

Livelihood Security of Rural Poor through MNREGAs: A Study of Kurukshetra District in Haryana

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Abstract

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) is the largest and most ambitious employment generation program to ensure livelihood security in rural India. It aims to provide at 100 days guaranteed employment at minimum wage rate to every rural household in a financial year. It provides a legal right to work and helps the poor to come out from the poverty trap. There is a great debate among the society regarding the functioning of MNREGA in the country.

The present study is an attempt to analyze the challenges and potential of MNREGA in generating employment opportunities in Kurukshetra District of Haryana. It is based on both primary as well as secondary data. The primary data has been collected with the help of detailed questionnaire from 100 beneficiaries and non beneficiaries of the scheme of Thanesar block of Kurukshetra district. The main focus of the paper is to examine the performance of MNREGA especially in terms of employment generation and assets creation. It highlights the major issues related to awareness among the beneficiaries, person-days generated and assets created over the years in Kurukshetra district. The study finds out that MNREGS has a positive impact on income earning capacity of the beneficiaries. The long-run sustainability of MNREGA has been examined through its contribution to create productive assets in rural areas.

Keynotes: MNREGA; Employment generation; assets creation.

SECTION-I

INTRODUCTION

Haryana is one of the prosperous states of India and had the second highest per capita income in the country at Rs 108354 in the year 2011-12 (list of Indian state PCI). The economy of Haryana is primarily based on agriculture and the second largest contributor to the India's central pool of food grain. About seventy percent of the residents are engaged in agriculture and agriculture allied activities with the low unemployment rate 3.2 percent only. It is lower than the national unemployment rate. The ratio of Below Poverty to total population is 11.16 in 2011-12 (Tendulker methodology) as compared to the national poverty ratio that is 21. With this socio-economic background of the state, this study gauge in to the role of MNREGA as one of the major safety net for rural areas. MNREGS

was implemented in two district of Haryana Sirsa and Mahendergarh in the first phase (2006). In 2008, it was extended to all the twenty one districts.

The main objective of MGNREGA is to generate employment opportunity for unskilled labour and to create sustainable assets to improve the livelihood of rural population. MNREGA differs from other employment generation programs in its approach as right based scheme.

Some of the salient features of this scheme are:

- MNREGA provides a time bound guarantee of 100 days of employment to each household that demands unskilled manual work in a financial year.
- The adult members of a rural household, willing to do unskilled manual work, are required to make registration by writing



or by oral request to the local Gram Panchayat.

- The job card should be issued within 15 days of application.
- Work should be provided within 5 km radius of the village within 15 days of application for work. In case, work is provided beyond 5 km, additional wages of 10% of the minimum wage are payable to the beneficiaries.
- Wages are to be paid according to the Minimum Wages Act 1948. There is provision of same wage rate to male and female candidates. At least one third of the total beneficiaries should be women.
- If Gram Panchayat cannot provide employment, then daily unemployment allowance at the rate of one third of the minimum wages has to be paid.
- Provision of facilities at work sites such as pure water, shades, first aids and crèches etc.
- The works that can be done under MNREGA include water and soil conservation, afforestation, land development works, rural connectivity, flood control and protection such as construction and repair of embankment, digging of percolation tanks and small irrigation projects.
- A 60:40 wage and material ratio has to be maintained. No contractors and machinery is allowed.
- The Central Govt. bears the 100% wage cost of unskilled manual labour. But the liability of payment of unemployment allowance is of the states.
- All the accounts and records relating to the scheme should be available for public scrutiny

SECTION-II

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- The main objective of the paper is to analyze whether NREGS improves the livelihood of people receiving employment under the program through creation of productive assets in the rural area.
- To examine the development potential of the program.
- To identify the challenges to turn the demand for casual labour for productive work.

