

## **The Role of MGNREGA: an Initiative of rural development, Goa**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is to enhance livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of manual wage employment to every household in a year. The most important and primary intention of the scheme is to eliminate poverty by providing fruitful guaranteed wage employment, strengthening natural resource management and an act in opposition to unemployment for the betterment of overall sustainability, it includes sustainability of the economy, agriculture, forest, income, health and many more ideas and principles of sustainable development, then it would be able to transform the face of rural India. The government of India enacted the National Rural Employment Act in the year 2005, to provide minimum days of employment to a registered, demanded household, of which the main purpose was to look out at the efficacy of this MGRNEGA in achieving the goals of development. This paper attempts to assess the prospective and consecutive of sustainable development in connection with MG-NREGA.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Goa is the smallest state in terms of area, located on the west coast of India and the fourth smallest state in terms of population. It is situated on the slopes of the Western Ghats. It is bounded on the North by Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra, on the East by Belgaum, on the South by Karwar Districts of Karnataka, and on the west by Arabian Sea. It has scenic natural beauty, attractive beaches, and distinctive architecture, feasts and festivals of a unique culture. The state has a geographical area of approximately 3,702 sq km. Estuary entrances and rocky capes along the palm-fringed beaches are the typical geographical feature of Goa. Also, there are wetlands at Carambolim. It has six rivers - Tiracol, Chapora, Mandovi, Zuari, Sal and Talpona. They originate from the Sahayadri mountain ranges and flow westward into the Arabian Sea. It has a long coastline with a length of 105 kms.

### **GOA PROFILE**

The state is distributed among its two districts and 11 talukas (local sub districts). Each of the State's thirteen tehsils (revenue centres) has an industrial estate, an industrial training institute and higher secondary level education facilities.

The capital city of Panjim is located on the banks of the Mandovi River. Vasco, Margao, Mapusa and Ponda are the other major towns.

**Table –I** Key Indicators of Goa

Sr.No.	Item (General)	Goa	India
1	Population* (in lakhs)	13.48	1028.61
2	Density of population (persons per sq.km).	363	324
3	Sex ratio* (females per 1000 males)	960	933
4	Urban population to total population* (%)	49.76	38.4
5	Decadal Growth Rate (1999-2001)	14.89	21.34
6	Geographical area (sq.km)	3702	3166285.0
7	Coastline (km.)	101	7,000
8	Total Forest Area (sq.km)	1,224 (33.06%)	774,740 (23.57%)

Source: \*Census, 2001. \*2001-02

Economic development brings about improvement in health and social factors. An analysis of Table 1.1 gives us some important facts about the status of Goa in comparison to India. Goa has a sex ratio of 960, which is much better than the national average of 933. Goa is the smallest state in India but the forest area 33.06% and that is much better than national forest area.

**Table: II** Human Development Indicators for Goa

Sr. No.	Human Development Indicators	Goa	India
1	Population served per Hospital (2004)	9054	61810
2	Hospital beds (per 1000 population)	3.79	.70**
3	Birth Rate	15.95	26.4
4	Death Rate	7.46	8.8
5	Infant Mortality Rate	12.40	70.5
6	Literacy Rate (male)	88.88	75.96
7	Literacy Rate (female)	75.51	54.28
8	Literacy Rate (total)	82.32	65.38

Source: Directorate of Planning, Statistics & Evaluation, Panaji-Goa. & Census 2001

Table 1.2 gives human development indicators for Goa. The Birth rate is among the lowest in the country, which has been declining consistently. The death rate is also very low at 7.7 per thousand as compared to the National average of 8.7 (2002). The infant mortality rate, i.e. number of deaths per thousand children before they attained the age of six years was 12.48 against the national average of 70. A good indicator for health, access to citizens is the Hospital beds per thousand populations. In Goa this figure was around 3.79 per 1000 population as compared to 0.70 for the All India average. Thus, we can infer from the above table that Goa has a very good record in terms of health indicators.

