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HYPOTHESES

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RESULTS & DISCUSSION

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SOCIO ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF PARTICIPATION IN MGNREGA: A STUDY IN BANKURA DISTRICT OF RURAL WEST BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

The initial 200 districts chosen for implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) were the most backward districts of this country. Bankura district in West Bengal was selected at its first phase. Our study tries to review the current status of implementation of MG-NREGA in Bankura district, West Bengal and to identify the emerging strengths and weaknesses for wider dialogue for improvements. 200 households have been chosen from two backward and demographically diversified blocks on stratified random sampling basis at its different stages. The respondents have been asked through open ended questionnaire on several aspects of MG-NREGA. The current literature has identified low awareness of the beneficiaries as well as some institutional gaps. Our study also observes some irregularities in the implementation procedure and the lack of awareness about the rights. Still the beneficiaries believe that if effectively implemented, NREGA will be a more effective instrument for reducing poverty. We have also tried to find out the determinants of participation of the households in MGNREGA in the study area.

JEL CODE

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KEYWORDS

NREGA, Implementation, Awareness, Opinion, Rural, Employment.

1. INTRODUCTION

India has more than three decades of experience in implementing different Employment Generation Programmes. These programmes have their origin during the Great Depression days when western countries used these as counter cyclical policy instruments. Several countries of the developing world have also used Public Work Programmes to deal with droughts and famines. Over time these schemes have evolved into employment creation and poverty alleviation programmes. These programmes have been used and advocated for alleviating both chronic and transient poverty in the South Asian context for a long time (Hirway, Saluja and Yadav, 2008). In India, NREGA came into force in 200 districts on 2 February 2006 and was then extended to an additional 130 districts in the financial year 2007-08. Before NREGA, time to time, different wage employment programmes were introduced in the country. The NREGA ranks first among the most powerful initiatives ever undertaken for transformation of rural livelihoods in India (Ghosh, 2009). In many ways the NREGA is a replication of earlier schemes with a legal guarantee. The most critical difference now is that people's entitlement, by law, the employment is mandated through NREGA. While other programmes are allocation-based, NREGA is demand-driven (Dreze, 2008).

The Act has been universalized w.e.f. 1st April 2008 and now covers the entire country. The programme has been renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) since October 2009 (Datta and Sharma 2010). It became operational in West Bengal from February 2006. In the first phase NREGA was implemented in 10 districts (South 24 Parganas, Bankura, Birbhum, Dakhin and Uttar Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Maldah, Murshidabad, Paschim Midnapur and Purulia) followed by another 7 districts in the second phase (North 24 Parganas, Burdwan, Coochbihar, Darjelling, Hooghly, Puaba Midnapur, and Nadia) from 1st April 2007 and one more district in third phase from 1st April 2008 (at Howrah).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Recent literatures observe the need as well as problems of implementation of NREGA through field investigation in different areas. Since its inception, NREGA has a good impact in many respects in rural India (Pankaj and Thanka 2010). Patnaik (2005) identifies the need for providing employment guarantee but Bhatia and Dreeze (2006) observes the low awareness of the beneficiaries about the demand driven job. They have also identified the institutional gap as a major stumbling block in the implementation of NREGA. Chathukulam -and Gireesan (2006) observe a range of problems and irregularities emerged in relation to wage payments. Shah (2007) has identified few other implementation problems in worksite facilities, productive assets, social audit etc. De and Dasgupta (2009) observes poor governance in the implementation of NREGA in rural West Bengal. The study reveals that despite the fact that all the 18 districts in the state have been covered under the NREGA, West Bengal clearly seems to lag behind other states in terms of actual job provision or the average number of days provided with job per family. According to Mukherjee and Ghosh (2009), while Madhya Pradesh (MP) has provided 9.96 per cent of the total job card holders with 100 days of employment and Rajasthan has provided 10.33 per cent, West Bengal has provided a meager 0.24 per cent with 100 days employment. De and Jana (2011) attempts to rank all the blocks of West Bengal on the basis of some performance indicators through Estimated Combined PCA (Principal Component Analysis) Index. The result shows the performance of Bankura district at Block level NREGA implementation is better compared to other districts. On this backdrop, we have chosen Bankura district as our survey area, a backward district of rural West Bengal (WBHDR, 2004), to observe different aspects of the implementation of NREGA in the light of field investigation.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The present study on evaluation of the NREGA Scheme is intended to assess the impact of the scheme on the targeted beneficiaries. The basic objectives of the study are:

