

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND EMPLOYMENT GENERATION THROUGH MGNREGA

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Abstract

This paper focuses on MGNREGA and its implementation through good Governance. MGNREGA is a flagship programme of government of India. Paper focuses on different implementing bodies and impact of good governance on the result of the programme at different level. The paper has adopted the descriptive analysis technique and based on secondary sources of data and statement. MGNREGA has inaugurated a remarkable process for the empowerment of the poor. The Act is particularly a tool of empowerment for the most vulnerable sections of the village communities as they are also victims of social exclusion and political marginalization. MGNREGA has made a dent on poverty by both-increasing employment opportunities and raising the wage rate. And it has strengthened the process of participatory democracy through economic decentralization and by giving significant roles to the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Keywords: Good Governance, participatory democracy, employment guarantee.

INTRODUCTION

In two general elections since 2004, the “other” India has spoken loud and clear to the few enclaves of prosperity that dot the country’s grim development landscape: if growth is not inclusive and broad based, its wheels will come off, severely undermining the very fabric of Indian democracy. Government of India has accelerated its pace of poverty alleviation strategies by mobilizing greater budget resources, creating time frames for quantifiable

deliverables, linking, with global frameworks of action, such as the Millennium Development Goals which provide an umbrella approach for addressing multi-dimensional deprivations. As a democratic country, a central feature of good governance is the constitutionally protected right to elect government at various levels in a fair manner, with effective participation by all sections of the population. The seriousness and urgency of these policy and resource commitments to poverty alleviation are exemplified in a single legislation was National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) which enacted on 23rd of August 2005 and got presidential assent on 5th of September 2005, is one of the largest and most ambitious anti-poverty schemes which strengthen livelihood security through time bound guaranteed wage employment and is a paradigm shift from all other development programs that were traditionally supply led. Centrally funded entirely through domestic resources, the implementation of this law is supported by a budget based on demand for employment. It was “an Act to provide for the enhancement of livelihood security of the households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members’ volunteers to do unskilled manual work and for matters connected or incidental thereto.....”(NREGA-2005).

Besides employment generation, the objective of the scheme is to create durable community assets for strengthening of the livelihood source on a sustainable basis. It serves as a social safety net by providing a source of employment as such it is an “employer of last resort”. It was initially called the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) but was renamed on 2nd October 2009 to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). The other key attributes of this scheme are time bound guarantee, labor-intensive work, decentralized participatory planning, women empowerment, work site facilities, and above all, transparency and accountability through the provision of social audits and right to information. The process outcome of this Act is creating a model of governance reform anchored on the principles of right to livelihood, transparency and grass root democracy.

However, much more needs to be done before NREGS possibilities become a reality. The record of productive assets creation has been poor if not altogether dismal. Long delays in wage payments, sometimes for several months, and the spread of corruption rearing its ugly head indicate the failure of entitlements reaching the poorest of the nation, thus defeating the very purpose of NREGS. An analysis of these symptoms suggests that there are clear reasons why the results are not along expected lines. Though no magic bullet or quick fixes exist, solutions may well be within our reach. As several observers have remarked, a critical lacuna in the implementation of NREGS has been the shortage of dedicated human resource, with an overloaded bureaucratic structure given “additional charge,” leading to delays and poor quality

output. Attempts to piggyback a radically new people-centered programme on to a moribund bureaucratic structure of implementation simply do not work. However, a dedicated implementation structure will only solve part of the problem. The second crucial missing link in the implementation chain is concurrent monitoring. Here, information technology (IT) has a huge role to play in making necessary information available transparently and at high speed. Rich though the MGNREGA Management Information System (MIS) is, there is much scope for improvement. The MIS, for instance, is not able to raise an alert on delays in wage payments because data are normally updated post-facto, thus undermining the very basis of monitoring.

MGNREGA is a unique and unprecedented effort in strengthening grass-root democracy in India. For the first time, the Indian state has legally mandated the implementation of mechanism that strengthen transparency and accountability at every step of the delivery chain, by creating platform for citizens to articulate their voice and directly engage with the state. This legal mandate has been the catalyst for state government across the country to innovate with different tools to strengthen accountability. Gram-Panchayat is the primary program implementing agency of NREGA, along with other PRI bodies and line departments. Potential implementation of NREGA needs adequate capacitated governing body and motivation.

