



Evaluating The Implementation And Developmental Impact Of MGNREGA In Hong Village: A Policy Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was introduced in 2005 to alleviate rural poverty by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment annually to rural households in India. This study examines the implementation and developmental impact of MGNREGA in Hong village, Ziro Valley, Arunachal Pradesh, with a specific focus on infrastructure development, wage disbursement practices, and local governance through the Gram Sabha. The findings reveal significant improvements in community infrastructure, including the construction of footpaths, traditional wells (sukung), drainage systems, and retention walls. However, major challenges persist, particularly delays in wage payments, governance inefficiencies, and lack of awareness among beneficiaries regarding compensation entitlements. Wage discrepancies across different project areas further indicate administrative lapses. To enhance the scheme's effectiveness, policy interventions such as real-time wage tracking mechanism, stricter enforcement of compensation provisions, and capacity-building programs for Gram Sabha members are necessary. Strengthening participatory governance and ensuring transparency in project allocation can improve MGNREGA's developmental impact in Arunachal Pradesh and serve as a model for similar rural contexts.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Rural Development, Local Governance, Infrastructure Development, Policy Implementation

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, famously stated, 'India lives in her villages.' He believed that the true essence of India lies in its rural communities and emphasized the importance of self-reliant, empowered villages for the country's overall progress. Gandhi advocated for decentralized governance and rural development as the foundation of sustainable growth, recognizing that addressing the needs of rural India was pivotal for the nation's prosperity. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) resonates

with this vision by empowering rural households and advancing development through community-driven initiatives.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), enacted in September 2005, marks a significant step in India's efforts to tackle rural poverty and unemployment. This initiative ensures that every rural household, where adult members are willing to engage in unskilled manual labour, is guaranteed 100 days of wage employment each financial year. Designed as a demand-driven program, MGNREGA has two main goals: providing livelihood security to vulnerable populations and promoting sustainable rural development by creating durable assets such as roads, water conservation structures, and other public infrastructure. The scheme is rooted in the values of inclusivity and participatory governance. It also seeks to empower marginalized communities, including women and Scheduled Castes and Tribes, by offering equal opportunities for employment.

However, despite its potential for transformation, the implementation of MGNREGA has encountered several challenges over the years. Issues such as administrative inefficiencies, delays in payment of wages, lack of adequate monitoring mechanisms, and corruption have often undermined the scheme's effectiveness. Moreover, regional disparities in its implementation have raised questions about its ability to achieve equitable development. The northeastern region of India, characterized by its unique socio-cultural and geographical context, presents specific challenges and opportunities for MGNREGA. Arunachal Pradesh, with its remote villages and traditional governance structures, offers an intriguing case for assessing the scheme's impact on rural development.

The rationale behind this study is to focus detailed village-level analysis of the implementation and impact of MGNREGA. While the existing literature focus mostly on district level study of MGNREGA in Arunachal Pradesh, this study attempts to provide an insight to the forces at play at the village level. This study examines the implementation and outcomes of MGNREGA in Hong village, the largest villages in Ziro Valley. The village serves as an ideal setting to examine how local governance structures such as the Gram Sabha interact with the program's objectives. Using a case study approach, this research seeks to uncover both the achievements and challenges of MGNREGA in Hong village, particularly regarding infrastructure development, wage disbursement practices, and community involvement.

Through this perspective, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on rural development and policy efficacy in India, providing insights that could guide future efforts to improve the scheme's implementation.

Objective

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the implementation and impact of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Hong village, Ziro Valley, Arunachal Pradesh. Specifically, the research seeks to:

1. **Evaluate the effectiveness of MGNREGA** in promoting rural development through the creation of public assets such as footpaths, drainage systems, and retention walls.
2. **Explore the influence of local governance structures**, particularly the Gram Sabha and Gram Chairpersons, in the planning, and execution of MGNREGA projects.
3. **Identify the challenges encountered by beneficiaries** of the scheme, including delays in wage payments, lack of compensation for delays, and insufficiency of wages in addressing rural poverty.
4. **Examine the inconsistencies in wage distribution** and variations in work allotment across different areas within the village.
5. **Suggest policy recommendations** to improve the efficiency, inclusiveness, and developmental impact of MGNREGA in rural Arunachal Pradesh.