1. To review the current status of implementation of NREGA in Bankura district, West Bengal and
2. To identify the socio economic determinants of participation in NREGA with the emerging strengths and weaknesses for wider dialogue for improvements

The initial 200 districts chosen for implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) were the most backward districts of this country and Bankura district in West Bengal was selected for the implementation of such programme at its first phase. Widespread poverty is a major feature of this district. The socio economic indicators are generally below the state average. The West Bengal Human Development Report (2004) ranked Bankura district in the 11th position out of 18 districts. The report identified that the overall literacy rate of Bankura district was 63.80 which was lower than the state average of 68.20; the percentage of SC and ST population to the total population were 31.87 and 11.06 which were higher than the state average of 23.02 and 5.50; the percentage of BPL families was 42.48 revealed the high incidence of poverty. The infant mortality rate (IMR) was 64.90, much higher than the state average 53; the percentage of agricultural labourers in the total rural working population is 37.1, higher than the state average of 33 indicating the large-scale landlessness combined with lack of effective employment opportunities in the non-agricultural sector. The result is lower incomes for a large section of the rural population contributing towards the backwardness of these blocks apart from agro-climatic and physiographic conditions.

In administrative perspective, Bankura district consists of 22 blocks. We have chosen two backward blocks for our survey, Sonamukhi and Chatna due to their diversified demographic composition and the difference in implementation status. The participation is relatively better in Chhatna block compared to Sonamukhi block as revealed in table -1. For collection of data from the sample households, a well structured questionnaire was canvassed. 200 respondents were asked in total selected through stratified random sampling. The stratification was made to select twenty villages/ gram samsads from four GPs according to their demographic and economic profile and the 100 households were chosen randomly from each block. Using a detailed and structured questionnaire, the survey was carried out in second and third quarter of 2011-12 fiscal year. The schedule primarily comprised of closed questions though a few open ended questions also existed to record the opinions and suggestions of the people. The topics covered in the questionnaire are summarized as follows: general information about the socio economic characteristics of household (especially about the head of the household). The other topics are household income and expenditure profiles; annual employment days including NREGA days, own rural employment days, daily wage base days, other type of employment days etc. This data was collected from four gram panchayats (GPs) of two blocks; Chatna-1 and Shusunia GP from Chatna block, Hamirhati and Kochdih GP from Sonamukhi block. We have used regression analysis to find the determinants of participation of the households in NREGA schemes. The household characteristics will be discussed in the following section.

Table-1: NREGA Employment Status of Bankura District in Fiscal Year 2011-12

Sl no.	Block	Cum. No of HH provided employment	Average person days generated per HH	Proportion of women in total cumulative persondays generated	Proportion of SC in total cumulative persondays generated	Proportion of ST in total cumulative persondays generated	Proportion of HH completed 100 days work
1	Chhatna	13578	32.70	0.45	0.51	0.29	0.05
2	Sonamukhi	19512	22.47	0.36	0.63	0.08	0.01
Total		326220	30.48	0.40	0.51	0.15	0.04

Source: Authors' Calculation from the official website www.nrega.nic.in

4. HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SURVEYED AREA

This section deals with household details such as their socio-economic background. A priori information on the socio-economic characteristics of the study area are analyzed from the data as it is found in the field survey for a better understanding of the nature of the population. It is necessary to have an idea about the caste wise, religion wise and marital status wise composition of the respondents; their level of indebtedness and assets; their occupational pattern, annual employment days and average expenditure patterns etc. The descriptive statistics of some selected parameters have been calculated for a better understanding of the household profile. General information of household, especially about the head of the household reveals that the ages of the heads of the surveyed households ranged from 25 to 80 years with a mean 45.42 and 10.18 standard deviation. The average education level (year of schooling) of the head of the surveyed households is 2.58 with 3.44 standard deviation. It ranged from illiteracy to higher secondary level (i.e. from 0 to 12). A comprehensive picture will be obtained from the following tables.

