



# Role Of MGNREGA In Livelihood Generation During The Covid 19 Pandemic In Odisha

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## Abstract

MGNREGA is one of the flagship programmes launched by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India, to eradicate unemployment and poverty in the country's rural areas. It is the world's largest social security plan, introduced under the MGNREGA Act of 2005. The Act's mandate is to give 100 days of guaranteed pay employment every fiscal year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to perform unskilled manual work. The scheme's other goal is to create long-term assets and boost rural people's livelihood resources. This article attempts to conduct a comparative analysis of the performance of MGNREGA on rural people in scheduled and non-scheduled areas of Odisha, one of the country's backward states, in terms of livelihood generation and asset creation during the Covid19 Pandemic. This study evaluates various indicators such as employment generation under MGNREGA, Number of person days generated among various social categories and Households Completed 100 Days of work people in scheduled and non-scheduled areas of Odisha. The study finds there is a variation in the impact of MGNREGA on scheduled and non-scheduled areas of the Odisha. Non-scheduled areas of the state have benefited significantly better than scheduled areas. Even after more than a decade of implementation of the act in Odisha, a large section of the rural population in the schedule areas is yet to reap the benefits of MGNREGA in terms of employment generation and number of person days received through their active participation in the employment generation programme.

**Keywords – MGNREGA, Schedule areas, Covid 19 pandemic Women, Livelihood generation**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Responding to the shocks and vulnerabilities of the poor and disadvantaged sections through social policy has been one of the primary responsibilities of governments across the world. Policies relating to social protection are important in this context since they directly benefit the needy. An improvement in the welfare and equity of the poor has served as a key basis for public interventions in social protection programs. The MGNREGA, one of the flagship programme for rural India, which mandates to enhance livelihood security of the poor and other vulnerable sections by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment in a financial year.

### **GOALS OF THE MGNREGA ACT:**

Every Act has some goals and aim to be achieved. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was also enacted with some aim and goals. These goals are:

- To provide Social protection for the most vulnerable people living in rural India by providing employment opportunities to them.
- To provide Livelihood security for the poor through creation of durable assets, improved water security, soil conservation and higher land productivity.
- To have efficient Drought-proofing and flood management in rural India.
- Empowerment of the socially disadvantaged people, especially women, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Schedules Tribes (STs), through the processes of a rights-based legislation.
- Strengthening decentralized, participatory planning through convergence of various anti-poverty and livelihoods initiatives.
- Deepening democracy at the grass-roots by strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions
- Effecting greater transparency and accountability in governance

Thus, MGNREGA is a powerful instrument for ensuring inclusive growth in rural India through its impact on social protection, livelihood security and democratic empowerment.

## SALIENT FEATURES OF THE ACT:

The salient features of the Act are as follow:

- All adult members of a rural household willing to do unskilled manual work have the right to demand employment.
- Such a household will have to apply registration to the Gram Panchayat
- After verification, the Gram Panchayat will issue a Job Card with photograph of all adult members of the household willing to work under the programme.
- The Job Card must remain in the custody of the household.
- Job Cardholder can apply for work to the Gram Panchayat which will issue him/her a dated receipt of the work application
- Employment will be provided by the Gram Panchayat (local self-governing body) within 15 days of work application, failing which unemployment allowance will be paid.
- Disbursement of wages has to be done weekly basis and not beyond a fortnight.
- Wages will be paid at the wage rate to the wage earners through their Bank/Post office accounts.
- An annual shelf of works to be prepared in advance for each year.
- A ratio of 60:40 for wage and material costs should be maintained at GP level.
- No contractors/and no labour-displacing machinery shall be used in execution of works.
- Panchayati Raj Institutions will have a principal role in planning, monitoring and implementation.
- At least one-third of the workers should be women.
- Inbuilt incentive-disincentive structure to the State Government for guaranteeing employment.

