

A Study on Effectiveness of MGNREGA in Rural Areas with Special Reference to Assam

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ABSTRACT:

High level of unemployment and low level of income due to poor quality livelihood in the rural areas of the country has been resulting in low purchasing power of the rural people and eventually also affecting their standard of living. Since independence, the government of India has been launching various anti-poverty and unemployment reducing programmes to generate employment specially in the rural areas of the country. As a rural employment programme vis-à-vis poverty alleviation programmes, MGNREGA programme has recognized the importance of including women empowerment as one of its primary objectives. Along with the other states of India, in the state of Assam also the MGNREGA was launched in the year 2005.

The paper mainly examines the effectiveness of MGNREGA programme in India with special reference to Assam.

Key Words: MGNREGA, Notified Wage Rate, Work Completion Rate, Gender Empowerment

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

High level of unemployment and low level of income due to poor quality livelihood in the rural areas of the country has been resulting in low purchasing power of the rural people and eventually also affecting their standard of living. Since independence, the government of India has been launching various anti-poverty and unemployment reducing programmes to generate employment specially in the rural areas of the country. The data provided by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) shows that unemployment in the rural areas has increased from 7.2% in the year 2000 to 8.1% in 2010. To achieve the target of growth with equity and to ensure social justice, the government of India has been implementing several poverty eradication plans since the fifth five year plan. The most recent initiative under the wage employment programmes by the government of India along with the state governments is the introduction of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2005. Initially, the programme was implemented in 200 districts only which has been extended gradually to more and more districts during the consecutive years. Although the Act focuses

on mainly utilization of underemployed and surplus labour force in rural areas by giving the rural unemployed people 100 days of direct supplementary wage employment, the degrees in person day employment has become an issue of concern.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act(MGNREGA) 2005, which was earlier known as National Rural Employment Act(NREGA) is a landmark step by the government for providing opportunity to the poor people in rural areas of India. The MGNREGA, with its legal framework provides a statutory guarantee of wage employment and marks achieved from a 'government providing approach' to an 'entitlement based approach' (Goswami and Bezbarua, 2011)

The Programme aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. It aims at improving the purchasing power of the rural people bring below the poverty line. It attempts to bridge the gap between 'haves' and 'haves not' of the country.

The objective of the programmes includes

- Ensuring social protection for most of the disadvantaged people living in the rural areas of the country through providing employment opportunities
- Ensuring livelihood security for the marginal income groups through the process of creating durable assets, soil conservation, higher land productivity
- Helping in the empowerment of the marginalised communities, specially woman, STs and SCs
- Strengthening decentralized participation planning through margin of various poverty alleviation programmes

The main feature of the act include time bound employment guarantee within 2 weeks and incentive discentive structure to the different state governments for providing employment opportunities to the rural people.

MGNREGA AND GENDER EMPOWERMENT

As a rural employment programme vis-à-vis poverty alleviation programmes, MGNREGA programme has recognized the importance of including women empowerment as one of its primary objectives. Research studies show that with the national participation in the programme more actively than in other employment

programmes. Research studies also indicate that the MGNREGA is a critical engagement opportunity for rural women who would otherwise have remained unemployed.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

A number of research works have been done from time to time on the rural employment programmes in India. Patel (2006) in his study has found few important constraints of existing rural employment generation programmes. A number of studies observed that the MGNREGA is quite a different rural employment programme from other employment schemes launched by the government from time to time in many aspects. Some studies show that the performance of MGNREGA in some parts of India are satisfactory whereas in some areas of the country the programme is not doing well (Trivedi and Aswal, 2011). Hazarika (2009) examined the impact of MGNREGA on gender and social empowerment in Morigaon and Bongaigaon districts of the state of Assam. According to him, majority of the respondents felt that they are now in better socio economic position. In his study he also found that in Bongaigaon district, majority of the job card holders were found to be Panchayat representatives. A panel study conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) on the MGNREGA in three states show that the employment programme provides the rural people employed opportunity during their lean season. That apart the scheme also ensures greater food security to the rural poor people (MGNREGA Sameeksha, 2013)

OBJECTIVES:

The paper has the following objectives:

- To review the functioning of MGNREGA in the state of Assam
- To evaluate the performance of the programmes in the state and to identify different problems in its implementation
- To offer policy prescriptions

METHODOLOGY:

The entire study is based on secondary data which is collected from various sources like Economic Surveys, journals, books, NSSO websites etc. and mainly from Ministry of Human Resource Development website.

