

TO STUDY THE MGNREGS' PERFORMANCE IN TERMS OF GENERATING INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT, CREATING ASSETS, AND IMPROVING BENEFICIARIES' SOCIAL STATUS

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on the MGNREGS implementation process performance evaluation. It covers a variety of topics, including the registration process, the issuance of job cards, and transparency in the assignment of work, as well as the fulfillment of the 100-day employment guarantee and the salary payment system's regularity. It also includes factors such as social auditing and physical verification via a vigilance committee. Aside from that, the influence of MGNREGS on beneficiaries' income and employment generation, as well as social and economic empowerment of women through equal remuneration, more job possibilities, on income and wages, and the formation of durable assets, were all addressed in the current research. To summarize, there is no doubting that MGNREGA has better potential in terms of reducing poverty, creating work opportunities, and increasing income. It is also the largest and most comprehensive social security and public works programme in the world. However, there have been challenges with its execution that must be acknowledged and handled in a meaningful way. There is no doubt that beneficiaries in the study region received more employment, but not to the extent that MGNREGA promised (i.e. 100 days). They were able to earn a small amount of money through MGNREGS, but not in the spirit of the program's goals. The scheme's implementation needs to be fine-tuned in order to eliminate rural poverty and solve socioeconomic backwardness in the research areas. Women's participation is low in the study region, therefore it's critical to make sure they get their rights under the Act. Women's participation in the programme should be encouraged through special measures.

KEYWORD: *Employment, Guarantee, Participation, Socioeconomic*

1. INTRODUCTION

India has been attempting to reduce the amount and rate of unemployment in rural areas since independence by implementing development initiatives and strategic choices for poverty eradication. However, the results of

all of these measurements were insignificant. According to various estimates, only approximately 25% of every such program's money reaches the intended beneficiaries since the money meant for the targeted population was leaked out. In this context, the MGNREGS, despite having strict and difficult criteria, is to be implemented by state governments, with the expectation that they will act only in their own interests. Aside from that, anomalies are generally noted when money is involved and the transaction is between those with influence over the plan and the poor unemployed labourer who would accept whatever is due to them. However, if the scheme is implemented efficiently and effectively, the following outcomes are guaranteed: (i) the employment guarantee would not only provide relief in times of distress, but it would also be a step toward long-term drought and flood proofing of Indian agriculture; (ii) this would be a more effective instrument for reducing poverty because the impact of growth on poverty is higher in areas where social infrastructure is more developed; (iv) the scheme would be a more effective instrument for reducing poverty because the impact of growth on poverty People will stop looking for work under MGNREGS as the conditions of their farms improve; (v) the employment guarantee expenditure will be non-inflationary because it will spur agricultural growth, on which a wide range of sustainable livelihoods can be built; and (vi) by fueling successive rounds of private investment, it will also set up a multiplier of s As a result, the current study aims to provide an in-depth assessment of the scheme's implementation as well as the identification of some of the gaps in the MGNREGS' implementation process and guidelines.

The improvement of the rural poor's standard of living in developing countries like India is a global challenge. 26.1 percent of the country's entire population was living in poverty at the end of the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002). It accounted for 27.1 percent of the overall population in rural areas. The unemployment rate is predicted to be 7.32 percent nationwide. Women's unemployment is increasing at a rate of 9.8% in rural areas. This is due to the low pace of new and productive employment creation. According to a 2005 World Bank estimate, 80% of India's population lives below the international poverty line of \$2 a day. India is ranked 80th out of 94 countries. According to the Suresh Dendulkar committee study, 37.2 percent of India's population (40.71 crore) lives in poverty. According to data from June 2020, India had 859 lakh families living in poverty. The labour force grows in lockstep with the population of working age. If the current trend of increasing women seeking work, primarily in rural areas, continues, the labour force will number over 650 lakhs. This will be on top of the 350 million people who are currently unemployed. As a result, India must employ approximately 1000 lakh people, the most of whom live in rural areas. According to the then-Planning Commission's assessment, India will not be able to give full employment, but it may be able to generate 650 lakh jobs in order to reduce unemployment. As a result, it was determined that ad hoc systems such as JRY, SGRY, and others

