

MGNREGA's Role to Enhance Sustainable Development Goals

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Received: 24 Oct 2024 Accepted & Reviewed: 25 Oct 2024, Published : 31 Dec 2024

Abstract

Since independence, the government of India has launched several poverty and unemployment reduction programmes in the rural areas of the country. One of the most indigenous programmes in the area of rural development is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which was introduced in 2005. In addition to create job opportunities, it revitalises the rural sector by enhancing infrastructure, increasing agricultural output, and promoting sustainable development, supporting gender equality environmental preservation, water conservation, and economic sustainability. This article examines MGNREGA's contribution in achieving some Sustainable Development Goals

Keywords- Sustainable Development Goals, MGNREGA, Rural Development, Poverty

Introduction

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was passed in 2005 to provide a legal guarantee of 100 days of wage employment to rural households in India. The act was implemented in 2006. Some main points of MGNREGA

- Provides a legal right to work
- Improves livelihood security for rural households
- Generates wage employment through infrastructure development
- Protects the environment
- Empowers rural women
- Reduces rural-urban migration

This act was introduced with the aim of improving the purchasing power of semi- or un-skilled rural people of India, irrespective of whether or not they fell below the poverty line. Around one-third of the stipulated work force is women. The law was initially called the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and was renamed with the prefix "Mahatma Gandhi" on 2 October 2009, Gandhi's birth anniversary.

India is the largest democracy and the most populated country in the world. Most of the population resides in rural areas and depends on agriculture and allied activities for survival.

India's rural population has been facing poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and other problems for ages, and they are on the threshold of subsistence. After independence, the Government of India has considered rural development one of its priorities and adopted numerous policies and programmes for developing rural areas. Economic growth is important to all kinds of development. Henceforth, the central and state governments have adopted several schemes to provide wage employment to the poor in rural India.

In India, numerous schemes have been promulgated over the years for poverty alleviation, employment generation and rural development. A few of them are – the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme

(RLEGP), Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM), Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana. All these programmes failed to attain desired goals for some reason or other.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, was published in the Gazette of India on 7th September 2005 and was renamed MGNREGA on 2nd October 2009. MGNREGA is the most significant employment-providing scheme in the world. The Act was notified in 200 districts in the first phase with effect from 2nd February 2006 and then extended to additional 130 districts in the financial year 2007-2008 (113 districts were notified with effect from 1st April 2007, and 17 districts in UP were notified with effect from 15th May 2007). The remaining districts have been notified under the MGNREGA, effective from 1st April 2008 (Kumar and Chakraborty, 2016).

Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) aims to enhance the livelihood security of households in rural areas by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The MGNREGA has become a powerful instrument for inclusive growth in rural India through its impact on social protection, livelihood security and democratic governance. MGNREGA is the ever law internationally that guarantees wage employment at an unprecedented scale (Ashtos, 2018). The Act also emphasises the need to build enduring assets in rural regions, such as roads, canals, ponds, and wells. Within 5 kilometres of the applicant's home, employment must be available, and the minimum wage must be paid. The candidates are entitled to unemployment benefits if employment is not given within 15 days. Gram Panchayats are in charge of implementing it. The importance is placed on labour-intensive tasks, including building infrastructure for water harvesting, drought relief, and flood control. Protecting the environment, empowering rural women, limiting rural-urban migration, and promoting social security among the poor are other areas on which this programme focuses (Deb, 2017).

Along with creating job opportunities, MGNREGA revitalises the rural economy by boosting agricultural output and enhancing infrastructure. Due to legal procedures and the fact that it is an Act, this programme for decreasing rural poverty and addressing natural resources is robust.

This Act led to the strengthening of grassroots democratic processes and the infusion of openness and accountability in rural governance, both of which are established in the Indian Constitution. Due to the fact that poverty exacerbates the issues of hunger and malnutrition and is further exacerbated by inequalities and inequitable access, a very high investment has been made under MGNREGA in order to create employment and give equal chances in employment wages, and decision-making. As a result, MGNREGA can achieve many of these SDGs in rural India (Azmat, 2013).

