CHAPTER-EIGHT

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS
The economic development of a nation also depends on utilization of labour force and physical resources. The economist view that mass participation of unskilled labour in development programmes will accelerate the growth process and the country will ensure increase in productivity. The major goals of any country’s economic policy have been to achieve rapid economic growth and provision of employment opportunities to its citizens. They are of opinion that the economic development must be twined with utilization of labour force and employment generation. The governments have to follow the policies of providing employment opportunities to the unskilled labour also. The opportunities of employment provide economic benefits to the labour and keep them to lead the life with assured income. In the absence of employment, unemployment crops up and this together with underemployment prevalent would affect the poorest segment of population of that country. Unemployment is the most serious of the challenges that all the countries face on the economic front. Unemployment is normally found in all economies, irrespective of their level of development. It does not remain confined only to unskilled workers. Often a sizeable number of skilled workers, sometimes even though they have good training in sophisticated technologies, fail to get jobs for longer periods.

One of the major problems facing our country today is the continued migration of people from rural to the urban areas. The villages are disintegrating
and cities are turning into slums. “No work” and “low wages” for a longer period are the root causes for this distressing conditions of the rural poor. The rural sector has been facing the problem of poverty due to absence of works mostly. As about 89.00 per cent of the labour force is engaged in unorganized sector, the increase in their employment would substantially bring development in the economy. There is a need to increase investment in this unorganized sector, particularly the rural segment, to increase the employment potentials to large number of people of that sector. The changes would bring about adequate improvement in the living conditions of the rural poor. The rural poor are to be considered as valuable resource as they have better knowledge of their life, environment, necessities and capacities. They are capable of expanding their physical capacities to fight against the poverty provided the government extend the help and create the infrastructure. The packages of poverty alleviation programmes aimed at giving self-employment and wage employment to the poorer sections of the community were continued on a big scale by the government under various five year plans. Though the planners paved the path with their rational thinking and the government initiated many programmes, the gap of unemployment is widening and the desired results were not achieved because of several reasons. The major reasons which can be adduced to the failure are lack of clarity in the programmes, rampant corruption in the execution, poor planning and implementation, entry of middlemen, and negligible people’s participation. The government has brought positively one
scheme, called MGNREG, to overcome all these barriers and mass participation of people to combat the poverty.

PRESENT STUDY

The present study deals with MGNREGS, a social policy scheme which is being considered as the largest social safety net providing gainful employment to crores of rural households throughout the country. This scheme has a strong base of Act which provide legal frame work to exact Central and State governments to prepare, finalize and approve the activities for providing employment to rural poor. This scheme also provide legal guarantee to rural poor who are living under poverty. It is an unique scheme which is being implemented in all 604 rural districts in the country with mass participation of people and is meant to provide employment for at least 100 days in a year. For the year 2010-11, a sizeable amount of `66100 crores were allocated and spent on this scheme and this scheme has brought major changes in the socio-economic well being of rural labour force.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The researcher has been able to tap some of the significant works and their focus relevant to the present study. It is found that several researchers made study on several areas of rural employment and poverty alleviation. They focused on:
employment generation and labour productivity in agriculture, economic backwardness and role of NGOs, progress of agriculture based industries and employment potentials, poverty among agricultural labour, institutional credit, rural banking and rural employment, resource mobilization and agricultural labour, migration to cities and growth of metropolitans, rural development approaches, policies and programmes, transparency and accountability in employment schemes, poverty alleviation programmes and economic disparities, poverty and child labour, socio-economic empowerment, rural unemployment and financing for agriculture, etc.,

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Though a good number of studies have been made on various government schemes meant for poverty alleviation and employment generation, the present study pays a focus on a unique scheme of great relevance, coverage, usefulness, comprehensiveness, network, and legal support for providing employment to rural poor at mass level. This study is carried in the region where acute famine conditions prevail and distress migration is common. The researcher has attempted to present a comprehensive picture on implementation of a popular rural employment programme in the most backward district in the country.
OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The principal objectives of the study are: to assess the level of people’s participation in MGNREG Scheme, to study the institutional mechanism adopted to implement the scheme, to study the extent of additional employment generated, to evaluate the progress of the scheme, and to gather the information on the perceptions of the MGNREG labour force in Anantapur district.

