

## **MGNREGA through Tribal Livelihoods**

### **(A Case Study on East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh)**

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#### ***Introduction***

*Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is considered as a “Silver Bullet” for eradicating rural poverty and unemployment, by way of generating demand for productive labour force in villages. Rural poverty and unemployment in India have grown in an unprecedented manner during the last few decades. There is a growing incidence of illiteracy, blind faith, hungry people, mal-nourished children, anaemic pregnant women, farmer suicides, starvation deaths, migration resulting from inadequate employment, poverty, and the failure of subsistence production during droughts. In order to make solution of these problems and to provide livelihood security to rural unemployed, Government of India (GOI) enacted the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in 2005. It is the biggest poverty alleviation programme in the world which is started with an initial outlay of Rs. 11,300 crore in year 2006-07 and now it is Rs. 34,699 crore (2015-16). This Act is now called as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. The Act provides a legal guarantee for 100 to 150 days increased of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household will to do public work related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage. This minimum wages varies from state to state, in some states it is Rs. 80 whereas in other it is Rs. 125 or Rs. 120. According to the Act the minimum wage cannot be less than Rs. 60. The 150 days of work figure was estimated because the agricultural season is only supposed to last roughly around 250 days and unskilled workers have no alternative source of income in the remaining parts of the year.*

#### ***History of MGNREGA***

NREGA has come after almost 56 years of experience of other rural employment programmes, which include both Centrally Sponsored Schemes and those launched by State Govt. These comprise the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) 1980-89; Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) 1983-89; Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY) 1989-1990; Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS)1993-99; Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) 1999-2002; Sampoorna Grameen Rojgar Yojana

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(SGRY) from 2001; National Food for Work Programme (NFFWP) from 2004 were national rural employment schemes. Among these, the SGRY and NFFWP have been merged with NREGA in 2005.

***Time-line of MGNREGA***

The following table 1.1. Shows the time-line of MGNREGA whereby the scheme got its modifications during the years of its running.

**The Time line of MGNREGA**

August 2005	NREGA legalised
February 2006	Came into force in 200 districts
April 2007	130 more districts included
April 2008	Universalization of the scheme
October 2008	Wage transaction through banks and post offices
16 <sup>th</sup> February 2009	MOU with the postal department
October 2009	Name changed to MGNREGA

As the above table depicts, when the Act got first introduced in 200 most backward districts of the country in Feb 2006, it was proposed to extend to the remaining districts only after 5 years, after seeing the popularity of the Act. But in the next year itself the Act was extended further to 130 more districts & within a year after the Act got universalized by bringing the entire country under its horizon with the exception of districts that have a hundred percent urban population & got soon named after Mahatma Gandhi (in Oct 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009) to make the Act more reachable to the masses and thus it became Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

***Significance of MGNREGA***

MGNREGA aims to achieve the objective as enunciated in the Article: 41 of the Indian Constitution- “giving citizens the right to work”. The Act is significant due to the following reasons:

1. While the earlier wage employment programmes did not provide any guarantee of job, this Act provided guaranteed job. This guarantee for wage employment is now uniformed all over the country like never before and development initiative, chipping in with essential public investment for creation of durable assets, without which the growth process can't be possible in the most backward regions of rural India.
2. The key element of MGNREGA is the provision of employment by the state to those people who are unable to find alternative employment, which provides a form of social safety net to the rural unemployment people.
3. In other wage employment programmes, anyone can be engaged as labour while in MGNREGA only job card holders that apply for employment can be engaged as labourers.
4. In other wage employment programme the duration of employment is dependent on duration of work by implementing agency while in MGNREGA, a job card holder applies for maximum 150 days. □
5. The other key attributes of this Act are labour-intensive work, decentralized participatory planning, women's empowerment, work-site facilities and above all transparency and accountability through the provision of social audits and right to information. The use of information technology in this programme is considered to bring about greater transparency through intensive monitoring and faster execution. The payment of wages through bank and post office accounts is other innovative step that is likely to reduce fudging of muster rolls on the part of the implementing

agencies since the actual payments are beyond their reach.

