

## Chapter 2: Summary of Partner Reports from Districts

### 2.1 Nawarangpur District

**2.1.1** The NGO named AVA (Association for Voluntary Action) conducted the study for the district Nawarangpur. The southern district of Nawarangpur, earlier a part of the undivided Koraput, is one of the 8 districts of backward KBK region and is having a large tribal population, which is 49.62% of the total as against the State average of nearly 22%. Tentulikhunti Block was chosen as the sample, and 4 GPs of this Block, namely Patraput, Kantagaon, Anchalguma and Jhariguma were taken up for the study, and again in each GP two villages were studied with focus in respect of implementation of NREGA. The list of 8 villages falling under the 4 GPs are as follows:

- Patraput GP- Patraput and Boriguda
- Kantagaon GP- Gandiguda and Kusunguda
- Anchalguma GP- Jhodiaguda and Nuaguda
- Jhariguma GP- Biriguda and Kenduguda

The selection of the above villages was based upon 3 criteria, such as proximity to or distance from the GP headquarters, proximity to or distance from the forests and reportedly good or poor implementation of NREGA. While villages Patraput, Nuaguda, Biriguda and Kusunguda were located within the vicinity of their respective GP headquarters, the location of the villages Boriguda, Jhodiaguda, Kenduguda and Gandiguda was far-off. While villages Boriguda, Jhodiaguda, Kenduguda and Gandiguda were located near the forests, the location of villages Patraput, Nuguda, Biriguda and Kusunguda was far-off. While the villages Boriguda, Jhodiaguda, Kenduguda and Kusunguda were reportedly having good performance on NREGA front, the villages Patraput, Nuaguda, Biriguda and Gandiguda had reportedly done poor.

**2.1.2** As regards the sources of information collected, these were primarily two; (1) a total of 80 respondent-villagers, 10 from each sample village, and (2) such Panchayat functionaries as Sarpanch and Secretary of GPs and such Govt officials as Programme Officer (BDO), Gram Panchayat Extension Officer, Additional District Project Coordinator (Project Director District Rural Development Agency) and Technical Officer dealing with MIS (Management of Information System). To enable the investigators to collect the relevant information within a given time frame, pre-scheduled questionnaires along with clarificatory training and orientation were served to them under the aegis of PRIA in a combined forum organized for the purpose. It was made clear to all that the information to be collected ought to pertain to the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the financial year 2008-09 i.e the 6 month period from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

**2.1.3** It would be interesting to know at this stage that while there was absolutely no problem in collecting information from villagers and Panchayat functionaries, the investigators faced an initial refusal from the PO-cum-BDO Tentulikhunti to share the information on NREGA with the investigators. The investigators had to approach PD DRDA, who in turn apprised the District Collector about the matter. Only on getting a green signal from the Collector the PD DRDA wrote a letter to the BDO instructing him to cooperate with the team of investigators in the matter of information sharing. Then only the BDO became willing to respond to the investigators in respect of NREGA related information as known to him. As Nawarangpur report states, this round-about and time-consuming route that the investigators had to traverse to reach to the office of PO-cum-DO simply to collect some basic information related to implementation of NREGA in the concerned Block was the main cause behind the delay in submission of the report to the nodal agency.

**2.1.4** Out of 80 villagers interviewed, as many as 52 (65%) were found lacking in awareness about the NREGA. However, it was a positive sign that all the households whosoever applied for the Job Card could get it. Though the Act stipulates the provision of job within 15 days of one's application for the purpose, only 21 persons out of 80 (26%) could get it in time. 38 persons (47.5%) got it within 30 days, 15 persons (19%) within 60 days and 2 persons within 90 days, while 4 persons didn't get any job even after a lapse of 90 days. In view of the clear stipulation of the Act that the workers won't have to pay any sum towards the cost of a job card, 10 respondents (12.5%), all belonging to Boriguda village under Patraput GP reported that they had to spend some money for the purpose. As regards the workers' preference for the type of works under NREGA, all opined in favour of concrete road works in comparison to earth works emphasized by the Government, for the simple reason that the latter is more labour intensive and therefore more strenuous than the former. On getting the job cards, 47 persons out of 80 (59%) applied for the job. As to why the remaining persons didn't apply, various reasons were revealed. Some thought that the job would be automatically allotted to a job-card holder without his applying for it. Some others didn't like to do any earthwork. And moreover, neither the GP functionaries nor the Block officials did carry out any special awareness drive to motivate the workers to apply for the job. Another interesting finding was that no applicant was given a receipt against his/her application for the job. On a close scrutiny it was revealed that neither the applicant demanded a receipt nor the concerned GP official offered it as per the mandate.

**2.1.5** Though more than 60% of the job-card holders didn't get the job within 15 days of their application for the same, none could receive the unemployment allowance, which as per law should have reached the unemployed person automatically. Moreover, the villagers being ignorant about this provision didn't put forward any claim it either. The Act stipulates that at least 50% of the NREGA money shall be spent through GPs for what is called Panchayat Works, while the remainder shall be utilized for General Works through Block, DRDA, Line Departments, SHGs and the like. It was found that 45% of the respondents availed job from their respective GPs while 21% from the Block. The remaining 24%, all belonging to villages Boriguda and Nuaguda, who were not given any job, could have got it provided they knew how to avail the jobs from the source of general works entrusted to DRDA.

**2.1.6** As regards the number of days that the villagers could avail the job within the study period of 6 months, it was found that out of 54 that availed the job, maximum number i.e. 14 persons availed 15days of work each, followed by 5 persons availing 12 days each, 6 persons each availing 7 days, and again 5 persons each availing 3 days. Only 2 persons could avail 40days of work each, and each of the 4 persons got 38, 21, 20 and 16 days of work respectively. The reasons for such poor turn-out of the workers in terms of work-days seem to be various, such as lack of awareness among the workers, their lack of interest in labour-intensive works, and moreover lack of any outreach initiative on the part of the personnel of Panchayat or Block.

**2.1.7** It was noticed to the credit of the concerned officials that the majority of the workers could get their wages within the stipulated period of 7days or maximum 15days. Out of 54 workers that got the wages, only 6 got it after 30days while 10 persons within 16 to 30 days. A good number, 20 persons got it within 7 days. As regards the delay in wage payment, the Block officials explained that BDO, JE and other such personnel being busy as they are around very many other jobs couldn't devote exclusive attention to the NREGA works. Specifically speaking, there being no separate JE for NREGA works, the existing JE of the Block who is already overburdened with other duties, takes a lot of time to go round different villages to measure the NREGA works. Since the payment of wages depends upon the measurement by JEs, there eventually occurs an unavoidable delay, and the Block can't do anything about it.

**2.1.8** As regards the nature of works undertaken, out of a total 57 engaged workers 42 (73%) were employed in road and other construction works on time rate basis while only 15 (27%) in works involving digging of soil such as pond excavation on piece rate basis. The construction workers got wages @Rs.70/- per day, while the soil workers @ Rs.100/- per 100 cft. There was a marked preference for time rate based construction works over the piece rate based soil works. It was further noticed that except 10 workers who were engaged on time rate basis, all others got their wages. As regards the reason for non-payment of wages, it was revealed that the Block JE who was supposed to do the measurement before the wages could be disbursed couldn't make himself available for the purpose as he was 'hard pressed due to excessive workload'. The Block JE was burdened with so many other works in addition to NREGA and moreover 'accords least priority' to the latter. Again, on verification, it was found that in as many as 40 Job Cards (73%), there was no mention of the number of days that a family got wage-employment. And further, in none of the job cards was there any mention of the amount of wages received by the concerned family, which is a clear violation of the NREGA guidelines.

**2.1.9** As regards the provision of unemployment allowance, no worker in the surveyed villages could get it, though many were entitled to. However, in Khandiaguda village under Tentukhunti GP of Tentulikhunti Block, unemployment allowances were paid to some workers following a prolonged agitation. After this the Government officials were found to be losing interest in carrying out NREGA works,

**2.1.10** Out of a total of 8 villages surveyed, only in 2 villages (25%), namely Patraput and Jhadiaguda such minimal worksite facilities as drinking water and rest shed were available. On being asked whether the Work Plan was approved in the Palli Sabha meetings, 50 persons out of 70 (62.5%) replied in the positive, 15 persons (18.75%) in the negative and the remaining 15 (18.75%) expressed their ignorance about the matter. As regards the formation of Vigilance Committees, only in 4 villages out of 8 (50%), namely Biriguda, Kusumguda, Gandiguda and Kenduguda such Committees do exist only in a formal sense but without having any knowledge on what to do. The villagers in general were found to be unaware about the role and functions of such Committees.

## **2.2 Puri**

**2.2.1** Puri is a relatively forward, coastal district, which came under purview of NREGA in the third phase of implementation of NREGA along with 5 more districts commencing from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008. The sample survey of working of NREGA in this district was undertaken by SWAD, Satyabadi and the period of survey spanned six months from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008. Six GPs of Satyabadi Block were selected for the sample survey, and a total of 10 villages were selected from these GPs as per the list mentioned below:

Sandhara GP-	Jayarampur and Nua Sahi
Nua Someswar Pur GP-	Panda Sahi and Baraghararia Sahi
Dugal GP-	Atheisia and Badahata
Mahura GP-	Alikia
Penthapada GP-	Rangani Sahi and Dubuduba
Sukal GP-	Alisha

The distance of the GP boundary from the Block headquarters was the criterion for the choice of the GPs. Distance-wise 3 GPs, namely Sandhara, Sukal and Mahura were located about 20 km. away and two GPs, namely Nua Someswar Pur and Dugal about 6 to 10 km away and one GP namely Penthapada closest of all to the Block headquarters.

**2.2.2** As regards the sources of information, the investigators held Focus Group Discussions with the villagers in the concerned villages and Interview with the Panchayat functionaries

including Sarpanchs of the concerned GPs. With an aim to collect and collate relevant information as comprehensively as possible in the given time span, they used two sets of pre-scheduled questionnaires, the first one consisting of 32 questions meant for eliciting response from the beneficiary villagers, and the second one consisting of 26 questions addressed to PRI functionaries including Sarpanchs.

**2.2.3** In course of interaction with the villagers it was noticed that they were largely ignorant about the provisions on how to apply for registration as eligible families under NREGA. The issue of job cards to the registered families was also found to be a messy affair. In 90% of the cases, the job cards issued didn't carry the photographs of the concerned adult members of the family. Out of 74 card-holders interviewed, 10 persons got the job card between 10 to 15 days of their application for registration, another 10 persons got it between 15 to 20 days, 8 persons between 20 to 30 days, and 29 persons between 30 to 75 days, and as many as 17 persons didn't get their cards yet. The investigators noticed a common problem that though the families were divided years back, the job cards were issued in the name of the head of the undivided family, causing difficulties for the adult sons and their family members to avail the job card and as well the job under NREGA. On verification of the job cards it was found that there was no mention of the days of work performed or amount of wages received by a card holding family in the job cards- a fact, which violates the very rationale of a job card as laid down in the Operational Guidelines on NREGA.

