CHAPTER-5

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are lots of deliberations on efficient and effective implementation of MGNREGA since its inception. The main challenge of MGNREGA is how to implement the scheme to give benefit to the weaker section of the society for whom it is meant for. The successful implementation of the scheme also depends on the awareness and participation of the beneficiaries in the scheme. However, the State Government including the other implementing agencies also needs to implement the scheme as transparently and effectively with a positive will to give its benefits to the maximum extent. This study tries to provide an overview on the performance of MGNREGA in Barpeta district of Assam. During the study the primary data are collected directly from the beneficiaries and implementing agencies in the form of questionnaires and secondary data are collected from reports, discussions and other electronic sources. In order to check disparity, data are collected from 400 beneficiaries and 55 officials of the implementing agencies (total 455) of five Developmental Blocks selected from east, west, north, south and middle zone of the district. The findings from the primary data are discussed below which also found a contrasting picture when compared with official statistics.

5.1 Findings of the study:

1. Though in all the sample Development Blocks, people belong to various caste such as Other Backward Class (OBC), Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribes(ST) and people from general category (GEN) are well registered, but in my sample villages 100% sample belong to the general caste where 90.25% of the total beneficiaries
are Islam and 9.75% are Hindu. In Barpeta, Chenga and Mandia 100% sample beneficiaries are Islam. In the study area, majority of the sample households (38%) belong to non-farm agricultural labour with poor economic condition.

2. Education plays a positive role in creating awareness. But most of the respondents in the study area are illiterate (46.25%). Therefore the level of awareness of the respondents regarding MGNREGA is not at all satisfactory. All the sample respondents have heard about MGNREGA. But worker’s awareness regarding the minimum wage, demand for work, the number of minimum days of employment guaranteed to each household under the scheme, unemployment allowance, extra wages beyond 5 kms work, awareness about worksite facilities was reportedly found very low. Though the data surveyed from the implementing agencies revealed that awareness regarding MGNREGA is promoted by holding Gaon Sabha meetings, by celebrating Rozgar Diwas. But in actual field, the picture is found to be something else.

3. 100% of the samples have heard about MGNREGA. 74% of the workers were informed about MGNREGA scheme by the GP. It reflects GPs play a very significant role in spreading information about MGNREGA like how to apply for job card etc. But regarding awareness no such role is seen to have played by these GPs. 100% of the sample beneficiaries are enrolled with job card under MGNREGA through written application. As per the guideline, affixing of photograph on job cards is mandatory without any charge. But study found that 55% beneficiaries have obtained freely but 45% beneficiaries told that they had to pay for photos and xerox or sometimes as tips. During the survey, 17% of the total
respondents have reported that their job cards are kept under the custody of GP members at the panchayat office.

4. MGNREGA is a demand based scheme. If any registered job card holder demands for employment, then the concerned authority is legally bound to provide them employment. Failure to it, an unemployment allowance has to be paid to the jobseeker. But the data reveals that under the scheme 83.25% of total sample did not demand employment while only 16.75% sample demanded employment. Further data also reveals that 46.75% of the total beneficiaries are yet to provide job, 19% of the total beneficiaries are allotted job between 15-30 days, 18.75% of the total beneficiaries are allotted job within 15 days and 15.50% of the total beneficiaries are allotted job in more than one month. In the study it is revealed that there is no evidence on unemployment allowances among the beneficiaries under MGNREGA in Barpeta District. Even none of the sample beneficiaries are aware of unemployment allowances under MGNREGA. Where data collected from the implementing agencies showed a totally different picture. From the data surveyed from the officials found that 9487 (32.86% ) beneficiaries have demanded for job and against that 9476 (32.82%) beneficiaries were allocated with job and remaining 0.04% beneficiaries have not allocated with job. Again it is found that 132 numbers of beneficiaries of Bagodi GP of Barpeta block have received unemployment allowance where in Bagodi GP of Barpeta Block 1853 workers demanded job and 1850 workers were offered job during 2014-15 financial year. Therefore as provided by the official data instead of 132 workers, only 3 workers should have received unemployment allowance. Here question may arise whether they have actually given 132 workers an unemployment allowance or
just to maintain record they have put just a number. Similarly in Moiramara GP of Bhabanipur Block also 8 workers were given unemployment allowance where 2216 people demanded job and exactly 2216 were also provided employment. If this data provided by the officials is true, then no person in Moiramara GP of Bhabanipur Block should get unemployment allowance. In Swapur GP of Rupshi blocks, 8 workers have received unemployment allowance under MGNREGA where 1790 people demanded job and 1782 were provided employment and no beneficiaries of Mandia & Chenga blocks have received unemployment allowance under MGNREGA.

