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Impact of MNREGA on Employment of Disadvantaged Groups, Wage Rates and Migration in Rajasthan

Mrutyunjay Swain and Shreekant Sharma*

ABSTRACT

The paper assesses the effectiveness of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) in generating employment for disadvantaged groups like SCs, STs and women, creation of durable assets, improving the agricultural and non-agricultural wage rates, enhancing the level of food security and controlling the out migration in rural Rajasthan. The study has also assessed the effects of MNREGA in terms of creation of durable assets, improvement in the agricultural and non-agricultural wage rates and containing out migration in rural Rajasthan which have potential positive impacts on vulnerable groups. The paper also analyses the perceptions of MNREGA workers about its role in improving the food security and the socio-economic conditions of participating households. Based on secondary level data analysis and the survey covering 200 participants and 50 non-participants from 10 villages of 5 districts, the study finds that the scheme has positively affected the agricultural and non-agricultural wage rates, reduced the extent of food insecurity and controlled to some extent the level of out migration in rural Rajasthan. Overall, it has promoted financial inclusion in the region. However, there is a declining trend in extent of participation of the SCs and the STs in MNREGA works during the reference years 2008-09 to 2010-11. But there has been slight improvement in participation of women in MNREGA works in Rajasthan.

Keywords: MNREGA, Disadvantaged groups, Wage rates, Migration, Logit models

JEL: J38, C51

I

INTRODUCTION

India lives in her villages. About 68.8 per cent of population in India subsists in 6.41 lakh villages (Census 2011) directly or indirectly depending on agriculture and allied activities for their livelihood whereas about 50 per cent of the villages have very poor socio-economic conditions. Though India has made remarkable progress on many fronts during the post-Independence period, the rural areas of the country have lagged behind and still struggle for the basic facilities. To trigger growth in rural areas, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) came into force in 2006. The unique features of the Act include time bound employment guarantee, incentive-disincentive structure to the State Governments for

*Sr. Research Officer/Assistant Professor (SS), Agro-Economic Research Centre, Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar- 388 120 (Gujarat).

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providing employment or payment of unemployment allowance at their own cost and emphasis on labour intensive works prohibiting the use of contractors and machinery (Government of India, 2008). Nearly about 90 per cent of the cost for employment provided is borne by the Centre. This is a flagship programme of the Government that directly touches lives of the poor and promotes inclusive growth. It is the largest ever public employment programme visualised in human history. It has unleashed a silent revolution by forcing the government and private employers to provide minimum wages to the poorest of the poor. It has increased the bargaining power of the poorest of the poor at every stage from demanding a job card to ensure legitimate wages for work (Dreze *et al*., 2006).

Some earlier studies on the impact of MNREGA have pointed out the impressive positive effects of the scheme on different fronts in various parts of rural India. Not only the scheme has helped the most needed employment to resource poor rural people, it has also induced increase in wage rates in rural farm and non-farm sectors which have positively contributed to food security level in the regions under study (Roy and Dey, 2009). It has tremendously improved the extent of curiosity, participation and awareness among rural people about various government programmes and has increased women participation in rural works (Jandu, 2008; Khera and Nayak, 2009). More importantly, it has been designed to reduce the extent of corruption in implementation of the scheme compared to that in previously implemented rural development programmes (Dreze *et al*., 2008; Vanaik and Siddhartha, 2008). The control of distress migration in villages is another significant outcome that has been achieved through MNREGA.

Though a wide variety of works were taken up under the scheme including works on soil and water conservation structures and rural roads that matched the requirements of the people but the quality and maintenance of assets need more attention in the coming years so that investment made would not go futile (Kareemulla *et al*., 2010). The lack of trained professionals for time bound implementation, under staffing and delay in administration, lack of people's planning, poor quality of works and assets created, inappropriate schedules of rates, unnecessary bureaucratic interventions and mockery of social audits are hindering the implementation process (Ambasta *et al*., 2008). CAG (2007) has also identified several weaknesses in the implementation of the Scheme. Increased awareness and active participation of civil society organisations can help in containing the loopholes in implementation of MNREGA in the country (Shah, 2007).

MNREGA is a huge public employment programme that requires periodic evaluation on various fronts in various parts of the country. In this study, an attempt has been made to assess the impact of MNREGA in promoting food security in the region by generating additional income and employment for the disadvantaged groups like the SCs, the STs and women. The study has also assessed the effects of MNREGA in terms of creation of durable assets, improvement in the agricultural and non-agricultural wage rates and containing out migration in rural Rajasthan. The

influence of various factors on motivating or demotivating the sample households (HHs) to participate in MNREGA works was also analysed.

