

**An Impact Assessment Study of the Usefulness and Sustainability
Of the Assets Created Under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural
Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) In Sikkim**



Submitted to

Shri Anil Ganeriwala

Secretary, Rural Management and Development Department

Government of Sikkim, India

Submitted by

Institute of Rural Management Anand

Post Box No. 60,

Anand – 388001, India

December 2010

Contents

List of Tables.....	2
The Research Team.....	3
Preface.....	4
Executive Summary.....	6
Chapter One: Introduction.....	9
Chapter Two: Of MGNREGA in India; In Sikkim.....	12
Chapter Three: Methodology Used.....	21
Chapter Four: Study Findings.....	25
Chapter Five: Gauging the Sikkim Uniqueness.....	37
Chapter Six: Concluding Remarks.....	44
Annex One: The Case Studies (Text).....	51
Annex Two: The State of Sikkim: A Profile.....	83
Annex Three: The Questionnaire.....	86

List of Tables

Table 2.2.1: MGNREGA in Sikkim – A Performance Trend.....	16
Table 2.2.2 Improvement in visibility of results.....	20
Table 4.2.1: Income Sources.....	27
Table 4.2.2: Utilization of MGNREGA income.....	31

The Research Team

Prof. Ajay Dandekar, IRMA

Prof. Vivek Bhandari, IRMA

Prof. Pratik Modi, IRMA

Preface & Acknowledgement

The MGNREGA, which was launched in 2005, is one of the most ambitious centrally sponsored schemes of independent India. Its scale and complexity continue to test the strength and creativity of India's public systems in new and exciting ways. Recognizing that State governments around the country are likely to adapt it differently because of the diversity of the country, the scheme has allowed the State administrations a fair amount of autonomy in shaping its implementation. IRMA, an academic institution with a strong commitment to streamlining and improving public administration in India, was approached by the Government of Sikkim, in early 2010 to evaluate the implementation of the MGNREGA in the State. Recognizing the importance of this study for Sikkim, and indeed other States working to implement this scheme, a faculty team at IRMA accepted the assignment in April 2010. The report that follows presents the findings of this research.

A more detailed outline of the methodology and key collaborators of this research are mentioned later in the report, but we would like to mention that our work began with an important meeting in April 2010 in which we identified the issues involved, and formulating our approach to this complex research. The information requirements for further work were also identified. Thereafter, the relevant data, ideas and notes were compiled from the relevant government departments; field data was also gathered with support from the SIRD (Karfector), whose staff was a joy to work with. Particularly, we would like to appreciate the help and support of Ms. Bhumika Pradhan, Assistant Director, SIRD-Sikkim. All of the findings were then collated, and critically evaluated. Simultaneously, our team visited sites in all corners of the State for fieldwork, and the verification of the available data. The report that follows presents the findings of this research in their entirety.

We would like to place on record our deep appreciation and admiration for the constant support of key members of officials in the Sikkim government, as well as their commitment to addressing the governance challenges that the MGNREGA poses. These include Shri Anil Ganeriwala (Secretary, RMDD), Dr. Sandip Tambe (Special Secretary, RMDD), as well as the

dedicated team working in the MGNREGA cell and the Rural Management and Development Department. We are grateful to them all for their support throughout this undertaking.

Executive Summary

MGNREGA continues to be one of the most ambitious centrally sponsored schemes of independent India. Its scale and complexity continue to test the strength and creativity of India's public systems in new and exciting ways. In Sikkim, the implementation of MGNREGA started from 2 February 2006 in North District, from 1 April 2007 in South and East Districts, and from 1 April 2008 onwards in the whole State with the objective of providing 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to each rural household opting for it. Having completed about four years of MGNREGA implementation in the State, the Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA) was requested by the Rural Management and Development Department, Government of Sikkim, in early 2010 to do an evaluation of the MGNREGA programme in the State as well as to look at the sustainability of the assets created under it.

In order to get a complete understanding, we felt that a multipronged mixed methodology approach was desirable. In the initial phase of the study, we conducted an in-depth round-table discussion with all the four district development officers (DDOs), the MGNREGA ombudsman, the SIRD director, the secretary and additional secretary of the RMDD, Government of Sikkim. This phase was followed up by intensive data collection – qualitative and quantitative – from all the stakeholders. Using stratified random sampling procedure, we surveyed the MGNREGA beneficiaries in 175 GPUs spread across the four districts of the State and 27 block development officers (BDOs). Over and above the survey data, we carried out extensive case studies of MGNREGA implementation in all the four districts of Sikkim. The case study data helped us triangulate our results from the other phases of the research while improving our understanding of the quantitative data.

The research team found that four major types of work were implemented under the MGNREGA – Water Conservation, Land Development, Plantation and A forestation and Road Connectivity. They more or less confirm to the list approved by the program guidelines. The state government has been particularly focusing on creation of durable assets under MGNREGA. In 2009-10, 175 Rural footpaths, 132 Flood control works, 71 Water conservation works, 414 Drought Proofing

and Plantation works, 89 Micro Irrigation Channels and 148 Land Development Works were completed. In order to enhance rural water security, the State had initiated a new spring-shed development program jointly with People's Science Institute, Dehradun and WWF-India under the banner of "MGNREGA Dhara Vikas". Outcome of this initiative include preparation of a "Village Spring Atlas" and increase in the discharge of the springs. Pilot spring-shed development works are already underway in Duga, Sumbuk, Kaluk and Namthang. The State administration, through implementation of MGNREGA, has been able to put money in the hands of the poor. During the last financial year (2009-10), a total of 55,000 (of the total 80,000) of the rural households (mostly women) participated in this program. The program attracted not only the 20,000 rural poor but also 35,000 APL families. Wage payments to the tune of INR 40 crore have been released to them, creating a multiplier effect and stimulating the rural economy. MGNREGA was able to dignify labor work in the villages, and provided purchasing power among the rural households. When these poor households spend this additional money, they create a demand for other commodities.

Primarily, MGNREGA has provided a source of supplementary income to the families without making any wage discrimination between men and women. Hence, it is the local women who are the active participants under this scheme. MGNREGA was one of the principal sources of earning alternate income in rural Sikkim. This program has enhanced food security and provided the unemployed a means of sustenance. Mostly, the employment was provided within the radius of 5 kilometer from the village. This entailed less travel and did not affect their household activities to a large extent. Providing bank accounts to rural women had a positive impact on their empowerment and self-confidence. Currently, there is a greater degree of community bonding and cohesion amongst the women-folk. Many have claimed that MGNREGA has provided them with a platform to discuss common issues and has augmented their awareness level with regard to community activities. Through land development activities (to control floods, soil erosion and enhance land stability) and the construction of orchards in one another's land, the level of community participation has increased. This has led to the establishment of mutual trust as well as better coordination with the local administration. Also, the technical expertise provided by the Agriculture and Horticulture department officials has led to better quality produce.

Our study found overall positive impacts of the assets created under MGNREGA in the state of Sikkim, and we foresee a second round of positive multiplier effect of this program; however, the mechanism to ensure durability and sustainability of the assets created under this program was absent. The state administration should start thinking in this direction as the assets created under the program, in near future will start demanding maintenance in order for it to continue to provide positive net returns to the community. Our study identifies provisions given under MGNREGA for ensuring durability and sustainability of the assets created under the program. Our study also suggests strategies to address the issue of durability and sustainability of the assets.

1.0 Introduction

The author of the present study: “**An Impact Assessment Study of the Usefulness and Sustainability of the Assets Created Under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Sikkim**”, is Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA), a Gujarat based premier management education institute. It was established in 1979, but now stands as a pioneering academic institution in rural management education and research. It is committed to pursuing excellence along with creativity and integrity. The unique strength of IRMA is its concern with integrating development and management in all its endeavors and activities. This perspective sets IRMA apart from other management and rural development institutions, which are largely concerned with either management or development, but not with both. Today, IRMA is recognized not only as an institution of excellence in teaching and research, but is also acknowledged for having successfully created the new discipline of rural management. This path-breaking approach of IRMA is being emulated by other institutions in India and abroad. As a premier institution of professional training and development, IRMA has evolved unique curricula for its various programs.

In recent years, IRMA has also created significant forays in the research and consultancy services sector. These two faculties have proven to be a means of enriching the quality and content of teaching and training. This continuous up gradation puts us in an enviable position of serving our clientele more efficiently by helping them identify and resolve their critical management problems. The union government, state governments, NGOs, cooperatives, and national and international donor agencies are major clients of IRMA. Over the years, faculty members of IRMA have completed a large number of research and consultancy studies and assignments encompassing all the spheres of rural lives.

Consultancy and Research projects constitute one of the major activities of the Institute along with teaching and training. IRMA has done consulting assignments for many major national and international agencies including Government of India, State Governments, The World Bank, ILO, UNICEF, UNDP, SDC, and FORD Foundation etc.

1.1 The Present Study

The present study came into being as a response to the invitation made by the rural management and development department of the Government of Sikkim to IRMA. In our subsequent proposal, our major contention was shown to be a process of scientific enquiry into the overall experience of the state in implementing the MGNREGA. It was also contended that the entire effort on part of IRMA would require a scientific process, marked by conceptualizing, designing, planning, implementation, sample selection, analysis, results, and report writing.

It was further intended to find out direct and indirect consequences of the scheme as reflected, in the field, by the usefulness and sustainability of the assets created. It was also acknowledged in the proposal that without getting adequate and focused inputs from the state government and the department of rural development and management, the study would not be able to sustain itself.

1.2 The Report Lay Out

The report has been laid out in a manner suitable to the readers' convenience. It commences with an executive summary of the entire treatise, followed by a note that introduces the study to the readers in terms of a brief on IRMA, the study's purpose and the sequence of chapters (Chapter One). The study then goes on to discuss the origins and performance of the MGNREGA both at the national level and the state level. It also gives the first indication of the uniqueness of the scheme in Sikkim (Chapter Two). The subsequent chapter briefly describes the methodology adopted in the study (Chapter

Three) before giving way to the two core chapters. These chapters are based on the data collected from all the relevant stakeholders using mixed methodology approach. It also in a way reflects an intense community consultation level the team could attain during the course of the study. These chapters respectively narrate (a) major findings of the study and (b) the uniqueness of the Sikkim experience as seen in the field and as borne out by numerous community groups and participants the team had consulted (Chapters Four and Five). The chapter that follows these two closes the study after making pointed and relevant concluding remarks (Chapter Six).

The annexes display their own importance. Annex one comprises of the text of the case studies. The inputs from the case studies informed our data analysis and conclusion through rich insights it generated from the field. Annex two briefly profiles the state of Sikkim. Annex three contains the questionnaire used in the study and Annex four portfolios a set of select pictures relevant to the program.

Chapter Two

Of MGNREGA in India; In Sikkim

2.0 **Introduction**

Having laid the background of the study in the previous chapter, we look at two different perspectives concerning the subject scheme of the study, i.e. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), in the present chapter. The first perspective refers to the scheme's standing at the national level; the second refers to the scheme's performance in the state under consideration, i.e. Sikkim.

2.1 **The MGNREGA: A brief**

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the most advertised and widely dispersed flagship program of the government of India, was carved out of a statutory act (known by the same name) notified by the Indian parliament in 2005. The MGNREGA was notified on September 7, 2005.

The main and immediate objective of the Act is to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.



The above objective is overarched by a set of goals that are embedded in the framework of just social development. These include: (a) a strong social safety net for the vulnerable groups by providing a fall-back employment source (b) a growth engine for sustainable development of an agricultural economy through strengthening the natural resource

base of rural livelihood and create durable assets in rural areas (c) empowerment of rural poor through the processes of a rights-based law and (d) introducing new ways of doing business, as a model of governance reform anchored on the principles of transparency and grass root democracy.

Thus, as the MGNREGA Act claims, MGNREGA fosters conditions for inclusive growth ranging from basic wage security and recharging rural economy to a transformative empowerment process of democracy.

The Act was notified in 200 districts in the first phase with effect from February 2nd 2006 and then extended to additional 130 districts in the financial year 2007-2008 (113 districts were notified with effect from April 1st 2007, and 17 districts in UP were notified with effect from May 15th 2007). The remaining districts have been notified under the MGNREGA with effect from April 1, 2008. Thus MGNREGA covers the entire country with the exception of districts that have a hundred per cent urban population.

The Act is marked by certain salient features that purport to facilitate in achieving the act's goals and objectives. Notable among them are:

(a) all adult members of a rural household, willing to do unskilled manual work, may apply for registration in writing or orally to the local Gram Panchayat (b) the Job Card should be issued within 15 days of application (c) employment will be provided within 15



days of application for work, if it is not then daily unemployment allowance as per the Act, has to be paid (d) wages are to be paid according to the Minimum Wages Act 1948 for agricultural labors in the State, unless the Centre notifies a wage rate which will not be less than Rs. 60/ per day. Equal wages will be provided to both men and women (e) at least one-third beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested work under the scheme (f) permissible works predominantly include water and soil conservation, afforestation and land development works (g) social audit has to be done by the Gram Sabha and (h) all accounts and records relating to the Scheme should be available for public scrutiny.

It must be mentioned here that the act is the first effort in the world to provide legal guarantee for the right to work and covers all the districts in the country. It also marks a paradigm shift from all precedent wage employment programs. There are some significant aspects of the same such as: (a) the MGNREGA provides a statutory guarantee of wage employment, a rights-based framework for wage employment (b) there is the legal mandate of providing employment in a time bound manner(15 days) and is underpinned by the provision of Unemployment Allowance (c) the Act is designed to offer an incentive structure to the States for providing employment as ninety percent of the cost for employment provided is borne by the Centre (d) unlike the earlier wage employment programs the MGNREGA is demand driven and has extensive inbuilt transparency safeguards such as documents, processes, village level community institutions to monitor and keep vigil and (e) The public delivery system has been made accountable, as it envisages an Annual Report on the outcomes of MGNREGA to be presented by the Central Government to the Parliament and to the Legislature by the State Government.

2.2 MGNREGA in Sikkim: A note

With the NREG Act getting passed in September, 2005, the MGNREGA-Sikkim was implemented from 2nd February, 2006 in North District, from 1st April, 2007 in South and East districts and from 1st April 2008 in the whole State with the objective of providing 100 days of guaranteed unskilled wage employment to each rural household opting for it. The MGNREGA, a demand-driven scheme has its focus on works relating to water conservation, drought proofing (including afforestation / tree plantation), land development, flood-control/protection (including drainage in waterlogged areas) and rural connectivity in terms of all weather roads.

