

MGNREGS in Tripura: A Study on Efficiency & Equity

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Indraneel Bhowmik



V.V. Giri National Labour Institute

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Preface

The North East Research Centre (NERC) at V.V. Giri National Labour Institute, Noida has been mandated to undertake and promote research on the issue of labour and employment in the North Eastern Region of India. A National Workshop was organised during 19-20th November, 2009 at Agartala, Tripura with an objective of identifying relevant issues and institutions. The invited resource persons presented papers and proposals on their proposed research at that workshop. On the basis of the proposals received, ten research project was on 'Efficiency and Equity Aspects of NERGS in Tripura: A Status Report' was coordinated by Dr. Amitabha Sinha, Associate Professor of Economics, Tripura University. Unfortunately, Dr. Sinha expired in between after prolonged illness. The authorities at Tripura University appointed Dr. Indraneel Bhowmik as his successor to the project. The present working paper titled, 'MGNREGS in Tripura: A Study on Efficiency & Equity' is the outcome of the project completed by Dr. Bhowmik.

The topic of the Project holds extreme importance for the people and the economy of the country. Never ever had any government programme been taken up on such a massive scale. The impacts, therefore, are likely to be far-reaching, and as a result critical examination of the scheme become a utmost necessity.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme assumes greater importance for all the North Eastern states including Tripura, particularly because the region is plagued by hurdles relating to limited industrialization, higher incidence of poverty, growing population and worsening of cultivable land-man ratio. State sponsored developmental activities have, therefore, often been the major driving force of the economy. The present study, therefore, becomes extremely relevant as investigation and evaluation of government programme assumes greater significance for future policy directions. The study is based on primary data obtained from 8 (eight) Blocks of the state and secondary data for the whole

state. The current paper examines the nature of functioning of the MGNREGS in Tripura with special focus on the issues of equity and efficiency. The equity aspect has been studied through the nature of inclusion of the socially disadvantaged groups as well as women. The efficiency perspective is analysed by examining the various stages of the scheme along with its impact on the rural poor. The study attempts in providing an exhaustive picture of the functioning of the scheme and also highlights issues which may influence future policy decisions. I am confident that this study would be very helpful to various stakeholders of the scheme and the state as a whole as well as scholars, researchers who would like to work on the related dimensions of the current scheme as well as working in the area of development theory, practice and policy both within and outside the region. I thank the researcher for coming out with this output against several limitations arising out of special circumstances with the project. I also thank Mr. Anoop Kumar Satpathy for his able and continuing coordination of the project for NERC, VVGNLI.



(V.P. Yajurvedi)
Director General

Acknowledgement

This Working Paper is an outcome of the VVG NLI-NERC sponsored Project- 'Efficiency & Equity Aspects of NREGS in Tripura: A Status Report', which was commissioned to my former colleague Dr. Amitabha Sinha, Associate Professor, Dept. of Economics, Tripura University, Suryamaninagar, who expired prematurely on 26th May, 2011. I am just trying to finish off his unfinished work.

I am thankful to the V.V. Giri National Labour Institute particularly its Director General Mr. V.P. Yajurvedi for providing me the opportunity to be an associate under special circumstances. My special thanks to Mr. Anoop Satpathy as this paper sees the light only because of his consistent encouragement and numerous reminders. My special thanks to the anonymous referee whose suggestions on an earlier draft have helped immensely.

I humbly acknowledge the faith bestowed on me by my authorities at Tripura University, the Honourable Vice-Chancellor Prof. A. Saha and the Registrar Dr. K.B. Jamatia, for completing this project. I am also indebted to my family members and my colleagues at the University for helping me out chalk out time for the preparation of the report.

The study had to cross several hurdles in the process but has reached the present stage only due to the efforts put in by Soma Debnath, Nibedita Chakraborty, Pradip Chauhan and Pritam Bose. All of them have been my student at some point of time.

Indraneel Bhowmik

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MG-NREGS) stands unique owing to its landmark origin from the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) notified on the 7th of September, 2005. History records it to be the first public service provisioning scheme enacted through the Parliament of India. The MGNREGS aims at improving the rural livelihood security by guaranteeing 100 days of wage-employment in a financial year to a rural household willing to perform unskilled manual work. The scheme is enormous in structure with coverage of allocations of more than Rs. 200000 crores (proposed allocation in 2012-13 is Rs. 33000 crores)¹ in the Central Budget and is classified as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme being administratively managed by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India with the process of implementation being in the hands of the respective state governments.

Initially termed as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, it was launched on February 2, 2006 by the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and the Chairperson of UPA, Smt. Sonia Gandhi at Bandlapalle village in Ananthpur district of Andhra Pradesh. There was an amendment in the nomenclature from 2nd October 2009 as a mark of respect on the 140th Birth Anniversary of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. The scheme spread across all the districts of India in three stages and has dual objective- generate employment opportunities and create rural assets. Employment generation would boost income levels of the underprivileged while assets could be the engines for future economic activity. The scheme tried incorporating aspects of equity by providing additional facility for the socially excluded class and women and tries to broaden the span of grassroots democracy by suggesting a more vibrant and active Panchayati Raj Institutes². The guidelines to the Act³ specifies creation of a 'strong

¹ Budget of Government of India proposed by the Hon'ble Finance Minister in Lok Sabha on 16th March, 2012

² Government of India (2005), 'The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005', Ministry of Law and Justice, New Delhi

³ MoRD (2008), 'The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (NREGA) - Operational Guidelines', 3rd Edition, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, New Delhi

safety net for the vulnerable groups by providing a fall-back employment source, when other employment alternatives are scarce or inadequate' as the first goal. The Act is considered to be an attempt to empower the rural poor by enhancing the social security with the backing of Law as well as a new model of governance to promote transparency and strengthen democracy at the grassroots level.

MGNREGS has emerged as a very prominent area of interest among the academicians of the country and the world and a lot of studies have been taken up to explore, analyse and discuss the various facets of the scheme and its stages of implementations. The scheme had raised high expectations even before inception particularly for its potential to protect rural households from poverty and hunger, reduce rural-urban migration, and increase opportunities for employment of rural women as well as being instrumental in creating useful assets in rural areas⁴. Even though the scheme⁵ has been adopted actively in India one cannot rule out the apprehensions regarding the proper implementation owing to the financial constraints of poorer states of the country⁶. The scheme since its early days has been making positive inroads in the life of the rural people with particular focus on the sections with poorer socio-economic characters⁷ and inclusion of the rural women in a big way albeit some difficulties⁸ in planning and implementation. On the other hand, it has also been criticised because 'NREGA is turning out to be the officials' baby...'⁹.

⁴ Dreze, Jean (2004), 'Financial Implications of an Employment Guarantee Act: Preliminary Estimates', mimeo, National Advisory Council, New Delhi.

⁵ Dreze Jean and Christian Oldiges (2007), 'How is NREGA Doing?' available at www.knowledge.nrega.net/651/1/How_is_NREGA_Doing.doc

⁶ Chakraborty, Pinaki, (2007) 'Implementation of the Employment Guarantee: A Preliminary Appraisal', Economic and Political Weekly, 17 February

⁷ Jha, R., Gaiha, R. & Shankar, S. (2008), 'Reviewing the National Rural Employment Guarantee Program', Economic and Political Weekly,

⁸ Jandu, Navjyoti, (2008), 'Employment Guarantee and Women's Empowerment in Rural India', paper presented to International Seminar on National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in India, organized by Institute for Human Development and Centre de Science Humaines, September 16-17, New Delhi

⁹ CSE (2008), 'NREGA: Opportunities and Challenges' available at <http://knowledge.nrega.net/105/>

However, the hurdles that the scheme faces are many. The demand side challenges include illiterate, unorganised and marginalised workers who are unable to acquire information, formally articulate demand, submit applications, read records (Job card, Muster Roll) and enforce transparency safeguards¹⁰. On the other hand, the supply side vulnerabilities arise due to lack of personnel with proper training and mindset which leads to poor quality of records maintenance, non-issue of legal documents, delayed Job cards¹¹. The lack of convergence amongst relevant government departments and functionaries is also a concern¹². The common man is however happy and find the scheme effective and would like to work for even more than 100 days,¹³ though only a few households in the country actually have even the 100 days¹⁴. The scheme has been of immense help¹⁵ to the rural women and the marginalised sections as it is seen that tribal people are better placed in terms of distribution of job cards and number of days of employment generated¹⁶. Thus the equity perspective of the scheme appears to have been addressed better. However, the efficacy and efficiency of the scheme has varied across the country and it is in this context that

¹⁰ Chhabra, Sangeeta and Sharma G.L. (2009), 'National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS): Realities and Challenges, LBS at http://www.mimts.org/lbs_journal

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² Shariff Abusaleh (2009), 'Assessment of Outreach and Benefits of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme of India', in *The Journal of Labour Economics*, Vol. 52, No.2

¹³ Drèze, J., & Khera, R. (2009), 'The Battle For Employment Guarantee'. *Frontline*, 26, 1, 4-26

¹⁴ Shariff, (2009),

¹⁵ Institute of Applied Manpower Research (2010) '*All-India report on Evaluation of NREGA- A Survey of Twenty Districts*' available at <http://knowledge.nrega.net/727/1/1.pdf>

¹⁶ Mishra Pulak, Bhagirath Behera and Narayan Chandra Nayak (2010), 'A Development Delivery Institution for the Tribal Communities: Experience of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in India', *Development Policy Review*, 28 (4): 457-479

governance assumes great importance for the effective implementation of the same¹⁷.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The surveyed literature focuses on a host of issues but mostly dwell on either efficiency or equity though many combine both the issues. In this context, one is reminded of the efficiency – equity debate¹⁸. The trade-off¹⁹ between efficiency and equity appears to be unavoidable in most of the scenarios of mainstream policy economics²⁰. However, the trade-off will be supposedly low in cases where commodities are subsidised to function as long-term investments and create future gains²¹.

The MGNREGS hopes to deal with the short term problem of unemployment by doling out opportunities in order to create long term assets which will be the resource base for future economic activities. Therefore we may say that the scheme provides a situation where these two indicators should move in tandem to achieve the desired goal. Naturally, with such a background we are intrigued to study the issues of equity and efficiency of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in Tripura as a detailed field level investigation on the scheme had not been undertaken in the state before.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In order to answer the research questions we specify the objectives of the study as stated below:-

- To examine the issues of equity on the basis of the participation of the

¹⁷ Shariff (2009)

¹⁸ Okun Arthur(1975), 'Equity and Efficiency: The Big Tradeoff', Brookings, Washington

¹⁹ Blank, Rebecca M (2002), 'Can Equity and Efficiency Complement Each Other?' University of Michigan. <http://www.fordschool.umich.edu/research/papers/PDFfiles/02-001.pdf>

²⁰ Le Grand, Julian (1990), 'Equity Versus Efficiency: The Elusive Trade-Off in Ethics' , Vol. 100, No. 3, pp. 554-568

²¹ Bardhan, Pranab (1996), 'Efficiency, Equity and Poverty Alleviation: Policy Issues in Less Developed Countries', The Economic Journal, Vol. 106, No. 438, pp. 1344-1356

- Weaker sections (Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes) of the society and
- Females in the scheme
- To examine the efficiency of the delivery mechanism on the basis of the-
 - Ground level conditions at various worksites of Tripura

1.4 Structural Framework

In order to address the research questions and fulfil the objectives as stated in the previous sections, the present study is structured into six (6) chapters including the current chapter 'Introduction'. The second chapter titled 'MGNREGS in Tripura- An Overview' provide a snapshot on Tripura's standing relating to employment, asset creation and financial involvement on the basis of Secondary Data. Chapter 3 provides the 'Socio-economic Profile of the Sample Households'. 'The Equity Perspective' is the fourth chapter where issues relating to the inclusion of the socially excluded section along with gender are considered. The fifth chapter is named as 'Ground Level Efficiency' and is an attempt to analyse the issue on the basis of primary data. The last chapter is called 'Conclusion' where attempts to sum up the observations of the previous chapters are made.

1.5 Methodology

The study uses both secondary and primary data. Secondary data on employment, physical assets and financial involvement were collected from the official website of the programme- nrega.nic.in, while the primary data was collected from a household survey following the multi-stage random sampling technique. At the first stage, all the four districts were selected and two Rural Development Blocks, were selected from each randomly. In the second stage, One Gram Panchayat or Village Council (in TTAADC areas) was selected randomly from each of the 8 selected RD Blocks. In the final stage, from each GP/VC, 10 percent of the households were selected randomly with a minimum stipulation of 50 households from each village. Thus, we got, 747 households, of which 400 households were NREGS workers while the remaining 347 households did not participate in the scheme as workers. Structured schedules were used to collect the relevant information. Focus Group Discussions were also conducted. Statistical tools like ANOVA, Box

Plots, Co-efficient of Variation have been used for analysis and data were processed through standard statistical software.

