

# EFFICACY OF ‘MGNREGS’ DIMINISHING WITH AN INFLUX OF TECHNOLOGICAL MEASURES IN IT – AN APPRAISAL

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*Abstract*—While conducting a survey of social security schemes particularly, employment-centred scheme, adoption of rural employment scheme in the form of ‘MGNREGS’ appears as a momentous step in Indian context. MGNREGS is indubitably one of the most important productive employment generation programmes. Since its inception, this scheme has appeared as country’s largest wage-employment scheme and has played twin role in not only generating employment but also in alleviation of poverty. As such, this scheme has contributed in the economic growth of the nation. In addition to this, the prime concern of the scheme is rural development. This scheme, as such plays a vital role in the development of a nation like India. Now-a-days, with the advent of digital era, technology is introduced in every sector whether it be education, work, etc. Similarly, technological measures have also been influxed in the MGNREGS in order to ensure smooth functioning of the scheme. No doubt, inclusion of such technological measures would result into more transparency, accuracy, speedy work of management of information, record-keeping system, monitoring, etc. Thus, such measures appear as a boon to any scheme in ensuring its proper functioning. However, same is not true with the MGNREGS, since, the scheme is designed only for rural employment. For technological measures to work properly, it

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*becomes necessary to have proper network connectivity. In rural area, it is highly possible that the network connectivity may not be proper. As such, connectivity problem may hamper the functioning of measures adopted for attendance, payment of wages, etc., which are some of the essential features of the scheme. Thus, it can be said that with the advent of technological advancement in the scheme, such as NMMS, MIS, etc. relevancy of the scheme has been put into uncertainty. As such, through this paper an attempt has been made to describe the scheme in nutshell and then to highlight the technological innovations infused into the scheme. Further it has also been described as to how far such technological instruments has affected the utility of the said scheme which was devised as a welfare scheme for poor and needy workers in India.*

**Keywords:** MGNREGS, Technology, Relevance, Employment, Rural.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Poverty and economic development cannot go side by side. As such it becomes necessary to have some measures to alleviate poverty so as to put the brick for economic development. With the view to achieve this goal, a scheme like “Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme” (hereinafter referred to as “MGNREGS”) was instituted by the Government of India (GoI).<sup>1</sup>

In the rural sector, initiative like MGNREGS appears as a historic step. It is a welfare scheme which was launched to generate employment opportunities specifically for rural workers. It is a demand-driven programme and is aimed to confer the right to employment to rural workers. The scheme of generation of employment was working very smoothly without any laches from the year of its inception. With the passage of time, there appears technological advancement in all fields of work, education, etc. New ways have been incorporated in the form of software applications designed to make work easy and fast. Even in the implementation of welfare schemes like MGNREGS, technology was introduced. No doubt, this technological upliftment proved fruitful in many areas. But, how far this fusion of technology in welfare schemes like MGNREGS has been appreciated and proved fruitful, remains uncertain.

<sup>1</sup> MGNREGA, 2005, §4, No. 42, Acts of Parliament, 2005 (India).

Thus, through this paper, an attempt has been made to first assess the role of MGNREGS in the livelihood of rural workers in India and then to review the working mechanism of MGNREGS, technological innovations which are introduced into the scheme, performance of the scheme after influx of technology in it for which statistical data have also been shown to compare and assess its working thereto.

## II. MGNREGS – AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON THE SCHEME

It is true that since independence, in India, a number of schemes have been framed and adopted for the welfare of the poor and marginalised section of the society. Among them, MGNREGS occupies a prominent place. MGNREGS is a welfare scheme, devised to generate employment opportunities for rural workers. At the inception of this scheme, the statute under which it was framed was “National Rural Employment Guarantee Act” (hereinafter referred to as “NREGA”), which was later on termed as “Mahatma Gandhi NREGA” (hereinafter stated as “MGNREGA”).

