

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) at Cuddalore District Vs. Life Style of Beneficiaries

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The future depends on what we do in the present – Mahatma Gandhi

Abstract: Life style implies everything about an individual or a family. It is a range of habits, behavior, attitude and approach of human beings towards life, moreover the way people lead their lives. It is influenced by many factors such as socio-economic and cultural values prevailing in a particular region. Life style can be categorized as good, moderate and weak. MGNREGS is a centrally sponsored scheme which extends a rural household an opportunity to work for one hundred days which aims at manifestation of rural infrastructure on the basis of afforestation, rain water harvesting, and reconstruction of water bodies and so on. Thus this study put forth the efforts to assess how far this scheme is effective, beneficial and uplifts the life style of beneficiaries by assuring wage employment to the rural masses.

Key words: Life security, Life style, Life Uplift, MGNREGS, Standard of living.

I. INTRODUCTION

As per Cambridge dictionary Life style can be meant as ‘the things that a person or particular group of people usually do’. It will be a matter of chance but not choice. Definitely life style seems to be fate of a person. By Nature human beings could prefer to lead happy, healthy, wealthy and blissful life. No one choose to lead weak or poor lifestyle. Hence it is a chance or the situation where they were born or belonged to. May be individual or families have the scope to create their own chance to lead well materialized life instead waiting to be created by others. "The State shall in particular direct its policy towards securing, that the citizens, men and women equally have the right to an adequate means of livelihood. The NREGA essentially addresses urgent and immediate issues of hunger and deprivation, since it is this lack of livelihood, lack of food security, and endemic poverty that sends rural households into the downward spiral of destitution".[1]

Since independence there are many schemes introduced time to time as a result of constitution of planning commission, and other developmental plans by the central and state Governments with their sponsorship in different name and covering different span of time with authorities for implementation to wipe off poverty, hunger deaths, and relieve the poor masses from the clutches of private money lenders, enable them to earn and lead a self-sustained life with right based approach. "Social contract theories lead to the rights approach to justice. Individual rights are essential for implementation of social contract. Social contract is also recognized as liberty too. The principle of liberty is

meaningless without rights. All types of rights ensure liberty. Originally some rights like, right to life, right to freedom, right to property, right to equal treatment were recognized by the States. Of late, varieties of rights are reconsidered; like right to food, housing, employment, education etc. These rights enable the human being to live with dignity. Self esteem, freedom from servitude and life sustenance now-a-day has become the indicators of economic development. Rights are not necessarily be derived from the social contract alone. The rights of children, age olds, and disabled, even the environmental rights of animals, insects, birds, environment and ecology, bionomical equilibrium are recognized for the sustainable growth".[2]

II. WORKING OF MGNREGS

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme aid them to develop and enhance their entrepreneurial skills by the way of giving them training with incentive in order to ensuring their food-security and improved access to other basic amenities of life and so on. "Addressing the challenge of unemployment in the rural areas of the country is central to the development of rural sector for ameliorating the economic condition of the people". [3] MGNREGS is a unique scheme which assures hundred days of wage employment to unskilled manual labour, apart it inclusive of many features such as one third of the beneficiaries could be women, equal wages to men and women, worksite facilities, accessibility of work within reasonable distances from concerned village, allocation of extra wage for extra kilometers, unemployment allowance

with added benefit of right to work and so on. In order to get the works allotted to a household, the unskilled adult members of a household have to apply and register their names with Panjayath Raj Institution. After this they will be provided job cards which are serving as a profile and contain relevant details about them. They will be informed when they allotted works. Their works will be supervised by the authorities time to time. Wages initially paid through post offices or by other means, later through deposit in bank accounts for which they have been insisted to open Aadhar enabled bank account in order to ensure transparency and accountability. The implementing authorities are in multiple tiers such as central, state, district and village levels. Hence it gains phenomenal significance in the matters of implementation. There are numerous studies, present study aims at assessing the impact of MGNREGS on life style of beneficiaries. Cuddalore is predominant district among the first phase district which have had chosen for implementing MGNREGS accordingly in Tamil Nadu. The reason behind choosing MGNREGS, as it is viewed as torch bearing scheme which have the potentiality to eradicate and address poverty and related problems. This is because it secures significance of enhancing livelihood securities of rural masses moreover; this could raise the level of expectation of the stake holders and general public on the whole. "Where the scheme works, where employment is provided regularly and reliably and so is the payment, where the infrastructure built is useful and sustainable, MGNREGA has transformed the lives of rural populations". [4]

