

Is MGNREGA a myth for Arunachal Pradesh? Field Evidence

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ABSTRACT

A study on the impact of MGNREGA in the north-eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh was conducted during October, 2014 to March, 2015. The focus was on assessment of the performance of the scheme in terms of job creation, efficiency in creation of durable social assets *vis-a-vis* work completion rate; efficiency in fund utilization to examine as to which extent this massive flagship programme could attain its promised deliverables during the periods in between 2008-09 to 2013-14. Though an impressive quantum of 240.21 lakh person days could be generated in the state and 10.26 lakh job cards were distributed during the entire span of study period. The work completion rate in the state was found to be very low i.e. 8.05% as large volume of funds remained being unspent. So the implementing authority in the state, perhaps, cannot avoid the blame for its apathy and non-responsiveness towards its poor people. The revelations made through the study had altogether put a serious question mark on the performance of MGNREGA in the state of Arunachal Pradesh as it grossly failed to guarantee 100 days jobs to the poor people as per promise.

Keywords: Arunachal Pradesh, MGNREGA, work completion rate, performance, fund utilization

Keeping focus on enhancing livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) came into existence with the enactment of a Parliamentary Act "NREGA" on September 7, 2005. The scheme was first launched at Anantpur district of Andhra Pradesh. At its first phase, the Act was notified in 200 districts with effect from February 2, 2006. At its second phase, in the financial year 2007-2008, it was extended to an additional 130 districts (113 districts with effect from April 1, 2007 and 17 districts in Uttar Pradesh, U.P. with effect from May 15, 2007). Subsequently, at its third phase, universalization of the scheme took place throughout the country with effect from April 1, 2008 by way of including all the remaining districts, excepting those having hundred percent urban populations. Since October 2, 2009, it

was re-named as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (GoI, 2013).

However studies conducted on pan India basis came out with the findings that MGNREGA ranks among the most powerful initiatives ever undertaken for transformation of rural livelihoods in India (Dhananjaya and Prathibha, 2011). In terms of assets creation, watershed development, prevention of drought etc NREGA was successful in Maharashtra (Shah and Mohanty, 2010). In terms of assets creation in Punjab MGNREGA was quite a success. (Singh, 2013) In Tamil Nadu, MGNREGA was found to be the most successful poverty eradication programme (Krishnan and Balakrishnan, 2014). In contrary studies from Jammu & Kashmir concluded that MGNREGA was still a distant dream of achieving for what it was meant with special reference to that state (Ahmad, 2012). Successful implementation of the Act was a big challenge in Madhya Pradesh (Sharma, 2009). In Maharashtra MGNREGA had failed due to lack

of enthusiasm among political and bureaucratic classes (Datar, 2007). The research conducted by in Jharkhand, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh reported that the states were only to blame itself and its corrupt bureaucracy for flawed implementation of the flagship programme (Banerjee and Saha, 2010). Based upon these above mentioned pros and cons of MGNREGA the present researcher tried to capture the picture of MGNREGA in the context of Arunachal Pradesh

The following section outlines the performance of MGNREGA in the state of Arunachal Pradesh on different aspects of Act. The later section summarises the findings as well as conclusions.

Data Base and Methodology

Present article is based on information collected from various secondary sources. Relevant secondary information has been collected from MGNREGA website and Rural Development Department, Government of Arunachal Pradesh. In the state of Arunachal Pradesh MGNREGA was introduced since 2nd February, 2006 with the first one being the Upper Subansiri district and subsequently throughout all the districts of that state by 2008-09. Therefore, it was decided that the analysis of performance would be made from 2008-09 financial year and would remain stretched up to 2013-14. However, in case of estimating the financial performance, analysis was done from 2006-07 onwards up to 2013-14. The performance of MGNREGA in the state under study was tried to be understood in terms (1) performance in job creation; (2) efficiency in creation of durable social assets *vis-a-vis* work completion rate and (3) efficiency in fund utilization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Performance in job creation under MGNREGA

It was revealed from perusal of table 1 that during the six years under study, spanning between 2008-09 to 2013-14, an impressive quantum of 240.21 lakh person days could be generated in the state by way of providing employment to otherwise poor rural people and the distributive pattern of those person days was 37.73 lakh, 20.58 lakh, 31.94 lakh, 35.71 lakh, 66.61 lakh and 47.64 lakh for 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 respectively.

