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THE ROLE OF MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME IN POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The Rural Development in India is one of the most important factors for the growth of the Indian economy. India is primarily an agriculture-based country. Agriculture contributes nearly one-fifth of the gross domestic product in India. In order to increase the growth of agriculture, the Government has planned several programs pertaining to Rural Development in India. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 was introduced by the Ministry of Rural Development, for improving the living conditions and its sustenance in the rural sector of India. National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) is a landmark legislation that has been made as it is a step towards the realization of wage employment as a right, providing a right to work and thus a right to life with dignity. It is also expected to enhance people's livelihood on a sustained basis, by developing the economic and social infrastructure in rural areas. The enactment of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) best reflects the Government of India's new resolve to strengthen the rural economy and livelihoods of the poor. MGNREGA aims to enhance livelihood security by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment annually to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing hundred days of wage-employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

In this study we examined the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme, Rural Development Schemes in India, Main features of Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, details of the job cards issued to households in India, details of the house hold demanded employment and employment provided in India, details of the person days working in India, details of the funds position in India, new initiatives, Conclusion and Reference.

KEYWORDS

MGNREGS, poverty alleviation.

INTRODUCTION

The Rural Development in India is one of the most important factors for the growth of the Indian economy. India is primarily an agriculture-based country. Agriculture contributes nearly one-fifth of the gross domestic product in India. In order to increase the growth of agriculture, the Government has planned several programs pertaining to Rural Development in India. The Ministry of Rural Development in India is the apex body for formulating policies, regulations and acts pertaining to the development of the rural sector. Agriculture, handicrafts, fisheries, poultry, and diary are the primary contributors to the rural business and economy.

The introduction of Bharat Nirman, a project set about by the Government of India in collaboration with the State Governments and the Panchayat Raj Institutions is a major step towards the improvement of the rural sector. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 was introduced by the Ministry of Rural Development, for improving the living conditions and its sustenance in the rural sector of India.

The 2011 Census estimates that 83.3 crore people, about 69 percent of the country's total population of 121 crore, continue to live in rural India. A major challenge thus arises is, how to feed India's growing population with rising incomes with the given land and water resources. The expansion of income opportunities in the farm sector and progressive absorption of people into nonagricultural activity have been identified as the most appropriate solutions to this challenge. For achieving rural development, the present government has been injecting resources at a massive scale to the rural and farm sector. Presently, seven major flagship programmes are being implemented to develop rural areas. They are: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) and Total Sanitation Campaign (TSP), Integrated Watershed Development Programme (IWDP), Pradhan Mantri Grameen Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) and rural electrification, including separation of agricultural feeders and Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Viduyutikaran Yojana (RGVY). All these programmes are essentially meant for creating gainful employment opportunities and to improve the quality of lives of rural masses. The present report attempts to study the developmental impacts of government policies on rural economy. The economic development reflects in the improvements in the economic well being of people at large. It indicates the increase in the purchasing power of the members of the society and the overall economic well-being of its people. The popular way of studying economic development is analysing the change and pace of change in real income/expenditure of people at large.

SOME OF THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES IN INDIA

- **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY):** This is a scheme launched and fully sponsored by the Central Government of India. The main objective of the scheme is to connect all the habitations with more than 500 individuals residing there, in the rural areas by the means of weatherproof paved roads.
- **Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY):** This was implemented as a total package with all the characteristics of self employment such as proper training, development of infrastructure, planning of activities, financial aid, credit from banks, organizing self help groups, and subsidies.
- **Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana (SGRY):** This scheme aims at increasing the food protection by the means of wage employment in the rural areas which are affected by the calamities after the appraisal of the state government and the appraisal is accepted by the Ministry of Agriculture.
- **Indira Awaas Yojana (Rural Housing):** This scheme puts emphasis on providing housing benefits all over the rural areas in the country.
- **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)** was launched on 25th December 2000 as a fully funded Centrally Sponsored Scheme to provide all weather road connectivity in rural areas of the country. The programme envisages connecting all habitations with a population of 500 persons and above in the plain areas and 250 persons and above in hill States, the tribal and the desert areas.
- **The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)** is a welfare programme being administered by the Ministry of Rural Development. This programme is being implemented in rural areas as well as urban areas. NSAP represents a significant step towards the fulfillment of the Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Constitution of India which enjoin upon the State to undertake within its means a number of welfare measures. These are intended to secure for the citizens adequate means of livelihood, raise the standard of living, improve public health, provide free and compulsory education for children etc. the Govt. of India launched NSAP as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme w.e.f 15th August 1995 towards fulfillment of these principles.

