CHAPTER 2
METHODOLOGY, AREA OF STUDY AND KEY CONCEPTS

Introduction

The study area is Thiruvananthapuram District. The study is based on the data collected from various blocks in Thiruvananthapuram District. The data is collected through direct interview method. 500 respondents from various parts of the study area are interviewed for collection of data adequate for the study. A detailed questionnaire was prepared prior to the data collection to facilitate systematic data collection. The questionnaire was prepared on the light of the pilot study conducted in Chani ward and Lourdepuram ward of KanjiramKulam Grama Panchayath in Athiyannur Block, Thiruvananthapuram District. The pilot study was conducted among 100 beneficiaries of MGNREGA.

Thiruvananthapuram District had 13 block panchayaths being benefited by MGNREGA. The employment generated during the financial year 2010-2011 was considered for the selection of the blocks where the primary investigation has to be conducted. Of the 13 blocks, Perumkadavila block generated the maximum employment for the financial year 2010-2011. The block had generated 843472 person days of work. So Perumkadavila block was selected as one of the blocks for primary data collection. There are 8 Panchayats in Perumkadavila block namely, Amboori, Aryankode, Kallikkad, Kunnathukal, Ottasekharamangalam, Perumkadavila and Vellarda. The Trivandrum Rural block was identified as the block with the least number of person days generated during the financial year 2010-2011. There are two panchayaths, Kudappanakunnu and Vattiyoorkavu in Trivandrum Rural block. Just 46550 person days of work was generated during the financial year, 2010-2011. As the data collection started Trivandrum Rural block was excluded from MGNREGA
and MGNREGA was no more implemented in this region because the block was attached to Trivandrum city corporation. Since the scheme was not available in this block, the block with second lowest number of person days generated was considered for data collection. This block was Kazhakuttom block. Kazhakuttom block was also included in the city limits. Pothencode was selected for the study as this block happens to be the third lowest person days of employment generated.

**Methodology**

To arrive at a proper mapping of NREGA, qualitative and quantitative tools have been used. Though the assessment is more quantitative as far as the nature of information gathering is concerned. The study primarily employs field-work questionnaire based data collection. The target group of this study are workers on NREGA works. As a prelude to the study, a rigorous demographic profiling of the Districts, Block and Gram Panchayat has been done. The second methodological stress of this study has been on administering the questionnaire as a tool to assess the impact of MGNREGA in each specific area. A random sampling was done in order to select beneficiaries from different worksites’ muster rolls. The primary data was collected from 500 beneficiaries of the MGNREGA from Thiruvananthapuram District. The number of beneficiaries that need to be interviewed in each block and each panchayath is decided based on the following formula,

*No of respondents from max block = No of days of work generated in the maximum block ÷ No of days of work generated in max and the min block × 500.*

*No of respondents from min block = No of days of work generated in the min block ÷ No of days of work generated in max and the min block × 500.*

*Block with maximum no of days of work generated*

**Block with minimum no of days of work generated**
No of respondents from each panchayath in the each block = No of work days generated in each panchayath ÷ Total No of work days generated in each block × No of respondents from respective block.

As per the above formula, 472.5 persons have to be interviewed in Perumkadavilla block and 27.5 persons have to be interviewed from Trivandrum Rural block. Since the Trivandrum Rural block was excluded from MGNREGA, 27.5 persons had to be interviewed from Pothencode block. The numbers of respondents were rounded of to 472 respondents from Perumkadavilla block and 28 respondents from Pothencode block.

Though the assessment adopts both qualitative and quantitative methods, a questionnaire based field work has been extensively followed. The design and contents of the questionnaire was also discussed with various experts, researchers and concerned officials. This was important to understand and adapt with the local dynamics. Questionnaire was prepared prior to the data collection. As the questionnaire was prepared, due importance was given to all the objectives of the study. Feedback on MGNREGA was gathered with adequate stress given to aspects such as transparency in implementation, accountability of MGNREGA, social upliftment, financial empowerment, benefits gained by women, etc. Data regarding the benefits that the society gained due to MGNREGA was also collected. The study tries to unearth the real magnitude of the social transformation that has taken place in the Thiruvananthapuram District due to the implementation of the NREGA schemes.

