

Chapter 5

Major Findings and Conclusion

Major findings of the study lead us to a conclusion that 56.83% beneficiaries have said that interpersonal communication is their first source of information on MGNREGS followed by group communication (28 percent). Thus, interpersonal communication plays an important role in disseminating information among the beneficiaries. The study of interpersonal communication is fundamental to any study of relationships (Andersen, 2001).

Besides, a majority from the respondents were unable to say that which media the government mostly uses to implement the MGNREGS. From this we can say that majority of the beneficiaries are unaware of the government media usage. It means that government has failed to bring awareness amongst the intended beneficiaries about its media practice. A good number of 46.83% respondents have expressed that group communication is their authentic source of information about the employment guarantee scheme, followed by interpersonal communication (45.33 percent).

From the major findings, it is seen that 54.67% beneficiaries of MGNREGS have expressed that interpersonal communication is their helping source which makes them know about payment for their work, followed by gaon sabha (45.33 percent), while newspaper and radio had no role in informing beneficiaries as to the payment for their work under the scheme. For most respondents (44.67%), the system and strategies of communication followed by the concerned authorities as to the implementation of MGNREGS are not satisfactory. They have expressed their unhappiness over them, and from this we find that communication strategies of the government are not effective in bringing proper awareness among the intended beneficiaries.

The CAG report (2013) has said that there were cases of suspected misappropriation of funds of Rs.128.23 crore in eight states and tampering with muster rolls was noticed in 10 states, April 2007 to March 2012. The report cites that widespread instances of non-payment and delayed payment of wages have been noticed in 23 states under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). It has also mentioned, despite MGNREGA being in force for seven years,

governments of Haryana, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh did not formulate rules for carrying out provisions of the Act, as of March 2012.

A majority of 51% MGNREGS beneficiaries have suggested that public announcement method should be adopted by the government to disseminate information to the beneficiaries. This was followed by gaonsabha (47 percent) 46.83% respondents are anguished that the panchayat's communication to the people on providing work under the project was not up to the expectation, and (25.33 percent) of them have said that panchayat's communication was not properly diffused to the beneficiaries. From this we can say that the system and strategies of panchayat communication are not much effective in reaching the intending beneficiaries. Barnes, 2001, p. 148). Mohr and Nevin (1990) suggested that communication was 'the glue' that held the relationship together. Many people in developing countries live far away from the global information highway. However, remote rural villages contain a rich communication environment that predates modern electronic media. In this modern age of new information and communication technologies and mass media, the cultural values of traditional media channels must not be disregarded.

If the government wants to properly communicate with rural communities, it must learn more about them and better understand how to channel our development work through the communities' traditional communication media as well. It is impossible to have relationships without communication (Duncan and Moriarty 1998). Receptivity to outside development messages can be greatly enhanced by the use of traditional and folk media that are an integral part of rural life, for example proverbs, poems, songs and dances, plays and stories. Traditional media offer an effective means to integrate local agricultural knowledge with new scientific knowledge from outside sources. At the same time, new media can be used and managed locally by indigenous people and farmers for their own purposes.

From the major findings it is seen that 47% respondents are sure that the panchayat was partially abiding by rules and regulations in the case of providing work, while (25.5 percent) are of the opinion that panchayat was not abiding by the rules at all. On the other

hand, (41.33%) respondents are of the firm belief that block and panchayat administrative bodies are responsible for miscommunication in MGNREGS, followed by district administration (18.67%). It is found that (31.33%) respondents are unaware of gaonsabha and (23.33 percent) of the respondents have said that the panchayat rarely organized gaon sabha to inform people about MGNREGS. From this, we can assume that panchayat's communication approach is not helpful to the respondents.

It was found that the data about MGNREGA which is supposed to be fair and transparent is not adhered to by the village panchayat members. This may be due to two reasons; one reason is that there might be some element of corruption or unfair practices going on under the MGNREGA by the panchayat members themselves which may hamper its growth in reaching out to the labourers. The other reason may be because the panchayat members themselves are being unaware of the terms and conditions of the MGNREGA. Future research in the field of MGNREGA could be in the areas of transparency of the Act and about the awareness among the people about its benefits for the poor (Thakur , A. 2011).

