

# **Impact of MGNREGA Program on Income, Assets Creation, and Food Security: Evidence from Selected 10 Semi-Arid Tropic (SAT) Villages in India<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) Programme is one of the flagship programmes of the Government of India to improve rural livelihood in the country, especially to provide employment during slack season of agricultural activities, when unemployment is rampant in rural India. Until August 2014, the MGNREGA has generated 1760.78 crores of mandays of work in rural areas with an expenditure of Rs. 2,65,727 crores, of which, nearly 70% were distributed as wages. This paper examines the impact of MGNREGA in 10 semi-arid villages spread across Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra states. Our assessment finds that the implementation of MGNREGA in the 10 villages across the three states has varied experiences. In none of the villages the average working days under the programme was found to be more than 40 days per annum. The average wage received by the beneficiaries was well below the prevailing agricultural labor wage rate in the village. However, the works under the programme generally take place in the non-agricultural season. Hence, even the wage rate is below that of the agricultural labor wages in the studied villages, the program has produced tremendous impact on financial stability of the program participating households. Though over the years the average wage rate (and the total income earned) under the programme has increased, the average days of employment provided had declined over the years across all the study areas (states), or remained stagnant along with the declining number of total beneficiaries. The latter is not the result of availability of alternative employment opportunities for the households but the inadequate availability of work in the villages. Most of the sampled households belongs to the marginalised sections and are agricultural labourers or marginal farmers. These program participants (beneficiaries) reported that they want the MGNREGA to provide them work for more than 100 days in a year and offer better wage rates or at least as that of the wage rates prevailing in the agricultural sector. The beneficiaries used the money earned from MGNREGA mostly for meeting domestic expenses and education of their children, while acquisition of durable household assets was not reported at all. The program beneficiaries also appreciated the community wide benefits of the rural assets and infrastructure created under the flagship programme, even though it may not have any direct benefit to the labor households, but they acknowledged the community level benefits of these rural infrastructures created under the program. The study suggests for proper implementation of MGNREGA through better monitoring at local level, use of ITC technology for monitoring on performances of the work activities, implementation of work on regular basis across the years, and with good governance and participatory decision-making on selection of work activities to be undertaken under the program.

## **Introduction**

India is a country with vast majority of the workers depending on the informal sector for livelihood. About 86 percent of the total workers belong to informal sector. However their share

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<sup>1</sup> Paper submitted for presentation at a National Seminar on “Flagship Programmes: Impact, Problems & challenges Ahead”, National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) in Rajendranagar, Hyderabad on 19-21 November 2014.

in national output is only 50 percent approximately. Most of these workers are either casual in nature or are self-employed. These workers have no security, no legal contract, no health benefits and other benefits extended to the workers of the formal sector (Kannan and Breman, 2013: 1). Their vulnerability is extended by the necessity to remain mobile due to the saturation and lack of demand in the primary agricultural sector. They generally have to work outside the place of their birth and face many uncertainties due to unfamiliar conditions, work expectations and job profile. Further they are, by and large, paid much less than the nominal wage for any particular job owing to basic limitations like lower education, poor skills and dearth of capital. The lean seasons or failure of agriculture due to the vagaries of nature, force many of these rural households (having no land or with smaller and marginal holdings) to migrate under distress to sustain their families; especially from those areas where rainfed farming is more widespread.. Often these migrants end up in city slums, live in unhygienic conditions and supply the bulk of unskilled and semi-skilled labour to manufacturing and service sectors in urban areas, often at lower wages than prescribed under law. Those who could not migrate depend upon meager assets which they sell or mortgage, cut back on their consumption including food, health care and education of their children (ibid, p. 3).

To address these issues discussed above, the Government of India (GOI) came up with a new programme called Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2006. The twin objectives of the programme were to create employment opportunity for rural population for certain minimum days in a year; as a matter of right and tap the vast reserve of under-employed and unemployed labour force in rural India, particularly women in time of agricultural crisis in particular and non-agricultural seasons in general (Viswanathan and Mandal, 2012). It was anticipated that the programme will particularly benefit the rural population in lean seasons and reduce distress migration, increase the purchasing power in general and create necessary physical assets in rural areas using the otherwise untapped labour potential in the rural areas. In this context, based on empirical household level assessment, in this study, we evaluate impact of the MGNREGA program activities on income, employment and food security related outcome and welfare indicators of households at the 10 selected villages in Semi- Arid Tropics region spread through the three states of India.

Targeting poverty alleviation through employment generation using rural works has had a long history in India that began in the 1960s. There were few notable precursors to the MGNREGA act which were based on the theme of alleviating rural poverty through creating employment in rural areas. These were Food for Work Programme (FWP) of 1977 and three years later National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) was introduced in 1980. In 1989, the above programmes were merged into Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) implemented through panchayats for the first time; in 1999 the programme was revamped and reorganized as Jawahar Gram Swarozgar Yojna (JGSY), reinforcing the role of panchayats with greater autonomy as sole implementing authority. In 1993 another different programmes with same objective was lunched, viz., Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), with specifically targeting job creation for rural

areas in lean period of agricultural activities. This programme was implemented through zila parishads or district level elected bodies as the sole implementing authority. In 2001 government merged the EAS and JGSY to converge employment generation, infrastructure development and food security in rural areas, the government integrated EAS and JGSY into a new scheme Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), village panchayats being sole implementing authority. Throughout these years the above programmes often overlapped and were administered by different departments of the government. Of course, all these programmes suffered from poor coverage, wrong targeting and lack of coherence among the multiple agencies. Even entrusting these activities to panchayats yielded little desired results. In 2006 the government integrated SGRY of 2001 and FWP of 2001, into a new scheme called Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). The innovative feature of the scheme was ensuring employment for a certain number of days in a year, which became a matter of right to the people [keeping in view the spirit of directive principles of Indian constitution (article 41), which directs all the states in India to ensure all citizens living in their jurisdiction right to work in line with the fundamental right to life guaranteed under article 21 of the constitution]. Originally, the law was proposed in September 2005 and implemented in the 200 most backward districts in February 2006, which later was made a universal programme.

