

## **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Program in Kerala: How it Creates Employment and Reduces Poverty?**

**Shanu N Nazar**

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Economics, University of Kerala, Kariavattom  
Thiruvananthapuram, India

### **Abstract**

To reduce the intensity of poverty and unemployment in India, both central and state governments have introduced a series of programmes. Among these, one of the important programmes is Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP) which aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing hundred days of wage employment in a fiscal year to rural household whose adult member volunteers to do unskilled manual work. This scheme is being implemented through center and state with cost sharing at 90:10 ratios. Hundred percent of the unskilled wage portion and administrative cost are borne by Government of India and 25% of material cost are met by the state government. The outcomes of the program are poverty reduction, increased work participation of women and gender equity, increased land use and land productivity, sharp decline in distress emigration, inclusive development and empowerments of the Panchayats. Thus MGNREGP is conceived as a holistic approach to make the growth more inclusive. More than 12 years have elapsed after the implementation of the scheme and it is the right time to examine the impact of the scheme. Hence the researcher, through this paper makes a humble attempt at this direction by examining the performance of the scheme in Kerala.

“The rich must live more simply so that the poor may simply live”

- Mahatma Gandhi

The development of rural India is an imperative for inclusive and equitable growth and to unlock the enormous potential of the population that is presently trapped in poverty with its associated deprivations. Poverty is a condition in which a person or community lacks the financial resources and essentials to enjoy minimum standard of life and wellbeing. Millions live with hunger and malnutrition because they simply cannot afford to buy enough food. The solution of poverty and unemployment in rural India has been a serious challenge before the Government of India.

To reduce the intensity of poverty, both central and state Governments have introduced a series of poverty alleviation and employment generation programmes. One of the important programmes among these is National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme introduced in 2005(NREGP). Now it is known as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP) and aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing hundred days of wage employment in a fiscal year to a rural household whose adult member volunteers to do

unskilled manual work. The parliament passed the MGNREGA in the monsoon session on August 23, 2005. In its first phase, it was implemented in 200 India's most backward districts on February 2, 2006. And its coverage has been extended to 130 more districts of India since April 1, 2007 in its second phase. The act is implemented in all districts of India from April 1, 2008.

MGNREGA is the first tangible commitment to the poor. The scheme aims at providing employment as a source of income by ensuring their dignity. Thus, it was considered a unique scheme, which provides them Right to work, enshrined in the constitution under directive principles of state policy (Part IV, Article 39 (a) and Article 41, constitution of India). In this sense the scheme was supposed to be the most unique scheme after independence as it provides them statutory right to employment.

Kerala is small Indian state with a land area of 38,863 Sq.km. and population of 33.3 million situated in the southwestern part of the country. Rural development programmes in Kerala are mainly either centrally sponsored projects or schemes and projects implemented by local bodies. In case of the former the Ministry of Rural development has been implementing a number of programmes in rural areas through the state governments for poverty reduction, employment generation, rural infrastructure and provision of basic minimum services. MGNREGP, a flagship scheme of the Government of India is implemented through centre and state with cost sharing in 90:10 ratio. Hundred percent of the unskilled wage portion and administrative cost are borne by Government of India and 25% of material cost are met by Government of Kerala. MGNREGP was notified in phase 1 in Wayanad and Palakkad Districts from 02/02/2006. Later Idukki and Kasargod Districts were notified under the Act on 01/04/2007. The act was extended to the remaining 10 districts from 01/04/2008. Initial remuneration under MGNREGA was Rs125 which has been raised to Rs 263 in 2017.

The outcome and the impact of the program are poverty reduction, increased work participation of women and gender equity, increased land use and land productivity, sharp decline in distress emigration, inclusive development and empowerments of the Panchayats. MGNREGP is conceived as a holistic approach to make the growth more inclusive. More than 12 years have elapsed after the implementation of the scheme and it is the right time to examine the impact of the scheme. Hence the researcher makes a humble attempt at this direction with the following objectives.

### **1.1 Objectives**

- To evaluate different measures for effective implementation of MNREGP.
- To examine socio-economic impact of MNREGP.

