

Performance of MGNREGA in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

Kurnool District, which is located in the Rayalaseema region, is the biggest and driest of all the drought prone districts of Andhra Pradesh. Agriculture is the main source of economy of the district. The work force engaged in agriculture is more than three fourths of the total work force and the demand for labour in agriculture sector is highly uncertain and seasonal. This is leading to migration of labour in a large scale to the nearest cities. In view of this, the Government of India has decided to implement the ambitious MGNREGA in this district in the Second phase. This paper examines the economic status among the different social groups in the district by conducting the field study. The results suggest that, after implementation of MGNREGA, the rural debt has been reduced significantly with education, and small-holdings than their counterpart rural households in the district. There is a large gap between the number of registered households and actual number of households working. On the other hand about 56 per cent of the sample respondents are not aware of the minimum wages paid under NREGA. Further, there is some kind of irregularities also noticed from the respondents in the implementation of the scheme like false muster rolls, delay in wage payment etc. The paper concludes that the policy recommendations for effective targeting of the program and particularly the social safety net benefits to the poor households in the study area of Kurnool District of Andhra Pradesh, India.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Performance, Kurnool District, Andhra Pradesh

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, henceforth MGNREGA is a wage employment scheme, enacted by the government of India (henceforth GOI) in 2005, aims of providing 100 days of guaranteed employment to every rural household willing to work in unskilled activities. In a sense it is creating legal entitlements. If the State fails to keep that 100 days' contract, the State will have to pay an unemployment allowance. If it fails to do that, the complainant can go to the courts. Wages paid under MGNREGA would correspond to the minimum wages paid in the particular state, revised from time to time. It is a decentralized program involving the Gram Panchayats and other local authorities in the implementation and supervision of the scheme. Initially started in 200 most backward districts of the country in 2006 the programme covers entire country today, nearly 619 districts covering all states had been included in MGNREGA. MGNREGA was envisaged as a demand driven program where the work in a particular village is under taken based on the demand from number of households demanding such work in a given year, the upper cap being 100 days per year per household. The costs to be shared by both the centre and states, though the larger part of the fiscal burden to be taken care by center as it has more resources. The centre will provide 100 percent funding of wages for unskilled manual work and 75 percent of material cost of the schemes including payment of wages to skilled and semiskilled workers while the States will fund 25 percent of material including payment of wages to skilled & semi-skilled workers cost. It was also decided that in case the states are unable to provide the required employment opportunities at the stipulated time, they will be entitled to an unemployment allowance to be paid by

the respective states. This was thought to act as a deterrent for possible lags in implementing the scheme on the part of state government.

The Present Study

Kurnool District, which is located in the Rayalaseema region, is the biggest and driest of all the drought prone districts of Andhra Pradesh. In this district it is clearly estimated that the droughts visits at least thrice in a decade. The Irrigation Commission and other Central Commissions have been identified the whole district as drought prone. A single dry crop i.e. ground nut is raised under rain fed conditions in most parts of the district. Agriculture is the main source of economy of the district. The work force engaged in agriculture is more than three fourths of the total work force. The demand for labour in agriculture sector is highly uncertain and seasonal. This is leading to migration of labour in a large scale to the nearest cities. The drought conditions are creating an ecological imbalance and converting the district into a desert. Drought prone areas are more vulnerable to denude the forests and exhaust the natural resources like water, soil, minerals etc. By result the rivers and other streams dry up. Consequently the underground water levels vanish and the area under irrigation is declined. The instant result is the decrease in agriculture production. This is leading to food problem. All these uneven conditions are making the lives of agricultural labourer and farmers rigorous and not bearing. As a result the district has witnessed a number of farmers' suicides. Keeping all the above facts in view the Government of India has decided to implement the ambitious MGNREGA in this district in the Second phase. In spite of many other schemes under taken for the betterment of rural poor, it is the only

programme that has mobilized the rural folk involvement. In this paper an attempt is made to evaluate the progress and performance of MGNREGA in Kurnool District. The main objective of this paper is to assess the impact of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act on income and employment generation of the sample beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries with regard to different social groups in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh.

