

International Journal of Global Economic Light (JGEL)

PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION OF MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT (MGNREGA), 2005 WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASSAM

Mr. Anupom Borgohain

Assistant Professor, Demow College, Sivasagar, Assam, India

ABSTRACT

In India, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is the first act which guarantees wage employment on a unique scale. Its aim is to increase the livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country by providing them at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year. It is hailed as a landmark initiative to alleviate poverty and generates productive wage employment. Along with this act, the government of India has taken up several policies after the independence in the matter of rural development with a view to ensure social justice and to solve the problem of unemployment, under-employment, poverty which is the major factors hunting the socio-economic development. But most of the government programmes had neither reduced the poverty levels in a sustainable manner nor had they extended the labour absorption size of the main stream economy in any significant scale. In this regard MGNREGA has a revolutionary step to play in eradicating poverty especially in rural areas. This present study attempts to depict the performance of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, 2005 particularly in Assam.

KEY WORDS: MGNREGA, Employment, Development, poverty, guaranteed wage

INTRODUCTION

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is the first noticeable commitment to the poor by the Government of India. The scheme aims at providing employment as a source of income by ensuring their dignity. Thus it is considered a unique scheme, which provides them Right to Work, as enshrined in the Constitution under Directive Principles of state policy (Part IV, Article 39 (a) and Article 41, Constitution of India). In this sense the scheme is supposed to be the most unique scheme after independence as it provides them statutory right to employment. Since the government has a statutory obligation to provide employment to every rural household in a financial year.¹

IMPLEMENTATION OF MGNREGA IN INDIA

The MGNREGA programme which was initially implemented in 200 backward districts of India, witnessed a

number of challenges during its formative days, the cause being the varied and specific problems of the respective districts. These 200 districts were identified as backward by the Planning Commission which called for immediate and urgent measures for social development. However, these districts, with their respective socio-economic problems inevitably posed a serious threat in the way of the successful implementation of the MGNREGA. Yet, the fact cannot be overlooked that gradually, the MGNREGA programme emerged successful with its multi-dimensional efforts that hold a way over the rural life of India. The success of the MGNREGA is reflected in the significant increase in employment opportunities and wage rates which have definitely resulted in a significant dent in rural poverty. They are the least developed areas of the country comprising mostly of marginal farmers and forest dwellers. It was executed in various phases. In the first phase, it was implemented in 200 backward districts of the country, an additional 130 district

were added in the second phase in 2007-08 and remaining 266 districts were notified in September 2008. And as on date, the scheme has been extended to all the districts of the country. In many of these districts, poverty has increased despite consistent focus on several poverty eradication programmes. Governance has little or no presence in most of these districts.ⁱⁱ One of the positive effects that have been brought about by the MGNREGA is that the villagers have been granted the power to demand employment. They could fearlessly come up with this demand, which has now been identified as one of

their several rights. For performance analysis, it is essential to look at the response of government in providing employment against the demand raised by workers. MGNREGA can target development using huge demand for casual jobs. It has made a dent on poverty by increasing employment opportunities. Table 1.1 presents the details of the progress of MGNREGA in India during the period 2006-07 to 2014-15. The indicators selected for measuring the progress are the number of job cards issued, Household demanded employment and employment provided to households.

Table 1.1: Progress of MGNREGA in India

Year	Cumulative No. Of household issued job card.	Cumulative No. Of household demanded employment	Cumulative No. Of household provided employment	Employment Provided %
2006-07	37850390	21188894	21016099	99.18
2007-08	64740595	34326563	33909132	98.78
2008-09	100145950	45518907	45115358	99.11
2009-10	112548976	52920154	52585999	99.36
2010-11	120095282	54008043	53384234	98.84
2011-12	125075528	46128636	46093261	99.92
2012-13	130630164	45605414	45578452	99.94
2013-14	128162177	51797343	51735913	99.88
2014-15	121031400	43582789	43503419	99.81

*Source: compiled from Azeez, N.P.A. & Akhtar, S.M.J. (2015). Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) provisions, Implementation and Performance. Delhi: New Century Publication and <http://www.nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx>, accessed on 20.09.2017.

However, as the county is apparently and inevitably diverse in all aspects, so, also the implementation as well as the performance of the scheme is bound to have inter-states variation. Yet, there are examples of certain states that have very well achieved the fruits of employment as born by the MGNREGA as a consequence of the demands of the rural folks. If we look at the state-wise analysis, the state of Andhra Pradesh performed well, as it was able to provide 100 % employment continuously under the scheme, followed by Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh etc.; with low performance by Himachal Pradesh. Table 1.2 presents the details of employment provided as against employment demanded under MGNREGA in India.

