

IMPLEMENTATION OF MAHATMA GANDHI NREGS: ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

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Abstract

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) which has come into force with effect from February, 2006 was a novel step towards eradication of poverty in India. The scheme aims to strengthen the livelihood security of rural population by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to every registered household in a financial year. The present study was conducted in Alappuzha District of Kerala, India, with the specific objective of assessing the impact of the scheme on socio-economic empowerment of marginalized groups and women. The study was carried out in 20 Grama Panchayats covering 600 workers, 100 mates, 140 officials and 181 non beneficiaries, thus, a total of 1021 respondents. The study found that the scheme has helped to improve the level of income of the rural people to a great extent. Participation of women and people belonging to weaker sections was found to be very high in this scheme. The Scheme has resulted in to an increase in the general wage rates besides strengthening the women and weaker section of the society. However, delay in issue of job cards, payment of wages, ignorance of the rural people about the benefits under the scheme, inhibition among the beneficiaries to claim the deserving benefits were the important issues requiring immediate attention.

Keywords: Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, Rural Employment, Poverty Alleviation, Women Empowerment, Administrative Challenges.

INTRODUCTION

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (NREGA) has come into force with effect from February, 2006 initially in 200 districts and later on extended to all the rural districts of India from 2008-09. The scheme is to enhance livelihood security in rural areas 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 work guarantee can also serve other objectives like generating productive assets, protecting the environment, empowering rural women, reducing rural to urban migration and fostering social equity, etc. Strengthening decentralised, participatory planning through convergence of various anti-poverty and livelihood initiatives, democratic empowerment and empowerment of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are also the basic objectives of this scheme.

The NREGA is a vital step towards realization of the right to work. It aims at arresting out-migration of rural people in search of employment and at the same time enhancing people's livelihood on a sustained basis, by developing the economic and social infrastructure in rural areas.

The Mahatma Gandhi NREGA (renamed during 2009-10) has given rise to the largest employment programme in human history and is unlike any other wage employment programme in its scale, architecture and thrust. There are legal provisions for allowances and compensation both in cases of failure to provide work on demand and delays in payment of wages. Plans and decisions regarding the nature and choice of works to be undertaken, the order in which it is to be triggered, site selection, etc., are all to be made in open assemblies of the Grama Sabha(GS) and ratified by the Grama Panchayat (GP). The GS may accept, amend or reject a work proposal, if made by a higher level forum. These decisions cannot be overturned by higher authorities, except to the extent of ensuring conformity with the provisions of the Act and its operational guidelines. This bottom-up, people-centred, demand-driven architecture also means that a great share of the responsibility for the success of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS lies with wage-seekers, GSs and GPs. Social audit is a new feature that is an integral part of the scheme. Potentially, this creates unprecedented accountability of performance, especially towards immediate stakeholders. It also empowers local citizens to play an active role in the implementation of employment guarantee schemes through Grama Sabhas, social audits, participatory planning and other means.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

In Kerala, the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS was implemented with effect from 5th February 2006; initially in two districts, viz.,