MGNREGS is thus, a principal scheme framed under the statute MGNREGA. This statute was enacted with the aim to provide a sense of livelihood security to workers in rural areas, where the rate of unemployment is comparatively higher.<sup>2</sup> As per the enactment, livelihood security can be enhanced “*by ensuring guaranteed work for a duration which shall not be less than hundred days during every fiscal year to every family whose member particularly adult member shows willingness to perform work which is unskilled or manual*”.<sup>3</sup> Initially, that is from 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2006 or can be said as, in the first phase of enforcement, this statute was notified in only 200 districts.<sup>4</sup> Thereafter, from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008, other districts were also covered by the scheme.<sup>5</sup> This scheme covers around eight categories of works.<sup>6</sup>

This scheme is based on a Labour-intensive approach and is a step toward the realisation of the “right to work” as envisaged by “*the Directive Principles of State Policy*” (DPSP) of the Constitution of India.

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<sup>2</sup> HARENDRA RAJ GAUTAM AND H.L. SHARMA, EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF MGNREGA VITAL FOR SOCIAL SECURITY OF THE POOR, KURUKSHETRA – SPECIAL ISSUE 24, 25 (October 2014).

<sup>3</sup> MGNREGA, 2005, *supra* note 1, Preamble, No. 42, Acts of Parliament, 2005 (India).

<sup>4</sup> GOVT. OF INDIA, State Performance Report, 2021-22 and Action Plan 2022-23 – Overview and Summary Tables, vol. I, STATE PERFORMANCE REPORT, 6 (2021-22).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> JOSEPH ABRAHAM, MGNREGS – NEED FOR REFORMS TO CREATE PRODUCTIVE RURAL EMPLOYMENT, KURUKSHETRA – SPECIAL ISSUE 54, 54 (October 2014).

### III. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF MGNREGA

MGNREGA was adopted with certain aims and objectives, which include:<sup>7</sup>

1. Providing wage employment to unskilled rural labour;
2. Generation of productive and durable assets;
3. Upgrading earning capacity of the rural unskilled workers;
4. Boosting the livelihood source of the poor;
5. Establishing social inclusion; and
6. Firming up Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

### IV. SALIENT FEATURES OF MGNREGA

The salient features of MGNREGA encompass constitutional mandate to ensure “the right to work” and include:<sup>8</sup>

- Employment guarantee for a period of “hundred days to every household to perform an unskilled or manual work provided that the adult member of such household offers his desire thereto”.
- Based on a demand-driven approach. That is employment is provided on the basis of demand from workers.
- Employment guarantee within the stipulated time frame of fifteen days of demand.
- Providing of unemployment allowance, in case the job is not given within the due period as stipulated.
- Work to be allocated within a radius of five kilometres of the residence of the worker concerned, in case of non-compliance, extra allowance be provided as travel expenses.
- Women workers should be given priority while work is allocated.
- Expenditure under the scheme is to be met by both the Union as well as respective state governments in a certain prescribed ratio.
- Labour intensive approach should be adopted.
- Payment of wages to men and women on the basis of “equal pay for equal work”.
- Central authority to allocate work and distribute funds shall be upon the PRIs (Panchayati Raj Institutions).

<sup>7</sup> GOVT. OF INDIA, *supra* note 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 6-9.

- Application of principles such as transparency, accountability, etc., in the working of the scheme. For instance, the application of “social audit”.
- Formation of productive assets to build up the source of livelihood for the poor and needy in rural areas.
- Its framework is described as “people-centred”, “self-selecting”, “right-based”.

## V. WORKING MECHANISM UNDERLYING MGNREGS

MGNREGS is a welfare scheme designed to accompany rural development. Unlike other employment guarantee schemes, this scheme is demand-driven. Thus, the working mechanism of this scheme is somehow distinct from other schemes of like nature. As such a brief overview of the working mechanism of the scheme has been described below:<sup>9</sup>

- Registration of an adult member of the household in the rural area depicting desire and willingness to perform manual and unskilled work. Such registration may be made either in writing or in oral form to the GP.
- After registration, verification has to be conducted to inspect the details and particulars of the registrant. After successful verification, a job card is issued to the registrant within fifteen days of registration.
- An application has to be made to the GP for employment specifying the duration and date for which work is sought.
- Within fifteen days of such application, work is provided by the Gram Panchayat to the applicant.
- Work is allocated to the applicants after considering the necessary details of the concerned applicants.
- In case of failure to provide such employment within fifteen days, the applicant shall be given an unemployment allowance.
- Remuneration to be given on a piece rate basis to the beneficiary per week. Priority to be given to women workers.
- Decision regarding the choice and nature of work to be allotted to the applicant has to be determined by the Gram Sabha in open assemblies, which has also to be ratified by the Gram Panchayat.
- Cost sharing has to be made between the Central and State Governments. There appear two types of cost. While the entire wage

