

MGNREGA: Evaluative Study of District Kupwara of J & K

Farzana Gulzar¹ and Nusrat Rashid²

¹The Business School, University Of Kashmir, Hazratbal, Srinagar, 190006, Kashmir

²The Business School, University Of Kashmir

E-mail: ¹farzana_ls@yahoo.com

Abstract—Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is considered as an essential Instrument for eradicating the poverty and unemployment in rural areas by generating the demand for productive labor force in villages. It provides an additional source of livelihood which enables to reduce poverty, child labour, migration and make rural people self dependent through productive asset creation like rural connectivity, water conservation and harvesting, land development, irrigation canals, flood control and protection, drought proofing etc. MGNREGA has been given the name of an anti-poverty program in the world and success of this program depends upon its proper implementation which helps rural people for uplifting their livelihood conditions. The aim of this study is to critically examine the implementation of this scheme and its impact on rural; livelihood development i.e. to what extent MGNREGA has made justice to rural poor and unemployed communities in District Kupwara (J&K). This study reveals that there is a little impact of MGNREGA on rural livelihood; the improper implementation strategy has polluted the spirit of this programme. Political intervention, corruption, biasness, favoritism in case of distribution of job cards, ineffective leadership and improper coordination of its stakeholders has stood a major barrier in implementing this programme.

Keywords: MGNREGA, unemployed, Kupwara (J&K), stakeholders

1. INTRODUCTION

Rural development is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of the specific group of people, the rural poor. It involves the extension of benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in rural areas, such as small farmers and landlords. In India, despite economic growth, poverty and unemployment continue to be the major economic problems with 75 per cent of the rural population living below poverty line and 74 per cent unemployed population hailing from rural India (Sanyal, 2011). India after the inception of independence realized the urgent importance of developing the villages and the vast majority of toiling millions who inhabit them. After Independence a good number of programmes for rural development have been initiated by the Government of India for the overall development of the rural people like Community Development programme (1952), National

Extension Services (1953), Panchayats Raj (1959), Rural Works programme (RWP) (1961), Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE) and Food for Work Program (FFWP) (1970), National Rural Employment Program (NREP) and the Rural Labour Employment Guarantee Program (REGP) (1980), Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY), the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), and the Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) (1990), Sampurna Grameen Rojgar Yojana (SGRY) (2001). Reviews of these programmes, however, had shown several perennial weaknesses: they include (i) low programme coverage; (ii) more than 50 per cent beneficiaries not from most needy group; (iii) bureaucracy dominated planning; little participation of community in planning; (iv) work to women lower than stipulated norm of 30 per cent; (v) only 16-29 days employment provided to household; (vi) assets created not durable; and (vii) corruption..[ARC 2006]. In an attempt to improve up on the weaknesses of the previous programs, the Government of India launched the National Rural Employment Guarantee Program (NREGP). The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), presently known as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is an Indian job guarantee scheme, enacted by legislation on August 25, 2005. It was launched on February 2, 2006 from Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh and initially covered 200 "poorest" districts of the country. The Act was implemented in phased manner – 130 districts were added in 2007–08. With its spread over 625 districts across the country, the programme has the potential to increase the purchasing power of rural poor, reduce distress migration and to create useful assets in rural India. Around one-third of the stipulated work force is women. The scheme provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage of 120 (US\$2.27) per day in 2009 prices. It also fosters social and gender equality as 23% workers under the scheme are Scheduled Castes, 17% Scheduled Tribes and 50% women. In 2010–11, 41 million households were employed on NREGA worksites. It is designed with the following unique features; a)