Thus MGNREGA is not only a welfare initiative but also a development effort that can take the Indian economy to a new prosperity.

### ***Goals of MGNREGA***

Enhancement of livelihood security in rural areas by guaranteeing 150 days of wage employment in a financial year to every registered household, creating productive assets, protecting the environment, Reducing migration, Empowering rural women and the poor through the provision of a right-based law, fostering social equity, to create strong social safety net for the vulnerable groups by providing employment source, when other alternative are inadequate.

Thus MGNREGA has 3 distinct goals:

1. Protective
2. Preventive
3. Promotive

It protects the rural poor from vulnerabilities by providing them demand based employment. It prevents risk associated with agricultural investment and forced migration of rural poor. It brings prosperity in rural economy via increased consumption demand. Thus MGNREGA can be considered as a growth engine.

### ***The Implementation Structure of MGNREGA***

MGNREGA has a five-tier structure of implementation starting from GP at the bottom to the central government at the top.

#### **1. Gram Panchayat (GP)**

GP is the nodal agency at the bottom level that has the authority to select, design and implement 50% of the works. Selection of works, monitoring and supervision are done by the Gram Sabha (village council). GP has the responsibility to register households, issue job cards, receive applications for employment, provide employment and monitor the NREGA works.

#### **2. Block Panchayat**

The rest 50% may be undertaken either by the block Panchayat or the district Panchayat or both. Block Panchayat monitors and coordinates the plans and works at the block level. Computer updating of MGNREGA works, muster roll entries, etc is done at the block level under the guidance of the MGNREGA programme officer.

#### **3. District panchayat:**

District Panchayat, in addition to implementing non-mandatory works, coordinates MGNREGA activities at the district level. Besides, it has the responsibility to prepare both the district annual plan and the five-year perspective plan. These two plan documents are the bases which guide the implementation of MGNREGA at the village level. These documents are prepared at the district level in consultation with the GP and block Panchayats.

#### **4. State Government**

Next in hierarchy is the state government which acts as a facilitator in the flow of MGNREGA funds and helping in preparation of manpower. It has the responsibility to set up the State Employment Guarantee Council. The latter has the role to advice the government from time to time on MGNREGA implementation in the state. Besides, the council is also entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring and evaluation of the MGNREGA in the state.

#### **5. Central Government**

At the top of the hierarchy comes the central government. The Ministry of Rural

Development, New Delhi is the nodal agency for MGNREGA implementation. It has the responsibility to set up Central Employment Guarantee Council for receiving advice on MGNREGA implementation. It may also undertake independent evaluation and monitoring of the scheme. It has the responsibility to prepare the budget and disburse funds.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

The literature review carried out above reflects that though some researchers have done study on NREGS most of those are confined to economic aspect only. It is not comprehensive. Very few people have emphasized on implementation aspects of NREGS. Social aspects are not much highlighted. The present study will discuss both implementation and the impact of NREGS in a tribal dominated village of East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh. While studying the study will emphasis on following questions:

- What extent MGNREGA has helped in sustaining the tribal livelihoods?
- Does MGNREGA become successful in improving the living condition of the poor?
- Does it promise job to the needy?
- Does it successful in reducing migration?
- Is it really a livelihood generating programme than wage-earning scheme?
- Are the people really aware about MGNREGA work?
- Is the Act properly implemented as per its rules?

### ***Objective of the study***

The main objectives of the present study are:-

1. To Understanding the implementation procedure of MGNREGA in the study area.
2. To Understanding the impact of MGNREGA on tribal livelihoods.

### ***Research Methodology***

The present study was carried out in costal Andhra. However, the study area was confined to Dusarapamu grampanchayat of Rajavommangi Mandal in East Godavari District. Using purposive sampling method the study area was selected. The village Dusarapamu consists of three hamlets i.e Dusarapamu, Subbhampadu and Yerrampadu.

