

Social Protection Perspective of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and Targeted Public Distribution System (PDS) in Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract

The present paper examines the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (NREGS) and Targeted Public Distribution System (PDS) in Madhya Pradesh from the social protection perspective. The paper reveals that there is substantial scope for improving the organisational efficiency of the two schemes in the context of universal social protection. The paper recommends that innovative approaches should be adopted to increase the protection cover under these schemes.

Background

Universal social protection has been identified as a key development intervention to accelerate the progress towards sustainable development goals (SDGs) as laid down in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015) and in leaving no one behind. Social protection has also been identified as a key element of national strategies in India to promote human development, and inclusive growth. Universal social protection contributes significantly to the reduction of poverty, vulnerability and inequality and supports social cohesion. It plays an important role in re-building societies after a conflict or after natural disasters including promoting and sustaining gender equality and women's empowerment. Social protection has also been found to contribute to a strong, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth. The contribution of social protection to the increase in productivity, improvement of skills and employability by enhancing human capabilities is well known. It facilitates investment in productive assets. By raising household income, it enhances consumption and savings that boosts aggregate demand. Social protection also improves risk management at the household level and prevents households from harmful coping strategies such as selling productive assets. It enhances people's resilience in the face of shocks and structural transformations.

Achieving universal social protection, however, is challenging because of both endogenous and exogenous factors and requires of innovative implementation approaches. There is also a need to improve the efficiency and efficacy of different social protection schemes. It has also been emphasised that that involvement of civil society organisations and democratically institutions and application of digital technology can contribute to significantly improving the social protection cover.

This study examines the awareness and utilisation of two social protection schemes in Madhya Pradesh – Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and Targeted Public Distribution System (PDS). The MGNREGS is directed towards promoting income security at the household level by guaranteeing daily wages employment for at the most 100 days in a year and providing unemployment allowance if the employment is not provided (Government of India, 2005). The PDS is directed towards promoting food security at the household level by providing food items at subsidised rates (Government of India, 1997). The MGNREGS is open to all individuals seeking work. The PDS, however, is limited to below poverty line households only. The food insecurity is the highest in these households. The study attempts to provide the benchmark about the knowledge and the utilisation of the two schemes. These benchmarks can serve as the basis for designing, pilot testing, and scaling up the innovative approaches to universalise the use of these schemes to achieve both income security and food security at the household level. Securing income and food security is critical to achieve the cherished goal of universal social protection cover, especially to the poor, vulnerable and the marginalised population groups.

The paper is organised as follows. The next section outlines the methodology of the study. Findings of the study are presented in section three which includes a snapshot of the characteristics of the household surveyed. This section also presents findings related to the use of the two schemes and reasons for not using the schemes including the obstacles faced in getting benefits under the schemes. The last section of the paper summarises the main findings of the study and discusses their implications in the context of universal social protection.

Methodology

The study is based on a survey carried out in three districts of Madhya Pradesh – Panna; Sehore; and Vidisha. In Panna and Vidisha districts, one sub-district – Panna in district Panna and Vidisha in district Vidisha was selected while in Sehore district, two sub-districts –Budni and Sehore were selected purposively. Within selected sub-districts, however, households were selected statistically. The study was confined to the rural areas only. In each selected sub-district, 500 households were selected so that total number of the households planned to be surveyed was 2000. The households were selected following a two-stage selection process. At the first stage of selection, villages were selected following the circular systematic sampling procedure. The village list of the 2011 population census served as the sampling frame for the selection of villages.

In the second stage sample selection, 10 households were selected in each of the selected villages again following the circular systematic sampling procedure. The number of residential households in each village were obtained from the Primary Census Abstract of the 2011 population census to serve as the basis for the identification of the households within the selected village for the survey. The selected households were contacted in person to collect the information related knowledge and awareness and the two social protection schemes.

Total number of households actually surveyed was 2041 against the planned 2000 households in the four sub-districts of the state. The information required for the study was collected through the direct interview preferably with the head of the family based on a pre-designed and pre-tested questionnaire. More than 82 per cent of the households surveyed were the pre-identified households. Primary reason for not contacting a pre-identified household was that a competent respondent was not available.

Findings of the Survey

Characteristics of the Households Surveyed

The key characteristics of the households surveyed, and the characteristics of the population of these households are presented in table 1. More than 74 per cent of the respondents were male whereas close to 30 per cent respondents were female. The proportion of female respondents varied across the four sub-districts covered under the study but was the highest in Sehore sub-district of district Sehore. It may be seen from the table that the basic characteristics of the surveyed households and the population in these households were more or less the same although there are some interesting differences.

