

Role of MNREGA in the Socio-economic and Political Transformation of Sawai Madhopur District in Rajasthan

Abstract

MGNREGA, The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005 is one of the important acts for the rural people to include in the growth process. It is emerged in response to the growing divergence between economic growth and rural job creation. It is helpful in reducing poverty in rural areas by providing 100 days guaranteed wage employment. It is also helpful in raising the standard of living of the rural people. It aims to enhance livelihood security for all adults willing to perform unskilled manual labor in rural areas. In the villages, the infrastructures are created, which is of prime importance for the development of the rural Areas. The Act envisages not only an immediate livelihood (through employing unskilled labor) but also long-term livelihood opportunities by creating sustainable assets in rural areas. This contributes to enhancing national resources (through water conservation, drought proofing, renovating water bodies, rural connectivity and so forth) and furthering sustainable development. This program is seen as a panacea for rural poverty, particularly if its implementation can be improved to ensure that it reaches all vulnerable sections of India's rural economy.

This case study is conducted in sawai-madhopur district of Rajasthan state, India. In this paper, the impact of MNREGA on various aspects of development is analyzed. What is its role in shaping the income security and well-being of men, women and children in rural households? How is the availability of the programme affecting the transformation of rural labor markets? And is it has a significant role in transforming rural India? The paper is based on both primary and secondary data.

Keywords: MNREGA, Poverty, Rural, Socio-Economic And Political Transformation, Inclusive Growth, JAM

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhiji's idea of 'Gram Swarajya' for overall development of rural India is implemented through the Mahatma Gandhi national rural employment guarantee Act (MNREGA). MNREGA playing a strong positive role in the socio-economic and political transformation of rural India. The Indian constitution's core values are taking shape through the MNREGA.

With this spirit that the MNREGA (NREGA) launched in February 2, 2006. It is the largest and most successful programme for socio-economic and political development of people in the world. In India nearly 70% population still lives in rural area in under developed conditions. Human capital and natural resources are still unutilized. A developed infrastructure and good governance are also just paper projects in rural India. The MNREGA enacted to provide at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage in a financial year to everyone willing to do unskilled manual work. Its auxiliary objective is to make strong natural and human resource management through works that help to eradicate the causes of poverty, unemployment, deprivation, discrimination and under development. The act is also a significant medium for strengthening democratic process by giving a major role to the Panchayati Raj institutions in its overall management.

The scheme has now been implemented in all the districts of the country more than 6 crore households were provided employment in 2016-17. This is a good progress in compare to 3 cr. households in 2007-08. There are 30.25 and 50 percent of the total persons days works in Account of SC, ST and women respectively. An allocation of Rs. 40,000 cr. has



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been made in the current budget as against Rs. 16,000 cr. in 2008-09 for MNREGA.

The SawaiMadopur district is a backward region; it is counted in 200 most backward districts of India. According to a social auditing, conducted in MNREGA in 2016 shows that there are some mix outcomes of MNREGA. On the positive side its have very significant impact on providing employment, especially in the days of non-agricultural activities. These employment opportunities have some economic value also. Now the beneficiaries are able to purchase items of their need, invest in education and health and living a dignified life. While the major inclusion of schedule caste, schedule tribes, other backward caste and especially women has very important value in the social-employment aspects. The works in MNREGA implemented through PRI's/Panchayati Raj Institutions. Most citizens can take participation in the overall management of MNREGA. It makes them politically engaged in the process of good governance and development.

According to district administration data and people feedback there were some irregularities also in the scheme like corruption, delayed payment, non-durability of constructed works and administrative negligence etc.

But due to attempts of continuous reforms like increase the budget allocation, use of technology, Jandhan-Aadhar-Mobile (JAM) trinity and better people participation, now MNREGA ensure "SabkaSaath-SabkaVikas", so there is strong probability of significant socio-economic and political transformation of rural people and region through MNREGA.

Geographical Profile of Study Area

SawaiMadhopur district encompasses an area of 5042.99 square km., which is 1.47 percent of the state's area. It is situated in eastern side of Rajasthan. District partly plain and partly undulating hilly terrain with the 450-600 meters of the mean sea level height, the latitude expansion of district is between 25°45' to 26°41' north latitude and between 75°59' and 77°00' east longitudes.

The Chambal River with her major tributary river Banas flows on the boundaries of Sawaimadhapur district which work as a dividing line between Sawaimadhapur district and Madhya Pradesh ranges of Aravali hills are in the northern western and southern parts of the district.