II

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The study is based on both secondary data and primary data collected from five districts of Rajasthan, namely, Banswara, Karauli, Nagaur, Jaisalmer and Sri Ganganagar. The districts were selected in such a manner that they would represent the entire state to the maximum possible extent. To facilitate this, one each from the North, South, East, West and Central location of the Rajasthan state were selected for the study (Figure 1).

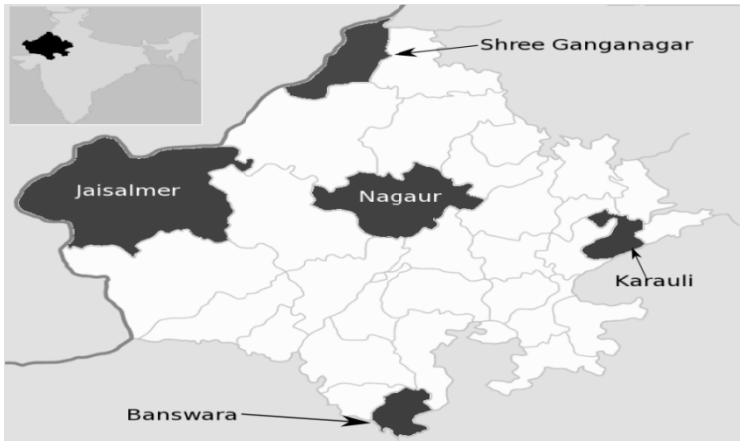

Figure 1. Selected Study Districts of Rajasthan, India

From each of the districts, two villages were selected taking into account their distance from the location of the district headquarters or the main city/town. In each district, one village was selected from the periphery of around 5 kilometers of the district/city headquarters and the second village from each district was selected from a farthest location of 20 kilometers or more. From each selected village, primary survey was carried out on 20 MNREGA beneficiaries and 5 non-beneficiaries working as wage employed. As a whole, 200 participants and 50 non-participants were surveyed in detail for the reference year 2009-10.

The data were analysed using simple statistical tools such as averages, percentages, coefficient of variation, Gini coefficient, Lorenz curves etc. The Logit regression technique was used to analyse the influence of various factors in motivating or demotivating the sample HHs to participate in MNREGA works at household level.

III

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Employment of Disadvantaged Groups in Rajasthan

Employment generation for rural people is the major short-term objective of MNREGA. Most of the districts in Rajasthan have performed exceptionally well in terms of employment generation under the scheme. During 2010-11, 52.871 lakh households were provided jobs under the MNREGA that constitutes about 97.3 per cent of all households demanding employment in Rajasthan. Similarly, during the two previous years 2008-09 and 2009-10, the performance in employment generation was even better since almost all households seeking jobs in all districts were provided jobs (Table 1). Among MNREGA workers, a majority was women and about 66.9 per cent of total person days generated was by women workers who were not working before the launch of MNREGA. This has resulted in increase in their economic freedom and their standard of living.

TABLE 1. PERFORMANCE OF MNREGA IN RAJASTHAN (2008-09 TO 2010-11)

Performance indicators	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
No. of households issued job cards	8,468,740	8,827,935	9,920,568
No. of households demanded employment	6,375,314	6,522,264	5,436,344
No. of households provided employment	6,373,093	6,522,264	5,287,141
Percentage of person-days generated by SCs & STs	52.0	49.0	48.8
Percentage of person days generated by women	67.1	66.9	68.3
Total person days generated	482,954,000	449,810,000	251,504,299
No. of households completed 100 days	2,631,892	1,514,420	302,746
Total number of works taken up	206,770	237,950	196,523
No. of works ongoing/suspended	135,720	110,996	342448
No. of works completed	100,472	92,251	23871
Expenditure on works ongoing/ suspended (lakh Rs.)	443,287	382,967	116,764
Expenditure on works completed (lakh Rs.)	159,187	190,602	31,346
Total no. of bank and post office accounts opened	7,359,460	9,330,267	9,743,160
Total amount disbursed through banks/post offices (lakh Rs.)	324,131	357,972	203,010
Unemployment allowance due (no. of days)	N.A.	5,010	51,839
Unemployment allowance Paid (no. of days)	N.A.	15	0
Unemployment allowance paid (Rs.)	N.A.	1200	0
Percentage of GP where social audit held	99.9	96.9	99.4

Source: www.nrega.nic.in; Accessed on 20/08/2011.

