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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### THE IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON TRIBAL POPULATION: A CASE STUDY OF JALPAIGURI DISTRICT IN WEST BENGAL

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#### Abstract

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was passed in 2005 and went into effect on February 2, 2006, covering 200 districts across India. Later on, this scheme was renamed the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2009. This act was passed to improve the stability of rural livelihoods by offering every household whose adult members agreed to perform unskilled manual labour 100 days of guaranteed pay employment in each financial year. The Ministry of Rural Development implements this scheme in partnership with state governments. The local governance bodies, such as Panchayati Raj Institutions, play an important role in the project development and implementation of this scheme in rural India. MGNREGS programs include water conservation, drought mitigation, land development, rural connection, and other rural infrastructure-building initiatives chosen according to local requirements and priorities. We selected the Jalpaiguri district for our study because it has several problems such as seasonal lockouts of tea plantations, shuttered tea gardens, unemployed laborers in isolated and closed forest villages, no heavy industry since independence, etc. In this paper we attempt to find out whether the implementation of the MGNREGA program in the Jalpaiguri district has improved the livelihood of the Tribal Population in the district and also how effective this program is in dealing with the unemployment problem among the ST population in the district. This study is based on both primary and secondary data from two blocks of Jalpaiguri district i.e. Mal and Nagrakata blocks covering the period 2017-18 to 2022-23. And from each block, I have chosen the two most populace GPs within the blocks. Although the MGNREGS is a good program for reducing rural poverty and unemployment, our primary survey reveals inadequate results in terms of job creation for tribal peoples and those living in the remote tea garden areas within the district. Furthermore, this scheme does not improve Scheduled Tribes' (STs') standard of living by providing jobs and promoting their participation in village affairs, hence it is less effective as the participation of ST workers against active workers currently stands at only 12.86 percent.

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## Introduction:-

Since India's independence, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) of 2005 has been a significant anti-poverty measure, under which the state promises a hundred days of employment to unskilled workers in rural regions. Before this scheme, several wage employment programs were being implemented frequently. Nonetheless, among the best initiatives geared toward transforming rural livelihoods in India, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) comes first. To improve livelihood stability in rural areas, all households with adult members who choose manual unskilled work would receive 100 days of guaranteed employment per financial year. Earlier, wage employment programs for the poor were commonly associated with poverty alleviation programs. These measures have not provided individuals with security, and many people are ignorant of them. We have chosen two blocks of Jalpaiguri district i.e. Mal and Nagrakata blocks covering the period 2017-18 to 2022-23 for our study. These two blocks are mostly tribal-dominated in the Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. This district has some basic problems such as no heavy industry since independence, closed tea gardens, the seasonal lockout of tea gardens, jobless workers of closed and locked out tea gardens, the problem of unemployment migration and remote forest villages, etc., and when MGNREGS was introduced in the district the main objectives were how to resolve these problems through this scheme. In this paper, we will attempt to find out whether the implementation of the MGNREGS program in the Jalpaiguri district has improved the livelihood of the Scheduled Tribe Population in the district and also how effective this program is in dealing with the unemployment problem among the ST population in the district.

## Goals of the Study

The primary goal of the present research is to evaluate the effect of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) on the livelihoods of the Scheduled Tribe population in the two blocks of Jalpaiguri district namely Mal and Nagrakata blocks. The study also focuses on its effectiveness in addressing unemployment among Scheduled Tribes (STs) from 2017-18 to 2022-23. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Assess the extent to which MGNREGA has reduced rural poverty among the tribal population in Jalpaiguri.
2. Determine the role of MGNREGA in providing stable employment opportunities to laborers in tea garden areas and isolated forest villages.
3. Analyse the improvement in STs living standards resulting from participation in MGNREGA.
4. Provide recommendations for enhancing the scope and effectiveness of MGNREGA, particularly in supporting agricultural activities for marginal and small farmers.

## Research Methodology:-

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data was taken from two blocks in Jalpaiguri district in West Bengal, Mal and Nagrakata, where the tribal population is more concentrated than other castes, and I chose the most populous GPs from each block. For my survey area of study, I selected the Bagrakot and Odlabari Panchayats from Mal block, and the Bhagatpur Tea Garden and Chengmari Tea Garden GPs from Nagrakata block.

