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A MICRO LEVEL STUDY OF RURAL EMPLOYMENT THROUGH MGNREGA IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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ABSTRACT
Unemployment is a chronic problem in India, both in rural and urban areas. In India, the problem of unemployment has become very serious with around 9.9 percent of the labour force is unemployed (Government of India, 2013). To reduce unemployment problem not only through emphasising and particular pattern of resource allocation technology but through special unemployment schemes especially rural public works like MGNREGA as it is considered among the most powerful initiative undertaken for transformation of rural livelihoods in India. The present study is an attempt to analyse the operation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in Arunachal Pradesh in general and East Siang district (Un divided) in particular. The work is primarily based on field study, an attempt was also made to examine and analyse the results of number of job-cards available among surveyed households, time gap between registration and the issue of job-card and time gap between issue of job card and getting a job in a surveyed household under MGNREGA. Besides, an attempt was also made to examine the socio-economic characteristics like educational status and annual income of the surveyed household. It captures the ground reality pertaining to issues of rural development through MGNREGA, so that the study will have policy implications and make growth as inclusive.

KEY WORDS: *Unemployment, Poverty, Rural Development*

INTRODUCTION

The labour market in India is largely dominated by employment in the informal sector (unorganized sector) as well as a high level of informal employment inside and outside the informal sector. However, it has been argued that economic growth has not transformed into corresponding growth in gainful employment and most importantly, in the growth of quality jobs. This problem still persist, though the degree and extent varies across regions in the country. The Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007-12) has selected 'faster and more inclusive growth' as its central theme. It recognized the need to make growth 'more inclusive' in terms of benefits of growth flowing to those sections of population, which has been passed by high rates of economic growth achieved in the recent years (Ghosh, 2010). One of the major planks of poverty reduction in the Eleventh Five Year Plan is the successful implementation of MGNREGA in all the States of India. The basic aims of this programme are the alleviation of poverty through productive employment and to improve the quality of life of rural people. The fiscal policy that provides more income directly to unskilled workers in the rural areas is likely to be much more effective in increasing aggregate incomes than other forms of public spending (Shah et al. 2010). It is the solution of crux of the problem of long-term employment opportunities, which provides direct supplementary employment to the people in rural areas during the lean period. It has prevented distress migration especially the working class and helped in empowerment of rural women.

Most of the States in the North-Eastern Region (NER) are considered economically backward in many respects. A Creating employment opportunity is a big challenge for the NER with its largely agrarian setting, low levels of industrial activity and significant dependence on the public sector for employment opportunities (Planning Commission, 2013). There has been growing concern about increasing unemployment and poverty as a vital economic problem in NER, in general, and Arunachal Pradesh in particular. Therefore, an urgent need is to detail understanding of the labour and unemployment problem and its various facets in the North- Eastern Region need to be explored.

The incidence of poverty in Arunachal Pradesh remained more or less static during the last two decades. About one-third of the populations were below poverty line at the beginning of the Eleventh and Twelfth Five-year plan. According to the estimate of the Planning Commission, 39.5 percent of people of Arunachal Pradesh were living below the poverty line. In order to uplift the BPL (below poverty line) families above the poverty line, emphasis has been given to create community infrastructure assets with employment opportunities for sustainable economic development. MGNREGA which was initiated in the year 2006-07 in Arunachal Pradesh, today

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it covers and implemented all the districts of Arunachal Pradesh. Initially it was launched in one district and was extended to two more districts during 2006-07 financial years. According to the data available, in Arunachal Pradesh, 16746 job cards were distributed in 2012-13 and 10.26 lakhs in 2018-19 among the different districts of the State. And over 93% of the job cards were issued to Scheduled Tribe (ST) population. Since the 1960s, considerable research was done on poverty level and trend across the country. However, in case of Arunachal Pradesh very little research was done. The limited information that is available makes it difficult to estimate the extent and intensity of poverty prevalent here even today. Hence, the present study is an attempt to examine the operation and performance of MGNREGA in Arunachal Pradesh, in general and East Siang district, in particular.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the operation of MGNREGA in terms of Number of Job-Cards Available Among Surveyed Households
2. Time Gap between Registration and the Issue of Job-Card
3. Time Gap between Issue of Job Card and Getting a Job in a Surveyed Household under MGNREGA.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions have been framed in lieu of a hypothesis:

1. What is the proportion of surveyed households that possess a valid MGNREGA job card?
2. What is the average time taken between registration and the issuance of job cards under MGNREGA?
3. What is the average duration between job card issuance and the first employment provided under MGNREGA?

DATA BASE AND METHODOLOGY

The present study is basically empirical in nature. The study used both primary and secondary data. The collection of primary data was based on multi-stage sampling technique. For this, an extensive coverage of eight villages, 120 sampled households were randomly selected and interviewed with structured questionnaire. The primary data obtained during the course of field survey were carefully tabulated and analysis was made based on tables, ratio, figures and percentage by using multi-stage sampling technique. The different types under the technique are as follows:

Stage I: Selection of district

Stage II: Selection of blocks

Stage III: Selection of villages

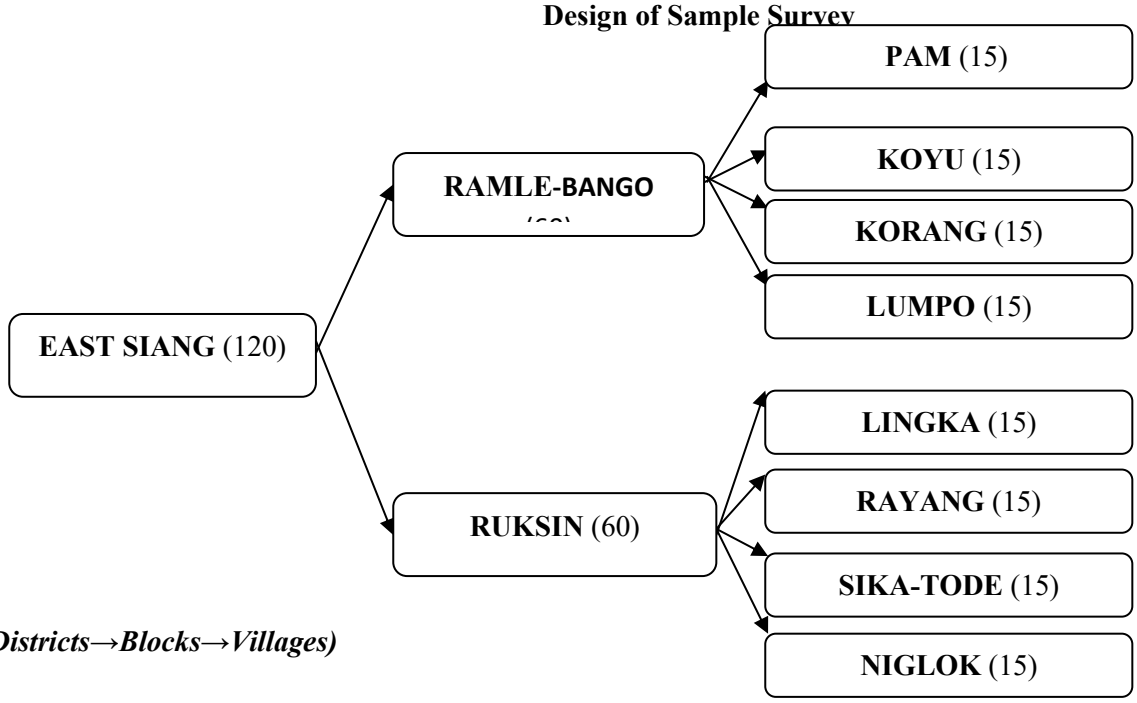
Stage IV: Selection of beneficiaries

In the first stage, one district namely East Siang district was selected by purposive sampling. In the second stage, two blocks namely Ramle-Bango and Ruksin were selected by purposive sampling on the basis of extent of operation of MRNREGA. In the third stage, four villages were selected from each block on the basis of distance from circle headquarter. In the final stage, the beneficiaries were selected randomly. The samples were selected at equal number (15 beneficiaries) from each village. The facts and figures from the respondents may not be as accurate as it should have been due to the lack of written record, non-availability of data and reluctances in providing the required information for the research. The details are shown in the following chart (Diagram 1.1)

