

**RESEARCH PAPER****Status of NREGA in Modern Village Allah: A Case Study of District Jammu (J&K)****Verinder Singh Manhas and Gaggan Kumar**

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Email: gagan99geographer@gmail.comReceived: 10th July 2017, Revised: 4th August 2017, Accepted: 9th August 2017**ABSTRACT**

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), presently known as 'Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act' (MGNREGA), is an unprecedented intervention by the Government in reforming and reenergizing the (rural) labour market both by way of correcting the prevailing anomalies and in providing livelihood security to millions of rural poor. Most of the rural poor are largely dependent on the prospects of agriculture sector which is facing the problems of productivity in absolute and relative terms. The promised 100 days of guaranteed wage employment per household per annum at the stipulated minimum wages would not only reduce the rampant under and unemployment in rural areas, but also impact the stagnant wage structure for the rural unskilled workers. Although the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)-2005 was not applicable to J&K in toto, yet the State Government has been implementing the Act in the form of a Scheme, of course without the component of the Employ Guarantee related 'unemployment allowance'. The Government of Jammu and Kashmir has formulated a full-fledged scheme called the 'Jammu and Kashmir Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme' (REGS). The present paper is a generous attempt to study the status of NREGA in the modern village of Allah and an attempt has been made to assess ground realities of MGNREGA in the study area.

Key words: MGNREGA, Jammu, Status, Assessment

INTRODUCTION

The Government of India has adopted a multifarious development planning of operations can promotes economic growth and also addresses the needs of the poor by making it sure that their basic rights are protected. The Ministry of Rural Development has a whole range of programme which aims to providing direct employment, self-employment, social security, housing, building, rural infrastructure and managing land resources to remove poverty. But some sections of rural population, especially the unskilled, casual and manual laborers are still unaffected by these measures. Majority of the rural population is engaged in agricultural and allied activities for income and livelihood. Still the fact is that people living in the villages are devoid of basic needs of life, namely, food, shelter, medical help, and education. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (Mahatma Gandhi NREGA) notified on 7th September, 2005, aims at enhancing livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult member's volunteers to do unskilled manual work. The Act covered all 619 rural districts of the country (up to 2009-10), 200 districts in its first phase and 330 additional districts in second phase. All the remaining rural districts were notified with effect from 1st April 2008 marking Phase iii of the Act. As per the MGNREGA, creation of durable assets and strengthening of livelihood resource base of the rural poor is an important objective of the scheme.

SALIENT FEATURES OF J&K REGS

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), 2005 envisages enhancing the livelihood security of the people in rural areas 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. While creating an environment of enhanced wage employment opportunities in rural areas, the Act provides for the generation of productive assets, protect environment, empower rural people, reduce rural-urban migration and foster social equity. The set of operational guidelines formulated for the purpose delineate a broad framework to facilitate the state

governments in formulating the State Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (REGS). Implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, the whole country will be covered by 2008-09. With the introduction of the NREGA in 2005, the REGS was launched in February 2006 in 200 backward districts in 27 states in the country. The Act initially was not directly applicable to Jammu and Kashmir, yet a request was made to Government of India for extending the jurisdiction of this Act to the State. Pending the notification, implementation of NREGA is being carried out through REGS in the State. In the first phase, three districts, viz. Poonch, Doda and Kupwara were brought within the ambit of this Scheme which has been extended to the districts of Anantnag and Jammu during phase - II. As envisaged in the Act, the Jammu and Kashmir Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has been formulated on the basis of the Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. The NREGA was extended to the State in 2007 and the guarantee component in terms of unemployment allowance has been made operational.

Although the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)-2005 was not applicable to J&K in toto, yet the State Government has been implementing the Act in the form of a Scheme, of course without the component of the Employ Guarantee related 'unemployment allowance'. The Government of Jammu and Kashmir has formulated a full-fledged scheme called the 'Jammu and Kashmir Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme' (REGS). The Scheme is being implemented on a cost sharing basis between the Centre and the State in the ratio of 90:10.