would not meet our goals. And it becomes necessary to rethink the approach in order to address the flaws, as well as to develop programmes based on legal principles. The NREGA law was passed by the parliament in 2005. Without a doubt, this is the largest public employment initiative ever seen in human history. This act has resulted in a paradigm shift in both the design and approach to wage employment programme intervention mechanisms. The Act's main goal is to "improve the livelihood stability of households in rural areas of the country by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed pay employment to every home whose adult members volunteer to conduct unskilled manual labour every financial year." In light of this, the purpose of this study was to assess the MGNREGS program's success in the Rojouri district of Jammu & Kashmir in terms of generating sustainable assets and employment possibilities, as well as increasing the standard of living of the rural poor. The following questions will be addressed by this study: (i) Did MGNREGS create 100 days of employment as required by the Act? (ii) How has it increased the family's income? (iii) Is there any change in the family's spending pattern? (iv) Has the scheme had any effect on worker empowerment and status? ; and (v). Has it resulted in the creation of positive social assets?). This research has looked into these concerns.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Indira Hirway (2019) conducted a field survey in Gujarat in July 2006 and concluded that the successful implementation of the employment guarantee is likely to disrupt the socio-economic power structure in rural regions and harm the vested interests of the rural power elite. Because people are more likely to select MGNREGS jobs with higher compensation over low-paid farm work, local firms will face a labour shortage, forcing them to hike wage rates to attract workers. Second, the programme restricts worker movement, putting employers and other contractors in the labor-supply market at a disadvantage once more. As a result, these individuals may attempt to demonstrate that MGNREGS is ineffective at the ground level.

According to a poll (**Jacob and Varghese, 2019**), in the first year of implementation in Kerala, practically all of the respondents were aware of their rights under the Act, owing to the high literacy rate among the employees. Workers can readily get benefits if they are informed of their rights, according to the survey.

In their investigations, an international NGO called Participatory Research under Asia (**PRIA**) (**2019**) discovered that in the MGNREGS programme, programme officers play a critical role in authorising the project with the technical support of engineers, including measuring the work done. In the lack of technical advice from engineers, studies have revealed that panchayats are unable to implement their plans.

Second, it was discovered that the proportion of women hired under the MGNREGS was much lower than that of men. According to the report, no household was paid an unemployed allowance, there was a delay in employment allocation, and mandatory worksite facilities under the scheme were completely ignored, which was one of the reasons for women's low participation because they felt discouraged due to the lack of crèche facilities at the worksite.

In its second monitoring report on the implementation status of MGNREGS, the Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) (2006-07) stated that villagers in the poorest states, such as Bihar (45.94 percent) and Uttar Pradesh (55.91 percent), have the least access to MGNREGS-generated employment due to the low percentage of families with Job Cards. On the other side, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra have issued more job cards than the national average.

While highlighting the importance of employment generating programmes in the field of poverty alleviation, **Verma (2019)** demonstrated that, despite the economy's steady expansion following independence, unemployment is still on the rise. The benefits of growth have not trickled down to the poor, particularly in rural areas. Acceleration of rapid economic growth with a focus on employment-intensive sectors (generation of income and wealth), access to basic minimum services to improve the quality of life of the poorest of the poor, and direct state intervention in the form of targeted anti-poverty programmes, including the provision of subsidised food grains, are all part of the strategy for poverty alleviation.

In her analysis of the MGNREGS, **Tanushree Sood (2019)** found that an additional yearly income of Rs.60000 for participating households is enough to lift a considerable portion of the population out of poverty. In this regard, the author used the example of Rajasthan's Dungarpur district. She went on to say that 90 percent of the 1.60 lakh workers in this area were women. Finally, the author proposed a change to the MGNREGS since numerous worker organisations are requesting part-payment of salaries in kind, and such an amendment would strengthen the link between the Act and food security.