The district is enriched with high variety of mineral resources both metallic and non-metallic about 92 percent of the rainfall occurs from south west monsoon during the months of July to September. The average rainfall is 800 mm. This district is located in the semi-arid region of the state. The temperature varies from maximum of 49°C in May/June to a minimum of 20°C in January.

The forest covers is about 28% of the total area. On the demographic front in 2011, Sawaimadhapur had population of 13,35,551 of which male and female were 704,031 and 631,520 respectively about 80 percent people resided in rural area.

Review of Literature

Carswell and De Neve(2014) found that MNREGA had positive effects on women as well as on the poorest households in Tamil Nadu by providing them with a safety net.

Deininger and Liu (2013) conducted a comprehensive study of MGNREGA in the state of Andhra Pradesh. They found that the policy had significant impacts. Short term impacts included, higher nutritional intake and medium term impacts included non-financial asset accumulation. They also found it was women, SC,ST and those seeking casual labor who obtained most benefit.

Dreze (2007) looks at the corruption in rural employment programs in Orissa and how this has continued in a MNREGA as well. However, he believes that there is tremendous potential of MNREGA in the survey areas. Where work was available, it was generally found that workers earned close to (and sometimes more than) the statutory minimum wage of Rs 70 per day, and that wages were paid within 15 days or so. This is an unprecedented opportunity for the rural poor, and there was evident appreciation of it among casual labourers and other disadvantaged sections of the population. There is the hope among workers that MNREGA would enable them to avoid long-distance seasonal migration. Further, there is plenty of scope for productive MNREGA works in this area, whether it is in the field of water conservation, rural connectivity, regeneration of forest land, or improvement of private agricultural land.

Khan, Ullah and Salluja (2007) have discussed the direct and the indirect effects of NREGA on employment generation and poverty reduction in a local area. For this, a detailed survey was done in a poor agricultural village with 400 households, nearly 2500 people. The survey recorded income and expenditure levels by type of household including large, small and marginal farmers, agricultural labour etc. The survey also recorded production activities undertaken by the inhabitants.

Mihir Shah says "MNREGA programmes visualize a decisive break with the past. Ever since independence, rural development has largely been the monopoly of local contractors, who have emerged as major agents of exploitation of the rural poor, especially women. Almost every aspect of these programmes, including the schedule of rates that is used to measure and value work done, has been tailor-made for local contractors. These people invariably tend to be local power brokers. They implement programmes in a top-down manner, run roughshod over basic human rights, pay workers a pittance and use labour-displacing machinery. MNREGA is poised to change all that. It places a ban on contractors and their machines. It mandates payment of statutory minimum wages and provides various legal entitlements to workers. It visualizes the involvement of local people in every decision - whether it be the selection of works and work-sites, the implementation of projects or their social audit."(Shah, 2008) Thus, MNREGA comes out as a potentially positive force to change the power

structures working in the rural areas of India in favour of the poor.

Mathur (2007) thinks that a system of regular and continuous flow of authoritative information is essential. There is room for the government to take up concurrent evaluations, more effective monitoring, time-series studies, and focused reports on critical aspects like minimum wages, muster rolls. To improve implementation, the government needs to solve problems, modify policy directives, and issue operational guidelines for the district, block and village levels. The government must take the lead, be proactive, mobilize institutions and groups, and use the media effectively. MNREGA involves several lakh government officials, panchayat functionaries, elected representatives, NGOs and community groups. They play a critical role but had little preparation for the challenge. MNREGA in fact is a programme of national importance which has been marginalized. While the ministry of rural development is the nodal ministry at the centre, every relevant department and agency requires being involved.

Mathur (2009) states that in social audit undertaken in Andhra Pradesh, it was found that in certain villages, some people stated that they had not been paid for the work done. When comparisons were made of the payments as per the pass-book with the payment as per the job card, it was discovered that the job card did not contain the inner pages that record the work done by each person; the job card itself was incomplete. Earlier, several officials, Field and Technical Assistants and Mates admitted to irregularities and about Rs. 50,000 were returned.