- **Council for Advancement of People's Action & Rural Technology (CAPART):** Recognising the need for an organisation that would coordinate and catalyse the development work of voluntary agencies in the country, particularly to ensure smooth flow of benefits to the underprivileged and socio-economically weaker sections of society, Government of India, in September, 1986 set up the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), a registered society under the aegis of the Department of Rural Development, by merging two autonomous bodies, namely, People's Action for Development of India (PADI) and Council for Advancement of Rural Technology (CAPART).

MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME (MNREGA)

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) is a landmark legislation that has been made as; it is a step towards the realization of wage employment as a right, providing a right to work and thus a right to life with dignity. It is also expected to enhance people's livelihood on a sustained basis, by developing the economic and social infrastructure in rural areas. Several studies have proved that this act has not only enabled generation of productive assets but has also led to higher food and income security for landless workers and other vulnerable sections of the rural poor, protecting environment, empowering rural women, reducing rural-urban migration and fostering social equity etc. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing hundred days of wage-employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

The enactment of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) best reflects the Government of India's new resolve to strengthen the rural economy and livelihoods of the poor. Implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development MGNREGA aims to enhance livelihood security by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment annually to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The most significant feature of MGNREGA lies in making the Government legally accountable for providing employment to those who ask. The act has the potential to go beyond just providing employment. By converging with related programs, the act can create durable assets and strengthen the livelihoods resource base of the poor.

MGNREGA has moved on to innovative initiatives like financial inclusion, social security provisioning for unorganized workers and identification of the poor. Given the unprecedented scale of the MGNREGA activities and vast potential for convergence, the program offers a big platform for multiplier effects beyond wage employment. However, scaling up of convergent action will largely depend on how the action points graduate from the pilot phase to mega efforts across states.

- The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA, also known as National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, NREGS) is Indian legislation enacted on August 25, 2005. The NREGA provides a legal guarantee for one hundred 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. The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD), Govt of India is monitoring the entire implementation of this scheme in association with state governments.
- This act was introduced 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 rural India. It attempts to bridge the gap between the rich and poor in the country. Roughly one-third of the stipulated work force must be women.
- Adult members of rural households submit their name, age and address with photo to the Gram Panchayat. The Gram panchayat registers households after making enquiry and issues a job card. The job card contains the details of adult member enrolled and his /her photo. Registered person can submit an application for work in writing (for at least fourteen days of continuous work) either to panchayat or to Programme Officer.
- The panchayat/programme officer will accept the valid application and issue dated receipt of application, letter providing work will be sent to the applicant and also displayed at panchayat office. The employment will be provided within a radius of 5 km: if it is above 5 km extra wage will be paid.

MAIN FEATURES OF RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME

THE FOCUS OF THE SCHEME SHALL BE ON THE FOLLOWING WORKS IN THEIR ORDER OF PRIORITY

- Water conservation and water harvesting.
- Drought proofing (including afforestation and tree plantation).
- Irrigation canals including micro and minor irrigation works.
- Provision of irrigation facility to land owned by households belonging to the scheduled Castes/Schedule Tribes or to land of beneficiaries of land reforms or that of the beneficiaries under the IAH of Govt. of India.
- Renovation of traditional water bodies including desilting of tanks.
- Land Development.
- Flood control and protection works including drainage in water logged areas.
- Rural connectivity to provide all weather access and
- Any other work which may be notified by the Central Government in consultation with the State government.

