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AWARENESS OF MGNREGA IN LUNGLEI DISTRICT OF MIZORAM

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ABSTRACT **DOI No: 10.36713/epra21141** **Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra21141**

The issue of distribution has been ignored for years under the influence of various growth-centric Western development models, which were not designed for highly inegalitarian and unequal societies such as of India. India witnessed a series of social and political discontents in the reform phase which are not completely disconnected with the growth process. The MGNREGA is an attempt to address, although partially, the issue of distribution that has become more pressing in the reform phase of high growth and increasing inequality.

The MGNREGA Act aimed at providing livelihood security in rural India by providing work on demand to the rural households to do unskilled work for a period of 100 days at the prevailing minimum wage rate in the states (MGNREGA Act, 2005).

The study was based on primary and secondary data. The unit of analysis of the propose study was the individual MGNREGA workers in Lunglei district of the state of Mizoram. Both men and women MGNREGA workers who had job cards were the respondents for this study. The paper explores the level of awareness the job card holders have of MGNREGA in the Lunglei district of Mizoram.

KEYWORDS: ***MGNREGA, awareness, livelihood***

I.INTRODUCTION

In the reform phase, India has witnessed a series of social and political discontents which are not completely disconnected with the growth process. The issue of distribution has been ignored for years under the influence of various growth-centric Western development models, which were not designed for highly inegalitarian and unequal societies such as of India.

The MGNREGA is an attempt to address, although partially, the issue of distribution that has become more pressing in the reform phase of high growth and increasing inequality. To provide minimum days of employment via manual labour to all the rural households and reach all the sections of the society was vital. Accordingly, the government resolved to enact a suitable Act which will provide legal guarantee for at least 100 days of employment every year at minimum wages for at least one able-bodied person in every rural poor household. 100% cost towards unskilled wages and 75% towards skilled, semi-skilled and material was to be borne by Central Government and 25% of skilled, semi-skilled and material costs were to be contributed by the States. In addition, 6% administrative expenses are borne by the Centre for effective implementation of the Act.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, is an Act to provide for the enhancement of livelihood security of the households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work and for matters

connected therewith or incidental thereto. (MGNREGA ACT, 2005)

Unskilled wage was given Rs. 91/- per day as per the Minimum Wages, 1948, and enhanced to Rs.103/- per day during 2009 and the rate was enhanced annually since then to meet the requirement of the people. The wage rate for unskilled manual workers under MGNREGA for Mizoram state was Rs. 194/- which came into force on 1st of April, 2013. The unskilled wage rate at present is Rs. 233/- per day which came into force on the 1st of April, 2021. The funding pattern of MGNREGS is 95.05:4.95 between the Centre and the State respectively. The entire cost of wages for unskilled manual workers is paid by the Central Government. Lunglei is among the two districts selected for the implementation of MGNREGA along with Champhai district during the second phase in Mizoram in 2007.

MGNREGA Scheme in Lunglei Block, Lunglei District is as follows.

Table 1
MGNREGA in Lunglei Block

S. No	Villages in Lunglei Block	Household	Persons	Male	Female
1	Bazar Veng	2000	3851	1771	2080
2	Bualte	166	456	206	250
3	Buknuam	184	253	137	116
4	Chanmari	2670	5055	2414	2641
5	Chengpui	76	144	87	57
6	Chithar	119	242	117	125
7	College Veng	482	1234	610	624
8	Dawn	190	313	188	125
9	Electric Veng	2042	3174	1603	1571
10	Farm Veng	685	1549	809	740
11	Haulawng	796	1895	957	941
12	Hauruang	458	1394	751	649
13	Hlumte	68	155	81	74
14	Hmuntlang	46	129	70	59
15	Hrangchalkawn	328	801	421	380
16	Khawmawi	392	650	302	348
17	Luangmual	848	1619	686	933
18	Lunglawn	1524	3258	1785	1473
19	Lungpuizawl	239	501	266	235
20	Mamte	217	480	257	223
21	Mausen	129	283	137	146
22	Mualcheng S	280	691	373	318
23	Mualthuam N	484	1132	613	519
24	Mualthuam S	160	430	241	189
25	New Ralvawng	126	215	160	55
26	Old Ralvawng	25	25	11	14
27	Pukpui	700	1568	808	760
28	Rahsi Veng	1997	3805	1991	1815
29	Ramlaitui	230	323	191	132
30	Ramthar	1357	3032	1505	1528
31	Runtung	92	179	101	78
32	Sairep	91	212	108	104
33	Salem	629	1343	678	665
34	Sazaikawn	165	307	136	171
35	Sekhum	125	283	158	125
36	Serkawn	764	1891	942	949