The implementation of the MGNREGS also leads to the creation of durable assets to strengthen the livelihood base of rural communities. Since the inception of the act, various studies indicate that the MGNREGA enhanced the livelihood of the rural households(Mahendra Varman & Kumar, 2020; Pankaj & Bhattacharya, 2022), led to women empowerment(Datta & Singh, 2012; Narayan, 2022). It also provides multiple environmental benefits (Kareemulla et al 2009; Verma and Sarina 2009). It was highly praised for its transformative effect on livelihood security components during the COVID-19 pandemic(Afridi et al., 2021; Dev, 2020; Mishra & Khan, 2023). But this significant effect varies across the states of the country in general and tribal and non-tribal areas of the country in particular. The available studies fails to assess the make a comparative analysis of the impact of the MGNREGA on the tribal and non-tribal areas. This paper

makes an attempt to perform a comparative analysis of the impact of MGNREGA during the COVID-19 pandemic on the state of Odisha (one of the backward states where the unemployment situation is more prominent and migration of the rural wage seekers to faraway places for employment continues to tarnish the image of the states).

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

- ❖ To evaluate the performance of MGNREGA in Odisha
- ❖ To study the participation of various social categories with respect to person days generated in of Odisha.

### **METHODOLOGY**

**Data and Sources of Data:** The study is based on the secondary data collected from websites of Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India and Directorate of Rural Development of Odisha. The data has been taken for the year 2018-19 to 2020-21.

**Theoretical framework:** The comparative study of the performance of the fully scheduled areas (districts) and non-schedule areas (districts) of Odisha has been measured by using the following indicators.

- Employment generation under MGNREGA
- Number of person days generated among various social categories
- Households Completed 100 Days of work
- Average person days per household.
- Percentage of Tribal households provided employment.
- Percentage of Non-tribal households provided employment.
- Percentage of Household completed 100 days of work in a financial year.
- Person days generated for Women.

### **Performance of MGNREGA in India during the pandemic**

In India, the coronavirus pandemic had a significant impact on both lives and livelihoods, as it did globally. India had a far more severe economic shock for two reasons. First, prior to COVID-19, the economy

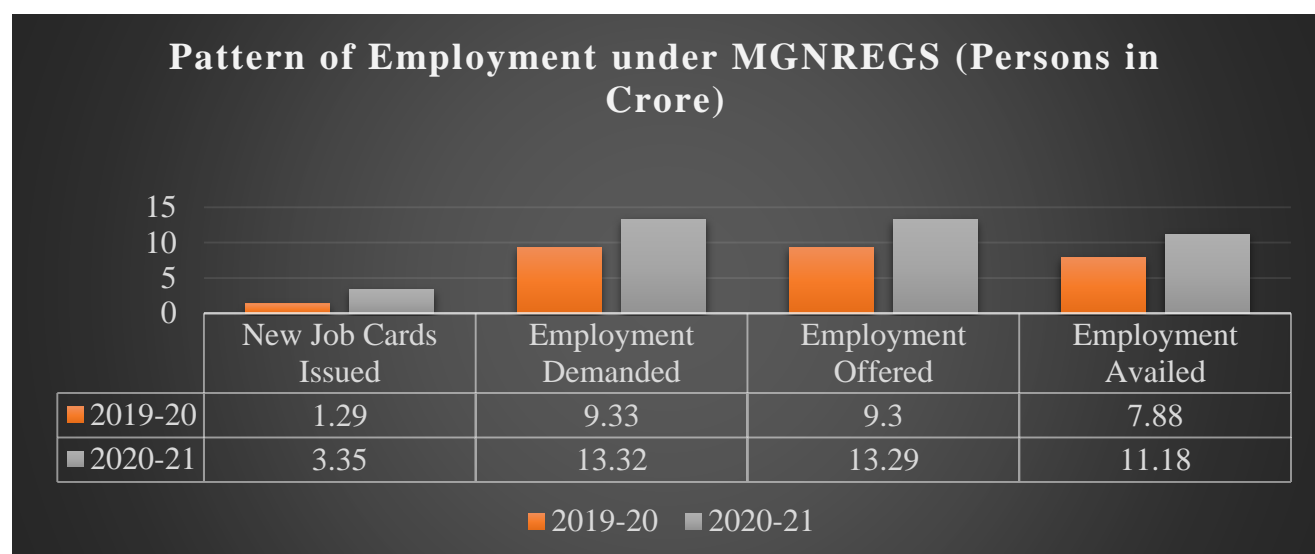
was already weakening, exacerbating pre-existing problems such as unemployment, low wages, rural distress, and widespread inequality. Second, India's large informal economy is particularly vulnerable. There has been an unprecedented shock to the labour market. The lockdown and shutdown has drastically impacted all economic activity. Unfortunately the bottom of the pyramid, notably informal workers and migrants, have been the most severely affected. In urban areas, the epidemic has resulted in substantial job and income losses for informal labourers. Unemployment has risen from 8.4% in March to 27% by April 2020. There was a loss of 122 million jobs. Small traders and casual labourers (daily wage workers) lost 91 million jobs. Even, MGNREGA witnessed an unprecedented challenge of accommodating a large number of unemployed rural poor and migrant workers during the COVID-19 crisis (Bhagat et al 2020).

