

**ROLE OF MGNREGA IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT OF THE PEOPLE: A STUDY OF TWO
BLOCKS IN NADIA DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL**

SYNOPSIS

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Introduction:

Indian economy is growing at a rapid pace alongside of globalisation. But rural India is lagging behind in the fields of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, ill-health, lack of sanitation and safe drinking water etc. (Leelavathi 2011: 1). The problems of unemployment and poverty have always been major obstacles to economic development of developing countries like India (Sharma 2016: 43). Poverty, has many social dimensions, is a curse which directly or indirectly affects the personal development of a person. In the last few decades, rural poverty and unemployment have grown in an unprecedented manner in India. There is a growing incidence of illiteracy, blind faith, hunger, malnourished children, anaemic pregnant women, farmer suicides, starvation deaths, migration resulting from inadequate employment, poverty, and the failure of subsistence production during droughts in rural areas of India. Therefore, Indian Government implemented various programmes that offered wage employment in public works on minimum wages. These wage employment programmes are CDP, RMP, VDP, CRSE, PIREP, SFDA, FWP, NREP, RLEGP, JRY, EAS, JRY, JGSY, SGRY, NFFWP etc. Among these programmes, the SGRY and NFFWP have been merged with NREGA in 2005 (Misra. et al. 2013: 2-3).

The NREGA Act, passed in September 2005, became operational in a few districts of West Bengal in February 2006. In the first phase, it was implemented in 10 districts of West Bengal, like Bankura, Birbhum, Malda, Purulia, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Murshidabad, South 24 Parganas, and Paschim Midnapore, etc. It was followed by other 7 districts like Purba Midnapore, Hooghly, Burdwan, Nadia, North 24 Parganas, Coochbehar, and Darjeeling from 1st April, 2007. So NREGA has been implemented in the Nadia District since April, 2007. The study is mainly based on Krishnagar II CD Block and Nabadwip CD Block of Nadia district. Both blocks are industrially backward and agriculturally dependent. NREGA is the biggest demand-driven poverty alleviation programme in the world. Later, this scheme was renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on October 2, 2009 (Mohanty 2012: 1). The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is an important milestone for developing employment opportunities in rural areas of India. It has been eradicating rural poverty and unemployment by the way of generating more employment for productive unskilled labour in rural India. The MGNREGA wage-employment programme implemented by State Governments with Central Government sponsorship. These wage-employment programmes

were self-targeting and aimed to provide enhanced livelihood security, specially of those dependent on casual manual labour. The main objective of this scheme was to provide 100 days of guaranteed unskilled-wage employment and economic development to every rural household in every financial year (Biwas 2010: 95). The State Government enacted the Act to provide wage employment to those who (every rural poor and lower middle-class households) demanded it (Guidelines 2008: 2). The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is being considered as a ‘Silver Bullet’ for the development of society. Because the scheme is a significant way to bring socio-economic development in rural life. Therefore, MGNREGA has been considered as an important milestone for the socio-economic development of the people. MGNREGA focuses on works relating to house construction, afforestation, improving livelihoods, land development, rural connectivity or rural footpaths, disaster restoration, micro irrigation channels, water conservation and water harvesting works, rural sanitation, and promotion of fisheries.

Literature Review:

The review of the research presented in this chapter deals with the study the role of MGNREGA in the socio-economic development of the people in both study blocks. The analysis of various empirical studies relating to the particular scheme is important to evolve the progress of general framework of the present research. (Kumar 2016: 54). Various pieces of literature have been reviewed, including books, Ph. D. thesis, articles, and reports etc. These selected literatures are related directly or indirectly to the present research study and presented thematically in following ways:

a) Various Dimensions of MGNREGA:

Annita Ranjan (2016) in her book, *MGNREGA and Women Empowerment*, explains empowering marginalised peoples, engendering social empowerment, modernisation of women under MGNREGA, creating wealth and adding assets, environment and sustainable development, and implementation and governance. The author has discussed different aspects of the Act and its implementation. The author tries to know how far this scheme has been successful and what needs to be done. She mentions passionate debates about social policy in India and the constitutional vision of bringing dignity to all fellow citizens. She has also discussed several aspects of personal, social, development, and national domains, as well as

the interests of its own acts of liberalisation and privatisation in these days of globalisation. The next chapters of the book examine both the conditions in which MGNREGA operates and the conditions that it helps to transform and recreate.