METHODOLOGY

Both the Primary and Secondary sources of Data were used in this study. The study covers a period of six years i.e from 2006-07 to 2011-12. The Secondary data were collected from: the Website of www.nrega.ap.gov.in, reports and records from DWMA, DRDA, Mandal Parishad and Zilla Parishad offices, and the National Crime Records Bureau Reports. The studies carried by individuals and organizations, articles in journals, edited books, were also used as secondary sources. The primary data are mainly collected from the MGNREG labour force, the executives and the operatives at the grass root level. The collected information has been analysed by using the simple statistical tools. The study area was mainly confined to Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh. By using a structured
questionnaire, the opinion survey was conducted by consulting 500 respondents mainly comprising the wage seekers in selected villages.

CHAPERISATION

The study is presented in eight chapters. Chapter One outlines the employment and unemployment concepts, rural employment, government policy for removing unemployment, the MGNREG Scheme, review of literature, need for the study, objectives, methodology, and limitations. Chapter Two focuses on poverty, farm suicides and poverty alleviation programmes in India. Chapter Three describe the Salient Features of NREG Act, 2005, and the minimum requirements to be fulfilled while implementing the scheme. Chapter Four presents the information on planning and execution of works under MGNREG. Chapter Five presents the profile of Andhra Pradesh and the progress of the MGNREG Scheme in the state. Chapter Six focused on the progress of MGNREGS in Anantapur District, mandal-wise. Chapter Seven presents the survey details collected from the labour participated in MGNREGS. Chapter Eight presents the summary, findings of the study, and the suggestions.

As presented in Chapter Two, the poverty has many dimensions and it is more marked among certain sectors of the economy, certain groups of people, and certain regions or localities. Poverty is a satisfaction analysis in which the poor are seen as those lagging behind others in a society in a relative sense. Out of 260
million poor people in the country, about 200 million people are in the rural areas. Around 100 districts are under constant threat of droughts and semi-famine like situation every year. Problem of perpetual and pernicious poverty, particularly in rural areas, has been deeply rooted in to the large scale unemployment among rural households. Food security is a serious problem in these drought affected districts. Human beings have been committing the suicides due to severe distress.

Some of the important conclusions arrived in the chapter are the following:

- A total of 96708 farm suicides were recorded at All India level during the period 1997-2008. The highest number of suicides was recorded in the year 2002. The farm suicides were high in Maharashtra followed by Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh.
- The suicides appear concentrated in regions of high commercialization of agriculture and very high peasant debt. Cash crop farmers seemed far more vulnerable to suicides. Absence of alternatives for generation of revenue even at meager level is one among the major reasons for these suicides.
- The discussion of key programmes of wage employment and self-employment revealed that they have created some positive impact in terms of creating durable public assets, and providing supplementary employment opportunities to work seekers during lean employment periods. The impact of employment programmes of early generation was limited and was not considered as satisfactory.
Chapter Three dealt with the salient features of NREG Act, 2005. This Act was introduced with an intention to provide for enhancement of livelihood security of the households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed employment in every financial year for every household whose adult members volunteer to do the unskilled work with the scheme made under the act. It is unique because it confers legal right to employment on the rural citizens. The State governments are empowered to start any scheme as per the statues laid down in the NREG Act. NREGS is a scheme which is being implemented in tune with the statues laid down by the NREG Act. The NREG Act gives assurance to the labour force, fix responsibility on the executives, and exact several implementing agencies to monitor the employment programmes as per the amendments. It empowers the Central and State Governments to design and implement several employment schemes within the frame work of laid down statute.

