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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

OBJECTIVES

HYPOTHESES

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RESULTS & DISCUSSION

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MGNREGA: ITS DRAWBACKS IN J&K 2010

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ABSTRACT

Mahatma Gandhi national rural employment guarantee act was passed with a view to provide hundred days of guaranteed wage employment to the venerable sections of the society in order to raise the living standard of these sections of society. Realization of the vulnerability of these sections particularly in rural areas as 72% of population living in rural areas the Government of India passed an Act known as Mahatma Gandhi Rural employment Act in 2005 notified by Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India on 7th September 2005. Based on the fact that MGNREGA can do wonders in order to raise the living standard of rural India a study was carried out In order to find the drawbacks which the act faces in rural areas in Jammu and Kashmir. The basic objective of the study is to find the drawbacks of MGNREGA in J&K. The study is carried out by the utilization of both primary (observational & telephonic interview) and secondary data. Finally the paper provides some suggestions whom if implied will definitely help in removing the drawbacks which will help in realizing the mission for which the act was passed.

KEYWORDS

Drawbacks, J&K, Mgnrega, Vulnerability.

INTRODUCTION

Loyal and efficient work in a great cause, even though it may not be immediately recognized ultimately bears fruits".

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru

Empowerment and upliftment of human population is the basic foundation stone to any economy. Indian population which is predominantly rural population accounts to 72.18% according to 2001 census lags far behind from their counterparts in urban India accounts to 27.82% in many areas such as purchasing power, infrastructure, connectivity, employment etc, prone to seasonal fluctuations because rural economy is predominantly agricultural economy. So a need was felt to improve the living condition of the rural India. In order to address this policy was conceptualized and subsequently formulated which came to be known as National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) 2005 notified by Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India on 7th September 2005. This law which gives a legal guarantee of at least 100 days of wage employment to rural household whose adult members volunteers to do unskilled and manual work in a financial year. Apart from providing the 100 days guaranteed employment the act is having excellent provisions for the planning, social audit, grievance redressal mechanism, payment of wages if implemented suo motto would bear excellent results.

MGNREGA has given the largest economic resources in our country, some amount of work and plenty of dignity. In state after state workers have testified that guaranteed employment and enabled them to fight many battles including a system of oppression where they have no choice but acquiesce to forced labour indebtedness & the indignity of having to beg for the survival. The unemployed are becoming workers and workers are raising issues of citizenship.

Jammu and Kashmir is the northern most hilly state of India situated between 32.15 degree & 37.05 degree North latitude & 72.35 degree & 83.20 degree east longitude. J&K state is the 11th largest having a geographical area of 101387* Sq. Kms. accounting to 3.20% of the total area of India. It is the 19th most populous state having a population of about 101.44 lakh souls (2001 census) of which 75.19% residing in rural areas in comparison to 102861.10 lakh total population & 72.18% rural population of India. The state is divided into three distinct regions based on the geography of the state and two administrative regions namely Kashmir division which includes Ladakh also and Jammu division.

The state is having two capital's summer capital Srinagar and winter capital Jammu. The climate of J&K exerts a profound influence on the inhabitants of any region. The social, cultural, economic and other aspects of life are directly and indirectly governed by climate. The climate ranges from burning & scorching heat of plains of Jammu to snow capped heights of Gulmarg (Kashmir) & the mud peaks of the mount Godwin Austin (Ladakh), 21265 feet above sea level, the 2nd highest in the world. From Alpine (Ladakh region) the extremely variants of climate in Jammu & Kashmir are due to its location & topography. Broadly the state of J&K comprises three distinct regions cold arid desert areas of Ladakh, temperate Kashmir valley & the humid subtropical region of Jammu. For the climate of Kashmir Lawrence's quotation stands out "every hundred feet of elevation brings some new phase of climate & the vegetation, and in a short side of thirty miles one can pass from over powering heat to climate delightfully cold".

J&K economy is a high cost mountain economy & has a number of characteristics that pose special development challenges. J&K possess numero uno position in Saffron production. The state is also largest producer of Apple, Walnut, Almond & many other dry & fresh fruits. It is also a major exporter of superior quality carpets wooden art; embroider clothes & many other valuable crafts. The state is especially vulnerable to external events, natural disasters that cause high volatility in state domestic product and it suffers from limited capacity in the public and private sectors, remoteness & isolation, limited capacity, income volatility, access to external capacity, limited diversification, susceptibility to natural disasters and environmental change, law & order and above all terrorism are the characteristics that define the special development challenge and vulnerability that J&K faces. As the number of educated youth is increasing in the state, the avenues for employment generation have not increased proportionately. High incidence of unemployment among the youth & the educated has emerged as a concern in the state.