Caste, Religion and Marital Status Wise Composition of the Respondents

According to Census, 2001, the percentage of SC and ST population in Bankura district were 31.87% and 11.06%. Table-2 gives the breakup of our respondents from the surveyed area in different social groups such as SC, ST, OBC, Minority and General category beneficiaries. The data has been gathered from 200 households of which SC communities are of 94 (47 percent), the ST communities are 43 (21.5 percent). The share of OBC, Minority and General are 22 (11 percent), 17 (8.5 percent) and 24 (12 percent). The household survey also revealed that out of 200 respondents 160 (80 percent overall) belonged to the Hindu community, only 10 percent Muslim respondents were found and respondent from 'others' was also 10 percent as a whole. We also assessed the marital status of the heads of the respondent households and the available options included: single, married, divorced, separated, and widowed. Results indicate that most of the heads (90 percent) of the surveyed households were married; about 3.5 percent of them noted that they were single and 6.5 percent were found as widowed.

TABLE-2: CASTE, RELIGION AND MARITAL STATUS WISE DECOMPOSITION OF THE RESPONDENTS

		No of respondent Households	Percent of total respondent Households
Caste	SC	94	47
	ST	43	21.5
	OBC	22	11
	Minority	17	8.5
	General	24	12
	Total	200	100
Religion	Hindu	160	80
	Muslim	20	10
	Others	20	10
	Total	200	100
Marital Status	Married	180	90
	Unmarried	7	3.5
	Widow	13	6.5
	Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey

Ownership of Different Assets, Level of Indebtedness and Beneficiaries of the Government Schemes

We have gathered data on the surveyed households' ownership of several purchased items including TV, radio, bicycle, mobile phone and animals like cow, goat and others. The results show (in table-3) that out of 200 households surveyed-- 16 i.e 8% of the surveyed households owned TV; 8 i.e. 4% households owned radio; 144 i.e. 72% owned bicycle and 63 i.e 31.5% owned mobile phones. 69 (34.5 percent) and 55 (27.5 percent) have cow and goat. This result has shown a dearth of assets among the surveyed families in the study area.

We have also evaluated the level of indebtedness, type of dwelling of the households as well as whether the surveyed households enjoyed any government schemes like Indira Awas Yojana, Antyodaya Yojana, Free Electricity, Annapurna Yojana. The result indicates that 57.5 percent households of our study area

depend on money lender and 40 percent on others like neighbours, relatives and especially on local shop owners. Local banks can access only 1.5 percent of them. Most of surveyed households (72.5 percent) have kancha house made by mud hut and 27 percent have mixed house. Out of 200 households only 21.5 percent got benefit from IAY, 7.5 percent from Annapurna and 42.5 percent from Antyodaya Yojana whereas 13.5 percent have been availing the free electricity connection.

TABLE-3: LIVESTOCK, LEVEL OF INDEBTEDNESS AND GOVERNMENT BENEFICIARIES (no of households)			
		No of respondent Households	%-age of total respondent Households
Livestock and Assets	Cow	69	34.5
	Goat	55	27.5
	Other	68	34
	TV	16	8
	Radio	8	4
	Mobile	63	31.5
	Cycle	144	72
Level of indebtedness	Money lender	115	57.5
	Bank	3	1.5
	Others	80	40
Nature of Houses	Kancha	145	72.5
	Paka	1	.5
	Mixed	54	27
Beneficiaries of Govt. Schemes	IAY	43	21.5
	Annapurna	15	7.5
	Free electricity	27	13.5
	Antyodaya	85	42.5

Source: Field Survey

Occupational Pattern of the Respondents, Annual Employment Days per Household and Average Expenditure of the Respondents

A common classification of the occupational pattern is to distinguish between earners as agricultural labourer, cultivator, household industry worker and other workers (Ghosh, Satpathy and Kapur, 2008). In our survey (shown in table-4) 73 percent households have been found as daily labour and 16 percent as cultivator. Out of 200 households surveyed, 157 (78.5 percent) households are observed to be in BPL category.

