

An Analysis on Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA): Outlook and Actuality

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Abstract:

The first and foremost necessity of India today is rural development. It has emerged as a new force and occupies the topmost position in the agenda of Indian national policy. The basic aim of rural development is to improve the socio-economic life of the vast number of people in rural area. Rural areas in which nearly three fourth of the country's populations live are characterized by poverty. The paper will focus Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act with its outlook and actuality.

Keywords: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Outlook, Actuality

Introduction

It is believed that an all round progress and development of the nation will be possible when all the sections of the society go hand in hand. For this rural development is of utmost necessary so that the rural people come forward with the main stream of the life.

'Rural Development' encompasses all sectors of rural life. In its widest sense it implies development of every aspect of rural life. The basic objective of rural development is to organize, develop and utilize the available resources in such a manner that the entire population dependent on these resources has an equitable opportunity to meet as a minimum, its basic needs.

Objective of the Study:

The objectives of the paper are-

1. To know about the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.
2. To study about the outlook and actuality of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

Methodology:

The paper is stand on secondary sources which are collected from books, journals, articles, Government reports, newspapers and website relevant to the study.

Discussion and Results:

The term Rural Development is viewed as an activity of a series of activities or a process, which either improves the immediate living conditions economic, social, political, cultural and environment or increases the potential for future living or both of the rural people.

Gandhiji underlined the importance of rural India by saying, "India lives in its village. If villages perish, India will perish; it will no longer be India". Since then successive governments have been trying to develop the rural India. In various five year plans, development of rural areas has been one of the most abiding concerns. The Government of India started its plan of planned growth soon after India got her independence.

India is a developing country so the Government of India has to proceed in this line by adopting different strategies for the upliftment of rural people. So far India has undertaken varied strategies for the all round development of the rural areas since independence. So, programmes are untaken as package included in the five year plan. Since the sixth plan onwards, various self employment programmes for rural housing and wage employment programmes have been introduced. Among these schemes, MGNREG Scheme (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) is one of the notable schemes.

In this paper a humble attempt has been made to find out how MGNREGA is making and attempt to upgrade the economic condition of rural people, to find out to what extent the scheme is said to be successful, and also to concretise some effective suggestions as solution of the problems. The paper is based on both primary and secondary data available at hand.

Implementation of MGNREGA in the District of Golaghat:

National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) was implemented from Feb. 2, 2006 after passing of the NREG act in the parliament in sept. 2005. The act was notified in 200 districts in the first phase with effect from Feb. 2nd, 2006 and then extended to additional 130 districts in the financial year 2007-08 (113 districts were notified with effect from April 1st, 2007 and 17th districts in up were notified with effect from May 15th 2007). The remaining districts

have been notified under NREGA with effect from April 1st, 2008. Now NREGA is renamed as MGNREGA from 2nd oct, 2009 in order to show deep reverence to the 'Crusader' of rural development in India. This is for the first time a job guarantee scheme for hundred days in a year has been introduced in the country with the objective to upliftment the economic and social condition in the rustic areas of Assam.

It has been said that the scheme has brought tremendous changes in the development of rural people but in reality it seems to be just the opposite in Assam. In spite of various strategies adopted by the Government of India for the economic upliftment of rural people, poverty is still having a strong hold in the rural areas of Assam. That is why, the study has been done to carry out a fact finding survey in two villages namely Borahi and Da-Borahi gaon to help both the beneficiaries as well as the policy makers to expedite the rural development through this scheme.

Here in this study, 60 respondents residing in two villages namely Borahi Gaon and Da-Borahi Gaon of the Golaghat District were interrogated and interviewed. The study has brought to light some problems face by card holder which needs a serious discussion among the elite section, the concerned authority and the policy makers.

The study reveals that 100% of the respondents have not got 100 days job guarantee in a year which is to be given under this scheme. The main reason behind this problem is bureaucratic red tap and corruption in the system.

Regarding the amount paid to them is also not satisfactory. Majority of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction the amount paid to them. They said that due to price like of necessary commodities at present day the amount (Rs. 130 per day) is not sufficient to meet the problem of their familial life.

It was also found that only one job-card is issued to every family. So, the remaining members become jobless which poses a great threat to the upliftment of the rural poor.