**Table 1: Person –days of Employment and Expenditure under MGNREGA in India**

Year	Person-days of Employment (in crore)	Growth (In %)	Expenditure (in crore)	Growth (In %)
2017-18	233.74		63,649.48	
2018-19	267.96	14.64	69618.59	9.38
2019-20	265.35	-0.97	68,265.97	-1.94
2020-21	389.29	46.71	1,11,719.55	62.80

Source: MIS reports of MGNREGA, MoRD, GoI, 2017–18 to 2020–21, <https://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home>.

**Figure 1: Employment Generation under MGNREGA in India during 2019-20 to 2020-21**



Source: Data put in graph from the MIS reports of MGNREGS, MoRD, and GoI

Even, MGNREGA witnessed an unprecedented challenge of accommodating a large number of unemployed rural poor and migrant workers during the COVID-19 crisis (Bhagat et al 2020). According to national data (Figure 3), as many as 3.35 crore new job cards were issued under MGNREGS during 2020–21 as compared to 1.29 crore in 2019–20. The figure indicates that due to a surge in unemployment in rural areas, there was an increase of 42.76% in the demand for work under the scheme. Similarly, there has been a considerable enhancement under the scheme on employment offered and employment provided to the tune of 42.9% and 41.8% during the first wave of the pandemic. A record number of 133.2 million persons demanded work under MGNREGS. Out of this, 132.9 million were offered with unskilled employment and 111.8 million availed work under the scheme in a single financial year during 2020–21. Though, there was a reduction in the number of COVID-19 cases from September 2020, for which the process of unlocking began in all states of India. However, due to the second wave of the pandemic from March 2021, there has been an increase in the number of jobseekers and the demand for employment under the scheme. Table 1 indicates the person-days of employment generated during the pandemic years as compared to the previous years. It is clear from the table that person-days of employment went up by 46.71% with 389.29 crore during 2020–21 compared to 265.35 crore in 2019–20. The pandemic also gave a push to the budgetary allocation, by spending over `1 lakh crore, and registering an increase of 62.80% from 2019–20, which was the highest ever in the history of any scheme to address the problem of rural unemployment. It can further be seen that 363.24 crore person-days of employment were generated during 2021–22, which was lower in 2020–21 with an expenditure to the tune of `1,06,385.35 crore. The programme has led to direct gains in employment as well as earnings for the poor.

**Table 2: Percentage of ST Population to total Population in Odisha**

Sl. No.	Name of the District	Percentage of ST Population to total Population (2011)
1	Anugul	14.1
2	Balasore	11.9
3	Bargarh	19.0
4	Bhadrak	2.0
5	Bolangir	21.1
6	Boudh	12.5
7	Cuttack	3.6
8	Deogarh	35.3
9	Dhenkanal	13.6
10	Gajapati	54.3
11	Ganjam	3.4
12	Jagatsinghpur	0.7
13	Jajpur	8.3
14	Jharsuguda	30.5
15	Kalahandi	28.5
16	Kandhamal	53.6
17	Kendrapada	0.7
18	Keonjhar	45.4
19	Khurda	5.1
20	Koraput	50.6
21	Malkanagiri	57.8
22	Mayurbhanj	58.7
23	Nabarangpur	55.8
24	Nayagarh	6.1
25	Nuapara	33.8
26	Puri	0.4
27	Rayagada	56.0
28	Sambalpur	34.1
29	Subarnapur	9.4
30	Sundargarh	50.7
	Odisha	22.8