More than 42 per cent of the respondents contacted, primarily, the head of the household, were illiterate. The proportion of illiterate respondents was the highest in Panna sub-district but the lowest in Sehore sub-district. Only around 5 per cent of the respondents were having education at least up to the intermediate level. This proportion was the highest in Sehore sub-district but the lowest in Panna sub-district.

Majority of the respondent were in the age group 30-50 years. There were, however, a small proportion of respondents with age below 20 years. These respondents were contacted because the head of the household was not available at the time of the visit to the household.

Most of the households surveyed were nuclear households comprising of husband, wife, and their children. More than one fifth of the households surveyed were extended households having husband, wife, their parents, and children. Less than 5 per cent of the households surveyed were joint households.

More than 96 per cent of the households surveyed were Hindu households. Muslim households constituted less than 4 per cent of the total households surveyed. More than 44 per cent of the households Scheduled Castes households. Scheduled Tribes households constituted around 23 per cent of the households surveyed whereas households of other social classes constituted around 33 per cent of the households surveyed.

Almost 65 per cent of the households were below the poverty line as revealed through the type of the Ration Card the households were having.

Ration Card was available in only around 65 per cent of the households. In around one fifth of the households having the Ration Card, the colour of the Ration Card was yellow whereas in only around 14 per cent of the households, the colour of the Ration Card was white. Most of the households with the Ration Card were having the blue Ration Card. More than 85 per cent of the households having the Ration Card were entitled for food subsidy.

The Samagra Card issued by the Government of Madhya Pradesh to identify the beneficiaries for the delivery of selected social protection services was available in more than 92 per cent of the households surveyed. In Panna sub-district, however, the Samagra Card was available in only around four-fifth of the households surveyed.

In almost 12 per cent of the households having the Samagra Card, all members of the household were not listed in the Card which means that the Card was not updated on a regular basis.

Almost 80 per cent of the households which were having the BPL Ration Card were also having the 'eligibility slip' that entitles the household to receive the ration at the subsidised rate under the Targeted Public Distribution System (PDS).

More than 96 per cent of the households surveyed were having a mobile phone whereas more than 56 per cent of the households were having either a motorcycle or scooter or moped. More than 55 per cent of the households surveyed were having television.

The total population enumerated in the surveyed households was 11021. This means that the average size of the households surveyed was around 5.4 persons per household. The sex ratio of the population was, however, unfavourable to females. There were only about 888 females for every 1000 males in the households surveyed under the study.

More than 27 per cent population enumerated in the surveyed household was below 15 years of age. Children less than 5 years of age constituted around 9 per cent of the enumerated population.

Almost 99 per cent of persons in the surveyed households were found to be having the Aadhar Card but only about 95 per cent had their name listed in the Samagra Card launched by the Government of Madhya Pradesh.

Table 1: Characteristics of the households surveyed.

| Characteristics | Total | Sub-district | | | |
|--|-------|--------------|-------|--------|---------|
| | | Panna | Budni | Sehore | Vidisha |
| Respondent relationship with the head of the household | | | | | |
| Household head | 72.7 | 93.2 | 76.3 | 51.5 | 57.6 |
| Other | 27.3 | 6.8 | 23.7 | 48.5 | 42.4 |
| Gender of the respondent | | | | | |
| Female | 24.4 | 12.5 | 27.6 | 33.8 | 25.5 |
| Male | 74.0 | 84.8 | 68.7 | 66.2 | 74.5 |
| Education of the respondent | | | | | |
| Illiterate | 42.4 | 77.7 | 34.8 | 24.9 | 27.6 |
| Literate but below primary | 13.5 | 11.4 | 18.2 | 10.2 | 15.6 |
| Primary but below middle | 14.1 | 5.6 | 13.6 | 12.9 | 25.2 |
| Middle but below High School | 15.8 | 3.4 | 16.2 | 22.4 | 22.3 |
| High School but below Intermediate | 8.6 | 1.3 | 9.3 | 18.8 | 5.3 |
| Intermediate but below Graduate | 2.8 | 0.2 | 3.8 | 6.3 | 1.4 |
| Graduate and above | 2.8 | 0.4 | 4.0 | 4.6 | 2.6 |
| Age of the respondent | | | | | |
| Below 20 years | 4.7 | 0.4 | 12.7 | 1.7 | 6.3 |
| 20-30 years | 14.3 | 9.4 | 8.0 | 22.2 | 16.5 |
| 30-40 years | 24.0 | 19.3 | 24.4 | 28.4 | 24.1 |
| 40-50 years | 25.4 | 25.6 | 27.9 | 23.6 | 25.3 |
| 50-60 years | 15.2 | 19.9 | 15.1 | 13.9 | 11.4 |
| 60 years and above | 16.4 | 25.6 | 11.9 | 10.1 | 16.5 |
| Type of Household | | | | | |
| Nuclear | 74.6 | 83.8 | 68.5 | 61.9 | 83.1 |
| Extended | 20.5 | 3.7 | 29.6 | 35.2 | 16.1 |
| Joint | 4.9 | 12.5 | 1.9 | 2.9 | 0.9 |
| Household religion | | | | | |
| Hindu | 96.3 | 99.1 | 95.2 | 94.1 | 96.5 |
| Muslim | 3.4 | 0.4 | 4.3 | 5.7 | 3.5 |
| Others | 0.3 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.2 | 0.0 |
| Social class of the household | | | | | |
| Scheduled Castes | 44.1 | 25.0 | 34.4 | 69.8 | 44.4 |
| Scheduled Tribes | 22.7 | 47.6 | 21.1 | 12.8 | 6.5 |
| Other Castes | 33.1 | 27.3 | 44.4 | 17.4 | 49.0 |
| Households having BPL Card | 64.9 | 69.5 | 64.5 | 47.8 | 77.7 |
| Household having Ration Card | 65.7 | 78.3 | 60.1 | 53.0 | 69.8 |
| Type of Ration Card | | | | | |
| Yellow | 20.2 | 18.2 | 27.0 | 21.9 | 16.6 |
| Blue | 65.7 | 62.6 | 58.7 | 55.9 | 81.0 |
| White | 14.1 | 19.2 | 14.3 | 22.2 | 2.3 |

