

An Empirical Study on Major Role and Responsibility by Panchayat Present in Rural Development Programme - Ariyalur District, Tamil Nadu

***DR. P. Ilango**

****G. Sundharamoorthi**

*Professor, Department of Social Work, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli

**Guest Lecturer, Department of Social Work, Bharathidasan University Constituent College, Kurumbalur

Abstract

Background: *"India lives in its villages"* - Mahatma Gandhi. The prime goal of rural development is to improve the quality of life of the rural people at the same time helps to promote the infrastructure of the villages. **Aim:** The aim of the research is to study the impact of NREGS on the infrastructure conditions of the rural community. **Methods:** Descriptive research study is concerned with describing the characteristics of the particular individual. Descriptive Research Design has been used for the present study. The universe of the present study includes all the Village Presidents living within 6 blocks that fall under Ariyalur district. From the total number of 6 blocks, one block was selected by lottery method. Thirumanur block, which was selected, has 36 Panchayats. There were 20 such Panchayats that came under the study. Village Presidents was selected by lottery method. **Results:** The maximum of 50 per cent respondents belong to the age group between 41 to 50 years. The gender wise distribution that 65 per cent of the respondents are male and 35 per cent of them are female respondents. They all agree that they know about the scheme and have attended special training on it. The survey also lists the topics on which there were 100 per cent responses from the presidents. **Conclusions:** The present study is a humble attempt to describe the Rural Development will provide logistic support both on technical and administrative side for programme implementation.

Keywords: Promote the Infrastructure of the villages, Roll and obligation of the Panchayat President

Introduction

"India lives in its villages"

"My idea of Village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own wants and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is necessary.....It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children....The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own waterworks ensuring clean water supply. This can be done through controlled wells or tanks".

- Mahatma Gandhi

Background for Rural Development

Around 65% of the State's population is living in rural areas. Hence Rural Development which is concerned with economic growth and social justice, improvement in the living standard of the rural people by providing adequate and quality social services and minimum basic needs becomes essential. The present strategy of rural development mainly focuses on poverty alleviation, better livelihood opportunities, provision of basic amenities and infrastructure facilities through innovative programmes of wage and self-employment.

The above goals will be achieved by various programme support being implemented creating partnership with communities, non-governmental organizations, community based organizations, institutions, PRIs and industrial establishments, while the Department of Rural Development will provide logistic support both on technical and administrative side for programme implementation. Other aspects that will ultimately lead to transformation of rural life are also being emphasized simultaneously.

Step Taken by Government for Rural Development

The Government's policy and programmes have laid emphasis on poverty alleviation, generation of employment and income opportunities and provision of infrastructure and basic facilities to meet the needs of rural poor.

Goals, Objectives and Strategy for Rural Development

The prime goal of rural development is to improve the quality of life of the rural people by alleviating poverty through the instrument of self-employment and wage employment programmes, by providing community infrastructure facilities such as drinking water, electricity, road connectivity, health facilities, rural housing and education and promoting decentralization of powers to strengthen the Panchayat raj institutions.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)

The Parliament enacted an Act No. 42 of 2005 called the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. The Act provides a guarantee for rural employment to households whose adult members volunteer to do un-skilled manual work not less than 100 days of such work in a financial year in accordance with the scheme made under the Act

Main Features of NREGS Following works Taken Lead by Panchayat President

1. Water conservation and water harvesting.
2. Drought proofing (including afforestation and tree plantation).
3. Irrigation canals including micro and minor irrigation works.
4. Renovation of traditional water bodies including desilting of tanks.
5. Land Development.
6. Flood control and protection works including drainage in water logged areas.

Review of Literature

Pattanaik (2009), studied on the implementation of NREGS in Hoshiarpur district. The primary data was collected from 10 village Panchayats of the two blocks i.e. Mahilpur and Dasus of Hashiarpur during the financial year 2007 – 2008. The researcher states that initial findings of the study shows that the scheme has been successful in achieving the equity, while its efficiency is still a question to be efficiently dealt by the implementers of the programme the better nexus and coordination between the government and the Panchayats would enable efficient implementation of the scheme at the village level.

Singh (2008), conducted a study. It was published in YOJANA. The author took up Sonbhadra which is the most backward district in Uttar Pradesh. The author concludes after the study as follows” In view of the cited Scenario and problems, we can unhesitatingly say that there is a huge need for spreading awareness in this area. Only awareness can save them from the unscrupulous village and district officials.

