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A STUDY ON PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION OF MGNREGA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO VILLUPURAM DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT

The MGNREGA Act gives legal guarantee of at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to the rural households, whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled and manual work. All the rural households who are willing to take up unskilled labour are required to register with their respective village council (called Gram Panchayats) and are issued with a Job card. After receiving the job card, a household can demand work anytime and will be provided employment within 15 days of expressing demand, else will be compensated with a daily unemployment allowance (Government of India 2008). Objectives: 1. To explain the area profile of Villupuram District, Tamil Nadu. 2. To explain the personal particulars of the respondents and to evaluate the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme in Villupuram District. 3. To provide suitable suggestions for the proper implementation of the programme. Methodology: Simple Random Sampling method was adopted to select the Sample of 336 respondents. Conclusion: The government provides 100 days of guarantee employment to a family during the financial year. Unskilled manual labour was meant to make it self-targeting so that only the very poor would seek work as a last resort. Limitation of choice to only unskilled work, ironically, undercuts the principle of rights, inclusion, and equity, as the legal design of work does not make the terms of inclusion equitable. It offers bottom-of-the-scale tasks with no chance of up gradation of skills to those with least opportunities. The unemployed and deprived will continue to be engaged in conditions of work that despite a legal guarantee and considerable financial resources perpetuate their lack of opportunities and capabilities.

Key Words: MGNREGA, Irrigation, Cropping Patterns, Crop Yields, Wages, Employment Women's Participation, Agricultural labour

Introduction

India has more than three decades of experience in implementing different Employment Generation Programmes. These Programmes have their origin during the Great Depression days when western countries used these as counter cyclical policy instruments. Several countries of the developing world have also used Public Work Programmes to deal with droughts and famines. Over time these schemes have evolved into employment creation and Poverty alleviation Programmes. These Programmes have been used and advocated for alleviating both chronic and transient poverty in the South Asian context for a long time (Hirway, Saluja and Yadav, 2010). The Act gives legal guarantee of at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to a rural house hold, whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled and manual work. All the rural households who are willing to take up unskilled labour are required to register with their respective village council (called Gram Panchayats) and are issued with a Job card. After receiving the job card, a household can demand work anytime and will be provided employment within 15 days of expressing demand, else will be compensated with a daily unemployment allowance (Government of India 2008). In some cases, rural households belonging to backward castes are allowed to perform work on their own fields. More importantly, the Act aims at eradication of extreme poverty and at making villages self-sustaining through productive asset creation (such as water tanks and soil conservation works). This is meant to regenerate the rural natural resource base, which in turn will result in sustainable livelihoods for residents. The scheme has been implemented in a phased manner. It was launched in two hundred selected districts on 2nd February 2006 in Phase I and was extended to 130 more districts in 2007-08 in Phase II. It was further extended to the remaining 285 districts from 1st April 2008 onwards, in Phase III. The government has referred to it as an “Act of the people, by the people, and for the people. Before MGNREGA, time to time, different wage employment programmes were introduced in the country. The MGNREGA ranks first among the most powerful initiatives ever undertaken for transformation of rural livelihoods in India (Ghosh, 2011). MGNREGA has come after almost 56 years of experience of other rural employment programmes, which include both Centrally Sponsored Schemes and those launched by State Govt. These comprise the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) 1980-89; Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEG) 1983-89; Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY) 1989-1990; Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) 1993-99; Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) 1999-2002; Sampoorna Grameen Rojgar Yojana (SGRY) from 2001; National Food

For Work Programme (NFFWP) from 2004 were National Rural Employment Schemes. Among these, the SGRY and NFFWP have been merged with NREGA in 2005. In many ways the MGNREGA is a replication of earlier schemes with a legal guarantee. The most critical difference now is that people's entitlement, by law, the employment is mandated through MGNREGA. While other programmes are allocation-based, MGNREGA is demand-driven (Dreze).

Concept of Rural Development

Development is a subjective and value-loaded concept and hence there cannot be a consensus as to its meaning. The term is used differently in diverse contexts. It basically means 'unfolding', 'revealing', or 'opening up' something which is latent. When applied to human beings, it therefore means 'unfolding' or 'opening up' their potential powers. Generally speaking, the term development implies a change that is desirable. Since what is desirable at a particular time, place and in a particular culture may not be desirable at other places, or at other times at the same place and in the same cultural milieu, it is impossible to think of a universally acceptable definition of development. At best, development in the context of society could be conceptualized as a set of desirable societal objectives which society seeks to achieve.