Palakkad and Wayanad and subsequently (in 2008) extended to all other districts. Considering the importance and scope of the scheme it is necessary on the part of the authorities to undertake periodical evaluation of the scheme and to initiate corrective steps, as and when required. The study helps to bring into light the area specific problems, so that special efforts can be initiated for the effective implementation of the scheme. As a part of this requirement, an evaluation study was conducted in Alappuzha district of Kerala.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Studies have already been conducted at different parts of the country in connection with the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS. Most of these studies have also traced out the issues prevailed in connection with its implementation. Jos Chathukkulam and Gireesan (2007), Vijayanand (2009), Gandhigram Rural Institute (2009), Nair et al. (2009), Sudarshan (2011), Kareemulla et al. (2009), Pankaj and Tankha (2010), Samarthan (2010), Abhishek Thakur (2011) Mukherjee and Sinha (2011), are examples. These studies have pointed out the major impact of the scheme and also put forward suitable suggestions for solving the problems and to improve the functional efficiency. Though many suggestions proposed by the planning authorities of various States are incorporated in the scheme, still, there are problems connected with the operation of the scheme at various levels, due to the heterogeneity in geographic, economic, social and political condition of various States in India. It is in this background the present study– Impact Assessment Study of the MGNREGS in Alappuzha district - was undertaken.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was carried out with the important objective of evaluating the effectiveness of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS in Alappuzha district of Kerala. The study also had the objective of identifying the issues relating to the implementation of the scheme and suggesting possible remedies. The present paper highlights the administrative constraints prevailed in Alappuzha district in connection with the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In view of the objectives of the study, factors such as days of employment generated, sources of income, wage payment, level of income, nature of expenditure, savings habits, availability of banking facilities, etc., were considered. Among the 14 revenue districts of the state, Alappuzha District is the smallest one in terms of area but having the highest density of population and the longest coast line among the districts. This is the only district in Kerala that has no high lands and forests. Paddy and coconut are the major crops cultivated in the district. Apart from agricultural works, people of this district are also engaged in activities such as making of coir products, fishing, prawn peeling, etc. There are 12 Block Panchayats and 73 Grama Panchayats in the district. The study was carried out in 20 Grama Panchayats that were selected from the 73 Grama Panchayats in the district. The sample consists of two best performing panchayats, two least performing panchayats and one panchayat with maximum SC population. These five GPs were selected using purposive sampling and the remaining 15 Panchayats were selected using simple random sampling method.

DATA COLLECTION

Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. Primary data were collected from three categories of respondents viz., Beneficiaries, Officials and Non- Beneficiaries. Total 1021 respondents were interviewed for collecting the data. This consisted of 600 workers, 100 mates, 140 officials and 181 non-beneficiaries. The opinion and views of various categories viz., beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries and officials were also collected by organizing Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) in all the selected GPs. Data pertaining to the years 2011-12 and 2012-13 were collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Administrative issues pertaining to registration, issue of job cards, identification survey, allotment of jobs, identification and management of works, payment of compensation, wage distribution, etc. are discussed hereunder;

Registration

The study revealed that 75 per cent of the beneficiaries came to know about the scheme through the neighbourhood groups. People's representatives were the next medium through which the people were attracted to the scheme. Only 4.8 per cent of the beneficiaries were attracted to the scheme with the help of TV/ Radio or newspaper. The study found that none of the Grama Panchayats organise awareness programmes to attract rural population to the scheme.

Issue of Receipt

As per the provisions of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, a person registering for job has the right to receive a receipt from the concerned Grama Panchayat showing the date of registration. However, some Grama Panchayats do not strictly follow this

instruction. The data collected in this respect revealed that 6.3 per cent of the beneficiaries covered under the study did not receive receipt showing their registration. Taking together the beneficiary workers, the position is that 72.17 per cent has got the receipt on the day of registration itself. In the case of 21.5 per cent, receipt showing registration was received only after getting the job card.

The data collected from 140 officials also support that the receipt for registration is not issued the same day of registration. From among the officials covered under the sample, 74.28 per cent disclosed that receipts for registration are issued on the same day. The remaining officials reported that such a receipt is issued after 15 days only. The figures relating to this showed that about 73 per cent of the job seekers were issued a receipt for registration on the date of registration itself .

This can be resolved by further streamlining the registration procedure under the scheme. Issue of proper receipts in time will also help to protect the rights of the beneficiaries of the scheme. The findings suggest that to a large extent, the GPs in Alappuzha district have been implementing the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS in the real spirit of the Act. However, the delay in issuing receipt of registration need be taken seriously.

Issue of Job Cards

The job card (JC) is a key document that records workers' entitlements under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS. It legally empowers the registered households to apply for work, ensures transparency and protects the workers against fraud. If the household is found to be eligible for registration, the GP will, within a fortnight of the application, issue a JC to the household. A copy of all JCs is maintained at the GP. The cost of the JCs, including that of the photographs is treated as administrative expenses and borne by the GPs.

