

A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE PERFORMANCE OF MGNREGA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO JORHAT DISTRICT, ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

The Govt. of India has been adopting a lot of programmes to address the problem of chronic poverty through “Right to work”. **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** is one of them which was passed in Indian parliament on August, 2005 which came into force on 2 February, 2006. The scheme provides livelihood security to the rural people by ensuring 100 days wage employment in a financial year. This paper deals with the comparative study on the performance of MGNREGA in Jorhat district of Assam. This study reflects how successful MGNREGA has been in carrying out its assigned tasks. Empirical study reveals that a total of 10541 works are not completed during the specified period (2020 - present) and the rate of completion of the works is 72.01%. This paper also presents a comparative analysis of how this scheme has provided employment opportunities to men and women. Results show that out of 54,684 total employments during the period (2023- till date) 57.08% is female. From this we can conclude that women participation under this scheme is higher as compared to men. In terms of income earned, a total of 1261.86649 lakh income is generated by women which are higher as compared with men. From this fact we can say that MGNREGA has the potential to improve the living standard of women and it can act as a source of livelihood security to them. Out of 57695 employment demanded by individuals more than 95% of individuals are able to get work under MGNREGA scheme. These data prove that this scheme will be effective enough in addressing burning issues like unemployment in the state.

KEYWORDS:

MGNREGA, Livelihood Security, Unemployment, Women participation

INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was introduced in Assam in 2006-07 in 7 districts as its first phase. Its coverage was extended to 6 more states in the second phase in 2007-08 and presently all the districts are covered under the scheme. A total of 70.2 lakh job cards are issued and 120.26 lakh workers are registered under this scheme in Assam. It is a remarkable programme of Indian government that directly touches the rural poor (**Deb, 2017**). Earlier it was known as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 which was renamed later as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). It aims at providing 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to undertake unskilled manual work. (**E.D. Shetty, 2008; 67**). MGNREGA is applicable in all the states of India, including Assam. In Assam, the scheme is widely implemented and it has provided employment opportunities to a large number of households (**Ahmed, 2016**). Under this scheme, job cards are issued to the households that are willing to participate in the scheme. The job cards contains the details of the members of the households who are eligible to work under the scheme. These households can seek employment in public projects such as water conservation and harvesting, land development, irrigation facilities etc. this scheme has been providing social and economic security to the rural households and has contributed significantly to the poverty reduction. The scheme has been successful in providing employment in drought- prone and ecologically degraded areas in Assam and contributed to natural resource management.

The scheme has been implemented in Jorhat district with an objective to provide job opportunities to rural households and uplift rural infrastructure. The scheme has played a significant role in creating

rural employment opportunities in the Jorhat district, especially during the lean agricultural season. Job cards enable rural peoples to seek employment in activities like building rural roads, digging wells, constructing dams etc. These projects are identified based on the developmental needs of the districts and job opportunities are provided accordingly. The wages paid under this scheme adhere to the minimum wage rate set by the state government and payment is made through the electronic transfer to the beneficiaries' bank account. Furthermore the scheme has provisions for payment of delayed wages with compensation in case of delays beyond the stipulated time period. It has also facilitated the creation of rural assets and infrastructure contributing to the overall development of the district.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sarkar and Kumar, (2011) in the paper titled “Impact of MGNREGA on reducing rural poverty and improving socio- economic status of rural poor: a study in Burdwan district of West Bengal” has examined the socio economic impact of MGNREGA on the rural poor who are who are mainly comprised of small and marginal farmers & agricultural labourers. This study shows significant impact of MGNREGA on socio economic variables like annual per capita income, monthly per capita expenditure, per capita savings, access to healthcare facility etc.

Rengasamy and Kumar (2012) in the paper titled “State level performance of MGNREGA in India: A comparative study” analyzed the state- wise performance of MGNREGA and its impact on various streams of agriculture and rural agricultural wages. It is found that MGNREGA has benefited the agricultural labourers not only directly, but also indirectly as the scheme pressured the Minimum Agricultural Wage Rate(MAWR) to be increased.

Ghose, (2015) in the paper titled “Addressing the employment challenge: India’s MGNREGA” examines the effects MGNREGA programme on employment, wages and incomes of the rural poor. It also considers its effect on overall growth of the economy.

Trailokya and Bhagirathi, (2015) in the paper titled “Employment Generation and social capital formation: A study on the impact of MGNREGA in Assam” highlights the positive impact of MGNREGA on the two very dimensions of development i.e. employment and social capital formation.

