

Role of MGNREGA in Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan

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Abstract:

“National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) enacted by legislation on August 25, 2005 and it was renamed as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on 2nd October 2009. The MGNREGA has completed ten years since its inception in India”. The aim of the scheme is to enhance livelihood security of the household in rural areas of the country by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed employment in every financial year of every household whose adult members voluntarily do the unskilled work.

The purpose of the study is to examine the women empowerment, issues and challenges and impact on MGNREGA scheme in India for boosting economic cycle for upcoming inflation crisis under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan announced by our union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman for Rs. 61,500 Crores in budget, revised with additional Rs. 40,000 Crores on 18th May 2020. Women participation is very high with 80% of the total beneficiaries under the scheme. The concept of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan has got wider popularity and acceptance in whole INDIA with the launching of decentralized planning in states. The study concludes that economically self-reliant India on MGNREGA scheme lays the basis for greater achievement in “Make in India” initiative and also for self-esteem. It has become a beacon of light in this COVID-19 Crisis along with uplifting inflation around the world and contributing substantially for improving country’s lifestyle and economic conditions.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Rural Development, Women Employment, Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan

Introduction:

In his famous talisman, Mahatma Gandhi urged us, in our moments of doubt, to recall the face of the poorest person we may have seen and ask ourselves whether the step we are contemplating is likely to be of any use to him or her. It is in this spirit that the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was launched in August 2005. It is perhaps the largest and most ambitious social security and public works program. While market-oriented reforms are necessary to generate faster growth

and larger public resources, they do not, on their own, guarantee participatory and equitable growth. Active social policies (such as the MGNREGA), far from detracting from economic reforms, complement them in an essential way. Notwithstanding some initial skepticism about the practicality and viability of this initiative, six years later, the basic soundness and high potential of the MGNREGA are well established.

The Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan is crucial for boosting up of economic cycle to develop new Self-Reliant India. MGNREGA have to empower rural people. In other words, “empowering rural people is a precondition for re-generating a good economic cycle. When rural people are empowered, society with stability along with their financial growth is assured to face the current crisis caused by COVID-19 pandemic”. The MGNREGA has positive impact on empowerment and employment pattern of rural people in recent years. It aims at enhancing livelihood security by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household, especially women. Women participation has increased significantly and perceived it giving them a sense of independence and security. Rural people play important role in the growth of the society as well as the country’s economy.

The definition of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan is actually different for different persons but there is an essential base that cannot change regardless of nationality, caste, color, profession etc. When rural category people support to empower themselves, the whole society is benefited and families are healthier with financial growth. Therefore, it is very important to empower rural areas. “The present review takes a critical look at the selected studies such as: Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, issues, challenges and unraveling various impacts of MGNREGA both at micro and macro level.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To investigate the impact of MGNREGA on rural empowerment in Bhiwandi, Thane, Maharashtra, India, under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
2. To identify the real issue and challenges faced by rural beneficiaries under MGNREGA in Bhiwandi, Thane, Maharashtra, India.
3. To make Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan effective by providing suggestions and recommendations for MGNREGA.

Methodology:

This research has been conducted by descriptive study. Primary and secondary data has been collected for this study. Questionnaire has been used for collecting Primary Data. Basically, the required materials have been derived from various journals, articles from newspaper, magazines, and web-sites which deal directly or indirectly with the topics related issues and challenges. After searching the important newspapers and web-sites, relevant information was collected and examined to address the objectives of the present study.

Progress and Achievements of MGNREGA in India:

For almost a decade of application, MGNREGA in India has been positive in ensuring livelihood for the deprived people in rural areas. During the year 2013-14, 3.8 crores households were given employment and a total of 135 crores person-days of employment have been produced. A budget delivery of Rs.12,000 crores has been made during the financial year 2007-08, Rs.30,000 cores in 2008-09, Rs. 39,100 crores in 2009-10 and 40,100 crores in 2010-11 respectively for execution of the scheme (*MoRD,2012*).

MGNREGA is currently the largest funded rural development program in India with an annual budget of USD 8.44 billion in 2019-20, compared to an initial budget of 1.6 billion in 2006-07. MGNREGA is operational in 34 out of the 36 states and Union Territories, and 691 of the 712 districts, which includes 6,918 blocks and 262,432 Gram Panchayats, the lowest tier of the Local Government system in India.

