



A Pathway to Sustainable Development of India by MGNREGA

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable development is a very important concept of the defining ideas of society. Sustainable development is a process to fulfill the needs of the current generation without compromising the fulfillment of the needs of future generations. It's a concept to complete present-time requirements without compromising with future requirements. Several Government programs are running in achieving sustainability of Economy, Agriculture Forest, Income, Health, Gender Equality, and many more. MGNREGA is a flagship program to achieve these goals. MGNREGA is not a program but an act against unemployment. It acts as a growth engine for the sustainable development of the agricultural economy and empowerment of the rural poor including women. This paper highlights the role of the rural development scheme MGNREGA in achieving sustainable development goals. The paper show that MGNREGA is doing well in employing rural people and in the eradication of rural poverty. In addition to this, the scheme has contributed rural people and in the elimination of rural poverty. In addition to this, the scheme has contributed towards gender equality.

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INTRODUCTION

India, being a developing country with the second-largest population globally, has faced the crucial task of creating sufficient employment opportunities for individual and national development. Since gaining independence, various programs and policies have been introduced to foster employment opportunities. These initiatives include the Community Development Programme (1952), Rural Manpower Programme (1960-61), Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (1971-72), Integrated Rural Development Programme (1980), Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (1989), and Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (2001), among others. Despite the implementation of these programs, the primary objectives of poverty eradication and comprehensive empowerment of marginalized segments of society remain unrealized. Many of these initiatives were primarily focused on contributing to the nation's economic growth rather than prioritizing comprehensive rural development. Unfortunately, the growth in unemployment rates has disproportionately affected underprivileged communities. Previous programs have fallen short of their intended impact in addressing poverty and empowering marginalized sections of society. There is a recognized need for future policies to reassess their strategies, ensuring a more inclusive and effective approach that directly uplifts the underprivileged and contributes to their holistic development. The challenge remains to design and implement programs that not only drive national growth but also prioritize the well-being and empowerment of the most disadvantaged sections of the population (Chahal et al., 2021; Chandra et al., 2023; Iskanto, 2024).

Sustainable development is an emerging issue of discussion in the whole world. The development can not only depend on economic development as there are other aspects such as social, political, and environmental. So, there is a requirement for simultaneous development of all these components thereby resulting in the development of a new concept of sustainable development. MGNREGA is the most significant poverty alleviation policy implemented for the upliftment and betterment of economically and socially disadvantaged people. It has been working to achieve sustainable development goals, and the scheme's aims align with them. It has been playing a significant role in achieving sustainable development goals (Adeyemi, 2022; Adula & Kant, 2022; Agaba & Mugarura, 2023; Ardian et al., 2023; Candrianto et al., 2022; Iskamto, 2023). MGNREGA helped to reduce poverty and the goal of sustainable development can be fulfilled by focusing on different variables of the scheme. The scheme helped to raise employment and income which facilitated agricultural investment and reduction in migration. Through NREGS earnings of women workers increased and NREGS also provided more control over their earnings which made them economically independent (Agaba & Christine, 2023; Agaba & Mugarura, 2023; Bosco & Moses, 2023; Herman, 2021; Naimar et al., 2024).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sebastian (2014) analysed various activities promoted under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme such as water harvesting and soil conservations. They could have high positive results on biodiversity and environment conservation. The study also suggested that biodiversity register of panchayats would be prepared as a part of the panchayat resource mapping at the earliest to identify the biodiversity hotspots in each panchayat. Awareness programmes among all the stakeholders would help to develop a positive attitude for conserving those precious biodiversity hotspots. Sudhir Maske (2015) analysed the need to create mass level awareness about the MGNREG programme, recruitment of competent staff for the proper implementation of the programme to ensure the realization of desired goals of MGNREG policy. The study also revealed that for achieving the universal goal of inclusive growth and sustainable development, the authorities must draft policies to enrich the backward regions this would help to regenerate the village resources to achieve the prime goals of sustainable development. Dheeraj (2017) revealed that MGNREG programme could contributed significantly for maintaining the Human Development Index (HDI) of India and created a positive impact on the four major indicators of the HDI namely – Income Generation, Economic self-reliance, empowerment of women (inclusive of gender mainstreaming) and the quality of life. The study also suggested that sustainable development of the nation could happen when the central and state governments introduce policies and initiatives for the growth and development of the rural household. Juliet Angom (2022) found out that MGNREGP contributed immensely to reforestation and afforestation through its land development objectives. It would help to reduce vulnerability of local agrarian communities of recurrent droughts and floods. Thus they could conserve soil moisture and fertility. The study also revealed that MGNREGP in convergence with other government forest development programs had the potential to promote afforestation and reforestation in Indian states.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To get an overview of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee program for the Sustainable Development of India.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Secondary data were used to get an overview of the specific schemes of MGNREGA. The secondary data were collected from books, journals, and various websites.