1.6 The Study Area

The Sample Villages

Districts	Blocks	Villages (GP/VC)
South Tripura	Amarpur	Birganj
	Kakraban	Silghati
Dhalai	Chawmanu	Durgacharra
	Salema	Kalachari
North Tripura	Jampui Hills	Tlangsang
	Kadamtala	Sanicharra
West Tripura	Padmabil	Uttar Padmabil
	Kathalia	Sovapur

Among the sample villages, in terms of population²², Kalachari has the largest number of households, while Tlangsang is the smallest and the only village with a 100 percent concentration of scheduled tribes. Uttar Padmabil and Durgacherra are also dominated by the scheduled tribes but there are a few families belonging to other communities too. Scheduled Castes Households are the maximum in Kalachari, Birganj and Shilghati GPs, though all these villages have sizeable number households belonging to the other communities also. Other Backward Castes and Unreserved category households are in substantial number in the two GPs of Salema and Amarpur Blocks respectively. The GP from Kakraban Block has considerable number of households practising Islam, apart from significant number of families from the unreserved category. The Religious Minority (Muslim) households are the most prominent in Sovapur GP, while in Sanicherra, maximum families are from the OBC section. In other words, we say that the sample for the study was drawn from a heterogeneous mix of people and households.

²² <http://tripura.nic.in/panchayat/eng/ROR2010> accessed on 15/03/2012

CHAPTER 2

MGNREGS in Tripura- An Overview

Engulfed by Bangladesh on three sides, Tripura shares only 162 Km as border with the rest of India. Moreover, the state has the second smallest size and the second largest population and GSDP in the North-eastern region of India. It should be noted that the state, till 21st January 2012, had 4 districts, 17 sub-divisions, and 40 RD Blocks, which has now been reconstituted as 8 districts, 23 sub–divisions and 45 RD Blocks. [However, we have considered the former composition for the present study]. Further, the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), set up in 1982, extends over all the four districts. There are 513 Gram Panchayats and 527 Village Committees for the TTAADC region. The urban areas of the state comprise the Agartala Municipal Corporation and 15 other Nagar Panchayats.

The altered geo-political condition arising during partition of the country led to transport and communication bottle neck thereby causing nominal private sector activities. The economy was primarily agrarian with minimal industrial sector existence and exhibited characters of backward economies with high rates of poverty, low capital formation, inadequate infrastructure, stumpy industrialisation and soaring unemployment. As a result, the role of the state was not limited to being just a facilitator of amenities and provisions but also as a major player in the economy by augmenting the demand mechanism through employment generation either directly or indirectly. The state however scores well in the human development components like literacy and health. The literacy rate increased to 87.75 percent in 2011 and is placed second to Mizoram in the NER. Moreover, the birth rate, death rate and infant mortality rates in Tripura, 14.9 per thousand, 5.0 per thousand and 27 per thousand, respectively are better than the national average²³.

The state government is the largest employer in the state with more than one lakh employees. On the other hand, the Suresh Tendulkar Committee estimated Tripura's total poverty ratio at 40.6 percent in 2004-05, i.e. around 3 percent higher than the national figures. With poverty eradication as a stated objective of the successive plan documents, the

²³ Government of Tripura (2011), Economic Review of Tripura, Agartala

various Welfare Schemes and programmes of the government assumes greater importance. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme therefore becomes extremely crucial in the state. The scheme was introduced in the most backward district of the state, Dhalai, during 'Phase- I' activities involving 200 districts of the country. The two districts of West Tripura and South Tripura were part of the 130 districts of 'Phase-II', while the North Tripura district came under the purview of the scheme in the 'Phase-III' when it was made universal across the country.

Tripura has been considered as one of the better performing states in the initial years²⁴ though its performance was a shade low in the successive periods²⁵. Nevertheless, the state has been awarded for being the best performer for two successive years 2009-10 and 2010-11 as claimed by the state Rural Development Minister²⁶ for efficiency in employment generation. The functioning of the scheme was found to be satisfactory²⁷ and it has been hoped that some of the major pitfalls of Tripura like poor irrigation system, poor connectivity and underdeveloped agriculture and allied activities can be removed through NREGS work. It should be remembered that Tripura alike other small states do suffer from the problems of nominal revenue generation within the state which often acts as a roadblock for the contributory matching grants for Centrally Sponsored Schemes. However, the case for MGNREGS is different as the Government of Tripura is one of the most prominent patrons of the scheme. The State Minister for Rural Development expressed his desire for increasing the guaranteed number of working days to 200 per household²⁸. In this context, we may note that on the lines of the MGNREGS, the state government of Tripura has launched the Tripura Urban Employment Programme (TUEP) offering a guarantee of 50 working days in a year to the urban poor with funds generated by the state's own sources without any budgetary assistance from the Central Government since 2009-10. The present chapter, thus, attempts to study Tripura's performance in the implementation of the scheme in terms of employment generation, asset creation and utilisation of funds.

²⁴ Dreze Jean and Christian Oldiges (2007)

²⁵ Shariff (2009)

²⁶ www.tripurainfo.com 'Tripura Top in MGNREGA again' (accessed on December 12, 2011) at <http://www.tripurainfo.in/Admin/ArchiveDet.aspx?WhatId=10342>

²⁷ Ray, Sanjay (2010), 'Implementation of NREGS in Tripura: An Evaluation', *The NEHU Journal*, Volume VIII, NO 1, January

²⁸ http://www.tripuratimes.com/leadnews/lead3_150512.html

2.2 Employment Generation

The provision of working under the scheme is simple in the sense that there are no preconditions attached, however, the process of obtaining employment is a two staged affair. The first stage is the enrolment where each interested households will be issued a job-card- the passport to work under MGNREGA. Each household will be issued a single card. The second phase is asking/ applying for work. On demanding work, any member (male or female) may be provisioned for work within 15 days of seeking work under the scheme. Thus it is obvious that the issue of employment under the scheme has to be examined in terms of both the issuance of job-cards and the number of labour-days generated. However, it should be noted mere availing the job-card does not guarantee employment, the family/ household has to ask for work and only then the issue of guarantee of work comes. On the other hand, issuance of job-cards does not mean that the household will offer to work under MGNREGS; it is obvious that they will not, if a viable alternative stands.

The acceptance of MGNREGS in the country is visible from the increasing number of job-cards being issued to the households. In Tripura, more than 92 percent of the rural households are job-card holders much alike other North-eastern states, where the enrolment is higher than the national average. However, all job-card holders do not seek work from the scheme; around 82-86 percent of the households actually do. The proportion of employment seekers among job-card holders is highest in Tripura followed by the other North-eastern states like Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur owing to the limited employment opportunity in other activities. The high proportion of job seekers can be explained due to the higher incidence of poverty. It may be noted here that the Tendulkar Committee Report calculated the Rural Poverty Ratio of the state as 44.5, which is higher than 41.8, the national average²⁹. It is seen that almost 99.98 percent of the households seeking work are provided with jobs under the scheme. In terms of person-days generated, the state ranks higher to many other large states and had created more than 1185 lakhs of work-days for its people over the period 2008-09 to 2010-11. Table 2.1 attests the greater vibrancy of the scheme in the state owing to higher share in the national pie for person-days generated and employment demand as compared to the enrolment. Tripura contributes only around 0.5 percent of the Job-cards issued, while in terms of employment demand, the states share is more

²⁹ Economic Review of Tripura, 2011

than 1 percent, and in case of person-days generated; the state contributes almost around 1.5 percent of the total.

Table 2.1: MGNREGS in Tripura

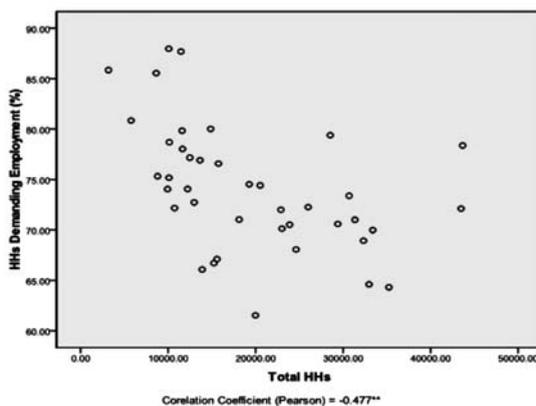
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Job-cards (HHs)	600615 [0.55]	607010 [0.54]	624133 [0.51]
Employment Demand (HHs)	549145 [1.20]	577540 [1.09]	557413 [1.00]
Person-days (Nos. In Lakhs)	351.12 [1.62]	460.23 [1.62]	374.51 [1.46]

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (accessed on 15/2/2012)

Notes: Figures in parenthesis indicate share within India

However, the demand for employment within the state varies significantly among the districts and the constituent 40 (forty) Rural Development blocks. The Blocks with higher demand for employment shares the commonality of tribal population and hilly terrain, suggesting greater acceptance of the scheme among the Scheduled Tribes owing to lack of viable alternatives arising due to limited agricultural opportunity. On the other hand, we find demand being less among the Blocks situated in the valley of the Gomati River, which provides vast agricultural expanses.

Fig 2.1: Proportion of Households of RD Blocks of Tripura demanding NREGS Employment



Source: Computed from <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (accessed on 15/2/2012) & http://tripura.nic.in/panchayat/eng/ROR2010_synopsis.pdf (accessed on 27/7/2011)

Notes: * Rural Population of Tripura in 2008-09, estimates by the Department of Panchayat, Govt. of Tripura

Moreover, the Blocks with larger populations seem to have lesser demand for work under the scheme as is seen in Fig 2.1 above. A negative but significant relationship [$R = -0.477^{**}$] is observed between the total number of households and the proportion of households seeking employment from MGNREGS, because Blocks with larger population mostly border urban areas having greater employment potential in the service sector.

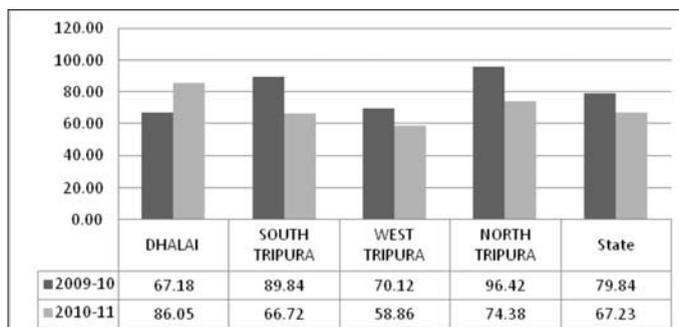
Table 2.2: Performance Indicators of MGNREGS in Tripura

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
<i>Average Person days (Nos./HH)</i>	63.95 [47.95]	79.83 [53.99]	67.23 [46.79]
<i>HHs with 100 days (%)</i>	10.37 [14.33]	37.09 [13.40]	14.61 [9.97]
<i>Women Person-days (%)</i>	41.09 [48.10]	38.45 [47.73]	38.21 [50.59]

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (accessed on 15/2/2012)

Notes: Figures in parenthesis indicate the all India figures

The higher number of person-days generated in the state is attested by the higher average person-days per households. Tripura has had a higher score than the national average all throughout the period and has been one of the better performing states in this aspect even though the performance declined in 2010-11. On the other hand, the state's performance in provisioning the upper limit of work-days has been inconsistent. In 2008-09, the state achieved only 10 percent, which was lower than the national average, but in the following year, Tripura emerged as the best performer in the country, again to droop in the subsequent period. However, in terms of Women person-days, it is seen that though Tripura maintained the one-third stipulation, it had lower ratios than the national average.

Fig 2.2: Average Workdays under MGNREGS in the districts of Tripura

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (accessed on 15/2/2012)

The number of average workdays per households was highest in North Tripura district in 2009-10, while Dhalai had the better performance in 2010-11. Basically, Table 3 shows that the average number of work-days varied significantly across the districts for both the year considered. It is further seen that average work-days per households are significantly higher for Blocks situated in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council³⁰ [TTAADC] region.

