

PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE OF MGNREGA IN HIMACHAL PRADESH: A CASE STUDY OF CHAMBA DISTRICT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

Deep Singh

Research Scholar, Dept. of Economics, HP University, India

ABSTRACT

The MNREGA being the largest employment providing programme in human history and is unlike any other wage employment programme in its scale and thrust. MNREGA provides a legal guarantee for wage employment of hundred days in a financial year. It is a demand driven programme where work is being provided by the demand of work by the wage seekers. MNREGA aims to overcome problems of target groups through its self-targeting mechanism of beneficiary selection that is a large percentage of poorest of poor and marginalized seeker of employment under scheme. MNREGA is bottom-up, people oriented, demand centered, self selecting, right based design and unprecedented employment providing programme. MNREGA is a landmark initiative to alleviate poverty and generate productive wage employment. This employment generation programme is a new lifeline for the rural people who earn their livelihood. Chamba district is one of the most backward districts of country so MNREGA plays an important role in the economic development of the district. Keeping this in mind, an attempt has been made in this paper to analyze the financial performance of MNREGA in Chamba District. The temporal data shows that there is fluctuating trend in the financial performance in the district. Apart from the temporal variations there are block wise variations as well in the district.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Physical performance, Chamba district, Himachal pradesh

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA):

An important initiative of Government of India towards rural development is the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005). The Act initially came into force in 200 economically backward districts of the country from February 2, 2006. MGNREGA aims at enhancing livelihood security of households in rural areas of the entire

country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Implementation of the programme has been entrusted to Panchayati Raj institutions which are the main planning and implementation authorities. Gram Sabhas have been assigned a pivotal role in planning, monitoring and social audit of projects under the Act. It is a holistic approach not only to generate employment opportunity but also to ensure infrastructural development like water conservation, water harvesting, irrigation and so on. In spite of several positive aspects of MGNREGA, different studies have revealed that the popularity of this act varies from place to place and prevalence of corruption also creates hurdles in the implementation of MGNREGA.¹

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a social security legislation, which was notified on 7th September, 2005 with an aim of enhancing the livelihood security of the rural people and arresting the migration from rural to urban. The scheme provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wages. The Act aims to achieve the objective by giving the right to work as enunciated in the Directive Principles (Article 41) in the Constitution of India²

1.2. Key Stakeholders in the Implementation of MNREGA

Implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA involves roles and responsibilities of a large number of stakeholders from the village to the national level. At the village level, wage seekers, Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat are the stakeholders, whereas Intermediate Panchayat and Programme Officers are the stakeholders at the block level. At the District level, District Panchayat and District Programme Co-ordinator (DPC) are the stakeholders, while State Employment Guarantee Council and State Government are the stakeholders at the State level. At the Central level, Central Employment Guarantee Council, Ministry of Rural Development and the Central government are the stakeholders. Other important stakeholders include - Members of Social Audit Fora, Vigilance and Monitoring Committees; Technical Staff of implementing agencies and Departments which stand to benefit from MGNREGA like Agriculture, Water Resources/Irrigation, Forest, etc³.

2.1 THE PRESENT STUDY

In the present study, the investigator investigated the financial performance of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in detail with the help of secondary data. The data was collected between the financial year 2011-12 to 2015-16 from the office of District Rural Development Agency, Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh, university library, daily newspapers, magazines and internet. The present study intends to assess the financial

performance of the scheme with the following objectives:

- i. To assess the fund released under the scheme during study period to different blocks of district and to assess the total expenditure incurred that is fund utilization by different blocks.
- ii. To give the comparative analysis of fund utilization by different blocks under the scheme during study period.

