

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES: AN ANALYSIS OF INDIAN INITIATIVES

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Abstract: *The Government of India has adopted a multifaceted development strategy that promotes economic growth and also addresses the needs of the poor by ensuring their basic rights. The Ministry of Rural Development has a gamut of targeted programmes from providing direct employment, self employment, social security, housing, building rural infrastructure and managing land resources to alleviating poverty. In this context, workfare programmes have been important interventions. Through short term employment, these programmes provide income transfers to poor households during critical times such as lean agricultural seasons, and enable consumption smoothening. Evolving the design of the wage employment programmes to more effectively fight poverty, the Union Government formulated the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2005, a paradigm shift from earlier programmes. The Mahatma Gandhi NREGA has become a powerful instrument for inclusive growth in rural India through its impact on social protection, livelihood security and democratic governance. Present paper purports to review the rural development in India particularly the performance of MGNREGA.*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of development is very broad and dynamic. Although, over a period certain well-defined goals of development have emerged, it has not been possible to form a coherent image of the process of development. It is a multifaceted process involving economic development, social advocacy and proper planning to improve the capacity of the existing social systems and institutions to cope with the demands of change and growth. In other words, development is a multi-dimensional process (Prasad, 2003).

Depending upon the pursuits of development relating to various spheres, development has been classified as economic development, social development, regional development, human development, gender development, rural development, urban development and so on. The paper has been conceived in this backdrop to study various rural development programmes implemented since independence.

The paper is organised in four parts. Part I states the objectives and research methodology; Part II discusses the conceptual framework. Major findings are discussed in Part III and Part IV lays out conclusion and suggestions.

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OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of the paper is to evaluate the performance of rural development programmes in India and to see how MGNREGA is an improvement over these programmes. The paper also tends to suggest few policy prescriptions for making implementation of MGNREGA more effective.

The Paper is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected from the three administrative blocks of district Patiala (Punjab) namely Samana, Nabha and Sanour in terms of percentage of utilization of funds. The secondary data have been culled from the reports of various Ministries of the Government of India like the Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Finance, MGNREGA programme reports, Punjab Government reports, articles and research papers.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: CONCEPT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural development has been receiving increasing attention of the governments across the world. It was an important focus of the World Bank that encouraged its introduction into the Official Development Plan Documents of all the member developing countries. Also, the concept of rural development has been changing over the years. It was considered synonymous with agricultural development. However, it was realized subsequently that rural development was much broader in its scope (Prasad, 2003). Apart from agriculture, rural development is also concerned with the development of infrastructure like roads, transport, power, insurance and banking, cottage industries, rural poverty, employment, modern education, health facilities and decent housing for the rural poor. Thus, rural development is a strategy specifically designed to improve economic and social life of the rural poor (Prasad, 2003).

Rural development is defined in terms of economic betterment of people as well as greater social transformation by the Planning Commission (Government of India, 1992). It is a “strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people – the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest, those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas” (Prasad, 2003).

Further, rural development is defined as a “process through collective efforts aimed at improving the well-being and self-realization of people living outside the urbanized areas. The ultimate target of rural development is people and not infrastructure.....one of the objectives of rural development should be to widen the people’s range of choices” (James, 1992).

Therefore, rural development is a pre-requisite of urban development. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam advocated adoption of PURA (Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Area) in his Vision 2020. According to him, PURA can be adopted for the upliftment of the rural areas. PURA involves four types of connectivity:

- physical connectivity, where 15 to 25 villages are linked to each other through roads. Besides roads, provision of electricity and transport facilities is included;

- electronic connectivity, where villages are linked with modern telecommunication and information technology services;
- knowledge connectivity, in which a school, a higher education centre, a hospital is established on every 5 to 7 kilometers;
- economic connectivity, where good marketing facilities are established to procure commodities and services of daily use and rural people can sell their produce in such markets (Kalam, 2008).

Prof. A.M. Khusro stated that “instead of moving human beings where infrastructure exists it is better to take infrastructure to villages where human beings live” (Datt, 2008). Therefore, ongoing rural development programmes need to be re-oriented to integrate the components of PURA in the rural development, thus enriching the process.

