

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The Indian constitution has given right to life to all its citizens as a fundamental right. That right also implies right to work for all. This goal of ensuring employment to every citizen is very much in order with Article 23 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights that states that “every one has a right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment” (UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948).

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is a unique scheme which recognizes the legitimate role of panchayats in addressing their fundamental duty as expressed in the seventy-third constitutional amendment of providing ‘economic development and social justice’ within their area of jurisdiction. The recognition of Panchayat Raj Institution (PRI) as the principal implementing agency of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment Guarantee (MGNREG) scheme, which has to unlock gigantic opportunities for decentralizing development and respecting local solutions to local livelihood challenges.

Neo-liberal policies have impacted adversely on the employment panorama in developing countries in multiple ways. Firstly, a high rate of growth is achieved through technical progress leading to increasingly capital intensive technologies, which is accompanied by declining employment intensity. Secondly, growth of exports of labour intensive products has increased employment, albeit of poor quality. Third, import of cheap goods under liberalization has resulted in closure of local production units, resulting in loss of jobs. Fourth, liberalization has frequently intensified gender inequalities in the labour market, further deteriorating women’s position in the labour market. Finally, opening of economies has exposed developing countries to global competition as well as to the global volatility, leading to increased employment insecurity, uncertainties, and vulnerability.

Promotion of labour intensive sectors has been recommended by experts including the Indian Planning Commission, to address these problems. This could be achieved by encouraging the corporate sector to move into more labour intensive sectors and by facilitating expansion of employment and of unorganized enterprises that operate in labour

intensive sectors. However, there are two questions: (1) What will happen to the un/underemployed until labour intensive sectors are developed enough to generate adequate employment? (2) Is it feasible to use the labour of the un/underemployed to promote labour intensive sectors in the economy through an Employment Guarantee Programme? The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) can answer both questions positively and this can also promote labour intensive growth in the medium and long terms.

### **Public Work Programmes to MGNREGS: A Brief Background**

India has a long history of public works programmes. They started as relief works during the pre-British and British period when disasters like drought and floods threatened the survival of people. They provided employment at minimum wages to enable affected people to survive. However, assets were selected in an ad hoc manner, keeping in mind largely the convenience of affected people. After Independence, however, public employment programmes were viewed as a means of generating employment to address the structural un/underemployment, as well as a means of creating productive assets for expanding the labour absorbing capacity of the economy (Nurkse 1957, Hirschman 1961). The first public works programme, Rural Works Programme (RWP), was introduced in the 1960s and was followed by a series of wage employment programmes, each trying to improve upon the earlier one. These initially were the Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE), Pilot Rural Employment Project (PIREP), and then two national employment programmes—the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) from 1980/81–1989 and the Rural Labour Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) during 1982/83–1989. The Jawahar Rojgar Yojana was introduced in the mid-1990s to involve panchayati raj institutions and a modified version of this programme, Sampurna Grameen Rojgar Yojana (SGRY), was introduced in the late 1990s to provide massive wage employment to the rural population (Hirway and Terhal 1994). Maharashtra's Employment Guarantee Scheme (MEGS) is important in this context, as it has several useful features not found in early employment programmes. Maharashtra's Employment Guarantee Scheme (MEGS) was introduced in the early 1970s with multiple objectives of guaranteeing work to all those who were willing to work at a fixed wage rate in rural areas. The element of guarantee was to ensure that the programme reached the poor at the

bottom, on the one hand and promote development of backward/poor regions, on the other. The other objective was meant to ensure that the programme did not end up creating a permanent army of unskilled labourers. The workings of these programmes have been evaluated by a large number of official and non-official agencies. An important observation coming out of these studies is that these programmes have definitely helped the poor, at least in selected pockets, by raising their employment and wage incomes. However, they have not had much impact at the macro level (Hirway 2003). To make these programmes successful, it is necessary that employment is made available on a scale that meets the demand for work, work is provided at a minimum wage rate and for adequate number of days to ensure minimum incomes, employment is made available locally, employment is accompanied by a minimum package of social security (security against injury, sickness and death, old age, maternity), and a good public distribution system ensures supply of food grains, at reasonable prices (Hirway 2003). Also, if the use of surplus labour has to result in capital formation, it is necessary that selection and sequencing of assets/works is done systematically. That is, the assets selected should be labour intensive during the construction phase, have short gestation periods, and generate sustainable employment in the mainstream economy. In short, if planned and implemented well, these programmes can promote strategic use of surplus labour to promote labour-intensive, sustainable development in the economy.

