



Volume 1, Issue 1, 2024

## *Intuitions & Insights*

An Interdisciplinary Research Journal



# Is Wage Difference Under MGNREGS and Agriculture Sufficient to Explain Labour Supply Problem in Rural India- A Case Study in District Puruliya

Dr. Phalguni Mukhopadhyay

Raghunathpur College, Raghunathpur, Purulia, 723133, Email: phalguni\_m@yahoo.com

**Abstract :** The MGNREGS launched in the year 2005 with the objective of poverty alleviation and employment generation. The unique importance of the scheme lies in its provision to enhance peoples' livelihood on a sustained basis, by developing the economy and social infrastructure in rural areas. But after the initiation of the scheme over time it is found that agriculture in rural India is facing a setback due non-availability of labour force during peak season of cultivation. This paper aims to study this phenomenon on the basis of the primary data in the district of Purulia, West Bengal. The study concludes that the scheme MGNREGS is making agriculture less profitable due to shortage of labour due to wage difference in MGNREGS in comparison to agricultural works resulting agricultural fields are either remaining uncultivated or being sold out for the use of non-farm products.

**Keywords:** MGNREGS, Vagaries of Monsoon, Per Capita Income, Monocropping, Malbhumi, Conversion of Land.

\*Corresponding author: P. Mukhopadhyay

**Received:** 15.10.2023; **Accepted:** 28.01.2024; **Published:** 03.04.2024

## 1. Introduction

In order to provide gainful employment and to eradicate poverty in rural areas, the GOI passed an Act, known as NREGA in August 2005<sup>1</sup>. It is perhaps the largest and most ambitious social security

and public works programme in the world. The Act will provide a legal guarantee for at least 100 days of employment to begin with on asset-creating public works programmes every year at minimum wages to at least one able bodied person in every rural and urban poor and lower middle-class household.

On the advice of the National Advisory Council, the GOI passed the NREGA comprising the main features as noted below:<sup>2</sup>

- a) Every household in rural India will have a right to at least 100 days of guaranteed employment every year for at least one adult member. The employment will be in the form of casual manual labour at the statutory minimum wage, and the wages shall be paid within 7 days of the week during which work was done.
- b) Work should be provided within 15 days of demanding it and the work should be located within 5 kilometer distance.
- c) If work is not provided to anybody within the given time, he/she will be paid a daily unemployment allowance, which will be at least one-third of the minimum wages.
- d) Workers employed on public works will be entitled to medical treatment and hospitalization in case of injury at work, along with a daily allowance of not less than half of the statutory minimum wage. In case of death or disability of a worker, an ex-gratia payment shall be made to his legal heirs as per provisions of the workmen compensation Act.
- e) Five percent of wages may be deducted as contribution to welfare schemes like health insurance, accident insurance, survivor benefits, maternity benefits and social security schemes.
- f) For transparency and accountability, all accounts and records of the programme will be made available for public scrutiny.
- g) The District Collector / Chief Executive Officer will be responsible for the programme at the district level.
- h) The Gram Sabha will monitor the work of the gram panchayat by way of social audit.

In consequence to the ACT, NREGS has been launched in 200 districts initially across the

country in Phase-1 during 2006-2007, and it was extended to additional 130 districts in phase-2 during 2006-2007. From April 2009 onwards, the ACT covers the whole of rural India. In 2009-2010 it was renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).<sup>3,4</sup>

Since inception more than 18 years has been elapsed and several studies has been made to evaluate the performance of the programme mainly under the following two heads:

- i) How far the programme is successful to alleviate poverty? and
- ii) How far it is fruitful to generate employment up to its target?

Different scenario has come up in the studies. In most cases it is revealed that this programme neither able to alleviate poverty nor able to generate sufficient employment to the rural poor. Rather a study raised a serious question that this programme has actually been reduced the supply of labour in rural India, thereby causing a setback in the production of agricultural fields.

This project is nothing but a target to study this above noted phenomenon.

The study has examined the problem of labour shortage in agricultural activities due to MGNREGS resulting a fall in the amount of cultivated area. Causing a decline in food grain production. The cause-and-effect relationship between MGNREGS and supply bottleneck i.e, supply of labour in rural India is significant and the labour problem in agriculture is becoming the main cause of either keeping the agricultural field uncultivated or converting the land into non-farm activities<sup>5</sup>.