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Diagram 1

Design of Sample Survey



(Districts→Blocks→Villages)

Note: Figures in the parentheses indicates number of surveyed households.

The secondary data were collected from various published and unpublished sources. It is no doubt a descriptive study, but extensive use was made of quantitative techniques like ratios, averages, percentages etc. Due to limited time available for field survey of being an individual researcher, it becomes difficult to conduct the extensive field survey and collect detailed information. However, every effort was made to collect all information for an in-depth study of the topic. The findings regarding MGNREGA from surveyed villages were presented in three sub-headings:

- **Number of Job-Cards Available Among Surveyed Households**
- **Time Gap between Registration and the Issue of Job-Card**
- **Time Gap between Issue of Job Card and Getting a Job in a Surveyed Household under MGNREGA.**

1.1 Number of Job-Cards Available Among Surveyed Households

In this sub-section, an attempt was made to examine the number of job-cards available among the surveyed households. The details are shown in Table1.1.

Table 1.1

Number of Job Card in Surveyed Household (*in percentage*)

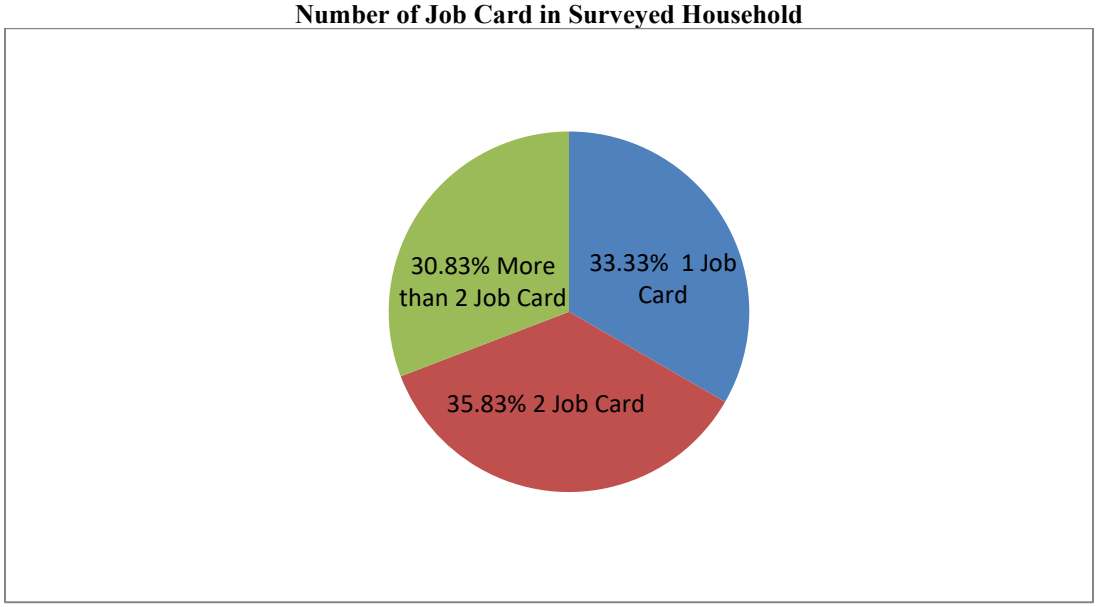
Village/Block	One	Two	More than 2
Pam	6.67	40.00	53.33
Koyu	6.67	33.33	60.00
Korang	6.67	40.00	53.33
Lumpo	0.00	53.33	46.67
Ramle-Bango*	5.00	41.67	53.33
Linka	60.00	40.00	0.00
Rayang	80.00	20.00	0.00
Sika-Tode	66.67	26.67	6.67
Niglok	40.00	33.33	26.67
Ruksin*	61.67	28.33	8.33
Total	33.33	35.83	30.83

