

Performance of MGNREGA in Assam- A Comparative Analysis

¹Dhiren Tamuli & ²Munmee Charingia

¹Department of Political Science, DKD College, Dergaon (India)

²Research Scholar, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat (India)

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ABSTRACT

India is rural based nation faced by many socio-economic problems which have been tried by the government to solve with different methods and techniques. Unemployment is one of the crucial rural problems of India. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA 2005), presently known as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is one of such policies implemented by the Government of India under Ministry of Rural Development. This policy has targeted to provide hundred days of guaranteed wage in every financial year to every household. The adult unemployed members of the family will be engaged in unskilled manual work and if fails to do so, the government will provide hundred days' wages to that person. The Act also mandates 33 per cent participation for women in MGNREGA work programmes. In Assam, all 27 districts were brought under the Act in three phases during the period from 2nd February, 2006 to 1st April, 2008. In Assam around 7.94 Lakhs employment are provided to households with a total of 131.55 lakh Person days till date. In this article, an attempt is made to justify and review the implementation of MGNREGA in Assam in comparison to national average. Besides this, this study tries to evaluate the nature of women participation as per the scheme. Secondary data, published and unpublished reports and journals have been taken into account for the study. The findings of the study revealed that the programme has brought a change in the socio-economic conditions of the beneficiaries in some other states of India. But in case of Assam, it becomes clear from the experiments that the scheme is not properly implemented in practical field. A huge gap between policy taken and implementation is found in Government's level and implementation in grass root level of the policy.

1. Introduction

India is a country with more than hundred crores of population. The backbone of the economy is based on rural development because a large number of populations live in rural areas. Census of India Report 2011 published that 68.84 percent people of India are rural based. The rampant problems of this population are poverty and illiteracy which is fueled by unemployment. Sometimes low productivity and unproductive expenses such as festival, ritual ceremonies etc make people weaker economically. Though India is considered as one of the top ten leading industrialized countries of the world, the actual spirit of India is still found in villages and in rural economy. Keeping these views in mind the government has taken up many initiatives on poverty alleviation and rural development. Different schemes are undertaken since 1952. MGNREGA is one of such schemes implemented by the Government throughout the country. The main target of this policy is rural development i.e. to eliminate the problems related to the rural poverty and all round development of the village livelihood conditions.

2. Objectives

The present study is designed to examine the performance of MGNREGA in Assam and its consequences. The study is based on the following objectives:

- Evaluate the performance of NREGA in Assam in comparison to other states *vis-à-vis* India

- Examine the status of women's participation in Assam
- Discuss the problems relating to implementation of MGNREGA at ground level

3. Methodology

The study is basically based on secondary data and observational method. Published and unpublished sources of data like books, journals, news papers, periodicals, Governmental and non-governmental reports, published and unpublished doctoral thesis and relevant websites are taken into account for analyse, describe and evaluate. Although there is a little difference between data available in official website of MGNREGA and data published in reports and other publications like Economic Survey of Assam, Statistical Handbook of Assam etc. Thus, data available in official website are given preferences. To study the performance of MGNREGA in Assam data are compiled from the secondary sources covering the 2012-13 to 2016-17 periods only.

Indian Scenario

According to the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012), about 300 million people living below poverty line had been declined during 1973-2004. In large states like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, the number of poor even increased.¹ Both 'Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana' (SGRY) and National Food for Work Program (NFFWP) which had assured food and job security to poor are

merged with MGNREGA to enhancing the livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year. For this, adult members of every household whose volunteer to do unskilled manual work are included in this scheme. In addition to this, the MGNREGA aims at creating durable assets that would augment the basic resources available to the poor. Along with community participation, the Gram Panchayat (The Village local self government) has been vested the accountability and responsibility to implement the MGNREGA in practical field.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) come into forced since 2005 and renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act (MGNREGA) in 2008. This Act has been implemented in three phases. The first phase started in 2006 covered 200 districts, in second phase 130 districts(2007-08) and the remaining districts of Assam in the third phase with effect from 1st April, 2008 except the pure urban areas of Assam.

