

# Impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act on rural employment and migration: A study at Kheada Gram Panchayat, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal

**Asit Sardar**

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Bangabasi Evening College,  
University of Calcutta, W.B.

## **Abstract**

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a flagship scheme of the GOI that directly touches the lives of the rural poor and seeks to ensure inclusive growth. The program aims to increase the livelihood security of families in rural areas and to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to each family whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. The Act was introduced by the GOI in August 2005. It was an important legislation that reaffirms India's position as a welfare state. And the way in which this scheme has improved the livelihood of people, living in rural areas of India, during Corona, is exceptional and it proved once that there is no alternative to this scheme in India at the moment. Therefore, keeping this background in mind, the paper seeks to explore how this scheme has been able to reduce the unemployment and migration in the Kheada Gram Panchayat area of South 24 Parganas district and how it has instilled hope by providing work and livelihood security to the villagers during the pandemic.

**Keywords:** GOI, MGNREGA, Flagship scheme, Employment, Unskilled labour

**Introduction:** After independence, two major problems have emerged as main obstacles to India's economic development, one is unemployment and the other is poverty. Both of these problems are currently intensifying in rural India, in fact the situation is getting worse day by day. Government of India is aware of these issues and has taken various steps to solve these problems. Various social welfare programmes have already been introduced in this regard, some of these programmes have been partially successful in addressing acute problems like unemployment and poverty; while others have been discontinued due to major flaws in their implementation. National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP), Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY), Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) and National Food for Work Programme (NFFWP) were some famous national level rural employment generation programmes implemented one after another by the GOI as to get rid of those major problems. Another thing is to be mentioned in this regard that the last two of the above mentioned programmes (SGRY+NFFWP) have not been discontinued but have been merged with NREGA in 2005 to ensure smooth implementation. NREGA is basically a social welfare scheme like

other schemes, but it is quite different from the earlier schemes and is more secure. The program was originally called National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development, GOI. It is considered as a flagship programme of the GOI which directly touches lives of the poor and promotes inclusive growth. And, within three years of its inception, the programme gained huge popularity and acceptance among the masses. Therefore, keeping this huge popularity of the programme in mind, and to make the program more reachable; more familiar to masses, it was renamed after Gandhiji. In October 2009, on the occasion of 140th birth day of Gandhiji, the programme gets its new name as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). According to the MGNREGA's official website, the overall performance of the program was really good during the financial year 2011-12 to 2018-19. It has provided employment to 6.95 Crore households till December 2019. Total number of job-card issued were 14.2 Crore. And, people belong to SCs and STs are significantly benefited by the scheme. And, significant improvements have been seen in women's participation too.

### Objectives of the study

The present study has been undertaken with the following objectives -

- To explain the concept, aims, significance of MGNREGA
- To discuss about the evolution and salient features of MGNREGA
- To see how successful has MGNREGA been in eradicating unemployment in Kheada Gram Panchayat.
- To know how successful MGNREGA has been in bringing livelihood security to the Kheada Gram Panchayat area.

### Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was introduced in 2005, to address this inequality and promote intensive development through the creation of short-term productive employment for the marginalized. The program was notified on 7 September, 2005 and was come into force in February, 2006 in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh. It was one of the biggest flagship-program of the Government of India that touches lives of the poor and promotes inclusive growth. The act aims at enhancing livelihood security of rural households by providing them at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. When the Act was first introduced in the 200 most backward districts (first phase) of the country in February 2006, it was decided that after observing the popularity of the Act, it would be extended to the rest of the districts. But the following year, the Act was extended to 130 more districts (second phase), and within a year of its enactment, the act brought the entire country under its horizon, excluding districts with hundred percent urban populations. Later, after seeing the huge success of the program, it was renamed after Gandhiji to make the scheme more familiar and more reachable to the people and thus it became *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2009*.

As we mentioned earlier, the Government of India is making various efforts to reduce unemployment by creating employment opportunities. After Independence, Indian government has implemented twelve 'Five-Years Plans' and with each plan it has introduced different schemes to eradicate unemployment as well as other major problems that needed to be addressed immediately. Many authors believe that

NREGA was introduced in India after 56 years of Independence but it was the first ever law internationally that guarantees wage employment at an unprecedented scale. After Independence, India's newly formed government faced various difficulties in conducting its administration. It has witnessed horrible communal disturbance all over the land. It has faced millions of refugees who compelled to leave their ancestral homes and flew into the country in pitiable conditions and started living here with an uncertain future ahead of them. There was scarcity of food and basic amenities and a fear of administrative breakdown. Along with rising problems of illiteracy, hunger, mal-nourished children, poverty, failure of subsistence production during drought, farmer's suicide and migration of people due to unemployment and under employment. So, there was a big challenge before the Indian government. And, in this context, India took several initiatives to solve the problems and ensure the development of the country through the implementation of appropriate plans.

