

# **Impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme on the Livelihoods of Rural Poor: A Study of the Naxalbari Block in Darjeeling District**

**By**

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*Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Political Science*



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सिक्किम विश्वविद्यालय

(भारतके संसदेके अधिनियमद्वारा स्थापित केन्द्रीय विश्वविद्यालय)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "Impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme on the Livelihoods of Rural Poor: A Study of the Naxalbari Block in Darjeeling District" submitted to Sikkim University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Political Science is the result of bonafide research work carried out by Ms Smriti Ghatani under my guidance and supervision. No part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree, diploma, associateship and fellowship.

All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by her.

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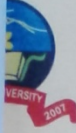
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### DECLARATION

I, Smriti Ghatani, hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of word done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form basis for the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other university/institute.

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## ABSTRACT

Public Works Programme in the name of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in India has been central to the debate of rural development thinking and practice. The main aim of this scheme has been the creation of better employment opportunities, improved water security and higher land productivity by providing 100 days of employment to an adult member of a rural household who is willing to do unskilled manual work within 5 km his or her residence. Globally MGNREGS is identified as one of the most successful public works programme when compared to other programmes of the world. As there is very little literature available on the Naxalbari block, this study has been an attempt to analyse the impact which MGNREGS has made on the livelihoods of the rural poor residing in the part of Naxalbari block, under Darjeeling district of West Bengal.

Altogether for the block as a whole, 85 respondents were selected for the survey. They were administered by a structured questionnaire along with personal open ended discussion session and the data pertaining to various variables have been collected and interpreted by using a before-after method of analysis. I have analysed the impact of MGNREGS on income, expenditure, poverty and empowerment. This study also incorporates documentary research methods giving a gist of the rural development practices in India from before the planning strategies till the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plans.

The outcomes of the analysis of Naxalbari block have brought multiple effects. While there were positive response in terms of income, political participation and empowerment of women, but in terms of the impact of the scheme on the reduction of poverty and the demands of work the responses were negative. Firstly, in terms of wages, the respondents were receiving only the wage for a maximum of 25 days they worked and for the remaining days they were unaware of unemployment allowances. Secondly, they were provided limited employment days as a result of works given and not demanded; this was something unlike the rules of the scheme as the work was to be given when the beneficiaries desired. With limited days of participation in the scheme their incomes increased and so did their expenditures, but if the days of employment were increased the scheme has the potential for being a role model in this region of West Bengal.

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## ACRONYMS

ACDA	Asian Centre for Development Administration
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CADP	Command Area Development Programme
CDP	Community Development Programme
DPAP	Drought Prone Area Programme
DWCRA	Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas
FYP	Five Year Plans
HPI	Human Poverty Index
IAAP	Integrated Agricultural Area Programme
IADP	Integrated Agricultural District Programme
IAY	Indira Awas Yojana
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Programme
JRY	Jawahar Rozgar Yojana
MEGS	Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme
MFALDA	Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers' Development Agency
MMS	Midday Meal Scheme
MNP	Minimum Needs Programme
MoRD	Ministry of Rural Development
NFFWP	National Food for Work Programme
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NREP	National Rural Employment Programme
NSSO	National Sample Survey Organisation
PMGSY	Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana
RLEGP	Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme
SFDA	Small Farmers' Development Agency
SL	Sustainable Livelihoods
SLF	Sustainable Livelihoods Framework
SGRY	Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana
SGSY	Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana
TADP	Tribal Area Development Programme
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Since the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century, public works have been central to rural development thinking and practice. The main aim of public works programmes is to minimize inequalities, marginalization and disparities in both the social and economic spheres by reducing poverty and vulnerability. As part of the rural poverty reduction agenda in many countries, national governments are increasingly investing millions of dollars in such programmes. There are different kinds of public works interventions, but the key components are the provision of employment by the state at a prescribed wage for those unable to find alternative employment. This provides a form of social safety net and livelihood security for the poor. Livelihood is one of the most important goals of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the well-known public works programme in India - being attempted through the creation of durable assets, improved water security, soil conservation and higher land productivity. Launched in 2006, MGNREGS has a great impact on the social transformation as well as on the livelihoods of poor and marginalized. Against this backdrop, this study evaluates the impact of MGNREGS's potential for livelihood security of rural poor in the Naxalbari Block of Darjeeling District, West Bengal.

## Theoretical Framework

Development of the country is associated with the overall development of the rural areas and poverty is the basic feature of these areas. Development theories have their origin from three different halls of the academy. It has originated from contradictions between economic growth and economic development which are the concerns of the field of economics, between the dialectics of modernity and tradition concerned in the study of sociology and between the theme of state and society which belongs to the academy of political theory (Nayak, 2008:1). The theories of economic growth were investigated by the mercantilists and physiocrats and by notable classical economists like Adam Smith, David Ricardo, John Stuart Mill, Thomas Robert Malthus and Karl Marx in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century (Jingan, 1997: 92).

The theories that root the cause of poverty can be due to individual deficiencies, by cultural beliefs, by geographical disparities, and by cumulative dependencies (Bradshaw, 2006: 6). Poverty in its most general sense is the lack of necessities like

food, shelter, medical care, and safety are generally thought necessary based on shared values of human dignity.

Sen's work on capabilities (2001) has been particularly important in promoting broader understandings of poverty. For Sen, development is about people's ability to raise their capabilities, so that they have greater freedom to achieve the 'functionings' they want to do or be, for example, living a long and healthy life, being a respected member of a community, raising a family, achieving satisfaction in sports or cultural activities. From this perspective, people experience poverty when they are deprived of basic capabilities: the ability to avoid hunger, become literate, appear in public without shame or take part in social activities, for example.

Understanding whether poverty and poor people's livelihoods are sustainable or not, after the development initiatives have become an important focus within international development literature and policy debates. A livelihoods approach understands poverty as more than just insufficient income. The sustainable livelihoods approach favoured by Department for International Development (DFID) defines livelihoods as 'the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living' (Carney 1998:213). In line with the Sustainable Livelihoods framework, a livelihood is defined here as 'the activities, the assets, and the access that jointly determine the living gained by an individual or household'. Meanwhile, broader understandings of livelihoods stress the active seeking of livelihoods as the 'tactical and strategic behaviour of impoverished people' (Whitehead 2002:576), such that livelihoods are 'the diverse ways in which people make a living and build their worlds' (Whitehead 2002:577). The DFID framework and the definitions that emerge from it also tend to incorporate features of the capabilities approach espoused by Amartya Sen (1983) and later by Martha Nussbaum (2003). Sen and Nussbaum advocate a departure from the measurement of conventional resource-based indicators for development, growth and distributive justice. Instead, they propose that resources be viewed as essential enablers that assist human beings in achieving various functional ends. Policymakers are encouraged to focus on allocating resources and establishing external conditions in a manner that maximizes human capabilities. Viewing livelihoods and growth from a human capabilities lens rather than focusing purely on income generation or resource allocation as such reflects a more advanced understanding of the concept of livelihoods in India.

The concept of 'sustainable rural livelihood' in developing countries is a central to the debate about rural development, poverty reduction and environmental management. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992) put forward the idea of sustainable livelihoods as an approach to maintain or enhance resource productivity, secure ownership, or the access to the resources and income earning activities as well as to ensure adequate and sustainable flows of food and cash to meet basic needs. The risk of livelihood failure determines the level of vulnerability of a household to income, food, health and nutritional security. So a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation (Chambers and Conway, 1992). Household livelihood security has been defined as an adequate and sustainable access to income and resources to meet basic needs including adequate access to food, potable water, health facilities, educational opportunities, housing and time for community participation and social integration (Frankenberger, 1996).

Though agriculture has been directly linked with the main source of livelihood for the rural people in India. With the changes in the society, agriculture turned out to be a non-profitable activity and the agricultural labourers were not getting the minimum wages. In 1970's and 80's India witnessed violent struggles for minimum wages. Naxalbari area of West Bengal faced similar struggles for wages and subjection of the peasantry. It then got the recognition of being neglected and brought in the sense of alienation to the people living there (Jha, 2015). The migration of the tribal created an alarming shortage of working hands in rural Bengal. On the other hand, the Government of India began implementing a range of schemes that focus on providing safety nets for the poor and vulnerable groups. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the world largest public work programme was launched in 2006 with the aim of enhancing livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country 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. This programme has become a powerful instrument for inclusive growth in rural India through its impact on social protection, livelihood security and democratic governance. The scheme is the main initiative to directly target poor, vulnerable households and communities. In addition, a number of other

programmes focus on specific aspects of deprivation, providing cash transfers to households or individuals, or subsidizing access to particular products. One of the major goals of this centrally sponsored flagship programme for rural employment generation is to ensure livelihood security to the rural people. The programme has its unique approach to provide purchasing power to the rural poor by guaranteeing, at least, one hundred days of wage employment to the rural households when other employment opportunities are lean. The Government of India is making large public expenditure under MGNREGS. In the budget of 2014-15, an allocation of Rs 34,000 crore had been made for MGNREGS. Under such circumstances, it became necessary to assess how far the programme was achieving its desired goals in terms of securing livelihoods of the rural people. Several studies on Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme have dealt with employment, empowerment and poverty alleviation of the country as a whole. There have also been studies carried out on the state of West Bengal and these explain the earlier wages employment programmes being based on low utilization of fund and weakness of implementing agencies (Ghosh, 2005). However, very little literature is available on the scheme and Naxalbari block of West Bengal, its presence and development, in general, has been undermined without reviewing its impact on the lives of the poor people. Thus, this study seeks to make an in-depth assessment on the performance of this scheme on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries of the programme of Naxalbari block, Darjeeling district and thereby seeks to fulfill the research gap that is there between the scheme and the area.

### **Review of Literature**

Since recent past the issue of development provided by various rural development programmes has been a burning issue and has been discussed and debated by policy makers, economic reformists, sociologists and feminists. They have been debating on the issues relating to socio-economic, political progress and how the poor are found to be under oppressions of inadequacies to meet their daily requirements. In that critical and crucial juncture many of socio-economic reformists with the help of eminent scholars of social sciences have obtained research analysis on this issue. The following sections is an endeavour to focus on the already published works relating to rural development programmes in the form of books, volumes, dissertation, articles, research

papers etc. focusing on the pre implementation and post implementation of MGNREGA all over the country.

Scoones (2009) has in his work offered a historical review of key moments in debates about rural livelihoods identified the tensions, ambiguities and challenges of such approaches. He has identified number of core challenges, centred on the need to inject a more thorough-going political analysis into the centre of livelihoods perspectives.

Solesbury (2003) in his work presents a chronology and a descriptive narrative of the development of Sustainable Livelihood Approach and identifies and characterizes four key interactions between research, policy and practice in that development.

The World Bank Report (2009) describes the public works programmes as being more effective when they include community involvement in the planning and selection of projects undertaken with public works labour including the creation of infrastructure that is most needed by the community. This gives a sense of community ownership of the asset is more likely to result in the maintenance of that asset.

The World Development Report (2014) has described the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act as a “stellar example of rural development”. The Annual Report credits the government’s flagship rural employment programme for not just unleashing a “revolution in rural India” but establishing a model of rural development.

Human Development Report (2014) also indicates that this kind of social net would also have multiple benefits in the human development. This is because MGNREGS has been able to provide income security to a large number of beneficiaries.

Sen (1975) wrote nearly two decades ago that “more has been written on the unemployment problem of India than on any other country in the world”. India’s history highlights the importance of empowering poor people and controlling corruption for poverty alleviation to succeed.

Bhende et al (1992) they attempt to analyze the role of Employment Guarantee Scheme in augmenting the wage income of rural households and its performance in terms of targeting the poor from the non-poor. They find that the Employment Guarantee Scheme provide employment when farm and off-farm employment opportunities are inadequate to absorb idle labour force in the rural areas. The scheme

succeeded in targeting the poor from non-poor and it has helped in reducing the severity of poverty by augmenting the incomes of the rural poor.

Srinivas (1960) studied the India's villages and observed that every village within a single state differed considerably in terms of economic, social, cultural, religious and political dimensions. In spite of several differences seen in the study, there was a thread of unity.

Chambers (1995) explores the different dimensions of poverty and illustrates the poor people's criteria in the article "Poverty and livelihoods: whose reality counts?" The paper discusses neglected dimensions of deprivation including vulnerability, seasonality, powerlessness and humiliation and the need of objective in terms of replaced "employment" in jobs of livelihood.

Cameron and Lim (2005) studied those rural households influenced by the migration of adult household members to urban locations in search of employment. Children may be left in the care of their mother alone or in the care of grandparents when both parents have migrated. Their studies suggest that household types other than nuclear families result in some significantly worse child nutritional outcomes. The implication is that governments should protect the welfare of the children of migrants, either through targeted programs or through increased opportunities for employment in rural areas.

Dreze (2005) in his article he expresses three common fears. One is that the money will be wasted due to widespread corruption. The second fear is that Employment Guarantee Act will lead to financial bankruptcy. The third fear was that the government will get entangled in endless litigation, as holders of aggrieved labourers take the local authorities to court. To dispense these fears, however, he said that the proposed Act aimed at empowering the disadvantaged, and included extensive safeguards against and dereliction of duty from the concerned authorities.

Jacob (2008) has found that the roads constructed by workers working under the Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Scheme have helped the people immensely and their work will probably contribute towards the development of the region.

Panda, Dutta and Prusty (2009) in their project report have explained that a large percent of the workers surveyed feel happy after communicating with bank officials, their confidence level has increased after working in NREGA and interacting with the government officials.



Dreze and Khera (2009) reflected the G.B. Pant Social Science Institute study on 81 percent of the sample households working under MGNREGS living in kaccha houses, 61 per cent of them being illiterate and over 72 percent of them not having electricity at home. Further the Centre for Economic and Social Studies of the two districts of Andhra Pradesh point out the fact that the proportion of landless agriculture labour participating in NREGA is higher than their share of the total households of the village studied. Similarly, it was observed that households who are self employed in non-agriculture activities have participated in large proportions in NREGA. The confluence of these three observations brings the conclusion that NREGA is addressing the economic needs of the most deserving and the marginalised households.

Jha et al (2011) in their paper explored the important but relatively neglected issue of real income transfers, net of the opportunity cost of time, under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. The authors use representative household level primary data for three States, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra to depict various individual and social characteristics of the population in these States as well as those of the participants in the NREGS. They also model the stochastic dominance comparisons of per capita monthly expenditures of participants with and without alternative employment opportunities in the absence of NREGS as well as the determinants of such opportunities. As an approximate measure of the net transfer benefits under NREGS, they consider shares of NREG earnings net of the opportunity cost of time in household income. The distribution of such net transfers across household characteristics as well as the distribution of benefits across villages in the three states is also discussed. In general, net transfers under the NREGS are quite modest. The paper also elaborates why accurate measurement of such transfers matters in an anti-poverty strategy.

Dutta (2009) in his article discusses some of the important challenges that plague the scheme. The first relates to corruption and leakages, frauds in muster rolls and embezzlement of government funds being rampant. The second problem relates to variation in wages. The Act stipulates that laborer under the NREGA is entitled to minimum wages. However, major interstate variations are noticeable in average wage-cost per man-day i.e. average wage rate in rupees per day. It is true corruption and lack of adequate preparation in implementing NREGS has led to some setbacks but these shortcomings do not reduce the landmark legislation to irrelevance.

Ninno et al (2009), in “How to Make Public Works Work: A Review of the Experiences” describes how public works programmes have been used extensively in response to either a one-time large covariate shock or repeated shocks. They have also noted that, for public works programmes to be successful, it is important to have clear objectives, select projects that can create valuable goods, and ensure predictable funding. The success of the programme depends critically on careful design and incorporation of all the key design features. Moreover, the programme also requires a monitoring and evaluation system that is designed to correct, mid-course, for sudden changes that inhibit implementation.

Priyadarshan (2010) put forward a shortcoming in Mid-Term Appraisal (MTA) of the 11th Five Year Plan that the planning commission has found that only 14 percent of worker households have completed 100 days of work as mandated under the Act.

Poonia (2012) explains in the article that the NREGA has the potential to stimulate local development, if the management and delivery are good and that women’s weak position in the labour market has been greatly helped.

Rath (1985) says that the strategy of helping the poor in rural society to get over poverty with the help of assets given to them is largely misconceived. Only a small portion could be helped; what is equally true is that only a very small proportion could be helped in this manner. Putting more burdens on this approach will discredit the line of attack, generate wastage, corruption and ultimately cynicism. In a multipronged attack on poverty, this approach surely has a legitimate place, but it cannot be the mainstay of such a programme.

Ramesh and Kumar (2009), in their study, have found out that MGNREGS holds prospects of bringing major changes in the lives of women. The act plays a substantial role in empowering women economically and laying the basis for a greater independence and self-esteem. Their study reveals more participation of women in the scheme than men and these beneficiaries have expressed their gratitude to ease out the debt burden to an extent.

Ambasta (2008) noted that it is not possible to realise the massive potential of the MGNREGA if we organise the same structure of implementation that has deeply institutionalised corruption, inefficiency and non-accountability, into the very fabric of Indian democracy. On the other hand, if the reforms suggested in this study are put into place, the MGNREGA holds out the prospect of transforming the livelihoods of the poorest of the poor and heralding a revolution in rural governance in India.

Babu et al, (2011) in their study that was undertaken in Betul and Mandla districts of Madhya Pradesh to assess the impact of MGNREGA on labour markets, particularly with regard to changes in land use, cropping patterns and economics of agriculture found that in both the districts, the fallow lands were brought under cultivation. There was a change in cropping pattern from dry land crops to irrigated crops and from traditional to cash crops. There was also a reported hike in the cost of labour and migration continued unabated in the study areas.

Babu et al (2011) undertook a study in Paschim Medinipur and Burdwan districts of West Bengal, to assess the impact of MGNREGA on labour markets, particularly with regard to changes in land use, cropping patterns and economics of agriculture. They found distinct changes in land use pattern and the use of fallow lands under cultivation. On the other hand, marginal and small farmers had experienced high costs for paddy cultivation in irrigated as well as rain-fed areas. But an analysis of the break-up of the costs showed that some of the expenses pertaining to small farmers, especially on irrigation, had reduced and attributed to the irrigation structures created under MGNREGA.

Bassi and Kumar (2010) in their study showed that NREGA was being praised by many in the academic, development and policy arena as a 'silver bullet' for eradicating rural poverty and unemployment, by way of generating demand for productive labour force in villages and private incentives for management of common property resources. The study argues that the nature of water management activities chosen under the Scheme and the callous way in which these activities are planned and implemented in different regions, without any consideration of their physical and socio-economic realities of the regions concerned, were creating several negative welfare effects. It identifies three broad and distinct regional typologies in India for deciding the nature of water management interventions for different regions and proposes the types for water management works under NREGS for each typology, which has the potential to generate labour demand while producing welfare effects.

Bhatia and Adhikari (2010) in their study discuss the hardships faced by NREGA workers when they do not have banks or post offices near their homes. Their difficulties are further worsened when the transaction is processed through the post offices because of poor record-keeping and the inability to cope with mass payments of NREGA wages.

Dheeraja and Rao (2010) studied the impact of MGNREGS on gender relations in 102 districts in 27 States. The study found that gender relations in favour of women increased in the post-MGNREGS period and qualities such as self-esteem, self-image and confidence levels of women improved through their participation under the scheme. SHGs contributed to the changes in gender relations among the members and MGNREGS consolidated these changes. Gender Relation Index (GRI) consisting of social, economic and political dimensions at both household and community levels increased for women after implementation of MGNREGS.

Dreze (2011) looked at the effectiveness of the transparency safeguards under MGNREGA. In the initial stage of implementation of the Scheme, claims were often made that MGNREGA funds are not reaching the poor based on misleading accounts of a CAG report. The field studies undertaken indicate positive findings and show an improvement, fewer instances of corruption and leakages under MGNREGA than programmes like the National Food for Work Programme.

Ghosh (2009), found that the main point of the study is that ‘inclusive’ public spending, such as in the MGNREGS, is not only desirable from a social or welfare perspective. It also provides very direct economic benefits because it is much more effective in dealing with the economic situations of the credit crunch and an aggregate demand slowdown. Work given under NREGS is arduous, physically demanding and the main beneficiaries of such work are the local rural economies through the contributions to infrastructure and land productivity, and the macro-economy because of the effect of the wage incomes on aggregate demand. NREGS is completely different from earlier government employment schemes since it treats employment as a right. The programme is intended to be demand-driven and encourages participation of local people in the planning and monitoring of specific schemes. MGNREGS tends to be more socially inclusive in that it involves women, SCs and STs as workers in the Scheme. Greater participation of women in the NREGS, particularly in some States, is clearly a positive indicator that shows the inclusive potential of the programme. However, NREGS potential has still not been achieved. Capacity building and administrative support at local government levels are key elements for better implementation of NREGS.

Hirway and Batabyal (2012) wrote that MGNREGA has been found to certainly trigger processes which enhance women’s empowerment through guaranteed daily wage employment with equal pay, mobilisation of collective strength and participation

in GSs and Social Audits. However, this study on MGNREGA has also added to women's time burden and drudgery. Much is yet to be done in empowering women to become active participants as well as real beneficiaries of MGNREGA. This study highlights the impact of MGNREGA on women in the village of Movasa, Gujarat.

Mehrotra (2008) examined the performance of the National Rural Employment Guarantee programme since mid-2005 and provided a summary of progress in certain areas and also highlighted specific weaknesses. It also described the challenges that lie ahead and suggests how these can be overcome.

Vaidya and Singh (2011) in their study made an assessment of MGNREGA with respect to the extent of employment generation, wage differentials, rural to urban migration, asset creation, determinants of participation and implementation in five districts of Himachal Pradesh. The main findings of the study suggested that out-migration was mainly the result of higher wages prevailing in the nearby towns. MGNREGA enhanced food security, provided protection against extreme poverty, helped to reduce distress migration and indebtedness and gave greater economic independence to women and purchasing power to the local economy. In terms of work, majority of the respondents found that there were good quality assets created under MGNREGA

The articles and books relating to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme highlights on the implementation, the success and failure of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in different parts of the country. However, there seems to be lack of research on MGNREGS and Naxalbari block of West Bengal. No books or articles have been available besides the knowledge of the Act being enforced in the block. Thus, this study seeks to make an in-depth assessment on the performance of this scheme on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries of the programme of Naxalbari block, Darjeeling district and thereby seeks to fulfill the research gap that is there between the scheme and the area.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The literature review carried out above reflects that though some researchers have done study on the structure of villages in India, their problems of poverty and unemployment, the hindrances towards sustainable livelihood of the rural poor, the implementation of rural development programme in India such as the MGNREGS, the

success and failure of MGNREGS in different parts of the country, but it is not comprehensive. Though there are numerous writings on Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in different parts of the country, there seems to be a lack of research on the working of this programme in Naxalbari Block of North Bengal. Besides, the information of the scheme being implemented in this block, there is very few works describing its performance towards bringing rural development in general and having an impact on the living of the poor in particular. It is for this reason the present study sought to discuss both implementation and the impact of MGNREGS on the livelihoods of rural poor in Naxalbari block of Darjeeling district.