SECTION-III

STUDY AREA:

KURUKSHETRA DISTRICT: To achieve the above stated objectives, the present study was carried out in Thanesar block of Kurukshetra district in Haryana to bring forth the impact of MNREGA on the livelihood of rural population in terms of employment opportunity and assets creation. Kurukshetra is one of the prosperous districts of Haryana from agriculture point of view. Agriculture is the prime economic activity and about 70% of the workforce is engaged in agriculture and its allied activities. Kurukshetra district is divided into two sub-divisions i.e Thanesar and Pehowa under six blocks Babain, Ladwa, Pehowa, Shahbad, Thanesar and Ismailabad. Kurukshetra district has a population of 964231 as per census 2011 with a population density of 630 inhabitants per square k.m.

Methodology:

The present study is based on both primary as well as secondary data. The primary data is collected with the help of detailed questionnaire and focus group discussion. From Thanesar block, five villages are selected on the basis of information gathered from Block Development Office regarding work done and going on during the survey period. Fifteen beneficiaries are contacted either at worksite or at home to collect the relevant information from each village. To assess the impact of MNREGA at village level, five non-beneficiaries are also contacted in each

village. The study is based on the sample size of one hundred respondents including seventy five beneficiaries of MNREGA and twenty five non-beneficiaries. Random sampling is used based on convenience to choose the respondents. The secondary data is obtained from Gram Panchayat (GP) records, DRDA offices and nrega.nic.in. The graphs, tabulation and percentage methods are used to present the finding out of primary survey and secondary data.

SECTION-IV

Generation of employment under MNREGS in Kurukshetra district

Table-1 presents the data related to number of households received employment, total person days generated, average person days per household (HHs) and HHs completed 100 days

during 2009-10 to 2012-13. The number of household received employment has been increased to 6800 in 2012-13 from 4218 in 2009-10 representing an increase of 38% over the time period. In 2012-13, 391009 person days have been generated as compared to 105214 person days in 2009-10. It is considerable increase of approximate three times in four years. The analysis reveal that average person days per household are fifty seven days as against the guarantee of 100 days employment. No doubt, this figure has been increased from thirty days employment at an average to each household. But the main issue related to the functioning of MNREGA is that the number of household who completed 100 days of employment is very low and the guarantee of at least 100 days employment to every household in a financial year is not ensured.

