



Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act: A Path Breaking for Rural Household

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ABSTRACT

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a flagship programme of Government of India. The Act was notified initially in 200 most backward districts of the country w.e.f. February 02, 2006 and subsequently extended all over India in two phases. The programme aims at enhancing livelihood security of the rural poor by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The Act seeks to create durable assets and strengthen the livelihood resource base of the rural poor. This paper looks at The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act's (MGNREGA) generation of employment and benefits of the rural households in India.

This is prepared based on the information collected for the Major Research project funded by the ICSSR. We personally thank the ICSSR for being funded for us to execute the work.

KEYWORDS : NREGA, Rural Development, Employment.

INTRODUCTION

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was part of the commitments made by the united Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in its Common Minimum Programme and came in to force in February 2006-initially in 200 selected districts, at one each one state .It has been hailed as a landmark and has attracted national and international attention .It has diverse objectives. On the one hand it is a social protection measure and builds on the experience of previous public programmes, especially the employment guarantee scheme (EGS) .On the other hand, through providing guarantee employment in rural areas.

THE NREGA ACT-A BRIEF OVERVIEW

The NREGS offers hundred days of work to unemployed families in rural areas.

The two conditions for the adults of a household to apply are:

1. They must be living in a rural area.
2. They must be willing to undertake unskilled manual labour for which they would receive the minimum wage.

The details that need to be furnished are their name, age and address. These are submitted to the Gram Panchayat, which issues the household their job card, which contains details of adult members of the household. All registered members of the household are then entitled to a maximum of 100 days employment for the entire household in a given financial year. Applicants who are provided with employment are informed in writing, by means of a letter sent to the address given in the job card and by a public notice displayed at the Panchayat Offices at the district, intermediate or village level.

As far as possible, the work site is to be within a five km radius of the applicant's village- in case it is not, it must be provided within the Block and the labourers must be paid 10 % of their wages as extra wages to meet the additional travel and living expenses. Facilities of safe drinking water, periods of rest, first-aid box with adequate material for emergency treatment for minor injuries and other health hazards connected with the work being performed are to be provided at the work site. In case the number of children below the age of six years accompanying the women working at any site is five or more, provisions shall be made to depute one such woman to look after the children. She will be paid the wage rate. The wages are to be paid within 14 days. Working hours are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with a lunch break from 1 p.m. to p.m. The Officials responsible for implementing the NREGA are:

1. The District Programme Coordinator who is the Chief Executive Officer of the District Panchayat or the Collector of the District.
2. The Programme Officer-a person who is not below the rank of Block Development Officer. The Programme Officer shall be responsible for matching the demand for employment with the employment opportunities arising from projects in the area under his jurisdiction.
3. The Gram Panchayat, which shall be responsible for identification of the of the projects in the Gram Panchayat area to be taken up under a Scheme as per the recommendations of the Gram Sabha and the Ward Sabhas and for executing and supervising such works. The Gram Panchayat shall make available all relevant documents including the muster rolls, bills, vouchers, measurement books, copies of sanction orders and other connected books of account and papers to the Gram Sabha for the purpose of conducting the social audit.
4. The Gram Sabha shall monitor the execution of works within the Gram Panchayat and conduct regular social audits of all the projects under the Scheme taken up within the Gram Panchayat.

The minimum wage varies from state to state-for instance. Whereas in the neighboring Union Territory of Pondicherry it is Rs.125. 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 Central Government provides the funds for the wages and for 3/4th of the material costs. No machinery is used. The State Government pays for ¼ of the material cost. Also, if after receipt of an application, the person isn't given work within 15 days, then he is eligible to an unemployment allowance for each day after the 15 days when he isn't employed until the State finds work for him. This unemployment allowance cannot be less than 1/4th of the wage rate in the first 30 days of the financial year and 3/4th of the wage rate in the remaining period of the financial year. The State Government has to bear the cost of the unemployment allowance.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- 1) To take an overview of the Mahatma Gandhi.
- 2) To study the benefits and scope of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA

METHODOLOGY

This study uses mainly secondary data. The sources of the data are published and unpublished sources from the DRDA office reports books, records, journals, magazines, publications, reports and so on.

