



Registration, Issue and Management of Job Cards under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA in Kerala

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Abstract

Even after sixty years of the planning era in the country, the situation of the rural poor could not be improved to the desired level. Though the percentage of population living below the poverty line declined from 45.3 per cent in 1951-52 to 27.5 per cent in 2004-05, the rural poverty rate stood at 28.3 per cent as against 47.4 per cent in 1951-52. Though the unemployment rate in the rural areas was lower, the higher incidence of poverty, especially in the rural areas of the country was a burning issue before the policy makers to remedy. Evidently, all the erstwhile employment programmes in the country upto 2005 were either discontinued or merged with other programmes as they could not produce the desired results in employment generation and poverty reduction. The last among the series of wage employment programmes is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (Mahatma Gandhi NREGA). Obviously, as an ambitious programme targeting the acute unemployment problem of the country, the efficient and effective implementation of the programme assumes pivotal importance. The study looked into the process of registration of beneficiaries under the Scheme and the issue and management of Job card. The highly positive perception score of the beneficiaries in this regard indisputably confirms the existence of a trouble-free and efficient process of Job Card registration and management in Kerala.

Keywords: Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, MGNREGA, Employment, Job Card

1. Introduction

The Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, as rightly observed, is an unprecedented nationwide employment scheme that already benefits millions of rural households across the subcontinent (Carswell & Cripps, 2013). It is considered as the first employment programme in the history of India that guarantees the right to work as a legal right

for every adult in rural India. It is a demand-driven and people-centred programme primarily addressing the rural poor and their fundamental right to work with dignity. It has got wide acceptance all over India and is valued as a boon to the rural poor (Nayak, Behera, & Mishra, 2009). The Act ultimately aims at enhancing people's livelihood on a sustained basis, by developing the economic



and social infrastructure in rural areas (Institute of Applied Manpower Research, 2007). It is also observed that it helps to enhance the purchasing power of the rural households and thus helps in poverty alleviation (Ministry of Rural Development, 2012). By providing equal wages to both men and women, the Act upholds the social position and integrity of women and thereby promotes gender equality. Remarkably, a number of macro and micro level organisations are involved in the formulation and implementation of the programme. At the micro level, the Gram Panchayats take the lead role in the implementation of the Scheme through Gram Sabhas. The involvement of *Kudumbashree* units, the Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) formed under Kerala State Poverty Eradication Mission, in the implementation of the Scheme, is a unique feature of Kerala. The registration of beneficiaries and the issue of Job Cards are the initial steps in the implementation of the Scheme.

2. Registration of Beneficiaries

The Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is open to all rural households in the country. 'Household' under the Act means a family comprising mother, father, and their children and any person wholly or substantially dependent on the head of the family. It will also mean a single-member family. As per the Act, all adult members of the households, willing to do unskilled manual work, may apply for registration, either in writing or orally, to their respective local Gram Panchayat (Govt. of India, 2005). The Act also provides that the application for registration may be given on plain paper to the Local Gram Panchayats. It should contain the names of those adult members of the households who are willing to do unskilled manual work, and such other particulars as age, sex and SC/ST status. The State Governments may make available a printed form, though not insisted upon, for the use of

the beneficiaries. The Operational Guidelines to the Act issued by the Ministry of Rural Development envisage that verification of applications regarding local residence in the Gram Panchayat concerned, ensuring the household as an entity, and the fact that the applicants are adult members of the household, shall be done by the Gram Panchayats (Govt. of India, 2008). To generate awareness about the Act among the rural households and to identify the families willing to participate in the Scheme, special campaigns were taken up at the time of implementation of the Scheme. Besides, Gram Sabha meetings, door-to-door surveys with the help of Gram Panchayat members, SC/ST members and women residents, a village-level government functionary and the Panchayat Secretary, NHGs/SHGs leaders, Anganwadi workers, etc., were also conducted to mobilize applications for registration.

The process of verification of applications shall be completed not later than a fortnight after the receipt of the applications in the Gram Panchayats. After verification, the Gram Panchayats will enter all particulars in the 'Registrations Register' in the Gram Panchayat. Every registered household will be assigned a unique registration number. Copies of the registration form will be sent to the Programme Officer for the purpose of reporting to the Intermediate Panchayat and District Panchayat, which will be helpful for further planning about demand for work and available resources. At the time of the commencement of the Act, it was insisted that Gram Sabhas of registered workers be held to explain the provisions of the Act. The registration of any person who submits incorrect information will be cancelled.