Table-1 Stages of MGNREGA from 2005 to 2009

August 2005	I Stage	II Stage	III Stage	IV Stage	V Stage	Final stage
NREGA legalized on 25 th Aug, 2005	Started Functioning in 200 most backward districts from 2 nd Feb, 2006	Extended to 130 more districts in April 2007	Extended to the whole country from 1 st Apr, 2008	Started paying wages through banks/ post offices from Oct, 2008	MOU with postal department has been signed from Feb, 2009	NREGA has been renamed as MGNREGA with effect from 2nd October 2009

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Table No. 1. shows the nature of exercising of MGNREGA from its beginning in 2005 to till 2009. This Act provides that the rural local self government have to ensure of hundred days employment per annum to the willing adult to be employed in unskilled manual work within fifteen days applying for it. A report on major works undertaken under MGNREGA reveals that in India as a whole around 2420.61crore person days were generated since inception covering a total of 685 districts in different states and union territories in India. (as on 09-09-17)

Basic Entitlements of MGNREGA

As it has already mentioned that the government has to provide 100 days of employment guarantee to a person within a

financial year within 15 days of application. Failing to provide as per the act, they have to provide unemployment allowances to the job card holders. According to the Act, the employment is to be provided within 5 kilometers of distance from his villages. If the work-site distance is beyond 5 kilometers distance than extra T.A. and D.A. is to be provided. A minimum wage guarantee for livelihood security is to be provided within 15 days of work done. There should be no gender discrimination in case of job and wages. Along with these facilities basic work-site facilities such as accidental benefits, drinking water facilities, child care facilities are also need to be provided.

Table-2 Status of MGNREGA in India from FY 2012-13 to 2016-17

Progress	FY 2012-13	FY 2013-14	FY 2014-15	FY 2015-16	FY 2016-17
No. of households demanded employment(in lakhs)	478.89	488.73	458.99	498.7	241.86
No. of households provided employment(in lakh)	460.39	451.87	394.76	420.66	126.57
% of household provided with employment	96.13	92.45	86	84.35	52.33
Person days Generated	2054719	2075035	1489778	1764659	193269
SC person days	442012	4677.34	335504	399884	39041
SC person days % as of total person days	21.51	22.54	22.52	22.66	20.2
ST person days	335573	352622	253830	314520	35595
ST person days % as of total person days	16.33	16.99	17.04	17.82	18.42
Women person days	1061275	1088616	819793	9854.31	109844
% of Women person days out of Total (%)	51.65	52.46	55.03	55.84	56.83

Average days of employment provided per Household	44.63	45.92	37.74	41.95	15.27
Average Wage rate per day per person(Rs.)	136.62	151.57	166.83	177.68	186.45
Total No of HHs completed 100 Days of Wage Employment	4491932	4402564	1740731	2527235	3372

Source: Official website of MGNREGA www.mgnrega.nic.in

MGNREGA Focuses on Different Activities

Different categories of permissible works are as follows:ⁱⁱ

- Water Conservation and water harvesting including contour trenches, contour bunds boulder checks, gabion structures, underground dykes, earthen dams, stop dams and spring-shed development
- Drought Proofing including plantation and afforestation;
- Irrigation canals including micro and minor irrigation works;
- Provision of irrigation facility, dug out farm pond, horticulture, plantation, farm bunding and land development;
- Renovation of traditional water bodies including desilting of tanks;
- Land Development;
Flood control and protection works including drainage in water logged areas including deepening and repairing of flood channels, chaur renovation, construction of storm water drains for coastal protection;
- Rural connectivity to provide all weather access, including culverts and roads within a village, wherever necessary;

