



MGNREGA: A SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAMME FOR MARGINALIZED CLASS ITS IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT:

This paper aims to throw light on the coverage of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and problems of its implementation. This is a social security programme, which is aiming at strengthening livelihood to rural population by guaranteeing minimum 100 days paid employment in a fiscal year to each household. This programme aims at empowering the people like socially and economically marginalized sections of the society. Among the various Employment Guarantee Schemes NREGA is the flagship programme to address poverty and unemployment in rural India. It is a growth engine for sustainable development of an agricultural economy. This Act also aims to strengthen the natural resource base of rural livelihood and create durable assets in rural communities. This programme achieved a lot; however, it is facing some implementing problems and that is to be resolved in near future. If this scheme is effectively implemented this has the potential to transform the geography of poverty. In this regard, transformative empowerment process of democracy is to be needed.

INTRODUCTION:

This paper looks at the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), which was launched as a social security measure aimed at providing employment security to the rural poor. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (Programme) is considered as a “Silver Bullet” for

eradicating rural poverty and unemployment. This programme was launched in the year 2005, earlier it was known as National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. It is the programme adopted for the rural development in India. It gives more importance to reduce the volume of poverty in rural area and with employment generation. This programme helps to increase the family income and standard of living of the beneficiaries. It is an Indian Labour Law and Social Security Measure providing at least 100 days of wage employment in each financial year to every household, whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Hence, it is demand driven wage employment programme.

The social revolution of 1970s is coined the word 'Marginalized' to explain the experiences of those who live on the fringe of mainstream. Marginalised people exist in all places including rural, Urban and sub urban regions. They cross all socio-economic, religious, racial, lifestyle and cultural groups. India is a country where majority of the population residing in rural community and for their wellbeing, the Government has to allocate funds and schemes to meet out their needs and demands weaker sections. In a long way process Indian Government has launched number of welfare and security programmes for the wellbeing and upliftment of those who are economically marginalized such as; poor, rural landless labourers, and unskilled population.

National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP), Special Employment Programme, Jawahar Rojagar Yojana, Food for work Program, Sampoorna Gramina Rojagar Yojana, National Skill building Machine, National Food for Work, National Rural Livelihood Machine, Indira Awas Yojana etc., are aimed at providing economic assistance. National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005) under the ministry of rural development (MRD) is the flagship programme of government of India. It strives for the enhancement of rural livelihood by providing at least 100 days of wage employment in every financial year to every household whose members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Work should

ordinarily be provided within 5 K. M. radius of the village or else extra wages of 10% are payable.

The act was come into force with effect from 2006 Feb, and was implemented in a phased manner. In 1st phase it was introduced in 200 of the most backward districts of the country. It was implemented in an additional 130 districts in 2nd phase 2007-08. The act was notified in remaining 285 districts from April, 2008 in 3rd phase. In India, since independence social protection programme have been an important part of development process and planning. However, after 75 years of independence about $\frac{1}{4}$ of its population lives under poverty and unemployment. The right to work or MGNEGA provided employment opportunity and poverty mitigation programme.

The Indian social system is ethnically diverse, heterogeneous and socially hierarchal. The vulnerable and marginalized groups in India are not easily identifiable. Economically backward and poor are marginalized and discriminated. MGNREGA in India is one such social protection programme has been much appreciated as a social protection programme as it has the potential to reach out the most-needy economic and social groups of the society.

The NREGP is an employment generation and poverty alleviation programme bringing about silent revolution, but is also facing several challenges. India is being an Argo-predominant economy, about 65% people depend upon agriculture as their major source of livelihood. The influence of disguised employment in India's agriculture is very high and owing to this it's contribution to GDP is very meagre. It has been evident that the process of Globalisation of these days has snatched away the opportunity of employment of the working-class population. The socio-economic problems viz; population explosion, poverty, and unemployment which have led for economic inequality.

NREGA is an enactment specially devised for ensuring the employment for the rural and backward regions of India. This is an initiative by the GOI to ensure compulsory employment opportunities which are available across the country to the citizens of India and is aimed for the welfare of the rural poor class in particular. This act was introduced with an aim of improving the

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purchasing power of the rural people, primarily semi or unskilled working people living below poverty line in rural communities. It attempts to bridge the gap between the rich and poor. It was also made clear that; 1/3 of the stipulated work force must be women. The act also seeks to create durable assets and strengthen the livelihood resource base of the rural poor.

Under MGNREGA a total 11.37 Crore house- holds availed employment and a total of 289.24 crore person days employment has been generated till dec, 2022. However, most of these initiatives often suffer from design and its implementation. In addition to administrative problems there are delays and inefficiencies, widespread corruption are the major causes for its 100 percent success.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PAPER:

- 1) To know the coverage of National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP)
- 2) To focus the impact of NREGP on Socio- economic conditions of the rural poor
- 3) To study the role of NREGP in conservation of natural resources
- 4) To examine the challenges for implementation for transforming rural India

METHODOLOGY:

Present study is based on secondary data. In this background, researcher has collected the necessary data from secondary sources and observations made whenever required. Researcher has referred and reviewed some of the important research articles, books, Internet, journals, Magazines, newspapers, published Ph. D thesis, radio telecasts to collect appropriate material for the article.

DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF PERMISSIBLE WORKS:

As per the schedule 1 of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, there are 153 kinds of works identified as permissible works. To strengthen the rural employability agriculture, conservation of natural resources and allied rural livelihoods and to provide a cleaner and healthier environment for the rural population. Creation of suitable livelihoods through natural resource management that enhance productivity of land, restore ecological

balance and provide diverse livelihood options to the rural house-holds is the key to eradication of poverty and hunger.

The successful efforts have been made in states for Water Conservation, Farm ponds Construction in Jharkhand, Bore Recharge in Karnataka, Neeru Chattu in Andra Pradesh, Kapil Dhara in Madhya Pradesh, Jalyukta Shivar in Maharashtra are some of the initiatives for conservation of natural resources. The following are the categories of works permissible under NREGA are-

- Water conservation and water harvesting
- Drought proofing (including plantation and afforestation) Irrigation canals including micro and minor irrigation works
- Desilting of water bodies, drought proofing, plantation and afforestation.
- Rural sanitation related works; school toilets Anganwadi toilets, solid and liquid waste management
- Flood control and protection works like irrigation, horticulture and land development on SC/ST/BPL/etc.
- Works in coastal areas such as; fish drying yard and construction of water drains
- Watershed related works; counter bund, farm bunding, dugout farm ponds, renovation of traditional water bodies including desilting of tanks
- Land development and rural connectivity programmes
- Rural drinking related works like; soak pits, recharge pits
- Livestock related works such as; poultry shelter, goat shelter, fisheries related work
- Solid and liquid waste management and flood management
- Irrigation and command area development related works etc.

PROGRAMMES IMPLEMENTATION:

NREGA provides 100 days of employment in a year to every rural household at the legal minimum wage. At the national level; this scheme has been highly successful in providing an income to small peasants and landless laborers. The enhanced wage earnings have led to a strengthening of livelihood resources base of the rural poor. In the year 2008-09, in India more than 67% of

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funds were utilized in the form of wages paid to the labourers. Some states, where the minimum wage have increased after implementation of NREGA: In Maharashtra Rs.47 to 72, Uttar Pradesh from Rs.58 to 100, from Bihar Rs 68 to 81, Karnatak Rs.62 to 82, west Bengal Rs.64 to 75, Rajasthan Rs. 73 to 100, Madya Pradesh Rs. 58 to 91, Himachal Pradesh Rs. 65 to 100, Jammu Kashmir Rs. 45 to 70, Nagaland Rs. 66 to 100 Chattisgarh Rs.58.73 to 72.23 etc.

Thus, the programme had high work participation for marginalized groups like SC/ST. Strengthening natural base of work in 2009, 27.75 lakh works have been undertaken; of which 46% were water conservation, 18% rural connectivity, 15% land development and 20% irrigation works on individual beneficiaries. After implementation of NREGA there has been a revision of minimum wages across the country. Average house hold earnings have increased from Rs 2795 in 2006-07 to Rs 4060 in 2008-09. This is an increase in agriculture minimum wages and wage earned per day and annual income facilitated socio-economic empowerment and increased level of spending on food, consumer goods, education of children etc.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF NREGP:

In the history of social security, the impact of NREGA in terms of its efficiency and efficacy in ensuring redistribution of income to the poor is appreciated. To a certain extent, the extent and nature of impact of the act on overall nature of change in the social conditions of the rural population. Although well intentioned in spirit, this act has found limited support from the states as well as central government in implementation. The experiences vary from state to state with relatively large successes in states like Tirapura and Rajasthan, to almost negligible success in states like Jarkhand, Uttar Pradeh and Bihar.

No other states have been able to provide even 100 days of employment mandated in the act. In some states it is less than 30 days in a year. There are also considerable variations in the wage paid for manual work across the state. In practice, MREGA suffers from several problems like reduced budgetary

allocation, corruption, violation of people's entitlements and insufficient employment generation.

Further the Implementation and performance of programme varies considerably across Indian states and districts. States like Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu have successfully created more than hundred days of employment. The states like Jharkhand and Bihar have lagging in the programme. The reasons behind unsuccessful is lack of awareness about the programme, corruption, interference of private contractors, limited administrative capacities and local politics are the reasons for hinderance for NREGA.