### **Rationale and Scope of the Study**

India has a long history and experience with the rural development programme to fight against chronic poverty and address work shortage during the slack agricultural season. Over the past seven decades several projects have been initiated in India to counter poverty and unemployment. The high poverty and unemployment rate will undermine the democracy if it is not reduced. From a theoretical perspective, supported by experiences elsewhere in India, these are reasons for considering that properly formulated programme could be established to construct and maintain the required physical infrastructure thus creating employment. These programmes generally comprise a wide variety of minor and intrinsically labour intensive works such as soil conservation and afforestation, small and medium scale irrigation flood protection and land development schemes. By sustaining demands for large masses of purely unskilled labour these programmes indeed provide an important contribution towards a simultaneous solution to the problem of rural employment, income distribution and growth. It is in this backdrop, the present study tries to explore the reality of rural development programme particularly MGNREGS, in Naxalbari block of North Bengal, in terms of the scale of job creation, livelihoods security and the potential of such programmes to bring development.

The study has some limitations also. The data collection is restricted to MGNREGS of Naxalbari Block and it may fail to represent the actual scenario of the whole state and country. Further due to the limitation of time and other resources it was not be possible to work with a large sample of respondents, they have been limited in terms of size and composition and only 85 rural poor have been considered for the study.

## **Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to look at how MGNREGS can contribute to the development and livelihood security of rural people in Naxalbari block. Following are some specific objectives:

1. To study the economic and policy rationale for rural development programmes.
2. To study the performance of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in West Bengal since 2006, in response to the role and relevance of such programmes with regard to the development of rural areas in general and as employment generation and poverty alleviation strategy for the rural poor, in particular.
3. To investigate the impact of MGNREGS on the livelihoods of rural poor, economic stability and women empowerment.

## **Research Questions**

1. What are the reasons behind the implementation of Rural Development Programme in India?
2. To what extent the Rural Development Programme such as MGNREGS has helped in sustaining the livelihoods of the rural poor?
3. Does MGNREGS become successful in improving the living condition of the poor?

## **Research Methods**

The present study has adopted two methods of data collection; documentary and field research methods. The documentary research method was applied to get the secondary data from the data that have been collected in the past. Further, the study has collected other relevant data pertaining to the progress and coverage of MGNREGS from the Department of Rural Development, West Bengal and Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India and government website. The data received from different sources has provided basic understanding about public works potential for poverty alleviation and livelihoods security of people of the research site. Fieldwork for this study has been carried out in Naxalbari Block of Darjeeling district, West Bengal by employing a range of research techniques that include a survey, interviews with key

actors like government employees, Panchayat representatives and in-depth interviews with beneficiaries of the programme. It accomplishes a total of eighty five MGNREGS beneficiaries as respondents. A *Before-after* method has been applied to assess the impact of MGNREGS on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries with analysis based on tables and graphs and explanation to them.



## **Plan of work**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter deals with the introduction of programmes in the rural areas, the theoretical framework, the literature review, the objectives, the research questions and the methodology.

### **Chapter 2: Rural Development Programmes in India: Challenges and Potentials**

This chapter gives a detailed description of the historical background of India's economic and policy rationale behind the implementation of policies, schemes and programmes directed towards the rural community in India. It also includes explanation on sustainable livelihood as the main aim of rural development programme and then it describes the challenges and problems that are experienced in India hitherto in relation to the implementation of rural development programme all over India

### **Chapter 3: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in India: Performance and Evaluation**

This chapter delivers the performance and evaluation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme as the flagship programme of the Indian Government being implemented all over the country. It also outlines the features of the scheme, its progress and its potential contribution in terms of poverty alleviation and as an employment generation programme.

### **Chapter 4: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and its impact on livelihoods: Lessons from the field**

This chapter demonstrates a background of Darjeeling district, the profile of the study area, Naxalbari block. It discusses the physical, demographic, socio-economic features of the block and then analyses the field work done on the background of the beneficiary households, mechanisms of job card creation, registration, work allocation procedure, their experiences and livelihood mechanisms before and after the implementation of MGNREG with the help of maps, tables and graphs.

### **Chapter 5: Summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations**

This chapter is devoted to the summary of findings and conclusion based on the survey. It also includes recommendations for better performance of MGNREGS in the study area with future implications.

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## CHAPTER 2

### RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND POTENTIALS

#### Introduction

Despite the fast grow of urbanisation<sup>1</sup>, industrialisation<sup>2</sup> and globalisation<sup>3</sup> in the 21<sup>st</sup> century most parts of the world still remain rural, more specifically the developing world. India is one of the very few countries in the world, which has a proud history of holding its census<sup>4</sup> after every ten years (Census of India). The earliest population counts of the country are revealed by the 'Rig Veda' during 800-600 B.C. Kautilya's Arthashastra<sup>5</sup>, written around 321-296 B.C., also laid stress on census taking a measure of state policy for the purpose of taxation (Rangarajan, 1992: 35). The population of India represents 17.99 percent of the world's total population which means that one in every six people on the planet are a resident of India (World Bank, 2011). The total population in India has been recorded to 1238.9 million people from 359.0 million in 1950 (MOSPI:2009). The level of urbanisation has increased from 27 percent to 31 percent in 2011, while the proportion of rural population has declined from 72 percent to 68 percent in 2011 (Satyanarayana and Madhusudana, 2012: 58). With 68 percent of rural population living in 6,38,000 villages, every strategy of development to succeed has to take into account the rural areas and the rural people (Singh, 1999:23). Thus, there has been a necessity for rural development in order to bring the nation's overall development (Rastogi, 2002:4). This need has not only been recognized by India but also the developed or first world countries. There have been several promises made by national and international organisations like the United Nations, World Bank etc for the eradication of rural problems in general and for better living conditions in particular.

#### Meaning of Rural Development

The concept of 'Rural Development' is a wide term comprising of the two words 'rural' and 'development'. There have been many ways of defining areas that are 'rural'. The general idea of conceptualizing rural areas came into use since the 1920's from the spheres of sociology, as an area where people are engaged in primary industry in the sense that they produce things directly for the first time in cooperation with

nature (Srivastava, 1961:5). The traditional assumption as per the Webster's dictionary that goes along with the word 'rural' is an open land with a non-metropolitan way of living. Rural areas have also been defined as 'villages' or sparsely settled places away from the influence of large cities and towns (Chauhan, 2008:10). They are considered distinct from more intensively settled urban, suburban areas and unsettled lands.

In many developing countries like India, there exists 'dualism' or coexistence of two separate economic subsystems, on one hand there exists in the economy a small but highly modern and developed urban subsector, which absorbs most of the material, financial, and educated and talented manpower resources. On the other hand, there is a very large but traditional and underdeveloped rural subsector, characterized by widespread poverty, unemployment and low productivity, which forms the majority of the population.

According to Census of India, rural areas are defined as 'the smallest area of habitation' where the village generally follows the restrictions of a revenue village under the premises of the district administration. The revenue village may not necessarily be a single agglomeration of the habitations but it has a definite surveyed boundary and each village is a separate administrative unit with separate village accounts. The entire revenue village is one unit. The National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) further defines 'rural', as an area with population of up to 400 individuals per square kilometer, where villages have a clear surveyed boundary but no municipal board and a minimum of 75 percent working population involved in agriculture and allied activities (Kumar, 1997:4). Besides, the Planning Commission also defines a town with a maximum population of 15,000 as being 'rural' in nature. Further, a society or community can be classified as 'rural' based on the criteria of lower population density, less social differentiation, less social and spatial mobility, slow rate of social change, etc. with agriculture as the major occupation (Chauhan, 2008:10). It is difficult to define the term uniformly because it varies from Asia to Africa.

Development, on the other hand, is a broader concept which means to open up something which is hidden. It is a process of directed change that is desirable in the society for bringing about social, cultural and political advancement through greater control over the environment (Verma, 2008:24, Singh, 1999:12). The concept of development also signifies the advancement of the society through progressive stages (Weidner, 1970). Sometimes the term is also used to connote a process, and sometimes the product of the process (Reddy et al, 2008: xvi) and it includes, (i) increase in real

per capita income (economic growth), (ii) improvement in the distribution of income (equity), (iii) political and economic freedom, and (iv) equitable access to resources, education, health care, employment opportunities and justice. It is a universally cherished goal of all individuals, families, communities and countries.

The definition of 'development' has however shifted over the years and is used to express animated change for reaping utmost human potential. Though technically, development is the name of a 'Policy' and its consequent programmes, designed to bring about a desired change' in social, economic, political, or technological spheres of life. It is concerned with the promotion of human capacities, physical or mental, to attain the cherished social goals. Development is potential-related, and it can be attained to the extent of the existing development potential, which is measured by the un-exploited resources, talents, margin of sophistication and the 'will power' which implements development policy. Development is the conditioning of progress, and when efforts are laid towards the use of growth potentials in rural economy and society, it is called rural development (Tewari and Singha, 1988:1).

In most countries, rural areas have been lagging behind cities in terms of national development. As far as Indian villages are concerned, they have been the centre of all economic and social activities. They have agriculture as their main source of livelihood and are further symbolized by widespread poverty, low level of illiteracy and income, high levels of unemployment and poor health status. The demographic profiles are skewed and the rural areas are experiencing depopulation (Uitto, 2008: 3). The incidence of problems has been directed more towards the rural areas because there have been inequalities caused by the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities between urban and rural sector. The main reason for the disparity between the two is the concentration of administrative, commercial and industrial set up additionally in the urban region and a disproportionately concentrated modernizing economy, socio-economic prospects and opportunities in the rural towns and cities (Nayak, 2008:36). This further has leads to stagnation and slow growth of agricultural productivity, the farmers getting distressed and committing suicides in various parts of the country and increasing the migration of rural people to the urban areas which indirectly hinder the overall national development. At the initial years even those who migrated for studying in higher institutions and for getting jobs often returned back during vacations, but gradually everything began favoring the urban setting. An imbalanced situation has arisen in India. It has become highly unacceptable in terms of its constitutional welfare

measures directed towards the citizens. Thus for bringing a balanced condition in the country, the development of the rural at a faster pace than urban areas has become one of the vital issues of the day. The improvement of the lives of the deprived with a high priority can ensure social justice, can alleviate poverty, guarantee better livelihood opportunities with provisions of basic amenities and quality social services are provided at the earliest (Moni and Misra, 2009:ix). Often the development of the rural or rural development has been interpreted and synonymously used with many terms. Therefore, before discussing the concept, it is essential to discuss its relationship with various terms like 'agricultural development', 'regional development', 'community development' 'rural welfare', 'rural reconstruction'.

### **Agricultural Development**

Until the 1970's, rural development had been considered synonymous with agricultural development through enhanced productivity. Agricultural development means the process of mounting agricultural production like those of crops, livestock, fish etc in which human beings, land and capital are simply regarded as means production. On the other hand, Rural Development mainly targets on people and institutions. It includes agricultural development activities and it is one of the means of economic revitalization for active farmers and targeted rural villages. Hence, agricultural development cannot be taken to encompass only agricultural development.

### **Regional development**

'Regional' means a certain area in country or continent of countries. The Rural Planning Association, for example, considers regional development as a regional plan including both the rural and urban development. Thus, rural development differs from regional development in the sense that it is intended to improve the lives of only the rural people.

### **Community Development**

Community development has been defined as the method by which villagers are involved in helping to improve their own economic and social conditions and thereby become an effective working group in the program of their national development (Taylor, 1956:67-78). Such development focuses on the building a sense of belongingness towards the community and make the people solve their own problems. But the definitions provided by the United Nations have never focused on community development specifically for the village or rural areas. Their views show that community development can be implied to both rural and urban settings. As such



community development is boarder than rural development and it fully does not cover rural development.

### **Rural Welfare**

Rural welfare as a concept takes into account all definable and indefinable factors in an attempt to create a state of well being in rural areas (Barnabas, 1968: 155). Rural welfare programmes have provisions of amenities for the individuals and community to attain a state of well being. While providing these amenities, participation and self-help emerge as a secondary force that does not essentially lead to rural development. Hence, rural welfare in its broadest form also cannot be treated as part of rural development.

### **Rural Reconstruction**

The main aim of rural reconstruction is to create an abundant and self sufficient life for the rural people in terms of social, economic, physical spheres. Though rural reconstruction encompasses all the elements of rural development, it cannot be used synonymously because peoples participation in not clearly spelt out in this concept.

Thus, none of the terms like agricultural development, regional development, community development, rural welfare and rural reconstruction can be used synonymously with rural development. The concept of rural development in fact has been looked upon as a national development plan perspective.

### **Definition of Rural Development**

The term 'rural development' is of prime concern and is widely acclaimed in both the developed and the developing countries of the world. The concept has however, undergone a metamorphosis during the last three decades. It had attracted the attention of the economist's right from the Mercantilist era, from the works of Adam Smith down to Marse and Keynes. They had been interested in the problems which were essentially static in nature and largely related to a western European framework of social and cultural institutions. For some Economists, development was the increase in the economy's real national income over a long period while to others, the increase in the per capita real income of the economy which are not convincing as it lacks human welfare was rural development. The term was used, solely for economic change, inclusive of the conditions which affect betterment and was later extended to its wider meaning to embrace changes of political, social, economic, cultural, technological, and also the psychological frame of society. One reason behind the use of different words along with rural development is the presence of its varied definitions emphasized on

shifting development policies (Griffin, 1974: 184). There has been no universally acceptable definition and it is used in different ways and in vastly divergent context (Chambers, 1987: 22). With a multiplicity of views and interpretations, rural development can be defined as a concept, a process, a phenomenon, as a strategy and a discipline (Rastogi, 2002: 2, Singh, 1998: 20).

As a concept, rural development means the overall development of the village by bettering the living conditions of the people as a whole. As a phenomenon, it is the end result of interactions between socio-economic, cultural, environmental, institutional, physical and technological factors (Krishnaswamy, 1985:4, Rastogi, 2002:3). As a strategy, rural development is an approach designed to bring a positive transformation in the rural livelihood and as a discipline, rural development is multidimensional and encompasses the interrelationship between agriculture, infrastructure, engineering and management sciences (Singh, 1999:20). Thus, rural development encompasses all sectors of rural life.

In the narrow sense, it is identified as a mere extension of irrigation facilities (Shah, 1977) and in the broad sense it is considered responsible for introducing basic structural changes in rural society with a view to remove inequality between different classes of people (Varghese, 1978: 4).

The Rural Development sector policy paper of the World Bank (1975) defines 'rural development as a strategy to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people, the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas. The group includes the small and marginal farmers, tenants and the landless'.

According to the United Nations Report, 'rural development has come into international usage to connote the process by which the efforts of people themselves are united to those of governmental authorities improve the economic, social and cultural conditions in the life of the nation and to relate them to contribute fully to national programme'.

The Asian Centre for Development Administration (ACDA) in the context of development of Asian countries defines 'Rural development as a process which leads to a continuous rise in the capacity of rural people to control their environment accompanied by the wider distribution of benefits resulting from such a control'.

In the words of Alan Matthews (2000: 252) rural development may be defined as 'seeking to sustain vibrant rural communities with a balanced structure of age,

income and occupational groups, capable of adapting to ongoing economic, social and cultural change, enjoying a high standard of living and an attractive quality of life and with sufficient income and employment opportunities to allow individuals and families to live with dignity.

According to James H. Copp (1972:516), rural development is a process of collective efforts, aimed at improving the well being and self-realisation of people living outside the urbanized areas'. He argues that the ultimate target of rural development is not infrastructure but the people.

In the words of Robert Chambers (1983), the term rural development is 'a strategy to enable a specific group of people, the rural poor men and women to gain for themselves more of what it want and need'. It involves helping the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of development.

According to Katar Singh (1999:20), 'Rural Development connotes the overall development of the rural areas with a view of improve the quality of life of the rural people'.

In the words of S. K. Sharma and S.L. Malhotra (1977), 'rural development consists of strategies, policies and programmes for development of rural areas and promotion of activities carried out in such areas with the ultimate aim of accelerating the agricultural production, properly utilizing available physical, natural and human resources, and achieving higher income and better living conditions for the rural population as a whole, particularly the rural poor and effective participation of the latter in the development process with the ultimate aim of creating conditions for self-sustained growth'.

According to Uma Lele (1975), 'Rural Development is an improvement in the living standard of the masses of low income population residing in rural areas and making the process of self sustaining'.

According to D. Ensminger (1974), rural development is a process of transformation from a traditionally oriented rural culture to a culture that accepts modern techniques in science and technology.

Emphasizing the operational overtone, S.K. Sharma (1991), defined rural development as consisting of strategies, policies and programmes for the development of the rural areas and promotion of activities carried in such areas with an aim of improving the agricultural productivity, better utilizing the natural, physical and human

resources, achieving higher income and better living conditions for the rural population specially the rural poor.

Rural development thus tries to improve the well being and self realization of people living outside urbanized regions through collective processes (Chauhan, 2005). In short, it is a process of empowering the powerless in the rural areas with the ultimate aim of bettering their quality of life based on maximum utilization of locally available resources. The essence of the all these definitions is at addressing poverty as the most immediate objective. The rural development process thus, tries to trickle down its benefits by providing opportunities of decent living to the low income populations on a self-sustaining basis. Since rural development intends to reduce poverty, it must clearly be designed to increase production and raise productivity. It is believed that improved food supplies and nutrition, together with basic services such as health, education and cultural activities would directly improve the physical wellbeing and quality of life of the rural poor, but also indirectly enhance their productivity and their ability to contribute to the national economy.

### **Rural development and sustainable livelihoods**

A number of villages in India have been dependent on their natural surroundings for their livelihood, and any disturbances caused in their environment adversely affect their earnings. Due to this the Government of India, after independence has persistently tried to develop sustainable livelihood as the main aim of rural development and to integrate approaches to tackle poverty in India. Such development has been centred on a specific group of beneficiaries, namely the rural poor comprising of a majority of small and marginal farmers, tenants, landless agricultural labourers, rural artisans, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other socially disadvantaged sections of the society.

Sustainable livelihoods approaches, therefore, have been based upon evolving various philosophies on poverty reduction, the way the poor live their lives, and the importance of structural and institutional issues. These approaches have been drawn upon changing views of poverty since the last three decades. In particular, participatory approaches to development have highlighted great diversity in the goals to which people aspire, and in the livelihood strategies, they adopt to achieve them.

### **Meaning of sustainable livelihood**

After decades of limited success in eliminating poverty, several agencies have revised their development strategies and placed greater emphasis on innovating new ideas. The

concept of ‘Sustainable rural livelihoods’ has been one such strategy that has recently become central to the debate on rural development, poverty reduction and environment management.

In a general framework, livelihood is the means of earning an occupation for a living. The word ‘livelihood’ can also be used in many different ways. In much of the developing world, people are engaged a number of activities that contribute to their well being or constitute their livelihood. These activities range from agriculture, petty hawking/trading, wage labour, to the provision of low-cost transportation services. Livelihood thus has come to mean the ability to access the available properties or assets, to manage them and to benefit from the entitlement by which people make of living (World Bank). A sustainable livelihood is an approach to poverty alleviation in which the possessions of the poor people are focused upon. The idea of sustainable livelihoods was first introduced by the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development, and the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development expanded the concept, advocating for the achievement of sustainable livelihoods as a broad goal for poverty eradication. In 1992, Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway composite definition of a sustainable rural livelihood, which is applied most commonly at the household level:

“A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term”.

Ian Scoones (1998), further modified the definitions of sustainable livelihoods as,

“A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base”.

Sustainable livelihood is achieved through access to a range of livelihood resources which are combined in pursuit of different livelihood strategies. However, the livelihood resources, institutional processes and livelihood strategies that lead to

sustainable livelihoods differ from one group to another. Thus, a sustainable livelihood is a systemic and adaptive approach that links issues of poverty reduction, sustainability and empowerment processes. The charisma of sustainable livelihood lies in its applicability to different contexts, situations of uncertainty and in its capacity as a consultative and participatory process for the cross-fertilization of ideas and strategies between various stakeholders. Those living in extreme poverty and outside the formal labor market, for example, constantly improvise their livelihood strategies due to high uncertainty and limited options. A subsistence farmer in the off-season or during drought becomes a wage laborer and could later revert back to farming when it is time to plough the field. In a similar manner, job security in the traditional ways of work seems to be decreasing in the modern sectors and people are changing jobs several times in their life time. The Sustainable livelihood approach has the flexibility to tap into such kinds of adaptive responses and utilize them as entry points for policy making (Krantz, 2001:8).

A variety of definitions and interpretations of the concept of sustainability has emerged in recent years, largely as a consequence of the work of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (Dixon and Fallon, 1989; Pezzey, 1989; Lele 1991). The WCED defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (1987: 8). It is important to recognize that the ability to meet the needs of both present and future generations is a direct function of the health and capability of the supporting ecosystems. Focusing on both the human and biophysical foundations of sustainability, a joint report of the World Conservation Union, United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and World Wide Fund for Nature defined sustainable development as "improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of the supporting ecosystems" (UNEP 1991: 211).

The context of rural development means sustained growth of income of the rural people along with the distribution of income and economic assets in favour of the poorer sections of the society in such way as to progressively remove poverty and unemployment in rural areas. In order to sustain their lives, the rural poor are undergoing a process which is known as diversification. Diversification as such is a livelihood strategy in which the person or the rural family unit builds a group of activities to raise their incomes and form better ways of making their living (Ellis,

2000). When area access difficulties are eliminated and opportunities of means of subsistence are identified and extended, the farmer or the family community develops the capacity to generate livelihood and improve their lives. Barret, Reardon and Webb (2001) agree that few people obtain their living wages from just one source or use their goods or merchandise to just one activity. They classify these actions as primary and secondary. For them the primary actions can be also called push factors the ones that would be related to risk reduction as land becomes restricted by growth of population, reaction against crisis, business deal's high rates which sometimes drive the rural families to auto-sufficiency in several services and goods. The secondary actions called pull factors are like the complementary strategies implementation into activities such as cultural integration with animals from the environment and industrial products. Diversification of rural properties, according to Ellis (2000), is strongly related to the creation of diversity as a social and economical process usually existent into a family unit. This process shows the pressure factors that come from family environment as well as the opportunities that make the families adopt complexes and different ways of earn living.

However, their livelihoods are based on significantly different social, economic, and natural environments. Most rural residents of many developing countries including India are engaged in and depend on local agriculture, forestry, and fishery resources to make a living. If the local people are final beneficiaries of development assistance, the aim of rural development can be defined as the improvement of sustainable livelihoods especially the impoverished groups, with careful attention paid to local characteristics (World Bank, 1975).

### **Sustainable livelihoods framework**

Specific livelihoods framework and objectives have been developed to assist with implementation. In essence, it is a way of putting people at the centre of development, thereby increasing the effectiveness of development assistance. In order to examine the ongoing work in the thematic area, establishment of indicators are necessary. These indicators help not only in identifying the underlying philosophy and strategies employed but also the types of indicators that have been developed to measure performance in the area. For example, the efforts of agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to measure poverty eradication is a necessary step towards the measuring the achievements of sustainable human

development. The Human Development Report of 1997 is devoted entirely to the multi dimensional aspects of poverty and has introduced a Human Poverty Index (HPI) that measures the levels of human deprivation as distinct from income measures. An essential part of the programming process under UNDP has been the adoption of sustainable livelihoods (SL) concept and approach as a means of poverty elimination. Sustainable livelihood tries to bring together the thinking and practice of poverty reduction strategies, sustainable development and participation and empowerment processes into a framework for policy analysis and programming.

The sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) presents the main factors that affect people's livelihoods, and typical relationships between these. It can be used in both planning new development activities and assessing the contribution to livelihood sustainability made by existing activities. In particular, the framework:

- Provides a checklist of important issues and sketches out the way these link to each other,
- Draws attention to core influences and processes and
- Emphasises the multiple interactions between the various factors which affect livelihoods (Krantz: 2011: 10-13).

The framework is intended to be a versatile tool for use in planning and management. It offers a way of thinking about livelihoods that helps order complexity and makes clear the many factors that affect livelihoods. A more important task than perfecting the framework itself is putting the ideas that it represents into practice. If that calls for adaptation of certain boxes or revision of certain definitions to make the framework more useful, the framework becomes a living tool. Use of the framework is intended to make a distinct contribution to improving DFID's ability to eliminate poverty. It is not simply a required step in project/programme preparation, nor does it provide a magic solution to the problems of poverty elimination. In order to get the most from the framework, the core ideas that underlie it should not be compromised during the process of adaptation. One of these core ideas is that analysis should be conducted in a participatory manner. Use of the framework should be underpinned by a serious commitment to poverty elimination. This should extend to developing a meaningful dialogue with partners about how to address the underlying political and economic factors that perpetuate poverty. Those using the framework must have the ability to recognize deprivation in the field even when elites and others may want to disguise this and skew benefits towards themselves (Brock:1999:23).



## **Livelihood assets**

The livelihoods approach is concerned first and foremost with people. It seeks to gain an accurate and realistic understanding of people's strengths, assets or capital endowments and how they endeavor to convert these into positive livelihood outcomes. The approach is founded on a belief that people require a range of assets to achieve positive livelihood outcomes and no single category of assets on its own is sufficient to yield all the many and varied livelihood outcomes that people seek. This is particularly true for poor people whose access to any given category of assets tends to be very limited. As a result they have to seek ways of nurturing and combining what assets they do have in innovative ways to ensure survival.

For understanding the livelihood framework, the asset pentagon becomes an essentiality. The pentagon was developed to enable information about people's assets to be presented visually, thereby bringing to life important inter-relationships between the various assets. The shape of the pentagon can be used to show schematically the variation in people's access to assets. The idea is that the centre point of the pentagon, where the lines meet, represents zero access to assets while the outer perimeter represents maximum access to assets. On this basis different shaped pentagons can be drawn for different communities or social groups within communities.

- Human capital represents the skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health that together enable people to pursue different livelihood strategies and achieve their livelihood objectives. At a household level human capital is a factor of the amount and quality of labour available; this varies according to household size, skill levels, leadership potential, health status, etc. Human capital appears in the generic framework as a livelihood asset, that is, as a building block or means of achieving livelihood outcomes. Its accumulation can also be an end in itself. Many people regard ill-health or lack of education as core dimensions of poverty and thus overcoming these conditions may be one of their primary livelihood objectives.
- Social capital in the context of the sustainable livelihoods framework it is taken to mean the social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives. These are developed through networks and connectedness, either vertical or horizontal between individuals with shared interests that increase people's trust and ability to work together and expand

their access to wider institutions, such as political or civic bodies, membership of more formalized groups which often entails adherence to mutually-agreed or commonly accepted rules, norms and sanctions and relationships of trust, reciprocity and exchanges that facilitate co-operation, reduce transaction costs and may provide the basis for informal safety nets amongst the poor.

- Natural capital is the term used for the natural resource stocks from which resource flows and services (e.g. nutrient cycling, erosion protection) useful for livelihoods are derived. There is a wide variation in the resources that make up natural capital, from intangible public goods such as the atmosphere and biodiversity to divisible assets used directly for production (trees, land, etc.).
- Physical capital comprises the basic infrastructure and producer goods needed to support livelihoods. Infrastructure consists of changes to the physical environment that help people to meet their basic needs and to be more productive. Producer goods are the tools and equipment that people use to function more productively. The following components of infrastructure are usually essential for sustainable livelihoods, an affordable transport, a secure shelter and building, adequate water supply and sanitation, clean, affordable energy and access to information (communications).
- Financial capital denotes the financial resources that people use to achieve their livelihood objectives. The definition used here is not economically robust in that it includes flows as well as stocks and it can contribute to consumption as well as production. However, it has been adopted to try to capture an important livelihood building block, namely the availability of cash or equivalent that enables people to adopt different livelihood strategies. There are two main sources of financial capital are available stocks and regular inflows of money.

Livelihoods analysis is an important component of regulatory reform. Many of the researchers affirm that the SLF provides a useful conceptual base for understanding urban poverty and the situation of people living in poverty in urban settlements, and is an effective tool for analyzing the impact of regulations on their livelihoods. It can be used to analyze the coping and adaptive strategies pursued by individuals and communities as a response to external shocks and stresses such as drought, civil strife and failed policies and anti-poor regulatory frameworks.

### **Rural development efforts in the pre-planning period**

Since time immemorial India has been recognized as a rural country and developing the rural areas has been the government's prime concern. While the potentials of proper planning could have been realized only after the Indians themselves assumed power to rule the country, the urge for planning and the keenness to undertake some type of planned action for uplifting the rural economy had begun several years before independence took place in actual (Ghosh, 1985).

Before the arrival of the British, Portuguese and French, India was a rich country and it attracted a many traders and invaders. But as the British settled and assumed power they began plundering India of its wealth rather than bringing about any socio-economic development (Naoroji, 1880). Problems were further added by recurrent famines and this led to India's rural economy being severely damaged. Rural development thus began as a humanitarian act for alleviating the sufferings of the Indians and rather, became a social practice without any executive or legal sanction (Mishra, 1983: 6).

In ancient India, the efforts made towards rural development are evident from the experiments made by various philanthropists and voluntary organisations (Lalitha, 2004:38-39). During 1860 onwards attempts on developing the villages were made by the Christian missionaries by an emphasis on cooperation among the people. The major efforts to fortify the living standard of the villagers were made by social reformers and nationalists (Jain, 2010:11).

In the pre-independence or pre-planning period, a large number of rural development efforts were initiated. Few of them disappeared and a number of them have still existed under different names by merging it with government sponsored schemes. The important rural development efforts during this period were:

In 1908, Rabindranath Tagore had set up the Rural Reconstruction centers in eight villages of Kalingram Pargana of West Bengal. Later in 1921, Tagore initiated the Sriniketan Rural Reconstruction centre with a view of making all round development in the villages through works under departments of animal husbandry, education, agriculture and village welfare. The idea of this experiment was however not well received by the government in those days (Lalitha, 2004: 38).

The Marthandum Project was launched in the same year 1921 by Spencer Hatch, it was based on attempts to bring complete development through economic,

social, religious, educational and physical reconstruction of the villages (Jain, 2010:11, Setty, 2002:25).

Then the Gurgaon Experiment of 1927 was launched by Frank Lugard Brayne. It aimed at the improvement of agriculture, education, health and social development (Lalitha, 2004: 38). Similarly other programmes were also started like the Sevagram Experiment of Mahatma Gandhi launched in 1937.

**Table 2.1 Rural development efforts in the pre- planning period.**

<b>Rural development efforts in the pre-planning period</b>		
<b>Name of the programme</b>	<b>Started by</b>	<b>Year</b>
Sriniketan project	Shri Rabindra Nath Tagore	1914
Marthandum project	Dr.Spencer Hatch	1921
Gurgaon experiment	F.L.Brayne	1928
Firka Development	Madras Government	1946
<b>Rural development effort in the early independence period</b>		
Etawah Pilot Project	Albert Mayor	1948
Nilokheri Experiment	S.K. Dey	1948
Sarvodaya programme	Shri Vinoba Bhave	1948-49

In 1946, the Firka Development scheme was initiated by the Madras government based on the constructive ideas of Mahatma Gandhi for organising a self sufficient village. After the immediate attainment of independence and before the commencement of the planned economic development model through the Five Year Plans (FYP), three significant programmes were launched. In 1948, a development project confined at Mahewa in Etawah district of Uttar Pradesh came into existence. This pilot project known as the Etawah Pilot Project was conceived by Albert Mayor with the aim of finding out how quickly a new method could be used for improving any villages (Mayor, 1958:37).

S. K. Dey was the founder of the Nilokheri experiment, launched in 1948. The main aim of launching this programme was to rehabilitate the displaced persons from Pakistan in the Nilokheri town (Setty, 2002:49). The scheme engaged the refugees in the constructive programmes assuring them the right to live, right to work and receive what they earned, the philosophy which came to be known as the ‘Mazdoor

Manzil' (Jain, 2010:11, Lalitha, 2004:40). But these early attempts were only irregular efforts and experiment. They did not last long mainly because they were individual initiatives helped by untrained staff towards fulfilling a holistic cultural approach. They also lacked people's participation and government's financial contribution (Lalith, 2004:40).

### **Rural development efforts during the planning period**

After India's independence in 1947, the planned economic development era began with the inception of the First Five Year Plan in 1951 under the Prime Ministers-ship of Jawaharlal Nehru. Since then the chief concern of the planner has been to focus on the rural sector to a great extent. In the beginning, the development planning sought to initiate a process of all round development for ensuring the rise in national income and improvement in the living of the people. The Indian government under the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), the apex body for formulating policies has implemented a number of programmes on an experimental basis for the development and welfare of the weaker sections of the Indian society. The aim of every Five Year Plan (FYP) has been towards the development of India along with the participation of the clientele of development (Kamala, 2014:1925).

### **The First Five Year Plan (1951-56)**

During the implementation of the First Five Year Plan, India was a newly attained independent country where poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition and poor standards of health had become a usual sight. This led to reconstructing India economically and socially. According to the Planning Commission Report (1952: 11), the First FYP's essential objective was to raise the standard of living of the people and to open to them opportunities for a varied life. For achieving this objective a comprehensive programme known as the Community Development Programme (CDP) was launched in 2, October 1952. This programme has been the first strategic programme for rural development in India (Gaur, 1992:1) which sought to initiate a process of socio-economic transformation of the villages through increased agricultural production, increased promotion of basic infrastructural facilities and basic services (Nayak, 2008:83).

The UN Report observed this programme as a process by which governmental efforts renovate the villages and then contribute to national progress (Reddy, 1988:63). The CDP was followed by launching of the National Extension Service Programme a year

later. The unit of development under this programme was the Block consisting of about a hundred villages. The idea behind this programme was to develop all spheres of village life in a coordinated manner but though it covered the countrywide rural areas it was much concentrated only on the social aspects of the community development activities.

### **The Second Five Year Plan (1956-61)**

By the time the Second FYP was made, the community development activities had extended all over India and in order to facilitate people participation in the village developmental efforts, the three-tier Panchayati Raj system was introduced in 1959 by the Balwantrai Mehta Committee (Nayak, 2008: 82, Naidu, 1990:7). According to the Planning Commission's Report (1956,185), the main objective of the Second FYP was to increase national income by 25 percent, to increase employment opportunities and to bring rapid industrialisation.

The Panchayati Raj system was followed by the launching of Village Housing Schemes in 1957 and Khadi and Village Industries Programme in 1957.

### **The Third Five Year Plan (1961- 66)**

The Third Five Year Plan laid emphasis on the reduction of poverty<sup>6</sup> and promotion of economic prosperity through self employment schemes. During this planning period, the Planning Commission brought a new process of involving the States in the preparation of National plans. The States were made to compile data relating to their resources, development and priorities. In this period, the Government of India launched the Integrated Agricultural District Programme (IADP) in 1962 and the Integrated Agricultural Area Programme (IAAP) in 1964 for achieving self sufficiency of food grains for the villagers. Other programmes of this period were the Applied Nutrition Programme, The Rural Industries Programmes and Rural Works Programme.

### **The Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74)**

By this time, the regional and sectoral disparities in social and economic conditions of rural people emerged and drew the attention of the government. 'Growth with stability' was the main objective of this planning period. In order to eliminate the disparities, special programmes like Small Farmers' Development Agency (SFDA), Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers' Development Agency (MFALDA), Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP) and Command Area Development Programme (CADP) were started.

The Drought Prone Area Programme was launched during the same period (i.e. in 1971) to promote the integrated development of areas. This programme was formerly known as the Rural Works Programme. The SFDA and MFALDA were set up during 1971-72 to deal with small farmers, marginal farmers and agricultural labourers by formulating special programmes to improve their economic condition. The Tribal Area Development Programme (TADP) was started in 1970-71 with the objective of bringing the tribal areas into the mainstream of economic development with the rest of the country. The Minimum Needs Programme (MNP) launched in 1974 during this plan period was to raise the standard of people living below the poverty line.

#### **The Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78)**

During this period the objective was changed as 'Growth for Social Justice' for improving the economic and social life of the poorest of the poor living in rural areas. In 1975, the 20-point programme was announced by the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi and then in 1977, the Desert Development Programme was launched with the objective of controlling desertification.

A new development strategy was also designed which is known as Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). The Integrated Rural Development Programme is a rural development program of the Government of India launched in Financial Year 1978 and extended throughout India by 1980. It is a self-employment program intended to raise the income generation capacity of target groups among the poor. The target group consists largely of small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers and rural artisans living below poverty line (BPL).

#### **The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85)**

The Sixth Plan, after taking into account the achievements and shortcomings of the earlier plans declared the removal of poverty as its main objective to be achieved. The major rural development programmes during this period were the Integrated Rural Development Programme, the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) and the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP).

The National Rural Employment Programme was launched in 1980's to provide supplementary employment opportunities to rural workers when they are not able to find a gainful employment.

The Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) is a centrally sponsored scheme in 1982 and the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) was introduced in 1983.

**Table 2.2 Rural development efforts in the planning period.**

<b>Plan Period</b>	<b>Rural Development Programmes After Independence</b>	<b>Year</b>
First Five Year Plan (1951-56)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Development Programme</li> <li>• Rural Health Service</li> <li>• National Housing Policy</li> <li>• National Extension Service</li> </ul>	1952 1952 1953 1953
Second Five Year Plan (1956-61)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land Reforms</li> <li>• Village Housing Schemes</li> <li>• Three tier system of Panchayati Raj</li> <li>• Khadi and Village Industries Programme</li> </ul>	1956 1957 1957 1957
Third Five Year Plan (1961-66)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive Agricultural District Programme</li> <li>• Rural Manpower Programme</li> <li>• Intensive Agricultural Area Programme</li> </ul>	1960 1960 1964
Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crash Rural Employment Programme</li> <li>• Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme (MEGS)</li> <li>• Small Farmers' Development Agency (SFDA)</li> <li>• Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers' Development Agency (MFALDA)</li> <li>• Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP)</li> <li>• Employment Guarantee Programme</li> <li>• Tribal Area Development Programme</li> <li>• Hill Area Development Programme</li> <li>• Command Area Development Programme (CADP)</li> </ul>	1970 1971 1971 1972 1971 1972 1972 1973 1974
Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated Child Development Services</li> <li>• Food for Works Programme</li> <li>• Minimum Needs Programme</li> <li>• Antodaya Programme</li> <li>• Whole Village Development Programme</li> </ul>	1975 1977 1977 1977 1977
Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated Rural Development Programme(IRDP)</li> <li>• National Rural Employment Programme (NREP)</li> <li>• Rural Landless Employment Guarantee</li> </ul>	1978-80 1980



	Programme (RLEGP)	1983-89
Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indira Awas Yojana (IAY)</li> <li>• Central Rural Sanitation Programme</li> <li>• Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY)</li> </ul>	1985 1986-87 1988
Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prime Minister Rozgar Yojana</li> <li>• Employment Assurance Scheme</li> </ul>	1993 1993
Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Midday Meal Scheme (MMS)</li> <li>• Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana</li> <li>• Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)</li> <li>• Samagra Awaas Yojana</li> <li>• Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)</li> <li>• Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY)</li> </ul>	1995 1999 1999 1999 2000 2001
Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Food for Work Programme (NFFWP)</li> <li>• Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission</li> <li>• National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)</li> <li>• Aam Admi Bima Yojana</li> </ul>	2004 2005 2006 2007
Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bachat Lamp Yojana</li> </ul>	2009
Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atal Pension Yojana</li> <li>• Deen Dayal Upadhaya Gram Jyoti Yojana</li> <li>• Digital India Programme</li> </ul>	2015 2015 2015

Sources: Planning Commission 2011; Lalitha, 2004:214-215.

### **The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-1990)**

The Plan expected a growth in the labour force of 39 million people and employment was expected to grow at the rate of 4 percent per year. Keeping this in view, the employment strategy emphasised increased cropping intensity, diffusion of technologies in rain-fed and low productive regions and promotion of labour-intensive infrastructure activity. The Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) and Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) were launched in 1985 and 1989-99.

### **The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-1997)**

The objectives of eight FYP included reduction in population growth, poverty and unemployment. A shift from relief type of employment to building up of durable

productive assets was the employment generation strategy. It aimed at the generation of 10 million person years of employment every year during the plan period. During this plan period JRY was again restructured in 1996 and the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) was launched in 1993-99.

#### **The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002)**

The ninth FYP ran through 1997 to 2002 with the main aim of attaining objectives like speedy industrialization, agriculture and rural development, human development, full-scale employment, poverty reduction, basic infrastructural facilities like education for all, safe drinking water and primary health care and self-reliance on domestic resources to prioritise agricultural sector and emphasise on the rural development. Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana (SGSY) is an initiative launched by the Government of India to provide employment to poor people living in rural areas of the country. The scheme was launched on April 1, 1999. The SGSY aims at providing self-employment to villagers through the establishment of Self-Help Groups (SHG). Activity clusters are established based on the aptitude and skill of the people which are nurtured to their maximum potential. Funds are provided by NGOs, banks and financial institutions. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) was launched on 25<sup>th</sup> December 2000 as a fully funded Centrally Sponsored Scheme to provide all weather road connectivity in rural areas of the country.

#### **The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007)**

The main goals of this plan period were the reduction of poverty by 5 percentages by 2007, providing gainful and high-quality employment to the labor force, increasing in wage rates by at least 50 percent by 2007 and attaining 8 percent GDP growth per year. During this period various programmes were launched like National Food for Work Programme (NFFWP) in November 14, 2004 and the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission in 2005.

The features of SGRY and NFFWP however were merged as NREGS in 2005. These programmes were supported by the Central Government and State Governments on the basis of sharing. Moreover, Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme (MEGS), which commenced in 1965, continued to be an important state-level wage-employment by the executive agencies, managed, and controlled by the government itself with little involvement of the legislature and the people.

### **The Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007–2012)**

The targets set during this period was to double per capita income by 2016-17, to reduce the educated unemployment to below 5 per cent, raising real wage rate of unskilled workers by 20 percent and to reducing the headcount ratio of poverty by 10 percentage points are some of the targets of Eleventh Five Year Plan. In addition to these, the government has put some targets under Millennium Development Goals to reduce the poverty and unemployment. The Bachat Lamp Yojana was launched in 2009.

### **The Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017)**

The Planning Commission's focus on this plan period has been on instilling inclusive growth making. The plan is expected to be one that encourages the development of India's agriculture, education, health and social welfare through government spending. It is also expected to create employment through developing India's manufacturing sector and move the nation higher up the value chain Atal Pension Yojana, Deen Dayal Updhayay Gram Jyoti Yojana was launched in 2015.

### **Potentials and Challenges of Rural Development Programmes in India**

Rural development is a dynamic process, which is mainly concerned with the rural areas. Development is a multi-dimensional concept, which involves all kinds of development in rural areas through collective governmental and voluntary agencies' efforts in our country, where the majority of the population dwells in villages. The national development becomes almost synonymous with rural development. Although the Indian economy is the fourth largest in the world the growth pattern is not uniform. India's growth in services and communications have improved substantially but in more important sections like agriculture, infrastructure development, and community and social services are still lagging behind. India cannot shine without the shining of rural India. The visible symbols of development should not make us forget the problems of rural India (Chatterjee, 2007).

The real scenario of rural India is faced with multiple development challenges in the field of population, natural resource, pollution, education, employment, health and infrastructure.

- **Population:** Increasing population which causes severe pressure on natural resources and the environment. **Natural Resources:** Depleting natural resources,

resulting in the insecurity of food and employment, compelling about 40 percent of the rural population to live in poverty.

- **Pollution:** Pollution of the environment and climate change, are causing a shortage of clean drinking water and creating an adverse impact on agricultural production.
- **Education:** Poor access to education, resulting in low literacy and unemployment of the youth. While the average literacy rate in rural areas is around 50-65 percent it is as low as 20-25 percent among women in backward areas. Education of girls was felt to be unnecessary in the past and this has seriously affected their quality of life. Illiteracy has also hindered their development due to lack of communication with the outside world. They are slow in adopting new practices, which are essential for the changing times. Low literacy rate, particularly among women having an adverse effect on their skills development, employment productivity, family welfare and education of their children.
- **Health:** Poor health status due to lack of clean drinking water, hygiene, sanitation and drainage facilities; inadequate health care facilities, leading to high child mortality and morbidity; loss of labour productivity, economic loss, indebtedness and poor quality of life; The rate of infant mortality in rural India is marginally higher than in the cities on account of poorer access to safe drinking water, sanitation and health care support. Urban India has 15 times the number of beds and four times the number of doctors per capita compared to rural India. Not only is there an acute shortage of medical personnel, but doctors and medical workers are absent 40 percent of the time in rural public health facilities.
- **Infrastructure:** Poor infrastructure for receiving timely information on development opportunities, market demand and prices for agricultural commodities, new technologies, forward and backward linkages, credit facilities and development policies of the government.

In a country like India, agriculture is the main base of all rural areas but due to a considerable decrease in the growth in agriculture the investment and profitability in agriculture also has been decreased. The farmers of rural India have therefore practised crop rotations, in spite of the measures taken up by the farmers crop failures prevail due to unpredictable climatic variations, no profit in meeting the cost of cultivation and burden in debts have become the massive cause of frustration and also the leading cause of suicide.

Since agriculture is the main sustainable livelihood it is important to accelerate time bound programmes to minimise the deceleration. Rural development implies both the economic betterment of people as well as greater social transformation. The basic objective of all rural development programmes has been the welfare of the millions. In order to achieve this, planned attempts have been made to eliminate poverty, ignorance and inequality of opportunities. A wide spectrum of programmes has been undertaken so far, to alleviate rural poverty and ensure improved quality of life for the rural population especially those below the poverty line. In the initial phase of planned rural development, the concentration was on sectors of agriculture industry, communication, education and health. The Ministry of Rural Development places importance now on health, education, drinking water, housing and road so that the quality of life in rural areas improves and the fruit of economic reform are shared by all sections of the society.

After independence, a number of development programmes were started to change the scenario in the rural areas. The government has initiated, sustained and refined many rural development programmes under different five year plans. Enormous funds have been spent, yet alleviation of poverty has remained a distant dream. Rural poverty is inextricably linked with low rural productivity and unemployment, including under-employment. There is a basic issue of providing livelihood security, basic enticements to the rural population. Infrastructural gaps require to be filled and connectivity with urban areas requires to be strengthened (Chauhan, 2014:2). With time and experience, it is realized that accelerated and meaningful development can be achieved only if people of the grass root are involved, “people’s participation” has become the keyword in rural development programmes. The participation of the people is necessary to provide the rural people with better prospects for economic development.