2.2 District Highlights of 2011 Census

- ❖ Chamba district occupies the 7th rank among the districts in terms of population.
- ❖ Chamba district has improved its rank from 6th in 2001 census to 4th in 2011 census in terms of sex ratio among the districts of the state with 986 females per 1,000 males as compared to 972 females per 1,000 males of state average.
- ❖ Chamba district stands 5th in terms of its working force having total workers of 294,035 persons against 3,559,422 working persons of the state.
- ❖ Chamba district stands at 7th positions in terms of decadal population growth (2001-2011) of 12.6 percent persons in comparison to state decadal population growth of 12.9 per cent persons.
- ❖ In terms of density of population per sq.km., Chamba district with 80 persons per sq.km. stands at 9th rank in the state.
- ❖ Chamba district occupies 8th rank among the districts of the state in terms of literate population. It has a literate population of 323,842 persons.
- ❖ Chamba district holds the 1st rank in terms of scheduled tribe population in the state. It has reported 135,500 persons as scheduled tribe. Pangi and Bharmour tehsils along with Holi sub- tehsil constitute the tribal area of the district.
- ❖ The economy of Chamba district is mainly depending on agriculture. It has returned 196,665 persons as cultivators and holds the 5th position among the districts of the state.
- ❖ Chamba district is known for its exquisite natural beauty which attracts large number of tourists from the plains round the year. Sub-Himalayan range of mountains full of diverse flora and fauna make Chamba district as a whole an exhilarating experience.
- ❖ Chamba district has an important place on the tourist map of the state with famous tourist places like Chamba town, Khajjiar, Dalhousie and Bharmour.
- ❖ Chamba district has also a name in Hydro Power Generation. Baira Siul, Chamera-I and Chamera –II are the projects situated in the district.
- ❖ All the in-habited villages of the district enjoy the facility of electricity and potable drinking water⁴.

MGNREGA: THE PRESENT STATUS

A number of authors have attempted to study the MGNREGA in detail and its related problems.

Dreze (2007):⁵ He looks at the corruption in rural employment programmes in Orissa (India) and how this has continued in a NREGA as well. According to Mathur (2007), a system of regular and continuous flow of authoritative information is essential, as opposed to the random reports and studies dependent on the initiative of individuals and groups. To improve implementation, the government needs to solve problems, modify policy directives, and issue operational guidelines for the district, block and village levels. The government must take the lead, be proactive, mobilise institutions and groups, and use the media effectively. NREGS involves several lakhs of government officials, panchayat functionaries, elected representatives, NGOs and community groups. They play a critical role but had little preparation for the challenge. NREGS in fact is a program of national importance which has been marginalised. While the Ministry of Rural Development is the nodal ministry at the centre, every relevant department and agency requires being involved.

Ambasta et al. (2008):⁶ gave a number of important recommendations. These included deployment of full-time professionals dedicated to MGNREGA at all levels, especially at the block level. Intensive effort at building up a massive cadre of fully trained grass-root workers is required at the gram panchayat level through a nationwide movement for capacity building, engaging government and non-government training institutions.

Mehrotra (2008):⁷ a civil servant who has worked in implementation of the scheme, believes that 4 per cent of programme costs allocated as administrative costs and professional support is still quite low and does not recognise the fact that a programme at the scale of MGNREGA requires serious professional support.

Khera (2008):⁸ He thinks that the successful implementation of the MGNREGA in the Pati block in Orissa (India) state goes beyond the ability of its residents to claim their rights. This is brought out by the high levels of engagement with the programme in terms of planning, implementation and monitoring.

Mathur (2009):⁹ states that in social audit undertaken in Andhra Pradesh (India), it was found that in certain villages, some people stated that they had not been paid for the work done. When comparisons were made of the payments as per the pass-book with the payment as per the job card, it was discovered that the job card did not contain the inner pages that record the work done by each person; the job card itself was incomplete.

Gopal K.S. (2009):¹⁰ He conducted a study on National Rural Employment Guarantee Act's social audit in Andhra Pradesh on the basis of secondary data. Social audit was examined and it was found that social audits have achieved much less than advertised. It was suggested that in order to make MNREGA more viable, much emphasis should be given to transparency, empowerment and good governance.

Dey, S. and Bedi (2010):¹¹ they made an attempt to study the functioning of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in Bhirbhum district in West Bengal. It was found that implementation of scheme was satisfactory but study also found some deficiencies in the implementation. There were long delays in wage payments.

Narayan N.C. Lokhande, Nitin (2013):¹² they made an attempt to evaluate the implementation of MNREGA in Maharashtra with the help of both primary and secondary data in three blocks. The study found that there is a serious lack of capacities in the agencies tasked with actualizing the scheme. The study clearly revealed that the design flow of not assessing the capacities of the governing agencies. The study suggested that a partnership between local non-government organization and educational institutions could offer a way out to bring in transparency and accountability.