Thus, if we take the percentage of households who demanded for employment and actual employment generated at national level, it seems to be around 99% with minor variation in different financial years, meaning that government was able to produce employment opportunities for those who demanded employment. Several factors explain the reasons for varying degrees of progress across states and even across districts within a state. Strong political wills, presence of civil society agencies and NGOs, higher levels of awareness among the communities; similar programmes were identified for a better take-off of MGNREGA in states like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan.ⁱⁱⁱ

Table 1.2: Employment provided as against Employment demanded under MGNREGA in major States (%)

States	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Andhra Pradesh	99.99	100	100	100	100	99.52	99.57
Assam	99.26	96.87	87.1	99.91	99.51	99.98	99.87
Bihar	98.84	97.08	100	100	97.71	99.95	99.93
Gujarat	100	100	100	100	98.45	99.53	99.76
Haryana	100	100	94.84	100	99.51	99.99	99.93
Himachal Pradesh	94.53	98.42	98.23	99.63	89.68	99.93	99.97
Karnataka	99.39	99.28	98.86	97.49	99.70	99.93	97.93
Kerala	94.10	96.63	99.04	99.84	99.90	99.98	99.99
Madhya Pradesh	104.8	100	100	99.99	97.88	99.95	99.79
Maharashtra	109	100	99.84	99.99	99.07	99.98	99.89
Odisha	99.07	96.67	98.23	98.71	99.48	99.99	99.93
Punjab	99.56	100	100	99.72	99.43	99.87	99.69
Rajasthan	100	99.88	99.97	100	99.18	91.56	-----
Tamil Nadu	99.96	100	100	100	99.31	99.41	-----
Uttar Pradesh	96.15	99.81	99.95	96.75	99.64	90.29	-----
West Bengal	95.31	98.04	100	99.73	98.59	95.06	89.54
India	99.18	98.78	99.11	99.36	99.89	99.79	99.68

*Source: compiled from Azeez, N.P.A. & Akhtar, S.M.J. (2015). Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) provisions, Implementation and Performance. Delhi: New Century Publication and <http://www.nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx>, accessed on 20.09.2017.

IMPLEMENTATION OF MGNREGA IN ASSAM

The MGNREGA is an unparalleled rural reconstruction programme to transform the Indian rural economic scene. It has already been stated that the MGNREGA is a unique weapon in the economic history of independent India to remove rural poverty and unemployment.^{iv}It is an innovative step for India's poor. This would not only help the abolition of rural unemployment but would put a check on migration of rural people to the urban areas. Like other parts of India, this act was launched in Assam from the financial year 2005-2006. In the first phase of this act, seven Districts of Assam were covered i.e. Karbi Anglang, Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, Goalpara, Lakhimpur, N.C.Hills and Dhemaji. After that it was extended to Cachar, Darrang, Barpeta, Hailakandi, Morigaon and Nalbari Districts of Assam in 2007-2008 and from 1st April, 2008, the scheme was implemented in all the remaining districts of Assam. The evolution of this act in

Assam can be dignified in terms of Job Card issued, employment provided to household and total expenditure made on the act. These are the proper parameters from the basis for measuring the volume and progress of the act. While assessing the development on these measure one should also consider that the nature of employment is seasonal and the duration of employment sought varies from district to district. The act is considered as an alternative source for providing employment when the main agriculture activities are not in full swing. Table 1.3 presents the details of the progress of MGNREGA in Assam during the period 2006-07 to 2014-15. In the year 2006-2007, the table (1.3) reveals that about 916753 job card were issued of which 798179 (87%) demanded employment. The number of issue of job card was increased in the succeeding year. In 2007-08 and 2008-09 it was increased up to 1565775 and 2970522 respectively. In 2009-10 and 2010-11, the figure touched to 3611714 and 4369561 respectively.