We all know that more than three-fourth of our population lives in villages. Therefore, development is not possible without including this large population living in villages. That is why Gandhiji once said, "India lives in its villages. If village perishes India will perish too. India will be no more India, her own mission in the world will get lost." The words are very true. According to experts, once agriculture and allied sector accounted for 50% of India's total GVA (Gross Value Added) but over the time that is likely to change. At present, the share of agriculture and allied sector has declined a lot. The writers lament that in India, which was once a major agricultural state, there are not enough people in agriculture today. The majority of unskilled people associated with agriculture are migrating to the cities in search of other jobs to meet their family-needs, living in unemployment and unhealthy life without getting proper employment.

Experts say, industry has developed in India and the Indian economy is growing very fast. But, paradoxically it has failed to generate adequate employment for its huge labour force. A small section of this large economy has retained most of the benefits of growth but the majorities, who live in the less productive sector, have been deprived of their due share. Another thing that needs to be said in this regard is that we have already discussed that after independence, the newly elected government had faced several problems in running the administration. And, problems such as- poverty and unemployment made the Indian Government more concerned than other problems. Because, these problems are the root of other ancillary problems, such as- hunger, mal-nourished children, anxiety, suicide etc. Since independence our country's economy has been dependent on agriculture and various problems related to this agricultural work have caused many problems in the lives of those who are directly associated with this work and failed to provide a better life. Although we should not blame this profession because, the profession was once (and still) the only hope of most of the people in our country. Moreover, agriculture was not a problem, the problem was the old technology used in Indian agriculture. And, there were other problems too. Therefore, we see a lot of initiatives by the GOI as to address these problems and to ensure livelihood security to the rural people of India. Although the plans adopted by the GOI in the post-independence period were not 100% successful but their role in overcoming the problems was quite commendable. Therefore, a list of some of the initiatives undertaken by the GOI after independence is provided below, so that a continuous history of all social welfare programs up to MGNREGA can be realized.

**Table 1: Major Rural wage Employment Programs in India**

Year	Name of the Programs
1971-72	Crash Schemes for Rural Employment
1979	Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment
1980	Integrated Rural Development Program
1980	National Rural Employment Program
1983	Rural Landless Employment Guarantee
1993-1994	Jawahar Rozgar Yojana
1993-1999	Employment Assurance Scheme
1999	Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana
1999-2000	Jawahar Grameen Rozgar Yojana
2001-2002	Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana
2004	National Food for Work Program
2005	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
2009	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

### Aims of MGNREGA

**MGNREGA** is a revolutionary step taken by the Government of India to eradicate poverty from rural India and ensure inclusive growth through social protection, livelihood security and democratic empowerment. It is presently the largest self-targeting program in India. The primary aim of the Act (as per gazette document of NREGA, 2005) is to provide a minimum security to the rural households by providing right to work on demand i.e. at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult member volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Other aims of the Act outlined by MoRD, India are:

- a. Providing social protection for the most vulnerable people living in rural India by offering them wage employment opportunities;
- b. Providing livelihood security to the poor by increasing income, creating sustainable wealth, ensuring safe drinking water, soil conservation and ensuring high productivity of land;
- c. Initiatives on drought mitigation and Flood Management in Rural India;
- d. Empowerment of the socially disadvantaged, especially women, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) through rights-based legislation;
- e. Strengthen decentralized and participatory planning through coordination of various poverty alleviating, livelihood security initiatives;
- f. Deepening democracy at the grass-root level by strengthening ‘Panchayati Raj Institutions’ (PRIs);
- g. Ensuring greater transparency and accountability in governance.

### Significance of MGNREGA

MGNREGA’s goals are to achieve the objective as enunciated in the Article 41 of the Indian Constitution- ‘giving citizens the right to work’. The Act is significant due to the following reasons-

- Although the previous wage employment programs didn't provide any guarantee of employment, this Act is the first ever law internationally, which guarantees wage employment on an unprecedented scale.
- It is a development initiative, chipping in with the essential public investment to create sustainable assets, without which the growth process in the most backward areas of rural India is not possible.
- The main component of MGNREGA is the provision of employment by the state to those people who are unable to find alternative employment, providing a form of social safety net to the rural unemployed.
- In other wage employment schemes, anyone can be engaged as a labourer, but in MGNREGA, only job-card holders can be employed as labourers.
- Other wage employment programs have no time limit, but MGNREGA mandates employment within 15 days of application, and payment of wages also has to be paid within 15 days of employment.
- In other wage employment Program, the duration of employment depends on the duration of work of the implementing agency, but in MGNREGA, a Job-card holder can apply for a maximum of 100 days of work.
- Other key features of the Act are labour- intensive work, decentralized participatory planning, women empowerment, workplace benefits and above all transparency and accountability through provision of social audit and right to information. The program envisages the use of information technology to bring greater transparency through closer monitoring and faster execution. Payment of wages through bank and post office accounts is another innovative step that can reduce fudging of master rolls by implementing agencies as actual payment is beyond their reach.

