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Impact of Mahatma Gandhi national rural employment guarantee scheme (MGNREGS) on rural migration in Dhemaji district of Assam

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Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is the boldest and most pragmatic approach introduced in India that guarantees wage employment at an unprecedented scale. This ambitious scheme aims at reducing rural migration by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to every rural household in a financial year. This paper seeks to examine the impact of MGNREGS on rural migration in Dhemaji district of Assam on the basis of both primary as well as secondary sources. After verification of empirical data, the findings suggest that the scheme has no positive impact on rural migration. The achievement in this respect was not satisfactory and the scheme has failed to fulfil its basic objectives. In the light of the findings, the study incorporates some meaningful suggestions to make the scheme more successful.

Keywords: Migration, Rural Migration, Physical Movement, Wage Employment, Household

1. Introduction

Human migration is the most important indicator in changing the size and structure of the population. Migration is a universal phenomenon and it is the third component of population change, while the two other important components of population change are fertility and mortality rate. Further, migration is the most observable and impressive fact in the growth of cities and it is also considered as an essence of urbanization in the globe ^[1]. Migration can be defined as a process of moving, either across an international border, or within a State. Encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people, and economic migrants ^[2].

The United Nations Organisation (UNO) defined migration as a form of geographical or spatial mobility between one geographical unit and another. It involves a change in residence from the place of origin or departure to the place of destination or arrival. National Sample Survey Organization (2008) defined migration as "A household member whose last Usual Place of Residence (UPR) any time in the past was different from the present place of enumeration was considered as a migrant member in a household." Census of India (2001) defined "A person is considered as a migrant by place of last residence, if the place in which he is enumerated during the census is other than his place of immediate last residence" ^[3].

Lee, E.S. (1970) "Migration is defined broadly as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence" ^[4]. O.S. Shrivastava defines migration as a permanent, or at least for a considerable period of time, departure for a place which is not just nearby. According to him, if a person is residing at a place but was not born in that place he/she is regarded as migrant ^[5].

In fact, migration is the physical movement of people across a specified boundary to another for the purpose of establishing a new permanent or semi-permanent residence. Migration may be individuals, family or in mass migration. Thus, the basic requirement of migration is the permanent or semi-permanent change of residence from one area to another which is guided by environmental, socio-economic, political and cultural factors. Migration is a varied and complex phenomenon. It may be either uni- or multi-directional, and temporary or permanent. Attempting to understand migration through the spectrum of nationality alone can unintentionally exclude second- or third-generation migrants in the analysis and overlooks the fundamentally dynamic character of migration ^[6]. Migration occurs at a variety of scales: intercontinental (between continents), intra-continental (between countries on a given continent), and inter-regional (within countries). One of the most significant migration patterns has been rural to urban migration - the movement of people from the countryside to cities in search of opportunities ^[7]. Thus, in the present study the term "Migration" has been defined as

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the movement of people from the rural to cities in search of jobs, better opportunities and environment.

2. Objectives of the Study

The research paper has the following objectives:

- To examine the impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) on rural migration.
- To find out the reasons for failure of MGNREGS in reducing rural migration.
- To examine the determinant factors affecting rural migration.
- To suggest suitable policy measures for improving the strength of the scheme in reducing rural migration.

3. Research Questions to be Examined

To evaluate the impact of MGNREGS on rural migration, the following research questions were formulated:

- How far MGNREGS was successful in reducing rural migration?
- Could MGNREGS successful in fulfilling its objectives?
- Did the implementing authorities implement the scheme in accordance with the provisions of the Act?

4. Methodology

The present study is a micro level research on impact of MGNREGS on rural migration. The study is basically an empirical one. In order to achieve the stipulated objectives, the methodology that has been followed in this study is historico-analytical. The historical method has been applied for historical records, information, documents, and file records *etc.* which are the basis of the study. The analytical method is employed to analyze the facts pertaining to the study.

Keeping the objectives and research questions in view, it has been decided to collect relevant data from both primary as well as secondary sources. The secondary sources such as books, journals, newspapers, websites *etc.* were consulted to collect the factual data concerning the study.

