An Analysis of Challenges of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) among beneficiaries in Dharmapuri district

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ABSTRACT

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005 guaranteed 100 days of employment in a financial year to rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. This act is an important step towards the realization of the right to work. In Tamil Nadu, this act was launched on February 2nd, 2006 and was initially implemented in six districts followed by 1st April, 2007 onwards implemented in four more districts and finally 1st April, 2008 it was extended to the remaining all other districts.

This study was conducted in Harur block of Dharmapuri district with 120 respondents for identifying the Challenges of MGNREGS. The major challenges are Poor allocation of funds and its disbursal to the beneficiaries affect its functioning Poor MGNREGS implementation results in creation of less public assets and infrastructure facilities, Wide spread corruption and misuse of allocated funds, Increased political interference in selection of beneficiaries and assigning of works, MGNREGS being the largest social security scheme in the world overburdens Panchayat Raj institutions and Lack of monitoring skills by worksite facilitators.

Keywords: MGNREGS, Challenges Analysis

INTRODUCTION

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is an Indian job guarantee scheme, enacted by legislation on August 25, 2005, and implemented on February 2, 2006. The law was initially called the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

(NREGA), but was renamed the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on 2nd October 2009. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is the largest employment guarantee scheme implemented in India and in the world itself. MGNREGA was started in three phases, first in 2006, covering 200 districts. second phase in 2007-2008, covering another 130 districts, and in the third and final phase, the remaining districts have been notified under NREGA with effect from April 1, 2008. Thus, the whole nation was brought under the purview has also been considered as an integrated approach for rural poverty eradication and sustainable development. Since, it's implementation in all over the districts of the country, but it has not shown the result which had been expected and even put forward in MGNREGA objectives. Most of the evaluation studies shown that the scheme is not working properly at ground level because of its poor implementation. There are many issues and challenges are coming up in its implementation of MGNREGA etc. With this background, the study was taken with the objective of "An Analysis of Challenges of MGNREGS works among the beneficiaries in Tamil Nadu".

LITERATURE REVIEW

[3]Lakshmi and Sundaramari (2014) opined that more than half of the beneficiaries (56.67 per cent) expressed delay in wage payments, followed by 48.67 per cent of the beneficiaries reporting lack of regular work and 41.33 per cent of the beneficiaries reported distant worksite.

[6]Shobha (2015) indicated that constraints faced in worksite were hard work, hours of work, travel, no basic facilities, wage were not given in time, less work days. low wages, health problems, delay in getting job, corruption and sexual harassment.

[2]Karma Loday Tamag et al., (2016) reported that MGNREGA gone through various constraints within its system like delay in the payment, Inadequate availability of facilities at worksite, Discontinuation of work because of lack of funds, lack of any governmental provision of financial support to the different line officers who provide technical expertise to the MGNREGA work, Irregular flow of funds etc.

[5]Prasad (2016) observed that while MGNREGA had played a significant role in reducing the distress, the program was yet to realize its full potential. While some problems were linked with the development of infrastructure such as post offices etc., that would improve the access to the beneficiary households, other problems were linked to functional

gaps such as lack of proper information dissemination. A third category of problems were linked with inadequacy of resources and proper designing of the activities to create durable, productive public assets. The more substantive challenges in that context were to do with the structural revival of the rural economy making it part of the priority areas as part of the development model and addressing the political economy questions of enable collective action seeking to democratize power relations in the rural societies which was the only method to control pilferages and other distortions intruding and constraining the exercise of the right guaranteed to the people.

[1]Benni and Nagaraja (2017) observed that 68.00 per cent of the beneficiaries felt that simultaneous work opportunity in agriculture was the reason for less number of days of employment, followed by 42.00 per cent of the beneficiaries stated that lack of facilities at worksite, hard work and inadequate wages as the reason for low employment for 28.00 per cent and 18.00 per cent respectively. Around one-fourth (26.00 per cent) of the beneficiaries felt that adequate work was not provided to them and unemployment allowances was also not paid. About 22.00 per cent of the respondents stated that women workers had restrictions in the home for working outside home.

