

THE ROLE OF MGNREGA IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE UDALGURI DISTRICT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KALAIGAON DEVELOPMENT BLOCK

Nishamani Sarma

Faculty, Mangaldoi Commerce College, Darrang, Assam (784125)
Email-sarmanisha035@gmail.com

Rupak Das

Research Scholar, Dept. Of Commerce, Dibrugarh University
Email-dasrupak48@gmail.com

Madhurjya Patir

Research Scholar, Dept. Of Commerce, Dibrugarh University, Email-
madhurjyapatir596@gmail.com

Abstract

Rural employment has been a part of the discourse since independence to reduce unemployment and eradicate poverty. Mahatma Gnadhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) legislated in 2005, August. It is considered as one of the best legislations by the erstwhile Dr. Manmohan Singh led UPA government. Because it has been a bold attempt to development process more participative and inclusive. It results in increase in rural incomes and purchasing power of rural poor which ensure greater participation of women and backward communities. This act also improves agricultural productivity, reduce distress mitigation from rural areas, and strengthening rural infrastructure. This study has analysed that the income of MGNREGA directly impacts the poverty alleviation & generation of income opportunities in the rural poor. This paper also shows some suggestive measures to rectify all the loopholes of the MGNREGA act to get the best possible outcome.

Key words – Poverty Alleviation, MGNREGA, Rural Employment

INTRODUCTION

Poverty reduction and rural development are the most difficult and biggest challenges in the country. Since independence a number of poverty alleviation and rural development programmes have been implemented during the plan period aiming to reduce poverty. According to census report of India (2011), 70 percent of the total population live in villages. Moreover, Agricultural Census Report (2010-11) states that 85.57 percent operational holding in the country are small and marginal farmers. With such a large number of small and marginal labours, the incidence of unemployment is very large. Out of the total population living in rural India, 25.7% of population are living in below the poverty line whereas in the urban areas; the situation is a bit better with 13.7% (NSSO Survey). It indicates that many people are not getting regular employment. Assam is also having high unemployment specially in rural areas. High

unemployment and low income of the rural people result in low purchasing power, which will affect the quality of life of the people. To achieve growth, prosperity, social justice and equality the Central Government has been implementing number of programmes. The MGNREGA in one of the greatest historic steps to achieve above objectives .The Act was passed in the parliament in 2005 .But in Assam , MGNREGA was introduced in 2005 -06, initially seven districts in the 1st phase .Later on ,in 2009-10 all the district was covered under the MGNREGA act

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

According to a World Bank Report ,rural development “is a strategy to improve the economic and social life of people the rural poor including small and marginal farmers ,tenants and landless” (World Bank) .The term ‘rural ‘means an area which is characterised by non urban style of life ,occupational structure ,social organisation and settlement pattern .Development is often defined in terms of technological and industrial development .But development of rural areas and its people means raising their standard of living .It is the development of rural areas through the extension of irrigation facilities ,construction of school building ,promotion of educational facilities ,health care and road etc . It is a multi dimensional process ,which include the socio –economic condition of the people living in the rural areas and ensure their participation in the process of development for complete utilisation of resources for better living condition .It extent the benefit to the weaker and poorest section of rural society .

Goswami (2003) in his doctoral work explained that the various rural development programmes implemented in Jorhat district of Assam fail to give satisfactory result .Certain socio economic ,political and technical problems were responsible for poor performance of the schemes .

Goswami (2008) also explain that MGNREGA has a positive impact on the lives of million people across the poorest districts of the country .He also observes that work without engagement with local contractors is the most remarkable features of the programme .He hopes that the poor people will get benefit from the Act .

Hazarika (2009) observed that the MGNREGA is a wage employment programme ,providing minimum wage employment to casual ,unskilled labour especially during lean season .Its longer aim is to generate saving and asset in the countryside ,to promote growth process based on local development .The researcher found that the programme has ended a positive impact on women empowerment .

