

## Findings from a Survey of Social Protection Schemes

Mandla District – June, 2013

A field survey of five social programmes – the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the Public Distribution System (PDS), the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Mid-Day Meals (MDM), and social pensions – initiated by the Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi with support from the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) was carried out in 10 select States over May-June 2013.

As part of this survey a five-member team visited four villages in Bijadandi Block of Mandla District between 5<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2013. This report is a short summary of our observations from the following randomly selected villages:

Village	Dates
Bilnagari	6-7 June
Lehsar	8-9 June
Pohdi Rayat	10-11 June
Chargaon Mal	12-13 June

The team conducted in-depth interviews with 26-28 randomly selected households in each village to understand the status of MGNREGA, PDS, ICDS and MDM. The team also conducted a door-to-door verification of all pensioners (IGNOAPS and IGNWPS) and detailed interviews with 12 pensioners in each village to evaluate old age and widow pensions.

### **Mahatama Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)**

- Awareness

Majority of the respondents were aware of their right to ‘100 days of work’ but most did not know about the demand-based nature of the Act and had not applied for work. Other than MGNREGA workers in Pohdi Rayat who had submitted a ‘group application’, prepared with the help of the mate, workers in the other villages had never applied for work.

- Availability of Work

‘Kaam nahin khula’ was the most common complaint made by respondents regarding MGNREGA. In Chargaon Mal, Lehsar and Bilnagri Mal, no MGNREGA work had started in the past six months. Pohdi Rayat was the only village where some work was ongoing (*maid baandh*).

- Job Cards and Record Keeping

While the number of days each household claimed to have worked under MGNREGA matched with the entries in the electronic job card (e-JC) in Pohdi Rayat and Chargaon Mal, there were major discrepancies in Bilnagri Mal and Lahsar. In many cases families, and even neighbours, with different job cards have been listed in the same e-JC. In most cases the ages of people listed on the job cards were wrong.

- Delays in Wage Payments

One of the most common reasons given by respondents for not working on MGNREGA worksites was the delay in wage payments. In some cases, people reported delays of more than four months in receiving their MGNREGA wages. For instance, in Pohdi Rayat wages for work done in the summer of 2012 were paid during Holi this year.

- Payments

In all four villages, respondents were receiving their MGNREGA wage payments in banks. They complained about the long queues at the bank when MGNREGA wages were being distributed and described how they often had to make more than one trip to the bank to collect their wages.

## **Public Distribution System (PDS)**

- Distribution of food grains – Amount and Regularity

There was no regular (i.e. monthly) distribution of PDS food grains in any of the four villages. As grains for 2-3 months were being distributed together, it was difficult for PDS beneficiaries to keep track of whether they were receiving complete quotas for all months.

Antayodaya (AAY) beneficiaries, who are entitled to 35 kgs of food grains, were only getting 50-60 kgs of grains for two months in Bilnagri Mal. In Lehsar, AAY beneficiaries had not received rations for the past three months. Pohdi Rayat was the only village where AAY beneficiaries were receiving their complete quotas but only wheat. The PDS dealer complained that he was only getting wheat and very little rice.

BPL beneficiaries are entitled to 15 kg of rice and 5 kg of wheat. However, in Chargaon Mal, BPL beneficiaries were only getting 30 kg of rice every two months. In Bilnagri, beneficiaries were only getting 30 kg of wheat.

None of the APL beneficiaries got food grains in any of the four villages.

- Quality

Other than Pohdi Rayat, where beneficiaries were satisfied with the quality of wheat and rice being distributed at the PDS, respondents from other villages complained about the poor quality of food grains they were getting. The most common complaint regarding the quality of rice was the presence of stones and rat excreta.

- PDS Shop – Infrastructure and Distance

PDS shops were housed in rented mud structures (kaccha houses) in Chargaon Mal, Bilnagri and Pohdi Rayat villages. In Lehsar, the shop was located in a cemented house.

The PDS shop in Pohdi Rayat was located in Bhainwahi (a gram panchayat, 3 kms away from Pohdi Rayat). In the other villages, the PDS shops were located in the village.

## **Social Pensions (IGNOAPS and IGNWPS)**

- Amount and Regularity

All pensioners we interviewed were receiving the correct amounts but payments were very irregular and this created a lot of difficulties for the recipients. In Chargaon Mal, Bilnagri and Pohdi Rayat, pensioners had received pension till March but were yet to receive their pensions for April and May. In Lehsar, pensioners had not received their pensions for March as well.

In most cases, pensions were being distributed with a lag of three months. For instance, in Chargaon Mal, people had received their pension for March in the second week of June. Not only did this make life difficult for pensioners (many of whom rely solely on pensions for their daily needs) but also made it hard for them to keep track of payments.

- Delivery of Pensions

Pensions were being distributed through post offices in three of the four villages. In Lehsar, where payments were being made through a bank in Umeria (5 kms away from Lehsar), pension accounts were being transferred to Maneri (12 kms away from Lehsar). This move has made it difficult for pensioners who have to travel further to get their pensions.

In Lahsar, Pohdi Rayat and Bilnagri Mal, respondents complained that post office officials charge them Rs. 5-15 per person for free services like withdrawal forms. In Chargaon Mal, the post man comes to the village to distribute pensions and this makes it easy for pensioners to get their money.

- Updating of Pension Lists

Door-to-door verification of pension lists revealed that there were some cases of pensioners receiving their pension years after their death. In Chargaon Mal, two pensioners were receiving their pensions 1-3 years after their deaths.

## **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)**

- Regularity

The Anganwadis in all the four villages open regularly but only for 2-3 hours.

- Services

Most respondents said that the Anganwadi opens only for children to eat hot meals and receive food packets, and not for pre-school education or health checkups. In Pohdi Rayat and Lahsar, few people knew the Anganwadi worker, as she lived outside the GP and rarely visited. Instead the Anganwadi helper operated the Anganwadi.

## **Mid Day Meal (MDM)**

- **Regularity**

MDM is not being served regularly in all four villages. The SHGs responsible for cooking the MDM complained that they were not receiving their rations on time. They also mentioned that the funds being provided for pulses, oil and vegetables were below the market rate.

In most cases, the menu was not being followed and children were getting rice and dal.

- **Quality**

Other than Pohdi Rayat, where respondents were satisfied with the quality of MDMs, respondents for the remaining villages said their children did not like the food. In Lehsar, parents said their children had got sick because of insects in the food and that they do not get vegetables.

## **Team Members**

Sufal Singh (NIWCY, Mandla)

Sophia Abbas (University of Delhi)

Leila Gautam (University of Delhi)

Mukesh Manjunath (India Institute of Technology, Madras)

Raghav Puri (Visiting Co-ordinator)

Ria Singh Sawhney (Team Co-ordinator)