

Update 110: Appointment of District Ombudsman for Grievance Redressal

Friends,

A short update: The Central government has issued an order for the appointment of an Ombudsman in every district for grievance redressal (attached). And, news of a protracted but successful struggle for delayed wage payment from Gujarat.

Regards,
Reetika.

1. Centre issues order on appointment of Ombudsman

Each district is to have an Ombudsman to deal with NREGA related grievances. Note also that the appointment of the Ombudsman will be subject to public scrutiny for one month (section 2.2.1). The attached order has the details of the selection process. Be sure to watch the selection process in your district!!

2. Gujarat: 2376 workers receive Rs. 34 lakhs after months of struggle

(received from Paulomee Mistry, Disha Ahmedabad, disha.ahmedabad@gmail.com)

Rashtriya Rojgar Khatri Kayda Hethal-na Kamdaro-nu Union-Gujarat (The Union of Workers Under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Gujarat) which has been actively striving towards implementation of the programme and the rules therein, had received complaints of non-payment of due wages to 2,376 workers/persons from Dadhela, Jagola, Ghughas, Vangad and Karmel gram panchayats of Dahod district. The due amount involved was Rs.34,24,856 which was not paid for the works done on construction/rejuvenation of community wells in the villages of these panchayats. This was despite the fact that any such payments have to be made within 15 days of work done!

The Union mobilized people from the concerned villages and had taken out a massive rally on 20th January 2009 at Fatepura and a Memorandum of Demand concerning the non-payment of people's rightful due wages, with details of the villages and panchayats, number of persons worked and eligible for legitimate payments, and the amounts due to them, and presented it to the Taluka Development Officer (TDO) to take urgent steps to concede the demands. However, the TDO's promise to do so remained false inspite of repeated representations by the Union and the workers, as payments were effected only for a period of 2 to 3 weeks of works done.

This fact prompted the Union to take out another big rally on 27th August 2009 at Fatehpura which tracked from Surgical Hospital Circle to the Taluka Development Office. People, with all vigour and shouting slogans, marched all the way to T.D. Office and submitted a Memorandum for immediate disbursement of their legitimate dues; as also they asserted that they would continue the sit-in demonstration until the TDO gave a

written undertaking clearly mentioning immediate payment of due wages within 2 days. The TDO had to accept the demand and he provided the undertaking in black and white promising the payment of due wages within two days, listing the areas and amounts due!

The TDO gave an official letter stating that the payments due were made to all concerned persons, depositing them in their bank or post office accounts! The Union verified the fact and we are contented that our efforts bore the fruits and payments aggregating Rs.34,24,856 were disbursed to the workers, although it involved taking out the rally twice and constantly do the follow-up work.