Interpersonal communication

It is seen that (68.83%) beneficiaries of MGNREGS have pointed out interpersonal communication as the vital source of information about MGNREGS fund embezzlement. This is followed by group communication. This reveals that interpersonal communication plays an important role for the beneficiaries to inform them of fund embezzlement, while newspapers played a lesser role and radio had no role in it. While a total of (59%) beneficiaries are of the firm view that they are not satisfied with the information provided on the citizen informatory board while (22.5 percent) have said that they do not get factual information on the board, leading to the conclusion that there is lack of trust in the information supplied. A good number of beneficiaries (48%) have stated that the government employment guarantee scheme is satisfactory to some extent and (44.5) percent have opined that it is a satisfactory scheme. Therefore, the MGNREGS appears to be a good employment generation scheme. 47.5% respondents believe that the work place is their best centre of information on MGNREGS, followed by the local market (36.5 percent).

Responsible factors for not sustaining development

It is also revealed that 66.33% respondents have alleged that corruption is responsible for not sustaining development through MGNREGS while 31.67 percent have said that delay in government communication has been mainly responsible. From this we can safely say that both corruption and inaccessibility to government communication are the main obstacles in sustaining development. Further, 40.33% respondents have declared that misuse of funds is the main obstacle in implementing the project, while 28.67 percent have said all the factors viz, inefficient political leaders and government officials (13 percent), misuse of funds (40.33 percent) and communication gap (18 percent) are responsible for this gloomy situation. From this we can conclude that corruption, inefficiency and government communication system are the main obstacles in implementing the MGNREGS. Jean Dreze has outlined in the article entitled 'NREGA: Dismantling the contractor raj' published in 'The Hindu' online edition, Nov 20 ,2007, strict implementation of the transparency safeguards is the best way to accelerate this process of "phasing out" of the traditional system of corruption. In this research it is found that a total of 35.33% beneficiaries have contended that development is partially related with the proper communication techniques of a particular governmental organization while 25 percent of the respondents believe that it is closely related.

Critics of the MGNREGA have focused on two sets of issues namely, (a) it is too expensive and (b) that corruption will prevent its success. The pro-market liberalizers view the NREGA as a dangerous piece of legislation that threatens to snowball India's fiscal deficit out of control. However, Mihir Shah (2004), holds the view that it could actually 'crowd-in' private investment and lay the foundation for non-inflationary growth in the medium term. According to Shah, the capacity of the agricultural sector to absorb labour has declined drastically due to a decline in the per capita output of agriculture.

The other issue of corruption can be dealt through social mobilization by grass roots organizations. As Jean Dreze says, 'legislation alone will not guarantee employment, continuous mobilisation is required' (Nirmala, L. 2006). The Act empowers citizens to play an active role in the implementation of employment guarantee schemes, through gram

sabhas, social audit, participatory planning and other activities. In fact the real significance of the act is directly proportionate to the extent and manner in its provisions are creatively pushed to their limits by the mobilization of the disadvantaged. The MGNREGS can become a major new instrument for galvanising panchayat raj institutions in India. (Shah, 2004)

The right to work in the Indian context is a continuing struggle. In this respect, there are some basic components that the state has to undertake if it wants to actualize the right to work. One is to deal with the phenomenon of corruption and proper communication. Corruption and communication gap are two major obstacles in the case of implementing MGNREG scheme. Provisions of information, education and communication (IEC) laid in the Act are not being strictly followed by the government officials. Accurate transparency beginning from the centre to state and its officials and to the beneficiaries is still lagging behind. The easiest way of reducing corruption is to ensure precise communication strategies. Government can start a feedback mechanism for the beneficiaries in the remote villages to reduce cheating and make the scheme more effective in sustaining the development process. Besides, information of work and names of workers and wages paid should be publically displayed. Public transparency at worksites and the participation of workers will go a long way in democratizing worksites and lessening leakage. Gram sabhas, and social audits are also an effective guarantee against corruption. The government should actively encourage such processes instead of blocking them (Banerjee, K)

Information Sources

The two major sources of information are friends and gaon sabha. Data shows that 56.83% of the beneficiaries came to know about MGNREGS through friends making them the most effective source of information. Gaon sabha come next in terms of generating awareness as 28% of the beneficiaries identify it as their first source of information of the scheme. Interpersonal and group communication has played a significant role where they seem to have made a huge impact in terms of making people aware of their rights. The government should emphasize these means of communication for the smooth functioning of the scheme for the rural labors and for the state development as a whole.