In the Indian context, rural development assumes special significance. According to the Census of India, 2011, 83.3 crore of population resides in the rural areas and 37.7 crore in the urban areas. This implies that 68.84 percent of the total population is rural and only 31.16 percent is urban (Table 1).

Table 1
Rural and Urban Population in India

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Category of Population</i>	<i>Population (in Crores)</i>	<i>Percentage of Population to Total Population</i>
1.	Rural	83.3 crore	68.84%
2.	Urban	37.7 crore	31.16%

Source: Government of India (2011), Census 2011, Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi.

As more than half of the population in the country lives in rural areas, the development of these areas is important as the backwardness of the rural sector would be a major impediment to the overall progress of the economy.

Keeping in mind the large rural population base and also backwardness of the rural areas, Government of India implemented various programmes and policies for transforming rural lives and ushering in rural development.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES: INDIAN INITIATIVES

Over the years, there has been a shift in the Government’s approach towards development policies. Instead of relying only on increase in general affluence to enhance the living standard of people, the approach has been to consider the acquisition of minimum levels of education, health, employment and nutrition as basic entitlements and recognize the key role of the state in providing them to every citizen of the country. There is also a fundamental change in funding and executing the government programmes. More number of key programmes are being funded by the Union Government and executed by state governments to ensure

that no entitlement or programme suffers due to resource constraint (Government of India, 2006). Also, the role of rural local bodies in planning and implementation of rural development programmes has been increasing post 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act.

After independence, the Government of India adopted Five-Year plans for realizing the development goals of the country. These plans had a major rural development component for transforming the rural areas. The various Five-Year plans and rural development programmes enshrined in them have been discussed briefly here under (Table 2).

Table 2
Rural Development Programmes

<i>Plan Period</i>	<i>Programme</i>	<i>Year</i>
1 st Five Year Plan (1951-56)	(a) Community Development Programme (CDP)	1952
	(b) National Extension Service (NES)	1953
2 nd Five Year Plan (1956-61)	(a) Khadi and Village Industries Programme (KVIP)	1957
	(b) Multi-Purpose Tribal Development Blocks Programme	1959
	(c) Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP)	1960
3 rd Five Year Plan (1961-66)	(a) Applied National Programme	1962
	(b) Rural Industries Projects	1962
	(c) Intensive Agricultural Area Development Programme	1964
Annual Plan (1966-67)	(a) Farmer's Training and Educational Programme	1966
	(b) Well Construction Programme (WCP)	1966
Annual Plan (1967-68)	(a) Rural Works Programme (RWP)	1967
	(b) Tribal Development Block	1968
Annual Plan (1968-69)	(a) Rural Manpower Programme (RMP)	1969
	(b) Composite Programme for Women and Children	1969
4 th Five Year Plan (1969-74)	(a) Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP)	1970
	(b) Cash Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE)	1971
	(c) Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Programme (PIREP)	1972
	(d) Minimum Needs Programme (MNP)	1972
	(e) Command Area Programme (CAP)	1974
5 th Five Year Plan (1974-79)	(a) Hill Area Development Programme (HADP)	1975
	(b) Food for Work Programme (FWP)	1977
	(c) Desert Development Programme (DDP)	1977
	(d) Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM)	1979
	(e) Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)	1979
6 th Five Year Plan (1980-85)	(a) National Rural Employment Programme (NREP)	1980
	(b) Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Scheme (RLEGP)	1981
	(c) Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA)	1983
7 th Five Year Plan (1985-90)	(a) Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY)	1989
8 th Five Year Plan (1992-97)	(a) Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS)	1993
	(b) National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)	1995

contd. table 2

<i>Plan Period</i>	<i>Programme</i>	<i>Year</i>
9 th Five Year Plan (1997-2002)	(a) Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY)	1999
	(b) Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)	1999
	(c) Indira Awas Yojana (IAY)	1999
	(d) Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana (PMGY)	1999
10 th Five Year Plan (2002-07)	(a) Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)	2005
	(b) National Rural Health Mission (NRHM)	2005
	(c) Rajiv Gandhi Vidyutikaran Yojana (RGVY)	2005
11 th Five Year Plan (2007-12)	(a) Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme	2008
	(b) National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP)	2009
12 th Five Year Plan (2012-2017)	(a) National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)	2013

Source: B.K. Prasad (2003), *Rural Development: Concepts, Approach and Strategy*, Sarup and Sons, New Delhi, pp. 61-64; internet.