- Construction of Bharat Nirman Rajiv Gandhi Sewa Kendra as Knowledge Resource Centre at the Block level and as Gram Panchayat Bhawan at the Gram Panchayat level;
- Agriculture related works, such as, NADEP composting, vermi-composting, liquid biomanures;
- Livestock related works, such as, poultry shelter, goat shelter, construction of pucca floor, urine tank and fodder trough for cattle, azolla as cattle-feed supplement;
- Fisheries related works, such as, fisheries in seasonal water bodies on public land;
- Works in coastal areas, such as, fish drying yards, belt vegetation;

Table 2 reflects the overall performance of MGNREGA during the year from 2012-13 to 2016-17. The table shows that the performance of MGNREGA has been significant in quantitative terms in the study period. Table 2 focuses that in India around 241.86 lakh of households demanded for employment out of which about 126.57 lakh of households are provided with employment in the financial year 2016-17

Table-3 Phage wise Coverage of districts under MGNREGA

1 st phage (w.e.f. 2 nd February 2006)	Bongaigaon, Dhemaji, Goalpara, Karbi Anglong, Kokrajhar,) Lakhimpur and N. C. Hills.
2nd Phase (w.e.f 1 April 2007):	Barpeta, Darrang, Cachar, Hailakandi, Morigaon and Nalbari.
3rd Phase (w.e.f 1 April 2008):	Baksa, Chirang, Dhubri, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Jorhat, Kamrup (Rural), Kamrup (Metro), Karimganj, Nagaon, Sivasagar, Sonitpur, Tinsukia and Udalguri.

Source: CAG report of Assam 2013

Current Status:

During the financial year 2016-17, about 718.10 crore person days of employments are generated with an average of 15.25 days per household. The programme has attracted the down trodden groups like Scheduled Caste (20.20%), Scheduled Tribes (18.42%) and women (56.83%). Out of 165.64 lakh works undertaken (New + Spill Over) during 2016-17, only 63.46 lakh works have completed till the end of that financial year and 102.18 works are still in progress.

MGNREGAS Funding Pattern:

According to the data provided in the official website of MGNREGA the total fund released increased from Rs. 42,103.88/- crore during FY 2013-14 to Rs. 56,878.29 /- during 2016-17. During 2016-17 the utilization of fund showed a deficit financing with a total expenditure of Rs.58,215.98/- crore. The

Grants are released to different districts directly from the National Employment Guarantee Fund. The Government of India has instructed to open separate bank accounts at the district, block and panchayat levels in order to credit MGNREGA grants directly.

Performance of MGNREGA:

MGNREGA has generated 193269 man days during the Financial Year 2016-17. During this financial year the importance is given on daily wages. At present the average wage earned is Rs.186.45/- i.e around Rs.190/- where as it was only Rs.65/- during the year 2006. Women work force participation under this scheme has increased to 56.83% during the Financial Year. It was observed that around 2420.12 crore person days were generated since inception with a total expenditure of Rs. 417937.14/- crore. (As on 08/09/2017)

Assam Scenario

Assam is also built with rural population. Around 86% of the populations live in rural areas. According to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) Oct' 2009, every State requires to formulate a State Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (SREGS), which should conform to the minimum features specified under the Act. According to the Act the household have a right to register

themselves with the local Gram panchayats and seek employments. MGNREGA was introduced in the state of Assam in 2006-07 covering 7 districts as the first phase. The coverage was extended to 6 more districts in the 2nd phase in 2007-08 and since 2008-09 all 27 are being covered under the programme. In Assam all 27 districts were brought under the Act in three phages during the period from 2nd February, 2006 to 1st April, 2008.

