



## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE AND MANAGEMENT

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**Reviewing Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment  
Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS)**

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## ABSTRACT

*Right to work is in fact right to live. All other rights are meaningless in the absence of right to work which is in fact right to live because when we have nothing to earn then how can we have any thing to eat and survive. In the present scenario, we see that the World is going through great transformations and liberalization, privatization, globalization etc. are setting new trends and opportunities of development among under developed and developing countries In 1992 India has adopted Globalization, Privatization and Liberalization as policy matter and it created new challenges before all round and overall development of the state. Therefore, in this light Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in lump sum the right to work has become the most important right in the present scenario. It guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. The Act was came into force in February 2006. Certain studies undertaken by Desarda (2006), Puri (2006), Biswas (2007), John (2008), Jha (2008) and Rao (2008) investigated that Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is a revolutionary stem for Indian poor. The field reports reveal that the implementation of the act has brought successful results and has provided work opportunity to the villagers in native place. Despite significant improvements in the expansion and implementation of MNREGS in Himachal Pradesh, there remain certain pertinent problems associated with the functioning of MNREGS machinery.*

## MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT:

In the fifty-sixth year of the Republic of India, Parliament passed “National Rural Employment Guarantee Act” (NREGA 2005) towards partial fulfillment of a constitutional obligation under Article 41 of the Indian Constitution that provides a non-justifiable ‘Right to Work’ to the citizens of the country and directs, “The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work in case of unemployment. The Act received assent of the President on September 5, 2005 and was notified in the Gazette of India on September 7, 2005. Recently, in 2009, the existing scheme has been renamed and is now known as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. The jobless growth in the 1990’s, stagnation or even decline in the growth of agricultural productivity, distressed farmers committing suicides in various parts of the country, increased migration from rural to urban areas were the larger socio-economic context of the MNREGA 2005. NREGA draws heavily on the experiences of a number of rural wage employment programmes of the Central and State Governments. National Rural Employment Programme [NREP] 1980-89. Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) 1983-89; Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) 1989-99; Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) 1993-99; Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) 1999-2002; Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) since September 2001; National Food for Work Programme (NFFWP) since November 14, 2004 (SGRY and NFFWP now merged with NREGS 2005) were national level rural employment generation schemes. These programmes were supported by the Central Government and State Governments with shared part of the burden. Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme (MEGS), which commenced in 1965, continued to be an important state-level wage-employment programme. Most of these schemes were formulated and implemented by the executive agency of the government with little involvement of the legislature. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) enacted in

2005 is a landmark legislation which empowers the rural population with the legal right to demand work. There are statutory effects of employment generation in rural areas. Economic empowerment gives people a voice, both within and outside households. NREGS by increasing rural income is expected to help stem rural-urban migration which is a major contributor to urban poverty. Through NREGS rural income has increased, thus reducing the gravitational pull of the cities. However, various studies highlight implementation problems at grass root level. These includes, delay in the distribution of job cards to target group, delay in wage payment and payment of less than minimum wage, absence of worksite facilities, non availability muster rolls at the worksite, presence of private contractors and shortage of staff and delay in appointments.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:**

A large number of studies have been conducted on NREGS at the National level by the government agencies as well as by the individuals but till date, in the state of Himachal Pradesh a very few micro level attempts have been made by the individual scholars and the government agencies by covering one aspect or the other. Due to sharp variation in topography, climatic conditions, infrastructural development, socio-economic conditions, income and employment avenues, methods, norms and thereby the results at national level studies on NREGS as well as policy implications cannot be applied to the hilly state like Himachal Pradesh. The present study aims to help in improving the implementation and functioning of officials and workers under NERGA schemes. Suggestions incorporated in the study will not only benefit the present scheme but may also help the similar types of schemes rendering the same job in the

country. Since, the study is unique in itself and the findings of the study will be significant in the formulation of the policies and their proper execution.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

1. To study the implementation of the transparency safeguards with respect to women participation, childcare and worksite facilities available in the study area.
2. To study the impact of scheme in empowerment and removal of unemployment among rural section.
3. To evaluate the nature of work in order to gauge their relevance in the socio-economic set up of the area.

