

## **EMPLOYMENT GENERATION AND ASSET BUILDING THROUGH MGNREGA: REFLECTIONS FROM WEST BENGAL**

*Debatra Kumar Dey\**

### **ABSTRACT**

*The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is primarily enacted to provide hundred days of guaranteed employment in a year to rural households on demand basis and creation of durable assets to strengthen rural livelihood resource base. Studies based on empirical evidences indicate mixed outcome in terms of employment generation and durability and usefulness of the assets created. The Act stresses upon identification, planning, execution and monitoring of projects in a participatory manner with a view to deepening democracy. Gram Panchayats (GPs) are assigned with the responsibility of formulating the works. The present study attempts to capture the extent of employment generation and creation of durable assets in the last few years in West Bengal known for its early decentralisation initiatives in India. The study is based on secondary data at disaggregated level up to district level in West Bengal. It emerges that GP, the principal implementing agency has no adequate capacities which in turn leads to creation of low value assets without much concern for durability. This approach adversely affects the completion rate of projects taken up leading towards reduced usefulness of the assets. It may be said that assets created under the scheme fall short of getting the status of sustainable assets.*

### **Introduction**

NREGA, enacted in 2005, forms the basis of a massive employment guarantee scheme, implemented throughout India, with two main objectives – to enhance the livelihood security of people in rural areas, and to boost the rural economy. It complies

the former by guaranteeing wage employment to members of the rural households who have volunteered to do unskilled manual work; and the latter through public works, including water-resource management and tree-planting (World Bank, 2013). It also serves as a poverty relief intervention, to the extent that

---

\* Assistant Professor in Economics, Srikrishna College, Bagula, Nadia, West Bengal - 741 502.

beneficiaries belong disproportionately to poor families even when the programme is not specifically targeted to the poor. Moreover, several countries introduced public works programmes to respond to a variety of financial, natural, and human crises (World Bank, 2012). The programme represents a major philosophic innovation in taking up rights-based and demand-driven approach, guaranteeing all rural households up to 100 days of employment per year at the going agricultural minimum wage (Dutta et al. 2012).

According to the National Human Development Report, 2001 "... the attainments in rural West Bengal on almost all indicators included in the radar... is less than half of the norm on each one of them" (Planning Commission 2002, pp 23). The ranking of the State in terms of Human Development Index (HDI) has come down from 8th position in 2001 among the major fifteen Indian States to 10th position in 2011. The rural poverty ratio in the State is almost at par with the national average. In spite of the best efforts towards land reforms in sixties, seventies and early eighties of the last century, 57 per cent of the households in rural areas are landless. In addition, major part of the cultivated area (79.6 per cent) in the State is operated by the marginal and small farmers. MGNREGA had been introduced in ten districts of the State in Phase-I (2006-07). It was extended to another seven districts in the next year and the remaining two districts were included after universalisation on 1 April 2008. The present study attempts to capture to what extent employment was generated and durable

assets are created in the last few years focusing on West Bengal known for its early decentralisation initiatives in India. The study is based on secondary data disaggregated up to district level.

### Review of Literature

Since introduction of the Act, several studies have been conducted mostly on field experiences in different States. It is claimed by the Planning Commission (2010) that 'There is evidence that implementation of NREG Programme has reduced distress migration and improved the bargaining power of agriculture labour leading to higher wages'. In one of the early field studies, it was observed that in Pati block of Madhya Pradesh the pro-active role of workers' organisation led to the realisation of entitlement of guarantee of work by spreading awareness about the Act (Khera 2008). Khera et al (2009) noted that the NREGA has several provisions that are aimed at improving the participation of women. These have been met with varying degrees of success in different parts of the country. It is found that NREGA employment, though small, resulted in significant benefits. However, serious problems remain in implementation across States. Pankaj and Tankha (2010) pointed out that paid work under NREGS helped rural women in realising income-consumption effects through better control over earnings. Further, NREGS broadened choices for rural women in two ways. One, it opened an entirely new avenue for paid employment. Two, as a result it broadened their choices and capability. Banerjee and Saha (2010) found evidences

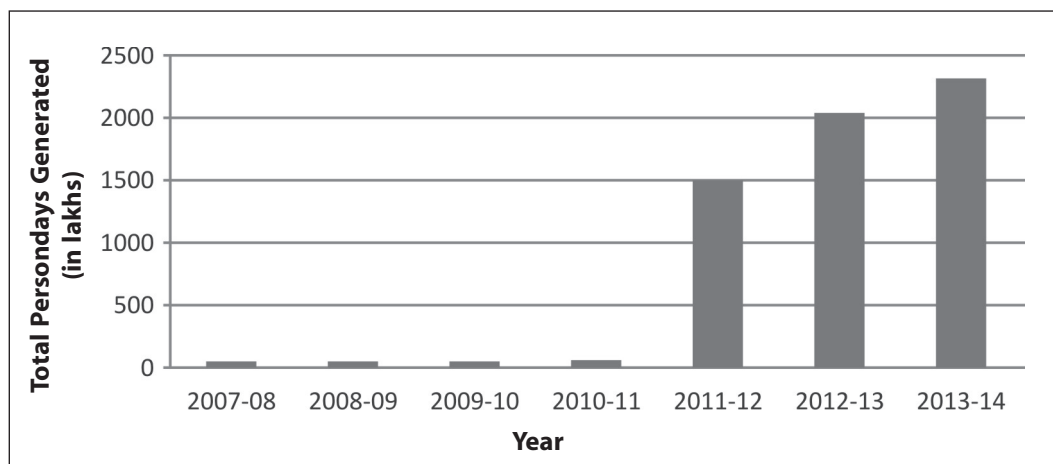
that in all the study villages (spread across 12 blocks in three States), the additional income earned through NREGA-related works was mostly spent on consumption of foodgrains. It has been concluded that had NREGA not been implemented in these areas, most of the households would not have had the capacity to purchase enough foodgrains. It is revealed in the study by NCAER (2009) that while it is true that significant achievements have been made in issuing job cards, there is over-reporting. Participation of job card holders is low. The study also emphasises two positive outcomes: improved share of ST households in employment and high participation of women. But very little is known about the quality of assets that have been created. Jha et al (2008) also found that STs and participation of landless is high in three villages of Andhra Pradesh.

Pradhan and Das (2007) report that various kinds of irregularities like distribution of job cards after the work get started, delayed and lower wage payment, reluctance of administration and little empowerment of the poor in Odisha for whom it has been designed. A study of IAMR (2009) conducted in 20 districts across 16 States found that more than half of the beneficiaries are unskilled workers. However, P. Patnaik (2010) criticises the term 'right'

used in the context of legislations (like right to food or employment) as seriously misleading. Accordingly, "the NREGA comes closest to providing a "right", but, as is well known, the provision of employment on demand as promised under the NREGA has not been the general practice (and unemployment allowance has not necessarily been paid when employment has not been provided); de facto therefore, the NREGA does not give a right to employment. In short, while the government talks of conferring "rights", they are not "rights" in the true sense of the term.

### **Employment Generation**

One of the major objectives of MGNREGA is to provide 100 days of employment in a year to the job seekers in rural areas. In the year 2013-14, out of 13.8 million rural households of the State (almost 85 per cent) have registered in MGNREGA although only 47 per cent of the households of the State participated. Figure 1 presents that except one year (2008-09), employment generation has been increased over the years and there is a sudden jump in the year 2011-12 and it continues in the next years also. However, this increment is not enough to fulfill the promise to provide hundred days of employment in a year to the households demanded employment.