Methodology

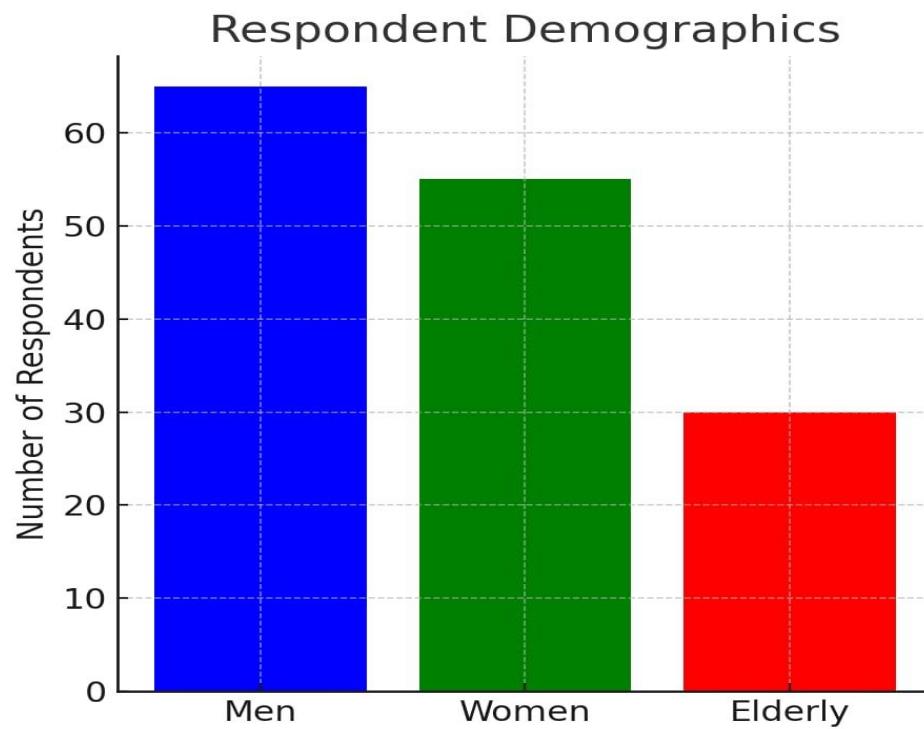
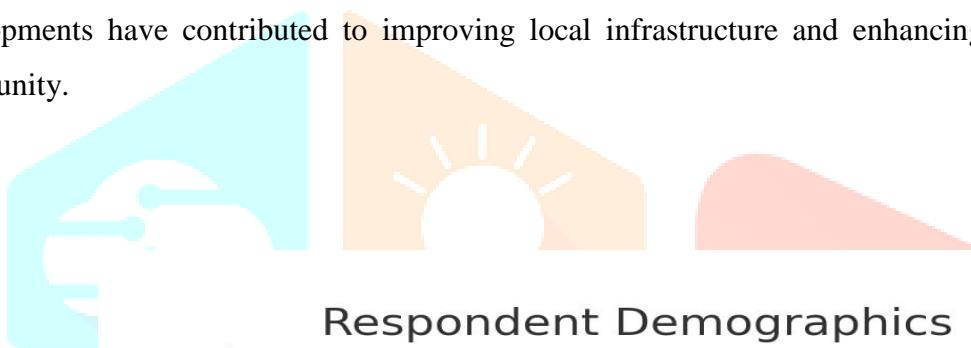
This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques to comprehensively analyze the implementation and developmental impact of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Hong village, located in the Ziro Valley of Arunachal Pradesh. The research involved conducting a survey of MGNREGA beneficiaries to gather data on their experiences with the scheme. A list of beneficiaries was obtained from the Gram Chairpersons of East Punyo, West Punyo, North Punyo, South Punyo, Kago tulu, Lambu Leyu, East Saji tulu, West Saji Tulu, South Saji Tulu, Pulo Tulu, TakheLeyu from Hong-Hari development Block. The households were selected randomly to ensure a representative sample. A total of 150 respondents, all agricultural workers, were surveyed, including men, women, and elderly members of the community, to reflect diverse perspectives.

