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Participation of scheduled castes in developmental programmes with special reference to MGNREGS in Ananthapuramu district of Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

In this paper, an attempt is made to discuss the extent to which Scheduled Castes participate and benefit from MGNREGS in Ananthapuramu district, where the prestigious programme was launched by the Government of India with the help of secondary data as well as a review of existing studies. Since MGNREGS has been one of the largest social protection programmes in the world, it is essential to understand the extent to which SC households have benefited from the programme. As these households are typically vulnerable and wage labour-dependent, MGNREGS has built-in provisions to see that SC households indeed benefit from the scheme.

Keywords: Man days, wages, and unemployment, land development, implementation

Introduction

To deal with the unemployment problem, Government of India has launched, from time to time, various employment schemes. Huge amounts of public money are being spent on recurring annual basis to support wage employment programmes. A constant monitoring of these programmes is necessary to evaluate their contribution to employment generation vis-a-vis expenditure incurred on them.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is a landmark initiative in providing 100 days guaranteed employment on demand to every rural household at the minimum wage whose adult members (both male and female) would like to do unskilled manual work. Participation of community in NREGS is one of the pre-requisites to enforce the 'rights and entitlements' envisaged and make it community-oriented and demand-driven scheme. The success of the programme is entirely dependent on the participation of the community in general and women in particular since the share of latter in employment is almost 50 per cent. As women are found to be better change agents of socio-economic transformation, efforts are needed to strengthen their participation for household livelihood security as well as better asset management.

MGNREGA was notified on September 7, 2005. The Act came into force on February 2, 2006 when 200 selected districts of the country were brought under its purview (Phase I, 2006-07). MGNREGA was extended to additional 130 districts in Phase II during 2007-08. The remaining rural areas were notified with effect from April 1, 2008.

Objectives and Significance of MGNREGA

The objective of the MGNREGA is to enhance the livelihood security of unorganized workers in rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to a rural household whose members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The Act further aims at creating durable assets and strengthening the livelihood resource base of the rural poor. The choice of works suggested in the Act address causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation, soil erosion, etc. so that the process of employment generation is on a sustainable basis.

The significance of MGNREGA lies in the fact that it creates a right-based framework for wage employment programmes and makes the Government legally bound to provide employment to those who seek it. In this way the legislation goes beyond providing a social

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Safety net, and towards guaranteeing the right to employment. By prioritizing natural resource management and emphasizing the creation of durable assets it holds the potential of becoming a growth engine for sustainable development of an agriculture-based economy.

Under MGNREGA employment is dependent upon the worker exercising the choice to apply for registration, obtain a job card and then to seek employment through, a written application for the time and duration chosen by her. The legal guarantee has to be fulfilled within the time limit prescribed and this mandate is underpinned by the provision of unemployment allowance. The Act is thus designed to offer an incentive structure to the States for providing employment as ninety percent of the cost for employment provided is borne by the Centre, and there is a concomitant disincentive for not providing employment, if demanded, as the States then bear the double indemnity of unemployment and the cost of unemployment allowance. Earlier wage employment programmes were allocation based. However, MGNREGA is not supply driven but demand driven. Resource transfer under MGNREGA is based on the demand for employment and this provides another critical incentive to States to leverage the Act to meet the employment needs of the poor. The delivery system has been made accountable, as it envisages an Annual Report on the outcomes of MGNREGA to be presented by the Central Government to the Parliament and to the State Legislature by the State Government.

MGNREGS in Ananthapuramu District

Ananthapuramu District, which is located in the Rayalaseema region, is the biggest and driest of all the drought prone districts of A.P. In this district it is clearly estimated that the droughts visits at least thrice in a decade. The Irrigation Commission and other Central Commissions have been identified the whole district as drought prone. A

single dry crop i.e. ground nut is raised under rain fed conditions in most parts of the district. Agriculture is the main source of economy of the district. The work force engaged in agriculture is more than three fourth's of the total work force. The demand for labour in agriculture sector is highly uncertain and seasonal. This is leading to migration of labour in a large scale to the nearest cities. The drought conditions are creating an ecological imbalance and converting the district into a desert. Drought prone areas are more vulnerable to denude the forests and exhaust the natural resources like water, soil, minerals etc. By result the rivers and other streams dry up. Consequently the underground water levels vanish and the area under irrigation is declined. The instant result is the decrease in agriculture production. This is leading to food problem. All these uneven conditions are making the lives of agricultural labourer and farmers rigorous and not bearing. As a result the district has witnessed a number of farmers' suicides. Keeping all the above facts in view the Government of India has decided to implement the ambitious MGNREGS in this district in the Second phase. In spite of many other schemes under taken for the betterment of rural poor, it is the only programme that has mobilized the rural folk involvement. In this chapter an attempt is made to evaluate the progress and performance of MGNREGS in Ananthapuramu District.