Table 1: NREGA Districts in J&K

Province	Name of the District	No. of Blocks	No. of Panchayats
Kashmir	Kupwara*	11	224
Kashmir	Anantnag	12	307
Jammu	Poonch*	6	115
Jammu	Doda*	19	262
Jammu	Jammu	11	295

Source: J&K Institute of Management, Public Administration and Rural Development, Srinagar/Regional Centre, Jammu

* included during 2006-07.

The Scheme envisages enhancement of the livelihood security of the people in rural areas by generating wage employment. The choice of works seeks to address the causes of chronic poverty like drought / moisture stress, deforestation and soil erosion. As such, the Scheme has the potential to transform the agriculture and rural poverty scenario.

The Scheme postulates the following objectives:

1. To provide livelihood security to the households in the rural areas of the notified districts by providing not less than one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.
2. To create durable assets and strengthen the livelihood resource base of rural poor. It is implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on a cost sharing basis between the Centre and the State in the ratio of 90:10.

The non-negotiable characteristics of the REGS are as under:

1. Every rural registered household is to be provided not less than one hundred days of wage employment on demand in a financial year.
2. Payment of wages to be made on weekly basis and not later than a fortnight from the time of application for wage employment.
3. Equal wages to be paid to men and women.
4. Contractors and labour displacing machinery are not to be engaged.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the impact of MGNREGA in the study area
2. To analyze the awareness level Awareness about MGNREGA
3. To analyze the Issue of Job Cards and Registration

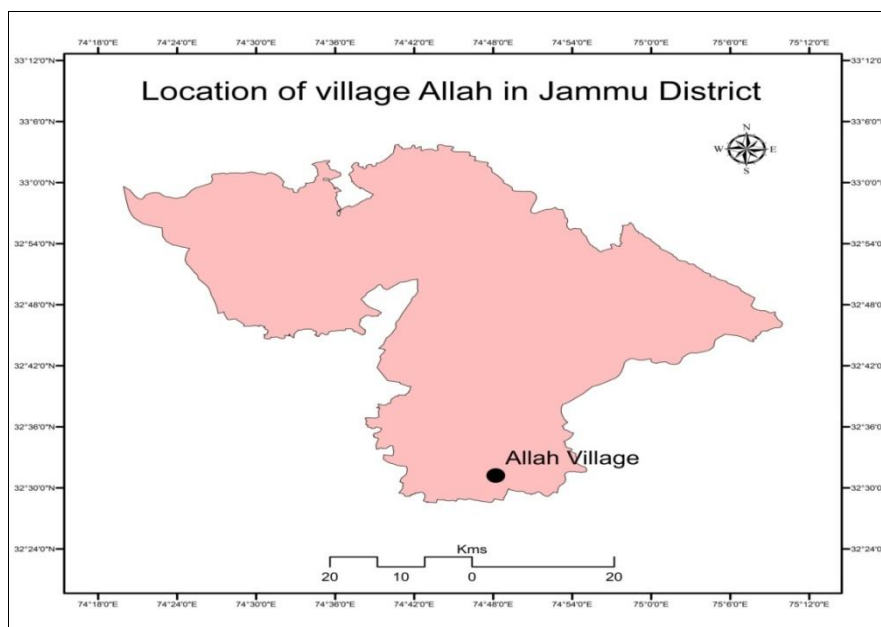
METHODOLOGY

The inspection or observation methods have been used for collecting the data which means the data collection is primarily based on personal investigation. The primary data were collected through field survey for which a detailed questionnaire is prepared with relevant NREGA indicators. Apart from this the secondary data is collected through District Hand Book and Census of India, 2011. The total working population of study area (Allah) is 1076 according to 2011 census and out of which 120 workers (respondent) has been selected randomly who are associated with NREGS. Simple statistical techniques are used throughout the study. The tabulation of the data is done by using Microsoft excel software. Cartographic techniques have been used for the preparation of map. Diagram were prepared with the help of Microsoft excel software. The location map of the study area is prepared with the help of software ArcGIS.