**Figure 1 : Total Employment Generated : West Bengal**

Source: www.nrega.nic.in

Table 1 presents average availability of employment per household from 2007-08 to 2013-14. It simply describes that only in the last financial year (2013-14) it has touched the peak of 40 days of employment in a year at the State level with wide variations among the districts. Moreover, the first phase districts which are characterised with social and economic backwardness are lacking in providing employment to the households in comparison to the districts where NREGA

was introduced in second and third phases of expansion. These districts are better-off than the ten first phase districts. It points to the fact that these districts are suffering from adequate government infrastructural support. Here it can be referred that Shah et al, (2008) argued that reforms in rural governance are necessary for effective implementation of a law guaranteeing employment as right.

**Table 1: District-wise Persondays Generated per Household**

District	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
South 24 Parganas	14	19	17	20	32	43	36
Bankura	19	28	23	38	31	39	34
Birbhum	13	38	22	26	36	43	45
Dakshin Dinajpur	13	25	19	20	21	28	17
Uttar Dinajpur	8	24	19	20	21	28	16

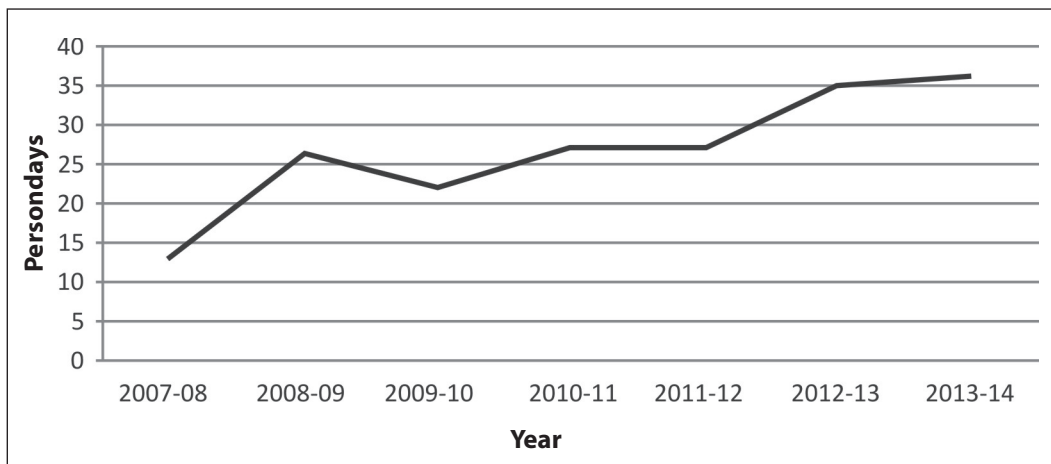
(Contd...)

**Table 1 (Contd...)**

District	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Jalpaiguri	12	25	25	23	26	26	27
Maldah	7	17	19	22	29	32	29
Murshidabad	8	21	27	30	25	30	23
Paschim Medinipur	13	27	19	25	22	27	35
Purulia	14	31	27	33	29	39	40
Phase-I	13	26	23	27	28	33	32
North 24 Parganas	6	42	28	32	35	45	34
Burdwan	4	34	23	33	25	31	35
Cooch Behar	2	15	14	14	14	17	34
Hooghly	5	20	17	29	31	38	47
Nadia	6	30	19	19	19	39	53
Purba Medinipur	9	16	23	24	27	38	40
SMP	4	20	13	17	18	20	29
Phase-II	5	26	21	27	26	35	40
DGHC	0	26	21	38	50	61	53
Howrah	0	9	12	16	20	32	24
Phase III	0	18	14	27	37	47	40
West Bengal	13	26	22	27	27	35	36

Source: [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

For West Bengal line graph has been shown depicting the rise and fall of employment availability.

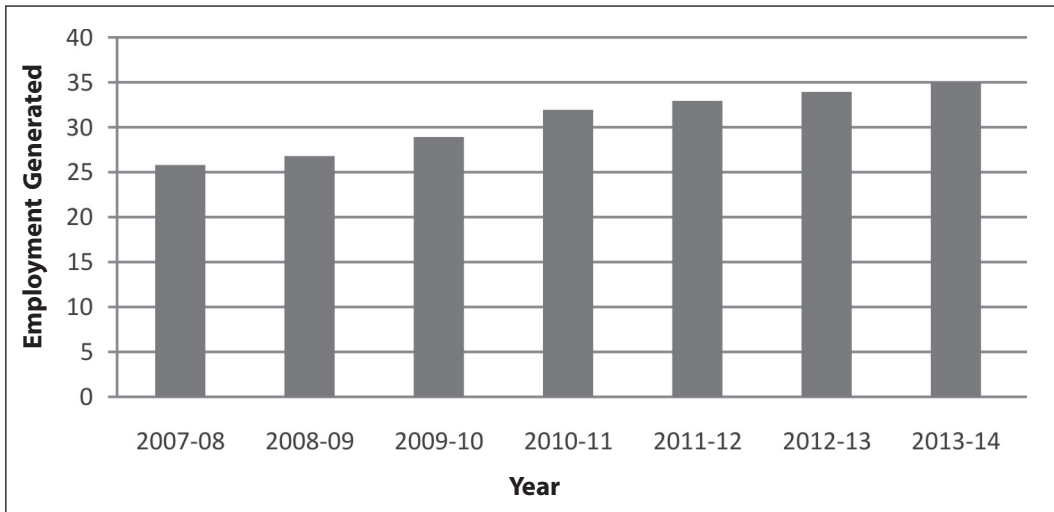
**Figure 2 : State Level Persondays Generated per Household**

Source: [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

There is no explicit provision in NREGA, 2005 regarding the participation of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the employment guarantee programme. However, they are considered as excluded from the mainstream growth process in the country as far as their inclusion is still a forlorn hope (Suryanarayana and Das, 2014). In West Bengal as per Census 2011, 28 per cent of the rural population belong to SC community and the proportion varies from 13 per cent in Murshidabad district to 53 per cent in Cooch Bihar district. The share of STs in rural population is 7.8 per cent and they are concentrated only in a few districts in northern and western parts of the State. However, there are differences in livelihood pattern of STs in these two parts of the State. Regarding women participation, Paragraph 6 of the Schedule II of the Act specifically mentions that 'priority shall be given to