It has been argued that the provision of employment to the rural poor is not an exclusive step; but has multi-faceted effects on the economy. Unemployment is strongly correlated with poverty, thus, provision of gainful employment will help reduce the number of poor. Further, the provision of income enables livelihood security, decision making and bargaining power to the poor. The socially marginalized and deprived communities are rejuvenated to fight for themselves. Local savings are boosted, adding to local capital formation. Even the women folks start realizing its true potential and are willing to accept newer roles and responsibilities in the process of rural development. Distress migration, constituting a significant proportion of migration in India, was thought to be brought down considerably and its ill effects on the society can be overcome. Besides, there are positive effects on physical and mental health of the households as well. By absorbing the surplus labour in productive activities, pressure on agriculture gets reduced considerably which further boosts agricultural productivity. Thus, it was believed that the provision of gainful long term employment can result in many constructive spill-over effects on the society.

In this backdrop, this paper examines the local level impacts of the national flagship programme that has gained global attention. The local level impacts are captured through an empirical survey covering 10 villages that form part of the ICRISAT-VDSA project. Following an overview of the important aspects and the status of implementation of the MGNREGA at the national level, the paper discusses the specific village level impacts with respect to their outcomes on household income, asset creation and food security and poverty reduction with particular reference to the socio-economically vulnerable groups. Following the presentation of the major impacts as pointed above, the paper concludes by highlighting some of the policy relevant aspects that need

serious attention in the future for making the programme yield sustainable impacts in the rural scenario.

### **MGNREGA- an overview**

As mentioned earlier, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, henceforth MGNREGA is a wage employment scheme, enacted by the government of India (henceforth GOI) in 2005, with the 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 to work as a fundamental right of individuals. If the State fails to keep that 100 days' contract, it will have to pay an unemployment allowance as compensation for not providing the employment committed under the proviso of the Act. If the state fails to accomplish that, the complainant can even 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.

The MGNREGA was envisaged as a demand driven program where the work in a particular village is undertaken based on the demand from number of households demanding such work in a given year, the upper cap being 100 days per household per year. The costs are to be shared by both the centre and the states, though larger part of the fiscal burden is to be borne by the center. 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. It was also decided that in case the states are unable to provide the required employment opportunities within 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 main provisions of the Act are:-

1. Employment to be given within 15 days of application for work.
2. If employment is not provided within 15 days, daily unemployment in cash is to be paid.
3. Employment within 5 km radius, else extra wages to be paid.
4. At least one-third beneficiaries have to be women.
5. Gram Sabha will recommend works.
6. Gram Panchayat to execute at least 50 percent of works.
7. PRIs have a principle role in planning & implementation.
8. Transparency, accountability & social audit would be ensured through institutional mechanism at all levels.

9. Grievance redressal mechanism to be put in place for ensuring a responsive implementation.

The other intended benefits from MGNREGA apart from job creation and improving livelihood conditions of the rural poor are:

- 1) To reduce distressed migration from rural to urban areas and from one part of rural to another part of rural areas
- 2) Creation of durable assets in rural areas
- 3) Invigorating civic and community life and enlivening of PRIs as they have been entrusted to formulate, implement and monitor the scheme
- 4) Empowerment of rural women through opportunity to earn income independently and to participate in social groups
- 5) Overall development of rural economy
- 6) Promotion of inclusive growth and development
- 7) Multiplier effects on the economy

### **Implementation Process:**

MGNREGA was enacted to be implemented mainly in the rural and semi urban areas. It was implemented in three phases; in the first phase the most backward 200 districts in the country were included in the purview of MGNREGA. In the second phase, another set of districts slightly better off than the first phase districts were included. In the last phase, all remaining districts were covered. MGNREGA has a list of activities that can be undertaken for providing jobs, mostly focusing on creation of physical assets in rural areas through construction of public infrastructure, construction and restoration of canals, tanks, check dams, protection walls, open wells and tube wells, building and restoration of village roads and land development among others. A job card had to be issued to the household after systematic registration of all the workers and noting down of the necessary details. The official structure and functioning of MGNREGA is discussed below.

At the Central level, the Department of Rural Development, Government of India, is in charge of implementation of MGNREGA in rural areas. It formulates policies and provides guidelines to the states and local governments to implement the scheme. At the state level, there is MGNREGA council headed by Chief Minister as the chairman and the Minister for Rural Development as the vice chairman. Further, the State Government is responsible for fixing rates to different works every year in consultation with the MGNREGA State Council. The district is the nodal unit for implementation of MGNREGA. The Collectors cum-District magistrates are the District Program Coordinators (DPCs) of MGNREGA works. The Project Directors of District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) work as nodal officers of the program. Moreover, at the district level, the most important institution is the Zilla Panchayat which acts as a nodal agency for the preparation of five year perspective plan based on village level plans as well as the annual plan of MGNREGA activities. At the Block level, the Block or Panchayat Samiti lies

between the Gram Panchayat (GP) and Zilla Panchayat in implementation of MGNREGA works and plays a crucial role in implementation. The Block/Taluka level setup consists of Program Officer (PO), who is invariably the Block Development Officer (BDO). His chief responsibility is to ensure that anyone who applies for work gets employment within 15 days. The GP is the basic root of the three-tier Panchayati Raj system in India and is the nodal implementing body in the successful execution of MGNREGA. The GP is responsible for many activities including registration of households, issue of job cards, creation of awareness, planning and execution of works and maintenance of records. A coalition of all these, especially the GP, is necessary to for a successful planning, execution, monitoring, evaluation and grievance redressal mechanism of MGNREGA.