TABLE-4: OCCUPATIONAL PATTERN OF THE RESPONDENTS (NO OF HOUSEHOLDS), ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT DAYS PER HOUSEHOLD, AVERAGE EXPENDITURE (in Rs.) PER MONTH			
	Catagory	No of respondent Households/ days/Rs.	%-age of total respondent Households
Occupational Pattern of the Respondents	Daily labour	146	73
	Cultivation	32	16
	Other	22	11
	Total	200	100
	Econ status (BPL)	157	78.5
Annual Employment Days	NREGA	19.4	10.0
	Own agricultural employment(days)	6.4	3.3
	Wage labour employment	88.3	45.6
	Other type of employment	80	41.3
	Total	193.8	100.0
Monthly Average Expenditure (in Rs.)	Food	2139.5	82.1
	Education	111.4	4.3
	Health	225.5	8.6
	Saving	130.85	5.0
	Total Expenditure	2607.25	100.0

Source: Field Survey

The overall study also reveals that the NREGA employment days per household in our surveyed area varied from 0 to 100 days with the mean value 19.36 and 15 standard deviation. Now it is surprising that the range of NREGA employment days in Chatna block is also 0 to 100 days but in Sonamukhi block it varies from 0 to 40 days. It was revealed by the concerned panchayats that the problem of finance and generation of work are the most serious limitations in the implementation of NREGA in later block.

The own agricultural employment days ranged from 0 to 110 with 6.40 mean and 13.56 SD. Since the opportunity of working in own agricultural land is less they depend on wage labour employment on a daily basis. It ranged from 0 to 300 with 88.34 mean and 82.96 SD.

Household income is an important economic variable, but at household level it is rather difficult to assess the family income in the absence of accurate information. It has been observed during survey that there is huge discrepancy between income earned, saving and consumption of a particular household. For this only the expenditure level of households was retained for the sake of analysis. Three major expenditures- on food, on education and on health were included.

The descriptive statistics of the parameters revealed that the total expenditure per month ranged from Rs. 1200 to Rs. 6800 in our surveyed block. The mean and standard deviation were Rs. 2607.25 and 1000. The average expenditure on food per month was Rs. 2139, ranged from Rs. 1000 to Rs. 5000 with standard deviation 738.66. The mean expenditure on education per month is Rs. 111.40 with standard deviation 163.06; it ranged from zero expenditure to Rs. 800. The average expenditure on health per month is Rs. 225.50 with standard deviation Rs. 135.62 ranged from Rs. 50 to Rs. 1000. The average saving per month is Rs. 130.85 with 164.25 standard deviation ranged from Rs. 0 to Rs. 1500.

5. RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

The individuals needing unskilled work for survival must be aware of the NREGA, the eligibility requirements for work, the procedure for registration, getting a job card, wage rates etc (ISS, 2008). In this section, we have presented opinion of all job card holders on issues such as job card, application of work, the length of the period for applying an obtaining the job and allowances or worksite facilities.

ISSUES RELATED TO JOB CARD AND WORK RELATED INFORMATION

Through this sub-section, opinion of all job card holders is collected on issues such as- money spent for the job card, procedure of getting the job card, whether they have faced any problem in receiving the job card like delay, transparency etc. Table-5 shows that in overall sense 92.5 percent of the surveyed beneficiaries revealed that the job cards were issued to them within 15 days of application. Majority of households expressed that they got their job cards without waiting for

much time and without money spent. Most beneficiaries got their job cards through GP. Majority of the rural households (91 percent) agreed that there is a transparent mechanism followed to issue the job cards. All of them, except 7, go to bank or P.O. to collect the payment.