*The CAG report (2007) has brought out glaring deficiencies of the MGNREGS in the following words:*

*The main deficiency was the lack of adequate administrative and technical manpower at the block and gram panchayat level. The lack of manpower adversely affected the preparation of plans, scrutiny, approval, monitoring and measurement of works, and maintenance of stipulated records at the block and gram panchayat level. Besides affecting the implementation of the scheme and provision of employment, this has also impacted adversely on transparency, and made it difficult to verify the provision of the legal guarantee of 100 days of employment on demand. Planning was inadequate and delayed, which resulted in poor progress of works. Systems for financial management and tracking were deficient, with*

*numerous instances of diversion/ misutilisation, and delay in transfer of state share. Maintenance of records at the block and gram panchayat level was extremely poor, and the status of monitoring, evaluation and social audit was also not up to the mark. [CAG (2007), Draft Performance Audit of Implementation of NREGA, p. 95]*

*CAG report (2013), the performance audit on MGNREGS under the said act in Assam was aimed at reviewing the efforts of the state government for effective implementation of the scheme as envisaged, and highlighting the areas and issues of concern which need to be addressed for successful implementation of the objectives of the scheme. Against the total funds of `4152.54 crore available in the State under MGNREGS during the period of 2007-12, `4060.48 crore (98 per cent) was reported to have been spent on generation of employment opportunities and creation of assets under the scheme in the state. Out of the total 39.21 lakh households in the state, 13.53 lakh to 21.55 lakh households demanded employment during the period 2007-12 and were provided employment on an average of 12 to 37 days per households per year.*

## **Summary of significant findings of the report**

### **Planning**

The performance audit revealed that neither any specific demand (labour budget) for the years 2007-08 and 2008-09 was placed with the ministry nor any labour budget approved during these years. During 2009-12, funds released fell short of approved labour budget. The estimates in the labour budget had no significance or application in the planning of annual action plan. District Perspective Plans (DPPs) as envisaged were either not prepared or prepared but not approved by the State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC). Annual development plans/action plans were prepared without considering the basic information required to assess the benefits expected in terms of employment generated. Works were executed outside the development plan.

**Release and Utilisation of fund**

There were instances of non/short release of both central as well as state government share and issues relating to diversion of fund, delay in transfer of fund to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment Guarantee scheme (MGNREGS) account in addition to other gross financial irregularities like irregular administrative expenses, doubtful expenditures, under utilisation of funds by executing agencies and non reconciliation of post office accounts.

**Registration and Issue of Job Cards**

Job cards were not issued properly and in a timely manner. There were cases of generation of excess job cards and fraudulent payment of wages through fake job cards. Besides, the registration list was never updated to add eligible workers or to delete ineligible workers. There was also lack of awareness of the provision of the scheme amongst the job seekers.

**Employment**

Average number of days of wage employment provided to each household annually varied from 8 to 63 days during 2007-12 in 10 selected districts against the guaranteed provision of at least 100 days wage employment to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. In the Sixth Schedule districts of Karbi Anglong and Chirang, the employment provided to women workers, however, ranged between 23 and 41 per cent, which reflected a positive impact of the scheme.

**Execution of works**

Numbers of non-permissible works were executed disregarding the provision of the Act. Most of the works remained incomplete mainly due to non-release of funds to executing agencies. Materials were procured at higher rates and remained unaccounted for. There were cases of less execution of works, wasteful expenditure and nonexistence of works stated to have been executed, doubtful expenditure and unauthorized execution of works. No attempt was also made for the maintenance of works executed. The state government had not prepared any guidelines for convergence of schemes/funds with other departments.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

There was deficiency in ensuring conduct of targeted inspections and maintenance of inspection records/reports. Besides, lack of vigilance/deficiency in checking of muster rolls, conducting social audit, grievance redressal reflected poor monitoring and evaluation of the programmes both at state and the district level.

