

TRIBAL EMPLOYMENT THROUGH MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT (MGNREGA) IN THE STATE OF KERALA

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Abstract: Kerala economy has witnessed several structural transformations during the period of 1980-81 to 2010-11. There is an improvement in both in the state of Kerala in terms of PCI and employment. But this growth is not equivalent to all social groups and those who lag behind is the subaltern groups. This initiated the government to introduce a number of employment schemes for their upliftment and poverty reduction. The employment scheme which focused more on the tribes is MGNREGA. So the present study focuses on how far the programme has benefitted the tribal population in providing employment and thereby uplifting their condition.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Scheduled tribes (ST), EMPLOYMENT, HOUSEHOLD, PREGA, SGSY, SJSRY

INTRODUCTION

Tribes are considered as the most indigenous people consisting of about 300 million living over 70 countries. Among the countries, India is having the largest tribal population in the world with 461 tribal groups constituting about 8.61 per cent of the total population. About 80 per cent live in central belt and a few of them live in the southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

As per 2011 census, there are 37 tribal communities in Kerala concentrated over the districts of Wayanad, Idukki and Palakkad. These Scheduled Tribe households have a better standard of living than their counterparts in the rest of the country in general. However, Tamil Nadu has shown an even better standard of living for Scheduled Tribe (ST) households (HH) than Kerala (Kerala Economic Review, 2015). Compared to the other southern states, the tribal community in Kerala has a peculiar feature that their condition is improving and not stagnant or worse like tribes in other states. As a consequence of this 11 tribal communities have been declassified on the basis of their social and cultural improvement/progress.

But when we compare them with other religious communities in Kerala, they lag far behind the general population in overcoming poverty. Hence it is clear that even though Kerala has made considerable progress in reducing poverty, there are still several pockets of deprivation in the State, particularly among tribal population and fishermen communities (Kerala Economic Review, 2015). To overcome this issue, the government has implemented various employment schemes which are either wholly sponsored by Centre or by state or by both. The most important among them are tribal sub-plan, Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Programmes, Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), National Food for Work Programme (NFFWP) and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Table I shows the number of beneficiaries from various employment schemes in state.

TABLE 1: Rural Employment programmes in kerala from 2013-14 to 2015-16

Per 1000 distribution of households (households) benefitted from employment generating schemes for Kerala						
YEAR	SOCIAL GROUP	distribution of households benefitted from				
		MGNR EGA	PM EGA	S G S Y	SJ SR Y	OT H ERS
2013-14(4TH ANNUAL REPORT)	ALL	212	2	–	2	1
2015-16(5TH ANNUAL REPORT)		191	1	1	–	11
2013-14(4TH ANNUAL REPORT)	SC	339	9	–	–	0
2015-16(5TH ANNUAL REPORT)		419	3	5	–	13
2013-14(4TH ANNUAL REPORT)	ST	417	–	–	–	–
2015-16(5TH ANNUAL REPORT)		573	–	–	–	–
2013-14(4TH ANNUAL REPORT)	OBC	215	1	–	–	1
2015-16(5TH ANNUAL REPORT)		144	1	0	–	14
2013-14(4TH ANNUAL REPORT)	OTHERS	135	0	–	6	–
2015-16(5TH ANNUAL REPORT)		140	–	–	–	4