It is well known a fact that rural Arunachal Pradesh is demographically characterized by the overwhelming presence of variant cross-section of tribal people. There are about 20 major tribes in the state with a score of their sub-tribes namely *Galo, Adi, Nyishi, Apatani, Tagin, Monpa, Khampti, Wanchos, Sherdukpens, Singphos, Mishmis etc.* And keeping perfect conformity with such demographic trend, the MGNREGA was also found to be generated more than 222 lakh person days for the rural ST population alone during the entire period under study and that accounted for 92.42% of the total person days created in the state during that period.

Table 1: Social category wise employment generation under MGNREGA in Arunachal Pradesh (*in lakh person days*)

Financial year	Total person days generated				
	Total	SC	ST	Others	Women
2008-09	37.73	0.02 (0.05)	31.46 (83.38)	6.25 (16.57)	23.58 (62.49)
2009-10	20.58	0 (0)	20.2 (98.15)	0.38 (1.85)	3.75 (18.22)
2010-11	31.94	0.01 (0.03)	28.91 (90.51)	3.02 (9.46)	12.05 (37.73)
2011-12	35.71	0.22 (0.62)	33.46 (93.70)	2.03 (5.68)	10.15 (28.42)
2012-13	66.61	0 (0)	62.6 (93.98)	4.01 (6.02)	21.93 (32.92)
2013-14	47.64	0.01 (0.02)	45.38 (95.26)	2.25 (4.72)	15.87 (33.31)
Total	240.21	0.26 (0.11)	222.01 (92.42)	17.94 (7.47)	87.33 (36.36)

Source: Rural Development Department, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh for 2008-09 to 2013-14

The Census of India (2011) was further revealing of 938:1000 female-male ratio in the rural areas of the state. In due cognizance of such gender feature, an attempt was also made to explore as to how much balance could be maintained while providing employment to the women cross-section of the rural agrarian nexus of the state through MGNREGA. Table 1 was revealing of the fact that out of the total person days created over different constituent years of the period under study, the participation of women were 62.49%, 18.22%, 37.73%, 28.42%, 32.92% and 33.31% for the years 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 respectively.

And thus, the cumulative share of women folk during the entire period stood to be 36.36% to indicate that there remained a lack of balance for that social category especially in terms of prevailing female-male ratio of the state.

MGNREGA provided legal guarantee of 100 days employment to all adult members of deserving rural households to be issued with job cards for the purpose. Table 2 was reflective of the fact that a little over 10.26 lakh job cards were issued in the state during the period under study and in perfect conformity with the demographic scenario of the state which is overwhelmed by the presence of various hill tribes, the proportional distribution of ST job card recipients during all the years under consideration was also found to be consistently remained over 93%. From a perusal of Figure 1, it could further be revealed that among those 10.26 lakh job cards that were distributed during the entire span of study period, its year wise proportional break up was 14%, 16%, 17%, 17%, 18% and 18% for 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 respectively.

Table 2: Issuance of job cards under MGNREGA in Arunachal Pradesh during 2008-09 to 2013-14

Year	No. of Households issued with job cards						
	Total	SCs		STs		Others	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
2008-09	145668	195	0.13	135937	93.32	9536	6.55
2009-10	166264	213	0.13	155986	93.82	10065	6.05
2010-11	172868	196	0.11	162649	94.09	10023	5.80
2011-12	178220	195	0.11	168003	94.27	10022	5.62
2012-13	180452	10	0.01	168839	93.56	11603	6.43
2013-14	182737	32	0.02	171066	93.61	11639	6.37
Total	1026209	841	0.08	962480	93.79	62888	6.13

Source: Rural Development Department, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh for 2008-09 to 2013-14

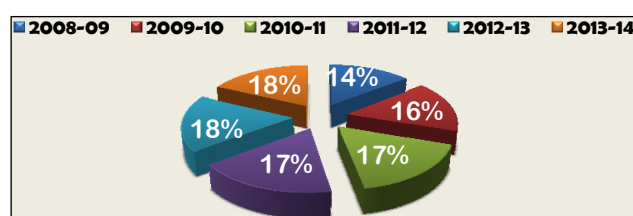


Fig. 1: Year wise percentage share of distributed job cards in Arunachal Pradesh

A commitment was made under MGNREGA to provide demand based wage employment to the

families below poverty line. It was in this light, a further effort was made to have a reflection of the account of demand raised under the Act by the job card holding households for their employment during 2008-09 to 2013-14 *vis-a-vis* provisioning of such employment.