Centre for Science and Environment, prepared a report for the Ministry of Rural Development Government of India (2008), to assess the potential of the MGNREGS. The study reveals that the MGNREGS has development potential. It has also looked at the most effective medium of disseminating information about the MGNREGS amongst people and found that out of 428 (11.92 percent) people knew through newspaper about MGNREGS, (7.84%) through radio, (1.4 percent) through television and (25.47 percent) through NGO representatives, (53.5%) through panchayat, (0.23%) through government officials.

Development communication means the nurturing of knowledge aimed at creating a consensus for action that takes into account the interests, needs and capacities of all concerned. It is thus a social process. Communication media and information and communication technologies (ICT) are important tools in achieving this but their use is not an end in itself. Interpersonal communication also plays significant role for spreading message. This basic consensus on communication for development and social change has been interpreted and applied in different ways through out the past century, both at theory and research levels, as well as at the levels of policy making and planning and implementation.

The relationship between the practical application of communication processes and technologies in achieving positive and measurable development outcomes is an emerging subject of research, discussion and conjecture. While media professionals, opinion makers and development policy makers have often sought to utilize communication systems for social mobilization and change, a lack of understanding of the complexity of behavioural, societal and cultural factors on end-user consumption patterns has more often led to ineffective, or even counterproductive outcomes. Experienced practitioners and scholars point to the need for a close study of society and culture in formulating communication and outreach strategies, thus ensuring that target audiences are reached in an appropriate manner to affect knowledge transfer. In establishing communication for development programmes, professionals have, in the past, often laboured under a misunderstanding commonly held by policy-makers relating to the nature of the discipline. Lay persons, understandably, confuse the subject with public relations, public information, corporate communications and other media-related activities. However, while communication for development and social change may incorporate skill-sets from those areas of information

dissemination, the subject reaches far deeper and broader into the entire communication process.

“Communication for development and social change is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and participatory process through which people are empowered to control their own destinies. Culture is central to development and deserves greater emphasis in communication for development and social change. Policy-makers, academics and practitioners alike should recognize that communication is a process, not a product or a set of technologies. It includes formal (for example, campaigns) and informal (for example, community participation), direct (for example, media exposure) and indirect (for example, communication in social networks) forms of communication. In other words, communication must be seen as an essential element of every development and social change project. Communication needs to be applied in different ways and at distinct levels according to the needs and characteristics of the context or community (Servaes, J. ed, 2008)”.

In most of the places it was observed that the government officials did not provide the villagers with adequate information. The awareness generation effort of the government about MGNREGS is very limited amongst the rural people. During discussions with the government officials, it appeared that even the government officials at the block and panchayat level are not well aware of the scheme and its guidelines and its communication provisions. Data reveals that from the government side no proper communication tools and techniques are used to disseminate information and awareness in the rural beneficiaries. The panchayat representatives said that they had not been provided with any publicity material (no pamphlets, handbills, posters leaflets etc.) lack of political will was reflected in awareness creation as well. Without applying effective means of communication at the panchayat level this act will degenerate into wasteful expenditure. Due to poor awareness among rural population, people are not aware about their basic entitlements such as job cards, minimum wage amount, minimum number of employment days, unemployment allowance. Even panchayat, Rozgar Sevaks and block development officers are ignorant about all the details of the scheme. They are poorly informed about various processes like registering household, forming vigilance committees, making

muster roll. Poor awareness not only leads to corruption but also to poor management of the scheme and thus true potential of MGNREGS is not being realised. At the local level, officials have made inadequate efforts to raise awareness about the scheme. The government must carry out an intensive training and awareness-building programme to make the officials and citizens fully aware of all the details of the programme (Agarwal, H. 2010). The barrier to this provision is often the state itself, especially when it cites corruption and communication gap as the reason for not granting financial autonomy to local bodies. However, this is a precondition for the right to work to lead to productive employment and to become effective.

