Impact of MGNREGA on Tribal Economy: A Case Study on the Village Chaupahari Jangal

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Abstract

This paper examines the economic as well as socio-cultural effectiveness of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act (MGNREGA) of the Village Chaupahari Jangal, a village located in Rarh Bengal between two big important cities Durgapur and Bolpur-Santiniketan of the state West Bengal. This mouza village has around 990 families, mainly focused on agricultural activities while young and middle age people are working as wage workers in different cities. Influence on the tribal economy and problems regarding MGNREGA have been studied here by generating primary data using a simple random sampling technique for door-to-door questionnaires. As this is a slow-evolving region and most of the families are poor, this study can give a scope to shortcut the problems and try to give managemental strategies.

***Keywords:** MGNREGA, tribal economy, livelihood, governance*

I.   INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is considered a vibrating force for eradicating rural poverty and unemployment. It provides an alternative source of livelihood which will have an impact on reducing migration, alleviating poverty, and making villages self-sustaining through productive assets creation such as road construction, soil and water conservation, etc. For which, it has been considered as the largest anti-poverty programme in India. (Nazeer. U, 2015) According to the study conducted by Nitin Lokhande and Haripriya Gundimeda (2021), nearly 7.5 million seasonal migrant workers took refuge under MGNREGA during the lockdown, found work for around 23 days, and secured about 28% of the income they used to earn daily in the pre-COVID-19 period.

Since the success of NREGA is expected to be crucially dependent on the basic structure of the local economy as well as on the capacity of the local governments, whereas Birbhum is one of the backward districts of West Bengal in terms of human development indicators, the rate of urbanization, the concentration of the marginalized population, and the share of agriculture in the district economy.

II.   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives have been taken into consideration :
•   To evaluate the impacts of the MGNREGA on the livelihood of the tribal people of the Chaupahari Jangal village.
•   To understand the impact of MGNREGA and evaluate the success and failure among the tribal community.

III.   LOCATION OF THE STUDY AREA

The selected area is a complicated area under Illambazar Police Station and Illambazar CD Block. For long decades the area was deprived of better infrastructure facilities, modern developmental projects i.e., social welfare points of view, better economic opportunities, etc. The area belongs to the left bank of the Ajay river. In this village, the number of well-conditioned families is very less in terms of income, educational background, and also from a social viewpoint, etc. and some are very poor comparatively considering all aspects. The dwellers of this village deal very simple life and mostly depends on primary activities, mainly agriculture.
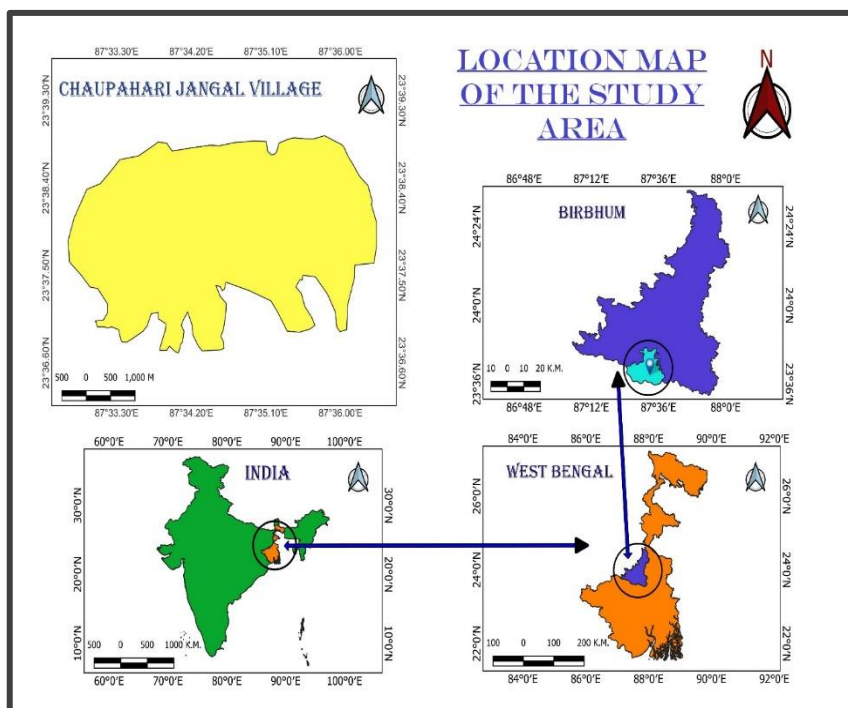
Figure 1: Location of the village Chaupahari Jangal, West Bengal

IV.   METHODOLOGY

To conduct a systematic geographical study relevant primary data were generated through a household survey by applying the purposive random sampling technique. Preparation of the questionnaire and questionnaire interview schedule was arranged, and to effectively fulfill that, the door-to-door survey was conducted.