1.5 MGNREGA AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

MGNREGA is covering many of the goals of sustainable development. It includes the following:

MGNREGA AND NO POVERTY

MGNREGA targets rural poverty as it covers the rural poor only. According to the census of India 2011, the majority of the population (almost 70 percent) lives in rural areas of India so, there is a need

to pay attention to rural poor and this work is done by MGNREGA through the provision of employment opportunities to the population.

MGNREGA AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES

MGNREGA aims at reducing the rural-urban divide. As urban areas are more developed than rural areas with more work opportunities, developed infrastructure, more facilities in every aspect. MGNREGA helps rural people to stand on par with urban people and boosts up economic equality by providing rural employment and infrastructure.

MGNREGA AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

MGNREGA provides the opportunity for the beneficiaries to demand employment and also ensures guaranteed employment to the applicants. The scheme has different features such as the provision of work within a radius of 5km of the village, no contractor allowed at the worksite, different work facilities such as shade, drinking water, rest, crèche facility compensation for delayed payment, provision of unemployment allowance which leads to the decent work environment and economic growth.

MGNREGA AND INFRASTRUCTURE

It helps to develop the infrastructure in rural areas which is advantageous for agriculturists also and for the whole community. The assets such as ponds, wells, tanks, playgrounds, roads, etc. All this led to the development of rural infrastructure.

MGNREGA AND LIFE ON LAND

There are different works permissible under the scheme to make life on land comfortable, healthy and clean such as:

- ❖ Water conservation and water harvesting
- ❖ Drought proofing includes (afforestation and tree plantation)
- ❖ Irrigation canals including micro and minor irrigation work
- ❖ Provision of irrigation facility to land owned by households belonging to scheduled caste and scheduled tribes
- ❖ Renovation of traditional water bodies including desilting of tanks
- ❖ Land development
- ❖ Flood control and protection work including drainage in water logged areas
- ❖ Rural connectivity to all weather access

PERFORMANCE OF MGNREGA IN INDIA

The Scheme was introduced in 200 districts in the financial year 2006-07 with a total budget outlay of Rs.11300 crores. An additional 130 districts were covered during the financial year 2007-08 with an increased budget allocation of Rs.12000 crores. MGNREGA has covered 734 districts, 7155 blocks, and 269840 Gram Panchayats in India.

PHYSICAL INDICATORS

The physical performance of MGNREGA in India is usually reviewed on the data based and compiled from the Annual progress reports and management information system maintained by the department of rural development. The physical performance under the program is evaluated in terms of person days generated. The category-wise percentage of person days at the national level is shown in table 1.1.

TABLE 1.1

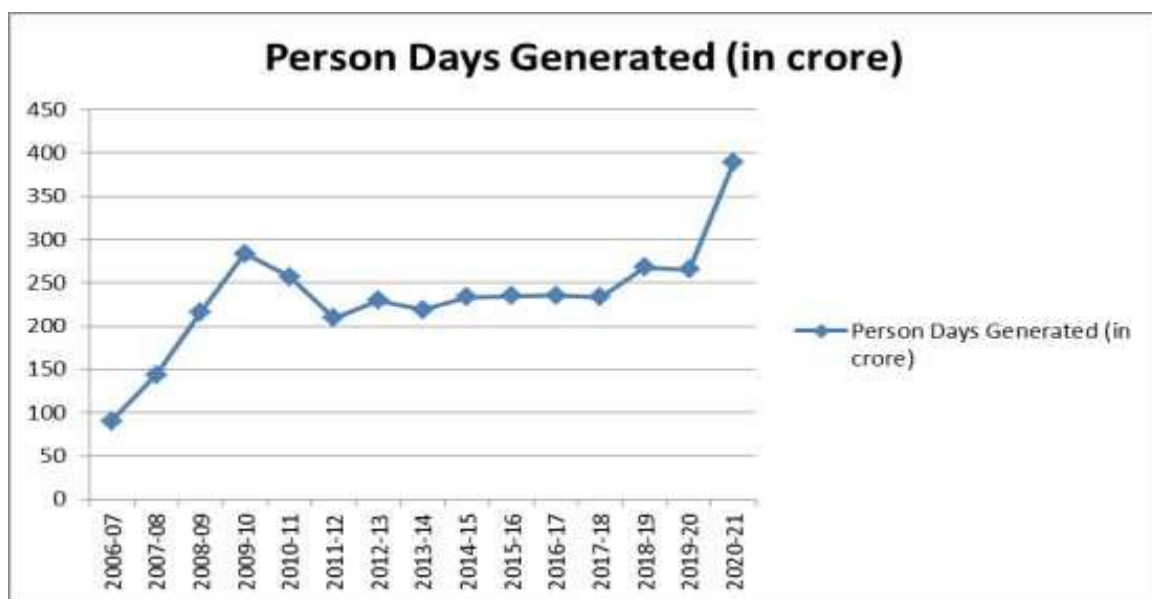
PERCENTAGE OF NUMBER OF PERSON DAYS BY CATEGORY WISE AT NATIONAL LEVEL: DURING 2006-07 TO 2020-21