The Data pertaining to the receipt of job card clearly shows (Table 1) that 69.5 per cent of the workers have received the job cards within 15 days of registration. The remaining 30.5 per cent of the workers have received Job Cards after 15 days but within one month from the date of registration. The GP-wise data are as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Days taken to Receive Job Card (N=600)

Sl. No.	Name of Grama Panchayat	Within 15 days	After 15 days but within one month
		Number (%)	Number (%)
1	Kanjikuzhi	30 (100.00)	0(0.00)
2	Thrikunnapuzha	25 (83.33)	5(16.67)
3	Pandanadu	18(60.00)	12(40.00)
4	Mannar	2(6.67)	28(93.33)
5	Chettikulangara	30(100.00)	0(0.00)
6	Arattupuzha	30(100.00)	0(0.00)
7	Pattanakkad	21(70.00)	9(30.00)
8	Thuravoor	18(60.00)	12(40.00)
9	Karuvatta	9(30.00)	21(70.00)
10	Purakkad	18(60.00)	12(40.00)
11	Chennam pallipuram	20(66.67)	10(33.33)
12	Perumbalam	30(100.00)	0(0.00)
13	Kainakary	2(6.67)	28(93.33)
14	Thaneermukkom	27(90.00)	3(10.00)
15	Muhamma	25(83.33)	5(16.67)
16	Krishnapuram	30(100.00)	0(0.00)
17	Thazhakara	30(100.00)	0(0.00)
18	Bharanikkavu	30(100.00)	0(0.00)
19	Mulakkuzha	11(36.67)	19(63.33)
20	Veliyanadu	11(36.67)	19(63.33)
	Total	417(69.50)	183(30.50)

Source: primary data. Figures in parenthesis are percentage to total.

As it is evident from table 1, in 35 per cent of the GPs, all the respondents received job cards within 15 days from the date of registration. Ninety per cent of the respondents from Thaneermukkom GP and 83.3 per cent of the respondents from Thrikunnapuzha and Muhamma GP also have received the job card within 15 days.

The overall position that 69.5 per cent of the respondents could receive the job cards within 15 days is highly encouraging. This shows the seriousness and efforts from the part of the panchayat officials to observe the instructions given by the government in this regard.

But, the delay in issuing JC should also be noted seriously. In the case of 30.5 per cent of the respondents, the JCs were issued only after 15 days but within one month. Much delay was observed in the case of Mannar, Kainakary, Mulakkuzha and Veliyanad GPs. Shortage of staff in the GPs was highlighted as the important reason for this.

Employment Guarantee Day (Rozgar Diwas)

According to the operational guidelines of Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, every GP should organise a Rozgar Diwas at least once every month. On this occasion, the GP should pro-actively invite applications for work from potential workers for the current as well as subsequent quarters. Dated receipts should be issued to the applicants on the day. The 'Employment Guarantee Day' should be earmarked for processing work applications and related activities such as disclosure of information, allocation of work, payment of wages and payment of unemployment allowances.

The President of the Gram Panchayat and all staff appointed at the level of the GP to assist Mahatma Gandhi NREGS should be present on the 'Employment Guarantee Day'. However, the study found that Employment Guarantee Day is not observed by the GPs regularly. Hence, necessary action need to be taken for organizing Rozgar Diwas on the stipulated dates.

Survey to Identify Households

As per the provisions of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, each GP should carry out door-to-door survey so as to identify eligible households who have been missed out but wish to be registered under the Act. The data collected from the officials indicated that none of the GP covered under the sample conduct such a survey. This is an omission which is to be rectified.

Demand for and Allotment of Job

As per the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, every adult member of a registered household whose name appears in the Job Card (JC) is entitled to apply for unskilled manual work. As per the schedule II paragraph 7 of the Act, applications for work must be for at least 14 days of continuous work. Application for work is to be submitted to the GP. Once the application is submitted, the applicant has to be provided with job within a period of 15 days. In case it is not done, the applicant is entitled to receive unemployment allowance.

The data collected from the sample GPs, revealed that, 57.5 per cent of the respondents could get employment within 15 days from the date of demand. Remaining 42.5 per cent got employment only after 15 days from the date of demand. The figures showed that five GPs (Kanjikuzhi, Perumbalam, Krishnapuram, Thazhakara and Bharanikavu) provided employment to all the job seekers within 15 days from the date of demand. While the performance of Pandanadu, Purakkad, Karuvatta, Mannar, Veliyanadu and Kainakary GPs were found to be very poor in this aspect.

Since it is a statutory requirement that the GP is responsible to provide employment to an applicant within 15 days, the failure is to be viewed seriously. This delay really poses a challenge to the very purpose of the scheme.

