

A RESEARCH STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME ON THE RURAL MARGINAL PRODUCERS IN WEST BENGAL

Prianka Sengupta¹
Kunal Kanti Hazra²
Professor (Dr.) Modan Mohan Chel³

ABSTRACT

More than 55% of the total tribal population of India are living in central India like Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh and Himalayan, Western India, the Dravidian region and Andaman, Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands. According to D.N Majumdar, tribes as social group with popular association endogamous with not any particular of functions governed by tribal ruler or otherwise, united in language or dialect recognizing social distance with other tribes or castes. The state of West Bengal constitutes conjoining urban, rural and tribal characteristics by maintaining its divergent geo-political situations, socio-economic living conditions and varied demographic constellations. Governing the state with a balancing act of maintaining equilibrium among these dynamics has been yet a challenge. However, the government through its state machineries and support of the civil societies has been endeavouring in maximizing the delivery of services and implementing the schemes and programmes by reaching out to every section of society equitably. The state government has felt the need of implementing “Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme” (hereafter MGNREGS) as a rural and tribal people's entitlement for their economic engagements and builds their village infrastructures. The present paper deals with the impact of this largest state funded public employment scheme on marginal producers in the state of West Bengal, which becomes a favourable region for the implementation of this schemes from the standpoint of its socio-economic, geo-political and demographic characteristics. The present study finds that, the people of the state have demand for the jobs under the scheme. The state government has been playing a crucial role in implementing the scheme on a priority basis to provide employment to the people of the rural areas and tribal belts of the state.

Key words: MGNREGS, Marginal Producers, Rural Areas and Tribal Areas of West Bengal.

¹Junior Research Fellow, Department of Political Science, School of Social Science, Adamas University, Kolkata, Email: priyankasengupta0006@gmail.com

²Research Scholar & Assistant Professor, Department of Education, School of Social Science, Seacom Skills University, Birbhum, Email: hazrakunal1985@gmail.com

³Professor & Head of the Department, Department of Education, School of Social Science, Seacom Skills University, Birbhum, Email: mathmmc@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION:

“Tribal rights with regards to lands and forests should be respected, The development of tribal's along the line of their own genesis without imposing anything on them, attempts should be made to train and build up a team of tribal themselves to do the work of administration and development”

-Jawaharlal Nehru

Tribes are the son of nature. There are approximately two hundred million tribal people which constitute 4% of the entire global population. In India, they are 10,42,81,034 persons about 104.3 million people are belong to Scheduled Tribe(ST) in different states and union territories, constituting 8.6 per cent of the country's total population(Census of 2011). Generally, they are living in inaccessible forest and hill areas and depend on agriculture or cultivators for their livelihood.

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).

“Tribal rights with regards to lands and forests should be respected, The development of tribal's along the line of their own genesis without imposing anything on them, attempts should be made to train and build up a team of tribal themselves to do the work of administration and development”-
Jawaharlal Nehru.

The policy makers did not clearly defined the term 'tribe' but they defined the term 'Scheduled Tribes' under Article 342 any tribe or tribal community or part of or group within any tribe or tribal community is Scheduled Tribe for the purpose of the constitution. Tribes have various features viz.

Geographical Isolation; Tribes live mostly in far-flung areas of remote forests and inaccessible hill areas and isolated from the mainstream of national life.

Backwardness; A number of tribes work in primary sector and dependent on agriculture either as labourers or as cultivators. The level of tribal economy is very unsatisfactory which is based nature and used indigenous technology and they are also live below poverty line and their literacy level and health status is poor.

Distinctive culture; Language and Religion; they have rich culture, traditions, language and religion which is different from non-tribes.

Shyness of Contact; they feel shy to contact with other culture peoples or non-tribal.

The commissioner of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (1952)^[3] has listed some features for the tribal people like

- a) They are found in remote forests and inaccessible hill-tracts.
- b) They are belong to their own stocks such as Negritos, Australoid and Mangoloids.

- c) They like their primitive occupation such as collecting of forest produce, hunting, shifting cultivation, rope-making.
- d) They speak the common tribal dialect and most of them are carnivorous.
- e) They live to be naked or semi-naked.
- f) They have a unique culture like drinking and dancing, singing, barding and other activities such as tattoo-making, acrobatics and magic/trickery.
- g) They also prefer primitive religion known as 'Aminist' in which they worship ghost and sprits.

During the princely and colonial period, the tribes had a very disappointing life as the British government followed a policy of isolation. The socio-economic condition of the tribal people is very vulnerable. After Independence, The central government has been making serious efforts since 1952 to give a dignified life to the Tribal people beside the constitutional rights under Article 15 (4), 244 (1), 339, Fifth and Sixth schedule, as well the reservation policy. In this context, our first Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru showed deep interest in the development of the tribal people. He launched a programme that is called 'Panchsheel'. Otherwise it is known as 'Tribal Panchsheel'. This panchsheel are divided into five points, these are-

- i. The people should develop along lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything of them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional art and culture.
- ii. The tribal right in land and forests should be respected.
- iii. We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical people from outside will no doubt be need, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing to many outsiders into tribal territory.
- iv. We should not over administer these areas or overwhelm them with multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through and not in rivalry to their own social and cultural instructions and
- v. We should guide results not by statistics or the amount of money spend but the quality of human character that is involved.

