



TO STUDY THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE MGNREGS PROVISIONS ARE BEING APPLIED IN THE RESEARCH REGION

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ABSTRACT

Under the MGNREGA programme, 100 days of employment should be guaranteed, together with works-on-demand, dated receipts, and unemployment benefits. Gram Sabha participation in the planning of the work and in the production of the plan should be ensured. Work should be prioritised in accordance with the MGNREGA priorities. Additional, trained, and technical employees should be engaged at all levels of the program's implementation to ensure capacity building. Work site management should also be properly ensured to make the programme more effective, such as the provision of essential work site facilities, proper maintenance of muster rolls, timely entries on job cards and measurement of work done, and proper supervision of works done or assets created to ensure the quality of work or the durability of the assets created. Salaries should be paid on time, and wages should be increased every six months in accordance with market prices. Proper management and allocation of funds should also be ensured to avoid wage payment delays. It is also necessary to appoint dedicated workers in banks and post offices to ensure proper wage payment. Records and registers should be kept in good working order. Social audits should be conducted on a regular basis to maintain transparency, and special vigilance committees should be established for this reason. The underprivileged workers must be educated on the MGNREGA's different provisions. It is critical that administrative inconsistencies in the programme be addressed as soon as possible. If these factors are taken into account, MGNREGS will undoubtedly reduce poverty and improve the socioeconomic level of people in the study region, the state, and the country as a whole.

Keyword: Guaranteed, Trained, Technical, Employees, Effective, Funds

1. INTRODUCTION

On February 2, 2006, the NREGA was introduced in the first phase in three districts of Jammu and Kashmir State—Doda, Kupwara, and Poonch—along with 200 other districts nationwide. Additionally, the initiative

was expanded to include two additional districts, Anantnag and Jammu, as of April 1, 2007. Additionally, starting on April 1, 2008, the same initiative was extended to all twenty-two districts in the state.

TABLE 1.1: PHASEWISE IMPLEMENTATION OF MGNREGA IN J&K STATE

Phase	Name of the District
Phase-I (2 nd of Feb. 2006)	Doda, Kupwara & Poonch
Phase-II (1 st April 2007)	Jammu and Anantnag
Phase-III (1 st of April 2008)	Rajouri, Reasi, Udhampur, Kathua, Samba, Shopian, Pulwama, Baramulla, Sirinagar, Badgam, Gandarbal, Leh, Kargil, Bandipura.

Source: Office of Commissioner Secretary to Govt. Department of Rural development & Panchayati Raj, J&K Government.

1.1 SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR JAMMU AND KASHMIR STATE

The government of Jammu and Kashmir published the state-specific instructions under MGNREGS on June 11, 2013, through Government Order No. 157-RD and PR of 2013. According to the MGNREGS, these requirements require every family with adult members who volunteer to perform unskilled physical labor to offer at least 100 days of guaranteed paid employment throughout a fiscal year. (i) Social protection for the most vulnerable rural residents through employment opportunities; (ii) livelihood security for the poor through the development of durable assets, enhanced water security, soil conservation, and increased land productivity; (iii) drought proofing and flood management in rural areas; and (iv) employment of the socially disadvantaged, particularly women, are the objectives outlined in the guidelines. SCs and STs through the process of right-based legislation; (v) enhancing decentralized, participatory planning through the convergence of several livelihood and anti-poverty efforts; and (vi) building Panchayati Raj Institutions to deepen democracy at the grassroots level.

Similar to the central government's guidelines, the guidelines also included specific features of MGNREGS, such as (i) legal guarantees for wage employment to unskilled labor, (ii) a demand-driven, bottom-up, people-

centered, and self-selection approach, (iii) the provision of work is triggered by the demand for wage employment and the work is opened only after the demand from the laborers, (iv) the provision of unemployment allowances in the event that the labor demand is not met within the allotted time frame, and (v) conducting social audits using a participatory approach and integrated natural resource management and livelihood generation perspectives.

The flagship initiative in the state of Jammu and Kashmir has been given top importance by the government. Its goals include ensuring food security by boosting rural residents' capabilities and reducing distress migration, in addition to eliminating rural poverty. The program even permits BPL families to expand their personal land holdings, enabling them to build their own assets while earning earnings. They will eventually be moved from BPL to APL status as a result of this.

