

**Status and Performance of MGNREGA Scheme in Employment Generation, Alleviating Poverty, Reducing Rural Urban Migration in Mahuadanr block – A Micro Level Study
(Khurd Kuro Village)**

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Abstract

MGNREGA is an efficient and effective scheme of central government to alleviate poverty, to generate employment and to reduce rural urban migration, and an effective tool to provide economic security to the rural unskilled workforce. With reference to this, the present study particularly focuses on how the implementation of MGNREGA Scheme in Khurd Kuro village of Mahuadanr, is effective in employment generation, alleviating poverty and reducing rural urban migration. The main focus of the study is to analyse how far this scheme has contributed in eradicating rural poverty and removing the problem of joblessness amidst rural households. Another dimension of this study is to know how MGNREGA has reduced the migration of workers from rural to urban areas in search of livelihood. An attempt is also made to assess the loopholes and hurdles in implementation and smooth functioning of MGNREGA in Mahuadanr (Khurd Kuro village in particular) and the reasons behind them. The present study thus tries to create awareness about the status of jobs and payments under MGNREGA and ensures its proper functioning and applicability in days to come.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Government, Migration, scheme.

Introduction

Employment Generation is one of the primary objectives of the Planning Commission of the Government of India, as it has been part of the perspective of five year plans since fifth five year plan (1974-78). The fifth five year plan had laid stress on employment, poverty alleviation and justice. In light of this, the sixth five year plan (1980-85) had the primary goal of achieving objectives such as rapid industrialization, increased employment, poverty reduction and technological self reliance. Thus, the fifth five year plan's focus was laid on the need of employment generation and poverty alleviation in the country and it was in this context, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (under MGNREGA Act, 2005) came into effect on 2nd February, 2006. As defined by MGNREGA Act, 2005, it is an Indian labour law and social security measure that aims to guarantee the

“right to work. ” The mandate of the act is to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The primary objectives of MGNREGA is to provide guaranteed wage employment to rural unskilled labourers, increase economic security and decrease migration of labour from rural to urban areas.

The MGNREGA provides multiple benefits such as a hundred days of guaranteed employment, work locations that are no more than five kilometres from the workers’ homes, direct bank account deposits for pay, the ability to receive cash payments under certain conditions, employment that is guaranteed within 15 days of request, and unemployment benefits in the event that employment is not secured within that time frame. Thus MGNREGA aims at providing 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult member volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The job card holders under the scheme of MGNREGA get various works in different sectors such as Rural Drinking Water Projects, Agriculture and Allied Activities, Rural Sanitation Projects, Irrigation and Flood Management Works, Livestock related works, Fisheries, Creation of Anganwadi Centres, Construction of Feeder Canal for community, Construction of Flood/Diversion Channel for community, etc.

In order to avail service under MGNREGA Scheme, taking physical capacity into consideration, one has to apply for this scheme using documents such as photo, birth certificate, and address proof. After registration, within fifteen days of application, job is provided and job card is issued. If job is not provided, the workers are given unemployment compensation.

Terms and Conditions under MGNREGA:

- 100 days of employment in a year
- 33% women participation
- Six working days in a week
- Duration of work is 7 hours per day
- Employment area is within 5kms from the household residence

Note:

- If, employment area is beyond 5kms, then additional 10% wage is given.
- If while doing the job under this scheme , a worker dies or gets physically disabled ; then
Rs 25000 compensation will be given.

- Job Card is given significant importance.

A recent study on daily wage by Byju's study, in March 2023, shows that "the government has declared new wage rates for unskilled manual workers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment guarantee Act, 2005, that is applicable with effect from 1st April, 2023. Wage hike ranges from Rs 7 to Rs 26 per day which is an increase of 2% to 10%. The Union Government has made it mandatory for payments to be made for MGNREGA beneficiaries through the Aadhar Based Payment System (AePS). As of 11th February 2021, 708 districts are covered."