## ABOUT NREGA

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, (NREGA) was notified on September 7, 2005. NREGA Launched on 2nd February 2006 as a momentous initiative towards pro-poor growth. For the first time, rural communities have been given not just a development program, but also a regime of rights. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (NREGA) guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to any rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. This work guarantee also serves other objectives: generating productive assets and skills, thereby boosting the rural economy, protecting the environment, empowering rural women, reducing rural urban migration and fostering social equity, among others. The Act offers an opportunity to strengthen our democratic processes by entrusting the principle role to Panchayats at all levels in its implementation and promises transparency through involvement of community at planning and monitoring stages.

**TABLE NO: III** Overall view of NREGA

Sr. No.	Brief Overall View of NREGA of Goa	North Goa	South Goa
1	Employment provided to households	0.06335 Lakhs	0.07562
2	<b>PERSONDAYS (IN LAKH)</b>		
a	TOTAL	2.59	1.11
b	SCs	0.14(5.31%)	0.01(1.22%)
c	STs	0.23(8.72%)	0.67(60.57%)
d	WOMEN	1.54(59.58%)	0.99(89.06%)
e	OTHERS	2.23(85.97%)	0.42(38.21%)
f	TOTAL FUND	9.5 Crore	6.6 crore
g	EXPENDITURE	5.69Crore	4.24crore
h	TOTAL WORKS TAKEN UP	546	214
i	WORKS COMPLETED	424	135
j	WORKS IN PROGRESS	122	79

Source: Govt. of Goa

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), enacted on 25 August 2005 and renamed the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on 2 October 2009, includes activities under nine different heads to provide employment to village communities and improve their livelihoods. The Act has been implemented in three phases since 2006, providing 4.48 billion days of employment over a period of three years. About Rs 34,600 Cr has been spent on wages, indicating the gigantic size of this program intended to benefit the poor and the huge investment that has been made in it. In addition to directly benefiting the landless and farmers with employment and wages, the wider, short- and long-term environmental dividends it yields are significant. Since the NREGA's implementation all over India, it has been deemed to have huge potential in empowering rural communities – with work and natural capital or livelihood capacity addition. There have been various studies looking into aspects such as its socioeconomic impact, its finances, and its administration and implementation (for instance, Shah 2007; Ambasta et al 2008 and Kareemulla et al 2009). Others focus on subjects such as rural poverty alleviation, gender issues, livelihood and food security, and migration, but there has been no major study of the environmental impact of the activities that have been carried out so far.

## OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

1. To study the object and to assess linkages with reference to implications of MGNREGA Act.
2. To analyse and examine some key achievements of MGNREGA.
3. To evaluate the Progress of MGNREGA in the rural employment generation in the state of Goa.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on secondary sources for information to analyze and infer conclusions. The study collects data for the period 2009- 10 onwards from the MGNREGA website .The study looks at the problem in a holistic way and specifically with reference to Goa, to arrive at the right conclusions. The present paper studies the context for the implementation of the programme, performance of MGNREGA at all India level by taking into consideration the issue of job cards, provision of employment to the households and person days created, types of works and status of the works besides an expenditure incurred for the works. Besides, the paper also examines the wage issue and concludes by presenting the case for continuation of MGNREGA to overcome rural distress.

- **Study Area: Goa State**
- **Sample Selection: Both North and South Goa District**

