Chapter- VII

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

MGNREGS came at a time of an increasing rural-urban divide, persistently high levels of extreme poverty, unemployment and a degraded natural resources base. It attempts to address these issues by providing a ‘revolutionary framework’. The MGNREGS is transparent and it is implemented principally at the grass root level. The scheme makes use of information technology to a great extent and is endowed with significant human and financial resources to tackle the aforementioned problems. Coming on the heels of a re-thinking in rural developmental context, the sustainable development aspect in the Act is written tall and natural resources management stands at the core of the Act. While still the subject of criticism from certain quarters, overall, a broad consensus exists today among policy makers, the political class, civil society groups and academicians, as to the necessity of a new, comprehensive public sponsored rural development programme. If implemented properly, the MGNREGS can bring about transformations on the social, economic and political arena of the rural community. It would protect rural households from poverty and household vulnerability. The availability of employment at the local area would also lead to a reduction of migration. It ensures gender equality and social justice by offering jobs to all adults, irrespective of their caste, creed and economic status. The Act calls for large levels of social mobilisation within a short duration, high participation rate of women, the achievement of economic independence and economic sufficiency to secure household economy at a high level. It also demands adequate and sustainable access to income and other resources to enable households to meet basic needs. This includes adequate access to food, potable water, health facilities, educational opportunities, housing and time for community participation and social integration.

The study, ‘Livelihood Enhancement of Rural Households through MGNREGS in Kerala’ which was carried out in two districts of Kerala has focussed on the livelihood enhancement of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) beneficiaries households and on assessing the
effectiveness of the MGNREGS in Kerala. In Kerala the scheme has been implemented in three phases. Palakkad and Wayanad districts were singled out for the first phase of implementation. In the second phase of implementation, Idukki and Kasarkode districts were selected and in the last phase the rest of the districts were considered. The study projected the effectiveness of wage employment programme on social and economic structure of rural society, and it also emphasised rural livelihood problems and their magnitude. The study discussed the history of evolution of wage employment programmes in society and has also mentioned the ideological background. It explored the role of wage employment programmes, particularly that of MGNREGS in livelihood enhancement of rural people. The study is an important one, as it sheds light on the aspect of the effectiveness of livelihood enhancement programmes on rural development.

7.1. Objectives

For assessing the effectiveness of MGNREGS on rural livelihood enhancement, certain aspects need to be analysed and these aspects form the objectives of the study. They are the following

- To study the operational structure and functions of MGNREGS in Kerala.
- To assess the socio-economic characteristics of MGNREGS beneficiaries.
- To assess the livelihood enhancement of rural communities through MGNREGS programmes.
- To relate the livelihood enhancement due to MGNREGS with socio-economic characteristics.
- To identify the constraints in programme implementation of MGNREGS.

7.2. Hypotheses

- The MGNREGS covers the intended target population effectively.
- The MGNREGS will enhance the livelihood security of the beneficiaries.
- Livelihood enhancement through MGNREGS and socio-economic characteristics are related.
- Constraints, if any, in the process of operation will hinder the effectiveness of MGNREGS.
7.3. Methodology

7.3.1. Location and sample for study

The study was carried out in two districts of Kerala- Palakkad and Wayanad. Three Panchayats were selected from each district. The selected Panchayats, were Chitoor, Polpulli and Agali from Palakkad district and Menangadi, Muttil and Pozhuthana from Wayanad district. Fifty rural households from each of the six Panchayats, thus a total number of 300 rural households were selected randomly from the list of MGNREGS beneficiaries. The selection was made on the basis of stratified random sampling procedure.

7.3.2. Research design

The research design, employed here, is ‘ex-post facto’ design. The design enables the researcher to discern the retrospective effect of a process on an event. Hence this design was used to measure the difference between the rural household livelihoods before and after the implementation of MGNREGS.

7.3.3. Variables studied

Socio-economic characters of beneficiaries relevant to this study were measured with the help of allotment of scores based on earlier studies. A measurement tool to quantify livelihood was developed using livelihood components such as Physical, Economic, Social, Human and Natural capitals, weightages were fixed using judges rating For quantifying major components (Physical, Economic, Social, Human and Natural capitals) items relevant to each component were included and score were allotted to the items. The livelihood score of individuals were found out by adding the scores obtained in each of the capital considered for the measurement.