37	Sethlun	412	1101	539	562
38	Tawipui N-I	260	583	288	295
39	Tawipui N-II	368	878	413	465
40	Tawipui S	616	1279	631	648
41	Thaizawl	139	332	155	177
42	Thangpui	66	103	47	56
43	Thangte	65	223	117	106
44	Theiriat	618	1583	714	869
45	Thingfal	651	1504	766	738
46	Thlengang	93	221	88	133
47	Thualthu	243	557	297	260
48	Thuampui	167	400	214	186
49	Vaisam	160	328	165	163
50	Vanhne	335	791	427	364
51	Venghlun	800	1668	807	861
52	Venglai	1171	2760	1324	1437
53	Zobawk N	384	905	440	465
54	Zobawk S	579	591	390	201
55	Zohnuai	505	1161	625	536
56	Zotlang	745	1839	812	1027
57	Zotuitlang	283	586	319	267
	Total	29544	62265	31249	31028

Source: www.ngrega.in

The above table, Table 1 featured the number of villages in Lunglei Block of Lunglei District. It also listed the number of households and number of persons engaged in MGNREGA. It also mentioned the number of male and female job card holders in each village. 3 villages namely Pukpui, Sethlun and Theiriat are selected randomly for the study.

In Pukpui village, there are 700 households, 1568 persons engaged in MGNREGA works where 808 are male and 760 are females.

In Sethlun village, here are 412 households, 1101 persons engaged in MGNREGA works where 539 are male and 562 are females.

In Theiriat village, here are 618 households, 1583 persons engaged in MGNREGA works where 714 are male and 869 are females.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pankaj[1] examined the empowerment effects of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme on rural women in Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. It argued that women workers have gained from the scheme primarily because of the paid employment opportunity, and benefits have been realised through income-consumption effects, intra-household effects, and the enhancement of choice and capability. Women have also gained to some extent in terms of realisation of equal wages under the NREGS, with long-term implications for correcting gender skewness and gender discriminatory wages prevalent in the rural labour market of India. Despite the difficulties and hurdles for women, prospects lie, inter alia, in their collective mobilisation, more so in laggard states.

Desai[2] advocated a new integrated, technology-led strategy to pull out of, what looks like, a vicious circle that agriculture is now caught in. The rapid growth of urban-based sectors during the reforms era has failed to accelerate agricultural growth or reduce poverty. This has been mainly because of inadequacies in providing the critical public goods on which farm growth thrives. Overcoming these inadequacies would facilitate achieving huge multiplier effects. For instance, rising farm incomes could mean more demand for services from the employment-intensive, non-tradable, rural non-farm sector. This, together with higher agricultural growth, would improve the rate of poverty decline. Since India's agriculture is land scarce and labour surplus, its growth requires augmenting land and labour using new technology. Such technology could be seed-centred, resource-centred or seed/breed-cum-resource-centred; the last being an integrated farming system. Agricultural policy in the reforms era has neglected all these options. This study advocates a location specific new technology based on integrated farming. Such technology will

[1]*Pankaj A, Tankha R (2010), 'Empowerment effects of the NREGS on Women Workers: A Study in Four States', Economic and Political Weekly , JULY 24-30, 2010, Vol. 45, No. 30 (JULY 24-30, 2010), pp. 45-55*

[2]*Desai B.M, et.al (2011), 'Agricultural Policy Strategy, Instruments and Implementation: A Review and the Road Ahead', Economic and Political Weekly, December 31, 2011, Vol. 46, No. 53 (DECEMBER 31, 2011), pp. 42-50*

bring down the unit cost in real terms, which will most benefit the poor.

