



Understanding Beneficiary Awareness Regarding Rights and Livelihood Security in MGNREGS across Manipur's Hill and Valley Districts

Shishi Khawlneikim^{1*}, Elmuonzo², Th. Diana³, Chingriyo Raihing⁴, Somishon Keishing⁵

¹⁻⁵Department of Home Science, G. P. Women's College, Dhanamanjuri University, Imphal - 795 001 (India)

*Corresponding Author, Email: shishihaokip@rediffmail.com

Citation: Shishi Khawlneikim et al. (2024), Understanding Beneficiary Awareness Regarding Rights And Livelihood Security In MGNREGS Across Manipur's Hill And Valley Districts, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(4),5936-5940, Doi:10.53555/kuey.v30i4.2315

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This research aims to gauge beneficiary awareness of their entitlements under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) recognizing its potential to uplift livelihoods in Manipur. Key provisions such as registering for work at Gram Panchayats, obtaining free job cards, timely payment for work, and ensuring worksite amenities were considered. The study covered both Hilly and Valley districts, surveying 250 beneficiaries through stratified random sampling. Analysis utilized frequency, percentage, and Z-tests. Results revealed a majority (55%) with low awareness across both districts, with none fully informed. Significantly different awareness levels were observed between the districts. The study primarily yields suggestions for improvement.

Keywords: Awareness, livelihood security, entitlements, Hill and Valley, MGNREGS

Introduction

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) embodies a deliberate government initiative aimed at tackling rural poverty while safeguarding the dignity of its citizens. By offering assured employment opportunities, the scheme endeavours to uplift the economic status of rural households, thereby mitigating their susceptibility to poverty and enriching their overall quality of life. Launched on February 2nd, 2006, in response to the imperative need for rural development and poverty alleviation in India, MGNREGS has progressively extended its coverage to encompass various states, including Manipur since April 1st, 2006. This historical backdrop underscores the government's enduring commitment to combating rural poverty through the sustainable generation of employment opportunities. MGNREGS aspires to broaden its scope across India, extending employment prospects to rural residents. At the heart of its objectives lies the enhancement of rural livelihoods through the provision of specific rights and entitlements to beneficiaries. These rights encompass the ability to register for employment, procure job cards without charge, receive prompt wages, and access fundamental worksite amenities. Through the bestowal of these rights, MGNREGS endeavours to empower rural beneficiaries, augmenting their capacity to secure livelihoods. For instance, the issuance of job cards and timely wage disbursements ensures that beneficiaries exercise greater control over their employment status and financial well-being. Similarly, the availability of worksite amenities contributes to a safer and more conducive working environment for rural labourers.

The scheme's focus on creating rural employment has significant socioeconomic implications. By providing a reliable income source, MGNREGS doesn't just reduce poverty but also stimulates local economies and promotes inclusive growth. Furthermore, by prioritizing the dignity and rights of the impoverished, the scheme cultivates social cohesion and equity within rural communities. In essence, MGNREGS embodies a multifaceted approach to poverty alleviation and rural development, accentuating the empowerment of beneficiaries and the advocacy of sustainable livelihoods. Through its implementation, the scheme endeavours to uphold the principles of social justice and dignity for all citizens, thereby nurturing inclusive and equitable growth throughout India's rural expanse.

Literature Review

The Government's initiative, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), introduced in 2005 (Mathur, 2008), marked a crucial commitment to empower the poor with dignified employment opportunities. Commencing its implementation in phases, MGNREGS began covering 200 districts from February 2nd, 2006 (MoRD, 2008), extending gradually across states like Manipur from April 1st, 2006, to April 1st, 2008 (Planning Commission, 2009). Aimed at enhancing rural livelihoods, especially in states like Manipur with escalating poverty rates (Government of Manipur, 2012), MGNREGS provides various rights to beneficiaries, ensuring access to employment and timely wages (MoRD, 2013). However, the success of MGNREGS hinges significantly on beneficiary awareness (Narang, 2014). Studies highlight that limited understanding of the program's processes and entitlements hinders its effectiveness (Rani and Pokhriya, 2016). In contrast, regions with higher awareness, like Garhwal district in Uttarakhand, exhibit greater scheme popularity (Rani and Pokhriya, 2016). Conversely, in Assam, deficiencies in worksite facilities and payment irregularities deter participation, attributed to beneficiary unawareness (Saikia and Borah, 2017). Lali also (2021) delves into the pivotal role of beneficiary and implementing agency awareness in shaping the outcomes of the program.