STUDY AREA

Located on the international border with Pakistan, the modern Allah is a village Panchayat located in the Jammu district of Jammu-Kashmir state, India. The latitude 32.4836074 and longitude 74.8075766 are the geo-coordinate of the Allah. It is situated just 2.5 km from International Border with Pakistan in Arnia sector 41km away from district headquarter Jammu. The Allah village has population of 3905 of which 2047 are males while 1858 are females as per Population Census 2011. In Allah village population of children with age 0-6 is 529 which make up 13.55 % of total population of village. Average Sex Ratio of Allah village is 908 which is higher than Jammu and Kashmir state average of 889. Child Sex Ratio for the Allah as per census is 818, lower than Jammu and Kashmir average of 862. Allah village has higher literacy rate compared to Jammu and Kashmir. In 2011, literacy rate of Allah village was 79.50 % compared to 67.16 % of Jammu and Kashmir. The total geographical area of village is 640.2 hectares. Arnia is nearest town to Allah which is approximately 7 km away.

Map 1: Location map of Village Allah



STATUS OF NREGS (J&K REGS) IN MODERN VILLAGE ALLAH

The NREGS is a significant tool of rural development to uplift the rural poor. The major focus of planning and rural development has been the productive absorption of under-employed and surplus labour force in rural areas. These objectives can be fulfilled through this employment act if it is implemented in effective way. Thus the effectiveness and status of NREGS in the village Allah has been analyzed through in depth study at micro-level with the help of 120 respondents. The

entire study has been presented, interpreted and analyzed through following tables and their descriptions:

Table 2: No. of respondents in different age-group

S. No.	Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1	15-25	7	5.8
2	25-35	24	20
3	35-45	54	45
4	45-55	18	15
5	More than 55	17	14.2
Total		120	100

Source: Primary Survey, 2017

INTERPRETATION:

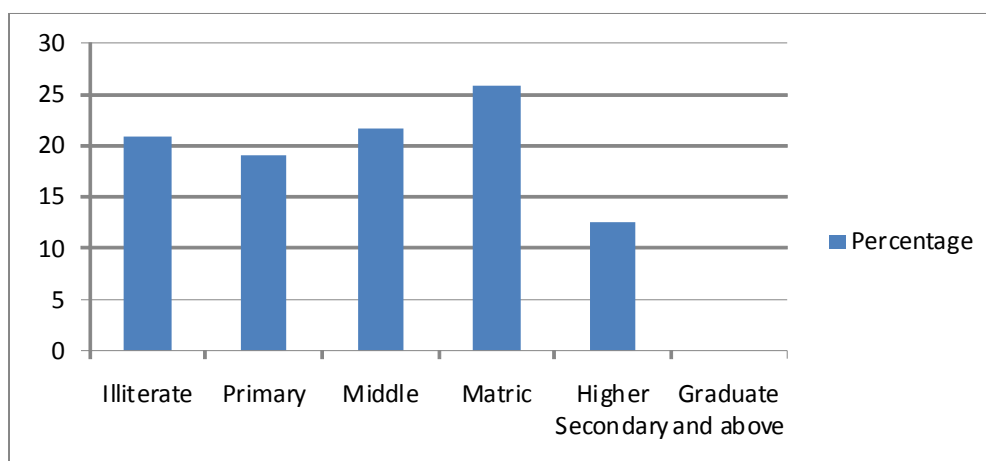
The above table shows the different age group of the respondent. It is interesting to know that workers in every age group are associated with NREGS. Age is the most important variable in understanding the social mobility the village. It signifies social placement, recognition and specific role of an individual. The most peculiar feature of this table is that 80% of total workers in NREGS belong to age group 25-45 that is the most productive age group. Only about 14% of NREGS workers are above 55 year.

