

## **MGNREGA-A LIFE LINE FOR RURAL POOR: A CASE STUDY OF CHANGA BLOCK OF DODA DISTRICT (J&K)**

By

Shamim Ahemad, Asstt. Professor Economics

Govt. SPMR College Of Commerce, JAMMU (J&K).

### **ABSTRACT**

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is the most accessible approach to rural India for poverty alleviation through employment generation, enacted by legislation on August 25, 2005. The scheme provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household at the statutory minimum wage rate. The present study was conducted in four villages of Changa block viz. Bharthi, Dhossa, Kakoo and Jullu in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir, with the objective of analyzing performance of MGNREGA. A total of 100 beneficiaries both male and female were selected and information was collected with the help of well structured interview schedule. After analysis of data, it was found that 88 percent respondents were aware about the MGNREGA Act and Village Panchayat members played a significant role in it. This scheme has developed a co-operative environment between local rural development department officials and people.

**KEY WORDS: Rural Development, MGNREGA, Poverty Alleviation and Rural Employment**

**INTRODUCTION:-** India diverted a large amount of financial resources to poverty reduction programmes since independence but the desired results could not be attained due to capital led strategy which displaces and replaces labor with machines and tools. The real India lives in villages and rural areas lack basic facilities and services such as roads, drinking water, electricity, schools, transport and communication. These poor people are highly unskilled and lack capacity to participate in the economic development process. Hence, a rural based labour intensive scheme was needed to meet the twin objectives of employment generation and asset creation in order to develop rural areas and eradicate poverty. In this connection Govt. of India had made several efforts starting from Community Development Programme (CDP) in 1952 with the aim of development of rural areas to Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) in 2001, but the performance of these programmes was not satisfactory in terms of wage employment, food security and development of village infrastructure. So the need was felt to restructure the wage employment programmes in a manner that gives the rural poor regular and guaranteed employment and also lead to development of rural infrastructure, thereby breaking the vicious circle of poverty. On 25<sup>th</sup> August 2005, the parliament passed an Act called National Rural Employment

Guarantee Act (NREGA), the most accessible approach to rural India for poverty alleviation through employment generation. This Act received the Presidential nod on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2005 and was launched by the then Prime Minister Mr. Manmohan Singh, on February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2006, in the village called Bandlapalli in Anantpur District of Andhra Pradesh. This Act was renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2009. It guarantees employment to any adult who is willing to do unskilled manual work, for 100 days per household per financial year. If employment cannot be provided, the applicant is entitled to daily unemployment allowance. The Act was initially introduced in 200 districts of the country and was extended to additional 130 districts in the financial year 2007-08. At present, it covers, the entire country with the exception of districts that have a 100 percent urban population since 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2008. MGNREGA is world's largest rural employment programme in terms of financial commitment and coverage. Its prime objective is to raise the income level of the people in rural areas coupled with development of infrastructure (Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India).

## **PROFILE OF DODA DISTRICT**

Doda district with population of 4.1 lakhs is extending over an area of 2306 km<sup>2</sup> is the 10<sup>th</sup> least populous district and 11<sup>th</sup> biggest district by area in the state of J&K. The district constitutes 92% rural population and thus making the implementation of Rural Development Programmes in the real earnest, an absolute necessity. The literacy rate is 65% which comprises of 78% male literacy and 50% female literacy and sex ratio is 919 in the district. The largest ethnic group is Muslims, accounting 53.8% of population followed by Hindus 45.8% and Sikhs 0.28%. Work force accounts for 37% of total population out of which 19.36% area main workers and 17.69% are marginal workers (Census, 2011 and Digest of Statistics 2011-12, J&K).