The primary data have been generated by personal interview method from 200 beneficiaries of MGNREGS as sample sizes from the four selected villages, i.e. 50 households from each village with the using a self prepared structured interview schedule by considering different anxiety dimensions like demographic and socio-economic background of the respondents, household provided 100 days of wage employment, wage rate and wage payments, affect of MGNREGS in labour migration and factors affecting migration from the rural to urban areas. The age limit of the respondents was 20 and above. The study was conducted during the period of March to June 2012. The questions were prepared in English for the sake of convenient but were translated into the local language (Assamese - which is the common language spoken in the district) at the time of their administration for the purpose of eliciting information.

Besides, as per the requirements, simple statistical tools like percentage, average and table were applied to analyze the data for the study.

5. Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to following respects:

- The findings of the study were based on expressed information of 200 selected respondents which may have its own limitations. Possibility of hiding certain facts cannot completely be ignored, although uttermost attention was taken to elicit authentic information.
- The technique employed for collection of relevant data was structured interview schedule. Therefore, the findings of the study were limited to this technique only.
- The scope of the study was limited to four selected villages of Dhemaji district of Assam. Thus, the conclusions of this study have their own limitations and can be applied elsewhere, with certain precautions.

6. Scope of the Study

The study was conducted in Dhemaji district, which is one of the 27 districts of Assam. The district is situated in the very remote corner of North-East India on the bank of the river Brahmaputra. Agro-climatically, the district falls in North Bank Plains Zone. Dhemaji is geographically located between 94.15 E and 94.15 E and 95.15 E longitudes and 27.45 N and 27.45 N latitudes. The district is bounded by the hill ranges of Arunachal Pradesh in the North and in the East, by the Lakhimpur district in the West and by the mighty river Brahmaputra with 20 tributaries in the South.

Dhemaji district has been selected purposively for the study because the researcher belongs to the district and is well versed with the socio-economic life of the rural people and local language, which helps in eliciting the requisite information. Dhemaji district is situated at a distance of 490 km. away from the State capital Guwahati. The district is considered as one of the most backward tribal dominated districts of Assam so as to why the Union Government had identified the district for implementation of MGNREGS in its 1st phase (2006-07). Further, the district is located at a remote corner of the state adjoining to Arunachal Pradesh, another tribal State of the country.

Out of five Development Blocks in the district, the study was restricted to two Development Blocks viz. Machkhowa Development Block and Bordoloni Development Block of the district. From each block, two villages were selected on the basis of following criteria:

- The numbers of households of the selected village are around fifty.
- The selected village is fifty years old in settlement at the existing locality.
- The number of employed households under NREGS is more than 90 per cent.

Besides, while selecting the villages, emphasis was given on caste wise representation i.e. Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe and Other Backward Classes. Accordingly, Jorkata Bangali Gaon and No 1 Barajan from Machkhowa Development Block; Kalbari Boro Gaon and Kathalguri from Bordoloni Development Block have been selected for intensive field study. Therefore, the present study is limited to 4 villages of Dhemaji district of Assam.

Table 4.1: Particulars of Sample Villages.

Name	Development Block	Gaon Panchayat	Caste Composition	Distance from District HQ
Jorkata Bangali Gaon	Machkhowa	Sissimukh GP	OBC	30 km.
No 1 Barajan Gaon	Machkhowa	Bengenagarah GP	OBC	21 km.
Kalbari Boro Gaon	Bordoloni	Joyrampur GP	ST	36 km.
Kathalguri Gaon	Bordoloni	Mingmung GP	SC	42 km.

Source: Office of the Block Development Officers, Machkhowa and Bordoloni Development Block, Dhemaji.

7. Review of Literature

The review of existing literature is not customary rather an essential part of research work. It also facilitates the comparison between the earlier findings and findings of present study^[8]. Therefore, before focusing on the main issue, it might be pertinent to look at the available literature pertaining to the present work to give a proper orientation and perspective to this study. Human migration is a universal phenomenon which occurred throughout human history and hence it has attracted the attention of scholars, academicians, political leaders and researchers both in India and abroad. Consequently, a lot of studies in the form of books, research works, articles, papers, reports *etc.* are found in the state and other parts of the country. The review of literature places a significant role in establishing the backdrop of this research work.