Thus defined, development is cherished by all individuals, communities and nations, irrespective of their culture, religion and spatial location.

Now days rural growth did not match overall development of rural areas with a view to improve the quality of lifestyle in rural population. In this sense, it is an inclusive and multi dimensional idea and encompasses the expansion of agriculture and related sectors, village and cottage industries and crafts, socio-economic infrastructure, society services and conveniences and above all, the human capital in rural areas. As an occurrence, rural growth is the end-result of exchanges among various physical, scientific, economic, socio-literary and institution. As an approach, it is measured to improve the economic and social well being of selected population. As an order of multi disciplinary in nature and represent of intersection of agricultural, and social, behavioral, engineering and management sciences. In the words of Robert Chambers¹:

Tamil Nadu Panchayat act, 1994

In Tamil Nadu on the basis of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act was enacted during 1994. This Act has given effect to the various

recommendations made in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. It is believed that with the introduction of the New Panchayati Raj system on the basis of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act was enacted during 1994, Community Development Programme and its related developmental programme could be properly implemented with the effective participation of the people. So far no attempt has been made how far the New Panchayati Raj System has given effect to the various Poverty Alleviation Programme with reference to Villupuram District. Therefore, the researcher thought it appropriate to evaluate Mahathma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme with reference to Tiruvallur District, Tamil Nadu.

Statement of the Problem

Government of India has been implementing a number of developmental programmes for the development of the people in rural areas. The development programmes are implemented through the Panchayati Raj Institutions consisting of District Panchayats, Block Panchayats and Village Panchayats. Wage employment programmes such as National Rural Employment Programme, Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme, Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, Employment Assurance Scheme, Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana, Sampoorna Grammen Rozgar Yojana and National Food for Work Programme have been implemented to provide employment and to bring about development in rural areas. The wage employment programmes stabilized wages in rural areas, checked fluctuation of food grain market prices in rural areas, created community assets in rural areas and created opportunities for decentralization and capacity building of Panchayati Raj Institutions. But these wage employment programmes could not be properly put into effect for various reasons such as fund shortage and delay in fund transfer, lack of planning, weak monitoring and verification systems, no comprehensive data-base and passive reporting. In order to put into effect the National Rural Employment Programme, National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was enacted to provide for the enhancement of livelihood security of the households in rural areas of the country by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household. This programme has reached the people and people have been benefited through this programme. So far no attempt has been made to evaluate how far this programme has reached the people and the people have been benefited in Villupuram District, Tamil Nadu. Therefore, the researcher thought it appropriate to take up this research study.

Review of Literature

Chhaya Datar (2007) has explained and compared the two schemes of MEGS and NREGA. The study portrays why the rural employment guarantee scheme failed in Maharashtra in 1976. The study has pointed out various irregularities in the execution of the scheme. The Sarpanch and Gram Sevaks receive a large sum of money to develop village assets. But they resist strongly because of the increased burden and the lack of kickbacks through the contractor. The organizations in Maharashtra have been moulded in old time politics of demanding and protesting against the state but are not used to the politics of participation of the people to override the state.

Dreze (2007) looks at the corruption in rural employment programs in Orissa and how this has continued in a NREGS as well. However, he believes that there is tremendous potential of NREGA 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 NREGA would enable them to avoid long-distance seasonal migration. Further, there is plenty of scope for productive NREGA 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.

Krishna Murty (2006) has dealt with the employment guarantee programme from the perspective of responding to sudden (and rapid) onset of events like economic crises, natural and man-made. The impact of such local disasters/crisis is large. Hence, the author addressed the disaster management strategies in India. This platform of NREGS could be used for mitigating the impact of disasters. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme must have the built-in elasticity and capacity to respond to disasters and crisis, particularly those of a localized nature, by expanding wage employment opportunities with minimum loss of time and aiding the recovery of the affected local economy.

Vidhiya Das and Pramod Pradhan (2007) have explored the execution in NREGA and process in empowering and offering benefits to tribal people. The author has appreciated the government for taking several progressive steps. Further they devised not to sit aback and

count its laurels. The government of Orrisa must rise to the occasion and take immediate step to stop this most hypothetical and cruel joke on its poorest and most vulnerable communities

Vinayak Reddy (2007) has adopted descriptive research design and used the available literature related to Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in the state of Orrisa. The author has observed that in a country where we have no unemployment insurance and social security, there is no better alternative than the public works programmes for many unorganized sectors. NREGA has emerged as biggest social security programme for the unorganized workers. These efforts require reorientation of the several institutions and policies and adoption of new strategies to achieve the objectives of national rural employment guarantee programme more effectively for inclusive growth as emphasized in the eleventh plan document.

