

# **SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT ON RURAL EMPLOYMENT. (A CASE STUDY OF AWOORA GRAM PANCHAYAT OF DISTRICT ANANTNAG, JAMMU AND KASHMIR)**

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## **Abstract**

India is one of the fast growing countries in terms of population and economy. According to UN data, the present population of India is estimated at 1,380,004,385 people, which is equivalent to 17.7% of the total world population. The country being second in the population after China, facing the crisis of poverty and unemployment to a large extent. Although, Government of India has devised rural development programs from time to time to overcome these problems, but seems to be very far from achieving the goal. Among such rural development programs, The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 commonly known as (MGNREGA) is one of the largest and most ambitious anti-poverty, demand driven job guarantee scheme from Government of India. Like that of the other states and union territories, Jammu and Kashmir also adopted MGNREGA as an instrument of rural development and employment generation in the union territory. The present study is an attempt to elevate the socio-economic impact of the hundred days employment guarantee scheme namely MGNREGA up on lives of rural population of Awoora gram panchayat of Phalgam Block in Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir.

**Key Words:** Rural Population, Job Cards, Rural Employment and Unemployment Allowance.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The development of rural areas and rural people has always been the primary concern in the economic planning and development process of our country. It is rightly said that real India lives in the villages, unless we are able to uplift the tribal and backward section of the society, India faces a dark future. Therefore, rural development and poverty reduction should be at priority for the nation like India. There is no denying the fact the two terms are inter-connected and are two sides of the same coin. To fulfil these goals, the Government of India since independence has framed numerous policies, schemes and rural development programs to meet the requirements. These programs can be broadly classified under five headings viz (1) Government sponsored programs (2) programs where banks play a role (3) Land to land programs (4) Social welfare programs; and (5) Insurance schemes. It is worth noting that there are various anti-poverty and employment generation schemes sponsored by Government of India like

1. Crash Scheme of Rural Development (CSRSD 1971)
2. Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Project (PIREP 1972)
3. National Food for Work Program (NFFWP 1976-77)
4. National Rural Employment Programme (NREP 1980-81)
5. Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM 1979)
6. Rural Landless Emp. Guarantee Program (RLEGP 1983)
7. Employment Assurance Schemes (EAS)
8. Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY 1989)
9. Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY 2001)
10. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA 2005)

Among them The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is one of the largest and most ambitious anti-poverty, demand driven job guarantee scheme from Government of India enacted by legislation on August 25, 2005. The act was brought by the UPA coalition supported by left parties. Jean Dreze, a Belgian born economist at Delhi school of economics, has been a major influence on this project. MGNREGA provides employment opportunities to rural labours as a matter of right. This scheme is a law whereby any adult, registered and is willing to work at the prescribed minimum wages is entitled to being employed on public works within 15 days from the date of application is received. If work is not provided within the

stipulated time, he/she is entitled to an unemployment allowance. The act came in to force with effect from February 2006 in 200 most backward rural districts and later extended to all rural districts of India from the financial year 2008-09. The act provides a legal guarantee for at least 100 days of employment in every financial year. The work is provided within the radius of 5kms from the applicant's residence. If work is not provided within the said distance, then the applicant is entitled to travel allowance of 10%. Moreover, the labours are entitled to some facilities at the work place such as clean drinking water, first aid and childcare. MGNREGA is a complex plot with many actors; the main actors are the state counsel, the district coordinator, the program officer, the gram panchayat. The gram panchayat has the responsibility of generating the sufficient work for those who demand it, issuing job cards and to supervise worksites. The process of achieving work under this act is very simple. It is basically a two step procedure; the first step is to register within the gram panchayat and the second step is to apply for work. The registration is required only once for five years but applications have to be submitted each time work is required. The act is entitled to both men and women at the same wages in fact any gender discrimination is prohibited. Wages are to be paid every week or in any case not later than a fortnight after the date on which work has been done.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A variety of research has been carried out on the rural development programs like MGNREGA in India. Therefore, unlimited literature is available to find a research gap and understand the impact of MGNREGA on rural employment. In order to find the appropriate result, the researcher has sighted the following material. Anindita Adhikari and Kartika Bhatia (2010) have analysed the switch from cash to bank payment of wages under the act. They had put in efforts to whether the switch really served as an effective check against the embezzlement of MGNREGA wages. Ian Mac Auslan (2007) studied that MGNREGA is closely bound with nations of entitlement and citizenship. Besides, John Dreze (2009) argued that the chief beneficiaries of MGNREGA are rural and marginal communities. He has also suggested and pressed over the right implication of the scheme so that it can provide a social security to the vulnerable sections of society. All above, Rohtagi V.D (2009) has studied almost the entire aspects of MGNREGA in a very comprehensive way including its legal and other aspects with case studies. There is no denying the fact that the literature available on MGNREGA has given lot of suggestions and recommendations related to the implementation and impact of MGNREGA. But so far as the promise of the act is concern, there is still a gap between MGNREGA on documents and MGNREGA in practice.

## METHODOLOGY USED IN THE STUDY

In order to study the socio-economic impact of MGNREGA on rural employment, gram Panchayat Awoora of Block Phalgam, District Anantnag, State Jammu and Kashmir has been selected. The Panchayat Awoora has 516 registered applicants under MGNREGA as on date 9/5/2021. Among which 311 are Male workers and 205 are Female workers. Descriptive research design and primary data has been adopted for this study in keeping view the following objectives.

1. To find socio-economic impact of the Act.
2. To analyse the availability of work under MGNREGA.
3. To find out the possible ways out to make the impact positive and plug the case of deviation if any from the prescribed norms of the producer.
4. To suggest the possible policy to improve the MGNREGA implementation and its performance in terms of achieving the ultimate objectives.