The collected data has been organized in a manner and analyzed with the help of suitable statistical techniques. Data compilation and processing have been done to prepare suitable tables, charts, and cartographic representations like Bar graphs, Pie diagrams, and Flow charts with the help of M.S. Word. After analyzing and interpreting all the graphs and diagrams final decision was made.

V.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
5.1.   SOCIO-ECONOMIC ATTIBUTES
5.1.1.   Demography

Chaupahari Jangal is a large village consisting of 11 small villages in Illambazar CD Block of Birbhum district, West Bengal with a population of 4445 out of which 2240 are males while 2205 are females as per Population Census, 2011. There are a total of 990 households residing in this village area. The average sex ratio of Chaupahari Jangal village is 984 which is higher than the West Bengal state average of 950.

In Chaupahari Jangal village out of the total population, 1933 were engaged in work activities. 72.32% of workers describe their work as Main Work while 27.68% were involved in marginal activities. Of 1933 workers engaged in main work, 172 were cultivators while 729 were agricultural laborers.
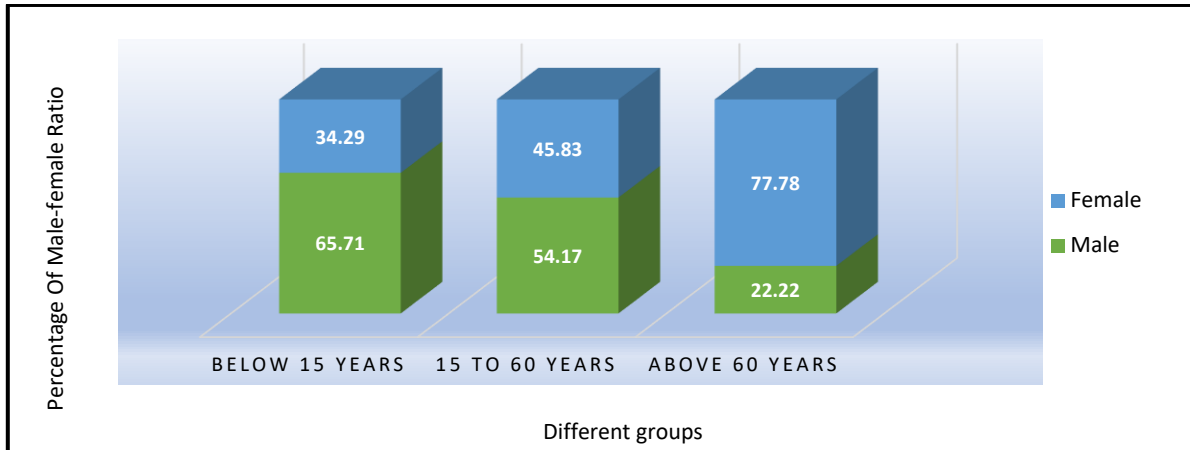
Table1: Demographic characteristics of Chaupahari Jangal Village, West Bengal

Particulars	Total Number	% with total pop.	Male Number	Female Number	Male Percentage	Female Percentage
Total Household	762	-	-	-	-	-
Total Population	3848	-	1969	1879	51.71%	48.83%
SC Population	497	12.91%	244	253	49.04%	50.9%
ST Population	2055	53.4%	1045	1010	50.85%	49.15%
Literacy	2730	70.95%	-	-	78.28%	63.48%
Child (0-6)	517	13.44%	256	261	49.52%	50.48%