TABLE-5 : JOB CARD AND WORK RELATED INFORMATION (No. of respondents say yes)		
Information	No of Households	%-age of Households
1. Money spent for the job card	13	6.5
2. Late to get the job card	52	26
3. Got the job card on time (within 15 days) after registration	185	92.5
4. Got the job card from GP	200	100
5. The Mechanism of getting is transparent	182	91
6. Payment is made through Bank or P.O.	193	96.5
7. Employed in response to an application for work	0	--
8. Find evidence of any Irregularity	2	--
9. Willing to get more jobs than actually did	168	84
10. Allotment of work on time	30	15
11. Information about job was known from G.P.	115	57.5
12. Information about job was known from Notice Board	40	20
13. Information about job was known from neighbour	98	49
14. No of complaint related to NREGA work	2	--
15. Job card entry done in front of the respondents	76	38
Source: Field Survey		

This section captured very important aspect of procedures and rules vis-à-vis guidelines of NREGA followed by the officials at GP level by way of views expressed by the beneficiaries. There are several guidelines to be followed by GP officials such as allotment of work in response to an application for work, allotment of work on time, time-lag between application for work and allotment of work redressal of grievances and complaints etc. Table-5 reveals the views of all the beneficiaries in the above aspects.

In the surveyed area, there is no such provision of application for work and all the beneficiaries are employed without any application, simply violating the guideline of NREGA. No such irregularities (only 2 as a whole) can be found in both the block but in both cases people actually demanded more jobs than what they actually did. It shows the need of job due to the unavailability of any alternative occupation.

According to the guidelines of the scheme, within a maximum period of 15 days of applying for job in writing, wage employment has to be provided (GOI, 2006). However, the response of the beneficiaries who got the wage employment speaks the other way. Respondents expressed that they did not get the work within the stipulated 15 days time of demand for work. Another crucial aspect is the time-lag between application and issue of job. The information about the job they got either from GP or from neighbour.

An attempt was also made to enquire with the beneficiaries whether there are any general nature of grievances or complaints regarding works allocation, registration procedures, and job card allocation etc. It is very interesting to observe that not a single complaint was lodged in Chatna block and only 2 in Sonamukhi block regarding the allocation of job. The reasons should be explored in a different way. The surveyed households were not felt easy to complaint against the panchayat. 38 percent of the respondents agreed that the job card entry was done in front of the respondents.

ISSUES RELATED TO ALLOWANCE AND OTHER FACILITIES

The Act under NREGA stipulates to provide basic facilities such as crèche, first aid, drinking water and shade for workers at the work site. There are several guidelines to be followed by GP officials such as facilities at worksite, delay in providing employment within stipulated time and unemployment allowance etc (Jha, Raghav and Shankar, 2008). An attempt was made as shown in Table –5 to enquire the extent of such facilities provided to the wagers at the work site. 66.5 percent did find those facilities at the work site for drinking water and shade but there are no such arrangements for crèche and first aid. All of them informed that they were not paid any unemployment allowance. They did not apply for the unemployment allowances and it is the responsibility of the GPs to let them know about the provision of the application for unemployment allowances. But the table reveals that they do not know about the existence of such provision. These are showing the inefficacy of GPs to run NREGA in a successful manner.

Even though there is growing public awareness of NREGA as a new initiative to provide rural employment, there was very little understanding of the basic features of the act in the survey area. Respondents should know the 'right' they got from the scheme like provision of employment to every registered person within 15 days of receipt of an application, applications to be for at least 14 days of continuous work, gram panchayat to accept valid applications and issue a dated receipt to the applicant, right to get the unemployment allowances (Menon, 2008). Table-6 reveals the lack of awareness of the respondents about the scheme. Only 55 percent were aware about the implementation of the programme, clearly shows the failure of GPs. Less than 50 percent were aware about the right to apply for work at any time. Only 21 percent (overall) of them know the application procedure and 87.5 percent is unaware about the right to get unemployment allowances. It is satisfactory to observe that 51 percent know the level of minimum wage and 75.5 percent know about the mandatory availability of muster rolls at the worksite.