Source: Census 2011

**Table-3: Scheduled Areas of Odisha**

Name of the District	Detail of the tracts declared as Scheduled areas	Area of the track under scheduled areas (in sq. km)	ST Population	Major tribes' concentration
Gajapati	R.Udayagiri Tahsil, Gumma and Rayagada blocks of Gajapati Soroda Tahsil, excluding Gazalbadi and Gochha Panchayats	2498.8	237489	Sora, Kulis, Mahali, Shabara Lodha
Sambalpur	Kuchinda Tahsil of Kuchinda Sub-division	2367.3	142972	Oraon, Kisan, Mirdhad, Gond, Kondh
Keonjhar	Tahsils of Keonjhar subdivisions namely(i) Keonjhar Tahsils(ii) Telkoi Tahsils. 2 Tahsils of Champua subdivision namely(i) Champua Tahsils(ii) Barbil Tahsil	6935.6	594840	Santhal, Bathudi, Saonti, Sabar Lodha, Munda, Kol-lohara
Kalahandi	Th.Rampur and Lanjigarh of Bhawanipatna Sub-Divin.	1323.5	74543	Gond, Kondh, Baiga
Balasore	Nilagiri Block of Nilagiri Sub-Divin.	223.6	61902	Santhal, Munda, Bathudi, Bhumija
Ganjam (Not in TSP)	Suruda Tahasil excluding Gazalbadi and Gochha Gram Panchayat in Ghumsur Sub-division (Bhanjanagar)	912	16898	Sabarlodha, Kondh, Matya, Kondh Gouda
Mayurbhanj	Whole District	10416.6	1258459	Santhal, Munda, Ho, Kolha, Bhumij
Sundargarh	Whole District	9921.4	918903	Oraon, Kisan, Munda, Gond, Bhuyan
Koraput	Whole District	8534	585830	Kondh, Paroja, Gond, Gadaba
Rayagada	Whole District	7584.7	463418	Saors, Kondh, Kondh Gauda, Bagata
Nabarangpur	Whole District	5135.3	564480	Gond, Bhattada, Omanatya, harua
Malkangiri	Whole District	6115.3	289538	Koya, Paroja, Bhumia, Dharua
Kandhamal	Whole district	7645.7	336809	Kondh, Gond, Kondh Gauda

Source: Population Profile of Scheduled Tribes in Odisha, 2010



**Table-4: Status of the MGNREGA assets in fully schedule areas of Odisha**

S.No	Name of the Districts	Total No. of Works Taken up (New+Spill Over)[In Lakhs]	Number of Completed Works	Completion rate of the Works
1	Mayurbhanj	1.12	65,037	58.1
2	Malkangiri	0.21	8,230	39.2
3	Rayagada	0.38	7,288	19.2
4	Nabarangpur	0.73	30,727	42.1
5	Kandhamal	0.19	7,123	37.5
6	Sundargarh	0.75	31,615	42.2
7	Koraput	0.52	17,931	34.5
8	<b>Total</b>			

Note: Data for Financial Year 2020-21 as on 06/10/2022

**Table-5: Performance of MGNREGA in Non-schedule areas of Odisha**

S.No	Name of the Districts	Total No. of Works Taken up (New+Spill Over)[In Lakhs]	Number of Completed Works	Completion rate of the Works
1	Angul	0.29	8,147	28.1
2	Kendrapara	0.31	10,572	34.1
3	Cuttack	0.28	6,775	24.2
4	Khordha	0.16	4,038	25.2
5	Jajpur	0.41	15,815	38.6
6	Jagatsinghpur	0.15	4,673	31.2
7	Bargarh	0.69	17,349	25.1
8	Boudh	0.27	11,403	42.2
9	Puri	0.32	9,199	28.7
10	Nuapada	0.44	11,035	25.1
11	Jharsuguda	0.14	5,076	36.3
12	Nayagarh	0.18	6,356	35.3
13	Sonepur	0.35	12,001	34.3
14	Dhenkanal	0.4	14,359	35.9
15	Deogarh	0.1	2,888	28.9
16	Balangir	0.62	26,275	42.4
17	Bhadrak	0.43	10,692	24.9
18	<b>Total</b>	5.54	1,76,653	31.8