There are number of acts which provide safeguards for the interest of the scheduled tribes, viz.

- Protection of Civil Right Act(1955)^[8]
- Forest Conservation Act(1980)^[8]
- Bonded labour Act(1986)^[8]
- Child labour Act(1986)^[8]
- Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Act(1989)^[19]
- Panchayats(Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act(PESA), 1966^[19]
- The scheduled tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights Act)(FRA), 2006^[19].

About the demand of the scheme is observed in the last four financial years “ (2013-2017) data analysis. It is found that, the budget allocations of the scheme show there was a consistent demand of employment under the Act. The website of the ministry of Rural Development, Government of India depicts that, the state of West Bengal in the financial year (FY) 2013-2014 had the total budget allocation of 595 lakhs rupees against Persondays Generated requirement budget of 711.82 lakhs rupees; FY 2014-2015 was 633.13 lakhs rupees against Persondays Generated requirement budget of 535.4 lakhs rupees; FY 2015-2016 was 760.06 lakhs rupees against Persondays Generated requirement budget of 894.46 lakhs rupees; and FY 2016-2017 was 800 lakhs rupees against Persondays Generated requirement budget of 800 lakhs rupees. In the calculation, it is observed that, the state has a deficit budget of 129.88 lakhs rupees. For the FY 2017-2018 the budget allocation has

been 900 lakhs rupees and the Persondays Generated so far has been 139.85 lakhs rupees that is more than 15% of the total allocated budget that has been implemented so far. Due to the effect of demonetization, it is predicted that more number of employments probably required to be generated. Besides, the fate of monsoon will also put a condition on the determination of the requirement of the budget. But the major concern felt by the participants of the scheme face is non-payment of wages on time. Recently, the Hon^{ble} Supreme Court expressed a concern regarding the nonpayment of wages to the MGNREGA workers on time by Government of India (the Supreme Court Case Writ Petition (C) No. 857/2015).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

Shalini Nair (2016)^[1] argued that the number of persondays generated by women increased significantly but for few states like Maharashtra and Uttarakhand showed decreased level over the year.

Dinesha et. al. (2015)^[1] tried to understand how MGNREGA enables inclusive development. An attempt is made to analyze whether the program is really enabling Inclusive Economic Development using simple statistical tools. The study found that MGNREGA has made significant impact on the lives of backward communities and in the process making them a part of Economic Development. Gupta and Ahmad (2015) conducted a study in district Rajouri of J&K state to examine the impact and durability of the assets created under MGNREGA. A few recommendations have also been made to further improve the quality of assets created under the program.

Gangadhara Rao (2014)^[1] had made an attempt in the present paper to estimate the transformation in rural labour in terms of its composition and wages earned by it by analyzing field data collected from 10 villages from five districts located in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

Surendra Singh (2013)^[1] indicated that Bundelkhand region of M.P. has a backward area and in this area MGNREGA had not provided 100 days job guarantee to who are willing to do jobs under this Scheme. Irregularities also found in implementation of MGNREGA in this area. Like Mustor roll was not prepared properly & wages inequalities between women and men. But another picture is that it provided some amount of jobs for peoples in this area. In Bundelkhand region government data shows that jobs were provided under MGNREGA but social & individual researches could not find them. In many cases found that jobs were provided to real beneficiaries and in some cases wages were not given after completion of work. Unemployment allowance which is another safe guard of this scheme not provided who wants jobs but unfortunately jobs were not provided within 15 days of jobs demanding.

Jyoti Poonia (2012)^[23] women in Kerala who were not working previously have started to work on MGNREGA sites as the minimum wage under the MGNREGA is far greater than the agricultural wage.

H. Subrahmanyam (2011)^[22] compares women education in India at present and Past. Author highlighted that there has a good progress in overall enrolment of girl students in schools. The term empower means to give lawful power or authority to act. It is the process of acquiring some activities of women.

M. Bhavani Sankara Rao (2011)^[22] has highlighted that health of women members of SHG have certainly taken a turn to better. It clearly shows that health of women members discuss among themselves about health related problems of other members and their children and make them aware of various Government provisions specially meant for them.

Doepke M. Tertilt M. (2011)^[22] Does Female Empowerment Promote Economic Development? This study is an empirical analysis suggesting that money in the hands of mothers benefits children. This study developed a series of non-cooperative family bargaining models to understand what kind of frictions can give rise to the observed empirical relationship.

Duflo E. (2011)^[22] Women's Empowerment and Economic Development, National Bureau of Economic Research Cambridge The study argues that the inter relationships of the Empowerment and Development are probably too weak to be self-sustaining and that continuous policy commitment to equality for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women.

Who is a Marginal Producer?