An attempt has been made to look into the various factors that lead to the non-achievement of desired goals of these programmes. For this the programmes have been broadly classified into various categories, namely, self-employment, food safety, social protection, rural infrastructure and development, health, women and child development and wage employment programmes (Table 3). The focus is on central government schemes only; the difficult task of mapping the numerous programmes of the states could not be undertaken here.

Table 3
Classification of Various Rural Development Programmes

<i>Classification of Rural Development Programmes</i>	<i>Programmes</i>	<i>Main Objective</i>	<i>Lacunae / Problems</i>
Self-employment programmes	IRDP, SGSY, NRLM–Aajeevika	To provide vocational training to the unskilled for self-employment	Poor targeting – many non-poor managed to get the benefits. Poor implementation of the programmes. Non-involvement of PRIs. Attempt to develop an entrepreneur out of the unskilled landless labourers having no experience in managing an enterprise. Unviable projects undertaken and sub-critical investments made leading to collapse of micro-enterprises. Banks uninterested in providing credits to poor and landless farmers having no experience in entrepreneurship.

contd. table 3

<i>Classification of Rural Development Programmes</i>	<i>Programmes</i>	<i>Main Objective</i>	<i>Lacunae / Problems</i>
Food safety programmes	PDS, TPDS, UPDS	To provide food subsidy to the poor to tackle malnutrition and create demand for food grains thereby giving price-support to the farmers	Diversion of food grains to the open market. Low purchasing power of the poor made it difficult for the BPL families to buy large quantity of food grains at one time. Non-transparency in the selection of beneficiaries and complicated basis of selection lead to faulty targeting. Being a centralized procurement system, high administrative costs were incurred. Problems of wastage and pilferage.
Social protection programmes	NSAP (NOAPS, NFBS, NMBS), AABY, RSBY	To provide financial and social security to the destitutes and deserted; pregnant women, etc.	Inadequacy of funds. Unsatisfactory coverage and limited reach of the schemes. Under-utilization of funds.
Rural Infrastructure and Development programmes	Bharat Nirman Programme, IAY, PMGSY, Rural Drinking Water, TSC	For achieving higher degree of rural-urban integration and an even pattern of growth and opportunities for the poor and disadvantaged sections of society	Non-participation of beneficiaries in the selection of projects. Inactive involvement of PRIs, civil society in the schemes. Non-coordination between implementing agencies. Inadequacy of funds. Lack of trained manpower with the PRIs. Poor infrastructural development.
Health Programmes	NRHM, PMSSY, AYUSH, JSY	To provide accessible, affordable and quality healthcare to the rural population	Lack of availability of specialized doctors and well qualified staff in the rural health centres. Failure of government in attracting well qualified health practitioners to work in rural areas. Lack of motivation by the government to convince people to go to government health centres rather than traditional daayis, hakims and v aids. Limited access to timely and affordable health care.
Women and Child Development Programmes	ICDS, RGSEAG– Sabla, IGMSY, RSBY	To provide special attention to women and children due to their vulnerability and lack of access to resources	Poor Implementation. Weak Administrative machinery. Lack of infrastructure.

contd. table 3

<i>Classification of Rural Development Programmes</i>	<i>Programmes</i>	<i>Main Objective</i>	<i>Lacunae / Problems</i>
Wage employment programmes	NREP, RLEGP, JRY, JGSY, SGRY, MGNREGA	To provide employment opportunities during the lean agricultural season	Poor targeting. Poor implementation of the programmes. Administrative interferences and delays. Under-utilization of funds. Absence of community participation. Weak Administrative machinery. Lack of human and technical resources with PRIs. Lack of experience and incapacity of the PRIs. Embezzlement of funds.

