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## **An empirical study on the implementation of MGNREGS in Malwa districts of Punjab**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme was introduced with a promise to provide at least 100 days of employment to the poor people at the rural level. It was introduced in 200 most backward districts in 2006 and by the year 2009, it was implemented in all the districts. The scheme failed to fulfill all its promises as made under the scheme mainly of providing 100 days of work. It also does not proved to be futile in creation of productive assets in the villages. In Punjab, the panchayat members have even complained regarding the attitude of workers in doing the work under the scheme while majority of the MGNREGA workers are also attached with agricultural sector along with the employment guarantee scheme. The number of panchayat members have even suggested regarding the closure of the scheme due to its impact on labor especially in agricultural sector. A common advice has been given both panchayat members to add new clauses in the scheme of using the workforce in other sectors like agricultural and industry in Punjab.*

### **KEYWORDS**

*Labor, Assets, Panchayat members, Government officials, Agriculture*

### **INTRODUCTION**

MGNREGA was launched with much fanfare in the year 2006 with a promise to provide at least 100 days of work in one year to the poor living at the rural level. The scheme was initially initiated in 200 most backward districts of India up to 2006, but it was started in whole of India by the year 2009. But since its inception, the government has failed to deliver the promises made under the act. The scheme has not able to provide 100 days of work to all the workers. Also in many parts the work done under the scheme is not a productive one. The various works under the scheme includes cleaning and maintaining of canals, making of streets and drains, rural path connectivity and rural level irrigation works etc. The government has not able to reduce the poverty rate at the rural level with this scheme despite its tall claim. The scheme has not able to deliver much in the already developed states like Punjab and Haryana. In some parts, the role of bureaucracy and the panchayat officials is also under scanner for the proper implementation of MGNREGA. In Punjab, the situation is some different as it is already agricultural developed state and due to this there is not much work to be done under the scheme expect for cleaning of ponds, roadsides etc. In this way, MGNREGA has not able to develop the productive assets in Punjab.

### **OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

1. To analyze the implementation of MGNREGA in the villages of Punjab.

2. To examine the role of Bureaucracy and influential persons in the implementation of MGNREGA.
3. To analyze the awareness level among the workers attached with MGNREGA.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### RESEARCH DESIGN

The study is both exploratory and descriptive in nature. For this, data has been collected from two districts namely Sangrur and Mansa of Punjab which are the part of Malwa belt of the state. Exploration has been done to analyze the implementation of MGNREGA in both the districts. For this, primary data has been taken which includes the respondents working as panches and sarpanches of various villages. Some government officials like Panchayat secretaries working in Block Development Offices were also approached but they refused to give the details. The respondents are inquired and interviewed regarding the implementation of MGNREGA with the help of structured questionnaires.

### SCOPE OF THE STUDY

A cross-sectional descriptive study conducted on the farmers of Sangrur and Mansa district. Panchayat members like panch and sarpanches have been randomly selected from each selected village from both the districts. These villages were selected from all the blocks of the Sangrur district. A total 10 villages from each block of Sangrur district were selected and Sangrur has 10 blocks in it, thereby making total number of respondents to 100 from Sangrur. Similarly, 100 respondents are also taken from Mansa district. Mansa district has only 5 blocks, so two Panchayat members were taken from each selected block. Self explanatory questionnaire were provided to the respondents for gathering information and the same was put to statistical analysis.

Descriptive statistical analysis was carried out in the study using commercially available statistical software (SPSS).

### MGNREGA IN PUNJAB: A Glance

Fatehgarh Sahib district has created most number of persondays i.e. 74,563 under the employment scheme in 2016-17 while Faridkot district has remained at last by creating only 2509 persondays in the same year while Sangrur and Mansa district have provided employment to only 238 & 61 households respectively in the same year. Ferozpur has issued maximum number of job cards to the SC workers attached under the scheme in Punjab while Pathankot has issued the least number of job cards to the SC workers. Similarly, district Fazilka has provided job to more than 51000 households under MGNREGA while Pathankot has provided employment to around 6192 households under it in 2016-17. Fatehgarh Sahib has topped the chart in providing 100 days of work to maximum of MGNREGA workers i.e. to around 745 households while Faridkot district has remained at last by providing 100 days of work to only 25 households. Similarly, Fatehgarh Sahib has provided 100 days work to maximum MGNREGA workers in Punjab in 2016-17. The district authorities have provided 100 days work to around 745 households which is maximum in Punjab while on the other hand, Faridkot district has provided 100 days of work to only 25 households in the whole year.