A few empirical studies using primary as well as secondary data have analyzed the impact of MGNREGS on migration. Sharma^[9] and Rossi^[10] analyse the impact of MGNREGA on migration in India and children in developing countries. Using analytical approach Khan *et al.*^[11] highlights the total and sex-wise causes of rural-urban migration among the states and union territories of India. The study also discusses about the socio-economic determinants of rural-urban migration in short, medium and long distance migration streams. Das^[12] investigates the socio-economic consequences of migration in Assam. Vinayakam *et al.*^[13], Kumar^[14] and Mohapatra^[15] describe the various reasons and factors contributing towards the rural migration and its consequences. Kalkoti^[16] highlights the significance and current status of rural migrants in India and suggests some development initiatives to ameliorate their working conditions. Chhikara^[17] suggests that the stream of women migration is not favourable for the social structure in general and rural area in particular for India. Dwivedi^[18] discusses how migration is continuing in different parts of India and how it is becoming more and more crucial towards improving livelihood status. On the basis of National Sample Survey data Kumar *et al.*^[19] highlights that weather has significant role in explaining both temporary and permanent migration in India. Thus, these studies carried by the different scholars and academicians do not prove the hypotheses of the present work. Therefore, present work is an endeavour to justify the validity of the hypotheses on the basis of relevant data.

8. MGNREGS – A Potential Tool for Rural Migration

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme now rechristened as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (henceforth MGNREGS) is a landmark in the economic history of independent India. In fact, the scheme is the manifestation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) - 2005. The MGNREGS is essentially a wage earning scheme designed as per the NREGA - 2005. The Act provides a legal foundation of work to MGNREGS and the schemes are the means through which this guarantee comes into effect. Initially, the scheme came into force in 200 most backward districts of the country having high Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) population. From 1st April, 2008, the scheme has been extended to the whole rural India (except the state of Jammu and Kashmir).

The scheme aims at ensuring livelihood security of the rural people by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to every rural household in a financial year whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual labour

at a statutory minimum wage. Apart from, this work guarantee can also serve other objectives such as generating productive assets, protecting the environment, empowering rural women, reducing rural-urban migration and fostering social equality among others.

The MGNREGA provides following mandatory provisions for reducing rural migration:

- 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to every rural household within their native jurisdiction who are in need of unskilled manual labour.
- As far as possible employment under the scheme is provided within a 5 km. radius of the applicant's residence or within the Panchayat. In case it is not, the work must be provided within the Block and the workers must be paid extra 10 per cent of the wage rate as daily transport and living allowances and thus, MGNREGS becomes a predictable source of local employment for the rural poor.
- In order to reduce women's migration, the Act focuses on "*Priority*" should be given to women in the allocation of work "*in such a way that at least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women*" [Schedule II, Para 6].
- The Act provides equal wages for both men and women.
- MGNREGS provides employment to the rural poor during the lean season in order to protect seasonal rural migration.

Besides, the Act also provides some other positive contributions for reducing rural migration:

- The Act makes the employment opportunities of the rural poor as a legal right, that they can demand, complain or in extreme cases, force the Government to provide employment.
- The MGNREGA is important as it has created an opportunity for generating additional guaranteed wage employment for both men and women who are willing to do unskilled manual work under the Act.
- The Act provides an opportunity of participation of rural people in the development process in the field of planning, monitoring, evaluation and management of the various development programmes.

Thus, the MGNREGS is a potential tool for reducing rural migration. In fact, only a guaranteed employment can eradicate rural poverty and protect the rural poor from economic insecurity, strengthen their bargaining power and fight for their legal rights boldly.

9. Results and Discussion

The attitudes and perception of the respondents have been analyzed with the help of empirical statistical data. The opinions of the respondents collected from the field are presented in the tabular form below. The first three tables are related to demographic and socio-economic profile of the sample respondents and the rest are based on observation of the sample respondents during the field work. The collected data have been analyzed under following five important indicators:

- Household provided 100 days of wage employment,
- Wage rate and wage payments,
- Impact of MGNREGS in rural migration,
- Factors affecting rural migration, and
- Suggestions to improve the MGNREGS functioning for reducing rural migration.