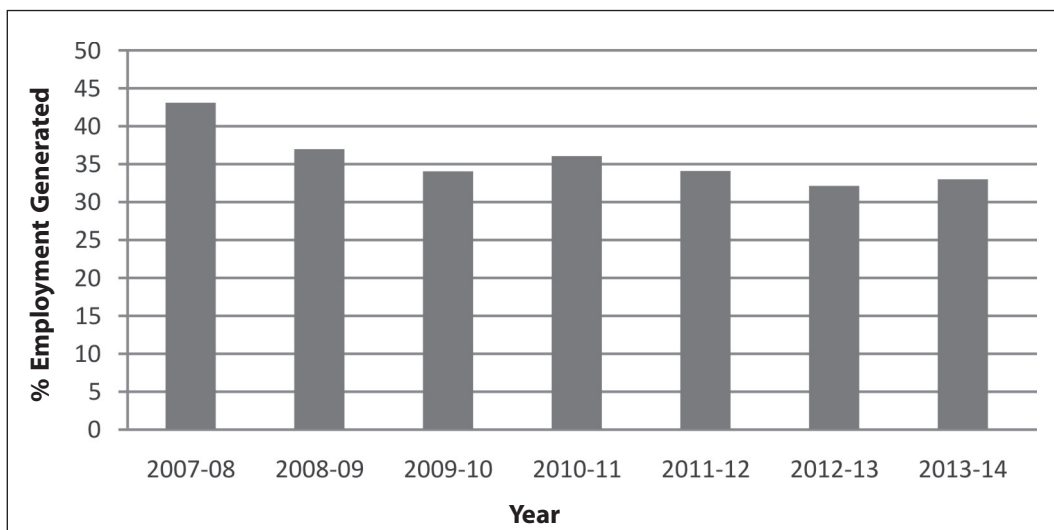
women in such a way that at least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested for work under this Act'. Figure 3a, Figure 3b and Figure 3c give an idea about the participation of SCs, STs and women in the State. It is noticed that the share of SCs and STs in employment is higher than their proportion in rural population. In the initial years, their share in employment is more than 50 per cent. Thus, it can be said that MGNREGA reached the SCs and STs of the State to a great extent. In case of women the scenario is quite different. On an average, the State is able to just reach the statutory minimum in the last three years. There are variations among the districts in compliance with the statutory norm. For example, even in the year 2012-13, there are 10 districts out of 18 where this statutory provision could not be fulfilled.

**Figure 3a : Share of Women in Employment Generated**

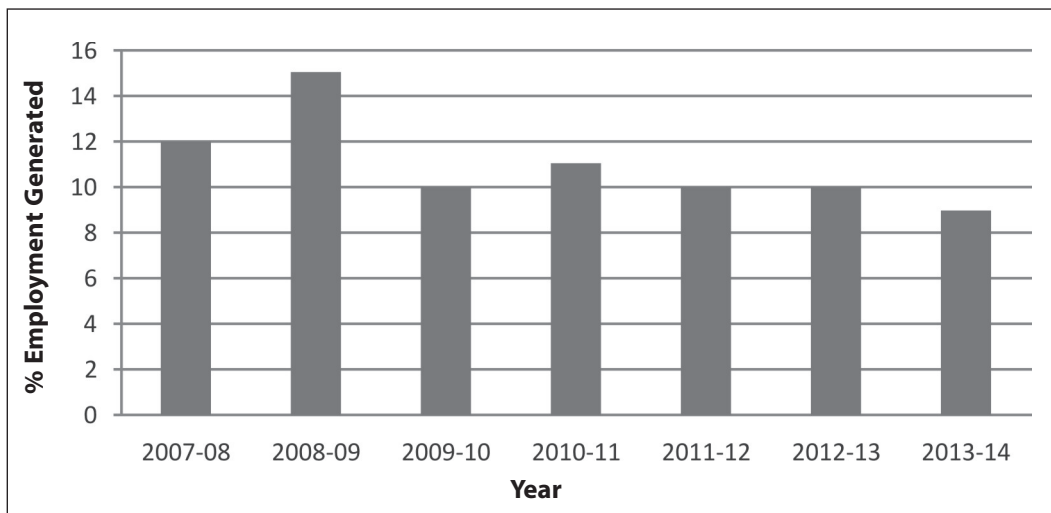


Source: [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

**Figure 3b : Share of SCs in Employment Generated**



Source: [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

**Figure 3c : Share of STs in Employment Generated**

Source: [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

From Table 2, it can be revealed that the basic objective of the guarantee of at least 100 days of work in a year to the households participated in the employment guarantee scheme cannot be ensured. In many districts, the situation is not even improving. Even after completion of eight years of implementation it was not possible on an average to provide 100 days of employment to even 5 per cent of the participatory households. If hundred days of employment is not guaranteed to the

households demanded work, this simply leads to non-adherence of commitment made in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005. Then the enhancement of livelihood security of the households in rural areas participating in this employment guarantee scheme as enshrined in the preamble of the Act may remain a distant dream. In sample studies these things may not be captured as performances vary widely from district to district and from gram panchayat to gram panchayat.



**Table 2 : 100 Days of Employment to the Households**

District	2009-10			2010-11			2011-12			2012-13			2013-14		
	HHs Provided Work	Completed 100 Days	HHs Provided Work	Completed 100 Days	HHs Provided Work	Completed 100 Days	HHs Provided Work	Completed 100 Days	HHs Provided Work	Completed 100 Days	HHs Provided Work	Completed 100 Days			
South 24 Parganas	138536	892 (0.64)	111911 (0.93)	1046	196415	7370 (3.75)	249521	18862 (7.56)	285313	12946 (4.5)					
Bankura	201860	3016 (1.49)	328889 (7.73)	25417 (7.73)	326841	12770 (3.91)	354079	24790 (7.00)	372561	15162 (4.1)					
Birbhum	461369	6037 (1.31)	457462 (2.38)	10882 (2.38)	468760	27032 (5.77)	452467	40182 (8.88)	509119	46583 (9.1)					
Dakshin Dinajpur	95961	776 (0.81)	77889 (1.02)	797 (1.02)	81830	1098 (1.34)	100673	2655 (2.64)	110201	686 (0.6)					
Uttar Dinajpur	48725	29 (0.06)	96000 (0.64)	612 (0.64)	90998	799 (0.88)	78990	559 (0.71)	102549	584 (0.6)					
Jalpaiguri	431506	2540 (0.59)	408396 (0.87)	3537 (0.87)	402534	4580 (1.14)	414331	5390 (1.3)	458950	3318 (0.7)					
Maldah	180252	818 (0.45)	131669 (1.44)	1897 (1.44)	196797	5095 (2.59)	192109	6088 (3.17)	245244	5796 (2.4)					
Murshidabad	438100	9743 (2.22)	480584 (2.82)	13557 (2.82)	400700	6468 (1.61)	422988	7909 (1.87)	529340	6513 (1.2)					
Paschim Medinipur	491298	3667 (0.75)	525481 (1.63)	8543 (1.63)	521596	4202 (0.81)	548871	12390 (2.26)	611737	20019 (3.3)					

(Contd..)

Table 2 (Contd...)

District	2009-10		2010-11		2011-12		2012-13		2013-14	
	HHs Provided Work	Completed 100 Days	HHs Provided Work	Completed 100 Days	HHs Provided Work	Completed 100 Days	HHs Provided Work	Completed 100 Days	HHs Provided Work	Completed 100 Days
Purulia	189870	7266 (3.83)	209979	11238 (5.35)	190854	6646 (3.48)	233036	16564 (7.11)	257997	19491 (7.5)
North 24 Parganas	353069	5745 (1.63)	343843	9539 (2.77)	339466	9851 (2.9)	356621	25158 (7.05)	286730	11106 (3.9)
Burdwan	652568	12524 (1.92)	711256	31090 (4.37)	746393	8549 (1.15)	756889	18046 (2.38)	835177	21773 (2.6)
Cooch Behar	268006	181 (0.07)	285879	500 (0.17)	294262	518 (0.18)	247131	686 (0.28)	310132	3167 (1.02)
Hooghly	291373	2919 (1.00)	394915	8805 (2.23)	433558	9065 (2.09)	457312	16486 (3.6)	499697	36577 (7.3)
Nadia	363637	1676 (0.46)	303617	1729 (0.57)	269083	1738 (0.65)	275220	15052 (5.47)	340456	43606 (12.8)
Purba Medinipur	304323	3555 (1.17)	294577	3448 (1.17)	342020	5504 (1.61)	417526	20362 (4.88)	427160	22800 (5.3)
SMP	21353	6 (0.03)	29807	87 (0.29)	41419	131 (0.32)	42228	406 (0.96)	58679	1018 (1.7)

(Contd...)