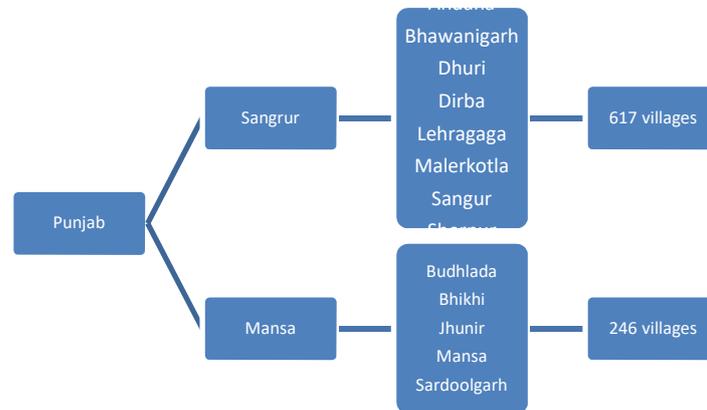
Meanwhile, Andana block has provided 100 days of employment to maximum number of households i.e. 107 in 2016-17 in Sangrur district while Dirba block has not initiated any work and it has failed to provide 100 days of work to any household.

Similarly in Mansa district, Budhlada block has provided 100 days of work to around 42 households under MGNREGA in 2016-17. On the other hand, Jhunir block has provided 100 days of work to only 1 household in the same year.

Source: [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

## SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Random sampling method has been adopted to select the villages to study the implementation of MGNREGA in rural Punjab. After this, the sample respondents i.e. panchayat members were selected



by using the random sampling method.

Figure 1 showing description of Sangrur and Mansa districts.

Figure 1 depicts that Sangrur district has 10 blocks namely Andana, Bhawanigarh, Dhuri, Lehragaga, Malerkotla, Sangrur, Sunam, Dirba, Sherpur & Ahmedgarh under MGNREGA while district Mansa has 5 blocks namely Budhlada, Bhikhi, Jhunir, Mansa and Sardulgarh. Sangrur district has total 617 villages while Mansa district has 246 villages.

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

**Table 1 showing district wise distributions of respondents whether continuously getting work under MGNREGA?**

		Mansa		Sangrur	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Whether continuously getting work under MGNREGA?	Yes	109	36.3%	39	13.0%
	No	191	63.7%	261	87.0%

Table 1 shows the percentage of the respondents in both the districts getting continuous work under NREGS. Around 36% & 13 % of workers from both Mansa & Sangrur district have confirmed of getting the continuous work respectively. Meanwhile, around 63.7% and 87% of respondents from both the respective districts have denied of getting the continuous work under MGNREGA showing the failing of the authorities in proper implementing the scheme at the rural level.

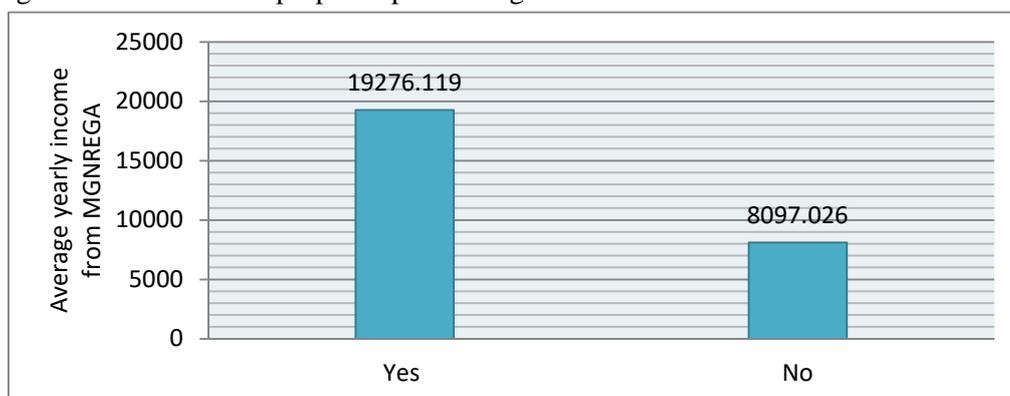


Figure 2 showing the average yearly income from MGNREGA in both Sangrur & Mansa districts.

