

***Dado Uge Ne Dadi Male***

**Work Guarantee Must Be As Certain As the Rising of the Sun**

**Will NREGA Ensure Security Against Hunger?**

**A Study- Summery Report**

**By**

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**Objective of the Study:**

The objective of this paper is to look at the financial and economic aspects of the NREGA. It will be studying the implications for the rural economy as a result of the minimum wage and employment instituted by the Act. Also, the greater bargaining power of the rural workforce and its implications on the job-markets will be looked at. Besides this, the effectiveness in implementation of the scheme will be studied.

**Duration:** The Study carried out in November to January-2007

**Coverage:** Ten districts have been chosen for the first stage of NREGA implementation. Of these, five lie in Gujarat, two in Madhya Pradesh and two in Rajasthan and one in Maharashtra

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**Findings of the Study:**

- ❖ Education level of the most of the job card hold was average 4.48yrs, but 174 respondents had studied till 10<sup>th</sup> standard.
- ❖ Average land holding of the respondents was 2.7 per family but majority of the land was non-irrigated, with 164 respondents describing themselves as land less labours.

- ❖ Majority of the sample, as many as 85% of the respondents, lived in kuchha (mud) housing. This is certainly a very high number and is an indicator of the poor economic status of the respondents.
- ❖ With regard to status of the employment only 96 described themselves as fully employed. 497 were half-employed, whereas 475 unemployed.
- ❖ Sarpanch was the main source of information After the Sarpanch, the NGOs became an important source of information. While in both Udaipur and Dungarpur in Rajasthan the administration has been very active in pushing NREGS as a scheme in Rajasthan, In Dhar , M.P., the sarpanch was the overwhelming source of information about the NREGS.
- ❖ 301 respondents said that they did not face any difficulties during the process of application for the job-card. However, there were 178 people who mentioned the fact that they faced some difficulties in the job-card application process. The common problems mentioned were: Lack of proper information, No job-card made and/or only temporary job-cards were made, Problems with regard to the job-card itself, no photographs taken, such as addition of name and photos.
- ❖ Of the people who have been able to obtain the job-card, we find that the average period of employment is around 39 days were provided out of 100 days. In Dangs, Panchmahal and Banaskantha, the implementation of the scheme has been really weak and only 5, 11 and 20 days of employment has been provided respectively. However, in Dungarpur (63 days) and Udaipur (67 days), the implementation has been really strong.
- ❖ 42% of the cases creation of new ponds and deepening or cleaning of existing ones was undertaken 26% of the cases, work related to road construction and maintenance was provided, Check-dam related work

- formed 16% of the cases. Rest of the cases comprised of work like canal maintenance and mud-work (digging and carrying). Hence, it is clear that the emphasis is on creation of assets which form a part of the basic infrastructure for the community.
- ❖ The selection of workers is done by the Panchayat (22%), talati (20%), contractor (17%), sarpanch (13%) etc. While the NREGA prohibits the use of contractors specifically, we found that they were still used in Dungarpur in Rajasthan. The basis of selection was mainly age (64%), ration card (24%) and job card (12%).
  - ❖ The time taken for the payment except Dhar and Sabarkantha, the wage payment takes more than two weeks in the various districts. In Udaipur, it is even worse than most other districts and 62.5% of the respondents got their wages after more than four weeks. But Panchmahal was the worst, as 44.9% of the respondents did not get their wages paid at all.
  - ❖ An analysis of the averages wages paid in the different types of work across districts shows that in many instances, the wages paid are even below the minimum agriculture wage level decided by the government (Rs. 50 per day for Gujarat, Rs. 73 for Rajasthan and Rs. 63 for Madhya Pradesh). This is something that the government needs to look at. Otherwise the purpose of the NREGS is defeated.
  - ❖ Effect on Labour market it is too early for there to be any tangible change in the wage rates, however, as many as 174 respondents claimed that there has been a change in the local wage rates since the EGS began. However, 327 workers also stated that there had been no change in the wages since the EGS started. Except for Dangs and Panchmahal, in most of the districts few respondents believed that there had been an effect on the wages. After some time, it would be interesting to study the dynamics

of the labor market and understand the positive and negative effect the EGS has had on it.

- ❖ The wages are paid either to the entire gang and divided among the gang by the leader, or they are paid directly to the individual worker. Wages were paid to gang-leaders mainly in Banaskantha, Dahod and Udaipur. In all the other districts, the majority of the respondents got their wages paid on individual basis.
  