### Performance of MGNREGA:

There have been some significant achievements to the credit of MGNREGA. Since inception in 2005, the performance of MGNREGA has been somewhat wavering. In some states and in some indicators, it has performed above potential, while in others, it is found lacking in many respects. Overall, its performance cannot be considered to be flawless. There have been some revisions in the act as per the need of the hour, but in spite of these, there have been many areas where the act is found wanting. However over the years as the studies shows the experience from MGNREGA varies across states and within a given state.

Table 1 gives a statistical account of the performance of MGNREGA among different aspects and across different classes of society. Asset creation and utilization of allocated funds have also been used as an indicator to measure the success of MGNREGA. The table shows the participation of different vulnerable groups; women, Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) have increased till 2009-10 and shows decline following years. The funds in terms of nominal figures increased all these years except for year 2012-13. The nominal figure for average wage paid also increased over time. However in terms of physical assets created, the programme shows an upward trend over the years, but a caution of words here will be appropriate, it may be due to the some of these works are taken over to the next year.

**Table 1: Performance of MGNREGA across different indicators**

Descriptive	2006-07 1.	2007-08 2.	2008-09 3.	2009-10 4.	2010-11 5.	2011-12 6.	2012-13 (P)	2013-14 (till Dec. 13)
Number of HHs provided employment (incrore)	2.10	3.39	4.51	5.3	5.5	5.06	4.98	3.81
<b>Person days (in crore) [% of total person days]</b>							<b>7.</b>	<b>8.</b>
Total	90.5	143.59	216.32	283.6	257.2	218.76	229.86	134.80
SC	22.9 [25]	39.4 [27]	63.4 [29]	86.5 [30]	78.8 [31]	48.47 [22]	50.96 [22]	31.53 [23]
ST	32.9	42.1	55.0	58.7	53.6	40.92	40.75	38.3

	[36]	[29]	[25]	[21]	[21]	[19]	[18]	[16]
Women	36.8 [40]	61.2 [43]	103.5 [48]	136.4 [48]	122.7 [48]	105.27 [48]	117.93 [51]	73.33 [54]
Others	34.6 [38]	62.2 [43]	97.9 [45]	138.4 [49]	124.8 [48]	129.38 [59]	138.14 [60]	82.18 [61]
Average person day per household	43	42	48	54	47	43	46	35
<b>Funds Allocated and Utilized (In ₹ Crore)</b>								
Budget Outlay	11300	12000	30000	39100	40100	40000	33000	33000
Central Release	8640.8	12610.3	29939.6	33506.6	35768.9	29189.7	30009.	29885.9
Total available fund (including OB)	12073.5	19305.8	37397.1	49579.2	54172.1	48805.7	45051.4	37084.7
Expenditure	8824	15857	27250	37905	39377	37072.8	39657.0	24848.7
Average wage per day ( ₹ )	65	75	84	90	100	111	9.	10.
Average cost per day ( ₹ )	97	110	126	134	153	169	11.	12.
<b>Works Detail (in Lakh)</b>							<b>13.</b>	<b>14.</b>
Total works taken up	8.4	17.9	27.8	46.2	51.0	80.8	106.51	111.64
Works completed	3.9	8.2	12.1	22.6	25.9	27.6	25.60	11.17
Water conservation	4.5 [54]	8.73 [49]	12.79 [46]	23.4 [51]	24.3 [48]	48.81 [60]	49.26 [46]	45.41 [41]
Works on individuals land	0.81 [10]	2.63 [15]	5.67 [20]	7.73 [17]	9.15 [18]	9.16 [11]	11.81 [11]	12.62 [11]
Rural Connectivity	1.80 [21]	3.08 [17]	5.03 [18]	7.64 [17]	9.31 [18]	13.86 [17]	13.04 [12]	12.62 [11]
Land Development	0.89 [11]	2.88 [16]	3.98 [15]	6.38 [14]	7.04 [14]	6.32 [8]	6.58 [6]	5.78 [5]
Any other activity	0.34 [4]	0.56 [3]	0.28 [1]	0.98 [2]	1.06 [2]	2.31 [3]	9.87 [9]	9.65 [9]

[http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/WriteReaddata/circulars/Report\\_to\\_the\\_people\\_English2013.pdf](http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/WriteReaddata/circulars/Report_to_the_people_English2013.pdf)

Note: Data in [ ] brackets represent percentage figures.

Source: Compiled and computed from the official report of MGNREGA 2013.

The remainder of the paper tries to address the following aspects of the implementation and outcomes of the MGNREGA in the context of the 10 study villages, that are part of the ICRIASAT-VDSA study.

1. How MGNREGA is functioning across study villages
2. The participation of village households in the programme
3. Status of employment and wage across study villages in MGNREGA from the year of implementation in these villages till 2012-13, i.e. the survey year
4. The benefits from MGNREGA for the respective villagers

### Data and Methodology

In 2012-13, International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRIASAT), Hyderabad and Gujarat Institute of Development Research (GIDR), Ahmedabad had undertaken a survey of

households spread across states of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra to assess the impact of the MGNREGA on Income, Assets and Food Security of Poor and Vulnerable Groups in 10 villages (all ICRISAT villages). Out of these 10 villages, 2 villages each were from Panchmahals (constituting mostly tribals) and Junagadh (mostly backward classes) in Gujarat, 2 villages in eastern Madhya Pradesh and 2 vilalges each in south-western Maharastra (solapur distrcit) and Vidarbha (Akola district, housheolds mostly from back ward classes). All these villages are of semi-arid climatic condition. In total 1678 households from small farmers (with holding of less than 5 acers per household) and land less labourers were surveyed. However in this particular study information from 891 households belonging to small farmer groups and land less labour households who had job cards were considered. The sample households were slected through a random sampling approach from the list of all the small farmer housheolds and land less labour housheolds in each village. The studied households constitute approximately 20% of the housheolds in these social groups for any given village selected for the study.