Lack of required education is another problem faced in rural areas. The study revealed that 90% of the respondents were illiterate. Only 10% of the respondents were literate but not to the extent of accepted demands. Some of them were under matric, some studied up to the primary level. As result of which majority of the respondents did not know the full form of MGNREGA and what are the objectives and the provisions given under this scheme.

Awareness among the people is very important to run successfully any government scheme. The study reveals that 90% of the respondents were not aware of the scheme. They were

not aware that 100 days job guarantee is to be given in a year. Apart from it, they were also not conscious of the medical facilities guaranteed to the card holder at the site of work.

Under this scheme, only 100 days job guarantee is given to every household living below poverty line. The remaining 265 days in the year the job card holders were not given any economic support under this scheme. As a result, the job card holders become helpless finding no other alternative to avail as the means of livelihood during the remaining days of a year.

Another significant fact is that there is no continuity of work. It is found in the field survey that the job card holders were not given regular works. After allotting 6 days work in a week, they were stopped and again they were given work after one or two weeks and even month after month which happened to be another serious problem faced by the almost all the jobs card holders. So, discontinuation of work at regular interval was really a great setback in their economic life as the amount was too small to get. Besides, this type of 'entry' and 'exit' to and from the work did not allow them to look for other means of livelihood which were kept available for them though for a low wage. When contacted with the Panchayat officials regarding this discontinuation, they failed to give reasonable reply but their body language indicated that something went wrong behind the screen. It might be the deep-rooted corruption that made them to make this provision caring not for the pathetic and miserable condition of the card holder but thinking for their own financial benefit out of the amount sanctioned for the betterment of the MGNREGS job card holders.

The merits of this scheme are really appreciating and accepting but the other side needs to be analysed and examined. It reveals that guaranteed job card for 100 days to the card holders, the government is instrumental to mar the tendency of hard working in the villages of Assam.

They developed a no-work ethos forgetting the fact that there was a time when every Assamese had been busy in work from morning till late evening because the agricultural pattern of economy demands it since the accident time. It is observed that the job card holders were waiting to get financial assistance from the government doing no effort to earn from the other available source. As a result, their pathetic economic condition was getting worse day by day.

It was found that in the name of providing job guarantee some fake job cards were issued in the name of those persons actually whose names were not in existence.

As the rural inhabitants of Assam are accustomed to agricultural activities, they have a natural urge and interest in this type of activities. But the works incorporated to the scheme are of other type such as water and soil conservation, afforestation and land development works etc. As a result they did not get job satisfaction from the work they took as a means of livelihood.

Considering all these problems, the following suggestions are forwarded to overcome these problems and also to do welfare to the beneficiaries of the scheme.

100 days job guarantee should be ensured to every job card holder which would surely strengthen their economic condition.

The amount should be increased from Rs. 130 to Rs. 200 to meet the rising demands of daily life. For this, the Government of India should make an amendment to this part of the act.

Apart from these, at least two job cards should be allowed in each family consisting more than five members.

The problems of illiteracy should be eradicated. For this the government, NGOs and the elite section should come forward to make adult education more familiar. Besides, the children of job card holders should be brought under the mission of Sarba Siksha.

Awareness camp, workshop among the rural folk regarding various rural development programmes should be organized both by the government as well as non-government organization.

The government should also make an arrangement to motivate the job-card holders to go for other similar jobs during no work days.

It is observed that there is a gap and misunderstanding among the government officers and the beneficiaries because the former failed making them understand that job was guaranteed for only 100 days. On the other hand, every beneficiaries with the card in hand thought that it would give him financial support for the whole year because they were short sighted, illiterate and careless regarding the objectives of the scheme. So frequent sitting and meeting should be held to overcome this difficulty. Apart from it, strict vigilance is of utmost importance from both the sides in order to make the scheme a great achievement.

Conclusion:

The scheme MGNREGA is definitely an effective measure to bring progress to the economic and social life of the down trodden. But, lack of co-ordination between the concerned

authority and the card holders relegates the scheme to the back ground. So, a collective effort from all sections of the society is needed to make the scheme a fruitful one in the rustic areas of Assam in order to take the state along the path of rapid progress and development. The dream of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of nation 'Gram Swaraj' will come through the MGNREGA when the people would be aware of the lacunas and would be prudent enough to apply remedies to wipe out these lacunas.

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