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MGNREGS and Rural Livelihoods in Kerala: A Beneficiary-Centric Study

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Abstract

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) has emerged as a cornerstone of rural livelihood security in India, with Kerala often cited as a relatively successful case in terms of implementation and participation. However, the effectiveness of the programme cannot be fully understood without examining the perceptions of its primary stakeholders—the beneficiaries themselves. This study analyses beneficiaries' perceptions of the effects of MGNREGS in Kerala, with a specific focus on regional variations across districts. Using primary data collected from MGNREGS beneficiaries across different regions of the state and supported by secondary sources, the study evaluates perceived impacts on income security, employment stability, household consumption, women's empowerment, and overall socio-economic well-being. The findings reveal significant regional disparities in beneficiaries' experiences and satisfaction levels, influenced by factors such as administrative efficiency, availability of work, wage payment systems, and local governance structures. While MGNREGS has contributed positively to livelihood security and social inclusion in most regions, gaps persist in terms of timely wage payments, adequacy of workdays, and quality of assets created. The study highlights the importance of region-specific policy interventions and strengthened local institutions to enhance the effectiveness of MGNREGS in Kerala.

Keywords: MGNREGS, Beneficiaries' Perception, Regional Disparities, Rural Employment, Livelihood Security.

Introduction

The development experience of Kerala received considerable attention on account of its achievements in the field of social development, literacy, education, health etc. The importance given to public investments has resulted in social development especially in the education and health sectors (Rajan, 2009). The advances in the social development arena have given rise to the Kerala Model of Development (KMD). The KMD propagates that Kerala has achieved material conditions of living comparable to the prevailing social conditions in developed countries. The KMD assumes top priority to social development indicators rather than on high levels of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, the economic reforms introduced in the State have reduced public investments for social development. Though the introduction of these reforms enhanced the rate of growth of the Kerala economy, these reforms have serious repercussions on the agricultural sector of the State (ibid, 2009). Yet another notable characteristic of Kerala is the successful practices in the implementation of democratic decentralisation. The responsibility of local governance rests with the PRIs. The importance given to three tier Panchayat Raj System and the devolution of funds and functionaries from the State Government to the federating units also becomes a typical model for other States to follow.

Amid these positive developments of the State, the predicament is that the effects of social development and democratic decentralisation have not been equally experienced throughout the State (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 2011). Moreover, the twin crises of poverty and unemployment also pose difficulties in its efforts to development. However, the extent and intensity of poverty has recorded a declining trend since 1999-2000, compared with the high incidence of poverty during 1960's. But, the persistence of unemployment continues to haunt Kerala economy. The rate of unemployment in Kerala is alarmingly increasing at an increasing rate. As per the latest World Employment and Social Outlook Report, published by International Labour Organisation, unemployment in the State is more than two times the all-India average. The aforesaid peculiarities of Kerala economy entail the need to assess the implementation of rights-based employment guarantee scheme in the State.

The introduction of MGNREGS could have been promulgated as a solution to all the aforesaid problems of the earlier programmes implemented in the State, since MGNREGS foresees a paradigm shift from a 'programme to an Act'. The MGNREG Act, while designing its Schedules and framing the entitlements of the workers, gives due consideration to solve failures of the earlier programmes and envisages a better rural economy free from poverty, unemployment, and lack of adequate livelihood facilities. During the implementation of MGNREGS in Kerala, various arguments were raised both in favour of and against the success of the scheme in the State. The main argument against the scheme was that it has less scope in solving the unemployment problem, since Kerala suffers from educational unemployment. On the other hand, those who argued in favour of the scheme anticipates that the favourable factors prevailing in the State which are conducive for the successful implementation of the scheme could earn more positive outcomes compared to other States in India. It is noted that there is a high degree of positive correlation exists between efficient implementation of MGNREGS and the social indicators such as literacy and efficient local governance (Jacob & Varghese, 2006).

Despite these favourable conditions, the implementation and impact of MGNREGS in Kerala are not uniform across regions. Variations exist in terms of availability of work, timeliness of wage payments, effectiveness of grievance redressal mechanisms, and quality of assets created. Differences in geographical conditions, fiscal capacity of local bodies, and administrative efficiency further contribute to regional disparities in programme outcomes. These variations underline the need for a region-specific assessment of MGNREGS rather than a uniform state-level evaluation.

