

APREGS comes as a boon to prevent Distress Migration

- A case study of pampanur village

Pampanur is a small village, situated at about 7 kms from Atmakur mandal headquarters. Totally there are 274 families in the village, out of which 239 are farm labor families. Among the labor families, 19 families are landless. All 274 families in the village have job cards under NREGP. Totally, there are 384 job cards in the village and 327 SB accounts related to APREGS in the village post office. There are 419 laborers in the village (234 women & 185 men).



Earlier these families were either un-employed or under-employed and under-paid. The laborers were working very hard in Agricultural works at very low wage rates of Rs. 40 - 50 per person per day. During droughts when they could not get employment in their village they used to migrate to far off towns and cities in distress. They used to leave the old people and children at home, who suffered a lot without support and care until their return.

“ Our 5 acres of assigned land was left uncultivated for many years because of rock out crops all over the field. I and my family members worked hard and cleared the rock out crops under APREGS. Last year we raised groundnut crop and got good yield. Now we are very happy” Said Lakshmakka W/o Thippe Naik, a women farmer from tribal family.

“Because of APREGS we have stopped migrating to other towns and cities and now getting enough work within our village through out the year. From our earnings, we could able to take up ram lambs rearing apart from making crop investment for our 5 acres of rainfed land” said Dhanamma W/o Kесе Naik, a tribal woman.

In this situation, APREGS came to their village, as a boon from the blues, in February 2007. Now it is a different story for them altogether. These labor families attended the Village level and Mandal level campaigns on NREGS organized by AF, wherein awareness was created on their rights and entitlements under

NREGA. AF has been extending support to the Government staff in identification of works, Village level planning, sanction of works, recording measurements of work done and timely disbursement of payments to laborers etc. During 2008-09, AF staff along with the gram panchayat. VO leaders and the concerned Govt staff facilitated the process of village level planning for NREGP with farmers and farm laborers. NRM works like earthen bunding, stone bunding, de-silting of small ponds, excavation of farm ponds, pitting for horticulture, jungle clearance etc., covering 180 farmers were identified in a participatory planning process. The estimates were submitted to Government and got sanctions for Rs. 2,924,083/-. The total laborers (419 members) were formed into 10 groups for the execution of the above works. 4 Overseers (Metis) and one Field assistant were appointed to monitor the quality of work, maintain the muster rolls and to assist in recording measurements and making timely



payments. Totally, 24,300 person days of work was generated during the year and these 419 laborers could avail 58 days of work on an average during the year at an average wage rate of Rs. 80 to 100 per day. That too equal wages for men and women ! On an average, each labor family could earn about Rs. 5,200 during the year. Another important consequence of NREGP, the agricultural wages which were @ Rs. 40/- to Rs. 50/- per day have also gone upto Rs. 100/- to Rs. 150/- per day! This has brought a big change in their lives –both socially and economically. It has changed the power relations between the labour and the big farmers who employ them.

The poor labour families are very happy now and are all praise for APREGS and AF. They are united in acknowledging the fact that APREGS has saved them from the hazards of distress migration and has enabled them to live with some dignity. The poor families could meet their basic needs with the earnings from APREGS. 16 families could purchase sheep and goat, 58 families could meet the education and health needs of their families, about 120 families could make crop investments and 8 families could purchase trinkets for their children.

“We, 4 members worked regularly in APREGS and earned about Rs. 20000 since last year. We are able to continue the education of our 4 children who are studying at Atmakur (High School) and Anantapur (Inter & B.Ed). APREGS made our life easy, as we could also meet our family expenditures to a great extent from our labour earnings” Said Narayanamma and Salakka, women from a SC family

On site facilities were not completely provided as promised. Some facilities like shade for the labour, drinking water supply were provided. Tools like Iron rods, spades, pick axes, baskets were provided to some laborers. Money was also given for honing of the tools in some cases. But still facilities like crèche, medicines were not provided. Most importantly, compensation is not being provided to those who have applied for but did not get employment. This is a big challenge for AF to lobby with Government for these facilities as per law !