

LABOUR'S LANDSCAPE IN INDIA

The report of the International Labour Organization, Employment and Social Outlook, Trends 2016, has underlined that 'Poor job quality remains a pressing issue worldwide'.

The incidence of vulnerable employment – the share of own-account work and contributing family employment, categories of work typically subject to high levels of precariousness – is declining more slowly than before the start of the global crisis.

Vulnerable employment accounts for 1.5 billion people, or over 46 per cent of total employment. In both Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, over 70 per cent of workers are in vulnerable employment'.

As per ILO Report

India is projected to account for 17.6 million or nearly 60 per cent of all unemployed in South Asia by 2017.

Workforce Participation and Employment Challenges

Of India's approximately 1.3 billion population, (constituting approximately one-sixth of the humanity), 70 per cent live in villages and 40-45 per cent can be categorized as the working population. The first point worth since emphasizing is that the world of work is segmented along the lines of caste, religion, gender, region, etc.

This leads to several problems, such as labour immobility for different groups, in particular women, huge wage differentials and discrimination, etc. For instance, the proportion of women in the labour force has been consistently lower than male workers by close to 20 percentage points.

Female work participation for the country is in the range of 25 to 30 per cent. ILO report Women and Work, 2016, the gender wage gap in India is among the highest in the world, at 26 per cent. Asian continent, which stands at 23 per cent and the mean average gender wage gap of less than 15 per cent in the developed economies.

Overwhelming dependence on agriculture which accounts for close to 50 per cent of the total workforce. Agriculture contributes only

approximately one sixth of the GDP of the country. As regards the non-agricultural sector, its single most important feature. The extremely high proportion of vulnerable informal employment.

Though the non-agricultural sector accounts for about half the work force, it contributes approximately 80 per cent to the total GDP, with a very small segment of less than 10 per cent being in the organized sector.

Of the total employment in the organized sector, almost 65 to 70 per cent is in the public sector including public administration and defense. The increasing dispossession and displacement of livelihood has propelled a labour reserve that is compelled to look for jobs in the non-agricultural sector.

But their too, landless and casual workers have found few opportunities for decent employment in both manufacturing and service sectors.

Around 85 per cent of all manufacturing enterprises work with either one or two workers, underlining their vulnerability and fragility and an overall trend towards self-employment since the 1990s. The core of the growth pattern is centered on the expansion of the service sector, which has a preponderance of both vulnerable casual and self-employment.

Increasing Vulnerability and Informality

As per the World Economic and Social Outlook Report, 2016, 12 per cent of the workforce in the developed countries and 46 per cent of the workforce in the developing countries are in informal employment.

Around 97 per cent of the self-employment in the rural and 98 per cent in the urban areas are in the informal sector. Count of informal labour was a whopping 447.2 million out of a total labour force of 484.7 million of the total working people. Vulnerable who work in insecure jobs with negligible social protection.

Over 80 per cent of the new jobs created in recent years have been casual in nature, with a large number of them in the construction sector.

Data on current daily status of work reveals that there was a significant decline in unemployment between 1983 to 1993-94, but unemployment rose sharply between 1993-94 and

2004-05. As per the official estimates, there is a need to create 10-12 million jobs every year to absorb the potential entrants to the labour force.

There has been a staggering decline by about 90 per cent in creation of new jobs; the figure for new jobs has come down from about 11 lakhs in 2010 to 1.5 lakhs in 2016.

Need for a Social Protection Floor

As has been noted earlier, only a minuscule proportion of the total workforce, which is part of the organized sector, enjoys some protective coverage. Except for the Minimum Wages Act in some states and some sectors, informal sector activities, for all practical purposes, remain unaffected by the existence of the major labour laws which were enacted to address the relevant labour relations in the organized sector. Keeping such a backdrop in view, it seems difficult to make sense of the shrillness with which the absence of flexibility in India's labour market is bemoaned.

India's policy makers face the challenge of designing and implementing a floor of labour rights, with a comprehensive vision of a 'national labour market'. Such a vision should clearly spell out a set of core labour standards, including a national minimum wage. Further, the discourses on social security need to be located in the currently dominant trajectory of growth and accumulation.

Conclusion

For workers in informal employment, there is an urgent need to ensure universal social protection that improves their conditions of work and helps them live a life with dignity. In order to do this there has to be a simultaneous focus on both expanding and improving delivery systems in the provisioning of basic services like nutrition, sanitation, health and education.

