

PROBLEMS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MGNREGA SCHEME IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

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Abstract: *The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is an important step towards realization of the right to work. It is expected to enhance people's livelihood security on a sustained basis, by developing economic and social infrastructure in rural areas. One of the most distinguishing features of the MGNREGA is its approach towards empowering citizens to play an active role in the implementation of employment guarantee schemes, through Gram Sabhas, social audit participatory planning and other activities. In fact, the huge potential of the MGNREGA has already been evident particularly to the enthusiastic response of local people, landless and marginal farmers and women workers in particular, wherever information about the program has been properly disseminated. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of MGNREGA, making a decisive break with the past, is the complete ban on contractors. This research paper focuses on the problems of MGNREGA scheme and remedial measures for the successful implementation of MGNREGA.*

Key Words: *Poor Administrative, Planning Skills, Inadequate Awareness, Corruption and Irregularities:*

1. INTRODUCTION :

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), enacted by the Government of India in 2005, is perhaps the most ambitious anti-poverty scheme launched anywhere in the world. However, the scheme has shown several problems anomalies when it comes to its implementation in the right manner. Some of the problems of the MGNREGA scheme may be listed as follows:

1.1 Poor Administrative and Planning Skills:

Under MGNREGA, villages are the basic unit of planning. Panchayat (the village local bodies) are required to prepare project estimates that involve extensive mapping of village resources and making an annual plan every year to identify works that can be taken up for local resource improvement. However, with limited skill in planning, resource management, handling of monetary resources and poor leadership skills, village panchayats fail to implement the scheme in the desired manner.

Since it involves rigorous planning and resource management, many panchayat members are hesitant to implement NREGA as it greatly increases their workload. In many places, Rozgar Sevak have been appointed to advise gram panchayats, to provide technical inputs, preparing the budget or village level planning needs, but they themselves are not trained adequately .

1.2 Inadequate Awareness:

MGNREGA is a right based programme, which guarantees 100 days of employment to poor household in rural areas. However, due to poor awareness among rural population, people are not aware about their basic entitlements such as job cards, minimum wage amount, minimum number of employment days, unemployment allowance, etc. Even panchayats, Rozgar Sevaks and block development officers are ignorant about all the details of the scheme. They are poorly informed about various processes like registering household, forming vigilance committees, making muster roll, etc.

Under MGNREGA there is a provision of unemployment allowance in case the local authorities fail to provide employment, however there is a widespread ignorance about how to avail the allowance. Sometimes even the officials deliberately do not give out this information as they fear punishment for not providing jobs.

Poor awareness not only leads to corruption but also to poor management of the scheme and thus true potential of MGNREGA is not being realized. At the local level, officials, have made inadequate efforts to raise awareness about the scheme. The government must carry out an intensive training and awareness-building programme to make the officials and citizens fully aware of all the details of the programme. People at the grassroots level must be made aware of Right to Information (RTI) Act, and be encouraged to use

1.3 Plagued with discrimination:

MGNREGA has provided a unique opportunity to people from rural India to earn their own income without any discrimination of caste or gender. Most remarkable feature of MGNREGA is that it pays women the same as men, something that was virtually unimaginable in rural India. However, cases of discrimination against women and people from backward groups are reported from several regions of the country. Some states such as Kerala and Andhra Pradesh have registered high percentage of women workers getting enrolled in the scheme whereas others have registered a very low percentage of women availing benefit under MGNREGA.

It has been reported that in some regions few job cards are issued when the applicants are women, or there are delays in the issue of cards. Women are sometimes told that manual labour under the MGNREGA is not meant for women. Women are told that they could not participate in ongoing works as it entailed digging and removing soil. Sometimes workers are expected to bring their own tools, such as spades and shovels and this becomes difficult for women carrying infants. Moreover lack of facilities such as drinking water, a crèche at the worksites, etc. adds to the problems of the women workers. No specific tasks for women have been identified. More thought must be given to ensuring that a larger number of women get work which they can do easily. Also facilities like drinking water and crèche must be ensured at the worksites.

1.4 Corruption and Irregularities:

There are several cases of fake muster roll entries, overwriting, false names and irregularities in job cards. Even the names of dead people have been entered in the muster rolls. Similarly, the names of people who have not registered often feature in the muster rolls, or the same name is repeated more than once. There are cases of payments being made without taking the worker's signature.

