

Impact of MGNREGA on Rural Income and Employment in the Basar Area of Leparada District, Arunachal Pradesh

Nyage Riba

Guest Lecturer, Department of Economics, Govt. Model Degree College, Palin

Abstract

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) represents a landmark intervention in India's rural development strategy by legally guaranteeing wage employment and strengthening livelihood security. In geographically remote and economically vulnerable regions such as Arunachal Pradesh, the programme assumes heightened significance due to limited non-farm employment opportunities and seasonal instability in agricultural income. This study examines the impact of MGNREGA on rural income and employment in the Basar area of Leparada district, using primary survey data collected from beneficiary households. The analysis focuses on employment generation, income security, social inclusion, migration dynamics, and implementation challenges. The findings indicate that MGNREGA has played a stabilizing role in rural livelihoods by providing supplementary income, enhancing employment opportunities for women and weaker sections, and reducing dependence on seasonal migration. However, persistent challenges related to wage delays, planning inefficiencies, and institutional accountability constrain the programme's effectiveness. The study argues that while MGNREGA functions as an important social safety net in the Basar area, its transformative potential depends on improved governance and local-level implementation.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Rural Employment, Income Security, Migration, Social Inclusion, Arunachal Pradesh

1. Introduction

Rural development in India's northeastern states is shaped by distinctive geographical, socio-economic, and institutional contexts. Arunachal Pradesh, characterized by difficult terrain, dispersed settlements, and limited connectivity, faces structural constraints in generating stable rural employment. In districts such as Leparada, particularly in the Basar area, livelihoods are largely dependent on subsistence agriculture, forest-based activities, and informal wage labour. Agricultural employment remains highly seasonal, resulting in periods of underemployment and income insecurity.

In this context, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) represents a critical intervention aimed at addressing chronic rural unemployment and vulnerability. By guaranteeing up to 100 days of wage employment per

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household, the programme seeks not only to provide immediate income support but also to strengthen rural asset creation and promote inclusive growth. Beyond its economic objectives, MGNREGA has broader social implications, including enhanced participation of women, reduced distress migration, and increased bargaining power of rural labour.

While several macro-level studies have examined the performance of MGNREGA, micro-level analyses remain essential for understanding how the programme functions in remote and tribal regions. The Basar area provides a relevant case for such analysis due to its socio-economic dependence on public employment programmes and limited alternative livelihood opportunities. This study therefore examines the impact of MGNREGA on rural income and employment in the Basar area, with particular emphasis on livelihood security, labour participation, and implementation challenges.

2. Objectives of the Study

The study aims to analyse the impact of MGNREGA on rural income and employment in the Basar area of Leparada district. It seeks to assess the extent to which the programme has contributed to employment generation, income security, and social inclusion, as well as its role in reducing seasonal migration. Additionally, the study examines the key challenges in programme implementation and explores beneficiaries' perceptions of areas requiring improvement.

3. Research Methodology

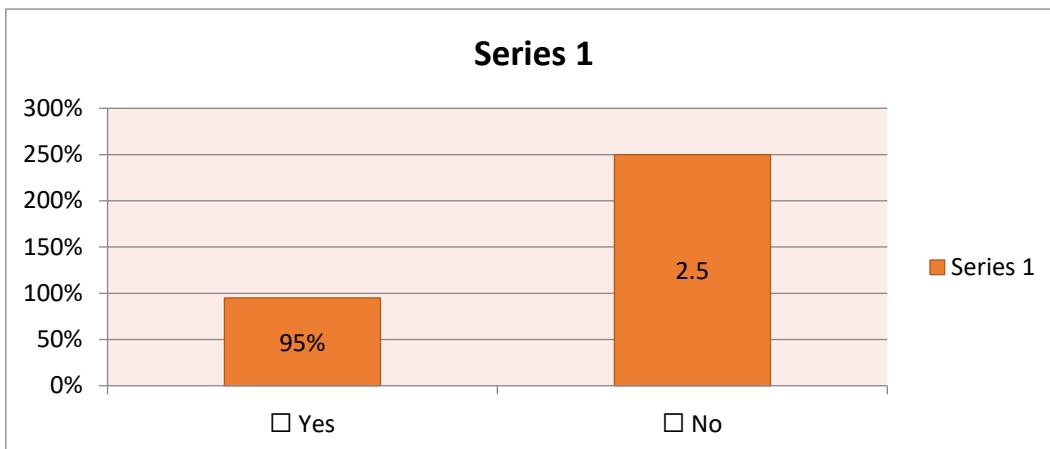
This study employs a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a structured household survey in selected villages of the Basar area, covering 100 respondents registered under MGNREGA. The survey included closed-ended questions to capture quantitative trends and open-ended questions to understand beneficiaries' experiences, perceptions, and challenges. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling. Secondary data from government reports, policy documents, and prior studies were also analyzed to contextualize and validate the findings. Quantitative data were examined using percentage analysis, while qualitative responses were interpreted thematically, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of employment outcomes, income effects, and implementation dynamics. This integrated methodology is particularly suited for evaluating livelihood impacts in contexts with limited formal employment records.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Coverage and Accessibility of MGNREGA