[4]Parimalsinh R Chavda and Sonal Bhalt (2018) concluded that the scheme suffers from many lacunae at the level of implementation such as erratic and irregular availability of employment, corruption, as well as low level of involvement of local population, especially women and marginalized groups in planning and monitoring of works undertaken under the Scheme. Those loop holes needed to be plugged in order to further improve its benefits to the rural people.

[7]Thirumal Kannan (2019) concluded that the major threat of the MGNREGS was poor allocation of funds and its disbursal to the beneficiaries affect its functioning with RBQ value of 94.33.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Selection of the district:

Based on the man days working on the project, the MGNREGS districts were classified into good performing districts and poor performing districts. Researcher is particularly interested in good performing districts as there is lot of research studies in poor

performing districts. Among the good performing districts, Dharmapuri was purposively selected for the study based on the reasons as listed below:

i.   Dharmapuri is one of the districts in Tamil Nadu where, more number of people are relying on this scheme

ii.   Familiarity to the culture, local language and infrastructural facilities available would help the student researcher to develop good rapport with the clientele and hence could receive better and valid responses.

Selection of blocks:

Dharmapuri district has ten blocks viz., Dharmapuri, Eriyur, Harur, Kadathur, Karimangalam, Morappur, Nallampalli, Palacode, Pappireddipatti and Pennagaram. Among them Harur block was selected as there was maximum number of beneficiaries under this social welfare scheme.

Selection of Village Panchayats:

A list of villages for the selected block was collected from the Department of Statistics. Harur block has thirty four Panchayat villages namely Achalvadi, Agraharam, Bairanaickanpatti, Chellampatti, Chinnakuppam, Doddampatty, Ellapudayampatty, Gopalapuram, Gopinathampatti, Jammanahalli, K.Vetrapatty, Keelmorappur, Keeraipatty, Kokkarapatty, Kolagampatti, Kongavembu, Kottapatti, M.Velampatti, Mampatti, Maruthipatti, Mathiyampatti, Mobiripatti, Naripalli, Parayapattypudur, Periyapatti, Pethathampattypudur, Ponneri, Setrapatty, Sittling, Theerthamalai, Vadugapatti, Vedakattamaduvu, Veerappanaickampatty and Veppampatti.

Description of the study area:

The MGNREGS has been implemented in Dharmapuri district of Tamil Nadu in III phase from the year 2009. The description of the study area is briefed here under.

Location:

The district is located between 11 47' and 12 33' north latitude and 77 02' and 78 40' east longitude. It occupies an area of 9622 sq kms. It is bounded on the north by Krishnagiri District, on the east by Tiruvannamalai District and Kallakurichi District, on the south by Salem District, and on the west by Erode District. The whole district is surrounded by hills, forests and the terrains consist mostly of rolling plains.

Soil type:

Different types of the soils such as black or mixed loams, red ferruginous and gravel are found in the Dharmapuri district. The black or red loam is very fertile due to its moisture absorbing character. Red and sandy clay loam soils are seen in the Vannampatti area. Black clay loam soils are seen in Dharmapuri Taluk and Jayapuram. Sandy and silty clay loam soils are seen in Harur, Nattam and Mariyampatti Area. Red and sandy clay loam soils are seen in Thoppur and Salem. Considerable stretches of good loam and black soil are found in Dharmapuri district. The soil has low nitrogen and phosphate content with marked variations between different taluks.

Climate and rainfall:

The district enjoys a tropical climate. The climatic conditions of the district are hot and dry in the summer i.e., from March to May and in the winter, it is very cold and misty ie., from November to February. The mean maximum temperature is around 36.5°C and mean minimum temperature is 19.4°C. The normal annual rainfall recorded at various rain gauge stations in the area ranged from 760 mm to about 910 mm with the average of 853 mm for the district.

Irrigation sources:

The major irrigation sources in the area are the canals, tanks, wells and bore wells. Irrigation is highest in Harur, Morappur and Karimangalam blocks followed by Palacode, Papireddipatti, Nallampalli, Dharmapuri and Pennagaram blocks. The major irrigated crops in the district are paddy, pulses, groundnut, coconut, sugarcane, banana and flowers. With judicious use of water and modern water management techniques, yield of those crops can be boosted and thereby their export potential can be explored.