**2.2.4** As regards the application for job to be made on a plain paper or on Form C-1 before the GP, the villagers were found to be largely ignorant about this provision. Some workers who submitted their applications for work didn't however demand a dated receipt against the same, simply owing to their ignorance. When asked about it they replied that they have verbally requested the Sarpanch/Secretary for getting the job under NREGA. In regard to the allotment of job and in the event of its failure the provision of unemployment allowance, out of 74 persons interviewed, only 18 told that they got the job within the stipulated period of 15 days. The remaining 56 persons who were as such entitled to unemployment allowance didn't receive anything of the sort, the reason being their ignorance about this provision. Moreover, while the participation of the disabled in NREGA works was nil, that of women was found to be negligible and that too only in Sukal GP.

**2.2.5** On the front of wage payment, it was noticed that 48 persons got Rs.70/- per day on time-rate basis. The remaining 26 persons who worked on piece rate basis got smaller amounts like Rs.61.5 or Rs.65.5 per day. In view of the currently prevailing higher rate of daily wages in coastal areas of Orissa, the villagers don't show much interest in NREGA works. It was also found that contrary to the statutory provision the workers were not issued notices to join the work. Neither were they informed about the total mandays and cost estimates of a project they were supposed to work for. The timely and proper measurement of the works and consequent determination of wages due to the workers are lacking in the process of implementation, as a result of which the workers grumble against delayed and lower payment of wages. On being asked about such operational snags, the Sarpanch Mahura stated his side of the story saying that he had not been officially informed till date as to who were appointed as Gram Rozgar Sewaks and Gaon Saathis. The Secretary of the said GP also complained about the lack of trained staff, which was mainly responsible for payment related problems. Besides he gave the instance of himself being overburdened with the duties of two GPs, Penthapada and Jaypur.

**2.2.6** On worksite facilities it was noticed in all GPs that except drinking water and the naturally available tree shade, nothing else was available. On being asked the Sarpanch of Nua Someswar Pur tried to explain away the deficiency saying that there was no need for a crèche since no female worker was involved in NREGA works and there was no need for first-aid box

since the workers as and when injured were taken to the nearest hospital for treatment. The workers who use their own working tools in course of NREGA works are not paid any hire-charges for the same, a fact, which works as a disincentive against workers' interest towards NREGA works.

**2.2.7** As regards Right to Information and Social Audit, which are as such built into NREGA to ensure transparency and accountability at every level, it was found that there existed a conspicuous absence of such provisions anywhere in the GPs under survey. The Secretaries and the Sarpanchs of GPs however admitted that they were aware about these provisions. The provision that the muster roll and job card need to be filled up at the worksite was not adhered to. Moreover, job cards were not found to be up-to-date. Usually somebody from GP side keeps rough notes in his personal Khata, on the basis of which Muster Roll and Job Cards are filled up later. As revealed from the villagers, there existed no monitoring and vigilance committee for NREGA works, a fact which was ascertained from the interview with Sarpanchs of 4 GPs.

**2.2.8** In regard to the provision for community participation in the process of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, it was gathered from extensive discussion with the people in villages that the common villagers who are in actual need of NREGA works are little involved, while the powerful and influential section among the villagers practically control the decision making process in respect of the new scheme. On being asked, the villagers informed that there was no Palli Sabha held for planning or disseminating the information on NREGA, and the Panchayat functionaries straight away started its implementation from the stage of registration of eligible families. The Panchayat representatives however stated that they being aware about such provisions would strive in due course of time to ensure people's participation by way of adopting such measures as formation of vigilance and monitoring committee, workers' association, social audit and discussion of NREGA in Palli Sabha/Gram Sabha meetings.

**2.2.9** The overall NREGA scenario of Satyabadi Block is marked by lack of minimum institutional arrangement, lack of orientation among the key official and PR functionaries, irregular monitoring, alienation of backward sections of society, lack of right to information and grievance redressal mechanism and hegemony of the influential persons in the decision making process. The half-hearted attitude of the officials coupled with lack of mass awareness about the new the law are responsible such malaises bedeviling the NREGA in Satyabadi Block of Puri district.

**2.2.10** The sample Study of NREGA in Satyabadi Block concludes with a set of recommendations, which need to be put into effect immediately to overcome the obstacles on the path of proper implementation of NREGA. It is a fact that Puri being a late comer NREGA district falling under Phase-III, more time is required for it catch up with the basic operational requirements of the new law. However, if at all NREGA is to succeed in a coastal district like Puri, its local situation ought to be kept in view, and the planning of NREGA done in such a way as to ensure hassle-free registration and issue of job cards attractive wages, timely payment, better worksite facilities, prompt payment of unemployment allowance, right to information, and speedy grievance redressal. Towards this end, the concerned officials need to be trained and oriented adequately and the people at large made aware about their rights and entitlements under the new law.

## **2.3 Angul**

**2.3.1** Centre for Development Service (CDS), a registered Society based at Banarpal in the District of Angul conducted the NREGA study for the district. Angul came under the purview of NREGA in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase commencing from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 along with 4 other districts of Orissa namely, Balasore, Bargarh, Bhadrak and Jajpur. Banarpal Block was chosen as the focus area of

the Study. Out of 25 GPs in Banarpal Block, 4 GPs, namely Kanjara, Talmul, Sakosinga and Bonda were taken up for survey. Again, a total of 8 villages, two from each GP were selected for the purpose of primary data collection. The GP-wise list of selected villages is as follows:

Kanjara GP – Kanjara, Mahar Sahi

Talmul GP – Garh Talmul, Talmul Sasan

Bonda GP – Bonda, Jhajiribahal

Sakosinga GP–Sakosinga, Kuio Balisahi

**2.3.2** For the 6 months time-line of the Study period i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008 primary data was collected from selected 10 households from each village, while secondary data from the concerned offices at District, Block and GP levels. Village level meetings with participatory method were held for eliciting the response of the villages, while interaction was held with the PRI functionaries and Govt officials to record the information furnished by them.

#### **The List of GP functionaries and Govt Officials interviewed**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Institution</b>
1	Ms. Mamata Muduli	Sarapanch	Bonda GP
2	Mr. Yudhistir Behera	Sarapanch	Talmul GP
3	Mr. Trailokya Dehury	Sarapanch	Sakosinga GP
4	Mr. Kirti Sahu	Secretary	Kanjara GP
5	Mr. Ashok Kumar Garhtia	BDO	Banarpal Block
6	Mr. Biswa Bhusana Panda	PD	DRDA, Angul

**2.3.3** It was found that there prevailed a general awareness among the villagers about salient provisions of NREGA, such as on job card, 100 days of guaranteed employment in a year, priority on labour intensive works and unemployment allowance. However, they didn't know the procedural details of how to avail their rights and entitlements at ground level.

**2.3.4** Most of the families whose names appear in the Govt list were issued job cards. It means that contrary to the Operational Guidelines no special survey for the purpose of NREGA was undertaken to identify the eligible families. As a result, the families, which were separated from the original joint families have not received job cards. Another peculiar fact was noticed that most of the families who received the job cards didn't have to apply for registration of the names. Again, those few families who applied for registration were not given the receipt against their applications so made. And a delay of 15 to 45 days occurred in the issuance of job cards to the applicants. Contrary to the rule it was further noticed that 90% of job cards were kept with Sarpanch/Secretary of the concerned GP. Moreover, on verification, it was found that only 38% of the job cards were filled up properly.

**2.3.5** The Schedule-1 of NREG Act mentions a list of 8 types of projects along with the order of priority, amongst which plantation is an important item. The areas under Banarpur Block

being affected by industrial pollution do stand the need for plantation works on a massive scale and there is strong demand from the local population for undertaking plantation in the concerned villages under NREGA. But strangely enough, plantation was not carried out anywhere in the Block, a fact which shows that the NREGA works were imposed from above and not in deference to the wishes of villagers.

**2.3.6** Though all the job card holders were interested to work under NREGA, as many as 40% of them didn't apply for the job mainly due to their ignorance about the need for making such application. Among those who applied for it, quite many did it verbally. Again, only a few, less than half of the number of applicants could get a receipt against the applications for job so made. It was gathered in course of interactions at different levels that the Panchayat officials intentionally avoided issuing such receipts thinking that once a receipt was issued, the person concerned could demand unemployment allowance using it. Again, it was revealed that the Panchayats were depending upon the Block authorities in respect of every stage in the implementation of NREGA, even in respect of 50% of NREGA works allotted to Panchayats. Specifically speaking, the delay in wage payment is caused by the delay in measurement of works by the Block JE, who is not an exclusive staff of NREGA but a Block official already overburdened with so many duties. Similarly, contrary to the Operational Guidelines, the Programme Officer is not a full-time dedicated officer for the purpose of NREGA, but remains the BDO who is already overburdened with a variety of functions in normal course of his duties.

**2.3.7** An interesting finding came to the notice of the investigators as regards the manner in which works were allotted to the villagers under NREGA. Without complying with the formalities like Demand for Work by Workers in Form C-1 and Notice by GP for allotment of Works in Form C-2, the works were started straight away and the card holding villagers asked to join in the works. In a few cases which occurred during rainy season, the workers placed their Demand in Form C-1 and the Panchayat Officials did also issue Notices for Work in Form C-2; but when the workers turned up at the worksite, they felt harassed by the Panchayat officials who discouraged them saying, 'If you work, you shall not get more than Rs.20/- a day', or simply, 'There is no work now, please go back and you shall come as and when we call you'. Thus not a single work was undertaken during the rainy season. Again, some workers felt unhappy about the Form C-2 (Notice for Work), where contrary to the mandate of the Act it is mentioned that if a Worker fails to turn up for work on the date mentioned in the notice, he/she won't be entitled to either work in future or unemployment allowance.

**2.3.8** Out of 81 villagers interviewed, the biggest chunk, that is, 35 persons got job upto 15 days, followed by 10 persons for 60 days, another for 30 to 45 days, 9 persons 15 to 30 days, and 8 persons from 45 to 60 days. The remaining 9 persons, who got negligible number of work-days couldn't recollect the exact duration of their engagement in NREGA works. It was noticed that 78 workers were engaged on piece rate, and only 3 on daily wage basis @Rs.70/- per day. As regards the delay in wage payment, out of 81 villagers interviewed, 9 were partially paid. 36 persons got the payment within 15 days, that is the deadline set by the Act. But as many as 31 persons got it after a delay of 30 days, and 5 persons within 15 to 30 days. There is no proof of any worker getting the compensation against the delayed payment as required under the Act.