J&K states geographical study reveals that the state's most of the population lives in hilly terrains which pose special threats to the development of the state. According to 2007 BPL census of the state conducted by Directorate of Economics & Statistics the total population falling under BPL category is 21.63% which includes 26.14% rural population & 7.96% urban population shown under table no 1. :-

TABLE NO. 1

	Estimated no. of persons (in lakhs)	BPL Population (in percentage)
Rural	22.00	26.14
Urban	02.21	07.96
Combined	29.21	21.63

Source: BPL survey 2007, Directorate of economics & statistics, J&K Government

NREGA IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Because of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir conferred upon by the constitution under Article 370, it was imperative on the part of J&K Government to come up with a scheme by which various activities were to be addressed besides evolving a workable framework in order to make dent in implementation of the scheme and to achieve underlying goals and objectives in conformity with the legally non negotiated parameters laid down in Schedule 1 & 2 of Act.

The state Government accordingly prepared a scheme known as Jammu & Kashmir National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (JKNREGS) which was notified after the approval from the state cabinet by virtue of Government order No; 99-RD of 2007 Dated: 13-03-2007.

The scheme encompassed all the provisions of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and because of the lagging economic stability of the state due to the prevailing conditions of terrorism, law & order problems, state government take the matter simultaneously with Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India for extension of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 to J&K state to ensure effective implementation of the scheme. After concerted efforts and follow ups NREGA 2005 was extended to Jammu and Kashmir in May 2007. The scheme was launched in Jammu & Kashmir in February 2006 initially in 3 Districts namely Poonch, Doda and Kupwara under Phase 1, subsequently during 2007-08, two more District viz Jammu and Anantnag under phase 2 and later it was notified for the extension in the remaining Districts with effect from April 2008 under phase 3.

OPERATIONAL BOTTLENECKS

1. POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Jammu & Kashmir is the strategically most important because the state is bounded from all sides with international borders whether it may be Pakistan, China or Afghanistan all nations wanting to show cause there impact on policies adopted by the state to overcome these hurdles. The state is gifted with abundant water resources, but resources tend to be useless because of Indus Water Treaty signed between India and Pakistan which results in huge deficit in energy requirement of the state. MGNREGA which allows only certain works which restricts its scope of operation. NREGA workers should be utilized in the sector of energy development. Any government of Jammu and Kashmir at the time of elections raises the issue of employment but when the time for execution comes all turns their backs. The state is worst in employment generation as the number of unemployed youth has reaches to an alarming figure of 5 lakhs. The central government which spends about 13% of its budgetary provisions on Jammu & Kashmir should also focus on policies which not only provide employment but should also focuses on the development while as keeping the accountability and transparency as the prima facie for the policies. State is also passing through a phase of worst hit terrorism from the last two decades which is from militants and the government sponsored terrorism. The implementation is thus not fully in operation or implemented as we are hearing on daily basis regarding problems of law and order.

2. NON EXISTANT PANCHAYAT

TABLE NO 2

Total number of Districts	Total number of Panchayats	Functional Panchayats	Percentage of functional Panchayats
22	4136	1563	37.80%

Source: Government of J&K

Panchayat Raj institutions are the primary principle institutions for the planning and implementation of the scheme under National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. They are the implementing Agency and also 50% of the works in terms of cost will be allotted to Gram Panchayats. Thus if about 50% of the works are permissible to Gram Panchayat we can easily conclude what could be the position of NREGA in Jammu and Kashmir where out of total 4136 Panchayat raj institutions only 1563 Panchayats are existent and that too in only one region, while as rest of the two regions (Kashmir & Ladakh) these primary institutions are non-existent shown in table no 2 as per the data used for i.e., primary and secondary for a long. The existence of these units do play a vital role in the development of rural areas because Panchayat raj institutions are the primary implementing agency of NREGA then how we can expect the proper implementation of Act in this state. At present total NREGA in the state is dancing in the hands of bureaucracy and so called separatists as only 37.80% Panchayat raj institutions are existent.

3. SOCIAL AUDIT

Social audit is the auditing of the works done by an auditor or by gram Panchayat, but because of the limited existence of Gram Panchayats this provision is not implemented properly or if implemented lacks the transparency. Also the centre Government has amended the Social Audit provision on Dec. 31, 2008 which empowers the Panchayats to conduct its own Audit, so the concept of external audit was removed in order to give the room for corruption. By the analysis of the data obtained from the official website of the MGNREGA shown in table no 3, we can easily say that in as much of 1563 Panchayats only 498 GPs have done the social audit which accounts to the dismal percentage 31.87% which points out towards lack of transparency of the scheme

