



Rural Infrastructural Development and Social Transformation under MGNREGA

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Abstract – Rural development is necessary for the overall development of the country. To develop the rural areas, various welfare schemes were introduced by the government of India. MGNREGA was one such scheme that was implemented to give guaranteed jobs to needy rural households with durable infrastructure development in the area. With its importance, the study examined the rural areas' infrastructural development and social transformation under MGNREGA. The study used the descriptive method to analyse the framed objective. Secondary sources such as journals, unpublished thesis, news reports, MGNREGA official websites, and other relevant works of literature were reviewed for the study. The study revealed that the various infrastructural development under the Act helps strengthen the rural bases. Its projected works such as water conservation, renovation of drainages system, dug well and ponds help in agricultural sectors and drinking water facilities in the areas. Some other promising infrastructural developments are road construction that helps in the easy access of goods and services and stores plant for storing final products of the farmers for future use. It also came to know that the social transformation of the rural areas could be possible when its people are economically empowered and live dignified life. All these could be possible only when the Act is implemented effectively and reach its benefits to the needy person. Therefore, proper implementation of the Act and following its guidelines are effective measures to bring infrastructural development and social transformation to the rural areas.

Keywords: Rural development, MGNREGA, Infrastructural development, social transformation, Rural areas.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rural development is a major concern for the overall development of the country. Its development could be termed a strategy for improving the quality of life and meeting the needs of rural residents, especially the vulnerable people. [1] The Ministry of Rural Development is the highest-level organization responsible for formulating rural development policies, regulations, and laws in India. [2] Since India got independent, various wage employment opportunities were introduced for the welfare of the rural people. However, inadequate fund utilisation and improper implementation lead to the failure of those schemes. After a series of implementations, MGNREGA came into being to empower the rural poor with employment opportunities with durable asset creation. The difference between MGNREGA and earlier employment generation programmes is that MGNREGA has a demand-driven approach, while earlier employment generation programs had a supply-driven approach. [3] Moreover, it is legally bound to guarantee rights for the workers who registered themselves under the Act. It provides equal wages for the same type of work irrespective of gender differences. So it is an ideal policy to close the gender differences, which would benefit men and women and the overall prosperity of rural regions. [4]

Since the introduction of MGNREGA, the focus on development has shifted to serving the lower castes and poorer households. [5] However, the irregular,



untimely distribution of wages and improper deliberation of wages create a lack of trust among the beneficiaries/workers towards the Act. People's expectations and beliefs about the Act that diminished in recent years were not surprised. It happened because of the irregular and mismanagement of funds by the implementing agencies. The Act's future is also heavily reliant on the scale of the long-term outcome measured in terms of sustainable rural asset creation and development rather than the Scheme's short-term financial benefits. [6]

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

MGNREGA is a gift for the people in rural areas, especially the poor rural workers who wish to work as unskilled manual labour. The Act was notified on 7 September 2005 by the government of India and came into force on 2 February 2006. Earlier it was known as National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. But on 2 October 2009, it was renamed Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. To benefit the entire poor rural population, MGNREGA was implemented phase by phase. In the first phase, 200 backward districts were covered. The second phase, which began on 1 April 2007, covered 130 districts, and the third phase covered all 615 districts of the country. Since its inception in 2006, approximately Rs 1 10,000 crores have been paid directly to rural households as wage payments, resulting in 1200 crore person-days of work. Since 2008, 5 crore families have gained employment each year. [3] The durable assets creation policy helps to form new income sources for the rural people. So, economic empowerment and the creation of durable assets could transform the social status of the rural people and the society at large. Therefore, the study examines the rural infrastructural development and social transformation of the rural areas under MGNREGA.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Naikoo and Aktar (2021) indicate that rural development programs like Animal Husbandry, agriculture, health, Rural Connectivity, and education bring significant results in increasing income and social empowerment in the District. It means that rural development programs succeeded in positively impacting the alleviation of poverty and the development of the socio-economic capacity of rural households. Angad Singh (n.d) reveals that People's participation is one of the foremost prerequisites of the development process, both from procedural and philosophical perspectives. He also put out the ineffective of the rural development program due to limited financial, workforce, and managerial resources as one of the factors for the ineffective implementation of the rural developmental programme. S. Parida et al. (2018) examined the impact of MGNREGA on rural development and the communication behavior of the respondents concerning MGNREGA. The study revealed that gender equality and communication are essential parts of sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction in rural areas. It further said that it would provide new information, ideas, and technologies to strengthen rural women. Vineeth Mathew (2018) revealed that MGNREGS has resulted in an overall increase in the beneficiaries' quality of life and the production of some socially beneficial assets. According to the study, successful implementation of the programme would help reduce rural poverty and unemployment while also assisting in establishing high-quality, long-lasting, and productive rural assets. Baladhndayutham (2016) in this study indicated that the MGNREGA



had the greatest impact on the rural poor's food security. It went on to say that this provided employees with enough purchasing power to cover a variety of expenses, such as paying debts, spending on children's health and education, and saving in chit funds, in addition to covering day-to-day family needs.

4. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are:

1. To access the role of MGNREGA in developing rural infrastructure.
2. To examine the social transformation of the rural areas under MGNREGA.

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the roles of MGNREGA in rural infrastructural development?
2. How MGNREGA helps in the social transformation of the rural areas?