Maiorano, Diego and Chakradhar, Budha (2014):¹³ studied the MNREGA in tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh. Study revealed that the ST's are among the most deprived sections of the population in country. The study found that in 2013-14 the average person day in Andhra Pradesh was 54.49 days per household but in tribal areas the figure was just 43.21 days per household. The study concluded that the MNREGA in tribal areas constitute an essential safety net against starvation and destitution. It was suggested that social audits should be done by making contacts with beneficiaries and it was also suggested that a greater effort by the state administration is needed in order to fill the gap between government order and ground reality.

Table 1: Block Wise Persondays Generated, Job Cards issued, Demand for Employment, Employment provided and Works completed in 2015-16

Sr. No.	Name of Block	PERSONDAYS GENERATED IN LACS	JOB CARDS ISSUED	DEMAND FOR EMPLOYMENT	EMPLOYMENT PROVIDED	WORKS COMPLETED
1	Chamba	3.48	16188	9376	8314	NA
2	Mehla	5.85	20650	12949	11959	NA
3	Bhatiyat	1.87	19038	6874	5656	NA
4	Salooni	5.85	19727	11596	9943	NA
5	Tissa	4.44	18074	11926	11063	NA
6	Bharmour	1.43	8433	4345	3908	NA
7	Pangi	3.40	5075	4039	3965	NA

Source: District Rural Development Agency, Chmba H.P.

Table 1 depicts the block wise Persondays Generated, Job Cards issued, Demand for Employment, Employment provided and Works completed in 2015-16. It is evident from the table that if we talk about persondays generated in the year 5.85 lac persondays were generated in Mehla and salooni blocks. Least persondays were generated in Bharmour block (1.43 lacs). As far as job cards are concerned the highest job cards were issued in Mehla which is followed by Salooni, Bhatiyat, Tissa, Chamba, Bharmour and Pangi respectively. It is also evident from the table that demand for employment was highest in Mehla block which is followed by Tissa, Salooni, Chamba, Bhatiyat, Bharmour and Pangi Blocks respectively. In the case of employment provided Mehla is top on the list which is followed by Tissa, Salooni, Chamba, Bhatiyat, Bharmour and Pangi blocks. The data for works completed is not available for the year 2015-16.

Table 2: Block Wise Persondays Generated, Job Cards issued, Demand for Employment, Employment provided and Works completed in 2014-15

Sr. No.	Name of Block	PERSONDAYS GENERATED IN LACS	JOB CARDS ISSUED	DEMAND FOR EMPLOYMENT	EMPLOYMENT PROVIDED	WORKS COMPLETED
1	Chamba	4.81	16001	10520	9664	620
2	Mehla	6.42	20514	13625	12755	972
3	Bhatiyat	3.30	18191	8862	7656	1294
4	Salooni	5.19	19318	12862	11420	1047
5	Tissa	4.82	17838	12218	10988	1139
6	Bharmour	1.16	8217	4433	3921	1294
7	Pangi	3.13	5034	3998	3846	314

Source: District Rural Development Agency, Chmba H.P.

Table 2 depicts the block wise Persondays Generated, Job Cards issued, Demand for Employment, Employment provided and Works completed in 2014-15. It is evident from the table that if we talk about persondays generated in the year 6.42 lac persondays were generated in Mehla and 5.19 lac days in salooni blocks. Least persondays were generated in Bharmour block (1.16 lacs). As far as job cards are concerned the highest job cards were issued in Mehla which is followed by Salooni, Bhatiyat, Tissa, Chamba, Bharmour and Pangi repectively. It is also evident from the table that demand for employment was highest in Mehla block which is followed by Tissa, Salooni, Chamba, Bhatiyat, Bharmour and Pangi Blocks respectively. In the case of employment provided Mehla is top on the list which is followed by Tissa, Salooni, Chamba, Bhatiyat, Bharmour and Pangi blocks. In the case of works completed it is evident from table that highest works were completed in Bhatiyat and Bharmour blocks whereas lowest works were completed in Pangi during the year.

