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Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and Assam: Certain issues of the Scheme

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Abstract:

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is a revolutionary Programme of the Government of India to reduce rural poverty, generate rural employment and create durable assets. Its main aim is to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every adult rural household who want to do unskilled manual work. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme was notified on 23rd August 2005 and came into effect on 7 September 2007 and it was implemented from 2nd February 2006 in three phases, 1st phase from 2006, covering 200 districts, 2nd phase covered 130 districts and the 3rd phase started from 2008. In Assam MGNREGS was introduced 2008. The main objective of the paper is to study performance of MGNREGS in Assam. The study is mainly based on secondary data collected from nrega websites.

Keywords: asset creation, employment generation etc.

Introduction: India is a developing country, 66.46 percent of population of India lives in rural areas. After independence from 1951 through five years plan the Government of India has adopted different programs to develop rural India but serious programs have been adopted since the 5th five years plan. The government of India has adopted different rural development programs like the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), National Rural Employment Programme(NREP), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme(RLEGP), Jawahar Rozgar Yojana(JRY), National Social Assistance Programme(NSAP), Rural Group Life Insurance Scheme(RGLIS), Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana(SGSY), Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana(SGSY), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana(PMGSY), Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana(PMGY), Food for Work Programme(FWP), National Food for Work Programme(NFFWP), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme(MGNREGS), National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), etc. for rural development of the country. MGNREGS is one of the revolutionary programme of the Government of India to reduce rural poverty, generate employment, create durable assets, empower socially disadvantaged groups, and build rural infrastructure. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme

was notified on 23rd August 2005 and came into effect on 7 September 2007 and it was implemented from 2nd February 2006 in three phases, 1st phase from 2006, covering 200 districts, 2nd phase covered 130 districts and the 3rd phase started from 2008. MGNREGA aims to provide livelihood security to people living in rural areas. Its main objective is to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to every rural household willing to do unskilled physical work. It also wants to provide social protection to rural people by offering employment opportunities, ensure their livelihood security by creating durable assets, by providing facilities like improved water security, soil conservation, and higher land productivity, to empower socially disadvantaged groups of the rural area through a rights-based legislation process, to ensure drought-proofing and flood control in rural areas of the country, to strengthen decentralized, participatory planning by adopting various anti-poverty and livelihood initiatives, to strengthen the Panchayati Raj Institutions, to ensure transparency, accountability and good governance (GoI, 2013).

Assam is a North Eastern State with 98.4 percent rural areas and 86% of people of the state live in rural areas. Unemployment and poverty are burning problems of the state. MGNREGS has been introduced in Assam in 2008 and presently till 27 September, 2023 job cards have been issued to 5941084 cumulative households under the scheme.

Objective:

The main objective of the paper is to study the performance of MGNREGS in Assam considering employment status, employment generation, assets creation, and utilization of funds. The study considers three years time period i.e. from 2019-20 to 2021-22.

Methodology:

The study is analytical, based on secondary data collected from nrega websites. It also considers other secondary sources like research journals, thesis, books, etc.

Discussion:

From the very inception of its implementation, MGNREGS has attempted to develop the rural economy of Assam by generating employment and asset creation. Up to 27 September 2022, the scheme has generated 37739137 persondays (<http://nrega.nic.in/home.aspx>). In this study, an attempt is made to study the performance of MGNREGS considering employment status, persondays generation, assets creation, and utilization of funds.

Employment Status:

Employment status deals with job cards issued to households, employment demanded, employment provided, household completed 100 days work. Job card, the most important document of workers keeps records of workers' entitlements under MGNREGS. It legally empowers job cardholders to apply for work (GoI, 2013). Table 1 shows employment status i.e. job card issued to households, employment demanded, employment provided and households completed 100 days work in Assam from 2019-20 to 2021-22.