**Evolution of MGNREGA**

The table given below provides the time line of MGNREGA and highlights the changes that have been made in the program from time to time during the course of the scheme

<b>August 2005</b>	<b>February 2006 (1<sup>st</sup> Phase)</b>	<b>April 2007 (2<sup>nd</sup> Phase)</b>	<b>April 2008 (3<sup>rd</sup> Phase)</b>	<b>February 2009</b>	<b>January 2010</b>
NREGA was legalized by a legislation	Came into force and launched in 200 most backward district of the country	130 additional districts were included	The scheme is fully implemented in all rural districts of India	MOU signed with the postal department for wage transaction	NREGA renamed as MGNREGA

Source: Compiled from various Reports on MGNREGA

The table above shows that when the law was first introduced in February 2006 in the 200 most backward districts of the country, at that time, it was decided that the law would be extended to the remaining districts after 5 years. After seeing its popularity, in the very next year the Act was extended to 130 more districts and within a year every district in the country was brought under the scheme and



hence the Act became universal. Exceptions were those districts which had 100% urban population. And after that the scheme was renamed, in order to make the law more acceptable and familiar to the public. The scheme was named as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) after Gandhiji in 2010.

### **Salient features of MGNREGA**

1. Adult members of a rural households, willing to do unskilled manual work, can apply for registration in writing or orally to the local Gram panchayat.
2. The Gram Panchayat will issue a job card after due verification. The job card will contain photographs of all adult family members who are willing to work under MGNREGA and is free of cost.
3. Job card should be issued within 15 days of application.
4. A job card holder may submit a written application for employment to the Gram Panchayat, mentioning the period for which the job is sought. Minimum days of employment shall be fifteen.
5. The Gram Panchayat shall issue a dated receipt of the written application for employment, against which the guarantee of providing employment shall be effective within 15 days.
6. Employment shall be provided within 15 days of application for work; otherwise daily unemployment allowance shall be paid as per law. The state is bound for providing unemployment allowance.
7. Generally work should be provided within 5km radius of village. If the worksite is more than 5km away from home then an additional 10% of wages shall be paid to cover additional transportation and living expenses.
8. Wages shall be paid in accordance with the Minimum Wages Act 1948 for agricultural labourers in the State, unless the Centre declares a rate of wages which shall not be less than Rupees 60/per day. And, Equal wages will be paid to both men and women.
9. Wages to be paid as per piece rate or daily rate. Wages are to be disbursed on a weekly basis and in no case more than a fortnight.
10. Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) have a major role in planning and implementation.
11. At least one-third of the beneficiaries will be women who have registered and applied for work under the scheme.
12. Each district has to prepare a shelf of projects. Works, selected for providing employment, must be selected from the list of approved works. The various categories of permitted works are as follow:
  - Water conservation and water harvesting related works;
  - Drought proofing;
  - Irrigation canals including micro and minor irrigation works;
  - Provision of irrigations facilities, horticulture and land development facilities to those land owners who belong to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes or below poverty line families or

to beneficiaries of land reforms or to beneficiaries under the Indira Awas Yojana of the Government of India or to small farmers or marginal farmers such as defined in the Agriculture Debt waiver and Debt relief schemes or beneficiaries under the scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006;

- Renovation of traditional water bodies, reservoirs including de-silting of tanks;
- Land development;
- Flood control and protection works including drainage in waterlogged areas;
- Rural connectivity to provide all weather access. Road construction may include culverts where necessary. And can be taken along the drain within the village area;
- And, any other work which may be notified by the Central Government in consultation with the State Government.