A study by the Centre for Environment and Food Security (CEFS) about the progress of the programme in Orissa revealed that the government had claimed that out of a budgetary provision of Rs 890 crores for 2006-07, the State Government was able to utilize Rs 733 crores (that is, 82.4 per cent) only. As a result, 57 days of wage employment was provided during the year. Not a single household was denied wage employment in 19 Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment Guarantee (MGNREG) districts. The government also claimed that 1.54 lakh families in the State completed 100 days of wage employ during 2006-07. However, the research team of the Centre for Environment and Food Security (CEFS) revealed the hollowness of these claims. Out of Rs 733 crores spent under the MGNREGS, more than Rs 500 crores was unaccounted for, probably siphoned off and misappropriated by government officials. The research team also found that not a single family in the 100 sample villages was able to secure 100 days of wage employment. Very few families got 20-40 days, the rest mostly between five and 20 days, if at all. Fake job cards and fabricated muster rolls exaggerated the benefits of the scheme. The social audit was non-existent. Thus, the ground reality was highly distressing despite tall claims of the government of the success about the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) implementation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Learning from the past experiences of wage employment programmes, the government of India has introduced an employment guarantee scheme in 2006. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), under which every rural household living in the most backward 200 districts of the country was guaranteed at least 100 days of wage employment at the minimum wage rate of the concerned state, was passed by parliament in 2005 and was implemented in February 2006. The Act was extended to 100 more districts in the second year and was extended to the entire country (rural areas) from

April 2008. The act was followed by the formulation of national guidelines, on the basis of which each state government was asked to design an employment guarantee scheme. This legal commitment is a landmark event in the history of poverty reduction strategies in India. It is also a unique event among the pro-poor strategies in the world, as no country has ever given a right of this kind to such a large section of the population so far.

Development has been studied countless times from many perspectives. Many of these studies have focused on communication as a useful tool for publicizing development plans, as the means by which exploitative social structures are perpetuated, or as the means of initiating sweeping cultural changes.

Narula's (1983) study of rural village and urban communities focused on development awareness, motivation, and participation. Some of the results were startling. First, she found that the masses who were most aware of development issues and most discontented were least motivated to participate actively in development programs. Second, the success of development programs was not commensurate with the effort the government had expended and did not match the performance expected from contemporary theories of development.

Participatory communication also has a desirable effect on the people involved as well as facilitating the success of particular development programs. It confers a sort of political emancipation, a new awareness of one's economic and social condition (Ryan and Kaplun 1980). There are various dimensions or stratum in development support communication theory. Development philosophy performs role of representation, with communicative advantage to resolve particular issues. Development theories replicate the picture of societal improvement with desirable alteration.

In 1978, UNESCO identified the "communication needs" of people in the new paradigm as "open dialogue" between the people and the government. The first way in which such a dialogue was conceptualized was in terms of the "direction" of the flow of messages and diversified content. The "multidirectional" or "multi way" flow of messages prescribes that messages should flow from bottom to top as well as vice versa, and

horizontally at every level of hierarchy. Diversification of content refers to the use of communication channels to do more than simply inform and persuade the masses to adopt innovations. Their experiences, thoughts, and motives should find opportunity for expression as well. To implement multidirectional and diversified messages, the UNESCO recommendations specified that "access" to media be made available, even in rural areas.

Singh and Gross (1978) advocated models of two-way communication between policy makers and the public, stressing the importance of feedback in the communication process. There are several loops of feedback and feed forward, allowing the senders of messages whether in a top-bottom, bottom-top, or horizontal net work to learn how the message is being understood.