Direct interview method was adopted for data collection. Each and every beneficiary from the selected panchayaths was personally interviewed. The information provided by the beneficiaries were entered in the questionnaire prepared prior to data collection. Work sites where the beneficiary was currently involved was
also visited and correctness of the data provided was ensured. People living the
neighbourhood was also contacted in order to ensure that the data provided by the
beneficiary regarding the benefits to the society was correct. On the basis of the
information provided by the beneficiaries, sites where MGNREGA work had taken
place before was also inspected.

Secondary data was collected from various sources such as journals,
government publications, news papers, websites, etc. The main source of online data
was http://nrega.nic.in. Journals such as Kurukshetra and Yojan also provided ample
of secondary data. The investigator made use of secondary data in order to understand
literature review with respect to the topic he has chosen for the research study.
Through this secondary data he could scrutinize and extract that information from this
data which was significant for the research study. From these published works, the
researcher was able to theoretically understand the research study he is engaged with,
and he could was able to draw on the concepts which were relevant for his study.

All the informations collected were entered into excel sheets. The SPSS
software was used to analyse the data collected.

Research Tools Used

The following research tools were used for the study:

1. One to one interaction with beneficiaries
2. One to one interaction with government officials
3. Focused group discussions with beneficiaries
4. Focused group discussions with community groups
5. In depth interviews of government officials at various levels
Research Sequence

The following sequence was followed in the study:

1. Desk review of MGNREGA- Thiruvananthapuram
2. Understanding the implementation process
3. Scoping visit and discussions with the MGNREGA officials
4. Development of work plans and study tools and the questionnaires
5. Sample selection
6. Data collection
7. Data compilation and analysis
8. Draft report writing
9. Final report submission

Limitations of the study:

This study has all the inherent limitations of a sample survey.

About the study area, Thiruvananthapuram

Thiruvananthapuram District is the southernmost district of the Indian state of Kerala. The headquarters is in the city of Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum) which is also the capital city of Kerala.

The district has an area of 2192 km², and a population of 3,307,284 (as per the 2011 census), the second largest in Kerala. It is divided into four taluks: Thiruvananthapuram, Chirayinkil, Nedumangad, and Neyyattinkara. The urban bodies in the district are the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, Attingal, Neyyattinkara, Varkala and Nedumangad municipalities.

Thiruvananthapuram district has a total of 12 blocks namely Athiyannur, Chirayinkeezh, Kazhakuttom, Kilimanoor, Nedumangad, Nemom, Parassala, Perumkadavila, Trivandrum Rural, Vamanapuram. Varkala and Vellanad.
Thiruvananthapuram city and several other places in the district loom large in ancient tradition, folklore and literature. South Kerala, particularly the Thiruvananthapuram district, had in the early past a political and cultural history which was in some respect independent of that of the rest of Kerala. The Ays were the leading political power till the beginning of the 10th century A.D. The disappearance of the Ays as a major political power, synchronised with the emergence of the rulers of Venad.

In 1684, during the regency of Umayamma Rani, the English East India Company obtained a sandy spit of land at Anchuthengu (Anjengo) on the sea coast about 32 kms north of Thiruvananthapuram city, with a view to erecting a factory and fortifying it. The place had earlier been frequented by the Portuguese and later by the Dutch. It was from here that the English gradually extended their domain to other parts of Thiruvithamcore (Travancore).

Modern history begins with Marthanda Varma, who is generally regarded as the Father of modern Travancore (1729-1758 AD). Thiruvananthapuram was known as a great centre of intellectual and artistic activities in those days. The accession of Maharaja Swathi Thirunal (1829-1847 AD) ushered in an epoch of cultural progress and economic prosperity.