Institute of Applied Manpower Research, Delhi (2009), "All India Report on Evaluation of MNREGA, A Survey of Twenty Districts". This study is based on evaluation of the MNREGA which assess its impact by taking 20 districts from Northern, Western, Southern and North-East region of India and 300 beneficiaries from each districts. This study reveals that in many districts, affixing of photograph on job cards is not followed and in some places the beneficiary paid money for getting it. Job card was not designed to have sufficient space for all the entries in detail. Many households did not get the work within the stipulated 15 days time of demand for work, neither were they paid any unemployment allowance. On the utility of maximum number of days of works, only small fractions of households could utilize more than 35 days of work, remaining still lagging behind. The reason for non-utilization of maximum permissible 100 days of work is late starting of the scheme. In most of the worksites, excepting crèche, other facilities like shed, drinking water were provided. Due to the income generation through this scheme, the

numbers of beneficiaries at the low earning level are reduced to nearly half in size. There is a rise of families who are spending more on food and non-food items.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the present study are:-

1. To assess the implementation of MNREGA, its functioning and to suggest suitable policy measures to further strengthen the Programme.
2. Identification of factors determining the participation of people in MNREGA scheme and whether MNREGA has been successful in ensuring better food security to the beneficiaries.
3. Measure the extent of manpower employment generated under MNREGA, their various socio-economic and political characteristics and gender variability in the Study Area.

Hypothesis

1. MNREGA is a major source of empowerment for women.
2. The Employment Guarantee Act is an opportunity to create useful assets in rural areas.
3. MNREGA is helpful to protect rural households from poverty and hunger.
4. The MNREGA gives employment, income, a livelihood and a chance to live a life of self Respect and Dignity.

Research Methodology

Study Area

The study was carried out in SawaiMadhopur District of Rajasthan. Using purposive sampling method the study area was selected.

Sampling Design

(i) Selection of Blocks

Sawaimadhopur district comprises of 7 blocks as per census (2011) name of the blocks are Bamanwas, BonlichauthkaBarwara, Khandar and MalanaDoongar. Case studies carried out in all five blocks except chauthkabarwara and MalanaDoongar.

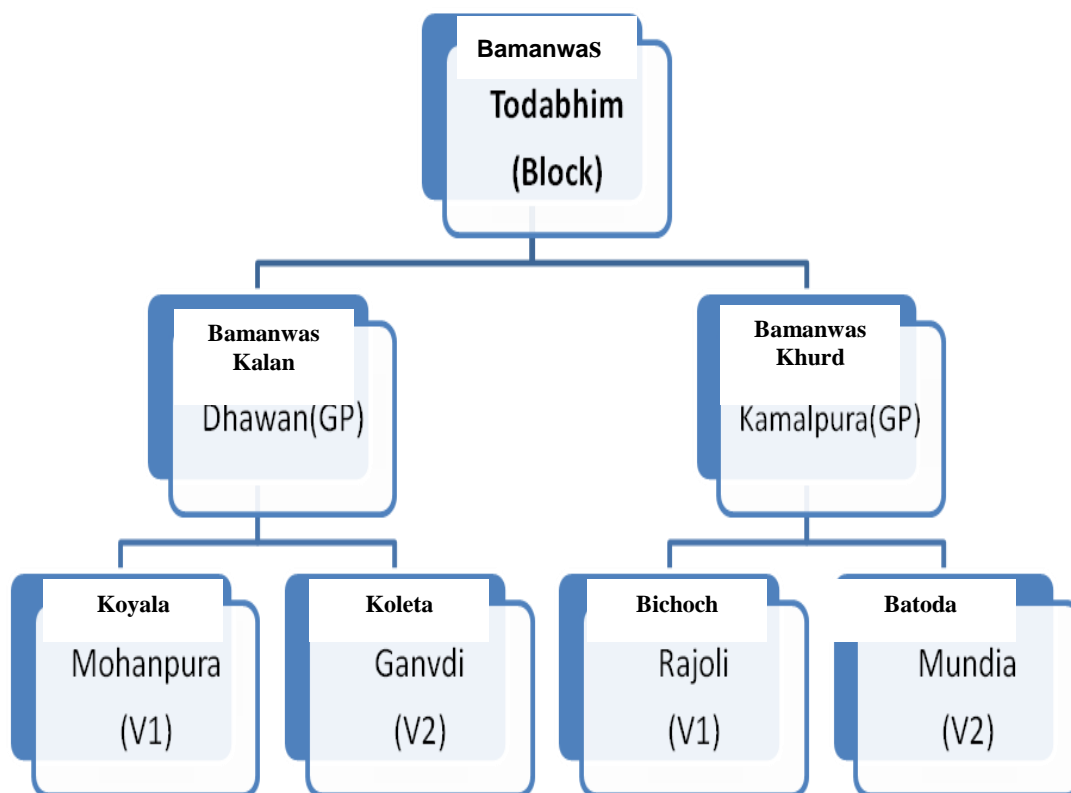
(ii) Sampling Procedure

Study area is selected on the basis of purposive sampling method.

