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PERFORMANCE OF MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT (MGNREGA): WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TAMILNADU

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Ph.D Research Scholar,
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Abstract
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) implements by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), is the flagship programme of the Government that in a without delay line to lives of the poor and promotes comprehensive growth. The Act aims at good-looking livelihood safety of households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members unpaid assistant to do unskilled manual work. Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is the first ever law universal that guarantees wage employment at an outstanding scale. The primary objective of the Act is augment wage employment and its supplementary objective is strengthening natural resource management through works that address causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation and soil erosion and so encourage sustainable development. The process outcomes include strengthening grass-root processes of democracy and infusing transparency and accountability in governance. Keeping this view, the authors have made an attempt to review the performance of MGNREGA as the main objective of this paper. It also explains the objectives, features, permissible works under this Act and funding pattern of MGNREGA.

Keywords
MGNREGA, Performance, Rural Employment, Households, Persons-days

Introduction
The Indian government has taken up various actions to overcome the problem of poverty.
Poverty alleviation programmes comprising of wage employment programmes, rural housing schemes and a public distribution system have been initiated from time to time. Some were partially successful in addressing the issue of poverty whereas others suffered from major flaws in their implementation. The Central Government launched NREGA on February 2, 2006. The Act guarantees the right to work to by providing 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. NREGA is the first ever law internationally, that guarantees wage employment on an unprecedented scale. Its auxiliary objective is to strengthen natural resource management through works that address causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation and soil erosion and so encourage sustainable development. The outcomes include strengthening grassroots processes of democracy and infusing transparency and accountability in governance. NREGA covers the entire country with the exception of districts that have 100 percent urban population. NREGA provides a statutory guarantee of wage employment and is demand driven which ensures that employment is provided where and when it is most needed. The legal mandate of providing employment in a time bound manner is underpinned by the provision of an Unemployment Allowance. The right to work brings security in people’s lives. Today, labourers cannot count on employment being provided to them during the lean season. An employment guarantee gives labourers more confidence in the prospect of local employment, and discourages seasonal migration.

**Objectives of the Study**
1. To explain the concept, evolution and current status of MGNREGA;
2. To discuss about the objectives and salient features of MGNREGA;

**Research Methodology**
The data collected for the study includes secondary data. The various sources used to collect secondary data include reports of MGNREGA, research papers, journals and the website of MGNREGA.

**Current Status of MGNREGA**
In current financial year 2011-12, (upto December, 2011) 3.77 Crore households were provided employment and 120.88 Crore person-days of employment were generated. The enhanced wage earnings have led to a strengthening of the livelihood resource base of the rural poor in India; 72 percent of funds utilized were in the form of...
wages paid to the workers. Self targeting in nature, the programme has high work participation for marginalized groups like SC/STs (40%) and Women (49%) in 2011-12 (upto December, 2011). Total works undertaken were 62.72 lakh in the same period, of which 53 percent relates to Water Conservation, 12 percent for the provision of Irrigation facility to lands owned by SC/ST/BPL/S&M Farmers and IAY beneficiaries, 22 percent for Rural Connectivity, 9 percent for Land Development, 4 percent for Any other activity approved by MoRD and 0.37 percent for Bharat Nirman Rajiv Gandhi Seva Kendra. Women participation in current financial year up to December, 2011 was 49% and the participation of SC & ST in current financial year up to December, 2011 is 40%

**Personal Particulars of the Respondents**

Under the personal particulars of the respondents, age, sex, religion, caste, marital status, educational qualification, occupation, annual income, size of the family, colour of the ration card, land owned particulars and facilities in the house of the respondents are explained in the following tables.

**Age of the Respondents**

The details relating to the age of the respondents are provided in table -1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Age of the Respondents</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Below 25 Years</td>
<td>19 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>26 Years to 35 Years</td>
<td>96 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>36 Years to 45 Years</td>
<td>78 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>46 Years to 55 Years</td>
<td>54 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>56 Years and above</td>
<td>85 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>332 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The details relating to the age of the respondents provided in the above table indicate that about 6% of the respondents belong to the age group of below 25 years; about 29% of the respondents belong to the age group of between 26 years to 35 years; about 23% of the respondents belong to the age group of between 36 years to 45 years; about 16% of the respondents belong to the age group of between 46 years to 55 years and about 26% of the respondents belong to the age group of 56 years and above.

**Sex of the Respondents**

The details relating to the sex of the respondents are provided in table -2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Sex of the Respondents</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>54 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>278 (84%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>332 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The details relating to the sex of the respondents provided in the above table reveal that about 16% of the respondents are males and about 84% of the respondents are females.

Religion of the Respondents

The details relating to the religion of the respondents are provided in table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Relation of the Respondents</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>307 (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>3 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>22 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>332 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The details relating to the religion of the respondents provided in the above table indicate that about 92% of the respondents are Hindus; about one percent of the respondents are Muslims and about 7% of the respondents are Christians.