Beneficiaries' perceptions serve as a crucial indicator of the effectiveness of MGNREGS, as they reflect lived experiences of access, adequacy, and usefulness of the programme. Perception-based analysis helps capture qualitative dimensions such as dignity of work, reliability of employment, and perceived improvements in socio-economic status, which are often overlooked in quantitative assessments. In the context of Kerala, where social development indicators are relatively high, beneficiaries' perceptions provide deeper insights into how MGNREGS complements existing welfare mechanisms and addresses emerging vulnerabilities. By examining beneficiaries' perceptions across different regions of Kerala, this study seeks to understand the extent to which MGNREGS has met its objectives of livelihood security and inclusive development.

Review of Literature

As the focus of the study is on the effect of MGNREGS from a beneficiary perspective, the review of literature is restricted to studies examining MGNREGS planning, implementation, and outcomes from a beneficiary-centric perspective in Kerala.

Panda (2015) flagged MGNREGS as a new initiative in the approaches to development. He opined MGNREGS as a programme which promotes sustainable development through capability enhancement. He identified the scheme as the best development practice to promote sustainable development in a developing economy. His observations were based on a field survey he has conducted in 2011, covering 400 MGNREGS workers and 400 MGNREGS non-workers spread over five Districts, ten Blocks and 40 GPs in Assam. Through this study he proved that MGNREGS has the capability to create three cardinal concepts of sustainability i.e., economic, social and environmental sustainability. Economic sustainability was measured by assessing increase in income, food security and bank accounts opened under the scheme. Number of children attending schools, presence of various social groups and associations and distress migration were the parameters used to assess social sustainability. The examination of works taken up under MGNREGS was assessed in order to study the environmental impacts of the scheme. Moreover, his study shows that MGNREGS increases income and food security to the poor, empowers rural women and strengthened the natural resource base in the study area. Finally, he concluded by saying that MGNREGS has the potential to bring about real decentralised sustainable development.

Abraham (2016) studied the process of asset creation under MGNREGS based on a primary survey covering four Southern States namely, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. The study examines the importance of local Government bodies in the process of asset creation under MGNREGS. The study has carefully verified the selection, implementation, ownership, quality and the importance of assets created under the scheme. Through this study, he reveals that the process of asset creation largely depends on the local, economic, political and social structure of different regions. The selection, implementation and expenditure of the works in an area clearly demonstrates bottom-up planning and effective co-ordination built upon the interests of the local people. Assets created on private lands were better managed and they maintained the desired quality. But with low material components, these assets tend to be non-durable. Most of the assets created were of utmost important for the locality. The study concludes that it is the active local representative bodies that voice the grass roots that can engage such public programmes into transformational agents in the process of development and growth of the economy.

An evaluation study was conducted by Ranaware et.al (2015) in Maharashtra to assess the impact of MGNREGS works on peoples' lives. The study sought to verify whether the works purportedly created under the scheme do exist and to assess their condition and quality. They also intended to examine the impact of these works upon the beneficiaries. The study was focussed only on subjective assessment and perceptions of beneficiaries and costs of users of these works. 20 Districts from Maharashtra were selected for the study. From these Districts, one Block was purposively selected and five GPs from each Block was selected respectively, which represents the best performing GP. The survey included 4881 beneficiary households and 4266 MGNREGS works. The survey considered all the works completed between January 2010 and December 2013. For both private works and private works, the sample household were selected through different approaches. The beneficiaries on public works were identified through spatial delimitation criteria. For private works, the land owner or the person who operated the land was considered. The study tried to capture all the distinct type of works through different questionnaires.

Gandhigram Rural Institute (2010) conducted a study on the implementation of MGNREGS in Kerala. Four Districts were selected by them on the basis of geographical location, period of implementation and on the

basis of SC/ST population. The study employed multi-stage sampling process to select four Panchayats from two Blocks selected from the Districts and used various methods such as survey, focus group discussion and interview with key informants. The study portrays a positive picture with regard to the implementation of MGNREGS in the State. The poor, especially the rural women were able to make savings out of the income and thus became an income earning member in the family. The extent of migration was stopped as noted by this study. The beneficiaries have benefitted from better social relationships and they were now able to give better education for their children. The works undertaken were according to the specifications laid down by the Act and they were executed as per the suggestions carried out during GS meetings. These works could increase the irrigation facilities, helpful to regenerate the traditional water bodies and resulted in better network of roads. The study revealed that the performance of the scheme in Kerala was very good. They also made some recommendations such as, suspension of work during the peak agricultural season, permission to undergo works in private lands, revision of wage rate, permission to alter the work pattern as per region wise specifications and provision of better infrastructure facilities.