In this backdrop, the paper attempts to examine how the institutional features, which are components of good governance, are being practiced through the institutional framework of grass-root level self-government institution along with this, attempts had been made to explore the relationship, if any, between the components of good governance and performance of MGNREGA. Thus Panchayats have been legally declared as the "principal authorities for planning and implementation" of the scheme made under the Act. Incidentally, NREG Act is the first developmental legislation which assigns a definite and important role to PRIs. Further for realizing entitlements and broadening capabilities of the disadvantaged, democratization and participation are essential and sufficient pre-conditions and only PRI can bring them about.

Research Objectives

1. To analyses the mechanism of implementation of the MGNREGS in India.
2. To examine the level of employment generated by the Scheme in India.
3. To evaluate whether MGNREGS is possible to achieve the good governance through its various features.
4. To check whether participation of people under MGNREGS is active or not.

MGNREGA IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of MGNREGA involves institutions at the central government and state level, and at all three-tiers of local government in India, which includes the Zilla Panchayat the district level, the taluk Panchayat the block level, and the gram Panchayat the village level. The most important agency at the central government is the Ministry of Rural Development and the Ministry-founded Central Employment Guarantee Council (CEGC). The Ministry is responsible for ensuring the adequate and timely delivery of resources to the states and for reviewing, monitoring, and evaluating the use of these resources, as well as NREGA processes and outcomes. The CEGC advises the central government on MGNREGA-related matters and monitors and evaluates the implementation of the Act. The Council is mandated to prepare annual reports on the implementation of MGNREGA and submit these to the Parliament.

The pivotal institution at the state level is the state government, which is required to formulate a Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (REGS) that conforms to the minimum features specified under the Act. In addition, the state government must constitute the State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC), whose main responsibility is to advise the state government on MGNREGA-related matters and to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Act. Finally, the state government is responsible for ensuring the adequate and timely release of the state share of the REGS budget and facilitates administrative, financial, and technical support for all implementing bodies at the Zilla (district), taluk (block), and gram (village) Panchayat level.

Since NREGA foresees a decentralized implementation, the principal authorities for the implementation of the REGS are the local government (Panchayat) institutions at the district, block, and village level. In order to provide employment in a timely and adequate manner, the local government institutions at all levels must identify priority areas of employment-generating activities and propose, scrutinize, and approve the respective REGS projects. At the district level, the identification of the REGS projects is guided by the five-year District Perspective Plan, which specifies the long-term employment-generation and development perspectives of the district. In addition to the long-term plan, local government institutions at all levels must also identify the priority activities to be taken up in a year. At the gram Panchayat level, these priority areas are decided during village council (gram sabha) and sub-village council (ward sabha) meetings. Based on the recommendations formulated in the gram sabha and ward sabha, the gram Panchayat prepares an annual plan and forwards it to the MGNREGA block program officer for technical sanction/approval. Here we are discussing about the role and functions of various implementation agencies.

i. Ministry of Rural Development (MORD):

The Ministry of Rural Development (MORD) is the nodal Ministry for the implementation of NREGA. It is responsible for setting up of the Central Employment Guarantee Council (CEGC). It has to ensure timely and adequate resource support to the states. It has to undertake regular review, monitoring and evaluation of processes and outcomes. It has to establish an MIS to capture and track data on every critical aspect of implementation, and assess the utilization of resources through a set of performance indicators.

ii. Central Employment Guarantee Council (CEGC):

The Central Employment Guarantee Council (CEGC) shall be responsible for advising the central government on NREGA-related matters, and for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Act. It shall prepare Annual Reports on the implementation of NREGA and submit these to Parliament.

iii. State Government:

The State Government has to formulate a Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (REGS), and the Rules pertinent to its implementation, in consonance with the Act. It will set up the SEGC (State Employment Guarantee Council), and also designate an officer as the State Rural Employment Guarantee Commissioner responsible for ensuring that all activities required to fulfill the objectives of the Act are carried out. It will ensure that the state share of the REGS budget is released on time. It will ensure wide communication of the scheme and dissemination of information regarding its implementation. It will ensure all administrative, financial and technical support to the District Programme Coordinator, Programme Officer, PRIs and all other agencies involved in implementation.