Multistage – Stratified Random Sampling is used to select the blocks and villages in the study area. For selection of sample respondents, random sampling method was adopted.

(iii) Sample Size

A sample of 150 households including both job card holders and non-job card holders were selected. Here, non-job card holder households were selected to explore the reasons for their non-participation in the MNREGA Activities. Out of 150 households 68 households are not having job cards.



Source: Computation by Author
Figure 1: Sampling Design for the Study

Research Sequence

1. Desk review of MNREGA
2. Understanding the implementation process
3. Development of work plans , study tools and the questionnaires
4. Sample selection
5. Data collection
6. Data compilation and analysis

Implementation and Socio-economic and Political Transformation

There are a lot of development works executed in SawaiMadhopur district under MNREGA a revolutionary improvement in water conservation is possible due to MNREGA in my case study of five blocks, there are three blocks, which recorded enhanced after level. Farmers and Agriculturist area also benefited by the 'Farm Land Scheme."

Recently by the major reforms in this scheme some more types of works are also included in MNREGA. Especially the construction of houses and toilets under 'the PM/CM affordable housing scheme' and 'Swatch Bharat Abhiyan', now all five blocks are reported 80% ODF status.

Implementation of MNREGA is bring out various changes in the social life of rural people. The Act provide strong social security net for the vulnerable group through the participatory process of works

Table 1: details of Sawaimadhopur in FY (20015-16) and (2016-17)

Works	2015-16	2016-17
Total no. of works taken up (New + spill over)	18015	21784
Number of ongoing works	6965	7560
Number of completed works	4850	4224
% of expenditure on agriculture and allied activities	58.78%	59.32%

Table 2: Job Card Profile of Bamanwas Block

Total no. of job cards	40,940
Total no. ob workers	1,01,843
(i) SC worker % as of total workers	19.04
(ii) ST worker % of total workers	29.87
Total no. of active job cards	24,021
Total no. of active workers	37,967

Source: www.nrega.nic.in

Table 3: Wages under MNREGA in Rajasthan

Year	Minimum Wages
2014-15	149
2015-16	163
2016-17	173
2017-18	192
20018-19	192

providing a legal guarantee of at least 100 days wage employment on works that address clauses of chronic poverty and other problems. The act enhance livelihood security in rural areas through strengthening the natural resource base of rural livelihood and

Remarking An Analisation

creating durable assets. The act is also likely to lead to a substantial reduction of rural urban migration. As revealed from primary data, a good majority of households (91.09 per cent) reported that there has been improvement in social security after the MNREGA.

MNREGA is expected to bring out changes in the standard of living of people in villages, almost respondents, feel that living standard in general improved after the MNREGA. The response show that due to incremental income obtained from MNREGA activities, households were able to spend more on food, clothing, education, having and health.

After introduction of MNREGA, households daily consumption is increased as reported by 82.93 percent of households. About 59.91 percent of households reported increment in spending on health and education, evidence suggest that it has indeed significantly impacted the four major ingredients of the H01: Income generation, economic self reliance, women's empowerment including gender mainstreaming and quality of life.

MNREGA and livelihood of tribal, dalit, backward and marginalized community – one of the major objectives of the scheme is the improvement of the income levels and enhancement of livelihoods security of marginalized section by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every registered households by comparing the annual income of the b beneficiaries before MNREGA and after MNREGA, it is found that there is increase of 28.52% in income of the beneficiaries like that there is increase of 47.72% in expenditure of the beneficiaries. Before the implementation of MNREGA the villagers were generally spending 64.24% from their income while after the implementation of this scheme they are spending 73.69% of their income.

Table 4: MNREGA participants and number of person days per household

	Average 20014-15	Average 2015-16	Range 2016-17
Women	40	48.1	6.7 to 88.2
Schedule Tribes	36	40.7	0 to 100
Schedule Castes	26	30.52	0 to 79
Person days per households	43	54	18.8 to 94.6

A study conducted in five blocks of Sawsaimadhapur district noted that in its sample, around 85% of the beneficiaries belong to below poverty line (BPL), 50% belong to SC's, 45% belong to the other backward class (OBC's).

