

Foreword

Having brooded over limited impact of earlier rural development and poverty alleviation programmes, the Government of India launched NREGS since February 2nd 2006 in 200 districts of the country in the first phase. Later on, it was extended to all the remaining districts in all the states/UTs from 1st April, 2008 as part of the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) agenda of the Government of India in an encompassing endeavour to ensure the needy and poor families of the rural areas their 'right to employment.' Elaborate provisions of the NREGS Act, 2005 (NREGA) includes efflorescent 'positive effects' generating components' in the form of basic implementation principles, like: (i) collaborative partnership and public accountability, (ii) Community participation, (iii) Role of Panchayats, (iv) Co-ordination among agencies, and; (v) Resource support.

The impact of such an ambitious scheme was desired to be evaluated and examined across the regions of the country. In the light of the predisposition of exploring 'observation based inputs' related to NREGS, the Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Department of Agriculture & Co-operation, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India assigned the study entitled: Impact of NREGA on Wage Rates, Food Security and Rural-Urban Migration in Bihar in the work plan year - 2009-11.

The study is based on both primary and secondary data collected from five districts of Bihar state, namely: Kishanganj, Rohtas, Samastipur, Banka and Gopalganj. Primary survey was administered on 200 NREGA participants and 50 non-participant households (Hhs) in the selected five districts.

The findings and analysis of the study are sufficient to enucleate that in the nascent stage of its implementation, NREGA was undoubtedly faced with some threats that could mainly emerge as a result of the weaknesses related to illiteracy, unawareness, and misconception regarding various provisions of the Act among the rural people. However, the strengths of the Act as a people's Act in several senses provide strong ground for architecting and to embellish the rural economy of India with enhanced standard of living of the common mass. The need of the hour is to discreetly exploit the available opportunities that are bestowed upon us in the form of NREGA. Observation based corrective measures do form precious part of the study that suggest the achievement of embraced objectives of NREGA effectively.

Dr. Rajiv Kumar Sinha and Dr. (Mrs.) Rosline Kusum Marandi, Research Associates of the Centre deserve my appreciation for completing this excellent piece of research work as Project Leaders on behalf of the Centre.

It is hoped that this report will be useful for the policy makers, academicians, researchers and all concerned for the cause of rural poor.

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The basic objective of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), 2005 is to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household, whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Having figured in the list of one of the most significant and unique programmes of the world, NREGA was prepared through a wide range of consultations with people's organizations. It empowers ordinary people to play an active role along with achieving the objective of their fundamental right to life with dignity. No doubt, the bargaining power of agricultural labourers that was subjected to wanton exploitation earlier has substantially increased after the launching of NREGA. Its likely impact was desired in the form of enhanced wage rate, better food security environment and reduction in frequency of/ magnitude of rural urban migration. In the above background, the study was conducted to find out the impact of NREGA in the state of Bihar, which was assigned to the Centre at the behest of the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India.

Professor Parmod Kumar, Head, (ADRTC), ISEC, Bangalore deserves high appreciation and special thanks for his excelsior study design, table formats and providing proper guidance at various stages of the study. As Co-ordinator of this all most study, the comments are invaluable, which at best we have tried to incorporate while finalization of this report. It will be in the fitness of the thing to extend our gratitude to the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, Prof. (Dr.) K N Dubey for his kind concern for smooth conduct of the studies and fruitful outcomes.

The co-operation extended by the Deputy Development Commissioners, Directors (Accounts Administration & Self Employment), Directors (National Employment Programme) of Kishanganj, Rohtas, Samastipur, Banka and Gopalganj districts deserves exaltation. NREGA Programme Officers of Kishanganj, Bahadurganj, Sasaram, Sivsagar, Hathuwa, Gopalganj, Rajoun, Banka, Pusa and Samastipur blocks are to be highly thanked for generously extending all possible support and help to the research team of the Centre.

Sri Raghendra Singh, Arun Kumar Singh, Sri Arun Kumar Jha, Sri Raj Kumar Jha (all Mukhiya) and Sri Uday Shankar Rai (Pramukh) are also to be thanked for believably extending their co-operation in the survey exercise of the Research team.

We appreciate the efforts of the members of project team for their sincere co-operation in getting it completed successfully.

Last but not the least, we wish to record our appreciation and thank to participant and non-participant workers of the NREGA, who were the respondents of this study.

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