

IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON EMPLOYMENT GENERATION IN KERALA

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Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) as a flagship programme by the Central Government of India started in September, 2005. As per the program, each rural household gets 100 days of guaranteed employment (unskilled works) every year. Although the major objective of this program is to provide livelihood security for rural households, it also facilitates the creation as well as maintenance of rural infrastructure and employment generation. The present paper is an attempt to overview the impact of MGNREGA on employment generation in rural Kerala. It also examined the demand for employment and employment generated revealed that MGNREGA plays a significant role in employment generation in rural Kerala.

Key words : MGNREGA, Employment Generation; Kerala

Introduction

With two thirds of the population residing in rural areas, development initiatives in the rural sectors can be crucial for India. The major source of employment as well as livelihood within this rural populace is agriculture. Frequent climatic changes have affected the agrarian life badly and with no other means of income they keep falling deep into the pit of poverty. Substantially, in rural India, poverty and unemployment is

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prolonging and it is also having a bad impact on overall development. Taking this growing problem into account, the Government of India launched its flagship scheme Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in 2005. MGNREGA offers a unique rights based guarantee of employment in rural areas. The Act mandates the provision of at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year, within 5 km of an applicant's residence, to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. As employment under MGNREGA is legally conditioned, a minimum wage is to be paid for the labour and if work, the government fails to provide employment over a period of 15 days, it has to provide certain unemployment allowances to those people.

Objectives of the study

1. To analyse the role of MGNREGA for Generation of employment in Rural Kerala.
2. To analyse the progress in employment generation against demand under MGNREGA in rural Kerala.

2. Materials and Methods

Navtez Singh (2018) analysed how the livelihood as well as employment opportunities transformed in India with the enactment of MGNREGA. Anil Kumar Mishra and Madhulika Singh (2017) studied how MGNREGA helped in generating more employment opportunities in India. Sami and Khan (2016) examined how MGNREGA helped to generate employment opportunities among the poor in selected Indian districts. Dutta, (2015) analysed the impact of MGNREGA in districts of Gujarat and West Bengal. Kumar (2014) examined the role of MGNREGA in the rural areas. Dutta, et.al (2012) discovered that unlike other employment schemes, MREGA has been more successful. Krishnamurty J (2006) closely examined the capacity of MGNREGA to act as a 'livelihood security' to the survivors of natural disasters and crisis.

The paper is based on descriptive arguments related to MGNREGA activities in rural Kerala from 2014-15 to 2019-2020. Secondary data gathered from different books, research papers, reports, journals, newspapers and online database is used.

Results, Analysis and Discussion

Profile of MGNREGA: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a Central-government sponsored wage employment scheme aim to provide livelihood security to the poor and rural households. In the beginning, the Act was implemented in 200 districts from 2nd February 2006 and then extended to 130 districts more in the financial year 2007-2008. 113 districts across the country and 17 districts in Uttar Pradesh were notified with effect from April 1st 2007 and from 15th May 2007 respectively. MGNREGA was imparted in rest of the districts from 1st April 2008.

The scheme aims to provide 100 days paid employment for everyone registered under the scheme, to reduce urban migration, to empower rural women and the poor, to create productive assets, and to increase employability of rural people. The responsibility of effective enactment of this scheme is bestowed with the Ministry of Rural Development. Besides the ministry, a professional institutional network has been set up which acts as a monitoring assessment and research committee. It assesses the steady and sustainable development of the program.

In Kerala, the scheme was initially implemented in Palakkad and Wayanad districts on 5th February 2006; later in April 2008, it was extended to all the 14 districts. The scheme now provides Rs 271 per person for a stipulated quantity of manual labour offered by the workers registered under the scheme. The impact of two devastating foods left, a lot of people deprived of their traditional employment opportunities, including farmers, small-scale entrepreneurs and people from the lower economic strata of society. The 'Rebuild Kerala', livelihood initiative along with MGNREGA scheme, helped to restore farmlands, canals, streams, wells and rivers, in addition to common public assets such as school playgrounds, Anganwadis, mangroves and streetlights.

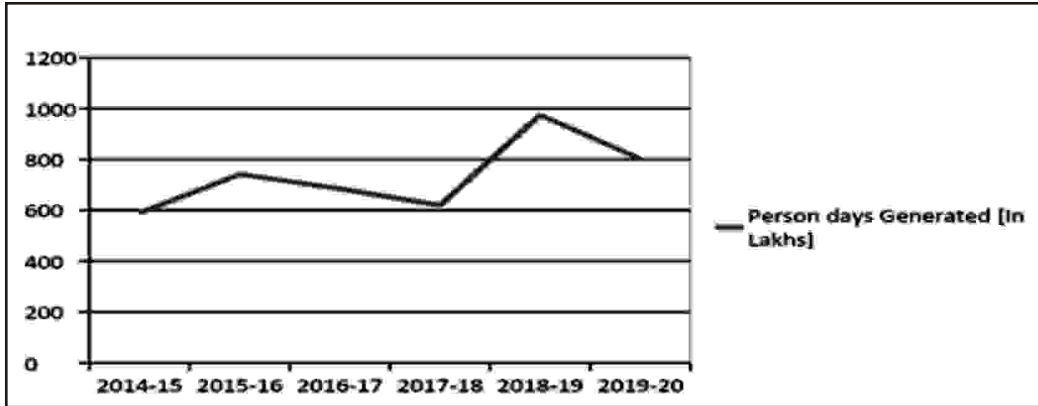
Table - 1
Trends and progress of employment generation in Kerala

