

Mgnregp – Problems and Challenges in Arunachal Pradesh

Dr. Rajen Miwu¹, Dr. Riko Mihu², Dr. Fames Linggi³

^{1,2}Assistant Professor, Indira Gandhi Govt. College Tezu

³Associate Professor, Indira Gandhi Govt. College Tezu

ABSTRACT

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme was introduced in 2005 under National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), 2005. On 2nd October'2009, NREGA has been renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act (MGNREGA). MGNREGA provides 100 days of guaranteed employment opportunities in a financial year to any rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage. It is an important step towards the realisation of the Right to Work. It is also expected to enhance People's livelihoods on a sustainable basis by developing the economic and social infrastructure in rural areas. The MGNREGP is different from earlier wage employment programmes because of its legal and demand-driven framework. However, there is no denying fact that there have been many problems in infusing the system with the new culture of demand-driven, right-based and decentralized decision making. The present study was carried in Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh where the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP) was initiated in second phase in the financial year 2007-08.

KEYWORDS: *MGNREGA, MGNREGP, Right to work, Livelihood, Social Equity, Productive Assets, Social Audit.*

INTRODUCTION

In order to reduce the level of poverty by providing job opportunities to the rural poor, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGA) was introduced in 2005 under National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), 2005. On 2nd October'2009, NREGA has been renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act (MGNREGA). MGNREGA provides 100 days of guaranteed employment opportunities in a financial year to any rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage. The Act was initially implemented in 200 selected districts in India, and later on, it was extended to all the districts of the country. MGNREGA is an important step towards the realisation of the Right to Work. It is also expected to enhance People's livelihoods on a sustainable basis by developing the economic and social infrastructure in rural areas. The choice of work seeks to address the causes of chronic poverty such as drought, deforestation and soil erosion. The work guarantee can also serve some other objectives like generation of productive assets, protecting the environment, empowering rural women, reducing rural urban migration and fostering social equity. The present study was carried in Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh where the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP) was initiated in second phase in the financial year 2007-08.

MGNREGP – PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

The MGNREGP is different from earlier wage employment programmes because of its legal and demand-driven framework. However, there is no denying fact that there have been many problems in infusing the system with the new culture of demand-driven, right-based and decentralized decision making.

In general, the implementation of MGNREGP in a State can be expected to depend on the quality of governance. Various states with better systems of governance and administration are more likely to have the ability to run complex programmes more effectively. On the other hand, poorer states have greater demand for work under MGNREGP. However, they also have greater unmet demand for work. This is perhaps because the State institutions are less capable of implementing MGNREGP. Therefore, there is a possibility that poorer States might end up in a vicious cycle in implementation of MGNREGP. They have higher demand for work but a lesser capacity to implement MGNREGP effectively because of institutional factors, awareness and participation levels of the workers etc., and end up with greater unmet demand of work.

PROBLEMS FACED BY THE STAKEHOLDERS

While conducting the field study an effort has been made to make interviews and discussions with the stakeholders to know the problems faced by them in the implementation of MGNREGA in the study area. Personal interview and discussion with the selected Panchayat leaders, Community Development (CD) Block and District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) employees have been conducted. Further, formal and informal discussion with the BDOs of CD Blocks, Project Director of DRDA, Zilla Parishad Members, Anchal Samity Members, Gram Panchayat Members and other knowledgeable persons in this field have been made to get the first hand report on problems being faced by them in the Planning, implementation and monitoring of MGNREGA in the study area. The Problems reported are as follows:

- ❖ The operational guidelines of the MGNREGA detail a household as a nuclear family comprising of father, mother and their children. In addition a household refers to a single member family. Despite this explanation, there was still lot confusion about the definition of the term ‘Household’ among the PRI members in the study area. In the interview the researcher found that more than one job card was issued to a household. A few cases were also found where a joint family was treated as one household, thus issuing them a single job card. Some tribes of the study area, particularly the Mishmi tribe, still follow the system of joint families. Such practices would put joint families in a disadvantageous position.
- ❖ Almost all the stakeholders have reported that the lack of dedicated administrative and technical staff for MGNREGA was the key constraint responsible for procedural lapses. The programme officer at the block level is supposed to be a full-timer, dedicated post of rank equivalent to the Block Development Officer (BDO). Similarly, appointment of a full-time ‘Employment Assistant’ in each Gram Panchayat is necessary. However, these appointments are yet to be made in many Gram Panchayats in the study area.
- ❖ Job cards have been prepared across all Gram Panchayats. In many GPs they have not reached the people, thereby restricting their right to demand work. A cause for this was the workload of the Employment Guarantee Assistant who undertakes the task of distribution. On average, each Employment Guarantee Assistant has ten or twelve Gram Panchayats under him/her, thus making the task difficult.