Very recently, The MGNREGA has completed 4 years of implementation in the State. This Scheme has been universalized and is operational in all the 163 Gram Panchayats of the State. The Scheme has been able to put money in the hands of the poorest of the poor on a scale that is unprecedented. During the last financial year (2009-10), a total of

55,000 (of the total 80,000) of the rural households (mostly women) participated in this program. The program attracted not only the 20,000 rural poor but also 35,000 APL families. Wage payments to the tune of Rs. 40 crore have been released to them, creating a multiplier effect and stimulating the rural economy. MGNREGA was able to dignify labor work in the villages, and provided purchasing power among the rural households. When these poor households spend this additional money, they create a demand for commodities. The production of these commodities, in turn, creates demand for capital, raw materials and workers. In Sikkim this multiplier effect is reflected in the increased investment in livestock (cows, pigs, poultry etc) and quality education in the rural areas.

The state government has been focusing on the creation of durable assets under MGNREGA. In 2009-10, we were able to complete 175 Rural footpaths, 132 Flood control works, 71 Water conservation works, 414 Drought Proofing and Plantation works, 89 Micro Irrigation Channels and 148 Land Development Works. In order to enhance rural water security the state had initiated a new Spring-shed development program jointly with People's Science Institute, Dehradun and WWF-India under the banner of "MGNREGA Dhara Vikas". Outcomes of this initiative include preparation of a "Village spring Atlas" and increase in the discharge of the springs. Pilot Spring-shed Development works are already underway in Duga, Sumbuk, Kaluk and Namthang.

In order to ensure transparency, more than 90% of the wage payment is being routed through the 57,000 newly opened bank and post office accounts. A grievance redressal mechanism has also been established along with transparent material purchase norms and a toll free helpline 7979 is operational. Ombudsman has been appointed by a committee headed by the Chief Secretary. The muster rolls were also read out in the gram sabha in Social Audits conducted by reputed NGOs in all the villages. Sikkim is amongst the few States in the country to complete the Social Audit and Labor Budget planning in all the Gram Panchayats in a time bound manner. Full time professional manpower are now at place at the Village, Block, District and State level, greatly improving the administration of the Scheme.

The shelf of works to be taken up in the village are proposed by the Gram Sabha, estimation is done by the Block office, technical sanctions are done at the District level and financial sanctions by the Zilla Panchayat. No contractors or middle men are permitted and 100% implementation of works is by the Gram Panchayat. MGNREGA has helped in strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions by bringing real democracy to the grassroots, and facilitated the transformation from Contractor Raj to Panchayati Raj.

The physical and financial progress of the program for 2009-10 as on 28th Feb, 2010 is provided in Table 2.2.1 on the following page. The scheme's implementation has received an unparalleled public response and about 50,000 rural households are currently participating in this program. This translates to a wage payment of Rs 50 lakh daily to rural Sikkim.

Table 2.2.1: MGNREGA in Sikkim – A Performance Trend

Indicator	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010*
District under MGNREGA	North	North, East and South	All districts	All districts
No. of Job cards	4,498	30,907	66,213	69,800
Households Employed	4,107	19,787	52,006	54,155
Persondays Generated	2,42,000	8,59,738	26,33,591	34,67,000
Persondays/household	59	43	51	64
No. of Works Taken up	159	514	632	2107
%of wage payment through accounts	0%	0%	24%	87%
Wage Material Ratio	81	68	61	64
Women Participation	26%	42%	38%	48%
Total Funds Available	8.32 Crore	15.81 Crore	49.50 Crore	98 Crore**

Total Expenditure	2.69 Crore	10.55 Crore	38.08 Crore	52 Crore
--------------------------	------------	-------------	-------------	----------

* As on 28th Feb, 2010; ** As on 31st March, 2010

The total labour budget for the State for 2009-10 was Rs 75 crore. Sikkim is amongst the few states where 100% implementation is being done by Gram Panchayats. The average outlay for a GPU is about Rs 45 lakh annually.

MGNREGA has helped in strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions by bringing real democracy to the grassroots, and facilitated the transformation from Contractor Raj to Panchayati Raj. In order to improve the technical management of this program, additional technical manpower on contractual basis have been recently appointed. Amongst the new initiatives, Bharat Nirman Rajiv Gandhi Seva Kendra (BNRGSK) at the GPUs level which will function as a MGNREGA Village Office and Village Resource Centre will soon be created.

There are other indicators such as (a) implementation of certain transparency safeguards (b) improvement in visibility of results (c) new initiatives employed that stand the state's performance in a very good stead. These are discussed below.

Types of Works

The research team found that four (04) major types of work are executed or implemented under the MGNREGA as given below. They more or less confirm to the list approved by the program guidelines.

- **Water Conservation**

- a. Irrigation channel
- b. Water tank



- c. Water storage units
- **Land Development**
 - a. Playground Development
 - b. Protection wall
 - c. Land terracing
 - d. Construction of shed



- **Plantation and Afforestation**
 - a. Orange Plantation
 - b. Orange rejuvenation plantation
 - c. Bamboo Plantation
 - d. Tree Plantation
 - e. Tree Saplings plantation
 - f. Teak plantation



- **Road Connectivity**
 - a. Footpath Development
 - b. Motor-able road development (Kachcha work)

Transparency safeguards

The following safeguards have been put in place to ensure transparency in implementation:

- 100 % implementation through Gram Panchayats
- 57,000 bank / post office accounts already opened

- Social Audit of all the 163 Gram Panchayats in all the 4 districts completed
- Complaint Grievance Redressal mechanism established
- MGNREGA Toll Free Helpline 7979 operational in Head Office for providing help and redressal of complaints.
- Amongst the few States to have no complaints in MoRD online portal
- Ombudsman has been appointed by a committee headed by the Chief Secretary
- Appointment of 163 Gram Rozgar Sahayaks at village level and 23 Technical Assistants at Block level completed
- State MGNREGA Cell with 6 professionals constituted in Nov 2009, Full time Assistant Program Officers (APO) at Block level in place in Jan 2010

Improvement in the visibility of results

Over the last two years certain improvements in the visibility of results has been noticed. The following table summarizes the same.

Table 2.2.2 **Improvement in visibility of results**

Performance Indicator	2008-09	2009-10
Fulltime Manpower	Village and District	Village, District, Block and State
Funds sanctioned	44 crore	87 crore
Intensity (person days per household)	51 days	80 days
Wage payment through accounts	24%	87%
Works completed	564	1200
% of water conservation works	19%	73%
Social Audit and Labour Budget	100% GP	100% GP

New initiatives

The following new initiatives have been employed by the state's administration as part of the scheme's implementation.

- Enhancing rural water security by initiating a new Spring-shed development program under the banner of "MGNREGA Dhara Vikas".
- Estimating software (ES) being developed in-house to reduce delay in estimation and enhance transparency
- Full operationalisation of MIS by 31st May, 2010
- Micro-monitoring System (MMS) being developed to keep a track of ward wise physical progress on a bi-monthly basis using SMS
- Convergence with Universal Financial Inclusion Project for faster and hassle free wage payments

Methodology

3.0 Introduction

At the time of submitting the proposal, the research team had contended that eventually the faculty at IRMA would deliberate on what could be termed as a reasonable methodology for the study given the time and budgetary constraints. It was also felt that the nature of the assignment required the methodology to be updated as per the contingencies that might arise during the course of the field work and subsequent developments.

3.1 Methodology Used

An initial scoping visit was made by the research team in April. The team spent about four days in the state, meeting different officials of the rural management and development department and followed it up with a number of pilot visits in the field to acquaint itself with the context and settings. Particularly, the interactions with the secretary (RMDD), the additional secretary (RMDD), and their NREGS Cell team members was useful in preparing a comprehensive methodology for the study and fine tune the methods of enquiry subsequently.

Based on the inputs from our scoping visit and the rich interactions we have had with several officials of the RMDD, we decided to pursue a mix methodology approach. We collected data – quantitative and qualitative – from all the stakeholders. We decided to collect the quantitative data through survey from the MGNREGA beneficiaries in 175 GPUs spread proportionately across the four districts of the state. The stratified random sampling procedure was used to identify these GPUs. Additionally, we surveyed about 27 BDOs and had an in-depth round-table discussion with all the four DDOs, the

MGNREGA ombudsman, the SIRD director, the secretary and additional secretary of the RMDD. Our initial experience convinced us that mere survey data would not yield much information about the issues at hand; hence, we decided to study the issues through the case study method as well. We conducted six case studies in all, two case studies each in North, South, and West districts. The case studies were based on consultation with various stakeholders at the village level, i.e., men and women of the village, the panchayat members, and the local level government functionaries. The information collected from the case studies provided rich insights into the issues at hand as well as helped us interpret the quantitative data in a better light. The detailed case studies are given as annexure in the report. The case studies were conducted at the following place:

Lachen (North District)

Nagi (South District)

Timberbung (West District)

Kaluk (West District)

Lachung (North District)

Tangi Bikmat (South District)

To collect the survey data, we employed the field investigators of State Institute of Rural Development – Sikkim. These field investigators were trained for the entire day by the IRMA team during the second visit to the state. We provided them the questionnaire and the list of GPUs and the MGNREGA work that they were supposed to visit. A faculty from the SIRD coordinated the data collection work on our behalf with the field investigators. We would like to put this on record that the IRMA team visited villages and the MGNREGA works in all the four districts, including the difficult terrain of Lachen and Lachung in North Sikkim where we met the Zumsa office bearers and saw the MGNREGA works. The entire methodology was discussed with the RMDD officials and was ratified by them before we started the data collection work.

- **Research Tools Used**

The following research tools were used for the study:

1. One to one interaction with beneficiaries
2. One to one interaction with government officials
3. Focused group discussions with beneficiaries
4. Focused group discussions with community groups
5. In depth interviews of government officials at various levels
6. Case studies

- **Data Management & Analysis**

The data were processed at IRMA by the faculty team with the help of research associates. The quantitative and qualitative data were processed at our end using the various data management softwares, such as SPSS, Excel, NViVo.

- **Research Sequence**

The following sequence was followed in the study:

- Desk review of MGNREGA-Sikkim
- Understanding the implementation process
- Scoping visit and round-table discussion with the RMDD officials
- Development of work plans and study tools and the questionnaires
- Sample selection

- Training of the field investigators at SIRM-Sikkim
 - Data collection
 - Data compilation and analysis
 - Draft report writing
 - Draft report presentation with the RMDD officials
 - Final report submission
-
- **Cooperation from the State**

We must put on record the complete cooperation we received from the state administration in conducting the study. We had sought various and numerous details of the MGNREGA work as implemented in the state, we had asked for multiple and complicated data on the communities, villages and population in general which was promptly provided. We were given full access to whatever data base the state had already acquired through its own efforts.

Study Findings

4.0 Introduction

In the present chapter, we examine the major findings of the study, as reflected in the results of the surveys, case studies and consultations carried out by the research team with a gamut stakeholders involved in the execution of MGNREGA in Sikkim.

4.1 Study Coverage

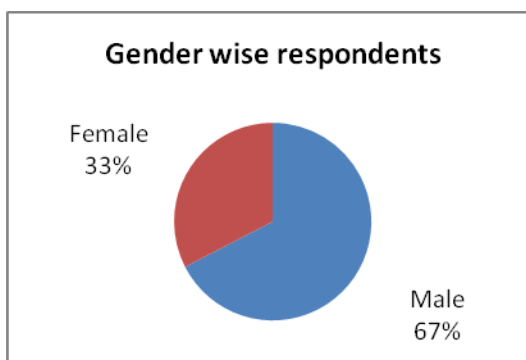
During this study we have focused on the usefulness and sustainability aspects of the community level assets created due to the MGNREGA. The team had visited 175 beneficiaries and collected data from them. The team also went and inspected 15-20 work sites to look at the assets created under the scheme and met the beneficiaries as well as panchayat members. Moreover, the team was involved in rigorous interaction with a host of community groups and government officials at various levels in form FGDs and in-depth interviews to develop the case studies. In the process, all the four districts of the state have been represented in our inquiry.

4.2 Major Findings

- **Respondents' Background**

Out of the total beneficiaries in the sample, 120 belonged to the below poverty line (BPL) families and 55 to the above poverty line (APL). The gender wise composition of the sample showed 33% female and 67% male. The awareness level about the program was indeed high. Out of the total, 160 (91.43%) respondents had good knowledge about the scheme, 143 (75%) respondents were literate, and only 13-15

respondents had studied beyond the 10th year of school. This shows that MGNREGA beneficiaries are mostly unskilled and semi-literate people who need this scheme the most.



- **Housing pattern**

Majority of the respondents had their own house, and majority of the houses were made from stone and mud.

- **Income Sources**

All the respondents were marginal or small farmers and their main source of income was agriculture. They were either doing farming in their own land or were associated with agriculture labor. Majority of the respondents (90%) had their own land, 39% of them had access to irrigation facility.

Table 4.2.1: **Income Sources**

Income sources	No. of respondents	% (N=175)
Agri. Labour	117	66.85
Own Farming	72	41.14
Livestock Farming	51	29.14
Non-Agri.labour	21	12.00
Salaried persons	20	11.42
Small shop owners	13	7.42
Government. Scheme	7	4.00
Others	6	3.42

Source: Survey

It may be added here that in general, one or two persons were found to be earning members in the family. About 57% respondents had one earning member in the family and 12% respondents had 2-3 earning members in the family. MGNREGA work could be a big help for such families who are small or marginal farmers, depending mostly on the farming income, having only one earning member. MGNREGA work could supplement their incomes and raise their standard of consumption.

Sikkim: MGNREGA sites verified during field work

During the course of field work, the team visited following sites to verify the types of works undertaken / implemented under the MGNREGA.

1.0 Plantation and Afforestation

• Bamboo	07	
• Broom	04	
• Cardamom	09	
• Chinese Teak	03	
• Fodder	05	
• Forest	05	
• Orange	02	
• Mixed	04	(39)

2.0 Land Development

• Boundary Wall	01	
• Box Drain	04	
• Irrigation	04	
• Terracing	06	
• Leveling	03	
• Playground	11	(29)

3.0 Water Conservation

• Tanks	04	
• Ponds	02	
• MGNREGA Dhara Vikas	03	
• Protection of Water bodies	05	(14)

4.0 Road Connectivity

- C C Footpaths 20
- Motor Roads 03 (23)

- **Wages and Payment**

Sikkim could achieve 80 days on an average for the wage seekers, with 23 per cent of the households completing 100 days. This is significantly higher than the national achievement of 54 days. On this performance outcome, Rajasthan is ranked 3rd and Andhra Pradesh 4th. Sikkim also scores high on the transparency safeguards front, being the leading State in making the Ombudsman functional, having a universal coverage of social audits and having a virtual complaint-free implementation.¹

Out of total (175) respondents, 50% had finished 100 days employment in the current year itself. This indicates the high probability of fully meeting the target well before the year end. The satisfaction of the beneficiaries was so high that a large number of them (87%) demanded more than 100 days of employment.

