



Pratidhwani the Echo

A Peer-Reviewed International Journal of Humanities & Social Science

ISSN: 2278-5264 (Online) 2321-9319 (Print)

Impact Factor: 6.28 (Index Copernicus International)

Volume-XII, Issue-II, January 2024, Page No.218-232

Published by Dept. of Bengali, Karimganj College, Karimganj, Assam, India

Website: <http://www.thecho.in>

MGNREGA AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT- A CASE STUDY OF BELDANGA-II BLOCK, MURSHIDABAD DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL

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Abstract:

Any nation's progress would be difficult to imagine without the growth of its rural economy, and ignoring rural development is equivalent to ignoring the nation's overall development. The majority of Indians reside in rural areas. 68.8% of the nation's population, as determined by the 2011 census, lived in rural areas. The process of enhancing rural residents' quality of life and economic empowerment is known as rural development. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA) is a comprehensive law that aims to promote rural development and employment opportunities for rural residents of India. MGNREGA aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The present study tries to review the current status of implementation of MGNREGA in Beldanga II block of Murshidabad district, West Bengal and to identify emerging strengths and weakness for wider dialogue for improvement. 50 households have been chosen from Dadpur gram Panchayat on stratified random sampling basis. The Present study observes some irregularities in the implementation procedure and the lack of awareness about the rights.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Rural Development, Awareness, Empowerment, Unemployment.

Introduction: By creating a demand for skilled labour in the village, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act (MGNREGA) is seen as a "Silver Bullet" for ending rural poverty and unemployment.... Rural poverty and unemployment in India have grown in an unprecedented manner during the last few decades. Since Independence various employment generation programmes like IRDP (1979), DWCRA (1983), NREP (1980), EAS (1983), JRY (1989), SGSY (1999), PMGSY (2000-01) etc. have been launched by the Government of India to reduce the poverty of rural India. However, these programmes have some limitation. So, in an attempt to remove the weaknesses of the previous

programmes, the Government of India has launched the new model of wage employment Guarantee Act which is named as National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. The act was enacted on 25th August and it came into force on 2nd February in 2006. The initial 200 districts chosen for implementation of the MGNREGA Act were the most backward districts of this country. Then MGNREGA covered all the districts of India from 1st April, 2008. The name of the NREGA was changed to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in October 2009 (Azeez and Akhtar, 2015). MGNREGA marked a paradigm shift from the other employment programmes with its rights-based approach. MGNREGA is visualized as a first step towards the realization of the economic rights to work as envisioned in the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution of India. It recognizes Article 39 of the Constitution, according to which the State must ensure that “citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means to livelihood” and Article 41 whereby “the State, shall within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing Right to Work” (Azeez and Akhtar, 2015). This programme preserves natural resources and generates useful assets while focusing on inclusive growth and creating jobs (Pamecha and Sharma, 2015). MGNREGA is providing alternatives to the villagers similarly in Beldanga II block many villagers having no job when there is no agricultural work. In such situation MGNREGA acts as an alternative method for income generation.

Some of the salient features of MGNREGA are as follows:

- All adult members of a rural household willing to do unskilled manual work have the right to demand employment.
- Such a household will have to apply registration in the Gram Panchayat.
- After verification, the Gram Panchayat will issue a Job Card with photograph of all the adult members of household willing to work under the programme.
- The Job Card must remain in the custody of the household.
- If the Gram Panchayat is unable to provide employment after 15 days of receiving a work application, unemployment benefits will be awarded.
- Disbursement of wages has to be done weekly basis and not beyond a fortnight.
- Wages will be paid at the wage rate to the wage earners through their Bank/Post Office accounts.
- A ratio of 60:40 for wage and material costs should be maintained at G.P. level.
- No contractors/ and no labour displacing machinery shall be used in execution of work.
- Panchayati Raj Institutions will have a principle role in planning, monitoring and implementation.
- At least one-third of the workers should be women.

Literature Review: The existing literature on the topic deals with different aspects of MGNREGA. A significant contribution in the field is made by N.P. Abdul Azeez and S.M.