THE MAHATMA GANDHI NREGA IMPERATIVE FEATURES

The main features are as follows:

(a) Job assignment process

The process for job assignment for an unemployment worker in rural India under MGNREGA is as follows:

- Any adult person of a rural household can apply to his „Gram Panchayat for an employment for unskilled manual work.
- The Gram Panchayat after a verification of an applicant will issue a job card.
- The households can submit a written application to Gram Panchayat mentioning the number of days the household seeks to work under the scheme.
- The Gram Panchayat issues a receipt to the household mentioning the guarantee to offer work within 15 days. The household is entitled to get unemployment allowance if the state government is failed to provide a job within 15 days
- Once the household starts working it should get the payments on weekly basis not later than fortnight.

b) Works allotted under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA

Table1: Works conducted under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA

Sr.No	Area of Work	Type of Work
1	Watershed related works	Contour trenches, Counter bunds, Boulder checks, Farm bunding, Gabion structures, underground dykes, Earthen dams, Dugout farm ponds, stop dams.
2	Watershed related works in mountain regions	Spring shed development
3	Agriculture related works	NADEP composting, Vermi composting, Liquid bio- manures
4	Livestock-related works	Poultry shelter, Goat shelter, construction of pucca (permanent) floor urine tank and fodder trough for cattle, Azolla as cattle – feed supplement
5	Fisheries related	Fisheries in seasonal water bodies on public land
6	Works in coastal areas	Fish drying yards, construction of storm water drains for coastal protection, Belt vegetation.
7	Rural drinking water related works	Soak pits, Recharge Pit
8	Rural Sanitation	Individual household latrines, School toilet units, anganwadi toilets, solid and liquid waste management
9	Flood Management	Deepening and repair of flood channels, chaur renovation

10	Irrigation Command related works	Rehabilitation of minor's, sub minors and field channels
11	Rural Connectivity	Stone Kharanja or brick kharanja, cement concrete and cement inter lock n
12	Land Development	Private land owned by Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe or Below Poverty Line families (BPL

Source : MoRD, 'Report of the Committee on Revision of MGNREGA Operational guidelines', Ministry of Rural Development, 2012.

(c) Coverage of the scheme

- In phase I, it was introduced in 200 of the most backward district of the country.
- It was implemented in an additional 130 districts in phase II, 2007-2008
- The Act was notified in the remaining rural districts of India from April 1, 2008 in phase III.

(d) Funding agencies and Fund transfer

The funding of the scheme is done by central and state governments. The central government assists for whole cost of wages of unskilled workers. It also bears the administrative charges related to scheme. The state government is entitled to provide unemployment allowance to the households in case if the village panchayat does not give the employment in stipulated time. The central assistance is directly provided to the implementing agencies at district level.

From 2006-07 the ministry has shifted to e-payment mode which involves core banking system network with Real time Gross Settlement (RTGS) mode. The funds are released to district rural development agencies by the Ministry of Rural Development.

(e) Main initiatives to strengthen effectiveness, transparency and efficiency to the scheme

• Information, Education and Communication (IEC) initiatives

The ministry has been involved in various activities towards creating consciousness amongst rural population concerning the scheme. It conducts one day orientation program with all Sarpanches, arranges Gram Sabha and promotes the scheme by using local news papers, media like print, TV, radio preferably in regional languages. Also it motivates NGOs, SHGs to take active participation in consciousness creation. A monthly magazine Kurukshetra and News letter Grameen Bharat (a monthly magazine published by Ministry of Rural Development) helps in creating demand for programme like Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.

• Formation of Ombudsman

One of the main problems with workers in the complaints related to wages. Consequently all states are supposed to form Ombudsman to solve the complaints. Almost 50 percent of states have operationalized the ombudsman. The functioning of the same is as follows.

• Social Audits

It is made obligatory that all Gram Panchayat must conduct at least one social audit in six months. It is also advised that, all the elected members and staff be there in the Gram Sabha. The summary of finding of social audit should be submitted to the state and the state is guide to frontward it to Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

• Payment system

For efficient and transparent payments to workers, the ministry is emphasizing all the payment to be made through banks and post offices.

MGNREGA: A Path Breaking For Rural Household

The main objective of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is to meet employment demand. The number of households provided employment is 4.48 crore in financial year 2012-13.