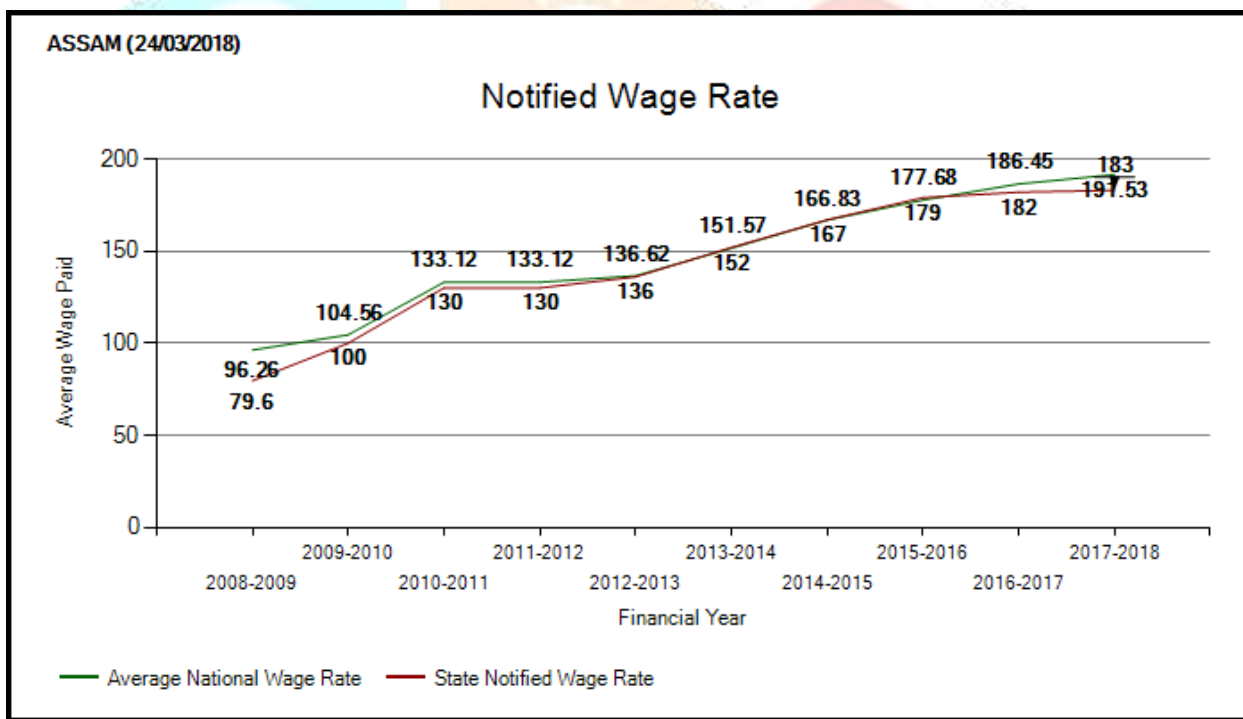
For accessing the performance of MGNREGA in the state of Assam, the data relating to MGNREGA are compiled from different secondary sources. Using the official data of MGNREGA, the present paper examines the programme, the present paper examines the programme on the basis of the following criteria-

- 1. Notified wage rate
- 2. Work Completion Rate
- 3. SC/ST participation
- 4 No of years taken up in FY 2014-15
- 5.No of years taken up in FY 2017-18

DATA ANALYSIS:

The first dimension in this paper considered is the notified wage rate .The notified wage rate in the state has been compared to that of the national average from the period 2008-09 to 2017-18.