3. Issue of Job Cards

In order to ensure transparency and protect labourers against possibility of fraud, the Gram Panchayats will issue a well-



designed Job Card to each registered household within fifteen days of the application for registration. The Job Card contains details such as date of application, date from which job is required, and the number of days for which job is required. It also includes details of job undertaken, such as name of the worker, gender, day and date of job sanctioned, nature of work done, muster roll number and signature of the authority authorising the work. Besides, there are separate pages for recording attendance and the total number of days worked by the household. Towards the end of the Job Card, there is a space for recording insurance policy number and the date of its issue as well as the name of the nominee. In case ex-gratia payment is made to any worker, the name of the employee, the date of the accident and the amount paid should be recorded at the place specified in the card. In case any accident occurs at the worksite, the name of such worker, the date of the accident and the amount of daily allowance paid should be recorded in the Job Card. Job Cards should be issued in the presence of the local community. Photographs of adult members who are applicants have to be attached to the Job Cards. All the important provisions relating to the Act and the contact number for reporting grievances are given on the last page of each card. The cost of the Job Card, including that of the photographs, shall be borne by the Panchayats as part of the programme cost. The Job Card sare to be kept in the custody of the households to whom they are issued and shall be valid for a period of five years of issue. Additions or deletions in any household on account of demise or permanent change of residence of a member shall be reported immediately by the concerned household. The Gram Panchayat will also undertake an annual updating exercise. All additions and deletions made in the Register will be read out in the Gram Sabhas and the Gram Panchayats will send a list of additions/deletions to the Programme Officers.

The *Operational Guidelines* to MGNREGA provides that a cardholder may apply for a duplicate Job Card, if the original card is lost or damaged. The application shall be given to the Gram Panchayats and shall be processed in the manner of a new application, the difference being that the particulars may also be verified using the duplicate copy of the Job Card maintained by the Panchayats. If a person has a grievance against the non-issuance of a Job Card, he/she may bring the matter to the notice of the concerned Programme Officer. If the grievance is against the Programme Officer, he/she may bring it to the notice of the District Programme Coordinator or the designated grievance-redressal authority at the Block or District level. All such complaints shall be disposed of within 15 days.

4. Objective, Hypothesis and Methodology

The study examines the process of Job Card registration, and its issue and management under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA in Kerala. It has been hypothesized that 'the perception of the beneficiaries regarding Job Card registration, and its issue and management under the Scheme in Kerala is neither positive nor negative, irrespective of the regional differences'. The population for the study comprised all the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA beneficiaries in Kerala. The sample size was calculated according to the specifications given by Krejcie & Morgan (1970) in their study. As per the study, the total sample size that has to be selected is 384 for a large population. As the percentage of households worked in each region of the State (Southern, Central and Northern) under the Scheme is more than 30, an equal number of samples was selected from each region (Table 1). But for getting enough sample from each region, 200 households were taken as the sample for the present study. Hence, the total sample size amounts to 600.

Table 1: Population Details

District	Region	No. of households that worked as on 31.03.2012 (Rounded off)	Percentage to total
Thiruvananthapuram	South	515870	33.81
Kollam			
Pathanamthitta			
Alappuzha			
Kottayam	Central	549050	35.99
Idukki			
Ernakulam			
Trissur			
Palakkad	North	460600	30.19
Wayanad			
Kasargod			
Kannur			
Kozhikode			
Malappuram			
Total		1525520	100

A Multistage sampling procedure was used to select the sample units for the study (Table 2). For this, Kerala was divided into three regions; central, southern and northern. From each region, two districts were randomly selected to constitute 6 sampling districts. From each of the selected district, two Blocks were selected at random to constitute a total of 12 sampling Blocks. Two Gram Panchayats each were selected from each of the selected Block, thus constituting 24 sampling Gram Panchayats. The final sample units of both beneficiaries were selected at random from the lists available in these Panchayats.

Reliability of the construct variables was ensured by using Cronbach's Alpha. All

the values were found to be greater than 0.7 which indicates the internal consistency of the subparts of each construct for measuring that construct. All the responses were collected based on the last two or three years' experience of the respondents under the Scheme. The primary data collection was done during the last quarter of the year 2012 and the first two quarters of 2013. The responses on the construct variables were collected on Five-point and Seven-point Likert-type scales. Student's t-test, Mann-Whitney U-test and Kruskal Wallis ANOVA were used to compare the average responses of the construct variables among different subsamples.