The researcher has selected 29% means 150 respondents out of the total registered workers with the help of random sampling method. The responses of respondent are collected with the help of interview schedule and observation techniques.

## PANCHAYAT AWOORA AT A GLANCE

According to Census 2011 information, the location code or village code of Awoora village is 003526.

Block / Tehsil	Pahalgam
District	Anantnag
State	Jammu & Kashmir
Pin code	192401
Area	70.8 hectares
Population	M(521), F(441) = 962
Households	160
Nearest Town	Pahalgam (14 km)
Registered applicants under MGNREGA	516

Job card issued	353
Job Cards not issued	163

Source (Data available at Indian Village Directory)

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA COLLECTED

The collected data has been classified, analysed and tabulated. Then simple percentage method has been used to measure the association between respondents and the employment provide by MGNREGA.

Table 1: Socio Economic Background of the Respondents

Gender	No. of the Respondents	Percentage
Male	100	66.66%
Female	50	33.34%
Total	150	100%
Monthly income	No. of the Respondents	Percentage
3000-4000	74	49.33%
4000-5000	45	30%
5000-6000	31	20.67%
Total	150	100%

Source (Data collected from field survey)

From the field survey and the data presented in the table, it is obvious that the percentage of male workers is more than the percentage of female workers. The only reason behind the low participation of females in the job opportunities provided by MGNREGA has been found that in the study area male members are usually working for their family while as females are mostly doing house hold works despite the fact there is major of the respondents whose monthly income is below four thousand rupees. It was also observed from the field survey that there is less number of respondents whose monthly income is around six thousand rupees. Moreover, it has also been analysed that there are needy people who want to get the job opportunities provided by MGNREGA, but as per the sources available on the website of Ministry of Rural Development Government of India only 353 job cards have been issued among them only 127 respondents have availed employment under the scheme.

Table 2: Gender Wise Respondents View on Satisfaction of Employment Provided by MGNREGA

Gender	Satisfied	Partially satisfied	Unsatisfied	Total
Male	30 (30%)	38 (38%)	32 (32%)	100 (66.66%)
Female	13 (26%)	15 (30%)	22 (44%)	50 (33.34%)
Total	43 (56%)	53 (68%)	54 (76%)	150 (100%)

Source (Data collected from field survey)

This table depicts the gender wise satisfaction of respondents by the employment provided under MGNREGA scheme. It is obvious from the presented data that majority (38%) of male respondents are partially satisfied and only 30% are satisfied. On the other hand only 26% female respondents are satisfied and 44% are unsatisfied. So far as the total ratio is concern, majority (76%) of the respondents have shared unsatisfied view on the employment provided under the scheme. While interacting with the respondents, the researcher came to know that 100 days employment in a year is not sufficient to meet the basic needs of their family.

Table 3: Gender Wise Respondents Views on More Work and More Wages by Other Agencies

Gender	To a great extend	To some extend	Not at all	Total
Males	46 (46%)	31(31%)	23 (23%)	100 (66.66%)
Females	22(44%)	11(22%)	17 (34%)	50 (33.34%)
Total	68(80%)	42(53%)	40(57%)	150 (100%)

Source (Data collected from field survey)

Table 3 illustrates the gender wise view of the respondents on the wages provided by MGNREGA as compared with the wages given by other agencies. The data depicts that 46% of male, 44% female and 80% of respondents are of the view that the wages provided under the scheme is low as compared to the wages provided by other agencies. Although, Government of India has enhanced MGNREGA wages up about 11%; yet at least 40% lower than minimum wages. (The Hindu Business line report dated March 29, 2020).

### IMPORTANT FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

From the above discussion on socio-economic impact of MGNREGA on rural employment, it has been observed that majority of the workers are males and very less number is from female section of the rural people despite the fact that 49.33% people have monthly income below 4000 rupees are not participating in the scheme. Moreover, it has been analysed that there are several other reasons behind the lackadaisical attitude of females towards the scheme. The first reason as discussed above is that in the study area females are generally performing house hold duties and males are generally doing outdoor work for their family. The second reason

is the non availability of work within the catchment area of 5kms which seems to be inconvenient for the rural female folk to participate in the scheme. Another reason for the less participation of female respondents in the MGNREGA scheme is the daily wages which are less than the wages provided for work in agricultural sector which is the primary source of income in the area. Above all, it is the season based allotted works and the wages which are not provided on time as mentioned in the scheme are the prime concerns for the people of the area to work under MGNREGA scheme.

After discussing pros and cons of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005) and its impact on the rural employment of gram Panchayat Awoora of Block Phalgam, District Anantnag, State Jammu and Kashmir. The researcher has following suggestions to improve the MGNREGA implementation and its performance in terms of achieving the ultimate objectives of the scheme in the area.

1. Attempts should be made to allotted work to the registered applicants in the catchment area throughout the year.
2. Job cards should be issued to all the registered applicants so that everyone could avail employment opportunity.
3. Working days and the wages provided under the scheme should be increased in order to maximize the participation of the applicants.

## CONCLUSION

In the conclusion we may say that Government of India since independence has tried to provide employment to the rural districts in order to overcome the crisis of poverty and unemployment which are the prime concerns of the nation. Although, various programs and schemes have been framed by the Ministry of Rural Development Government of India, but still seems far from achieving the goal. Undoubtedly, The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 commonly known as (MGNREGA) is one of the largest and most ambitious anti-poverty, demand driven job guarantee scheme from Government of India, but still lacks to meet out the requirement, because there is still a gaps between the promises of the scheme and MGNREGA in practice.

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