### **AREA OF STUDY:**

Out of 12 districts in the state District Mandi has been selected on the basis of the implementation of the NREGS in second phase. From Mandi district Gopalpur block was selected for comprehensive survey. However, selection of District and block was influenced by the availability of running schemes and ongoing work. Apart from canvassing with the help of above-mentioned structured questionnaires, relevant field level data/information was collected through Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) with the common villagers, womenfolk, youths and workers. Comments and conversations of the beneficiaries while at work were used for recording the number of workers, male and female present at the sites, actual wage payment, availability of facilities at worksites etc.

**FINDINGS AND DISSCUSSION:**

**Source of Information about NREGS: An Analysis**

62.5 percent respondents were educated about NREGS by the panchayat office, while, 33.33 percent got information about this scheme from their relatives and friends. A negligible number of respondents got information about NREGS (i.e. 4.17 percent) from government office or NGO’s working in their local area.

**Table No. 1**

Source of Information	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Panchayat/Local body	75	62.5
Govt. Official	3	2.5
NGO’s	2	1.67
Relatives & friends	40	33.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

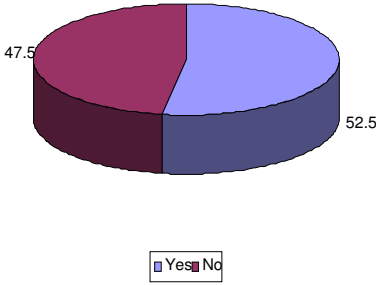
Note: Data compiled through questionnaire

Thus, it may be concluded that respondents in majority got information of the scheme from the panchayat office which is enough to infer that the role of members of the panchayat and local body is significant to make rural and innocent people aware about the scheme.

**Table No. 2**

**Work Availability within 15 Days and NREGS: An Analysis**

Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	63	52.5
No	57	47.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>



Note: Data compiled through questionnaire

As per provision of the NREGA, employment is definitely provided within fifteen (15) days after enrollment under the scheme. It is observed that 52.5 percent of the total respondents replied positively while, 47.5 percent could not get work after fifteen (15) days of enrollment. It means though the majority which is more than half of the people got work according to the norms of the scheme yet lots of people haven't got work under NREGS norms. It further indicates that there may be violation of the norms of the scheme due to which people are not able to get employment within the stipulated time period.



In National Rural Employment Guarantee Act/Scheme there is provision of unemployment allowance for those who were not given work under the scheme within fifteen (15) days of filling the application after enrollment. Further more it was surprising that 66.67 percent of the total respondents were not paid the unemployment allowances while,33.33 percent of the respondents have not filled the applications for unemployment allowance due to the unawareness of the full details of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and 33.33 percent beneficiaries were not in a position to make their remarks. It is further suggested that there may be some voids in publicity part of the scheme. Therefore, it should be publicized by the agencies concerned enabling the people to avail full advantages and opportunities.

**Table No. 3**

**Unemployment Allowance and NREGS: AN Analysis**

<b>Opinion</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	0	0.0
No	80	66.67
Can't Say	40	33.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The donut chart visualizes the data from the table. It features three segments: a very thin yellow segment representing 'Yes' at 0.0%, a large dark red segment representing 'No' at 66.67%, and a medium-sized light green segment representing 'Can't Say' at 33.33%. A legend below the chart identifies the colors: yellow for 'Yes', dark red for 'No', and light green for 'Can't Say'.

Majority respondents opined that National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is adequate enough and is highly relevant to provide employment to all

unemployed people. Yet 13.31 percent of the respondents found the policy moderately relevant followed by 14.17 who rated that the policy is slightly relevant for all unemployed. They believe that the well educated unemployed rural mass do not want to do unskilled manual work. Thus, the participation of number of well educated people participation is less but it is adequate enough to provide employment opportunities to all unemployed youths.

**Table No. 4**

**Opinion of Respondents about Adequacy of NREGS:**

Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Highly Relevant	87	72.5
Moderately Relevant	16	13.33
Slightly Relevant	17	14.17
Not Relevant	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note: Data compiled through questionnaire

As per norms of the NREGS, women should be given equal opportunity to work under the scheme. Thus, to know the interest of women to work under the scheme majority respondents that is opined that women of their area prefer to work under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme whereas 10 percent refused. This shows that women are also showing their interest for the scheme and a very less number of women have not showed any interest to work.

