

# The Cosmic Crisp Benefits of MGNREGS on ecological conservation: A study with special Reference to Kottayam District in Kerala, India

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(Received 21 July, 2020; Accepted 12 August, 2020)

## ABSTRACT

MGNREGS is one of the biggest safety nets in India for employment generation and environmental protection. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme came into force in the year 2006 in the 200 districts of the country. Later, it is extended to all the districts in India by 2008. The Programme provides employment opportunities by ensuring environmental protection for sustainable development. The present study highlights the role of MGNREGS in environmental protection and examines the environmental implications of the act. It highlights the initiatives adopted by PRIs for environmental protection in the study area.

**Key words:** MGNREGS, Bio-diversity, Environment, Grama Panchayat

## Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment Guarantee scheme has two important objectives. The primary objective is to enhance livelihood security by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to a rural household who is ready to do unskilled manual labour. The secondary objective is the creation of durable assets which improve the rural connectivity and strengthen the livelihood of the poor. The major works of MGNREGS focusing on water conservation, soil conservation, renovation of water bodies, land development etc. All these works has environmental benefits like groundwater recharge, biodiversity conservation, handling the current climate risks etc (Tiwari, 2011); (Ministry of Rural Development, 2012)

MoRD (2012): "MGNREGS Sameeksha: An Anthology of Research Studies on the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act,

2005, Government of India", Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.

## MGNREGS and Environmental Benefits in Kerala

In Kerala, the responsibility for implementation of the programme vests in the hands of village panchayats, Self-help groups and kudumbasree. In Kerala, the government has extended MGNREGS works to private lands for building water harvesting structures, taking private agricultural lands for paddy cultivation and other plantations (NREGA, 2009).

MGNREGS at Glance in Kerala (2018-19)

Total No. of Districts	14
Total No. of Blocks	152
Total No. of GPs	941
Total No. of Job Cards issued	36.02
Total No. of Workers (In Lakhs)	55.76
Total No. of Active Workers (In Lakhs)	23.44
SC worker against active workers (%)	14.36

ST worker against active workers (%) 4.7

Source: <http://nregasp.nic.in/>

### Significance of Study

The Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee Scheme has initiated in Kerala with the objective of providing employment opportunities by protecting environment through which sustainable growth can be ensured. Sustainable development is a long goal for thinking about future by balancing the environmental considerations. The modern concept of development should go hand-in-hand with environmental development (Education, 2004). So, the present study aimed to analyse the contribution of MGNREGS in Kerala for environmental protection.

### Objectives

- To study the environmental initiatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the implementation of MGNREGS.
- To analyse the effectiveness of the programme initiated by PRIs for sustainable development.

### Methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected from the Kottayam District in the state of Kerala. From the Kottayam District, by using purposive sampling identified the three top performing Block Panchayats with the help of MGNREGS official website. These three Block Panchayats were Kanjirappilly, Vaikom and Pampady. In the following stage, through random sampling one Grama Panchayat was selected from each Block Panchayat. Thus, Mundakayam, Udayanapuram and Pampady Panchayats were selected from the three Block Panchayats. In the final stage, again, randomly 15 samples were selected from Panchayats. Thus, a sample of 45 respondents was covered for the study.

### Review of Literature

Sinha, Basu and katiyar made an attempt to study about the topic "Adapting to Climate Change: Opportunities under MGNREGA" and they found that MGNREGS has made a great contribution with regard to food security, ecological sustainability and health hazards management. The study evaluates the ecological and economic impact of MGNREGS in Madhya Pradesh and came to a conclusion that

MGNREGS contributes to the ecological security and agricultural production in Madhya Pradesh (Bhaskar Sinha).

Mathew Sebastin and P A Azeez (2014) examined the various activities under MGNREGS for environmental security and bio-diversity conservation. The study states that the activities for bio-diversity conservation are severely constrained in the absence of adequate resources and manpower. They concluded that concerted efforts need to be made for ensuring the involvement of all the stakeholders, policy makers and academicians for integrating bio-diversity conservation with MGNREGS activities (Mathew K Sebastin, 2014).

### Data Analysis and Findings

The study shows that 77% beneficiaries are opined that work priorities are determined in Grama Sabha meeting and through MGNREGS they got an opportunity to take part in the planning process. According to the beneficiaries most of the works related to environment protection focusing on conservation of water resources. (Table I)

**Table 1.** Environmental Services

Options	Frequency	Percent
Grazing lands and forests	10	22.2
water resources	19	42.2
reducing soil erosion	16	35.5
	45	100

Source: Field Survey

**Table 2.** Effectiveness of Environmental Services

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	34	80
No	6	13.3
Not Responded	5	11.1
	45	100

Source: Field Survey

The above table shows that majority of the respondents (80%) are satisfied with the activities of Grama Panchayat for the protection of environment. Less than half of the beneficiaries opined that the working of Panchayat is not satisfied with regards to the protection of environment.

### Suggestions for the Effective Implementation

- The Grama Panchayat should formulate appro-

priate policies for the effective implementation of environmental conservation activities.

- Efforts should be made to ensure the active participation of professionals, academicians and stakeholders.
- There is a need to combine different schemes to enhance socio-economic and environmental sustainability.
- Work priority should be given for the creation of durable assets based on the availability local resources.

### Conclusion

It can be concluded that MGNREGS has a great potential to enhance environmental services and therefore Kerala is a role model for the other states in India. The study shows that the programme has multiple environment services to provide employment as well as to conserve environment. So, it can be used as a tool for the progress and development of the nation. The working of Panchayati Raj Institutions has to be encouraged more with the active participation of the people in its entire process for tack-

ling the issues in the way of its implementation. The future of MGNREGS seems to be shimmering because of the favourable support from the people and government.

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