The analysis on caste composition of job card holders in Rajasthan revealed considerable variation in the incidence of different social groups across districts under review. The districts with higher ST population like Banswara, Pratapgarh and Barmer provided MNREGA job cards to more ST households (HHs) in the state. In Jaisalmer and Bikaner districts, other backward class HHs resided in large numbers. It is worth-mentioning that there is a declining trend in the proportion of participation of SCs and STs in MNREGA works during the reference years (Table 1). On the

other hand, participation of 'OBC' category and General Caste category of HHs has increased over the reference years. Not only there was a declining trend in issue of job cards to lower social strata in Rajasthan, there was also a declining trend in person-days generated by these SC & ST HHs. The percentage of person-days generated by SCs & STs has declined from 52 per cent in 2008-09 to 48.8 per cent in 2010-11. The decline in relative participation of these marginalised groups was basically due to their lesser proportion in total population. However, significant proportion of these marginalised groups has been covered under the scheme in rural Rajasthan.

The number of households who completed 100 days of participation in the MNREGA works in Rajasthan has drastically declined over the reference years. Only 41.3 per cent of the total households given employment were found to complete 100 days of employment in 2008 that has considerably declined to 23.2 per cent in 2009-10 and further to 6.5 per cent in 2010-11. The total number of works taken up and the number of works completed have also declined over the years. The total number of completed works has fallen from 100472 in 2008-09 to as less as 23871 in 2010-11. The failure to plan and execute the works plan at villages in a timely manner due to shortage of MNREGA staff and line department staff and lesser involvement of PRIs were mainly responsible for the inability to provide sufficient works to the workers.

As far as number of projects completed and total amount spent is concerned, it was found that, during 2010-11, a total of 23871 works were completed whereas 342448 works were under progress in entire Rajasthan. Out of these 23871 completed works related to rural connectivity, provision of irrigation facility and land development constituted a major share during 2010-11 (Figure 2).

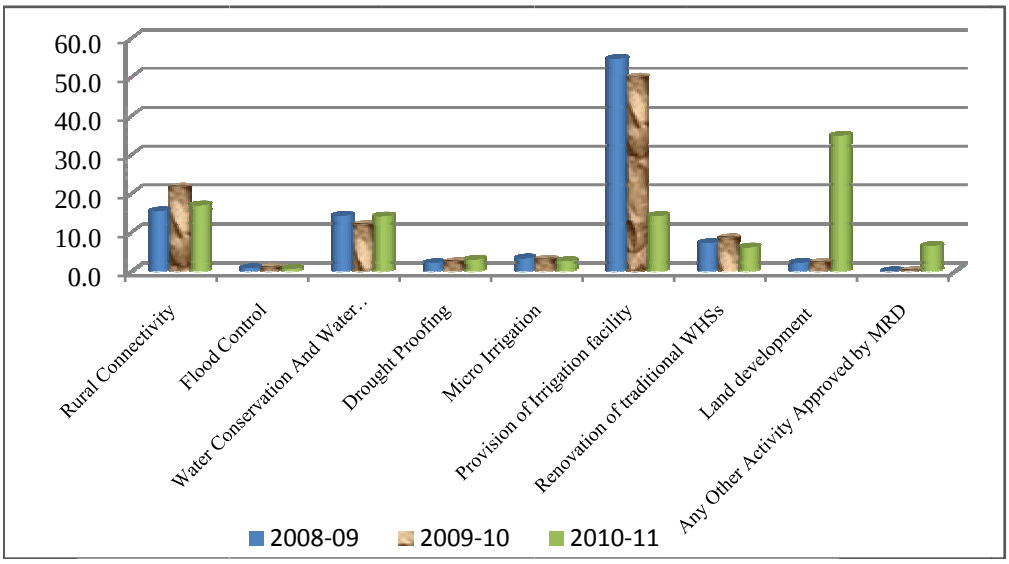

Figure 2. Percentage of Works Completed Under NREGA in Rajasthan.

During two previous reference periods 2008-09 and 2009-10, rural connectivity, provision of irrigation facility and the works related to water conservation and water harvesting constituted a major share. However the quality of assets created was not very satisfactory as observed in the study districts. It was observed that works have been taken up without proper planning at some places. For example, rural roads have been stopped at the middle of the agricultural field due to some legal disputes since the work was not initiated with proper planning and in due consultation wih stakeholders. Lack of awareness and participation hinders the entire process including selection of assets to be created. The MNREGA officials in the region reportedly expressed that, no proper and timely proposals are coming from Gram Sabha. Time shortage and staff shortage also affected the quality of assets created. No maintenance has been arranged after creation of the assets that threaten the durability of assets though huge amount of money has been spent on different ongoing and completed projects in all districts of Rajasthan during reference periods.