Das and Darshana (2016) in the paper titled “Role of MGNREGA in rural employment: A study of Barpeta district of Assam, India” states that MGNREGA have played a major role in providing women employment. This study focuses on the object and implementation of MGNREGA in rural areas.

Saikia et al. (2017) in the paper titled, “Impact of MGNREGA on Rural Livelihood in Assam with special reference to kamrup district of Assam” focuses on the implementation of the scheme. It deals with the importance of MGNREGA on rural development and also highlights the drawbacks of the scheme.

Chopra, (2019) in the paper titled “Taking care into account: Leveraging India’s MGNREGA for women’s empowerment” examines the gendered debates during the formulation of the act and analyses the gendered nature of its implementation. It concludes that true focus on women empowerment requires that women’s lived experiences are taken into account, especially those relating to their unpaid care responsibilities.

Anindita and Ruma, (2020) in the paper titled “ Role of MGNREGA in Rural Employment: A study on Rupiabathan Village, Nalbari District, Assam” attempts to assess the impact and effectiveness of the act in the Rupiabathan Village during the financial year 2017-18.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To show and analyze the efficiency of the scheme in performing its assigned tasks through work execution gap and work completion rate.
2. To give a comparative analysis of the participation of men and women under the scheme.
3. To show how successful this scheme has been in offering employment opportunities.

METHODOLOGY

In order to fulfill the objectives of the paper, the study has used various relevant secondary data provided by some research journals, articles and various websites of central and state governments of India. Various analytical tools like tables, bar graph and line graph are used to meet the objectives of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

In this section, focus is made on analyzing various dimensions regarding the progress of MGNREGA scheme in Jorhat district of Assam on the basis of some relevant secondary data. Under this section, whether this scheme has been able to do all the specified tasks, the gap between work completion, the rate of performance, demand for and supply of employment etc. are being discussed.

Table 1 shows the distribution of works and how much of them are completed from financial year 2020 to present. It is clearly visible from the table that a total of 38774 works have been started during the specified period and out of them 28233 works have been completed. In other words 27.19% of the assigned works are left undone. Although the rate of incompleteness of works is small it could be a possible limitation of the scheme. Comparatively, the progress of the scheme during the financial year 2020-21 is more satisfactory than other periods since the amount of incomplete works under this period is negligible. Moreover, the number of assigned works is also greater than other periods. During the financial year 2021-2022 the volume of total number of initiated works is less as compared to other periods which is 1950 and out of which only 1179 works are completed.

Table 1: Works completion under MGNREGA scheme from 2020 to present

S. No	Block	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024		Total	
		No. of work started	No. of work completed	No. of work started	No. of work completed	No. of work started	No. of work completed	No. of work started	No. of work completed	No. of work started	No. of work completed
1	Jorhat	3762	3762	252	252	3612	2059	855	42	8481	6115
2	Jorhat central	1585	1582	196	115	2316	2190	296	153	4393	4040
3	Jorhat east	1607	1604	205	133	1867	1165	142	3	3821	2905
4	Kaliapani	1958	1910	143	44	1676	385	518	7	4295	2346
5	North west Jorhat	4022	3942	612	251	2096	1335	1694	265	8424	5793
6	Titabar	3751	3733	542	384	4570	2916	497	1	9360	7034
Total		16685	16533	1950	1179	16137	10050	4002	471	38774	28233

Source: Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India

Table-2 deals with the work completion gap and completion rate under MGNREGA scheme across six blocks from 2020-21 to present. As it is distinct from the table that the performance of the scheme is better in the financial year 2020-21 where the work completion rate is 99.09% which means that the number of incomplete works is negligible. It also shows the efficiency of the scheme in performing its assigned tasks. Except 2020-21, in all the financial years the rate at which works have been completed is not much satisfactory. Almost 40% of the works are left undone in the financial years 2021-22 and

2022-23. The current financial year till date is facing the worst performance as out of 4002 works only 471 have been completed. It means almost 88% of the works are still in the incomplete list. From this fact we can expect its performance to be decreased in the present financial year. The work completion gap is much higher in the financial year 2022-23 which is 6087. It indicates the inefficiency of the scheme to complete the initiated works. A total of 10541 works are not completed during the specified period and the rate of completion of the works is 72.01%.