Table 2: Multistage Sampling of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA Beneficiaries

Region	6 Districts out of the total 14 Districts (Two Districts each from each region)	12 Blocks from the selected Districts (Two Blocks each from each District)	24 Gram Panchayats from the selected Blocks (Two Gram Panchayats each from each Block)	600 Beneficiaries (25 beneficiaries each from the selected Gram Panchayats)
South	Thiruvananthapuram	Pothencode	Pothencode	25
			Mangalapuram	25
		Nedumangade	Anad	25
			Aruvikkara	25
	Kollam	Chavara	Neendakara	25
			Thevalakkara	25
		Kottarakkara	Kottarakkara	25
			Pooyappally	25
		Vazhakkulam	Vengola	25

Central	Ernakulam	Vadavucode	Vazhakkulam	25
			Kunnathunade	25
			Ayikkaranade	25
	Idukki	Adimaly	Adimaly	25
			Vellathooval	25
		Thodupuzha	Kumaramangalam	25
			Muttam	25
North	Wayanad	Kalpetta	Meppady	25
			Vythiri	25
		SulthanBethery	Ambalavayal	25
			Meenangadi	25
	Malappuram	Kondotty	Kondotty	25
			Pulikkal	25
		Ponnani	Edappal	25
			Vattamkulam	25
3 Regions	6 Districts	12 Blocks	24 Gram Panchayats	600 Beneficiaries

Note: Random selection is made at all stages

5. Results and Discussion

The views of beneficiaries, on various aspects of registration and issue of job cards in Kerala are examined in two parts. The responses on the categorical variables such as channel of submission of application, process of verification and rejection, if any, of applications, intervention of the Members of Panchayats in the issue of Job Cards, time lag in the issue of Job Cards, inclusion of the names of all eligible family members and their photographs in the Job Cards, expenditure incurred on obtaining Job Cards and maintenance of Job Cards are examined in the first part. The assessment of the procedures followed by the Gram Panchayats in conducting the registration of the households and issue and management of Job Cards are dealt with in the second part. The assessment of procedures is done based on the views of the beneficiaries on a Five-point scale pertaining to the variables such as filling up and verification of the Job Card application, promptness in the issue of Job Cards, promptness in updating membership entries and work entries, speed in rectification of wrong entries, if any, upkeep of Job Cards and the general attitude of the Gram

Panchayat officials towards the MGNREGA workers.

5. (A) 1.Submission of Application for Registration

A household willing to apply for registration under the Scheme can submit an application through ; (1) Written request through Gram Sabhas, (2) Oral request through Gram Sabhas, (3) Direct written request to Panchayats, and (4) Direct oral request to Panchayats. The response of beneficiaries in Kerala regarding the channels of obtaining the Job Card in Table 3 reveals that, in all, 97.4 per cent of the beneficiaries submitted applications for registration directly to their respective Gram Panchayats. There is no significant difference among different regions in this regard. A meagre, 1.3 per cent, placed oral request through Gram Sabhas and another 1.3 per cent made written applications through Gram Sabhas. No one had made oral requests to the Panchayat for Job Cards. The All-India report on evaluation of MGNREGA, published by the Institute of Applied Manpower Research, also revealed that written request to the Gram Panchayat was the main channel for obtaining registration by the beneficiaries (Institute of Applied Manpower Research, 2007).

Contrary to the above, a study by Chathukulam & Gireesan (2007) reveals that sizeable numbers MGNREGA registrations are happening in Kerala through special drives in Gram Sabhas.

Table 3: Channels of Submission of Application

Source	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Written request through Gram Sabhas	2	1.0	6	3.0	0	0.0	8	1.3
Oral request through Gram Sabhas	4	2.0	3	1.5	1	0.5	8	1.3
Direct written request to Panchayats	194	97	191	95.5	199	99.5	584	97.4
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data

5.(A)2. Rejection of Application for Registration

As prescribed in the Act, the facility for registration is open throughout the year at the Gram Panchayat offices during their working hours. The application for registration by a household shall be accompanied by a copy of a valid identity card and two passport size photographs of each of the applicants from the family. Errors in the filling up of applications and/or the failure in attaching the required documents can result in initial rejection of the applications. The experience of the beneficiaries in Kerala (Table 4) reveals that that the applications of 93.3 per cent of the beneficiaries were accepted for registration and issue of Job Cards, without finding any defects. However, 6.7 per cent of the applicants experienced rejection due to wrong/missing information in the applications and/or lack of relevant documents, which were later accepted on rectifying the error or on production of relevant documents as the case may be.

Table 4: Initial Rejection of Application for Registration

Response	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	23	11.5	11	5.5	6	3.0	40	6.7
No	177	88.5	189	94.5	194	97.0	560	93.3
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data

5.(A) 3. Identification of Beneficiaries in Gram Sabhas

The *Operational Guidelines* of MGNREGA dictates that all the households found eligible for registration should be issued Job Cards by reading out the names of those families in the open meetings convened by Gram Sabhas for identification. Table 5 reveals the responses of the beneficiaries in Kerala regarding the identification of beneficiaries in the Gram Sabhas before issuing the Job Cards. A majority of the beneficiaries (58.3%) confirmed that their names were read out in the Gram Sabha meetings before the issue of Job Cards. The remaining 41.7 per cent had no such experience. The observations by Chathukulam and Gireesan (2007), based on a study in Kerala also confirm that the list of persons eligible for registration was not read out for verification in the Gram Sabhas, in all the cases. Another study in Kerala by Nair, Sreedharan & Anoopkumar (2009), mentions that the identification process was going on in the State in a different way. The beneficiaries are mobilised at specific locations in the Gram Panchayat wards, and the ward members and/or the ADS members issue Job Cards to the households after their identification. The Institute of Applied Manpower Research (2007) found that, on the all-India basis, only 75 per cent of the beneficiaries were identified through Gram Sabhas before issuing job cards.