Regarding social auditing and inspection of MNREGA work in the study districts in Rajasthan, total number of blocks where social audit has been completed was still very less during reference periods and there has been no satisfactory progress in terms of inspection of works at district and block levels during 2010-11. However, there has been a good progress on the fronts of muster rolls verification and number of Gram Sabha and Vigilance and Monitoring Committee (VMC) meeting held during the same period. However, the overall performance of the scheme was satisfactory as per the social audit reports of 2008-09 and 2009-10. The performance in terms of disposal of complaints was not satisfactory in the majority of districts in Rajasthan during these two reference years. It is disheartening to note that proper care has not been taken even in creating a reliable database. It seems that the social audit results have been reported wrongly on the MNREGA official website. Since these databases are used for periodical evaluation of the scheme and policy formulation, utmost care must be taken in building reliable database.

As far as MNREGA payment processed through banks/post offices is concerned, it was found that that various districts in Rajasthan have used both banks and post offices evenly for making wage payment towards MNREGA works. However, as expected, the number of joint accounts in both these cases was considerably less in all reference years. The total amount disbursed for wage payment through banks and post offices was Rs. 2, 03,010 lakhs in 2010-11 in Rajasthan, out of which, Rs. 114,755.66 lakhs was disbursed through banks and Rs. 88,254.88 lakhs was disbursed through post offices. It may be noted that in some districts like Hanumangarh and Sawai Madhopur, no payments were made to beneficiaries either through banks or post offices even if a large number of individual accounts in banks and post-offices were available. Similarly, in Bundi district, 1,50,974 individual bank account holders and 5,350 joint bank account holders participating in MNREGA work during 2009-10 did not get wage at all through any bank whereas all the

MNREGA workers having post office accounts managed to get their wages accounting to Rs 6,778.82 lakhs.

So far as payment of unemployment allowance in Rajasthan is concerned, the data depicted a very scary picture throughout the state. Though unemployment allowance was due for 51839 days covering 26 out of 33 districts in Rajasthan during 2010-11 not a single rupee was paid to the MNREGA workers.

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Sample Households

The analysis on the socio-economic characteristics, the income and consumption pattern of sample households revealed that, out of a total of 250 sample HHs, 80 per cent were beneficiary households and remaining 20 per cent were non-beneficiary households. The average family size of a beneficiary household is 5.43 while that of a non-beneficiary household is 5.44. About 2.5 members of a beneficiary household and 2.1 members of a non-beneficiary household are income earners. More importantly, the proportion of per HH women participants in MNREGA works (54.1 per cent) was more than that of the men participants in MNREGA works in Rajasthan. The literacy rate is quite low in the study regions. Illiteracy is more among MNREGA workers as about 44.4 per cent of them are illiterate compared to 41.6 per cent illiterates in the case of non-MNREGA workers. In the case of MNREGA beneficiaries, the SCs and STs comprised 25.5 per cent and 24.5 per cent respectively whereas the OBCs and general categories of HHs accounted for 25 per cent each. The majority of earning members of both MNREGA beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were wage earners. Comparatively more among MNREGA beneficiaries (77.4 per cent) were wage earners whereas about 61.7 per cent of non-MNREGA household members were the wage earners.

The average annual income generated by a beneficiary and a non-beneficiary HH from all livelihood sources was Rs 50,116.6 and Rs 58,318.9 respectively (Table 2). beneficiary households was also better than that of beneficiary households. The per capita consumption of food and non-food items by the MNREGA beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were found to be reasonable in the study areas compared to NSS

TABLE 2. INCOME, CONSUMPTION, BORROWINGS AND WAGES OF SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS

Description (1)	Beneficiary (2)	Non-beneficiary (3)	All households (4)
Average annual household income (Rs.)	50,116.6	58,318.9	51,757.0
Average annual household consumption (Rs.)	53,502.1	58,724.7	54,542.8
Average wage (Rs./day)*	118.6	134.8	121.8
Average borrowings (Rs./HH)	9,220.8	16,150.0	10,606.6
Gini coefficient of income	0.343	0.427	0.364
Gini coefficient of consumption	0.342	0.347	0.345
Gini coefficient of wage	0.116	0.283	0.217

Source: Field survey data

Note: *The wage rate includes all activities undertaken by sample households. The average wage from MNREGA works was Rs. 78.7 per beneficiary HH per day only.

average. However, both income and consumption expenditure of non-participants in MNREGA were found to be much better compared to that of MNREGA beneficiaries. Overall, the socio-economic conditions of non-participants of MNREGA were much better. On the other hand, the extent of variability of income and expenditure of non-beneficiary households was found to be more (see Figures 3a, 3b).

