

# MNREGA- a paradox of effective implementation and challenges

1. Selvakumar Joseph Michael,  
Research scholar, Bharathiar University  
Coimbatore- Tamil nadu, India.

2. Dr. S. Saravanakumar,  
Gobi Arts and Science College,  
Gobichettypalayam, Tamil nadu, India.

**Abstract:** MNREGA- one of the most ambitious programme of employment and a creative initiative in human history that guarantees employment legally to rural population keeping in view the consequences of agricultural sector which cannot provide full employment at all levels. MNREGA provides a greatest consequence for sustainable rural livelihood and it has become the EMPLOYER of the last resort. The paper aims to study the initiatives for its effective working and the challenges it faces in its practical sense. Experiences of implementation of the programme reflect that the results have been fairly mixed. On the whole the results appear that the programme has not been successful to the desired extent with reference to its effectiveness. This research paper makes an attempt to evaluate major initiatives for its effective implementation and the challenges faced in turn.

**Key words-** MNREGA, Objective, Features, Effectiveness, Implementation, challenges.

**Introduction:** Mahatma Gandhi National rural Employment act of 2005- a land mark legislation guarantees wage employment in a financial year for 100 days to combat unemployment in agricultural sector. The paper aims to study the initiatives for its effective working and the challenges it faces in its practical sense. Experiences of implementation of the programme reflect that the results have been fairly mixed. On the whole the results appear that the programme has not been successful to the desired extent with reference to its effectiveness. This research paper makes an attempt to evaluate major initiatives for its effective implementation and the challenges faced in turn.

MNREGA- one of the most ambitious programme of employment and a creative initiative in human history that guarantees employment legally to rural population keeping in view the consequences of agricultural sector which cannot provide full employment at all levels. MNREGA provides a greatest consequence for sustainable rural livelihood and it has become the EMPLOYER of the last resort. Andrew Shepherd, Director of UK-based Overseas Development Institute, Chronic Poverty Research Centre [CPRC], stated that, -“MNREGA is a good start to address poverty issue in the country, but it also requires better system of monitoring and evaluation to gauge its impact”

## **Objectives of MNREGA:**

MNREGA aims at providing employment opportunities for the rural people. It aims at growth engine for sustainable development of an agricultural economy and the act seeks to strengthen the natural resources. It aims at reducing hunger, rural asset formation, economic empowerment of poor women, improvement in rural environment and sanitation, to bring new interface between rural poor, state and civil society and to provide relief from rural village moneylenders. MNREGA aims at fostering conditions for inclusive growth ranging from basic wage security and recharging rural economy for a better transformative empowerment process of democratic system thereby strengthening the grass root processes of democracy and to infuse transparency and accountability in governance.

MNREGA named after Mahatma Gandhi on October 2, 2009 facilitates the following features

- Time bound employment guarantee and wage payment.
- 100 days of employment to a local rural household if it demands it and is willing to do unskilled manual work.
- A job card- necessary for demanding employment through MNREGA
- All adults members whose names are on the job card can apply for employment.
- Employment will be given within 15 days of application for work.
- The work should be provided within 5KM radius. In case work is provided beyond 5KM extra wages of 10% to be paid to meet the transportation expenses.
- Wages are to be paid in accordance with the daily rate and disbursement of wages to be done on weekly basis and it should not exceed beyond a fortnight.
- One third of beneficiaries should be women folk who have registered and requested work under the scheme
- Basic worksite facilities includes safe drinking water, shade for taking rest, first aid box for emergency and other things connected with work.

**Normal Permissible works under MNREGA:**

- Water conservation and water harvesting.
- Tree plantation.
- Irrigation canals which includes micro and macro irrigational works.
- De-silting of tanks.
- Land development- land leveling.
- Flood control and protection works including drainage in water logged areas.
- Construction of roads for better rural connectivity.
- Work related with renovation of ponds and tanks.
- Any other work notified by central government in consultation with the state government.

The success of any act or schemes depends on its effective implementations. More over every phase of implementation provides information about the mistakes which needs to be rectified.

Effectiveness is ensured through major initiatives undertaken that include

**Increasing transparency and public accountability:** For this purpose the involvement of Gram Sabha, Civil society members and government administrative machinery has been made mandatory. There are the formation of vigilance and monitoring committees to the highest level through state and central employment guarantee council. These provisions in the act empower participation of local people in the programme and administration to check the progress, work quality and other aspects of its implementation. The primary objectives of monitoring and transparency are sought to be achieved through vigilance, surveillance and through social audits. Accordingly, districts and states are supposed to send this information in a format which as information pertaining to verification of muster rolls, social audits conducted. States has reported that social audits have been successfully conducted. Social audit reports have been uploaded duly in MGNREGS website. Moreover monitoring by eminent citizens -a new scheme which assigns them to give a feed-back on the working of MNREGA is one of the mechanisms for monitoring its performance.

**Effective administrative and financial management of the MGNREGS:** The Labour budget principle ensures that the district programme coordinators are required to prepare Labour budgets in the month of December for the upcoming financial year which contains the details of anticipated demand of unskilled manual work.

Under section 21[1] of the NREGA, States have been instructed to establish State Employment Guarantee Funds which will ensure greater flexibility to the states in fund management of proper implementation of MNREGS.[ State funds have been set up in states which include Rajasthan, AP, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, UP, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Gujarat.