TABLE-6: ALLOWANCE AND FACILITIES (NO. OF RESPONDENTS SAY YES) AND ASSESSMENT OF THE RESPONDENT'S AWARENESS		
	Nos.	%
1. Maintenance of the worksite facilities – drinking water, shade	133	66.5
2. Maintenance of the worksite facilities – crèche, first aid	0	--
3. Got any unemployment allowances	0	--
4. Applied for unemployment allowances	0	--
5. Provision of the application for unemployment allowances was not known	200	100
6. The MG-NREGA being implemented in the area	110	55
7. Right to apply for work at any time and to be employed within 15 days	94	47
8. The work application procedure	42	21
9. The level of minimum wages	102	51
10. Their right to get the unemployment allowances	25	12.5
11. Mandatory availability of muster rolls at the worksite	151	75.5
Source: Field Survey		

6. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

MG-NREGA is the most significant scheme to uplift the overall quality of life of rural households from the extreme poverty. Thus people should aware about the scheme so that they can reap the full benefit of the programme (Ambasta, Shankar and Shah, 2008) and they should identify the problems and prospects of the scheme for their own interest so that they can participate in planning and monitoring of the scheme.

OPINION OF THE RESPONDENTS ABOUT THE PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

In this section we have attempted to present the opinion about the impact of the scheme on various important attributes which contribute to the enhancement of quality of life such as food security, fight against poverty and indebtedness, greater economic independence of women, to arrest out-migration etc. Table-7 depicts the opinions of respondents/beneficiaries in this regard. Only 31 percent of them agree (in favor of 'strongly agree' and 'agree' taken together) on the view that the programme enhances food security and 50 (in favor of 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' taken together) percent believe that the programme can not provide some protection against extreme poverty. It is very encouraging that more than 50 percent are of the view that it can reduce distress migration, 32 percent think that rural indebtedness can be reduced by this programme. 51 percent are in favour of the programme because they think that the programme has offered greater economic independence to women. 52.5 percent respondent believes that the programme can generate better purchasing power but almost 68.5 percent believe the programme is responsible for the higher local wage rate and cost. It is also seen that 80 percent of the respondents are of the view that the scope of children to go to school has been improved by the programme. But all of them are aware about the corruption of NREGA work; they also believe that the quality of NREGA work is not satisfactory. In spite of that 61.5 percent and 50.5 percent respondent believe that there is an improvement in roads and communications i.e. rural connectivity and water level, because the programme has a greater stress on the conservation of water bodies.

TABLE-7: OPINION OF THE RESPONDENTS (%-AGE OF HOUSEHOLDS) REGARDING THE PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF NREGA

Sl no:	Opinion	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1	NREGA enhances food security	10	52	27	71	40	200
2	NREGA provided some protection against extreme poverty	15	58	28	69	30	200
3	After NREGA payment they can run their family	7	41	23	88	41	200
4	NREGA helped to reduce the distress migration	29	70	26	48	27	200
5	NREGA helped to reduce indebtedness	11	53	55	61	20	200
6	NREGA gave greater economic independence to women	22	80	45	34	19	200
7	NREGA generated better purchasing power in the local economy	22	83	40	46	9	200
8	NREGA has increased the local wage rate	70	67	21	25	17	200
9	NREGA has improved the scope of the children to go to school	86	75	18	14	7	200
10	The quality of NREGA work is satisfactory	6	43	35	76	40	200
11	Zero corruption exists in NREGA work	2	14	37	67	80	200
12	Improvement in roads and communication due to NREGA work	32	91	15	39	23	200
13	NREGA work has improved the water level	23	78	25	45	29	200

Source: Field Survey

DETERMINANTS OF PARTICIPATION IN MGNREGA

In order to get to know the determinants of participation of households in MGNREGA programme, a regression analysis was done using the following multiple linear regression model:

$$\text{EMPD} = b_0 + b_1 \text{FAMSIZE} + b_2 \text{EXPM} + b_3 \text{WAITDAYS} + b_4 \text{OTHEREMP} + b_5 \text{DISTANCE} + b_6 \text{LAND} + b_7 \text{DMOBILE} + b_8 \text{DCHATNA} + \text{error}$$