Table 3: Education level of the respondents

S. No.	Education level	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Illiterate	25	20.83
2	Primary	23	19.16
3	Middle	26	21.66
4	High	31	25.83
5	Higher Secondary	15	12.5
6	Graduate or above	0	0.0
Total		120	100

Source: Primary Survey, 2017

Graph 1: Showing Educational Status of Respondents



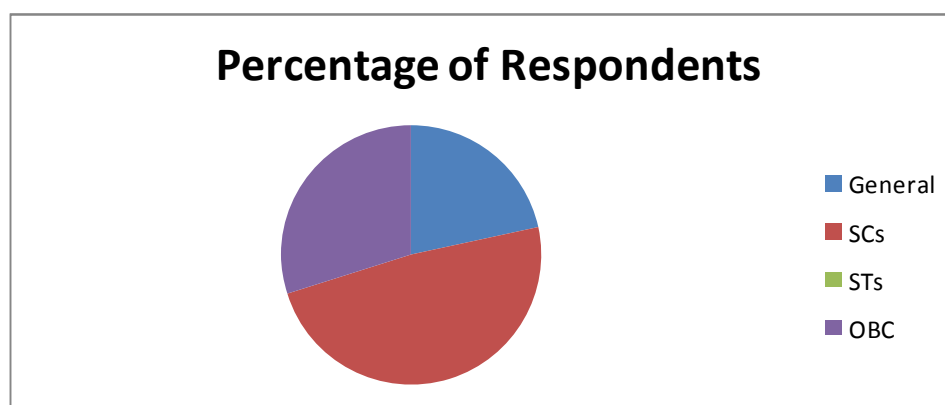
INTERPRETATION:

The level of literacy and education is an important factor in choosing an occupation. It is equally important in creating awareness about NREGS so it is relevant to analyze the literacy and educational level of NREGS workers. The data given in above table present the literacy level of respondent of the study area. About 80% of the respondents are literate but their literacy level is not good. The 65% of the respondents have educational level up to high school and 20% of the total respondents are illiterate.

Table 4: Caste and communities wise number of respondent

S.No.	Caste	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	General	26	21.66
2	SCs	58	48.83
3	STs	0	0
4	OBC	36	30
Total		120	100

Source: Primary Survey, 2017

Graph 2: Caste and communities wise number of respondent**INTERPRETATION:**

Since India is the land of villages where caste is co-terminus with class and therefore the development programmes specially focus more on SC and ST. Since the people of lower caste are deprived socially and economically for ages therefore it is relevant to know the participation of these people in developmental schemes like NREGS. The above table shows the participation of different caste and tribes in the scheme under study. It is revealed that about 80% of the total respondents or workers in NREGS are individual of weaker section of SC and OBC. And about 20% of the respondents are general. The maximum benefit from the scheme is drawn by scheduled caste as about 49% of total respondents are SC.

Table 5: Source of information or awareness about J&K NREGS

S. No.	Source	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Sarpanch/ Panch	58	48.33
2	Television	11	9.16
3	Government Official	41	34.16
4	Newspaper	3	2.5
5.	Radio	7	5.83
Total		120	100