The beginning of English education was made in 1834 by opening an English school at Thiruvananthapuram. In 1836, an observatory and a charity hospital were established at Thiruvananthapuram. During the reign of Ayilyam Thirunal (1860-1880), a fully equipped Arts College was started besides the several English, Malayalam and Tamil schools. A large hospital with a lying-in-hospital and a lunatic asylum was also established. In 1873, the University College was opened. It was during the reign of Sri Moolam Thirunal (1885-1924), that the Sanskrit College,
Ayurveda College, Law College and a second grade College for Women were started at Thiruvananthapuram. A department for the preservation and publication of oriental manuscripts was also established. One of the significant measures associated with Shri Moolam Thirunal’s reign was the inauguration of the Legislative Council in 1888. This was the first legislative chamber, instituted in an Indian State.

In 1904, the Shri Moolam Assembly came into being. The activities of the Indian National Congress echoed in Thiruvananthapuram and other parts of Kerala during the reign of Shri Moolam Thirunal. In 1938, a political conference of the Congress was held in the city under the presidency of Dr. Pattabi Sitraramaiah.

The period of Maharaja Shri Chithira Thirunal Bala Rama Varma who took the reins of administration in 1931, witnessed many-sided progress. The promulgation of the Temple Entry Proclamation (1936) was an act that underlined social emancipation. In 1937, a separate University for Travancore was started. This was later redesigned as University of Kerala, following the formation of Kerala State in 1956.

With the accession of Travancore to the Indian Union after Independence, the policy of the State Government as well as the political atmosphere underwent radical changes. The first popular ministry headed by Sri.Pattom A.Thanu Pillai was installed in office on 24th March, 1948. Consequent on the recommendations of the State Reorganisation Commission, the four southern taluks of Thovala, Agasheeswaram, Kalkulam and Vilavancode were merged with Tamil Nadu. The State of Kerala came into being on November 1, 1956.

**Physiography**

Thiruvananthapuram, the southern most district of Kerala State is situated between north latitudes 8° 17’ and 8° 54’ and east longitudes 76° 41’ and 77°17’. The
southern most extremity, Parasala, is only 56 kms away from Kanyakumari, the "land’s end of India". The district stretches along the shores of the Arabian Sea for a distance of 78 kms. Kollam district is on the north and Thirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts of Tamil Nadu are on the east and the south respectively.

The district can be divided into three geographical regions-highlands, midlands and lowlands. Chirayinkeezhu and Thiruvananthapuram taluks lie in midland and low land regions, while Nedumangad taluk lies in midland and highland regions and Neyyattinkara taluk stretch over all the three regions. The highland region comprises mainly of mountains. Bounded on the east and northeast by the mountain ranges of the Western Ghats, this area is ideal for major cash crop plantations like rubber, tea, cardamom and other spices. Timber trees like teak, rose wood, etc. are grown in this region. The midland region, lying between the Western Ghats and the lowlands, is made up of small and tiny hills and valleys. This is an area of intense agricultural activity. This region is rich in produces like paddy, tapioca, spices and cashew. The low land is comparatively narrow and comprises of rivers, deltas and seashore and is densely covered with coconut palms. The Ghats maintain an average elevation of 814 meters rising to peaks of 1219 to 1829 meters in certain places. The Agastyarkoodam, the southern most peak in the Ghats, is 1869 meters above sea level and figures in the popular mythology connected with Agastyamuni, the sage. Mukkunnimala near Thiruvananthapuram (1074 meters) is an important health resort in the district.

