CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As a wage employment program MGNREGA provides minimum wage employment to unskilled and casual labour during the lean season. So, the present study attempted to know the result of the MGNREGA after its implementation in the state of Assam during the last 11 years and how it was able to reduce poverty at the bottom level as well as how it could improve the purchasing power of the poor.

The success of the movement could better be explained through the fact that the scheme was not sufficient enough to provide employment to all unemployed masses of the state which is evident from the numbers of job cards issued or numbers of households that demanded employment.

6.1 Overall Findings

- The status of education of the beneficiaries was low. Educated people have job card but not interested to work under MGNREGA. More than 58 percent of the families were headed by either illiterate people or those educated only up to primary level.

- The main occupation of nearly 70 percent beneficiaries was agriculture and wage labour. It was noticed that all the beneficiaries had taken MGNREGA as subsidiary occupation only.

- Although there was gap in the demand and supply of employment under MGNREGA in both the selected districts, it was least amount in both the
districts. The total number of households that were provided employment, as against the total number of households demanded employment, was 90 percent in Barpeta district in 2015-16 and it was 92 percent in Marigaon district. This percentage was 90 percent for all over the state. Therefore, it can be assumed that the demand supply gap of employment demanded and employment provided is found to be in a satisfactory level as nearly 90 percent job seekers received employment in both the districts.

- The Act provides the rural people constitutional right of ‘right to work’ for maintaining livelihood security, economic and social infrastructural development of the rural areas. In this respect, the Act ensures minimum 100 days employment to every rural household. In Barpeta district, only 1.08 percent households have received 100 days employment in 2015-16, whereas in Marigaon district only 0.15 percent households have got 100 days employment in the same year. In Assam only 2.81 percent households have got 100 days employment. So, it can be inferred that MGNREGA totally fails to fulfill its basic objectives to enhance livelihood security by providing 100 days guaranteed employment in a financial year in rural areas whose adult members were willing to participate in unskilled manual work.

- While examining the category wise person day generation of employment, the study found that the percentage of person days generated for social groups seeking employment against the total person days employment generated to all category households was only 3.34 percent for SC and 1.08 percent for ST households in Barpeta district in 2015-16. Whereas, in Marigaon district, the percentage of person days generated to SC households against the cumulative
number of person days generated was 9.32 percent and for ST only 9.73 percent in 2015-16. It therefore, clearly reflects that MGNREGA fails to reach the minority social groups to provide and generate employment. Thus, it justifies that more number of employment is needed to be generated for SC and ST Job card holder households in order to develop and strengthen their livelihood security under the Act.

- The average person day generation under MGNREGA for needy households is limited to 30 to 40 days per household since the inception of the Act and thus it can be inferred that limited employment to needy households only partially help in reducing their poverty and also to improve livelihood security. The selected Barpeta district can only provide 50 average days of employment in 2015-16, which is highest among all the districts of Assam. The average days of employment in the state of Assam were 32 days in 2015-16.

- MGNREGA is not successful in ensuring the women employment by generating minimum stipulated number of employment to women not only in the single GP but also in the state of Assam. The Act fails to provide 33 percent employment in Assam as a whole, although the Act ensures 33 percent reservation for women.

- The gap between the number of job card holders and households demanding work is very high in both the districts. The gap is highest (only 21 percent HH demanded work) in Barpeta district among all the districts of Assam. In Bajali block of Barpeta district, out of the total job card holders only 17 percent, 13 percent and 16 percent households demanded employment in 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16 respectively. Similarly, in Gobardhana block only 25 percent,
13 percent and 26 percent job card holders demanded work in 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16 respectively. The percentages are comparatively higher (52 percent demanded work) in Marigaon district. In Laharighat block of Marigaon district out of the total job card holders, the percentage of households demanding work was 78, 70 and 54 in 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16 respectively. Also in Mayong block the percentage was 65, 42 and 52 respectively in 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16. So, comparatively in Barpeta district the percentage of employment demanded was very low during those three years. Thus, it is very important to find out the reason as to why a huge number of job card holders are not interested to work under MGNREGA. The respective authority must have the responsibility to find out the causes of concern of the low demand of the households for employment under MGNREGA.

- For MGNREGA work, the project cost includes the provision of safe drinking water, shade for resting, changing room, medical facilities and recreation facility for children etc. But, all the female respondents clearly express their view that except drinking water facility, no other facilities are provided at the working site. Thus, the working women are not satisfied and are not willing to work under MGNREGA.

- Low level of awareness among the job card holders about MGNREGA and less involvement in planning and execution of the Act is another important loophole found in the field study. So, it can be inferred that awareness creation among the job card holders should have the prime priority of the Act. For this, Gram Sabhas has to be strengthened and it should be held at every Ward area
for a minimum of four times in a year, so that the villagers can involve in planning and development process on their own through MGNREGA. For promoting participation and for bringing the benefits from the Act, awareness level about the MGNREGA in terms of rights and entitlements, procedures and grievance redressal system are important factors.

- Social audit is an important factor for workers participation. During field verification in 2013-14, the system of social audit was very poor because very limited numbers of Gram Sabhas were held at that time. But, after 2016-17, the SIRD has started social audit in every Gram Panchayats and have tried to involve the rural people in the planning process. So, there is a need for a special directorate for social audit in the state to capture all the Gram Panchayats in Assam.