Thus, we can say that MGNREGA is one of the pillars of rural employment generation for unskilled manual labour. The present study has an extensive discussion on the impact of MGNREGA Scheme on the rural households and how it has contributed towards poverty alleviation, employment security and reduction of rural urban migration in Khurd Kuro village in the recent years. The study also assess the drawbacks and loopholes found in the implementation of the act that has negatively impacted people's trust in the scheme in the pages to come.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

- To assess the contribution of MGNREGA in employment generation
- To ascertain the impact of MGNREGA in Poverty Alleviation
- To know its effects of MGNREGA in reducing rural-urban migration
- To analyse the lapse or loopholes in implementation of MGNREGA Scheme

Khurd Kuro, one of the villages of Mahuadanr sub division is chosen to analyse the functioning and implementation of MGNREGA Scheme and assess the gap in its proceedings and effectiveness.

Data Base and Methodology

Both primary and secondary data sources are used for the study. A questionnaire consisting of both open ended and close ended questions was prepared. For the primary data a survey was conducted in Khurd Kuro village for assessing the role of MGNREGA in employment generation, poverty alleviation and for reducing rural urban migration. Secondary data sources are referred to derive basic information about the scheme and its related facts. Apart from these two sources, online sources are also considered for additional facts and figures.

Study Area

For the present study, Khurd Kuro, one of the villages of Mahuadanr subdivision of Latehar district is selected. This village has approximately 109 households which is surrounded by Kita towards the North, Jateya Tongri towards the South, Nagar Pratap and Bishrampur in the East and Kudo Kala in the West. It is situated 3.5 km away from sub-district headquarter Mahuadanr and 160km away from district headquarter Latehar. There are fourteen gram Panchayats in Mahuadanr and Parhatoli is the gram panchayat of Khurd Kuro village. As per the data, Khurd Kuro village has a total population of 623 people out of which male population is 357 and female population is 266. It lies at 23.3928°N latitude and 84.1264°E longitude. The total geographical area of the village is 91 hectares. When it comes to administration, Khurd Kuro village comes under Manika Assembly constituency and Chatra parliamentary constituency. Mahuadanr is nearest town to Khurd Kuro village for all its major economic activities.

Discussion

The survey is conducted in the village on the basis of a set of questions prepared in line with the subject matter of the study. A detailed direct interview also is taken from Mrs. Anshi Devi, supervisor (commonly called Mate Didi) of the workers in Khurd Kuro, Parhatoli Gram Panchayat. It is observed that MGNREGA Scheme has a considerable impact in this village. From every family, at least one person is employed under this scheme. There are three major projects such as well project, river channel project and land boundary project, are in progress in the village. Due to these projects villagers refrain from migrating to other places for works.

The information about the schemes and their functioning is given to the people during gatherings or public meetings and details about the scheme are displayed with the help of photos and videos. Gram Sabha meeting is organized in the village every month to assess the progress.

Both men and women without any gender bias get jobs and get equal wages. As per the new wage rates, implemented by the government from April 2023, wages have been increased from Rs. 237 to Rs 255 i.e. nearly 7.5 % increase in wage. But as per the stated facts, this increment in wages; though applicable from April 2023, has yet not been credited to the workers account, they are still receiving payment at the previous wage rate.

Under each supervisor (Mate), twenty workers are employed at once. In case, only 10 workers work a day; then for two consecutive days, one day will be counted for the supervisor. At present, the MGNREGA scheme is giving six months training to such prospective supervisors. Generally, women candidate is given the job of a mate under MGNREGA Scheme. The **Mahila Mate Program** was launched in March 2021 under MGNREGA to encourage more women to join Self Help Groups and increase their participation in the rural workforce. The job of a mate is to supervise workers, take daily attendance and maintain records of work done by each worker. Also, these mates, on behalf of the workers, send request application for jobs to the higher authorities; which if sanctioned within fifteen days provides job to the workers; if not then the workers are given unemployment compensation. As per the collected information, very few to negligible number get the unemployment compensation. Sometimes, there is delay in payment to workers. This prolonged delay in payment is one of the reasons why workers migrate to urban areas.

