ABSTRACT

IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES IN MANIPUR: A CASE STUDY OF WAGE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMES

INTRODUCTION

Poverty eradication has been one of the most important objectives since the beginning of economic planning in India. Eradication of poverty through, overall monetary and social development by ensuring equitable access in resources and skills, as well as by widening the opportunities for useful employment to the poor sections of the society has been some of the objectives of economic planning in India. No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable (Smith, 1937). Collin (2006) define poverty is the state of being extremely poor. Ross (1994) defines poverty as “deprivation of economic resources that are required to meet the food, shelter and clothing needs necessary for physical well-being”. The Planning Commission, which is the nodal agency for estimating the number and proportion of people living below the poverty line at National and State levels, separately for rural and urban areas, make poverty estimates based on a large sample survey of household consumption expenditure carried out by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) after an interval of approximately five years. The 68th round of the NSSO (2011-2012), was based on a sample of 59,070 households in 7,391 villages and 41,602 households in 5223 urban blocks. 10 percent of the poorest of selected households live on Rs. 23.40 per day while their rural counterparts do with even less on Rs. 16.78 per day. The rate of growth of expenditure is lower in rural areas as the rural poor are known to depend more on non-traded items. But it came to all income groups, the average monthly consumption expenditure increased by 18 percent in rural areas against 13.2 percent in urban areas. The NSSO survey has pegged this average monthly spending by rural families in 2011-2012 at Rs. 1,281.45 and by urban households at Rs. 2,401.68. The per capita expenditure level of the urban population was on the average about 87.4 percent higher than that of the rural population. There has been an improvement in the monthly per capita consumption expenditure as purchasing power has grownup due to higher incomes. Impact assessment is a process aimed at structuring and
supporting the development of policies. It identifies and assesses the problem at stake and the objectives pursued. It identifies the main options for achieving the objective and analyses their likely impacts in the economic, environmental and social fields. It outlines advantages and disadvantages of each option and examines possible synergies and trade-offs. According to the World Bank (2008) “Impact assessment compares the outcomes of a program against a counterfactual that shows what would have happened to beneficiaries without the program. Unlike other forms of assessment they permit the attribution of observed changes in outcomes to the program being evaluated by following experimental and quasi-experimental designs”. Normally, the assessment and analysis of poverty was dominated by economic indicators such as levels of income, levels and patterns of expenditure and consumption and assets. In the eighties, however, social indicators such as educational and health status and nutritional levels gained currency. Poverty alleviation has been largely a result of overall economic growth. While developments in the rural employment are concerned the movement towards an employment guarantee programme is highly laudable. Although, India’s policy pronouncements provide people’s participation in development planning and administration, such participation has generally been ineffective. For instance, rural poverty alleviation programmes, the gram sabha or village council are considered as epicenters of participation. The Indian government has taken up various measures to overcome the problem of poverty. Poverty alleviation programmes comprising of wage employment programmes, rural housing schemes and a public distribution system have been initiated from time to time. Some were partially successful in addressing the issue of poverty whereas others suffered from major flaws in their implementation. Some of the major wage employment programmes in India as well as Manipur are:

f) SampoornaGrameenRozgarYojana (SGRY)
g) National Food For Work Programme (NFFWP)
h) National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)
WAGE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMES IN MANIPUR