The Persons engaged in an activity connected with, or related to, primary produce³; people engaged individually or a group in activity that produces a small amount of a product or crop with high production costs and little or no profit. As a working definition for this study marginal producer is understood and considered by the researcher as all the households of the rural and tribal villages who produces being engaged in agriculture, forest, fisheries, horticulture, poultry, art, craft and other farm and nonfarm or off farm activities at an individual or group capacity. The marginal producers often sell their produces in the market with a very lesser or no profit or even sometimes loss. It is also situation for them that, they either sometimes have to remain unemployed for a longer period, underemployed or disguisedly employed most of the time living in their villages or hamlets in the rural and tribal areas. Looking into the general situations in the rural and tribal demographic situations of the state, the present study categorically considers and exclusively deals with the SCs, STs and Women as marginal producers who have been engaged in the abovementioned activities living in the rural and tribal areas of Purulia and Burbhum districts of West Bengal.

A Brief Outline of the Scheme :

The flagship scheme under a central legislation in its nature and scope for providing public employment in anywhere in the world, the MGNREGA completed a decade of its existence in the country in 2016. Amidst political oppositions and policy differences between the ruling political party and the opposition, the scheme continues to have widespread acceptance of the republic for its relevancy, necessity and demand in the country.

The MGNREGA was notified on September 5, 2005 and implemented in three phases covering all districts over time. Although the focus was on augmenting wage employment, it is ambitious in scope and aims to accomplish a number of things. Amongst other things, the Act envisaged that the works undertaken as part of the scheme would strengthen natural resource management and address causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation and soil erosion, thereby encouraging sustainable development. While there is a fairly rich documentation of the impacts of the MGNREGA as a safety net programme on wages, income and consumption, a very little is known about the nature of assets created and their impacts on peoples' lives. Indeed, the MGNREGA is frequently thought of as a poverty alleviation scheme through the creation of wage employment for unskilled labourers and not much else. The fact that, it is not simply a work creation programme but derives its legitimacy from being an asset creation programme is often overlooked. When it is not, there is a widespread belief that assets created under MGNREGA are of dubious usefulness.

In order to eradicate poverty in rural areas, several anti-poverty programmes like the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) of 1980-89; Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme

(RLEGP) of 1983- 89; Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY) of 1989-1990; Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) of 1993-99; Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) of 1999-2002; Sampoorna Grameen Rojgar Yojana (SGRY) of 2001; National Food For Work Programme (NFFWP) of 2004 etc, were launched by the Central Government in phased manner and implemented through the State Governments across the country. Amongst the above NREGA was one of the most popular and successful programme which was renamed on October 2, 2009 as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

The broad aim of the Act as stated by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India is “enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing hundred days of wage-employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work”.

The Rationale, Significance and Objectives of the Study:

Studies reveal that MGNREGA has helped rural households in a sustained manner to smoothen the consumption between the agricultural peak season and lean season. Klonner and Oldiges (2013, 2014) reported in their research that, the poverty gap between Phase I and Phase II districts has decreased. In the present study, it was found that, between the Phase I and Phase III, Purulia in the Phase I district out performs that of the Phase III district of Purulia. The rationale and significance of the study therefore, has been self-explanatory in the topic itself. The researcher dealt with the subject from its bottom-up, people-centered, demand-driven, self-selecting, rights-based and marginalized & vulnerable groups “ inclusive growth-oriented design. The present research has been a humble attempt stemmed from the self-fulfilling interest that proceeded towards the investigations that ultimately resulted to contribute to the policy directives for the effective and efficient implementation of the scheme for the aggressive socio-economic upward mobility of the rural marginal producers. It primarily aimed at identifying issues pertaining to the effective and efficient implementation of MGNREGS in the state of West Bengal; studying the impact of MGNREGS on the process of promotion livelihoods of the rural marginal producers in the state of West Bengal; and studied the impact of MGNREGS in reducing distress migration in the state of West Bengal.

<u>JOURNY OF MGNERGA</u>		
SI No.	Dated	Issues
1	August 25th, 2005	NREGA enacted by the legislation of Indian parliament
2	September 5th, 2005	Assent the act to the president of India
3	September 7th, 2005	Notified the act in the Gazette of India
4	February 2nd, 2006	Came into force in 200 districts of the rural areas
5	April 1st, 2007	113 more districts were selected in this time for the rural areas
6	May 15th, 2007	17 more districts were selected in this time for the rural areas
7	April 1st, 2008	Notified in the remaining rural districts
8	October 2nd, 2009	Renamed the act as MGNREGA
<i>Source: http://www.mgnrega.nic.in</i>		

METHODOLOGY:

The present study collected information and data from both primary and secondary sources for generalising (i.e., statistical inferences). The methodology included reference to the publication research, executed structured interview schedules and conducted some case studies. It also included present and past information about employment programmes in the country. The study followed mixed methods research design. The sample size of total 300 (50:50) Job Card holder households were purposively selected from the two districts falling under the Phase I and Phase III categories to understand the impact of the scheme on the marginal producers. The phase one district included Purulia and the Phase three district has been Purulia. The data were collected from the 10 GPs i.e. 5 GPs each from the two districts. The sample GPs were selected based on the highest percentage of registration of the marginal producers (SCs, STs and Women) in the scheme. Proportionate random sampling method has been followed for gathering participants or sample units for this study since the population/marginal producers are composed of SCs, STs and Women and thus, their number relative to the entire population determines the number of participants or sample units from each category.