LABOUR REFORMS IN INDIA

Introduction

Labour reforms essentially call for overhaul of labour market rather than making piecemeal changes in the labour laws or expanding the social security measures in a sporadic manner.

Interestingly, it is the most opportune time for labour reforms in India for two reasons: first, China is fast losing its advantage as manufacturing hub as labour cost has trebled there in last one decade and second the Government of India is truly committed to 'Make in India' and attracting the investors and large businesses to set up their manufacturing bases in the country.

Problems

Broadly speaking, labour reforms are linked to competitiveness by augmenting labour productivity. No wonder, India missed the opportunity of being manufacturing hub of the world due to rigidities in labour market, archaic labour laws and glaring skill deficit.

Nevertheless, labour market in India remains poker faced when it comes to attracting foreign direct investments especially in labour-intensive sectors such as leather goods, textiles, gems and jewellery, sports goods, weapons and ammunitions, furniture, rubber products, fabricated metal products etc.

Indian labour market is spoiled by overarching complexities of archaic labour laws, unmindful bureaucratic control and corrupt inspectorate having unlimited abilities to exploit the susceptible factory owners at the cost of welfare of the workers.

Need

It is imperative that labour laws are progressive, bureaucratic control is substituted by transparent governance and self-reporting and disclosure as well as voluntary adoption of labour standards take over the flawed system of factory inspections and compliances.

The reasons why labour markets need to be regulated by law to a much greater extent than goods markets are well known. Workers are not commodities; they are human beings and citizens, and individual workers are also weaker party in any employer-employee relationship.

There is no doubt that we need labour legislation to protect legitimate labour interests, but the resulting legal framework must ensure a reasonable balance between the objective of protecting the legitimate rights of employees and the equally important objective of providing a framework which would encourage efficiency and create incentives to expand total employment.

It is essential to have labour laws in sync with emerging trends such as casualization of labour, third-party employment, etc. At the same time, it is equally important to ensure that basic rights of the workers are protected and labour standards are implemented across industries and formal as well as informal sectors.

Significant skill shortage across the country has almost a crippling impact on Indian labour market. More than archaic labour laws, this factor makes the labour market quite unattractive especially for foreign direct investment.

A study of Planning Commission (2001) indicated that only 10.1 per cent of the male workers and 6.3 per cent of female workers possessed specific marketable skills in the rural areas while only 19.6 per cent of male workers and 11.2 per cent of female workers had requisite skills in urban areas.

Only 5 per cent of the Indian labour force in the age bracket 20-24 has vocational skills whereas the percentage in industrial countries is much higher, varying between 60 per cent and 80 per cent.

References of Labour Issues

There are references of labour issues in National Manufacturing Policy, National Policy on Child Labour, National Policy on Skill Development, National Employment Policy, National Policy on HIV/AIDS and World of Work, National Policy on Safety, Health and Environment at Workplace, etc. Last traces of a labour polity are found in the draft of 3rd Five Year Plan document which is quite dated. Such directionless and adhoc efforts have done no good to liberalize the labour market in line with global trends.

Way Forward

It is important to eliminate absurdities, dualities and ambiguities from existing labour laws so that industry is in a better position to leverage

full potential of labour market in the country without any fear of the law.

Labour laws should foster an enabling environment so far as employment practices are concerned.

Sooner we overcome compliance mind-set (a consequence of labour law rigidities), better is our chances enhancing global competitiveness in manufacturing as well as service sector.

The government of India should first focus on developing a consensus on national policy framework on labour issues rather than continuing with an adhoc approach to amend a few provisions of labour laws to please the industry.

Labour reforms in true sense will take place when the labour market is full of highly skilled people ready to add to the value to manufacturing and service delivery without fear of being exploited at the hands of the employers.

While recent initiatives of the Government of India to make changes in labour laws are welcome, equal emphasis should be laid on empowering the labour forces by enhancing their competencies.

INFORMAL LABOUR MARKET IN INDIA

Introduction

The Indian labour market is dichotomous in nature wherein 92 per cent of the workforce is in informal employment and less than 10 per cent is in formal employment. The reason for this large proportion of workforce being informal draws back to the socio-economic factors that existed since the colonial times.

