



Fabrication and falsification

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Data manipulation in the MGNREGA is leading to gross violations in its implementation

- A lack of dignified employment, non-payment of adequate wages on time and insufficient food mean that the family of four is in a dicey situation and staring at starvation.

A curation of data

- In recent years, there have been at least 74 reported starvation deaths, with 60 cases having occurred in the last two years across parts of India; a lot of them have been in Jharkhand.
- Based on a directive by the Union Ministry of Rural Development, the Jharkhand government issued a report on 18 deaths.
- Hastily produced and in insensitive language, the report concludes that none of these deaths was due to starvation or connected to MGNREGA — a lazy, convenient denial of any correlation.
- Here are some examples to illustrate how the manipulation of information is leading to ethical and legal violations.
- The MGNREGA is a demand-driven programme, i.e., work must be provided within 15 days of demanding work failing which the Centre must pay an unemployment allowance (UA).
- A UA report is generated but rarely implemented.
- Numerous ground reports across the country suggest that because of a funds crunch, field functionaries do not even enter the work demanded by labourers in the MGNREGA Management Information System (MIS).
- Although work demand data (in person days) and employment-generated data are available at a panchayat level, aggregate data at the national level are only presented for employment generated.
- Thus, under-registered national demand is captured but intentionally not reported.
- By doing this, the Central government is trying to hide its violation of the extent of under-provision of work.

Key findings

- Further, the Centre's oft-repeated claims of the "highest ever allocation" are dubious and meaningless because if the allocation does not honour work demand, as is the case here, it is a violation of the Act.
- While this delay by the Central government (called stage 2 delays) is captured in the system, it is intentionally suppressed to avoid paying delay compensation — another violation of the Act.

A case of insensitivity

- In the process, countless lives are getting silently buried in fabricated statistics.
- While the government is busy falsifying realities, starvation and agrarian distress, the slow death of the MGNREGA continues.

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