Fig-1: Notified Wage Rate in Assam and India Comparison

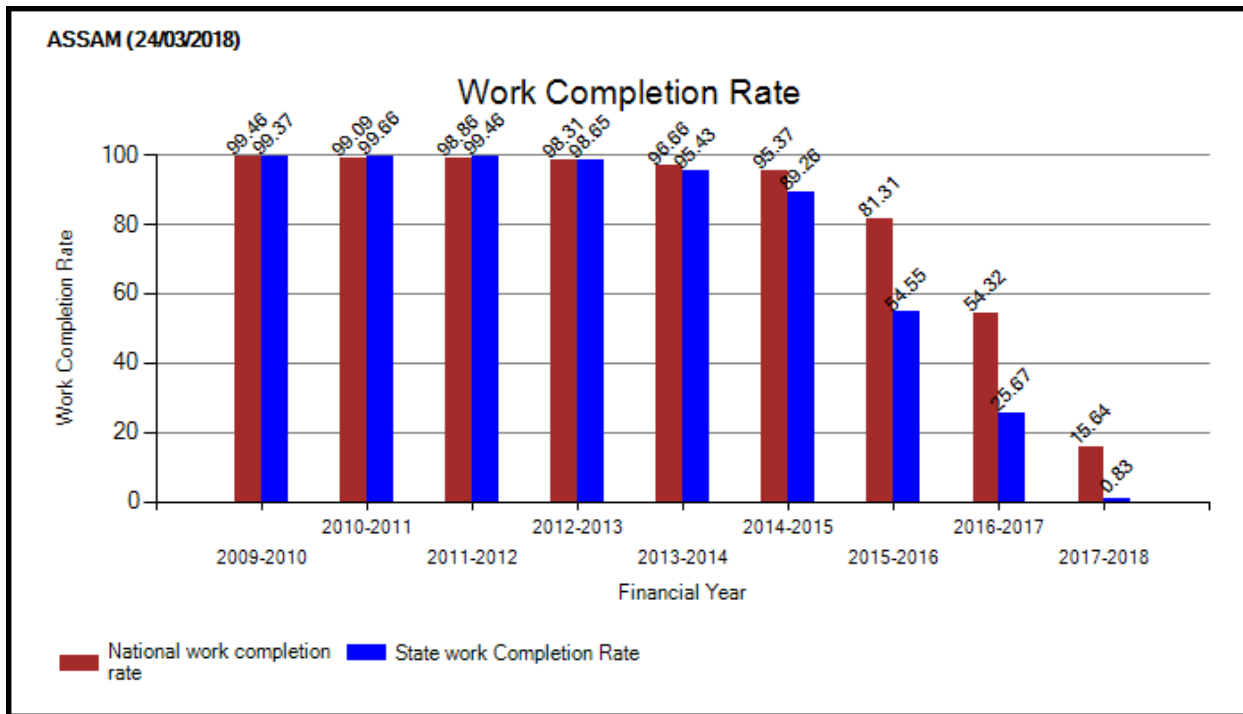


Source: http://mnregaweb4.nic.in/netnrega/MISreport4.aspx?fin_year=2013-2014&rpt=RP accessed on 24-03-2018

The second dimension in this paper considered is the work completion rate from the period 2009-10 to 2017-18. The figure-1 shows the average national wage rate and state notified wage rate in the State of Assam during various financial years. From 2008-2009 till 2017-2018, both the average national wage rate and the state notified wage rate were increasing and showing an upward trend. The average national wage rate was higher

than the state notified wage rate from 2008-09 till 2012-2013. In 2011-12, the average national wage rate remained constant at 133.12 as in 2010-2011 and the state notified wage rate also remained constant at 130 in 2011-2012 as in 2010-2011. In 2012-2013 both the wage rate has increased slightly. From 2013-14 till 2015-16, the average national wage rate was lower than the state notified wage rate. Again from 2016-17 till 2017-18, the average wage rate was higher than the state notified wage rate. Since both the wages were increasing throughout the various financial years, it implies that MGNREGA has been successful in generating employment opportunities and ensuring livelihood security to the rural poor.