## **2. Methodology**

Since this is a case study, so primary data is the basis of the study. Study has been made in the District Purulia, West Bengal.

**District Profile:** Purulia is a district of West Bengal which ranks first amongst the drought prone districts. The basic features of this district are, scanty rainfall, undulating terrains, high surface water runoff, soil erosion, lack of natural resources, agricultural production completely dependent on monsoon, high rate of illiteracy and unemployment and inadequacy of government policies.

It is situated in western zone of the state and is marked by its latitude in the North 23.42°N and in the South 22.43°N, while the longitude shows in the East 86.54° E and in the West 85.49°E. The total geographical area is 6259 sq. Kilometers.

The district Purulia has 5 Sub-divisions, 22 Police Stations(2016), 20 Community

development Blocks, 20 Panchayat Samities, 170 Gram Panchayets, 2458 inhabited villages, 3 Municipal Towns and 5 non-Municipal Towns.

According to 2011 Census the District shows 2930115 out of which 51.09% percent is Male and 48.91% is female. Rural population is 87.26 percent whereas urban population is 12.74 percent. So most of the people are rural dwellers. The density of population per square kilometer in the district is 468.

The Census of 2011 further reveals that out of the total population in the district 567767 were SC and 540652 were ST out of which 290789 SC Male, 276978 SC Female, 271803 ST Male and 268849 ST Female.

The Literacy rate in the district in 2011 Census shows that 64.48% percent people were literate out of which Male literacy is 77.86% percent whereas female literacy is 50.52% percent. As per 2011 Census, 87.26% population of Puruliya district lives in rural areas or villages. The total puruliya district population living in rural area is 2556801 of which males and females are 1304208 and 1252593 respectively. In rural areas of Puruliya district sex ratio is 960 females for 1000 males. If child sex ratio data of puruliya district is 956:1000. Child population comprises 14.31% of total rural population of puruliya district.

The utilization of land in the district shows that out of 625650 hectares land Forest Area is 75050 hectares, 109060 hectares are under non-agricultural use, 2010 hectares are Barren and Uncultivable, only 800 hectares are for permanent pastures and other grazing land. 128040 hectares are fellow land and 29540 hectares are under net area sown.

Agriculture is the main stay of the District's Economy. About 65% percent of the total population are engaged in agricultural production. In the District's income agriculture contribute about 70% Lac culture in one of the important aspect of agriculture. However since the District has no major irrigation project, agricultural production is completely dependent on the **vagaries of monsoon**. Maximum amount of cultivated land are under monocropping system. For this, the marginal famers and agricultural labourers remain unemployed for the maximum period of the year, resulting low per capita income of the maximum families.

Small and marginal farmers constitute the bulk of the farming community in the district. Lack of resources and access to appropriate technology have been the two important inhibiting factors in

motivating majority of the farmers for adoption of improved agricultural practices. However the lack of availability of key agricultural inputs like plant nutrients, better quality of seeds in right time, agricultural machineries as well as special geographical structure (malbhumi) of land treated as major constraints for adopting efforts in increasing per capita income and optimistic attitude of the farmers dependent on agriculture.

Another problem of the district development is the distributive inequality in the present structure and this social and economic inequality is increasingly becoming the main barrier for achieving efficiency. Hence direct government intervention becomes most necessary for reducing the rural poverty in the present structure.

That's why several attempts have been made for improving the living conditions of the rural poor. The community development project in the fifties and Panchayati Raj system in the sixties are worth mentioning in this context. Direct Government Policies for removing poverty through several poverty alleviation programmes have come into effect since 1970's. The most important programmes were Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA), Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Laborer (MFAL), Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), Crash Scheme for Rural Employment Programme (CSRE), Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Programme (PIREP), Desert Development Programme (DDP), Command Area Development Programme (CADP) and Food for Work (FFW) Programme. But none of these programmes could comprehensively cover the whole country. Besides these were merely subsidy giving programmes and there was no planned approach to enable the rural poor to achieve a higher level of income.

Later on several wage employment programmes had been launched and in the year 2005, MGNREGS has been launched as one of the major flagship strategies of the Government of India in coherence with the pursuit of the objective of removing poverty and unemployment.