Source: Compiled from various sources including internet.

It is evident that although the nature and objective of the programmes has been different, they suffered from similar kind of shortcomings and constraints (Table 3). These programmes suffered on account of poor targeting of beneficiaries, administrative delays, untrained human resources, inadequate financial resources, unavailability of technical resources, and lack of participation of the people, corrupt practices and faulty implementation. More specifically,

- (i) the targeting of the poor was the main problem. Many non-poor or richest among the poor reaped the benefits which resulted in lesser benefits reaching the poor.
- (ii) schemes were implemented with poor knowledge about the ground realities. Not much research was done to adjust or fit the programmes as per the local conditions and needs which lead to unviable projects.
- (iii) a number of agencies are involved in the planning and implementation of the schemes which lack coordination amongst themselves. Also, there is no central agency or official appointed to establish coordination between them.
- (iv) there were too many programmes prevailing under different authorities and agencies. The rural masses had difficulty in understanding the complexity and nuance of the various programmes and approaching concerned authorities for different schemes.
- (v) implementing authorities like panchayats lack human and technical resources needed for the implementation of the programmes.
- (vi) no effort was made by the government to encourage people to participate in the formulation and implementation of the programmes.
- (vii) no separate administrative apparatus was set-up to monitor or evaluate the programmes.

- (viii) there was no mechanism to involve PRIs or other implementing agencies in the programme or project plan formulation. In this aspect top-down approach was followed by the government.
- (ix) most of the programmes and schemes were centrally sponsored, so there was lack of will on the part of state governments to implement the programmes properly.
- (x) administrative interferences and delays led to under-utilization of funds, high administrative costs and corruption.
- (xi) the fund allocation for most of the programmes especially wage employment programmes reduced.

Amongst all the programmes of rural development, wage employment programmes deserve special mention as they are associated with curbing distress migration by providing employment opportunities locally. The wages offered in lieu of work widens the spending choice of rural masses. The wage employment programmes also instill a feeling of confidence and self-respect amongst the people as fear of hunger no longer prevails.

WAGE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMES

The provision of employment to the unskilled labour force in the rural areas is one of the means to undertake rural development. The development programmes, especially wage employment programmes help in self-sustenance of rural economy by providing employment locally and instilling a feeling of respect among rural population. An attempt has been made to look into the historical aspect of the wage employment programmes initiated after independence by the Government of India (Table 4).

But various studies have highlighted that wage employment programmes suffered on account of improper utilization of funds, low coverage of the targeted population, funds being utilized for capital intensive activities rather than labour intensive activities, lower days of wage employment (less than 30 days in a year), elite capture, corruption, lower women participation and so on (Government of India, 2006).

The programmes that appeared sound on paper could not be translated successfully into practice. The need was to review the planning and implementation aspects of the programmes. An effort in this direction was made for the first time by providing statutory base to an employment programme in the form of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2005.

MGNREGA provides guaranteed 100 days of on-demand wage employment to the unskilled labour force locally. The programme has priority for employment provision and creating durable assets for the rural economy. Being a guarantee and rights-based approach, it strengthens the bargaining power of the rural people. Also it ensures that if work on-demand is not provided within 15 days, unemployment allowance is paid.