iv. State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC):

The State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC) shall advise the state government on the implementation of the scheme, and evaluate and monitor it. It will also decide on the 'preferred works' to be implemented under REGS, and prepare Annual Reports for submission to the State Legislature.

v. District Panchayats:

The District Panchayat will be responsible for finalizing the district plans and for monitoring and supervising the REGS in the district. It can also execute works from among the 50 per cent that are not to be executed by the Gram Panchayats.

vi. District Programme Coordinator (DPC):

The state government will designate a District Programme Coordinator (DPC), who shall be responsible for the overall co-ordination and implementation of the scheme in the district.

vii. Intermediate Panchayat (IP):

The Intermediate Panchayat will be responsible for planning at the Block level, and for monitoring and supervision. It can also be given the responsibility of executing works from among the 50 per cent that are not to be executed by the Gram Panchayat.

viii. Programme Officer (PO):

A full-time officer will be appointed as the Programme Officer at the Block level, who shall be responsible for coordinating the works undertaken by the Gram Panchayat and the implementing agencies at the Block level.

ix. Gram Panchayat (GP):

The Gram Panchayat has a pivotal role in the implementation of REGS. It is responsible for planning of works, registering households, issuing job cards, allocating employment, executing 50 per cent of the works, and monitoring the implementation of the scheme at the village level.

x. Gram Sabha (GS):

NREGA authorizes the Gram Sabha to recommend works to be taken up under REGS, to monitor and supervise these works, and to conduct social audits of the implementation of the Scheme. In addition, the Gram Sabha should be used extensively for facilitating the implementation of the scheme, by acting as a forum for sharing information about the scheme, and also in ensuring transparency and accountability.

xi. Other Implementing Agencies:

In addition to Panchayats, Line Departments, NGOs, central and state government undertakings, and self- help groups (SHGs) can also be identified as implementing agencies.

EMPLOYMENT GENERATION THROUGH MGNREGS

MGNREGA focused on the districts having high incidence of poverty. However, it goes beyond poverty reduction and recognizes employment as a legal right. Skeptics considered it as a populist measure while others have considered it as a landmark initiative towards poverty alleviation and empowerment of poor. It is argued that this would not only increase the income

of the poor, but the asset creation through the process of employment would generate a much needed productive infrastructure for poverty alleviation on a permanent basis.

There has been a "significant dent" in poverty in rural areas as the implementation of MGNREGA has increased earning of rural households resulting in an increase in their purchasing power. With the increase in employment opportunities and wage rates (under NREGA), there has been a significant dent in poverty in rural areas. Initially the programme is implemented in 200 backward districts, identified by the Planning Commission, will pose major challenges to the implementation of the MGNREGA because of their special problems. They are the least developed areas of the country comprising mostly marginal farmers and forest dwellers. It was implemented in a various phases. In phase one it was implemented in 200 backward districts of the country, additional 130 districts in phase two in 2007-08 and remaining 266 districts notified in September 2008 and the scheme has now been extended to all the districts of the country. In many of these districts poverty has increased despite consistent focus of several poverty eradication programmes. Governance has little or no presence in most of these districts.

One of the most important aspects of MGNREGS is that the villagers can rightfully demand employment. The authority is responsible to provide employment in response to demand or provide employment allowance in the case it is do so. For performance analysis it is essential to look at the response of government in providing employment against the demand raised by workers. The NREGA can target development using huge demand for casual jobs. It has made a dent on poverty by increasing employment opportunities. During the first year of implementation (2006-07) in 200 districts, 2.10 Crore households were employed and 90.5 Crore person days were generated. In 2007-08, 3.39 Crore households were provided employment and 143.59 Crore person days were generated in 330 districts. In 2008-09, 4.51 Crore households have been provided employment and 216.32 Crore person days have been generated across the country. Thus while this is, Drèze and Oldiges argue, a vast improvement on previous wage employment programmes, the NREGA is currently falling well short of its potential in terms of employment creation. In 2009-2010, 5.25 Crore and in 2010-2011 made slight increase to 5.49 Crore households and 275.15 Crores have been provided employment. As far as the participation of SCs is concern their proportion increases for employment from 22.95 Crores person days (25 percent) in 2006-07 to 78.75 Crores person days (30.63 percent) in 2010-11. Although the participation of STs increased considerably from 32.98 Crores person days to 53.62 Crores, but their proportionate growth has decreased significantly from 36 percent to 20.85 percent in same period.

