



Socio-economic impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

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Abstract

MGNREGA represents a significant social welfare initiative in India, aiming to tackle poverty and unemployment. Initially known as NREGA, it emerged as a pioneering employment program with substantial public investment, guaranteeing 100 days of work. Over time, MGNREGA has emerged as a powerful tool for empowering socially marginalized groups and fostering inclusive growth by providing beneficiaries with greater assets. This study explores the diverse impacts of MGNREGA, focusing particularly on its effects on women empowerment, the efficacy of planning and staffing, and environmental sustainability. The advancements in women empowerment resulting from MGNREGA have translated into increased economic opportunities and social empowerment within both households and communities. Additionally, the study assesses the effectiveness of planning and staffing in program implementation, examining factors such as resource allocation and program design. Furthermore, it investigates how employment generation activities under MGNREGA influence natural resources and land use patterns, aiming to leverage the program for promoting sustainable development and mitigating environmental degradation.

Keywords: Socio-economic, MGNREGA, Women empowerment, planning, staffing, environmental sustainability

Introduction

Since the Independence, India was struggling to find suitable schemes in the vast hinterland. Thus, the experiences of the decades provided the ample lessons to the government to come up with such schemes to see and alleviate poverty and unemployment scenario in the country. According to Kharkwal and Kumar (2015), "MGNREGA is a national law funded largely by the central government and implemented in all the states which creates a justifiable right to work for all households, have a right to get not less than 100 days of unskilled manual labour on public works in each financial year. It is one of the important schemes being implemented by the government to achieve inclusive growth". Today this scheme has enormous potential to uplift socio-economic conditions and to raise the standard of rural life. Also benefits of women had been realised through this scheme and thus continuous to enhance the choice and decision making in the family. Therefore, this paper called for the study to explore and evaluate overall impact of this kind of employment guarantee programme in Garo Hills, particularly focusing the Betasing Development Block under the district of South-West Garo Hills, Meghalaya.

1. Background of the study

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is the flagship rural employment generation program of the Govt. of India. The scheme aims at better livelihood security of the households in rural areas of the country by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year, to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The Government has merged the old schemes like JawaharRojgarYojana (JRY) Employment assurance scheme and the Sampurna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), Jawahar Gram SamridhiYjana (JGSY)etc., to

introduce a new scheme such as MGNREGA; consideration is that one-third of the unskilled workers should be women (Hazarika, 2009) ^[14]. This scheme ensures livelihood security in rural areas and a step towards realising the right to work by targeting underprivileged groups.

It was in 1991; the Government of India introduced the scheme with the aim of enhancing job opportunities in rural areas and reducing the socio-economic disparity between the upper and lower classes. This initiative, was spearheaded by then Prime Minister P.V. NarasimhaRao, and hence designed to address employment challenges in the country, with key objectives focused on:

- Generating employment in the agricultural sector.
- Developing infrastructure in rural regions.
- Improving food and income security.

Eventually, this scheme was enacted on 25th August, 2005 and it came into force on February 2, 2006 from the district Anantapur in the state of Andhra Pradesh. It is a unique intervention at the national level which aims at transforming the rural areas by improving the socio-economic conditions of people. Initially, it was known as National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) however in 2009 this act was renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). A national law funded largely by the central government and implemented in all states and creates a justifiable "right to work" for all households with legal right to get not less than 100 days (Johari and Gupta, 2022) ^[15].

Choudhary and Aham (2021), researched focused on the comparative study of women's participation through MGNREGA programme in the North-eastern states of Assam and Meghalaya. In their findings the results underlines that Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been

instrumental in bringing about transformative changes in the lives of women in India.

Tirkey (2018) ^[3], in his paper entitled 'Implementation of MGNREGA scheme under Dalu Block, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya, reveals that MGNREGA is a well-conceived piece of legislation and a potential tool in the hands of ordinary citizens for securing their fundamental livelihoods; however its deficient execution deprives rural communities of their fundamental entitlements. Further he lauded that despite numerous challenges, MGNREGA is a program that is beginning to have a positive impact on the lives of women.