*Note: * represent the Block*
Source: Field Survey, 2019

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The number of job-card holders of the beneficiaries among surveyed household is shown in diagram 1.1.

Diagram 1.1
Number of Job Card in Surveyed Household



Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 1.1 shows the number of job card facilities available among surveyed households under MGNREGA. From the table it was observed that more than 35.00 percent of surveyed households were found to have job-card facilities of 2 members per family and 33.33 percent household were found of having one job card. The rest i.e. 30.83 percent were of more than 2 job cards in a family. If we compare in terms of block- wise, one person job-card per family (61.67 percent) was found to be more in Ruksin Block, while two person job-card per family (41.67 percent) and more than two person performing (53.33 percent) were found to be higher in Ramle-Bango Block. This may be due to the higher concentration of nuclear family scattered in villages of Ruksin Block. At village level, out of eight villages surveyed, it was found that in Lumpo village of Ramle-Bango Block, all the surveyed households were having either two job-cards or more than two job-cards. On the other hand in Linka village and Rayang village of Ruksin Block, there was not a single household who was found to have more than two job-cards.

Further, from the surveyed villages it was observed that most of the card holders fell under the category of age between 30-50 years. The reason for more number of job-cards depends on size of family member who remain unemployment to that particular household. However, it was interesting to observe that during the field survey in Koyu village of Ramle-Bango, the panchayat member increased the number of job card only to its own family members and their relatives by leaving the others.

In terms of gender-wise distribution of job-card, the job-card issued among male was found to be higher (58.85 percent) than that of female (41.15 percent). Though many women enrolment of master rolls under MGNREGA was found to be low but its participation to the work place was found to be quite high.

1.2 Time Gap between Registration and the Issue of Job-Card

In this sub-section, an attempt was made to examine time gap between registration and the issue of job-card among the surveyed households. The details are shown in Table 1.2.