| Characteristics | Total | Sub-district | | | |
|--|-------|--------------|-------|--------|---------|
| | | Panna | Budni | Sehore | Vidisha |
| Households having Samagra Card | 92.4 | 79.1 | 94.3 | 98.9 | 98.0 |
| All members listed in Samagra Card | | | | | |
| Yes, all registered | 88.1 | 88.9 | 93.8 | 80.0 | 91.7 |
| No, some not registered | 11.9 | 11.1 | 6.2 | 20.0 | 8.3 |
| Household having the Eligibility Slip | 78.9 | 90.7 | 74.7 | 72.5 | 79.7 |
| Usual occupational engagement of household members | | | | | |
| Agriculture | 66.7 | 50.9 | 63.7 | 78.1 | 67.0 |
| Unskilled labour | 92.2 | 96.4 | 94.4 | 79.8 | 97.5 |
| Skilled labour | 8.5 | 10.7 | 7.8 | 9.9 | 4.0 |
| Paid job | 5.9 | 6.3 | 10.2 | 7.5 | 0.0 |
| Business | 5.2 | 6.4 | 13.0 | 4.8 | 1.0 |
| Usual occupational engagement of women | | | | | |
| Only household work | 84.9 | 88.2 | 71.4 | 95.2 | 73.5 |
| Agriculture | 51.1 | 53.9 | 63.3 | 55.7 | 19.2 |
| Unskilled labour | 77.6 | 94.9 | 84.0 | 63.4 | 81.8 |
| Skilled labour | 10.1 | 60.7 | 33.8 | 0.0 | 1.1 |
| Business | 5.6 | 38.9 | 19.0 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| Household assets | | | | | |
| Bicycle | 63.2 | 92.3 | 50.6 | 48.9 | 69.5 |
| Radio/Transistor | 7.7 | 4.7 | 12.8 | 5.9 | 5.2 |
| Television | 55.5 | 28.7 | 66.2 | 43.6 | 77.8 |
| Mobile phone | 93.4 | 93.2 | 88.8 | 94.3 | 96.3 |
| Computer | 6.2 | 13.5 | 10.6 | 2.5 | 5.8 |
| Two-wheeler | 56.6 | 73.7 | 55.6 | 55.8 | 49.1 |
| Four-wheeler | 8.7 | 16.7 | 10.8 | 7.6 | 4.7 |
| Cooler | 27.4 | 17.5 | 40.6 | 26.1 | 4.8 |
| Washing machine | 3.9 | 7.5 | 7.4 | 2.1 | 0.7 |
| Refrigerator | 5.5 | 14.0 | 7.6 | 4.6 | 0.0 |
| House owned or rented | | | | | |
| Own | 96.6 | 97.1 | 90.7 | 97.5 | 99.8 |
| Rented | 3.4 | 2.9 | 9.3 | 2.5 | 0.2 |

Source: Author

Remarks: The distribution of the occupational engagement of the members of the households and women members of the household does not add up to 100 as household members were reported to be engaged in more than one occupation. For example, a person may be engaged in the agricultural activities as the household was having land for agriculture. However, the same person is engaged in some other occupation also presumably because the income from agriculture may not be sufficient to earn the livelihood for the household.