<sup>9</sup> MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (MoRD), GOVT. OF INDIA, MGNREGA SAMEEKSHA, AN ANTHOLOGY OF RESEARCH STUDIES ON THE MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT, 2005 (2006-12) 2-3 (ed. Mihir Shah, Orient Black Swan).

cost has to be paid by the central government, the material cost has to be paid in a ratio of 3:1.

- To maintain and uphold principles of transparency and accountability in the working of the scheme, measures such as social audit<sup>10</sup>, grievance redressal mechanism<sup>11</sup>, and public scrutiny has been adopted.
- And further to maintain the aim of the statute, expenditure has to be made in such a way that the ratio of expenditure is in the ratio of 60:40 between wage expenditure and material expenses.

## VI. ROOTS OF MGNREGS AND CONSTITUTIONAL MANDATES

The roots of MGNREGS can be traced from the provisions of the Constitution of India. It can be seen as the statutory enforcement of the “right to work” as envisaged in the DPSP, which mandates “*the State to make certain that citizens, whether men or women to enjoy the right to an adequate means to livelihood*”<sup>12</sup> and that “*the state, on the basis of its economic capacity and development, shall make effective provision for securing right to work...*”<sup>13</sup> Thus, the scheme has been adopted as a means to provide the larger fundamental right to life with dignity.<sup>14</sup>

## VII. ROLE OF MGNREGS IN THE LIVELIHOOD OF RURAL WORKERS

MGNREGS has appeared as an alternative source of employment for rural workers.<sup>15</sup> Since the scheme is demand-driven, it provides employment to workers who desire and apply to work as unskilled workers. Further, the work allocated under the scheme is generally unskilled and manual, which makes the scheme general with no basic requirement of skill from workers. For women workers, this scheme appears as a hub of opportunity, since in the allocation of work, priority is given to women workers, the distance of work to be allocated cannot be outside the range of five kilometres, work to be performed under the scheme includes only unskilled and manual work. This scheme of employment appears as a good source of livelihood for rural workers who opt for agriculture as an occupation. Since, in agriculture, workers have to face the sufferings of seasonal unemployment. During seasonal unemployment, the worker has to wait for another period to cultivate and grow crops and have to

<sup>10</sup> MGNREGA, 2005, *supra* note 1 at §17.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*, at § 27(2).

<sup>12</sup> INDIA CONST. art. 39.

<sup>13</sup> INDIA CONST. art. 41.

<sup>14</sup> MoRD, GOVT. OF INDIA, *supra* note 9.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.* at 6-7.

meet their expenses with minimal savings. In such a period of unemployment, MGNREGS appears as a significant source of employment. Further, the significance of MGNREGS as a source of employment for the rural workforce can also be assessed from the fact that there was around a forty percent increase in the number of workers making demand for work during the phase of COVID-19 under MGNREGS.<sup>16</sup> Further from the fact that in the fiscal year 2023, demand for work was made by around 6.49 crore households, of which around 6.48 crore households were offered work and around 5.7 crores of them availed work so allotted, it is evident that the scheme is beneficial and valuable for the rural workforce.<sup>17</sup>

So far as the amount of wage paid to the worker under the scheme is concerned, MGNREGA entitles every worker, to wages for each day of work at the rate notified by the government, particularly, the respective state.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, the significance of MGNREGS lies in the fact that it acts as a supplementary source of livelihood for poor and marginalised workers. And in some cases, it has also been seen that the income received from MGNREGS by the workers has been used for starting their own work.<sup>19</sup> In some cases, agricultural workers also utilise the MGNREGS income in purchasing seeds, manures and other farming equipment.