Panday and Mehta (2020), in their case study of women participation in north-eastern states found out that the MGNREGA has not been successful in carrying out the policy recommendations. For states similar to Assam, they have always struggled to realize the advantages of MGNREGA and have fallen short of meeting the minimum target for women's participation.

Hussain (2022) ^[5], in his research, Analytical study of MGNREGA's, stated that MGNREGA program, which is being implemented throughout Assam, has not fully realized. Similarly, in Kamrup, Hojai, Barpeta, and Nalbari districts, the program has experienced limited success. Evidently, he proved that the program has failed to provide the guaranteed work. Further, he said that the true spirit and essence of the Act have not been fully realized in the state of Assam due to issues such as worksite facilities, flawed wage payment procedures, and the unauthorized presence of contractors.

Deka and Panda (2015) ^[6], in their study of Employment Generation and Social Capital Formation of MGNREGA in Assam, investigated that over the past nine years, the state of Assam has witnessed significant expansion in the implementation of the flagship MGNREGA program. An assessment of MGNREGA's impact concerning two crucial aspects, namely employment and the formation of social capital, demonstrates a substantial positive influence on both fronts. This unequivocally reinforces the program's primary objective, which is to enhance the livelihood security of marginalized and impoverished populations.

Das (2016) ^[7], in his study entitled 'Role of MGNREGA in Rural Employment of Barpeta, found out that MGNREGA has been a blessing for the impoverished residents of rural areas. Additionally, marginalized groups, including Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and others, are granted the opportunity to improve their private lands.

Haque (2012) ^[4], in his research on MGNREGS and its effects on Agriculture Exploring Linkages, studies the relationship between MGNREGA and agricultural productivity. He posits a positive impact of the program on agricultural productivity. He points out that this has been due to large amount of irrigation, water harvesting and land-development works undertaken under MGNREGA and thus reveals the contribution of this particular scheme in the village.

Pandey and Ahmed (2014) ^[8], in their case study of women participation in MGNREGA in Kashmir, drawn the insights from the examination of primary data, and thus, studied the achievement of the gender equality, as the initially envisaged with 33% reservation in MGNREGA.

Bhatia *et al* (2020), in their research 'Impact of MGNREGA on rural empowerment in Hisar', provides an insight that

MGNREGA assists women in meeting their immediate household needs in the short term and addressed their long-term strategic goals. It can be noted that it has reduced reliance on male family members, liberating women from subordination and domination.

Das (2019) ^[10], in his research entitled, 'The Impact of MGNREGA on Economics and Environmental sustainability', revealed that the MGNREGA has not limited to being a labour-centric initiative designed solely for providing employment opportunities to rural residents. Instead, it encompasses a diverse range of programs and constitutes a comprehensive multidimensional action plan. Consequently, he emphasized that the effective implementation of this program has the potential to enhance both the socio-economic and environmental sustainability of rural areas, with a particular focus on West Bengal.

Singh *et al* (2022) ^[11], in their analysis on livelihood security and sustainability of MGNREGA underscores MGNREGA's profound impact on the lives of individuals. Functioning as a rights-based program, it extends beyond the provision of a mere 100 days of employment. Their research underscores that it also includes measures to augment individuals' capacity to assert their rights, facilitate women's empowerment, facilitate the management of sustainable livelihoods, and encourage participation in natural resource management.

Sunitha and Sudha (2020) ^[13], in their research conducted on Ecological and Economic Development through MGNREGA reveals that MGNREGA program has entirely dedicated to the generation of wage employment and the establishment of sustainable and productive assets, with the ultimate goal of providing a continuous source of income for rural inhabitants.

Subba (2019) ^[12], in his research on MGNREGA: Climate Change and Adaptation revealed that MGNREGA has generated substantial environmental benefits. The implementation of MGNREGA initiatives has bolstered the resilience of rural communities in the face of climate-related risks. Moreover, it has been established that MGNREGA projects not only directly enhance livelihoods but also indirectly contribute to mitigating climate risks.