1.5 Delay in Payment of Wags:

According to the MGNREGA guidelines, payments for the work should be made within 15 days of the completion of the work. However, delay in payment and incorrect payments are a common problem under MGNREGA. This delay can be for several weeks to sometimes months. Often workers have to make several visits to the post office or the co-operative bank to find that their wages have not been credited into their accounts. Sometimes delay is also caused because works are carried out without proper approval and thus the payment is withheld.

2. Challenges in creating useful assets:

So far, works related to rain water harvesting and conservation, desalting of canal distributaries, desalting and renovation of old ponds/tanks and digging up of new farm ponds are mainly being carried out under MGNREGAS. Several works that were taken up under MGNREGA remain incomplete even after two years of their start. Since there is no provision to factor in the completion of work in the overall planning, state government have initiated a large number of new works and abandoned the old incomplete works mid-way. Success of MGNREGA should not only be assessed in terms of employment provided but also the asset created .

3. Problem of labour availability and inflation:

Many economists attribute increasing labour scarcity in agriculture, rising food price and inflation to MGNREGA. MGNREGA has no doubt raised rural daily wage rates, reduced migration and led to several other positive social effects in rural India. But at the same time it has also contributed to rising farm input costs, withdrawal of labour from the farm sector and therefore impacted agricultural operations and food prices. High labour costs due to non-availability of labour is resulting in high cultivation cost and thus leading to higher food prices. Many critics feel that by focusing on the employment and not on the production, the scheme merely redistributes the proceeds of a limited production. The scheme no doubt inflates demand but without corresponding increase in production of useful assets, leads to inflation.

With this backdrop in mind, in the present research paper an attempt has been made to analyze the views of the respondents regarding the various problems of MGNREGA scheme, employment registration, job card issued,

application dated receipts, allotment of work, unemployment allowance, monitoring by vigilance committee, availability of labourer and problems of MGNREGA implementation. An attempt has also been made to analyze the views of the respondents regarding remedial measures for the successful implementation of MGNREGA and how above mentioned problems can be mitigated.

4. Preparation of the list by Gram Panchayat:

In order to know the views of the respondents regarding the list, the respondents were asked whether a list was prepared by the Gram Panchayat of all the possible households that might seek registration? Table 1.1 shows the responses of the respondents regarding this.

Table 1.1
Views of the respondents regarding the preparation of the list by Gram Panchayat

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	120	95.24
2.	No	6	4.76
	Total	126	100.00

Table 1.1 shows that majority of the respondents (95.24 percent) are of the opinion that Gram Panchayat prepared a list of all the possible households that might seek registration and 4.76 percent respondents say that Gram Panchayat did not prepare a list of all the possible households that might seek registration. This shows that the Gram Panchayat prepare a list of all the possible households that might seek registration.

4.1 Whether the list of registered persons read out for verification in the Gram Sabha Meeting:

Further, the respondents were asked whether the list of registered persons was read out for verification in the Gram Sabha meeting? Table 1.2 shows the responses of the respondents in this regard.

Table 1.2
Views of the respondents regarding whether the list of registered persons read out for verification in the Gram Sabha meeting

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	117	92.86
2.	No	9	7.14
	Total	126	100.00

Out of 126 respondents, the majority of the respondents (92.86 percent) are of the view that Gram Panchayat read out the list of registered persons for verification in the Gram Sabha meeting whereas 9 respondents (7.14 percent) replied that Gram Panchayat did not read out the list of registered persons for verification at the Gram Sabha meeting. Hence, it can be said that Gram Panchayat make it public the list of registered persons for verification in the Gram Sabha meeting.

4.2 Whether job cards regularly updated:

The question was asked from the respondents whether the list of job cards regularly updated and put upon the Gram Panchayat notice board? Table 1.3 shows the responses of the respondents regarding this question.

Table 1.3
Whether the list of job cards regularly updated and put upon the Gram Panchayat notice board

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	21	16.67
2.	No	105	83.33
	Total	126	100.00

Table 1.3 reveals that majority of the respondent (83.33%) said that Gram Panchayat has not regularly updated the list of job card and not put upon the Gram Panchayat notice board whereas the 16.67 percent respondents have told that Gram Panchayat has regularly updated the list of job cards and put upon the Gram Panchayat notice board. Thus, it has been found that the majority of the respondents said that Gram Panchayat has not regularly updated the list of the job cards and not put upon the Gram Panchayat notice board. This shows that people in the study area are facing such problems which needs to be solved.

4.3 Whether there is any one who has not received the job card:

Further, the respondents were asked whether there is anyone who has not received the job card well in time. Table 1.4 shows the responses of the respondents regarding this.

