

# MGNERGA Nurturing the life of Rural People in India: A Sociological Study

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**Abstract:** Given the magnitude of rural poverty, the MGNREGA has suggested wide interest for the reason that it is expected to ease this burden by providing an opportunity to move out from the clutches of poverty. Even as recently as 2009-10, India was home to 355 million people living in poverty out of which 278 million or 78 % were in rural areas. The argument for developing and implementing strategies to reduce poverty by increasing productive employment opportunities in rural areas is compelling. Generally, Gram Panchayats implement the programmes under MGNREGA. MGNREGA not only creates job opportunity but also sustains it. The engagement of contractors or the middlemen is strictly prohibited under this program. MGNREGA not only provides economic security and rural assets but also helps in protecting the environment, empowering rural women, reducing rural-urban migration, fostering social equity etc. The principles and agencies for execution, list of allowed works, financing pattern, monitoring and evaluation and typically the detailed measures to ensure transparency and accountability are attractively described in the act. Women empowerment is one of the heartening aspects in MGNREGA program. Under this program, one-third of all employment is reserved for the women and there is a provision of equal wage between the men and women. It is also a very good opportunity for the rural youths of our country, instead of wasting their precious time, 100 days of work is very useful economically for them but it creates a social asset for the country. Another merit of MGNREGA is that it develops the bargaining power of labour who often suffers due to exploitative from the middlemen in the market conditions. Despite several controversies, MGNREGA can be termed as the best scheme for rural people of India. Thousands of rural people survive their day to day life because of this scheme. One of the major impacts of this scheme is the reduction of migration from rural sector to the town and cities for causal unskilled work.

**Key Words:** Poverty, Welfare Programs, Policies, Unskilled, Adult Members

## I.INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a job guarantee scheme for rural Indians. It was enacted by legislation on 25 August 2005. The scheme provides a legal guarantee for at least 100 days of paid employment in every financial year to adult members of any household eager to do unskilled manual work related to public work at the statutory minimum wage of 120 per day in 2009 prices. If they fail to do so the government has to pay the salary at their homes. The central government outlay for the scheme was 4000 billion in the financial year 2010–11. This act was introduced with the aim of improving the purchasing power of semi- or un-skilled rural people of India, irrespective of whether or not they fell below the poverty line. Around one-third of the stipulated work force is women. The law was initially called the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and was renamed with the prefix “Mahatma Gandhi” on 2 October 2009, Gandhi’s birth anniversary.

Circumstantial cause for the emergence of MGNREGA

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a flagship Program of Government of India. The program aims at increasing livelihood security of the rural poor by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The MGNREGA Act seeks to create long lasting assets and strengthen the livelihood resource base of the rural poor. The choice of works suggested in the Act address causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation, soil erosion so that the process of employment

generation is on a sustainable basis. The Act was notified initially in 200 most backward districts of the country w.e.f. February 02, 2006 and subsequently extended all over India in two phases, later on it was extended to additional 130 districts added in the financial year 2007-2008 total 113 districts were notified with effect from April 1st, 2007, and 17 districts in Uttar Pradesh (UP) were notified with effect from May 15th, 2007. The remaining districts have been notified under MGNREGA with effect from April 1, 2008. Thus, the MGNREGA covers the entire country with the exception of districts that have a hundred percent urban population.

#### Significance/Importance of the MGNERGA act

**Increased the Infrastructure assets:** MGNREGA has helped to improve the infrastructure and natural resource base of the rural poor, which has had a positive impact on the environment. During the 100 days of work, rural household folks have created miracle in their respective villages. In many parts of India, under the MGNREGA ponds have been cleaned, desilted and rejuvenated the water bodies by digging small wells. Especially in northern parts of the Karnataka, under the MGNERGA hundreds of sanitary blocks have created and basic houses have been constructed. Over all MGNERGA program has also helped to improve the accessibility of basic services in rural areas and increased infrastructure assets.

**MGNREGA Reimbursing Income Loss:** As per a study conducted by Azim Premji University in 2021 across four states especially, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh, MGNREGA helped in compensating 20-50% of the income loss incurred because of the Covid-19 induced lockdown and even during the drought conditions.