Debasish Biswas (2010) in his article, “Performance of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme with Special Reference to Jalpaiguri District of West Bengal”, focuses on the measures of the performance of MGNREGS in the Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. The Act aims at eradicating extreme poverty and making villages self-sustaining through productive asset creation. He wanted to focus on important provisions of MGNREGA, where the main rules, regulations, and major challenges have been mentioned. In addition, seven dimensions were selected in order to measure the overall performance of Jalpaiguri district as far as MGNREGS is concerned. These dimensions are i) Persondays generation, ii) Participation of different categories of people viz. SC, ST and women, iii) Number of households provided 100 days of employment, iv) Percentage of women participation in MGNREGS, v) Utilisation of fund against the availability of fund, vi) Average number of days employment and viii) Number of different schemes and their weightage. Lastly, the author tried to mention some important suggestions and recommendations for a successful MGNREGA Act for eradicating rural poverty and unemployment from the rural villages.

Dinesh Kumar Malhotra (2022) in his thesis, “Poverty Alleviation Programmes and Environmental Sustainability with reference to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme in Himachal Pradesh”, analyse and understand the impact of implementation of poverty alleviation programme, MGNREGA, with special emphasis on environmental sustainability as the programme is labour intensive and activities are mainly aimed to create infrastructure for sustainability of the village economy. The study has also examined the relation of various institutions, people, procedures involved in implementation of the MNREG scheme. He explains in his study organisational structure for implementation of MGNREGA. He also examines the role of social audit for strengthening MGNREG scheme and rural household employment and income. His research work improving implementation of MGNREGA, with a view to environmental sustainability at rural level. He mentioned MGNREGA, implemented properly and sincerely, has potential of transforming the rural economy, may attend specially employment generation, poverty alleviation and protection of environment etc.

Kalaivani Subramanian and Thangamalar Selvaraj (2016) in their book, *Impact of MGNREGA on Agriculture: Impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act on Agriculture*, highlight the impact of MGNREGA on rural poor households, food security, and agriculture. The authors discussed in this book the attributes related to agriculture contributed by MGNREGA activities and their relationship with the impact of MGNREGA activities on agriculture. This book also indicates that the MGNREGA workers may be provided with more water-related work, like creation of new ponds and water harvesting structures, so as to improve the irrigation intensity. Thus, MGNREGA ensure livelihood security of the rural poor through the creation of durable assets and water security. It has concentrated on employment opportunities as well as social opportunities in rural areas of India.

b) MGNREGA and Socio-Economic Development:

Amita Sharma (2010) in her article, *Rights-based Legal Guarantee as Development Policy: The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act*, examined the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (Mahatma Gandhi NREGA) as a rights-based legal framework for guaranteeing basic livelihood security to rural households. Amita Sharma tries to explore in her paper the legal design and policy innovations in which rural households facilitate the fulfilment of the objectives of the Act. She considers Mahatma Gandhi NREGA as a rights-based policy formulation in development contexts. She mentioned following questions by examining the rights-based framework of MGNREGA: a. What rights are being recognised? b. What are the processes for realising them? Are these feasible? c. What obligations are created by such processes upon the state and the citizen? d. What are the challenges to the administrative systems in implementing programmes governed by legal frameworks? e. What kind of negotiations are possible to balance the mandatory nature of law with the flexibility desired of a development programme? She has critically discussed the MGNREGA in terms of its design and key factors that constrain and facilitate the achievement of its objectives. This article engages with these questions and suggests the possibility of reviewing some aspects of the Act.

Archana Sinha and Denzil Fernandes (2019) in their study, *The Unravelling of MGNREGA A Comparative Study of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh*, pointed out that MGNREGS is able to cater to only 32 per cent in providing assured income. A very small percentage of people received at least 100 days of

wage employment. The MGNREGS has partially arrested women's participation, unemployment, poverty and migration among labourers from these rural areas. However, at the panchayat level, the post of Gram Rojgar Sahayak (GRS) has remained almost vacant in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. They also explained the need to adapt and strengthen the transparency safeguards related to wage payments. They find out that due to a lack of awareness people are not demanding jobs under MGNREGS.