Alternative development perspective is another approach which is the theoretical base of this study. Alternative development can be viewed as a roving critique of mainstream development, shifting in position as mainstream development shifts, as a series of alternative proposals and methodologies. It can be viewed as concerned with local development, with alternative practices on the ground, or as an overall challenge to the mainstream, and part of a global alternative. The main purpose of alternative development approach of 'development theory' is to participate with the local setting to focus on grass root activities. It is believed that the programs of alternative development are more participatory, and inclusive in nature. Civil society groups are expected to be involved in the alternative development process, as the civil society thinks that the programs of the state are not sufficient and also not efficient for beneficiaries. According to Nerfin (1977), alternative development is the terrain of 'Third System' or citizen politics, the importance of which is apparent in view of the failed development efforts of government (the prince or first system) and market forces (the merchant or second system). Alternative development is often identified with development by non government organization (Drabek 1987).

Communitarian perspective of development focuses on economic distribution, participatory approach in policy making and integration of community. It promotes group and individual choice of freedom, cultural and artistic creativity, regional and local autonomy, political participation, consumer and public rights, social mobility and political



access and circulation (Majid Tehranian, 1979). Communitarian approach of development gives more importance to the community and it says that community should decide its own way of development. There should not be any imposed idea from outside; state must consult with the community people to make any development plan for societal upliftment, peoples' participation is imperative and community must participate in decision making process. The structure of communication is from bottom to top. This research study is based on the 'Development Communication Theory' of Majid Tehranian.

### **MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE MGNREGS**

The main objective of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

### **MGNREGS GOALS**

- a. Strong social safety net for the vulnerable groups by providing a fall-back employment source, when other employment alternatives are scarce or inadequate.
- b. Growth engine for sustainable development of an agricultural economy. Through the process of providing employment on works that address causes of chronic poverty such as drought, deforestation and soil erosion, the Act seeks to strengthen the natural resource base of rural livelihood and create durable assets in rural areas. Effectively implemented, MGNREGS has the potential to transform the geography of poverty.
- c. Empowerment of rural poor through the processes of a rights-based law.
- d. New ways of doing business, as a model of governance reform anchored on the principles of transparency and grass root democracy.

### **Major Salient Features of MGNREGS**

- Wages to be paid every week not later than a fortnight
- In the case of any delay in the payment of wages, labourers are entitled to compensation as per the Payment of Wages Act
- No gender bias is permitted

- Provisions are made for compensation and treatment in the case of injury and for on-site safe drinking water, care of small children, periods of rest and a first-aid box
- Contractors and labour displacing machines are banned
- At least 60 per cent of the expenditure under any project to be on wages.
- At least 50 per cent of the projects, in terms of value, to be implemented through the gram panchayats which must prepare a development plan
- The programme officer to be responsible for the implementation of the employment guarantee programme in the block.

### **COVERAGE OF MGNREGS**

The Act was notified in 200 districts in the first phase with effect from February 2nd 2006 and then extended to additional 130 districts in the financial year 2007-2008 (113 districts were notified with effect from April 1st 2007, and 17 districts in Uttar Pradesh were notified with effect from May 15, 2007). The remaining districts have been notified under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) with effect from April 1, 2008. Thus, The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) covers the entire country with the exception of districts that have a hundred percent urban population.

The Act is an important step towards realization of the right to work. It is also expected to enhance people's livelihood on a sustained basis, by developing the economic and social infrastructure in rural areas. The choice of works seeks to address the causes of chronic poverty such as drought, deforestation and soil erosion. Effectively implemented, the employment guaranteed under the Act has the potential of transforming the geography of poverty.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is the most significant act in the history of Indian polity in many ways like grassroot level participation of every citizen and beneficiary through democratic process, multi-layered social audit and transparency mechanism by involvement of civil society, comprehensive planning at village level towards sustainable and equitable development. A salient feature of the Act is to improve the quality of life of rural households who are vulnerable to

migration in search of daily wage employment by channelizing the wage workforce towards developmental activities at the village level itself.