Table 1: Employment Status of Assam under MGNREGS from 2019-20 to 2020-21

Year (1)	Job cards issued to households(Cumulative) (2)	Employment demanded by households (3)	Employment provided to households (4)	Households completed 100 days of work (5)	% of households completed 100 days of work $[\{(5)/(4)\} \times 100]$ (6)
2021-22	5947994	2945263	2736822	52291	1.91
2020-21	5556597	2718112	2510215	71268	2.84
2019-20	5003925	2158409	1928449	29979	1.55

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/Homeep1.aspx>

It is reflected in table 1 that in 2019-20 in Assam job card has been issued to 5003925 cumulative households; in 2021-22 it has increased to 5947994 households. It is observed in the table in 2019-20 employment was provided to 1928449 households, but in 2021-22 number of households provided employment has increased to 2736822. The scheme wants to provide at least 100 days of employment to every household. It is reflected in table 1.1 that in 2019-20 out of 1928449 households provided employment only 29979 households completed 100 days work in the year comprising 1.55 percent of the total households provided employment. The figure shows that in 2020-21 only 2.84 percent of households completed 100 days work but in 2021-22 (1.91 percent) of households completed 100 days work. The data makes it clear that in the study period only a very negligible percentage of households completed 100 days of work.

Employment Generation: As MGNREGS wants to provide at least 100 days of work to every household desire to do unskilled physical work, through its different income-generating works it generates working days for its job cardholders. Table 2 given below represents persondays generated in the study period by MGNREGS in Assam.

Table 2: Pattern of Persondays generated in Assam from 2019-20 to 2021-22

Year	Total Persondays generated	Persondays generated to SCs	Persondays generated to STs	Persondays generated to non-ST/SCs	Persondays generated to women
2021-22	91707306	3896896	14807219	73003191	43608837
2020-21	91153052	4027835	13218029	73907188	40184528
2019-20	62305948	3080244	11057032	48168672	26027444

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/Homeep1.aspx>

The table shows that in 2019-20 the scheme generates 62305948 persondays in the state but in 2021-22 persondays generated in the state has increased to 91707306. It is seen in the table that in 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 3080244, 4027835 and 3896896 persondays have been generated to SCs in Assam. In the study period, persondays generated to STs have increased from 11057032 in 2019-20 to 14807219 in 2021-22. Similarly, during the study period, the scheme has generated 48168672, 38566318, and 39903926 persondays to

non-ST/SCs. Persondays generated to women in the study period are 17000888, 18515230, and 21911125 respectively.

Persondays Generation to SCs:

The table 3 shows persondays generated to SCs in Assam in the study period.

Table 3: Persondays generated to SCs in Assam from 2019-20 to 2021-22

Year	Total Persondays generated	Persondays generated to SCs	Percentage of Persondays generated to SCs
1	2	3	$4=(3/2 \times 100)$
2021-22	91707306	3896896	4.25
2020-21	91153052	4027835	4.42
2019-20	62305948	3080244	4.94

Notes: Figures on parentheses indicate percentage of total persondays

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/Homeep1.aspx>

The table states that among the three years in 2019-20 highest percentage (4.94%) of persondays has been created to SCs. In 2020-21 and 2021-22, almost the same percentage of persondays has been generated to SCs in Assam. It can be said that the scheme is not in success to generating persondays to SCs of the state.

Persondays Generation to STs:

The table 4 shows persondays generated to STs in Assam in the study period.

Table 4: Persondays Generated to STs in Assam from 2019-20 to 2021-22

Year	Total Persondays Generated	Persondays Generated to STs	Percentage of Persondays Generated to STs
1	2	3	$4=(3/2 \times 100)$
2021-22	91707306	14807219	16.15
2020-21	91153052	13218029	14.50
2019-20	62305948	11057032	17.75

Notes: Figures on parentheses indicate the percentage of total persondays

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/Homeep1.aspx>

Table 4 reflects persondays generated to STs in Assam from 2019-20 to 2021-22. It shows that in 2019-20 highest percentage (17.75%) of persondays has been generated to STs which is followed by 2021-22 and 2020-21. It also states that the scheme is not successful in generating more persondays to STs of the state.

