



A Study on role of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme on rural life based on Sivasagar district of Assam

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Received: 01.09.2026; Accepted: 19.09.2026; Available online: 30.09.2026

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Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, launched on 2nd February, 2006, by the Government of India, is a very important measure to reduce rural poverty by providing 100 days assured wage employment to needy rural beneficiary households. The scheme promotes inclusive growth by providing employment opportunities, creating income-generating assets and infrastructure in rural areas of the country. It is a people-centered, demand-driven, and right based employment programme providing legal guarantee of wage employment and providing work within 15 days of demand. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) presently covers 741 districts of the country. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme was implemented in 2008 in Sivasagar, one of the oldest districts of Assam. The study is an attempt to know the role of MGNREGS in rural life based on the Sivasagar district of Assam. It is based on both primary and secondary data.

Keywords: employment, assets, rural life, etc.

1. Introduction:

India, the populous country of the world with acute problems of poverty and unemployment, has been adopting different measures since 1951, i.e., from 1st five-year plan, to overcome the problems of poverty and unemployment. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act (MGNREGA), launched by the Government of India on 2nd February 2006, is one of the measures undertaken by the Government of India to reduce the problems of poverty and unemployment. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) aims to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to every poor rural household of India to enhance their livelihood security. MGNREGS, originally known as the National Rural Employment Act (NREGA) aims to create durable assets to empower socially disadvantaged groups like women, Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), implemented under the Ministry of Rural Development. The scheme promotes inclusive growth by providing employment opportunities, creating income-generating assets and infrastructure in rural areas of the country. The NREGA, renamed as MGNREGA in 2009, has been implemented in three phases throughout the rural areas of the country, presently covering 741 districts of the country.

The goals of MGNREGA are to provide social protection to the rural people, to ensure livelihood security, to empower socially disadvantaged groups of rural people, to ensure drought- proofing and flood control, to strengthen decentralized, participatory planning by adopting various anti-poverty and livelihood initiatives, to strengthen the Panchayati Raj Institutions, to ensure transparency, accountability, and good governance.

MGNREGA is a paradigm shift from Wage Empolyment Programmes. It is a people-centered, demand-driven, and right-based employment programme providing legal guarantee of wage employment and providing work within 15 days of demand. The Act keeps the legal provision of Unemployment Allowance in the event of the failure of the authority to provide work in time according to demand. Social Audit is an indispensable part of the Act, and the Central Government has to present the Annual Report of the Scheme to the Parliament.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme was implemented in 2008 in Sivasagar, one of the oldest districts of Assam, with more than 90.44 percent of people living in rural areas (Directorate of Census Operation, Assam, 2011). The district has 5 development blocks namely, Amguri, Demow, Gaurisagar, Nazira, and Sivasagar. Till 26th September, 2025, 128899 households have been registered in the district under MGNREGS.

2. Review of literature:

There is extensive literature on the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme; some of them are mentioned below.

Kaur (2013) carried out a study to know the impact of MGNREGA on the rural economy of Punjab using random sampling technique, and the study reveals that MGNREGS increased employment opportunities in the state but failed to stop the migration of rural poor to urban areas.

Korra (2015) examined the performance and impact of MGNREGA on beneficiary households in three villages of the Mahabubnagar district of Telangana using multistage random sampling method. The study reveals that the scheme was not successful in the state in providing 100 days of employment, equal distribution of wages, and in preventing the migration of workers.

Bhat & Mariyappan(2016)conducted a study to know the impact of MGNREGA and participation of women beneficiaries in Wahipora village of Kuwara district of Jammu and Kashmir using random sampling method and found out that the scheme helped the poor beneficiaries by providing wage employment, minimizing gender discrimination, and providing equal wages to both male and female.

Breitkreuz et. al. (2017) carried out a study to know social protection provided by MGNREGS through guaranteed employment for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Odisha, and concluded that the MGNREGS provided limited employment to these groups.

Duarah, M. (2019) conducted a study to know the impact of MGNREGS on the reduction of poverty in Sivasagar district of Assam using two stage sampling technique and found that the MGNREGS has reduced the level of poverty in selected blocks of Sivasagar district, also increased the level of income of rural poor of the district.

Gurnule, T.M. (2021) conducted a study to know the impact of MGNREGA on rural lives in Mahur village of Nanded district of Maharashtra using random sampling method and found out that MGNREGA has given importance to humanity and it increased livelihood conditions.

Though lots of work has been done on MGNREGA and MGNREGS, the present study attempts to know the impact of MGNREGS on the livelihood conditions of rural people of Sivasagar district of Assam, as no one has studied this.

3. Objectives of the study:

The overall objective of the study is to know the role of MGNREGS in rural life. The specific objectives of the study are based on the following objectives.