By reviewing the Operational Manual of the NREG Scheme prepared on the basis of the provisions of NREG Act, some of the conclusions were drawn from this chapter. They are the following:

- The NREGA provides a comprehensive frame work for planning and decision making on various aspects like design and implementation of schemes, conditions for providing employment, fixation of wage rate, establishment of
councils at centre and state level, monitoring at state level, provision of funds, transparency and accountability, powers of Central and state governments, audit of accounts, establishment of grievance redress mechanism, disbursement of wages, payment of unemployment allowance, responsibilities of various executives, etc.,

- The guidelines and policy framework provide a complete clarity on the smallest issue to the most prominent. Dos and DO NOTs were conveyed in absolute manner. These guidelines were pertinent and shown clear way to all the implementing agencies at Zilla Parishad, Mandal, and Gram Panchayat levels.

- The prominent guidelines were: no permission for engaging any contractor for implementation of the works, the works shall be performed by using manual labour and not machines, ensuring transparency and accountability at all levels of implementation, ensuring that the total wages shall be paid as per the quality and quantity of the work done, the works shall be shown to the labour within fifteen days as requested by the labour, standard scheduled rates are to be followed, under no circumstances the labourers shall be paid less than the wage rate, preference shall be given to the works identified and approved in the Grama Sabha, effective grievance cell for dealing with the complaints made by the labour and public and executive shall dispose the disputes and complaints within seven days, the disbursement of daily wages shall be made on a weekly basis or in any case not later than a fortnight, all payments of wages shall be made in cash and directly to the person, payment of unemployment allowance if
the applicant for employment is not provided employment within fifteen days, etc.,

Chapter Four dealt with planning and execution of works under MGNREG Scheme. The planning exercise followed in MGNREG focus on: optimum utilization of the growth potential of the villages to increase the employment, production and income, addressing rightly the problem of chronic unemployment through employment on public works, creating institutional support to protect the employment interests of the rural poor, augmenting the duration and productivity of employment, and achieving integrated rural development for satisfying the basic minimum needs of all rural households in the country. In the past, several programmes and schemes were designed and implemented but the implied objectives were not achieved effectively due to glaring deficiencies in planning, monitoring and execution. The result was that they were perceived as subsidy giving programmes. But the present MGNREG has a support and frame work of well established planning process and inbuilt mechanism for demanding commitment and accountability of various individuals, entities and agencies for providing employment to rural poor and developing rural areas and their resources.

By reviewing the chapter contents, some of the conclusions arrived at are the following:
Under the MGNREG Scheme, the planning will be done at three levels viz., at Gram Panchayat level, at Mandal level, and at the district level and all these plans will be coordinated to prepare a ‘shelf of projects’ to offer employment on demand. The government is very keen to involve local people and Panchayat Raj institutions for implementing the scheme. The Employment Generation Scheme Plans (EGS Plans) are to be prepared at Gram Panchayat, Mandal and District level which are linked to each other and the District EGS Plan is a summary of all Mandal and Gram Panchayat EGS Plans.

The MGNREG has a well developed frame work of implementation with specific activities performed in order by the different entities and individuals as it is related to a large population and being implemented vastly over a large geographical area with an intention to address a phenomenon and provide security to the much needed public. The duties of all executives who are at operational and planning level are well defined and synchronized right from the initial phase to the ultimate phase. Viewing the labour force as target groups, guidelines are framed properly right from the stage of ‘calling applications for registration’ and subsequent stages of issuance of job cards, application for work, allotment and execution of work, opening of savings accounts in banks and post offices, and to the ultimate stage of payment of wages.