**MGNREGA Prevented Rural Migration:** The main objectives of the MGNERGA is to prevent rural migration to Urban Migration. By providing 100 days of work to rural household that too near their dwelling place, the program succeeded in withholding the people to stay back in their respective villages. It has been observed that once three months of job provided during peak summer period that is from February to April, the problem of unemployment has been

considerable reduced. Thus MGNERGA has succeeded in its reaching its objectivity.

#### II.LITERATURE REVIEW ON MGNERGA

Ghose, Ajit (2010) believes that the government should not rely just on special programs to improve job circumstances. Jobless growth basically deals with employment that doesn't result in higher productivity. Instead of using special programs, constructive investment programs may reduce the gap between labour incentives and productivity. One such initiative that might result in an income transfer to the impoverished is NREGA, if it is used effectively.

Ghose, Jayanti (2005) has said that MGNREGA may continue to have a significant influence on the Indian economy even if it were just half implemented. Since a long time ago, the Indian economy has been afflicted by disguised employment, mostly in agriculture, where there has been an overabundance of labour working in a small number of agricultural regions.

Hirway, Indira (2005) emphasized that the purpose of Employment Guarantee Schemes (EGS) is to allow people to apply for jobs so as to ensure that the legislation is appropriately implemented. A well-thought-out approach to execution and methodical planning may improve the poor's standard of living. The effective instrument of MGNREGA should be used to reduce poverty in addition to being a supportive of the proper policy.

Himansu (2011) discovered that MGNREGA's impacts were clearly apparent. Based on data from the 66th round of the National Sample Survey, there was a 4 percent growth in the casual wage rates of rural males and females between 2005 and 2010. He also discovered that the MGNREGA has successfully lifted the majority of the impoverished by addressing their most susceptible issues.

Dr. Akhilesh Tiwari and Soodam, Vishal (2016) concluded in their study that MGNREGA had a major positive impact on the socioeconomic welfare of the local population which was carried out in disaster-affected districts of Rudraprayag district of Uttarakhand state of India. The program's primary goal was to create a social safety net against hunger

and poverty by offering a steady income through guaranteed employment in their home communities

### III.OBJECTIVES OF MGNREGA

1. To provide social protection & employment opportunities to the vulnerable groups.
2. To create durable assets, reduce water security, soil conservation, and higher land productivity.
3. To have efficient Drought-proofing and flood management in rural India.
4. Empowerment of the socially underprivileged people, like women, Scheduled Castes, Schedules Tribes, through employment opportunities.
5. Strengthening decentralized, participatory planning through the convergence of various anti-poverty and livelihoods initiatives.

#### Research Methodology of the Study

The study on MGNREGA is based on both Primary and Secondary Data. In order to have an original glimpse of the study, Yalavalli Village, Shimamogga district have been selected. The study was conducted in the month of November 2025, 50 MGNREGA rural householders were selected on the basis of Random Sampling Method. In order to elicit information from the rural household respondents, interview schedule method was used. During the study, questions were asked to the respondents about the challenges that they have encountered during their work, mobility, changes in their life that have been undertaken and answers were recorded.

#### Unique features of the MGNREGA Act

- All adult members of a rural household willing to do unskilled manual work have the right to demand employment. Such adult members have to apply to the Gram Panchayat and register themselves with for the unskilled work. After verification by the Panchayat Development Officer or concerned officials, the rural household will be issued with a job card with a photograph, this will allow the rural household to get involve in the day to day activities. It is very important to note that the job card will with photograph will be given to the rural households who are eligible for to work under this program. The beauty of the program is that if the local village panchayat failed to provide employment to the rural house

hold after applying for the work, then the concerned Gram Panchayat will pay unemployment allowance to the respective person immediate after 15 days of the receipt of their application. There is a condition for the wage disbursement, it has to done on weekly basis preferably every Saturday of the week and not beyond a fortnight. If the village panchayat failed to disturb the amount on time, then the concerned Panchayat Development Officer will be accountable for the discrepancy. Normally wage rate to the wage earner will go through savings bank account holder. In order to provide a decent job to the rural house holders the respective Gram Panchayat must prepare a annual work chart in advance, subsequently a ratio of 60: 40 for wage and material costs should be maintained at the Gram Panchayat level. Under the MGNREGA scheme neither contractors nor middlemen is allowed into middle the work, at the same time, no machineries are permitted to work while executing their goal. While planning the work, monitoring the work force and implementation of the program Panchayat Raj body will play a key role. In order to provide economic security to the women, at least one-third of the work force should be women folks.

