

## **Survey of Food Security Schemes in Dhadgaon, Nandurbar**

The Indian Institute of Technology Delhi initiated a survey of the welfare schemes of the government in Dhadgaon Block, Nandurbar. These include the ICDS, the Public Distribution System (PDS), the NREGA, the Mid Day Meal Programme and Social Security Pensions for the vulnerable. The survey is being conducted in ten states of which Maharashtra is one. One of the teams recently concluded a survey of 6 villages in Dhadgaon block of Nandurbar District in Maharashtra with the help of Narmada Bachao Andolan. The villages included Kelapani, Leghapani, Radikalam, Hathui, Kundal and Amla.

The team found massive irregularities in the functioning of these programmes but also found reasons for hope, as people expressed their appreciation for their entitlements when they are able to get them.

**PDS:** The PDS was found to be hugely dysfunctional with massive discrepancies. In Kelapani (a backward and far off village), most people had BPL or Antyodaya cards, was the worst faring village, where people reported receiving only around 10-30 kgs of grains per year, whereas they are entitled to receive nearly 35 kgs per month. In fact, people are unaware of their entitlements, having last received some grain from the PDS shop in August, 2012. Their ration cards have no entries in them since 2003! The villages of Hathui, Radikalam and Amla were not much better - people receive approximately one-third of their entitlements over the past three months, and that too very irregularly (see table below). A number of people of Amla village received some ration after nine months just a few days ago. Kundal village was the only sample village where people were happy with the functioning of the PDS as they received between 25-35 kgs of grain (wheat and rice) regularly every month.

The PDS dealers, are often influential people of the village (such as Gram Panchayat members), were reported to be unresponsive to the people's demands for regular supply of rations, commonly turning them away saying they did not get the supply.

**NREGA:** NREGA, the flagship social protection programme of the Government of India, was found to be the most shocking while at the same time providing massive hope. In all sample villages, people did not have any idea about their most basic entitlements in terms of the number of days of work they can get, the number of days within which wages are supposed to be paid and the minimum daily wage rate. Little effort seems to have been made either by the state or local governments to create awareness about people's entitlements. This is surprising since Maharashtra is the state that pioneered the idea of an guaranteed employment Act over 30 years.

In several villages, the surveyors found that NREGA wages are being misappropriated possibly by NREGA functionaries. The NREGA wage payments are supposed to be made through the post office in the block. However, in several villages, the villagers said they did not have their pass books, as some local leader or the post master had kept them for 'safe keeping' and refused to give it back to them. Further, the Kelapani residents were not allowed to go to the post office themselves – the local forest guard would withdraw the money and give it to the workers waiting outside. Nowhere were the passbooks found to be updated. It was only in Amla village, where there is no local post master and the people are served by the Dhadgaon post office, did villagers have their own post office passbooks, the people withdrew the money themselves and the pass books were updated.

In some villages, huge discrepancies were found between the information provided on the NREGA website and the actual work done by workers. In some cases, these were mistakes in the data entry at

the MIS stage. For instance, for the same person, a job card existed under the family name Pawar as well as under the family name Pawra. Both job cards have work and payments on them. The respondent is only in possession of one of the job cards. The discrepancies were highest in Radikalam village. While villagers had worked an average of 59 days, their job cards showed that they had worked and received payment for over 71 days. One worker, Vankar Hunya Pawra, was found to have two job cards in his name online. However, he was only aware of one job card. Further, according to his job card, he had received nearly Rs. 19000 in 2008-09, Rs. 8200 in 2011-12 and Rs. 3100 in 2012-13. However, the worker said he had never really done any work under NREGA in 2008-09, and received not more than Rs. 1500 in any of the other years.

However, there was reason for hope. In the village of Amla for instance, a number of works were done for water conservation, watershed management and tree plantation on the villagers' fields themselves which the villagers found to be very useful. People's main complaint was that they got very few days of work under NREGA.

**ICDS:** ICDS was found to be uniformly in shambles with very little capacity building or monitoring happening. Most respondents with children below 6 years of age did not send their children to the AWC because the AWC remained mostly closed or did not provide any useful service. In Kelapani, Leghapani, Radikalam and Kundal the AWC was found to be mostly non-functional. The only AWC which was found to be functional was an AWC in Patil Pada in Hathdui village where the AWC was found to have received training, the AWC was well stocked and the environment fit for the children's development.

Village	E-Job Card Entry (in person days)	Actually worked (In person days)	PDS (grains received per month in kilos)				
			Mar	Apr	May	June	Total
Kelapani	27.68	15.89	3.1	6.7	3.6	0	13.33
Radikalam	71.6	59.25	12.1	9.95	16.8	0	38.84
Hatthui (incl Kundal)	7.48	15.74	15.9	13.7	7.8	0	37.35
Amla	18.31	23.17	1.6	0	77.3	10.68	89.55
All villages	31.3	28.5	8.1	7.6	26.4	2.67	44.8

**Pensions:** The survey team found relatively fewer discrepancies in the implementation of pension schemes meant for the elderly, disabled and widowed people. Most of the beneficiaries were found to be genuine.

It is disheartening to find the sorry state of programmes meant for the welfare of the most vulnerable among us.