Jawed Akhtar (2015) in their book Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) Provisions, Implementation and Performance. The book incorporates various chapters related to MGNREGA and its performance, Employment Multiplier Accelerator interaction in MGNREGA. John Joseph Puthenkalam and M. K. George (2012) in their book “Human Development Strategy of MGNREGA” concentrates on the human development approach and focus on MGNREGA and its impacts and implications for India as well as other developing nation. Chandra Prakash Singh in his book “Poverty alleviation Programmes under the Plan” explain the concept of poverty, quantitative dimensions of poverty in India and discussed working poverty programmes. Pamecha and Sarma (2015) have made an analysis on the socio-economic impact of MGNREGA scheme on the life of beneficiaries of Durgapur district. Mihir Saha (2007) in his article “Employment Guarantee, Civil Society and Indian Democracy” mentions that the MGNREGA has the potential to provide a “big push” in India’s region of distress. He describes that for MGNREGA to be able to realize its potential, the role of civil society organization is critical. Roshni Pandey (2017) in her article “MGNREGA and Its role in Rural Development” explains how MGNREGA is a beneficial and effective scheme for the development of rural India.

Objectives of the Study:

The basic objectives of this study are:

1. To review the present status of implementation of MGNREGA in Beldanga II block of Murshidabad district, West Bengal.
2. To identify the emerging strengths and weakness for wider dialogue for improvements.
3. To find out some measurable recommendations for proper implementation of this Act.

The Survey area and The Methodology of the Study: In India, MGNREGA came into force in 200 districts on 2nd February 2006. Murshidabad is one of the backward districts of West Bengal. Murshidabad district is situated between 23⁰48” and 24⁰52” North latitude and 87⁰49” and 88⁰44” East longitudes and spread over to an area of about 5316.11 square kilometers. There are 26 blocks and 255 Gram Panchayat in Murshidabad district. For the collection of empirical data researcher have chosen a block named Beldanga II of Murshidabad District. As per census 2011, Beldanga II block has a total population of 231068, out of which 118,709 are males while 112359 are females. Schedule Castes (SC) constitute 73,755 while Schedule Tribe (ST) was 11,218 of total population in Beldanga II Block.

This study is primarily based on primary sources, although some secondary sources have been used. For the collection of primary data from sample households, both closed and open ended questions have been employed. Purposive sampling methods have been used to select the study area. Dadpur have been selected out of 11 gram Panchayats from Beldanga II block which is mainly rural belts. After the selection of Gram Panchayat,

the list of job card holders of MGNREGA household was obtained from Gram Panchayat. 50 respondents having MGNREGA job card holders were randomly selected.

MGNREGA- a Brief outlook in India, West Bengal and Murshidabad district: The MGNREGA programme has already completed eleven financial years and is now running into twelve year. The current financial year provides data only up to 15th August, 2023 as discussed below. Table-A provides the overall performance of MGNREGA in India as well as the state of West Bengal and the district of Murshidabad during the current year 2022-23.

Table-A

Statistics	India	West Bengal	Murshidabad
Total no. of Job Cards issued	14.87(in Cr)	136.79(in lakh)	12.08(in lakh)
Total no of Workers	26.3(in Cr)	257.71(in lakh)	20.4(in lakh)
Total no of active Job Cards	9.74(in Cr)	92.63(in lakh)	5.38(in lakh)
Total no of active Workers	14.43(in Cr)	139.02(in lakh)	6.75(in lakh)
Average days of employment provided per HH	47.83 %	23.24%	30.89 %
Average wage rate per day per person (in Rs.)	217.91	213.81	208.49
Total no of HHs completed 100 days of wages employment	35,98,917	1618	29
Total HH worked	6.18(in Cr)	16.29(in lakh)	0.92(in lakh)
Total Individuals Worked	8.76(in Cr)	20.2(in lakh)	1.04(in lakh)

Source: https://nreganarep.nic.in/netnrega/all_lvl_details_dashboard_new.aspx?Fin_Year=2023-2024&Digest=WJEEpOm1k0Ptz2KJJGSoqA, accessed on 15.08.2023