## SALIENT FEATURES OF THE ACT

### **The Act: Salient Features**

The NREGA extends to all rural areas of India, including Fifth and Sixth Schedule areas,<sup>1</sup> except Jammu and Kashmir. The various provisions of the NREGA are the following: (i) it provides at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in every fiscal year for at least one adult

member of every household prepared to do unskilled manual labour at the wage rate specified by the state government; (ii) creation of durable assets and strengthening the livelihood resource base of the rural poor shall be an important objective of the scheme. The state council shall prepare a list of permissible works, as well as a list of “preferred works”; (iii) the program may also provide, as far as possible, for the training and up gradation of the skills of unskilled labourers; (iv) wages may be paid in cash, in kind, or both, provided that at least one-fourth of the wages shall be paid in cash only; (v) employment shall be provided within a radius of five kilometres of the village where the applicant resides at the time of applying. In cases where employment is provided outside such radius, it must be provided within the block, and the labourers shall be paid 10 percent of the wage rate as extra wages to meet additional transport and living expenses; (vi) in case the number of children below the age of six years accompanying the women working at any site is five or more, provisions shall be made to depute one woman worker to look after such children. The person deputed for this shall be paid the statutory minimum wage; and (vii) a proportion of the wages, not exceeding 5 percent, may be deducted as a contribution to welfare schemes organized for the benefit of labourers employed under the program, such as health insurance, accident insurance, survivor benefits, maternity benefits, and social security schemes.

As specified in the act, for the purpose of funding and the implementation of the NREGA, the central government will set up the National Employment Guarantee Fund. Individual state governments will set up the State Employment Guarantee Fund for a matching contribution under this scheme. The funding pattern, as laid down in the act, specifies that the central government’s obligation would be to make payments of wages for unskilled manual workers under the scheme, up to three-fourths of the material costs of the scheme, including wages, skilled and semiskilled workers and a certain percentage of the total cost of the schemes determined by the central government. The state government shall have to bear the cost of unemployment allowance, one-fourth of the material costs, and the administrative expenses of the state council. Apart from the mandatory provision of resources required for the implementation of NREGA, its success in enhancing the “livelihood security” of rural households would critically depend on the effective implementation of the scheme. The NREGA provides for a multi-tier structure of authority for implementation and monitoring of the scheme with specified functions and duties for each authority. The agencies involved are Central Employment Guarantee Council, State Employment Guarantee Council, District Program Coordinator, and the Program Officer appointed by the state government and the Gram Panchayat. The responsibility of the Gram Panchayat will be the identification, execution, and supervision of projects as per the recommendations of Gram Sabhas (village assembly). For accountability and transparency purposes, the Gram Sabhas are given the power to conduct a regular social audit of individual schemes. The structure of implementation as laid down indicates that a coordinated approach of different tiers of government or vertical coordination is critical for successful implementation of the scheme. Also, the horizontal coordination across departments for program identification and execution of work through Panchayat assumes critical importance.

Some of the features/characteristic of the Act is:

- i) Adult members of a rural household, willing to do unskilled manual work, may apply for registration in writing or orally to the local Gram Panchayat.
- ii) The Gram Panchayat after due verification will issue a Job Card. The Job Card will bear the photograph of all adult members of the household willing to work under NREGA and is free of cost.

- iii) The Job Card should be issued within 15 days of application.
- iv) A Job Card holder may submit a written application for employment to the Gram Panchayat, stating the time and duration for which work is sought. The minimum days of employment have to be at least fourteen.
- v) The Gram Panchayat will issue a dated receipt of the written application for employment, against which the guarantee of providing employment within 15 days operates.
- vi) Employment will be given within 15 days of application for work, if it is not, then daily unemployment allowance as per the Act, has to be paid liability of payment of unemployment allowance is in the States.
- vii) Work should ordinarily be provided within 5 km radius of the village. In case work is provided beyond 5 km, extra wages of 10% are payable to meet additional transportation and living expenses.
- viii) Wages are to be paid according to the Minimum Wages Act 1948 for agricultural labourers in the State, unless the Centre notifies a wage rate which will not be less than Rs. 60/ per day. Equal wages will be provided to both men and women.
- ix) Wages are to be paid according to a piece rate or daily rate. Disbursement of wages has to be done on a weekly basis and not beyond a fortnight in any case.
- x) At least one-third beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested work under the scheme.
- xi) Work site facilities such as crèche, drinking water, shade have to be provided.
- xii) The shelf of projects for a village will be recommended by the *gram sabha* and approved by the *zilla panchayat*.
- xiii) At least 50% of works will be allotted to Gram Panchayats for execution.
- xiv) Permissible works predominantly include water and soil conservation, a forestation and land development works.
- xv) A 60:40 wage and material ratio has to be maintained. No contractors and machinery are allowed.
- xvi) The Central Government bears the 100 percent wage cost of unskilled manual labour and 75 percent of the material cost, including the wages of skilled and semi skilled workers.
- xvii) Social Audit has to be done by the Gram Sabha.
- xviii) Grievance Redressal mechanisms have to be put in place for ensuring a responsive implementation process.
- xix) All accounts and records relating to the Scheme should be available for public scrutiny.