7.3.4. Theoretical framework

The study was based on the model of Systems Theory which describes and explains the dynamic interrelationships of the system's components, which mutually and continually influence each other. A theoretical frame work of study was
developed based on the objectives of the study. The researcher identified indicators of household vulnerabilities (before the implementation of MGNREGS) and livelihood enhancement (after the implementation of MGNREGS). The components of the system identified five different livelihood assets on which the household create their livelihood. The framework envisages livelihood enhancement through MGNREGS and it can be evident in additional employment more income, more participation, etc. The constraints of MGNREGS if any affect the socio-economic status of the beneficiaries.

7.3.5. SWOT analysis

In order to evaluate MGNREGS, SWOT analysis was done. Through this the Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat factors were identified. For SWOT analysis, a group of 126 key informers were selected. A five point Likert Scale was employed for SWOT analysis.

With the help of SPSS programme 16 version the data were analysed. The statistical tools used were ANOVA, t-test and correlation and simple percentage.

7.4. Findings of study

The salient findings of the study are summarised and presented here.

7.4.1. Profile of the districts

The profile of the studied districts showed that agriculture and related activities are the main economic sources of households. In these districts the dependency of the people on its rich natural resources is visible and the livelihood security hence depends on the protection of the natural resources. Though social and demographic progress is better in these districts, the economic situation is not promising. The incidence of poverty and low work participation in these districts coupled with the ever shrinking agricultural sector necessitates planned intervention like implementation of MGNREGS in these districts. Total population of Palakkad district (2810892) is higher as compared to that of Wayanad district. The sex ratio in Wayanad district is 1067 female per 1000 male and in Palakkad it is 1035 for 1000 male people. Literacy rate is very high in Kerala (93.91 percent) compared to the
other states in India, in Palakkad it is 88.49 per cent and in Wayanad it is 89.32 per cent.

7.4.2. Socio-economic profile of the respondents

The study analysed the socio-economic profile of the respondents and their households. Basic information, it revealed that the beneficiaries of MGNREGS were from different sections of the society. The vast majority of the respondents were marginalized people like SCs, STs and other backward communities (91 per cent) and only 9 percent of them were general categories. The different religious groups participated in MGNREGS works, majority of them were Hindus (79.3 per cent).

7.4.2.1. Sources of livelihood

Among the studied households, main sources of livelihood were agriculture and agriculture labour (40.3 per cent) and MGNREGS was the main source of livelihood in 28 percent households. It was very high in the case of Wayanad district. To a large number of people, MGNREGS was a secondary occupation. More than three fourths of the households have chosen it as secondary occupation in Palakkad and Wayanad districts. Majority of the sample households’ annual income was less than Rs. 15,000/-, 74 per cent of the total respondents’ annual income was between Rs. 10000/- and Rs. 15000/-. The incidence of indebtedness was identified. 64.3 per cent bore debt burden. Some people had small saving in SHGs, post office or Bank accounts. This financial inclusion method enhanced people’s economic conditions.

7.4.2.2. Infrastructural facilities

The status of infrastructural facilities in the studied villages was average; most of them owned houses. Terraced or concrete houses were fewer in studied area. 82.7 per cent of them had electricity connection, 73 per cent of them had drinking water facilities and 89.7 per cent of them were reported to have adequate sanitation facilities. The incidence of migration was very low, in Palakkad district. 19.3 per cent of respondents were reported to have migrated for better employment and income. The main reasons for migration were lack of employment opportunities and low wage rate in the rural areas. Health status was average, hospital facilities were available in the majority of the sample panchayats and the respondents had medical insurance.
7.4.2.3. Land holdings

Around two third of the households possessed less than 50 cent of land, only 14.7 percent of people owned larger size of land. Some of the rural households had some kind of livestock, 12.3 per cent of households had cattle and 64.3 per cent of them had poultry etc. To sum up, the households belonged to poor or moderate socio-economic background.

7.4.3. Impact of MGNREGS

In backward districts like Palakkad and Wayanad, the wage employment programmes such as MGNREGS could bring about significant changes in different spheres of life like social, economic, cultural, etc. The influence of MGNREGS on rural household livelihood is reflected in many ways.

7.4.3.1. Transformation of household livelihood

MGNREGS could impact significant transformation in the field of household livelihood. Before the implementation of MGNREGS, 86 percent of the respondents belonged to the lower group and only 14 per cent belonged to higher group. These respondents opined that the situation has undergone a sea change after the implementation of the MGNREGS programme. As the result of transformation the number of rural households belonging to the higher group increased and this increase reflects the fruitfulness of MGNREGS. 87 per cent of respondents remarked that MGNREGS enabled than to have better livelihoods. The t-test also showed a significant difference between before and after indicating impact of MGNREGS. The statistical data in the two districts suggest that the situation of rural households was worse. After the implementation of MGNREGS the level of rural livelihood of Wayanad improved more than that of Palakkad. This comparison shows that the functioning of MGNREGS has been more effective in Wayanad than that in Palakkad district.