**Climate**

The large forest reserves favourably affect the climate and induce more rain in the district. In the mountain ranges, chilling cold is experienced, whereas lower down the climate is bracing and in the plains, it is generally hot. Though the mean
maximum temperature is only around 90 F, it is oppressive in the moisture-laden atmosphere of the plains. Humidity is high and rises to about 90 per cent during the southwest monsoon. The average rainfall is around 150 cms per annum. It is significant that the district gets rainfall both from the southwest and the northeast monsoons. The southwest monsoon starts by the end of May or from the beginning of June and fades out by September, while the northeast monsoon commences in October. Dry weather sets in by the end of December. December, January and February are the coolest months of the year. March, April and May are generally very hot. During the months of April and May, the mean daily maximum temperature rises upto 35 degree Celsius and in the days of December-January, it may go down to 20 degree Celsius.

**Flora and Fauna**

Thiruvananthapuram district is noted for its unique variety of flora and fauna. The district has a rich variety of plants ranging from rare orchids, medicinal plants and spices to hedge plants, tubers, plants yielding edible fruits and fibre yielding plants. Aromatic plants and spices such as pepper and ginger are cultivated on a large scale on the hilly tracts. The Nedumangadu taluk of the district is one of the biggest centres of cultivation and trade of pepper and other hill products. A major portion of the district comes under the middle plain and the region is under the cultivation of coconut, paddy, tapioca, tuber crops, plantains and vegetables crops. The forests of the district abound in a variety of animals and birds and its adjacent areas are conducive to the growth of wild life. Elephants, bison, monkeys and rare species of reptiles have the place of distinction in them. The Neyyar reservoir and nearby areas abound in wild life. Nestled in the lap of Western Ghats, a wild life sanctuary is fastly growing over an area of nearly 777 sq. kms. around this reservoir. It preserves the
scenic beauty of the area and provides a healthy holiday resort to the tourists. The
forest under the Kulathupuzha range is the habitat of rare species of snakes and
lizards. Mammals are well represented in the district. Nilgiri Langur (Kasi fohnii) the
lion tailed Macaque (Macaca silenus), the Nilgiri brown mongoose (Herpestes fuscus)
and the Malabar civet (Moschothere civettina) are characteristic to this region. The
monkeys include macaques and langurs. Carnivores include tiger, jungle cat, toddy
cat and leopard, though the tiger population has become considerably scarce. Jackal,
wild dog, sloth bear, gaur (Kattupothu), a few species of deer, elephants etc. are also
seen. The reptiles include the lizards, snakes, crocodiles and tortoises. There are about
75-80 species of snakes in this area. Some of them are very poisonous.

Socio-Economic Conditions

More than 50 per cent of the total population depends on agriculture for their
livelihood. Agricultural labourers constitute 42 per cent of the total labour class.
Large scale industries are not established in the district. Most of the people are
engaged in low remunerative pursuits which require very little capital. Political and
social consciousness, coupled with the efforts of the social, religious and cultural
leaders, have helped considerably pull down the age-old feudal order. Economic
changes have also affected the social life and attitude of the people.

Administration

The headquarters of the district administration is at Vanchiyoor, Thiruvananthapuram, just 1.5 kms away from the Government Secretariat and the Central Railway Station. The district administration is headed by the District Collector. He is assisted by six Deputy Collectors holding charges of general matters, land acquisition, revenue recovery, land reforms, housing and election. The District Collector also holds the charge of the District Magistrate and is assisted by the
Additional District Magistrate (Deputy Collector, General) and the Revenue Divisional Officer. The district has only one revenue division, Thiruvananthapuram, headed by the Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO) and the office is located at East Fort, Thiruvananthapuram. He is also the Sub-divisional Magistrate. There are four taluks, namely, Neyyattinkara, Thiruvananthapuram, Nedumangad and Chirayinkeezhu (H.Q. at Attingal), each headed by a Tahsildar.

District Panchayath

As per the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution of India, the new Panchayat Raj-Nagarapalika Act came into force. In pursuance of related legislation in the State Legislative Assembly, the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act came into effect on 23rd April, 1994. The State Election Commission held elections to grama panchayats, block panchayats, district panchayats, municipalities and corporations in September, 1995. The elected representatives took over charge on the Gandhi Jayanthi day of 1995. Thiruvananthapuram district includes 84 grama panchayats, 12 block panchayats, one district panchayat, four municipalities and one corporation.