Table 3: Block Wise Persondays Generated, Job Cards issued, Demand for Employment, Employment provided and Works completed in 2013-14

Sr. No.	Name of Block	PERSONDAYS GENERATED IN LACS	JOB CARDS ISSUED	DEMAND FOR EMPLOYMENT	EMPLOYMENT PROVIDED	WORKS COMPLETED
1	Chamba	5.36	15876	10619	9864	771
2	Mehla	7.76	20528	13915	13242	974
3	Bhatiyat	4.41	19068	9373	8534	1294
4	Salooni	6.81	19141	13630	12706	1047
5	Tissa	4.19	17772	12027	11064	1139
6	Bharmour	2.78	8132	5223	4927	1294
7	Pangi	3.25	4965	3993	3877	314

Source: District Rural Development Agency, Chmba H.P.

Table 3 depicts the block wise Persondays Generated, Job Cards issued, Demand for Employment, Employment provided and Works completed in 2013-14. It is evident from the table that if we talk about persondays generated in the year 7.76 lac persondays were generated in Mehla and 6.81 lac person days were generated in salooni block. Least persondays were generated in Bharmour block (2.78 lacs). As far as job cards are concerned the highest job cards were issued in Mehla which is followed by Salooni, Tissa, Bhatiyat, Chamba, Pangi and Bharmour respectively. It is also evident from the table that demand for employment was highest in Mehla block which is followed by Salooni, Tissa, Chamba, Bhatiyat, Bharmour and Pangi Blocks respectively. In the case of employment provided Mehla is top on the list which is followed by Salooni, Tissa, Chamba, Bhatiyat, Bharmour and Pangi blocks. In case of works completed it is clear that highest works were completed in Bhatiyat and Bharmour which and lowest were completed in Pangi in 2013-14.

Table 4: Block Wise Persondays Generated, Job Cards issued, Demand for Employment, Employment provided and Works completed in 2012-13

Sr. No.	Name of Block	PERSONDAYS GENERATED IN LACS	JOB CARDS ISSUED	DEMAND FOR EMPLOYMENT	EMPLOYMENT PROVIDED	WORKS COMPLETED
1	Chamba	6.60	15544	10594	10086	771
2	Mehla	8.89	20244	15520	14976	154
3	Bhatiyat	4.25	18602	9473	8579	413
4	Salooni	6.69	18595	12844	11838	600
5	Tissa	6.69	17512	12811	12028	402
6	Bharmour	1.92	8004	4644	4280	413
7	Pangi	2.99	4726	3785	3685	143

Source: District Rural Development Agency, Chmba H.P.

Table 4 depicts the block wise Persondays Generated, Job Cards issued, Demand for Employment, Employment provided and Works completed in 2012-13. It is evident from the table that if we talk about persondays generated in the year 8.89 lac persondays were generated in Mehla and 6.69 lacs in Salooni and Tissa blocks. Least persondays were generated in Bharmour block (1.92 lacs). As far as job cards are concerned the highest job cards were issued in Mehla which is followed by Salooni, Bhatiyat, Tissa, Chamba, Bharmour and Pangi respectively. It is also evident from the table that demand for employment was highest in Mehla block and lowest was in Pangi. In the case of employment provided Mehla is top on the list which is followed by Tissa, Salooni, Chamba, Bhatiyat, Bharmour and Pangi blocks. In case of works completed table depicts that highest works were completed in Chamba block which is followed by Salooni, Bhatiyat, Bharmour, Tissa and Mehla respectively and lowest works were completed in Pangi block.

Table 5: Block Wise Persondays Generated, Job Cards issued, Demand for Employment, Employment provided and Works completed in 2011-12

Sr. No.	Name of Block	PERSONDAYS GENERATED IN LACS	JOB CARDS ISSUED	DEMAND FOR EMPLOYMENT	EMPLOYMENT PROVIDED	WORKS COMPLETED
1	Chamba	4.48	14987	9632	9514	485
2	Mehla	7.16	19340	13645	12967	793
3	Bhatiyat	4.83	18182	9344	8601	684
4	Salooni	5.48	17920	10949	10497	530
5	Tissa	4.49	17021	11737	10445	190
6	Bharmour	2.02	7796	4708	4296	684
7	Pangi	2.87	4469	3651	3611	222

Source: District Rural Development Agency, Chmba H.P.