Where,

- EMPD = Annual Employment Days from NREGA
- FAMSIZE = Family size
- EXPM = Monthly Expenditure of the Household (Rs.)
- WAITDAYS = Maximum No. of days waited by the household for payment
- OTHEREMP = No. of Days of Employment in a year other than NREGA
- DISTANCE = Distance (in Kms from village to the main road)
- LAND = Land holding of the household (in bigha)
- DMOBILE: Whether the household owns mobile (=1 if owns, 0=otherwise)
- DCHATNA: Dummy for whether the household belongs to Chatna block (=1 if the respondent lives in Chatna, 0=otherwise)

Table-8 represents the descriptive statistics of the variables. The data reveals that the average annual employment days from NREGA within the survey period was 19.36 with 15.07 standard deviation for 200 households. The mean and s.d. of the family size of surveyed people were 4.11 and 1.06. The mean value of monthly expenditure was Rs. 2607.25 with a very high s.d. of 999.39; the mean and s.d. of waiting days for payment were 47.66 and 22.23, the data also reveals that people waited for even four months after the completion of job. The mean value of other employment days than NREGA was 159.53 and the s.d. for that was 51.85. The average distance from village to the main road in km was 3.19 with 1.51 s.d.; the land holding of the household ranged from .00 to 10.00 bigha with mean 1.08 bigha (1 bigha = 33 Dec.) and 1.69 s.d.. No of owner of a mobile was introduced here as a dummy variable to capture the status of economic conditions of 200 households. The mean value was 0.31 with 0.46 s.d.

TABLE-8 : DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF 200 HOUSEHOLDS			
	Mean	Range	S.D.
EMPD	19.36	0-100	15.07
FAMSIZE	4.11	1.00-7.00	1.06
EXPM (in Rs.)	2607.25	1200.00-6800.00	999.39
WAITDAYS	47.66	7.00-120.00	22.83
OTHEREMP	159.53	52-280	51.85
DISTANCE (in Km.)	3.19	.00-5.00	1.51
LAND (in bigha)	1.08	.00-10.00	1.69
DMOBILE	0.31	.00-1.00	0.46

Source: Field Survey

The regression results are reported in table-9. The 'Adjusted R²' value of 0.32 implies that about 32% of variation in the EMPD is explained by the regression model. The significant 'F' value indicates that a significant relationship exists between weighted linear composite of the independent variables as specified by the model and the dependent variable.

TABLE-9 : ESTIMATED REGRESSION RESULTS			
	Unstandardized Coefficients	t value	Sig
(Constant)	36.237	5.985	.000
FAMSIZE	2.493	2.841	.005
EXPM	-.004	-3.537	.001
WAITDAYS	-.119	-2.846	.005
OTHEREMP	-.044	-3.091	.002
DISTANCE	-2.668	-4.412	.000
LAND	1.274	2.538	.012
DMOBILE	4.710	2.112	.036
DCHATNA	6.502	2.721	.007

Source: Estimated from Primary Survey Data

Adjusted $R^2 = 0.32$; $F = 12.69$ (Level of significance = .000)

The results show that significant positive factors affecting the participation in NREGA employment days (EMPD) are FAMSIZE, LAND, DMOBILE and DCHATNA and the significant negative factors are EXPM, WAITDAYS, OTHEREMP and DISTANCE.