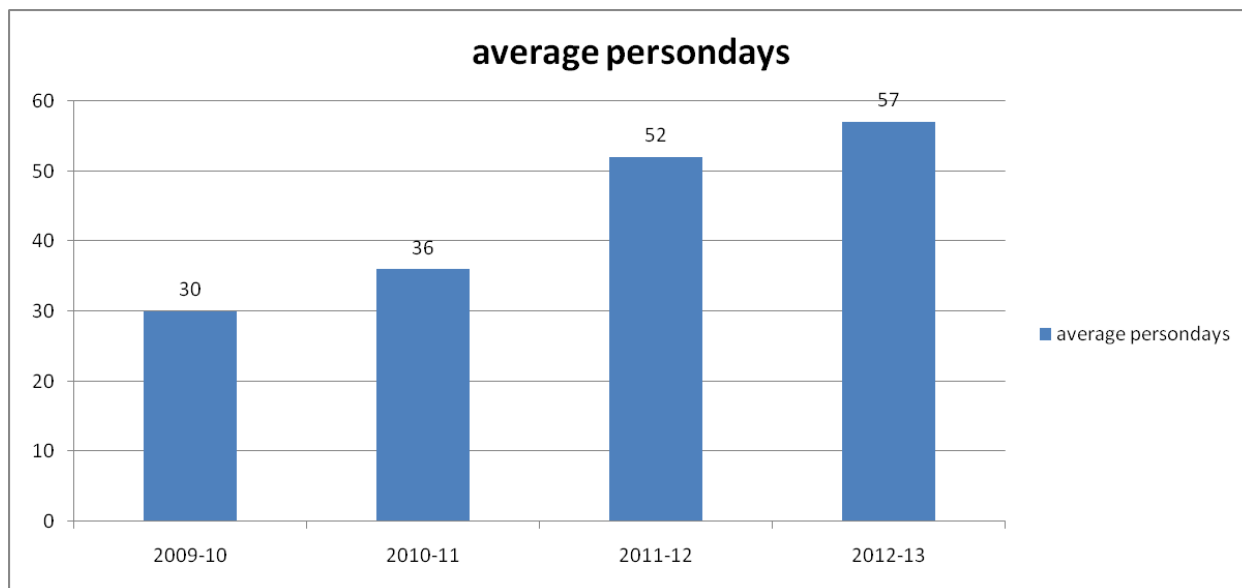
KURUKSHETRA

Year	Job cards issued SCs	Job cards issued STs	Job cards issued others	Total job cards issued	Total HHs demanded work	Total HHs provided work
2007-08	27994	0	00	27994		
2008-09	28125	0	8119	15928	3108	3108 (19.51%)
2009-10	17223	0	9820	17267	4078	4078 (23.61%)
2010-11	17890	0	12092	21328	7237	7204 (33.77%)
2012-13	17211	1	15689	27027	9595	9595 (35.50%)
2013-14	11664	1	21400	33853	18005	18005 (53.18%)
2014-15	11269	1	22528	35247	9655	9652 (27.38%)

Table-1 Employment generated under MNREGA in Kurukshetra district

Year	No. of households Received employment	Person days generated	Average person days per household	HHs completed 100 days
2009-10	4218	105214	30	63
2010-11	5352	195168	36	168
2011-12	5716	297356	52	422
2012-13	6800	391009	57	694
2013-14	18005	4,84,446	50	
2014-15	9652	1,42,274	15	

Source: <http://www.nrega.nic.in>



KKR	Total person-days worked (non-SC/ST)	Total person-days worked by SCs	Total person-days worked by STs	Total person-days worked by women	Total person-days
2008-09	100000 (100%)	0	0	0	100000
2009-10	100000 (100%)	0	0	0	100000
2010-11	100000 (50%)	100000 (50%)	0	100000 (50%)	200000
2011-12	1,81,769 (61.12%)	1,15,587 (38.87%)	0	1,24,493 (41.86%)	2,97,356
2012-13	2,27,202 (58.10%)	1,63,802 (41.90%)	0	1,66,746 (42.64%)	3,91,004
2013-14	3,05,315 (63.02%)	1,79,121 (36.98%)	10	2,19,246 (45.25%)	4,84,446
2014-15	96,066 (67.52%)	46,208 (32.48%)	0	64,942 (45.64%)	1,42,274

Women participation under MNREGS

The Act emphasis that at least one third of the total beneficiaries of MNREGS should be women. In the secondary data analysis, it was found that around forty percent of the total person days are women person days. The table showed that women participation has been increasing over though not shown much change over the period.

Table No. 7
 Women participation under MNREGA in Kurukshetra district

Year	Total person days generated	Women persondays generated	Women participation in Percentage
2009-10	105213	45414	43
2010-11	195167	76548	39
2011-12	297356	124493	42
2012-13	391004	166746	43
2013-14	274839	123721	45
2014-15	1,42,274	64942	45

Source: <http://www.nrega.nic.in>

PRIORITY WISE WORK DESCRIPTION:

The long term objective of NREGS i.e. to create rural infrastructure and improve livelihood of poor, depends on the types of works selected under the scheme. Less focus on creation of productive assets has been a major reason for the failure of employment generation programs in India. In Kurukshetra district, priority wise work description during 2013-14:

- 41 % of the total works undertaken were related to rural sanitation.
- 21% of the total works undertaken were related to rural connectivity.
- 10 % the total works undertaken were related to land development activities.
- 9 % of the total works undertaken were related to water conservation.
- 7 % of the total works undertaken were related to irrigation.
- Works related to flood control, renovation of traditional water bodies and drought proofing were undertaken.