**Table 2 (Contd...)**

District	2009-10		2010-11		2011-12		2012-13		2013-14	
	HHs Provided Work	Completed 100 Days	HHs Provided Work	Completed 100 Days	HHs Provided Work	Completed 100 Days	HHs Provided Work	Completed 100 Days	HHs Provided Work	Completed 100 Days
DGHC	9886	92 (0.93)	65611	3784 (5.77)	97317	7554 (7.76)	110131	15190 (13.79)	107498	8526 (7.9)
Howrah	52432	27 (0.05)	61564	305 (0.5)	76125	634 (0.83)	102100	3956 (3.87)	92620	1114 (1.2)
West Bengal	4994124	61509 (1.23)	5319329	136813 (2.57)	5516968	119604 (2.17)	5812223	250731 (4.31)	6441160	280785 (4.4)

Source : Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India, [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

Note: i) Percentage figures are within brackets.

ii) Percentage is calculated by dividing households completed 100 days of work by households provided work multiplied by 100.

**Asset Creation**

Section 2 of Schedule-I of the Act vividly expresses that 'Creation of durable assets and strengthening the livelihood resource base of the rural poor shall be an important objective of the Scheme'. In addition, Section 16 of the Act emphasises the functioning of Gram Sabha through Gram Panchayats (GPs) by mentioning that at least fifty per cent of the works in terms of cost must be undertaken by the GPs. West Bengal has its three-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) since 1978 guided by the West Bengal Panchayat Act 1973 amended and updated on regular basis.

As per the guidelines of MGNREGA, it is expected that the GPs should have sufficient number of approved projects in hand to avoid time loss in starting works when demanded. In Table 3, an effort is being made to present data on number of approved projects and number of GPs at the district level from where the number of approved projects per GP can be seen for the period 2009-10 to 2012-13. This gives a picture of shelf of projects in GPs.

**Table 3 : Number of Projects Implemented at the Gram Panchayat Level**

District	No. of GP	2009-10			2010-11			2011-12			2012-13		
		Total No. of Projects	No. of Projects per GP	No. of Projects	Total No. of Projects	No. of Projects per GP	No. of Projects	Total No. of Projects	No. of Projects per GP	No. of Projects	Total No. of Projects	No. of Projects per GP	
24Pgs(S)	312	6481	21	7509	24	29056	93	42988	138				
Bankura	190	12768	67	20626	109	18032	95	18795	99				
Birbhum	167	22059	132	26045	156	28990	174	29337	176				
D.Dakshin	65	2669	41	3205	49	3429	53	5380	83				
D.Uttar	98	1514	15	2982	30	3779	39	3324	34				
Jalpaiguri	146	17210	118	16678	114	20155	138	20483	140				
Malda	146	3012	21	4143	28	11586	79	12731	87				
Murshidabad	254	8528	34	11623	46	11857	47	12612	50				
Paschim Medinipur	290	34160	118	45736	158	46452	160	55494	191				
Purulia	170	15894	93	21340	126	17985	106	17992	106				
24Pgs(N)	200	21207	106	71286	356	113599	568	102230	511				
Burdwan	277	24897	90	28248	102	27758	100	33074	119				
Coochbehar	128	4255	33	6962	54	6855	54	7492	59				
Hoogly	207	8553	41	12071	58	16827	81	21445	104				
Nadia	187	9270	50	9109	49	8874	47	13704	73				

(Contd..)

**Table 3 (Contd...)**

District	No. of GP	2009-10		2010-11		2011-12		2012-13	
		Total No. of Projects	No. of Projects per GP	Total No. of Projects	No. of Projects per GP	Total No. of Projects	No. of Projects per GP	Total No. of Projects	No. of Projects per GP
Purba Medinipur	223	17632	79	18845	85	24948	112	43520	195
Howrah	157	1659	11	2012	13	2437	16	5072	32
SMP	22	484	22	631	29	886	40	1066	48
DGHC	112	476	04	1400	13	4417	39	6715	60
West Bengal	3351	212725	63	310451	93	397922	119	453454	135

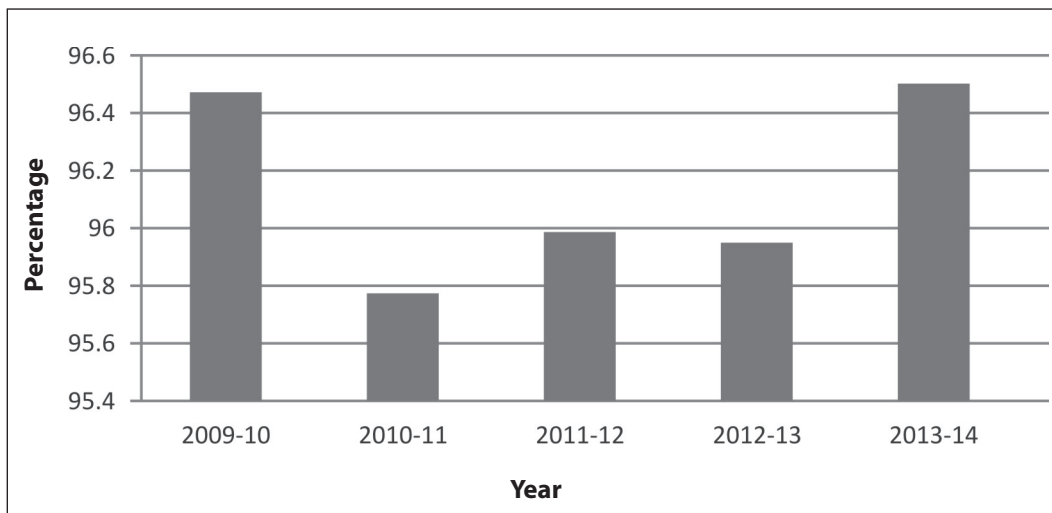
Source: www.nrega.nic.in

Ideally number of projects to be maintained in the shelf should be 2-3 times of the number of projects under implementation. In some districts like Birbhum, Jalpaiguri, Paschim Medinipur, Purba Medinipur and Purulia, the number of projects in a gram panchayat are more than 100 which indicates a safe side for giving works as and when possible. In North 24 Parganas included under NREGA in second phase (w.e.f. 1 April, 2007), the number of projects in the shelf of projects is unusually high- this is also not desirable because many of them may not be implemented at all. From the Table it can be seen that in the year 2009-10 there are 8 districts below the State average of 63 projects per GP. In the following year this gap has been extended among the 17 districts [Darjeeling district comprises Siliguri Mahakuma Parisad (SMP) and Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC)].

In a GP there are Gram Sansads (GSs) or wards – 3351 GPs in West Bengal have 37067 GSs; average being slightly above 11. If the case of Howrah is taken up (being the lowest in respect of number of projects per GP) then it can be said that number of projects in the shelf of projects of GP will not cover all GSs of the GP. It implies that some

GSs of a GP remained excluded from the work of MGNREGA.