### **1.2 Methodology**

Secondary data are used for the study. Secondary data are collected from various published documents of Govt. of India and Kerala, official website of MNREGP and other sources.

### 1.3 Features of MGNREGA

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a holistic measure aimed at fulfilling one of the most important human rights that is Right to Employment, at least to one member of the family. Some of the encouraging features of MGNREGA are as follows;

1. Guaranteed employment for one hundred days: MGNREGA is a big opportunity for rural areas of India. This act has a provision of guaranteed employment for one hundred days in every financial year to rural households with unemployed adult members prepared to do unskilled manual work at a statutory minimum wage rate. As per the provision of this act, a person who needs employment is to get his/her family registered with Gram Panchayat.
2. The benefits are reflected in greater economic security, higher farm wages, lower migration and building of infrastructure
3. The scheme has been universalized for all persons living in rural areas whether they are Below Poverty Line (BPL) or Above Poverty Line (APL).
4. A minimum of 33% reservation to be made for women, where the numbers of applicants are too large.
5. As far as practicable, a task funded under MGNREGA shall be performed by using manual labour and not machines.
6. Every scheme will have adequate provisions for ensuring transparency and accountability at all levels.
7. The Act says that at least 50 percent of the works in terms of costs will be allotted to the gram panchayats for execution. The act defines panchayats as the prime authorities in management of the MGNREGA. Panchayats are to finalize, approve, implement and monitor the projects. The scheme will not permit engaging any contractor for implementation of the projects.
8. If injury is caused to any person employed under MGNREGA, he/she will be entitled to free of charge medical treatment.
9. If a person employed under the scheme, dies or become permanently disabled by an accident arising out or in the course of employment he/she will be paid by the implementing agency as ex-gratia payment at the rate of twenty-five thousand rupees.
10. Job Card: Job Card is a legal document of right to work. In a job card the information about the applicants, like his/her name, age, sex, name of the head of the family, number of adult members of the family willing to work etc. is given. This job card is valid for a period of 5 years. And the main purpose of this job card is to enable MGNREGA workers to verify their own employment and wage details. After registration and getting job card a person has to apply for work for a definite period of his own choice. Applications can also be given orally to the gram panchayat.

11. Muster Roll: It is a list of the names of the workers working under MGNREGA. So at every worksite there is a muster roll containing the names of workers. This is a kind of attendance register. Muster Roll is also a unique feature of MGNREGA.

12. Worksite Facilities: The facilities of safe drinking water, rest shed, crèche for children below 6 years of female workers and first-aid box with adequate material for emergency treatment for minor injuries and other health hazards connected with the work being performed will be provided at the worksites.

13. Work Location: There is also a provision that employment has to be given within a circle of 5 km radius and if it is beyond 5 km, there is also a provision for payment of additional transportation and living expenses at 10 percent of extra wages.

14. Wage Rates: Under MGNREGA Wages will be paid at the rate of agricultural minimum wages as notified by the state government from time to time. Section 6(1) of MGNREGA states that not-with-standing anything contained in the Minimum Wages Act 1948, the central Government may by notification specify the wage rate for the purposes of the Act.

In fixing the wage rates two basic principles must be kept in mind. First, since the objective is to ensure a minimum income from work to guaranteed livelihood, wages should be high enough to meet the daily subsistence needs of the worker households. Second, in order that only the really needy, avail of the guaranteed work and no diversion of labour takes place from other regular productive works, wages should be significantly higher than the prevailing market wages. In principle, the minimum wages fixed under the Minimum Wage Act, 1948 should fulfill these requirements and should therefore be the wages to be paid under the Employment Guarantee Programme and there can be no compromise with the payment of statutory minimum wages as per the Minimum Wage Act, 1948. The wages for the MGNREGA workers from 1st October 2016 is Rs. 240 per man days and it revises in every 6 months and this remuneration is equal for both, men & women. In December 2017 remuneration in Kerala is Rs263.

15. Wage Payments: Payment of wages to the workers is to be given every week or within 14 days in any circumstances. If a worker does not receive his/her wages on time, he/she is liable to get compensation under the Wage Payment Act, 1972.