YEAR	PERSON DAYS GENERATED SO FAR (IN CRORE)	SC PERSON- DAYS % AS OF TOTAL PERSON DAYS	ST PERSON- DAYS % AS OF TOTAL PERSON DAYS	WOMEN PERSON- DAYS OUT OF TOTAL (%)
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2006-07	90.5	23 (25%)	33 (35%)	36 (40%)
2007-08	143.59	39.4 (27%)	42 (29%)	61 (43%)
2008-09	216.3	63.4 (29%)	55 (25%)	103.6 (48%)
2009-10	283.6	86.5 (30%)	58.7 (21%)	136.4 (48%)
2010-11	257.2	78.8 (31%)	53.6 (21%)	122.7 (48%)
2011-12	209.3	46.2 (22%)	37.7 (18%)	101.1 (48%)
2012-13	229.86	50.96 (22%)	40.75 (18%)	117.93 (51%)
2013-14	218.68	50.29 (23%)	34.98 (16%)	115.54 (52.84%)
2014-15	233.74	50.39 (21.56%)	40.88 (17.49%)	125.21 (53.53%)
2015-16	234.96	52.74 (22.44%)	41.88 (17.82%)	130.04 (55.34%)
2016-17	235.64	50.23 (21.32%)	41.51 (17.62%)	132.23 (56.16%)
2017-18	233.74	50.39 (21.56%)	40.88 (17.49%)	125.21 (53.53%)
2018-19	267.96	55.65 (20.77%)	46.67 (17.42%)	146.27 (54.59%)
2019-20	265.35	54.07 (20.38%)	49.14 (18.51%)	145.35 (54.78%)
2020-21	389.17	77.28 (19.86%)	66.54 (17.91%)	206.99 (53.19%)

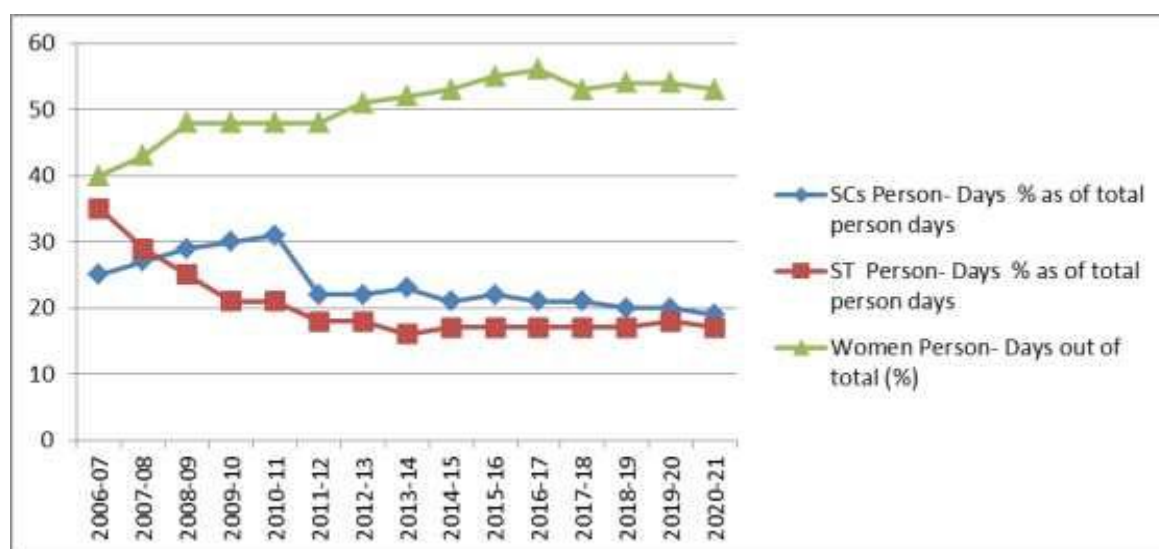
Source: Researcher's Calculations from MGNREGA data (www.nrega.nic.in)

FIGURE-1.1 (A): TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSON-DAYS GENERATED (IN CR.)