The status of the knowledge and utilisation of the MGNREGS and PDS based on the information provided by the respondents surveyed under the study is discussed in the following pages.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

Only about 57 per cent of the respondents reported that they had heard about the Scheme. This proportion was less than 5 per cent in Panna sub-district and around 13 per cent in Budni sub-district but more than 95 per cent in Sehore sub-district and almost 90 per cent in Vidisha sub-district. Among those who had not heard about the Scheme, around 54 per cent had the knowledge that the Government had started scheme which provided work (Table2).

About half of the respondent knew that the Job Card was necessary to take benefits under the scheme. However, around 58 per cent of the respondents who knew that Job Card was necessary reported that application for the Job Card was to be submitted to the Gram Panchayat. Around 39 per cent did not know where to submit the application.

Only about one third of the respondents knew that work under the scheme was to be demanded and the application for the demand of work was to be submitted to the Gram Panchayat. Around 35 per cent respondent did not know that the work was to be demanded under the scheme.

More than 55 per cent of the respondents surveyed did not know that the duration of the work demanded under the scheme must invariably be mentioned in the application for the demand of work. Similarly, more than 58 per cent of the respondents did not know the maximum number of days for which the work could be demanded under the scheme.

Almost 75 per cent of the respondents did not know that if the work was not provided then the unemployment allowance would be admissible and almost 10 per cent respondents were of the view that no unemployment allowance was admissible. Only about 11 per cent of the respondents knew that application would have to be submitted for getting unemployment allowance. In Panna and Budni sub-districts, at least three-fourth of the respondents were of the view that no such application was necessary. Among those respondents who knew that application was to be submitted to get the unemployment allowance if the work was not provided, majority did not know where to submit the application. Around one-fourth of the respondents reported that the application was to be submitted to the Gram Panchayat while a very small proportion reported that the application was to be submitted to the Janpad Panchayat.

Only about 22 per cent of the respondents reported that their household had benefitted from the scheme. Among those who reported that the household was not benefitted from the scheme, almost 85 per cent reported that nobody ever contacted the household and told about the scheme and the benefits under the scheme while around 55 per cent of the respondents reported that they were not knowing the procedure of getting the benefit from the scheme. About 46 per cent of the respondents reported that the household did not have the Job Card necessary to get benefits under the scheme.

More than 90 per cent of the households without Job Card did not apply for the Job Card. Primary reason for not applying for the Job Card was the lack of knowledge about the process of getting the Job Card. At the same time, around 18 per cent of the respondents reported that nobody contacted them for the issue of Job Card.

More than 50 per cent households which applied for the Job Card could not cite any reason for not getting the Job Card issued. Application of a small proportion of households was rejected but they did not know the reason of rejection.

Almost 98 per cent of the respondents reported that the household did not get the any work under the scheme in the current year. Among those who got work in the current year, only a small proportion demanded the work. Among the very few which demanded work, the majority demanded work for more than 7 days but around 37 per cent got work for less than 7 days.

Only a negligible proportion of households who did not get work even after demand and who applied for the unemployment allowance received the unemployment allowance. In Panna, Budni and Vidisha sub-districts no household received the unemployment allowance.

More than 83 per cent of the respondents reported that women of their household did not work under the scheme. Among the households from which women worked under the scheme, less than 15 per cent reported that women took their children with them to the place of work. Majority of women left their children at home while they went out for work under the scheme.

There was virtually no arrangement for the care of children at the place of work. There was no Jhoola Ghar or Aya to take care of children of women working under the scheme in any of the four sub-districts covered under the present study.

About one third of the respondents, however, reported that drinking water facility was available at the place of work while a very small proportion reported that shed and first aid facility was available

When asked about why women of the household did not work under the scheme, the most common response was that women of the household did not go out for work. Another dominant reason was that there was nobody in the house to take care of children. There was also concern about the behaviour of the contractors.

An attempt was also made to verify the work that households got under the scheme. However, almost 60 per cent of the household could produce the Job Card. Many of the Job Cards were more than five years old and were not renewed so that households having expired Job Card were not eligible for work under the Scheme.

On the other hand, entries in the available Job Cards which were not expired were found to be mostly incomplete and irregular. The respondents were found to be grossly ignorant about relevance and the need of maintaining the Job Card up-to-date to receive the entitlements that are provided under the scheme.

