

A Review on Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

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ABSTRACT: *The National Rural Job Assurance Act for Mahatma Gandhi (MGNREGA) was created to mitigate rural poverty by 100 days of guaranteed jobs per year by the Indian Government. Using focusgroup methods, this mechanism was examined how this mechanism has given rights and protections to Scheduled Castes by promising jobs, Tribes and women in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Odisha. It was learned that the perceptions of participation in MGNREGA varied depending on how they participated compared to market salaries in the area, as well as local wages. While MGNREGA provided disadvantaged groups with some basic work, it did not provide significant support to the most vulnerable. There was, however, some evidence of minor but significant changes in labour relations. In order for this initiative to truly achieve its aims, higher pay, more resources for employment, improved execution and a greater understanding of the caregiving duties of women would be needed.*

KEYWORDS: *MGNREGA, policy, poverty reduction, employment guarantee, India.*

INTRODUCTION

Rural poverty, despite high rates of economic growth in India since the 1990s, it's also a policy issue. More than two-thirds of India's population resides in rural areas, representing 75% of India's poor people. Nearly 30 percent of rural Indians reportedly live below the poverty line [1]. Caste, job status, gender and land ownership include threats to rural poverty Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes are especially focused on rural poverty (ST). To demonstrate, while SCs make up about 22 percent of the population and STs make up 11 percent of the population, 80 percent of the rural poor are made up of these classes Women are also over-represented in rural poverty, with a disproportionate number of low-wage, marginal agricultural jobs in rural India. Notably, even with rapid agricultural growth, marginal farmers and landless rural people have experienced economic declines [2]. The Government of India, acknowledging these issues, has implemented many

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (hereinafter referred to as MGNREGA), which provides a specific rights-based guarantee of employment to reduce income and food insecurity in rural areas, is one such scheme. Major expenditure, amounting to \$5.3 billion (Ministry of Rural Development, 2013-14), or 0.3 percent of gross domestic product, has been made in this scheme [3]. It is necessary to assess to what degree MGNREGA has accomplished its specified policy objectives, considering the scale of this policy

framework, the substantial amount of public money invested in it and the possible effect on rural people. This article aims to do this by evaluating the extent to which this scheme has been able to provide disadvantaged groups, especially SC, ST and women, with rights-based social security through guaranteed jobs. Furthermore, we ask a theoretical question: can this strategy achieve a substantial reduction in poverty for marginalized people in India. Using a qualitative research model in three fields of case study, we aim to address these questions through results from a study involving two main phases of data collection. First, to clarify the main priorities of the policies, we checked MGNREGA policy documents. We then went to the case study sites and conducted 19 focus groups in three rural sites in three states, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Odisha, with 219 policy implementers and end users, to gauge the degree to which these objectives were accomplished on our study sites. The sites of the study were selected because they were rich in agrobiodiversity, but also had high poverty rates, between 60 and 85 percent. Our research contributes in a special way to the literature on MGNREGA.

It provides evidence from an in-depth qualitative analysis that provides insight into policies from local people's viewpoints and perceptions (an emic perspective) in the spirit of a critical ethnographic tradition that believes that learning from inside is the best way of knowing[4]. This article will add to the MGNREGA literature that consists mainly of global, state or multi-state aggregate assessments to date[5][6], or studies focusing on single or a few causes, such as the relationship between MGREGA and stunting and malnutritrting [7][8]. As an alternative, we propose an overview of three research sites in the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Odisha from an in-depth, qualitative case study. Our contribution does not claim to isolate unique variables or performance measures. Instead, we provide evidence from the 'subjective voice' of the policy's end users (i.e. neighborhood individuals in rural sites) as well as from local authorities who provided insights into local dynamics and ways in which policies are enforced in these areas. Pani and Iyer (2012: 14) demonstrate that 'local procedures are generally best captured by systematic qualitative research' and that's what we are trying to do here[9]. This research thus adds to the emerging literature on multi-dimensional micro-level analysis. Using this method helps the researcher to uncover new elements of a specific policy action, as yet unconsidered, that may be ignored in other macro-level approaches. Although the results are not generalizable across India or the whole of each state in which the study was conducted, we argue that the insights gained from this approach would improve understanding of certain aspects of the MGNREGA policy that may not be apparent through other approaches at the macro level. In response to the persistent poverty and inequality plaguing rural India, the MGNREGA program was introduced following a number of government jobs programs created. MGNREGA is the world's biggest rural jobs scheme. The Government of India defines it as a bottom-up structure based on rights, demand-driven, self-selecting. In addition to providing supplementary employment for rural households, MGNREGA also aims to provide additional employment for rural households.