Table 1.3: Progress of MGNREGA in Assam

Year	Cumulative No. of Household issued job card.	Cumulative No. of Household demanded employment	Cumulative No. of Household provided employment	Employment provided %
2006-07	916753	798179 (87%)	-	
2007-08	1565775	1448243 (92%)	-	
2008-09	2970522	2155349 (72%)	1877393	87.10
2009-10	3611714	2139111 (59%)	2137270	99.91
2010-11	4369561	1807788 (41%)	1798372	99.48
2011-12	3915772	1353548 (34%)	1347341	99.54
2012-13	3963611	1229449 (31%)	1217074	98.99
2013-14	4165360	1321079 (32%)	13,20,881	99.99
2014-15	4336380	1083109 (24%)	1081765	99.88

* Source: http://164.100.128.68/netnrega/homesciti.aspx?state_code=04&state_name=ASSAM, accessed on 10.10.2017

By the end of 2014-15, the figure reached to 4243135. While looking at the figure of employment demanded by the households, in the 2006-2007 it was 798179 and in the 2007-08 it was increased 1448243. The demand for job increased in the later year. The cause for the high demand of employment was the increased consciousness on wage employment among the people. However, over the years there has been sharp fall in the demand for jobs under this act. The proportion of households with job cards demanding jobs decreased from 92 % to 72 % and further 59 % in 2009-10, 41 % in 2010-11, and 25 % in 2014-2015 respectively. While observing at the figure of employment provided to the number of household, it can be showed that in 2008-09, it was 1877393. In the later time the quantity of employment provider was increased day by day. In 2009-2010 the figure was 2137270 and in 2010-11 it was 1798372. The number of provided employment was touched 1261778 in 2013-2014.

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN, SCS & STS UNDER MGNREGA

There is inequality and vulnerability of women in all sphere of life. There are required to be empowered in all walks of life. Formation of a new social order may not be a successful one without the active participation of women, because women constitute half of the population. Women have constitutional rights to quality health care, economic security, and access to education and political power. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which entitles rural households to 100 days of casual employment on public works at the statutory minimum wage, contains special provisions to ensure full participation of women. The decrease in the works participation rate under MGNREGA raises questions on the efficacy of implementation of this act in fulfilling the stated objective of the programme. In the initial years 50 % of the employment days were shared by women. In 2006-07 the participation of women in this act was 181.43 lakhs; in 2007-08 it was 150.43 and 2008-2009 (table 1.4).

Table 1.4: Status (in Lakh Person-days) of MGNREGA in Assam

Year	Women	Men	Total	SC	ST	Others
2006-2007	181.43	133.19	314.62	49.57	265.05	0
2007-2008	150.43	77.39	227.82	37.06	190.76	0
2008-2009	204.03	547.05	751.08	78.19	258.78	414.11
2009-2010	203.03	529.92	732.95	89.03	227.36	416.56
2010-2011	124.73	345.82	470.55	51.74	128.26	290.55
2011-2012	88.05	265.42	353.47	19.64	80.68	253.15
2012-2013	80.56	24.41	104.97	19.46	63.77	22.74
2013-2014	29.17	87.99	117.16	7.14	20.77	22.74
2014-2015	59.34	151.6	210.94	12.79	31.96	166.17

*Source: Source: statistical hand book Assam 2007,2008,2009,2010,2011,2012,2013 and http://164.100.128.68/netnrega/homestciti.aspx?state_code=04&state_name=ASSAM, accessed on 11.10.2017

However there has been a gradual decline in the employment days for women and only a quarter of the employment days are shared by women as of today in the state. On the other hand the work participation rates for SC and ST households have also decreased significantly. In 2006-07 the participation of SC was 49.57 lakhs; in 2007-08 it was 37.06; in 2008-09 and 2009-10 it was 78.19 and 89.03 respectively. After that the rates of participation of SCs have decreased and in 2014-15 it reduced to 12.79. The limited scope of works required for asset creation has been identified as the principal cause behind the limitation of employment generation in the rural sections covered under the programme.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OF MGNREGA IN ASSAM

Table 1.5 presents the detail of MGNREGA expenditure in Assam during the period of 2007-08 to 2013-14. It is evident from the table that during 2007-08 to 2013-14, the total expenditure incurred under MGNREGA in Assam was 509785.05 lakh as against 611381.03 lakh available funds. The percentage of expenditure was 83.38 during the study period. It is pertinent to note that during 2010-11, the expenditure was much higher (165.48%) than the total fund released under the Scheme while the percentage of expenditure is too low in 2007-08.

