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IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN RURAL AREAS OF DHARWAD DISTRICT OF KARNATAKA STATE



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ABSTRACT:

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), popularly known as India's workfare programme, is one of the important poverty alleviation programmes of India which provides guaranteed employment to the rural people to improve their livelihood. The study has been

undertaken to find out the role of MGNREGA towards the overall growth of rural areas in Dharwad district based on the secondary data of 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. The study revealed that the programme has generated immense employment opportunities thereby improving the livelihood of the people in the district. Because of the demand based employment opportunity, the scheme is very popular among the beneficiaries. In the study area, 250929 job cards were issued against the 251616 household applications in two years. For 2012-13 and 2013-14, a total 84496 households consisting of 245941 persons were given the job opportunity against the demand from 102055 households consisting of 301836 persons. Among the different blocks in the study area, Dharwad block was top in both number of applications and issue of job cards with 30538 applications and 30405 job cards respectively whereas the demand for work was maximum in Kalaghatagi block with 18007 households demanding the work consisting of 56537 persons. Further, it was found that in most of the sample gram panchayats, the job cards were issued against all the applications received except Mishrikote and Gudageri. The highest demand for the job was found in Mishrikoti with 864 households consisting of 3779 persons and yielding into the maximum job opportunity for 710 households consisting of 3110 persons. The study has revealed that provisions in the Act are helpful in bringing the consequential changes in the living standards of the beneficiaries by creating the makeshift change in the employment opportunities among the rural poor people.

KEYWORDS

Dharwad, employment, MGNREGA, rural area .

INTRODUCTION: -

The reduced employment opportunities due to more than one reasons, have affected severely the overall sustainable growth of India in general and the rural areas in particular. The increasing population has greater impact on employment scenario in the country. The majority of the poor in rural areas depend mainly on the wages they earn through unskilled and manual labour. They are often on threshold levels of subsistence, and are vulnerable to the possibility of sinking from transient to chronic poverty. Inadequate labour demand or unpredictable crises that may be general in nature, like natural disaster or personal like ill-health, all adversely impact their employment opportunities. In a context of poverty and unemployment, workfare programmes have been important interventions in developed as well as developing countries for many years. These programmes typically provide unskilled manual workers with short-term employment on public works such as, irrigation infrastructure, reforestation, soil conservation and road construction (Channaveer Gowda 2014). Employment is one of the very important solutions to eradicate the poverty.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which has been implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), is the flagship programme of the Government that directly helps lives of the poor and promotes overall growth of the people. It was implemented in all the rural districts of India in April 2008. It is the biggest employment providing programme started in a country for the development of its rural areas. It aims at providing 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) has shown a significant improvement in different aspects of uplifting of the rural households.

The number of households associated with MGNREGA works has been increasing consistently, the number of days for which employment has been provided have also increased. Another important aspect of MGNREGS is the increasing participation of women in it. It not only provides employment to them but by giving wage rate equal to that of a man, it has empowered the women economically as well as socially (Usha rani., 2011).

For the first time, right to work has been made a legal compulsion and entitlement for unemployment allowances in case of non-allotment of employment assured through this act. What is considered to be crucial is the empowerment of the poor through the provision of a right-based law, which would act as a strong safety net in the lack of alternative employment opportunities for poor people. The other key attributes of this scheme are time bound guarantee, labor-intensive work, decentralized participatory planning, women empowerment, work site facilities, and above all, transparency and accountability through the provision of social audits and right to information (Dipjoy Sen Roy 2009).

The MGNREGA has great potential of increasing the livelihood security of households among the rural unemployed and underemployed. It provides many opportunities for creating rural public assets, which has been neglected. It also helps to enhance the purchasing power of rural households, thereby contributing to improve livelihood security of the people by poverty alleviation

MGNREGA is being implemented in Karnataka since 2006, now it covers all the districts of the State. The main aim is to ensure livelihood security of households by providing unskilled work to people through establishment of sustainable assets.

The objectives of MGNREGA:

MGNREGA is a potent instrument for ensuring overall growth in rural India through its impact livelihood security and democratic empowerment. It's important objectives are:

- 1.To provide 100 days employment for a family in a financial year, thereby improving the Livelihood security of households for the poor through creation of durable assets like improved water security, soil conservation and higher Land productivity
- 2.Management of Drought and flood in rural India
3. To provide social security
- 4.Avoiding migration from rural –Urban
- 5.Effecting greater transparency and accountability in governance
- 6.Enhancement of women status

The most significant feature of the MGNREGA is that it vests the country's rural communities with rights to demand employment and binds the Government to time -bound legal guarantees to honour and fulfill the demand. The implementation of the Act has yielded encouraging results, despite uneven performance across the country, in augmenting employment, increasing wage earnings, stemming distress migration, enhancing productivity and promoting equity, especially gender equity. This Act for unskilled manual labour is ushering in a new era of technology and financial inclusion for rural communities. The concept of National Rural Guarantee Act (NREGA) is a major initiative of Government of India (Gol) towards poverty reduction and income generation among rural poor families (Vikas Postar., 2011).