However, promoting development in rural areas is a slow and complex process. It requires simultaneous action in various sectors, in an environment undergoing rapid, sometimes volatile change. The change comes from internal as well as external processes such as privatization and globalization, by forces appearing scattered and disparate (Bauman, 1998).

Globalization is a major source of change. It is a complex process, consisting of global penetration of finance and market, information and media, technology and culture, transport and tourism, and even crime. Liberalized trade regimes as well as more integrated and consumer driven agricultural and food markets are globalizing rapidly

and driving innovations, forcing farmers to adapt or lose out. At the country level, it is increasingly the system of growers-packers-exporters of a country that competes with the business system of another country, and not necessarily business entities independently (Matopoulos et al).

Rural development programmes are suffering from some maladies and drawbacks that is why it has not been implemented successfully. Some of the hurdles or obstacles are discussed below. Internally, the economy growing at a phenomenal rate, combined with a flourishing democracy is making people sit up and take notice across the world. The country remains shackled in corruption, red tape, age old social barriers and a puzzling lack of transparency. The procedures for the release of subsidy and credit give in abundant to corruption. Growth is not uniform across sectors and large cross-sections of the populace remain outside its purview. Several social, political and economic factors need to be tackled for sustaining a high rate of growth, as well as to make this growth inclusive. Elimination of child labour, women empowerment, removal of caste barriers and an improvement in work culture are just a few of the things the Indian society needs to introspect on. Tackling corruption in high places, removing the ills of the electoral system, shunning politics of agitations and keeping national interest above petty politics may not be too much to ask of the country's policy makers. Rapid growth in the rural economy, well planned and targeted urban growth, infrastructure development, reforms in education, ensuring future energy needs, a healthy public-private partnership, intent to secure inclusivity, making all sections of society equal stakeholders in growth, and above all good governance will ensure that India achieves what it deserves. In the midst of a transformation to a network economy with a shift from markets to networks, from quantities to qualities, from commodities to niches, and from supply-driven to demand-driven large chains, the rural development programmes in India have suffered from shortcomings, some of which are mentioned below:

- Fund shortage and delay in fund transfer: The size of the block, population and incidence of poverty has been avoided while allocating funds for programmes. In certain cases the programme did not have a meaningful link with the speed of poverty.
- One of the main reasons for a large number of beneficiaries are not been able to cross poverty line has become reported to be the inadequacy of assistance made available by loan and subsidy.

- Complicated banking procedures: The Banking procedures being very complicated confuse the applicant.
- Lack of training for implementing agencies and non-availability of managerial skills at the field level is also one of the main hurdles. Training of extension personnel and non-officials has been a significant and conspicuous activity as a means and as a necessary prerequisite for effective rural development. The development personnel are found to lack the right attitude and the conviction for improvement. Training of diverse nature offered at different stages in the career of extension personnel has come to stay as an integral part of rural development (Setty, 2002).
- Lack of planning: The total absence of planning at district and block levels had resulted in a casual approach to the implementation of the programme.
- Lack of community participation: Peoples participation in rural development is a central feature and an unquestionable complement for success and sustainability of any development programme. Besides these the people are failed to educate or institutionalize for participation in the developmental activities (Setty, 2002).
- Weak monitoring and verification systems: Though a greater emphasis is laid on stakeholders by the governments at the centre and state, monitoring and evaluation are not paid serious attention thereby rendering in efficient (Chandra Dass, 2004). No serious attentions are given to reports, return and collection of reliable information. Assigning of monitoring and evaluation duties is not properly done. The guidance is neither provided nor is the beneficiaries enquired about the utilization of loans.
- No comprehensive data-base due to the lack of co-ordination between District Rural development Agency (DADA), the Block and other departments, which cause problems in preparation of proper household survey and plans, and development of perspective and Annual action plans to reflect a balanced mix of sectoral priorities based on local needs and resource availability. No proper records are maintained with regard to the meeting of target groups and stakeholders.

- Lack of awareness among the rural people about the schemes and various developmental programmes due to inefficient management in the Government sector.

### **Advantages of developmental programmes**

Some of the gains of these developmental programmes are:

- Increased in Income Beneficiaries: Even if all the beneficiaries have not been able to go above the poverty line, there has been an increase in income at varying degrees in different regions of the country.
- There have been increases in the number of earning members in households.
- The period of employment per month has increased.
- The administrative machinery has also been considerably strengthened which can be judged as a success of the rural development.
- The rural development programmes are acting as an instrument of socioeconomic changes, which are being taken place in rural areas. With peoples participation the progress made in this direction is far from satisfactory.

### **Issues and remedies - Future perspectives**

- 1) There is not a proper co-ordination between various rural development programmes. All the rural development schemes require being integrated or coordinated effectively.
- 2) There should be a proper co-ordination among activities of different credit providing institutions.
- 3) The existing system of supervision, inspection and guidance for rural development programmes should be strengthened, by regular monitoring and follow-up of the beneficiaries by the staff of the implementing agency. Provisional guidance should be provided for monitoring and follow-up to the beneficiary as also periodic verification of physical possession of the assets, their maintenance, gradual economic improvement of the beneficiaries status.
- 4) The block level plan should be prepared so that optimum utilization of local resources can become possible.
- 5) For the removal of tendencies of wrong identification of beneficiaries, awareness should be generated among rural masses.



- 6) Most rural development programmes provide finance to agriculture, allied sector and small business activities to increase the monthly income of rural people. So linkage of rural development programmes with Social Forestry schemes as it is more job oriented.
- 7) Wasteland can be provided to the rural poor for purposeful income generating plantation by growing trees for providing fodder for cattle and small fire wood for rural poor.
- 8) Rationalisation of Subsidy, certain conditions should be imposed on the plantation of trees and crops so that a million families living below poverty line will be brought above the poverty line.
- 9) Good and dedicated political leadership, efficient administration, proper monitoring, people's participation and awareness are equally important to elevate poverty from various angles. Only financial assistance will not prove meaningful unless the efficient system of programme implementation is established.

Thus, rural development programmes in future can be implemented taking the above mentioned perspectives.

## Endnotes

1. Urbanisation is the process by which large numbers of people become permanently concentrated in relatively small areas, forming cities. It involves a shift in population from rural to urban locations, transforming rural as well as urban landscapes and livelihoods. Almost inevitably, urbanisation involves changes in demographic, economic and environmental flows between rural and urban areas, though not always in predictable ways.
2. Industrialisation or Industrialization is the period of social and economic change that transforms a human group from an agrarian society into an industrial one, involving the extensive re-organisation of an economy for the purpose of manufacturing. It is a marked departure from a subsistence economy that is largely agricultural towards a more mechanized system of production that entails more efficient and highly technical exploitation of natural resources in a highly formal and commercialized economic setting.
3. Globalization refers to the growing interdependence of countries resulting from the increasing integration of trade, finance, people, and ideas in one global marketplace. International trade and cross-border investment flows are the main elements of this integration.
4. An official count or survey of the population at a given point of time is known as a census.
5. Arthashastra is an ancient Hindu treatise on state craft, economic policy and military strategy written in Sanskrit by Kautilya, a scholar in Takshashila during the reign of the Mauryan Empire.
6. Poverty is a state or condition in which a person or community lacks the financial resources and essentials to enjoy a minimum standard of life and well-being that's considered acceptable in society. Rural people can be said to be in poverty when they are deprived of income and other resources needed to obtain the conditions of life—the diets, material goods, amenities, standards and services— that enable them to play the roles, meet the obligations and participate in the relationships and customs of their society.

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## CHAPTER 3

# MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME: PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION

### Introduction

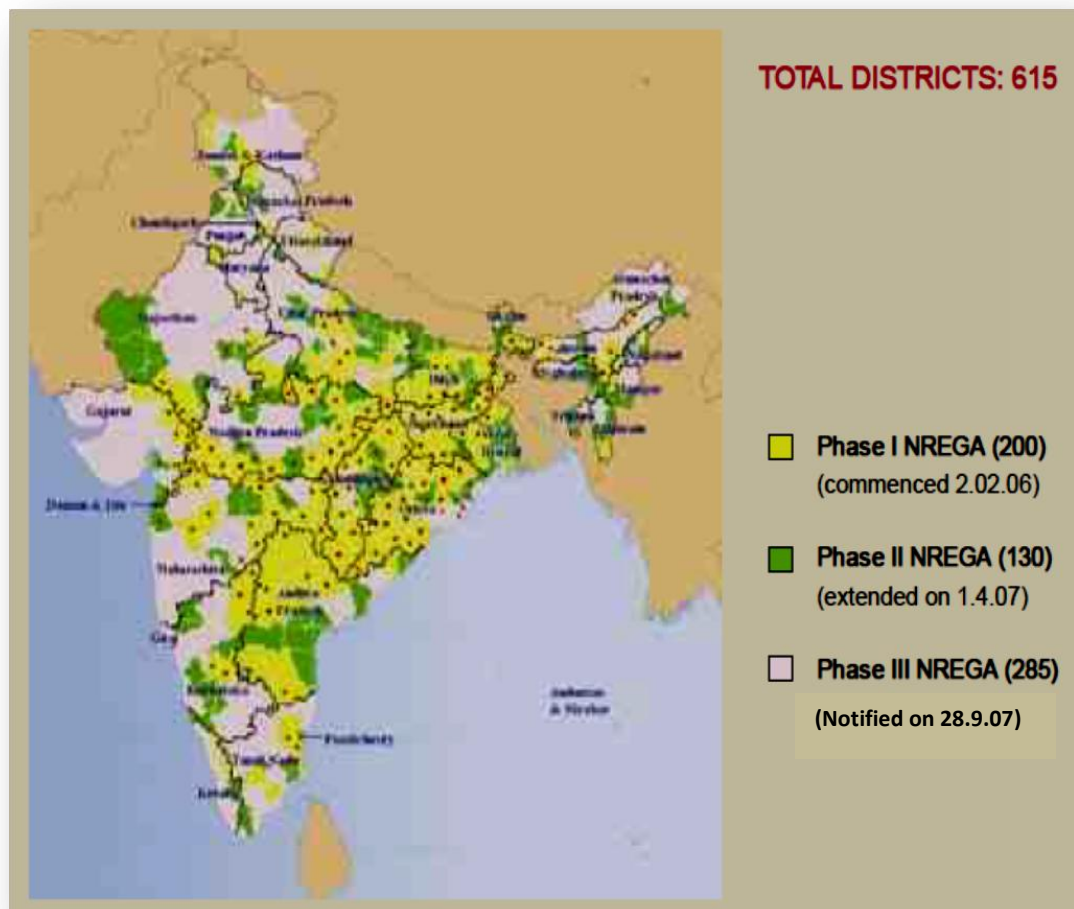
An investigation of various crisis situations throughout the world, suggests that the impact of a single crisis can be deep and enduring especially on the poverty and employment levels (ILO, 2008: 54, OECD, 2008:1). The speed with which different countries recover from crisis and shocks remains dependent on their ability to progress from the tragedy. In such situations, creating a sufficient number of jobs solely through market driven mechanisms can be a challenge even in the best of times because there is widespread globalisation, financial liberalisation and economic restructuring (Miller et al, 2010:7). Due to the presence of not many unemployment benefits and social security schemes in most developing countries, public work programmes which include a direct approach to job creation and improvement conditions to sustain livelihoods of the poor are attracting attention to manage shocks and make the outcomes of growth more inclusive. Rural development programmes or public works programmes have long been considered as a staple of social assistance programmes. Primarily their focus has been on poverty reduction or on addressing unemployment challenges but more recently, they have been designed as a ‘safety net’ (Miller et al, 2010:4). Poverty eradication, employment generation and social protection have been major objectives of development planning process in India. The central and the state governments have been implementing many schemes and trying to make sufficient allocations for the provisions of health, education and other facilities for the well being of the rural people (Gawande and Hoekman, 2006: 528).

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (NREGA) was passed on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2005 and enforced on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006. This Act has been acknowledged as being different from its forerunners, as it guarantees employment as a legal right. The first state to launch the Employment Guarantee act was Maharashtra under the former Chief Minister late Vasant Rao Naik. He had launched it as the revolutionary Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme which proved to be extremely

effective towards alleviating the dismal condition of poor farmers and landless labourers in villages of Maharashtra which had been struck by two ferocious famines. The Planning Commission of India after studying the degree of success of the Maharashtra scheme and found it quite an effective way for targeting poverty by functioning it as a cash transfer programme.

Later the same scheme was implemented on all India level by the central government in the form of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, ensuring 'right to work'<sup>1</sup> for the rural Indians. With its legal framework and rights-based approach, NREGA aimed at providing employment to all those who demand it. NREGA is the first ever law internationally, that guarantees wage employment at an unprecedented scale. The scheme covered 200 of the most backward districts of the country initially in 2006 in Phase I, followed by 130 additional districts in 2007 in Phase II and then in 2008, it was expanded to all the remaining districts of the country.

**Fig 3.1 Coverage of districts in phases under MGNREGS**



Source: [http://nrega.nic.in/circular/Report\\_to\\_the\\_people.pdf](http://nrega.nic.in/circular/Report_to_the_people.pdf).

This landmark initiative confers a legal right to employment on the rural people by guarantying employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled work.

The Act was renamed as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2009. The main objective of MGNREGS is to ensure livelihood security of the rural poor by generating wage employment opportunities, to create productive assets for the communities and to ensure women equality in work outside their homes. The government reports refer to it as an act of the people, by the people and for the rural people.

### **Objectives of MGNREGS**

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme since its initial year of implementation has aimed in the following:

- To ensure social protection for the most vulnerable people living in rural India through providing employment opportunities, on demand of the people, not less than one hundred days of unskilled manual work in a financial year to every household <sup>2</sup>,
- To create productive assets of prescribed quality and durability through wage employment,
- To ensuring livelihood security for the poor through creation of durable assets, improved water security, soil conservation and higher land productivity
- To proactively ensure social inclusion and empowerment of marginalized communities especially women, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), through the processes of a rights-based legislation,
- To strengthen decentralization and deepen the process of democracy by giving a pivotal role to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)<sup>3</sup> in planning, implementation and monitoring, and
- To infuse transparency and accountability in governance.

MGNREGA with its strong objectives emerged as a powerful instrument for inclusive growth in rural India through its focused based aims on social protection, livelihood security and democratic governance. It also pioneered the Governments essential welfare policies <sup>4</sup>, foregrounding its development obligations as citizen's rights.

## **Salient Features of MGNREGS**

The features of the scheme correlate also to the process of registering oneself under the scheme, receiving a job card, demanding for job, being a part of the workforce, receiving facilities, earning wages and thereby managing their expenditure on daily needs.

i. **Applying and registering**

The adult members of every rural household residing in any rural area who is willing to do unskilled manual work may apply for registration either in writing, or orally to the local Gram Panchayat (GP)<sup>5</sup>. The unit for registration is a household. Under the Act, each household is entitled to a 100 days of employment in every Financial Year (FY).<sup>6</sup>

ii. **Getting a Job Card**

After due verification of place of residence and age of the adult member, the registered household is issued a Job Card. The Job Card forms the basis of identification for demanding employment. Each Job Card having a unique identification number is to be issued within 15 days of registration. The demand for employment in the Gram Panchayat or at block level has to be made against the Job Card number. Job Cards are also supposed to be updated with days of work and payment made to the beneficiary as and when the work is undertaken.

iii. **Application for Work**

When a written application stating the time and duration for seeking work is made to the Gram Panchayat or to the Programme Officer (PO) of the Block Office, the local authority has to issue a dated receipt of the written application for employment, against which the guarantee of providing employment within 15 days begins to operate.

iv. **Getting an unemployment allowance**

When an adult member is not provided employment within 15 days, the state, according to the rules of the scheme has to pay an unemployment allowance to the beneficiary.

v. **Provision of Work**

For allocating work to the beneficiaries, it must be ensured that work is provided within 5 kilometers radius of the village. In case, work is provided beyond 5 kms, extra wages of 10 percent has to be paid to meet



additional transportation and living expenses. Priority has to be given to women, such that at least one-third of the beneficiaries under the Scheme have to be women and at least 50 per cent of works, in terms of cost, are to be executed by the Gram Panchayats (NREGA, Schedule II:6).

vi. **Getting wages**

Wages have to be paid according to the State-wise Government of India (GoI) notified MGNREGA wages and it has to be done on a weekly basis and not beyond a fortnight in any case. Payment of wages is mandatorily done through the individual/joint bank/post office beneficiary accounts. Provisions also favor for equal pay for equal work between men and women

vii. **Planning**

Plans and decisions regarding the nature and choice of works to be undertaken in a Financial Year along with the order in which each work is to be taken up, site selection, etc. has to be made in open assemblies of the Gram Sabha (GS) <sup>7</sup> and ratified by the Gram Panchayat. The district provides the work through a selection of works from a list of permissible works (Schedule I). The scheme focuses on different category of permissible works which are as follows:

- Water conservation and water harvesting structures to augment and improve groundwater like underground dykes, earthen dams, stop dams, check dams with special focus on recharging ground water including drinking water sources,
- Micro and minor irrigation works and creation, renovation and maintenance of irrigation canals and drains,
- Afforestation, tree plantation and horticulture in common and forest lands, road margins,
- Food control and protection work including drainage,
- Improving the productivity of lands,
- Works related to the rural infrastructure, rural connectivity to unconnected villages and to connect identified rural production centers to the existing pucca road network, and

- Any work which may be notified by the Central Government in consultation with the State Government in this regard.

viii. **Cost Sharing**

The Government of India bears 100 percent wage cost of unskilled manual labour and 75 per cent of the material cost, including the wages of skilled and semi-skilled workers.

ix. **Worksite Management**

The scheme prohibits the use of contractors or machinery in the execution of the works so that the workers are directly benefitted. To ensure that the spirit of the Scheme is not diluted and wage employment is the main focus, MGNREGS mandates that in the total cost of works undertaken in a Gram Panchayat, the wage expenditure to material expenditure ratio should be 60:40. Worksite facilities such as crèche, drinking water and shade have to be provided at all worksites (NREGA 2005, Schedule II: 28).

x. **Transparency and Accountability**

Transparency and accountability in the programme are ensured through Social audit<sup>8</sup> to scrutinize all the records and works under the Scheme are to be conducted regularly by the GS. Grievance redressal mechanisms and rules have to be put in place for ensuring a responsive implementation process. All accounts and records relating to the Scheme should be available for public scrutiny

Almost all the rights based features of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme have been inherited from previous wage employment programmes (WEP), including the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme. The impetus to recreate the wage employment programme as law under MGNREGS can be credited to the political manifesto of the Congress party.

### **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in India**

The most significant rural development initiative of the Eleventh Plan period has been the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Initially, the scheme faced implementation problems from many states. Though it is difficult to analyze the performance of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme through its impact on 100 days of the lives of rural people, it is

worth mentioning that this important scheme brings silent revolution in the rural areas. This scheme has had a different consequence at different levels in various districts ranging from the participation, the rise in income and changes in socio-economic conditions of the affected area to altering the social dynamics.

During the year 2014-15, 5 crore households were given employment and a total of 134.80 crore persondays of employment have been generated. Of the 134.80 crore employment generated, 31.5 crore were SCs, 21.09 crore were STs and 73.3 crore were women. A total of 5,63,32,402 crore work were taken up of which 11,70,000 lakhs have been completed.

### **Performance of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee**

#### **Scheme in India**

Over the years, MGNREGS has delivered the largest employment programme in human history, which is unlike any other in its scale, architecture and thrust. It has been a bottom-up, people centered, demand-driven, self-selecting, rights-based design is new and unprecedented. Never have in such a short period so many crores of poor people benefited from a Government programme.

#### **Households provided employment, earnings and livelihood security**

MGNREGS's record on the parameter of employment generation has been much compared to its predecessors. Since 2006, the total number of households provided employment throughout India has ranged from 2.1 crore to 12.72 crore in the financial year 2015. The number of households provided employment was 4.51 crore in the FY 2008- 2009. Till 2008, about 25 million households had benefitted from about 857 million person days employment generated. In 2011–12, nearly 5.00 crore families were provided over 211 crore person-days of work under the programme. In the financial year, 2012-13, 4.16 crore households were provided employment and 141 crore persondays of employment were generated. Till 2015 MGNREGS has generated 1348 crore person-days of employment (official website).

A panel survey conducted by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) on the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA in 3 states also shows that the Scheme provides work at a time when no other work or alternate employment opportunities exist. The Scheme has also contributed to ensuring greater food security, monthly per capita expenditure, savings etc.

From FY 2006-07 up to FY 2015 over Rs. 1,29,000 crore has been spent on wages. This is almost 70 percent of the total expenditure. The Scheme's notified wages have increased across all States since 2006. The average wage earned per beneficiary has risen from Rs. 65 per person day in 2006, to Rs. 115 by 2012 and Rs 169 in 2015.

A report by a global research organization indicates that for the first time in nearly 25 years, growth in rural spending outpaced urban consumption between 2009-10 and 2011-12. It also concluded that the increase in rural consumption is driven in significant part by the scheme.

### **Financial Inclusion**

To ensure transparency in the deliverance of wages to the MGNREGS beneficiaries and to reduce chances of misappropriation by the middle men in the process of wage payment, the Government of India authorized that all MGNREGS wage payment should be made through banks and post office accounts directly in the accounts of the beneficiaries. As a result, nearly 8.6 million accounts have been opened and around 80 percent of payments have been carried out through these means. In this way, the scheme has bought much improvement in the financial and social security provision of the rural sectors. If year wise report is examined in 2008, 27.1 million bank accounts were opened in the rural areas with zero balance requirements for wage payments under the scheme. As much as 7, 06 million bank accounts and 3.22 million post office accounts have been opened in 2014-2015, and in the FY 2015-16, 7.30 million and 3.30 million bank and post office accounts have been opened.

Almost 80-90% of the rural people have been for the first time being included in the financial network of the country. Though financial inclusion was not one of the many provisions of the scheme, but still the scheme has assumed achievement in it (Mathew and Kalika, 2011:47).

### **Inclusive Growth**

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has been a self-targeted programme, targeting the rural poor in general, and the marginalized groups<sup>9</sup> in particular. The trends in the participation of marginalized groups have been remarkable. The share of participation of marginalized sections namely, the Scheduled Castes (ST), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) in the number of workdays created at the national level has been as high as 40 to 60 per cent across each of the years of the Scheme's implementation.

Surveys conducted in 2008, reveals the majority of the schemes beneficiaries belonging to the disadvantaged sections of the society (Dreze and Khera, 2009: 4). In FY 2011–12, 40 per cent of the total person-days of employment were provided to SCs and STs as according. In the case of both SCs and STs, the participation rate exceeds their share in the total population. In the FY 2014-15, out of 1.55 million total numbers of person-days worked by households, 34 crore were the total person-days worked by Scheduled Castes and 26 crore were the total person-days worked by the Scheduled Tribes. According to the FY 2015-16, out of 1.44 million total numbers of person-days worked by households, 33 crore were the total person-days worked by Scheduled Castes and 24 crore were the total person-days worked by the Scheduled Tribes .