it introduced a rights based framework, b) it introduced a legal guarantee of work as opposed to a government programme which could be withdrawn by a government at will, c) time bound action to fulfill guarantee of work within 15 days of demand for work, d) incentive structure for performance (central government funds 90% of costs of generating employment), e) disincentive for non performance (unemployment allowance to be paid within 15 days if work not provided within 15 days is a state government liability), f) demand based resource availability and, g) accountability of public delivery system through social audits. The MGNREGA achieves twin objectives of rural development and employment. The MGNREGA stipulates that works must be targeted towards a set of specific rural development activities such as: water conservation and harvesting, afforestation, rural connectivity, flood control and protection such as construction and repair of embankments, etc. Digging of new tanks/ponds, percolation tanks and construction of small check dams are also given importance. The employers are given work such as land leveling, tree plantation, etc. MGNREGA has moved on to innovative initiatives like financial inclusion, social security provisioning for unorganized workers and identification of the poor. The law was initially called the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) but was renamed on 2nd October 2009.

2. MGNREGA IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR STATE

The Act (MGNREGA) was extended to the state in 2007 and the implementation of NREGA is being carried out through Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (REGS). As envisaged in the Act, the Jammu and Kashmir Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has been formulated on the basis of the Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. In J&K state, the implementation of MGNREGA has been done in various phases. In the first phase, three districts, viz. Poonch, Doda, Kishtwar and Kupwara were brought within the ambit of this Scheme which has been extended to the districts of Anantnag and Jammu during phase-II. As envisaged in the Act, the Scheme is being implemented on a cost sharing basis between the Centre and the State in the ratio of 90:10.

3. OBJECTIVES OF MGNREGA WERE

- Provide strong safety for people by providing numerous sources of employment, when other employment alternatives were inadequate.
- Serves as a growth engine by providing employment through works and strengthen natural resources and to create durable assets in rural areas.
- Empower people through safety law.
- Introduce new ways of business, as a model of governance reforms, anchored on the principle of transparency and grass root of democracy.

District Kupwara is situated at an altitude of 5,300 feet above sea level and is the northern most district of the Kashmir Valley. It shares a long border with POK in its north and western side and is totally enclosed by the Baramulla district on the other side. This district is endowed with rich dense forests. The geographical area of the district is 2,379 sq. km with three Tehsils namely Handwara, Karnah and Kupwara, with a total population of 8.70 Lakh out of which male population is 4.74 lakh and female population is 3.96 lakh with sex ratio of 843 females per 1000 males. The density of population in the district is 368 persons per sq km as against 124 persons for the state lakhs as per 2011 census. Out of the total population, 1,33,843 population is below poverty line. The district consists of 363 villages and 3 towns, 13 community Blocks and 3 Tehsils, 13 Education zones, and 356 Panchayats. As per the 2011 census, 87.97% population of Kupwara lives in rural areas of villages. The total Kupwara district population living in rural areas is 765,625 of which male are 412,038 and females are 353,587 respectively. Out of the rural population percentage about 21.19% comprises child population between age group of (0-6). Literacy rate were recorded as 62.92% as per census data 2011, Gender wise literacy (male and female) stood at 74.20 and 49.67 percent respectively. In total, 374,998 people were literate, out of which males are 238,785 and females are 136,213 are females. In district Kupwara NREGA was introduced in 2005-06 along with other most backward districts of the country including district Poonch and district Doda of the state. The act which was enacted by legislation in August 25, 2005 was later renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment guarantee act on October 2 2009. The activities undertaken by MGNREGA in this hilly district include water conservation and harvesting, irrigation canals including micro and minor irrigation works, renovation of traditional water bodies including desilting of tanks, flood control and protection works, works of development of lands belonging to ST/SC's. District Kupwara has secured top position in the implementation of nrega during the ongoing financial year in Kashmir. It has created 60 lakh maydays which is more than in any other district to be able to do it in Kashmir. The better implementation was possible due to heavy participation by the people in the programme. NREGA is a demand driven scheme where achievement of targets depends upon the demand of workers. (Project Officer, wage employment).