This Scheme has been able to put money in the hands of the poorest of the poor on a scale that is unprecedented. During the last financial year 2009-10, 60 per cent (about 54,000) of the rural households were provided employment. A total sum of Rs 43 crore through wage payments was pumped into rural Sikkim through 57,000 bank and post office accounts. It created a multiplier effect and stimulated the rural economy². The wage payment of 100 rupees per day's work was given to almost every beneficiary. In our survey, 94% of the respondents replied that they were earning Rs. 100-125 per day and they used to receive the wages in 15 to 20 days. As per our survey, 60% of the respondents had accounts in banks and 40 % had accounts in Post Offices. However, a larger number of these 40% post office accounts holders, nearly 32.7% complained about the delay in receiving the payment. They believed

¹ <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jul2110/oth06>

² <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jul2110/oth06>

An Impact Assessment Study of the Usefulness and Sustainability Of the Assets Created Under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment

Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Sikkim, 2010.

that this delay was due to slow work, lack of adequate liquidity, and poor administration of the post office branches.

- **Migration**

Migration is not a major issue in Sikkim. Our qualitative as well as quantitative data showed that the effective implementation of MGNREGA in the state could arrest the within state migration. Our respondents to survey and focus group discussions participants informed us that after the implementation of MGNREGA, the small amount of migration has come down by almost half.

- **Wage Utilization**

It is a well established economic fact that spending has a multiplier effect. When these poor households spend their additional MGNREGA money, they create a demand for several commodities. The production of these commodities, in turn, creates demand for raw materials and workers. With its current level of coverage and intensity, MGNREGA is increasingly becoming a lifeline of the rural women in the State.³

In this study, we were interested in finding out how the MGNREGA wage money was spent by the beneficiaries. We found that majority of the families were spending the increased income from MGNREGA after better food basket followed by children's education and health. This expenditure pattern is interesting. It shows that the MGNREGA money is being spent after improving the quality of life and human development related issues.

³ <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jul2110/oth06>

Table 4.2.2: **Utilization of MGNREGA income**

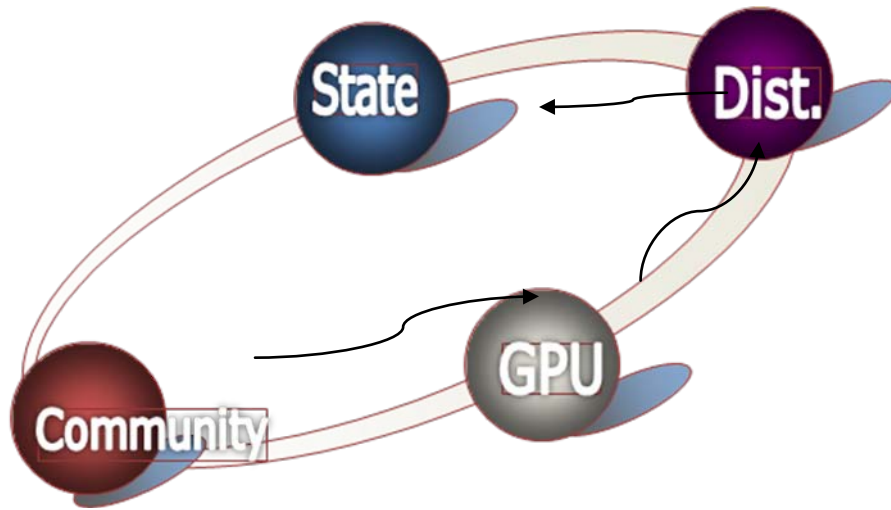
Utilization pattern	No. of family	% (N=175)
Good food	141	81
Children's education	126	72
Health related expenditure	112	64
Bought new/old things for household use	61	35
Buying things for agriculture	49	28
Renovated the house	25	14
For irrigation work	14	8
Paid back loan	11	6.3
Share market	6	3.4
New insurance policy	1	0.6

- **Conformance with the MGNREGA Guidelines**

The MGNREGA guidelines view the program at the district level in three major phases. These are: Planning, Management and Implementation / Execution. In the paragraphs that follow, we look at the state's performance within the framework of these three phases.

Planning Level

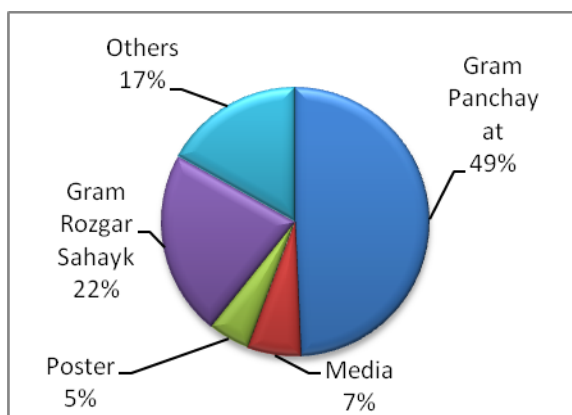
As per the guidelines, the administration prepares the plan in close interaction with community based on the community's demand. This fact was reflected in our data as well, where we found that 70% of the respondents informed us that planning was done as per the community's demand and they had taken part in the plan development at village level.



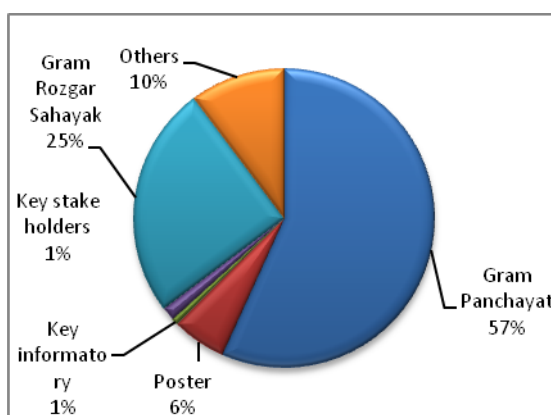
Management Level

The state administration has set up an effective communication channel for MGNREGA through a functional Helpline. The administration has developed good printed information material on MGNREGA for circulation. It is through the government machinery that the village community gets to know about the MGNREGA. Our data shows that the most important sources of knowledge about MGNREGA are Gram Panchayat followed by Gram rozgar sahayk. Such a responsive communication has resulted in high awareness level among the beneficiaries. The success in creating awareness is complemented by an effective implementation by the administration. The job cards are issued within 15-17 days' time according to 74.2% respondents.

Graph: **Knowledge sources about MGNREGA among the surveyed population**



Graph: **Knowledge sources about work availability (in MGNREGA) among the surveyed population**



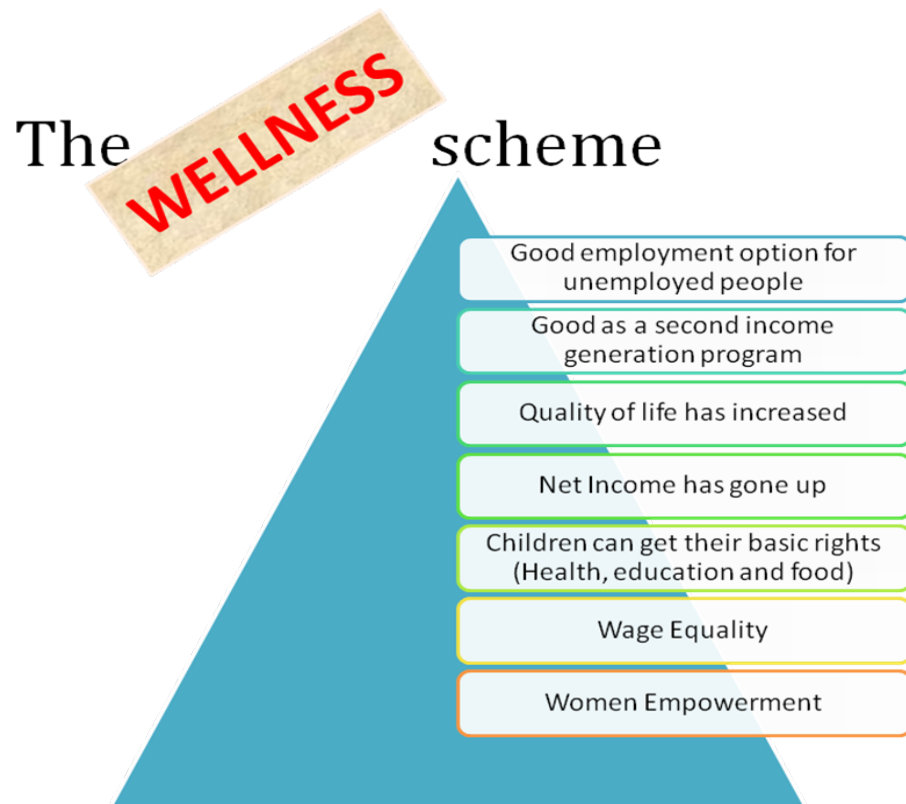
Implementation Level

MGNREGA work has led to the construction of several assets throughout the state. The works under MGNREGA can be segregated into four major types: (a) Water conservation (b) Land development (c) Plantation and afforestation and (d) Road connectivity. Under these four categories, more than 150 assets have been created in the Sikkim during the last year.

4.3 Impact of MGNREGA

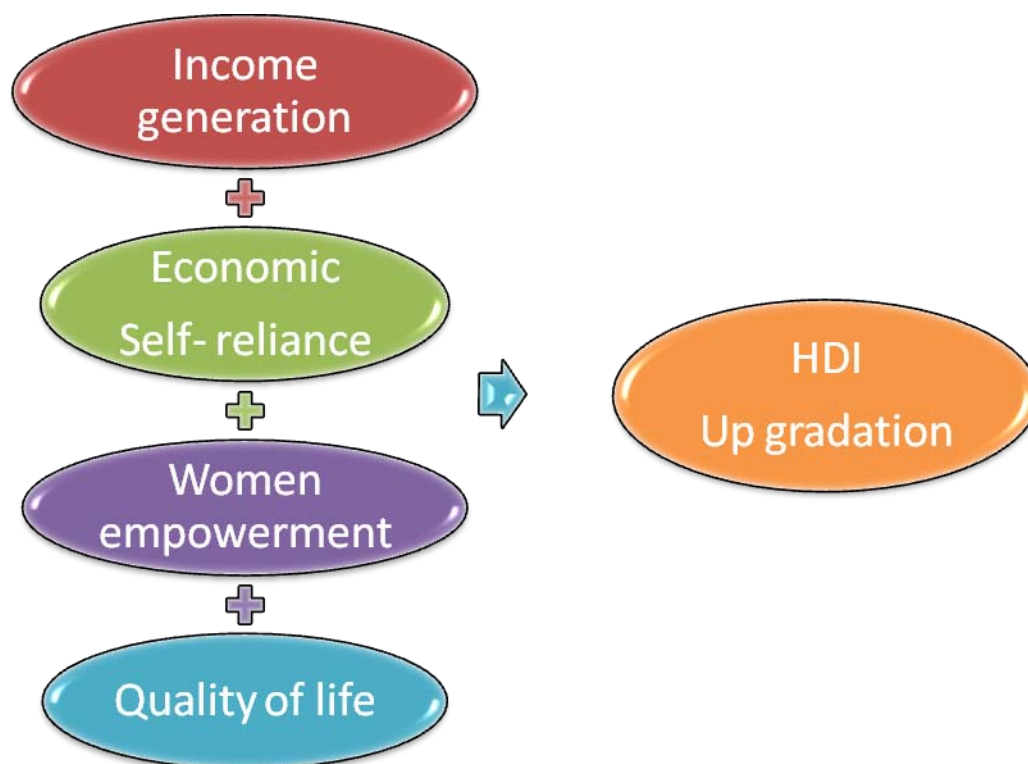
During the team's consultations with the various stakeholders, it emerged that one of the most significant impact the scheme is that it has brought back home, as it were earlier, the dignity of labor. It has added significantly to the purchasing power of the beneficiaries who are spending the additional income on better quality of life and human development related issues which is a good sign for the better future of the state and its people. The MGNREGA work has enhanced the bargaining power of the rural households in negotiating their wages in the open market. As our case studies in the annexure reflects, the biggest beneficiary of the MGNREGA in Sikkim are women whose standing in the family and society has gone up despite Sikkim being a more egalitarian society compared to the bigger Indian states. Women were feeling empowered and equal as the MGNREGA work did not discriminate between the man and women in terms of their wages. This fact was a significant confidence boost up for women. The scheme has come to be termed as the Wellness Scheme. In the following two diagrams, we have tried to capture the scheme's impact graphically.

Graph: The Wellness Scheme



It may be mentioned here that besides emerging as a viable option for the unemployed, the scheme has also done wonders to the morale of the disabled and physically challenged populace as the evidences suggests – scores of them have found suitable employment across the sites being developed in the state.

Graph: **Linking the MGNREGA results to the Human Development Indicator (HDI)**



The impact of MGNREGA can be viewed in terms of the extent to which it has come to have a bearing on the state's position in the terms of the Human Development Indicator (HDI). While it is beyond the scope of this study to exactly peg down the impact (of MGNREGA) on the HDI, evidences suggest that it has indeed significantly impacted the four major ingredients the HDI: Income Generation, Economic self reliance (of the poor), Women's empowerment including gender mainstreaming and Quality of life. Based on the current evidences, we believe that MGNREGA work would have positive impact on the HDI of the state.

The Sikkim Uniqueness

5.0 Introduction

As is evident from the foregoing narrations, Sikkim has been at the forefront of the implementation of this act. In the process, it has achieved some results, milestones, and created some community assets. It is more than three years of implementation now, and a ripe period to look back and reflect on the results. In this context, studying the usefulness and sustainability of assets created under MGNREGA-Sikkim and mapping the scheme's uniqueness as seen in the hitherto performance of the state is both inevitable and significant. The present chapter tries to elucidate the Sikkim uniqueness.

5.1 Uniqueness of MGNREGA in Sikkim

There is a gamut of facets of the MGNREGA implementation in Sikkim where its uniqueness can be gauged. We have tried to capture some noteworthy facets from the same in the following paragraphs that we feel represent the essential uniqueness of the schemes implementation.

- **Population Background**

Two very strong facets of the social fabric are: (a) just about half the number of total families has women as their main bread earners and (b) almost all the families have their own land even though they are not very big farmers. More than one third of the farming population possesses irrigation facilities as well.

- **High on Promise**

The state of Sikkim promises a hundred (100) days of guaranteed wage employment to every rural household in the state under the MGNREGA.

- **Coverage**

The state's administration has been able to bring all the four districts (Sikkim North, West, South and East) and all its respective gram panchayat units (GPUs) under the ambit of the MGNREGA and the act.