16. Mode of Wage Payments: Under MGNREGA the payments of wages through banks or post offices are benefited the MGNREGA workers. Many observers have advocated that the payment of wages through bank/ post office is the right step under MGNREGA to prevent the corruption. The main advantage of this approach is that it reduces the likelihood of any fudging of the muster rolls on the part of the implementing agency namely Gram Panchayats.

The fundamental attraction of the use of bank or post office accounts for MGNREGA wage payments is twofold. First, it separates the payment agency from the implementing agency to avoid any sort of corruption. Second, it ensures that money sanctioned for wage payments can be listed only by the labourers listed on the muster rolls. Bank payments also have a transparency role. They extend the trail of transparency all the way down to the money actually reaching the hand of the labourers. In addition it can be

argued that the bank/ post office payments of MGNREGA wages encourage savings and help to initiate people to modern banking arrangements.

17. Social Audit: It is a dynamic tool by which people are able to make officials accountability for their performance in the delivery of legally enshrined rights. Social Audit is a participatory process in which both the local people and government officials verify the outcomes under MGNREGA. So that they help at every stage to built up the transparency and responsibility under MGNREGA. Social Audit is a process for evaluating, reporting and improving the performance and behaviour of local people and government officials.

18. Unemployment Allowance: It is the most attractive as well as encouraging feature of MGNREGA. Under this, if an applicant is not provided employment within 15 days of receipt of his/her application, there is a provision of daily unemployment allowance. This unemployment allowance is one-fourth of the prescribed wages for first 30 days and after that it is half of the prescribed wages. And this allowance will be paid by the concerned state government and officials responsible for implementing the scheme are accountable for it. But a person will not get any unemployment allowance in certain conditions shown below:

(a) If a person has completed 100 days employment in a financial year and

(b) If he/she refuses to do work.

(c) If he/she takes a continuous leave for 7 or more than 7 days from work without any prior information will not get any unemployment allowance for a period of three months. But he/she will be eligible to seek employment under the scheme at any time.

19. Reduction in Migration: The lack of work was the main reason for migration in most districts and states. The MGNREGA is expected to reduce migration through three main effects:

(a) Employment security during lean seasons.

(b) Earnings and savings effects and

(c) Social (happiness) effects.

About the first, the trend in migration suggests the dominance of seasonal migration and mostly in search of daily wage employment. The MGNREGA assures a minimum of 100 days employment that takes care of at least the lean season. Regarding the second effect, the gap between earnings and surplus is generally higher if a worker gets employment near his/ her residence than if he/ she migrate to urban centers or other places.

20. Insurance: In case of any accident, there is a provision for insurance for workers under MGNREGA.

21. National Helpline set up for receipt of complaints: The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has set up a toll free National Helpline (1800110707) to enable the submission of complaints and queries for the protection works entitlements and rights under the Act.

22. Employment guarantee day (RozgarDiwas): Every Gram Panchayat should organise a RozgarDiwas at least once every month. At this event the Gram Panchayat should pro-actively invite applications for work from potential workers for the current as well as subsequent quarters. Dated receipts will be issued to the applicants at this event. The

'Employment Guarantee Day' should be earmarked for processing work applications and related activities such as disclosure of information, allocation of work, payment of wages and payment of unemployment allowances.

However, these activities should not be restricted to "Employment Guarantee Day". In particular, applications for work should be accepted at any time. The President of the Gram Panchayat and all staff appointed at the level of the Gram Panchayat (Gram RozgarSevak) should be present on Employment Guarantee Day.

#### **1.4 Works under MGNREGA**

The MGNREGA document has envisaged that the focus of the scheme will be on the following work in order of priority:

1. Water conservation and water harvesting.
2. Drought proofing (including afforestation and tree plantation).
3. Irrigation canals including micro and minor irrigation works.
4. Provision of irrigation facility to land owned by households belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.
5. Renovation of traditional water bodies including desalting of tanks.
6. Land development & soil conservation works.
7. Flood control and protection work including drainage in water logged areas.
8. Rural connectivity to provide all-weather access. The construction of roads may include culverts where necessary and within the village area may be taken up along with drains.
9. The state government may notify any other work in consultation with the central government.

