



Assessment of MGNREGA Scheme in Employment Generation, Reducing Rural Poverty and Rural-Urban Migration in India: An Overview

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Abstract:

MGNREGA scheme is the biggest anti-poverty alleviation programme in the world. The act NREGA came into force in 2006 but on 2nd October 2009 it has changed into MGNREGA. Initially, 200 districts were selected for the enforcement of the scheme and in the year 2008, now it is implemented in all 734 districts of the country. The major aims and objective of MGNREGA scheme is to remove rural poverty through generating employment in rural areas, reducing rural-urban migration and to develop rural infrastructure. The main objective of this paper is to know the operational schemes and permissible works and to examine the role of MGNREGA in generating employment opportunities, budget allocation, employment generation state-wise, to examine the current status of MGNREGA in India. The study is based on mainly secondary sources of data. During the financial year 2022-23, the Central Government has allocated INR 61000 Crores. It is evident from the study that Uttar Pradesh has maximum number of workers and Goa state has lowest numbers of workers. The study also reveals that under the MGNREGA scheme Sikkim has pay highest wage INR 381 to the workers and Chhattisgarh state has pay lowest wage INR 193 to the workers. Among the states of India there is huge variation among of wage rate under MGNREGA scheme. The Central Government should promote "One Nation- One Wage" rate for the MGNREGA workers of all the states of India. MGNREGA is considered as a "silver bullet" and a promising boon for improving the standard of living of rural poor peoples. Thus in this 21st century this wonderful flagship scheme become as "backbone of new rural India". The World Bank considered that MGNREGA scheme as a stellar example of rural development and praises it's as world largest public programme as Policy barrier to economic development and poverty alleviation. Thus there is no doubt that MGNREGA scheme play a positive significant role in reducing rural-urban migration, ample employment generation, improving the standard of living of rural poor and alleviating rural poverty. In 21st century now MGNREGA scheme become Digital MGNREGA because every work perform through Digital platform.

Key Words: MGNREGA, Livelihood Security, Poverty Alleviating, Employment Generation, Rural Migration, Digital attendance.

Introduction:

The MGNREGA is a revolutionary step for India's poor citizens. It is the **biggest anti-poverty alleviation programme** in the world. Thus MGNREGA is considered as a "**silver bullet**" for alleviating rural poverty and generating huge employment (Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India). India is a country where majority of its population live in rural areas (almost 68.8 per cent, 2011 Census). The concentration of people living in rural areas has found to have correlation with poverty. Keeping in view the National Rural Employment Guarantee Bill which was passed by Parliament on 7 September, 2005. The act NREGA came into force from 2 February 2006, Initially 200 districts were selected for the enforcement of the scheme with a total budget of 11,300 crore rupees (Ministry of Rural development, Government of India). The NREGA scheme was first started at Bandalpalli village in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh. But in the year 2008, it was implemented in all 640 district of the country. **On 2nd October 2009, the Government of India renamed the NREGA as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)**. 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 unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wages (Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India).

Rural poverty and unemployment in India have grown in an unprecedented manner during the last few decades. There is a growing incidence of illiteracy, blind faith, hungry people, mal-nourished children, anemic pregnant women, farmer suicides, starvation deaths, migration etc. resulting of inadequate in employment, poverty, and the failure of subsistence production during droughts. This minimum wage varies from state to state, in some states it is Rs. 80 whereas in other it is Rs. 125 or Rs. 120. According to the Act the minimum wage cannot be less than Rs. 60. The 100 days of work figure was estimated because the agricultural season is only supposed to last roughly around 250 days and unskilled workers have no alternative source of income in the remaining parts of the year.

The main objective of MGNREGA scheme is to reduce rural poverty and generate huge employments, improve rural infrastructure and reducing rural-urban migration. In general, poverty can be defined as a situation when people are unable to satisfy the basic needs of life. It may be also analyzed by low per capita income and low per capita energy consumption, housing condition, availability of basic amenities and facilities (drinking water, sanitation etc.). **Khan, Ullah and Salluja (2007)**, have discussed the direct and indirect effects of NREGA on employment generation and poverty reduction in local area. For this, a detailed survey was done in a poor agricultural village with 400 households, consisting nearly 2500 people. The survey recorded income and expenditure levels by type of household including large, small and marginal farmers, agricultural labour etc. The study reveals that most of the people do not access the scheme, as they haven't heard of the programme. Almost everyone wants more work from the scheme and better facilities at the work place. **Dey and Bedi (2010)**, studied the functioning of the NREGA between 2006 to 2009 in Birbhum district of West Bengal. Their study reveals that in order to serve as an effective "employment of all last resort" the programme should provide more job during lean season and wages should be paid in timely manner. This study shows that there is universal awareness about NREGA job card have been made available to all those who have applied and NREGA in Birbhum district related information is well maintained and relatively accessible. But there are long delays in wage payments during the first year of the programme, since then the payment lag has declined and is now in the range of 20 days.