Results and Discussion

Gender Wise Participation in MGNREGA

In MGNREGA works both men and women take equal part in the works. But women participation rate is higher than men at state level as well as district level. This is because women are not getting high wages in outside works when compared to MGNREGA works. Table-1 gives the gender wise participation of labourers in the programme in Kurnool District.

Table 1: Gender Wise Work and Wage Earnings under MGNREGA Scheme in Kurnool District

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Male registered	827202	827202	827202	827202	827202	827202	827202	827202
Female registered	738050	738050	738050	738050	738050	738050	738050	738050
Male working	241726	340344	304997	324282	248588	275285	252928	191551
% Male Working	49.97	48.56	47.89	47.61	47.25	47.24	46.64	46.60
Female working	242024	360488	331901	356826	277570	307492	289371	219486
%Female Working	50.03	51.44	52.11	52.39	52.75	52.76	53.36	53.40
Male wage (Rs.in Lakhs)	6293.93	7838.37	10267.41	7893.88	7977.25	7744.85	6458.56	4273.34
% Male Wage	49.26	47.06	46.44	45.78	45.47	45.64	45.28	45.00
Female Wage (Rs. in Lakhs)	6484.1	8818.28	11841.83	9347.71	9565.21	9222.84	7803.61	5223.79
% Female Wage	50.74	52.94	53.56	54.22	54.53	54.36	54.72	55.00
Male average	88.9	88.13	88.32	92.28	96.02	105.48	109.9	119.66
Female average	88.08	87.25	87.62	91.28	94.39	101.41	104.58	113.32

Source: DWAMA Office, Kurnool

It is evident from Table-1 that the number male and female registered under MGNREGA in Kurnool district is constant during eight years of study. The actual number of males and females working under the programme is not evenly distributed over the years. However, the per cent of women working under the programme in the district is gradually increasing year by year. On the other hand the per cent of male working under the programme is showing downward trends in the district. It means men are not more inclined to work under the programme. It can be attributed for low wage earnings under the programme. As such men were going for other works to earn more money. The wage amount allotted to men

and women in the district is also unevenly distributed. As the women workers under the scheme is high, so the per cent of wages of female is higher than males.

Caste Wise Beneficiaries

The MGNREGA scheme aims at bringing economic equality by giving large share of access and opportunity to the disadvantaged and economically weaker sections of the society, such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Below Poverty Line (BPL) households. Table-2 gives the details of Caste wise households benefited by this programme in Kurnool District since its implementation to 2014-15.

Table 2: Caste Wise Participation and Wage Earning Analysis of MGNREGA in Kurnool District

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
BC-No of regd. HHs	410581	410581	410581	410581	410581	410581	410581	410581
BC-No of working HHs	154446	190302	168349	172950	141860	168758	165599	127959
BC-Total wage(Rs in Lakhs)	7792.21	10282.72	13654.22	9317.55	9444.34	9956.7	8445.25	5291.19
BC-Days worked	8736088	11719689	15576372	10334016	10004999	9708357	7939516	4593857
SC-No of regd. HHs	175256	175256	175256	175256	175256	175256	175256	175256
SC-No of working HHs	74358	87645	79208	79096	69948	76760	75663	62251
SC-Total wage(Rs in Lakhs)	3449.95	4542.69	5942.64	4130.23	5309.38	4465.86	3760.43	2656.2
SC-Days worked	3864420.5	5173542.5	6743746	4490179.5	5597038	4333035	3535694	2300083
ST-No of regd. HHs	19050	19050	19050	19050	19050	19050	19050	19050
ST-No of working HHs	6387	6945	6302	6074	5493	5742	5626	4638
ST-Total wage(Rs in Lakhs)	274.74	316.31	478.26	364.59	483.63	360.37	298.52	192.21
ST-Days worked	316604	361722	524000.5	392084	524766	352725	279262	166479
Minorities-No of regd. HHs	37767	37767	37767	37767	37767	37767	37767	37767
Minorities-No of working HHs	8805	12835	12029	13635	11376	13024	12803	10813
Minorities-Total wage(Rs in Lakhs)	387.18	603.52	830.49	640.96	662.49	678.36	598.06	446.11
Minorities-Days worked	438929.5	694342.5	945806.5	709050	691897	667090	557570	388940
Others-No of regd. HHs	127872	127872	127872	127872	127872	127872	127872	127872
Others-No of working HHs	34043	36704	32604	37541	28695	33715	33812	28232
Others-Total wage(Rs in Lakhs)	1273.71	1558.68	2046.09	1711.21	1613.14	1781.6	1589.25	1143.41
Others-Days worked	1477181.5	1785841.5	2309191.5	1869920	1671101	1721268	1460066	973603