Table-4 Mahatma Gandhi NREGA Outcomes (Physical Achievement) for the FY 2012-13 to FY 2016-17

Progress	FY 2012-13	FY 2013-14	FY 2014-15	FY 2015-16	FY 2016-17
No.of households who have demanded employment (in lakhs)	1229450	1321657	1008996	1522237	475450
No.of households provided employment (in lakhs)	1217074	1260988	853837	1246328	209421
% of household provided employment	98.99	95.40	84.62	81.87	44.04
Persondays Generatedr[In Lakhs]	309.65	298.56	179.18	359.48	31.85
SCs	18.46	19.30	10.81	18.47	1.70
SC % as of total	5.96	6.46	6.03	5.14	5.34
STs	63.79	48.05	27.08	66.98	5.49
ST % as of total	20.60	16.09	15.11	18.63	17.24
Women	80.54	73.89	50.20	118.31	11.40
Women out of Total (%)	26.01	24.75	28.02	32.91	35.79
Average days of employment provided per Household	25.44	23.68	20.99	28.84	15.21
Average Wage rate per day per person(Rs.)	136.62	151.87	166.98	178.94	181.96
Total No of HHs completed 100 Days of Wage Employment	10,018	16,031	7803	29012	119

Source: Official website of MGNREGA

Table-4 shows the employment provided to different categories from 2012-13 to 2016-17. In Assam around 4.75 lakh households were provided with employment during the financial year 2016-17 with a total of 31.85 lakh person days generated under MGNREGA. Around 1.70 lakh SC households

were participating out of total while 5.49 lakh ST households were participated during the financial year. A total of 11.40 lakh women were participated under MGNREGA.

4. Results and Discussion

Fig-1 Household provided with employment in different states for the FY 2016-17(figures in lakh)

