

## **District level awareness campaigns on NREGS (2007)**

AF, along with some other NGOs like APPS, REDs and APUHAC (Andhra Pradesh Upadhi Hakkula Amalu Committee) organized a district level awareness campaign on 2-12-07 at Lalithakala Parishad, Anantapur and Dr. Y.V. Malla Reddy, Director, AF, and Mr. Gopal, Director CEC (Centre for Environment Concerns) took initiative and organized the campaigns. The Government functionaries at state level and district level extended their cooperation in making the campaign a grand success.

Nearly 1500 labourers from AF Project villages and another 1500 from Project villages of other NGOs from the different parts of the district participated in the campaign. A massive rally was organized, demanding effective implementation of APREGS with all rights and entitlements of labour under NREGA. The rally attracted the attention of thousands of onlookers. The rally was followed by a public meeting at the Lalithakala Parishad and many eminent people participated and delivered speeches, emphasizing on right to work, utilization of 100 days employment, basic amenities at the work spot and role of Government functionaries and labour in effective implementation of APREGS. The speakers from various sectors include Mr. K.R. Venugopal, Retired Collector, EX-Secretary of PMO as the Chief Guest, Mr. Minar Pimple, Asia Millennium Campaign, Mr. K. Sreenivasulu, EX-MP, Dr. Y.V. Malla Reddy, Director – AF, Mr. K. S. Gopal, Director, CEC and convenor APUHAC, Mr. Murali, Director – APREGS, Ms. Bhanuja, Director, REDS, Mr. P. Balaram, APPS, and Mr. Jeevan Kumar, Human Rights. The important messages/awareness given by the various speakers is as follows -

- The labourers must be the main actors in protecting their rights and accessing the benefits in full. The concept of living wage of at least Rs.150/- should be demanded in place of a minimum wage of Rs.80/- which will enable them to live with some human dignity, medical facilities and education to their children. If the labourers could raise their voice and concerns at village level, then the NGOs and CSOs would be in a better position to take their demands to district and state level authorities.
- The labourers should demand 100 days of work and get it. They should submit their job applications in time and take receipts from the concerned officials. They should also approach the mandal level offices for timely sanction of works and timely payments.

- The labour should demand on-job facilities like drinking water, shade, crèche etc.
- In order to create food security to poor labour families, different types of grains should be distributed in sufficient quantities through PDS as part of their wages and the remaining amount should be paid in cash. Wage payment procedures should be to the convenience and needs of the wage seekers.

Mr. Murali, Director, APREGS, acknowledged that there are still many problems that need to be solved and listed the actions being taken to solve the problems. According to him 780 crores worth of works were implemented in 30000 villages in AP State wherein 5 lakh 72 thousand labourers have worked. He explained the highlights and shortfalls in detail about the implementation of APREGS.

- Some of the labour representatives also spoke in the meeting and explained their problems, demands and finally gave some suggestions for proper implementation of the REGS. One of the important suggestion was that the implementation responsibility should be given to local CBOs.