## Results and Discussion

### Socio-Economic Profile of Sample Households

The Table 2 below shows that among sample hosueholds male headed households are predominant in any given region. In Gujarat among the MGNREGA beneficiaries 65% were below poverty line (in the tribal region), while 45% of those in Junagadh were found to belong to BPL households (2 villages). In Madhya Pradesh 72% of all the beneficiaries were belonged to BPL households while in Maharashtra for Vidarbha and South Maharashtra, the figures were 88% and 65% respectively. However when asked about the self-assessment of their economic status within the village context, the figures are contradictory, what we find from figures for BPL households. It may happen in a village setting where the hosueholds etermine their social-economic status in the given micro-setting which may go contrary to the offical norms. In Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra; beneficiaries were basically from other backward classes (more than 60%) while for Gujarat, in Panchmahal 90% of beneficiaries were from schduled tribe and in Junagadh 62% were from schduled caste groups. As given in table 1; the majority of smaple housheolds in non-tribal region of Gujarat (consisting of 2 villages in Junagadh distrcit), easter Madhya Pradesh (consisiting 2 vilages of Raisen disctrict) and in the Vidarbha (consisiting 2 vilages of Akola disctrict) were from landless households, mostly from schduled caste communities. Remaing housheolds in these areas and other study areas who have land, are mostly small farmers (see Table-2 below).

**Table 2: Socio-Economic Profile of Sample Households (%)**

No	Characteristics	categories	Gujarat-Tribal region N=127	Gujarat-Non-Tribal region N=70	Madhya Pradesh-Eastern belt N=122	Maharashtra-South-West N=434	Maharashtra-Vidarbha N=138	Total N= 891



1.	Sex of the respondents	Male	92.9	92.9	98.4	97.2	95.7	96.2
		Female	7.1	7.1	1.6	2.8	4.3	3.8
2.	Socio-economic status	APL	34.6	51.4	17.2	25.6	8	25.0
		BPL	65.4	45.7	72.1	62.4	88.4	66.9
		Antyodaya	-	2.9	9	11.8	-	7.2
		Ration card not available	-	-	1.6	0.2	2.9	1.8
3.	Social group	SC	7.1	62.9	24.6	13.1	26.1	19.5
		ST	90.6	1.4	4.9	-	0.7	13.8
		OBC	0.8	34.3	69.7	45.2	62.3	44.0
		Others	1.6	1.4	0.8	31.6	2.9	16.3
		NT	-	-	-	10.1	8	1.8
4.	Economic status of the sample households (self-assessment)	Very rich	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.7	0.4
		Rich	0.0	0.0	1.6	6.7	14.5	5.7
		Medium	50.4	45.7	56.6	85.0	66.7	70.3
		Poor	46.5	45.7	59.3	7.4	18.1	22.0
		Very Poor	3.1	8.6	2.5	0.2	0.0	1.6
5.	Ownership of land (%)	Those who possess land	86.6	28.6	45.9	59.0	44.2	56.5
6.	Size of the land holding (those owning land)*	Less than 1 acre	1.8	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0	0.8
		1-5 acres	98.2	84.8	96.4	80.7	94.2	87.9
		5-10 acres	0.0	8.9	1.8	12.5	4.4	7.9
		More than 10 acres	0.0	5.3	1.8	5.7	1.4	3.4

*Note:*In case of Panchmahal 96.1% of 127 total sample households have worked at least once in NREGA, for Junagadh, the corresponding figure is 100% for total of 70 households sampled. Likewise, for Raisen in MP, the figure is 100% for 122 sampled households from Papada and Ramura Kalan villages of MP. For Maharashtra in Solapur, both the study villages not have a single household which has participated in MGNREGA. In Kinkhed only 1 household has participated, so the figure for district Akola is presented mainly from Kanzara where 68.8% of sample household has at least worked once in MGNREGA. We did this analysis because the above table the responses for various impacts could be affected whether the household has actually participated in MGNREGA or not. In MP and Gujarat all most every household barring the Chattha had worked at least once in MGNREGA. In case of Maharashtra, only Kanzara has reported participation of MGNREGA, the figures reported for Akola is actually the findings from this village.

*Source:* Sample Survey.

### **Participation of Sample Housheolds in MGNREGA**

On an average the housheolds in Gujarat, little more than 2 memebers participated in the job for the reference year while for other 2 states it is only 1 member who had participated in the MGNREGA for the above said year (table not shown separately). The average working days per housheold was highest in tribal region of Gujarat which had fallen over time from 38 days in 2006-07 to 10 days in 2012-13, while in Junagadh it has fallen from 69 days to 41 days during the same period. In Madhya Pradesh during the same period the average number fo days work is availabel to the housheold has gone up from 18 days to 42 days. In Maharashtra's Vidarbha region the number of working days have gone up from 20 days to 41 days during the same period (in Kanzara only). In South Marhshtra i.e. solapur region, in both the villages, none of the housheolds desite having job card, had worked in MGNREGA as the oppartunity for work is

plenty in agriculture activities with in the vilages and nearby industrial areas (table not shown separately).

Table-3 below gives the figuers of participation of sample housheolds in MGNREGA from the year of implementation in their respective villages. It shows in Gujarat's non-tribal region and Madhya Pradesh all the sample households had at least worked once in the programme. However in Vidarbha only 70% of those having job cards had worked at least once in the programme. Except for Vidarbha the number of households participating in the programme are falling or remain stagnant over the years, except for initial couple of years. The average working days across the given years are similar for both male and female participants. In Vidarbha region, the average number of days available for work has increased for both males and females while for other areas it is declinin for both the sexes.