Table 4
Wage Employment Programmes

<i>Programmes</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
Rural Manpower Programme (RMP)	1960-1969	To provide employment to 2.5 million persons in areas exposed to pronounced seasonal employment.
Cash Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE)	1971-1974	To provide employment to 1000 persons in 350 districts through labour intensive works and create durable assets.
Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP), Rural Works Programme (Later restricted as Area Development Programme)	1971-1973	To mitigate the severity of scarcity by organizing labour intensive and production oriented works so as to generate considerable employment.
Food for Work (FWP)	1977-1980	To generate gainful employment to a large number of unemployed and under-employed persons, both men and women in rural areas to improve their income and consequently their nutritional level. To create durable community assets and strengthen the rural infrastructure which will result in high production and better living standard in rural areas. To utilize surplus food grains for development of human resources.
National Rural Employment Programme (NREP)	1980-1989	To generate additional gainful employment; create durable community assets and raise nutritional standards of the poor.
Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP)	1983-1989	To provide 100 days of employment to at least one member of a landless household.
Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY)	1989-1999	To generate additional gainful employment for unemployed and under-employed through creation of rural economic infrastructure, community and social assets with an aim to improve quality of life in rural areas.
Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS)	1993-1999	To provide 100 days of assured employment to a person in 1752 backward blocks during lean agricultural periods in the form of manual work.
Food for Work Programme II	2000-2002	To augment food security through wage employment in drought affected rural areas.
Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY)	1999-2001	Creation of demand driven community village infrastructure including durable assets at the village level and assets to enable the rural poor to increase the opportunities for sustained employment. Generation of supplementary employment for unemployed poor in rural areas.
Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY)	2001	To provide wage employment, food security and creation of durable assets.

Source: Government of India (2002), *Drought 2002*, Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, New Delhi, p. 17.

MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT, 2005

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005, came into force on February 2, 2006 and was implemented in a phased manner. In Phase I, it was introduced in two hundred most backward districts of the country. It was implemented in an additional one hundred thirty districts during Phase II in 2007-2008. As per the initial target, MGNREGA was to be expanded countrywide in five years. However, in order to bring the whole nation under its safety net and keeping in view the demand, the scheme was extended to the remaining two hundred eighty-five districts of the country from April 1, 2008 in Phase III. MGNREGA has its genesis in the preceding wage employment programmes. The rights-based framework was inherited from Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Act 1977. MGNREGA made the demand factor a conscious strategy as a right to obtain employment. Financial obligations of both Centre and the states are a part of the legal framework. The MGNREGA guidelines also detail operational and administrative modalities of implementation seeking to address the limitations of the earlier wage employment programmes and placing greater emphasis on planning processes and Management Information System for improving data management. Apart from guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment, the Panchayati Raj Institutions have been vested with the responsibility of planning, implementation and monitoring of activities taken up under the scheme.

However, since the conditions for implementing the rights-based processes of the Act were not necessarily universally or equally present, the implementation of the Act, became the testing and training ground (Government of India, 2013). MGNREGA aims at enhancing the livelihood security of the people in rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment in a financial year, to a rural household whose members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The objective of the Act is to create durable assets, strengthen the livelihood resource base of the rural poor and to reinforce the commitment towards livelihood security in the rural areas. "For the first time, rural communities have been given not just a development programme but a regime of rights. The Act will unlock the potential of the rural poor to contribute to the reconstruction of their environment. By doing this it will accelerate the growth of the rural economy. MGNREGA provides for employment, income, livelihood and a chance to live a life of self-respect and dignity" (Government of India, 2009). Earlier MGNREGA provided employment under nine different heads, namely, rural connectivity; Bharat Nirman Rajeev Gandhi Sewa Kendra; water conservation and water harvesting; drought proofing; micro irrigation works; provision of irrigation facility to land owned by households belonging to the SC/ST, or to land of the beneficiaries of land reforms, or to land of the beneficiaries under the Indira Aawas Yojana/Below Poverty Line families; renovation of traditional water bodies; land development and flood-control and protection works. In year 2012, convergence of MGNREGA with other works happened due to which more works related to coastal areas, fisheries, rural drinking water and rural sanitation were added to its ambit along with above mentioned nine types of works.