CUDDALORE DISTRICT AT A GLANCE:

Cuddalore District is located in the southern state Tamil Nadu in India. It is ancient, historic district. The district was bifurcated from South Arcot district on 30th September 1993. The city of Cuddalore is the district headquarters; the district was named after it. The district has three divisions, ten taluks, thirty two blocks, and 905 revenue villages. Moreover it has 13 panchayat unions and 683 village panchayats as rural development administration. In urban it has five Municipalities and 18 town panchayat. This District consists of nine legislative and two parliamentary constituencies. Total Geographical area of the district is 3678 Sq.km with coastal line of 68Km. stretching. Five major rivers are running in this district. The district has some small deposits of lignite that helps in production of electricity etc,. The district is also one of the most robust fishing areas in the state of Tamil Nadu, and home to a large number of fisher population. Agriculture and industries are also main profession of this district peoples. Cuddalore district has been classified as a multi-hazard prone district. Since the District has a long coastline, therefore it is vulnerable to the cyclonic depressions and result in rains which causing floods. Cyclones and flood have caused damage severely in the district several times in the past few centuries. Cyclone “Nisha” in 2008 and the

cyclone “Thane” in December 2011 were caused heavy damage to this district in many respects, in recent years. This Cuddalore district experienced worst impacts of Tsunami during the year 2004. The devastation caused by this Tsunami was billions of dollars’ worth infrastructure, economic assets and materials, more than this; the proportion of devastated precious human loss was more.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study considers both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from the respondent’s through interview schedule method of MGNREGS beneficiaries from Cuddalore district from various phases whereas secondary data is collected from various books, journals and web sources.

SAMPLING:

The respondents selected for the study were beneficiaries of MGNREGS from Cuddalore district of TamilNadu, the population size is 764,385. As the population is enormous to collect data from the beneficiaries, the Morgan sampling method was used to determine the sample size. Hence the total number of samples collected from beneficiaries was 384.

MGNREGS Vs. LIFESTYLE:

Standard of living literally means the ability of the families to allocate part of their income for their wellness and wellbeing. "Ordinary Lifestyles explores how popular media texts bring ideas about taste and fashion to consumers, helping audiences to fashion their lifestyles as well as defining what constitutes an appropriate lifestyle for particular social groups". [5] Life style not only depends ability, because some people have ability to spent but they won’t; because of their frugal attitude. It is assumed frugal attitude is the outcome of their past experience, hurdles they have gone through in their life or out of nature. Hence poor or weak life style caused by the attitude, weak economic position of families and absence of strong passion to lead life in such a manner. MGNREGS beneficiaries are the unskilled manual labour who can register and work under the scheme. The presumption is that they are from backward economic position rather strong. "Speaking regarding the participation of backward classes field studies corroborate the high Workforce participation by the marginalized".[6]

Table – 1 Impact of MGNREGS on Food

Particulars	No.of respondents (n=384)	Percentage (100%)
No change	124	32.3
Increased	40	10.4
Considerably increased	34	8.9
Increased to some extent	186	48.4

Source: Primary Data

The above table reveals that nearly half (48.4 per cent) of the respondents were opined that after joining MGNREGS their ability to spent for food is increased to some extent, as food is the basic need of survival. Considerably 32.3 per cent were felt that there is no change on spending for food, this can be because of number of members in the family would be lesser as beneficiaries and the remaining portion of the respondents are also on the agreeing side that they could able to spent relatively more for food articles after joining MGNREGS. Thus it can be inferred from this present study MGNREGS has little bit improved the spending power of rural peoples for food stuffs.