**2.3.9** As regards the mode of payment of wages, out of 81 families surveyed, 71 have opened Savings Bank Account, and the remaining 10 who didn't have Bank Account till date were paid cash against their wages drawn from the Accounts of other workers. The Again, only in 47% of the cases, the issue of Bank cheques to the workers, as required, was done openly in front of others, while the remaining respondents expressed their ignorance about this provision. As regards the need for proper maintenance of Muster Roll at the worksite, out of 81 persons, as many as 34 persons admitted that their attendance was taken not on Muster Roll, but on plain

paper, while 30 persons attested to the fact of the attendance being taken on Muster Roll. 17 persons informed that no attendance was taken at all. As against the provision that Muster Roll need be filled up by the Gaon Sathis at the worksite, they were not seen at all anywhere, though they were given appointment for the purpose. Moreover, muster roll was not available at the worksite. It was revealed that the Sarpanch used to collect advance signatures of the Account holding Workers, draw the cash himself and pay it to other workers. This fishy practice by the Sarpanch seems to be the new source of corruption around NREGA money after the supposedly foolproof mode of payment through Banks was introduced.

**2.3.10** The maintenance of worksite facilities seems to be too poor. Out of 81 workers only 28 attested to the availability of drinking water, only 20 to that of First Aid, only 3 to a Rest Shed, and only 4 to the Creche. As regards the equipments used in the works, 68 workers used their own equipments, 6 used the hired ones and remaining 7 used the Departmental equipments. However, only two workers got a nominal amount towards the equipment charges.

**2.3.11** As regards the mandatory provision of holding Palli Sabha/Gram Sabha for planning of NREGA works, about 30% of the respondents replied in the positive, 26% in the negative and the remaining bulk of 44% expressed their ignorance about this provision. From a discussion with the yes sayers, it was however revealed that the meetings were held only for formality's sake, its organizers showing no interest or enthusiasm in the subject matter. On being asked about the existence and functioning of the mandatory village level forum called Monitoring and Vigilance Committee for checking corruption in NREGA works, 23% of the respondents replied yes, 22% no and remaining bulk of 55% expressed their ignorance about this provision. Further, the investigators found the record keeping practices messy and tardy at different levels. The data collected from GP, Block and District administration didn't tally between them. The suo motu disclosure of NREGA related information at any level is conspicuous by its absence. The social audit, though formally shown by the officials to have been held, there is no evidence showing that it was held anywhere as per the norms laid down in the Operational Guidelines.

## **2.4 Dhenkanal**

**2.4.1** The NGO named Samajik Seva Sadan based at Dhenkanal conducted the NREGA study for the district of Dhenkanal, which came under the purview of NREGA in the 1<sup>st</sup> Phase commencing from 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006. The 3 nos. of staff of the NGO who were imparted training and orientation on the questionnaire and method of study in a workshop organized for the purpose on 9-11 September 2008 jointly by PRIA and SWWS at Hotel Green Park, Bhubaneswar. Adopting the pattern followed in case of some other districts, 2 villages from each of 4 GPs under the selected Sadar Block of Dhenkanal were chosen as the thrust areas for the purpose of the study. 10 families from each village were selected for the purpose of primary data collection. Again, while choosing the beneficiary families from each selected village, the Scheduled Tribe group was given the numerical priority. The GP-wise list of villages so selected is as follows:

1.Dhirapatana GP	1.	Krushnaprasad
	2.	Kamadhenukaote
2.Bhapur GP	1.	Bhapur Sabar Sahi
	2.	Mahulpunji
3.Mangalpur GP	1.	Mangalpur Sabar Sahi
	2.	Mangalpur Juanga Sahi
4.Talabarkote GP	1.	Talabarkote
	2.	Siaria

Questionnaires were used to collect information from the beneficiary families of each selected village, who were mobilized to gather in a meeting held for the purpose. The secondary data were collected from the Sarpanchs of abovementioned 4 GPs, and such Govt officials as BDO and Addl. BDO of Sadar Block and Project Director and Junior Engineer of DRDA, Dhenkanal, who are entrusted with monitoring and supervision at Block and District levels respectively.

**2.4.2** It was found that out of 80 families, all except 8 knew more or less about NREGA. Again except only 5 families all got job cards. Out of 75 families that got the job cards, 65 got it within 15 days while remaining 10 between 15 to 30 days. None of the families that got job card had to spend any money towards this. Out of 75 card holding families, 73 had the job card kept with them while the job card of one family was with the contractor, and that of the remaining family with the Gaon Sathi. All the families told that they were interested to work under NREGA but were facing several problems in availing the work. Out of 75 families possessing job card, 64 had applied for job, while 11 didn't. As regards the provision for issue of acknowledgement receipt for the application for work, only 4 families got it and the overwhelming bulk comprising 71 families were denied of it. As to whether they got job within the stipulated period of 15 days, only 28 families got the job timely, while 7 families got it late and remaining bulk of families didn't get any work at all. As regards from whom they got the job, only one family reported that he got it from the contractor, while others from the GP. It was further found that the total mandays, for which they got jobs during the 6-month period under survey (1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008), it amounted to 242 days, i.e. less than 7 days per head.

**2.4.3** As to the delay in getting wages, out of 35 families, 24 got it within 7 days, 6 families within 15 days and remaining 5 within 30 days. Explaining the delay in payment of wages, Sarpanch Bhapur GP blamed the delayed release of sanctioned amount for this. Out of a total of 35 families that got wage work 12 families worked on Piece rate (Thika Chowka) and 23 families on daily-wage basis. As regards the amount of daily wages given, it was found to be the stipulated one i.e. Rs.70/-. Though payment through Bank cheque was prevalent only families availed it, while the remaining 32 families got it in cash. As regards the need for mention of the amount received in the job card, only 8 cases out of 35 complied with it. Again, only 18 families reported that Muster Roll was being maintained at the worksite, while others seemed to be ignorant about this provision. On verification serious discrepancy between the entries in Muster Roll and corresponding entries in Job Cards was noticed. Moreover, they were found to be ignorant about the provision of compensation to be paid to the concerned workers on account of any delay in wage disbursement.

**2.4.4** As regards the provision of unemployment allowance in the event of failure of the authorities in timely allocation of jobs, none of them got it and the villagers were also found not to be aware about the procedure of getting it and lodging of complaints alleging its non-disbursement.

**2.4.5** As regards the worksite facilities, only 5 families reported their knowledge about the drinking water in place, another 5 families about the rest shed and 4 families about first aid provision. No worker was found to be aware about the provision of a crèche at the worksite. Out of a total of 35 families who worked in NREGA works, as many as 33 used their own equipments, while the Panchayat supplied equipments to only 2 families. Those who used their own equipments were not compensated for the purpose.

**2.4.6** As against the mandatory provision of planning of NREGA works in the Palli Sabha/Gram Sabha meetings, only 9 families out of 80 replied in the positive while the remaining bulk expressed their ignorance about it. About the need for functioning of Monitoring and Vigilance Committees at village level to check corruption, as many as 78 families expressed

about their ignorance in the matter. No Beneficiary Committee was found to have been formed in any village.

**2.4.7** On being asked about the records maintained at the GP level, the Gram Rojgar Sewaks as directed by the Sarpanchs of 3 GPs showed that they were maintaining such 10 types of registers as to record Registration, Issue of Job Cards, Accounts, Application for Work, Muster Roll, Palli Sabha meetings, Notice for joining the Work, Employment, Assets and Grievance. However, on a close enquiry by the investigators it was revealed that these registers were prepared very recently just to satisfy the surveyors. Other Panchayats also started keeping such registers under the impact of the survey. This fact was revealed by Sarpanch of Talbarkote GP to the visiting investigators. As regards the transparency provision on the need for putting an information display board at the worksite only the Sarpanch, Dhirapatana replied in the positive, while Sarpanch Bhapur maintained that it was being placed in GP office in place of worksite. The Sarpanch, Talbarkot informed that Dengura facilities existed for the purpose and the Sarpanch, Mangalpur informed that the information was placed at G.P Office.

**2.4.8** As regards the grievance redressal mechanism being in place or not, the Sarpanchs of GPs Talbarkot and Mangalpur informed that the grievance if any is first heard at GP level for an amicable settlement, failing which the matter is referred to Block/Panchayat Samiti for necessary action. However, the remaining 2 Sarpanchs didn't give any observation in the matter. As to the question how many grievances were recorded in the concerned Register, it was found to be nil. The BDO when asked that he had received 5 grievances and disposed them off. As regards the mandatory provision of social audit at Palli Sabha/Gram Sabha level, it was found missing from every village, though 4 Sarpanchs claimed that it was in operation if not properly in their respective GPs. The BDO being asked about it claimed that social audit was being organized as per rule, but couldn't supply a copy of any single such event. As against the provision of penalty or disciplinary action against the defaulting officers, the Sarpanchs maintained that no such case has so far arisen.

**2.4.9** Asked about the correspondence if any between the data posted on the internet and that maintained at ground level, the Sarpanchs of Dhirapatna, Talbarkot and Mangalpur replied in the positive while the Sarpanch Bhapur GP observed that there was no such correspondence between the two. The BDO however observed that there existed conformity between two sets of data. As to the question whether they were acting as per the Operational Guidelines, the Sarpanch, Dhirapatana said yes, while Sarpanch, Bhapur plainly told that she was not at all concerned with it. The Sarpanch, Talbarkot observed that Gaon Sathi and Gram Rojgar Sevak were supposed to act as per the above Guidelines, and the Sarpanch, Mangalpur told that Gaon Sathi was specially employed to ensure its compliance. The Sarpanchs also placed their general observations on the state of NREGS in their respective areas. Sarpanch Bhapur admitted with regret that the EO was executing the NREGS without any consultation with Sarpanch. The Sarpanchs, Talbarkot and Mangalpur GPs stressed the need for timely release of sanctioned amount for ensuring timely implementation of the works and timely payment of wages. The Sarpanch, Mangalpur GP further told that the scheme should be implemented keeping in view the priority of needs of the villagers of a GP. However, the common refrain of all the Sarpanchs was that the Scheme on the whole has not benefited the job seekers so far, and priority of the villagers' need didn't find reflection in the NREGA works either. Moreover, a lot of manipulations in filling muster roll and job card are taking place.

**2.4.10** The BDO Sadar and PD DRDA were found be devoid of a clear understanding about the provisions of the Act, NREGS Orissa and Central Operational Guidelines. They intentionally hesitated and delayed in furnishing information to the investigators in response to the questionnaire. Functionaries of both PRIs and Government authorities lacked a right attitude and

necessary enthusiasm for implementing NREGA. Due to absence of full time dedicated officers for NREGA at different levels, present lot of Govt officials who are already overburdened with a variety of jobs in their respective spheres are not able to do justice to NREGA.

