Socio-Economic impact of MGNREGA: Evidences from district of Udham Singh Nagar in Uttarakhand, India

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: The present study conducted in the District of Udham Singh Nagar in Uttarakhand, has examined the impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on the socio economic status of participants.

Methods/Statistical analysis: The study was based on the information gathered from 80 households of four Gram Panchayats of an average performing block in the district. Twelve socio-economic indicators were evaluated using three point scale to assess the socio-economic impact of the scheme. The average days of employment in MGNREGA scheme observed to decrease slightly from 59.8 days in 2007-08 to 51.9 days in year 2013-14 and significant increase in 2013-14 over 2007-08 was noticed in socio-economic indicators namely, annual per capita food, non food, health and, per child education expenditures. Debts were found to increase along with asset possession though per capita saving declined. The value of socio-economic index indicated that in the initial years of implementation of the programme, about 36 per cent of the beneficiary households were in poor socio-economic strata which decreased to 12 per cent in 2013-14, while beneficiary households in good socio-economic strata increased from 30 per cent to55 per cent.

Application/Improvements: Study suggested that implementing agencies should make conscious efforts to increase the person days employment in the area to meet the minimum specified target of employment under MGNREGA and also the scheme should be continued in future and expanded to other regions of the country involving more families under its ambit.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Socio-economic profile, person days, indicators, Socio-economic index.

1. Introduction

In a context of persistent poverty and unemployment scenario various wage employment programmes like Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (CRSE), Food for Work Programme (FWP), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) etc. have been developed and introduced in the country for many years. In spite of these programmes, our country witnessed a declining growth rate of employment in rural areas during the period from 1972-73 to 2004-05. The growth rate of rural employment, which was 2.32 per cent during 1972/73-1977/78, declined to 1.8 per cent during 1983/84-1993/94, and further to 1.32 per cent during 1999/2000-2004/05. Rural unemployment increased from 0.46 per cent in 1972-73 to 1.2 per cent in 1993-94 and further to 2.5 per cent in 2004-05. Apart from this, the additional employment generated in agriculture during 1993/94-2004/05 was of poor quality and low productivity that resulted in slow growth rate in agricultural production.

Considering these facts Government of India enacted National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in 2005. It is a unique policy intervention at the national level which aims at enhancing the livelihood security of the people living in rural areas [1] and [2]. In 2009 this act was renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). This is a national law funded largely by the central government and implemented in all states, which creates a justifiable "right to work" for all households, have a legal right to get "not less than" 100 days of unskilled manual labour on public works in each financial year. It is one of the important schemes being implemented by government to achieve inclusive growth.

MGNREGA ranks first among the most powerful initiatives ever undertaken for transformation of rural livelihoods in India [3-5]. In many ways the NREGA is a replication of earlier schemes with a legal guarantee. While other programmes are allocation-based, MGNREGA is demand-driven [6]. Starting from 200 districts on 2 February 2006, the NREGA covered all the districts of India from 1 April 2008. Every adult member of the registered households under MGNREGA may demand work when he or she is in need and the government is bound to provide hundred days of guaranteed wage employment to every household who so ever has been registered under the scheme. Thus, MGNREGA is a huge step towards social security mechanism of the rural poor.

This is the largest employment programme ever started in the country with a huge public investment. According to the National Report (2013-14), 12.8 crore households have been registered in MGNREGA and 1.05 crore total works being undertaken with total expenditure of Rs 17940.20 crores.

The programme has enormous potential to uplift socio-economic conditions and to raise the standard of living of rural poor by guaranteeing 100 days wage employment. Benefits of MGNREGA to women had been realized through income-consumption effects, intra household effects, and the enhancement of choice and decision making in the family [7-8]. Introduction of MGNREGA had a clear positive impact on employment, income generation, standard of living, women participation and socio-economic conditions of rural poor [9-16] while [17-20] did not found the functioning of MGNREGA very satisfactory and reported people's dissatisfaction about the impact of MGNREGA on their livelihood and the quality of the work done under this scheme.