Caste of the Respondents

The details relating to the caste of the respondents are provided in table -4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Caste of the Respondents</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Forward Community</td>
<td>9 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Backward Community</td>
<td>88 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Most Backward Community</td>
<td>97 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe</td>
<td>138 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>332 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The details relating to the caste of the respondents provided in the above table indicate that about 3% of the respondents belong to forward community; about 27% of the respondents belong to backward community; about 29% of the respondents belong to most backward community and about 42% of the respondents belong to scheduled caste/scheduled tribe community.

Marital Status of the Respondents

The details relating to the marital status of the respondents are provided in table -5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Marital Status of the Respondents</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>252 (76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>10 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Widow/Widowers</td>
<td>70 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>332 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The details relating to the marital status of the respondents provided in the above table indicate that about 76% of the respondents are married; about 3% of the respondents are unmarried and about 21% of the respondents are widow/widowers.

Educational Qualifications of the Respondents

The details relating to the educational qualification of the respondents are provided in table -6
Table - 6
Educational Qualification of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Educational Qualification of the Respondents</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>170 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Primary Education</td>
<td>40 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Middle School Education</td>
<td>98 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>High/Higher Secondary Education</td>
<td>17 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Graduate Education</td>
<td>7 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>332 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The details relating to the educational qualification of the respondents provided in the above table reveal that about 51% of the respondents are illiterate; about 12% of the respondents have primary education; about 30% of the respondents have middle school education; about 5% of the respondents have high/high secondary education and about 2% of the respondents have graduate education.

Occupations of the Respondents

The details relating to the occupation of the respondents are provided in table -7

Table - 7
Occupation of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Occupation of the Respondents</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Agriculturists</td>
<td>40 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Agricultural Workers</td>
<td>246 (74%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Business People</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Other Workers</td>
<td>44 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>332 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The details relating to the occupation of the respondents provided in the above table indicate that about 12% of the respondents are agriculturists; about 74% of the respondents are agricultural workers; about one percent of the respondents are business people; and about 13% of the respondents are other workers.

Annual Incomes of the Respondents

The details relating to the annual income of the respondents are provided in table -8.

Table - 8
Annual Income of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Annual Income of the Respondents</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Below Rs.30,000</td>
<td>318 (96%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Rs.30,001 to Rs.40,000</td>
<td>10 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Rs.40,001 to Rs.50,000</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Rs.50,001 and above</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>332 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The details relating to the annual income of the respondents provided in the above table indicate that about 96% of the respondents have income below Rs.30,000/-; about 3% of the respondents have income between Rs.30,001/- to Rs.40,000/-; about one percent of the respondents have income between Rs.40,001/- to Rs.50,000/- and about one percent of the respondents have income Rs.50,001 and above.
Evaluation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in Tiruvallur District, Tamil Nadu has been evaluated in the following pages on the basis of various issues relating to registration, job cards, norms for application of works, transparency in selection of works, transparency in implementation of works, wage payment details and accounts and audit.

Registration
The respondents were asked whether they agree that the registration has been done to all eligible households as per the norms of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. The responses of the respondents are provided in table -9

Table -9
Registration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Query</th>
<th>Responses of the Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Do you agree that Grama Panchayat has prepared a list of all eligible households that might seek registration?</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Do you agree that registration is done in a special Gram Sabha meeting?</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Do you agree that a list of persons eligible for registration is eligible at Grama Sabha meeting?</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Do you agree that registration is open in the Gram Sabha on an ongoing basis?</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Do you agree that every one eligible for registration has registered their name?</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(51%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses of the respondents provided in the above table reveal that about 40% of the respondents strongly agree that Grama Panchayat has prepared a list of all eligible households that might seek registration; about 20% of the respondents agree that Grama Panchayat has prepared a list of all eligible households that might seek registration; about 11% of the respondents have no opinion about the Grama Panchayat has prepared a list of all eligible households that might seek registration; about 15% of the respondents disagree that Grama Panchayat has prepared a list of all eligible households that might seek registration and about 14% of the respondents strongly disagree that Grama Panchayat has prepared a list of all eligible households that might seek registration. The responses of the respondents provided in the above
The responses of the respondents provided in the above table reveal that about 56% of the respondents strongly agree that job card is prepared, issued and updated in a transparent manner; about 17% of the respondents agree that job card is prepared, issued and updated in a transparent manner; about 9% of the respondents have no opinion about the job card is prepared, issued and updated in a transparent manner; about 11% of the respondents disagree that job card is prepared, issued and updated in a transparent manner; about 11% of the respondents disagree that job card is prepared, issued and updated in a transparent manner; about 51% of the respondents agree that job card is issued on free of cost; about 23% of the respondents agree that job card is issued on free of cost; about 13% of the respondents have no opinion about the job card is issued on free of cost; about 8% of the respondents disagree that job card is issued on free of cost; about 13% of the respondents agree that anyone in your village has received the job card despite applying for it; about 19% of the respondents agree that anyone in your village has received the job card despite applying for it; about 13% of the respondents have no opinion about the anyone in your village has received the job card despite applying for it; about 11% of the respondents disagree that anyone in your village has received the job card despite applying for it.
issued and updated in a transparent manner and about 7% of the respondents strongly disagree that job card is prepared, issued and updated in a transparent manner.