JOB CARD ISSUED IN MGNREGA

The Job Card is the key document recording workers' entitlements under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA. The implementing agency is issued the Job Card to the registered household's as legal instrument for applying for work, which also ensures transparency and protects workers against fraud.

DETAILS OF THE JOB CARDS ISSUED TO HOUSE HOLDS IN INDIA

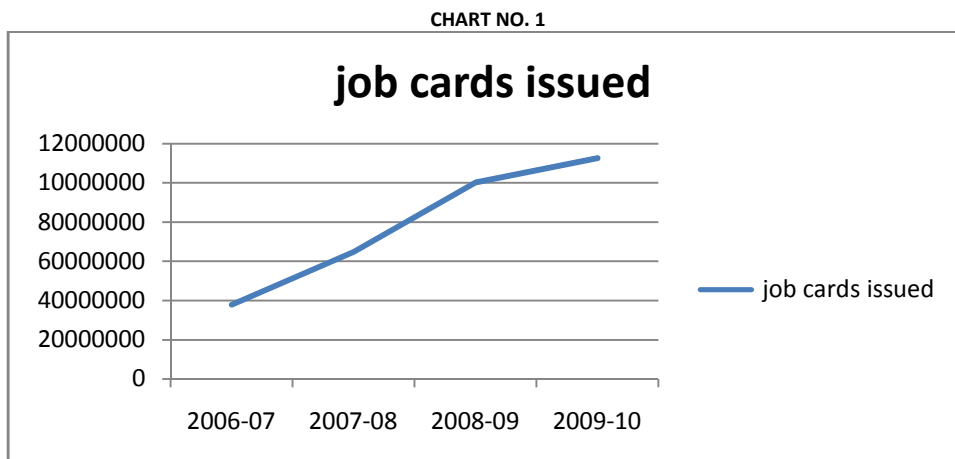
TABLE NO. 1

years	Cumulative No. of HH issued job cards	% age
2006-07	37850390	-
2007-08	64740595	71%
2008-09	100145950	54.6%
2009-10	112550610	12.3%
2010-11	119824438	6.4%
TOTAL	435111983	

Source: MGNREGA website

It is observed from the above table that the job cards was issued to the house hold members during the study period 43.5 crore. Out of which more than 71% of the job cards were issued in the year 2007-08 compare to the previous year. At the same time it was only 6.4% increased in the year 2010-11 while compare to 2009-10. However, the trend of the issuance of job cards to the house hold members has been increased every year.

DETAILS OF THE JOB CARDS ISSUED TO HOUSEHOLDS IN INDIA



HOUSE HOLD DEMANDED EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT PROVIDED IN MGNREGA

As per the demand for employment by the people of rural areas to carry out the developmental works of the rural areas the authorities concerned has provided the employment people in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme. The details of the household demand and employment provided to the workers are given below.

