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Stakeholder's Opinion To Reduce Constraints in Implementation to Make Mgnregs Work

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ABSTRACT

The study was undertaken in Thane district of Maharashtra to elicit the constraints perceived by the stakeholders involved from village to district levels in effective implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and their opinion to overcome these constraints. The study revealed that the constraints perceived by majority of beneficiaries were late payment of wages, non-payment of wages in the form of grains, non- provision of 100 days work, long distances of work sites and delay in allotment of works and their suggestions to overcome these problems were timely payment of wages, payment of wages in cash and grains, fulfillment of 100 days employment guarantee, provision of works through Gram Panchayat nearer to the residence and timely allotment of works. The constraints perceived by majority of People's Representatives were illiteracy of the people, absence of Village Monitoring Committee, lack of co-operation and conflicts between groups of people, allocation of less number of works through Gram Panchayat, and limited work activities to be under taken in MGNREGS which may not be available at the village level. The constraints perceived by majority of Officials from village to district levels involved in MGNREGS implementation were non- availability of staff on contract basis, non-availability of funds in time and more and weak documentation.

KEYWORDS: Beneficiaries, Constraints, MGNREGS, Opinion, Stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment and poverty are strongly related and hinder the economic growth and development of the country. In India, these two problems are severe in rural areas, leaving it outside the growth path. A substantial reduction in poverty can be achieved only if there is determined effort on the distribution of income and consumption in favour of poorer sections of the population. This call for significant increase in employment opportunities in rural areas. In accordance, National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) has been launched in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh on 2nd February, 2006, with effect from 1st April, 2006 in 200 drought prone and backward districts in India. Thus, NREGS covered the entire country with the exception of districts that have a hundred percent urban population. The Government of India on 2nd October, 2009 renamed its flagship rural job guarantee programme- National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

The revolutionary programme provides legal right of employment to rural candidates- an exclusive feature which differentiates it from routine schemes, aiming to eliminate poverty and generate employment. At a time when the world is facing one of the worst food crises ever witnessed, it becomes extremely pertinent to look at the effectiveness of the MGNREGA in providing both short and long term food security through work on improvement of agriculture and provision of water. There have been a number of studies that look at the effective implementation of the act in terms of employment created as well as issues of wages, processes of implementation, feedback mechanisms, assessment of the impact of the MGNREGA in terms of the realization of its development potential, etc. Yet, the potential of MGNREGA in reaching the rural poor is unsurpassed as it is now being implemented in all the districts of India. There is thus an urgent need to study the success of the employment guarantee scheme, lacunae and drawbacks if any and mechanism to address them. In this context the present investigation was carried out with an objective to elicit the constraints perceived by the stakeholders from village to district levels in effective implementation of MGNREGS and their opinion to overcome these constraints.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted by following descriptive research design in randomly selected ten villages of purposively selected five talukas of Thane district of Maharashtra. A sample of 90 beneficiaries selected randomly by following disproportionate random sampling procedure. The concerned People's Representatives and officials involved in the implementation of MGNREGS at various levels such as district, taluka and village were selected through census method for the study. The People's Representatives (20) like Sarpanch, Vice-Sarpanch of each village were selected for the study. The officials (31) involved in implementation of MGNREGS at various levels like Joint Programme Coordinator at district level, Programme Officer, Assistant Programme Officer, Engineer and Computer Operator at taluka level and Gram Rozgar Sevak at village level were selected for the study. Data was collected through well structured interview schedule. The collected data was coded, classified and tabulated. Finally, Arithmetic Mean, Standard Deviation, Frequency and Percentage were used for drawing conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Constraints Perceived by the Beneficiaries

Table 1 clearly showd that the constraints perceived by selected MGNREGS beneficiaries during the implementation of MGNREGS. Majority (94.44%) of selected MGNREGS beneficiaries reported their problem as a late payment of wages. This might be due the non release of funds available with district administration in time. The MGNREGS consists of various procedures which makes delay in payment of wages. The study area was 100 per cent tribal area. The tribal people depend on daily earning for nourishing their family. But, the daily payment of wages was not possible to workers in MGNREGS. Another problem expressed by large number (84.44%) of beneficiaries is nonpayment of wages in the form of grains. This problem specially mentioned by female workers because the payment in cash forms leads to increase drinking habits in male. They used to spend more than 50 per cent of income on drinking liquor. If the major part of wages is in the form of grain, then they will bring it to home which enhances the food security to their families. The non provision of 100 days work (82.22%) was the another problem in that area. This might be due to stoppage of works due the conflicts between people's groups. The officials were not willing to go there and provide works to them. The demand for works based o measurements was less because the tribal people used to do work on hours basis not on the basis of measurements. They didn't want heavy works. They were habituated of the money without work. Sometimes they registered their names only for getting unemployment allowance. Long distances of work sites (66.67%) might be due non availability of works within the village. Non- payment of 10% extra wages for works outside the 5km. radius (34.44%) because of unawareness of the people. They were not demanding and officials also neglecting.

