A Study on Workers Participation and related issues of MGNREGA in Jayanti Forest Village of Kalchini Block, Alipurduar District

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Abstract

The popular MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) or nation wide Non Urban Career Assurance Act is designed at improving the income protection of the people in rural areas such as Jayanti village, by ensuring 100 days work occupation in a financial year. The purpose of the act is to make resilient resources and enhance the income source platform of the rural people of Jayanti village. The survey has been done in Jayanti village for the purpose of analysing the work participation rate and impact on rural livelihood of MGNREGA. In this study area the MGNREGA was initiated with the objective of enhancing livelihood security.

Key words: MGNREGA, Job card, Wages, Beneficiaries

1. Introduction

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), 2005 is the best job guarantee scheme of India designed to provide job guarantee for at least 100 days in rural parts of the country. All the adult members (at least 18 years of age) of the any family in rural part of the country are given non-skilled work. NREGA was notified on September 7, 2005 and it has come into force from 2nd February 2006 to give effect to the provisions of the act in Jalpaiguri district along with nine other districts of West Bengal. To provide up to 100 days of guaranteed employment in a financial year on demand to every household in the rural areas registered under the Act and to augment livelihood resource base of the rural poor through creation of durable assets for employment generation in a sustainable manner. Government has renamed the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGA) - after the name of Mahatma Gandhi on his birth anniversary October 2, 2009 and was abbreviated as MGNREGA. On that day Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced that the NREGA would now be called Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Guarantee Act. The main objectives of MGNREGA are Expanding earning sources, strengthening pure natural resources under control via works that deal with causes of serious hardship like famine, deforestation and ground break down and so motivate maintainable growth, strengthening grassroots procedures of democracy, infusing visibility and responsibility in government strengthening high decentralization as well as deepening procedures of democracy by providing a critical part to the local Panchayati Raj, Organizations in planning, tracking and execution.

2. Location Of The Study Area

Jayanti is a small forest village within Buxa Tiger Reserve Forest in Alipurduar district of West Bengal, India. Alipurduar is the newly created district of West Bengal, it became 20th district of West Bengal on 25 June, 2014. Earlier it was Jalpaiguri District’s interim. The geographical position of Jayanti village is 26*37’ N to 26*47’30”N latitude and 89*35’E to 89*42’E longitude. The rivers ‘Jayanti’ lies in the left side of Jayanti village. It is located along with a
natural border with the Bhutan hill. The forest village Jayanti is around 30Km away from Alipurduar town and connected the nearest railway station is ‘Alipurduar Junction’.

Figure 1: Location of the study area

3. Literature Review

There are many articles and research paper written by many scholars on various aspect of MGNREGA like regional development (rural development), work participation rate (especially women’s participation), economic independency of women, and employment status in rural areas. A paper by Keshlata and Dr. Syed Nadeem Fatmi (2015) “The contribution of MGNREGA in the empowerment of the scheduled tribes through poverty alleviation and rural development in the Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh: An analytical study”- emphasizes on the impact of MGNREGA on socio-economic well being and empowerment of scheduled tribes in Madhya Pradesh.

Shenbagaraj,P. and Arockiasamy,S. ,on an article (2013) “Impact on MGNREGA on local development : A study of Ottapidaram Blocks in Thoothukudi district , Tamil Nadu” – analyze the impact of MGNREGA in increasing the employment & earnings of households.


4. Objectives of the Study

The study on MGNREGA in Jayanti village of Alipurduar district has following objectives
• To describe the issues related to MGNREGA in Jayanti village such as distance of work place, duration of working time, type of payment, job card, health card etc.
• To highlight the effect of MGNREGA on rural livelihood pattern.
• To describe the work participation rate of sexwise main & marginal workers.
• To find out the problems related to MGNREGA.
• To suggest measures for the development of MGNREGA workers.

5. Data Source
The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data has been collected through door to door survey and field observation method, while the secondary data has been collected from Kalchini B.D.O. office and of MGNREGA, Jalpaiguri.

6. Methodology
The number of sample households having Job card is 70 which have been selected from Jayanti village adopting Random sampling. After being satisfied with entries of interview schedules, the processing of the data has done in these ways:-
• Simple statistical techniques which were possible to apply and work out manually.
• The cartographic technique (pie –graph, bar graph etc) has been used to represent social and economic characteristics of MGNREGA workers.
• GIS software is used for showing the location of the study area.