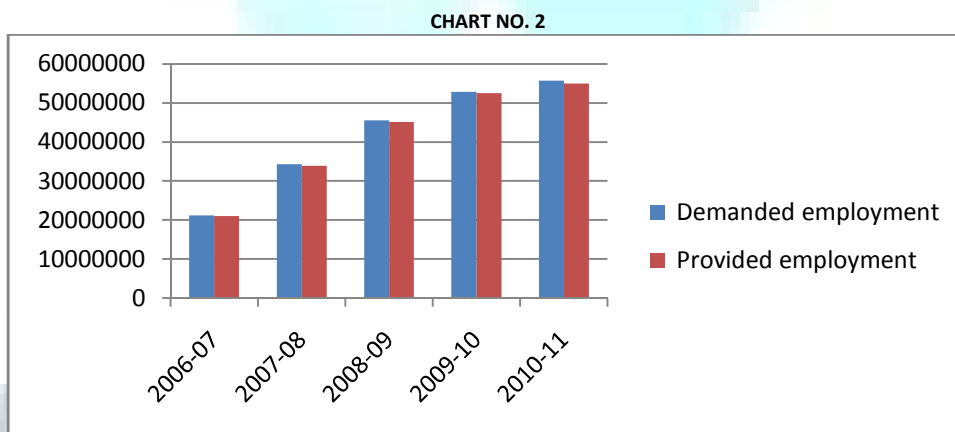
TABLE NO. 2

years	No. of households who have demanded employment	% age	No. of households provided employment	% age
2006-07	21188894		21016099	-
2007-08	34326563	62%	33909132	61.3%
2008-09	45518907	32%	45115358	33%
2009-10	52864608	16%	52530453	26.4%
2010-11	55763244	5%	54954225	4.6%
TOTAL	209662216		207525267	

Source: MGNREGA website

It is understood from the table that the total number of house hold demanded the employment were 20.96 crore from 2006-07 to 2010-11 and employment provided to the workers were 20.75 crore during the study period. It is observed that the government has not provided employment corresponding to the demand employment.

DETAILS OF THE HOUSE HOLD DEMANDED EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT PROVIDED IN INDIA



PERSON DAYS WORKING UNDER MGNREGA IN INDIA

Under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme, the govt. of India has provided the 100 days work to the demanded people in various works such as water conservation and water harvesting, drought proofing (including afforestation and tree plantation, irrigation canals including micro and minor irrigation works etc. The details of the person days working is given below.

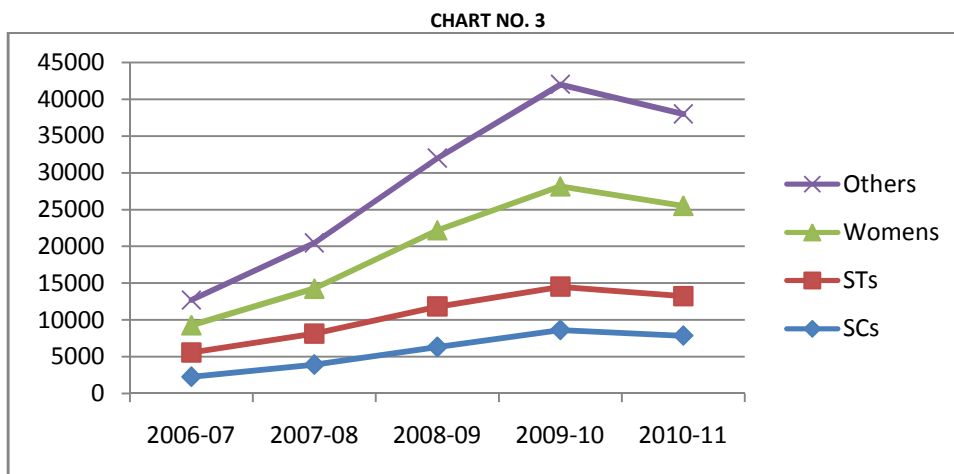
TABLE NO. 3

YEAR	Person days in Lakhs					% age
	SCs	STs	Women	Others	Total	
2006-07	2295.23	3298.73	3679.01	3456.59	9050.54	
2007-08	3942.34	4205.6	6109.1	6219.98	14367.95	58.7
2008-09	6336.18	5501.64	10357.32	9795.06	21632.86	50.6
2009-10	8644.83	5874.39	13640.51	13840.35	28359.57	31
2010-11	7875.65	5361.8	12274.23	12477.81	25715.25	-9.1
TOTAL	29094.23	24242.16	46060.17	45789.79	99126.17	

Source: MGNREGA website

The table No. 3 shows that the total number of Scheduled Caste members working in days 29 lakhs followed by Scheduled Tribe were 24.24 lakhs. The Women workers were 46 lakhs and other workers were 45.78 Lakhs among all categories during the study period under this scheme. The total person working days were 99.12 lakhs during the period from 2006-07 to 2010-11. It is observed that from 2006-07 to 2009-10 the working days were gradually increased but during the year 2010-11 it was declined.

