

**AN OVERVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF MAHATMA
GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT
GUARANTEE ACT IN KARUNABARI BLOCK OF
LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT, ASSAM**

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ABSTRACT

A committee was constituted by the Government of India for estimating poverty shows that approximately 38% of India's population is poor. According to 2011 census, more than 75% of poor people are living in rural areas. Low productivity and unemployment are the main reason of rural poverty. In order to alleviate rural poverty by generating employment, Government of India launched Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act(MGNREGA), 2005. However, the programme is not free from challenges. This paper tries to highlight the challenges being faced by Karunabari Block of Lakhimpur District of Assam, India as well as working of this programme.

Key Notes: MGNREGA, poverty alleviation, challenges in implementation.

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Introduction:

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is an Indian labour law and social security measures that aim to guarantee the rights to work. It aims to ensure security of livelihood in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult member volunteers to unskilled manual work. The Act was first proposed in 1991 by P.V. Narashimha Rao. Finally, it was accepted in the parliament and commenced implementation in 625 districts of India. Based on this pilot experience, MGNREGA was implemented in all the districts of India from 1st April, 2008. It was regarded as world largest and most ambitious social security and public works programme of Government of India. The World Bank in its World Development Report, 2004 referred it a “stellar example of rural development”.

MGNREGA, the largest employment generated programme initiated with the objectives of enhancing livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year, to every household whose adult member volunteers to do unskilled manual work. Other aim of MGNREGA is to create durable assets such as roads, canals, ponds, wells etc. Employment is to be provided within 5 km of an applicant’s residence and minimum wages are to be paid. If work is not provided within 15 days of applying, applicants must provided an unemployment allowances under MGNREGA is a legal entitlement. MGNREGA was mainly launched to facilitating economic security and creating rural assets in rural areas. Moreover, it can help in empowering rural women, reducing rural migration to urban areas and cultivate social equity among others.

The Act provides many provisions to promote its effective management and implementation. The Act clearly mentioned the agencies for implementation, list of works, financing pattern, monitoring and evaluation and most importantly to detailed measures to ensure transparency and accountability.

According to the Act, Gram Panchayat(GP) is the basic agency which is responsible for registration of households, issuance of job cards, providing works etc. Gram Panchayat has to select, design, and implement 50% of works. Block is the second tier of monitoring mechanism

which deals with the implementation of the programme. The Block undertakes the remaining 50% of the work either at their own Block level or at district level or jointly undertake by them. It also looks after the updating data and under the programme relating to works muster roll entries etc. besides inspection of the works under MGNREGA.

Karunabari Block is an administrative block of Lakhimpur district of Assam, India. Karunabari Block is consists of Bongalmora, Barchala Mahghuli Pandhuwa, Dakhin Laluk, Dikrong, Harmati, Niz Laluk, Pabha, Tinthengia, Uttar Laluk and Yubonagar Gram Panchayats. According to the 2011 census total population of Karunabari block is 1,50,684. Total male population of the block is 76,546 and female is 68,199. Schedule Tribe and Schedule Caste population of the block is 11,105 and 7,963 respectively.

Karunabari block is a peaceful area with inhabitants of different communities- Hindu, Muslim and Christian. Many ethnic groups like- Mising, Deori, Kacharis etc. are living harmoniously in the block. Maximum of them are economically backward and poor. Unemployment is a major problem of people in the block. So, proper implementation of the scheme, MGNREGA is very necessary for reducing unemployment and poverty from the block.

This paper tries study the working of MGNREGA and the challenges faced by Karunabari block in proper implementation of the scheme.

Research Methods:

In preparation of this paper both descriptive and analytical methods have been used based on both primary and secondary sources. Books, journals, articles and available in the websites are used for analysis of the theoretical perspective of the paper. A survey was conducted for collection of primary information about the working of MGNREGA in the Karunabari block.