## VIII. MGNREGS AND INFLUX OF TECHNOLOGY

With the advent of the digital era, technology has been introduced in each and every sector of the economy. Even in MGNREGS, technology has been adopted in the form of application software designed to ensure the smooth functioning of the scheme. Some of these include:

1. **Geographical Information System (GIS):** GIS is an ICT instrument devised for the purpose of “mapping and analysing the geographic terrain” and proposes “development works” on the basis of scientific reasoning.<sup>20</sup> The GIS-based system of planning of Gram panchayats has been initiated by the Ministry as an integrated planning approach. Thus, planning of work under the MGNREGA is now done by using technological innovations. In December 2022, a plan for 2,62,654 GPs have been designed.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Participatory Research in India (PRIA), 15 YEARS IN: THE MGNREGA STORY, Occasional Paper, 28 (March, 2021).

<sup>17</sup> MINISTRY OF FINANCE, GOVT. OF INDIA, *Economic Survey 2022-23*, 171 (January 2023).

<sup>18</sup> MoRD, GOVT. OF INDIA, *supra* note 9 at 8.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* at 6.

<sup>20</sup> MoRD, GOVT. OF INDIA, GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SYSTEM (GIS) PLANS FOR AROUND 75% GRAM PANCHAYATS COMPLETED PIB – DELHI (Nov. 19, 2021, 6:13 PM), <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1773279#:~:text=GIS%2Dbased%20planning%20under%20Mahatma,planning%20at%20the%20implementation%20level> (last visited on Feb. 22, 2023).

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

2. **Yuktdhara Geospatial Planning Portal:** It is an online planning portal developed by the National Remote Sensing Centre, ISRO, Department of Space. It facilitates the Planning of MGNREGA and assists other Departments and Ministries in mapping the terrestrial site of planned assets through the web management system and hence enhancing integration, effective monitoring system, and creation of assets, among others.<sup>22</sup>
3. **National Electronic Fund Management System (Ne-FMS)/ DBT:** It is designed to facilitate the fund flow system and timely disbursement of remuneration to the worker’s account following the DBT Protocol and came into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016.<sup>23</sup> Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) Protocol means “notionally travel through State Employment Guarantee Fund to the workers account, grounded on a Fund Transfer Order (FTO) to be generated by States’ implementing agencies”.<sup>24</sup>
4. **Software for Estimate Calculation Using Rural Rates for Employment (SECURE):** It is a workflow-based system, wherein the work names and work codes are received from MGNREGA MIS to the concerned Block/District/State on login after the approval from Labour Budget. The Block/District/State, which so received information then prepares estimates which are then bestowed with AS/TS sanctions and a slip of such sanctioned estimates is then generated from the system. Thus, it helps in facilitating estimates with minimum consumption of time loaded with accuracy.<sup>25</sup>
5. **Ombudsperson App:** This App was launched on 24th February 2022 in order to facilitate smooth reporting and categorization of grievances which may be received from various sources such as physical, digital and mass media related to the implementation of the MGNREG Scheme; speedy delivery of awards as per the guidelines; and uploading of annual reports on the website.<sup>26</sup>
6. **Jaldoot App:** Jaldoot is a mobile app, developed by Panchayat Raj and MoRD, jointly to facilitate “manual examination of water levels in open wells two times a year” and also “transmit the geo-tagged pictures”. It has been designed to work both in online as well as offline modes.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> GOVT. OF INDIA, NATIONAL ELECTRONIC FUND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (NE-FMS) – FRAMEWORK OF IMPLEMENTATION, MGNREGA, 3 (Sept. 9, 2016), [https://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/writereaddata/Circulars/1756NEFMS\\_Upscaling.pdf](https://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/writereaddata/Circulars/1756NEFMS_Upscaling.pdf) (last visited on March 19, 2023).

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> SOFTWARE FOR ESTIMATE CALCULATION USING RURAL RATES FOR EMPLOYMENT (SECURE), <https://secure.nic.in/home>. (last visited on March 20, 2023).

<sup>26</sup> MoRD, GOVT. OF INDIA, UNION MINISTER SHRI GIRIRAJ SINGH LAUNCHES OMBUDSPERSON APP FOR MGNREGA, PIB – Delhi (Feb. 24, 2022 6:31 PM), <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1800847> (last visited on Feb. 24, 2023).

