

Social impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Hoshiarpur district : A socio-economic study

■ Neha Wasal

Arya College , Ludhiana (Punjab) India
(Email : neha_wasal@yahoo.com)

ARTICLE INFO :

Received : 23.09.2019
Revised : 08.11.2019
Accepted : 25.11.2019

KEY WORDS :

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Rural development, Employment opportunity, Rural connectivity, Sarpanch

HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE :

Wasal, Neha (2019). Social impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Hoshiarpur district : A socio-economic study. *Adv. Res. J. Soc. Sci.*, **10** (2) : 60-65, DOI: 10.15740/HAS/ARJSS/10.2/60-65. Copyright@2019 : Hind Agri - Horticultural Society

ABSTRACT

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) aimed at providing direct employment to the deserving rural people has been in operation for last many years. The present study had conducted to assess the role of NREGA programme with the following specific objectives: to study socio-economic profile of the beneficiaries of NREGA, to assess the contribution of NREGA in socio-economic development of its beneficiaries, to identify the factors of success and failure and to render suitable suggestions for further improvement in the NREGA programme. Socio-economic profile of the respondents revealed that most of the respondents were male, in the middle age group, hailing from schedule caste category and were having little education and low income level. The profile of beneficiaries of NREGA programme indicated that the benefits of this programme is going to the deserving people. Rural connectivity (repair of roads etc.), village cleanliness, plantation were the major areas in which the NREGA beneficiaries worked under the supervision of a Mate. The village Sarpanch proved to be the major person who made aware to the beneficiary and helped them to get employment under this programme. On an average beneficiary of NREGA got employment for 15 days in a month. All the beneficiaries of the NREGA programme got prescribed wage *i.e.* Rs.123 per day which was paid timely to the respondents. 1/5th of the respondents held that dependency on the farmers had reduced after joining NREGA programme and also wage rate had increased in other activities in villages due to the arrival of NREGA programme. 38 per cent of the respondents opined that NREGA activities helped them to remove idleness whereas 25 per cent of respondents felt more social recognized after joining NREGA. Overall the launching of NREGA programme had increased the demand for labour in rural areas. The non- beneficiary of NREGA programme did not join the NREGA largely due to social inhibition (not ready to do labour in own village), low wage rate and irregularity of work. Irregular grants and work opportunities, less wage rate were the major constrains experienced by the beneficiaries of NREGA. Regularity in grants, generating adequate employment opportunity may prove more useful for NREGA beneficiary and society at large.

INTRODUCTION

Development of any country depends upon the productive population of that very particular country. Employment is the best source to enhance the chances of development whether it is economic or social development. By and large all the government formed after independence has tried to solve the problem of unemployment especially in the rural area of our country. NREGA is one of the important steps taken in this field by UPA government. Main goal of this act is to provide employment to rural people in order to fulfill their social and economical needs.

Socio-economic development of weaker sections of the society has been the prime agenda of the government formed after independence in India. Various programmes have been experimented for the development of rural people, in India in the last six decades. Right from the Community Development Programme (1952) till Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (2000), there is a long list of rural development programme implemented in India for socio-economic welfare of the rural people. As the benefits of rural development programmes were not percolating down, since 1970 more attention was given by government towards the poorer section (Vanaik, 2008). Fast multiplying population, shrinking economic resources are further adding to the number of poor and are becoming a cause for serious concern for the government. The recent UNDP Human Development Index report has put the India on 134th position among 192 countries of the world in over all development ranking indicating toward the declining standard of life in Indian society.

When India attained the political freedom from Britishers, it was afflicted with socio-economic backwardness. To reconstruct the society on the desired lines Indian government started planned development programmes to achieve the targets in specific time frames. Community Development Programme (CDP) was started in early 50's. This programme was started across the country with a view to improve the life of people of rural area specifically the weaker section. However this programme could not yield the desired results due to various reasons such as wider coverage of area, less skilled manpower and corruption etc.