Objectives

1. To explain the area profile of Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu
2. To explain the personal particulars of the respondents and to evaluate the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme in Villupuram District
3. To provide suitable suggestions for the proper implementation of the programme.

Scope of the Study

The main focus of the study is to evaluate the Mahathma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme with reference to Villupuram District, Tamil Nadu. Therefore, the major thrust is to evaluate the Mahathma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme with reference to Villupuram District, Tamil Nadu.

Limitations of Research

Though Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme has been put into effect in all Districts of India, the topic of research is to evaluate the Mahathma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme with reference to Villupuram District.

Method of Research

Since the study is mainly based on the data collected from the responses of the respondent beneficiaries of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme of Villupuram District, social survey method is made use of in this study.

Sources of Data

The data for this study are collected both from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of data are collected from the schedules furnished to the respondent beneficiaries of the Villupuram District, Tamil Nadu. The secondary sources of data are collected from the Books, Articles, Reports, Acts and Monographs.

Study Design

The primary purpose of the study is not the testing of any hypothesis. Being an exploratory-cum-empirical study, its basic thrust is to gain familiarity and insight into the evaluation of the Mahathma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme with reference to Villupuram District, Tamil Nadu.

Sampling Design

There are Twenty two Blocks in Villupuram District. The researcher has selected 332 respondents from 23 Village Panchayats at the rate of about 26 respondents from each Village Panchayat located in eight Blocks as detailed below:

Table- 1
Block and Village Panchayats

S.No.	Name of the Block	Name of the Village Panchayat
1.	Thirukkoyilur	1. Koovanur 2. Melaripattu 3. Athandamarudur
2.	Mugaiyur	1. Kangaiyanur 2. Pallichandal 3. Jambai
3.	Thiruvannainallur	1. Akkanur 2. Pavandur 3. Panapakkam
4.	Tirunavalur	1. Korattur 2. Koovagam
5.	Kanai	1. Nallapalayam 2. Kadayan 3. Karuvaksh
6.	Kandamangalam	1. Kodukkur 2. Chittalambattu 3. Tirumangalam
7.	Vikkiravandi	1. Senjipudur 2. Thirunandipuram 3. Pidaripattu
8.	Mailam	1. Mambakkam 2. Sembakkam 3. Konalur

Respondent beneficiaries were selected randomly from each selected Village Panchayat to critically evaluate the Mahathma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme with reference to Villupuram District, Tamil Nadu.

Selection of the Respondents

Since the present research work is to evaluate the Mahathma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme with reference to Villupuram District, Tamil Nadu, the respondent beneficiaries are selected from the different parts of Villupuram District selecting ten respondent beneficiaries randomly from each Village Panchayat for the critical analysis of the study.

Interview Schedule

The Interview schedule is designed to collect the information from the respondents of the Villupuram District. The interview schedule consists of the following items: The personal background of the respondent beneficiaries of the Villupuram District and Implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme in Villupuram District Tamil Nadu on the basis of the responses of the respondents selected for the study.

Data Collection

Collection of data is an important and rich experience in the whole of this research process. It took part-time fieldwork for almost six months. Since the respondents selected for the study could be located in eight Blocks of Villupuram District, traveling took quite a lot of time and effort. Once all the respondents are selected the researcher sought prior permission from the respondents through letters and telephones. This approach are found to be very useful and practical, as the respondents were well informed of the purpose of the study and well assured of its confidential nature.

Method of Data Collection

Personal interview with the help of the structured interview schedule was the main method used for the collection of primary data from the respondents. This approach in data collection helped the researcher in many ways. Initially, most of the respondents of Villupuram District were skeptic about this study. But person-to- person approach provided sufficient room for clarifying their doubts and explaining the purpose of the study. The researcher got an opportunity to stay with the respondents during data collection. It was a

very helpful exposure where the researcher got an ample chance to observe and discuss the evaluation of Mahathma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme with reference to Villupuram District, Tamil Nadu from the point of view of the responses of the respondent beneficiaries.