Source: Census of India, 2001

5.1.2. Age Structure

Age division was made into three groups less than 15 years, 15 years to 60 years, and more than 60 years in descending order. From the collected data, its visible that 15.84 percent of the total collected data household are from below 15 years of age group. 76.02 percent of people are in the 15 to 60 years age group and the rest 8.14 percent belong to the more than 60 years age group. In the below 15 years age group there is 65.71 percent male and 34.29 percent female. In the group of 15 to 60 years, the age group male percentage is 54.17 and female is 45.83 percent. In the age group above 60 years, the male-female percentage is 22.22 and 77.78 respectively.
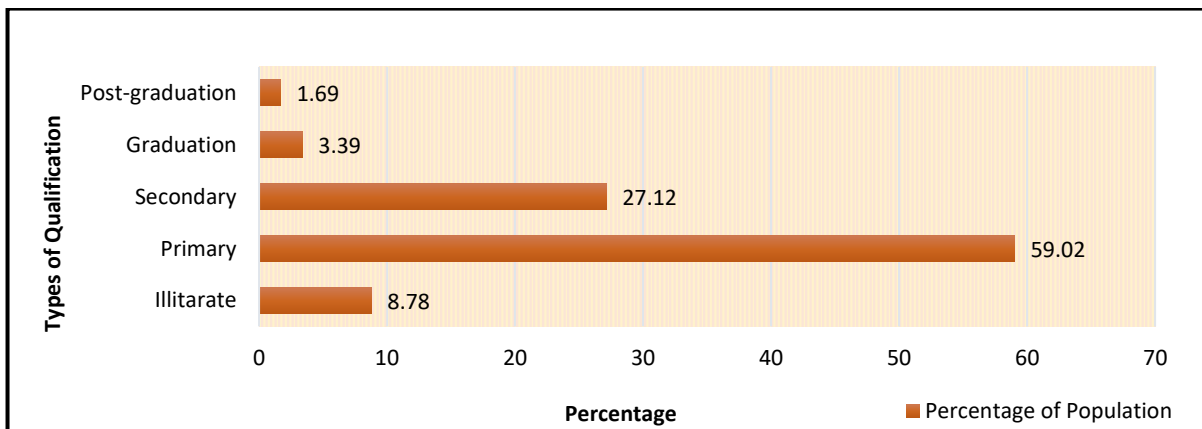

Source: Primary Data generated from Field Survey
Figure 2: Age structure of Chaupahari Jangal Village

5.1.3. Educational Qualifications

According to our study areas perspective, five different groups were formed for qualification details. These are Illiterate; Primary, which means from 0 to class 4; Secondary, which means from class 5 to 12th; Graduate and next one is Post Graduate. Data says, nearly 59.02 percent of people have done only primary. Secondary qualified are close to 27 percent. While 3.39 percent of people are graduated and 1.69 percent of people have completed post-graduation. But the percentage of illiterates is still not good, more than 8.7 percent of people are illiterate here, though most of them are old age people, over 60 years old.

Source: Primary Data generated from Field Survey
Figure 3: Education scenario of Chaupahari Jangal Village

5.1.4. Occupation

Out of the total collected data population, which is 221, there is around 53 percent male and 47 percent female. Out of which there is some working population and some are non-working population. Occupation structure has been made to find out the percentage of the population in different sectors. The structure has been made with 8 different groups, like students, unemployed, farmers, daily laborers, govt. jobs, private jobs, self-employed, and others (non-working population). The highest percentage of the population is daily labour and the next highest percentage is students. The rest others are working in different sectors.

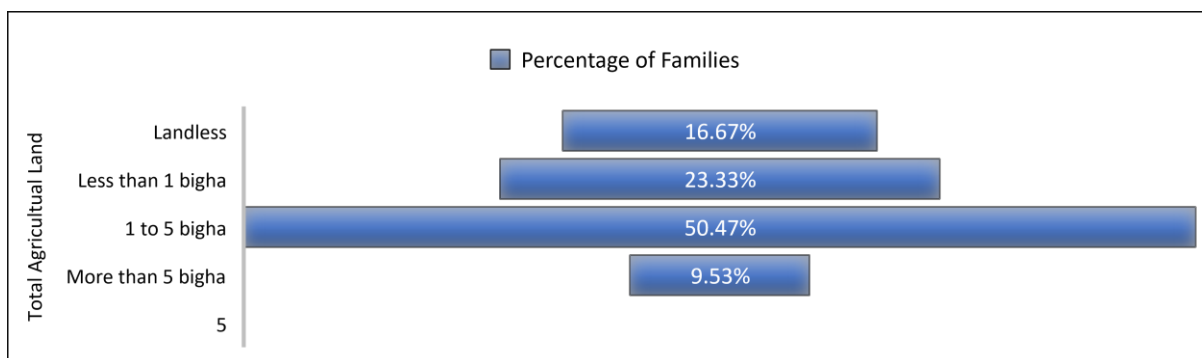Table 2: Occupation structure of Chaupahari Jangal Village

Sl. No.	Types	Percentage
1	Student	32.02
2	Unemployed	18.59
3	Farmer	20.85
4	Daily Labour	32.74
5	Self-Employed	4.48
6	Government Employee	1.28

Source: Primary Data generated from Field Survey

5.1.5. Agricultural Land

Types of agricultural lands have been divided into four different groups; landless, less than 1 bighas, 1-5 bighas, and more than 5 bighas. Among the total respondent, almost 17 percent of them are landless, 23 percent less than 1 bighas, and 50 percent have 1 to 5 bighas. Only 10 percent of families have more than 5 bighas of agricultural land.