Nayak, Behera, and Mishra (2008) conducted their study in 2 districts of Orissa mainly Mayurbhanj and Balasore. NREGA programme was first introduced in 200 most backward districts of the country. During the first phase itself, Mayurbhanj was selected along with other 18 backward districts of the state including KBK (Koraput, Bolangir and Kalahandi) districts. In the next phase, five more districts of Orissa were included under the scheme including Balasore. Mayurbhanj completed 3 years of NREGA implementation while Balasore has completed two years. Both the districts are reported to have achieved certain goals and failed in others. This study shows that the state as a whole as well as the two sample districts are well in certain physical and financial parameters like provision of employment to those who demand jobs and maintenance of wage and non-wage ratio. However their performance in certain other important parameters like utilization of funds and creation of demand for jobs is not very encouraging. While the target is to guarantee 100 days of employment to each household, not many households have achieved this target. According to this report well thought out effort is necessary to address these problems of NREGA in the state.

Taufique and Areful (2017) expressed their view that MGNREGA scheme is the only guarantee wage employment scheme in Malda district of West Bengal. Their study shows that MGNREGA scheme play an important role in alleviating the rural poverty in different block of the district. The researchers suggest that the co-ordination of various segments is very much necessary for successfully implementation of the scheme in Malda district of West Bengal.

MGNREGA is considered as the most significant act in the history of the Indian polity in many ways like grass root level participation of every citizen and beneficiary through democratic process, multilayered social audit and transparency mechanism by involvement of civil society, comprehensive planning at village level towards sustainable and equitable development etc. MGNREGA is considered as a Growth Engine as it brings prosperity in rural economy via increased consumption and demand. The rural people **considered MGNREGA as a promising boon** for improving their standard of living.

History of MGNREGA Scheme

NREGA has come after almost 56 years of experience of other rural employment programmes, which include both Centrally Sponsored Schemes and those launched by State Government. These comprise the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) 1980-89; Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) 1983-89; Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY) 1989-1990; Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) 1993-99; Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) 1999-2002; Sampoorna Grameen Rojgar Yojana 2 (SGRY) from 2001; National Food For Work Programme (NFFWP) from 2004 were national rural employment schemes. Among these, the SGRY and NFFWP have been merged with NREGA in 2005.

Time-line of MGNREGA Scheme

The time line of MGNREGA the scheme got its modifications from the time since the time of its final implementation.

Table 1. 1: Time line of MGNREGA Programme

August 2005	February 2006	April 2007	April 2008	October 2008	16 February 2009	2 nd October 2009
NREGA legalized	Came into force, initially 200 Districts were selected	130 more Districts included	Universalized the scheme to all over India	Wage transaction through banks/post offices	with the postal department MoU	Name of Scheme changed (NREGA to MGNREGA)

Source: Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, 2012-13

The Act got first introduced in 200 most backward districts of the country in Feb 2006. Subsequently, it was proposed to extend to the remaining districts only after 5 years. Later, looking at the popularity of the Act, was extended further to 130 more districts & within a year after the Act got universalized by bringing the entire country under its horizon with the exception of districts that have a hundred per cent urban population & got soon named after

Mahatma Gandhi (on October the 2nd 2009) to make the Act more reachable to the masses and thus it became Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

Goals of MGNREGA Scheme

Long-term objectives of the Act include:

- Enhancement of livelihood security in rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of guarantee wage employment in a financial year to every registered household.
- Creating productive assets
- Protecting the environment
- Reducing rural to urban migration
- Empowering rural women and the poor through the provision of a right-based law.
- Fostering social equity.
- To create strong social safety net for the vulnerable groups by providing employment source, when other alternative are inadequate.
- Community participation
- Creating and maintenance rural infrastructure

Thus MGNREGA has three distinct goals:

- ❖ Protective
- ❖ Preventive and
- ❖ Promotive

It protects the rural poor from vulnerabilities by providing them demand based employment. It prevents risk associated with agricultural investment and forced migration of rural poor. It brings prosperity in rural economy via increased consumption demand. Thus MGNREGA can be considered as a “Growth Engine”.