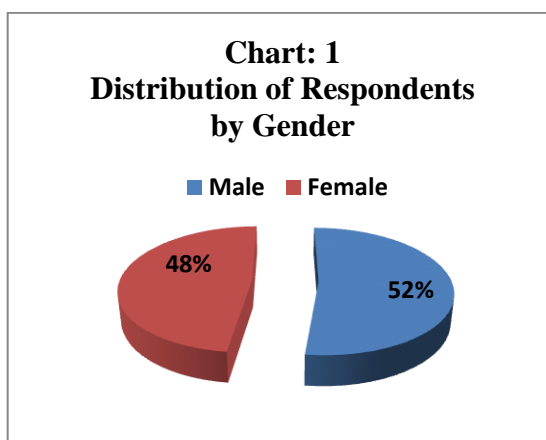
Job cards have been provided to 136.79 lakh families in West Bengal and 14.87 crore households in India. Of these, 9.74 Cr job cards in India and 92.63 lakh job cards in West Bengal are active during the 2022–2023 fiscal years. In India, there are 14.43 Cr active workers and an average of 47.83 days of employment per household. Otherwise in West Bengal a total 139.02 lakh workers are active workers and average days of employment provided per households is 23.24 percent. In Murshidabad district a total 12.08 lakh households are issued job cards among them 5.38 lakh job cards are active during financial year 2022-23.

Findings and Discussions: The presentation and analysis of data are the topics of this section of the study. The survey provides some crucial information about the gender, caste group, level of education, and monthly household income of the MGNREGA job card holders in Dadpur Gram Panchayat. The respondents' socio-economic profile is described in Tables 1 out of which 52 percent respondents are men, and 48 percent are women.

TABLE-1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gram Panchayat (GP)	Male	Female	Total
Dadpur	26	24	50
Total (%)	52%	48%	100%

Source: Data Obtained from Survey.



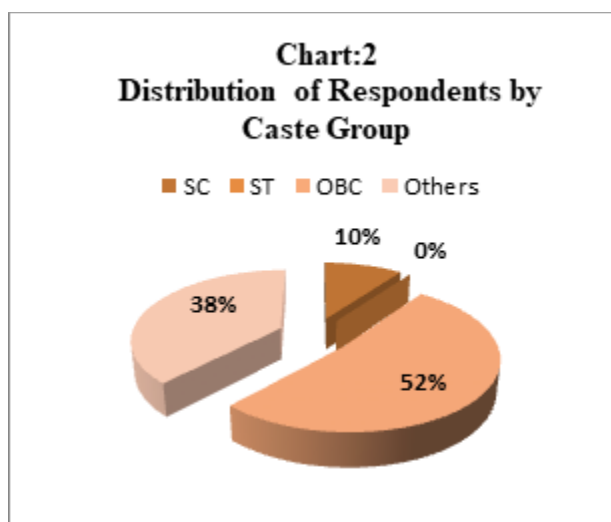
Source: Data Obtained from Survey.

Table 2 illustrates that 10% of the respondents fall into the SC category, 52% into other backward classes, and 38% into other categories. There is no representation of ST respondents in the study area.

TABLE-2: Distribution of Respondents by Caste Group

GP	SC	ST	OBC	Others	Total
Dadpur	5	0	26	19	50
Total (%)	10%	0%	52%	38%	100%

Source: Data Obtained from Survey



Source: Data Obtained from Survey

One can determine the respondents' level of literacy from **Table 3**. According to the table, the Dadpur village respondent's education level is divided into following categories: 32% are illiterate, 28% have only completed primary school, 6% have completed their Madhyamik, and 14% have completed higher education.

TABLE-3: Distribution of Respondents by Education

GP	Illiterate	Primary	Junior	Madhyamik	Higher secondary	Higher Education	Total
Dadpur	16	14	10	3	0	7	50
Total (%)	32%	28%	20%	6%	0%	14%	100%

Source: Data Obtained from Survey.