Aulakh (2018), writing about the implementations of NREGS in Nawanshar, claims that people still prefer low-paying government office jobs to manual labour under the NREGS; the situation is widespread in Punjab, with manual labour aversion being referred to as a social stigma. The writer describes some of the good work done under the NREGS, but educated people generally avoid physical labour even after becoming registered. Migrant labour, which is prohibited by the statute, wishes to participate in the plan. Similarly, women want to

work but are discouraged by societal stigma and the unwillingness of educated adolescents to work with their hands.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the MGNREGS' performance in terms of generating income and employment, creating assets, and improving beneficiaries' social status.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Both primary and secondary data sources served as the foundation for this investigation. A carefully planned interview schedule, targeted group discussions, and in-person interviews with beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, implementing agencies, bank representatives, and Panchayat representatives were employed to gather primary data. Prior to and following the MGNREGS program's introduction, data on several parameters was gathered. The secondary data was gathered from a variety of sources, including published studies, books, articles, the official MGNREGS website, reports from various committees, the Ministry of Rural Development, the Government of India, the Rural Development Department, and several Block Development Offices.

The descriptive design was chosen for this investigation. A list of Gram panchayats was gathered from each of the nine block offices in order to choose the responders. Additionally, beneficiary lists were gathered from every block in every village panchayat. The stratified random sampling method was used to divide the Gram panchayats into two High and Low Performing Panchayats. Additionally, the researcher planned to collect 40 samples from each Panchayat—High Performing and Low Performing Panchayats—so 80 samples were selected using a straightforward random sampling technique from each Panchayat. The Gram Panchayats were chosen based on their performance and ranking in MGNREGS, which includes job card registration, employment demand, employment creation, asset creation, program awareness, and money use. According to the information provided below, 720 beneficiaries in total have been selected for the study.

4.1 TOOLSOFDATACOLLECTION

A pre-tested interview schedule was used by the researcher to gather primary data. In order to collect even the smallest facts required for the current study, the interview schedule was created as thoroughly as feasible. In the first phase, a group of MGNREGS beneficiaries in the study area pre-tested the interview schedule. This

has made it possible for the researcher to guarantee that the timetable flows consistently and to omit some unimportant items. The sample population chosen for the study was then given the finalized interview schedule.

5. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

TABLE5.1

TYPEOFHOUSE

House	No.ofRespondents	Percentage
Kaccha house	294	42
Semi pucca house	238	34
Kaccha house	168	24
Total	700	100

House type: The respondents' economic standing is also revealed by the housing pattern in rural areas. Table reveals that just 24% of respondents have a pucca house, 34% have a semi-pucca house with a wooden log roof, and 42% have a muddy kaccha house. This suggested that the majority of study participants are impoverished.

TABLE5.2

MARITALSTATUSOFRESPONDENTS

Maritalstatus	No.ofRespondents	Percentage
Married	574	82
Unmarried	112	16
Widows	14	2

Total	700	100

The majority of respondents (574) out of the total sample respondents—or 82% of the sample respondents—are married, Of the remaining group, 2% were widowers and 16% were single.

TABLE5.3

FAMILY SIZE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Family size	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Up to 4	182	26
5 to 8	427	61
9 or above	91	13
Total	700	100

Concerning the respondents' family sizes, the field survey revealed that, of the sample as a whole, 61% have five to eight family members, 26% have small families with only four family members, and 13% have larger families with nine or more.

TABLE5.4

EMPLOYMENT GENERATED BY THE RESPONDENTS THROUGH DIFFERENT WORKS UNDER MGNEGA

Blocks	Employment	Different works under MGNREGS								Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	12	