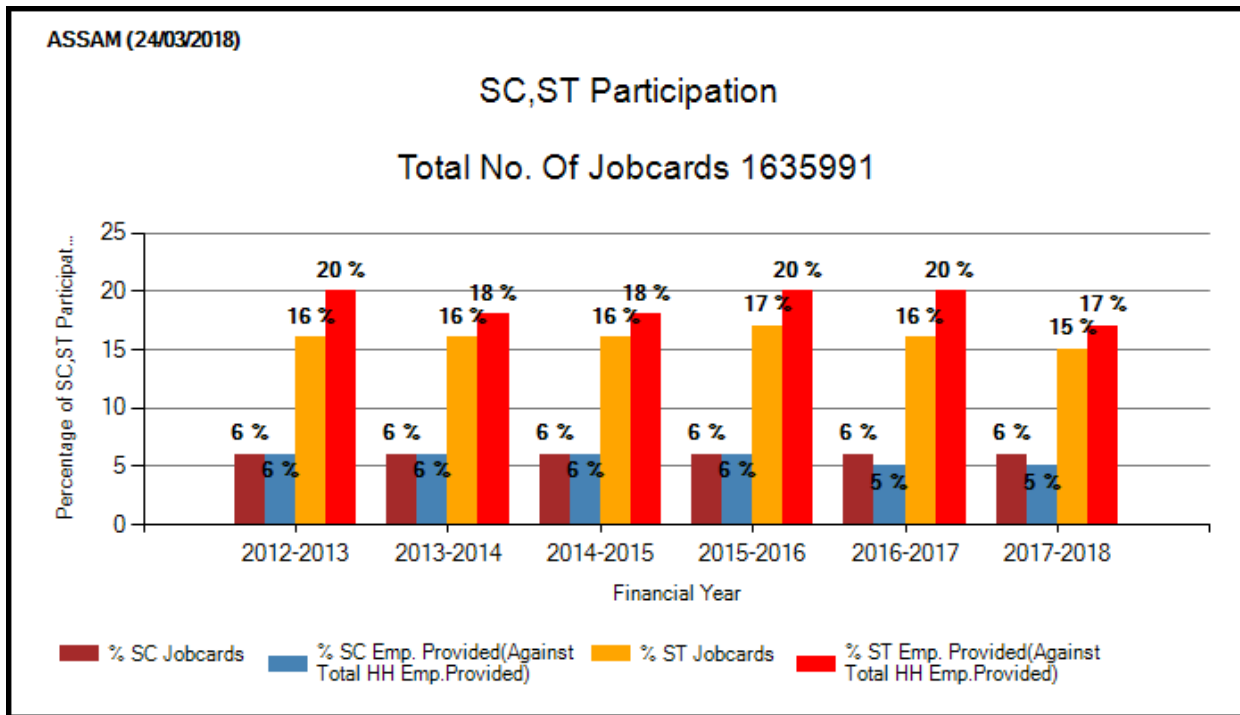
Fig-2: Work Completion Rate in Assam and India Comparison



Source: http://mnregaweb4.nic.in/netnrega/MISreport4.aspx?fin_year=2013-2014&rpt=RP accessed on 24-03-2018

The diagram-2 reveals the work completion rate in Assam during various financial years. From 2009-2010 till 2013-2014 both the national and state work completion rate was more or less same showing the change by very small percentage. From 2014-2015 till 2017-18, both national work completion rate and the state work completion rate was showing a downward trend and the state wage rate was lower than the national work completion rate. In 2017-2018, the state work completion rate has declined drastically to 0.83%. The data reveals that MGNREGA has not been so successful in Assam in terms of work completion rate.

