

An exploratory study on implementation of MGNREGA in Malwa region of Punjab

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ABSTRACT : The present study was conducted to assess implementation of MGNREGA consistent to its provisions in Malwa region of Punjab. Seven districts of the Malwa region were selected through probability proportionate to size procedure of sampling. A total of 252 respondents *i.e.* 36 beneficiaries from each district comprised the sample for study. The data was collected through interview schedule consists of 4 parts *i.e.* issuance of job cards, employment records, wage payments and social audit procedure. As far as issuance of job cards aspects were concerned, it was found that forty-five per cent of the respondents made oral request for membership followed by those who were nominated by gram sabha (36.90%) and very few made written request (17.86%). Ninety-four per cent beneficiaries reported that all the eligible members were included in the job cards. In employment aspect of MGNREGA as reportedly by respondents only 25.39 per cent of job card holders got 100 days of employment. Seventy five per cent were offered more than 35 days of employment much below the mark of 100 days per family. Thirty eight per cent of the respondents had access to drinking water facility followed by first aid facility (18.65%), Creche (17.85%) and shade for workers during rest hours (14.68%). Payments records revealed that all the payments are made through Bank in all the districts. Majority (93.25) of the respondents reported that they don't get wage payment at in time. At mean, they have to wait for six month or more. Social audit was mandatory once in a six month. Only 57.14 per cent of the respondents reported that social audit was conducted and remaining forty three per cent opined that it was never done. Therefore many irregularities were observed in the implementation of the scheme, which is a hindering factor for success of programme.

KEY WORDS : MGNREGA implementation, Issuance of job cards, Employment, Facilities, Wage, Punjab

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INTRODUCTION

India with its mammoth population of 131 billion, out of which 67.63 per cent still live in rural areas continues

to be predominantly rural country. The incidence of poverty and unemployment is also much more severe in the villages. In this context saying that rural development is national development will not be hide off the mark.

Rural development is an interminable process. The government embraced this cause through starting various development programmes.

Since India's independence several programmes have been designed with the aim to alleviate rural poverty as an approach towards planned development of the country. The employment oriented programmes as effective instruments of poverty alleviation started receiving attention around 1980's. Consequently, several programmes such as National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) were implemented. Some other employment generation programmes launched by central government included Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), Sampoorna Grameen Yojana (SGRY), National Food for Work Programme (NFFWP) etc. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, (NREGA) is one such ambitious programme of GOI which was notified on September 7, 2005 with the objective to enhance 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 Act which came into force on February 2, 2006 was implemented in phased manner. In the first phase it was introduced in 200 most backward districts of the country. It was then extended to additional 130 districts in the financial year 2007-2008. Subsequently the Act was extended to cover all the districts, with the exception of districts that have a hundred per cent urban population. MGNREGA is being implemented mainly by gram panchayats (GPs). The involvement of contractors is banned. The law provides many safeguards to promote its effective management and implementation. The act explicitly mentions the principles and agencies for implementation, list of allowed works, financing pattern, monitoring and evaluation, and most importantly the detailed measures to ensure transparency and accountability. The budget and content of the programme has been changing overtimes under the dynamics of politics. There have also been reports of it's shortly implementation. It was against this backdrop that present study was planned to examine the implementation of MGNREGA consistent to its objectives in different districts of Malwa region of Punjab.

METHODOLOGY

The study was covered 7 districts of Malwa region

of Punjab using probability proportionate to size sampling procedure. From each district, two blocks were selected in consultation with concerned district officials. From each block two villages were selected for canvassing the schedules and collecting information from the beneficiaries. So, two blocks and four villages (two villages per block) were selected from each district taking the total to 28 villages. From each village, nine beneficiaries who have been working under MGNREGA for the last five years were selected randomly. So, a total of 252 beneficiaries comprised the sample of the study. The interview schedule was developed to collect the information of various aspects under MGNREGA such as issuance of job cards, employment aspect, wage payments and their records and social audit. The reaction of the beneficiaries to the implementation procedure followed by GP for the registration of beneficiaries, mechanism of registration in terms of inviting applications, registration for job cards, verification of the same in a transparent manner, social audit etc. were captured in options 'Yes' and 'No' responses.

OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

The results obtained from the present investigation are summarized below :

Issuance of Job cards :

In order to register themselves under MGNREGA, the willing adults can make oral or written request. However, the data in Table 1 depicts that, forty-five per cent of the respondents made oral request for membership followed by those who were nominated by the gram sabha (36.90%). However, only 17.86 per cent made written request. In Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Ropar and Mansa districts, majority of the respondents got membership upon oral request, whereas in Moga, Sangrur and Bathinda districts, majority of the respondents were nominated by gram sabha. Illiteracy of the respondents was the main reason for submitting written applications/requests. Similar findings were reported by Raghavan *et al.* (2008), who reported that job card holders were largely illiterate, unaware of the paper work involved, got their application filled up without date, thus removing scope for tracking the 15 days deadline for allotting work.

The MGNREGA guideline also dictates that the registration process has to be an open-ended process to facilitate registration of eligible households (HHs) throughout the year. However, it was found that majority

(56.34%) of the respondents submitted their request on registration day followed by those who made random requests (33.73%) and late requests (9.92%). Similar trends of registration were observed in Ludhiana, Moga, Ferozepur and Ropar districts.

As per the stipulated guidelines of MGNREGA, the identity of all the eligible applicants have to be verified in an open meeting of GS. Data in Table 1 shows the response details of households (HHs) who certified that such norms were followed or not before issuing the job card. Two-fifth of the respondents agreed that proper verification of all applicants was not done before issuing the job cards. Thirty eight per cent of the respondents reported that Additional project officer verified their particulars. But in Ludhiana and Ropar districts, 47.22 per cent and 77.78 per cent, respectively reported that Gram Sabha verified their application before issuing the job cards which is in accordance with the provision.

Overall, about ninety-four per cent beneficiaries reported that all the eligible members were included in

the job cards. In Ludhiana, three-fourth of the beneficiaries reported that all their family member got included in the job cards.

As per guidelines, the custodian of the job cards should be the beneficiaries/ job card holders but in Ludhiana district, one-fourth of the respondents reported that the custody of the job card was neither with the household member nor with the Gram Panchayat. The job cards were in the custody of *Gram Rojgar Sewak*. In other districts of *Malwa* region, job card holders had the custody of their job cards. Similar results were found in a study done in Maharashtra. It's showed that only 34 per cent households registered under *MGNREGA* had the job cards in their custody (Shah, 2012).

The MGNREGA guideline dictates that the member must get the job card within 15 days of the registration and it should carry photograph of all members who are ready to do unskilled manual work under the scheme. Table 1 illustrates that one-half of the *Malwa* respondents did not experience the same. They got their job cards a

Table 1 : Information regarding issuance of job cards under MGNREGA act in Malwa region of Punjab

	Ludhiana n ₁ =36 f (%)	Moga n ₂ =36 f (%)	Ferozepur n ₃ =36 f (%)	Ropar n ₄ =36 f (%)	Sangrur n ₅ =36 f (%)	Mansa n ₆ =36 f (%)	Bathinda n ₇ =36 f (%)	Total n=252 f (%)
Membership request								
Oral request	27 (75.00)	0(0)	20(55.55)	19(52.78)	0(0)	30(83.33)	18(50.00)	114(45.23)
Written application	0(0)	14(38.88)	16(44.44)	9(25.00)	0(0)	6(16.67)	0(0)	45(17.86)
Nominated by gram sabha / APO	9(25)	22(61.11)	0(0)	8(22.22)	36 (100)	0(0)	18(50.00)	93(36.90)
Submission of request								
On registration day	27 (75.00)	17(47.22)	36 (100)	26(72.22)	18(50.00)	0(0)	18(50.00)	142(56.34)
After registration day	0(0)	15(41.67)	0(0)	10(27.77)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	25(9.92)
At Random	9(25.00)	4(11.11)	0(0)	0(0)	18(50.00)	36 (100)	18(50.00)	85 (33.73)
Verification of applicants particulars								
By Gram Sabha (GS)	17(47.22)	2(5.55)	0(0)	28 (77.78)	3(8.33)	10(27.78)	0(0)	60 (23.81)
By Additional project officer (APO)	0(0)	14(29.89)	36 (100)	8(22.22)	11(30.56)	26(72.22)	0(0)	95 (37.69)
Never done	19(52.78)	20(55.55)	0(0)	0(0)	22(61.11)	0(0)	36 (100)	97 (38.49)
All eligible family members included in job card	27(75.00)	36 (100)	36 (100)	35(97.22)	36 (100)	30(83.33)	36 (100)	236 (93.65)
Custody of the job cards								
Household members	27(75.00)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	243(96.42)
Gram Panchayat (GP)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0 (0)
Any other	9(25.00)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	9 (3.57)
Issuance of job card after registration								
Within 15 days	0(0)	0(0)	16(44.44)	18(50.00)	11(30.56)	10(27.78)	0(0)	55 (21.82)
15-30 days	17(47.22)	22(61.11)	0(0)	9(25.00)	0(0)	26(72.22)	0(0)	74 (29.36)
More than 30 days	19(52.78)	14(29.89)	20(55.55)	9(25.00)	25(69.44)	0(0)	36 (100)	123 (48.8)
Job card carries photograph of all beneficiaries	27(75.00)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	243 (96.42)