Table 3 suggested that during the periods between 2008-09 to 2013-14 altogether 86.46% of the 10.26 lakh job card owning families actually demanded for employment with their distributive patterns being 74.92%, 81.73%, 95.42%, 84.61%, 94.72% and 85.66% for the years 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 respectively to signify highest demand raised by the deserving families in 2010-11 followed in descending order during 2012-13, 2013-14, 2011-12, 2009-10 and 2008-09. But in sharp contrast to the just mentioned scenario of demand, leaving apart 2013-14 when, as per the published documents, 99.42% of the households were provided employment in response to their demands and in 2012-13 when 93.73% of job demanding households were provided employment, during none of the remaining years under study the provisioning for employment in response to the demand raised by the job card owning households could reach 90% mark. And in ascending manner those were 61.88%, 82.18%, 86.47% and 87.90% for the years 2008-09, 2009-10, 2011-12 and 2010-11 respectively.

Although issuance of job cards to the identified poor families would legitimize receipt of their wage employment and thus enable them with some degree of family income security, the case of Arunachal Pradesh was found to be showing some different trend as became evident from a further perusal of table 3. It could be observed that in reality 74.99% of the 10.26 lakh job card owning families got some employment during the period under study with the year wise distributive pattern being 46.36%, 67.17%, 83.88%, 73.16%, 88.78% and 85.16% for the years 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 respectively. From the previous study conducted that though in cases of the smaller constituent states of the North-Eastern region like Tripura, Sikkim, Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram the employment generated per households was as high as 97.14 person days in a year during the periods between 2008-09 to 2011-12, the state of Arunachal Pradesh, the other state of the same region, however, remained to be an exceptional one

Table 3: Demand based employment provided under MGNREGA

Year	HHs issued with job card (no.)	HHs demanded employment ¹ (no.)	HHs provided employment in response to demand ² (no.)	Percentage of total job card holding HHs which got employment ³
2008-09	145668	109131 (74.92)	67534 (61.88)	46.36
2009-10	166264	135893 (81.73)	111682 (82.18)	67.17
2010-11	172868	155205 (95.42)	136430 (87.90)	83.88
2011-12	178220	150789 (84.61)	130392 (86.47)	73.16
2012-13	180452	170918 (94.72)	160207 (93.73)	88.78
2013-14	182737	156531 (85.66)	155620 (99.42)	85.16
Total	1026209	878467 (86.46)	761865 (86.73)	74.99

Source: Rural Development Department, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh for 2008-09 to 2013-14

Note: 1. Figure in the parenthesis indicates percentage to Col. 2 of corresponding year.

2. Figure in the parenthesis indicates percentage to the no. of HHs in Col. 3 of corresponding year.

3. Percentage of total job card holding HHs got employment is recorded with respect to Col. 2 of corresponding year.

Table 4: An account of households given full 100 days job during 2008-09 to 2013-14

Year	HHs completed 100 days of work ¹	Percentage of HHs got 100 days work w.r.t. HHs issued with job cards ²	Percentage of HHs got 100 days work w.r.t. HHs demanded employment ³	Percentage of HHs got 100 days work w.r.t. HHs provided with employment ⁴
2008-09	19843	13.62	18.18	29.38
2009-10	344	0.21	0.25	0.31
2010-11	602	0.37	0.39	0.01
2011-12	57	0.03	0.04	0.04
2012-13	3367	1.87	1.97	2.10
2013-14	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	24123	2.37	2.75	3.17

Note: 1. Source: Rural Development Department, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh for 2008-09 to 2013-14.