7.4.3.2. Impact on Physical Capital

The impact of MGNREGS, on physical capital was obvious. Before the implementation of the scheme the percentage of respondent belonging to the lower
group was 7.3 per cent and in the higher category it was 92.7 per cent. But after the implementation the percentage of respondents in the lower group has become 2.7 per cent and to the higher group it has become 97.3 per cent. In the case of Wayanad before MGNREGS 26 per cent of households belonged to the lower group and 74 per cent in the higher group. After the implementation, the percent of respondents in the lower category has become 8.7 per cent and in the higher group it has become 92 per cent. All these show the positive impact of the scheme on the enhancement of physical capital in rural livelihood.

7.4.3.3. Economic Capital

The livelihood analysis reflected that the economic capital had been very weak. Majority of the people belonged to the lower group. But the enactment of MGNREGS transformed the situation. After the implementation the percentage of households in the higher category has gone from 2 percent to 64.3 per cent. This shows that MGNREGS has had positive impact on the economic capital of household livelihood.

The wage rate in the villages where MGNREGS had already been implemented had increased. In the earlier period, women received low level of wages for works. As a result of enactment of MGNREGS, the wage rate of women increased and it influenced the economic capital of rural household positively. The study showed that some of the women have started saving money on small scale. It helped in the empowerment of rural women.

The influence of MGNREGS on economic capital in each of the two districts is reflected clearly in the study. In both districts, majority of the people belonged to lower group (97.3 per cent in Palakkad and 98.7 per cent in Wayanad) before the implementation of the scheme. But after the enactment of MGNREGS the lower group percentage has decreased. After the implementation the percentage of households in the higher category has gone from 2.7 per cent to 64 per cent in Palakkad and 1.3 per cent to 64.7 from in Wayanad. These figures indicate the influence of MGNREGS.
7.4.3.4. Human Capital

Study indicated a clear cut improvement in human capital due to MGNREGS. Before the implementation of MGNREGS, human capital was very weak in the study area. Most of the respondents (97.3 per cent) belonged to the lower group; only 12.7 per cent of the people were in the high group. But after implementation the human capital of household progressed. As revealed by higher presence of beneficiaries in higher categories. More than 80 per cent of the respondents opined that they had achieved better level of human capital through MGNREGS implementation. Before the implementation of the scheme, the level of education in the study area was average, majority of the respondents had only primary education, and women’s education was relatively low. The rural people were not aware of public matters, especially the government’s social welfare programmes and policies. With the implementation of MGNREGS, the educational status of rural people has improved.

Women and children are healthy in the study area. Most of them have medical insurance and accesses to public health facilities. The improvement in the field of health is clearly due to the impact of MGNREGS. The district wise analysis of the rural household’s human capital, showed that in Palakkad district 83.3 per cent of people belonged to the low group before the implementation, and after the implementation it became 70.3 per cent. And the percentage of people in the high group was 60.7 per cent and it has become 82.7 per cent after the implementation. In Wayanad the percentage of respondents in the lower group was 91.3 before the implementation, after it has become 21.3 per cent. Before the enactment 80.7 per cent of people belonged to the higher group and the percent was increased to 78.7 after the enactment. In both districts educational status of the people particularly in tribal village was very low. The awareness which developed as a part of the scheme has been exerting a positive drive on the human capital of rural households.

7.4.3.5. Social Capital

Social capital refers to social networks and association in which household members participate. A large number of women in the study area were engaged in Kudumbashree networks, some of them were executive members. Before the implementation of MGNREGS in rural society the social participation level was very
low, similarly in the village level Gram Sabha meeting only a few people used to participate. In tribal villages, social organisations such as Oorukuttam functioned. Earlier the participation rate of women was very low in Oorukuttam also. The advent of MGNREGS mobilised the social cohesion of the rural people. As a result, they started to take part in various social organisations. Thus they became aware of so many public affairs. Through Kudumbashree Ayalkuttam and other NHGs, people get social as well as economic security. The emergence of Kudumbashree is in fact a milestone in the empowerment of women. The village people became aware of the importance of social capital. Besides they became members in other organisations as well.

7.4.3.5.1. Political participation

With the advent of MGNREGS, the participation rate in Gram Sabha increased, this resulted in the better functioning of elected representatives and the local self government such as Panchayats. This movement was more remarkable in districts like Wayanad. Some of the households were members of caste organisation, farmers union and trade unions. Women and men enjoyed the same right when they worked under MGNREGS, as a result every one worked equally and got equal wage, irrespective of gender, caste, etc. Thus MGNREGS helped to obliterate any sort of discrimination in society. This ensured social justice and promoted social capital.