### **Profile of the Blocks:**

There are 20 Blocks in the District Puruliya and all these blocks are taken as strata. So we need a brief outline about some key statistics of these Blocks as depicted in the Table below:

**TABLE-1: Key statistics of different block in Puruliya District**

Sl No	Block	Area (Sq.Km)	Population	Density of Population
1	Arsha	375.04	154736	413
2	Bagmundi	427.95	135579	317
3	Balarampur	300.88	137950	458
4	Bandwan	351.25	94929	270
5	Barabazar	418.06	170564	408
6	Hura	382.21	143575	376
7	Joypur	230.47	133349	579
8	Jhalda-1	315.09	137143	435
9	Jhalda-2	256.61	148156	577
10	Kashipur	451.31	200083	443
11	Manbazar-1	381.32	154071	404
12	Manbazar-II	285.81	97164	340
13	Neturia	203.65	101427	498
14	Para	312.59	200621	642
15	Puncha	330.11	123855	375
16	Purulia-I	281.50	151188	537
17	Purulia-II	310.10	469488	547
18	Raghunathpur-I	201.82	117760	583
19	Raghunathpur-II	197.67	113790	576
20	Santuri	179.69	78515	437

(Source: Census of India 2011.)

From the above table it is revealed that with respect to the population size Para Block ranks first with the population 200621. Next 5 Blocks in order are Kashipur (200083), Barabazar (170564), Purulia-II (169488), Arsha (154736), and Manbazar-I (154071) respectively. Population size is lowest

in the Block Santuri (78515).

With respect to the density of population it is revealed that Para Block is densely populated (642) while Bandwan is sparsely populated Block.

Since the study is linked with agriculture so we also need to give an outlook about the distribution of population over different categories of workers and non-workers in the Blocks.

The Table is given below:

**Table-2: Distribution of population over different categories of workers and non-workers**

Sl No.	Block	Total Works				Non-Workers
		Cultivators	Agri. Labour	Household incl workers	Other workers	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Arsha	19904	20374	9266	13953	81239
2	Bagmundi	17359	20308	1340	14228	72344
3	Balarampur	12333	21384	1517	21441	81275
4	Bandwan	8752	24834	4776	9034	47533
5	Barabazar	24110	42185	2436	15573	86260
6	Hura	17454	35033	1762	15391	73935
7	Joypur	15230	15541	6425	14479	81674
8	Jhalda-1	17082	19776	5572	13789	80924
9	Jhalda-2	10637	10126	32347	14068	80978
10	Kashipur	15208	36249	2463	29075	117088
11	Manbazar-1	13914	43646	2125	14191	80195
12	Manbazar-II	13866	32070	935	4621	45672
13	Neturia	5655	9242	1080	21297	64153
14	Para	12249	25529	2410	32059	128374
15	Puncha	21480	30933	1581	11037	58824
16	Purulia-I	12935	24156	2216	22163	89718

17	Purulia-II	12343	26245	4137	27487	99276
18	Raghunathpur-I	5606	11881	1422	21178	77673
19	Raghunathpur-II	5709	12361	1284	21760	72676
20	Santuri	6274	9837	994	12378	49032

(Source: Statistical Handbook, Purulia, 2016.)

From the data given in the Table-2 it is revealed that number of agricultural labour is maximum in Manbazar-I Block (43646). The next 5 blocks are Kashipur (36249), Hura (35033), Manbazar-II (32070), Pancha (30933) and Arsha (30374) respectively. In Block Neturia number of agricultural labour is lowest (9242) and Santuri is the 2<sup>nd</sup> (9837) from below.

So from the statistics it is reflected that most of the workers in the Blocks Manbazar-I, Barabazar, Kashipur, Hura, Manbazar-II, Pancha and Arsha are working in agricultural field on daily wage basis.

However with respect to the number of non-workers ranking of the Blocks is different. Para Block stands first following Kashipur, Purulia-II, Purulia-I, Barabazar, Joypur respectively.

According to the size of non-workers Manbazar-II ranks first and Bandwan second. This is because in those Blocks either there is alternative source of livelihood or they are being migrated that require detail study to reveal the actual reason behind this.

The number of cultivators is highest in the Block Barabazar (24110), Pancha Block stands second (21480). Raghunathpur-I Block occupies the first position from bottom with the number 5606 and then Neturia (5655).