Table No. 7
 Assets created in Kurukshetra District:

		2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Babain	Works completed	14	29	26	58
	Works in progress	15	17	31	31
	Total works	29	46	57	89
	Work completed rate (%)	50%	63%	45%	65%
Ladwa	Works completed	17	41	41	20

	Works in progress	10	15	22	37
	Total works	27	56	63	57
	Work completed rate (%)	63%	73%	65%	35%
Pehowa	Works completed	00	95	83	65
	Works in progress	65	18	17	18
	Total works	65	113	100	83
	Work completed rate (%)	00	84%	83%	78%
Shahbad	Works completed	19	79	117	96
	Works in progress	64	88	40	46
	Total works	83	167	157	142
	Work completed rate (%)	24%	47%	74%	67%
Thaneser	Works completed	40	19	131	79
	Works in progress	22	63	17	20
	Total works	62	82	148	99
	Work completed rate (%)	65%	23%	88%	79%
Total works	Works completed	90	263	398	318
	Works in progress	176	201	127	152
	Total works	266	464	525	470
	Work completed rate (%)	33%	56%	75%	67%

Source: <http://www.nrega.nic.in>

KKR

year	No. of works started	No. of works completed	Work completion rate
2009-10	299	296	98.99
2010-11	313	310	99.04
2011-12	324	317	97.84
2012-13	347	327	94.23
2013-14	892	806	90.35
2014-15	356	256	71.91

SECTION-IV (a)
 THE POTENTIAL OF MNREGA IN PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT
 AND ASSETS CREATION: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED VILLAGES

In order to analyze the various issues related to MNREGA such as awareness among the respondents, facilities provided at worksites, types of work undertaken, administrative problems, corruption etc. The findings out of the study are:

Thanesar block

Thanaser block	VILLAGE
	Barwa
	Dolatpur Khera
	Kainthla Khurd
	Khaspur
	Lohar Majra

Table no. 8
 Demographic distribution of beneficiaries:

	No.	%
Male	38	50.7
Female	37	49.3
SC	42	56
BC	33	44
Gen	00	00
Married	61	81.3
Unmarried	9	12
Widow	5	6.7
Works in primary sector	73	97.3
Works in secondary sector	2	2.7
APL	52	69.3
BPL	23	30.7
Illeterate	36	48
1-5	17	22.7
6-10	18	24
10-12	3	4
Above 12	1	1.3

(Source: computed from survey data)

Awareness: the most important issue related to the implementation of the scheme is awareness among the labour. if they know about the provision of the act, they can force the panchayats or implementing authority to correct the system by using their right. They can themselves check whatever the wrong. But, at the field level it was found that the spread of information was not satisfactory.

Table No. 9
 AWARENESS AMONG WORKERS:

Provision under MNREGA	Percentage of respondents who know about the provision
100 days per household	70
Minimum wage	70
Provision of crèche/shade/ water	64
Work measurement	64
Unemployment allowance	0
Role of Gram Sabha	0
Notice board	0
Muster roll	48