Table 1 : Employment Scenario in India under MGNREGS

Years	No. of HH Registered	Employment Demanded by HH	Employment Provided to HH	Employment Provided (%)
2006-07	37850390	21188894	21016099	99.18
2007-08	64740595	34326563	33909132	98.78
2008-09	100145950	45518907	45115358	99.12
2009-10	112548976	52920154	52585999	99.37
2010-11	120095282	54008043	53384234	98.84
2011-12	118595083	31724531	31105136	98.04

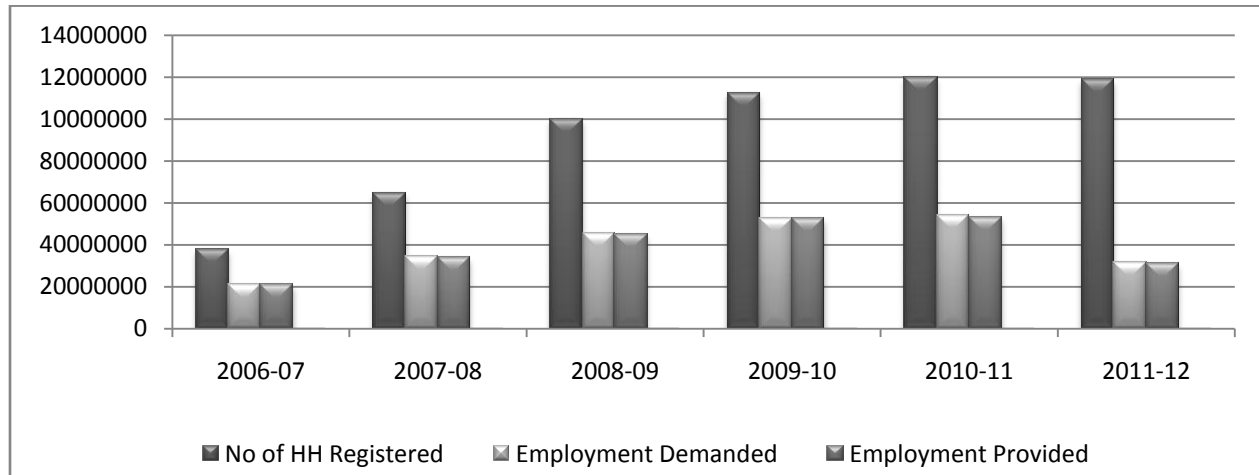
Source: www.MGNREGS.nic.com

Note: HH= Household

With drastic unemployment problem persisted in the various part of the country, MGNREGS provides some relax by providing employment to 2.10 Crores household in 2006-07 which increased drastically to 5.49 Crores in 2010-11. If we look the number of household employed, the states like UP (6431213), Andhra Pradesh (6200423), Rajasthan (5859667), West Bengal (4998239) etc. and with all India level of 54947068. But Employment generation per household for the year 2010-11 indicates that states like Mizoram (97 days), Nagaland (95 days), Sikkim (85 days), Manipur (68 days), Tripura (67 days) Meghalaya (57 days), Andhra Pradesh (54 days), Tamilnadu (54 days), Rajasthan (51days) could generate more than 50 days of employment against the target of 100 days. On the other hand the states like Arunachal Pradesh (23 days), Assam (26 days), Punjab (27 days), West Bengal (31 days), Bihar (33 days), Haryana (35 days), Kerala (40 days), Maharashtra (44 days), Madhya Pradesh (49 days) etc. falling below 50 days of employment generation. According to Drèze and Oldiges (2007) estimates, 900 million person-days of employment were created or 17 person-days per rural household (against an allocation of 100).