2. Significance of the study

Since the Independence Rural India has been in flux with regard to economic problems. Numerous ups and down has been visible in many of the states with the increasing population. The employment scheme like MGNREGA holds a special importance for the states like Meghalaya where the majority of the people depend on daily wages and agriculture. Through the introduction and implementation of MGNREGA the state of Meghalaya has seen numerous developments especially in the rural areas. The changing lifestyle of the people living in the rural areas and their eagerness to respond to the policies were positive. True to the objectives set in the policy the state of Meghalaya has achieved in the socio-economic conditions, income generation, right to work, women participation etc. However to look closely and assess the implementation of the programme has been a matter with growing developments in the state. Especially in the matters of studying socio-economic conditions of the beneficiaries in the district of South, West Garo Hills where the people were neglected for many years due to its geographical distance from the state capital and the implementation of such polices were in

questions. Therefore this study will focus solely with the socio-economic conditions among the beneficiaries to bring out the positive impact of the implementation of MGNREGA.

3. Objectives

- a. To study the women empowerment under MGNREGA.
- b. To assess the effectiveness of planning, staffing, and environmental sustainability aspects of MGNREGA in South-West Garo Hills.

4. Hypothesis

- a. The implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has positively contributed to women empowerment by increasing women's participation in the programme.
- b. The unsuccessful planning in MGNREGA impacts in shoddy development of projects.
- c. The effectiveness of staffing in MGNREGA significantly influences the successful implementation of the program.
- d. The implementation of MGNREGA has a positive impact on environmental sustainability by promoting eco-friendly projects and conserving natural resources.

5. Research questions

- a. How does the implementation of the MGNREGA impact gender empowerment in South-West Garo Hills?
- b. How does ineffective planning in the implementation of MGNREGA affect the quality and progress of development projects in rural areas?
- c. To what extent does the staffing of MGNREGA impact the program's efficiency and outcomes in South-West Garo Hills?
- d. How does the implementation of MGNREGA contribute to environmental sustainability?

6. Methodology and procedure

The present study deals with the methodology and procedure which includes research design, population, sample, tools of data collection and statistical techniques.

6.1 Research Design

The design that the investigator adopted is Descriptive Survey research design which seeks to investigate the problem and to have a better understanding of the outlined of the objectives. It is both qualitative and quantitative in the nature.

6.2 Population

Table 1: Populations

Sl. No	Name of the Village	Number of Household	Male	Female	Total enrolled in MGNREGA
1	Sonabil	90	163	153	316
2	Baispara	183	336	342	678
3	Chiringpara	118	204	199	403
4	Malchapara	101	164	160	324
	Total	492	867	854	1,721

Source: Website of nregastrep.nic.in Betasing Development Block 2023

The Betasing Block of South-West Garo Hills, Meghalaya is the population of the study which are given in the above table: Sonabil with 316, Baispara with 678, Chiringpara with 403 and Malchapara with 324 enrolled in MGNREGA.

6.3 Sample

The investigator has used simple random sampling technique. In this study, the investigator has selected 25 participants from each of the four villages from Betasing Block. These villages are specifically identified as Sonabil, Baispara, Chiringpara, and Malchapara, as illustrated in the sample table below:

Table 2: Sample

Sl. No	Name of the Village	Number of Household	Total Persons enrolled in MGNREGA	Selected Sample
1	Sonabil	90	316	25
2	Baispara	183	678	25
3	Chiringpara	118	403	25
4	Malchapara	101	324	25
Total				100

Source: Website of nregastrep.nic.in Betasing Development Block 2023

6.4 Tools of the study

To collect the primary data the investigator has created and formulated 5 points Likert Scale which consists of total 20 statements. Moreover, the investigator translated the questionnaires into Garo, (a dialect spoken in the Garo Hills region of Meghalaya), to ensure authentication and offer clearer explanations to the beneficiaries about the formulated statements. The developments of the questionnaires are in alignment with the study's objectives as outlined by the investigator.

6.5 Procedure of data collection

The investigator had visited the four chosen villages and distributed the questionnaires to collect the required primary data. Subsequently, the gathered data was examined further based on the formulated hypotheses. For the sake of convenience, the investigator also shared the questionnaire items using Google Forms, providing respondents with a link to input their data accordingly. Perhaps, in the field the investigator adapts the simple random technique to collect the data from the respondents.