Frequency given in table only depicts the frequency of 'Yes' responses given by the beneficiaries

month after the registration. Majority (96.42%) of the respondents reported that their job cards carried photograph of all the adult members willing to take up employment under MGNREGA. Only in Ludhiana district, respondents in Changan village did not have the custody of their job cards so they were unable to express their view on this aspect.

Employment aspects :

The maintenance aspect captured important information regarding procedures and rules *vis-à-vis* guidelines of MGNREGA followed by the officials at GP level by way of views expressed by the beneficiaries. There are several guidelines to be followed by GP officials such as distance between worksite and residence, communication and dissemination of information about

works, extent of women participation in all the activities carried out under MGNREGA, facilities at worksite, record keeping of attendance, procedure to be followed for payment of wages, delay in providing employment within stipulated time and unemployment allowance etc. so, the discussion below depicts the views of all the beneficiaries with respect to above items.

The data pertaining to average number of days of work provided to each and every household are given in Table 2. There is a provision of maximum of 100 days of employment to each household under this scheme. Only 25.39 per cent of job card holders got 100 days of employment. Seventy five per cent were offered more than 35 days of employment much below the mark of 100 days per family. Mansa district was successful in providing 100 days employment to majority (83.33%) of

Table 2 : Maintenance of employment records under MGNREGA act in Malwa region of Punjab								(n=252)
Employment records	Ludhiana n ₁ =36	Moga n ₂ =36	Sangrur n ₃ =36	Ropar n ₄ =36	Bathinda n ₅ =36	Ferozepur n ₆ =36	Mansa n ₇ =36	Total n=252
	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
No. of days of employment offered								
100 days	17(47.22)	0(0)	7 (19.44)	9(25.00)	0(0)	1(2.88)	30(83.33)	64 (25.39)
<100 days	19(52.78)	36 (100)	29(80.56)	27 (75.00)	36 (100)	35 (97.22)	6(16.67)	188(74.60)
Off-site employment paid	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1 (2.88)	4 (11.11)	5 (1.95)
Off-site allowance								
Transport allowance	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1 (2.88)	4 (11.11)	5 (1.95)
Living allowance	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4 (11.11)	4 (1.58)
Verification of records								
Daily activity record	10(27.78)	0(0)	0(0)	9(25.00)	18(50.00)	1(2.88)	0(0)	38 (15.08)
Wage payment	27(75.00)	22(61.11)	7(19.44)	9(25.00)	18(50.00)	36 (100)	4(11.11)	123(48.81)
Employment record (number of days employed)	10(27.78)	14(38.89)	36 (100)	0(0)	18(50.00)	16(44.44)	4(11.11)	98 (38.89)
Communication about work allocation								
Information on notice board	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	36 (100)	36 (14.28)
Drum beating	10(27.78)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	18(50.00)	0(0)	0(0)	28 (11.11)
Public announcement	17(47.22)	0(0)	18(50.00)	9(25.00)	18(50.00)	1(2.88)	26(72.22)	89 (35.32)
Oral communication (person to person)	9(25.00)	36 (100)	18(50.00)	27 (75.00)	0(0)	35 (97.22)	36 (100)	161 (63.89)
Women's share in work allocation								
>33%	19(52.78)	36 (100)	7(19.44)	9(25.00)	18(50.00)	36 (100)	36 (100)	161(63.89)
<33%	17(47.22)	0(0)	29(80.56)	27(75.00)	18(50.00)	0(0)	0(0)	91 (36.11)
Facilities available at work place								
Crèche	17(47.22)	22(61.11)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	6(16.67)	45 (17.85)
First aid	17(47.22)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	20 (55.55)	10(27.78)	47 (18.65)
Drinking water	17(47.22)	22(61.11)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	21(58.33)	36 (100)	96 (38.09)
Shade for workers	17(47.22)	20	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	37 (14.68)
Maintenance of attendance record								
Muster roll	27(75.00)	22(61.11)	18(50.00)	9(25.00)	18(50.00)	0(0)	36 (100)	130(51.59)
Register	9(25.00)	14(38.89)	18(50.00)	27 (75.00)	18(50.00)	36 (100)	0(0)	122(48.41)

the respondents.