- **Demand driven planning and schemes**

It was found that unlike other states, planning for MGNREGA works in the state has been demand driven. More than 70 per cent of the sites / project / sub schemes have been planned and sanctioned based on the consultations with the community. Of the beneficiaries surveyed, more than 75 per cent reported that they had heard about the site level / scheme level plans and little less than that number said they actually took part in the planning process.

- **Provision of Work**

It was found that on the average, the gram panchayats have been able to provide work within 15 days, as stipulated in the guidelines, to about 3/4th of those who demand. Only 13 per cent of the beneficiaries feel that they were called for work after 15 days but within 20 days after the applications were given. In other words, the period between registration, application and provision of employment is short (between 15-20 days) and is uniform across the state.

Another point where the state administration has been able to confirm to the guidelines is providing work at the preferred location. Almost all respondents said they were getting work either in their respective villages or within a radius of five (5) kilometers.

It was reported that more than 50 per cent of applicants have already completed their quota of a hundred (100) employment days each well within a year. Emboldened by the experience, about 87 per cent of the beneficiaries feel they should be considered for an employment of more than 100 days.

- **Wages and Payment**

It is unique to the state of Sikkim that on an average, the daily wages – for both men and women – are Rs. 100 per day per head at the minimum but more importantly, more than half receive the same within 15 days after the labor on a site is done. Moreover, unlike other states, Sikkim has been able to involve nationalized banks more pro-actively in handling the payment.

- **Participation of women and local self governments**

It was found that women's participation is both solicited and insisted at all the levels of the project / scheme / work cycle. Fortunately, in Sikkim, gram-sabha is the pivot around which planning and execution processes revolve. Generally, the gram-sabhas choose, plan, prepare labor budget and recommend works at the village level.

The Block Development Officer (BDO) and the District Development Officer (DDO) are directly involved in the works/schemes' implementation. The former, acts as the program officer (PO) while the latter acts as the District Program Coordinator (DPC). The recent appointment of Gram Rozgaar Sahayak as a link between the Panchayat and the district and the state administration has come as a boon to the execution part of the program.

The shelf of projects for a village is generally recommended by a gram sabha and approved by the district panchayat.

- **Notable Achievements**

In the last three to four years, the state administration has notched a number of achievements with respect to the planning, management and implementation of the MGNREGA. Some of these include:

- More than 15 fold increase in the number of job cards issued to the work applicants;
- More than 12 fold increase in the number of households covered under the scheme;
- More than 14 fold increase in person days generated;
- More than 13 fold increase in the number of works taken up;
- More than 2 fold increase in women's participation;
- More than 21 per cent increase in funds utilization;
- About 87 per cent of payments are done through banks; and
- Labor budgets have been prepared and social audits have been conducted in all GPUs.

- **Innovative Initiations**

Also in the last couple of years, the state administration has been able to initiate a number of innovative ideas and schemes that has made the program run more smoothly and being more effective. These include:

- Initiation of a four-step operative MGNREGA-Sikkim toll free HELPLINE (dial 7979 from the landline or 03592 202979 from mobile phones) across the state during office hours (1000 hours to 1600 hours on working days)
 - An Ombudsman has been appointed
 - The MIS has become fully operational at the state and the district level
 - A micro-monitoring system is being developed for monitoring ward-wise progress of the schemes and works
 - The state administration has been able to converge with Universal Financial Inclusion (UFI) project for faster and hassle free wage payments
-
- **Taking advantage of Traditional Community Institutions**

Sikkim North, the largest district in Sikkim but the least populated remains snow bound at least four to six months in a year. With rate of rainfall being very high in the area, roads, houses, foot paths, buildings, and other infrastructure receive major loss and damage. This in turn leads to massive soil and water loss through erosion and landslides

Unlike other districts of Sikkim, it has a unique local self governing body called the Zumsa, which substitutes Panchayats in this tribal area. These are extraordinary and exceptional examples of village administration. Zumsa is responsible for administration and implementation of developmental works, including MGNREGA.

The effectiveness of Zumsa can be gauged from a set of rules of implementation (with respect to the MGNREGA) which every member household in the district has to follow. These include:

- Households without a job card including aged individuals and single women, is rare.
 - The entire village is divided into six groups, with each group comprising 35 households, for the purpose of smooth implementation of work undertaken under MGNREGA.
 - Decisions with regards to distribution of works to the groups are also taken in Zumsa meetings, where the entire village is present, including women.
 - It is mandatory for one member from each household (of the assigned group) to be at the worksite. In case of absence from a household, the household is subjected to a fine of Rs 150/per day.
-
- **Gender Mainstreaming in the MGNREGA works and projects**
 - Effective implementation of the MGNREGA in the state has led to ample employment opportunities for Women. The MGNREGA has raised both enthusiasm and expectations among women workers. They unanimously affirmed that it has enhanced their lives by helping them generate more livelihood options from their immediate surroundings by making work available to everyone, preferably women and aged, within a five kilometer radius.
 - Women's Participation is quite impressive. In fact, percentage of women working at the site many a times exceeds 50%. It will be apt to call this scheme "a women's scheme" as sight of women doing hard work, in high numbers, is quite common. In fact, MGNREGA has managed to generate employment, for the first time, at fair and equal wages in the village itself, unlike previous schemes.
 - The scheme has effectively generated a feeling of ownership for the women about the entire program. None of the women seem to have any knowledge of previous employment generation scheme. Most of the schemes had men working, with hardly any women availing the opportunity. As one of the respondents, Shring

Yankee, explains:” *this is the first time when I have worked so regularly on any employment generation scheme. With MGNREGA being introduced, we would never go and work in other schemes as wages there are lower and not equal to men*”.

- Unlike MGNREGA, equal wage policy was not being followed in earlier schemes, making them an unattractive proposition. Besides this, with no guarantee of work being available regularly, these schemes were hardly popular amongst women. Breaking the social norm of “unequal wages” between men and women is an achievement in itself.

Concluding Remarks

6.0 Introduction

Our concluding remarks essentially are a mix of (a) field level observations and (b) issues and concerns emanating from the same. These have been further categorized into those referring to Planning, Management, Execution, Asset Sustainability, and Impact on the people.

6.1 Planning Level

- As MNREGS is a demand driven programme issuing a job card to all families wherever there has been a demand raised is commendable. There perhaps could be a possibility to make this facility available online.
- It is suggested that to create income generating assets for the rural poor the example of convergence of works under MGNREGA at Khamdong block in the east district could be emulated. A Rural haat called sekwa bazaar has been constructed under MGNREGA. Since the material cost would well go beyond the stipulate 40%, funds were pooled in from different departments. The land development work which is a labor intensive work was met through MGNREGA while the SRDA constructed the marketing sheds, the sanitation cell of RMDD constructed public convenience and some funds was also pooled from the Panchayat Funds. In the same block strawberry cultivation with the help of ICAR has also been accomplished under MGNREGA which is providing good income source to the people.
- Once the financial inclusion is completed there would be a greater synergy in convergence with other programmes, especially in the areas of infrastructure development and income generation. It would further enhance the profile of the

programme in this convergence executed and the works get planned in such a way that they dovetail with the financial year.

- The bottom up planning approach of NREGA as executed through the Panchayats and Jhumsa needs more technical support as the profile of the programme increases. Thus it would be of immense help if the long term perspective plan document is made available at the level of Panchayats to help them plan better their individual work plans.

6.2 Management Level

- The workers also reported in many instances that there was a delay in the receipt of the payment. This was despite the workers having accounts in the post offices and where ever possible in banks. The possible reason for the delay is identified at the level of post offices not being accustomed to perform the banking operations and thus the fund transfers thus getting delayed. We recommend considering a mobile banking unit to take care of this problem till the banks are streamlined to facilitate electronic transfers up to the village levels. The administration may also consider a mobile ATM unit that may provide access to the account holders every month within a span of five km range.
- As the programme has now acquired a large profile there is a need to put in place a rigid quality control regime at the material reception site. This quality control may need certain training on part of local panchayat members who are entrusted with the task of receiving of the material. The administration may want to review its existing quality control regime in the light of the tremendous expansion of the NREGS.
- The initiative to create an MIS of the programme as well as the material costing software are path breaking steps that need to be emulated across the length and breadth of the NREGS programme in the country. The State of Sikkim must lead the way in helping the other states usher greater transparency in their execution of the NREGS programme in the country.

6.3 Execution Level

- The MGNREGS programme in Sikkim has now evolved into a model execution programme. The uniqueness of this execution lies in its synergy with the people through the Panchayats on one hand and the complimentary support of the administration on the other.
- The Panchayats have conceptualized the works on their own as per the needs of the people in that panchayat and this has reflected in the large number of people participating not only in the programme but also in the evaluation of the same through the social audits.
- The administration has played a commendable role in the execution of the programme. It has devised a execution method that is non intrusive, supportive and compassionate as well as swift and efficient. This is reflected in compliances on payment schedules by accounts, a rising curve in the number of work days as well as extremely efficient record keeping in a completely transparent manner. These records of job cards as well as payments are made available to a third party as well as for the participants on demand. This has given the execution an immense moral strength.

6.4 Asset Sustainability

MGNREGA promises a revolutionary demand-driven, people-centred development programme. Planning, implementation and social audit by gram sabhas and gram panchayats can engender millions of sustainable livelihoods following initial rounds of wage employment. What would accelerate this strengthening of small and marginal farming is the proposal to allow assets creation through MGNREGA on farmers' lands. There needs to be a renewed focus on improving the productivity of agriculture and convergence to engender allied sustainable livelihoods. MGNREGA is not the usual run-of-the-mill relief and welfare programme of the past. It is not merely about transferring cash to people in distress. It is about creating durable assets that will ultimately lead to a reduced dependence of people on MGNREGA. There is no doubt that the promise and

An Impact Assessment Study of the Usefulness and Sustainability Of the Assets Created Under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment

Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Sikkim, 2010.

the potential of MGNREGA has charged the hearts and minds of the rural poor with unprecedented hopes and expectations.

Following are some of the provisions given under MGNREGA for the durability and maintenance of the MGNREGA assets.

- Convergence of the MGNREGA funds with funds from other sources for the creation of durable assets is permissible. However, care must be taken to ensure that MGNREGA funds do not substitute for resources from other sectors or schemes. NREGA funds are intended to create additional employment; this will not happen if the employment currently generated by other programmes is displaced by the MGNREGA.
- The maintenance of assets created under the act (including protection of afforested land) will be considered as permissible work under MGNREGA. The same applies to the maintenance of assets created under other programmes but belonging to the sectors of works approved in schedule I of the Act.
- To ensure sustainable assets and a holistic approach to planning, a project approach should be adopted towards defining a work. This will enable subsuming a number of works as activities under an umbrella work or project. The project may be formulated with the block as a unit so that the programme officer may coordinate the activities under it at sub block levels. Inter block projects may also be formulated at the district level.
- Funds available with PRIs from other sources (such as the National Finance Commission, State Finance Commission, State Departments) and other Central or Centrally Sponsored Schemes (such as the Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana [SGSY], Drought Prone Areas Programme [DPAP], Desert Development Programme [DDP], Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana [RSVY], Backward Area Grant, etc.) can also be dovetailed with NREGA funds for the construction of durable community assets/works permissible under NREGA.

Some of the suggested strategies to address the issue of durability and sustainability of the assets are:

- A small amount (fixed percentage) in the form of “Maintenance Fund” from the allocated amount (at the gram panchayat level) for the creation of the asset needs to be kept aside for the maintenance of the asset. This could be used as a revolving fund to take care of the expenditure required for the regular upkeep of the asset.
- Inclusion of “Maintenance plan and Maintenance fund” should be made mandatory at the time of submission of the asset creation plan.
- Of the total sanctioned budget for a specific year on MGNREGA, a fixed percentage may be kept aside for the upkeep of the assets.
- An Awareness campaign should be carried out at the Gram Panchayat level (functionaries), Gram Sabha level, Block and District levels to stress upon the importance and necessity of asset durability and maintenance.

6.5 **Impact:**

- Primarily, MGNREGA has provided a source of supplementary income to the families in and there was no visible wage discrimination between men and women. This rate is not conducive for the men who prefer working outside the village where they can earn higher daily wages. Hence, it is the local women who are the active participants under this scheme. Another observation was that unlike other states, there was no bias against women headed households in our village.
- MGNREGA was one of the principal sources of earning alternate income in rural Sikkim. This enhanced food security, provided the unemployed a means of sustenance; especially during the off-season.
- Also, under this scheme people were provided employment in worksites that were located within a radius of 5 KMs from their villages. This entailed less travel and did not affect their household activities severely.

- Also this scheme ensured social empowerment and financial inclusion of the women. This was achieved by creating of savings accounts in financial institutions of the likes of banks and post offices with their husbands as co-signatories where the wages were deposited. This provided them with a formal means of saving their money, earning some interest and most importantly boosted their self-confidence.
- This scheme also helped mitigate distress migration and thereby reduce the workload on women.
- The effective implementation of MGNREGA in Sikkim has ameliorated the primary and secondary activities of its residents. This is particularly true with regard to women. Currently, there is a greater degree of community bonding and cohesion amongst the women-folk. Many have claimed that MGNREGA has provided them with a platform to discuss common issues and has augmented their awareness level with regard to community activities. Through land development (to control floods, soil erosion and enhance land stability) and the construction of orchards in one another's land, community participation levels have shot up. This has led to the establishment of mutual trust as well as better coordination with the local administration. Also, the technical expertise provided by the Agriculture and Horticulture department officials has led to better quality produce. One of the greatest benefits meted out to the women-folk is that they claim to have better access to health facilities and their knowledge levels too have soared.
- The awareness level of the women folk with regard to MGNREGA and other existing government schemes is quite high, though they also alleged that these schemes were making people complacent and over-dependent on the government benefits.
- Another interesting aspect of this scheme was it mandated the fact that all workers and job card holders be able to sign their names in order to avail the. Consequently, the Chief Minister's Adult Literacy Mission has been a huge success with a phenomenal enrolment rate. As a corollary to this, not only has the literacy rates shot up; parents are now more conscious of the importance of education and are more proactive when it comes to sending their children to school.

- With regard to dropouts, NREGA has proved to be a double-edged sword. While the supplementary source of income has lessened the need for children to drop out of schools for earning a living; it has had an adverse impact on higher education. For older children, NREGA is a lucrative source of earning additional income and hence the interest in pursuing higher studies has plummeted.

Case Studies (Text)

Case Study 01 / Kaluk, West District

Kaluk, West District of Sikkim is also a mountainous zone with lower, middle and higher hills, and is largely an agri based economy. Tourism is another livelihood option, as undulating terrains do not allow very flourishing agriculture

Though MGNREGA got introduced in Kaluk GPU of West District, two years later, ie in 2008, in comparison to North district, experiences of people are quite similar in terms of successes and shortcomings.

