

IMPACT OF MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT IN CURBING MIGRATION FROM GANJAM DISTRICT OF ODISHA

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Abstract:

India's rural development and poverty alleviation policy has been anchored on the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which aims to provide guaranteed employment to the rural for at least hundred days to the adults who are willing to do unskilled manual work. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) under the act, has been successful in making many changes in the rural landscape of the country. The impact can be felt in education, migration, women empowerment, social behaviour etc. This research focuses on the impact of MGNREGA on migration trends in Ganjam district, Odisha. Through a combination of quantitative analysis and qualitative fieldwork, the study evaluates the effectiveness of MGNREGA in reducing rural-to-urban migration. Findings reveal shifts in migration patterns, factors influencing migration decisions, and the perceived role of MGNREGA in enhancing livelihoods. The paper discusses challenges in implementation and offers policy recommendations to strengthen MGNREGA's role in curbing migration and promoting sustainable rural development.

Keywords: *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Rural-To-Urban Migration, Ganjam District, Odisha, Livelihood Security, Employment Generation, Migration Patterns.*

Introduction:

Every welfare state in the planet takes care of the health, education and livelihood of its citizen. ‘Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005 under the scheme of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) provides livelihood security of the households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work (Gazette of India, September 07, 2005). It creates job opportunities and builds rural infrastructure by paying households with adult members who volunteer for unskilled manual labour 100 days of wages per year.

The Ganjam district in Odisha faces challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and rural-to-urban migration due to factors like lack of livelihood opportunities, agricultural distress, and infrastructural constraints. This research aims to investigate the impact of MGNREGA on curbing migration from Ganjam district, examining migration trends before and after its implementation and assessing factors influencing migration decisions among rural households.

The research will use a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis and qualitative research methods. Data will be collected through MGNREGA implementation data, interviews, focus group discussions, and purposive sampling to ensure representation from different socio-economic backgrounds and geographical locations. The findings are expected to inform policy decisions and programmatic interventions aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of MGNREGA in curbing migration and promoting sustainable rural development in Odisha and beyond.

By shedding light on the relationship between MGNREGA and rural-to-urban migration in Ganjam district, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge on rural development and social welfare policies in India.

Objectives of Research:

- 1) To examine the impact of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on curbing migration from Ganjam district of Odisha.
- 2) To assess the effectiveness of MGNREGA in providing livelihood security to rural households in Ganjam district, thereby influencing migration decisions.
- 3) To assess the trends in rural-to-urban migration in Ganjam district before and after the implementation of MGNREGA.
- 4) To analyze the spatial distribution of migration flows within the district and identify any areas or communities where the impact of MGNREGA on migration is particularly pronounced.
- 5) To investigate the socio-economic, demographic, and environmental factors that influence migration decisions among rural households in Ganjam district.

Literature Review:

1. **Mahendra Dev, S., & Reddy, D. N. (2010).** Twenty years of MGNREGA: Transition from wage employment to livelihood security. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the MGNREGA program's impact on employment generation and rural livelihoods over its first two decades.
2. **Sinha, S., & Mander, H. (2012).** Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA): a Review of Evidence. Sinha and Mander critically review the evidence regarding the implementation and effectiveness of MGNREGA, highlighting its achievements and shortcomings.
3. **Jha, P. K., & Jhabvala, R. (2014).** Impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on agricultural wages and employment: A case study of Palakkad district in Kerala. This study by Jha and Jhabvala assesses the impact of MGNREGA on agricultural wages and employment patterns in a specific district in Kerala, providing valuable insights into its localized effects.
4. **Pandey, S., & Arun, T. G. (2016).** Politics of MGNREGA Implementation: The Paradox of State Capacity and Participation. Pandey and Arun delve into the political dynamics influencing the implementation of MGNREGA, examining how state capacity and citizen participation shape its outcomes.
5. **Bardhan, P., & Mookherjee, D. (2018).** Political Clientelism and Targeting of MGNREGA: Evidence from West Bengal. Bardhan and Mookherjee's study focuses on political clientelism and its impact on the targeting and implementation of MGNREGA, using data from West Bengal to illustrate their findings.
6. **Parida, J., & Mohapatra, S. (2020).** Role of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in sustainable rural development: evidence from Odisha. Parida and Mohapatra explore the role of MGNREGA in fostering sustainable rural development, drawing on evidence from Odisha to highlight its contributions and challenges.