**Table No. 5**

**Women's Preference to Work under NREGS: AN Analysis**

Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage	
Yes	102	85.0	
No	12	10.0	
Can't Say	6	5.0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Note: Data compiled through questionnaire

It further concludes that tilt is found towards operational guidelines of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, that women should be given preference while distributing the work. Eleven percent of the people are satisfied with the wages paid to them.

**Table No. 6**

**Utilization of Funds under NREGS: AN Analysis**

Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	60	50.0
No	28	23.23
Can't Say	32	26.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note: Data compiled through questionnaire

From the above table, it is clear that fifty percent of the total respondents believe that funds were used as per norms whereas, 26.67 percent respondents refused to say anything while 23.23 percent opined that money sanctioned for the scheme was not used as per norms. The majority of the people believe that funds were utilized at the right place at the right time in right manner and in the right direction. Yet noticeable number of respondents didn't say anything meaning by that there may be misuse of the funds allocated under the scheme.

On the basis of the compilation of data and on the personal observation of the researcher, it is observed that majority of the respondents were not found satisfied with the facilities provided by the executing agencies at the worksite, 8.33 percent respondents were found highly satisfied, 10 percent moderately satisfied and 15

percent were found up to the level of satisfaction regarding the worksite facilities and it was observed by the researcher that only facility of drinking water was present at the working site.

**Table No. 7**

**Opinion of Respondents about Worksite Facilities**

Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Highly Satisfied	10	8.33
Moderately Satisfied	12	10.0
Satisfied	18	15.0
Not Satisfied	80	66.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note: Data compiled through questionnaire

### Worksite Facilities in NREGS: AN Analysis

It may infer that the executing agencies or local body should increase the facilities like first aid, shelter and crèche at the worksite to boost the moral of NREGS beneficiaries.

**Table No. 8**

**Number of Minimum Working Days – Opinion thereof**

Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
100 Days	20	16.67
150 Days	30	25.0
200 Days	50	41.66
Equivalent to Daily Wagers	20	16.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note: Data compiled through questionnaire

### Minimum Working Days in NREGS: AN Analysis

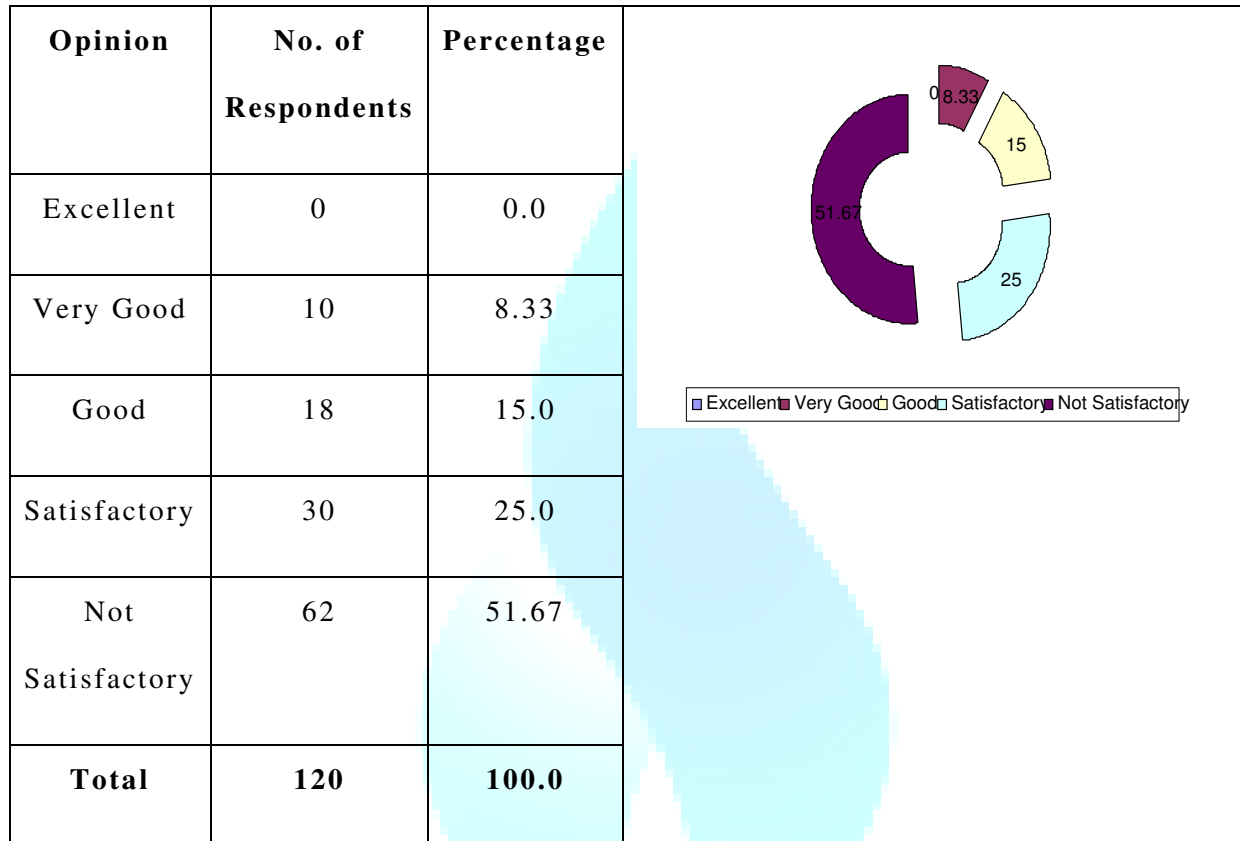
So far as the number of minimum working days is concerned, it is revealed that only 16.67 percent respondents were satisfied with the minimum 100 days employment