Note: Data for Financial Year 2020-21 as on 06/10/2022

**Table-6: Performance of MGNREGA in fully schedule areas of Odisha**

S.No	Name of the Districts	Average person days per Household (in number)	Person days generated for tribal (in %)	Person days generated for Non-tribal (in %)	Person days generated for women (in %)	Household completed 100 days of work in a financial Year (in %)
1	Mayurbhanj	55.08	54.9	45.1	45.17	6.28
2	Malkangiri	55.68	65.63	34.37	42.24	12.02
3	Rayagada	62.78	61.7	38.3	46.25	15.24
4	Nabarangpur	59	57.32	42.68	43.13	10.26
5	Kandhamal	70.16	58.15	41.85	47.47	20.98
6	Sundargarh	61.41	69.54	30.46	46.68	13.47
7	Koraput	64.69	55.88	44.12	42.94	13.77
8	<b>Total</b>	61.3	60.4	39.5	44.8	13.1

Source: MIS reports of MGNREGA, MoRD, GoI, 2020–21, <https://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home>.

Note: Table-6: displayed the performance of MGNREGA in fully schedule areas of Odisha by measuring the following indicators.

**Table-7: Performance of MGNREGA in Non-schedule areas of Odisha**

S.No	Name of the Districts	Average person days per Household (in number)	Person days generated for tribal (in %)	Person days generated for Non-tribal (in %)	Person days generated for women (in %)	Household completed 100 days of work in a financial Year (in %)
1	Angul	52.89	15.8	84.2	45.57	5.51
2	Kendrapara	32.34	0.67	99.33	33.09	1.26
3	Cuttack	40.11	6.59	93.41	33.1	2.23
4	Khordha	44.02	11.3	88.7	40.64	5.11
5	Jajpur	38.18	7.72	92.18	38.3	1.53
6	Jagatsinghpur	38.75	0.34	99.66	30.63	0.99
7	Bargarh	49.01	23.71	76.29	37.41	10.28
8	Boudh	46.82	10.99	89.1	40.4	2.32
9	Puri	40.24	0.31	99.69	34.4	0.85
10	Nuapada	61.24	40.09	59.91	44.61	20.40
11	Jharsuguda	51.31	45.2	54.8	45	8.9
12	Nayagarh	51.92	8.8	91.2	41.57	6.3
13	Sonepur	50.11	7.7	92.3	36.79	6.8
14	Dhenkanal	63.14	15.6	84.4	46.44	14.0
15	Deogarh	58.21	35.9	64.1	49.66	9.9
16	Balangir	61.86	23.2	76.8	41.47	19.3
17	Bhadrak	37.55	0.9	99.1	41.5	0.7
18	<b>Total</b>	48.1	15	85	40	6.8

Source: MIS reports of MGNREGA, MoRD, GoI, 2020–21, <https://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home>.

Note: Table-7: displayed the performance of MGNREGA in fully schedule areas of Odisha by measuring the following indicators.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

#### Employment Generation under MGNREGA in Schedule and Non-schedule areas of Odisha during 2018-19 to 2020-21

**Table-8: Employment Generation under MGNREGA in Schedule areas**

Particulars	2018-19		2019-20		2020-21	
	Number	Growth (in %)	Number	Growth (in %)	Number	Growth (in %)
<b>Employment Demanded</b>	1378760		1563894	13.4	2889942	84.8
<b>Employment Offered</b>	1377517		1562494	13.4	2889455	84.9
<b>Employment Availed</b>	1144942		1296482	13.2	2047451	57.9

Source: MIS reports of MGNREGA, MoRD, GoI, 2018–19 to 2020–21, <https://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home>.

**Table-9: Employment Generation under MGNREGA in Non-schedule areas**

Particulars	2018-19		2019-20		2020-21	
	Number	Growth (in %)	Number	Growth (in %)	Number	Growth (in %)
<b>Employment Demanded</b>	1516689		1684223	11	3289182	95.3
<b>Employment Offered</b>	1511704		1679703	11.1	3286046	95.6
<b>Employment Availed</b>	1327704		1473529	11	2558241	73.6

Source: MIS reports of MGNREGA, MoRD, GoI, 2018–19 to 2020–21, <https://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home>.