Laxmi Gurung, runs a small neat shop in the main market of Kaluk. She worked only the first year in MGNREGA for 44days and earned Rs 4400/-and feels quite happy with the effort, *“this money came in handy at that time and I invested it in my shop. It has become very popular lately, amongst people and they seem quite keen to work for 100 days as it is a good source of employment in this part of the state”*. The shop happens to be her main source of livelihood now and she doesn’t need to work under MGNREGA any more



Though it’s been only two years since MGNREGA got operational in this GPU of 1500 households, job cards have been issued to everybody interested and eligible. Awareness about MGNREGA (locally called “*NEGRA*” in all the districts) is quite high and one person from each household participates in the works taking place in the respective wards.

Though not mandatory, like lachen and lachung, people are quite regular in their participation.

Strategic use of MGNREGA money so far, has initiated comprehensive development of the village by increasing income, productivity and preventing land degradation. Works have been undertaken in all the wards (comprising approx 335 households in each) with Catch water drain

(3), Cardamom plantation, broad leaf plantation, drinking water tank(1) , village footpaths (1), irrigation channel(1) coming up in just a two years time.



Work on Catch water drain in one of the wards “upper tadong” is underway with approx 40 households participating. As elsewhere, strength of women is much higher.”Hill women are very hard working and why shy away from manual, hard work if we need to feel empty stomach!” Indira Gurung rightfully questioned. They are quite eager to learn new skills as well to carry out the tasks.

“The fact that men are fewer in number also gives us an opportunity to try out tasks traditionally being carried out by men uptil now “remarks Renuka smilingly.

Despite being the first year in the district, people have worked more than 75 days last year and most of the women have accounts in their name. But payment is not immediate and this causes a great deal of inconvenience. Renuka, a young girl, living with her father is a regular worker in MGNREGA. *“It is difficult to remember how much money I have earned last year as the gap between payment and work was quite high. But it got spent on buying ration, clothes, food and other essential commodities”*. *“Working on the hilly, sloppy terrain is no easy job and we need to be paid more than 100, to be honest”*- she frankly adds.



She looks forward to working regularly, and gets disappointed if for some reason work gets stopped half way, as happened on one of the occasions in the past. *“I, along with others in the group, went to the BDO and made a complaint for the work to resume”*. Such is the demand for work under MGNREGA.

“Lack of suitable employment in the past made me work on other people’s land, but thankfully I am not required to do so ever since we started working on MGNREGA”, says Indira Gurung. She lives with her husband and children and is quite keen to work all 100 days *“Working in MGNREGA for almost 75 days last year and few days this year, has granted me monetary security to maximize my efforts on my own land, unlike earlier times when I was forced to work as an agricultural labour at a much lower wage on other people’s land”*.

This is the story of most of the people who now prefer to maximize their time and effort on their own land. Moreover with MGNREGA, women don’t feel forced to work elsewhere at exploitative wages, anymore.

“Frankly we had difficulty making ends meet earlier but a lot has changed now. I am in a position to spend more money on children’s education, household items, food, get my children treated when they fall sick and even spend some money on agriculture now- to buy seeds and other inputs” narrated Indira Maya Gurung, happily.

She and her husband also sell milk to supplement their income. With regular earnings from MGNREGA now, they are able to concentrate more to optimize returns from milk sale. *“Most of the decisions at home are still being taken by men in the family; nevertheless I have begun to have some say in expenditure especially if it is about my earning. This is giving me some sense of freedom, something I had never experienced before”*. A sentiment shared by other women in the group currently working on the box drain in their ward.

Most of the women working at the Box drain site didn’t have a bank account in their name earlier *“it is an elated feeling. But the bank being in Jorhang, we have difficulty going alone. We all go together but each of us has to spend 100 Rs just on the transport. I don’t like wasting away even a day’s hard earned wage”*, says Renuka. Women in remote areas like Kaluk, have difficulty accessing banks/post offices.

Most of the women have joint accounts with other members of the family and this hampers women's complete control over the account, as realized by one of the Panchayat functionaries, "Opening of individual account is a very long, time consuming process though we know the shortcomings of having a joint account. Nevertheless we will try and rectify it in future ", he further promised.

Thus emergence of women workers as independent bread winners in the family is also impacting their role in the decision making in the family.

Nevertheless, the discretion to spend on her own needs and control the use of her earnings is something that will take few more years, but thankfully a beginning has already been made.

Thus even in the west district, with just two years behind them, MGNREGA is proving instrumental in providing real livelihood opportunities for rural poor. This is also a reaffirmation of the hypothesis that MGNREGA has supplemented the income of the worker households and is beginning to bring about an improvement in their standard of living, to an extent.

Decisions regarding MGNREGA schemes are taken up in Gram Sabha meetings, held at the start of the work. Women hardly participated in these meetings earlier, but MGNREGA has given them a chance to be part of these decision making forums. Though they still hesitate in attending and expressing themselves, proceedings are at least making them aware of the processes involved and other developmental activities of the village.

Unlike previous schemes, MGNREGA has also done away with contractors and middle men, thus minimizing the siphoning off of public money,"*I was told that in earlier schemes contractors would take away large part of money that was meant for public, but thankfully, we haven't come across any middle men yet and money is coming straight into our hands*" says one of the young workers present.

People seem quite happy with the choice of works, in fact they all take the decision collectively .They feel that the construction of rural connectivity and flood control structures in their wards as well as the village has been quite useful for the fragile mountain environments. Leela Gurung substantiates it saying "Box drain has been quite effective so far in controlling the floods and

channelising the water for a more productive use, we had a tough time earlier with severe soil erosion and surface runoff.”

“Cardamom plantation has been done on private lands belonging to APL’ and BPL’, both. It will be a good source of income for people in times to come, besides being helpful environmentally,” suggested Renuka’s father likewise.

Tree plantation with broad leaf species like “Uttis, Aukhar” etc has also been carried out on village land primarily to prevent landslides.

Nevertheless , workers are not very happy with the state of assets created so far – be it tree plantation, drinking water tank, cardamom plantation or even.....

“Water tank worked quite well for some time but is need of a repair now. Likewise plantation needed proper care and protection from strong sunshine and rainfall. Lack of it resulted in damaging a good number of seedlings last season “, says an elderly woman who worked at the plantation last year.

At least 30% of the plants have died in absence of proper care and attention, during summers and winters, they claim. This clearly conveyed some level of awareness of the state of assets created, amongst women.

Moreover, many of the plants didn’t bear fruits this year. Many of the saplings, people claim, probably came from the nearby areas and not from the forest department, as decided in the meeting.

On condition of anonymity, one of woman workers revealed,” quality of cement and other material used in water tanks and other assets is clearly not of high standard and this has resulted in the damage to the assets”

With just two years gone by, it’s little too early to expect women being fully informed on empowering provisions of MGNREGA, especially with regards to workers entitlement and MGNREGA itself- complaint and grievance redressal, unemployment allowance, process of social audit, community based planning and evaluation of MGNREGA schemes etc. “Except for the knowledge of each household being entitled to 100 days of work, equal and minimum

wages for both men and women, necessity of job cards for work, we are hardly aware of any other provision. We don't even know the full form of MGNREGA" says Renuka and her father. *"Attempts need to be made to improve awareness levels and capacities to help villagers use MGNREGA provisions optimally"*- agrees the Mate.....

Though job cards are duly filled up (with signature of authority missing in all) , awareness of different sections of job cards, details mentioned including the amount and number of days ,is pathetically low , especially amongst women.

Women are also not aware of inspection visits to the site by vigilance committee (as claimed by a member of vigilance committee -comprising 9 members including one woman) or any senior officer from the Block.

According to Renuka, Indira, and others, worksite facilities are routinely absent except for drinking water (contradictory to the Mate who claimed the presence of all facilities). Nevertheless young women with children and aged residents are also assigned work as per their physical status.

"Aged women are thankfully not denied work. An old woman from our ward, having a mentally challenged young daughter, and with no other source of income, could make her ends meet with 5000- 6000 money she earned working in MGNREGA last year. Whenever there is work in the ward, she is present. MGNREGA earnings have been truly helpful to people like her, cope with real difficult times"-an emotion shared by everyone present.

Case Study 02 / **Nagi Phampok, South District**

Sikkim is immensely endowed with rich biodiversity, forest and water resources and has been identified as one of the biodiversity hotspots. It has approx 86% of the total land under forest cover and the biodiversity supports 4500 species of flowering plants large variety of orchids, avifauna and butterflies. The livelihood of the people is intimately connected with these resources and appropriate water and forest management would benefit agriculture, horticulture

activities like cultivation of exotic fruits, ecotourism, and hydropower generation and also reduce erosion.

However the fundamental water related challenge for Sikkim has been:

1. Concentration of rainfall during 3-5 months of the year
2. High intensity and volume of rainfall leading to high surface runoff and soil erosion
3. Uneven spatial and temporal variation in rainfall
4. Loose top soil, deforestation and steep gradient leading to severe land degradation during monsoon.

These along with the recent drying up of springs (dharas) has limited the livelihood options of the people and posed a serious socio-economic challenge for the people.

The spring (dhara) is the major source of water in Sikkim with about 85% of rural household depending on it for drinking and agriculture purpose. It is formed when there is a small crack in the rocks and it is recharged by the infiltration of rain water in the soil around the catchment area. Afforestation, climate change and land degradation have reduced the percolation of water in the soil and increased evaporation and surface run off consequently drying the dharas. Thus there is a need to respond to these water related challenges to ensure that these assets which offer the highest possibility for sustainable development are managed properly. The thrust of development agenda needs to be directed towards conservation programs not only by the line department, but a framework which draws on the partnership between the community and the Government along with the principles of conservation.

The MGNREGA Dhara Vikas (spring shed development) under MGNREGA is being implemented in Sikkim with the objective to rejuvenate the drying springs while creating employment opportunities for the rural poor. It seeks to arrest the speed of the surface runoff so that maximum water percolates into the soil and the dharas are recharged. According to the official paper on MGNREGA Dhara Vikas the scientific principles on which the MGNREGA Dhara Vikas is based is to reduce the speed of running water by developing the catchments of the springs by using Soil Moisture Conservation works, Vegetative and Social Measure works. Soil

Moisture works include digging of staggered contour trenches, gully plugging, bonding of terraces and making them inward sloping and de silting of existing dried up ponds and lakes.

Vegetative measures include plantation of low water demanding and shallow rooted grass, shrubs .Social measures include ban on grazing, fuel wood and fodder cutting and social fencing of the recharge area of the springs.

At Nagi Phampok Gram Panchayat Unit consisting of 560 households in the South District the MGNREGA Dhara Vikas covers 17 hect. of the catchment area of two major water sources, Lampatey dhara and Seeti khola. These two water sources caters to not only the households of Nagi Phampok GPU but the people of Maneydara GPU also depends on it for drinking and agriculture purpose.

An ambitious project to document the status of the water source in Sikkim called the Perennial Village Spring atlas has been launched by RM&DD and SIRD. This provides detail information on the location, catchment status, landownership and the discharge of the spring. These data provide the baseline to initiate the spring shed management or MGNREGA Dhara Vikas.

The owners of the land Mr.Mimark Lepcha, Mr.Leela Pd. Dahal, Mr.Purna Pd. Dahal, and Mr.Tashi Lepcha were very happy, as their land was being developed through the project. One of the owner commented *“Earlier our land was deserted because of the steep gradient and soil erosion...one could not see a single tree here. Agriculture was impossible and there was indiscriminate grazing and this resulted in more degradation of land”*.

Under the MGNREGA Dhara Vikas program large amount of plantation of fast growing trees, fodder grass, shrubs is being successfully carried out. The survival rate of the plants conveyed that social fencing was strict and successful. A person has also been specifically deputed under MGNREGA to look after the survival of plants and ward off illegal grazing by the people. One could also observe large number of counter trenches dug along the lines and Napier grass planted near the trenches.

The people were hopeful that with the increased flow of water, with the improvement of source they will get sufficient water for drinking & the women will not have to travel far distance to

fetch water. The surplus water would be used for agriculture, horticulture activities and they can also invest in floriculture which will enhance the income of the farmers.

Deepak Dahal *“The result will be visible in the dry season, we are positive that this time water will not dry in Lampatey and there will be increased flow in Seeti Khola.”* Thus the MGNREGA Dhara Vikas will directly impact the livelihood of the people living in Rural Sikkim. It has become a symbol of hope for the rural people whose livelihood has been affected by climate change and other such reasons.

The participation in MGNREGA has also raised the capacities of the people to a large extent. People are increasingly becoming aware of the Government schemes and development activities in the village and the role of functionaries like BDO and Panchayats. They said that they have more interaction with their elected representatives after implementation of MGNREGA and if they have any problem they approach the BDO. *“Earlier we used to be busy in our own household chores and didn’t know what was going on but now we work and know lot of things”*
Dil Maya Chettri

Apart from MGNREGA Dhara Vikas land development works like terracing in the private field which was implemented in the GPU in 2009-10 have made the land appropriate for cultivation. The demand is more for assets that will directly benefit them. Terrace cultivation is being practiced in Sikkim but terracing a field is a labour intensive and a difficult task because of the steep gradient and the stony soil. The beneficiaries reported that they are able to sow maize this year in the fields because of the land development work.

Nar Bahadur Chettri *“We are earning more in MGNREGA compared to the earlier days, when we were engaged as agricultural labourers and moreover it was not available throughout the season.”* Almost all the workers were aware of the minimum and equal wage provision under the scheme and they perceived it as their right which is a very positive sign. The MGNREGA has not only given immediate income opportunity but it seems to be changing the social fabric of the society. Kharu Pd. Dahal *“Earlier we used to take gifts like sugar and local beer and request for loan of Rs.1000/- to Rs1500/- to the local mahajans (moneylenders).They charged an interest of 3% to 5%and if unable to pay we had to part with our animals. But now we go to the bank to take our money from MGNREGA during emergency”* The workers agreed that opening of bank

An Impact Assessment Study of the Usefulness and Sustainability Of the Assets Created Under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment

Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Sikkim, 2010.

accounts have increased their saving habit, earlier all the money was received in cash and they spent all they had and during emergencies they approached the local money lenders. Kharu Pd.Dahal “*we utilize half the money and half remains in the bank because this gives us a sense of security.*”

The popularity and the benefit of the scheme was more obvious when one of the workers asked “*how long the Government is going to provide this scheme*”

Case Study 03 / **Tangi Bikmat, South District**

The South District is the smallest district of Sikkim comprising only 10.57% of the total geographical area but is the second most populated district. Amongst its population of 141889, 97.39% reside in rural area with only 2.61% residing in urban area

The South District is often termed as the dry belt of Sikkim with even the district headquarters Namchi, facing acute water shortage during winters. Its share to the total cultivated land is only 26.95% .But despite small land holding, water scarcity and low productivity of land agriculture remains the mainstay of the population in rural area, while in the urban area the government sector is the single most employment generating sector. A glance at the poverty profile map of Sikkim shows that there is a large concentration of poverty in the south district with some wards like Beng, Thassa and Mangim having 60-80% of household below poverty line. The MGNREGA was launched in the South District during the second phase of its implementation in the backward districts in 2008-09. Since its implementation MGNREGA has provided people an alternate income opportunity, and there has been a marked change in the living standards of the people. It has also created better prospects for sustainable livelihood through the assets created under MGNREGA and more so it has become an important tool for socio-economic change in village.

