

# Effects Of MGNREGA Scheme On Rural Livelihood: An Ex-Post Analysis

Manabhanjan Sahu<sup>1</sup> , Pran Krishno Panigrahi<sup>2</sup> , Pravash R. Mohapatra<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, koneru lakshmaiah education foundation, Hyderabad, [sahumana2016@gmail.com](mailto:sahumana2016@gmail.com),

<sup>2</sup> Research Scholar, GIET University, Gunupur, Odisha, India

<sup>3</sup> Professor & Head, GITA Autonomous college, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

## ABSTRACT

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is aimed to enhance livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country by providing 100 days of manual wage employment annually to every household. The present study was designed to assess the impact of MGNREGA scheme on the livelihood of studied people. To get more insights of the research an empirical study was carried out among the selected sample in Rayagada district of Odisha. Primary data was collected with the help of structured questionnaire schedules on socio-economic aspects through in-depth interviews. Outcome of the study reveals that the MGNREGA scheme had contributed significantly sustaining the lives of beneficiaries through enhancement of socio-economic status by creating valuable assets. The results of the study also found a significant impact of the MGNREGA scheme in terms of ensured food security and purchasing power

**KEYWORDS:** MGNREGA, Food Security, Livelihood, Socio-economic Status, Spending Capacity and Sustenance

## INTRODUCTION

Across the world, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is recognized as one of the largest public employment programs (Rajalakshmi et al., n.d.). This is a central government's initiative in a partial collaboration with the state governments to offer all rural households in the country to a minimum of 100 days of manual labor each year at a notified wage rate (Esteves et al., n.d.; Narayanan et al., 2014). Under the scheme, the rural workers are allowed to ask for manual labor work according to their needs (S. D. Natesan & Marathe, 2017). The government is required to award the works within 15 days from the day of application. If not so then, the government is

required to pay unemployment benefit to the applicants. (Harish et al., 2014). MGNREGA has both a built-in accountability framework and also a transaction-based real-time online system for any public works program in the country. MGNREGA maintains a huge database of 2, 5 lakh gram panchayats regarding workers across the country in its administration. (Pamecha et al., 2015). Not only is the availability of information in the public domain a great challenge of the scheme but also the transparency regarding the payment of wages is also desired (Ahuja et al., n.d.).

MGNREGA is forging ahead in inculcating the inclusive reforms to offer transparency of distribution of economic opportunities to the rural

workforce along with restoring the provincial economy (Ranaware et al., 2015). MGNREGA has improved the standard of living of the people through its adaptive flexibility, which has helped to create productive assets, reduce the rate of migration, socially include women, provide work opportunities to the needy and improve vocational security (Singh et al., n.d.). Different studies have revealed that, there is an indicative change and transformation of diversified incomes and employment options for the rural population, but the documents are not in total support of actual process achievements (Sarkar et al., n.d.). The achievement of MGNREGA relies on its lawful execution of both central and state government (Salian et al., n.d.). Therefore, there should be constant efforts to make an acceptable apprehension about the various provisions of this law by sensitizing the locals (Narayanan et al., n.d.).

### **Objectives:**

The major objectives of the study are as follows:

- i. Evaluate the impact of the MGNREGA Scheme on livelihoods in terms of changing patterns of income, expenditure, savings, migration and asset creation.
- ii. Investigate issues relating to perception and awareness of the MGNREGA scheme.
- iii. Analyze problems faced by MGNREGA beneficiaries and make appropriate suggestions for better implementation

### **Methodology**

A cross-sectional study was carried out and the sample of 280 individuals from Rayagada district of both sexes aged between 20 and 60 years old was considered by a multistage random sampling technique. Rayagada district was purposely chosen, as the district is inhabited by a large portion of the population of the schedule caste and tribe, and the majority of its area falls under the fifth schedule of the constitution. The two villages, namely Rayagada and Gunupur, were

selected on the basis of poverty in terms of livelihood and employment.

Demographic data regarding household composition, economic status and level of education, cultural practices and traditions, and social norms were collected at the using household records. In-depth interviews and observation techniques were used to collect data on villagers' livelihoods, changing income and expenditure patterns, awareness of the regime, people's perception of the quality of the labor, asset creation and impact on savings.