4th & 5th EUS Survey, Labour Bureau

The table clearly shows that all social groups benefitted from the MGNREGA program than any other employment generating program during 2013-14. That is, 212 Households benefitted from MGNREGA, 2 Households from Pradhan Manthri Employment Guarantee Act (PMEGA), 2 Households from SJSRY and 1 Household from others program as per the 4th annual report of labour bureau. But the beneficiaries from MGNREGA has declined to 191 Households, while beneficiaries from other programmes has increased from 1 household to 11 Households during the year 2015-16.1, 1 Household from PMEGA, 1 Household from SGSYY benefitted during the same period whereas, None of the sample Households benefitted from SJSRY program during 2015-16 as the government failed to meet implementation and administrative expenses. The same trend is followed for OBC and other social groups. Among the scheduled caste (SC) & ST Households the number of Households benefitted from MGNREGA programme increased during 2015-16. 156 Households from ST population and 80 Households from SC population benefitted from MGNREGA during the year. Another notable point is that none of the ST Households benefitted from any other programmes except MGNREGA over the years. The problem with most of the schemes is that they are introduced with huge agenda but are implemented poorly. There are leakages in the cash transfer, poor identification of target group, beneficiaries do not get their wages on time etc. But when we look at MNREGA, the government has made implementation better with time. MGNREGA in its full implementation is a multi-pronged approach to dissociate the poor people from their hardships and simultaneously create valuable infrastructure for the country.

Tribal development in Kerala

There are 37 Scheduled tribes in Kerala out of 48 tribal communities; their strength is only 1.45% of the state's population. There has been an increase of 0.63 per cent compared to 2001 population census. As per 2011 census, the highest percentage of STs is in Wayanad (31.24 %) district followed by Idukki (11.51%), Palakkad (10.10%) and Kasargode (10.08%) districts. The four districts together account for 63.93 per cent of the tribal population in the state. Lowest percentage of STs is in Alappuzha district (1.36 per cent), 50% of them are concentrated in the hilly areas of Wayanad and Idukki districts. The Sex ratio of Scheduled Tribe population in Kerala is 1035, which is clearly biased towards female. The literacy rate of tribal population is 75.8 per cent, the highest among the states of India. In terms of the quality of housing and the access to basic education also, the tribes of Kerala are much ahead of their counterparts elsewhere in the country. The levels of poverty among STs have declined in the state to half the percentage to all India, but compared with the rest of state population, the

poverty rate is much higher (Kerala Development Report, 2008). Recognizing their social and economic backwardness, the independent India had devised a two-pronged strategy in the pursuit of their upliftment.

MGNREGA in Kerala

In Kerala, MGNREGA has been implemented in three phases. The 1st phase of the program was initiated in February 2006 in the rural areas of two districts – Palakkad and Wayanad. The programme was extended to Kasaragod and Idukki districts by February, 2007 in the second phase and to the remaining 10 districts by January 2009 in third phase. In conformity with the Act, the state government has issued guidelines for implementation of the scheme. This programme came to be known as a Kerala State Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (KSREGS).

The MGNREGA and the Tribals

After independence and globalization, tribes are the most vulnerable in India. Most of the STs are unskilled or semi-skilled workers. Stagnancy and low productivity in agriculture augmented their vulnerability. Globalization and new economic policy had only marginal impact on their upliftment. To achieve fiscal balance the government is scaling down public expenditure on social sectors and the responsibility is being transferred to private operators. As a result, there has been sharp deterioration in the conditions of the poorest and marginalized, particularly the most vulnerable sections of the society. This prompted the government to implement many employment policies to help them to overcome their vulnerability, most important among them is the MGNREGA implemented by government of India in 2006.

MGNREGA is initiated to uplift the marginalized like SC, ST and women through reducing unemployment. With this purpose the MGNREGA is concentrated mainly in rural areas, which is prone to social economic and natural hazards. For the same purpose, the Ministry of Rural Affairs government of India through this programme has given more importance to Schedule Tribe population and as part of this MGNREGA was implemented in such areas. Phase I of this programme was focused towards upliftment of tribal communities. As part of this, from 2014, the ministry of rural affairs has augmented the working days of MGNREGA for tribes, who have been provided land rights under the Forest Rights Act, 2006. This additional 50 days of wage employment beyond the stipulated 100 days will be given to the tribal households living in the forest areas, provided that these households have no other private property except for the land provided under the Forest Rights Act. This enhancement is on the basis of the recommendation of the ministry of tribal affairs Government of India.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the present study is given below

- To analyze the tribal participation and upliftment through MGNREGA in the state of Kerala with special focus on Wayanad, and Palakkad districts.