In another survey of Marigaon and Bonngaigaon districts (Hazarika 2009) also found that women are becoming self dependent which implies gender empowerment in the two districts .But he also found that most of the panchayat representative have large number of job cards which is against the act.

RESEARCH GAP

The researcher has found that there are number of studies on the subject nationwide but in the state of Assam very few studies (Hazarika , 2009; Bordoloi , 2011 ; Dutta , 2012 ;Borah ,2014; Das ,2016; Boruah ,2017; etc) have taken place. Present researcher could not find study on

MGNREGA in the Udalguri district of BTR region. This has induced the present researcher to select this region to conduct a research study on MGNREGA.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study assesses the procedure adopted for the selection of beneficiaries and delivery of benefit under MGNREGA in the study area .Present study will examine the extent of economic improvement of household after joining MGNREGA and their socio economic condition and how MGNREGA has enormous potential to improve the lives of rural people. With this analysis we can examine the contribution of MGNREGA on improving the standard of living of the participating household which will be a for literature base for future researchers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study is based on the formation of the following research objectives

1. To examine the procedure adopted for the selection of beneficiaries and delivery of benefit under MGNREGA in the study area

To examine the extent of economic improvement of the beneficiaries through MGNREGA in the study area

DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY

AREA OF THE STUDY

The study has been conducted in the Kalaigaon Development Block of Udalguri District of Assam

Sources of data:

Primary as well as secondary sources of data have been used for the study

SAMPLING FRAME

UNIVERSE OF THE STUDY:

The universe of the study consists of all the MGNREGA beneficiary households registered in the Kalaigaon Development Block .The size of universe is 24158.

TABLE 1- No of NREGA Beneficiary household

SL NO	VCDC	No of villages	No of NREGA Beneficiary Household
1	Naptipara	5	1921
2	Niz kalaigaon	7	1730
3	Ranipukhuri	5	1301

4	Teapkhat	1	145
5	Kacharital	7	2401
6	Kalaigaon town	3	1105
7	Majorchuba	8	1522
8	Bhakatpara	5	1056
9	Bhuyankhat	10	2522
10	Balipara	8	2001
11	Chengapathar	8	2249
12	Damaruguri	9	1950
13	Gerua	5	2546
14	Jhargaon Kadamguri	8	1709
	Total	89	24158

Source: Office of the Kalaigaon Development Block

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Stratified sampling technique has been used for the present study .Out of 14 VCDC's, 7 VCDC (50%) are selected by using lottery method. Total number of MGNREGA households in these 7 VCDC is 8,780 .Considering the time and cost constraints , Sample of 367 beneficiaries household is fixed by using Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table.

These 367 sample households are selected proportionately from these 7 VCDC which is shown in Table No. 2

Table 2 Sample Distribution

Sl no	VCDC	NO of NREGA household	Sample household

1	Naptipara	1921	80
2	Tepakhat	145	7
3	Kalaigaon town	1105	46
4	Majarchuba	1522	64
5	Bhakatpara	1056	44
6	Ranipukhuri	1301	54
7	Nizkalaigaon	1730	72
	Total	8780	367

Source- Researchers Self-Calculation

And from each of these VCDC's target household are selected randomly. Out of these 367 beneficiary's households 350 households have responded while collecting primary data. So finally the sample size for the study stood at 350.

Limitation of the study:

1. Due to scarcity of time and other resources for the researcher, study is confined to a limited geographical area only.
2. The study is based on information elucidated by the particular household and institutions. Hence, there could be variations in sharing their views and experience exactly. The opinion of the subject may not be free from individual biases and prejudices.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The analysis of the data collected has been made by applicable of suitable approach and methods. The analysis has been done in the context of various questions asked by the researcher to fulfill the objective of the study.