Thus while this is, Dreze and Oldiges argue, a vast improvement on previous wage employment programmes, the MGNREGA is currently falling well short of its potential in terms of employment creation. If we take the percentage of employment demanded by household and actual employment generation at national level it is around 99 percent with minor variation in different financial years, which means that government is able to produce employment opportunities for those who demand employment. In this sense we can say that the programme is successful.

Figure 1 : Employment Scenario in India under MGNREGS

Source: www.MGNREGS.nic.com

Several factors explain the reasons for varying degrees of progress across states and even across districts within a state. Strong political wills, presence of civil society agencies and NGOs, higher levels of awareness among the communities, and prior experience and capacities of civil servants and officials with regard to implementing similar programmes (like drought relief schemes) are identified as some factors responsible for a better take-off of MGNREGS in states like Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. Innovations and adaptations made by some of the states are also identified as one of the reasons for relative success in some locations (IHD: 2009c). For example, in Andhra Pradesh, self-help-groups and their federations at the village and mandal levels played an important role in the implementation of MGNREGS (undertaking monitoring, wage payment, social audit, and other functions). The state of Rajasthan had vibrant civil society groups in certain districts who championed implementation of MGNREGS through field level facilitation (ibid). In states like Jharkhand, lack of effective decentralized governance systems appeared to be reasons for the poor performance (ibid). Exceptionally high performance of a district like Dungarpur, a drought prone area, in Rajasthan is attributed to the effective grass roots mobilization of communities by NGOs and civil society activists. While the same is the case with many parts of Andhra Pradesh, it is coupled with effective monitoring systems and use of technology (electronic transfer of funds, on-line MIS) that appeared to have enhanced the performance of a state like Andhra Pradesh (IHD: 2009c). In Bihar, shortage of personnel, lack of technical personnel and low capacities seem to be the reasons for poor performance (IHD: 2008). Innovative implementation mechanisms like vesting the responsibility of implementation in Kudumbashri (self-help groups) in Kerala are illustrative of the space available for effective implementation of MGNREGS, and especially that of women's

participation. Kerala's strong Panchayat Raj institutions could also have enabled effective implementation. Awareness building appeared to have worked well in Pakur, Jharkhand—a tribal dominated area which shows high performance. However, several field studies point out generic factors like low funds, poor flow of funds due to political and administrative hurdles, etc. as reasons for varying performance across states and districts (IHD: 2008)

Legal Provisions for PRIs under MGNREGS:

MGNREGA assigns PRIs the most critical role in its implementation. Some of the salient provisions illustrating this point are summed up below:

- Section 12(1) mandates the inclusion of representatives of the PRIs in the State Employment Guarantee Council which is the paramount institution at the state level in implementing the Act, with wide ranging powers and functions.
- Section 13 declares the three-tier PRIs as the “principal authorities” for planning and implementation and outlines the functions of intermediate and district level Panchayats in planning and supervision of implementation. The District Programme Coordinator, who, in most part of the country, is the District Collector, is given an obligation by this section to assist the District Panchayat.
- Section 15 speaks of the Programme Officer at the intermediate Panchayat level (and not at the CD Block level). It further states that all or any of the functions of the Programme Officer can be discharged by the Gram Panchayat or any other local authority.
- Section 16 explains the role of the Gram Panchayat and mandates that at least 50 percent of the work in terms of cost has to be implemented through the Gram Panchayat. Further, it has given the responsibility of allocating employment opportunities among the applicants to the Gram Panchayat.
- Section 17 endows the Gram Sabha with the authority to conduct social audit and monitor execution of works.
- Schedule II explains the duties of the Gram Panchayat in registering the household, issue of job cards, assigning of work, maintenance of records etc. Thus the MGNREG Act assigns a wide ranging role to PRIs right from registering of workers up to monitoring and social audit. It vests powers of planning and implementation (at least 50%) with the PRIs and casts an obligation for transparency and accountability on them, especially on the Gram Panchayat. Probably the only deficiency with reference to PRIs is the non-mentioning of the District Planning Committees in the Act. Ideally the DPCs should have

been assigned the task of coordinating the planning and preparation of the Perspective Plan, Labour Budget and the Annual Plan.