Unemployment Allowance

As mentioned above, a registered job seeker under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS is entitled to receive unemployment allowance if he/she is not provided with job within 15 days from the date of demand. The unemployment allowance will be paid as per Section 7 of the Act. The allowance will not be less than one-fourth of the wage rate for the first thirty days and not less than one-half of the wage rate for the remaining period of the financial year.

The analysis of the data collected, brings out the interesting observation that 40 per cent of them did not know about this provision. It was also revealed that, 58.7 per cent of the beneficiaries, though was aware about such a provision, did not apply for the unemployment allowance. Among the respondents, 1.3 per cent has applied for it but none received the benefit. The Panchayat-wise data brought to light the fact that none of the beneficiaries covered under the sample, from Thazhakara and Bharanikavu GP, were aware about the provision. Similarly, a vast majority of the beneficiaries representing Veliyanadu, Krishnapuram, Pandanadu, Mulakuzha, Kainakary, Muhamma and Mannar GPs also were not aware of this benefit.

Thus, the figures relating to the status of availing unemployment allowance under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS point to the fact that among the beneficiaries of the scheme, there exists an inhibition to claim the deserving benefits. This observation is on the basis of the fact that, though 59 per cent (approx.) of the respondents were aware about the benefit, they did not apply for the same. In short, there is a need to carryout awareness programme so as to remove this constraint.

Identification of Works

In line with the provisions of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, it was found that in all the GPs, the Grama Sabha (GS) plays the predominant role in identifying the works to be undertaken. The GS is the principal forum for job seekers to raise their voice and make demands. As per the scheme, the GS has the right to recommend the works to be taken up and it is the final authority to determine the order of priority in which works are initiated under the scheme. The GS is responsible to monitor the execution of works within the Grama Panchayat. It is also the primary forum to conduct the social audit.

During the study, 89 per cent of the officials reported that the projects are identified and prepared by the GS. The opinion of 8 per cent of the officials was different. According to them, the projects were identified and project reports were prepared by the people's representatives. In fact, identification of works by the GS ensures the people's participation in the developmental programmes in the GPs.

Management of Works at the Site

The work under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS are supervised and controlled by mates at the worksite. Mate is an experienced and trained worker who is also a registered beneficiary under the scheme. As per the provision of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, the mate also has to participate in works. In addition to the supervisory job, mates also have to do work allotment, maintenance of muster roll, time keeping, ensuring of suitable tools, provision of facilities at the work site, ensuring of discipline, etc.

Project Initiation Meeting and Allotment of Works

As per the provisions of the scheme, before starting any work, project initiation meeting should be held with all the workers on the site and all the stakeholders should be invited to this meeting. The provisions of the Act, the system of payment of wages, information on worksite facilities and their entitlements in the event of injury by accidents or death or injury or death of any child accompanying the worker should be explained to the workers in the meeting. However, the study found that the initiation meetings were not held as prescribed. It was also noted that the workers were not divided into small groups of 4-6 as suggested in the operational guidelines 2013. In 90 per cent of the groups, the number of workers was more than 25. Only in 10 per cent cases, the strength of a working group was found below 25. All these workers were found working in groups in a particular spot.