Table-2.3: ANOVA for Average Person-days

Indicator	Category	Year	Df	'F'	Sig
Average Person Days	Districts	2009-10	3,36	26.96	.000
		2010-11	3,36	19.34	.000
	TTAADC & Non-TTAADC Blocks	2009-10	1,38	3.008	.091
		2010-11	1,38	10.673	.002
HH with 100 days work	Districts	2009-10	3,36	30.108	.000
		2010-11	3,36	29.437	.000

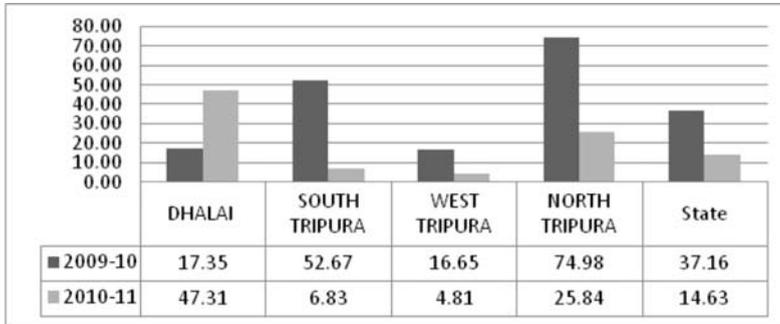
Source: Computed

Regarding the issue of provisioning 100 days of work to households, the performance of districts varied significantly. Fig 2.3 below shows that in 2009-10, almost 75 percent of the Job-Card holding households were

³⁰ The Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council was set up in 1982 to facilitate development of the Scheduled Tribes in a better way earmarking more than 70 percent of the total area of the state. The region covers the hilly tracts and is dominated by the Tribal communities, and administratively accounts from 17 Regional Blocks exclusively.

provided with 100 days of work, while in the next year, Dhalai had a better coverage but it was much lower than the peak attained by the North Tripura district in the previous year.

Fig 2.3: Proportion of Households having 100 days work in the districts of Tripura



Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (accessed on 15/2/2012)

It should be noted that a highly significant positive correlation³¹ between the average person-days per household and the number/proportion of households with 100 days work is observed for the district level and Block level MIS data for Tripura.

2.3 Asset Creation

It is often argued that of the twin objectives of generating employment and creating physical assets/infrastructure, the former often gets higher priority over the latter³², yet various studies^{33, 34, 35} are in unison in accepting that capital formation in the rural economies is likely to boost up the economy to great extent and the issue attains greater importance from the long term perspective of poverty eradication because improved economic conditions of villages will result in lesser people opting for NREGS in future³⁶. The MIS

³¹ 'R' = 0.950*** in 2009-10 & 'R' = 0.856*** in 2010-11

³² Shariff, 2009

³³ Shah Amita and Jose Sunny (2009), 'Asset Creation and Local Economy under NREGS Scope and Challenges' GIDR Working Paper Series, No-193: April 2009

³⁴ CSE (Centre for Science and Environment), (2008), 'The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), Opportunities and Challenges', New Delhi

³⁵ Mehrotra, Santosh (2008), 'NREG Two Years On: Where do we go from Here?' Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 43, No. 31, pp.27-35

³⁶ Mandavilli, Sujoy Rao (2010), 'NREGA: Corruption mars welfare society, India' available at <http://www.merinews.com/article/some-measures-for-enhancing-the-efficacy-of-nrega/15833850.shtml>

data shows that around 1.87 crores of works had been taken up under the scheme since inception till 2011-12 and only around 35.51 percent of the works could be completed³⁷. The rate of completion varied across the states and the smaller states and union territories had a higher rate of completion in general. The best performance was in Lakshadweep, 70.46 percent and the lowest rate of completion was in Maharashtra, 16.71 percent.

Tripura records a completion rate of almost 49 percent and ranks seventh in the country. The state leads among the small and special category states in the context of the absolute number of works taken up, which is even higher than many other bigger states like Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. Around 3.75 lakhs of works have been taken up in the state with the maximum being in the West Tripura district (51.4 percent) and the minimum (12.12 percent) in the Dhalai district which is in conformation to the size, number of habitations and population of the districts. The highest number of works is related to land development (22.23 percent) which is marginally ahead of works taken up for rural connectivity (22.18 percent). It may be noted that, the share of other works (decided by the state government in consultation to the central government) is around 10 percent.

Table 2.4: Works under MGNREGS in Tripura between 2008-09 and 2011-12 [in numbers]

Districts Activites	Dhalai	South Tripura	West Tripura	North Tripura	Total
Rural Connectivity	13128	22350	33973	13844	83295
Flood Control	497	1272	3812	586	6167
Water Harvesting	12736	14562	33484	8755	69537
Drought Proofing	3347	4144	14804	4102	26397
Micro Irrigation	2874	9977	15850	4235	32936
Irrigation	243	1121	3810	1472	6646
Water Bodies	790	4347	20196	1772	27105
Land Development	10017	18868	43023	11603	83511
Other Works	1841	8131	24013	5770	39755
Bharat Nirman	47	66	31	26	170
Total	45520	84838	192996	52165	375519

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (accessed on 15/2/2012)

³⁷ As on 15/02/2012

Table 2.5 shows that among the districts of Tripura, the performance of South Tripura is the best performer (65.61 percent) in terms of completion of work, while the rate is lowest for the largest West district. The South Tripura district, apart from having the best rate in aggregate also has the best completion rate for activities like rural connectivity, flood control, water harvesting and conservation, drought proofing, micro-irrigation, land development and creation of sewa kendras under Bharat Nirman. Dhalai has the best performance for restoration of water bodies; North Tripura has the highest rate for irrigation to beneficiaries while West Tripura leads in terms of completion of other works. On the flip side, we find west Tripura having the lowest rates for Rural Connectivity, Flood Control, Water Harvesting, Drought Proofing, Micro Irrigation and Bharat Nirman, whereas, North Tripura shows the lowest completion rate for water bodies, land development and other works. It should be noted here that the state as a whole has the best completion rate for irrigation activities (80.36 percent) while the rates are lowest for drought proofing works (37.67 percent). Further, more than 50 percent completion has been achieved for five of the 10 (ten) categories considered here. Renovation of traditional water-bodies is the only other activity to have a completion rate below 40 percent.

Table 2.5: Completion Rate of Various Works Taken in Tripura [till 15/02/12]

Districts Activites	Dhalai	South Tripura	West Tripura	North Tripura	Total
Rural Connectivity	53.28	64.26	35.77	49.57	48.47
Flood Control	66.60	73.27	56.27	63.48	61.29
Water Harvesting	58.83	59.45	26.49	53.43	42.71
Drought Proofing	44.88	59.39	29.70	38.64	37.67
Micro Irrigation	59.15	71.34	47.65	55.30	56.82
Irrigation	58.44	64.76	84.07	86.28	80.36
Water Bodies	66.58	61.08	34.52	22.23	38.91
Land Development	60.12	79.50	42.97	33.11	51.91
Other Works	44.98	45.63	54.90	41.99	50.67
Bharat Nirman	38.30	65.15	12.90	26.92	42.35
Total	56.14	65.61	39.88	45.58	48.46

Source Computed from <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (accessed on 15/2/2012)

2.4 Financial Aspects

The funding for the scheme comes from the annual budgetary allocation of the Department of Rural Development, Govt. of India. The NREG Act accords that the Central Government will bear the full wage cost of unskilled manual labour and 75 percent of the material cost including the wages of skilled and semi skilled workers, and the states are to provide with the balance. The Act further stipulates 60:40 ratios for wages and material expenditure.

Table 2.6: Percentage of Expenditure against Total Availability of Fund

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
<i>Tripura</i>	104.12	78.94	99.04
India	73.08	76.57	74.57

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (accessed on 15/3/2012)

In India, over the years it is seen that around 75 percent of the available funds could be utilised during the last three years. The states with higher proportion of spending include Karnataka, Kerala, West Bengal, and Uttaranchal apart from the North-eastern states. All these states indicate spending of more than 80 percent on an average. Tripura also indicates very high spending in 2008-09 and 2010-11, while it was comparatively lower in 2009-10, but the utilisation has remained higher than the national average all through. In this context, it may be noted that till the 15th of March, 2012, Tripura has received a total of Rs 257958.7 lakhs as Central Release, while the total availability of funds had been Rs. 292464.9 lakhs. The expenditures for the various projects of the state were Rs. 251406.1 crores, i.e., 85.91 percent of the total funds available. The MGNREGS enabled the people of Tripura to earn Rs. 155306.7 lakhs as wages, while materials worth Rs. 87285.29 lakhs were procured. An amount of Rs. 8814.1 lakhs was the administrative expenses. The West Tripura and Dhalai district had the highest & lowest flow of fund (cumulative) respectively.

Table 2.7: Percentage of Wages in Total Expenditure

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
<i>Tripura</i>	61.25	63.45	60.85
India	66.79	67.47	65.23

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (accessed on 15/3/2012)

On the other hand, in regards to wages as a proportion to total expenditure, the pan Indian data stands in the range of 65 to 67 percent, while Tripura's spending on wages has also been in the margins, just covering the threshold limit and has been lower than the national average.

Table 2.8: Percentage of Expenditure against Total Availability of Fund in Tripura

Districts	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Dhalai	108.03	112.14	98.55
South Tripura	106.57	91.63	98.60
West Tripura	102.23	72.33	99.83
North Tripura	99.67	68.70	98.59

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (accessed on 15/3/2012)

Utilisation of available funds in the districts of Tripura had been the best in 2008-09, and for the Dhalai district. The North Tripura district has had lower levels of utilisation than the other districts. On the other hand, wages as proportion of total expenditure has been pretty uniform in the districts of Tripura as shown in Table 2.9 below.

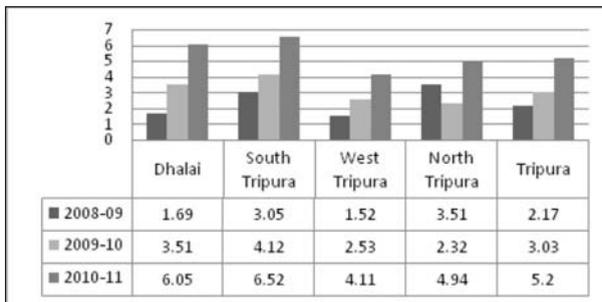
Table 2.9: Percentage of Wages in Total Expenditure in Tripura

Districts	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Dhalai	63.44	66.59	61.83
South Tripura	63.03	63.74	63.68
West Tripura	56.91	63.52	60.89
North Tripura	69.30	61.62	57.03

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (accessed on 15/3/2012)

A rising trend of administrative Expenditure over the years across all districts of the state is seen.

Fig 2.4: Share of Administration Cost in Total Expenditure in Tripura



Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (accessed on 15/3/2012)

CHAPTER 3

Socio-economic Profile of the Sample Households

The Sample households were classified into two groups- NREGS Workers households and Non-NREGS households in order to understand the nature of participating group in the scheme. The socio-economic character of the two strata of respondents is analysed on the basis of the standard parameters like- religion, community, poverty, housing, and fuel use, availability of power, education, occupation and income. Further, the extent of institutional support enjoyed by the scheme worker households is also taken stock of.

3.2 Social and Housing Pattern

Table 3.1 shows that the majority of the households for both categories were Hindus, while the respondents from Tlangsang of Jampui Hills were Christians. Muslim Households were found to be in the majority in Sovapur Village of Kathalia RD Blocks, while Silghati in South Tripura & Sanicharra in North Tripura had more than one-third representations of Muslims among the NREGS worker households.

On the other hand, we find that the respondents were mostly poor. The situation of the NREGS household in the Dhalai district represented by Durgacharra village of Chawmanu RD Block and Kalachari village of Salema Block appears to be the grimmest with only 1 percent of the NREGS workers lying above the Poverty Line. The incidence of BPL and Antoday households has been lowest at the Birganj GP of Amarpur Block, with 44 percent of the respondent households having APL ration cards among the worker households. The proportion of APL households, among Non-workers, is generally higher in almost all the villages except Tlangsang in Jampui Hills.

The coverage of electricity in Tripura is better than many other states and apart from the Durgacharra village, all other villages' record above 50 percent of the households having electric connection at their premises for both the categories.