Participation of Scheduled Caste

The MGNREGS scheme aims at bringing economic equality by giving large share of access and opportunity to the disadvantaged and economically weaker sections of the society, such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Below Poverty Line (BPL) households. Table 1 gives the details of participation of Scheduled Caste households under the scheme in Ananthapuramu District since its inception to 2017-18.

Table 1: Participation of Scheduled Caste under MGNREGS in Ananthapuramu District

S. No	Year	Total No of HHs Employment Provided	Total No of SC-HHs Employment Provided
1	2006-07	225726	50758
2	2007-08	350645	68077
3	2008-09	315255	63430
4	2009-10	343092	70461
5	2010-11	324911	69142
6	2011-12	240083	53619
7	2012-13	277601	58920
8	2013-14	276946	57915
9	2014-15	260842	53873
10	2015-16	292833	57493
11	2016-17	283775	53414
12	2017-18	295688	53945

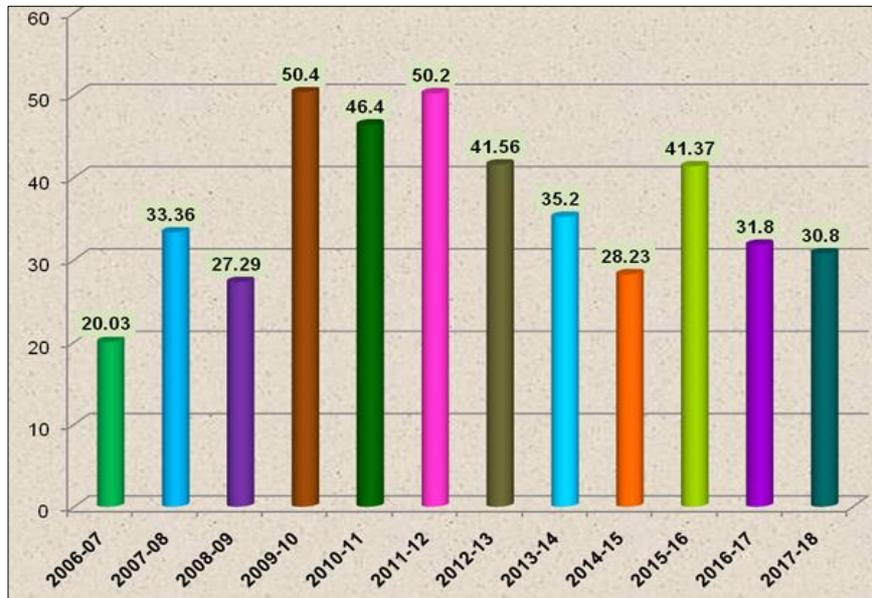
Source: <http://www.nrega.ap.gov.in>

It is evident from table 1 that the number of Scheduled Caste households participating in MGNREGS works is not evenly distributed during 12 years of study in Ananthapuramu district. It ranges between 50,758 (2006-07) households to 70,461 (2009-10). Among the total households the share of Scheduled Caste households is highest in 2006-2007 (22.49 per cent) and lowest in 2017-2018 (18.24 per cent). The share of participation of

Scheduled Caste households in total households is gradually declining from 2011-12 onwards.

Scheduled Caste Man Days Created

Figure 1 show the man days created by Scheduled Caste households under MGNREGS in Ananthapuramu district during 2006-2007 to 2017-2018.



Source: <http://www.nrega.ap.gov.in>

Fig 1: Man Days Created by Scheduled Caste Households

In 2009-2010 50.4 thousand man days were created by Scheduled Castes in the district, which is highest during 12 years of Programme implementation in the district. The second highest man days were created in 2011-2012 (50.2 thousand days). In the first year of implementation of the Programme only 20.03 thousand man days were created for Scheduled Castes households in the district. The percentage of Scheduled Castes households’ man days in the total man days varies between 17.1 per cent (2016-2017) to 26.09 per cent 2011-2012. It is pertinent to note that from 2011-2012 onwards the man days created for Scheduled Castes households is showing downward trends. In view of this

there is a need to amend the law to specially target this class of people under the Programme. The important reason for this kind of phenomenon can be attributed to the scheme’s irregularity and holdup of payment of wages.

Wage Earning Analysis of Scheduled Caste

In rural areas of drought ridden Ananthapuramu district the scheme is providing wage security to the downtrodden sections of the society. Table 2 furnishes the details wage earning analysis of Scheduled Caste under MGNREGS in Ananthapuramu District.