After assessing the non-achievements of CDP programme government focused on agricultural oriented strategies for rural development. On the basis of the expert

committee of US agriculture scientist government started Intensive Agriculture District Programme (IADP). This programme later on converted into Intensive Agricultural Area Programme (IAAP). These programme showed quite success in raising the agricultural production. However a wide section of society consists of labour, agricultural labour, artisans, small and marginal farmers could not get much benefit of these programmes. Consequently most of the benefit of this programme was availed by the well to do section of the rural society. Prevalence of unemployed and unskilled persons jumped to high level in rural area. All India Credit Review Committee set up by Reserve Bank of India in its report in 1969 recommended that specific and target approaches should be adopted in the rural development enabling the deserving rural people to take benefits from the development process.

After 1970's, there was a change in the strategy regarding rural development programmes. The new strategy was adopted by the government, which aimed at to follow target group approach instead of the whole rural set up. Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA), Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labour Agency (MFALA), Crash Scheme for Rural Development (CSRDP) were the major programmes implemented under this approach. However, the evaluative studies of all these programmes indicated that they could not achieve the motive due to various factors (Arora, 1990).

In the later phase of nineteen seventies, Government implemented three major anti-poverty programmes namely Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP). From these programmes IRDP was the major programme, which covered almost, the whole rural population under its various activities divided into three major sections *i.e.* primary, secondary and tertiary. Another important aspect of IRDP has been to provide subsidies on loan to its beneficiaries. Though development efforts helped a few but it widened the gap between rich and poor in the rural areas and thus necessitated to shift the focus of the rural development process (Bhai *et al.*, 2004).

Since, 1999-2000, all these programmes were merged and a new programme named Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) was started by Indian government. This self-employment programme Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), launched

with effect from 1.4.1999, has been conceived keeping in the view the strengths and weaknesses of the earlier rural development programmes. The objective of restructuring was to make the programme more effective in providing sustainable income through micro enterprises.

Though all the above discussed programmes showed some achievement during their times but no programme could give guarantee regarding to the employment. Keeping in view the previous experiences of rural development programme Indian government started National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) [which is presently known as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)]. In this scheme, there is a legal guarantee for 100 days employment in a financial year to at least one member of every household whose adult member volunteer to do unskilled manual work at the minimum wage rate prescribed in a state or else an unemployment allowance to enable them to achieve socio-economic betterment (Singh and Mishra, 2006). In the first phase, it was implemented in 200 most backward districts of India, in 2007, NREGA covered another 130 districts and from April, 2008, the Act is implemented in all the districts of the country (Vanaik, 2008). So NREGA is primarily meant to provide employment to the deserving rural people (Panda, 2007).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study on role of National Rural

Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in socio-economic development in Hoshiarpur district was conducted in Hoshiarpur district by adopting systematic sampling procedure Hoshiarpur district was first district in Punjab where the NREGA programme was implemented in 2006. So the study was planned to conduct in this district. Of all the ten blocks of Hoshiarpur district two blocks namely Tanda and Dasuya were taken for study. Dasuya having the highest number of beneficiaries while Tanda was possessing less number of beneficiaries of NREGA at the time of study. From the selected block two villages namely Harsi Pind and Khandali Narungpur from Tanda and Badla and Dadiyal were taken from Dasuya and were randomly selected.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The results obtained from the present investigation as well as relevant discussion have been summarized under following heads :

Impact of NREGA :

The thrust of this study has been to bring forth the impact of NREGA on social, economic, psychological aspects of the beneficiaries. So efforts were made to assess the impact of NREGA and the results are discussed in forthcoming tables.