Table No-1 (No. of workers registered in MGNREGA in the sample GPs of Katwa block of Bardhaman district)

GPs	SC		ST		WOMEN		Total Sample Units
	% of registration	Sample Units	% of registration	Sample Unit	% of registration	Sample Units	
Ketugram-I	19.53	5	46.64	12	50.26	13	30
Ketugram-II	11.68	3	50.14	14	50.08	13	30
Mongalkote	9.07	3	49.03	13	50.14	14	30
Katwa- I	13.73	4	39.37	11	51.79	15	30
Katwa- II	7.52	2	34.9	12	49.88	16	30
Total	--	17	--	62	--	71	150

**Sample drawn based on the information on the MGNREGA, 2005, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India (West Bengal)*

The above table depicts the respondents who have been registered to volunteer to do the manual work under the MGNREGA. The table explains about the sampling method of the present study. The researcher has used the existing data of the government on the work registration to select the sample units for the study. Thus, the present study follows proportionate random sampling method to select the respondents from among the registered workers who are the marginal producers in this study. In Purulia district, Manbazar block has been purposefully selected as the block is one among the largest geopolitical regions of the district consisting of 17 GPs and work of MGNREGA in progress. It was found that women are the largest participants of the scheme constituting 49.88% and therefore their representation was highest in the sampling i.e. 71 sample units out of total 150. Since, Purulia district is the tribal area, it was found that, the tribal participants are the majority in availing benefits under the scheme constituting 34.9 percent so their representation has been proportionately 62 sample units and SCs are the minority only having 7.52 percent in the workers "registration and therefore, 2 sample units have been randomly selected for the present study.

Table No- 2 (No. of workers registered in MGNREGA in the sample GPs of Manbazar Block of Purulia district)

GPs	SC		ST	WOMEN			Total Sample Units
	% of registration	Sample Units	% of registration	Sample Unit	% of registration	Sample Units	
Bankata	64.07%	17	1.56%	1	48.12%	12	30
Bankati	47.07%	14	0%	0	50.31%	16	30
Baragajari	40.59%	13	0%	0	49.20%	17	30
Bhalubasa	48%	14	0.07%	0	49.31%	16	30
Chhotsagen	46.97%	13	0.20%	0	48.94%	17	30
Total	--	71	--	1	--	78	150

Sample drawn based on the information on the MGNREGA, 2005, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India (West Bengal)

The above table depicts the selection of the sample units for the study from Purulia district taking the government published data and basing upon the field situations. It was found that Purulia district gives somewhat a different picture that of Purulia district that has been depicted in the table 1. In table 2, it is shown that, the SC people are the highest registered MGNREGA workers having 46.97 percent and the sample units are of 71 against almost absence of people belonging to tribal community. However, in both the districts, women are the largest participants of the scheme. The table 2 shows that, 48.94 percent registered women worker for the scheme and therefore, the largest 78 sample units are represented from the women marginal producers for this study.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPATION :

The table shows that the proportion of the tribal to the tribal population of the States/Union Territory is highest in Lakshadweep (94.8%) followed by Mizoram (94.4%), Nagaland (86.5%), Meghalaya (86.1%), Arunachal Pradesh (68.8%) and Dadra & Nagar Haveli (52.0%), within the major states Chhattisgarh (30.6%) has the highest percentage of STs population followed by Jharkhand (26.2%) and West Bengal (22.8%). These populations are lowest in Uttar Pradesh (0.56%), Tamil Nadu (1.1%) and Bihar(1.28%), Kerala (1.45%) and Uttarakhand (2.89%).

Table No-1 Sows total population and proportion of Scheduled Tribes

Total population and proportion of Scheduled Tribes in each state to the total state and National population				
S.No.	State/Union Territory	Total Scheduled tribe population	Percentage of Scheduled tribe population to total state population	Percentage of scheduled tribes in the state to total scheduled tribe population in India
1	Madhya Pradesh	15,316,784	21.08	14.68
2	Maharashtra	10,510,213	9.35	10.07
3	Odisha	9,590,756	22.84	9.19
4	Rajasthan	9,238,534	13.47	8.85