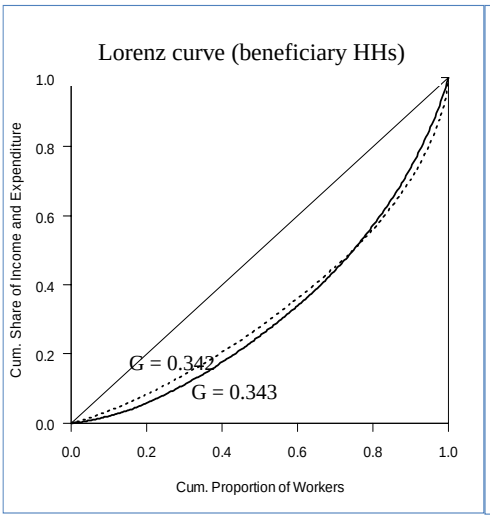

Figure 3a. Lorenz Curves for Income and Consumption of Beneficiary HHs

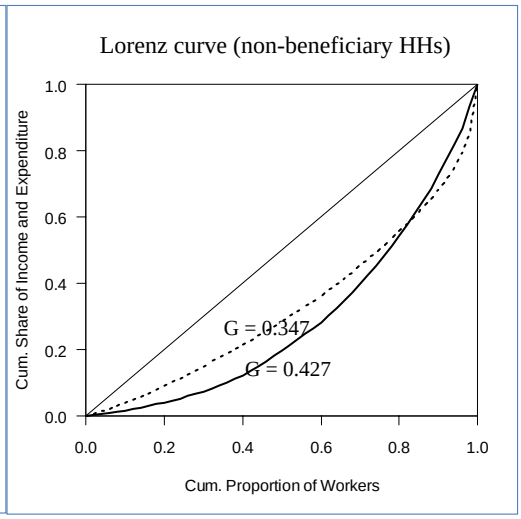

Figure 3b. Lorenz Curves for Income and Consumption of Non-Beneficiary HHs

Determinants of Participation in MNREGA Works

The influence of various factors in motivating or demotivating the sample HHs to participate in MNREGA works was analysed with the help of logit regression technique at household level. The analysis helped to assess the influence of various predictor variables on the participation in MNREGA as a binary outcome variable. Among the predictors, four were continuous variables and three were categorical dummy variables. The continuous predictors were annual HH income (Rs./HH), household size (No.), the distance of work place from home (kms) and the per HH wage (Rs./day); and the categorical dummy variables were female worker participation (female=1, otherwise=0), possession of land (have land=1, otherwise=0) and BPL card holding (BPL card holder =1, otherwise=0). The model was fitted with intercept. The findings of the HH level logit model are stated in Table 3.

The logistic regression coefficients give the change in the log odds[1] of the outcome for one unit increase in the predictor variable. Three predictor variables (household size, wage per HH and female participation) and intercept were found to

TABLE 3. DETERMINANTS OF PARTICIPATION IN MNREGA (HH LEVEL LOGIT REGRESSION) (DEPENDENT VARIABLE: PARTICIPATION IN MNREGA, YES=1, NO=0)

Predictor variables (1)	Coefficient (2)	Exponential value of coefficients (3)	Std. error (4)	Z value (5)	Pr (>|z|) (6)	
Intercept	7.263	1427.206	1.663000	4.368000	0.000013	***
Household income (Rs.)	0.0000048	1.0000048	0.000011	0.437000	0.662227	
Household size (No.)	-0.0487	0.9525	0.012030	-4.048000	0.000052	***
Distance of work place from home (Km)	-0.1279	0.8799	0.133800	-0.956000	0.339115	
Wage rate(Rs./day)	-0.3884	0.6781	0.129700	-2.993000	0.002758	**
Female worker (Yes=1, No=0)	3.2540	25.8937	0.9629	3.38	0.000726	***
Possession of land (Yes=1, No=0)	0.4828	1.6206	0.6103	0.791	0.428881	
BPL Card holding (Yes=1, No=0)	0.0634	1.0654	0.5921	0.107	0.914757	
Pseudo R^2	0.6353	No. of observations = 250				
LR Chi-square	158.95	Degree of freedom= 7			0.000000	

Source: Computed (using R) from field data.
Notes: Significance codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' .

significantly influence the participation in MNREGA works while remaining predictor variables such as distance of the work place from home and land holding and BPL card holding did not significantly influence the participation in MNREGA work. The Chi-square value of 158.95 with 7 degrees of freedom and an associated p-value of about 0.0 confirmed that our model as a whole fitted significantly better than an empty model.[2] The results of the model indicated that, for one unit increase in household size, the log odds of participating in MNREGA would decrease by 0.0487. This was mainly because there was no provision under MNREGA to provide more working opportunities to families with higher family size. All households irrespective of family size are offered 100 days of employment each under the Act. For a one unit increase in wage rate, the log odds of participating in MNREGA decreased by 0.3884. It is worth-mentioning that non-participant workers were mostly skilled and semi-skilled with better standard of living. Thus they could manage to get higher average wage compared to MNREGA beneficiaries. From Table 2, it may be seen that the average wage of MNREGA beneficiaries was Rs. 118.6 per day compared to that of Rs. 134.8 per day for non-beneficiary workers. The average wage from MNREGA works was Rs. 78.7 per beneficiary HH per day only. This kind of distribution of wage rates affected the coefficient of wage rate in negative direction favouring inverse relationship between wage rate and MNREGA participation. Thus it is suggested to provide more wages to MNREGA workers.