PERSON DAYS WORKING UNDER MGNREGA IN INDIA



FUNDS POSITION OF MGNREGA IN INDIA

The Govt. of India has sanctioned required funds for implementing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme to carry out work of water conservation and water harvesting, drought proofing (including afforestation and tree plantation, irrigation canals including micro and minor irrigation works etc. by the authorities concerned through workers. The funds position available and funds released by the Govt. of India and expenditure incurred for the works carried out by the workers is given below.

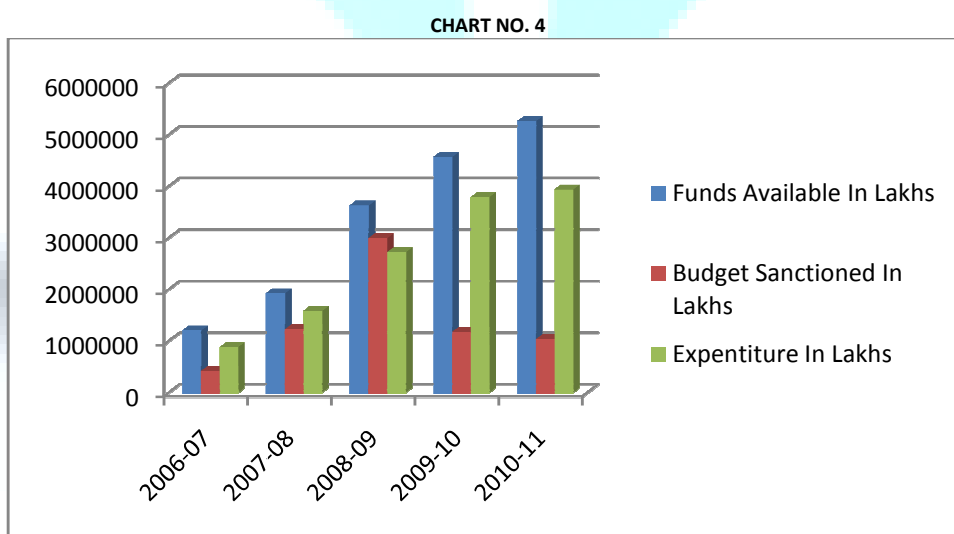
TABLE NO. 4

YEAR	Funds Position					
	Funds Available In Lakhs	% age	Central Release (Sanctioned) In Lakhs	% age	Expenditure In Lakhs	% age
2006-07	1207362.72		418432.42		882335.55	
2007-08	1927877.71	59.6	1229592.4	193.8	1585844.15	79.7
2008-09	3630045.57	88.3	2994544.33	143.5	2725068.7	71.8
2009-10	4568246.91	25.8	1178076.46	-3.9	3790977.95	39.1
2010-11	5264889.48	15.2	1038287.82	-8.8	3937727.03	3.8
TOTAL	16598422.39		6858933.43		12921953	

Source: MGNREGA website

It is analysed from the above table that the available funds in this scheme was of Rs. 1.66 crore out of which the government has sanctioned only Rs. 68.58 lakhs where as the expenditure has showed of Rs. 1.29 crore. The expenditure also tremendously increased every year from 2006-07 to 2010-11. As such the government should sanction more funds at par with expenditure incurred in order avoid pending amount to be released to the workers.

DETAILS OF THE FUNDS POSITION OF MGNREGA IN INDIA



WORK POSITION OF MGNREGA IN INDIA

The Govt. of India has engaged worker under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme in various works such as Water conservation and water harvesting, Drought proofing (including afforestation and tree plantation, Irrigation canals including micro and minor irrigation works etc. The details of the various works ongoing and works completed under this scheme are given below.