Pillai (2010) as part of a study examining the performance of 15 major centrally sponsored programmes expressed his concern over the implementation deficiencies of MGNREGS in Kerala. He commended that the failure of the scheme in guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment has tarnished the success of MGNREGS. As the main objective of MGNREGS is to provide 100 days of wage employment, the failure in generating these much employment days vividly explains the implementation failure of the scheme in Kerala. However, he also opined that higher women participation in the State can be seen as useful investments in the hands of women which have multiple uses.

Statement of the Problem

Although MGNREGS has significant potential to transform rural livelihoods through employment generation and asset creation, the performance of works under the scheme in Kerala has not reached the desired level when compared to several other states. The effective functioning of MGNREGS largely depends on the coordinated role of beneficiaries, Gram Sabhas, and Gram Panchayats, which together form the foundation of programme implementation. Better planning of works, timely completion, and operational efficiency are closely linked to the active participation of beneficiaries at various stages of implementation. Unlike earlier wage employment programmes, the scale, institutional design, and rights-based framework of MGNREGS are intended to optimise outcomes for stakeholders and strengthen the rural economy through the creation of productive assets. However, existing studies and government reports on MGNREGS in Kerala have predominantly focused on macro-level impact assessment, with limited attention to the execution of works from the beneficiaries' perspective. In particular, the influence of official procedures and administrative processes on work efficiency and outcomes remains underexplored. This gap underscores the need to assess effect of MGNREGS from the perspective of its beneficiaries by analysing different aspects of the scheme, including planning, implementation, and work execution.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess perceived changes in the socio-economic lives of MGNREGS beneficiaries in Kerala.
- To analyse beneficiaries' suggestions for strengthening the implementation of MGNREGS works.

Methodological and Statistical Framework

The study is descriptive and exploratory in nature and is based on primary data. Primary data were collected from MGNREGS beneficiaries during the year 2020–21. The required sample size was determined using a standard sample size estimation formula at a 95 per cent confidence level and a margin of error of 5 per cent, assuming a response distribution of 50 per cent. Based on this estimation, the sample size was fixed at 384 beneficiaries.

A multi-stage random sampling technique was adopted for selecting the sample. To capture regional variations within Kerala, one district each was selected from the northern, central, and southern regions of the

state—Kannur, Thrissur, and Alappuzha respectively. The sample was allocated to each district proportionately based on the total number of beneficiaries, resulting in a sample of 106 beneficiaries from Kannur, 119 from Thrissur, and 159 from Alappuzha. From each selected district, four Gram Panchayats were chosen at random. The required number of beneficiaries from each Panchayat was then selected proportionately from the beneficiary lists obtained from the respective Panchayats, using random numbers generated through Microsoft Excel. Data were collected from the selected beneficiaries using a pre-tested structured interview schedule to ensure reliability and clarity of responses. The analysis of primary data involved descriptive techniques and appropriate inferential statistical methods to examine variations, relationships, and the combined influence of multiple factors related to beneficiaries' perceptions and satisfaction.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

By guaranteeing unskilled wage at the minimum wages, MGNREGS seeks to uphold the socio-economic conditions of the poor, vulnerable and the marginalised sections of the society and to equip this significant population, to get them absorbed in the mainstream economy. In congruence to this, an attempt was made to analyse the extent of changes happened in the lives of the beneficiaries after availing work under MGNREGS. The extent of these changes was analysed and for convenience it was classified into three groups.

Table 1 Distribution of beneficiaries by their perception on the extent of positive changes occurred after availing work under MGNREGS

Opinion	Total		Region					
			North		Centre		South	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No change	15	3.91	3	2.83	5	4.2	7	4.4
Some extent	147	38.28	39	36.79	50	42.02	58	36.48
To great extent	222	57.81	64	60.38	64	53.78	94	59.12
Mean	2.58		2.50		2.55		2.54	
SD	0.55		0.58		0.58		0.57	
t	18.460		10.750		9.319		11.868	
Sig.	0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000	

Source: Primary Survey

Table 1 presents distribution of beneficiaries by their opinion about extent of positive changes occurred after availing works under MGNREGS. From the table, it can be seen that 57.81 percent of total sample has reported that a great extent of changes occurred in their life after availing work under MGNREGS and 38.28 percent said that the changes occurred is of some extent. At the same time 3.9 percent asserted that there is no change occurred in their life after availing works under MGNREGS. The mean score of extent of change was found to be 2.58, which was significantly higher than the mean of the response scale as the significance level of one sample t test with test value 2 is less than 0.05. The result indicates that according to the perception of beneficiaries there is significant change occurred in their life after availing work under MGNREGS. The region-wise analysis also revealed that there is significant change occurred in the life of beneficiaries from three regions of Kerala after availing works.