- ❖ The first stage in the implementation of the MGNREGA is the preparation of Action Plans for each Panchayat. Normally, Action Plans are to be prepared by the Gram Panchayats based on labour demands reported by the Gram Sabhas. Works are selected locally to generate the required number of working days so as to provide employment to the job card holders on demand. While preparing the Action Plans the guidelines of the Act regarding the nature of work to be undertaken, labour-material ratio to be followed etc. should be adhered to. However, the officials of the implementing agencies who were involved in the preparation, scrutiny and approval of Action Plans revealed the problem that the Action Plans were not properly prepared by the PRI members.
- ❖ The Gaon Buras (Village Heads) have reported that the present IEC efforts by the Government officials were less than adequate and it calls for an aggressive awareness campaign in the study area so that the message in regard to the entitlements, more so about the broad features of the scheme, would spread far and wide in the study area. Otherwise, the spirit with which the MGNREGA was enacted would be diluted.
- ❖ The knowledge of the mates regarding the provisions of the scheme and their efficiency in mobilizing workers, organization of the worksites, maintenance of muster rolls and job cards play an important role in the effective implementation and in ensuring that the workers' rights are protected. The officers have revealed that the worksite mates were often not capable of managing the worksites.
- ❖ The arrangements for sand, gravel and timber are generally done by the PRI members in the study area. The private transportation cost differs from the Government rates and the difference of which concerned PRI member(s) has to bear. Therefore, majority of PRI members suggested that it would be convenient if the materials are made available at the site and on time by the officials.
- ❖ The cost of materials is relatively higher in the hilly region since they have to be procured from long distances. It was reported by the implementing agencies that it is difficult to adjust the wages of the skilled labourers in the material component and maintain the 60:40 ratio. Thus, problems were faced in completing the works on time with the remaining mandays. The implementing agencies argue that the wage – material ratio could be increased in favour of the material cost to create better quality of works.
- ❖ All the Programme Officers have expressed that some of the works selected by the Gram Panchayats were non-productive without any impact on the socio-economic growth of the village. More productive schemes like horticulture and rejuvenation of cardamom, ginger plantation, which has direct benefits to the people should have been taken up. Further, they have informed that a few informed APST workers were very enthusiastic about works to be taken on their private land which has not been so far explored. However, they have suggested that such works should be taken on the basis of economic backwardness criteria rather than on the ST/SC status.
- ❖ The PRI members revealed that even after the selection of works, finalization of estimates and sanction of projects, they were forced to chase the project like a contractor. They expressed that this should be avoided and improved system created.
- ❖ Women workers worried about small children who were left alone at home in absence of child care facility. The essential facilities such as crèches and caretaker though are assumed in the Guidelines but not provided in practice in the study area.
- ❖ An adverse indirect impact of women beneficiaries has been reported in the absenteeism of the girl child in school who had to stay back home to take care of young siblings and perform household activities.

- ❖ The MGNREGA is an employment generation programme that lays equal emphasis on both livelihood security and asset generation. The Act envisages execution of rural asset creation through the scheme. As per the Act, any person who has completed 18 years of age and is willing to do unskilled manual work can apply for job under the scheme. Asset creation works, if identified required considerable amounts of skilled labour. All the officials interviewed in the study district have expressed that it was quite difficult to build durable assets employing unskilled labour.
- ❖ One of the features of MGNREGA implementation is the payment of wages to the individual bank accounts of workers. The Act prescribes that wages for each work are to be released within 14 days of work completion. The officers reported that the delay in allocation of funds by the Government for payment of wages was a severe problem in the study area.
- ❖ The lack of sufficient Banking and Post Office facility in the study area was another setback for the beneficiaries. Banks and Post Offices were located at a distance of 20 – 25 kms for many GPs in the blocks and sub-divisions covered for filed study.
- ❖ The officers reported Political interference in the implementation of the scheme. The Political alliance between PRI members and the Mates had led to many irregularities. They said that there were in stances where manipulations were made in the preparation of muster rolls.
- ❖ The Gaon Buras felt that the Social Audits need more external facilitation. Not only is the audit process complex, but in order for communities to participate and speak, they need to be provided with secure platforms.
- ❖ The problems faced by the Social Audit Unit during the process of Social Audit were:
 - The data required for the Social Audit were not readily available in the updated form.
 - During the door-to-door visits, the majority of the job card holders were out of their houses for their livelihood.
 - In many cases, the original Muster Rolls were kept by the ASMs where as they should be maintained by the Gram Panchayat Chairpersons or POs. It hampered the Social Audit and took extra time and day.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the stakeholders have faced the above mentioned problems during the planning, implementation and monitoring of MGNEGA works in the study area. Thus, the Government must take an important step to remove all the hurdles pertaining to MGNREGP. If Government takes measures to eradicate all the problems faced by the stakeholders in the implementation of MGNREGP, that time the programme's objectives to provide guaranteed wage employment, to create productive and durable assets and to strengthen the livelihood resource base of the rural poor may be achieved.

