

Standing Under the Arch¹

Understanding Social Audits

as a tool for Transparency and Accountability

in the context of the

Andhra Pradesh Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

The World Bank and SPIU (GoAP)



and



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¹ The title refers to a tradition of the ancient Romans. Whenever one of their engineers constructed an arch, the engineer assumed accountability for his work in the most profound way possible: he stood under the arch.

Executive Summary

The significance of peoples' participation in transparency and accountability in government policy and programme implementation has taken centre stage. Acts and guidelines such as the 73rd amendment, the resolution on Joint Forest Management and the National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas guidelines have ushered in a new era of community involvement in implementation of programmes and transparency and accountability. The highlights of the changes have been the following:

- Guidelines have become more operational in nature, with scope for flexibility according to local conditions;
- Participation and even the programmes are enforceable through a rights based approach;
- The programmes have become demand based and are working in tandem with the market forces;
- Role of top down targeting has been reduced by making beneficiaries self selecting;
- Transparency and accountability have become bottom up in the programme design;
- Facilitating transparency and accountability through the RTI;
- Making programmes convenient for the people by stipulating reasonable turn-around times for payments, documentation, etc. by decentralizing processes.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and the Right to Information (RTI) Act are in some ways the latest in this chain of evolution. Transparency and accountability initiatives such as Social Audits (SAs) have a legislative sanction and the process for conducting the audits have been laid out in the NREGA guidelines.

Across the country and in Andhra Pradesh, SAs have been conducted systematically under APREGS for the first time. As a consequence, the processes for implementing SAs are yet to be standardized based on the initial results.

It was anticipated that the SAs would generate awareness among people and create community driven accountability among the functionaries. This study was commissioned by the World Bank with support from the Government of Andhra Pradesh, and carried out by Intellectap, to understand the effects of the present process of SAs on the awareness levels of wage seekers, to gauge their perceptions, and the role of SAs in promoting transparency and accountability. The SA has multiple roles to play for changes in the community, and the study attempted to understand them as an evolving process.

The study reached out to 840 wage seekers across three districts of the state, three times over a period of seven months- initially one month before the SA for a baseline, one month after the event, and then six months after the event. In addition, 180 wage seekers were also interviewed 5-7 days after the SA for obtaining their perceptions regarding the process and map the immediate effects of the process. Perspectives of the implementation functionaries, discussions in groups comprising of only women, and both men and women were also conducted.

The findings of the study indicate substantial changes in the level of awareness among wage seekers:

- SAs brought about a better awareness amongst the wage seekers regarding the programme, increasing from 39% in the first round to 98% in the third round;
- With regard to job cards, worksite facilities and other non-negotiables, awareness increased from about 25% in the first round to over 95% in the third round;
- More wage seekers reported having demanded work, up to 99% in the third round from 55% in the first round. 98% also reported that their demand had been fulfilled;

- It was found that the wage seekers in general were a bit hesitant to undertake most aspects of the programme implementation that required official documentation to be completed. While they registered for work without much hesitation, demanding and applying for work was seldom, if ever, done the way the guidelines stipulated, and programme implementation was left much to the discretion of the Field Assistant.

Grievance redressal:

- There were no instances of complaints being recorded in writing, or of the complainant receiving a written acknowledgement of the same;
- The Field Assistant was the conduit for conveying and resolving grievances.

Payments:

- 60% of the respondents complained of delayed wages in the third round, up from 49% in the first round;
- However, 99% of the respondents received correct wages;
- 92% and above received the payment slip;
- 74% of the respondents came to know of the correct wages from the payment slip by the third round.

The wage seekers were largely aware of the village social audits and had positive feedback about the 'checking' of job cards, pay slips and other records done during the process. The wage seekers reported that

- The Social Audit team gave them information regarding their entitlements and procedures under the programme;
- The Social audit forum was thought as a good mechanism for bringing corrupt functionaries to book;
- The awareness regarding Right to Information was negligible across the three rounds.

The wage seekers were frequently not able to identify the roles and responsibilities of the Panchayat in the programme. However, the basic awareness regarding Gram Sabha and its role in selection of shelf of works increased by the third round. The common refrain across the study was that the women hardly attended the Grama Sabha because either they were not told or they had other work to attend to.

Given the evolving process for implementation, some factors that may influence wage seeker response to Social Audits and transparency and accountability, and these may include

- The role of stakeholders;
- The process of implementation and follow up;
- The frequency; and
- The location of the Audits

As a conclusion, the findings throw up many more questions that would need a deeper understanding in future, including

- Queries on the "stickiness" of the increased awareness;
- Issues of implementation to ensure follow up action;
- Comfort of the community with the more official processes, etc.

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Layout of the Report

Chapter-I: The Policy Perspective - Programme planning and implementation in India has evolved from top down planning to participatory planning, from monitoring, evaluation and transparency and accountability as stand-alone activities to integrating them in the programme design. The chapter traces the evolution of transparency and accountability components of programmes from top down to being supported by legislation and enshrined in the constitution as a right.

The chapter also has a brief overview of the study design. Given the evolutionary stage of the process of Social Audits when the study was undertaken, it was thought appropriate to use the study as stepping stone to understanding changes in the social and programme dynamics due to the process of conducting Social Audits, and the event of holding a Social Audit Forum.

Chapter-II: Auditing for a Transformation-Provides an overview of voices of what the respondents said over the three rounds. While 840 respondents were contacted over three rounds, 750 of the responses were used for analysis keeping in mind data quality standards. The chapter covers their awareness, responses, perceptions and expectations have changed over time, keeping the Social Audit as an event at the center of the querying.

Chapter-III: Perceptions After the Storm- Takes into account a snapshot of the wage seeker's perceptions a mere 5-7 days after the Social Audit forum. This snapshot attempts to provide an idea of the dynamics in perceptions because of an event that provides space for participatory transparency and accountability initiatives

Chapter-IV: Maps of Individual Reality- Covers the thoughts of the wage seekers regarding the programme and various other issues over the course of the study. The confidence and self perception of the respondents shows interesting changes across the study, with empowerment and confidence growing over time.

Chapter-V: Looking Ahead-The concluding chapter, puts forward thoughts for the future of Social Audits in Andhra Pradesh. It also includes an analysis of some of the parameters that might affect wage seeker behavior and perception, and some questions for further research.

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Chapter-I: The Policy Perspective

Participation, Transparency and Accountability in India

In the year 2002, the Planning Commission, Government of India, brought out the document “India-Vision 2020”. The document was put together to provide a picture of what the country wanted to move towards in the areas of progress and excellence without losing sight of the challenges that the country would be faced with. A reading of the chapter on governance provides an illuminating overview of the directions in which governance, and transparency and accountability were expected to move in the timeframe mentioned.

Decentralization and People's Participation

Devolution of power to local bodies will continue at an accelerated rate. Pressure from the grassroots will increasingly supplant governance from the top down

- Local communities will come to depend less on state and central government action and more on their own initiative and organisational capacity
- A better educated and better informed electorate will be increasingly demanding of its rights and increasingly critical of non-performing governments and their individual members

On Efficiency, Transparency and Accountability

- Mechanisms will be evolved to increase transparency and reduce corruption.
- E-government will improve responsiveness and reduce corruption in some areas.
- Computerisation of information systems coupled with downsizing, higher recruitment standards and stricter discipline will increase administrative efficiency.

Source: India- Vision 2020, Chairman Dr. S.P. Gupta, Dec 2002, Planning commission, Government of India

One cannot emphasise enough the importance of accountability and transparency in programmes where public funds are concerned. Monitoring of implementation and accountability of development interventions, and especially government interventions, has so far been a challenge in India.

Transparency and accountability: From authority to rights-based participation

In the Indian context, most government programmes in the 1970s and 80s were top down. These programmes were supply-driven and hinged on appropriate targeting. Errors of omission and commission were rampant, and the pressure to demonstrate performance within confined timeframes made implementation more prone to errors.

Project monitoring and transparency and accountability measures were initially separate activities undertaken by the respective authorities in-charge of implementing the programmes. Considering the case of the programmes implemented during the 1970s and early '80s, such as the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), TRYSEM, DWCRA, etc., it can be seen that there were multiple challenges at the programme level, including targeting, top down nature of the programme, monitoring and evaluation by the implementing authorities themselves, and NO beneficiary involvement in the programme whatsoever. The benefits of these programmes were often equivalent to one time grants of livestock and/or so-called capacity building training programmes. Similar challenges were observed through to the late 1980s, where wage employment programmes were implemented. They too, suffered from corruption and rigid, top down guidelines with minimal beneficiary involvement.

Towards the end of the 80's the Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP) and the Desert Development Programme (DDP) adopted the watershed approach. The Integrated Wasteland Development Projects

scheme (IWDP) taken up by the National Wasteland Development Board in 1989 also aimed at developing wastelands with watersheds as a unit.² One of the earliest documents to have incorporated the importance of People's participation in the implementation of Government programmes was the guideline for watershed development that stated the following:

"...most successful experiments, largely of Voluntary Agencies (VA) and a few from the governmental agencies, indicate that success is achieved through Government's/VA's participation in the peoples programmes rather than the other way around."

Source: Guidelines for Watershed Development Programme (old)

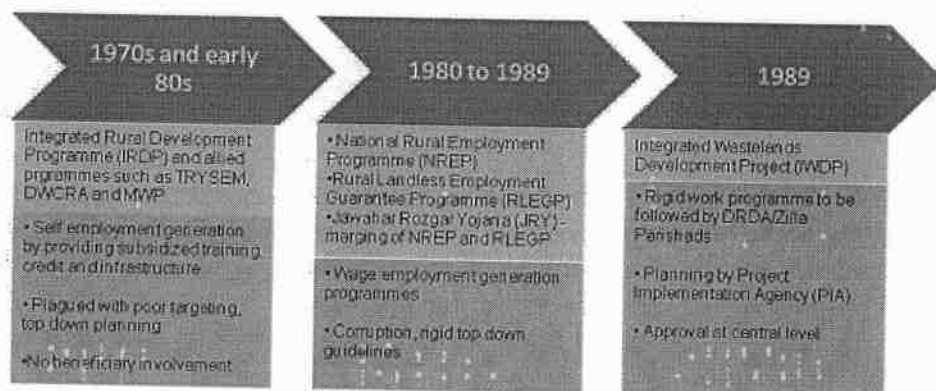


Figure 1: Tracing the evolution of transparency and accountability in India

² Guidelines for Watershed Development Programme (old), Department of Land Resource, Government of India. Available at <http://dolr.nic.in/guideline.htm>, last referred in February 2008.

Thinking has progressed a great deal from the first watershed guidelines, and the legislative and executive have combined to provide constitutional sanction to certain aspects of participation, as well as incorporated monitoring, evaluation and accountability and transparency within programme design. Some milestone policies and programmes and why they are considered important in the history of monitoring, evaluation and transparency and accountability initiatives in the country are summarised below:

Year	Name of the programme	Important evolution for Transparency and Accountability
1990	National Resolution on Joint Forest Management (JFM)	Pioneering initiative in bringing community involvement and participation in planning and implementation of the programme.
1992	73 rd Constitutional Amendment	Constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Empowerment of Gram Sabhas for planning and monitoring of village development programmes including conduct of Social Audit.
1993	Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS)	The word "assurance" is notable here. Thought processes were moving towards making programmes enforceable.
1995	Revision in Common Watershed guidelines	Included people's participation in planning, implementation and monitoring through Watershed committee comprised of user groups, SHGs, panchayat and women, funds for implementation to WCs – guidelines applicable to IWDP, NWDPRA and other watershed development programmes
1999	Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY)	Guidelines indicated implementation through village panchayats, social Audit to be undertaken by Gram Sabha; village level Vigilance and Monitoring Committee to oversee implementation. However implementation did not reflect action on these.
1999	Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) - Merging IRDP and allied programmes	Implementation of credit, training and enterprise development through Self Help Groups- more empowering and better impact than IRDP due channeling of planning and implementation through SHGs
2005	Right to Information Act	Powerful tool to ensure transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority. Provides the right to any citizen of India to request access to information and the corresponding duty of Govt. to meet the request, except the exempted information and the duty of Govt. to pro-actively make available key information to all.
2005	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)	Implemented through the State Rural Employment Guarantee Schemes (REGS). Guidelines include detailed procedures for social audits and grievance redressal
2007	Amendment in SGRY guidelines	Guidelines for maintenance of records and social audit and vigilance amended in line with the NREGA guidelines

Following the Watershed Guidelines was the national resolution on Joint Forest Management strengthening people's participation and the 73rd amendment empowering Grama Sabhas (GS) to plan and monitor programmes through Social Audits.

It can be noticed that beneficiary involvement in programmes has evolved from being stipulated in the guidelines towards legislative sanction of rights and responsibilities that facilitate the implementation of the guidelines. The integration of the 73rd amendment, the RTI and various other lessons that have been learnt over time are amply visible in the guidelines for the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. The evolution in approach is evident through this comparison, and the highlights of the changes have been the following:

- Guidelines have become more operational in nature, with scope for flexibility according to local conditions
- Making participation, and in some ways even the programmes themselves, enforceable through a rights based approach
- Making the programmes demand based and working in tandem with the market
- Reducing the role of top down targeting by making beneficiaries self selecting
- Make transparency and accountability bottom up in the programme design
- Facilitating transparency and accountability through the RTI
- Making programmes convenient for the people by stipulating reasonable turn-around times for payments, documentation, etc. by decentralizing processes

"Transparency and accountability are a must in the implementation process of rural development programmes." *Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, Cabinet Minister, Ministry of Rural Development, January 2008.*

The NREGS Guidelines: Towards Vision 2020

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) guidelines act in both the letter and spirit of the Vision 2020, and SAs are part of that picture to make the transparency and accountability more bottom-up and awareness based.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (NREGA) guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to any rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. The Act initially came into force in 200 districts with effect from 2 February 2006.³

The basic objective of the Act is to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment. This work guarantee can also serve other objectives: generating productive assets, protecting the environment, empowering rural women, reducing rural-urban migration and fostering social equity, among others.

The Act requires every State to formulate a State Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (REGS), which should conform to the minimum features specified under the Act. Once the Act comes into force, rural households have a right to register themselves with the local Gram Panchayats, and seek employment under the Act. Work is to be provided within 15 days of the date of demand, failing which the State Government will have to pay unemployment allowance at the stipulated rates.