Progress	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Person days Generated (in Lakhs)	588.72	741.72	684.62	619.59	975.26	802.3
SC person days percent as of total person days	16.2	15.96	17.1	16.2	15.94	15.53
ST person days percent as of total person days	3.5	3.63	4.81	4.91	5.54	6.7
Women person days out of Total (percent)	92.16	91.27	91.08	90.76	90.41	89.8
Average days of employment provided per Household	42.65	49.26	46.97	47.24	65.97	55.75
Average Wage rate per day per person(in Rs)	214.28	231.82	243.09	260.91	274.2	274.29
Total No of HHs completed 100 Days of Wage Employment	98648	165988	113186	117370	441479	251141
Total Households Worked (in Lakhs)	13.8	15.06	14.57	13.12	14.78	14.39
Total Individuals Worked (in Lakhs)	15.13	16.93	16.44	14.71	17.08	16.54

Source: nrega.nic.in

MGNREGA and employment generation in Rural Kerala: Table 1 explains the progress of employment generation in Kerala. Person employment generated days during the year 2014-15 was 588.72 lakhs and it increased to 802.3 lakh person days in 2019-20. Above 90 percent of the beneficiaries of the scheme are women and the average days of employment provided per household was 55.75 during 2019-20. The total number of households who completed 100 days of wage employment was 98648 during 2014-15 but this increased to 251141 during 2019-20. Also, there was a hike in the employment generation during the year 2018-19 due to the flood and increased demand for employment. (figure. 1)

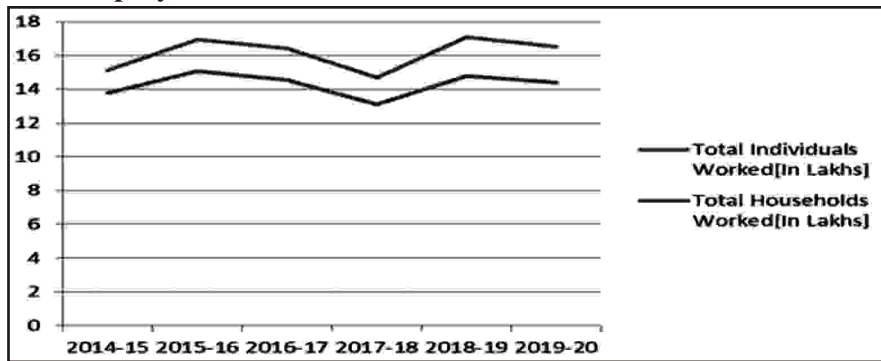
Figure - 1
Employment Generation



Source: nrega.nic.in

In Kerala during the year 2019- 2020, 71.95 percent of the households got jobs and the highest rate was in Alappuzha (80.76 percent) and lowest in Malappuram(62.11 percent) (figure 2). Comparatively, the progress of employment generation during 2018-19 was higher than that of 2019-20 (table 2). The major reason for the increase in employment generation was the flood in Kerala. Also, when the government announced 'Rebuild Kerala' which aimed at rehabilitating affected population, livelihood rejuvenation was given higher prominence. As a result the workers joined their hands to restore farmlands, canals, streams, wells and other infrastructural entities.

Figure - 2
Employment Generation in Individuals and households



Source: nrega.nic.in

Table - 2
Demand for employment and Employment generated in Kerala

Districts	2018-19			2019-20		
	No.of active job card	No.of HH got job	Percent of HH got job	No.of active job card	No.of HH got job	Percent of HH got job
Thiruvananthapuram	236409	179877	76.09	233838	173713	74.29
Kollam	204802	152457	74.44	206500	143799	69.64
Pathanamthitta	68640	51838	75.52	68931	51960	75.38
Alappuzha	174682	148041	84.75	176641	142647	80.76
Kottayam	88303	60694	68.73	86007	61673	71.71
Idukki	137904	108585	78.74	140600	108755	77.35
Ernakulam	117465	82264	70.03	116318	79784	68.59
Palakkad	222852	165984	74.48	215365	154882	71.92
Thrissur	133874	86004	64.24	128227	86011	67.08
Malappuram	147062	88682	60.30	140314	87146	62.11
Wayanad	85532	62312	72.85	86100	60291	70.02
Kozhikode	193029	144237	74.72	193128	141290	73.16
Kannur	118139	81144	68.69	115416	80017	69.33
Kasaragod	91165	66268	72.69	92234	66812	72.44
Total	2019858	1478387	73.19	1999619	1438780	71.95

Source: nrega.nic.in

Conclusion

MGNREGA is one of the rural development programmes implemented in India that gained wide acceptance. The pertaining poverty and lack of employment opportunities were turning into a nightmare for the rural people. Most of them even gave up their life as they were not able to withstand the aftermath of such a situation. During such a pathetic situation the MGNREGA was a boon for the poor in the rural areas. By providing 100 days of guaranteed wage employment and ensuring women's participation in it through reserving one-third share in the total employment for women; MGNREGA has proved to be more inclusive than any other schemes.

In Kerala, people were badly affected by the flood that occurred in 2018. It destroyed both shelter and means of livelihood of people in Kerala. Post-flood periods, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme occurred to be a blessing for the flood victims, especially women and the elderly. Kerala generated higher employment in the financial year 2018-2019, as compared to 2017-18. Thus, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is considered one of the most inclusive and effectual employment generation programs designed by the government of India for rural development since independence.

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