Source: Based on Table 1.1

FIGURE-1.1 (B): PERCENTAGE OF NUMBER OF PERSON DAYS BY CATEGORY WISE AT NATIONAL LEVEL : DURING 2006-07 TO 2020-21



Source: Based on Table 1.1

It is clear from table 1.1 that In the financial years 2006-07 and 2020-21, the number of person-days generated was 90.5 crore and 389.17 crores respectively, out of which 40 per cent and 53.19 per cent person-days were generated for women. Figure 1.1(B), shows a clear idea about the percentage of person-days generated by different social categories during 2006-2021. The share of STs in total person-days declined continuously and in 2020-21, it reached 17.91%. The SC share increased from 25% to 31% for the first 5 years (till 2010–11) but declined thereafter. This reflects that although the MGNREGA is intended to provide employment guarantees to marginal sections like SC/STs in rural areas, it is not efficient in terms of targeting them. As of 2006-07 percentage of women participants was 40%. Now it has risen to 53.19 %. From the overall data, we can observe that rural women have started more participating in MGNREGA. This could also be attributed to the availability of work in the village itself and a wage rate equal to men. The requirement of a minimum of one-third of the beneficiaries to be women ensured adequate demand-side pull for the participation of women in MGNREGA. Women participation saw a marginal decline from 56.16 % in 2016-17 to 53.53 % in 2017-18 and then a slight increase to 54.59 % in 2018-19. In FY 2020- 2021 MGNREGA saw 53.19 % work participation from women and this dip could be attributed to the Covid pandemic and lockdown.

2. FINANCIAL INDICATORS

Central and State Governments both are releasing sufficient funds for the proper implementation of this Scheme.

AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS AND EXPENDITURE

The main objective of MGNREGA is to provide wage employment opportunities to the rural poor. The total available fund and total expenditure under MGNREGA at the national level are shown in table 1.2 from the year 2006-07 to 2020-21.

TABLE 1.2

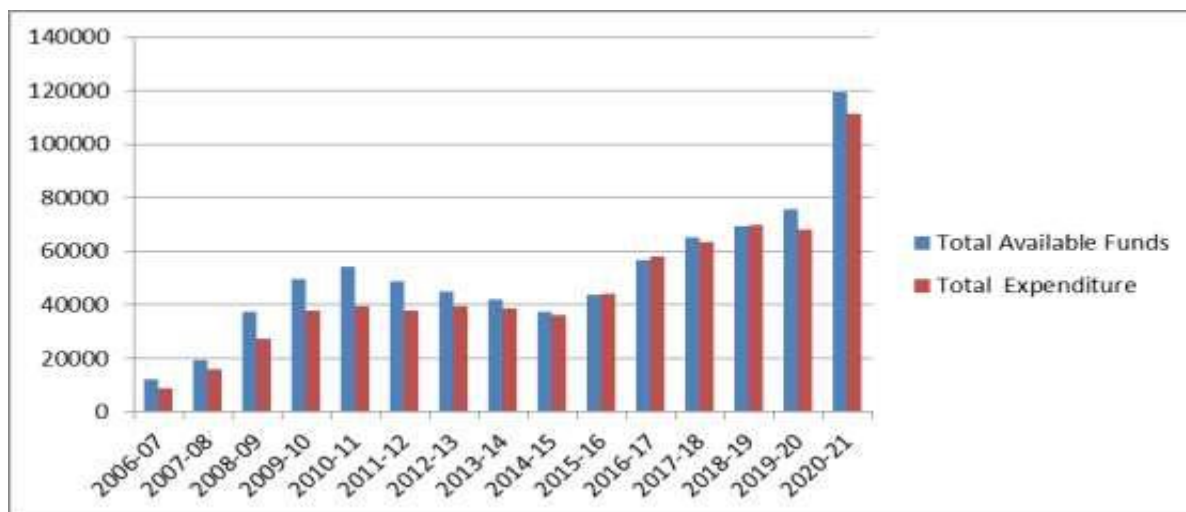
TOTAL FUNDS AND TOTAL EXPENDITURE UNDER MGNREGA : A NATIONAL OVERVIEW YEAR-WISE DURING 2006-07 TO 2020-21