The data is collected through questionnaires. There are two types of schedules one for the villagers and the other for the panchayat members engaged in the implementation of the MGNREGA scheme. The village schedule also contained qualitative questions related to changes in the lifestyle of the villagers taking place during the last decade.

The following data sources have been used for the present study: information available on the official website of MGNREGA ([www.MGNREGA.nic.in](http://www.MGNREGA.nic.in)), data provided by the District MGNREGA Cell (Jalpaiguri district, West Bengal) and a primary survey where we interviewed 200 households in four Blocks of the district. Apart from that we also interviewed 30 members engaged in the MGNREGA implementation programme in these three Blocks which include the Supervisor, Village Level Operator, Nirman Sahayak, Data Entry Operator, Executive Assistant, Panchayat, Gram Rozgar Sevak and Secretary of the Panchayat. This survey was conducted to understand how much people were benefitted by this scheme as it was claimed by the district administration. Our primary target was to know whether the rural people get 100 days guaranteed job, how they come across about this scheme, what types of work they generally perform, how much wages they get under this scheme, how long it takes to get the wages etc.

### Important Anti-Poverty Programme Since Independence

The Government of India's efforts to alleviate poverty through various schemes like Jawahar RojgarYojna (JRY), Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), and Training for Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM), were crucial steps toward addressing unemployment and poverty, but they struggled with implementation issues. These schemes had various shortcomings such as lack of awareness, community participation, planning, and the quality of assets, reflecting the complexity of effectively administering large-scale programs. Additionally, issues like false muster rolls and payment problems undermined the credibility and impact of these initiatives. The introduction of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2005 marked a significant shift. By providing a legal framework for guaranteed employment, MGNREGA aimed to address some of these persistent issues. It sought to ensure transparency, accountability, and better implementation through measures like social audits and direct benefit transfers. MGNREGA has been recognized for its role in transforming rural livelihoods by offering a safety net for rural households and empowering them with a legal right to work. While it has made substantial progress, ongoing challenges and criticisms continue to highlight areas for improvement, such as timely wage payments and effective monitoring.

### Objective of MGNREGA

The act was enacted to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. In the past, wage employment programs targeted at the poor were generally identified with poverty alleviation programs. Such programs treated as schemes have failed to bring any security in people's lives. Often people were not even aware of them. The MGNREGA goes beyond poverty alleviation and recognizes employment as a legal right.

The primary objectives of the MGNREGA Act include:

- a) to provide 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work
- b) ensuring social protection for the most vulnerable people living in rural India through providing employment opportunities,
- c) ensuring livelihood security for the poor through the creation of durable assets, improved water scarcity, soil conservation and higher land productivity,
- d) strengthening drought-proofing and flood management in rural India
- e) aiding in the empowerment of the marginalized communities, especially women, Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), through the process of rights-based legislation,
- f) strengthening decentralized, participatory planning through convergence of various anti-poverty and livelihood initiatives,
- g) deepening democracy at the grass-roots by strengthening the PRIs
- h) effecting greater transparency and accountability in governance.

MGNREGA has become a powerful instrument for inclusive growth in rural India through its impact on social protection, livelihood security, and democratic governance. The performance of MGNREGA is depends not only on its success in achieving its objectives but also in terms of how well the guidelines were followed in the implementation (MGNREGA Sameeksha, p.1).

### Brief Profile of the Jalpaiguri District

Jalpaiguri District in West Bengal is located in the North Bengal area, and it shares international borders with Bhutan to the northeast and Bangladesh to the south, respectively. The Kalimpong district borders the district to the north, the Coochbehar district to the southeast, and the newly constituted Alipurduar district to the west. Currently, Jalpaiguri has two sub-division namely Jalpaiguri Sadar and Mal Subdivision (earlier it had Alipurduar sub-division till Alipurduar became the 20<sup>th</sup> district of the state). After the bifurcation of the Jalpaiguri District, it now has seven blocks namely Jalpaiguri Sadar, Dhupguri, Mal, Maitali, Maynaguri, Nagrakata, and Rajganj blocks with 80 Gram Panchayats.