Besides this, it can be the construction of Bharat Nirman Rajiv Gandhi Sewa Kendra as Grameen Gayan Sampad Kendra and Gram Panchayat Bhawan at Gram panchayat level notified by Central Government. The shelf of projects has to be prepared based on the priority set by the Gram Sabha. At least 50% of the work should be allocated to Gram Panchayats for implementation. The cost of material component of the projects including wages of skilled and semi-skilled workers drawn under the project shall not exceed 40% of the total project costs. The use of contractor and worker displacing equipment is prohibited. Workplace facilities like- crèche, drinking water, shade has to be provided as per the law. In addition to all the matters that have been said to be carried out as a policy responsibility, the significant matters are as followed-

- I. The project shelf for a village will be recommended by the Gram Sabha and approved by the Zilla Panchayat.
- II. Permissible works mainly include water and soil conservation, forestry and land development works.
- III. A 60:40 wage and material ratio must be maintained. No contractors and machinery is allowed.
- IV. The central government bears 100% of wage cost of unskilled manual labour and 75% of the material cost including wages of skilled and semi-skilled workers.
- V. Social audit has to be done at least once in every six months through Gram Sabha.
- VI. Grievance redressal mechanism has to be established to ensure a responsive implementation process.
- VII. All accounts and records relating to the scheme should be available for public inspection and if any person desirous of obtaining a copy of such records then, on demand and on payment of specified fee, authority has to fulfil that requirement.

**Scope of the Study:** This study focuses on rural unemployment and migration issue in Kheada Gram Panchayat area of South 24 Parganas district, West Bengal (in this perspective, an attempt has been made to understand the situation during the pandemic). The universe of study is the Sonarpur Block of Baruipur Sub-division under South 24 Parganas district. And the unit of study is the Kheada Gram Panchayat of Sonarpur Block. In this study, the investigator has decided to survey 100 households from Kheada Gram Panchayat of Sonarpur Block. And, this surveyed information will be used as primary data.

## AN ACCOUNT OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN BHANGORE GAM PANCHAYAT AREA

**Study Area at a Glance:** State- West Bengal → District- South 24 Parganas → Sub-Division- Baruipur → Block- Sonarpur → Gram Panchayat- Kheada Gram Panchayat

**Research Methodology:** The study area is Kheada Gram Panchayats in South 24 Parganas District, West Bengal. It is a 'Quantitative Research Study which conducted through Semi-structured questionnaire. And, it followed the descriptive method of research design to examine the changes in the lives of rural people through MGNREGA. And for data collection, the scholar has used both primary and secondary data collection method. Primary data is collected through field interview. And field interview was conducted on the basis of structured questionnaire. In order to collect secondary data, various sources like journals, official website of MGNREGA, Census Report and official records of Kheada Gram Panchayat was given priority by the scholar. And, the statistical analysis of the study is prepared by applying 'Convenience Random Sampling' method.

### Review of Literature

'All India Report on Evaluation of NREGA: A Survey of Twenty Districts' by 'Institute of Applied Manpower Research', Delhi, 2009- This survey is based on the assessment of NREGS which assessed its impact on 20 beneficiaries from North, West, South and North East regions of India and 300 beneficiaries from each district. The survey revealed that in many districts, it is not wrong to put pictures on job cards and in some places beneficiaries have paid to get it. The job cards are not designed to have enough space for all entries in detail. Many families did not get work or unemployment benefits within the stipulated 15 days. With the maximum number of days of work utility, only a small part of the family can use more than 35 days of work, the rest are still lagging behind. The reason for non-utilization of maximum 100 days of work is that the scheme starts late. In most workplaces, other than crèche, other facilities such as sheds, drinking water were provided. Due to the increase in income through this project, the number of beneficiaries at the lower income level has come down by households spending more on food and non- food items has increased.

Mathur, who conducted a survey in Andhra Pradesh in 2007, said that a system of regular and continuous flow of authentic information is essential. There is no room for contemporary government evolution, more effective monitoring, focused report on important aspect like time-series study and minimum wage, master roll is needed. To improve implementation, the government needs to address issues, change policy guidelines for district, block and village level. Governments must lead, be proactive, bring organizations and groups together, and use the media effectively. NREGS involves millions of government officials, panchayat workers, elected representatives, NGO community groups. They play an important role but they have very little preparation for the challenge. In fact, NREGS is a program of national importance that has been marginalized. Although the Ministry of Rural Development is the nodal ministry of the Centre, the participation of every relevant department and organization is required. He conducted another study in 2009, and found that in certain villages, wages were not paid even after the work was done. When comparing pay by bank pass-book with pay by job-card, it is seen that job-card does not have inner pages which record the work done by each person; the



job-card itself was incomplete. Earlier, a number of officials, field and technical assistant had admitted to the irregularities.

Dreeze and Lal (2007) described in their study on NREGS in Rajasthan in terms of employment generation per rural household. They revealed that in 2006-07 the average rural households in six ‘NREGA districts’ of Rajasthan got work for 77 days. They also said that the main beneficiaries of the program belong to the under-privileged sections of the society. They found that women’s share of NREGA employment in Rajasthan is estimated at about two-third.