### ***Sampling Procedure***

For the selection of beneficiary respondents two stages were followed. In the first stage purposive sampling method was adopted for the selection of the study area. In the second stage, for selecting the sample respondents, random sampling method was adopted. A sample of 150 households including both job card holders and non-job card holders were selected. Here, non-job card holder households were selected to explore the reasons for their non-participation in the MGNRES activities. Out of 150 households 68 households are not having job card.

Data was collected both from primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected from all the stakeholders of NREGS. Questionnaire surveys with the different stakeholders engaged in NREGS in the study site were organised. Semi structured informal interviews also taken from selected households. Transect walk into the MGNREGS worksites were conducted to have firsthand experience on the MGNREGS works at the community level.

### ***Data Analysis***

Both qualitative and quantitative data was analyzed in the backdrop of the project objectives. Quantitative data was tabulated and statistically analysed using SPSS software. Qualitative data was interpreted based on the information collected from the field.

### ***Significance of the Study***

The present study attempts to understand the implementation procedures of MGNREGS and its impact on tribal livelihoods in a tribal dominated panchayat of East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh. This study focuses on the role of GP to generate sufficient employment opportunities, the procedures for registration, issuance of job cards, and application for employment. This would enable us to understand and examine the institutional mechanisms under which the entire programme is being implemented. The problems and prospects of MGNREGA can then be better understood and accordingly, necessary measures can be devised to make the programme realize its set objectives. The outcome of the study will help in understanding the problem of implementation of the study. It will help in formulating the better policy and strategy for the future.

### ***Review of Related Literature***

Since the date of implementation of NREGS various social scientists have made attempt to study the impact of NREGS and also its implementation procedures

*Khan, Ullah and Salluja (2007)* have discussed the direct and the indirect effects of NREGP on employment generation and poverty reduction in a local area. For this, a detailed survey was done in a poor agricultural village with 400 households, nearly 2500 people. The survey recorded income and expenditure levels by type of household including large, small and marginal farmers, agricultural labour etc. The survey also recorded production activities undertaken by the inhabitants. This village study reveals that most people do not access the scheme, as they haven't heard of the programme. They would like a more proactive role of the panchayat in deciding the infrastructure to be constructed. Almost everyone wants more work from the scheme and better facilities at the work place. There is enough evidence of fudging and mismanagement of records.

*Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, Chennai (2009), "Evaluation of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act: In Districts: Cuddalore, Dindugal, Kanchipuram, Nagai, Thiruvallar, State: Tamilnadu"*:- This study generally reveals the impact of MNREGA in the state of Tamilnadu by taking 5 districts into account. In each districts 4 GPs were chosen.

This study shows many positive aspects of the programme. These are mainly:

1. Villagers consider NREGA is promising to be a boon for improving rural livelihood.
2. Provision of job within the village is very much encouraging to villagers.
3. NREGA also ensured gender equality in rural Tamilnadu.
4. The programme employed a very good proportion of scheduled caste and backward caste people.
5. Involvement of SHG members improves people's NREGS awareness and this is very important for future NREGS planning.
6. Financial inclusion strategies like bank account opening and rural ATM for NREGS beneficiaries at four villagers of cuddalore block has resulted in multiplier effects of savings, financial safety etc.
7. Registrations are open throughout the year.
8. Most of the respondents perceived that payment were received within a week.

*Dey, and Bedi (2010)* studied the functioning of the NREGS between February 2006 and July 2009 in Birubham district, West Bengal. Their study reveals that in order to serve as an effective "employer of last resort", the programme should provide more job days during



lean season and wages should be paid in a timely manner. This study shows that, in Birubham, there is universal awareness about the NREGS, job card have been made available to all those who have applied and NREGS related information is well maintained and relatively accessible. But there are long delays in wage payments during the first year of the programme, since then, the payment lag has declined and it is now in the range of 20 days.

*Nayak, Behera, and Mishra (2008)* conducted their study in 2 districts of Orissa mainly Mayurbhanj and Balasore. NREGA programme was first introduced in 200 most backward districts of the country. During the first phase itself, Mayurbhanj was selected along with other 18 backward districts of the state including KBK districts. The next phase, five more districts of Orissa were included under the scheme including Balasore. Mayurbhanj completed 3 years of NREGA implementation while Balasore has completed two. Both the districts are reported to have achieved certain goals and failed in others.

