



100 Days Employment Guarantee Programme: A Successful rural development experiment in Telangana State – A field-based study

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Abstract

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), popularly known as the 100 Days Employment Guarantee Programme, is one of India's most significant social protection and rural development initiatives. The programme guarantees up to 100 days of wage employment annually to every rural household willing to undertake unskilled manual work. Telangana has emerged as one of the best-performing states in implementing the scheme by combining employment generation with natural resource management, sustainable agriculture, and community asset creation. This study examines the contribution of the programme to rural development through a field survey conducted in Jonnalaboguda and Peddakothapally villages of Nagarkurnool district. Primary data collected through household interactions and field observations are supplemented with secondary data from the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, Government of Telangana, and the Economic Survey of India. The findings indicate that the programme has enhanced rural employment, reduced seasonal migration, strengthened women's participation in the work force, improved water conservation, supported agricultural productivity, and indirectly promoted livestock development. The study concludes that the convergence of MGNREGS with irrigation, watershed development, and rural infrastructure programmes has significantly contributed to sustainable rural development in Telangana. It recommends strengthening community participation, ensuring timely wage payments, and expanding durable asset creation to maximize long-term benefits.

Keywords: MGNREGS, employment guarantee, Telangana, rural development, water conservation, sustainable livelihoods

Introduction

Rural development has remained one of the principal objectives of India's development planning since independence. Despite sustained economic growth, rural areas continue to face challenges such as unemployment, seasonal migration, declining agricultural productivity, environmental degradation. Addressing these challenges requires public investment employment generation and sustainable natural resources management.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), enacted in 2005^[3], represents a landmark rights-based approach to rural development. The Act guarantees upto 100 days of wage employment annually to every rural household demanding work. Unlike earlier wage employment programmes, MGNREGA provides a legal entitlement to employment while creating productive community assets.

Telangana has implemented the programme effectively by integrating employment generation with water conservation, afforestation, rural connectivity, land development, and irrigation support. The state's emphasis on transparency, digital monitoring, and community participation has contributed to improved programme outcomes.

The present study evaluates the contribution of the programme to rural development through field observations and household surveys conducted in selected villages of Nagarkurnool district.

Review of Literature

Several scholars have evaluated the impact of MGNREGS on rural livelihoods.

Dreze and Khera (2017)^[1] observed that MGNREGS has strengthened livelihood security by providing wage employment during agricultural lean seasons.

Hirway (2019)^[2] argued that the programme contributes significantly to natural resource management through water harvesting and soil conservation.

The Economic Survey of India highlighted that MGNREGS acts as an effective social safety net during periods of rural economic distress.

Studies conducted by the Ministry of Rural Development indicate that durable community Assets created under the programme have improved agricultural productivity and groundwater recharge.

Although numerous studies examine the national impact of MGNREGS, relatively few focus on field-level evidence from Telangana. This study attempts to fill this gap through village-level observations and household surveys.

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives:

1. To examine the implementation of the 100 Days Employment Guarantee Programme in Telangana.
2. To assess its contribution to employment generation and income security.
3. To analyse its impact on agriculture, irrigation, and natural resource conservation.
4. To evaluate its contribution to livestock development and rural livelihoods.
5. To suggest policy measures for strengthening programme effectiveness.

Research Methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data.

Primary Data

- Household survey conducted in Jonnalaboguda and Peddakothapally villages.

- Personal interviews with beneficiaries.
- Field observations.
- Photographic documentation of rural infrastructure, irrigation facilities, drinking water sources, and livestock activities.

Secondary Data

- Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.
- Government of Telangana.
- Economic Survey of India.
- Annual Reports on MGNREGS.
- Research articles and published books.

The collected information has been analysed using descriptive and qualitative methods to understand the programme and contribution to rural development.

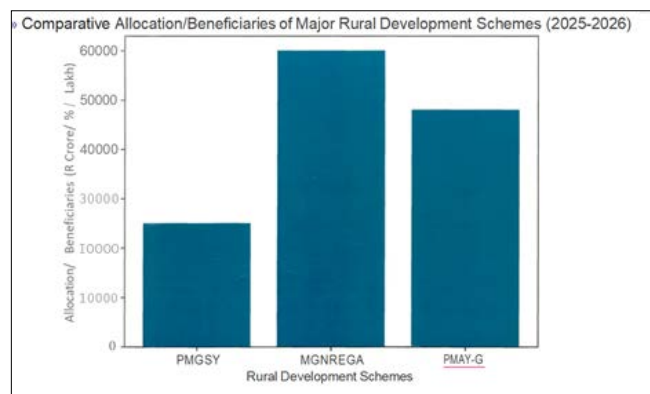
Statistical Table

Table 1: Major Rural Development Programmes in Telangana (2025-2026)