### **Guarantee of work**

Under the Act: (1) Guarantee is given for casual and manual work on public works (and on private works under specified situations) to all households (all members of the household above 18 years) living in rural India; (2) the guarantee is for at least 100 days in one year at the stipulated minimum wages; (3) work should be provided within 15 days of demanding it; and (4) work should be located within 5 km of distance. If work is not provided to anybody within the given time, he/she will be paid a daily unemployment allowance.

### **Entitlements**

MGNREGS workers are entitled to several amenities, facilities, and allowances including: (1) worksite facilities like safe drinking water, shade for small children and workers for rest period, a first aid box with adequate material for emergency treatment of minor injuries, strokes, body ache, and other health hazards, and crèche facilities for babies; (2) medical treatment and hospitalization costs in case of injury on work, along with a daily allowance of not less than half of the statutory minimum wages; and (3) deduction of 5 percent of wages as contribution to welfare schemes like health insurance, accident insurance, survivor benefits, maternity benefits, and social security schemes. Strict penalties have been laid down in the Act for non-compliance with the rules relating to employment guarantee, terms of employment, and entitlement of workers.

### **Planning for works and funding**

A Central Employment Guarantee Council came into existence at the national level to implement the Act. The council, with adequate representation from women and dalits (members of low status casts), advises the central government on matters concerning implementation of the Act, has established central evaluation and monitoring systems, and organizes regular monitoring. At the state level there is a state council that advises the state government on all matters concerning MGNREGS. At the district level, the collector or the programme director (PD) is responsible for the implementation of the programme. At the block level, there is a programme officer and the panchayat samiti in charge of the implementation of the scheme.

The gaon panchayat at the village level is expected to prepare a perspective plan (for five years), an annual plan, and a shelf of projects or works in a participatory manner in consultation with the gram sabha and technical experts. Fifty percent of the works are to be planned at the village level, while 25 per cent each at the block and district levels, in consultation with people and experts. Each person wanting employment gets registered with the village panchayat and gets a job card along with his/her photograph. Work is to be provided to all registered persons as according to the rules laid down in the state.

A separate National Employment Guarantee Fund has been set up at the central government level. State-level funds will be created to ensure availability of funds for the programme. The wage component will be paid by the central fund while the material component will be shared by the centre and the state government.

### **Type of works under MGNREGS**

- Water conservation and water harvesting;
- Drought proofing (including afforestation and tree plantation);
- Irrigation canals including micro and minor irrigation works;
- Provision of irrigation facility, horticulture plantation and land development facilities on land owned by households belonging the SC and ST or to BPL families or to beneficiaries of land reforms or to the beneficiaries under the Indira Awas Yojana of the Government of India;
- Renovation of traditional water bodies including de-silting of tanks; land development;
- Flood control and protection works including drainage in water logged areas;
- Rural connectivity to provide all-weather access; and
- Any other work which may be notified by central government in consultation with the state government

### **Transparency and accountability**

The Act lays down provisions for consequent transparency in implementation and accountability of implementers. These provisions include: (1) an annual report, as well as all accounts and records relating to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), is to be made available in convenient form for public scrutiny; (2) the details of each project, including accounts, are to be displayed

prominently on a board close to the site and at the office of the village panchayat; and (3) the gram sabha has to monitor the performance of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) through conducting social audit and having the quality of assets evaluated by technically qualified personnel to ensure that they meet the required technical standards and measurements. Heavy penalties have been laid down for non-compliance of any rules under the Act, including a fine not less than Rs.1,000, imprisonment up to six months, or both.

### **Communication aspects of MGNREGS**

1. Awareness generation through Information, Education and Communication ( IEC ) For people to know their rights under the Act, effective communication of information about the Act and Scheme is essential.
2. For awareness generation every State Government will undertake an intensive Information Education Communication (IEC) exercise to publicise the key provisions of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and procedures to be followed like the process of registration, demand for employment, unemployment allowance, grievance redressal and social audit.
3. Information Education Communication (IEC) should target workers, rural households, panchayat and pay special attention to deprived areas and marginalized communities. The state government should draw up an information education communication plan and develop communication material designed to help people articulate their demand and claim their entitlements.
4. Information should be widely disseminated, especially in remote areas, SC/ST hamlets through television, radio, films, print media including vernacular newspapers, pamphlets and brochures.

