

The Role of Mgnrega in Rural Development

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Abstract

[Mgnrega is a different form of wage employment programme launched in the history of India. It provides a legal guarantee of wage employment. This paper is an attempt to examine the impact of MGNREGA on employment generation in the Dhemaji district of Assam. Secondary data was collected from the ministry of rural development and other published sources. Data was thoroughly analyzed. This study shows that MGNREGA has provided employment opportunities to the vulnerable section of the society. However, still there is a big gap between jobs offered and jobs demanded. It has still a long way to go to fulfill the objective of providing complete hundred days of work to per household. There is also report of anomalies in its implementation]

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I. Introduction

The MGNREGA marks a paradigm shift from previous wage employment programmes either planned or implemented in India's history. It has an integrated natural resource management and livelihoods generation perspective. It has legal provisions for allowances and compensation in case of failure to provide work on demand and delays in payment of work undertaken.

In recent years, both the central government and the state government have taken special initiative for the attainment of rural development on different fronts. The Panchayat and Rural development department largely works to enhance livelihood opportunities, addresses chronic poverty, provides social security and works for economic inclusions of rural poor families.

II. Objective of the study

- (i). To know the current status of MGNREGA
- (ii). To know the problem of implementing MGNREGA
- (iii). To know the participation of SC & ST population in MGNREGA
- (iv) To know the performance of MGNREGA.

III. Research Methodology

Only secondary data was taken into consideration for purpose of the study. The relevant secondary data was collected from the publication of Ministry of rural developments, MGNREGA sameeksha, Kurukshetra, Yojana and the official website of mgnrega.

IV. Literature Survey

The MGNREGA is perhaps the largest and most ambitious social security and public works programme in the world. Several independent and government studies have been conducted on the performance and other socio economic related issues of MGNREGA in different parts of India. Since its inception many of these studies were conducted as part of the ministry of rural development, GOI, and by various agencies. The present study is to know the impact of MGNREGA on the rural population of Assam, specifically in Dhemaji. Since independence, Government of India has been adopted numerous employment generation programmes. The major objective of these employment generation programmes has been the poverty alleviation. The employment generation programmes have impact on the alleviation of poverty. However, these programmes could not make enough impact on unemployment in the rural areas because the problems of seasonality in employment and underemployment remained unsolved. In order to solve all these problems, government of India introduced Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2005. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing hundred days of wage-employment in a financial year to a rural household who volunteer to do unskilled manual work. This act started functioning from February 2006.

Initially it was introduced in 200 districts of the country and by 1st April 2008 it covered 593 districts covering 4,49,40,870 rural households. NREGA is renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act on October 2009. This act was introduced with an aim of improving the purchasing power of the rural people, primarily semi or un-skilled work to people living below poverty line in rural India. MGNREGA has introduced in the Dhemaji district of Assam in the very first phase of its launch. It started functioning from 2nd February 2006. It is perhaps the most ambitious anti-poverty scheme launched anywhere in the world. It has already completed nine years of its functioning in Dhemaji along with some other parts of India. Since its launch MGNREGA has made deep in roads into the lives of millions of rural poor generating livelihood opportunities.

Dhemaji is an economically backward district of Assam mostly inhabited by the tribal people mainly Misings, Sonowal Kacharies and a sizeable number of Deories and Bodos. Agriculture is the main occupation of Dhemaji. Nearly ninety percent people lives in villages in Dhemaji. Seasonal unemployment and under-employment is the main cause of unemployment in Dhemaji. In February 2006, along with five other tribal dominated districts of Assam, MGNREGA was introduced and implemented in Dhemaji. From various studies it has reported that the act has tremendous impact on employment generation, capital formation and socio – economic condition of the people of Assam. This paper is an attempt to examine the impact of employment generation in Dhemaji.

V. Data analysis and Discussion

Employment generation is one of the prime objectives of MGNREGA. The employment benefits of MGNREGA has reached to the schedule Castes (SCs), Schedule Tribes (STs) and women from 2006-2007 to 2014-15. MGNREGA has provided wage employment with an average of 25-30 person days in the rural areas of various districts of Assam. The average person day of employment generation in Assam is below the national average. At present all the twenty seven districts of Assam has implemented MGNREGA Act. The performance of MGNREGA in Dhemaji is below the expected level. However, the participation of STs and women in MGNREGA in Dhemaji is above the state average. This paper is an attempt to examine the impact of MGNREGA on employment generation in Dhemaji in the year 2013-14 to 2014-15.

In 2013-14, the MGNREGA has provided average person day of employment per household in Assam is 25.43 percent but in the same year it has provided average day of employment in Dhemaji is only ten percent. In 2013-14, the act has provided average employment in Assam is 23.65 person days and the employment generated to SCs and STs are respectively 6.59 percent and 16.18 percent. But in the same year, in Dhemaji, MGNREGA has provided average employment is 9.57 person days while employment to SCs and STs are respectively 2.06 person days and 34.90 person days.