Source: Primary Survey, 2017

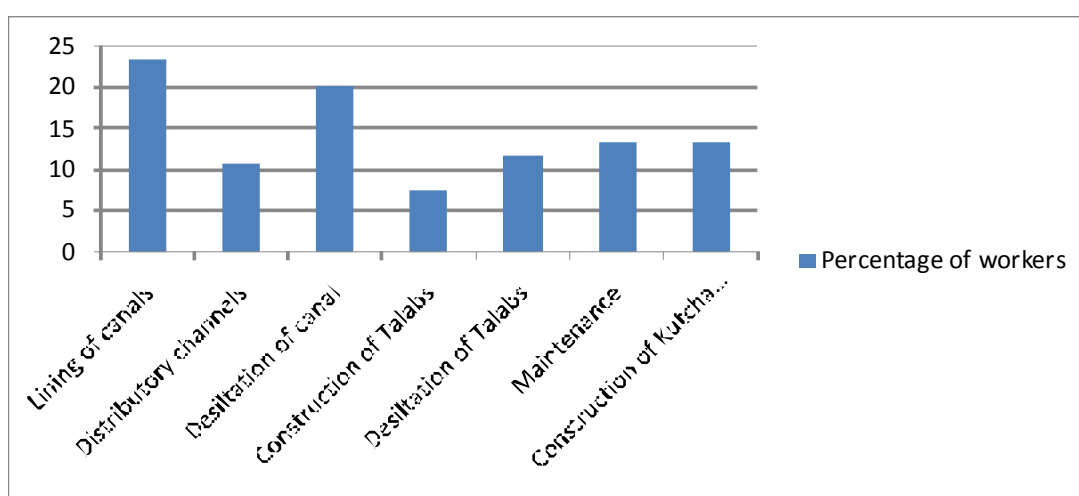
INTERPRETATION:

Since the means of communication in rural area is not so developed as compare to urban areas. Therefore for the rural people to know their rights under NREG Scheme effective communication of information about is essential. The basic features of the scheme should be widely publicized in vernacular language. The most crucial aspects of the act such as process of registration and application, grievances redress procedures, role of different agencies associated with the schemes etc must be communicated in clear and simple language. The above table revealed the different sources of awareness about NREGS to the respondents. It is found that about 85% of the respondents got information about the various aspects of NREGS. Apart from these TV and Radio are also aware the workers about NREGS.

Table 6: Nature of work allotted to NREGS workers

Nature of Work		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Irrigation Development	Lining of canals	28	23.33
	Construction of dis-tributory channels to agricultural field	13	10.83
	De-siltation of canal	24	20
	Total	65	54.16
Local water bodies developments	Construction of Talabs	9	7.5
	Di-siltation of Talabs	14	11.67
	Maintenance	16	13.33
	Total	39	32.25
Link road	Construction of Kutcha road	16	13.33
Total		120	100

Source: Primary Survey, 2017

Graph 3: Showing percentage of workers in different types of work**INTERPRETATION:**

This is the most important table of the study which depicts the type of work allotted to the workers under the scheme of NREGA. The table reveal that about 87% of the total workers under the scheme are provided work for construction, renovation, de-siltation and maintenance of the water bodies in the village within which about 55% of the respondents are engaged in irrigational work and 32% are engaged in work associated with traditional water bodies such that village talabs. About 13% of the respondents are engaged in the construction of village local roads.

Table 7: Percentage of job card holders and number of days after which the respondents got job cards after registering applications

Indicator		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Possession of Job Card	Yes	103	85.83
	No	17	14.17
No. of Days	Within 15 Days	88	73.33
	After 15 Days	32	26.77

Source: Primary Survey, 2017

INTERPRETATION:

The above table depicts the number of respondents having job cards and respondents without job card. It also shows the percentage of respondent who got work within fifteen day after application. The job card is a critical legal document issued by gram Panchayat to every household. After registering an application for job card it should be issued immediately within a fortnight after

verification. This is valid for a period of 5 years. In case of loss of original card or damage the duplicate card may be issued and if a person has a grievance against the non- issuance of job card he or she may bring the matter to the notice of Programme Officer or the design grievance redressed authority at block or district level. All such complains should be made within 15 days. Job Card is the first step to demand employment and to claim wages if job is not provided within stipulated time frame. The above table shows that maximum number of workers i.e. 86% possess job cards and about 14% of the workers don't possess the job card. There is also provision in the scheme that Employment to be provided to every registered person within 15 days. Table 6 reveal that about 74% of the total respondent got work within the stipulated time and 26% of the respondents did not get work in stipulated time.