Table 3.1: Socio-economic indicators of NREGS Workers Household (%)

Blocks	Amarpur		Kakraban		Salema		Chawmanu		Jampur Hills		Kadamtala		Kathalia		Padmabil		Total			
	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH		
GP/VC	Birganj		Silghati		Kalachari		Durgacharra		Tiangsang		Sanicharra		Sovapur		Uttar Padmabil		Total			
	96	90	64	78	100	100	100	100	0	0	0	66	86	50	42	100	100	72	74.5	
Religion	4	10	36	22	0	0	0	0	100	100	0	34	14	50	58	0	0	15.5	13	
Christian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12.5	12.5	
APL	44	60	22	78	0	86	2	0	36	22	38	82	40	54	20	20	25.25	50.2	50.2	
BPL	52	40	60	22	46	14	96	94	64	78	50	16	48	46	80	80	62	48.7	48.7	
Antoday	4	0	18	0	54	0	2	6	0	0	12	2	12	0	0	0	12.5	1	1	
Electricity	90	70	66	78	86	86	48	46	98	94	56	80	72	48	98	92	76	74.25	74.25	
Kachcha	100	100	98	88	36	4	0	0	0	28	18	18	0	0	100	90	43.25	41	41	
Pucca	0	0	0	8	10	28	0	0	100	22	18	32	0	2	0	10	15.5	12.75	12.75	
Semi Pucca	0	0	2	4	54	8	100	100	0	46	14	34	100	98	0	0	28.25	36.25	36.25	
Housing	T h a t c h /		Bamboo		0		0		0		50		16		0		13		10	
Firewood	100	100	100	98	98	76	100	98	96	44	96	82	100	96	100	100	99	86.75	86.75	
LPG(GAS)	0	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	4	52	4	14	0	4	0	0	1	11.75	11.75	

Source: Field Data

Notes: - WH- NREGS Worker Households; NWH- Non NREGS Households

Table 3.2: Occupational Pattern of the Sample Households (%)

Blocks	Amarpur		Kakraban		Salema		Chawmanu		Jampur Hills		Kadamtala		Kathalia		Padmabil		Total		
	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	
GP/VC	Birganj		Silghati		Kalachari		Durgacharra		Tiangsang		Sanicharra		Sovapur		Uttar Padmabil		Total		
	10	0	2	20	0	28	0	0	22	14	0	26	2	2	2	2	4.75	11.5	11.5
Govt. Employee	60	60	36	68	26	96	88	8	2	80	22	72	78	96	92	67.75	50.5	50.5	
Daily Wage Labour	20	30	18	14	20	12	4	12	62	78	6	3	2	0	4	16.63	19.25	19.25	
Cultivators	10	10	12	18	10	22	0	0	6	8	32	3	0	2	2	5.62	11.25	11.25	
Business	0	0	6	12	2	12	0	0	8	0	18	20	18	0	0	5.25	7.50	7.50	
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	18	20	18	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Field Data

Notes: - WH- NREGS Worker Households; NWH- Non NREGS Households

Table 3.1 also shows that among the respondents, 43.25 percent live in Mud (Kachcha) houses while Half Brick/Tin houses (Semi-Pucca) are highly concentrated in Durgacharra and Sovapur. It should be noted that the worker households from Sovapur are all Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) beneficiaries, which enabled them to have a better housing facility. The incidence of Pucca (brick) houses is mostly in Jampui Hills while 50 percent of the worker households in Sanicherra and 60 percent of non-worker households of Kalachari stay in thatch and Bamboo houses. However, it should be noted that the incidence of Semi-Pucca houses are more among non-worker households.

Also seen here is that the worker households predominantly use firewood for domestic fuel, while LPG cylinders are the major form of fuel among Non-worker households of Jampui Hills. The dependence on firewood is higher among the worker households across the state.

3.3 Occupational Pattern

Table 3.2 shows that Daily wage work is the most common occupation among both the NREGS worker households as well as Non-worker households in the sample villages/ blocks except for the Tlangsang village of the Jampui Hills Block, where the majority of the respondent households were cultivators. The incidence of Government service holder is less in NREGS worker households, though we find that 22 percent of the worker household has a government employee as the head of the family in Jampui Hills. Government employee, often casual or DRW, as the head of family is seen in all areas except Chawmanu Block, but their incidence is very nominal in Padmabill and Kathalia also. Basically, from the available data, we can infer that work under NREGS is mostly taken up by households where opportunities for other vocations are less. It should be noted here that the two tribal villages of Durgacharra and Uttar Padmabil has the maximum incidence of Day wage workers, while in the other Scheduled Tribe village, Tlangsang, most of the resident have some land and are classified as cultivators for owing plantations, commonly rubber. The opportunities in trade, business and other services are limited in all the villages, be it plains or hills. It should be noted that around 20 percent of the worker household and 18 percent of the non-worker households respondents from the Kathalia have opted for 'others' as their occupation, because primarily,

they did not want to reveal their real activity, but it is likely that the region being in the border with Bangladesh, they might be involved in some clandestine activities, which however cannot be proved. Others also include odd jobs like collection of fodder and forestry products, artisan, etc. Apart from Chawmanu and Kathalia, we have representatives from the Business or Self-employed category in all Blocks, though it is very low in the Padmabil Block. The proximity to Dharmanagar town is probably the cause of a high incidence of business (32 percent) as the occupation for non-worker households in Sanicherra of Kadamtala RD Block.

3.4 Monthly Household Income

The sample Households are mostly poor. From Table 3.3, we see that for both the categories, the maximum number of respondents belong to group earning between Rs 1501 to 2500 per month, followed closely by the immediate higher group- Rs 2501 to 3500 per month. The proportion of households earning above Rs 5000 per month is very low for NREGS worker households in almost all the sample sites and only 5 percent respondent households in Jampui Hills, which is the maximum. The lowest income group is the most dominant in Padmabil. In Sanicharra almost 36 percent of the non-worker household earn above Rs. 6000 per month. Nevertheless, what remains is that the 92 percent of NREGS worker households earn less than Rs 3500 per month, while the proportion of non worker households in the same category is 73 percent.

3.5 Educational Level

The Education aspect has been made on the basis of the level of education attained by the head of the household. Table 3.4 shows that the levels of education among the two categories are pretty similar. The proportion of higher educated heads of the household is very minimal, while the commonest form of education has been the lower primary level. The most interesting aspect here is the comparatively higher degree of education of the NREGS households. Among the various study sites, it appears that the average level of education is higher in the Jampui Hills Block, while it is less in Sovapur village of the Kathalia Block, which also has the highest proportions of illiterates.

Table 3.3: Level of Income (Rs. /month) of the Sample Households (%)

Blocks	Amarpur		Kakraban		Salema		Chawmanu		Jampui Hills		Kadamtala		Kathalia		Padmabil		Total	
	Birganj		Silghati		Kalachari		Durgacharra		Tlangsang		Sanicharra		Sovapur		Uttar Padmabil		WH	NWH
	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH		
<1501	8	0	16	8	12	8	32	8	2	0	6	4	18	18	98	16	24	7.75
1501-2500	20	70	38	40	64	38	26	4	38	26	40	18	52	60	0	30	34.5	35.75
2501-3500	62	10	40	26	22	42	28	54	42	28	46	14	28	14	0	50	33.75	29.75
3501-5000	0	10	4	8	2	10	14	24	10	24	0	20	2	4	2	2	4.25	12.75
5001-6000	10	0	0	2	0	2	0	8	3	6	6	8	0	2	0	2	2.375	3.75
6000<	0	10	2	16	0	0	0	2	5	16	2	36	0	2	0	0	1.125	10.25

Source: Field Data

Notes: - WH- NREGS Worker Households; NWH- Non NREGS Households

Table 3.4: Educational Profile of the Head of the Sample Households (%)

Blocks	Amarpur		Kakraban		Salema		Chawmanu		Jampui Hills		Kadamtala		Kathalia		Padmabil		Total	
	Birganj		Silghati		Kalachari		Durgacharra		Tlangsang		Sanicharra		Sovapur		Uttar Padmabil		WH	NWH
	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH	WH	NWH		
Illiterate	32	20	20	18	16	12	16	6	4	2	20	18	38	34	8	22	19.25	16.5
Class I to III	30	60	46	64	52	42	48	56	14	38	38	46	42	48	50	60	40.00	51.75
Class IV to VII	34	10	28	8	22	24	32	38	38	38	32	16	16	10	40	14	30.25	19.75
Class VIII to IX	0	0	6	8	6	10	4	0	26	18	6	10	4	6	2	2	6.75	6.75
Class X and above	4	10	0	2	4	12	0	0	18	4	4	10	0	2	0	2	3.75	5.25

Source: Field Data

Notes: - WH- NREGS Worker Households; NWH- Non NREGS Households

3.6 Institutional Facilities enjoyed by the NREGS Workers

Six Institutions set up or promoted by the government agencies were identified and their familiarity and usefulness to the households were taken as a measure of utility. Similarly, three government programmes (social security-2; poverty eradication- 1) running for quite some time in the rural areas were randomly selected and benefits accrued by any member of the household was taken as an indicator for usage.

Banks appear to be the most important institutions as seen in Table 3.5 below. The Gram Panchayats/Village Committees also appear to be important to the worker households. Jampui Hill offers a different perspective owing to greater role played by the Church in social decision making. Government Schools are the most preferred (often only) place of education except for Tlangsang, as children mostly study at the Mission School. However, the Health Centres (Primary & Community) are the most common place for medical treatment in all the villages. The importance of the Post Office still holds among most of the respondents though its significance lies with only 52 percent of the worker households in Jampui hills. Nevertheless, these five centres/ agencies are found to be useful by at least 84 percent of the respondents. But, the importance or usefulness of the Integrated Child Development Service Centre has been reported by only 51.75 percent of the households from the state. None of the sample households uses the ICDS facility at Salema Block, certainly a very confusing result. The Padmabil, Kathalia and Chawmanu Blocks have high responses for ICDS while the others do not credit it as much.

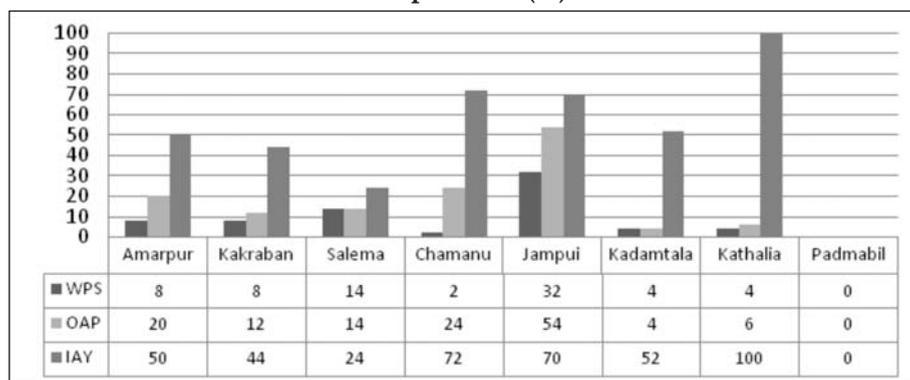
Table 3.5: Usefulness of the Institutions (Positive responses in percentages)

Blocks [GPs/VCs]	Gram Panchayat	Government Schools	Health Centres	ICDS Centre	Banks	Post Offices
Amarpur [Birganj]	100	100	80	32	100	98
Kakraban [Silghati]	94	96	84	38	98	88
Salema [Kalachari]	100	86	100	0	100	68
Chamanu[Durgacharra]	100	100	100	92	100	98
Jampui [Tlangsang]	46	6	98	40	98	52
Kadamtala [Sanicharra]	100	86	100	14	100	86
Kathalia [Sovapur]	100	98	100	100	100	100
Padmabil [Uttar Padmabil]	100	100	82	98	100	84
Tripura	92.5	84	93	51.75	99.5	84.25

Source: Field Survey

On the other hand, Fig 3.1 shows that none of the workers at Padmabil has ever enjoyed any of the three schemes, considered here. For the other areas, the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) has the highest outreach among the respondents. The proportion of beneficiaries with support from the Old Age Pension scheme is higher than that of the Widow Pension Scheme (WPS). It has been observed that some of the beneficiaries have received support from all the three while there were a few who are bereft of any kind of beneficial schemes.

Fig 3.1: Benefits from Government Programmes enjoyed by the sample HHs (%)



Source: Field Survey

3.7 Differentials between NREGS workers and Non-workers

The two categories of sample household indicate some similarities in terms of their religion, nature and build of houses, availability of electricity and the pattern of fuel use. However, there are a few differences as well as mentioned below-

- Incidence of poverty (BPL & Antodaya) is higher among scheme workers
- The proportion of semi- pucca houses is higher among the Non-NREGS workers.
- Usage of LPG as fuel is higher among the Non-NREGS workers
- Proportion of Daily wage earner as the head of the household is higher in NREGS worker household.
- Interestingly, both groups have head of households who are government servants, but such instances are found in greater number among Non-NREGS workers

- The average monthly income of NREGS households is lower than that of the Non-NREGS worker households. Moreover, the proportion of households in the lowest income strata is much higher in the former category. Consequently, the proportion of higher income earners is greater among Non -NREGS workers.
- The proportion of illiterates is higher among the NREGS workers whereas, the Non- NREGS are marginally ahead in both literacy as well as higher levels of education. However, it is very interesting to note that, though literacy rate is pretty high in the state, the level of education is not high and the incidence of a high drop-out rate is visible among both the categories

Thus to surmise, we say that the NREGS worker households are relatively worse off than their counterparts in the villages who do not avail the scheme. In this context it should be noted that many of the respondents from NREGS workers opined that the scheme is the only opportunity of gainful employment to them and without it they would live in hunger and greater distress. Thus the primary objective of the scheme appears to have been satisfied in Tripura as per the indications of the socio-economic conditions. The scheme is certainly playing a major role for the development and welfare of a large section of rural poor.