## PARADIGM SHIFT FROM WAGE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMES

NREGA marks a paradigm shift from all precedent wage employment programs. The significant aspects of this paradigm shift are captured below:

- i) NREGA provides a statutory guarantee of wage employment.
- ii) It provides a rights-based framework for wage employment. Employment is dependent upon the worker exercising the choice to apply for registration, obtain a Job Card, and seek employment for the time and duration that the worker wants.
- iii) There is a 15 day time limit for fulfilling the legal guarantee of providing employed.
- iv) The legal mandate of providing employment in a time bound manner is underpinned by the provision of Unemployment Allowance.
- v) The Act is designed to offer an incentive structure to the States for providing employment as ninety percent of the cost of employment provided is borne by the Centre. There is a concomitant disincentive for not providing employment as the States then bear the double indemnity of unemployment and the cost of unemployment allowance.
- vi) Unlike the earlier wage employment programs that were allocated based. NREGA is demand driven. Resource transfer under NREGA is based on the demand for employment and this provides another critical incentive for States to leverage the Act to meet the employment needs of the poor.
- vii) NREGA has extensive inbuilt transparency safeguards
  - a. Documents: Job Cards recording entitlements (in the custody of workers) written application for employment, Muster Rolls, Measurement Books and Asset Registers
  - b. Processes: Acceptance of employment application, the issue of date receipts, time bound work allocation and wage payment, Citizen Information Boards at Worksheets, Vigilance Monitoring Committees, regular block, district and state level inspections and social audits.
- viii) The public delivery system has been made accountable, as it envisages an Annual Report on the outcomes of NREGA to be presented by the Central Government to the Parliament and to the Legislature by the State Government. Specifically, personnel responsible for implementing the Act have been made legally responsible for delivering the guarantee under the Act.

## NATIONAL

One of the major problems of implementation was due to the improper estimation of labour requirements. As we mentioned earlier, women made up much of the employment list, but the estimate of the projects in many Panchayats was prepared keeping in mind the productivity of men. Thus, women's labours, though they worked hard, were not able to complete the required work according to the estimates. Some of the works initiated under the scheme like water canal construction involved continuous digging, etc., the sort of work women would find difficult. As a result, the workers reported cases where authorities refused to pay them full wages. Another

consequence of estimation problems was the gross underemployment. Authorities were driven by the target of giving employment to all people to whom job cards were issued. Hence some work sites employed more workers than what was actually required.

## SOME CONCERNS

**(i) *Seasonal variations:*** The vast majority of the people is involved in agriculture that provides employment for the workforce. The agricultural activities dominate in the district during the harvest season, which is twice a year. Once the harvest is done with, the households sink into a season of unemployment. This scheme can then be very efficiently used to fill the void created in this scenario of seasonal unemployment. There have been instances in some Panchayats where the work that began was temporarily stopped so as not to interfere with the harvest. We could gather from the block program officers that this factor has been noted and there have been directions so as to schedule the work accordingly in future.