6. METHODOLOGY

The study used both analytical and descriptive methods to examine the role of MGNREGA in rural infrastructural development and its impact on the social transformation of rural areas. Most of the data are gathered from secondary sources. Secondary data are collected from journals, unpublished thesis, news reports, articles, and the official website of the MGNREGA

7. ROLE OF MGNREGA IN RURAL INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural areas need durable infrastructural development to bring a life of prosperity and happiness to the people. Due to their various limitations, they could not develop their personal growth and development. Some of their limitations are lack of inter-village road connection, village to

town road connection, the market for their final product, stores plants, drinking water facilities, proper sanitation, irrigation facilities, and immediate/long-term measures to tackle natural calamities, etc. There might be other issues depending on the place where it belongs; the above mentioned factors are the most common.

Agriculture accounts for almost one-fifth of India's gross domestic GDP. Agriculture and allied sectors are the main sources of livelihood for the rural people. Even though it is seasonal and depends on the monsoon turnover, it still stands as an important source of income. Irregular monsoon sometimes brought flood or drought to the cultivation land. Such situations affect the normal production of goods in rural areas. Its impact got maximum to the vulnerable farmers who grew crops on another land. So, it requires the construction of proper irrigation channels, the creation of micro and minor irrigation, and the renovation of drains and traditional water bodies to facilitate enough water facilities for cultivation. The infrastructural development for water conservation, water harvesting, and other land development works like dug wells, ponds, etc., could improve the drinking water facilities and water management system in agricultural sectors. The Home Ministry addresses these cultivation and water conservation issues to be taken up as a priority work under the Act while resuming works after the pandemic, Covid-19. [7] Adequate water supply in agricultural sectors will help in increasing goods production. After cultivation, farmers look for a place to sell their final product. For this, they require an all-weather road link between villages and also between villages and towns in order to get their final product to market. Sometimes they also need a place to store their goods for future use. As a result, the MGNREGA plan for creating inter-road connections and food grain storage facilities (to execute the provisions of the National Food Security Act 2013) could alleviate some of these challenges. In terms of health, rural sanitation projects under MGNREGA works such as individual household latrines, school toilet units, and Anganwadi toilets



could achieve "open defecation free" status and solid & water management in the rural areas. Creation of infrastructure such as fish drying yards, storage facilities, and promotion of fisheries in seasonal water bodies on public land, promote income protection for fishers throughout the year. Moreover, the construction of playfields under the Act could bring physical fitness and mental strength to the rural people. It could also lead up a way for blooming new sportsperson in the areas. For disaster management, works like restoration of essential public infrastructure, including flood control works, providing drainage in water-logged areas, chaur renovation, and construction of storm water drains for coastal protection could help protect against the inconvenience impact of the natural calamities

8. ROLE OF MGNREGA IN SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE RURAL AREAS

Rural areas need social transformation to achieve the overall development of the country. Without rural development, we cannot count on the country's inclusive growth. The majority of the people living in the rural areas earn their living on a daily basis. Over and above, due to the large human population, they did not have enough employment opportunities in the areas. As a result, some of them migrated to the nearby cities to earn their empty plate. So, with limited income generation capacities, the social statuses of the rural people were below expectation. They could not participate in community gatherings or ceremonies in their locality. Right after independence, the government of India takes up various steps to minimise some of these difficulties for the rural people, especially the poor and vulnerable people. Among those, MGNREGA was one of them that provided guaranteed wages and employment to rural workers. Under this, social transformation of the rural areas could be possible through economic empowerment and asset creation projects. The guaranteed employment opportunities act as a

social safety net for the vulnerable families even during the lean period. Its provision of providing unemployment allowance and compensation for untimely distribution of wages legally bounded the government to act in a better way while executing. It instructs the government to address the urgent needs of rural distress through economic empowerment. If the expenditure level of the people improves, it could help in their children's education and the maintenance of their families. So, the Act can also be termed a people-centric Act as it provides work to the working people, especially the vulnerable people, with the right to life with dignity. [8] Therefore, the Act would greatly transform rural societies by reducing poverty and bringing the dignified socioeconomic status of the rural people through its multiplier effects. [9]

9. MAIN FINDING

It is learned from the study that MGNREGA could transform rural society into prosperity and development. Its infrastructural development under the planned project helps in the development of many rural sectors. Irrigation projects such as the creation of waterways and the restoration of older drains help in the greater production of goods. Furthermore, the Act's provision for the establishment of food grain storage facilities benefits the storage of food for future use. The creation of durable all-weather road connections supports the transportation of goods and services. Not only this, it makes an easy way for emergency patients to reach the hospital in time. The infrastructure development of sanitary work helps reduce open free defecation. Further, the creation of playfields helps in maintaining good physical health among the people. Thus, the changes in health behaviour might be regarded as indicators of the degree of rural transformation. [10] After joining the Act, the workers' social status increased. They could participate in community gathers as their expenditure level increased. They could send their



children to the school for learning. So through economic empowerment with durable asset creation, the social transformation of the rural societies could be seen in positive ways.

10. CONCLUSIONS

People in the rural areas, especially the poor, are those who have suffered a long list of struggles. Providing employment opportunities was opted as a basic necessity to uplift the economic and social wellbeing of the rural masses. Along with this, creating durable assets was also necessary to strengthen the economic foundations of the poor as it could generate more employment opportunities in the futures. Keeping an eye on these, the great leaders of the government of India, through the Minister of Rural Development, introduced MGNREGA that provided wage employment opportunities for the economically weaker section of the rural society alongside with the creation of durable rural assets that could facilitate them in the future. However, the influence of various MGNREGS activities on asset development is determined by their efficacy, reproductive capability, and usefulness of work completed. [11] So, if the Act is properly implemented, the chronic poverty, unemployment could be reducing to a reasonable level. This will help in boosting rural development and enhanced access to state resources. Therefore, MGNREGA must be implemented effectively. The workers/beneficiaries must also take active role in all its implementing process. At the same time, the social auditor must be assigned to audits every aspect of development projects taken up under the Act.

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