Programme	Estimated Expenditure (Crores)	Beneficiaries (Approx.)
PMGSY	25,000	10 lakhs
MGNREGA	60,000	35 lakhs
PMAY-G	48,000	18 lakhs

Table 2: Employment generated under MGNREGA in Telangana

Year	Households Employed (Lakhs)	Person days Generated (Crores)
2022-23	28	23
2023-24	31	25
2025-26	33	27
2025-26	35	29



Bar diagram Explanation

A bar diagram comparing the major rural programmes shows that MGNREGA accounts for the largest share of rural employment support, followed by housing under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin and rural roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana.

Impact of MGNREGA in Telangana

Employment Generation

The scheme provides wage employment to millions of rural households. Reducing seasonal migration.

Poverty Reduction

Regular wage income improves the purchasing power of rural families.

Creation of Rural Assets

Works such as:

- Farm ponds
- Checkdams
- Rural roads
- Soil conservation structures

Help in strengthening agricultural productivity.

Women Empowerment

Nearly 50% of beneficiaries are women, promoting gender equality in rural labour markets.

Challenges in Implementation

Despite its success, the programme faces some challenges;

- Delay in wage payments
- Lack of technical supervision
- Inadequate awareness among rural workers
- Political interference at local level

Case Studies

Research Methodology

Case study method has been employed to collect primary data as well as secondary data. Participant observation method has been followed to take information from beneficiaries.

Thirupathamma, a resident of Jonnalaboguda who worked in MGNREGA 100 day's employment programme has worked in this programme. However presently she is not working. She worked in land leveling, bunding and wild plant clearing for one year during the year 24-25. She was paid by Bhadrachalam who supervised her work as field officer paid her a daily wage of Rs.170/- to 270/- per day. However she was abandoned from work by the field officer of the programme who did not paid her wages for several days around an amount of Rs.6000/- as due. Bank also refused her request. She left from her work since the year 25-26. However she managed to bear the cost of living successfully during this year 2026. Her son Raju also worked in this programme. The reason they were told is as the manager of the group has been transferred to other area. Another beneficiary met for data collection has been Kapu Saroja. She did not complained about wages as she was paid in time; Govindamma who worked in the same village in plantation and social forestry works was paid in time. She belongs to (golla) shepherd community. Niranjanamma who also worked was paid in time. Some beneficiaries had left the work and joined nearby groundnut oil mill and the wages they received were Rs.500/- and Rs.600/- for morning and night shifts respectively. However this year 25-26, 15 persons have been working in 100 days employment scheme with per day wages between Rs.350/- to Rs.370/-.

Overall, the resultant features have been in the form of plantations of tree species, watering tree plants, forest species, and developing parks and earth works which resulted in ground water content and proper ecological balance in and around the area which belongs to Nagarkurnool District of Telangana State.

Overall, the beneficiaries under 100 Days employment guarantee programme has resulted in not only creation of employment but also in enhancing earning capacity and this has been in coincide with betterment of their livelihoods.

Suggestions

To improve the effectiveness of the programme:

1. Ensure timely wage payments through digital systems.
2. Strengthen social audits and transparency mechanisms.
3. Increase awareness programmes in rural areas.
4. Provide skill training to workers.

Findings and discussions

The study finds that the 100 Days Employment Guarantee Programme has significantly contributed to rural development in Telangana by generating wage employment, improving household incomes, creating durable community assets, and strengthening the livelihoods of rural families. Field observations from Peddakothapally village indicate that the programme has become an important source of employment during agricultural lean seasons. The timely availability of wage employment has reduced seasonal migration and provided economic security to vulnerable households (Government of India, 2024)^[5].

Women constitute a substantial proportion of the work force under the programme. Regular participation has enhanced their economic independence, increased their contribution to household decision-making, and promoted financial inclusion through direct wage transfers into bank accounts (Government of Telangana, 2024^[8]). The programme has therefore contributed not only to employment generation but also to women's empowerment.

The study also reveals that the creation of productive rural assets, including farm ponds, check dams, feeder channels, plantations, and rural roads, has strengthened agricultural productivity and improved natural resource management. These assets support sustainable rural livelihoods by improving irrigation facilities, conserving soil moisture, and enhancing groundwater recharge (Ministry of Rural Development, 2024^[5]).