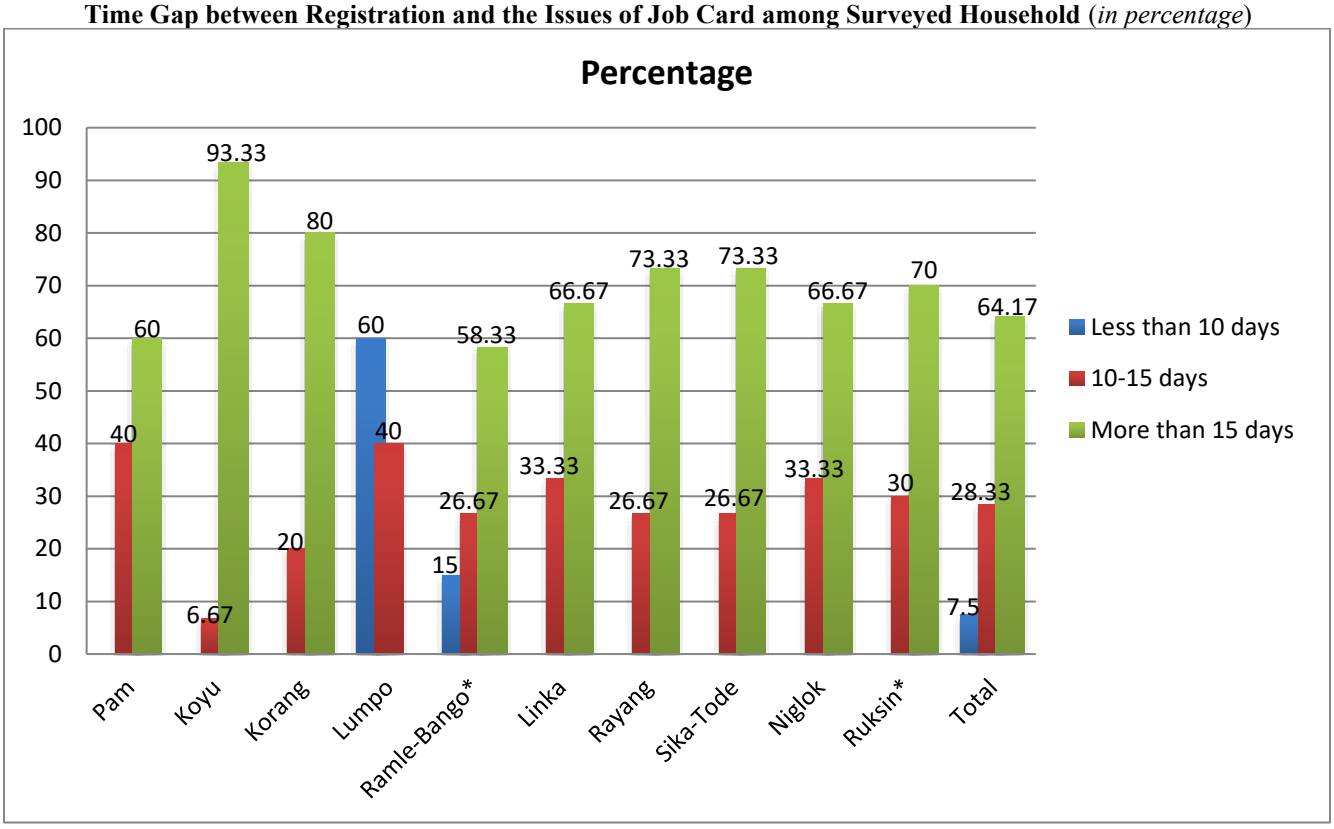
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Table 1.2
Time Gap between Registration and the Issues of Job Card among Surveyed Household (*in percentage*)

Village/Block	Less than 10 days	10-15 days	More than 15 days
Pam	0.00	40.00	60.00
Koyu	0.00	6.67	93.33
Korang	0.00	20.00	80.00
Lumpo	60.00	40.00	0.00
Ramle-Bango*	15.00	26.67	58.33
Linka	0.00	33.33	66.67
Rayang	0.00	26.67	73.33
Sika-Tode	0.00	26.67	73.33
Niglok	0.00	33.33	66.67
Ruksin*	0.00	30.00	70.00
Total	7.50	28.33	64.17

*Note: * represent the Block*
Source: Field Survey, 2019

Diagram Table 1.2
Time Gap between Registration and the Issues of Job Card among Surveyed Household (*in percentage*)



Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 1.2 shows time gap between registration and issue of job card in MGNREGA. The table clearly reflects that in most of surveyed villages of MGNREGA, job-card was issued from date of registration which was recorded in more than 15 days (64.17 percent), followed by 10 to 15 days (28.33 percent) and within 10 days (only 7.50 percent) respectively. The time lag between registration and issue of job-cards in 10-15 days was found to be similar in both blocks, except in Koyu village. In Koyu village under of Ramle-Bango Block there was a single household who got a job-card within ten days of registration. In fact, around 73 percent of the surveyed households got the job-card after 15 days of registration. It is interesting to observe that no villager under Ruksin Block was found to get the job-card within 10 days of registration. However, in terms village-wise distribution, only in Lumpo village of Ramle-Bango Block was found to issue job-card within 10 days of registration. The reason for shortest time gap between issue of job card and registration may be due to the

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closeness of BDO office. From the study area, it was interesting to observe that there was unnecessary delay in registration and issue of job-card due to red tapism in administration. Sometimes, it was found that panchayat members did not distribute job-cards timely. Some villages, such as Koyu and Korang in Ramle Bango Block, are located far from the office, resulting in delays in the distribution of job cards. However, this did not impact work attendance. Finally, it was found that registration and issue of job-card were not found to be mandatory and necessary in surveyed area, although the Acts mandates issue of job-card within 15 days from date of registration. But some of them managed to get it in time on the basis of understanding between panchayat members and concerned BDO.