**Table 3: Participation in MGNREGA in the Sample villages in three states of India, 2006-12**

Characteristics	Gujarat-Tribal region N = 127	Gujarat-Non-Tribal region N = 70	Madhya Pradesh-Eastern belt N = 122	Maharashtra-South-West N =434	Maharashtra-Vidarbha N = 18	Total N = 891
No. of households reported to participate in MGNREGA at least once in between 2006 and 2013 (%)	125 (98.4)	70 (100.0)	122 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	97 (70.3)	414 (46.5)
No. of households worked in each year (% of total of households mentioned above)						
2006	35 (27.6)	2 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	13 (9.4)	50 (5.6)
2007	93 (73.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	11 (8.0)	104 (11.7)
2008	11 (8.7)	0 (0.0)	51 (41.8)	0 (0.0)	13 (9.4)	75 (8.4)
2009	7 (5.5)	31 (44.3)	82 (67.2)	0 (0.0)	10 (7.2)	130 (14.6)
2010	9 (7.1)	15 (21.4)	56 (45.9)	0 (0.0)	6 (4.3)	86 (9.7)
2011	6 (4.7)	35 (50.0)	57 (46.7)	0 (0.0)	26 (18.8)	124 (13.9)
2012	0 (0.0)	26 (37.1)	52 (42.6)	0 (0.0)	49 (35.5)	127 (14.3)
2013	0 (0.0)	23 (32.9)	52 (42.6)	0 (0.0)	17 (12.3)	93 (10.4)
Average no. of days males got the work (total number of males)						
2006	20.7 (35)	30.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	20.8 (13)	21.6 (50)
2007	21.8 (93)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	20.0 (11)	21.6 (104)
2008	24.2 (11)	0.0 (0)	16.4 (51)	0.0 (0)	36.5 (13)	21.0 (75)
2009	13.2 (7)	12.3 (31)	24.7 (82)	0.0 (0)	47.3 (10)	22.9 (130)
2010	19.7 (9)	34.2 (15)	27.3 (56)	0.0 (0)	37.5 (6)	28.4 (86)
2011	24.3 (6)	37.8 (35)	24.6 (57)	0.0 (0)	46.5 (26)	32.9 (124)
2012	0.0 (0)	26.8 (26)	32.8 (52)	0.0 (0)	42.2 (49)	35.1 (127)
2013	0.0 (0)	20.5 (23)	33.4 (52)	0.0 (0)	65.6 (17)	36.1 (93)
Average no. of days females got the work (total number of females)						
2006	19.9 (35)	32.5 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	20.5 (37)
2007	20.0 (93)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	20.0 (93)
2008	25.1 (11)	0.0 (0)	16.9 (7)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	21.9 (18)
2009	11.5 (7)	12.5 (31)	26.0 (21)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	17.4 (56)
2010	16.2 (9)	33.9 (15)	24.2 (15)	0.0 (0)	25.0 (1)	26.3 (39)
2011	24.0 (6)	35.9 (34)	24.5 (13)	0.0 (0)	35.3 (8)	32.2 (61)

2012	0.0	26.5 (26)	35.0 (16)	0.0 (0)	42.3 (14)	32.9 (56)
2013	0.0	20.5 (23)	32.3 (17)	0.0 (0)	49.4 (9)	29.6 (50)

Source: Sample Survey.

The average wage earned by the household from the MGNREGA varied widely for the households in the 3 states. In Gujarat for both the region the average earning for household was below Rs. 2000 while in Madhya Pradesh it is around Rs. 3200, for Maharashtra it is more than Rs, 6000 (for Kanara in Vidarbha region). The rates for the work were fixed on 'per piece' basis in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh while in Kanara the workers are paid around Rs. 145-160 per day basis.

### Wage from MGNREGA for sample households

Table-4 below gives us the daily average wage for the beneficiary households have gone up in each region between initial couple of years for each region while later it started to decline. The average annual income for the households in respective areas also shows an upward trend. But this increasing trend should be seen in context of the declining number of households participating in each year. The increasing average duration of work and rising wage rate in MGNREGA has increased the average annual income for sample households in Vidarbha region by more than thrice, but the number of households participating in MGNREGA has come down drastically.

**Table 4: Income Received from MGNREGA in the Sample villages in three states of India, 2006-12**

Characteristics	Gujarat-Tribal region N = 127	Gujarat-Non-Tribal region N = 70	Madhya Pradesh-Eastern belt N = 122	Maharashtra-South-West N = 434	Maharashtra-Vidarbha (Eastern Maharashtra) N = 138	Total N = 891
Average daily wage earned by the household in Rs. (total number of households)						
2006	66.0 (35)	65.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	150.8 (13)	88.0 (50)
2007	69.7 (93)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	160.9 (11)	79.4 (104)
2008	73.6 (11)	0.0 (0)	88.8 (51)	0.0 (0)	129.2 (13)	93.8 (75)
2009	90.0 (7)	65.0 (31)	86.3 (82)	0.0 (0)	136.5 (10)	87.3 (130)
2010	78.0 (9)	64.0 (15)	103.8 (56)	0.0 (0)	148.0 (6)	96.9 (86)
2011	102.0 (6)	64.5 (35)	113.8 (57)	0.0 (0)	186.6 (26)	112.69 (124)
2012	0.0	67.0 (26)	113.8 (52)	0.0 (0)	144.1 (49)	119.9 (127)
2013	0.0	68.7 (23)	127.5 (52)	0.0 (0)	148.4 (17)	121.0 (93)
Average annual income earned by the household in Rs. (total number of households)						
2006	2753.7 (35)	4250.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3107.7 (13)	2905.6 (50)
2007	2151.0 (93)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3222.7 (11)	3180.0 (104)
2008	4306 (11)	0.0 (0)	1633.3 (51)	0.0 (0)	4150.0 (13)	2436.7 (74)
2009	2335.7 (7)	1607.1 (31)	2682.9 (82)	0.0 (0)	5260.0 (10)	2605.8 (130)

2010	2636.2 (9)	4187.3 (15)	3458 .1 (56)	0.0 (0)	4766.7 (6)	3601 (86)
2011	5729.0 (9)	4667.7 (35)	3602.4 (57)	0.0 (0)	6686.9 (26)	4643.8 (124)
2012	0.0 (0)	3433.4 (26)	3602.4 (52)	0.0 (0)	7224.06 (49)	5641.9 (127)
2013	0.0 (0)	2397.4 (23)	5267.7 (52)	0.0 (0)	11246.8 (17)	6129.0 (93)

Source: Sample Survey by the authors.

