

# Knowledge of Rural people about National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)

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#### Abstract:

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is a revolutionary step for India's poor. NREGA is the first ever law, internationally that guarantees wage employment on an unprecedented scale and is therefore different from the earlier government schemes. The present study was conducted in five villages of Dharwad taluk, to know knowledge of NREGA among beneficiaries, problems faced by them and suggestions for improvement of the programmes. The sample consisted of 270 randomly selected beneficiaries of NREGA. The results revealed that, majority of beneficiaries (97%) had high knowledge about the programme. Age and education were positively and significantly related to the knowledge of the beneficiaries. Most of the beneficiaries faced some problems while, 33 per cent beneficiaries said that there are no sufficient work site facilities like drinking water and 24 per cent women beneficiaries said that there is no crèche facility. Majority of the beneficiaries suggested that there should be increase in wages and that number of working days should be more than 100 days.

**Key words:** Knowledge, problems and suggestion

#### Introduction:

The schemes launched by the government from the time to time provide relief to rural population, but never guaranteed employment to every household in the village. They were just allocation based programme. A typical feature of these schemes was that none of the jobs were permanent in nature, they were all short term casual jobs, usually for a period of hundred days or more. Job opportunities created by these schemes and programmes acted just as a supplement to the basic amenities of life for a rural family in a sustainable manner.

Taking in to consideration the limitation of earlier rural employment schemes the government of India created a historic story by enacting NREGA. The nation rural Employment Guarantee Act was notified on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2005 and came into force on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006. The aim of NREGA was to enhance the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing 100days of wage employment in a financial year to a rural household whose members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. As per this act employment is to provided by local government when work is demanded by any worker or group of workers registered under NREGA. The present study has been taken in five villages of Dharwad taluk because, the programme is successfully running in the villages which were selected for the study.

#### Methodology and Objectives:

The study has been carried out in the year 2010-11 in Dharwad District of Karnataka by

selecting 270 beneficiaries of the programme randomly. The total beneficiaries were equally drawn from the five villages to study the knowledge of NREGA among beneficiaries, problems faced and suggestions given by beneficiaries.

#### Results and Discussion

The data presented in **Table 1** reveals that, most of the beneficiaries (55%) belonged to middle age group, between 31-50 years. Around 34 per cent of the beneficiaries were youth between the age group of 18-30 followed by old (12%) in the age group more than 50years. The percentage of illiterate and primary education was almost equal that is, 46 and 45 per cent respectively. About nine per cent beneficiaries had high school and very few (0.7%) had completed higher secondary and above. Around 99 per cent of the beneficiaries were labourers (main occupation) followed by agriculture (subsidiary occupation is 11%).

The data in **Table 2** shows that the majority of the beneficiaries were male (73%) followed by female (28%). The data also shows that most of the beneficiaries belongs to SC/ST (42%). Around 37 per cent of the beneficiaries were OBC followed by upper caste (22%). Around 57 per cent of beneficiaries had income level up to 1000-3000, 37 per cent had income level 4000-6000. Only five and three per cent had income level 7000-9000 and 10,000-12,000 respectively.

The NREGS scheme is an employment generation programme where in those willing to do manual work is given employment. It is therefore obvious that able bodied men in age

group of 31-50 years have registered for the programme. Since it is manual work many agricultural labourers are willing to do work under the programme. Members from landed families often hesitate to do such jobs as they consider that it would lower their status in the society. With regard to gender and caste categories, the scheme envisages that there should be at least 1/3<sup>rd</sup> women and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of SC/ST beneficiaries. The findings are almost on par with the mandates of the programme. The nature of the work itself suitable for the illiterate and less educated labourers and so, most of the beneficiaries who have registered for the programme are illiterate and less educated. Regarding the non-beneficiaries the findings represent the demographic characteristics of the selected rural area.

The findings of the present study are in line with those reported by Usha Rani (1999) for age, Padma (1984) for gender, Gautam & Singh (1991) for Caste, Pattanaik (2009) for Education.