Impact of NREGA on economic aspect of beneficiaries:

Table 1 indicate the economic impact of NREGA on the beneficiaries of NREGA. Data indicated that 58.33

Table 1 : Distribution of respondents on the basis of economic impact of NREGA		Multiple responses
Economic impact	Beneficiaries	Rank
Shift in mode of labour	05 (8.33)	6
Dependence on farmers has reduced	13 (21.66)	4
Daily wage rate has gone up	35 (58.33)	1
Demand for labour has increased	15 (25.00)	3
Opportunities of work have increased due to NREGA	07 (11.66)	5
Increase in durable assets	07 (11.66)	5
Increase in rural connectivity	04 (6.66)	7
More economic independence	17 (28.33)	2
Decrease in indebtedness	07 (11.66)	5

per cent beneficiary respondents felt that main economic impact of NREGA had been the increase in their wage rate. Now they get more wages under NREGA. It was also tried to know whether beneficiary respondents had created some durable assets with the help of NREGA and the data indicated that 11.66 per cent of the beneficiary respondents opined that they were able to create assets with the help of NREGA, mean they can have economic benefits from created assets.

During the field work respondents replied that relief from economic dependence on others have given them a sense of confidence. Similarly economic independence was also found to be encouraging as 28.33 per cent of the beneficiary respondents replied that now they feel more economically independent. Data show that 21.66 per cent of the beneficiary respondent felt that dependence on the farmers has reduced due to NREGA. 11.66 per cent of the beneficiary respondents told that it had increased the employment opportunities which give them more chance to earn. They were getting more options to choose where they want to work. 11.66 per cent of the beneficiary respondents opined that it had reduced their indebtedness. Amount of debt had decreased after getting engage with NREGA. Further 6.66 per cent of the beneficiary respondents replied that its main economic impact was that it increased the rural connectivity through which they were getting more chance to connect with world. Whereas 8.33 per cent of beneficiary respondents opined that it had shifted the mode of labour.

On the whole data indicated that after joining NREGA, beneficiaries under the study area recognized it as a good act which increased the wage rate, the economic independence, rural connectivity, durable assets, reduced indebtedness and created more job opportunities for the people.

Social impact:

Social development of the beneficiaries through economic development have been one of the important objectives of by and large all the rural development programmes started by Indian government from time to time. NREGA contains some optimistic objectives in which social impact and social objectives have a special place. The result discussed in the Table 1 indicated that 38.33 per cent of the beneficiary respondents felt really

better as far as their work or job is concerned. 25 per cent of the beneficiary respondents told that now they feel more socially recognized. Now many people know about them and their activity and show more interest in interacting with them.

Data further show that 28.33 per cent of the beneficiary respondents recognized social equality as the most important social impact of NREGA on the respondents. Every person has a particular place in this society. The person who is earning will have more respect in the society. Now beneficiary respondents felt that they get equal place in the society. And they can contribute more to the society because their interaction has also increased now.

On the issue of empowerment to the women 26.66 per cent respondents opined that it has empowered women. After joining NREGA women's participation in social activities had been increased to a good extent and this encourage women empowerment in our society. Women respondents told that they become more self dependent now.

Study further revealed that change in social status of poor people had become possible through this act. 16.66 per cent of the beneficiary respondents felt that it has changed the social status As it is known that social status of a person depends on many aspects, but economic empowerment is very important for social aspect. Joining of NREGA further showed encouraging results as 25 per cent of the beneficiary respondents told that their inter personal relationships has become good after joining NREGA group. Data show that 16.66 per cent of beneficiary respondents felt that it had also effected the occupational change of poor people .30 per cent of the beneficiary respondents opined that NREGA gave a right to live with self respect which was also the main social impact.

Had respondents felt any change regarding their standard of living after joining NREGA? Yes, in case of 26.66 per cent of the beneficiary respondents felt a positive change in their standard of living, as there was improvement in their houses, sanitation conditions, medical facilities etc. This was largely attributed to the change in their economic position after joining NREGA.

Thus, on the whole results show that after joining NREGA respondents felt more confident as it had removed idleness of most of the respondents which

directly or indirectly improve the living standard of the respondents. It provided a feeling of equality to the respondents and their social status increased. Their inter personal relationships had become good.