From each Block 3 Panchayats have been selected randomly by using random number table. Again from each Panchayats 2 Villages have been selected purposively such that one village is developed while the other is less developed or backward. The list of the Panchayats and the villages under each Panchayats is given below: -

**Table-3: GP wise village list of various Blocks under Puruliya District**

Sl. No.	Name of Block	Name of G.P	Name of Village	No. of Beneficiaries
1	Bandwan	Dhadka	Dhadka	39



			Satatogora	24
		Bandwan	Aspara	23
			Sirisgora	34
		Supudih	Madhupur	33
			Liki	27
2	Jhalda II	Tatuara	Metyala	35
			Damrughutu	33
		Mazdih	Mazdih	28
			Nowahatu	29
		Cheka	Cheka	24
			Durku	26
3	Bagmundi	Ajodhya	Saharjuri	15
			Bhuingarrah	25
		Suisa	Atna	17
			Saridi	21
		Sindri	Charida	32
			Sindri	30
4	Santuri	Garsika	Kharbar	25
			Tiasi	28
		Santuri	Dheksila	23
			Talbera	20
		Murradih	Murradih	34
			Vati	18

Sl. No.	Name of Block	Name of G.P	Name of Village	No. of Beneficiaries
5	Joypur	Baragram	Kusumtikri	34
			Baragram	30
		Ghagra	Ghagra	30
			Dimdiha	28
		Mukundapur	Mukundapur	32
			Bhatdih	27
6	Balarampur	Genrua	Deoli	30
			Bersa	28
		Balarampur	Pandkidih	20
			Registrypara	22
		Darda	Kasidih	20
			Dhadka	26
7	Puncha	Puncha	Puncha(M)	26
			Damdahi	15
		Lakhra	Badra	16
			Joykella	19
		Kenda	Konapara	31
			Hariharpur	20

8	Manbazar -1	Pairachali	Polmi	23
			Mukundpur	23
		Ramnagar	Baramesiya	27
			Bangram	26
		Gopalnagar	Jabla	32
			Gopalnagar	31
9	Man-2	Dighi	Nowadih	16
			Dighi	23
		Kumari	Khariduaara	7
			Kumari	25
		Bari	Bari	21
			Bagdega	20
10	Barabazar	Latpada	Latpada	14
			Amrabera	16
		Banjora	Banjora	18
			Lagudih	19
		Delatbamu	Badaldih	22
			Puriara	18
11	Purulia-1	Bhandarpuara	Bhandarpuara	20
			Ralibera	19
		Sonijuri	Chagda	21
			Kotloi	23
		Lagda	Lagda	30
			Chakra	29
12	Purulia-2	Ghangha	Ghangha	20
			Nadiara	24
		Bhangra	Dubcharka	23
			Karcha	26

		Chh.Dumdumi	Chharah	34
			Dumdumi	29
13	Arsha	Beldih	Beldih	21
			Juradih	17
		Sirkabaid	Sirkabaid	30
			Aharrah	27
		Chatuhansa	Chatuhansa	31
			Kantadih	29
14	Hura	Chatumother	Bariarpur	
			Chatumother	26
		Ladhurka	Jambaid	
			Shyamnagar	
		Khairi	Khairi	
			kalaboni	

Sl. No.	Name of Block	Name of G.P	Name of Village	No.of Beneficiaries
15	Kashipur	Kalidaha	Kalidaha	21
			Karanjberia	21
		Gognabaid	Gognabaid	28
			Monpura	18
		SimlaDhnara	Dhanara	27
			Liya	26
16	Raghunath pur-1	Bero	Beldanga	15
			Raidih	16
		Khajura	Khajura	30

			Dhadkibona	21
		Chorpahari	Badurdih	17
			Sija	20
17	Raghunath pur-2	Mnglda-Moutor	Nanduka	19
			Rangamati	15
		Chheliama	Kargali	32
			Chheliama	28
		Nutandih	Nutandih	27
			Kasibera	18
18	Para	Nadiha	Kaluhar	26
			Bathanbari	17
		Udaipur	Bathanbari	20
			Dhadkidih	20
		Jhapra	Jhapra	30
			Jobarrah	29
19	Nituria	Janardandih	Raghudi	16
			Rampur	20
		Digha	Bortoria	27
			Inanpur	24
		Raiband	Raiband	26
			Sidpur	18
20	Jhalda 1	Marumusina	Latar	15
			Marumusna	21
		Ichag	Ichag	27
			Akahara	19
		Jhalda	Pat Jhalda	22
			Muslimdih	28

Two villages from each Gram Panchayat has been selected purposively. One is developed and the other is backward or less developed in comparison to other. In our list the developed village has been marked by D whereas backward or comparatively less developed village has been marked by B. The beneficiaries has been selected randomly and the number of selected beneficiaries is almost 30 percent.