Total population and proportion of Scheduled Tribes in each state to the total state and National population				
S.No.	State/Union Territory	Total Scheduled tribe population	Percentage of Scheduled tribe population to total state population	Percentage of scheduled tribes in the state to total scheduled tribe population in India
5	Gujarat	8,917,174	14.75	8.55
6	Jharkhand	8,645,042	26.2	8.29
7	Chhattisgarh	7,822,902	30.62	7.5
8	Andhra Pradesh	5,918,073	6.99	5.67
9	West Bengal	5,296,953	5.8	5.07
10	Karnataka	4,248,987	6.95	4.07
11	Assam	3,884,371	12.44	3.72
12	Meghalaya	2,555,861	86.14	2.45
13	Nagaland	1,710,973	86.47	1.64
14	Jammu & Kashmir	1,493,299	11.9	1.43
15	Bihar	1,336,573	1.28	1.28
16	Tripura	1,166,813	31.75	1.11
17	Uttar Pradesh	1,134,273	0.56	1.08
18	Mizoram	1,036,115	94.43	0.99
19	Arunachal Pradesh	951,821	68.78	0.91
20	Manipur	902,740	35.12	0.86
21	Tamil Nadu	794,697	1.1	0.76
22	Kerala	484,839	1.45	0.46
23	Himachal Pradesh	392,126	5.71	0.37
24	Uttarakhand	291,903	2.89	0.27
25	Sikkim	206,360	33.79	0.19
26	Goa	149,275	10.23	0.14
Union Territories				
1	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	178,564	51.95	0.17
2	Lakshadweep	61,120	94.79	0.05
3	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	28,530	7.49	0.02
4	Daman & Diu	15,363	6.31	0.01
Source: Census of India, 2011.				

Out of the total Scheduled Tribe population of 104.3 million, more than half of the ST population is concentrated in the state of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Jharkhand and Gujarat. State wise Madhya Pradesh is the highest percentage of tribal population to total population of the country (14.68%), followed by Maharashtra (10.07%), Odisha (9.19%), Rajasthan (8.85%),

Gujarat(8.55%), Jharkhand(8.29%), Chhattisgarh(7.50%), Andhra Pradesh(5.67%), West Bengal(5.07%), Karnataka(4.07%), Assam(3.72%), Meghalaya(2.45%) and the remaining states represent 11.6% of the tribal population. Out of the total ST population in the country, 11.3 % are living in rural areas, whereas, only 2.8% in urban areas.

The total no of person days generated by women in all the districts of West Bengal and their respective ratio throughout the State. It is clear from the above table that in FY 2016-17 Burdwan is the leading district in the state to generate highest number of person days i.e., 20.98% in FY 2015-16 Coochbehar was in the leading position with 12.32% person days, in FY 2014-15 & FY 2013-14 again Burdwan was the leading district and in FY 2012-13 Purba Medinipur was in the leading position with 11.33% person days. On the basis of above data we can get a mixed result regarding the performance of MGNREGA in the districts of West Bengal. Some districts like Burdwan, Coochbehar and Paschim Medinipur are maintaining an increasing trend to some extent but the performance of districts like Alipurduar, Siliguri Mahakuma Parisad and Uttar Dinajpur are very bad. Rest of the districts are maintaining both the increasing and decreasing trend.

General findings are brought and analysis has been made to the present study using secondary and field data on the impact of MGNREGA on the marginal producers in the state of West Bengal. For the optimum accuracy and generalization of the findings one district from the tribal areas and the other one from the coastal rural areas have been purposefully selected.

Report of the Committee for Revision of MGNREGA Operational Guidelines submitted to the Ministry of Rural Development Government of India stated that, the MGNREGA led to major increases in wages of rural workers. When the fact (attested by NSSO data on “landed labourers”) was recognised that, the majority of MGNREGA workers were impoverished small and marginal farmers, especially in the tribal areas, could see the direct impact MGNREGA has made on raising incomes of small and marginal farmers. The tightening of the labour market post-MGNREGA is a positive indicator of poverty alleviation and signals a pressure for technological advances that raise farm productivity in areas of relative labour shortage. This is the process of agrarian transformation the world-over.

Studies conducted by Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore; Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal; Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad and University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore have all concluded that, the MGNREGA works have had a positive impact on agricultural productivity. In one of the studies conducted in Chitradurga District of Karnataka, IISc found that MGNREGA works, besides enhancing agricultural productivity, successfully reduced water, soil and agricultural vulnerability. A study in Rajganpur block of Sundargarh district found that, a few durable assets had been created (Nayak, 2013).

Table 3: Distribution of Job Cards in the state of West Bengal

Job Cards	Figures
Total No. of Job Cards issued to the households	62.98 Lakhs
Total No. of Workers	166.25 Lakhs
Total No. of Active Job Cards of the households	28.9 Lakhs
Total No. of Active Workers	47.22 Lakhs
SC worker against active workers	16.67%
ST worker against active workers	34.45%

*Source: The MGNREGA, 2005, Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India (West Bengal)

The table 3 states that, the total 62.98 lakhs job cards have been issued to the adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work under the scheme but total No. of them constitute 166.25 lakhs. However, the active job cards of the households are not impressive as it stands at 28.9 lakhs active job cards of the households (less than 50 per cent). As regards the active workers from the active job cards of the households it is 47.22 lakhs that is merely 28.4 per cent out of which SC workers constitute 16.67 per cent and the STs 34.45 per cent.

