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STATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME IN INDIA

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Abstract: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme/Act(MGNREGA) seeks to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to at least one member of every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work and generate assets for the community that could be useful for their daily occupational activities and to cater to their economic needs. The study would examine the trend in employment generated and status of asset created for all the states and union territories of India for the year 2015 - 2018 . Findings showed the inconsistency in the data over the years which depicted some kind of inefficiencies from the implementation side that prevented from catering to the objectives under the Act in terms of its employment provision and asset generated and that these limitations needed immediate solution.

Keywords: Employment, households, assets.

I INTRODUCTION

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act/Scheme(NREGA/S), funded by the central government and implemented in all states, seeks to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to atleast one member of every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work, it creates "right to work" envisioned in the Constitution of India as one of the 'Directives Principles of State Policy'. The programme may also provide, as far as possible, for the training and up-gradation of the skills of unskilled labourers. The unique feature of the programme includes time bound employment guarantee and wage payment within 15 days and at-least 33% of the beneficiaries are to be women. Wages may be paid in cash or in kind or both, taking into account the guidelines and recommendations of the State Council on this matter as far as possible. Employment should be provided within a radius of 5 kilometres of the village where the applicant resides at the time of application for the job. In cases where employment is provided outside such radius, it must be provided within the block, and transport allowances and daily living allowances should be paid in accordance with programme rules.

The programme was enacted in September 2005, came into force on 2nd February, 2006 and got implemented in a phased manner. In phase 1, it was introduced in 200 of the most backward districts of the country. It was then implemented in an additional 130 districts in the second phase in 2007-08. And as per the initial target, NREGA was to be expanded countrywide in five years. In phase 3, starting from 1st April, 2009, it was further extended to the remaining 274 rural districts of India and now covers all rural areas of the country. On 2nd October, 2009, NREGA/S was renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme/Act(MGNREGA) with its main focus on works relating to water conservation, drought proofing(including afforestation/tree plantation), land development, flood control/protection(including drainage in waterlogged areas) and rural connectivity in terms of all weather roads.

II METHODOLOGY

The study would examine the trend in employment generated and status of asset created. It selected all the states and union territories of India for the year 2015 - 2018 . Findings analyse using secondary data collected from the official website of NREGA and study would be analysed using percentage and actual number.

III LITERATURE REVIEW

Aiyar and Samji (2006) examined the key principles that could contribute to strengthen the effectiveness of NREGA. Using the theories of horizontal and vertical relationships of accountability and also based on the studies and experiences of previous wage employment generation schemes, the study concluded that clear defined and assigned roles such as resource transfer and capacity building of Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha and community monitoring through score cards would play crucial roles for the structure of the NREGA’s proper functioning.

Datar (2007) examined the failure of NREGA in Maharashtra. 20 villages in which 68 persons were interviewed. Study concluded that government machinery had been paralysed as politicians looked at the scheme as a populist measure for the last minute support to prove their concern for drought affected farmers and landless labourers, some works sanctioned in an arbitrary manner without its viability within the larger watershed map for villages. Lack of regularity, coordination, delay in wage payment, erring officials not punished nor unemployment allowance granted to any labourer who was not provided with work made the poor fed up of the scheme. The sarpanch and gram sevaks resisted to receive large sums to develop village assets because of the increased burden and lack of kickbacks through the contractor. Seasonal migration rose as a result of such situation.

Mishra (2011) examined the effectiveness of MGNREGA in the creation of assets in three districts of Madhya Pradesh. Within these three districts, the study covered a sample of 16 blocks, 396 villages, 211 Gram Panchayats and comprises 350 responses at sarpanch level, 4714 responses at household level, and 1304 usable responses at worksite level in these three districts. The study showed significant impact on assets created at individual and community lands on rural households. Rise in water conservation activities under MGNREGS impacted on the cropping pattern through a shift from low value traditional crops to high values crops, increased income, enhanced road connectivity - reduced distances between villages, improve access to health service centers and reduced maternal mortality rate but required proper monitoring activities for maintenance else assets created would become obsolete in future.

Stina *et al.* (2015) assessed the performance of MGNREGA in Manipur. The study was based on published secondary data of 7 years i.e., from 2008-09 to 2014-15 of the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Govt. of Manipur with necessary interpolation by way of utilizing the official online sources of MIS manager of MGNREGA. Results showed that person days of employment generated per year found to be inadequate but participation of women were beyond the stipulated percentage, work completion rate was far from satisfactory while financial performance seemed quite satisfactory but poverty in rural Manipur increased even after introduction of MGNREGA.

IV FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Table 1: Employment generated under MGNREGA in India

Year	Households	Persons	Persondays
2015-2016	48132074	72259092	2351412793
2016-2017	51222192	76690926	2356403416
2017-2018	51158907	75915341	2337431332
2018-2019	52696761	77775777	2679742876

Source: www.nrega.nic.in

As per table 1, employment generated for households, persons as well as person days increased except for the year 2017-2018 which witnessed a decline. Under ‘households’ category, the fall witnessed the highest decline at -.1%, whereas in actual number, ‘person-days’ category witnessed the highest fall in employment generation. During the given four years, employment provided in terms of ‘person-days’ category had the highest increase at 14%.

The inconsistency in the data over the years showed that there were some inefficiencies from the implementation side that could not cater to the objectives under the Act in terms of its employment provision and asset generated and that these limitations needed immediate solution to ensure that MGNREGA cater its rightful objectives to the rural poor so as to bring them out of extreme poverty.

Table 2 : Work status under MGNREGA in India.

Year	Number of works completed	Number of works not yet completed	Work completion rate(%)
2016-2017 and earlier	35455591	1407771	96.18
2017-2018	6153639	3132291	66.27
2018-2019	2251358	6057293	27.1

Source: www.nrega.nic.in

As per table 2, number of works completed declined over the years and the number of works not completed increased and this pushed down the completion rate from 96.18% to 27.1%.

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