SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON MELGHAT’S TRIBAL FAMILY- A CASE STUDY

Sarita Ghanshyam Tiwari¹
Research student, Ph. D. programme
Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, India
Email: tiwari_sarita@rediffmail.com

Dr. D.N. Vyas²
Principal, RDG College, Akola, India
Email: devvya@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

India is a country of villages and about 50 per cent of the villages have very poor economic condition. Rural poverty is largely a result of low productivity and unemployment. In order to alleviate rural poverty by generating employment and creation of sustainable assets in Rural India, Government of India brought in the flagship programme called Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005. It is the biggest poverty alleviation programme in the world which was started with an initial outlay of Rs. 11,300 crore in year 2006-07.

The present research paper consist a case study of a tribal farmer living in the village of Melghat region of Amravati District in Maharashtra. The objective of narrating the present case study is to get a fair idea about the socio economic impact of the scheme MGNREGA on tribes residing in Melghat region and to study conditions of the labours, beneficiary farmers, and asset created.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Melghat, Tribes, Socio economic impact

INTRODUCTION OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Melghat, the region of Satpura Mountains covers mainly Dharni and Chikhaldara tahsils of Northern Amravati District in Maharashtra. The major part of Melghat region is covered with Tiger Reserve wildlife sanctuary (buffer zone) and the reserve forest. Melghat the name suggests a “meeting of the Ghats” on the map. With majestic mountain ranges bestrewed with river and water streams, the valley speaks for its own beauty. But, the beauty of the place does not complement the living conditions of the tribes residing here. Melghat is a Scheduled Tribal area comprising 89.27% of the tribal population. Korkus, Gond, Nihal, Balai, Gaolan, Gawali, Halbi, Wanjari are the tribes residing in Melghat. These people face problems of absence of alternative livelihood opportunities, seasonal migration, complete dependency on agriculture with limited land holding, poor administration, unhygienic lifestyle and ill-health. The area is additionally infamous for its high malnutrition and child mortality rates, which become the subject of alarming stories in the national and international media every few years.

Total 320 villages spread over the area of 4004 sq. km are located far away from each other having population density is about 60-70 person per sq. km. Many of these villages are with very poor or no infrastructure like connectivity, transportation, communication, electricity, basic amenities. These villagers are highly lacking with facilities to education and health care.
The economy of the tribes in Melghat is agro forest based one. The farmers of Melghat region are totally dependent on agriculture as their main occupation. Due to the undulating topography there is high rate of runoff of the rain water. As most of them are small landholders, majority of the tribal population stands below poverty line and facing the food problem for about four to five months in a year. The tribal farmer practicing the organic farming but as the period passed they also adopted chemical farming that reacted negatively on them.

Poor accessibility of banks, high illiteracy ratio and no proper legal ownership of agricultural land by the local tribes in Melghat region have lead them to borrow money from money lenders in case of emergencies. Even then they are not progressing well. The reason is excessive borrowing rates, often at interest rates of 60% per annum or more. If hundred rupees are borrowed for three to four months, they have to return Rs. 150 to 200 after four months. These moneylenders not just harass the farmers for repayment but also grab their harvested crops, paying far below the market rates. Since farming does not provide adequate income, large numbers migrate out, especially between December and April, going as far afield as Amravati, Nagpur, Pune and Mumbai to work as daily wage labours.

The education of children is disrupted by this seasonal migration and the monsoons, when the rains make schools inaccessible. The quality of education in the schools, which lack basic infrastructure and facilities, is also poor.

Indebtedness with high rate of interest for cultivation and other process of farming unable to paid on time and as a result most of them suffer from heavy debts and which further leads them to mental stress.

It needs to developed livelihood security for these people and end migration tendency by providing resettlement and rehabilitation in accordance with legal norms without violating their human rights. Keeping in same view MGNREGS implemented in Melghat by the Government. The basic object behind implementing MGNREGS in Melghat is to foster conditions for inclusive growth ranging from basic wage security and recharging rural economy to a transformative empowerment process of democracy.