The survey findings indicate that MGNREGA has achieved considerable coverage in the Basar area, with a large proportion of households registered as job card holders. This widespread registration reflects both awareness of the programme and the high demand for public employment in the region. Registration under MGNREGA enhances households' access to formal wage employment and provides a degree of income assurance, particularly during periods of economic stress.

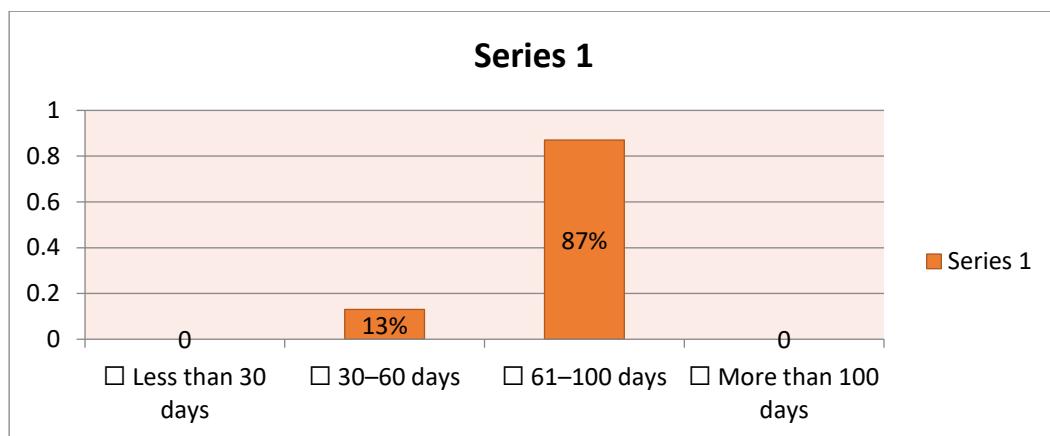
At this stage of analysis, a graph showing the proportion of households registered under MGNREGA can be placed to illustrate the programme's reach.



4.2 Employment Generation and Seasonal Stability

Employment generation under MGNREGA has emerged as a crucial mechanism for addressing seasonal unemployment in the Basar area. Survey responses indicate that households primarily access MGNREGA work during lean agricultural periods, when farm-based employment is limited. This timing underscores the programme's role in smoothing seasonal income fluctuations and reducing vulnerability associated with agrarian uncertainty. The availability of employment within the village also reduces transaction costs associated with migration and job search.