While intensive communication should precede the introduction of the Act, communication is also an integral part of the implementation process, aimed at making this legislation a 'People's Act'. The effectiveness of this communication process will be evident to the extent to which people who needs work under this Act register and apply for work. Other signs of successful communication include the active involvement of local communities at every stage; prompt grievance redressal, vigilant social audits by the Gram Sabhas, and wide use of the right to information.

### **Communication perspective of development**

In the context of development, the main purpose of human communication is to understand the human reality in order to achieve goals and select the other subsequent goals. Thus mutual understanding is fundamental to the process of communication itself. A circular communication is necessary at all levels with several loops of feedback and feed-forward to arrive at mutual understanding. A development communication model is based on the communication patterns for development discussion information and feedback, about the development programs, problems and needs and the relationship among these communication links.

Communication perspective of development views development as the construction of particular set of relationships, roles and patterns of actions and communication as the process by which those are created.

### **According to Nora Quebral, Communication offers the development process a number of inputs:**

- A way to survey a new environment especially by establishing consultative vehicles.
- A way of raising consciousness and awareness amongst communities of issues pertaining to a better life for all.
- A way of promoting feedback - a dynamic two-way process can be set up between people and developers.
- A way to teach new skills selling.
- A national dream and a vehicle for programmes, directed at nation building.

### **Key elements of the development communication approach according to Nora Quebral;**

- It is responsive: It does not provide useless information that which people did not want to know, but which central planners deemed as crucial. People understand their own needs better and through this approach communication becomes a tool in the planning and development process, not a mechanism to persuade communities once unpalatable decisions have been made in their best interests.

- It hinges on feedback: It is not a one way process but involves dialogue mechanisms about the information that was transferred. It is also fundamentally about consultative processes being managed at community level.
- Innovation and creativity: The message must not be dull and boring but show clearly how the information transmitted will make a difference in the life of the recipient, it must not instill doubt or disbelief, but trust and confidence. Development communication workers should, however, balance creativity with an understanding of what communities would be prepared to accept and where consideration has been given to the norms and prevailing values of that community.
- Independent validation: It is not about government speak. This approach builds participatory mechanisms and functional networks involving non government organizations, and traditional leadership structures while also encouraging links with networks from across the country and indeed all over the world. These can either prove or disprove the validity of the information transmitted.
- It is about sustainability and continuity: It is not about dumping information in a community and never going back for months.
- It is about community participation: Development programmes plan for communities or supply information which planners feel communities need, fail to be relevant initiatives and more often than not fail to be sustainable. A primary emphasis of this approach is to plan with communities, create structures which offer communities and developers equal power, and use communication methods which are fundamentally participatory in nature. This often requires that government planners, developers or community workers have to listen to the advice of communities and change the views they themselves hold.
- It is about access and visibility of government where government is no longer a distant and unknown entity in community development experiences. This approach reverses the practice of communities having to travel long distances and at relatively great cost to access government services and information. This is made worse when government is not clearly and properly identifiable and access is difficult because of inaccessible buildings, unfriendly and unprofessional staff. The development communication approach brings government employees face to face

with communities so promoting accountability at local level. This is not possible when civil servants are remote and impersonal.

- It is about the use of simple and relevant language where concepts are packaged in the experiences of communities, in their own language and where communities themselves have played a major role in the development of material for development communication programmes.