REFERENCE

1. Dey, N., Dreze, J., and Khera, R. (2006), *Employment Guarantee Act: A primer*, National Book Trust, New Delhi, Menon, S. (2008).
2. *National Rural Employment Guarantee Act: Issues, Challenges and Experience*, ICFAI University Press, Hyderabad.
3. MGNREGA SAMEEKSHA- An Anthology of Research Studies on the MGNREGA, 2005. (2012), Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India

4. Roles and Responsibilities of key Functionaries, MGNREGA, 2005 (2014). Ministry of rural development, Govt. of India
5. Operational Guidelines, MGNREGA, 2005. (2013). Ministry of rural development, Govt. of India
6. MGNREGA Sameeksha II-An Anthology of Research Studies on the MGNREGA, 2005. (2015). UNDP, New Delhi
7. Indian Rural Development Report 2012-12 (2013). Orient Blackswan Private Limited, New Delhi
8. Abraham, B.J., Chakrabarti, B., Chattopadhyay, R. and Nath S., (2012), *MGNREGS and Creation of Employment Assets in Bardhaman, West Bengal*, Indian Journal of Public Administration, VOL.LVIII, NO.4, October to December 2012.
9. Abraham, J., (2014), *MGNREGS- Need for Reforms to Create Productive Rural Employment*, Kurukshetra, pp-54-60, October. 2014.
10. Baby, K., (2015), *Social Inclusion and Rural Development Through MGNREGA*, Kurukshetra, pp-45-50, December, 2015.
11. Bhowmik, I., and Bose, P., (2015), *efficiency and impact of MGNREGS in Tripura*, Social change and development, VOLXII, NO.1, 2015
12. Dey, D.K, (2016), *Employment Generation and Assets Building through MGNREGA: Reflection from West Bengal*, Journal of Rural Development, VOL.35, NO.1 pp-51-76, January-March, 2016, NIRD and PR, Hygerabad.
13. Gautam, H.R., Parmer, Y.S. and Sharma, H.L., (2014) *Effective implementation of MGNREGA Vital for Social Security of the Poor*, Kurukshetra, pp-24-27, October, 2014.
14. Goswami, B., Dutta, A.R., (2014), *Status of Implementation of the MGNREGA in Assam: All is nNot Well*, Journal of Rural Development, VOL.33, NO.2 , pp-173-182.
15. Kumar, V., (2013) *Socio-Economic Impact of MGNREGS on Rural People: A study in Mandi District of Himachal Pradesh*, Indian Journal of Public Administration, VOL.LIX,NO.2, April-June, 2013.
16. Mahato, A., (2014) *Rural Wages Employment- A Critical Review*, Kurukshetra, pp-28-31, October, 2014.
17. Pal, M., (2014) *Impact of MGNREGA on Employment Generation and Capital Formation*, Kurukshetra, PP-2023, October, 2014.
18. Reimeingam, M., (2016) *Impact of MGNREGA Scheduled Tribe Workers on Poverty in Sikkim*, Journal of Rural Development, VOL.35, NO.1 pp-77-95, January-March, 2016, NIRD and PR, Hyderabad.
19. Salian, P.V and Leelavathi, D.S, (2014) *Implementation of MGNREGA in Karnataka: Issues and challenges*, Journal of rural development, VOL.33, NO.3, pp-261-279, July-September, 2014, NIRD and PR, Hyderabad.
20. Sahu, B. and Abraham, J., (2015) *Factor Influencing Demand for Rural Labour under MGNREGA*, Kurukshetra, VOL. 63, NO.12, pp-26-29, October, 2015.
21. Sikligar, P.C, (2012), *Impact Assessment of Wage Employment (MGNREGS): A Study in Tripura*, Indian Journal of Public Administration, VOL.LVIII, NO.1 January-March, 2012.
22. Tripathy, K.K., (2014) *Implementation of Wage Guarantee: what?*, Kurukshetra, VOL.62,NO.12, pp-1015, October, 2014.