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDS (IN RS.CRORE)	TOTAL EXPENDITURE (IN RS.CRORE)	(PERCENTAGE AGAINST AVAILABLE FUNDS)
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2006-07	12074	8823 (73%)
2007-08	19306	15856 (82%)
2008-09	37397	27250 (73%)
2009-10	49579	37905 (76%)
2010-11	54172	39377 (73%)
2011-12	48832	38034 (78%)
2012-13	45051	39657 (88%)
2013-14	41905	38553 (92%)
2014-15	37526	36025 (96%)
2015-16	43567	44003 (101%)
2016-17	56788	57924 (102%)
2017-18	64986	63650 (98%)
2018-19	69229	69619 (101%)
2019-20	75510	68266 (90%)
2020-21	119311	111444 (93%)

Source: Researcher's Calculations from MGNREGA data (www.nrega.nic.in)

FIGURE 1.2 (A): TOTAL FUNDS AND TOTAL EXPENDITURE UNDER MGNREGA (IN RS. CRORE)



Source: Based on Table 1.2

FIGURE 1.2(B): PERCENTAGE OF EXPENDITURE AGAINST AVAILABLE FUNDS



Source: Based on Table 1.2

Table 1.2 shows that the allocation of funds trends shows a steady increase from 2006–2007 to 2010–2011. It declined from its level in 2010–2011 till about 2015–2016. It has, however, increased in recent years, touching the highest in 2020–2021. The total annual expenditure was reduced from Rs.39,657 crore in 2012–2013 to Rs.36,025 crore in 2014–2015, while for 2016–2017 and 2017–2018, expenditure increased up to Rs.57,924 crores and 63,650 crores respectively. The utilization rate of funds has been volatile, ranging between 73% and 78% between 2006–2007 and 2011–2012. It has increased mostly from 2012–2013 to 2016–2017. It is clear from the figure that there is an increasing trend in the percentage of total expenditure to total available funds over the years and shows maximum utilization of the available funds under MGNREGA in the study period. the total available fund was Rs.12074 crore during the financial year (2006-07) in which Rs.8823 crore (73%) was total expenditure while in 2020-21 the available fund was Rs.119311 crore and in this 93 per cent fund was consumed. We cannot deny that the success of MGNREGA depends on the finances and the data given in table 1.2 shows that

the State Government has always kept a lot of money for the working of MGNREGA. Thus MGNREGA Scheme has helped people have a positive effect on life

CONCLUSION

Thus, we can see that Sustainable development does not focus solely on economic issues rather it includes the three general policy areas namely economy, environment, and society. Sustainable Development maintains a balance between various human needs like the desire to have upgraded lifestyles and feeling of well-being on the one hand and preserves natural resources and ecosystems on the other hand. Thus, Sustainable Development is a concierge of the divergent factors needed for the existence of the present and future generations. It is generally accepted that sustainable development cannot be achieved without a substantial reduction in the number of people who are poor. If we leave poverty to prevail in Indian societies, then the dream of sustainable development can never be achieved. Sustainable development in India can be attained only if the problem of poverty is resolved first. Thus, MGNREGA is a right-based approach to poverty reduction and has shown how human rights are supported by an inclusive legal framework and realized in a sustainable way. Convergence is employed as leverage and can be employed as a strategic approach to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development. The employment provided under the scheme of MGNREGA can be better used for the fundamentals of achieving development. India since the inception of MGNREGA has made significant progress in reducing poverty, hunger, and food nutrition which is the basic step of achieving sustainable development. It is suggested that being a part of society it is our responsibility to promote sustainable development by making use of alternate resources rather than making our wants unlimited. Moreover, the government should also take steps to bring together various institutes like private and public NGOs and educational institutes for this mission and must consider MGNREGA as a junction for implementing various policies for achieving sustainability. The government should not go for making further new policies on sustainable development as they remain idle rather than the government should make proper efforts in implementing the already existing policies. It is we who have to decide whether development means affluence or whether development means peace, prosperity, and happiness and it is MGNREGA which can be a better strategy for attaining development if implanted suitably.

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