At the time of Independence we were left with a largely peasant economy and the labour force was a minority and driven by inter-caste rivalry as non-farm occupations were mostly caste driven. Entrepreneurship was restricted to certain communities and the industries that did come up were iron, steel, mines, textiles, newsprint etc. where the labour component was low.

The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) defined the informal/unorganised sector as all unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the sale and production of goods and services operated on a proprietary or partnership basis and with less than ten workers.

Jobs in the agriculture sector declined and shifted largely to the construction and low skilled service sector in the form of informal employment.

Post-liberalization due to increasing global competition and withdrawal of the reservation and subsidies the risk element increased and entrepreneurs continued to keep their firm size small to be exempt from complying with the regulations, tax structure, labour laws including social security for workers.

This disinclination on the part of the entrepreneurs in increasing firm size led to the growth of casual and contract labour post-liberalisation.

Further with the growth of MNCs offshore outsourcing and international sub-contracting has increased which has also led to the shift towards temporary employment vis-à-vis permanent employment.

This was because by engaging contract labour the employers would be free of the hassles of hire and fire policy guided by the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.

Increasing contract actualisation/casualization of employment has led to a situation of the workforce losing out on job security, social security in terms of medical benefit for self and family; pension, workmen compensation, minimum wages, overtime wages for extra hours, exposure to occupational hazards and so on.

Reports

Second National Commission on Labour (2002), SP Gupta Report on Targeting 10 Million Employment Opportunities per year over the Tenth Plan Period (2002), Task force on Creating 10 million Job Opportunities (2002), National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (2004-2008). From these Reports it emerged that the labour force was largely illiterate with very low levels of vocational skills which hindered their transition from the agriculture to the manufacturing or service sector.

Policy Measures

In one of the major low skilled employment sector viz; construction, the Building and other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996 and the

Building and Other Construction Workers Cess Act, 1996 was enacted with a view to regulate the wages, working conditions, safety and health, welfare measures etc. of these workers.

The Unorganized Workers Social Security Act 2008 was enacted to provide social security and welfare of unorganized workers. Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana was launched in 2008 to meet the out-of-pocket health expenses of unorganised sector workers.

The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970 to regulate the employment of contract labour. But the applicability of Act is restricted to establishments or contractors engaging more than 20 workers and so a large number of contract workers remain outside the purview of this Act.

Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service Act, 1979) was enacted. This Act lists out the welfare measures available to migrant workers such as equal wages as that of local employees, right to return home periodically without losing wages, right to medical care and housing at the employment site etc.

Atal Pension Yojana that provides a guaranteed minimum pension beginning from Rs. 1000 per month to the age group 18-40 on attaining the age of 60 based on their subscription.

The Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana provides accident and disability cover upto Rs. 2 lakh at an annual premium of Rs. 12.

The Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana provides life insurance cover of Rs. 2 lakh at an annual premium of Rs. 330.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana to provide financial support to farmers suffering crop loss/damage arising out of unforeseen events for the entire crop cycle from pre-sowing to post-harvest losses.

Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Protsahan Yojana, the Government provides the 8.33 per cent of employer contribution to the Employees' Provident Fund and in the case of textile sector the entire 12 per cent employer contribution of the employer would be paid by the government for all the new accounts opened after April, 2016.

National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme was launched wherein the government provides reimbursement of 25 per cent of prescribed stipend subject to a maximum of Rs. 1500 per month per apprentice to all apprentices to employers and also sharing of the cost of basic training in respect of fresher apprentices (who come directly for apprenticeship training without formal training) limited to Rs. 7500 per apprentice for a maximum duration of 500 hours/3 months.

Skill India Mission, through the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana and skill development programmes being implemented by the 20 plus Central Ministries the new entrants to the labour force are skilled so that they get better paying jobs.

Conclusion

Make in India, Digital India, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan are initiatives that should provide opportunities for employment generation. Besides efforts are being taken to promote entrepreneurship through initiatives such as Startup India, Standup India, MUDRA, ASPIRE, Atal Innovation Mission, Pradhan Mantri Yuva Yojana etc. as an entrepreneur would in turn create more wage jobs.

While the legislative and schematic initiatives are bound to bring in more informal workers under the social security cover efforts also need to be taken to ensure that the new jobs created are of decent nature.

