

MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT (MGNREGA) IMPLIMENTATION STATUS IN KERALA

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Abstract

Evolving the design of the wage employment programmes to more effectively fight poverty, the Central Government formulated the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2005. With its legal framework and rights-based approach, MGNREGA provides employment to those who demand it and is a paradigm shift from earlier programmes. Notified on September 7, 2005, MGNREGA aims at enhancing livelihood security by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The Act covered 200 districts in its first phase, implemented on February 2, 2006, and was extended to 130 additional districts in 2007-2008. All the remaining rural areas have been notified with effect from April 1, 2008.

Kerala has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. But most of the unemployed are educated. Thus NREGA has only limited application in tackling the problem of unemployment among the poor of Kerala. Yet it has a niche idea for about 4 to 5 lakh people who are willing to do physical labour and for woman additional annual income of Rs. 12,500/- obtained from the Employment Guarantee Scheme would be a substantial boost in income and purchasing power. These all are importance of MGNREGA, the paper concentrate Implementation Status report of Kerala during the period of 2012-13 and also explains the average growth pattern work status of Kerala.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Growth Pattern

Introduction

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is an Indian law that aims to guarantee the 'right to work' and ensure livelihood security in rural areas 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 statute is hailed by the government as "the largest and most ambitious social security and public works programme in the world". The more comprehensive survey of Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, a 'Supreme Audit Institution' defined in Article 148 of the Constitution of India, reports serious lapses in implementation of the act.

The Indian government has taken up various measures to overcome the problem of poverty. Poverty alleviation programmes comprising of wage employment programmes, rural housing schemes and a public distribution system have been initiated from time to time. Some were partially successful in addressing the issue of poverty whereas others suffered from major flaws in their implementation. National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) 1980-89; Rural

Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) 1983-89; Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) 1989-99; Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) 1993-99; Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) 1999- 2002; Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) since September 2001; National Food for Work Programme (NFFWP) since November 14, 2004 (SGRY and NFFWP now merged with NREGS 2005) were national level rural employment generation schemes. However these programmes could not provide social security to the rural poor. The Central Government launched NREGA on February 2, 2006.

Objectives of MGNREGA

MGNREGA is a powerful instrument for ensuring inclusive growth in rural India through its impact on social protection, livelihood security and democratic empowerment. Its important objectives are:

1. Social protection for the most vulnerable people living in rural India through providing employment opportunities;
2. Livelihood security for the poor through creation of durable assets, improved water security, soil conservation and higher land productivity;
3. Drought-proofing and flood management in rural India;
4. Empowerment of the socially disadvantaged, especially women, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), through the processes of a rights-based legislation;
5. Strengthening decentralized, participatory planning through convergence of various anti-poverty and livelihoods initiatives;
6. Deepening democracy at the grass-roots by strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions;
7. Effecting greater transparency and accountability in governance

MGNREGA in Kerala

Kerala has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. But most of the unemployed are educated. Thus NREGA has only limited application in tackling the problem of unemployment among the poor of Kerala. Yet it has a niche idea for about 4 to 5 lakh people who are willing to do physical labour and for whom an additional annual income of Rs.12,500/- obtained from the Employment Guarantee Scheme would be a substantial boost in income and purchasing power. Therefore right at the beginning a political decision was taken to target the eligible families, visualising NREGS as the nucleus of a concerted and convergent anti-poverty initiative.

Features of MGNREGA in Kerala

The following are the innovative features in the organization of the Employment Guarantee Programme.

1. The agriculture workers of Kerala are fairly well organized into trade unions. Therefore primacy is given for the organization of meetings of registered workers. This enables proper