There are two ways to generate large scale awareness amongst citizens. The first is the model used in large scale education programmes, which involves building a cadre of volunteers and taking up village level campaigns emphasizing on inter personal and group communication system and strategies to educate and inform rural beneficiaries on their rights and informing panchayats on their responsibilities for sustaining development through MGNREGS in rural India. The other kind of mass mobilization is an intensive targeted campaign in village level using traditional communication methods like puppet show, public announcement; village level meetings, street play, and local folk media could be used to reach the most underprivileged sections of the society, along with the support of civil society organizations. The awareness campaigns not only provide basic information about the act as well as card holders, rights for 100 days employment, but also provide guidance in exercising their rights. The ongoing efforts of the government to popularize the scheme as well as of the civil society to reach out to the potential families need to be up scaled and intensified.

Some Media Reports on MGNREGS

1. Media Response During enactment

The coverage of the NREGA in the media has changed over a period of time. When the bill was being discussed in parliament several journalists and columnists condemned the bill as:

(i) An economic hoax¹ because, it was not the duty of the state to guarantee employment, it burdened the tax paying public that actually funded such schemes, and the government should maximize production not work.

(ii) A corruption guarantee scheme² because it was a planned drain of wealth from the productive sector to the underground economy, perpetuates the populist legacy of politicians would not only be wasteful but entail fresh taxes and erode India's competitiveness.

(iii) Bountiful and wasteful³ as already the central government spent over Rs 40,000 crore per annum for poverty alleviation which was wasted; the scheme would be implemented first in districts represented by powerful politicians who would get the chance to utilize tax payer's money for political patronage

(iv) A means to call midterm elections⁴ since, it allowed purchasing power worth Rs 12000 crores to 20 million Indians in the first phase of the programme.

(v) A still-born child⁵ because, it would generate vast rents with small transfer benefits, leakages of government programmes..

(vi) Create a hole in government finances⁶ to the tune of 0.6% of the GDP

(vii) A means to siphon off money⁷ because the MGNREGA was to be evaluated on the basis of the number of days of employment generated not outputs like creation of assets and therefore could lead to massive fraud by the bureaucrats to show generation of employment.

Thus costs of the scheme as well as widespread corruption along with capitalist rhetoric were the main objections. The same sentiments were shared in sections of the international media⁸ which wondered as to how the government would sustain the scheme. Another writer saw it as a momentous initiative⁹ that had the potential to boost the rural economy and compared it with employment schemes across the world. A third writer

¹ Sauvik Chakravarti, Employment Guarantee a Hoax, Indian Express, New Delhi,

² Swapan Dasgupta, Rename REGA as Corruption Guarantee Scheme, The Pioneer, New Delhi

³ Tavleen Singh, Marxists begin to see the light Not Sonia, Indian Express, Sunday August 28, 2005

⁴ N. Chandra Mohan, Jobbing through to the elections, Sify.com, 5 October, 2005

⁵ Sebastian Morris, Employment Guarantee Scheme is a still-born child: Try land reforms, Financial Express, August 30, 2005

⁶ M.K. Venu, Leading Reform is a two-way street, Economic Times, September 6, 2005

⁷ Job Scheme: A means to Siphon off money, Rediff Money, September 5, 2005

⁸ Cherian Thomas, Adding jobs But at what cost?, International Herald Tribune, September 14, 2005

pointed out that the act improved the rural economy's ability to absorb labour leading to better wages.¹⁰ It was based on the principle of self targeting and would benefit only those in dire need.¹¹ These were the exceptions.

