

## Village Report: Patna Village (Janho Gram Panchayat)

The team conducted its survey in Patna village 9-10 June, 2013.

### **NREGA**

This government scheme is especially important in a village like Patna where a large number of labourers migrate to places like Mumbai, Ranchi and the state of Gujarat in search of work. This happens mostly between November and January. The inefficient implementation of NREGA means that a lot of people are denied the chance to work in their own village.

#### Job Cards

Twelve out of our 23 respondents did not have their NREGA job cards with them. 7 of them had given their job cards to contractors and 2 of them had given it to forest department officials. Jagdish Oraon, a farmer, could not work under NREGA because his job card was with a contractor named Banarsi Ram who refused to return it. Banarsi Ram said he would only return the job card in exchange for fifty rupees. This is just one example of such a case that was found in this village. Similarly, a contractor named Lakshmi Ram has Raju Oraon's job card. Raju Oraon is also a farmer. Maharaj Oraon told us that his job card was currently with a contractor named Jai Mangal Yadav.

#### Mode of Payment

NREGA workers are still being paid in cash rather than through bank or post office accounts. 13 out of 23 respondents were paid in cash the last time they worked under NREGA. Only 4 people were paid through Post Office accounts. The remaining 6 had never worked under NREGA.

#### Delay in Payments

Payment is delayed in a significant number of cases. 7 people were paid after more than 15 days when they last worked on a NREGA jobsite. In a meeting that was called in the village school, the team met a large number of labourers who had not been paid for work they had done between March-May 2013. The details are given below-

Beech Chama Daha Palas Gadha Talab Nirman, Yojana Number- 11/12-13

Name of Labourer	Job Card No.	Account No.	Wages Due
Shiv Nath Singh	39347	12410313	80 chouka
Santu Singh			90 chouka
Muneshwar Singh			77 chouka
Phatu Singh			90 chouka
Manoj Singh	40072		90 chouka
Sunita Devi		5507386	90 chouka
Vinita Devi	39347	5507347	90 chouka
Vimla Devi	126126	12410507	40 chouka

## Awareness

Awareness regarding NREGA guidelines and regulations is quite low in Patna village. Only 2 out of 23 respondents knew that they were entitled to 100 days of work per year. Only 7 respondents were aware that payment for NREGA work is supposed to happen within 15 days. Not a single respondent was aware that the NREGA wage rate in Jharkhand was Rs. 138 per day.

- Not a single respondent out of 23 had ever put in a written application for NREGA work. Lack of awareness about NREGA is a cause for this absence of applications.
- Patna village was slightly better than other villages like Bhatko and Vishnubandh in terms of the frequency of NREGA work happening. Some residents of the village had even worked in March 2013. However, people living in settlements that were on the outskirts of the village, like the Oraon tola, were not even aware that NREGA work had happened that year.
- Residents of Patna are quite eager to work at NREGA worksites. 16 out of 23 respondents said that their families would work a full 100 days if they were paid the minimum wage and payment happened within 15 days.
- 10 e-job cards had a number of incorrect work entries. A lot of money has been released which cannot be accounted for. Money has been released even when people have never worked under NREGA. Tulsi Oraon is a member of the Home Guard and his wife is an Anganwadi Sevika. His e-job card has 10 names, out of which only 2 live in the same household. The other names are of people who are in no way related to Tulsi Oraon and his family. Nobody in his household has ever worked under NREGA. However, the e-job card shows 72 days of work in 2012-13. Rs. 8784 have been released in Tulsi Oraon's name and his wife's name. There are more such entries in his e-job card for the years 2008 and 2010.

## **Public Distribution System**

In Patna, BPL cardholders and Antyodaya cardholders receive only 32 kilograms of rice per month. For this they pay Rs. 32. The entries in the ration cards show that 35 kilograms of rice have been sold to each family from the ration shop. This is clearly wrong as every respondent with a ration card said they received only 32 kilograms. The PDS Dealer himself admitted that he gave each cardholder only 32 kilograms per month. Such falsification of records was a major concern for the survey team.

## Visit to the PDS Ration Store

The Survey Team made a visit to the PDS Ration Store to interview the PDS Dealer. The documents he showed us and his own account of what happens each month in grain allotments were quite different.

According to his own stock and sale registers, and his release receipts, the dealer receives 24.50 quintals of rice for BPL families and 14.00 quintals for Anyodaya families. When divided by 110, which is the total number of BPL and Anyodaya families he caters to, the per family allotment he receives is 35 kilograms. If these figures can be relied upon, 3 kilograms of rice per family are unaccounted for (the dealer gives only 32 kilograms to each cardholder). For 110 families, that amounts to 330 kilograms of rice.

However, the dealer insisted that per quintal of rice, he received 4 kilograms of rice less. He also claimed that he had to make payments to what he called the 'jungle sarkar', which leaves him with 32 kilograms of grain per family, which he distributes. If the dealer, and not his documents, is to be believed, a loss of 4 kilograms per quintal at the Block level means that he receives 36.96 quintals of rice for 110 families that he caters to. This means that the per family quota he receives is 33.6 kilograms of rice. We know that he gives only 32 kilograms to each family, implying that he siphons off 1.6 kilograms from each family. When multiplied by 110 families, we see that 176 kilograms of rice are still being stolen by him. Both situations show a massive siphoning off of rice.

### **Mid-day Meals**

The Mid-day meal scheme is one that works better than many other schemes in most villages. However, it is far from satisfactory. While most parents are satisfied with the quality of food served, all of them reported that eggs, which are the most nutritious item on the mid-day meal menu, have never been served in schools.

### **Integrated Child Development Services (Anganwadi Kendra)**

One startling observation in Patna was that a large number of people are unable to take their children to the Anganwadi because it is more than a kilometre away. This happened especially with the residents of the Oraon tola of the village. Out of 23 respondents, only 8 had children below the age of 6, who are entitled to Anganwadi services. All these respondents only went to the Anganwadi the day health check-ups/vaccinations were held or when Take-Home Rations (THR) were distributed. In one case, when the child turned 3 years of age and stopped receiving THR, the family stopped going to the Anganwadi because of the distance. However, all respondents told us that vaccinations were held regularly and vaccination cards were also made for children.

### **Pensions**

One of the major problems with pension payments was a delay in payments. The Supreme Court order that pensions should be paid by the 7<sup>th</sup> each month is not being followed. All our respondents said that pensions were not paid for months. Those who could recall said that pensions were last paid in March.

Pensioners also complained about the inconvenience caused by the amount of time taken to visit the bank and withdraw pensions from their accounts.

There is also a need to update the pension lists at the block level. 3 people who were on the pension list that we received from the Block Office had died. One of them had died around 4 years ago.

We verified the pension list we obtained from the block office. Out of 5 widow pensioners in the list, 2 had died and nobody in the village could tell us anything about Sona Kuwer, one of the widows on the list.