Though it is mandatory to provide transport allowance to job card holders in the event of work site falling beyond the distance of 5 km. Only in Ferozepur (2.88%) and Mansa (11.11%) respondents were staying beyond 5 km got employed and were paid transport allowance and living allowances per provision under act. About the verification of records, it was mandatory that the Additional Project Officer verifies the daily activity, wage payment and employment records. However, it was observed that daily activity record was verified in 15.08 per cent cases, wage payment records were verified in 48.81 per cent cases and employment record was verified in 38.89 per cent. The inference drawn is that daily activity records were not mentioned in Moga, Sangrur and Mansa Districts (Bishnoi and Rampal, 2015).

As per provision under MNREGA several modes of dissemination of information such as (a) notice board, (b) drum beating, (c) public announcement (d) oral communication are expected to be used to inform all the households falling in the jurisdiction of a particular GP about work allocation. An attempt was made therefore to know the most common mode of communicating the information regarding work allocation. It was found that oral communication (63.89%) was the predominant source of communication in *Malwa* region followed by public announcement (35.32%), information on notice board (14.28%) and drum beating (11.11%).

MGNREGA scheme also stipulates at least one-

third of the wage allocation *i.e.*, person-days to women beneficiaries. Table 2 captures this data of women participation in the MGNREGA works. An attempt was made to analyze the participation of women in each and every household compared to the total person-days utilized by the respective households. The data revealed that 63.89 per cent of wage earners under MNREGA are women beneficiaries. It may be attributed to the fact that MGNREGA is not a primary source of income for the beneficiaries, so women avail this opportunity more than men. Only in the Sangrur district women participation was less than 33 per cent due to the backwardness of the district as people are more tradition bound and don't allow women to work outside their houses. The findings are in Poonia (2012) study which reported that women's weak position in the labour market has greatly improved due to the MNREGA scheme.

The MGNREGA Act stipulates to provide basic facilities such as crèche, first aid, drinking water and shade for workers at the work site. An attempt was made see the implementation of this provision to the wagers at the work site. Only thirty eight per cent of the respondents had access to drinking water facility followed by first aid facility (18.65%), Creche (17.85%) and shade for workers during rest hours (14.68%). Forty seven per cent beneficiaries In Ludhiana district reported that they got all the facilities. Similar findings were observed by Bhattacharyya and Vauquiline (2013), who reported that there was absence of worksite facilities such as toilets, first aid and work-site-equipments and which reflected

Table 3 : Maintenance of wage records under MGNREGA act in *Malwa* region of Punjab

	Ludhiana n ₁ =36 f (%)	Moga n ₂ =36 f (%)	Sangrur n ₃ =36 f (%)	Ropar n ₄ =36 f (%)	Bathinda n ₅ =36 f (%)	Ferozepur n ₆ =36 f (%)	Mansa n ₇ =36 f (%)	Total n=252 f (%)
Wage payment								
Weekly	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0 (0)
Fortnightly	17(47.22)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	17 (6.75)
Monthly	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0 (0)
Biannual	19(52.78)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	235(93.25)
Wage/day	165.91	182	187	184	182	172	183.44	179.47
Place of payment								
G.P. office	9(25.00)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	9 (3.57)
Through banks / PO	27(75.00)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	243(96.42)
Frequency of meetings for late/ non payment	10(27.78)	14(38.89)	11(30.56)	8(22.22)	18(50.00)	36 (100)	26(72.22)	123 (48.81)
Monthly	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0 (0)
Bimonthly	0(0)	0(0)	11(30.56)	8(22.22)	0(0)	15(41.67)	26(72.22)	60 (23.81)
Quarterly	0(0)	14(38.89)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	10(27.78)	0(0)	24 (9.52)
Biannual	10(27.78)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	18(50.00)	11(30.56)	0(0)	39(12.00)

inhuman of poor conditions of work.

Recording of attendance on muster roll at the work site is another important step in the overall process of carrying out works under MGNREGA scheme. The data in Table 2 revealed that there were one half of the respondent's signatures found on the muster rolls. Another half of the respondents (48.41%) sign on register which is not in line with the guidelines of MGNREGA. The enquiry at official level revealed that since they are still struggling with teething problems such as lack of human resources, lack of vision and lack of plan approvals etc. the implementation of provisions is also not proper. More or less similar results were obtained by Singh *et al.* (2013); Gupta and Patel (2015); Kaur and Randhawa (2016) and Tiwari and Upadhyay (2013).