- **FAMSIZE:** The results suggest that for a larger family size there will be a higher amount of working days through NREGA, hence better participation in the said programme. Since the scheme is demand driven, therefore the members of a household who are willing to work and applied for work have better participation in NREGA. The panchayat members and officials are influenced by a member to incorporate the name of the others to the programme. The GP members are even politically influenced because large family size means higher voting rights.
- **LAND:** Higher land holding by household also represents higher participation in NREGA. It happens due to the fact that higher land holding means greater influence on panchayat members and officials. It is observed during the survey that the no of NREGA employment days are more for such influential persons. Thus NREGA as a major source of employment for the vulnerable group was not established.
- **DMOBILE:** In our model, the first 'dummy variable' is DMOBILE, used to represent the economic status. Individual having mobile can access the information better than others from the panchayat members or officials./
- **DCHATNA:** The regional difference of NREGA activity in the same district can be explored by the second dummy variable DCHATNA. Chatna block performed in a better way than Sonamukhi block. One reason may be the difference in poverty level of two blocks. Since the implicit goal of NREGA is to enhance the livelihood security of the poor people, therefore the demand for NREGA employment days is expected to be higher in places with a higher share of poor people. The second reason is the infrastructural advancement of Chatna block in terms of planning and execution of works. The potential for designing a higher number of schemes and the timely receipt of funds can be regarded as the important factors determining the efficiency of GPs. In the period of survey, we observed Chatna block as a better block in terms of the implementation of the programme, maintenance of shelf, social audit etc. It is to be mentioned here that, in 2012, Chatna block bagged the 'Block of the Year' in overall NREGA performance. So DCHATNA as a positive significant factor is showing the creation of better employment days in Chatna block compared to the Sonamukhi block.

The significant negative factors are also important to state the causal relationship between NREGA employment days and its socio economic factors.

- **EXPM:** If the 'expenditure per month' of a household is high that definitely indicates that the household must be engaged in other alternatives. High income or high expenditure per month means the income is generated from secured 'other type of employments'; hence it will lead to a fall in NREGA participation.
- **WAITDAYS:** If the 'waiting days' to collect the payment of work is large then it will be less attractive to join the programme, hence lesser will be the participation. The time lag between commencement of work and payment of wages becomes crucial to take the decision of participation. Actually in our survey areas we have been reported against the procedure of final payment, the gap between final working day and payment day is too long—wages are not paid in a timely manner. The main reason for the delay is the absence of the timely receipt of NREGA fund and the second obvious reason is the mismanagement of GPs.
- **OTHEREMP:** If people have the opportunity to work at higher wage rate (than NREGA wage) or have more assured work at the same or even at a lower wage rate, they may not be interested in undertaking NREGA work especially when the timing of NREGA works clash with those of their alternative works. It means participation in NREGA will be less. The households are involved in other type of works than NREGA employment days throughout the year to maintain their families because the NREGA employment days are not enough in the lean season. The lean season is characterised by a scarcity of livelihood opportunities due to the drying up of agricultural activities. It will cause a temporary migration for the alternatives. So if 'other employment days' increase then it will automatically lead to a fall in NREGA participation.
- **DISTANCE:** higher distance means less information will reach from panchayat to village or households regarding the launch of the programme. Higher distance also means the remoteness of the poor household and distance from the GPs. the information depicted in the notice board of panchayat is remained unknown to the households, hence lower participation.

7. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

The picture emerging from this brief investigation is not very encouraging. The functioning of NREGA in the study area is not satisfactory. A majority of the households have reported that they are willing to get more jobs than what they are presently getting. Even after six years of implementation of NREGA in the state our study reveals that people know very little about the law and different opportunities. The study also reveals peoples dissatisfaction about the impact of NREGA on their livelihood and the quality of the work done under this scheme. Nevertheless, the programme can be a great agent for socio-economic upliftment by providing livelihood security to the poorest of the poor in rural West Bengal. Given the limited capacity of agriculture to absorb additional labour force, the development of rural non-farm sector should be developed.

The determinants of MG-NREGA employment days identify the crucial factors for the successful implementation of the programme. The 'long delays' in wage payment must be minimized because such delay is not consistent with the provision of the MGNREGA Act. Another issue is the provision of work when alternative employment opportunities are scarce; the MGNREGA has to fulfill the gap by providing extra employment days during the lean season. The predominant work under the programme is related to excavation and re-excavation of ponds. GP has to prepare the proper shelf of schemes and to explore different or innovative works with new ideas. The overall awareness of the programme and information regarding the job should be widespread for better participation.

8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SCOPE OF FURTHER RESEARCH

The results are based on the random sample drawn from a backward district in West Bengal which may not be true for other places. Also the analysis is based on the variables for which we had been able to collect data.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am to acknowledge the financial support from UGC for conducting the survey.

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Thanking you profoundly

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Sd/-

Co-ordinator

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