**Strengthening of administrative staff:** Strengthening through administrative support system is yet an another initiative for the effective working of MNREGS thus facilitating one Gram Rozgar Sewak Sahayak, one technical assistant, one computer assistant and one full-time dedicated programme officer in every block. Moreover

**Pilot Initiatives:** Yet an another initiative undertaken includes pilot projects which include training and skill building for MGNREGS workers, Basic education programme, Computer literacy and facilitating wage payment mode through modern business mode.

**The convergence:** Convergence projects undertaken aims to target flexibility in choice of work, livelihood security etc. The central government has developed and disseminated convergence guidelines with different schemes and specific programmes which include Indian council of Agricultural Research, National Afforestation programme and other host of programmes undertaken for inter-sectoral linkages.

**Burning issues and challenges faced by MNREGA:**

Major issues include- Works are opened by the government at times at their convenience, rather than the need or the demand of the people. Moreover wages have not come in time to the post offices and banks thus proving a hurdle to handle situations. It is also observed that there is no facility for proper social audit. There are chances that government may get involved in litigations, as hordes of labourers may take the local authority to court of law.

**Corruption:** A government –sponsored study on the MREGA has found a large –scale corruption and irregularities in the implementation of the programme in states with authorities in some places misappropriating central funds. A team of researchers from the V.V.Giri National Labour Institute noted that there was great fraud in the making of job cards, muster rolls. The study further brought out the darker side of the working where in some cases workers performed a day's job but their attendance was

put for 33 days. While the workers got money for one day, wages for the other days were misappropriated by the people associated with the functioning of MNREGS. Corruption is the most serious issue and challenge in MNREGA and unfortunately it is prevalent at various levels.

**Insufficient Utilization of allocated funds:** Yet an issue and challenge before MNREGA is related to proper utilization of the allocated fund. While the government announces that it spends more money to fight hunger, poverty, injustice, inequality but in reality the allocated funds may not reach the real needy thus paving way for the statement- while the poor remains poorer, the rich remains richer.

**Lack of proper planning:** It is necessary to track which resources in which part of the village can be developed under MNREGS? Authorities should decide which project will lead to a sustainable asset? Which is the neediest community? There is a need to get information of existing resources in a village hence necessitating the need of proper planning before MNREGA is implemented.

**Identification failure:** It is observed that in many villages, people don't feel any involvement with MNREGS projects and it is just a wage generating source for them. Hence there is a need for identifying the people who really requires job by taking into account the following criteria- amount of land a household possesses, number of earning members in each household, wealth possessed by a household etc.

**Scarcity of Human resources:** One of the challenges for effective implementation of MNREGS is the non-availability of human resources at the panchayats level- especially skilled and semi-skilled resources. This facilitates alternative solutions of utilizing the services of old/retired teachers for paper work, recruitment on contractual basis, and recruitment of students for paperwork, encouragement of educated women to take up employment with the panchayats.

**Lack of transparency and absence of social audit in practical sense:** Although MNREGA has provisions for transparency in the process of implementation, in actual practice, data on the work done and payments made for various kinds of jobs is kept as a closely guarded secret- thus making social audit a mere mockery system. Muster rolls are faked, Labour is underpaid, and bogus workers are shown as paid workers while the actual work is done by machines.

#### **Conclusion:**

Good intentions and good outcome may contradict with each other when it comes to government sponsored programme. The MNREGA schemes may not be a cent percent success; on the other hand it cannot be abandoned as it provides a cooling effect to the rural population who are suffering from the heat of poverty and unemployment. It is up to the governments at all level to make effective use of the scheme to help the needy and the poor.

There is a need to realize that MNREGA is not to be viewed as a mere governmental welfare programme but designed with true aim to provide best welfare state. Efforts should be united to bridge the gap between challenges and effective implementation to the make the act and scheme more fruitful and useful.

#### **REFERENCES**

- [1] Adhikari, A.and Bhatia (2010), NREGA Wage payments; Economic and political weekly.
- [2] Basu A.K., Chau H, Kanbur R., (2009): A theory of employment guarantees, constability, credibility and distributional concerns, journal of public economics.
- [3] K.K.Bagchi-MNREGA as a right to employment (2011)
- [4] Dhiren Vandra- NREGA: Basic components.
- [5] Dey, Subhasish (2010): Evaluating India's National rural employment guarantee scheme
- [6] The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005, Ministry of Rural development, Government of India.
- [7] <http://www.nrega.nic.in>
- [8] National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 guidelines, 2006
- [9] Narayan Chandra & Ramesh Golait- MGNREGA- Virtuous social protection.
- [10] NREGS: A study of sustainable livelihood models, Mudra Institute of communications (2008)
- [11] Wary, R.L (2007): The employer of last resort programme: could it work for developing countries? Economic and Labour market.
- [12] MNREGA-SAMEESHA-an anthropology of research studies from 2006-12 compiled by Neelakshi and Varad Pande.
- [13] MNREGA- provisions, implementation and performance- S.M.Javed Aktar.
- [14] An economic impact of MNREGA by Harish BJ and Nagaraj.
- [15] Community governance in India- a case study of MNREGA- by Kush Varma and Poonam Singh.