2. Media Response on MGNREGS implementation

Since then the coverage of the MGNREGS has changed. The media has either started looking at success stories on the positive side or lamented lapses in implementation, which prevented the poorer sections from receiving their due. Benefits from the scheme that have been highlighted include:

(i) Rural unemployed labourers in Panchayats in Delhi gaining productive employment¹² for a longer period of time. This was being facilitated by a smooth flow of information from Delhi to all tiers of the district officials and the Panchayati Raj.

(ii) Corruption being minimized¹³ in Rajasthan due to public vigilance leading to more than one and a half lakh people gaining employment in Dungarpur district. There was massive participation of rural folk tribal women looked forward to seeing their men back home. A Padyatra¹⁴ of activist groups in Rajasthan revealed little corruption and a proactive administration.

(iv) Reduced rural-urban migration¹⁵ in Gujarat and Rajasthan since it enabled labourers avoid costs of migration.

3. Media Highlights on some state's performance

These are specific case studies, stories, and news items on selective states focusing on problems in implementation:

(i) Corruption and neglect¹⁶ hindering implementation of the programme in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

⁹ Maxine Olson, Work for pro-poor growth, The Economic Times, October 20, 2005.

¹⁰ Sridhar, V. 2005. 'Empowering the rural poor', Frontline, Vol. 22, Issue 19, Sep 10-23

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Sonu Jain, Job Guarantee rolls out, ray of hope in New Delhi shadow, The Indian Express, 3 February, 2006

¹³ Mohammad Iqbal, Public vigilance helps to minimise corruption in rural employment guarantee scheme, The Hindu, 28 April, 2006

¹⁴ Abha Sharma, Coming home to a better tomorrow, Deccan Herald, Bangalore

¹⁵ Reetika Khera, Employment Guarantee and Migration, The Hindu, 13 July 2006

¹⁶ Sreelatha Menon, Village 'dole' takes baby steps amid apathy, graft, Rediff Money, 7 August, 2006

(ii) Low ground awareness, low wages and lack of attendance in gram sabhas¹⁷ in Gujarat which also has the distinction of having the first court case¹⁸ on lack of payment of adequate wages.

(iii) Difficult work sites, underpayment, violation of social security norms, uninformed people and children in scorching heat¹⁹ characterizing the implementation of MGNREGA in Madhya Pradesh. Discrimination on the basis of caste, community, disability and proximity to sarpanch, panchayat secretary have been noticed across the country

(iv) Several states failing²⁰ to implement provisions of the programme. Haryana Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal and Kerala have not issued state specific operational guidelines. Chattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh have issued their own amendments which violate the provisions of MGNREGS.

¹⁷ Rajiv Shah, Report slams state record on rural jobs, Gandhi Nagar, 15 September, 2006

¹⁸ Kamran Sulaimani, Paid just Rs 4 per day under rural job scheme, widow moves Gujarat HC, Indian Express, June 15, 2006

¹⁹ Sachin Kumar Jain, Digging in times of harvest, Tehelka

²⁰ States dragging their feet on rural job scheme, says study, The Economic Times, Chandigarh, June 5, 2006

Recommendations

- Government should develop feedback mechanism process to get feedback directly from the beneficiaries of the scheme. In this respect, government can provide toll free number to get response from the job card holders or can send higher authority from the state or center to visit the work place of the scheme and interact with the workers to know the ground reality.
- There should be transparency and intensive training inputs at implementation level. The training should be more structured and capsule based and has a component of exposure to the best delivering district or state. All the details like muster rolls, wages paid, and types and amount of work done should be disclosed actively by the concerned competent implementing authority.
- Apart from present mechanism in the MGNREG scheme, there should be district, block, panchayat and village level consultation with larger society. The inputs from the civil society groups, voluntary organizations and community based organizations will be very much useful as they work with marginalized group workers, to ensure effective implementation of MGNREGS.
- Social audit should be strictly conducted in the village where work has been undertaken under MGNREG scheme through non governmental organization with credibility and who are working in the area. Beneficiaries should be included in social audit for transparency and accountability. The gram panchayat shall make available all relevant documents; muster rolls, bills, vouchers, sanction orders and other books of accounts and papers to the gram sabha for the purpose of social audit as cited (Schedule 17(3) of the Act).
- Social workers, representatives of non governmental organization, retired teachers can be trained up for social mobilization in the field for awareness on rural development scheme and strengthening gram sabhas. It is seen that public announcement method is one of the effective media to disseminate message among the rural people, as the health department uses for pulse polio programme for awareness in the villages. Traditional communication methods like padyatra, village level meetings, puppet shows, street plays, and local folk media can also be used to reach the most disadvantaged sections of society, along with the support of