Source: DWAMA Office, Kurnool

The data in Table-2 shows that the per cent of working households among backward classes never crossed at least 50 per cent among the registered households. The per cent of working BC households among the registered households ranges between 31.17 per cent in 2014-15 to 46.35 per cent in 2008-09. However, it is pertinent to note that the per cent of BC working households among total working households is higher than other social category households. During eight years of study more than half (ranges between 54.71 to 56.90 per cent) of working households under MGNREGA belong to backward class community in the district. The total number of days worked for BCs is gradually increased during first three years of study. But after that downward trends appearing in total days of BCs. The wage amount disbursed to BC households is higher than other social category candidates as their participation is high.

The next social group which has highest number of participants in MGNREGA programme in Kurnool district is Scheduled Castes. The percentage of working households among the registered Scheduled Castes households ranges between 35.52 per cent to 50.01 per cent. The number SC households working under MGNREGA in the district is highest (87645) in 2008-09 and lowest in 2014-15 (62251). The per cent of Scheduled Caste working households among total households ranges in between 25.76 per cent to 27.18 per cent. In 2009-10 financial year the SC total working days is highest (6743746) and lowest in 2014-15 (2300083) financial year. More or less same trends are visible in case of SC household wages.

The other or general social category households occupies third place with regard to the participation in MGNREGA in Kurnool district. The per cent of households participating among registered general households ranges in between 22.08 per cent to 28.70 per cent. Their share among total working households ranges in between 10.92 per cent to 12.24 per cent. The total days worked by others gradually increased during first three years of study and thereafter they are unevenly distributed. The wages paid to other category of households' ranges in between Rs. 1143.41 lakhs to Rs. 2046.09 lakhs.

Among the minorities the working households among registered households ranges in between 22.08 per cent in 2014-15 to 29.36 per cent in 2010-2011. The per cent of working minority households among total working households is gradually increasing except 2012-13 and 2013-14. The total wages disbursed to minorities over the years is erratically distributed. The total number days worked by minorities increased during first 3 years of study and gradually declined thereafter.

The share of Scheduled Tribe working households among total working is comparatively low among various social categories in the district. The share of ST households never crossed 3 per cent of total working households in the district. The share of ST households among total working households is gradually decreasing except 2011-12. Only 24.35 per cent of registered ST households participated in MGNREGA works in the district and it is highest i.e. 36.46 per cent in 2008-09. The total of ST households is highest (524766) in 2011-12 and lowest in (166479) in 2014-15.

Number of Family Members Benefited by NREGA

As per the NREGA legislation gives a legal guarantee of employment in rural areas to anyone who is willing to do

casual manual labour at the statutory minimum wage. Any adult who applies for work under the Act is entitled to being employed on public works within 15 days. The data with regard to number of members benefited in a family relates to 3 years i.e., from 2006-07 to 2008-09 are given in Table-3.

