**An Analytical Study of Socio-Economic Categories Benefited under MGNREGA programme in Southern Rajasthan**

**Abstract**

The Government of India launched the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2006, initially as NREGA, and expanded it in 2009 to cover all states, including Jammu and Kashmir. Implemented in three phases, MGNREGA now encompasses all districts across India. The scheme has significantly contributed to employment generation and poverty alleviation, particularly in Rajasthan, which records one of the highest participation rates in the country. It serves as a crucial source of livelihood, especially during non-agricultural seasons when farming opportunities are limited. The study was conducted in Southern Rajasthan, focusing on Dungarpur and Rajsamand districts, selected for their highest number of families completing 100 days of MGNREGA work. From each district, two blocks were chosen, and five villages per block were randomly selected, total 20 villages. A sample of 240 beneficiaries was interviewed face-to-face using a structured schedule for data collection. The findings revealed that various categories of people benefited under the program, with their respective Mean Percent Scores (MPS) and ranks. The most benefited group was Scheduled Tribes (STs), ranked 1st, followed by rural households living below the poverty line (2nd), youth and unskilled workers in rural areas (3rd), Scheduled Castes (SCs) (4th), and women (5th). In total, ten categories of beneficiaries were identified in the study. Based on the study, MGNREGA should focus on inclusive participation of marginalized groups like STs, SCs, women and rural poor. Local institutions need to be strengthened for effective implementation and monitoring. Linking MGNREGA with skill development programs can enhance long-term livelihood opportunities. Timely wage payments, better worksite facilities, and asset creation should be prioritized. Regular awareness, convergence with other schemes and evaluations will further improve the program’s impact.

**Key words: -** MGNREGA, Employment Generation, Rural Development, Poverty Alleviation, livelihood

**Introduction:**

India’s rural economy has long been characterized by seasonal employment, underemployment, and poverty. To address these persistent issues and provide a legal guarantee of wage employment, the Government of India introduced the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2005, which came into effect in 2006. Initially launched as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), it was renamed in 2009 as MGNREGA and extended to cover all districts across the country, including Jammu and Kashmir. The Act aims to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. Beyond providing employment, the program also seeks to create durable rural assets, improve agricultural productivity and empower vulnerable and marginalized communities.

MGNREGA is a rights-based and demand-driven programme that not only offers economic security but also strengthens democratic processes through community participation, social audits, and decentralized planning. Over the years, it has emerged as one of the most important rural development initiatives in India, particularly during periods of agrarian distress, drought, or lack of seasonal agricultural work. The Act places special emphasis on social inclusion, aiming to bring women, Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and people living below the poverty line into the fold of formal wage employment.

Rajasthan is among the leading states in terms of MGNREGA implementation and performance. With a high rural population, significant tribal presence, and frequent drought-prone conditions, the state has consistently ranked high in terms of person-days generated and the number of households that completed 100 days of employment. Within Rajasthan, the southern region—comprising districts such as Dungarpur, Rajsamand, Udaipur, Banswara**,** Chittorgarh, Pratapgarh and Bhilwara—is particularly important due to its socio-economic backwardness and high dependence on MGNREGA for livelihood support.

**Materials and Methods:**

An ex-post-facto research design was adopted for the present study, as it involved the analysis of events that had already occurred, without any manipulation of variables. The study was conducted in Southern Rajasthan, which comprises seven districts: Udaipur, Rajsamand, Banswara, Dungarpur, Chittorgarh, Pratapgarh, and Bhilwara. Among these, two districts Dungarpur and Rajsamand were purposively selected based on the criterion of the highest number of families who had completed 100 days of employment under the MGNREGA.

From each selected district, two blocks were chosen using the same criterion, resulting in a total of four blocks. Within each block, five villages were randomly selected, thereby comprising a total of twenty villages for the study. From these villages, a sample of 240 beneficiaries (i.e., 12 respondents per village) was selected through random sampling. The primary data were collected using a well-structured interview schedule, administered through face-to-face interviews with the selected respondents.

**Result and discussion:**

**Categories of People Benefited under the Programme**

The term “categories of people benefited under the MGNREGA programme” refers to the various socio-economic groups within rural communities who derive either direct or indirect benefits from the scheme. Table 1 presents the categorization of beneficiaries based on categoryunder MGNREGA, along with their corresponding Mean Percent Score (MPS) and ranks in both Dungarpur and Rajsamand districts. This classification highlights the relative importance and extent of benefits received by each group, reflecting MGNREGA's targeted inclusiveness in its implementation.

An analysis of table 1 reveals that Scheduled Tribes (STs) ranked first with overall MPS 97.50, indicating the significant inclusion of tribal populations under the program. Notably, in Dungarpur district, STs secured the highest position with MPS 98.33, while in Rajsamand, they