This study shows that the state as a whole as well as the two sample districts are well in certain physical and financial parameters like provision of employment to those who demand jobs and maintenance of wage and non-wage ratio. However their performance in certain other important parameters like utilization of funds and creation of demand for jobs is not very encouraging. While the target is to guarantee 100 days of employment to each household, not many households have achieved this target. According to this report well thought out effort is necessary to address these problems of NREGA in the state.

*Dreze (2007)* looks at the corruption in rural employment programs in Orissa and how this has continued in a NREGS as well. However, he believes that there is tremendous potential of NREGA in the survey areas. Where work was available, it was generally found that workers earned close to (and sometimes more than) the statutory minimum wage of Rs 70 per day, and that wages were paid within 15 days or so. This is an unprecedented opportunity for the rural poor, and there was evident appreciation of it among casual labourers and other disadvantaged sections of the population. There is the hope among workers that NREGA would enable them to avoid long-distance seasonal migration. Further, there is plenty of scope for productive NREGA works in this area, whether it is in the field of water conservation, rural connectivity, regeneration of forest land, or improvement of private agricultural land.

*Mathur (2007)* thinks that a system of regular and continuous flow of authoritative information is essential. There is room for the government to take up concurrent evaluations, more effective monitoring, time-series studies, and focused reports on critical aspects like minimum wages, muster rolls. To improve implementation, the government needs to solve problems, modify policy directives, and issue operational guidelines for the district, block and village levels. The government must take the lead, be proactive, mobilize institutions and groups, and use the media effectively. NREGS involves several lakh government officials, panchayat functionaries, elected representatives, NGOs and community groups. They play a critical role but had little preparation for the challenge. NREGS in fact is a program of national importance which has been marginalized. While the ministry of rural development is the nodal ministry at the centre, every relevant department and agency requires being involved.

*Mathur (2009)* states that in social audit undertaken in Andhra Pradesh, it was found that in certain villages, some people stated that they had not been paid for the work done. When comparisons were made of the payments as per the pass-book with the payment as per

the job card, it was discovered that the job card did not contain the inner pages that record the work done by each person; the job card itself was incomplete. Earlier, several officials, Field and Technical Assistants and Mates admitted to irregularities and about Rs. 50,000 were returned.

*Institute of Applied Manpower Research, Delhi (2009)*, “All India Report on Evaluation of NREGA, A Survey of Twenty Districts”. This study is based on evaluation of the NREGS which assess its impact by taking 20 districts from Northern, Western, Southern and North-East region of India and 300 beneficiaries from each districts. This study reveals that in many districts, affixing of photograph on job cards is not fallowed and in some places the beneficiary paid money for getting it. Job card was not designed to have sufficient space for all the entries in detail. Many households did not get the work within the stipulated 15 days time of demand for work, neither were they paid any unemployment allowance. On the utility of maximum number of days of works, only small fractions of households could utilize more than 35 days of work, remaining still lagging behind. The reason for non-utilization of maximum permissible 100 days of work is late starting of the scheme. In most of the worksites, excepting crèche, other facilities like shed, drinking water were provided. Due to the income generation through this scheme, the numbers of beneficiaries at the low earning level are reduced to nearly half in size. There is a rise of families who are spending more on food and non-food items.

#### ***Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents***

The sample households selected for the study cover households from various caste and ethnic communities.

#### ***Caste of the Respondents***

Caste and ethnicity plays a major role in any kind of development studies. The presence of various castes and ethnicity creates a heterogeneity situation, which stands as a hurdle in the process of implementation (Mishra, 2007).

#### ***Caste and Ethnicity of the Respondents***

<b>Caste</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
SC	16	10.66
ST	86	57.33
OBC	31	20.66
GENERAL	17	11.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

#### ***Source: Survey Data***

The above table shows that out of 150 households, majority (57.33%) of the households are belonging to ST population. The rest of the households distributed among OBC, General Communities and SC. They are respectively 20.66%, 11.33% and 10.66%. It reflects that the Studied Panchayat is numerically dominated by tribal communities.