Distribution of sample beneficiary according to the family size

Table 3-Table showing distribution of sample beneficiary according to the family size

Family size	No of beneficiary	Percentage
1-4	110	31.5
4-8	161	46
8-12	79	22.5
Total	350	100

Source-Field Survey by the Researcher

Interpretation:

From the above table it is clear that 46% of total beneficiaries have their family members from 4-8, 31% beneficiaries have 1-4 members and 22.5% of total beneficiaries have 8-12 members.

Distribution of sample beneficiary according to category

Table 4 -Table showing distribution Of sample beneficiary according to caste

Category	No of beneficiary	Percentage
GENERAL	75	21.5
ST	103	29.5
SC	118	33.5
OBC	54	15.5
TOTAL	350	100

Source-Field Survey by the Researcher

From the above table it has been clear that 33.5% of the beneficiaries belong to SC category, 29% belongs to ST category, and 15.5% beneficiaries are from OBC category and 21.5% beneficiaries from general category.

.Distribution of sample beneficiary according to nature /type of employment

Table 5-Table showing distribution of sample beneficiary according to nature /type of employment

Nature/type	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
Agriculture	208	60	268	76.5
Govt job	3	1	4	1
Private job	75	3	78	22.5
Total	261	88	350	100

Source-Field Survey by the Researcher

Interpretation

From the above table and figure it is clear that the main occupation of 76.5% sample beneficiaries are agriculture, 22.5 % beneficiaries do private job and only 1% of sample beneficiaries have done government job as their main occupation.

Distribution of sample beneficiary according to various govt scheme beneficiaries

Table 6 -Table showing distribution of sample beneficiary according to various govt scheme beneficiaries

Particulars	Yes	NO
Whether PMAY (rural) Beneficiary	105(30%)	245(70%)
Whether land reforms Beneficiary	18(5 %)	332(95%)
Whther small or marginal Farmers	298 (85%)	52(15%)
Whether BPL family	143(41%)	206 (59%)
Whther RSBY beneficiary	110 (31.5%)	240 (78.5%)

Source-Field Survey by the Researcher

Interpretation:

From the above table it has been seen that 60% of total sample beneficiaries have got the benefit of Pradhan Mantri Avaj Yojana (PMAY). 19.9% beneficiaries have got land reforms benefit .And 85 % sample beneficiaries are small and marginal farmers and 41% beneficiaries are BPL family, 31.5% sample beneficiaries have got the benefit of Rastriyo Saisthya Bima yojana (RSBY) .

Asset and liability position of sample beneficiary before availing job card and after availing job card.

A.RESIDENCE TYPE

Table 7-Table showing Residence Type of sample beneficiaries

RESIDENCE	BEFORE AVAILING JOB CARD		AFTER AVAILING JOB CARD	
	KACCHA GHAR	PAKKA GHAR	KACCHA GHAR	PAKKA GHAR
	319(91%)	31(9%)	178 (61%)	136(39%)

From the above table it has been seen that 91% of sample beneficiary's residence type were kaccha ghar and only 9% of beneficiaries have pakka ghar before availing job card. But there is a change of residence type after availing job card and 39% of sample beneficiaries lives

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

As a India's largest wage employment programme MGNREGA provides minimum wage employment to unskilled and casual labour during the lean season .So the present study attempted to know the result of MGNREGA after its implementation in the study area after 15 years and how it was able to improve the economic condition to reduce poverty at the bottom level.

Findings related to objective 1 i.e. To examine the procedure adopted for the selection of beneficiaries and delivery of benefit under MGNREGA in the study area are has been given below

After visiting the MGNREGA beneficiary and respective circle office it has been found that the job card is issued to all the adult member of the rural household who have the willingness and ability to do unskilled manual work .Works creating individual asset shall be practised on land or homestead owned by household belong to the Schedule caste, Schedule Tribe ,Other families below poverty line ,women headed household ,physically handicapped headed household ,beneficiaries of the land reforms and Beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Awas yojana . As per the study, 21.5% of sample beneficiaries are from general category, 29.5% from ST category, 33.5% from SC remaining 15.5 % include in the OBC category.

