

**MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT AND  
RURAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES -  
A CASE STUDY OF PALAKKAD DISTRICT IN KERALA STATE**

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**Abstract**

*The nature of unemployment existing in India is sharply differs from the one that prevails in industrially advanced countries. A large number of workers are forced to remain jobless both in rural and urban areas. So the government of Indian introduced various employment generating programmes from the past three decades. The Maharastra model of rural employment has existed since 1970's. The National rural Employment Programe and rural Landless Employment program began in 1980's in 1989, Rajiv Gandhi Government integrated the two schemes in to one. Thus born the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY). But it was different. The funds would be deposited in to village institution responsible for development activities used to create employment creation.*

**Keywords:** *employment generating programmes, National rural Employment Program, Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, Employment Assurance scheme, Jawahar Gram Smridhi yojana, IRDP, NFWP*

On the model of Employment Guarantee Scheme of Maharastra, the government introduced Employment Assurance scheme (EAS) with effect form 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1993, Jawahar Gram Smridhi yojana (SGSY) was introduced in April 1999 as a result of restructuring and combining the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and Million wells Scheme (MWS) in to a single self - employment programme. In late 2004, the national food for work Programme (NFWP) was launched. It is targeting 150 backward districts. These districts were identified by Ministry of rural Development. This programme was to be implemented through the district administration and a menu of labour intensive projects. The final change came in December 2004, when the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was tabled in parliament. The bill provided a guarantee at 100 days of unskilled manual work in a financial year to every household in rural areas whose adult members volunteered to work.

**Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act**

The government of India have passed National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005, in September 2005. The Act gives legal guarantee of at least one hundred days of wage employment in a Financial year to a rural household, whose adult member to do unskilled and manual work. The main features of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act are follows

### **1. Funding**

The scheme shall be implemented as a centrally sponsored scheme on the cost sharing basis between the centre and state in the proportion of 80:20

### **2. Implementation Arrangements**

The Gramapanchayat shall be the principal authority for planning and implementation of the scheme. The Gramapanchayat shall be responsible for identification of the work in Gram panchayath area. In Grama- panchayath level, the Secretary of Panchayath is responsible person of the scheme. In the intermediate level, the block panchayath shall be the principle authority for planning and implementation of the scheme. A block programme officer is posted for the scheme. At the district level the district panchayth shall be the principle authority for the planning and implementation of the scheme. The district collector or chief executive officer will be responsible for the programme at the district level.

### **3. Registration and Issue of Job Card**

Any adult person of the household mayor on behalf of the members of the household apply to the Gramapanchayath, in the Jurisdiction of which they reside, for registration of their household and for issuance of job card. A job card with unique ID number will be issued by the Gramapanchath to the households. The Panchayath secretary shall make necessary entries in the Job Card and in the employment register regarding to the wages paid and employment provided

### **4. Application for Work and Work Allotment**

Job card holders seeking job shall submit their application to, the Gramapanchayth secretary. The application shall be valued if the wage employment sought by a household is at least 14 days and the aggregate employment provided to the household is not more than 100 days. While providing employment, priority shall be given to women, in Such a way that at least one third of the beneficiaries shall be women. Physically handicapped person may be provided wage employment by entrusting suitable works. Work should be provided within 15 days of demanding it and the work should be located within 5 kilometer distance.

### **6. Un employment Allowance**

If work is not provided to anybody within the given time, he/she will be paid a daily unemployment allowance, which will be at least one third of the minimum wages.

### **6. Welfare Measures**

Equal wages shall be paid to both men and women. The wages shall be paid within 7 days of the week during which work was done. Wage rate is subject to a minimum of Rs. 60 per day, but in Kerala, the Govt. notifies a wage rate of minimum of Rs. 80 per day. Five percent of wages maybe deducted as contribution to welfare schemes like health insurance, accident insurance, survivor benefits, maternity benefits and social

security schemes. Workers employed on public works will be entitled to medical treatment and hospitalization in case of injury at work along with a daily allowance of not less than half of the statutory minimum wages. In case of death or disability of a worker, an ex gratia payment shall be made to his legal heirs as per provisions of the workmen compensation Act.

#### **7. Transparency and Accountability**

For transparency and accountability all accounts and records of all the programmes will be made available for public scrutiny.

#### **8. Grievance Redressal Mechanism**

Any grievance shall be enquired and action initiated within 7 days by the concerned authorities. Details of all the grievances received and disposed at each level should be maintained in the Grievance register.

#### **Cost of Employment Guarantee Programme**

The National Advisory Council (NAC) has prepared the cost of employment guarantee programme at 1% of the GDP. Some estimates show that the total cost of all programme per year at 2004-2005 prices works out of Rs. 40,000 crores ie, 1.3% of GDP. The total cost of the programme with phased implementation rises from 0.5% of GDP in the first year (2005-2006) to 1 percent of GDP, when it fully implemented all over India in 2008-2009. This was done to eradicate the crucial problem of unemployment and poverty in our country.

#### **Importance as the Scheme**

The foremost planning as the scheme is to encourage the unemployed people in rural areas. If properly implemented, this will provide employment in lean periods to the rural people on the one hand, and create really productive assets on the other. This scheme will improve the income level of the poor in rural areas, and in turn increases the demand for other goods and services in the economy, which will increase the standard of living of the people and economic growth will improve. Migration of people from rural areas has been increasing, by providing employment to rural people migration can be reduced to some extent. Therefore employment guarantee is necessary.

#### **Palakkad District in Kerala**

When the govt. of India implemented National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in selected 200 districts in India, as a First Phase,. This scheme has come in to force from February 2, 2006, in the rural areas of the two districts in Kerala, Palakkad and Wayand.

Palakkad district occupies a unique place in the implementation of this scheme. In 2006-2007 there were 74156 Job card holders, but it increased to 235617 in 2009-2010. In 2006-2007, the number of households getting employment through this scheme was 43957, increased to 108350 in 2009 - 2010. Palakkad has its own features in the implementation of this scheme as we compared to other districts.

Palakkad bagged the National award for excellence in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act administration in 2007-2008. Palakkad was the first ever district from Kerala to receive the award and was one among the 22 districts selected for the award from across the country. Attappadi, the first integrated Tribal Development project in the state used MGNREGS effectively to improve the lives of the tribal communities. Palakkad is the first district in Kerala to implement an end to end ICT solution which minimizes human interface in MGNREGS a process, so that there is greater accountability and transparency. Another important feature of MGNREGS in the district is the implementation of the Insurance Scheme - Janasree Bhima Yojana (JBY) for the MGNRES workers. Haritha Keralam is a Panchayath - managed campaign for afforestation, which is an example of convergence of forestry with Mahatma Gandhi NREFS.

#### Statement of the Problem

One of the important characteristic features of our country is mass unemployment and poverty, which is one of the hindrance for the development of our country. Employment opportunities can be increased by self employment programmes, which help to eradicate poverty and bring about an improvement in the quality of life, which will promote the development of our country.

During the last five decades several schemes have been initiated for the upliftment of weaker sections in the country. Some schemes aim at providing self employment and some other schemes aim at wage employment. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment Guarantee schemes fullfills these norms aimed at proving self employment and wage employment to the poor sections of the society. So the researcher has chosen this scheme for his study.

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