#### ***Religion of the Respondents***

Religion of the households plays a vital role in rural development. The ideological differences based on various religions influence the implementation process of any study.

#### **Religion of the Respondents**

<b>Religion</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Hindu	107	71.33
Muslim	2	1.33
Christian	41	27.33

<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>
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**Source: Survey Data**

Above table shows that among the sample respondents, maximum of the households (71.33%) belonging to Hindu religion. The rest 27.33% are Christians and 1.3% are Muslims.

**Main Source of Livelihood**

All most all the households were depending on forest resources for their livelihoods. However, in course of time lots of change has seen. The intervention of various development projects, outsiders have brought a lost to the forest resources. It has disturbed the symbiotic relation between man and nature. The dependence of forest has gone down.

**Main Source of Livelihood**

Source of live wood	Respondents	Percentages
Service	15	10
Owner cultivator	22	15
Farm labour	11	7
Non farm labour	91	61
Other	11	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Survey**

The majority of populations (61%) in Dusarapamu village are involved in non-farm sector having poor economic status and livelihood insecurity.

**Distribution of Job Cardholder according to Caste, Religion, Educational Qualification, Landholder and BPL Card Holder.**

The implementation of NREGA came with the introduction of Job card to the villagers.

**Distribution of job card holders**

(In %)

Caste	SC	ST	OBC	General		
	8	67	15	10		
Religion	Hindu	Muslim	Christian			
	76	2	22			
Educational qualification	illiterate	Lower primary	Upper primary	High school	intermediate	graduate
	33	11	10	23	17	6
Land holder	0-1 acre	2-3 acre	4-5 acre	landless		
	37	18	4	41		
BPL card holder	BPL card holder	No BPL card holder				
	36	64				

Source: primary data

The above table shows that among the job-card holders the majority (67%) is ST. Out of all job card holders 76 % are Hindu, 33% illiterate, 41% are landless and 64% are non-BPL card holders.

Among the non-job card holders, the majority consists of STs (57.4%), illiterate (45.6%) and landless (41.2%). Thus, there is need for improvement, as maximum number of respondents in this village have not got job card till yet. Among the non-job card holders,



many families are belong to the most vulnerable sections like women headed households, senior citizens and poorer sections while the rich, influential people, authorizing committee itself getting much benefits on the name of poor and unemployed youths.

### ***MGNREGA and Tribal Livelihoods***

MGNREGS is the most significant scheme to uplift the overall quality of life of rural households. One of the major objectives of the scheme is the improvement of the income levels and enhancement of livelihood security in rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every registered household. However, the data from the field reflected that there is little impact of MGNREGA on tribal livelihoods. By comparing the annual income of beneficiaries before MGNREGA and after MGNREGA, it is found that there is increase of 28.52% in income of the beneficiaries. Like that there is increase of 47.42% in expenditure of the beneficiaries. Before the implementation of MGNREGA the villagers were generally spending 64.24% from their income while after the implementation of this scheme they are spending 73.69% of their income.

### **Source wise annual households expenditure before and after MGNREGA**

<b>Source of expenditure</b>	<b>Before MGNREGA</b>	<b>After MGNREGA</b>
<b>Food</b>	69.13	59.29
<b>Clothing</b>	7.68	8.28
<b>Health</b>	3.46	3.57
<b>Cooking fuel</b>	0.99	1.24
<b>Education</b>	0.9	1.2
<b>Transport</b>	2.14	2.63
<b>Social/ religious function</b>	3.95	4.55
<b>Alcohol</b>	1.91	2.19
<b>Electricity bill</b>	0.96	2.83
<b>Phone bill</b>	0.35	2.55
<b>Agri.equipment and seeds</b>	2.36	2.31
<b>Household assets</b>	1.38	2.04
<b>Recreation</b>	0.27	0.31
<b>Maintenance of house</b>	4.52	7.01

### **Source: Primary Data**

The above data shows that due to change in income there is also change in expenditure. Generally the expenditure of villagers was more on food items. Around 69.13% of their expenditure used to go to food. But after the implementation of this scheme the expenditure on food items gradually shifted to non-food items which include both luxury and necessity items. For this the expenditure on food items is gradually decreasing (59.29%) and on non-food items is increasing. This reflects that there is some impact on tribal livelihoods but this impact is considered as very little. This is because no proper and regular work which is the direct result of poor implementation.