2. Calculation was made in terms of the values of a given year of Col. 2 of the present table in respect to the values of corresponding year of Col. 2 of the table 4

3. Calculation was made in terms of the values of a given year of Col. 2 of the present table in respect to the values of corresponding year of Col. 3 of the table 4.

4. Calculation was made in terms of the values of a given year of Col. 2 of the present table in respect to the values of corresponding year of Col. 4 of the table 4.

wherein there occurred a declining trend in terms of generation of employment (Channaveere, 2014). Not only demand based employment, MGNREGA had also its expressed promise to ensure 100 days job in a year. Hence, the researcher further endeavoured to understand the scenario of providing full 100 days job to the rural households of the state under study. And, objectively speaking, in terms of providing full 100 days job as per promise, a far shabbier picture emerged out. While it became apparent from table

3 that the proportional allocations of mere job provisioning for the job card holding households were 46.36%, 67.17%, 83.88%, 73.16%, 88.78% and 85.16% for the years 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 respectively, far lesser proportion of 29.38%, 0.31%, 0.01%, 0.04% and 2.10% of the same employment obtaining households were actually had the fortune of getting full 100 days job for the years 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 respectively. The scenario was still worst in

2013-14 when none of the so employed households got full 100 days job (table 4). This finding is in the same tune of the study conducted in state of Assam, which reported that the scheme could not be able to keep its commitment of providing 100 days employment in a year to the rural workers and it failed to create assets; but it seemed to have paid good political dividends for the governments (Bordoloi, 2011). And keeping parity with such perplexing trend as emerged out in table 4, only 3.17% of the households were actually observed to have annually got employment for 100 days during the entire six years under study although it was appearing from the simplistic perusal of published documents, as presented in table 3, that the percentage of total job card holding households during the same period was far more healthier to the tune of 74.99 percentage.

Table 4 further revealed that by way of maintaining similar trend during the entire period of 2008-09 to 2013-14, while only 2.37% of the job card owning households got full 100 days employment, it was only 2.75% of the employment demanding households that got 100 days employment under the Act during the same period.

Efficiency in creation of durable social assets *vis-a-vis* work completion rate under MGNREGA

Alongside providing 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to the families below poverty line on the basis of their demands, creation of durable assets and strengthening of livelihood resource base of the rural poor had also constituted to be one of the vital objectives of MGNREGA. Accordingly, water conservation and

water harvesting, small irrigation and drainage improvement, land development and rural connectivity, flood protection and afforestation *etc.* were identified as some of the prioritized areas of intervention of the scheme. The physical performance under MGNREGA in Arunachal Pradesh was studied in the light of accomplishments made in those prioritized areas of intervention. And here, MIS data, as available on nrega.nic.in platform till 2013-14 and placed here under in table 5, was indicative that the state had taken up altogether 5774 no. of various works like water conservation, construction of minor irrigation canals, land development, drought proofing, flood control, rural connectivity, rural sanitation, renovation of traditional water bodies, provisioning of irrigation facility to land owned by SC/ST beneficiaries of land reform *etc.*

So, apparently the items of prioritized works were found to be maintained in congruence with the policy document of the scheme. But, as a matter of fact, as transpired from table 5, the completion rate of those works was miserably poor with only 8.05% from the year of initiation of the scheme in 2006-07 till 2013-14. It must have to be admitted that the extent of illogicality in failing to complete 5740 no. out of 5774 no. of undertaken works by estimated dates was frustrating by any standard particularly in the backdrop of existence of over 96.83% of the 10.26 lakh job card owning families, who were not provided with full 100 days employment. This was more so because planned engagement of such large volume of otherwise well deserving but unutilized work force could simply alter the work completion scenario other way round as happened in many other states in the country. However, this kind

Table 5: Works undertaken and their completion rate under MGNREGA during 2008-09 to 2013-14

Year	Total no. of works undertaken	No. of works undertaken whose estimated completion date is over	No. of works completed	Work completion rate in terms of no. of works undertaken
Up to 2009-10	540	540 (100.00)	121	22.40
2010-11	1	1 (100.00)	0	0
2011-12	107	107 (100.00)	10	9.35
2012-13	2778	2749 (98.96)	202	7.27
2013-14	2348	2343 (99.79)	132	5.62
Total	5774	5740 (99.41)	465	8.05