MAJOR FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

7. Selection of Alipurduar District And MGNREGA Status
Alipurduar in West Bengal has been selected for the present study. Some of the features of this district made the research to select this district: It is a newly created district of west Bengal with 6 blocks. There is a huge possibility of development Tourism as industry in the Tea Gardens. Alipurduar district is famous for three ‘T’- Tea, Tree, Tiger. Most of the people of this district earn their livelihood from their sources of Tourism. What are the impacts of MGNREGA on their livelihood pattern of this district is the main reason for selection this district. Alipurduar is one of the district of west Bengal where MGNREGA has been successfully implemented in 6 blocks & 66 gram panchayet. 3.04 lakhs applications were registered for job card and 2.35 lakhs job cards are active up to August 2014 in this district. Out of the total active job cards 27.55% job card holders belongs to Scheduled caste workers and 21.77% are scheduled tribe worker. In this district total household worked under MGNREGA is 1.87 lakhs. Out of total individual workers (2.36 lakhs person), percentage of male, female, SC & ST workers are 52.12%, 47.88%, 27.5%, 22.69% respectively. A very small percentage (0.12%) of disable person also worked under MGNREGA in Alipurduar district. There are 6 blocks in Alipurduar district like Kalchini, Alipurduar I, Alipurduar II, Falakata, Kumargram, & Madarihat. In Kalchini block total no of job card were registered 62,940, out of them 52,934 job cards are active. In Alipurduar – I, 29,971 job cards are active out of total 43,676 registered job cards. Except these 2 blocks out of 6, Alipurduar II, Falakata, Kumargram & Madarihat has 35,600, 44,062, 38,170, 33,691 active job cards respectively. The table shown about the blockwise distribution of workers in Alipurduar district.

| Table 1. Block wise Distribution Of Workers in Alipurduar district |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
|                  | Kalchini       | Alipurduar I   | Alipurduar II | Falakata    | Kumargram    |
| Total no of workers | 1,56,571   | 98,181          | 1,03,600      | 1,30,194    | 1,02,193     |
| Total no of active workers | 75,081      | 46,449          | 46,360        | 61,128      | 46,940       |
|                   | 1,08,778      |                 |               |             |               |

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From the following table we can easily stated that the highest no of workers is found in Kalchini block. SC workers are lowest in this block but ST Workers is highest. The highest no of male workers is found in Alipurduar II & highest no of female workers is found in Madarihat block.

### 8. MGNREGA In Kalchini Block

Kalchini block is one of the major block of Alipurduar where the study area Jayanti has been located. As per report of District programme coordinator MGNREGA, Alipurduar out of total 62940 card holder households, 10.38% job card holders of the block belong to SC & 37.28% belong to ST. Percentage of total no of male & female workers in these blocks are 52.3% & 47.7%. Total bank accounts opened under this scheme 96.46% are individual & 3.54% are joint. In case of post office 93.21% are individual and 6.79% are joint accounts in this block.
Figure 4. Application Registered for Job Cards in Kalchini Block & Alipurduar District

Table 2. Status of MGNREGA in Kalchini block for the financial year of 2013-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>2013-14</th>
<th>2014-15</th>
<th>2015-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approved Labour Budget</td>
<td>7,92,264</td>
<td>9,19,025</td>
<td>18,02,274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person days Generated so far</td>
<td>12,54,888</td>
<td>12,21,228</td>
<td>14,11,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total Labour Budget</td>
<td>158.39</td>
<td>132.88</td>
<td>78.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC person days % as of total person days</td>
<td>10.53</td>
<td>10.61</td>
<td>10.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST person days % as of total person days</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>39.13</td>
<td>38.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women person days out of total (%)</td>
<td>46.06</td>
<td>46.35</td>
<td>47.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average days of employment provided per household</td>
<td>28.32</td>
<td>27.53</td>
<td>32.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Average person days for SC households</td>
<td>27.41</td>
<td>27.25</td>
<td>31.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Average person days for ST households</td>
<td>29.25</td>
<td>27.64</td>
<td>32.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No of Households completed 100 days of wage employment</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>1075</td>
<td>1322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% payments generated within 15 days</td>
<td>11.25</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>17.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total households worked</td>
<td>44,313</td>
<td>44,366</td>
<td>43,973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total individuals worked</td>
<td>52,034</td>
<td>52,281</td>
<td>55,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of men worked</td>
<td>54.09</td>
<td>54.07</td>
<td>52.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of women worked</td>
<td>45.91</td>
<td>45.93</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of SC worked</td>
<td>10.54</td>
<td>10.65</td>
<td>10.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of ST worked</td>
<td>38.85</td>
<td>38.94</td>
<td>38.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of disabled person worked</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.22</td>
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</table>

