

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, ECONOMICS & MANAGEMENT

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**ACHIEVING INCLUSIVE GROWTH THROUGH MGNREGA AMONG THE RURAL POOR IN INDIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The focus of the government in recent years has shifted from promoting Incredible India to building Inclusive India. Inclusive growth needs to be achieved in order to reduce poverty, to create additional gainful employment and other social and economic disparities, and also to sustain economic growth. Inclusive growth thus seeks to broaden the flow of benefits of policies towards the currently excluded sections. However, for achieving inclusive growth, it is essential that the diffusion of opportunities be supported with good governance and accountability. Now, the planning commission included inclusive growth for the poor in the growth and development process. MGNREGA is one of the important acts for the rural people to include in the growth process. It is helpful in reducing poverty in rural areas by providing 100 days guaranteed wage employment and to create infrastructures and helpful in raising the standard of living of the rural people by under taking Labour-intensive tasks like creating infrastructure for water harvesting, drought relief and flood control. In this back ground, the present study made an attempt to assess the need and importance to build Inclusive India and emphasizes on its imperativeness on inclusive growth and aims at examining the effectiveness of MGNREGA on excluded section of the rural areas. It presents the opportunities available for building an inclusive India. The main objectives of the study are to examine the impact of MGNREGA on some of the social and economic factors of the rural people such as employment and wages. The study is based on secondary data and some of the findings of the study on aforesaid objectives to be discussed in the paper.*

**KEYWORDS**

Inclusive growth, MGNREGA, Employment generation, excluded section.

**INTRODUCTION**

Reforms undertaken in the early 1990s made India one of the world's fastest growing economies. The boom of the IT industry and improved industrial production created an atmosphere of optimism, which led to the coining of phrases, such as Incredible India, India Shining, and India 2020 around the end of the millennium. The Indian growth story has been one of high Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth but primarily driven by the growth in services sector. Not all sectors of the economy have grown at the same pace as is reflected in the relatively low agricultural growth rate, low-quality employment, poor education, inadequate healthcare services, rural-urban divide, social inequalities, and regional disparities. Growth that is not inclusive affects the society, the economy, and the polity.

India's growth has primarily benefited its urban elite and middle class population who are engaged largely in the fast-growing services sector. The Indian middle class, defined as those consuming between 2 and 20 US dollars per day, has grown by about 205 million between 1990 and 2008. However, around 70 percent of the poor are from rural areas, where there is a lack of basic social and infrastructure services, such as healthcare, roads, education, and drinking water. Stunted agricultural growth, relatively high food prices, and low rural wages, insufficient government spending on rural development and obsolete infrastructure are key determinants of rural poverty. Significant interstate as well as intrastate regional disparities continue to exist in India. Low growth rates and poor public services in the poorer states further widens the disparity in development.

Around 58 percent of the workers in India are involved in the agricultural sector. Despite this, the contribution of agricultural and allied sectors in the GDP is only around 14%. Hence, for the removal of poverty, unemployment and disparities it is imperative that the rural farm and nonfarm sectors be promoted. Agriculture continues to suffer from fragmented land holdings and water availability problems. Further, it is vulnerable to crop procurement prices and weather conditions. Poor monsoons lead to crop failures and subsequently in debt repayment distress for farmers. An estimated 86% of the Indian workforce is engaged in the informal or unorganized sector; however, the quality of employment remains a problem. Workers in this sector have virtually no social security. A report by World Bank suggests that, inclusive growth approach takes a longer term perspective as the focus is on generating productive employment rather than on direct redistribution of income as a means of improving financial well-being of the excluded groups.

In India, more than 70 percent people live in rural areas and among rural population, marginalized sections of the Society is more vulnerable. India already achieved a very impressive growth rate of more than 8 per cent in the Eleventh plan, but the country is still facing the problem of mass poverty, especially in the rural areas. This needs special attention by the government. Successive governments have initiated several projects, such as Jawahar Rozgar Yojna, Integrated Rural Development Program, Rural Housing Scheme, and Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana to promote inclusive growth in India. In recent years the government has done a commendable work by enacting employment guarantee act i.e. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in 2005. The Act was enacted in 2005 and came into force on February 2, 2006. Initially, it was introduced in 200 most backward districts and latter on in April 1, 2008, implemented in all the districts, except the districts with hundred per cent urban. The Act gives the legal right to the rural people to get at least 100 days employment, which is expected to reduce the poverty level in the rural areas. The present study mainly deals with the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, how it is helpful in reducing poverty in rural areas and improve socio economic life by providing 100 days guaranteed wage employment. The secondary data for this purpose collected through secondary sources provided by the planning commission, MIS report on MGNREGA and other sources. The data has been analyzed to know the impact of MGNREGA on the employment and income of the rural people

**STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The statement of the research problem is to address the need and importance of building Inclusive India. It also presents the opportunities available for building an inclusive India. The study aims at identifying the variables such as man days of employment generated and wage rates which lead to the inclusion of excluded rural poor and their growth. It also examines the challenges, problems & impact of MGNREGA on some of the social and economic factors of the rural people.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The present research study sets the following objectives;

1. To analyses the need and importance to build Inclusive India.
2. To assess the impact of MGNREGA on man days of employment generated in rural areas.
3. To examine the wage rates and its variation among different states.

**RELEVANCE AND NEED TO BUILD INCLUSIVE INDIA**

It is relevant for the present Economic and Social conditions of the Indian Economy. Because of its nearly 1 billion inhabitants, (an estimated 350-450 million) are below the poverty line. According to the new World Bank's estimate on poverty, based on 2005 data, India has 456 million people, 41.6 percent of its population, living below the new international poverty line of \$1.25 (PPP) per day and more than 400 millions are unemployed. Generation of productive

employment (decent work) for labourforce in the economy is very essential, as employment is a key to inclusive growth. Employment generation in all sectors, regions and for all socio-economic groups Particularly (1) for poorer sections of population, (2) backward regions, (3) lagging sectors and (4) SC / ST / OBC / women etc Inclusion of small enterprises / producers preferably in a decentralized framework Controlling inequalities and disparities

TABLE-1: EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN MILLION PERSON YEARS (BY CDS BASIS)

Items	1983	1993-94	1999-00	2004-05	CAGR 1983 to 1993-94	CAGR1993-94 to 1999-2000	CAGR1999-00 to 2004-05
Population (Millions)	718.10	893.68	1005.05	1092.83	2.11	1.98	1.69
Labour Force(Millions)	263.82	334.20	364.88	419.65	2.28	1.47	2.84
Work force(Millions)	239.49	313.93	338.19	384.91	2.61	1.25	2.62
Unemployment Rate (%)	9.22	6.06	7.31	8.28	NA	NA	NA
No. of unemployed	24.34	20.27	26.68	34.74	NA	NA	NA

Source: various rounds of NSS data

The above table1 shows the growth rate of population, labour force, work force and unemployment in India. Estimates on employment and unemployment on CDS basis indicate that employment growth during 1999-2000 to 2004-05 has accelerated significantly as compared to the growth witnessed during 1993-94 to 1999-2000. During 1999-2000 to 2004-05 about 47 million work opportunities were created. Only 24 million during the period between 1993-94 and 1999-00. Nearly 35 million of labour force was unemployed.

To tackle all the above cited problems it is essential to implement inclusive policies. MGNREG one among such policies. The most important feature of the act is that, it is inclusive in nature as a result of the basic objective and vision of the act. The act targeted the growth and development of the economy with the aims of poverty reduction among the rural people through employment generation. The act not says about only employment generation, but guarantees all the rural people without distinction of below poverty line, for at least 100 days. The act for employment generation is certainly distinct from earlier employment generation schemes which never given a legal right to demand employment from the government. The following goals of the MGNREGA bring into force to make the rural people inclusive.

1. Social protection for the most vulnerable people living in India.
2. Livelihood Security for the poor through creation of durable assets, improved water security, soil conservation and higher land productivity.
3. Drought proofing and flood management in rural India.
4. Empowerment of the socially disadvantaged, especially women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, through the process of 'a rights-based' legislation.
5. Strengthening decentralized, participatory planning through convergence of various anti-poverty and livelihood initiatives.
6. Deepening democracy at the grass-roots by strengthening Panchayat Raj Institutions.
7. Effecting greater transparency and accountability in governance.