Structured interviews were conducted with salary claimants, elected panchayat raj officials, government staff, key informants and other local community leaders.

All the data collected was compiled and analyzed to assess the impact of the MGNREGA program in the study area. observation were used to collect data on villagers' livelihoods, changing patterns of income and expenditure, awareness of the scheme, people's perceptions of the quality of work, asset creation and the impact on savings.

## **Results and Discussions**

### **Socio-economic attributes of respondents**

Table 1 shows that among the respondents (n = 280), 52.9% of men participate in the work of MGNREGA, while the participation of women is 47.1%, which shows that some of the women reluctant to participate in MGNREGA activities. Evidence from the NSSO and MGNREGA survey, which suggests that in states with a wider gender wage gap, female participation in MGNREGA is higher, but the present research results are in contradiction with the results of the present study, which indicate that a lower participation of women (47.1%) was found in the study area, due to the involvement of women more than half of women in SHGs. It is clear that the age group in which most workers are present comprises 37.9%, or between 41 and 50 years old. Respondents in the 51-60 age group also contributed 27.1%, showing that they also work hard to earn a living. From the analysis, it was

found that most social groups of the respondents varied across the sampled villages. Among them, 45% and 32.1% come from disadvantaged groups such as STs and SCs, while only 22.9% belong to other social classes. Education plays an important role in the development of society for different purposes (Weekly & 2016, n.d.). A total of 36.4 per cent of workers are illiterate in this area, which shows the discouragement and ignorance of the advantage that education plays in the life of an individual (Shah, 2016).

Regarding the seniority of MGNREGA workers, it was found that the majority of respondents at 48.6% have worked for more than three years. The association of workers with the plan between one and two years represents 10.7%. Employees engaged in MGN-REGA activities for approximately 2-3 years correspond to 32.9% and only 7.9% of respondents worked less than 75 days during the 2013-2014 fiscal year. Dating and past work opportunities assume a huge role in respondents' work related accomplishments, as they have an incredible impact on the fresh start of work (S. Natesan et al., n.d.).

Prior to MGNREGA, more respondents worked as wage laborers (37.9%) and marginal farmers (62.1%). From these data, it is clear that 59, 3% of respondents who participated are landless

(55% in Rayagada and 65% in Gunupur) while 36.4% (41.3% in Rayagada and 30% in Gunupur) are marginal farmers. The study found that most workers belong to the low income group and their average household income is INR 82,000.

The majority of respondents in the study area revealed that the work done under MGNREGA has opened up many new avenues for them. The same kinds of reflections were found in the previous studies (Ghose, 2015; Tiwari et al., n.d.; G Vasudevan et al., n.d.-a).

The factors responsible for the wide acceptance to undertake work under this program include lack of alternative employment (57.9%), which was mentioned as the main motivation for participating in MGNREGA, as evident in Table 2, and concerns and obligations towards family obligations, particularly in case of the women interviewed, they do not prefer to travel to distant places of work. In this context, the working distance of MGNREGA is confined to the radius of 5 kilometers, which is the major factor in the participation of a large number of women in the program. In the research survey, it was found that 28.6 percent of workers participate in MGNREGA activities because the workplace is easily accessible and located within their geographic territory (Afridi et al., n.d.).

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Characteristics	Total (n=280)		Male (n=148)		Female (n=132)	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>Job Card Holders</b>	280	100	148	52.9	132	47.1
Age (Over all: 43.89±8.46; Male: 43.69±9.34; Female: 44.11±7.43)*						
20-30	38	13.6	26	17.6	12	9.1
31-40	60	21.4	26	17.6	34	25.8
41-50	106	37.9	52	35.1	54	40.9
51-60	76	27.1	44	29.7	32	24.2
<b>Community</b>						
SC	90	32.1	34	36.5	36	27.3
ST	126	45	54	36.5	72	54.5
OBC	64	22.9	40	27	24	18.2
<b>Educational Qualification</b>						
Primary (1-4)	58	20.7	32	21.6	26	19.7