Chapter Five present the details of profile of Andhra Pradesh State and the progress of MGNREG Scheme in it. The State of Andhra Pradesh is surrounded by
six states and the Bay of Bengal. It has the longest continuous coastal line of 974 Kms and comprising Telugu speaking regions of Andhra, Telangana and Rayala Seema. A major portion of food and commercial crops that are in Andhra Pradesh are from the Coastal Andhra (Andhra) region and consisting of nine districts. Economically and industrially the Rayala Seema region is very backward compared to other two regions and the density of the population is low as it is prone to frequent droughts and famines since ancient times. Most of the Telangana region is covered with dry and barren lands and equipped with scant water resources but this region is well developed industrially. The Topography, the climate, and the geographical division base is yielding low rain fall when compared to other states. Agriculture is the main occupation of about 62.00 per cent of the people in Andhra Pradesh. Though the state has the largest deposits of quality minerals, major industries are very less in number and industrial units are not spread widely. Tourism has not been developed to the satisfactory level though it has many attractive tourist places.

The MGNREG Scheme has shown tremendous progress in its implementation in Andhra Pradesh. The Scheme was made as an instrument to spend a lot of public money on providing employment to a large section of the society. It is considered as the best way to provide relief employment on demand and make a transfer of substantial amounts to the rural work force and protecting them from economic insecurity. It will be the best remedy to protect the rural poor
from the continuous famines and droughts continuously occurring in Telangana and Rayala Seema regions. This scheme has been proposing many solutions for many rural problems and the government will be able to tackle many age old problems if it continues the same progress.

By reviewing the Chapter contents, some of the conclusions are arrived at are the following:

- The Scheme is being implemented in 22 districts of the State and is considered as an alternative source for providing employment when the main agricultural activity is not in full swing. The nature of employment is seasonal and the duration of employment sought varies from district to district according to agricultural practices.
- The State government, through its local bodies and the agencies meant for implementing MGNREGS, has issued a sizeable number of job cards to the wage seekers. In the year 2006-07, about 4670227 job cards were issued and the same number has been reached to 12101138 job cards in the year 2011-12. Much addition to the job cards was made in the years 2007-08 and 2008-09.
- The amount expended on the scheme in the initial year was ` 200826 lakhs (2006-07) and went up to ` 540498.26 lakhs (2010-11), at increased level during the study period. About 92.00 per cent of these amounts were expended
on wages to unskilled labour, about 5.00 per cent on contingency and the remaining on material. The increase in total expenditure over the years was three times to the expenditure made in the initial year.

- A high number of job cards were issued in the districts of Nalgonda, Mehaboob Nagar, Kurnool, Anantapur and Warangal in order. The total households provided employment were high in Nalgonda, Warangal, Mehboob Nagar, Karim Nagar, Prakasam, East Godavari and Anantapur districts in order. The number of individuals provided employment were very high in Warangal followed by Nalgonda, Mehboob Nagar, Kurnool, Anantapur, Prakasam, Karim Nagar and Adilabad districts.

- The amount expended on the scheme was very high in Anantapur district followed by Mehaboob Nagar, Vizia Nagaram, Srikakulam, Nizamabad and Adilabad districts. A low amount of expenditure was made in the districts of Guntur, Krishna, Ranga Reddy and Nellore districts in order as these districts were having rich agricultural and industrial resources and a large number of participate in their regular agricultural and industrial activities giving less importance to attending MGNREG activities.

