

PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE AND ITS EFFECTS ON MGNREGA SCHEME

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ABSTRACT:

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA) is a rural poverty reducing scheme through hundred days of guaranteed employment per year. This scheme has provided rights based social protection to both rural men as well as women. MGNREGA is a policy solution to rural poverty in India. It has offers a unique rights based employment guarantee to reduce income and food security in rural areas. The experiences of participation in MGNREGA varied state to state depending on how MGNREGA wages compared to market wages, awareness and implementation of the programme. The marginalized section of the society is helped out by MGNREGA scheme. It has inaugurated a remarkable process in the empowerment of poor. The government is trying to address MGNREGA specifically as a tool of empowerment for the most vulnerable sections of the village communities because they are victims of social exclusion and political marginalization. People's participation from the marginalized section of the society in governing process has enhanced the democracy in India. The participation of people has effects on MGNREGA scheme by enhancing the meaning of democracy in a developing country like India. This paper will try to focus on the process of people's participation in a democratic country through economic decentralization and how people's participation in MGNREGA has contributed to the enhancement of the values of democracy in India.

KEYWORDS: Democracy, Governance, Participation, MGNREGA

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Abraham Lincoln, Democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people. People's participation is the cornerstone of a democratic country. In a democratic country public policy is goal oriented which has been strong fully influenced by the effective

participation of people. The process of democratization has transit a democratic government to more democratic through active participation of the people. MGNREGA is a scheme of social protectionism to bridge the gap between the poor and the affluent in developing countries. According to World Bank report in 2011 India is predominantly a rural country with about 69.9% of its population residing in the villages out of which 28.3% live below the poverty line. So, growth in rural sector is one of India's major concerns. Unni and Rani (2002) argue that the size of the informal economy and the tenacious poverty in developing countries make it necessary that social protection mechanisms implemented in such economies be based on productive employment and poverty reduction. India has experimented with various social protection interventions – “often referred to as social security, social safety net, poverty alleviation or social welfare programs - with the objectives of reducing poverty, vulnerability and social inequalities” since it gained independence in 1947 (Holmes et al (2010). The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the world's largest employment guarantee scheme implemented in 2005 in India, utilizes 2.3% of India's GDP (Ministry of Rural Development, 2008a). The dual objectives of 2 MGNREGA were providing a “safety net for poor rural households through the provision of wages, while simultaneously transforming rural livelihoods through the creation of productivity-enhancing infrastructure” (Holmes et al (2010). Berg et al (2012) sees the benefits from such public works stemming from three distinct effects: “a direct effect on those employed in the works; a labor market effect related to the shift in labor demand; and an increase in productivity related to the public goods into which the labor is invested”. Vast amount of research already existing in literature proves that MGNREGA has a positive impact on wages of casual workers (Azam (2012), Berg et al (2012). People's participation in MGNREGA scheme varied state to state depending on how MGNREGA wages compared to market wages, awareness and implementation of the programme. The marginalized section of the society is helped out by MGNREGA scheme. It has inaugurated a remarkable process in the empowerment of poor. The government is trying to address MGNREGA specifically as a tool of empowerment for the most vulnerable sections of the village communities because they are victims of social exclusion and political marginalization. People's participation from the marginalized section of the society in governing process has enhanced the democracy in India. The participation of people has effects on MGNREGA scheme by enhancing the meaning of democracy in a developing country like India.

So, this paper will try to focus on the process of people's participation in a democratic country through economic decentralization and how people's participation in MGNREGA has contributed to the enhancement of the values of democracy in India.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- i. To examine the effects of people's participation in MGNREGA i.e. how it could help out in enhancing the values of democracy.
- ii. To assess the hindrances of people's participation in MGNREGA scheme.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. Is MGNREGA successful in bringing an egalitarian social order?
- ii. What are the challenges in people's participation in MGNREGA?

4. METHODOLOGY

The method of study used here is descriptive and analytics based on secondary data. The secondary data are collected from various sources like books, journals, newspaper, magazine and internet. Also researchers' eye observation and internal criticisms are used for further analysis.

5. PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION AND MGNREGA

The Indian employment scheme was introduced in 2005, and was renamed MGNREGA in 2009, after the scheme had been rolled out across all Indian states. It is described by the Government of India as a rights-based, demand-driven, self-selecting, bottom-up scheme (Mukundan, 2009). In addition to providing rural households with supplementary employment, MGNREGA also seeks to encourage and facilitate the empowerment of women through financial inclusion and independence, strengthen civic participation, as well as improve the rural landscape (Planning Commission, 2011). Under the scheme, adult members of rural households are guaranteed 100 days of employment each year at the statutory minimum wage rate of the state or greater, provided they are willing to do unskilled manual labor. Included in this employment scheme is the guarantee that if the government is unable to provide a job to a qualified applicant within 15 days of an application being submitted, the applicant will receive unemployment insurance. The goals of MGNREGA scheme are social protection, the creation of durable assets (such as water security, soil conservation, higher land productivity) through the manual labor conducted by the

workers, employment of disadvantaged workers such as women, SC and ST, and inclusive growth in rural India through the policy's impact on livelihood security and democratic empowerment. The Act sets a stipulated minimum wage equal for men and women that varies by state and mandates that one third of the workers be women. Wages must be paid weekly, and in no case later than a fortnight. Work should be provided within a radius of five km from the claimant's house failing which the wage paid must be higher than the stipulated wage by 10 per cent to cover transport charges. Basic amenities like crèche, first aid, drinking water and shade must be provided at all work sites. The type of works that can be undertaken under MGNREGA is limited to water conservation and harvesting, drought proofing, afforestation, minor irrigation, flood control and protection, renovation of traditional water bodies, including de-silting of tanks, land development and construction renovation of village roads and maintenance of assets created under MGNREGA. Participation of people plays a central role in the discourse of rural development practitioners and policy makers. People's participation is always a prerequisite. Participation of beneficiaries can be understood in terms of participation in decision making, implementation of development programmes, monitoring and evaluation of the programme and sharing the benefits of development. Kramar in his book *Participation of Poor* stated that in launching a war on poverty requires maximum feasible participation of poor in the programmes meant for their welfare. People's participation in development process can come only through voluntary action. The planning process undertaken for economic development of the country would have to be directed towards ameliorating the living conditions of people below the poverty line. There are several socio-economic factors that influence the desired level of participation of people in the process of development across the world. For the first time in the history of post independence India the Gram Panchayats are directly involved in planning, implementation and social audit of MGNREGA. Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha are responsible for identifying, approving, allocating, supervising, monitoring and are accountable for all works under MGNREGA in their respective areas. MGNREGA programme has made an effort to improve the people's participation level in decision making process to the evaluation process through the provision of Right to Information Act, social audit and the Gram Sabha. These are unique platforms for the villagers to raise their voice and monitor the working of the programme. So, the bottom-up participatory approach of development has been adopted where the Gram Panchayat is the nodal agency at bottom level that has the authority to select, design and implement 50 per

cent of the works. Active participation of the beneficiaries in the grievance redressed system can help the programme to be more transparent and accountable and thereby reduce the level of corruption. The MGNREGA stipulates that all information requests under RTI related to the MGNREGA be made available to the applicant within 7 days as opposed to the stipulated 30 days in RTI Act. Section 17 of the Act mandates that regular social audits to be conducted in the Gram Sabha at least once in every six months. All these provisions are listed in the programme with an intension to achieve the goal of inclusive growth through active participation of the rural mass. So, MGNREGA workers can participate in the actual process of decision making through the enactment of provisions like works selection process, social audit and the grievance redressed system. There was a wide variation across the villages in regard to the level of awareness regarding the provisions of MGNREGA. There are various factors which have impacted on the level of participation of MGNREGA. Age have an inverse impact on the participation. It means with the increase in age, level of participation decreased significantly. Level of education is also inversely related to the level of participation in MGNREGA workforce. There is a significant gender differentiation in the level of participation. The age old phenomenon of gender discrimination is responsible in rural society of Assam especially in Muslim communities where female were still not encouraged to work outside their home except the widow. Occupational status was found to have an inverse impact on the level of participation in MGNREGA activities. It have been seen that people who were accustomed to manual labor participates more than the people from other occupations. So, participation of people in MGNREGA scheme has enhanced the concept of democracy in India. It has been strengthening the true values of democracy by advancing the employment opportunity to the poor section of the society, marginalized groups particularly women and minorities.

6. CONCLUSION

MGNREGA is the superior poverty alleviation programme in India. The participation of people has tremendously increased the successfulness of the programme. People's participation has strengthened the true color of democracy in India. However, participation of people has been affected by several factors including the awareness level of the people, education, age, gender discrimination, occupational status etc. Peoples participation is not only limited on the manual works but too extended on the decision making process. Participation is a process of

empowerment. MGNREGA strengthened the women power in society by helping out the women community economically and socially too through involving them in the decision making process. The success of MGNREGA not only depends on effective functioning of its administrative agencies but too upon the actively participation of the people. People's participation is must for the development of any society. Finally, we can conclude that MGNREGA is successful in bringing an egalitarian order in our society.

7. REFERENCES

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