Middle school (5-8)	82	29.3	36	24.3	46	34.8
High school (9-10)	34	12.1	16	10.8	18	13.6
Others	4	1.4	2	1.4	2	1.5
Illiterate	102	36.4	62	41.9	40	30.3
<b>Work Experience in MGNREGA</b>						
Up to 1 year	22	7.9	6	4.1	16	12.1
1-2 year	30	10.7	12	8.1	18	13.6
2-3 year	92	32.9	52	35.1	40	30.3
Above 3 year	136	48.6	58	52.7	58	43.9
<b>No. of Employment Days</b>						
50-60	28	10	6	4.1	22	16.7
61-70	36	12.9	20	13.5	16	12.1
71-80	20	7.1	10	6.8	10	7.6
81-90	34	12.1	20	13.5	14	10.6
91-100	162	57.9	92	62.2	70	53
<b>Occupation before joining MGNREGA</b>						
Labour	106	37.9	60	40.5	46	34.8
Farmer	174	62.1	88	59.5	86	65.2
Land-holding						
Landless	166	59.3	86	58.1	80	60.6
Less than 1 acre	88	31.4	48	32.4	40	30.3
1-2 acre	24	8.6	14	9.5	10	7.6
2-3 acre	2	0	0	0	2	1.5

Household income (Mean  $\pm$  SD) 82047.39  $\pm$  31668.13 86657.47 $\pm$ 42044.8176878.52 $\pm$ 10389.33

Through conversations with workers, it was learned that 5.7% of workers revealed that the rate of pay offered by MGNREGA is roughly equivalent to that of other horticultural work in the survey territory, and that he didn't interest them very much. Other issues raised by respondents are late payment of salaries due to technical implementation details in the states, including inadequate staffing, untimely recording and reporting of attendance, data entry, generation of the list of salaries, the Fund Transfer Order (FTO), weak banking infrastructure and lack of transparency (Carswell et al., 2014; Economics & 2016, n.d.; Gayathri Vasudevan et al., 2020).

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their experience**

Profile Details	Total		Male		Female	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>Reason for Taking up MGNREGA Work</b>						
Well paid-up	8	5.7	3	4.1	5	7.6
Non-availability of other work	81	57.9	51	68.9	30	45.5
Got opportunity to work within their locality	40	28.6	15	20.3	25	37.9
Additional benefit of unemployment allowance	11	7.9	5	6.8	6	9.1
<b>Reason for Low Employment Attendance in MGNREGA (Below 75 Days Only, n=47)</b>						

Involving in other work	29	61.7	15	51.7	14	48.3
Bound with family and social responsibilities	18	38.3	7	38.9	11	61.1

Previous researches have also revealed the technical issues of implementing MGNREGA, Good physical working conditions are a prerequisite on the construction site to ensure the safety of workers, especially women (Paliwal et al., n.d.).

As per MGNREGA guidelines, it is necessary to have essential provisions like clean water, medical aid units, shelter, rest time and child care (nursery) for working mothers and who have babies under the age of five on site (Practice & 2021, n.d.).

It emerges from the study that although few of the essential provisions mentioned in the guidelines have been implemented, the most crucial facilities such as drinking water, shelters for relaxation, first aid kits and childcare children (nursery) were not found on the construction sites (N Lokhande et al., n.d.).

### Impact on expenditure structure

The majority of respondents communicated that the MGNREGA program has gained noticeable change among them and improved purchasing power (G Vasudevan et al., n.d.-b). They could now take care of food, medical services and various expenses (Ranjan, 2021).

It is obvious that they spend more money on food and secondly they spend part of their salary in priority on primary consumable items, ceremonies, entertainment, etc (Nitin Lokhande & Gundimeda, 2021; Gayathri Vasudevan et al., 2020).

Expenses for the purchase of agricultural tools are also one of their priorities for a good harvest, but they spend moderate incomes on health care

(Esteves et al., n.d.; Rajalakshmi et al., n.d.). Their least investment goes to education, because half of it is paid for by the government (Narayanan et al., 2014; S. D. Natesan & Marathe, 2017). The implementation of MGNREGA ensured the food security of workers in the study area but did not make them financially strong, because they could not save thanks to their low income (Harish et al., 2014; Pamecha et al., 2015). In informal discussions with the workers, it was learned that having savings in the bank gave them great confidence, which enhanced their dignity in the family (Ahuja et al., n.d.; Ranaware et al., 2015).