To assess the socio-economic impact of the programme on beneficiaries, different studies have considered diverse parameters like changes in income, saving, household expenditure, health and nutritional status etc but in a partial manner [21]. Some other important socio economic indicators like expenditure on children education, dwelling house conditions, sanitation facilities, drinking water facilities, expenditure on health etc have lacked attention. A composite socio-economic index encompassing all relevant socio economic parameters will be more meaningful in evaluating overall impact of this kind of employment guarantee programme. This paper is concerned with assessing the impact of MGNREGA on overall socio-economic conditions of the rural poor in Udham Singh Nagar district of Uttarakhand.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Data Base

The study has been conducted in Udham Singh Nagar district of Uttarakhand. A period of six years from 2007-08 to 2013-14 was considered to assess the impact of MGNREGA. The sample for study was drawn in three stages(community blocks, gram panchayats, and beneficiary households).The blocks and gram panchayats each were assigned score separately on a scale of 10 on the basis of performance in respect of three parameters, namely total person days created, total expenditure made and total number of social audit conducted in a financial year. The blocks and the panchayats were then ranked on the basis of aggregate score. One average performing block namely, Kashipur; and two good performing gram panchayats (Kachnal gosai and Dhkiyakala) and two poor performing gram panchayats (Judka and Gulediya) were selected. Finally in the last stage, a sample of 80 beneficiary households was selected randomly consisting of 20 households from each gram panchayat.

Primary data were collected for two years i.e. 2007-08 and 2013-14 and secondary data were procured for the period from 2007-08 to 2012-13. Information related to socio-economic profile of the beneficiary households like the caste category and religion, size and composition of family, education level, principal and subsidiary occupation, land holding pattern, livestock possession, asset possession, income and expenditure pattern, employment pattern and wage earning from different sources including MGNREGA were collected from the primary sources using survey schedule through personal interview method. Information related to study area and block wise performance of scheme at various time periods were collected from the secondary sources.

2.2. Analytical Tools

To assess the impact of MGNREGA on the socio-economic condition of beneficiaries, different qualitative and quantitative socio-economic indicators were considered for two selected years, i.e. 2007-08 and 2013-14, which are given in Table 1. The changes in the value of these indicators over the six years period were examined. In order to eliminate the inflationary effect, values of such variables which could be expressed in monetary term were adjusted to 2007-08 equivalent using Consumer Price Index (CPI) for agricultural labourers. Each quantitative indicator was stratified into three scales as poor, medium and good as given in the table.

Table 1. Guidelines for the formulation of scale of selected indicators

S. No.	Indicators	Poor	Medium	Good
1.	Annual per capita income (Rs.)	≤mean-0.5×SD	>mean-0.5×SD to ≤mean+0.5×SD	>mean+0.5×SD
2.	Annual per capita expenditure on food (Rs.)	≤mean-0.5×SD	>mean-0.5×SD to ≤mean+0.5×SD	>mean+0.5×SD
3.	Annual per capita expenditure on other non food consumptions (Rs.)	≤mean-0.5×SD	>mean-0.5×SD to ≤mean+0.5×SD	>mean+0.5×SD
4.	Per Capita value of productive assets (Rs.)	≤mean-0.5×SD	>mean-0.5×SD to ≤mean+0.5×SD	>mean+0.5×SD
5.	Rooms per persons (No.)	≤mean-0.5×SD	>mean-0.5×SD to ≤mean+0.5×SD	>mean+0.5×SD
6.	Annual per capita expenditure on education (Rs.)	≤mean-0.5×SD	>mean-0.5×SD to ≤mean+0.5×SD	>mean+0.5×SD
7.	Per capita annual expenditure on health (Rs.)	≤mean-0.5×SD	>mean-0.5×SD to ≤mean+0.5×SD	>mean+0.5×SD
8.	Per capita savings (Rs.)	≤mean-0.5×SD	>mean-0.5×SD to ≤mean+0.5×SD	>mean+0.5×SD
9.	Per capita amount of outstanding debt (Rs.)	>mean-0.5×SD	≤mean-0.5×SD to >mean+0.5×SD	<mean+0.5×SD
10.	Condition of the dwelling house	Straw thatched roof, earthen floor, mud or mud brick wall, not properly made	Straw thatched or partially asbestos roof, earthen floor, mud or mud brick wall, properly made	Asbestos roof, pakka or partially-pakka floor, brick or mud-brick wall. Or better condition
11.	Access to health facility	Depends on community tube well for drinking water and no latrine facility in house	Depends on community tube well for drinking water and have latrine facility in house	Have own source of drinking water and latrine facility in house
12.	Possession of other assets	Possession of any three or less than listed assets	Possession of three to six listed assets	More than six assets

Simple statistical tools like averages, percentages etc. were used to find out the changes in these parameters, which were then tested for statistical significance using paired t-test.