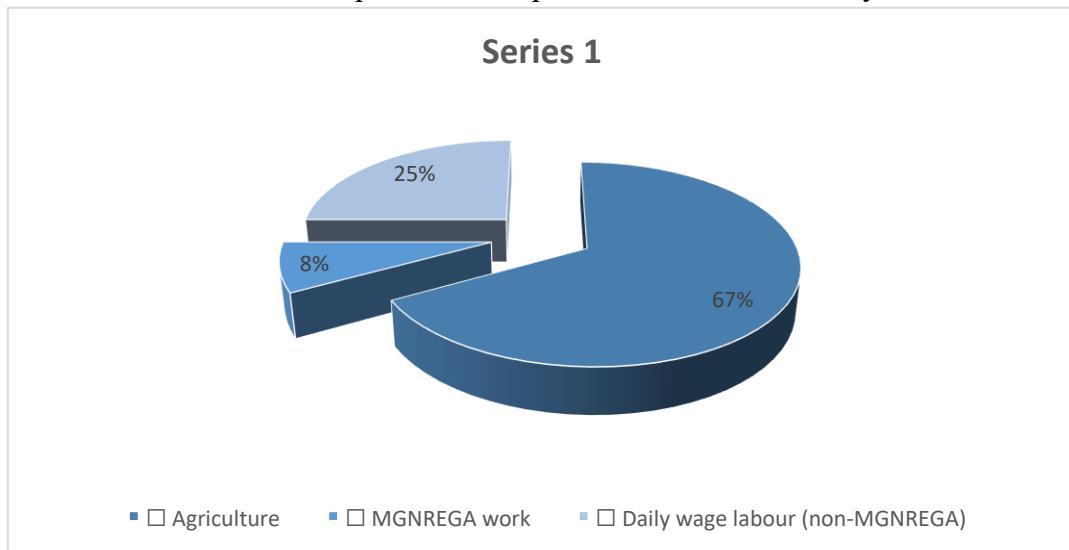
A graph indicating the distribution of employment days received by households may be inserted here to support this discussion.



4.3 Income Security and Supplementary Earnings

The analysis reveals that MGNREGA contributes significantly to household income security by providing supplementary earnings rather than replacing existing livelihood activities. Respondents reported that wages earned under the programme are used to meet basic consumption needs, repay small debts, and cope with unforeseen expenses. This supplementary income plays a stabilizing role in household finances, particularly for economically weaker households with limited asset bases.

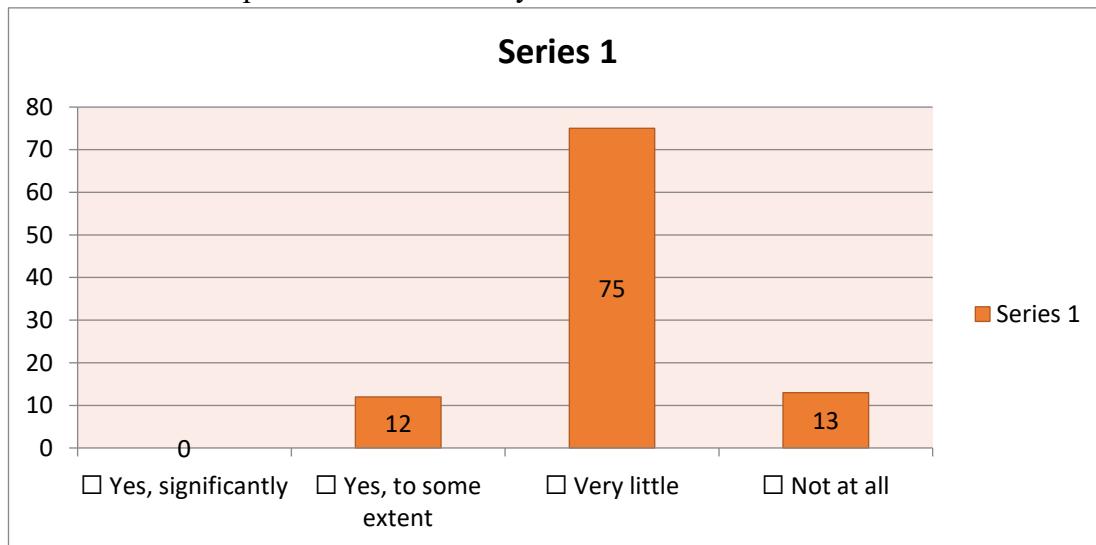
A graph reflecting respondents' assessment of MGNREGA's contribution to household income can be placed at this point to reinforce the analysis.