<sup>27</sup> MoRD, GOVT. OF INDIA, JALDOOT APP LAUNCHED: TO ENABLE MONITORING OF GROUND WATER TABLES ACROSS THE COUNTRY, PIB – Delhi (Sept. 27, 2022, 5:49 PM), <https://rural.nic.in/en/>



7. **Aadhar Based Payment System (ABPS):** Aadhar Based Payment System (ABPS) in MGNREGS was introduced by the Government in 2017 as one of the methods of payment of wages to workers so as to ensure timely payment of wages as well as transparency towards the payment.<sup>28</sup> The system has been introduced after viewing that delay in payment of wages may be caused due to problems relating to bank accounts.<sup>29</sup> Initially, it was mandated in only those districts where a high banking penetration was seen. Thereafter, it was mandated to be followed in the remaining areas also. Till now seventy-five percent of the total active worker's Aadhaar have been seeded in MIS and around 6.53 crore worker's Aadhaar has been linked for payment under ABPS.<sup>30</sup>
8. **Management Information System (MIS):** Management Information System (MIS) has been introduced in MGNREGA as a means to establish transparency, accountability and proper implementation. It stores information relating to all the details regarding job cards, muster rolls and wage and material payments.<sup>31</sup>
9. **National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS) App:** This Application has been launched to monitor the attendance of workers engaged in work allotted under the scheme.<sup>32</sup> Through this App, attendance is recorded along with the photo of the worker.<sup>33</sup> It is a mobile App, through which attendance at the work site is recorded by taking two time-stamped and geo tagged photographs of the workers in a day. This application was initiated on May 21, 2021, and was made mandatory from May 16, 2022, for all the work sites where the number of beneficiaries enrolled in the muster roll was twenty or more.<sup>34</sup>

These were some of the technological innovations made to facilitate the functioning of the MGNREG Scheme in a smooth manner.

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press-release/jaldoot-app-launched-enable-monitoring-ground-water-tables-across-country (last visited on Feb. 20, 2023).

<sup>28</sup> MoRD, GOVT. OF INDIA, UNION MINISTER SHRI GIRIRAJ SINGH SAYS, THE CENTRE TODAY ASSERTED THAT IT IS FULLY COMMITTED TO ENSURE THE WAGE PAYMENT TO EVERY BENEFICIARY OF THE MGNREGA SCHEME, PIB – Delhi (March 19, 2023, 8:49 PM), <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1908595> (last visited on March 22, 2023)

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

<sup>30</sup> GOVT. OF INDIA, *supra* note 4 at 13.

<sup>31</sup> MoRD, GOVT. OF INDIA, *supra* note 9 at 61.

<sup>32</sup> MINISTRY OF FINANCE, *supra* note 17 at 206.

<sup>33</sup> MoRD, Govt. of India, DIFFICULTIES UNDER AADHAAR BASED PAYMENT SYSTEM & NATIONAL MOBILE MONITORING SYSTEM, PIB – DELHI (March 15, 2023, 5:42 PM), <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1907209>. (last visited on March 20, 2023).

<sup>34</sup> MoRD, Govt. of India, NATIONAL MOBILE MONITORING SYSTEM (NMMS) APP FOR MGNREGS, PIB – DELHI (March 21, 2023, 6:59 PM), <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1909254> (last visited on March 22, 2023).

Similarly, a number of software applications such as e-muster rolls, electronic transfer of data files, etc. have been installed to establish an e-governance system in the functioning of MGNREGS so as to ensure the smooth working of the scheme.

## **IX. PERFORMANCE OF THE SCHEME AFTER INFLUX OF ICT TOOLS – A TOPICAL REVIEW**

There exists no doubt as to the utility of MGNREGS in providing income insurance to rural workers. But with the advent of technological innovations in the scheme meant for rural development by the creation of employment opportunities, the efficacy of the scheme is slightly diminishing. This is evident from the fact that after the influx of technological equipment such as ABPS, etc., challenges have been encountered regarding the regular payment of wages to workers, etc.