MGNREGA guarantees a secured 100 days of employment among the rural unskilled workers willing to perform manual work, especially during the pandemic it could become a real life saving instruments for the migrant workers and landless workers. Though MGNREGA ensures employment guarantee in Odisha as well. However, it can be seen from Table 9 that rural people of Non-schedule areas have benefitted more compared to schedule areas in terms of employment offered and employment availed. The rural people of Non-schedule areas have seen nearly 85 and 63 percent growth in terms of employment offered and employment availed during the pandemic. On the other hand, rural people of Schedule areas have seen nearly 72 and 45 percent growth in terms of employment offered and employment availed during the pandemic.

This is showing that there is less employment opportunities in the Schedule areas due to the low level of awareness about the various provisions of MGNREGA under in Schedule areas.

**Person days generated among various social categories under MGNREGA in Schedule and Non-schedule areas of Odisha during 2018-19 to 2020-21**

**Table-10: Person days generated among various social categories in Schedule areas**

Particulars	2018-19		2019-20		2020-21	
	Number	Growth (in %)	Number	(Growth in %)	Number	Growth (in %)
<b>SC</b>	4345684		5539741	27.5	9356974	68.9
<b>ST</b>	19249006		25106436	30.4	44776898	78.3
<b>Others</b>	8676720		11169083	28.7	20649051	84.9
<b>Total</b>	32271410		41815260	29.6	74782923	78.8
<b>Women</b>	13679441		17754777	29.8	33684741	89.7

Source: MIS reports of MGNREGA, MoRD, GoI, 2018–19 to 2020–21, <https://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home>.

**Table-11: Person days generated among various social categories in Non-schedule areas**

Particulars	2018-19		2019-20		2020-21	
	Number	(in %)	Number	(Growth in %)	Number	(Growth in %)
<b>SC</b>	5113877		6330846	24.8	11207271	77
<b>ST</b>	4179829		6454991	54.4	12024026	86.3
<b>Others</b>	18401020		25156556	36.7	49112316	80.5
<b>Total</b>	27694726		37942393	37	72343613	90.7
<b>Women</b>	10675268		15440355	44.6	29851590	93.3

Source: MIS reports of MGNREGA, MoRD, GoI, 2018–19 to 2020–21, <https://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home>.

One of the major objectives of MGNREGA is to uplift the socially disadvantaged and nationally accepted most vulnerable section of people like Scheduled Caste (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) and women. In this regard it has been found that non- schedule areas are more successful in providing number of person days among Scheduled Caste (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) and women. The Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and women of non- schedule areas have seen almost 52, 32 and 48 percent of growth in terms of number of person days of work received in non- schedule areas which is higher compared to the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and women of schedule areas.

MGNREGA scheme was launched with one of the important goal is to improve the social as well as economic condition of the vulnerable poor especially women with the provision that at least one-third of beneficiaries should be women. *Table 12* indicates a significant change the lives of women during the pandemic. Almost women have received nearly 60 and 48 percent of person days of work in schedule and non- schedule areas of Odisha during the Covid19 pandemic.

### **Household completed 100 days of work in MGNREGA in Schedule and Non-schedule areas of Odisha during 2018-19 to 2020-21**

**Table-12: Households completed 100 Days of works in Schedule areas**

Particulars	2018-19		2019-20		2020-21	
	Number	(Growth in %)	Number	(Growth in %)	Number	(Growth in %)
<b>SC</b>	3041		6262	105.9	16736	167.3
<b>ST</b>	15953		34401	115.6	98262	168.2
<b>Others</b>	6358		14014	120.4	34337	145
<b>Total</b>	25352		54677	115.7	149335	173.1

Source: MIS reports of MGNREGA, MoRD, GoI, 2018–19 to 2020–21, <https://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home>.