Liu[3] described patterns of job-seeking, rationing, and participation in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. At the national level, it finds that the self-targeting design of MGNREGS leads to greater rates of self-selection into the programme by poorer and scheduled tribe or scheduled caste households. However, the administrative rationing of MGNREGS jobs is not pro-poor but exhibits a sort of middle-class bias. At the state level, roughly half of 27 states exhibit rationing and participation profiles that signal effective pro-poor targeting; the other half struggle to avoid high rates and regressive patterns of administrative rationing of jobs to which the poor have a legal right.

Esteves[4] quantified the environmental and socio - economic benefits generated by the works implemented under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and assessed the potential of these benefits to reduce vulnerability of agricultural production and livelihoods of the beneficiaries, post implementation (2011-12) as compared to pre - implementation (2006-07), to current climate variability. The empirical evidence from the 40 sample villages in the four districts with diverse socio - economic and environmental conditions shows that MGNREGA works are generating multiple environmental and socio-economic benefits. These benefits have led to improved water availability and soil fertility resulting in increased crop production, increased employment generation and reduced migration.

Himanshu[5] argued that the decline in performance of this scheme in Rajasthan is not entirely due to the lack of demand. Instead, the supply-driven top-down nature of the programme has led to a "discouraged worker" syndrome with workers showing disinterest in demanding work and passively waiting for availability of NREGS work. Strengthening the demand-based nature of the NREGS may reduce the need for rationing. Simple temporal tracking of NREGS outcomes at the village level along with proper recording of demand through the Management Information System may well help detect discrimination within panchayats.

Panda[6] admitted the existence of corruption and malpractice in the operation of the MGNREGS. The equity and inclusivity of the Scheme is squeezed in a number of rural settings because of lack of initiative on the part of the government and limited awareness on the part of the probable beneficiaries. The quality of the assets created need improvement. Based on the centrality of the market supplemented by the government, a good economy required a reasonable degree of individual and community capability and freedom, which a large part of rural India lacked. Development practices like MGNREGS will remain relevant as long as it ensures a critical minimum level of income, equity and mobilization and self-confidence to rural poor - both men and women. The issues of corruption, distortions, malpractices in MGNREGS, particularly at the grass-roots level (gram sabha), reflect the fact that our local institutions are yet to mature to take care of the imperatives of sustainable development.

Bhat[7] attempted to find out the targets and achievements and the awareness and utilization level of the programme in the state with special emphasis on district Anantnag. It was revealed that, there has been significant increase in the level of employment provided under the programme from its implementation in the district. Rural connectivity, micro-irrigation, flood control and water conservation were given priority in terms of their order. The improvement in the level of awareness among the rural masses about the programme is evident from the fact that the number of households who demanded employment increased since 2008. It can be concluded by saying that despite some weaknesses, the NREGA is a remarkable legislation, under which local administrations are legally bound to provide work on demand to any worker or group of workers who apply for work within 15 days of receipt of a work application on public works operated under the NREGA.

Annadurai[8] expected to enhance rural people's livelihood in a sustained status, by developing the economic and social infrastructure in rural areas through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Generation Scheme. He mentioned that NREGA is the most significant act in the history of Indian polity. The Act is important to improve the quality of life of the rural households who are vulnerable to out-migration in search of daily wage employment by channelizing the workforce towards developmental activities at the village level.

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[3]*Liu Y, Barrett C.B (2013), 'Heterogeneous Pro-Poor Targeting in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme', Economic and Political Weekly, March 9, 2013, Vol. 48, No. 10 (MARCH 9, 2013), pp. 46-53*

[4]*Esteves T, et.al (2013), 'Agricultural and Livelihood Vulnerability Reduction through the MGNREGA', Economic and Political Weekly, December 28, 2013, Vol. 48, No. 52 (DECEMBER 28, 2013), pp. 94-103*

[5]*Himanshu, et.al (2015) 'NREGS in Rajasthan: Rationed Funds and Their Allocation across Villages', Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 50, No. 6 (FEBRUARY 7, 2015), pp. 52-60*

[6]*Panda, B (2015), 'National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme: Development Practice at the Crossroads', Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 50, No. 23 (JUNE 6, 2015), pp. 126-131*