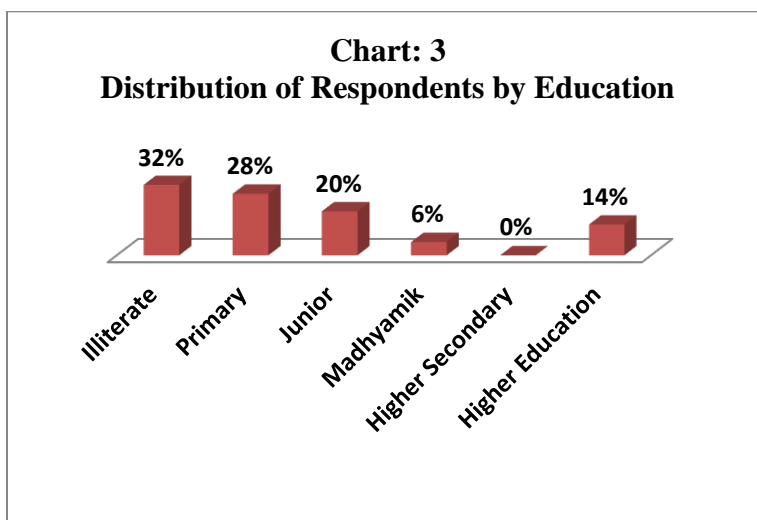
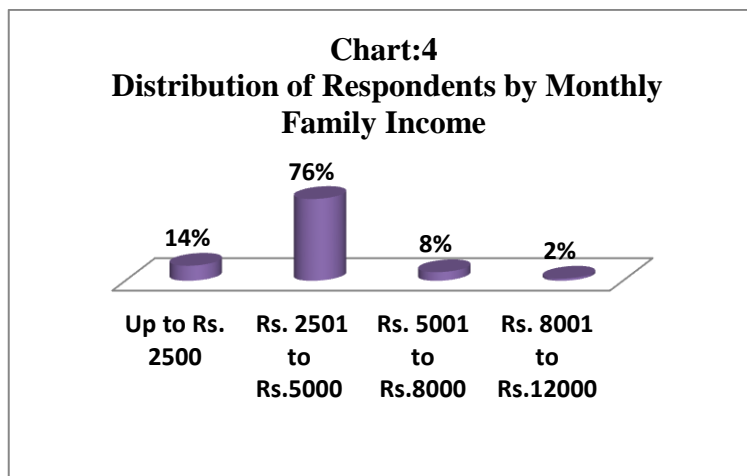


Table-4 provides information relating to economic status of the respondents of Dadpur village. 76 percent respondents stated that their monthly income ranges between Rs. 2501 to 5000, 14 percent reported monthly income up to Rs. 2500 and only 8 percent stated their income to be within Rs. 5001 to 8000. Table shows that income of only 2 percent exceeds rupees 8001 to 12000. From the table we can infer that most of respondents are poor.

TABLE-4: Distribution of Respondents by Monthly Family Income:

GP	Up to Rs. 2500	Rs. 2501 to Rs. 5000	Rs. 5001 to Rs. 8000	Rs. 8001 to Rs. 12000	Total
Dadpur	7	38	4	1	50
Total (%)	14%	76%	8%	2%	100%

Source: Data Obtained from Survey.



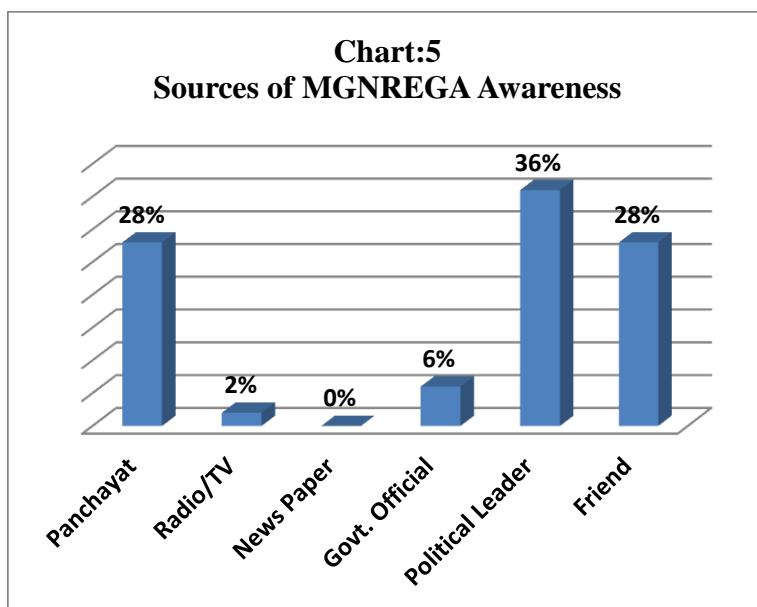
Source: Data Obtained from Survey.