7.4.3.5.2. Migration

Before the implementation of MGNREGS, migration was very high in the rural part. Unemployment and low wage rate have contributed much to the cause of the increased rate of migration. But after the MGNREGS, any household can receive jobs within 14 days after application. MGNREGS has had positive impact on bringing down the migration rate. Before the implementation of MGNREGS 98.3 per cent of respondents belonged to lower group and after the implementation 66.7 per cent belonged to higher group. Thus the numerical data disclosed the favourable impact of MGNREGS on social capital. In Palakkad before the implementation 93.7 per cent respondents belonged to lower group and after it have become 64.7 per cent. In Wayanad also the same trend was noticed.
7.4.3.6. Natural Capital

Palakkad and Wayanad districts are mostly agricultural regions; in these regions MGNREGS has effected positive changes both in the ecology of the area and in the society. The functioning of MGNREGS in these areas is agricultural and ecological oriented. In the two districts, the strength of natural capital was very low before the implementation of MGNREGS. Of the respondents, 57.7 per cent belonged to lower group and 42.3 per cent belonged to higher group before the implementation. After successful intervention of MGNREGS mobilised the natural capital as evident from higher proportion of beneficiaries in higher category. The MGNREGS programme pays particular attention in preserving natural resources, as a result, the natural capital increased.

MGNREGS includes activities such as land levelling, bunding and terracing, etc. These activities were done in the land of SC, ST and other marginal farmers under the scheme. The lands, which were not used for cultivation earlier, due to inconvenient nature of land, were brought under cultivation after the implementation of land development activities under the MGNREGS. The study revealed the favourable impact of MGNREGS on Natural capital, the individual farmers participated actively in this scheme and they worked in the farm, which was not useful in the earlier period. There was significant improvement in the income of the farm households, due to the cultivation. Therefore land preparation activity under MGNREGS has provided financial benefits for the poor farmers.

Agriculture and livestock production, etc are largely vulnerable to drought, lack of rainfall, lack of irrigation facility and soil infertility. The MGNREGS works reduce the vulnerability of agricultural production and livelihood. This reduction reinforces the strength of natural capital. The public works such a water conservation, water harvesting, construction of ponds, etc help to improve water storage, water availability for irrigation and soil fertility. They helped to enhance the agricultural productivity of land.

The district wise comparison of the strength of natural capital revealed that Wayanad district was mobilised to a larger extent than Palakkad. In both districts, majority of the respondents belonged to lower category (Palakkad 55.3 per cent and
Wayanad 60 per cent) before the implementation. The introduction of MGNREGS, changed the situation, 78.7 per cent of respondents in the Palakkad district have come into the higher group after the implementation. In Wayanad the percentage of respondents in higher group has become 81.3 per cent. Hence, it can be said that contribution of MGNREGS on natural resources mobilisation was significant.

7.4.4. Impact of MGNREGS: Role of Implementation Process

MGNREGS is an alternative source of enhancing rural livelihood security. It has impact on rural – urban migration and the eradication of rural poverty. It also plays a major role in making rural villages self-sustaining through productive works. The MGNREGS, as a wage employment programme, has been considered as the largest poverty alleviation programme. Its success depends upon its correct and proper way of implementation.

In Kerala, MGNREGS implementation has achieved a very good status as compared to the other states in India. Panchayat Raj Institutions and Kudumbashree SHGs took more initiatives in the planning and implementation of MGNREGS works.

Works are identified and listed in Kudumbashree ADS meeting. These neighbourhood groups identify works based on needs and necessities. The identified works are presented in the Ward level Gram Sabha meeting. Through this discussion, the identified works are listed on the basis of their importance and these listed works are submitted to Panchayat Committee. The Panchayat Committee approves the sanction for implementation. Some of the respondents said that workers’ Gram Sabha was not called for separately, but this was jointly operated with general Gram Sabha. MGNREGS is a separate agenda of this meeting. So, people do not get enough time for discussing the MGNREGS matter.

The Gram Panchayat along with Kudumbashree has played a key role in registration and issue of job cards. All registered households have got job cards in the sample Panchayats. The Secretary of the Panchayat is responsible for issuing job cards, and they are issued to the households free of cost. A ‘mate’ is identified from the ADS of Kudumbashree for the purpose of implementing, organizing and
coordinating the works. The ‘mates’ supervise the works and maintain muster rolls. All Gram Panchayats have constituted the vigilance and monitoring committees, for each work for concurrent social audit.