## **2.5 Sundargarh**

2.5.1 To know the status of implementation of NREGA in the district of Sundargarh the study was conducted by SANGO, C/O YAVARD, Lahunipada, Sundargarh. This district has a high incidence of BPL families, which count 185969 out of a total of 285141 as per the BPL Survey of 1997. This district therefore came under the purview of NREGA in the 1<sup>st</sup> Phase itself with effect from 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006. In line with the criteria fixed for other districts a total of 8 villages, two each from a GP were selected for the purpose of gathering primary information, and a total of 80 households 10 from each village were interviewed for the purpose. However unlike some other districts, the 4 GPs chosen didn't fall under a single Block but belonged to 4 separate Blocks. The list of pairs of selected villages showing their respective GP and Block are as follows-

- Baghanipani & Lahandabud villages of Ahandabud GP under Sundargarh Sadar Block,
- Tangrani & Chatain Toli villages of Jharbeda GP under Kuarmunda Block, - ----
- Mahura & Balisoda villages of Darjing GP of Lahunipada Block, and
- Rengalbeda & Nuagaon villages of Koira GP of Koira Block.

As regards the rationale of choice of the above Blocks, a complex mix of three considerations was adopted, such as the degree of overall socio-economic development, reported good or poor performance on NREGA front and distance-cum-communication problem vis-à-vis the district headquarters.

2.5.2 Village level Volunteers under the guidance of two investigators carried out the activities of the study for the stipulated 6 month period from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008. Two sets of questionnaires were used for eliciting the relevant information from the respondents, the first one consisting of 32 questions was addressed to the village workers covered under NREGA, and the second one consisting of 22 questions to the PRI functionaries and Govt officials entrusted with execution of the Scheme under NREGA. In respect of second set of questionnaire, that is, the one meant for secondary information two BDOs, one EO of a GP, one Secretary of a GP all representing Govt officials, and two Sarpanchs, one Naib Sarpanch and one Samiti Member being the elected PRI representatives were contacted on sample basis.

2.5.3 It was noticed that 67.5% of the rural population had some or other knowledge about NREGA, which indicates that a big chunk population constituting as much as 32.5% are in no way concerned with NREGA notwithstanding the fact that NREGA has remained in operation in Sundargarh since February 2006. Nearly all those who are aware about NREGA have got Job Cards. None had to spend any money for getting the same. The bulk of the job cards, 76.25 % were found to be kept with the holder-families, 5% with persons whom the card-holder families don't know, and the remaining ones with such GP functionaries as Sarpanch or Gram Rozgar Sewak or Gaon Sathi.

2.5.4 Out of the persons who got jobs under NREGA, 65% were found to have applied for the job as per the norm, while others constituting 35% got the jobs without having to apply for it. Then out of the persons who applied for the jobs, as many as 70% were not given any acknowledgement receipt against their application. It is obvious that without such a receipt available with them, they can't demand any unemployment allowance in the event of Govt's failure to provide them with the job. It was further noticed that as against the obligation of a GP

to allocate the job within 15 days of the application so made, the majority of the families i.e. 59% got it beyond the stipulated time limit. Another obvious finding was that none of the families who were denied job within the stipulated period got any unemployment allowance, and most of such families couldn't raise a demand for it due to lack of the receipt of the application for job. Some families were also not aware about how such unemployment allowance would be made available to them and by whom. As against the Act's guarantee of at least 100 days of work in a financial year to a job card holder, it was found that 60% of the workers got only 11 to 30 days while a miniscule 8.5% got 30 to 40 days and 7.5% got 40 to 50 days of work.

**2.5.5** The Act stipulates that wage payment be made within 7 days, maximum 15 days of the date of completion of the work. However, about 50% of workers got their payment after a delay of about one month. Only 42% of the workers got payment within the stipulated 7 to 15 days, and some didn't receive it at all. Another interesting finding was that about 84% of the workers were engaged in earth works on Chowka (piece rate) basis while the remaining section on daily wage basis, as per the Government's priority given to the former. However, the workers felt that they earned comparatively less amount of wages while working on Chowka basis than on Daily Wages basis. It was noticed that about 64% of the workers were getting their wages through Savings Account in Banks and Post Offices, and 34% through cash while the remaining 2% didn't receive their payment at all. As regards the query as to why other workers have not been covered under Payment through Cheque system, procedural bottlenecks at Block level were mainly responsible for it. As against the need for faultless entries in Job Cards and Muster Rolls, nearly 33% of job cards didn't carry any mention of the person-days and in case of about 48% of workers their names were wrongly entered in Muster Roll. But neither the PRI representatives nor the Govt officials who were interviewed did admit to the existence of any discrepancy in the matter of above entries. However, 84% of the workers admitted that the wage payments to them were made in the presence of the public as required under the Act. As to the query whether the information on the Internet tallied with the ground reality, two BDOs who were interviewed replied in the positive, while majority of PRI functionaries who were interviewed expressed their ignorance in the matter.

**2.5.6** As regards the compulsory provision of various worksite facilities under the Act, about 79% of the workers reported about availability of drinking water, only about 26% that of First Aid, only about 29% that of the rest shed, and only about 26% that of a crèche. Most of the workers who worked for NREGA works, i.e. about 84% used their own tools, but didn't receive anything towards the hire charges of the same. In the matter of compensation to be paid against injury or death of a worker, two BDOs who were interviewed observed that no such eventuality has taken place at all. Similar was the case in the matter of compensation to the workers required to be paid against any delay in wage payment. No instance of unemployment allowance paid to anybody was ever found in the district.

**2.5.7** As regards the need for planning of NREGA works in a Gram Sabha/ Palli Sabha, nearly 82% replied in the positive. But anti-corruption mechanisms in the form of Monitoring and Vigilance Committees or Beneficiary Committees were conspicuous by their absence. But strangely enough, two BDOs who were interviewed claimed that such committees were formed and functioning. The same BDOs also claimed that Social Audits were held at public places involving public, but couldn't provide a copy of the proceedings or resolution of any such event. They also informed that no disciplinary action has so far been taken against any official since no case of violation of the law had ever arisen. As regards the need for keeping in place a grievance redressal mechanism, one BDO mentioned that a register was kept in his office, though no complaint has so far been received. The other BDO replied that the complaints of villagers should be redressed at village level itself by Monitoring and Vigilance Committees and also

through social audit process. However, all the respondent executives were found to be deficient in knowledge about grievance redressal mechanism under NREGA.

**2.5.8** On record keeping practices at GP and Block levels, there was no unanimity of views among the respondent officers and PRI functionaries. On the public right to access NREGA related information, there was no unanimity either. Some PRI persons mentioned that the information could be accessed in GP Offices, while some others stated that records could be inspected too. One BDO stated that one can gather information from the internet and from different workshops organized by the Government. The other BDO mentioned that one could avail RTI Act to access NREGA related information.

**2.5.9** On being asked whether any and if so, which official guidelines the PRI functionaries and official executives were abiding by in the matter of implementation of NREGA, out of 8 respondents 4 PRI persons kept mum, while one of their group mentioned Planning at Palli Sabha level and the other mentioned Guideline. However, two BDOs mentioned the Act, Operational Guidelines and Govt circulars as the source of their guidance. It is interesting to note that any reference to OREGS, notified on 16<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2006 in the Orissa Gazette was missing from the statements of all respondents.

**2.5.10** The Operational Guidelines of Govt of Orissa stipulate that the all the NREGA personnel at GP and Block level should be appointed as full time dedicated staff, and the salary and allowances of theirs would be borne by the State Govt. In response to this question, it was found that the existing BDOs and JEs at Block level were serving as Programme Officer and Technical Officer under NREGA while personnel like Gram Rozgar Sewaks and Gaon Sathis were appointed exclusively for NREGA. Asked about what problems the NREGA was facing in their respective spheres, one BDO mentioned that flow of labour force to mining sector and bad roads coupled with some other hindrances were hurdles before proper implementation of NREGA. The other BDO added that the workers engaged on Chowka basis were not maintaining the time schedule, for which the number of persons engaged in a particular Chowka and the number of person-days of each worker couldn't be properly recorded. He however hoped that with the appointment of Gaon Sathis, regular maintenance of such work-time could be ensured.

## **2.6 Sambalpur**

**2.6.1** The sample study of NREGA in Sambalpur district was undertaken by the NGO named AWARD, based at Jarabaga, Kuchinda, Sabalpur. This district of Western Orissa had come under the purview of NREGA in the 1<sup>st</sup> Phase of its implementation, which commenced with effect from 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006. Kuchinda Block was selected as the focus area of the study, and as in other districts, a total of 80 registered workers comprising 10 from each of 8 villages were selected for the purpose of primary information collection. All the 8 villages, two from each of 4 GPs belonged to Kuchinda Block. The GP-wise list of villages selected is as follows:

- Salevadi GP – Villages Dulesara and Lundrudihhi
- K.Jamankira GP- Villages Bad Mundaloi and Jaladihi/Salekhaman
- Gochhara GP- Villages Harijanpada (Gochhara) and Guruan
- Bankey GP- Villages Palsachuan and Dumermal

Among the 80 worker respondents, 65 were male and 15 female, from whom primary information was collected. Four PEOs (Panchayat Executive Officers), one each from a Gram Panchayat were interviewed for the purpose of secondary information. Two sets of questionnaires, the first one comprising 17 questions and the second one comprising 16 questions were used to elicit information from primary and secondary sources respectively. The responses

from these sources were analysed vis-à-vis the provisions of principal Act, Operational Guidelines and Orissa Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. As in case of other districts, the study period pertained to the status of NREGA during the 6 months, from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

2.6.2 The following Table presents some basic information about each of the 4 GPs selected under survey such as Name of PEO from whom the information was collected, number of villages, wards and population, number of registered households as on 1<sup>st</sup> October 08, number of Job cards issued and type of projects undertaken.