Qualitative indicators were not subjected to the statistical testing as these could not be expressed in quantitative units. Further, considering scale value of the indicators, **socio economic index** was calculated for individual beneficiaries by using the following formula [22]:

$$I_{ij} = (\sum S_{ijk} / \text{Maximum Possible Total Scale Value}) \times 100$$

Where, I_{ij} = Socio-economic index for the ith beneficiary in j^{th} year

S_{ijk} = Scale value of kth indicator for i^{th} beneficiary in j^{th} year

On the basis of index value, the total sample was grouped into three different socio-economic strata namely, poor socio-economic condition, medium socio economic condition and good socio economic condition using the same scaling principle as given in Table1.

Chi square test was used to test the significant difference between values in 2007-08 and 2013-14 using the formula as given below:

$$\chi2= \sum \frac{(o_i - e_i)^2}{e_i}$$

Where, o_i = Observed frequency of the ith strata
              e_i = Expected frequency of the ith strata

Observed frequency is the number of households in the ith strata during the year 2013-14, whereas the expected frequency is the number of households in the ith strata in the year 2007-08.

3. Results and Discussion
3.1 Socio-Economic Profile of Beneficiaries

Table 2 shows religion, caste and education wise distribution of beneficiary households. It is apparent from the table that people participated in MGNREGA irrespective of any religion. Caste category wise distribution showed that there was greater participation from backward ethnic groups like scheduled castes (38 per cent) and other backward classes (43 per cent).

Education-wise distribution revealed that most of the beneficiary families were headed by persons with low education level as about 31 per cent of family heads were illiterate and 37.50 per cent had education only up to primary level (Table 2). More than higher secondary level educated family heads were almost negligible.

Table 2. Religion, caste and education wise distribution of beneficiary-households

Particulars	Subcategories	No. of Beneficiaries	Per cent-age
Religion	Hindu	47	58.75
	Muslim	28	35.00
	Sikh	5	6.25
	Total	**80**	**100.00**
Caste	SC	30	37.50
	ST	4	5.00
	OBC	34	42.50
	General	12	15.00
	Total	**80**	**100.00**
Education level of the head of the family	Illiterates	25	31.25
	Literates (i) Up to primary level (ii) Up to secondary level (iii) Up to higher secondary level (iv) More than higher secondary level	 30 18 6 1	 37.50 22.50 7.50 1.25
	Total	**80**	**100.00**

Table 3 depicts occupational structure of the beneficiary households. Farming appeared to be the main occupation of most of the beneficiaries (42.50 per cent) and subsidiary occupation for few (2.50 per cent). MGNREGA was only the subsidiary occupation for all the beneficiaries. Other predominant occupations for the beneficiaries were agricultural labour work (main for 30 per cent and subsidiary for 16.25 per cent), factory work (subsidiary occupation for 40 per cent households), and animal husbandry (subsidiary occupation for 32.5 per cent households) etc. Construction workers, shop keepers, account keepers, anganwadi workers, bhojan matas, street hawkers, housemaids were also present in the sample in marginal proportions.

Beneficiaries were found to be resource poor when viewed in terms of ownership of land, livestock, farm machinery and implements (Table 4). They were either landless (35 per cent) or marginal farmers with majority (41.25 per cent) having farm size less than 0.33 acres.

Table 3. Main and subsidiary occupations of the households

Occupation	Beneficiaries	
	Main	Subsidiary
Agricultural Labourer	24(30.00)	13(16.25)
MGNREGA work	-	80(100.00)
Farming	34(42.50)	2(2.50)
Animal Husbandry	-	26(32.50)
factory worker	2(2.50)	32(40.00)
Transportation work	2(2.50)	-
Construction work	7(8.75)	-
Shop keeper	6(7.50)	3(3.75)
Account Keeping	1(1.25)	-
Hawker	1(1.25)	-
House maid	1(1.25)	-
Bojan Mata(workers in school)	1(1.25)	-
Aganwadi Worker	1(1.25)	-

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate per cent to total beneficiary households.

