

## STRENGTHENING MNREGA: A Powerful Tool for Rural Empowerment Bihar Fellowship-1: Brahmanand Rishidev

**\*Prevent Starvation \*Create Employment \*Strengthen Local Economy \*Build Local Infrastructure \*Prevent migration**

*India's Budget for the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in 2021 was Rs. 98,000 (Around \$12.9 billion or more than \$15,000 for every village). It is a huge commitment with immense potential to transform the rural landscape and make a major dent in the endemic poverty. Effective implementation of the act is crucial and even though it has improved, Rahul Gandhi's lament that no more than 15% of welfare benefits reach the intended recipients, remains very much relevant. Making people aware of the scheme and then helping them cross the various hoops to eventually derive benefits is a major task. This is where Fellows such as Brahmanand are playing a crucial role.*

**Brahmanand** works with Jan Jagaran Shakti Sangathan, an activist organization in the Araria area of northeast Bihar. Laborers, landless farmers, students and youth comprise this 18000 strong organization that covers 85 panchayats and 250 villages in Araria, Katihar and Saharsa districts. Main focus of his work is ensuring entitlements such as ration cards, old age pension, MNREGA and related issues in the Raniganj block of Araria district.



**A demonstration organized by Brahmanand about development of rural enterprises and livelihoods**



**Community outreach using musical performance (Brahmanand is in the center)**

### 2023-23 Update

	Benefits	Numbers applied	Numbers approved
1	MNREGA Work	1000	500
2	Housing benefits		65
3	New ration cards for marginalized families	643	390
4	Pensions	40	30
5	General relief	2000	
6	Health institutional support/Health	100	

-- IFA Liaison: Ramchandra Prasad

## Secretary, National Campaign for People's Right to Information Delhi Fellowship: Ashok Kumar

IFA has provided Fellowship for the NCPRI secretary for around 20 years. Having evolved during the campaign for the RTI Act, NCPRI monitors progress, promotes awareness and opposing efforts to dilute it. It is also a common source platform for national movements for food security, pensions, social security and MNREGA including NAPM, MKSS, Satark Nagarik Sangthan and others.

### Weekly News Digests:

One of Ashok's main tasks is to prepare a weekly news digest of RTI related events, news items and reporting from newspapers, social media and other sources. These are made widely available. Each weekly newsletter is typically a digest of 40 to 50 such items.

### Meetings, Conferences and Lectures

NCPRI hosts frequent sessions of national interest that the secretary helps arrange. Ashok is an active member of many national civil society organizations including NAPM, ICAN, Right to Food Campaign and Pension Parishad. In addition **Ashok holds weekly meeting in the working class communities (bastis) all around Delhi to promote and facilitate the use of RTI in their lives.**



-- IFA Liaison: Prithvi Sharma