**Basic Information on Progress of NREGA in selected 4 GPs of Kuchinda Block as on 1.10.2008**

Name of the Panchayat	Respondent In-charge of NREGS (Source of Information)	Basic Information	Regn. status as on 1 Oct. 08		No. of Job-cards issued	Types of projects undertaken
			Total HHs	Regd HH/job cards		
1. Bankey	Akshya Badpanda P.E.O, Bankey M- 9937526851 Since March 08	No. revenue village-10 No. Ward-13 Population- 3751	698	675/662	662	<b>Water conservation Measures</b> 1.Tank renovation <b>Rural connectivity</b> 1.Cement concrete road 2.All weather road
2. Gochhara	Satchidananda Behera PEO-Gochhara M.No-9777111785 Since 2007	No. revenue village-7 No. Ward-11 Population-5079		1359	1359	<b>Water conservation Measures</b> 1.Tank renovation <b>Rural connectivity</b> 1.Cement concrete road 2.All weather road
3. K.Jamankira	Ambirish Sharma P.E.O, K.Jamankira Since Sept.2007	No. revenue village-11 No. Ward-13 Population-4792	1236	1257	1257	<b>Water conservation Measures</b> 1.Farm Pond 2.Tank renovation 3.Earthen canal <b>Rural connectivity</b> 1.Cement concrete road 2.All weather road
4. Salevadi	Krushna Ch. Nayak P.E.O, Salevadi 9777356114 Since Aug.2007	No. revenue village-10 No. Ward-11 Population-3096	686	778	772	<b>Water conservation Measures-</b> 1.Farm Pond <b>Rural connectivity</b> 1.Cement concrete road 2.All weather road

2.6.3 In regard to awareness about NREGA among the villagers, out of 80 workers only 21 were found to be having average knowledge about it, while 23 knew about a few of its provisions and as many as 36 didn't have any knowledge at all. However 77 out of 80 workers had job cards. As regards the number of days within which the job card was issued after the application for it was made, it was within 7-10 days in case of 6 respondents, within 15 days in 24 cases, within 30-60 days in 17 cases and 2 to 6 months in 6 cases. In 23 cases Job-cards were issued without any application made from the job seekers. The remaining persons expressed their ignorance about the provision and procedure of issue of job cards. Only a few card-holders (numbering 6) have spent a negligible amount of money such as Rs.2/- or Rs.10/- against receipt of job card. The Job cards were found to be kept with the card holding families except in 5 cases, where it was kept with Gram Sathis in GP Office. These 5 exceptional families didn't know the provision about the custody of the job card.

**2.6.4** Out of 80 households, 47 submitted application for work and got the job for some days or the other. However, Panchayat Executive Officers have asked others for engaging themselves in work without prior application for job in Form C-1. It was however found that no acknowledgement receipt as required was issued against the applications for job. A disconcerting feature came to light in course of the study. Though most of the registered households wanted to work under NREGA, they didn't know how to secure it. Only 11 respondents out of 80 were able to avail job within the due period of 15 days, while remaining 69 kept waiting indefinitely with the hope that Panchayat would call upon them from its side. In the process some respondents stated that they got work after waiting more than even 60 days. Neither those who got no job nor those who got the job after the stipulated period received any unemployment allowance. The reason for non-disbursement of unemployment allowance is the lack of the acknowledgement receipt 'against the application for work. Moreover, the job-card holders also didn't know how to fight for getting unemployment allowance as and when it was denied to them. As regards the provision of minimum 100 days of job to a household within a year, out of 76 workers who got the job, as many as 20 didn't get any work at all; 21 persons less than 10 days; 29 persons got it for 10 to 20 days, only 6 persons for 20 to 30 days.

**2.6.5** As regards the provision that wages need be paid within 7 days, or maximum 15 days of the date of completion of the work, it was noticed that only 8 persons got it within 7 days, 15 persons within 7 to 15 days, 25 persons within 16 to 30 days, and 17 persons after a lapse of 30 days. Thus out of a total of 65 persons, only a minority i.e. 23 persons got it timely. The majority of workers who got delayed payment, were not compensated duly against the delay so caused. Payment is made mostly in cash. Only 7 respondents out of 80 surveyed households have Saving Accounts. 17 respondents reported to have worked on the basis of daily wage, while 44 workers were engaged in earth works on Chowka (Piece Rate) basis. A number of confusions were found to reign among the workers as to how the amount of wages is determined in piece rate works. Though the data on man-days are being maintained in Job-cards, but the prescribed practice of filling up the Muster Roll at the worksite is conspicuously absent. It needs to be mentioned here that the Operational Guidelines for NREGS works demands a discrete determination of wage structure for both time rate and piece rate works down to GP level basing upon the geo-climatic conditions of the locality. But in Orissa it is noticed, a flat daily wage-rate i.e. Rs.70/- per day and a schedule of piece-rate for earth works of 3 soil types (hilly, hard and general) in terms of CFT as notified on Orissa Gazette in April 2007 have been made applicable for each and every area of the State irrespective of the local conditions. Such standardized, flat rates, which are much below what Contractors in some places pay or what the employers of migrant labour pay serve as a disincentive to the workers to work under NREGA.

**2.6.6** As regards the worksite facilities to be provided under NREGA works, only drinking water was found to be available in 3 out of a total of 8 projects surveyed. Other facilities such as First-aid, rest shed or crèche are completely absent. Due to the failure of the authorities to supply tools and instruments required in the process of labour, the workers used their own kits but didn't receive any hire-charge on account of this. Though Gram Sabhas and Palli Sabhas are formally held, participation of the common villagers is very poor. There is no evidence to show that any NREGA plan was discussed and decided in any Palli Sabha/Gram Sabha meeting. As against the mandatory provision of formation and functioning of Monitoring and Vigilance Committees to check corruption in every project, only two such committees were reported to have been formally formed, though yet be functional as per the guidelines. The Social Audit Process or The Social Audit Forum mandatory to be in place for all NREGA projects is absolutely absent in all the 4 GPs surveyed.

**2.6.7** As regards the perception of the Panchayat Executive Officers about their powers and

duties as the chief executives of NREGA at GP level, they were interviewed and their responses collected. The work orders are issued in their name and they are supposed to exercise supervision over every work. Record keeping of all transactions made for NREGS projects at GP level and financial control in the capacity of joint account holder along with Sarapanch are their critical functions. They are also Public Information Officers for maintenance of transparency under RTI Act. They are guided by circulars and guidelines on NREGS issued by State Panchayati Raj Dept. The PEOs are also first appellate authority to hear complaints at GP level such as job on demand, wage-payment/ structure and work-site facilities. All the PEOs who were interviewed claimed that no corruption or malpractices or deviation from the rules or norms existed at any level. As regards how NREGA can be made into a success, the PEOs commonly pointed out that payment through accounts in Banks/Post Offices was the only option to check corruption and as well to ensure transparency. They also stressed that creation of awareness among different stakeholders especially PRIs and wage workers and provision of more technical man-power at GP level were barely necessary. They however opined that the lack of whole-hearted involvement in the process of NREGA implementation drags the entire programme downward.

**2.6.8** The perceptions of the PEOs on the state of implementation of NREGS in their respective GPs were contrasted with the findings from the workers vis-à-vis the statutory norms laid down under NREG Act and Operational Guidelines. It was noticed that clear contradictions existed between what PEOs claimed and the ground reality that existed. Such contradictions were visible in such matters as issue of Job-cards, Employment generation, wage payment, Work site facilities, Muster roll maintenance, functioning of Monitoring & Vigilance Committees and above all Social Audit process and forum.

**2.6.9** In the process of study some major findings affecting the implementation of NREGA in Sambalpur came to light, which are worth mentioning. In contrast to the mandatory provision for the NREGA works to be determined in the Gram Sabha/Palli Sabha, most people in the villages surveyed didn't have any idea as to how the nature and site of works need to be selected. In the eight villages surveyed, only in two villages Jaladihi and Lundrupada Pallishabha there was some attempt by the PEO and villagers to take decision for rural connectivity and farm-pond activity. But in each case participation of villagers was as low as 25-30% and the say of influential and vested-interest groups, who belong to Political Parties dominated the proceedings of the meeting. A colossal gap between provisions of NREGS and its actual implementation on the ground came out quite starkly in course of the survey. Entries in the two most important documents, job cards and the muster roll were a visible mismatch. The muster rolls ought to be maintained by the village mate (Gaon Sathi) on the work site on daily basis, and he is therefore entitled to additional ten rupees a day for such extra duties. But the survey revealed that none of the muster rolls was maintained on the worksite, and worse still, the muster rolls were mostly kept in the possession of the PEOs, and the beneficiaries were made to sign on blank muster rolls for the days they received their payments. The PEO afterwards made entries matching the figures on both muster rolls and job cards.

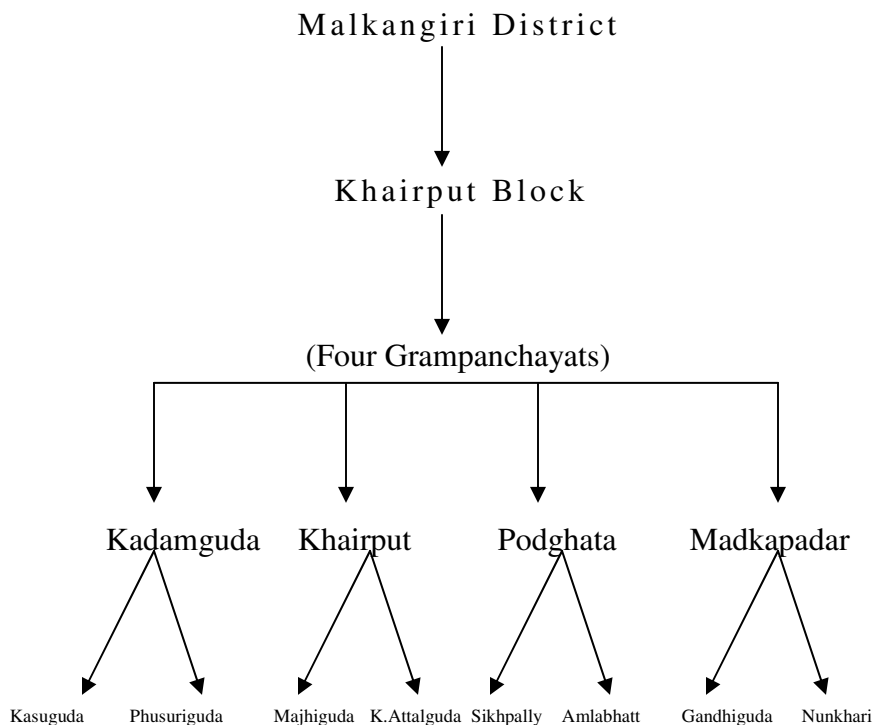
The functionaries recruited by the government for the implementation of NREGP at the GP level like the Gram Rozgar Sewaks often encounter a political environment hostile to the culture of fairness and efficiency. The PRI leaders being political persona themselves often seek and invariably succeed to keep the NREGA functionaries under their thumb rule. This is a potent factor for derailing and misfeasance of the entire NREGA programme. Besides the executive instruments that the Govt of Orissa have devised, such as NREGS-2006 and a series of administrative circulars often mutually contradictory, are so much divergent from the principal Act and Operational Guidelines that the real rights and entitlements as envisaged therein are simply nullified at ground level.

The culture of secrecy, which is practiced at every level in the administration of NREGA by the overwhelming section of both Govt officials and PRI functionaries coupled with absence of a functional mechanism for grievance redressal and social audit simply render the provisions of transparency and accountability as prescribed in Act and Operational Guidelines into a big joke.

