

Importance of MGNREGA in Enriching the Rural Life before and after Covid-19: A Review

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ABSTRACT

rural life is always a life with lot of the struggle. Mainly, rural life is depends upon the agricultural and agricultural depends upon the rain in addition to other seasonal variation. Most of the employees are landless and marginal farmers, looking for livelihood opportunities and addressing the financial crisis in order to meet the family's basic needs. That is why landless and marginal farmers need such job opportunities that, in terms of income and employment, make them self-reliable. In this way, after introducing new businesses, these workers will be able to achieve self-reliance (on a short and long term basis) and may assist family members during this COVID-19. Moreover, a good number of the migrated laborer from the cities have return back after imposing the lock down and this makes situation really worse in the rural area. In this tough condition of less opportunities of generation of the income, mahatma Gandhi national rural employment guarantee act (MGNREGA) emerge as a mean to tackle the situation.

Keywords

MGNREGA, Work, Job opportunities, Employment, Income, Covid, Virus, Pandemic, Rural, Urban.

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Introduction

India is still considered as a developing country and a large portion of the total population of India still lives in villages and depends upon the agricultural and allied sectors. A rough estimation given by the governmental agency predict that 70 percentage of population lives in the villages. These peoples have been considered deprived from many facilities as that of the urban population enjoyed. There are various factors which categories the life of rural people such as the economical and social problems, literacy, poverty, unemployment, low income, poor and low level of nutrition as counted on the basis of the protein intake, unavailability of good medical facilities as shown in Fig. 1. The government has come various policies to tackle these problems and trying hard to enhance their life and living condition by providing them several other income sources [1].

The economic, social and cultural universe in which rural families are bound to make their living is rural subsistence. Farming is still a vital practice and is increasingly regarded as a fundamental means of survival [2]. At the same time, however, MGNREGA brought another ray of hope to ensure livelihoods for the rural poor in general and the vulnerable segment of the rural population in particular. The one more problems faced by the people of rural people are the highly unpredicted pattern of the raining season in India. The raining pattern is the main factor to predict the crops pattern and largely a deciding factor in the income of the farmers. Although, if raining season is not so good then crops have been affected severely and thus, left the farmer with less cash in hand and they have to search for new sources for the living [3]. Apart from this, there is one more severe problem in India and that is the disguised nature of the farming, where many people are engaged themselves in a small piece of land but land will not generate the enough income for

make a living for these people and these people are not able to even fulfill their basic needs from this small generated income from this piece of land. Therefore, they have to again looking for some other work to generate the income for their living.



Fig. 1: Problems associated with people living in rural areas

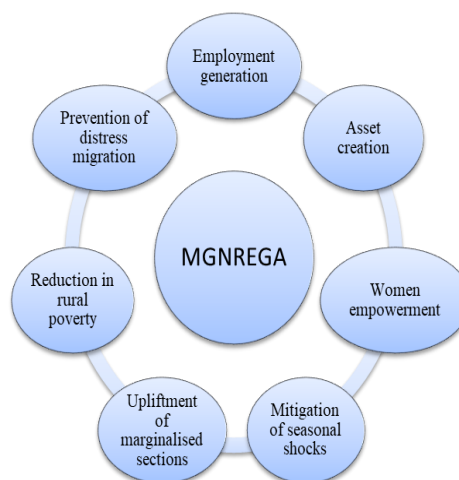


Fig. 2: Scope of the MGNREGA

The one of the important policy of the government in the direction of the upliftment of the rural lives is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) (Fig. 2). The MGNREGA aims the life and

income sources of the rural people and have intention to enhance the quality of the people in villages by providing them a guarantee of employment. The guarantee has covered the every rural household for the 100 days employment for the unskilled work [4]. The government of India, implemented this scheme first time in 2006, for this 200 most back ward villages have been selected and after that this scheme extended another 130 village in second phase. In 2008, these schemes have covered all the left out villages in first and second phase. From the inception of the scheme, all the villages have been covered in phase wise manner in country.

The objective of the MGNREGA is to increase the livelihood security of rural poor people by providing every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work with at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year. The Act seeks to establish productive assets that have a direct effect on various sectors of the village economy, such as road building, land development, water conservation and irrigation facilities, as well as strengthening the livelihood resource base of rural poor people [5]. However, there has been an increased demand from States over the past few years for new works to be included, creating an even stronger positive cooperation between MGNREGA and agriculture and allied rural livelihoods.

In the era of 1990, the growth of the jobs had declined drastically and this duration is infamous for the jobless growth. This has been impacted also the coming year and all the major sectors did not emerge as the job creations factor in the economical growth of the India [5]. But as a agriculture dominant country, this sector provided the jobs to many people but agriculture is a sector where growth is very slow and people engaged themselves in this field needed to wait for so long to generate the income and that income will also depends upon the fortune of the weather. Therefore, a policy in the form of the MGNREGA come as a boon for the many people as well as the government, where government can employee people in any constructive work for the development of the infrastructure and life of the people.