Under the scheme, expenditure is paid by both the union as well as respective state governments. While the material cost is paid by both the Union government and state government in the three-fourth (seventy-five percent) and one-fourth (twenty-five percent) ratio, respectively, wages to workers are paid wholly by the union government.<sup>35</sup> As such rules regarding payment of wages to workers under the scheme are framed solely by the union government.<sup>36</sup>

Recently, it has been mandated and ordered by the union that “all payments under the MGNREGS shall be made through Aadhar Based Payment system only”.<sup>37</sup> And this mandate shall come into effect from February 1, 2023. This has made the situation worst for workers who were earlier getting wages from an “account-based system”. Since, prior to this mandate, there were two-fold mechanisms of wage distribution, viz., “account-based” and “Aadhaar-based”. While in the former, the bank account becomes the address of the beneficiary, in later Aadhaar is taken as a financial address. And the worker was at liberty to opt for any of the methods to get wages.

But with the new mandate on the ABPS, the scenario has been changed. Under ABPS, not only worker’s Job card as well as bank account has to be seeded with Aadhaar but the said account has also to be linked to the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) mapper.<sup>38</sup> This process seems more complex from the perspective of workers especially rural workers who are wandering and searching for work, unskilled or manual, to earn their

<sup>35</sup> MGNREGA, *supra* note 1 at § 22.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*

<sup>37</sup> Jean Dreze, *Making Aadhaar-based Payments Compulsory for NREGA Wages is a Recipe for Disaster*, THE WIRE, (Feb. 16, 2023), <https://thewire.in/rights/aadhaar-payments-compulsory-nrega>. (last visited on March 20, 2023).

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*

livelihood. As a result, a number of workers are found to be not eligible for ABPS. This is evident from the figures shown in the table below:

Table No. 1 - Status of Workers in MGNREGS (As on 22 March 2023)

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Status of Workers in the Scheme</b>	<b>Total No. of Workers</b>	<b>Aadhaar Seeded</b>	<b>Eligible for ABPS</b>
	Workers enrolled	280257653	205805527	134347989
	Active Workers	149548173	142906556	101937552

(Source)<sup>39</sup>

In addition to this, seeding and mapping a bank account involves a series of formalities such as compliance with KYC norms, biometrics, etc. which further hampers the potential of rural workers in getting wage employment. Thus, the purpose for which ABPS has been introduced in MGNREGS, which is to reduce the scope of delays in the payment of wages is not fulfilled. Instead, a series of troubles has been faced by beneficiary workers.<sup>40</sup>

Further, measures like MIS have also hampered the implementation mechanism of the scheme. MIS can be described as the storehouse of all the information relating to registration, issuance of job cards, allotment of work, etc. This was introduced to validate accountability and transparency in the scheme. It provides access to information to the public. But how far the information so generated in the system shows the ground reality of the administration of the scheme remains suspicious.<sup>41</sup> A delay in reporting data in MIS has also been revealed.<sup>42</sup>

Yet another shortcoming is the occurrence of inconsistency between data recorded under MIS (i.e., ICT-induced technique) and data shown by NSSO, regarding statistics of beneficiaries under the scheme.<sup>43</sup> This can be seen from the following table:

<sup>39</sup> MoRD, GOVT. OF INDIA, MGNREGA - STATUS OF AADHAAR, [https://mnregaweb4.nic.in/netnrega/AdhaarStatus.aspx?lflag=eng&fin\\_year=2022-2023&source=national&labels=labels&Digest=kODLakQv8M9FT6WbXb7zhA](https://mnregaweb4.nic.in/netnrega/AdhaarStatus.aspx?lflag=eng&fin_year=2022-2023&source=national&labels=labels&Digest=kODLakQv8M9FT6WbXb7zhA). (last visited on March 21, 2023).

<sup>40</sup> *Id.*

<sup>41</sup> Siraj Dutta, *How Technology Undermined Workers' Rights in India's Rural Job Guarantee Scheme*, (Dec. 20, 2022), <https://scroll.in/article/1037497/how-technology-undermined-workers-rights-in-indias-rural-job-guarantee-scheme>. (last visited on March 20, 2023).

<sup>42</sup> MoRD, GOVT. OF INDIA, *supra* note 9 at 76.

<sup>43</sup> *Id.* at 58.