**2.6.10** The Sambalpur Study has thrown up a few critical suggestions, which are worth looking into if we want to set aright the flawed process of NREGA, even in other districts of the State. Firstly, the rural people now-a-days being interested about the growth of infrastructure in their respective areas, the sole and exclusive emphasis on wage employment to manual labourers should give way to mixed goal of NREGA such as asset creation and wage employment. Secondly, the determination and disbursement of wage need be made people-friendly and area specific, so that more and more people get attracted towards NREGA works. Thirdly, water conservation works and afforestation programmes ought to be continued with priority, since these would not only create durable rural assets having the potential to address to livelihood needs of poor and marginalized sections of people, but improve the ecological profile of the countryside.

## 2.7 Malkangiri

2.7.1 The district of Malkangiri, earlier a part of undivided Koraput district and located in the southern tip of Orissa, possesses rich biodiversity in the shape of mountain ranges and dense forests and precious heritage sites of historical and cultural importance and at the same time the home to a vast tribal population including the primitive tribes like Bonda. Besides an epitome of acute poverty and illiteracy, Malkangiri quite for some decades now has served as an easy terrain for extremist groups like Naxalites and Maoists. The status study of NREGA in this district was undertaken by a local NGO called PUSPAC and like in other districts the study sought to base its findings on the performance of NREGA in the six-month time span (from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008) in four sample GPs each covering 2 villages, and with each village covering 10 selected registered families. All the 4 GPs selected for the purpose belonged to Khairpur Block. The site selection for the study can be presented in the form of a pyramid as mentioned below:



**2.7.2** As for the methodology adopted for collection of data from both primary and secondary sources and consolidation of the same into the form of a report, it comprised several components and underwent several stages as well. Interaction with both workers in their respective villages and with PRI functionaries and administrative executives in the concerned offices, visit to worksites to verify the availability of various facilities along with muster roll, and serving of questionnaires to respondent workers and functionaries were undertaken in order to elicit information in a systematic and authentic manner. Two sets of questionnaires were used, the first one comprising 20 questions and addressed to the workers centred round such salient features of NREGA process from a workers' perspective as Awareness on NREGA, Registration of families, Distribution of job cards, Applications for job, Allotment of works, Execution of works, Maintenance of muster rolls, Worksite facilities, Payment of wages, Payment of unemployment allowance, Social audit in the Gram Sabha, Functioning of vigilance and monitoring committee and Grievance redressal mechanism. The second set of questionnaire comprising 26 questions and addressed to the PRI functionaries and Govt officials centred round the need for ascertaining their perception in regard to their own role and obligations as laid down in the Act and Guidelines and possible reasons for bottlenecks if any encountered in the operational process. The information so collected was subject to comparison with the data gathered from Internet and other official sources. Then the data collected from various sources were subject to an analysis keeping such yardsticks and parameters in view as were stipulated in the statutory publications like NREG Act, Operational Guidelines and OREGS-2006. The following PRI functionaries and Govt officials at different levels were interviewed for the purpose:

**List of Govt Officials and PRI functionaries interviewed**

Sl.	Level	Name of Interviewee	Designation
01	District	Govinda Chandra Sethi	PD, DRDA, Malkangiri
02	Block	Salil Mahanty	GPEO/PEO, Khairput & Kadamguda GP
03	Panchayat	Ashok Sarkar	PEO, Madkapadar GP
		Budra Dhangda Majhi	Sarpancha, Khairput GP
		Jagabandhu Gadangi	Sarpancha, Podaghat GP

**2.7.3** It is interesting to know that the study so undertaken to document the status of NREGA in its sample areas did exercise some wholesome impact on the process of implementation at ground level by way of stimulating the questioning spirit among the villagers on one hand and sensitizing the PRI functionaries and Govt officials on the need for necessary corrective measures at different levels on the other. It was noticed that the workers got to know through the questionnaire served to them such critical details, earlier unknown to them, as the need for demanding work, worksite facilities, unemployment allowance, and compensation for delayed wage payment. In fact, inspired by the new knowledge so gained, the workers for instance, as later admitted by the concerned Sarpanch of Madkapadar GP, compelled him to provide worksite facilities forthwith. This study led to a voluminous increase in mass application for jobs under NREGA. In some areas it led to increased awareness, unity and resolution among the workers to lodge complaint about the delayed wage payment before the BDO-cum-Programme Officer. In course of interaction with GPEO of Khairaput GP and Sarpanch of Podghat GP, it came to light that irregular funds flow from FRDA to the GPs was a critical factor causing failure of NREGS at ground level. The matter was discussed with PD, DRDA who is

entrusted to make timely flow of funds to the concerned Block, and to ensure further flow of funds timely from the Block to the GP. In tune with the provisions of Operational Guidelines, the Programme Officer at Block level was instructed by the PD to ensure the timely flow of funds to each GP by way of temporary diversion of funds of one GP to another, as and when necessary. The next important lacunae that was brought to the notice of concerned authorities was the glaring discrepancy between the data posted on the Internet and corresponding figures available at ground level. The GPEO, Khairput in fact admitted such a discrepancy that related to the numbers of job applications vis-à-vis the numbers of persons provided with job for a particular period in the financial year 2008-09. Of course he tried to explain away the mismatch calling it typographical error. The process of study with its avowed thrust on laying bare of the facts at every level also generated some tensions between the surveyors and vested-interest groups. In one case, a staff of the organization Mr.Sadhu Pangi was beaten by the local goons at the instigation of Sarapanch in alliance with some petty politicians.

**2.7.4** Before the findings of the study are treated in detail, it is necessary to briefly look at the overall profile of 4 GPs of Khairput Block, namely Kadamguda, Khairput, Podghat and Madkapadar, which were chosen as sample areas for the purpose of the study. **Kadamguda GP** located at a distance of 9 km from the Block headquarters, is mostly inhabited by primitive tribes like Bondas and surrounded by stony, barren hills pointing to the tragedy of large-scale deforestation in the past. Out of two sample villages chosen from this GP, in village Pushuriguda 42 families were registered under NREGA, and out of them only one family belongs to SC, 30 families to ST and 11 families to other castes. The second village Kasuguda has a small population and is as such regarded as part of Kadamguda village. Next, **Khairput GP**, located contiguous to Khairput Block headquarters, is a tribal area too inhabited by Bondas and Kandhas. Two villages namely, Majhiguda and Kandha Atalguda were chosen from this GP under the study. In village Majhiguda total number of families registered under NREGA are 52, out of which 10 belong to SC, 27 to ST and remaining to OBC. The second village Kandha Atalguda is entirely covered by ST population of Kandha tribe, from among which 61 families have been registered under NREGA. The third in the row is **Podghat GP**, which is located about 7 km. from the Block headquarters and characterized by hilly and riverine topography and populated by Bhumiya and Paraja tribes. Two sample villages were selected for the study, namely Sikhapalli and Amalabhath. In Sikhpalli total number of families registered under NREGA are 176, out of which 5 belong to SC, 166 to ST and 5 to other castes. In the second village Amlabhat 60 families were found to be registered, out of whom 59 belong to ST and only one to other caste. The fourth one selected was **Madkapadar GP**, located on a hilltop at a distance of about 25 km from Block headquarters and surrounded by the lush green timber wood forests is mostly inhabited by tribes such as Didoi and Gadwa. Two villages were taken from this GP, namely Gandhiguda (Madkapadar) and Nunkahari. A total of 88 families from the said two villages, all belonging to ST, were registered under NREGA.

**2.7.5** In course of the study some salient yet critical findings came to the notice of the surveyors. No **muster roll** was being maintained at the work site as required under the Operational Guidelines. The workers also told that they didn't have any knowledge about the maintenance of muster roll at the worksite. As regards the **participation of women in workforce**, it was impossible to gather any official picture about it, since there was no **display board** found anywhere announcing inter alia the number of workers in general and that of women workers in particular engaged in NREGA works. But the surveyors found that the participation of women in the region was almost equal to the male participation. It has been possible owing to absence of any inhibition in the tribal society against the women working in the field. It was however noticed that one **handicapped person** in Kadamguda GP and another in Madkapadar GP were engaged in NREGA works. As regards **worksite facilities**, only in one village named Amlabhadd under Podghat GP, the only facility, drinking water was available. However, it is interesting to note that in Madkapadar GP the surveyors during their first visit didn't notice any facility in place; but later on they were informed about the provision of drinking water made available at the said worksite. It was certainly due to the impact of the study.

**2.7.6** In respect of **measurement of works** the Operational Guidelines stipulates that the day-to-day measurement be recorded in the measurement books maintained by the mates (Gaon Sathis) in charge of the worksite, while the final measurement ought to be carried out by the qualified technical personnel at close intervals. It was however noticed that the measurement of a pit, for instance, was done by the Gaon Sathi with the help of a stick pre-designed by the Junior Engineer of the Block irrespective of the texture of soil. And wages used to be paid as per such blanket measurement. In absence of any display of **Schedule Rate of Wages** at the workplace, the workers couldn't argue out their reasoning for a higher claim based upon the hardness of soil and hardship of toil. It was noticed that the workers used their own tools and equipments in the process of NREGA, but no payment on account of **hire-charges for such accessories** was ever paid to any worker, and nor any record thereof was maintained. As against the provision for both **muster roll and job card** to record the days of work performed and amount of wages received by a worker, the actual facts relating to this important matter couldn't be cross-checked for verification by the surveyors, since both these important documents were being kept by the Panchayat officials/PRI members without the knowledge of the concerned workers.

**2.7.7** It is also worth mentioning that the **workers having no job card** were found engaged in NREGA works. A Sarpanch on being asked about the reasons of such out-of-the-way practice explained that the GP wanted to finish the work within the shortest time-span, but the registered workers didn't show any interest in the particular work. The Sarpanch further mentioned that the **workers lacked interest in NREGA works** particularly in such periods of the year which coincided with Harvesting, Cultural festivities and Migration to outside places in search of better wages. The Sarpanch added that owing to **delay in flow of funds to the GP**, they were not able to start NREGA works even when workers showed interest for their involvement. A big discrepancy was noticed in **the entry in the job cards of the workers in respect of workdays** performed by them when contrasted with their own statement. For instance, while the worker admitted to have worked only for 4 to 5 days, his job card showed 40 to 60 workdays. The Executive Officer of concerned Gram Panchayat on being asked about this glaring anomaly explained that notwithstanding what is mentioned in muster roll or job card the payment shall be made to all those persons who actually worked, no matter some of them had job card or not. As regards the norm of **wage payment to be made within a week or maximum within a fortnight**, the surveyors found it violated everywhere. However, the PEO dealing with Kadamguda GP and Khairput GP claimed that wages were paid in cash on weekly basis at a gathering in weekly market in the concerned villages. To

justify **cash payment in place of payment through cheque** the said PEO pointed out after referring to a letter from Panchayati Raj Department, Orissa that the areas under Madkapadar GP being far off from any Post Office or Bank, cash payment has remained the prevalent mode of wage disbursement.