Rao (2008), conducted a study on the NREGA. The study was carried out in Raichur district of Karnataka and Anantpur district of Andhra Pradesh in May – September 2007 to access the process of awareness of NREGA in the sample districts. The role of the civil society was aptly acknowledged in creating awareness. Further the author suggests the following for creating better awareness. Community radio concepts can effectively be used to give information to the target population. Local associations and teachers can be roped support the awareness.

Significance of the Study

This research becomes significant since it studies the special effects of the NREGS on the society and promotes the infrastructure status of the rural community, both directly and indirectly. The study also helps in identifying the defects of the scheme and suggests ways to rectify them. Hence this research becomes important. This research also reflects the involvement status of the Panchayat President and the present situation of the rural community therefore it can be called as the mirror of the society.

Statement of the Problem

India is the largest democratic country with rich and varied culture and life styles. There are industrious cities and fertile villages. The villagers depend on agriculture for their living. More than 80% of the Indians live in villages. When agriculture fails them, they hurl in poverty. They central and state governments have implemented various schemes to eradicate the poverty of the rural people. National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is one such a scheme which has gained popularity in recent times. These should be studied closely to identify the negative aspects and the central reason behind them. So that they can be rectified in order to make the scheme more successful. The implementation of the scheme nationwide has many practical difficulties. Only a direct research with those who help in implementing the scheme and the beneficiaries will help to remove these difficulties.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the awareness regarding the NREGS among the respondents.
2. To evaluate if the objectives of the NREGS are achieved.
3. To find out whether NREGS helps to promote the infrastructure of the villages.
4. To suggest ways and means to improve NREGS.

Assumptions

1. Panchayat President with higher level of education is likely to have a higher level of awareness on the scheme when compared to Panchayat President with lower level of education.
2. Panchayat President with higher age has less involvement in the scheme than the Panchayat President with lower age who has more involvement.

Research Methodology

Descriptive research study is concerned with describing the characteristics of the particular individual. **Descriptive Research Design** has been used for the present study. An attempt has been made, initially, to describe the background socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, and then the key variables namely awareness of the Panchayat President on the Scheme, Salient Feature of the Programme, and then finally to study the Deficiency on the programme. The universe of the present study includes all the Village Presidents living within 6 blocks that fall under Ariyalur district. From the total number of 6 blocks, one block was selected by lottery method. Thirumanur block, which was selected, has 36 Panchayats. There were 20 such Panchayats that came under the study. Village Presidents was selected by lottery method. The structured interview schedule was prepared in Tamil so that it could be understood by the respondents. The collection of data was done from 19th June to 31st August, 2009.

Results and Discussion

TABLE – 1: Distribution of Respondents by their Age

S. No.	Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	20 – 30 years	01	5.0
2.	31 – 40 years	04	20.0
3.	41 – 50 years	10	50.0
4.	51 – 60 years	02	10.0
5.	61 – 70 years	03	15.0
	Total	20	100.0

Source: Field Survey

The table above shows the age of respondents. The maximum of 50 per cent respondents belong to the age group between 41 to 50.

TABLE – 2: Distribution of Respondents by their Gender

S. No.	Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Male	13	65.0
2.	Female	07	35.0
	Total	20	100.0

Source: Field Survey

The gender wise distribution table shows that 65 per cent of the respondents are male and 35 per cent of them are female respondents.

TABLE – 3: Distribution of Respondents by their Community

S. No.	Community	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	SC	03	15.0
2.	BC	12	60.0
3.	MBC	05	25.0
	Total	20	100.0

Source: Field Survey

The distribution of Panchayat presidents according to caste shows that 60 per cent of them belong to Backward Community. 25 per cent belong to Most Backward Community and 15 per cent belong to the Schedule Community.

TABLE – 4: Distribution of Respondents by their Educational Qualification

S. No.	Educational Qualification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Primary	05	25.0
2.	Secondary	08	40.0
3.	Higher secondary	01	05.0
4.	College	06	30.0
	Total	20	100.0

Source: Field Survey

The education level of the Panchayat presidents are shown in this table 40 per cent of them have completed secondary education and it is very important to note that 30 per cent of the village presidents have completed college studies.

TABLE – 5: Distribution of Respondents by their Family Type

S. No.	Type of Family	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Joint	12	60.0
2.	Nuclear	08	40.0
	Total	20	100.0

Source: Field Survey

The above table shows that 60 per cent of the respondents live in joint families and 40 per cent live in single families.

