WORK PRESSURE ON FIELD ASSISTANTS
VILLAGE SECRETARIES WHO ARE NOT TAKING THE RESPONSIBILITIES
OF "EMPLOYMENT ASSURANCE"

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“We don’t know how will be a village secretary.”
“He comes once in two months.”
“He comes only at the time of paying the pensions.”
“We have to go to manclala for getting the signature.”
“There is no hope of his availability, even there.”

These are the complaints on village panchayat given by the workers like ‘Dasli’, Gaura yadamma, and Lingayya...National Rural Employment Assurance Law has levied the main responsibilities on village panchayats. It has handed over certain specific duties to the panchayat secretaries. According to the rules they must be available to the workers. They have to collect the filled up applications of the workers who possess the job cards, and have to issue the receipts. Those applications have to be sent to the Programme Officer. The law is saying that village secretaries have to handle the other field responsibilities like this. But, the workers and field assistants of manchala manual in ranga reddy district were saying that village secretaries are not ready to take over there responsibilities. When questioned, “Who were handling their duties? Field assistants were answering that all the work has been mounted upon them. Mr. G.Bhaskar, the field assistant of chennareddyguda said, “Village secretary will not be available to take the job card applications. We are collecting the filled up applications. We are showing the applications to him and getting the signatures.” Mr.Venkatesh, the field assistant of loyapally conveyed “we ourselves did the job of village secretary. We showed the work to the3 workers. They not at all felt the responsibility. According to the Government rules, these field assistants have to help the panchayat secretaries in maintaining the records. They have to extent their support to the technical staff also. That is why they are called field assistants. / But, in the actual scene, they are bearing the maximum work pressure. They are undertaking multiple responsibilities.

Mr.Ravinder, the field assistant of Japala is saying, “issuing the job cards, to go to the work place and showing the work, maintaining the attendance in the registrars, taking the measurements regarding to the work once in a week, posting the measurement details in the measurement sheet and showing that to the technical assistant in mandal office, feeding the wages in the computer, opening the accounts in the post office by the workers, filling the application forms of savings bank accounts, getting the signatures on them by the Mandal Development Officer, handing over them to the post man, like this....we are having so many works. Even if we work till the evening, still there will be work in pending. Mr.Sanjeeva, the president of State Field Assistant’s Association said that, in addition to the above mentioned duties, the responsibilities of village unions like writing the details of Employment Assurance works on the notice
boards and distributing the pay slips, is also been forcibly put on us.” According the details given by him, the nominal wages which are being paid to the field assistants also been reduced on the basis of work. The trials were going on to reduce the nominal wages being paid to the field assistants on the basis of work. In this scenario, during the last one year as association was formed by the field assistants to solve their various problems including wages. They are getting ready to start a protest against the government demanding the enhancement of wages, T.A. and D.A. They are demanding the appointment of a field assistant for every 500 families. Andhra Pradesh Agricultural Labour Union states that Mandal Development officers are not appointing field assistants wherever the necessity is there, even though the Government has issued orders to appoint the additional field assistant. As said by this union the field assistants have to walk about 10 to 15 kilometers for reaching and monitoring the work place. But they are facing financial problems as the required T.A.’s and D.A.’s are not paid properly. The field assistants are bearing the burden of Employment Assurance Scheme works at the Panchayat level. They are standing as a bridge among workers, Panchayats and authorities. In this connection solving their problems means helping the government in implementing the Employment Assurance Scheme in a better manner.

MORE WORK PRESSURE....LESS PAYMENTS....

In the beginning the authorities announced that only two to three hours of work per day will be there for the field assistants. But in practice a different situation is being seen. The work pressure is increasing on the field assistants as the number of workers is increasing. For example, in the case of Loyapalli village a lot of difficulties had been faced in implementing the scheme as there was only one field assistant for about 1100 workers. Neither the secretary nor the surpanchs cooperated...a lot of work was done...Post office is distant... Due to all these factors the payment of wages to the workers was delayed by 6 to seven months. In this situation the Mandal officer made the field assistant as the responsible person for all these when workers started a strike. With all these types of problems and with very work load field assistants were struggling a lot. But they are getting just 1200 rupees as salary. This is even less the daily wages paid to workers per month.

WHAT VILLAGE SECRETARIES ARE DOING...?

According to the details given by the workers and field assistants in Manchala mandal, the village secretaries are not coming village panchayat offices. They are not at all having any concern of the scheme. They were talking just like Mr. Sayyad Aji Hussain, the ex. Secretary of Dadpalli village that only by canvassing about the scheme by using mikes their responsibility is over. Just like Lingampalli village secretary Mr. Narasimha Reddy, they are showing that the authority having a visit to “Indiramma Ideal Villages” is the symbol of implementing the scheme. Like Mr. Raghu, the secretary
of Augapalli they are telling that they have collected applications but did not collect, and also they said they have given the receipts, but did not gave any receipt. Secretaries were telling that they have conducted awareness programmes in their villages 3 to 4 times regarding the Employment Assurance Scheme, but no evidence is seen regarding this. They are not even in a state to tell approximately how many job cards are there in the village. In some places it is the worst condition to see disappointing the workers.