The non-provision of crèche facility (28.89%) to female beneficiaries is due to children below the age of 5 years at worksites not exceeding 5. The women used to keep their children at home only instead of bring-

ing them to worksites. The poor worksite facilities (21.11%) like unavailability of primary aids due to lack of sufficient fund or negligence of officials.

A small number (20.00%) of MGNREGS beneficiaries expressed no opportunity to get employment more than 100 days as a problem. The act provides only 100 days employment guarantee. The district administration can't extend this limit without orders received from central government. The sampling area was 100 per cent tribal area. The agricultural and industrial development was very poor. There was extreme shortage of water for agricultural purpose. Hence, except kharif season there was no any source of employment for them. They used to migrate at least six month in the year to nearby urban areas of the Thane, Nashik, Pune districts. The MGNREGS provides only 100 days employment which was not sufficient for them. That's why the still migration of people was going on.

Constraints Perceived by the Officials

Table 2 clearly indicated that the constraints perceived by selected officials during the implementation of MGNREGS were illiteracy of the people (100.00%) might be due to insistence on transparency in MGNREGS and non willingness of these people to improve their living standards followed by non- availability of staff on contract basis (100.00%) might be due to low salaries, need to stay in villages and no certainty of its continuation, non availability of funds in time (90.32%) might be due to procedural delays, more and weak documentation (80.65%) might be due to the lot of time it is consuming in subjecting them to mental agony, delay in payment of wages to the workers (77.42%) might be due to complicated procedural norms, lack of timely training (64.52%) might be due to paucity of experienced staff to train them, under payment of salaries to MGNREGS staff (64.52%) might be due to less amount of funds available towards administrative cost, lack of co-operation from people's groups and social organisations (51.61%) might be due to pub he outlook as this being a government scheme, lack of technical facilities (48.39%) might be due to revelry of MGNREGS conceived, bogus registration of families (41.94%) might be due to lack of proper supervision, lack co-operation from the implementing agencies like agricultural department, forest department, etc. (32.26%) might be due to multifunctionaries works they have to concentrate and no administrative and financial powers transferred to JPC from DPC (19.35%) and poor infrastructure facilities at JPC office (3.23%) might be due to initial teething problem of MGNREGS implementation, respectively.

These findings were in agreement with the findings of Chathukulam and Gireesan (2007), Ambasta *et. al.* (2008), Gladson (2008), Dutta (2009) and Kohli (2009).

Opinions of Beneficiaries for Reducing Constraints

The study revealed that the opinions given by selected MGNREGS beneficiaries to overcome the constraints perceived by them during the implementation of MGNREGS. Majority of the beneficiaries reported their opinion as timely payment of wages (94.44%). The timely payment of wages will be made possible when the MGNREGS procedures simplified. Due to more documentation the timely payment of wages is not taking place. Another reason was the lack of timely availability of fund from district administration. Payment of wages in cash and grains (84.44%) was the suggestion specially mentioned by female workers because the payment in grain forms leads to increase the food security to their families. The fulfillment of 100 days employment guarantee (82.22%) requires identification of more works at Gram Panchayat level without any limitation with regard to the types of work to be taken up under MGNREGS. The development of school buildings, primary health centers in tribal areas will help to improve the life of people. The more number of water conservation works helps to increase the water availability for agricultural purpose. Provision of works through Gram Panchayat nearer to the residence (66.67%) was another suggestion to overcome the problem of long distance of worksites. Timely allotment of works (36.67%) in order to avoid delay in provision of works.

Due to temporary appointments of officials at various levels of implementation of MGNREGS, they are not willing to do work carefully and enthusiastically. Hence, sometime they are not willing to offer all benefits of MGNREGS to workers. The provision of timely fund at various levels and permanent appointments of officials helps to improve the effective implementation of MGNREGS. Payment of extra wages for long distance work sites (34.44%), provision of crèche facility (28.89%), provision of necessary work site facilities and provision of sufficient employment in their own village (21.11% each), grievance redressal mechanism should be nearer (18.89%), registration should be open in the Gram Panchayat on an ongoing basis (14.44%), payment of wages should be according to kind of works (3.33%) and timely payment of unemployment allowance (1.11%) were the opinions of least significance.