Ghosh (2008) found that MGNREGA is a highly cost-effective means of directly or indirectly generating employment that plays an important role in revitalizing the rural economy, providing stability of basic necessities to the rural poor and improving the bargaining power of rural workers.

Dutta (2009) conducted a study of MGNREGA in Dangs (Gujarat) and Jalpaigudi (West Bengal) districts and stated that community mobilization and interaction due to MGNREGA has enhanced rural connectivity functions. It has checked migration as now rural laborers are given employment in their native villages.

**Performance of MGNREGA in Kheada Gram Panchayat: Analysis, Findings and Interpretation**

In this discussible part, an attempt has been made to analyse and interpret the exact findings based on the data obtained by conducting direct fieldwork on employment and livelihood security at the Kheada Gram Panchayats of Sonarpur Block in South 24 Parganas. The collected data has been analysed by coding and tabulating. Simple percentage test applied to analyse the data regarding the changes brought by MGNREGA in the lives of rural poor of the Kheada gram panchayats in South 24 Parganas district with the intention to reach a logical conclusion.

**Distribution of the workers/Respondents as per age-gender status:** Our unit of the study is the Kheada gram panchayats of Sonarpur Block. A total of 100 respondents were interviewed from the above mentioned gram panchayat. And, out of 100 workers as well as respondents in Kheada Gram Panchayat area 65 were male and 35 were female.

Table-1: Distribution of the workers in Kheada Gram Panchayat as per age-Group status

<b>DISTRIBUTION OF THE WORKERS/RESPONDENTS</b>						
(According to Age-Gender status)						
<b>KHEADA GRAM PANCHAYAT</b>						
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Sub-group</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>
Age	21-30	6	9.2	7	20.0	13
	31-40	11	16.9	14	40.0	25
	41-50	20	30.8	11	31.4	31
	51-60	23	35.4	2	5.7	25
	61-70	5	7.7	1	2.9	6
	Total	65	100.0	35	100.0	100

Source: Field Survey

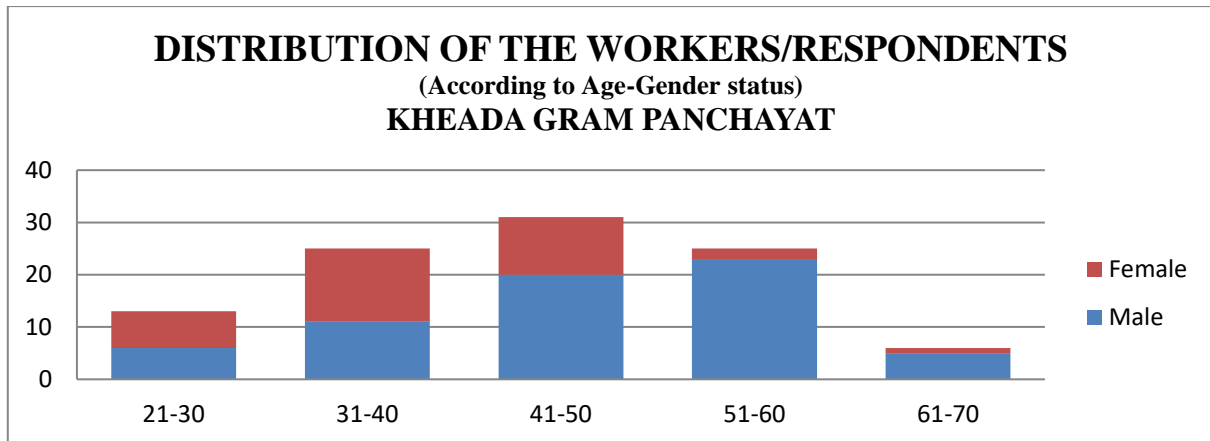


Table no. 1 shows the ‘Distribution of Workers’ in Kheada Gram Panchayat area as per its Age-Group Status. Analysing the table given above, it has been found that overall participation of people in the 41-50 years-age-group is highest in MGNREGA works, while the participation of people in the 61-70 years-age-group is the lowest. Again, judging from the male participants’ side, it has been noticed that 51-60 age-group men are more involved in this program. On the other hand, the majority of female participants are in the 41-50 years-age-group. Therefore, it can be said that the number of elderly male participants is more than the elderly female participants. In other words, it can be said that with upper-age group, women or female workers are participating less in MGNREGA-works but the opposite picture is seen in case of men or male workers.

**Distribution of Workers/Respondents by Marital Status:** As we said earlier, a total of 100 workers were interviewed. And, Out of 100 respondents in Kheada Gram Panchayat area 91 respondents were married, 8 respondents were unmarried and 1 respondent was widows.