List of Tables Used

The following tables are used in preparation of the paper-

Table no.1: Jobcards issued social category wise in different financial years

Financial years	Total registered households under MGNREGA	Jobcards issued to Schedule Caste households	Jobcards issued to Schedule Tribe households	Jobcard issued to other social categories	Total jobcards issued
2015-2016	27498	1219	1546	24422	27187
2016-2017	26545	1128	1393	23906	26427
2017-2018	25931	1076	1379	23252	25707

Source: Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, 9 March 2018, 01:49:24 PM

Table no.2: Frequency of Political Interference in Issue and Non- receive of Jobcard

Percentage of individuals approach to receive jobcard by political interference	Percentage of individuals failed to receive jobcard due to lack of political support	Percentage of individuals who don't know have a jobcard
6.67%	20%	10%

Source: Survey conducted by the researcher

Table no.2: Beneficiaries' have completed 100 days work in different financial years

2015-2016 financial year	2016-2017 financial year	2017-2018 financial year
1.36%	1.64%	0.37%

Source: Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India, 9 March 2018, 01:49:24 PM

Results and Discussions

Success of the aims of government depends upon proper implementation of programmes. Without proper execution of programmes government cannot ensure development of the country. As we know that more than 38% of India's people are poor and more than 75% of people are living in rural areas. Government of India adopted many poverty alleviation programmes time to

time. MGNREGA is also such a poverty alleviation programme, which is regarded as the world largest poverty alleviation programme. MGNREGA is working in the Karunabari block since its commencement for implementation in all the district of India. In the financial year 2015-2016 jobcard provided to 27,187 households out of 27,498 no. of registered households under MGNREGA in the block. Out of which 1,219 jobcard issued to Schedule Caste, 1,546 were issued to Schedule Tribe and 24,422 jobcards are issued to other social categories households. In the financial year 2016-2017 jobcards were issued to 26,427 out of 26,545 no. of registered households under MGNREGA in the block. Out of total number of jobcards issued, 1,128 were provided to Schedule Caste, 1,393 were provided to Schedule Tribe community and 23,906 jobcards were issued to other social categories. Again, in the financial year 2017-2018, 25,707 households were issued jobcards out of 25,931 no. of registered households under MGNREGA in Karunabri block. Out of which 1,076 were issued to Schedule Caste and 1,379 were to Schedule Tribe and 23,252 were to other social categories households. Although, MGNREGA has been working from the commencement for its implementation in 1st April 2008 in all the districts of India, but from the study it is seen that the people of the block are still in poverty and unemployment. So, this paper tries to study the lacunas being faced by the block in implementation of the scheme, MGNREGA. The study covered around 150 individuals from different Gram Panchayats of Karunabari block, 15 persons from each Gram panchayat. From the study it is seen that certain challenges are hampering in proper implementation of this programme. The challenges can be discussed through the following heads-

Political Interference

According to the respondents, many government employees approached to receive jobcard through political interference and the real beneficiaries are unaware of their jobcard and under MGNREGA and are deprived from it in the block. It is found that 6.67% government employees approached to receive jobcard local government by political interference. 20% real beneficiaries are deprived of receiving the jobcards due to lack of political support from the local government and 10% of people do not know that they have a jobcard which is issued and listed in the statistic of MGNREGA. So this is a major barrier in proper implementation of this scheme in Karunabari Block of Lakhimpur district of Assam.

Corruption

Corruption is a major challenge in the implementation of MGNREGA scheme in Karunabari block of Lakhimpur. Bribe from rupees 50 to 500 are paid in order to receive the jobcard. From the survey it is found that around 34% of total respondents have to give bribe to the local officials for receiving jobcard. Being unable to give them bribe 20% of individuals under BPL families are deprived of receiving job cards. Although, use of tractors and contractors are banned to work under MGNREGA, in some areas under Karunabari block the private contractors are using tractors for construction of road. This survey indicates that 90% of road construction under MGNREGA uses tractors by managing the officials of Gram Panchayats and the block. Again, the representatives of local government and private contractors take the jobcards of many beneficiaries by giving only 200 to 500 rupees after a year or more than two years. It indicates that corruption is increasingly hampering in the proper implementation of the scheme MGNREGA and alleviation of poverty from the block.