6.6 Statistical techniques

During the study, the investigator used the following statistical techniques namely; one sample t-test for item analysis by using SPSS (20.0 version developed by IBM) software, average mean, and percentile grading table.

7. Analysis and interpretation

In the current study the investigator attempted the analysis of data based on the data obtained from the field. To facilitate comprehension, all responses were converted into percentages, taking into account the frequency of responses as "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree", "Neutral", "Agree", and "Strongly Agree" for each item in the rating scale. The entire analysis and interpretation were undertaken in alignment with the objectives.

From the given Percentile Grading Table the following data analysis of the objectives were underscored.

Table 3: Percentile Grading Table

Sl. No.	Percentage (Category)	Grade	Interpretations
1	0 -20	C	Average
2	21 – 40	B	Good
3	41 – 60	A	Very Good
4	61 – 80	A+	Excellent
5	81 – 100	O	Outstanding

In order to find out the percentage of the objectives, the investigator used Microsoft Excel sheet and following are the percentages shown through the help of Bar Graph and Table respectively.

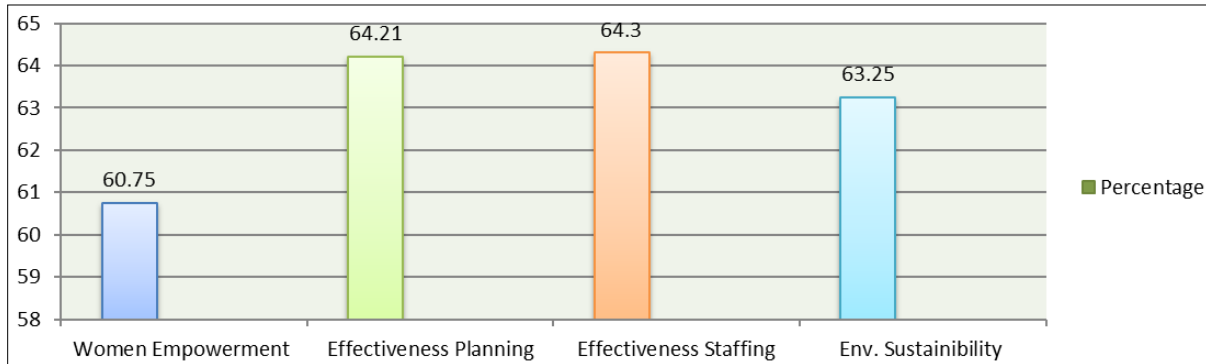


Fig 1: Percentage of the objectives

Table 4: Percentage of the objectives

Sl. No	Objectives	Percentage of Use
1	To Study the Women Empowerment under MGNREGA	60.75%
2	To assess the effectiveness of Planning of MGNREGA	64.21%
3	To assess the effectiveness of Staffing of MGNREGA	64.3%
4	To assess the effectiveness of Environmental Sustainability aspects of MGNREGA	63.25%
	Total Average Percentage	63.12%

The above Fig 1 and table 4 precisely represents the percentage of the objectives obtained from the beneficiaries’ opinion. In the first objective, to study the women empowerment under MGNREGA the total percentage obtained is 60.75%. Therefore, the first objective indicates the grade of ‘A’ (*Very Good*) in terms of Women empowerment. In the second objectives, to assess the effectiveness of Planning of MGNREGA the total percentage is 64.21%. Hence, it represents that the obtained percentage lies in the grade of ‘A+’ (*Excellent*) in terms of the effectiveness of Planning. While on the third objectives, to assess the effectiveness of staffing of MGNREGA the total percentage shown is 64.3%. Therefore, the percentage indicates the ‘A+’ (*Excellent*) grade in the third objective. Furthermore, on the fourth objectives, to assess the effectiveness of environmental sustainability aspects of MGNREGA the total percentage obtained is 63.25%. Thus, in this objective too precisely represents the ‘A+’ (*Excellent*) grade.