In most of the sample villages the primary nature of MGNREGA implementation is related to creation of community assets like check dams and road construction except for eastern Madhya Pradesh where 60% of the work were related to digging up farm ponds in the private fields under 'Kapildhara Yojana' of the state government (see table 5 below).

**Table 5: Name of the activities undertaken by the sample households who had at least worked once in MGNREGA**

Name of the activities in which the household worked	Gujarat-Tribal region N = 127	Gujarat-Non-Tribal region N = 70	Madhya Pradesh-Eastern belt N = 122	Maharashtra-South-West N =434	Maharashtra-Vidarbha N = 138	Total N=891
1. Closed embankments	8.3	0.0	0.0	-	4.6	2.9
2. Check dam	18.6	0.0	1.6	-	0.0	4.9
3. Well construction	1.3	0.0	59.6	-	7.9	29.6
4. Construction of Pits	1.3	0.0	0.0	-	0.0	0.3
5. Farm ponds	5.8	0.0	0.0	-	7.2	3.6
6. Deepening of ravines	1.9	0.0	0.0	-	0.0	0.4
7. Road construction	60.2	0.0	34.9	-	67.1	43.1
8. Clay work	2.6	0.0	0.0	-	0.0	2.3
9. Take a deep lake	0.0	58.6	0.3	-	7.9	6.1
10. Bori dam work	0.0	41.4	0.0	-	0.0	4.2
11. Tree plantation	0.0	0.0	1.0	-	4.6	1.3
12. Sanitation work	0.0	0.0	0.3	-	0.0	0.1
13. Build a school	0.0	0.0	1.3	-	0.0	0.6
14. Agriculture work	0.0	0.0	1.0	-	0.0	0.1
15. Canal construction	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	0.7	0.4
Total responses	156	70	304	0	152	682

Source: Sample Survey.

### Issues related to Payment

One of the major dissatisfaction of the sample households who had worked in MGNREGA is that of delay in payment of wages. Most of these works takes place in non-agricultural season, when small farmers and landless labourers face difficulty in to meet their daily needs. However the wage is paid after at least a month or more. Even if the wage rate under MGNREGA being less than what is prevailing in these villages, the people wants the wages should be paid within a week, which will help them to meet their consumption needs (see table 6 below). Most of the beneficiaries receive their wage in their accounts, but this has not stopped the leakage completely

as they are still paying a proportion of their wage to local leaders and officials to ensure their continued participation in next year.

**Table 6: Payment related Issues**

Variables	categories	Gujarat-Tribal region N = 127	Gujarat-Non-Tribal region N = 70	Madhya Pradesh-Eastern belt N = 122	Maharashtra-South-West N =434	Maharashtra-Vidarbha N = 138	Total N = 891
Delay in receiving wag	Within 15 days	72.0	15.2	25.0	0.0	13.5	30.7
	15-30 days	19.3	31.8	56.8	0.0	62.8	46.0
	31-60 days	0.0	35.6	9.7	0.0	19.6	13.8
	61-90 days	0.0	0.0	3.1	0.0	3.4	4.9
	91 day onwards	0.0	0.0	2.6	0.0	0.0	1.1
	Not received	6.8	17.4	2.8	0.0	0.7	2.9
Mode of payment	Bank	75.8	97.0	63.9	0.0	40.5	53.5
	Post office	8.7	3.0	28.5	0.0	56.1	24.9
	Cash	8.1	0.0	4.2	0.0	2.7	18.2
	Not received wages	6.8	0.0	3.4	0.0	0.7	3.4
Total number of responses		158	132	352	0	148	790

Source: Sample Survey.

### Use of Earnings from MGNREGA by sample households

It is clear from the table-7 below that the cash starved households in our sample who are mostly small farmers and labourers spent the major part of their earning from MGNREGA on purchase of food articles and necessary household consumption, especially in non-tribal region of Gujarat and Vidarbha. In tribal region of Gujarat 30% of responses were for use of MGNREGA money to meet agricultural expenses. Some of the households also use this money to purchase the raw materials for their handicraft/other small businesses.

**Table 7: How NREGA wage is spent by the household (%)**

Heads on which the money has been spent	Gujarat-Tribal region N = 127	Gujarat-Non-Tribal region N = 70	Madhya Pradesh-Eastern belt N = 122	Maharashtra-South-West N =434	Maharashtra-Vidarbha N = 138	Total N=891
1. Domestic expenses, mostly food consumption	55.6	81.4	68.2	-	86.6	63.5
2. Agricultural expenses	30.1	8.1	-	-	-	11.5
3. Wages not received	4.6	0.0	1.73	-	0.80	2.2
4. To buy raw materials	7.1	1.2	13.3	-	-	2.6

5. Educational expenses	2.6	9.3	0.57	-	4.5	12.2
6. Debt paying	-	-	6.4	-	0.9	2.7
7. Health expense	-	-	4.6	-	2.7	2.2
8. House repairing	-	-	5.2	-	4.5	3.0
Total responses	231	88	190	-	116	625

### **Various Impacts of the programme from beneficiary's point of view**

None of the beneficiaries in the studied villages (except for Babrol and Karmdi-Chinagariya in Gujarat and Kanzara in Maharashtra) see any direct material benefit to their household from the MGNREGA work. However they do acknowledge the assets are beneficial to community as a whole especially check dams, roads, and renovation of large ponds. In Gujarat the construction of check dams, wells and deepening of local ponds and in Maharashtra, the construction of village roads had benefitted directly to the surveyed beneficiaries as well (see table 8 below). However we did not come across any example of beneficiaries acquiring land, live stock or any other income generating assets by themselves from the wage earnings. In the studied villages the migration is substantial in villages of Gujarat and Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. We found the households in our sample still send some one in their family to work outside because the remuneration is high, over the years MGNREGA opportunities had fallen (in Gujarat) and the hard physical work involved in the works in the scheme.

