

Chapter-8 Employment

8.1 Employment

The primary objective of MGNREGS is the enhancement of livelihood security of rural households by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in each financial year to every household having adult members volunteer to do the unskilled manual work.

Out of the total 39.21 lakh households in the State, 13.53 lakh to 21.55 lakh households demanded employment during the period 2007-12 and were provided employment on an average of 12 to 37 days per household per year.

Scrutiny of records of 10 selected districts revealed that the average number of days of wage employment provided to each household annually varied from 8 to 63 days during the period from 2007-08 to 2011-12. The details are given in Table-17.

Table-17
Position of person days generated in test-checked districts

Sl. No.	Name of district	Person days per rural household				
		2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
1.	Kamrup (R)	-	15.86	20.38	28.69	27.08
2.	Dibrugarh	-	22.05	26.14	20.87	16.67
3.	Jorhat	-	13.28	16.16	17.76	19.79
4.	Goalpara	8.95	11.58	13.69	20.54	25.58
5.	Cachar	24.89	32.15	22.47	21.15	21.28
6.	Hailakandi	7.52	22.76	26.65	21.55	17.85
7.	Lakhimpur	51.67	25.34	26.27	27.50	26.87
8.	Darrang	34.33	20.74	26.66	30.62	32.08
9.	Chirang	-	53.00	50.66	44.40	33.27
10.	Karbi Anglong	41.90	63.44	40.56	25.18	25.65

Source: Information furnished by DPCs/DRDAs of concerned selected districts.

- *In Kamrup (R), Dibrugarh, Jorhat and Chirang districts, the scheme came into effect from 2008-09.*

As evident from the details above that in the eight test-checked plain districts (Sl. 1 to 8), wage employment provided to households varied between 7.52 and 51.67 days under the scheme. In two districts of Sixth Scheduled Areas, employment provided ranged between 25 and 63 days during 2007-12. Thus, none of the 10 selected districts could achieve the primary objective of providing at least 100 days employment to all rural job seekers during 2007-12 under the scheme. The reasons for such shortfall were not available on record.

8.2 Non-issue of Wage-Slip to wage earners

For every payment due to the workers, a wage slip in prescribed format {as per Annexure B-3 (i) of the guidelines} should be issued by the implementing agency to the workers stating the amount and the period for which the work was done. Payment without issue of wage slip is fraught with the risk of payment to other person.

In none of the 10 test-checked districts, wage slips were found generated and issued to the wage earners for the payment of their wages.

8.3 Unemployment Allowance

Para 5.5 of Operational Guidelines provides that any person having a job card can apply for work to GP (formally or informally). The GP, in turn, would arrange for employment within 15 days, failure to do so would lead to payment of unemployment allowance in accordance with provision of the Act. Unemployment allowance is to be paid from the State Government funds.

(a) In all the 10 test-checked districts, no instance of payment of unemployment allowance was noticed. The eligibility and quantum of unemployment allowance could not be ascertained in audit for want of application, details of job demand, issue of letter of intimation of job offered etc.

(b) As per Monthly Progress Report (MPR) in the test-checked districts of Cachar and Hailakandi, total 3,66,923 and 3,48,090 job card holders respectively had demanded jobs, against which 3,31,036 and 3,46,748 workers respectively were provided jobs. Thus, 35,887 and 1,342 job card holders of Cachar and Hailakandi districts respectively were neither provided jobs nor were paid unemployment allowance despite availability of sufficient funds due to excess release of state share of ₹5.43 crore in respect of Hailakandi district.

8.4 Compensation for delay in payment of wages

Every person working under MGNREGS is entitled to wages at the minimum wage rate fixed by the State Government for agricultural labourers. The MGNREGS Operational Guidelines further stipulate that workers were entitled for being paid on a weekly basis, and in any case, within a fortnight of the date on which work was done. In the event of any delay in wage payments, workers are entitled for compensation as per the provisions of the Payment of Wages Act, 1936 (@ ₹1,500 to ₹3,000 to each on every such occasion). Compensation costs are to be borne by the State Government. The deficiencies noticed in the process are indicated below.

(i) In six test-checked Development Blocks under Kamrup (2), Lakhimpur (2) and Darrang (2) districts, payment of wages to 4,111 (engaged in 25 works during 22 February 2009 to 28 February 2012) wage earners/job card holders was delayed by four to 69 days but the admissible compensation of ₹61.67 lakh (taking minimum ₹1,500 per Job Card holder/labourer) as required to be paid by the State Government under the Act, was not paid at all (details are shown in **Appendix-11**).

(ii) In three test-checked blocks under Karbi Anglong district, payment of wages to 4,106 labourers during 2007-08 to 2011-12 was delayed (shown in **Appendix-12**) beyond the limit of 15 days. But, the compensation of ₹61.59 lakh admissible for the delay to 4,106 job card holders of the district was not paid.

(iii) In the test-checked Chirang district, beneficiary survey revealed that in 210 cases, payment of wages was delayed by two to three months (approx) but compensation of ₹3.15 lakh (210 x ₹1,500) was not paid.