Manipur is the third largest State in the North Eastern Region of India. Population pressure is found to be increasing day by day reducing the man-land ratio from about 1: 7.85 hectares in 1901 to 1: 0.87 hectares in 2011. With such a size of population to support on so small a land area the state of Manipur finds great difficulty in making any significant impression on its poverty and economic backwardness. Manipur is one of the states situated in the North Eastern Region of India, is an isolated hill-girt state stretching between $92^0 58'E$ to $94^0 45'E$ longitudes and $23^0 50'N$ to $25^0 42'N$ latitudes. Manipur spread over a geographical area of 22,327 sq. kms, which constitutes 0.7 percent of the total land surface of India. 90 percent of the total geographical area of the state, i.e., 20,089 sq.km, is covered by hills, the remaining area is small valley covering only 2,238 sq. kms and accounting for only one-tenth of the total area of the state. Population of a country is its most important asset and demographic indicator. Out of the population of Manipur as per 2011 census 13.6 lakhs were males and the rest 13.5 lakhs were females (CENSUS, 2011). There are 7(seven) scheduled castes communities and 33(thirty three) different scheduled tribes of different ethnic groups presenting complicated socio-economic phenomena. There is apparent disparity in the level of income and consumption between the rich and the poor, between the urban elite and the rural poor, between the have and have not and between the public living in the hills and those in the valley. The state has 51 towns (28 statutory towns and 23 census towns) and 2588 villages as per 2011 census. Imphal is the capital city of Manipur. The state of Manipur splits up naturally into two tracts viz. the hills and the dales. The Districts are divided into sub divisions. There are 41 (forty one) Blocks, 9 (nine) C. D. Blocks in valley and 32(thirty two) T.D. Blocks in the hills. Estimation of poverty is necessarily in the state.

As is well known, poverty estimation is based on private consumption expenditure of the individual. Estimation of poverty for the year 2009 - 2010, households with a per capita per month expenditure lower than Rs. 687 in rural and Rs. 990 in urban areas were considered to be below poverty line in Meghalaya. In that year, Manipur with 47 percent and Assam with 38 percent of the people were estimated to live below the poverty line. The other 9 (nine) hill States has lower incidences of poverty compared to the national average of 29.8 per cent (GoI, 2012). The researcher has felt that there is also need for evaluating and assessing the performance of these programmes and their impact on the alleviation of poverty in the state. Considering the above
facts, the proposed study entitled, “Impact Assessment of Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Manipur: A Case Study of Wage Employment Programmes” has been selected as research problem.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Subba(1985) the lowest income groups have the least income mobility compared to the other income groups. In the pursuit of poverty alleviation programmes such as IRDP and JRY etc., concern for undertaking activities like soil conservation, water harvesting, drainage and construction of field channels which raise agricultural productivity is not adequate. This integrated approach is detrimental to raise agriculture productivity as well as to alleviating rural poverty on a sustainable basis. Hanumantha (1987) indicted that differences exist in the generation of income by various IRDP schemes across different occupations and caste groups. The beneficiaries crossing poverty line due to IRDP varies significantly according to different studies. It ranges from 49.5 percent as per PEO study to 17 percent by the RBI study. The studies of Govt. of India (1986, 87, 89) showed that 50 percent of the old beneficiaries have crossed poverty line of Rs. 3500 and 12-13 percent of new beneficiaries have crossed poverty line of Rs. 6400. The studies by ICM revealed that the crossing poverty line varies between 6-11 percent. The main contribution is primary sector and ISB sector schemes. Dev (1995) revealed that the poverty alleviation programme arrangement of interventions has expanded to include health and nutrition programmes for women and children, social safety nets for vulnerable groups and disabled persons, labour market interventions, pensions and social funds; and subsidised food through the public distribution system. Public works programmes have been a central component of the safety net approach in India since the 1960s, with the aim of improving the livelihood security of rural households by creating employment and developing rural infrastructure and assets. Hans (1996) revealed that Panchayat Raj Institutions were intended to ensure peoples participation and improving living conditions of the people which are neglected. The village level institutions could not come into their own because of inadequate devolution of responsibilities and resources in the absence of a well-equipped planning mechanism at decentralized level capable of formulating a single integrated rural development plan with professional competence enlisting people participation and safeguarding the interests of weaker sections. Galab (1999) highlighted the village level institutions could not come into their own because of inadequate devolution of responsibilities and resources in the absence of a well-
equipped planning mechanism at decentralized level capable of formulating a single integrated rural development plan with professional competence enlisting peoples participation and safeguarding the interests of weaker sections. Naturally, Panchayats should allow and help the rural poor to participate in the development activities directly. Papola (2005) suggests that NREGA goes beyond poverty reduction and recognizes employment as a legal right. Skeptics considered it as a populist measure while others have considered it as a landmark initiative towards poverty alleviation and empowerment of poor. It is argued that this would not only increase the income of the poor, but the asset creation through the process of employment would generate a much needed productive infrastructure for poverty alleviation on a permanent basis. It is also seen as an initiative to operationalize the concept of the right to work, enshrined in the Constitution under the Directive Principles of State Policy by guaranteeing work to those who are demanding employment. Kareemulla (2009) studied on NREGA apart from the gaps in regional coverage; at least one important topic remains largely unexplored. Though NREGA is primarily perceived as a social security programme, it can also play an important role in the creation of productive assets; NREGA is severely under-researched, and is only beginning to be an object of serious investigation.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. to evaluate critically the existing theories and concept of impact assessment.
2. to analyse the socio-economic conditions of wages employment programmes.
3. to access whether wage employment programme has achieved its objectives of poverty eradication in India.
4. to measure the impact of the programmes on beneficiaries in terms of change in satisfaction level, income level and employment status.
5. to examine the impact of the poverty alleviation programmes including employment generation, beneficiaries’ asset creation and beneficiaries’ perception
6. to analyse and interpret the sampled data.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Stratified random sampling method was used to select the respondents for the study. The Poverty alleviation programmes have been implemented in 9 (nine) districts of Manipur, viz., Bishnupur, Chandel, Churachandpur, Imphal East, Imphal West, Senapati, Tamenglong, Thoubal and
Ukhrul. From every district, 1 (one) block is randomly selected for the study viz., Imphal East C.D., Imphal West C.D., Kakching C.D., Bishnupur C.D, Chakpikarong T.D, Chingai T.D., Kangpokpi T.D., Lamka T.D., Khupum T.D. and from each block, (2) two villages were selected. From selected villages, 10 (ten) beneficiaries were selected randomly. Therefore, the total sample size of the study is 180 respondents.