In Kerala, MGNREGS was implemented at first in Palakkad and Wayanad districts. During the financial year 2010 - 2011, 107966 households demanded MGNREGS works and around 4689470 person days were generated in Palakkad district. In Wayanad the number of households, who demanded MGNREGS works, was 53835 and around 1198180 person days were generated.

People are largely aware of MGNREGS in the sample districts. Around 95 per cent of the respondents have sufficient knowledge about MGNREGS; majority of them said that Gram Panchayat and Kudumbashree SHGs were the important sources of awareness. This indicates that Grama Panchayat officials and Kudumbashree volunteers played a significant role in spreading the awareness. Majority of the beneficiaries have joined because of the support by Kudumbashree volunteers (ADS and CDS). Of the total respondents, 72 per cent opined that Kudumbashree workers had helped them to apply for job cards and demand works etc. Only 16 per cent respondents remarked that they had been selected by direct recommendations of Gram Panchayat. In the case of awareness, more than 96 per cent of respondents were aware of 100 days of employment per household, minimum wage fixation, and equal wage rate for men and women etc. only 52 per cent of respondents were aware of other different provisions in MGNREGS such as grievances and redressal mechanism. Very few of the respondents were aware of eligibility of unemployment allowance and related provisions under MGNREGS.

Wage payment is a very significant component under the scheme. The wages are distributed through the bank / post office individual accounts after the completion of work. Delay of wage disbursement is one of the major issues in the Wayanad district. The MGNREGS guideline mentioned that wage payment had to be made within two weeks. The prescribed MGNREGS wage rate is paid, but some of the respondents said that they got less than minimum wage. They also pointed out that in certain situations the works could not be completed within the prescribed time or
days. In certain contexts, climatic conditions and geographical structures may disable the workers to finish their task in time.

In the study area, especially in tribal region people face some hazards in MGNREGS wage disbursement and individual bank account system. Most of the villages are illiterate or semi literate, they find it difficult to go through formalities of such bank and post offices. Workers have to spend more time and money to withdraw their wages when banks are far away from their places. They have to go to the bank twice or thrice to enquire if their wages have been credited.

The study result disclosed that there is no age or gender wise discrimination on the worksite and in the wage disbursement. Under the scheme, health insurance is implemented through RSBY for below poverty line families. And other supportive measures like educational assistance is provided for MGNREGS beneficiaries’ children up to higher secondary level. In Wayanad and Palakkad districts, all Gram Panchayats have implemented these two supportive programmes under MGNREGS. So people are more attracted to MGNREGS works.

There is low level of political interference in the MGNREGS implementation in the study area. But some issues could be identified from the respondents opinions. In the present situation MGNREGS workers are politically organized, they have constituted NREGS Workers’ Federation and NREGS workers’ Union.

The activities of vigilance and monitoring committees are better, they help to reduce complaints and boost up implementing efficiency. Monitoring committee members visit the work site, and check muster roll regularly. This mechanism helps to great extent, in the attainment of predetermined goals and aims. In both districts periodical social auditing is held regularly. It is a way of measuring, understanding, reporting and ultimately improving an organization’s social and ethical performance. Social auditing creates an impact upon governance. In the study, 88 respondents (29.3 per cent) were of the opinion that social auditing and public scrutiny were effective to a great level, but 160 respondents (54 per cent) opined that they were effective only in moderate level.
7.4.4.1. SWOT factors about MGNREGS implementation

The identification of Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threat factors (SWOT) is a crucial step in prescribing policy measures for the successful implementation of MGNREGS. MGNREGS is a legal right, well written act promising rural reconstruction and rural orientation and large level of women participation. MGNREGS is a demand based wage employment programme which promises job to needy. Financial inclusion and ensuring livelihood sustainability are the top most strength factors of MGNREGS implementation in Kerala. The weaknesses of MGNREGS implementation in rural society are mainly the delay of wage payment, the lack of proper awareness, unavailability of district perspective plan and the absence of convergence with other rural development programmes or departments. The poor performance of grievance and redressal mechanism is a serious weakness which prevents the improvement of MGNREGS implementation in Kerala. MGNREGS bestows the rural people with ample opportunities to reduce seasonal unemployment and thus ensures the enhancement of rural livelihood; the Act ensures that more than 50 per cent of workers must be women. The wage payment through individual bank accounts helps to develop small savings. Public participation in vigilance and monitoring committee develops collective consciousness. The rejuvenation of natural resources, creation of social assets, and the provision of working in private land, etc are other opportunities offered by MGNREGS.