Table 2 Mean score of extent of change occurred in the life of beneficiaries after availing works under MGNREGS

Characteristics		Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Age	Less than 40	2.65	0.53	0.383	0.820
	40-49	2.53	0.57		
	50-59	2.53	0.6		
	60-69	2.52	0.57		
	70 and above	2.43	0.51		
Gender	Male	2.42	0.59	0.403	0.527
	Female	2.57	0.56		
Social Category	SC	2.48	0.58	0.142	0.935
	ST	2.62	0.51		
	OBC	2.57	0.57		
	General	2.54	0.58		
Religion	Hindu	2.54	0.56	0.940	0.394
	Muslim	2.63	0.57		

	Christian	2.45	0.64		
Marital Status	Married	2.53	0.58	2.931	0.038
	Unmarried	2.00	0.58		
	Separated	2.65	0.49		
	Widowed	2.67	0.48		
Educational Qualification	Primary	2.53	0.59	1.053	0.384
	High school	2.59	0.55		
	Higher Secondary	2.64	0.56		
	Degree/PG	2.37	0.49		
	Technical	2.37	0.63		
Family Size	3	2.56	0.55	0.617	0.606
	4	2.51	0.59		

	5	2.55	0.57		
	5+	2.59	0.54		
Status of House	Own	2.53	0.58	0.281	0.756
	Rented	2.61	0.56		
	Joint family	2.6	0.55		
Interaction				1.053	0.395

Source: Primary Survey

Table 2 presents the mean score of extent of change occurred in the life of beneficiaries after availing works under MGNREGS. The variation in the extent of change was evaluated by one-way ANOVA. The table shows that the extent of change occurred in the life of beneficiaries after availing work under MGNREGS are same among beneficiaries of all characteristics except marital status as the significance level of F values are greater than 0.05. As far as beneficiaries by marital status are concerned, it can be seen that the extent of change occurred among unmarried beneficiaries is 2.00 which is significantly lower than others.

Similarly, the responses of the beneficiaries regarding the importance of MGNREGS to their family was recorded and analysed. Responses were recorded in 5-point scale as given below.

Table 3 Importance of MGNREGS to the family

Opinion	Total	Region
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			North		Centre		South	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Very unimportant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unimportant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neutral	38	9.9	6	5.66	15	12.61	17	10.69
Important	307	79.95	89	83.96	91	76.47	127	79.87
Very important	39	10.16	11	10.38	13	10.92	15	9.43
Mean	4.05		3.98		3.99		4.00	
SD	0.4		0.49		0.45		0.45	
t	43.818		26.982		22.031		27.677	
Sig.	0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000	

Source: Primary Survey

Responses of the beneficiaries which reveal the importance of MGNREGS to their family presented in Table 3 indicates that about 80 percent of them confirmed that the MGNREGS is important to their family. 10.16 percent of them asserted that the scheme has very important role in their day-to-day life. The remaining beneficiaries were neutral in their responses. It is significant to note that none of them recorded a negative response in this regard. The mean score of importance was found to be 4.05, which is significantly higher than the mean of the response scale as the significance level of one-sample t test with test value 3 is less than 0.05. From the result, it can be concluded that as opined by the beneficiaries, MGNREGS has a significant place in supporting their family. Regional analysis also revealed that MGNREGS beneficiaries from different regions of Kerala have accorded significant importance to the scheme.