Table2: Work completion gap and rate

S. N O	Block	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024		Total	
		Gap	Completion rate	Gap	Completion rate	Gap	Completion rate	Gap	Completion rate	Gap	Completion rate
1	Jorhat	0	100	0	100	1553	57	813	4.91	2366	72.1
2	Jorhat central	3	99.81	81	58.67	126	94.56	143	51.69	353	91.96
3	Jorhat East	3	99.81	72	64.88	702	62.4	139	2.11	916	76.03
4	Kaliapani	48	97.55	99	30.77	1291	22.97	511	1.35	1949	54.62
5	North west Jorhat	80	98.01	361	41.01	761	63.69	1429	15.64	2631	68.77
6	Titabar	18	99.52	158	70.85	1654	63.81	496	0.2	2326	75.15
Total		152	99.09	771	60.46	6087	62.28	3531	11.77	10541	72.81

Source: Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India

On the basis of the data obtained from the above two tables following figures are drawn. The first diagram relates to the work completion gap. The bar in case of 2020-21 financial year is very close to zero which means that during the year almost all the initiated works have been completed. It is obvious from the table that the work completion gap has been increasing after that period and it is highest during the 2022-23. We can say that the performance of the scheme has been decreasing gradually and its improvement is urgently needed. On the other hand second diagram depicts a comparative analysis of performance of the scheme between Assam and Jorhat district. It is clearly visible from the fig2 that during 2020-21 the work completion rate is satisfactory to both. The red line shows the trend of work completion rate of Assam from 2020 to present. The down ward sloping line shows that the completion rate is decreasing over the specified time period. Although the line representing Jorhat district is downward sloping it is still lies above the red line which indicates that as compared to Assam the performance of the MGNREGA in Jorhat is somewhat better. During the current financial year the completion rate is almost same for both Assam and Jorhat. But in 2022-23 the difference between work completion rate in Assam and Jorhat is much higher as indicated by the greater vertical distance between the two lines.

