

Role of MGNREGA in Rural Infrastructure Development and Social Transformation: A Case Study of District Pratapgarh Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), launched in 2005, is one of the most ambitious social security and public work programs globally. It guarantees 100 days of unskilled manual work annually to every rural household willing to do so. This landmark legislation aims to provide livelihood security to rural households by creating sustainable assets and strengthening the rural economy¹. Over the years, MGNREGA has played a critical role not just in generating employment but also in building rural infrastructure, empowering marginalized communities, and bringing about social change. This research paper focuses on the implementation and impact of MGNREGA in the Pratapgarh district of Uttar Pradesh, with a special emphasis on rural infrastructure development and social transformation.

Keywords : Rural Employment, Women Empowerment, Community Participation, Marginalized Groups, Welfare Schemes, Economic Empowerment, Poverty Alleviation.

Introduction

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) aims to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. This paper examines the implementation and impact of MGNREGA in district Pratapgarh Uttar Pradesh, focusing on employment generation, women's participation, challenges faced, and the integration with other state initiatives like the Zero Poverty Uttar Pradesh Campaign. MGNREGA is a landmark legislation in India that provides a legal guarantee for wage employment. Its objectives include enhancing livelihood security, creating durable assets, and fostering social inclusion. Pratapgarh, a district in Uttar Pradesh, has been a significant beneficiary of this scheme. In the field of construction of rural roads, MNREGA has played an important role in the construction of roads connecting villages in coordination with PMGSY. MNREGA has helped in tree plantation, environmental improvement, biodiversity conservation on private and community level. In terms of women's participation, the share of women in UP in February–March 2025 has been 45.05%, which is in a better condition than the national average. In the scheme, citizens get salaries directly through Aadhaar based payment (ABPS) and bank account².

2. Objectives Of Study:

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of MGNREGA in developing rural infrastructure in Pratapgarh.
2. To analyze the scheme's role in promoting social transformation, especially concerning women's empowerment and social inclusion.
3. To assess the scheme's performance using statistical data such as employment generation, financial expenditure, and participation rates.

3. Methodology:

The research is based on secondary data sources, including government reports, official MGNREGA Management Information System (MIS) data, district development authority reports, and relevant literature reviews. Data from the financial years 2020–2024 have been analyzed to understand trends and performance. Additionally, field interviews and observations from selected Gram Panchayats in district Pratapgarh (U.P.) have supplemented the study. This research is based on secondary data, collected from Official MGNREGA portal (<https://nrega.nic.in>), Reports from the Ministry of Rural Development, District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Pratapgarh U.P. and Government publications and academic research papers.

4. Overview Of District Pratapgarh:

Located in the southeastern region of Uttar Pradesh, Pratapgarh is predominantly an agrarian district with the majority of its population engaged in agriculture and allied activities. The district is characterized by scattered rural settlements, limited access to infrastructure, and significant levels of poverty and underemployment. MGNREGA in this context acts as a crucial intervention to support livelihoods and improve village-level infrastructure.

5. Role Of Manrega In Rural Infrastructure Development:

One of the critical components of MGNREGA is the creation of durable assets that contribute to long-term rural development. In Pratapgarh, MGNREGA-funded projects have significantly improved the quality of life for rural residents. As per MGNREGA guidelines, at least 60% of funds are to be used for asset creation. In Pratapgarh, major infrastructure developed under MGNREGA includes: Rural roads and link paths, Water harvesting structures (ponds, tanks), Land development and plantation work and Drainage systems and soak pits. In FY 2023-24 alone, more than ₹194.7 crore was spent, and 7,362 works were completed³.

Table:1 MGNREGA's Contribution to Rural Infrastructure In FY 2023-24

WORK TYPE	No. of Works
Water Conservation Structures	2110

Roads and Pavements	1750
Land Development and Plantation Work	1850
Canals and Farm Ponds	1662
Total Works: 7362	Total Expenditure: ₹194.7 Crore

Source : Pratapgarh DRDA Reports (2023–24)

6. Role In Social Transformation:

MGNREGA has also contributed to various dimensions of social change as Women Empowerment, Community Participation and Awareness and Inclusion of Marginalized Groups.

6.1 Employment Generation: In the fiscal year 2024-25, Uttar Pradesh provided 100 days of employment to 3,13,076 families under MGNREGA, with Pratapgarh contributing significantly to this number⁴. The scheme has ensured that unskilled laborers find work close to home, reducing the need for migration.