The operational guidelines of the Act cover transparency, accountability and public vigilance in detail. Social Audits are mentioned in Chapter 11, and lays out details of the Social Audit process, the forum, as well as the mandatory agenda for the event.

"An innovative feature of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is that it gives a central role to 'social audits' as a means of continuous public vigilance (NREGA, Section 17). The basic objective of a social audit is to ensure public accountability in the implementation of projects, laws and policies..."

Source: Operational Guidelines, The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, Government of India

Social Audits are considered an ongoing method of public vigilance on 11 aspects of programme implementation:

- Registration of families
- Distribution of job cards
- Receipt of work applications
- Preparation of shelf of projects and selection of sites
- Development and approval of technical estimates and issuance of work order
- Allotment of work to individuals
- Implementation and supervision of works
- Payment of unemployment allowance

³ An additional 130 districts were notified under Phase-II with effect from 15 May 2007, and the remaining 266 districts have been notified under Phase-III with effect from 1 April 2008. These additional districts are not being covered as part of this Performance Audit.

- Payment of wages
- Evaluation of work
- Mandatory social audit in the Gram Sabha (Social Audit Forum)

The operational guidelines also list activities, the authorities responsible for that activity, vulnerabilities to programme implementation, and mention steps to ensure transparency and SA for each of these. For example:

Activity and responsibility	Vulnerabilities	Steps to Ensure Transparency and SA
Distribution of Job cards Responsibility: Sarpanch	• Delay in receiving job Cards • Issuance of false job cards • Issuance of job cards to ineligible persons: To non-residents; To minors; To those not members of the listed family. • Non-issuance of job cards • Asking for money for issuing job cards	• There shall be an (enforceable) one-month time limit for the supply of job cards, from the date of registration. • The list of job card holders must be updated every month, and be available for inspection at the Gram Panchayat office. • A file containing photocopies of all job cards issued shall be open for inspection at the Gram Panchayat office. • The job card should state the fact that there is no charge for it. The job card should also list the basic entitlements (including the minimum wage rate) under NREGA on one of its sides

The guidelines also mandate holding a review through the Grama Sabha or the Social Audit Forum once every six months. Information is to be read out publicly, and people given an opportunity to question officials, seek and obtain information, verify financial expenditure, examine the provision of entitlements, discuss the priorities reflected in choices made, and critically evaluate the quality of work as well as the services of the programme staff.

These transparency and accountability initiatives are to be conducted using Government machinery itself, thus providing scope for people's participation in transparency and accountability of the programme within the programme's own implementation framework.

REGS in Andhra Pradesh

In August 2007, when the Government of India (GoI) issued an order to undertake Social Audits as part of REGS, The Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP)⁴ issued a Government Order (GO), a part of which is reproduced in the box below, detailing out the process for Social Audits. The GO begins by noting that:

"Government have reviewed the impact of Social Audit and observed that Social Audits are found to be a powerful tool for empowering people in understanding their rights and entitlements and also a critical monitoring and evaluation tool for the administration."

1. *Social Audits will be conducted in all the 650 mandals of Phase –I EGS districts and follow up will be conducted in at least 10% of the mandals, by the end of March 2008.*
2. *Based on learning from the ground, it is felt necessary to assiduously follow certain processes without compromising on the quality, as detailed below.*
 - *The social audit process begins with filing of application under the RTI with the Mandal Program Officer (MPDO).*
 - *Social Audits are conducted by literate youth from laborer families who are identified and trained as village social auditors.*
 - *The process is facilitated by state and district resource persons.*
 - *During the social audit process cent percent verification of muster rolls and works is done through door to door campaigning, focused group discussions and conduct of gram sabhas. The implementation of the non negotiable of the Employment Guarantee Scheme is also seen.*
 - *Awareness building of the wage seekers on their rights and entitlements under the scheme is an integral part of the social audit process.*
 - *The process culminates in a Mandal level public meeting held on a pre-notified date in presence of the public, political representatives and officials and EGS functionaries where village wise social audit reports are read out, public testifies and corrective action is taken*

Sec 3.1: Social Audits will be conducted in all the 650 mandals of Phase –I EGS districts and follow up will be conducted in at least 10% of the mandals, by the end of March 2008

Source: G.O.Ms.No.431, PANCHAYAT RAJ & RURAL DEVELOPMENT (RD-II) DEPARTMENT, Government of Andhra Pradesh

⁴Government of Andhra Pradesh, Abstract, NREGS–AP-Social Audit in Implementation of NREGS– Guidelines on the conduct of Social Audit during financial year 2007-2008 –Orders – Issued. Dated 20.09.2007, G.O.M.S No.431.

Social Audits in Andhra Pradesh have been evolving since they began. In order to arrive at the most appropriate process for conducting these audits, inputs were taken from agencies that had conducted similar audits in other parts of the country, and adapted to suit the context of the state of Andhra Pradesh.



Figure 2: REGS board outside a village

About the study

Social Audits are tools for ongoing public vigilance and for generating awareness and ensuring transparency and accountability in the REGs programme. Social Audits are being conducted in a systematic manner by the Government of AP for the first time under APREGs, and there is inadequate understanding of the changes that the process creates in the community that is being exposed to it. In this context, the World Bank, with support from the SPIU (Government of AP), has commissioned this study to be carried out by Intellectap to better understand the effects of a Social Audit on the following:

- Wage seeker awareness levels and understanding regarding the programme before and after the audit
- People's participation in Social Audits
- The effects of observing transparency and accountability initiatives in action
- Wage Seeker, Village, Mandal and District level functionaries' perceptions regarding the programme

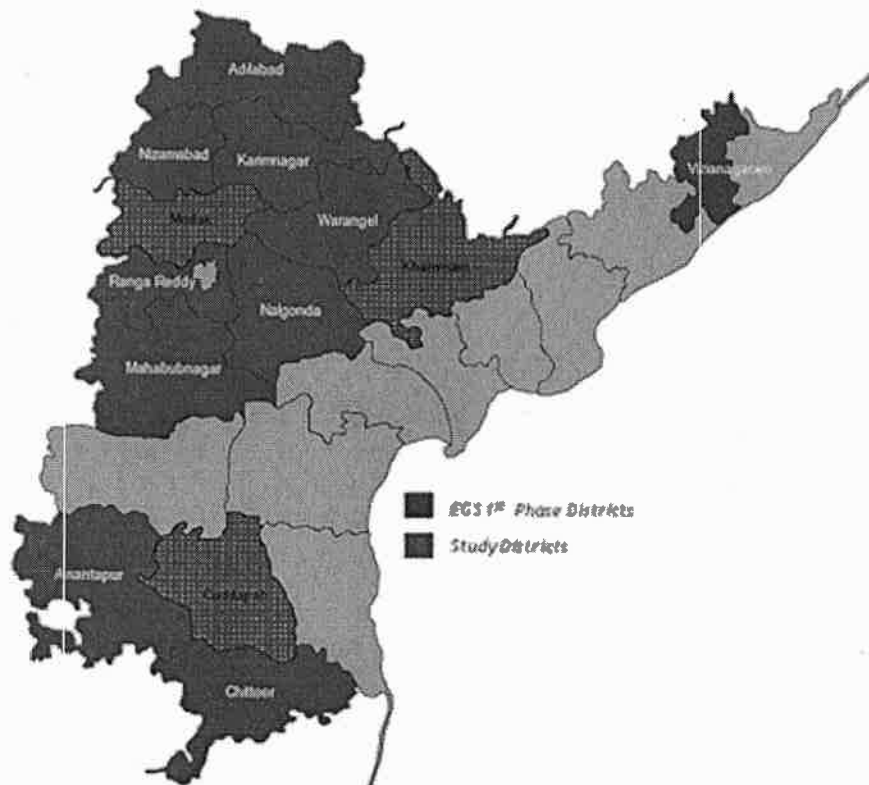


Figure 3: Map of the study districts

The study reached out to 840 wage seeker households across three districts of the state, three times over a period of seven months- initially one month before the Social Audit for a baseline, one month after the event, and then six months after the event. In addition, 180 wage seekers were also interviewed 5-7 days after the

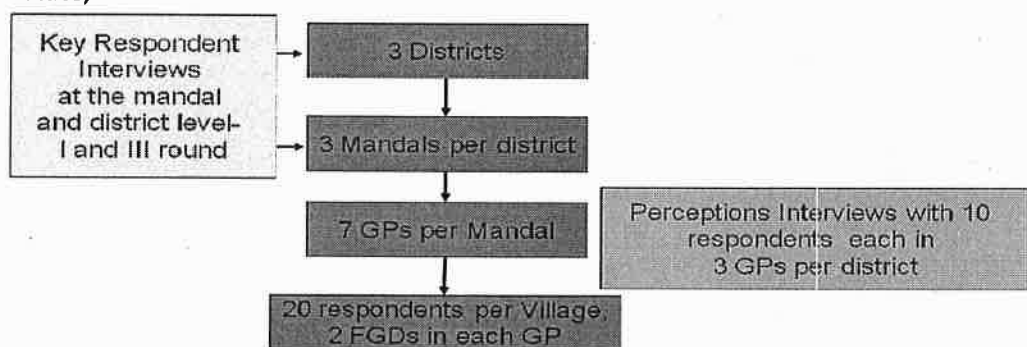


Figure 4: Diagrammatic representation of sampling methodology

Social Audit. Perspectives of the implementation functionaries, discussions in groups comprising of only women, and both men and women were also conducted. Please refer to Annexure I for the sampling methodology and other details.

Limitations of the study

The timing of the study coincided with the initiation of the SAs in the state, and it is to be noted here that the process of conducting Social Audits itself has evolved dramatically with time. For instance, the hitherto dormant Grama Sabhas have been galvanized into action by the time the study team entered the third round of data collection. Therefore, the results in this report reflect the changes that are specific to the *process* that was being followed, and similar research initiatives undertaken with differing SA processes are likely to yield differing results. However, these results are indicative of the kind of changes that take place within the community and the perceptions of the wage seekers.

The initiation of SAs in the state caused a flurry of activity in the villages, both from programme functionaries, as well as various other stakeholders, including NGOs in the area, the Social Audit Teams, and other research teams such as ours. The wage seekers themselves professed to be worn-out with answering queries on the SA and related issues during the study. Hence, a small element of respondent fatigue needs to be factored into our understanding of the results. In addition to respondent fatigue due to multiple sources of enquiry, a small element of fatigue due to answering the same questionnaire thrice is also to be factored in.

While the study team has been careful to ensure that the responses elicited are correct through a process of intensive training and pre-testing, and that they are recorded accurately through periodic and random checking of the hard copies of data, there is nevertheless an element of interviewer fatigue and other human errors that might have crept in.

Chapter-II: Auditing for a Transformation

Broadly, the study expected to find that the wage seekers would have low awareness and less participation or willingness to participate in the SA process in the first round of data collection. However, this was expected to increase after the Social Audit, and remain high even six months after. As the study progressed, the team estimated that the wage

seekers would be more participative and ensure accountability of the functionaries. After the social audit, the team expected an increase in the respondent's empowerment status, and sense of achievement and pride.

"Wage rates in the village are up because of the NREGA. It used to be 30-35 rupees, but now they give even the women 40-50 rupees."

Anjaneyulu, Arepalli

This chapter traces the implementation process of the REGS, the Social Audits and other aspects of the programme.

Profile of the Wage Seekers

- 59% women respondents;
- SC and ST combined were 64% of the sample;
- 87% had BPL ration cards.

Keeping with the study's focus on interviewing women and SC/ST wage seekers, the overall sample consists of 59% women, while SC and ST respondents comprise 64% of the sample. 87% of the respondents reported holding Below Poverty Line (BPL) ration cards. Regarding educational qualifications, a mere 5% were educated up to High school or above, and 72% of the respondents had no formal education at all. Occupationally, 69%

were agricultural wage labourers, and 39% of the respondents were members of SHG groups. Of those who were not themselves members of SHG groups, 22% had a family member who was part of the SHG system.

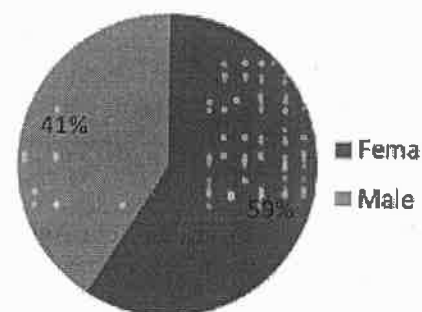


Figure 5: Sample breakup by gender

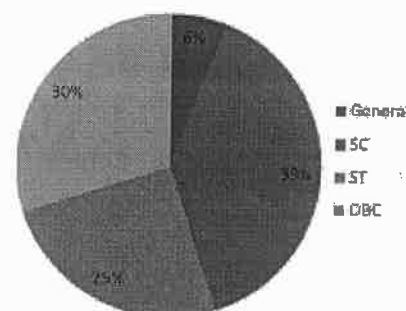


Figure 6: Sample breakup by caste

Awareness of the Programme

The primary objective of the Scheme is to provide livelihood security to the households in rural areas of the 13 notified districts by providing not less than 100 (one hundred) days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household, whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled and manual work.

- Awareness and recall of programme increased from 39% in round 1 to 97% in round 2, and stayed high in round 3;
- Awareness regarding most non-negotiables of the programme increased;
- However, an understanding and recall of the Right to Information eluded most of the respondents.

"Women and men are getting equal wages. We women are very happy. But sometimes the men refuse to do this work because of equal wages!" Respondents at Pranashala

A dramatic change in the awareness levels with respect to the programme was observed across the three rounds. From only 39% of the respondents knowing about APREGs/NREGA in the first round, awareness jumped more than two fold to 97% in the second round, and stayed at 98% even after six months after the social audit.

It was found that awareness regarding the details of the programme, such as providing 100 days of guaranteed work, increased dramatically after the Social Audit and remained high even six months after the event. 99% of the respondents were aware that

the programme provided 100 days wage employment at the time of the third round.