The information from each beneficiary has been collected through structured schedule the sample copy has been attached in the Report. In addition to the basic information like name, family income, agricultural wage etc., the number of days worked under MGNREGS has also been collected for the period 2008 to 2014. Wage rate in MGNREGS and the wage rate in agricultural activities or like other works has been surveyed.

The data on number of workers engaged in agricultural sector has been collected. At the same time the information regarding migration has been collected. The wage difference in the works under MGNREGS and agricultural fields or other activities has been considered to make a conclusion about the shortage of supply of labour in agricultural fields resulting the conversion of land in different forms thereby reducing the total amount of production, a serious issue of food grain production with respect to the growth of population.

Analysis has been made to draw the findings of the study as given in the part of the observation conclusion and policy prescription.

### **3. Analysis**

As already stated that provisioning of wage employment is a widely practical tool in India's effort towards poverty eradication particularly in the sixth five year plan and onwards. The experiences of different programmes culminated in an Act in 2005. When the Government of India enacted the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA).

In consequence to the Act, NREGS has been launched in 200 districts initially across the country in phase-1 during 2006-07 and it was extended to additional 130 districts in phase-2 during 2007-08. From April 2008 onwards, the act covers the whole of rural India. In 2009-2010 it was renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) acknowledging the importance of Gandhiji's dream of upholding rural India.

Before analyzing the data it is worthwhile to note down the salient features of the Scheme.

- a) Adult members of a rural household may apply for employment if they are willing to do unskilled manual work.
- b) Such a household will have to apply for registration to the local G.P. in writing or orally.
- c) The respective G.P. after due verification, will issue a Job Card to the household as a whole. The job card will bear photograph of all. Adult members of the household willing to work under MGNREGS. The Job Card photograph is free of cost.
- d) A Job Card holding household may submit a written application for employment to the G.P. stating the time and duration when work is sought, minimum days of employment have to be 15.
- e) The G.P. will issue a dated receipt of the written application for employment against which the 15 days guarantee to provide employment operates.
- f) Employment will be given 15 days of application for work by an employment seeker.
- g) If employment is not provided within 15 days, daily unemployment allowance in cash has to be paid. Liability of payment of unemployment allowance is on the State Government.
- h) At least 1/3rd of persons to whom work is allowed have to women.
- i) Wages are to be paid according to minimum wages as prescribed under the minimum wages Act 1948 for agricultural labourers in State, unless the Centre notifies a wage rate which will not be less than Rs 60/day.
- j) Disbursement of wage has to be done on a weekly basis and not beyond a fortnight.
- k) Each district has to be prepare a self-project. The instrument for providing employment is to be works selected from the list of permissible works.
- l) Works should ordinarily be provided within a 5 km radius of the village.
- m) Work site facilities such as drinking water, shade have to be provided.
- n) Social audit has to be done by Gram-Sabha.
- o) Grievance Redressed Mechanisms have to be put in place for ensuring a responsive implementation process.
- p) All accounts and records to the scheme are to be made available to any person desirous of obtaining a copy of such records on demand and after paying a specified fee.

On the basis of these guidelines and surveyed data let us now give a brief analysis of the study.

In this study it is found that in Arsha Block normal wage in the year 2008 is Rs 80/- and it has

increased to Rs140/- in the year 2014. Whereas wage in the work under MGNREGS in Rs.105/- in the year 2008 and it has increased to Rs.225/- in the year 2014. Thus wage rate in normal works, basically agriculture because most of the people are agricultural labour has though increased but not at par to the rise in wage rate in the scheme under MGNREGS. The workers on an average have got 120 days of work.

On the basis of the response of a beneficiary in the village Beldih under Panchayat Beldih in the Block Arsha. It is found that a beneficiary named as Dhanu Mahato got 120 days work under MGNREGS and he also possessed 5 Bigha land where he contributed 33 percent of his labour. So there is no scope to give labour in other fields as workers. Particularly at the time of harvesting that's why after serving his own land and doing work under MGNREGS there is no need to migrate other place for work.