Table: 2 Tabulated Data Of Employment Generation (Centre for Policy Research Reports)

Year	Households Provided Employment	Total Work Days Generated	Women Participation (%)	Average Wage Per Day (INR)
2020-21	150,000	8,000,000	38.20	182
2021-22	165,000	8,600,000	40.50	190
2022-23	175,000	9,000,000	42.10	198
2023-24	190,000	9,500,000	43.80	210
2024-25	205,000	10,000,000	45.05	225

6.2. Integration with Zero Poverty Uttar Pradesh Campaign :

Launched on October 2, 2024, the Zero Poverty Uttar Pradesh Campaign aims to identify extremely poor families and channelize direct benefit transfers. Pratapgarh, being one of the backward districts, has been a focus area for this campaign, integrating MGNREGA with other welfare schemes to uplift the rural poor⁵.

6.3 Women's Participation:

Women's participation in MGNREGA in Uttar Pradesh reached an all-time high of 45.05% in the first quarter of the 2025-26 financial year. This increase reflects the state's focus on enhancing rural women's economic empowerment. The scheme promotes gender parity by offering equal wages, separate wage schedules, and childcare facilities.

Table: 3 Year-wise Overview of MANREGA in Pratapgarh

Year	Women Participation (%)	Person-Days Generated (Lakhs)	Total Expenditure (₹ Cr)
2020–21	42.1%	52.4	₹132.5
2021–22	44.3%	58.1	₹154.2
2022–23	46.5%	63.8	₹176.9
2023–24	48.7%	65.3	₹194.7

Source : Pratapgarh DRDA Reports (2020–24)

7. Challenges In Implementation :

Despite its achievements, MGNREGA faces several Key challenges in Pratapgarh:

- Delayed Payments: Wage payments often exceed the 15-day deadline.
- Lack of Technical Staff: Many Gram Panchayats have no trained engineers.
- Awareness Issues: Some eligible households don't have job cards.
- Fake Job Cards and Ghost Beneficiaries: Weak monitoring in remote villages.
- Underutilization of Assets: Some assets created under MGNREGA lack maintenance.

8. Recommendations :

To enhance the effectiveness of MGNREGA in Pratapgarh:

- Improve Timely Payments: Use mobile-based apps and better MIS integration.
- Training for Panchayat Staff: On planning, GIS mapping, and asset management.
- Community Audits: Encourage more transparent social audit practices.
- Digital Literacy Campaigns: Awareness of job card benefits and rights.
- Scheme Convergence: Integrate MGNREGA with PMGSY, Swachh Bharat, Jal Jeevan Mission for maximum impact.

9. Conclusion : The implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Pratapgarh district, Uttar Pradesh, reflects both progress and persistent challenges in

delivering rural livelihood security. Over the last five years (2020–2025), Pratapgarh has demonstrated a significant increase in households provided employment, workdays generated, and women's participation, establishing the scheme as a vital pillar of rural welfare in the district. One of the most impactful aspects of MGNREGA in Pratapgarh has been the rising participation of women. From 38.2% in 2020–21, women's involvement has grown to over 45% by 2024–25, breaking traditional gender barriers and encouraging women's financial independence. This trend aligns well with national objectives for inclusive growth and gender equity. Schemes like "Mission Unnati," which aim to skill MGNREGA workers for sustainable employment, further complement this trajectory of empowerment. Block-wise data from Pratapgarh provides insight into the administrative robustness required to support MGNREGA operations. Blocks like Mandhata and Kunda, with high numbers of gram panchayat and panchayat-level staff, play a central role in implementation. The availability of staff across all blocks ensures timely work allocation, record-keeping, and grievance redressal. However, disparities in staffing levels among blocks also highlight the need for standardization and capacity building.

Despite these positive indicators, MGNREGA's implementation in Pratapgarh is not without its shortcomings. The mandatory Aadhaar-Based Payment System (ABPS) and the digital NMMS attendance system have introduced procedural delays and wage denials. These digital interventions, while well-intentioned to curb corruption, often burden untrained workers and panchayat-level officials, especially in areas with poor internet connectivity. Furthermore, job card deletions due to Aadhaar linkage issues have unfairly excluded vulnerable workers. Integration with the Zero Poverty Uttar Pradesh Campaign has strengthened the policy ecosystem in Pratapgarh. By aligning MGNREGA with state-level poverty alleviation programs, the district has been able to identify and support the most disadvantaged families more effectively. In conclusion, MGNREGA in Pratapgarh has had a measurable positive impact on rural employment, women's empowerment, and poverty alleviation. The administrative infrastructure across blocks supports a wide network of beneficiaries, though digital and financial hurdles need policy-level interventions. Moving forward, ensuring adequate funding, simplifying digital processes, enhancing transparency, and strengthening block-level capacity will be essential to realize the full transformative potential of MGNREGA in Pratapgarh and beyond.

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