The economic stimulus relief package announced by the government is touted to be worth Rs.20 Lakh crores under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. The central government has now allocated an additional amount of Rs. 40,000 crore under MGNREGA Scheme:-

- This will help in generating nearly 300 crore person days in total under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.
- The government is addressing the need for more work including returning migrant workers in Monsoon season as well.
- Creation of larger number of durable and livelihood assets including water conservation assets to boost rural economy through higher production.

I. Issues in MGNREGA:

“MGNREGA aids in enrichment of agriculture productivity (through water harvesting, check dams, ground water recharging, improve moisture content, check in soil erosion and micro-irrigation), stemming of distress migration, increased access to markets and services through rural connectivity works, supplementing household income, increase in women workforce participation, ration, and the regeneration of natural resources”. India is one of the largest developing countries in the world. The economy of India fundamentally depends upon the cultivation sector. Yet today most of the people live in rural communities of India. Therefore the difficulties of the rural India are more important rather than the overall problems in India.

II. Challenges in MGNREGA:

The best performing states include Tripura, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Andhra Pradesh. The average performing states include Sikkim, Chhattisgarh, Meghalaya, Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The poor performing states include Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Rajasthan and Jharkhand. MGNREGA scheme need to access development opportunities through other programs for transiting from wage employment to sustainable

livelihood. MGNREGA wages play an important role in the financial life of the job card holder's family.

III. Impact of MGNREGA:

The programs like MGNREGA created a positive impact on increasing the quantum and level of employment. Agricultural incomes have been increased across the country, in which the impact of MGNREGA is considerable. The female agricultural wage rate became much higher than male wage rate. MGNREGA is providing employment to the tune of 18.1 % of the total household workers.

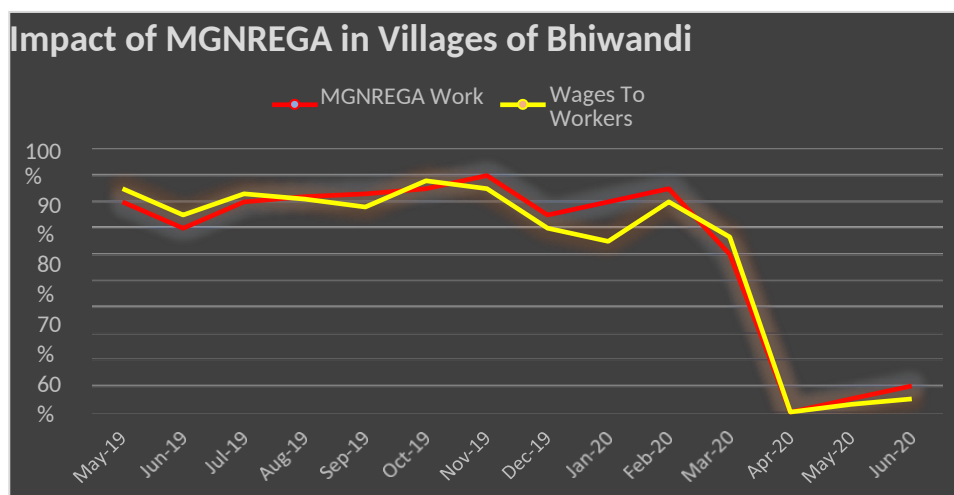
Analysis of the Study:

✓ Impact of MGNREGA in villages of Bhiwandi:

The cross-sectional study and focus based discussion program reveals that scheme like MGNREGA has created some sort of negative as well as positive impact on increasing the quantum and level of employment in nearby villages of Bhiwandi city (Thane district). The study has thrown light on the employment differences of underdeveloped and developed areas. The MGNREGA is a program which has been making opportunities for the people to enhance their economic condition but the tribal people of nearby villages of Bhiwandi are not getting benefit from the MGNREGA scheme properly. Providing only unskilled manual labour work through the scheme does not appear to be a strong idea for future. Provision for the skilled and semi-skilled workers should be implemented into the Scheme.

