

MGNREGA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES**Dr. S. Shyamala Devi****Government First Grade College Channapatna****INTRODUCTION**

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been implemented by Government of India since 2005. The right of employment is a pre-condition for welfare of the poor. India with its Employment guarantee scheme is the first country in the world to offer employment and job security in such a large scale. The MNAREGA is now a flagship of all welfare activities for the poor and needs to be studied at micro level. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is an Indian Guarantee job opportunity scheme, enacted by legislation on August 25, 2005. The law was initially called the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) but was renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA) on 2 October 2009.

BACKGROUND OF MGNREGA

On February 2, 2006, the MGNREGA came into force in 200 of India's backward districts. This is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with Centre - State funding ratio of 75:25. The primary objective of the scheme to provide a legal guarantee for 100 days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage of 120 per day in 2009 prices. This legal commitment is a landmark event in the history of poverty reduction strategies in India.

Its secondary objective is focusing to strengthen natural resource management, which would help in attainment of the goals of sustainable development. By improvising and expanding the scale of public works in the rural areas the infrastructural base has been strengthened. It has been providing

means of irrigation, flood protection, drought management, soil conservation, afforestation, water harvesting and thus encourage to sustainable development.

MGNREGA was implemented in phase wise manner all over India. This was first introduced in 200 most backwards districts of the country in February 2006, later extended to 130 additional districts in the financial year 2007- 2008. The remaining all the districts have been notified under the MGNREGA with effect from 1st April 2008. Thus, the NREGA covers the entire country with the exception of the districts that have been hundred percent urban population.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

1.Low wage rates:

The wage rate cannot be less than the minimum agricultural wage rate of the state but however the MGNREGA wage rates are less than the state minimum wages. The low wage rates have resulted in lack of interest among workers to work for MGNREGA schemes.

2. Insufficient budget allocation:

Insufficient budget allocation from the Central government which hampers the work in peak season.

3. Lack of planning & administrative skill:

The review of the MGNREGA by Central, State and NGOs reveals that, the panchayats have no experience at all in planning large-scale programmes. There was poor planning and they lacked administrative skills.

4. Lack of focus:

Though Schedule One of the MGNREG Act referred to conservation of natural resources such as rainwater, land, forests, this was not reflected in the works floated for the scheme. Under this scheme, contractors and machineries should not be used. But in some work places, contractors were allowed and machineries were involved.

5. Centralisation:

A centralised payment system has left the representatives of the Panchayati Raj Institutions has no role in planning, implementation, monitoring and grievance redressal of MGNREGA schemes. They are unable to address grievances or make payments.

6. Inadequate manpower

Another issue is the deficiency of adequate administrative and technical manpower at the Block and Grama Panchayat, technicians, officers etc. The lack of manpower has adversely affected the preparation of plans, scrutiny, approval, monitoring and measurement of works, and maintenance of the records and accounts.

7. Lack of facilities for women:

One of the objectives of the Scheme to strengthen women empowerment. Around one-third of the work force under MGNREG is women. They lack proper facilities for them and their children's. Therefore, proper work environment with restrooms, Crèches for their children's have to be set up.

8.Lack of funds for the Scheme:

Being one of the largest initiatives of its kind in the world, MGNREGA was started with an initial outlay of Rs.11, 300 crore in the year 2006-07 (almost 0.3% of GDP). The total outlay for the programme is increasing by every financial year. Funding the scheme is possible through improved tax administration and reforms. But the TAX-GDP ratio has actually been falling. There are fears that the programme will end.

9.Discrimination:

The most remarkable feature of MGNREGA is that equal pay is given to men and women. However, cases of discrimination against women are reported. In some regions only a few job

cards are issued to women. Some states have registered high percentage of women workers getting enrolled in the scheme whereas others have registered a very low percentage of women.

10. Delays in payment:

There are often delays in payment for the work completed under the scheme and also there is no compensation for the delays.

11. Corruption and Lack of Transparency:

Corruption and lack of Transparency indicate that the poverty alleviation programmes and schemes were not effective. The actual funds that reach the beneficiaries are very less. Local governments have also been found very corrupt in issuance of job cards.

CONCLUSION:

The government must address the various issues in MGNREGA. The government through proper implementation of schemes can alleviate poverty, unemployment, underemployment, creation of income and productive assets in rural etc. MGNREGA is subject to several issues and challenges like corruption, inadequate fund, centralization, delays in payment and lack of transparency etc., the Government, NGOs and the people must participate in effective execution of MGNREGA in rural areas to fulfill the objectives.

References

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