Selection of Beneficiary:

Favouritism in selection of beneficiary of MGNREGA is also a major barrier for ensuring proper implementation of the scheme in Karunabari block. In the block the members of local government select beneficiary under the scheme MGNREGA from their own family members and relatives. From the study it is found that 40% of people from total respondents are relatives of the officials of local government. Again, according to the respondents, representatives of Gram Panchayats provide around 47% of work under MGNREGA to their near and dear ones depriving many beneficiaries of MGNREGA.

Poverty

Poverty is a major challenge in ensuring proper implementation of MGNREGA in the Karunabari block. According to report available in the website, Department of Rural Development under Ministry of Rural Development of Government of India approximately 98% of people of the block is below poverty line. They cannot even buy an internet accessible phone for getting first hand information about the policies taken by the government. Daily wages for earning meal to the family is the major concern of the people in most of the remote areas of the block. On the other hand wages under MGNREGA are provided to the jobcard holders after a

long period of time. Besides, they have a fear that they might lose their work for daily wages after going to work under MGNREGA scheme. Irregularities in completing 100 days work by jobcard holders under MGNREGA may be a major cause of poverty prevailing in the block.

According to the statistics available in the website of the Department of Rural Development only 369 families out of 27,187 provided with jobcard under the block have completed 100 days work in 2015-2016 financial year. So, it is seen that only 1.36% of total families with jobcard have completed 100 days work under MGNREGA in this financial year. Again, in the 2016-2017 financial year only 434 families out of 26,427 jobcard holder families have completed 100 days work under MGNREGA in the block. It shows that only 1.64% of jobcard holder households completed defined days of work under MGNREGA in 2016-2017 financial year in the block. The outcome of the financial year 2017-2018 is also not satisfactory in completing 100 days work under MGNREGA. In this financial year only 95 families out of 25,707 jobcard holder families completed 100 days of work under MGNREGA. In this financial year completion of 100 days work under MGNREGA reduce to 0.37% which is not a good symptom in poverty alleviation and proper implementation of the scheme in the block.

Illiteracy

Like poverty, illiteracy is also a major barrier for achieving proper implementation of MGNREGA in the block. Nearly 40 % of people of the block are still illiterate. Besides, in the villages of Karunabari block there are approximately 80% of dropout individuals from different stages of their education. They cannot read the information on the notice board outside government offices. They have to depend upon the wishes of the educated or may call them as elite people of the rural areas. Being illiterate and dropout individuals from their early education, they do not know about the funding mechanism of the scheme MGNREGA. Now-a-days, wages of MGNREGA are directly transferred to the beneficiaries' account. But the fact is that 44% of total respondents are still not aware about it.

Lack of Willingness of the People

Because of the presence of favouritism, political interference and corruption, most of the jobcard holders of the block do not want to go for work under MGNREGA. Rather, they prefer to work as daily labourers to fulfill the needs of their families. Bases on the statements of the respondents

16.67% of jobcard holders usually prefer to work as daily labourers instead of working under MGNREGA as their wages are paid after three to four months of completion of work.

Conclusion

Without proper implementation of welfare schemes government cannot achieve its goals. So, proper implementation of welfare schemes is very essential for achievement of objectives of government. Effective execution of welfare schemes is very necessary for ensuring development of a country. India is a developing country and unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition etc are major socio-economic barrier for development of India. Government of India has been taking many welfare schemes from time to time aiming to eliminate these barriers and welfare of all sections of the society without regarding caste, creed, race, religion etc. MGNREGA was such a scheme that launched by the Government of India in 2005 to alleviate poverty and unemployment. It has been working in all the blocks of India since its inception. According to the literatures the blocks face many challenges in implementation of this scheme. Karunabri block of Lakhimpur district of Assam is also not an exception to it. The challenges faced by MGNREGA are discussed as above. The study indicates that working of MGNREGA is failure in achieving its objective. Constructive measures should be taken by the government and non-governmental organizations to eliminate these barriers in implementation of this programme for greater interest of the people.

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