### Impact on the creation of village assets

At research sites, the most common types of work carried out through MGNREGA were road building and pond digging (Sarkar et al., n.d.; Singh et al., n.d.). Water conservation through various water management works has been undertaken, which includes drought resistance, exploration of irrigation sources, which enables small landowners to be more stable in creating productive assets such as land, livestock and irrigation works related to agriculture (Narayanan et al., n.d.; Salian et al., n.d.). Access to basic services such as health, education and communication in rural areas is possible thanks to rural connectivity (S. Natesan et al., n.d.; Shah, 2016). In the study, it was also found that the MGNREGA scheme focused more on rural road connectivity and carry out allied activities, which improved the economic wellbeing of native people (Ghose, 2015; Weekly & 2016, n.d.).

**Table 3: Respondents' views on the effect of MGNREGA on village asset creation**

Profile Details	Total		Male		Female	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>Advantage from Communication and Transportation</b>						
Yes	109	77.9	57	77	52	78.8
No	8	5.7	5	6.8	3	4.5

To some extent	23	16.4	12	16.2	11	16.7
<b>Better Irrigation and Water Management</b>						
Yes	116	82.9	60	81.1	56	84.8
No	2	1.4	2	2.7	-	-
To some extent	20	14.3	10	13.5	10	15.2
<b>Creating Infrastructure for Cattle Shelters</b>						
Yes	121	86.4	62	83.8	59	89.4
No	6	4.3	4	5.4	2	3
To some extent	13	9.3	8	10.8	5	7.6
<b>Benefit from Afforestation Activities</b>						
Yes	127	90.7	69	93.2	58	87.9
No	3	2.1	-	-	3	4.5
To some extent	10	7.1	5	6.8	5	7.6

Regarding the impact of MGNREGA in improving city resources and creating infrastructure, it was found from the field data that respondents revealed that communication has improved

(77, 9%), expressed an improvement in the supply of protected and safe drinking water (82.9%), informed conditions are favored for the domestication of livestock (86.4%) and people are satisfied with the measures taken for reforestation to increase forest cover (90.7%), as mentioned in Table 3. About a quarter of the respondents expressed that the progress was delayed in some areas where the survey was initiated, due to poor planning and lack of organization among villagers and officials.

The study found mixed responses from the selected respondents regarding the creation of resources. A large proportion of respondents said that MGNREGA had brought about outstanding positive changes in cities as well as in their lives by ensuring food security and improving purchasing power. Some workers said that asset creation does not benefit them and cannot bring provincial improvement as visualized by MGNREGA. Despite the many obstacles and limitations of the program, it was inferred from the study that MGNREGA's work produces various environmental and financial benefits for the workers.

These benefits in allowing them to maintain and improve groundwater, recharge groundwater levels, increase the capacity of water bodies,

which ultimately led to a better irrigation system. The measures taken at MGNREGA have also helped to control soil erosion and disintegration. Workers expected to harvest more benefits of the MGNRE-GA in the years to come.

## CONCLUSION

The significant effect of the MGNREGA program was observed in raising food security as well as improving purchasing power. The scheme guaranteed equal wages for both genders without any disparity and it also improved people's standard of living by offering higher wages.

The various impacts of this program have added to the improvement of the financial situation of the provincial family units and the reduction of misery to some extent. As there are generous measures of landless poor in the review area, they rely on ranching and other occasional physical labor before the program is implemented. But after running the MGNREGA program in the region, it considerably ensured better livelihoods for the natives. The desired goals of the employment guarantee scheme are gradually penetrating people's lives for overall well-being,

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has identified the following key and critical issues of MGNREGA, which are important to be addressed by government and all concerned for better implementation.



1. Emphasis should be placed on sensitizing and motivating rural households towards the government's efforts for the project.
2. Regular monitoring and evaluation and institutional support for the development of skills consistent with the objective of the program must be strengthened.
3. Ensure the greater interest of women at all levels, e.g. site administration, personnel development and social audits.
4. At grassroots level, the GRS (Gram Rojgar Sevak) and Sarpanch must be interested in interacting with the beneficiaries and making them aware of their rights for a better implementation of the programme.

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