Concept of Governance and Good Governance:

Nowadays, the terms 'Governance' and 'Good governance' has become catchword in the development discourse. 'Governance' is defined as a process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented. It denotes both political and administrative functions to ensure moral behavior and ethical conduct in the task of governing (Singh and Singh, 2004). Good governance is, among other things, participatory, transparent and accountable, effective and equitable, and it promotes the rule of law. It ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources (UNDP, 1997). Absence of good governance acts as a formidable hurdle in the achievement of proper development. It is necessary to provide the best benefit to a large number of people (Bagchi, 2005). UNDP recognizes the following 9 core characteristics of good governance, which are: 1) Participation 2) Rule of law 3) Transparency 4) Responsiveness 5) Consensus-oriented 6) Equity 7) Effectiveness and Efficiency 8) Accountability and 9) Strategic vision. The implication of good governance is manifold as good institutions beget good governance. Institutions matter for both long and short term because they form the incentive structure of a society and provide the underlying determinants of economic performance (Sharma;2007) rightly pointed out that, many of the items listed on the good governance agenda as preconditions for development are actually consequences of it. The implications of good governance are profound as institution building and the promotion of good governance demand simultaneous commitment to economic development. Finally, measuring good governance and overall governmental performance, generally, requires measuring the "outcomes" not just "inputs" (Rotberg; 2004).

Participation, transparency and accountability are the three pillars of good governance. Following the UNDP measures of good governance, we have considered the following components of good governance and comparing with MGNREGS:

i. Participation:

The MGNREG Act is hailed as a historic land mark that can ensure the democratic privilege of dignified means of livelihood through Right to work with participatory processes like social audit and people's plan. The government has referred to it as an "*Act of the people, by the people, and for the people*". The Act was prepared through a wide range of consultation with people's organizations. The Act addresses itself chiefly to working people and their fundamental right to

life with dignity. All men and women should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively. Towards this end, planning for works at the local level through decentralized and participatory systems becomes necessary. The Act emphasizes that nature of work will be determined in Palli-Sabha through participatory people's plans, approved in Gram Sabha and accordingly the shelf of activities would be prepared. The Gram Sabha is further entrusted to take an active role in approval and monitoring of work, and conducting social audit. Meetings of Gram Sabha (meeting of entire village) are necessary.

The Act also empowers ordinary people to play an active role in the implementation of employment guarantee schemes through *Gram Sabhas* (participatory & representative micro level administrative unit in three-tier Panchayat System), social audits, participatory planning and other means. This Act is an important step towards the realization of the right to work. It is also expected to enhance people's livelihoods on a sustained basis, by developing the economic and social infrastructure in rural areas. MGNREGS is the use of the platform for peoples participation facilitated by social audit. In this context it must be remembered that social audit or public audit is a continuous ongoing process, through which people can participate in the monitoring and implementation of the MNREGA. It was felt that active community participation was particularly important for ensuring transparency and public accountability. Thus more than any other law, MNREGA is an Act of the people, by the people and for the people.

ii. Transparency and Accountability:

It was believed that decentralization of governance through Panchayati-Raj system will pave the way for more accountable governance where power will be in the hand of the people and they will be capable to wield it against erring elements. But on the contrary the system was less responsive towards this decentralization of power and village people are still subject to corruption and deficit of effective service delivery. Transparency and accountability therefore is most crucial to any development paradigm and are two most important requisite for good governance. Transparency is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them. NREGA provides for a 100 days of guaranteed employment in one financial year to all rural households, members of which are willing to do manual labour. The Act not only guarantees wage employment as a right, but also promotes community monitoring through vigilance and monitoring committees, social audit through Gram

Sabha and also makes provision for complete transparency as mandated by the Right to Information Act, 2005. Likewise in order to ensure transparency and reduce corruption the government is particular that, MGNREGS works should be subjected to social auditing by Gram Sabha. Article 17 (1) says that Gram Sabha would monitor all works which are implemented in the Gram Panchayat. Article 17 (2) of the NREGA says “the Gram Sabha shall conduct regular social audits of all the projects under the scheme taken up within the Gram Panchayat”. Article 17 (3) says “the Gram Panchayat shall make available all relevant documents including the muster rolls, bills, vouchers, measurement books, copies of sanction orders and other connected books of account and papers to the Gram Sabha for the purpose of conducting the social audit.