Registration

The respondents were asked whether they agree that the registration has been done to all eligible households as per the norms of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. The responses of the respondents are provided in table -2

Table-2
Registration

S. No.	Query	Responses of the Respondents				
		SA	A	NO	D	SD
1.	Do you agree that Grama Panchayat has prepared a list of all eligible households that might seek registration?	134 (40%)	65 (20%)	36 (11%)	50 (15%)	47 (14%)
2.	Do you agree that registration is done in a special Gram Sabha meeting?	176 (53%)	78 (23%)	24 (7%)	38 (11%)	16 (5%)
3.	Do you agree that a list of persons eligible for registration is eligible at Grama Sabha meeting?	157 (47%)	86 (26%)	34 (10%)	36 (11%)	19 (6%)
4.	Do you agree that registration is open in the Gram Sabha on an ongoing basis?	135 (41%)	92 (28%)	27 (8%)	42 (13%)	36 (11%)
5.	Do you agree that every one eligible for registration has registered their name?	168 (51%)	56 (17%)	31 (9%)	40 (12%)	37 (11%)

The responses of the respondents provided in the above table reveal that about 40% of the respondents strongly agree that Grama Panchayat has prepared a list of all eligible households that might seek registration; about 20% of the respondents agree that Grama Panchayat has prepared a list of all eligible households that might seek registration; about 11% of the respondents have no opinion about the Grama Panchayat has prepared a list of all eligible households that might seek registration; about 15% of the respondents disagree that Grama Panchayat has prepared a list of all eligible households that might seek registration and about 14% of the respondents strongly disagree that Grama Panchayat has prepared a list of all eligible households that might seek registration.

The responses of the respondents provided in the above table reveal that about 41% of the respondents strongly agree that registration is open in the Gram Sabha on an ongoing basis; about 28% of the respondents agree that registration is open in the Gram Sabha on an ongoing basis; about 8% of the respondents have no opinion about the registration is open in

the Gram Sabha on an ongoing basis; about 13% of the respondents disagree that registration is open in the Gram Sabha on an ongoing basis and about 11% of the respondents strongly disagree that registration is open in the Gram Sabha on an ongoing basis.

The responses of the respondents provided in the above table reveal that about 51% of the respondents strongly agree that every one eligible for registration has registered their name; about 17% of the respondents agree that every one eligible for registration has registered their name; about 9% of the respondents have no opinion about the every one eligible for registration has registered their name; about 12% of the respondents disagree that every one eligible for registration has registered their name and about 11% of the respondents strongly disagree that every one eligible for registration has registered their name.

Job Cards

The respondents were asked whether they agree that the job cards have been issued as per the norms of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. The responses of the respondents are provided in table-3

Table-3
Job Cards

S. No.	Query	Responses of the Respondents				
		SA	A	NO	D	SD
1.	Do you think that job card is prepared, issued and updated in a transparent manner?	187 (56%)	58 (17%)	29 (9%)	36 (11%)	22 (7%)
2.	Do you agree that job card is issued within one month of registration?	125 (38%)	98 (30%)	36 (11%)	49 (15%)	24 (7%)
3.	Do you think that job card is regularly updated and put up in the notice board?	165 (50%)	81 (24%)	30 (9%)	40 (12%)	16 (5%)
4.	Do you agree that a file containing photocopies of all job cards are available for inspection in the Gram Panchayat Office?		146 (44%)	86 (26%)	42 (13%)	38 (11%)
5.	Do you agree that job card is issued on free of cost?	168 (51%)	76 (23%)	43 (13%)	27 (8%)	18 (5%)
6.	Do you agree that anyone in your village has received the job card despite applying for it?	146 (44%)	62 (19%)	43 (13%)	37 (11%)	44 (13%)

Norms for Application of Works

The respondents were asked whether they agree that the application of works has been done as per the norms of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. The responses of the respondents are provided in table-4

Table -4
Norms for Application of Works

S. No.	Query	Responses of the Respondents				
		SA	A	NO	D	SD
1.	Do you agree that the application for work being received in Gram Panchayat?	145 (44%)	68 (20%)	36 (11%)	49 (15%)	34 (10%)
2.	Do you agree that the workers receive dated receipts for application of work?	135 (41%)	92 (28%)	27 (8%)	42 (13%)	36 (11%)
3.	Do you agree that applicants get works in time within fifteen days of demand?	179 (54%)	65 (20%)	31 (9%)	26 (8%)	31 (9%)
4.	Do you agree that there are cases of payment of unemployment allowance?	187 (56%)	46 (14%)	39 (12%)	42 (13%)	18 (5%)
5.	Do you agree that thirty three percent quota to women in the allotment of works is followed?	125 (38%)	98 (30%)	36 (11%)	49 (15%)	24 (7%)