Numerous planning agencies, governments, non-governmental groups, and academics have long considered the best ways to reduce poverty, and there are many different programs in place. Any program aimed at reducing poverty is judged on its capacity to reach the impoverished, how well it works to make them smile, and how well it meets its goals. By enhancing natural resources and generating sustainable assets, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGS) is one such program that, by its very nature, contributes to lowering the enormous influx of unemployed rural poor workers.

2. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

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.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In their work, **Aiyar and Salimah (2020)** demonstrate various design ideas that can help strengthen the MGNREGS. According to the authors, the Gram Panchayats should be in charge of all operational activities, while the state government should be in charge of general monitoring and regulation of the process. Through

social audits and community score cards, citizens must play an important part in monitoring the programme. Bela Bhatia and Jean Dreze (2006) did a study on MGNREGS and found significant flaws in the program's institutional structure. They further claimed that there is no difference between NREGA and other employment programmes such as the National Food for Work Programme (NFFWP) and Sampoorna Grameen Rojgar Yojana (SGRY), and that the basic goal of providing on-demand work at the statutory minimum pay has not been met. After completing a survey on MGNREGS in AP, Chhattisgarh, MP, and Jharkhand, the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) (2006) found that AP had the highest level of awareness (97.5 percent), followed by Chhattisgarh (69 percent), MP (45 percent), and Jharkhand (45 percent) (29 percent). Unpaid unemployment benefits, the presence of invisible workers, and the difficulty of completing a particular task under a piece rate system were all issues identified in the study.

Chakraborty (2020), while conducting research on NREGA, stated that the programme has no budgetary issues. Its budget is just slightly larger than what the government has spent in the past on other rural employment programmes. He went on to say that it is a demand-driven programme that has fallen far short of expectations in several states. The fund usage ratio varies a lot from state to state. She stated that there is an urgent need for collaboration at all levels of government.

In a final report based on field visits, the Indian School of Women's Studies Development (2020) revealed that widowed, abandoned, and separated women living in native homes in Tamil Nadu are not identified as independent households and are either completely excluded or included in their native family's job cards. Second, women were paid significantly less than the required wage amount (Rs25-50).

In its annual report for 2006-07 on the performance of Bilaspur district, the Government of Chhattisgarh noted that the MGNREGS performed well in the district in terms of job creation and asset building. According to the report, (a) A total of 2936 proposals for work were submitted in the stated year, valued Rs.14785.08 lakhs, of which 2843 (of Rs.14466.52 lakhs) were approved. The work on 805 (28%) of the sanctioned projects has already been finished, with the remaining 2038 (72%) still in process. (b) A total of 202467 families applied for jobs, with 194511 (96%) of them being hired. (c) A total of 32960 (16%) families have already received the desired 100 days of employment. (d) During the said year, work worth Rs.10642.48 lakhs was taken, out of which work worth Rs.2368.75 lakhs was finished and work worth Rs. 8273.73 lakhs was in progress.

According to a report published by the Government of India in 2006-07, the 'Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Work Guarantee Act (MGNREGS)' supplied employment to 62 percent of SC and ST households. It was

greater than the national average in nine (9) states. Furthermore, one-third reservation for women who have registered and met the criteria has been reported in 18 states, with Tripura (85 percent) and Tamil Nadu (82 percent) being the highest. Furthermore, while focusing on the success of the MGNREGS programme, it was announced that in the 2006-07 fiscal year, 73.08 percent of the available funds were used, indicating good MGNREGS performance.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. Research into the socioeconomic status of MGNREGS recipients.
2. To determine the extent to which the MGNREGS provisions are being applied in the research region.

5. 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.

5.1 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.

6. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

SOCIALPROFILE

Age, gender, social group, religion, educational attainment, family size, BPL card holder, caste, and other characteristics are all part of the workers' social profiles. A standardized questionnaire was used to examine the respondents' social profiles. The following tables provide a thorough summary of these parameters:

TABLE6.1:

GENDERWISEDISTRIBUTIONOFRESPONDENTS

Gender	No.ofRespondents	Percentage
Male	532	76
Female	168	24
Total	700	100

Source:FieldSurvey

Table showed that 532 of the sample respondents were men and only 168 were women, or 76% and 24% of the total sample respondents, respectively. The secondary data also confirms the low female involvement in MGNREGS. The researcher discovered the cause of this low level of participation. These include (i) male dominance, (ii) the weight of household chores like child care, livestock rearing, and kitchen work, and (iii) women's lack of knowledge about the program.