TABLE – 6: Methods of Creating Awareness

S. No.	Methods of Creating Awareness	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Announcement	05	25.0
2.	Announcement and Bit Notices	09	45.0
3.	Announcement, Bit Notices and Banner	01	05.0
4.	Announcement, Bit Notice and Advertisement Board	05	25.0
	Total	20	100.0

Source: Field Survey

The above table lists the methods of awareness carried out in different Panchayats. Among the respondents 45 per cent of them stated that announcements and bit notices were used to create awareness about the NREGS scheme 25 per cent of the presidents said that only announcement were used and the same percentage of them agreed that announcement, bit notices and advertisement boards were also used for creating awareness among the public.

TABLE – 7: Verifying the Application

S. No.	Method of Verification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Ration Card	12	60.0
2.	Electoral Roll	01	5.0
3.	BPL Census	01	5.0
4.	Ration card and Electoral Roll	06	30.0
	Total	20	100.0

Source: Field Survey

This table studies the percentage of responses on the methods of verification used to check the applicants. 60 per cent of the beneficiaries produced ration cards and 30 per cent were verified with both ration cards and electoral roll.

TABLE – 8: Number of Gram Sabha Convened to Finalize the List

S. No.	Number of Gram Sabha	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	One	12	60.0
2.	Two	08	40.0
	Total	20	100.0

Source: Field Survey

From the above table we come to know that 60 per cent of the respondents have agreed that only on Gramsabha meeting was held to finalize the list of works while 40 per cent of them said that two meetings were held.

TABLE - 9: List of Work Done Under NREGS - 2008 - 2009

S. No.	Name of the Panchayat	Type of work			Total
		Water conservation	Renovation	Rural Roads	
1	Alagayamanavalam	1	-	1	2
2	Chinnputtakadu	-	2	1	3
3	Kamarasvalli	1	1	1	3
4	Kandiratheertham	1	2	-	3
5	Keelakolathur	-	2	1	3
6	Malathankulam	-	1	2	3
7	Kovilesanai	2	-	1	3
8	Kovilur	-	1	1	2
9	Koman	1	2	1	4
10	Kuruvadi	-	1	1	2
11	Manjamedu	1	1	1	3
12	Melapulur	1	1	1	3
13	Parpanacheri	-	-	2	2
14	Poondi	-	1	2	3
15	Sullangudi	-	2	1	3
16.	Thirumalaipadi	1	1	1	3
17.	Varanavasi	1	1	1	3
18.	Villupankurichi	1	1	-	2
19.	Venganoor	1	1	1	3
20.	Vetriyur	-	2	1	3
	Total	12	23	21	56

Source: From District Collector Office, Ariyalur

The table above shows that among the 20 Panchayats, 23 works were renovation of ponds and lakes. There were 21 works on rural roads and 12 water conservation works were carried out.

TABLE - 10: Average Proportion of SC / ST Working under NREGS

S. No.	Percentage of SC / ST Beneficiaries	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Below 25	01	5.0
2.	25 - 50	09	45.0
3.	50 - 75	10	50.0
4.	Above – 75	-	-
	Total	20	100.0

Source: Field Survey

The above table shows the percentage of SC / ST beneficiaries working under this scheme. Among the 20 Panchayat taken for the study, 10 Panchayats have 50-75 per cent of SC / ST workers 9 Panchayats have 25-50 per cent of them.

TABLE – 11: Social Audit at Panchayat Level

S. No.	Interval of Social Audit	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yearly	-	-
2.	Half yearly	11	55.0
3.	Quarterly	09	45.0
4.	Monthly	-	-
	Total	20	100.0

Source: Field Survey

This table studies the regularity of the social audits. 55 per cent of the Panchayats have half yearly audit and 45 per cent of the Panchayats have Quarterly audit. This shows that the scheme is being regularly monitored and the funds are utilized properly.