- assessment of demand and in inculcating the workers perspective in the design of the programme in choice of the works in preference of locations and in deciding the schedule.
2. Kerala uses trained facilitators in the workers meetings as well as in subsequent Gramasabhas. This ensures that effectively to convey the principles and features of NREGA to the lay citizen. These facilitators help in the conduct of these meetings in a semi-structured and orderly manner.
 3. A strong engineering support system has been put in place. In addition to one diploma/degree holder working on contract at the level of the Village Panchayath, there is a system of accredited engineers. Such engineers are drawn from amongst retired engineers, staff working in Engineering Colleges, Polytechnics/ ITIs, engineers working in NGOs etc. These engineers are paid for their work, at rates fixed by Government. Further, if any engineer from a government department or agency is willing to help the Village Panchayath over and above his normal work, he is also allowed to do so and is paid at 50% of the rate applicable to others.
 4. Panchayath Raj Institutions are in the central place in the planning and implementation of NREGA. They are the sole agencies responsible for this. Since Kerala has a very strong decentralization experience, Panchayath raj Institutions have considerable capacity in the planning and implementation of local development works. They have used this capacity to full advantage in the implementation of NREGA. It is significant to note that as of now the entire implementation is in the hands of Village Panchayath.

Achievements of MGNREGA in Kerala

Compared to the earlier wage employment programmes there have been significant achievements under NREGS. They are:

1. So far through a combination of transparent processes and procedures, local action and constant vigilance it can be proudly be claimed that implementation of NREGA has been totally corruption free. The factors contributing to this situation include:
 - A clear political decision was conveyed to the Panchayath that the scheme has to be implemented strictly according to the letter and spirit of the Act. There were several pragmatists arguing for an asset focused programme ignoring the processes and conforming to the procedures on paper, and it was argued that Kerala would lose out as the demand for unskilled labour is very limited and as the wages are much higher than the statutory minimum wages in more than 90% of the State, it would be better to go for public works. But this opinion was firmly rejected.
 - The work is organized through the Kudumbashree system and the poor have a stake in the work right at the beginning.
 - The technocratic power to accord Technical Sanction, measure works and recommend payments has been made more spread out and accountable through the Committee system and in case of difference of opinion the appellate system.

- Special emphasis have been given to the rights of workers and they have been made fully aware of their entitlements. In a state where workers are fairly well organized this has resulted in their jealous guarding of their privileges.
2. Implementation of NREGA has contributed to very high levels of women empowerment, particularly in the following aspects
 - As the work is organized by women's groups, the gender perspective gets built in automatically.
 - As women are comfortable working along with their neighbours, nearly 80% of the workers have been women.
 - For the first time equal wages are really paid and this has boosted the earnings of women.
 - As the wages are paid into Bank accounts the habit of thrift which was already inculcated through the Kudumbashree experiment has further been strengthened.
 - As the Bank deposits are increasing, the intra-household status of the woman has also been improving commensurately as she controls substantial cash resources and withdrawal can be only on her decision.
 3. NREGS has given rise to a new work culture. Hitherto workers were controlled by contractors and their middlemen who knew how to extract work. When NREGS began the out-turn was very poor as the workers could not be supervised properly. But soon the workers themselves realized that they would be losing collectively and a new internal dynamics evolved with peer pressure forcing workers to put in their maximum effort. At the same time a kind of social responsibility also became evident as more capable workers became more than willing to put in extra effort to make up for those who genuinely could not do hard work beyond a point, like the women and the elderly

Objectives of the study

To study the working status of MGNREGA in Kerala during the periods 2012-13

Hypothesis of the Study

There is a significant change in growth pattern of Household Issued Job card in MGNREGA.

Methodology of the study

The study depends extensively on secondary data, collected from sources of Ministry of Rural Development and the study period is one year , that is 2012- 13.

Statistical Tools

The appropriate statistical and econometrics model like annual average growth model was used to measure growth pattern of work status of MGNREGA in Kerala .

Limitation of the Study

The study covers only in Kerala and hence the result cannot be generalized.

Results and Discussion

Cumulative No. of Household Issued Job card in Kerala is represented in the table 1. Comparing to the other districts of Kerala more Sc households were taken job card in the district of Palakkad (69295) and then followed by the districts like Thrissur (49982), Malappuram (32018) and Thiruvananthapuram (21554) respectively. Whereas very less Sc households were taken job card in the district of Wayanad (2878). But in the case of St's job card are taken more in district of Wayanad (15701) and then followed by Idukki (9263), Kannur (3663), Kottayam (2214) and very less in Alappuzha (408). More other castes households were taken job card in district of Thiruvananthapuram and less in Wayanad. In total job card issued more in the district of Thiruvananthapuram (273613) and then followed by Kollam (228329) and Palakkad (222982) respectively.