Being a female worker versus a male worker, increased the log odds of participation in MNREGA works by 3.254. In terms of odds ratio of 25.89, the odds of female participation in MNREGA are 25.89 times larger than the odds for a male worker to participate in MNREGA works. Thus, the female workers have better

chance of joining MNREGA work compared to their male counterparts. It was also observed that fairly a good section of female participants did not do any labour works before initiation of MNREGA. MNREGA has given them the opportunities to come out of their houses and earn something for them and for their families. The better participation of women workers has resulted in better awareness among rural women regarding various aspects of the scheme and about other programmes of the government as well. The rise in their purchasing power has reduced the extent of their dependence on the male members of the families. The sale of cosmetics and other items used by women has increased manifold in the study villages. However, it was observed that the weakest working members of the family including ladies and children were found being sent for MNREGA works, whereas the most efficient members of the family works in better avenues. The non-participation of efficient members of the family in MNREGA works has certainly affected the quality of assets created under the scheme.

Impacts of MNREGA on Employment and Income Generation and Migration

It was found that, about 1.41 persons of a sample household (with family size 5.4) were employed in MNREGA works in the state. Banswara district topped among study districts with maximum of 1.95 members per household employed in MNREGA works. Out of 1.41 members per HH who participated in MNREGA works, about 0.81 members (i.e., 57.7 per cent) were women (Table 4). About 74.3 per cent of the MNREGA workers in Jaisalmer were women. Women participants are found to be maximum (0.90 per HH) in Banswara district. Though 100 days of employment was guaranteed as per the Act, the sample households in Rajasthan could manage to get about 82 days per HH in 2009. Out of these 82 days per beneficiary family, about 52 days (i.e., 63.4 per cent) were the man-days participated by the female workers. Only SC households in Jaisalmer and ST households in Nagaur were fortunate to get full 100 days of employment per HH. The average distance of the work places from the residences of workers was found to be reasonable in all districts except Sri Ganganagar district. The average distance in the case of Sri Ganganagar was 4.35 km compared to average distance of 2.54 km for all sample respondents taken together.

On an average, the sample HHs in Rajasthan got their wages at the rate of Rs. 78.7 per day compared to the minimum prescribed wage rate of Rs. 100 per day. Overall the women workers received higher wage rate (Rs. 80) compared to average wage rate of Rs. 79 per day received by all workers. It is worth mentioning that the lower average daily wage earned by the working members of our sample households in all study districts of the state was basically due to the fact that people were given more piece rate work compared to daily wage work. So in the majority of cases, the payment was made on the basis of task rate which was found to be less than Rs. 100 per day. However, workers expressed that comparatively more of them received the

TABLE 4. THE EFFECTS OF MNREGA ON EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME GENERATION AND MIGRATION IN STUDY DISTRICTS

Characteristics (1)		Sri Ganganagar (2)	Banswara (3)	Jaisalmer (4)	Karauli (5)	Nagaur (6)	Rajasthan (7)
Average household size		4.7	6.0	5.0	5.4	6.1	5.4
No. of members per hh employed during the year	Aggregate	1.35	1.95	1.05	1.35	1.35	1.41
	Women	0.73	0.90	0.78	0.83	0.83	0.81
No. of days per hh employed during the year	Aggregate	71.73	81.48	81.28	84.93	91.30	82.14
	Women	41.40	35.40	59.95	60.20	63.43	52.08
Per cent HHs employed 100 or more days	Aggregate	27.50	50.00	45.00	40.00	60.00	44.50
Wage rate obtained (Rs.)	Aggregate	94.82	78.72	67.19	76.39	78.37	79.14
	Women	97.24	80.32	68.59	76.48	77.30	79.99
Increase in income due to MNREGA per HH per year	Aggregate	6801.4	6414.1	5461.2	6487.8	7155.2	6500.6
	Women	4025.7	2843.3	4112.0	4604.1	4903.1	4165.6
Average distance from residence where employed (Km)		4.35	1.18	3.1	1.34	2.74	2.54
No of members migrated from the village because of not getting work under NREGA even after registration (per household)		0.23 (4.79)	0.725 (12.08)	0.4 (8.00)	0.425 (7.87)	0.4 (6.56)	0.44 (8.06)
No of out-migrated members returned back to village because of getting work in NREGA (per household)		0.08 (1.60)	0.5 (8.33)	0.075 (1.50)	0.025 (0.46)	0.2 (3.28)	0.175 (3.24)

Source: Field survey data.