Wage records :

As per guidelines of MGNREGA, wage payment must be within 7 days and not beyond 15 days. But majority (93.25) of the respondents reported that they don't get wage payment at in time. At mean, they have to wait for six month or more. Only in Ludhiana district, forty seven per cent of the respondents agreed that they got their wages within 15 days of work.

There are two provision of it, one is minimum wage rate payment and second is payment according to actual work measurement. Ludhiana and Ferozepur

beneficiaries got less than minimum wage rates because in districts, the actual output of the workers was less so they paid less than prescribed rates. Findings are in conformity with the study done by Palanichamy (2011), which reported that wage rate received per day in Thuinjapuram block of Thiruvannamalai district in Tamil Nadu was Rs. 10 less than the minimum prescribed rate.

Further the tabled showed that majority of payments to the beneficiaries are made through Bank in all the districts. However in one of the village in Ludhiana district the payments were made directly by the GP as they were not issued job cards as yet. According to guidelines of MNREGA the monthly meeting were conducted with job cards holders by Gram Panchayat for their problems. Table 3 further revealed that none of the respondents from any district reportedly had regular monthly meetings with gram Panchayat. Forty-eight per cent of the respondents reported that gram panchayat call meetings for delayed payments. About twenty four per cent reported that meetings were conducted bimonthly.

Social audit :

Social audit is mandatory once in six months. Only 57.14 per cent of the respondents reported that social audit was conducted and remaining forty three per cent opined that it was never done (Table 4). In Moga, Sangrur and Ropar districts reportedly no social audit was ever

Table 4 : Maintenance of records of social audit and complaints redressal system for public scrutiny under MGNREGA act in Malwa region of Punjab

Social audit	Ludhiana	Moga	Sangrur	Ropar	Bathinda	Ferozepur	Mansa	Total
	n ₁ =36 f (%)	n ₂ =36 f (%)	n ₃ =36 f (%)	n ₄ =36 f (%)	n ₅ =36 f (%)	n ₆ =36 f (%)	n ₇ =36 f (%)	n=252 f (%)
Never done	0(0)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	108 (42.85)
Once in 6 months	36 (100)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	144 (57.14)
Once in a year	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0 (0)
Composition of social audit committee								
Job card holders	18(50.00)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (100)	118 (46.83)
Gram panchayat members	18(50.00)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	18(50.00)	0(0)	0(0)	36 (14.28)
Any other	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0 (0)
Presentation of social audit report								
Before Gram panchayat	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Before job card holders	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	3 (8.33)	0(0)	3(1.19)
Both of the above	36(100)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	18(50.00)	33 (91.67)	36 (100)	123 (48.80)
Complaints redressal records								
Maintenance of complaints register	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (14.28)
Complaints lodged (written)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (14.28)
Complaints redressal record (written)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	36 (100)	36 (100)	36 (14.28)

done. MNREGA also provides that the social audit committee must be composed of Job card holders and Gram Panchayat members. The programme officer must present all work related documents to gram sabha for verification and then to social audit committee. Social audit committee after examining all the documents must submit the report within one month back to the gram sabha and all the documents must be presented before gram sabha and workers. In Ludhiana, half of the respondents agreed that members of social audits were chosen from among job cards holders. In Bathinda, Ropar and Mansa all the beneficiaries reported that member were chosen among beneficiaries for this purpose. It may be attributed to the fact that the beneficiaries as well as gram panchayat were unclear about the provision and implementation procedure of social audit. An attempt was also made to enquire from the beneficiaries about the maintenance of grievance redressal record such as complaints regarding works allocation, registration procedures, and job card allocation etc. Complaints register maintenance is mandatory and all the complaints must be lodged in the complaint register, solved within a specified time frame and the person filing complaint should receive a written answer by way of action taken under the scheme but only 14.28 per cent beneficiaries reported that complaint register was maintained and they logged complaints in the register. In Ludhiana, Moga, Sangrur, Ropar and Bathinda in all the districts complaints register was not maintained due to shortage of funds.

Conclusion:

The study yielded adequate information to prove that there are irregularities in implementation of the scheme and that it is not consistent to its provisions under the act. The major irregularities observed included payment delays, inadequate employment, ineffective grievance redressal and complaints mechanism. To make the scheme successful in improving quality of life of rural poor, it is necessary that irregularities should be tackled so a large numbers of people participate in programme and make programme successful. Similar results were also found by Randhawa (2013).

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