**Table 8: What are the benefits received by the household from the MGNREGA work**

categories	Gujarat-Tribal region N = 127	Gujarat-Non-Tribal region N = 70	Madhya Pradesh-Eastern belt N = 122	Maharashtra-South-West N = 434	Maharashtra-Vidarbha N = 138	Total N = 891
% of households did not respond	19.9	0.0	62.4	0.0	43.2	15.
No direct material benefit from the asset to the household	78.3	37.9	0.8	0.0	19.6	37.9
Economic benefit	18.6	58.3	73.7	0.0	19.6	47.7
Roads came closer to house	3.1	0.8	7.5	0.0	3.4	4.2
Bath facility	0.0	2.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6
Well recharge	0.0	0.8	3.0	0.0	2.7	1.9
Get employment	0.0	0.0	9.8	0.0	10.8	6.1
Become a well get water from cultivation	0.0	0.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.8

Well made	0.0	0.0	0.8	-	0.7	0.4
Sanitation made	0.0	0.0	1.5	-	-	0.4
Total number of responses	129	132	133	-	84	478

The economic impacts from the beneficiaries' points of view (in terms of responses) largely concentrated on increase in household income and improvement overall economic conditions (see table 9 below). Next comes the item, the additional amount has exclusively help them to purchase food grains followed by the expenses on education of children across all the study areas.

**Table 9: Economic impacts of MGNREGA as Perceived by the Respondents**

Heads on which the money has been spent	Gujarat-Tribal region N = 127	Gujarat-Non-Tribal region N = 70	Madhya Pradesh-Eastern belt N = 122	Maharashtra-South-West N =434	Maharashtra-Vidarbha N = 138	Total N=891
Household income has increased	52.3	44.6	51.7	-	58.7	53.2
Improvement in overall economic conditions	33.8	41.9	32.8	-	35.6	31.5
Spend on children's educational expenses	1.5	0.0	-	-	-	0.5
Helpful in purchasing food grains	7.7	5.4	1.7	-	1.0	3.3
Savings in the household	0.9	6.7	-	-	-	3.1
No need to go out for employment	3.8	1.4	2.5	-	4.7	6.4
Debt paid	-	-	11.3	-	-	3.1
Total responses	126	79	116	0	104	425

*Source:* Sample Survey.

The additional amount in the household has improved the economic condition, which in turn has a direct bearing on the social status of the household. Table-10 below does show for seventy percent of households in the study areas the additional income has improved their social status. The opportunity for women to participate in public work is next major social gain from the programme.

**Table 10: Social Impact of MGNREGA as perceived by the sample respondents**

Social Impacts	Gujarat-Tribal region N = 127	Gujarat-Non-Tribal region N = 70	Madhya Pradesh-Eastern belt N = 122	Maharashtra-South-West N =434	Maharashtra-Vidarbha N = 138	Total N=891
1. Social status has increased	85.8	89.5	59.4	-	80.8	61.2
2. Equal status for males and females	5.5	0.0	10.6	-	0.0	4.0

3. Women of the house started working outside	3.1	6.6	9.5	-	2.9	2.7
4. Accepted as a member of the society	1.6	0.0	4.5	-	1.5	1.6
5. Unique identity was created in the society	3.1	2.6	4.9	-	14.8	5.9
6. Helpful in domestic expenses	0.9	1.3	6.1	-	0.0	12.0
7. Get loan or debt	0.0	0.0	3.0	-	0.0	1.6
8. Get borrowing	0.0	0.0	1.5	-	0.0	0.3
9. Debt now paying	0.0	16.	1.5	-	0.0	0.3
Total responses	128	76	122	0	68	394

Source: Sample Survey.

The programme was helpful to give access to the rural households who are otherwise outside the purview of institutions like schools, bank and dairies (see table 11 below). The exact pathway of institutional link of households and MGNREGA in our study still needs further exploring. However what data shows the additional income has helped the households to send their children regularly to the school. It has given them the job card which also doubles up as identity card for the poor households who were lacking any recognition from the government machinery. In some of the sample households it is the only official identity card available to the household.

**Table 11: Institutional impacts of MGNREGA as perceived by the sample respondents**

Institutional impacts	Gujarat-Tribal region N = 127	Gujarat-Non-Tribal region N = 70	Madhya Pradesh-Eastern belt N = 122	Maharashtra-South-West N =434	Maharashtra-Vidarbha N = 138	Total N=891
Entry in schools	67.2	62.3	54.7	-	21.4	56.8
Connected to milk producing dairies	11.4	3.3	0.0	-	0.0	5.8
New identity with the institution created	21.4	34.5	35.8	-	50.0	31.3
Know about bank activity	0.0	0.0	9.4	-	2.4	2.2
Not perceived any social impact	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	26.2	4.0
Total responses	122	61	53	-	42	278

Source: Sample Survey.

As far as the environmental impact of the MGNREGA, construction of check dams has helped to increase or at least stabilize the ground water level in these villages. The expansion of greenery surrounding these water bodies has helped in improving the village atmosphere. Soil erosion has come down and drinking water availability has improved in some areas (see table 12 below).

However people perceive the overall food security concerns have not been addressed by the MGNREGA so far despite earlier we see that some of the households use the money to purchase



the food grains. It implies the money earned from the activity is still inadequate to ensure food security for the households (Table 13).

**Table 12: Environmental impacts of MGNREGA as perceived by the sample respondents**

Environmental Impacts	Gujarat-Tribal region N = 127	Gujarat-Non-Tribal region N = 70	Madhya Pradesh-Eastern belt N = 122	Maharashtra-South-West N =434	Maharashtra-Vidarbha N = 138	Total N= 891
Water level rose due to check dams	44.4	64.2	11.7	0.0	2.3	24.2
Natural atmosphere improved	22.8	17.1	0.0	0.0	16.2	15.3
Due to road, less dirtiness	0.0	0.0	40.2	0.0	28.0	25.2
Soil erosion decreased	8.1	11.4	1.4	0.0	4.8	6.7
Water was utilized for farming	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3	0.6
Well construction led to water storage	0.0	3.0	19.5	0.0	25.6	3.1
Used as drinking water	0.0	0.0	25.9	0.0	0.0	6.1
Forest development	17.6	2.9	1.3	0.0	20.8	15.6
Seedlings properly matured	6.6	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.4
Total responses	136	70	78	0	43	326

Source: Sample Survey.