In the South District Tangi Bikmat Gram Panchayat under the Namthang block was sampled for the case study. An average of 85 days of employment was provided to the household in 2009-10. Out of 368 household 296 completed 100 days of employment and in total 31280 Mondays was generated in the Gram in 2009-10.

The GPU falls under the tomato cultivation belt of Sikkim and people also engage in floriculture activities bringing flowers like Calla lilies, Liliun, Alstomeria and Orchids in the market. But scarcity of water during winters and also very few spring sources is always a constraint. It was informed that recently the springs dried much earlier compared to earlier years and the discharge of water was considerably reduced which affected the productivity of the crops. The small landholdings and low productivity of land was another reason which hindered agriculture activities. Thus people were mostly engaged as marginal laborers or the younger generation even moved to the bazaar area of Namchi (20 km away) and engaged as taxi drivers.

An Impact Assessment Study of the Usefulness and Sustainability Of the Assets Created Under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment

Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Sikkim, 2010.

It is obvious that MGNREGA has created much enthusiasm among the people and generated belief that it has the potential to create sustainable livelihood basis for the people. This was mainly obvious in the selection of works in the Gram Sabha for the financial year 2009-10. In 2008-09 conventional activities like C.C footpath, which has very minimal socio-economic value was undertaken. This along with Rest House were the activities, usually undertaken under SGRY or Food for Work Program, therefore when the implementation of MGNREGA started in 2008-09 it was perceived as yet another wage employment program after SGRY. But by next year people became aware of the broad range of activities that can be undertaken under MGNREGA and the need to create productive assets. During 2009-10 30 days of work was provided in plantation work in private fields and 70 days in construction of water harvesting tanks. Thus MGNREGA created spurt of opportunities not only to earn wages within the village but also to demand works which has direct bearing on their environment and livelihood.

The people were optimistic that the harvesting tanks would help them in the dry season and they can also experiment with some winter crops. The plantation of Ambliso, Timber and Napier grass in the private holdings under MGNREGA would yield them good benefits. The Ambliso (broom grass) is a dynamic plant grown in the hills. It yields broom sticks fetching a good market price. It is used in Puerotican terracing thus helping to arrest soil erosion. Its leaves are also used as fodder grass and when the plant gets dried its branches are used as firewood.

Lakhi Lepcha 62 yrs informed that her husband suffers from mental illness and her brother-in-law suffers from Tuberculosis. Her six sons lived separately and being the sole bread winner of the family she said that MGNREGA has helped her to sustain the family .She informed that though she has 2 acres of land, the land was lying fallow because there is no one in her household who could help her. She says last year under MGNREGA *“I worked in my own field and got wages also”*. The Ambliso which was planted in her field would yield broom stick which would be an additional source of income.

She shared that the wages she is earning at present while working in the construction of Sewa Kendra would help her send her youngest daughter to college who had recently passed her 12th std. The MGNREGA has undoubtedly widened the income opportunity for the rural poor household.

It has also raised the purchasing capacity of the rural people and this has an accelerating effect on the rural economy. The money which is pumped in the rural areas by MGNREGA is usually spent in the local market to buy consumer goods and thus it is circulated within the rural area. This fact was more obvious when people reported that many small shops selling consumer goods have cropped up in the village and some have even invested their wages in such shops.

Sewa Maya Chettri age 52 yrs has 3 sons. The 2 sons (27yrs & 22 yrs) both married and hold separate job cards and the younger one (19yrs) lives with the parents. The job card was in her husband's name but they held only single pass book which is in her name. It was informed that her husband stayed at home to attend the cattle and do the field work and it was usually Sewa Maya Chettri who came to the MGNREGA site for work.

She informed that last year she received a one time payment of 7000/-for 70 days of work and 3000/- for 30 days of work. The money was spent in buying an almirah and 2 goats. She said that the wages earned from MGNREGA also helped her to buy medicines as she suffered from heart ailment and had to spent Rs.1000/-every month in buying medicines.

However her daughter-in-law a young lady of 20 yrs says she feels good because she buys clothes and whatever she needs and has given her a sense of freedom.

It was observed during the field visit to the construction site of Sewa Kendra under MGNREGA at Tangi Bikmat surprisingly 70% of the workers present were women. Sewa Maya commented *“It is easier to work in MGNREGA and moreover we have lot of friends. Earlier some of the young girls used to run away, when a vehicle use to arrive at the worksite because they use to feel shy, as women had not done manual jobs outside their house.”*

Asked to a young girl Sunita Rai whether she feels shy or awkward to do manual job she said she doesn't. She said that it was her own decision to come for work and feels that she is earning and this has given more confidence, now that she has money and financial security.

Nowhere in the history of rural development, there has been such remarkable participation of women. The MGNREGA has been more accessible to women and gender friendly. Economic dependence of women has always been the major cause of social subjection of women in India but the trend is slowly changing. With such significant participation of women in MGNREGA,

An Impact Assessment Study of the Usefulness and Sustainability Of the Assets Created Under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment

Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Sikkim, 2010.

they have now access to income and this had raised their dignity and esteem. This has also to a certain extent changed gender relations when Binita Tamang daughter in law of Sewa Maya Chettri flagged the issue by saying *“My husband helps me in household chores because I feel tired after going from the worksite...nowadays husbands have to help his wife because we also earn ”*

Though the women informed that very less women participated in the Gram Sabha but this time they would attend and demand for more works. During the discussion a young girl wanted to know what the medicines are mandated to be available in the first aid box and she said that most of the time basic medicines for headaches and others are not available. This amply proves that women are coming to the forefront to assert their rights and privilege and they are gradually being empowered.

The MGNREGA has also helped the marginalized from falling into more abject poverty by providing economic alternatives. Women like Santi Rai whose husband married another woman have been able to support herself and her children by participating in MGNREGA, and she says *“I am not dependent on my husband...to hell with him”*

The women opined that they feel they are also the earning members of the family; they contribute to household expenses unlike earlier times when their work use to go unrecognized even though they toiled the whole day. This has helped them to take certain social decisions. Though the pass book was in the husband's name they said that there was consensual spending and said that they are able to invest in children's education, nutrition and health care. It is visible that the economic opportunity provided by MGNREGA has helped them find an identity for themselves. However since the wages was based on time rate basis the mate informed that there is always a risk of the work not being completed on time, he even remarked that Government work is like *“sarkari kam kahilay jancha gham”* meaning that people just wait for the sun to set while working in a government scheme. He suggested that the workers have to be motivated to work honestly and they need to understand that they would benefit from the assets created under MGNREGA.

The MGNREGA has made tangible impact on the livelihood of the people and empowered women to a large extend, nevertheless there are certain grey areas which was observed during the An Impact Assessment Study of the Usefulness and Sustainability Of the Assets Created Under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment

fieldvisit. It was also observed that though women came to work there was only a single passbook in the name of the job card holder who happens to be the male member of the family. The muster roll was also in the name of the one member of the family and each family member came turn wise to work in the name. Though women reported that they had no problem to their husband operating the passbook even though they worked, it is mandatory that each worker have their own passbook or joint account. It was also noticed that the entire household worked in the same date and were allotted equal number of days of employment, each household worked for 30days in the plantation work and 70 days in the construction work at the same time. There is a need to change the perception that *“we will get work when the Panchayat starts the project”*. People have to be made aware to demand work individually and when it is necessary for them. The MGNREGA being a Rights based scheme entails not only the provision of 100days of employment but also building the capacities of the people to assert their rights, women’s empowerment, sustainable livelihood management and natural resource management, and to make it meaningful people should be made aware of these aspects of MGNREGA.

Case Study 04 / **Lachen, North District**

Sikkim is a beautiful, picturesque state, nestled in the Himalayas. It is geographically and climatically, a very diverse state. Rocky and slopping land doesn’t offer much of agriculture. Though terrace farming is being practiced.

Despite the terrain being rocky and hard, agriculture happens to be the mainstay of economy of people here. But life comes practically to a standstill, with snowfall restricting movement for almost four to six months in a year.

With limited options of earning decent livelihood, MGNREGA is being seen as a wonderful opportunity for an alternate livelihood avenue, in these difficult conditions of living, especially by women.

With rate of rainfall being very high in the area, roads, houses, foot paths, buildings, and other infrastructure receive major loss and damage. This in turn leads to massive soil and water loss

through erosion and landslides. While loss of fertile soil impacts agriculture productivity, damage to infrastructure results in huge inconvenience and monetary loss to residents.

MGNREGA, with an objective of environmental restoration and conservation, apart from asset creation and income generation, provides a unique opportunity to generate employment within the village by undertaking restorative and preservation works in the rural areas of Sikkim, in particular.

With women having close association with natural resource, MGNREGA is gradually proving quite effective in making a dent on their excessive work burden and drudgery and also providing sustainable livelihoods.

North district happens to be the most mountainous and largest of all the four districts. Nevertheless, it is also least populated districts in the state.

Being snow bound at least four to six months in a year, it offers very few avenues of employment and livelihood to people to take care of their needs entire year round.

Lachen ,“meaning Big Pass” perched at an elevation of ...is the last village in the northern most part of the district and home to “Lachenpas”,a unique Sikkimese Bhutiya community.

Unlike other districts of Sikkim, it has a unique local self governing body called the Zumsa, which substitutes Panchayats in this tribal area. These are extraordinary and exceptional examples of village administration. Having been officially recognized in place of village panchayats, it is responsible for administration and implementation of developmental works, including MGNREGA.

According to women, Zumsa has been very strict in its implementation of MGNREGA ever since it got introduced in 2006. Interestingly, it has introduced indigenous ways of managing and administering the scheme, *“word of Pipon is a law in itself, and thankfully he has taken the work on MGNREGA very seriously”*- says one of the women workers.

Households without a job card (except for those not interested, or in service) including aged individuals and single women, is rare.

Entire village has been divided into six groups, with each group comprising 35 households, for the purpose of smooth implementation of work undertaken under MGNREGA, by Zumsa.

Transparency is being maintained with choice and allocation of works by Zumsa. Decision with regards to distribution of works to the groups is also taken in Zumsa meetings, where the entire village is present, including women.

It is mandatory for one member from each household (of the assigned group) to be at the worksite each day, without fail. In the event of being absent, the household is subjected to a fine of Rs 150/per day.

This system ensures very high participation of the community including that of women-*“if it the turn of our group, then there is no way we would remain at home. We have to go”* - says Naithi.

Nevertheless, it is a common practice to find even those whose names are not there on job card, working in MGNREGA. This is considered quite “normal” in the village, to avoid paying fine and to avail the opportunity to earn money-*“I went to work at the site as my father was unable to go that day”*- says one of the young residents.

By generating employment for women at fair wages in the village, MGNREGA can play a substantial role in economically empowering women and laying the basis for greater independence and self-esteem.

Employment opportunities through MGNREGA seem to have raised both enthusiasm and expectations among women workers. They unanimously affirmed that it has enhanced their lives by helping them generate more livelihood options from their immediate surroundings. Thereby, it has brought about benefits at the village as well as household level- *“it has done us lot of good since apart from being a regular source of money , some development is taking place at the village level also”* - says Sukil.

Women’s participation is quite impressive in the village. In fact, percentage of women working at the site many a times exceeds 50%. It will be apt to call this scheme “a women’s scheme” saysas sight of women doing hard work, in high numbers, is quite common. In fact,

MGNREGA has managed to generate employment, for the first time, at fair and equal wages in the village itself, unlike previous schemes”.

In fact none of the women seem to have any knowledge of previous employment generation scheme. Most of the schemes had men working; with hardly any women availing the opportunity- *“this is the first time when I have worked so regularly on any employment generation scheme. With MGNREGA being introduced, we would never go and work in other schemes as wages there are lower and not equal to men”* explains Shring Yankee.

Unlike MGNREGA, equal wage policy was not being followed in earlier schemes, making them an unattractive proposition.

Besides this, with no guarantee of work being available regularly, these schemes were hardly popular amongst women.

Breaking the social norm of “unequal wages” between men and women is an achievement in itself.

Making work available to everyone, preferably women and aged, within a five km radius is also being followed to the T. *“It would have been difficult for me to go to far off distance with children at home, but thankfully all the works till now have been closeby”*, as shared by one of the women workers.

Level of awareness with regards to 100 days of work for each household, equal wages, job cards, minimum wages etc is quite high.

“Shring Yankee”, in her 30’s lives in Lachen village with her husband and children *“I worked for almost 60-70.days (doesn’t remember exactly) last year (2009-2010).Though we have used the money for our regular household expenses, but it is on the education of my children that it has been used the most. I really feel happy that I am able to send my children to school regularly now, unlike earlier times when it was difficult without any regular source of income”*.She says she used to be dependent on her husband for any expense but now with MGNREGA money that she earns, she feels slightly empowered and less dependent, as she is also an earning member of the family”.

According to “Sukhil”, resident of Lachen who has been working in MGNREGA since its inception, the need to borrow money from local money lenders has also reduced ever since MGNREGA came into their lives as the money in their accounts takes care of the lean months.

“Though spending of money is still largely in the hands of men in the family, nevertheless I feel more confident now spending a portion of it on my own needs”- says one of the young workers.

They feel happy going to Banks to withdraw money directly from their accounts –a novel experience for all of them. It certainly gives them a sense of freedom and some level of confidence. Some of the women are going to the banks themselves rather than getting them collected through others in the family.

”Since our wages go directly to the account , we take it out only when needed and spend on essential items, unlike earlier times when cash would come in our hands and get spent even on inconsequential items”, remarks Naithi. She too looks forward to participating in MGNREGA activities with lot of interest, along with other members in her family.

Thus there is an increased spending of earnings from MGNREGA on food, consumer goods, education of children, healthcare and even for offsetting debts.

While some were aware of the money they had earned, most still depend on the male members in the family, to keep a track of it.