Recent research emphasises the significant role of awareness in MGNREGS efficacy. Studies in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh highlight the correlation between beneficiary awareness, participation, and scheme satisfaction (Sharma & Singh, 2023; Gupta et al., 2022). Similarly, in Gujarat, although awareness levels are relatively high, challenges persist in accessing payments and worksite facilities (Patel & Patel, 2024). These findings stress the importance of targeted awareness campaigns and efficient implementation mechanisms to optimize MGNREGS's impact on rural livelihoods.

Objectives

Given the diverse outcomes of MGNREGS across different regions, this study aims to assess beneficiary awareness of their rights under the scheme in both Hill and Valley districts of Manipur. By understanding and examining this awareness, the study also seeks to identify avenues for enhancing the scheme's effectiveness in achieving its goals within the state.

Materials and Methods

The study took place in two distinct districts of Manipur say Imphal East, located in the Valley district, and Churachandpur, situated in the Hilly district. These districts were deliberately chosen to reflect the diverse geographical landscape of the state, comprising both the Hilly and the Valley regions. The selection process for these districts was based on simple random sampling. From each district, eight villages were carefully selected, prioritizing those with the highest number of households as documented on the MGNREGA website. In the Hilly district, the chosen villages included Zehang Lamka, Rengkai, Tuibong, and D. Phailen, while in the Valley district, the selected villages were Kairang Khomidok, Khurai Nandeibam, Bashikhong, and Keirao Makting. A total of 250 beneficiaries were then recruited for the study, utilizing a stratified random sampling technique with proportional allocation to ensure fair representation across different demographics. This inclusive approach encompassed both genders and individuals actively involved in MGNREGS activities. Data collection was carried out through structured questionnaire based interviews. Subsequently, the gathered data underwent comprehensive analysis, involving frequency and percentage calculations, as well as Z-tests for proportions, to extract meaningful insights and conclusions from the study.

Analysis and Results

MGNREGS outlines fifteen rights or provisions for beneficiaries, forming the basis for assessing their awareness levels. The primary respondents were beneficiaries who had engaged in MGNREGS activities. Table - 1 presents the awareness levels of beneficiaries regarding the 15 rights/provisions provided by MGNREGS in Manipur's Hilly and Valley districts. Only 26% of beneficiaries were aware of their right to apply for registration under MGNREGS, with a slightly higher awareness among Valley district beneficiaries (28%) compared to those in the Hilly district (23%). Regarding the provision of free job cards, only 36% of beneficiaries were aware, with a slightly higher awareness in the Hilly district (36.8%) compared to the Valley district (34.4%). The majority (95%) of beneficiaries were unaware that they needed to apply to their Gram Panchayats for work under MGNREGS, resorting to verbal requests instead, with a slightly higher awareness in the Valley district (6.4%) compared to the Hilly district (3.3%). None of the beneficiaries were aware of their right to choose the time and duration of work or the provision of providing work within 15 days of application. Similarly, none were aware of the provision for unemployment allowance if work was not provided within 15 days of application. Approximately 30% of beneficiaries were aware of the provision for

crèche facilities, while 36% were aware of drinking water provision, and 37% were aware of first aid facilities at the worksite. Valley district beneficiaries showed higher awareness regarding drinking water and first aid provision (40.8% and 40%, respectively) compared to Hilly district beneficiaries (30.4% and 34.4%, respectively). Only 28% of beneficiaries were aware of their right to check their muster roll whenever they wanted, with slightly higher awareness in the Valley district (29.6%) compared to the Hilly district (25.6%). Merely 15% of beneficiaries were aware that wages should be paid within 15 days of work done. However, 54% were aware of their daily wage amount, with slightly higher awareness in the Valley district (18.4%) compared to the Hilly district (12%). The awareness of equal wages for both men and women under MGNREGS was high, with 94% of beneficiaries aware of this right, showing marginal differences between the Hilly and Valley districts. Approximately 88% of beneficiaries were aware of the provision of 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a year, with higher awareness in the Valley district (93.6%) compared to the Hilly district (82.4%).

Table - 2 manifests the Z - test for proportion results, indicating significant differences between the Hilly and Valley districts regarding awareness of the 15 parameters studied under MGNREGS. Notably, awareness of the right to 100 days of employment in a year showed a significant difference. The data in Table - 3 were categorized into five levels of awareness, indicating that none of the beneficiaries had complete awareness of all 15 rights/ provisions. The majority of beneficiaries (55%) exhibited low awareness, while 43% had medium awareness. Few (0.4%) had high awareness. Medium awareness was higher in the Valley district (50%), while low awareness was higher in the Hilly district (61.6%). No beneficiaries in the Hilly district exhibited high awareness. Further analysis using Z test for proportion in Table - 3 showed significant differences in low and medium levels of awareness between the Hilly and Valley districts. Moreover, Table - 4 categorized awareness into good and poor levels, showing significant differences between the Hilly and Valley districts in both categories. These findings highlight the need for targeted awareness campaigns to bridge the awareness gap among MGNREGS beneficiaries in both the Hilly and Valley districts of Manipur.