It has been found that all the job card is issued to the beneficiaries at free of cost by simply giving an duly filled application form in their respective VCDC by submitting the following details

Photograph of applicant

Name, Age and gender

Name of Village

Name of VCDC

Name of Block

Details of whether the applicant is beneficiaries of SC/ST/IAY/LR

Signature /Thumb impression of applicant

It has been found that within 15 days of application received the job card is issued to the all the beneficiaries.

The act provide the rural people constitutional right of 'right to work' for maintaining livelihood security , economic and social infrastructural development of the rural areas .In this respect the act ensures 100 days of employment to every rural household within the 15 days of application received . But in the study area only 3% beneficiaries have got 100 days of employment and only 2% people have got employment within 15 days of application received. So it can be said that MGNREGA totally fails to fulfil the basic objectives to enhance livelihood security by

providing 100 days guarantee employment in a financial year in the study areas who have job card.

For MGNREGA works, The project cost include the provision for shade for resting, drinking water, first aid facility, children care facility, changing room etc. But all the beneficiaries admit that there are no other facility except drinking water facility. And all the female respondents clearly said that there are no provision for any kind of children care facilities at the work place.

Most of the respondents agree that Muster rolls are available and maintained by the officials and allowed to check whenever they need.

Under the MGNREGA scheme if the beneficiaries workplace is 5 Km away from the work place there is a provision to give allowance but the beneficiaries are not given any kind of allowances if their work place is beyond the 5 km radius from their home.

The wage amount of MGNREGA is much lower than the local market wages and worker's expectation wage. As per the study, per day wages for unskilled manual work under MGNREGA is Rs 213 where as minimum wage for unskilled worker under state government is fixed at Rs 298.21. Due to this reason the beneficiaries faced many problems.

The core aim of MGNREGA scheme is to ensure a source of livelihood for the economically weaker section by guarantying 100 days of employment in a financial year. If government fail to keep the promise, MGNREGA will ensure to provide unemployment allowance to the job card holder. But in the study area not a single beneficiary have got any kind of unemployment allowance although the act totally fail to fulfil the basic objective.

Findings related to objective 2 i.e. to examine the extent of economic improvement of the beneficiaries through MGNREGA in the study area

The study shows that the various kind of asset holding patterns by the sample beneficiaries such TV, Two wheeler, livestock, and bank deposit is increased after joining the MGNREGA. At present majority of sample benefices have TV, two wheeler, livestock and bank deposit. The study also shows that 43% of sample beneficiaries have taken loan from various bank and NBFC (mostly from BANDHAN bank). However it was noticed that availability of various asset, live stocks are mainly responsible for other source of income. Moreover the main occupation of the beneficiaries was agriculture and wage labour. It was noticed that all the beneficiaries had taken MGNREGA as subsidiary occupation only.

The study shows that majority of families lives in kaccha house, still many families lives in pakka house as they have got the benefit of pradhan Mantri Awas yojana. The study reveal that 29% of family have less than one acre of agricultural land and 34% of sample beneficiaries having land up to 10 bigha. That means almost majority of the respondents include under small and marginal farmer category. Although 37% of sample beneficiaries have land up to 20 bigha.

The study has been found that some beneficiaries have got the benefit of land reforms although there was not any improvement in the land holding pattern of the beneficiaries.

As per the study, 57% of the respondent beneficiaries disagree that MGNREGA helps to generate employment in the study area as MGNREGA totally fails to fulfil its basic objective.

The study also shows that 43 % of the sample beneficiaries neither agree nor disagree that MGNREGA helps to generate additional income whereas 28% responded disagree to this.

Majority of the sample beneficiaries disagree that MGNREGA improved standard of living .Although there is improvement in their economic condition in post MGNREGA period but they said that MGNREGA is not responsible for creating any kind of asset.