Table 4. Land holding pattern and ownership of livestock and implements of beneficiaries

Particulars	Subcategories	Beneficiaries	Average size of holding (acres)
	A. Landless	28(35.00)	0
Size of holding	B. Marginal land holding (i) < 0.33 acre (ii) 0.33acre to 0.56 acre (iii) > 0.56 acres	 33(41.25) 16(20.00) 3(3.75)	 0.24 0.49 0.77
	Total	**80(100)**	**0.34**
	Numbers of livestock	**Beneficiaries**	**Average**
	0	39(48.75)	0
	1 to 4	21(26.25)	2.47
	4 to 8	15(18.75)	5.73
Livestock ownership	> 8	5(6.25)	10.00
	Total	**80(100)**	**4.58**
	Numbers of Implements	**Beneficiaries**	**Average**
	0	15(18.75)	0
	1 to 2	22(27.50)	1.54
Implements owned	3 to 4	32(40.00)	3.59
	More than 4	11(13.75)	5.72
	Total	**80(100)**	**3.26**

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate per cent to total beneficiary households.

The overall average land holding size of the beneficiaries was 0.34 acre. These findings suggest that as the land holding size increases among MGNREGA job card holders, the demand for employment under this programme goes down. About 49 per cent of the beneficiaries did not own any livestock. Around 26 per cent beneficiary households owned one to four livestock with an average of 2.47 livestock and 25 per cent households were having more than four livestock. The overall average livestock holding size of the beneficiaries was 4.58. The findings also revealed that none of the household owned heavy farm machinery like plough, thresher, combine, tractor, and pump sets etc. Of the total beneficiary households, 19 per cent did not have any type of implements, while remaining 81 per cent of the total households owned only minimal farm implements with an overall average of 3.26 implements.

3.2. Extent of employment generated by MGNREGA and the changes in
employment pattern and wage structure in rural areas
3.2.1. Changes in employment pattern

Table 5 presents the pattern of employment of beneficiaries from different sources and per cent change therein during the period from 2007-08 to 2013-14. A perusal of this table shows that the average number of days of employment got on own farm was 27.31 days in 2007-08, which marginally increased to 28.68 days in 2013-14. Though, the change was small but was significant. The reason of this small change may be that a person's engagement on his own farm is nearly fixed and certain activities of every farm do not change very often.

Table 5. Occupation wise employment received by beneficiary households during the years 2007-08 and 2013-14

(Person days/year per households)

Types of employment	No. of days per households			
	2007-08	2013-14	Change in the values	% change
Own farm employment	27.31	28.68	1.37*	5
Agril. Labour	73.16	81.15	7.99*	10.9
Self employment	44.05	52.91	8.86	20.11
Non agricultural employment	43.36	42.97	-0.39	-0.89
MGNREGA	59.85	51.9	-7.95*	-13.2
Total	230.82	257.63	26.81	11.61

Note: * significant change in the values of variables at 5% level of significance.

The average number of days of employment as agricultural labour increased significantly from 73.16 days in 2007-08 to 81.15 days in 2013-14. The increase in employment during the period was estimated to be 10.9 per cent. The reason for this significance change may be that, the agricultural activities are always given utmost importance in the study area as the block comes under one of the highest agriculturally affluent zones of the state.

The average number of days of employment got from MGNREGA scheme was 59.8 in year 2007-08 which decreased significantly to 51.9 days in year 2013-14. Despite of increased awareness among job seekers on account of growth of the scheme, level of employment got by beneficiaries decreased by more than 13 per cent. The decline in the number of day's employment acquired from MGNREGA implied that people did not get job opportunities under MGNREGA and engaged themselves in other employment opportunities to earn their livelihood.

3.2.2. Changes in wage structure in rural areas

Out of the five identified employments for beneficiaries only three employments were wage oriented, namely agricultural labour work, other non agricultural employment and MGNREGA works. Table 6 shows that at the initial stage, wages for employment under MGNREGA and wages for non MGNREGA employments were almost same, but over time wages for different employments increased by rapid pace.

The wage rate prevailed for agricultural labour in 2007-08 was Rs. 73 per day, while the same was Rs. 203 per day in 2013-14, which was estimated to be 178.08 per cent higher than that prevailed in the year 2007-08. Average wage for non agricultural employment was Rs 71.61 per day in 2007-08 which increased to Rs 207 per day in 2013-14. In case of MGNREGA the wage rate initially paid in the year of implementation was 73 rupees per day which hiked by 101 per cent in year 2013-14 and reached to Rs. 145 per day.