Therefore, the overall average percentage derived from all objectives indicates an excellent grade, suggesting a high socio-economic impact of MGNREGA in South-West Garo Hills, Meghalaya, across outlined objectives. The responses demonstrate strong indicators of women’s empowerment, effective planning, and improved staffing, all contributing to beneficiaries achieving desired outcomes from the program. Additionally, the high percentage of responses regarding environmental sustainability highlights MGNREGA’s significant role in conserving natural resources, maintaining ecological balance, and promoting livelihood diversification among beneficiaries. This underscores the program’s effectiveness in maximizing socio-economic benefits in the region.

Objective -1

To study the women empowerment under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

Hypothesis: HO 1: The implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been tested positively contributed women empowerment by increasing women’s participation in the programme.

The first objective is to study the women empowerment under MGNREGA. To find out this, the investigator arranged the collected data and obtained the percentage from the 100 responses by using the Microsoft Excel Sheet and the T-score is being calculated with reference to the table of T-score given by Henry E. Garrett in his book “Statistics in Psychology and Education” and thus the given following table illustrates the same.

Table 5: Percentage and interpretation of the objective 1

Objective 1	N	Frequency	Average Percentage	Conversion to t-Score	Interpretation
To study the women empowerment under MGNREGA	100	1215	60.75%	52	Very Good
t-score=52		df=99	0.01=2.63		

The above table 3 indicates that an average percentage of 60.75% is obtained from the respondents for the objective 1 from four villages under Betasing Block. The calculated t-score 52 is greater than the table value at 0.01 level of significance. Thus, it is significant and the interpretation grade shows 'A' which is very good grade of women empowerment under MGNREGA. Therefore, the implementation of MGNREGA has positively contributed towards women empowerment. Hence, the articulated hypothesis that, the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

has positively contributed to women empowerment by increasing women's participation in the programme is retained.

Objective-2

To assess the effectiveness of planning of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in South-West Garo Hills.

Hypothesis: HO 2: The unsuccessful planning in MGNREGA impacts in shoddy development of projects.

Table 6: Percentage and interpretation of Objective 2

Objective 2	N	Frequency	Average Percentage	Conversion to t-Score	Interpretation
To assess the effectiveness of planning of MGNREGA in South-West Garo Hills	100	1541	64.21%	53	Excellent
t-score=53		df=99	0.01=2.63		

The above table 4 indicates that the average percentage obtained is 64.21% out of total coding frequency of 1541. The calculated t-score 53 is greater than the table value at 0.01 level of significance. Thus, it is significant and the interpretation grade shows 'A+' which is an excellent in assessing the effectiveness of Planning of MGNREGA in South West Garo Hills of Betasing Block. However, the articulated hypothesis, the unsuccessful planning in MGNREGA impacts in shoddy development of projects is not significant according to the respondents of four villages of Betasing Block of South West Garo Hills. Therefore, the hypothesis is not retained. Hence, we can conclude that

planning in MGNREGA significantly contributes to the development of the projects in the villages in Betasing Block of South-West Garo Hills Meghalaya.

Objective -3

To assess the effectiveness of staffing of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in South-West Garo Hills.

Hypothesis: HO 3: The effectiveness of staffing in MGNREGA significantly influences the successful implementation of the program.

Table 7: Percentage and interpretation of Objective 3

Objective 3	N	Frequency	Average Percentage	Conversion to t-Score	Interpretation
To assess the effectiveness of staffing of MGNREGA in South-West Garo Hills.	100	1286	64.3%	53	Excellent
t-score=53		df=99	0.01=2.63		

The above mentioned table 5 shows the average percentage is 64.3% scored for the third objective. The calculated t-score 53 is greater than the table value at 0.01 level of significance. Thus, it is significant and the interpretation grade indicates that the effectiveness of staffing of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in South-West Garo Hills is in the grade 'A+' which is an excellent as per the respondents from the beneficiaries of four villages under Betasing Block of South-West Garo Hills.

Hence, the articulated hypothesis that the effectiveness of staffing in MGNREGA significantly influences the successful implementation of the program is retained.