Data and Methodology

The present study is based on secondary data. The secondary data were collected from various sources such as Department of Ministry of Rural Affairs, National Sample Survey Organisation, Economic Review etc. For the purpose of the study, data from the districts s Palakkad, and Wayanad were collected where MGNREGA was implemented in the 1st phase and where the MGNREGA works more efficiently. The study uses secondary data from 2012-13 to 2016-17 as most of the previous studies are up to this period.

Table 2: performance of MGNREGA IN KERALA FROM 2012-13to 2017-18

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PERFORMANCE OF MGNREGA in Kerala (FY 2012-13 TO 2016-17)						
Sl.No		FY 2012-13	FY 2013-14	FY 2014-15	FY 2015-16	FY 2016-17
1	Number of Households provided employment(in Lakhs)	15262 83	15238 63	13802 36	15056 72	14476 96
2	person days generated(in lakhs)					
	Total	837.7 4	866.0 3	588.7 2	741.7 4	684.6 2
	sc (% as of total person days)	15.85	16.88	17.48	17.4	16.95
	st (% as of total person days)	2.63	2.93	3.88	3.93	4.16
	Women	92.99	93.37	92.16	91.27	91.08
	Avg. person days per employment H.H	54.89	56.83	42.65	49.26	46.97
3	financial details					
	Wages	163.7 1	180.1 6	214.2 8	231.8 2	243.0 9
4	Works					
	works taken up(in lakhs)	2.11	2.57	2.97	3.56	0.93
	works completed	17698 3	10437 2	18508 6	20190 3	25530 1

Source: www.nrega.nic.in

Table 2 shows the performance of MGNREGA in Kerala. It is clear from the table that, number of Households provided employment through MGNREGA declined by 7859 lakhs from FY 2012-13 to 2016-17. The decline may be due to the changing government and their policies especially demonitisation. 'Since our economy is heavily dependent on cash, and only less than half of the population uses banking system for monetary transactions, demonitisation has hit trade and consumption hard. With people scrambling for cash to pay for goods and services, the move is likely to take a big strike on the country's growth and output during the coming fiscal years. Consumption makes up for around 56% of India's GDP, hence, a drop in spending will pull down growth'. (Economic times). Shortage of cash in the economy also led to non-payment of wages and provision of employment. The number of person days generated also declined from 837.74 lakhs in 2012-13 to 684.62 lakhs in 2016-17. That is, there is a decline of 153.12 lakhs over the years. The decline is high during 2014-15. It may be due to the changing government and their policies. Social group wise classification shows that there is an increase of person days among SC and ST population. It has increased from 15.85 lakh person days in 2012-13 to 18.32 percent in 2016-17 among Cs and from 2.63 percent to 3.88 percent among ST population during 2012-13 to 2016-17 respectively, which indicates the higher participation of most deprived classes in the society. Among women's participants the person days generated has declined but the decline is meager (1.91 %). In short, the average person days per employment Households declined from 54.89 percent in 2012-13 to 46.97 percent during 2016-17.

It is also clear from the table that the wages from MGNREGA in Kerala has increased over the years. The wages in Kerala has increased from Rs. 163.71 per day in 2012-13 to Rs. 243.09 per day in 2016-17. Presently the MGNREGA wages in Kerala is Rs. 259. The high wages in MGNREGA programme is a blessing to the illiterate and the aged. It is also seen from the table that the works taken up through MGNREGA in Kerala also declined over the years. The total number of works taken up in Kerala through the programme declined from 2.11 percent in 2012-13 to 0.93 percent in 2016-17. It is also evident from the table that the number of works completed through the scheme has increased by 78318 lakhs over the years from 2012-13 to 2016-17. Most of the MGNREGA works done in Kerala are either in rural households which is limited and limiting the works done through the programme. These facts are clear from the above table

Tribal Employment through MGNREGA

Since the study focuses mainly on two districts, Palakkad and Wayanad, where the programme is performing well according to the previous studies. This section focuses on employment provided for all social groups, number of ST Households issued job cards, employment provided to ST households, the growth in employment provision to ST Households and number of ST households completed 100 days in the programme in these two districts.