Ashok Purohit's (2014) book, *MGNREGA and Rural Development*, is a work related to rural-urban migration, rural livelihoods, and rural women empowerment in some selected districts of Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana. The author explains the impact of MGNREGA on rural-urban migration and rural livelihoods. Again, he has discussed the challenges and opportunities of MGNREGA towards transforming rural India and women empowerment. The author has mainly highlighted the appraisal of impact assessment of MGNREGA and rural women empowerment in some selected districts of Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Haryana. He has comparatively analysed the number of days worked and wages, people's awareness, worksite facilities, rural migration, women independence, implementation process, corruption, and the challenges and opportunities of MGNREGA.

Dahlia Khaira (2017) in her book, *Appreciation & Evaluation of MGNREGA in Punjab*, discussed MGNREGA in terms of adequacy of administrative machinery, outreach of the programme, role in socio-economic conditions of women, capacity building measures of local officials, and efficiency of accountability and grievance redressal mechanisms for better provision of services under MGNREGA. She also analyses in her book about policy prescriptions for overcoming the gap in the implementation of the programme and strengthening the rights-based approach. She has mentioned organisational structure and implementing agencies of MGNREGA, women empowerment, capacity building, transparency, and accountability in all seven chapters of the book.

There are adequate research works done on the role of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in the socio-economic development of the people in general but not on Krishnagar II CD Block and Nabadwip CD Block. The present study is an attempt to fill this gap in the selected study areas.

Objectives of the Study:

The main objectives of the study are mentioned below in the following way:

- i. To understand the general view of the MGNREGA from the perspective of the socio-economic development of the people.
- ii. To evaluate the impact of MGNREGA on the socio-economic development and rural poverty of the people of Krishnagar II and Nabadwip Block.
- iii. To understand and examine the institutional mechanisms under which the entire programme is being implemented.
- iv. To find out the implementation issues and challenges of MGNREGA in Krishnagar II Block and Nabadwip Block.
- v. To know the extent of SC, ST, and women's participation in MGNREGA works in Krishnagar II Block and Nabadwip Block.

Research Questions:

- i. What are the various historical dimensions of MGNREGA?
- ii. What are the employment opportunities provided by the MGNREGA in both given blocks of the study areas?
- iii. What is implication of MGNREGA's employment generation for men and women?
- iv. What are the implementation challenges of MGNREGA in the study areas?

Research Hypotheses:

From the above objectives of the study, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- i. MGNREG Scheme strengthens the socio-economic development of the people in general and women's emancipation, economic development and their empowerment in particular.
- ii. There are is a gap between the provisions and implementation of the MGNREGA in Krishnagar II and Nabadwip Block.

Research Methodology:

The research work is empirical and analytical in nature, based on field surveys. Therefore, interviews and group discussions have been used for collecting data. For these purposes tried to establish the perception of MGNREGA and its impact on socio-economic development in two study blocks of Nadia district on the basis of empirical-analytical analysis. Both primary and secondary sources have been used for the completion or formulation of this research work. The primary data was collected from the beneficiaries with the help of both structured and unstructured questionnaires (interviews) and a field survey. Interviews with the officials from the sectoral departments were also conducted. The primary data for the present study has been collected through direct contact with the respondents by using well-structured question schedules (personal interview and group discussion of two study blocks).

The primary data was also collected from difference sources i.e. Chief Executive Officer of BDO and village Panchayats. A mix of male and female people of different ages, castes, religions, and qualifications have been selected for getting the primary data. The secondary data was collected from various existing literature like books, articles, journals, newspapers, thesis, dissertations, etc. Besides the primary data, secondary sources covering aspects relating to the performance of MGNREGS, quantum of employment generation, works undertaken and financial position at the national, state, district, and sample block levels are included for the data analysis. For the collection of information and data on the above-mentioned specific aspects, numerous documents and official records such as published and unpublished reports obtained through various sources such as both in Nabadwip and Krishnagar II block development offices, and all gram panchayat offices of two blocks. The participants were selected through simple random sampling from all panchayats of study blocks. 25 respondents have been selected from every Gram Panchayat. Thus, the total sample size of the Krishnagar II block is $7 \times 25 = 175$ respondents, and Nabadwip block is $8 \times 25 = 200$ respondents. A sample of 375 households including both job card holders and non-job card holders was randomly selected. Here, non-job card holder households were selected to explore the reasons for their non-participation in the MGNREGS activities.