Discussion

The present findings emphasize the nuanced challenges persisting in accessing timely payments and adequate worksite facilities despite relatively high awareness levels among beneficiaries as indicated by Patel and Patel's (2024) study in Gujarat. This highlights the need for not only elevating awareness but also ensuring efficient implementation and monitoring mechanisms to tackle systemic issues and optimize the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme's (MGNREGS) impact on rural livelihoods. The study reveals a significant dearth of awareness among beneficiaries regarding their rights and provisions under MGNREGS across both the Hilly and Valley districts of Manipur. Despite the comprehensive framework of rights provided by MGNREGS, beneficiaries exhibit a notable lack of awareness, particularly concerning procedural aspects such as application processes and entitlements like timely wage payments and unemployment allowances. This finding underscores the critical importance of enhancing awareness among beneficiaries to ensure effective utilization of the scheme.

Further exploration of awareness levels, categorized into complete, high, medium, low, and no awareness, unveils a prevailing low level of awareness among beneficiaries in both districts. Interestingly, the Valley district demonstrates a higher medium level of awareness compared to the Hilly district, which exhibits a higher prevalence of low awareness. The absence of beneficiaries with high awareness in the Hilly district underscores the urgent need for targeted awareness campaigns and capacity-building initiatives in these areas. It also draws upon a corpus of recent studies to elucidate the significant role of beneficiary awareness in driving the success of MGNREGS. Narang's (2014) study accentuates how a dearth of awareness undermines the demand-driven nature of the program, while Rani and Pokhriya (2016) establish a correlation between awareness levels and the popularity of the scheme in Uttarakhand. Conversely, research by Saikia and Borah (2017) highlights shortcomings in Assam attributed to beneficiary unawareness, a sentiment echoed in the findings of Sharma and Singh (2023) in Bihar, where low awareness correlates with diminished scheme effectiveness. Gupta et al. (2022) investigation in Madhya Pradesh underscores that heightened beneficiary awareness augments participation and satisfaction with MGNREGS, emphasizing the indispensability of targeted awareness campaigns and capacity-building initiatives for enhancing livelihoods. The findings also underscore a significant disparity in awareness levels between the Hilly and Valley districts, particularly concerning the provision of 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a year. This discrepancy emphasizes the exigency for tailored interventions to address the distinct informational needs of beneficiaries in each district, thereby optimizing the efficacy of MGNREGS.

Conclusion

The study emphasises the urgency of enhancing awareness among beneficiaries regarding their rights and entitlements under MGNREGS to ensure the effective implementation and equitable access to livelihood

security in both the Hilly and Valley districts of Manipur. Further research and targeted interventions are imperative to address the identified gaps and promote inclusive participation in the MGNREGS program. As revealed by the study, awareness of beneficiaries about their rights under MGNREGS is notably low in both districts, with none of the beneficiaries having complete awareness of all the rights and provisions provided. This underlines the critical importance of generating more awareness among beneficiaries about their rights, as awareness contributes significantly to the program's effectiveness and beneficiaries' ability to derive maximum benefits from it.

In Manipur, where poverty remains a pressing issue and agricultural dependency on monsoons poses challenges, MGNREGS assumes critical importance. Research conducted by various scholars across different states consistently highlights the significance of beneficiary awareness for the success of MGNREGS. These studies highlight the crucial role of targeted awareness campaigns and capacity-building initiatives in maximizing the potential impact of MGNREGS on poverty alleviation and rural livelihood improvement. Additionally, they stress the importance of efficient implementation and monitoring mechanisms to address systemic challenges and optimize the scheme's effectiveness in enhancing rural livelihoods.