civil society organizations. Mobilizing people for gram sabha, leaflets, posters, street play and wall writing in local language can also be adopted for rural development programmes. Provisions of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) laid in the MGNREG Act must be strictly followed by the implementing agency.

- Creation of quality awareness: A quality awareness campaign with a focus on details of the provisions and entitlement of the scheme should be launched, ensuring the effective involvement of the gaon panchayat, villagers and beneficiaries. Media training programmes should be given to all the panchayat members, and other functionaries in the block and village level. Awareness campaign should be organized monthly among beneficiaries, social workers, youths and women. Members of the Vigilance and Monitoring Committees must be well aware of the provisions of the scheme. Village monitoring committees need to be formed as per the guidelines. The members of such committees need to be oriented towards their role and should be empowered to make their panchayat's display and basic information of MGNREGS implementation in the gram sabha.
- It has been observed that the government's technical staff harasses panchayat representatives in providing technical sanction or conducting financial audit. They also demand bribes to approve schemes. This results in ineffective supervision, corruption and delay in clearance of payments to panchayat and beneficiaries, which adversely affect payments of wages to job card holders. It is also seen that majority of the new panchayat representatives are first timers in public life. Thus, there is a need for a more focused and longer orientation cum training programme for the elected representatives. To check this kind of problems government can adopt electronic transfer system to make payment directly to the account of beneficiaries which will be easier and preventive measure against corruption and embezzlement of fund.
- Community information centre should be established by the government at village level or in the nearest local market for disseminating information to the rural beneficiaries. The information centre will also be responsible for collecting basic issues highlighted by the citizens, families and panchayat, and provide such

information to the district administration or concerned officials at the state level which is implementing MGNREGS for quick measure.

- Rozgar Mela: This is slated to be organized in every panchayat for the purpose of job card registration and distribution, and for opening the bank accounts of the beneficiaries. This could also be used to generate awareness and information. The rozgar mela can be organized coincidentally with the weekly local markets, which are common features in the rural areas.
- Strengthening of the accountability, transparency and vigilance aspects of the implementation: Apart from strengthening the existing provision of transparency, accountability and vigilance, an accountability provision for the panchayat representatives also needs to be included in the guidelines. Moreover, the punitive provision needs to be made more comprehensive to ensure its effective functioning.
- The state government should make rules and regulations to deal with any complaint at block and the district level as per (schedule 1(19) of the Act). If any dispute or complaint arises under the scheme against the gram panchayat, the matter shall be referred to programme officer (schedule 23(5) of the Act). The programme officer shall enter every complaint in a complaint register and shall dispose the disputes and complaints within 7 days of its receipt (schedule 23(6) of the Act). Appeal against the programme officer will be to the district programme coordinator. Appeal against the district programme coordinator may be with an appropriate authority designated by the state government.

The Employment act has both supporters and critics. It involves a huge allocation of public funds for short-term employment. The development model for india should aim at full time employment for everyone. As Mahatma Gandhi said, what we need is job for all able bodied persons, because human resource is an asset. However, the country is torn between capitalist corporatization and socialist equity. In the new developing scenario, no one is sure of the continuance of the employment guarantee Act. If it continues, there shall be an in-depth research on all-India basis, especially focusing on its communication components, for communication is power, whatever may be the medium.

Demerits of the Study

- Because of time constrain researcher had to complete the survey in stipulated time.
- It is a sample survey; its result may not be generalized to other part of the state.
- It was very difficult for the researcher to get data from the rural beneficiaries of the scheme.
- Cost factor was very expensive while collecting data from the field
- This study specifically focused on communication dimension not in employment generation.