1.3 Time Gap between Issue of Job Card and Getting a Job

In this sub-section an attempt was made to examine the time gap between registration and getting a job. The details are given in Table 1.3

Table 1.3

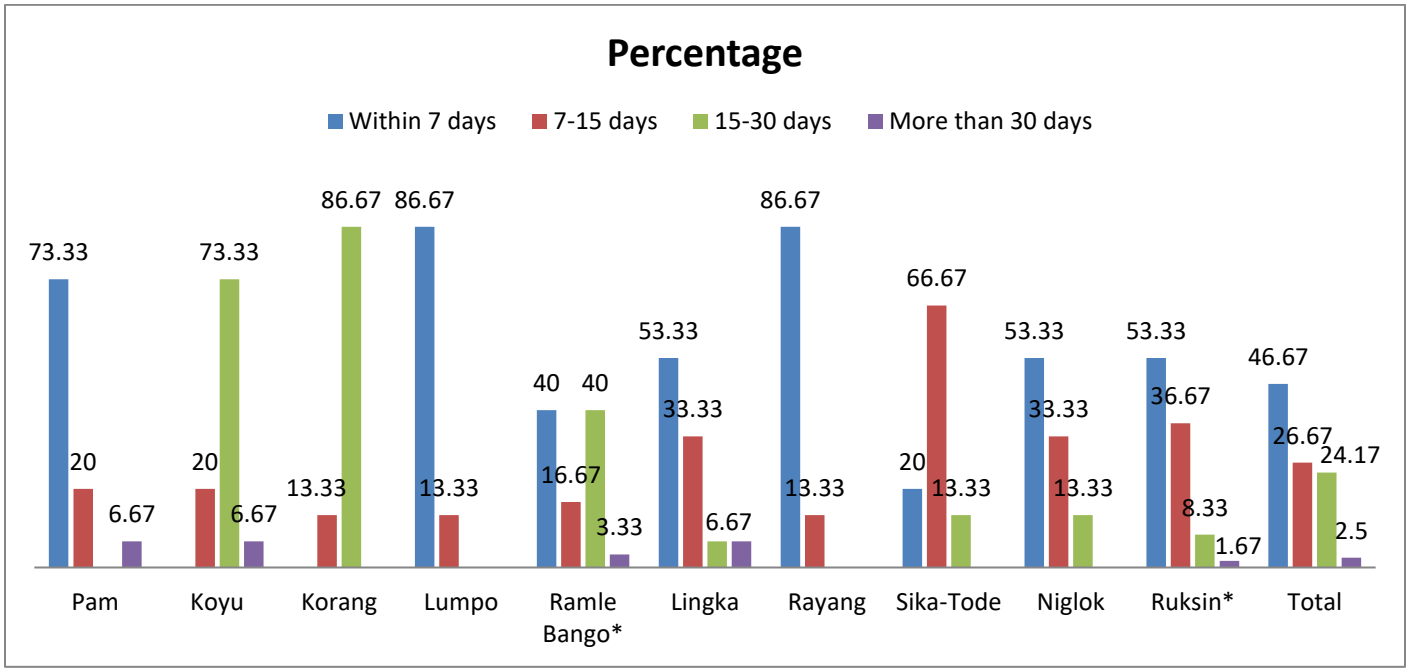
Time Gap between Issue of Job Card and Getting a Job in a Surveyed Household under MGNREGA (*in percentage*)