Table 1: Household Issued Job card of MGNREGA in Kerala - 2012-13

Districts	Cumulative No. of Household Issued Job card			
	SC'S	ST'S	Others	Total
Palakkad	69295	10405	143282	222982
Wayanad	2878	15701	91276	109855
Total Phase I	72173	26106	234558	332837
Idukki	16651	9263	128470	154384
Kasargod	3179	2683	91556	97418
Total Phase II	19830	11946	220026	251802
Alappuzha	20677	408	190777	211862
Ernakulam	18240	1027	147839	167106
Kannur	4394	3663	152582	160639
Kollam	16700	782	210847	228329
Kottayam	11996	2214	133485	147695
Kozhikode	16559	1838	195304	213701
Malappuram	32018	1357	185240	218615
Pathanamthitta	15752	907	94311	110970
Thiruvananthapuram	21554	1971	250088	273613
Thrissur	49982	1156	146708	197846
Total Phase III	207872	15323	170718	1930376
Total Phase I+II+III	299872	53375	2161765	2515015

Source: Ministry of Rural Development

Table 2: Issued Job card of MGNREGA in Kerala - 2012-13

Variable	Coefficient Value	Significance level
SC'S	0.072	0.01*
ST'S	-0.151	0.024*
Others	0.03	0.04*

Source: Author Calculation

*significance at 5% Level

Growth Pattern of issued job card is given Table 2. The result revealed that estimated coefficient of Sc's St's and others were statistically significant at 5 per cent level. But important note that St's coefficient values was -0.151. This reveals that work status of St's has decreased by 15 per cent annually.

Table 3: Work Status of MGNREGA in Kerala - 2012-13

Districts	Cum No of H.H Demand Employment	Cum No of HH Provided Employment	Cum No of H.H Completed 100 Days
Palakkad	145254	136748	22016
Wayanad	85363	77706	8610
Total Phase I	230617	214454	30626
Idukki	125573	119045	32899
Kasargod	65278	57405	9240
Total Phase II	190851	176450	42139
Alappuzha	147767	140261	36496
Ernakulam	108290	96534	24796
Kannur	107753	92297	7802
Kollam	147022	128677	29461
Kottayam	88670	77980	8655
Kozhikode	133401	120719	16066
Malappuram	125445	112464	25303
Pathanamthitta	73123	62669	15034
Thiruvananthapuram	203034	184241	70566
Thrissur	137912	118740	32921
Total Phase III	1272417	1134582	267100
Total Phase I+II+III	1693885	1525486	339865

Source: Ministry of Rural Development

Work Status of MGNREGA in Kerala - 2012-13 indicted in Table 3. Cumulative number of households demands for employment, provided employment and completed 100 days were very high in the Phase III. In Phase III Thiruvananthapuram district holds first position in households

demands for employment, provided employment and completed 100 days and very low was in district of Pathanamthitta.

Findings of the study

- Job card issued more in the district Thiruvananthapuram (273613) and then followed by Kollam (228329) and Palakkad (222982) respectively.
- The study found that work status of Sc's and others have increased 7 and 3 percentage and it is statistically significant.
- The study found that work status of St's has decreased by 15 percentages and it is also statistically significant at 5 percentage level.
- Cumulative number of households demands for employment, provided employment and completed 100 days are very high in the Phase III

Suggestions

1. Government and authorities should take proper care of functioning of programme.
2. In case providing job card strictly follow government rules and regulation.
3. Special attention given to ST's and encouraging to participate MGNREGA.

Conclusion

The Act guarantees the right to work to by providing 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. NREGA is the first ever law internationally, that guarantees wage employment on an unprecedented scale. Its auxiliary objective is to strengthen natural resource management through works that address causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation and soil erosion and so encourage sustainable development. Growth Pattern of work status of MGNREGA in Kerala, we saw that SC's and Others participation of MGNREGA is not effective. But at the same time work status of St's has decreased by 15 percentages. So effective implementation of MGNREGA is needed in Kerala for curbing of poverty.

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