



## A STUDY ON ADMINISTRATION AND WORKING OF MGNREGS : ITS IMPACT ON COUNTRYSIDE OF KURNOOLDISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

**Varam Venkata Narasaiah**

Lecturer in Political Science Government Degree College, Pattikonda ,Kurnool Dist., Andhra Pradesh.



### ABSTRACT:

*Labour is the main asset for the vast majority of the poor in India and as a result expanding employment opportunities should be the focus for not only sustained poverty reduction but also for improvement in human development. The absolute number of unemployed and underemployed has consistently increased in spite of the fact that there was an improvement in the gross domestic product of the economy. Agriculture has proved to be a losing proposition in the country. The larger agrarian crisis has a terribly adverse effect on farm households. The increasing numbers of farmers committing suicides reflect the symptom of this crisis. Because of the failure of agriculture, which happens to be the largest employer in the rural areas, unemployment and underemployment are quite rampant in the rural areas and it is incumbent upon the government to address this issue. It was perceived that there was a dire need for programs that generated employment directly and wage income to the poor. Especially, during the absence of opportunities of employment in the rural areas, these employment generating programs provided income transfers to the poor in India. Many schemes have been conceived of and implemented for the welfare of the weaker sections of the society since independence. Hence, we can say that India has a protracted history and experience in implementing wage employment programs. The National Rural Employment Generation Act 2005 (NREGA) makes a clear departure from the previous employment generation programs. It is unique in the sense that MGNREGA being an Act is also a right. It has a 'rights-based' framework which gives a legal guarantee for work, as opposed to a typical government program which could be withdrawn at will by a government.*

**KEYWORDS:** National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, employment opportunities, agriculture, Rural areas, Weaker sections, livelihood security.

### STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme should not be a charity/welfare program. If it is a mere welfare program, the implementation completely depends on the government's political will. If it is a rights-based program, it has to be implemented as per the provisions of whatever is mentioned in the Act. In our Constitution, we created a lot of legal rights ourselves after independence. In reality, however, there is a wide gap between the rights and their realization. The pertinent question is if NREGA is a right, how does the poor use this right? How is the poor going to know that they now have a right to employment? Even if they know, can they demand it? Has the government set up the system to respond to a demand-driven system? Also, the long-term impact of the program on poverty in terms of income effects and sustainability (ability to retain above power) remains an interesting aspect. For the implementation of MGNREGA, the key body is Gram Panchayat at the bottom. The Gram Panchayat should play a pivotal role in the implementation of the

Scheme in accordance with the provisions of the scheme. The present study aims to investigate and address some of the issues raised above.

- Apart from the above questions, the study aims at studying the implementation and impact of National Rural Employment Guarantee Program at the ground level. The study, in essence, aims at a reality check at the grassroots level to find out the problems and issues involved in the implementation of the Scheme and how it is really helping the labouring class in the rural areas of the country in general and in the Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh in particular to get out of the mire of poverty and squalor and lead a life of dignity.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

The major objectives of the present study are:

- to examine the functional structure of MGNREGA
- to study the transparency and accountability in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in Andhra Pradesh
- to analyse the social and economic characteristics of the respondent workers participating in the Scheme in the Gram Panchayats selected for the sake of the study.
- To assess the awareness of the respondents regarding the various provisions that are contained in the Scheme
- to examine and estimate the employment generation that is being facilitated among the sample households.
- to examine the asset creation among the sample respondents and the accompanying consumption behaviour among them.
- to give suitable suggestions for the effective implementation of the Scheme

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was ushered in with the aim of providing legal guarantee for providing at least hundred days of wage employment to those rural households whose adult members are willing and interested to do unskilled manual labour. Initially, 100 days of employment was assured to the rural poor especially during the lean agricultural season so that it improves the socio-economic status of the labour force in rural India. Subsequently, during the UPA government of Man Mohan Singh it was extended to 150 days for the rural workforce in tribal areas and during the present NDA government of Narendra Modi it was extended to 150 days for the drought hit areas after the areas are declared drought hit by the state governments. It is being probed through this study whether the labourers are getting the assured days of employment through this Scheme.