**SAMPLE DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Name of the District</th>
<th>No. of Block in the District</th>
<th>No. of Selected Block</th>
<th>No. of Village in the Block</th>
<th>No. of Selected Village</th>
<th>No. of Beneficiaries Selected in the Village</th>
<th>Total No. of Beneficiaries Selected in the Village</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bishnupur</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chandel</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Churachandpur</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Imphal East</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Imphal West</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Senapati</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tamenglong</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Thoubal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ukhrul</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY**

Keeping in mind the objectives of the study, the following null hypotheses have been framed for testing.

**Ho₁:** There is no significant correlation between the independent variables.

**Ho₂:** There is no significant correlation between employment numbers of days and change in economic conditions of the beneficiaries.

**Ho₃:** There is no significant difference between before and after MGNREGP Programme Income of the selected villages.

**Ho₄:** There is no significant association between various Income of Wages Employment Programme and average number of working days.

**Ho₅:** There is no significant relationship between gender and the level of satisfaction of the respondents.
Ho$_6$: There is no significant relationship between age and the level of satisfaction of the respondents.

Ho$_7$: There is no significant relationship between family size and the level of satisfaction of the respondents.

Ho$_8$: There is no significant relationship between educational status and the level of satisfaction of the respondents.

Ho$_9$: There is no significant relationship between occupational status and the level of satisfaction of the respondents.

Ho$_{10}$: There is no significant relationship between agricultural income and the level of satisfaction of the respondents.

Ho$_{11}$: There is no significant relationship between income before MGNREGP Programme and the level of satisfaction of the respondents.

Ho$_{12}$: There is no significant relationship between income after MGNREGP Programme and the level of satisfaction of the respondents.

Ho$_{13}$: There is no significant relationship between functionaries’ monitors and the quality of assets created under MGNREGP Programme.

Ho$_{14}$: There is no significant relationship between Impact on Water Conservation and Level of Satisfaction of the respondents.

Ho$_{15}$: There is no significant relationship between Impact on Agriculture Productivity and the level of satisfaction of the respondents.

Ho$_{16}$: There is no significant Impact on Cropping Pattern and Level of Satisfaction of the respondents.

Ho$_{17}$: There is no significant relationship between impact on agricultural productivity, water conservation, cropping pattern and change in economic condition of the respondents.

**DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

The study is both empirical and descriptive in nature. The primary data were collected from beneficiaries through structured questionnaires. The secondary data were collected from beneficiaries, PRIs, local bodies, Govt. publications and reports, (published as well as unpublished) the agencies functioning at the district, State and Central levels. The collected data were analysed to measure the impact of wage employment in Manipur with the help of appropriate descriptive and test statistics tools like mean, standard deviation, bar diagram,
percentage bar diagram, multiple bar diagram, analysis of variance (ANOVA), co-relation and chi–square test. The data was also processed with the help of SPSS – 16 for analysis.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
Social development has now been accepted not only as a strong component of economic development but even some thinkers, academician and planners have started accepting it as a critical development. The involvement of our societies is to sustain the pace of economic development. The anomalies and disparities that have cropped up during all these years of planning have been largely on account of low level of social development. The study would enable us to importantly examine and evaluate the working of social sector schemes in the sample districts. It aims to identify their strong as well as weak points and suggest appropriate policy interventions, both in the short-term as well as in long-term so that essential modifications and rectifications are introduced during the period of operation of schemes and also at the start of new programmes. Therefore, it is intended to look in details into the aspect of participation in work and nature of economic activities.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY
The primary data which was collected through questionnaires and personal interviews method may not be cent percent correct and there may be chances of faulty, though the work was be very attentive and careful while collecting data. The level of literacy of the beneficiaries and the barrier of language, as the study was cover the whole state where diverse languages are spoken, will be a difficult thing to collect primary data. There may be need for an interpreter in each area in order to communicate with the targeted respondents. So, there may be chances of misinterpretation of the information. Lack of proper cooperation from the side of PRIs and other implementing officials while seeking the required data and information for the study may also be a hurdle in this study.

ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS
The first chapter introduces the topic and critically evaluates the existing theories and distribution of various assessment of impact on poverty alleviation programmes. An introduction is given on the present study in which the objective of the study, methodology are focused, hypothesis, scope, significance and the organization of the chapters have been discussed. The second chapter highlighted the impact assessment of poverty alleviation programmes in India.
The third chapter examined the performance of wage employment programmes in India. The fourth chapter discussed on the impact assessment of wage employment programmes in Manipur and schemes implemented in the district during the last ten years and the beneficiaries’ experiences regarding their schemes, the fund allocated for the wage employment programmes and details of work executed by the villagers. The fifth chapter analysed and data interprets on various Socio-economic factors before and after the MGNREGP of sampled beneficiaries. Finally the conclusion delves into suggestions and an overall view of the socio-economic status of the selected beneficiaries of the district of Manipur.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY
1. It is found that centrally sponsored scheme is to provide about 100 days of assured casual manual employment during the lean agricultural season at statutory minimum wages to all persons between the age group of 18-60 years who are productive and labour-intensive social and community workers.

2. The village panchayats are involved in the registration of persons seeking employment and the panchayats maintain those registrations. They also coordinate and monitor the work. A maximum of two adults per family is to be provided employment under the scheme.

3. The budgetary allocation of funds reflecting a steady increase from 11300 crores in 2006-2007 to 40100 crores in 2010-2011.

4. Wage employment programme were taken up by the age group of 41 to 50 years with 35.6 percent of the total population, 28.3 percent respondents were in age group of 31 to 40 years, 9.4 percent respondent were in age group of 20 to 30 years and the rest 16.7 percent of the respondents were in 51 to 60 years of age group. The proportion of beneficiaries in the older age group of 61+ years was 10.0 percent. The highest number of respondent is between the age group of 41 to 50 years.

5. It has been observed that 55.6 percent of the respondents belonged to male beneficiaries and only 44.4 percent of the sample beneficiaries belonged to women group.

6. It is observed that the distribution of respondents who can afford their children for education before and after the MGNREGP. Out of 180 respondents, 103 respondents i.e. 57.2 percent
of the respondents can afford their child for education at private school and 19.44 percent was increased after the programme. 36.47 percent of the total respondents can afford their children for education at government school and -1.66 percent was decreased after the programme. 6.11 percent of the respondents cannot afford their child for education and -17.78 percent was decreased after the programme. But there was an impact of schooling of children after the programme.