- ❖ **Denial of Registration:** Reports from the field point out the incidents of denial of registration is one of the major reasons for unsuccessful implementation of this scheme. Discrimination based on caste has also been noted in some states like Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh etc. It is also reported that, in the state of Uttar Pradesh (Sitapur District) women were discouraged from registering.
- ❖ **Unequal Distribution of Job Cards:** According to data provided on the NREGP website (www.nrega.nic.in) maintained by the ministry of rural development, the percentage of job cards issued to registered households varies across the states is unequal. For example, in Maharashtra it stands at 12% while for others such as Andhra Pradesh it is over 90 percent.
- ❖ **Ridiculously Low Wages:** NREGP wage rates of the 17 states are lower than the corresponding state minimum wages. The ridiculous low wage rates have resulted in lack of interest among workers of the scheme. Survey on ground will show that, payments are regularly delayed due to Fund Transfer order (FTO) is signed by the second signatory. Delay takes place even in the processing of signed FTO's for which MIS does not calculate compensation.
- ❖ **Delay in Distribution of Job Cards:** The point of concern is not just the percentage of issue but the percentage of distribution of job cards. Though job cards have been prepared but, in many states, they have not reached the common people. Thus, it is restricting their right to demand of work. A

probable cause for this is the work load of the Panchayat who under takes the task of distribution. Panchayat sevak has 2 or 3 panchayats under him, hence making the task is extremely difficult to panchayats.

- ❖ **Insufficient Budget Allocation:** Many times funds have dried up in states due to lack of budget sanctions from central government which hampers the work. Every year about 80% of fund get exhausted. More over the amount allocated is insufficient to ensure proper implementation of the programme on the ground.
- ❖ **Unsolicited and Spontaneous Fees Being Charged for Work Application Forms:** Fees for application forms are being charged in many states like Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand. The fees range from Rs 5 to Rs 50 in some states and forms are also sold openly in local markets. The NREGA guidelines state that, applications may even be submitted to the gram panchayats on a plain piece of Paper.
- ❖ **De-capacitated in Terms of Staff and Infrastructure and Huge Rush in the Banks:** The workers normally have to visit banks more number of times to withdraw their payments. This is happened due to lack of infrastructure and more Que. Often, the workers do not get their payment during their urgency.
- ❖ **Non-Issuance of Receipts:** Another general problem noted in the villages is the absence of a system to issue receipts to applicants. This could be because of lack of awareness on the part of the panchayat sevak and the villagers. Receipts, however, are crucial as a proof of work demanded.
- ❖ **Absence of Worksite Facilities:** The NREGA provides for facilities of safe drinking water, shade for children, periods of rest and a first-aid box at the work place etc. (Section 27, Schedule II of the NREGA). But a lot has to be done to ensure these facilities, the notable absence of which is a problem that cuts across states. Some reports from the field in Orissa (Kalahandi district), Chhattisgarh (Jashpur district), Jharkhand (Palamau district), Madhya Pradesh (Jhabua, Khandwa and Umaria districts) and Gujarat (Sabarkantha district) observe a complete lack of facilities at the worksite.

- ❖ **Interference and Presence of Contractors:** Like in many other rural development programmes, contractors are increasingly becoming a threat to the NREGA. Though this may not be very apparent on the surface, private contractors are slowly finding their way into the system. The Act clearly states (Schedule I, Section 11), that no contractor is permitted in the implementation of these projects. Yet, reports from Chhattisgarh and Orissa point towards this emerging problem.
- ❖ **Shortage of Staff and delay in Appointments:** The act was not accompanied by the appointment of additional staff for its implementation. This has resulted in the existing staff being burdened with additional work. The lack of staff is having negative impact on the workings of the NREGA.
- ❖ **Disruption due to Imposition of Election Code and Code of Conduct:** Due to the imposition of the election code of conduct NREGA process is being disrupted on account of election polls. Absence of confirmed employment, refusal of work to applicants and a ban on starting new works etc. Despite clear instructions from the Planning Commission, job card holders would be provided employment after the announcement of elections. Even for complete instructions issued by the planning commissioner, there is a disruption in work.
- ❖ **Delay in Wage:** Delays in wage payments have always been a matter of concern. National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) payments are delayed for weeks, sometimes months and the time lag vary from state to state. For instance, in Jashpur district, Chhattisgarh, month-long delays were noted in some areas like Barwani district, Madhya Pradesh, the delay was for a period of 15 to 30 days. Delays were also noted in Manika and Manatu blocks in Jharkhand too.

CONCLUSION:

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is envisaged to enhance the lively hood security of household in the rural areas of Indian society by providing guaranteed wages for every financial year to all household members do unskilled manual works. It has created expectations and confidence among the rural poor.

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Deforestation and road connectivity environment cleaning etc. are works under taken in this scheme.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and its implementation, objectives, scope and Problems of implementation are discussed in this paper. Showing the achievement in providing mere facts and figures is not enough. There are some doubts about the successful implementation of the programme owing to lack of proper administration, interferences of contractors and lack of public awareness about the schemes etc. No doubt, this programme is an important initiative under taken by Government of India but there are some hurdles and issues with related to this scheme is to be taken care.

It is important to note that, NREGA addresses itself chiefly to working people and their fundamental right to live with dignity. The success of the NREGA, however will on people's realization of the act as a right. Surveys reveal that the number of registering persons increasing every year and total registered card holders are also in increasing trend especially women, SC's and ST's are in increasing trend. The present study reveals that, effective levels of awareness and sustained public pressure are crucial to ensure the implementation and problems addressed.

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