GPs in West Bengal are executing projects well above (near about 100 per cent) the statutory minimum of 50 per cent mandated in the Act. Figure 4 presents the share of GPs in total projects undertaken for the last five years. There is no such variation at the district level also. At the GP level there is only one technical person (known as Nirman Sahayak) having educational qualification of Diploma in Civil Engineering. As a whole, the consequence of shortage of staff leads little effort to social mobilisation without which there is no chance of NREGA emerging as a people-centered programme (Shah et al, *ibid*). This may enhance the chances of not creating durable assets which is one of the main objectives of the rural employment guarantee scheme for the enhancement of livelihood security in rural areas. Narayanan and Lokhande (*ibid*) pointed out this deficit of technical personnel at the GP and block level in their study in Maharashtra. They mentioned that 'the implementation process is also affected by lack of awareness, information and capacity'.

**Figure 4 : Share of GP in Total Project Undertaken**

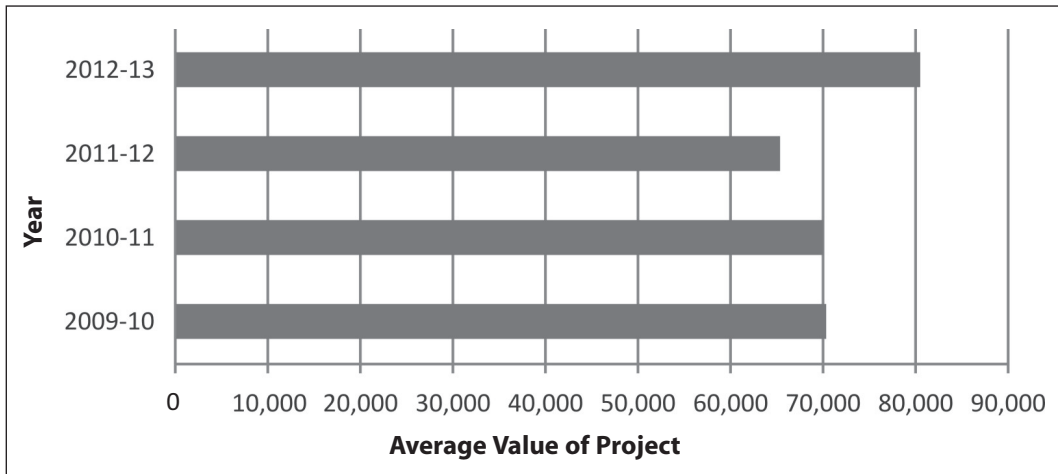
Source: [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

For ascertaining what type of works are taken up at the GP level, an attempt has been made to calculate the average value of projects executed for the last four years. From Figure 5, it can be noticed that the average value of GP projects are limited within the vetting power (the financial power delegated to give technical approval to a work) of Nirman Sahayak, not even it touches the vetting power of Sub-Assistant Engineer posted at the block/district level. For

example, in North 24 Parganas, huge number of projects have been approved (Table1), but the average value of a project is the lowest since 2010-11. Proliferation in physical number with low investment indicates that the assets created are not durable. In 2009-10, only in three districts average value of projects implemented by the GP is more than ₹ one lakh. The corresponding figure for 2010-11 is five, eight in 2011-12 and twelve in 2012-13.



**Figure 5 : Average Value of Project Executed by GP in West Bengal**



Source: [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

It is noticed that in the initial year a large number of works remained incomplete. This implies that works on record are shown as ongoing but subsequently they remain incomplete (may be some of them being not considered forever). For the years 2009-10 and 2010-11, the proportion of works not having expenditure in those works have shown high percentage; these gradually declined in the next years. Table 4 shows that huge number of projects have the approval at GP level, but majority of them may remain in the category of spill-over works. In the operational guideline 2013, only technical reasons behind are hinted at. There may be several issues including area-specific problems at the time of implementation

resulting in improper implementation of projects.

This issue of completion of works undertaken in West Bengal has further been reflected in Table 4 which presents the completion of works in the State as a whole in different categories for the period 2008-09 to 2012-13. It is viewed that number of projects undertaken in the State gradually increased over time. Number of projects undertaken in 2012-13 is simply 4.7 times of the corresponding number in 2008-09. But the completion rate is also declining on an average with an exception in 2011-12. Similar trend is also observed if one looks into different categories of works.

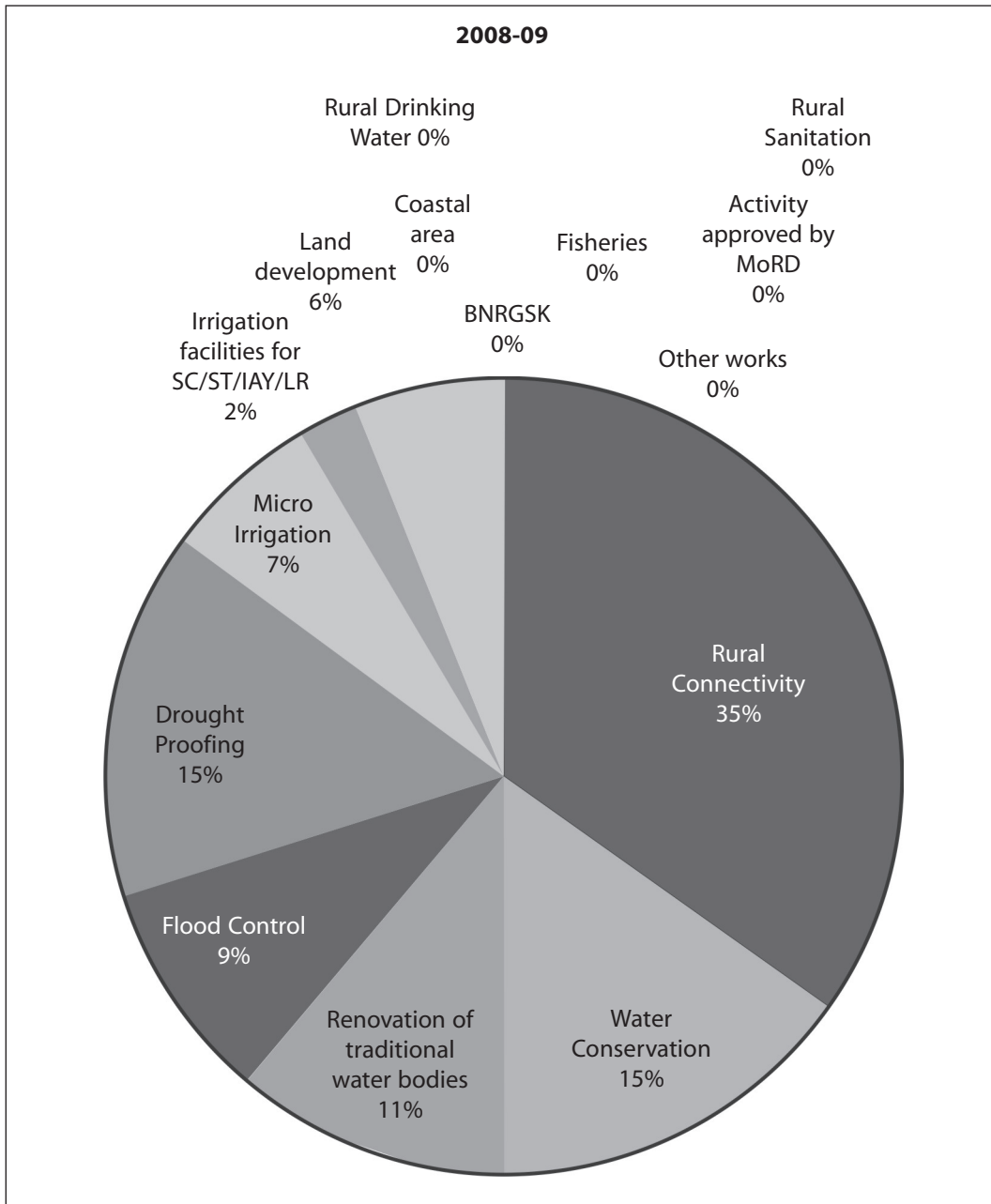
**Table 4 : Category-wise Work Completion Rate : West Bengal**