TABLE NO. 5

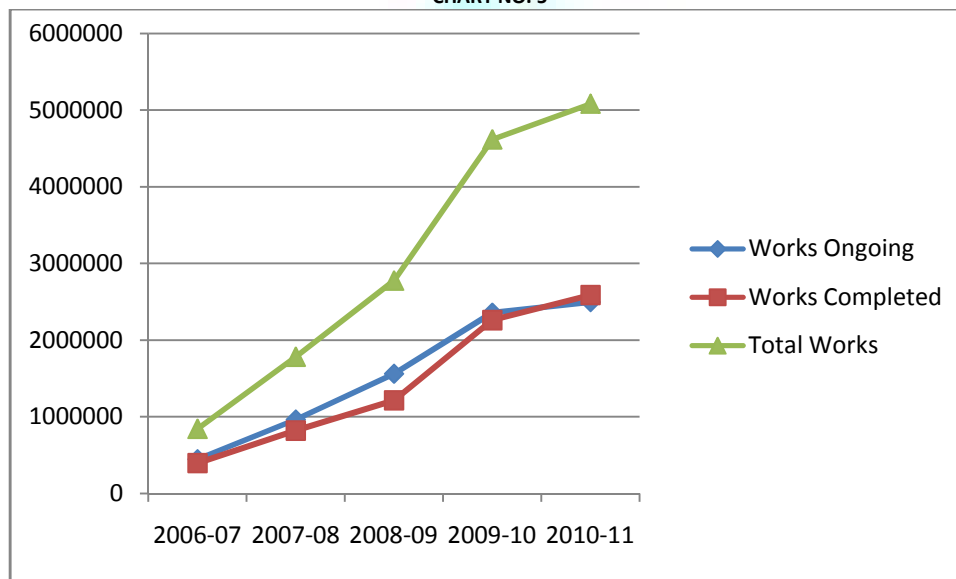
YEAR	Work Position			
	Works Ongoing	Works Completed	Total Works	% age
2006-07	444806	396782	841588	
2007-08	961280	820168	1781448	111.6
2008-09	1560485	1214139	2774624	55.7
2009-10	2357480	2259343	4616823	66.4
2010-11	2496763	2585824	5082587	10
TOTAL	7820814	7276256	15097070	

Source: MGNREGA website

The above said table shows the details of the work position of this scheme. The total ongoing works under this scheme was 78.2 Lakhs while work completed was 72.76 lakhs during the year 2006-07 to 2010-11. The total works were undertaken from ongoing work and works completed was 1.50 crore under the various works during the study periods.

WORK POSITION OF MGNREGA IN INDIA

CHART NO. 5



NEW INITIATIVE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

USE OF ICT AND BIOMETRIC PROJECT

MGNREGA workers are largely illiterate, poor and at the bottom of the social hierarchy. They cannot articulate their demands 'formally' in writing. The absence of written application for employment, non-issuance of dated receipts, non-payment of unemployment allowances or compensation for delay in wages are not only on account of administrative lapses in record keeping, but reflect the social undercurrents and dynamics that prevent workers from exercising their rights in demanding work from the Gram Panchayat in an equitable manner.

The large scale of operations, the limitations of outreach of various services and the need to handle large volumes of information in a transparent manner necessitates the use of ICT in program delivery.

The use of ICT devices and biometrics for authentication will bring in transparency and efficiency. Geared towards real time capture of the processes involved in MGNREGS such as registration, demand of work, issue of dated receipt, allocation of work, attendance at worksite with GPS coordinates, measurement of work, wage payments, etc. it would be instrumental in ensuring transparency and accountability, strengthening MIS reporting and tracking and reducing delays in measurement and payments.

CONCLUSION

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme is playing vital role in alleviation of Poverty in India by providing employment in rural people and best reflects the Government of India's new resolve to strengthen the rural economy and livelihoods of the poor. Implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development MGNREGA aims to enhance livelihood security by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment annually to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The most significant feature of MGNREGA lies in making the Government legally accountable for providing employment to those who ask for work.

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