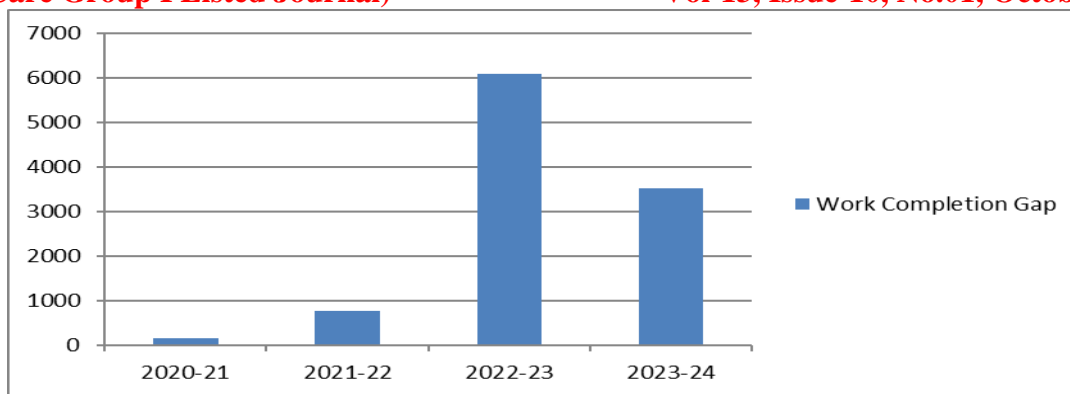


Fig 1- Work Completion Gap

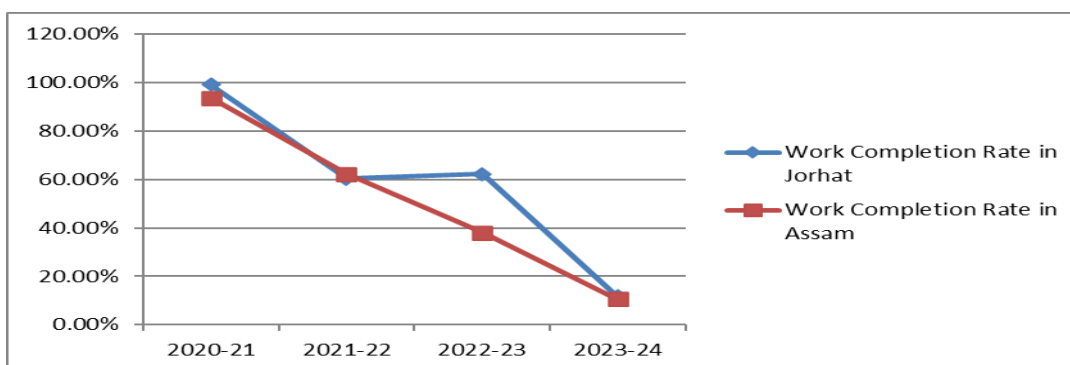


Fig 2- Work Completion Rate in Assam and Jorhat

Women participation in MGNREGA

MGNREGA has brought about a positive transformation in the lives of many women in the region by providing employment opportunities. Many women have become economically independent and this scheme makes it possible for them to contribute financially to run their families. Moreover this scheme has improved the living standard of women by ensuring equal work opportunities and equal pay for all. Table 3 shows the employment scenario under different work categories during 2023-24. It is distinct from the table that 10596 women are employed in irrigation facilities to SC/ST/IAY/LR whereas the number of men employment is 10526. In all the work categories the female employment outnumbered male employment. In case of irrigation camels the number of female employment is more than that of male by 3557. Out of 54,684 total employments during the period 57.08% is female. From this we can conclude that women participation under this scheme is higher as compared to men. In terms of person days generated it is higher in case of women than men. There exists a gap of about 1 lakh person days between female and male which is clearly visible from the table. With regard to income earned, a total of 1261.86649 lakh income is generated by women which is higher as compared with men. From this fact we can say that MGNREGA has the potential to improve the living standard of women and it can act as a source of livelihood security to them.

Table3: work category wise women employment provided for the financial year2023-24

Work category	Worker employed		Persondays (in lakh)		Amount earned(in lakh)	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Rural connectivity	66	27	0.00889	0.00303	2.11582	0.72114
Water conservation and harvesting	4554	2985	0.47654	0.31653	113.19079	75.22693
Renovation of traditional water bodies	506	321	0.04468	0.03073	10.63384	7.31374
Flood control	2307	1811	0.23919	0.21929	56.92722	52.19102

Drought proofing	1242	912	0.11648	0.08552	27.72224	20.35376
Irrigation canal	7099	3542	0.83543	0.39001	198.38697	92.62397
Irrigation facilities to SC/ST/IAY/LR	10596	10526	3.04502	2.88697	724.55268	686.92001
Land development	4138	2817	0.47904	0.33755	113.80941	80.16723
Bharat Nirman Rajeev Gandhi Sewa Kendra	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coastal areas	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rural drinking water	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fisheries	691	508	0.06083	0.05153	14.47754	12.26414
Rural sanitation	18	18	0.00021	0.00028	0.04998	0.06664
Other works	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	31217	23467	5.30631	4.32144	1261.86649	1027.84858

Source: Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India

On the basis of the data obtained from the table, a pie chart is prepared in fig-3 which shows how women are being offered varieties of work opportunities. It is clearly visible from the chart that irrigation facilities involve most of the available women employers followed by irrigation canals, Water conservation and harvesting, land development etc. MGNREGA helps women in creating social assets. MGNREGA has brought about a large number of women to the labour market and has strengthened them to perform large scale economic activities. Through this scheme women are able to contribute to burning issues of the state life flood control, rural sanitation, rural connectivity ect. Since the scheme provide employment locally therefore the participation of women is much higher and it enables women to spend on their health which in turn leads to the improvement of overall health status of women in the region.