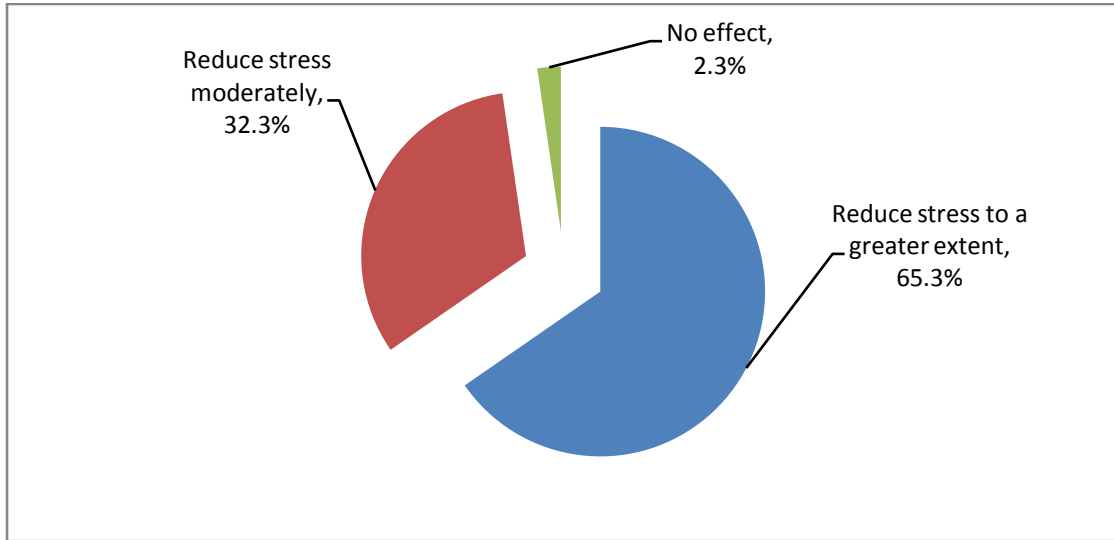
(Source: computed from field data)

Use of right to work by the rural labour: All the respondents had job cards. They got job cards through oral request to the sarpanch and didn't face any difficulty. They got work under the scheme. but, the respondents were not using this scheme as a right. Only 38% of the respondents demanded work from the panchayats. But, 62% of the respondents did not demand for the work. They were under the impression that sarpanch will start the work only then they can do work under the scheme. Only 10 % of the respondents completed 100 days as per the legal entitlement. It was reported on the work sites that all facilities were available on worksites except first aid. A person known as mate was there to supervise the work. Attendance was filled in muster roll at the worksite.

Table no. 10
 Use of right to work

	No.	%
Demand work under MNREGA	29	38.7
Don't demand work under MNREGA	46	61.3
Get 100 days employment	12	16
Don't get 100 days employment	63	84
Scheme reduce stress	73	97.3
Scheme doesn't reduce stress	2	2.7
Reduce stress to a greater extent	49	65.3
Reduce stress moderately	24	32.3
No effect	2	2.3

(Source: computed from survey data)



Financial inclusion or Payment of wages: wage payments to the labourer are very sensitive issue. Under MNREGA wage payments are made through banks. During primary survey, it was found that all the respondents have their own bank accounts. They told that payment through banks is good. It reduces extent of intervention of third party. Out of the sample size, 95% of the respondents draw themselves their wage payments through banks. 91% of the female respondents reported that they receive their wages in their own accounts.

Table no.11
 Financial inclusion

	No.	%
Having Bank Account	68	90.7
Don't have Bank account	7	9.3
Having job card	75	100
Wage payment from Bank	75	100
Draw wage payment himself/herself	71	94.7
Delay in wage payments	38	50.7
Wage payment on time	37	49.3

Source: computed from survey data

Social inclusion: the participation of the beneficiaries in Gram Sabha (GS) is not satisfactory. First, they do not know role of GS and approximately fifty percent of the respondents do not know whether GS held or not held in the village. Even those who know, they did not participate in GS at village level. Only 34 percent of the respondents attended the GS in the study area. Even those attended the GS did not Participate in work selection procedure. Forty five percent of the total respondents said social audit took place in their village. But the respondents of Lohar Majra told that sarpanch was not interested to start the work and they were not informed about GS.