- 1) To know the performance of MGNREGS in the Sivasagar district of Assam
- 2) To assess the satisfaction of respondents relating to employment provided by MGNREGS
- 3) To know the role of MGNREGS on the livelihood conditions of respondents
- 4) To examine the satisfaction of respondents regarding asset creation

4. Data source and Methodology:

The study is analytical in nature, based on both primary and secondary data. Secondary data is collected from the District Census Handbook of Sivasagar district, Directorate of Census operation, Assam, 2011, nrega websites, research articles, Ph.D. thesis, etc.

4.1 Time period

The study is of five years period from 2020-21 to 2024-25.

4.2 Methodology:

The Sivasagar district has five development blocks with 82 Gaon Panchayats. Gaurisagar block has 27 Gaon Panchayats, and Hatighuli Gaon Panchayat under Gaurisagar block has been selected for study. The Hatighuli Gaon Panchayat has registered 1113 households and 1852 persons under MGNREGS up to 26 September 2025. The sample size of the study is 5 percent of the total registered households under study, i.e., 56. The two stage sampling method has been adopted to select the sample size. In the first stage, purposively, Hatighuli gaon panchayat under Gaurisagar block has been selected out of 27 gaon panchayats of the block. In the second stage, out of 1113 registered households, using random sampling method, 56 sample households have been selected and the data is collected from the heads of the households.

4.3 Data analysis tools:

The data is tabulated in a systematic way, and percentage is applied to analyze the data.

5. Discussion:

5.1 Performance of MGNREGS:

While studying the performance of MGNREGS, the physical performance and financial performance of the scheme from the period 2020-21 to 2024-25 in Sivasagar district are considered.

5.2 Physical performance:

Physical performance of MGNREGS is studied by considering employment status, employment generation, and asset creation.

5.2.1 Employment status:

Employment status takes into consideration the total number of job cards issued to households, employment provided to households and households that have completed 100

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 days of work. Table 1 shows employment status under MGNREGS in Sivasagar district from 2020-21 to 2024-25.

Table 1:

Employment status under MGNREGS in Sivasagar district from 2020-21 to 2024-25

Year	Households issued Job Cards	Households provided employment	Households completed 100 days of work	Percentage of households completed 100 days of work $[\frac{4}{3} \times 100]$
1	2	3	4	5
2020-21	115065	45691	203	0.05
2021-22	123572	57740	593	1.03
2022-23	132979	55111	1053	1.91
2023-24	131236	57831	1189	2.06
2024-25	121896	45725	837	1.83

Source: <http://nreganarep>

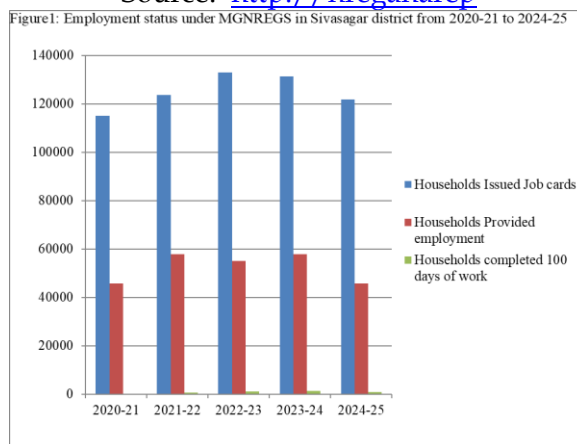


Table 1 and Figure1 show employment status under MGNREGS in Sivasagar district from 2020-21 to 2024-25. It is seen in Table 1 that in Sivasagar district the cumulative number of households issued job cards has increased from 115065 in 2020-21 to 131236 in 2023-24. But in 2024-25, the number of households issued job cards has reduced to 121896. It is because of a large number of delete of job cards and a smaller number of inclusions of job cards in 2024-25. It is also seen that in 2020-21, employment was provided to 45691 households, and in 2023-24, it has increased to 57831, but in 2024-25, the number decreased to 45725. The highest number of households (1189) completed 100 days of work in 2023-24, indicating 2.06 percent, whereas the least number of households(203) completed 100 days of work in 2020-21, showing 0.05 percent.

5.2.2. Employment generation:

Employment generation states the total person-days generated. In the study, person-days generated to SCs, STs, non-SC/STs, women, and total person-days generated under MGNREGS in the district are shown.