Table 2: Wage Earning Analysis of Scheduled Caste under MGNREGS in Ananthapuramu District

S. No	Year	Total Wages Paid	Total SC Wages Paid	% of SC Wages Paid
1	2006-07	8089.84	1813.16	22.41
2	2007-08	14402.16	2796.8	19.42
3	2008-09	11714.86	2384.09	20.35
4	2009-10	22706.27	4917.33	21.66
5	2010-11	20234.26	4766.78	23.56
6	2011-12	20556.18	5339.53	25.98
7	2012-13	22586.70	5007.13	22.17
8	2013-14	21375.42	4445.12	20.8
9	2014-15	17690.68	3547.62	20.05
10	2015-16	32397.15	5841.69	18.03
11	2016-17	30083.76	5052.79	16.8
12	2017-18	30807.87	5212.40	16.92

Source: <http://www.nrega.ap.gov.in>

Table 2 makes it clear that the total wages paid under the scheme as well as total Scheduled Caste wages paid is distributed erratically over the years. But, during 12 years of MGNREGS implementation in the district the total wages paid to Scheduled Caste households increased more than 2.8 times. On the other hand during the same period of time the total wages paid under the scheme increased more than 3.8 times. It means that there is faster growth in the wage amount received by non-Scheduled Caste persons under the scheme in the district. The share of wages paid to Scheduled

Castes in total wages is gradually decreasing from 2011-2012 onwards except in 2017-2018.

Physical Progress under LDP

In the State of Andhra Pradesh special measures were taken under MGNREGS from 2010-2011 onwards to develop the lands of Scheduled Castes under Land Development Programme (LDP) of Scheduled Castes. Table 3 furnishes the details physical progress under the Scheduled Castes Land Development Programme under the aegis of MGNREGS in Ananthapuramu district.

Table 3: Physical Progress on Scheduled Caste Lands under LDP

S. No	Year	Total No of LDP acres taken up (in progress)	Total No of SC acres taken up (in progress)	% of SC acres taken up
1	2010-11	99632.17	42480.48	42.64
2	2011-12	42044.81	4775.91	11.36
3	2012-13	100175.33	13677.2	13.65
4	2013-14	60135.771	10109.04	16.81
5	2014-15	43170.61	6861.58	15.89
6	2015-16	87264.83	10130.8	11.61
7	2016-17	73649.48	9335.34	12.68
8	2017-18	63561.819	10346.54	16.28

Source: <http://www.nrega.ap.gov.in>

As per table 3 the total number of LDP acres taken up in the district is highest in 2012-2013 (100175.33 acres). On the other hand in case total number of Scheduled Caste LDP acres taken up is high in 2010-2011 (42480.48 acres). In the same way the share of Scheduled Caste LDP acres taken up in total LDP acres taken up is high in 2010-2011 (42.64 per cent). Thereafter, the share of Scheduled Caste LDP acres taken up in total LDP acres taken up in the district is sharply

fallen and it touched the lowest ebb of 11.36 per cent in 2011-2012.

Financial Progress under LDP

Table 4 furnishes the details financial progress under the Scheduled Castes Land Development Programme under the aegis of MGNREGS in Ananthapuramu district.

Table 4: Financial Progress on Scheduled Caste Lands under LDP

S. No	Year	Total Expenditure on LDPs	Total Expenditure on SC lands in LDP	% of Exp on SC lands in LDP
1	2010-11	7913.89	3336.43	42.16
2	2011-12	4550.38	525.14	11.54
3	2012-13	111974.88	9465.79	8.45
4	2013-14	61398.44	7272.42	11.84
5	2014-15	30201.09	2427.76	8.04
6	2015-16	21277.23	1993.95	9.37
7	2016-17	12487.11	1232.43	9.87
8	2017-18	46077.83	6061.56	13.16

Source: <http://www.nrega.ap.gov.in>

Table 4 exhibits that the percentage of expenditure on Scheduled Caste lands in total expenditure under Land Development Programme under the aegis of MGNREGS is high (42.16 per cent) in 2010-2011. It sharply collapsed to 11.54 per cent in the next financial year. The amount of actual expenditure on SC lands under LDP is high (Rs. 9465.79 lakhs) in 2012-2013. But, surprisingly in that same year the share in the percentage of expenditure on Scheduled Caste lands in total expenditure under Land Development Programme under the aegis of MGNREGS is low (8.45 per cent).

Conclusion

As per the study the share of participation of Scheduled Caste households in total households is gradually declining from 2011-12 onwards. The important reason for this kind of phenomenon can be attributed to the scheme's irregularity and holdup of payment of wages. During 12 years of MGNREGS implementation in the district the total wages paid to Scheduled Caste households increased more than 2.8 times. On the other hand during the same period of time the total wages paid under the scheme increased more than 3.8 times.

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