Table 4 Mean score of responses of beneficiaries regarding importance of MGNREGS to their family

Characteristics		Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Age	Less than 40	3.98	0.39	2.011	0.100
	40-49	3.98	0.41		
	50-59	4.09	0.51		
	60-69	3.93	0.44		
	70 and above	3.93	0.27		
Gender	Male	3.99	0.49	0.037	0.849
	Female	4.01	0.44		
Social Category	SC	4.00	0.41	2.500	0.065
	ST	4.31	0.48		
	OBC	3.99	0.45		
	General	3.98	0.47		
Religion	Hindu	4.01	0.43	0.344	0.710
	Muslim	3.98	0.43		
	Christian	3.97	0.53		
Marital Status	Married	4.01	0.45	0.046	0.987
	Unmarried	4.00	0.00		
	Separated	4.00	0.50		
	Widowed	3.97	0.43		
Educational Quali- fication	Primary	3.98	0.45	0.775	0.545
	High school	3.99	0.41		
	Higher Secondary	4.09	0.45		
	Degree/PG	4.00	0.53		
	Technical	4.00	0.48		
Family Size	3	4.13	0.52	2.136	0.101
	4	3.96	0.47		
	5	3.99	0.40		
	5+	4.05	0.41		

Status of House	Own	4.00	0.45	0.563	0.572
	Rented	4.02	0.44		
	Joint family	3.80	0.45		

Source: Primary Survey

The mean score of importance of MGNREGS to the beneficiaries according to their different characteristics is presented in the above table. The variation in the importance given was examined by one-way ANOVA. The table indicates that importance given to MGNREGS is same among beneficiaries of all characteristics as the significance level of F values are greater than 0.05. There is no difference in opinion on the basis of age, gender, social category, religion, marital status, educational qualification, family size and status of house. From the analysis, it can be inferred that MGNREGS is assisting all its beneficiaries in one way or another.

Suggestions for better implementation of works

The success of every wage employment scheme depends on correcting the anomalies which prevents the scheme from accomplishing the desired objectives. Since beneficiaries are the primary stakeholders of MGNREGS, they were asked to record their suggestions for better implementation of MGNREGS works. The responses were recorded and presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Suggestions for better implementation of works

Suggestions for better implementation of works		
	n	%
More utilisation of waste lands	39	10.16
Need more work days	93	24.22
Need work regularly	139	36.20
No suggestions	11	2.86
Wages should be paid promptly	42	10.94
Works should be undertake in small & marginal land holdings also	60	15.63
Total sample	384	100.00

Source: Primary Survey

Above table revealed that 36.2 percent of the beneficiaries demanded regularity in work for proper work implementation and 24.2 percent demanded more work days irrespective of the stipulated 100 days employment. 15.6 percent demanded that work shall be undertaken in small and marginal land holdings so that poor people can also benefit from private works undertaking as part of MGNREGS work. Beneficiaries also suggested (10.16 percent) for more efficient utilization of waste lands, so that these lands can be used for agricultural purposes. 10.9 percent expressed their regret in delayed wage payments. As per their opinion, prompt wage payments could result in better implementation of works. The remaining 2 percent of the beneficiaries did not suggest any measures for further improvement. The suggestions put forward by the beneficiaries is analysed by considering their characteristics using Friedman test and the result is presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Analysis of suggestions according to the characteristics of beneficiaries

Characteristics	Suggestions	Friedman Test
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		More utilisation of waste lands	Need more work days	Need work regularly	Wages should be paid promptly	Works should be undertake in small & marginal land holdings also	Chi-Square	Sig.
Age	Less than 40	1	5	4	2	3	15.032	0.005
	40-49	1.5	4	5	1.5	3		
	50-59	1.5	4	5	1.5	3		
	60-69	1.5	4	5	1.5	3		
	70 and above	3	1.5	5	1.5	3		
	Mean Rank	1.8	3.7	4.8	1.6	3.1		
Gender	Male	2	4	5	1	3	7.6	0.107
	Female	1	4	5	2	3		
	Mean Rank	1.5	4	5	1.5	3		
Social Category	SC	2	4	5	1	2	13.436	0.009
	ST	1	2	5	2	4		
	OBC	2	4	5	1	3		
	General	1	4	5	2	3		
	Mean Rank	1.63	3.63	5	1.63	3.13		
Religion	Hindu	2	4	5	1	3	10.508	0.033
	Muslim	1	3	5	2	4		
	Christian	1	4	5	2	2		
	Mean Rank	1.33	3.67	5	1.83	3.17		
Marital Status	Married	1	4	5	2	3	11.081	0.026
	Unmarried	2	2	5	2	1		
	Separated	2	3	5	1	3		
	Widowed	2	2	5	1	4		
	Mean Rank	2.13	3.25	5	1.75	2.88		
Educational Qualification	Primary	1	4	5	3	1	16.694	0.002
	High school	1	4	5	2	3		
	Higher Secondary	1	4	5	2	3		
	Degree/PG	2	5	4	1	3		
	Technical	2	3	5	1	3		
	Mean Rank	1.5	4.1	4.8	1.8	2.8		
Family Size	3	1	4	5	2	2	12.205	0.016
	4	2	4	5	1	3		
	5	2	4	4	3	1		
	5+	1	3	5	2	4		
	Mean Rank	1.5	3.88	4.88	2.13	2.63		
Status of House	Own	2	4	5	1	3	9.28	0.054
	Rented	1	4	5	2	3		
	Joint family	1	2	2	2	2		
	Mean Rank	1.33	3.83	4.5	2.17	3.17		