5. MGNREGA emphasised to give minimum 100 days guaranteed job employment to its enrolled beneficiaries in a financial year. But in the research study it is found that workers were not given the prescribed 100 days of employment under the MGNREGA in Barpeta District. During the study it revealed that 46.75% of the total beneficiaries did not get employment till the study was conducted, 25.50% were employed for 1-20 days, 19% of the total beneficiaries have employed for 21-40 days, 8.75% sample beneficiaries have employed for 41-60 days. In the entire sample Block not a single sample beneficiary was provided 100 days of work. Whereas per official data, only 98 (0.34%) beneficiaries have been allocated with job for 100 days as guaranteed by MGNREGA.

6. The data showed that 67% of total sample who worked under the scheme got Rs.152 as wage at the same time 33% sample got Rs.139, while the actual government notified wage during the 2014-15 year was Rs. 167. 100% of the sample of implementing agencies told that Rs 167 wage is given to the workers during the year 2014-15 and all payment are done by bank account transfer. The
study revealed that payment of wage is normally delayed to more than two months or sometimes uncertain. The study also reveals that the sole reason for delay in wage payment told to the workers is irregular flow of funds.

7. MGNREGA guidelines specify that the state is obliged to ensure worksite facilities such as Creche, drinking water, first aid and shade at worksites. But during the field study, 100% of the sample said that there are no such facilities provided to them in the worksite. Some of the respondents claimed that they used to carry drinking water where water is not easily available. Moreover, the MGNREGA guidelines also specify that work must be provided to workers within 5 Km radius of the village. If not then extra 10% are payable to the workers to bear transportation and living cost. Data showed that 24% were provided job beyond 5 Km but no extra wage payment is made to them.

8. The operational guideline emphasized on the procedure of Social Audit to be held by gram Sabha on MGNREGA works. But in the research it was found that 73.82% of the beneficiaries did not answer on social audit issue while 26.18% beneficiaries were aware about social audit and replied that it was done by the Gaon Sabha. Again 61% of total sample workers did not participate in Gaon Sabha meeting while only 39% beneficiaries participated in the meeting. This indicates that notices regarding Gaon Sabha meeting are not widely circulated by the panchayat.

9. MGNREGA Act also provides for maintenance of transparency and accountability. The guidelines require that muster rolls should be read out publicly and also to be available for public scrutiny in the Panchayat office and also at work sites. This will help in preventing corruption. But reality is something different. However,
100% of the sample of implementing agencies opined that they maintained muster roll and they are available for public scrutiny. But during the study not a single muster roll is found to be available in the worksite. Data showed that 78% of the total beneficiaries are opined that implementation of MGNREGA is not transparent and only 22% of the total beneficiaries have opined that implementation of MGNREGA is transparent. Further the study also revealed that 87% of the total beneficiaries do not have any idea on grievance redressal mechanism.

10. In the research study, it is also found that there is evidence of corruption in the implementation of the scheme. Data showed that 97% of the total beneficiaries are opined that there is corruption in MGNREGA while only 3% of the total beneficiaries could not replied on corruption issue. Further, 63% number of beneficiaries stated that corruption occurs at Gaon Panchayat level, 34% stated that corruption is evident both in Gaon Panchayats and Block offices and 3% did not respond to this question.

11. It is found from the surveyed people that most of the works related to land development, road construction, levelling of road etc. are done by using tractors whereas per guidelines there is prohibition of use of heavy machineries and contractors under the Act. But in the district it is revealed that most of such works were completed by tractors and bills were raised in the name of some registered job card holders. During payment such workers are taken to the bank and let them withdraw money. After withdrawal the money, the officials keep the major portion of the money and gave a nominal amount to the workers by saying that without working they are earning from home. The workers also do not complain as they think that they have received money at the mercy of those people.
12. The prime objective of MGNREGA is to enhance livelihood security by improving their economic condition. The study showed that 47% of the total beneficiaries could not reply whether working under MGNREGA has increased their income or not. 34% opined that there is no increase in income, 14% opined that to some extent their income has increased. Only 5% of the total beneficiaries opined that their income has increased subsequently working under the scheme. The data showed that 47% of the total beneficiaries spent their MGNREGA wages on food while only 7% of the total beneficiaries spent their wage on savings. Further only 10% of the total beneficiaries said that MGNREGA has helped them in acquiring livestock, 7% of the total beneficiaries said that MGNREGA has helped them in acquiring other assets and 6% of the total beneficiaries said that MGNREGA has helped them in acquiring movable assets. Further 100% of the sample opined that MGNREGA has not helped in reducing indebtedness.