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage of respective household size.

better wages from MNREGA works during the reference year than the same from other kinds of public works taken up earlier under other programmes. It is worth mentioning that the average wages earned from MNREGA works were among the lowest as compared to other income generating activities such as agricultural and non-agricultural labour works. On the other hand, the increase in income due to MNREGA per HH per year was Rs. 6500.6 in Rajasthan. Among the study districts, it was highest in Nagaur (Rs. 7155.2) and lowest in Jaisalmer (Rs. 5461.2). Though the amount looks very meager, it has helped the poorest of poor significantly. The larger scale of operation of the programme in the state has considerably enhanced the economic conditions of the rural people.

As regards the nature of assets created under MNREGA and their durability, the majority of MNREGA workers were found to be engaged in rural connectivity works followed by land development works and creation of water conservation and water harvesting structures. Taking all sample households (HHs) together, about 72.0 per cent of participating HHs and 72.3 per cent of participating workers have worked in rural connectivity works in Rajasthan. It may be noted that about 56.5 per cent of MNREGA HHs reported that the quality of assets created was good while about 40

per cent reported that that the quality of assets created was very good. Only 3 per cent of MNREGA HHs reported that the quality of assets created was bad. However, the quality of assets created with respect to the amount spent was grossly inadequate.

So far as the effects of MNREGA on labour migration is concerned, about 8 per cent of family members of a sample household in Rajasthan have migrated out to other places for not getting work under MNREGA (Table 4). Relatively among study districts, out-migrants were more in Banswara district where about 12.1 per cent members of sample households migrated from the village because of not getting work under MNREGA even after registration. On the other hand, about 0.175 members of a household (3.24 per cent) had returned back to village because of getting work in MNREGA in Rajasthan. Incidentally, the returning of out-migrants to join MNREGA was more in Banswara too compared to other study districts. Since Banswara is situated close to Gujarat that provides better avenues for migrant workers, relatively more workers from this district used migration as a strategy for their income smoothening. As far as the types of activities in which they were engaged earlier to joining MNREGA are concerned, about 60 per cent of returned members of sample households in Rajasthan were earlier working in construction, manufacturing and mining sectors while 30 per cent and 10 per cent of returned members were engaged in agricultural labour works and private works respectively.

Role of MNREGA in Ensuring Food Security

The perceptions of beneficiary households reveals that about 20 per cent of them did not get sufficient food for the whole of year. Insufficient wage employment (35.2 per cent), low wage rate (15.6 per cent), frequent occurrence of drought (10.8 per cent), higher prices (12.8 per cent) and higher family size (10.4 per cent) were the major causes of their food insufficiency (Table 5). Among the difficulties other than food insufficiency, not having better home/land (28.0 per cent), lack of irrigation structure (23.2 per cent), poor quality of drinking water (20.8 per cent), and not having required agriculture implements (16.8 per cent) were the major ones. It is worth-mentioning that about 99.5 per cent of sample beneficiary households expressed that the MNREGA scheme has enhanced food security and it has provided protection against extreme poverty. About 75.0 per cent of sample beneficiary households expressed that it has helped to reduce distress migration. About 98.0 per cent of sample beneficiary households expressed that it has helped in giving greater economic independence to women and 92.5 per cent of them revealed that it has generated purchasing power at local economy.

TABLE 5. PERCEPTIONS OF WORKERS ON ROLE OF MNREGA IN ENSURING FOOD SECURITY

Sl.No. (1)	Particulars (2)	Per cent HHs agreed (3)
1.	HHs not having sufficient food for the whole of year	20.0
2.	Reasons behind food insufficiency:	
(i)	Insufficient wage employment	35.2
(ii)	Higher family size	10.4
(iii)	Frequent occurrence of drought	10.8
(iv)	Rising prices	12.8
(v)	Low wage rate	15.6
(vi)	Any other (no food subsidy, monetary problem, low rainfall, death of earning person, old age, etc.)	8.8
3.	Difficulties other than food insufficiency	
(i)	Poor quality of drinking water	20.8
(ii)	Increase in medical expenses	10.4
(iii)	Increase in prices/ Inflation	12.8
(iv)	Electricity shortage	7.2
(v)	Lack of education facilities	5.6
(vi)	Unemployment problem	35.2
(vii)	Not having better home / Land	28.0
(viii)	Lack of irrigation structure	23.2
(x)	Not having BPL card	7.6
(xi)	Not having household durables	15.2
(xii)	Not having enough livestock	2.4
(xiii)	Not having required agriculture implements	16.8
(xiv)	Not having better sanitation facility	4.4
(xv)	Not responded	6.0
4.	Perceptions on role of MNREGA in ensuring food security	
(i)	MNREGA enhanced food security	99.5
(ii)	MNREGA provided protection against extreme poverty	95.5
(iii)	MNREGA helped to reduce distress migration	75.0
(iv)	MNREGA helped to reduce indebtedness	76.0
(v)	MNREGA gave greater economic independence to women	98.0
(vi)	MNREGA generated purchasing power at local economy	92.5

Source: Field survey data.