Village/Block	Within 7 days	7-15 days	15-30 days	More than 30 days
Pam	73.33	20.00	0.00	6.67
Koyu	0.00	20.00	73.33	6.67
Korang	0.00	13.33	86.67	0.00
Lumpo	86.67	13.33	0.00	0.00
Ramle Bango*	40.00	16.67	40.00	3.33
Lingka	53.33	33.33	6.67	6.67
Rayang	86.67	13.33	0.00	0.00
Sika-Tode	20.00	66.67	13.33	0.00
Niglok	53.33	33.33	13.33	0.00
Ruksin*	53.33	36.67	8.33	1.67
Total	46.67	26.67	24.17	2.50

*Note: * represent the Block*
Source: Field Survey, 2019

Diagram 1.3

Time Gap between Issue of Job Card and Getting a Job in a Surveyed Household under MGNREGA (*in percentage*)



Source: Field Survey, 2019

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Table 1.3 shows that at the time of interview most of the respondent informed that the lowest gap in getting a job was within 7 days (46.67 percent), while highest gap was recorded of more than 30 day (only 2.50 percent). However, in terms of villages surveyed, in Pam (6.67 percent), Koyu village (6.67 percent) of Ramle-Bango and Lingka village (6.67 percent) of Ruksin Block was found to be highest gap of more than 30 days, while lowest gap of within 7 days was recorded in Lumpo village (86.67 percent) of Ramle-Bango and Rayang village (86.67 percent) of Ruksin block.

Table 1.3 shows that out of eight villages, Lumpo village of Ramle-Bango Block and Rayang Village of Ruksin Block 86.67 percent beneficiaries got the job within 7 days of issue of job card. However, in Koyu and Korang village of Ramle-Bango Block not a single beneficiary got a job within 7 days after issuing of job card. The reasons for variation in time gap of getting a job may be distance of BDO office and poor transportation and communication system especially in villages like Koyu and Korang. In fact it is interesting to observe that during the survey in most cases it does not matter early registration will get the early job which is in part of the system. But it largely depends on the amount of fund available in the district and time taken by the bureaucrats to process the file. It was also observed that in many places the Government officials as well as Gram Panchayat members failed to perform their duties for accurate maintenance of job-cards and enforcement of master roll. In many cases villagers were not also found to come forward to claim the benefits of the scheme. In one village, Gaon-Bura (Sarpanch) himself did not know how to avail the scheme.

CONCLUSION

The study area is considered to be one of the most economically backward areas of the district where majority of the people are directly and indirectly engaged in agriculture and allied activities. It requires implementation of the various poverty alleviation programmes by the Government to improve the standard of living. In this regard MGNREGA is playing an important role in the district to enhance the income level and create durable assets of the poorer section of the society. Though many problems and constrains are reported in the study area, but this programme has found to have tremendous popularity in the district. All the respondents have accepted that among various poverty alleviation programmes, MGNREGA appears to be highest number of people's participation in the programme.

However, people's perceptions in the study area are not still satisfactory because of many challenges like inadequate fund, improper planning and policy from implementing agencies, lack of knowledge and awareness about the work procedure among the rural poor. In order to create positive perception among the beneficiaries regarding MGNREGA, the Government needs to take up some activities like organizing awareness campaign, training and development programmes in order to spread the knowledge about the programme and its benefits.

Five-point Likert Scale

The MGNREGA was designed to generate rural employment and raise the income of poor households. However, the study found that partial implementation limited its effectiveness, as most beneficiaries saw little change in income or expenditure. Wages earned were primarily spent on household consumption, while families continued to rely on casual labour as their main livelihood source.

Gender-wise analysis showed that over half of the workers at worksites were women. Respondents highlighted that MGNREGA provided locally available job opportunities, which increased women's participation despite relatively low enrolment on master rolls. Almost all surveyed households confirmed that women engaged more actively than men, indicating that the scheme contributes to women's empowerment. The findings further suggest that MGNREGA offered equal participation opportunities across households without gender discrimination.

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