Similar picture has been reflected for most of the beneficiaries in this village. Only few beneficiaries shifts to other places for work obviously at higher wage. In Bagmundi Block normal wage in the year 2008 is Rs 120/- and it has increased to Rs.130/- in 2014. Whereas wage in the work under MGNREGS is Rs.105/- in the year 2008 which has increased to Rs.225/- in 2014. So MGNREGS wage rate is more than the work basically in agriculture. A beneficiary namely Jiten Kalindi, in the village Atna under Suisa Panchayat contribute only 20% of his labour in agriculture and basically this is in his own land (5 Bigha).

Thus doing his own work and MGNREGS works where wage is higher he has no time to spare his labour in others field, resulting a shortage of labour supply in the locality. Same scenario is reflected in other villages under Bagmundi Block.

In the Block Balarampur normal wage rate is to some extent high Rs.160/- in the year 2014 but it is less than the wage rate under MGNREGS. On an average the beneficiaries have got 110 days work under MGNREGS. At the same time it is revealed that most of the beneficiaries have contributed 35% of their labour in their own field. Obviously the scope serving in others field is very less resulting a problem in the market for getting labour during peak hour of cultivation.

Survey of Bandwan Block reveals that normal wage in 2014 is Rs140/- and on an average the beneficiaries in 100 days work programme are getting work 110 days in the year. A beneficiary **Anil Paramanik** from village Apsara told that after doing cultivation in his own land and working under



the scheme (MGNREGS) he is not able to contribute in others field as hired labour. Here it is noted that family income of Anil Paramanik is Rs.6000/- per month. Picture is same in other villages also.

In Barabazar Block in the village **Latpada** under **Panchayat Latpada** beneficiary **Lakhan Sing Sardar** noted that after doing his own cultivation and availing 110 days work on an average under MGNREGS, he is less interested to do agricultural work in other fields, rather he is doing alternative Jobs where wage rate is higher than agriculture. In this village normal wage is Rs 140/- in the year 2014 which is comparatively much less than MGNREGS wage. He also replied that he is not migrated.

Picture of Hura Block is also more or less same. Only difference is that here normal wage rate is to some extent high Rs 180/-, but it is still less than MGNREGS wage rate.

In this Block the beneficiaries are only doing job in their own field or the field taken from the land owner on lease basis which is called Bhag Chasi.

In all the villages namely Chatumohar, Bariapur, Jambaid, Shyamnagar, Khairi and Kalaboni. The beneficiaries after working under MGNREGS particularly in the monsoon season only served in their own cultivated land. In this Block the shortage of labour during the peak season of cultivation is so acute that most land owners are learning their land for cultivation in terms of minimum return or their land are remaining uncultivated.

The interesting fact is that the affluent land owners are though interested to cultivate their land but are not being able to do due to non-availability of labour at right time. Again alternatively they are trying to use machines like Tractor on rent but the supply of Tractor is not sufficient with respect to demand in one hand and on the other the applicability of Tractor is not fruitful in all category of land due to its geographical structure(Malbhumi). So most of the land owners those were cultivators are now land leaser for few years and after that they are selling their lands or the lands are remaining uncultivated.

The fields where earlier two or three crops were cultivated now becomes monocropping. Only paddy is being cultivated and according their response this is due to simply shortage of labour supply as well as increase in wage rate.

In Block Joypur the name of the surveyed villages are Kusumtukri, Baragram under Baragram Panchayat, Ghagra and Dimdiha under GhagraPanchayat and Mukundpur and Bhatdih under

Mukundpur Gram Panchayat. Amount these six villages Baragram, Ghagra and Mukundpur are developed while others are less developed / backward.

The data reveals that on an average both developed and less developed villages the beneficiaries are getting 110 days work.

The normal wage in agricultural activities or like other works is Rs 160/- where the wage under MGNREGS is Rs 225/ - in the year 2014.

So here also the unskilled Job seekers are more willing to do work under MGNREGS and practically it is the fact and same conclusion is drawn in this Block also. Since Bokaro (Steel City) is nearest to this Block so most of the people are shifted for work at higher wages there.

Similarly in the Blocks Jhalda-I, Jhalda-II, the workers are at first preferred to do Job in the MGNREGS and after that they are cultivating their own land. And if some extra time is available then they are devoting in Biri Making Work. This is because in these two Blocks leisure time is spent on this job and particularly the female workers are comparatively more interested to do this job to earn extra income.

