

EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME IN MAHARASHTRA - A PRELIMINARY OBSERVATION

1. The Study

The Employment Guarantee Scheme was started by the Government of Maharashtra in 1972 as a part of the 15-Point Programme for the development of State economy. The scheme aimed at providing gainful and productive employment in approved works to all unskilled persons in the rural areas including the areas of 'C' class municipal councils. At the instance of Planning Commission, a preliminary observation of the working of the scheme was made by the Programme Evaluation Organisation with a view to study its organisation and administration including employment generated and assets created.

2. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the scheme were the following:

- i) to understand the organisation and administration of the scheme including its contents, working, and arrangements for monitoring,
- ii) to assess the extent of employment generated,
- iii) to study the types of assets created and the extent to which these were productive, and
- iv) to comprehend the trend in labour attendance and migration of labour

3. Sample Size/Criteria for sample selection

Based on the highest average about attendance per day during 1992-93, only one district of Solapur was selected for preliminary observation. From this district, 2 tehsils, namely Sangcha and Madha were selected based on the highest number of mandays of employment generated upto March, 1992. From each of the selected Tehsil, 2 villages with the highest number of percolation tanks constructed under EGS were selected in consultation with the Tehsildar. From each of the selected villages two completed assets of different types were selected with a view to understanding the extent of employment generated and benefits accrued to the people.

Ten beneficiaries, who worked under EGS and received wages were selected at random from each of the selected villages in consultation with the Gram Sevak Talathi and knowledgeable persons. Following was the coverage under the study:-

- Tehsils 2
- Villages 4
- Assets 8
- Beneficiaries 40

4. Reference Period

The field study was conducted during March, 1993 and the secondary data were collected for the years 1986-87 to 1992-93.

5. Main Findings

1. The Planning Department was overall incharge of EGS at the state level while at the district level, the Collector was looking after the scheme who was also responsible for allocating the works among the implementing agencies for the EGS.
2. Any adult person of 18 years and above in rural area willing to do any unskilled manual work was registered under this scheme. A non-transferable identity card was issued by the Samiti Officer, after his registration. The registration of employment seekers was done upto October 31, 1984 and a total of 43.27 lakhs were registered in the State. The registration was not updated/revised since then.
3. Wage rates were fixed uniformly equal to the prescribed minimum wage, keeping in view the interest of local labour engaged in agricultural operations. Wages were paid according to the quantity and quality of work done by an individual.
4. Various Committees/Councils had been formed at the State, District and Panchayat Samiti level for effective planning, coordination, periodical review, supervision and implementation of the scheme.
5. As regards monitoring, the progress reports were submitted weekly as well as monthly by the implementing agencies to the District Collector for onward transmission to the Planning Department.

6. Of 43.27 lakh persons registered for employment under EGS upto October, 1984, 62 percent were below poverty line. It showed that all those registered were not genuine employment seekers. There was not much difference in respect of registration of job seekers among male, female and different social groups.
7. During 1991-92, 211 lakh mandays were generated under Horticulture, while it was about 29 lakh and 22 lakh mandays under Shram Shakti Dware Gram Vikas and Jawahar Wells, respectively .
8. The wages received per person employed was Rs 273, Rs.719 and Rs.1995 during 1975-76, 1980-81 and 1991-92, respectively. The wages per manday worked out to Rs. 2.41 in 1975-76, Rs. 5.73 in 1980-81 and Rs.16.08 in 1991-92.
9. Out of 40 beneficiaries, 31 reported the scheme as useful. Eight got employment in their own village of which three reported that the scheme was useful for the village.
10. In all, 2.50 lakh different types of assets were sanctioned under EGS of which 86 per cent were completed till March, 1992 and the remaining were either under progress (4%) or abandoned (5%) or not taken up.
11. The accrued benefits in terms of area and number of persons were highest in the case of percolation tanks. Besides the percolation tanks provided indirect employment in agricultural activities to 160 persons per year by way of bringing more area under irrigation.
12. The repairs and maintenance of assets created under EGS were the responsibility of the agencies to which these were transferred. The maintenance in respect of eight selected works was found to be good.
13. The work in respect of almost all the selected assets was carried out both in the peak and slack agricultural seasons. The percolation tanks provided more employment as compared to other works. The nalla- bunding, forestry and roads also provided better employment opportunities.
14. The EGS works had been able to arrest the migration to the extent of nearly 16 percent of the rural population taking all the selected villages together.

15. The percentage of the total beneficiaries registered got employment under EGS in 1975-76, 1980-81 and 1991-92 was 45, 47 and 58, respectively. The female participation in registration and employment under EGS was to the extent of 42 per cent.

6. Major Suggestions

1. For the successful implementation of the scheme, it is imperative that the target groups, who are genuinely in the need of unskilled work provided under the scheme, may be identified and registered.
2. The names of all such registered employment seekers, who did not report for employment under EGS within a specific period of time may be deleted and the list updated/revised regularly.
3. It is suggested that the system of maintenance of records and monitoring may be streamlined.
4. The Gram Panchayats should be involved in identification of assets to be taken up under EGS, as the assets created relate to the community.
5. It was suggested that the adequate number of wells may be dug so that more area may be brought under irrigation.
6. It was desired that extra funds for the upkeep and maintenance of the works may be provided to the executing agencies in addition to their regular departmental funds.