Despite these achievements, certain implementation challenges remain. Delays in wage payments, inadequate technical supervision, insufficient awareness among beneficiaries regarding their rights and entitlements, and limited convergence with other rural development programmes reduce the programmes overall effectiveness. Addressing these challenges will further enhance the programme's contribution to inclusive rural development.

Policy Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, the following policy recommendations are suggested:

1. Ensure timely payment of wages through efficient digital payments systems.
2. Strengthen transparency and accountability through regular social audits and community participation.
3. Increase technical support for planning and executing durable community assets.
4. Promote greater convergence between the Employment Guarantee Programme and agriculture, watershed development, horticulture, livestock, and rural infrastructure programmes.
5. Expand skill development and livelihood diversification initiatives for rural workers.

6. Enhance awareness among beneficiaries regarding employment rights, wage entitlements, and grievance redressal mechanisms.
7. Encourage active participation of women and marginalized communities in planning and monitoring programme activities.
8. Strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems through the use of digital technology and real-time data management.

Conclusion

The 100 Days Employment Guarantee Programme represents one of India's most significant rural development initiatives. The experience of Telangana demonstrates that effective implementation, administrative commitment, community participation, and transparency can transform the programme into a powerful instrument for sustainable rural development.

The field study conducted in Peddakothapally village confirms that the programme has generated employment, increased household incomes, reduced rural distress migration, strengthened women's economic participation, and created productive rural assets. These outcomes have contributed to improved living standards and enhanced rural resilience.

Although implementation challenges continue to exist, they can be addressed through timely wage payments, stronger institutional mechanisms, better planning, improved technical support, and greater community participation. Continued policy support and effective governance will ensure that the programme remains a vital instrument for inclusive growth, poverty reduction, and sustainable rural development.

The Telangana experience offers valuable lessons for other states

Field Observation and Impact Assessment

The present study is based on field visits to Jonnalaboguda and Peddakothapally villages in Nagarkurnool District, Telangana. Household interactions, direct observations, and photographic documentation were undertaken to understand the contribution of the 100 Days Employment Guarantee Programme to rural livelihoods and infrastructure development. The observations indicate that the programme has strengthened natural resource management, agricultural productivity, and livelihood security through its convergence with irrigation and rural development initiatives.

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Drinking water facilities: The survey revealed that access to drinking water has improved considerably through bore wells fitted with motorized pumping systems and water tankers supplying potable water during periods of scarcity. These facilities play an important role in meeting the domestic water needs of rural households.

Although bore wells and water tankers are generally financed through rural water supply programmes, their sustainability depends upon groundwater recharge. In this regard, MGNREGS contributes significantly through the construction of farm ponds, recharge pits, check dams, contour trenches, and desilting of village tanks. These labour-intensive works improve groundwater levels and help ensure a more reliable water supply.

Women beneficiaries reported that improved drinking water availability has reduced the time spent collecting water, enabling them to participate in income-generating activities and Community development.

Irrigation development and agricultural growth: The important of the most significant observations during the field visit was the impact of the Mahatma Gandhi Kalwakurthy Lift Irrigation Scheme. The availability of assured irrigation has transformed agricultural practices in the study area.

Farmers informed that irrigation has enabled them to cultivate two or even three crops annually instead of depending on a single rain-fed crop. Water availability has encouraged the cultivation of paddy, cotton, maize, vegetables, and horticultural crops, thereby increasing farm incomes.

MGNREGS complements this major irrigation investment by supporting field channels, land levelling, water harvesting structures, and soil conservation works. Together, these interventions have enhanced agricultural productivity and reduced vulnerability to drought.

Natural Resource management: The field level water availability observations clearly indicate that the Employment Guarantee Programme has become an important instrument for conserving natural resources.

The programme has supported:

- Soil conservation measures
- Water harvesting structures
- Farm ponds
- Check dams
- Plantation activities
- Land development works
- Desilting of village tanks

These assets improve groundwater recharge, reduce soil erosion, increase moisture retention, and contribute to sustainable agriculture. Beneficiaries reported that wells retain water for longer periods after the implementation of these conservation works.

Livestock Development: Forms an integral part of the rural economy in the study villages. Sheep rearing, goat rearing, and dairy farming provide supplementary income to farming households.

The survey indicated that improved grazing lands and increased water availability have enhanced livestock productivity. Employment Guarantee works such as pasture development, plantation, and soil-moisture conservation indirectly support animal husbandry by improving fodder availability.

Many respondents stated that income from livestock helps households meet educational, health, and social expenditures during periods of agricultural uncertainty.

Women's Participation: Women constituted a significant proportion of workers participating in the Employment Guarantee Programme. Wage employment has strengthened their financial independence and improved their role in household decision-making.