Promoting and facilitating women's empowerment through financial inclusion and freedom, enhancing political engagement and improving the rural landscape (Planning Commission,

2011). The Indian system of jobs was introduced in 2005 and renamed. After the scheme had been rolled out across all Indian states, MGNREGA in 2009. Under the program, adult rural household members are guaranteed 100 days of work per year at the state's statutory minimum wage rate or higher, provided that they are willing to do unqualified manual labor. Included with this jobs scheme is the promise that the applicant will obtain unemployment benefits if the government is unable to offer a job to an eligible applicant within 15 days of the application being submitted? The stated objectives of this policy are: (1) social protection; (2) the production by manual labor of workers of sustainable assets (such as water security, soil conservation, higher land productivity); 3) jobs of marginalized workers such as women, SC and ST; and 4) inclusive growth in rural India through the effect of the policy on the security of livelihoods and democratic empowerment. MGNREGA has gained significant attention from leaders, policy think tanks, and academics as a flagship program of the Government of India. MGNREGA studies consist mainly of larger-scale assessments using administrative data to clarify program implementation in different states. These studies have reported significant results on implementation costs, obstacles and accomplishments, migration impacts, household income and job impacts, and the adoption by disadvantaged groups such as ST, SC and women of the programme. Taken together, throughout the literature, a variety of main trends are apparent. Second, there is substantial heterogeneity in the implementation and uptake of MGNREGA through multiple states [10]. The secret to execution is the job availability. On average, the number of working days available was lower than the amount guaranteed by the Act. Previous studies show that only an average of 17 days of jobs per rural household was available in the 200 districts in which MGNREGA was implemented in 2006-2007. However, more recent data indicates that the potential for work may increase. Stahlberg (2012) showed, for example, that per householder, the average number of days employed was 54. This number is considerably higher than in 2006-2007, but is well below the policy ceiling per household of 100 days per year.

There is also notable variance in the distribution of resources for MGNREGA across states (for the categories of salaries, supplies and administrative costs). In 2009-2010, the average percentage of MGNREGA funds spent on salaries was 67.5 percent, although there was significant variability. It was stated in Tamil Nadu, important to our research, that 98 percent of the funds were spent on salaries. Approximately 88 per cent of the funds were spent on wages in Kerala, though just over 60 per cent of the funds were spent on wages in Odisha. Interestingly, administrative expenditure in Tamil Nadu was about 2 percent, in Kerala it was about 5 percent, and in Odisha the administrative costs were just under 40 percent. The reasons for such large administrative cost fluctuations are unclear, but 'leakage' is suspected of being one cause for high administrative costs. However, while it may seem ideal to spend much of the budget on wages, spending all the money on wages may also mean that states are not making capital investments to increase the quality of employment and infrastructure projects. The Act specifies that 60% of the budget should be spent on salaries, with the remaining 40% spent on supplies. In all three regions, MGNREGA was implemented: Kerala, Tamil Nadu,

And Odisha, and the vast majority of the participants, were well versed in the curriculum. In Kerala, 46% of the participants in the focus group worked for MGNREGA, and the total number of days worked during the program was 57. MGNREGA was used as a last resort job by both men and women. In Tamil Nadu, MGNREGA was used by 72 percent of the survey participants and the total number of days worked was 68. MGNREGA was used mainly by women in Tamil Nadu, because men usually migrated for higher-paid jobs to Kerala or Karnataka states. In Odisha, though 61% of the participants worked for MGNREGA, the program offered fewer days of work for workers; the average number of days was 36. MGNREGA has been used by both women and men in Odisha.

CONCLUSION

As a rights-based regulation, the establishment and implementation of MGNREGA. The initiative reflects a commitment to developing a legislative structure to remedy some of the injustices faced by the most disadvantaged members of Indian society by providing tailored job guarantee services to marginalized community members. This article discusses MGNREGA's implementation at unique sites in three Indian states: Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Odisha. It illustrates some of the achievements and challenges of implementation from the point of view of end users and frames these challenges in a liberalized emerging economy in the sense of the delivery of a rights-based approach. Our findings indicate that in all three regions, the MGNREGA software was known to end users, although the usage was inconsistent between regions. In the Tamil Nadu and Kerala sites, usage was highest and lowest in the Odisha location, although participants suggested that they would prefer the Odisha site for more days. Our use results are consistent with other studies that have found that use in Kerala and Tamil Nadu is higher and in Odisha is consistently lower. Wages varied between the locations, and between men and women. In both Kerala and Tamil Nadu, MGNREGA salaries were higher for men, but the same for both sexes in Odisha. The payment arrangements differed between countries, and there was no mention of access to unemployment insurance on any of the pages. From Ruparelia (2013: 570) points out that the rights-based policy, in principle, sets 'new criteria for true social citizenship.' A rights-based approach is differentiated from conventional social provision approaches by guaranteeing rights within a legal framework; in the case of MGNREGA, by a guarantee of employment. In this way, it provides meaningful access to citizenship for vulnerable people previously beyond their reach. Like Ruparelia (2013), however, we argue that the degree to which these rights can be guaranteed depends on successful systems of government that can transcend social, political and economic obstacles that both recognize and perpetuate deeply rooted citizens' inequalities.

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