The reasons for non-payment of compensation to the deserving beneficiaries were not on record. Thus, non-payment of compensation on account of delay in making payment of wages to wage earners in violation of Payment of Wages Act, 1936 frustrated the very objective of the scheme.

8.5 Providing employment to women workers

While providing employment, priority shall be given to women in such a way that at least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested for employment under the Scheme.

In the 10 test-checked districts, participation of women in terms of employment under the scheme was poor as could be seen from Table-18.

Table –18
Position of employment provided to women

(Figures in lakh)

Name of the district	Person days generated									
	2007-08		2008-09		2009-10		2010-11		2011-12	
	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women
Plain districts										
Kamrup (R)	-	-	5.2	0.75	10.47	1.65	18	3.13	11.72	2.18
Cachar	14.71	1.23	28.97	2.91	22.89	1.06	10.07	0.84	10.8	NA
Hailakandi	2.84	0.08	20.34	2.31	23.27	0.83	15.42	2.98	10.88	1.77
Dibrugarh	-	-	6.28	0.81	8.34	1.41	10.19	2.61	5.26	1.41
Jorhat	-	-	7.61	0.48	7.79	1.21	7.82	1.14	10.56	1.47
Goalpara	16.99	4.15	15.19	2.98	13.97	4.07	16.5	5.22	18.25	6.23
Lakhimpur	32.93	8.89	18.84	4.14	17.27	3.45	17.57	3.87	11.98	2.76
Darrang	32.01	3	22.35	4.45	10.39	1.26	17.49	2.09	17.66	2.2
Total	99.48	17.35	124.78	18.83	114.39	14.94	113.06	21.88	97.11	18.02
Percentage of women		17%		15%		13%		19%		19%
Six schedule districts										
Karbi Anglong	73.74	17.01	113.02	36.86	55.06	17.89	29.62	9.4	24.13	7.89
Chirang	-	-	41.85	10.87	40.15	14.12	20.74	11.4	14.69	5.1
Total	73.74	17.01	154.87	47.73	95.21	32.01	50.36	20.8	38.82	12.99
Percentage of women		23%		31%		34%		41%		33%

Source: Information furnished by concerned PD, DRDAs.

The table above indicated that in eight plain districts, the persondays shared by women ranged between 13 and 19 per cent of the total persondays generated during 2007-12. In two Sixth Schedule districts of Karbi Anglong and Chirang, employment provided to women workers, however, ranged between 23 and 41 per cent, which shows a positive impact of the scheme.

8.6 Non-payment of arrear wages

The Commissioner, Panchayat & Rural Development instructed all the Project Directors (PDs), DRDA of Assam to make payment of wages at revised rate of 100 w.e.f. 2 December 2009 and ₹130 w.e.f. 1 January 2011.

(i) Scrutiny revealed that there was denial of payment of wages amounting to ₹1.13 crore during January to March 2011 due to non-payment of wages at revised rate despite instructions issued by GOA. Details are given in Table-19.

Table-19
Position of non-payment of arrear wages

Name of district	Person days generated	Period of generation	Rate at which wage to be paid (₹)	Rate at which wage paid (₹)	Difference (₹)	Less payment made (₹ in lakh)
Cachar	2,57,976	January to March 2011	130	100	30	77.39
Hailakandi	1,18,000		130	100	30	35.40
Total	3,75,976					112.79

Source: Information furnished by PD, DRDA, Cachar and Hailakandi.

(ii) Similarly, in the test-checked Lakhimpur and Darrang district, arrear wages for an amount of ₹2.90 lakh was not paid to 1,497 job card holders (against 13,845 mandays). Details are shown in Table-20.

Table-20
Position of short payment of wages

Name of district	Name of Block	Person days generated	Period of generation	Rate at which wage to be paid (₹)	Rate at which wage paid (₹)	Difference (₹)	Less payment made (in ₹)
Lakhimpur	Boginadi	948	January 2011	130	100	30	28,440
	Narayanpur	336		130	100	30	10,080
Darrang	Bechimari	12,561	Feb & April 2010	100	80	20	2,51,220
Total		13,845					2,89,740

Source: Departmental records.

The POs/PDs, however, had not yet cleared (May 2012) the arrear of wages payment to the beneficiaries.

Conclusion

There was shortfall in providing 100 days of annual employment to a large section of targeted rural community besides non-payment of various entitled allowances/compensations, thereby frustrating the primary objective of ensuring livelihood security of the rural population. Wages at revised rate were also not paid to a large number of workers.

Recommendation

The State Government needs to critically review the deficiencies leading to failure to provide 100 days wage employment at all levels and put in place a clearly defined monitoring mechanism so as to fulfill the primary objective of the scheme to enhance livelihood security of rural households. Instructions should be issued to all concerned to maintain Employment Register interalia recording the date of

receipt of application for job and arrange for issue of dated receipt and pay unemployment allowance suo moto to the beneficiaries whom employment could not be provided as per scheme guidelines. For delayed payment of wages, the eligible workers must be paid compensation in terms of the provision of the Act.