As per the Act, it is illegal either to involve contractors or the machinery in the works envisaged under the scheme. The present study throws light on the fact whether the works are being undertaken without involving both the machinery as well as the contractors. The study also focuses on the other relevant issues pertaining to the Scheme like the issue of job cards-whether they are being issued on time or not, whether there exists any wage discrimination between the men and women workers and to know that the officials are providing minimum facilities of the work spot like the drinking water, childcare facilities, shade, room for changing clothes etc which have been categorically stated in the Act.

The Act also provides a minimum statutory wage for the workers who are involved in the Employment Guarantee Scheme. It is being probed through the study whether the minimum wage as envisaged in the Act which according to the latest enhancement is Rs. 180 in Andhra Pradesh, is being paid to the workers or not. The Act also says in no uncertain terms that the work must be made available to the workers within the radius of 5 kms and in case the worksite is more than a distance of 5 km, the workers need to be paid extra wage as commutation charges. The study is useful to understand whether the above provision is being followed or not in letter and spirit. It has also been put down the Act that in case of inability to provide work to the workers who demand work, unemployment allowance has to be paid within 15 days after a demand has been made for the work. It will also be analyzed in the study whether the unemployment allowance is being paid in case of the workers who

not being shown the work. To know the effects of implementation of this Scheme, a detailed study at the grassroots level is highly imperative and for this reason the present study has a lot of significance.

### SCOPE OF THE STUDY

After making a critical analysis of the earlier studies, the present study utilizes the most suitable methodology to analyze the evaluation of the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Program with the most conceptual clarity to study how the present Employment Guarantee Scheme is being implemented in Kurnool District and whether it is providing the mandatory 100 man days of employment for the jobseekers to improve the economic status of the rural poor in the mandals and in the Gram Panchayats that are selected for the sake of this study in particular and the district as a whole in general.

The study also makes a study of the socio-economic characteristics of the sample respondents-the workers participating in the Employment Scheme to know their awareness about the program and to seek and understand the impact of the Scheme in the Gram Panchayats and Mandals that were selected in the district.

The study also covered various aspects like the enhancement of income of the respondents, the employment opportunities provided by the Scheme, the asset creation that was possible due to the Scheme the facilities available at the work spot, the increase of purchasing power etc.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of literature is one of the most important aspects in any research work. It is a measure for stating the recent output on a particular area of research and organized in a helpful sequence to strengthen the present research techniques. The main objective of the review of literature is to understand the research activities that have taken place in a particular discipline in general and in the area of research in particular. It also helps to find out the research gaps related to the topic.

The following pages bring out some of the studies which are exclusively made on MGNREGS.

Vaidhyanathan, (2005)<sup>1</sup> in his scholarly article, ***“Empowerment Guarantee and Decentralisation”*** is of the opinion that the MGNREGS is so conceived that the participation of local people is ensured through a decentralized structure with gramapanchayats playing a crucial role in the implementation of the program.

Bela Bhatia and Jean Dreze, (2006)<sup>2</sup> in their article ***“Employment Guarantee in Jharkhand: Ground Realities”***, argues that there are great many pitfalls in the institutional setup of MGNREGS and he further states that there is hardly any difference between the earlier rural employment and poverty alleviation programmes and the present program.

Patel Amrit, (2006)<sup>3</sup> made a study on how the Panchayati Raj institutions are implementing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in his article ***“Role of Panchayati Raj institutions in Implementing Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme”***.

Dreze, (2007)<sup>4</sup> makes a study of how corruption has crept into all the rural employment programs in Orissa and has in fact benefited the officialdom than the intended beneficiaries of the program and he says that this also holds good as far as the present program of NREGS is concerned in his article ***“NREGA: Dismantling the Contractor Raj”***.