4. EMPLOYMENT GENERATION PROGRESS UNDER MGNREGA

The basic objective of NREGA is to enhance livelihood security to people in rural areas and guaranteeing 100 days wage employment in a year to members of each rural household who volunteer to do unskilled manual work with a minimum wage of Rs. 110 per day. All the adult members of rural household willing to do unskilled manual work has right to demand wage employment of 100 days per house hold. They have to submit an application form mentioning their

names, age, address with a photograph to the panchayat secretary or to the Programme Officer concerned. The panchayat secretary registers households after verification and issues a job card. The job card contains the details of a registered person and submits an application form for work in writing either to panchayat secretary or programme officer. In district Kupwara, total number of households issued job cards till 16th may 2015 are 57689, out of which SC are 0 and ST are 22555 and others are 35134 and cumulative number of households demanded employment are 15919. The labour budget estimation provided till the reporting month is 23606. The number of households working under MGNREGA till date is 5590 (Department of Rural development Kupwara, 16th may 2015).

5. PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE INDICATING ASSET CREATION UNDER NREGA

Physical performance under nrega consists of Rural connectivity, flood control and protection which includes drainage in wayer logged areas, construction and repair of embankments etc, water conservation and water harvesting which includes digging of new tanks/ponds, percolation(tanks), small check dams etc, drought proofing includes afforestation and tree plantation, micro irrigation works includes minor irrigation canals, provision of irrigation facility to land, renovation of traditional water bodies which includes desilting of tanks/ponds, desilting of old canals, desilting of traditional open well etc and land development includes plantation, land leveling etc.

6. PERSONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

In this process, the personal capacity is made on Gram panchayat level, Block level and District level. Under Gram Panchayat level, Gram rozgar Shayak and Accountants are hired under MGNREGA. In District Kupwara, total target of gram shayak were 359, out of which 196 has been achieved and target of 11 accountants have been achieved. Under block level, Programme Officers, Engineers or Technical Assistants and Computer Assistants are hired under NREGA. In a particular District, there was a target of 11 Programme Officers and target has been fully achieved, The number of Engineers or Technical Assistants were 72, out of which only 38 has been achieved and Target of 11 Computer Assistants is not being achieved yet. Under District level, Works Manager Technical Assistants, IT Manager Computer Assistant, Accounts Manager, Training Coordinators, Coordinator for Social Audit and Grievance Redressal are being hired under the scheme. Total target of works managers were 11 and only 4 has been achieved, IT manager computer assistants were 11, none has been achieved, Accounts Manager were 11 and still not achieved, Training Coordinators were 11, none achieved and Coordinator for social audit and grievance redressal were 11 and still not been achieved.

7. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

- Asset creation on short term basis
- Low wage rates as compared to the market rate. The current applicable wage rate since April 2015-16 is 164 as compared to the other states like Haryana where applicable wage rate is 236.
- The scheme is oriented at unskilled people, who are not trained properly. Now the Government is going to start a training program for skill development which is called as Project Life. Under this program, one person from each household will be opted for training.
- Non Availability of Human resources. The scheme requires District level experts to implement it in a proper way which unfortunately are not available even after the target of experts has been set but have failed to achieve. The major hurdle on the part of the human resources is that there are no permanent employees under the particular scheme.
- Non availability of funds.
- Government intervention and favoritism is given priority.
- Accountability not up to date.
- Misuse of funds on political activities.
- Improper implementation of the scheme.

8. SUGGESTIONS

- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act needs to be operated on convergence basis..
- The Act must be implemented properly, government interventions, biasness and favoritism need to be eradicated and it should be made transparent.
- The district level experts should be made available for the successful functioning of the scheme.
- MGNREGA employees should get a permanent position and salary should be as per their work responsibility.
- There should be availability of funds.