TABLE – 12: Allocation of Fund at Panchayat Level under NREGS – 2008 - 2009

S. No.	Name of the Panchayat	Provident Funds 2008 – 2009	Expenditure Funds 2008 – 2009	Balance Fund 2008-2009
1	Alagayamanavalam	686000	495784	190216
2	Chinnputtakadu	1192000	767453	424547
3	Kamarasvalli	931000	693898	237102
4	Kandiratheertham	908000	346507	561493
5	Keelakolathur	1103000	613419	489581
6	Malathankulam	1050000	905446	144554
7	Kovilesanai	964000	596527	367473
8	Kovilur	680000	393908	286092
9	Koman	1303000	720997	582003
10	Kuruvadi	921000	498006	422994
11	Manjamedu	962000	500599	461401
12	Melapalur	1185000	893171	291829
13	Parpanacheri	625500	409654	215846
14	Poondi	1074000	1065610	8390
15	Sullangudi	1042000	308272	733728
16.	Thirumalaipadi	900000	512010	387990
17.	Varanavasi	630000	557303	72697
18.	Villupankurichi	626000	324801	301199
19.	Venganoor	118000	390467	789533
20.	Vettriyur	1061000	487820	573180

Source: From District Collector Office, Ariyalur

Findings of the Study

Socio - Demographic Characteristics

The maximum of 50 per cent respondents belong to the age group between 41 to 50 years. The gender wise distribution that 65 per cent of the respondents are male and 35 per cent of them are female respondents. The distribution of Panchayat presidents according to caste shows that 60 per cent of them belong to Backward Community. 25 per cent belong to Most Backward Community and 15 per cent belong to the Schedule Community. The education level of the Panchayat presidents are shown in this 40 per cent of them have completed secondary education and it is very important to note that 30 per cent of the village presidents have completed college studies. The 60 per cent of the respondents live in joint families and 40 per cent live in single families.

Awareness on the NREGS

The survey on awareness about the NREGS list out various questions and the responses by the Panchayat presidents. The presidents have given 100 per cent responses to all the questions. They all agree that they know about the scheme and have attended special training on it. They also affirm that the ward members and MNP and others cooperate with them. The presidents have registered people for NREGS in their villages. The villagers apply both orally and in written. All the applications are processed in 15 days by the president himself. All the presidents agree that no applications were refused and Gram Sabha meetings were convened to recommend the list of works. All the presidents disagreed only on one point that is a separate meeting was not convened on the scheme and receipts for the applications received were not issued to the applicants.

Issue of Job Card and Approved List of Works

The survey also lists the topics on which there were 100 per cent responses from the presidents. The presidents agree that job cards were issued to all, free of cost, with their photographs, in 15 days from the date of registration. There was a meeting convened in the Gram Panchayat to finalize the list of approved works and the finalized list was put on display for the public to see and all the works were selected from the permissible list of works under NREGS.

Execution of Works

The survey on progress of work brings out the responses by the presidents. There are 100 per cent responses all the responses were positive.

Payment of Wage

The topic lists eight questions on the wages provided to the beneficiaries. All the answers by the Panchayat presidents were positive and they agreed that the wages were issued to the beneficiaries as per procedure.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The responses by the presidents on the registers and audit were all positive and the registers were maintained as per the procedure laid down by the NREGS scheme and audits were done regularly.

Grievance Redresses

From the survey we come to know that complaint registers are maintained in all the Panchayats. All the presidents agree that the complaints are disposed within time limits. The presidents also agreed that no help lines were setup for redressing grievances. The president's 100 per cent are of the opinion that the scheme should be implemented during times of less agricultural works. They also agreed that the scheme reduced migration and provided employment opportunity to all the people.

Suggestions of the Study

Suggestions to the Government

NREGS chooses irrigation, rural roads, water conservation etc., as works under the scheme which involves a certain level of danger to the workers initially. Therefore machineries can be used initially to clear out hard surfaces, thorny bushes and for those works that could cause danger to workers.

Suggestions to Future Researchers

The salient features of the scheme have not fully reached the beneficiaries which could separately be taken for study by the future researchers. The future researchers can take up for their study has excluded power of control to the village Presidents so that their problems could be analysed and reasons for non completion could be evaluated.

Suggestion to Social Workers

The social workers who play a vital role in strengthening the government schemes on various levels could help in monitoring and implementation of the scheme so that the aims and objectives of the government are achieved.

Conclusion

The study has brought out important findings which indicate significant the watershed activities or soil conservation activities or other activities should be understood in this light. Water is viewed here as a basic human right and as a public good, it is this view that has made it possible for the case studies to allocate water according “needs” of the particular community. Hence it is unable to meet its basic goals. Furthermore, we also need to outline the provision of facilities by the administration. The decision to provide work is being taken by the Gramsabha in most of the cases which shows that devolution of power is taking place.

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