MGNREG scheme is appeared to be a critical source of employment for the rural poor, particularly categories such as distressed families from SC and ST. The data suggest that as a measure of social protection to the poor and vulnerable social groups the scheme is making a difference by augmenting their employment and incomes. In all states the share of SCs and STs in the employment generated under the scheme is much higher than their share in population. Even in Gujarat and Rajasthan, where it was lower initially, there was substantial increase in the later years. Concentration of SC and ST population vary in different states, therefore figure of SC/ ST work days generated can be meaningfully interpreted with the availability of percentage of SC/ ST population in the MGNREGA districts.

The G.B. Pant Social Science Institute under the coordination of Jean Dreze, studied six north Indian states and found that 73 percent of respondents belong to scheduled caste/ scheduled tribe families. The CESS (2009) study reported that majority of MGNREGA beneficiaries came from the vulnerable social groups (SCs, STs, and OBCs), landless agricultural laborers and women. The participation of scheduled castes and other backward classes is more than their respective shares in the total households. Such conditions reflect the fact that the workers face multiple deprivations and hence MGNREGA work becomes an important source for sustaining them at the subsistence level. Even in Bihar, benefits reached mostly the target groups and the process was also found non-discriminatory

The majority of MGNREGS workers belong to the most disadvantaged section of the society. At the all India level, SC and ST together constitutes for more than 50 percent of total employment days created. There is steady growth in participation of SC families

over the period of time; it shows an increase from 25.36 percent to 30.63 percent during 2006- 07 to 2010-11 and then declined to 15.26 percent during 2012-13 with wider variations across the states. Table .1 shows participation of SCs in major states from 2006 to 2013 as percent of total participation. The highest SCs participation is in Punjab (78.27 percent) followed by Haryana (52.21 percent), Uttar Pradesh (33.75) and West Bengal (32.95 percent) while the lowest participation of SCs in the states like Assam (05.70 percent), Gujarat (8.99 percent), Kerala (15.26), Maharashtra (16.93 percent), and Karnataka (16.95 percent) in the year 2012-13. Thus MGNREG scheme provides a solution to the inclusive growth by providing legal guarantee to the employment for under privileged sections of society in the country.

Table:1  
Participation of SCs in Major States under MGNREGS (Percent)

States	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Andhra Pradesh	29.82	27.72	26.14	24.67	24.32	27.72	23.99
Assam	8.652	7.6	10.41	12.14	10.99	7.6	5.78
Bihar	47.08	45.66	50.07	45.30	45.4	45.66	23.97
Gujarat	7.036	5.918	12.67	14.87	14.54	5.918	8.99
Haryana	60.03	53.8	53.03	53.58	48.93	53.8	52.27
Himachal Pradesh	30.4	32.31	33.52	33.35	32.58	32.31	23.32
Karnataka	33.05	30.23	27.77	16.70	16.16	30.23	16.95
Madhya Pradesh	15.87	17.87	17.82	18.48	19.34	17.87	19.19
Maharashtra	16.19	18.44	16.51	25.61	22.0	18.44	16.93
Punjab	69.36	76.29	74.22	78.92	78.31	76.29	78.27
Rajasthan	15.97	19.24	28.79	26.53	25.5	19.24	18.38
Orissa	23.65	24.33	20.24	19.16	18.13	24.33	18.11
West Bengal	36.08	36.28	37.45	36.85	36.91	36.28	32.95
Uttar Pradesh	56.85	53.75	53.56	56.41	53.96	53.75	33.75
Tamil Nadu	56.06	57.36	60.27	59.07	57.71	57.36	28.19
Kerala	20.1	14.76	19.47	16.77	17.04	14.31	15.26
India	25.36	27.44	29.29	30.48	30.63	27.44	22.05

Source: [www.mgnrega.com.in](http://www.mgnrega.com.in)

In Kerala MGNREGA has been implementing in three phases. The first phase of the programme was initiated in February 2006 in the rural areas of two districts- Palakkad and Wayanad. The programme was extended to Kasargod and Idukki by February 2007 in second phase and to the remaining ten districts by January 2009 in third phase. In conformity with the Act the State Government has issued guidelines for implementation of the scheme. This programme came to be known as Kerala State Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (KSREGS). Kerala has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. Thus MGNREGA has somehow a limited application in tackling the problem of unemployment among the poor of Kerala.