The responses of the respondents provided in the above table reveal that about 38% of the respondents strongly agree that job card is issued within one month of registration; about 30% of the respondents agree that job card is issued within one month of registration; about 11% of the respondents have no opinion about the job card is issued within one month of registration; about 15% of the respondents disagree that job card is issued within one month of registration and about 7% of the respondents strongly disagree that job card is issued within one month of registration.

**Findings**

The details relating to the personal particulars of the majority of the respondents reveal that about 58% of the respondents belong to the age group of below 45 years; about 84% of the respondents are females; about 92% of the respondents are Hindus; about 42% of the respondents belong to scheduled caste/scheduled tribe community; about 76% of the respondents are married; about 51% of the respondents are illiterate; about 74% of the respondents are agricultural workers; about 96% of the respondents have income below Rs.30,000/-; about 63% of the respondents has 4 persons and above in their family; about 99% of the respondents has green colour ration card; about 84% of the respondents have no lands; about 86% of the respondents have electricity facility in their house. The responses of the majority of the respondents indicate that: About 60% of the respondents agree that Grama Panchayat has prepared a list of all eligible households that might seek registration; About 76% of the respondents agree that registration is done in a special Gram Sabha meeting; About 73% of the respondents agree that a list of persons eligible for registration is eligible at Grama Sabha meeting; About 69% of the respondents agree that registration is open in the Gram Sabha on an ongoing basis; About 68% of the respondents agree that every one eligible for registration has registered their name; About 73% of the respondents agree that job card is prepared, issued and updated in a transparent manner; About 68% of the respondents agree that job card is issued within one month of registration; About 74% of the respondents agree that job card is regularly updated and put up in the notice board; About 70% of the respondents agree that a file containing photocopies of all job cards are available for inspection in the
Gram Panchayat Office; About 74% of the respondents agree that photographs are taken before, during and after completion of the work; About 79% of the respondents agree that is displaced on the notice board or available in the records, public display and social audit forum; About 74% of the respondents agree that vigilance and monitoring committee has submitted its report; About 74% of the respondents agree that the report is available in the records and About 60% of the respondents agree that there is quality of work.

**Suggestions**

On the basis of the discussion held with the officers and the representatives of the Panchayati Raj Institutions responsible for the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the following suggestions have been made: Dedicated staff needed exclusively to manage this scheme. Monitoring and Information System needs to be strengthened to have visibility at Block/Panchayat Level. Though this programme is targeted for unskilled labour, there are evidences of people working with better qualifications. Communication channels should be improved for effective people participation and better understanding. Panchayat level people should ensure that benefits primarily reached the underprivileged based on certain minimum counseling. The programme should focus on long term benefits instead of job ensuring short term objectives. Instead of competing/hindering agricultural activities, it should strengthen agricultural activities. Water conservation, renovation projects are a good start and it should continue to focus more on such long term rewarding projects. Agricultural focus should not diffuse with the success of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Appropriate initiatives should be decided and executed to ensure the success of agriculture in rural areas. Officials expressed that people are aware of the minimum wages paid but this is ascertained on the basis of the opinion expressed by people in focus group interactions and survey analysis. Communication channels should be improved for effective people participation and better understanding. Proper National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme orientation needs to be planned and administered frequently in villages to make a difference. Pending registrations are immediately resolved in all the Districts.
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act has the potential for sustainable development and it may be worthwhile considering implications of going beyond unskilled labour. The big question is whether Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act should remain a guarantee of unskilled hard labour. There are reasons that it is not desirable to limit the instrumentality of employment to unskilled manual labour. With the large investments that the Act will require, the issue will be whether such investments should not be used for more sustainable employment opportunities stimulating both growth and equity. Confining Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act to unskilled manual labour will only be a means to coping with poverty, not of ameliorating it. Unskilled manual labour was meant to make it self-targeting so that only the very poor would seek work as a last resort. Limitation of choice to only unskilled work, ironically, undercuts the principle of rights, inclusion, and equity, as the legal design of work does not make the terms of inclusion equitable. It offers bottom–of-the-scale tasks with no chance of up gradation of skills to those with least opportunities. The unemployed and deprived will continue to be engaged in conditions of work that despite a legal guarantee and considerable financial resources perpetuate their lack of opportunities and capabilities. This will further reduce their ability to access any other opportunity of employment that lifts them out of intergenerational deprivation. Meanwhile, those with historical advantages will continue to access higher employment opportunities adding value to their skill and knowledge. A safety net creates the possibility of immediate relief but is not designed to address issues of the quality of equity. Quality and equality of opportunity are necessary conditions for any serious commitment to securing livelihood.

Reference

