

***REPORT ON THE JAN SUNWAI ON MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT
GUARANTEE SCHEME***

TOWN HALL, RAIPUR ON 24TH NOVEMBER, 2010

ORGANISED BY

RIGHT TO FOOD CAMPAIGN AND RIGHT TO WORK CAMPAIGN

On 24th November, 2010 Jan Sunwai (Public Hearing) was conducted in Raipur on the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) jointly by the Right to Food Campaign and Right to Work Campaign. Chaupal-One of the prominent organizations associated with the Right to Food Campaign in Chhattisgarh organized this State Level Jan Sunwai. This report tries to catch glimpses of the proceedings and thereby give a fresh thought to Jan Sunwai as a strategy of monitoring in today's context.

For the Jan Sunwai, Mr. Subramaniam, State Commissioner of NREGS, Mr. Sameer Garg, the Principal Advisor for the Supreme Court Commissioner on Right to Food, Professor Rath from Illahabad, who has been active in various studies related to NREGA in different states was present along with the Sarpanch of the villages. In this state level event, job card holders from almost all the districts were present.

One of the important scheduled proceedings in the Jan Sunwai was the presentation of the large field study carried out by a group of NGOs associated with the Right to Food Campaign in Chhattisgarh. The study was to assess the quality of implementation of MNREGS and identify issues needs to be resolved through feedback. In this study, 43 blocks across 17 districts of the state were covered.

Sameer Garg presented the study while the commissioner of MNREGS was present. He presented various facts from the study related to the irregularities in the payment of wages, completion of wages days etc.

The people came from various districts talked about their problems before the commissioner and the other dignitaries present. The following were the problems expressed by the job cardholders.

The unavailability of the crèches facilities at the worksites at many places despite there is the provision for the same under MNREGA.

Job Cardholders work for more than 100 days but they are given wage payment for less than 100 days or for 100 days. In some villages, the job card holders said that they have not received the money of the work done in 2009. Some said that the contractors pay less than Rs. 100 despite the provision of maximum wage payment of Rs. 100 or the maximum wage decided in each state.

Some of the job card holders said that, the bank is deducting the money from the bank account unnecessarily. The job card holders in Dhamtari reported that, nearly 25,000 have been deducted by Dena Bank of all the job card holders in a particular village. In some villages, the bank accounts have been opened but no passbooks have been given to the cardholders.

One of the female job cardholder said that, her husband is dead but still someone taking money in her husband's name.

In the response, the commissioner NREGS told that the main problem in the implementation today, is the lack of technical assistants, as they are less in number. To address this problem, they have lessened the qualification from engineering graduates to diploma holders. The training programme has also been arranged to train the assistants, so that they can carry out the activities. In the end, he assured that, the complaints will be followed up by the concerned officials and departments.

The Jan Sunwai and the field level study both were important steps to exercise the peoples' control over the implementation of the scheme. The importance of the study is prime as it was carried out largely by the people in the field.

Sameer Garg emphasized on this fact that, such initiatives are important and should be carried out once in a year and at local levels. The local, field based organization can be involved in these tasks to check the irregularities and malpractices that are prevailing in the implementation.