Table 2:

Persondays generation under MGNREGS in Sivasagar district from 2020-21 to 2024-25

Year	No of person days generated to Scheduled Castes (SCs)	No of person days generated to Scheduled Tribes (STs)	No of person days generated to non-SC/STs	Total person days generated	No of person days generated to women
2020-21	44160	62465	806890	913515	406295
2021-22	65577	160917	1175723	1402217	712461
2022-23	99001	170516	1393129	816209	1662646
2023-24	141847	237838	1651475	2031160	1094336
2024-25	80533	249900	1164568	1495001	821059

Source: <http://nreganarep>

Table 2 states that the highest number of person days was generated for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and non-SC/STs in 2023-24. In this year, highest total person days was also generated. Conversely, in 2022-23, the highest person days (1662646) were generated to women. Table 2 reflects that the lowest total person days was generated in 2022-23. During the study period, the lowest person days were generated to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), non-SC/STs, and women in 2020-21.

5.2.3. Assets creation:

To enrich rural livelihood, MGNREGS creates durable assets in rural areas. The assets created under the scheme are rural connectivity, flood control and protection, water conservation and water harvesting, renovation of traditional water bodies, drought proofing, micro irrigation works, land development, fishery. other works, Bharat Nirman Rajib Gandhi Sewa Kendra, Anganbadi/other rural infrastructure, rural sanitation, and rural drinking water. Table 3 reflects assets created under MGNREGS from 2020-21 to 2024-25 in Sivasagar district.

Table 3:

Assets created under MGNREGS from 2020-21 to 2024-25 in Sivasagar district

Assets Created	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Anganbadi/Other rural infrastructure	0	0	7	41	98
Drought Proofing	29	52	252	157	152
Flood control and protection	77	26	354	103	145
Fisheries	1	5	17	20	38
Micro Irrigation work	173	229	1016	470	600
Work on individual land (Category IV)	3224	3850	3034	15399	9190
Land Development	74	83	403	213	376
Other works	0	0	1	0	5
Rural Connectivity	56	6	54	13	59
Water conservation and water	4	68	374	191	214

harvesting					
Renovation of traditional water	16	9	59	11	15
Rural Sanitation	0	1	0	0	0
Total	3654	4329	5571	16618	10892

Source: <http://nreganarep>

Table 3 shows assets created under MGNREGS in the study period in Sivasagar district. In 2020-21 highest assets was created on work on individual land (Category IV), and the number was 3224. No asset was created on rural sanitation and Anganbadi/Other rural infrastructure and other work, and only one asset was created in the fishery. In all the studied years the highest work was done on individual land (Category IV). In 2021-22, no asset was created on Anganbadi/Other rural infrastructure and other work. In 2022-23 and 2024-25, MGNREGS did not create any assets on rural sanitation, while in 2023-24, no asset was created on other work and rural sanitation. Table 3 also reflects that during the study period the maximum number of assets (16618) was created in 2023-24 and the minimum (3654) in 2020-21.

5.3 Financial performance:

Financial performance is assessed considering the utilization of fund. Utilization of fund is obtained by deducting total expenditure including payment due from the total availability of fund. Payment means MR (Muster Roll), Bills/Vouchers are included in the MIS (Management Information System), but the date of payment is not entered. Financial performance is reflected in Table 4.

Table 4:

Financial performance of MGNREGS in Sivasagar district from 2020-21 to 2024-25 (Rs. In lakh)

Year	Total availability of fund	Total expenditure including payment due	Percentage of utilization	Net Balance
1	2	3	$4=(3/2) \times 100$	$5=2-3$
2020-21	2132.62	2149.35	100.78	-16.73
2021-22	3253.09	3263.32	100.31	-10.23
2022-23	4185.57	4070.55	97.25	115.02
2023-24	5511.03	5376.74	97.56	134.29
2024-25	5019.91	5948.97	118.51	-929.06

Source: <http://nreganarep>

Table 4 shows that in 2020-21, total availability of funds was Rs 2132.62 lakh, and total expenditure including payment due was Rs 2149.35 lakh. This year, the percentage of utilization of funds was more than 100 percent, and the net balance was negative. Similarly, in 2021-22 and 2024-25, the utilization of funds under MGNREGS was more than 100 percent with a negative net balance. In 2022-23 and 2023-24, utilization of fund was 97.25 percent and 97.56 percent, respectively. It is seen in Table 4 that financial performance was highest in 2024-25. In 2020-21 and 2021-21 years, also utilization of funds was more than 100 percent.

5.4 Satisfaction of respondents relating to employment provided by MGNREGS:

Table 5 reveals level of satisfaction of respondents relating to employment provided by MGNREGS.