9.1 Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Characteristics – Age and Sex

Looking at the demographic profile of the respondents (Table – 9.1), out of the total 200 respondents, 63 which constituted 31.50 per cent belonged to the age group of 40 – 49 years, followed by 28.50 per cent between the age group of 30 - 39 years, 19.50 per cent in the age group of 20 - 29 years and 15

per cent within 50 - 59 years. Though the population above the age of 60 years is considered as old citizens, the study showed that a sizeable number of respondents i.e. 5.50 per cent (11) belonged to above 60 years. From the point of gender differences, male respondents constituted 57.50 per cent (115) while female respondents accounted 42.50 per cent (85) of the total respondents.

Table 9.1: Demographic Indicators of Respondents.

Indicator	Name of the Villages										
	Age Group	Jorkata Bangali Gaon		No 1 Barajan Gaon		Kalbari Boro Gaon		Kathalguri Gaon		Total	
		No	PC	No	PC	No	PC	No	PC	No	PC
Age	20-29	11	22.00	19	38.00	2	4.00	7	14.00	39	19.50
	30-39	21	42.00	13	26.00	11	22.00	12	24.00	57	28.50
	40-49	10	20.00	9	18.00	26	52.00	18	36.00	63	31.50
	50-59	7	14.00	6	12.00	9	18.00	8	16.00	30	15.00
	60 +	1	2.00	3	6.00	2	4.00	5	10.00	11	5.50
	Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	200	100
Sex	Sex	No	PC	No	PC	No	PC	No	PC	No	PC
	Male	28	56.00	27	54.00	25	50.00	35	70.00	115	57.50
	Female	22	44.00	23	46.00	25	50.00	15	30.00	85	42.50
	Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	200	100

Source: Field Survey

Social Characteristics – Caste and Educational Status

The respondents were basically two types – tribal and non-tribal. The empirical data on caste composition of respondents (Table – 9.1.1) revealed that the caste wise representation of respondents was almost equal. The percentage of tribal and

non - tribal respondents stood at 49.50 per cent and 50.50 per cent respectively. The caste group classification also showed that 41.50 per cent of the total respondents belonged to Other Backward Classes (OBC) followed by Scheduled Caste (5.50 per cent) and other communities (3.50 per cent).

Table 9.1.1: Social Characteristics of Respondents.

Indicator	Name of the Village										
	Caste	Jorkata Bangali Gaon		No 1 Barajan Gaon		Kalbari Boro Gaon		Kathalguri Gaon		Total	
		No	PC	No	PC	No	PC	No	PC	No	PC
Caste	Tribal	Nil	Nil	1	2.00	50	100	48	96.00	99	49.50
	Non-Tribal	50	100	49	98.00	Nil	Nil	2	4.00	101	50.50
	Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	200	100
	SC	9	18.00	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	2	100	11	5.50
	OBC	34	68.00	49	100	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	83	41.50
	Others	7	14.00	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	7	3.50
Educational Status	Educational Status	No	PC	No	PC	No	PC	No	PC	No	PC
	Literate	19	38.00	40	80.00	16	32.00	21	42.00	96	48.00
	Illiterate	31	62.00	10	20.00	34	68.00	29	58.00	104	52.00
	Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	200	100
	ME Passed	17	89.47	20	50.00	13	81.25	16	76.19	66	68.75
	HSLC Passed	2	10.53	11	27.50	3	18.75	5	23.81	21	21.88
	HS Passed	Nil	Nil	8	20.00	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	8	8.33
	Graduate	Nil	Nil	1	2.50	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1.04
	Post-Graduate	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total	19	100	40	100	16	100	21	100	96	100	

Source: Field Survey

Educational status is a major socio-economic indicator of a family. Hence, the educational background of the respondents has been recorded during the course of study (Table – 9.1.1) which showed a vivid picture of educational attainment of the respondents. For the purpose of the study, a person who simply could write and sign his/her name was considered as literate. However, the analysis does not show any optimistic picture of literacy rate (48 per cent) in the selected areas under study. Significantly, the majority (68.75 per cent) of the respondents studied up to ME School. The literary rate up to HSLC level stood at 21.88 per cent while 8.33 per cent

represented HS level and 1.40 per cent studied up to graduate level.