ENSURING GENDER JUSTICE IN LABOUR

Introduction

India has one of the lowest work force participation rates (WPR) of women, which is even lower than many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and is drastically lower than the participation rates for men.

Though female literacy rates and educational enrollment rates have been moving favourably during a period of higher economic growth, female employment remains a challenge.

It is particularly puzzling during a period which saw the launching of a large scale rural employment programme, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MGNREGS). There has been a sharp decline in women's workforce participation rate from 28.2 per cent in

2004-05 to 21.7 per cent in 2011-12, which reflects an ongoing crisis.

Trends and Patterns in Female Employment

There are issues and difficulties inherent in the statistical system which means that the data on women's work is not the best. Not only is the WPR lower for women, for rural women there has been a dramatic fall, while for urban women it has stagnated.

The positive income effect of higher real wages in the economy and positive outcomes of educational programmes are the main reasons attributed to the decline in women's employment.

A larger proportion of females are opting out of labour force to attend to household chores, which inter alia means increasing care responsibilities on women.

Apart from lack of employment opportunities, many women cannot participate in full-time employment, given the larger social expectation on women to undertake household domestic work.

Many struck by the agrarian crisis have been flooding into construction and related activities, an area that has seen a boost with the real estate boom in the post-liberalisation era.

Nature and Quality of Women's Employment

What is the nature of employment that women are in?

For rural women unpaid workers/helpers are the largest group (41 per cent) and then casual workers (35 per cent).

Agriculture and artisanal work are in crisis and men are moving out to search for other paid work, leaving women to carry the burden and then be documented as paid self-employed or own account workers.

Turning to urban women workers, the situation at the overall level seems improving since we see a trend of increasing numbers of regular workers, by 10 percentage in 20 years.

However, women's work participation rate is very low in urban areas- just 15 per cent in 2011-12. A major chunk of regular workers also need to be seen as part of the growing informal sector.

What sort of work is this?

On the one hand, women are receiving some income possibly independently of other family members, which they can use as they wish, mostly to meet regular consumption expenses.

In beedi, textiles, bangle or bindi making, packaging, etc. Wage rates in home based work is very low, whether piece rate or hourly wages, requiring very long hours of work and onerous labour to make a livelihood, and where they may be dependent on the contractor.

What is striking is that it is not in trade, hospitality or communication sectors that a large proportion of women are employed. The bulk of the growth has been in education sector and in domestic work.

In domestic work wages and work conditions vary widely and work relations are marked by constant and individual control.

With the increasing privatization of education at all levels, often women who work in this sector are in uncertain employment, exploited in various ways, and not paid the wage due to them.

Another point to note is the increasing number of scheme workers who are central in the running of many state schemes/programmes such as anganwadi and ASHA workers. These workers, with multiple work responsibilities are not recognized as workers by the state, but ascribed as volunteers, who are eligible only for an honorarium.

Unemployment data is not a good indicator of employment issues as poor cannot afford to remain unemployed though they are underemployed and underpaid. A part from market oriented activities women are engaged in many economic activities such as collecting firewood and fodder, collecting water and forest produce, weaving and spinning for home use.

Even after many years of passing of Equal Remuneration Act, 1974 wage gap between women and men remains a reality affecting women of all ages, classes, communities and regions.

State Interventions

Organisation of micro-credit arrangements, formation of NGO-aided Self Groups and so on constituted the agenda of the catch all do all policy approach for lifting women out of poverty and to strive for their economic empowerment.

Though MGNREGS did ease the initial crisis, in the long run the limited number of days of employment guaranteed and the focus on manual work has not been able to address women's employment puzzle.

There is enough evidence of young women being denied employment because of the possibility of them taking leaves to meet maternity and child care demands.

Though there is an increase in the days of maternity leave with the Maternity Benefit Act (Amendment) 2017, the coverage of it is limited to the organized sector. The amendment provides for paid maternity leave of 26 weeks as against 12 weeks. The Act also proposes provisions for crèches in an establishment with 50 or more workers, leaving the provision of working from home to the discretion of employers.

What is required is an extension of maternity benefit to all women workers and a strict implementation of the Act.

One of the reasons for poor female labour force participation is the lack of suitable jobs on offer. There is a need to make greater investments in secondary and tertiary education, vocational and skills training of women.

The discouraging impact of low wages and poor conditions of work is found to result in women withdrawing from employment if the households can afford.

