

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH RURAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the role of rural development schemes in achieving the sustainable development goals. The study is based on secondary data covering the period 2011-12 to 2020-21. The study has selected three schemes namely MGNREGA, PMGSY and PMAY-G operational under Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD). The results of the study show that MGNREGA is doing well in employing rural people and in the elimination of rural poverty. In addition to this, the scheme has contributed towards gender equality as the share of women in employment was more than men in every year of the study. Further, it has provided strength to the marginalized section of society such as Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) by giving them employment and increasing their participation in village-related works. In addition to this, the highest share of expenditure was done in the agriculture sector. Further, PMGSY also contributed in creation of infrastructure for the poor by connecting the number of habitations to All-weather roads. The number of connected habitations has increased during the period of study. In addition to this, the number of houses constructed under PMAY-G also increased. The study suggests that the wage rate of beneficiaries should be increased according to the rising inflation. Further, the work ambit of MGNREGA should be widened, the inclusion of agricultural work on the land of marginal and small farmers to reduce their financial burden and the same is needed for the safer environment. The targets under rest of the two schemes i.e. PMGSY and PMAY-G should also be properly achieved and also to be increased for better road connectivity and housing for all.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, MGNREGA, PMGSY, PMAY-G Rural, Poverty.

Introduction

Sustainable development is a topic of discussion in the whole world. The development cannot solely depend on economic development as there are other aspects such as social, political, cultural and environmental. So, there is a need for simultaneous development of all these components thereby resulting into the development of a new concept of sustainable development. According to Brundtland's Report, "Sustainable development is a development and well-off that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs".

The sustainable development goals emerged in the year 2012 from the concept of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with the main motive to eradicate poverty in the whole world. Further, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cover the issues which affect every aspect of human life. There were 17 interconnected goals emerged from the Millennium Development Goals such as no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well being, quality education, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace, justice and strong institutions, partnership for the goals. (UNDP)

Sustainable development is concerned with the development without depleting natural resources. In a country like India, where rural area is directly dependent on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture and natural resources, the scheme like MGNREGA can help in the regeneration

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of natural resources and achieve sustainable development. There was the phase-wise implementation of the Act, it was implemented on February 2, 2006, in 200 (most backward) districts of India. In the IInd phase in 2007-08, the additional 130 districts were covered. Then in the IIIrd Phase of its implementation in 2008 the act was implemented in whole of India except for the districts having a hundred per cent urban population. In 2009, NREGA was re-named as MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act). The MGNREGA Act guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members are willing to perform unskilled manual work. The objectives of the MGNREGA programme is to ensure social protection and livelihood security to rural poor, empowerment of the disadvantaged and marginalised groups such as women, SCs (Scheduled Caste), STs (Scheduled Tribals), deepening the democracy at bottom-level, bringing more transparency and accountability in governance. (MGNREGA Sameeksha, 2012) (Operational Guidelines, 2013: p.3). The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) was introduced in the year 2000 to promote the rural roads by connecting the unconnected rural habitations in order to improve the access of rural people to economic and social infrastructure that will ultimately help them to come out of poverty. The IAY that was started as the part of National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) in 1980.. In the year 1989, IAY becomes the part of Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) and it became operational as an independent scheme from 1996. Then in the year 2016, it has been renamed as Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Grameen (PMAY-G).

MGNREGA helped to reduce poverty and the goal of sustainable development can be fulfilled by focusing on different variables of the scheme. (Planning commission, 2010) The scheme helped to raise the employment and income which facilitated agricultural investment and reduction in migration. (Banerjee and Saha, 2010) Through NREGS earnings of women workers had increased and NREGS had also provided more control over their earnings which makes them economically independent. (Pankaj and Tankha, 2010) The activities under MGNREGA were found to have reduced the vulnerability of agricultural production, water resources and livelihoods to uncertain rainfall, water scarcity and poor soil fertility. (Tiwari et. al.) MGNREGA work was considered as a high social status symbol by women. (Swamy, 2013) PMGSY showed that adherence to the rules and adoption of data base under the scheme made it a success (Nanda and Kanagadurai, 2006). Maujunath (2012) stated that lack of funding and expertise make gram panchayats incapable to perform PMGSY work. Sampath and Murugan (2013) found the new road connectivity improved in majority states of the country. Kumar and Yadav (2015) stated that cost incurred and length of constructed roads increased due to PMGSY. Kumar (2000) found convergence of IAY with other schemes for sanitization and kitchen as an important element of its success. Chandanshiv (2010) stated positive impact of the scheme but with some deficiencies related to quality of material used. Biswas (2015) found the gap in housing requirements of rural people.

