



Vidarbha Rohayo Major Sammelan: Vidarbha NREGA Labor Summit Report

18 January 2010, Shetkari Niwas, Karanja Lad, Dist. Washim
444105

Chief Guest: Dr. Rajendrasingh

Jointly Organized by SAMVEDANA AND SAMVARDHAN
SANSTHA, KARANJA



There are two contrasting situations in the rural area of Vidarbha: severe lack of employment for unskilled labor in unorganized sector and there is huge amount unspent at government department allotted for employment and watershed development work. A cross cutting arrow goes through this situation is large scale destruction in the natural resources. This large unspent fund of NREGA (MREGS in Maharashtra state) can be utilized to solve both problems viz. to provide employment to mass and to restore degrading ecosystems. In this situation a question is arises that where to start to ameliorate the situation? We believe we should start with the labor, largely unorganized, devoid of knowledge and deprived.

NREGA is demand driven program and labors have to ask for the work. However, due to lack of knowledge people simply do not ask for work. Role of local institutions like GRAMSABHA is crucial in the implementation of this act however this largely do not happen at all. The act stipulates that GRAMSABHAS should come up with management plan of there own area. However again due to lack of knowledge this largely does not happen.

To cope with some of the above problem we organized one day summit of labors, Gram Panchayat members, and government officials and student's summit. The main objective of this summit was to explain the NREGA act to all the sections of the society. NREGA only for the sake of the employment to labor is not the core area of our work. Rather to initiate whole village development work by incorporating principal of whole basin management is core area of work. The river basin is our target area.

Main Concerns

1. All the forms related to NREGA should be available in the Gram Panchayat (Not available in many GPs).
2. Job Cards of the labor should be issued immediately (Since 2 years such JOB CARDS not issued at my villages).
3. The work demand forms should be accepted by the officers (Not accepted at Many GPs).
4. The acknowledgement of the demand form should be immediately distributed to labors.
5. The wages should be distributed within 15 days.
6. The honorarium of the ROJGAR SEVAK should be distributed immediately.
7. All the facilities as mentioned in the act should be provided to labors.
8. All line departments should plan for the work and there should be diversity in the work.
9. At the time of the planning of village whole basin should be considered.
10. Officers, Gramsabhas, Sarpanch doing good work should be felicitated.
11. There should be helpline to solve the problems of the labors.

Beyond our expectations about 4000 people including labors, government officials, students, and common people gathered to understand the conservation of watershed through NREGA. We made the seating arrangement for the approximately 1000 people while about 3000 people seated under the sun for almost 3 hours.

Chief Guest of the program was **Megesese winner Dr. Rajendrasingh, Tarun Bharat Sangh, Jaipur**, Member of the Maharashtra state assembly **Mr. Prakash Dahake**, Collector of Washim district **Mr. Udaysingh Rathore**. The program was divided into two parts viz. capacity building and actual field visit to understand the watershed management at local level.

The program started with the introduction given by **Dr. Nilesh Heda**. He explained need of the NREGA. He argued that, NREGA is only way to halt the degradation of natural resources. It is the practical way to implement the **GRAMSWARAJ** (Village Independence), a concept given by Mahatma Gandhi, at local level. The act gives power to local institutions to make a planning of village. However, according to him, this act is violated at every step. Government official refused to accept forms essential to ask for work and so on. The actors behind this failure are not only government officers but also labor and GRAMSABHA members. As a part of future plan, he provided way of study of this act and peaceful activism at local level.

The collector of the Washim district **Mr. Udaysingh Rathore** provided status of the MREGS in the Washim district and agrees to take necessary actions to strengthen the same.

Member of the state assembly **Prakash Dahake** decided to incorporate the NREGA in the development work in his constituency (Manora and Karanja Taluka).

As a part of capacity building **Mr. Pawan Mishra** explained in very simple words steps to start NREGA work in villages.

The Final speech of first session was delivered by **Dr.**

Rajendrasingh. He argued that failure of the NREGA is not only due to the government officers, but labors also involved in the same. Present situation of the water resources, rivers and other natural resources in India is alarming. To halt this situation there are two practical way viz. water conservation and soil conservation, both the objectives can be fulfilled by the NREGA.

After the lunch Rajendrasingh and selected people went to a small village SHIVNAGAR to understand principles of the watershed management. SHIVNAGAR is a small village of the Karanja Taluka. Acute water shortage is the principle problem all people of the Shivenagar are facing. In this situation ridge to valley approach-based watershed work is important to cope with the problem.

The follow up of this program is to spread the message in the whole Vidarbha. On ground level this can be happened by showing some examples, thus we are selecting 10 villages in the Bembla river basin for the positive interaction where system-based watershed work will be done. Watershed work for the sake of watershed work is not the priority rather holistic approach which involves conservation of biodiversity through people's participation will be the main theme. In this regard the program was a starting point.

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