Tentative Chapters

The introductory chapter of the research has discussed the historical and methodological aspects by adopting contemporary quantitative techniques in which the

literature review deeply explained. Generally, development is considered as a condition in which belongings are improving. But it is defined in several ways in separate contexts like social, political, biological, science and technology, and language and literature. In a socio-economic context, development is considered as the improvement of people's lifestyles through improved education, incomes, skill development and employment. It is the process of socio-economic transformation based on cultural and environmental factors. So, socio-economic development is considered as a process in which social and economic conditions have developed in a society. But socio-economic development is measured by some indicators, like GDP, a combination of literacy, life expectancy or access to health care, higher level of efficiency, well-being, justice, income or levels of employment and democracy at all levels. MGNREGA has been merged with development. MGNREGA has been considered an important way in which social economic equity and fixed income are maintained in every financial year. Some of the literature is directly and indirectly involved in the present research study. That is why literature review is important for making a complete research work. Without a proper literature review, the research study cannot be completed smoothly. The introduction chapter explains the research objective, research hypothesis, research gap, research methodology, implementation and impact etc. of MGNREGA in the context of two study blocks. To know the extent of women's participation in MGNREGA works and compare socio-economic development between Krishnagar II and Nabadwip block. The research work is basically empirical and analytical in nature, based on field survey data. Therefore, interview and group discussion methods have been used with beneficiaries for collecting data.

It is observed that no research work has been done on socio-economic development in both blocks of Nadia district. So, necessary research data is not available on this topic under two blocks of Nadia district. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to fill this gap in the selected block areas. It also discussed about significance of the research work. The present research study is an attempt to understand the actual scenario of MGNREGS and its impact on socio-economic development in minority-dominated Krishnagar II CD block and Nabadwip CD block of Nadia district, West Bengal. It focuses on the role of both block's in generating sufficient employment opportunities, the procedures for job card registration, issuance of job cards, necessary measures and application for employment. It will help in formulating better policies and strategies for the future generation.

The various dimensions of MGNREGA in two blocks in second chapter analysed conceptual framework, objectives, goals, limitations, significance, implementation, monitoring system, and related information of MGNREGA. MGNREGA is an important rights-based, demand-driven, self-selecting, time-bound, centrally sponsored, and state government-enacted scheme. It has been coming through various programmes since 2005. It aims to create durable assets and strengthen the livelihood resource for the rural poor. It enhances the livelihood security of rural people by guaranteeing hundred days of wage employment in a financial year for those who volunteer to do unskilled manual work. MGNREGA has covered the entire rural area within the country with the exception of districts that have a hundred percent urban population. MGNREGA name has been changed into MGNREGA in 2009. In addition, the large number of stakeholders have been involved in the implementation of the MGNREGA works from lower level to higher level or the village level to the national level. The village is the lowest tier for execution of MGNREGA works at gram panchayat level. Programme Officer at the Block level, District Programme Coordinator in district level, State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC) and State Employment Guarantee Mission (SEGM) in state level, and Ministry of Rural Development in Centre level, are responsible for the effective implementation and monitoring of the MGNREGA work.

MGNREGA and socio-economic development in Nabadwip block in third chapter based on block office data and field survey data. This chapter discusses various issues like both block's performance trends, employment provided households, participation and persondays generated of SC, ST, women and disabled person, utilisation of fund (in Lakhs) in Nabadwip block. The Nabadwip CD Block has been focusing on the creation of durable assets under MGNREGA. In the financial year of 20201-22, Nabadiwip CD Block has been able to complete 984 house construction, 408 livestock promotion, 109 afforestation, 82 improving livelihoods, 30 land development, 29 rural footpaths, 25 disaster restoration, 15 micro irrigation channels, 10 water conservation and water harvesting works, 9 rural sanitation, and 8 promotion of fisheries. In this year, total completed works are 1709 and 2553 ongoing works by 964.76 lakhs expenditure in study block. Most of the employment provided by households was women in all financial years. It is followed by SC and ST households. It is discussed that MGNREGA has an important impact on the participation of SC, ST, women, and disabled people without discrimination in Nabadwip block. In addition, it discussed how many households had got land reform facilities, 100 days of employment, and fund utilisation against the availability of funds under MGNREGA in Nabadwip block from the financial year of 2016-