Table 3: Number of Family Members Benefited by NREGA Programme

S. No.	No. of Family Members	Total No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of Total
1.	One	36	30.00
2.	Two	52	43.34
3.	Three	15	12.50
4.	Four	9	7.50
5.	Five	4	3.33
6.	Above Five	4	3.33
Total		120	100.00

Source: Field Data

The Table-3 indicates that in 30 per cent of the sample respondent families only one member got employment under NREGA scheme in last three years. About 43.34 per cent beneficiary household's two members have employment under the NREGA. Around 12.50 per cent beneficiary respondent families' three members got employment. In the remaining 14.16 respondent families got more than three persons were benefited by the scheme. It means that in these families more than one person got employment during one year or other year.

Number of working days

Scheduled II of NREGA enactment outlines conditions for guaranteed rural employment under EGS scheme. Paragraphs 1-5 of this schedule envisages the issue of a job card, valid for at least five years at a time, entitling the holder to up to a maximum of 100 days employment (which is the limit set for the household). The number of working day each sample respondent beneficiary is presented in Table-4. As per Table-4, it is regret to note that only 15.83 per cent of sample respondent families got required number of man days. Nearly one-fourth of the families got man days 50 or less than 50. Among them 40 per cent got 25 to 50 days, 20.83 per cent got 10 to 25 days and 14.17 per cent got below 10 days of work. It is learnt that it is due to administrative lapses in identification of works, which minimizing the man days. Only 9.17 per cent got man days between 50 to 75 days.

Table 4: Approximate Number of Employment Days for NREGA Beneficiaries

S. No.	Numbers of Day	Total No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of Total
1.	Below 10 days	17	14.17
2.	10 to 25 days	25	20.83
3.	25 to 50 days	48	40.00
4.	50 to 75 days	11	9.17
5.	75 to 100 days	19	15.83
Total		120	100.00

Source: Field Data

Bank / Post Office Accounts

Under the NREGA scheme the wages shall be paid to the beneficiaries through Banks or Post Offices. As such it is

essential for every job card holder to open an account either in Bank or Post Offices, whichever is near and feasible. The Bank/Post Office accounts possessed by sample beneficiaries are given in the Table-5.

Table 5: Bank/Post-Office Account Possessed By NREGA Beneficiaries

S. No.	Responses	No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of Total
1.	Yes	116	96.67
2.	No	4	3.33
Total		120	100.00

Source: Field Data

The Table-5 indicates that 96.67 per cent of sample respondents opened their account either in Bank or Post Office. Only 3.33 per cent does not possess any account. It is learnt during the study that these four respondents issued job cards just before fortnight of the collection of primary data.

Wage Payments for NREGA Beneficiaries

Every person working under the scheme is entitled to wages at the minimum wage rate fixed by the State Government or the competent authority concerned for agricultural labourers under the Minimum Wages Act 1948, unless the wages have been notified by the Central Government under section 6(1) of the NREGA Legislation. As per this legislation, wages should pay at least once in a fortnight. It is essential to ensure to being paid on a weekly basis, and in any case within fortnight of the data on which work was done (NREGA, section 3(3)).

If workers are willing, dovetailing of wage payments under APREGS with social security arrangements can be thought of with the consent of the worker, a proportion of the wages may be earmarked and contributed to welfare schemes organized for the benefit of APREGS workers such as health insurance, accident insurance, survivor benefits, maternity benefits and other social security arrangements. Such a social security cover will be purely voluntary. No such contributions from the wages received by the worker will be made without the consent of the worker concerned. The relevant procedures shall be spelled out by the State Government and reviewed regularly by the State Council.