Table 2: Awareness and use of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS).

| Particulars | Total | Sub-district | | | |
|---|-------|--------------|-------|--------|---------|
| | | Panna | Budni | Sehore | Vidisha |
| Heard about MGNREGA | 56.8 | 4.6 | 12.5 | 95.6 | 89.9 |
| Knowledge about scheme | 54.0 | 3.1 | 16.1 | 76.5 | 86.7 |
| Job Card necessary | 49.9 | 3.0 | 9.6 | 92.1 | 78.6 |
| Where to apply for Job Card | | | | | |
| Do not know | 39.0 | 30.4 | 41.3 | 24.8 | 51.8 |
| Gram Panchayat | 58.4 | 17.4 | 43.5 | 74.5 | 47.8 |
| Janpad Panchayat | 1.7 | 34.8 | 13.0 | 0.5 | 0.0 |
| Others | 0.8 | 17.4 | 2.2 | 0.2 | 0.4 |
| Knowledge that work to be demanded | 33.0 | 3.0 | 5.9 | 92.1 | 27.0 |
| Knowledge about where to apply for work | | | | | |
| Do not know | 45.1 | 36.4 | 45.7 | 14.0 | 73.8 |
| Gram Panchayat | 53.6 | 36.4 | 40.0 | 85.5 | 26.0 |
| Janpad Panchayat | 0.8 | 9.1 | 14.3 | 0.3 | 0.0 |
| Others | 0.5 | 18.2 | 0.0 | 0.3 | 0.2 |
| Knowledge that it is necessary to mention days of work required | | | | | |
| Yes | 39.5 | 33.3 | 13.0 | 79.4 | 7.5 |
| No | 5.1 | 33.3 | 55.6 | 1.2 | 2.0 |
| Do not know | 55.4 | 33.3 | 31.5 | 19.4 | 90.5 |
| Knowledge about maximum days of work | 36.8 | 25.0 | 19.6 | 73.5 | 6.0 |
| Knowledge about unemployment allowance if work was not given | 16.3 | 0.0 | 3.8 | 33.9 | 2.2 |
| Knowledge about application is necessary for unemployment allowance | 11.4 | 11.1 | 5.0 | 24.7 | 0.7 |
| Knowledge about where to apply for unemployment allowance | | | | | |
| Do not know | 72.4 | 66.7 | 66.7 | 72.5 | 73.9 |
| Gram Panchayat | 25.7 | 33.3 | 16.7 | 26.5 | 17.4 |
| Janpad Panchayat | 1.2 | 0.0 | 16.7 | 0.3 | 8.7 |
| Others | 0.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.8 | 0.0 |
| Household benefitted from the scheme | 21.6 | 0.4 | 2.0 | 35.6 | 39.4 |
| Reasons for not getting benefitted | | | | | |
| Do not know about the scheme | 23.1 | 2.3 | 74.2 | 91.5 | 21.5 |
| Process of getting benefit not known | 44.9 | 0.7 | 56.2 | 80.0 | 86.8 |
| No adult member in the household | 10.7 | 0.5 | 37.0 | 82.2 | 4.9 |
| Not engaged in unskilled work | 9.8 | 2.9 | 32.6 | 50.0 | 7.8 |
| Nobody contacted | 84.6 | 15.4 | 87.7 | 98.5 | 81.9 |
| No Job Card | 46.3 | 10.0 | 74.4 | 97.3 | 34.7 |

| Particulars | Total | Sub-district | | | |
|--|-------|--------------|-------|--------|---------|
| | | Panna | Budni | Sehore | Vidisha |
| Not required | 19.7 | 0.0 | 80.6 | 80.0 | 12.9 |
| Ever applied for Job Card | 6.5 | 2.4 | 7.8 | 13.6 | 0.0 |
| Reasons for not getting Job Card | | | | | |
| Do not know | 50.3 | 0.0 | 69.2 | 74.2 | 42.5 |
| Application rejected | 6.5 | 33.3 | 15.4 | 16.1 | 1.9 |
| Others | 43.1 | 66.7 | 15.4 | 9.7 | 55.7 |
| Reason for not applying for Job Card | | | | | |
| No knowledge | 60.7 | 64.9 | 74.0 | 82.5 | 23.2 |
| Necessary documents not available | 5.7 | 18.9 | 7.7 | 2.2 | 2.0 |
| No time to apply | 2.0 | 0.0 | 2.9 | 1.1 | 3.3 |
| No literate member in the family | 1.4 | 2.7 | 1.0 | 0.0 | 2.6 |
| Nobody contacted | 17.6 | 0.0 | 14.4 | 10.4 | 37.1 |
| Others | 12.7 | 13.5 | 0.0 | 3.8 | 31.8 |
| Anybody came home to prepare Job Card | 2.2 | 6.1 | 2.1 | 2.9 | 0.0 |
| Anybody asked to get Job Card | 2.5 | 8.1 | 2.8 | 3.2 | 0.0 |
| Got work under the scheme this year | 2.1 | 0.5 | 0.7 | 5.4 | 1.7 |
| Applied for work | 2.9 | 6.9 | 0.0 | 7.2 | 0.0 |
| Got work even without applying | 28.2 | 0.0 | 1.3 | 26.0 | 41.2 |
| Who told you about work | | | | | |
| Village Chowkidar | 9.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 9.8 | 9.1 |
| Gram Panchayat Sachiv | 52.7 | 0.0 | 100.0 | 86.3 | 41.6 |
| Asha/AWW | 0.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.6 |
| Panchayat representative | 21.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.0 | 28.6 |
| Relatives or acquaintances | 15.5 | 100.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 20.1 |
| Others | 0.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.0 | 0.0 |
| Received travel allowance | 13.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 8.2 | 43.5 |
| Household women got work | 16.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 37.0 | 24.3 |
| Do women take children to work | | | | | |
| Yes, take children to work | 13.8 | na | na | 17.5 | 6.2 |
| No leave them at home | 26.2 | na | na | 21.1 | 36.6 |
| No young child | 7.9 | na | na | 10.2 | 3.1 |
| Other | 1.8 | na | na | 1.2 | 3.1 |
| Arrangements for care of children at place of work | | | | | |
| Jhoola Ghar | 0.0 | 0.0 | na | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Aya to take care of children | 0.0 | 0.0 | na | na | 0.0 |
| Drinking water facility | 31.3 | 0.0 | na | 63.9 | 3.9 |
| Shade for the rest of workers | 3.0 | 0.0 | n | 5.7 | 1.3 |
| First Aid | 5.6 | 5.6 | na | 7.7 | 1.3 |
| Reasons for women not working under the scheme | | | | | |
| Ladies do not work outside home | 12.1 | 6.6 | 23.4 | 6.6 | 35.5 |
| Nobody else for household work | 10.4 | 1.1 | 16.1 | 6.1 | 55.9 |