The figure 1 shows about the creation of employment under the scheme of MGNREGA. It depicts that, in the district of Burdhaman 37 per cent of the respondents viewed that, the scheme has created employment opportunity but the majority of the respondents denied being so. The situation is not that encouraging in case of Purulia district as the figure shows it was only 23 per cent of the respondents viewed that, the scheme has created employment and the majority of the respondents are saying no creation of the employment under the scheme.

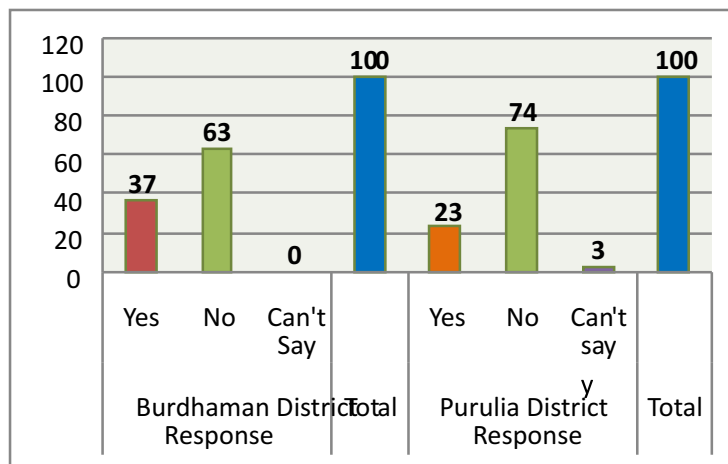
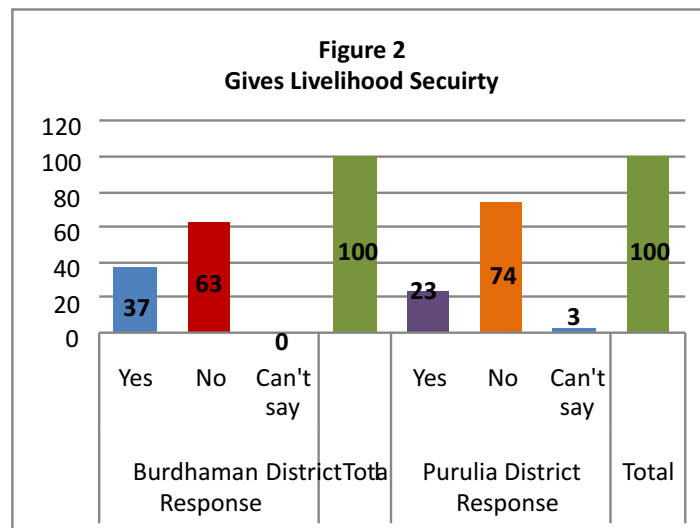


Figure 1 Creation of employment under MGNREGA Source: Field Study



Source: Field Study

The figure 2 depicts about giving livelihood security to the respondents. It is depicted in the figure that, 37 per cent of the respondents belonging to burdhaman district viewed that, the scheme under MGNREGA has provided them a sense of livelihood security as against 23 per cent of the respondents of Purulia district. The reason behind to be so as found out during the discussions with the respondents that, in general, there has been a lack of provisions of employment engagement of the respondents on their demand. Fulfilling the job demands as per the guidelines has been the major factor of developing a sense of livelihood security among the respondents under the scheme as stated by the respondents in the present study.

Table No-10: Multiple Responses on the Important Impact of MGNREGA on the Marginal Producers

Total population and proportion of Scheduled Tribes in each state to the total state and National population				
S.No.	State/Union Territory	Total Scheduled tribe population	Percentage of Scheduled tribe population to total state population	Percentage of scheduled tribes in the state to total scheduled tribe population in India
1	Madhya Pradesh	15,316,784	21.08	14.68
2	Maharashtra	10,510,213	9.35	10.07
3	Odisha	9,590,756	22.84	9.19
4	Rajasthan	9,238,534	13.47	8.85
5	Gujarat	8,917,174	14.75	8.55
6	Jharkhand	8,645,042	26.2	8.29
7	Chattisgarh	7,822,902	30.62	7.5
8	Andhra Pradesh	5,918,073	6.99	5.67
9	West Bengal	5,296,953	5.8	5.07
10	Karnataka	4,248,987	6.95	4.07
11	Assam	3,884,371	12.44	3.72
12	Meghalaya	2,555,861	86.14	2.45
13	Nagaland	1,710,973	86.47	1.64
14	Jammu & Kashmir	1,493,299	11.9	1.43
15	Bihar	1,336,573	1.28	1.28
16	Tripura	1,166,813	31.75	1.11
17	Uttar Pradesh	1,134,273	0.56	1.08
18	Mizoram	1,036,115	94.43	0.99
19	Arunachal Pradesh	951,821	68.78	0.91
20	Manipur	902,740	35.12	0.86
21	Tamil Nadu	794,697	1.1	0.76

Total population and proportion of Scheduled Tribes in each state to the total state and National population				
S.No.	State/Union Territory	Total Scheduled tribe population	Percentage of Scheduled tribe population to total state population	Percentage of scheduled tribes in the state to total scheduled tribe population in India
22	Kerala	484,839	1.45	0.46
23	Himachal Pradesh	392,126	5.71	0.37
24	Uttarakhand	291,903	2.89	0.27
25	Sikkim	206,360	33.79	0.19
26	Goa	149,275	10.23	0.14
Union Territories				
1	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	178,564	51.95	0.17
2	Lakshadweep	61,120	94.79	0.05
3	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	28,530	7.49	0.02
4	Daman & Diu	15,363	6.31	0.01
Source: Census of India, 2011.				