Table-2: Distribution of the workers in Kheada Gram Panchayat by Marital status

DISTRIBUTION OF THE WORKERS/RESPONDENTS (According to Marital status) KHEADA GRAM PANCHAYAT						
Variables	Sub-group	Male	%	Female	%	Total
Marriage	Married	61	93.85	34	97.14	95
	Unmarried	4	6.15	-	-	4
	Widow/Widower	-	-	1	2.86	1
	Total	65	100.0	35	100.0	100

Source: Field Survey

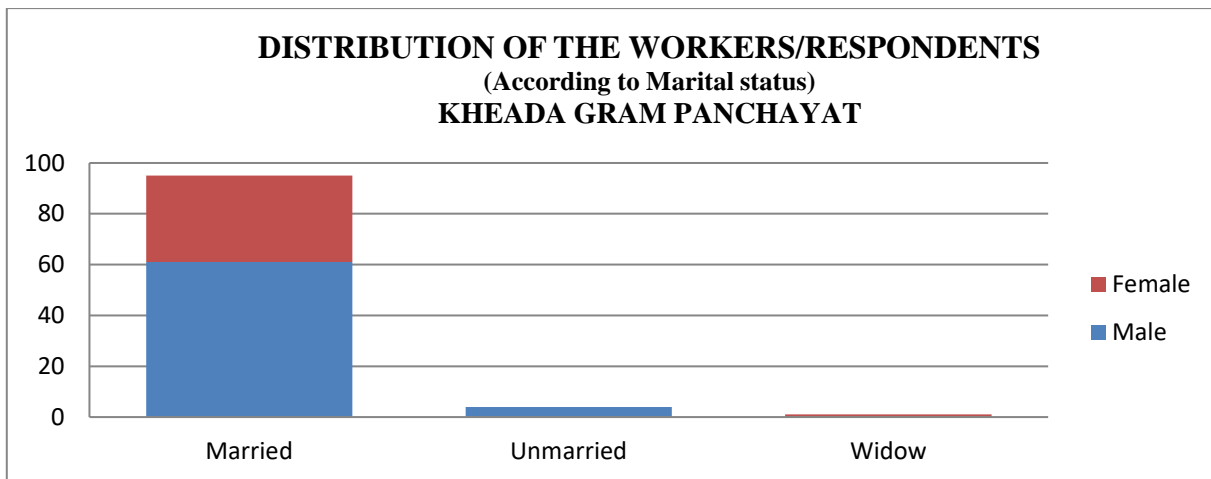


Table no. 2 shows the ‘Distribution of Workers’ in Kheada Gram Panchayat area as per their ‘Marital’ Status. Analysing the table given above, we find that maximum respondents as well as workers in Kheada Gram Panchayat are married (95). And, male married respondents are more in number (61) than female married respondents (34). Although, percentage wise, the number of married female respondents/workers is higher (97.14) than married male respondents/workers (93.85). It means the married females are participating more in MGNREGA-works than married males. And, we have found only one widow respondent and four unmarried male respondents, out of 100 respondents, who have been participated in MGNREGA-works in the study area.

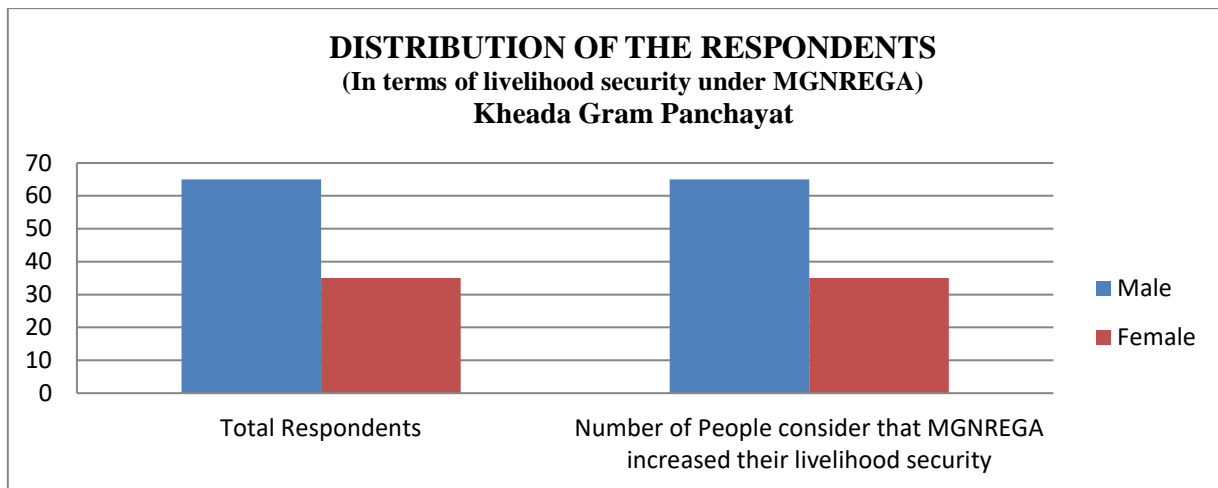
**Distribution of the respondents in terms of livelihood security of people after working under MGNREGA**