CHAPTER 4

The Equity Perspective

Among the multiple objectives of the MGNREGS, one of the most prominent is promotion of equity. The NREG Act aims at “the generation of productive assets, protecting the environment, empowering rural women, reducing rural-urban migration and fostering social equity, among others”³⁸. In India, the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs) have been traditionally marginalised and are considered to be often placed in the bottom of the economic and social ladder, bereft of much employment and income earning opportunity. The MGNREG scheme records the number of applicants and the quantum of opportunities generated from these afore mentioned excluded sections of the society. The other major dimension of inequality in the country is related to gender, stemming up as manifestations of the various forms of dominance of the patriarchal society. The NREG Act makes an attempt to foster gender equity by stipulating a minimum of one-third reservation of the work-days for women as well as by earmarking equal wage across gender.

Therefore, the issue of equity is studied on the basis of a) participation of the socially excluded sections and b) participation of females in the employment under the scheme.

4.2 The Inclusion Aspect

It should be noted here that the population of the state is heterogeneous and the scheduled castes are spread across the state with a higher degree of concentration in the West Tripura district, while the scheduled tribes are the dominant population in the Dhalai district. It is presumed that these marginalised sections being economically poor in general are likely to take greater advantage of the scheme and would enrol and participate in higher numbers in the scheme. Thus, the issue of Inclusion of the excluded sections have been analysed on the basis of the enrolment ratio³⁹, allotment ratio⁴⁰, and the field observations. A score of the enrolment ratio and the allotment ratio above 1 (one) will supposedly suggest greater inclusion.

³⁸ MoRD, 2008

³⁹ Enrolment Ratio= Proportion of Job Card Holdings/ Proportion of Population

⁴⁰ Allotment Ratio= Proportion of Persondays generated/ Proportion of Job Cards Holdings

4.2.1 The Enrolment Issue

Table 4.1 shows that the enrolment ratio of Scheduled Castes under the MGNREG scheme is less than 1, for most of the cases except for 2008-09. The enrolment ratio for the North Tripura district had been reasonably higher in that year. For the successive periods, we observe a decline in the scores. The decrease has been the maximum in the South Tripura district (from 1.00 to 0.90), and the scores have in general been higher for the North Tripura district. However, for the scheduled tribes, we find a favourable trend for inclusion according to the enrolment ratio, though the scores have been marginally less for West Tripura and North Tripura in 2008-09. It should be noted here that, the ratio for the Scheduled Tribes for the whole state had been highest in 2009-10. In other words, it may be said that the proportion of job card holders from the scheduled castes category is lower than the proportion of the Scheduled Castes population in the state and the districts as well, while greater proportion of Scheduled tribes households have enrolled themselves for availing work under the MGNREG Scheme.

Table 4.1: Enrolment Ratio of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

	Scheduled Castes			Scheduled Tribes		
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Dhalai	0.97	0.92	0.92	1.01	1.06	1.04
South Tripura	1.00	0.90	0.90	1.03	1.03	1.02
West Tripura	1.00	0.98	0.97	0.98	1.02	1.00
North Tripura	1.07	0.98	0.98	0.99	1.05	1.01
Tripura	1.01	0.95	0.95	1.01	1.03	1.01

Source: Author's Computation from <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (accessed on 15/2/2012) & http://tripura.nic.in/panchayat/eng/ROR2010_synopsis.pdf (accessed on 27/7/2011)

4.2.2 The Allotment Ratio

Table 4.2: Allotment Ratio of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

	Scheduled Castes		Scheduled Tribes	
	2009-10	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11
Dhalai	0.90	0.94	1.07	1.06
South Tripura	0.99	1.01	1.08	1.10
West Tripura	0.97	0.97	1.09	1.13
North Tripura	1.01	1.00	1.03	1.22
Tripura	0.97	0.97	1.06	1.14

Source: Author's Computation from <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (accessed on 15/2/2012) & http://tripura.nic.in/panchayat/eng/ROR2010_synopsis.pdf (accessed on 27/7/2011)

The allotment ratio also suggest similar trends alike the enrolment ratio. Table 4.2 shows that the allotment ratio for the scheduled castes has been lower than 1 (one) as well as pretty less than that of the scheduled tribes for both the years. The ratio for the SCs has been particularly less for the Dhalai and the West Tripura district. On the other hand, for the STs of the state, the ratio indicates a favourable situation. All the districts depict a similar and uniform trend of assigning greater number of person-days amongst the Scheduled Tribes. The ratio increases to 1.14 in 2010-11 owing to the increase in all the component districts. However, special mention is to be made for the North Tripura district, where the ratio increased significantly from 1.03 to 1.22 in a year. The lower scores of the Scheduled Castes indicate that many SC household have enrolled for the scheme but has not availed any benefit from it, while it appears that the scheme has been accepted with greater enthusiasm among the tribal population of the state.

The lower enrolment and allotment ratio of the Scheduled Castes in the state raises question from both the demand side mechanism as well as from the supply side mechanism. The explanation for such a cause from the demand side mechanism would be that, the scheduled caste household have an alternative employment and earning opportunity, possibly owing to certain community based occupation like- fishing, pottery, etc, may be some of them have their own land also. From the supply side, there might be a possibility of the extent of the scheme being limited in areas/villages dominated by the people of this community. On the other hand, the higher participation of the scheduled tribes is probably because of the declining jhum (shifting) cultivation in the hinterlands of the state. With declining availability of land, many of the tribal households have stopped their traditional cultural practice of slash and burn cultivation. These families now look at government programmes for their sustenance mainly and NREGS fits their requirement exactly.

4.2.3 Inclusion at the Field level

Table 4.3: Community Profile of the Sample Villages (%)

Blocks	GP/VC	SCs	STs	OBCs	UR
Amarpur	Birganj	53.61	0.77	23.96	21.66
Kakraban	Silghati	39.79	0.00	2.08	58.13
Salema	Kalachari	49.30	0.00	25.31	25.39
Chamanu	Durgacharra	2.91	79.64	17.45	0.00
Jampui	Tlansang	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00
Kadamtala	Sanicharra	11.01	1.23	42.73	45.03
Kathalia	Sovapur	22.74	5.09	9.28	62.90
Padmabil	Uttar Padmabil	1.37	90.73	7.14	0.76
		26.60	21.35	19.66	32.39

Source: Author's Computation from http://tripura.nic.in/panchayat/eng/ROR2010_synopsis.pdf (accessed on 27/7/2011)

Table 4.3 shows that among the eight sample villages, Birganj (Amarpur Block) and Kalachari (Salema Block) has a dominant Scheduled Tribes, population, while Tlangsang (Jampui Hill Block), Durgacherra (Chawmanu Block) and Uttar Padmabil (Padmabil Block) are tribal majority villages. On the other hand, people of unreserved category are the largest group of the three remaining villages- Silghati (Kakraban Block), Sovapur (Kathalia Block) and Sanicharra (Kadamtala Block). However, it may be noted that in Sanicharra, a sizeable population belongs to the OBC category. Further, Sovapur has a dominant Muslim population and there are considerable number of people from the religious minority sections in Silghati who have been enumerated in the unreserved category.

Table 4.4 shows that Scheduled castes are the dominant among the NREGS workers in the three villages of Birganj, Silghati and Kalachari. In Birganj, the proportion of SCs among the workers is equal to their share in the population, and very surprisingly, the proportion of SCs among Non-workers is even higher. But in the two other villages, participation of the SCs is much higher than their share in the population. Moreover, the proportion of SCs among the Non-workers is also much lower than that of the workers in the three villages of Silghati, Kalchhari & Sovapur, while the latter leads in Birganj and Sanicharra. It is surprising to note that even though Sanicharra village has 11 percent population belonging to Scheduled Castes, none of them appear in the sample households for the workers, though we find such representatives among the non-workers. Interestingly, even though we find nominal SC population in the two tribal dominated villages of Durgacharra and Uttar Padmabil, there are no representatives among the Sample households. Obviously, such a scenario suggests greater acceptance of the community to the activities of the scheme. However, considering the aggregate sample profile of the state, we observe that 26.25 percent of the total workers of the sample belong to the SC category, while, the community's share in the total population of the sample villages is 26.60 percent. The field situation is somewhat in tune with the secondary data, where, we find that the total proportion of SC person-days is marginally lower than that of the share of the community in the population.

Table 4.4: Community Profile of the Sample Households (%)

Blocks		NREGS Worker				Non Workers			
		SCs	STs	OBCs	UR	SCs	STs	OBCs	UR
Amarpur	Birganj	54	0	22	24	60	10	0	30
Kakraban	Silghati	54	0	4	42	22	0	10	68
Salema	Kalachari	76	0	12	12	56	2	12	30
Chamanu	Durgacharra	0	96	4	0	0	86	14	0
Jampui	Tlangsang	0	100	0	0	0	98	0	2
Kadamtala	Sanicharra	0	2	34	64	6	0	52	42
Kathalia	Sovapur	26	0	12	62	18	2	18	62
Padmabil	Uttar Padmabil	0	100	0	0	0	100	0	0
		26.25	37.25	11	25.5	20.25	37.25	13.25	29.25

Source: Author's Computation

Table 4.4 further shows that the participation of the Scheduled Tribes in the scheme is very much in tune with the observations from the secondary data. All the workers under the scheme at the two villages of Tlangsang and Uttar Padmabil belong to the Scheduled Tribes community, while their proportion among the worker households of Durgacharra is also much higher than their share in the population. In Sanicharra also, the share of STs among the worker households is higher than their proportionate population, while in Sovapur and Birganj, the share of the STs is less. In Sovapur, we do find 2 percent of the Non-workers being scheduled tribes. Nevertheless, in aggregate we find that the share of the STs in the sample population is 21.35 percent while their share among the sample is much higher at 37.25 percent. Thus, from the above, we find that in terms of promoting equity, the scheme has certainly led to the inclusion of the Scheduled Tribes in the state, but for the Scheduled Castes community further field level study is necessary to make any conclusive statements. Yet, one cannot deny the fact that among the sample, the proportion of Scheduled Castes is higher among the Worker households as compared to that of the non-worker households.

4.3 Gender Equity

The MGNREG Scheme (NREGS) has been credited by numerous studies^{41, 42} as being a very powerful tool in empowering women in rural India. The design of the scheme itself allows equity for women in access to work as well as payment of wages as lack of 'pre-conditions' except willingness to do unskilled manual labour is the only necessity. Tripura, a better performing state in terms of the Human Development Indicators, stands foremost in the literacy rate among rural women among the NE states. The gender ratio is also higher than the national average. Therefore it is likely that female participation in NREGS would be healthy. We have also seen reports of the scheme opening new vistas of development for the women of the state by empowering them with the supplementary income for the household⁴³. It is in this background we study the aspect of gender equity of the scheme in Tripura on the basis of the available secondary information on the female persondays generated and the field level findings.

4.3.1 Generation of Female Persondays

Table 4.5: Proportion of Females in NREGS Person-days in Tripura

Sl.	Districts	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
A	Dhalai	34.79	34.47	33.96
B	South Tripura	43.17	43.58	44.02
C	West Tripura	40.00	41.89	36.55
D	North Tripura	35.55	36.24	38.36

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (accessed on 15/2/12)

It has been seen in Chapter 2 that the generation women persondays in the state has been in tune with the minimum stipulation of the Act, but the percentage score for the state (Table 2.2) is lower than the National average and more importantly has been decreasing over the years. Table 4.5 shows that among the districts also the minimum one-third reservation

⁴¹ Jandu (2008)

⁴² Sharma Amita (2011), Rights-based Legal Guarantee as Development Policy: The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act; Discussion Paper available at http://www.undp.org.in/sites/default/files/reports_publication/MG-NREGA_DiscussionPaper.pdf

⁴³ Talukdar, Ratna Bharali (2008), 'NREGA shines for Tripura women' available at <http://knowledge.nrega.net/115> (accessed on 27th January, 2012)

has been maintained. The proportion of females has been consistently higher for the South Tripura district, while the rates for the females have been lowest in the most backward and tribal majority district of Dhalai.