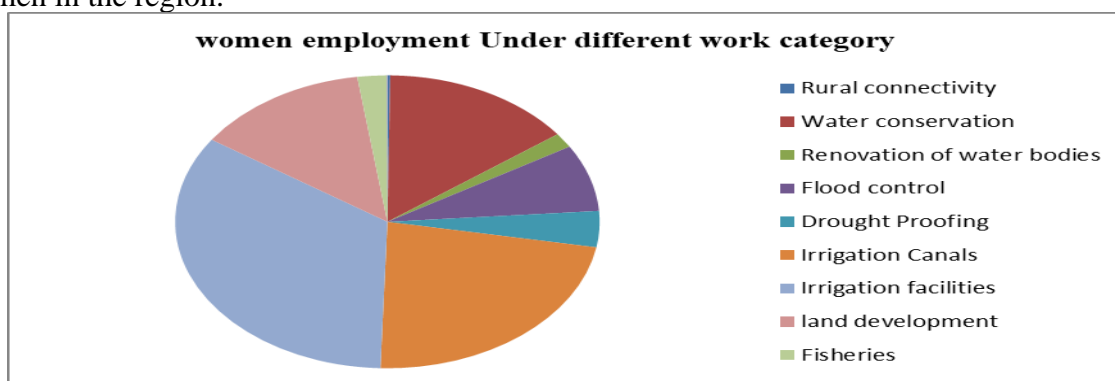


Fig 3- Women Employment under Different Work Category

Demand for and Supply of Employment under MGNREGA during 2023-24

The effectiveness of the MGNREGA scheme lies in the fact that there is no huge gap between demand for and supply of employment under MGNREGA as depicted by the table-4. In other words all those who wish to take employment under the scheme are able to get it. As it is distinct from the table that during the year total employment demanded by households is 46560 and out of which 46517 households are offered employments. This indicates the proficiency of the scheme in providing employments to a large section of the people. Out of 57695 employment demanded by individuals more than 95% of individuals are able to get work under MGNREGA scheme. These data are used to draw a bar graph as shown in the fig-4 which reveals that across all the blocks there are no any huge gap between employment demanded and offered. The persons and households who are unable to get work opportunities are negligible in amount. Based on these data, we can conclude that this scheme can go a long way in reducing the problem of unemployment especially in the rural areas.

Table 4: Employment demanded and employment offered during 2023-24

Block	Employment Demanded		Employment offered	
	Households	Persons	Households	Persons
Jorhat	15058	17121	15040	17102
Jorhat central	4234	5045	4234	5045
Jorhat East	6566	7625	6557	7612
Kaliapani	4353	6182	4350	6177
North west Jorhat	7327	10342	7316	10324
Titabar	9022	11380	9020	11376
Total	46560	57695	46517	57636

Source: Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India

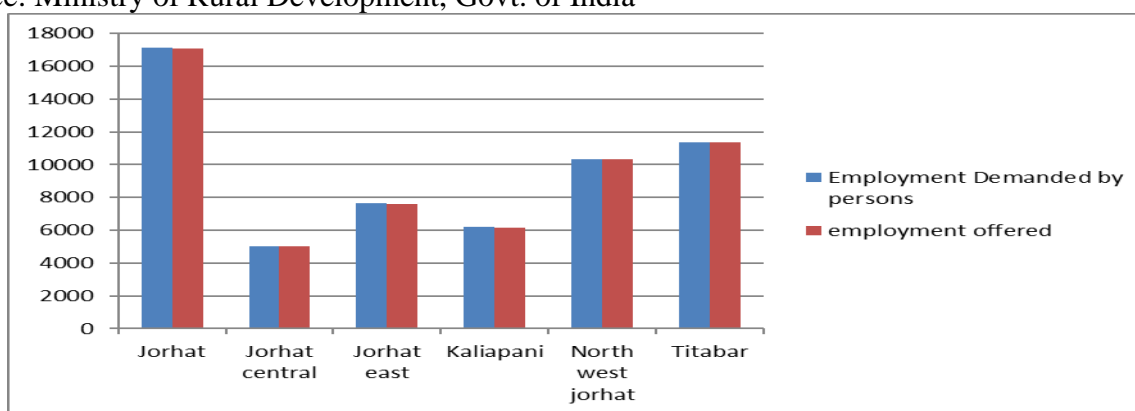


Fig 4- Demand and Supply of Employment

CONCLUSION

The study has analyzed the trend of work completion gap and work completion rate of MGNREGA scheme in Jorhat district of Assam. Results show that during the period (2020- present) the work completion rates have been decreasing which indicates the poor performance of the scheme in performing its assigned tasks. On the other hand the work completion gap also starts increasing which reveals that most of the assigned works are left undone. Despite these limitations, the overall work completion rate is satisfactory which is 72.81%. This shows the efficiency of the scheme in the study area. The secondary data also reveals that the scheme has been successful in ensuring effective participation of women in different kinds of economic activities which helps in asset creation and rural development. After analyzing the data it is found that the participation of women is higher than that of men which can help in women empowerment to a greater extent. By ensuring equal pay as men this scheme also acts as a source of livelihood generation and economic security of the women and has significantly contributed to improved standard of living of rural women. In terms of providing employment opportunities this scheme is highly effective. Study reveals that out of 57695 employment demanded by individuals more than 95% of individuals are able to get work under MGNREGA scheme which indicates its efficiency in creating employment opportunities. On the basis of the results, we can conclude that this scheme can go a long way in addressing the problems like unemployment, poverty, rural; development etc.

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