

Impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on the life of the resident of the Villagers under Chayangtajo CD Block of East Kameng District of Arunachal Pradesh.

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I. Introduction:

The Chayangtajo Community Development (CD) Block is one of the oldest CD Block in East Kameng District opened in the year 1985 and is the home of 1173 households settled in 35 villages having a population of 6941 with 3407 male population and 3534 Female populations as per Census 2011. The altitude of the block varies from 1060 meters to 1906 meters above the mean sea level. The out comes under cool temperate and sub-humid climatic regions. It is 81 KM away from the district headquarters Seppa and is connected with a motorable road. The people settled in the area are predominant with tribal communities belonging to Nyishi tribes carrying the titles of Bagang, Yangfo, Tajo, Rebe, Killo, Keyong, and Puroik communities.

Livelihood patterns of the Community:

As revealed through various sources and focus group discussions, around 80 to 90 percent population of the blocks are leading a self-sufficient family life, all households is having owned around 3 to 10 plots of land for cultivation or farming except a few Puroik community households. Hence, agriculture is the mainstay of the community to sustain life in the village, as given below:

| Sl.No | Categories of sources of Income of the community | Number of respondents | % of respondents |
|--------------|---|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Agriculture and Farming | 150 | 75% |
| 2 | Domestication of Animals | 26 | 13% |
| 3 | Other Sources (daily wage, MGNREGA, etc.) | 24 | 12% |
| Total | | 100 | 100% |

Fig. 1. Table showing the sources of income of the community on which they depend.

As revealed in the table above shows that Agriculture and related farming account for 75% of the sources of income for the community from where they derived for living in the village. Domestication of animals and other sources together accounted for 25% only. this shows that the majority of people are dependent on agricultural farming as their occupation.

However, the production from the agriculture field and other farming activities hardly sustained the annual requirement of the villager as revealed through Focus Group Discussions with the village heads and Gram Panchayat members of the study area. They stated that hardly 25% of the families have self-sufficient food production from agriculture and other farming activities while the remaining 75% have shortfalls which they meet up from other sources as discussed below.

Every household is having domestic animals like Mithuns, Cow, Pig, Goat, and Fowl of their own from which they can be earned to meet up the annual shortfall requirement from the agriculture and other farming activities of the family as reported in the given table which accounts for 49% of all sources other than agriculture and farm activities, as given in the table below:

| Sl. No | Categories | Total number of respondents | % of respondents |
|--------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | By doing Wage Labour | 36 | 18% |
| 2 | By selling Domestic Animals | 98 | 49% |
| 3 | Lending from Others | 12 | 6% |
| 4 | By Selling Assets | 20 | 10% |
| 5 | Remittances and Other Receipts | 32 | 16% |
| 6 | MGNREGA related wage | 2 | 1% |
| Total | | 200 | 100% |

Fig. 2 Table showing the status of sources of income to meet the annual family requirement for domestic consumption.

