

A Success Story of MGNREGS at A Remote Gangaraju Madugula Mandal of Visakhapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh in India

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Abstract:-The primary objective of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 is to be able to provide rural employment and for the creation of durable assets. This beneficial legislation aims at raising the standards of those marginalized groups who are living below the poverty line in our society. The empirical research was carried out with a purposive sample group of 192 persons consisting of 100% Scheduled Tribal population at Gangaraju Madugula Mandal, Visakhapatnam District in Andhra Pradesh. The success of the scheme was assessed through a chi – square test. In other words, if the people participated irrespective of the difference in their family incomes, it is said to be a popular and successful scheme. The study also involved the evaluation of MGNREGS since its inception in terms of rural employment and development. It was found that the massive participation of wage-seekers is far greater in number than in any other governmental scheme implemented in the Mandal so far; reducing remarkably temporary migrations of the wage-seekers and in helping those to repay their Self Help Group loan amounts in time. No doubt, it has come to the rural poor as a timely succor to be aptly called as “magna carta” of rural employment.

I. INTRODUCTION

The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines “Social Assistance” as one that provides benefits to persons of small means granted as “of right” in amounts sufficient to meet a minimum standard of needs and financed from taxation. The social assistance underlines the idea that the care of the poor should not be merely placed on compulsory and statutory basis.

Access to social security has become a fundamental human right. The access to which every individual who is a citizen of India is entitled as a member of the society. This right is embodied

in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UNGA in 1948 and also is granted under numerous National Constitutions ; though it has been realized in different degrees depending upon the traditions, history, level of economic development and the political and social philosophy of a country.

The ILO has directly and indirectly influenced the Indian Labor Legislations. The social assistance legislations in particular, found expression of the voice and spirit of the ILO for promoting social justice and for creating new values and philosophy as well as continually adopt State Policy towards weaker sections of the society in keeping contemporary social climate.

One such recent social assistance legislation that came into existence is the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005. The act guarantees a minimum of 100 days of employment to the rural poor recognizing the principle of right to work’ enshrined in our constitution with such provisions like enforcement of the right by means of payment of unemployment allowances and the like. The primary objective of the act is to provide rural employment and for the creation of durable assets. This beneficial legislation aims at raising the standards of those marginalized groups who are living below the poverty line (BPL) in our society.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

The success or the failure of the scheme is the direct measure of people’s participation and the popularity of the scheme can be measured by testing a hypothesis and applying a chi-square test. In other words, if the people participated irrespective of the difference in their family incomes, it is said to be a popular scheme.

The null hypothesis was formulated stating that, the preference pattern is independent of the income level.”

• Research Findings 1

The selected 192 sample group consisted of 100% ST population of the G.Madugula Mandal of Visakhapatnam of A.P in India . Of the selected sample, 99.48% were BPL families. 53.64% were males and the remaining female population. The maximum people within the age group of 25-31 have reported to work. 82.52% were married and only 17.57% were unmarried. The illiteracy percent was 79.16 though; the awareness relating to this scheme was 95.3%. The sample population was happy to admit that they did participate in the scheme and the transparency in wage payments was 65.10%. Only 1.04% of the sample had participated in other govt.schemes and a whopping 78.12% said that they did not participate in any other program. To a question relating to the benefits under the scheme, 88.02% said it was beneficial, 1.04% said “no” and 10.93% did not respond. Regarding the preference over other schemes, 90.10% voted for MGNREGS and 0.53% wanted small scale industries and 9.37% opted for other works. 80.72% of the sample said that the staff of the

scheme is helpful, 1.56% said “no” and the remaining did not respond. 17.70% of the population said they used to migrate once or twice earlier for employment, 18.75% said “no” and 63.54% opted not to respond. Membership with Self Help Groups was 67.18% of the sample who have incurred loans and are able to meet them with these wage payments successfully, 14.58% said they will become members, if possible, and 18.22% did not respond.

• Research Findings 2

The object of the research is to determine whether MGNREGS-AP at G.Madugula Mandal is a success or not ; by studying the preference pattern of the wage-seekers and in doing so to determine whether the preference pattern for the newly introduced scheme is dependent upon the income level? If it is a popular scheme then, irrespective of income levels of the wage-seekers, there will be a massive participation, which is the test of their preference of this scheme over others. .