The work done under MGNREGA was mostly belongs to land development on private lands, waterworks on common lands, afforestation and horticulture work category. The assets created under the scheme were of good quality and well maintained by the local government or by the users themselves. (Ranaware et. al, 2015) The construction of basic infrastructure facilities under MGNREGS such as road connectivity can be lead to rural areas for development. This increase people access to the external environment, linkage to market access and thus liking to create a crucial role in generating employment and access to livelihood options. (Sharma, 2016) Although various studies have been conducted to assess the contribution of the MGNREGA, PMGSY and PMAY-G scheme in India, no study could have been found which have linked rural development schemes with sustainable development. So, in this paper, an attempt has been made to study the role of rural development schemes in the sustainable development of India.

Research Methodology

The study is based on secondary data. The study has covered the period from the year 2011-12 to 2020-21. The data has been collected from the website of MGNREGA, website of PMGSY, website of PMAY-G, website of Ministry of Rural Development, website of UNDP and various other sites and journals. The data has been analysed using Percentage Analysis.

MGNREGA and Sustainable Development

It seems that MGNREGA is covering many of the goals of sustainable development. It includes the following:

- **MGNREGA and No Poverty**

MGNREGA targets rural poverty as it covers the rural poor only. According to the census of India 2011, majority of the population (70 per cent) lives in rural areas of India so, there is need to focus on rural poor and this work is done by MGNREGA through the provision of employment opportunities to the rural people.

- **MGNREGA and Decent Work and Economic Growth**

MGNREGA provides the opportunity to the beneficiaries to demand employment and also ensure guaranteed employment to the applicants. The scheme has different features such as the provision of work within the radius of 5km of village, no contractor is allowed at the worksite, different work facilities such as shade, drinking water, rest, crèche facility, compensation for delayed payment, provision of unemployment allowance which leads to the decent work environment and economic growth.

- **MGNREGA and Gender Equality**

MGNREGA provides equal work opportunities for both men and women. Under the scheme, there should be at least 33 per cent women workers out of total workers, equal wages for both men and women, the share of women mates should be 50 per cent at all the worksites. Therefore, all these provisions promote gender equality.

- **MGNREGA and Infrastructure**

It helps to develop the infrastructure in rural areas which is beneficial for agriculturists also and for the whole community. The assets such as ponds, wells, tanks, playgrounds, roads etc, all this led to the development of rural infrastructure.

- **MGNREGA and Economic Inequalities**

MGNREGA aims at reducing the rural-urban divide. As urban areas are more developed than rural areas with more work opportunities, developed infrastructure, more facilities in every aspect. MGNREGA helps rural people to stand on par with urban people and boosts up economic equality by providing rural employment and infrastructure.

- **MGNREGA and Life on Land**

There are different works permissible under the scheme to make life on land comfortable, healthy and clean such as:

- Water conservation and water harvesting
- Drought proofing includes (afforestation and tree plantation)
- Irrigation canals including micro and minor irrigation work
- Provision of irrigation facility to land owned by households belonging to scheduled caste and scheduled tribes
- Renovation of traditional water bodies including desilting of tanks
- Land development
- Flood control and protection work including drainage in water logged areas
- Rural connectivity to all weather access

(Operational Guidelines, 2013)

Table 1 shows the performance of MGNREGA in India from the year 2011-12 to 2020-21.

Table 1: Performance of MGNREGA in India

Year	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Total employment Provided (Person days) (in crores)	211.42	210.8	218.67	166.28	220.76	224.51	222.27	256.19	254.66	389.09
Person- days provided to women (Percentage)	56.68	57.93	58.07	54.88	55.26	56.16	53.47	54.59	54.78	53.19
Person- days provided to SCs (Percentage)	20.73	21.20	21.99	22.4	22.29	21.32	21.5	20.77	20.38	19.87
Person- days provided to STs (Percentage)	22.56	20.87	19.94	16.97	17.8	17.62	17.61	17.42	18.41	17.95
Person-days provided to differently abled persons	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	461880	462917	606149
Average Wage rate per day per person	-	-	-	143.92	154.08	161.65	169.45	179.13	182.09	200.71
Total Expenditure(in crores)	36436.50	38495.49	36553.55	36,025.04	44,002.59	58,062.92	63,662.56	69618.59	68261.93	111719.55
Percentage of expenditure on Agriculture and Allied works	-	-	-	52.81	62.85	66	66.74	66.12	67.54	65.01

Source: www.mgnrega.nic.in

The table 1 shows that the performance of MGNREGA in India. It is well known fact that employment is the basis for removal of poverty and hunger from the society. It also helps bring peace in society as people get busy with their work and there will be less criminal activities. The data indicates that total employment provided under the MGNREGA scheme was 211.42 crores in the year 2011-12 that has increased to 389.09 crores in the year 2020-21. Inclusion of women in every sphere of life may be social, economic, political is very important. To empower women in the different areas, MGNREGA is contributing a lot as the share of women in total employment was 56.88 per cent in the year 2011-12 that increased to 58.07 per cent in the year 2013-14 and it has reached 53.19 per cent in the year 2020-21. Although the share of women workers has shown a fluctuating trend, these figures show that during the study period the share of women workers remains above the stipulated share i.e. 33 per cent.