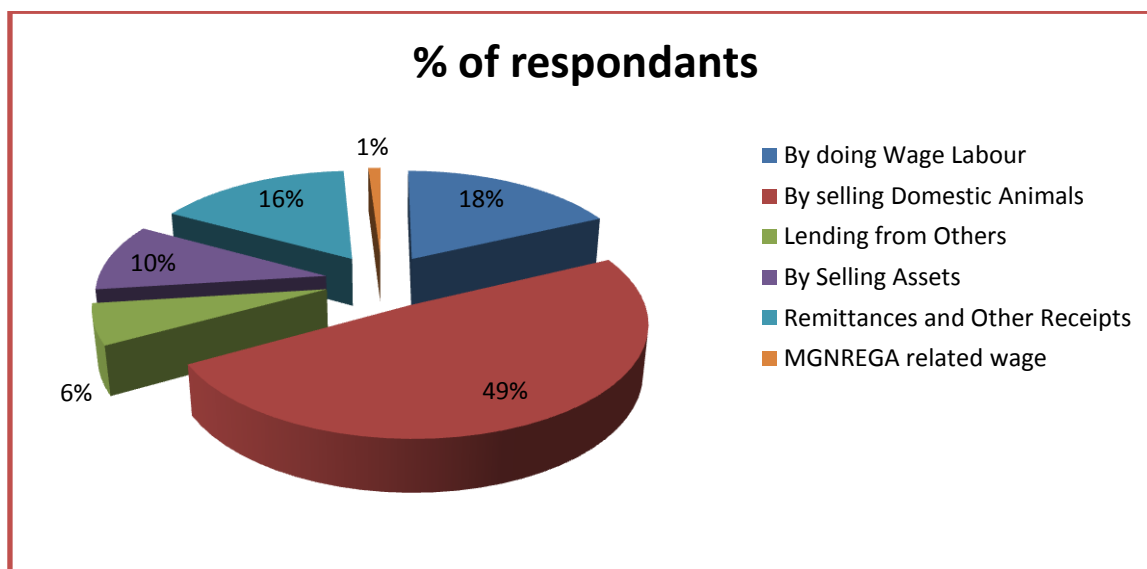


Diagram: Showing percentage of sources of income of the community to meet up the annual family requirement.

As revealed in table No. 2 and the corresponding diagram above, the annual shortfall of the community in the block is met up by selling domestic animals which accounts for 49%, wage employment (other than MGNREGA), and other daily paid wages account for 18%, remittance from migrated family members and other receipts accounts for 16%, internal borrowing/lending accounts for 6% and the families depends on MGNREGA works account for mere 1% in the livelihood activities of the communities. This shows that the impact of the noble MGNREGA program whose primary objective is to provide 100 days of wage employment to every intended family in a financial year, and enhancement of livelihood status of the community, has the least impact on the villagers of the Block.

II. Implementation of MGNREGA in the Block:

The shifting of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) into the purview of an Act during the year 2005 turns out to be one of the major shifts in the Central Government's Policy for the generation of employment to the community throughout the states in India. Along with the nation, the MGNREGA Scheme was also launched in the year 2006 and was implemented in a District of the State (i.e., Upper Subansiri District), in Arunachal Pradesh, however, the entire Districts of the state were covered under the scheme from 1st April 2008 onwards.

2.1 Initial Impression of the Scheme:

The initial phase of the scheme makes the people excited to have the provision of 100 days of wage employment for all above the age 18 years of a person irrespective of a person's education qualification, strength, gender differences, experience, etc. under the scheme the first time in the state. Many people who were intimated about the scheme come forward and approach for a job at the Block Office. After having the job cards people started demanding jobs through the Block Development Officer (BDO) who is also designated as Programme Officer (PO) for the implementation of the scheme and work as allocated in their respective

villages. During this first phase, the response of the community was mixed, many turn up demanding work, and many ignore it.

2.2 Practical experiences of the community under the scheme:

The community after working a few days under the MGNREGA scheme and the wages paid against the working days didn't satisfy the wage rate and the number of days provided at a time counted as Rs. 172/- per day (2017-18) and the number of days provided was only 40 to 50 days only, which is much lesser than the actual daily wage rate of Rs. 400 to 500/- per day.

Further, the engagement of villagers in their respective agriculture fields and other primary business from where they earned to sustain the annual household requirement pay less attention to MGNREGA works especially during the working season from March to November. Lack of awareness about the program on the part of program implementers and the community were the concerns besides, transparency and accountability in the wage payment (Cash mode), non-wage (material) supply, lack of manpower/functionaries under implementing Agency created hue and cry in the process of implementation and less impact of the scheme to the livelihood status of the villagers. Average numbers of days of employment for the last 4 financial years from 2015-16 to 2018-19 period for Chayangtajo CD Block are shown in the table below:

| Years | Total No. of Active Workers | Household provided employment | Person days generated | Average No. of days employed |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| 2018-19 | 4432 | 19389 | 844481 | 44 |
| 2017-18 | 4432 | 11563 | 343378 | 30 |
| 2016-17 | 6546 | 17935 | 707984 | 39 |
| 2015-16 | 6316 | 8148 | 541030 | 66 |
| Total | 21726 | 57035 | 2436873 | 179 |
| The average total of 4 years | 5432 | 14259 | 601298 | 45 |

Table No. 3. Shows employment provided to the community during 2015-16 to 2018-19 (Source MIS MGNREGA).