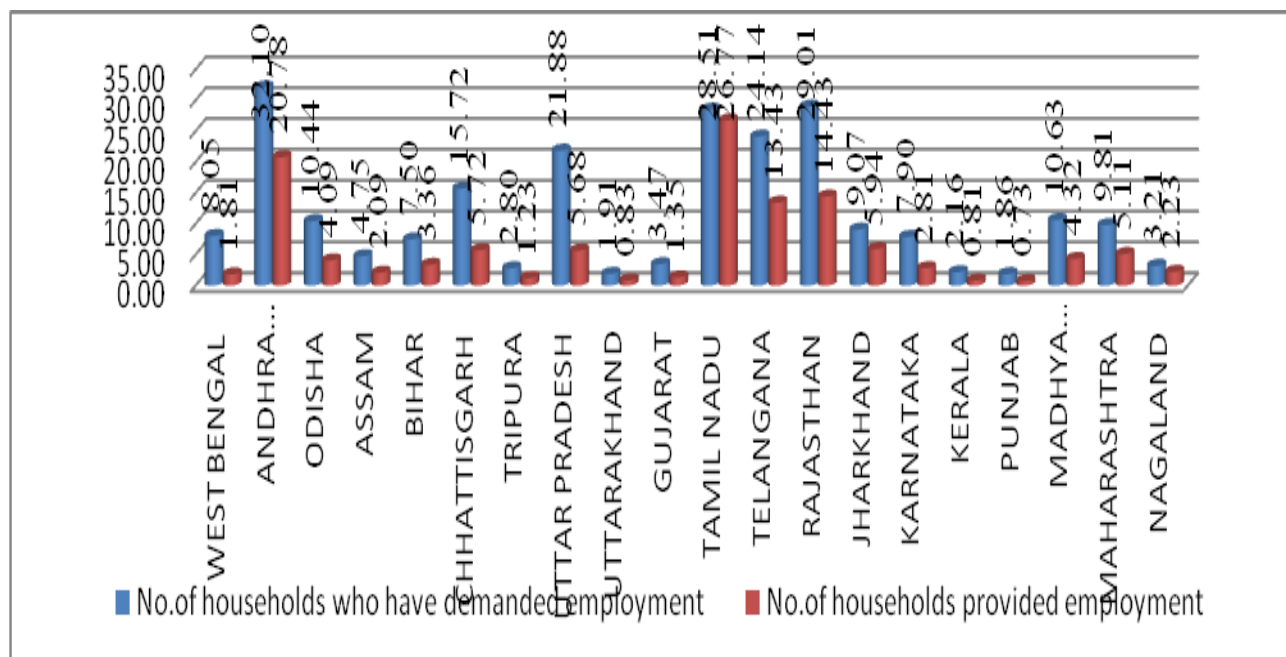
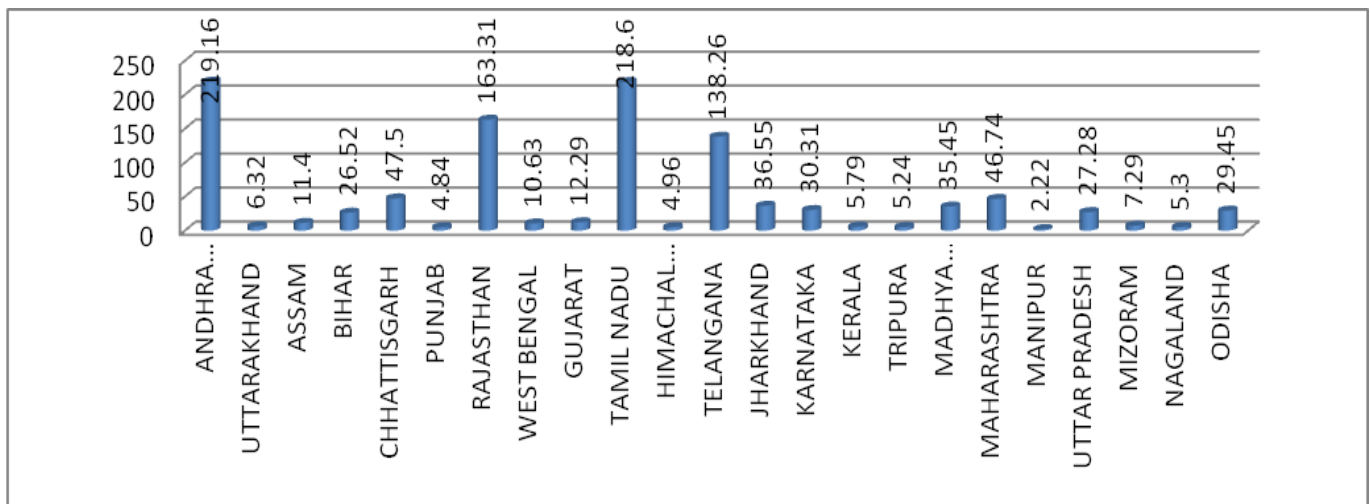


Fig-1 depicts the picture of overall comparison between household provided with employment and household demanded employment in different states of India. The figure clearly reflects the picture of differences between household provided with employment and household demanded employment. In some states like Andhra Pradesh(32.10 lakh), Tamilnadu(28.51lakh), Rajasthan(29.01 lakh) and Telengana(24.14 lakh) the household demanded with employment is quite high then the remaining states. In those

states household provided with employment is also good. Although there is a gap between household provided with employment and household demanded with employment but in Tamilnadu it is almost equal. In Assam household around 4.75 lakh households were demanded with employment and only 2.09 lakh households were provided with employment i.e. only around 50% households were provided with employment during the Financial Year 2016-17.

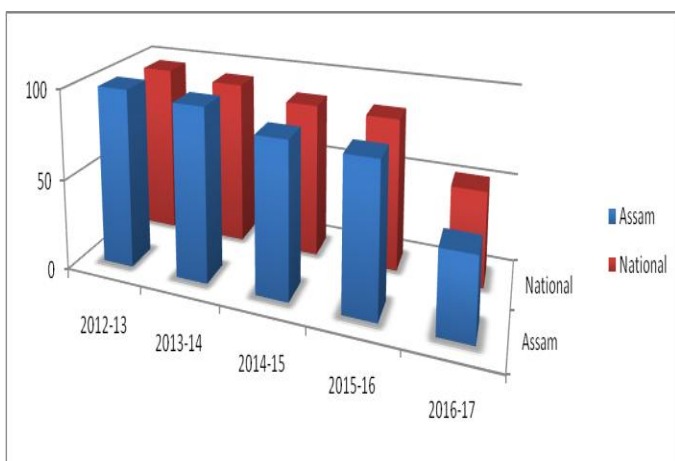
Fig-2 Participation of women in different states for FY 2016-17(figures in Lakh)