Work Category	2008-09		2009-10		2010-11		2011-12		2012-13	
	Total projects undertaken	Completed (%)	Total projects undertaken	Completed (%)	Total projects undertaken	Completed (%)	Total projects undertaken	Completed (%)	Total projects undertaken	Completed (%)
Rural Connectivity Water Conservation	35818	53	80710	48	92994	48	102597	50	132182	39
Renovation of traditional water bodies	15879	51	49014	41	73121	58	69529	55	83533	48
Flood Control	12458	50	21921	47	32094	57	37624	48	52799	48
Drought Proofing	8254	59	12528	54	13379	50	16090	53	18163	44
Micro Irrigation	13274	61	17652	54	60432	19	117650	46	99137	45
Irrigation facilities for SC/ST/AY/LR	5890	60	11248	52	12298	58	14363	57	15050	48
Land development	2313	58	5997	38	5997	38	17087	57	31650	3
Others	6479	51	17347	52	25515	58	35677	59	45794	47
Total	0	0	4087	55	4124	44	4848	51.7	4017	39
	100365	54	220504	48	319954	47	414565	51	473325	44

Source : www.nrega.nic.in

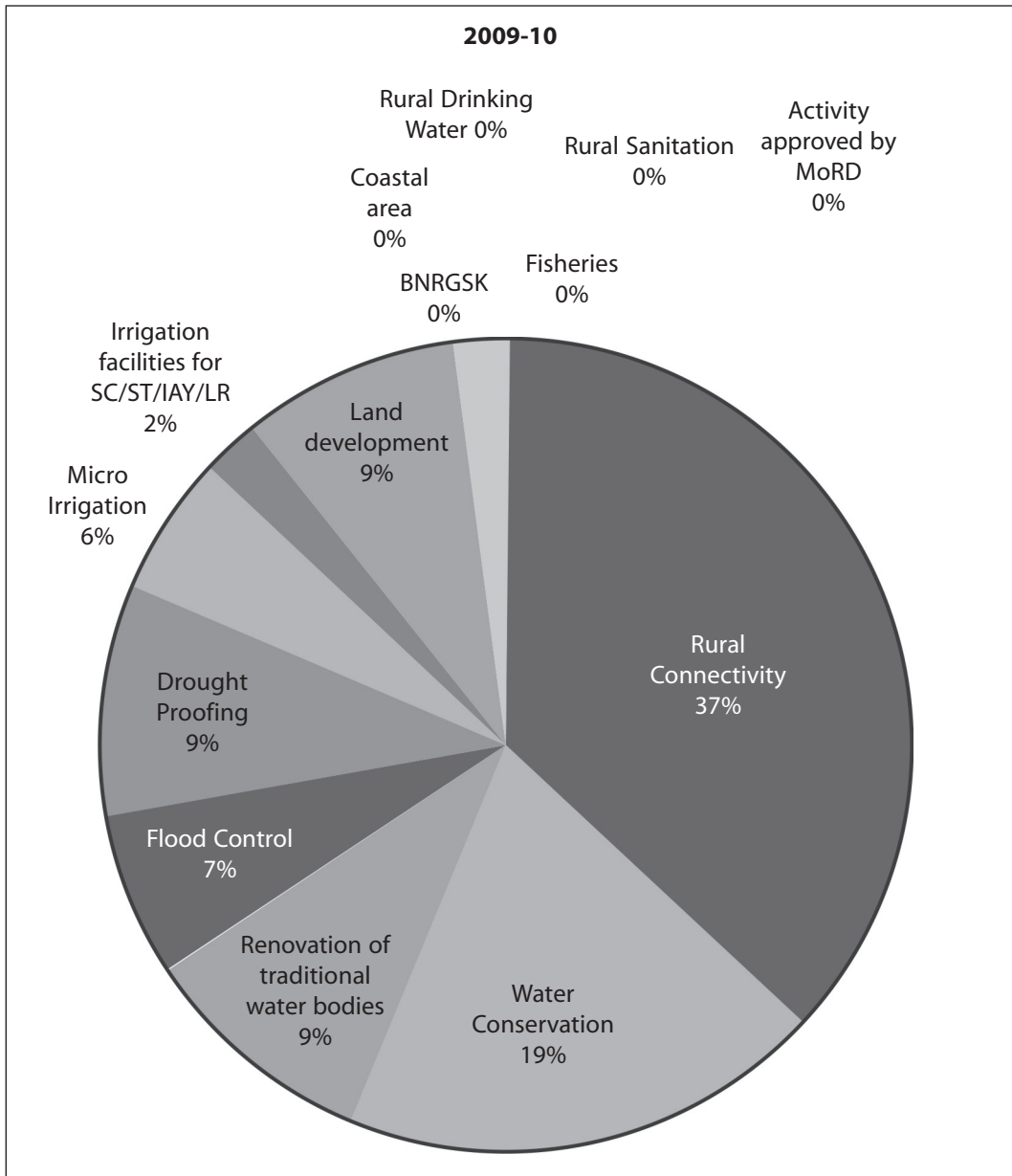
It is seen that rural connectivity is leading in terms of number of projects undertaken while as per Operational Guidelines 2006 its priority has been placed at the bottom of the list. However, its completion rate has drastically declined in 2012-13. Moreover, in its Report No. 6 of 2012-13, Comptroller and Auditor General of India finds that in West Bengal 293 works, all of which are earthen road, spread over 24 GPs fall in the category of 'non-creation of durable asset'. The total cost of these works is ₹ 6.53 crore. Another interesting aspect is that in the category of Drought Proofing there was a 3.4 times jump in the number of projects in 2010-11 compared to the preceding year and the completion rate decreased to as low as 19 per cent. As a consequence, the number of projects taken was highest under this category due to a large number of incomplete works in the previous year.

Against this backdrop, let us now present the share of assets created in different categories (Figure 6) in the State since extension of the Act to whole of the State since 1 April 2008. It is obvious that total number of completed assets increased during this period (2008-09 to 2012-13) mainly because of the increased number of projects undertaken. The increment in asset creation is far below the rate of increment in projects undertaken earlier. Rural connectivity remained at the top of the list in terms of share in total assets created, its share gradually declined in the last three years. On the other hand, the share of drought proofing projects increased particularly in the last two years due to its sudden jump in 2011-12. The share of water conservation and renovation of water bodies does not have any particular trend, however together they capture one-third of the total assets.