in a financial year where as 83.37 percent which is enough to say were dissatisfied with the number of minimum 100 days employment. It may also be interpreted that majority of the respondents opined that this period of minimum hundred days must be increased up to 150 or 200 days. There was also a group of beneficiaries who supported the opinion to increase the working days equivalent to daily wages basis or at par with daily wagers i.e., provision of work for the whole year. Therefore, it is suggested that on the basis of the opinion majority this period of minimum 100 days work must be increased up to a level of satisfaction so that they may able to earn something not sufficient to their family for the whole year.

Table 9 indicates that about 48 percent of the respondents consider that the policy is meaningful up to the level of satisfaction and for welfare of rural masses as well as development of local areas. It means that nearly half of the beneficiaries are responding positively in favor of this scheme. People consider the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme meaningful and adequate for all unemployed people who desire to work under the scheme and good enough for the development. People find the policy capable to do well for the rural masses and are satisfied with provisions and norms of the scheme but they were not so happy with the executing agencies.

Table No. 9

Satisfaction Level of the Beneficiaries and MNREGS: An Analysis



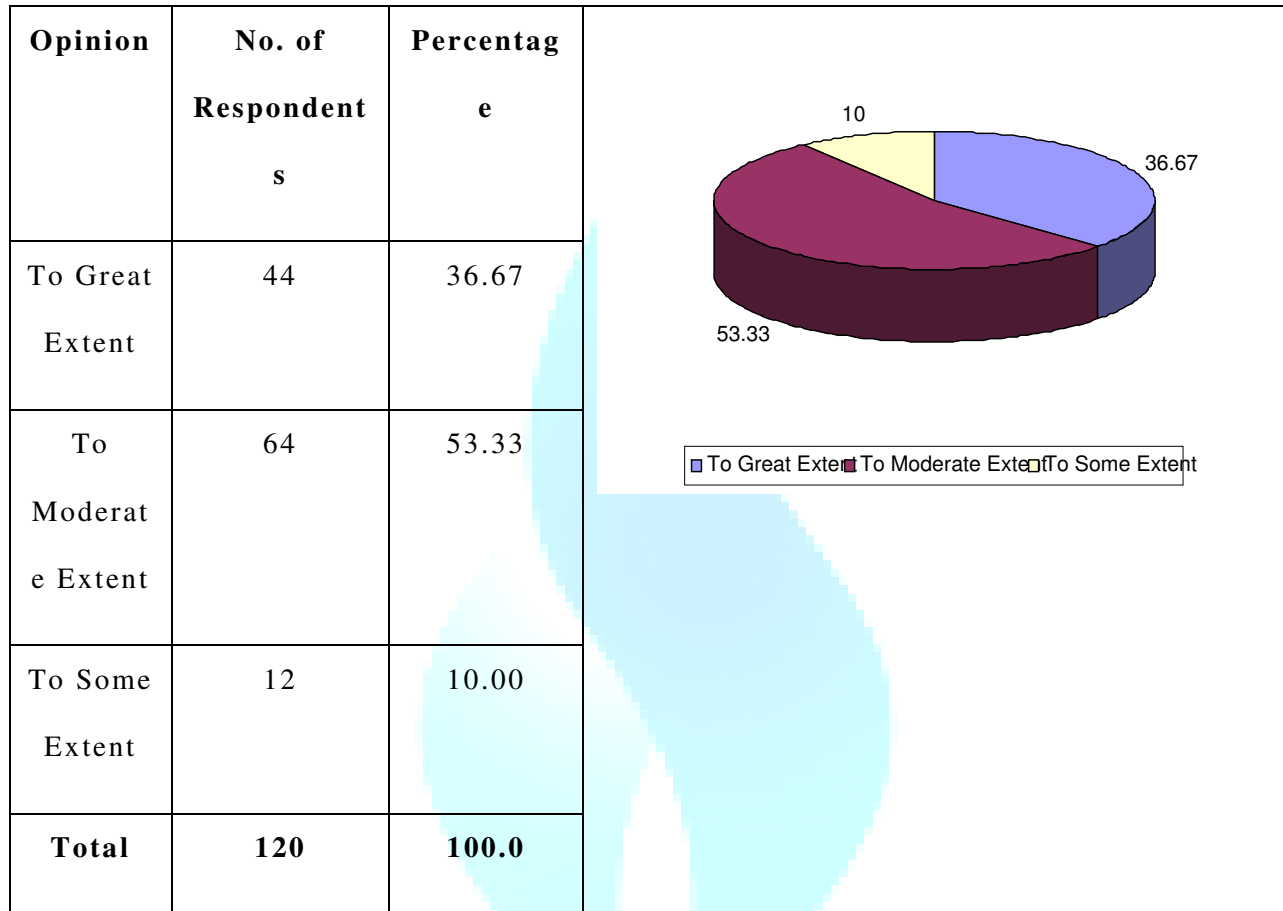
Note: Data compiled through questionnaire

The NREGS can play a vital role in the development at local level; their opinion regarding this issue has been compiled in Table No. 10. A major chunk (90%) of the respondents agreed on the point which means people believe that such policies not only providing employment to unemployed but with the implementation of the scheme, many developmental works were done by local masses with their own choice and villages become work living to the great extent or to moderate. Only 10 percent believe that this policy is playing role to some extent in socio-economic development of the rural community.



Table No. 10

## Socio-Economic Development of the Rural People and NREGS: An Analysis



Note: Data compiled through questionnaire

Thus, it is concluded that this scheme is very helpful in the socio-economic development of the individuals to great extent and to moderate extent while a few viewed that this scheme has increased the socio-economic level of beneficiaries to some extent only. So, it is submitted that this scheme has changed the life of rural community in a positive way and is able to increase the socio-economic level of standards in every walk of their life.

On the basis of the analysis of the data shown in various tables and the personal observations of the researcher, it can be concluded that there is a mixed type

of response of the common masses with reference to the working of the local bodies, officials and implementation part of the scheme. People are satisfied with the way union government implemented the scheme but are not happy with the working and implementation of the scheme by the local bodies. So far as the weaker section and women are concerned, people belonging to this class or category are not discriminated and are getting full opportunity to work under NREGS. Upper castes and economically sound people have no interference in the scheme. Those persons employed under the scheme got full wages for the work, fixed under the norms of the scheme. No work is done on contractual basis by the name of NREGS and the funds sanctioned for the scheme were used for the sanctioned works only. People are connecting themselves with the policy because the policy provides bread and butter to the rural community.