Under MGNREGA scheme there is a reservation of 33% seats for women to encourage women towards the employment guaranteed works. Fig-2 reflects the scenario of participation of women in different states of India. Among the states Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu shows almost equal trend of women participation with 219.16 lakh and 218.6 lakh respectively. In Assam only 11.4 lakh women were taking part in different MGNREGA related activities. Among other states Rajasthan and Telangana occupies the third and fourth positions with 163.31lakh and 138.26 lakh participating women respectively.

provided with employment between Assam with national average. The picture reflects the scenario of demand and supply employment of for last three financial years from 2012-13 to 2016-17. A decreasing trend was observed from 2012-13 to 2016-17 gradually reaching a very poor state in 2016-17. Although the national trend shows a decreasing result but Assam (44%) follows a lowering trend then national average (52%). Except 2016-17, both the cases show almost equal trends. But in 2016-17 the difference between Assam and National average is easily visible.

Fig-3 Comparison between household demanded employment and household provided employment



The above fig-3 depicts the comparison between household demanded with employment and household

Fig-4 Comparison of Average working days per households

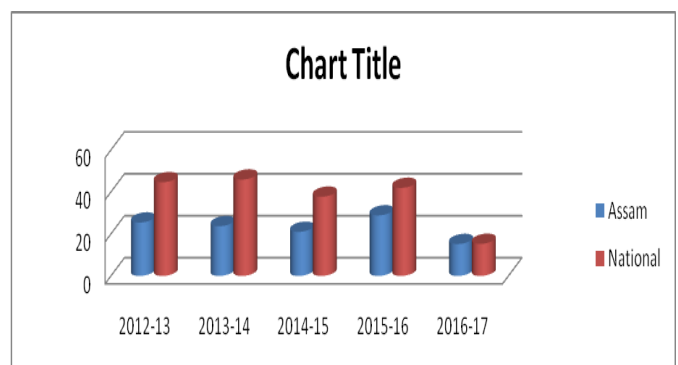


Fig-4 reflects the differences of average working days provided to households for last five Financial Years from 2012-13 to 2016-17. Except 2016-17, a noticeable difference is observed from 2012-13 to 2015-16. Assam moves with much lower average working days than National average. During 2012-13 the national average was 44.63 i.e. around 45 days

per household but in Assam only 25.44 i.e. around 25 days per household. Similar in the case of 2013-14, where national average shows around 46 days employment per household, on the other side a quite lower working days were provided in Assam with around 24 days per household. Only in 2016-17, a similar no.s of working days was provided by both nationally and by Assam i.e. 15 days per household. But the figure is quite lower than preceding years.