Table 5:

Satisfaction level of respondents relating to employment provided by MGNREGS

Gender	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Total
Male	5 (16.67%)	7 (23.33%)	18 (60%)	30 (100%)
Female	13 (50%)	5 (19.23%)	8 (30.77%)	26 (100%)
Total	18 (32.14%)	12 (21.43%)	26 (46.43%)	56 (100%)

Source: Data compiled from field study

Table 5 reflects that among the male respondents, 60 percent of the respondents are unsatisfied with employment provided by MGNREGS, 23.33 percent are neutral about it, they are neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, and only 16.67 percent are satisfied with employment provided by the scheme. It is observed in Table 5 that among the female respondents, 50 percent are satisfied with employment opportunities provided by the scheme, a few of them are neutral, and 30.77 percent are dissatisfied. It is reflected in Table 5 that 32.14 percent of respondents are satisfied with employment provided by MGNREGS but 21.43 percent are neither satisfied nor unsatisfied about it and 46.63 percent are dissatisfied. The respondents are not satisfied with 100 days of guaranteed employment. They viewed that they need more working days to support their families financially as income obtained from MGNREGS are not sufficient to meet their daily needs. However, the satisfaction level among females is higher as compared to men, as the females can earn an equal wage in working under the scheme, and it makes them economically self-sufficient to some extent.

5.5 Role of MGNREGS on livelihood conditions of respondents:

In the study, an attempt is made to know the role of MGNREGS on the livelihood conditions of respondents. Table 6 reflects it.

Table 6:

MGNREGS enhances livelihood conditions

Gender	Yes	No	Total
Male	5 (16.67%)	25 (83.33%)	30 (100%)
Female	4 (15.38%)	22 (84.62%)	26 (100%)
Total	9 (16.07%)	47 (83.93%)	56 (100%)

Source: Data compiled from field study

It is observed in Table 6 that in the study, 16.67 percent of male respondents viewed that MGNREGS has enhanced their livelihood conditions, while 83.33 percent of male respondents put forward their views that MGNREGS has not enhanced their livelihood conditions. 16.07 percent of female respondents viewed MGNREGS in positive way, that MGNREGS has enhanced their livelihood conditions, but 84.62 percent viewed it in a negative way. Out of the total respondents, 16.07 percent agreed that MGNREGS has enhanced their livelihood conditions, but 83.93 percent did not agree with it. It can be concluded that the majority of the respondents said that MGNREGS does not enhance livelihood conditions.

5.6 Satisfaction of respondents regarding asset creation:

The satisfaction level of respondents about asset created is assessed by considering their views on assets created. Three variables, satisfied, neutral, and dissatisfied, are considered for this.

Table 7:

Satisfaction level of respondents about assets created under MGNREGS

Gender	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Total
Male	6 (20 %)	5 (16.67%)	19 (63.33%)	30 (100%)
Female	5 (19.23%)	2 (7.69%)	19 (73.08%)	26 (100%)
Total	11 (19.64%)	7 (12.5%)	38 (67.86%)	56 (100%)

Source: Data compiled from field study

It is revealed in Table 7 that out of the total 30 male respondents, 20 percent are satisfied with the assets created under MGNREGS, 16.67 percent are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with assets created under MGNREGS, and 63.33 percent are dissatisfied. Out of the total 26 female respondents, 19.23 percent are satisfied, 7.69 percent are neutral, and 73.08 percent are dissatisfied with the created assets. It is reflected in Table 6 that majority of the respondents (67.86 percent) are not satisfied with assets created under MGNREGS, 12.5 percent are neutral, and 19.64 percent are satisfied.

6. Major findings:

1. In the study period, the number of households issued job cards, household demanded and provided employment, and completed 100 days of work under MGNREGS increased from 2020-21 to 2023-24 in Sivasagar district but in 2024-25, all these have decreased to some extent.
2. The study reveals that in the study period, the highest number of person days was generated to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and non-SC/STs in 2023-24 in Sivasagar district under MGNREGS.
3. The study also reflects that during the study period maximum number of assets was created in 2023-24 and the minimum in 2020-21 under the scheme.
4. The study states that the majority of the respondents (46.43 percent) are dissatisfied with employment provided by the scheme.
5. However, the satisfaction level among the female respondents is higher as compared to women relating to employment provided by MGNREGS.
4. It can be concluded from the study that majority of the respondents, 83.93 percent viewed that MGNREGS does not enhance livelihood conditions.
5. It is observed in the study that majority of the respondents (67.86 percent) are not satisfied with assets created under MGNREGS, 12.5 percent are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and 19.64 percent are only satisfied.

7. Conclusion:

MGNREGS plays a vital role in rural India by enhancing livelihood security by providing wage employment and creating rural infrastructure. MGNREGS has provided employment, generated person days, and created assets in Sivasagar district. Based on data collected from Hatighuli Panchayat, it is seen that the majority of the respondents viewed that MGNREGS has not enhanced livelihood conditions, and they are also not satisfied with the assets created under the scheme in the district. The competent authority needs to take needful action to enhance the livelihood conditions of the rural poor as well as to create sustainable rural assets in the district through MGNREGS.

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