At the same time since these two Blocks are situated in the Border area of Jharkand , so few workers are migrated for work in Bokaro, Ranchi(Capital of Jharkand) and Muri(Industrial Belt). Resulting shortage labour supply in agriculture.

For example a respondent named as HaripadaNayakunderMarumasina Panchayat in Block Jhalda-I who have no agricultural land works under MGNREGS when available and in the rest of the days he migrated to Ranchi for work.

In the Kashipur Block the surveyed villages are Kalidaha, Karanjberia, Gognabaid, Monpura, Dhanara and Liya.

The village Karanjberia under Panchayat Kalidaha is a small village with only 460 villagers. Economic condition is bad and mainly tribal dominating. A respondent LakhiramKisku who's family income is Rs.4000/- per month. Agricultural wage is Rs.140/- MGNREGS wage is Rs.225/-. Obviously more than normal wage. So the beneficiary when MGNREGS work is available opts for that and on other days he remains busy in carpentry as it is known to him. In addition to this he migrated to Asansol for alternative works. Hence he did not spare labour in other fields.

More or less same scenario is present in all other villages also in Kashipur Block.

Blocks Manbazar-I and Manbazar-II is situated in the South-East side of the district and beside Kumari & Kasai river. Bankura is the border district of the block. In these two Blocks surveyed villages are Polmi, Mukundpur, Baramesiya, Bongram, Jabla, Gopalnagar, Nowadih, Dighi, Khariduar, Kumari, Bari and Bagdega.

Economic condition of the village Mukundapur as for example is bad. Population of the village is 865. A respondent Madhu Bauri whose family income is Rs. 3000/-. In the year 2008 he has got 90 days of work under MGNREGS and in 2014, he has got 120 days of work. Normal wage there is Rs.140 in 2014. Obviously lower than MGNREGS wage. Only two members of the family works in agriculture. He possess only two bigha land. He works in others field also as he did not go another place for work. But in the village Polmi a respondent namely PagalBauri whose economic condition is also bad did not work in agricultural field instead go to Burdwan for alternative works to earn more than here in agricultural works.

Thus, in Manbazar Block the scenario is different in the villages.

In Neturia Block which is Coal Based area, the workers migrated to Asansol as it is nearest to this Block. Most of the villagers are not dependent on agriculture and less interested to do agricultural work. But since the wage in the scheme under MGNREGS is high and the restriction is not strict so they work under MGNREGS if available. In the village Rampur under Janardandih availability of 100 days' work is only 90 days in 2014.

In the Block Para the name of the surveyed villages are Kaluhar, Bathanbari, Dhadkidih, Jhapra and Jobarrah. Among these Kaluhar, Dhadkidih and Jhapra are developed. On the basis of the data from respondents it is revealed that normal wage is Rs.120 and on an average the workers are getting 100 days' work under MGNREGS.

Since Santaldihi Thermal Power Plant is nearest to this Block, so most of the respondents said that they have to go Santaldihi for work and in the year near about 180 days they work there. Hence in agriculture there is crisis of labour in this block and this is for both MGNREGS and availability of alternative source of earning in the nearby industrial belt (Santaldihi Thermal Power Plant).

In the Pancha Block scenario is same as Manbazar-I and Manbazar-II. Normal wage rate in the villages is Rs.140/- in 2014. Working under MGNREGS on available days they fled to Burdwan for

alternative work near about for 90 days.

In the Block Purulia-I the studied villages are Bhandarpura, Ralibera under BhandarpuraPanchyat, the village Chagda and Kotloi under Sonijuri Panchayat and the village Lagda and Chakra under Lagda Panchayat.

Among these Bhandarpura, Chagda and Lagda is developed.

In village Lagda most of the villagers belong to upper-caste and doing service. Hence they are facing trouble in getting labour during harvesting season as the beneficiaries under MGNREGS are getting Job there at higher wage. In other villages also the availability of workers for doing agricultural work is less. This is because they come to district town and work at higher wage. There is ample opportunity in the district town to get alternative job at higher wage than agricultural work.

The picture of Purulia-II Block though not uniform to Purulia-I but the villages adjacent to district town behaves like Purulia-I. The villages like Chharah, Karcha, availability of workers in agricultural activities are decreasing gradually. Only the household who have sufficient working members are continuing cultivation. The others are either leasing out their land or the land is remaining uncultivated.

