

## **A Socio-Economic study on MGNREGA in Assam: A study**

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**Abstract:** Rural Development refers to the all-round development of the rural areas. Its aim at improving the quality of live and wellbeing of the economic condition of the rural people. Rural Development is being a crucial topic of discussion among the researchers and policy makers of Assam as well as the country as a whole. The government of Assam has been implementing several poverty elevation and employment generationschemesfor improving the socio-economic condition of the rural people. Among these schemes MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Guarantee Act) which is considered as bullet scheme implemented by the Assam government on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 with an aim of improving the purchasing power of the rural people, primarily semi or un-skilled work to people living below poverty line. In this seminar paperattempt has been made to examine the basic roles of MGNREGA as an employment generation scheme in Assam. In this context an attempt has also been made to give some suitable recommendations for proper implementation of this programme in selected area.

**Key words:** development, employment, government, programme and rural.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

India is a rural country, more than 65 percent population live in rural area. Poverty, hunger, unemployment and backwardness are the burning problems which has standing as a great wall against the all-round development of rural India since independence. According to the United Nation Global Multi-dimensional Poverty Index-2019there are almost 27.01 core Indian people who still living Below Poverty Line (<https://www.indiatoday.in>).Thereforethe Government of India has been implementing some important schemes in rural areas in order to provide wage employment and additional money income with specific consideration and weaker section of the societyto eradicate poverty.It may be traced back to the Community Development Programme and National extension Programme which wereintroduced in 1952 and 1953 with an aims of improving the quality of life of the people living in rural area by providing various employment facilities and opportunities. Apart from that the important implemented schemes are Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) in 1980, Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) in 1982-83, Indira AwaasYojana (IAY) in 1985, Prime Minister's RojgarYojana (PMRY) in 1993-94, , , Swarnajayanti Gram SwarogjarYojana (SGSY) in 1999etc. The SGSY is regarded as a new self-employment programme to assist the rural people to enhance income and wellbeing of their life. It was introduced on 1st April, 1999 in Assam with an aim of helpingthe poor to uplift them from the poverty line.The people who got the benefits under this programme are known as beneficiaries. SGSY has been conceived as a holistic programme of self-employment.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is regarded as an employment generating programme which was passed by the central government in 2005 and came into force in 2006. It was first introduced in 200 districts during the financial year 2006-07 and 130 districts during the financial year 2007-08. In April 2008 NREGA (now MGNREGA) extended to entire rural area of the country covering all State and Union Territories, 614 Districts, 6,096 Blocks and 2.65 Gram Panchayats. The scheme now covers 648 Districts, 6,849 Blocks and 2, 50,441 Gram Panchayats in the financial year 2015-16. (<https://www.Vikashpedia.in>).

#### **1.1. Features of MGNREGA:**

The key features of MGNREGA can be mentioned under the following points.

- I. It Improveslivelihood security of people living in rural areas.
- II. ItProvides a legal guarantee of 100 days' of wage employment in a financial year to rural unemployed people who willing to do unskilled manual work.
- III. Itimproves the purchasing power of the rural people.
- IV. It focuses on the socio-economic empowerment of the women.

- V. It attempts to bridge the gap between rich and poor.
- VI. The Unique features of the act include time bound employment guarantee and wage payment within 15 days, incentive disincentive structure to the state government for providing employment as 90 percent of unemployment allowance at their own cost and emphasis on labour intensive works prohibiting the use of contractor and machinery.
- VII. To bring more transparency, government has initiated geo-tagging of all assets created under MGNREGA.

**1.2. The following those are eligible to benefit from the MGNREGA.**

- I. It is available to all adult member of any household who willing to do unskilled manual job.
- II. The act mandates 33 percent of participation must be for women.
- III. It is also inclusive with higher participation of Women, SC and ST.

**1.3. Importance of MGNREGA:**

MGNREGA aim at achieving the objective as enunciated in the article 41 of the Indian Constitution “giving citizens the rights to work”. The Act has become more significance due to the following reasons.