The total Number of Households provided employment out of demand in the district shows that the total number of employment provided in Kerala remains more or less the same as the increase is meager. It has increased from 90.11 in 2012-13 to 90.18 lakhs in 2016-17. Whereas the employment provided in Palakkad and Wayanad has declined over the years. It may be due to the irregularity of the participants of MGNREGA programme in the earlier periods which is a crucial factor for the provision of employment out of demand in the following years. Number of Households provided employment out of demand in Palakkad district declined from 94.23 percent in 2012 to 91.39 percent in 2016-17. There is a decline of about 2.84 percent during 2012-13 to 2016-17. The decline was high during 2014-15 (89.24 percent).

Table 3: Number of Households provided employment out of demand (in lakhs)

Year	PALAKKAD		WAYANAD		KERALA	
	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS DEMAND EMPLOYMENT	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS PROVIDED EMPLOYMENT OUT OF DEMAND	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS DEMAND EMPLOYMENT	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS PROVIDED EMPLOYMENT OUT OF DEMAND	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS DEMAND EMPLOYMENT	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS PROVIDED EMPLOYMENT OUT OF DEMAND
2012-13	145253	94.23	85363	91.06	1693873	90.11
2013-14	163125 (12.30)	93.22	83887 (-1.73)	91.78	1678824 (-0.89)	90.77
2014-15	169524 (3.92)	89.24	72544 (-13.52)	87.80	1565148 (-6.77)	88.19
2015-16	188388 (11.12)	91.31	71661 (-1.22)	88.84	1664786 (6.37)	90.44
2016-17	180367 (-4.25)	91.39	68436 (-4.50)	89.84	1605381 (-3.57)	90.18

Source: www.nrega.nic.in

Note: figures in brackets show growth rate

The same is true in the case of Wayanad, there also, the total No. of HOUSEHOLDS provided employment out of demand declined by 1.22 percentage points from 2012-13 to 2016-17 and the decline is high during 2014-15. But compared to Palakkad district the decline is not soaring. This is given in table 4. From this it is clear that Although MGNREGA offered some primary employment for marginalized groups, it does not do substantial help to the most vulnerable.

The growth rate of number of households demand employment is given in brackets. It shows that number of households demand employment declined from 12.30 per cent in 2012-13 to -4.25 per cent in 2016-17 in Palakkad district. The same has a continuous decline in Wayanad district that is, it has declined from -1.73 per cent in 2012-13 to -4.50 percent in 2016-17. The decline in the number of households employment may be of two reasons.

First, as the employment provided to the households declined over the years, there may be a feeling among the card holders that there is no use of demanding employment

Second, irregular pay and discontinuous work made the card holders to seek alternative work with regular pay and continuous work.

Finally, the work and income (which is not increasing with the changing economic condition) through the programme is not enough for a family to sustain at the time of increasing cost of living.

But another important fact to notice is that majority of the Households tries to get and keep the MGNREGA card renewed as it is useful not to get work but for other purpose i.e, the card holders get fund for construction of house etc. so in short, the success of MGNREGA programme is not with the total cards issued but with the total number of Households demand employment and the number of Households got employment, as employment and regular income are the most important factors to overcome the circles of poverty and vulnerability. Now we have to look on how it is working among the tribal population of these districts, which is given in the following tables and figures.

Table 4 shows the number of Households job cards issued to ST Households as a percentage to total cards issued. It is clear from the table that total cards issued to ST households in Kerala increased from 2012-13 to 2016-17 i.e., from 2.20 to 2.81 percent, even though the increase is not high.