In the Block Raghunathpur -I and Raghunathpur -II the surveyed villages are Beldanga, Raidih, Khajura, Dhadkibona, Badurdih, Silja, Nanduka, Rangamati, Kargali, Cheliyama, Nutandih and Kasibera.

A respondent Ananda Murmu from the village Beldanga under Panchayat Bero in the Block Raghunathpur-I told that normal wage in the area is Rs120/- and he worked for 120 days in the scheme under 100 days work at the wage rate Rs.225/-in 2014.

He has Six Bigha land and he cultivated his land by himself with the help of the family members. After cultivating his own land and also working for 120 days of work under MGNREGS, the scope of doing work in other's field is very less. Hence the owner of land who are not able to serve himself and also have no family labour are not interested to cultivate their land, instead they are considering the process of leasing out their land for cultivation to other's, because though they have money to spend for cultivation but not getting necessary labour at the right cost and at right time.

Similar picture is reflected in other villages in Raghunathpur-I Block.

In Raghunathpur-II, a respondent from the village Cheliyama, comparatively developed

village replied in the questionnaire that on an average the availability of work under MGNREGS is 110 days. Since the village is upper caste dominated and have alternative sources, so the families who have alternative source are less interested to cultivate their land at the present agricultural scenario. Alarming rise of wage rate with non-availability of labour at the time of necessary working as catalyst for transferring their cultivable land to the hand of others. Again vagaries of monsoon is becoming unbearable for continuing cultivation of their land.

In the Block Santuri, the last Block of our study reveals the same picture of selling out the cultivable land for those families who have no sufficient family members and dependent on hired labour.

The name of the surveyed villages are Kharbar, Tiasi under Garsika Panchayat, villages Dhaksila and Talbera under Santuri Panchayat and villages Murradih and Vati under Murradih Panchayat.

A respondent from village Kharbar under Panchayat Garsika told us that normal wage in the area is Rs.140/- in 2014. Which was Rs 80/- in 2008. Obviously it is far less than the wage offered under MGNREGS , So when 100 days work available they are fully agreed first to do it. Otherwise they left their village for Asansol to work at higher wage then Rs.140/- again since this Block is Coal Based Area so the availability of alternative work is not tough.

The Scenario in other villages is more or less similar. The families those have not man power are becoming less interested to cultivate their land due to two reasons: i) Non Availability of labour at right time and ii) Due to excessive rise in the cost of production including wage.

#### **4. Conclusion**

From the above analysis the study is now in a position to give conclusion in a nutshell.

In most of the surveyed villages in 20 Blocks it is found that the families who have agricultural field for cultivation are becoming less interested to continue their cultivation due to non availability of labour at the right time of cultivation. This non availability causes due to the schemes running under MGNREGS. The problem is becoming acute and rising also in our study period 2008-2014, as told by the respondents. Physically it is found that the agricultural fields are either lying uncultivated or being used for alternative use like making house or selling out for making business.

The families those who have sufficient family members are still trying to continue cultivate their land and also taking land from others to cultivate either in the form of Bhag Chasi or in the form of giving a certain amount of cultivated product to the owner of the land. But it is observed that they also are becoming less interested in this process after few years and commented that due to vagaries of monsoon and due to increase in inputs like labour wage, pesticides, machineries, it is not possible to continue this agreement. Ultimately the families those having no family members are findings no alternatives rather to sell out their land or keeping the land uncultivated.

**Acknowledgement:** The author give a sincere thanks to the respected Editors and Reviewers for their valuable suggestions to improve the quality of the work.

**Reference:**

- [1] Yamini, A. (2009). Transparency and accountability in NREGA – A case study of Andhra Pradesh.
- [2] Centre for Science and Environment (2007). The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) opportunities and challenges (DRAFT).
- [3] Khera, R. (2011). The Battle for Employment Guarantee.
- [4] Novotny, J., Kubelkava, J. & Joseph, V. (2013): A multidimensional analysis of the impacts of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme: a tale from Tamil Nadu. Singapore Journal of tropical Geography, 34, 3, 322-341.
- [5] Statistical handbook, Purulia Bureau of Applied Economics & statistics. Dept of Planning, Statistics & Programme Monitoring Govt. of West Bengal.