7. The study observed that the majority of the sample beneficiaries belong to Schedule Tribe community with 55.6 percent of the respondents. 33.3 percent of the respondents were OBC community and the rest 11.1 percent were General category of the respondents. The data indicate that from the sample technique of stratifies random sampling SC respondents of the beneficiaries have not full filled in identifying the deserved beneficiaries of the selected district.

8. Most of the beneficiaries have 50.55 percent belonged to small size families 1-4 members. Families with nine members constitute 45.6 percent belonged to medium size family. About 3.9 percent of the families have large size families with more than 10 (ten) members. The programme identified a household as a family of above 5 (five) members.

9. Most of the beneficiaries have 24.4 percent skilled labour category, 69.4 percent have unskilled labour category and 6.1 percent have semi-skilled labour category.

10. It can be observed from the beneficiaries that 76.1 percent of the respondents have benefitted from Wages Employment Programmes but 23.9 percent of the respondents do not get the benefits of the Wages Employment Programmes. The majority of the respondents have benefitted from Wages Employment.

11. According to their opinion of change in economic condition of the beneficiaries that 48.8 percent of the respondents have improved their economic condition in an average while 40.0 percent of the total respondents are in the category of good improvement, 10.6 percent of the respondents are in the group of very good improvement and only 0.6 percent of the respondents are in the group of poor category.

12. The results of inter- correlation matrix between selected variables found that the outcome variables of education are having positive correlation with age with a correlation of .665
The calculated value of the Chi-square value (13.78) is less than the table value of the Chi-square (15.5) at the 5% level of with 8 (eight) df. It indicates that the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant relationship between education and the levels of satisfaction of the beneficiaries.

17. The calculated value of the Chi-square value (18.51) is greater than the table value of the Chi-square (12.59) at the 5% level of with six 6(six) df. It indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant relationship between occupational status and the levels of satisfaction of the beneficiaries.

18. The calculated value of the Chi-square value (2.26) is less than the table value of the Chi-square (12.59) at the 5% level of with 6(six) df. It indicates that the null hypothesis is
accepted. Hence, there is no significant relationship between the agricultural income and the levels of satisfaction of the beneficiaries.

19. The calculated value of the Chi-square value (15.23) is less than the table value of the Chi-square (15.507) at the 5% level with 8(eight) df. It indicates that the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant relationship between the income before MGNREG Programmes and the levels of satisfaction of the beneficiaries.

20. The calculated value of the Chi-square value (18.75) is greater than the table value of the Chi-square (15.507) at the 5% level with 8(eight) df. It indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant relationship between income after MGNREG Programmes and the levels of satisfaction of the beneficiaries.

21. The calculated value of the Chi-square value (0.909) is less than the table value of the Chi-square (9.488) at the 5% level with 4(four) df. It indicates that the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, it can be concluded that there is no significant relationship between quality of asset and functionaries monitors the quality of assets created under MGNREG Programme.

22. The calculated value of the Chi-square value (6.530) is less than the table value of the Chi-square (15.507) at the 5% level with 8(eight) df. It indicates that the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, it can be concluded that there is no significant impact on water conservation and their level of beneficiaries’ satisfaction.

23. The calculated value of the Chi-square value (9.067) is less than the table value of the Chi-square (21.026) at the 5% level with 12(twelve) df. It indicates that the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, it can be concluded that there is no significant impact on agricultural productivity and their satisfied with present impact of programme.

24. The calculated value of the Chi-square value (5.454) is less than the table value of the Chi-square (9.488) at the 5% level with 4(four) df. It indicates that the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, it can be concluded that there is no significant impact on cropping pattern and their level of beneficiaries’ satisfaction.
SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY

1. At the village level, provision should be made to train all department level functionaries from time to time. It is further suggested that these functionaries should not be unduly burdened with additional work load. Their work is evaluated at regular intervals.