**(ii) *Supervision problems:*** The scheme is presently being implemented on a limited scale in the district. But a lesson learnt is that there is a severe shortage in manpower of government staff employed to supervise the scheme. There is only one overseer and engineer to supervise work of an entire Panchayat. When the scheme is implemented on a wider scale in all wards of a Panchayat (as it has happened since November 1, 2006), two officers alone would not be able to supervise the works efficiently.

**(iii) *Workers' perspective:*** As mentioned above delayed payment of wages is the most important problem for the workers. They are used to the system of daily wages and it is important for the "bread winner" of the house to get some cash in hand daily. This was another reason for the low turnout of men for the work. Another grievance raised by the workers in some Panchayats was that the authorities were not giving them specific instructions regarding the amount of work to be done.

**(iv) *Nature of the works undertaken:*** The Act specifically defines that the scheme should aim at promoting "asset creating" work. The Act makes it mandatory that the total cost incurred by a panchayat 60 per cent should be towards wage payment and 40 per cent towards material costs.<sup>3</sup> This clause is acting as a hindrance towards real asset creation. Much of the works, hence undertaken were devoted to drainage renovation, water channel creation and similar sort of works where material requirements were minimal. The overseers also expressed serious concern as they cannot make estimates with just 40 per cent material costs. A greater allocation towards material costs is required to initiate proper asset creating works.

## ANALYSIS

Based on the above analysis, it can be concluded that the existing institutional arrangement is not sufficient enough in poorer states to implement NREGA in an effective manner. There is an urgent need for both vertical and horizontal coordination across levels of governments within the states. Some of the things that rural local bodies, especially the village Panchayats, can engage in for effective implementation of this act are: (i) demand based budgeting; (ii) advance planning to offer work on demand; and (iii) holistic and intersectoral planning of projects for work to avoid duplication. The "social audit" through Gram Sabha, as mentioned in the Act, can also help to



revitalize the ineffective Gram Sabhas in many of these districts. The Gram Sabha can play an active role in planning, monitoring, and supervision of projects. To institutionalize the implementation of the NREGA, there is an urgent need for defining the clear charter of roles and responsibilities through activity mapping, capacity building of all the agencies involved in the process of implementation, and imparting training for that purpose. By strengthening the institutional structure for community participation in decision making, a holistic approach would evolve towards convergence of asset creation and management. In many places, Panchayats does not have the necessary capacity to manage the schemes and capacity building ought to take place at Panchayat level. Devolution of responsibilities and strict accountability norms would accelerate capacity building at the levels of Panchayats and the scheme can effectively function as a demand-driven one. In assessing the demand for labour, Panchayat level preparation of labour budget, district wage list, and schedule of rates at the district Panchayat level would go a long way for effective implementation. Keeping the spatial dimension of the implementation in mind, the importance of the smooth flow of funds for implementation of projects in accordance with the demand, capacity building at village level, right to information to enable social audit effectively and accountability of functionaries, and an effective grievance Redressal mechanism assumes critical importance.

**TABLE :IV** Employment/ job card

Total No. of Districts	2
Total No. of Blocks	12
Total No. of GPs	190
Total No. of Job Cards issued[In Lakhs]	0.37
Total No. of Workers[In Lakhs]	0.47
Total No. of Active Job Cards[In Lakhs]	0.11
Total No. of Active Workers[In Lakhs]	0.11
(i)SC worker against active workers[%]	3.11
(ii)ST worker against active workers[%]	32.28

*Source: Govt. of Goa*

**TABLE: V** Work Performance

<b>Works</b>	<b>FY 2017-2018</b>	<b>FY 2016-2017</b>	<b>FY 2015-2016</b>	<b>FY 2014-2015</b>	<b>FY 2013-2014</b>
Number of GPs with NIL exp	75	48	54	38	58
Total No. of Works Taken up (New+ Spill Over)[In Lakhs]	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Number of Ongoing Works[In Lakhs]	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Number of Completed Works	30	343	322	337	184
% of NRM Expenditure(Public + Individual)	84.03	83.33	73.62	69.91	57.33
% of Category B Works	1.16	2.22	2.57	1.8	0.18
% of Expenditure on Agriculture & Agriculture Allied Works	84.03	83.33	73.62	69.91	57.33