**Figure 2: Households completed 100 Days of works (Increasing trends)**

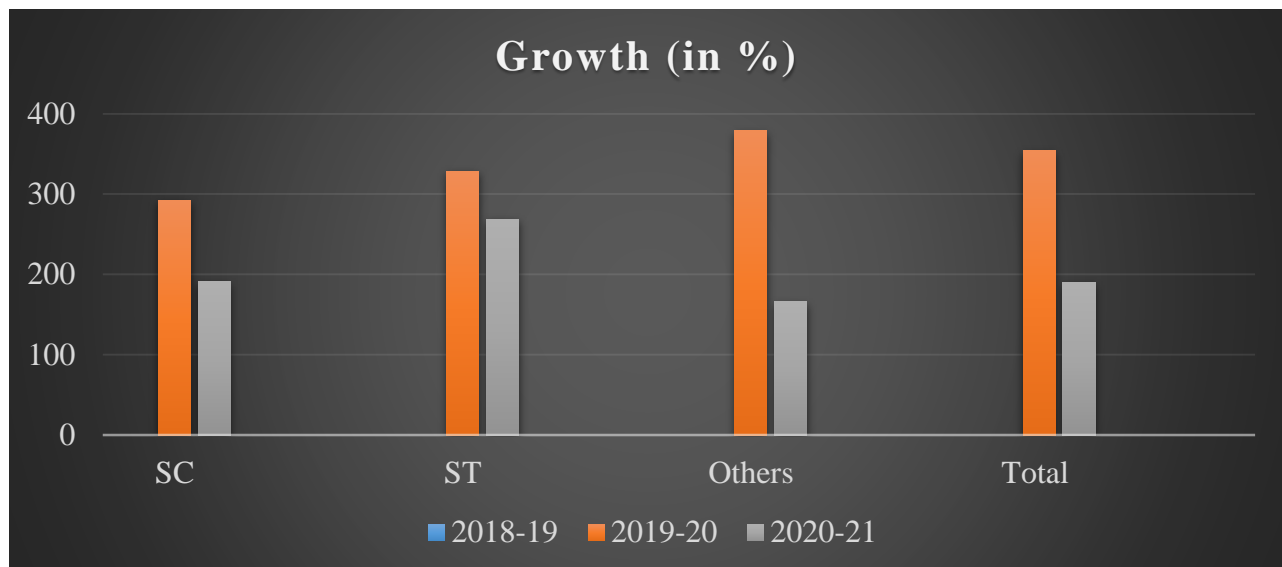


Source: MIS reports of MGNREGA, MoRD, GoI, 2018–19 to 2020–21, <https://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home>

**Table-13: Households completed 100 Days of works in Non-schedule areas**

Particulars	2018-19		2019-20		2020-21	
	Number	(Growth in %)	Number	(Growth in %)	Number	(Growth in %)
<b>SC</b>	1521		5971	292.6	17366	190.8
<b>ST</b>	1878		8050	328.6	29681	268.7
<b>Others</b>	5760		27577	378.8	73248	165.6
<b>Total</b>	9159		41598	354.2	120295	189.2

Source: MIS reports of MGNREGA, MoRD, GoI, 2018–19 to 2020–21, <https://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home>.

**Figure 3: Households completed 100 Days of works (Decreasing trends)**

Source: MIS reports of MGNREGA, MoRD, GoI, 2018–19 to 2020–21, <https://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home>

This is an important indicator which determines the successful implementation of MGNREGA Scheme as every scheme has the objective of providing maximum benefits to as many people as possible. In this aspect it can be seen from *Table 13*, that the SC, ST and people belonging to other groups of schedule areas of Odisha has seen an increasing trends in terms of households completed 100 days of works from the financial year 2018-19 to 2020-21. Whereas the non-schedule areas of Odisha have suddenly showing decreasing trends during the pandemic situation in financial year 2020-21.

### **Summary and Conclusion:**

The state's actions and responsibilities in ensuring rural employment following a pandemic-induced lockdown are greatly appreciated. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, India's largest public-funded wage employment program, has played a critical role in providing social security in rural areas during the pandemic. It was also easily seen from one of the backward states, Odisha. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, has really secured the livelihood of the rural migrant workers, landless labourers and marginal farmers across the caste and tribe groups in Odisha. There is a variation in the impact of MGNREGA on scheduled and non-scheduled areas of the state. Non-scheduled areas of the state have benefited significantly better than scheduled areas. Even after more than a decade of implementation of the act in Odisha, a large section of the rural population in the schedule areas is yet to reap the benefits of MGNREGA through their active participation in the employment generation programme.



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