Sustainable development

The word Sustainable Development has become a catchword in the present world, and its importance has grown in the modern world. Every citizen of every country has acknowledged its importance as a critical component of each nation's public policy and the global agenda.

Sustainable development is a set of actions and initiatives to preserve resources while balancing economic growth with environmental and social impacts. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development established 17 goals to achieve this.

The 1987 Brundtland Report clarified the meaning of sustainable development: “Sustainable Development is a development that will meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to own needs” (Bhat and Yada, 2015).

Further Ban Ki Moon has also emphasised that —We hold the future in our hands together we must ensure that our grandchildren will not have to ask we failed to do the right things and let them suffer the consequences. (UN Secretary-General Moon, 2007).

The National Sustainable Development Strategy defines sustainable development as a targeted, long-term, comprehensive and synergic process that (i) affects the conditions and all aspects of life at all levels, (ii) satisfies the biological, material, spiritual and social needs and interests of people, (iii) eliminates or significantly reduces interference that endangers, damages or destroys conditions and forms of life, (iv) does not burden the country, (v) preserves resources ,and (vi) protects cultural and natural heritage. In the academic literature, sustainable development is defined as the process of improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems.

In order to end poverty, safeguard the environment, and guarantee that everyone lives in peace and prosperity, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were unanimously agreed upon in January 2016. Through a global consultative process, the 17 Goals, which must be accomplished by 2030, were developed based on the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals to include many more new areas of focus, including climate change, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, and innovation, among many other essential areas.

The SDGs are founded on establishing partnerships and outlining precise rules for accomplishing these goals following the requirements of each region. The 17 Sustainable goals are

- Eliminate Poverty
- Erase Hunger
- Establish Good Health and Well-Being
- Provide Quality Education
- Enforce Gender Equality
- Improve Clean Water and Sanitation
- Grow Affordable and Clean Energy
- Create Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Increase Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
- Reduce Inequality
- Mobilize Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Influence Responsible Consumption and Production
- Organize Climate Action
- Develop Life Below Water
- Advance Life on Land
- Guarantee Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

• Build Partnerships for the Goals

The MGNREGA programme focuses on enhancing natural resource management and development through afforestation, drought-proofing flood control, water conservation, MGNREGA contributes to sustainable development by

- SDG 1: No Poverty: MGNREGA is a main scheme for achieving this goal.
- SDG 5: Gender Equality: MGNREGA contributes to gender equality by empowering rural women.
- SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth: MGNREGA provides employment and alleviates poverty.
- SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities: MGNREGA reduces inequalities by providing employment to the rural poor.
- Land development: MGNREGA develops marginal, degraded, and wastelands to increase agricultural production.
- Micro-irrigation: MGNREGA builds irrigation canals to increase the water supply for agricultural crops. (mgnregaweb4.nic.in).

MGNREGA is the most significant poverty alleviation policy implemented for the upliftment and betterment of economically and socially disadvantaged people. It has been working to sustainable development goals, and the scheme's aims align with them. It has been playing a significant role in achieving sustainable development goals. For bringing equality between men and women and reducing inequalities in work, MGNREGA has made a special provision for women. The Act stated that at least 33% of the total beneficiaries must be women. MGNREGA has a vital role in the country's development and has played a significant role in women's empowerment. Women are now more capable of making household decisions than men and using their earnings to develop the house. The scheme also provides decent work conditions and provisions for safe drinking water ,shade, childcare facilities for women, etc.

Conclusion

MGNREGA creates dignified jobs which are decent and ensure productive and secure employment, social protection, rights, and participation in planning and are green in that they contribute to environmental sustainability, such as protection of the ecosystem, reliance on renewable sources of energy and thus they are directly related to climate change ,mitigation and adaptation activities. Among the eight aims of MGNREGA, the most popular goals for MGNREGA to work towards in order to achieve sustainable goals are securing livelihoods, providing wage employment, empowering women, and creating assets. Ensuring hundred days of employment to each house-hold, accountability and transparency, proper conduction of Social Audit, awareness about sustainable development are some of many things needed to do for the better implementation of the scheme.

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