A study conducted by Dreze and Khera in 2009, in Uttar Pradesh indicates a similar level of participation. Further the works done in private lands of the marginalized since 2011-2012 indicates 20 lakh individuals benefiting under this category. There has hardly been any development programme that involves SC's and ST's participation without any reservation or quota. Clearly, the scheme has acted as a powerful tool of economic redistribution, social equity and has in fact become a positive indication for the country (Dreze and Khera, 2009:3; Ghosh, 2009). The Scheme also provides an alternative source of income for rural labourers, raising the reservation wage and implicitly offering labourers bargaining powers in an otherwise inequitable rural labour market. The Scheme has provided labourers (particularly those who are in debt bondage or contract labour with a dignified choice of work. MGNREGS has also reduced distress migration from traditionally migration-intensive areas.

### **Women Empowerment**

As a rural wage employment programme the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme mandates that a minimum of one-third of the beneficiaries are women who have registered and have requested for work. This offers a unique opportunity for the rural women who rarely get a chance to earn their income (Dreze and Khera, 2009:8). At the national level, the participation of women in the Scheme has surpassed the statutory minimum requirement of 33 percent. With 40 percent of total person-days worked by women in the financial year 2006 to 2007, to 43 percent in the year 2007-2008 and 55 percent beneficiaries as women in 2013-14, around Rs 62,000 crore have been spent on wages for women. Their participation under

the Scheme has been much higher than in all other forms of recorded work as the scheme creates a decent and favorable working condition (Ghosh, 2009). As the scheme stipulates a work of within 5 kilometers of the village where the job applicant resides makes women participation broader and who would have otherwise remained unemployed or underemployed (Dreze and Khera, 2011:50).

With an increased rate of participation and large amounts being spent on wages for women, suggest a positive impact of the Scheme on the economic well-being of women. The Scheme has also led to gender parity in wages. The NSSO 66th Round indicated that MGNREGA has reduced traditional wage discrimination in public works. Access to economic resources has also had a favorable impact on the social status of women, for example, women have a greater say in the way the money is spent in households.

However, there have been differences in women's participation all over India. There has been a higher participation of women from the southern Indian states compared to the northern states. The southern states, like Kerala and Tamil Nadu, show a higher rate of participation in MGNREGA as compared to their overall work participation in all recorded works. Among the northern and some eastern states, however, the pattern has been different with proportionately fewer women working in the Scheme than in other rural work with Rajasthan is the only exception. These gaps are especially marked in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, where women participation in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme are low (Ghosh, 2009).

Some of the possible factors responsible for a high rate of participation of women in few states of India are due to

- **Social factors:** Culture plays a dominant role in defining a women's place in the society. A more egalitarian kinship structure is found in some states of India particularly the southern India while the communities in the north are patrilineal in structure (Dyson and Moore, 1983). Thus, cultural acceptance of female participation in various political, social and economic spaces leads to higher women participation in the scheme.
- **Economic factors:** An abundant supply of female workers in the labor market is another reason why women participate and get empowered. The private sector pays women Rs 40 to Rs 100 for a day's work in

agriculture while men earn Rs 250 to Rs 500 a day in the agricultural and construction sectors (Bonner et al, 2012:38). In contrast, under MGNREGS, the wages ranged from Rs 60 to Rs 80 a day, for both men and women in 2006 and in 2014-15 from Rs 150 to Rs 169. As a result, most men prefer private sector employment. While women earn less in private sector agriculture, they prefer MGNREGS.

- **Institutional factors:** The presence of effective institutions at the state and local government level are factors promoting female participation in MGNREGS. The provision of the Act to provide worksite services like crèches have made a significant impact on women's participation. The absence of contractor from the worksite is another institutional factor that has led to favorable women's participation.
- **Civil societal factors:** The influence of numerous, active women's self-help groups (SHGs) also have an impact on women empowerment. The role of community-based organisations and Self-Help Groups has been important in mobilizing and organizing the poor women to increase their participation.

Women rely heavily on natural common property resources like water and fuel and are more severely affected by climate change and natural disasters because of their social roles. Since MGNREGS plays an important role in natural resource regeneration, the Scheme seems to be strengthening livelihood security for women with the use of which these women are able to spend their money to avoid hunger, repay small debts, paying their child's schooling and make their living conditions better.

### **Natural resource regeneration and sustainable development**

Creation of sustainable assets that strengthen the livelihood resource base of rural areas has been one of the key objectives of MGNREGS. Around 146 lakh works have been carried out under the scheme since its inception, and priority has been given to activities related to water harvesting, groundwater recharge, drought-proofing, and flood protection. Its focus on eco-restoration and sustainable livelihoods will lead over time, to an increase in land productivity and aid the workers in moving from wage employment to sustainable employment. Almost 53% works relate to soil and water conservation.

Mahatma Gandhi NREGA works focus on regenerating the rural ecosystem and creating rural infrastructure that supports sustainable livelihoods. MGNREGA has faced criticism on the quality and sustainability of the assets created under it. Critics of the Scheme argue that since employment generation is the primary objective of the Act, the works undertaken are labour-intensive and tend to be non-durable and have limited use (Bassi, 2010). However, when planned and implemented well, MGNREGA works have led to a rise in ground water, improvement in soil quality and reduction in the vulnerability of production system to climate variability. However, the extent and kind of impact of MGNREGA work on the environment depend on the scale of the activities undertaken, the technical design, the quality of assets created and ownership and use of physical structures constructed. A study found that due to check dams created under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, the percolation potential of the villages studied improved by 1,000–28,000 cubic meters a year. Construction of percolation tanks also improved recharge in the watersheds considered.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Guarantee Scheme has ensured social protection through providing employment to the marginalized rural communities, elimination of poverty and implemented in all the districts of India, this scheme provides employment to around 5 crore households on an average, every year. The approach paper to the Twelfth Plan of the Government of India states that ‘with a people-centered, demand driven architecture completely different from the earlier rural employment programmes, MGNREGA has led to the creation of 987 crore person-day of work since its inception in 2006-07. In the financial year 2010-11, MGNREGS provided employment to 5.45 crore households generating 253.68 crore person-days. During the financial year 2014-15, a total of 36009444 households were provided with employment, 12125.27 person-days in lakh were generated (Madhusudan, 2014).

### **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in West Bengal**

West Bengal is the fourth-most populous state of India with a population of 9.13 crore (Census of India, 2011). The state is situated on the eastern part of the country and stretches from the Himalayas in the north to the Bay of Bengal in the south. It is situated between 21°30' North latitude & 27° 30' and 85° 30' & 89°45' East longitude and has the tropic of Cancer running across it. The state has a total area of 88,752 square kilometers in which about 72% live in the rural areas covering 96% of the total geographical area of the whole region (Dutta and Sengupta, 2014:1-23). With a large



rural population in West Bengal a number of rural development programmes have been implemented including the Indira Awas Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, Sarva Sikhsha Abhiyan and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

The West Bengal Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme was framed to provide employment as per Section 4(1) of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005. The West Bengal Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme came into force from February, 2006. It was enforced in different parts of the states in three phases. The main responsibility for implementing the scheme in the district is given to the Panchayats and Rural Development Department of West Bengal. The scheme seeks to create durable assets, improve rural connectivity, to ensure sustainable ways of living and strengthen the basic needs of the rural poor through its 100 days of wage employment legal right. However, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Schemes works are also focused on land and water resources which include water harvesting and conservation, soil conservation and protection, irrigation provisioning and improvement, renovation of traditional water bodies, land development and drought proofing. Thus, MGNREGS also has the potential to generate environmental benefits such as ground recharge, soil, water and bio-diversity conservation, reducing land degradation, control rainfall, drought and floods (MoRD, 2012).

In the first phase MGNREGS was implemented in 10 districts of Bankura, Birbhum, Malda, Purulia, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakhin Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Murshidabad, South 24 Parganas and Paschim Midnapore. In the second phase it was implemented to 7 districts of Purba Midnapore, Hooghly, Burdwan, Nadia, North 24 Parganas, Coochbehar and Darjeeling in the year 2007 and in the final phase in Howrah in 2008 (Biswas, 2005: 95).

**Table 3.2 Coverage of districts in phases under MGNREGS in West Bengal**

<b>PHASE I</b>	<b>PHASE II</b>	<b>PHASE III</b>
1. 24 Parganas (South)	1. 24 Parganas (North)	1. Alipurduar
2. Bankura	2. Burdwan	2. Howrah
3. Birbhum	3. Coochbehar	
4. Dakshin Dinajpur	4. Hooghly	
5. Uttar Dinajpur	5. Nadia	
6. Jalpaiguri	6. Purba Medinipur	
7. Maldah	7. Darjeeling / Siliguri	
8. Murshidabad	Mahakuma Prishad	
9. Paschim Medinipur		
10. Purulia		

Sources: www.nrega.nic; Ramsundar and Shubhabrata, 2013; Biswas, 2010.

### **Performance of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in West Bengal**

During the year 2014-15, 45 lakh households were given employment and a total of 16.9 crore person-days of employment have been generated. Of the 16.9 crore, 5.46 crore were SCs, 1.42 crore were STs and 7.02 were women. Around 48,50,942 lakh works were undertaken which comprised of water conservation, rural sanitation, land development, fisheries and rural connectivity. Further, 1.19 crore of job cards were issued in the year showing an increase from the earlier year which included 1,17,420 in 2013-14. The table below shows the performance of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme during the year 2014-15 in the state of West Bengal.

**Table 3.3 Progress of MGNREGS during the year 2014-15 in India and West Bengal**

<b>Financial Year 2014-15</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>West Bengal</b>
<b>Total person days generated (In crore)</b>	<b>134.80</b>	<b>16.9</b>
<b>SC's (in crore)</b>	<b>31.5 (23%)</b>	<b>5.46</b>
<b>STs' (in crore)</b>	<b>21.09 (16%)</b>	<b>1.42</b>
<b>Women (in crore)</b>	<b>73.3 (54%)</b>	<b>7.02</b>
<b>Job card issued (in crore)</b>	<b>12.72</b>	<b>1.19</b>
<b>Total works completed (in lakh)</b>	<b>11,70,000</b>	<b>48,50,942</b>

Source: www.nrega.nic.in

So far as the state of West Bengal is concerned in terms of performance of MGNREGS, during the year 2013-14, 1,17,42,605 crore job cards were issued. A total of 22,96,34,013 crore person-days of employment had been generated and out of the 22 crore total person-days generated, 7.69 crore were SCs, 2.21 crore were STs and 8.19 crore were women. As much as 35,41,908 lakh of work were undertaken in the year. Though Darjeeling district of West Bengal was awarded for 'Leadership in improving MGNREGS Implementation' in the year 2013-14 on the basis of experts and screening committees, in comparison to other states of India, West Bengal has been termed poor in terms of implementation of the scheme. According to the Central Government in the year 2015, MGNREGS in the state has targeted to achieve only 3 percent of the total works (Ali, 2015).

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>The Indian constitution refers to the Right to Work under the ‘directive principles of state policy’. It is urged in Article 39 that the State shall ensure “the citizens, men and women equally, the right to an adequate means to livelihood”, and that “there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Further, the Article 41 stresses that “the state, shall within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing right to work...”
- <sup>2</sup>A household is defined as members of a family related to each other by blood, marriage or adoption and they are supposed to be residing together and sharing meals.
- <sup>3</sup>Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are systems of rural local governance in India. They are the prime instruments of decentralization at the grassroots level of administration, namely in the village, block and district.
- <sup>4</sup>Welfare policies refer to ‘those collective interventions that contribute to the general welfare by assigning claims from one set of people who are said to produce or earn national income to another set of people who may merit compassion or charity’ (Titmus, 1963:16).
- <sup>5</sup>A Gram Panchayat is the primary unit of the three-tier structure of local self governance in rural India that was created through the Panchayati Raj System. Each Gram Panchayat consists of one or more villages.
- <sup>6</sup>A Gram Sabha is a body of all persons entered as electors in the electoral roll for a Gram Panchayat. All the meetings of the Gram Sabha are convened by the Gram Panchayat to disseminate information to the people as well as to ensure that development of the village is done through participation or consent of all households.
- <sup>7</sup>Social audit refers to the audit and scrutiny of all processes and procedures under the Scheme, including documents and records of wage payments, muster rolls etc and the work done.
- <sup>8</sup>The term marginalization refers to individual or groups who live at the margin of society. They are often referred as the vulnerable groups. Their situations may be either be historical or cultural and in the Indian context, the marginalized social groups are primarily the Scheduled Castes (SCs), the Scheduled Tribes (STs), the Other Backward Castes (OBCs) and the Muslims. Historically, these groups have

suffered discrimination and have been excluded from the mainstream economic and social spheres in India in one way or the other and thus have been called as groups living in the margins of the society.

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## CHAPTER 4

### MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME AND ITS IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS: LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

#### Introduction

Public works programme or rural development programmes have a long history in India. It has been the only means through which the rural poor utilize their unskilled, casual and manual labour for earning a living. The rural poor are often on threshold levels of subsistence and are vulnerable to the possibility of sinking from transient to chronic poverty. At times inadequate labour demand or unpredictable crises like natural disaster or ill-health, all adversely impact their employment opportunities. In this context workfare programmes have important interventions and schemes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme which was launched in 2006 all over India provide multiple benefits to the people. This programme provides unskilled manual workers with short-term employment on public works such as irrigation infrastructure, road construction, reforestation and soil conservation. It also provides income transfers to poor households during critical times and acts as a means of earning for consumption, especially during slack agricultural seasons or years. In a country like India with high unemployment rates, transfer benefits from workfare programmes prevent poverty from worsening, particularly during lean periods. Durable assets that Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme creates have the potential to generate second-round employment benefits when the works leading to infrastructure is developed. The scheme has led to various outcomes all over India and in West Bengal. Thus, to analyze the impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme on the livelihood of rural poor a survey was conducted in Naxalbari block, of Darjeeling district of the state of West Bengal.

#### Overview of Darjeeling District

The name 'Darjeeling' comes from the Tibetan words, 'Dorje' meaning, thunderbolt and 'Ling' meaning a place or land, defining Darjeeling as the land of the thunderbolt. In 1835, Darjeeling was acquired by the East India Company from Sikkim. Prior to

that, Darjeeling formed a part of Sikkim and for a brief period of Nepal (Sharma, 2014: 4).

Darjeeling district forms the northernmost district of the state of West Bengal in eastern India in the foothills of the Himalayas. The district is famous for its beautiful hill stations and is often referred to as the Queen of the Hills. It is surrounded by two important neighbouring countries namely, Nepal and Bhutan in the eastern and the western side and by the state of Bihar and the district of North Dinajpur in the southern and the state of Sikkim in its northern side. Thus being encircled by international boundary with the countries, this district has remained a place of immense strategic importance since last 200 years. The rivers Mechi, De Chu, Mahananda, Rangit, Teesta and Rangpo also form the natural border of the district. Darjeeling district is located between 26° 31' to 27° 31' North Latitude and 87° 59' to 88° 53' East Longitude at an average elevation of 6982 ft (2128m).

**Fig 4.1 Map of Darjeeling District**



Source: www.mapsofindia.com



**Table 4.1 Darjeeling District Profile**

District Headquarter	Darjeeling
Area	3,149 km <sup>2</sup>
Location	26° 31' to 27° 31' North Latitude 87° 59' to 88° 53' East Longitude
Altitude	6982 ft
Density	590/km <sup>2</sup>
Total Population	18,42,034
Urban Population	7,27,963 (39.42%)
Rural Population	1,118,860 (60.5%)

### **Population**

The population growth of Darjeeling district is not static rather it is fluctuating in nature. The total population of the people of Darjeeling district was 10,06,434 in 1981 and it increased to 13,35,687 in 1991 ( Census of India). A comparison of the census of a decade between 2001 and 2011 shows that in 2001, the total population of the district was 1,609,172 out of which there were 830,644 males and 778,528 females and according to 2011 census, the total population of the district is 18,42,034 out of which there have been 9,34,796 males & 9,07,238 females.

The district also comprises of both urban and rural areas. Out of the total population, 7,27,963 (39.42%) people live in urban area and it includes 370,294 males and 357,669 females. On the other hand, 11,18,860 people (60%) live in the rural areas of the district which include 5,66,965 males and 5,51,895 females (Census of India,2011)

### **Geography**

Geographically, the district can be divided into two broad divisions, the hills and the plains. The entire hilly region of the district initially came under the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, a semi-autonomous administrative body, which was replaced by the Gorkha Territorial Administration under the state government of West Bengal. The council covers the three hill subdivisions of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong. The foothill of Darjeeling Himalayas, which comes under the Siliguri subdivision, is known as the Terai. The Terai is bounded on the north by the mountains, on the south

by Kishanganj district of Bihar state, on the east by Jalpaiguri district and on the west by Nepal. It has a length from north to south of 18miles, and a breadth from east to west of 16miles. As of 2011 it is the second least populous district of West Bengal after Dakshin Dinajpur.

### **Administrative subdivisions**

Darjeeling is also the districts headquarter and altogether it comprises of 687 villages, 17 police stations, 12 community development blocks, 4 municipalities, 1 municipal corporation and four subdivisions.

The Sub-Division wise distribution of the Community Development Blocks and Urban Local Bodies are as follows:

1. Darjeeling Sadar Sub-Division consisting of Darjeeling Pulbazar, Rangli Ranglot and Jorebunglow–Sukhiapokhri Community Development Blocks and Darjeeling Municipality.
2. Kalimpong Sub-Division consisting of Kalimpong–I, Kalimpong–II and Gorubathan Community Development Blocks and Kalimpong Municipality.
3. Kurseong Sub-Division consisting of Mirik and Kurseong Community Development Blocks, Kurseong Municipality and Mirik Notified Area.
4. Siliguri Sub-Division consisting of Matigara, Naxalbari, Phansidewa and Kharibari Community Development Blocks and Siliguri Municipal Corporation.

There are 134 Gram Panchayats in the district with 1390 Gram Sangsad and 12 Panchayat Samities. Unlike other districts in West Bengal, three-tier Panchayet system under the Darjeeling district exists only in Siliguri Sub-Division. For 112 Gram Panchayats in the hill Sub-Divisions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong, the operational Panchayat system is of single tier only the Gram Panchayat. As a result, out of the total 134 Gram panchayats, three tier systems are functional only in 22 Gram Panchayats of Siliguri Sub-Division.

### **Siliguri Subdivision**

Siliguri is situated at the base of the Himalaya mountains in the plains of Darjeeling District by the side of river Mahananda. It is the second largest city in West Bengal and known as the gateway of North-Eastern India. The strategic location of the place makes

sure that travelers to the North-East has to pass through Siliguri. It is also the commercial capital of the region. The Sub-Division is bounded on the north by the Sub-Himalayan ranges and on the south by Bangladesh, Uttar Dinajpur and Bihar. To its east lies Jalpaiguri District and Kalimpong Sub-Division and on the west by Nepal. Siliguri got its Sub-Divisional status in the year 1907 and it has got four Community Development Blocks, namely, Matigara, Phansidewa, Naxalbari and Khoribari block and one municipal Corporation area known as Siliguri Municipal Corporation under its administrative jurisdiction. The Sub-Division comprises of 7 Police Stations and 22 Gram Panchayats and three Assembly Constituencies.

- Siliguri municipal corporation
- Matigara (Community development block) consists of rural areas with 5 gram panchayats and one census town: Bairatisal.
- Naxalbari (Community development block) consists of rural areas with 6 gram panchayats and one census town: Upper Bagdogra.
- Phansidewa (Community development block) consists of rural areas only with 7 gram panchayats.
- Kharibari (Community development block) consists of rural areas only with 4 gram panchayats.

This study is based on evaluation of the scheme on the overall quality of life of people living in Naxalbari block. Naxalbari is a village and also the name of a community development block in Darjeeling district of the state of West Bengal. It comes under the jurisdiction of Siliguri subdivision of Darjeeling District along with the other 3 blocks namely, Khoribari, Matigara and Phansidewa.

### **Naxalbari Block**

The Naxalbari block consists of one town and rural areas further consisting of 6 Gram Panchayats, namely, Gossainpur, Hatighisa, Lower Bagdogra, Moniram, Naxalbari and Upper Bagdogra. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has been implemented in Darjeeling district in 2007.

Out of 6 Gram Panchayats in Naxalbari block, 3 Gram Panchayats Units (GPU) has been purposely selected. Out of these 3 gram panchayats also 3 villages/ sansads were randomly chosen, namely from Naxalbari Gram Panchayat - Budh Karan jote was selected, from Gossainpur gram panchayat - Bharat Singh was selected and from Lower

Bagdogra - Roop Singh Jote was randomly selected. Though 100 beneficiaries were chosen as a sample, due to constraints of workers being engaged in other daily activities, a total of only 85 MGNREGS beneficiaries could be analyzed. This was also because when the survey was carried in the months of August and September, the MGNREGS work was not carried out. By way of structured survey schedule open-ended questionnaires, data on several variables were collected from these beneficiaries who are part of the Scheme.

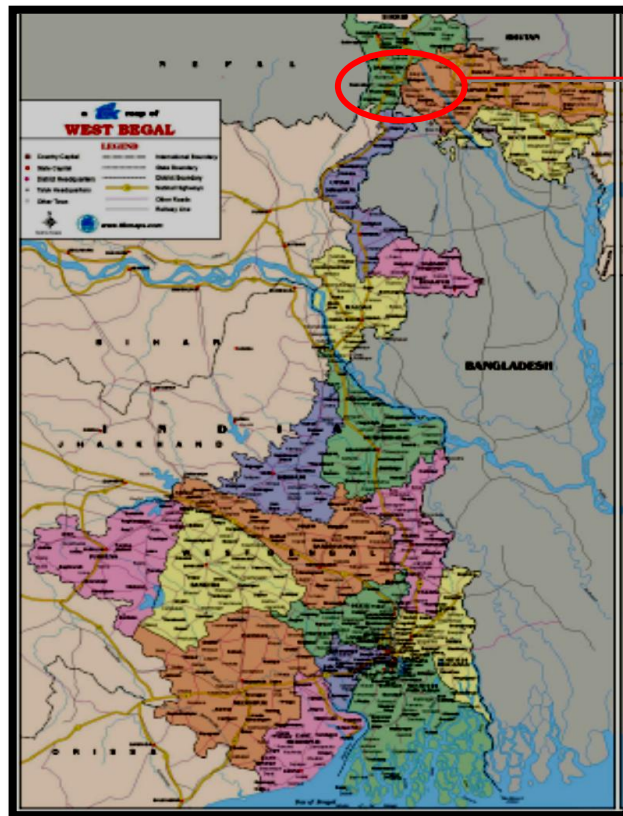
In each GPU, responses were collected according to the attendance of the beneficiaries near their worksites. The survey was carried out through questionnaire and face to face interview. A Before-after method has also been applied to assess the impact of the scheme on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries. The livelihood security has been measured in terms of different parameters.