Objective- 4

To assess the effectiveness of Environmental Sustainability aspects of MGNREGA

Hypothesis: HO 4: The implementation of MGNREGA has a positive impact on environmental sustainability by promoting eco-friendly projects and conserving natural resources.

Table 8: Percentage and interpretation of Objective 4

Objective 3	N	Frequency	Average Percentage	Conversion to t-Score	Interpretation
To assess the effectiveness of Environmental Sustainability aspects of MGNREGA	100	1012	63.25%	53	Excellent
t-score=53		df=99	0.01=2.63		

The table 4.6 indicates that the average percentage scored is 63.25% out of total coding frequency of 1012. It shows that the calculated t-score 53 is greater than the table value at 0.01 level of significance. Thus, it is significant and the interpretation grade shows 'A+' which is excellent in assessing the effectiveness of Environmental Sustainability aspects of MGNREGA in the district of South-West Garo Hills and there is a positive impact on environmental

sustainability by promoting the eco-friendly projects and thus helping to conserve the natural resources as per the respondents of the four villages of Betasing Block of the mentioned district. Therefore, the articulated hypothesis, the implementation of MGNREGA has a positive impact on environmental sustainability by promoting eco-friendly projects and conserving natural resources is retained.

Major findings and discussion

The investigator reports the findings of the study in connection to their research questions. Perhaps all of them stem from the observations and findings made by the investigator during field surveys and visits.

- a. Since the inception the MGNREGA has significantly contributed to women's empowerment by providing equal employment and payment for both men and women and thus leading to economic independence to certain extent among women beneficiaries. This finding is consistent with the studies conducted by Choudhary and Aham (2021) which highlighted the sense of independence and self-esteem among women.
- b. With the income earned through MGNREGA the women in the family have been able to invest more in the education and health of their families, particularly their children.
- c. The dark side of wages earned is that the beneficiaries are not able to receive the wages on time and there has been always a delay in the process as per the respondents.
- d. MGNREGA has been an asset creation for the beneficiaries especially the women of the particular district where many of the projects were productive such as construction of roads, retaining walls, culverts, water conservation structures, rural infrastructures. These activities has enhanced and improved the rural locality and above all empowered women through skill development and increased access to resources.
- e. The active participation of women in MGNREGA particularly in the district of South-West Garo Hills has challenged traditional gender roles and stereotypes prevalent in rural communities. Hence, it has helped in promoting gender equality and fostering a sense of dynamics among women in decision-making. This finding supports the studies conducted by Bhatia *et al* (2020) who found that this scheme has liberated women from traditional subordination and domination.
- f. Timely meticulous planning among the stakeholders and beneficiaries have contributed positive impact to the rural development as well as ensured employment opportunities to each household.
- g. Planning in the village level for the projects lacks coordination and as a result led to disparities in the distribution of work among the beneficiaries.
- h. Since the inception of MGNREGA the expand development have been identified in the rural infrastructure and the contribution in shaping the beneficiaries in socio-economic areas have been a commendable service. Hence this can be owed to the abled and effective planning and execution from the grassroots level.
- i. Effective staffing has enabled the quality monitoring, supervision and evaluation that promote transparency and accountability in MGNREGA implementation.
- j. The adequate staffs offer a better assistance to workers, resolve grievances faster and provide technical guidance for the project execution.
- k. Projects such as afforestation, soil and water conservation and watershed management have been implemented since the inception and thus helped in replenishing depleted resources and hence restoring ecosystem. This finding aligns with previous studies

conducted at national level, such as Sunitha and Sudha (2020) ^[13] and Subba (2019) ^[12], which highlighted the MGNREGA projects and its promotion towards environmental sustainability.