[7]*Bhat, F.A and Majid, P (2014), 'MGNREGA in Jammu and Kashmir: Some Field Experiences', Indian J Econ Dev Volume 10 No.1 (2014): 40- 46*

[8]*Annadurai, R (2016), 'A Study of MGNREGS in Walajah Block, Vellore District', International Journal of Business and Administration Research Review, Vol. 1, Issue.16, Oct- Dec, 2016*

Azhagaiah[9] mentioned the potential of MGNREGS to transform the rural socio-economic relations at micro-individual as well as macro-societal levels. However, the potential is still incipient and requires to be substantially supported in many different ways, since the very orientation of MGNREGA and the presentation of involvement in public works as a right is a very new concept in rural India, which will take time still to permeate, especially at the local levels. But all of us must understand that the MGNREGA may not be a long term solution to the unemployment problem of rural India. The present study proved that there is an increase in the welfare of the family for both male and female workers like spending more for family, children's education and enables those savings in bank / post office after working under MGNREGA.

Maiorano[10] measured the local government's effort to ensure implementation of the scheme in the scheduled areas, the gap between administrative orders and the grass-roots level is wide that could radically improve implementation of the scheme in tribal areas. To sum up, Scheduled Tribes are by far the most disadvantaged groups in India's society and in most cases, they live in very remote areas where very little economic activity takes place. The MGNREGA in tribal areas constitutes an essential safety net against starvation and destitution, particularly during the lean agricultural season. It is crucial that the peculiar ecological, social, cultural and economic conditions of tribal areas are taken into account. The state administration did make a sincere attempt to do so; but a greater effort is needed in order to fill the gap between government orders and ground reality.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the demographic profile of the respondents in Aizawl District, Mizoram.
2. To identify the awareness level of MGNREGA beneficiaries in Aizawl District of Mizoram.

IV. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Works under MGNREGA has become one of the means of employment in rural areas. Those who are economically backward engage themselves to sustain their families. A key problem with MGNREGA is its inconsistent implementation, leading to issues like low wage rates, delayed payments, inadequate budget allocation, and a lack of quality work, which often fails to provide substantial long-term livelihood support to rural households, particularly the most marginalized communities, despite its goal of guaranteeing 100 days of unskilled manual work per year to adult members of rural households.

Today, rural household incomes are about more than just agriculture. They need to be supplemented with livestock rearing and daily wages since farming alone isn't viable. But if the farmer is expected to spend time on-site even after her work is done and register her attendance twice a day, she is unable to take her livestock for open grazing to the commons or work on farmlands.

This study explored the level of awareness among the MGNREGA beneficiaries about the workings and functioning of the scheme and whether they are aware of their rights in the workplace.

V. HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant relationship between educational qualification with awareness level of MGNREGA beneficiaries in Aizawl District.

VI.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study is empirical and descriptive in nature and finds out the awareness level of MGNREGA beneficiaries in Lunglei district. Primary and secondary data were used for this study. Primary data is collected from MGNREGA beneficiaries through structured questionnaires and secondary data is collected from research articles, magazines, newspapers and MGNREGA official website. 90 samples were collected from Lunglei block, taking 30 respondents each from Pukpui, Sethlun and Theiriat villages. Analysis using SPSS software analysis – One Way ANOVA is used for this study. A simple random sampling method is used as a sampling procedure for this study.

VII. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

- Demographic Profile – Percentage Analysis

The data pertaining to demographic profile of the respondents are presented as follows –

[9]*Azhagaiah, R and Radhika, G (2014), 'Impacto f MGNREGA on the Economic Well-being of Unskilled workers: Evidence from* Puducherry Region', *Pacific Business Review International*, Volume 6, Issue 10, April 2014

[10]Maioraio D, Buddha C (2014), 'MGNREGA in Andhra Pradesh's Tribal Areas', Economic & Political Weekly, December 20, 2014, Vol. XlIX, no.51