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Agriculture has been the primary occupation of the people of the district. More than 42 per cent of the total population depend on agriculture. Cultivable land may be classified as wet, dry, garden and plantations. Paddy is the most important crop.
cultivated in the wet lands. Tapioca and pulses are the important dry land crops. Coconut, one of the most important crops of the district, is cultivated in an area of 843.08 km² and the annual production is about 516 million nuts. Rubber cultivation is mainly confined to Nedumangad taluk. At present, there are about 269.99 km² of rubber plantations and the annual production is estimated at 30,717 tonnes. Newly introduced agricultural development schemes have opened new vistas in this field. Fresh schemes are introduced in every panchayat with a view to maximize yield per unit area by exploiting the production potential of paddy and vegetables. Cashew is grown in 21.84 km² of land and the production is about 1745 tonnes. Pepper cultivation covers an area of 50.9 km² and the yield is about 1824 tonnes. Soil conservation projects are being implemented with subsidy and loans.

**Industry**

In Thiruvananthapuram district there are 2 Central sector, 14 state sector, 1 co-operative sector, 4 joint sector and 60 private sector medium and large scale industries. The Kerala state Industrial Development Corporation (KSIDC) units employ 9262 people with an investment of Rs.34,394 lakhs (as on 31.03.2003). In 2002 there were 901 registered working factories. They include oil mills, cashew factories, cotton textiles, saw mills, printing units, rubber industrial units, chemical units, match factories, general engineering units and automobile workshops. The S.M.S.M. Institute in Thiruvananthapuram is a major institution through which the products of the handicraft industries are marketed. As of 31 March 2003, there were 28,918 small scale industrial units employing 115,597 people in the district. In agro based industries, 4544 people work, 3080 work in forest based, 980 in animal husbandry based, 5057 in pesticide based, 1282 in chemicals based, 4708 in engineering based, 3075 in manufacturing and building materials section and 6192 in
other industries. Of these SSI units, 1323 are Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe units and 6065 are women units. There is an industrial estate at Pappanamcode and an industrial development centre at Kochuveli. Traditional industries such as coir and handloom are now faced with several problems. The main varieties of coir produced are Anchuthengu and Muppiri. Handloom weaving is prevalent at Balaramaparam, Amaravila, Kulathur and Chirayinkeezhu. It is estimated that clothes worth Rs.95,000,000 are annually produced in the handloom sector. There are 20 Hantex (Handloom Weavers’ Co-operative Society) depots and five showrooms in the district. Keltron (Kerala state Electronics Development Corporation) has made inroads into electronic markets throughout the country. The opening of many private Television channels in the state, made Thiruvananthapuram the home of several studios and related industries.

Thiruvananthapuram was rated as the best 2nd tier metro with IT/ITES infrastructure, and second in terms of availability of human talent. The district contributes 80 per cent of software exports from the state.

**Key concepts**

**Poverty and inequality: Measurement and meaning**

Poverty can be measured in a number of ways, each with its advantages and limitations. Most often measurements are based on monetary income or consumption. The often cited international poverty lines of US$1 or 2 a day are examples of this approach with US$1 a day considered “extreme poverty” and US$1–2 a day considered “severe-to-moderate”. In effect, these are measures of absolute poverty.

By these measures, approximately one sixth of the world’s population is living in conditions of severe poverty at less than US$1 a day and roughly half are living on less than US$ 2 a day. International poverty lines allow for comparisons among
countries and over time, but may be too high or low to be relevant or most appropriate in a particular country. In contrast, relative poverty is context specific and is defined in relation to the standards that exist in a given society and with reference to people in society who are not poor. This identifies poverty with disadvantage and so with inequality.