17 to 2021-22. Some specific subjects have been discussed in this chapter based on field survey data. These are respondent's awareness about MGNREGA work, written application, unemployment allowance, and impact of age-caste-religion and gender of respondents in Nabadwip block. In addition, respondent skills, women's participation, wage payment, worksite facilities, child labour, and some important developmental pictures have been discussed in this chapter. Without regular and adequate work and timely wage payment, study block people are forced to migrate and seek alternate employment than MGNREGA. Very few per cent of people of the study block were aware of MGNREGA work and unemployment allowance (10%). Mostly middle-aged (35-52 years) Hindu other backward class women have participated under study block MGNREGA employment. Respondents (randomly selected) of Nabadwip block have same opinion that MGNREGA work or wage payment (99%) not provided timely. No respondent has taken money of advance wages from MGNREGA project in study block. From the field survey it is clear that 96 per cent of employees (192 out of 200 respondents) of study block have job cards, but 95 per cent of employees have MGNREGA work-updated reports in their job cards. But all respondents have the same opinion that MGNREGA will be useful if the Act provides regular work and wage payments without any defects.

MGNREGA and socio-economic development in Krishnagar II block in fourth chapter based on block office data and field survey data. This chapter, like 3rd chapter, also discusses various performance trends like employment provided households, participation and persondays generated of SC, ST, women and disabled person, and utilisation of fund (in lakhs) in Krishnagar II block. The Krishnagar II CD Block has also been focusing on the creation of durable assets under MGNREGA. In the financial year of 20201-22, Krishnagar II CD block has been able to complete 634 house construction, 68 road connectivity or rural footpaths, 81 afforestation or plantation works, 35 disaster preparedness or restoration, 22 improving land productivity, 15 micro irrigation channels, 09 land development, 06 water conservation and water harvesting works, 01 rural sanitation, 04 building construction, 05 fishing, 03 improving livelihoods, and 01 playfield, etc. In this year, total completed works are 905 and 2085 ongoing works by 720.10 lakhs of expenditure in Krishnagar II block. Like Nabadwip block, most of the participating employees were women in all financial years in Krishnagar II block. It was followed by SCs and STs. The good impact of MGNREGA on SC, ST, women, and disabled person is allowed to be employed without discrimination in this block. It is discussed how

many households got land reform facilities, 100 days of employment, and fund utilisation under MGNREGA in Nabadwip block from 2016-17 to 2021-22.

Some specific subjects have been discussed in this chapter based on field survey data. These are respondent's awareness about MGNREGA work, written application, unemployment allowance, and impact of age-caste-religion and gender of respondents. In addition, respondent's skills, women's participation, wage payment, worksite facilities, child labour, and some important developmental picture have been mentioned in the fourth chapter. Without regular and adequate quantum of work and timely wage payment in Krishnagar II block people are forced to migrate and seek alternate employment than MGNREGA. Very few per cent (2.29) people in Krishnagar II block were aware of MGNREGA work. But 100 per cent peoples of this block were unaware of the unemployment allowance. Mostly middle-aged (35-52 years) (44.57%) Hindu other backward class married women have participated in this block MGNREGA work. Most of the respondents (randomly selected) in Krishnagar II block have the same opinion that MGNREGA work (96.57%) or wage payment (100%) is not provided in timely manner. Like Nabadwip block, nobody of Krishnagar II block has taken money of advance wages from MGNREGA project. But all respondents have the same opinion that MGNREGA will be useful if the act provides regular work and wage payments without any defects.