In the state of Kerala, the performance is good when we take the indicator of providing employment as against employment demanded which has been increased from 94.45% 2006-07 to 99.84% in 2009-10 and further to 99.90% in 2012-13 (Table.2 and Figure 3.2).But the problem in Kerala is different and it is the problem of educated unemployment rather than involuntary. As people are educated, they are reluctant to do an unskilled manual work providing under the scheme. Whenever people here about MGNREG scheme, they register under the scheme, but half of the registered households do not demand the job.From Table. 2, it is observed that the number of household registered for job has increased sharply from 2.14 Lakhs in 2006-07 to 32.56 Lakhs in 2011-12 and further to 24.86 Lakhs in 2012-13. But the actual demand for employment has increased from 1.04 Lakhs during 2006-07 to 16.71 Lakhs during 2012-13, while the employment provided has increased from .99 Lakhs (94.45 percent) to 16.70 Lakhs (99.90 percent) during the same period recording manifold increase over a period of seven years. Thus, it may be stated that the scheme has been successful in providing employment to all those who demanded employment through the scheme.

Table:2

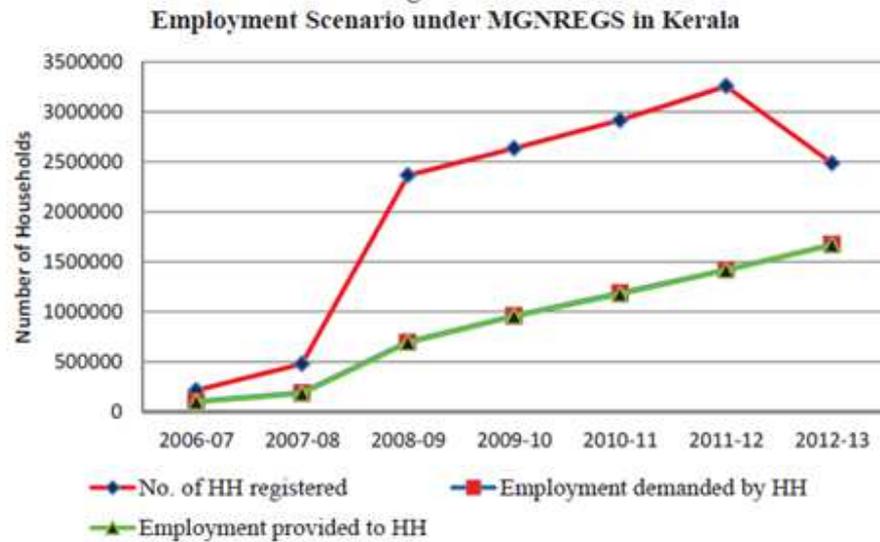
**Employment Scenario in Kerala under MGNREGS**

Items \ Years	Years						
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
No. of HH registered	213831	478980	2365600	2634155	2915695	3256781	2486694
Employment demanded by HH	104927	188373	698680	957477	1186356	1418056	1671701
Demand against Registration (%)	49.07	39.32	29.53	36.34	40.68	43.54	67.22
Employment provided to HH	99107	182029	692015	955976	1175816	1416386	1670070
Employment provided (%)	94.45	96.63	99.05	99.84	99.11	99.88	99.90

*Source:* www.mgnregs.nic.com *Note:* HH:-Household

Figure1 shows the rising trend of employment demanded and provided by MGNREG scheme and wider gap between registration of household and demand of household for job under this scheme. The districts-wise analysis has been shown in Table: 3. The scale of registrations in Wayanad and Palakkad, the two districts where the MGNREG scheme was first introduced in the state, came as a big surprise for most observers. In the first phase of implementation in Wayanad and Palakkad of Kerala, the share of employment offered in 2006-07 was only 94.10 percent of the household demand. However, by the next year (2007-08) the proportion of demand met increased to 96.63 percent which includes two more districts (Kasaragod and Idukki) and during this period in Palakkad district whatever household demanded 100 percent employment was provided and became one of the best districts of the country in the implementation of the scheme and by 2008/09 onwards the scheme was able to offer employment to almost all the households and persons that demanded employment which includes almost all districts of Kerala. The case is similar in case of actual employment provided as a share of employment offered, the coverage has been almost hundred percent. Almost all households who demanded employment were actually provided employment as well (Table-3).