REFERENCES

- [1] Government of Jammu and Kashmir (2007)-Office of the Dy. Director Employment Exchange, Jammu and Kashmir (Srinagar), March, 2007.
- [2] NSSO 61TH Round (2004-05), "Survey on Employment and Unemployment" National Sample Survey Organization, Ministry of Statistics and program Implementation Government of India, July 2004-June 2005.
- [3] Gupta, S.P (2007), "Jammu and Kashmir: A Profile", Comprehensive Jammu and Kashmir General Knowledge, Ramesh Publishing House, New Delhi.
- [4] Government of Jammu and Kashmir (2008-2009), Directorate of Economics and Statistics district Statistical and Evaluation Office, Kupwara (D.C. Complex Kupwara) .
- [5] Government of Jammu and Kashmir (2006), Household Hold Survey-Department of Education, Jammu and Kashmir.

- [6] Sandaram K (2001), Special article, "Employment-Unemployment Situation in the Nineties". Journal of EPW, Issue: 36, No.11, March 17-23, 2001.
- [7] Ghose Ajit K, (2004), Special Article, "The Employment Challenge in India". Journal of EPW, Vol.39, No. 48, Nov.27-Dec-03, 2004.
- [8] Mitra Sona, 2006, "Pattern of Female Employment in Urban India". Special Article Published in EPW, Vol. 41, No. 48, Dec. 08, 2006.
- [9] Hansda S.K, Ray Partner, 2006, Special Article, "Employment and Poverty in India during the 1990s", Published in EPW, Vol.41, No.27 & 28, July 08-July-21, 2006.
- [10] Dr. Effet Yasmeen (2007), "Employment Scenario in Jammu & Kashmir: An Analysis of causes and Strategies". P.G. Dept. of Economics, University of Kashmir, Srinagar-190006.
- [11] Gupta S.P (1990), "Employment and Unemployment", Population Growth and the Problem of Unemployment. PP. 293.
- [12] Kieselbach, T. and P.G. Svensson (1988) "Health and Social Responses to Unemployment in Europe", Journal of Social Issues, 44, 173-191.
- [13] Liem, P. and P. Rayman (1984) "Perspectives on Unemployment, Mental Health and Social Policy", International Journal of Mental Health, 13, 3-17.
- [14] Mishra, S.K and Puri, V.K (2004), "Trends and structure of employment-unemployment", P-182, Indian Economy, 22nd Ed. Himalayan Publishing House, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi-110002
- [15] Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Economic Survey 2011-12 (J&K).
- [16] Singh, L.B (1994), "Unemployed Educated Young Men in India: Their Problems of Adjustment". The Indian Journal of Social work, Vol. LV, No. 3, 357-367.
- [17] War, P.B. (1983), "Work, Jobs and Unemployment", Bulletin of the British Psychological Society, 36, 305-311.
- [18] Robinson, "Essay in the Theory of Employment". 1953.
- [19] Bhalla. G.S and Singh, G.R. (1997), "Recent Development in Indian Agriculture, a state level analyses", Sponsored by Planning of India, Economic and Political Weekly March.
- [20] Bhattacharya, B. B. (1997), "Changing Composition of Employment in Tertiary Sector", Economic and Political Weekly March 15.
- [21] Chandershekher C.P. and Jotiya Gosh, (2004), "How Feasible is a Rural Employment Guarantee in India", An Economic Agenda for Social Scientists, Sahmet.
- [22] Das. N, (2004), "Low Employment Growth, Reviving Labor Intensive Manufacture", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. No. 39, p 2192-2194.
- [23] Government of India, (2004-2005), (2006-2007), "Various Issues of National Sample Organization Report".
- [24] Mathur Asoke, (2002), "Technical Skill Education and Economic Development in India", Journal of Labor Economic Vol. 45, No.4.
- [25] Mehra, S. (1996), "Surplus Labor in Indian Agriculture", India Economic Review vol.1, April, p 144.
- [26] Planning Commission, (1992), "Employment, Past Trends and Future Prospects", New Delhi.
- [27] Renku and Martin, (2005), "Employment Guarantee in Rural India", what would it cost and How Much it Reduce Poverty, Economic and Political Weekly. July 30.
- [28] Singh, L.B, Kumari, R. and I.K Singh (1992) "Extent of Hostility in Educated Indian Unemployed Youth-A MicroAnalysis",