According to the 2011 Census of India, Jalpaiguri district had a total population of 3,872,846 out of which 1,983,064 are males while 1,889,782 are females. Out of this population, 27.4% of people live in urban areas while 72.6% live

in rural areas and the average literacy rate in urban areas is 82.4% while that in rural areas is 69.7%. According to the 2011 Census, Schedule Caste (SC) accounts for 37.7% of the total population in the Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal, while Schedule Tribe (ST) accounts for 18.9%. This means that more than half of the population that inhabits the district belongs to marginalized communities such as Schedule Castes (SCs), Schedule Tribes (STs), Women, and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The male literacy rate is 70.43% and the female literacy rate is 58.32% in the district. As per the Census of 2011, Schedule Caste (SC) constitutes 37.7% of while Schedule Tribe (ST) was 18.9% of the total population in the Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal which also suggests that more than half of the population living in the district belonged to the marginalized communities like Schedule Castes (SCs), Schedule Tribes (STs), Women and Other Backward Class (OBCs) (<https://alipurduar.gov.in/aboutus.html>). As previously said, Jalpaiguri district is regarded as one of West Bengal's backward districts, and it does not have any heavy industry. The tea industry is the only industry that serves as the district's economic backbone (<https://www.censusindia.co.in/district/jalpaiguri-district-west-bengal-328>). But this tea industry also has been the focus of attention in the last few decades because of the seasonal lockout of tea gardens, closed tea gardens, jobless workers of closed tea gardens, and migration of tea garden laborers during the lean period for employment, etc.

### Causes of Rural Poverty in Jalpaiguri district

Poverty is defined as a situation in which a person is unable to sustain a living standard that allows them to live comfortably. Poverty in the Jalpaiguri district can be attributable to various interconnected factors:

1. **Agricultural Dependence:** The economy of Jalpaiguri is primarily agrarian. Fluctuations in agricultural productivity due to monsoon dependency, inadequate irrigation facilities, and lack of modern agricultural techniques can lead to inconsistent income for farmers, exacerbating poverty.
2. **Limited Industrialization:** Jalpaiguri lacks significant industrial development compared to other regions. This limits employment opportunities outside of agriculture, leading to higher unemployment and underemployment rates.
3. **Educational Barriers:** Inadequate educational infrastructure and high dropout rates reduce opportunities for higher-paying jobs. A lack of vocational training programs further limits the ability of residents to diversify their employment opportunities.
4. **Healthcare Issues:** Poor healthcare infrastructure and services contribute to high medical expenses for families, pushing them further into poverty. Illness and disease also reduce the workforce's productivity.
5. **Infrastructure Deficiencies:** Poor infrastructure, including roads, electricity, and communication networks, hinders economic growth. It also affects access to markets, healthcare, and educational facilities.
6. **Population Pressure:** High population density puts pressure on the available resources, leading to fragmentation of land holdings and increased competition for jobs and resources.
7. **Tea Garden Crisis:** Jalpaiguri is known for its tea gardens, but many of these have faced closures or poor management, leading to unemployment and poor living conditions for tea garden workers.
8. **Environmental Factors:** Frequent floods and natural disasters in the region cause displacement and loss of livelihood, pushing many families into poverty.
9. **Social Inequality:** Caste-based and tribal discrimination can limit access to education, employment, and social services for certain communities, perpetuating cycles of poverty.
10. **Government Policies and Implementation Gaps:** Inefficiencies in the implementation of poverty alleviation programs and social welfare schemes can lead to inadequate support for those in need.

**Table No. 1:-** Total No. Beneficiaries including STs Participation percentage under MGNREGS in Jalpaiguri District As on 09/06/2024.

TOTAL NO. BLOCKS	07
TOTAL NO. OF GPS	80
TOTAL NO. OF JOB CARDS ISSUED	404295
TOTAL NO. OF WORKERS	7.76 Lakhs
TOTAL NO. OF ACTIVE JOB CARDS	3.01 Lakhs
TOTAL NO. OF ACTIVE WORKERS	4.14 Lakhs

ST WORKERS AGAINST ACTIVE WORKERS (%)	12.86
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Source: [https://nreganarep.nic.in/netnrega/all\\_lv1\\_details\\_dashboard\\_new.aspx?Fin\\_Year=2024-2025&Digest=cz7jPIJ6fbHTWNeFeforFA](https://nreganarep.nic.in/netnrega/all_lv1_details_dashboard_new.aspx?Fin_Year=2024-2025&Digest=cz7jPIJ6fbHTWNeFeforFA)

The above table shows that ST workers participation stands at 12.86 percent out of the total 4.14 lakh active workers in the district. From this data it can be argued that in spite of demand of job under MGNREGS participation of tribal population under this scheme in the district is very poor.