The survey questionnaire was designed to cover key areas, such as awareness about MGNREGA provisions, payment timelines, infrastructure development, and the challenges faced by beneficiaries. The questions were structured to elicit both quantitative and qualitative responses, providing a holistic understanding of the scheme's functioning. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including the Gram Chairperson and Gram Sabha members, to gain insights into governance and administrative practices, as well as the challenges in sanctioning and implementing MGNREGA projects.

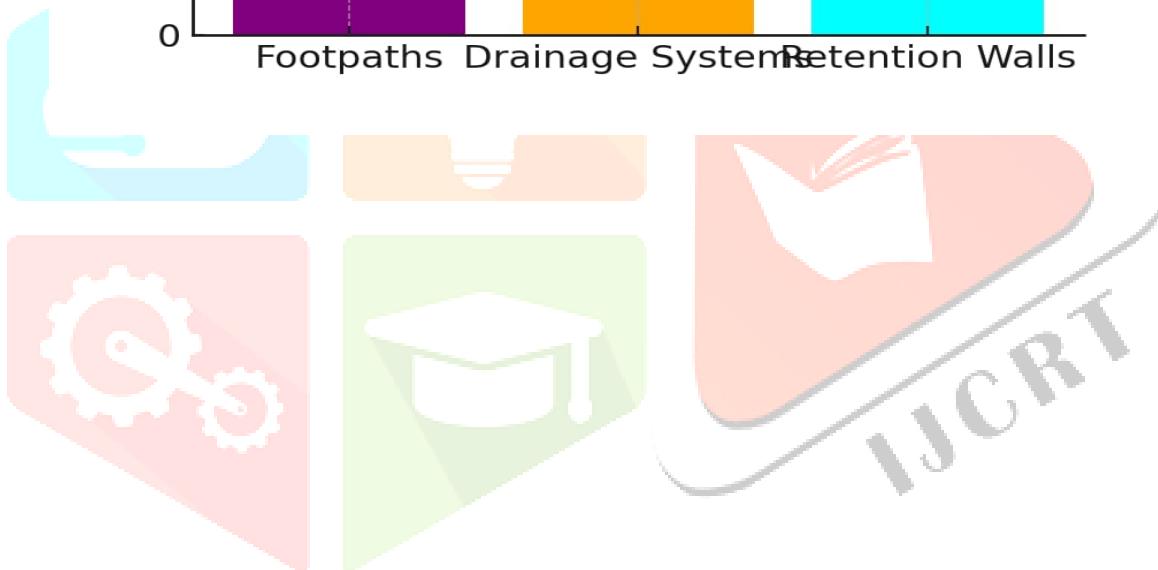
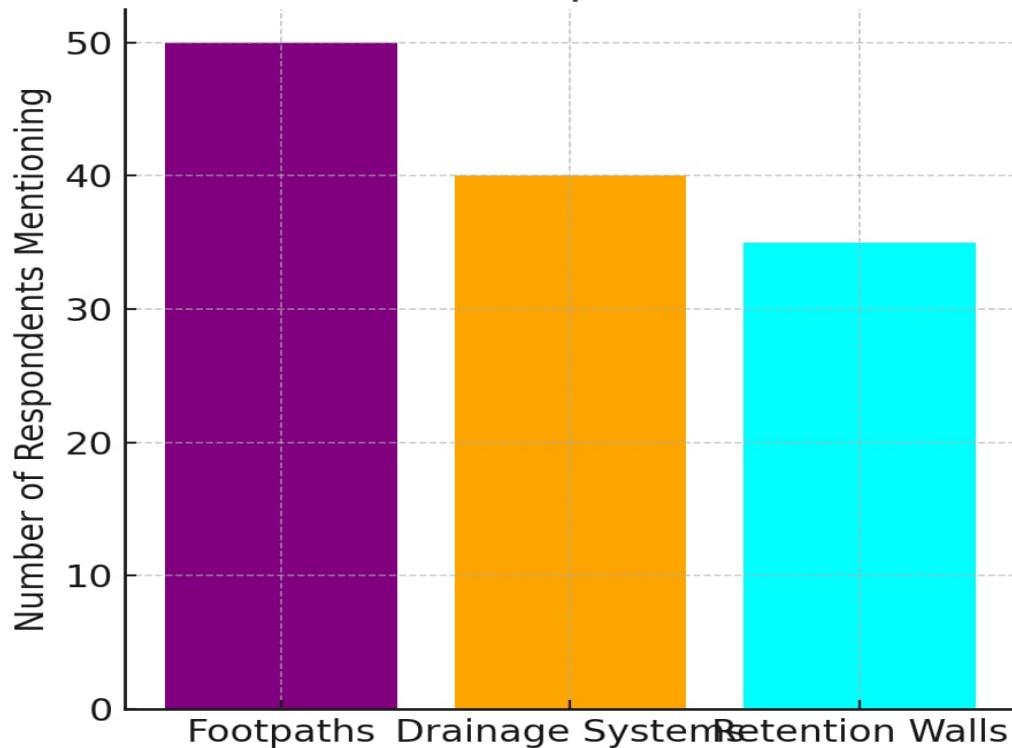
Field visits to project sites were undertaken to observe the quality and utility of completed works, such as footpaths, wells, drainage systems, and retention walls. Informal conversations with villagers during these visits added contextual depth to the findings. To supplement primary data, secondary sources, including government reports, press releases, and official guidelines on MGNREGA, were reviewed.