Table-5 provides information relating to awareness among respondents regarding the implementation of MGNREGA. 28 percent respondents said that they are aware regarding MGNREGA through the Panchayat, 36 percent known through political leader and 28 percent known through friends. Only 6 percent and 2 percent respondent's are aware about MGNREGA through Govt. Official and radio, television. From the table we can infer that most of respondents are not aware about MGNREGA through Government institution and media.

TABLE-5: Sources of MGNREGA Awareness

GP	Panchayat	Radio/TV	Newspaper	Govt. Official	Political Leader	Friend	Total
Dadpur	14	1	0	3	18	14	50
Total (%)	28%	2%	0%	6%	36%	28%	100%

Source: Data Obtained from Survey.



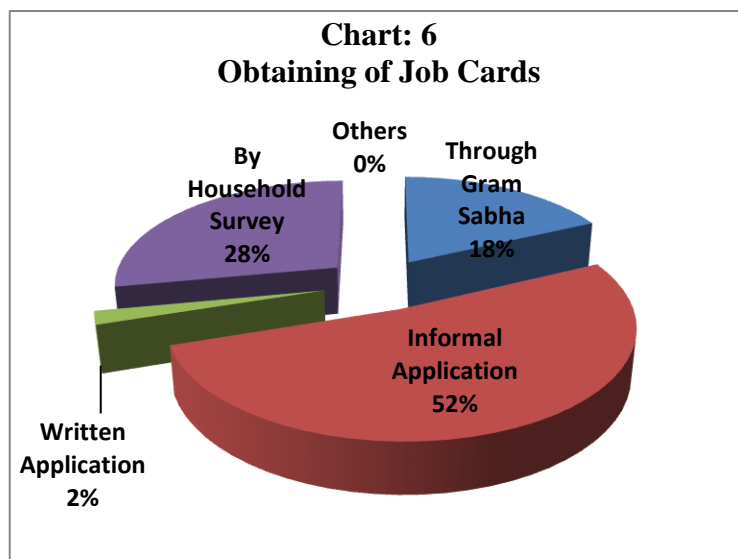
Source: Data Obtained from Survey.

In **Table-6** 18 percent respondents obtain job card through Gram Sabha. 52 percent respondents received job card through informal application and 28 percent respondents collect from household survey. Only 2 percent respondents procure job card through written application.

TABLE-6: Obtaining of Job Cards

GP	Through Gram Sabha	Informal Application	Written Application	By Household Survey	Others	Total
Dadpur	9	26	1	14	0	50
Total (%)	18%	52%	2%	28%	0%	100%

Source: Data Obtained from Survey.



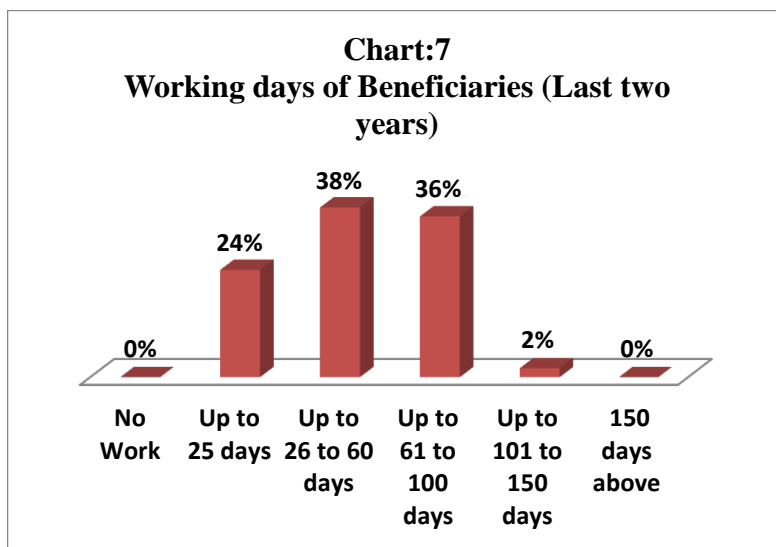
Source: Data Obtained from Survey.

