

REDUCING PAYMENT DELAYS UNDER MGNREGA THROUGH PAYDASH

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The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) aims to provide 100 days of unskilled labor to each rural household across India. In line with the spirit of the act, timely payment (15 days) is an essential component of the Act. Yet, due to a variety of infrastructural and administrative reasons, this deadline is missed across the country. On average, for instance, it took 51 days on average for payments to be processed across India during FY 2014-15, with some states witnessing average delays of over 100 days.

Inarguably, [MGNREGA's MIS](#) is a vast repository of data, designed to ensure transparency in one of India's largest social sector schemes, whose budget (at 7.5 billion USD) occupies around 45% of the country's Rural Development Ministry's annual budgetary outlay (as of 2017-18). Yet, information available regarding payment delays, while robust and accurate, may not be very actionable. Officials at the lower tiers of India's administrative setup (Districts, Blocks and Panchayats) are able to consume these data points only after adding significant efforts required to analyze them.

In light of the above, Evidence for Policy Design's team, after several rounds of deliberations and large amounts of on-field feedback, has come up with a mobile app and website-PayDash-that aims to reduce payment delays by providing an actionable tool in the hands of Block and District officials, which helps them track the performance of their subordinates, and fix accountability. The app, which also functions offline, is an intuitive, user-friendly and easily navigable tool, available in English and Hindi.

The project, a Randomized Controlled Trial, will be spread across several states, with Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand being the first two. During February-March 2017, EPoD India's team of researchers and field associates visited all of Madhya Pradesh's 51 districts, surveying and training officials in each one of them. Results from the roll-out are being monitored, even as preparations for roll-out in Jharkhand are underway.