From the table, it is found that the working of MGNREGA varied from district to district. In Palakkad district cards issued to ST H.H (as a percentage to total cards issued) declined from 4.69 percent in 2012-13 to 4.61 percent in 2016-17. Whereas in Wayanad district it increased from 15.29 percent in 2012-13 to 25.30 percent in 2016-17, that is, there is an increase of about 10 percentage points over the years. It is due to the fact that about 50 percent of the tribals in Kerala is in Wayanad district.

It is also clear that even though the government is providing MGNREGA cards to those who demands the same, they are not providing employment to all the needy people, which makes the programme backward bending. The reason for the lack of provision of employment may be due to the unproductive assets created in the economy through the programme, which is a waste.

Table 4: Number of job cards issued to Households

Y E A R	PALAKKAD		WAYANAD		KERALA	
	TOTAL CARDS ISSUED	CARDS ISSUED TO ST (AS A PERCENTAGE TO TOTAL CARDS ISSUED)	TOTAL CARDS ISSUED	CARDS ISSUED TO ST (AS A PERCENTAGE TO TOTAL CARDS ISSUED)	TOTAL CARDS ISSUED	CARDS ISSUED TO ST (AS A PERCENTAGE TO TOTAL CARDS ISSUED)
2012-13	224778	4.69	112150	15.29	2541736	2.20
2013-14	255035 (13.46)	4.53	121142 (8.02)	19.31	2822008 (11.03)	2.42
2014-15	279867 (9.74)	4.56	133819 (10.46)	24.79	3015274 (6.85)	2.76
2015-16	304208 (8.70)	4.69	138891 (3.79)	25.27	3192522 (5.88)	2.84
2016-17	313488 (3.05)	4.61	130249 (-6.22)	25.30	3202875 (0.32)	2.81

Source: www.nrega.nic.in

The Number of ST households provided employment as a percentage to total employment provided in the table shows that the employment provided to ST households in Kerala through MGNREGA has increased during 2012-13 and 2016-17. It has increased from 2.45 percent to 3.48 over the years. The same trend is continued in the selected districts also. Employment provided to ST Households in Palakkad as a percentage to total employment provided increased from 4.45 in 2012-13 to 5.58 in 2016-17. In Wayanad district the same has increased from 16.04 in 2012-13 to 28.06 in 2016-17. When we compare

Palakkad and Wayanad districts, it is clear that the increase is more in Wayanad (by 12 percentage points) than in Palakkad (around 1 percentage points). It may be because tribals are more in Wayanad district and the MGREGA programme do concentrate there.

The figures in brackets give the growth rate of total cards issued in Palakkad, Wayanad and Kerala. In Palakkad district total cards issued declined from 13.46 percent in 2012-13 to 3.05 percent in 2016-17. In Wayanad district it declined from 8.02 percent in 2012-13 to -6.22 percent in 2016-17. In Kerala the same has declined from 11.03 percent to 0.32 percent during 2012-13 to 2016-17. This shows that the rate of fall of decline in total cards issued to ST Households as a percentage to total cards issued is smaller when compared to the whole, both in the districts and the state.

EMPLOYMENT PROVIDED TO ST HOUSEHOLDS

(AS A PERCENTAGE TO TOALEMPLOYMENT PROVIDED)

	PALAKKAD	EMPLOYMENT PROVIDED TO ST HOUSEHOLDS (AS A PERCENTAGE TO TOTAL EMPLOYMENT PROVIDED)	WAYANAD	EMPLOYMENT PROVIDED TO ST HOUSEHOLDS (AS A PERCENTAGE TO TOALEMPLOYMENT PROVIDED)	KERALA	EMPLOYMENT PROVIDED TO ST HOUSEHOLDS (AS A PERCENTAGE TO TOALEMPLOYMENT PROVIDED)
2012-13	136865	4.45	77734	16.04	1526283	2.45
2013-14	152058	4.35	76990	19.99	1523863	2.74
2014-15	151285	5.10	63696	24.77	1380236	3.19
2015-16	172020	5.27	63666	26.93	1505672	3.30
2016-17	164832	5.58	61480	28.06	1447696	3.48