Social and cultural constraints (though differ across regions and communities) are still issues that explains poor participation of women in employment.

Growing concerns around the safety of women is also a clear deterrent to women's employment. The ban on night shift for women is under review by the central government as part of amendments in The Factories Act 1948.

Provision for safety at the workplace and safe transport of women though has been provided for in the revision, it is of least priority with no monitoring mechanism in place. The increasing incidences of sexual harassment at the workplace, during commuting and in public places are fuelling the perception that cities and towns are not safe, adversely affecting women's mobility for employment.

Two sectors where unionization of workers is worth mentioning (largely women-only sectors) are scheme workers and domestic workers. While anganwadi workers have been organized for a long time since, domestic workers are unionizing in new and extensive ways, questioning the undervaluation of their work.

Conclusion

It is high time that the state and employers come together on a priority basis to find comprehensive solutions, rather than merely introducing patchy interventions which do not address the issues of women's employment. While considering major amendments to labour laws, which is in the pipeline, there is a need to reckon the larger gendered impacts of these amendments.

AUTOMATION: CHALLENGE TO WORKFORCE?

Introduction

Adoption of technology, global reach, and faster communication is changing the way goods are manufactured, serviced and delivered. In many areas, a machine is not only replacing human labor, but it is also taking on cognitive skills.

Automation has long term implications and apparently threatening joblessness of semi and unskilled workforces. It is, therefore, essential that automations are sustainable and able to create benefits for people.

Automation will provide an opportunity to create innovative and more productive jobs for human resources. Coordinated and supportive frameworks to be worked out aiming at ceaseless integration of automation, productivity, and the creation of more jobs.

Technology Trends

Availability of data through high-speed communication link provided opportunity to analyze production, requirement and supply pattern, gap areas assessment. Big Data analyst is able to analyze a large volume of data and draw inferences.

High-speed internet makes it possible to connect devices that can be controlled remotely. Internet of Things (IoT), where each device, from a washing machine, coffee machine, lamp to car and jet engines is possible to be controlled over IoT. The relationship is going to be between machine-

people, machine-machine, and people-people. In fact, IoT is going to be an integral part in designing smart cities shortly.

Technology driven manufacturing units can be powerful drivers of economic opportunity and improved well-being. Machines can reduce risk in a hazardous workplace and improve the effectiveness. Especially in the form of elimination of a vast number of jobs. Maximum impact is generally on semi and unskilled labours, who make up a substantial portion of the workforce in manufacturing and agricultural sector.

International Labour Organization (ILO) report for the G20 Employment Working Group in 2015, there has been a downward trend in the labour share in many of the countries. Labor's declining share in GDP is a cause of concern in many advanced economies as well as developing countries.

Paradigm Shift

Technological advancement and pace of change will significantly affect the availability of jobs, type, and location. As location and type of jobs will change, there will be large-scale displacement of the workforce. It is expected that technology should customise job requirements and make it accessible to the vulnerable group.

Social Equality

Technology will create new high-skilled jobs as well as improve the quality of existing jobs. Technology driven new jobs are also expected to remove some social barriers to entry and promote gender equality. For example, some jobs are considered to be labour intensive and male dominated. With a paradigm shift, no such barriers will ever exist.

Challenges

Continuous investment in technology without considering the impact on existing workforce could lead to a host of operational risks. Upgrading skills of an existing workforce who will be able to handle change in working environment. How automation will help employees having different skill sets.

If technology is used only in making high-speed, cost-effective machines that replace labours, there will be a long-term problem in the macro economy.

Surging unemployment will damage social cohesion and reduce consumer demand, creating a vicious cycle of a weak economy.

Way Ahead

Long-term preparedness is the key to success in any business. Government funded institutions need to investigate how technological changes are going to affect employment, what are the opportunities for consumers, manufacturers and other stakeholders involved in the entire supply chain management.

Conclusion

Harnessing the potential of technology for overall economic growth and well beings of people is the way forward. Upskilling, reskilling and collaboration will be the key enablers in sustaining business models. A new curriculum and pedagogy for our schools, colleges, universities and setting up of more vocational training centers is the need of the hour.