Table 5: Identification of Beneficiaries in Gram Sabhas

Response	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	86	43.0	113	56.5	151	75.5	350	58.3
No	114	57.0	87	43.5	49	24.5	250	41.7
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data



5(A) 4. Involvement of Panchayat Ward Members

Gram Panchayat members can motivate and help the applicants of MGNREGA in the process of registration and obtaining Job Cards. Regarding such involvements, 83.7 per cent of the beneficiaries confirmed that they had no such experience. However, the rest of the beneficiaries (16.3%) had received motivation and helps from their respective Ward members in the registration process. Region-wise, the involvement was lower in the Northern part of the State (12%), compared to the South and Central parts (18.5 % each). The results published by the Institute of Applied Manpower Research (2007), based on a survey conducted in twenty districts in different parts of the country, reveal that a very negligible number of people received any help from the elected Ward members or public servants in connection with registration and issue of Job Cards.

Table 6: Intervention of Ward members

Response	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	37	18.5	37	18.5	24	12.0	98	16.3
No	163	81.5	163	81.5	176	88.0	502	83.7
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data

5. (A) 5. Time Lag in the Issue of Job Cards

As per the directives of the MGNREGA, Job Cards are to be issued to the applicants, after proper verification and identification, at the earliest, preferably within a couple of weeks. In Kerala, a significant majority (85%) of the beneficiaries received their Job Cards within the stipulated time period of a maximum of 15 days (Table 7). Of the rest, 3.3 per cent beneficiaries were issued their Job Cards after the stipulated period of 15 days but within 20 days of their applications. However, a sizeable number of beneficiaries (11.7%) were issued their Job Cards only after 20 days of their applications. It was also observed that

most of the delayed issues occurred during the initial years of implementation of the Scheme. Over time, especially after the computerisation of the process, the issue time has been reduced to the satisfaction of the beneficiaries. Region-wise, the Northern part of the State could issue Job Cards to most of their beneficiaries (99.5%) within the stipulated time period. The southern and central regions are found to be much behind in the matter of prompt issue of Job Cards (80 per cent and 75.5 per cent respectively).

Nayak, Behera & Mishra (2009), in a study about the processes and procedures of MGNREGA in Orissa, report that there were cases where Job Cards were issued even after three weeks or more, from the date of application. Lack of necessary manpower for carrying out procedural work is reported as one of the major reasons for such delays. The All India Survey conducted by the Institute of Applied Manpower Research (2007), also reveals that Job Cards were not issued within the stipulated time. Another study, on implementation of MGNREGA in four States (Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh) revealed that except in Madhya Pradesh, the time lag for the issue of Job Cards was one month to three months (Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, 2006). A study conducted in Thane and Akola districts of Maharashtra reports that the legal requirements as to the issue of Job Cards were fulfilled in most of the cases (Central Institute of Fisheries Education, 2009).

Table 7: Time Lag in Issue of Job Cards

Response	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Up to 15 days	160	80	151	75.5	199	99.5	510	85
16-20 days	13	6.5	6	3.0	1	0.5	20	3.3
More than 20 days	27	13.5	43	21.5	0	0.0	70	11.7
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data



5. (A) 6. Inclusion of Members in the Job Cards

The responses of the beneficiaries regarding whether all the eligible household members who are willing to do unskilled work under the Scheme have been included in the Job Cards or not are depicted in Table 8. Convincingly, 94.2 percent of the beneficiaries in Kerala had positive responses regarding it. However, 5.8 percent of the respondents expressed negative opinions in this regard, alleging non-inclusion of eligible members of their households for reasons beyond their explanation. The southern region is found to be poor in giving entry to eligible members (11.5%) compared to the central and northern regions (4.5% and 1.5% respectively). The study results given in the 'All-India Report on Evaluation of MGNREGA', based on the survey of twenty districts, also reveals that all the eligible members of the family were not included in the Job Cards in all cases (Institute of Applied Manpower Research, 2007).