Objectives of the Study:

The present study has been undertaken with the following objectives-

1. To know the operational mechanism and schemes, types of the works introduced by MGNREGA programme.
2. To find out the role of MGNREGA in employment generating, reducing rural-urban migration, reducing rural poverty in India.
3. To know the weak and strength features of MGNREGA scheme.

Database and Research Methodology

The study is based on **Secondary** sources of data. To fulfill the objectives of the study the relevant data have been collected from Ministry of Rural Development Report 2018-19, Government of India, newspaper, articles, book, Research Journal, etc. The collected data have been processed and analyzed keeping the objectives in mind.

Salient features of MGNREGA

(i) Right based-frame work

- All adult members of a rural household willing to do unskilled manual work have the right to demand employment.
- The GP after due verification will issue a job card.
- After verification, the GP will issue a job card (contain details of the member) to the household with photograph free of cost within 15 days of application.

(ii) Time bound guarantee of employment

- Employment will be provided by the GP within 15 days of work application, else unemployment allowance will be paid.

- A household may avail to 100 days of guaranteed employment in a financial year, depending on its need.

(iii) Permissible works

- Water conservation; drought proofing (including plantation & Afforestation); flood protection; land development; minor irrigation.

(iv) Labour intensive works

- A ratio of 60:40 will be maintained between wage and material.
- Contractors/machinery is not permitted. Payment of wages:
- Wages will be paid at the wage earners through their bank/post office accounts.
- Payment of wages to be made in every week and in any case not later than a fortnight.

(v) Decentralization

- Gram Sabha (local community) will recommend works to be taken up.
- Gram Panchyat will execute at least 50% of work.
- PRI will have a principal role in planning, monitoring and implementation.

(vi) Work site management and facilities

- Work should be provided within 5 km radius of the village.
- In case the number of children below the age of 6 years accompanying the women working at any site is 5 or more, provisions shall be made to assign one women worker to look after such children. The person assigned for this shall be paid the statutory minimum wage.
- Thus drinking water, first-aid and shade are to be provided on the work sites.
- Timely measurement to be ensured.

(vii) Women empowerment

- At least one-third of the workers should be women.
- Equal wages will be provided to both men & women.

(viii) Transparency and Accountability

- Proactive disclosure of information.
- Social Audit by the Gram Sabha is compulsory.
- Regular monitoring at all levels.
- Grievance redressal mechanism is to be set up.

(ix) Funding

- 100% wage cost is borne by Central Govt. 25% Material cost is born by the State Govt. Unemployment allowance is borne by State Govt.

(x) Digital Attendance: Digital capture attendance through mobile application through National Mobile Monitoring System (NMSS) App.

(xi) DBT Mode Payment: Direct Benefit Transfer account payee through Aadhar to reducing corruption and other malpractices.

Operational Mechanism of MGNREGA Scheme

MGNREGA has a five-tier structure of implementation starting from Central Government at the top to the bottom level at Gram Panchyat.

Central Government (First Tier)

At the top of the hierarchy comes the Central Government. The Ministry of Rural Development, New Delhi is the nodal agency for MGNREGA implementation. It has the responsibility to set up Central Employment Guarantee Council for receiving advice on MGNREGA implementation. It may also undertake independent evaluation and monitoring of the scheme. It has the responsibility to prepare the budget and disburse funds to all the states.

State Government (Second Tier)

Next in hierarchy is the state government which acts as a facilitator in the flow of MGNREGA funds and helping in preparation of manpower. It has the responsibility to set up the State Employment Guarantee Council. The latter has the role to advice the government from time to time on MGNREGA implementation in the state. Besides, the council is also entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring and evaluation of the MGNREGA in the state.

District Panchyat or Zila Parishad (Third Tier)

District Panchyat, in addition to implementing non-mandatory works, coordinates MGNREGA activities at the district level through “**District Project Coordinator**”. Besides, it has the responsibility to prepare both the district annual plan and the five-year perspective plan. These two plan documents are the bases which guide the implementation of MGNREGA at the village level. These documents are prepared at the district level in consultation with the GP and block Panchyat.

Block Panchyat or Panchyat Samiti (Fourth Tier)

The rest 50% may be undertaken either by the block Panchyat or the district Panchyat or both. Block Panchyat monitors and coordinates the plans and works at the block level under the supervision of Programme Officer, “**Block Development Officer (BDO)**”. Computer updating of MGNREGA works, muster roll entries, etc.