*Source: Govt. of Goa*

**TABLE: VI** Year-Wise Achievement

<b>Progress</b>	<b>FY 2017-2018</b>	<b>FY 2016-2017</b>	<b>FY 2015-2016</b>	<b>FY 2014-2015</b>	<b>FY 2013-2014</b>
Approved Labour Budget[In Lakhs]	1.5	2	1.26	1.33	0.54
Person days Generated so far[In Lakhs]	0.69	1.26	1.07	1.72	1.15
% of Total LB	45.94	63.13	85.3	129.67	212.13

% as per Proportionate LB	122.93				
SC person days % as of total person days	4.14	2.78	3.58	3.31	3.05
ST person days % as of total person days	30.5	35.15	24.87	27.71	32.97
Women Person days out of Total (%)	78.55	77.79	76.9	74.88	75.3
Average days of employment provided per Household	12.63	18.69	18.16	23.87	22.96
Average Wage rate per day per person(Rs.)	240.22	229.39	203	195.28	178.32
Total No of HHs completed 100 Days of Wage Employment	3	33	21	104	52
Total Households Worked[In Lakhs]	0.05	0.07	0.06	0.07	0.05
Total Individuals Worked[In Lakhs]	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.08	0.05
Differently Abled persons worked	2	3	2	2	1

Source: Govt. of Goa

**TABLE: VII** Financial progress

Financial progress	FY 2017-2018	FY 2016-2017	FY 2015-2016	FY 2014-2015	FY 2013-2014
Total centre Release	47.13	425.85	246.82	137.95	205.86
Total Availability	364.11	466.63	347.62	487.08	608.55

Percentage Utilization	43.88	85.18	86.47	93.85	48.87
Total Exp (Rs. in Lakhs.)	159.78	397.48	300.59	457.14	297.39
Wages (Rs. In Lakhs)	134.31	293.77	215.26	339.21	204.68
Material and skilled Wages (Rs. In Lakhs)	23.45	73.37	67.8	105.13	86.29
Material (%)	14.86	19.98	23.95	23.66	29.66
Total Admin Expenditure (Rs. in Lakhs.)	2.02	30.34	17.53	12.8	6.42
Admin Exp (%)	1.26	7.63	5.83	2.8	2.16
Liability (Wages) (Rs. in Lakhs.)	36.84	0.47	0.58	1.08	1
Average Cost Per Day Per Person (In Rs.)	277.41	312.21	282.61	262.16	255.91
% of Total Expenditure through EFMS	0	0	0	0	0
% payments generated within 15 days	70.28	66.92	31.2	42.03	50.37

*Source: Govt. of Goa*

## CRITICISMS:

Many criticisms have been levelled at the program, which has been argued to be no more effective than other poverty reduction programs in India, with a key exceptions such as Rajasthan.

The first criticism is financial. The MGNREGA is one of the largest initiatives of its kind in the world. The national budget for the financial year 2006-2007 was Rs 113 billion (about US\$2.5bn and almost 0.3% of GDP) and now fully operational, it costs Rs. 391 billion in financial year 2009-2010. Funding was argued by Jean Dreze and others to be possible through improved tax

administration and reforms, yet the tax-GDP ratio has actually been falling. There are fears the programme will end up costing 5% of GDP.

Another important criticism is that the public works schemes' completed product (e.g. water conservation, land development, a forestation, provision of irrigation systems, construction of roads, or flood control) is vulnerable to being taken by over wealthier sections of society. A monitoring study of NREGA in Madhya Pradesh showed the types of activities undertaken were more or less standardised across villages, suggesting little local consultation.