Table 1.5 Present the detail of MGNREGA in Assam

Year	Total available fund (Rs. in lakh)	Total expenditure (Rs. in lakh)	%
2007-08	80609.74	54914.93	68.12
2008-09	132229.22	95380.77	72.13
2009-10	131203.57	97155.57	74.05
2010-11	40888.47	67662.34	165.48
2011-12	83061.96	68661.11	82.66
2012-13	70325.51	59810.62	85.05
2013-14	73062.56	66199.71	90.61
2014-15	58529.66	50285.73	85.91
Total	669910.69	560070.78	83.69

*Source: Statistical hand book Assam 2007,2008,2009,2010,2011,2012,2013 & http://164.100.128.68/netnrega/homestciti.aspx?state_code=04&state_name=ASSAM, accessed on 11.10.2017.

MGNREGA is thus seen to have been implemented in Assam, but with very doubtful success, the reasons being inappropriate work plan and labour planning. The sole reason for these loopholes are found to be the districts-wise variations within the states itself and the narrow and constricted shelf of work. A gradual decline has been observed both in the 100 days of guaranteed employment along with the average number of employment days. However, a certain solution can be found if the PRI representatives of the states are adequately trained to prepare an appropriate budget both for work as well as labour. This calls for some kind of innovative ideas in the budget that could assure success regarding the different programmes as envisaged by the scheme that included wage employment for 100 days as well as assets creation. It is worth-mentioning that in terms of proper implementation and execution of MGNREGA, Tripura has been recognised as the most successful state and at the same time Assam has been enlisted at the 26th position which is in fact a matter to be taken proper measure for proper manifestation and implementation.

End notes:

- ⁱ Mathur, L. (2007). *Employment Guarantee: Progress So Far. Economics and Political Weekly*, 52, 18.
- ⁱⁱ Azeez, N.P.A. & Akhtar, S.M.J. (2015). *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) provisions, Implementation and Performance. Delhi: New Century Publication.*
- ⁱⁱⁱ Azeez, N.P.A. & Akhtar, S.M.J. (2015). *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) provisions, Implementation and Performance. Delhi: New Century Publication.*
- ^{iv} Kar, S. (2013). *Empowerment of Women through MGNREGS: Issues and Challenges. Odisha Review.* 76-80.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books:

1. Agrawal, A. N. (2000). *Indian Economy-Problems of Development & Planning. New Delhi: Wishwa Prakashan.*

2. Arunachalam, P. (2011). *Economic Impact of Political Empowerment of Women in India*. New Delhi: GRPC Publications.
3. Banerjee, G.O., and Banerji, S. (2010). *Issues on Rural Finance, infrastructure and Rural Development*. Delhi: Abhijeet Publications.
4. Chatterjee, S. (2009). *Employment Programmes and Rural Development in india*. Jaipur: RBSA publisher.
5. Chaudhary, C.M. (2009). *Rural Development*. Jaipur: Sublime Publications.
6. Das R. (1986). *Socio-Economic Transformation of millions through Rural Development*. Uttar Pradesh: Twenty first century publisher.
7. DC, N. (2008). *Rediscovering Rural Development*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons.
8. Datt, R. & Sundharam K.P.M (2006). *Indian Economy*. New Delhi: S.Chand & Company Ltd.
9. Dutta, A. Chandra & Chakraborty A. (Eds.) (2009). *Decentralization of power and rural development in India*. Dibrugarh.
10. Dutta, N.L. & Bhuya M.D. (2003). *Rural Development in Assam*. Dibrugarh University.
11. Goswami, P.C. (1989). *Problems of Rural Development in North-East India*. Delhi: B.R. Corporation.

Newspapers:

1. Aiyar, Y. (2014, November 8). *Re-framing the MGNREGA*. *The Hindu*.
2. Dreze, J. (2008, January 11). *Employment Guarantee: beyond propaganda*. *The Hindu*.
3. Dreze, J. (2009, September 19). *Employment Guarantees slave labour?.* *The Hindu*.
4. Lakshman, N. (2006, May 11). *Employment guarantees signs of transformation*. *The Hindu*.
5. Lakshman, N. (2007, August 14). *The hundreds days baskets*. *The Hindu*.
6. Mathur, L. (2009, March 1). *Silent but Successful Initiative*. *The Hindu*.
7. Ram, N. (2008, January 11). *With global meltdown, NREGS becomes more important*. *The Hindu*.
8. Roy, A. & Dey, N. (2009, August 27). *Dalits, the poor and the NREGA*. *The Hindu*.
9. Swaminathan, M.S. (2009, June 1). *Synergy between Food Security act & NREGA*. *The Hindu*.