Economic Characteristics – Occupation and Annual Income

The major occupation of the respondents was farming (Table-9.1.2). Out of 200 interrogated respondents, the highest 53.50 per cent (107) were found as cultivators followed by house wife (31.50 per cent) and labourers (9.00 per cent). Though agriculture was the main occupation of the respondents, it has been observed that certain trends of changes have come up in

to their occupations. Now-a-days due to the opening up of new avenues of earnings, many of the respondents apart from agriculture, have taken up allied sources as their occupations such as engaging themselves in doing private service (0.50 per cent); fishermen (5.00 per cent); business (0.50 per cent) like

shops, Tea stall, Fair price shops, Hotel *etc.* However, this does not show any major shift in general occupation of the respondents and agriculture still remains as their main source of occupation.

Table – 9.1.2: Economic Characteristics of Respondents.

Indicator	Name of the Villages										
	Occupation	Jorkata Bangali Gaon		No 1 Barajan Gaon		Kalbari Boro Gaon		Kathalguri Gaon		Total	
		No	PC	No	PC	No	PC	No	PC	No	PC
Occupation	Cultivation	22	44.00	31	62.00	25	50.00	29	58.00	107	53.50
	Private Service	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	2.00	Nil	Nil	1	0.50
	House Wife	15	30.00	16	32.00	18	36.00	14	28.00	63	31.50
	Business	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	2.00	Nil	Nil	1	0.50
	Fisher man	6	12.00	Nil	Nil	4	8.00	Nil	Nil	10	5.00
	Labourer	7	14.00	3	6.00	1	2.00	7	14.00	18	9.00
	Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	200	100
Annual Income	Income	No	PC	No	PC	No	PC	No	PC	No	PC
	Below Rs.10,000/-	18	36.00	17	34.00	33	66.00	22	44.00	90	45.00
	Between Rs.10,000/- to Rs. 20,000/-	22	44.00	19	38.00	12	24.00	20	40.00	73	36.50
	Between Rs. 20,000/- to Rs. 30,000/-	7	14.00	13	26.00	2	4.00	5	10.00	27	13.50
	Above Rs.30,000/-	3	6.00	1	2.00	3	6.00	3	6.00	10	5.00
	Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	200	100

Source: Field Survey

The field study suggested that most of the beneficiaries came from economically poor background to engage under MGNREGS. Majority of the respondents (45.00 per cent) belonged to the lower income group i.e. below Rs. 10,000/ per annum, while the respondents who came from high income group (30,000/ per annum) constituted 5.00 per cent. The respondents between the income group of Rs. 10,000/- to Rs. 20,000/ per annum constituted 36.50 per cent followed by 13.50 per cent within the income level of Rs. 20,000/- to Rs. 30,000/-. Thus, different income group of families were engaged in MGNREGS. However, majority of the respondents belonged to the lower income group.

9.2 Perception of the Respondents

The statistical data derived from the field revealed that the MGNREGS failed to provide the targeted 100 days of wage employment to each rural household in a financial year in selected villages under study (Table – 9.2). 91 per cent of the total respondents viewed that MGNREGS could not provide 100 days of guaranteed employment while 96.50 per cent very clearly stated that one hundred days of wage employment round the year was insufficient for the rural unemployed.

Table – 9.2: Responses of the Respondents.

Indicators	Questions	Percentage	
		Yes	No
Household provided 100 days of wage employment	Are you getting 100 days of wage employment under MGNREGS in a financial year?	91.00	9.00
	Whether 100 days of wage employment in a financial year is sufficient for rural unemployed?	96.50	3.50
Wage rate and wage payments	Are wages higher in cities than MGNREGS?	100	0
	Are you satisfied with the wage rate under MGNREGS?	100	0
	Are you interested to work under MGNREGS?	9.50	90.50
	When were you paid wages?		
	a. Within 7 Days	0	0
	b. Between 7-15 Days	13.50	0
	c. Between 15-30 Days	59.50	0
d. After 30 Days	27.00	0	
	Did you pay compensation for delayed payment of wages?	0	100
Impact of MGNREGS in rural migration	Can MGNREGS reduce rural migration?	11.50	88.50
	If not, what is the reason for its failure?		
	a. Wages are not paid at the spot on the same day	5.00	0
	b. Wages of MGNREGS are less than the existing market rate	49.00	0
	c. Not getting work under MGNREGS even after registration	22.00	0
	d. The works under MGNREGS remained inoperative in the areas	17.50	0
	e. Different activities under MGNREGS are seasonal on account of prevailing weather condition	6.50	0
Was there the incident of labour migration took place in your family/village before the implementation of MGNREGS?	51.50	48.50	

