

Village report for Vishnubandh village, Vishnubandh panchayat

The team visited Vishnubandh village from 8-10 May, 2013. Vishnubandh village is about 17 km from the block headquarters and the nearest bank. Matlong panchayat which is 3km before Vishnubandh enroute from Manika, has a post office. The village has two middle schools, two anganwadi centres and a ration shop. The village is divided into 5 tolas i.e. Nadi paar, Paschim, Kherajaria, Khirakhard and the most populous Basti tola at the centre. The tolas are quite spread out with the distance between each 0.5 km to 4 km, Khirakhard being the furthest. All tolas except Khirakhard have electricity, albeit intermittently.

The survey team completed 21 household interviews, 12 interviews with pension beneficiaries, verification of 45 old age and widow pension beneficiaries, which is a complete list of all beneficiaries in the village. In addition to this the team also held a meeting with about 40 people from different tolas on issues of water, land and forests, PESA, findings emerging from the survey and the upcoming public hearing in Manika. A summary of the survey findings are below:

NREGA

Job cards

While the target for the household survey was to complete 30 households which are a random sample of job card holders in the village, the survey team was able to only complete 21.¹ This was because of a number of irregularities found in the job cards.

- **Duplicates:** One set of duplicate job cards in the name of the same person Mohiuddin Ansari (job card numbers JH-06-004-015-007/9791 and JH-06-004-015-007/52246), was found. The BPL number on both were the same but the names on each were spelt somewhat differently. While on the first work has been done upto 2008, the second job card shows work done in 2009.
In another case there was a set of job cards, both of which had listed the name of Arjun Singh. In one job card, the names of Arjun Singh and his wife were listed while in another, Arjun Singh and his father's names were listed.
- **Fake job cards:** 3 job card holders could not be found in the village and no one could identify them.

Fake entries and siphoning of funds

14 out of 21 job card holders we interviewed said they had either never done NREGA work in 2011-12 and 2012-13 or had worked for less than the number of days shown in their job cards. Payment made against these fake entries amounts to Rs. 55,800 in 2011-12 and Rs. 75,396 in 2012-13, a total of Rs. 1.3 lakhs in two financial years.

¹One person in our sample had left the village, two job cards were found in the same village so the team only conducted one interview in the household and one person in our sample was completely unresponsive and the team was unable to complete the interview.

Several of these cases included those who had migrated at the time the work had take place last year (i.e. May 2013). Video testimonies of these cases are available.

Table 1 Job card holders who have never worked but job cards show entries and payments

Name	Job card number	Number of days (2011-12)	Number of days (2012-13)	Total amount paid
Dinesh Bhuiya	57220	0	54	6558
Jhalo Devi	9963	92	72	20064
Kopli Devi	99903	0	96	7320
Arjun Singh	9978	0	60	7320
Reyajul Miya	47845	84	24	13008
Shambhu Ram	57205	0	90	10980
Kaael Oraon	53377	36	66	12372
Rajmatiya Devi	9948	101	96	23832
Habib Miya	50360	96	48	14472
Akbar Ansari	50065	48	48	11616
Mahrum Kunwar	53347	96	0	11520

In cases where the job card holder has confirmed that he/she has worked, there is a mismatch between the work listed in the job card and the type of work that the person recalls. There were a few cases where the family had done NREGA work several years ago as the E-job card indicated.

Payments

Not a single household said that they had received their wages through the bank/post office system despite the shift away from cash in 2008. All households interviewed reported having received their wages in cash through a ‘contractor’. In fact 15 out of the 21 households interviewed said that they did not have a post office or bank account although their e-job cards have account numbers against their names.

No alternative to migration

14 of the 21 households interviewed had a family member that was had either migrated at the time or had recently returned from brick kilns in Benaras, steel rod factories in Rajasthan and rice mills in Chhatisgarh. All those we spoke to said they migrate because there is no alternative employment in the village. There was unanimous consent to working for all 100 days under NREGA if work was opened in their village. Although none of them had applied for work, their responses indicate the level of unmet demand in the village.

Pensions

Table 2 Pension beneficiaries (IGNOAPS and IGNWPS)

Alive and getting pension	Alive but could not meet beneficiary	Dead	Person could not be identified	Total
29	2	10	4	45

1. Pension payments have not been made since March. While pensioners are supposed to be paid each month, they get their payment once in 2-3 months.
2. There is no fixed date for pension payments and there is no system for informing people that they should collect their payment from the bank/post office. This paves the way for informal information system captured by intermediaries.
3. The team found that none of the pension beneficiaries' passbooks had been updated since 2010-11. Bank officials said that they are under-staffed and therefore unable to update passbooks regularly. Pension beneficiaries have no records of their payments and are therefore unable to keep track of the amount received and the months they have been paid for.
4. The survey team found cases where the ration cards of pension beneficiaries was taken away or their name was replaced by their son's.

Public Distribution System

There are 99 BPL ration cardholders, 100 APL, 38 antyodaya and 150 'atirikt BPL' families in Vishnubandh. All families reported having received 28-30 kilos after even though the ration shop dealer told them he was giving them a standard 32 kilos each. All families aid the full amount of Rs 35 and all ration card entries were for 35 kilos.

When the team met with the ration dealer, Narayan Yadav and inspected his records, it was found that the amount of rice he received from the block for BPL ration card holders is 1330 kilos. This fulfills the 35 kilo allotment requirement for each family. In his sale register as well, the per family/card amount distributed is 35 kilos and not 32. According to his documents there is no case for why families should receive less than their 35kg entitlement. There is inconsistency between the dealer's statements to people and the records and Narayan Yadav was unable to give a satisfactory response to explain why people were getting less than 35 kilos of rice when he had received the full allotment.

The ration dealer was also selling kerosene oil at the rate of Rs 17.24 as opposed to Rs 14.3 in the purchase voucher. Families reported getting only 3 litres whereas they are entitled to 4 litres. The total allotment received at the ration shop is 1200 litres whereas the total number of families that kerosene is to be distributed to is 387.

There were also several reports of the ration shop dealer speaking rudely to ration card holders when they questioned him on why they were getting less than what they were entitled to. In one instance, the ration shop dealer had even threatened to kill the people raising these issues. He even told the team that if he had to give people 35 kilos he would be unable to 'afford' running his household and would have to give up his dealership.

ICDS

There are two anganwadi centres, one in the basti tola and the other in khira khard. However most families the team interviewed reported that they rarely send their children to the centre because the centre itself opens only for a few days in a month. Most families in our sample never send their children to the centre. While immunization takes places regularly, other essential services such as cooked meals, monthly weighing, health check ups are not being provided even when the centre opens. It had been about three months since the Sevika here had died and while a new sevika had been appointed she was yet to take charge. Lactating and pregnant mothers were receiving THR but said that the quantity was adequate only for one meal. Moreover the THR is rarely consumed just by the beneficiary – most often, it is shared by others in the family.

Mid Day Meal

All families whose children study in the government school reported that MDM is served regularly with no interruptions. However, meals are not served according to the menu which includes one egg a week. There were three cases where families reported that some form of discrimination/segregation had been observed in the school.