

An Assessment of the Implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in Udaipur District with special emphasis on the awareness among tribals.

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Organizational Traineeship Segment

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Background to NREGA

The NREGA is a government initiative aimed at combating the chronic unemployment problem within rural Indian populations. The Act gives the legal guarantee of 100 days of unskilled labour employment per financial year to each household in the rural area. The village Panchayat is required to: raise awareness regarding NREGA; register households; give job cards; prepare a village development plan and consequently implement the employment within these development projects. The scheme gives personal wages based on a 'measurement of work' done in a day, which is defined by the type of task performed, and the number of hours performing each task (including under different geomorphological conditions). According to the NREGA the minimum wage is set per state based on an individual working 7 hours a day, and within Rajasthan this is fixed at 73 rupees. The payment of wages are made on a weekly basis but must not be later than a fortnight. If a person who has applied for the work is not given employment within 15 days from the date on which the work is requested, an unemployment allowance should be paid to the applicant by the State Government.

Abstract

This study assessed the contribution of the NREGA in 3 blocks, focusing on the jurisdiction of 6 Panchayats controlling 31 villages, with 53 different employment sites. It had four broad objectives.

1. To assess the awareness level about the NREGA and its provisions among the villagers, mostly tribals.

2. To assess whether the provisions in the Act are being followed at the work site, the panchayat and the block level.
3. To analyse the gaps in the implementation of the Scheme.
4. To provide suggestions of intervention to the Organisation so as to improve the implementation of the Scheme.

A total of 42 personal interviews and 30 Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) were administered. A measure was established to categorise each participant based on low, medium and high awareness of the NREGA. Out of the 42 respondents, 10 showed high (24 percent), 20 showed medium (48 percent) and 12 showed low awareness (28 percent). Of all the respondents, 30 (71 percent) were aware that daily wage rates are calculated on the basis of measurements, though none were aware as to how the measurement is done. Very few participants were aware of the unemployment wages entitled after 15 days of no-work. The average wage per day paid to the labourers was 50 rupees. The duration of time taken to receive wages ranged from 18 days to 35, with the mean time taking 25 days. Results indicated there was a non-transparency in 'measurement of work', as there was no uniformity in deciding how measurements were characterised. Furthermore, the lack of systematic recording of the 'measurement of work' meant shirking of work duties - observations indicated that ¼ of the workforce was failing his/her duties at any one time.

The report therefore highlights the huge problems within the implementation of the NREGA in rural villages – the discrepancy between the act guidelines and the actual reality. The study emphasises the necessity for rural villagers to be aware of the complaints procedure and to work in collective action to ensure their voice is heard. Observational research suggested that there is a high correlation between the success of the Scheme at a village and the effectiveness of the Seva Mandir instated Gram Vikas Committee (GVC) - the more effective the GVC is, the more successful the implementation of the Scheme. The report therefore suggests the importance of building the capability of the GVC to tackle the problems. A comprehensive training module has been devised in combination with this study to support this capacity building process. It is also suggested that a fulltime Seva Mandir employee at the zone level can be instated to effectively mobilise the villagers and monitor the actual ground realities of the NREGA programme delivery.