Table 1.4

Views of the respondents regarding whether there is anyone who has not received the job card

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	8	6.35
2.	No	118	93.65
	Total	126	100.00

Table 1.4 shows that majority of the respondents (93.65%) said that there is no one who has not received the job card well in time. On the other hand, there are 6.35 percent respondents who have reported that there are few people who have not received job card and their complaint are also pending regarding this. Thus, it has been found that majority of the respondents have said that there is no one who has not received the job cards and there is no complaint pending in this regard.

4.4 Whether the allotment of MGNREGA work is done in transparent manner:

The respondents were asked whether the allotment of work is being done in a transparent manner, with list of work allotment being put on the panchayat notice board for public notice and display? Table 1.5 shows the responses of the respondents in this regard.

Table 1.5

Whether allotment of MGNREGA work is done in a transparent manner

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	41	32.54
2.	No	85	67.46
	Total	126	100.00

Table 1.5 indicates that majority of the respondents (67.46 percent) are of the view that the allotment of MGNREGA work is not done in a transparent manner, with a list of work allotment being put on the panchayat notice board for public notice and display. On the other hand 32.54 percent respondents have told that the allotment of work is done in a transparent manner. This shows that allotment of MGNREGA work is not done in a transparent manner in the study area.

4.5 Functioning of block level officials:

Further, the respondents were asked whether they think that the block level officers are working adequately for the implementation of rural development scheme under MGNREGA? Table 1.6 shows the views of the respondents in this regard.

Table 1.6

Whether Block level officials are working adequately for the implementation of rural development schemes under MGNREGA

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	24	19.05
2.	No	102	80.95
	Total	126	100.00

Table 1.6 reveals that majority of the respondents (80.95%) have reported that block level officers are not working adequately for the implementation of rural development schemes under MGNREGA whereas 19.05 percent respondents are of the view that block level officers are working adequately for the implementation of rural development schemes under MGNREGA in their area. Thus, it can be said that block level officials are not working adequately and properly for the implementation of rural development schemes under MGNREGA may be due to their other administrative works. Thus, it is urgently required that block level officials should pay more attention towards the MGNREGA activities.

5. Problems in the implementation of developmental activities under MGNREGA:

The respondents were asked that what are the real problems in the implementation of development schemes under MGNREGA? It has been found that cent-percent of the respondents reported that red tapsim, non cooperative attitude of the officers, political interference and lack of people's participation are the main problems in the implementation of development schemes under MGNREGA.

5.1 Visits of the members of vigilance committee to the worksite:

In this regard, the respondents were asked whether the members of the vigilance committee make regular visits to the worksite and monitor the implementation of various aspects of the MGNREGA work? Table 1.7 shows the responses of the respondents in this regard. Table 1.7 indicates that majority of the respondents (62.70%) have reported that the members of the vigilance committee don't make regular visits to the worksite and do not monitor the implementation of various activities of the MGNREGA and on the other hand, 37.30 percent respondents replied that members of the vigilance committee make regular visits to the worksite and monitor the implementation of various activities of the MGNREGA.

Table 1.7
Whether the members of vigilance committee make regular visits to the worksite

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	47	37.30
2.	No	79	62.70
	Total	126	100.00

This shows that the members of vigilance committee pay no attention towards the regular visits to the worksite. Further, the majority of the respondents (62.70 percent) have also told that the members of vigilance committee are not selected in the transparent manner. They are selected as per the choice of the panchayat pardhan and ward members. On the other hand 37.30 percent respondents did not express any reason for this.

5.2 Whether availability of labour is a problem:

In this regard, the respondents were asked whether availability of labour is a problem for routine activities due to MGNREGA scheme? Table 1.8 shows the views of the respondents in this regard.

Table 1.8
Whether availability of labour is a problem for the routine activities due to MGNREGA

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	107	84.92
2.	No	19	15.08
	Total	126	100.00

Table 1.8 shows that majority of the respondents (84.92%) reported that availability of labour is a problem for the routine activities due to implementation of MGNREGA scheme whereas 15.08 percent respondents did not agree with this statement. These majority of the respondents replied that due to implementation of MGNREGA scheme all the wage labourers in rural area are working in the MGNREGA. Therefore, there is a lack of the laboures for others works.