- I. While the earlier wage employment programmes would not be able to provide any guarantee of job whereas the MGNREGA Act has been able to provide guarantee of job. This guarantee for wage employment is now uniformed all over the country like never before.
- II. It is a development initiative, chapping in with essential public investment for creation of durable assets, without which the growth process cannot be possible in the most backward region of rural India.
- III. The other key attributes of the MGNREGA Act are labour- intensive work, decentralized participatory planning, women empowerment, work-site facilities and above all transparency and accountability through the provision of social audits and rights to information. The use of information technology in this programme is considered to bring about greater transparency through intensive monitoring and faster execution. The payment of wages through the bank account is other innovative step that is likely to reduce feeding of muster rolls of the part of the implementing agencies since the actual payments are beyond their reach.

## **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Following literatures have been reviewed to understand the statement of the problems.

**Desai Vasant(1988)** in his title of the book “Rural Development, Vol. IV, Experiment in Rural Development”, recommended that for the effective implementation of rural development programmes all the state government should build a strong and well equipped organizational set up.

**Dutta N.L. & Bhuyan M.D. (2004)** in their book “Rural Development in Assam” covers various aspects of rural development which includes rural bureaucracy, people’s participation in rural development, Panchayatiraj institutions, Non-governmental organizations, self-help groups, employment of weaker and rural health service

**Rao P. Gopinath (2006)** in his book “Rural Development, Sustainable Livelihood and Security”, observed that the central problems of rural development and the role of sustainable livelihood approaches in addressing them. It explores the interrelationship between agriculture growth, employment and rural poverty.

**Kumar S. (2006)** in his book “Rural Development through Technology Interventions”, Examine the ways and means of rural development in modern light of technological interventions. The book points out irrational and unscientific attitudes and approaches impede progress and change.

**Nath V. (2010)** in his book “Rural Development and Planning in India” emphasizes the need for rural development and its impact on nearly three fourth populations describing several programmes under different five year plans especially the community development followed by strengthening the Panchayatiraj Institutions.

**Sing Satyaveer (2013)**, in his book “Rural Development in 21<sup>st</sup> Century” observed that rural development generally refers to the process of improving the quality of life and economic wellbeing of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated area. Change the global production networks and increased urbanization has changed the character of rural areas.

**Dass Arvind (2014)** “Panchayati Raj and Rural Development” the book is comprehensive study of Panchayat Raj concept, PRIs their formation and structure, function and role of the government in the development planning and budgeting etc.

## **III. OBJECTIVES:**

The main objectives of this seminar paper are-

- I. To explore the proper implementation of the MGNREGA scheme in the selected area.
- II. To investigate the hurdles in implementation of the MGNREGA scheme in the selected area.
- III. To give a suitable recommendations for proper implementation of the MGNREGA scheme in selected area.

#### **IV. METHODOLOGY:**

A case study method along with various methods i.e. historical, analytical, observation and descriptive have been used in this paper. For this study, the survey method was applied using structured questionnaires to collect the primary data. Further discussion with the respondents and employees of the Sadiya Block Development Office were also the primary sources. The secondary Data has been collected from the printed books, Journal, e-bulletins, magazines and newspaper etc. To explain the whole situation different tables have been used

##### **Significance of the study:**

It would not be an exaggeration to say that rural development in India is the true national development. Though, India ranks among the most industrialized countries in the world today, yet the rural dimension of its economy are towering significance. India has been continued to be a predominantly rural country. The majority of population i.e. 69 percent live in rural areas and 26 percent live below the poverty line while livelihood of 68 percent population is in agriculture and allied activities. They generally suffer from inadequate infrastructure facilities and technological advancement, indigence, illiteracy and poverty etc., but in India 36.5 percent population were poor and very poor and 7.32 percent unemployed, which is the major socio-economic problem in rural area. However, MGNREGA has been the mainstay for poverty alleviation in our vast rural areas. While standing as a testimony to the Government's commitment and concern for the cause of the rural poor, it attracted worldwide attention for the novelty and universal coverage. The MGNREGA has achieved its goal of highest percent of rural household to get full 100 days' work during the last financial year when the total number of rural unemployed and BPL families. It makes one set up and asks whether MGNREGA has really lined up to its full potential. There is an urgent need for enlarging the scope of MGNREGA.