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Many studies have been carried on MGNREGA- a poverty alleviation programme in India and it has been delimited to review some literature to identify the trend. MGNREGA is an aspiring programme which if properly executed and quality standards are followed, will help in reducing poverty in rural India. Though the challenge of poverty in India is huge because of absolute numbers and its multiple layers, largely governed by social customs, MGNREGA has made a significant contribution by generating over 1.7 billion person days of employment through mass coverage of over 40 million households in just four years (Dreze and Khera, 2008). This scheme has created a positive impact on the lives of rural unemployed unskilled workers by generating an additional source of income to them without discrimination between men and women on the basis of opportunity and wage rate (IRMA, 2010). The workers have improved their primary and secondary activities because of their extra income and savings and the Act has reduced migration of people from rural to urban areas in search of jobs

(Nazma, 2013). The success of such large scale social programmes mainly depends on the approach used in their implementation which became the reason for failure of earlier wage employment programmes. The weaknesses and flaws in the implementation mechanism if addressed will definitely make the programme fruitful by higher wages, increasing productivity and also will reduce the rural-urban migration (Mehrotra, 2008). Another aspect of the programme is that government should strictly discourage educated people to do unskilled work and for them other employment opportunities should be created (Jain and Singh, 2013). Greater efforts are needed to build the capacity of administration and improve governance at district level. The success of targeted anti-poverty schemes in India is dependent upon proper identification of the beneficiaries, transparency, supervision over field staff and social mobilization (Saxena, 2007). Enough studies are available at the national and state level regarding the impact of MGNREGA on the lives of rural people but some micro studies at the block and village level are required to see the condition of participating households. The present study tries to fill this gap in the existing literature by covering four villages of Changa block in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To study the socio-economic background of the respondents.
2. To analyze the performance of MGNREGA in the study area.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study with its scope extended to Changa block of Doda district is based on primary data, collected through interview schedule. Multi-stage random sampling has been used in the selection of Changa block which happens to be one among the most backward blocks of the Union Territory of J&K in terms of literacy, income level and infrastructure with 100 percent rural population. The impact analysis has been done on the basis of the information collected from 100 beneficiaries under MGNREGA from four villages- Bharthi, Dhossa, Kakoo and Jullu of Changa block in Doda district. The selection of villages is based on a list prepared by the Block Development Officer for each village where the programme has been implemented and 25 households from each village have been interviewed giving equal weightage to all villages.

## **ANALYSIS**

The survey of the sample villages showed that majority (55 percent) of the respondents belong to the age group of 36-59 years, followed by 23 percent between 26-35 years and 15 percent above 59 years. The study also shows that 39 percent of the total beneficiaries were women and 65 percent respondents were from muslim community and remaining 35 percent belong to hindu religion. The respondents were from different castes such as 25 belong to schedule caste and 15 to schedule tribe category. 85 percent of the respondents were married and majority (70 percent) of them were living in joint families with majority

(56 percent) having family size between 5 to 8 members. The monthly income of 60 percent respondents was between Rs. 3000-5000 and 68 percent owned un-irrigated land up to 5 kanals. All the respondents were living in kutcha houses and majority of them were holding either Antodaya ration card (20 percent) or B.P.L. ration card (66 percent) and 68 percent among them were literate.

**Table 1. Socio-economic profile of the respondents (N=100)**

Attributes	Class	Percentage
Age	18-25 years	7
	26-35 years	23
	36-59 years	55
	Above 59	15
Sex	Male	61
	Female	39
Religion	Muslim	65
	Hindu	35
Caste	General	60
	Schedule Caste	25
	Schedule Tribe	15
Marital Status	Married	85
	Un-married	15
Family Type	Joint	70
	Nuclear	30
Family Size	Up to 5 members	33
	6-8 members	56
	Above 8	11
Education	Illiterate	32
	Up to 8 <sup>th</sup>	45
	10 <sup>th</sup> and above	23
Monthly Income	Up to Rs. 3000	27
	Rs. 3001-5000	60
	Above Rs. 5000	13
Land Holding	Landless	17
	Up to 5 kanals	68
	Above 5 kanals	15
Land Type	Un-irrigated	100
Ration Card	Antodaya Card	20
	B.P.L. Card	66
	A.P.L. Card	14
House Type	Kutcha	100