Inequality is usually measured by the Gini coefficient which reveals the inequality existing in a data distribution of personal (or household) income or consumption. It is defined as a ratio with values between 0 and 1. A value of 0 corresponds to perfect equality (i.e. everyone has the same income) and 1 corresponds to perfect inequality (i.e. one person has all the income).

People experience poverty in many ways, not just in terms of income. Thus, poverty is a multidimensional concept. The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite measure based on three key indicators of poverty: life expectancy, educational attainment and income. The HDI provides a more integrated, holistic measure of poverty than the poverty lines but cannot be computed for persons or families, only for territories.

The satisfaction of basic needs is another way in which the multidimensional nature of poverty is often addressed. Composite indexes of satisfaction of basic needs are composed by assigning scores to the meeting of recognized basic needs related to housing (and housing quality), access to health and education, employment and income, etc. These types of indexes, usually computed in ad hoc ways according to the availability of data, can be applied to individuals or households as well as to territories.

The Copenhagen Declaration saw poverty as having “various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable
livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion”.

Others may argue that not only is poverty multidimensional but that it cannot be measured by income or even by utility as conventionally understood: what matters is not the things a person has or the feelings these provide but what a person is or can be and does or can do, i.e. his or her capabilities.

Rural

At the international level, there is no standard definition of “rural” which would be applicable to all countries, but the size of the locality, or the smallest civil division in a country is most typical. Thus, urban areas are often defined as localities with a population of 2,000 or more inhabitants, and rural areas as localities with a population of less than 2,000 inhabitants and sparsely populated areas. For countries where density of settlement is not sufficient to distinguish urban and rural areas, international recommendations propose the use of additional criteria: the per cent of the economically active population employed in agriculture, the general availability of electricity and/or piped water in living quarters, and the ease of access to medical care, schools and recreation facilities, for example. In reality, urban and rural areas form a continuum and are inextricably linked.\(^2\)

Job card

A Job Card is the basic legal document, which enables the registered household to demand guaranteed employment. The Job Card should be issued within 15 days of application and is valid for five years. The household Job Card will have the name and photograph of each registered member. The Job Card and photograph
are free for the applicant. Job Card is a key document that records workers’ entitlements under MGNREGA. It legally empowers the registered households to apply for work, ensures transparency and protects workers against fraud.³

**Muster Rolls**

Muster Rolls are attendance sheets used for MGNREGA works. MRs are normally issued by the Block to the Gram Panchayat and each of them are stamped with a unique identification number. Wage payments to beneficiaries are calculated on the basis of attendance and measurements listed on Muster Rolls (MR). MRs are supposed to be available at worksites and updated every day.⁴

**Unemployment Allowance**

If an applicant for employment under the Scheme is not provided employment within 15 days of receipt of his application or from the date on which the employment has been sought, he/she is entitled to a daily unemployment allowance.⁵

**Social Audit**

A social audit is a process by which the people, the final beneficiaries of any scheme, programme, policy or law, are empowered to audit such schemes, programmes, policies and laws. A social audit is an ongoing process by which the potential beneficiaries and other stakeholders of an activity or project are involved from the planning to the monitoring and evaluation of that activity or project. It thereby tries to ensure that the activity or project is designed and implemented in a manner that is most suited for the prevailing (local) conditions, appropriately reflects the priorities and preferences of those affected by it, and most effectively serves public interest. To put it in a simpler way, social audit can be described as checking and verification of a programme/scheme implementation and its results by the community with the active involvement of the primary stakeholders. Social audit
covers the quantity and quality of works in relation to the expenses incurred/
disbursement made, number of works/materials used and also selection of works and
location of works. The aim is effective implementation and control of irregularities.6

**Distinguishing features of rural labour markets**

Labour markets can be said to function well if they achieve two primary
objectives concerning efficiency and fairness. In an efficient labour market, all
workers willing to work at the going wage rates are likely to quickly find suitable jobs
that match their skills, education and experience. Fairness is most typically measured
in terms of whether a worker is paid according to the value of his or her work. A well-
functioning labour market is also characterized by adequate protection of workers
against the risk of income loss by enabling workers to quickly find a new job or
through the provision of suitable social protection. According to all these criteria,
rural labour markets tend to function poorly.