The Panchayati Raj Institution (PRIs) has to play a crucial role in implementation of MGNREGA. Beside this, lack of awareness, inability of workers to submit written application, delayed payment of wage, non-maintenance of muster rolls and inferior quality of assets created under the programme are some of the issues that needs to be addressed to weed out corruption. Above all, these are some constraints in the way of implementation of the programme which have much more significance in successful implementation of the MGNREGA. However, effective people's participation, co-ordination of the government machineries, NGO's can fulfil the aims and objective of MGNREGA. To make an in-depth study on implementation of MGNREGA, the investigator selected Sadiya Subdivision situated in Tinsukia District of Assam for the period of 2016-17 and 2017-19. Obviously, the selected subdivision is located in a remote isolated area and heterogeneous population. Looking into the broad objectives of this anti-poverty programme a systematic analysis is required to understand the situation. Therefore, the proposed study is a humble attempt in this direction

##### **Sample analyse and Sample Size:**

The present study is a field study to analyse the socio-economic study of the MGNREGA on selected area that is Sadiya Sub-Division of Tinsukia District of Assam. The Tinsukia District consists of three Sub-Divisions i.e. Tinsukia Sub-Division, Magherita Sub-Division and Sadiya Sub-Division. Out of the Three Sub-Divisions Sadiya Sub-Division is considered as the historical region of Tinsukia District of Assam. It is located near the Arunachal Pradesh in the North-Eastern part of India. To conduct the study more smoothly one Block that is Sadiya Development Block has been selected.

#### **V. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE SADIYA DEVELOPMENT BLOCK**

The socio-economic profile of the Sadiya Development Block is explained below.

##### **5.1 Demographic Profile of Sadiya Sub-Division**

According to the national census 2011 the total population of Sadiya Sub-Division is 1,04,938 out of which 53912 (51.37 percent) are male and 51026 (48.63 percent) are female. There are 31315 (2.38 percent) population belong to the Schedule Caste out of which 16601 (53.01 percent) are male and 14714 (46.09 percent) are female. Schedule Tribes population is 99780 (7.06 percent) out of which male are 57234 (57.40 percent) and 42546 (42.60 percent) female. On the other hand there are 76,797 (73.18 percent) population belong to other community.

##### **5.2 Literacy**

As we all know that education plays a key role in The process of all-round development. But the rural people in Sadiya are not well educated. As per the 2011 census total literacy rate of Sadiya Sub-Division is 75.78 percent out of which 71.48 percent are male while 58.05 percent are female. The total illiterate of Sadiya Sub-Division is 35,688.

##### **5.3 Occupation**

Occupation is an important socio-economic factor which determines one's mode of living, thinking and behaviour etc. to a great extent. There for it is essential to know the occupation of the people. Agriculture is the

chief occupation for livelihood of the people of Sadiya Sub-Division. There are 89.09 percent population engaged in agriculture sector. Only a few populations engaged in business sector and service sector in Sadiya Sub-Division.

#### **5.4 Major crops**

The crop produced in Sadiya Sub-Division is mainly seasonal based. According to the climate the crops of various qualities are produced at different season of a year. However the irrigation facilities are quite insufficient in Sadiya Sub-Division therefore the cultivators are mostly dependent on natural weather and monsoon rain. The major crops of Sadiya Sub-Division are kharif and Rabi crops. The major Kharif crops are Sali, Ahu, Bihari and vegetable etc. On the other hand the major Rabi crops are Wheat, Potao and Oilseeds like mustard oil and Rabi vegetables etc.

### **VI. MGNREGA IN SADIYA SUB-DIVISION**

MGNREGA is being a crucial scheme in Sadiya Subdivision. MGNREGA has been very appreciably implemented in the Sadiya Sub-Division like any other place of India. According to the employees of the Sadiya Development Block the MGNREGA scheme was initiated in the year of 2008-09 covering the 11 Panchayats. This scheme has been mainly in road connection and infrastructural development. This Scheme has been very beneficial to the rural unemployed people. Numerous unemployed young men and women of Sadiya Sub-Division now have been able to get the opportunity of being absorbed in works. Through the absorptions of some people the under privileged families are directly or indirectly benefited to a great extent. Thousands and thousands of unemployed rural people basically women have got a tremendous chance to become economically uplifted as well as are enjoying economic empowerment at home as a whole. Through this scheme they also establish their participation in the government developmental programmes as stakeholders.