Figure:1



Source: calculated from Table:2

When the MGNREG scheme was first introduced in 2006 there was a widespread belief that the scheme, though of great potential benefit for other states in the country, was of little relevance to Kerala. Because, Kerala is facing the problem of jobless growth with unemployment of 83.45 Lakhs (25 percent) people. From the above analysis, we find that with unemployment of 83.45 Lakhs, only 32.56 Lakhs household registered and actual demand for employment is only 11.75 Lakhs households. This means that MGNREGS is unable to solve the problem of unemployment in Kerala or people are reluctant to provide their labour service. Kerala is facing the problem of educated unemployment and they are highly skilled labourers and are unwilling to undertake the jobs created by MGNREG scheme which provide unskilled manual work for rural people. The mental attitude and status quo of educated *Keralites* do not allow them to take-up such work. Another problem is related with wage rate provided by MGNREG scheme, even if wage rate increased to Rs. 164 under the scheme, it is too low as compared with market wage rate in Kerala which vary between Rs. 300-500. Since educated unemployment required the creation of skilled job rather than unskilled manual jobs, the scheme was considered inappropriate and irrelevant for Kerala for solving the problem of unemployment.

Table: 3  
**Employment Provided over Employment Demanded- District-wise Analysis (Percent)**

Districts	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Palakkad	94.83	100	100	100	98.70	99.96	99.97
Wayanad	93.26	99.92	99.62	100	97.01	99.89	99.98
Idukki		88.85	99.76	99.96	99.15	99.98	99.97
Kasaragod		84.52	97.25	99.98	99.03	99.97	99.95
Alappuzha			98.30	100	97.78	99.86	99.94
Ernakulum			99.64	99.04	98.94	99.94	99.98
Kannur			99.27	99.51	98.77	99.84	99.93
Kollam			94.45	99.57	97.33	99.8	99.95
Kottayam			97.86	99.66	98.55	99.84	99.95
Kozhikode			98.87	99.87	98.78	99.84	99.96
Malappuram			99.78	99.93	99.03	99.81	99.95
Pathanamthitta			97.49	99.91	97.93	99.96	99.95
Thrissur			99.50	99.78	99.36	99.74	99.93
Thiruvananthapuram			99.94	100	97.65	99.95	99.98
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>94.10</b>	<b>96.63</b>	<b>99.04</b>	<b>99.84</b>	<b>98.41</b>	<b>99.88</b>	<b>99.96</b>

Source: www.mgnregs.nic.com

#### 1.4.1 District-wise Performance

Kerala is also the home for indigenous tribal population who constitute 1.14 per cent of the total population. Major portion of them reside in the main stream with other people. The highest concentration of scheduled tribes is seen in Wayanad district (37.36 per cent) followed by Idukki (14 per cent) and Palakkad (10.89 per cent) and these three districts together account for over 60 per cent of ST population of the state. The coastal district of Alappuzha has the lowest percentage of the tribal population. As far as tribal people are concerned, it is concentrated in Wayanad district with 22.94 per cent in 2006-07, and increased to the highest level of 27.98 per cent in 2007-08, then reached to 26.81, 27.21, 23.33, 18.12 and 18.85 per cent in subsequent years followed by Idukki, Palakkad and Kasaragod and the lowest participation in Alappuzha, Kollam and Thrissur and other districts (see Table 4).