	In mandays									
Budhal	Upto31days	02	00	02	05	02	02	06	01	20
	32-63days	02	01	03	08	03	03	02	02	24
	64-79days	01	02	04	09	01	02	06	01	26
	80-100days	01	00	01	04	00	00	01	00	07
Darhal	Upto31days	02	00	03	05	01	01	08	02	22
	32-63days	04	01	04	07	02	02	06	01	27
	64-79days	05	01	02	07	01	00	05	00	21
	80-100days	00	01	00	03	00	01	02	00	07
Doongi	Upto31days	02	00	02	05	02	03	06	01	31
	32-63days	03	02	04	06	03	01	15	01	34
	64-79days	03	01	02	05	01	00	00	00	12
	80-100days	00	00	00	03	01	02	03	00	19
Kalakote	Upto31days	03	01	03	04	00	01	03	02	17
	32-63days	02	00	02	06	03	03	08	02	26
	64-79days	03	02	04	11	03	02	04	00	29
	80-100days	00	00	01	02	00	00	03	00	06
Manjakote	Upto31days	01	00	01	06	00	02	08	00	18
	32-63days	03	01	04	07	00	02	05	02	24
	64-79days	02	00	02	07	01	01	08	04	25
	80-100days	00	00	00	04	06	00	00	00	10
Nowshera	Upto 31 days	02	01	02	06	02	01	07	01	22
	32-63 days	02	01	03	09	02	01	08	00	26
	64-79 days	04	00	03	06	01	01	06	02	24
	80-100 days	00	00	00	04	00	00	00	01	05
Rajouri	Upto 31 days	02	00	01	07	01	01	05	01	18
	32-63 days	04	01	02	10	01	02	04	01	25
	64-79 days	06	01	03	06	03	03	06	01	29
	80-100 days	00	00	01	03	00	00	02	00	06
	Upto 31 days	04	00	03	07	01	01	07	02	24

Sunderbani	32-63 days	03	01	05	11	01	02	02	02	27
	64-79 days	02	00	03	04	02	02	08	02	23
	80-100 days	00	00	01	01	00	01	00	01	04
	Upto 31 days	02	01	01	07	02	01	03	01	19
Thanamandi	32-63 days	04	01	03	13	03	03	01	01	29
	64-79 days	02	01	02	05	00	02	13	00	25
	80-100 days	00	00	00	02	00	00	03	02	07
Total	Upto 31 days	20 (02%)	03 (0.42%)	18 (03%)	52 (08%)	11 (02%)	13 (01%)	53 (08%)	11 (02%)	181 (26%)
	32-63 days	28 (04%)	09 (01%)	30 (04%)	79 (11%)	18 (03%)	19 (03%)	51 (07%)	10 (01%)	244 (35%)
	64-79 days	28 (04%)	08 (01%)	25 (03%)	60 (09%)	13 (01%)	13 (02%)	57 (08%)	10 (01%)	214 (30%)
	80-100 days	01 (01%)	01 (0.14%)	04 (01%)	26 (03%)	07 (01%)	04 (01%)	14 (02%)	04 (01%)	61 (9%)
G.Total		77(11%)	21 (3%)	77(11%)	217 (31%)	49(7%)	49(7%)	175(25%)	35 (5%)	700(100%)

Source:FieldSurvey

Note: 1=Water conservation and water harvesting works. 2= Drought proofing including afforestation and tree plantation works. 3= Minor Irrigation works .4= Land Development works.5=Renovation of traditional water bodies works.6=Flood control and protection works.7= Rural connectivity.8= Fisheries ponds.9= Cattle sheds.10=Rural sanitation works.11= Construction of play grounds.12=Works taken up in convergence with other schemes.

6. CONCLUSION

guaranteeing 100 days of work under the MGNREGA program, providing workers with dated receipts, working on demand, and providing unemployment benefits. It should be made sure that the Gram Sabha is included in the planning of the work and that they participate in the creation of the plan. The priorities outlined in MGNREGA should guide the choice of employment. By hiring more technical, skilled, and trained

personnel at every stage of the program's execution, capacity building should be guaranteed. Work site management should also be properly ensured in order to increase the program's effectiveness. This includes providing necessary facilities for the work site, maintaining muster rolls, measuring the amount of work completed, entering it on time on job cards, and properly supervising completed work or assets to guarantee their durability or quality. In addition to ensuring timely wage payments, wages should be raised every six months in accordance with current market prices. Appropriate fund allocation and administration should also be guaranteed to prevent wage payment delays. In order to properly pay wages, banks and post offices must also hire specialized personnel. It is important to make sure that records and registrations are properly maintained. Special vigilance committees should be established for this purpose, and social audits should be conducted on a regular basis to guarantee openness. The numerous MGNREGA provisions must be explained to the underprivileged workers. Eliminating administrative anomalies from the program on a priority basis is crucial. MGNREGS will undoubtedly reduce poverty and improve the socioeconomic standing of the people in the research region, state, and nation as a whole if these factors are taken into account.

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