**Table No. 2:-** Performance of ST person days under MGNREGS in MAL, and Nagrakata blocks of Jalpaiguri District from 2017-18 to 2022-23.

BLOCKS	2017-18	2018-2019	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
MAL (in percent)	12.45	14.47	17.89	23.34	34.23	41.63
NAGRAKATA (in percent)	32.56	37.78	38.97	40.77	37.75	38.79
WEST BENGAL	8.9	8.4	9.66	8.39	7.91	8.9

Source: <https://www.nrega.nic.in>

The following table shows that ST person days under MGNREGS in Mal block were 12.45 percent in 2017-18 and climbed to 41.63 percent in 2022-23, while ST person days under MGNREGS across West Bengal were 8.9 percent both in 2017-18 and 2022-23. The number of ST person days under MGNREGS in Nagrakata block was 32.56 in 2017-18, but it climbed to 38.79 percent in 2022-23. From the data presented above, it is clear that tribal people under MGNREGS participate significantly more in MAL and Nagrakata blocks than in the other blocks of the district.

As we previously mentioned, Jalpaiguri district has several fundamental problems including closed tea plantations, seasonal lockouts, unemployed workers in closed and locked-out tea estates, isolated forest villages, etc. The primary goal of MGNREGS, when it was implemented in the district, was to use this scheme to address these issues. It was the duty of the Panchayati Raj institutions to introduce this program to the populace. The District Administration has been able to revive 12 Tea Gardens (TGs) that had been closed for the previous 6–8 years with the help of MGNREGS.

The purpose of this survey was to determine the extent to which the district administration's strategy has benefited the livelihood condition of the tribal population in the district, especially in two blocks of the district namely Mal and Nagrakata Blocks. Our main goals were to find out whether the tribal people of this district were given a 100-day employment guarantee, how they learned about the program, what kinds of jobs they often performed, how much money they received under the program when they would accept it, and other details. We were interested in finding out how the job card is distributed, how the community members feel about the MGNREGA awareness campaign, how they complete the 4A form (a demand form for 100 days of work), what challenges the Panchayat office staff faces in carrying out the scheme, what kinds of developmental work has been done as a result of the scheme's implementation, etc. In addition to the interviews, we went to the workplace where the MGNREGA program was implemented.

### Socio-Economic Background of Job Card Holders

To evaluate, the impact of various provisions of MGNREGA on employment card holders in Mal and Nagrakata blocks, data were collected to gain information about their socio-economic background and principal occupation before the scheme was implemented, as shown in the following table:

#### Socio-Economic Background of Job Card Holders in Mal Block

Sl. No.	OCCUPATION	MALE		FEMALE	
		No. of Respondents	Percentage	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Tea Garden Labour	50	33.33	38	31.66

2	Cultivator	35	23.33	5	4.16
3	Skilled Labour	17	11.33	24	20
4	Unskilled Labour	35	23.33	15	12.5
5	Small Shop	7	4.66	3	2.5
6	Domestic Servant	6	4	35	29.16
		Total=150	100	Total=120	100

Source: Field Survey

The table above reveals that 33.33 percent of male respondents are tea garden workers, 23.33 percent are cultivators, 11.33 percent are skilled laborers, 23.33 percent are unskilled laborers, 4.66 percent are run small shops and 4 percent are domestic workers. Further, it is found that the majority of women respondents i.e. 31.66 percent are tea garden workers and significant number of women respondents i.e. 29.16 are domestic workers.

#### Socio-Economic Background of Job Card Holders in Nagrakata Block

Sl. No.	OCCUPATION	MALE		FEMALE	
		No. of Respondents	Percentage	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Tea Garden Labour	78	52	52	43.33
2	Cultivator	12	8	10	8.34
3	Skilled Labour	15	10	09	7.5
4	Unskilled Labour	28	18.66	17	14.16
5	Small Shop	10	6.57	0	0
6	Domestic Servant	7	4.66	32	26.67
		Total=150	100	Total=120	100

Source: Field Survey

The above table shows that 52 percent of male respondents are tea garden workers, 8 percent are cultivators, 10 percent are skilled laborers, 18.66 percent are unskilled laborers, 6.57 percent are run small shops and 4.66 percent are domestic workers. Further, it is found that the majority of women respondents i.e. 43.33 percent are tea garden workers and significant number of women respondents i.e. 26.67 are domestic workers.