Female beneficiaries reported that earnings from the programme are utilized for children's education, healthcare, repayment of debts, and household consumption. Participation in MGNREGS has also increased their confidence and involvement in Gram Sabha meetings and village development activities.

Overall observation is that there is further scope for enactment of the rural development programmes uniformly throughout the country as there is a regional variation in regional rural development. Hence the governments should see that overall development of all the regions should be achieved.

Reduced rural migration: Respondents stated that the availability of local wage employment has reduced seasonal migration to nearby towns and cities. Earlier, many labourers migrated in search of work during agricultural lean seasons. The Employment Guarantee Programme has enabled them to remain in their villages while earning a regular income. This has strengthened family cohesion and ensured better care for children and elderly family members.

Findings and Discussion

The study finds that the 100 Days Employment Guarantee Programme has significantly contributed to rural development in Telangana by generating wage employment, improving household incomes, creating durable community assets, and strengthening livelihoods (Government of India, 2024; Government of Telangana, 2024) [5, 8]. Field observations from Peddakothapally village support these findings.

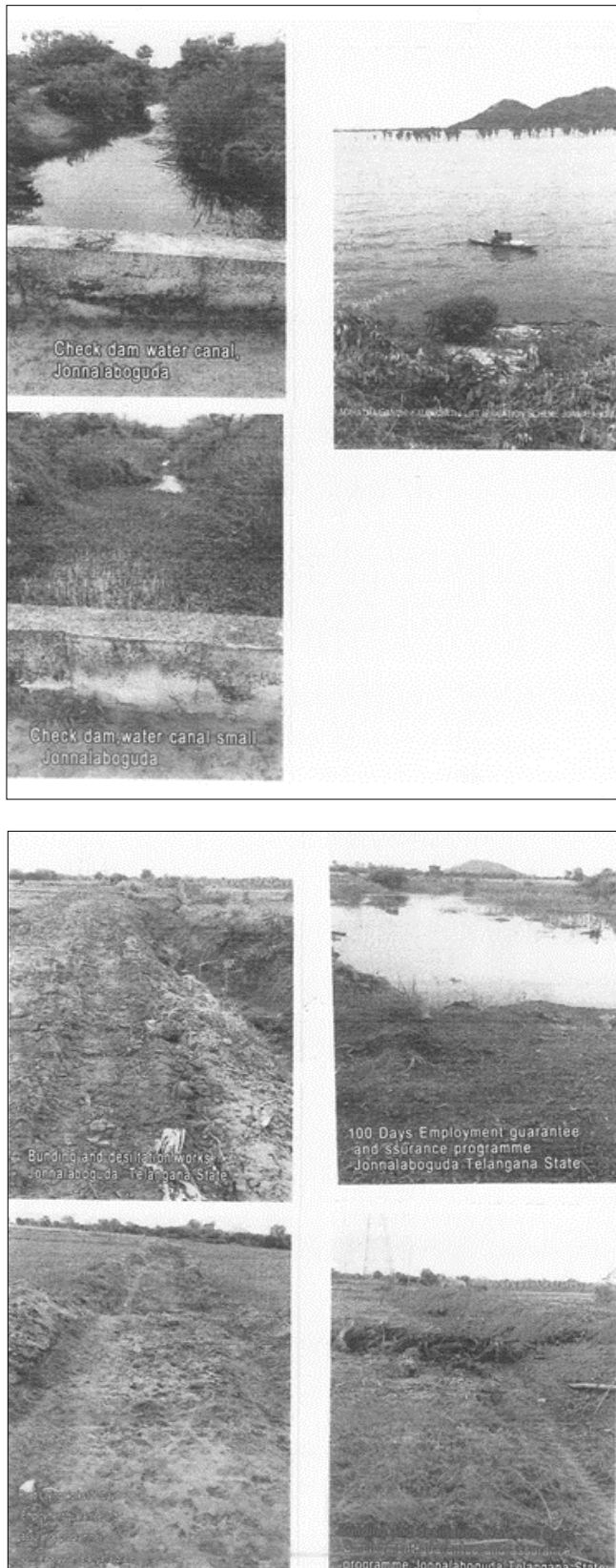
Policy Suggestions

Ensure timely wage payments; strengthen social audits; improve technical support; converge with agriculture and watershed programmes; expand skill development; increase awareness; promote participation of women and marginalized groups; strengthen monitoring.

Conclusion

The Telangana experience demonstrates that effective implementation of the Employment Guarantee Programme can promote inclusive and sustainable rural development.

Photographs: Field Survey



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