Chapter Six focused on the progress of MGNREGS in drought prone and most backward district of Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh. This district was formed in the year 1882 and at present it has been divided in to three revenue divisions and in size it is ranked third among the districts and accounts for 6.90 per cent of the
total geographical area of Andhra Pradesh. This district has 14 assembly segments and 63 revenue mandals and 2 parliament constituencies. The annual rain fall is only 550 mm which is the lowest among the other districts in the state. Comparatively this district has limited mineral resources and industrial units located are meager. Insufficient irrigation facility is one among the major causative factor for rural unemployment. The rural labour always cripples to find the ways and mean to come out of the precarious conditions and to improve their economic status. In the light of geographical and climatic drawbacks and limitations, this district is continued to be a place of famines and droughts. The cultivation under rain-fed conditions keep the farmers to face many complexities and ultimately makes them to get uneconomical yield. The rural population suffers from many problems like absence of continuous employment, idle labour due to discouraging agricultural activities, absence of large and medium scale industries, and no assured irrigation facilities. The severity of these problems is much higher to this district when compared to other districts in the state. Because of these reasons, the planners are bound to pay their attention on this district whenever they initiate any employment and poverty alleviation programme and execute them. For the first time in Andhra Pradesh the NREGS was introduced in the year 2006 in this district as this district is determined as most backward area in the state as well as the country. Since then the Government of Andhra Pradesh has been executing the works under various programmes. Various Panchyat Raj institutions and implementing agencies have shown progress in implementation of schemes in the
district over the years. To appraise the progress and performance of MGNREGS in Anantapur district, the parameters selected are: number of job cards issued, number of households provided employment, the number of individuals provided employment, total expenditure for the scheme, average days of employment per household, and the number of households completed 100 days employment.

Some of the conclusions drawn from the chapter are the following:

- The number of job cards indicates the volume of employment provided to the needy as the job card is mandatory to all the people who want to participate in the scheme. The number of job cards issued in the initial year was 491016 and the same has been reached to 712638 by the end of the year 2011-12. There has been a continuous increase in the number of job cards issued during the study period. It conveys that more and more labourers were shown interest on participating in the scheme as the years pass on. A highest number of individuals in Madakasira, Gorantla, Kalyandurgam, Mudigubba and Gooty revenue mandals have registered their names through obtaining job cards. Comparatively a less number of individuals in Somande Palle, Hindupur, N.P.Kunta, Pedda Pappur and Nalla Chervu revenue mandals were issued job cards.

- In the beginning year 2006-07 about 226986 households in 63 revenue mandals were provided employment. In the year 2011-12 about 152537 households were brought under the scheme. The much progress was seen
in the year 2007-08 as a highest number of households were provided employment. The households brought under the scheme were very high in Gooty, Vajrakarur, Kalyandurg, and Mudugubba revenue mandals. Comparatively a less number of households in Hindupur, Somande Palli, Pedda pappur, Rolla, and Agali revenue mandals in the district.

The number of individuals provided employment in the year 2006-07 was 360173 and this has been reached to 634991 by the year 2011-12, showing a tremendous improvement in the scheme. A highest number of individuals were shown employment in the years 2009-10 and 2010-11. The number is very high in Gooty, Kalyandurg, Vajrakarur, Mudigubba, and Singanamala revenue mandals. Comparatively a less number of individuals in Hindupur, Tadpatri, Agali, Lepakshi, N.P.Kunta and pedda Pappur revenue mandals were provided employment.

The expenditure made on payment to unskilled labour was ` 8245.41 lakhs and the same was registered as ` 20784.20 lakhs in the year 2010-11 showing a sizeable increase in the amount expended in the district. The MGNREG is more effective in the revenue mandals of Gooty, Kalyandurg, Vajrakarur, Kanagana Palli, and Singanamala as higher amounts were expended in these mandals in different years of study period. Comparatively, the scheme is less effective in the revenue mandals of
Hindupur, Yellanur, Talupula, Pedda Pappur and Tadpatri as the lower amounts were expended in these mandals.

- The expenditure on material and skilled labour in the year 2006-07 was `195.35 lakhs and the same has reached to `9933.59 lakhs in the year 2010-11. The highest amounts on material and skilled labour were expended in C.K.Palle, Kalyanadurg and Anantapur rural revenue mandals. Comparatively, the lesser amounts were expended in Bathala Palli, Brahma Samudram, Rayadurgam, and Talupula revenue mandals.