On the issue of issuance of job card data revealed that large majority of the respondents (96%) held that they approached Sarpanch for getting job cards. 71 per cent of the respondents considered repeated visit to village Sarpanch houses as the main difficulty which they faced and only 28 per cent of the respondents got receipt of their application for work. By and large all the respondents got work after applying for work in NREGA and all the respondents got their payment through bank. Thrust of the study has been to highlight the kind of works under taken under NREGA in study area. Data revealed that majority of the respondents (66%) were engaged in rural connectivity (repair of roads etc.) work while 13 per cent of the respondents were engaged in work village cleanliness and ponds. A large majority of respondents (96%) got work within their village. Three fourth of the respondents work for 15 days in a month under NREGA while 22 per cent informed that they work for 12 days in a month under NREGA. 88 per cent of the respondents opined that that wages under NREGA were paid on time and by and large all the respondents held that the wage rate was same for men and women under NREGA under the study area. Large majority of the respondents (85%) replied that they do not have any family member engaged in NREGA. 51 per cent of the respondents held that they don't want their female family member to work under NREGA. 33 per cent of the respondents felt an increase in their income. Out of those who felt increased in their income, 50 per cent of the respondent felt that their monthly income has changed upto Rs.1000 while 48 per cent opined that their income has changed upto Rs. 2000. More than half of the respondent (68.33%) were engaged in labour work before getting engaged with NREGA. 66 per cent opined that NREGA help them to fulfill their responsibilities and little more than half of the respondents (58%) opined that their main responsibility is to fulfill household needs. 53 per cent of the respondents felt improvement in their social status after getting engaged with NREGA and an effort was made to pin point the factors of failure of NREGA and it was found that irregularity of work, less wage

rate, social barriers, lack of adequate work were the major factor which led the programme towards failure (Agrawal and Kumar, 2010; Ambastha *et al.*, 2008 and Panda, 2007).

Conclusion:

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) is a unique programme which is directly aimed at to provide guaranteed employment to the deserving people of the countryside. This programme provides a legal safe guard for getting employment. Hence, this programme is quite different than the previous rural development programme. Under this programme a person can get 100 days ensured employment on specified wage rate. This programme has been in operation in Hoshiarpur district for the last 5 years. The significance of this study lies in highlighting the contribution of this programme in providing employment which ultimately helps people to achieve better standard of life. Any development programme need time to time appraisal for the refinement in it. So the efforts made in study would help to know the deficiencies prevailing in the programme and to suggest remedial measures for further improvement. The impact assessment of this programme would also be useful for knowing the ground level realities as to how the rural people respond to the development interventions of the government.

REFERENCES

- Agarwal, A. and Kumar, P. (2010). Monitoring afforestation works under NREGS: Experiences from Jhansi district: *Development Alternatives*, **20**(2): 11 -12.
- Ambastha, P., Shankar, P.S.V. and Shah, M.(2008). The road ahead: *Yojana*, **52**(8): 44-56.
- Arora, R. C. (1990). *Integrated rural development*. S Chand and Company. New Delhi, India.
- Bhai, L. T., Karuppiyah, C. and Geetha, B. (2004). Micro credit and social capitalism in rural Tamil Nadu. *Social Welfare*, **50** (10) : 30-35.
- Panda, S. (2007). Socio-economic profile and development of tribes in Orissa. *Kurukshetra*, **55** (10): 31-38.
- Reports by Deputy Commissioner-cum-District Programme Coordinator, Hoshiarpur.

Neha Wasal

Report by Tiwari D K: I.A.S Deputy commissioner (Hoshiarpur).

& *Pol Weekly*, **30**(7): 8-10.

Singh, J. N. and Mishra, A. (2006). Backward linkages of rural employment guarantee scheme: *Kurukshetra*, **54**(10): 30-34.

WEBLIOGRAPHY

Official website of NREGA- www.nrega.nic.in.

Vanaik, A. (2008). NREGA and the death of Tapas Soren. *Econ.*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 10th Year of Excellence ★ ★ ★ ★ ★