

A Statistical insight into MNREGS

“The poor with the right to demand, the right to know and the right to dignity. Not the right to beg.” - Aruna Roy (2009, quoted in UNDP 2009)

The literature on rural public employment schemes has recognized two ways to alleviate citizens from the clutches of poverty. One is through the transfer benefits such as direct returns to the poor for participation in the scheme or by giving them share in the extra income/assets generated and the second way is via the stabilization benefits that reduce the risks faced by the poor through consumption. The literature also establishes a set of challenges for the government such as creating required awareness among the beneficiaries about the objectives and utilization process of the program, deciding functionaries at the local and lower levels of implementation, ensuring efficient monitoring and evaluation etc., that act as a barrier in efficient roll out and effective realization of the benefits from these schemes. One critical challenge among others is the process of screening and selection of the poor, the failure of which leads to large scale leakage and cornering of the fruits by the non-poor. Studies suggest that to overcome this challenge schemes must be framed with efficient targeting and creating incentives that deter the participation of non-poor. The framework for the scheme must be laid out such that at lower income levels, the participation costs are not too high and net gains are not too low.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is the flagship, demand driven, rights-based rural employment scheme which was implemented by the Indian Government in 2005. As a public works program, it uses a self-targeting mechanism to address and overcome the above mentioned challenge by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The goal is the empowerment of the socially disadvantaged, especially the women, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), through the process of rights-based legislation. MNREGS has a decentralized implementation mechanism by direct involvement of Gram Sabhas and Gram Panchayats in identification and recommendations of works to be undertaken under the scheme.

The schemes involves contributions from multiple stakeholders at the various levels of program planning, implementation, management and supervision. Some of the key stakeholders with responsibilities have been listed in the table below:

Public Administration Stakeholders

Admin Level	Agent/Agency	Key Responsibility under MNREGS
Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ministry of Rural Development - Central Employment Guarantee Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nodal Agency for MNREGA implementation - Resource provision and Assessment of resource use and processes - Research, monitoring, and evaluation of NREGA related activities.
State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State government - State Employment Guarantee Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formulation of activities - Review, monitoring, and evaluation of NREGS - Resource allocation and administrative, financial, and technical support to local government tiers.

Admin Level	Agent/Agency	Key Responsibility under MNREGS
Block	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Block program officer - Junior engineer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical sanction/approval of the gram panchayat annual plan of REGS activities. - Submission of a consolidated statement of approved block-level proposals to the taluk panchayat. - Performance assessment of employment guarantee assistant. - Monitoring and supervision of REGS activities, including the implementation of a social audit by the gram sabhas. - Assessment of the technical feasibility and cost efficiency of district plan REGS activities.

		- Supervision and evaluation of REGS work implementation.
Village	- Employment guarantee assistant	- Monitoring of REGS work implementation at the village level and maintenance of REGS-related documents. - Responsible for the process of registration, distribution of job cards, work allocation, wage payments, etc.

Elected Local Government

Admin Level	Agent/Agency	Key Responsibility under NREGA
District (zilla)	Zilla panchayat (or zilla parishad)	- Preparation of district plans and labor budget - Monitoring and supervision of REGS activities
Block (taluk)	Taluk panchayat	- Identification of priority areas of REGS activities - Consolidation of the gram panchayat plans at the block level into a block plan. - Proposal, scrutiny, and approval of district plan REGS activities
Village (gram)	Gram panchayat	- Execution, monitoring, and auditing of gram panchayat-funded REGS activities.

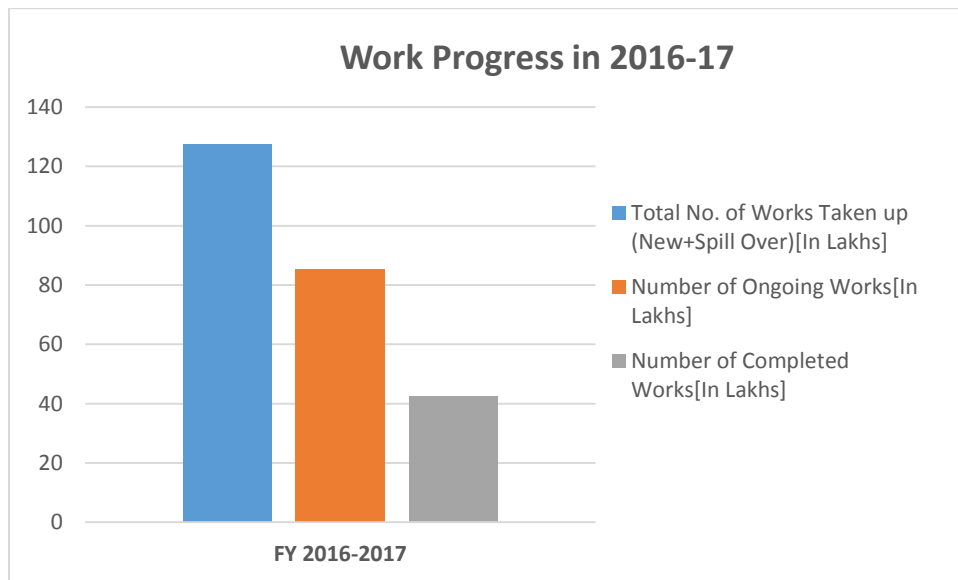
In the first phase from February 2nd 2006, the act of the scheme was notified in 200 districts across India and was extended to an additional 130 districts in year 2007-08. Since 1st April 2008 the scheme covers the entire country with the exception of districts that have hundred percent urban population. As of December, 2016 the scheme is effective in 2,62,250 Gram Panchayats, across 6,860 blocks and 682 districts in India. Till date the scheme is estimated to have generated 2216.82 (in Cr.) person days in employment with the total implementation expenditure of 366172.81 (Rs. In Cr.)

