PREFACE

The govt. intervention in labour market as an employer of last resort (ELR) in India has been taking place for many years. Starting with Rural Works Programme in 1961, the govt. has practiced a large number of employment generation programmes, namely the Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE) from 1971-1974, Food for Work Programme (FWP) from 1977-1980, National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) from 1980-1989, Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) from 1983-1989, Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) from 1989-1999 and so on.

The case for using such programmes in improving welfare of the poor rests on three points: first, the labour intensive employment guarantee programme serves as a vehicle for the provision of employment to stabilise fluctuations in employment; second, it is an instrument to transfer employment and income to poor sections of the population and third, it is used as a low cost method of creating rural assets.

Review of the Indian experience of practicing labour intensive public employment programmes introduced prior to 2006 reveals that the rural infrastructure and household welfare, two outcomes of such programmes have improved in the era of development planning in the country. On the other hand, empirical literature provided evidence of failure of such programmes in achieving the objectives of employment and growth mainly due to poor implementation and corruption.

Thus, despite the efforts to enhance livelihood security to the people, the unemployment and poverty are extremely high and are the most burning problems of
the country today. The govt. has now changed its wage employment policy from self-targeting employment programme to universal programme. As a result of movements by the people and organisations for universalising the right to work as incorporated in the Indian Constitution and based on the experience of Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme, the govt. of India passed the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) on 7th September 2005. After introducing the NREGA, India became the first country in the world to ensure legal guarantee of work. The state govt. implements the NREGA as per the provisions laid down in the Act and at the state level with the nomenclature National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). However, 80% of the cost of executing the works under the scheme is borne by the central govt.

The NREGS aims at enhancing livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of wage employment in every year to households whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work under the scheme. The NREGS differs from earlier wage employment programmes as it provides legal guarantee of employment on demand.

The NREGS was implemented in a phased manner with covering 200 poor districts from 6th February 2006 followed by 130 districts in April 2007 and the remaining districts were covered under the scheme from 1st April 2008. Thus, the scheme covers the entire country except Jammu & Kashmir, and districts with 100 percent urban population.
The flagship programme has attracted the attention of researchers, NGOs and institutes since its inception in 2006. As a result within short spun of its functioning, some studies have been conducted on NREGS by Indian and foreign researchers and institutes.

Thus, we find rapidly enlarging literature connected directly with NREGS. However, not a single study has so far been conducted on NREGS in the context of Cachar district which was covered under the scheme in second phase (2007-08). Thus, the present study entitled “An Assessment of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in Cachar district of Assam” intends to bridge the research gap arising in assessment of NREGS of high quality in Cachar district.

The Cachar district is one of the backward regions of India facing poverty, unemployment and lack of infrastructure. At the same time, poor implementation of govt. sponsored schemes in this region is a problem in achieving the objectives of such programmes. The NREGS if implemented properly has the potential to go a long way towards strengthening infrastructure and providing livelihood safety net when employment opportunities are scarce. So, the Cachar district is appropriate for assessing the implementation and impact of NREGS.

The present study investigates into the implementation problems, problems faced by job card holders, level of NREGS awareness and impact of NREGS on household welfare and migration. The study is organised in five chapters. The chapter I deal with introduction including public employment programme-theory with reference to
NREGS, the relevance of the study, the objectives, and hypotheses, profile of the study area and methodology of the study. The chapter II is devoted to review of literature. The review of literature has been done in three sections-first, we reviewed the studies directly conducted on NREGS; the second section reviews studies conducted on other employment generation programmes introduced in India prior to NREGS and the third and final section of this chapter reviews studies conducted on other employment generation programmes at the international level. The chapter III deals with analysis of the objectives and hypotheses formulated in this study based on the primary data and secondary data. Tabular analysis and econometric models like multiple regression and logit regression have been used in testing the hypotheses. The regression models have been estimated using the advanced statistical packages like SPSS 17 and STATA 11. The chapter IV presents an analysis of administrative efficiency in implementing the NREGS in Cachar district. The fifth and final chapter is devoted to conclusions and suggestions.

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Place...Silchar............

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