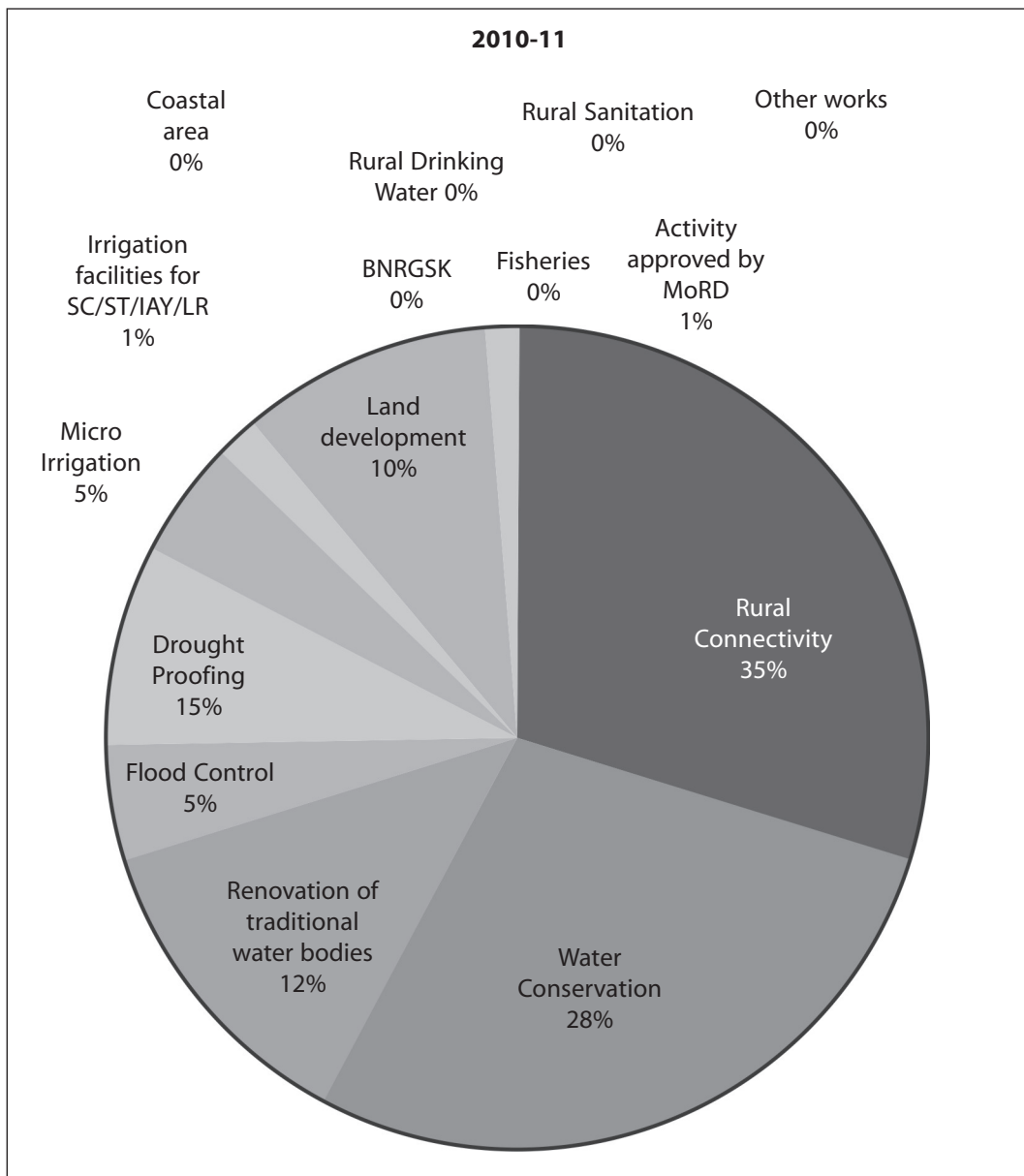
**Figure 6 : Year-wise Share of Assets Created (2008-09 – 2012-13)**