- The man days (person days) of employment generated under the scheme in the year 2006-07 were registered as 8976207 and they same have reached to 20303163 in the year 2010-11 showing a much progress over the years. In this regard, the volume of employment was high in Gooty, Peddavaduguru, Kanagana Palli, and Bukkaraya Samudram mandals, and the lowest employment levels were registered in Hindupur, Agali, Pedda Pappur, Putlur, and Rolla revenue mandals in the district.

- The number of households completed 100 days of employment was 13773 in the year 2006-07 and the same were reached to 64468 in the year 2010-11. A high number of households fared better in this parameter are in Gooty, Kanagana Palle, Kalyanadurg, and Singanamala revenue mandals. The percentage of households which completed 100 days of employment was below 10.00 per cent in the years 2006-07, 2007-08, and 2008-09, and the
same has rose to 23.00 per cent in the years 2009-10 and 2010-11. This trend conveys that there is a tremendous progress.

Chapter Seven focused on presenting the details of data collected from primary sources for assessing the usefulness and impact of MGNREGS on the economic status of rural unemployed unskilled labour living in drought-prone district of Anantapur. The data has been collected from the selected wage seekers include information on their social, educational, residential and marital status, and information on their employment opportunities, issuance of job cards, status of working conditions provided, identification of activities and their allotment, types of activities performed, type of public assets created, maintenance of muster rolls, work measurements, difficulties in opening accounts in banks and post offices, payment of wages, awareness on wage rates and quantity of work done, gender discrimination in payment of wages, type of corruption practices observed, etc.

Some of the conclusions drawn from the survey data collected by the researcher are the following:

- The sample includes the labourers belonging to Backward Castes, Scheduled Castes and Tribes, and Other Castes represented about 37.40 per cent 32.40 per cent and 9.00 per cent respectively. The proportion of men respondents is relatively much higher than the proportion of women in all social categories. Majority of the respondents possess the primary
education as they represented about 53.60 per cent of the sample and next to it, about 31.00 per cent of the respondents are illiterates. The respondents who possess high school education and college education are meager as they represented about 9.60 per cent and 5.80 per cent of the selected sample. About 68.80 per cent of the respondents are married and unmarried respondents are represented by 21.60 per cent of the sample. About 25.00 per cent of the sample is in the age between 18 and 25 years and 36.60 per cent of the sample are in the age between 26 and 35 years and they together constitute 61.60 per cent of the sample. About 22.805 of the sample are in the age range of 36 and 50 years and the labour who are above 50 years are representing 15.60 per cent of the sample. About 56.00 per cent of the sample is small farmers by status and about 32.80 per cent are agricultural labour and the remaining are rural artisans and erstwhile industrial labour.

- Majority of the respondents have expressed positive opinion on various statements relating to motivational aspects, preference to work, planning and execution of works, impact of the scheme and the increase in income after joining the scheme. They opined that the basic purposes of joining the NREG are absence of agricultural activities and better labour rates. They preferred working for NREG due to better payments and better working conditions. The main motivators for joining the scheme are their Panchayat President and the Village Secretary.
On categorizing the opinion, it is found that the majority have accepted that the Grama Sabha was conducted in their village, all activities are identified and prioritized in the Grama Sabha itself and the same activities were undertaken for employment. They opined that the authorities are showing employment continuously for 100 days in their villages itself.

While getting job cards and opening of accounts in the post offices, majority respondents could not find difficulties. They expressed that they are well aware of work measurements and value of work done. But, the respondents who revealed their displeasure on conduct of Grama Sabha, prioritization of works, provision of instruments/implements for working, and payment of wages below the level of official norms, are in significant number.

The scheme has a positive impact on the socio-economic life of the rural poor. Majority of the respondents expressed that: the scheme has prevented them from migrating to other areas, the extent of migration has been decreased, the incremental earnings are sufficient to meet the basic needs, and they could able to create assets from out of NREG earnings. They could also save the money, find the prosperity in other co-workers, earn more than the other sources, purchased durable farming implements, and find creation of public assets in their villages. They could also find difficulty in staying in their villages in the absence of NREG work at this time.