**Table 1: Distribution of beneficiaries based on their category under MGNREGA**

| **S. No.** | **Category of beneficiaries** | **Dungarpur**  **(n1=120)** | | **Rajsamand**  **(n2=120)** | | **Total**  **(n=240)** | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **MPS** | **Rank** | **MPS** | **Rank** | **MPS** | **Rank** |
| 1 | Rural households who living below poverty line. | 95.83 | IV | 98.33 | I | 97.08 | II |
| 2 | Agricultural labourers who may faces seasonal unemployment due to the nature of agricultural work. | 93.33 | VII | 94.16 | V | 93.75 | VII |
| 3 | Marginalized and vulnerable group such as Schedule castes (SCs) | 95.00 | V | 95.83 | IV | 95.41 | IV |
| 4 | Marginalized and vulnerable group such as Schedule tribes (STs) | 98.33 | I | 96.66 | III | 97.50 | I |
| 5 | Marginalized and vulnerable group such as Women | 96.66 | III | 93.33 | VI | 95.00 | V |
| 6 | Marginalized and vulnerable group such as People with Disabilities (PWDs) | 84.16 | XI | 86.66 | XI | 85.41 | XI |
| 7 | Landless labourers who do not own agricultural land. | 90.00 | VIII | 89.16 | IX | 89.58 | IX |
| 8 | Small and marginal farmers, who limited land holding and may not have sufficient agricultural work throughout the year. | 97.50 | II | 91.66 | VII | 94.58 | VI |
| 9 | At least one third of the beneficiaries should be women participants. | 89.16 | IX | 90.83 | VIII | 90.00 | VIII |
| 10 | Youth and unskilled workers in rural areas. | 94.16 | VI | 97.50 | II | 95.83 | III |
| 11 | Migrants and returnee workers who may have lost their livelihoods due to various reasons. | 88.33 | X | 87.50 | X | 87.91 | X |

were ranked third with MPS 96.66. This underlines MGNREGA’s focus on providing livelihood security to the most marginalized rural groups, particularly tribal communities. Rural households living below the poverty line (BPL) were ranked second overall (MPS 97.08), with Dungarpur ranking them fourth (MPS 95.83) and Rajsamand ranking them first (MPS 98.33). The third position was occupied by youth and unskilled rural workers, with overall MPS 95.83. In Dungarpur, they were ranked sixth (MPS 94.16), whereas in Rajsamand, they secured the second rank (MPS 97.50).

Scheduled Castes (SCs) were ranked fourth overall with MPS 95.41. In Dungarpur, this group was placed fifth (MPS 95.00) and in Rajsamand, fourth (MPS 95.83).

Women were ranked fifth in the overall analysis (MPS 95.00). They held a higher position in Dungarpur (third, MPS 96.66) compared to Rajsamand (sixth, MPS 93.33). This demonstrates MGNREGA’s emphasis on gender inclusion by promoting female workforce participation.

Small and marginal farmers were ranked sixth overall (MPS 94.58). Dungarpur showed greater benefit for this group (second rank, MPS 97.50), whereas Rajsamand ranked them seventh (MPS 91.66), suggesting that MGNREGA serves as a vital support mechanism for farmers with limited landholdings.

Agricultural labourers, who face seasonal unemployment, were placed seventh overall (MPS 93.75). In Dungarpur, they ranked seventh (MPS 93.33), while in Rajsamand, they were placed fifth (MPS 94.16). The data confirms MGNREGA’s role in supplementing income during lean agricultural seasons.

Mandated women participation, which ensures that at least one-third of the beneficiaries are women, was ranked eighth (overall MPS 90.00). It ranked ninth in Dungarpur (MPS 89.16) and eighth in Rajsamand (MPS 90.83), further reinforcing the program’s gender-sensitive design.

Landless labourers were ranked ninth (overall MPS 89.58), with Dungarpur assigning them the eighth rank (MPS 90.00) and Rajsamand the ninth (MPS 89.16). This shows the program’s importance for those without access to land and dependent entirely on wage labour.

Migrant and returnee workers were ranked tenth overall (MPS 87.91). They occupied the tenth position in both Dungarpur (MPS 88.33) and Rajsamand (MPS 87.50), indicating moderate support for this group under MGNREGA.

Lastly, people with disabilities (PWDs) were ranked lowest, in the eleventh position, with an overall MPS 85.41. They received an MPS 84.16 in Dungarpur and 86.66 in Rajsamand, pointing to a need for more inclusive strategies to enhance their participation in the programme.

These findings align with those of Reddy *et al.* (2014), who reported that Scheduled Tribe populations in MGNREGA Phase-I districts experienced significant poverty and that the scheme provided critical livelihood support during the lean agricultural season.

**Conclusion**

The present study clearly highlights that MGNREGA has been instrumental in providing employment and livelihood security to various vulnerable and marginalized sections of rural society in Southern Rajasthan. Among all beneficiary categories, Scheduled Tribes (STs) emerged as the most benefited group, followed by rural households living below the poverty line, and youth and unskilled workers, reflecting the program's strong alignment with its objective of supporting the rural poor and disadvantaged. The program also showed significant outreach to Scheduled Castes (SCs), women, and small and marginal farmers, affirming its inclusive design and equitable implementation. However, the relatively lower ranks of people with disabilities (PWDs), migrants, and landless labourers point to existing gaps in targeting and outreach, which need policy and implementation attention. District-level differences in beneficiary rankings further suggest that local socio-economic dynamics influence the effectiveness of the program. More attention should be given to people with disabilities, migrant workers, and landless labourers so they can get more benefit from the program. MGNREGA should be linked with skill training programs to help young and unskilled workers get better jobs in the future. To encourage more women to join, basic facilities like childcare, toilets, and rest areas should be provided at the work sites. Since each district is different, planning should be done based on the local needs and situations of the people. Regular checks should be done to make sure all groups, especially weaker sections, are getting fair chances to benefit from MGNREGA. Awareness camps and meetings should be organized so that more people, especially the poor and disadvantaged, know about their rights under the scheme.

COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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