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Study in the awareness level and constraints of the beneficiaries of MGNREGA scheme in Dimapur District of Nagaland

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Abstract

The present study determines the awareness level and the constraints faced by farmers and government officials in the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme in the Dimapur district of Nagaland. The field study was conducted with the objectives to study the awareness level of the respondents and the constraints faced by the beneficiaries and government officials during the implementation of the MGNREGA scheme. Findings revealed that the awareness level was medium and two major problems that were faced by the beneficiaries were the unavailability of 100's days' work and the delay of the payment of the MGNREGA wages. The government officials expressed the problem of the non-availability of the fund in the treasury at the proper time and also not being provided with the required fund meet for the payment of MGNREGA. It was for this reason that a total of 100 days of work could not be provided due to lack of funds for the total of 100 days. As a result, suggestions were made to tackle such problems through proper administration and monitoring mechanisms. Establishment of proper payment process to ensure timely disbursement of wages to workers and also creating awareness so that there will be active participation of the workers in the planning and implementation processes thereby fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility which can be achieved through community mobilization, training programs, and the establishment of transparent and participatory decision-making structures and thereby, fulfilling its vision of empowering rural communities and reducing poverty in India.

Keywords: Awareness level, constraints, beneficiaries, government officials, MGNREGA

1. Introduction

The existence of unemployment in the nation is one of the main causes of the imbalance in the wealth of the country, as a significant portion of the country's rural population depends on agriculture and related sectors for their daily sustenance. The wages earned through casual, manual, and unskilled employment are the main source of income for the rural poor in India [1]. There were several acts before the MGNREGA which focused on alleviating rural poverty through creating employment in rural areas. Several schemes such as RMP, CSRE, PIREP, MFALS, FWP, NREP and RLEGP) were adopted and implemented on a national scale. To gather job generation, infrastructure patterns and meal safety in the rural areas, the government built in NREP and RLEP into a brand new scheme the Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY) in the year 1989. Later on 1st April 1999, the JRY was renamed to Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) with a similar objective. In 2001, it was merged with SGRY. Even after the implementation of these schemes and efforts were made by the Government, still, a very large number of the population were not engaging themselves in rural development activities. These programmes were proved to be a failure mainly due to lack of sufficient available resources and many constraints like a lack of planned approach and confinement to mere subsidy-providing programmes. On August 2005, the NREGA scheme was passed in India which was first suggested and conceptualised by the then Prime Minister P.V Narasimha Rao in 1991 and finally it was enacted in September 2005. It was later renamed by the Government of India as MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) on 2nd October 2009 [2].

The MGNREGA aims to provide employment opportunities to rural households and address the issue of poverty and unemployment in rural India. The scheme guarantees 100 days of wage employment to each rural household in a financial year, with a focus on unskilled labour [3]. Initially, the MGNREGA scheme was implemented in 625 districts of India. On 2nd February 2006, the first phase of the scheme was introduced in 200 backward districts. An addition of 130 rural districts was extended to the first phase from 2007-08 and the remaining districts were implemented from 1st April 2008. The scheme enabled the rural people in having livelihood security by providing employment. The scheme also provided auxiliary objectives like the creation of assets and empowering the rural people thereby improving the standard of living of the poorer sections of the country [4, 5]. According to the census of 2001, Nagaland with a population of 19.81 constituted 0.19% of the country's total population. Out of which 71.14% were from rural areas having a literacy rate of 67.11% and 36.82% of the rural area population of Nagaland were living below the poverty line. As stated by C. Rangarajan, India's poverty rate in 2011*12 was 29.5%. The overall poverty rate for the state of Nagaland was 14%. Recently, the Indian government highlighted Nagaland as having the best upward trend in poverty levels, with 4.1 lakh people living below the poverty line in 2009-10, compared to 1.7 lakhs in 2004-2005 [6].

Keeping these in view, a field study was conducted with the objectives

1. To find out the awareness of the respondents about MGNREGA.
2. To study the constraints faced by the beneficiaries and the government officials during the implementation of the MGNREGA scheme.

2. Materials and Methods

The current investigation was conducted in Dimapur district of Nagaland state during 2019-20. Nagaland has 11 districts and the location which was chosen for study is its 8th district, Dimapur. The most populated district of Nagaland, Dimapur has been selected purposively for the study since it was included in the 3rd phase of MNREGA which is the last phase and the most recent one. The district of Dimapur has 6 blocks. Out of 6 blocks, Chumukedima and Medziphema block was selected for the study. From Chumukedima block, Chumukedima village and Unity village were selected and from Medziphema block, Khaibung and Seithekiema C villages were selected. 25 respondents were taken from every village. Thus, a total of 100 respondents (from 4 villages of 2 blocks) were taken for the study. Data was collected through a well-structured schedule from the 100 beneficiaries and available officials concerned with MGNREGA at the district level, block level and village level. Data was also collected from secondary sources (from Rural Department Office records, the official website and the MGNREGA scheme records). The analysis of the collected data was done by using frequency, percentage and mean methods.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Awareness of the respondents about MGNREGA activities

The awareness level of the people is a factor that will influence people to participate in the MGNREGA scheme. The data regarding the level of awareness of the respondents have been shown in Table 8.

Table 1: Determination of the level of awareness of the respondents

Sl. No.	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
1	Unaware	11	11
2	Moderately aware	87	87
3	Significantly aware	2	2

Mean=3.36

Table 1 reveals that most of the beneficiaries (87.00%) were moderately aware while 11.00 per cent had no awareness and 2.00% were significantly aware. The result of the study showed that the respondents of the study area were moderately aware as compared to the study in West Bengal where 80-90 per cent of the rural people were found to be aware of the NREGA scheme due to the efforts of the Panchayats to create awareness about NREGA through NRGEA campaigns [7]. The current study also observed that

people with lower education levels had lower awareness regarding the MGNREGA scheme.