The following are the various threat factors. One of the major threat factors is that MGNREGS work implementation is very low, so most of the households cannot complete 100 days of MGNREGS work. People are not aware of all the provisions of MGNREGS. The politicizations of work credit in the MGNREGS works and unionism are major threat factors in Kerala. The insufficient salary of officials, lack of training programmes for staff members and work monitoring Kudumbashree volunteers etc. are the major other major threat factors associated with the implementation of the scheme.
7.4.4.2. Constraints and challenges

Various constraints and challenges were identified in the different dimensions of MGNREGS implementation. The major constraint faced at the district level authority was the unavailability of the district perspective plan. Due to this reason, the implementation of works was often delayed. Weak documentation processes was another important issue. The major difficulty faced at the Block level, was the weak supervision of works, cent per cent supervision of works cannot be carried out by Block level officials. Another important difficulty is poor integration with the Block Panchayat staffs and MGNREGS staffs, so Block level works were implemented very rarely. At the Gram Panchayat level, the most serious difficulty was the unavailability of the Scheme Guideline. The majority of the Panchayats in sample districts did not have copies of MGNREGS Act. The unavailability of seasonal calendar was one of the important constraints faced at local level. The seasonal calendar being unavailable, the authority could not find out the MGNREGS works and other labour works in the Panchayat throughout the year. Poor net working system among Panchayats, workers and bank were noticed. In the case of wage disbursement, workers face several difficulties; one of them was lack of sufficient staff and computer facilities, which disturbed the smooth implementation of MGNREGS works. The training provided to MGNREGS staff and Kudumbashree volunteers at the field level was inadequate. A large number of elected representatives opined that training sections were of no avail in clearing their doubts on various operational issues. Certain elected representatives were indifferent to the proper functioning of MGNREGS in Palakkad District. They created several hurdles during the Scheme execution. These constraints need to be eradicated for the successful implementation of MGNREGS in rural sectors.

7.5. Validation of hypotheses

The analysis of results as described above amply demonstrated the creation of evidence towards either accepting or rejecting the tentative hypothesis of the study. The empirical result on the implementation of MGNREGS on rural livelihood sector reveals that there has been enhancement in the level of livelihood through providing
unskilled manual works in the rural society. Here the validation of hypothesis is done.

The first hypothesis says: *the MGNREGS covers the intended target population effectively*. MGNREGS has provided wage employment particularly in rural marginalized sections. The recent data revealed the upward graph in employment generation and wage disbursement. Under the scheme 12.84591 lakhs households were employed during the 2010-2011 financial year, during the period total 353.76 lakhs person days were generated. In Kerala, the majority of the people who were involved in MGNREGS are women. In Palakkad 107612 families have been given 4689470 days of employment under the scheme so far. In Wayanad total 7579 households got work under this scheme, 1972824 person days were generated during the 2010 – 2011 financial year. The work participation of marginalized section has also under gone pronounced improvement. The work participation rate of SC in Palakkad was 23.81 percent and in Wayanad it was 6.18 percent. The work participation rates of ST population in Palakkad and Wayanad were 5.38 and 22.87 percents respectively. Women work participation rate was very high in these two districts, in Palakkad it was 93 percent and in Wayanad it was 84 percent. The numerical data bear testimony to the hypothesis that the MGNREGS covers the intended target population effectively.

The second hypothesis says, *the MGNREGS will enhance the livelihood security of the beneficiaries*. It is evident that the implementation of MGNREGS will advance the physical quality of rural lives. The idea of rural development was propounded three or four decades ago. Since then a good number of development programme has been made through State interventions. The improper interventions made by inefficient and corrupt bureaucrats had contributed to the cause of the decline of earlier livelihood enhancement programmes. But MGNREGS is entirely different from the earlier programme in its implementation. It is an Act; interventions from politics and bureaucracy are not encouraged and it functions in a transparent manner. It will ensure public accountability in each and every step of its implementation. MGNREGS provides 100 days of unskilled manual work for every household in a year. These additional wage employments significantly contribute the enhancement of rural household livelihood. After the enactment of MGNREGS,
income level of beneficiaries has been increased, and it also contributes to the ecological sustainability and social security. The MGNREGS works rejuvenate the natural resources and they serve as a support to agriculture; the land preparation activities of private land and creation of irrigation facilities enhance the rejuvenation of natural resources. MGNREGS implements works like social forestry, rain water harvesting creation and protection of water bodies etc., these works strengthen the natural capital of particular village or society. It was clearly observed that there was a significant difference established between before and after implementation of MGNREGS not only in overall livelihood enhancement but also in all the capitals included in livelihood. Hence, the second hypothesis is illustrated to be true.