Though people are finding the policy meaningful and powerful enough to provide employment to maximum unemployed yet they find drawbacks in implementation and distribution of work under the scheme unevenly at grass root level by local bodies. People suggest increasing the number of works and number of working days. Some new works are to be added in the list which can be done by well educated unemployed rural mass without hesitation. People suggest to increase wage and time limit and assign work to all applicants and it will help the scheme to achieve maximum or above the norms and provisions in the policy for the welfare and socio-economic development of the rural community.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

In India, agriculture has been the main source of economy and a very large proportion of its population is engaged in this primary sector and earning bread and

butter for nearly two third of its population and contributes 18.5 percent towards the national income. It is an instrumental of income and employment generation which contributes more in the economy of a developing country, like India. The uneconomic size of land holdings due to division and fragmentation, and rapid growth of population which is dependent on agriculture more than the area available for cultivation, dependence of agriculture on vagaries of nature and famines etc. results in low productivity per farmer and per person. The employment opportunities in the rural areas are inadequate because of slow progress in small scale and cottage industries and scarcity of large scale industries in the rural areas. This is a summary of the findings of a study of the status of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in sampled Gopalpur Block of Mandi District in Himachal Pradesh.

Keeping in view the importance of agriculture sector and development of the rural people thereof, the government of India has announced various productive and supportive measures in this regard. Being developing country, India is facing many problems and besides many other problems, unemployment is a great problem before the development of the country. In many productive and supportive measures for the development of rural people the government of India has provided 'Right to Work' in fact 'Right to Live'. All other rights become meaningless in the absence of right to work because when we have nothing to earn then how can we have anything to eat and survive.

Therefore, in this light National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme – 2005 launched on February 02, 2006 is a primary instrument to combat rural unemployment, hunger and poverty by providing guaranteed one hundred days of employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. Keeping it in mind, the picture emerging from the brief

investigation brings the reality about NREGA-2005 or NERGS and its provisions and implementing the scheme at grass-root level of rural community. The researcher found on the basis of the questionnaire, observations and discussions with the beneficiaries and others about right of equality, unemployment allowance, and awareness about the scheme, interference by upper caste and economically sound people and discrimination level on different demographic characteristics.

Respondents of all age, sex, caste gave a mixed reaction for the scheme. Besides their response, the personal observations of the researcher are also given space in this chapter. It has been found that the people of all age group are showing their interest for the scheme and are keen to participate and do work under National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. The scheme is capable enough to attract people of all age group, the people belonging to big sized family, SC & ST category. Besides all these factors, the scheme in Gopalpur Block of District Mandi is free from political interference and external agencies pressure. The people belonging to upper caste did not make use of their influence nor do the economically well of people control the working of the scheme in the region. The scheme is free from all sort of external pressure and their influence.

The present study reveals that all the registered persons are not getting work within fifteen (15) days. Majority of the people do not know about filing the application for getting work after enrollment which means the publicity agencies are not doing their job properly. Many important points of the policy are not publicized by these agencies. The study shows that the government agencies are implementing the policy in the right way but at grass root level the local bodies are still weak in implementation and promotion of the policy for welfare of local poor people. The

government officials are doing their job of monitoring and checking the works undertaken under the scheme is satisfactory.

It has been observed that the levels of awareness among workers in GPs are very low. This is primarily due to the large use of the print media for most of its NREGA awareness campaigns. These included advertisements in local newspapers, hoardings in and around government and pantheist buildings, important provisions of the Act published behind the job cards and the painting of some of the important provisions of the Act on important landmarks in villages. Most people were not aware of their right to apply for unemployment allowance was evident from the fact that not a single individual application had been made for this under NREGA.

While most workers are aware about the '100 days of work' provision, they are nuclear about the fact that each nuclear family gets one Job Card (JC). Most worksites we visited had workers who did not have a Job Card but were working on a family member's Job Card. For example a boy (aged 18 or above) who recently got married would keep working on his family's Job Card not realizing that he and his wife are entitled to a new Job Card (i.e. 100 days of work). Most workers knew that the payments were to be made within 15 days of completing the work but they didn't know what they should do if the payments were not made within 15 days. While there is a provision to demand for compensation in the event of delayed payments no one is aware of it. For example in sampled panchayats wage payments for some of the workers had been delayed by two months.