SIGNIFICANCE OF MGNREGA

The significance of MGNREGA lies in the fact that it creates rights-based framework for wage employment programmes and makes the government legally accountable for providing employment to those who ask for it. It provides statutory guarantee or a legal base for wage employment. In this way, the legislation goes beyond providing a social safety net towards guaranteeing the right to employment (Government of India, 2007). MGNREGA also marks a paradigm shift from the previous wage employment programmes. Earlier wage employment programmes were allocation based. However, MGNREGA is not supply driven but demand driven. Employment is dependent upon the worker exercising the choice to apply for registration, obtain a job-card and seek employment through a written application for the time and duration that the worker wants. The legal guarantee has to be fulfilled within the time limit prescribed and this mandate is underpinned by the provision of unemployment allowance. The Act offers an incentive to the states for providing employment as ninety percent of the cost for employment provided is borne by the Centre. There is a concomitant disincentive for not providing employment if demanded, as the states then bear the double indemnity of unemployment and the cost of unemployment allowance. Resource transfer under MGNREGA is based on the demand for employment and this provides another critical incentive to states to leverage the Act to meet the employment needs of the poor. The public delivery system has been made accountable as an Annual Report on the outcomes of MGNREGA has to be presented by the Central Government to the Parliament and by the State Government to the State legislature. In 2008-09, around 10 crores job cards were issued and this number gradually increased to 13 crores in 2014-15. Similarly in 4.51 crores of household were provided employment in 2008-09 and with fluctuations this number stood at 3.60 crores households in 2014-15. In 2008-09, MGNREGA generated 216.32 crores person days while it decreased to 121.25 crores person days in 2014-15 (Table 5).

HOW MGNREGA IS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER WAGE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMES

- 1. Rights based Framework** – The adult members of a rural household who are willing to do unskilled manual work can demand employment as their right under MGNREGA.
- 2. Time bound Guarantee** – The Act provides for 15 days time period within which the employment has to be provided to the applicant otherwise, unemployment allowance has to be paid.
- 3. Employment** – Every household can seek employment for up to 100 days in a financial year depending on the actual demand.
- 4. Labour Intensive Works** – The wage and material ratio has to be within 60:40 limits for permissible works at the gram panchayat; no contractors or machinery is allowed under the Act.

Table 5
MGNREGA National Overview

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Total Job Cards issued in crores	10.01	11.25	11.98	12.50	13.06	13.15	13.00
Employment provided to household in crores	4.51	5.26	5.49	5.06	4.99	4.79	3.60
Persons days [in Crore]							
Total	216.32	283.59	257.15	218.76	230.48	220.22	121.25
SCs	63.36 (29%)	86.45 (30%)	78.76 (31%)	48.47 (22%)	51.21 (22%)	49.79 (23%)	27.51 (23%)
STs	55.02 (25%)	58.74 (21%)	53.62 (21%)	40.92 (19%)	41.00 (18%)	38.23 (17%)	20.18 (17%)
Women	103.57 (48%)	136.40 (48%)	122.74 (48%)	105.27 (48%)	118.23 (51%)	116.24 (53%)	67.32 (56%)
Others	97.95 (45%)	138.40 (49%)	124.78 (48%)	129.38 (59%)	138.27 (60%)	132.29 (60%)	73.57 (61%)
Person days per HH	48 days	54 days	47 days	43 days	46 days	46 days	34 days
Central Release in crores	29939.60	33506.61	35768.95	29189.77	30009.96	32743.68	26710.96
Total available fund (including OB) in crores	37397.06	49579.19	54172.14	48805.68	45630.50	42215.67	31467.58
Expenditure in crores (percentage against available funds)	27250.10 (73%)	37905.23 (76%)	39377.27 (73%)	37072.82 (76%)	39778.29 (87%)	38672.40 (92%)	26404.45 (84%)
Expenditure on Wages in crores	18200.03 (67%)	25579.32 (70%)	25686.53 (68%)	24306.22 (69.53%)	27153.53 (72%)	26647.54 (73%)	18859.16 (76%)
Total works taken up in lakhs	27.75	46.17	50.99	80.77	104.62	94.14	95.14
Works Completed		22.59	25.90	27.56	25.53	24.11	9.88
Works break up							
Water conservation	12.79 (46%)	23.43 (51%)	24.26 (48%)	48.81 (60%)	48.37 (46%)	31.53 (33%)	29.82 (31%)
Works on Individual Land	5.67 (20%)	7.73 (17%)	9.15 (18%)	9.16 (11%)	11.92 (11%)	12.78 (14%)	13.62 (14%)
Rural Connectivity	5.03 (18%)	7.64 (17%)	9.31 (18%)	13.86 (17%)	12.83 (12%)	14.46 (15%)	12.92 (14%)
Land Development	3.98 (15%)	6.38 (14%)	7.04 (14%)	6.32 (8%)	6.61 (6%)	6.06 (7%)	5.91 (6%)
Any other activity	0.28 (1%)	0.98 (2%)	1.06 (2%)	2.31 (3%)	9.84 (9%)	2.07 (2%)	2.05 (2%)
Bharat Nirman Rajiv Gandhi Seva Kendra	-	-	0.17 (0.33%)	0.29 (0.36%)	0.29 (0.28%)	0.34 (0.36%)	0.33 (0.34%)