Source: [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

**Figure 6 (Contd...)**

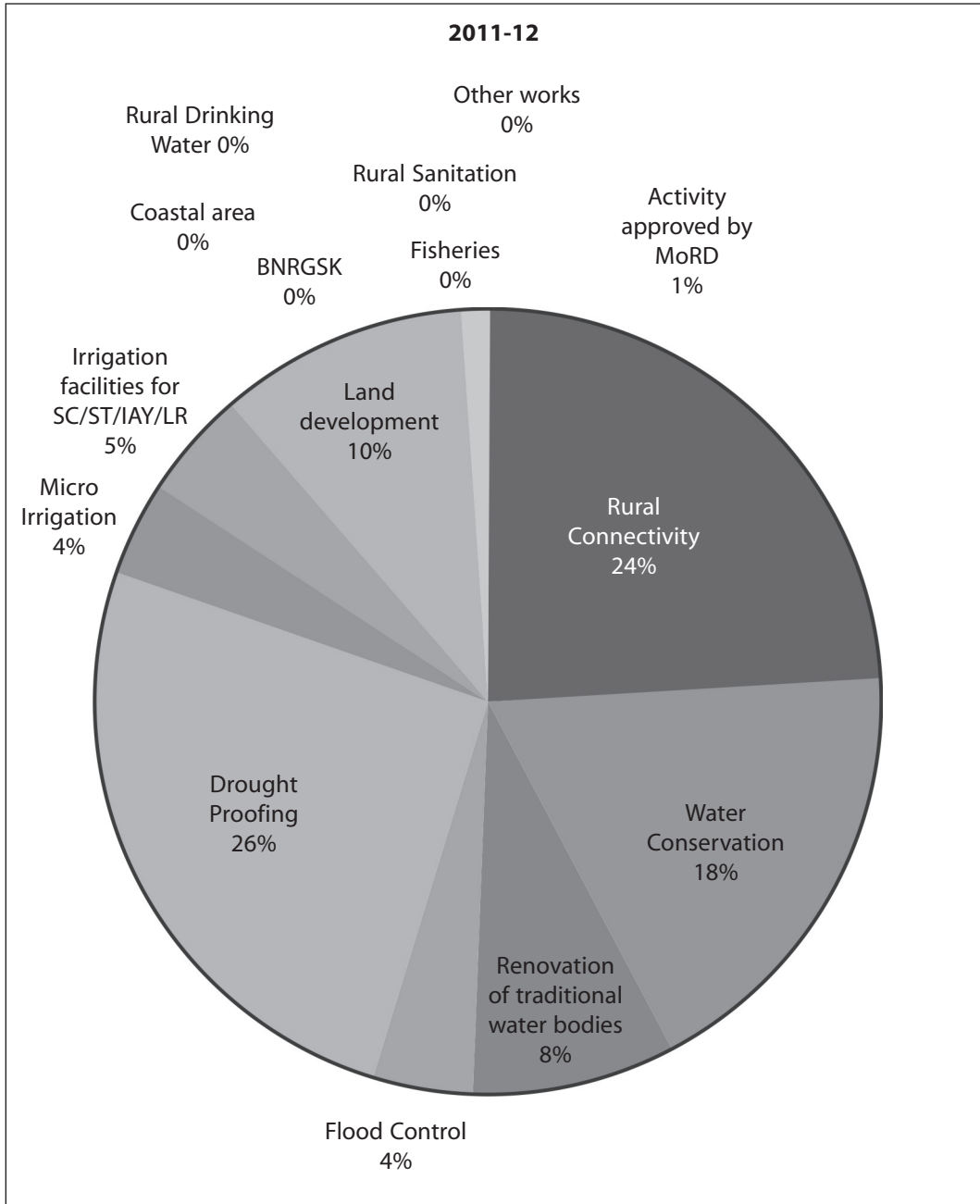


Source: [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

**Figure 6 (Contd...)**

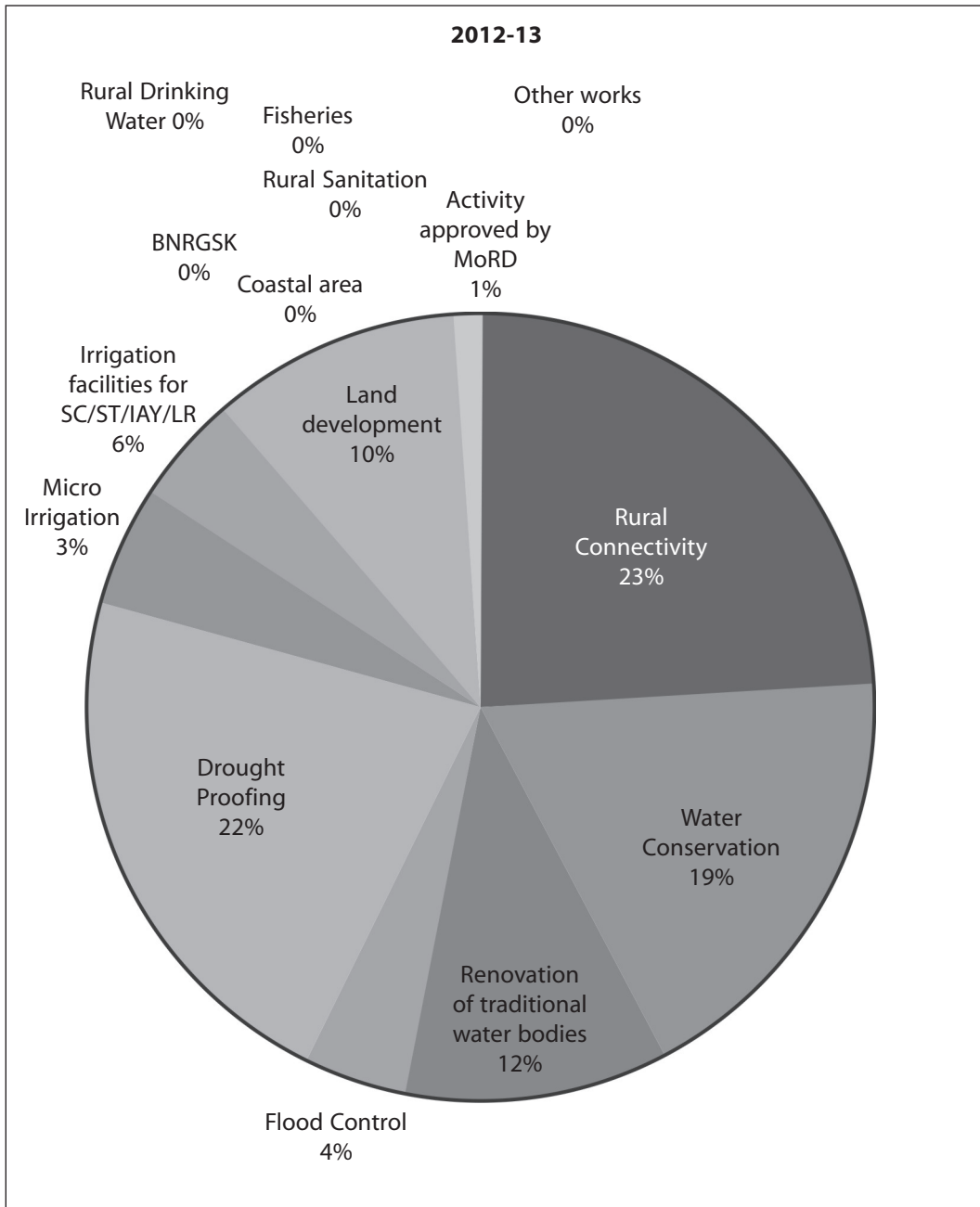
Source: [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

**Figure 6 (Contd...)**



Source: [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

Figure 6 (Contd...)



Source: [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)



### **Conclusion**

In this employment guarantee programme, though registration of the households is very high, participation in work is more or less half in the State. Though the panchayats are the principal implementing agencies, this trend could not be arrested yet. Proper verification of the households registered requires to be undertaken on periodic basis to check ineligible households. The benefits of the Act in terms of employment availability to the households could not be realised due to low employment generation. For obvious reason, the State's performance in providing 100 days of employment to the households is not at all satisfactory. The field experiences indicate that the households demanding work are not provided employment at a stretch for at least 14 days. If at a stretch work for a reasonable period is not provided and shelf of projects are not ready, it is very difficult to satisfy the guarantee of 100 days of employment to the households.

Regarding asset generation, excessive work load on GPs leads to generation of low value assets -these may not be sustainable in nature. The experiences tell that due to work burden and low participation of people in forum for discussions, the implementing agencies including the gram panchayats prefer to include traditional and easy to execute projects according to their own preference – rarely the villagers get opportunity to exercise their options or to express their preferences. In general, the dormant attitude of the villagers in activities of the gram panchayats affects the nature of projects taken up. There are many provisions in the West Bengal Panchayat Act to involve the local people with the panchayats, widely they are not implemented with seriousness, however. Closing of these gaps may help to implement MGNREGA in a concerted manner for the poor households in the rural areas who have very little alternatives for their sustenance.

---

### References

1. Banerjee, K. and P. Saha (2010): 'The NREGA, the Maoists and the Development Woes of India', *Economic and Political Weekly*.
2. Dutta, P., R. Murgai, M. Ravallion and Dominique van de Walle (2012), 'Does India's Employment Guarantee Scheme Guarantee Employment?', Policy Research Working Paper 6003, World Bank, Washington, DC.
3. All India Report on Evaluation of NREGA: A Survey of Twenty Districts (2009), Institute of Applied Manpower Research, New Delhi.
4. Jha, R. ed. (2008), Reviewing the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 15.
5. Khera, R. and N. Nayak (2009), 'Women Workers and Perceptions of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act', *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLIV 43.
6. Khera, R. (2008), 'Empowerment Guarantee Act', *Economic and Political Weekly*.
7. Narayanan and Lakahande (2013), 'Designed to Falter MGNREGA Implementation in Maharashtra', *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLVIII 26 and 27.
8. Study on Evaluating Performance of National Rural Employment Guarantee (2009), NCAER-PIF, New Delhi.
9. Patnaik, P. (2010), 'A Left Approach to Development', *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLV 30.
10. Pradhan, P and Das, V (2007), 'Illusion of Change', *Economic and Political Weekly*, August 11.
11. National Human Development Report (2001), Planning Commission (2002), Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
12. Planning Commission (2010), Mid Term Appraisal of Eleventh Five Year Plan, New Delhi.
13. Shah, M. et al. (2008), 'Two Years of NREGA: The Road Ahead', *Economic and Political Weekly*.
14. World Bank (2012), Public Works as a Safety Net Design, Evidence and Implementation, World Bank, Washington, DC.
15. World Bank (2013), Poverty Social Impact Analysis of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in Karnataka to Enable Effective Convergence, World Bank, Washington, DC.