Table 4.6: ANOVA- Proportion of Female Person-days in Districts of Tripura

Year	Groups	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
2008-09	Between	750.647	3	250.216	7.056	.001
	Within	1276.653	36	35.463		
	Total	2027.300	39			
2009-10	Between	370.053	3	123.351	5.069	.005
	Within	875.972	36	24.333		
	Total	1246.025	39			
2010-11	Between	583.342	3	194.447	4.076	.014
	Within	1717.527	36	47.709		
	Total	2300.869	39			

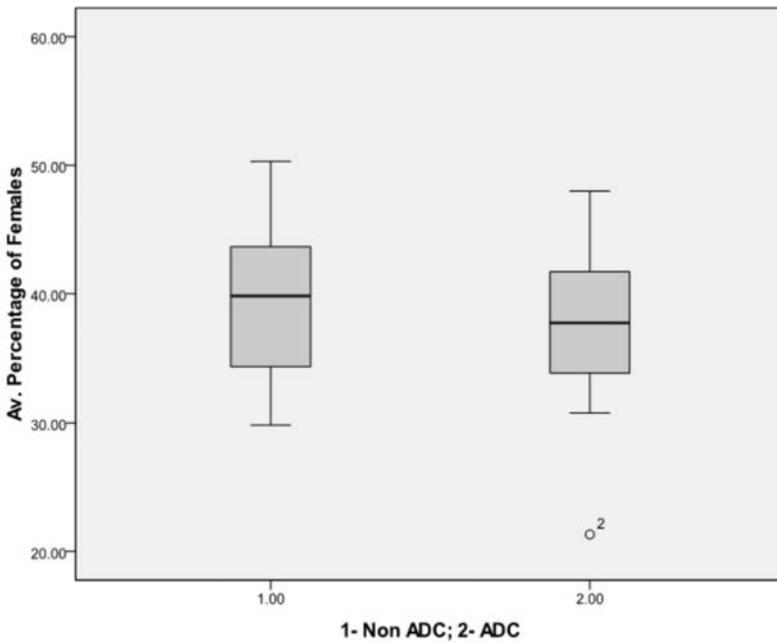
Source: Computed

Though most of the constituent RD Blocks of the districts satisfy the minimum requirements; there are a few RD Blocks like Chawmanu, which faltered on this account consistently⁴⁴. On the other hand, it is observed that the Blocks with higher proportion of women workers appear to be economically well off apparently, though there are some aberrations. In this context, it may be noted that introduction of the multi-cropping system in certain pockets of Jirania, Mohanpur, Teliamura, Khowai and Dukli keeps the men busy in the agriculture fields allowing greater opportunities for the female representatives of the households. Moreover, from Table 4.6, we find that the differences between the female participation rates vary significantly across the districts. It should be noted here further that the value of 'F- statistic' has been highest in 2008-09 and least in 2010-11, even though it has been significant all throughout with varied intensity. From Fig 4.1, we further see that female participation is lesser in the TTAADC areas as the median, maximum and minimum rates for the Non- ADC areas are higher. Even though the means for the two groups, 39.40 & 37.28 are not significantly different, it should be noted that the minimum rate

⁴⁴ <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> (accessed on 15/2/12)

of female persondays in the ADC areas is basically an outlier (Chawmanu marked as O²). Lower proportions of female workers in the ADC areas are due to the limited availability of alternatives. In cases of availability of a single opportunity it is the male member who often participates in the MGNREGS (or any other economic) activity as the women of the household often withdraws from the workforce.

Fig 4.1: Female Participation (Average for 2008-09 to 2010-11) in ADC & Non ADC areas of Tripura



Source: Computed

Table- 4.7:- ANOVA for Female Person-days

Category	Year	Df	'F'	Sig
Rural & Peri-Urban Blocks	2008-09	1,38	5.216	.028
	2009-10	1,38	1.611	.212
	2010-11	1,38	6.166	.018

Source: Computed

It is however observed that Blocks in the vicinity of Agartala depict higher participation of females owing to greater employment opportunity of the males of the households in activities related to trade and services in the urban area. Table 8 attests to our conjecture. In Tripura, the Agartala Municipal Council and 15 Nagar Panchayats spread over the four districts comprise of the urban areas. We consider the immediate next Blocks of these 16 urban units as peri-urban due to the easy transport and communication which allows residents of those regions to find employment in the urban jurisdiction. Thus, on the basis of such a classification- hinterland and peri-urban, we find the average proportion of female participation for 24 hinterland Blocks less than that of the 16 peri-urban Blocks for all the three years. Table 4.7 shows that apart from 2009-10, the means for the two category were significantly different, thereby supporting our proposition that in the interior parts of the states, males represent the households mostly for the MGNREGS assignments. Females work in greater number in areas close to urban centres because the males of the households, in majority of the cases, have alternative gainful employment opportunities in the adjoining urban areas.

4.3.2 Gender Equity in the Field

Table 4.8: Job Card User among the Sample Households (%)

Districts	Blocks	GP/VC	Male	Female	Both
	Amarpur	Birganj	22	12	66
	Kakraban	Silghati	18	20	62
South Tripura			20	16	64
	Salema	Kalachari	0	2	98
	Chamanu	Durgacharra	98	0	2
Dhalai			49	1	50
	Jampui	Tlangsang	2	4	94
	Kadamtala	Sanicharra	58	32	10
North Tripura			30	18	52
	Kathalia	Sovapur	48	40	12
	Padmabil	Uttar Padmabil	0	0	100
West Tripura			24	20	56
Total			30.75	13.75	55.50

Source: Field Survey

Table 4.8, above, shows that both males and females represent the households for accessing jobs under the MGNREGS, and in the majority of the cases, it is either of the two representing the household. Moreover, for almost 14 percent of the sample households, it is only females, who avail the MGNREGS opportunity. Among the districts, we find that Dhalai has the least incidence of exclusive female representation owing to the very low rates from the Chawmanu Block, which stands as an exception because of the overwhelming dominance of male representation for the households. The reason is simple and has been explained above and corroborates the observations from the secondary data. The economic backwardness of the Block provides hardly any income opportunities to the households, thus the males prefer to work outside leaving domestic chores for the females. The higher rates of both members representing the household in the tribal villages of Tlansang and Uttar Padmabill attests to the age-long tradition of gender equity among them- as in jhum cultivation, where family members irrespective of their sex worked in the fields. The incidence of higher proportion of males in Kadamtala and Kathalia are influenced by social characters like religion and castes. Incidentally, these two Blocks along with Chawmanu has lower percentage of dual representations. The comparatively higher proportion of female workers in Sovapur is because of the males being engaged in other activities. Moreover, proximity to urban areas (Nagar Panchayats) like Kamalpur, Khowai and Sonamura also leave very few households from Kalachari (Salema), Uttar Padmabil (Padmabil) & Sovapur (Kathalia) to have only male representation at the scheme activities.

In this context, we may refer to the special observations from the field. During November 2010, at the Shilghati village of Kakraban Block it was observed at a land levelling worksite that 70 percent of the workers there were female. Befriending the female workers it was learnt that males of the households sent their counterparts from the family to work, because of the market wage differentials. The prevailing daily wage rate for a male private labourer ranged from Rs.150 to Rs. 200, while for females it ranged between Rs.120-150. It was therefore a natural economic decision to allow the females work with NREGS allowing greater opportunity for the males to earn the market wage. Incidentally, the female proportion in employment increased thereby fostering gender equity. However, there is a spill over gain for the females. Some female workers opine that their position and standing in the household increased as they started earning through NREGS. They enjoy social prestige and feel empowered on having a right to spend on the basis of their own income. They play a more active role in the household decision making, withdrawal and depositing

money at banks etc, while a few illiterate women have learnt to sign their names for the purpose. Thus, the issue of gender equity, as it appears for Tripura is more an outcome rather than the measure. In areas or places which are remote, people lead a much harder life and to them the priority is poverty eradication and the males are mostly the representative for the employment generation programmes to sell their physical labour.

4.4 Concluding Observations

Thus to surmise the issue of equity in MGNREGS, we may say the following-

- Socially excluded groups or sections of the society have taken special interest in the scheme and have enrolled in large numbers in the hope of getting some gainful employment and earning opportunities.
- The enrolment ratio and the allotment ratio of the Scheduled Tribes in the state has been favourable
- The allotment of work to the Scheduled Castes have been less than their enrolment in many Blocks
- The gender equity in the form of stipulated minimum ratio has been maintained at the aggregate level, though variations exist at the Block Level.
- Female participation is higher in Blocks sharing a border with a Nagar Panchayat.
- Empowerment of women has been an outcome of the scheme as is seen during field survey.

The inclusion of the marginalised sections of the society has been a target of the union government and the MGNREG Scheme provides a very vibrant platform. In Tripura, the aspect of equity in terms of community participation and gender balance has been maintained with minor hiccups. Considering the socio-economic profile of the sample households, we find that the NREGS workers households in Tripura are mostly from the marginalised class and are poverty stricken and mostly belong to the lowest strata of the society with lower education levels. As a result they very little option but to depend on the scheme for sustenance. From the perspective of equity, it appears desirable to have more representations of rural poor amongst the workers, and the scheme appears to do so. The higher participation of the socially excluded section in the workforce is also a positive indicator for inclusion efforts, but the state has lesser proportions of females in the person-days generated, thereby posing a mark on the issue of gender equity. However, the scheme has been immensely beneficial to the female workers whoever has participated.

CHAPTER 5

Ground Level Efficiency

The MGNREGS is different from the earlier Employment Generation Programmes owing to its legal mandate as well as in its effort and format to warrant efficiency in the delivery mechanism by specifying the conditions relating to number of days of employment, unemployment allowance, worksite facilities, creation of tangible assets and etc. However, economists⁴⁵ and policy analysts often debate regarding the efficacy⁴⁶ and targeting of the scheme as many feels that leakages prevent the achievement of the desired goals⁴⁷. It has also been observed that the scheme achieves⁴⁸ only a fraction of the demand as a very nominal proportion of the card holders could be provided with the 'upper limit' of the number of the work-days though majority of the participant would like to have it. Naturally, a mismatch between the demand and supply occurs and along with the alleged leakages, raises the question on the efficient functioning of the scheme. In economics, we consider allocation of resources as efficient if it is impossible to make one or more members of the society better off without making some members worse off. Nevertheless, one cannot deny the fact that there have been differences in the implementation of the scheme across the various states and Tripura, as we have seen earlier is credited as a good performer in the implementation of the scheme.

It is in this background that we take up the present chapter to study the various aspects of efficiency of the scheme at the field level on the basis of information collected about the enrolment process, worksite facilities, transparency issues like social audits, payment provisions and the nature and quality of assets created, etc through the field survey.

⁴⁵ Bhalla Surjit S(2012), 'No Proof Required : Corruption by any other name', Indian Express, Feb. 4

⁴⁶ Ravallion, Martin (2012), 'Corruption in the MGNREGS- Assessing an Index', *Economic & Political Weekly* February 25, 2012 Volume XLVII, No 8

⁴⁷ Sethi, Anirudh (2011), MS- A Disaster Called MNREGA at <http://www.anirudhsethireport.com/tag/nrega/>

⁴⁸ Dreze and Khera (2009)

5.2 The Enrolment

Table 5.1 shows that only around 8 (eight) percent of the households reported receiving their job card after a single visit to the Panchayat office while for the others including all from Kathalia, Padmabil, Chawmanu and Jampui, numerous visits were necessary. 38 percent of the worker households from Sanicharra GP however received their Job Card on their first visit itself. Moreover, Jobcards were available within 15 days only for 12 percent of the sample respondents, while the majority had to wait more than a fortnight. The waiting period is least in Kadamtala Block. Basically, the situation in the Sanicharra GP of the Block appears to be better than the other areas. The entire process of job card issue seems to be delayed and slacked in the Dhalai and West districts, while the North Tripura and South Tripura district performs better. However, all the respondents across the Districts, Blocks and villages showed their Photo Identity cards to the field investigators thereby suggesting that the process of ID card issue had been exhaustive.