- ❖ The wages did differ in some places depending on the type of work. However, in most places there was little change in wages depending on the type of work undertaken. Also, the wages are paid mainly on the basis of the amount of work done by the workers and not on the basis of the time taken to do the work. Similarly, the payment is made on the basis of measurement. It was found that there was no standard method of measurement used. Different ways of measuring the same work led to differing wage-payment across the villages and districts.

**Observation:**

**Gujarat:**

- ❖ There was a lack of information provided about the scheme and even government officials felt that they had not been adequately briefed
- ❖ No work demanded by the people (which was the original aim of the scheme) and the decision to provide work was taken by the senior government officials or local officials like sarpanch or talati
- ❖ In many instances, job card issued per ration-card.
- ❖ In the case of large family the single job card were given to the families with only mentioning the two members of family.
- ❖ Job cards often kept by the sarpanch or talati and hence respondents do not have direct information about their wage payments

## **Disha**

- ❖ In some case after the work got over the job card were collected back by Sarpanch and Talati.
- ❖ Wage payment often delayed or wages not paid at all

### **Madhya Pradesh:**

- ❖ In many villages job-cards are being kept with sarpanch or the talati
- ❖ Measurements of work done are being taken by contractor kept by panchayat (contractors not allowed under NREGA)
- ❖ In order to obtain any information, written requests have to be submitted, can be difficult and time-consuming
- ❖ Many people have not received their wages
- ❖ People are not aware about the legislation
- ❖ Often the worked is stopped in between and the workers are rendered jobless

### **Rajasthan:**

- ❖ In some instances the job-cards was kept by the sarpanch or talati
- ❖ Corruption found in wage payment
- ❖ Very high dependence on government officials (e.g., collector in Dungarpur) for the scheme to function properly, little push from grassroots

### **Maharashtra:**

- ❖ Job-cards are being distributed
- ❖ Government is not putting applicants' photos onto the cards (unlike, say, Gujarat), hence there is a delay
- ❖ Of the 10 panchayats surveyed, only in only 2 have the people got job-cards
- ❖ In eight, either the job-cards is with the Panchayat office, or has not reached at all
- ❖ Many sarpanch do no have information about the NREGA
- ❖ In the general public, very few people have information about the NREGA

- ❖ Confusion between state-wise EGS and NREGS
- ❖ Lack of clarity about the aegis of which schemes the existing work is going on

## **Conclusion**

As we have seen, the EGS is already making a difference to the lives of the people. Yet there is a long way to go. There are some issues in terms of the benefits to be drawn from the assets created by the scheme. Also, the menial nature and the lack of encouragement for both skilled labor and further training is something that is of concern in the long run. Implementation issues like issuance of job-cards on time is also a concern. Facilities for workers would also have to be improved over time. From the labor market point of view, it would be important to create a safety net through EGS for poor people without damaging the labor market and employment prospects. Another vital lesson to be learnt from the EGS in Maharashtra is to ensure that the scheme does not encourage widespread corruption. This would really hamper its effectiveness. Safeguards need to be put in place to ensure that this does not happen, something that is easier said than done. In our comparison across states, we find that there are some differences in the implementation of the scheme. The districts in Rajasthan have done well in the initial implementation. However, in terms of the various types of activities and programs covered under NREGS, Gujarat has done better overall.

The next stage of this study will be to prepare a citizen report on NREGA, which will include the budget Analysis, interviews with government officials who are involved with the implementation of the scheme, in order to get a more complete picture of the scheme. As part of the plan DISHA hoped that the study will be turned into a longitudinal one and will assess the implementation of EGS on an annual basis for the next few years.

## **National Rural Employment Grantee workers Union- Gujarat**

To deal with the widespread complains regarding inefficient implementation of the NREG scheme by the state government it was felt necessary to form a union and to raise the issues of NREG Act workers of Gujarat. With consensus of the 5000 people gathered on 17<sup>th</sup> June at Godhara in a Sammellan a ***National Rural Employment Grantee workers Union*** formed. The NREGA workers union-Gujarat is the first registered trade union to voice the issues of NREGA workers employed in Gujarat.

NREGA Workers Union ensures the proper implementation of the ACT. It will seek and secure the entitlements to the 100 days employment guarantee for the rural people and facilitates its effective implementation and monitoring. It will train community to demand for work, which will start with *How to write an application to demand work*. It ensures the enforcement of the minimum wage. In case of violation it will file a complain and fight for the rights of the NREGA workers

Apart from this union will facilitate the community in preparing the micro level plan for NREGA. At the end of the December 5643 job card holders are members of the Union.

The president of the ***National Rural Employment Grantee workers Union*** is MS Vimalaben Kharadi and the General Secretary of the union is Ms Paulomee Mistry. The union has the eleven member's executive committee from the representation of the all Six NREGA implemented districts of the Gujarat.