Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act: A Tool for inclusive growth in Rural India

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Abstract - The Ministry of Rural Development is one of the important ministries in India involved in development of rural areas of the country. The mission and vision of ministry exhibits a sustainable and inclusive growth of rural India. The ministry is striving hard to increase livelihood opportunities and improved quality of life of rural poor people. Furthermore, eradicating poverty is a significant endeavor of the ministry. Implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development, National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) is the flagship programme of the Government that directly touches lives of the poor and promotes inclusive growth.

Keywords: Inclusive Growth, MGNREGA, Rural India.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Act aims at, “enhancing livelihood security of household in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.”

Objective of the Study
- To take an overview of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA
- To study the use of e- governance and ICT with respect to Mahatma Gandhi NREGA
- To study the overall impact of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA on rural livelihood of India.

II. METHODOLOGY
This study uses mainly secondary data. The sources of the data are published and unpublished sources like books, journals, magazines, publications, reports, etc.

The Mahatma Gandhi NREGA Foremost 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.
(b) Works allotted under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA

Table 1: Works conducted under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No</th>
<th>Area of Work</th>
<th>Type of Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Watershed-related works</td>
<td>Contour trenches, Counter bunds, Boulder checks, Farm bunding, Gabion structures, underground dykes, Earthen dams, Dugout farm ponds, stop dams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Watershed-related works in mountain regions</td>
<td>Springshed development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Agriculture related works</td>
<td>NADEP composting, Vemi composting, Liquid bio-manures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Livestock-related works</td>
<td>Poultry shelter, Goat shelter, construction of pucca (permanent) floor urine tank and fodder trough for cattle, Azolla as cattle-feed supplement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Fisheries related</td>
<td>Fisheries in seasonal water bodies on public land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Works in coastal areas</td>
<td>Fish drying yards, construction of storm water drains for coastal protection, Belt vegetation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Rural drinking water related works</td>
<td>Soak pits, Recharge Pits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Rural Sanitation</td>
<td>Individual household latrines, School toilet units, anganwadi toilets, solid and liquid waste management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Flood Management</td>
<td>Deepening and repair of flood channels, chaur renovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Irrigation Command related works</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of minor’s, sub minors and field channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Rural Connectivity</td>
<td>Stone Kharanja or brick kharanja, cement concrete and cement interlocking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Land Development</td>
<td>Private land owned by Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe or Below Poverty Line families (BPL)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


(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 forward 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.

### III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Annual Report Ministry of Rural Development (April 2006 - March 2007) reported that in case of choice of work under NREGA, highest priority that is 54% was given to water conservation followed by providing irrigation facility to the land owned by SC/ST 10% land development 11%, rural connectivity 21% and any other activity 4% in 2006-2007 etc.

The All India Report on Evaluation of NREGA (2008), a survey of twenty districts, observed that eighty percent of household expressed that they did not get the work within the stipulated 15 days time; neither were they paid the unemployment allowance. The survey revealed that the number of families spending less on food has come down drastically where as there is a rise in number of families who are spending more on food and non food items.

Mathur, Lalit (2008), “Employment guarantee progress so far” depicted in the finding that MGNREGA could act as a great agent of socio-economic up-liftment and providing livelihood security of poorest of the poor in India if implemented earnestly. The employment and the earning under MGNREGA should be treated as additional avenue for such households.

Jaswal Anshuman and Mistry Paulomee’s (2007) study summary reported on “will MGNREGA ensure security against hunger” in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra concluded that 42% of the cases creation of new ponds and depending or cleaning of existing ones was undertaken 26% of cases, work related to road construction and maintenance was provided, check-dam related work formed 16% of the case, rest of the cases comprised of work like canal maintenance and mud–work (digging and carrying) hence it is clear that the emphasis is on creation of assets which form a part of the basic infrastructure for the community.

Anil Kumar Kute, Dr. P.M. Honnakeri (2012) examined very interesting case in Gulbarga district in Karnataka state, and observed that 63 percent of respondents stated that the migration has decreased after MGNREGA implementation. They also found that the scheme has helped workers in their food security management.

**Present Status of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA**

In current financial year 2011-12, (upto December, 2011) 3.77 crore households were provided employment and 120.88 crore persondays of employment were generated. The enhanced wage earnings have led to a strengthening of the livelihood resource base of the rural poor in India; 72 percent of funds utilized were in the form of wages paid to the workers. Self targeting in nature, the programme has high work participation for marginalized groups like Schedule caste/Schedule tribe (40%), women (49%) in 2011-12 (upto December, 2011). Entire work undertaken were 62.72 lakh in the same period, of which 53% relate to water conservation, 12% for the provision of irrigation facility to lands owned by schedule caste/ schedule tribe/ below poverty line, small farmers of marginal farmers, IAY beneficiaries, 22% for rural connectivity and 9% for land development, 4% for any other activity approved by Ministry of Rural Development and 0.37% for Rajiv Gandhi Seva Kendra. Women participation in current financial year upto December, 2011 was 49% and the participation and schedule caste and schedule tribe in current financial year upto December, 2011 is 40%.

**Use of ICT, E-Governance in Mahatma Gandhi NREGA**

The ministry of Rural Development has taken various initiatives with deployment of ICT towards improved performance of the scheme.

(a) **MIS**

The ministry has developed a web enabled MIS, www.mgnrega.nic.in dedicated to this ambitious program. The system makes the enormous data obtainable to public in a whole transparent manner. The MIS incorporated independent pages devoted to every panchayat (almost 2.5 Lakh), the data of 619 districts belonging to 34 states and Union Territories. The various stakeholders like common public, Zilla Parishadas, Gram Panchayat, staff, workers, district program coordinators, program officers, and ministry use this MIS system.

The ministry along with National Informatics Centre (NIC) has developed a very comprehensive
software package as ‘NREGA soft’. The ‘NREGA soft’ is a local language work flow based transaction level system designed for all MGNREGA related activities. The software is hosted on the portal of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA. The software provides a transparent system across all the areas connected to exchange of data for a variety of users.

The ‘NREGA soft’ offers a variety of modules like,

- Workers management module which includes data of registration and issue of jobs to workers, payment details
- Fund management module keeps a record of funds transfer from ministry to workers.
- Grievance redressal module where all concerned can lodge and track the status of their complaints.
- Social audit module integrates the social audits to all gram Panchayat.

Data storage at NREGA soft: The NREGA soft uses the Microsoft platform using ASP, NET languages. The server keeps massive data gathered from all India. The system has around, 12 Crore worker’s job card with all details and has been maintaining more than 8 Crore muster rolls.

(b) Developmental projects

The innovative technology is being used and tested for implementing the scheme in more efficient manner and to decrease the gaps observed during last few years. The handheld devices like Laptops, mobile phones, are being used for data capturing, downloading and transferring. The NREGA soft after processing the data sends the pertinent information to banks and post offices for fast payments to NREGA workers. Another very significant development is taking place is ‘Aadhaar’ based authentication of a worker which will offer dependable biometric system in future.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is no uncertainty that the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA has been successful in achieving 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 operational zing this enormous flagship program.

The Mahatma Gandhi NREGA will be a path breaking program for inclusive growth of rural India.

V. REFERENCES