SOCIAL AUDIT REPORT

TABLE NO 3: STATE NAME: JAMMU AND KASHMIR

S.No.	District name	Total GP	No. of Panchayat Covered	No. of Social Audit	Issue Raised and action taken	Verification of Documents	Greivence Submitted and action taken	Minutes of meeting
1	ANANTNAG	293	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	BADGAM	283	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	BANDIPORA	115	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	BARAMULLA	365	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	DODA	232	232	262	232	0	0	232
6	GANDERWAL	104	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	JAMMU	297	51	51	0	0	0	0
8	KARGIL	95	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	KATHUA	244	32	32	0	0	0	0
10	KISHTWAR	134	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	KULGAM	162	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	KUPWARA	359	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	LEH (LADAKH)	93	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	POONCH	191	47	44	0	0	0	0
15	PULWAMA	186	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	RAJOURI	296	51	51	0	0	0	0
17	RAMBAN	124	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	REASI	147	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	SAMBA	99	85	85	2	0	0	0
20	SHOPIAN	103	0	0	0	0	0	0
21	SRINAGAR	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
22	UDHAMPUR	204	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		4136	498	525	234	0	0	232

Sources: www.nrega.nic.in

4. SHIFTING OF FOCUS FROM LABOUR INTENSIVE TO MATERIAL INTENSIVE PROJECTS:

The basic aim of MGNREGA was to generate as much as possible labour days both in lean and non-lean seasons so that the seasonal impact on the earning could be minimized. But this provision was also amended by a notification on Nov11, 2009 giving room to material intensive projects by the consequence of this the labour days will get decreased and also gave a room & eroded the powers granted to Panchayats under the Act and allowed material contractors to get a foot in the door and also opened the door of corruption.

5. WAGES

Living in the current inflationary situation to meet both ends meat has become so difficult even for most of the middle class individuals. So by fixing wages are comparatively lower than the prevailing market rates is also loophole of the Act. MGNREGA which gives 100 days of guaranteed employment is not only violating the Minimum Wages Act came up with a notification issued on Jan1,2009 has bought out the unbridled discretionary powers conferred on the Center by Sec6(1) of the act to fix wages lower than minimum wages. As per available data available from the primary data collected and also from the Ministry of Employment Labour, Government of India in Jammu and Kashmir State notified minimum wages are Rs110 (100 +10) in which 100 stands for the minimum wages and 10 is state contribution for MGNREGA workers, but if we look on political stability and geographical condition still a worker has to confine with hundred ten rupees wage. It is unjustified when other persons can earn more than doing unorganized/ agricultural labour then why to turn out to MGNREGA.

6. ENGAGEMENT OF INADEQUATE SUPPORTING STAFF FOR MIS AS WELL AS IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHEME:

Jammu and Kashmir Government at the time of launching of the scheme, conceptualized and imperative that instead of providing separate staff for implementation decided to launch the scheme with existing available staff with rural development department although if they would have hired professional staff on that would have not only removed the time lag in the planning but also would have helped in proper implementation and evaluation of the scheme. Another benefit for the state government would have been that it would not have to bear the expenses for the salaries as 75% administrative costs are borne by the central government. Non engagement of staff acts as a double edged sword for MGNREGA.

7. GRIEVANCE MANAGEMENT

Grievances of the labourers working under MGNREGA or the job card holders were to resolved/solved by an ombudsman but the powers of the ombudsman are so that he cannot pass any order like an RTI counterpart. So the ombudsman should be provided with such powers so that he can actually act a person that will be there for the cause of workers. As far as Jammu & Kashmir is concerned as per primary data there is not any person appointed to actually work as ombudsman.

SUGGESTIONS

1. The political system, law and order, effective implementation of article 370 should be prima focus for the success of MGNREGA because unless and until situation of doing work is not conducive, how can we expect the effective planning and efficient implementation of the Act, So the first suggestion is solve the problem of uncertainty and law & order in the state.

2. As the state is strategically located having international influences, the relations with our neighbors should be smoothened so as to create an environment for a better life.
3. The policy should not be homogenized policy for the whole nation, rather it should be formulated keeping in mind the geographical conditions, climate, inflation, purchasing power so that a sense of equality can be arisen among the citizens.
4. Although some districts have Panchayats while as most of the districts are without Panchayats, so Panchayat elections should be held as early as possible.
5. Wherever the Panchayat raj institutions are functional the social audit is not held in all of the GPs, so social audit should be held strictly according to the laid down provisions as it may reduce the delicacy and enhance transparency.
6. The act should be provided with adequate staff as provided in other states so that effective and efficient planning and implementation can be achieved.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the data both primary and secondary it can be concluded that MGNREGA is still in a distant dream of achieving for what it was meant with special reference to that of J&K and that too with respect to 2010. The scheme is flooded a lot of operational loopholes from planning to the implementation of the act.

*Excluding area under illegal occupation of Pakistan and China

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