Gram Panchyat at Village level (Fifth Tier)

Gram Panchyat is the nodal agency at the bottom level that has the authority to select, design and implement 50% of the works. Selection of works, monitoring and supervision are done by the Gram Sabha (village council). Gram Panchyat has the responsibility to register households, issue job cards, receive applications for employment, provide employment and monitor the MGNREGA works under the supervision of Gram Pradhan and all members. It is the most important tier.

Permissible Works under MGNREGA Scheme:

The works under MGNREGA scheme are-

- Renovation of traditional water bodies and desalting (ponds, lakes, rivers, well, etc.)
- Water conservation and water harvesting.
- Development of irrigational canals including micro and minor irrigation works.
- Land development, leveling of ground, dumping of ground holes.
- Flood control and protection works, drainage in water logged areas.
- Rural connectivity works (like construction roads, bridges).
- Massive Afforestation on public places and river erosion areas.
- Wetland protection and management
- Rural Infrastructural Construction and Development (Such as Anganwadi building for community, construction of Gram Panchyat bhavan for community, Construction of SHGs buildings and house for community, construction and Maintaince of food grain storage buildings, Construction of toilet under Nirmal Bahart Abhiyan)
- Construction of PMAY-G house for individuals,
- Any other works which may be notified by the Central Government and State Government (i.e. *Swacch Bharat Abhiyan, Namami Ganga Clean programme*) with the consolation of the State Government.

Table 1. 2: Budget allocation of MGNREGA Scheme, India (2008-09 to 2022-23)

Financial Year	Rupees INR (In Crores)
2008-09	48000
2009-10	39100
2010-11	40100
2011-12	41615
2012-13	33000
2013-14	33000
2014-15	34500

2015-16	34699
2016-17	38500
2017-18	48000
2018-19	55000
2019-20	60000
2020-21	61500
2021-22	98000
2022-23	89154
2023-24	61000

Source: nrega.nic.in, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, Report, 2022-23

Table 1. 2 shows that MGNREGA scheme was first time universalize in all the states of India during the year 2008-09. This scheme was introduced by UPA (United Progressive Alliance) Government with a total budget of INR 48000 Crores and with the passage of time the fund allocated to this scheme is slightly an increase and during the financial year 2022-23 the NDA (National Democratic Alliance) government has allocated a total budget of INR 61000 crores.

Table 1.3: Current Status of MGNREGA Scheme in India, 2022-23

Total Number of district under MGNREGA scheme	734
Total Number of Block under MGNREGA scheme	7154
Total Number of Gram Panchyat (GP) under MGNREGA scheme	270,195
Total Numbers of Job cards issued (in Crores)	15.76
Total Numbers of Workers (in Crores)	29,22,43, 080
Total Numbers of Active Job Cards (in Crores)	9.99
Total numbers of active workers (in Crores)	15,06,83,744
SC Workers against Active Workers (%)	19.84
ST Workers against Active Workers (%)	16.39

Source: nrega.nic.in, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, Report, 2022-23

Table 1.3 shows that In our country among the 734 districts, 7154 blocks, 270,195 Gram Panchyat MGNEGRA scheme is smoothly regulating and working successfully. A total 15.79 Crores Job cards are issued during the year 2022-23.

Role of MGNREGA Scheme in Employment Generation and Eradicating Poverty, Reducing Rural-Urban Migration in India:

The primary aim of MGNREGA is to generate ample employment in countryside area. Thus MGNREGA scheme has truly played a significant role in employment generation in every states of India as per the population of state. As per Table 1.4 we clearly say that Uttar Pradesh state has maximum employment generate and Goa states has lowest employment generate state under MGNREGA scheme. On the other hand poverty is closely associated with the unemployment. The states like Jharkhand, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and North-Eastern states has maximum poverty found. Moreover, still rural-urban migration has maximum take place. The states like Maharashtra, Gujrat, Punjab, Haryana, Karnataka, Gujarat, Kerala, and Goa are in migrate states from the less develop and poor states like Jharkhand, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and North-Eastern states. Thus still MGNREGA scheme is not fully achieved its objectives and vision.