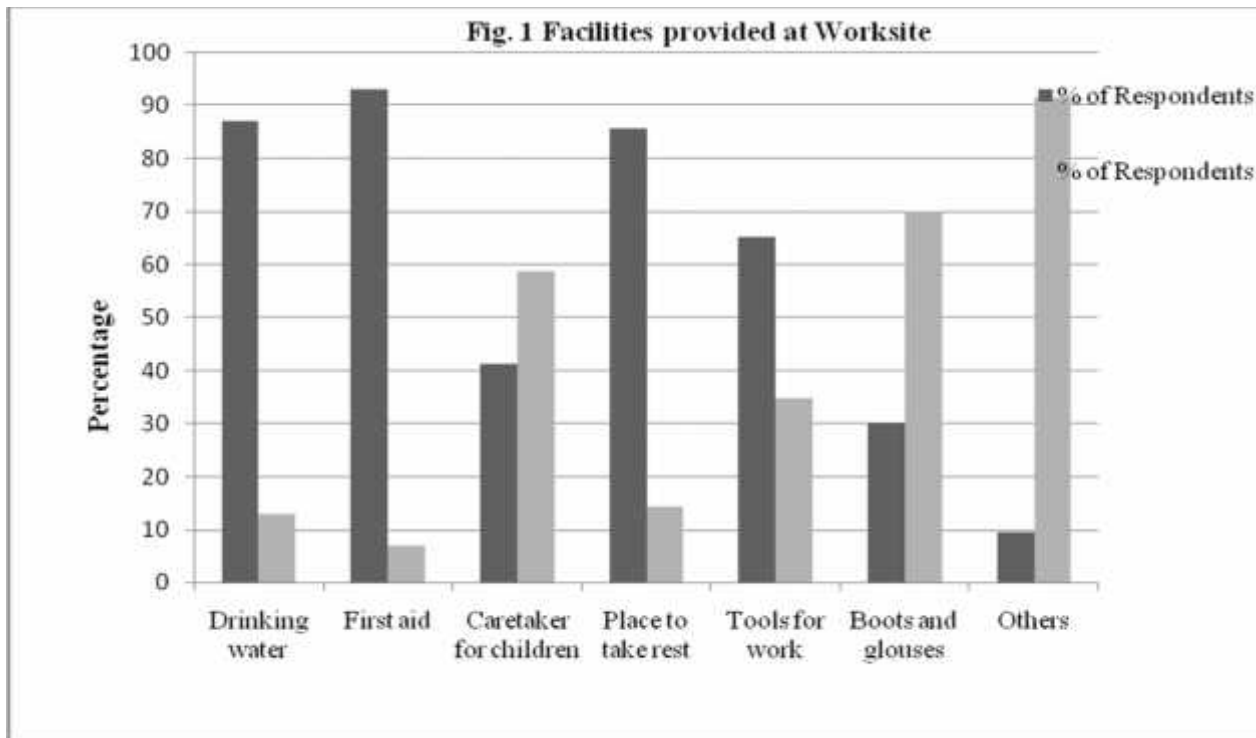
Accidents at Work Site

As per the provisions of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, the workers should be made aware of the benefits for which they are eligible in the event of accidents at the work site. This is to be done in the initiation meeting itself. However, the data collected in this respect indicates that only 73.2 per cent are aware of the benefits while the remaining 26.8 per cent are ignorant about it. The Grama Panchayat-wise data revealed that none of the workers from Chettikulangara and Arattupuzha were aware about such benefits. The intensity of ignorance was high in Bharanikavu (93.33 per cent), Thazhakara (76.67 per cent) and Krishnapuram (73.3 per cent) also. All the workers covered from Thrikunnapuzha, Pandanadu, Mannar, Karuvatta, Purakkad, Perumbalam, Thaneermukkom and Mulakuzha GPs were well aware of the benefits in the event of accidents.

These figures point towards the need for carrying out the initiation meeting more effectively and seriously. The chances of accidents at work site, the precautions to be taken and the benefits for which the workers are eligible in the event of accidents should be clearly explained to the workers, before the commencement of each work.

Facilities Provided at the Work Site

The Mahatma Gandhi NREGS insists that, basic facilities should be provided at the worksite. These facilities include first aid kit, drinking water, caretakers for children, place to take rest, tools for working, boots, glouses, etc. The finding of the study in this regard is illustrated in fig.1.



Source: Compiled from Primary data

As shown in fig.1, 93 per cent of the workers opined that first aid facilities are provided at the worksite. Similarly, 87 per cent workers get drinking water and 85.7 per cent find places to take rest. On the other hand, most of the workers pointed out that boots and gloves and caretaker for children were not provided. Seventy per cent of the workers did complaint that they were frequently forced to work in very dirty water. The study found that in no GP, facilities such as boots and gloves were provided for. This was viewed as an important issue as far as the workers, who were forced to work in dirty water and ponds, are concerned.

Administration and Management

The effectiveness of the work done by each group under the MGNREGS mainly depends upon the strength of their team spirit. A positive and strong relationship between the supervisor (mates) and the workers is a good indicator of work efficiency. With a view to know the type of relationship between the mates and workers under different groups, data were collected. The related data indicates that there is no complaint on the part of the workers about their mates. Out of the total 600 workers covered under the study, 97 per cent reported that they have no complaint about their mates. There was no complaint on the part of workers in respect of muster roll and allotment of rest time. However, 3 per cent of the workers did complaint about partiality in work allotment.