On the issue of asset creation nothing much is observed from the field. Except road work no other works are being taken here. Recently some initiations have been taken by Sarapanch for the SC/ST land development. In all three hamlets including Dusarapamu, Subbampadu and Yerrampadu, people had expressed their disappointments with MGNREGA works. Here, the following table shows that maximum numbers of respondents (86%) have the negative opinion on MGNREGA.

### ***Positive and Negative Response on MGNREGA***

<b>Response</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Positive</b>	40	27
<b>Negative</b>	86	57
<b>No idea</b>	24	16
<b>Total</b>	150	100

Source: primary data

According to some villagers, whatever the poor gets from MNREGA work spends only to feed his stomach and also in alcohol for few days, nothing left for saving, clothing, and maintenance of house as well as children's education.

### ***Impact on Migration***

By securing livelihood, MGNREGA also mitigates seasonal/distress migration which has been a significant source of employment and income for a large proportion of rural population. But there are two types of risks associated with working under NREGS. First, in most of the cases, the wages are paid on piece rate basis and depending on his/her performance; a worker may get even less than the minimum prevailing market wage rate.

Second, as per the provisions under the scheme, a household should get minimum 100 days of employment. But, the GP fails to provide 100 days of employment to job seekers. Such limited and irregular supply of works restricts the job-seekers from working under NREGS. Regular employment opportunities also motivate many of them to migrate to other states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Nagpur, Raipur and Tata.

The above discussion reveals that though MGNREGA is a well thought-out legislation, a powerful tool in the hands of the common people to get their basic livelihood, but its poor execution deprives them from their basic rights. While the target is to guarantee 100 days of employment to each household, this GP has not achieved this target. The way in which MGNREGA should function is not happening in the study area. Job cards are not reaching the beneficiaries. The unemployment allowance for the failure to provide employment within 15 days of application as per the guidelines of MGNREGA was not followed. Though there is a little change in expenditure pattern of households but it fails to stop the flow of distress rural-urban migration, restricting child labour, alleviating poverty, and making village self-sustaining through productive assets creation as only incomplete road works being taken here. Therefore, a well thought out effort is necessary to address these problems of MGNREGA in this Gram Panchayat. To make the Act more effective for securing the desired objectives of rural poverty eradication and livelihood security, there is an urgent need to ensure citizen participation in all stages of the implementation process. A proper mechanism should be developed to check the corruption in distribution of job cards, assured timely payment of actual wage and substantial asset creation.

### ***Suggestions***

- The success of the programme depends upon its proper implementation. Much of the pitfalls of MGNREGA implementation can be overcome if proper processes and procedures are put in place. Thus, there should be continuous efforts towards creating adequate awareness on different provisions of MGNREGS amongst the people. Creating awareness is necessary not only to motivate the people to work under the scheme but also to encourage them to participate in its planning and implementation.
- Efficient utilization of resources under the scheme requires bringing in transparency and accountability. Provision for social audit at the panchayat level on a regular basis can

play a significant role in this regard.

- The leadership style should be democratic in nature. This will facilitate greater community participation, information sharing, expression of opinion by the rural mass, and development of social networks
- There is also the important role of the Govt. in implementation of MGNREGS. Thus the Govt. must take immediate steps to stop corruption in its implementation by which the MGNREGA wages reaches to the workers directly. We can surely ensure that the money goes to those who need it.
- There should be the ability and willingness of local Govt. and Panchayat to plan works and run the programmes effectively.
- A proper monitoring mechanism should be developed that can assured correct procedure in job card.
- Social Audit should carry out in regular interval.