Table 1. 4: State wise Employment Generation under MGNREGA scheme In India

Name of State	Employment Generation (In Lakhs)
West Bengal	296.42
Andhra Pradesh	138.75
Bihar	250.68
Haryana	21.96
Jharkhand	106.11
Madhya Pradesh	182.51
Meghalaya	12.72
Odisha	131.19
Sikkim	0.5
Uttar Pradesh	310.68
Goa	0.5
Arunachal Pradesh	5.07
Chattisgarh	95.22
Himachal Pradesh	27.35

Karnataka	181.54
Maharashtra	274.51
Mizoram	2.29
Punjab	28.07
Tamilnadu	134.79
Uttarakhand	18.29
Telengana	105.88
Assam	118.11
Gujrat	100.16
Jammu and Kashmir	24.02
Kerala	62.27
Manipur	10.09
Nagaland	7.56
Rajasthan	259.45
Tripura	12.21

Source: nrega.nic.in, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, Report, 2022-23

Table 1.5: State-wise Wage Rate per Day of MGNREGA unskilled Manual Workers, 2022-23

Name of State	Wage Rate Per Day for Work under MGNREGA Scheme (INR)
West Bengal	213
Andhra Pradesh	245
Bihar	198
Haryana	315
Jharkhand	198
Madhya Pradesh	193
Meghalaya	226
Odisha	215
Sikkim	381
Uttar Pradesh	204
Goa	294
Arunachal Pradesh	212
Chattisgarh	193
Himachal Pradesh	254
Karnataka	289
Maharashtra	298
Mizoram	233
Punjab	269
Tamilnadu	273
Uttarakhand	204
Telengana	245
Assam	224
Gujrat	229
Jammu and Kashmir	214
Kerala	291
Manipur	251
Nagaland	212
Rajasthan	221
Tripura	212

Source: nrega.nic.in, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, Report, 2022-23

Table 1.5 shows that there is some huge margin variation in wage rate of MGNREGA worker among all the states of India. As per Table 1.5. Ministry of Rural Development, Report, 2022-23 Sikkim state has pay maximum wage to the MGREGA worker that is INR 381 per day and Chattisgarh state has pay lowest wage to the MGNREGA worker that is only INR 193 per day .

Challenges and Opportunities of MGNREGA Scheme in India:

These are the following challenges have been faced for ensuring successful implementation of MGNREGA Scheme in our country.

1. In our country with more than 65 per cent of population belonging to deprive and marginalized sections of the society i.e., SC, ST, OBC and minorities community. This along with the low literacy rate resulted people having little knowledge about the aims and objectives of MGNREGA programme in the study area.
2. The employment generation is not maintained properly. On the contrary, some people who are in need for employment are excluded in the study area.
3. Delay of the payment to the MGNREGA workers in the study area.
4. Failure of the authority to job provided to the MGNREGA job card holder.
5. Delay in opening of account in the banks to job card holder under the DBT (Direct Benefit transfer) for the payment of workers.
6. Most of the works are unskilled, arduous and monotonous and machines are not allowed in any works.
7. There is works discrimination with regard to provide employment among the SC, ST, OBC, minority and women's in the MGNREGA schemes in the study area.
8. The wages rate (per day) is very low, provided by MGNREGA scheme.
9. The unemployment allowance rate is not properly distributed to the workers under the MGNREGA Schemes in the study area.
10. The works site facility is very less attention. There is lack of drinking water facility, lacks of First -Aid box etc. under this scheme in the study area.

Conclusion:

Through MGNREGA scheme, first time rural women's have got assured employment. Our country India is well known for its "Unity in Diversity" although in every states of India has different wage rate. The Central Government should be pay attention like "**One Nation-One Wage**" under MGNREGA scheme workers wage. The Central Government should increase the MGNREGA workers wage rate, provision of at least 200 days of work to the BPL (Below Poverty Line) and landless family and Women's as against 100 days of work. The Central Government should be appointing a brand Ambassador of MGNREGA programme for better promotion of this scheme. The Government should allow using Contractors and Machines in some cases at work site facilities areas.

In 21st century, MGNREGA scheme become Digital MGNREGA because every work perform through Digital platform. MGNREGA is not only a welfare initiative scheme but also a development effort that change the rural society into a new prosperity. Lastly we must have faith in our former Prime Minister Dr. Man Mohan Singh who describes it as "**A landmark in our history in removing rural poverty from the face of the nation**". No doubt this world biggest Anti-poverty scheme plays a positive significant role in ample employment generation, alleviating rural poverty and reducing the rural- urban migration from India. The BIMARU States like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh are also well performed in this flag schemes. Thus this wonderful flagship scheme become as "**backbone of new rural India**". The World Bank considered that **MGNREGA scheme as a stellar example of rural development and praises it's as world largest public programme as Policy barrier to economic development and poverty alleviation..**

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