Selection of respondents:

A Sample size of 120 respondents was fixed for this study considering the limitations of time and other resources. MGNREGS beneficiaries were respondents for the present study. Beneficiaries were selected from each of the ten panchayat villages of selected block. A sample size of 120 respondents was selected from the ten villages by using proportionate random sampling.

FINDINGS

Challenges of MGNREGS:

The stakeholders of MGNREGS had ranked the challenges of this scheme on the basis of its usage and their understanding in their real life situations.

S.No.	Particulars	No. of Respondents	Per cent	Rank
1.	Poor allocation of funds and its disbursal to the beneficiaries affect its functioning	112	93.33	I
2.	Poor MGNREGS implementation results in creation of less public assets and infrastructure facilities	108	90.00	II
3.	Wide spread corruption and misuse of allocated funds	101	84.16	III
4.	Increased political interference in selection of beneficiaries and assigning of works	93	77.50	IV
5.	MGNREGS being the largest social security scheme in the world overburdens Panchayat Raj institutions	86	71.66	V
6.	Lack of monitoring skills by worksite facilitators	79	65.83	VI

From the table, the following inference can be drawn. The major challenges of MGNREGS perceived by the respondents.

Poor allocation of funds and its disbursal to the beneficiaries affect its functioning:

The allocation of funds and its disbursal to the beneficiaries at the National and State level has become erratic. During the first phase of its implementation the scheme was viewed as an economic right and allocations were made. However, in the later years allocation for the

scheme was done on the basis of demands. Moreover, wage arrears also became to increase and accumulate and the budget allocations were utilized for the arrear payments. The subsequent less allotment and disbursal of funds under this scheme is regarded as a major challenge by 93.33 per cent of the respondents.

Poor MGNREGS Implementation results in creation of less public assets and infrastructure facilities:

This is regarded as a second major challenge of this scheme among 90.00 per cent of respondents. As discussed earlier in the previous sections, lack of planning and expertise at the grass roots has resulted in the poor implementation towards creation of less public assets and infrastructure facilities. Poor allocation of funds and disbursal of funds to the beneficiaries has also attributed to the poor functioning of this scheme in the study villages. The absence of proper social audits, corruption by elected representatives and government officials are also possible reasons for this outcome.

Wide spread corruption and misuse of allocated fund:s

Being poor, illiterate, rural women and hailing from the socially backward sections of the society, the wide spread corruption and misuse of allocated funds remain as a major threat to the functioning of this scheme in rural areas. Issue of fake cards, multiple entries, violation of labour rules are some of the common issues behind this outcome. This has made 84.16 per cent of respondents as a third major challenge in the functioning of this welfare scheme.

Increased political interference in the selection of beneficiaries and assigning of works:

This welfare initiative at the grass roots suffers from increased political interference in the selection of beneficiaries and assigning of works in rural areas. With political functionaries active at the grass root level, the party representatives need to satisfy their voters and through this scheme they try to satisfy their voting population by selecting them and assigning work to them. In few cases, very less work more pay is allotted to their supporters and this causes friction among the beneficiaries in the functioning of scheme with periodical disputes and quarrels. This has made 77.50 per cent of the respondents view this as a fourth major challenge of MGNREGS.

MGNREGS being the largest social security scheme in the world overburdens Panchayat Raj institutions:

The village Panchayat suffer from many infrastructure handicaps. Many offices lack digital connectivity or digital infrastructure, trained manpower for carrying out the day-to-day affairs of MGNREGS and this has overburdened Panchayat Raj institutions. The involvement of SHG's water user association, NGOs has further increased their work load. The maintenance of seven main records associated with the scheme in Panchayat union office namely job cards and applications, social audit and Grama Sabha records, wage disbursal records, work done and expenditure records, permanent assets records, complaint records and issue of materials records and their entries, safely maintaining them are of tedious in nature Moreover with public money involved the government officials at the grass roots need to put more efforts to maintain, use it for daily use and for routine audit purpose. This has been identified as a one of the challenge in the functioning of this scheme by 71.66 per cent of the respondents.

Lack of monitoring skills by worksite facilitators:

Lack of monitoring skills by worksite facilitators as the major challenge identified from 65.83 per cent of beneficiaries, there is no separate worksite facilitators for MGNREGS works in the Panchayat. The Panchayat is giving the worksite facilitator role to the one of the beneficiaries and they act as the role of worksite facilitator.

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