| Particulars | Total | Sub-district | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------|---------|
| | | Panna | Budni | Sehore | Vidisha |
| Small children in the family | 4.5 | 2.3 | 6.5 | 9.4 | 1.1 |
| No arrangement for care of children | 1.2 | 0.7 | 4.8 | 0.5 | 0.0 |
| Low wages | 2.4 | 0.5 | 15.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Work not appropriate for ladies | 1.8 | 0.9 | 6.5 | 1.9 | 0.0 |
| Place of work very far | 0.2 | 0.0 | 1.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Contractor behaviour inappropriate | 4.1 | 3.4 | 16.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Job Card available in the household | 40.8 | 24.1 | 14.0 | 40.8 | 60.0 |

Source: Author

Targeted Public Distribution System (PDS)

Almost 78 per cent respondents knew about the scheme. Knowledge about the scheme, however, varied across the four sub-districts. The proportion of respondents knowing about the scheme was only around 41 per cent in Panna sub-district but nearly universal in Sehore and Vidisha sub-districts (Table 3).

Nearly half of the households had blue Ration Card while less than 5 per cent of the households were having yellow Ration Card which means that around 53 per cent of the households were entitled to receive subsidised ration under the scheme. Almost 25 per cent of the households were not having any type of Ration Card.

More than 76 per cent of those households which had a Ration Card of any type reported that all members of the households were listed in the Ration Card. However, only around 56 per cent of those households which did not have all members listed on the Ration Card informed that they applied for getting the unlisted household members listed in the Ration Card.

One condition for getting the benefit under the scheme is that the household must be listed in the list of beneficiary households available at the PDS shop. Only around 68 per cent respondents reported that their household was listed in the list of beneficiaries.

Almost 90 per cent of the households eligible for taking the benefit under the scheme reported that they regularly obtained the ration from the Ration shop whereas more than 93 per cent of these respondents reported that they obtained ration from the ration shop during the month prior to the survey.

In Panna sub-district, there was virtually no knowledge about the norm of getting ration under the scheme (5 Kg per person per month). By contrast, more than 90 per cent respondents in Budni and Vidisha sub-districts knew about the ration per person per month.

More than 40 per cent of the respondents informed that the Ration Shop owner refused to give ration as per the norm under one pretext or the other. Moreover, about 17 per cent of these respondents reported that they could not obtain full ration as they

did not have the money to purchase full ration. On the other hand, more than 43 per cent of the households in sub-district Budni reported that the ration in sufficient quantity was not available in the ration shop so that they could not get the quantity of the ration as provided under the scheme.

The main reason for not getting the benefit under the scheme was that the household was not having the eligibility slip that is issued to the household by the government. Even if a household is having a BPL Ration Card, it may not get the ration from the dedicated PDS shop if the household is not having the eligibility slip.

More than 27 per cent of those households who received ration under the scheme were, however, not satisfied with the quality of the ration although this proportion varied across sub-districts.

However, only about 8 per cent of those respondents who reported that they were not satisfied with the quality of ration received under the scheme at the subsidised rate reported that they had lodged a complaint about the poor quality of the ration available from the PDS shop to the competent authority. Majority of the respondents reported that they did not lodge the complaint because they did not have any knowledge about the process of lodging the complaint if the quality of ration available from the PDS shop was not satisfactory.

