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An Impact Study on the Socio-Economic Life of the MNREGA Workers in the District of Jashpur, Chhattisgarh



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Abstract

The author intends to draw the attention of the readers, to get acquainted with the socio-economic conditions of the workers involved in the work of MNREGA, through this paper. This paper is concentrating on the workers of only one district i.e. Jashpur, one of the most tribal inhabitants districts in Chhattisgarh. The impact came out through this study is very positive. The author suggests that this kind of schemes should be implemented in the country so that common people and especially the tribals, poor sections of the society may be benefitted more and more.

Keywords: MNREGA, Poverty, Displacement, Livelihoods, Government Activities

Introduction

After independence, Government of India has scheduled the tribal groups in the Constitution and provided special provisions for their welfare and development. In spite of the many affirmative Schemes and Programmes, tribals in India are facing incessant problems due to their low socio-economic conditions, poverty, unemployment, displacement, indebtedness, lack of opportunities, lack of accessibility and lack of awareness of the government programmes. Coupled to this, the government and private industrial establishments have initiated mega projects of mining, hydro-electric, industry, business, roads and transport which is leading to the loss of traditional land ownership and livelihood opportunities. This is resulting in large scale migration of rural tribal to urban areas in search of livelihoods either temporarily or on permanent basis which in turn resulting into the disturbances of their traditional socio-psychological family relationship, network of neighbourly relationships and the adoption of new urban culture. Human Migration and in particular tribal migration with its implications is becoming an important socio-economic problem for the policy makers and government to undertake welfare and development activities.

Methodology

Taking all the surveyed facts and figures, into consideration, this present impact study outlines the following objectives –

Objectives

1. To collect information and analyse them as per the situation of the area.
2. To study the ground reality of the socio-economic conditions of the tribals.
3. To suggest and recommend for future action plan.

Hypothesis

On the basis of the limited studies conducted on this line and in order to substantiate the objectives outlined above the following hypotheses were framed to test their validity.

1. The participatory approach brings a difference in the impact of developmental program in terms of physical, social and economic growth among the people and in the target area through the MNREGA scheme.
2. The alternative sources of earning generated through this program helps in bringing down the migration rate, poverty and unemployment. There is a significance difference in the life style of the people through the implementation of this programme.

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Research Design

The activities conducted in the study area, especially in the context of tribal development programme, still leave many questions unanswered. It is with this consideration and to gain more insights in the subjects, the present impact study is based on a Descriptive Design.

Sampling

While following a purposive stratified random sampling procedure the samples were taken 20 MNREGA workers from 5 villages each i.e. Barangjor, Jumaikele, Jambahar, Singibahar and Konpara to represent the Universe.

Primary Sources

Individual Interview

The author has conducted a survey of 100 households with the help of surveyors taking 20 individual MNREGA workers from each village. They were interviewed about their family status, their economic possessions and status, their educational and cultural life patterns etc.

Focused Group Discussion (FGD)

The collection of data was made from the community with the help of Focused Group Discussion (FGD). It was aimed at collecting information from 15-20 people sitting together and sharing their opinions about the status of the villages.

Observation

While collecting the data through the above methods, non-participant observation method was used to get more insights and to supplement the above data. It was more helpful during the site visit to understand the physical works by the people themselves.

Secondary Sources

The data from the secondary sources were collected on the concept and context of the developmental activities. Help was taken from the published books and journals, unpublished articles and documents. The records of the concerned Government Department at the District Level were also referred for the above purpose.

Limitation of the Study

The present piece of research has certain limitations which the author feels free to share with:

1. The non-availability of the main people of the villages sometimes prolonged the process of data collection. The surveyors have to visit the same village again and again.
2. During the course of FGD the dominance of the elite members was not allowing others to come forward and revealing the information. However, care was taken to ensure the participation of those people with a very low profile by structuring the discussion and inviting such members' view.

Demographic Profile of the Universe

The universe comprises of 1268 households of 05 villages in Jashpur districts, where most of the tribals are residing. Their houses are in the close vicinity of each other and mostly they are knit together for the good of their community. The Total population of the 05 villages is 8602, out of which 4331 (50.35%) male population and 4271 (49.65%) female members reside. The sex ratio of the total universe is 986, higher than the national sex ratio i.e. 940 as per the census 2011.