Table 8: Number of days after which the respondents got work after applying for work and distance of worksite from native village

Days and Distance		No. of respondent	Percentage
No. of days	Within 15 days	120	100
	More than 15 days	0.0	0.0
Distance between village and worksite	2 Km	76	63.33
	2-5 Km	44	36.67
	More than 5 Km	0.0	0.00

Source: Primary Survey, 2011

INTERPRETATION:

There is provision that employment to be provided to every registered person who posses job card within 15 days of receipt of application. This table reveals that the entire respondent in the study area got work within stipulated time frame such that within the time period of 15 days. Also there is provision in the scheme that guarantees each rural household a hundred days of manual work within the radius of 5 km and from the table it is clear that there is no violation of this act and all the worker got work within the radius of 5 km from the native village. Moreover 76% of the worker got work within the 2 km from the village.

Table 9: Income of respondents per month

S.No	Income	Number of respondent	Percentage
1	2000-3000	18	15
2	3000-4000	62	51.7
3	4000-5000	40	33.3
Total		120	100

Source: Primary Survey, 2017

INTERPRETATION:

There is a provision that every person working under the scheme is entitled to minimum wage fixed by the state. Equal wage shall be paid to men and women. The minimum wage fixed for the NREGS worker in the state of Jammu and Kashmir is rupees 179. Table 8 reveals that more than 50% of the respondents have income between 3000-4000. And about 33% of the respondents have income between 4000-5000.

Table 10: Showing no. of days after which wages are received

S.No	No. of days	Number of respondent	Percentage
1	Within 7 days	12	10.00
2	Within 15 days	88	73.33
3	More than 15 days	20	16.67

Source: Primary Survey, 2017

INTERPRETATION:

According to J&K NREGS it is mandatory to pay wages to workers within seven to fifteen days. The scheme provides clear cut instructions to the officials that the workers should get their entitlements within the time frame. This table deals with the ground realities as far as provisions for wages are concerned. This table shows that only 10% of the workers receive wages within the seven days. Majority of the workers that is more than 83 % get their wages within the stipulated time frame. About 17% of the workers get wages after 115 days of work completed. The reason behind this that there are conflicting reports from the district and block officials regarding release of wages.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Summarizing the micro level study that is status of J&K National Rural Employment Scheme in the village Allah we would like to remark that the status of scheme is satisfactory but in certain aspects it is not up to the mark. There are issues related to issuance of Job Cards, late payments of wages, not timely allotment of work after applying for work, no adequate funds, small proportion of workers who are without job cards, no guarantee of allowances in case of work is not provided within the 15 days after applying for work, lack of awareness about the various provisions of the scheme and so on. Thus, in order to tackle all these issues which create hindrance in the effective implementation of the scheme of NREG in J&K following suggestion may be recommended:

1. The basic features of the scheme should be widely publicized in vernacular language. The most crucial aspects of the scheme such as process of registration and application, grievances redress procedures, role of different agencies associated with the schemes etc must be communicated in clear and simple language.
2. As provided in the Act, there should be a full-time Programme Officer responsible for the administration of the Scheme in the State. Instead, the Block Development Officer has been designated as the Programme Officer, who is unable to dedicate full time to the Scheme.
3. There should be a specific mechanism of inspection of works across different levels of administrative machinery.
4. Unemployment Allowance should be granted in case work is not allotted within 15 days
5. Special concession for the physically challenged persons.
6. The State has a useful mechanism of registration and issuance of job cards but still there are hindrances in it which should be addressed.
7. Awareness levels about NREGA, RTI Act, Social Audit, official to be contacted in case of the functional problems regarding job cards, non-provision of work and delayed payments have had a positive impact on the performance of the Scheme. It is for this reason that majority of the workers did not possess the job cards and the wage seekers have been incurring expenditure on getting job cards.

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