13. Another important objective of MGNREGA is to arrest rural urban migration by proving employment at local areas. The study reveals that 28.75% of the total beneficiaries still have migrated to urban areas in search of employment after implementation of MGNREGA. Failure of the GP to provide 100 days of employment to job seekers, irregular supply of work, delayed payment, low wages restricts the workers to work under the scheme. It is also evident that Gaon Panchayats have not taken any steps to arrest migration of beneficiaries to urban areas. Further the people who did not migrate opined that though they work under the scheme, they have also adopted other means of livelihood as the scheme is not able to provide them sufficient employment.
14. Another important objective of MGNREGA Act is to empower women and to make them self reliant. It is true that the level of awareness of the people regarding the scheme is not encouraging; women in study area have become pro-active participants in the schemes. Despite of low wages and delayed wage payment, women are interested to work under the scheme as works are locally available within the 5 Km radius of their house. Data showed that 29.75% of the sample beneficiaries said that women are benefitted from MGNREGA while 21% of the total beneficiaries said that MGNREGA has helped women to some extent. Further 89.25% of sample beneficiaries are of view that women have control in their own earnings. However a very small portion (17%) opined that MGNREGA has helped them in participating in family decisions making process.

15. Under MGNREGA various types of village assets have been created to cater the need of the rural people like rural connectivity, water conservation and fishery, land development, plantation etc. The quality of the assets created under the scheme is found to be satisfactory. But due to poor maintenance, 32% assets were found in poor conditions. The good quality of the assets was due to recent construction of the assets.

16. Non completion of project is one of the greatest obstacles towards the successful implementation of MGNREGA scheme. Out of total 55 sample, 46% have revealed that main reason for non completion of projects under MGNREGA is due to irregular flow of funds, 25% revealed that it is due to lack of technical support, 20% revealed that it is due to other reasons and 9% revealed that it is due to poor execution of the scheme.
17. From the above data, it is found that out of the total 55 sample, 29% of the sample opined that availability of funds can accelerate better implementation of MGNREGA, 26% opined that technical training can remove the hindrances of the scheme, 22% revealed that efficient planning can lead to successful implementation of MGNREGA, 16% opined that wage enhancement can attract people to participate in the scheme, while 7% have revealed that labor management can be another important step for implementation of MGNREGA.

The study has proceeded by taking the following hypothesis:

1. MGNREGA has brought some amount of improvement in the economic lives of the rural people.

2. MGNREGA has led to some amount of reduction in rural urban migration due to availability of additional work and income in their local place, but due to ineffective implementation, rural urban migration still continues on a significant scale.

3. It empowers women to be self-dependent and to get decision-making rights within the family.

4. MGNREGA gives the rural people an opportunity to create effective and useful economic assets in rural areas, but it has not achieved its desired objectives due to corruption among officials and lack of awareness among the common people.

After analysis the collected data, the hypothesis assumed are found to be as under:

1. The first hypothesis is found to be negative. In the study, it is found that as per the guidelines of MGNREGA, the workers were not given the prescribed 100 days of employment under the scheme in Barpeta District. During the study it is also
revealed that 46.75% of the total beneficiaries did not get employment till the study was conducted. Only 5% of the total beneficiaries opined that their income level has improved working under the scheme. It also fails to reduce indebtedness among the respondents.

2. The second hypothesis found to be correct. In the initial years, people were provided employment and also they are willing to work under MGNREGA as works are provided within their reach. But with passage of time due to insufficient works, non availability of funds, failure of the GPs to provide 100 days of employment, delay in wage payment have forced people to migrate to other nearby urban areas in search of a better livelihood.

3. The third hypothesis is found to be positive as despite of low wages and delayed wage payments women participations in the scheme is found to be high. Few women could have participated in family decision making and majority of women have control over their own earnings and also contribute to their family expenditure.

4. The fourth hypothesis is found to be correct. A number of village infrastructures have been created under MGNREGA which will definitely benefit the rural people of the district. But at the same time, it is also found that poor maintenance of the assets, non completion of projects and corruption in the scheme have stood as a hindrance in successful implementation of the scheme.

From the above findings it reveals that though MGNREGA is a well thought powerful mechanism to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to the common people, but its poor execution, flawed implementation on the part of the
implementing agencies and lack of awareness among the beneficiaries deprived them from their basic right to employment. The benefit of the scheme for whom the scheme is meant for are not reaching to them. They are not getting 100 days of employment, unemployment allowance for the failure to provide employment within 15 days of their demand, not improving their economic condition. Though the village assets are created it lacks quality. Therefore to make this well thought legislation more effective and people oriented, following suggestions can be recommended:

5.2 Recommendations:

1. Lack of awareness regarding the scheme has reduced its success rate. To create awareness among the public regarding MGNREGA, apart from brochures, newspapers, television, radio, etc., proper campaigning through street drama, loudspeaker, writing on the wall about MGNREGA can be an effective measure to increase awareness. Moreover to increase awareness, people need to be educated. Awareness on various benefits of MGNREGA schemes to be promoted to the maximum extend by employing special village level employees. The scheme is need to popularize so that the benefit of the scheme can reach to the socially and economically weaker section of the District. Thus, continuous efforts towards creating adequate awareness on its provisions of the scheme amongst the people are utmost necessity to motivate the people to work and to encourage them to participate in its effective implementation.