**Table 13: Impact of MGNREGA on status of Food Security**

Impact on food security	Gujarat-Tribal region N = 127	Gujarat-Non-Tribal region N = 70	Madhya Pradesh-Eastern belt N = 122	Maharashtra-South-West N =434	Maharashtra-Vidarbha N = 138	Total N=891
1. Any change in food availability in the household due to working for NREGA						
(a) Increase	8.7	18.6	15.6	0.0	0.7	4.9
(b) Decrease	0.0	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
(c) No change	91.3	80.0	84.4	100.0	99.3	95.0
2. Change in food consumption in village due to work for NREGA						
(a) Increase	7.9	17.1	14.8	0.0	9.4	5.9
(b) Decrease	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
(c) No change	91.3	82.9	85.2	100.0	90.6	93.9

Source: Sample Survey.

Table 14 below shows that MGNREGA has otherwise no impact on agriculture or agriculture practices in studied villages, be it agricultural wages, labour supply and on poverty, indebtedness or general welfare. Given the inadequate availability of days of work under MGNREGA and a lower wage rate these macro variables in a village context can hardly show any improvement.

**Table 14: Impact of MGNREGA on cropping pattern, availability of labour, labour wage, cost of agriculture, poverty, indebtedness, purchasing power, general welfare**

Impact on	Gujarat-Tribal region N = 127	Gujarat-Non-Tribal region N = 70	Madhya Pradesh-Eastern belt N = 122	Maharashtra-South-West N =434	Maharashtra-Vidarbha N = 138
Has cropping pattern changed					
Yes	0.8	0.0	2.5	0.0	0.0
No	90.6	95.7	97.5	0.0	72.5
No idea	8.6	0.3	0.0	0.0	27.5
Availability of Labour					
Increased	3.9	1.4	13.1	0.0	0.0
Decreased	3.1	4.3	2.5	100.0	0.0
No change	93.0	94.3	84.4	0.0	100.0
Increase in Labour Wage					
Yes	5.5	8.6	15.6	0.0	0.0
No change	93.7	91.4	84.4	100.0	100.0
No idea	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Increase in Production per unit of principal crop					
Yes, increased	1.6	0.0	5.7	0.0	0.0
Yes, decreased	3.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4
No change	94.5	100.0	94.3	100.0	97.1
No idea	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4
Protection against extreme poverty					
Yes	4.7	17.1	19.7	0.0	13.8
No	94.5	82.9	80.3	0.0	65.9
No idea	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.3
Indebtedness					
Yes	3.1	12.9	23.0	0.0	10.1
No	96.9	87.1	77.0	0.0	70.3
No idea	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	19.6
Additional purchasing power					
Yes	3.1	14.3	14.8	0.0	8.7
No	96.9	85.7	85.2	0.0	72.5
No idea	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	18.8
General welfare					
Yes	6.3	24.3	18.0	0.0	18.8
No	92.8	75.7	82.0	0.0	62.3
No idea	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	18.8

*Note:* Above question is asked to all the sample households who had participated in MGNREGA at least one year between 2006-07 and 2012-13.

*Source:* Sample Survey.

## Conclusions and policy suggestions

Our assessment at these 10 villages suggest that the MGNREGA program activities had produced varied work experience and outcome across the 3 states surveyed. While in Gujarat, the number of days of work provided under the program has significantly gone down over the years, whereas the work opportunity had increased in in other 2 states of Madhya Pradesh and

maharashtra. But, in none of the states we found any household which has worked for 100 days in the reference year of 2012-13. The payment of wages were adversely delayed in all of the sample studied villages, which had inadvertently discouraged people to demand more work from the government scheme (exception being Kanzara where people work on daily wage rate basis for the MGNREGA program). In all the 10 villages studied, the participation of women is very low compared to the national average, because the women in the sampled villages found the work under MGNREGA very drudgery and difficult for women to work. In Maharashtra, the two villages of South Maharashtra hardly had taken any work under MGNREGA for all these years, as plenty of alternative employment opportunities and livelihood options are available with the villagers in and around the village.

The governance of implementation of MGNREGA in a community seems to be an issue with the respondents who reportedly not aware of the process who decided the work activities to be undertaken in the program. Very few of them had knowledge of Gramsabhas who had to suggest the work to be undertaken in the village. Many of the sample respondents were also not satisfied with the delay of wage payments under MGNREGA, lack of supervision and transparency in the implementation of the work under the program. In the light of the empirical evidence shown here, it is no doubt the scheme may need to be reoriented. It is logical to suggest that if the focus is more on those regions where this type of intervention is needed most for addressing rural unemployment and distress, then the usefulness of this kind of EGS would be much more. The role of local government institutions at grass root level that are responsible for implementing the MGNREGS program must be improved with more accountability and the leakages to be checked to revive the confidence of the people on MGNREGA, as a powerful social safety net tool to many of the poor and vulnerable households, who otherwise, may remain unemployed in the absence of any of such SSN support program in the local communities. We suspect that the similar conclusions may be found in case of studies conducted in other villages or other states of India.

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#### **Acknowledgements:**

This paper is work in progress, and forms part of a larger study undertaken by the authors with financial support from the CGIAR- CRP2 program on Policy Institutions and Markets (PIM) program and co-funded from the VDSA project of ICRISAT, Patancheru, India.

We also acknowledge the efficient research support rendered by the GIDR research team, particularly, Ms. Hema Iyengar and Mr. Ramnik Chavda. Authors are solely responsible for any of the errors and omissions that remain.

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