

**DR. N. C. SAXENA, COMMISSIONER AND
HARSH MANDER, SPECIAL COMMISSIONER OF THE SUPREME COURT
IN THE CASE: PUCL v. UOI & Ors. WRIT PETITION (Civil) No. 196 of 2001**

September 14th, 2009.
NREGA/688/MoRD.

Ms. Rita Sharma,
Secretary
Ministry of Rural Development
Government of India
New Delhi

Sub: Definition of household under NREGA.

Dear Ms. Rita Sharma,

We write to you to request you to amend the definition of the household in the NREGA Guidelines. The current guidelines define a household as follows: “‘Household’ will mean a nuclear family comprising mother, father, and their children, and may include any person wholly or substantially dependent on the head of the family. Household will also mean a single-member family.”

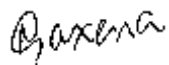
While this definition is definitely a step ahead of the traditional definition of a household i.e. all those who share a common hearth, it can be further improved to ensure that even those who are excluded within the household have access to work under the NREGA. For instance, it is well documented that single women are often discriminated even within the family, especially when it comes to access to benefits under government schemes. Even under NREGA, studies have shown that single women find it difficult to get work and even when they do the wages are taken by the head of the household (who is often a man), as the bank account is often in his name.

We therefore recommend that single women, disabled adults and aged people (and their minor dependents) must be treated as independent households for purposes of NREGA, implying that they would get separate job cards. Therefore, the definition of household may be amended so that single women, disabled adults and aged people (and their minor dependents) are treated as separate households even if they are dependent on the head of the family they are living with.

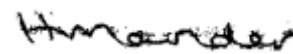
We do hope that you will be able to make this amendment to the definition of the household in the NREGA guidelines.

Thanking you.

With Regards,



Dr. N.C. Saxena



Harsh Mander