Table 8: Inclusion of Members in the Job Cards

Response	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	177	88.5	191	95.5	197	98.5	565	94.2
No	23	11.5	9	4.5	3	1.5	35	5.8
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data

5. (A) 7. Affixing Photographs of Members

As per MGNREGA Guidelines, photographs of all eligible adult members who are applicants have to be attached to the Job Cards. The cost of affixing the photographs will be borne by the Gram Panchayats as part of the programme cost. The Gram Panchayats will also undertake an annual updating of Job Cards, following the formalities for registration in the case of addition of members. Obviously, cent per cent of the beneficiaries reported that the photographs of all eligible members were pasted on the Job Cards (Table 9).

Table 9: Affixing the Photograph

Response	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100
No	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data

5.(A) 8. Expenditure for Obtaining Job Cards

It is mandatory that the Gram Panchayats shall affix the photographs of all the eligible members of the household in the Job Cards and the expenses in connection with it shall be considered as part of the programme cost. However, 32.2 percent of the beneficiaries had the experience of incurring costs for obtaining Job Cards in Kerala (Table 10). The cost of photographs of the applicants is the lone individual cost in connection with the issue of Job Cards. It was generally observed that during the initial years of the inception of the Act, the Gram Panchayats were providing facilities for taking photographs of the applicants for affixing them on the Job Cards. But in later years, the facility was provided free of cost only to the SC/ST beneficiaries in some Panchayats, and others were asked to supply the photographs at their own expense. As many as 193 beneficiaries (32.3%) incurred a cost ranging from Rs.30 to Rs. 60 each for photographs. Out of the beneficiaries who had spent money for obtaining the Job Cards, 63 per cent belonged to the northern region, 28.5 per cent to southern region and only 5 per cent to the central region.

A study conducted in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh found that a significantly large percentage of the beneficiaries incurred cost in the form of cost of application, cost of photograph including transportation and even bribe for issuing Job Cards (Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, 2006). Instances where no photographs were affixed in the Job Cards and also were beneficiaries paid for the

photographs are reported in Orissa by Nayak, Behera & Mishra (2009).

Table 10: Expenditure for Obtaining Job Cards

Response	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	57	28.5	10	5.0	126	63.0	193	32.2
No	143	71.5	190	95.0	74	37.0	407	67.8
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data

5. (A) 9. Upkeep of Job Cards

As per the statute, the Job Cards should be kept by the workers. They bring the Job Cards when they come to the worksite. In Kerala, 98.7 per cent of the beneficiaries reported that they themselves kept the Job Card (Table 11). But a few beneficiaries were keeping their Job Cards with the Ward Members/Worksite Mates. It is to be noted that the cards could be kept with the Ward Members/Worksite Mates with their full consent, to ensure the availability of the card on all working days. On completion of the work, it will be given back to them.

Table 11: Authority Keeping the Job Cards

Response	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Self	195	97.5	198	99	200	100	593	98.8
Gram Panchayat Officials/Ward Members	5	2.5	1	0.5	0	0.0	6	1.0
Mate of Worksites	0	0.0	1	0.5	0	0.0	1	0.2
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data

Regarding the custody of Job Cards, the experiences all over India are different. A study, 'Performance of MGNREGS in Kerala' by the Department of Extension Education, Gandhigram Rural Institute, Tamil Nadu in 2009 makes serious mention about the bad practice of keeping the Job Cards with

others by the workers (Ministry of Rural Development, 2009). The report holds that it may lead to a very bad precedent of non-payment of statutory minimum wages, and fudging of muster rolls leading to large-scale corruption tarnishing the very image of the noble Scheme. Another study, conducted in Orissa, found that although, the majority of the Job Card holders kept their cards in their own custody, instances of keeping the cards with ward members were plenty in number (Nayak, Behera, & Mishra, 2009). Similar observations have also been made by the Institute of Applied Manpower Research (2007) in this regard in the All India Report on Evaluation of MGNREGA.

5. (B) 1. Support for Filling up and Submission of Applications

The Gram Panchayats, along with the *Kudumbashree* machinery have been officially making efforts to campaign and motivate the rural people to get registered under the MGNREGA. Panchayat Ward level official meetings are convened under the leadership of respective ward members for popularising the Scheme and distribution of applications for registration. Special meetings are also to be convened in SC/ST colonies to ensure their active participation in the programme. Door-to-door canvassing is also to be done by NHGs, ADSs and CDSs to give awareness to the people about the Scheme. The responses of the beneficiaries about the efforts of the authorities to invite beneficiaries to the Scheme, and preparation and submission of applications, are presented in Table 12. It is quite evident that 98 per cent of the beneficiaries have received high to very high support and help from the official machinery in the preparation and submission of applications. None of the beneficiaries has given negative response regarding the degree of support. The positive effort of the official machinery in supporting the registration process under the Scheme is, therefore, indisputable.