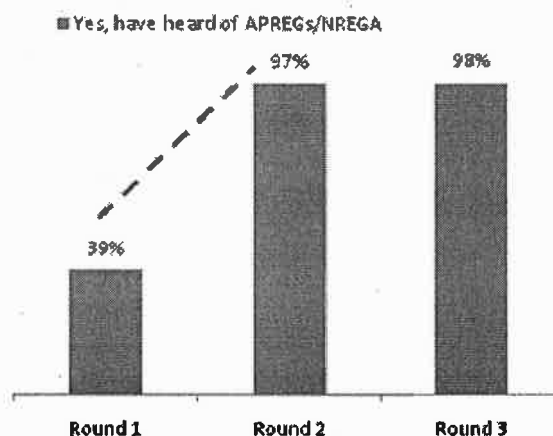


Figure 7: Awareness of APREGs/NREGA

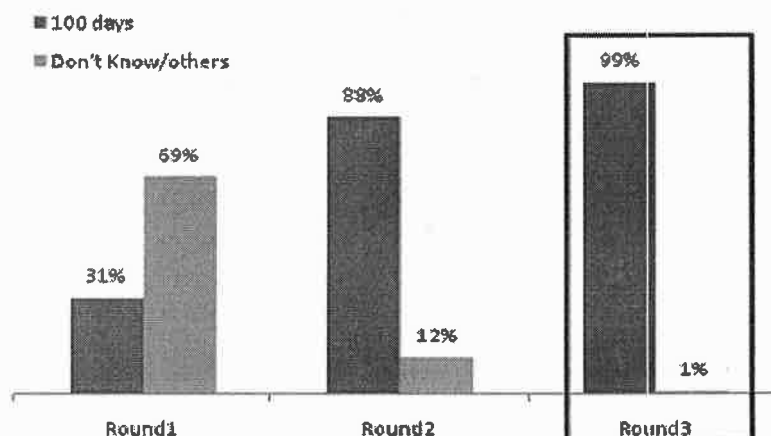


Figure 8: Number of days of employment provided by the programme

Levels of awareness regarding the non-negotiables of the programme also increased substantially, with most respondents reporting an awareness of prohibition of contractors and machines in the programme,

and that work can be demanded at any point during the year.

Most wage seekers were able to identify and understand the more

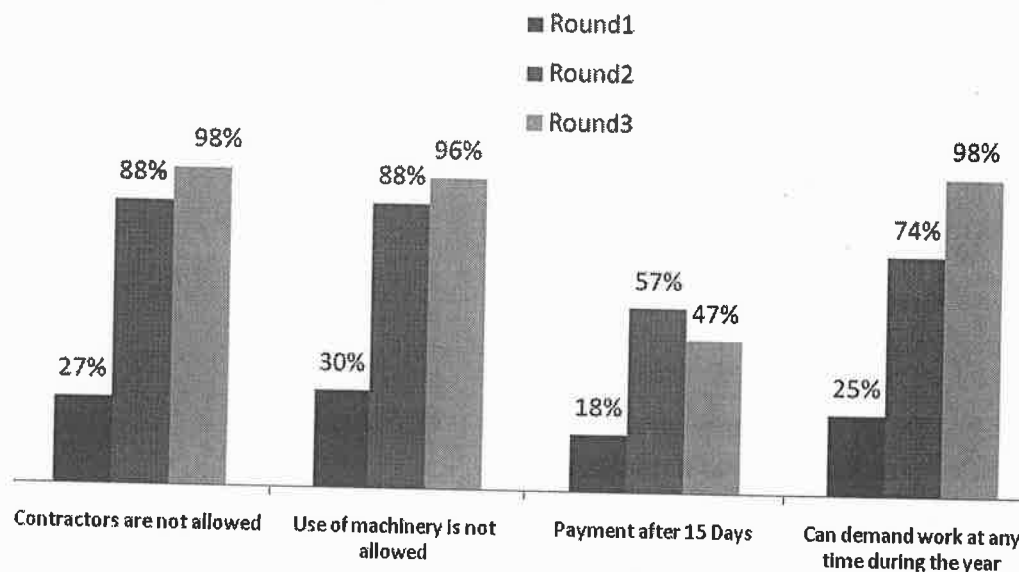


Figure 9: NREGA non-negotiables

operational aspects of programme implementation. They came out strongly against contractors and middlemen. The stipulation against the use of machines was contended by some wage seekers, who felt that machines were necessary to generate long-lasting productive assets from heavy earth works, such as bunding. In addition, they felt that machinery for certain activities increased their efficiency.

"They say we are not supposed to use machinery. But it is sometimes necessary, because the bunding and other earthwork does not last long if we do it using manual labour." Respondents at Turkal Khanapur

Registration and Job cards

As per the guidelines, households should apply for registration under the scheme with the Gram Panchayat. Following verification of applications and registration of households, the households are issued Job Cards, within a fortnight of the application for registration.

- 72% received the job cards within one month of applying;
- 91% said they had not paid any amount for receiving the job cards.

The study interviewed only those respondents who had job cards (or at least temporary job card numbers), and the data shows that 72% of the respondents received the job cards within 30 days of applying, while 10% received after 30 days. 91% of the respondents mentioned that they had not paid any amount for applying for the job cards.

There were hardly any complaints against the process of applying for and receiving job cards. In some habitations, it was found that some respondents had applied for job cards, but had not received them till the day of the interview. However, they were all provided with temporary Job card numbers, and were able to access work using that number as a reference for payment.

"We have applied for a Job Card, but have not received it yet. Instead we have temporary numbers. The temporary numbers are useful, we get to work even if we don't have the Job Card with us at present." Respondents at Satyanarayanapuram

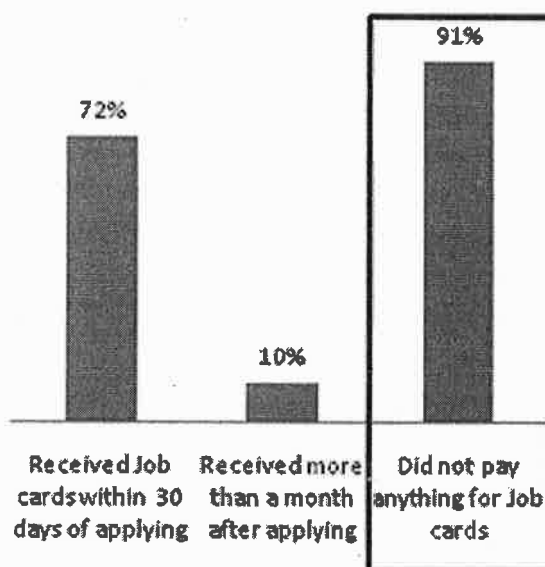


Figure 10: Job cards received and payment for the same

Entries in Job cards

- Entries were reported on more job cards by the third round;
- More people kept their job cards with themselves.

Data across the three rounds shows that the job cards were likely to be checked more regularly after the social audit, with a tenfold increase being reported. The number of Job cards entries being reported also jumped more than two fold from 39% and 40% in the first and second rounds respectively to 95% in the third round.

"I don't ever give my Job Card to the FA or to anyone else except for entries. I keep it with myself. That is the best way to ensure that no cheating takes place!" Pochamma, Arepalli S.J.

Likewise, while the number of wage seekers keeping custody of their Job cards was 90% in the first round, it had increased to 99% in the second round and remained at that level in the third. This could mean that wage seekers seem to be more aware of the importance of the documentation after the social audit. 99% of the respondents reported having a Post office account, and go to the post office themselves to withdraw money. 97% of the respondents keep the passbook with themselves.

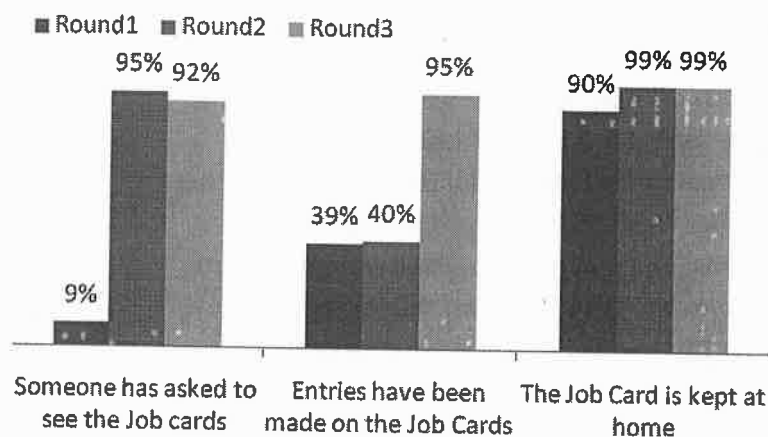


Figure 11: Job card related responses

Demand and Application for work

As per the guidelines, application for work should be submitted to the Gram Panchayat. It should contain details of the Job Card, date from which work is required and number of days for which work is required. The Gram Panchayat/Programme Officer shall be responsible for providing work to the applicant within 15 days of date of receipt of application.

- More wage seekers demanding work, more demand for work being met ;
- The understanding of demanding for work has increased across the rounds;
- Awareness regarding application for work is very low across the three

Provisi

on of work under REGS is demand driven. In round 1, only 55% of the workers reported demanding work. During the first and second rounds, there was a gap between the number of respondents demanding work, and the number mentioning that their demand had been fulfilled. Only 43% said their demand had been met in the first round, while 70% said so in the second round. A notable observation is in the third round, where 99% of the respondents mentioned having

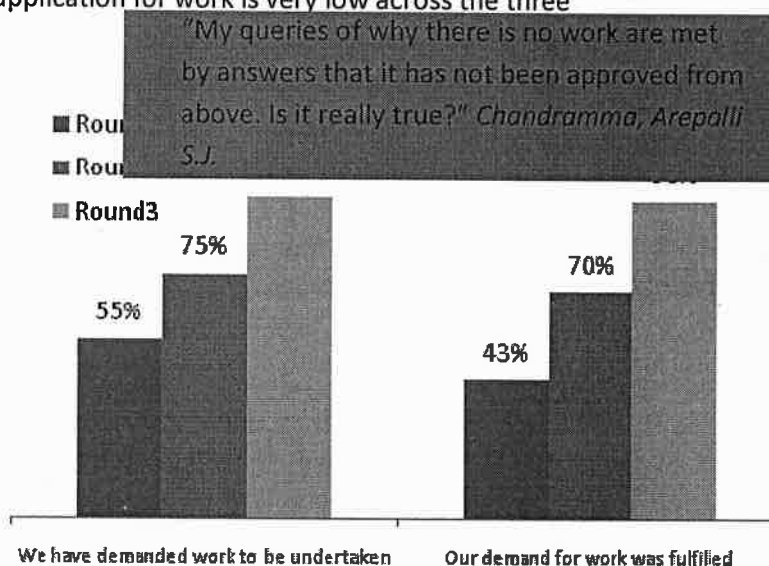


Figure 12: Demand for work

demanded work, and 98% respondents mentioned having had their demand for work fulfilled.

While the report on demand for work has been encouraging, it seems that the wage seekers are not aware of the need to put the demand in writing. In discussions, the often mention that they had a conversation with the FA to demand for work.

Similar to the demand for work, formally applying for work is also not widely prevalent. As can be seen in the chart, only 9% of the respondents applied for work in round 1, out of

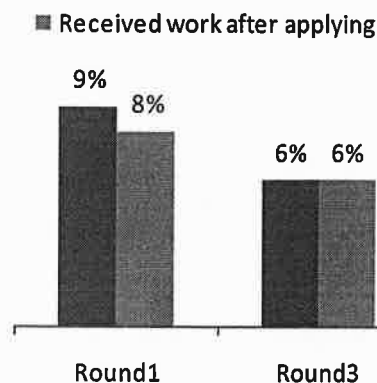
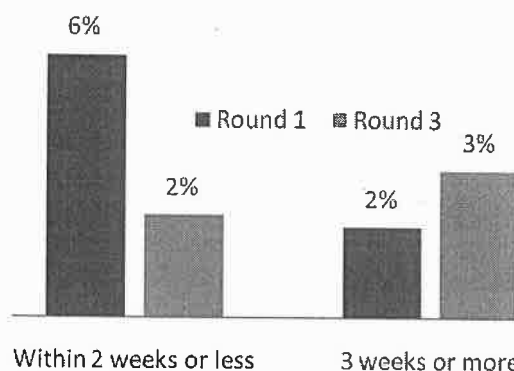


Figure 13: Receiving work

which 8% received work. In round 3, only 6% applied for work and the same number received it, while the percentage of both applied and received for round 2 are Nil.

The guidelines say that the Gram Panchayat/Programme Officer shall be responsible for providing work to the applicant within 15 days of date of receipt of application.

However, the number of respondents who said they received work was very small (8% for Round 1 and 5% for Round 3, none for Round 2). In addition, while 6% of the respondents mentioned they received work within 2 weeks or less of applying in round 1, this number was down to 2% in round 3. 2% mentioned having received work within 3 weeks or more in round 1 and the same time was reported by 3% in round 3.



It appears from data that the programme implementation could benefit from improvements in the response time for provision of work.

Figure 14: Time taken for the wage seekers to receive work

Some factors affecting wage seeker participation in REGS

- Opportunity cost of working at the REGs worksite- alternative labour available at the local landlords and the current wage rate
- Working conditions and the state of the worksite- the harder the work and tougher the worksite, the more the needy self select themselves
- Perceptions, attitude and dignity of labour- earth work is considered demeaning by some. However, there are also places where any money was considered to be good money. So, while some families would not go for earthwork even though they were struggling to make ends meet, others would work even though they earned enough and more through other sources
- Health, family and other constraints

Selection of work and involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions

The guidelines stipulate that the shelf of projects/works to be taken up should be determined by the Gram Sabha. These should also be assessed for relevance and priority by the Gram Sabha.

An open 'project meeting' with all potential workers and open to people from the Gram Panchayat should be held to explain the work plans, and their details and work requirements before the work commences..

- Field Assistant is still a major channel for information regarding work instead of the Grama Sabha;
- Involvement of the Grama Sabha increased and 32% of the respondents mention that selection of work is done in Gram Sabha in the third round.

The major channel for information regarding the selection and implementation of work has been the Field Assistant over the three rounds. The FA seems to have become more active in

disseminating information during the time of the social audit, with a gradual slackening after it. Between 45 and 58% of the

respondents mentioned that the work was selected by the FA. However, notable in the chart is the information with regard to the role of the GS. By the third round, 5% of the respondents were getting information from the GS, up from 1% in the first round. In

addition, 32% of the respondents mentioned the work being selected in the GS.