	Did any of your family/village members migrate out of job after the implementation of MGNREGS?	59.00	41.00
	Do any of your family/village members migrate back to village to work under MGNREGS?	0	100
	Does the rural migration decline after implementation of MGNREGS?	33.00	67.00
Factors affecting rural migration	Which of the following factors help in rural migration?		
	a. Job or employment	73.50	0
	b. Marriage	2.50	0
	c. Education	10.00	0
	d. Health or medical facilities	6.00	0
	e. Amenities	1.00	0
	f. Others	7.00	0
Suggestions to improve MGNREGS functioning for reducing rural migration	<p>Following suggestions were forwarded by the respondents for reducing rural migration</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wages should be paid on the spot in time. 2. Present target of 100 days of wage employment per household per year should be increased to minimum 150 days. 3. The wage rate under MGNREGS should have parity with market rate. 4. All works under NREGS should be implemented well planned and well ahead of time. 5. Different activities under MGNREGS were seasonal on account of prevailing weather condition. Therefore, the implementing authorities should start the MGNREGS programme during lean season as well. 6. Awareness programmes should be organized to sensitise the common people. 		

Source: Field Survey

In regard to comparison of wages under MGNREGS with cities, 100 per cent respondent opined in the affirmative. All the respondents frankly admitted that the wage rate under MGNREGS was sizeably lower than the prevailing market rate (Rs. 250 or more than that per day) for which 90.50 per cent interviewees reported that they were not interested to work under the scheme.

As per NREGA - 2005, wages are to be paid every week or in case, not later than a fortnight after the date on which such work was done. The Act also ensures that if the wages are not paid in time, the labourers are entitled compensation as per the provisions of the Payment of Wage Act, 1936. By and large, 59.50 per cent respondent asserted that they had paid wages between 15 to 30 days. Moreover, 100 per cent respondent viewed that no compensation was paid to them for delayed payment.

In replying to the question about whether MGNREGS could reduce rural migration, 88.50 per cent replied that the scheme failed to reduce rural migration. Regarding the reasons for failure of MGNREGS in reducing rural migration, different types of opinion were observed of which majority (49 per cent) hold the view that wages under MGNREGS was sizeably lower than the existing market rate. They opined that before (51.50 per cent) and after (59 per cent) implementation of MGNREGS, the incident of migration to nearby cities or town took place in their localities. Besides, 100 per cent interviewees reported that no family/village members migrated back to village to work under MGNREGS. 67 per cent of the respondents responded that the rural migration was not declined after the implementation of MGNREGS. Regarding factors affecting the rural migration, an absolute majority (73.50 per cent) of the respondents did not have satisfactory comments and viewed that many young people migrated from rural to nearby urban areas in search of job or employment.

In light of these analyses, the following measures are suggested which may be considered by the implementing authorities and policy planners for securing improvement of MGNREGS functioning for reducing rural migration:

- Wages should be paid timely.
- The wage rate should be enhanced keeping parity with the existing market rate.

- Present target of 100 days of wage employment should be increased to minimum 150 days to every rural household in a financial year.
- All works under MGNREGS should be implemented well planned and well ahead of time.
- Different programmes under MGNREGS should be implemented during lean period for the benefit of workers.
- Frequent awareness programmes should be organized in a meaningful way through public awareness campaigns, conferences, village meetings and distribution of leaflets in educational institutions extensively in order to educate and sensitise the common people about the different aspects of implementation of MGNREGS.
- The administration of different levels and of different bodies should have the commitment and sincerity in implementation of the scheme.
- In fact, the Government's effort alone will not be able to implement any national programme like MGNREGS. Peoples' active and full participation is a must for the success of the scheme. For this purpose, special attention must be given by the Government to increase peoples' participation in the scheme.
- In order to fulfil the objectives of the scheme, intensive efforts and attention is to be needed. There is an urgent need for a good governance, dedicated bureaucracy, strong political will, co-operation from all sections of the society, voluntary organizations i.e. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Self Help Groups (SHGs) for successful implementation of the scheme.