In fact, the term “labour market” suggests a unity that is absent in practice.
Rather, there are multiple markets for labour, demarcated by industry, crop,
occupation or geographical area. Rural economies are generally mixed, with the rural
farming and non-farming populations earning their living from interdependent
agricultural and non-agricultural activities and with employers competing with each
other for available labour supply, especially during peak periods of the farming
season.

Strong economic, social and political power imbalances between employers
and workers tend to be more prevalent in rural society than in urban areas and can
undermine the fair and effective functioning of rural labour markets. Often employers
own and control not only agricultural land, but also other assets needed by workers,
such as housing, access to water, access to forest resources, animals, convenience
stores, credit, and, in some cases, schools and health-care facilities. Complex interlocking relationships that can involve wages, barter and other types of exchanges between employers and workers can reinforce workers’ dependence. For instance, when workers can only obtain loans from their employer or can only hire oxen from the landlord they work for, negotiations on wage rates may be tied to outcomes in those other areas as well. Bonded or forced labour exchange often originates in the interlocking of the labour and credit markets whereby the labourer, who is in debt to the employer, has the obligation of working for the employer until the debt has been repaid. Such types of labour exchange constitute a denial of basic human rights.

Labour organization tends to be weak in rural areas, where traditional, even feudal labour relations persist, where rural workers enjoy lesser legal rights than other workers as well as in areas where seasonal and casual employment on small farms predominates. Labour organization is much stronger when farms are large, employment is more permanent, and labour relations more formalized, as in plantations.

Serious barriers to employment associated with factors such as gender, ethnicity, or caste can severely restrict labour mobility. Such discrimination contributes to labour market dysfunction. Improving the functioning of rural labour markets is essential to the success of policies intended to promote pro-poor growth. Labour is often the only asset of the poor, and it is through the labour market that the poor participate in economic activity.

Rural labour markets are largely markets for unskilled labour where supply comes from workers with little formal education or training. The prevalence of casual labour and child labour contributes to low productivity, low wages and weak bargaining capacity. Where small family farms predominate, much of the supply of
labour is from small farmers and their families who need to supplement the income obtained from their own holdings by hiring out their labour. The supply of labour is largely determined by how they value the returns to labour on their own farms compared to the wages they could earn by working for others. Where labour is abundant and population pressure on land is high, there is often involuntary unemployment, with workers being unable to find employment at the going wage rate. The prevalence of child labour in agriculture perpetuates a cycle where household income for both farmers and waged workers is insufficient to meet their economic needs.

Agriculture is subject to risks of weather and price volatility that tend to reduce the overall demand for labour and to influence the contractual arrangements under which farm production is carried out. Major oscillations in labour demand and labour productivity throughout the agricultural cycle result in seasonal employment patterns, seasonal migration, intra-year wage variations, widespread underemployment and the dominance of casual over permanent employment. Waged agricultural workers typically find employment for only half the year and have little income to sustain them between seasons. The employment relationships in rural labour markets are often complex and difficult to regulate, especially where much labour is supplied through labour contractors, subcontractors and gang masters.7

**Workers’ Entitlements**

All workers are entitled to the statutory minimum wage. Men and women should be paid equally. Wages should be paid within a week, or fifteen days at most. Wages should be paid in public. When wages are paid, muster rolls should be read out and Job Card entries should be made. Sign the muster roll after receiving your wages and checking the entries. Never sign a blank muster roll. If you live more than 5 km
away from the worksite, you are entitled to a travel and subsistence allowance (10 per cent of the minimum wage). Muster rolls should be available and maintained at the worksite. You are entitled to check the muster roll at any time. Shade, drinking water and first-aid should be available at every worksite. If more than five children under the age of six years are present, child care facilities should also be provided at the worksite.
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