Source: Field Study

The table 10 depicts the multi responses of the respondents of both the districts exclusively about the impact of the scheme. The responses are optimistic and therefore, it provides a larger scope and ample of opportunity to the stakeholders of the scheme to understand the field reality of the implementation of the scheme and improve upon some areas that would make the scheme more people's need centric. It is shown in the table that the highest percentage of the respondents in both the districts of Burdwan (71%) and Purulia (78 per cent) feel that they have gained self-respect through the MGNREGA work. Employment opportunity gave them confidence and they were no more the absolute dependents of the local unorganized employers for their livelihoods. However, there were 17 per cent of the respondents from Purulia district, did not feel any difference in this regard.

As regard creation of the asset as one among other mandates of the scheme, the table 10 shows that 27 per cent of respondents of Burdwan district felt that, assets have been created through the scheme and the majority of the respondents (55 per cent) said that, they did not find any difference in this impact indicator. However, interestingly, in Purulia district the picture was different. Here, the majority of 73 per cent of the respondents said that, assets have been created through the scheme. About the impact on the agricultural wages, the above tables state that, 79 per cent of the respondents from Burdwan district felt that, it has impacted positively on their agricultural wages and the percentage showing 87 per cent in case of the respondents in Purulia district.

The scheme gave seasonal benefits to the respondents in both the districts. The table 10 depicts that in Burdwan district, the majority of 91 per cent of the respondents find the scheme benefiting them in

the offseason when they are not in their self-economic engagements. However, the matter was not that magnitudes in case of Purulia district as it is only 34 per cent of the respondents agreed to the point that, the scheme gave seasonal benefits. The respondents of this district of the opinion that, since the block is situated attached to capital city of Bhubaneswar, so their livelihoods are more depended on the city than the scheme.

The scheme has given space for strengthening grassroots processes of democracy as viewed by 29 per cent of the respondents from the Burdwan district and 7 per cent of the respondents of Purulia district. The majority of the respondents in both the district said that, there has been a need of strengthening the grassroots process of democracy infusing transparency and accountability in governance. It was found that, 25 per cent of the respondents from Burdwan viewed that, they were financially included due to the scheme as against 28 per cent of the respondents from Purulia district. On the women empowerment, the above table states that 69 per cent of the respondents from Burdwan viewed that, the scheme has a direct impact on the women empowerment as more than equal views of the respondents came from Purulia district i.e. 65 per cent. It was found that, 51 per cent of the respondents of Burdwan opined that there has been an active involvement of panchayat activities since the scheme rolled out as against 39 per cent in the district of Purulia. 89 per cent of the respondents belonging to Burdwan district viewed that, the scheme is more helpful during emergencies like flood, draught and employment crisis like demonization causing unemployment and 39 per cent of the respondents of Purulia district are of the same points of view.

On the points of checking migration as one among other mandates of the scheme, the table 10 shows that, 49 per cent of the respondents from the district of Burdwan stated that, the scheme has checked the distress migration from their areas to towns and cities. In the case of Purulia district the figure showing 38 per cent of the respondents who viewed the same.

From the above multiple response table, it is analyzed that, the scheme has in an average brought a positive impact on the lives of marginal producers of both the tribal and rural areas found in the present study.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY :

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.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS :

The MGNREGS is one among the most need and right based welfare schemes for the state of West Bengal. It will not be mistaken to view that, this scheme is the lifeline in the state from the standpoint of its socioeconomic, geopolitical and demographic situations and persistent inequality in their dynamical continuum. If efficiently dealt with, the scheme has adequate potentialities to eliminate those unequal elements of socioeconomic and geopolitical dynamics and that would lead to ensure society that is more equitable.

However, there are lapses in the implementation of the scheme that has to be overcome as earliest and to develop such thoughtful strategies to stop its repetitions. It is a general finding that payments of wages have been often delayed under the scheme and that needs to be checked. Awareness about

the scheme like the entitlements of the participants, the process of application, demand for jobs, compensation in case of failure on the part of the government and such other empowering information has to be disseminated on a priority basis. Laxities have also been observed in the governance of the scheme like, renewing the job cards and taking initiatives in providing employment opportunities, which has to be looked into urgently with a serious note. There is a plenty of good will existing among the participants and the locality for this scheme that needs to be nurtured and applied in the planning processes for making the scheme more of a success by optimizing relieving distress, abject poverty and checking abated migration of the rural and tribal people. By doing so will ensure that, there is a sign of an improving quality of life of the people manifested mainly through fulfilling their day to day needs of food and nutrition, good health and better education for their children.