Table: 4  
Participation of STs under MGNREGS in Kerala (Percent)

Districts	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Palakkad	4.23	6.87	4.93	5.00	7.03	4.22	5.24
Wayanad	22.94	27.98	26.81	27.21	23.33	18.12	18.85
Idukki		11.48	17.84	8.61	7.37	6.74	7.29
Kasaragod		5.82	7.8	4.71	4.83	2.53	2.52
Alappuzha			0.06	0.42	0.45	0.19	0.22
Ernakulum			0.45	0.84	0.69	0.56	0.65
Kannur			5.15	4.9	4.24	3.68	3.46
Kollam			0.41	0.42	0.48	0.34	0.42
Kottayam			2.08	2.69	2.35	1.1	1.44
Kozhikode			0.7	1.15	0.96	0.55	0.87
Malappuram			1.07	1.2	1.31	0.77	0.75
Pathanamthitta			0.33	1.06	1.39	0.85	0.98
Thrissur			0.14	0.72	0.55	0.4	0.57
Thiruvananthapuram			6.73	1.03	1.07	0.8	0.76
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>12.39</b>	<b>13.03</b>	<b>9.26</b>	<b>5.33</b>	<b>3.44</b>	<b>2.37</b>	<b>2.59</b>

Source: [www.mgnrega.com.in](http://www.mgnrega.com.in)

Women participation during the scheme execution in Kerala has been very high, considering the provisions of earmarking a minimum of 33 percent of employment generated to them. Significantly, *Kudumbashree* volunteers (all women) are assigned with the task of work supervisor at the worksites. This resulted in improving their managerial, technical and soft skills, marginally. No gender consideration seems to have been adopted in the districts for providing work site facilities. Provision of keeping a maid for looking after children below 5 years of age at the worksite was rarely seen in the state. Mostly the workers used to keep the children at home itself, under the custody of aged relatives. Presence of women work supervisors also was a positive factor in attracting more women workers in various ways. Strict adherence to the norms of equal wages for men and women, probably for the first time in the history of implementation of wage employment programmes in Kerala, has resulted in improving the attractiveness of scheme among women.

Studies reveal that the Act has a positive impact on women's employment opportunities and intra-household bargaining power. It is an interesting fact that the female work participation rate is in general below 18 percent in the state of Kerala. However, on the MGNREGS worksite, their participation is more than 90 percent. It reveals the increase in trend of women participation in the state of Kerala under MGNREGS. Table 5 shows districts-wise women participation in various districts of Kerala which has increased from 65.31 percent in 2006-07 to 92.95 percent in 2012-2013.

Table : 5  
**Percentage of Women Participation in Kerala (District-wise Analysis)**

Districts	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Palakkad	74.64	83.00	89.07	92.21	93.25	95.65	95.56
Wayanad	53.83	59.00	76.60	79.44	84.93	86.43	86.83
Idukki		79.10	87.06	72.54	71.79	76.92	77.08
Kasaragod		79.45	82.79	87.85	87.4	92.09	93.07
Alappuzha			89.45	93.28	94.45	96.13	96.33
Ernakulam			91.08	93.93	94.69	95.69	95.80
Kannur			85.81	93.58	95.49	95.53	95.83
Kollam			82.53	87.18	86.9	91.58	91.9
Kottayam			85.84	94.58	95.54	96.42	96.69
Kozhikode			83.34	92.71	93.68	95.11	95.51
Malappuram			78.79	92.26	92.86	92.94	92.66
Pathanamthitta			82.08	92.89	94.65	95.55	95.42
Thrissur			94.44	95.87	95.64	96.33	96.21
Thiruvandram			85.02	90.02	90.87	94.2	94.45
Grand Total	64.31	72.55	85.01	88.19	90.36	92.85	92.95

Source: www.mgnrega.com.in

Table: 5 shows that the percentage of women participation has increased in each and every district and is highest in Kottayam where women participation is 96.69 percent, followed by Alappuzha (96.33 percent), Thrissur (96.21 percent), Ernakulam (95.80percent)and lowest participation is in Idukki (77.08 percent) in the year of 2012-13. District wise share of women which have been increasing since 2008-09 to 2012-13 except in Idukki district where some declining trend is reported. The low and declining participation of women in the district of Idukki is mainly due to their involvement in tea plantations. In the initial period of implementation their participation is comparatively better because they had higher wage under the scheme than the wage rate under tea plantation factory. But when the workers from tea plantation were converted in to the scheme, the wage rate in the tea plantation was raised higher than MGNREGS wage rate. That is why they again went to tea plantation. And also, tea plantation is their hereditary job where women are main workers; they are reluctant to give up their job. But in most of the districts of Kerala, workers especially women under MGNREGS are new entrants to the labour market.