Opinions of Officials for Reducing Constraints

The results revealed that the opinions given by selected officials to overcome the constraints perceived by them during the implementation of MGNREGS were organisation of literacy programmes like "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan" at village level (100.00%) might be due to problem posed by illiteracy in the effective implementation of MGNREGS followed by appointment of adequate trained staff on permanent basis (100.00%) might be due to technicalities involved in the implementation of MGNREGS programme, timely allocation of sufficient funds (90.32%) might be due to it is key for timely payment of wages, synchronization of related documents (80.65%) in order to reduce delay in payment of wages, timely training to the staff in accordance with their needs (77.42%) might be due to ensuring the proper implementation of MGNREGS, extending the 4 per cent limit of administrative cost (64.52%) in order to increase the salaries of MGNREGS staff, organisation of Gram Sabha weekly (64.52%) might be for achieving better cooperation from the people and solving their problems, appointment of separate MGNREGS staff at village level for 20-25 Villages (58.06%) for proper documentation and timely payment of wages, opening of postal accounts of those who are on work instead of all registered families (58.06%) might be due to overcome the problem of tedious documentation and bogus registration of families, provision of technical facilities (51.61%) in order to maintain large amount of data of beneficiaries, collection of fine for bogus registration on par with unemployment allowance (48.39%) in order to check offensive happenings and effective implementation of MGNREGS, division of works among line and staff departments (41.94%) for early execution of works and better cooperation, organisation of capacity building sessions to elected members and officials through training sessions and exposure visits (19.35%) might be due to knowing and adopting good practices at other places, giving sufficient administrative and financial powers to JPC (19.35%) in order to avoid delay in execution of MGNREGS works and strengthening of JPC Office (3.23%) might be due to bringing administration nearer to people, respectively.

Opinions of People's Representatives for Effective Implementation of MGNREGS

The study clearly indicated that the opinions given by selected People's Representatives for effective implementation of MGNREGS were organisation of literacy programmes like "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan" at village level (100.00%) might be due to the impending problem of illiteracy to the implementation of MGNREGS followed by obtaining people's co-operation in solving the conflicts among them through Gram Sabha (100.00%) might be due to the lack of persuasion on behalf of MGNREGS implementing agency while implementing the programme, setting up of Village Monitoring Committee for better supervision (95.00%) might be due to the lack of involvement of people to promote transparency, allocation of more than 50 per cent of works through Gram Panchayat (90.00%) might be due to the allotments of more works through only Panchayat Samitee, introduction of 'Wage Subsidy' to the farming community by applying MGNREGS workforce (85.00%) might be keeping in view the prevailing dissatisfaction among the big farmers as the farm wage rates increased, MGNREGS making agriculture further non-remunerative and also to make identification of MGNREGS works easier, enhancing minimum limit of 14 days and maximum limit of 100 days employment guarantee to higher side might be due to the life sustenance and as well as taking up income generation activities becomes difficult as the cost of living escalating day by day, appointment of trained technical staff at village level on permanent basis (65.00%) might be due to the identification of works and their documentation is becoming difficult and timely supervision at block and district levels (65.00%) might be due to check corruption and diversion of funds, respectively.

Keeping in view the above said constraints and opinions the strategies were developed for effective implementation of MGNREGS towards overall development of the rural people are efforts must be made to improve the literacy among the people through programmes like "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan", build large scale citizen's awareness campaigns for

generating demand side of MGNREGA, improve institutional capacities of Gram Panchayat, introduction of 'Wage Subsidy' to the farming community by applying MGNREGS workforce, timely allocation of fund at various levels of implementation of MGNREGS, efforts must be made to organise capacity building sessions to PR Functionaries about the programme and its monitoring through training sessions, exposure visits and sharing of good practices, appointments of adequate trained staff at various levels of implementation of MGNREGS specially, at the village level on permanent basis, the pro- active planning for effective engagement of block and district Panchayats in order to achieve better cooperation between them and line departments in the implementation of MGNREGS, adequate attention to strengthen Village Monitoring and Vigilance Committee, flexibility for technical sanction of civil works and audit of accounts through competent private professionals, improved technological options for performance and monitoring, establishment of information resource centres and helpline in collaboration with civil society organizations and it has been observed during the survey that unemployed youths in the villages are showing more interest to work under MGNREGS. Hence, MGNREGS should be continued in order to facilitate them towards gainful employment.

CONCLUSION

A number of Centrally Sponcered Schemes have been implemented under Rural Development Mission and welfare of the poor. But, MGNREGA is one of the unique experiment undertaken in India to eradicate poverty. The scheme has been launched to supplant the error and gaps of all previous schemes with the involvement of Panchayats, civil society and local administration. Poor families were targated to get benefits of employment and livelihood to supplement their family income with saturation concept. As a whole, MGNREGA is an important step towards realization of the right to work. It is expected to enhance people's livelihood security on a sustained basis by developing economic and social infrastructure in rural areas. One of the most distinguishing features of the MGNREGS is its approach towards empowering citizens to play an active role in the implementation of employment guarantee schemes, through gram sabha, social audit, participatory planning and other activities.

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