man starts creating rumours against PRADAN and giving threats to CFT staff. Although all these thing happening federation strongly take their stand and finally 300 women SHG mate came out and gram sabha approved. These things happened because federation mobilize women and large number of women participated in gram sabha. After selection CFT gave technical training to all women mates which were financially supported by block administration. Now they are working happily and if any problem comes around they fight it jointly.

NREGA Sahayata Kendra (NREGA Facilitation Center)

There were mainly two aspects of NREGA. One is selection of schemes to be implemented and other one, the more important side is of employment generation. The selection of schemes can be addressed better by proper Gram

Sabha, pre-planning exercise etc. But the second part is interest of labour. In the village also, people is more concern about scheme and less about labour. For example, to get employment in NREGA a labour needs job card, but she/ he does not know how and where to prepare job card. A labour wants payment timely but she/ he does not know why payment delay happens and where to complain for delay payment. The act says that if a labour do not get employment within two weeks of job demand she/ he will get unemployment allowance, but where to claim? So, after getting clarity on act, the most common question comes is "if not, then what?"

The objectives of NSK are

- Helping the villagers to access the benefits of MGNREGA
- Awareness generation on the Act of MGNREGA and some few more entitlements
- Raising voice against corruptions happening in the different programmes
- Village level institution building to unite people for creating mass pressure against the bureaucracy, government and exploitative middleman system when required

Whenever NSK volunteers find any fraud cases regarding NREGA, They lodge complain to Block Development Officer. These complains are well discuss in Block Co-ordination Committee (BCC) Meeting among Block Development Officer, Block Program Officer, Gram Rojgar Sewak, Pnachayat Sewak, CFT and Nrega Sahayata Kendra Volunteers. Participants jointly try to find out the solution and whatever result come out through discussion the block administration take action on the basis of result.

PRADAN and CFT help Nrega Sahayata Kendra to plan for awareness creation, monitoring and field inspections. We provide support to Nrega Sahayata Kendra volunteers like MGNREGA MIS training (How to find labours Job Card, Schemes Status and Tracking labour's delay payment etc.), Motivational training, planning meeting and confirmation about new updates in MGNREGA, State Circulars etc.

Participation of Panchayat in MGNREGA

In Raidih the role of PRI was negligible especially in case of MGNREGA. The PRI representatives are working as a support hand to block administration. They had no decision on MGNREGA. There are Panchayat office, but locked from the day of inauguration. For every small work people needs to move to block. When it is an achievement, block administration takes the credit and when it is a failure or confusion they pass it for PRI people. The PRI representatives became contractor of block.

Before initiating joint effort strengthening of PRI is utmost important. Few initial steps have been taken in near past to strengthen PRI. The most vibrant and important step is Rojgar Diwas. Here it decided that Panchayat Office must have to open at least once in a week for MGNREGA related works. Initially, resistance came like villagers will not come in Panchayat Office; PRI representatives will not give time in Panchayat Office etc. But the Rojgar Diwas broke down all assumptions and rumours. It was such a big gathering that now the staffs of Panchayat need to work upto 4pm on this day.

In Rojgar Diwas

- Villagers are accessing their own Panchayat
- No needs to come to block for each small issues
- PRI representatives found their space to work
- It became easier for villagers to access or question their people rather to interact BDO or block other officials
- Though it started for MGNREGA works but addressing a bigger issue

Block administration have given clear instruction to Rojgar Sewak and Panchayat Sewak to conduct weekly Rojgar Diwas at their respective Panchayats with the help of CFT. Block administration also keep their eyes in regularity of Rojgar Diwas if any Panchayat miss their weekly Rojgar Diwas then BDO take action against Rojgar Sewak and Panchayat Sewak. Mukhiya also make their presence in this event actively and motivate people around MGNREGA Act and importance of Rojgar Diwas.



NREGA Sahayta Kendra at Raidih



NREGA labours are accessing kendra



Block Co-Ordination Committee (BCC)" meeting

Block administration organize weekly "Block Co-Ordination Committee (BCC)" meeting. BDO, BPO, Gram Rojgar Sewak, Panchayat Sewak, Mukhiya, CFT Members, Nrega Sahayata Kendra etc. are to be participants of this meeting. This weekly meeting is an important aspect to understand the status of work jointly, solve the problem raised at field and prepare review of the previous week and plan for the next week. Since all PRI members are available in this meeting they also get aware about their Panchayat. We prepare agenda for the meeting then discuss on the basis of MGNREGA MIS report. According to discussion and plan for the next week all PRI members and staffs (both CFT & Block) actively engage at field level.

Other than this the Panchayat level workshop, meeting organised by federation increased the interaction of villagers with PRI. Now PRI representatives are found more confident and slowly they are realising that they are there to support and help the community and not the bureaucracy.

The steps followed are

- INRM training and exposure of each hamlets under the selected revenue villages
- NREGA related trainings at hamlet level
- Panchayat, Block and District level workshop to make NREGA a common agenda
- Formation of Panchayat, Block and District Co-ordination committee for discussing the issues and challenges in a regular interval
- Transact walk and Map preparation prior to planning
- Hamlet level discussion on plan preparation and prioritisation

- Involving Panchayat representatives in planning process
- Organising Gram Sabha for plan sanctioning and prioritisation
- Preparing village level booklet consisting of Baseline survey report, Plan consolidation, Photocopy of Gram Sabha minute, Maps (Social map, resource map, plan map etc), well-being ranking etc
- Distribution of Booklet to Village, Panchayat, Federation, Block, DRDA so that anyone can see the plan any time
- Involving Gram Sabha in Mate selection, Barefoot engineer selection (interestingly all the mate and barefoot engineer selected by Gram Sabha are SHG women)

Conclusion

By this way a collective effort is going on in Gumla to make MGNREGA better but all this effort is putting by community institution. On other hand each stakeholder trying to play their role and responsibility and strengthening people voice. Our visualisation is to make MGNREGA people program which will only happen when people/NREGA labour sensitized or feel no one can come in between labour and their rights. I want to sight how different stakeholders engaging himself like Panchayat involve in planning process and aware people, Panchayat staffs engage in implementation at ground with good coordination with CFT, block engage in administrative part.

Result of this good coordination, Raidih is created some good examples like large number of people started work in MGNREGA, make Panchayat representative accountable toward people and "burn lamp of hope that NREGA is not MAREGA" apart from that people create some good model like mango plantation, sheds and good quality water harvesting structure.

No. of Job Cards made and entered in the MIS	No. of bank accounts frozen in the MIS	No. of structures physically completed	No. of mango plantation	No. of SHG mates trained	No. of SHG mates that have worked in at least one scheme
298	989	216	320	301	154

We have some dilemma like CFT is very short term program and what will happen when there is no support to Narega Sahayta Kendra, Is it strive in net of government? These two are node to make this MGNREGA better place to work. In absence of such facilitation centre, are there

chances that MGNREGA again pull back to same bad condition? What will happen to government target which is at all not MGNREGA act because MGNREGA is all about plan extracts from ground? Will it happen that people raise their voice? Lots of such question still in mind...



Presenting plan in front of government official at Ghaghra; Kansir panchayat



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