



NREGA Sangharsh Morcha

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Charter of Demands

The legal provisions of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) are being persistently violated by the Government of India (GoI). NREGA Sangharsh Morcha, a national-level network of organisations and individuals committed to the employment guarantee act demands the following:

Adequate Funding: NREGA is meant to be demand driven. However, the labour budget of each state is arbitrarily curtailed by an “approved labour budget”. Union Budget allocations have subsequently been mapped to this truncated figure thereby making this a supply driven programme. The budget allocations for FY 2022-23 is Rs 73,000 crores out of which about Rs 18,350 crores are pending liabilities from previous years. This at a time when the number of households demanding work in [May 2022 is 11 percent more than the same period last year and much higher than the pre-covid year](#). [As on July 1, the GoI owes money to 15 states while West Bengal has not received any funds from January](#). **We demand that the GoI must release all pending funds to states and must have adequate funds for the year to honour the demand driven nature of the Act.**

Timely Payment of Wages: As per the Act, workers must be paid within 15 days upon completion of a muster roll of work. For this to happen, the GoI must process and transfer wages to workers as per the electronic invoices -- called Funds Transfer Orders (FTOs) -- within 7 days of receiving them from states. [An analysis of over 18 lakh invoices for the first half of FY 2021-22 showed that the GoI processed only 29% of the FTOs within the mandated 7 day period](#). This is conservative as delays get much worse in the second half of each year as funds run dry. By now there is incontrovertible evidence that inadequate funding leads to massive delays in wage payments. Even the [Ministry of Finance has acknowledged this](#). **We strongly demand that the GoI must take concrete steps in ensuring that wages to workers are paid within the stipulated 15 day period.**

Payment of full compensation for delays: As per Para 29, Schedule II, workers should be paid full compensation for each day's delay in receiving wages. However, in violation of this and also in contravention of the [Supreme Court Orders](#), GoI considers that wages have been paid the moment the GoI electronically receives the FTOs from states. It does not account for the time taken by the GoI in processing these FTOs to pay the workers. **We demand that workers must be compensated for the full duration of delay, i.e. till the wages are credited in their account. The rate of compensation for delayed payments should be increased to at least to 0.5 per cent of the pending wages per day of delay to bring the compensation amount closer to what workers are entitled to as per the Payment of Wages Act.**

Increase in wage rate: NREGA wages are stagnating in real terms and are less than the statutory minimum agricultural wages in [27 states](#) and Union Territories. Further, in line with changing rural consumption patterns, the GoI should index NREGA wages to CPI-R instead of CPI-AL, as it currently does. This follows the Seventh Pay Commission recommendation of Rs. 18,000 as the minimum monthly salary six years ago in October 2016, after which huge increases in prices have taken place. **Therefore, we demand that NREGA wages be**

immediately made at par with states' statutory minimum agricultural wages and rapidly move towards raising it Rs. 800 per day.

Scrap app-based attendance system: The usage of National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS) App has created more barriers to work. [Ground reports](#) suggest that workers have lost 50% of their wages owing to technical glitches in the app and many women mates -- worksite supervisors -- have had to take loans to get smartphones to use the app. Women workers who constitute more than half the NREGA workforce have been [more impacted](#) because of this app. There are no proper guidelines or clear solutions to deal with technical glitches, nor is there a guarantee of wages for the lost hours and days. Workers have no control over the attendance process and as it is directly linked to their wages, it is undermining the proper functioning of the programme. **NMMS based attendance system should be immediately scrapped.**

Delinking from Aadhaar: Despite repeated Supreme Court orders to the contrary, the government has made Aadhaar compulsory for NREGA. This is denying countless numbers of workers their legal right to work and wages. **NREGA should be delinked from Aadhaar with immediate effect.**

We also strongly demand that Social audits need to be conducted as per the Act, Supreme Court orders and CAG rules and standards across the nation. We demand the immediate setting up of independent Social Audit Units, adequately financed directly by the Ministry and to ensure that social audits are regularized in all states, findings are put in public domain and timely actions are ensured against each irregularity.

The government should also immediately take into notice that the provisions for the **travel allowance (10% of wages) and compensations (for death and injury during work) have not been revised since the inception of the programme in 2005 and should be corrected and increased right away.**

Finally, NREGA workers who have completed 90 days of work in a year should be automatically brought under the fold of Building and other Construction Workers(BoCW) Act. For this, the GoI Government should pay a cess of 1% of the annual budget to the BoCW boards such that NREGA workers in different States can access the social security benefits under BoCW.

Eradication of corruption: NSM is fully committed to the eradication of corruption in NREGA. We have fought it all along by all possible means, from national policy demands to grassroots mobilisation. However, irresponsible implementation of NREGA on the part of central and state governments has led to systemic corruption. Delayed wage payments make things worse, because they sap workers' interest in NREGA and discourage them from fighting corruption. For good measure, social audits have been systematically undermined, through underfunding and other means. Instead of supporting social audits and other participatory anti-corruption measures, the central government has taken refuge in technological fixes that have proved useless at best, such as the questionable Aadhaar Payment Bridge System (APBS). In many states, the nexus between private contractors, political parties and corrupt functionaries is still being given free rein. **We demand a revival of participatory anti-corruption methods, full support for social audits, abandonment of counter-productive technical fixes, and an end to the contractor raj where it prevails.**

We urge that the central government should take urgent notice of all the above demands and take adequate measures to implement NREGA in letter and spirit.

देरी बंद करो, चोरी बंद करो ! सही समय पर पूरा काम, सही समय पर पूरा दाम !