#### Funding of MGNREGA

- Central Government – Central Government will have borne 100% of wages for unskilled manual work, subsequently, 75% of the material cost of the schemes including payment of wages to skilled and semi-skilled workers.
- State Government- State Government will fetch 25% of material including payment of wages to skilled and semi-skilled workers cost. But lots of responsibility with regarding to the unemployment rests with the State Government. If the State Government fails to provide job to the respective eligible rural house hold then it has to provide 100% of the unemployment allowance.

#### How the of Work Distribution takes places in MGNREGA:

- Schedule I, Para 10 of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA positions that it shall be open to the Panchayat Office and the Gram Panchayat to direct any

person who has applied for employment to do work of any type permissible under the Act. The information on work requested and work allotted is required to be mentioned in the Job Card and Employment Register. Therefore, it is necessary that it should be recorded on the Job Card and the Employment Register. The State Government shall define clear coordination mechanisms so that data on work requested and allotted by the Program Officer and the Gram Panchayat are properly maintained. Gram Panchayat and Block Officers should also share information on work allocated and works opened.

With regard to the Unemployment Allowance:

1. If an applicant is not provided employment within 15 days of receipt of his/her application seeking employment, he/she shall be entitled to a daily unemployment allowance. In the case of advance applications, employment should be provided from the date that employment has been sought, or within 15 days of the date of application, whichever is later. Otherwise the unemployment allowance becomes due.
2. The unemployment allowance will be paid as per Section 7 of the Act. The 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.

Best success story of MGNREGA:

**Jalpaiguri:** Jalpaiguri district is located in the northern part of West Bengal. Under the MGNREGA program a kind of blue revolution was implemented. Fish farmers were encouraged to not only to raise the fish culture but they were also encouraged to involve in growing vegetables. Thus MGNREGA encouraged them earn more money and generated extra money.

**Paschim Bardhaman:** Paschim Bardhaman is a predominantly an urban, industrial and mining region of West Bengal. In fact in this region men folk are completely involved themselves in the mining industry. But MGNREGA program encouraged the womenfolk to involve them in poultry farming. Hence, with the help of men folk huge Poultry shed were constructed and encouraged both men and women into the poultry farming. The initiative produced a heartwarming results, women started to

earn extra money through selling of eggs and chicken meat. At the same time, poultry provided nutritious food to their kids, hence MGNREGA provided path breaking result in the life's of women folk which is a model to the others districts of India. Through MGNREGA empowering women to earn on their own, mobilizing a huge social capital as well as nutrition for children giving a steady source of income to the family.

**South West Khasi Hills:** A group of tribal people from 14 villages through MGNREGA in South West Khasi Hills District came together to create the suspension bridge on the Rilang river to carry their products in the markets of Ranikor reforms that can make the MGNREGA program successful.

#### IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION ON CHALLENGES OF MGNREGA

Challenges and issues pertaining to the implementation of MGNREGA

##### 1. Corruption:

There have been instances of corruption, particularly in the form of embezzlement of funds and manipulation of records. Out of 50 respondents 38 of them consisting of 76 per cent complained that there is large scale corruption by the Gram Panchayat officials. They replied that they have seen the Gram Panchayat Officials proxy enters fictitious names into the ledgers and make money. The respondents responded that this makes them frustrated but they said they maintain silence fearing of losing job and reprimand from the Gram Panchayat officials.

##### 2. MGNREGA created limited job opportunities:

As per the MGNREGA program guidelines it provides only 100 days of employment per person per year. Out of 50 respondents 44 of the respondents consisting of 88 per cent replied they have big families consisting 6 to 8 members. Providing employment for single house hold does not fill their stomach, hence the respondents urged the researchers that at least 3 to 4 four members of the family must provide job for a period of 100 days this may cater their needs. Otherwise this may lead to increase of hungry souls in the family.