Figure 2 shows that the workers who are getting 100 days of work under the MGREGA are having the annual average income of around 19,000/ to 20,000/- INR from it while the workers who are not getting 100 days of work are having the average annual income of around 8,000/- per annum only. So it can be said that the MGNREGA has benefitted the registered workers in increase their monthly as well annually income. If more and more number of workers is being given 100 days of work under it, then they can easily increase their income with the help of it.

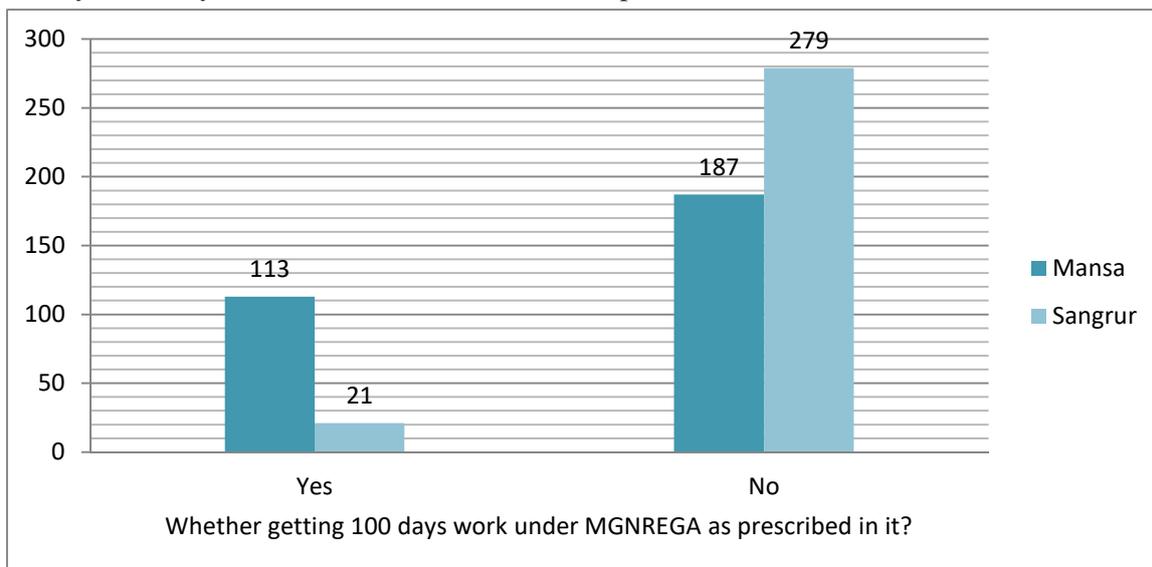


Figure 3 shows number of workers getting 100 days of work under MGNREGA in Sangrur and Mansa districts.

Figure 3 shows that the respondents in Mansa district are getting more 100 days of work as prescribed in the act as compared with the Sangrur district. It was observed that in Sangrur district very few workers have been able to get the 100 days of work under MGNREGA.

		Mansa		Sangrur	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Whether getting 100 days work under MGNREGA as prescribed in it?	Yes	113	37.7%	21	7.0%
	No	187	62.3%	279	93.0%

Table no. 2 shows the district wise distribution of whether getting 100 days work under MGNREGA as prescribed in it. The respondents were asked that whether they are getting 100 days of work in one year under MGNREGA, around 37% of workers form Mansa district have said yes and around 63% replied in negative. Similarly, only 7% from Sangrur district have replied in positive but around 93 % responded negatively. But while taking the respondents of both the districts, the positive response was around 22% and around 77.7% responded in negative.

Majority of respondents had said that they got only 30-40 days of work on average basis in one single year. But when this data was cross checked from the website of Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, New Delhi ([www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)), it was observed that the workers in the selected villages got the work ranging from 1 to 99 numbers of days in the different years. In some villages, the workers have got 10 to 20 days of work in one particular year and in other year they even got 80 to 90 days of work. Even few villages in Sangrur districts alleged that no work has been done under the scheme in the past 5 years in their respective villages.

<b>Table 3 showing frequency distribution of whether there is any delay in the payment of wages?</b>					
		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>98.2</b>	<b>98.2</b>	<b>98.2</b>
	<b>99.0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Table 3 shows that massive 98% respondents of both the districts have admitted of not getting wages at time through around the year under the scheme. The district wise and gender wise result was also same for the above variable.