Table 12: Support for Filling up and Submission of Applications

Response	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Neutral	8	4.0	1	0.5	3	1.5	12	2.0
High	52	26.0	52	26.0	24	12.0	128	21.3
Very High	140	70.0	147	73.5	173	86.5	460	76.7
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data

5. (B)2. Facility for Submission of Applications

Households can apply for registration under the Scheme at any time during a year. A particular household willing to register under the Scheme could get the facility for submission of application as ensured by the statute. The responses of the beneficiaries regarding the throughout facility provided by the Gram Panchayat authorities for the submission of applications are presented in Table 13. Altogether, 98.3 per cent of the beneficiaries confirm that the authorities are providing throughout facility for submission of applications. No responses are found negative, while 1.7 per cent beneficiaries kept neutral.

Table 13: Throughout Facility for Submission of Application

wq	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Neutral	8	4.0	2	1.0	0	0.0	10	1.7
Agree	16	8.0	31	15.5	28	14.0	75	12.5
Strongly Agree	176	88.0	167	83.5	172	86.0	515	85.8
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data

5. (B) 3. Verification of Application

The application for a Job Card by a household should accompany copies of valid identity proofs and two passport-size photographs of each member willing to work under the Scheme. The applications are verified as to the local residence in the Gram Panchayat concerned and the household as an entity, and the fact that the applicants are adult members of the household. As stated earlier, the issue of Job Cards has to be approved by convening Gram Sabha

meetings, by reading out the names of those families in the open meetings. A significant majority of the beneficiaries in Kerala (98.3%) 'agree to strongly agree' that thorough verification of applications is done by the authorities in connection with the registration process. Absence of negative responses confirms that the process is efficient beyond any scope for error.

Table 14: Thorough Verification of Applications

Response	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Neutral	8	4.0	2	1.0	0	0.0	10	1.7
Agree	5	2.5	37	18.5	6	3.0	48	8.0
Strongly Agree	187	93.5	161	80.5	194	97.0	542	90.3
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data

5. (B) 4. Involvement of Gram Sabhas

The *Operational Guidelines* of the Scheme dictates that Gram Sabhas shall be convened to explain the provisions of the Act, mobilise applications and involve in the conduct verification of the beneficiaries as part of the registration process. The responses of the beneficiaries regarding the involvement of Gram Sabhas in the registration process are detailed in Table 15. Strikingly, 85.7 per cent of the beneficiaries kept neutral without giving any positive or negative responses in this regard. However, while 11 per cent of the beneficiaries confirmed the active involvement of Gram Sabhas, 3.2 per cent negatively responded the involvement.

Table 15: Active Involvement of Gram Sabhas

Response	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Disagree	1	0.5	18	9.0	0	0.0	19	3.2
Neutral	174	87.0	162	81.0	179	89.5	514	85.7
Agree	10	5.0	18	9.0	16	8.0	44	7.3
Strongly Agree	15	7.5	2	1.0	5	2.5	22	3.7
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data



5. (B) 5. Issue of Job Cards

As explained earlier, every household registered under the Scheme should be issued a Job Card. Job Cards are to be issued free of cost, containing important particulars such as name, address and photographs of the registered members, their gender and age, bank account number, mandatory insurance policy number, elector's photo identity card number, signature of applicants, seal and signature of the registering authority, signature of a State Government officer, and the contact number(s) for reporting grievances. Regarding the issue of Job Cards as specified in the Act, 89.7 per cent beneficiaries in Kerala 'agree to strongly agree' to the fact that the cards were issued in the proper manner. While 8 per cent beneficiaries disagreed, 2.3 per cent of the beneficiaries neither agreed nor disagreed on the point (Table 16).

Table 16: Proper Issue of Job Cards

Response	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Disagree	34	17.0	14	7.0	0	0.0	48	8.0
Neutral	9	4.5	5	2.5	0	0.0	14	2.3
Agree	28	14.0	65	32.5	31	15.5	124	20.7
Strongly Agree	129	64.5	116	58.0	169	84.5	414	69.0
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data

5. (B) 6. Prompt Updating of Membership Entries

There is a provision in the Scheme's statute for annual updating of the Job Cards for addition or deletion of members. Table 17 discloses that a majority of the beneficiaries (97.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that there was prompt updating of membership entries by the Panchayat. Only 3 beneficiaries (0.5%) recorded negative opinion in this regard.