Table 6. Pattern of wages in different years (Rs/person days)

Sources of employment	Wage per personday		
	2007-08	2013-14	% change
Agril. Labour	73.00	203	178.08
Non agricultural employment	71.61	207	189.06
MGNREGA	73.00	145	101.38

The increment in wage rate in case of agriculture and non agricultural employment was higher than that in MGNREGA. Therefore, MGNREGA can be said wage regulator of labour market, as these wages act as standard wages and do influence other market wages.

3.3. Impact of MGNREGA on the socio-economic indicators of beneficiaries

To assess the impact of MGNREGA on the socio-economic indicators of beneficiaries, twelve socio-economic indicators (nine quantitative and three qualitative) were identified and changes in the values of these indicators were analyzed over the six year period extending from 2007-08 to 2013-14. The values of the quantitative socio-economic variables for the beneficiaries are presented in the Table 7.

Table 7. Values of socio-economic variables for beneficiaries (at constant prices)

Variables	2007-08	2013-14	Difference in the values	Percentage change
Annual per capita income (Rs.)	8959.02	8953.14	-5.88	(-)0.06
Annual per capita food expenditure (Rs.)	5696.42	6103.92	407.50*	7.15
Annual per capita non-food expenditure (Rs.)	1344.78	1450.97	106.19*	1.80
Per capita health expenses (Rs.)	678.07	789.25	111.18*	16.40
Per child education expenditure (Rs.)	253.75	475.00	221.25*	87.19
Per capita value of total assets (Rs.)	54807.33	84805.54	29998.21*	54.70
Amount of per capita savings (Rs.)	1014.67	691.42	-323.25*	(-)31.85
Amount of per capita debt (Rs.)	78.63	110.43	31.80*	40.49
Availability of room per person (No.)	0.91	0.92	0.01	0.65

Note: * Significant at 5% level of significance.

A perusal of the table shows that the annual per capita income of the beneficiaries remained almost stagnant over the five year period. Annual per capita food as well as non-food expenditure of beneficiaries significantly increased by 7.1 per cent and 1.8 per cent respectively in year 2013-14 over 2007-08. This suggests that MGNREGA had positive impact on the spending of target beneficiaries.

Annual per capita expenditure on health increased significantly by 16.4 per cent in year 2013-14 over 2007-08. Annual expenditure of beneficiaries on education per child also increased significantly by 87.19 per cent during the period of six years.

Per capita value of total assets in real terms grew significantly by 54.7 per cent from Rs 54807 in 2007-08 to Rs 84806 in the year 2013-14. Per capita savings of the beneficiaries decreased significantly by about 32 per cent during the same period. Amount of outstanding debt for beneficiaries significantly increased by 40.49 per cent in the corresponding period. This decline in savings together with increase in debt is understandable with increase in different expenditures and increase in assets but stagnant income. Beneficiary households could afford to dip into their savings and raise funds through debt due to feeling of assured employment support in future under MGNREGA. Availability of rooms per persons for beneficiaries remained unchanged.

To examine the socio-economic impact of MGNREGA, certain qualitative indicators were also identified. These qualitative indicators were dwelling house conditions of beneficiaries, their access to safe drinking water and sanitary latrines and possession of other assets. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Distribution of sample households according to condition of the dwelling house

Condition of dwelling house	No. of beneficiary households	
	2007-08	2013-14
Poor: Straw thatched roof, earthen floor, mud or mud brick wall, not properly made	34(42.50)	11(13.75)
Medium: Straw thatched or partially asbestos roof, earthen floor, mud or mud brick wall, properly made	41(51.25)	57(71.25)
Good: Asbestos roof, pakka or partially-pakka floor, brick or mud-brick wall. Or better condition	5(6.25)	12(15)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate per cent to total beneficiary households.

The table reveals that 42.5 per cent dwelling houses were in poor category, 51.25 per cent were in medium and only 6.25 per cent houses were in good categories. The corresponding figures for 2013-14 were 13.75 per cent, 71.25 per cent and 15 per cent respectively. This shows that many of the beneficiaries were able to improve their dwelling house conditions after they started working in MGNREGA.

