

PG Department of Geography, Patna University

Paper – Regional Geography

Unit- V

Niharika Narayan

Assistant Professor (Guest)

Email Id- [narayanniharika@gmail.com](mailto:narayanniharika@gmail.com)

## **Merits and Demerits of MGNREGA**

**Introduction-** Implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is the flagship programme of the Government to influence the life of poor masses positively and enhance their development. MGNREGA aims at enhancing livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

Importance of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA The main objective of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is as described in the Article: 41 of the Indian Constitution - “giving citizens the right to work”.

### **The Mahatma Gandhi NREGA merits are the following reasons-**

- There was no guarantee of jobs in the previous all wage employment programmes, the MGNREGA provided guaranteed job. Now there is uniform security of wage employment in the entire country unlike before.
- Almost all the previous programmes were allocation based rather than demand based. This criterion is the unique punch point of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.

- The key element of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is the provision of employment by the state to those people who are not able to find alternative employment, which provides a form of social safety net to the rural unemployment people.
- MGNREGA is an initiative for development, chipping in with essential public investment for creation of durable assets without which the growth process can't be possible in the most backward regions of rural India.
- There is no time frame in other wage employment programmes but in Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, employment will be given within 15 days of demand.
- In other wage employment programmes, there is no restriction on any person to be engaged as a labourer whereas in Mahatma Gandhi NREGA only job card holders that apply for employment can be engaged as labourers. 97
- The duration of employment is dependent on duration of work in other wage employment programme by implementing agency whereas in Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, a job card holder applies for maximum 100 days.
- The payment of wages through post office and bank accounts is other innovative step that is likely to reduce fudging of muster rolls on the part of the implementing agencies since don't have access to actual payments.
- Mahatma Gandhi NREGA are decentralized participatory planning, labourintensive work, women's empowerment, work-site facilities and above all accountability and transparency through the provision of right to information and social audits. Information Technology is extensively used in this programme to keep a close track on the works done and promote transparency and efficient execution. So Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is a vital stepping stone for the Indian economy committed to enhance its growth and not just a welfare initiative.

## PERFORMANCE CARD

*Beneficiaries provided work under MGNREGA across the country and in some of the top-performing states. Figures in lakhs*

States	2014-15	2015-16 (till Sept 30)
Tamil Nadu	69.13	60.61
Andhra	55.56	53.03
Bengal	73.54	31.75
Uttar Pradesh	47.18	38.28
Rajasthan	51.40	40.27
<b>India</b>	<b>621.72</b>	<b>400.60</b>

### Challenges of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA are-

There are certain unavoidable loopholes in the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA. The problems are inter-related. The problems are not with the Act but with the way in which it is implemented. Some important challenges are:

- Bad administrative and planning ability- The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) have issued a report which indicates the lack of execution and competency by the village Panchayat members in implementing the scheme in decentralized manner. It also focused on the need to build this capability rapidly and effectively. The CAG report highlights the deficiency of adequate administrative and technical manpower at the Gram Panchayat (GP) and Block levels, especially at the Programme officer, Technical Assistants, and Employment Guarantee Assistant level. The administrative costs of various employment schemes are very high. In spite of that administrative cost under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA has been kept low. This must be increased. There is an urgent necessitate to ensure more administrative assistance for the programme at all levels, which means both resources and 114 personnel devoted to the actual

implementation, monitoring and financial management of the programme. Sufficient funds and manpower must be made available to the panchayats so that they are capable of implementing this programme effectively as well as efficiently.

- Insufficient awareness MGNREGA-is a right based programme, which guarantees hundred days of employment to poor household in rural areas. In spite of that due to poor awareness among rural population, people are not aware about their basic entitlements such as job cards, minimum wage amount, unemployment allowance, minimum number of employment days etc. Panchayat, block development officers and Rozgar Sevak are ignorant about all the detail of the MGNREGA. They are poorly informed about various processes like registering household, making muster roll, forming vigilance committees etc. Under the MGNREGA there is a provision of unemployment allowance in case the local authorities fail to provide employment, in spite of that there is a widespread ignorance about how to avail the allowance. The information related to unemployment is purposely hidden by the officials at times, in the fear of being reprimanded for not providing jobs. The beneficiaries have no idea about whom should they approach for lodging complaint and what will be the next step. Although the government of India recently passed an ombudsman order. Poor insight not only leads to corruption but also to poor management of the scheme and as a consequence true potential of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is not being realized. At the local level, official have made inadequate effort to raise awareness about the scheme. All the officials and citizens need to be educated regarding the details of programme through awareness and intensive training techniques by the government. People at the grassroots level must be made aware of Right to Information (RTI) Act and be encouraged to use it.
- Overemphasis on employment- Two major objectives of the programme are: (i) Provision of 100 days of unskilled employment in a financial year and (ii) Creation of productive and durable assets that would enhance agriculture productivity. Nevertheless, in actual operationalization of the Act, the initial objective assumes by far the most dominant concern of the law, the second objective, creation of sustainable productive assets, stands in the shadow. Even during the social audit the primary attention goes to matters related to allocation of work, registration, issue of job cards, timely wage

payment and worksite facilities rather than the utilization of works completed, increase in production, operationalization, multiplier effects of income generation, maintenance of assets created on the public land and issue of ownership.