Further, the respondents were asked about the main problems regarding implementation of MGNREGA? It has been found that almost all the respondents stated the following problems regarding the implementation of MGNREGA scheme:

- Delay in receiving of the funds;
- 60; 40 ratio is not suitable and proper;
- Lack of trained staff;
- Banks are far away from their residences and bank staff do not cooperate them properly;
- Financial corruption is also noticed;
- Problems in material transportation;
- Assessment of work delayed because of one Junior Engineer deputed for the whole area;
- No funds to purchase work tools;
- Guarantee 100 days are less;
- Delay in the payment of wages;
- Wages are less and work is more;
- Wages are less as compared to the market rate.

Further, the respondents were asked how these problems can be mitigated and solved. It has been found that cent percent of the respondents have given the following suggestions in this regard.

- Provide regular and more than 100 days work;
- Mate should be trained for measurement;
- Wages should be given at least on weekly basis;
- Work measurement by the Junior Engineer should be well in time;
- Regular staff for MGNREGA should be provided;
- Existing wages should be increased;
- Job cards should be at the worksite;
- Muster roll sheet should be at worksite;
- Awareness camp should be organized for the people at the village level;

In addition to these suggestions, the respondents also made the following suggestions for the proper implementation of the MGNREGA scheme in the area:

- The process of registration in MGNREGA should be transparent to remove the vulnerabilities of registration like absence of the concerned functionary, denial of registration to eligible applications, incomplete list of adult in each household, registration of bogus families, individuals, rejection of incomplete registration forms and asking for money for registering names/families.
- The initial registration should be carried out at a special Gram Sabha meeting convened for the purpose to remove anomalies like incomplete list of adults in each household and denial of registration to eligible applicants.
- The shelf of project/work should be assessed for relevance and priority by the Gram Sabha to remove the problem of the selection of a low priority of inappropriate work and selection of work that serves a vested interest.
- A list of the finally selected projects and works, in their order of priority should be publicly displayed at the Gram panchayat office to improve the lack of public support/cooperation for that work and poor selection of a work site.
- A technical estimate must be carried out with the involvement of the local people to remove the problems like inaccurate technical estimate and inclusion in estimate of unnecessary expenditure.
- The technical estimate must be put to Gram Sabha for approval to remove the anomalies like excessive rates & material and unclear work order that does not make the details of the work clear, or leaves scope for misinterpretation.
- The payment should be made in a public place on fixed days to ensure that there is no ambiguity regarding payments. This will remove the vulnerabilities like non-payment of wages, late payment of wages, and underpayment of wages to the wrong person.

- All recipients and amount of payment must be read aloud to ensure that the illiterate are not cheated, and also to check ghost payments. This will help in removing the vulnerabilities of payment of wages to the wrong persons and also in the name of non-existent (ghost) workers, payment of wages for non-existent projects and failure to pay minimum wages.
- The format for the technical estimate must be simple and easily understood by the people.
- A copy of the sanction/work order must be available for public inspection at the worksite to improve the supply of less than sanctioned and poor quality materials & tools.
- A list detailing all payment must be put up in public and accessible place to remove the vulnerabilities like denial of unemployment allowance by wrongly accusing a person of not reporting for work, late payment of unemployment allowance, payment of unemployment allowance to the wrong person, payment of unemployment allowance to nonexistent (ghost) persons, and demand of bribe for paying allowance.
- The vigilance and monitoring committee members should be selected or announced at the meeting of the Gram Sabha.
- The vigilance committee should check the wrong as per a checklist prepared before every biannual social audit forum as described in the text to remove the vulnerabilities like recording of nonexistent (ghost) workers, recording of fictitious (ghost) workers, work not conforming to work specification or prescribed standards, and supply of less than sanctioned/poor quality materials and tools.

6. Conclusion :

To sum up the present research paper it is revealed that almost all the respondents stated that there is delay in receiving of the funds, 60:40 ratio is not suitable and proper, lack of trained staff, banks are far away from their residence and bank staff do not cooperate them property, financial corruption is also noticed, problems in material transportation, assessment of work delayed because of one junior engineer deputed for the whole area, no funds to purchase work tools, guarantee 100 days are less, delay in the payment of wages, wages are less and work is more and wages are less as compared to market rate are the main problems in the implementation of MGNREGA scheme. Further, the cent-percent of the respondents have given suggestions to mitigate the above mentioned problems and they said that there should be regular & more than 100 days work, mate should be trained for measurement, wages should be given at least on weekly basis, work measurement by the junior engineer should be well in time, regular staff for MGNREGA should be provided, existing wages should be increased, job cards should be at the worksite, muster roll sheet should be at worksite, and awareness camp should be organized for the people at village level.

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