Table – 2 Impact of MGNREGS on Education

Particulars	No.of respondents (n=384)	Percentage (100%)
No change	167	43.5
Increased	74	19.3
Considerably increased	26	6.8
Increased to some extent	117	30.5

Source: Primary Data

The above table reveals that nearly half (43.5 per cent) of the respondents were opined that after joining MGNREGS there were no change in the amount that can spent for education purposes, 30.5 per cent were stated that MGNREGS increased their level of spending for education purposes to some extent, 19.3 per cent were felt that MGNREGS increased their level of spending for education and remaining 6.8 per cent were opined that it is considerably increased. Education may range from very cheap to costly. It was presumed that the wards of MGNREGS beneficiaries choose to educate mostly from corporation schools. So the chances for expenses are relatively low. Moreover, bus pass will be accessed by them for transport. Equal part of them feels somehow MGNREGS helps to spend for education related expenditure.

Table – 3 Impact of MGNREGS on Electricity/Fuel

Particulars	No.of respondents (n=384)	Percentage (100%)
No change	175	45.6
Increased	57	14.8
Considerably increased	67	17.4
Increased to some extent	85	22.1

Source: Primary Data

Table reveals that nearly half (45.6 per cent) of the respondents stated there were no change of electricity/fuel consumption after joining MGNREGS, 22.1 per cent were felt that amount spend for Fuel and electricity is increased to some extent, 17.4 per cent were stated that it is considerably increased and remaining 14.7 per cent were

said it is increased. So it could be inferred from the above table there is no considerable impact of MGNREGS on fuel or electricity. Unlike olden days, every house hold having access to two-wheeler, LPG, mobile phones, television and other electronic gadgets.

Table – 4 Impact of MGNREGS on Medicare

Particulars	No.of respondents (n=384)	Percentage (100%)
No change	183	47.7
Increased	63	16.4
Considerably increased	43	11.2
Increased to some extent	95	24.7

Source: Primary Data

The above table reveals that nearly half (47.7 per cent) of the respondents feel MGNREGS does not improved their level of Medicare facilities. 24.7 per cent were stated that it is increased to some extent, 16.4 per cent were feel their ability to spent for Medicare is increased and remaining 11.2 per cent were felt it is considerably increased. Usually rural people hesitate to spend for Medicare it is because of their improved immunity levels, lack of proper awareness about health care, backward financial situation and so on. May be they prefer to go to clinics when the services rendered at free of costs or at when the complexity of the diseases is high.

Table –5 Impact of MGNREGS on Clothing

Particulars	No.of respondents (n=384)	Percentage (100%)
No change	72	18.8
Increased	52	13.5
Considerably increased	203	52.9
Increased to some extent	57	14.8

Source: Primary Data

The above table reveals that nearly half (52.9 per cent) of the respondents were feel MGNREGS has considerably increased their level of spending for clothing, 18.8 per cent were no changes, 14.8 per cent were felt it is increased to some extent and remaining 13.5 per cent were stated MGNREGS has increased their ability to spent for clothing. It should be interpreted from the table definitely MGNREGS has considerable impact on clothing than before. As we knew the clothing not only protects from the climate but it is more than that in a modern civilization. Thus we can recall the proverb “what you are is what you wear”.

IV. CONCLUSION

Even though life style is determined by external as well as internal factors of an individual, it is majorly depends upon the economic background of households. When we discuss about economic background of MGNREGS beneficiaries,

they were typically from poor families who is still struggles for their basic needs to be fulfilled. Hence it can be concluded that lifestyle of MGNREGS beneficiaries are still have not considerably improved for either individuals or community on the whole. But it can evident that it is strengthening in trend when it is compared to the past Scenario. It is not sufficient; because the scheme have been passing a decade after its implementation. Hence it is worthy to conclude life style is strongly connected with sustainable development. " Social and economic development is the main aim of rural development for rural people, especially to bring about sustained improvement in their living condition through an increase in their income and access to social goods." [7] Tamil Nadu especially Cuddalore district is on its way to sustainable development. Similarly life style of MGNREGS beneficiaries is also moderate in its position. Further it could be strengthened with the help of Government aided policies, programmes with proper implementation of those and bringing change in the attitudes of rural masses.

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