Table no. 12
 Social inclusion

	No.	%
Social audit held in village	34	45.3
No social audit held in village	13	17.3
Don't know	28	37.3
Social audit attended	22	29.3
Social audit not attended	53	70.6
Gram sabha held in village	39	52
Gram sabha not held	8	10.7
Don't know	28	37.3
Gram sabha attended	26	34.7
Gram sabha not attended	42	42
Gram sabha attended rarely	7	9.3
Worker play role to select work	4	5.3
Worker play no role to select work	71	94.7
100 days sufficient	13	17
100 days not sufficient	62	82

(Source: computed from survey data)

Impact of MNREGA on respondent's livelihood: The paper examines the impact of the scheme on the livelihood of respondents. It is based on the assessment of the beneficiaries. They assess the impact of the scheme on income earning capacity, expenditure pattern, agricultural wage rate through increasing bargaining power and migration in the family.

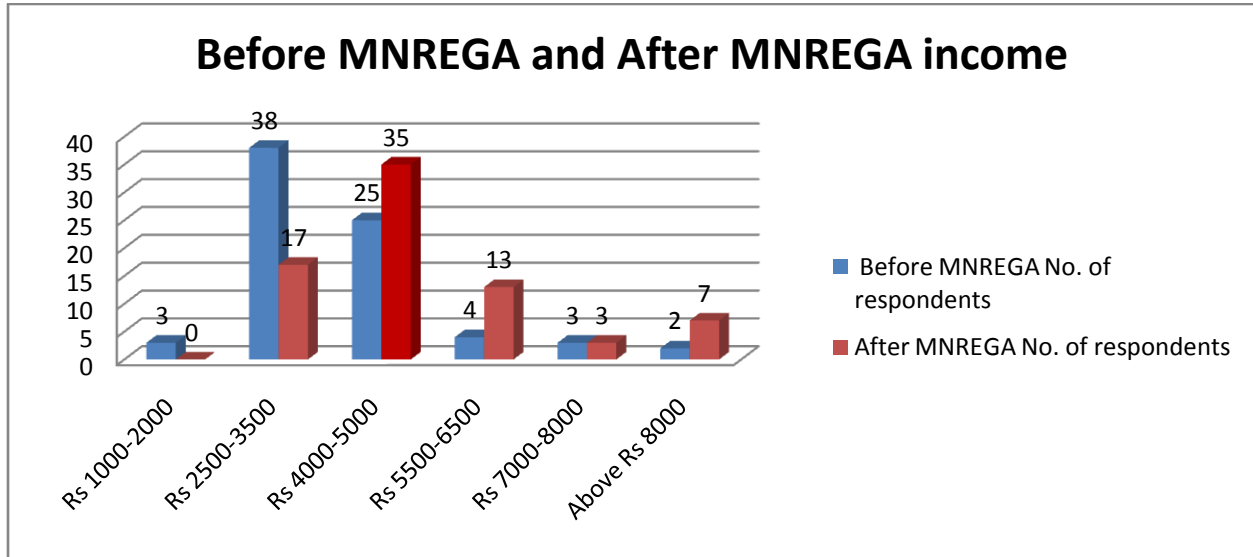
Income: 97% of the respondents told that the scheme has increased income significantly.

Expenditure: increase in the income affects the purchasing power. It was revealed by the respondents that they spend more on both food and non food items due to income earned under the scheme.

Table No.13
 Monthly income of respondents before and after MNREGA

Monthly income	Before MNREGA No. of respondents	After MNREGA No. of respondents
Rs 1000-2000	3	0
Rs 2500-3500	38	17
Rs 4000-5000	25	35
Rs 5500-6500	4	13
Rs 7000-8000	3	3
Above Rs 8000	2	7

Source: computed from survey data



Agriculture wage rate: 58% of the respondents assess that MNREGA has caused to increase in daily wages for agricultural activities. It has increased their bargaining power for work. 49% of the respondents admit that it has reduced stress to a greater extent regarding getting work, and 24 % of them revealed that it moderately useful.

Migration: Although, migration is not a major issue in kurukshetra district. labourer used to work in city and near about places. 13% of the respondents told that someone from their families work outside due to better opportunities and higher wages. The scheme has no impact on these families. Still they are working outside.