Persondays Generation to Non-ST/SCs:

The scheme provides employment opportunities to all the rural people of the state. The table 5 shows persondays generated to non-ST/SCs under the scheme.

Table 5: Persondays Generated to Non ST/SCs in Assam from 2019-20 to 2021-22

Year	Total Persondays Generated	Persondays Generated to Non-ST/SCs	Percentage of Persondays Generated to Non-ST/SCs
1	2	3	$4=(3/2 \times 100)$

2021-22	91707306	73003191	79.60
2020-21	91153052	73907188	81.08
2019-20	62305948	48168672	77.31

Notes: Figures on parentheses indicate percentage of total persondays

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/Homeep01.aspx>

Table 5 states that the scheme generates the highest percentage of persondays(81.08%) to non-ST/SCs in 2020-21 and in 2021-22 and 2019-20 it generates 79.60 and 77.31 percentage of persondays to Non-ST/SCs. The figure states that the scheme is in success in generating more persondays to Non-ST/SCs.

Tables 3, 4 and 5 state that in the study period, the scheme generates the highest persondays of persondays to Non-ST/SCs. It generates the least persondays to SCs in the study period. The scheme has generated more percentage of persondays to Non-ST/SCs but very low to SCs and STs.

Persondays Generated to Women:

The act wants the empowerment of rural women. It wants at least 33 percent participation of women at MGNREGA activities. The data given below shows persondays generated to women in the study period.

Table 6: Persondays generated to Women in Assam from 2019-20to 2021-22

Year	Total Persondays generated	Persondays generated to women	Percentage of Persondays generated to women
1	2	3	$4=(3/2 \times 100)$
2021-22	91707306	43608837	47.55
2020-21	91153052	40184528	44.08
2019-20	62305948	26027444	41.77

Notes: Figures on parentheses indicate percentage of total persondays

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/Homeep01.aspx>

Table 6 states that the scheme generates more than 33 percent persondays to women in the study period. It generates the highest persondays(47.55 percent) in 2021-22 and the lowest(41.77 percent) in 2019-20.

Assets Creation:

MGNREGS is an employment generating scheme. It tries to generate employment by creating different income-generating assets. The implementation of the scheme has created several assets like flood control, rural connectivity, water conservation, and water harvesting, renovation of traditional water bodies, drought Proofing, irrigation canals, land development, fishery, other works, Bharat Nirman Rajib Gandhi Sewa Kendra, etc. Table 1.7 given below depicts the total number of assets created in Assam from 2019-20 to 2021-22.

Table 7: Assets created in Assam from 2019-20 to 2021-22

Name of the assets created	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Flood Control and protection	1935	2196	4710
Rural Connectivity	2882	184	1898
Water Conservation and Water Harvesting	2918	2841	6300
Renovation of Traditional Water Bodies	593	151	371
Drought Proofing	1137	823	1780
Micro Irrigation Projects	2780	2567	4092
Land Development	4284	4322	8605
Fisheries	1421	484	1009
Other Works	67	4	58
Bharat Nirman Rajib Gandhi Sewa Kendra	16	0	4
Angwanbadi/ Other Rural Infrastructure	43	241	585
Rural Drinking Water	3	0	5
Works on Individuals Land(Category IV)	58909	116130	97407
Play Ground	9	NIL	NIL
Rural Sanitation	347	6	21
Coastal Areas	NIL	2	NIL
Total	77344	129951	126845

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/Homep01.aspx>

The table 7 states that the total assets created in the state in 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 are 77344, 129951 and 126845 respectively. The data reflects that the highest assets are created in 2020-21 and lowest in 2019-20. It is reflected in the study in 2019-20 highest assets is created in works on individual land (Category IV) lowest of rural drinking water. Similarly in 2020-21 highest assets of works on individual land (Category IV) and the lowest of other work is created. In this year no asset of Bharat Nirman Rajib Gandhi Sewa Kendra and rural drinking water is created. In 2021-22 highest assets are created on works on Individuals Land (Category IV) and the lowest in the Bharat Nirman Rajib Gandhi Sewa Kendra.

