

100 Days under MGNREGA: Reality or Myth?

The average percentage of households that completed 100 days of employment in 2013–14 declined to as low as 6.4 per cent in February 2013–14.

THE MAHATMA GANDHI National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was notified on September 7, 2005. The objective of the Act is to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to each household whose adult members could volunteer for unskilled manual work. As per the Act, adult members of a rural household have to apply for registration either in writing or orally to the Gram Panchayat (GP). The GP, after due verification, issues a job card and the cardholder then has to submit a written application for employment to the same, with the appropriate date and duration for which work is required. The GP then issues a dated receipt of the written application for employment, which guarantees a provision of employment within 15 days; if not, then daily unemployment allowance as per the Act has to be paid. Work has to be provided within a radius of five kilometre (km) of the village. In case work is provided beyond five km, extra wages of 10 per cent are to be paid to meet additional transport and living expenses.

As the intent of the Act was to provide at least 100 days of work, it is important to examine if this has been accomplished. We used data from the Management Information System (MIS) of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India to examine this aspect and found that in the year 2012–13, on average for all states, only 10.5 per cent of households had reported completion of 100 days of employment. Only 10 states outperformed the national average, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, and Tripura. The average percentage of households that completed 100 days of employment in 2013–14 declined to as low as 6.4 per cent in February 2013–14 (Table L.1).

In 2013–14, the number of states that performed higher than this 'low' national average was nine instead of the previous ten states, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, and Tripura.

The new states of better performers that came up on this list are Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka, but as many as four states dropped out of the earlier list, which are mostly the northeastern states, namely, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and the border state of Jammu & Kashmir. Hence, we do not find any relationship between growth and MGNREGA participation and it could be an outcome of the implementation process.

Additionally, the MIS data show that more than half the households have registered themselves under the programme, but less than 40 per cent of households demanded jobs in 2013–14.

When we examine the actual indicators of 'person days generated' in a financial year in the MIS data, we find that in 2012–13 the average number of days employment generated for all the major 27 states was 46.7. The 13 states that have generated employment for more than the national average of 46.7 days are Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu and Tripura. If we compare the average number of days of employment generated for 2013–14 with corresponding figures for 2012–13, we find that the average declined from 46.7 days in 2012–13 to 41.3 days in 2013–14. The 13 states that have generated employment for more than the national average of 41.3 days are Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu and Tripura. The details are presented in Table L.1.

It is significant that Chhattisgarh and Karnataka, which performed below the national average in 2012–13, performed above the national average in 2013–14. On the other hand, Manipur and Nagaland, which performed above the national average in 2012–13, could not perform above the national average in 2013–14.

Hence, it can be concluded that the objective of the Act to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year

Table L.1: Percentage of Households that Completed 100 days and Average Number of days of Employment Generated per Household

State	2012-13		2013-14	
	Percentage of Households Completed 100 days	Number of days of Employment Generated per Household	Percentage of Households Completed 100 days	Number of days of Employment Generated per Household
Andhra Pradesh	17.3	55.9	8.3	44.7
Arunachal Pradesh	2.9	33.6	0.0	23.2
Assam	0.8	25.4	0.7	22.5
Bihar	8.7	45.1	4.5	39.2
Chhattisgarh	9.3	45.3	9.5	45.5
Gujarat	7.7	41.4	4.5	38.6
Haryana	6.8	43.8	3.2	34.0
Himachal Pradesh	7.9	50.9	7.1	48.4
Jammu & Kashmir	10.7	56.5	5.1	44.7
Jharkhand	6.1	39.9	5.0	36.6
Karnataka	7.9	46.4	7.7	48.6
Kerala	22.3	54.9	14.3	50.6
Madhya Pradesh	5.6	39.8	3.9	37.1
Maharashtra	14.2	53.7	9.3	42.2
Manipur	0.5	62.4	0.0	19.2
Meghalaya	16.1	52.4	4.8	41.7
Mizoram	19.5	87.8	0.0	51.6
Nagaland	13.9	63.5	0.1	30.0
Odisha	4.7	34.1	6.0	36.7
Punjab	1.6	27.3	2.1	29.4
Rajasthan	10.0	52.2	8.4	45.3
Sikkim	21.0	64.1	7.8	54.1
Tamil Nadu	19.1	57.8	11.0	54.8
Tripura	37.9	86.9	11.3	71.4
Uttarakhand	2.4	33.1	2.4	33.0
Uttar Pradesh	5.2	43.7	3.7	34.8
West Bengal	4.4	34.7	2.3	30.4
Total	10.5	46.7	6.4	41.3

Source: MIS Data, Ministry of Rural Development (www.rural.nic.in).

to each household, whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work, has not been achieved so far. Moreover, there is lower demand for jobs under MGNREGA in 2013-14, indicating that such jobs are not remunerative enough due to wage payment based on piece rates. These facts show that the programme has potential but there could be multiple reasons why the objective has not been achieved.

The government needs to explore alternatives to enhance the number of days and the demand needs of potential job seekers. One option is to include new assets under MGNREGA to create additional employment. Maintenance of assets could also be included for sustainability of assets' benefits and useful job possibilities. One major observation that has emerged is that the coordination between GP officials, district

MGNREGA cell and the state programme coordinator needs to be strengthened. Only if this happens, demand for work could be estimated accurately, number of days could be enhanced and the works could be executed and completed timely. Also, there is a need to review the schedule of rates based on specific local conditions as this would ensure beneficiary workers to get stipulated MGNREGA wages on a per day basis.

Last but not the least, state and regional concerns should be addressed to find out why certain states have fallen behind and others have not succeeded in providing the required 100 days of employment. The NCAER has been granted a project to evaluate the implementation process of MGNREGA and we will share the findings when the study is completed.

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