A large number of respondents were placed in the category of the people with the income range between ` 50000 and ` 60000 after joining the
scheme. Earlier, a large number of people were in the range of ` 20000 and ` 30000.

➢ The researcher could find that there lies the displeasure among the significant number of respondents in: restricting the scheme for 100 days, delay in payment of wages, working measurements, cut in wage payments, technical mistakes in measuring work quantities, mistakes in maintaining the muster rolls, recovery of the outstanding loans from the NREG wage amounts by the bank staff, proxy entries in the muster rolls as some labour are attending on other job cards after completing their stipulated days, and no personal presence of staff throughout work period.

SUGGESTIONS

Rural India has been supported with needful scheme which came to the rescue of millions of rural unskilled labour. The MGNREGS is unique because it has the concepts of distribution of increased income to minimize the inequalities of income and wealth, involving local people in taking decision with regard to creation of public assets, scope for large scale participation, institutional support to the labour, a right-based legal entitlement given to labour force to make a demand for provision of employment, highly synchronized system at different levels, use of natural resources and creation of durable assets, and so on. Though the scheme
was initially confined to ‘below poverty line’ families, almost all the rural households are seeking employment under MGNREGS. In the district where the distress migration was a way of life, wherein, men, women and child labour were migrating by leaving behind the elderly and children in most of the villages in Anantapur district, the MGNREGS has shown some positive impact. It is highly satisfactory that migration was arrested in majority of the villages after implementation of the scheme though acute drought conditions prevailed in the habitations. The researcher found improvement in the economic status of the rural labour force and the positive environment in provision of employment. But the progress is not at ideal level as the government has to move further and make efforts at increased level to achieve the implied objectives of the scheme. There are several government departments, organizations and implementing agencies which are involved in leading the rural unskilled labour towards right direction of providing gainful employment. The Government has to play a key role with more responsibilities to attain the effectiveness in implementation of the scheme. As a result of the present study, it is felt that a further improvement is to be made to address the rural unemployment problem rightly. The researcher ought to give some useful suggestions. The suggestions are as follows:

- The demand for work on MGNREGS tends to be higher in poorer and drought-prone areas. The participation rates on the scheme are higher for poor people than others. Keeping in view these two points, the government
has to implement the scheme relatively a higher number of days in the
drought-prone areas without any ceiling/restrictions on the number of days.
The scheme may be implemented relatively in high number of days in these
areas and where the labour force is idle and is available readily in all
seasons. The number of days may be curtailed in the areas where labour is
engaged in industrial and commercial activities.

The impact of NREGS needs to be reassessed time-to-time and it can’t be
viewed always in just political terms. The long-term consequences for the
agricultural sector must also be taken into consideration. Some farmers’
groups have suggested that the present 150 days employment guarantee
be confined strictly to months when there is no harvesting or sowing activity.
If it is not done, the small and marginal farmers have to face so many
problems relating to the shortage of labour which affect the agricultural
activities. It may lead to decrease in productivity in agriculture because of
labour scarcity and the agricultural activity will be uneconomical and difficult
to continue, and the consequences will be adverse.

The government has to bring all rural development programmes carried
under the NREGS under the auditing ambit of the Comptroller and Auditor
General of India (CAG) as a larger amounts are being spent on the scheme.
There should be an effective mechanism to deal with instances of misuse of
funds at all levels. Performance audits of rural development schemes should
also be carried out in all districts and special auditors to audit the flow of
funds and use of funds and their usefulness. But the auditing activity should not hurt the intended beneficiary.

- The NREGS should be linked with agriculture so that the farmers may find attractiveness in agriculture. If there is a labour scarcity and the rural unskilled labour is mostly participating in MGNREGS only, the farmers can’t carry their activities at low cost level. To encourage the small and medium farmers and keep them free from the labour problems, the government has to extend support by allowing them to complete certain activities from out of NREG funds. The government should extend this facility to all sections of the society who are poor.