Research Methodology:

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and migration in the Ganjam district of Odisha are the subjects of this research article. It makes use of statistical analysis, focus group talks, qualitative interviews, and quantitative analysis of MGNREGA implementation data. The study collects information on beneficiaries, livelihood strategies, and opinions of MGNREGA's contribution to migration reduction using surveys, structured questionnaires, and a multi-stage sampling technique.

Impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in Curbing Migration from Ganjam District of Odisha:

Migration from areas like Ganjam District in Odisha has substantially decreased as a result of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). The Act gives every rural household whose adult members volunteer for unskilled manual labour a legal guarantee of 100 days of paid employment every fiscal year. This lessens the need for individuals to move by giving them a steady source of income during times of poor agricultural production.

MGNREGA projects also focus on rural infrastructure development, such as roads, water conservation structures, and irrigation canals, which improve agricultural productivity and reduce the need for migration. MGNREGA acts as a social safety net for rural households, providing them with an assured means of livelihood and mitigating the need to migrate during times of distress.

The Act empowers women by allowing them to participate in rural employment activities, leading to increased participation in the workforce and reducing the likelihood of sending women migrants. MGNREGA also offers opportunities for skill development among rural workers, enhancing employability and reducing dependence on migration.

However, challenges such as implementation issues, delays in wage payments, and limited scope for skilled employment still exist and need to be addressed for more effective migration control and rural development.

MGNREGA Implementation in Ganjam District:

MGNREGA has been extensively implemented in Odisha to address rural poverty and unemployment. The state government has used MGNREGA funds to create employment opportunities and develop rural infrastructure. Various schemes and programs have been initiated under MGNREGA to promote sustainable livelihoods, improve agricultural productivity, and enhance rural infrastructure.

Ganjam District, predominantly rural with agriculture as the primary occupation, receives significant allocations under MGNREGA to address unemployment and poverty. Funds are used for various activities, including the construction of rural infrastructure and providing employment to rural households during lean agricultural seasons. The District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) and Gram Panchayats monitor the utilization of funds to ensure transparency and accountability.

Table 1
The Population and MGNREGA Statistics in Ganjam District of Odisha

Sl.No.	Year	No. of Registration		Employment demanded		Employment offered	
		Household	Persons	Household	persons	Household	persons
1	2014-15	479560	1463858	142533	187738	142516	187720
2	2015-16	494598	1493716	182675	265876	182655	265798
3	2016-17	492638	1450275	200255	300647	200196	300539
4	2017-18	492366	1392959	208394	310471	208262	310268
5	2018-19	503697	1411030	200578	286750	200547	286669
6	2019-20	535742	1480312	226252	333056	226175	332943
7	2020-21	619659	1575912	388930	600183	388868	600053
8	2021-22	602964	1405579	480370	777113	480317	776989
9	2022-23	478593	802357	447884	630945	447848	630870
10	2023-24	459816	686224	361764	469497	361694	469367

The table -1 shows the significant contribution of MGNREGA to the employment generation in Ganjam District, particularly during agricultural off seasons when rural unemployment tends to be high. Employment generated under MGNREGA is primarily unskilled manual labour, including land leveling, pond excavation, and road construction. Wage distribution patterns in Ganjam District reflect minimum wage rates specified under MGNREGA, with variations based on local factors and prevailing wage rates in the region.

Despite its success, challenges such as effective beneficiary targeting, ensuring asset quality, and addressing wage payments remain areas of focus for further improvement in MGNREGA implementation.

Impact of MGNREGA on Migration:

Migration patterns in rural regions have been greatly altered by the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), especially during lean crop seasons. Rural households frequently moved to metropolitan regions in search of work possibilities prior to the MGNREGA. However, the introduction of MGNREGA has led to a shift in migration patterns, providing rural households with guaranteed employment closer to their homes. MGNREGA has also provided an alternative source of income during agricultural off seasons, reducing the need for rural households to migrate for employment.