### 1.5 Conclusion and Suggestions

TheMahathma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was passed in the year September 2005 and it started functioning from February 2006. Now the scheme covered all the districts in India.It comes at a time of an increasing urban-rural divide,

persistently elevated levels of extreme poverty, unemployment and degraded natural resources base. The scheme attempts to address these issues by providing a revolutionary frame work. The Act is rights based, transparent, and principally implemented at the grass roots level. It uses Information Technology on a large scale and is endowed with significant human and financial resources to tackle the aforementioned problems. Coming on the heels of a re-thinking in developmental economics, the sustainable development aspect in the Act is written tall and natural resource management stands at the core of the Act.

Implementation of MNREGA has some problems. One of the important problems is that the scheme could not provide promised 100 days of work to most of the demanded household. Also the number of projects is not adequate under the scheme. The political involvement at the stage of registration and the selection of the workers are another reason for the failure of the scheme.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

Suggestions which can help extent the scheme's scope and functioning are the following.

1. Extension of activities under NREGA – Apply NREGA's resources to make economic use of common lands for agricultural and associated extension activities thereby benefiting the local people and the economy.
2. Make the hoarding of job cards a punishable offence – Part of the transparency and monitory mechanism relies on the entering of correct data into the job cards. Often it is found that vested officials hoard these cards and possibly enter false data. This corrupt practice should be made a punishable offence.
3. Technical staffs – there is lack of professionals who can provide expert advice on planning, execution and supervision of the works done. If more qualified personnel are being roped in it would increase the pace of implementation and enhance the quality of assets.
4. The government should try to provide 100 days of work to the employment demanded household. The work allocation with the help of other agencies should give priority to employment generation and also more projects should be included in MNREGS. Another suggestion is about the wage problem. The wages should be provided at the time of completion of work in the worksites.
5. Many of the problems are happening with the lack of awareness of the people about the scheme. So awareness and proper training should be given to the people.

If the act is implemented vigorously and in its true spirit, it will change the face of rural India and provide the basic for livelihood security and sustainable development. The potential benefits will not only occur to the current generation but to those to come too; also it can serve as an example for other developing economies facing similar challenges.

## References

Jacob and Varghese , NREGA implementation (2006) , “Reasonable Beginning in Palakkad, Kerala”

The official website ([www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in) ) of the government of India (2007)  
CAG Report on Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2013) – Performance Audit of MNREGS, page vii.

Sainath P.(2007) In agrarian crisis, farmer suicides, Rural India. <http://psainath.org>

Dreze, Jean (2007):“India’s Employment Guarantee Act: Reclaiming Policy Space- Globalization and Development”, New Delhi Oxford University Press.

Nirmala Lexman (2007), The Hundred Days Basket, [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com)

Parashuram Ray (2007), Centre for Environment and Food security (CEFS) [www.indiawaterportal.org>sites>files](http://www.indiawaterportal.org/sites/files)

Mathur L. (2007), Employment Guarantee: Progress So Far, Economic and Political Weekly

Matur (2008), Performance measurement at Micro level, the literature survey, [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)

Muhammad (2008-2009), Annual-report-2008-2009- [www.asthango.org](http://www.asthango.org)

Ashish Rajan and Kartika Bhatia (2009), Pati is a village & Teshsil in Barwani district in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. [www.en.m.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.m.wikipedia.org)

Khera, R., Nayak, N. (2009): “Women Workers and the Perception of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in India”, Economic and Political Weekly, 24 October.

Reddy (2012), Notification of districts of Andhra Pradesh for the implementation of MGNREGA in Andhra Pradesh - [www.gssaap-cag.nic.in](http://www.gssaap-cag.nic.in)

Gill et al. (2012), [www.hivos.org](http://www.hivos.org)