Helpline Number for Registration of Complaints

The Mahatma Gandhi NREGS provides the facility of online registration of complaints in each GP. However, it was found that the level of awareness among the people about this facility is less. The data collected from the beneficiaries point to the fact that 39 per cent of them were not aware of the helpline number and the services available through that facility. Only 61 per cent were aware of this service. It was also observed that the helpline number is not displayed in a prominent place in most of the GPs covered under the study.

Difficulties Faced at the Work Site

The study revealed that 22.2 per cent of the workers and 17 per cent of the mates face difficulties in arranging food at the work site. Insult by people other than co-workers (12.8 per cent) was another important issue faced by the workers. Seventy two per cent of the beneficiaries reported that they find it very difficult to get shade during strong sun light and heavy rainfall.

Payment of Wages

As per the provisions of the MGNREGA, workers are entitled to being paid on a weekly basis, and in any case within a fortnight of the date on which work was done. Weekly muster roll is a necessary and primary condition to ensure payment of wages within 14 days from the date of work. The data pertaining to the preparation and submission of muster rolls indicated that all the mates covered under the sample (100 Nos.) prepare and submit muster roll in time, to the concerned GPs. However, the analysis of the data revealed the delay in payment of wages to the workers. The data collected from the workers revealed that only 32 per cent of the workers were getting the wages within 14 days from the date of completion of work. The details about payment of wages, GP-Wise, is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Time Taken to Release Wages

Sl. No.	Name of Grama Panchayat	Within 14 days	After 14 days but within 30 days	After 30 days
		Nos. (%)	Nos.(%)	Nos.(%)
1	Kanjikkuzhi	0 (0.00)	28(93.33)	2(6.67)
2	Thrikunnapuzha	7 (23.33)	23(76.67)	0(0.00)
3	Pandanadu	0 (0.00)	27 (90.00)	3(10.00)
4	Mannar	0 (0.00)	18(60.00)	12(40.00)
5	Chettikulangara	0 (0.00)	17(56.67)	13(43.33)
6	Arattupuzha	0 (0.00)	18(60.00)	12(40.00)
7	Pattanakkad	9 (30.00)	16(53.33)	5(16.67)
8	Thuravoor	10 (33.33)	16(53.33)	4(13.33)
9	Karuvatta	2 (6.67)	27(90.00)	1(3.33)
10	Purakkad	6 (20.00)	24(80.00)	0(0.00)
11	Chennampallipuram	3(10.00)	16(53.33)	11(36.67)
12	Perumbalam	30 (100.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
13	Kainakary	0(0.00)	13(43.33)	17(56.67)
14	Thaneermukkom	25 (83.34)	4(13.33)	1(3.33)
15	Muhamma	2(6.67)	2(6.67)	26(86.67)
16	Krishnapuram	28(93.33)	2(6.67)	0(0.00)
17	Thazhakara	29(96.67)	1(3.33)	0(0.00)
18	Bharanikavu	30(100.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
19	Mulakuzha	10(33.33)	14(46.67)	6 (20.00)
20	Veliyanadu	1(3.33)	26(86.67)	3(10.00)
Total		192(32.00)	292(48.67)	116(19.33)

Source: Compiled from Primary data . Figures in parenthesis are percentage to total.

It is evident from Table 2 that, 68 per cent of the beneficiaries under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS got wages only after 14 days from the date of completion of work. It was also found that 48.67 per cent respondents were getting wage payments after 14 days but within 30 days. It is specifically to be noted that 19.33 per cent of the beneficiaries got their wages only after one month.

It is clear from table 2 that, in Perumbalam and Bharanikavu GPs payment was made to the workers within 14 days itself. In Thazhakara (96.67 per cent), Krishnapuram (93.33 per cent) and Thaneermukkom (83.34 per cent) GPs, majority of the workers got the amount of wages within 14 days. The model set by these panchayats in disbursing payments is worth replication. Wage payment was delayed by more than 30 days in the case of Muhamma, Kainakary, Chettikulangara and Arattupuzha GPs, to a large number of workers under the scheme. Also in the FGDs many of the workers produced evidence for the delay in payment of wages. It was observed that only 32 per cent of the beneficiaries are getting the wage payments within 14 days as stipulated under the MGNREGS in Alappuzha district. In the case of 19.33 per cent of the workers, wage payments are delayed by more than 30 days.