It has been observed that the most important factor behind the poor performance of NREGA in the GPs has been the near non-implementation of most of the transparency safeguards. This is mainly a result of the apathetic attitude of the Gram Rojgar Sevaks (GRS), Sacheev and Sarpanch towards educating people about

these provisions and also low levels of literacy among the population of these Gram Panchayats. It has been also found that in this GPs surveyed found that the Job cards were either with GRS/Pradhan/Sarpanch or they had been distributed a day before we had arrived. Most Job cards had incomplete entries and in some cases without entries the worker had received payments. Most people were unaware about the importance of getting their Job cards updated. There was also a trend of 'submitting' Job cards when the workers began work at a particular NREGA worksite. This was a disturbing trend as this meant that the worker's Job cards were with the implementing agency till the work was completed.

It has been found that the most of the sample worksites surveyed had minimal worksite facilities. Only drinking water was available at most sites and some persons had been employed to provide water to the workers. While there was natural shade available at worksites of Gram Panchayat Nawani, workers complained about there being no provision of 'shade for resting' at worksites in the Gram Panchayat Kot and Smaila. First-aid kits and crèches were not available in the study area at any of the worksites. Studying the overall impact of the scheme in Gopalpur Block in District Mandi of Himachal Pradesh, the researcher found that this policy is playing vital role in providing employment opportunity, locating assets and empowering women and weaker section of the society. The scheme is really meaningful and capable of providing social security to rural masses.

It can be said that even though the implementation of NREGA in GPs was not up to the mark, our interaction with the workers showed that most of these workers felt that NREGA had made their lives better. The problem was that at some of these worksites workers had done, on an average, 15-20 days of work that was not enough to bring about major changes in the lives of the workers, however, the potential of

NREGA as a means to bring about a change in the lives of these workers was immense. In sampled GPs it has been observed that employment followed a very seasonal pattern as most workers were agricultural labourers and relied heavily on the cropping patterns being followed in the village. Another important impact of NREGA has been that of increased household incomes because women can now earn higher wages. This was a point reiterated by most workers when asked about how NREGA had affected their families. Many households now feel more comfortable in allowing their women to work as manual labourers because with the absence of contractors and similar wages, a better work environment for women and the weaker section of the society is a good example to explain this change in attitude.

Finally it can be observed that while the implementation of NREGA in most study area of Gram Panchayats in Gopalpur Block is not up to mark, the potential for NREGA to contribute in increasing socio-economic dynamics of rural household and development of rural infrastructure in the region is immense. If the presence of an educated Gram Rojgar Sevak in every Gram Panachayat has failed to initiate the required change in the implementation of NREGS in this region, it is the time that community participation is strengthened and public action should be initiated and it would lead to more awareness and better implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

## **AREAS OF CONCERN**

In order to better implementation of the scheme following areas needed for tuning:

- The wage payment should be done well in time because in the absence of

provision of minimum wage payment any employment guarantee scheme cannot be able to improve socio-economic dynamics of the beneficiaries.

- The person belonging to low income group should be given preference to do work under the scheme.
- Time limit of one hundred (100) days should be increased so that people need not to wander in search of the work outside the village.
- The list of the work recommended by the government, which are done under the scheme should be increased as there are many other facilities which people want to have for better livelihood.
- As the NREGS not only deals with the provision to provide employment to unemployed but also deals with the developmental works done in the region. So there should be time limit to the sanctioned works for its completion.
- The government officials should make continuous and surprise visits to check the worksites where the work is on progress.
- There should be one committee for each ward that should advise about needs of the ward to the Panchayat.
- Vigilance group should be formed within the villages to check the working of the scheme. The members of this vigilance group should be neutral and no member should belong to the Panchayat or local body.
- Maximum works should be started in agriculture lean season.
- Preference should be given to such works under NREGS whose services and profit can be enjoyed by large number of people of the region.
- There should be general house to let people about starting of the new work



under NREGS, so that large number of people give application and apply for work under the scheme.

- Before sanctioning money, government should check whether the site proposed for the work is accurate or not and will it be in public welfare or useless for general public.
- The Deputy Commissioner should himself check the worksites so that the traces of political interference or preference to near and dear ones can be eradicated from the Block.
- Keeping in mind the well educated unemployed rural mass, some special units should be formed to provide respectable employment to them.
- The researcher observed that some of the workers were the retiree from the Indian Army or Government/Non-government jobs; it should be strictly prohibited to provide enough work to the registered persons under the NREGA-2005 norms.

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