Livelihood security is a very vital issue. People need security of livelihood for a tension-free life. People are much more tension-free if they have a source of livelihood throughout the year. And, schemes like MGNREGA have been introduced to increase the livelihood security of people in rural areas and to ensure an improved quality of life. And, in this context, distribution of the respondents in terms of livelihood security after working under MGNREGA is important to understand.

**Table 3: Distribution of the respondents in terms of livelihood security of people after working under MGNREGA**

<b>DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS (In terms of livelihood security of people under MGNREGA)</b>		
<b>Kheada Gram Panchayat</b>		
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Total Respondents</b>	65	35
	100	
<b>Number of people consider that MGNREGA increased their livelihood security</b>	65	35

Source: Field Survey



The field survey data given in Table no. 3 and the graphs constructed on the basis of that data show that all persons interviewed in the study area acknowledged that MGNREGA has ensured them livelihood security. Most of the population in India is rural and most of them are agriculturists. These agricultural people are used to be unemployed for three consecutive months every year. In such a situation, the rural people are left with no work, and therefore the 100 days guaranteed wage employment in MGNREGA has helped them financially.

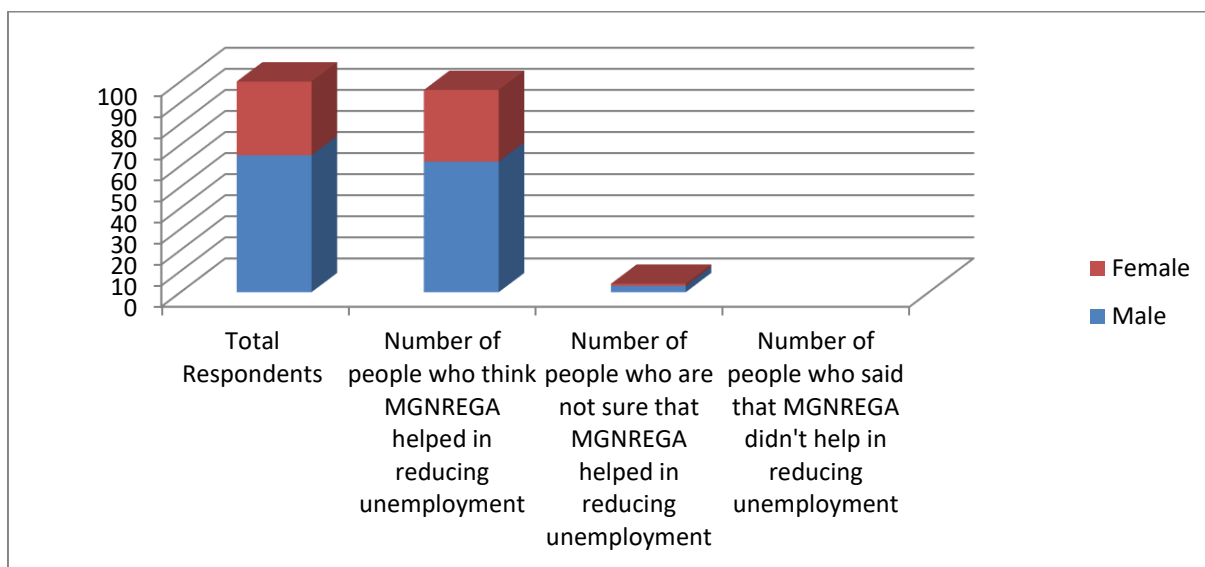
#### **Distribution of the workers/respondents in terms of views on the role of MGNREGA in eradicating unemployment**

Unemployment is a major problem. The whole world is grappling with this problem. Unemployment is a phenomenon that occurs when a person actively searching for employment is unable to find work. Unemployment represents the number of people in the work force who want to work but don't have a job. It is generally stated as a percentage and calculated by dividing the number of people who are unemployed by the total workforce. The workforce made up of those people who want to work. It excludes people who are retired, disabled, and those who have ability to do any work but currently not looking for a position. Unemployment affects not just the person himself but also his family and in the long run the society where he or she lives. It brings with it despair, unhappiness and anguish. It forces people to live their lives in a way that they don't wish at any means. Now, what we will analyse is how effective MGNREGA has been in reducing unemployment in Kheada Gram Panchayat area, located under district of South 24 Parganas. So, let us try to understand the matter clearly by presenting the data obtained from the field survey and the diagram based on it given below.