Review Of Literature

Manisha Nair et al studies about the Effect of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on Malnutrition of Infants in Rajasthan, and concluded as the policy has a positive impact on the health of the infants not only in Rajasthan but at the pan India level. These policies help the mostly poor people and the persons who live below the poverty line by providing them a mean to earn their bread and butter through the engagement in the work as per the government's guideline. By helping the rural peoples' in their economical condition, they become capable to procure more nutritional based food and other necessary eatable for their children and infants and for their ladies. The more income per household brings the advantage of the food security.

Rhonda Breitzkreuz *et al.* explained in his paper published in 2017 that MGNREGA can be cure the Indian village poverty by providing them 100 days guarantee employment in every year. The Indian government has targeted the

marginalized sections of the rural India for uplifting and enriching their life by providing the work in a year. Almost all the people in rural India have been engaged in the work of agricultural and allied sector but there is unfortunate in the agricultural that this sector highly depend upon the weather condition, in fact, most importantly on the raining patterns. Even though MGNREGA presented some necessary employment for marginalized sections, it did not supply considerable help to the majority vulnerable. On the other hand, there was some confirmation of small but important shifts in labor relationships. Higher earnings, more opportunity for work, better completion and a greater gratitude of the care giving farm duties of women will be compulsory for this strategy to fully meet its goal [2].

Vij, Nidhi explains in her paper EMPOWERING THE MARGINALIZED: MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT IN INDIA published in the year 2013 that Since Independence, social security services in India has been an important part of the growth process and planning. After sixty-five years, though, nearly one-fourth of the population remains in poverty. Vulnerable classes among the disadvantaged have not been well targeted, despite a multitude of social security services. Nevertheless, with its self-targeting mechanism, the recent paradigm change towards rights-based legislation may have hit the right chord. In April 2010-March 2011, nearly 55 million households were employed by the Right to Work or Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Job Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and invested almost 8 billion US dollars. There has been particularly high participation by women and socially backward classes. This paper analyses MGNREGA's policy requirements, implementation and monitoring process to argue that policy designs can contribute to empowerment of the oppressed sections with legal enforceable frameworks and collaborative governance systems [6].

From the review of these paper, it is clear that MGNREGA is an umbrella policy of the Indian government that also contribute in the food security up to some extent in addition to provide the guaranteed employments to marginalized section of the Indian population lived in the rural regions of the country. This policy also help the people by increasing their purchasing power a bit that help them to enhance life and increase the nutritional value in their diet and also empowered them to fight against the malnutrition problems of the their infants and feeding mothers. On the other hand, this scheme help the nation building by developing the life of the people in addition to the building the infrastructure for the country.

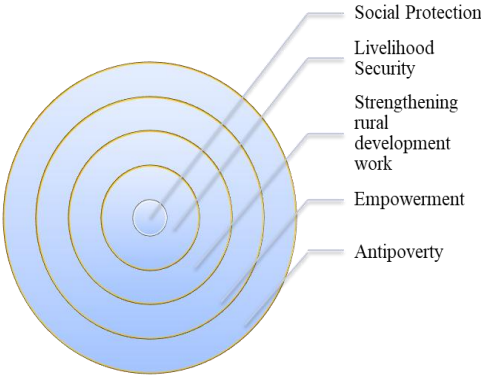


Fig. 3: Area covered by MGNREGA scheme

Objectives, Beneficiaries, And Outcomes Of Mgnrega

MGNREGA is designed to balance 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches to rural development and social policy with its key goals of alleviating poverty and promoting human and rural development through the provision of local job opportunities. The programmer, although introduced nationwide, is decentralized. Program administration is directed through the state government and programmer implementation is directed through districts, panchayats, villages, and MGNREGA workplace-level jobs, including the construction of irrigation infrastructure, land development, conservation and flood control water management, and road construction (Fig. 3). MGNREGA is commended for its universal accessibility and rights-based approach, providing the ability for every rural citizen to participate voluntarily [7].

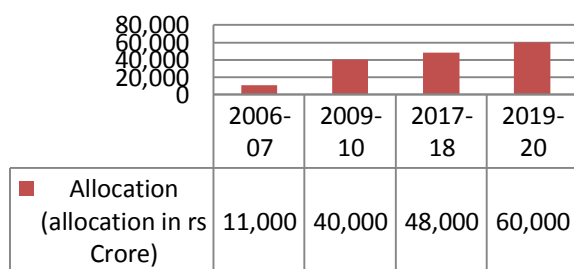
Though, the character of the employment offered throughout MGNREGA, shared with the remuneration rewarded, means so as to there is an understood self-targeting instrument aimed in the direction of the rural deprived [8]. Remuneration rates are the indistinguishable for women and men, which distinguish MGNREGA from the majority of rural or undeveloped wage labor opportunity. Furthermore, women have been explicitly targeted throughout the program. One of the important points of the scheme is the women empowerment by providing them more work opportunities than that of the male. The scheme has made a provision to provide the work to one third female worker. The whole scheme is supervised by the ministry of rural development and as per statics given by the various governmental and nongovernmental organizations those women participation in the total work force is 48 percentages across the India. Apart from the upliftment of the rural Women, this scheme has targeted the marginalized and deprived section largely. However, the participation of the women and other marginalized section has varied in every state.