The different parameters associated with livelihoods or the improvements of overall quality of life of people that have been taken into consideration during the survey are

- i. Impact on income – earning levels of each household,
- ii. Impact on Expenditure on food and non-food items,
- iii. Impact on Household and cultivable assets creation by the beneficiaries,
- iv. Impact on People participation,
- v. Impact on Poverty level, and
- vi. Impact on Empowerment,

The study also captured the impact of the scheme that features the views and feedback of the beneficiaries on the implementation of the scheme at grass root level right from the stage of issue of job cards, application of allowance, unemployment, provision of work, wages and type of work. With the above set of objectives, the study was carried out in Naxalbari Block of Darjeeling district by targeting 85 beneficiaries and the structured survey schedule comprising of various questions has been interpreted and analysed under various features.

**Fig.4.2. Map of West Bengal**



Source: [www.google.co.in](http://www.google.co.in)

**Fig 4.3. Map of Naxalbari Development Block**



Source: Block Development Office.

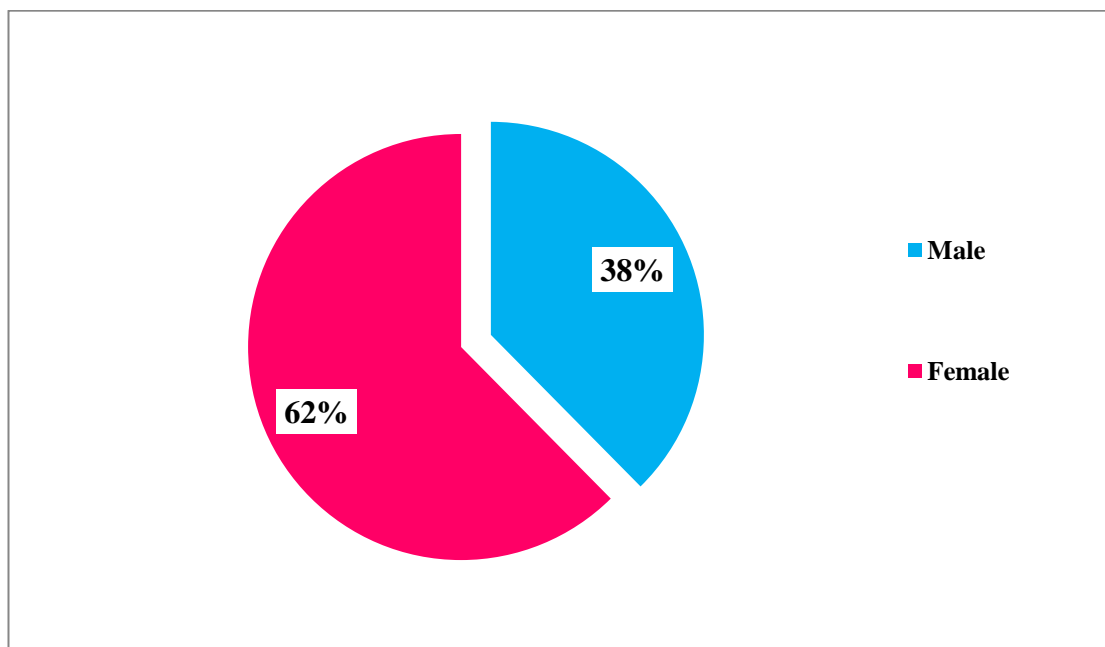
### Characteristics of the respondents

A survey of 85 respondents was carried out in the month of August and September by using structured questionnaire and interview. The respondents were confined to the areas of Gossainpur, Lower Bagdogra and Naxalbari Gram Panchayats.

### Gender

Gender discrimination has been a problem of the Indian society and there has been growing acceptance of the implementing gender focused goals of development. MGNREGS at the rural level also tries to incorporate these gender equity development goals.

**Fig. 4.4 Distribution of the respondents on the basis of gender.**



Source: Field survey

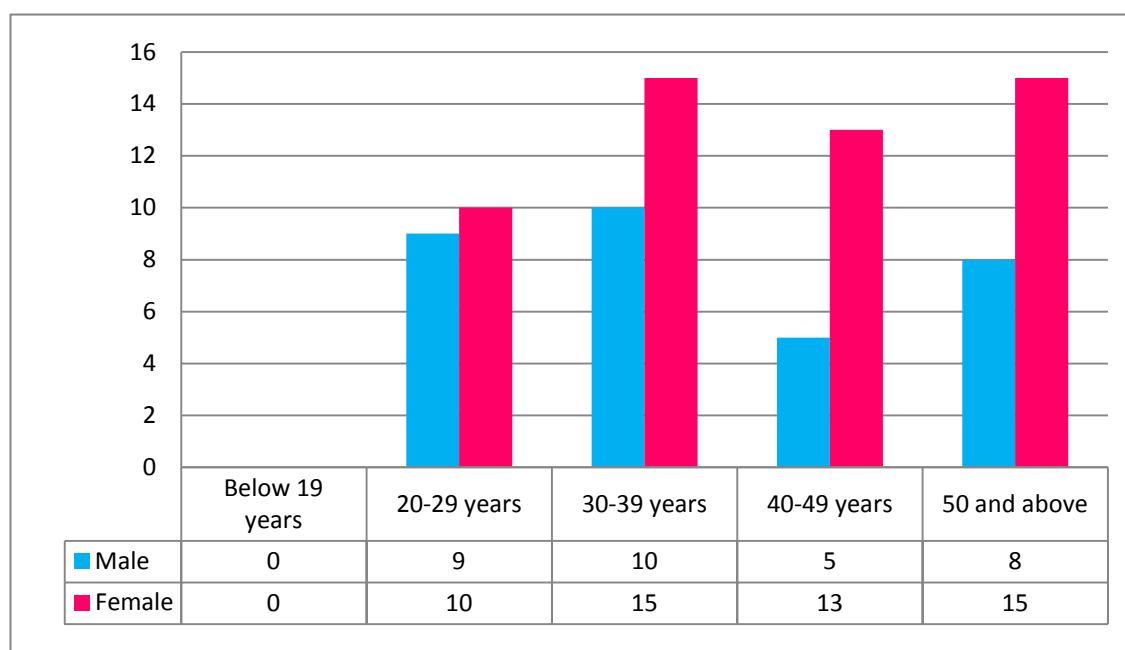
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme provides employment to any adult member of a rural household who is willing to do unskilled manual labour for 100 days. It also tries to promote the participation of women in the workforce through a one-third quota or reservation. In accordance to the total of 85 respondents who were surveyed 38% (32 respondents) were males and 62% (53 respondents) were females. Along with engaging in household activities like cooking, cleaning, washing etc women are found to be working under this scheme due to its various provisions of the scheme (Holmes et al, 2011:2). The scheme provides for work

is to be provided within five kilometers of the residence of a worker. Therefore, women’s participation in the work has been reasonable. Working at a distant place is difficult for women who happen to take the main responsibility of household chores. Secondly, there is less chance of exploitation of their labour. There is a statutory minimum wage, and hence wage earned in MGNREGS work is much more than the works carried out under a private place. Thirdly, there are regularity and predictability of working hours and is limited to eight hours a day, which is seldom expected in other works.

### Age

Age is recognized as an important variable to determine the strength of working physically. Different age groups have variations in life and social experiences which affect their ways of living. Any adult member of rural household is capable of working under the scheme.

**Fig. 4.5 Distribution of the respondents on the basis of the age.**



Source: Field survey

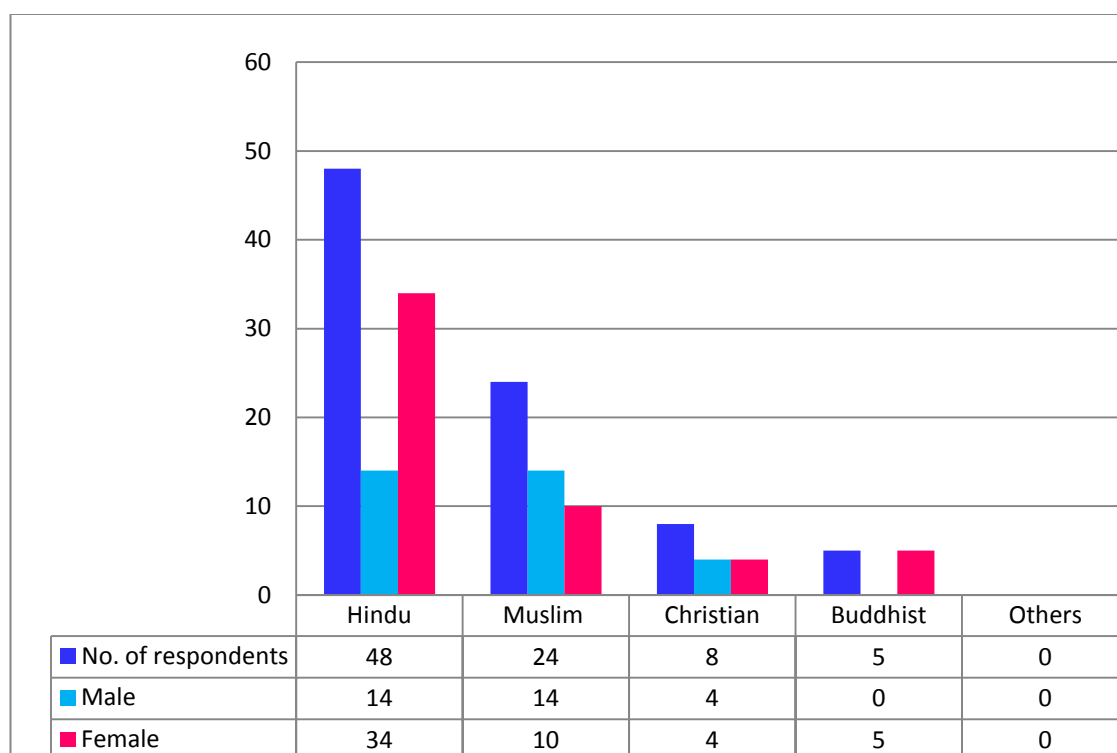
The figure 4.5 represents a graph on the 85 responses surveyed in Naxalbari block. There were a total of 53 females among whom 10 females were under the age group of 20-29 years, 13 were between the age of 40-49 years, 15 were between 30-39 years and the remaining 15 also belonged to 50 years and above. As far as the males were

concerned, 9 of them were of 20-29 years of age, 10 of them were 30-39 years, 5 of them were 40-49 and 8 of them belonged to 50 and above age group. The age group between 20 to 39 years is generally considered to be the most vibrant and energetic age where the desire to accomplish goals are on high. Youths are better able to access economic and social opportunities share in economic growth, live healthy lives, and contribute to the household, community, and national wellbeing. The extraordinary concern of this representation is that maximum respondents are of the age group of 40 and above. This means that older men and women even at this age too, are trying to work outside their homes to have a sustainable living. Few old women were residing in the houses where there were no earning members, their son and daughters had left them for jobs in big towns and had not been sending money.

### Religion

The constitution provides for a secular republic with all religion offered equality under the law. MGNREGS also provides no discrimination on the basis of religion. People from all religions can freely be a part of the workforce.

**Fig. 4.6 Distribution on the basis of religion of the respondents**



Source: Field survey

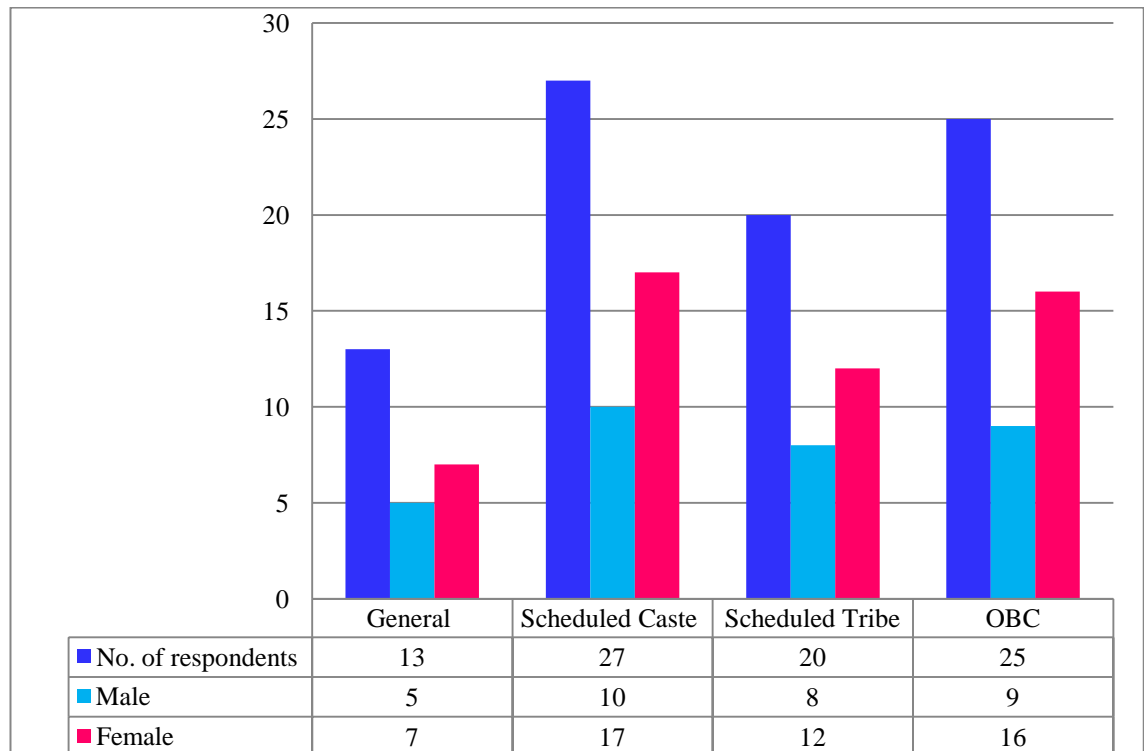


Religious profile of the population is an important socio-cultural and demographic feature in India. The figure 4.6 shows the religious category of the respondents. A maximum of 48 respondents (14 males and 34 females) working under the scheme belonged to the Hindu religion. Some Hindus had been converted into Christians as they thought changing their religion would help their children to get into good schools and improve their daily living. 24 of them (14 males and 10 females) were of the follower of the Muslim religion, 8 respondent (4 males and 4 females) were Christians and 5 of the respondents women were Buddhists. No male respondents were Buddhist from Naxalbari area.

### Caste

The Indian society is characterized by high degrees of structural inequalities based upon organization of people in caste and ethnic groups (Thorat et al, 2007: 1). Caste system in India has existed for thousands of years and it operates by dividing society into a number of hierarchical groups by birth.

**Fig 4.7 Distribution based on the caste category of the respondents.**



Source: Field survey

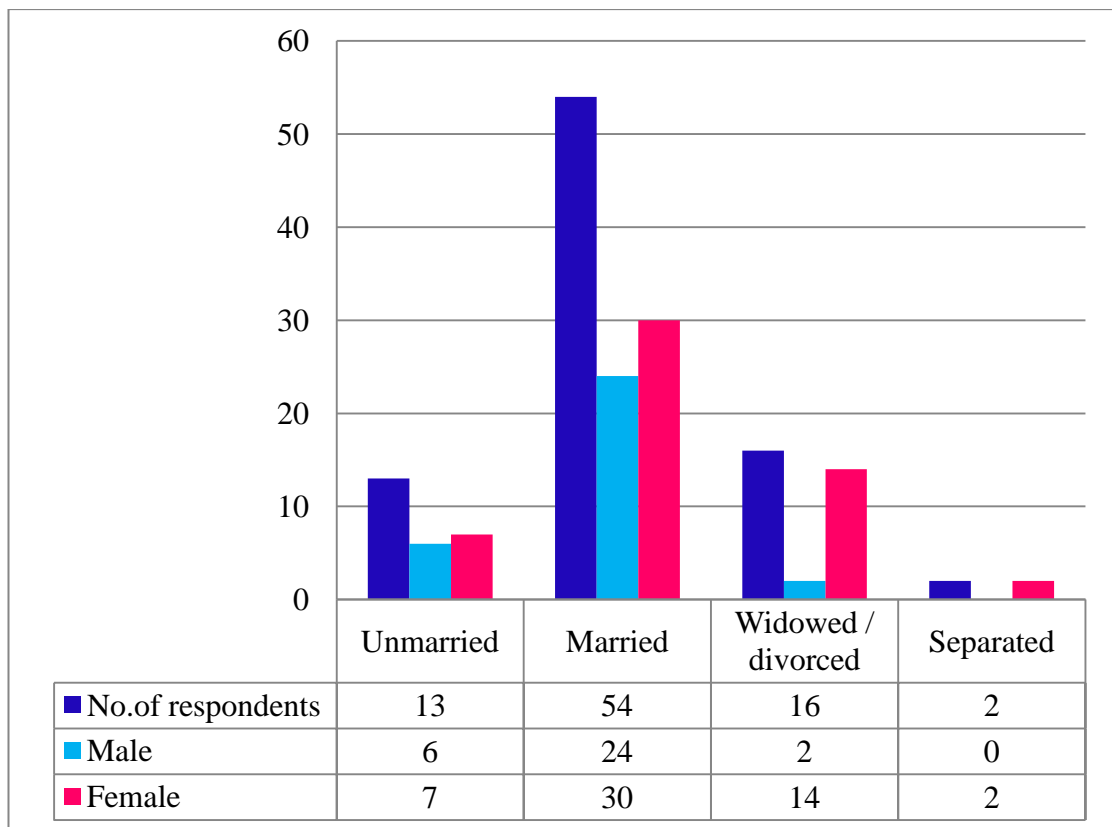
Caste based division is another means of classifying the Indian population. This classification denies social mobility and differentiates lower castes and classes from all

other forms of social life. Lower caste and tribal groups have remained at the bottom of socio-economic hierarchy and in acute poverty.

Maximum people living in Naxalbari block are marginalized groups namely the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes. Thus, most of the respondents or surveyed in the field belonged to these groups. Out of the total 85 respondents, 27 of them belonged to the Scheduled Caste category (10 were males and 17 were females), 25 respondents belonged to the Other Backward Class category (9 of them were males and 16 were females) and 20 respondents belonged to the ST category (8 males and 12 females). The remaining 13 of the respondents belonged to the general category (5 were males and 7 were females). Thus, the survey reveals that participation of rural marginalised groups in MGNREGS is very high in the surveyed region.

### Marital status

**Fig 4.8 Distribution on the basis of marital status of the respondents**



Source: Field survey

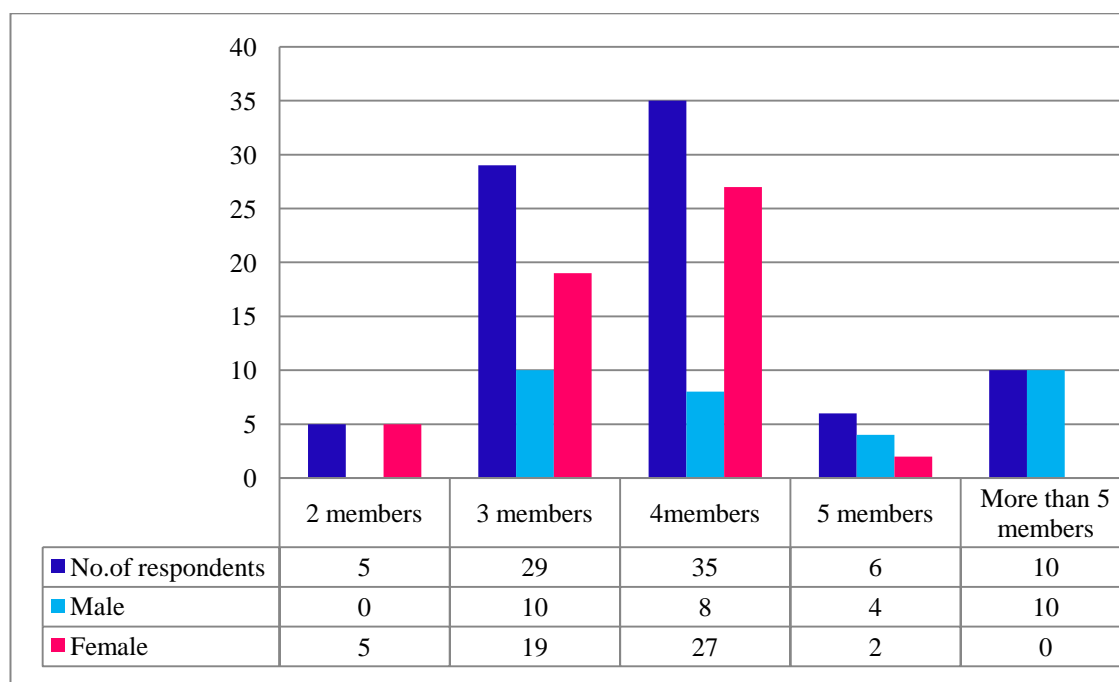
Of the 85 respondents surveyed, 24 male respondents and 30 women respondents of the survey were married. The 30 married females had taken the decision of working in the

scheme by themselves without the decision of their husbands. The scheme has provided them the means of supporting their husband in the daily expenses and making a sustainable family life. The number of unmarried respondents was 13, they had been unable to get employed elsewhere and thus, they did not want to miss the opportunity of legally being employed and earning by themselves and helping in the household income. 16 respondents were widowed and divorced. Among them 14 females were widows and 2 females had separated from their husbands. These women were compelled to protect themselves and for this purpose, they came forward and started working in various places and also joined MGNREGS to earn an extra income.

### Number of family members

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme provides employment to an adult member of a rural household for a period of 100 days in a year.

**Fig. 4.9 Distribution based on the number of the family members of the respondents.**



Source: Field survey

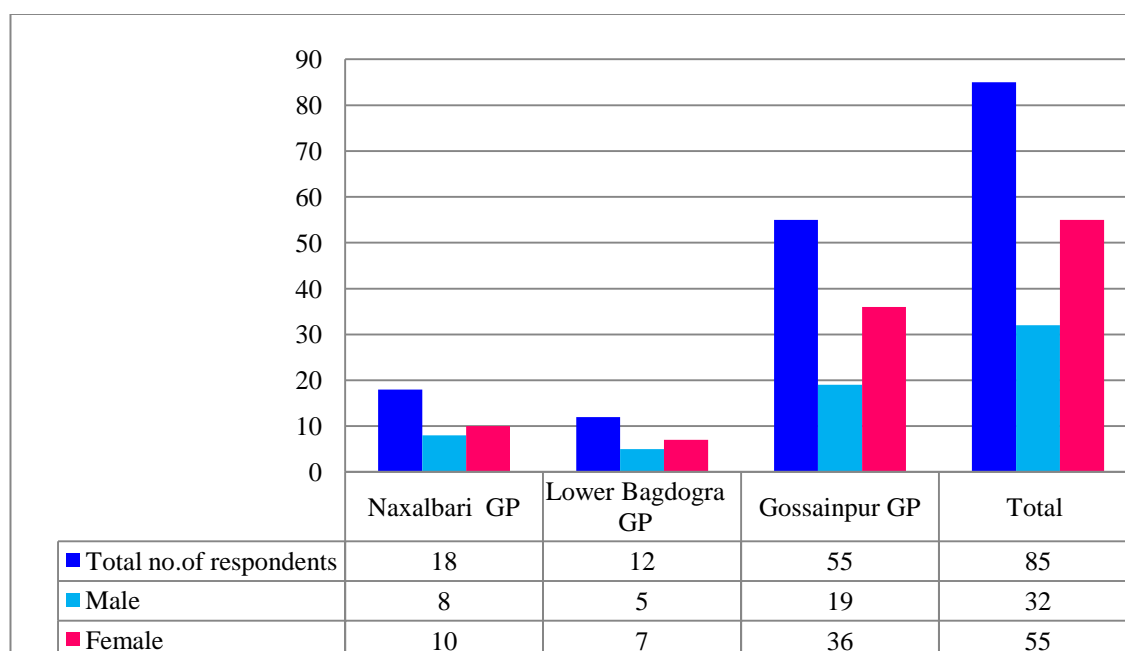
As per the rules of the scheme, an adult member of a rural household must be willing to do unskilled manual labour for 100days. Therefore, it becomes the sole responsibility of the adult member to earn an extra income for fulfilling the needs of his or her family. The Fig 4.9 shows the number of family members the respondents. Within a total of

85, only 5 respondents (5 females) had 2 members in their house, 29 respondents (10 males and 19 females) had a family comprising of 3 members. A maximum of 35 respondents (8 males and 27 females) however had 4 member family which means that with an increase in their number of members more resources was essential for sustainable living. The remaining 6 respondents had 5 members and other 10 respondents had more than 5 family members. This shows that with the increase in the number of members, demands to be accomplished also increases. With the opportunity of MGNREGS, every household in the rural area of Naxalbari block has been satisfying their family need to some extent.