Table:2 State-wise Average Person Days of Employment Per Household (2006-07 to 2011-12)

States	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Andhra Pradesh	31	42	48	66	54	56
Arunachal Pradesh	27	62	43	25	23	16
Assam	72	35	40	34	26	26
Bihar	35	22	26	28	34	38
Chhattisgarh	56	58	55	51	45	44
Goa	-	-	-	28	27	28
Gujarat	44	31	25	37	45	38
Haryana	48	50	42	38	36	39
Himachal Pradesh	47	36	46	57	49	52
Jammu & Kashmir	27	24	40	38	42	45
Jharkhand	37	45	48	49	42	39
Karnataka	41	36	32	57	49	42
Kerala	21	33	22	36	41	45
Madhya Pradesh	69	63	57	56	50	42
Maharashtra	41	39	46	51	44	47
Manipur	100	43	75	73	68	61
Meghalaya	25	39	38	49	58	49
Mizoram	15	35	73	95	97	73
Nagaland	47	22	68	87	95	67
Odisha	57	37	36	40	49	33
Punjab	49	39	27	28	27	26
Rajasthan	85	77	76	69	52	47
Sikkim	59	44	51	80	85	60
Tamil Nadu	27	52	36	55	54	48
Tripura	67	43	64	80	67	86
Uttar Pradesh	32	33	52	65	52	36
Uttarakhand	30	42	35	35	42	42
West Bengal	14	25	26	45	31	26
All-India	43	42	48	54	47	42

Source: MIS data from MGNREGA website (http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/mpr_ht/nregampr.aspx, accessed on 7 February 2013).

Table: 3

Total job card issued	1.18 Crore	4.48 Crore	10.01 Crore	11.25 Crore	11.94 Crore	13.39 Crore	13.59 Crore
Employment provided to households	2.10 Crore	1.39 Crore	4.31 Crore	1.24 Crore	3.40 Crore	3.04 Crore	4.18 Crore
Person days (in Crore)							
Total	66.1	143.59	278.32	263.59	227.15	214.34	163.58
SCs:	23.95 (25%)	139.36 (27%)	69.36 (25%)	88.45 (33%)	71.74 (31%)	41.70 (22%)	38.05 (23%)
STs:	32.98 (49%)	42.07 (29%)	55.02 (19%)	58.74 (22%)	53.63 (23%)	38.59 (18%)	38.59 (16%)
Women	38.40 (49%)	61.15 (43%)	103.37 (37%)	136.40 (51%)	122.74 (53%)	103.81 (48%)	86.42 (52%)
Others:	11.58 (17%)	42.16 (29%)	97.98 (35%)	118.20 (44%)	131.78 (58%)	128.04 (60%)	102.71 (62%)
Person days per HH	4.14days	4.03days	4.14days	5.14days	4.1days	4.1days	5.6days
Budget Outlay	11300	12000	30000	38100	40300	40000	33800
Central	8640.8	12617.39	29939.60	33506.61	35758.93	29189.77	26333.06
States/UTs Rs Crore:							
Total available fund including O&M Rs Crore:	12075.55	15905.81	37597.06	49279.19	54172.14	48812.49	43464.26
Expenditure in Rs Crore (Percentage against available fund)	8423.3 (69%)	15856.80 (82%)	27550.10 (73%)	37905.23 (76%)	39377.27 (73%)	38014.70 (78%)	29422.22 (68%)
Expenditure on Wages (in Rs Crore) (66%)	5942.3 (77%)	10738.41 (68%)	18200.03 (67%)	25579.32 (70%)	25686.53 (68%)	24880.91 (69%)	19127.10 (71%)
Total works taken up (in Lakhs)	8.33	17.88	27.73	48.17	56.99	82.31	64.34
Works Completed	8.33	8.22	12.14	22.59	22.90	18.56	11.83

The above table shows that MGNREGA offers hundred days of work to unemployed rural households with excellent wages and welfare schemes, hence the average person days of employment per household in rural has been increased gradually year by year. The central and state government has tried to give the employment opportunities as much possible to the rural poor households.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA has been flourishing in attaining its primary objective of providing wage employment to rural household in India. The Ministry of Rural Development has done an imposing work towards conceptualizing and operationalizing this enormous flagship program. The Mahatma Gandhi NREGA will be a path breaking program for inclusive growth of rural India.

PERFORMANCE OF THE MAHATMA GANDHI NREGA (National Overview)

With a view to universalize the system of wage payments through individual accounts, it has been recommended to all States to disburse wages through Post Offices and Bank Accounts. 8.71 crore (as per MIS) Mahatma Gandhi NREGA bank and post office accounts have been opened to disburse wages.

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