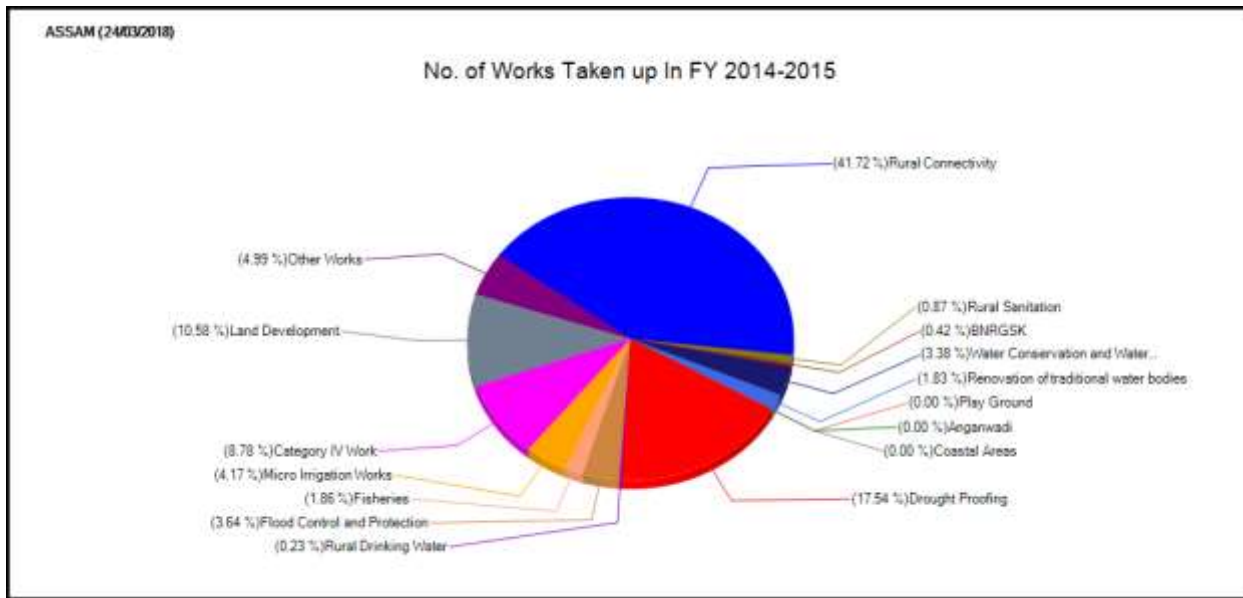
Fig-3: SC ST Participation in MGNREGA



Source: http://mnregaweb4.nic.in/netnrega/MISreport4.aspx?fin_year=2013-2014&rpt=RP accessed on 24-03-2018

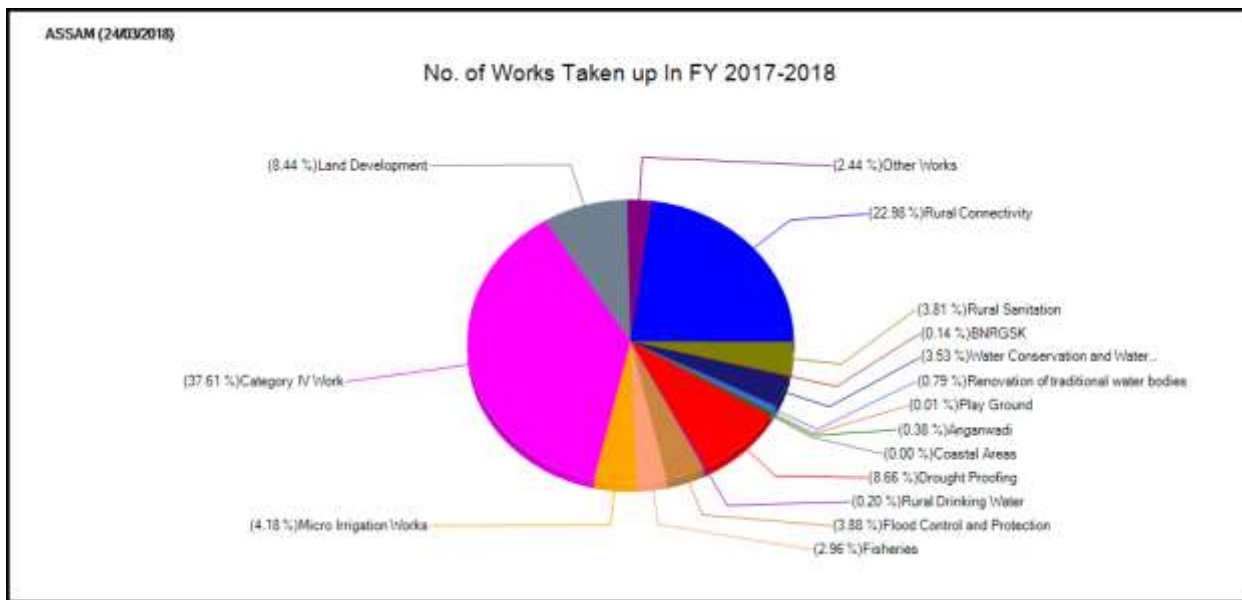
The figure-3 shows the percentage of SC,ST participation in Assam. The percentage of jobcards issued to the SC category people remained the same i.e 6% from 2012-2013 till 2017-18. The percentage of SC Employment Provided (Against Total HH Employment Provided) remained the same at 6% between the year 2012-2013 till 2015-2016. In 2016-17 and 2017-18, the percentage of SC employment provided (Against Total HH Employment provided) declined to 5%. Till 2014-2015, % of ST jobcards remained the same at 16% and increased slightly to 17% in 2015-16 and declined further to 16% in 2016-2017 and further declined to 15% in 2017-2018. The percentage of ST Employment Provided (Against Total HH Employment Provided) was 20% in 2012-2013 and declined to 18% in 2013-2014, remained constant at 18% in 2014-2015, further increased to 20% in 2015-2016, again remained constant at 20% in 2016-2017, further declined to 17% in 2017-18. The ST category were in a more advantageous position as compared to SC category in terms of number of jobcards due to implementation of MGNREGA in Assam.