The respondents were also having little knowledge about the competent authority to which the complaint was to be lodged regarding the poor quality of the ration available under the scheme. It was found during the survey that the competent authority to which the complaint about the poor quality of ration available under the scheme was to be lodged was different in different sub-districts covered under the scheme. In the Sehore sub-district, all complaints were lodged to the State Food Commission that has been constituted by the state government. In Panna sub-district, on the other hand, more than three fourth of the complaints lodged were registered in the Chief Minister Helpline. In Vidisha sub-districts, complaints regarding the poor quality of the ration available under the scheme were lodged to multiple agencies including the district Collector, the Chief Minister helpline, and the Janpad Panchayat. In sub-district Budni, complaints were lodged to the Janpad Panchayat and the Gram Panchayat. It appears that there was not well-defined centralised system of registering complaints related to the poor quality of the ration available under the scheme. At the same time, there was no respondent who reported that some action was taken on the complaint lodged and there was an improvement in the quality of the ration available under the scheme.

There is also a provision of food security allowance under the scheme. However, knowledge about the food security allowance was virtually zero in all the four sub-districts covered under the study. Only one respondent in sub-district Panna had reported that the household had received the food security allowance as provided under the scheme. In Budni, Sehore and Vidisha sub-districts, there was no respondent who reported that the household had received the food security allowance.

Table 3: Knowledge and use of Targeted Public Distribution System

| Particulars | Total | Sub-district | | | |
|--|-------|--------------|-------|--------|---------|
| | | Panna | Budni | Sehore | Vidisha |
| Knowledge about PDS | 77.9 | 41.8 | 75.1 | 98.7 | 97.9 |
| Type of Ration Card | | | | | |
| Blue - below poverty line | 48.9 | 32.5 | 42.8 | 44.7 | 74.4 |
| Yellow - Antyoday | 4.8 | 4.7 | 10.8 | 0.8 | 4.7 |
| White - General | 21.7 | 48.7 | 23.2 | 12.1 | 3.0 |
| No Ration Card | 24.6 | 14.0 | 23.2 | 42.4 | 17.8 |
| All members entered in the Ration Card | | | | | |
| All members | 76.1 | 86.3 | 78.0 | 62.6 | 75.9 |
| Some members | 20.3 | 6.4 | 17.3 | 36.6 | 22.8 |
| If no, applied for addition | 56.0 | 51.3 | 51.3 | 66.7 | 45.3 |
| Family is listed in beneficiaries list | 68.5 | 52.6 | 65.2 | 63.7 | 80.9 |
| Taken ration from PDS shop | | | | | |
| Yes, every month | 89.7 | 87.3 | 81.3 | 95.8 | 93.3 |
| Occasionally | 3.7 | 8.5 | 5.7 | 0.8 | 0.0 |
| No | 6.5 | 4.2 | 13.0 | 3.4 | 6.7 |
| Took ration in the last month | | | | | |
| Yes | 93.3 | 94.0 | 84.5 | 96.1 | 96.9 |
| No | 6.7 | 6.0 | 15.5 | 3.9 | 3.1 |
| Know about the ration per person | | | | | |
| Do not know | 32.0 | 95.4 | 6.8 | 0.6 | 1.2 |
| Yes | 60.8 | 1.7 | 91.9 | 81.3 | 96.9 |
| Others | 7.2 | 2.9 | 1.3 | 18.2 | 1.8 |
| Reason for taking ration less than due | | | | | |
| No money | 16.7 | 12.5 | 18.9 | 17.8 | 0.0 |
| Not required | 12.0 | 5.0 | 5.4 | 14.7 | 12.5 |
| Quantity not available | 13.4 | 0.0 | 43.2 | 11.0 | 0.0 |
| Supplier refused | 41.7 | 12.5 | 16.2 | 51.3 | 75.0 |
| Others | 16.3 | 70.0 | 16.2 | 5.2 | 12.5 |
| Reason for not taking the ration | | | | | |
| No money | 4.8 | 7.5 | 6.9 | 3.5 | 3.1 |
| No Eligibility Slip | 58.3 | 7.5 | 17.2 | 86.0 | 84.4 |
| Shop owner refused | 12.8 | 2.5 | 65.5 | 3.5 | 3.1 |
| PDS shop closed | 1.1 | 2.5 | 3.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Machine out of order | 2.7 | 7.5 | 0.0 | 1.2 | 3.1 |
| Could not match with records | 1.1 | 2.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 3.1 |
| Poor quality | 0.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 3.1 |
| Others | 18.7 | 70.0 | 6.9 | 5.8 | 0.0 |
| Satisfied with the quality of ration | | | | | |
| Fully satisfied | 57.9 | 6.7 | 40.5 | 79.6 | 94.2 |