Table-1

DHEMAJI	Number of Household issued Job Cards	SC	ST	Others	Total	Women
		3314	31993	82121	117428	NA
	Person days generate	23267	393154	710203	1126564	375436
	% of total workdays	2.06	34.90	63.04	----	33.23
	Number of household completed 100 days of work	NA	NA	NA	275	

Source-Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.

In 2013-14, MGNREGA provided employment to women in Assam is 24.75 percent of total working days generated in that financial year while in Dhemaji, it has provided employment to women is 33.23 percent of total working days generated.

In 2014-15, MGNREGA has provided average employment in Assam is 21.81 person days while in the same year the act has provided employment in Dhemaji is less than then ten percent. In the same year employment generated towards SCs and STs are respectively 6.07 percent and 15.16 percent in Assam and in Dhemaji the same is respectively 1.96 percent and 34.48 percent. Employment generated to women in Assam is 28.13 percent of total person days while in the same year it is 41.57 percent in Dhemaji. The MGNREGA has provided employment to vulnerable sections of rural areas of Assam so in Dhemaji too like SCs, STs and women. SCs and STs both together got nearly forty percent of total workdays in Dhemaji. However out of these two STs got more employment in Dhemaji. Again participation of STs in Dhemaji is higher than the state average. It is because Dhemaji is a tribal dominated district of Assam. The participation of women of Dhemaji in MGNREGA is much higher than the state average. The higher participation of women of Dhemaji in MGNREGA indicates awareness of the act among the women of Dhemaji. Higher participation of women also reveals any discrimination of gender.

Table-2

DHEMAJI	Number of Household issued Job Cards	SC	ST	Others	Total	Women
		3424	33429	82844	119697	
	Person days generate	4006	70397	129766	204169	84267
	% of total workdays	1.96	34.48	63.56	-----	41.57
	Number of household completed 100 days of work	NA	NA	NA	18	NA

Source-Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.

Providing hundred days of employment to each household is another important feature of MGNREGA. But complete hundred days of work is still a far away objective to be fulfilled in Dhemaji. In 2013-14, only 275 household has completed hundred days of work which is 0.23 percent of the total number of job card holders in that particular year. Again in 2014-15, only 18 household has completed hundred days of work which is meagerly 0.01 percent of the total job card holders. This shows the difference between jobs demanded and jobs offered under MGNREGA. The gap between jobs demanded and job offered under MGNREGA in Dhemaji is due to various reasons. Moreover various reports and information from the villagers of Dhemaji has revealed that the Act has very poorly implemented. Due to the poor implementation MGNREGA has failed to reach the targeted goal of providing hundred days of employment to the people of rural areas.

VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusions

The MGNREGA has already made its impact on the rural people of Dhemaji. This Research reveals that MGNREGA has provided employment opportunities to STs, SCs and Women of Dhemaji. In fact, increase in women workforce participation rate and increase participation of STs is a great success of MGNREGA. However, there are still number of issues relating to the adequate and proper implementation of MGNREGA. Recently, the government authorities have initiated various measures to check corruption relating to the proper implementation of MGNREGA. Corruption free implementation of the act will surely benefit the rural people. Introduction of Direct Benefit transfer, mandatory social audit of executed work, timely payment of wages, full inclusion of village panchayats in the execution of the act and making aware of the provisions of the Act to the villagers will definitely bring more and more people under the purview of MGNREGA. One of the major concerns that observed was poor implementation. The reasons for the poor implementations are first; corruption adversely affects the programme. There are several cases of fake entries. In some cases same name is repeated more than once. There are allegations of nexus between the block development officials and the village panchayats in many places. There should be a strict enforcement of transparency safeguards. Proper implementation of Direct Benefit Transfer scheme will be helpful to reduce the scope of fake job cards. Second, Absence of social audit is also a shortcoming of MGNREGA. Social audit has been made mandatory for all works executed under MGNREGA. Yet, in many cases social audit do not take place regularly. Third, Lack of awareness also restricts the implementation of the programme. Due to poor awareness among the villagers of Dhemaji, people do not aware about their basic entitlements such as job cards, minimum wage amount, minimum number of employment days, etc. Under MGNREGA, there is a provision of unemployment allowance in case the local authorities fail to provide employment; however there is widespread ignorance about how to avail the allowance. Poor awareness leads to corruption and it eventually affects the true potential of the scheme. Fourth, Lack of awareness and lack of knowledge of the provisions of MGNREGA among villagers also responsible for poor implementation of the Act. Fifth, According to MGNREGA guidelines, payments should be made within fifteen days of the completion of work. However delay in payment and incorrect payments are a common problem under MGNREGA. Reason for payment delay is mainly due to inadequate and late transfer of fund from sponsoring agency to implementation agency. Government must ensure easier availability of funds at the district level.

VII. Recommendations

Some recommendations for the better implementation are

All the programmes under MGNREGA must be well planned and well ahead of time with a definite time frame for completion. 100 days employment per house hold should be strictly followed. More transparency should be there. Access to information at every stage of implementation is necessary.

The present study is not free from limitations. Due to several reasons it was difficult to find out the authentic information from the respondents. However, the findings of this study are foundation for further study. Future researcher may take into account of other factors too.

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