Fig-5 Comparison between participation of women

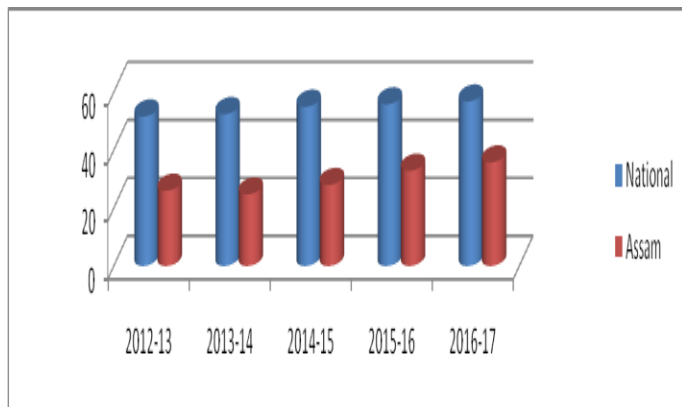


Fig-5 significantly displays the women participation in MGNREGA related activities in Assam with national average. It shows the participation of women was increased gradually during 2012-13 to 2016-17. In national during 2012-13 the women participation rate was 51.65, which increased to 56.83% till the end of 2016-17. While Assam also shows an increasing trend gradually but at a lower rate than national. During 2012-13 the women participation rate for Assam was 26.01% which increased to 35.79% till the end of 2016-17

Problems of implementation of MGNREGA

To identify the problems and gaps between, we have visited few selected villages of Golaghat District. After analyzing the rural situation we have identified following problems responsible for improper and ineffective implementation of MGNREGA

- I. **Low Literacy rate:** Although the literacy rate in Assam is 72.19%, but most of the rural people are found illiterate. Sometimes they even do not know to write their names also. In that case people may not be able to understand the guidelines properly. As a result there may be difficulty in maintaining records of daily works undertaken by the beneficiary itself. Therefore people are unable to know what information is written in their job card due to which sometimes people may not get actual wage instead of their working days. Sometimes they are unable to maintain the bank and post office accounts also.
- II. **Low rate of Women participation:** The participation rate of women is low in state level than the national level. There is a lack of awareness among women about the reservation. Traditional values and patriarchal nature may also fuel in such low participation rate.

- III. **Lack of awareness:** Awareness among beneficiary is poor. People are less aware about the benefits of MGNREGA. They do not know about the 100days of employment guarantee, unemployment allowances, basic worksite facilities and accidental benefits etc.
- IV. **Negligence of *panchayat* and block authorities:** There is also negligence from *panchayat* and block authorities. They do not provide information about new job. They never encourage people to have job cards. The *panchayat* and block authorities do not maintain the proper records. They do not follow actual guidelines.
- V. **Inherent problem of implementation:** Besides these problems some other inherent problems such as untimely release of fund, negligence or delay in dissemination of information, lack of timely support from the government, somewhat corruption etc also fuels the improper implementation of MGNREGA.

Evaluation

From the above analysis it is observed that the MGNREGA scheme is not successfully implemented in Assam in comparison to other states of India. Employment generated under MGNREGA is very poor in Assam. From above data and analysis it is observed that demand for employment is declined gradually then preceding years. The average working days did not exceed beyond 50 days for last 5 years in case of Assam. Although there is a reservation for women but still there is a vast gap between Assam and national average in case of women participation rate. Only during 2015-16 and in 2016-17 the women participation rate crosses beyond 30%. There is a gap between planning and implementation of the scheme. The gap also found between government higher authorities and grass root level. Government also fails to provide 100 days of employment. Unemployment allowances and other benefits such as accidental benefits, basic worksite facilities are not provided by the government. During the financial year 2016-17, a total of 82276no.s of works are taken up out of which only 18418 no.s of works have completed till date. Around 63858no.s of works are still going on.

5. Conclusion

In view of the fact that, most of the results of the present study are not encouraging towards rural development. The problem is in the implementation of the Act and not with the Act itself. There is a vast gap between planning, implementing, monitoring, verification and evaluation of different MGNREGA activities. A thorough evaluation and monitoring is required from top to bottom to reduce the gap between planning and evaluation. For successful implementation of MGNREGA it is necessary to strengthen the network among government authorities (top to bottom). Panchayat and block authorities should take the prime responsibility in successful implementation of the scheme. Regular awareness campaign is to be organized among rural people. Awareness among women is utmost necessary. At least two times monitoring in a year is required for successful implementation. Social audit is essential in every six months for evaluation of problems of implementation. After evaluating the various problems related to implementation it is necessary to take reformative action

against the problem. Then only the goals of introducing MGNREGA will be achieved. As well as it will become the

cause of rural development.

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