Further concerns include the fact that local government corruption leads to the exclusion of specific sections of society. Local governments have also been found to claim more people have received job cards than people who actually work in order to generate more funds than needed, to be then embezzled by local officials. Bribes as high Rs 50 are paid in order to receive the job cards.

A multi-crore fraud has also been suspected where many people has been issued the NREGA card who is either employed with another Government Job and who are not even aware that they have a Job Card. The productivity of labourers involved under NREGA is considered to be lower because of the fact that labourers consider it as a better alternative to working under major projects. There is criticism from construction companies that NREGA has affected the availability of labour as labourers prefer to working under NREGA to working under construction projects.

It is also widely criticized that NREGS has contributed to the farm labour shortage. In July 2011, the government has advised the states to suspend the NREGS programme during peak farming periods.

The National Advisory Committee (NAC) advocated the government for NREGA wages linkage with statutory minimum wages which is under Minimum wages act as NREGA workers get only Rs100 per day.

Although a programme of this magnitude will take time to be of any relevance in changing the landscape of rural India, initial reports of evaluation studies by various institutions and individuals have documented the processes of revival and resurgence largely driven by NREGA as an axis of struggle by the rural poor. It has neither been claimed nor was envisaged that NREGA is the key to successful rejuvenation of rural areas. This requires many such efforts, particularly towards ensuring the broken linkages of the growth process to include the rural areas as engines of growth. Nonetheless, it does offer an opportunity for the rural poor to stake claim to the fruits of the growth. Moreover, NREGA success stories provide opportunities for main streaming and legitimizing the struggle for other social security legislation.

The NREGA has some built-in limitations (focus on employment; activities not implemented according to a plan, spatially or time-wise; disconnected and scattered implementation of activities, to name a few), but its many activities still have the potential to provide environmental services, and conserve and enhance natural resources (soil, water, grass and forest resources). There is the need to identify fail-safe activities that improve soil, water, grass and forest resources even without micro-plans or watershed plans. A thorough analysis of investment in different types of NREGA activities, especially in the long term, is also required.

## CONCLUSION

The existing socio-economic conditions in a state have a great influence on the successful implementation of schemes like the NREGS. The role played by the local bodies in informing the masses about the Act and its provisions, the higher participation by women in the scheme and minimal corruption levels are important features observed in this study. The practicality of the unemployment allowance is questioned, as no serious steps are being taken in this regard. Though Kerala took a comparatively long time to implement the Act, the state has done its homework and is doing fairly well in implementing the Act in select districts, if not in absolute terms than surely in relative terms.

## SOME IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT MGNREGA:

1. Around 182 million beneficiaries (15 percent of India's population) provide social security by MGNREGA (under Ministry of Rural Development)
2. The Mid-day meal scheme under the Ministry of Human Resource Development reaches out to 105 million beneficiaries which make it the biggest school-feeding programme.
3. The Janani Suraksha Yojna under the National Rural Health Mission has around 78 million beneficiaries and is the top-most social security programme in terms of conditional cash transfers. Conditional cash transfers involve transfer of money only when the persons meet the certain criteria.
4. Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS) launched by the Ministry of Rural Development is the second largest social security programme in the world for unconditional cash transfer.
5. The world's top five largest social safety net programmes are all from the middle-income countries. Besides India, the other three countries are China, South Africa and Ethiopia.
6. The total expenditure of 120 developing countries for social safety is around 329 billion dollars. This expenditure is in the span of 2010 and 2014.

In short, the launching of MGNREGS enhanced the economic and social participation of women in the society. The elimination of the disparity between men and women in the payment of daily wages is a notable achievement of MGNREGA. In other words, the new wage employment programme succeeded ensuring freedom and equality for women in civil, economic and social areas of activity.

MGNREGA, the most ambitious wage employment programme introduced in India since independence could succeed in realizing its primary goals. In short, the study found that, even though there are some gray area of concern, the performance of MGNREGS is highly encouraging.

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