"The women never get information on when the Grama Sabha or Social Audit forums are held. The elders and important persons don't tell us." *Eswaramma, Kothapeta*

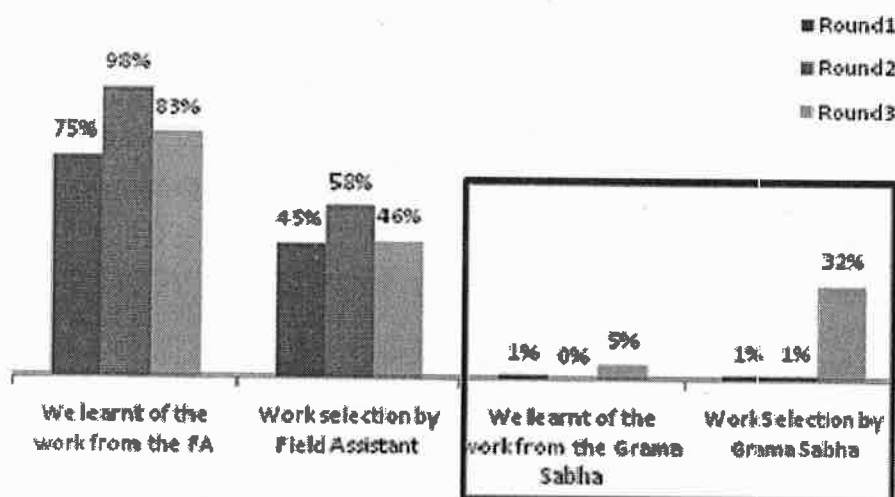


Figure 15: Source of information for work and work selection

As the study progressed, there was more than 50% jump in reporting having heard of a GS. The percentage of respondents reporting a GS being held in their village increased from 21% in round 1 to 98% in round 3. Also, 62% of the respondents said that APREGs work was discussed in the GS. This percentage was up from 15% in the first round.

It seems to indicate that the events between the first and the third round have combined to create better awareness regarding the GS, and to facilitate the discussion of APREGs work in the GS.

It is interesting to note the percentages regarding the awareness and attendance to a GS

amongst the women.

While 40% of the

respondents who had heard of the GS in the first round were women, this had increased to 52% across the second and third rounds. The reporting for GS being held in the Panchayat was very similar. However, in spite of more than 50% of the respondents aware of the GS being women in the third round, only 47% claimed to have attended the Sabha in the third.

The common refrain across the study was that the women hardly attended the GS because either they were not told or they had other work to attend to.

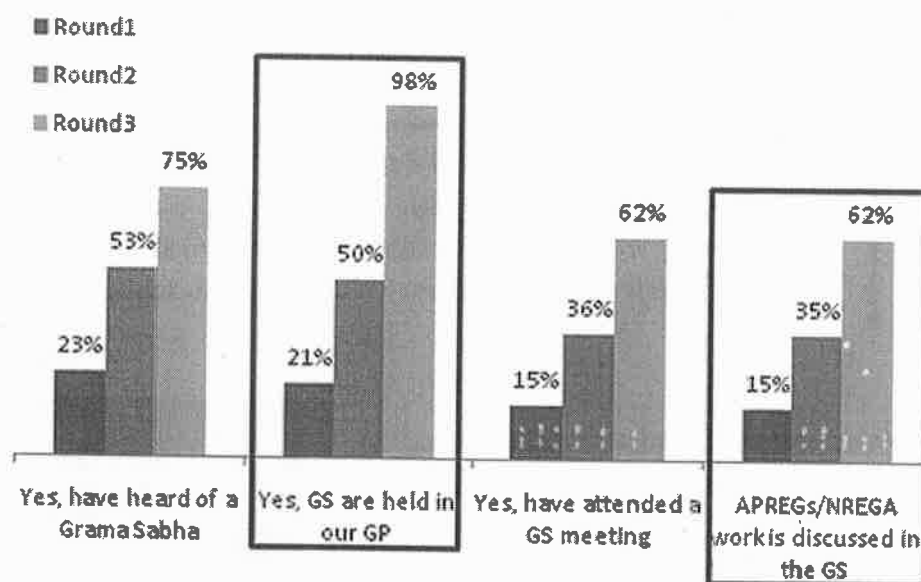


Figure 16: Grama Sabha involvement in APREGS

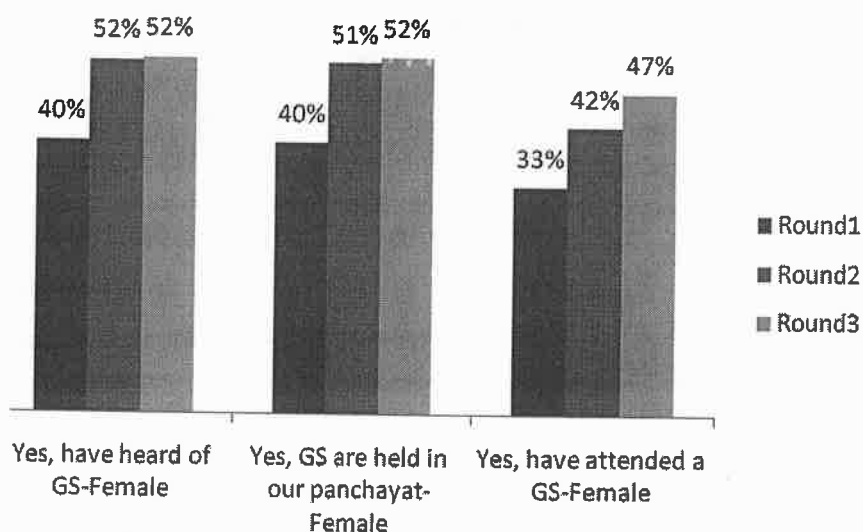


Figure 17: Grama Sabha from the perspective of the female respondents

Women and (Non)-Participation

Savitramma of Parnasala, Dummugudem, is busy -like many of her other rural sisters. Her husband is often sick and unable to work consistently, so she is forced to work as much as she can. Lately she has been working at the REGs site because she gets higher wages than at the local landlord's.

But, she says, between cooking, cleaning, caring for her husband and three children, looking after their poultry and livestock, and attending the weekly SHG meeting, she says she has hardly any time to either visit the Panchayat office to register for REGs, or demand work, or check up on the authenticity of payments, or attend Grama Sabha meetings, that is- if she ever comes to know of the event.

In addition, she cannot read or write, so she feels intimidated by these procedures.

"We agricultural labourers want work, and nothing else. It is good if we get work, we will fill our stomachs with our own hard earned money." Savitramma, Parnasala

Entitlements

Workers are entitled for work site facilities such as safe drinking water, shade for children and periods of rest, first-aid box with adequate material for emergency treatment of minor injuries and other health hazards connected with the work.

If the number of children below the age of six years accompanying the women, working at any site is five or more, one woman worker shall be engaged to look after the children and she shall be paid wage rate.

Any injury caused to a person employed under the Scheme by accident arising out of and in the course of his/her employment, such person is entitled to medical treatment free of charge.

- Workplace facilities reported an improvement over the three rounds;
- Number of wage seekers carrying work implements to the worksite, as well as those receiving maintenance for them increased.

"Our field assistant has started arranging for water and shade after the social audit."

Respondents at Konyala

Reports of availability of drinking water at the site increased from 79% of the respondents in round 1 to 95% of the respondents in round 3 through 83% in round 2. The provision of first aid box at the worksite, which was reported by 59% and 52% of the respondents in

rounds 1 and 2 respectively, increased to a positive response by 83% in round 3.

Some concerns, however, remain.

The availability of a crèche facility decreased from 8% in the first round to 3% in the third, while only 40% of the

respondents mentioned the provision of shade at the worksite even in round 3.

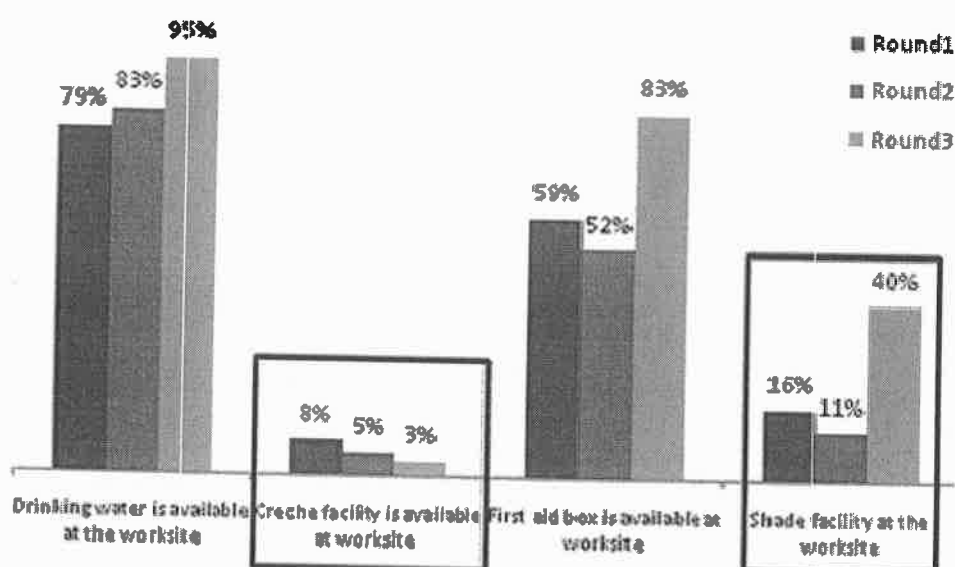
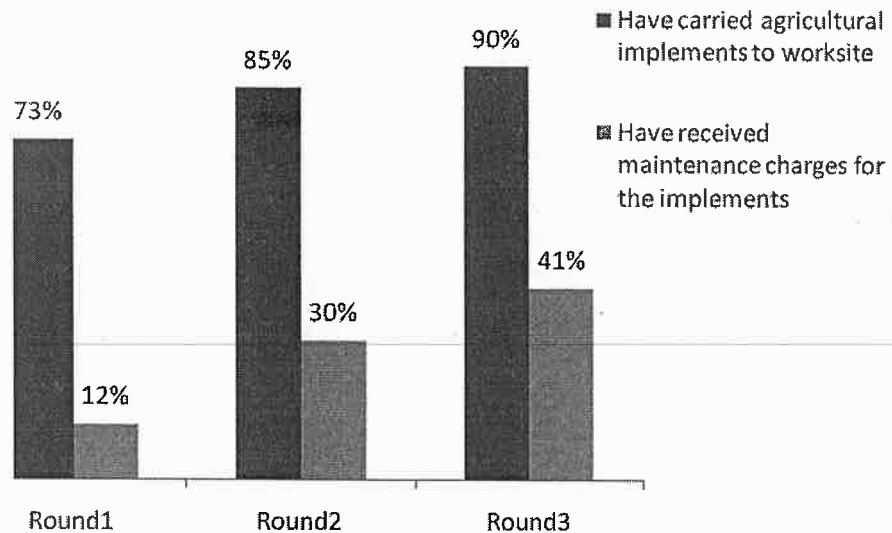


Figure 18: Entitlements at the work site

Both the percentage of respondents carrying agricultural implements to the worksite, as well as the percentage receiving maintenance charges increased. While 90% of the respondents reported carrying implements in the third round, up from 73% in the first, 41% of the respondents reported receiving compensation, up



from a mere 12% in the first round.

Figure 19: Agricultural implements and maintenance

Medical Compensation- A Case for Contemplation

Rallacheruvupalle is a village in Obulvaripalle Mandal of Cudappah District.

The wage-seekers found that having to haul the mud that was dug up from a worksite was taking up a lot of their time, as the dumping ground was some distance away. This was limiting the amount of wages they could earn per day.

The wage seekers decided to address this bottleneck to higher wages, and showed a unique initiative to make their work more efficient- they hired a tractor on their own to carry the mud that they had dug up.

However, on one of the trips to the dumping ground, tragedy struck- one of their colleagues, who was riding the tractor to help unload the dirt, fell off the moving vehicle and sustained a fractured foot.

Since the injury was sustained at the worksite, the wage seekers approached a doctor for treatment, and submitted the expenses for compensation. However, they were disillusioned that no compensation had been provided to them, as the authorities pinned the blame on machinery, and delayed compensation saying machinery was not to be used on the work site.

"We hired a tractor to carry the mud to a further away place so that we could increase our work output. One of our colleagues was injured with a fractured foot, and we requested for compensation. However, nothing has been given so far." Respondents at Rallacheruvupalle

Payment of wages and unemployment allowance

Every person working under the Scheme shall be entitled to wages at the minimum wage rate fixed by the State Government (or the competent authority concerned) for agricultural labourers under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, unless the wages have been notified by the Central Government under Section 6(1) of the Act.

If an applicant is not provided with employment within fifteen days of receipt of his/ her application seeking employment or from the date on which the employment has been sought in the case of an advance application whichever is later, he/ she shall be entitled to a daily unemployment

- 99% of the respondents received correct wages;
- 92% and above received the payment slip;
- 74% of the respondents came to know of the correct wages from the payment slip by the third round;
- 33% of the respondents were aware of the provision for unemployment allowance in the third round, up from a mere 7% in the first.

Overall, the status of wage payments was heartening. 99% of the respondents received wages, and the percentage of awareness regarding the payment slip, receipt of payment slip and understanding of correct wages steadily increased across rounds to culminate at 92% or above in each case.

In addition, it is interesting to note that the source of information regarding the wages that the respondents were to get changed in favour

of the payment slip from the FA over the three rounds.