Most families face some problems while cultivating. Among all of them, nearly everyone accepts the water supply problem. People face irrigation problems while cultivating major crops like rice or wheat etc. Other problems like fertilizer, land issues, etc. are also there that cause some additional problems. Those who have their lands for cultivation due to the above-described problems fail to cultivate sometimes. Around 23 percent of the farmers cultivate thrice in a particular season, 59 percent of farmers cultivate twice and the rest of the people sometimes cultivate once in a season or skip the season.
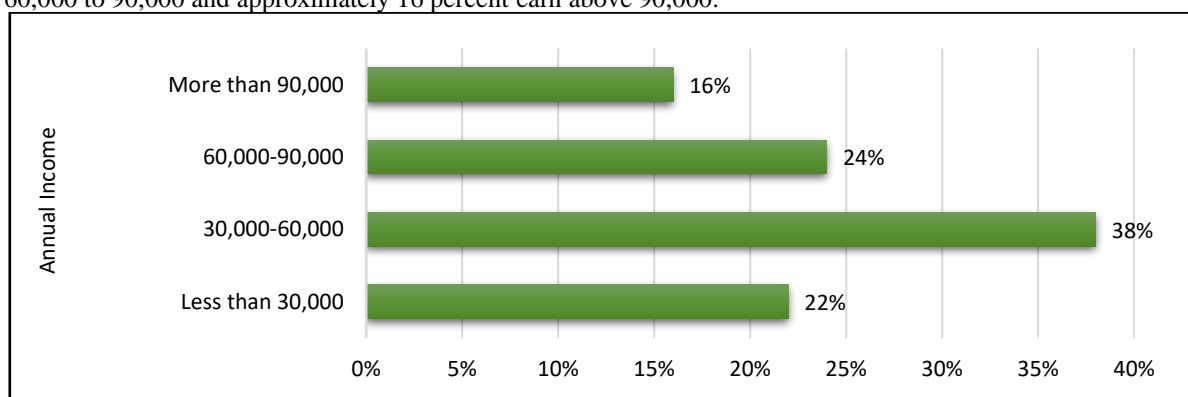

Source: Primary Data generated from Field Survey
Figure 4: Agricultural land distribution of Chaupahari Jangal Village

5.1.6. Annual Income

The income of these people is not well structured. Most of them earn on a day-to-day basis, and very few percent of people are having a better monthly income. Some of them are even not getting any source of income for over a month or more. According to our assessed data, most people's annual income is around 30,000-60,000. Data says, 22 percent of the people's yearly income is below 30,000, 24 percent earn between 60,000 to 90,000 and approximately 16 percent earn above 90,000.

Source: Primary Data generated from Field Survey
Figure 5: Annual family income variability of Chaupahari Jangal Village

5.1.7. MGNREGA Job Card Holders

MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) is a scheme under this guaranteed wage employment is provided in rural areas to every household for a minimum of 100 days. A job card is provided to every individual worker for their working record entitlement. As per the collected data from the survey, MGNREGA work is available in this area. Among the total population of the village, 76.9 percent of people are working under this scheme. Out of these working people, there are some families, that have more than 1 household worker, while some have 2 to 5 workers. Below table showing the different worker number divisions for every family –

Table 3: Percentage of MGNREGA workers in every family of Chaupahari Jangal Village

Number of Family Members Engaged In MGNREGA	Percentage
None	1%
1 member	28.8 %
2-5 members	50.6%
More than 5 members	1.1%

Source: Primary Data generated from Field Survey

5.1.8. SUPPORT DURING PANDEMIC

Covid-19 situation led to a backstep for society and its overall development. It impacted every possible aspect, such as livelihood, economic condition, culture, society, etc. But it created the most negative impact economically on the weaker section of society. In our study area, respondents have lost their job source, and their daily labour work due to transportation issues, and many families are still in debt as they didn't have any source of income during the pandemic. Though both central and state governments tried to find solutions and also reduce the problems by providing a certain amount of money and basic amenities to poor families still that wasn't enough to control the situation, while, some families haven't gotten help from the government for various administrative issues. In our study area around 96 percent of families have received financial support from the government but rest 4 percent were not included.

5.2. PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS
5.2.1. Workdays

As per the data, people get work a minimum of 7-8 days at a time and 15-20 days maximum, which is very low considering the total set day. Based on our collected data, during the pandemic, a smaller number of work days were given in some parts of the area. While on the other parts no MGNREGA work was implemented. If the state governments take adequate measures to ensure that the 100 days of guaranteed employment is provided to the rural household, it will lead to additional income for the rural household, which will bear a positive impact on their development.