Opinions of the officials covered under the sample were collected to identify the reasons for the delay in payment of wages. Lack of office facility (including shortage of staff) and lack of funds were the important reasons pointed out by them. Delay in submission of muster rolls in proper form was also highlighted as a reason for the late release of wages. These issues are to be rectified for the timely payment of wages.

Compensation for Delay in Payment of Wages

As per the guidelines of the MGNREGA, a worker is entitled to receive compensation for delay in payment of wages. According to the guidelines, in case wages are paid after 15 days of work done, compensation as calculated under the provisions of payment of Wages Act, shall be paid along with the wages. For this purpose, it is not necessary that the worker should file a claim.

The analysis of the data relating to compensation for delay in payment of wages brought out the fact that 45 per cent (270 workers) of the beneficiaries did not know about this benefit. It was found that 46.33 per cent (278 workers) of the beneficiaries did not apply for the compensation, though they knew about this benefit. The remaining 8.67 per cent applied for compensation, but did not receive it. Thus, a type of hesitation was observed among the respondents and officials in claiming or disbursing compensation for the delay in wage payment.

Conduct of Social Audit

An innovative feature of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS is that it has institutionalized social audit as a means of continuous public vigilance. The basic objective of social audit is to ensure public accountability in the implementation of projects, laws and policies.

The data collected from the officials and mates revealed that 93 percent of the respondents covered under the category of officials and 97 percent of the mates attend the process of social audit. Among the category of officials, 2 per cent did not attend the meeting and remaining 5 per cent were not aware of social audit. Among the mates, 96 per cent reported that they attend social audit meetings without fail. All the mates who attended the meetings of social audit were of the opinion that the social audit is needed and it is useful also. Among the respondents under the category of beneficiaries (excluding mates), 74 per cent believed that social audit is necessary and useful. The opinion of the remaining 26 percent was different; 13 per cent believed that it is not effective and useful and the remaining do not know about social audit.

In short, the opinion of 13 per cent of the workers and 5 per cent of the people's representatives included under the category of officials that they are not aware of social audit is to be viewed seriously. This is a very important means to ensure transparency, inclusion, participation, consultation and accountability under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS. When the opinion of 26 per cent of the workers under the scheme, that social audit is not effective and all were not aware about it, is considered, it is to be concluded that transparency and real participation in a democratic way is not fully ensured in Alappuzha district.

The data collected from the office of the Joint Programme Coordinator (JPC) disclosed the fact that during the year 2012-13 one social audit each has been conducted in all the GPs in Alappuzha district. Only in Bharanikkavu development block two social audits have been conducted in GPs during the year 2012-13. In Bharanikkavu block, there are 6 GPs and a total number of 13 social audits have been conducted. As per the guidelines of MGNREGA, at least two social audits should be conducted in each G.P.

It was reported that, during the social audit, few issues relating to the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGS have been raised and corrective actions were taken. However, no verification of document was done as a part of social audit.

CONCLUSION

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) 2005 is a land mark legislation in Indian history of social security legislation after independence. This legislation has been brought about a silent revolution in rural areas of the country. Enacted after a successful struggle for employment guarantee legislation, it is a partial victory towards a full-fledged right to employment in any developing country.

The study carried out in Alappuzha district brought into light that, the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGS has been in the right direction. But, few administrative and management issues adversely affecting the beneficiaries can't be ignored. Delay in the issue of receipts for registration, job cards, providing employment and the delay in the disbursement of wages were found prevailing in some GPs in the district. This has resulted into lot of financial difficulties on the part of the



beneficiaries who fully depend on the income from the daily work under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS. Delay in payment of wages was found crucial in most of the GPs brought under study. The fact that 68 per cent of the beneficiaries under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS got wages only after 14 days from the date of completion of work needs attention of the authorities urgently. In case such delay is prevailed, the very purpose of the scheme will be challenged. Based on the findings of the study, it is also felt that there is an urgent need to make the rural people aware of the benefits under the scheme and their rights to claim such benefits.

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