"The work has been very helpful to us. We get paid according to the wage-slip, and nobody who has not worked gets paid." *Maddela Mallamma, Vaddepalli*

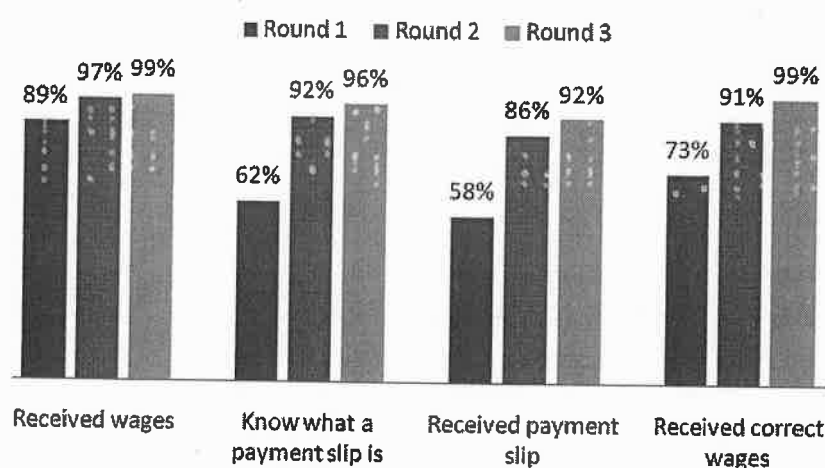


Figure 20: Wages and payment slips

As the chart shows, 74% of the respondents in the third round came to know of their wages from the payment slip, up from 26% in the first, while only 19% got the information from the FA in the third round, down from 49% in the first round.

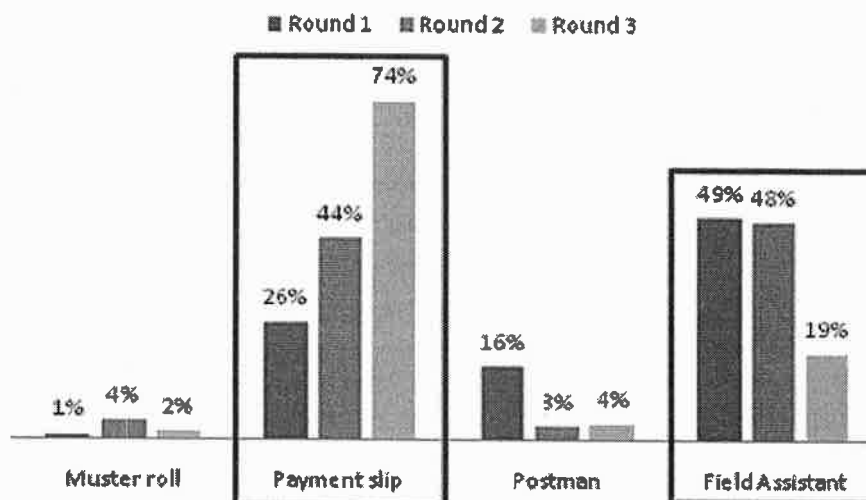


Figure 21: Sources of information for wages

Awareness regarding the existence of an unemployment allowance under the programme increased from 7% in the first round to 33% of the respondents in the third round.

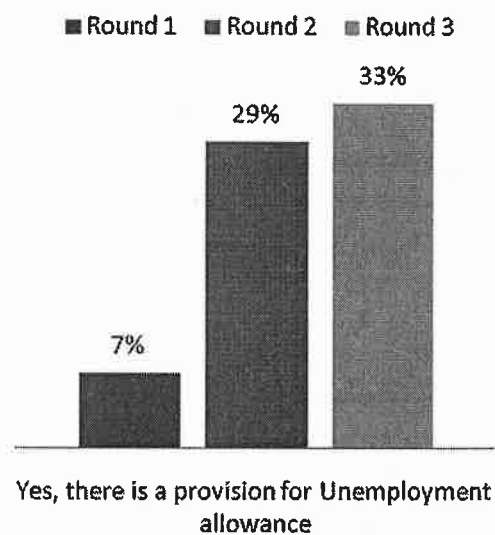


Figure 22: Information on unemployment allowance

- More muster rolls being maintained by appointed labourers;
- 99% respondents signed/ put thumbprints on the muster roll;
- 99% received wages through their Post Office account;
- 69% satisfied with the wages received.

After the social audit, the muster rolls seem to be maintained more transparently. The number of respondents reporting signing their names/ thumbprints on the muster roll increased from 92% in the first round to 99% in the second and third

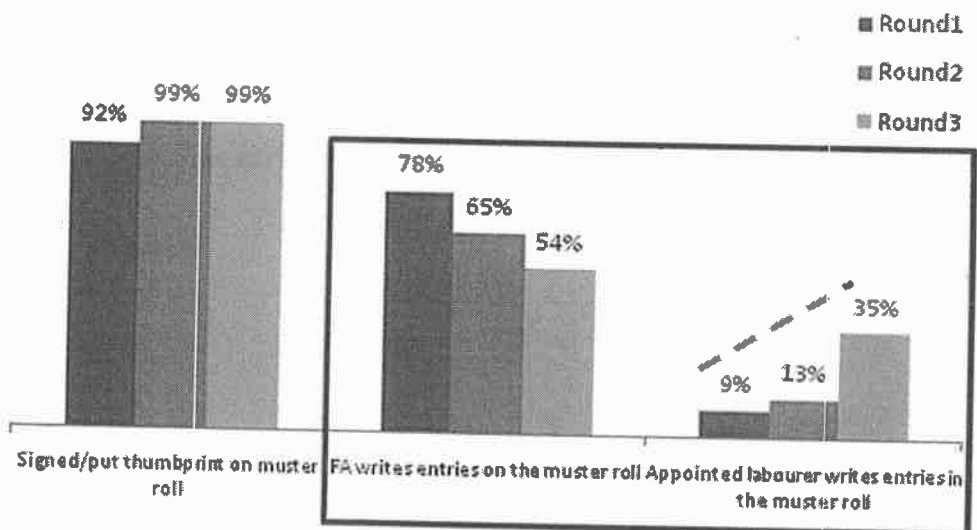


Figure 23: Muster roll and its maintenance

rounds. An interesting finding is that the percentage reports of the FA writing the muster rolls decreased across the rounds, while the incidences of an appointed wage seeker writing the rolls increased.

The mode of payments moved steadily towards the stipulated Post Office account process. At the end of six months from the social audit, 99% of the respondents reported receiving

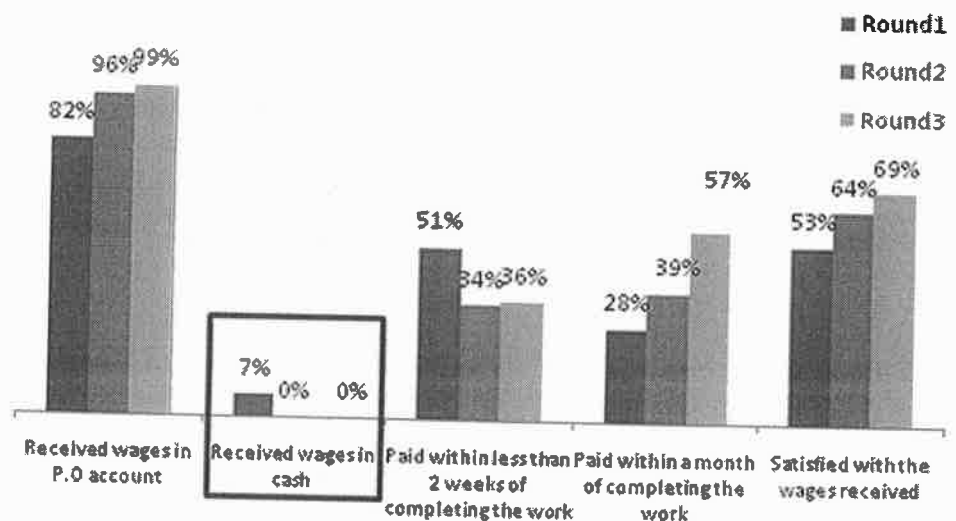


Figure 24: Mode of payment

wages in their Post office accounts. In the first round, 7% of the respondents mentioned receiving wages in cash, and this had reduced to 0% in the second and third rounds.

- 60% reported delays in wage payments even in the third round;
- 94% and above reported having observed no fraudulent practices.

Some concern s regarding delayed payments are voiced by the respondents. While 51% of the wage seekers reported getting paid within two weeks of completing the work in the first round, this percentage reduces to 34% in the second and increases to 36% in the third round. However, it is heartening to note that 57% of the respondents mention having been paid

within one month of completing the work, up from 28% in the first, and 39% in the second rounds. 69% of the wage seekers mention being satisfied with the wages received in the third round.

Wage seekers report an increase in the visits to the worksite by members of the Panchayat and other officials increased after the social audit. In particular, 95% of the respondents mentioned panchayat members visiting the worksite in the third round, up from 64% in the second.

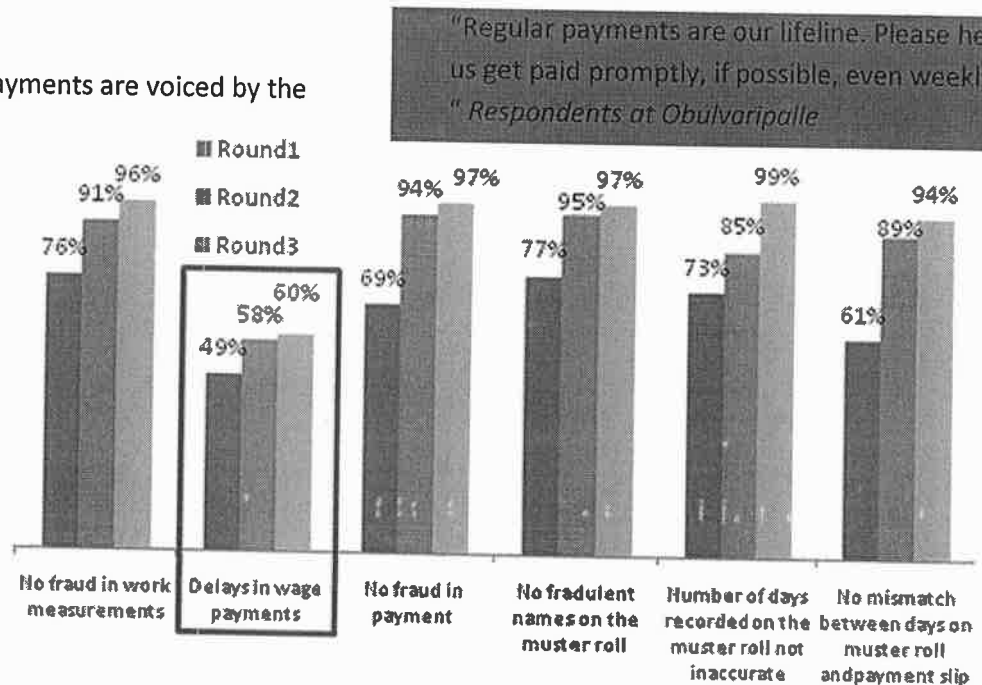


Figure 25: Grievances and frauds

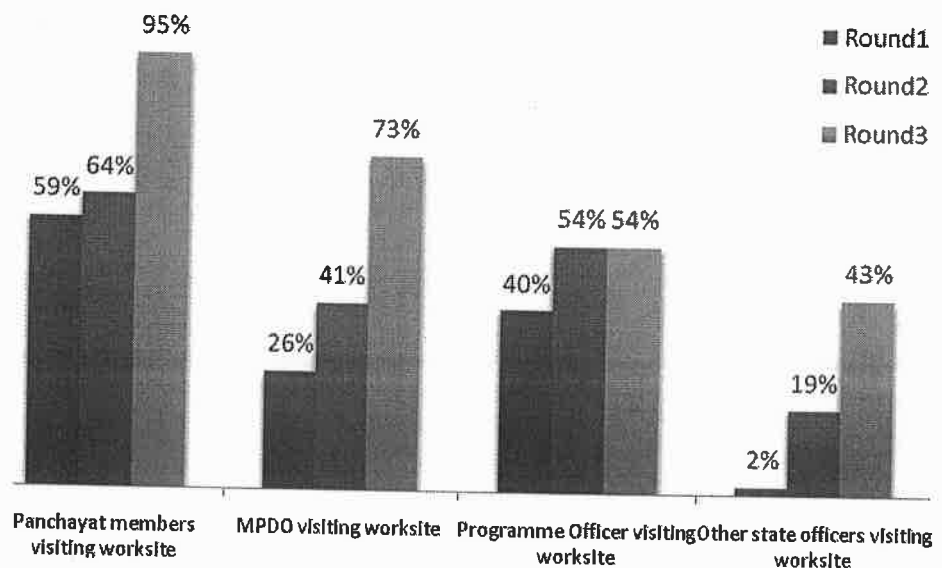


Figure 26: Visits by functionaries and officials

Power to the People

Sitting outside her house by the side of the metalled road, Chandramma gathers her friends around her to recount how they used the RTI to the benefit of the entire village.

Chandramma and her friends found that the FA was embezzling funds meant for REGs wages in her village. Having heard about the RTI from the Social Audit Team, she decided to gather proof, and report the misdeed.

She first went to the FA and challenged him to accept that there were names of people who had not worked at the worksite on the muster roll. The FA flatly denied the accusation.

She then asked to take a look at the muster roll, which was kept at the Panchayat Office, saying she wanted to take a Xerox of the record. She was first refused access to the information. But she persisted told the Panchayat secretary about the RTI, and how she was entitled to the information that she wanted. In one last ditch effort to dissuade her, the authorities asked for Rs. 50 as the price for the photocopy. Undeterred, she and her friend contributed Rs. 25 each to make up the Rs. 50, and took a Xerox copy of the muster roll.

Armed with the proof, she confronted the Field Assistant, and told him that she had decided to report him at the Social Audit forum to be held in the Mandal.

Many residents of Arepalli SJ attended the Social Audit forum meeting, keenly observing the goings on and taking note of the large amounts of money that FAs from other villages had embezzled. They noted that the pilferage by their own FA was paltry in comparison, and the resolve to report the FA slowly turned into forgiveness, provided he was ready to accept his mistake.

Chandramma and the villagers came back without reporting their FA at the forum, confronted him in the village and extracted an apology, a promise to pay the money back to them, and a promise never to indulge in misdeeds again. The money has since been recovered from the FA, and Chandramma is proud that she and her friends could resolve their problems on their own.

"We got a xerox of the information on the muster roll from the PO by paying Rs. 50 so that we could prove that there was misappropriation of funds." Chandramma, Arepalli S.J.