Utilization of Fund: Table 8 shows the utilization of funds under MGNREGS in Assam during the study period which is obtained by deducting total expenditure from total availability of funds.

Table 8: Utilization of funds under MGNREGS from 2019-20 to 2021-22

(Rs. in lakh)

Year (1)	Total Availability of Fund (3)	Total Expenditure (4)	Utilization of fund (in percentage) $5=(4/3)\times 100$	Balance
2021-22	239198.13	233304.56	97.54	5893.6
2020-21	249480.01	226482.21	90.78	22997.8
2019-20	144772.16	140297.83	96.91	4981.36

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/Homeep01.aspx>

The table 8 states that the total availability of funds is highest in 2020-21 and 90.78 percent of the fund is utilized in this year while in 2019-20, 96.91 percent of the available fund is utilized. In 2021-22 total availability of funds is 239198.14 lakh Rs. and among the studied three years the highest percentage of the fund is utilized in the year ((97.54percent).

Findings: The study throws out the following findings-

1. The study finds out that from 2019-20 to 2021-22 job card issued in Assam has been increased from 5003925 cumulative households to 5947994 households.
2. Number of households provided employment has increased from 1928449 households in 2019-20 to 2736822 households in 2021-22.
3. In 2019-20 1.91 percent of the total households completed 100 days work while in 2020-21 and 2021-22 only 2.84 percent and 1.55 percent of households completed 100 days. The data makes it clear that in the study period only a very negligible percentage of households completed 100 days of work.
4. The study states that in 2019-20 the scheme generates 62305948 persondays in the state but in 2021-22 persondays generated in the state has increased to 91707306.
5. In 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 3080244, 4027835 and 3896896 persondays has been generated to SCs in Assam, 11057032, 13218029 and 14807219 persondays to STs. Similarly, during the study period, the scheme has generated 48168672, 73907188, and 73003191 persondays to non-ST/SCs in 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 respectively.
6. Among the three studied years in 2019-20 highest percentage(4.94%) of persondays has been created to SCs.
7. In 2019-20 the highest percentage17.75 (%) of persondays has been generated to STs.
8. The scheme generates the highest percentage of persondays(81.08%) to non-ST/SCs in 2020-21 and in 2021-22 and 2019-20 it generates 79.60 and 77.31 percentages of persondays to Non-ST/SCs.
9. It generates the highest persondays(47.55percent) in 2021-22 and the lowest(41.77 percent) in 2019-20 to women.
10. The scheme creates 77344, 129951 and 126845 assets in 2019-20, 2021-22, and 2022-23 respectively. The highest assets are created in 2020-21 and lowest in 2019-20.
11. In all the three years highest assets on works on Individuals Land (Category IV) is created.
12. Total availability of funds is highest in 2020-21 and 90.78 percent of the fund is utilized in this year. In 2021-22 total availability of funds is 239198.13 lakh Rs. and among the studied three years the highest percentage of the fund is utilized in the year.

Suggestions: Based on the above-mentioned study following suggestions can be given-

1. Steps should be taken to generate more persondays under the scheme so that the scheme covers every rural household of the state.
2. Wage given to the MGNREGS workers should increase to encourage them to complete at least 100 days of work under the scheme.
3. The scheme should provide more days of work in a year.
4. It should generate more persondays for all the rural people of the society.
5. Steps should be taken to encourage the participation of women in MGNREGA activities.
6. It should give more emphasis on creating more income-generating assets.
7. Availability of funds should increase and there must be fuller utilization of available resources.

Conclusion: As MGNREGS is an income-generating scheme by increasing availability of funds and proper utilization of funds MGNREGS can play important role in the development of rural Assam. It will help to generate employment opportunities and to reduce poverty in the state as well as of the country.

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