Features of MGNREGA act:

Registration: Adult members of a rural household willing to do unskilled manual work, may apply for registration either in writing, or orally to the local Gram Panchayat (GP). The unit for registration is a household. Under the Act, each household is entitled to a 100 days of employment every year.

Job Card: After due verification of place of residence and age of the member/s (only adult members are eligible for employment), the registered household is issued a Job Card (JC). Job Card forms the basis of identification for demanding employment. A JC is to be issued within 15 days of registration. Each JC has a unique identification number. The demand for employment in the GP, or at block level has to be made against the JC number. Job Cards are also supposed To be updated with days of work and payment made to the beneficiary as and when the work is undertaken.

Application for Work: A written application seeking work is to be made to the GP or Block Office, stating the time and duration for which work is sought. The GP will issue a dated receipt of the written application for employment, against which the guarantee of providing employment within 15 days operates.

Unemployment allowance: In case employment is not provided within 15 days, the state (as per the Act) will pay an unemployment allowance to the beneficiary.

Provision of Work: While allocating work, the below mentioned considerations are followed: Work is provided within 5 kilometres (kms) radius of the village. In case, work is provided beyond 5 kms, extra wages of 10 per cent are payable to meet additional transportation and living expenses. Priority is awarded to women, such that at least one-third of the beneficiaries under the Scheme are women. At

least 50 per cent of works, in terms of cost, are to be executed by the GPs.

Wages: Wages are to be paid as per the State-wise Government of India (GoI) notified MGNREGA wages. Wages are also to be paid according to piece rate, as per the Schedule of Rates (SoRs). Payment of wages has to be done on a weekly basis and not beyond a fortnight in any case. Payment of wages is mandatorily done through the individual/joint bank/post office beneficiary accounts.

Planning: Plans and decisions regarding the nature and choice of works to be undertaken in a FY along with the order in which each work is to be taken up, site selection, etc. are all to be made in open assemblies of the Gram Sabha (GS) and ratified by the GP. Works that are inserted at Block and District levels have to be approved and assigned a priority by the GS before administrative approval can be given. The GS may accept, amend or reject them.

Cost Sharing: The GoI bears the 100 per cent wage cost of unskilled manual labour and 75 per cent of the material cost, including the wages of skilled and semi-skilled workers.

Worksite Management: To ensure that the workers are directly benefitted under the Scheme, the Act prohibits the use of contractors or machinery in execution of the works. To ensure that the spirit of the Act is not diluted and wage employment is the main focus, MGNREGA mandates that in the total cost of works undertaken in a GP, the wage expenditure to material expenditure ratio should be 60:40. Worksite facilities such as crèche, drinking water and shade have to be provided at all worksites.

Transparency and Accountability: Transparency and accountability in the programme is ensured through the following: Social audit, to scrutinise all the records and works under the Scheme are to be conducted regularly by the GS. Grievance redressal mechanisms and rules have to be put in place for ensuring a responsive implementation process. All accounts and records relating to the scheme should be available for public scrutiny. (MGNREGA Sameeksha 2006-2012).

In this context the study was undertaken to study the impact of MGNREGA in uplifting the rural society by increased employment opportunities with the following objectives;

1. To study the Demand for employment in Dharwad district.
2. To envisage the Number of Job Cards issued under MGNREGA;
3. To analyze the Employment provided under MGNREGA;

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Study has been under taken to find out the role of MGNREGA towards overall growth of Dharwad district. The data required for the study was collected from secondary source viz., Ministry of Rural Development (www.mgnregs.nic.in.) for 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. Suggestions and conclusion were made based on the analysis of the data.

Employment generation through MGNREGS:

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was effectively implemented in Dharwad District in creating immense scope for increased employment opportunities among the rural people. The details of the job demands and the opportunities is as given below;

Demand for Employment in Dharwad District

Total households applied for job card in the district were 251616 in two years and job card issued were 250929. A total of 102055 households consisting of 301836 persons demanded for employment.

Among the total number of demands received 84496 households consisting of 245941 persons were given the job opportunity as per the provisions of the act. By providing the job opportunities to more than 80 per cent of the received demands, the scheme was helpful in generating the new employment opportunities among the rural people thereby improving the livelihood of the people in Dharwad district.