Table 17: Prompt Updating of Membership Entries

Response	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Disagree	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.5	3	0.5
Neutral	8	4.0	5	2.5	0	0.0	13	2.2
Agree	42	21.0	46	23.0	60	30.0	148	24.7
Strongly Agree	150	75.0	149	74.5	137	68.5	436	72.7
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data

5. (B) 7. Updating of Entries Regarding Works

The Job Cards must contain employment details of households, such as member-wise work demand and allocation, description of work done, dates and days worked, muster roll numbers by which wages are paid, amount of wages paid and unemployment allowance, if any, paid. Overall, 80.7 per cent of the beneficiaries 'agree to strongly agree' that the entries were recorded regularly without fail. However, a considerable number of beneficiaries (17%) disagreed to the majority opinion stated above.

Table 18: Prompt Updating of Entries Regarding Works

Response	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Disagree	75	37.5	5	2.5	22	11.0	102	17.0
Neutral	9	4.5	5	2.5	0	0.0	14	2.3
Agree	21	10.5	28	14.0	8	4.0	57	9.5
Strongly Agree	95	47.5	162	81.0	170	85.0	427	71.2
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data

5. (B) 8. Rectification of Wrong Entries in Job Cards

Wrong entries in the Job Cards can occur in relation to the basic details of the households and/or in relation to the details of work done and paid for. Rectification of basic details can be done by making an application

to the Data Entry Operators of the Panchayats and the same can be rectified with the approval of the Panchayat Secretaries. Similarly, mistakes in relation to the number of days worked can be rectified by making applications with the recommendation of the Mates to the Data Entry Operator of the Gram Panchayats. After getting approval from the Gram Panchayat Secretaries, the Operator can proceed with the correction process. The experiences of the beneficiaries in this regard reveals that, overall, 55.3 per cent of the beneficiaries in Kerala 'agree to strongly agree' that there was speedy rectification of wrong entries in the Job Cards by the authorities (Table 19). However, 10.3 per cent the beneficiaries have negative responses regarding the correction process as it is much delayed. Altogether, 34.3 per cent beneficiaries recorded neutral responses.

Table 19: Speedy Rectification of Wrong Entry in Job Cards

Response	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Strongly Disagree	27	13.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	27	4.5
Disagree	28	14.0	6	3.0	1	0.5	35	5.8
Neutral	35	17.5	100	50.0	71	35.5	206	34.3
Agree	48	24.0	81	40.5	126	63.0	255	42.5
Strongly Agree	62	31.0	13	6.5	2	1.0	77	12.8
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data

5.(B) 9. Encouragement for Self Custody of Job Cards

To maintain transparency and to avoid manipulation, the Statute insists on the custody of Job Cards with the beneficiaries themselves. It should be brought to the work sites by the workers on all days of work. Altogether, a significant majority of the beneficiaries (93.9%) acknowledged the fact that the authorities were encouraging them for the proper self-custody of the Job Cards (Table 20). The absence of negative responses in this regard confirms the positive interest of the authorities to follow the provisions of the statute in this regard.

Table 20: Physical Upkeep of Job Cards

Response	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Neutral	12	6	15	7.5	10	5	37	6.1
Agree	12	6.0	7	3.5	54	27.0	73	12.2
Strongly Agree	176	88	178	89	136	68	490	81.7
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data

5.(B)10. Positive Attitude of Panchayat Officials

The Gram Panchayat is the pivotal body for implementation of the Act. It is responsible for receiving applications for registration, its verification, registering the households, issuing Job Cards, receiving application for employment, issuing dated receipts, allotment of employment, executing works, maintaining records and conducting social audit. The Assistant Secretaries are in charge of MGNREGA in the Panchayats and they are assisted by Assistant Engineers, Overseers and Accountants. Believably, 96.6 per cent of the beneficiaries in Kerala, without exception, confirmed the positive attitude of the Gram Panchayat Officials in the process of registration, issue and management of Job Cards. Negative responses in this regard were meagre (0.2%).

Table 21: Positive Attitude of Panchayat Officials

Response	South		Central		North		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Strongly Disagree	1	0.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.2
Disagree	1	0.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.2
Neutral	12	6.0	6	3.0	0	0.0	18	3.0
Agree	32	16.0	64	32.0	68	34.0	164	27.3
Strongly Agree	154	77.0	130	65.0	132	66.0	416	69.3
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	600	100

Source: Primary Data

The perception score of the beneficiaries on the ten different aspects regarding Job Card registration and management under the Scheme collected on a Five-point Likert-type Scale is depicted in Table 21. The assessment was made by

comparing the scores of each dimension with the neutral score '3'. For this t-test was done. Here the test was done to statistically confirm whether the mean score is equal to '3' or not. A significant t-value indicates that there is significant difference in the mean score from the neutral score. Then, if the mean score is less than '3', and if it is statistically significant, that score indicates that they have a negative perception towards that item. If the

mean score is greater than '3', and if it is significantly different from 3 that score indicates that they have a positive perception towards that item. This analysis was done for each item, for each dimension, and also to the overall mean score of each dimension. All the analysis was done for all the respondents together and also to the respondents in each region.

