

### **“Steps to Rightful Claims”**

Gunthaguda is a small village in Mahadeiput GP surrounded by small hillocks. It consists of 55 households out of which 13 are scheduled tribes and 42 families belong to other backward caste. Agriculture is the primary means of subsistence. They depend on monsoon for their agricultural activities as there are no other means of irrigation. There is a small farm pond in the village which is utilized by ten farmers for irrigation purpose and they raise summer crops. But for the rest of the families wage labour is the only source of livelihood once the harvest is over. Though NREGA is being implemented in the area since February 2006, villagers are not still aware to access Rights and claims under the Act i.e. apply for job card, employment and ensure appropriate wage remuneration. Thus most of the families are hired by local contractors and middlemen to work as cheap labourers at distant places.

In order to organize the communities, Pragati has facilitated a Village Development Committee in the village consisting of 12 members. There are monthly meetings in the village and Pragati staff sensitize the villagers on Govt. plans and programmes along with their work of promoting organic farming. With an objective to generate awareness on NREGA & RTI, Pragati had organized an awareness rally and public meeting in collaboration with PRI representatives of Mahadeiput and Mastiput GPs on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2007 in which 50 persons of Gunthaguda village had participated.

In the monthly meeting of December, the VDC of Gunthaguda village decided to submit applications for 20 persons who had immediate need of employment. These people received a notice from the Panchayat to work in a nearby village. But they were reluctant to go there as they wanted to work in the water harvesting structure which was proposed to be executed in their own village. They again approached the Panchayat office and the BDO. In February 2008, due to their continued initiative, work order was issued for construction of a canal (estimated value of Rs 2 Lacs) in the village. This time the VDC selected a VLL from the village in whose name the work order will stand. The work started from 25<sup>th</sup> February 2008 which continued for 10 days generating 600 man days of employment for the villagers. The VDC ensured entry in muster rolls and proper wage payment @ Rs 70/- and payments were also made weekly. Due to the

intervention of VDC members the JE and VLW also made proper monitoring and entry in muster rolls.

In the meantime the VDC has also mobilized the Panchayat for construction of school boundary and the incomplete concrete road in the village. Besides two persons had also received work orders for execution of irrigation ponds under NREGA. The VDC leaders had also participated in the Gram Sabha on 26th January to demand for proper selection of beneficiaries for social security measures like old age pension, widow pension, Indira Awas, etc. The VDC of Gunthaguda has set an example that organized community based institution is a perfect pressure group that can mobilize Govt. plans and programmes and liaison with line departments for the benefit of the community.

**Prepared By**

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