Table 2
Demographic Profile

Demographic variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	58	64.4
	Female	32	35.6
	Total	90	100
Marital Status	Single	9	10
	Married	75	83.3
	Widow	6	6.7
	Total	90	100
Age	Below 20 years	0	0
	20 – 40 years	60	66.7
	40 – 60 years	30	33.3
	Above 60 years	0	0
	Total	90	100
Educational Qualification	Illiterate	0	0
	Primary	0	0
	Middle	9	10
	High School	54	60
	Higher Sec.	27	30
	Graduate	0	0
	Total	90	100
Family Income per month (in Rs.)	Below 10k	0	0
	10k – 20k	12	13.3
	20k – 30k	63	70
	30k – 40k	15	16.7
	Above 40k	0	0
	Total	90	100

Source: Computed Data

INTERPRETATION

From the above table, Table 2 it is shown that 64 percent of the respondents are male and the remaining 36 percent are female. 10 percent of the respondent are single and 83 percent of them are married, and 7 percent are widows. 67 percent of the respondents are in the age group 20 – 40 years, and 33 percent of the respondents are in the age group 40 – 60 years. 70 percent of the respondents received education till secondary education and none of the respondents are illiterate. 70 percent of the respondent's monthly family income lies between 20000 to 30000 rupees, 17 percent of the respondent's monthly family income lies between 30000 to 40000 rupees, and the remaining 13 percent of the respondent's monthly family income lies between 10000 to 20000 rupees.

•Awareness Level of Beneficiaries – One Way ANOVA

Table 3
Awareness Level of Beneficiaries

Variables		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Minimum wage payment	Between Groups	.085	2	.043	.166	.848
	Within Groups	22.370	87	.257		
	Total	22.456	89			
Employment within 15 days	Between Groups	.233	2	.117	.749	.476
	Within Groups	13.556	87	.156		
	Total	13.789	89			
Unemployment allowances	Between Groups	.104	2	.052	.273	.762
	Within Groups	16.519	87	.190		
	Total	16.622	89			

Worksite facilities	Between Groups	.030	2	.015	.090	.914
	Within Groups	14.370	87	.165		
	Total	14.400	89			
One third workers should be women	Between Groups	.130	2	.065	.366	.695
	Within Groups	15.426	87	.177		
	Total	15.556	89			
Equal wages for men and women	Between Groups	.156	2	.078	.456	.635
	Within Groups	14.833	87	.170		
	Total	14.989	89			
Provision of 100 days guaranteed employment	Between Groups	.267	2	.133	.900	.410
	Within Groups	12.889	87	.148		
	Total	13.156	89			

Source: Computed Data (at 5% level of significant)

INTERPRETATION

From the above table, Table 3, it is inferred that the calculated value of one-way ANOVA from seven variables which is more than the hypothetical value ($p<0.005$) at 5% level of significant. Minimum wage payment shows that F = .166, probability (p) value = .848 > 0.05. Employment within 15 days shows that F = .749, probability (p) value = .476 > 0.05. Unemployment allowances shows that F = .273, probability (p) value = .762 > 0.05. Worksite facilities shows that F = .090, probability (p) value = .914 > 0.05. One third workers should be women shows that F = .366, probability (p) value = .695 > 0.05. Equal wages for men and women show that F = .456, probability (p) value = .635 > 0.05. Provision of 100 days guaranteed employment shows that F = .900, probability (p) value = .410 > 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence there is no significant relationship between educational qualification and awareness level of MGNREGA beneficiaries for the above mentioned seven variables.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act has greater impact in Lunglei District. In Lunglei block around 62,000 people are economically and socially benefitted by the implementation of the scheme. From the above finding, we can say that despite the educational qualification the beneficiaries are quite aware of their rights and functioning of the scheme. Though there is awareness among the beneficiaries, there is still a dire need from the government's side to educate the people of the workings and functioning of the scheme so that it will be more beneficial for the them and the works under the scheme be implemented more better to benefit the society. Also, the government needs to allocate more funds to improve the quality of work and to increase the wage amount.

IX. RESEARCH IMPLICATION

The government should create more awareness programme so that the scheme beneficiaries can know the important provisions made for them under MGNREGA and payments be made through bank accounts and on time in particular. The research implications for the scheme will definitely help policy makers, government, panchayats and human resource practitioners to provide suitable suggestions. It will help both the central and the state government to look at the existing solutions for the problems in the area and adopt the methodologies for implementing new strategies for the more efficient functioning of the MGNREGA.

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