### **Profile of MGNREG Scheme**

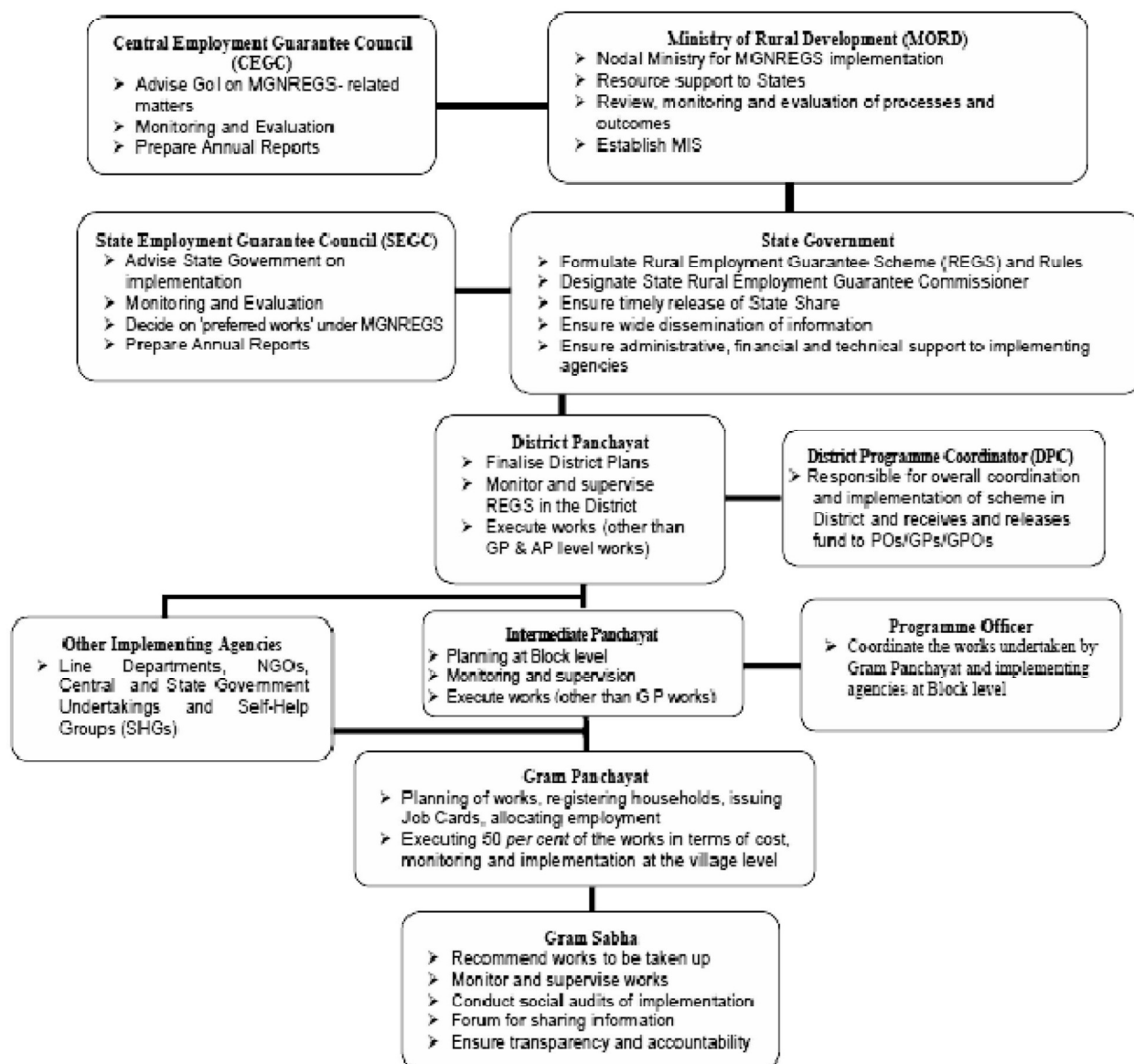
The Mahathma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MGNREGS) is a flagship programme of government of India executed by Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) under MGNREGA Act, 2005. This programme, which aims at providing livelihood security to the rural poor, was being implemented with effect from 2 February 2006 initially in 200 most backward districts of the country and then extended to 130 additional districts in 2007-2008 and has now been notified in all the remaining districts with effect from April 1, 2008. The Act provides a legal guarantee of 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work at the minimum wage rate notified for agricultural labour prescribed in the state or else an unemployment allowance. The objective of the Act is to supplement wage employment opportunities in rural areas and in the process also build up durable assets. Planning is critical to the successful implementation of the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). A key indicator of success is the timely generation of employment within 15 days while ensuring that the design and selection of works are such that good quality assets are developed. The basic aim of the planning process is to ensure that the district is prepared well in advance to offer productive employment on demand. The Act under section 16, mandates the formulation of a development plan by the Gram Panchayat on the recommendations of the Gram Sabha. The development plan will be an annual plan that consists of a 'shelf of projects' to offer employment on demand.