Access to the facilities of safe drinking water and sanitary latrine improved during the specified time period (Table9) .In the year 2007-08 there were 32.5 per cent households having no latrine facilities which reduced to 10 per cent till year 2013-14. In 2007-08 only 12.5 per cent of the beneficiaries had their own source of drinking water, which increased to 36.75 per cent in 2013-14.

Table 9. Distribution of sample households according to access to facilities of safe drinking water and in house toilet

Access to health facilities	No. of beneficiary household	
	2007-08	**2013-14**
Poor: Depends on community tube well for drinking water and no latrine facility in house	26(32.50)	8(10.00)
Medium: Depends on community tube well for drinking water and have latrine facility in house	44(55.00)	43(53.75)
Good: Have own source of drinking water and latrine facility in house	10(12.50)	29(36.25)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate per cent to total beneficiary households.

Possession of other assets like mobile phones, trunks, almirah, radio, television, cycle, electric fans, clocks, fiber chairs, music systems, emergency lamps etc also increased considerably during the study period. In the year 2007-08 about 44 per cent beneficiaries were in poor asset holding position, which decreased to only 14 per cent in the year 2013-14 (Table 10). Thus it shows enhanced living standard of the beneficiaries.

Table 10. Distribution of sample households according to possession of other assets

Asset possession	No. of beneficiary household	
	2007-08	**2013-14**
Poor	35(43.75)	11(13.75)
Medium	35(43.75)	51(63.75)
Good	10(12.50)	18(22.50)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate per cent to total beneficiary households.

3.4. Overall impact of MGNREGA on socio-economic status of the beneficiaries

The overall socio-economic status of MGNREGA beneficiary households based on estimated value of socioeconomic index have been presented in Table 11. Depending upon the value of indices all the respondent beneficiary households were grouped into three strata viz. poor, medium and good as described in section 2.2.

Table 11. Distribution of households into different socio-economic strata based on value of socio-economic index

Asset possession	Beneficiaries		
	2007-08	**2013-14**	**Percentage Change**
Poor	29(36.25)	10(12.50)	23.75*
Medium	27(33.75)	26(32.50)	1.25*
Good	24(30.00)	44(55.00)	15.00*

Note: * Significant at 5% level of significance.

It was found that in the initial year of implementation (2007-08) of MGNREGA in the study area 29 (36.25%) out of total 80 beneficiary households were in poor socio-economic condition. In 2013-14 only 10 households (12.5%) were found under poor category. During the same period the number of beneficiary households in good socio-economic condition increased from 24(30per cent) to 44 (55per cent) in 2013-14. These results suggest that MGNREGA is effective in improving the socio economic conditions of job participants.

4. Conclusion

The study revealed that majority of the participants of MGNREGA was relatively poor, based on socio-economic parameters considered in the study. Religious neutrality was found in the participation. Caste category wise distribution showed that backward ethnic groups like OBCs and SCs participated in greater proportion than the

general caste people. Educational status of the beneficiaries was low. More than fifty per cent of the families were headed either by illiterates or by people educated only up to primary level.

Farming and agricultural labour work formed the main occupation for around 73 per cent of the total beneficiaries, while these were subsidiary occupation for 19 per cent people. It was noticed that all the beneficiaries had taken MGNREGA as subsidiary occupation only.

The average days of employment in MGNREGA scheme slightly decreased from 59.8 days in 2007-08 to 51.9 days in year 2013-14, while the same increased in other sources of employment like own farm employment, agricultural labour work and self employment over six years. The average days of overall employment in 2013-14 increased by 11.61 per cent over the same in 2007-08 and reached to 258 days per beneficiary household from 231 days.

MGNREGA was observed capable of enhancing income level, food security and livelihood security of rural households on a sustainable manner and showed its positive impact on the socio-economic conditions of the beneficiaries. Beneficiaries were found having availing better health facilities, safe drinking water and sanitation facilities and improved dwelling house conditions, as a result of MGNREGA. The scheme also enhanced the purchasing power of beneficiaries, as their asset possession, annual per capita food and non-food expenditure, per capita expenditure on education and health increased considerably after they started working under the scheme. The results were in correspondence with the studies conducted by [23] and [24].

Socio-economic index prepared for the beneficiaries on the basis of select socio-economic indicators showed that MGNREGA altered the socioeconomic set-up of rural masses towards betterment. Therefore, the scheme is worth continuing in future.

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