From the abovefield data from both the two blocks, it has evident that the majority of job card holders employed under the scheme come from low-income families and they have other alternative sources of income. The MGNREGS has provides them with a one-of-a-kind opportunity to earn extra money to improve their livelihood condition.

#### Impact of MGNREGS on STs Participation in Jalpaiguri district

In this section, qualitative questions on changes in the villages during the last one year, i.e., during the year 2022-23 have been addressed and inferred (in % of household terms). It is based on the perception of sample respondents regarding the description/ parameters mentioned in the following table. If we look at this table we find that questions were framed to find out the consequential effect of MGNREGS on qualitative change related to various aspects of village economy in Mal and Nagrakata blocks of Jalpaiguri district.

#### Qualitative questions on livelihood changes in the village during the 2017-18 to 2022-23 (% of Sample Households)

Description	MAL BLOCL			NAGRAKATA BLOCK		
	Yes	No	Not Known	Yes	No	Not Known
After implementation of MGNREGS labourers who migrated earlier to town are coming back to work in the village.	45	25	20	55	15	30
Labour was migrating due to the high wage rate in the town.	60	15	25	75	10	15

No change in labour migration by MGNREGS activities	15	45	40	25	35	40
After MGNREGS change in wages of casual labourers increased	54	20	26	52	24	24
After MGNREGS change in wages of casual labourers decreased	24	48	28	26	42	32
Has living standard improved in your village since the introduction of MGNREGA	32	48	20	37	45	18
After MGNREGS have you witnessed an increase in household consumption in the village	25	45	30	25	48	27
After MGNREGS have you witnessed more children are now going to the school	60	25	15	65	10	25
After MGNREGS have you witnessed the change in the trend of attached labour in agriculture	15	40	45	10	65	25
After MGNREGS have villager's awareness towards Government Schemes increased?	60	15	25	75	15	10

Source: Field Survey

According to the above table, laborers who had previously gone to town/city began to return to work after the establishment of MGNREGS, particularly after the pandemic era (45 percent in Mal Block and 55 percent in Nagrakata Block of the sample household). However, because to salary disparities and late delivery of salaries in MGNREGS-related operations, laborers continued to migrate to towns/cities (60 percent in Mal Block and 75 percent in Nagrakata Block of the sample households). When asked about the change in salaries of casual labourers after the scheme was implemented in the hamlet, more than half of the respondents in both blocks said it had increased significantly. Next, when we asked about the improvement of living standards after the implementation of MGNREGS in their village we found that more than 45 percent of respondents in both blocks replied that their living standards did not improve. Still, on the question of increase in household consumption after implementing the scheme more than 45 percent of the respondents in both blocks replied that it has increased in the last few years. More than 60% of respondents in both blocks reported that more children are now attending school as a result of the scheme's implementation in the village. When asked about changes in the trend of attached labour in agriculture, 40% of the sample respondents and 65% of the respondents said there was no change in the existing trend of attached work in agriculture. Finally, when we asked about their awareness of Government Schemes more than 60 percent of the respondents replied that it has increased.

Apart from the above-mentioned findings we also found the following observations from our primary survey and this are:

### Problems of Rural Poverty

During our survey of four tea gardens in the Mal and Ngarakata blocks of Jalpaiguri district, we noticed malnutrition, illiteracy, diseases, long-term health problems, unsanitary living conditions, a lack of proper housing, a high infant mortality rate, injustice to women, and social ill-treatment among tribal people. One could easily claim that they are still on a survival strategy and that tribal people are denied basic needs within the district's four tea gardens which we surveyed. We will now offer a brief picture of rural poverty in terms of employment, food, education, and health facilities before the introduction of MGNREGS, as well as changes that occurred after MGNREGS was implemented in the district.

### Rural poverty and employment

A large proportion of the rural population in two blocks relies on agriculture for their livelihood. However, agriculture in the district faces several challenges such as small land holdings, monsoon dependency, and limited scope for non-agricultural employment. Most rural households do not have alternative sources of income, making them vulnerable to agricultural risks. Apart from that Tea gardens are a major source of employment; however, the sector faces significant challenges such as fluctuating global tea prices, labor issues, and inadequate support from the government. Many workers in tea gardens live in poverty due to low wages and poor working conditions. Hence when MGNREGS was introduced in this district it was assumed that this could address the problem of poverty and unemployment in the district. After visiting the four tea gardens we observed that there is no positive change in rural

poverty. When the workers do not get employment, they are not given the unemployment allowances under this scheme in the district. The beneficiaries under this scheme are not fully aware of this unemployment allowance. From this, we can say that before and after the introduction of MGNREGS we do not find enough change in the rural poverty in the surveyed area of the district.

