

A Study On Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) And Rural Development: An Overview

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Abstract

The most significant rural development initiative of the Eleventh Plan period was the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) it includes Sustainability of Economy, Agriculture, Forest, Income, Health and many more ideals and principles of rural development. The goals of MGNREGA are to provide strong safety-net for vulnerable groups by providing a fallback employment when alternative employment sources are scarce or inadequate. It acts as a growth engine for sustainable development of agriculture economy and empowerment of rural poor through the process of rights-based law and new ways of doing occupation. MGNREGA not only provide wage employment as an alternative source of livelihood but also create durable assets such as road construction, land development, water conservation and irrigation facility, which has tremendous influence on different sectors of village economy.

Keywords: Empowerment, employment, wages

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is the flagship programme of the Indian Government that directly touches the lives of the rural poor. The act was enacted on 25th August, 2005 and it come in to force on 2nd February, 2006. MGNREGA is the Scheme which can definitely improve the economic and social condition of beneficiaries if implemented properly. For last several decades these villages have been suffering from poverty, lack of quality health services, poor infrastructure and inadequate facilities of education. The rural economy mainly development on agriculture. Gram Panchayat (GP) GP is the nodal agency at the bottom level that has the authority to select, design and implement 50% of the works. Selection of works, monitoring and supervision are done by the Gram Sabha (village council). GP has the responsibility to register households, issue job cards, receive applications for employment, provide employment and monitor the NREGA works. Block Panchayat. The rest 50% may be undertaken either by the block Panchayat or the district Panchayat or both. Block Panchayat monitors and coordinates the plans and works at the block level. Computer updating of MGNREGA works, muster roll entries, etc is done at the block level under the, guidance of the MGNREGA programme officer.

District Panchayat in addition to implementing non-mandatory works, coordinates MGNREGA activities at the district level. Besides, it has the responsibility to prepare both the district annual plan and the five-year perspective plan. These two plan documents are the bases which guide the implementation of MGNREGA at the village level. These documents are prepared at the district level in consultation with the GP and block Panchayats. State Government: Next in hierarchy is the state government which acts as a facilitator in the flow of MGNREGA funds and helping in preparation of manpower. It has the responsibility to set up the State Employment Guarantee Council. The latter has the role to advice the government from time to

time on MGNREGA implementation in the state. Besides, the council is also entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring and evaluation of the MGNREGA in the state. So democratic empowerment. It stipulates that employment generating works must be targeted towards a set of specific rural development activities.

Empowerment of Rural

The extensive participation of gender in MGNREGA has meant that gender are coming out of their homes, not only to work but also to visit banks and Panchayat offices, which they may not have done previously. This enhanced mobility comes with the higher status of being income-earning workers. Although this study did not find any evidence of changing gender roles within the household as a result of women working on MGNREGS sites, it find evidence of increased confidence and decision making skillamong gender. Genders remain embedded in family relations in employment and in the formulation of social protection policy. There is a refusal to accept women's double day or the issue of care responsibilities as a collective concern of the state. Because women remain care givers even if they take on paid work, their preference is for work near the home, flexible timings, etc all of which are fulfilled by the MGNREGA. In many rural areas there are few work opportunities outside of agriculture. Therefore, poor households dependent on agricultural work for their survival are forced to migrate during lean seasons or somehow survive through borrowing, etc. This is precisely the situation that MGNREGA is intended to address, through the creation of additional work opportunities during agricultural lean seasons. The type of work created, that is paid work on public works, is well suited to the prevalent traditions round gender's work in some states. There is a well-established tradition of paid work for women as well as men, and when other work is not available within or near the village, most men and some women commute to work some distance away.

Unemployment Allowance

The Gram Panchayat Programme Officer shall be responsible for providing wage employment to the applicant within 15 days of the date of receipt of the application in the case of advance applications, employment will be provided from the date that employment has been sought, or within 15 days of the date of application, whichever is later. ii) If a Gram Panchayat is unable to provide employment within 15 days, it will be the responsibility of the Programme Officer to do so. The employment allotted by the Programme Officer will be intimated to the Gram Panchayat and vice versa. iii) If upon receiving a request for work, an Implementing Agency directed by the Programme Officer does not start work on time, or does not employ the persons directed to it for work by the Gram Panchayat, the Programme Officer will make alternative arrangements to ensure employment for those applicants. iv) According to Section 14(d) of the Act, the District Programme Coordinator will coordinate with the Programme Officers and the Implementing Agencies to ensure that applicants are provided employment as per their entitlements. If a Programme Officer fails to provide employment, the District Programme Coordinator will intervene to make appropriate arrangements for employment. v) If an applicant is not provided employment within fifteen days of receipt of his/her application seeking employment, s/he shall be entitled to a daily unemployment allowance. vi) The unemployment allowance will not be less than one-fourth of the wage rate for the first thirty days and not less than one-half of the wage rate for the remaining period of the financial year. vii) The unemployment allowance payable to the household shall be sanctioned and disbursed by the Programme Officer or by the Gram, Block or District Panchayats as the State Government may authorize viii) Ideally, unemployment allowances should be paid at the Gram Panchayat level, on 'employment guarantee day'. ix) Every payment of unemployment allowance shall be made or offered within 15 days from when it becomes due x) In the event of any delay, the recipients shall be entitled to compensation based on the same principles as wage compensation under the

Payment of Wages Act, 1936. xi) According to Section 8(2) of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, every case of nonpayment or delayed payment of unemployment allowance. Shall not be eligible to claim the unemployment allowance payable under this Act for a period of three months but shall be eligible to seek employment under the Scheme at any time.