Source: Government of India (2015), *MGNREGA – Report to the People: 2014-15*, Ministry of Rural Development, Department of Rural Development, New Delhi,

5. **Decentralized Planning** – The local bodies have been assigned a principal role in planning, implementation and monitoring of the scheme. The gram sabha is mandated to recommend works to be undertaken in the village and at least 50% of works has to be executed by the gram panchayats. The programme has been the single most important instrument for empowering gram panchayats.
6. **Work-site facilities** – The workers must be provided with various facilities at the worksites such as crèche, drinking water, first aid and shaded area for rest.
7. **Women empowerment** – The Act prescribe that at least one-third of beneficiaries should be women. The gender component of the programme has helped in improving socio-economic conditions of the women workers as they have wages on par with men without any gender discrimination. With an increased rate of participation and equal wages for women, there has been a positive impact on the economic well-being of women and children. The access to economic resources has a favourable impact on the social status of women. Women beneficiaries have control over their income due to direct transfer of wages in their bank accounts. With this control over finances they were more involved and also wielded influence in intra-household decision-making processes. Thus the change in socio-economic conditions of the women has positive impacts on children's education, food security and nutrition. Women have choice over spending of their wages on medicine, food, clothing, education of their children, which was missing earlier.
8. **Funding** – The Central Government has to bear 100% cost towards unskilled wages and 75% towards skilled, semi-skilled and material cost while 25 % of skilled, semi-skilled and material cost has to be contributed by the states. In addition, 6% administrative expenses are also to be borne by the Centre for effective implementation of the Act (Government of India, 2013). However, the study of MGNREGA in District Patiala of Punjab State suffered from many lacunae at all levels. Important administrative agencies responsible for implementing, monitoring and evaluating MGNREGA and thus recommending measures to improve its implementation had not been constituted. The Central Employment Guarantee Council, the apex body at the central level entrusted with the implementation of the programme in the country had not been appointed since 2012. At the state level also the Punjab State Employment Guarantee Council responsible for implementing MGNREGA in the state had not been re-constituted since the expiration of its term in 2013. The State Employment Guarantee Mission responsible for recruiting experts to establish a professional State Management Team had failed to appoint the required number of experts in important areas such as rights and entitlements, human resource development, knowledge management and learning, social inclusion, participatory planning process for livelihoods and convergence.

Similarly the Vigilance Cell responsible for receiving complaints or taking *suo-moto* action on media reports and conducting regular field visits to detect irregularities under MGNREGA has not been constituted at the state level. At the village level, the Vigilance

and Monitoring Committees were found to be largely dysfunctional. The field survey also revealed lack of adequate number of officials for implementing MGNREGA in the district. The Technical Assistants responsible for assisting gram panchayats for preparing work proposals and undertaking measurements of works had not been appointed in the district. Junior Engineers (Panchayati Raj) had been assigned additional duties for MGNREGA in the place of Technical Assistants. However, the JEs were not available in requisite numbers and believed themselves to be above the job. The shortage of TAs and JEs had an adverse impact not only on the shelf of works to be prepared by the gram panchayats but also on the measurement of works and wage payments of the workers. The number of Gram Rozgar Sahayaks was also inadequate in the district. The non-appointment of MGNREGA staff in adequate numbers has led to the over-burdening of the existing staff.