Findings of the Survey

The survey conducted among 150 respondents in Hong village reveals both the developmental benefits and significant challenges in the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). A majority of the participants emphasized the scheme's positive impact on community development. Key infrastructural improvements credited to MGNREGA include the construction of footpaths, sukun (traditional well), drainage systems (commonly referred to as 'nalahs'), and retention walls. These developments have contributed to improving local infrastructure and enhancing the quality of life in the community.



Infrastructure Developed Under MGNREGA





Construction of foot path at Lorin Pabu, Takhe village



Top: Drainage ('Nalah') at Takhe Leyu



Top: Sukung (Traditional Well) at Tapi Segment, Hong Village;

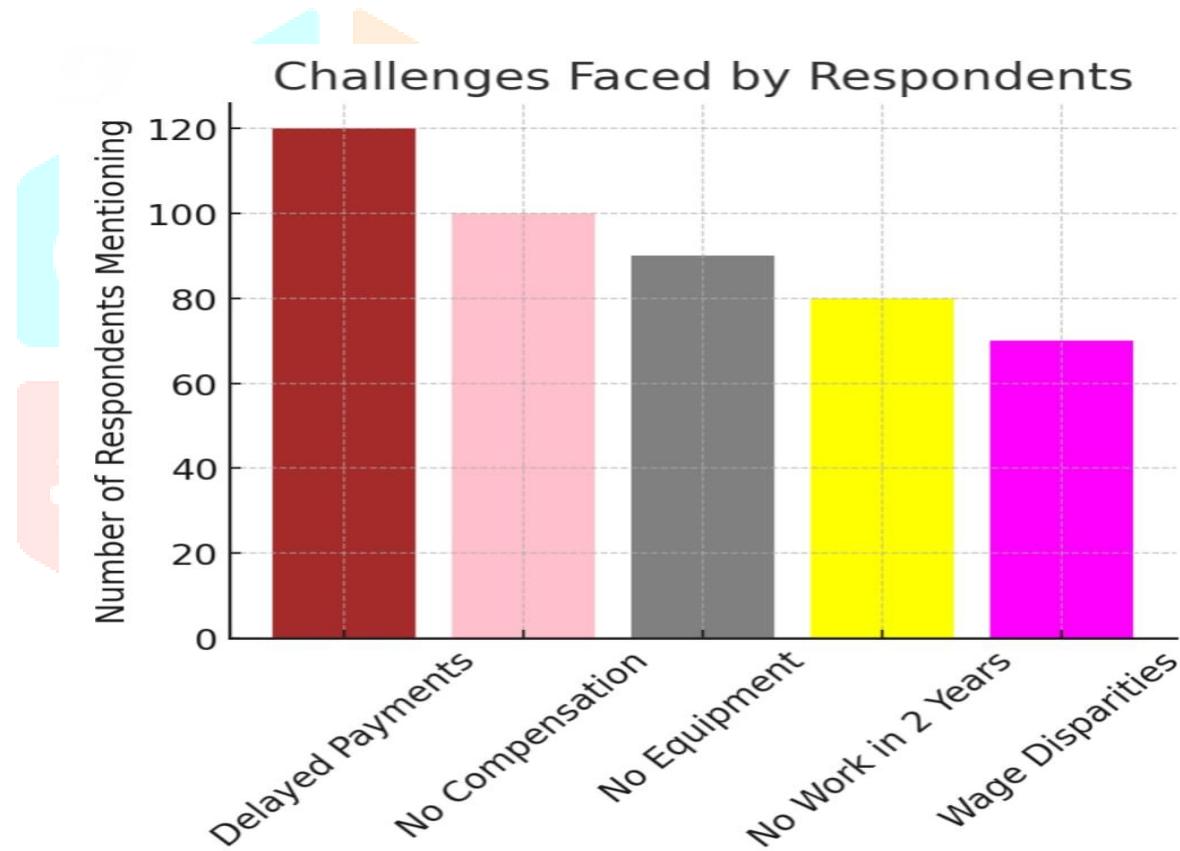
Bottom: Retention Wall at LambuLeyu, Hong, Village