Table 5:No. of ST Households provided employment

Source: www.nrega.nic.in

Table 6 shows the growth rate of employment provided to ST Households through MGNREGA in KERALA. From the table it is clear that the employment provided through the programme is declining in Kerala and its districts declined over the years. The growth rate in employment in Kerala has declined from 11.56 in 2013-14 to 1.37 in 2016-17. The highest growth in employment through the scheme is in the year 2015-16. The same trend is seen in Palakkad and Wayanad. In Palakkad district employment growth through the programme declined from 8.62 in 2013-14 to 1.57 in 2016-17. In wayand it has declined from 23.29 in 2013-14 to 0.61 in 2016-17. The decline is high in Wayanad district that is a decline of around 22 percentage points. In both districts the growth rate of employment provided is high in 2015-16 i.e, 17.50 percentage and 8.66 percentage points respectively.

Table 6: Growth Rate of Employment Provided To ST Households Through MGNREGA

	PALAKKAD	GROWTH RATE	WAYANAD	GROWTH RATE	KERALA	GROWTH RATE
2012-13	6094		12470		37458	
2013-14	6619	8.62	15387	23.39	41789	11.56
2014-15	7713	16.53	15778	2.54	43977	5.24
2015-16	9063	17.50	17145	8.66	49660	12.92
2016-17	9205	1.57	17249	0.61	50339	1.37

Source: www.nrega.nic.in

From the above tables it is clear that the employment provided to ST Households as a percentage to total employment provided in Kerala and the selected districts has increased over the years. But when we take the growth rate of employment provided to the ST households over the years, the picture is just reverse, particularly in the tribal populated district like Wayanad. It also shows that the employment provided through the programme in general has declined, compared to total employment provided to ST Households. Along with the above said factors, it is also necessary to have a look on total households completed hundred days out of total Households provided employment to know the attitude of tribals towards employment.

The number of Households completed hundred days of employment provided to Households is given in table 7. A look into that gives the idea that among the ST Households, the percentage of households completed 100 days in Kerala has declined from 19.62 percent in 2012-13 to 12.40 percent in 2016-17. This means that along with employment provided, the households attending 100 days is also declining because of the irregularity of wage payment or the preferences of the tribal groups to engage in other activities apart from their traditional employment. This delay can be one of the reasons why total job cards issued and employment provided through the programme has declined over the years.

In the case of Palakkad district, the status is reverse, the percentage of Households completed 100 days has increased from 18.31 percent in 2012-13 to 26.30 percent in 2016-17. There is a continuous increase in completion of 100 days by households. This means that the programme is more effective in Palakkad than in other districts.

Table 7: Number of Households completed hundred days out of total employment provided to Households

Year	PALAKKAD			WAYANAD			KERALA		
	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS PROVIDED EMPLOYMENT	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS COMPLETED HUNDRED DAYS	PERCENTAGE TO TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS PROVIDED EMPLOYMENT	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS PROVIDED EMPLOYMENT	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS COMPLETED HUNDRED DAYS	PERCENTAGE TO TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS PROVIDED EMPLOYMENT	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS PROVIDED EMPLOYMENT	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS COMPLETED HUNDRED DAYS	PERCENTAGE TO TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS PROVIDED EMPLOYMENT
2012-13	6094	1116	18.31	12470	1564	12.54	37458	7350	19.62
2013-14	6619	1326	20.03	15387	3243	21.08	41789	9266	22.17
2014-15	7713	1561	20.24	15778	1494	9.47	43977	4852	11.03
2015-16	9050	2459	27.17	17145	2078	12.12	49647	7528	15.16
2016-17	9244	2431	26.30	17278	2174	12.58	50481	6261	12.40