MGNREGS offers hundred days of work to unemployed families in rural areas. The two conditions for the adults of a household to apply are:

1. They must be living in a rural area.
2. They must be willing to undertake unskilled manual labour for which they would receive the minimum wage.

This is based on the logic that people would not migrate in lean agriculture seasons if enough work/income is available locally. The approach of implementing MGNREGA in Melghat is to promote sustainable livelihood activities and interventions to improve the quality of life with the development based on the environment, available natural resources, traditional skills and the tribal culture.

Therefore to deal with the stated problem the present research paper through light on a case study of a selected village from Melghat region to find out the socio economic impact of MGNREGA on tribes in Melghat region.

**CASE STUDY**

**Construction of Well under MGNREGS Enhance Annual Income of Tribal Household Up To 5 Times and Switch Labours to Owners [ Individual Benefit Asset (Micro Irrigation facility to SC/ST/IAY/LR) ]**

Gram Panchayat : Doma
Block : Chikhaldara
This case study belongs to a korku tribal family which lives in the Gram Panchayat Doma of Chikhaldara block in Amravati District. Head of the family owns 1 acre of agricultural land in the village Doma and lives with his wife, two sons, one daughter in law and two grand childrens. The primary source of income of his family is agriculture. Prior to the MGNREGA his whole family was entirely dependent on the monsoon for irrigation of their agricultural land with much difficulty. Hence, he was able to cultivate only one crop in the whole year.

After his family’s registration in the MGNREGS, he was benefited through the provision of a new well under the scheme in the year 2011-12. As per the provision the sanctioned amount under the scheme for the construction of well was Rs.200000. The construction of well completed in the year 2012-13. As per his statement he had not paid a single rupee for getting the well sanctioned in the GPs MGNREGS work but at the beginning when actually the work was being carried out in his farm he had paid some wages to workers and brought some material which was latter paid to him by GP.

After completion of well in his farm he started to get the profit and currently one acre of his land gets irrigated through the well.

According to him, earlier through the crop like cotton, soyabean, he was able to earn annual income of Rs. 20000-25000 in a year. But construction of well on his farm land increased his farm production and last year his income was more than four times. Because of irrigation facilities available in one acre, he started to cultivate wheat crop as well as garlic. According to the head of the family, last year he had cultivated garlic in his farm and made a total annual income of around Rs. 140000 to 150000.

According to the family head, MGNREGS has helped him a lot in farming as his annual income rose four to five times which was far better than his previous annual income. During the discussion the family head admitted that before the construction of MGNREGA well in his farm he had no proper means of irrigation and as a result had to work on others farm field to meet his family expenses. But after the construction of well he can now work much better on his own field and the final product had improved too. His family is very happy with the MGNREGA scheme. He says that as a poor and illiterate farmer he did not have the means to build his own source of water for irrigation, nor to take a loan for the same.

Photo plate III: Tribal family working in Farm Field and cutting the Garlic crop

(Source: Real picture of the tribal family)
He said that two of his sons use to get migrated before MGNREGA. But as the MGNREGA was started in the village, now no one is migrating from his family members to outside the village for work. Now the entire family works on their own crops and overall production has increased. In addition he and his family members also works in MGNREGS works whenever works ongoing in the village to earn substitute income.

This change increased his family’s social status and quality of life and also ensured food security for his family within the village. Thus through the MGNREGA scheme, the family has benefitted a lot and they now feel like owners, not workers!

CONCLUSION
The above case study of the tribal farmer reveals that livelihood asset such as irrigation well created under MGNREGA scheme has improve economic capacity of tribal farmer in Melghat village.

REFERENCES
1. UB Media, 2011, Documentary Film “Melghat Pattern”, Collector Office, Amravati, Maharashtra State
5. MGNREGA official reports collected through Collector office, Amravati for the year 2008-09 to 2011-12.
6. Annual reports on MGNREGA collected through Zilha Parishad, Amravati for the year 2008-09 to 2011-12.
7. http://mahaegs.maharashtra.gov.in
8. http://www.nrega.nic.in