The process of social audit according to the guidelines should include public vigilance and verification of the following 11 stages of implementation of MGNREGS: registration of families, distribution of job cards, receipt of work applications, preparation of shelf of projects and selection of sites, development and approval of technical estimates and issuance of work order, allotment of work to individuals, implementation and supervision of works, payment of unemployment allowance, payment of wages, evaluation of work, mandatory social audit in the Gram Sabha (Social Audit Forum). The guidelines lists out various vulnerabilities at each stages, suggests steps to promote transparency and accountability. Guidelines also delineates in great details how to publicize, collect data and prepare document, procedures to be adopted and mandatory agenda of the Gram Sabha for social audit. Growing realization of need for transparency, accountability and participation has led to creation of space for social audit under MGNREGA. Using this institutional design many governmental and non-governmental agencies have conducted social audit in last one and half year since the launch of MGNREGS albeit with different approaches and methodologies. It has been observed that mere statutory provisions are not sufficient to promote transparency and accountability in MGNREGS. Demand side needs to be strengthened with awareness about entitlements, capacity building, mobilization and facilitation. Supply side, primarily responsible for follow up actions, should be supported by creating a non-threatening environment, capacity building in record keeping. It is also important to complete the process of devolution to Panchayats because accountability without power is as absurd as power without accountability.

The Right to Information Act of 2005 ensures and any official information could be obtained by any citizen by mere application and state is liable to furnish the information with 30 days. This act is another milestone in the history of democracy in India because public access to information instills spirit of accountability and transparency in governance. Right to information is also seen as a corrective instrument to check corruption, overcome unnecessary

secrecy and bureaucratic apathy towards citizen's demands. Right to information is a pre requisite for healthy democratic structure. Indian Parliament enacted the famous Right to Information Act in 2005, which makes access to information as fundamental right of the people. Right to Information (RTI) empowers every citizen to seek any information from government offices and access to official documents on request except the information about national security and strategic issues, private matter and matter under judicial consideration. Since the scope of the Act is broad, RTI has revolutionized the concept of democratic governance substantially. So when MGNREGA was enacted by Indian Parliament in 2005 August, RTI was made as an integral part of the Act. It is envisaged that MGNREGA will be meaningless without proper use of RTI because RTI can check corruption and leakage of public funding on MGNREGA in an effective manner. Above all, the provisions of RTI make the implementing agency more transparent and accountable to common masses.

iii. Effectiveness & efficiency:

The efficiency and effectiveness of any program is that processes and institutions produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources. As far as concerned with MGNREGA, there were two challenges before the effective implementation of MGNREGS. The first was the capacity of the Indian state to meet the huge financial obligations that the law brings in. The other was that even if this law was passed and money made available, corruption would ensure that much of the money would go into the pockets of middlemen. The issue that the implementation mechanism for this program envisage planning and executing at local level providing ample opportunities for middle men to chifon out the money depriving the deserved ones. Critics feel that it would be difficult to ensure the implementation of this guarantee in a vast country like India without compromising the provisions of transparency and accountability. This has still remained a great concern in implementation of this Act throughout the country even after five years.

The overall fund utilization in the MGNREGA has plummeted to 60 percent. Most states were unable to utilize even half of the funds slotted for administrative expenses, stalling administrative reforms that are expected to increase the efficiency of the scheme. Administrative costs are important because the money is used to improve the knowledge base of the scheme like technology, monitoring mechanisms, infrastructure, personnel capacity etc. The states can use 6 percent of allocation under the scheme for administrative purposes, to build capacity for the kind of expenditure the scheme targets to ensure income support for the poor. But the overall utilization of funds for administrative costs under the scheme was 40.3 percent in 2010-11.