A perusal of data in **Table 3** shows overall knowledge level of the beneficiaries about NREGA programme. About 97.00 per cent of beneficiaries had high knowledge, while in the medium knowledge category there were only 2.6 per cent beneficiaries. None of the beneficiaries were in the low knowledge category.

The reason majority of the beneficiaries had high knowledge that they have made efforts to know the benefits and shortcomings of the programme. In addition to their own efforts the concerned Panchyat officials have also educated the beneficiaries about the mandates of the programme.

According to Yadav and Garag 2010, state Government should take step to provide adequate publicity to the programme and to persuade and ensure that all BPL households as possible are persuaded to register under NREGA.

According to Banerjee 2009 local social activities having of NREGA in augmenting the meager sources have how to begin work to

mobilize and assist local communities to demand work and get their full entitlement.

Singh and Kumar in 2009 reported that in Haryana initially many labours were not interested to take up work in the same village to dig a pond as they were not sure of the payment. However, when they were given detailed information about NREGS by the Panchyat by the officials they started slowly to enroll for the work. Thus it is clear that empowering them with the knowledge is very important to motivate them to come towards and enroll themselves and understand that getting work is their right.

The result in **Table 4** indicated that, 33 per cent beneficiaries had problem that there is no sufficient worksite facility provided by Panchyat and 24 per cent women beneficiaries said there is no crèche facility at worksite. Only five per cent beneficiaries faced problem that they had not paid unemployment allowance wherever work was not be given.

Majority of beneficiaries suggested that there should be increase the number of working days beyond 100 days per year and 33 per cent beneficiaries had suggested that sufficient worksite facilities should be provided.

In view of the above mentioned problems there is a need for awareness creation among the rural folk. The information about the programme has mostly spread through word of mouth. The villagers are given told about the programme only after registration. There is suggested that before launching of the programme the Panchyat members are educated about the programme. This should be followed by village level awareness campaign for people from all castes and class because this programme promises work to all those who are willing to do manual work.

**Table 1: Age, education and occupation profile of beneficiaries.**

Demographic variables	Beneficiaries (270)	
	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age(years)</b>		
Young (18-30)	91	33.70
Middle (31-50)	148	54.80
Old (above 50)	31	11.50
<b>Education</b>		
Illiterate	124	45.90
Primary School	121	44.90
High School	23	08.50
Higher Secondary	02	0.70
<b>Occupation</b>		
Labour	241	89.25
Agriculture	29	10.75
Any other	-	-

**Table: 3 Knowledge level of the Beneficiaries**

Knowledge	Beneficiaries	
	Frequency	Percentage
Low	-	-
Medium	07	2.60
High	263	97.40

**Table 2: Gender, caste and income of beneficiaries.**

Demographic variables	Beneficiaries (n=270)	
	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	195	72.20
female	75	27.80
<b>Caste</b>		
SC/ST	112	41.50
OBC	99	36.70
Upper caste	59	21.80
<b>Family income (per month)</b>		
1000-3000	153	56.70
4000-6000	98	36.30
7000-9000	13	4.80
10,000-12.000	06	2.20

**Table 4: Problems faced and suggestions given by beneficiaries about NREGA**

Si. No	Problem faced	Frequency	Percentage
1	Worksite facility	90	33.00
2	Crèche facility	65	24.00
3	Unemployment allowance	12	4.00
	<b>Suggestions given</b>		
1	Increase in wages	252	93.33
2	Increase working days	189	70.00
3	Provide sufficient worksite facilities (Drinking water, shed and first aid)	90	33.00

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## Conclusion:

The NREGA is an important step towards realization of the right to work. It is enacted with fanfare to bring out socio-economic transformation in the lives of rural people. One of the most distinguishing features of the NREGA is its approach towards empowering citizens to play an active role in the implementation of employment guarantee scheme. The Panchyat should conduct more number of meetings to educate rural people about the programme. Apart from village level meetings and discussion, wider publicity needs to be given via the mass media. Presentation of with, success stories would motivate young men and women to come forward to work for the programme which would not only benefit them on The NREGA is an important step towards

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