### NREGA KEY TO INDIA'S FOOD SECURITY

Raising the productivity of the rain fed areas of which the backward districts constitute 60 per cent is an imperative if we were to meet the goal of national food security in the coming years. Estimates show that even in the most optimistic scenario of further irrigation development in India, nearly 40 per cent of national demand for food in 2020 will have to be met through increasing the production of rain fed dry lands agriculture. Nearly 65 per cent of the national unutilized irrigation potential is in the eastern parts of the country, comprising the medium to high rainfall regions of West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, eastern Uttar Pradesh and northern AP, all NREGA areas. These areas also form the chunk of India's degraded lands. India needs to treat 125 million Ha of land under soil and this will take 75 years to do so under the watershed development programmes. For the government to complete this by 2020, it has to allocate Rs 10,000 crore every year for the next 15 years. The NREGA being a scheme with focus on rejuvenation of ecology can bear 50 per cent of the cost to make the attempt feasible. (Source: Report of the Technical Committee on Watershed Programmes in India, Department of Land Resource, Ministry of Rural Development, January 2006).

The inclusiveness of MGNREGA can be evaluated with the actual performance in terms of employment generation and marginalized groups participation in the schemes. In the financial year 2012-13 alone, MGNREGA provided employment to 3.2 crore households, over 88 crore person-days of work. Over the last seven years, MGNREGA has generated nearly 1,296 crore persons –days of work. The share of SCs and STs during 2006-07 to 2012-13 has been 28 per cent and 23 percent respectively. The women occupied an agreeable share of 47% on an average during the 2006-7 to 2012-13. It has been depicted in the following table3

TABLE -2: PERFORMANCE OF MGNREGA (FY 2006-07 TO FY 2012-13)

	2006-07 200 districts)	2007-08 330 districts	2008-09(All rural districts)	2009-10(All rural districts)	2010-11(All rural districts)	2011-12(All rural districts)	2012-13(All rural districts)	Total 2006-07 to 2012-13
No. of households provided employment (in crores)	2.1	3.4	4.5	5.3	5.5	5.1	3.2	
	person	days	in	crores				
Total	90.5	143	216.3	283.6	257.2	216.7	88.3	1296
SCs	23(23%)	39.4(27%)	63.4(29%)	86.5(30%)	78.8(31%)	47.7(22%)	20.3(23%)	359(28%)
STs	33(36%)	42(29%)	55(25%)	58.7(21%)	53.6(21%)	39.7(18%)	13.3(15%)	295(23%)
woman	36(40%)	61(43%)	103.6(48%)	136.4(48%)	122.7(48%)	103.7(48%)	48.3(55%)	612(47%)
Average person days per employed households	43days	42 days	48 days	54 days	47 days	43 days	28 days	
Works in lakhs								
Works taken up	8.4	17.9	27.8	46.2	51	42.1	28.6	222
Works completed	3.9	8.2	12.1	22.6	25.9	19.6	4.3	97

Source: MGNREGA (official website), <http://www.mgnrega.nic.in>

The below table 4 shows the Stipulated daily minimum wage and average NREGA WAGE actual paid. In majority of the states the actual wage paid was less than that of stipulated daily minimum wage'



TABLE 3: VARIATIONS IN WAGE PAYMENT

States	Stipulated daily minimum wage	Average NREGA wage actually paid
Andhra Pradesh	Rs 80	Rs 80
Chhattisgarh	Rs 67	Rs 62.63
Jharkhand	Rs 76.68	Rs 68
Karnataka	Rs 74	Rs 68
Madhya Pradesh	Rs 61.37	Rs 50
Orissa	Rs 70	Rs 65
Rajasthan	Rs 73	Rs 65
Tamil Nadu	Rs 80	Rs 80
Uttar Pradesh	Rs 100	60
West Bengal	Rs 68	Rs 68

Source: Union ministry of rural development, field visit information provided by NREGA workers and officials.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The scheme will

1. Increase in average annual income of households by providing employment
2. Increase in the productivity of small and marginal land holdings
3. Increase Quality and construction of assets like water tanks to overall water availability and groundwater.

In order to achieve inclusive growth, holistic and integrated solutions are needed to facilitate rapid and sustainable growth India has a huge potential to be a role model for this century if the efforts at the inclusive growth by the government and private sector succeed. It can be suggested that policies are needed to implement MGNREGA more efficiently and to improve the quality of the works.

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