Table 5: Women Share of Employment in MNREGA

Year	% in Total Employment
2006-07	40
2008-09	48
2010-11	48
2012-13	44
2014-15	46
2016-17	48

Table 6: Share of Women in MNREGA at Block level

District Average		42%
High	Bamanwas	44%
	Bonli	40%
	Khandar	40%
	ChauthKaBarwada	38%
Low	Sawaimadhapur	32%
	Gangapur	31%

As recorded for the year 2015-16 water conservation and water harvesting activities accounted for the largest share (33%) in total expenditure increased for carrying out different activities followed by rural connectivity (30%), renovation of traditional water bodies and afforestation (20%) land improvement and development (10%) and etc. (7%)

Transformation in Political participation and empowerment of Democratic inclusiveness:-

Self help groups, civil societies, gram Panchayats, PRI's (Panchayati Raj institutions) and other right based movements have been play a deeply involved role in engaging the rural people with democratic process. Civil societies like MKSS(Major kisan Shakti Sngathan), WNTA (Wada natodabhiyan) plays a very crucial role in creation of awareness and enhance the efficiency of this act.

The social auditing process also make tremendous affects on people's participation in development programmes with the help of PRI's and other civil societies and NGO's that's why the government also made some very effective provisions of social auditing in MNREGA to improve the efficiency of this program and act.

The present BJP led NDA government with the help of state government started a new programme for the creation of durable assets and ensures the maximum participations of people in this programme under the "DeendayalUpadhyay gram Koshalyayojna". The government skilled "Barefoot engineers" for the semi-technical (trained) helpers for MNREGA 's construction related works. The govt. also initiated the integrated participatory planning exercise (IPPE) through the gram Sabha.

Major issues and Areas of Appreciation

According to primary data, respondents view and the outcomes of social auditing programmes save following areas of concern arise-

1. Corruption
2. Delay in payments
3. Irregular flow of funds
4. Inadequate staff
5. Fudged job cards
6. fake entries in muster rolls
7. lack of public grievance redressal system
8. Low awareness about act, scheme, rights and provisions
9. Questionable durability of assets and poor quality of work.
10. Inactive PRI's
11. Huge task and limited resources
12. Insufficient information management system (IMS)

13. Lack of IEC information, education, communication limitations.
14. Limited kind of works.
15. Poor planning and lack of coordination between villagers, people's representatives and officials.

Future scenario with reformative agenda:-

The success of any act or scheme depends on it's proper implementation much of the loopholes of MNREGA can be overcome if proper response process and procedures are put in places.

Thus, there should be continuous efforts towards creating adequate awareness on different provisions of MNREGA amongst the people robust IEC

1. Information education and communication campaign should be follow to enhance the efficiency of MNREGA.
2. The government must take immediate steps to stop corruption in it's implementation, thus the money goes to those who entitled it.
3. Efficient utilization of resources should be access by the social auditing at the gram sabha level on regular interval.
4. Instead of 100 days the work should be for 150-200 days, especially in geographically challenged area like desert or drought prone areas.
5. Effective use of ICT information communication technologies can sort out many problems of MNREGA like the usage of Biometric machines, GPS(global positioning system) devices, MIS(management information system), JBA (janDhan bank account), aadhar and mobile linkage etc.
6. Government should link his other developmental programmes with MNREGA. Agricultural development, rural development, housing and sanitations are major potential areas for inclusive work implementation with help of MNREGA.
7. Wages should be increased and linked with consumer price index- rural instead of CPI-agricultural labor(in accordance with the Mahendra dev committee).
8. A periodic and participatory training session should be given for better understanding and co-ordination.

Conclusion

The role of MNREGA in the socio economic and political transformation is a fact of not only SawaiMadhopur district, even throughout the country. It is one of the largest development programme of it's kind in the World. However the experience of SawaiMadhopur district shows a mixed picture. The scheme is successful in terms of inclusive job creation enhanced the quality standard of life, asset creation, use of rural resources (natural and Human), participation of marginalized society, migration check and transformation of socio-economic and political scenario of rural India.

While as we know every act or schemes efficiently depends on it's implementation. The MNREGA loosing it's potential due to problems in it's implementations. Corruption and improper policy management are major pitfalls on the success trajectory of MNREGA.

But the ray of hope is arising from the reformative agenda for MNREGA. Integrated participatory planning exercise, linking with JAM (jandhanaadhar and mobile), deployment of ICT tools, enhanced IEC campaign, Bigger fund, inclusion of some more kind of works under MNREGA etc. Some exemplary efforts to harness the full potential of MNREGA.

Overall the act and schemes of MNREGA has the great potential to transform the socio-economic and political development face of India. It's a catalyst policy based and legislation based intervention to make a new India.

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