Many productive assets have been created under MGNREGA – Juniper plantation (Juniper – besides being a good income generation source once it grows up as it is used as “agarbatti in monasteries, has other advantages as well, explains Sukhil “ *we decided to go for Juniper as being a degraded piece of land, it was important to select species that binds the soil together and arrests soil erosion”*), Box Drain (catch water drain work), minor irrigation channels, village footpaths, extension of existing jeepable roads, wall construction etc. Most of these works have been undertaken on community land .It is obvious that majority of the work has been done in the area of water and soil conservation, complying to the underlying objective of MGNREGA.

“I have not much knowledge of the area under plantation, nor am I aware of number of trees planted. I just worked there. Men would probably know of it”- explains one of the women

workers. This is a disturbing reflection of lack of interest and awareness amongst women of the factual details of development activity, in which they participated.

Nevertheless participation in MGNREGA is giving women an opportunity to use decision making spaces at the household and community /village level.

Zumsa calls for meetings on MGNREGA everyone participating in the schemes, including women, is expected to be there. Despite being a largely patriarchal body , opportunities presented by Zumsa, have exposed women to these spaces and gradually use these forums to voice their opinion, participate in decisions and planning discussions with regards to future schemes to be undertaken under MGNREGA. This seems to be a new and exciting experience for most of them, though they still feel shy in speaking up before the village elders.

As expressed by Naithi *“We were never invited to Zumsa meetings, as only head of the family was supposed to be there. But MGNREGA has exposed us to these proceedings”*. Zumsa meetings on MGNREGA are usually held at the beginning and end of each scheme.

Apart from sharing of Information about the scheme, worksite, timings etc, decisions on some aspects (though not all) of works is generally done at these meetings. Such as the Decision to go for “Juniper plantation“, though Forest Department also played a crucial role in arriving at the decision.

“Pipon’s” decision does carry lot of weight, people, including women, can also put forth their view point.

Thus MGNREGA meetings have given women an opportunity to be assertive about their place in public space.

“Shring” feels a great change has come over her, ever since she has started working in MGNREGA, *“I feel more confident speaking up now in comparison to earlier times when I was extremely shy. I never went to Zumsa and other public meetings, as I never got a chance. I wouldn’t have come and met you so easily, the way I did today, had MGNREGA not been there”*.

This conveys a lot about gradual empowerment of women. Though still a long way to go, it certainly is a big leap forward.

Being ahead of other societies and states in terms of Gender Equality quotient, it came as a breath of fresh air to see women working with shovel, and other tools (usually used by men), without any inhibition and difficulty. It is not a rare sight to see women and men shoveling sand together, digging the land, mixing concrete etc in this part of Sikkim.

Nevertheless, if men are in good number, there is a segregation of tasks at the worksite, with women being assigned tasks typical of the work being expected of them in a traditional society such as head loading or shifting of sand, cement, breaking of stones etc .

To ensure workers' welfare and conducive conditions to promote workers' productivity at the worksite, due care has been taken in the village to provide clean drinking water, child care facilities, a shade, period of rest (from 12.00 to 1.00pm) and food in between, as claimed by women, using MGNREGA provisions.

“Crèche facilities are also available and there are quite a few women with young children in the village”, as claimed by women workers, “nevertheless they are not encouraged to bring their children to the site. This certainly denies the opportunity of single mothers to earn decent livelihood”, as admitted by women

This also takes away their right to employment as well, offered through this Act. Same applies on aged people. Being alone at home or not physically fit, they give it a miss sometimes but have to compensate by paying Rs 150 for that day. A greater sensitivity is expected on the part of Zumsa elders.

Timely payment of wages is another problematic area that needs to be worked upon as it puts people in a situation where they are forced to borrow money, especially in times of need.

Though participation levels are high and employment opportunity within the village has brought about some improved visible changes in people's lives, nevertheless there is a lot that still needs to be improved upon.

Awareness levels regarding operational guidelines, household registration, job card details, work applications, grievance redressal mechanism, and entitlements such as unemployment allowance, is highly inadequate. Worksite facilities have been provided, as mentioned by women and others,

awareness regarding them is again quite dismal- “*No training has been done so far, for us it is only an employment generation scheme. We would certainly like to know more about MGNREGA to use it optimally*” - remarked one of the workers.

Thus low level of awareness, even in a district where MGNREGA has been implemented for over two years, is indeed worrying. Apart from increasing their dependence on government authorities, it prevents people, especially women from exercising their rights in the event of its violation. Moreover it also takes away their opportunity to make the best possible use of the public space made available through this Act to make their voices heard in the creation of productive assets such as water harvesting structures, tree cover on degraded, common land, structures for flood control, irrigation etc .

Having close association with natural resources, gender sensitive processes and assets can take away the drudgery and reduce the time and effort of women in carrying out these unpaid economic activities. Though conventional (and not so conventional) is little too early to analyze the impacts assets would have on the roles and responsibilities of women, but these aspects would start impacting women's lives in few years time.

Case Study 05 / **Timberbung, West District**

Timberbung GPU, comprising 480 households, is situated in the West District, not very far from Jorthung.

Sukhmaya Subba, a middle aged woman, living alone with her young daughter, worked in MGNREGA last year. She worked along with her daughter, for 40 days last year and the money earned was spent well on household items, food and health care primarily. She seems quite keen to work in MGNREGA, as she feels “*it is a good source of employment especially for women, being in village, unlike earlier employment schemes*”. She is disappointed that her household chores keep her from participating in MGNREGA works happening in her ward.

Besides lacking continuity, earlier schemes didn't maintain wage parity between men and women and invested mostly in laying down of footpath or construction of motorable roads,

unlike MGNREGA, where a big fraction is for environmental preservation. Focus on environmental restoration works and conservation is a big assurance in this ecologically fragile area, especially from the point of view of women.

With just two years gone by, money has been invested judiciously in all the wards, in carrying out varied works like –footpath (5),plantation(5), weeding(5), box drain(3), village school wall protection and so on.

Like other Districts Panchayats and Government Functionaries have been quite prompt with respect to getting job cards made of almost 90% of the population and making work available to all those eligible, interested and needy.

Lalitha Dahal, a young woman, is quite happy with MGNREGA work. Having availed full 100 days of work last year, she is looking forward to finishing another round this year. Her only regret is that it is not available through out the year. She seems quite keen, like others that it goes beyond, 100 days. Though payment is not immediate, she has received wages for 83 days already, **“it is a substantial amount. Though I work all day in my field and carry out household chores, this is the first time I have earned cash worth 8300 Rs. It is a satisfying feeling. I have invested it well in buying ration, my children’s education and it comes in handy when my children fall ill, and also in social causes. It has certainly changed the outlook of my family members ever since I started bringing in money.”**



Kamal Maya, another woman from the same ward, is also a regular presence at the worksite. She is thankful that with MGNREGA money coming in now, **“I am not required to work as agricultural labour any more. Moreover I was paid very low, just 20-30 Rs a day, in comparison to Rs 100 that I am getting now, and earlier that too would depend on the whims and fancies of the employer”**



Adding to the experiences already narrated by others, Pavitra Karki said **“I take decisions to spend money (utensils, household items, clothes , food etc) sometimes even without taking my husband’s consent , go to the market on my own, and even take the liberty to spend it on myself, something I have never done before. I had to always seek permission of my husband or others in the family. This is a completely new experience for me”**, Lalita admitted, along with Kamal that these changes are certainly making them more independent and confident.

Moreover, with cash coming in regularly, credit worthiness of the poor, including women, has gone up. **“Shopkeepers, and others loan us money easily now as they are assured of their returns because of MGNREGA. Our reputation has certainly gone up”**.

Like other areas, women have bank accounts in their name now, for the first time.

Lalita has already been to the bank 3-4 times, **“initially I would go with others, but I can go alone too. I certainly feel more confident now.”**



“Though money earned has improved our purchasing capacity, nevertheless it can be put to a much better use if the gap between the payment and work gets reduced”-a feeling unanimously shared by all the women.

Panchayat President accepted it without any hesitation and attributed the delay to the long procedure money is subjected to, before it eventually the workers' hands.

With very few opportunities for decent source of livelihood, assured employment at MGNREGA has certainly reduced money crisis that most of the families go through in these difficult conditions of living.

With cloud burst and heavy rain washing away fertile soil, plants etc, leaving the slopes denuded and vulnerable to erosion, MGNREGA money is appropriately been used by the people and functionaries to undertake protection and restoration works. **“we are happy that more and more works are being undertaken for environmental purposes .There is a big demand for anti erosion works in gram sabha meetings and decisions are taken collectively”**, says Laltiha .

According to women, catch drain works have been quite effective, in arresting erosion of a large arable land (affected area runs into acres, but they couldn't come up with the exact figure) as it channelizes the gushing water into irrigation channels , **“this makes water available for our land, and also prevents landslides and thereby huge personal losses as well”**.

This will eventually impact the agricultural productivity in the area. **“Being an agrarian economy, this will be the ultimate gain, but it will take many years to become evident”**

There is a great demand for plantation on private and public land. **“we planted fruit bearing trees, fodder grasses, broom plants, and even bamboo on a completely denuded piece of private land ,using MGNREGA resources. With catch drain works, irrigation channel and other flood control structures coming up, we are confident that cultivable land would get protected and would have a multiplier effect on the agriculture”** explains the Rural Development Assistant along with women present .

MGNREGA , according to Pavitra is not only a reliable and regular source to earn money, but is a medium to generate additional income once commercial , fruit plantation, fodder trees reach maturity.

Nevertheless they seemed a bit worried about the insufficient look after of assets **“we realized this time that the survival rate of the saplings is not very high, and we need to take proper care of them, so as not to let our effort and money go down the drain”**- a common feeling shared by Rural development Assistant and the facilitator



Box drain

Likewise, there is a concern for the sustainability of other assets created like the catch water drain, which got damaged in rainfall this season and requires immediate repairs.



“Box drain requiring repairs”

Another very interesting revelation as shared by Pavitra and others, **“MGNREGA has forced private employers to provide us much better rates as compared to earlier times. We have refused to work for them at such a low wage rate, moreover we insist on some parity in wages with men, now that we know we are entitled to it”**. This is an ample proof of increased awareness and exercise of women’s rights.

Thus apart from ensuring increased income which could be spent on education facilities, health care, it has increased their power to bargain and negotiate.

“Since we are not aware of the provisions in detail, we don’t know what we are entitled to. Otherwise we will not hesitate to even approach the BDO in case of any violation “

MGNREGA seems to have created reasons and opportunities for those in search of alternate employment for stable income, to work and remain in their village with their families. This has had an impact on curbing people's outmigration. *“Few Men and women had migrated to the area where tunnel work was going on. Since MGNREGA came in, they have all come back. I too had gone there with my family and we are happy that we don't need to go there any more. More than men, we suffered as we were paid less than men, had to slog the whole day, take care of kids and household chores after a hard day's work and survive in bad living conditions. Children suffer the most in such a situation. MGNREGA has been instrumental in bringing us back”*, happily admitted one of the women workers.

It is a fact that during migration, women and children become more vulnerable, as the probability of their being subjected to violence, malnutrition, hunger and insecurity, goes up significantly, in such a situation.

Men strongly feel that MGNREGA has come as a boon especially for women. *“Day is not far when they will be confident enough to take decisions on their own, without depending on men. This will definitely impact the strong position men have been enjoying in the society till now”*, though jokingly added by a male relative of Sukhmaya Subba, but having an iota of truth.

Case Study 06 / **Lachung, North District**

Lachung is the other important village situated in the Northern most district of Sikkim. It is a small village with multi ethnic society but dominating community is Bhotias. This beautiful village is said to be the “most picturesque village in the entire Sikkim”.

Surrounded by steep rugged hills, narrow valleys and rocky difficult terrain, like Lachen, it too suffers from heavy rainfall. Snowfall, for at least 5-6 months in a year, takes away the livelihood options and opportunities for the local inhabitants.

In such a situation MGNREGA is a program that has begun to make a difference in the lives of people, particularly women. Furthermore, it is increasingly becoming popular among the workers, ever since it got introduced in 2006.

As amply expressed by a local shop owner, a woman, *“It is a unique scheme which allows us to improve our environmental conditions and also earn money doing that”*. MGNREGA is thus providing not just real livelihood opportunities which are not just helpful in mitigating poverty but also environmental degradation simultaneously.

Zumsa, the traditional local self governance bodies, has been responsible for the generating information about the availability of work, so necessary for successful implementation of MGNREGA. *“All of us have heard of the scheme and almost all the households have worked also”*, says Pema, a young girl.



Most of the women were of the view that MGNREGA is beginning to bring about a significant change in their villages as well as in their own lives. This is because employment is being provided regularly within their village (unlike previous schemes).

Though it is an agrarian economy, it is not able to provide livelihood the whole year round. In such a situation MGNREGA offers an excellent opportunity to women to add up to their household income.

Thunki, living with her family, has worked on the scheme ever since it got initiated three years back. She looked happy having earned Rs 1500 Rs for 15 days of work she did last year, She has spent her earnings on consumer items, food and also on health care and children’s education– *“I even spent some money on buying myself bangles, clothes etc which I could certainly afford*

earlier but could never decide on my own as I was not earning then. I certainly feel a sense of freedom”.



Decisions regarding the allocation of work are taken in a meeting which is to be attended by all households. Attending the meetings and participating in MGNREGA work is mandatory for each family and Violation of this is taken as a serious offence and offenders are fined with 150/- Rs each day.

“Though payment of fine of 150 Rs pinches a lot, nevertheless it has ensured high level of participation”, shares a young worker in the group.

Though provision of work to one person of the household, thankfully, has not been interpreted to mean only the male head of the family (unlike some other states) and the credit for this to a great extent goes to Zumsa.

MGNREGA has been instrumental in giving women a chance to move out of their houses and access a decent source of livelihood as remarked by Chinten-*“I never worked in any of the employment schemes earlier and have no knowledge either. This is my first time and I feel good. I have no problems working with my hand as we are used to working hard.”*

Most of the women, including Samki, don’t remember how many days they worked last year and the money they earned- *“though we go the bank to take out money, but records of money received etc are being kept by men folks in the family”*.

Nevertheless, payment has not been immediate till now. Long delays also lead to their forgetting the details of work and payment.

Most of the women we spoke with have opened up their account in banks and post offices because of MGNREGA. In fact many of them have done it for the first time. Chiten feels elevated having a bank account in her name –*“I go to the bank myself to take out money. Earlier I would go with a male member but now I can go on my own”*. Though a small change, it has given women a taste of independence and strength.

Fixed working hours also (from 8 in the morning till 4 in the evening) is an added incentive. *“People need more work and if possible higher wages, to take care of their needs through out the year”*, demands Richen, a young resident of Lachung, *“Conditions of living are quite difficult here and we have to put in lot of effort and labor in carrying out these physical tasks. Opportunities of earning decent livelihood are quite slim through out year, specially when agricultural work gets over”*

Though work availability has increased post MGNREGA, there is still a massive demand for more work.