#### **Table: 6.1. Person Registered for MGNREGA**

The table No. 7.1 has revealed that there exists 11 Gaonpanchayat in Sadiya Sub-Division. The total population of Sadiya Sub-Division are 10, 4839. Out of the total population job card has been issued to the member are 46874 lakh where 27702 are male and 19172 are female. On the other hand there is 8730 job card holders belong to the STs Community, 1355 belong to the SCs community and 36789 belong to the other community.

#### **Table: 6.2. Year Wise Progress, works and Financial Progress under MGNREGA**

The table: 7.2 has shown that the approved labour budget for the 4 financial years has been increasing from financial year 2016-17 to 2017-18 but gradually it is decreasing. It has also shown that the amount allocated for the person days was increasing till to the financial year 2017-18 later decreased in the financial year 2019-20. It has also revealed that SCs, STs, Women and other community's person days was increasing till financial year 2018-19 but later decreased. Moreover it has also shown that the total household works and individual works observed an increasing trend from the financial year 2016-17 to 2019-20. Similar case has also observed with the participation of the differently abled worked person.

The table: 7.2 has also revealed that there are number of works had been undertaken which was increasing in the previous financial year from 2016-17 to 2018-19 later it is decreased in the financial year 2019-20. Among the several works rural road connection is the prime work which has been undertaken in the Sadiya Sub-Division. Same case has been observed regarding the funds realising in the different sectors. It has also shown that the funds released in the different sectors had been increasing in the previous year but later it has been observed with the declining figure.

### **VII. CONSTRAINTS OF MGNREGA:**

There are several constraints were found in the field study on the way of proper implementation of MGNREGA. The major constraints of the scheme have been discussed below.

#### **7.1 Lack of awareness**

The lack of awareness among the people specially the unskilled labour is a major hurdle in implementation of MGNREGA. It is ostensible that an unskilled labour is surely uneducated. Hence it is very challenging for them to acquire knowledge about the guideline of the MGNREGA and their legal entitlement.

#### **7.2 Fail to provide 100 days wage employment**

The main aim of MGNREGA Act is at enhancing the wellbeing of the livelihood security to the rural people and basic objective of the Act is to provide 100 days of guarantee wage employment to unemployed basically who are willing to do unskilled manual work. From the field study it was found that all selected beneficiaries of the Sadiya Sub-Division were not able to avail the 100 days of guarantee of wage employment under the

MGNREGA. They also reported that delay in issuing a job card, wage not provided according to the Act were common to them.

### **7.3 Delay in wage payment**

Delay in wage payment has been another important hurdle in proper implementation of MGNREGA. According to the guidelines of MGNREGA wage to be paid according to the price rate or daily rate. Disbursement of wages has to be done on weekly basis and not beyond a fortnight in any case. But the 100 percent of the selected beneficiaries reported that actually they were received the wage after one month.

### **7.4 Employment and work Register are not properly maintained**

As per the guideline of the MGNREGA Application Register, Job card Register, Employment Register and Work Register should be properly maintained. But it was found that the selected Block has not maintained it properly. As a result, details of the work such as number, date of sanction, date of completion of work, expenditure incurred, date of social audit were have not been found during the field study.

### **7.5 Lack of selection of suitable project**

MGNREGA guidelines specially mentioned about the creation of durable productive assets in the form of roads, improving rural infrastructure, drought proofing including a forestation and plantation, irrigation channel, including micro and minor irrigation works, renovation of traditional water bodies, land development, flood control and protection works and conservation of water bodies for harvesting etc. But in the field study it was found that reconstruction of connecting roads and digging of pond were the only works performed in the selected Area.

### **7.6 Poor quality of work:**

There is no proper execution of works. Hence, it is a matter of concern that throughout the GaonPanchayat, the approved works are not always publicly displayed. But it was revealed from the field study that there was no Gram Sabha meeting had been organized regarding the activities of MGNREGA during the study period. Even most of the beneficiaries were not aware about Gram Sabha meeting which reflect non-participation of the selected beneficiaries in decision making process. The beneficiaries used to work in any work assigned by the Secretary or Contractor. The nexus between secretary, engineers and contractor used to confine the work in paper only. Site account registers in respect of receipt and issue of materials to the work and temporary advance register in respect of advance availed for payment of wages had not been maintained MGNREGA guidelines, permit execution of road projects providing all weather connectivity in rural areas. However, during the field study it was found that road of the two selected villages remain kucha and incomplete and is not able to provide all weather access.