The middlemen, commonly known as the broker or dalal play an interfering role between the workers, supervisors and the block and are mainly responsible for embezzlement of funds in between. When the mates under MGNREGA Scheme submit the Master Roll for disbursing payment to the block; the computer operators in the block create major hurdles in its smooth disbursement of money. The concerning government officials must take note of this.

Nature of work under MGNREGA Scheme in Mahuadanr area :

As in the rest part of the country, in Mahuadanr also, unskilled manual labour work is

Provided. Some of the common projects implemented in this area are :

- Digging well
- Gardening of Mango trees
- Cattle Shade
- Creating irrigation channels
- Land Boundary
- Creating Doab
- PM Awas Yojana ,etc .

Both men and women get equal opportunity in the schemes, but in the case of digging a Well, mainly men workers are involved with minimum women participation. In every four months, new schemes are introduced and jobs are provided. The duration of work is four hours per

day. The BPO sector is responsible for the proper working and management of MGNREGA in Mahuadanr.

Here, the payment to workers is made directly into their bank accounts. The Union Government has made it mandatory for payments to be made for MGNREGA beneficiaries through the **Aadhar Based Payment System (AePS)**. ABPS is a bank led model which allows online interoperable financial transaction at PoS (Point of Sale/Micro ATM) through the business correspondent /bank mitra of any bank using the Aadhar authentication. But, in special circumstances, cash may be provided to the workers in need.

The work under MGNREGA Scheme is efficiently supervised in Khurd Kuro village. The schemes or projects are effectively completed in time. Sometimes, there are delays due to non payment of wages. The workers oppose the non-payment of wages through *hartals and dharna pradarshan* in front of mates, but that is not a regular affair.

Every one working under MGNREGA Scheme in Mahuadanr does not possess a job card. Generally, one person or more than one person from a family owns a job card. Out of the 10 households specifically studied under this Scheme, more than one person from each household possesses a job card in his /her name. The data pertaining to the same can be shown in the data analysis section.

There is a scope of promotion or performance appraisal for the workers. Some women workers have now taken training and requisite qualification to become *Mate Didi* under this scheme. This, in another way is a technique of women empowerment (Mahila Sashaktikaran). Good and efficient workers are given further opportunities in another scheme.

Thus, from the discussion, we may conclude that MGNREGA is providing favourable opportunities to the village unskilled workers with guaranteed 100 days of employment in a year .It is contributing significantly towards alleviating poverty with one or more than one worker from each household involved in the scheme. With its ongoing schemes and projects, it is able to retain labourers in the village and has reduced rural urban migration to a considerable extent. There is some discrepancy in the disbursement process and functioning due to the presence of middlemen and computer operators at the block who are involved in unfair practices.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The following feedback was collected from five workers working under MGNREGA Scheme :

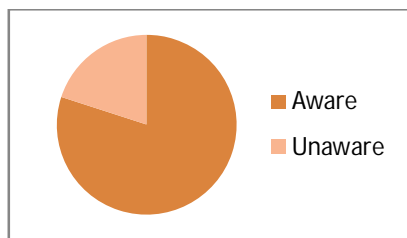
Name of the worker	Number of Family Members	Number of family members with Job Card /Employed under MGNREGA	Benefits of MGNREGA	Drawbacks of MNREGA
Anil Samudwar	6	3	Job in own village	Delay in Payment
Hiraman Singh	5	3	Direct money in bank account	Delay in Payment
Lalsay Lohra	5	1	No need of migrating to town	Delay in Payment
Rajesh Singh	7	2	Poverty Alleviation	-
Sandeep Samudwar	5	1	Job in own village	Delay in Payment

From the above table we may infer that one or more than one member of each family is employed under MGNREGA. The benefits of this scheme are clearly poverty alleviation, reduction in migration to town and cities, and direct deposit of money in their bank accounts. The major issue or problem faced is delay in payment which worsens their condition.