Table-4: Distribution of the respondents in terms of views on the role of MGNREGA in eradicating unemployment

DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS (In terms of views on the role of MGNREGA in eradicating unemployment)					
KHEADA GRAM PANCHAYAT					
Parameters	Male	%	Female	%	100
Number of people who think MGNREGA helped in reducing unemployment	62	95.38	34	97.14	96
Number of people who are not sure that MGNREGA helped in reducing unemployment	3	4.62	1	2.86	4
Number of people who said that MGNREGA didn't help in reducing unemployment	-			-	
Total Respondents	65	100.0	35	100.0	100

Source: Field survey



The field survey data given in Table no. 3 and the graphs constructed on the basis of that data show that 96 respondents out of 100 respondents of Kheda Gram Panchayat think that MGNREGA has helped in reducing unemployment in their Gram Panchayat. Again, 4 out of 100 respondents were not sure whether MGNREGA has helped to reduce unemployment in their Gram Panchayat. Most importantly, none of the 100 respondents as well as workers in the Kheada Gram Panchayat feels that MGNREGA has not helped in reducing unemployment. In terms of percentage, it appears that 97.14 per cent of female respondents are confident about the success of MGNREGA in reducing unemployment, while males are somewhat sceptical or unsure. 95.38 per cent of male respondents are confident about the success of MGNREGA while 4.62 per cent are not. On the other hand female respondents only 2.86 per cent are not sure about the success of the program. Therefore, it is clearly understood that among the respondents in the discussed study area very few respondents are not sure about the success of



MGNREGA in reducing unemployment but majority of the respondents think that MGNREGA has been very successful in reducing unemployment.

**Distribution of the respondents of Kheada Gram Panchayat based on the total number of working days received by a Job-card holder in a financial year**

Variables	Sub-Group	Frequency	Percentage
Number of working days received in the last five financial year	Above 80 days	9	9%
	Above 90 days	86	86%
	Full 100 Days	5	5%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Survey data

**Distribution of respondents in Kheada Gram Panchayat based on work experience in MGNREGA**

Sl. No.	Variables	Sub-group	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age	Below 30	13	13%
		31-50	56	56%
		Above 51	31	31%
2.	Gender	Male	65	65%
		Female	35	35%
3.	Reason for taken up MGNREGA work	Comparatively lucrative wage rate	5	5%
		Lack of alternative job	58	58%
		Facility of getting job within 5K.M.	35	35%
		Additional benefit of unemployment allowance	2	2%
4.	Reason for low employment in MGNREGA (Below 90 days)	Engaging other income generating activities	64	64%
		Willing to work only those days	7	7%
		Family, child and other commitment	18	18%
		Authority has not provided	11	11%
5.	Occupational activity before	Agricultural labour	24	24%
		Framer	48	48%
		Self-employed	14	14%

	joining MGNREGA	Non-farming works	11	11%
		Others	3	3%
6.	Major benefits of MGNREGA employment	Higher wage than agriculture	25	25%
		Additional income to the family	63	63%
		No harsh work	2	2%
		Minimum working time	9	9%
		Additional benefits	1	1%
<b>Total</b>			<b>100</b>	

Source: Field Survey

**Conclusion:** MGNREGA is India’s largest rural employment generation program since independence. The program not only secures 100 days of employment but also provides a minimum income for each adult member of each household in the village at the same time. It also deals with some other aspects like environmental protection, social security, development of rural infrastructure, empowerment of women, promotion of gender equality, wealth creation and mitigating migration. In this way, the act serves as an important tool not only for employment generation but also for all forms of rural development in India. From the above discussion, it is clear that the objective of strengthening rural livelihood security by eradicating poverty and hunger by guaranteeing employment to MGNREGA participants in the study area under discussion has been well met. However, MGNREGA has faced many challenges. There is no doubt that employment has been created through this program but the number of working days, as promised in the Act, has not been found satisfactory. The reason behind this is that there is a huge gap in the ratio of card-holders and job allocations on record. MGNREGA plays an important role in the development of rural economy. MGNREGA changes in wage structure, accessibility of jobs to nearby workplaces, stopped massive migration in the rural India. The allocation of fixed wages under MGNREGA has led to a rational development of the wage structure in the private sector run by rural communities. Despite some flaws in the implementation of the MGNREGA Act, it has served as a panacea for the long-suffering rural development. The best contribution is that it ensures 100 days working guarantee. In addition, providing equal participation opportunities to rural women promotes gender equality in the workplace. MGNREGA not only reduces unemployment and migration but also promotes rural development.

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