According to women provision of shade for periods of rest, first aid and child care facilities are routinely absent at the worksite. Though they get to rest for an hour and there are women to prepare tea and provide for drinking water during the work hours.

Women with young children and aged residents are also not encouraged to come and work. Though there have been cases where women have brought children to the worksites but they crawled around unattended while their mothers worked.

Thunki and Samki, did admit that young single mothers do need MGNREGA all the more and crèche facilities should be provided for at the site also to prevent any untoward incident - *“Unfortunately, this is the first time we are hearing that MGNREGA has a provision for such facilities at the worksite. We are hardly aware of any thing else except that it pays 100 Rs to both men and women and each family is entitled to 100 days of work in a year”*. They were surprised to hear that there is a provision which entitles them to even “demand for work whenever they need to work”.

Despite these shortcomings most of the women felt it to be very important in their lives now, improving environmental conditions and enhancing women's spending capacity.

People have collectively worked on schemes undertaken so far like Plantation, Catch water drain, Terracing, road etc. Though level of awareness with respect to details of number of plants planted, area of the land, money invested etc, is quite low, they seem quite knowledgeable of the advantages of these initiatives. They feel box drain, plantation would help considerably in arresting soil erosion taking place through massive surface runoff. Though eventual impact of the plantation will become evident in few years time, villagers have worked collectively despite it being a private piece of land, as they believe that terracing, plantation would result in prevention of landslides, and would have a multiplier impact on the surrounding, preventing damage to households from getting washed away.

This is quite an interesting phenomenon. Though MGNREGA guidelines prefer work in community land, people here strongly feel that development of private land can't be ignored in the process of bringing about comprehensive natural resource development. *"Nature doesn't recognize boundaries and as such prevention of landslides even on private land will have a fall out on the arable land, including our farm land, houses, in the surroundings"*, says a male resident worker.

Zumsa meeting at the start of each scheme fully ensures that people are well informed of the initiation of work, venue, timings etc. Women do participate in both Zumsa meetings. Though they still feel shy and scared of sharing their concerns, problems with higher authorities such as "Pipon", they are somehow convinced that with time to come, they would feel more confident.

Apart from a meeting at the completion of the work, people don't otherwise meet during the implementation, unless urgently needed.

Various committees (as per the provisions) comprising village people, including women, responsible for supervision, implementation of the work etc are also not being constituted.

Job cards remain with Pipon during the execution of work, and are returned once the work gets over. Women are not much aware of the details given inside the card. Apart from the basic provisions of MGNREGA, awareness levels with respect to grievance redressal mechanism,

work application procedure, stipulated time period of payment , worksite facilities etc, is dismal. Moreover, sharing of details of MGNREGA scheme is not done proactively by the Pison and others in Zumsa, as claimed by people.

When asked about the durability of the asset, Chintan, Richen and others do not have much to share *“we have not paid much attention to this aspect. We don’t know the exact condition of the tree plantation, village footpath or other assets created , moreover none of us remember being part of any discussion on maintenance etc in any of the meetings on MGNREGA. Nevertheless, the group responsible for undertaking the work should be responsible for its upkeep”*. Clearly, more attention needs to be paid towards proper sustenance of the assets.

Gender related concerns can be crucial in collective decisions on creation, sustainable of village assets as it can prove effective in the long run in reducing their workload and improving the quality of women’s lives. Their opinion, experience, perspective in planning, implementation and evaluation of process and assets can be very useful in building a gender inclusive community ownership of MGNREGA process.

As mentioned earlier, low level of awareness especially amongst women, as well as lack of worksite facilities is quite troubling. It is denying women with young children, the opportunity to make MGNREGA a viable option. Procedural delay, resource crunch leading to inordinate delay in payments is another challenge that needs to be overcome.

Nevertheless, the overall impact of MGNREGA on women’s lives has been quite positive with improved levels of awareness, increased presence/participation in public forums, and contribution to health care and food security of the family. Gradually, with more effective implementation of MGNREGA provisions, it will have a multiplier impact enhancing their economic independence and self-confidence with more just and equitable gender relations at the household and society level.

The State of Sikkim: A Profile

Location	▶	Approx 27 deg. North 88 deg. East
Area	▶	7,096 sq.kms (0.22% of area of India)
State Population (As per 2001 Census)	▶	540,493 (Male 288,217; Female 252,276).05% of the total population of India
Sex ratio (2001 Census)	▶	986 females/1000 males
Density of population	▶	76 per sq. miles
Capital	▶	Gangtok
District, Areas	▶	East District (954 sq. km) -Gangtok
& District Capitals	▶	West District (1166 sq. km) -Gyalshing
		South District - Namchi
		North District (4226 sq.km) - Mangan
No. of Sub-Divisions	▶	9 (Gangtok, Pakyong, Rongli, Namchi, Soreng, Gyalshing, Rabongla, Mangan, Chungthang)
Climate	▶	Tropical, Temperate and Alpine
No. of Zilla Panchayat ward	▶	100
No. of Gram Panchyat	▶	166 units
No. of Revenue Blocks	▶	454
Other Important towns	▶	Jorethang, Singtam, Rangpo, Pakyong Rhenock, Meli, Chungthang and Soreng
Languages Spoken	▶	Nepali, Bhutia, Lepcha, Limboo, Magar, Rai,

	Gurung, Sherpa, Tamang, Newari, Sunuwar (Mukhia).
Main occupations	Farmers, Cardamom Growers, Government Contractors and Government Employees.
Per Capita Income	29,808/- (2005-06, at current prices)
Domestic product	1717 crores (2005-06, at current prices)
Religions	Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity
Urban Population	11.1%
% below poverty line	19.2 (in 2005-06)
Birth rate	19.2 (in 2005-06 per 1000)
Death Rate:	4.5 (in 2005-06 per 1000)
Infant Mortality rate	32 (in 2005-06 per 1000)
State Day (the day Sikkim Became a part of India)	16th May
State Animal	Red Panda (<i>Ailurus fulgens</i>)
State Bird	Blood Pheasant (<i>Ithaginis cruentus</i>)
State Flower	Nobile Orchid (<i>Dendrobium nobile</i>)
State Tree	Rhododendron (<i>Rhododendron niveum</i>)
No. of Assembly seats	32
No. of Lok Sabha seats	1
No. of Rajya Sabha	1
No. of Police Stations	82 (2005-06)
Crime Statistics (1997)	Murders: 15 Robbery: 9 Theft: 115 Burglary: 56 Rape: 7; Kidnapping: 9

No. of Doordarsan TV	▶ 1 at Gangtok
High power Transmitters	▶ 1, MV & SW at Gangtok
No. of All India Radio Stations	
No. of Schools and Educational Institutions in the State	▶ Primary 503 Middle (Junior) Schools 146 Secondary Schools 93 Senior Sec. Schools 41 Public Schools 4 Degree College 3 Engineering College 1 Medical College 1 B.Ed College 1 Law College 1 Sheda 1 Monastic Schools 70 Sanskrit parshala 12 Madrasa 7 Teachers Training Inst. 1 Industrial Training Inst. 1 Polytechnic Institutions 2
Percentage of literacy	▶ 82 % (2005-06)
No. of hospitals	▶ 6, including Sir Thutob Namgyal Memorial & Manipal Referral Hospitals
No. of Primary Health Cente	▶ 24

The Questionnaire

Questionnaire A (For NREGS Beneficiary)

NREGS-Sikkim Impact Assessment Study

Notes for the Field Investigator:

- 1. This questionnaire is meant for the NREGS beneficiaries**
- 2. Please fill-up the questionnaire in clear and legible handwritings**

A. Primary Information

101	GPU Name:	GPU code: [] []
102	Village Name:	Village code: [] []
103	Ward Name	Ward Code
104	Block Name	Block Code
104	Name of Beneficiary:	Contact:

105	Gender: Male: 1, Female: 2					
106	BPL/APL Code ½ :		Name of the Work :			
107	Work Code :					
108	Is the beneficiary aware of the NREGA scheme?		Yes...1, No...2			
109	When did the Scheme start?		Month..... Year.....			
Job Card Number:						
Family Details		Total Number of members	Number of Literate members	Number of Class X pass and above	Number of Graduates and above	Number of illiterate members
		A	B	C	D	E
110	Adults male					
111	Adults female					
112	Minor- Boys					
113	Minor –Girls					

114	Number of earning members in the family:	Male: [] Female: []	
115	Current Main income source?	1. Agri- Labour 2. Non agri- labour 3. Own framing 4. Small shop 5. Livestock Farming 6. Government. Scheme 7 Salaried/ Contract 8 Other (Specify).....	
116	What was the income source before NREGA was introduced? (Multiple answers)	1. Agri- Labour 2. Non agri- labour 3. Own framing 4. Small shop 5. Livestock Farming 6. Government. Scheme 7 Salaried/ Contract 8 Other (Specify).....	
117	Does Beneficiary have own land?	Yes...1, No...2	If no, than go to 118
118	If yes, how much...	ACRES..... []	

119	Does beneficiary have irrigation facility?	Yes...1, No...2
120	The type of house wall the beneficiary is having	Rented room.....0 Ekra Mud.....1 Stone Mud.....2 Wooden Plan.....3 Ekra Cement.....4 Stone Cement....5 Brick Wall.....6

B. About NREGA

201	Do you know about NREGA?	Yes...1 No...2
202	From which source did you come to know about NREGA?	1. Gram Panchayat 2. Media 3. Poster 4. Gram Rozgar Sahayak 5. Others (Specify).....
203	When did you apply for the job card?	Month: Year:

204	After application, within how many days did you receive the job card?	Number of days:
205	From which source you are getting information about NREGA work?	1. Gram Panchayat 2. Poster 3. Key informatory 4. Key stakeholders 5. Gram Rozgar Sahayak 6. Others (Specify).....
206	Are you aware about NREGA Planning?	Yes...1 No...2
207	Are you involved in NREGA Planning?	Yes...1 No...2
208	Are you getting work against demand?	Yes...1 No...2
209	If no, give the reason:	
210	After your demand, the Gram Panchayat is providing work in a how many days?	Number of days:
211	If it is more than 15 days, please ask the respondent about the reason for the delay:	

213	Are you working in the village you are living?	Yes...1 No...2
214	If no, give the reason:	
215	How many family members are working in NREGA scheme?	Male..... Females.....
216	How many days of employment were given to you in the last year under NREGA?	Numbers.....
217	How many days of employment are given to you this year?	Days.....
218	Do you think you need more that 100 days employment from this scheme?	Days.....
219	You are working for which activity? (Multiple Choices Possible)	1. Flood control 2. Water conservation 3. Road 4. Foot path 5. MGNREGA Dhara Vikas 6 Gutter (drain) 7 Land Development 8. Plantations

		9 Others (Specify).....
220	How many government departments are working under NREGA in your village?	1. Agriculture / KVK 2. Forest 3 Horticulture 4. Irrigation 6. Others (Specify).....
221	Did you get any unemployment wages in case you didn't get the job within 15 days of the time demanded?	Yes 1..... No 2.....
222	What is the per day wage given to you under NREGA?	Rupees per day:
223	How the wage money is paid to you?	1. Cash 2. Bank account transfer 3. Post office 4. Cheque 5. Others (Specify).....
224	Within how many number of days the payment is received?	

225	Are you getting payment on time?	Yes...1 No.... 2	If yes, go to 227. If no, then answer the next question
226	If no, give reason		
		Before the scheme	After the scheme
227	What was the total yearly family income?	Rs.	Rs.
228	How many members are migrating to other places for earning their livelihood?	Number before NREGS:	Number after NREGS:

C. Wage Impact

301	How do you spend the wage money received from NREGA? (Multiple answer possible)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On good food 2. On children education 3. Paid back loan 4. Bought new/old things for household use 	Note Any Further Comments from the Respondent Here:
-----	--	--	---

		5. Renovated the house 6. Health related expenditure 7. Buying things for agriculture 8. For Irrigation work 9. New insurance policy 10. Shares Others (Specify)	
302	Do you believe that the NREGS assets created in your village have helped you and others in the village generate some additional income? If yes, how? Please provide details.		

D. Overall suggestions/views on the schemes:

401	How do you like/dislike this scheme?	
-----	--------------------------------------	--

402	How does this type of scheme help as a livelihood option?	
403	Do you have any suggestions for improving this scheme?	
404	Do you have any other livelihood option in your mind?	
405	Are you interested in working under NREGS? Why?	
406	<p>(A) Are there people in the village who do not have the job card but are interested in working under NREGA?</p> <p>(B) If yes, then what are the reasons for not having job cards? (If No, then go to the next question)</p>	Yes ...1 No..... 2
407	Are notices related to NREGA scheme etc put up in Panchayat offices regularly?	
408	Are any facilities provided at the work site? If yes then what are they?	
409	Is work always given within 5 km of the village? If not then do you get extra	

	wages	
410	Are you aware about the grievance redressal mechanism? Have you ever made use of it?	
411	Are aged /disabled people also employed under NREGA? If yes, then what kind of jobs are usually assigned to them?	

Questionnaire – B (From Block Development Officers)

NREGS-Sikkim Impact Assessment Study

Notes for the Field Investigator:

- 1. This questionnaire is meant for the Block Development Officers**
- 2. Please fill-up the questionnaire in clear and legible handwritings**
- 3. Please use the back-side of the page, or some additional pages, if the space provided is not adequate to record the information. Please mark the question identification number for such additional information.**
- 4. Some of the questions may have overlapping answers, but please ask all the questions even if it is repetition.**

Regarding structures

101	What are the TYPES of structures created under NREGS in your block?	
102	Kinds of technical inputs are given from your office. Please specify.	
103	Was any civil engineer involved in creation of the structures?	

104	How do you maintain quality control in NREGS works?	
-----	---	--

Maintenance of structure (General and Financial arrangements)

201	Who maintains the structures created under NREGS?	1. GPU.... 2. NREGA Cell.... 3. Empowered Committee.... 4. Other (Specify) 5. No provisions for maintenance are made yet. (Any Comments)...
202	Detail the procedure created for maintaining the structures	
203	Are the roles and responsibilities of the maintenance work outlined officially? If yes, then please detail them.	

204	Is there a maintenance fund created? If yes, then how much is the amount?	
205	Who has created the maintenance fund?	
206	Who manages the maintenance fund? And how?	
207	Is technical expertise available for maintenance of the structure? Who provides it?	
208	Are local resources used in creation and maintenance of structures?	

Wage Impact of NREGS

301	According to you, has NREGS helped the beneficiaries generate	
-----	---	--

	<p>additional income? How?</p> <p>Please provide some details to support your observations.</p>	
--	---	--