In some villages the payment is delayed by 3-4 months as responded by the respondents but in other villages, the wages are delayed by almost around 1 year also. Even few of the respondents have also alleged that they have not been given wages in spite of having done the work under MGNREGA. The panchayat authorities alleged that the government did not releases the required grant at time. The situation is similar in both the districts.

<b>Table 4 showing district wise distribution of any presence of corruption in MGNREGA?</b>					
		<b>Mansa</b>		<b>Sangrur</b>	
		<b>Count</b>	<b>Column N %</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Column N %</b>
<b>Is there any presence of corruption in MGNREGA?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>7.7%</b>
	<b>No</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>87.0%</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>87.0%</b>
	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>9.0%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4.3%</b>

As there are number of reports often comes regarding the presence of corruption in MGNREGA on routine basis but when this thing was asked from the respondents, then around 87% from both the districts have clearly responded in negative and moreover around 6.7% said that they are not aware about the presence of any kind of corrupt activity in the scheme. It was observed that they are not aware about the corrupt activity due to lack of awareness, illiteracy and old age of most of the workers registered with the scheme. The table shows that around 87% of respondents from both the districts said that there is no presence of corruption in the employment scheme as shown in table no 4. It was also observed that around 99 percent of the respondents are not aware about any accidental compensation being paid by the government to them in case of happening of any accident etc at the worksite. It shows that the officials and panchayat members do not takes pain to aware the workers regarding the main clauses or benefits of the scheme.

<b>Table 5 showing frequency distribution of type of work labor mostly prefers to do under MGNREGA?</b>					
		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>Cleaning</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>71.7</b>	<b>71.7</b>	<b>71.7</b>
	<b>Leveling</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>27.2</b>	<b>27.2</b>	<b>98.8</b>
	<b>Irrigation</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>.7</b>	<b>.7</b>	<b>99.5</b>
	<b>99.0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>.5</b>	<b>.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Table 5 shows that majority of the workers prefers to do the work of leveling only under the scheme owing to less strength required for it.

**Table 6 showing frequency distribution of respondents on is there any use of asset creation to the villagers under MGNREGA?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Yes	334	55.7	55.7	55.7
	No	257	42.8	42.8	98.5
	99.0	9	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	600	100.0	100.0	

The table 6 depicts that around 55.7% of the respondents have confirmed the use of assets created under the employment scheme in their respective villages while around 42.8% of respondents have declined the any use of the assets created under the scheme.

**Table 7 showing results of Chi-square tests for respondents working as agricultural laborer along with working under MGNREGA**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	193.648 <sup>a</sup>	1	.000		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	190.015	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	170.619	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				<b>.000</b>	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	193.325	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	600				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 22.95.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table.

Table no. 7 shows that the p value regarding the agricultural laborers working under MGNREGA is .000 which is highly significant.

**Table 8 showing results of Chi-square tests of respondents on whether ready to work if MGNREGA is associated with Industry?**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.620 <sup>a</sup>	1	.000		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	26.412	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	33.404	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				<b>.000</b>	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	27.574	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	600				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 31.63.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 8 showing results of Chi-square tests of respondents on whether ready to work if MGNREGA is associated with Industry. The p value of the above factor is 0.000 which is highly significant.

<b>Table 9 showing results of Chi-square tests of respondents on whether MGNREGA can stop Migration to the cities if it is implemented with more efficiency?</b>					
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	58.967 <sup>a</sup>	1	.000		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	57.499	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	67.632	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test					
Linear-by-Linear Association	58.869	1	.000	.000	.000
N of Valid Cases	600				

Table 9 shows that the p value is .000 which shows it as a highly significant regarding the fact that whether MGNREGA will be able to stop the migration towards cities or not if implemented with more efficiency in both the districts.

<b>Table 10 showing results of Chi-square tests of whether MGNREGA has helped in decreasing the level of Poverty?</b>			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.942 <sup>a</sup>	2	.031
Likelihood Ratio	6.976	2	.031
Linear-by-Linear Association	.131	1	.717
N of Valid Cases	600		

a. 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.30.

The table 10 shows that the p value for the variable that MGNREGA has helped in decreasing the level of poverty is .031 which is highly insignificant.

<b>Table 11 showing results of Chi-square tests of whether income has been increased due to implementation of MGNREGA?</b>			
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.924 <sup>a</sup>	2	.012
Likelihood Ratio	9.046	2	.011
Linear-by-Linear Association	.122	1	.726
N of Valid Cases	600		

a. 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.30.