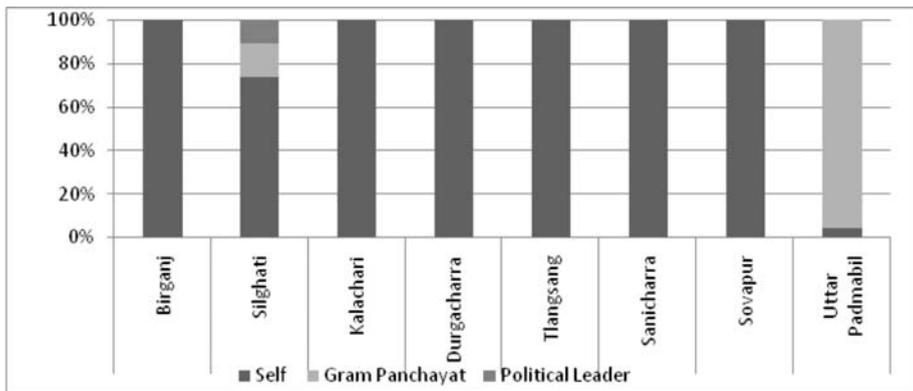
Table 5.1: Indicators of Performance during the inception stage (%)

Districts	Blocks	GP/VC	Multiple visits for obtaining Job Card	Job Card Issued after 15 days	Job provided within 15 days
	Amarpur	Birganj	92	80	66
	Kakraban	Silghati	82	88	62
South Tripura			87	84	64
	Salema	Kalachari	98	82	100
	Chamanu	Durgacharra	100	100	98
Dhalai			99	91	99
	Jampui	Tlangsang	100	100	100
	Kadamtala	Sanicharra	62	60	32
North Tripura			81	80	66
	Kathalia	Sovapur	100	100	100
	Padmabil	Uttar Padmabil	100	94	92
West Tripura			100	97	96
Total			91.75	88	81.25

Source: Field Survey

Nevertheless, it can be comprehended that the issuance of Job Card often requires a lot of effort. In course of a group discussion at Shilghati village, Kakraban Block, on 4th November, 2010 villagers opined that initially, they were apprehensive about the issue of job card and only a few of them had applied for the jobcard. The Panchayat however attempted to build awareness about the scheme by organising meetings. But the real incentive for universal application for jobcard came when the initial applicants started getting employment and received income.

Fig 5.1: Custody of Job Card (%)



Source: Field Survey

However, from Fig 5.1, we see that in most of the villages, the Job Card is in possession of the worker households. However, there are exceptions, as seen in Padmabil Block of West Tripura, where, the card stays at the Panchayat/ Council office. The situation in Kakraban Block is also different with the political leader also emerging as the custodian of the card for 14 percent of the respondents.

5.3 Allocation of Work

Table 5.2 shows that the implementing agencies perform better in terms of providing employment within 15 days of application in accordance of the Act. More than 81 percent of the respondents of the state opine receiving work within 15 days, with all respondents from three Blocks/villages agreeing to this fact. The surprising result here is the best performer for enrolment issue, Sanicharra of Kadamtala, appears to be lagging behind other places. Both the areas from South Tripura also show a lower rate in this respect. It is further observed that there are variations

among the sample areas in terms of the average number of workdays per household. The state average in this parameter was 74 (seventy four) and for the sample villages, it ranged from a low of 34 (thirty-four) days in Kathalia to a high of 100 (one hundred) days for Tlangsang. The average was highest in the North Tripura District and least in West Tripura district. The responses of the sample households are very much in tune with that of the secondary data of the Blocks as noted in the previous section with the two Blocks of North district standing high.

Table 5.2: Employment Scenario (%)

Districts	Blocks	GP/VC	Job provided within 15 days	Av. Workdays in 2009-10
	Amarpur	Birganj	66	95
	Kakraban	Silghati	62	77
South Tripura			64	86
	Salema	Kalachari	100	49
	Chamanu	Durgacharra	98	89
Dhalai			99	69
	Jampui	Tlangsang	100	100
	Kadamtala	Sanicharra	32	98
North Tripura			66	99
	Kathalia	Sovapur	100	34
	Padmabil	Uttar Padmabil	92	56
West Tripura			96	45
Total			81.25	74

Source: Field Survey

Moreover, in regards the employment opportunities, Table 5.3 shows that more than 80 percent of the respondents have availed employment under the scheme on the basis of their applications while the remaining had their job-cards but did not formally apply rather were informed by the GP functionaries to report for work. In this context, we may note that often it is seen in Tripura, that activities under the scheme are taken up once the fund is available. It may be further added that from all the different field sites it was observed that none of the job-card holders basically

demand work. As the work-order for the identified project is sanctioned the Panchayat officials inform villagers of the ensuing work and ask those willing to sign the demand form at the office. Therefore whoever signs gets employment.

Table 5.3: Procedure and Timing of Job (%)

	Yes	No
Job offer on the basis of an application	80.5	19.5
Job during the lean period of agriculture	78	22

Source: Field Survey

Further from the Table 11, we know that majority of the respondents feel that their involvement as worker to the scheme occurred during the lean cropping season, which certainly had been an objective of the Act and the scheme. However it was learnt from a group of Panchayat members that the identified activities often get delayed because the implementing agencies are extremely overburdened. As a result the desired timing of the activity often fails.

5.4 Working Conditions

Table 5.4: Facilities at the Worksites (Positive responses in %)

Blocks	GP/VC	Creche	First Aid	Drinking Water	Shades
Amarpur	Birganj	8	2	90	0
Kakraban	Silghati	2	14	100	10
Salema	Kalachari	36	98	98	96
Chamanu	Durgacharra	78	0	0	0
Jampui	Tlansang	6	2	0	0
Kadamtala	Sanicharra	74	52	100	90
Kathalia	Sovapur	0	6	80	0
Padmabil	Uttar Padmabil	0	98	98	12
Tripura		25.5	34	70.75	26

Source: Field Survey

The scheme calls for certain provisions to be made at the worksite. Positive responses from the villagers indicate better implementation. Therefore from Table 5.4, we find that drinking water is mostly available at the worksite except for Tlangsang and Durgacharra. As regards, other warranted facilities, certain laggardness are observed at all sites. Crèches for children and shades for the workers are not found much in the West (Kathalia & Padmabil) and the South Tripura district (Amarpur & Kakraban), while very surprisingly, 78 percent of the respondents of Chawmanu affirmed its availability though none of the other provisions were available. First Aid provisions were found to be satisfactory Uttar Padmabil and Kalachari. It may be noted here that in course of field visits to the worksite it was observed that even though shades (Plastic sheets) are provided for rest in some sites, it was grossly inadequate to meet the requirements. Among the villages, Tlangsang seems to be the least equipped with the provisions, while Kalachari appears to be better off.

In terms of payment to the beneficiary, we observe that the most common format is through the Bank Transfer though payment in cash from the GP office has been the most in Padmabil Block of West Tripura as seen in the Table 5.5 above. The expansion of banking provisions to the NREGA workers is certainly a big step towards financial inclusion. Payment through Banks often creates forced savings, but some of the NREGS workers at Sovapur village feel that banks are at a distance of 10-15 kms as a result, they have to spend a whole day as well as bus fare in order to withdraw their sum from the account, losing a day's work and income. The wages are mostly paid within 15 days of work but there are occasional delays for which one of the Panchayat office bearers blame the workers. He has observed that some workers are callous and miss signing the muster roll thereby causing problems and delay. Some workers even do not have the urgency for the money as a result take the signing process lightly. Again problems arise in case of a different member from the household arrives as a replacement, he or she works but the signature is to be put by the person assigned officially. He feels that such workers are around five percent of the workforce but these few are the cause for the troubles faced by the large majority.

Table 5.5: Wage Payment System (%)

Blocks	GP/VC	Bank Transfer	GP office
Amarpur	Birganj	100	0
Kakraban	Silghati	100	0
Salema	Kalachari	100	0
Chamanu	Durgacharra	100	0
Jampui	Tlangsang	100	0
Kadamtala	Sanicharra	100	0
Kathalia	Sovapur	100	0
Padmabil	Uttar Padmabil	18	82
Tripura		89.75	10.25

Source: Field Survey

Table 5.6: Preference for the type of Contract for Wage Payment (%)

Districts	Blocks	GP/VC	Piece Rate	Time Based	No Answer
	Amarpur	Birganj	56	44	0
	Kakraban	Silghati	86	14	0
South Tripura			71	29	0
	Salema	Kalachari	100	0	0
	Chawmanu	Durgacharra	2	94	4
Dhalai			51	47	2
	Jampui	Tlangsang	82	16	2
	Kadamtala	Sanicharra	56	38	6
North Tripura			69	27	4
	Kathalia	Sovapur	6	92	2
	Padmabil	Uttar Padmabil	94	6	0
West Tripura			50	49	1
Total			60.25	38	1.75

Source: Field Survey

On the other hand, from Table 5.6, it may be noted that around 60 percent of the sample respondents would prefer to work under piece rate contract, while 38 percent would be more comfortable in time based work (daily wage rate), while the remaining 2 (two) percent do not have any choice; they are ready in any capacity. The preference for piece rate work is high in most of the sites namely- Silghati (Kakraban) village, Kalachari (Salema), Tlangsang (Jampui Hills), Sanicharra (Kadamtala) and Uttar Padmabil (Padmabil). On the other hand, there is an overwhelming preference for time based contract in Durgacharra (Chawmanu) and Sovapur (Kathalia). It may be noted here that the highest incidence of no preference occurs in Sanciharra village.

5.5 Transparency Mechanism

Table 5.7: Awareness and Participation in Social Audit by NREGS workers (%)

Blocks	GP/VC	Awareness		Participation	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Amarpur	Birganj	80	20	0	100
Kakraban	Silghati	66	34	14	86
Salema	Kalachari	36	64	12	88
Chamanu	Durgacharra	96	4	2	98
Jampui	Tlangsang	2	98	0	100
Kadamtala	Sanicharra	94	6	94	6
Kathalia	Sovapur	100	0	100	0
Padmabil	Uttar Padmabil	2	98	0	100
Tripura		59.5	40.5	27.75	72.25

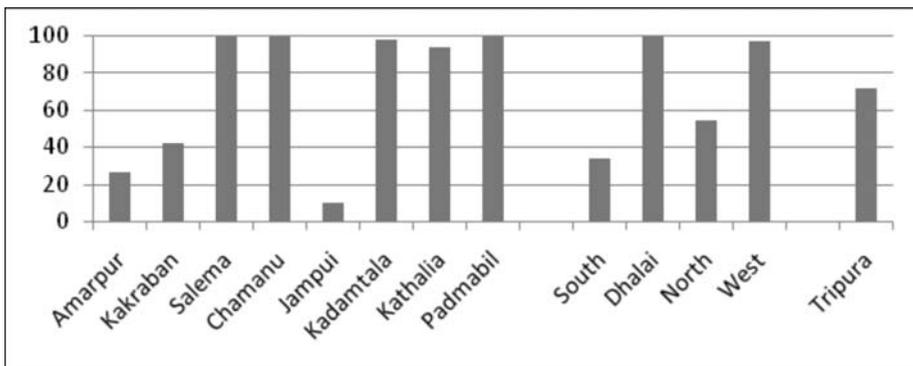
Source: Field Survey

The features of MGNREGS call for transparency measures through social audit and it is expected that the villagers will participate actively in the audit process. Table 5.7 shows that almost 60 percent of the workers are aware of the concept of social audit but their participation in the process is very low, 27.75 percent. The awareness is high in the South Tripura district but participation is very low. The activity relating to social audit is found to be extremely encouraging in Sovapur GP of Kathalia Block with all the workers not just expressing their awareness but also revealing that they

have participated in the social audit process convened through Gram Sabha meetings. The awareness level is low the two tribal dominated villages of Tlangsang and Uttar Padmabil. The participation is zero for these two villages as well as for the Birganj village. The case for Chawmanu Block is also very interesting as a very high percentage of the respondents are aware of the social audit process, but they do not participate in it. A Group Discussion conducted at the Sovapur village of Kathalia block revealed that two social audits are done in a year. The Panchayat convenes the meeting in consultation to the RD Block authorities. The villagers are provided with the detail of the ongoing activities and suggestions are sought from them for the next period.

It is seen from Fig 5.2 that around 71 percent of the sample respondents opine that the activities under the MGNREGS Scheme are mostly displayed at the worksite which enables the villagers as well as visitors to know about what is being done. However, the display at the worksite is not uniform in nature. From the same figure itself, we find that the display boards at the Dhalai district are in proper manner, while it is found to be quite good by the respondents of the two villages of the West Tripura district also, but the responses from the worksites of the South Tripura are certainly not encouraging in this aspect. Among the villages, we see that only 10 percent of the respondents from Jampui Block believe that NREGS works are displayed properly, thereby causing the average for the North Tripura to droop.