Table No. 1 Total no. of Population of the Universe and The Sex Ratio

Villages	Total No. of Households	Total Population	Male Population	Female Population	Sex Ratio
Barangjor	178	1419	720 (50.74%)	699 (49.26%)	970/1000
Jumaikele	240	1677	840 (50.08%)	837 (49.92%)	996/1000
Jambahar	206	1236	622 (50.32%)	614 (49.68%)	987/1000
Singibahar	410	2869	1439 (50.15%)	1430 (49.85%)	994/1000
Konpara	234	1401	710 (50.68%)	691 (49.32%)	973/1000
Total	1268	8602	4331 (50.35%)	4271 (49.65%)	986/1000

Source: Primary Survey, May, 2015

The Literacy level of the respondents

The literacy level of the respondents has been found out to be on the average side. As the table indicates that 13% of the respondents are illiterate, while 23% of them have completed their primary schools, followed by 37% respondents have passed Middle schools. Only ten (10%) respondents have managed to do their graduation and 3% of the

MNREGA workers have completed their post graduation. This shows that the literacy rate of the area, is quite good. The credit goes to the private schools run by the Missionaries esp. the Jesuit Missionaries, who are running the famous school and colleges named 'Loyola'. There are other schools also in the area run by the Diocesan Society, Holy Cross, St. Anne Congregation, the FMM Sisters congregation etc.

Table No. 2 Distribution of respondents as per their Literacy level

Village/ Educational Level	Illiterate	Primary School	Middle School	High School	Graduate	Post Graduate	Total
Barangjor	02	05	08	03	01	01	20
Jumaikele	02	06	09	02	01	00	20
Jambahar	01	02	08	04	04	01	20
Singibahar	03	04	06	03	03	01	20
Konpara	05	06	06	02	01	00	20
Total	13 (13%)	23 (23%)	37 (37%)	14 (14%)	10 (10%)	03 (3%)	100 (100%)

Source: Primary Survey, May, 2015

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The Economic-Categorization of the households

The economic- categorization of the households was done on the basis of annual earning through different sources, and as a results 11% were found poor, followed by medium category households (69%) and well-off households (20%). The occupation varies from food gatherers and landless to agriculturists.

Table No. 3 Distribution of Respondents as per Economic Status (Land Holdings)

Villages	Poor	Medium	Well-off	Total
Barangjor	3	14	3	20
Jumaikela	2	14	4	20
Jambahar	2	12	6	20
Singibahar	2	13	5	20
Konpara	2	16	2	20
Total	11(11%)	69 (69%)	20 (20%)	100 (100%)

Source: Primary survey, May, 2015.

Poor = landless farmers & farmers less than or equal to 1 acre of land.

Table No. 5 Distribution of the MNREGA Workers as per their Monthly Income from All Sources

Villages	10000-15000	15001-20000	20001-25000	25001-30000	30001-35000	35001 and Above	Total
Barangjor	2	3	5	5	4	1	20
Jumaikela	1	3	3	5	6	2	20
Jambahar	2	2	6	8	1	1	20
Singibahar	2	5	5	5	2	1	20
Konpara	4	6	6	2	2	0	20
Total	11 (11%)	19 (19%)	25 (25%)	25 (25%)	15 (15%)	5 (5%)	100 (100%)

Source: Primary Survey, May, 2015.

The above table depicts the respondents' income. It is found that 11 respondents belong to income group of Rs. 10000 to 15000 and 19% respondents belong to Rs.15001 to 20000, whereas 25% respondents come under the income level of Rs. 20001 to 25000 and 25% respondents fall under the income level of Rs. 25001 to 30000. Similarly it has been found that a total of 15% respondents do come under a high income group of Rs. 30001 to 35000 while a total of 5% respondents come under the highest income group of Rs. 35001 and above. This set of figure certainly gives a picture that the impact of MNREGA is experienced in the said villages.

Table No. 6 Distribution of the MNREGA Workers as per their Access to Toilet Facilities

Villages	Toilet Facilities Before MNREGA		Toilet Facilities After MNREGA		Total
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Barangjor	04	16	15	05	20
Jumaikela	06	14	18	02	20
Jambahar	03	17	16	04	20
Singibahar	08	12	18	02	20
Konpara	02	18	14	06	20
Total	23 (23%)	77 (77%)	81 (81%)	19 (19%)	100 (100%)

Source: Primary Survey, May, 2015.