**Table 2.**

S.No.	Question Asked	Response of Beneficiary (Percent)	
		Yes	No
1	Awareness about MGNREGA Act	88	12
2	Source of information:		
	Gram Panchayat	85	
	V.L.W.	12	
	T.V./Radio	3	
3	Knowledge about Registration	82	18
4	Co-operation between People and Administration	62	38
5	Provision of work within 5 kms	100	
6	Is wage rate sufficient?	9	91
7	Timely payment of wages	84	16
8	Satisfaction about Scheme	65	35
9	Payment through Bank Account	100	
10	Increase in family income	78	22
11	Has MGNREGA reduced migration for jobs	54	46
12	Socio-economic changes at the village level	72	28

Table 2 shows that 88 percent respondents were aware about MGNREGA scheme which entitles every adult household member of 100 days of job guarantee during a financial year. Majority (85 percent) of them got information about this scheme from Village Panchayat members, followed by 12 percent who were informed by the Panchayat Secretary also known as V.L.W. and 82 percent beneficiaries had complete knowledge about the working of the scheme from registration to final payment. This scheme has brought administration back to village as was said by 62 percent respondents that it has increased co-operation between the rural people and administration and 65 percent respondents showed their satisfaction about functioning of MGNREGA in their area. MGNREGA has definitely created employment opportunities in rural areas and has increased the income level of people as had been revealed by 78 percent respondents. The scheme has reduced migration of workers to other areas in search of jobs and also has brought several socio-economic changes in their villages as was said by 54 percent and 72 percent respondents respectively.

## **CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS:**

The Central Government has given a lot of emphasis to poverty alleviation schemes in the country since independence and MGNREGA is one among. The scheme seems to be in the right direction as was revealed by majority of beneficiary respondents in the study area. Several problems were noticed during the course of interaction with the beneficiaries regarding the implementation of MGNREGA in the study area like favouritism in the selection of beneficiaries, 84 percent opined about delayed payments and 91 percent respondents talked about the low wages paid to them. Even the assets created were not maintained and their quality was not up to the mark. Following are the few suggestions which will help a lot in improving the delivery system under MGNREGA:

1. The beneficiaries should be selected from the BPL families without any consideration.
2. Guidelines about the scheme should necessarily be kept in the village meetings.
3. Officials associated with such schemes should be made more accountable.
4. Adequate flow of funds should be made available to the officers in charge of implementation of such schemes all through the year.
5. Quality of assets created through these schemes should be improved.
6. Participation of women should be increased, both at work sites and in decision making about MGNREGA works.
7. Worksite facilities like drinking water, shade, first-aid and crèche should also be made available to the workers.

## **REFERENCES:-**

Chhabra, Sangeeta Sharma, G.L.(2008). National Rural Employment Scheme (NREGS): Realities and Challenges *LBS Journal of Management and Research*, Vol.6 No, 1-2, Dec 2008.

Digest of Statistics – J&K Government for different years.

Dreze, Jean and Reetika Khera (2008). The Battle for Employment Guarantee, *Frontline*, Vol 26, No 1,3-16 January-(2008).

Indira Bishnoi, Sarita Verma and Swati Rai (2012), MNREGA: An Initiative towards Poverty Alleviation through Employment Generation, *Indian Research Journal of Extension Education Special Issue (Volume I)*, January, 2012.

M. Sanjoy Singh, Kh. Tomba Singh, Rural Poverty Alleviation Programmes: A Study Of Mgnrega In Manipur, International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention ISSN (Online): 2319-7722, ISSN (Print): 2319-7714, September, 2013.

Nazma Banu, (2013) MGRNEGA: An Effort for Rural Employment and Poverty Alleviation: A study of TSP region of Udaipur District, June 2013.

Saxena, N.C. (2007) "Rural poverty reduction through centrally sponsored schemes" Samya-Centre for Equity Studies, New Delhi, India

Website of Ministry of Rural Development Govt. of India.