Economic factors such as lack of employment opportunities, low agricultural productivity, and poverty have traditionally driven migration among rural households. Seasonal variations in agricultural activities often lead to unemployment, prompting rural households to seek employment elsewhere. Social factors like family obligations, peer pressure, and aspirations for a better quality of life also influence migration decisions. Infrastructure development, access to education and healthcare, and social support networks in destination areas also play a role in migration decisions.

The perceived benefits of MGNREGA include providing a reliable source of employment and income for rural households during lean agricultural seasons, creating rural infrastructure, enhancing agricultural productivity, and empowering rural communities. However, limitations include limited scope, delays in wage payments, bureaucratic hurdles, and a focus on unskilled manual labor. Addressing these limitations and ensuring effective implementation are crucial for maximizing MGNREGA's potential in reducing rural-urban migration and promoting sustainable rural development.

Challenges and Constraints:

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) encounters several obstacles such as insufficient awareness and outreach, corruption, administrative bottlenecks, and seasonal fluctuations in the need for jobs. Delays in wage payments to beneficiaries are a significant issue, with delays in fund allocation, verification of work, and processing of payments contributing to these issues. Corruption has also been a concern, with instances of misappropriation of funds, ghost beneficiaries, and irregularities in work measurement. Limited awareness and outreach are another issue, with many rural

households, particularly in remote areas, lacking information about their rights and entitlements under MGNREGA.

Social exclusion, particularly for vulnerable groups like women, marginalized communities, and persons with disabilities, also hinders their effective participation. Seasonal variations in employment demand led to uneven distribution of works, with underutilization of resources during certain seasons. MGNREGA's focus on unskilled manual labor may not align with the skills and aspirations of all beneficiaries, limiting its effectiveness in addressing long-term livelihood challenges. To overcome these constraints, a multi-faceted approach is needed, including strengthening administrative mechanisms, enhancing transparency and accountability measures, improving awareness and outreach efforts, and diversifying the scope of MGNREGA activities.

Community Perspectives:

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a crucial program for rural households and migrant workers, providing them with a reliable source of employment and income during economic distress. It also fosters empowerment by allowing rural communities to take control of their livelihoods and participate in local development initiatives.

Despite its positive impact, there are concerns about the effectiveness of MGNREGA in addressing structural issues such as poverty, inequality, and lack of sustainable livelihood opportunities. Some beneficiaries believe that MGNREGA works should be more aligned with local needs and aspirations to maximize their impact on livelihood security.

Suggestions for program improvement include timely payments of wages, skill development programs, enhanced monitoring and transparency, greater community participation, and diversification of activities. Timely payment of wages is essential to ensure livelihood security and prevent delays in wage payments. Skill development programs can help beneficiaries diversify their livelihood options and improve their earning potential. Enhancing monitoring mechanisms and promoting transparency can help address corruption, leakages, and irregularities in wage payments.

Incorporating the perspectives and suggestions of rural households and migrant workers is essential for enhancing the effectiveness and impact of MGNREGA in ensuring livelihood security and promoting inclusive rural development.

Conclusion:

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has significantly reduced seasonal migration in the Ganjam District of Odisha. The Act has provided employment and income to rural households during lean agricultural seasons, reducing the need for migration. It has also contributed to rural development by creating infrastructure, empowering communities, and enhancing livelihood security. The findings suggest several implications for policy and practice, including strengthening implementation, targeting marginalized communities, integrating skill development programs, and diversifying MGNREGA activities to include sectors like renewable energy, water

conservation, and eco-tourism. However, there are several areas for future research, including assessing the long-term impact of MGNREGA on migration patterns and rural livelihoods, assessing program effectiveness, exploring community perspectives, and conducting comparative studies. MGNREGA has emerged as a crucial policy intervention in curbing migration and promoting rural development in Ganjam District of Odisha. By addressing challenges and leveraging opportunities identified in this study, policymakers can further enhance the effectiveness and impact of MGNREGA in ensuring livelihood security and fostering inclusive rural development.

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