TABLE6.2

RELIGION-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

Religion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Muslims	448	64
Hindus	231	33
Sikhs	21	3
Total	700	100

The majority population in the study area is Muslim. It was discovered that 64% of the respondents in the sample families were Muslims, 33% were Hindus, and the remaining 3% were Sikhs.

TABLE 6.3**CASTE-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS**

Caste	No. of Respondents	Percentage
ST	252	36
SC	77	11
OBS	147	21
General	224	32
Total	700	100

The majority of respondents, according to their socioeconomic category, are from disadvantaged and backward segments of society (ST 36%, SC 11%, and OBC 21%). Additionally, 32% of respondents fell into the general category, according to the statistics in the table. The results indicate that the research area's underprivileged segments profited from the MGNREGS program.

1.Problems faced by MGNREGS workers/beneficiaries:The MGNREGS employees who participated in the field survey revealed that they are having a lot of trouble finding work under the program. These issues are listed below in decreasing order of severity.

TABLE 6.4CONSTRAINTINDEXOFBENEFICIARIES

S.No	Constraints	Severe constrains (sc)	Mere Constraints (C)	No constraints	Total score (2xsc+c)	(CI)=Total score/total respondent	Rank
1	Less wagherates	700	20	0	1420	1.97	1 st
2	Delayinpaymentof wages	660	40	20	1360	1.88	2 nd
3	Seasonalemployment	510	180	30	1200	1.67	3 rd
4	Timelagingetting employment	410	260	50	1080	1.50	5 th
5	Hindranceinwithdrawal ofwagesfromaccounts	400	300	20	1100	1.52	4 th
6	Non-availabilityof musterrollsat worksite	405	290	25	1100	1.52	4 th
7	Noregularsocialaudit	390	260	70	1040	1.45	6 th
8	Irregularflow offunds	250	390	80	890	1.23	7 th

Less wage rates (CI=1.97): Based on the study and interviews with MGNREGS employees, it was discovered that they are dissatisfied with the minimum wage rate since they revealed that it is significantly lower than the going rate in the market. Employees were deterred from accepting jobs under MGNREGS.

Delay in payment of wages (1.88): Wage payment delay (1.88), a violation of the law requiring biweekly payments, is seen in the research area when wages provided to job seekers via MGNREGS are not made on time. In the study region, earnings are typically given out every three to four months, however occasionally

they are received after six months. Banks waited nearly a month to credit the workers' individual SB accounts with their wages.

Seasonal employment (CI=1.67): The majority of respondents revealed that MGNREGS no longer seems to be a demand-driven program because it appears to follow the same process as the previous supply-driven programs and only offered employment for a restricted amount of days (CI=1.67). The greatest distinguishing feature of MGNREGS is that it offers employment whenever the workers want it. In the past, wage employment programs only offered employment during lean times and at the request of the officials. Therefore, it would seem that MGNREGS is ad hoc in nature and only offered seasonal work, similar to other earlier programs. Additionally, it has been noted that the responder beneficiaries in the study area often receive an average of 41 (DPC 2016) days of employment. The researcher claims that this is far less for their survival, which leads to extremely poor program earnings.

7. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is undeniable that MGNREGA has a higher potential to reduce poverty, create jobs, and increase income. It is also the biggest and most ambitious public works and social security initiative. However, there have been implementation-related problems that must be acknowledged and effectively resolved. Without a doubt, MGNREGA recipients in the study area received more jobs, but not as promised (i.e., 100 days). Through MGNREGS, the workers were able to obtain a meager salary, but this was not in keeping with the program's goals. To eradicate rural poverty and solve socioeconomic backwardness in the study areas, the scheme's implementation needs to be improved. Women are underrepresented in the study field, therefore it is crucial to give them access to the Act's benefits. Women's participation in the program should be encouraged by special measures.

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