A comparison study shows the overall development performance of MGNREGA between Nabadwip block and Krishnagar II block in five chapter. The performance (completed work) of Nabadwip block was higher than Krishnagar II block. As, 610 completed works and 3136 ongoing works of Nabadwip block by 692.64 lakhs expenditure, and 354 completed and 2468 ongoing activities of Krishnagar II block by 494.82 lakhs expenditure in the last 2021-22 financial year. Then the percentage of employment provided to households, women's participation, persondays generated of SC, ST, women, and disabled persons, utilisation of funds (in lakhs), etc. have discussed in this chapter. The employment provided households no. of SC, ST and women of Krishnagar II block was higher than Nabadwip block in the entire financial year of 2015-16 to 2021-22. But both employments provided households and average no. of employment days of Nabadwip block was higher than Krishnagar II block. In 2021-22, the percentage of employment provided HHs of both blocks Nabadwip and Krishnagar II was 97.96 and 90.60. This year, the Nabadwip block and Krishnagar II block have been able to provide employment opportunities for only an average of 42.25 days and 22.30 days per HH

respectively. Women's participation in both study blocks have higher than other communities (SC and ST etc.). However, participation of SC, ST, and women of Krishnagar II block was higher than Nabadwip block. Then it is discussed how many households have completed 100 days of employment in a financial year, and it is clear that Nabadwip block's households have received 100 days of employment more than Krishnagar II block in all financial years except 2016-17. Then it is mentioned that fund utilisation against the available funds in the aspects of labour and material expenditure in both blocks.

This chapter compares employee's awareness about provisions, utility, written application, Gram Sabha meeting, unemployment allowance of MGNREGA, and employee's educational qualifications, skills, and work record under MGNREGA in Nabadwip block and Krishnagar II block. From the field survey, it is clear that most of the respondents from both blocks are not aware of MGNREGA work and unemployment allowance. But 100 per cent people of two blocks said that MGNREGA would be very useful if it provided regular work and wage payment without any defects. At the same time, 6.5 per cent of Nabadwip block and 9.71 per cent of Krishnagar II block selective respondents said that they would migrate even if MGNREGA had been implemented without any defects. No respondent worker demanded work with a written application in the study blocks. From the field survey, it was also clear that educated respondents participated more than illiterate. But no respondent worker was graduate under MGNREGA in both blocks. It also discussed the worksite facility, impact of age-caste - religion- gender of respondents, wage payment, women participation rate, and child labour etc. based on field survey in this chapter. Mostly middle-aged (35-52 years) Hindu (other backward-class married) women have participated in study block MGNREGA employment. Randomly selected people of both study blocks have same opinion that MGNREGA work or wage payments were not provided in timely. No respondent in either study block got an unemployment allowance. It is also clear that no respondent of either block had taken advance money and unemployment allowance from MGNREGA project.

From the field survey, it was found that the average number of employment days under MGNREGA as per respondents was very low compared to the official record in both study blocks. No respondent of study two blocks has said that they received 100 days of employment in any financial year. From the field survey it is clear that most of the respondents were marginal labours or very small farmers under MGNREGA in both study blocks. Their main sources of income were agricultural activities. As 53.5 per cent of participating respondents in

Nabadwip block and 62.28 per cent respondents of in Krishnagar II block were agricultural labours. It was followed by 34.5 per cent of respondents and 31.43 per cent respondent who were very small farmers who had some land in the Nabadwip and Krishnagar II blocks respectively.

The last chapter (six), but not the least, provides a **brief summary and conclusion** of the research study. It mentions some findings from the research study. It also gives some recommendations to eradicate the problems in the specified study areas and develop a developmental strategy for better implementation of MGNREGA in both the Krishnagar II block and the Nabadwip block. Then the overall conclusion of the study is finally mentioned.