Table 11 shows that MGNREGA has helped in increase in income. The p value for the variable is .012 which signs it as insignificant for the above given fact.

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## DISCUSSION

The respondents include panches and sarpanches of the randomly selected villages from both the districts. It was observed that all the young aged panchayat members were fully aware about the MGNREGA clauses but majority of panches and sarpanches were not aware about it as mostly of them were illiterate or very less educated. Almost all the respondents admitted that funds are not allotted at time by the government and it is commonly delayed by around 4-8 months on average. Due to this fact, the labor is not given wages at time. Moreover, no compensation is paid to the labor if the wages given are delayed as prescribed in the Act. But one of the major limitations proving under the scheme is the non availability of the skilled labor as maximum of the labor working under the act is unskilled. This also sometimes hampers the output due to little knowledge of the labor.

The panchayat members have different views regarding the formation of assets under MGNREGA. The villages in which drains and streets were constructed are proving the scheme as fruitful and productive. But the villages in which only ponds and roadside weeds are cleaned does not proved to be fruitful and productive in nature. This work mainly includes the cleaning of road side weeds and leveling of soil along the roads. It is because after rains the soil got eroded and weeds naturally grown up. The labor is satisfied in doing the MGNREGA, only in the case when they are getting the simple work of leveling and cleaning the roadsides. It clearly shows the immaturity of the labor towards the scheme.

During research, it is also observed that number of panchayat members especially Sarpanches are not in favor of the employment guarantee scheme. They have given number of reasons behind this. One major reason is the non- payment of wages at right time, the workers often complains to them. Owing to personal and social reasons and sometimes due to political matters, the sarpanches have to give them payment of MGNREGA work from their own pockets thereby putting them under debt for number of months as MGNREGA funds are often released by the government after a gap of 4-8 months. If they don't provides wages to them from their own, then the labor threatens to gherao the house of sarpanch and also threatens to vote to opposite party in the coming elections, thereby making no other option for the sarpanch. Even sometimes the labor falsely alleges the sarpanch of making corrupt activities in case of non-payment of wages to them.

Some panchayat members also suggest that the sarpanch of the one village must be given the charge of analyzing and initiating the work of MGNREGA of some other village. This will control the blackmailing activities of the labor as the other's village sarpanch has nothing to do with the vote bank or social relations. This step can also control the working of labor as majority of the sarpanches complained that the workers are not interested in doing the proper work under the scheme but they openly admits MGNREGA as their birth right and due to this, work is done very slowly and again due to social, personal and political reasons, the sarpanch can't force them to do proper work and that to be completed at time.

A number of sarpanches even alleged that sometimes due to poor planning of the higher officials, works are initiated having of no use or output e.g. Sarpanch of one village revealed that the higher officials ordered them to clean the village pond with the help of MGNREGA labor. The work was started. But due to large area of the pond, it was not cleaned on scheduled time and this led to temper of the villagers against the sarpanch as the pond was necessary for their dairy animals i.e. buffaloes in scorching heat. The sarpanches also admitted that in majority of cases, they have no say in choosing or planning of work done under the scheme but they have to still abide by the orders of the higher officials from block development and panchayat department. But overall the sarpanches were not in favor of MGNREGA as it has led to increase in their expenses and has also affected the social relations at the village level.

Some sarpanches also concealed that the work initiated under MGNREGA is checked on daily basis by the block development officials. But sometimes they have to face the wrath of these officials due to non-completion of work at scheduled time. The sarpanches reacted that the MGNREGA labor often

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didn't listens nor obey their orders as they considers the employment scheme as their birth right. If the sarpanches forces the labor for doing work than the labor blackmails the sarpanch to make the false charges of corruption or other offences against them thereby bundling their hands. They also suggested that there must be one supervisor to be appointed for 5-6 villages that can take care and control the MGNREGA funds and activities. Supervisor can also easily direct the labor to do and complete the work at proper time.

## CONCLUSION

The state government failed to implement the employment scheme as such promised by the Govt. of India. It is analyzed that the registered labor is not willing to work properly under it and secondly, the majority of sarpanches/ panchayat officials have given number of valid reasons regarding its improper implementation. Also the central government has failed to provide the funds required for the scheme at the given time thereby angering both workers and the persons attached with it. The scheme also failed to increase the productivity as majority of works have not able to build the assets to be useful for people. The government has to make some changes in its working for the proper implementation of the act.