2. The involvement of district level functionaries to ensure that proper departmental coordination was being maintained in the execution and implementation of programmes at the block levels. Likewise their intervention could also be sought to resolve the problems timely.

3. Every Gram Panchayats with the help of NGOs, at the initial stage may be encouraged to come up with annual work plan, which includes integration of all targets, setup by other departments. It should also be ensured that the targets are in total conformity with problems and demands at the local levels.

4. The procedure in the selection of beneficiaries be simplified and made uniform so that genuine beneficiary does not feel unduly harassed. The help of village development authority could also be taken up.

5. Both the major employment programmes have now been brought under the PRIs at various levels. The District Planning Committees and the other bodies have been so constituted as to give a voice to elected representatives at all levels, including MLAs and MPs. It is therefore, now both feasible and necessary to merge all employment programmes including the funds available to MLAs and MPs.

6. In order to maximise the impact on employment and poverty, the funds available to employment programmes should be enhanced and should be linked to an employment guarantee. A minimum employment feature was initially incorporated in the wage programme without a guarantee. There should be greater progressiveness in the allocation of these funds.

7. To improve the educational and economic status of the beneficiaries’ opportunities for basic and adult education with training which lead to better employment should be provide.

8. Large scale drinking water, electrification and health care of the villages is also suggested as a necessary measure.
9. An allowance for motivating the beneficiaries to work in the village area, should be introduced. This may include monetary incentives, housing and other basic amenities of the beneficiaries.

10. Lastly, it is suggested that the guidelines should necessarily be displayed in the Gram Panchayats notice boards or village meetings. Further it should be made known to all that they need not approach any middlemen or village leader to get selected as a beneficiary under any scheme by paying some amount to them.

CONCLUSION

At the planning and implementation level, there was an envisaged shift from the bureaucracy to local democratic institutions. These include several types of institutions but the thrust towards democratically elected bodies is expected to be the key player of greater participatory development. Both these changes were expected to improve the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes. However, the extent to which government support can have a structural impact on poverty reduction and enhancing equity is much more difficult to assess. Changes towards more equity must develop from within Indian society. A unique and radical programme like the NREGS requires time to be fully or even substantially streamlined. The main characteristic of the Scheme is slow-moving and low-spending. The bureaucracy seems to be in the grips of some kind of fear and weariness. This stems from negativity of the developmental outcomes of this programme, suspicion surrounding its empowerment spin-off and changing balance of power and an overall climate of fiscal tightening and low spending. The inability to effectively address the problem of poverty through the NREGA arises from the following features: low productivity-linked wages, inadequate employment generation, permitting only casual manual work and the restrictions on permissible works. The scheme has been slowly and surely taking deeper roots in Manipur with the active participation of a strong local government having time tested experience in local level planning and development. The start-up activities initiated at different levels have helped in launching the scheme smoothly. The level of awareness among the households about the scheme, its components and its salient features is quite high, which can be mainly attributed to the efforts taken by functionaries at different levels to take the scheme to every nook and corner of rural areas.

However, majority of the workers felt the facilities were inadequate. Men and women were able to get the minimum wage prescribed by the state government. Wages are not distributed through
banks or post offices. Majority of the respondents were not able to get wages within a period of 15 days. There are incidents of delay of wage payment beyond one month. The scheme has distinct impact on the income, expenditure pattern, employment status, and possession of assets of the beneficiaries. It has empowered the women in social, economic and political fronts. The scheme has also yielded many benefits to the individual beneficiaries and panchayats. The functionaries have ensured that essential components of the scheme such as social audit, grievance redressal, transparency and accountability are grounded and practiced. The performance of the scheme as perceived by the rural beneficiaries in all districts is found to be ‘very good’ indicating the good work done by beneficiaries of the scheme at different levels. Wage employment programmes are a powerful instrument for ensuring inclusive growth in rural India through its impact on social protection, livelihood security and democratic empowerment. The right to work brings a sense of security in people’s lives. Today, labourers cannot count on employment being provided to them during the lean season. An employment guarantee gives labourers more confidence in the prospect of local employment in the villages.

REFERENCES