9.3 Emerging Facts

The empirical information obtained from the field by analyzing the different indicators, the study draws the following important observations:

- The performance of MGNREGS in generation of 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to rural household was not satisfactory. The scheme failed to provide the targeted 100 days of employment to the rural household in a financial year.
- The empirical data derived from the field revealed that one hundred days of wage employment round the year

was not sufficient for rural unemployed. 96.50 per cent of the respondents asserted that the present target of 100 days of employment to the rural poor should be increased to minimum 150 days.

- The MGNREGS has no positive impact on rural migration. The scheme has failed to stop rural migration in Dhemaji district of Assam. Many young people migrated from rural to nearby urban areas in search of job or employment after implementation of MGNREGS.
- There was no record of any family or village members migrated back to village for work under MGNREGS.
- The results show that the main reason for failure of MGNREGS in reducing rural migration is the meagre wage rate under the scheme. The wage rate under MGNREGS is sizeably lower than the existing market rate. As a result, the rural unemployed were not interested (90.50 per cent) to work under MGNREGS.
- 100 per cent respondents asserted that the wage rate in cities or town was higher in comparison to MGNREGS. So, they were not satisfied with the wage rate under MGNREGS.
- It can rightly be concluded that the MGNREGS failed in fulfilling its objectives. The study reveals that the incidence of labour migration took place in the study areas after (59 per cent) the implementation of MGNREGS. Thus, rural migration remains a living phenomenon in the villages under study.
- The scheme's outcome in respect of timely payment of wages to the MGNREGS workers was not encouraging. The study reveals that the wages were not paid to workers in time.
- No compensation was paid to worker for delayed payment of wages. The implementing authorities could not implement the scheme in accordance with the provisions of the Act. Some irregularities and gross violations of the MGNREGA – 2005 had taken place in implementation of the scheme.
- The study very clearly indicates that MGNREGS failed to provide job or employment adequately to the rural poor.
- Search of job or employment was the major determining factor of rural migration in selected villages under study.

10. Conclusion

Thus, at the end, it may be summed up that the above discussion and analysis shows it beyond any shadow of doubt that the implementation of MGNREGS does not make any remarkable success in reducing rural migration in Dhemaji district of Assam. The scheme could not ensure the targeted 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to every rural household in a financial year and has failed to bring any perceivable transformative outcomes in the issue of rural migration. In fact, the scheme was not successful in fulfilling its basic objectives. The study indicates that some irregularities and violations of the important provisions of the Act had taken place in implementation of the scheme. The implementing authorities could not implement the scheme in accordance with the letter and spirit of MGNREGA.

The study has brought to light the fact that the implementation of MGNREGS has been facing some significant loopholes. If all the loopholes could be brought under strict control, there will be no doubt that MGNREGS would be a boon against rural migration. Therefore, to make the programme more successful, intensive efforts and certain changes are still required in government plans and programmes so as to fulfil its basic objectives.

Further, the literature survey suggests that the literature available on the present work is limited in number. In fact, the introduction of MGNREGS is a recent phenomenon. It may be logical to state that the scheme is still in experimental stage. No systematic major studies have so far been done in depth and detail on MGNREGS in the context of Assam. Therefore, specific research is needed on this issue in order to evaluate the impact of the scheme in reducing rural migration. This micro-study has brought some significant research questions that need to be verified on the basis of empirical data. It would not be wrong to say that the study will provide a base for further extensive research work in the field in future. Therefore, it will be a worthwhile effort if some scholars, academicians or researchers were to study on the fore issues in several districts of Assam or neighbouring states of Assam and compare the same with the other parts of the country to fully understand the impact of MGNREGS on rural migration.

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