In 2012-13, 124694 job cards were issued against 124890 applications received. The demand for the work was received from 137704 persons belonging to 47744 households and the job opportunity was rendered to 130966 persons of 45993 households.

Similarly, in 2013-14 total households applied for job card were 126726 and 126235 job cards were issued. A total of 114975 persons of 38503 households were given the work against the demand from 164132 persons belonging to 5431 households (Table 1).

Table: 1 Demand for employment in Dharwad District

Particulars	Financial Year		Total
	2012-13	2013-14	
Job card			
Total households applied	124890	126726	251616
Total cards issued	124694	126235	250929
Demand for work			
Total households demanded work	47744	54311	102055
Total persons demanded works	137704	164132	301836
Employment provided			
Total households worked	45993	38503	84496
Total persons worked	130966	114975	245941

During 2013-14, among the different blocks of the study area, maximum numbers of households applied from that of Dharwad block with 30538 applications, consequently 30405 cards were issued in the block. The maximum number of demands for the work were received from Kalaghatagi Block with 18007 households applying consisting of 56537 persons. Accordingly, in this block the maximum numbers of 34718 persons of 11149 households were given the working opportunity (Table 2).

Table 2: Employment generated during the financial year 2013-2014 in different blocks of Dharwad district.

Particulars	BLOCK					Total
	Dharwad	Kalaghatagi	Kundgol	Navalgund	Hubballi	
Job card						
Total households applied	30538	27569	27771	18978	21870	126726
Total cards issued	30405	27511	27742	18955	21622	126235
Demand for work						
Total households demanded work	12801	18007	8298	6790	8415	54311
Total persons demanded work	37615	56537	24762	18858	26360	164132
Employment provided						
Total households worked	9825	11149	6310	5036	6183	38503
Total persons worked	29026	34718	18455	13409	19367	114975

Further, the employment opportunity was studied in the three sample gram panchayats in each of the three blocks of Dharwad district for 2013-14 (Table 3). In Dharwad block, a total of 2718 cards were issued in the three sample gram panchayats viz., Kotur, Tadakoda and Narendra against 1173, 682 and 863 applications respectively. Among the 1961, 530 and 814 persons demanding the work in Kotur, Tadakoda and Narendra respectively, 1602, 415 and 390 persons were given the working opportunity respectively.

Similarly in Kalaghatagi block, together from Mishrikoti (1481), Dummawad (786) and Devikoppa (924) a total of 3191 job cards were issued against the 1482, 786 and 924 applications respectively from each gram panchayat. A total of 3904 persons from Mishrikoti (3110), Dummawad (341) and Devikoppa were given the work against the demand of 3779, 1060 and 1021 persons from each of these gram panchayats respectively.

In Kundagol block, from total 5512 card holders, 4769 persons belonging to 1435 households of three gram panchayats, Gudageri (1041), Shirur (1791) and Saunshi (1937) demanded the work. Among them, 539 (Gudageri), 1290 (Shirur) and 1378 (Saunshi) persons were given the work opportunity.

It was noted that, except in Mishrikoti and Gudageri, the job card issue per cent against the number of applications was 100 per cent. The maximum number of demands received and work given was in Mishrikoti gram panchayat.

Table 3: Employment generated during the financial year 2013-2014 in different sample gram panchayats of the study area

Particulars	STUDY AREA									Total
	Dharwad			Kalaghatagi			Kundgol			
	Kotur	Tadakoda	Narendra	Mishrikoti	Dummawad	Devikoppa	Gudageri	Shirur	Saunshi	
Job card										
Total households applied	1173	682	863	1482	786	924	1448	1649	2422	11429
Total cards issued	1173	682	863	1481	786	924	1441	1649	2422	11421
Demand for work										
Total households demanded work	474	212	221	864	378	413	262	510	663	3997
Total persons demanded work	1961	530	814	3779	1060	1021	1041	1791	1937	13934
Employment provided										
Total households worked	402	166	119	710	125	187	147	375	466	2697
Total persons worked	1602	415	390	3110	341	453	539	1290	1378	9518

Based on the outcomes and experience of the study it can be implied that;

- 1.MGNREG programme has increased the employment opportunities among the rural poor people.
- 2.Efforts in creating awareness about the scheme have to be strengthened.
- 3.MGNREGS can be efficiently employed to conserve natural resources
- 4.Regular trainings to the implementing authorities can increase the efficiency of the MGNREG scheme.
- 5.Specific to the study area, the scheme has played a pivotal role in generating the employment opportunities across the gram panchayats leading to overall development of rural poor people.

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