### **Rural Poverty and Food Security**

Rural poverty and food security in the two blocks are closely linked, with poverty significantly affecting households' ability to get sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. Agriculture is mostly reliant on the monsoon season, making the district vulnerable to floods that can destroy crops and restrict food supplies. Poor roads, energy, and communication networks obstruct access to markets and key services, impacting both income and food distribution. Poor infrastructure and transportation constraints limit access to local markets, which has an impact on food distribution. After visiting the tea gardens, it became apparent that even after the implementation of the MGNREGS program in the tea gardens area, food security among the tribal people in the district remains bleak.

### **Rural Poverty and Health**

After visiting the survey areas, we find that rural areas especially all remote tea gardens of Jalpaiguri district lack adequate healthcare facilities, including hospitals, clinics, and health centers. Long distances to the nearest healthcare facilities can prevent timely access to medical care, especially in emergencies. Even when facilities exist, they may be understaffed or lack essential medicines and equipment. Poverty leads to insufficient access to nutritious food, resulting in malnutrition, particularly among children and pregnant women. Limited diversity in diet contributes to deficiencies in essential vitamins and minerals. Many rural households lack access to clean water and proper sanitation facilities, leading to waterborne diseases. It was thought MGNREGS would be able to provide them with better job conditions but the reality is something different as the workers sometimes had to work in unhealthy atmospheres which has given birth to many health problems among the tribals of the four tea gardens of Jalpaiguri district.

### **Recommendations:-**

After completing the field visit in four villages of Mal and Nagarakata block we have the following recommendations:

1. Increase the number of job cards to satisfy demand. Panchayats should examine applications before issuing them.
2. Wage payments to beneficiaries should be timely and sufficient.
3. Panchayats should arrange more awareness workshops on MGNREGS to ensure beneficiaries understand their rights under the scheme.
4. Panchayats should prevent corruption at all levels by raising awareness among stakeholders.
5. To compile large amounts of data under this scheme, more permanent and trained experts should be appointed in the Panchayat offices across all the blocks in the district.
6. Ensure appropriate maintenance of MGNREGS records in the Panchayat office.
7. Ensure consistent and precise measurements. To ensure quality, sensitive supervision of completed work should be provided.
8. Ensure transparency and responsibility among institutions implementing the scheme at various levels.

### **Conclusion:-**

In summary, we can state that the Jalpaiguri district's MGNREGA initiative could have produced better results if certain variables hadn't acted as a roadblock to advancement. The beneficiaries of MGNREGS at two different blocks identified opening and maintaining bank and post office accounts as the biggest issue. The local bank or post office may not open accounts in some locations. Consequently, the employees are not receiving their pay on schedule. In addition to negatively impacting the villagers' opinion of the plan, this will also cause some operational problems for the departments. There have been reports of extremely low PRI scheme participation in certain blocks. Other constraints at the work level as flagged by the beneficiaries include:

- Unavailability of the list of approved works at the GP,
- Less clarity of Social audit,
- Lack of political will at the implementation level,
- Technical manpower shortage at the Gram Panchayat level,



- Enormous workload for a Single NirmanSahayak at the Gram Panchayat Office,
- Late payment distribution to the beneficiaries.

Overall, the MGNREGA scheme has a lot of scope to increase income and livelihood security for the rural poor. The current research has outlined the main areas of advancement as well as the program's weaknesses to assess the impact of MGNREGA. MGNREGA has notably failed to deliver the anticipated level of jobs. The number of actual employment days created annually has been far less than the 100 days that were stipulated in the policy. Payroll payment delays are frequently observed when it comes to this issue. When the program is being implemented, procedural flaws are also observed. For example, anomalies are observed when social audits and Gram Sabhas are conducted. It is true that by adding several characteristics to its design, MGNREGA corrected many of the flaws of past wage employment schemes. The current study does, however, show that while MGNREGA has a good impact on income production, asset development, and, most importantly, raising standards of living, it is not without restrictions. MGNREGA's efficacy will grow with time and significantly contribute to changing the rural poor's access to a sustainable means of subsistence and the power dynamics within the community.

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