Source: Primary Survey

The table shows that the most important suggestion put forward by beneficiaries in the age group less than 40 years is need for more work days as it has got the highest rank of 5 (ranks are given in reverse order). The second important suggestion of beneficiaries of this age group is in need for work regularity followed by works should be undertaken in small and marginal landholdings. They have given the lowest importance given to more utilization of waste lands. The suggestion of beneficiaries in 40-49 age groups is found to be different from the suggestion of youngest age group. They have given first importance to need work regularity followed by need for more work days. The lowest importance is given to more utilisation of waste lands and prompt payment of wages. Similar variation in the suggestion is also seen in other age groups. The result of Friedman test revealed that the suggestions put forward by beneficiaries vary significantly with respect to their age as the significance of Chi-Square value is less than 0.05. The gender wise-analysis

of variation revealed that there is no significant variation between the opinion of male and female beneficiaries with respect to suggestions for better improvement. Both category give due emphasis on work regularity and for more work days.

While considering different social category, the most important suggestion given by all the categories is the need for regular work. The second important suggestion given by the SC beneficiaries is more work days. On the other hand, the need for undertaking MGNREGS works in small and marginal landholdings is the second important suggestion given by ST category. The lowest importance given by SC category is promptness in wages and that of ST is more utilization of waste lands to carry out works. The importance given by OBC category is almost similar to the suggestions given by SC category. The result of Friedman test presented in the table indicates significant differences in suggestions given by beneficiaries of different social category.

Similarly, result of Friedman test revealed that the suggestions put forward by beneficiaries belonging to different religion, marital status, educational qualification and family size varies significantly as the significance of Chi-Square value is less than 0.05. It is evident that majority of the beneficiaries suggested for regular work and the need for more work days. It is pertinent to note that beneficiaries who have comparatively better education have given the third importance to the need for taking up works in small lands. There is no significant variation among beneficiaries belonging to different status of housing, as the significance level of Chi-Square test is greater than 0.05.

The above analysis revealed that the crucial issue pertaining to MGNREGS work implementation in Kerala is irregularity in work allocation. The beneficiaries were not getting work regularly as per their demand. The need for more work days through MGNREGS is another notable suggestion given by the beneficiaries. It is to be noted that during the primary survey the guaranteed employment days was 100. Presently, it has increased to 150 days. It was observed that those who seek employment under MGNREGS demands work continuously and regularly. Therefore, it may be inferred that they perceive the work as their permanent job offered by government.

Execution of works in small and marginal landholdings and more utilization of waste lands are the other major suggestion put forward by the beneficiaries. Currently, majority of private works are carried out in landholdings of large size due to the limitations in carrying out different works in small land holdings. But this might result in a situation where the poor is being utilized for creating assets for those who have more lands. Similar situation is exhibited in a study by Hirway (2010) on the performance of MGNREGS.

The shortage of public lands to carry out work turns out to be a hurdle in creating public assets. In congruence to this, the beneficiaries suggest that proper measures should be taken to utilize waste lands to execute MGNREGS works. As opined by them, these lands can be converted to productive lands by undertaking land development activities through MGNREGS.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussions reveal that scheme is successful in reaching the targeted population in the State. It is widely known that more than 90 percent of MGNREGS workers in Kerala are women. In addition to this, the study found out that elderly women are the major beneficiaries of the scheme in the State. An important inference drawn from the analysis is that the satisfaction level of the beneficiaries is directly linked to their socio-economic characteristics. More dissatisfaction is noted with respect to timing, irregularity in work, inadequate supply of tools etc. Lack of adequate public lands in executing works and issues in handling online work assessments are the areas of concern from the official side. If the implementing authorities take appropriate measures to impede all the issues with regard to work execution, there are rays

of hope for MGNREGS in Kerala to transform not only the lives of its beneficiaries, but also the structure of rural economy in the State.

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