Impact at village level:

This assessment is based on perception of the respondents and villagers. The long term objective of NREGS is to create rural infrastructure and to improve livelihood of poor depends on the types of works to be done under the scheme. work selection directly affects community level assets. The respondents perceive the following impact in the study area:

The impact of MNREGS at village level is multidimensional. On the one hand, it improves the income-consumption pattern of the beneficiaries. On the other hand, works related to roads, water bodies, ponds, tanks, streets land development and sanitation improves the rural infrastructure.

In Barwa village works undertaken are:

- The works related to water conservation includes digging of pond, clearance of canal, water tanks, water works and drainage.
- Rural connectivity to provide all weather access through building gravel road, earth filling on kaccha rasta and brick pavement between village and outside houses (farm houses).
- More emphasis on irrigation projects as clearance of minor, drain etc.
- Sanitation of village area.

In Dolatpur Khera village assets created are in the form of:

- Water conservation and water harvesting for instance digging of new ponds, renovation of existing tanks and clearance of water works.

- Works related to rural connectivity i.e. earth filling on rasta, brick pavement to connect village with other villages.
- Land development activities as land leveling, tree plantation on panchayat land.
- Sanitation of village area.

In Khaspur village assets created are in the form of:

- Land development activities such as land leveling and earth filling on panchayat land.
- Works related to rural connectivity i.e. streets, brick pavement to connect village with other village.
- Sanitation of village area.

In Kainthla Khurd village assets are in the form of:

- Land development activities such as land leveling on panchayat land.
- Clearance of minor, rajbhaha and drains.
- Sanitation of village area.

In Lohar Majra works undertaken are:

- Clearance of minor and drains.
- Land leveling on panchayat land.
- Sanitation of the village.

The overall assessment of MNREGS by beneficiaries:

- The roads built under MNREGS works have connected village to the farms. 73% of the respondents assess that MNREGS has improved rural connectivity through streets, roads and land development activities.
- Digging ponds is the major activity under the scheme. These ponds help in water harvesting during rainy season and improve the ground water level. 61 % of the respondents told that ponds built under the scheme contribute to water conservation.
- Clinkiness of minor canals, rajbhaha, and water works improve the quality of water. 58% respondents assess that MNREGS improves the quality of water.
- Works related to mud cleanliness, water passing system contribute to the sanitation of villages. Villages represent the picture of real India. Sanitation of villages directly affects health of villagers. 60 % respondents revealed that it contributes for the sanitation of the village.

Table no.14
Perceived impact of MNREGA

	No.	%
Impact on agricultural wage	44	58.7
Enhance Income	73	97.3
Increase expenditure	73	97.3
Increase irrigation facilities	67	89.3
Water conservation	46	61.3
Improve streets	55	73.3
Tree plantation	13	17.3
Improve quality of water	44	58.7

Source: computed from survey data

Assessment of MNREGA by non-beneficiaries:

	No.	%
Work done under MNREGA according to village requirement	4	16
Some works according to village requirement	9	36
Irrigation facilities improve after MNREGA	8	32
Barren land improved after MNREGA	9	36
Rural sanitation	11	44
Road and streets increase after MNREGA	16	64
MNREGA to be continue	14	56
Worker availability decrease after MNREGA	17	68
Agricultural wage increase after MNREGA	20	80
MNREGA benefitted village	14	56

To sum up, the main positive findings are:

- Minimum wage of Rs 214 per day was paid to the labourer.
- Wage payments are paid through bank and labourer draw their wages themselves.
- MNREGS has positive impact on employment availability and income earning capacity.
- MNREGS has positive impact on employment availability and income earning capacity.
- Women beneficiaries have their own bank accounts and 64 percent of them decide for what purpose wage money will be used.
- Hundred percent women said that MNREGS has enhanced income earning capacity and 73 percent of them assess that it has enhanced income to a greater extent.