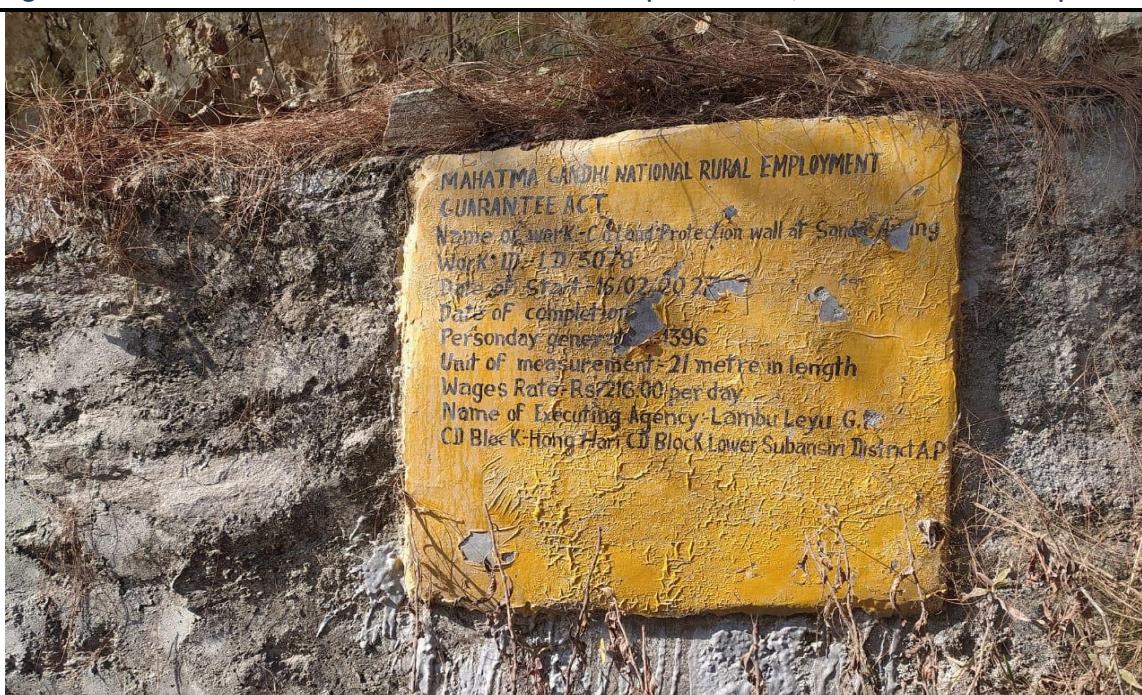


However, the findings also highlight critical implementation gaps, particularly with regard to the timely disbursement of wages. A significant number of respondents reported extensive delays in wage payments. In

many cases, wages were paid several months after the completion of work, while some individuals reported waiting up to one or even two years. Such delays undermine the primary objective of MGNREGA, which is to provide immediate financial relief to rural households. According to the Ministry of Rural Development, wage seekers are entitled to receive compensation for delayed payments at a rate of 0.05% of the unpaid wages per day beyond the sixteenth day of closure of the muster roll. However, the survey revealed that no such compensation was provided to the workers. Alarmingly, the majority of respondents were unaware of the provision of compensation for delayed wages, reflecting a lack of awareness about their rights under the scheme.