## **VIII. CONCLUSION**

From the above discussion it has been concluded that MGNREGA, which was introduced to give justice to the rural people has failed in meeting the desired needs. The several constraints in proper implementation of MGNREGA have been discussed above. Finance occupies the central position in any rural development programmes and the success of the programmes depends upon the viability of finance. Apparently, the government grant is the source of working of MGNREGA. According to the guideline of the MGNREGA, disbursement of wage has to be done on weekly basis but in reality the beneficiaries have to wait for a long period of time for payment of work done. Because the government has failed to release the amount sanctioned for MGNREGA. Thus it is observed that the basic objectives of MGNREGA aim at enhancing secure livelihood of the rural people by providing of 100 days of guarantee wage employment work to the unemployed, protecting the rural environment, empowerment of women decentralization and processes of transparency and accountability but in real practice the MGNREGA has faced several problems in proper implementation aspect. It fails to bring awareness of the rural people, lack of people participation, improper selection of beneficiaries, poor quality of works, Lack of selection of suitable project, no regular social audit are the various problems on the way of implementation of MGNREGA.

After all a complete participation is highly required in the Sadiya Sub-Division for rural development in terms of economic condition, health condition, and education scenario and employment opportunities and their livelihood is also standardized; poverty is reduced as well, like wise rural infrastructure is also developed. In such joint effort of these women of the groups there emerges their dependable income source in the respective families

## **IX. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Some recommendations for improvement of the working of MGNREGA have been prescribed below.

- I. The success of the MGNREGA depends upon its proper implantation. Much of the pitfalls or implementation can be overcome it through proper process and procedure that should put in place. Thus there should be continuous efforts towards creating adequate awareness on different provision of

MGNREGA among the people creating awareness is necessary not only to motivate the people to work under the scheme but also to encourage them to participate in its planning and implementation.

- II. The Government should streamline and regulate the process of release of fund as per norms and should undertake periodical review to ensure utilization of funds in compliance with the provisions of MGNREGA guidelines.
- III. The Panchayat need to take up steps to organize more awareness programmes to educate the beneficiaries about MGNREGA, timely issue of job card, provide work site facilities as per the provision of the scheme to uplift the condition of the people living in rural area.
- IV. The village Headmen need to play a major role in implementation of the MGNREGA. They have to involve in the planning, decision making and implementation of the scheme. It was found in the field study that the selected village headmen were not aware about the MGNREGA.
- V. Ensure regular meeting of Gram Sabah to address issues of planning, monitoring, grievance redressal and social audit of the scheme.

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The Hindu: English Daily  
The Assam Tribune: English Daily.  
The Sentinel: English Daily, Guwahati

#### Appendix

**Table: 7.1. Person Registered for MGNREGA**

Block Name	Sadiya Development Block
Total No. of GPs	11
Total No of Job Card issued( in lakh)	46874
Total No. Male Job Card( in lakh)	27702
Total No. of Female Job Card(in lakh)	19172
Total No. of STs Job Card(in lakh)	8730
Total No of SCs Job Card(in lakh)	1355
Total No. of Other Job Card(in lakh)	36789

**Table: 7.2 Year Wise Progress, works and Financial Progress under MGNREGA**

I Progress	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
Approved Labour Budget (in lakh)	151.62(96.43)	288.89(98.98)	340.79(78.5)	299.93(98.46)
Person days generated (in lakh)	76825	152486	165183	56495
SCs total Person days	1567	5428	4544	1623
STs total Person days	13508	38208	27547	11335
Women total person days	36925	68098	69908	24037
Others total person days	61750	108850	13309	243537
Total household work (in lakh)	21363	20215	19230	18642
Total individual worked(in lakh)	34775	33725	32009	29169

Differently abled person worked	03	04	03	01
II Works progress				
Total No of Works started	67	153	734	730
Number of on-going work	00	119	99	88
Number of completed work	67	34	635	642
III Financial Progress				
Total expenditure (%)	2.17	128.07	161.27	165.27
Completed	00	3.31	119.27	122.02
On-going	2.17	124.76	42.52	43.25

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