There is a relationship between socio-economic variables and the livelihood enhancement of rural households. The nature of this relationship is different in various regions in the study area. The variables namely occupation, income and saving, size of land holding, ownership of livestock and social participation were found to have significant contribution and direct effect on household livelihood. Majority of the sample respondents have chosen MGNREGS work as a secondary occupation. Household members mainly demand MGNREGS works during the seasonal unemployment situation. This additional wage employment programme contributes to the household income security and it enhances the purchasing power of the households. Ownership of sizable land area under cultivation shows high level livelihood. The raring of livestock contributes the additional income source of household economy. The level of social participation determines the strength of social capital in individual household. Migration rate negatively influences household livelihood. The level of migration in the sample village is very low; it indicates the successfulness of MGNREGS implementation in these villages. The variables like age, debt burden, migration were not found influencing the livelihood enhancement significantly. Thus the third hypothesis, *the livelihood enhancement through MGNREGS is influenced by socio-economic characteristics* is proven to be valid.

The fourth hypothesis says that ‘*constraints if any in the process of operation will hinder the effectiveness of MGNREGS*’. The study revealed the constraints faced at different levels of implementation agencies of Gram Panchayat, Block Panchayat and District authorities. In most of the Panchayats in the study area, the shelf of
projects had not been prepared. Similarly, the District Perspective Plan (DPP) was not available in its complete form. These too show the inefficiency of MGNREGS officials. In Wyanad and Palakkad most of the MGNREGS works should be held in the private lands owned by SCs, STs and other marginalised sections. But most of the works are done in the private lands of the people who are above poverty line (APL) this may be due to political influence or partialities. These tendencies disclose that politicians and beaurocrates misuse the purpose of MGNREGS.

The smooth functioning of MGNREGS works is determined by the efficiency of officials like AE / overseer, office clerk and data entry operator of the Panchayat. But all these officials are temporary; as a result, the changing ruling party imposes its influence on these officials and thus disables them from working effectively. The functioning of Kudumbashree plays a pivotal role in the MGNREGS work implementation. But the Kudumbashree volunteers are not given periodical training. As a result their functioning becomes inefficient. The labourers who supervise the works of MGNREGS are paid equally as the workers. Yet, these supervising agencies have to perform some additional tasks and they are not paid for the extra work. So this supervising agent should be included in the category of semi-skilled and they should be given separate salary. Similarly, the wage rate of MGNREGS staff is very low. These low wage rates retard the efficiency of the functioning and adversely affect the functioning of MGNREGS. Seasonal Calendar is not available in any of the villages in study area. The unavailability of Seasonal Calendar results in the delay of the implementation of MGNREGS works. Another important constraint is the delay in the wage payment. The workers receive their wage only after 4-5 weeks. Bank officials and MGNREGS staffs are responsible for this delay. These are the major obstacles which prevent the proper functioning of the scheme. The above mentioned hypothesis is illustrated to be true.

Based on the theoretical framework and validation of hypothesis of the study, the system theory can be applicable for analysing enhancement of livelihood through MGNREGS. The study found the different components of livelihood especially in economic (savings, purchasing power, etc) and social (participation and social status, etc). The constraints were also identified and it acted as an obstacle for the successful implementation of the programme in some areas. It also found that the livelihood enhancement through MGNREGS is influenced by socio-economic characteristics.
7.6. Conclusion

Central and State Governments have been formulating and implementing several programmes and schemes for the welfare of rural communities. Social thinkers and rural development policy makers suggest and propose the new model of welfare programmes. All of them observe a visible and sustaining policy which will ensure the creation of an equitable and non exploitative social order. Livelihood enhancement is a multi-dimensional process which influences and mobilises each and every level of human lives. In this context, development and welfare programmes should play a pivotal role in the creation of a new society. After independence, government introduced Five Year Plans, in addition to so many welfare schemes for the upliftment of targeted population. As compared to the other developmental programmes and scheme, MGNREGS is a newly launched wage employment programme, targeting rural community. The operational structure and functions of the MGNREGS can be progressed in so many ways. In its legal framework, nature of transparency and accountability and public participation are ensured in each and every process.