In **Table-7** working days of beneficiaries are divided into six categories. The average performance of last two years, 0 percent respondents have got more than 150 days of work, 2 percent got 101 to 150 days of work, 36 percent got 61 to 100 days of work and 38 percent got job 26 to 60 days of work. Only 24 percent respondents have got job less than 25 days of work in last two years.

TABLE-7: Working days of Beneficiaries (Last two years)

GP	No Work	Up to 25 days	26 to 60 Days	61 to 100 Days	101 to 150 days	150 days Above	Total
Dadpur	0	12	19	18	1	0	50
Total (%)	0%	24%	38%	36%	2%	0%	100%

Source: Data Obtained from Survey.



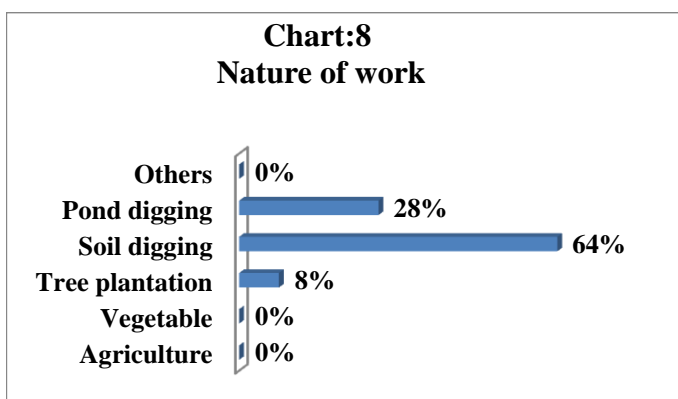
Source: Data Obtained from Survey.

Table-8 provides the nature of MGNREGA work. 8 percent job cardholders work in tree plantation and 28 percent pond digging. Highest percentage of job cardholder (64 percent) works in soil digging.

TABLE-8: Nature of work

GP	Agriculture	Vegetable	Tree plantation	Soil digging	Pond digging	Others	Total
Dadpur	0	0	4	32	14	0	100
Total (%)	0%	0%	8%	64%	28%	0%	100%

Source: Data Obtained from Survey.



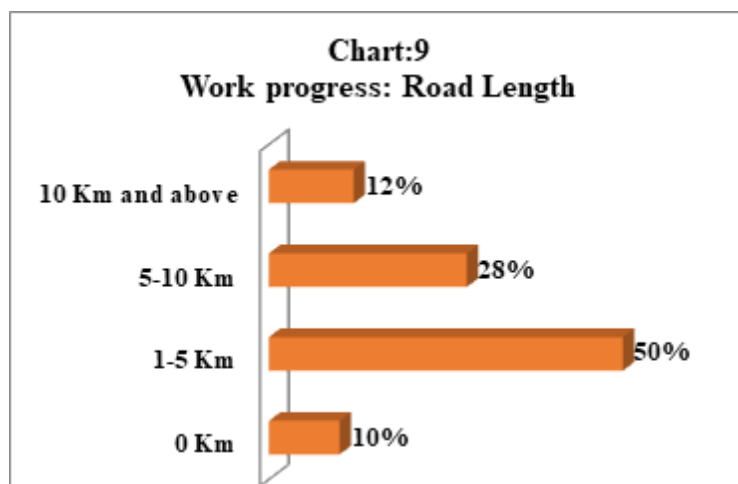
Source: Data Obtained from Survey.

Table-9 shows that the progress of work. 50 percent respondents tell that 1 km to 5 km construction of road under MGNREGA project. 14 percent shows 5 km to 10 km and 12 percent shows above 10 km construction of road is made. 10 percent shows the work is nil.