Works

<table>
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<th>Works</th>
<th>2013-14</th>
<th>2014-15</th>
<th>2015-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total no of work taken up</td>
<td>1892</td>
<td>2642</td>
<td>5500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of Ongoing works</td>
<td>1610</td>
<td>2175</td>
<td>5209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of completed works</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of expenditure on agriculture &amp; agriculture allied works</td>
<td>64.46</td>
<td>62.47</td>
<td>62.41</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Financial progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wages (Rs In lakhs)</td>
<td>1791.71</td>
<td>1423.69</td>
<td>3105.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material and skilled wages(Rs in lakhs)</td>
<td>782.36</td>
<td>585.34</td>
<td>1166.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expenditure(In lakhs)</td>
<td>2638.21</td>
<td>2099.87</td>
<td>4321.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material (%)</td>
<td>30.39</td>
<td>29.14</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average wage rate per day per person(Rs)</td>
<td>150.99</td>
<td>168.99</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Cost per day per person (Rs)</td>
<td>180.75</td>
<td>194.14</td>
<td>223.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: http://www.nrega.nic.in/
9. MGNREGA in Jayanti Village

Sex wise main & marginal workers: Main workers are those who work more than 6 months in a year and marginal workers work less than 6 months in a year. Out of the total workers, 89.89% are main workers and remaining 10.11% are marginal workers. In the distribution of workers, there are male and female workers. Among the male workers, 92.5% are main workers and 7.5% are marginal workers. On the other hand, in case of females, the percentage of main workers is lower (66.67%) compared to males and the percentage of marginal workers is 33.33%.

Wages per day: At present, wages of MGNREGA workers are 3 types - Rs 169/- for unskilled labours, Rs 253/- for semi-skilled labour and Rs 338/- for skilled labours. In the Jayanti village, the majority of workers, near about 88.57% get Rs 169/- for unskilled labour and only 4.29% get Rs 338/- for skilled labours. And 7.14% for semi-skilled workers.

Figure 5. Sex Wise Main & Marginal Worker

Source: Field Survey

Figure 6. Wages Per Day

Source: Field Survey

Age at joining as workers: Out of the total male workers, 23.47% joined their job before 15 years of age, 37.76% of workers joined between 15-20 years and 38.78% joined after 20 years of age. On the other hand, 5.41% female workers joined their job in 15-20 years of age and 6.31% joined after 20 years of age.

Distance of work place from residence: 77.42% MGNREGA workers working < 500 meter distance from residence are males and 22.58% are females. 88.54% males and 13.46% females work place located at distance of 500 meter to 2 Km. Distance of 95.83% male workers and 4.17% females workers is more than 2 km.

Figure 7. Age at joining as workers

Source: Field Survey

Figure 8. Distance of workplace from the residence

Source: Field Survey
Working under MGNREGA: In Jayanti village of the total workers 88.04% are males and 11.96% are females. So the gender gap between the workers is 76.08%.

Effect of MGNREGA on livelihood pattern: The main objective MGNREGA is to enhance rural livelihood pattern. But 70% respondents of the study area reported that their livelihood pattern is not much affected by this scheme.

Preferred job under MGNREGA: In the study area 51.43% respondents are says that their job is preferred under MGNREGA and 48.57% are says that their job is not preferred under MGNREGA.

Participation In work: There are various types of works and training programmes under MGNREGA. At village level Gram Rojgar Sahayak (50%), Block level account (10%), engineers and Technical Assistant (10%), and programme officer (10%). At the district level work manager and Technical (10%) and Account Manager (10%)

Type of work by MGNREGA Workers: In Jayanti village out of total MGNREGA workers at presents 2.7% engaged in water conservation and water harvesting, 13.33% in drought proofing, 12.7% in micro irrigation, 14% in provision of irrigation facility to land, 21.33% in land development, 22.7% in flood control, and protection and remaining 13.33% in embankment.
Figure 12. Participation in work training

Source: Field Survey

Figure 13. Types of work by MGNREGA workers

Source: Field Survey

Type of Account: Wages of workers disburse through individual and joint accounts. Majority of workers (72.86%) have individual account while remaining 27.14% have joint accounts. Of the total female workers majority (52.86%) cannot draw their amount without permission of their husband.

Source: Field Survey

Figure 14. Type of Account

Source: Field Survey

Figure 15. Wage Disbursement

Source: Field Survey
Wage Disbursement: Under MGNREGA the workers received their wages through bank and post office. In Jayanti village wages of 87.14% workers disbursed through post office and 12.86% workers through bank.

Freedom to withdrawn money for female: In the Jayanti village out of total 52.86% female workers cannot draw their amount without permission of their husband and 47.14% females workers freedom to withdrawn money without permission of their husband.

Time of getting job after application: According to MGNREGA after application work should be provided within 15 days of demanding it. If work is not provided to anybody he/she should provided unemployment allowance. It is clear from the field study that in the study area only 30% households were provided work within 15 days, 28.57% provided between 15-30 days and 41.43% provided after 30 days.