The MGNREGS, as a livelihood enhancement programme, contributes to the additional wage employment and more income. The present study analysed how far MGNREGS could be successful in enhancing rural livelihoods. The scheme focuses not only on providing wage employment for the rural poor, but also on the rejuvenation of natural resources and creation of social security, etc. It creates the rural transformations in the modern developmental context. Women and community empowerment, supplementary income and employment were recorded in the study. These factors and certain features like bulk payments helped to stimulate the incidence of social participation.

In the MGNREGS process and functions, a variety of constraints such as, structural, resource, operational, technological and institutional constraints were faced. These obstacles prevent the achievement of successfulness and development goal of the scheme. Also, the number of person days generated remains far too low, not enough works are being planned and executed and people, to a certain extent, remain unaware of key entitlement with some officials exploiting this ignorance for
personal gain. Nevertheless, as compared to the other States, the Act is implemented well in Kerala. This can be partly attributed to the efficiency and integrity of the officials involved, as well as to the existing social development of the local population.

### 7.7. Suggestions for enhancement of MGNREGS

Based on the theoretical and empirical evaluation of MGNREGS implementation on rural livelihood, the following are certain broad suggestions to make it a logical success.

#### 7.7.1. Towards policy

- In addition to the existing MGNREGS, more livelihood enhancement provisions should be implemented. By the inclusion of new enhancement provisions, the status of the rural households can be improved.

- Compared to the average wage of labourer in Kerala (Rs. 400/- to 600/-) in MGNREGS wage rate is very low (only Rs. 164/-). It is very necessary to increase the wage of the labourers in accordance with the social and economic situation of Kerala. It will accelerate their livelihood enhancement process.

- The Kudumbashree volunteers, who play the crucial role in the implementation of MGNREGS work, get only the same wages of labourers. If they are considered as skilled labourers and paid accordingly, it will enhance the work quality of the same.

- The activities under MGNREGS should be extended, so as to enable more economic use of common land for agriculture and associated activities. This will benefit the local people and economy.

- It is essential to add the MGNREGS work under the field of agriculture to raise production and to ensure food security.

- To ensure ecological sustainability and to enhance the natural capital, the forestation and agriculture related works in the public and private lands should be incorporated under the work limits of the MGNREGS.
Proper training should be imparted to officials and ‘mates’. The training needs to be updated at regular intervals. For example, the supervision of works at the site by mates requires them not only to have good leadership skills but also to be aware of the Act’s salient features.

MGNREGS works should be expanded in order to meet future challenges. Being a natural resource management programme, MGNREGS should be able to address climate changes and create assets which can prevent the worst effects of climate changes. The framework has already been done and it should be modified to specifically address the effects of climate changes in all the regions.

7.7.2. Towards impact

The MGNREG Act offers the 100 days of wage employment per year for every rural household, but the beneficiaries do not get the actual working days. This prevents the successful implementation of the scheme. So the authorities should take necessary action to avert the delay of work allotment.

All the MGNREGS officials in the Panchayats are temporary staff. The quality of the works can be improved either by making the temporary staff permanent or by appointing new permanent staff.

The Panchayat should provide tools and implements required by the labourers. They should be user friendly and well maintained.

There is a lack of professionals (agronomists, irrigation engineers, community organisers, etc) who can provide expert advice on planning, execution and supervision of the works. If more qualified persons are appointed, it will stimulate the pace of implementation and enhance the quality of assets.

More efforts need to be directed towards making people aware of their entitlements and rights. In a demand driven scheme like the MGNREGS, this is of paramount importance.
7.8. Suggested lines of future work

The present study has been undertaken only with regard to MGNREGS beneficiaries’ households restricted to two districts. Hence, it is suggested that similar studies may be taken up in future to assess the livelihood, livelihood enhancement and livelihood sustainability of the tribals, rural marginalised sections and urban poor, etc.

The scope of the present study has been shortened to a small section, due to the scarcity of time and since it is a research study. That is why; there should be a detailed study about the several dimensions of the livelihood, besides this.

The vulnerability of livelihood is an important factor, which could be studied in detail. Studies can be also initiated on the studies on successful group of MGNREGS to assess socio-economic sustainability. The contribution of SHGs, Panchayats, etc. maybe also studied for knowing political angle of the livelihood.

Finally, it could be concluded that MGNREGS certainly have potentialities to tackle rural livelihood problems in a broader, comprehensive manner. Providing livelihood security in sustainable manner can become their manifested strength. There are sufficient provisions to do so. Some provisions need to be restructured. If the Act is implementated rigorously and in its true spirit, it will change the face of rural India and provide the basis for livelihood security and sustainable development. The potential benefits will not only accrue to the current generation but also to those who are to come, it can serve as an example for other developing economies facing similar challenges.
List of Publication of the candidate