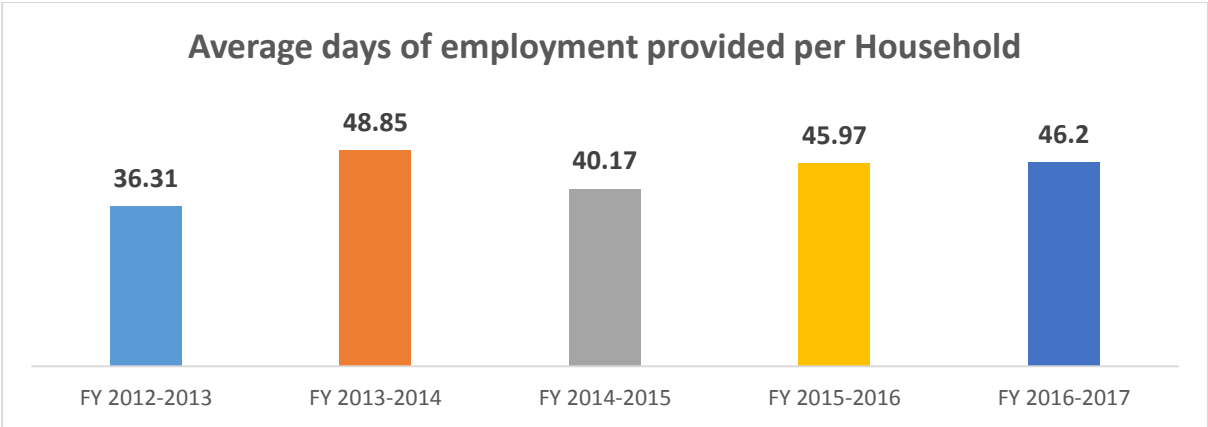
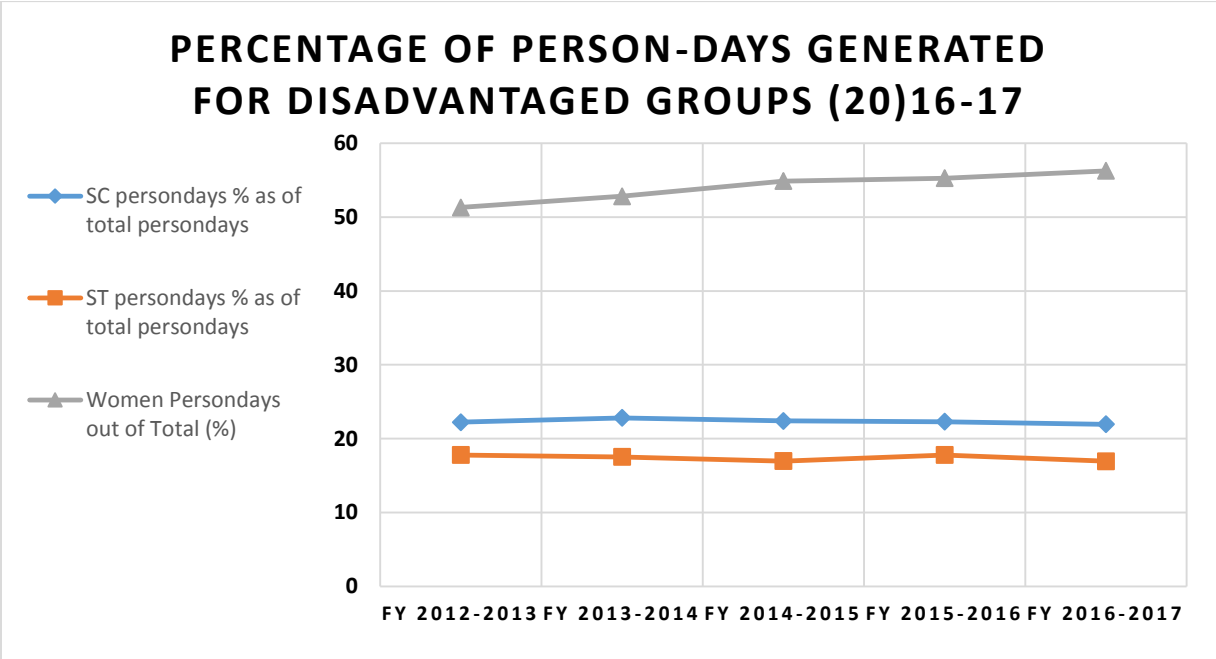
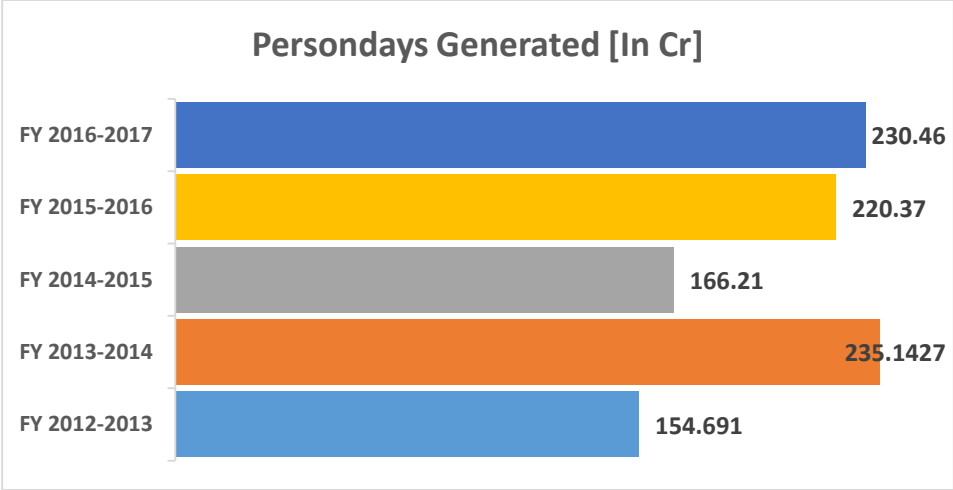
A total of 25.52 crore workers have been employment under the scheme with an active worker strength of 10.84 crore. Around 12.52 crore job cards have been issued out of those 7.17 crore are currently active