Khan, Ullah and Saluja, (2007)<sup>5</sup> have made a study of the direct as well as the insidious effects of this social welfare program not only on employment generation but also on poverty reduction in the rural areas of the country.

Mathur, (2007)<sup>6</sup> in his article ***“Employment Guarantee: Progress So Far”*** believes that MGNREGS in fact is a program which has immense national importance but has been marginalized due to poor implementation and poor appreciation of its objectives.

Singh P.K, (2007)<sup>7</sup> argues in his essay ***“NREGA : A New Hope For Rural Employment Generation”*** that this program is creating immense hope in the hearts of the people that it is going to ameliorate poverty and better their economic condition.

A study was made by the **Planning Commission of India** (2008)<sup>8</sup> which revealed that the Panchayati Raj institutions which happen to be the program implementing institutions of MGNREGS were not in a position to provide employment on demand and on time and a majority of the people who were interviewed revealed that then did not get the work within the stipulated 15 days nor were they paid unemployment allowance as is envisaged in the act.

Rao Mohan, V., (2008)<sup>10</sup> made a study of how this employment guarantee scheme is providing a lifeline to the vulnerable sections of the rural India in his article entitled, ***“Employment Guarantee Scheme is a Lifeline for the Vulnerable Sections”***.

Singh Kumar Dhruva and ChoudharyEkta, (2008)<sup>11</sup> made an analysis of the functioning of NREGS in the light of the C&AG report in their article ***“A Balance Score Card of the NREGS”***.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study which is focused on understanding how the empowerment of rural work force has been achieved through MGNREGS is basically done by probing both the primary and secondary source material.

Regarding the primary data, the data is collected through a purposive random sampling method. Initially all the three revenue divisions in the district are selected for the study. From each revenue division two mandals are selected. From each mandal, two village panchayats are selected for the sake of the study. From each village panchayat 25 beneficiaries of the scheme are selected as respondents. Along with these beneficiaries, data is also collected by interviewing the officials and non-officials who are involved in the implementation of the scheme. With regard to the secondary data, the data is collected from several research institutions such as National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Centre for Social and Economic Research (CSER), Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESS), SERP, APARD, State Institute of Rural Development and different reports that have been published by the panchayats and Rural Development Department of the Government of Andhra Pradesh and the Ministry of Rural Development of the Government of India, reports from the MGNREGS implementing agency of Kurnool district i.e. DWMA office, Kurnool, MPDO office of the concerned mandals of the study area and the report submitted by the social audit teams, the vigilance teams, the annual reports, books, articles, newspaper, reports etc.

**Selected Mandals and Villages**

NAME OF REVENUE DIVISION	NAME OF THE MANDALS	NAME OF THE VILLAGES
KURNOOL	KURNOOL RURAL	PASUPULA
		DINNIDEVARAPADU
	KALLUR	PARLA
		CHINNATEKKURU
ADHONI	KOSIGI	VANDAGALLU
		CHINNABOMPALLI
	DEVANAKONDA	KUNKANURU
		NALLACHELIMALA
NANDYAL	BANAGANAPALLI	KAPULAPALLI
		BEERABOLU
	SIRIVEL	ISUKAPALLI
		KOTTALAPALLI

**Secondary Data:** The secondary data for the study is selected from reports and journals, records, published and unpublished matter along with relevant books. The data is also collected from several research institutions such as National Institute of Rural Development, (NIRD), Centre for Social and Economic Research (CSER), Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESS), SERP, APARD, State

Institute of Rural Development, Osmania University library, Arts college Seminar Library and different reports that are published by the panchayat and the Rural Development Department of the Government of Andhra Pradesh and the Ministry of Rural Development of the Government of India, reports from the MGNREGS implementing agency of Kurnool district(DWMA) and the report submitted by the social audit teams, the vigilance teams, the annual reports are also take into account for collecting the data the data thus collected has been analysed and interpreted.