- On focus group discussion it is found that in Muslim dominated GPs many ghost and proxy workers were working against original job card holders.

- Due to the skewed nature of the fund flow, works taken under MGNREGA can’t be completed in the stipulated time. The sanction date and work completion date has huge gap although the works completion time is only 1 to 5 months.

- MGNREGA wages is much lower than the local market wages and worker’s expectation wages. As per the study, average wage under MGNREGA is Rs 138 and average market wage is Rs 238, whereas the minimum wage for the unskilled worker under the state government is fixed at Rs 250. Due to this reason, there is no impact on migration of rural people to nearby town and
other cities around the country. The estimated reservation wage is found to be Rs 270. Therefore, the MGNREGA wage in Assam could be raised to Rs 270 to check rural urban migration.

- Family education, family income, awareness, household size, land size, availability of live stocks, gadgets and transport are mainly responsible for not participation in MGNREGA work. The workers having more land, livestock, gadgets and transport are not interested to work under MGNREGA. They are mainly engaged in domestic works. These variables are statistically significant also.

- All the job card holders are not interested to work under MGNREGA. This is due to the low wages paid under MGNREGA than the market wages. Lack of interest among youth for active participation in such type of unskilled work, political interference, direct involvement of GP officials who are sometime biased and deprived few section of people and loses interest. Another section of people collected job card only for the purpose of getting other benefits like health and family welfare scheme from the government.

- Focus group discussions also express that there are some irregularities in the implementation process of the Act that are created by the GP. Nobody raises the voice against the GP. If anyone raises the voice against the GP, he/she will be debarred from MGNREGA work in future.

- Monitoring and Information System (MIS) of the MGNREGA is quite systematic, but practically there are some loopholes. But practically, during the visit of field study it was found that some people are not getting work
under MGNREGA, yet their name was shown against the number of days working in MIS report. Even deceased person’s name also included in MIS.

6.2 Policy Implications

✓ Regular job card should be issued to every needed person who demand job, so that job card can’t be given on rent/hire to other person and to restrict proxy workers.

✓ Minimum wage act should be implemented in MGNREGA to restrict rural urban migration. Payment should be made on time. Bank and GPs have to be responsible to issue bank passbook and handover to the beneficiaries.

✓ Unemployment allowance should release for the job card holders to stop irregularities, proxy workers and to keep the justice of the Act. It will compelled the state government to create job for the workers.

✓ Electronic devices such as mobile technology like whatsapp, facebook should be used for successful implementation of MGNREGA.

✓ There must be a positive vision of the Panchayat officials and representatives to develop their own locality. They should be devoted, dutiful so that the poor people can be benefited from MGNREGA work.

✓ Awareness among the people through Gram Sabhas and involving the villagers in planning process is necessary. So, Gram Sabhas should be strengthened to monitor proper implementation of the scheme and also to check corruption. Power should be handled in such a way so that it reaches to the level of the poor villagers. This will enable the entire development
program under MGNREGA to reach the villages situated at a distance from the development blocks. For this special directorate should be established for social audit in the state to capture all the Gram Panchayats in Assam.

6.3 Conclusion

This study is an attempt to understand the socio-economic conditions of the MGNREGA workers, their conditions of work, their age, sex, caste, education level, earning, and expenditure including the problems faced by both job card holders and implementing agencies. Undoubtedly, MGNREGA is one of the largest rural employment programs implemented in India. After harvesting, the rural people can’t find any income generating work in the villages. Due to non-availability of opportunity to work in the locality and nearby towns, the people of rural areas are most affected with the problems of poverty. In many part of India, the cultivators and rural people are forced to migrate nearby localities due to livelihood constraints. When the Act came into force in India in 2005, the rural people hoped that they will get minimum 100 days guaranteed wage employment. MGNREGA has provision for inclusion of 33 percent reservation for women and priority for marginalized groups (SCs and STs), so that they can get employment and develop their locality through the creation of infrastructural development. It has enabled them with sufficient purchasing power and they are able to at least support their basic necessity i.e. food. Ultimately, it should reduce poverty at the bottom level as well as it can empower the poor in the short run. But, the Act fails to achieve its objectives. The scheme could not provide the 100 days job guarantee to the majority of the job card holders. Even the study observed that the scheme fails in respect of providing employment avenues to the unemployed in a large scale. In fact the tune and essence of the Act could not
shine in the State of Assam. A big question arises that whether MGNREGA is successful in the studied circle or not, as mixed responses from beneficiaries has been observed in the present study. So, the respective authority should give special attention to ensure more employment for unskilled manual work regularly for the poor rural people. For these, the study recommends that the scheme should be implemented in a proper manner, with proper planning and effective supervision by respective authorities, and should be carried out proper monitoring at the grassroot level. In order to make the Act effective, awareness among villagers is of utmost necessary. This will help to reduce corruption and unemployment problems thereby attaining success in elevating poverty in the state of Assam and India as a whole.

Last but not the least, it must be mentioned that MGNREGA is a flagship program implemented by government of India in all over country from 2006-2007. Our study covers only two district of Assam which partially reflects the situation of the whole country. So, there is scope to study the Act in wide manner for sustainable development, so that the Act can give more employment to the rural people of the country as a whole and can reduce rural poverty.