job cards. The massive umbrella of the scheme has reached to the marginalized groups with 20.7% of the active workers belonging to the Scheduled Castes and 16.15% of the active workers belonging to the Scheduled Tribes. The activities of MNREGA are financed by the funds from the center and the state. The total available funds for the implementation of the scheme in the financial year 2016-17 was Rs. 45, 924.46 crore from which 90.64% have already been utilized and the central government has already disbursed 93% of these to the lower levels.

The data on the current status of the scheme and its progress in the last 5 years is available from the official NREGA website of the government of India. It tracks the progress under three heads i.e. generated work hours, work undertaken and financial progress. At present in 2016, 154.691 (in crore) person-days have been generated under the scheme. A large proportion of the person-days have been generated for the marginalized and socially disadvantaged such as 21 percent for the Scheduled Castes, 17 percent for the Scheduled Tribes and 56 percent for the women. This is a representation of the remarkable success of the scheme in terms of reaching out to the decided targets. In-fact in the past five periods, the percent of person-days generated for these sections have remained stable around their current levels.

With reference to work, 127.6 (in lakhs) including new and spillover have been taken-up under the scheme out of which 33 percent stand complete and 67 percent are on-going. There has been a 22% growth in the work undertaken since 2012. The central government has released 39030.97 (in crore) in 2016 for the scheme which is 85 percent of its total available funds for this year and is 30 percent higher than the funds released in 2012. The progress of important indicators have been shown in the graphs below:





The current status of the scheme and its progress in the past five periods has been visualized in the above graphs. The MNREG scheme is an unprecedented policy of the government to provide social protection to the most vulnerable people through employment. Although it has been able to generate right-based work for the poor yet the potential still remains unearthed. Evidence indicates existence of massive implementation problems such as lack of transparency and accountability mechanisms leading to elite capture, role of local politics in issuance of job cards and selection of work under the program, misappropriation of funds although the government has mandated the transfer of funds through banks and post-offices but the majority in rural areas either don't have an account or banks and post-offices are not located in the vicinity and lack of awareness among the beneficiaries and lack of training among the local implementers.

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