"We came to know at the Social Audit Forum that FAs ate up Rs. 30-40,000 or more in the other villages. Our FA ate only about Rs. 2,000 or so, we did not report him. But still, the social audit is useful, they suspended 6 FAs there!" Respondents at Arepalli SJ

Social Audit and SA Forum

- Majority of the respondents had heard of a Social Audit;
- 93% said the social audit was a desirable task;
- However, awareness regarding the Right To Information was consistently low.

A majority of the respondents had heard of a Social Audit, were aware that a social Audit had been conducted in the village, and also that the Social Audit team conducted the exercise.

93% of the respondents said a Social audit is a desirable task, and as many as 89% of the respondents mentioned that they

would undertake a Social Audit on their own in the third round, as compared to 10% in the second round. However, the awareness levels regarding the provisions of the RTI Act remained low, even while peaking one month after the Social Audit. This was

observed across the

"The Social Audit people should come every month to keep these wrongdoings at bay!"
Satyamma, Arepalli SJ

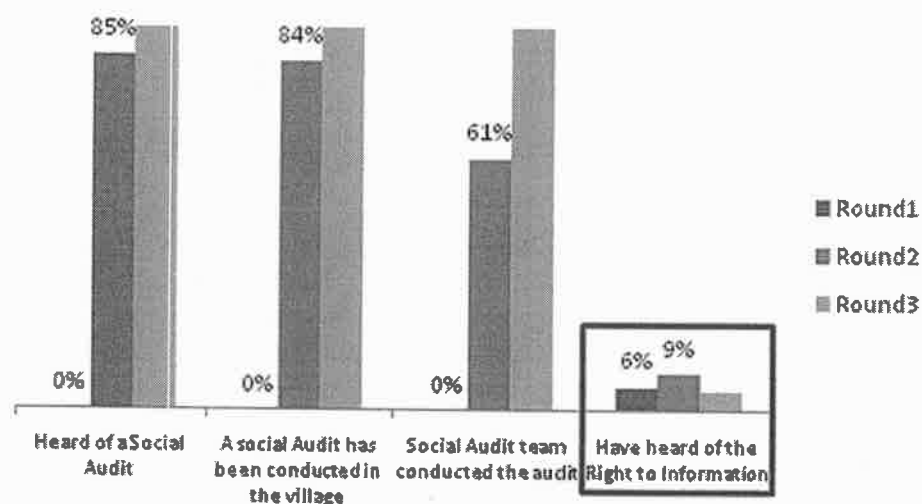


Figure 27: Awareness of Social Audits and the RTI

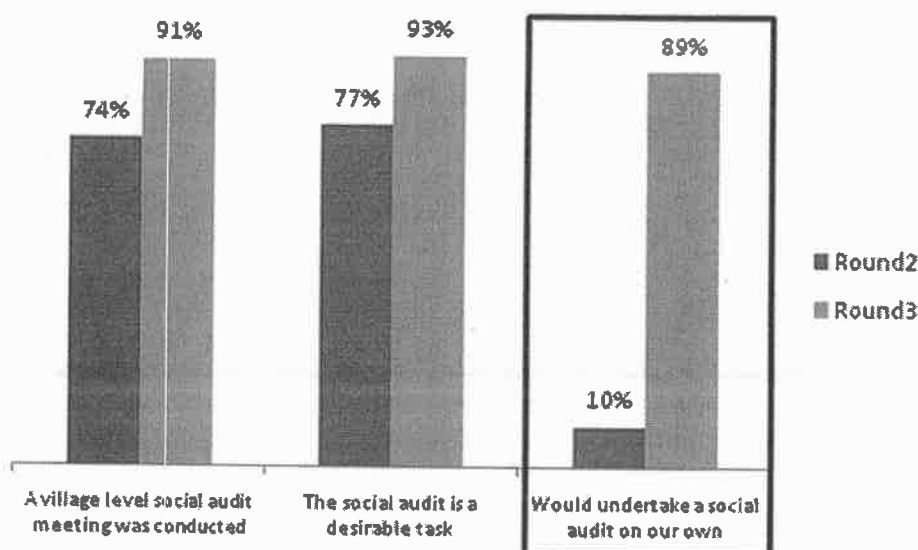


Figure 28: Usefulness of Social Audits

- 87% of the respondents had heard of the SA forums through the village Social Audit;
- 22% were of the opinion that the social audits would be held once in six months;
- The percentage of respondents saying that corrupt officials were suspended/dismissed actually fell from 40% in round 2 to 30% in round 3.

study, including the focus group discussions and other interactions.

45% of the respondents who said they would not undertake a social audit on their own in the second round and 42% in the third round said it was because they were illiterate.

The source of information about the SA forums was through the village social audit for 87% of the respondents in the third round. While awareness regarding the frequency of the SA forum was low in general, but 22% believed it would be held once in six months.

20% of the respondents in the second round mentioned that either they or a family member had attended a Social Audit Forum, while this percentage increased to 34% in the third round.

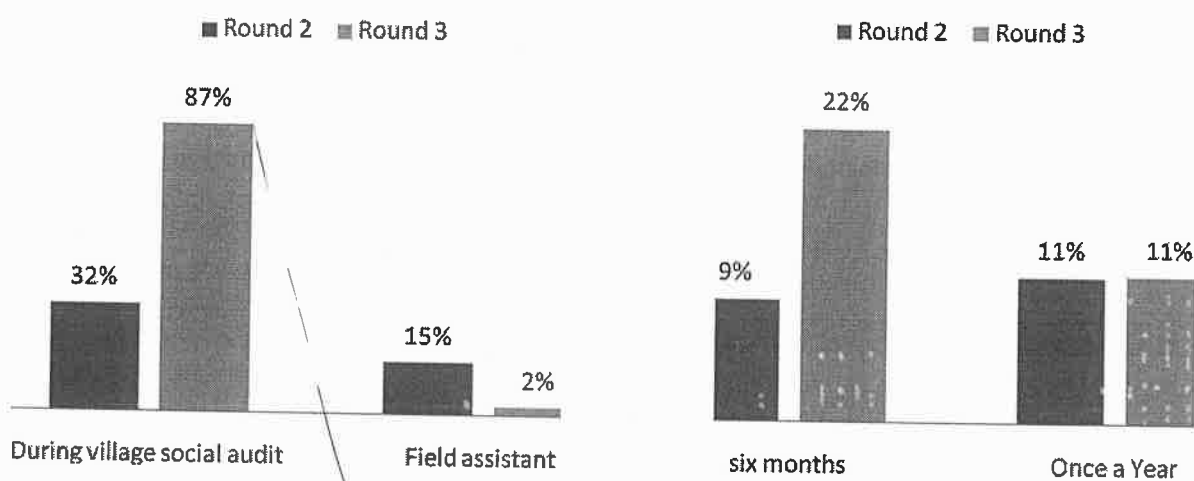


Figure 29: source of information about SA forum, and frequency of SA forum

10% of the respondents in the second and 21% in the third round were aware that action had been taken at the SA forum.

Of those who responded in the positive to this query, 46% mentioned an attempt to make payments more timely as the action in the third round, up from 6% in the second.

It is interesting to note that, while 40% of these respondents said corrupt officials were suspended or dismissed in the second round, only 30% came up with that reason in the third round.

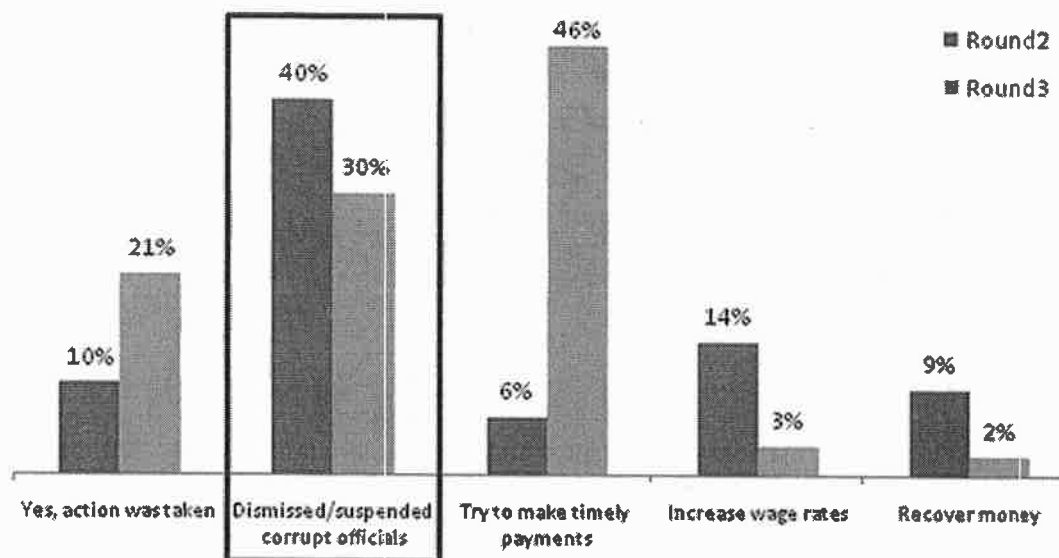


Figure 30: Action taken at the SA forum

Were the following issues discussed in the Social Audit Forum?

The awareness of the respondents regarding the goings on at the Social Audit Forum jumped from the second round, but remained between 30 and 35% in the third round.

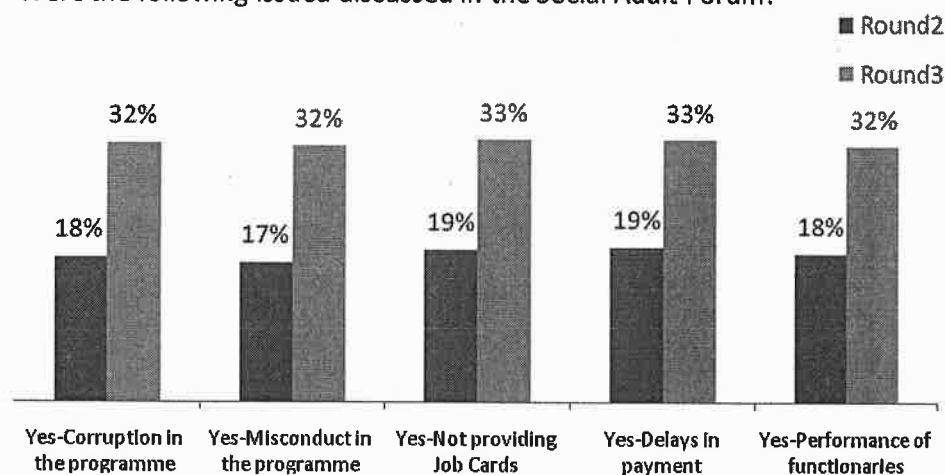


Figure 31: Points of discussion in the SA forum

Suggestions to make Social Audits more effective

Bhargavi, PO of Obulvaripalli, is pragmatic about how action points from the village social audit and the SA forum are implemented.

She says it is very difficult for local teams to take action against localized corruption, as the people conducting the audits would be dealing with would be those with whom they have to interact on a day to day basis. In addition, she says that action proclaimed at the SA forum is sometimes not followed up, thus disillusioning the wage seekers.

“It would help if the social audit teams were from outside, it may not be possible for local people to do much about localised corruption.” PO Obulvaripalli

Chapter III: Perceptions After the Storm

- 33% of the respondents were aware that Fig-1 was that of the work being decided in the Grama Sabha;
- 35% of the respondents were aware that the programme provided 100 days of work;
- 45% of the respondents mentioned equal wages for men and women;
- Only 22% of the respondents recognized Fig 4 as mentioning work being provided within 15 days;
- Only 28% recognized Fig 5 to represent the payment cycle;
- 99% of the respondents knew that Fig 6 related to prohibition of machines and/or contractors.

For the perceptions dataset, 180 respondents were contacted, 60 each from the three districts, in accordance with the study design. It consisted of 59% female respondents. SC/ST and OBC respondents consisted 96% of the sample, and 93% of the respondents had BPL ration cards. 68% respondents had no formal education (as compared to 72% in the main sample).

Awareness regarding REGs

The respondents were asked if they understood what the pictures at the back of their job card meant:



Fig 1: Work being decided in the Grama Sabha

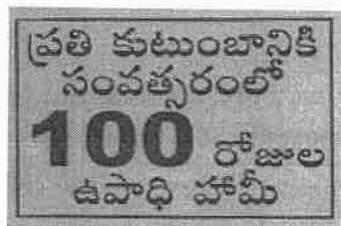
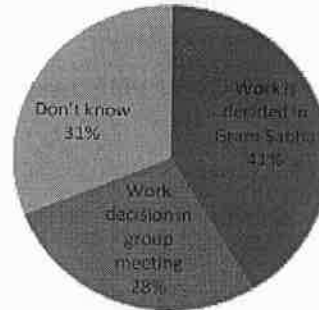


Fig 2: Each household guaranteed 100 day's work

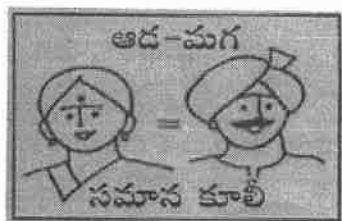
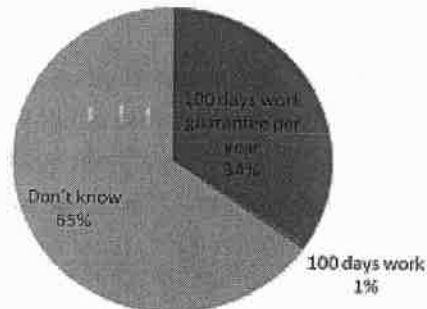


Fig 3: Equal wages for men and women

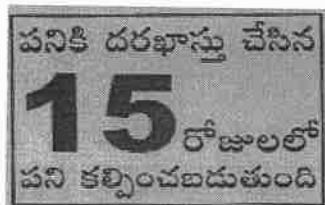
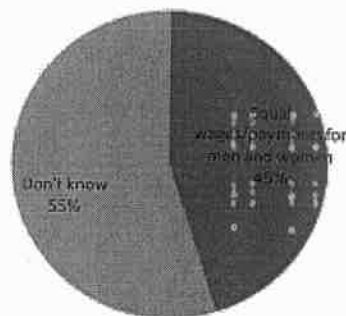
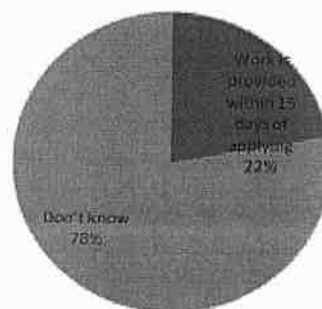


Fig 4: Work to be provided within 15 days of demand



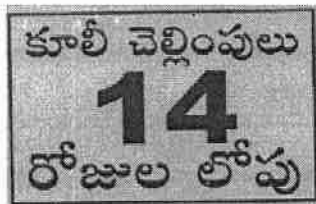


Fig 5: Payment to happen within 14 days of work

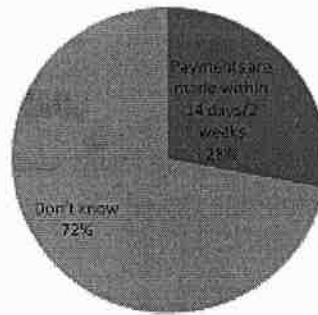


Fig 6: No contractors or machinery allowed

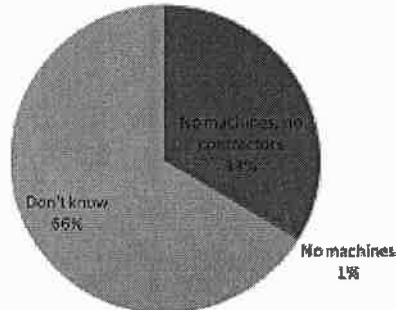


Figure 32: Understanding of pictures on the Job card

28% of the respondents thought the benefits of REGs was earning money. While 17% of them had experienced delayed wages, 16% of them had approached the FA to resolve their problems.