The following are the areas of concern:

- The secondary data analysis show that average employment provided per household is very low. The field survey reported that households completed 100 days are very low.
- Awareness regarding unemployment allowance, notice board and role of gram sabha is low.
- In Dolatkhera village, job cards were with the sarpanch.
- In the sample villages, no entry of attendance in the job card was made.
- Non-availability of first aid facilities. Delay in wage payments.
- Farmers told that after the implementation of MNREGS, there is shortage of farm labour because labour prefers to work under the scheme.

SECTION-V

DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF MGNREGS

Areas to use labour in productive work:

Tree plantation:

In Haryana, total area under forest is very low i.e. only 3.8% of the total area is under forest. The district has practically no forest except grown by the both sides of roads and canals by government departments. However, total area under forest in the district is 45 Sq. Km. which is about 2.9% of the total area (1530 Sq. Km) of the district. More and more trees should be planted on waste land, Panchayat Bhawan and village land.



Skills formation: The main concern of the employment generation strategy is of skill formation. Providing employment without formatting skills does not solve the problem. The strategy should focus on skill formation to reduce dependency of the beneficiaries on such programs. These programs should enhance the capacity of the labourer to start their own business. Ponds built under MNREGS can be used for fisheries. Labourer can be trained for such activity. So after MNREGS work they can start such activity and reduce their dependency on such program.

New works more emphasis on improving livelihood of rural poor population: Recently, works related to agriculture, NADEP composting, vermi composting, manure, livestock, poultry shelter, goat shelter, Ajola, drinking water related works, recharge pit etc. are included under the Scheme. These works focus to increase the agricultural productivity, self-employment generation and assets creation at village level.

Cleanliness of rural India instead of digging unnecessary holes: Villages represent the picture of real India. Sanitation of villages directly affects health of villagers. There is no waste management system to curb the domestic and agricultural garbage. Some of the sites in the villages look like slums. It has a severe health effect on the human resource. MNREGS can play a very important role to make villages clean and healthy reducing the cost of illness. Clean villages build the real dignity with in the country.

Under MNREGS works related to building pavements in Government school, play grounds and maintenance of these assets should be done.

After talking to the farmer in this region, it was found that there was a shortage of farm labourer because they prefer to work under NREGS. The primary data analysis also supports this issue. 95% of the respondents prefer to work in MNREGS. The reason was less working hours, so that they can manage their household activities and livestock care. Under MNREGS, agricultural works can be done on the land of marginal farmers. But such kinds of works are not undertaken in the study area.

SECTION-VI

CONCLUSION

Challenges to the long run sustainability

PRIs active participation and will to implement the scheme: Mahatma Gandhi emphasized on decentralization of the political power by assigning the major role to the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs). MNREGS has been implemented with the same philosophy. The success of the program depends on the active participation of Gram Panchayats. This study supports that there was different experience in the sample villages depending on the willingness of sarpanch. Those GPs were active to start the program, it has benefitted

positively in terms of availability of employment opportunities by enhancing income capacity.

Labour- material ratio: under MNREGA provision, it is mandatory to maintain 60:40 wage-material ratios for the total cost. The use of machinery is prohibited to complete the work. The main concern is to employ unskilled labour. The new works focus on assets creation, but it requires more of the material expenditure and less use of labour. the identification of the productive work is a challenge to consider with great care.

Maintenance of the assets created: the sustainability of the program depends on what



kind of assets has been created at village level` and `how long they sustain to improve the livelihood of the poor`. For example, tree plantation should be maintained to take long term benefits. This is a bigger challenge to maintain the assets created under the program.

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Annexure

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Geographical area (census 2011)	44212 Sq. km
Population	25353081
Rural population	16531493
Urban population	8821588
Percent of rural population	65.21%
Net sown area	3550 hect.
Net sown area to total geographical area	8.03%
Irrigated area \of net sown area	
Area under forest (2010-11)	3.81%

(Source: Haryana Economic Survey 2013-14)