Table 6: Regularity of Wage Payments

S. No.	Payment Mode	No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of Total
1.	Weekly	78	65.00
2.	Fortnight	18	15.00
3.	Irregular	20	16.67
4.	Don't Know	4	3.33
Total		120	100.00

Source: Field Data

The Table-6 makes it clear that nearly two-thirds of sample respondent beneficiaries stated that the authorities paying wages weekly once. About 15 per cent reported they are getting wages once in a fortnight. It is conspicuous to note that 16.67 per cent reported that the payments of wages are irregular. When asked about the authorities at Mandal level about the irregularity of payments, they replied that due to technical snags the payment of wages to certain beneficiaries is taking place long time. About 3.33 per cent denied responding.

Awareness about Minimum Wages

As per the Minimum Wages Act-1948, the minimum wage for agriculture labour is Rs.80. As such under the NREGA scheme the beneficiaries has to get the daily wage not less than Rs.80. The maximum wage limit under the scheme is Rs.155 and the minimum wage which the beneficiary get largely depend on the piece of work. The awareness about the minimum wage is essential for the beneficiaries to avoid financial irregularities in the work. As such during the study the knowledge of beneficiaries on minimum wage was recorded and presented in Table-7.

Table 7: Beneficiaries knowledge about minimum wages

S. No.	Responses	No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of Total
1.	Yes	52	43.33
2.	No	68	56.67
Total		120	100.00

Source: Field Data

A close perusal of Table-7 indicates that more than half (56.67 per cent) of the sample respondent beneficiaries are not aware of the minimum wages to be paid under the NREGA scheme. During the study, it is observed that illiteracy or minimum literacy level of sample rural respondents become a stumbling block to know the minimum wages. Only 43.33 per cent of beneficiaries are aware of minimum wages.

Implementation of Equal Pay

As per the NREGA legislation, equal wages shall be paid to both men and women workers, and the provisions of the Equal Remuneration Act-1976, shall be compiled with. The sample respondent's responses regarding equal wages are presented in Table-8. Table-8 indicates that about 84.17 per cent of respondents responded positively. With regard equal wages. None of the respondents reported negatively. About 15.83 per cent responded neither positively nor negatively.

Table 8: Implementation of Equal Pay for Equal Work to Beneficiaries

S. No.	Responses	No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of Total
1.	Yes	101	84.17
2.	Don't Know	19	15.83
Total		120	100.00

Source: Field Data

Use of Machinery for NREGA Works

The NREGA Legislation envisages that all works under the scheme have to be taken manually, as the fundamental aim of the programme is to provide wage employment to rural poor during unseasonal. The use of machinery under the scheme is completely prohibited. In spite of this, the new using machinery in some areas of the district is heard. As such during the survey the perceptions of the respondents on use of machinery was registered and the same is presented in Table-9.

Table 9: Use of Machinery under MNREGA

S. No.	Responses	No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of Total
1.	Yes	7	5.83
2.	No	96	80.00
3.	Don't Know	17	14.17
Total		120	100.00

Source: Field Data

It was observed from Table-9 that 80 per cent of the respondents reported that they have no knowledge about the using of machinery under the scheme. About 5.83 per cent reported that they observed the using of machinery under the scheme at one point of time or other. They said that the local landlord used JCB to level his uncultivated land and claimed bills under the scheme, with the consent of the local authorities. About 14.17 per cent denied responding.

Usefulness of NREGA

The utility of any program. /scheme is to be determined on the basis of views expressed by the beneficiaries, who are the active observers as well as promoters of the scheme. As such during the study the opinions of sample respondent beneficiaries were registered and presented in Table-10, by using 4 point rating scale.

Table 10: Beneficiaries Perception of Usefulness of NREGA

S. No	Responses	No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of total
1	Very useful	28	23.33
2	Somewhat useful	57	47.50
3	No use	18	15.00
4	Don't know	17	14.17
Total		120	100.00

Source: Field Data

Table-10 reveals that about 70.83 per cent of sample

respondents expressed some kind of usefulness of the scheme. To be more precise, around 47.50 per cent expressed moderate usefulness of the scheme and around 23.33 per cent expressed most usefulness of the scheme. About 15 per cent expressed negative perceptions on the programme. During the study it is learnt that most of the respondents who expressed dissatisfaction is marginal and small farmers. They felt that after the introduction of the scheme, the wage rates of labour have gone up and also expressed scarcity of labour during agricultural peak seasons. About 14.17 per cent not responded.