95% of the respondents had been to the Social Audit in the village, and 79% said their grievances had been addressed. 78% thought Social Audits are an effective tool for grievance redressal, and 89% thought that the Social Audits should be conducted

on a regular basis. 56% of the respondents wanted the social audits to be held for sharing problems and solving them.

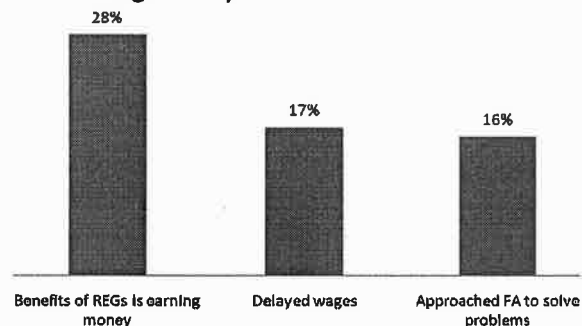


Figure 34: Benefits of REGs, grievances and redressal

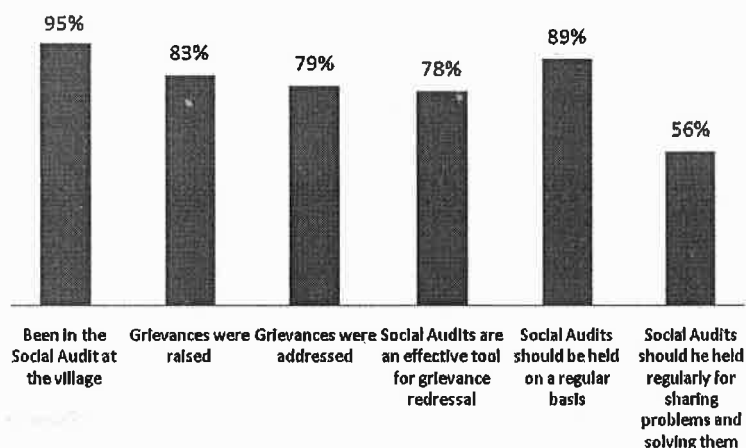


Figure 33: Perceptions regarding Social Audits

In comparison, only 47% of the respondents had attended the SA Forum at the Mandal. 73% thought the SA Forum was a useful exercise, and 61% of the respondents were confident that the decisions made would be implemented. The main reasons for this belief were a confidence in the system, and belief in their own ability to participate and follow up on happenings.

Respondents were aware of the fact that Job Cards were to be issued free of cost, and 85% mentioned that they would not

pay for obtaining them. 83% were also categorical in mentioning that they would encourage family and friends to refrain from paying for this facility as well.

Wage seekers are happy with the evolution in the mode of payment, from foodgrains to cash. 34% said they thought it was better to receive cash.

Local people's perceptions about the work and wage seekers seem to have changed after the Social Audit, but the respondents were unable to mention exactly how. They were also not able to link the Social Audit to the changes directly.

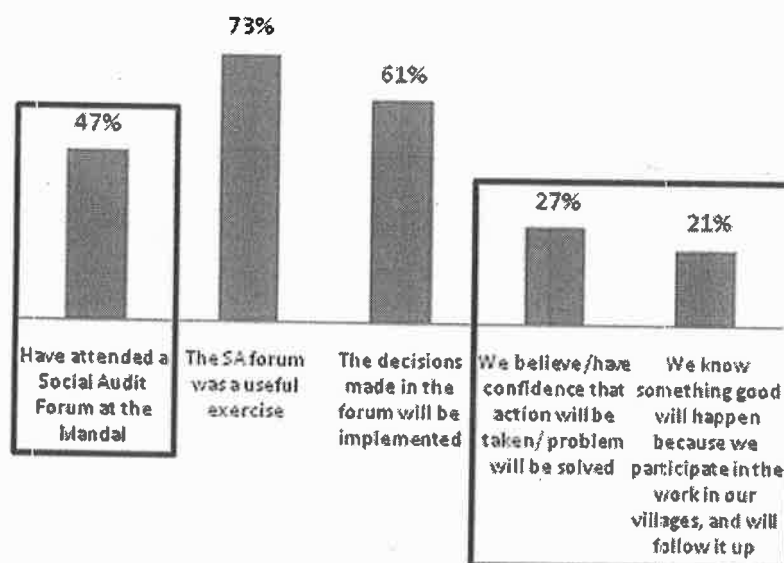


Figure 36: Perceptions regarding SA forum

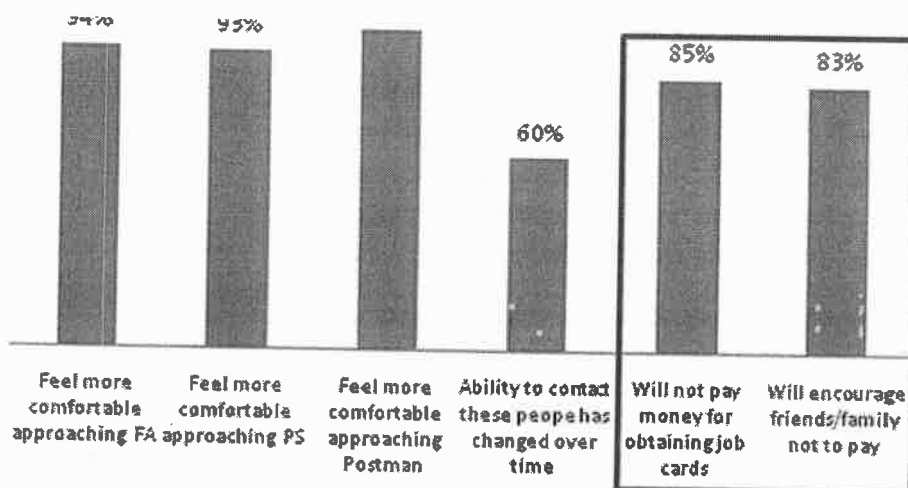


Figure 35: Change in perceptions towards functionaries and awareness of rights

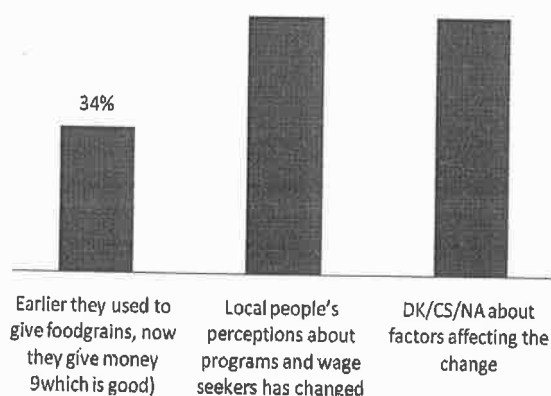


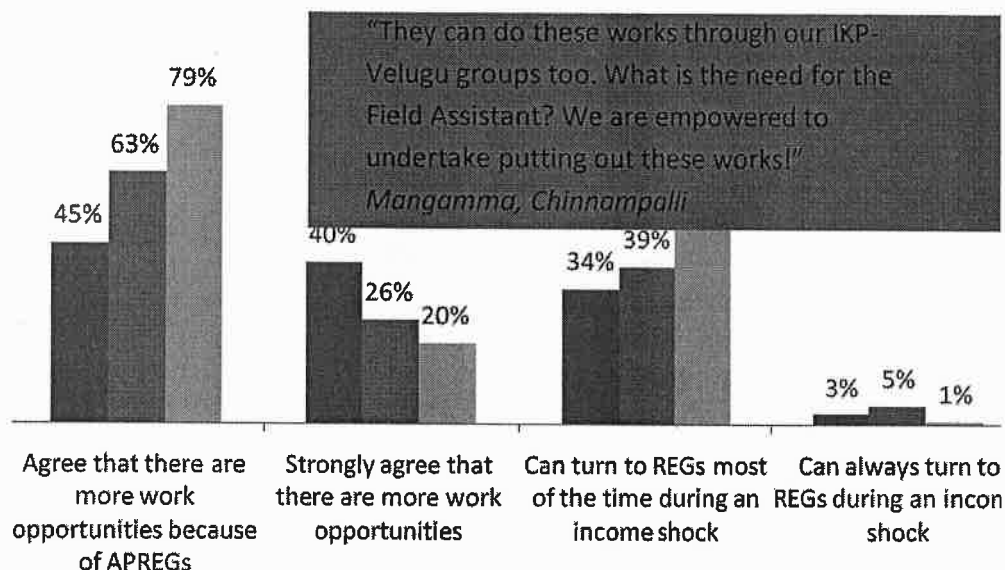
Figure 37: Perceptions of REGs

Chapter IV- Maps of Reality

- Overall perceptions of the wage seekers regarding the programme are positive;
- Late payments in wages remained a problem throughout the rounds;
- Perception of awareness increased across the rounds.

The

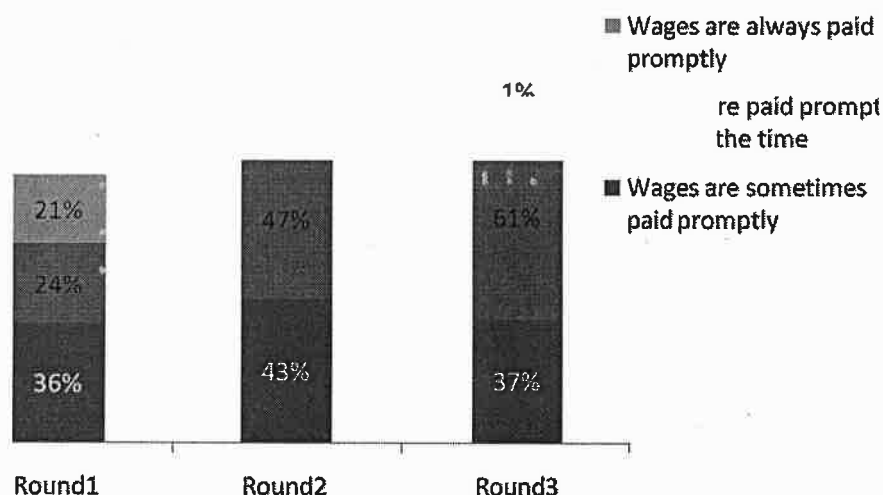
wage seeker's perceptions regarding APREGs seems to be positive, but not emphatically so across the three rounds. This is reflected in the way they view REGs as an opportunity to work. While 79% agreed that there are more work opportunities because APREGs in the third round, up from 45% in the first, only 20% strongly agreed to the statement, as compared to 40%



in the first round.

It also seemed that REGs was a preferred source for mitigating income shocks, but was not the best option, as only between 1-5% of the respondents mentioned being able to “always” turn to REGs during an income shock.

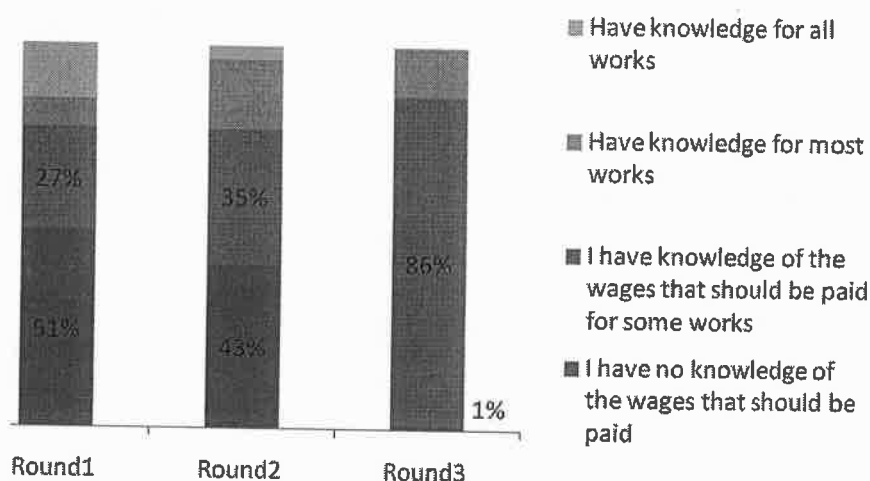
Figure 38: Opinion of REGS



The percentage of respondents mentioning that wages were paid promptly increased from 24% to 61% across the rounds.