Table No. 2 - Information provided for the period of July 2009-June 2010, by NSSO (66th Round) and MIS/MPR

<i>State</i>	<i>NSSO</i>		<i>MIS</i>	
	<i>Job provided (in %)</i>	<i>Average person days/Household</i>	<i>Job provided (in %)</i>	<i>Average person days/Household</i>
Andhra Pradesh	35	46	50	61
Bihar	10	24	16	32
Assam	18	32	27	42
Jharkhand	16	23	44	43
Karnataka	8	30	42	58
Chhattisgarh	48	35	61	44
Gujarat	18	25	24	38
U.P.	16	31	24	58
Uttarakhand	27	23	33	35

(Source)<sup>44</sup>

Thus, no doubt, ICT is abeneficial instrument in the present era, to invoke ways of progress. But the same tools are found to be troublesome in the implementation of schemes where the beneficiaries are poor, illiterate, needy, etc, and the area where there are still problems regarding network connectivity.

## X. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

MGNREGS appears as a unique and historic step taken by the government in affording livelihood sources for the rural workforce. It is a demand-driven scheme. As such, for rural workers who generally opt for agriculture as a source of livelihood, this scheme plays a significant role. This scheme is adorned with a number of special features which makes it unique and vital from other related schemes framed for rural employment. Thus, through this scheme, an attempt has been made by the government to not only provide a welfare scheme for rural workers but also provide legal recognition of “the right to work”.

However, with the advent of technological measures in the governance of the scheme, its efficacy is diminishing. Technological measures such as MIS, ABPS, NMIM, etc. were introduced in the scheme with the aim to have smooth functioning of the scheme. But, due to the existence of some uncertainties, such as poor connectivity in rural areas, etc., the hope attached to the linking of technological innovations into the said scheme has not been met.

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<sup>44</sup> *Id.* at 71.

Moreover, this scheme was designed after taking into consideration of rural workers' education, skill, earning potential, etc. The inclusion of new technological tools in such a scheme, where registrants are generally illiterate or in some cases having only primary education, seems impractical. Workers getting work under the scheme are those who are generally unskilled. In such a situation, it is not practical to expect them to have e-literacy. Further, it becomes an opportunity for others, who can easily earn a lump sum amount by making fools of these innocent poor and illiterate workers. Thus, the introduction of technology in a scheme framed for the generation of employment opportunities for the poor and needy seems unworkable.

Recently, after viewing the situation of workers, the union government has extended the time till March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023, for the mode of payment by two modes.<sup>45</sup> It has also been provided that Aadhar seeding of around ninety-five percent (14.27 crore workers out of 14.96 crore total active workers) active workers has been successfully done.<sup>46</sup> Of which ABPS has activated around 10.05 crore workers.<sup>47</sup> Further, after the due date, the mode of payment of wages would be ABPS in the first place and in case registration under the system has not been done due to some technical problems, the Bank Accounts mode of payment may also be used.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, this shows that the government is doing its best at their ends for making advancements in the scheme. But it is not sure whether the fusion of technology into the scheme which has been basically designed for poor and needy, unskilled and manual workers will be proved fruitful or not. Since to insert any technology-driven mechanism in the scheme like MGNREGS, it is necessary that the beneficiary is also well equipped with technology-related awareness, as to how it will enable them to get their wages, how their attendance may be registered, what to do in case of technical error, etc. So, it is suggested that before inserting any technological advancements in the scheme, consideration must be given to the awareness program for beneficiaries. So that the scheme may achieve its objective in true spirit. Further, it is also necessary to assess the technological advancements at grassroots levels, since the scheme is based on the concept of rural development, where the people are still habitual of traditional or non-technological measures. Yet another condition, which is hampering the very objective of technological measures is poor network connectivity in rural areas. Thus, prior to inducing technological instruments in scheme like MGNREGS, it is quite necessary to have a study on its pros and cons.

<sup>45</sup> MoRD, GOVT. OF INDIA, THE UNION MINISTER FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYATI RAJ SHRI GIRIRAJ SINGH TOOK A HIGH LEVEL MEETING OF THE MINISTRY OFFICIALS AND DIRECTED THEM TO HAVE A MIXED MODEL FOR PAYMENT ROUTE TO THE RURAL JOBS SCHEME BENEFICIARIES UP TO 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2023, PIB – DELHI, (March 19, 2023, 8:49 PM), <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1908595> (last visited on March 22, 2023).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*