

To
Shri Amarjeet Sinha,
Secretary
Department of Rural Development
Ministry of Rural Development
Krishi Bhawan
New Delhi 110001

14th September 2017

Dear Mr. Sinha,

Subject: Charter of demands by NREGA Sangharsh Morcha

NREGA Sangharsh Morcha is a common platform of workers groups, campaigns and citizens from across the country, raising issues related to the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). Enclosed is a charter of demands articulated and raised by more than a thousand NREGA workers from 16 States across the country currently mobilized at Jantar Mantar from 11th – 15th September.

Workers of the MGNREGA have suffered great injustice during the last few years through outright violations of the Law in the form of inadequate employment, low wages, delayed payments and lack of compensation for delayed payment.

The following are some issues that we would like to highlight:

1. The budgetary allocation for NREGA has been decreasing in real terms since 2010-11 and has been decreasing as a percentage of the GDP as well. Out of the budgetary allocation of Rs. 48,500 crore (FY 2017-18), approximately Rs. 11,000 crore expenditure has been exhausted to clear pending liabilities of the previous financial year. Appropriate budget, as per Supreme Court orders should be allocated to honour at least the projected labour budget compiled from statutory processes from the Gram Sabha.
2. Lack of funds has translated into a lack of work on demand at the ground level. There are various testimonies from people across the country on work not being provided as per demand. A sample of complaints from NREGA workers currently at protest is enclosed.
3. We are disturbed to note that the recommendations of the committee constituted under Mahendra Dev were set aside. Subsequently, the Ministry constituted the Nagesh Singh Committee to address identical issues; as per reports in the media, the Nagesh Singh Committee has recommended to de-link MGNREGA wage payment from the statutory Minimum Wage of the State. We strongly protest against the injustice and the unconstitutionality

of this recommendation. In addition, we demand that the recommendations of the Nagesh Singh report be made public immediately.

4. Wage payments continue to be delayed, and the full extent of the delay is not being calculated and displayed on the MIS. The Supreme Court orders on payment of compensation to workers for wage delays are also not being followed, with only 6% of calculated compensation paid to workers for this financial year. The discretion of the Programme Officer to reject compensation is also untenable.
5. NREGA has huge opportunities to help people rebuild their lives when hit by disaster. The Ministry may consider enhancing the entitlement of number of days of work provided and widening the scope of permissible works under MGNREGA on account of drought and flood, as seen in Gujarat, Assam and Bihar.
6. Further there is strong need to strengthen the inbuilt transparency, accountability and grievance redress mechanisms in NREGA. Social audits, as per the Audit of Scheme Rules, 2011 and Auditing Standards of Social Audit, 2016 need to be conducted in all states. We demand the immediate setting of independent Social Audit Units, adequately financed directly by the Ministry, in all states, as laid down in these rules and standards. Section 25 of the NREGA needs to be imposed strictly, and effective systems of grievance redress set up for non-compliance of the Act.
7. Enhancement of entitlements, including more days for employment per individual and an increase in the NREGA/minimum wage as per Supreme Court orders in the Raptakos Brett case.

With regards,

(On Behalf of NREGA SangharshMorcha)

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