As MGNREGA focuses on the removal of inequalities and wants to strengthen the marginalized section of society that is why it is important to check the share of SCs and STs in employment provided under the MGNREGA. This table depicts the share of SCs was 20.73 per cent in the year 2011-12 and it has declined to 19.87 per cent in the year 2020-21. Simultaneously, the share of STs has also decreased from 22.56 to 17.95 from the year 2011-12 to 2020-21. Further, the person-days generated to differently abled persons were 461880 in 2018-19 that increased to 606149. Wage rate defines the income generation capacity of the beneficiary. Under the scheme, the average wage rate per day per person was 143.92 in the year 2014-15 that has increased to 200.71 in the year 2020-21. The table further shows that the total expenditure under the MGNREGA scheme in India was Rs. 36436.50 crores in the year 2011-12 that reached to Rs. 111719.55 crores in the year 2020-21. The agriculture sector is the major contributing sector of GDP of the Indian economy. This sector requires much attention, MGNREGA contribution to the agriculture sector is increasing as the share of agriculture and allied sector under the total expenditure has increased from 52.81 per cent in the year 2014-15 to 65.01 in the year 2020-21.

PMGSY and Sustainable Development

One of the sustainable development goals is to create quality, reliable, resilient infrastructure. This could be achieved under PMGSY connecting rural habitations with all-weather roads. Table 2 shows the number of habitations sanctioned and connected with all weather roads under PMGSY in India from the year 2011-12 to 2020-21.

Table 2: Number of Habitations Sanctioned and Connected in India under PMGSY

Year	Sanctioned Habitations	Connected Habitations
2011-12	109910	78298
2012-13	125704	88231
2013-14	141682	98223
2014-15	141760	109777
2015-16	143442	119984
2016-17	154085	131948
2017-18	160536	143479
2018-19	163442	153917
2019-20	163442	158073
2020-21	163442	160663

www.omms.nic.in

The table 2 shows that the sanctioned habitations to be covered under PMGSY was 109910 in the year 2011-12 that reached to 163442 in the year 2020-21 whereas the number of habitations connected was 78298 in the year 2011-12 that inclined to 160663 habitations in the year 2020-21.

PMAY-G and Sustainable Development

Housing is also one of the important goals under SDGs and it directly and indirectly affects other targets and goals to be achieved under SDGs Agenda 2030. Thus, the role of PMAY-g is important to assess in providing housing to rural poor in the country. Table 3 shows the number of targeted houses and number of houses constructed under the scheme in India from the year 2011-12 to 2020-21.

Table 3: Total Targets Set and Houses Completed under PMAY-G in India

Year	Number of Houses (Targets)	Houses Completed
2011-12	13.94	8.75
2012-13	29.97	20.99
2013-14	24.45	20.94
2014-15	24.32	19.97
2015-16	21.64	18.81
2016-17	42.63	38.51

2017-18	31.94	28.72
2018-19	25.14	23.77
2019-20	59.26	31.85
2020-21	45.50	27.26

www.iay.nic.in

The table 3 shows that the target set by States for the construction of IAY/PMAY-G houses in India in 2011-12 was 1394 lakh that increased 45.50 lakh in 2020-21. As far as the total number of PMAY-G houses constructed is concerned, 8.75 lakh houses were constructed in the year 2011-12 and this number reached to 27.26 lakh in the year 2020-21.

Conclusion

On the whole, it can be concluded that rural development schemes are doing well in achieving the sustainable development goals. The MGNREGA scheme has contributed towards employment generation, gender equality as the share of women in employment was more than men in every year of the study. Further, the scheme has provided strength to the marginalized section of society such as SCs and STs by giving them employment and increasing their participation in village related works. *In addition to this, the highest share of expenditure was done in the agriculture sector. Further, PMGSY also contributed in creation of infrastructure for the poor by connecting the number of habitations to All-weather roads. The number of connected habitations has increased during the period of study. In addition to this, the number of houses constructed under PMAY-G also increased. The study suggests that the wage rate of beneficiaries should be increased according to the rising inflation. Further, the work ambit of MGNREGA should be widened, the inclusion of agricultural work on the land of marginal and small farmers to reduce their financial burden and the same is needed for the safer environment. The targets under rest of the two schemes i.e. PMGSY and PMAY-G should also be properly achieved and also to be increased for better road connectivity and housing for all.*

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