2.3 New Development under MGNREGA:

The launching of the digital India movement in the year 2015, has to some extent ensured transparency and accountability in the program implementation, however, there still exists a sorry state of affairs in the MGNREGA implementation process in many Blocks of the Districts in the State which includes, internet connectivity, complications in the software application operation, power connectivity to the interior villages and blocks of the state which compelled the Ministry to relax those non-connected areas (Blocks) further letting out similar malpractices in wage payment and non-wage distribution.

III. Major factors of less impact of the Scheme:

3.1 Meager Wage Rate:

Meager wage rates of Rs. 172/- per day under MGNREGA in comparison to agricultural and other daily wage rates of Rs. 400/- to 500/- prevailing in the area also make the program less impact on the economic status of the community and compelled the working forces of the village to migrate to nearby towns and cities for employment and earning during agriculture lean period.

3.2 Sparsely Populated Location:

Less number of registered populations under MGNREGA from the village happens to be one of the major reasons behind the non-creation of visible, durable, and sustainable assets out of the MGNREGA scheme. The Funds were Gram Panchayat wise allocation comes around 2 to 3 lakhs only for the GPs having a registered population of around 150 to 200 Job Card holders. Moreover, employment averaging 45 days in a year also happens to be the reason for sharing fewer amounts under non-wage heads. All these reasons make people opt for an alternate source of income like Jhum cultivation, a permanent govt. service by migrating from the village to sustain life and for the education of the children.

3.3 Limited Working Seasons:

Lean period of work demand and allocation to the wage seekers, the climatic condition of the District varies from place to place even within a short distance due to rugged topography, and the region experiences cool temperate to sub-humid climate. The summer months experience heavy rainfall which triggered sheet erosion, landslide, flooding, etc. during the period, and the winter experiences extreme cold which hampered the working period and left with a short period of hardly 6 months from October to March in a year which hampers MGNREGA works on Agri-Horti and allied activities during the off-seasons, especially for Agri-allied related

activities. Thereby compelled the program implementers to look for other non-NRM and livelihood-related activities during the lean period.

3.4 Sound Economic Status of the Community:

The study revealed that almost all households have their land for cultivation, and every family is domesticated like Mithuns, Cow, Goat, and Pig as part and partial of their livelihood. They could sustain self-sufficient life without depending on Govt. subsidies and assistance. Also, approximately 20% of families have one or more members engaged in a permanent and temporary government jobs. All these family backgrounds might have been the reason for the least impact of the MGNREGA scheme at Chayangtajo CD Block in particular and the State as a whole.

3.5 Lack of Awareness about the program about:

Chayangtajo CD Block is counted among one the backward blocks of the State and the district was covered under the MGNREGA scheme late in the year 2008. Education comes late in the area and almost all households are headed by an illiterate member. Therefore, villagers don't know their rights and entitlement under the scheme. Moreover, lack of transparency and accountability means on the part of Panchayat Leaders and the Officer in charge of the program also informed to be another reason for the non-success of the program in the Block as that of other mainland states.

IV. Conclusion:

Despite having the provision of providing 100 days of wage employment to every household for the creation of durable, sustainable, and livelihood-oriented Assets and having the provision of transparency and accountability through Social Audit, Ombudsman redressal system, prescribed and defined guidelines under the program. The MGNREGA program still failed to win the morale of the community in the study area in particular and the state as a whole.

Therefore, Training and Capacity Building on the guidelines need to be given to all levels of stakeholders, right from the user groups (the community members) to the decision makers (the legislature). The community should aware of such a level that they can claim their rights and entitlement, PR members to be trained to lead the community to perform, and the Govt. functionaries should be trained to deliver their duties and transparently serve the community. The institution of Social Audit should make independent and strong in the State. There and then the MGNREGA program might set its impacts on the area in particular and the State as a whole.

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References:

- [1]. Socio-economic Review 2013-14 of East Kameng District (Arunachal Pradesh);
- [2]. Census of India 2011,
- [3]. MGNREGA website (Report);
- [4]. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) from concerned Block.
- [5]. Primary data was collected through questionnaires.