IMPACT OF MGNREGS ON LABOUR MARKETS

Introduction

Agricultural labour increased significantly from 7.08 million in 1981 to 121 million in 2008. At the same, the percentage of operational land holdings under small and marginal farmers has gone up from 70 percent in 1971 to 82 percent in 2001. To address the problem there is a need to have stringent efforts and focus on inclusive growth. The inclusive growth is defined by prioritizing key result areas through major programmes aiming at time-bound delivery of outcomes. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is one among them.

By providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household.

The enactment of the legal guarantee to a minimum 100 days 'work reflects the will of the citizens of India and recognition of the right to work as a justifiable right, where the poor and vulnerable are proactively engaged with.

Hitherto the research findings have not established the exact impact of the programme on labour markets, migration and wages.

The following research gaps are being identified:

- Does MGNREGA target the exact labour communities or not? '.....policy and implementation.
- Has MGNREGA adversely affected the agriculture sector by raising agriculture wages and made the labour unavailable during the agriculture seasons?
- Does MGNREGA have an impact on risk and distress migration?

Impact on Labour Markets

Rural labour markets are constrained by several mechanisms that are skewed in favour of the socially and economically powerful and so the poor and landless labour is unable to negotiate in an equitable manner.

In this manner, wages, rural labour markets and migration are intrinsically linked to not only MGNREGA interventions but also other programmes such as Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) under NRLM are being implemented simultaneously.

The labour markets in two sample states are sensitive to the forces that shape the primary sector as such like soil, water and irrigation, land usage as well as events like droughts etc.

Strengthening of community based organizations and role of civil societies helped the rural labour market, where due to several initiatives through administration and governance and a history of proactive administrative commitment, also helped wage labour and distress migration.

A positive focus was on strengthening agriculture and improving governance.

MGNREGA along with MKSP schemes and agricultural operations with a view to raise agricultural productivity and growth during post MKSP-NRLM were increased.

Migration and MGNREGA

Strengthening of SHG interventions through civil societies and intensification as well as diversification of agriculture under MKSP have made difference in reduction of migration especially during seasonal migration. MGNREGS works during off season mostly have helped to some extent reduction in all time migration.

Uncertainty of getting work

The field data indicate that it is the delay in payments that is turning people away from this programme. MGNREGA is a demand-driven scheme. Another uncertainty of getting work was Aadhar based payments.

Shortage of technical assistants, non-formulation of Information, education and communication plans. Absence of convergence activities and lack of monitoring of the implementation of the scheme.

Reasons for wages not being paid in time

- Working without one's name on the muster roll: The worker's Job Card number mentioned on the work application is different from the Job Card number.
- Error in recording the number of days worked.
- Lost muster rolls.
- Wage-lists/FTOs not being generated/authorized.
- Scheme closure in MIS without completing wage payments.
- Working without a bank or post office account.
- Wrong account number in the MIS.
- Wrong Aadhaar number in the MIS.
- Aadhaar number linked to a wrong account.
- Deletion of a worker's name from her/his Job Card.

Role of SHGs and impact on labour markets, migration and wages

Participating in labour budgeting, participating in project meetings and taking up work as per the muster roll and providing facilities at the site by SHGs have made positive changes on labour markets especially reduction in drudgery, reduction in distress migration and influential wages both in agriculture and non-agriculture.

Conclusion

The low performance has been attributed to various programmatic and implementation issues.

- The poor and the potential beneficiaries in the State do not have adequate knowledge about the MGNREGS. This is largely because of the poor dissemination of the scheme.
- Social audits are not held regularly, further, but their very purpose is defeated by the extremely low levels of popular interest.
- The wide gap between the projections and achievement results in sub-optimal deployment of funds. State and implementing agencies find it difficult to meet their fund requirements.
- Grievance Redress Mechanism is neither strong nor made available to perform.
- A major reason cited for the delay in payments is the measurement of work done. There is no proper measurement of quantum of works undertaken by the Technical Assistants and Junior Engineers regularly.

Wherever the programme was dovetailed with MKSP and MGNREGS, positive impact was observed and the women SHGs helped the labour to come one from drudgery especially breakthrough the grip of contractors, where the socially powerful, the middlemen and others actively resist the rigorous implementation of MGNREGA.

Economic empowerment and financial inclusion were crucial for gender empowerment and equality. Self help groups have taken leadership positions, starting from economic empowerment to leadership in larger social and political domains in sample villages of both the states.