Additionally, it was found that there is a variation in the daily wages received by beneficiaries. Some respondents reported receiving ₹216 per day, while others claimed to have received ₹400 per day. This inconsistency raises concerns about transparency in wage distribution and compliance with the prescribed guidelines.





Under construction protection wall at Hong Hari Block (Above),
Mention the daily wage as ₹216 per day.

The survey also uncovered governance challenges within the Gram Sabha, which is responsible for implementing MGNREGA at the village level. One Gram Chairperson revealed that certain members of the Gram Sabha demanded personal favors, such as the construction of walls on private properties, instead of prioritizing community infrastructure projects. This self-serving behavior hinders the development of community assets, which are vital for the long-term success of the scheme.

Moreover, the role of Gram Chairpersons was found to vary significantly across the village. Some Chairpersons, often those who were more politically active, actively pursued the sanctioning of projects for their respective areas. In contrast, others, who were either less politically involved or unwillingly appointed to their positions, did not advocate for work to be sanctioned. This disparity in leadership has resulted in certain areas being overlooked for development projects, further exacerbating inequality. Many Gram Chairpersons expressed dissatisfaction with their roles, stating that they felt powerless and compelled to act according to the wishes of Gram Sabha members, which discouraged proactive leadership.

To sum up, while MGNREGA has contributed positively to community infrastructure development, its potential to uplift rural livelihoods in Hong village remains significantly underutilized. Structural inefficiencies such as delays in wage payments, governance challenges, and the misalignment of priorities within the Gram Sabha must be addressed to ensure the scheme fulfills its intended objectives and promotes equitable development.

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlights the critical role that MGNREGA plays in promoting rural development and providing a safety net for vulnerable populations in Hong village, Ziro Valley, Arunachal Pradesh. The scheme has made notable impact on building community infrastructure, such as footpaths, drainage systems, and retention walls, which have enhanced the quality of life in the village. Nevertheless, ongoing challenges such as delays in wage payments, insufficient wages, and lack of awareness about compensation for delayed payments, continue to hinder the scheme's effectiveness. Additionally, governance-related issues, such as unequal distribution of sanctioned projects and the influence of politically active Gram Chairpersons, further exacerbate these challenges.

To address these shortcomings, certain policy recommendations are necessary. A real-time wage tracking mechanism should be established to allow workers to monitor payments and report delays. Awareness campaigns should be conducted regularly to educate MGNREGA beneficiaries about their rights, particularly compensation for delayed wages, through village meetings, social media, and local radio. Strengthening Gram Sabha participation by introducing mandatory periodic public audits will ensure greater accountability and provide workers with a platform to voice concerns. Transparent project allocation is essential, and a rotational work allocation system should be implemented to prevent favoritism and ensure equal infrastructure development across all regions. The role of Gram Chairpersons must be redefined with clear accountability measures to eliminate biases in project sanctioning. Additionally, structured training programs should be introduced for Gram Sabha members to enhance their governance and financial management capabilities, alongside performance-based evaluations to ensure their active participation. Providing direct access to government-funded tools and materials will reduce the financial burden on workers and expedite infrastructure projects. Establishing independent auditing mechanisms will further ensure the quality and sustainability of constructed assets. By adopting these measures, MGNREGA can more effectively fulfill its goal of providing rural employment as well as lead towards inclusive and equitable development in Arunachal Pradesh.

Gandhi envisioned self-reliant villages as the cornerstone of India's progress, believing that sustainable development could only be achieved when the needs of rural India were addressed with sincerity and dedication. MGNREGA, as a policy inspired by this philosophy, holds immense potential to translate Gandhi's vision into reality. However, for this vision to be fully realized, the scheme must evolve to overcome structural inefficiencies and encourage greater community participation and equitable implementation. By addressing these challenges, MGNREGA can truly embody Gandhi's dream of an India where villages thrive as centers of economic and social vitality.

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