Source: nrega.nic.in

Table 6: Financial performance under MGNREGA

Year	Central Release (₹ in lakh)	Total available fund (₹ in lakh)	Total expenditure (₹ in lakh)	Unspent amount (₹ in lakh)
2006-07	1210.85	1211.25	221.34 (18.27)	989.91 (81.73)
2007-08	705.38	972.49	303.90 (31.25)	668.59 (68.75)
2008-09	2948.84	4338.22	3289.54 (75.83)	1048.68 (24.17)
2009-10	3386.17	4290.39	1725.74 (40.22)	2564.65 (59.78)
2010-11	3528.47	5554.98	5057.31 (91.04)	497.67 (8.96)
2011-12	6078.58	6462.89	96.87 (1.50)	6366.02 (98.50)
2012-13	2654.39	4009.4	1302.71 (32.49)	2706.69 (67.51)
2013-14	13852.67	14958.23	12255.79 (81.93)	2702.44 (18.07)
Total	34365.32	41797.58	24253.23 (58.03)	17544.65 (41.98)

* Figure in the parenthesis indicates percentage to Column 3 of corresponding year.

Source: 1. Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India (2013) for 2008-09 to 2012-13.

2. Rural Development Department, Government of Arunachal Pradesh (2014) for 2013- 14.

of shabby physical performance could have been improved a lot especially when there was no dearth of availability of financial support for the scheme since the year of its inception in the state.

Efficiency in fund utilization under MGNREGA

Table 6 was reflective of the fact that out of the total available fund of ₹ 1211.25 lakh in the year 2006-07, only 18.27% had been utilized, leaving a large proportion of about 81.73% fund being unspent. And, barring some minor departures, almost a similar trend could be observed for the subsequent years of its implementation also. In terms of hard financial figures, the amounts of unspent balance remained to be 668.59 lakh, 1048.68 lakh, 2564.65 lakh, 6366.02 lakh and 2706.69 lakh for the financial years 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2011-12 and 2012-13 respectively to suggest extremely sorry proportions of 68.75%, 24.17%, 59.78%, 98.50% and 67.51% of the allocated fund for those respective years remained to be unspent.

Even during the comparatively better years of financial performance like 2010-11 and 2013-14 when 91.04% and 81.93% of the corresponding allocated fund was found to be spent, the actual value of unspent amount for those years, nevertheless, were not paltry ones. In fact, the actual value of unspent balance remained to be 497.67 lakh and 2702.44 lakh respectively for those years of 2010-11 and 2013-14. As cumulative effect, the state of Arunachal Pradesh

could not be able to utilize as high as ₹ 17544.65 lakh which was all set to be spent for the wage based employment of its otherwise poverty stricken people in one hand and creation of durable community assets and/or infrastructure for the larger benefit of the rural gentry on the other. Other study too reported widespread complaints of corruption, pilferage of funds and very low level of utilization of budgeted provision in MGNREGS. In noticing failure of the scheme to create sufficient productive asset for strengthening rural infrastructure, it was commented that MGNREGS had failed to make significant impact on the existing socio-economic conditions of poor rural households (Singh, 2012)

CONCLUSION

Going by such experience, it won't perhaps be unjustified to candidly express that the sum and substance of the story of MGNREGA in the state of Arunachal Pradesh has been a genuine pointer for the executing authority that it should re-look into its failures and thoroughly overhaul the monitoring and execution process of the scheme at the soonest with a pro-people bent of mind. The work completion rate in the state was found to be very low i.e. 8.05% in spite of large volume of funds remained being unspent. So the implementing authority in the state, perhaps, cannot avoid the blame for its apathy and non-responsiveness towards its poor people. The revelations made through the study had altogether put a serious question mark on the performance of MGNREGA

in the state of Arunachal Pradesh as it grossly failed to guarantee 100 days jobs to the poor people as per promise. There is a necessity from the part of the implementing authority to further sensitize the poor job card holding families in registering their voices for employment under MGNREGA, in order to make it a really purposeful one.

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