Source: www.nrega.nic.in

TABLE 8: Increase in MGNREGA Notified Wages from FY 2006–07 to FY 2011–12 and Minimum Agriculture Wage (Rs per day) for FY 2017 IN KERALA

	Increase in MGNREGA Notified Wages from FY 2006–07 to FY 2011–12 and Minimum Agriculture Wage (Rs per day) for FY 2017						
	MINIMUM WAGES FY 2005-06	NOTIFIED WAGES AS EFFECTIVE ON JAN 1 2009	REVISED WAGE RATE EFFECT FROM 1ST JAN 2011	REVISED WAGE RATE EFFECT FROM 1ST APRIL 2012	REVISED WAGE RATE 2016	REVISED WAGE RATE 2017	MINIMUM AGRI WAGE MINIMUM WAGES ACT 2015 BY LABOUR BUREAU
KE RA LA	125	125	150	164	240	258	590

Source: www.nrega.nic.in

MGNREGA wages from the year 2005-06 to 2017 shows that there is an increase in MGNREGA wages. It has increased by 7 percentage points from 2005-06 to 2017. Almost all years, the MGNREGA wages is increasing. While comparing

MGNREGA wages and the minimum agricultural wages, it is clear that agricultural wages are very high compared to MGNREGA wages which makes the programme less attractive.

Findings

The study tribal employment through MGNREGA in Kerala analysed the impact of MGNREGA in tribal employment through various indicators like total job cards issued, employment provided and the number of Households attended 100 days in Kerala with reference to Palakkad and Wayanad districts, where the tribals are higher and the programme implemented in its first stage. From the analysis the study found out the following.

1. ST households are benefitted highly from MGNREGA programme and they are not engaged in any other programmes like PMEA, SGSY, SJSRY and others in Kerala
2. The overall performance of MGNREGA programme is satisfactory. i.e., both the physical and financial indicators have increased over the years from 2012-13 to 2016-17
3. Number of households demand employment and employment provided to households out of demand declined in the state as well as in Wayanad and Palakkad districts.
4. Number of job cards issued to households has declined in Wayanad and Palakkad districts between 2012 and 2016. Whereas cards issued to households remained more or less same in the state.
5. Total employment demand through the programme and the cards issued have declined over the years
6. Employment provided to ST Households as a percentage to total employment provided increased in the study districts and as a whole in Kerala during the study period.
7. The growth rate of employment provided to ST Households declined in Kerala and the study districts.
8. The number of Households completed 100 days of employment declined in Kerala, remained more or less same in Wayanad and increased in Palakkad.
9. In the case of wage rate also there is an increase in MGNREGA wages from the initiation of the programme, but low compared to agricultural wages.
10. The major limitations noticed from the study are the mismanagement in fund allocation, lack of productive work and mere emphasis on creating work for name sake.

Suggestions

1. MGNREGA works should be time bound, to overcome the feeling that it is an easy and free way to earn money.
2. It should be implemented effectively to reach the needy ones.
3. Returns through the programme should be more regular, i.e., the time lags in receiving wages should be regular.

Conclusion

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employee Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA) was introduced by the India government to reduce rural poverty through 100 days of guaranteed employment per year and the employment generation is considered as a measure to eradicate poverty. It has generated more rural employment than any other government scheme or private initiative in the history of independent India. From the above study it is clear the programming is beneficial to the ST households, as the employment provided to ST Households as a percentage to total employment provided increased in the study districts and as a whole in Kerala during the study period, but not for the state as a whole. The number of households completed 100 days also increased over the years. The programme can also be considered as a Blessing to Illiterate and Aged Males and a Source of Off-season Employment. The wage rates are also increasing. Even though it is less than agricultural wages, but can be considered as an additional source of income during off-seasons.

With these merits, the MGNREGS also has some problems that need to be addressed. The irregularity of wages and the discontinuity in the works provided will lead to fall in the participation and the lack of productive works will also create a negative impact among the people. These are to be rectified to make the programme more effective and socially acceptable.

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