## Organisational Structure and Funding Pattern of MGNREGS

The organisational structure for implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)

### Organisational structure of MGNREGS



For the funding of scheme, the government of India established a fund called the National Employment Guarantee Fund, from which grants are released directly to the districts, blocks and gram panchayat levels, with separate bank accounts for monitoring transparency at each level.

**Statement of the problem:**

‘Communication Strategies for MGNREGS: A Study of Beneficiary perceptions in Southern Assam’, is the title of this study. In this study, it is attempted to assess the communication perceptions of the beneficiaries about MGNREGS in the three districts of Barak Valley. Most of the studies found on MGNREGS have dealt with the implementation of the Act in terms of employment created as well as issues of wages, processes of implementation, corruption, issues of migration, embezzlement of funds, participation of women workers, changes in livelihoods, feedback mechanisms and others. However, a few studies have focused on the communication aspect and media awareness in terms of the realization of its development potential. Rarely any of the studies have attempted in broader sense to look into the communication perceptions of the beneficiaries and strategies being created by the implementing authority and its contribution towards long term development and sustained employment generation in the villages. This thesis is an effort to bridge this gap by studying the communication perceptions of the beneficiaries about MGNREGS which is different in nature than that of those studies conducted by different researchers on this scheme.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

General objectives

- To understand the perceptions of respondents as to the methods and strategies of government communication for rural development through MGNREGS.

Specific objectives

- To know what media or channel the government officials mostly use to communicate with the rural people for their program’s publicity.
- To understand the type of the content of the messages and its impact that the government officials would like to convey to the target audience.
- To find out the best source of information for the beneficiaries about the scheme.

- To find out the effectiveness of communication of government developmental programme (MGNREGS) and the perception of beneficiaries about the programme's communication aspects.
- To find out the affective factor for not sustaining development through MGNREGS.
- To know the correlation between development and communication.

### **Research Questions**

The scope of this research is to answer the following questions:

- How does the government organization communicate with the people for implementing the developmental programs in the society?
- What communication strategies are adopted to inform and educate the beneficiaries about MGNREGS?
- Are the beneficiaries satisfied with the communication of the government for development?
- What is the affective factor responsible for not sustaining development through MGNREGS?
- How far the government sponsored programme is successful in order to bring development through communication?
- What is the best source of information for the beneficiaries about MGNREGS?
- What media or channel the government officials mostly use to communicate with the rural people for their program's publicity?
- What type of the content of the messages that the government officials convey to the target audience?

## **SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

As development communication is practised in a number of spheres in which public policy is exercised - sanitation, health, safety, economic stability, agriculture, land rights and employment, the approach requires careful coordination if it is not to deteriorate into a haphazard and watered-down effort doing the right thing in the wrong way.

The government of India, since Independence, has initiated several socio-economic structural measures and communication strategies for eradication of poverty, unemployment, health problems among others. As part of this objective, the government has been allocating funds under different heads towards plan outlays from time to time for various developmental programmes being implemented by the state governments. However, the common belief is that these programmes are not delivering the expected benefits, mainly on account of lack of communication and coordination between administrators or policy makers and beneficiaries. Even at the grassroots level, the desired results have not been achieved because of improper implementation of the programmes, ineffective selection procedure, communication gap, procedural delay, corruption and so on. The present study will critically examine the beneficiaries' awareness, communication perception and assessment of the rural developmental government sponsored programme and its reach in the society, implemented by the central government. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is selected to understand its communication methods and techniques and the attitude, perceptions of beneficiaries for the study.

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