5.2.2. Last Work Time

Our study area is a forest-covered tribal area where modern facilities are limited, though development in the region is making things better. MGNREGA is a central government scheme that runs depending upon various decisions which lead to fewer employment opportunities. In the study area around 79 percent of families are working 100 day's work, and the rest 21 percent of families are not getting employment opportunities.
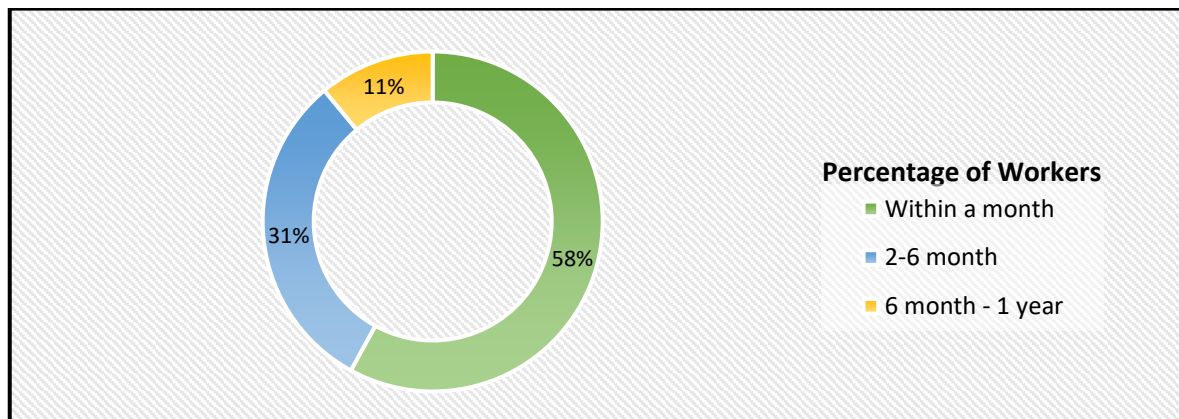
Due to the pandemic situation, the last time MGNREGA work was organized was in the year 2020-2021. However, according to a few respondents, they worked within the last 1 year under MGNREGA in their locality for a few days.

5.2.3. Unprincipled Wage Rate

The average wage across the village was 240 rupees during the last 2 years. This is lower than the notified rate of 280 rupees for the state of West Bengal. The government of India declared a boast in the budget allocation for the MGNREGA scheme after the lockdown was announced due to COVID-19. Gender discrimination is also present in this area, as the male wage amount is much higher than the female wage amount. As per the data, the daily wage of males varies from a minimum of 250 to a maximum of 280 rupees year by year, while, the female wage amount varies from a minimum of 230 to a maximum of 250 rupees.

5.2.4. Overview Of Payment

Receiving the payment properly with the actual amount and also receiving it on time are a few of those major backward points of MGNREGA. By the compiled surveyed data, nearly 58 percent of workers have collected their money within a month after work. While some of the rest have received it after 2-3 months and some are even after a year. About 42 percent of workers are facing late payment issues in this area.

Source: Primary Data generated from Field Survey

Figure 6: Slow MGNREGA wage payment division of Chaupahari Jangal Village

5.2.5. Challenges

After completing over a decade, MGNREGA has faced various issues such as employment ratio reduction, payment delay, budget issues, unruled violence among the workers, lesser working locations option, unorganized use of technologies, etc. In our study area, some of these issues are present like fewer employment opportunities, wage payment holdbacks, fewer technological facilities, etc.

VI.   SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMANDATIONS

Realization and appreciation for this scheme like the support of the participants, application process, work need and interest, small amount as compensation in case of failure by government, and other prior report has to be analyzed depending on the preference. Attention also has to give in to the governance of this scheme like job card renovation and taking steps in supplying better employment chances, which has to be looked into capitally with a critical note. There is a huge possibility of improvement in the tribal livelihood through the execution of their daily needs fulfillment such as food, better health conditions, and more educational opportunities for their children.

VII.   CONCLUSION

This scheme is considered a major work-producing scheme in rural India and also for delivering daily basis wage payments. MGNREGA focuses on equity in society and destroying the social power structure present in the different parts of the country. Though, such problems as differences in male-female wage amount, differences in work opportunities, variations of working days in different locations at the district level, long processing time, social disparities, late wage payment issues, etc. are the main points that need to be addressed and need to solve all these as soon as possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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