Awareness of the Programme

The villagers are informed about the MGNREGA Scheme in Gram Sabha gatherings through photos, videos, presentations and talks. As a result, out of the total population:

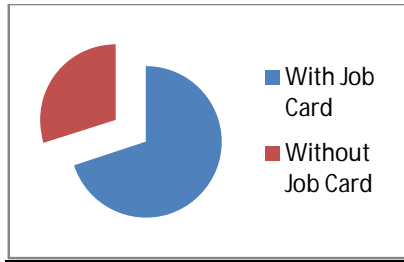
Aware : 80% Unaware: 20%



Workers with Job Card

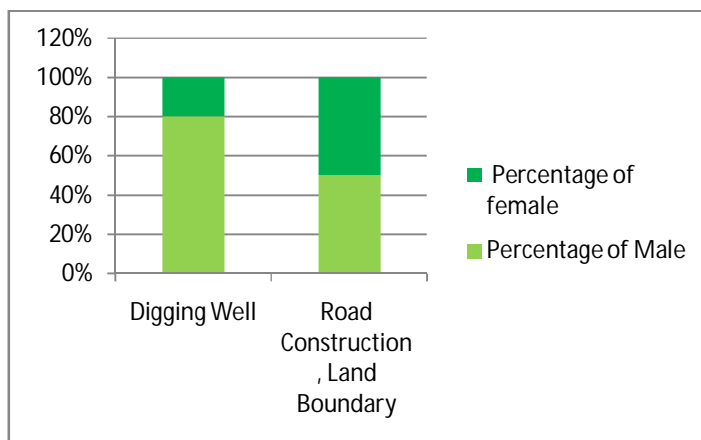
A job card is an entitlement card issued to rural household whose adult member demand employment under MGNREGA and show willingness to do casual manual work. According to the survey made, the following percentage is job card holders:

With Job Card : 70% Without Job Card: 30%



Men and Women employed under various schemes :

Name of the Scheme	Digging Well	Road Construction, Land Boundary
Percentage of Male	80%	50%
Percentage of female	20%	50%



Conclusion

This micro level study of Khurd Kuro village has brought out some major findings related to the MGNREGA Scheme. The study clearly states that, MGNREGA has a considerable impact in the village and has contributed to a significant level in eradicating joblessness and rural poverty. Also, due to the available jobs in the village itself and the ongoing three to four projects under MGNREGA, it has contributed in retaining the labourers in the village. It has reduced rural urban migration and one or more person from each household has a job card of MGNREGA.

However, there are few major drawbacks of the scheme such as delay in payment of wages to workers which discourages the labourers and compels them to migrate to urban areas in search of livelihood and the presence of intermediaries (brokers, computer operators, etc.) who are involved in unfair practices and embezzlement of cash. They do not allow the benefits of the plan to go in the right hands. Apart from this, during Adhar Based Payment System (AePS)

system of payment is beneficial as money is directly credited to the bank accounts of workers. But, at times, the middlemen take the workers fingerprints and do not make payments to them or transfer the payments to another account. Such leakages in the operational level has created a negative impact on the minds of people and slowly they are losing interest in such jobs. Also, the computer operators at the block level do not allow passing of the master roll for payment without charging extra money or benefits.

Thus, we may conclude that though MGNREGA Scheme is an effective tool for employment generation, poverty alleviation and reducing rural urban migration with some improvements required at the operational level yet it would be a more productive and effective scheme for workers, if the role of middlemen is completely removed from the system. MGNREGA is a ray of hope, for many rural households suffering from poverty and joblessness.



Data Collection from Mrs. Anshi Devi,
Supervisor (Mate Didi) of Khurd Kuro
Village, Mahuadanr.

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Socio Economic Profile and Quality of Life Among the Oraon of Beltoli

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