Unemployment allowance: Majority of respondents of the study area are not aware of unemployment allowance. Only 15.71% received unemployment allowance due to not providing job within 15 days from date of application, remaining 84.29% households were not provided this allowance.

100 days work in last financial year: Out of total households with job cards 40% get 100 days work in last financial year while as remain 60% did not get 100 days work.

Figure 16. Freedom to withdrawal money

Figure 17. Time of getting job after for female application

Figure 18. Unemployment Allowance

Figure 19. 100 Days Work

Source: Field Survey
Gram sava attendance and its necessity: Role of gram sava in the effective implementation of MGNREGA in rural development is necessary. Of the total respondents majority 69.70% attendance Gram sava and 87.14% of them reported that it is necessary for the rural development.

Duration of work per days: Out of total respondents of Jayanti village 31.42% have reported that they work less than 6 hours per day, 34.29% work 6-7 hours and remains 34.29% work more than 7 hours under MGNREGA.

Peak season of work: According to 42.87% the peak season for their work is rainy season. 35.70% and 21.43% respondents reported that their peak season for work is winter and others respectively.

Extra work performed by the workers: The respondents were asked whether they performed extra work or not? Out of 70 respondents 35.71% reported that they perform extra duties during peak season of work.

Availability of workers in the village: 87.14% respondents reported that the availability of worker in the village is good where as only 12.86% respondents think that it is bad.
Complaints by beneficiaries of MGNREGA: There are various complaints regarding MGNREGA. Majority of respondents, (75.71%) reported that ‘Non payment’ of wages in due time is the main problem. Poor quality of work (60%) irregularities of MGNREGA work (52.86%), non completion execution of work in Annual Action Plan (41.43%) etc. are drawbacks of this scheme. According to 51.43% respondents get preferred job under this scheme where as 42.86% respondents demanded their preferred job but denied. 57.14% respondents reported that the behaviour of the Gram Rojgar Sahayak is satisfactory.

Employment within 5 km from residence: According to the MGNREGA Act the workers should be provided job within 5 km from their residence. But in Jayanti 72.86% workers provided job within 5 km. There is provision of T.A. for excess distance beyond 5 km in MGNREGA. Respondents are not aware of this fact. Only 14.29% demanded T.A. and they got it.

Members in job cards: In the study area number of workers in job cards varies between 1-4. The job cards contain no of workers represents male dominated workers consequently. No. of females in job cards is very low compare to male.

**Figure 24. Availability of labour**

![Figure 24. Availability of labour](source)

**Figure 25. Employment within 5 KM**

![Figure 25. Employment within 5 KM](source)

**Figure 26. Complaints by beneficiaries of MGNREGA**

![Figure 26. Complaints by beneficiaries of MGNREGA](source)

10. Problems related to MGNREGA

The CAG report underlines the fact that the guidelines indicated in the MGNREGA have not been followed. The main problems in this area are:

i) Every state government was required to appoint in each block, a full time programme officer, exclusively responsible for the implementation of MGNREGA. The state
government, (B.D.O.) to take additional charge to implement MGNREGA. CAG report finds that 19 states had not appointed these officers in 70% of the blocks surveyed. The point which needs to be highlighted is that MGNREGA is not a programme that can work of on additional charge. The lack of professional staff is one of the major problems in Jayanti village.

ii) MGNREGA specially mentions the creation of durable productive assets, in the form of roads, improving rural infrastructure, drought proofing, watershed development, water conservation etc. The survey found that the focus is on rural transformation were conspicuous by their absence

iii) Although MGNREGA has provisions for transparency in the process of implementation, in actual practice, data on work done and payments made for various kinds of jobs kept as a closely guarded secret. As a consequence there is a mockery of social audit. Even some of the fake NGOs are prepared to verify social audit by charging a ridiculously low fee per panchayet. As a consequence, the most radical provisions of MGNREGA are violated with impunity.

iv) MGNREGA stipulates that projects shall not be implemented by employment of contractors, because contractors do not pay labour statuary minimum wage and get most of the work done by machines. Muster rolls are faked, labour is underpaid, bogus workers are shown as paid workers while actual work is done by machines. The schedule of rates is not observed in practice.

11. Conclusion

In fact MGNREGA is conceptually a very important national programme initiated at the level of the central government, but its record of implementation reveals that there are wide spread complaints of corruption and pilferage of funds and very low level of utilization of budgeted provision. It has not succeeded in creating sufficient productive assets for strengthening rural infrastructure. It has therefore failed to impact on the poor rural households and if deterioration is not checked, the programme will lose the enthusiasm and momentum generated for the programme in 2006, describing it as a revolutionary project to impact on the life of the poor.

References


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Government of India, Report of the committee on Unemployment, May 1973