Findings of the Study:

- i) It is observed that the overall performance of Nabadwip block was better than Krishnagar II block. As, Nabadwip block has been able to perform more completed works than another block in almost all financial years. In 2015-16 to 2017-18 financial year, the percentage of employment provided HHs of Krishnagar II block was higher than Nabadwip block. From 2018-19 to 2021-22 financial year, the percentage of employment provided HHs of Nabadwip block was higher than Krishnagar II block.
- ii) Most of the respondent workers of both blocks are unaware about MGNREGA employment. They are known MGNREGA work as 100 days of work, or Matikata kaj. Generally, the women are not aware properly about the process and entitlements of the programme. Unlike man, they can't go outside house. Again, no awareness camping has been arranged under MGNREGA in both study blocks. As 97.71 per cent of respondents of Krishnagar II block and 85.5 per cent respondent of Nabadwip block are known MGNREGA work as 100 days work or Matikata kaj.
- iii) Most of the respondents of both blocks are largely unskilled. The majority of workers under both study blocks are unskilled labour. As 88 per cent of respondents of Nabadwip block and 95.43 per cent of respondents of Krishnagar II block are unskilled labour. They can't demand other technical work as unskilled labour.

- iv) The majority of respondents in both study blocks have job cards and bank-updated records of MGNREGA work. From the field survey it is clear that 96 per cent of employees (192 out of 200 respondents) of study Nabadwip block have job cards and 95 per cent of employees have MGNREGA work reports on their job cards or bank accounts. 94.29 per cent of Krishnagar II block respondents have job cards with 89.71 per cent of MGNREGA work-updated records.
- v) The number of respondent workers of SC, ST and women of Krishnagar II block under MGNREGA employment was higher than Nabadwip block in all financial years (2015-2016 to 2021-22). Krishnagar II block has been able to provide more employment for SC, ST and women households than Nabadwip block. Though the overall employment provided performance of both blocks are almost same. Although the participation of SC, ST and other small-marginal farmers were not affected much under MGNREGA in both study areas.
- vi) It is noticed from official data that the per cent of women participations of Krishnagar II block were always higher than Nabadwip block under MGNREGA from 2015-16 -2021-22 financial year. It is also necessary to mention that Krishnagar II block's SC and ST participation was more than another block. So, it is clear that the participation of women, SC and ST households of Krishnagar II block was more than Nabadwip block. So, the Krishnagar II block's participation was more than Nabadwip block under MGNREGA work.
- vii) From block official data its observed that most of the households of Nabadwip block have received 100 days of employment more than Krishnagar II block in all financial years except 2016-17. Because only 2016-17, Krishnagar II block's more households have completed 100 days of employment than Nabadwip block. It had a better impact on rural economic growth and development of Nabadwip block more than Krishnagar II block. Rest of all financial years except 2016-17, Nabadwip block has been able to provide more households with 100 days of employment than Krishnagar II block.

- viii) Nabadwip block's 100 days of employment opportunity, land reform or IAY-benefited households were more than another block in the entire financial year. Like the general worker, disabled workers also have participated under MGNREGA employment in both study block. However, the disabled benefits of Nabadwip block were greater than Krishnagar II block.
- ix) Though the fund utilisation percentage of both study blocks was very high (almost 99%). However, the fund utilisation percentage of Krishnagar II block was higher than another block. From block official data, its necessary to say that labour expenditures of both study blocks are so higher than material expenditures in all financial years (except 2017-18 in Krishnagar II block). In addition, labour expenditures of Nabadwip block are higher than Krishnagar II block. But materials expenditure of Krishnagar II block is higher than Nabadwip block.
- x) It is found that majority of respondents of both study blocks (89.5 % of Nabadwip block and 100% of Krishnagar II block) are not aware of the written application needed to get MGNREGA work. Most of the respondent workers from two blocks who have applied for work said they did so orally. No worker demands work with a written application in two blocks of Nadia district.
- xi) Irregular payments or delay in wage payments is also responsible for overall poor participation of respondent in MGNREGA. The majority of respondent participants of both study blocks have got MGNREGA work (but less than 100 days of entitlement) and full wage payment. From the field survey its clear that only 5.5 per cent of selective respondents of Nabadwip block and 7.4 per cent of Krishnagar II block did not get any work. Both blocks have the same opinion that MGNREGA work or wage payments were not provided in timely. Particularly a single earners man of the household can't participate in this project. For the last three years, the central government hasn't provided MGNREGA funds to the West Bengal State Government. According to the Central Government, there is so much corruption in West Bengal MGNREGA work. Though the West Bengal government denied the above claim, it was only a political issue. No respondent participants in both study

blocks got an unemployment allowance. However, no workers in either block were aware of the unemployment allowance.