A random sample of 192 individuals was taken and the responses classified into 3*3 contingency table as given below:-

Preference /income	Prefer NREGS	Prefer other Programs	Indifferent	Total
Low	130	2	6	138
Medium	34	-	-	34
High	20	-	-	20
Total	184	2	6	192

Table 1:- Contingency Table of Wage-Seeker's Preference Pattern

III. THE NULL HYPOTHESIS

Preference pattern is independent of income level.

The chi-square is calculated by using a formula which comes to 3.26. The degrees of freedom are 4 and at 5% level of significance and for 4 degrees of freedom, the value of chi-square is 9.488. As the calculated value of the chi-square falls within the acceptance region, the null hypothesis is accepted , i.e., we conclude that at 5% level of significance , the Poisson Probability model gives a satisfactory fit to the given data; so we conclude that the preference pattern is independent of the income level, and NREGS-AP at G.Madugula mandal is a popular scheme and a real success.

IV. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The research findings suggest that NREGS is a success at G.Madugula Mandal of Visakhapatnam District in A.P. The interviewed sample testifies to this fact, stating that it is truly a beneficial program for the rural poor and that they have participated in far greater number in the scheme than in any

other government scheme. It could have been a greater success, had the people's representatives, the NGOs, the VOs and the members of PRIs participated keeping aside their partisan interests. The wage-seekers were found to meet their loan amount successfully with their earnings through NREGS and more number of participants have shown their willingness to join the SHGs in the mandal . This would also empower them to act in concert in various government schemes thereby, ushering micro-level planning in its true sense.

The rate of temporary migrations in search of work has come down remarkably as they are receiving payments to the extent of Rs.125/day which is far greater than what they would have received in other employments. Curiously enough, the majority of the population did not respond to the question of future migrations in view of NREGS . The probable reason could be that they must be taking this scheme as a temporary one and seem to be under the impression that they would have to return to their earlier pattern of seeking livelihoods through migrations once this scheme is over. The sense of insecurity still is felt in the people regarding future employments in spite of the advent of MGNREGS.

MGNREGS is mainly aimed at providing off-season rural unskilled employment. Whether such schemes can be run to provide relief against unemployment due to structural reforms or otherwise, is a question that needs further study. The participation of the female population shows the popularity and acceptance of the scheme by the people.

The chi-square test proves that the preference pattern is independent of income level. There was a greater participation of the people in the scheme keeping aside the class differences.

The transparency in payments has been the concern of the government since the inception of the scheme in the State. The State of Andhra Pradesh has taken the lead in implementing the system of social audit, vigilance officers at various levels and giving a nod to the institution of Ombudsman' in checking misappropriations of NREGS funds and corruption. The study shows the need to strengthen people's participation which could be achieved only, if they use effectively the tool of conducting gram sabhas .

Notwithstanding the cynicism of few and motley, in its short span of existence, NREGA has ushered in a new revolution in our rural areas to be aptly called the "Magnum Opus" or Magna carta" of rural employment and development. It would not be out of place to quote Van Stuijvenberg in this context that:

Mature democratic institutions, free of press and a large number of economists are a safe-guard against too reckless economic reforms".

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panchayat Raj Institutions should be strengthened as they are still in their cradle stage, especially after the advent of 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, the marginalized groups need proper understanding of their powers which could be ascertained by imparting proper training to them and through a team of experts working at the gross root level.

The over-burdened Mandal Parishad Development Officers should be allowed to look after various other schemes operating in the mandal and for the purpose of NREGS - a separate officer should be appointed who is not below their rank as per the Act. This would ensure close monitoring and supervision of the scheme especially, in the mandals where there is a heavy demand of work and the expenditure reaches Rupees Ten millions per month .

In the State of Maharashtra, where the progress of implementation of MGNREGS was found to be poor, the State had appointed the Tahsildars as the Programme Officers e.g., in Akola District of Maharashtra, owing to the fact that the

Block Development Officer was over-burdened with numerous other schemes to be implemented at the block level. One should not forget that the State of Maharashtra has been implementing Employment Guarantee Scheme since 1960s and the demand for work is slightly less. And the State is rightly appraised as the mother of the MGNREGS called EGS.

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