ABSTRACT

MGNREGA as a fall back employment source is designed to make a significant difference to livelihood security in rural India. This right based wage employment programme aims at enhancing livelihood security by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Based on the review of literature on the subject, to fill the research gap the study attempts to trace the impact of MGNREGA in better performing Andhra Pradesh and low performing Karnataka with inter-district and intra-district comparison. Besides, the study endeavours to test the causal relationship between MGNREGA and changes in income, consumption expenditure pattern and distress migration. A modest attempt has been made to capture the impact of the scheme not only based on certain quantitative parameter using simple statistical tools but also by using qualitative parameters, which many times provide much more insights than what quantitative parameters can do.

The performance of various wage employment programmes and need for MGNREGS was examined in the backdrop of the thesis. Rural poverty, employment and unemployment situation in India, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka was also discussed to understand the deep rootedness of poverty and unemployment. Considering the high rate of rural poverty especially the rate of unemployment in both Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka an effort has been made to examine the physical and financial performance under MGNREGA in both the states and study districts.

The field observation reveals that the principle of “bottom up approach” is very much missing in both Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Further the awareness on the basic provisions and entitlements of the Act among the functionaries is lacking at various stages. The relationship between awareness and participation under MGNREGA was analyzed and found out that even though awareness is the necessary condition, it is not a sufficient condition for higher and effective participation. Based on the primary data the impact of MGNREGA on changes in household income, changes in food consumption, particularly nutritional food intake and impact on distress migration were analysed with the help of appropriate statistical tools. The results show a positive and significant correlation between MGNREGA participation and all these variables. Further as expected the impact of MGNREGA participation on income, consumption and reducing distress migration is high in better performing areas than low performing areas which signifies the importance of MGNREGA. Besides food, the MGNREGA raises the savings level among the households especially in better performing areas. The study also noticed that MGNREGA income has helped increase in spending on private tuition and sending children into private schools and expenditure on health related issues among sample households. Further, the MGNREGA has proved to be reaching the needy and impacting the poor, particularly SCs and STs, landless households and those with members relying primarily on the casual labor market.

The study, observed huge inter-district and intra-district variation in performance under MGNREGA, this is attributed to differential institutional and delivery capacities of the local level bureaucracy and PRIs, mobilization of civil society, administrative preparedness of the state and political will. Therefore, proactive role of functionaries at all levels; involvement of PRIs, conduct of Gram Sabhas and vertical and horizontal coordination across the implementing agencies and capacity building are very much required for effective implementation of the act.