**2.7.8** As regards the provision for holding **meetings of Gram Sabha/Palli Sabha on NREGA matters**, the workers admitted the holding of Gram/Palli Sabha meetings but were not sure whether NREGA matters were discussed therein or not. But Gram Panchayat Extension Officer of Khairput Block claimed that the NREGA related provisions and facilities were discussed from time to time at Gram Sabha/Palli Sabha meetings. On the need for holding **Social Audit of NREGA works**, the GPEO simply observed that the external social audit has not been done yet. On the need for **maintenance of complete transparency** in the process of administration and decision-making process, the GPEO observed that this obligation lay with the Government, which through an arrangement for suo motu disclosures can offer to the people full access to all relevant information around NREGA. He however admitted that the salient information about each project should be displayed in the local language at the worksite and in prominent places of Gram Panchayat.

**2.7.9** About **Unemployment allowance**, it was noticed that no body received it though there were very many instances of delay in provision of job within stipulated 15 days of the application made for the job. The knowledge of the villagers about this legal right was found to be very negligible. An interesting case came to the light in course of the survey. As per the data on Internet 25 nos. of persons were eligible for receiving unemployment allowance in Khairput GP; but the concerned workers due to their lack of effective knowledge about this provision couldn't file any grievance when they were denied of it. At last, when the surveyors brought this matter to the knowledge of the GPEO, he promptly took note of it, but instead of agreeing to pay the pending unemployment allowance to the concerned workers indicated to make do the discrepancy if any in online data. Moreover, the concerned workers, who were not in possession of the acknowledgement receipts against their applications for job, couldn't find any legal basis to support their claim for unemployment allowance. Further, no worker did receive any amount towards **compensation against the delayed payment of wages**, the reason again being the lack of receipt for application for work and non-mention of authentic data in the muster roll.

**2.7.10** As regards the need for a robust **Grievance redressed mechanism** to be in place at Block and District levels, the surveyors couldn't discover even a single one effective anywhere. From the Internet sources two cases of complaint were noticed. But these two complaints were not concerned with the grievances of the workers, but centred round the appointment of Gram Rozgar Sevak. On the need for formation of **Monitoring and Vigilance Committees at village level**, not a single one could be located by the surveyors anywhere in the Block. However, the Official report of the Block mentioned about one such Committee to have been formed, but the proceedings even of its inaugural meeting were not available. As per the Internet sources, only one meeting of such a Committee was conducted since the date of implementation of NREGA in Malkangiri district. As to what

accounted for people's apathy towards any struggle to achieve their due claims, compensations and unemployment allowances, the surveyors had sought the opinion of a PRI leader, the Sarpanch of Madkapadar GP. In the opinion of Sarpanch, no one was interested to apply for job. Rather it was on behalf of Gram Panchayat that an organized effort was made to fill up the job-application forms for the workers and thereafter Gaon Sathi had to visit door to door for collection of signature/ thumb impression from the potential workers on forms so filled up. Due to non-involvement of the workers themselves in the application process demanding works, they remain still unaware about the NREGA process, Sarpanch reasoned out in conclusion.

### **Gajapati-1 (Mohana Block)**

**2.8.1** The District of Gajapati had come under the purview of NREGA in the 1<sup>st</sup> Phase that commenced with effect from 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006. Two separate studies on the status of NREGA during the 6 month period from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008 were conducted in the district of Gajapati, one covering Mohana Block and the other one covering R.Udaygiri Block. For the sake of convenience, the first one can be called Gajapati-1 while the second one Gajapati-2. The Gajapati-1 is the subject matter of the present chapter.

The NGO called Udyam conducted the study of Gajapati-1 covering Mohana Block. Like in cases of other district level studies, the present Study covered eight nos. of sample villages, two each from 4 selected Gram Panchayats falling under Mohana Block in Gajapati district. Again, like in other district level studies, a batch of 10 sample households were selected from each village for the purpose of primary data collection. The GP-wise list of villages is as follows-

Gram Panchayat	Village
Mohana	Mohana
	Badakhani
Pati. Govindapur	P. Govindapur
	Bada Malai
Merapalli	Merapalli
	Bhaliasahi
Malasapadara	Malasapadara
	Halapanka

The information relating to the study was collected through following means-

- Interaction with NREGA workers in their respective villages
- Collection of Primary and Secondary data using questionnaires
- Focus Group Discussions at village level
- Interaction with Sarpanchs, GP Level officials and Block officials

For sourcing the secondary information available at the level of GPs, the Sarpanchs of 4 GPs were contacted and they cooperated with the surveyors in the matter of information sought. The names of Executive Officers of 4 GPs who provided information on their respective areas are as follows-

Mohana GP	Sri. Bhaskar Chandra Patra, PEO
P. Govindapur GP	Sri. Hadibandhu Sahu, PEO
Merapalli GP	Sri Laxmikant Patra, PEO
Malasapadara GP	Sri. Bhaskar Chandra Patra, PEO

The Additional BDO Mohana Block Sri Pradip Kumar Panda also cooperated with the surveyors in the matter of information relating to concerned Gram Panchayats.

As regards the questionnaires used for eliciting information, 3 sets of the sort were used, the first set consisting of 32 questions was addressed to village level workers, second consisting of 22 questions to GP level functionaries, and third consisting of 26 questions to Block level officials.

### **Situation at Village Level**

**2.8.2** In course of the village level survey, it was noticed that out of 80 families only 17 families had an overall awareness about NREGA. However all the 80 families chosen for survey were in possession of Job Cards. Out of 80, only 14 families got the Job Card within the stipulated period of 15 days, while 17 families within 2 to 3 months and remaining 49 got it after a lapse of three months from the date of application. However no family had to spend any money for getting the job card. As to where the job card is kept, 69 out of 80 families were having it with them, while the job cards of 11 families were kept with Gram Saathi and Gram Rozgar Sevak. All the card-holding families were found to be interested to work under NREGA. Surprisingly, no family had to apply for job as required under the law, though all the families interested to work got the job from the GP. Out of 80 families surveyed, 20 have not got any work, 40 families got 1 to 14 days of work, 9 families 15 to 28 days, 6 families 29 to 46 days and only 5 families more than 60 days during the six month period from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> Sept'. 2008.

**2.8.3** As regards the extent of delay in getting the wages beyond the stipulated maximum period of 15 days, 60 families reported that they got after a lapse of two months after completion of the work i.e. a delay of 45 days. All the workers worked on daily wage basis at the rate of Rs.70/-, and none on piece rate or Chowka basis. Out of 80 families surveyed, 70 got the Pass Book in the Banks. However, out of 60 families that worked and got wages, as many as 34 got it through cash while the rest through Cheque. All families felt that they got the right amount of wages as against their work. As regards the question whether their job cards bore the correct entries on the number of workdays, it was noticed that as many as 34 cards mentioned larger number of workdays than that actually performed. As to whether the muster roll was filled up at the worksite, the answer was no in case of every muster roll that was used. As regards whether the wages were disbursed at the worksite as required under the law, the answer was no. However, the wages were disbursed at GP office. Out of such prescribed worksite facilities as drinking water, rest shed, first aid and crèche, only drinking water and rest shed were found to be available. It was noticed that all the 60 families used their own tools and equipments for NREGA works, but nobody got any hire-charges against them from NREGA funds. As regards the holding of Gram Sabha/Palli Sabha meetings to discuss NREGA, the villagers recollected and told yes, some sort of NREGA related discussions were held in Gram Sabha/Palli Sabha meetings. Out of 80 families surveyed, 55 could recollect that they were present in such meetings. On the need for formation of Monitoring and Vigilance Committee at village level to checkmate corruption in NREGA works, no worker seemed to know anything about it.

### **Situation at GP LEVEL**

**2.8.4** The Sarpanchs from Mohana, Merapalli, Malasapadara and P. Govindapur GPs under Mohana Block, who were contacted for the survey admitted that they were responsible for NREGA works from the year 2006-07 and were supposed to ensure the upkeep of such records as Registrations of Workers, Distribution of Job Cards, Receipt of Application for Jobs, Allocation of Works, Inspection of worksite and Payment as per the muster roll. Further the surveyors could learn from the Sarpanchs that such documents were available in the Gram Panchayat office as Register for Workers' Registration, Register for Distribution of Job Cards, Register for Ongoing Works, Assets Register, Register of Gram Sabha meetings, Cash Book and Muster rolls.

**2.8.5** It was noticed that the Job cards were provided free of cost to all registered workers' families as required under law. The Sarpanchs told, however, no register for applications for Job, as required, was being maintained at GP level since they have not received any such claim from the workers. However, they were providing unskilled job to all workers whosoever expressed interest to do the job. The wages received by the workers were getting entered into the Job Card. As to whether the workers received the wages within the stipulated time of 15 days, the Sarpanchs admitted that it has not been possible so far due to a host of adverse factors, such as measurement not being conducted in time due to the excessive workload of Block Junior Engineers, non-submission of muster rolls in time, the concerned personnel of a single GP being engaged in two to three GPs and delay in release of grants to the GPs. As per the claim of Sarpanchs, the muster rolls were being maintained regularly, and the payments made through cash, bank and post office. As regards the norm of wage payment to be made at the worksite in the presence of neutral minded persons or in weekly meetings, it was found that the wages and other dues were being paid in the Panchayat offices in the presence of the PRI members. As against the norm for payment of compensation on account of delay in wage payment, it was noticed that no such compensation was ever paid to anybody. As regards the need for compensating the worker for the loss of life or limb, the Sarpanchs told that any such case has not arisen at all so far.

**2.8.6** As per the statement of the Sarpanchs, the Monitoring and Vigilance Committees were formed consisting of both male and female members in course of meetings held by the GP, however no Beneficiary Committee as required to be formed was in existence anywhere. As to whether social audit process was in operation, the Sarpanchs mentioned that every year exercises on social audit were being conducted by them at village level but the villagers owing to lack of their interest were seldom present during such exercises. Asked about whether Social Audit forum as required to be held at least half-yearly was being organized, the Sarpanchs replied that such forums were being held on completion of every project and the proceedings thereof were enclosed to the cash records. But the Sarpanchs refused to share the copy of the proceedings of the said social audit forums with the surveyors.

**2.8.7** As regards the need for transparency in the NREGA process, the concerned Sarpanchs stated that they have put display boards at every worksite. Besides people were using RTI Act to access information on NREGA. As to how far there existed correspondence between the Internet data and ground reality, they claimed that it was upto 90%. In respect of accountability, the Sarpanchs admitted that they were aware about its provisions, but no disciplinary action has been taken against anybody on account of violation of rules and responsibilities.