- l. The projects of MGNREGA has reached out the villages in the district, the conservation of water through various projects like building check dams, ponds and percolated tanks to recharge the groundwater levels and increased the water availability for domestic and agricultural use. This finding is consistent with the studies conducted by Hague (2012), who points out that the large amount of irrigation, water harvesting and land-development works undertaken under MGNREGA positively impact the program on agricultural productivity.
- m. The distribution of plant saplings to each households and engaging in afforestation and agro forestry have been one among them. In the region where Jhum cultivation has been the traditional practice need much of these projects to rebuild the natural resources.
- n. with the aim to raise socio-economic conditions of the beneficiaries in the implementation of projects like animal husbandry, horticulture, and agro-forestry which reduce depending on natural resources and thus diversify on rural livelihood and as a result promote sustainable livelihood options in villages.

Suggestions

- a. **Gender Equality and Empowerment:** Even though the gender equality and empowerment has been one of the primary focuses in MGNREGA however there are lots of scopes which needs improvement. Some of the respondents expressed that since the inception of scheme the government has been exploring more and also achieving in this area. They suggested that better follow up in women empowerment through equal employment opportunities is required at this time. Therefore, the stakeholders need to take a note on this particular issue.
- b. **Improvement in Planning and Coordination:** It is true that the district of South-West Garo Hills have seen the percentage of 64.21% in the effectiveness of planning according to survey. However, Planning is something which requires continuity to achieve greater coordination. Therefore the respondents emphasized the grassroots level of planning should be taken care with great sense of purpose so as to ensure correct projects required in the villages.
- c. **Timely Wage Disbursement:** The beneficiaries have expressed their need in getting the wages timely. With the digital payment at this present time still there is a delay in wage disbursement to the workers. Therefore, the beneficiaries suggested that with recent technology it should be faster so as to meet the necessary requirements of the family.
- d. **Enhanced Staffing:** Many of the respondents proposed that MGNREGA from the centre and state level should conduct awareness programme on the recent projects which improves greater productivity. They also suggested that the efficient personnel should be

recruited with proper training so as to provide the necessary assistance to workers, resolve grievances and to provide technical guidance for project execution in the districts and villages.

- e. **Transparency and Accountability:** Some of the respondents emphasized on the need of transparency and accountability in project implementation thereby allow effective and efficient outcome of the projects.
- f. **Livelihood Diversification:** Knowing the positive impact of MGNREGA the beneficiaries pointed out the need to focus and encourage more on the implementation of projects which diversify the livelihood of the beneficiaries. As a result those projects can help to reduce the dependence on natural conservation and promote alternative income generated sources for rural household. Thereby to large extent promote sustainable development.
- g. **Climate Change Mitigation:** With the growing need for the climate change mitigation the respondents suggested that the MGNREGA can be the living witness in promoting and generating awareness on climate change and further provide ways to mitigate. Hence, to meet the need the expanding of the existing projects and engaging in awareness campaigns should be the priority to achieve sustainable agricultural practices rather than the traditional Jhum cultivation.

Conclusions

Undoubtedly, the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been the empowering device based on the conceptualisation of welfare state which is responsible for inclusive growth. Since the inception, MGNREGA has played a very significant role in the socio-economic conditions of rural populations with the 100 days wage employment. Further, this Act serves as a far-reaching asset creation and livelihood diversification to protect the rural households in the villages particularly in the district of South-West Garo Hills, Meghalaya.

This study unveils the significant role played by MGNREGA in empowerment of women and conservation of natural resources with the proper planning and efficient and abled staff recruited. Nonetheless, the study has shed light on the identified objectives with excellent findings and also the recommendations from the respondents. It has also explored the challenges of various aspects together with the achievements. Further it has also one of the crucial suggestions that require attention for the improvement of the socio-economic conditions is the livelihood diversification and thus allows the rural populations in those projects and changes and transform so as to meet the daily requirements of the family and to grow in environmental sustainability.

Finally, this study provides the positive outcome of MGNREGA in South-West Garo Hills and leaves the imprint that the socio-economic conditions of the beneficiaries has changed to large extent due to this scheme implementation. The extensive findings on the outlined objectives precisely reveal the potentiality that MGNREGA brings to rural citizens. In future, such studies may also be conducted in other districts too whereby the assessing the contributions of MGNREGA to society may be revealed and

potentiality to bring change that may also be implanted in the lives of common beneficiaries of the state of Meghalaya.

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