Table 22: Perception Score of Beneficiaries about Job Card Registration and Its Management

Dimensions	South			Central			North			Overall		
	Mean	SE	t-value	Mean	SE	t-value	Mean	SE	t-value	Mean	SE	t-value
Full Support for Filling up of Application	4.54	0.07	21.22**	4.72	0.039	43.90**	4.85	0.028	65.76**	4.70	0.029	57.79**
Throughout Facility for Submission of Application	4.72	0.07	24.24**	4.81	0.036	49.70**	4.86	0.025	75.62**	4.80	0.028	64.46**
Thorough Verification of Application	4.78	0.07	25.37**	4.78	0.038	47.32**	4.97	0.012	162.91**	4.84	0.027	68.22**
Active Involvement of Grama Sabhas	3.09	0.06	1.56 ^{ns}	2.99	0.039	0.22 ^{ns}	3.13	0.029	4.54**	3.07	0.025	2.80**
Prompt Issue of Job Cards	4.14	0.10	11.52**	4.4	0.063	22.08**	4.85	0.026	71.92**	4.46	0.042	34.99**
Prompt Updating of Membership Entries in job card	4.59	0.07	21.97**	4.71	0.042	40.77**	4.66	0.040	41.53**	4.65	0.031	53.45**
Prompt Updating of Entries regarding works in job card	3.55	0.11	4.87**	4.72	0.050	34.61**	4.63	0.067	24.33**	4.30	0.051	25.31**
Speedy Rectification of Wrong Entry in Job Card	3.32	0.11	2.83**	3.49	0.050	9.78**	3.65	0.036	17.88**	3.48	0.043	11.32**
Proper Physical Upkeep of Job card	3.49	0.08	5.89**	3.2	0.045	4.46**	3.71	0.057	12.46**	3.47	0.037	12.40**
Positive Attitude of Panchayat Officials	4.55	0.08	19.42**	4.61	0.044	36.30**	4.66	0.034	49.43**	4.61	0.032	49.53**

Source: Primary data

** Significant at 0.01 level;

* Significant at 0.05 level; ns non-significant at 0.05 level;

The calculated Chi square value for comparing the perception about the Job Card registration and management using Kruskal Wallis test was 21.482 and it was found to be significant at 0.01 level indicating that there exists significant difference in the perception about the Job Card registration and management process among the respondents belonging to the three regions (Table 23). Hence, Mann-Whitney U test was carried out for comparing the regions, pair-wise, and the results are given in Table 24.

Table 23: Results of Kruskal Walli's Test for Comparing the Perception about Job Card Registration and Management

Region	Mean	Std. Deviation
Southern	42.00	4.83
Central	42.57	2.86
Northern	43.96	2.07
Chisquare	21.842	
p-value	< 0.001	

Significant at 0.01 level

Source: Computed using primary dat

The perception about Job Card registration and management in the Northern



region is significantly different from that of the Southern and Central regions. No significant difference was noted between the Southern and Central regions. The mean values given in Table 24 confirm that the respondents in the Northern region have higher perception compared to respondents in Southern and Central regions.

Table 24: Results of Mann-Whitney U test Test for Comparing the Perception about Job Card Registration and Management

Regions Compared	Z-value	P-value
South and Central	0.043 ^{ns}	0.965
South and North	3.029**	0.002
Central and North	5.021**	< 0.001

Significant at 0.01 level

Source: Computed using primary data

The test details in Tables 23 and 24 show that the hypothesis, 'the perception of the beneficiaries regarding Job Card registration, and its issue and management under the Scheme is neither positive nor negative, irrespective of the regional differences' stands rejected as the overall mean score of the perception is 4.61 (significantly higher than the moderate/neutral score '3') and the p-value of the Kruskal Wallis test confirming the existence of significant difference in the perception among the respondents belonging to the three regions is <0.001. The higher perception score of the beneficiaries in this regard indisputably confirms the existence of a trouble-free and efficient process of Job Card registration and management in Kerala.

6. Conclusion

The success of an employment programme, whether centrally sponsored or State sponsored, depends on its effective implementation. Ensuring flawless implementation is not an easy task especially in a democratic setup as in the case of India. The Mahatma Gandhi NREGA introduced in the country in 2006 has been receiving red-carpet welcome all over the country even in the midst certain criticisms rose against its

negative impact on the economy. The declining share of central allocation for the Scheme (in proportion to GDP) has given scope for speculation over the destiny of the Scheme. Positively, the success of the State in streamlining the process of registration and, issue and management of Job cards can be modelled for other States wherein problems do exist with regard to registration of beneficiaries and Job card management.

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