Fig-4: No. of Works taken Up in FY 2014-15



Source: http://mnregaweb4.nic.in/netnrega/MISreport4.aspx?fin_year=2013-2014&rpt=RP accessed on 24-03-2018

The above diagram reveals the number of works taken up in financial year 2014-2015. The largest percentage of work was taken up in Rural Connectivity (41.72%), followed by Drought Proofing (17.54%), followed by land development (10.58%), followed by Category IV work (8.78%). The percentage of work taken up in playground, Angadwadi and coastal areas was 0%. The percentage of work taken up in certain areas was very meagre in Rural sanitation, BNRGSK, Rural drinking water below 1%. The percentage of work done in renovation of traditional water bodies was 1.83% and in fisheries increased slightly in 1.86%. The percentage of work taken up in Micro Irrigation work was 4.17% and in Flood Controls and Protection was 3.64% and Water conservation and water was 3.38%, in other works was 4.99%. MGNREGA has been successful in generating employment opportunities by providing works in various areas.

Fig-5: No. of Works taken Up in FY 2017-18

Source: http://mnregaweb4.nic.in/netnrega/MISreport4.aspx?fin_year=2013-2014&rpt=RP accessed on 24-03-2018

The figure-5 reveals that the largest percentage of work was taken up in Category 1V (37.61%) followed by Rural Connectivity(22.98%),followed by Drought Proofing(8.66%),followed by land development(8.44%).The percentage of work taken up in coastal areas was 0%,in playground was 0.01%, in BNRGSK was 0.14%, in Rural Drinking water was 0.20%,in Angadwadi was 0.38%,in Renovation of traditional water bodies was 0.79%, in Fisheries was 2.96%,in other works was 2.44%, in Water Conservation and Water was 3.53%,in Rural Sanitation was 3.81%,in Flood Control and Protection was 3.88%,in Micro Irrigation Works was 4.18%.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Major findings of the study are as follows:

1. MGNREGA has not been so successful in generating employment opportunities in terms of work completion rate in the state of Assam.The state work completion rate in Assam in the financial year 2017-18 has fallen drastically to 0.83%

2.The percentage of jobcards issued to the SC holders remained constant at 6% and the percentage of jobcards issued to the ST holders remained constant for some years,then showed an increasing trend followed by decreasing trend.However the percentage of jobcards issued to the ST was more than that of SC.In that way,as a result of MGNREGA,STs were more benefitted as compared to SCs in terms of issue of jobcards

3. If we make a comparison between the works taken up in financial year 2014-2015 and 2017-2018, it will be seen that number of works in percentage taken up in areas of Angadwadi, Playground, Rural Sanitation, Water Conservation and Water, Flood Control and Protection, Micro Irrigation Works, Fisheries, Category IV work has increased in the financial year 2017-18 as compared to the year 2014-2015. However the number of works in percentage taken up in financial year 2017-18 remained same as in 2014-15 in Coastal areas. The number of work in percentage taken in financial year 2017-18 has declined as compared to the financial year 2014-2015 in areas of Drought Proofing, BNRGSK, Renovation of traditional water bodies, Rural Connectivity, Land Development, Rural Drinking Water, Other Works etc

Major Recommendations for removal of existing problems of MGNREGA in the state of Assam are as follows-

- All the initiatives under the MGNREGA, Have to be well streamlined so that the individual programmes can be implemented from time to time without any lacuna
- Since the targeted 100 days of employment could not be ensured in most of the areas. So, appropriate measures should be taken to ensure the target strictly.
- Greater level of transparency is required about different sanctioned jobs, issue of job cards and financial involvement therein.
- Any kind of unnecessary political intervention should be stopped to materialize its objectives.
- To ensure the objective of equity, both ST and SC should be provided with the same number of jobcards.

CONCLUSION:

From the above discussion, it may be concluded that the performance of MGNREGA in the state of Assam is not so much satisfactory. In a number of dimensions, the scheme could not work properly when the state figure is compared to the national figure. Though according to the government official report show that MGNREGA has positive impact on employment pattern of women and SC and ST. But in the state of Assam, when compared to the national level the performance is less than average.

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