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- ❖ A majority of the respondents became aware of this employment guarantee scheme through the television at their homes
- ❖ A majority of the respondents were aware about the 100 days of employment for households.
- ❖ The majority of the respondents were not aware of the minimum wages related to the program.
- ❖ This shows that the majority of the respondents are aware of the fact that they must be paid equal wages without any reservations on gender.
- ❖ The Majority of the respondents were ignorant about the Paramount role of Gram Sabha in the Scheme
- ❖ The majority of the respondents are aware of the fact that labour displacing machinery should not be used in the scheme.
- ❖ One half of the respondents know about the provision of unemployment allowance in case work is not provided within 15 days of applying for it the other half are ignorant about it.
- ❖ Majority of the respondents said that they have knowledge about provision for facilities like drinking water, crèche at the work site.
- ❖ The majority of the respondents were aware that they must be provided medical assistance in case they are injured at the worksite as per the norms of the Scheme.
- ❖ A majority of the respondents are ignorant of the fact that they can claim ex-gratia in case of death or disability resulting from an accident while working for the employment guarantee scheme.
- ❖ Majority of the respondents are aware of their right that their payments must be made within a fortnight of the completion of the work.
- ❖ A majority of the respondents said that the time gap between the date of registration and the receipt of job card was between 16-30 days
- ❖ A majority of the sample respondents confided that they did not spend money for getting the job card.
- ❖ A majority of respondents confided that most of the time the Gram Sabha meetings identify the works to be done under the scheme.
- ❖ A majority of respondents confided that the time gap between the date of application by them for seeking employment under the scheme and the provision of employment, between was between 16-30 days.
- ❖ A majority agreed that drinking water facility was available at the worksite and similarly, a majority of the respondents said that shed for changing their dress was not available
- ❖ A majority of the respondents said that there was no helper at the worksite to take care of the children of the women participants of the scheme.
- ❖ A majority of the respondents did not accept that the facilities that were available at the worksite were adequate.
- ❖ A majority confided that the payment of the wages was done through post office.
- ❖ A majority of the respondents said that the quality of the works that were taken up under the scheme was only average in nature.
- ❖ A majority of the respondents agreed that work was readily available for them under the scheme.
- ❖ A majority of the respondents believed that work for them was allotted within 5 km from within the radius of the village.
- ❖ A majority of the respondents participated between 50-74 in this Scheme.

- ❖ A majority of the respondents said that the kind of treatment that they received at the workplace was good,
- ❖ A majority of the respondents said that the number of working days was not sufficient and the majority of the respondents wanted the number of working days to be increased by more than hundred working days.
- ❖ Most of the respondents wanted the wages to be enhanced and they need to be enhanced substantially

### Impact of the program

After working for MGNREGS the respondents gave the following responses for the impact of the program

- ❖ A majority of the respondents did not have personal savings in spite of taking part in the scheme.
- ❖ A majority of the respondents said that they did not have cash on hand in spite of working for the scheme.
- ❖ A majority of the respondents said that the scheme did not help them to clear their old debts.
- ❖ A majority are of the opinion that the employment opportunities have not grown substantially in spite of the scheme.
- ❖ A majority of the respondents said that the scheme has not really enabled them to buy gold and silver ornaments.
- ❖ A majority of the respondents said that the scheme has not really enabled them to possess any permanent assets.
- ❖ With regard to the health expenses, the respondents said that they were in a better position to spend money for issues related to their health.
- ❖ A majority of the respondents said that they were in a better position to meet their festival expenses after participating in the scheme.
- ❖ A majority of the sample respondents said that the scheme has enabled them to some extent to be decision-makers in the family matters and has also enabled them to earn respect from the members of the family.
- ❖ A majority of the respondents believed that the scheme is enabling the creation of common assets in the village.