Irregularities in NREGA

It is better to throw the money into a drain than to put it in the “National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme”, one of the country’s better known economists proclaimed when the debate for the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was at its peak. Many of the respondents of the NREGA bill and indeed much of the public voiced concern that, the scheme would simply add to the corruption that infects most of the development schemes in this country.

The Comptroller and Auditor General’s (CAG) report on the NREG (based on its first six months of functioning); points to a number of procedural irregularities. They often reported irregularities in the implementation of scheme are; corruption, harassment of labour during works, frauds in work measurement, false muster rolls, others like low wages delay in payment etc.

Table 11: Beneficiaries Observations on Irregularities in NREGA (Multiple Responses)

S. No	Type of Irregularities	No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of total
1	Corruption	91	75.83
2	Harrasment of labors	22	18.33
3	False measurements in works	61	50.83
4	False muster rolls	96	80.00
5	Don't know	24	20.00

Source: Field Data

The Table-11 makes it clear that more than three-fourths of respondents reported some kind corruption in the implementation of scheme. As a corollary to corruption is false muster rolls, which help the local authorities to draw money by preparing false muster rolls. The false muster rolls results in the low average income to the beneficiaries. About 80 per cent reported false muster rolls. False in measurement of works is also another irregularity which was reported by more than half of respondents. Harassment of labour at work sites and low wages and delay in wages was reported by 18.33 per cent and 20 per cent respectively.

Conclusions

From the above analysis we conclude that the number of registered households under MGNREGA remained constant and also there is a large gap between the number of registered households under MGNREGA and actual number of households working during eight years of period in Kurnool district. The sufficient number of working days (100 days) not provided this program for each household. In other hand the percentage of working households never crossed the figure of about 55 per cent in the study area. The study also reveals that the amount of migration of rural labour declined after the implementation of MGNREGA and has a positive impact on

the daily wage rates in the agriculture and allied sectors. Besides, MGNREGA has significantly contributed in reducing vulnerability caused by excessive farm borrowings, and thus improving welfare of the program participant households, who are usually less good off section of the rural communities. Further, we noticed that there is some kind corruption in the implementation of programme. As a corollary to corruption is false muster rolls, which help the local authorities to draw money by preparing false muster rolls. The false muster rolls results in the low average income to the beneficiaries.

Suggestions

From the observations of this study we suggest some important points to improve this programme. Firstly, to enhance the work participation rate under MGNREGA, farmer-related works like horticulture works need be introduced. Besides, works have to be identified for skilled labour to benefit from the scheme. Secondly, to ensure 100 days of employment to all households, more and more number of works has to be identified by local authorities. Thirdly, to increase the awareness of beneficiaries on minimum wages, wide propaganda is essential. Fourthly, to mitigate the problem of irregular wage payments, there is need to increase the staff strength in respective post-offices. Fifthly, a set of

core values need to be identified and shared across the MGNREGA personnel so that they appreciate the sensitivities involved in ensuring the success of the programme. Sixthly, to reduce the irregularities in the implementation of the scheme vigilance and monitoring mechanism needs to be strengthened. Seventhly, a unitary project management structure from the district to the village level with well-defined flow of responsibility, authority and accountability need not be over-emphasized. Eighthly, for the creation of durable assets under the scheme due care has to be taken while identifying the works. Ninthly, the style of management and leadership under the MGNREGA would need to be participatory with flexible channels of communication. Lastly, the staffing pattern of project functionaries needs rationalization particularly at the levels of field assistants and technical assistants.

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