The responses of the respondents provided in the above table reveal that about 44% of the respondents strongly agree that the application for work being received in Gram Panchayat; about 20% of the respondents agree that the application for work being received in Gram Panchayat; about 11% of the respondents have no opinion about the application for work being received in Gram Panchayat; about 15% of the respondents disagree that the application for work being received in Gram Panchayat and about 10% of the respondents strongly disagree that the application for work being received in Gram Panchayat.

The responses of the respondents provided in the above table reveal that about 38% of the respondents strongly agree that thirty three percent quota to women in the allotment of works is followed; about 30% of the respondents agree that thirty three percent quota to women in the allotment of works is followed; about 11% of the respondents have no opinion about the thirty three percent quota to women in the allotment of works is followed; about 15% of the respondents disagree that thirty three percent quota to women in the allotment of works is followed and about 7% of the respondents strongly disagree that thirty three percent quota to women in the allotment of works is followed.

Transparency in Selection of Works

The respondents were asked whether they agree that the transparency in selection of works has been made possible as per the norms of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. The responses of the respondents are provided in table-5

Table-5
Transparency in Selection of Works

S. No.	Query	Responses of the Respondents				
		SA	A	NO	D	SD
1.	Do you agree that the shelf of projects is prepared in the Gram Sabha?	157 (47%)	86 (26%)	34 (10%)	36 (11%)	19 (6%)
2.	Do you agree that technical estimates are prepared by Junior Engineer in consultation with the residents of the village?	146 (44%)	86 (26%)	42 (13%)	38 (11%)	20 (6%)
3.	Do you agree that works are taken up from the shelf of the project?	187 (56%)	58 (17%)	29 (9%)	36 (11%)	22 (7%)
4.	Do you agree that list of NREGS works are read out loudly along with the amount sanctioned and amount spent on the works in the Gram Panchayat area?	168 (51%)	56 (17%)	31 (9%)	40 (12%)	37 (11%)
5.	Do you agree that Gram Panchayat Board update with list of works painted on it?	165 (50%)	81 (24%)	30 (9%)	40 (12%)	16 (5%)

The responses of the respondents provided in the above table reveal that about 47% of the respondents strongly agree that the shelf of projects is prepared in the Gram Sabha; about 26% of the respondents agree that the shelf of projects is prepared in the Gram Sabha; about 10% of the respondents have no opinion about the shelf of projects is prepared in the Gram Sabha; about 11% of the respondents disagree that the shelf of projects is prepared in the Gram Sabha and about 6% of the respondents strongly disagree that the shelf of projects is prepared in the Gram Sabha.

Transparency in Implementation of Works

The respondents were asked whether they agree that the transparency in implementation of works has been made possible as per the norms of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. The responses of the respondents are provided in table -6

Table -6
Transparency in Implementation of Works

S. No.	Query	Responses of the Respondents				
		SA	A	NO	D	SD
1.	Do you agree that work order is given with adequate publicity?	147 (44%)	54 (16%)	38 (11%)	48 (14%)	45 (14%)
2.	Do you agree that there is a Board at the worksite giving all the details?	181 (55%)	68 (20%)	31 (9%)	28 (8%)	24 (7%)