SUGGESTIONS:

All the loopholes of the MGNREGA act be reduced easily if the schemes and its executions are monitored and reviewed frequently and in cases of laps are immediate rectification should be there .For this purpose ,the following suggestions can be considered .

Minimum wage act should be implemented in MGNREGA in the study area to restrict the mitigation .Payment should be made on time.

Unemployment allowance should release for the job card holders if they fail to provide 100 days of employment to stop irregularities, proxy workers and to keep the justice of the act .

Electronic devices such as mobile technology like whatsapp, facebook should be used for proper implementation of MGNREGA

There must be positive vision and willingness of the panchayat officials and representatives to develop their own place .They should be honest, devoted, and dutiful so that the poor people can be benefited from the MGNREGA work.

There should have provision for shade, drinking water, first aid facility and children care facility at the work place .Awareness among the people through VCDC and involving the village planning process is necessary.

CONCLUSION

The study is an attempt to understand the role of MGNREGA on economic development of rural poor .Obviously, MGNREGA is one of the largest rural employment programme implemented in India .After harvesting ,rural people can't find any income generating work in the villages .Due to non availability of opportunity to work in the locality ,the people of rural areas are most affected with the problem of poverty .When the act came into force in India ,the rural people hoped that they will get minimum 100 days guaranteed wage employment .MGNREGA has also included a provision for 33 percent reservation for women and priority for marginalized group (SC,ST),so that they can get employment which will in developing their locality through infrastructural development .It has enabled them with purchasing power

and so that they can enjoy their basic necessities .Ultimately it should reduce poverty by empowering rural poor .But the act fails to achieve its objectives .The scheme could not provide 100 days job guarantee to the majority of the job card holder. Even the study observed that the scheme fails in respect of providing employment avenues to the unemployed masses. Infact the tune and essence of the act could not shine in the study area.

Last but not the least, it must be mentioned that MGNREGA is a flagship programme implemented by government of India .The researcher study area cover only one development block of Udalguri District which partially reflect the situation of the whole district .So there is scope to study the act in wide manner for sustainable development,so that the act can give you more employment to reduce poverty .

REFERENCE

- Ahangar ,G.B .,(2014) ,” Women Empowerment through MGNREGA: A case study of Shahbad block of District Anantnag.”Jammu and Kashmir ,Abhinav,3 (2),(Feb)
- Fisher , W. H., Ali Shoaib , 2019.Reshaping Domain the Decentralisation ,Public The Mahatmma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and Trajectories of Local democracy in Rural India’ ,World development , Volum 120 ,August 2019.Page 147 -15
- Goswami B, and Dutta A.R.,2013 ,” status of Implemntation of the MGNREGA inAssam :All is not well “,Journal of Rural Development ,VOL. 33 No .(2) pp .173 - 182 ,NIRD ,Hyderabad .
- Das ,S. K., 2013 A Brief Scanning on Performance of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantte Act in Assam ,India ‘,American jounrl of Rural development 1.3 (2013) : 49-61.
- Dasgupta ,S., and S . Sudarshan ,2011.The issue in Labour market inequality and women’s participation in India’s National rural Employment Guarantee Act.’ Working paper No .98 , Geneva : International Labour Organisation.
- Dheeraja, C., And H. Rao ,2010.Changing Gender Relations: A study on MGNREGA across different states,’ National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad ,India.
- Hirway ,I. , and S . Batabyal ,2012. MGNREGA and Women Empowerment, UN women south Asia , New Delhi
- Hazarika ,P.G.,2009 ,”Promoting Women Empowerment and Gender Equality through

the Right to Decent work :Implementation of National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP) in Assam state (India) –A case study,”The Hugue ,Institute of Social Studie

- Panda ,B .&Umdor ,S .,2011, “Appraisal nad Impact Assesment of MGNREGA in Assam .”North Eastern Hill University .Shillong