### Gram Panchayat

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme mandates the Gram Panchayat for the implementation, planning and execution of the procedures related to the works of the scheme. Gram Panchayat is the primary unit of the three-tier structure of local self-governances in rural India, the Panchayati Raj System. Each Gram Panchayat consists of one or more villages. The Naxalbari block of North Bengal consist of 6 Gram Panchayat Units.

**Fig. 4. 10 Distribution of the beneficiaries on the basis of Gram Panchayats.**



Source: Field survey

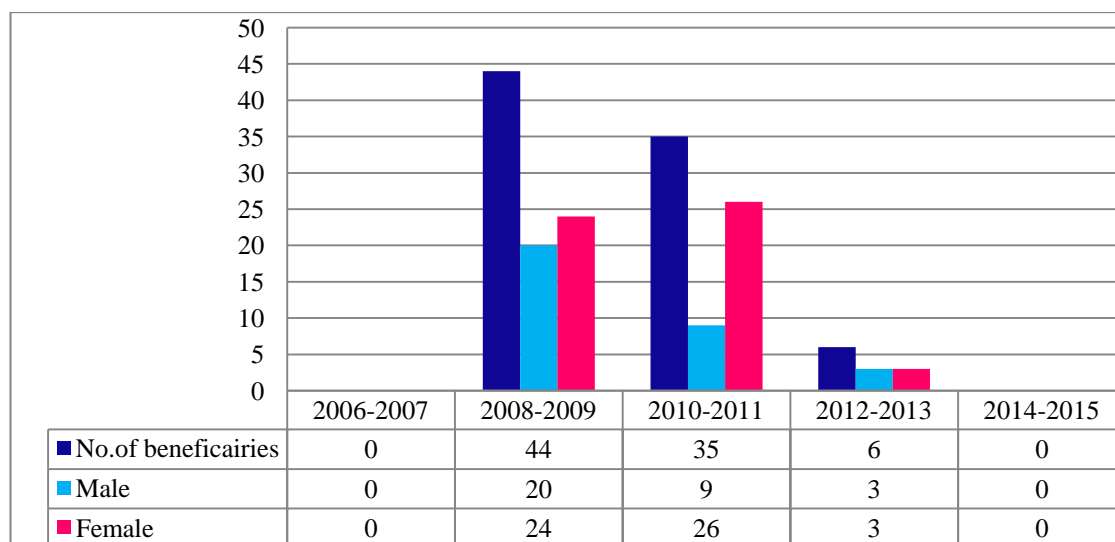
The enhancing of livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year

to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work under the MGNREGS scheme in the Naxalbari block of Darjeeling District is executed through 6 Gram Panchayat Units. Due to constraints of time, three Gram Panchayats were surveyed to analyse the impact of MGNREGS on the livelihoods of rural poor. The above figure 4. 10 represents a survey conducted on 85 respondents. Out of the 85 respondents, 12 respondents were residents of Lower Bagdogra Gram Panchayat unit and 18 respondents were from Naxalbari Gram Panchayat unit. The maximum of 55 respondents from the field of research were the residents of Gossainpur Gram Panchayat unit. Plans and decisions regarding the nature and choice of the works to be undertaken in a financial year along with the order in which each work is to be taken up, which site is selected, and which workers are to be employed in which work are the decisions made in the Gram Sabha and it is ratified by these gram panchayat units.

### Year of joining MGNREGS

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is a flagship programme of the United Progressive Alliance government which was notified in September 2005. In Phase I it was enforced in 200 of the most backward districts of the country between the years 2006-07. In 2007-08 the scheme was extended to 130 additional districts, including the study area, the Naxalbari block under the supervision of Siliguri Mahakuma Parishad, Darjeeling district.

**Fig 4.11 Distribution based on the Year of joining MGNREGS**



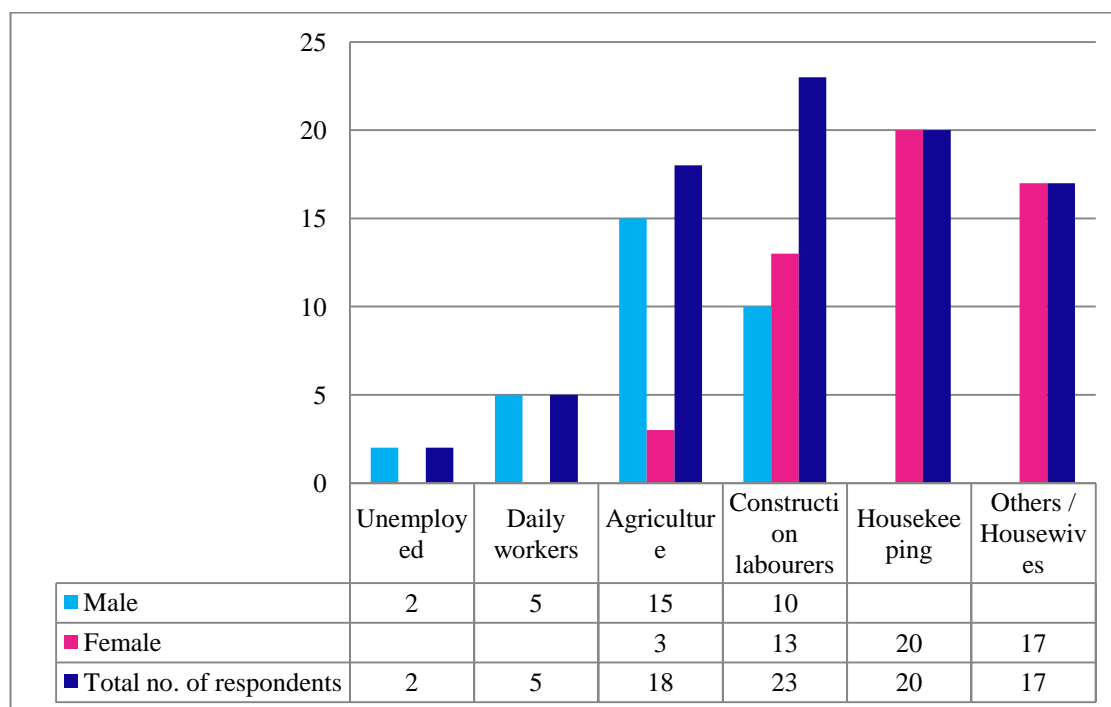
Source: Field survey

The figure 4.11 represents the year in which the respondents started working in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Since the scheme was launched in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase in Darjeeling district, most of the respondents, 44 of them had started working in the years 2008-2009 which means that they were aware of the scheme in the initial years. 35 of them had joined in between the years 2010-2011 and the remaining 6 of the respondents had joined in 2012-13. The number of working days they had experienced was up to 25 days in a year and they were unaware of unemployment allowances. None had enrolled or registered during the months when the survey was carried out.

### Main occupation

One of the aims of MGNREGS is to provide employment to an adult member who is willing to do unskilled manual work. Since inception people from different walks of life have been willing to participate in the scheme and they have been applying for job cards.

**Fig. 4. 12 Distribution based on the main occupation of the respondents.**



Source: Field survey

The scheme does not mandate any specific rules of who can be employed under the scheme and as such a large number of people apply for jobs either orally or in writing to the Gram Panchayat. The fig. 4.12 represents the main occupation of the respondents. When checked gender-wise it is clearly seen that 2 of the male

respondents had never worked in any place before, they were unemployed and MGNREGS was the first available option to them for work. 5 male respondents were rickshaw pullers and they fall under the category of daily workers or daily wage earners.

As agricultural is the main occupation in the rural area, it is considered beneficial to many, thus 18 respondents have been workers in the agricultural fields. To these respondents engaged in agricultural works or farmers, saving money for future is a major problem because even the diligent application of customary farm practices does not often yield much surplus beyond home needs. Thus, these respondents conveyed their thoughts working under this scheme by recalling that by working as a labourer has started fetching them more money per day than selling agricultural produces. Working in MGNREGS during agricultural off seasons has been advantageous to them and has helped them make little savings for future. 23 respondents had further been already working as labourers in construction sites and they found the work under this scheme similar to the private work. 20 respondents worked as maids and are still involved in housekeeping works when not working under the scheme. The remaining 17 females however, had never worked outside, they have been housewives and they joined the scheme only to help their husband in coping with their family needs.

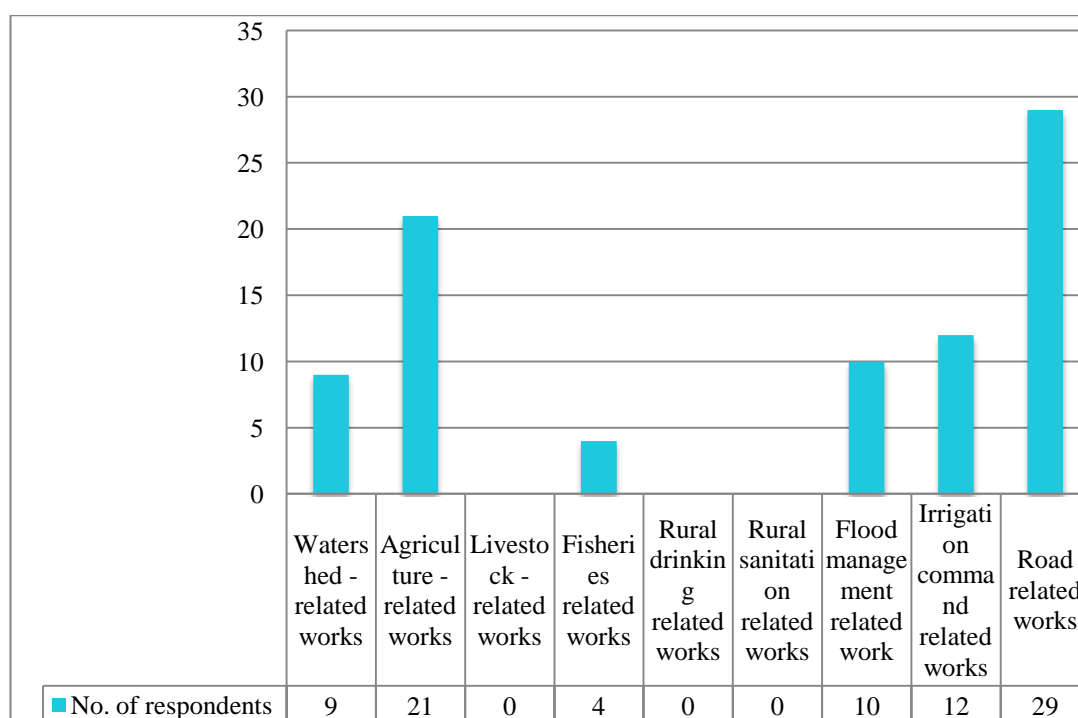
## **Types of works done under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment**

### **Guarantee Scheme**

MGNREGA is recognised as an ecological scheme that aims to create sustainable livelihoods through regeneration of the natural resource base of rural India. In the process, it provides resilience and adaptation to climate change.

Under the rural development scheme of MGNREGS different kinds of works such as Watershed -related works, Agriculture -related works, Livestock -related works, Fisheries related works, Rural drinking related works, Rural sanitation related works, Flood management related works, Irrigation command related works and Road related works are there.

**Fig 4.13 Distribution based on the Types of works under MGNREGS**



Source: Field survey

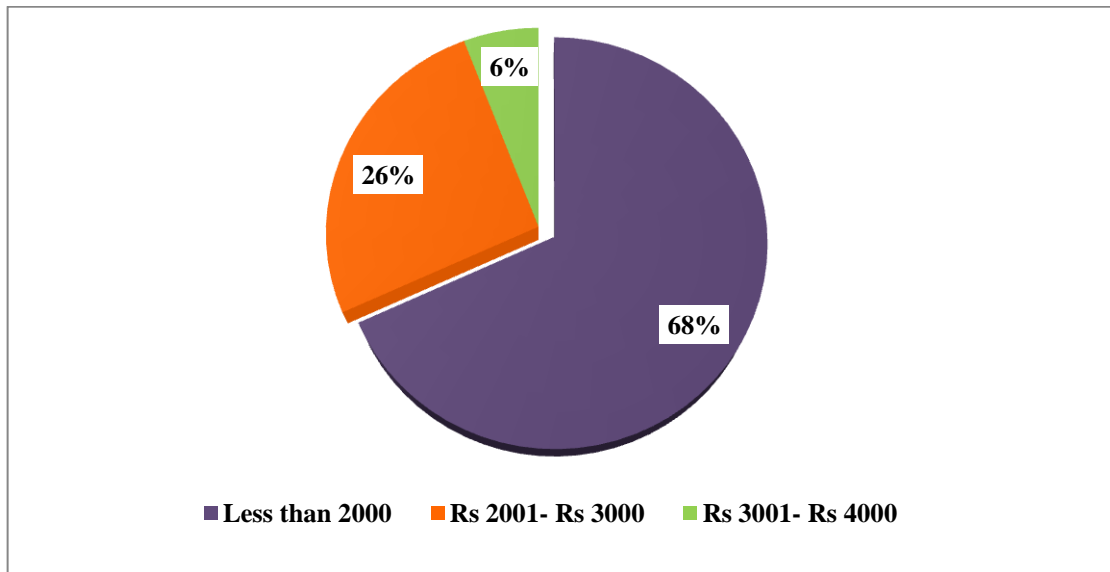
During the survey on 85 respondents it was found that 29 respondents were engaged in road related works like carrying mud and constructing rural connectivity in their villages. Apart from that, 21 respondents were engaged in agricultural related works including planting of seedlings provided to them by the Gram Panchayat. They grew these in their own housing areas and sold them accordingly in local market places. The seedlings given to them were of lemon, beetle-nut, bringle. They were also doing works related to water related works, agriculture related works, fisheries related works, flood management related works, irrigation related works and road related works.

### **Income**

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme initially started with giving Rs 60 per day as wage. Thereafter the amount of wage has been increasing with every financial year. The wages ensure an alternative source of income raising the wage of all workers and implicitly offering them some bargaining powers for their livelihood. This is a positive development for the beneficiaries.

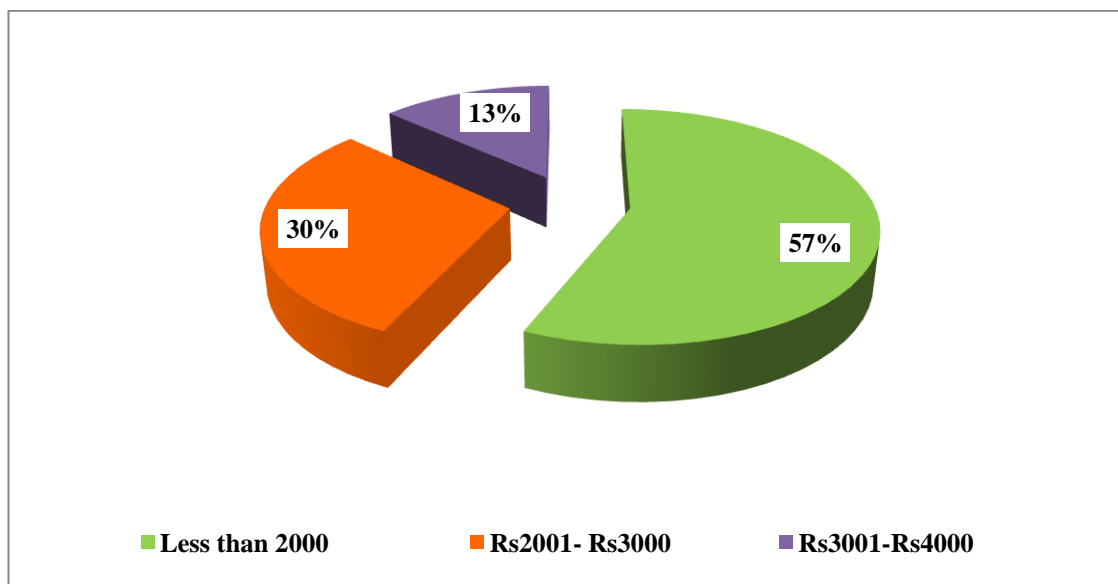


**Fig 4.14 Distribution based on the income before joining the MGNREGS.**



Source: Field survey

**Fig. 4.15 Distribution based on the income after joining the MGNREGS**



Source: Field survey

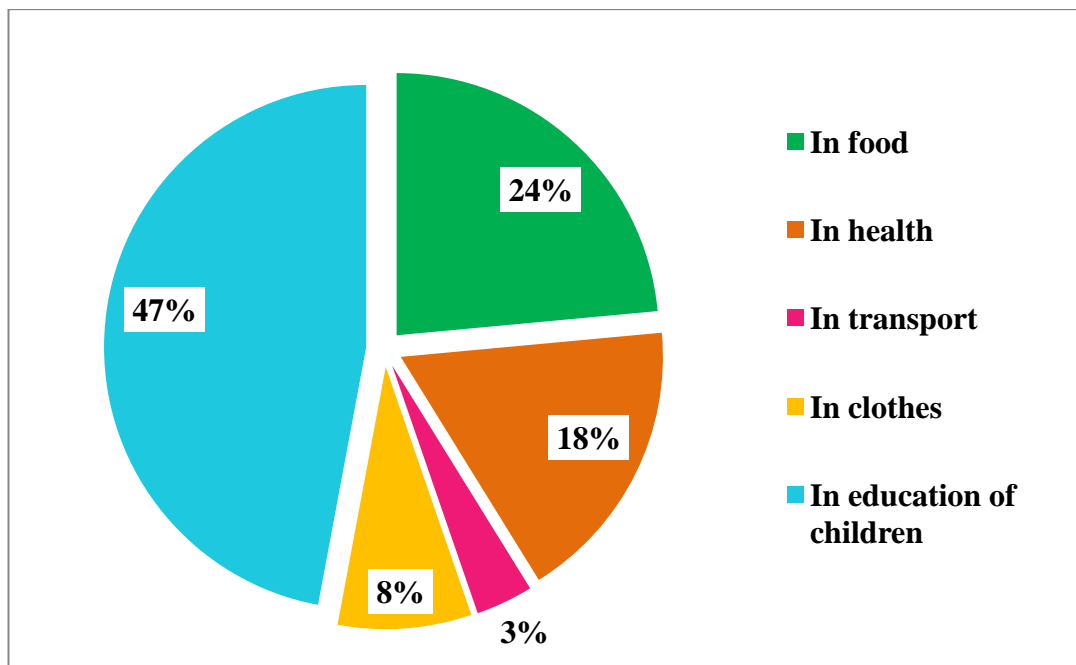
The above figure 4.14 represents the income of the respondents. Earlier 68 percent of respondents earned less than Rs 2000, 26 percent of them earned between Rs 2001- Rs3000 and only 6 percent were getting above Rs3000. The present income in fig. 4.15 however shows that 57 percent of the respondents have now been earning between less

than Rs 2000, 30 percent of them are earning Rs 2001-3000 and 13 percent are getting Rs 3001-Rs 4000. This shows that the income levels have been increasing with change in Five year plans. However, the respondents mentioned that poverty has not increased with the increase in income as their daily requirements on household also have been increasing simultaneously.

### Impact on expenditure

Monthly per capita expenditure has been a proxy indicator to measure the impact of MGNREGA on poverty levels of a household.

**Fig. 4.16 Impact on expenditure of the respondents**



Source: Field survey.

The impact of MGNREGS on the lives of rural poor can be analysed through the expenditure levels of the respondents each month. The success of the scheme is positive when the increase in income leads to an increase in their expenditure, particularly on food and essential items, of the household. The fig. 4.16 shows the expenditure of the respondents. Out of 85 respondents, 47 percent had their maximum expenditure invested on the education of children as they are paying school fees, buying uniform, stationaries and paying tuition fees also. 24 percent had their expenses used mostly in buying food like ration items. 18 percent were spending on maintaining health. According to them their money is being used in buying medicines and treating

themselves and the less remaining 8 percent and 3 percent were using their income in buying clothes and in transportation respectively.

