

Pramod Kumar and Dipanwita Chakraborty, *MGNREGA: Employment, Wages and Migration in Rural India*, Routledge Taylor and Francis India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2016, pp. 274, Price ₹ 895/-.

The book focusses on one of the flagship programmes of the Government of India for providing employment in rural areas. It has woven the aspects of employment with wages and migration from rural India. Besides, it emphasizes linkage of employment with livelihoods, food security and gender issues. This book has also emphasized the implementation, challenges and the extent of success the programme has achieved in providing employment in rural areas. It is rich in empirical data as agro-economic research centers from 16 states of India compiled the research reports on MGNREGA.

There is discussion of MGNREGA since the 1990s. The authors emphasize that its object is to ensure the legal right of poor whoever is willing to work at a minimum wage rate for 100 days in rural areas and to hold rural to urban distress migration. They make it clear that though there were apprehensions that the present government would scrap the scheme, it has carried it forward by bringing more transparency and efficiency in implementation.

The objectives stated are a) to know the extent of employment generated and socio-economic characteristics and gender variability of those who received work under the scheme, b) to analyses the trends in agricultural wages and determine factors affecting agricultural wages with respect to MGNREGA, c) to compare wage differentials in MGNREGA and other employment activities, d) to find the effect of MGNREGA on the pattern of migration from rural to urban areas, e) to find out the assets created under MGNREGA and its durability, f) to determine the factors that determine participation in MGNREGA and whether it has been successful in ensuring better food security, and g) to assess the implementation of the MGNREGA and its functioning and to suggest suitable policy measures to further strengthen the programme. The chapters in the book cover these objectives.

The authors' point out that around 30 per cent of rural households received job cards and the share of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women in total employment was good but employment generated (on average) per person was 45 days as opposed to the target of 100 days. The state-wise performance of the scheme is given. The projects undertaken were water conservation, rural connectivity, irrigation, renovation of traditional water bodies, micro-irrigation and flood control. Most of funds were spent on rural connectivity. Though auditing of the projects was done it was limited. The scheme envisages that unemployment allowance would be given to those who may not get actual work in the stipulated time, but very few job seekers received the allowance.

The authors' points out that there was a sharp increase in real wage in the post-MGNREGA period and there was high propensity of out-migration from farm-labour to be absorbed by non-farm sector. They show that some members per family migrated because they did not get work under MGNREGA. They state

that it is difficult to say that the MGNREGA has been successful in cutting down incidence of labour migration from rural areas in search of job. The authors on assess the functioning of MGNREGA and points out the irregularities in it.

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