- xii) Theoretically maintains all provisions of MGNREGA but practically does not fulfil all the provisions of the Act in both study areas. According to MGNREGA provision, all households have right to work for 100 days in a financial year but practically not found. Only few households have received 100 days employment in a financial year in both study areas. Social audits as well as grievance redressal mechanisms are more necessary to control corruption in MGNREGA work and wage payments. But social audits and grievance redressal mechanisms have not done properly in any area of study blocks.

Suggestive recommendations:

It observed from the various findings of the present study that MGNREGA has been providing some employment opportunities for the rural population to the different socio-economic strata in both study blocks. Rural labours have got some additional income opportunities to contribute to their household's expense through participating in the MGNREGA programme. MGNREGA's some positive changes have come up in the pattern of lifestyle among the different groups of households (marginal farmers, daily wage labourers, rural labour, and creation of asserts etc.) by providing employment opportunities.

Various types of problems and gaps were well depicted in the implementation authorities of the MGNREGA programme. In this context the following policy measures may be in corporate in MGNREGA implementation:

- The success of this programme depends on its proper implementation. Most of the pitfalls of MGNREGA implementation can be overcome if proper processes and procedures are put in right way. Thus, there should be continuous efforts towards creating adequate awareness of the different provisions of MGNREGS amongst the people in both blocks. Awareness of MGNREGA is necessary not only for people's motivation to work but also to encourage them to participate in its planning and implementation process.

- Provision should be made to organise training camps, cultural programmes and other methods among the workers of the villages during off-agricultural seasons (lean periods).
- It is very necessary to increase substantially work allocation for the respondent in both blocks. However, work should be provided on a reasonable basis per month. It can motivate worker's livelihood security. The work duration in a month of off-season must be allocated at least 10 days. Then, rural poor families have able to run their family expenses in lean periods. On the other hand, delaying payment must be avoided.
- Awareness is a key aspect of the Act. However, lower-level officials of both blocks (Gram Pradhan, Gram Panchayat Presidents, etc.) are not aware of MGNREGA rules and regulations. It is very necessary to organise a training program for the MGNREGA implementing authorities at all levels on these issues.
- To bring transparency and accountability under the MGNREGA scheme, provision for social audit can play a significant role at the lower level on a regular basis in this regard.
- The leadership style should be cooperative in nature. This will facilitate rural peoples to greater participation, information sharing, opinion expression, and development of social networks etc.
- There is an important role for the government in the implementation of MGNREGS. Thus, the government must take immediate steps to stop corruption (mostly misused job card and wage payment) in its implementation and wage payments. Therefore, a proper monitoring (like finger print presence and leave, taking employee's photo and sent to higher authority from time to time, employment should be provided directly etc.) system is essential for MGNREGA worksites and wage payments.
- The officials of both study blocks should frequently visit the MGNREGA worksite to assess and properly evaluate the work progress. The official responsibilities are to provide different facilities (first aid, drinking water, rest etc.), timely wage payment, and extra essential aspects for workers.
- Women's participation in MGNREGA employment can be maximised through the selection of separate worksites for them.

- A proper monitoring mechanism should be developed that can ensure correct procedures in the job card and at the work site. Few mechanisms like employee's finger print presence and leave, taking employee's photo and sent to higher authority from time to time, employment should be provided directly etc. are should strictly be maintained.

It observed that this scheme provides a good employment option for unemployed rural people. MGNREGA (secure income generation programme) increases the purchasing capacity of rural people in both blocks. MGNREGA is a platform in which rural people get extra-employment opportunities. It has eradicated poverty from the rural section in both study areas. The MGNREGA programme eliminates discrimination between men and women in the aspect of employment and wage payment. It is the great success of MGNREGA in society. MGNREGA work is a big help for such families who are small or marginal farmers in both study areas. If the above recommendations are fully exercised in the implementation process of MGNREGA then the worker participation rate will be more increased. Both hypotheses of the study i.e., 'MGNREG Scheme strengthens the socio-economic development of the people in general and women's emancipation and empowerment in particular', and 'there is a gap between the provisions and implementation of the MGNREGA in Nabadwip and Krishnagar II blocks' are validated.

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