The second challenge needs to be seriously addressed by all quarters. Corruption is a serious problem that could undermine all the objectives of this significant, radical, and hard won entitlement for India's rural poor. The question of leakages need to be addressed not just to answer the critics, but also to ensure that the benefits of this legislation reach those it was supposed to. The ghost of corruption has haunted many public interventions in India, and the MGNREGA is no exception. Bank payments of MGNREGA wages were recently introduced on a mass scale, and projected as a foolproof remedy against corruption. Recent evidence, however, suggests that the banking system itself is not above corruption — corrective steps are urgently needed. The effectiveness of MGNREGA also crucially depends on what type of schemes it gives priority to. Lack of focus of social, gender inequality in creation of productive assets has been a major reason for limited success of wage employment programme.

iv. Equity:

Equality of men and women in decision making to improve or maintain their wellbeing one major provision of MGNREGA is employment generation without gender discrimination. Through this, it was protected the women justice and rights. There is much that the MGNREGA promises from the perspective of women's empowerment as well. Most boldly, in a rural milieu marked by stark inequalities between men and women – in the opportunities for gainful employment afforded as well as wage rates – MGNREGA represents action on both these counts. The Act stipulates that wages will be equal for men and women. It is also committed to ensuring that at least 33 percent of the workers shall be women. By generating employment for women at fair wages in the village, MGNREGS can play a substantial role in economically empowering women and laying the basis for greater independence and self-esteem. While recognizing the significant achievements of MGNREGS with regard to (1) Gender parity of wages, (2) Mobilization of women for MGNREGS employment and (3) increased in control rights of women in earnings from MGNREGA.

In contrast to the high participation of women in the programme as workers, their participation in processes like work selection, social audit, mobilization of civil society, and share in the control and management of assets created is not encouraging. This being the case, in some places, women's participation in the Gram Sabha has still increased, and there is even an increase in the number of women who speak in the Gram Sabha. There are also some examples of women's groups playing an important role in the management of community assets. Technological change and economic development policies need to be supported by programmes for equality-based gender institutions at micro and macro-levels. Self-Help Groups, Mahila Mandals (rural women's organizations), gender responsive Panchayats, community

based organizations (such as SEWA, Working Women's Forum, Kudumbasree, and numerous rural NGOs working on MGNREGA implementation) can be efficient models of such institutional arrangement at the local level. These organizations can play an active role in widening the outreach of both technological information and spreading awareness on women's control rights to productive assets and incomes earned through the guaranteed employment and otherwise. Such an approach will enable rural poor women and men to have greater access to institutional credit, promote greater bargaining power against unjust social and economic practices and facilitate implementation of MGNREGA programmes. However, capacity building improvement of members of SHGs through skill training and mandatory measure of gender equality in management and control rights to productive assets are critical, only then it would be possible for SHGs to act as an effective agency for rural development under MGNREGA.

Importantly, a majority of the women workers under MGNREGA programme say that such employment has brought a significant change in their communities and in their own lives; the MGNREGA wages are higher than the market wages and it has improved their spending capacity. Women are able to use their earnings for household food and consumption needs, healthcare and education of children. More important, earlier they "used to be dependent on their husbands for any expenses", but now with some cash in their hands, women have greater degree of economic independence and self- confidence, "feel empowered", as they are also earning members of the family. That equal rights to productive assets of women with those of men, can lead to greater economic activity, change in the perception of dependence on men, and thus result in substantially reducing exclusion of women from social processes and promote development of diverse capabilities, thereby enhancing productivity and reducing inequality.

CONCLUSION

This narrative about responding to people's protest about poverty through introduction of a right based approach for poverty alleviation in the form of provision of rural employment guarantee in the constitutional system of India suggests that the MGNREGA has inaugurated a remarkable process for the empowerment of the poor. The Act is particularly a tool of empowerment for the most vulnerable sections of the village communities as they are also victims of social exclusion and political marginalization. Secondly, it has stimulated mobilization of the poor for livelihood within the legitimate frame work of governance. Thirdly, MGNREGA has made a dent on poverty by both-increasing employment opportunities and raising the wage rate. And fourthly, it has strengthened the process of participatory democracy through economic decentralization and by giving significant roles to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), the rural poor classes, communities and the civil society groups.

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