4.4 Inclusion of Women and Weaker Sections

One of the notable findings of the study is the expansion of employment opportunities for women and socially disadvantaged groups under MGNREGA. The programme's provision of local employment has enabled women to participate in wage labour without migrating or neglecting domestic responsibilities. This has enhanced women's economic agency and contributed to greater intra-household financial participation.

A graph depicting increased employment opportunities for women and weaker sections may be placed here to visually substantiate this observation.

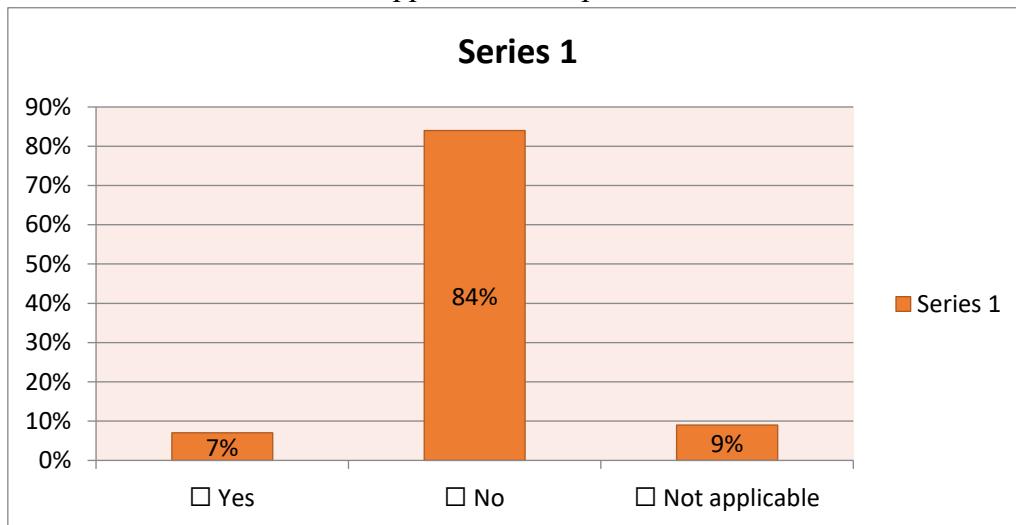


4.5 Impact on Seasonal and Distress Migration

The findings suggest that MGNREGA has contributed to a reduction in seasonal and distress migration, although the effect remains partial. While some households continue to migrate in search of better wages, the availability of local employment has reduced the frequency and

intensity of migration. This has important social implications, including improved family cohesion and community stability.

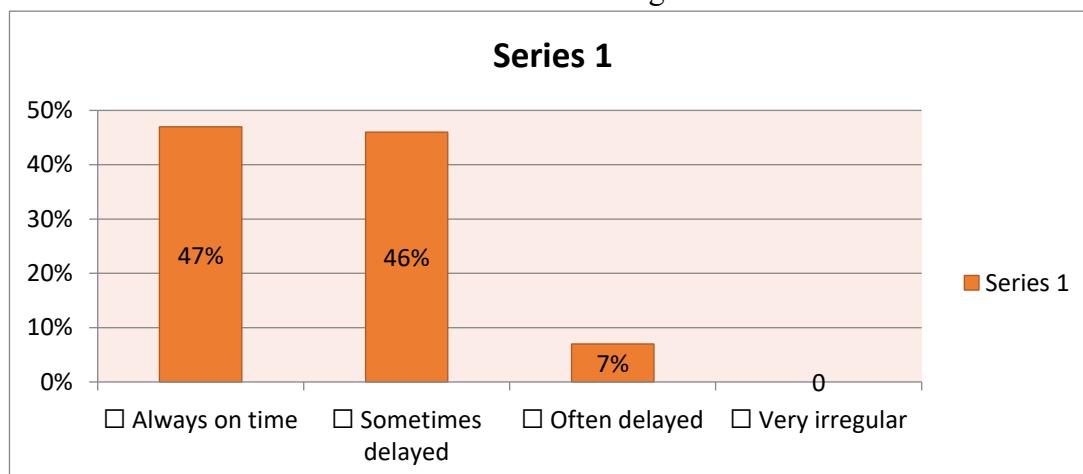
A graph illustrating changes in migration dependence among households can be placed here to support this interpretation.