- The government should make enforcement to conduct the Gram Sabha compulsorily and make effective participation of all rural households, more importantly women and other marginalized groups, and discussion leading to decision making process. In the Gram Sabha, the activities are to be identified, prioritized and taken up for implementation on realistic manner. This will make the labour force to work effectively, transparently and avoid misunderstanding/communication gap.

- The labour should be involved in developing and creating more public and productive assets which will be supportive to utilization of natural resources of that area/village. If the NREG activities are meant for only providing employment and wage payment purposes, there would be no scope for rural development unless public assets are created at substantial level. If the
NREG activities are supporting the development of the assets of some sections of the people, there will be no scope for getting support from other sections who are also poor and they remain poorer as long as this discrimination is followed.

- The effectiveness and efficiency in the services can be increased by applying Information technology widely at all levels to ensure transparency in exhibiting the transactions, progress of work, future plans, and thereby allowing all knowledgeable labour to know everything about the government plans and programmes in advance.

- The labour force has been suffering from non-availability of implements for carrying the NREG works allotted to them. If the labour was asked to perform the works which are similar to routine activities, they can equip themselves all the implements and complete the works. If they are allotted a different work which requires different implements to perform the allotted works, they have to get them from others on certain conditions. They have to bear the responsibility and liable to replace the implement if they were lost and become unusable. The government has to provide the required implements to the labour force and maintain them with good condition and allow the labour force work with the instruments supplied to them. Not only acquiring the tools/implements and maintain them in good condition, they must be supplied to the labour force. On getting the instruments, the labour
can perform the activities at low cost or at no cost if the government supply the implements to the labour.

- The government should fix wage rates appropriately at reasonable level keeping in view the local agriculture related conditions and the consequences arising from it. Fixing the rates at higher level will certainly hamper the small and marginal farmers and they face problems while procuring the labour for their routine agricultural activities. The government should also make the rural farming community to survive and carry the activities at lower rates or at reasonable wage rates.

- Though there is a compulsion that the middlemen role should not be allowed, there are certain villages where the middlemen are encroaching and dictating terms to the operatives and the participating labour and moulding the opportunities as their right to make money from the scheme sources. Even certain work groups are still not free from the dominant middlemen who can influence the authorities and give problems to labour by stopping the works with the litigations. The authorities are also encouraging such kind of middlemen activity to keep themselves be free from resistance from the dominant middlemen.

- A significant number of labour are also facing problems due to inordinate delay in making wage payment by the authorities concerned as and when the procedural lapses occur and non availability of funds. The local Post Masters in some villages are creating some problems while making the
payments to the labourers. They are either delaying the payment process or not paying full amounts due to the labourer and as well they are collecting certain amount forcibly from the labourers, which has to be curbed immediately.

- The government should formulate a comprehensive legal framework for NREG and make them independent of political policies/agenda for any party which ever comes into power. Adopting changes very frequently in the programme patterns, policies, nomenclatures, etc., would hamper the implementation of NREGS. Whichever comes to the power, that party should carry the programme intact with all spirit in case of NREG Scheme.

- There must be an effective monitoring and grievance handling cell at Mandal Parishad level to supervise the activities and address the complaints made by the labourers. This cell should look into the affairs of various groups, without interfering adversely, and help the labour force in call of any trouble. It must be capable of handling so many illiterate men and women. The cell has to ensure the supply of key planning information to the planners and policy makers.

- Though the NREGA is a milestone legislation that has brought a change in the living standards of millions of rural people, the experts have to bring and make positive reforms/addition to the existing laws and rules time-to-time so that the Act will enable the beneficiaries to take the fruits of the act. While following the reforms agenda, the labourers, non-governmental
organizations and the operatives are to be consulted for good proposals and suggestions.