TABLE-9: Work provided by MGNREGA: Road Length

GP	0 Km	1-5 Km	5-10 Km	10 Km and above	Total
Dadpur	5	25	14	6	50
Total (%)	10%	50%	28%	12%	100%

Source: Data Obtained from Survey.



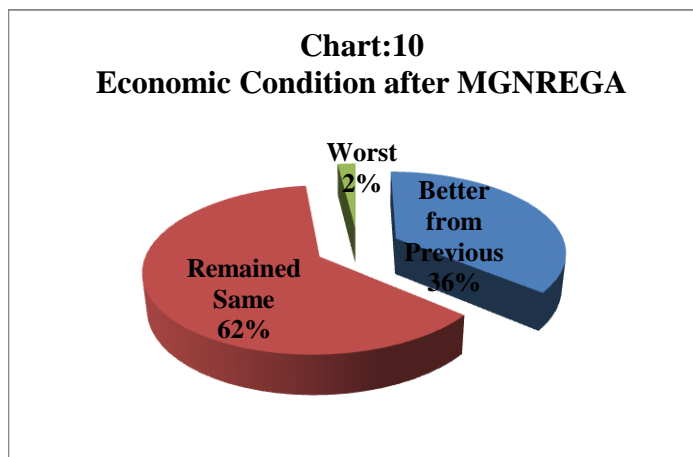
Source: Data Obtained from Survey.

Table-10 refers to economic condition of respondents after getting MGNREGA work. 36 percent respondents show better condition from previous, 62 percent respondents tell that the economic condition remains the same and only 2 percent shows the bad side of economic condition.

TABLE-10: Economic Condition after MGNREGA

GP	Better from Previous	Remained Same	Worst	Total
Dadpur	18	31	1	100
Total (%)	36%	62%	2%	100%

Source: Data Obtained from Survey.



Source: Data Obtained from Survey.

According to MGNREGA guidelines, it is mandatory to have basic facilities such as safe drinking water, first aid kits, shade and also child care facility for women workers. Table-11 refers 48 respondents out of 50 of Dadpur G.P. did find those facilities at the work site for drinking water, first aid and shade but only 2 respondents did find child care facility at the work site. All of them informed that they were not paid any unemployment allowance. They did not applied for the unemployment allowances and it is the responsibility of the GPs to let them know about the provision of the application for unemployment allowances. No one got extra 10% wage for above 5 km distance from home to work place.

Table-11: Allowance and facilities available in worksite (No. of respondents says yes)

Facilities and Allowances	Dadpur	Total (%)
1. Maintenance of the worksite facilities- drinking water, first aid and shade	48	96%
2. Maintenance of the worksite facilities- Child care	2	4%
3. Got any unemployment allowances	0	0
4. Applied for unemployment allowances	0	0
5. Provision of extra 10% wage for above 5km distance from home to work place	0	0

Source: Data Obtained from Survey.

Conclusion: MGNREGA avowedly aims to have a significant impact on rural employment and development. In addition to eradicating rural poverty and preserving the typical way of life for those living in rural areas, it aids in the creation of rural assets like roads, ponds, plantations, etc. However, the findings of this study paint a less-than-ideal image. The

function of MGNREGA in the study area is not satisfactory. The researcher found that only 36 percent respondents said that their economic condition was better after the implementation of MGNREGA. As an average 36 percent of respondents living at Dadpur Gram Panchayat of Beldanga II block are illiterate, the effect is clear as majority of the respondents are not aware about the activities. On the other hand the monthly family income of 92 percent respondents is within five thousand. As a result, the poor economic condition led to the demand for 100 days work but the image is quite unsatisfactory about 100 days work in last two years, data which is collected from the field, is not satisfactory. This scheme has not been used properly in the block. 62 percent of respondents have said that this MGNREGA scheme has not brought any change in their economic condition. In order to make NREGA scheme successful people have to be more concerned about understanding their rights and duties. It is clear from the present study that no unemployment allowances are provided to the villagers despite of having job cards. So, the panchayat must play an important role in sorting out the various problems faced by the villagers. For the proper implementation of the scheme, the states as well as the local institutions have to be more active. Therefore, it is recommended that the programme should be further spread in the rural areas by means of proper planning, better monitoring, adequate supervision and effective implementation.

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