4.6 Wage Payments, Satisfaction, and Programme Reliability

Despite its positive contributions, the reliability of MGNREGA as a livelihood support mechanism is undermined by delays in wage payments. Many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the timeliness of wage disbursement, noting that delayed payments weaken trust in the programme and limit its effectiveness as a safety net. Overall satisfaction with employment opportunities reflects a balance between the benefits of assured work and frustrations arising from administrative inefficiencies.

A graph showing perceptions of wage payment timeliness and overall satisfaction may be inserted at this stage.



4.7 Implementation Challenges and Beneficiary Perspectives

The open-ended responses reveal deeper structural challenges in MGNREGA implementation. Respondents emphasized the need for stronger grievance redressal mechanisms, improved village-level planning, and greater transparency in wage payments.

Limited awareness of entitlements further constrains workers' ability to demand work and hold authorities accountable. These challenges indicate that institutional capacity and governance quality are critical determinants of programme effectiveness.

A table showing the distribution of reported implementation problems and suggested improvements can be placed here to consolidate beneficiaries' perspectives.

Data	Percentage
<input type="checkbox"/> Delay in wage payments and the need for timely, transparent disbursement	20%
<input type="checkbox"/> Need for stronger grievance redressal mechanisms and local-level accountability	27%
<input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate planning and monitoring of works at the village level	26%
<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of awareness about entitlements and job card rights among workers	4%
<input type="checkbox"/> Irregular availability of work and demand-based employment not fully ensured	23%

4.8 Perceived Impact of MGNREGA on Household Income Security and Employment Opportunities

The open-ended responses reveal that MGNREGA has had a perceptible impact on household income security and employment opportunities in the Basar area. Respondents emphasized that the programme provides regular wage employment during lean and off-season periods, thereby reducing periods of unemployment and income uncertainty. Many households reported that MGNREGA has become a dependable source of supplementary income, helping them meet basic consumption needs and cope with financial stress. The programme has also expanded employment opportunities for women and economically weaker sections, contributing to greater inclusiveness in the rural labour market. However, a smaller proportion of respondents noted that irregular availability of work and delays in wage payments limit the programme's effectiveness as a reliable livelihood support mechanism. These perceptions, summarized in Graph, indicate that while MGNREGA has strengthened livelihood security, its benefits remain contingent upon effective implementation.

Data	Percentage
Regular wage employment during lean and off-season periods	33%

Increased employment opportunities for women and weaker sections	35%
Reduced need for seasonal or distress migration	10%
Supplementary income improving household financial security	28%

5. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that MGNREGA plays a crucial role in stabilizing rural livelihoods in the Basar area by providing timely employment during periods of agricultural underemployment. The programme has contributed significantly to income security, especially for women and socio-economically disadvantaged groups, thereby fostering social inclusion. However, despite these benefits, persistent challenges such as delays in wage payments, inadequate local-level planning, and limited awareness of entitlements constrain the programme's effectiveness. These findings align with studies from other northeastern states, which highlight that geographical remoteness, administrative bottlenecks, and weak institutional capacity often undermine the transformative potential of MGNREGA. The partial reduction in seasonal migration observed in the study indicates that while local employment opportunities have improved, structural livelihood vulnerabilities continue to necessitate mobility for certain households. Policy interventions focused on strengthening governance mechanisms, ensuring timely wage disbursement, enhancing beneficiary awareness, and integrating MGNREGA with complementary livelihood schemes could amplify the programme's impact. Overall, the study underscores the importance of contextualized implementation strategies that account for the socio-economic and geographical specificities of tribal and remote regions like Basar.

6. Conclusion

The study concludes that MGNREGA has made a meaningful contribution to rural income security and employment generation in the Basar area of Leparada district. While the programme has not eliminated structural vulnerabilities, it has reduced livelihood insecurity and enhanced economic participation among vulnerable groups. Addressing implementation challenges and strengthening institutional accountability can significantly improve the effectiveness of MGNREGA and reinforce its role as a cornerstone of rural development policy in Arunachal Pradesh.

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