

Fellowship: Nandlal Master Updates

January 2009

NREGA Updates

- Scheme launched from April 1st in Varanasi area
- Guarantees 100 days of work to low-income families
- 1/3 of work is to be allocated to women and 3% for handicapped
- Conflict between centre and state - between implementation and financing
- Scheme is riddled with corruption
- Example - 180 days of work is done but it filed for 300 days. Difference is split amongst the officials

NREGA Survey

District : Varanasi UP

Block - Arajiline

Total Gram Panchayat - 107

Area of survey - 58 gram panchayat

Time of survey - August September 2008

No of villages surveyed - 58

NREGA Survey

| | |
|---|---|
| No of job cards issued - | 5976 |
| No of accounts opened - | 1558 |
| No of people who got work - | 2168 |
| Total no. of man days of work done - | 13585 |
| Avg no work days per job card - | $13585/5976 = 2.2$ |
| Avg no work days/person who worked- | $13585/2168 = 6.3$ |
| Total wages paid - | 894,222 |
| Average wages per day - | $894222/13585 = 65.8$ |

NREGA Survey

- People had to pay for opening bank accounts and taking photographs, both of which should have been done by the govt.
- Women and physically challenged people have not received adequate representation
- No facilities were made available like shade to rest, drinking water, medicines, etc
- No unemployment benefit has been ever provided

NREGA Survey

- People were being asked to do too much work in a single day especially for women and physically challenged people.
- There is one person who is hired at a salary of Rs 2000/month to look in to the nitty-gritty of the implementation details at the village level. This person is also not getting paid on time.
- Formed a union of all these field-workers.



Workers working on a canal near Mehdiganj. Good number of women employed



Workers measuring the work done again.

Villagers meeting with the BDO



Updates from Schools

- There are two day schools being run – one at Harsos and another at Nagepur – with about 180 and 190 children enrolled respectively
- There are three NFE centers being run at Saudapur, Harsos and Nagepur – with about 100 children attending these centers. Children range from the age of 10 to 18.
- There are 6 centers being run for adolescent girls (Kishori Kendras). There are about 25-35 girls who go to each of these centers. They are provided basic education, taught sewing, embroidery and given information about women's health issues, domestic violence and self-sufficiency.

Updates from Schools

- At the last Asha-India conference, Ram from Puvidham demonstrated the use of learning material they had developed there. They have acquired two kits to use at their schools
- Nandlal attended the Learning Network Conference at Kolkata at the end of December. Interacted with people from different schools who were working on improving quality of education – activity based learning, role of exams in learning.
- Interesting discussion about the importance of art and what is the definition of art. Nandlal organized a day long teacher training session to discuss some of the ideas he learnt at the conference. Will try to provide a greater emphasis on art.

Day School at Mehdiganj, Rajatalab



Start of Schools

- Started another Kishori Kendra and sewing center at Birbhanpur
- Two sewing machines, carpets and embroidery material donated by Subhasit Jan Sewa Sansthan, Varanasi
- 30 girls have already enrolled to join this center
- The expenses for this center will be supported by SJSS
- Stationery at ASV, Nagepur supported by SJSS
- We have received about 400 books in support
- Have contacted the Basic Education Coordinator of the District for help with more books.

Independence Day Celebrations

- Flag hoisting at the schools
- Explained the importance of independence
- Children participated in cultural programs - dance, song, plays, debates, etc
- Sweets distributed amongst all who were present - children, parents, villagers

Water Rights Campaign

- The Ballia plant was shut down in August citing financial losses. The local community had been protesting against the plant because of indiscriminate discharge of waste by the plant into the surrounding fields
- In January, started the construction of two new ponds in Nagepur and Mehdiganj to aid water conservation. The villagers presented this proposal to the local officials and work for it was approved under the NREGA scheme, costing about 123,000 and 687,000 rupees respectively



Noted water-conservation expert Rajendra Singh along with villagers starting the construction of a village pond on January 13th, 2009

Other Activities

- There are about 32 self-help groups, which have a monthly meeting. There are training sessions organized from time to time.
- Health Camp organized at the community center. About 450 people from the village benefitted from this camp
- A team of 5 people went to Bihar to help provide relief to those affected by the floods. Helped in the cleaning of the locality, providing relief material and starting of a school for the children