The study proved that there is an increase in the welfare of the family for both male and female workers like spending more for family, children's education and savings in bank/ post office after working. Since, lockdown period started from 23rd March 2020 MGNREGA work crashed and financial crisis arose in rural areas. Increasing lockdown period by social distancing due to COVID-19 pandemic has made the condition worst in all rural areas.

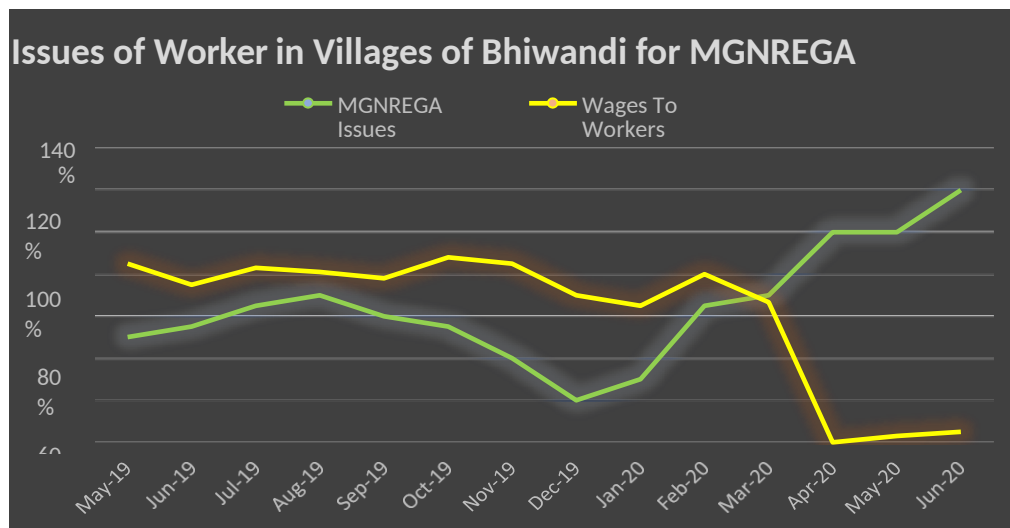
These can be explained with the help of below chart:



✓ Issues in MGNREGA in villages of Bhiwandi:

The cross-sectional study and focus based discussion on this program reveals that the scheme MGNREGA is facing several issues in nearby villages of Bhiwandi. The critical issues into processes such as registration, proof of application, problem of job cards, allocation for employment, application for employment, selection and execution of work, transparency, payment, staffing and monitoring etc.

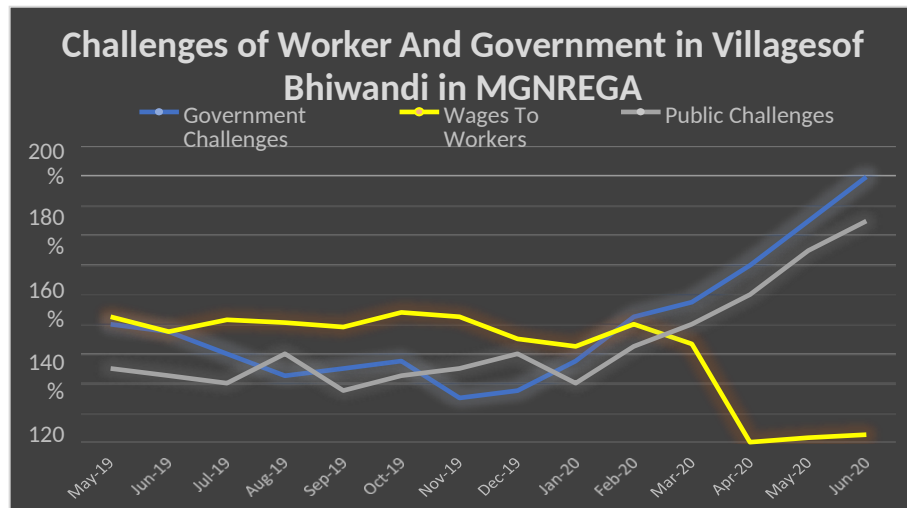
The study proves that there is lack of awareness amongst rural and tribal people in nearby villages of Bhiwandi which creates issues for getting wages. Here the administration department of MGNREGA is also crashed and closed since lockdown started from 23rd March 2020, which is crucial issue for rural workers for their wage payment in this COVID-19 pandemic situations. This can be explained with the help of below chart:



✓ Challenges in MGNREGA of village of Bhiwandi:

The cross-sectional study and focus based discussion on this program reveals that this act (MGNREGA) has been introduced aiming towards improving the purchasing power of rural people and to provide job to unskilled labours interested to work. The management aspect to implement MGNREGA effectively has been discussed with a view to provide employment according to intention of act, payment of remuneration to workers, and planning and inspection of work leaving behind no lapse. “Poor administrative, planning skills, inadequate awareness, plagued with discrimination, corruption and irregularities, delay in payment of wages. So far, works related to rainwater harvesting and conservation, desalting of canal distributaries, desalting and renovation of old ponds/tanks and digging up of new farm ponds are mainly being carried out under NREGA. There is a need of development in identifying/creating new employment chances and dovetailing various programs routed by the Central and the State Governments with NREGA”.

The study proved that “MGNREGA is perhaps the most ambitious anti-poverty scheme launched. It may be understood that the problems and challenges are from both, government and public”. Government in Poor administrative and planning skills, inadequate awareness, plagued with discrimination, corruption and irregularities, delay in payment of wages. Public inadequate awareness, no purposive spending, being unorganized in the nearby villages of bhiwandi. This can be explained with the help of below chart:



Conclusion of the Study:

This study concludes by an observation through analysis on rural empowerment, issues, challenges, and impact through MGNREGA, this act is leads to rural empowerment through active participation of rural public in this scheme. It has brought economic and social empowerment of women. MGNREGA has certainly empowered rural workers economically and socially, “Gender - Neutral Measures” has been adopted such as increase in participation of women in planning and social audits of MGNREGA implementation of better worksite facilities, proper payment of wages, planning of work in phases and speedy grievance redressal encouraged rural public to demand for more work under this scheme.

Generally, when income of a family increases, it has a profound impact on the expenditure pattern. It is evident from the data that 79.5% respondents were having mobile sets and 30% were possessing motor-cycles. Similarly, 33.5% households have T.V. sets and 88.5% have electricity connection in their dwelling units. This is a bright side of the story. But the other side of the picture is not so good. The data reveal that 83% households do not have gas connection in their kitchen and 90% of our sample households have no toilet facility in their dwelling units. Thus, a long way has to go to improve the quality of life at village level because the absence of these basic amenities to the households ultimately adversely affected the health front of the families. During the survey it was also noticed, they also found short duration and temporary migration among MGNREGA families. The female members of these households preferred local migration only.

Therefore, the assured employment in rural areas could certainly reduce out-migration. MGNREGA can certainly check distress related migration from rural areas.

Thus, study observed that the wage received by female-worker at migrated place was not different from the minimum MGNREGA wage. So, they use to work at every place actively. The increase in their income leads to increase in their expenditure will leads fluctuation in economy of India. Fluctuation and Cycling of currency help to boost Indian economy. So that the economic condition of India will again gain its pace quickly, which was the real motive behind Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. Work under the MGNREGA has been provided to 2.33 crore wagers in 1.87 lakh panchayats to benefit migrant workers, who are being actively enrolled. The Government had generated 14.62 crore person-days of work till May 13,2020 which was 40-50 per cent more as compared with May 2019. This is to help migrant labourers to find work who have returned to their home states due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Suggestions And Recommendations:

For improving the content of the scheme and for better implementation, the following suggestions are offered:

- Political interference is often reported to be prevalent both at the time of beginning and implementation of scheme. It is strongly suggested that such kind of political interference should be avoided by the politicians.
- The provision of food for women at work sites creates enthusiasm among women to participate in MGNREGA works.
- Women participation can be enhanced by appointing female supervisors on MGNREGA work and in conducting social audit.
- There is a low awareness among some women workers of MGNREGA. To come out of this anomaly more awareness campaigns have to be conducted to educate the people about the provisions of the program.

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