Note: Sum of the percentages is more than 100 due to multiple responses by the respondents.

IV

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

MNREGA has been the lifeline of the poor villagers that has positively contributed to increase in employment, income, wage rates and food security in the study regions. The major issue is on its effective implementation so as to meet its development objectives like financial inclusion and inclusive growth. Since it is a largest ever employment programme in the history of India, there has been some lacunae and weaknesses in its implementation in various parts of the country. Though Rajasthan is relatively a better performing state, there are some issues that require urgent policy attention. Declining participation of weaker sections like SCs and STs, non-payment of unemployment allowance, inadequate staff strength and frequent changes in staff, poor quality of assets created and poor provisions for maintenance

of the structures created, corruption and interference of local politicians/influential people are some of the issues that require corrective measures.

The failure to plan and execute the works plan at villages in a timely manner due to shortage of MNREGA staff and line department staff and lesser involvement of PRIs were mainly responsible for the inability to provide sufficient works to the workers. Thus there is a need to increase the staff strength for planning and executing the MNREGA works and to take some measures so as to ensure better participation of more number of HHs belonging to lower social strata like SC/STs in MNREGA works. The proportion of women in MNREGA staff should be increased since the majority of MNREGA workers are women.

The nature of assets created at various places in the study districts was not very satisfactory because they were taken up without proper planning and without proper consultation with villagers. Some assets created were either completely useless or became useless due to no maintenance provision. So MNREGA works should be executed after proper planning and consultation with Gram Sabha and the potential beneficiaries. The maintenance of all structures created should be arranged through MNREGA also. The creation of productive assets should be considered as the primary objective of the scheme in the long-run while the creation of guaranteed employment under MNREGA becomes the by-product.

A very scary picture was projected throughout the state of Rajasthan with respect to payment of unemployment allowance. The lack of awareness and ignorance of the MNREGA workers about the procedure adopted for applying the job and the unethical procedure followed by some MNREGA officials were the major causes of the poor show on payment of unemployment allowance. Proper care should be taken by the central government to pursue the state governments to pay their due of unemployment allowance to the deserving MNREGA workers.

It was observed that some Gram Panchayat members were politically motivated and biased towards their party men for issue of job cards for which some needy and poor HHs did not get the job card while some better-off families got job cards that they used to earn some amount by transferring to others on rent. Thus, it is suggested to conduct a fresh survey by some independent agencies to identify total number of job cards issued to needy HHs and to cancel all misused job cards possessed by the well-off families. The influence of local politicians and other influential groups at village level has significantly affected the implementation at many places in the study districts. Starting from issue of job cards, corruptive practices are found to be prevalent in the selection of MNREGA officials and execution of the MNREGA works. It is suggested to include some provisions in MNREGA that would enable to take stringent actions against corrupt officials and alienate politicians from the every stage of implementation of MNREGA and encourage participation of civil society organization (CSOs) in fighting against corruption and in giving social justice to MNREGA beneficiaries wherever necessary. There is a need for civil society groups to work actively with local panchayats to ensure that elderly workers, disabled

persons and nomadic tribes who do not fall in the ambit of the scheme, are also included. They should be supported by the government so as to allow them to spread awareness among the rural people regarding various aspects of the scheme. It is noteworthy that the lack of awareness among the rural people hinders the entire process of implementation of MNREGA including selection of assets created, job application, timely payment of wages, payment of unemployment allowance etc.

NOTES

1. The odds of success are defined as the ratio of the probability of success over the probability of failure. For example, the participation odds for female, one of our predictor variables, is p/q and the odds for male is p^1/q^1. Thus the odds ratio for female worker is (p/q)/ (p^1/q^1). The coefficient for female worker is the log of odds ratio between the female group and male group. So we can get the odds ratio by exponentiating the coefficient for female worker. Each exponentiated coefficient is the ratio of two odds, or the change in odds in the multiplicative scale for a unit increase in the corresponding predictor variable holding other variables at certain value.

2. It is a model with no predictors. Logistic regression uses maximum likelihood, which is an iterative procedure. The first iteration (called iteration 0) is the log likelihood of the "null" or "empty" model

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