2. Various works such as land development, rural connectivity, water conservation, drought proofing, irrigation, renovation of traditional water bodies, storage of ground water etc are carried out under the MGNREGA scheme. The scheme can be a very useful tool for certain specific areas to cater the need of public at large.
The projects under the scheme should be taken according to the need of that area. Projects that are sustainable in nature like forestation, water conservation etc should be provided with additional incentives to the beneficiaries. Moreover renovation of traditional water bodies and drought proofing works can generously cater scarcity of water and also contribute to fishery development. Further works on embankment can help to protect erosion of areas in the district falling at the river banks.

3. The success of the MGNREGA scheme depends upon its effective implementation. For proper planning, implementation and execution of various projects of MGNREGA, the role of Gaon Panchayats is very important and should be encouraged. Through proper implementation and process much of the loopholes of the scheme can be removed.

4. A democratic leadership style will facilitate greater community participation, information and opinion sharing by the rural mass and development of social linkage.

5. The State Government should ensure the process of release of funds as per norms and should monitor on proper utilization of fund.

6. The Govt. must take stringent and immediate steps to curb corruption in implementation of MGNREGA and be vigilant so that wages reaches to the workers for whom it is meant for without delay. To check misappropriation and diversion of funds monitoring system of the scheme can be improved by Management Information System (MIS).
7. Transparency and accountability ensure efficient utilization of resources under the scheme. Therefore provision for regular social audit must be carried out by Gram Sabha which enable in bringing transparency and accountability.

8. There should be well prepared plan at district level of the approved projects under MGNREGA so that it can be implemented smoothly at grassroots level.

9. Proper planning and smooth functioning of the programmes largely depend on the ability and willingness of the implementing agencies at the grassroots level. For effective implementation of the scheme, dedicated, trained and professional persons can be appointed.

10. There must be proper direction from State Government to all districts to ensure timely preparation of Annual Plans and also for preparing DPPs to develop long-term shelves of projects. On the other hand State Government should also direct all District Programme Coordinators (DPCs) to ensure that the included works in the district annual plan must be get sanctioned and executed within the timeframe.

11. To enhance the sustainable livelihood activities among the rural families emphasis on IBS (Individual Beneficiary Scheme) works under the scheme should be given importance.

12. Job cards, muster roll and other records are to be maintained properly at Block and Panchayat level in order to maintain transparency. Moreover Government should impose strict rule to undertake periodical review of Job Cards issued, and deletion of the fake Job Cards from MIS to avoid further fraudulent payments. A proper monitoring mechanism should be developed to assure correct procedure in job card. At the same time, State Government must also ensure that under no
circumstances Job Cards are retained by GPs or other implementing officials for any purpose.

13. In order to tap deficiency, targeted inspections and maintenance of records, due vigilance, regular checking of muster Rolls, conducting Social Audit, grievance redressal etc. to be carried out both at State and the district level.

14. The scheme should also primarily emphasis on projects that helps in acquiring village level assets for the development of the villages and caters the needs of the public at large.

15. The time gap between work done and payment should be reduced to minimum possible time.

16. The study reveals that market wage rate is much higher than MGNREGA wage. It discourages people to work under the scheme. Therefore in order to maintain consistency with the minimum market wage rate, MGNREGA wage rates should be revised as regular intervals.

17. Selection of beneficiaries is another important aspect in successful implementation of the MGNREGA scheme; hence Gaon Panchayats should be careful in selection of the beneficiaries.

18. The problems and complaints of the workers also need to be looked into seriously and steps should be taken to motivate them to work under MGNREGA to avoid migration.

19. Creation of dedicated nodal agencies at each panchayat level with well equipped trained personnel and information may be helpful in generating employment and creating assets at the same time.
20. Introduction of GPRS tracking system to track ongoing projects under MGNREGA in various rural areas will be beneficial on real time basis and to effectively implement the scheme. Through GPRS system centre/state can monitor the progress of the projects within seconds just by using a laptop / computer. In fact corruption level can also be checked vide these GPRS systems.

This chapter comprises of findings and recommendations based on the data collected vide field survey. The outcome of the analyzed data revealed that implementation of MGNREGA in Barpeta district was able to penetrate its prime objective to provide minimum guaranteed employment to the economically weaker section of the society especially in rural areas to some extent but fails to improve the economic condition of the beneficiaries with a sustainable asset building. The next chapter comprises of the conclusion after the empirical study.