3.1.1 Source of information.

The source of information is not the same for all the beneficiaries. The data for the source of information of MGNREGA by the beneficiaries have been presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Arrangement of the respondents according to their source of information

SL. No.	Block	Village	Sample Size (N) = 100				
			Peer group	Govt. officials	Extension workers	Media	Others (Specify)
1.	Chumukedima	Village 1	4	21	0	0	0
		Village 2	3	22	0	0	0
2.	Medziphema	Village 3	0	17	8	0	0
		Village 4	0	15	10	0	0
Frequency			7	75	18	0	0
Percentage Total (%)			7	75	18	0	0

Table 2 states that the majority of the beneficiaries (75.00 per cent) received knowledge about MGNREGA through government officials, followed by extension workers (18.00 per cent) and 7.00 per cent from their peer group.

3.2. Constraints faced by the beneficiaries and government officials in the implementation of the MGNREGA scheme

3.2.1. Constraints faced by the beneficiaries in the implementation of MGNREGA in the study area

The constraints encountered by the beneficiaries in the implementation of MGNREGA in both the villages under Chumukedima block and Medzephema block have been depicted in Table 3. The table reveals that 100% of the beneficiaries have problems with the availability of 100 days' work under the MGNREGA and also delays in the payment of the MGNREGA wages. The beneficiaries of the MGNREGA scheme in the study area claimed that in a year, there was hardly 20 days of work available to them. Many workers have experienced delays in receiving their wages, which not only hampers their livelihoods but also undermines the scheme's objective of providing immediate relief to the rural poor. Although the study points out that there was an improvement in their income, it was found so because of the fact that the beneficiaries will get a bulk amount of money altogether (3000/- for the year 2019-2020) irrespective of the number of days they worked. This clearly shows the lack of administration and monitoring at the state, district and village levels.

The next major constraint (47% of the beneficiaries agreed) was the fact that they were not getting the correct wages per day's work. And this may be due to the reason that the beneficiaries were unaware of the amount of per day's wage that they are supposed to get and also they were unaware of the proper functioning of the MGNREGA scheme.

About 21% of the beneficiaries stated that they have problems in the submission of work and work allotment. Majority of the respondents didn't have any issues regarding this matter as most of the paperwork was done by the village president or the one in charge of handling the scheme. However, this was found to be an issue as the beneficiaries lacked the proper knowledge and had to dependent everything on somebody for such a matter. It was also found that 6% of the beneficiaries had problems at the work site. None of the beneficiaries had any problem in getting a job card which again points to the fact that since they were depending on someone to do the work for them, this matter wasn't much of an issue for the beneficiaries. It was also found that there was no discrimination between men and women.

Table 3: Constraints faced by the beneficiaries in the implementation of MGNREGA

SL. No	Problems faced by the beneficiaries	Chumukedima Block		Medzephima Block		Total	Rank
		Village 1	Village 2	Village 3	Village 4		
1	Non-availability of 100 day's work	25	25	25	25	100	I
2	Delay in wage payment	25	25	25	25	100	I
3	Getting job cards	0	0	0	0	0	V
4	Submission of work application and work allotment	7	11	10	3	21	III
5	In getting correct wages per day	12	10	14	11	47	II
6	Discrimination between men and women	0	0	0	0	0	V
7	Work site problems	2	0	3	1	6	IV

3.2.2. Constraints faced by the government officials in the implementation of MGNREGA

In interviewing the Government Officials from each village, the answers obtained were uniform in all. The constraint faced by government officials in the implementation of MGNREGA in the study area has been depicted in Table 4. According to the table, it is observed that the main problem that the officials have is that the funds are not available in the treasury on time. One more problem was that they did not receive the mandatory amount of funds to meet the wage fee for the

MGNREGA workers. In terms of funding and coverage, MGNREGA is the largest rural development programme in the world. It requires the implementing officers to devote enough time to it. The implementing and supervisory personnel, such as BDOs, Project Directors, and district collectors, are seen to be overworked with other administrative and developmental tasks. As a result, these officers are unable to devote adequate time to this initiative, which lowers the effectiveness of its execution and oversight.

Table 4: Constraints faced by the officials in the implementation of MGNREGA

SL. No.	Constraints faced by the government officials	Chumukedima block		Medzephima block	
		Village 1	Village 2	Village 3	Village 4
1	Do you face any pressure from outside to make a job card?	No	No	No	No
2	Do you pay wages to any household with the power which is registered but does not participate in MGNREGA?	No	No	No	No
3	Is any support/aid provided for you for making a yearly work budget?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	Are funds from the treasury made available at proper time?	No	No	No	No
5	Are you provided with the mandatory fund for the payment of MGNREGA wages?	No	No	No	No

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme has undoubtedly played a crucial role in addressing rural poverty and providing employment opportunities in India. However, it is evident that the program faces several significant challenges that need to be addressed for its effective implementation and long-term success. This issue can be attributed to administrative inefficiencies, corruption, and the lack of proper monitoring mechanisms. It is imperative that the government takes proactive steps to streamline the payment process and ensure timely disbursement of wages to

the workers. Sustainability is also a crucial concern. To ensure the long-term sustainability of the scheme, efforts should be made to generate demand through increased awareness, skill development, and the creation of productive assets that have a lasting impact on rural development. Lastly, extensive awareness campaigns must be conducted to educate rural communities about the benefits and provisions of the MGNREGA scheme. Active participation of villagers must be encouraged in the planning and implementation processes, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility. This can be achieved through community mobilization, training programs, and the establishment of transparent and participatory

decision-making structures, thus strengthening the impact of MGNREGA and fulfilling its vision of empowering rural communities and reducing poverty in India.

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