Table 1: Social and Economical provision of MGNREGA

Social Protection	Provisions in MGNREGA
Provision	100 days confirmed employments
	Unskilled work promoted
	Ensured income
Prevention	Guaranteed employments
	Direct benefit transfer
	Irrigation and land development
Promotion	National wage rate
	Public infrastructure works
	Water conversation work
Transformation	Woman work force reservation
	Right to information
	Transparency Rules
	Mandatory Social audits

Table 1 have been showing the provision of the act which will be beneficial foe the people after incorporation of the act. Due to the decentralized nature of MGNREGA and the uncertainty in its execution, there are also significant variations between regions of India in program outcomes. There is evidence, for instance, that female involvement in MGNREGA, in addition to better educational outcomes for their children, can lead to increased empowerment among female workers. Participation in MGNREGA is also related to household welfare changes, including enhanced food security and increased spending on consumption. There is evidence at the village level to indicate that MGNREGA projects have led in some settings to developing rural growth and infrastructure [9].

At the same time, in some environments, MGNREGA is blamed by employees for their failure to satisfy the demand for jobs and for failing to offer 100 days of paid work guaranteed. This lack of sustainable employment contributes to the rationing and rotation of jobs, which in some states can have a disproportionate effect on the most vulnerable employees, and especially women. In addition, as a result of the type of work offered by the program, stigma can be associated with involvement in the program [10]. In certain settings, however, this stigma may be less than the stigma associated with agricultural labor. Landowners who sell comparable local agricultural labor opportunities are also concerned that MGNREGA affects rural labor supply and demand, arguably placing upward pressure on rural wage rates. The size and complex governance of MGNREGA provides ample opportunities for inefficiencies and corruption at several levels within the program's administration. Fig. 4 has been illustrating the increment in the government fund in last few years for the scheme.

Allocation in Rs. (values in Crore)**Fig. 4:** Allocation of the fund for the MGNREGA

MGNREGA As A Mean To Subside The Effect Of The Covid In Employment Generation

India is a vast and populous country because of this India is suffering from the problem of the unemployment in urban as well as rural area. Although, there are many job opportunities in urban areas but main problem of the unemployment have been seen in rural area. The main reason of the unemployment in the rural area is that there is only one job sector available i.e. agricultural in addition to the allied services. Moreover, the situation in the rural area have become even more worse when a large number of people migrated back to their respective villages after the outbreak of the covid. The government have to take harsh measure to protect the spread of the virus, therefore, a total lockdown had been imposed throughout the country.

India suffers from joblessness. It may have spread in the Covid 19 virus attack, and therefore the sudden reduction in income is caused by job losses of those who have moved to cities, taking its toll. The Indian coronavirus lockdown has left millions of migrant workers unemployed. In this scenario, many migrant workers from different states of the country are returning to villages. They are facing financial and job concerns now. Most employees are landless and marginal farmers, and job prospects are desperately needed to address the financial crisis. While the national lockdown has yet to end and the wounds of migrant workers are still fresh, workers have begun to return to the job market.

During the lockdown, a large number of people have lost their job and migrated back to their native place, out of these a good sum of the people belongs to the rural area. Although, lockdown have been lifted in phase manner but there is scope for all the people again in the urban area because of the complete shut down of the many business and many industries are giving permission to work from to their employees, which has a negative effect on the rebound of the local transportation. As many rickshaws and auto drivers belong to rural area in addition to this many manufacturing based MSME have been closed. In the midst of the coronavirus lockdown, financial instability and deteriorating living conditions have prompted workers to start looking for jobs at the earliest (Fig. 5). That is why landless and marginal farmers need such job opportunities that, in terms of income and employment, make them self-reliable.

Central and local administration have been kept informing people regarding the government policies that may be helpful

to these people in financial security and also include these people in the arena of the financial security. The situation is more worst in the village where many people depend upon a single money earner in the family. In the time of covid, MGNREGA emerges as a mean to earn the livelihood and look after respective family by providing them financial security. Therefore it is needed a plan to make self reliance of these laborers by providing economic, social and administrative support with sustainable manner.

**Fig. 5:** Scope of the MGNREGA as the work Undertaken in the Scheme

MGNREGA is a program funded by the Government of the Center that provides village workers guaranteed employment opportunities for 100 days [11]. Migrant workers need cash for their day-to-day needs, which is why MGNREGA can play an important role in generating jobs, but it is necessary to expand its duration of work and the job listed. The following works are included within the scope of the MGNREGA.

Conclusion

Everyone needs to secure life by gaining the financial and work security and this comes from the job or engaging in some work which can generate the income. Government also aim to spread the wings of the financial inclusion to cover as many as people to empower them and pave the way for the growth through the financial inclusion. MGNREGA is a policy of the government to make people empowered through help them to find the work for income generation. With the adoption of new enterprises, migrant workers, landless and marginal farmers may get job opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic and job crisis. We can provide job opportunities as well as means of income generation to the landless and marginal farmers during the situation of lockdown time. Most of the workers are landless and marginal farmers and they are searching job opportunities and make solution of the financial crisis so that they can fulfil the basic needs of the families.

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