### SUGGESTIONS

1. Appropriate awareness has not been created among the workers of the MGNREGA. The non-governmental organizations and the elected representatives of the local bodies can also lend a helping hand to the government officials in spreading awareness among the rural populace of the district.
2. The government must take appropriate steps to see that uniform wages are paid to both men and women workers of the scheme and also the wages are paid on time.
3. Some of the respondents have complained against harassment taking place at the place of work. Stringent measures must be taken by the government to see that these practices are put to an end and the women workers are accorded adequate protection from sexual harassment as well as other forms of harassment.
4. For comprehensive participation of the women in the scheme, women should be allowed in the deliberations pertaining to the scheme. Female supervisors must be appointed for monitoring the works at the worksites so that it will enhance the participation of the women. Similarly, even in the case of social audits women must be made part of the team so that it ensures the proper evaluation and the working of the scheme.
5. Efforts must also be made to create provision for food at the worksite. This will enable more workers to participate in the scheme enthusiastically because it is sometimes proving strenuous for the workers to carry their lunch boxes to the worksite.

6. It has been reported by some of the respondents that the mandatory number of working days have not been given to them. In a drought prone district like Kurnool where 150 days of work has been ensured through the scheme of late, the government should make all-out efforts to make the provision of this mandatory to all families of the rural areas.
7. There have also been apprehensions regarding the quality of works that have been effected under the scheme. Appropriate measures must be taken to make sure that the quality of works taken up under the scheme are par excellence otherwise millions of rupees of tax payers money will be going down the drain without serving any purpose.
8. It has also been reported that unemployment allowance is not being paid to some of the respondents who were not provided work as per the scheme. It must be ensured that in case of failure of provision of works to the workers, unemployment allowance must be paid to them.
9. Similarly, transport allowance must also be paid to those workers whose worksite is more than 5 km from the place of the residence.
10. It has also been expressed by the respondents that both the wages as well as the number of working days as have been envisaged under the scheme are inadequate. Hence measures must be taken to increase both the wages as well as the number of working days.

### REFERENCES

1. Vaidhyanathan, A., '*Employment Guarantee and Decentralisation*', Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XXI, No.13, June, 2005, pp. 1582-1587.
2. Bela Bhatia and Jean Dreze., "*Employment Guarantee in Jharkhand: Ground Realities*", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXXVI, No.11, July, 2006. pp.3198-3202.
3. 29. Patel Amrit "*Role of PRIs in Implementing Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme*", Kuruksetra, Vo1.54, No. 10, August 2006, pp. 24-29.
4. Dreze, J. *NREGA: Dismantling the contractor raj*, *The Hindu*, Bangalore 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2008, p.4.
5. Khan, A. Ullah and Saluja, M.R., "*Impact of MGNREGA on Rural Livelihoods*", Paper presented in *10<sup>th</sup> Conference on Sustainable Development Sustainable Solutions: A Spotlight on South Asian Research*, Islamabad, Pakistan, December10-12, 2007.
6. Mathur, L., *Employment Guarantee: Progress So Far*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.42, No.52, pp.17-20.
7. Singh, P.K., "*NREGA: A New Hope for Rural Employment Generation*" Southern Economist, Vol.46, No. 3, June 15, 2007, pp.21-24.
8. Planning Commission of India, *All-India Report on Evaluation of NREGA: A Survey of Twenty Districts*, Prepared with Financial Support and Research Inputs from Programme Evaluation Organisation (PEO), Planning Commission- By Institute of Applied Manpower Research, Plot No. 25, Sector a-7, Narela, Delhi-2008.
9. Nayak, Behera and Mishra, 2008.
10. Rao Mohan, V., *Employment Guarantee Scheme is a life line for the Vulnerable Sections*"Kuruksetra,Vol.56, No.8, June 2008, pp. 46-48.
11. Singh Kumar Dhruva and ChoudharyEkta, "*A Balance Scorecard of the NREGS*"in the Light of the C & AG Report, Kuruksetra, Vo1.56, No. 5, March 2008, pp. 38-40.