### **Situation at Block Level**

**2.8.8** Sri Pradeep Kumar Panda, Additional Block Development Officer, Mohana Block who has been working here since his posting in 2006-07 was interviewed for eliciting information relating to administration of NREGA at Block level. He said that the Block was conducting NREGA as per the guidelines mentioned in the Act, State Scheme, Operational Guidelines and circulars issued by the Government from time to time. He further mentioned that such records were being maintained at Block level as Muster Roll, Register for Workers' Registration, Register for Job cards, Register for Applications for Work in form C-1, Register for Work Allocations in Form C-2, Employment Register, Assets Register and Claims Register.

**2.8.9** As regards whether the grievance redressal mechanism was in place, the ABDO made a too brief quip saying no grievance has been lodged before them yet. He also confidently reported that all the job cards were issued free of cost, works were provided to all the persons interested to work, the muster rolls were being maintained duly and regularly and the entry of amount of

wages paid through Cash, Bank Cheque or Postal account was being maintained in the job cards properly. However he admitted the delay in payment of wages and attributed it to the delay in release of sanctioned amount from above. As to whether the wages were paid, as required under the law, in the presence of independent persons or in public meetings held weekly in market places, the ABDO mentioned that the wages were being paid in the presence of PRI members. As regards the compensation against delayed payment or unemployment allowance against the failure to provide job to the applicant worker, if ever paid to any body in the Block, the ABDO asserted that this question has not arisen at all so far.

**2.8.10** As to whether any Monitoring and Vigilance Committee has been formed for NREGA works in the Block, the ABDO couldn't reply properly, perhaps due to his lack of understanding about this provision, but mentioned that one supervision committee was formed during 2006-07 with BDO at its lead. He however plainly admitted that Beneficiary Committee as required to be formed in each village has not taken shape anywhere. In respect of Social Audit process, he mentioned that the Block was organizing a social audit exercise each year in every village in the interest of transparency, but the people as they lacked in interest didn't participate in it. As to whether any Social Audit Forum was conducted at least six-monthly in any village, the ABDO maintained that each such forum has been held on completion of every project and the report thereof was kept in the concerned project file. However he refused to provide a Xerox copy of the said report. As to whether the data on Internet and the data maintained at GP level tallied, he asserted that these two almost tallied with each other. As regards the people's right to information about NREGA works, the ABDO said that the Block administration was following all the norms and guidelines issued by the Government in the matter. About whether any disciplinary action based upon a public complaint has been taken against any official, he said that no complaint has ever been received from any quarter, let alone disciplinary action.

## **2.9 Gajapati-2 (R.Udayagiri Block)**

**2.9.1** The District of Gajapati had come under the purview of NREGA in the 1<sup>st</sup> Phase that commenced with effect from 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006. Two separate studies on the status of NREGA during the 6 month period from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008 were conducted in the district of Gajapati, one covering Mohana Block and the other one covering R.Udayagiri Block. For the sake of convenience, the first one can be called Gajapati-1 while the second one Gajapati-2. The Gajapati-2 is the subject matter of the present chapter.

The NGO called SWWS (Society for Welfare of Weaker Sections) based at Paralakhemundi conducted the study of Gajapati-2 covering R.Udayagiri Block. Like in cases of other district level studies, the present Study covered eight nos. of sample villages, two each from 4 selected Gram Panchayats falling under R.Udayagiri Block in Gajapati district. Again, like in other district level studies, a batch of 10 sample households were selected from each village for the purpose of primary data collection. The GP-wise list of villages is as follows-

Sabarapalli GP	1- Village Sabarapalli
	2- Village Anjarsahi
Chhelagada GP	1- Village Purunadhia
	2- Village Chhelagada
Sialilati GP	1- Village Sialilati
	2- Village Poipani
Mahendragada GP	1- Village Mahendragada
	2- Village Suguba

The information relating to the study was collected through following means-

- Interaction with NREGA workers in their respective villages
- Collection of Primary and Secondary data using questionnaires
- Focus Group Discussions at village level
- Interaction with Sarpanchs, GP Level officials and Block officials

For sourcing the secondary information available at the level of GPs, the Sarpanchs and Panchayat Executive Officers of 4 GPs were contacted and they cooperated with the surveyors in the matter of information sought. The BDO was contacted for sourcing information at Block level. The names of BDO and Executive Officers of 4 GPs who provided information on their respective areas are as follows-

<b>Block/ GP</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation</b>
R. Udayagiri Block	Sri. Rajendra Kumar Nanda	Block Development Officer
Sabarapalli GP	Sri. Kartika Raika	Executive Officer
Chhelagada GP	Sri. Sashanka Subudhi	Executive Officer
Mahendragada GP	Sri. Sahadeva Dalai	Executive Officer
Saililati GP	Sri. Sahadeva Dalai	Executive Officer

As regards the questionnaires used for eliciting information, 3 sets of the sort were used, the first set consisting of 32 questions was addressed to village level workers, second consisting of 6 questions to GP level functionaries, and third consisting of 26 questions to Block level officials.

### **Situation at Village Level**

**2.9.2** In course of the village level survey, it was noticed that out of 80 families only 60 families had an overall awareness about NREGA. However all the 80 families chosen for survey were in possession of Job Cards. Out of 80, 30 families got the Job Card within the stipulated period of 15 days, while 50 families got it within 30 to 35 days from the date of application. However no family had to spend any money for getting the job card. As to where the job card is kept, 79 out of 80 families were having it with them, while only 1 job card was kept in Gram Panchayat office. All the card-holding families were found to be interested to work under NREGA. It was found that 40 families had to apply for the job as required under the law, the remaining half didn't apply for it. Out of 80 families surveyed, 4 have not got any work, 19 families got 1 to 14 days of work, 9 families 15 to 28 days, 6 families 29 to 46 days and only 2 families more than 60 days during the six month period from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> Sept'. 2008.

**2.9.3** As regards the extent of delay in getting the wages beyond the stipulated maximum period of 15 days, all the families reported that they got after a lapse of 1 to 3months on completion of the work. Out of all the workers surveyed, 14 got daily wage at the rate of Rs.60/-, while 64 got at the rate of Rs.70/- per day. All worked on daily wage basis and none on piece rate or Chowka basis. All the 80 families surveyed got the Pass Book in the Banks. However, all the families got wages in cash, none through Cheque. As regards the question whether their job cards reflected the correct entries on the number of workdays, it was noticed that as many as 34 cards mentioned larger number of workdays than that actually performed. As to whether the muster roll was filled up at the worksite, the answer was no in case of every muster roll that was used. As regards whether the wages were disbursed at the worksite or in the presence of public as required under the law, the answer was no. However, the wages were disbursed at GP office. Out of such prescribed worksite facilities to be in place as frinking water, rest shed, first aid and

crèche, only drinking water and rest shed were found to be available. It was noticed that 60 families used their own tools and equipments for NREGA works, but nobody got any hire-charges against them from NREGA funds. As regards the holding of Gram Sabha/Palli Sabha meetings to discuss NREGA, 50% of the villagers surveyed couldn't recollect anything of the sort. However the remaining 50% of the villagers told that such meetings were held but were attended by PRI members and persons having vested interests. On the need for formation of Monitoring and Vigilance Committee at village level to checkmate corruption in NREGA works, no worker seemed to know anything about it.

### **Situation at GP LEVEL**

**2.9.4** The Sarpanchs from the selected 4 GPs under R.Udayagiri Block, who were contacted for the survey admitted that they were responsible for NREGA works from the year 2006-07 and were supposed to ensure the upkeep of such records as Registrations of Workers, Distribution of Job Cards, Receipt of Application for Jobs, Allocation of Works, Inspection of worksite and Payment as per the muster roll. Further the surveyors could learn from the Sarpanchs that such documents were available in the Gram Panchayat office as Register for Workers' Registration, Register for Distribution of Job Cards, Register for Ongoing Works, Assets Register, Register of Gram Sabha meetings, Cash Book and Muster rolls. On being asked whether a Claims Register was being maintained or not, they replied no, the reason being that they didn't receive any claim so far.

**2.9.5** The Sarpanchs claimed that they were providing unskilled job to every worker whosoever wanted to do the job. As to whether the workers received the wages within the stipulated time of 15 days, the Sarpanchs admitted that it has not been possible so far due to a host of adverse factors, such as measurement not being conducted in time due to the excessive workload of Block Junior Engineers, non-submission of muster rolls in time, the concerned personnel of a single GP being engaged in two to three GPs and delay in release of grants to the GPs. They further told that the payments were made through cash, bank and post office.

**2.9.6** As per the statement of the Sarpanchs, the Monitoring and Vigilance Committees were formally formed in every village, but were not functional owing to ignorance of its members. The villagers also didn't know the members of such Committees. No Beneficiary Committee, as required to be formed was in existence anywhere. As to whether social audit process was in operation, the Sarpanchs mentioned that every year exercises on social audit were being conducted by them at village level but the villagers owing to lack of their interest were seldom present during such exercises. Asked about whether Social Audit forum as required to be held at least half-yearly was being organized, the Sarpanchs replied that such forums were being held on completion of every project and the proceedings thereof were enclosed to the cash records. But the Sarpanchs refused to share the copy of the proceedings of the said social audit forums with the surveyors. As to how far there existed correspondence between the Internet data and ground reality, they claimed that these fully tallied with each other.

### **Situation at Block Level**

**2.9.7** Sri Rajendra Kumar Nanda, Block Development Officer, R.Udayagiri Block who has been working here since the year 2006 was interviewed for eliciting information relating to administration of NREGA at Block level. He said that the Block was conducting NREGA as per the guidelines mentioned in the Act, State Scheme, Operational Guidelines and circulars issued by the Government from time to time. He further mentioned that all necessary records were being maintained at Block level.

**2.9.8** As regards whether the grievance redressal mechanism was in place, the BDO replied in the positive and told that he had received 3 grievances out of which 2 were disposed while 1

remained pending. He also confidently reported that all the job cards were issued free of cost, works were provided to all the persons interested to work, the muster rolls were being maintained duly and regularly and the entry of amount of wages paid through Cash, Cheque or Postal account was being maintained in the job cards properly. As to whether the wages were paid, as required under the law, in the presence of independent persons or in public meetings held weekly in market places, the BDO mentioned that the wages were being paid in the Panchayat meetings.

**2.8.9** The BDO however plainly admitted that Beneficiary Committee as required to be formed in each village has not taken shape anywhere. In respect of Social Audit process, he mentioned that the Block was organizing a social audit exercise each year in every village in the interest of transparency. As to whether any Social Audit Forum was conducted at least six-monthly in any village, the BDO maintained that each such forum has been held on completion of every project and the report thereof was kept in the concerned project file. However he refused to provide a Xerox copy of the said report. As to whether the data on Internet and the data maintained at GP level tallied, he asserted that these two tallied with each other to the extent of 90%. As regards the people's right to information about NREGA works, the BDO said that the people can access the requisite information from Display Board, C-2 Notice and xerox copy of Muster Roll. About whether any disciplinary action based upon a public complaint has been taken against any official, he said that no such action has been taken against anybody.