##### 3. Lack of awareness about the MGNERGA

It is unfortunate to note that even though the MGNREGA is a popular program many rural folks do not know the significance of it. Female folks do not have heard of it. Out of 50 respondents 34 of them consisting of 68 per cent are of the opinion that they have not heard this anything about the program from the Village Panchayats. They replied they have enrolled to this program after learning that their neighboring relatives attending the program. After hearing from them they went and registered with the officials. This shows that there is a callous and negligent attitude of the Gram Panchayat personals who are not taking initiative of spreading the news of job opportunity that available during the crucial drought prone days of 100 days. Hence it has been proved that MGNREGA has been not reached to rural masses in a large way and the rural folks failed to take the advantage of the benefits the program offers.

#### 4. Administrative apathy in delays:

The program is often marred by bureaucratic delays and inefficiencies, making it difficult for rural folks to access benefits in a timely manner. Out of 50 respondents 38 of them consisting of 76 of them alleged that often they receive late payments due to the administrative reasons. The respondent lamented that after hard 6 days of hard work, when they went collect their weekly wages, the officials give petty reasons like ledger has not been prepared, Gram Panchayat officials are on leave, amount has been granted, local holiday and shoe them away. The respondents said, the lethargic attitude of the officials are making them feel sad. For example, delay in payments in Andhra Pradesh.

#### 5. Quality of work:

Many critics argue that the quality of work carried out under MGNREGA is not up to the mark and the work undertaken is not aligned to the local needs and priorities. Out of 50 respondents 36 of them consisting of 72 per cent claim that they are working mechanically without bothering about the quality of work. The respondents responded that even Gram Panchayat officials do not coerce them for good work they just tell them to work from morning to late evening. Limited financial inclusion: Limited financial inclusion in the states such as Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and in Andrapradesh is also a

challenge for the proper implementation of MGNREGA regarding the transfer of wages.

Measures to improve the MGNREGA program successful.

#### Launching of Urban MGNREGA:

Critics of MGNREGA suggest that poverty not only just existed in rural areas but also rampant in urban areas too. The critics pointed out that the rate of unemployment is high in urban areas, hence scores of people in urban areas are deprived of food and shelter. If the deprived one from the Urban communities are provided with few months of unskilled jobs it will be a great effort on the part of the government in reducing the urban poverty and misery. Henceforth, they are suggesting the Urban MGNREGA to extend the program to urban areas. This can help address the issue of unemployment in urban areas and provide employment opportunities for low-skilled workers.

#### Introduction of Universal Basic Income

Economist suggests that introduction of Universal Basic Income system may be a substitute for the MGNREGA. According them Universal Basic Income provides more opportunities with the amalgamation of more schemes. At the same time this system provides more security than the MGNREGA, economists analyze UBI is more efficient and provides little space for corruption.

#### Merging of MGNREGA with other schemes:

Social Planners are of their opinion that it is best to merge MGNREGA with other social welfare schemes. They are of the opinion that if MGNREGA is merged with other schemes it may be useful for the rural house hold to get more job opportunities. Simultaneously larger goals can be achieved with the larger schemes. Social planners argue that if larger plans normally allocated with the bigger grants hence the sustainability of the project is more compared with other smaller schemes.

#### Innovative measures to be introduced:

Social Welfare Officials are stress on another suggestion is to introduce innovative measures. They are of their opinion that using digital platforms for transparency, continues monitoring, and grievance redressal of labors, linking MGNREGA with the private sector to increase job opportunities, and

involving Panchayat Raj Institutions in the implementation of the program may attract more number of rural household.

**Regular Social audit:** To improve the implementation of MGNREGA, there is a need to mandatorily hold social audits every six months this helps the government to monitor the programs more efficiently. Consequently, transparency will increase automatically through the social audit.

**Issue of Job cards:** Job cards should be issued to individuals who are eligible for employment under MGNREGA, not to elected PRI representatives and MGNREGA officials.

#### V.CONCLUSION

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) 2005 is landmark legislation in Indian history of social security legislation after independence. Enacted after a successful struggle for employment guarantee legislation, it is a partial victory towards a full-fledged right to employment in any developing country context. The essential feature of this legislation which separates it from any other public service provisioning scheme is its enactment through the parliament of India. This legislation has been bringing about a silent revolution in rural areas of the country. MMGNREGA Act for the first time brings the role of the state as a provider of livelihood within the reach of the participants/beneficiaries themselves. By design, it is different from any employment generation scheme that has been previously implemented. It requires different approach towards employment generation schemes and towards overall involvement of the State in providing the right to employment to its masses.

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