Knowledge regarding payments for works increased, with only 1% of the respondents mentioning that they had NO knowledge of the wages that were to be paid. 86% of the respondents said that they had knowledge of the wages to be paid for some works, up from 27% in round 1. However, those confident of having knowledge for all works

Figure 39: Perceptions on payment of wages



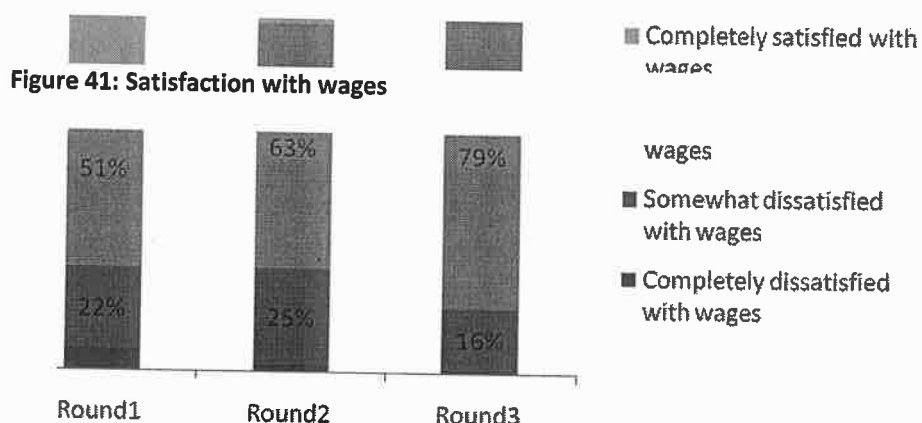
decreased over the rounds.

Figure 40: Knowledge of wages

79% of the respondents mentioned being somewhat satisfied with the wages being provided. This percentage was up from 51% in the first round. Dissatisfaction with the wages reduced across rounds, but the percentage of respondents who were completely satisfied with the wages reduced as well.

A positive response towards REGs functionaries listening to the wage seeker's grievances was expressed by 43% of the respondents. 31% of the wage seekers mentioned that the REGs functionaries treat them with respect most of the time. A larger percentage (45%) had a negative opinion that they were treated with respect only 'sometimes'.

Figure 41: Satisfaction with wages



The respondents were positive about the Field Assistant, and 77% said they were somewhat satisfied with the Field Assistant in the third round. This was up from 40% in the first round. The numbers for the TA were similar, with 79% saying they were somewhat satisfied with the TA in the third round, up from 60% in the first.

Overall, 60% of the respondents mentioned being completely satisfied with APREGs.

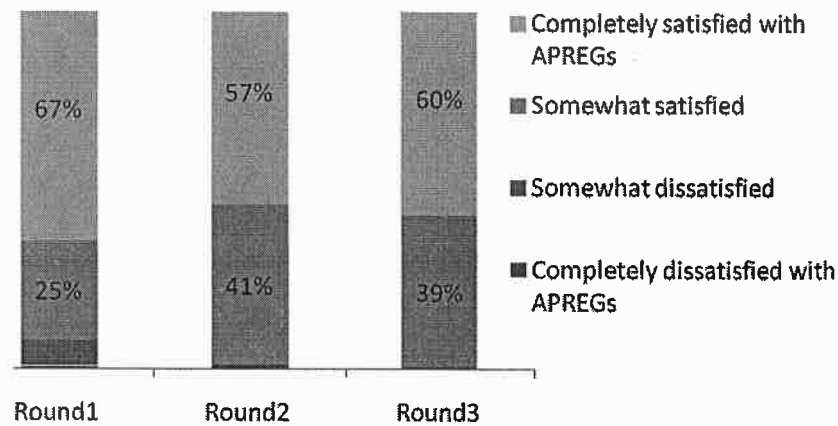


Figure 42: Satisfaction with REGS

There were certain general trends that came to light through the FGDs across the three rounds. Below is a summary of the observations:

Details	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
General awareness of NREGA/APREGS			
Basic awareness of NREGA/APREGS	The groups were aware of REGs as a separate programme, providing 100 days of work in the village.	The groups were aware of REGs as a separate programme, providing 100 days of work in the village, with a minimum wage of Rs.80. Some of them confused it with IKP-Velugu.	The groups were aware of REGs as a 5-year programme, providing 100 days of work in the village, with a minimum wage of Rs. 80.
Knowledge of details of norms/procedures	Most of the groups had knowledge of the payments, equal wages, muster rolls, and to a certain extent payment slips and PO accounts. Hardly a few groups were able to mention that they could apply for and demand work in the village, most of them thought it was the responsibility of the FA to put out work.	Same as in Round1	Same as in Round1
Opinion regarding the scheme	Uniformly good opinion of the scheme. Work in the lean season, regular wages, equal wages, reduced migration are some of the plus points mentioned. There were problems with the continuity of work, less wages paid for some works and delayed payments.	Uniformly good opinion of the scheme. Work in the lean season, regular wages, equal wages, reduced migration are some of the plus points mentioned. A request for clarification in measurements was put forth, as some groups were convinced that their daily wages were low due to errors in measurement. There were problems with the continuity of work, less wages paid for some works and delayed payments.	Same as in Round 2
Right to Information Act			
Awareness	None	None	None
Problems faced	None	None	None

Opinion	None	None	Some groups were curious and asked the interviewers to clarify what it meant and how it worked. They thought it was a very good idea if implemented well, as they faced a lot of problem in getting information from higher officials.
Social Audit			
Basic awareness of Social Audits	None	Many groups mentioned that the SA was undertaken to catch corrupt people within the programme.	The focus has shifted from corruption based outcomes to checking. Many of the groups mentioned that the audit merely "checked" the documentation.
Knowledge of details of process, people involved	None	They had knowledge of what they saw and heard in the village, viz. the door to door visit and the village meeting, even though many group members did not attend the village meeting.	Many groups were aware that the Job cards, account books and in some cases even muster rolls were checked by the SA team.
Grievances raised and redressal	None	Delayed payments, people taking cuts and non receipt of payment slip, etc. were common complaints. Some of the problems were redressed during the social audit, but many also remained unsolved.	Delayed payments, less wages in certain kinds of labour, non receipt of payment slips were some of the grievances. Many of them mentioned that the grievances have not been redressed.
Social Audit Forum	None	The event had just concluded, and the many groups had heard about it. Many had not attended the forum either due to lack of information, or because some official nominated only one member to attend, or because they were working. Some had visited the forum and observed the goings on, even fewer actually raised grievances in the forum.	Many groups had not attended the SA forum. They were often aware of some people from their village having attended, but were frequently not able to say what happened at the forum.

Effectiveness of Social Audits	None	Many groups were not aware of what transpired at the forum, but guessed that checking would be useful to reduce corruption in the programme. The groups that were aware thought it was a very good initiative, and made officials and functionaries very responsible and accountable. <i>The case of Arepally SJ is unique, as one villager actually paid Rs.50 and took photocopies (ostensibly under RTI, said the official) of the muster roll to prove that people who were not doing the work were also getting paid under REGs.</i>	Many groups were not sure of the effectiveness of the Social Audits. Many others said it was helpful as a forum to create awareness amongst the village people. Those groups that had members who attended the SA forum said it would curb corruption. Some groups were confused about which group or meeting pertained to the SA, as there had been many more visitors and meetings in the meanwhile.
Local Governance			
Awareness about Gram Sabha	Low awareness of GS, especially in women's groups.	The women's groups were largely unaware of the GS. Very few women even attended the GS. Some groups were aware of the GS as being a forum to discuss village problems. Some groups also knew that REGs shelf of works was discussed at the GS.	The women's groups were not aware of the GS and showed least interest. In some cases, they would even report an active GS as inactive, because they simply did not know about it. There seem to have been some village meetings pertaining to APREGs in October, which many groups mentioned.
Involvement with REGS	Most of the groups were not aware of the GS' involvement with REGs. Many said that the GS was not involved in REGs at all. In many villages, the GS was not active.	Many of those who were aware mentioned the GS as a forum where REGs works were discussed.	The groups mentioned that they discussed worksite selection and work allocation during the GS.
Status - active/not active	Many GS were not active.	Many GS were not active due to the Sarpanch not taking interest.	Some groups reported the GS as being active, keeping in mind the discussion they had. However, there were still a large number of

				GS reported inactive.
Panchayat Role in overall village development	Most of the groups said that the Panchayat's role was to undertake village development works.	Same as in Round 1	Same as in Round 1	Same as in Round 1
Panchayat Role in APREGS	The groups were mostly not aware of Panchayat role in REGs. Some of them mentioned that the FA and work is selected by the GP.	Many groups were not aware of the role of the GP. Those who were aware mentioned that the Panchayat Secretary issues the Job cards, and the Sarpanch appoints the FA.	Same as in Round 2	Same as in Round 2
Problems faced	Most groups came out with problems specific to the village, their unhappiness with the Panchayat and a lack of forum for discussing the village problems.	Delay in wage payments, REGs work being discontinued, lack of a first aid box onsite, roads, drainage, drinking water, borewells etc. were the problems mentioned.	Apart from wage payment delays and general village problems, not many specific problems were reported. Many groups reported that the Panchayat and GS had met and resolved some of their common problems. One group in Bottimeedapally in Obulvaripalle mentioned that the postman was taking cuts.	

The changes across the rounds are quite remarkable. Apart from the RTI and the conviction about Social Audits, the overall response was positive for the programme and the Audit.

Chapter V: Looking Ahead

This study is a first step in understanding the changes that take place within the communities that are subjected to a Social Audit process. There are likely to be many factors that influence the effectiveness of the SA and wage seeker response to them, including the socio-economic fabric of the area for intervention, the political climate, and other issues. Discussed below are some broad aspects that are integral to the process of carrying out the SAs. The study team acknowledges that these issues are by no means exhaustive.

Stakeholders in the SA

The present round of Social Audits was facilitated through the Government Machinery, with notable individuals representing some voluntary agencies coordinating the process. The SA teams at the village levels consisted of educated local youth.

In order to demystify the process for the REGS functionaries, the present process of the SA includes training for them on what to expect from the SA, and also on how to support the initiative. However, from the responses garnered to the Key Respondent Interviews, it was evident that the functionaries were wary of the process, and especially at the Mandal and District level, were very reluctant to divulge answers to the study team's queries.

Given that 89% of the wage seekers said they would be willing to conduct a SA on their own, it might be feasible to tap into the new found empowerment of the wage seekers by making the SAs truly local, and carried out through the wage seekers.

The advantages of such an initiative would be that the locals would take greater interest in the SA process, and ensure better follow up. However the down side is that locals might not be able to completely address the problems of localized corruption, as voiced by REGS functionaries. In order to arrive at the optimum balance, there would be a need to involve both local and state/national level agencies in the SA process.

Follow up after the SA

The success of the Social Audit depends heavily on the follow up that accompanies the Forum and other audit activities. In order to create a better response from the wage seekers, it is essential that any decision taken is implemented without deviations, and that the feedback of the event reaches the wage seekers.

A look at the pattern that emerges from the FGDs shows that groups of wage seekers were clearly let down by what happened after the SA. There was hope and enthusiasm immediately after the SA, and the event was hailed as one that would put an end to corruption and malpractices. In the third round, however, the emphasis was on the mundane task of "checking" the documentation, and there was hardly a mention of corruption within the groups.

Frequency of SA

The frequency of the SA would play an integral role on wage seeker response to ongoing transparency and accountability initiatives. SAs at regular intervals would create a familiarity effect, and also make the process of transparency and accountability uppermost in the minds of the wage seekers.

Location of SA

The present location for the SA is both at the village as well as the Mandal level. The study findings say that women were often not informed about the SA forum, or were unable to attend it due to various constraints.

Given the strength of the Village Organizations in Andhra Pradesh, participation from women has the potential of assisting in institutionalizing the SA process. One strategy of carrying this out would be to hold the SAs at locations and times that were more accessible to the women of the village. Instead of a Mandal level meeting, a Village or Panchayat level meeting could be likely to elicit better response from the women, and the truly needy who work on the REGS worksites.

Points to Ponder

In the light of the factors discussed above, below are some of the many questions that come to mind towards a better understanding of Social Audits:

- Will more frequent Social Audits actually create greater awareness, or will the awareness fall again once the novelty has worn off?
- How to ensure follow up on decisions to make sure that the process lives up to its promises?
- Is it feasible to undertake SAs in a village as events similar to that at the Mandal level?
- What is the optimum balance between outreach and resource requirement?
- Will the community gain comfort with the more “official” aspects of the programme with time?

Appendix 1: Study methodology, data tools, and data entry

Study Methodology

Sampling:

The study was conducted in the districts of Medak, Khammam and Cuddapah.

In each district:

- 2 Mandals were selected where no social audit had been conducted yet, but are scheduled within a few days of the data collection
- 7 Gram Panchayats were selected in each Mandal (total 14 GPs per district)
- 20 labourers were selected and interviewed with an attempt to reach out to as many SC/ST wage-seekers and women wage seekers as possible

The total sample includes: 3 districts, 6 mandals, 42 GPs and 840 labourers.

Study Design:

At the village (habitation) level there were two types of surveys to gauge the effect of social audits on levels of awareness of APREGS, the perceptions of functionaries (are they less corrupt? more accountable? are grievances redressed?) and what benefits are derived from the social audit exercise:

- Individual surveys of NREG labourers (840).
- FGDs: One with mixed-gender respondents and one with exclusively female labourers only (5-8 participants were included per FGD- preferably those who had not been involved in the individual surveys, but have worked on APREGS). These were conducted three times in each of the 42 GPs:
 - Once before the social audit,
 - One month after the social audit, and
 - Five months after the 2nd survey (six months after the social audits)

As can be seen from the map, the districts were geographically spread out to represent different parts of the state. The GPs were selected based on the distance from Mandal headquarters- one close, two medium and two at a large distance. The households were selected randomly, with emphasis on interviewing SC/ST and women wage seekers.

In order to determine wage seeker perceptions regarding the social audit process, Individual surveys were administered at the GP level within 5-7 days after the SA Forum had taken place. 3 GPs were selected at random, with an attempt to keep at least one GP from the sample GPs already surveyed. 10 wage seekers were surveyed per GP, amounting to a total of 180 wage seekers covered during this phase.

To understand the effect of the social audit on the government administration, Key informant interviews were attempted in all sample mandals, with the field assistant, technical assistant, village social auditors, MPDO, APREGS program officer, program director, district collector, MPTC, ZPTC, MLA, GP members, district resource persons and state level officers. This exercise was conducted twice: once at the beginning and once during the first round of labourer interviews, and once during the third round.