3.	Do you agree that open project meeting is held before commencement of work to explain the details of works?	133 (40%)	83 (25%)	41 (12%)	43 (13%)	32 (10%)
4.	Do you agree that muster rolls are available for public scrutiny at all times at the worksite?	148 (45%)	73 (22%)	37 (11%)	40 (12%)	34 (10%)
5.	Do you agree that worksite material register is maintained along with verification by atleast five workers whenever materials come to the work?	165 (50%)	93 (28%)	31 (9%)	27 (8%)	16 (5%)
6.	Do you agree that a daily individual measurement of work is conducted in a transparent manner where piece rate norms are in force?	198 (60%)	65 (20%)	21 (6%)	33 (10%)	15 (5%)
7.	Do you agree that final measurement of works is done by Junior Engineer in the presents of group of workers?	124 (37%)	75 (23%)	36 (11%)	50 (15%)	47 (14%)
8.	Do you agree that there is vigilance and monitoring committee constituted for the Panchayat?	157 (47%)	67 (20%)	34 (10%)	45 (14%)	29 (9%)
9.	Do you agree that this committee regularly visits the worksite and monitor the implementation of various aspects of the works?	145 (44%)	78 (23%)	36 (11%)	49 (15%)	24 (7%)
10.	Do you agree that complaints are made?	175 (53%)	71 (21%)	30 (9%)	40 (12%)	16 (5%)
11.	Do you agree that complaints are addressed within seven days by the required authority?	147 (44%)	96 (29%)	34 (10%)	36 (11%)	19 (6%)
12.	Do you agree that open project meeting is held within seven days of completion of the work?	156 (47%)	76 (23%)	42 (13%)	38 (11%)	20 (6%)
13.	Do you agree that all those who work on the site and the residents of the village invited to look at the entire records?	145 (44%)	82 (25%)	27 (8%)	42 (13%)	36 (11%)
14.	Do you agree that works carried out under REGS in your village is executed through contractor?	169 (51%)	75 (23%)	31 (9%)	26 (8%)	31 (9%)

The responses of the respondents provided in the above table reveal that about 44% of the respondents strongly agree that work order is given with adequate publicity; about 16% of the respondents agree that work order is given with adequate publicity; about 11% of the respondents have no opinion about the work order is given with adequate publicity; about 14% of the respondents disagree that work order is given with adequate publicity and about 14% of the respondents strongly disagree that work order is given with adequate publicity.

Findings

The details relating to the personal particulars of the majority of the respondents reveal that about 58% of the respondents belong to the age group of below 45 years; about 84% of the respondents are females; about 92% of the respondents are Hindus; about 42% of

the respondents belong to scheduled caste/scheduled tribe community; about 76% of the respondents are married; about 51% of the respondents are illiterate; about 74% of the respondents are agricultural workers; about 96% of the respondents have income below Rs.30,000/-; about 63% of the respondents has 4 persons and above in their family; about 99% of the respondents has green colour ration card; about 84% of the respondents have no lands; about 86% of the respondents have electricity facility in their house.

The responses of the majority of the respondents indicate that: About 67% of the respondents agree that this committee regularly visits the worksite and monitors the implementation of various aspects of the works; About 74% of the respondents agree that complaints are made; About 73% of the respondents agree that complaints are addressed within seven days by the required authority; About 70% of the respondents agree that open project meeting is held within seven days of completion of the work; About 69% of the respondents agree that all those who work on the site and the residents of the village are invited to look at the entire records; About 74% of the respondents agree that works carried out under REGS in your village is executed through contractor;

Suggestions

On the basis of the discussion held with the officers and the representatives of the Panchayati Raj Institutions responsible for the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the following suggestions have been made: Dedicated staff needed exclusively to manage this scheme. Monitoring and Information System needs to be strengthened to have visibility at Block/Panchayat Level. Though this programme is targeted for unskilled labour, there are evidences of people working with better qualifications. Communication channels should be improved for effective people participation and better understanding. People confuse the Act with past government schemes and so there is lot of assumptions and beliefs. This is highlighted even in data analysis section where many people expressed presence of contractors/machines.

Communication channels should be improved for effective people participation and better understanding. Officials expressed that people are aware of the minimum wages paid but this is ascertained on the basis of the opinion expressed by people in focus group interactions and survey analysis. Communication channels should be improved for effective people participation and better understanding. Proper National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme orientation needs to be planned and administered frequently in villages to make a

difference.

Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act has the potential for sustainable development and it may be worthwhile considering implications of going beyond unskilled labour. The big question is whether Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act should remain a guarantee of unskilled hard labour. There are reasons that it is not desirable to limit the instrumentality of employment to unskilled manual labour. With the large investments that the Act will require, the issue will be whether such investments should not be used for more sustainable employment opportunities stimulating both growth and equity. Confining Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act to unskilled manual labour will only be a means to coping with poverty, not of ameliorating it. Unskilled manual labour was meant to make it self-targeting so that only the very poor would seek work as a last resort. Limitation of choice to only unskilled work, ironically, undercuts the principle of rights, inclusion, and equity, as the legal design of work does not make the terms of inclusion equitable. It offers bottom-of-the-scale tasks with no chance of upgradation of skills to those with least opportunities. The unemployed and deprived will continue to be engaged in conditions of work that despite a legal guarantee and considerable financial resources perpetuate their lack of opportunities and capabilities.

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