- Shortage of staff and postpone in appointments- The working of MGNREGA is being hampered due to lack of sufficient manpower.
- Delay in issue of job cards- When a worker demands work under MGNREGA, his demand has to be complied within 15 days. The study by the Institute of Applied manpower Research indicated that 80 percent of the households are yet to get job within 15 days of their demand for work and on top of that they were also not paid any unemployment allowance under MGNREGA.
- Delay in wages payment- According to the provision of MGNREGA, within 14 days of a work's completion its payment has to be made. Nevertheless, wages could not be paid within the stipulated period of time. In spite of that delay in payment and incorrect payments is 116 a common problem under MGNREGA. This delay can be from several weeks to sometimes months. Oftentimes workers have to make several visits to the post office or the bank only to find that their wages have not been credited into their accounts. When works are done without proper permission, the payments are withheld leading to delay in wages. In case of delay in payments beneficiaries must be compensated as per the Payment of Wages act of 1936.
- Absence of worksite facilities- The Mahatma Gandhi NREGA provides the facilities for shade for children, safe drinking water, a first-aid box and periods of rest at the work site. In spite of that, we need a proper mechanism to implement these facilities in the absence of which all states are facing lot of problems. A few reports from the field in Orissa (Kalahandi District), Chhattisgarh (Jashpur District), Jharkhand (Palamau District), Gujarat (Sabarkantha District) and Madhya Pradesh (Jhabua, Khandwa and Umaria Districts) observe a complete lack of facilities at the worksite. In Rajasthan's District, in spite of that, it was heartening to note that medical kits were found at most worksites. During extreme summer season, kids are not being taken care of properly. As a consequence, women are hesitant to bring their children to the sites. It also forces them to rethink about applying for work in the first place. For the rural poor workers, trees are the only savior from hot sun and provide them with shade on the open sites.

- Consistent concurrent monitoring lacking- Concurrent monitoring is yet another link which is missing from the chain of implementation. Information technology has an indispensable role in providing the necessary information at the right time in a transparent way. A nice management information system is developed under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA. But its main drawback is its failure to timely alert on crucial issues.

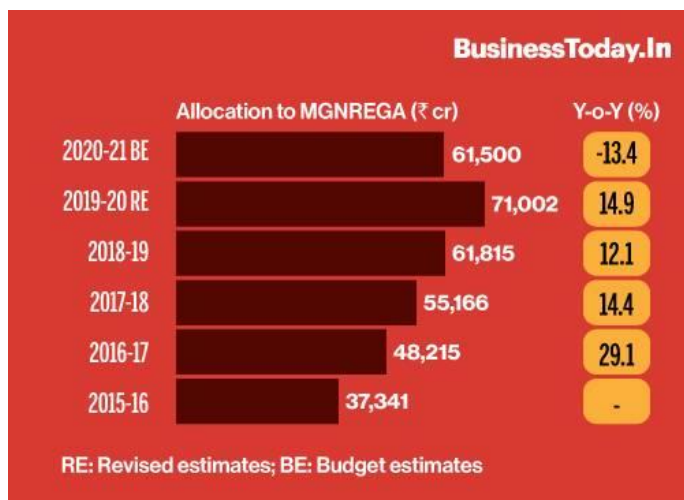
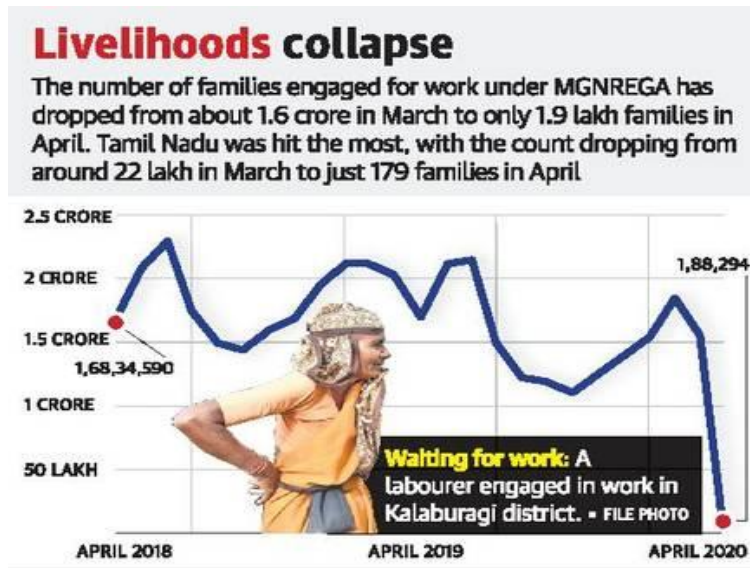


FIG: Government reduced budget in MGNREGA