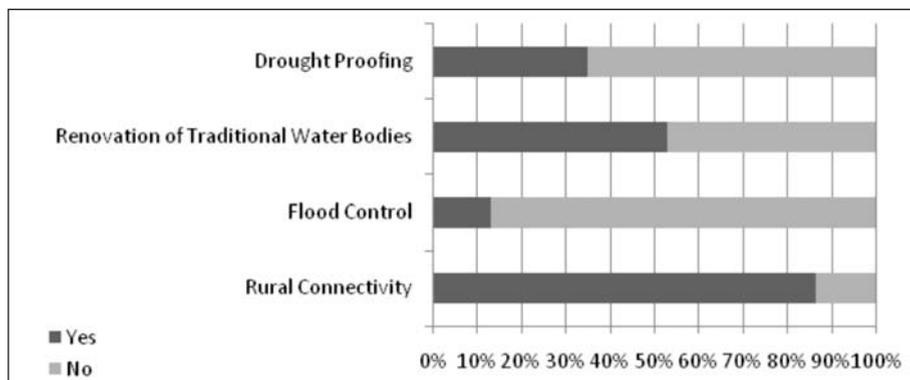
Fig 5.2: Display of MGNREGS works (%)



Source: Field Survey

5.6 Impact of the Scheme

Fig 5.3: Perception of Benefit from MGNREGS Works by Non-MGNREGS households (%)



Source: Field Survey

The inherent nature of the scheme assures impact on several dimensions like- asset creation, migration and income level. Fig 5.3 shows that rural connectivity to be the most beneficial (86 percent) of the various types of activity. The works relating in the renovation of the Traditional Water-bodies are found to be effective by 53 percent of the Non-NREGS households, while drought proofing actions are considered to be beneficial by 35 percent of the respondents. But the activities relating to flood control does not find much favour as we see almost 87 percent of the respondents do not consider such work as very useful. Nevertheless, the impact of the scheme on the issue of asset creation cannot be ignored completely. It is certainly true that roads have improved connectivity, facilitated easier movement of the people, led to greater market access and linkage. Agricultural and fishery activities helped many, but all is not well because there are apprehensions about some of the activities. Ponds created under the scheme have been criticised for its ineffectiveness to hold water. An 'Upa Pradhan' (Vice Chair of the GP) opines that such a situation is an outcome of the poor quality of work arising due to the lesser number of able bodied people in the NREGS workforce. Old, infirm and females are the majority at the worksite but they are physical limitations to cut, dig and move more than 20-25 Cubic feet per day, whereas an adult able-bodied labourer would remove around 70cft of Earth in a day. Naturally, the cost of the work therefore increases and adversely affects the economic returns.

Table 5.8: Impact of MGNREGS on Migration (in %)

Blocks	GP/VC	Consider-ably	Moder-ately	No impact	Not Applicable
Amarpur	Birganj	2	98	0	0
Kakraban	Silghati	12	76	0	12
Salema	Kalachari	92	8	0	0
Chamanu	Durgacharra	100	0	0	0
Jampui	Tlangsang	2	2	96	0
Kadamtala	Sanicharra	56	28	4	12
Kathalia	Sovapur	100	0	0	0
Padmabil	Uttar Padmabil	40	4	0	56
Tripura		50.5	27	12.5	10

Source: Field Survey

On the other hand, it may be recalled that one of the primary objective of the Act was to check the distress migration towards urban areas by the rural people during the lean period of agricultural activity. We have seen earlier that the scheme takes up the work mostly during the cropping off season, which is reflected to an extent in the adjacent Table 5.8. More than 50 percent the scheme workers and sample respondents feel that migration has reduced considerably following increased income opportunity in the rural areas itself. Another 27 percent also acknowledge the decline in migration. The impact of the scheme is strongly visible in Chawmanu, Salema (in Dhalai district) and in Kathalia. On the flip side, the respondents from the South district (Amarpur & Kakraban) take the middle path in accepting moderate impact on out migration. The response from Jampui Block is completely different with 96 percent believing that the scheme hardly had an impact on migration. Surprisingly, the majority of respondents from Padmabil Block have mostly opined that migration is not an issue applicable in their domain, though 40 percent feel the scheme doing favours in checking migration.

Table 5.9: Impact of MGNREGS on Household Income (Rs. /month)

Blocks	GP/VC	Average Increment
Amarpur	Birganj	778
Kakraban	Silghati	858
Salema	Kalachari	604
Chamanu	Durgacharra	410
Jampui	Tlangsang	842.4
Kadamtala	Sanicharra	718
Kathalia	Sovapur	389.9
Padmabil	Uttar Padmabil	596
Tripura		649.54

Source: Field Survey

The aspect of livelihood security as an objective of the scheme gets validated from Table 5.9 above. The worker households enjoy an additional income from the scheme and we find that the amount is Rs. 649.54 per month on average for the aggregate sample households. However, the average incremental income varies between villages. The maximum addition occurred in Silghati village, while the least increase was in Sovapur. It is also seen that the increase is generally more for the sites of the South Tripura and North Tripura, while it is lowest for the villages of West Tripura.

Table 5.10: Utilisation of Income from MGNREGS (%)

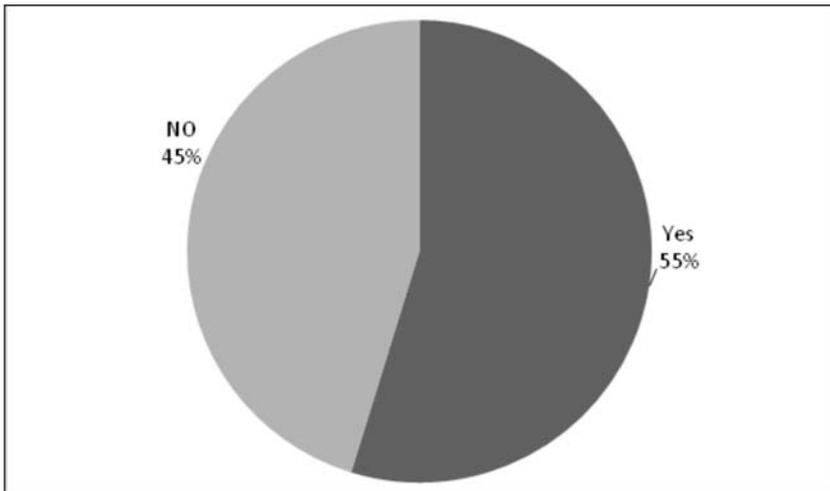
Purpose	Workers
Food	82
Clothing	75.75
Children's Education	42.75
Agriculture	1
Festival	0.25
Undisclosed	16.5

Source: Field Survey

Table 5.10 shows that the additional income earned are primarily spent for food. As many as, 82 percent of the households use the money for arranging two square meals a day, while more than 75 percent use

the fund for clothing. An encouraging facet here is that 42 percent of the workers hope to utilise the money for the education of their children. Interestingly, 4 workers from Kadamtala Block expressed their idea of using the NREGS funds for consuming agricultural inputs, whereas, 1 (one) respondent from the sample has used the NREGS income for celebrating his festival with greater joy. At a discrete level, a female worker reported that she categorically pays the electricity charges for her house from her own income. Nevertheless, it can be said that the income earned from the scheme by the workers are utilised for a host of activities which are certainly steps towards a better livelihood for the rural poor.

Fig 5.4: Willingness of Non-worker household for enrolment (%)



Source: Field Survey

Thus, one cannot ignore the fact that MGNREGS has had an impact in the rural economy of the country and the constituent states by augmenting the income of the participants. The positives are reinforced from Fig 15, where we see that 55 percent of the respondents from the Non-worker households, across the state expressing their willingness to apply for a job card and avail employment opportunity under the scheme in future.

5.7 Concluding Observations

The issues of efficiency as observed from the field survey provide us with interesting interpretations. The scheme appears to be efficient

under certain parameters particularly relating to enrolment and allocation of work. The most impressive result is that works are assigned within 15 days of application. But the reality is that the villagers do not demand work, rather they sign the demand form only when a work is supposed to begin. The legality is thereby maintained. Moreover, a positive feature is that unlike many states, the Job Card is in the custody of the worker/ households, though there were subtle signals of political interference in employment provisions. Moreover efforts are taken to provide work during the lean period of agriculture though there are unintentional delays. The worksite facilities however need improvement though payments are mostly through Banks. But the awareness and participation in the social audit is very limited.

Among the assets created, roads and rural connectivity has the maximum laurels among the villagers for facilitating easier movement, greater market access and enhanced linkages with the outer world, whereas other kinds of activities do face criticism for substandard quality. Out-migration during lean season has decreased due to increased income opportunities at home, which allows greater intake of food and clothing for most of the worker household.

Thus from the point of ground level efficiency the scheme can be termed successful in improving the livelihood of the poor people in rural Tripura, even though there are multiple scopes of improvement in the delivery mechanism.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

A Scheme as enormous as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is bound to have huge impact in the economy of a small state like Tripura, just because of the fact that fund worth more than Rs. 3000 crores have flowed to the state since its inception. The economic features of the land - higher poverty levels, limited employment opportunities, restrained industrialisation and minimal infrastructure, makes the scheme more pertinent for the state of Tripura. The secondary data also suggest that the scheme has had better deal in the state as compared to many other states. Thus, the present study was taken up to examine what and how is the scheme doing in Tripura, with specific focus on issues relating to equity and efficiency of the delivery mechanism.

The first Chapter laid out the structure of the study and introduced the research problem, while in Chapter 2; we made an overview of the various facets of the scheme in Tripura on the basis of the secondary data. The 3rd Chapter provided the profile of the major stakeholders of the scheme in the state. We observed that the participants were mostly poverty stricken and often lived in deplorable conditions. Chapter 4 dealt with the issues of equity and it was observed that the socially excluded sections have been incorporated in the functioning of the scheme in large numbers in accordance to the scheme objectives, while in terms of gender parity, Tripura maintained the stipulated quota but the performance was a shade lower than the national average. The 5th Chapter examined the ground level efficiency, where we saw that the scheme has certainly made an impact on the livelihood of the rural poor and augmented their living standards. However, in terms of the basic minimum provisions at the worksites, the situation is far from desirable.

Nonetheless, we sum up the following observations-

- MGNREGS provides development funds worth 4 to 5 percent of GSDP of Tripura
- Large number of man-days generated enables the rural poor earn a living
- The activities of the scheme works to improve the asset base of the state- Road connectivity and land levelling is the most preferred form
- In the context of equity-

- The marginalised and the socially excluded sections have accepted the scheme in a big way as seen in the **higher** enrolment ratios
- The participation of the Scheduled Tribes appears to be higher than that of the Scheduled Castes
- The state maintains desirable ratio for female participation but it is **lower** than the national average -**Promotes** Women Empowerment
- The proportion of female person-days **varies significantly** among the districts- female participation is **higher** in areas near to the urban centres
- Poor and tribal people has greater participation in the scheme activities
- From the perspective of efficiency-
 - The average number of workdays per households is **more** than many other states and has been **higher** than the all- India level
 - The average workdays is **higher** in remote and tribal dominated Blocks
 - The work completion rate in Tripura is **greater** than the Indian figures
 - There has been **delays** in receiving the job-cards
 - The concept of demand for work does **not** exist- Works assigned only when projects are sanctioned- generally during **lean** seasons
 - Payments are mostly through Banks, issue of **financial inclusion** addressed
 - Participation in Social Audit **minimal**
 - Migration has **reduced**
 - Quality of work is **debateable**
 - Income used for **basic necessities**- Helps in **poverty reduction**
 - **Lack** of monitoring and administrative officials

Therefore, to conclude we would like to put forward the argument that MGNREGS is of great importance in the state. In terms of equity, the state appears to be doing pretty well, while from the point of efficiency, it is better than many states but there are scopes of improvement. The most important issue that crops up here is the low level of awareness regarding the features of the scheme among the rural people. Most of them are not aware that it is a 'Rights based approach' and feels privileged if favoured by the authorities with work. The stakeholders however feel that the scheme suffers from the lack of sufficient monitoring and implementing

staff as they present strength is inadequate to fulfil. In other words, they realise that the executive agencies are overburdened. Another serious hurdle for the state has been its own resource mobilisation resulting in checks to the flow of work. Provision of matching share is often a problem for the smaller states for the Centrally Sponsored Schemes. The impact for such a condition for the scheme is in the form of limited number of semi-skilled workers; a share of expenditure for them is to be borne by the states. It should be noted here that the effectiveness and success of any project increase manifold with timely and just monitoring, which the state lags at time. Naturally the issue of governance crops up here. Competent governance can make things better. The issue of efficiency and equity, hence, becomes more a function of governance and the proper blending of these two aspects will result in more effective implementation of the scheme in the state, particularly because MGNREGS has heralded a new dawn among the vast majority of the rural poor in the state who find new means of existence.

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