The study revealed that the training programmes conducted for the officials were irregular and unsystematic. Out of the 12 Sarpanches, 6 had never been exposed to any form of training. Similarly, out of the 8 GRS, only 3 were provided on-the-job training for 2-3 days by SIRD and that too after 10-12 months of their appointment. The APOs said that the training programmes had benefitted them and they were ready to undertake follow-up training programmes in the wake of increased ambit of MGNREGA works. However, more training programmes were not arranged due to the indifference of the senior officials towards training. Further, no training was provided to the mates while the volunteers of the Nehru Yuva Kendra in the district who conducted social audit were simply trained to fill-up the requisite proformas for social audit. This affected the implementation of the programmes in different ways.

Majority of the job-card holders were found to be unaware regarding the key provisions of the programme. In some cases, it was found that the officials had deliberately concealed the information from the people on certain fronts like unemployment allowance, travelling allowance, insurance, etc. Due to lack of information, people were unable to claim their entitlements. Further the non-involvement of civil society organizations and NGOs has also largely compromised the social mobilization in the district. The mechanisms of grievance redressal also failed to address a large number of complaints. No complaint boxes were installed at the block or district offices. The Ombudsman had also not been appointed in the district since 2012. Further, the workers were also not aware of the procedure to be followed for redressal of their complaints. Delay in payments to the workers is another impediment for the beneficiaries who have very few resources at their disposal. At pan India level it has been found that number of persondays generated in 2008-09 had decreased when compared with number of persondays generated in 2014-15 (Table 5). Keeping in mind the severe drought gripping the Central India, this is a disturbing trend.

CONCLUSION

Since the commencement of First Five-Year plan, the concern for rural development has led to the initiation of a number of schemes in this regard. However, in spite of nearly six

decades of planning, the battle for rural development remains to be successfully, fruitfully and meaningfully fought. Unfortunately, India has been unable to build rural development as a mass movement. The fruits of economic growth have not benefitted everyone uniformly. There are various reasons for this uneven development in the society.

Modern economy is technology driven and not labour-intensive. A large number of high quality goods and services are produced with fewer hands. In short, modern economy is not generating much employment and sometimes it displaces and replaces labour with machines and tools. Also, the modern education system is not tuned to the changing economic scenario. The large agricultural workforce in rural areas is not sustainable with dwindling cultivable land and use of modern methods of cultivation. As a result, the rural labour is pushed into cities in search of work; but as they do not have any employable skills in the urban formal sector, they often end up doing jobs in informal sector. Thus, the government needs to develop safety nets for such sections of society who have not reaped dividends of the development process and try to mainstream them. They need livelihood security in the form of wage employment to ensure a dignified survival (enshrined in Directive Principles of State Policy) and reduce distress migration.

Therefore, rural development must be organized to utilize the relatively unskilled human resources that are available in the rural areas by generating adequate employment opportunities. The various employment generating schemes initiated by the government should not only be able to generate employment but also strengthen the livelihood resource base and rural infrastructure simultaneously creating durable assets for the poor. The field survey revealed that the problem of implementation of MGNREGA is more of administration rather than planning. The uneven implementation across states points to the need to strengthen service delivery and improve governance structures. The implementing agencies at the central and state level must be constituted. The adequate number of officials needs to be appointed as per the provisions of the Act and provided adequate training. Their training must incorporate the concept of basic philosophy of the programme. The grievance redressal mechanisms must be strengthened in order to address complaints of the workers. Vigilance and Monitoring Committees must be made functional to realise the potential of MGNREGA as a game changer. Along with strengthening the administrative mechanisms it is recommended that there should be timely payments of wages so as to ensure financial and nutritional security of the workers. More works should be undertaken for generating more person days and creating durable rural assets for water harvesting and conservation so that vulnerability of droughts can be reduced.

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