Distribution of Wages

Accounts of all the people offered work in MGNREGS are maintained in the partner bank and the local government transferred wages electronically to the bank accounts of individuals. Payments to the individuals are made through ATMs in the village using biometrics. This project has been implemented in villupuram District in Tamilnadu in the following villages. The key features of the pilot projects are as follows: The project is focused at financial inclusion and ensures leak proof delivery of wages to the beneficiaries. The local people derive the benefit of the ATM with the help of the kiosk operator. Because of this, the financial literacy in the villages improves and the people get to understand the benefit of banking services. This project further helps to open chances to rural entrepreneurs using the kiosk platform. It also helps for a self-sustainable business model in which the kiosk operator generates revenues to continue the operations and when scaled up, leads to growth of the rural economy.

Education

Another important positive impact of MGNREGA operation is that it is able to reduce the school dropout rate. The increased income of workers helps them to send their children to school. Before MGNREGA works most of the children's mainly girls are engaged in collection of fodder fuel wood , water, take care of younger siblings etc but after implementation of MGNREGA sustainable development works assures water supply, regeneration of common land and crèche facilities helps to reduce the school dropout rate. Subsequently, there is an increase in school enrolment of MGNREGA families.

Health

MGNREGA has direct and indirect effect upon health. It acts as a 'health line' for rural poor. Direct effects are such that MGNREGA workers can able to spend a portion of their wages to cope with chronic illness of household members, health care facilities in work site will improve their health condition. Construction of drainage, toilets, child care facilities, rural connectivity, water and soil conservation etc. will reduce the water born diseases and help in improve the cleanliness level and ultimately it supports the children for their all round development. Besides this it will give better ability to women to avoid hazardous work, possibility of sexual abuse and exploitation from private landlords and contractors etc. and provide mental satisfaction to women.

Welfare

Welfare of gender Provisions of irrigation facility, horticulture plantation and land development facilities on land owned by households belonging to the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribes. Not less than one third of non-official members shall be belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes and Minorities. For the Central Council two representatives to be nominated by the Central Govt from SC, one representative each from ST, Other Backward Classes and Minorities. Share of total SCs /STs in total person days generated is given below:

Lack of Awareness

It is a well-known adage that 'Knowledge is Power'. There is no denying in the fact that, effective implementation of MGNREGA, like any other scheme, is dependent upon the awareness about the existence of such a scheme. According to the MGNREGA guidelines, as well as the information provided by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India; creation of awareness, is an imperative part of the implementation of MGNREGA. However, in the village, where the study was conducted; it was found that, most of the people had heard about the scheme initiated by central government, but were very less aware of the procedural formalities, mode of operation and the operational instructions, which were to be followed under the scheme. For example, under the scheme there is a clear provision that if employment is not provided to the registered person within 15 days, then she/he shall become eligible for unemployment allowance. In the village, there were a number of people who were eligible to have unemployment allowance but primarily due to unawareness regarding where to submit complaints concerning this, was the chief reason for non-receiving of the allowance.

Discussion

Development not only enhances the national power and improves the quality of life but brings a number of serious environmental issues such as air pollution, water pollution, soil degradation, and desertification. In contrast to development, Sustainable development does not focus solely on economic issues. Moreover, it encompasses the three general policy areas namely economy, environment and society. Sustainable Development maintains a balance between the various human needs like the desire to have improved lifestyles and feeling of well-being on one hand, and preserves natural resources and ecosystems on the another hand. Thus, Sustainable Development is the caretaker of the divergent factors needed for the existence of the present and future generations. As India grows into one of the world's largest economies, millions of people are left behind who are incredibly poor, illiterate and living in grim conditions. Thus, removal of poverty is therefore a prerequisite for the protection of the environment and no doubt a great road map for achieving sustainable development. Poverty and a degraded environment are closely inter-related, especially where people depend for their livelihoods primarily on the natural resource base of their immediate environment. Restoring natural systems and improving natural resource at the grassroots level are central to a strategy to eliminate poverty.

Conclusion

MGNREGA is one of the largest rural development programme implemented in India. The present study aimed at quantifying and generating empirical evidence on the potential of MGNREGA in creating rural employment and rural development. The sanctioning of work, disbursement of payments and release of funds are the most critical bottlenecks in the implementation of MGNREGA. It is so because; there are several simultaneously functioning machineries, which are involved in process, ranging from the village level, block level, district level and finally state level. Red tapes and extreme adherence to official formalities is present at every level. Adding on to this is corruption, which is practiced as sharing of percentage of sanctioned project amount. People, associated with MGNREGA, be it the wage seekers, Gram Sabha members, elected Panchayat representatives or the people allied with monitoring and evaluation; are not totally aware of the schemes, roles, formalities and functionalities of the scheme. The major aim of this study is to identify role and relevance of MGNREGA in rural growth and development. The main limitation of this study was the time limitation and reluctance from the part of members. On the basis of data collected from different sources for the detailed study regarding this topic, it can be concluded that MGNREGA has a great role and impact on the rural development in coming future and it is better to expand this program in other relevant area like agriculture, industry, It is we who have to decide whether development

means affluence or whether development means peace, prosperity and happiness and it is MGNREGA which can be a better strategy for attaining development if implanted suitably. Thus in present study an attempt has been made by the researcher to study the impact of MGNREGA on rural lives in Villupuram District, Tamilnadu.

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