Table 5 depicts the block wise Persondays Generated, Job Cards issued, Demand for Employment, Employment provided and Works completed in 2011-12. It is evident from the table that if we talk about persondays generated in the year 7.16 lac persondays were generated in Mehla and 5.48 lacs in Salooni block. Least persondays were generated in Bharmour block (2.02 lacs). As far as job cards are concerned the highest job cards were issued in Mehla which is followed by Bhatiyat, Salooni, Tissa, Chamba, Bharmour and Pangi respectively. It is also evident from the table that demand for employment was highest in Mehla block which is followed by Tissa, Salooni, Chamba, Bhatiyat, Bharmour and Pangi Blocks respectively. In the case of employment provided Mehla is top on the list which is followed by Salooni, Tissa Chamba, Bhatiyat, Bharmour and Pangi blocks. In case of works completed table depicts that highest works were completed in Mehla block which is followed by Bhatiyat, Bharmour, Salooni, Chamba and Pangi respectively and lowest works were completed in Tissa in the year.

Table 6: Block Wise comparative analysis of Persondays generated, job cards issued, demand for employment, employment provided and works completed during 2011-12 to 2015-16

Sr. No.	Name of Block	Persondays generated in Lacs	Job Cards Issued	Demand for Employment	Employment Provided	Works Completed
1	Chamba	27.73	78587	50741	47442	2647
2	Mehla	36.08	101276	69654	65899	2893
3	Bhatiyat	18.66	94131	43926	39026	3685
4	Tissa	24.63	88217	60719	55588	2870
5	Salooni	30.02	94701	61861	55774	3224
6	Bharmour	9.31	40582	32353	21332	3685
7	Pangi	15.04	24269	19466	18984	993

Source: District Rural Development Agency, Chmba H.P.

Table 6 depicts the block wise comparative analysis of 5 indicators of MGNREGA i.e. person days generated, job cards issued, demand for employment, employment provided and works completed for the time period of 2011-12 to 2015-16. Table depicts that if we take into consideration person days generated it was highest in Mehla block which was followed by Salooni, Chamba, Tissa, Bhatiyat, Pangi and Bharmour blocks respectively. If we talk about Job cards issued the table depicts that highest job cards were issued in Mehla block during study period which was followed by Salooni, Bhatiyat, Tissa, Chamba and Bharmour blocks respectively and lowest job cards were issued in Pangi block. As far as demand for employment is concerned the descending order of the blocks is as Mehla, Salooni, Tissa, Chamba, Bhatiyat, Bharmour and Pangi respectively. In the case of employment provided, Mehla block provided the employment to the highest number of persons which was being followed by Salooni, Tissa, Chamba, Bhatiyat and Bharmour blocks and in Pangi block the employment was provided to least number of persons. As far as works completed are concerned the highest works were completed in Bhatiyat and Bharmour blocks which are followed by Salooni, Mehla, Tissa, Chamba blocks and lowest works were completed in Pangi block.

CONCLUSIONS:

Around 70 per cent of indian population is living in rural areas and the people of rural areas should have the same living standard as of the urban people. So, it is utmost important that the programmes and policies should be introduced to enhance the living standard of rural poor.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a “Silver Bullet” for eradicating rural poverty and unemployment, by way of generating demand for productive labour force in Indian villages. This scheme provides an alternative source of livelihood which will have an impact on reducing migration, restricting child labor, alleviating poverty, and making villages self-sustaining, cleaning up of water tanks, soil and water conservation work, etc. This scheme has been considered as the largest anti-poverty programme in the world.

As district Chamba is concerned, it is the most backward district of Himachal Pradesh. MNREGA in Himachal Pradesh was introduced firstly in two districts namely Chamba and Sirmour. As far as physical performance of MNREGA is concerned in Chamba district, it can be concluded that there are temporal and spatial variations in the person days generated, job cards issued, demand for employment, employment provided and works completed. Year wise data and block wise data revealed that all the indicators showed fluctuating trend during the study period. It can also be concluded that there are block wise variations as well. Mehla block performed exceptionally well where as the performance of tribal blocks i.e. Bharmour and Pangi is very poor with respect to all the indicators i.e. person days generated job cards issued, demand for employment, employment provided and works completed. So, emphasis must be given by policy makers and implementing authorities to cope up the area wise disparities in the implementation of the scheme.

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