REFERENCES

1. Ambasta, P, P S V Shankar and M Shah (2008): 'Two Years of NREGA: The Road Ahead', Economic & Political Weekly, February 23.
2. Bela Bhatia and Jean Dreze (2006), 'Employment Guarantee in Jharkhand: Ground Results', EPW, Vol XLI, No 29, July 22, 2006.
3. Chathukulam, Jos and K Gireesan (2006): 'Political Economy of Pre-Launch Preparedness of NREGA in Kerala', paper prepared for National Seminar on Panchayat Raj Institutions after 73rd Amendment Constitution: A New Deal for Rural India on August 19-20 at Tirupati, organised by AGRASRI.
4. Datta S. and V. Sharma (2010), State of India's Livelihood Report 2010, Sage, and New Delhi.
5. De, B. and B. Dasgupta (2009), 'Governance and Employment Generation in Rural Areas: A Case Study on NREGA in selected districts of West Bengal', The India Economy Review 2009, volume-6, September 2009.
6. De, B. and S. Jana (2011), 'An Analysis of Block Level Performance of NREGA in West Bengal', Vidyasagar University Journal of Economics, Volume-XV, 2010.
7. District Human Development Report: Bankura, 2007, HDRCC, Development and Planning Department, Government of West Bengal, April 2007
8. District Statistical Handbook: Bankura (2008), Bureau of Applied Economics and Statistics, Government of West Bengal, 2008
9. Drèze, J (2008): 'Employment Guarantee: Beyond Propaganda', the Hindu, January 11.
10. Ghosh J (2009), "Equity and Inclusion through public expenditure: the potential of the NREGA", Progoti.
11. Ghosh S., Trishna Satpathy and Aasha Kapur (2008), "National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme", Alternative Economic Survey, India 2007-08, p-223.
12. Government of India (2006): 'NREGA: Operational Guidelines 2006', Ministry of Rural Development, New Delhi, also available at www.nrega.nic.in Hirway, Indira (2008): 'Plan for Long Term', The Indian Express, February 2.
13. Menon, S (2008), "Right to Information Act and NREGA: Reflection on Rajasthan", MPRA Paper No: 7351.
14. Shah, M. (2007), 'Employment Guarantee, Civil Society and Indian Democracy', EPW, November 17, 2007

15. West Bengal Human Development Report, 2004, Development and Planning Department, Government of West Bengal, May 2004
16. Ahuja, Usha, Rani. Tyagi, Dushyant., Chauhan, Sonia., Choudhary, Khyaliram. (2012) "Impact of MGNREGA on Rural Employment and Migration: A Study in agriculturally Backward and agriculturally-advanced districts of Haryana" Agricultural Economics Research Review, Vol.24
17. S. P. Singh and D. K. Nauriyal, (2009), "System and Process Review and Impact Assessment of NREGS in the state of Uttarakhand", Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee, July 2009
18. Thomas, E.M, (2010) "The Relevance of NREGA in Ensuring a Corruption Less Wage Employment Programme and Women Empowerment - A Case Study" Retried from-http://www.nap.sipag.org/pdf/EM_THOMAS.pdf [9] Jandu, Navjyoti (2008) "Employment Guarantee and Women's Empowerment in Rural India" available at
- 19.http://www.righttofoodindia.org/data/navjyoti08_employment_guarantee_and_women's_empowerment.pdf
20. Pankaj, Ashok & Tankha, Rukmini (2010) "Empowerment Effects of the NREGS on Women Workers: A Study in Four States" Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 45, No. 30 (JULY 24-30, 2010), pp. 45-55
21. Sehgal M. S. Foundation (2015) "Identifying Backwardness of Region in West Bengal: A BlockLevel Analysis" Study sponsored by Research Division, NITI Ayog, Government of India, June 2015
22. MoRD (2014-15) "Annual Report, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, p 12. (www.rural.nic.in)
23. Dash J & K Behera K. (2010). "The State of Shamanistic Knowledge System in the Face of Globalizations: Need for a Policy Dialogue", in (Ed.). Ed.Behera M.C. & Jumyir Basar. Interventions and Tribal Development, Challenges before Tribes in India in the era of Globalization, New Delhi: Serials Publications.
24. <http://www.sociologyguide.com/tribal-society/>
25. <http://www.sociologyguide.com/tribal-society/tribal-struggles.php>
26. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_change
27. Nayak Smita, 2013, Impact of MGNREGA on Status of Tribal Women in West Bengal: A Case Study of Rajgangpur Block of Sundergarh District, Published in "Journal of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Vol. 2 No. 2, December 2013" [2]
28. http://jaesnet.com/journals/jaes/Vol_2_No_2_December_2013/2.pdf (Surfed on 17/04/2017)
29. West Bengal Economic Survey, 2014-15 [4]
30. Impact of Mgnrega on Status of Tribal Women in West Bengal: A Case Study of Rajgangpur Block of Sundergarh District by Dr. Smita Nayak published in Journal of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Vol. 2 No. 2, December 2013.