### Impact on political Participation

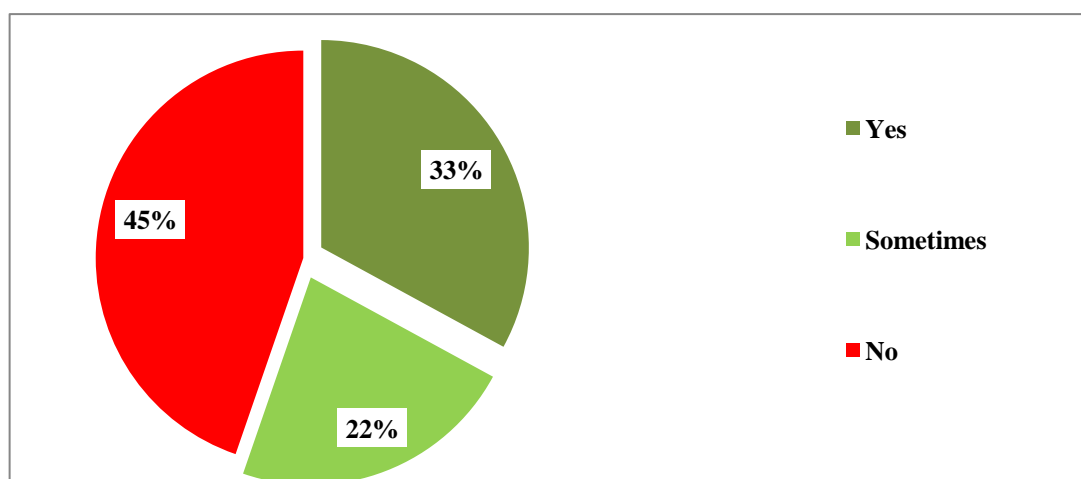
**Table 4.2 Political participation of the respondents in Gram Sabha/ Sansad before MGNREGS**

Earlier Participation	No. of respondents	Male	Female
Yes	28	20	8
Sometimes	19	5	14
No	38	7	31

**Table 4.3 Political participation of the respondents in Gram Sabha/ Sansad after MGNREGS**

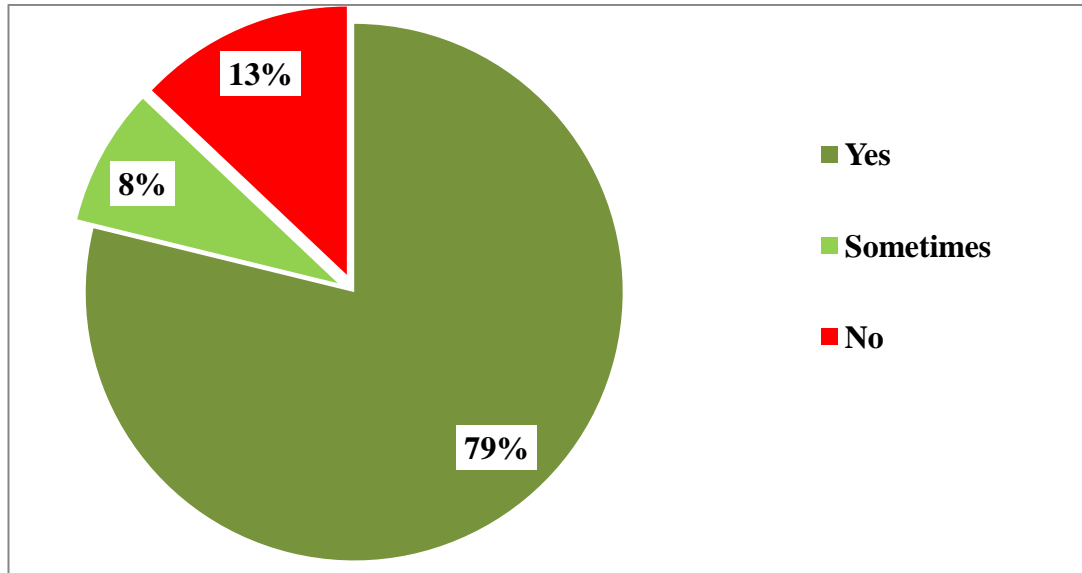
Present Political participation	No. of respondents	Male	Female
Yes	67	27	40
Sometimes	7	3	4
No	11	2	9
Total	85	32	53

**Fig. 4.17 Distribution based on political participation of the respondents in Gram Sabha/ Sansad before MGNREGS**



Source: Field survey

**Fig 4.18 Distribution based on political participation of the respondents in Gram Sabha/ Sansad after MGNREGA**



Source: Field survey

The above figure represents the participation of the respondents. Before becoming a part of MGNREGS there were 33 percent respondents (28 respondents) who had been participating in Gram sabha/sansad meetings. 22 percent (19 respondents) were participating sometimes while 45 percent of the respondents (38 respondents) had never participated in political activity.

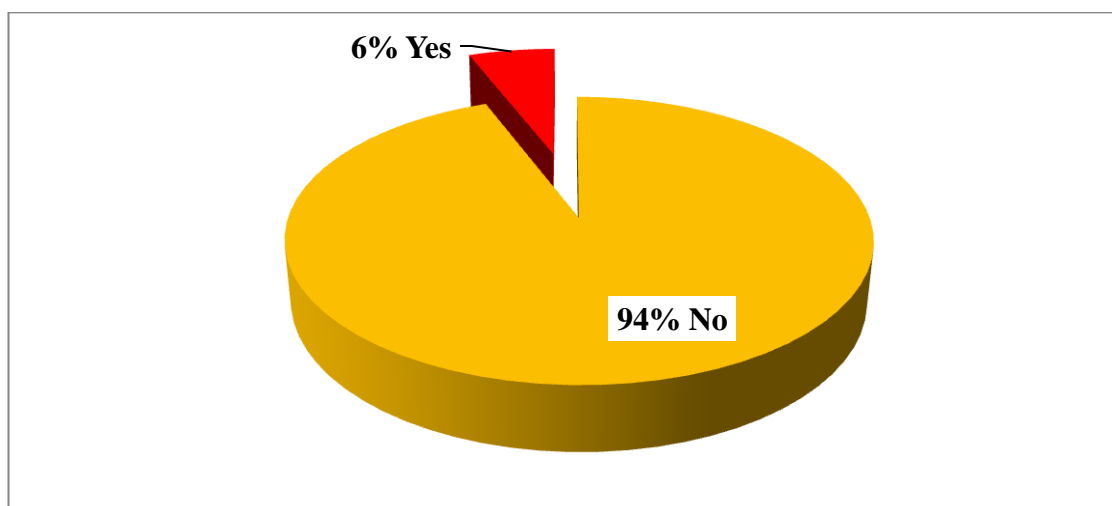
However, the present scenario of participation suggests that now 79 percent of the respondents (67 respondents) have now been participating in local political activities. The participation has increased considerably. 8 percent (7 respondents) of the respondents were of the opinion that they participate sometimes only and the number of non-participants has reduced to 13 percent (11 respondents).

### **Impact on poverty reduction**

Global poverty declined significantly over the last two decades. The millennium development goals 2000's target of reducing half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty was achieved years ago, ahead of the 2015 deadline. According to the Millennium Development Goals Report, 2014 until the year 2010, one third of the

world's 1.2 billion extreme poor lived in India alone and their poverty has been a result of the influences of social inequalities governed by caste, ethnicity, gender, age and religion. Many scheme is India have tried to reduce poverty of the people. To analyse the impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme on the poverty of the rural people, 85 respondents were surveyed in Naxalbari block.

**Fig.4.19 Distribution based on impact on poverty after joining MGNREGS**



Source: Field survey.

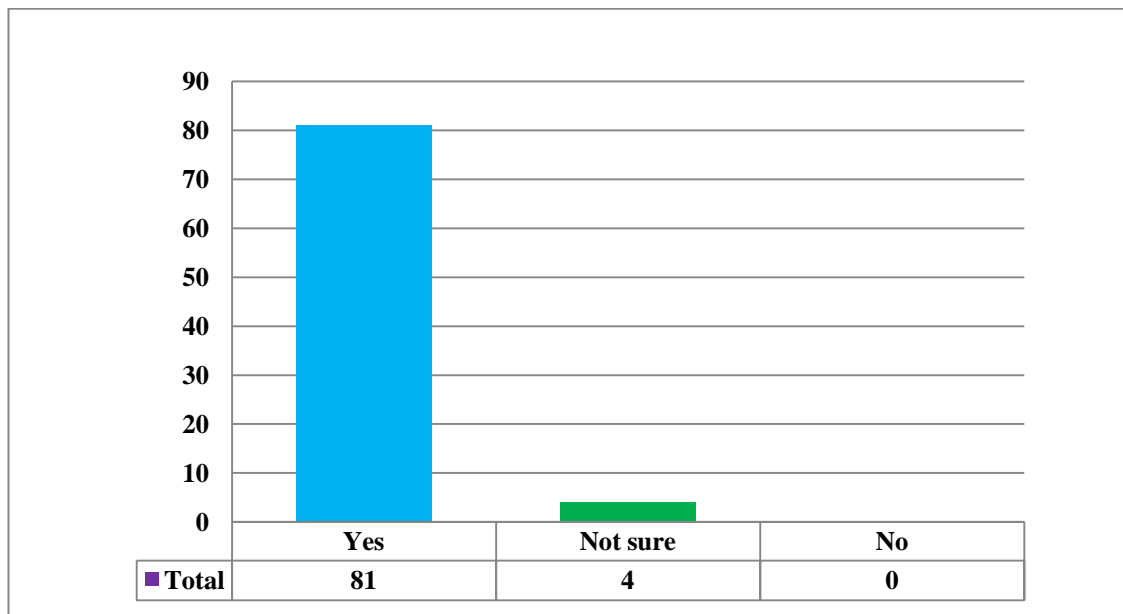
People are said to be in poverty when they are deprived of income and other resources needed to have better living conditions in terms of food, shelter and clothing (Townsend, 2006:5). Income cannot alone determine the level of poverty. Multiple and different types of deprivation determine the poverty of an individual. However, determining poverty on the basis of income is not possible according to the 94% (80 respondents) responses. To them, the scheme has not been able to reduce their poverty. The 6 % respondents said that by earning Rs 150 to Rs 169 per day through the scheme for 25 days maximum have helped them to earn more increased with a slight increase in the daily wage pattern. The development scheme has however alleviated some aspects of poverty and address the issue of development in the rural areas

### **Empowerment**

Empowerment is the process by which vulnerable groups actively engage and participate in the decision making process, because even when there are designs, problems of exclusion and discrimination may persist. Different interpretations of power lead to different conceptualization of empowerment. Rowlands (1995) observes power in generative terms, for instance “the power some people have of stimulating

activity in others and raising their morale”. Zimmerman’s puts this empowerment simply as a process of enabling individual, through participation with others to achieve their primary personal goals (Perkins, Zimmerman 1995; Zimmerman 1995). Empowerment can thus be seen as a process which can alter the preexisting unequal power relations in favor of the previously excluded or marginalized sections through inclusion and providing information in order to influence the governance process by integrating with mainstream discourse. With this view of empowerment, the process of empowerment will include four steps: inclusion, information, influence and integration. Inclusion is the first step for empowerment. For those who may have been initially marginalized and not included in the decision making process, the first step towards empowerment would imply bringing them on board.

**Fig 4. 20 Distribution based on Impact on the empowerment of the respondents**



Source: field survey

The above fig. 4.20 suggests that a total of 80 beneficiaries feel empowered, economically, socially and politically and only 4 of them are not sure of their present situation. MGNREGS employment trends that it is the neediest who seek employment under the Scheme. While MGNREGS with its rights-based approach within the design has “a space” for the marginalized to exercise their rights, but only design need not always translate into action (Joshi, 2010). For the poor to effectively assert their rights, they should to be empowered to take the platform to raise their voice. Their opportunities for collective action need motivations, capacities to act and a sense of identity (Koopmans 1999). Further, individual participation and mobilization could be

enhanced through a more open or decentralized political opportunity structure (Vrablikova 2011). This is provided under MGNREGS a decentralized and collaborative governance system called the social audits in Section 17 of the MGNREGS law. The basic objective of a social audit as a mandatory post-implementation exercise is to monitor all projects under MGNREGA at least once in 6 months. The scheme has several gender sensitive features that are attractive for women workers. It also stipulates that priority shall be given to women. In terms of implementation, it mandates that a minimum of one-third of the beneficiaries are to be women who have registered and have requested for work (Schedule II, Section 6 of MGNREGS). The state is obliged to ensure certain worksite facilities to enhance women workers' participation. It further stipulates payment of equal wages to male and female workers. Wage earnings of workers are to be paid directly to the person concerned. Parity in wage rates also appears to be positively affecting participation of women in the Scheme. Improved access to economic resources and paid work has had a positive impact on the socioeconomic status of the women.

These were the variables enquired during the survey in Naxalbari Block.

## CHAPTER 5

### MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Rural development in India is an essential segment of the country's overall development. Though crore of rupees have been invested in rural development during the last six and a half decades after independence, the problem of underdevelopment in the rural areas is as crucial as it was. But the significance of the subject has grown over the years. Rural development has gained importance and is not simply an economic proposition but it has political, social, psychological, cultural and environmental dimensions.

In view of damping the rural underdevelopment by acute problem of poverty and vulnerability, Indian government has been planning strategic programmes. One such programme has been Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. It provides 100 days of legal jobs guarantee to who those who are willing to do unskilled manual work under this scheme. From the time it was launched in West Bengal, many irregularities were evidenced in implementation of the scheme like irregularities in job card distribution, delay in wage payment, poor selection of work projects, muster roll has not been prepared properly. These were the information gathered through literatures that were available. Thorough analyses made on its impact on the lives of rural people of Naxalbari have however shown different findings.

#### **Summary of findings**

This study in the Naxalbari block of Darjeeling district of West Bengal was undertaken with an objectives to study the performance of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in West Bengal since 2006, in response to the role and relevance of such programmes with regard to the development of rural areas in general and as employment generation and poverty alleviation strategy for the rural poor, in particular, and also to investigate the impact of MGNREGS on the livelihoods of rural poor, economic stability, participation and women empowerment. The survey was conducted in the Naxalbari Block to find out the major impacts of the programme on the livelihoods of rural poor. The major findings of the study are as follows.

Firstly, the evidences from the survey suggests an inclusive strategy of opportunities for the improvement in the quality of life of the people, especially the poor, SCs, STs,



OBCs, and women. The large participation of the marginalised communities in the scheme has not just ensured equality to them but also was a fulfilment of the aims of the scheme. Among the 85 respondents surveyed, 72 respondents were of the marginalised groups, namely 27 of them belonged to the Scheduled Caste category, 25 respondents belonged to the Other Backward Class category and 20 respondents belonged to the ST category. This caste based division of the Naxalbari blocks investigation reveals a high participation of marginalized groups.

Inclusive strategies also means making sure that everyone is included in the nation's growth, regardless of their economic class, gender, disability and religion. In this regard, the presence of women as beneficiaries in the MGNREGS is a way of empowering them. Among the 85 respondents surveyed, 53 respondents were females. There has been a high participation of women in the Naxalbari block due to the various gender-sensitive provisions of the scheme. As the scheme provides work within five kilometers of the residence, these women have found it easy to engage in their household activities like cooking, cleaning, washing etc along with working under the scheme. These women were found to have joined the scheme to fulfill their family demands. Parity in wage rates has been another positive factor that has affected a higher participation of women in this region. Besides childcare facilities at the worksite is another factor that has allowed housewives living in the area to come out and participate in the fields. Thus, improved access to economic resources and paid work has made a positive impact on the socioeconomic status of these women.

The issue of wage payment and income generation has been satisfactory in the surveyed area. The minimum wages of Rs 169 per day are being received by the beneficiaries which is a little less than the wage per day from their main jobs. The frequency of wage payment through the daily wage system also was found to be regular. The respondents in the area were paid through bank accounts and post office. The respondents in the area were earning Rs 150 to Rs 169 per day through the scheme for 25 days maximum. This helped them to earn more with a slight increase in the daily wage pattern. But they still remain affected by the poverty levels which cannot be increased by mere rise of income.

In terms of the political participation of the respondents, there were improved results. As the scheme was implemented and the works were being sanctioned by the Gram Panchayats, the Gram Sabha played the role of selecting the works to be done and it conducts the social audits. Participation of people at large and women in particular in

these institutions and assemblies became critical for realizing the participatory potential of the scheme. Thus, during the survey it was found that women workers did not generally take part in Gram Sabha's meetings prior to working in MGNREGS. More than half of the sample of respondents surveyed had never participated in any political activity partly due to lack of awareness about the significant role to be played by the Gram Sabhas in the villages. But with their working in MGNREGS, they became a more social, confident and increased their participation in the Gram Sabha meetings. However, there was no single information when the respondents were asked about the payment of the unemployment allowance in the three Gram Panchayats. This gives the impression that all the households are provided jobs. But when the respondents are given the job cards, there have not been collecting the receipts for job applications. As a substantial part of the seekers of wage employment in region were illiterate, they have also not been submitting written applications for jobs and they demand the job orally. In this situation, an observation has come up that not having a receipt for job applications makes the beneficiaries refrain from receiving the unemployment allowance when they had not been working under the scheme. The respondents were given only 25 days of employment at a maximum in a year and for the remaining days they could not get employment under this scheme. Thus, employment has been generated in a limited scale.

### **Conclusions**

MGNREGS marks a radical departure from earlier wage employment programmes in terms of its legal and demand-driven framework. However, there is no denying the fact that there have been many problems in infusing the system with the new culture of demand-driven, rights-based, decentralised decision-making. Rural Development needs accelerated attention for any fact of development. Primarily it requires changes in the economic, social, political and psychological behaviour of the rural people who are illiterate and ignorant. The various developmental programmes are mainly concerned with improving the standards of the population possessing low income population residing in rural areas and making the process of their development self sustainable. The developmental programmes are aimed to get desired results. The development programmes are targeted to improve living conditions, providing minimum needs, increasing productivity and employment opportunities. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is one of the rural development

labour based programme executed by the central government. The 100 days flagship programme has provides immense help in the upliftment of the malnourished population, least in contact with the modern world, least influential politically, least likely to possess adequate land and capital for a decent life, least able to help themselves and hardest for governments to help. The poor are located in a disproportionate manner in millions all over the country, the focus in regard the development has shifted to rural development on account of the obvious failure to bring about appreciable improvement either in the living conditions of the weaker sections of the rural population or in reducing poverty and unemployment. In response to this challenge, the government launched MGNREGS with the dual objectives of providing wage employment opportunities for the rural poor who are landless or highly reliant on wage labour work and promoting agricultural productivity through the creation of rural assets and infrastructure. Employment from MGNREGS involves registering, obtaining a job card and seeking employment. This programme ensures equal distribution of wages to both men and women.

This study on 'Impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme on the livelihoods of rural poor: A study of the Naxalbari block in Darjeeling District' has proved that, the scheme has been making a difference in the lives of the rural people. When viewed from the micro level, the rural people have benefitted in terms of inclusive growth with a high participation of marginalized groups, the empowerment of women economically, politically and socially. The wages of the respondents increased even from 25 days employment through this, they became capable of managing their expenditures. But the rise in income has not created full reduction of poverty. Poverty has remained as an independent variable influenced by factors other than income and limited working days is not a criterion for its reduction. However, the scheme has acted as a powerful tool in the hands of the common people to get their basic livelihood, but poor execution has deprived them of their rights. Thus, if the awareness and the number of working days are increased, the scheme has the potential for being a role model in each village of India.

## **Recommendations**

MGNREGS is one of the most important schemes in India for providing employment to the marginalised people who are in want of finding a job. But still there are many areas which need to be touched. Thus, for better implementation of MGNREGS particularly in this study area and also whole of India in general, it is advisable that:

- Awareness about the provisions of the scheme should be increased.
- If only 25 days in this area can help in increasing income and empower the rural citizens than the number of full 100 working days can bring better results in reducing the poverty of rural India.
- The computerised versions of determining the success and failure should be properly investigated. The existing system of supervision, inspection and guidance MGNREGS should be strengthened, by regular monitoring and follow up of the beneficiaries by more implementing staffs.
- There should be proper co-ordination among activities of different credit providing institutions.
- For removal of tendencies of wrong identification of beneficiaries, awareness should be generated among rural masses. The wrong identification should be investigated.

## **Contribution of the study**

The contribution of the study to the literature and knowledge is as follows; firstly, very little seems to have been researched and written on the impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme on the livelihoods of the poor in Darjeeling district of West Bengal. The knowledge generated by this study, therefore may be useful not only to Naxalbari block but also to other blocks of West Bengal in the area of rural development, livelihood and empowerment. Secondly, the findings of the study with regards to the impact of the MGNREGS on selected livelihoods variables may well be of interest to policy makers, development practitioners in government and non-governmental organizations.

## **Limitations**

The study on ‘Impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme on the livelihoods of Rural Poor: A study of the Naxalbari Block, Darjeeling district’ had some limitations. The data collection was restricted to MGNREGS of

Naxalbari Block which comprised of six Gram Panchayats but out of the six only three Gram Panchayats was survey. Thus, it may fail to represent the actual scenario of the whole state and the country. Further due to the limitation of time and other resources it was not possible to work with a large sample of respondents, they have been limited in terms of size and composition and only 85 rural poor have been considered for the study.

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**SURVEY SCHEDULE**

1. Name (optional):

2. Gender :

Male	
Female	

3. Gram panchayat:

Moniram gram panchayat		
Naxalbari gram panchayat		
Hatighisa gram panchayat		
Upper Bagdogra gram panchayat		
Lower Bagdogra gram panchayat		
Gossainpur gram panchayat		

4. Age

Below 19 years		
20-29 years		
30-39 years		
40-49 years		
50 and above		

5. Religion

Hindu		
Muslim		
Christian		
Buddhist		
Others		

## 6.Caste

General		
Scheduled Caste		
Scheduled Tribe		
OBC		

## 7. Marital status

Unmarried		
Married		
Widowed / divorced		
Separated		

## 8. No. of family members

2 members		
3 members		
4members		
5 members		
More than 5 members		

## 9. Opinion of the respondents with respect to impact of MGNREGS on the livelihoods of rural poor

### 9.1. Working under MGNREGS since

Year	Male	Female
2006-2007		
2008-2009		
2010-2011		
2012-2013		
2014-2015		

### 9.2. Kind of work done in MGNREGS

Rural connectivity		
Flood control		
Water conservation		
Renovation of water bodies		
Land development		
Agriculture		
Others		

### 9.3. Wage for works under MGNREGS

Rs 80- Rs 100	
Above Rs 100	

### 9.4. No. of working days in a year

Less than 20 days	
21- 40 days	
41- 60 days	
61- 80 days	
81- 100 days	

## 10. Human capital

### 10.1. Main occupation

Occupation	Male	Female
Unemployed		
Daily workers		
Agriculture		
Cattle rearing		
Construction labourers		
Sellers / Traders		
Housekeeping		
Others		

## 10.2. Income

Income in Rs	Only in main Job	After working in MGNREGS
Less than Rs 1000		
Rs 1001- Rs 3000		
Rs 3001- Rs 5000		
Rs 5001 and above		

## 10.3. Main expenditure

In food	
In health	
In transport	
In clothes	
In education of children	
Others	

## 11. Financial Capital

### 11.1. Source of income

Agriculture /Livestock	
Agriculture/Livestock/Labourer	
Agriculture/ Daily worker	
Agriculture/ Sellers- Traders	
Agriculture /Housekeeping	
Others	

### 11.2. Savings

Banks	
Post Office	
Others	

## 12. Participation in Gram Panchayat/ Gram Sabha

Yes	
Sometimes	
No	

13. Satisfaction with MGNREGS.

Fully satisfied	
Satisfied	
Not satisfied	

14. Do you feel empowered?

Yes	
No	

15. Has MGNREGS helped you in making a sustainable livelihood?

Yes	
No	

16. Suggestions regarding the Scheme.





**MGNREGS women beneficiaries holding Job card in Gossainpur Gram Panchayat**



**Interviewing MGNREGS women beneficiary and staff of Gossainpur Gram Panchayat**





**MGNREGS beneficiary in agriculture field at Naxalbari Gram Panchayat**



**MGNREGS beneficiary's family at Naxalbari Gram Panchayat**





**A young MGNREGS beneficiary studying and working under the scheme, Lower Bagdogra Gram Panchayat**



**Job card holders of Lower Bagdogra Gram Panchayat**



**MGNREGS beneficiaries working in South Ranidanga, Gossainpur Gram Panchayat**



**Agriculture field used to grow vegetables in the beneficiary's household Naxalbari Gram Panchayat Unit**





**Rural connectivity between a village and the main road, constructed by MGNREGS beneficiaries in Gossainpur Gram Panchayat**



**Watershed management works under MGNREGS in Naxalbari Gram Panchayat**