The above table indicates that after MNREGA a huge change of socio economic condition has been experienced by the people involved in MNREGA works. It is clear indication that before MNREGA 77%

Medium = Farmers having 1.1 acres to 4.9 acres of land.

Well-off = Farmers having 5 acres of land and above.

Table No. 4 Distribution of Respondents as per Their Nature of Houses

Villages	Kaccha	Semi-pacca	Pacca	Total
Barangjor	2	14	3	20
Jumaikela	2	14	4	20
Jambahar	1	12	6	20
Singibahar	1	13	5	20
Konpara	3	18	2	20
Total	9(9%)	71 (71%)	20 (20%)	100 (100%)

Source: Primary survey, May, 2015.

From the above table it is very clear that 9% respondents have pure kaccha houses to dwell in, whereas 71% respondents do have semi-kaccha houses, while 20% respondents have pacca houses. This is a sign and positive impact of the MNREGA work on the people of these villages.

respondents did not have the toilet facilities attached to their houses while now after the MNREGA the figure has increased to 81% respondents who are having their toilet facilities. It shows that there is increase in the living standard of the people.

Table No. 7 Distribution of the MNREGA Workers as per their Savings

Villages	Savings Before MNREGA		Savings After MNREGA		Total
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Barangjor	05	15	18	02	20
Jumaikela	03	17	19	01	20
Jambahar	02	18	20	00	20
Singibahar	06	14	20	00	20
Konpara	01	19	18	02	20
Total	17 (17%)	83 (83%)	95 (95%)	5 (5%)	100 (100%)

Source: Primary Survey, May, 2015.

The above table depicts that the fact of saving status of the respondents after MNREGA, has increased almost 100%. The information shows that in two of the study villages, namely, Jambahar and Singibahar 100% respondents responded that they have cultivated the habits of saving in the banks after MNREGA. In total before MNREGA only 17% respondents were saving their money while it was found after the MNREGA 95% respondents opined that they are saving. It implies that they are earning more than their daily consumption. It also implies that their living standard has increased.

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Observations

1. It is commonly observed in almost all the Gram Panchayat that the job card is with sarpanch or employment assistant.
2. Maximum job card holders complaint for the delay in wages, in some of the Gram Panchayats the villagers were very much dissatisfied with working of MNREGA.
3. In almost all the villages Sarpanches usually provide works to their relatives.
4. District Jashpur is a tribal and backward area where people are under pressure of sarpanch and Rojgar Sahayak.
5. When survey team reached there to fill the schedule they found that people were afraid and it was also being observed that they were not having their job cards. And some of them told the survey team that they did not have their job cards yet.
6. It is commonly found that there has been improvement in the living standard (Socio Economic Condition) of people.
7. MNREGA laborers are not getting 100 days of guaranteed wage employment at Gram Panchayat.
8. There is lack of information about unemployment.
9. It has been observed that from 2006-07 to 2011-12 construction of road, lakes, an urbanization work has been done at village level.

Concluding Remarks

Thus one can see that this social welfare programme is primarily intended to enhance the livelihood securities of the people in rural areas by supplementing wage employment opportunities to the unskilled labour force. The programme is in force with the intention that it would act as a strong safety net for

the poor in the wake of lack of alternative employment opportunities. In an attempt to ensure the rural economy to grow, the scheme is expected to regenerate the rural natural resource base for sustainable livelihood by carrying out soil and water conservation activities. The significance of MNREGA scheme lies in the fact that it creates the right based framework for wage employment to those who demand it. While the scheme provides a legal framework, the state governments have the legal liability and central government provides a fiscal guarantee. The scheme also ensures that there is decentralized planning, which means a perspective plan needs to be prepared for the whole district with a list of permissible works. In this way the legislation goes beyond providing the social safety net, and towards guaranteeing the right to employment. The course of MNREGA has to be determined on the basis of the enforcement of two non-negotiable factors, namely, ensuing basic entitlements to workers and creating assets to strengthen the livelihood of the people.

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