References

1. Government of Manipur. (2012). Draft annual plan (2012-13) and 12th five year plan (2012-17). Planning Department, Government of Manipur.
2. Gupta, A., Singh, B., Kumar, R. and Sharma, S. (2022). Beneficiary Awareness and Participation in MGNREGS: A Study in Madhya Pradesh. *Indian Journal of Social Development*, 22(2), 287-301.
3. Lali, S. (2021). Examining the Impact of Beneficiary and Implementing Agency Awareness on the Success and Failure of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). *Journal of Rural Development and Employment*, 15(2), 45-58.
4. Mathur, R. (2008). Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme: A Crucial Commitment to Empower the Poor. *Journal of Rural Development*, 34(2), 78-92.
5. Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. (2008). National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005. Operational guidelines (3rd Ed.): Salient features of the Act. New Delhi: Ministry of Rural Development.
6. Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. (2013). Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act: A paradigm shift. Goals Operational guidelines 4th Edition. New Delhi: Ministry of Rural Development.
7. Narang, A. (2014). Impact of MGNREGS on Rural Livelihoods: A Study in Northern India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 49(28), 96-102.
8. Patel, K. and Patel, S. (2024). Awareness Levels and Challenges in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme Implementation: A Case Study of Gujarat. *Development Policy Review*, 39(1), 78-92.
9. Planning Commission. (2009). Implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in Manipur. New Delhi, India.
10. Rani, S. and Pokhriya, A. (2016). Impact of Beneficiary Awareness on the Popularity of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme: A Case Study of Garhwal District, Uttarakhand. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 41, 112-125.
11. Saikia, B. and Borah, D. (2017). Challenges in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme Implementation in Assam: The Role of Beneficiary Unawareness. *Assam Development Review*, 23(2), 89-102.
12. Sharma, R. and Singh, A. (2023). Correlation between Beneficiary Awareness, Participation, and Satisfaction with Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme: Evidence from Bihar. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 58(9), 34-48.

Table - 1: Awareness of beneficiaries regarding their entitlements and livelihood security provisions under MGNREGS

Sl. No.	Awareness Parameters	No. in Districts		
		Hilly: N=125 (%)	Valley: N=125 (%)	Total: N=250 (%)
1	Writing application to register under MGNREGS	29 (23.2)	35 (28.0)	64 (25.6)
2	Obtaining Job card free of cost	46 (36.8)	43 (34.4)	89 (35.6)
3	Writing application for work	4 (3.2)	8 (6.4)	12 (4.8)
4	Choice of time for work	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
5	Choice of duration for work	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
6	Getting MGNREGS work within fifteen days of their application	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

7	Getting unemployment allowance if not getting employment within 15 days from the date when work is sought	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
8	Crèche facility	38 (30.4)	38 (30.4)	76 (30.4)
9	Drinking water facility	38 (30.4)	51 (40.8)	89 (35.6)
10	First-aid facility	43 (34.4)	50 (40.0)	93 (37.2)
11	Right to check their muster roll	32 (25.6)	37 (29.6)	69 (27.6)
12	Getting wages within 15 days of work done	15 (12.0)	23 (18.4)	38 (15.2)
13	Daily wage amount	62 (49.6)	73 (58.4)	135 (54.0)
14	Equal wage rate for men and women	116 (92.8)	118 (94.4)	234 (93.6)
15	Getting 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a year	103 (82.4)	117 (93.6)	220 (88.0)

Table - 2: Z - test for proportion value about rights of beneficiaries under MGNREGS

Sl. No.	Awareness Parameters	Z - Score (at 95% CI)
1	Writing application to register under MGNREGS	0.87
2	Obtaining Job card free of cost	0.40
3	Writing application for work	1.18
4	Choice of time for work	-
5	Choice of duration for work	-
6	Getting MGNREGS work within fifteen days of their application	-
7	Getting unemployment allowance if not getting employment within fifteen days from the date when work is sought	-
8	Crèche facility	-
9	Drinking water facility	0.71
10	First-aid facility	0.91
11	Right to check their muster roll	0.70
12	Getting wages within 15 days of work done	1.41
13	Daily wage amount	1.40
14	Equal wage rate for men and women	0.52
15	Getting 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a year	2.72*

Z-test not applied as certain cell values are zero/ same,
(CI: confidence interval) *significantly different

Table - 3: Beneficiary awareness and livelihood security provisions under MGNREGS with Z - Score Analysis

As per districts	Districts			Z - Score (at 95% CI)
	Hilly: N=125 (%)	Valley: N=125 (%)	Total: N=250 (%)	
Complete awareness	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	-
High Awareness	0 (0.0)	1 (0.8)	1 (0.4)	-
Medium Awareness	46 (36.8)	62 (49.6)	108 (43.2)	2.04*
Low Awareness	77 (61.6)	60 (48.0)	137 (54.8)	2.16*
No Awareness	2 (1.6)	2 (1.6)	4 (1.6)	-

Z-test not applied as certain cell values are zero or same, *significance difference
Complete awareness-knew 15 provisions, High awareness-knew 10-14 provisions, Medium awareness-knew 5-9 provisions,
Low awareness-knew 1-4 provisions, No awareness-knew 0 provisions

Table - 4: Beneficiary awareness of livelihood security rights across Districts under MGNREGS

As per districts	Districts			Z-score (at 95% CI)
	Hilly: N=125 (%)	Valley: N=125 (%)	Total: N=250 (%)	
Good awareness	46 (36.8)	63 (50.4)	109 (43.6)	2.17*
Poor awareness	79 (63.2)	62 (49.6)	141 (56.4)	2.17*

*significantly different