| Particulars | Total | Sub-district | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------|---------|
| | | Panna | Budni | Sehore | Vidisha |
| Satisfied to some extent | 10.6 | 8.2 | 29.4 | 17.3 | 0.8 |
| Cannot say | 2.1 | 2.8 | 11.9 | 0.3 | 0.0 |
| Not satisfied | 27.1 | 78.6 | 7.9 | 2.5 | 4.8 |
| Fully unsatisfied | 2.3 | 3.6 | 10.3 | 0.3 | 0.3 |
| If not satisfied complained | 10.0 | 3.9 | 9.1 | 15.1 | 42.5 |
| State Food Commission | 33.3 | 25.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 | na |
| CM Helpline | 80.0 | 77.8 | na | na | 100.0 |
| Collector | 50.0 | 0.0 | na | na | 100.0 |
| Public hearing portal | 0.0 | 0.0 | na | na | na |
| Public hearing | 0.0 | 0.0 | na | na | na |
| Janpad Panchayat | 66.7 | 0.0 | 100.0 | na | 100.0 |
| Gram Panchayat | 95.8 | 0.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Vigilance committee | 40.0 | 25.0 | na | 100.0 | na |
| Know about food security allowance | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.8 | 1.0 | 0.0 |
| Not received food security allowance | 75.6 | 80.0 | na | 78.4 | 33.3 |

Source: Author

Discussions and Conclusions

Universal social protection has been advocated to strengthen household economic security, household resilience to external shocks and protection from vagaries of nature such as the COVID-19 pandemic and risks and uncertainties associated with the market economy (Chaurasia, 2022). It has been argued to contribute significantly to the well-being, especially of the vulnerable, poor, and marginalised groups of the population, including well-being of children and women.

Government of India has launched a number of schemes that provide protection cover to the population and to specific population groups who are vulnerable to one or the other social, economic, and environmental risks and hazards to promote their well-being and to ensure that no one is left behind in the process of economic, social, and human development.

The present study has examined the status of implementation of two of these schemes – Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and Targeted Public Distribution System (PDS) through the social protection perspective so as to make these schemes more effective in protecting individuals and households, especially children and women from economic, social, and environmental shocks and to provide them opportunities for their full development and growth. The study contacted more than 2000 households in four sub-districts of Madhya Pradesh to explore different dimensions of the implementation of the two schemes.

The study has revealed that the current status of the implementation of the two schemes from the social protection perspective is far from satisfactory and there is substantial scope of improvement in the implementation of these scheme so as to provide effective protection cover to the potential beneficiaries who are entitled to get benefits under the scheme.

It has been observed that both the schemes are being implemented in the conventional bureaucratic manner and this approach of implementation appears to be the main reason these schemes are not able to provide protection cover to all the potential beneficiaries. The findings of the study suggest that there is a need of improving the needs effectiveness of these scheme by reaching all the potential beneficiaries and informing them about the schemes and their benefits. At present, a selective approach appears to have been adopted to reaching out the potential beneficiaries under these schemes so that a substantial section of the population, especially, vulnerable population remains devoid of the benefits of these schemes. This selective approach also appears to be the reason behind the limited knowledge of the community in general and potential beneficiaries in particular about these schemes.

The study suggests that the organisational efficiency of the two schemes needs to be enhanced significantly through innovative approaches of implementation so as to ensure that the potential beneficiaries of these schemes receive the full entitlements that have been provided under the scheme. At present, both the needs effectiveness and the capacity efficiency of these schemes remains poor so that only a small proportion of the potential beneficiaries receive full entitlements that have been provided under these schemes.

Both the schemes are currently provider driven. This means that their implementation is critically dependent upon the providers of services under these schemes – the Secretary of the Gram Panchayat in case of MGNREGS and the owner of the PDS shop in case of PDS. There is a need that the implementation of these schemes is driven by the community and community organisations so as to make these schemes more effective in meeting the social protection needs of the people, especially children and women who are regarded as the most vulnerable group of population irrespective of religion, class, and standard of living.

There is also a need of establishing a functional grievances redressal system to improve the efficiency of the two schemes. There is an in-built grievances redressal system in place under both the schemes, but this system is hardly functional at the grass roots level, the interface with the community. The study has revealed that the beneficiaries have little faith in the grievances redressal system because it hardly contributes to improving the delivery of services under these schemes. Another problem is that the procedure of lodging grievances is very cumbersome and most of the beneficiaries, primarily the poor and the deprived ones are simple incapable of using the system to lodge their grievances and to get the grievances addressed through the system.

The findings of the present study may serve as the basis for designing and implementing alternative yet innovative approaches for improving the organisational efficiency of these schemes. In the context of universal social protection, it is imperative that these schemes must be driven by the community and their social protection needs and not by the arbitrariness of the services delivery agencies. In this context, establishment of a community-based system of monitoring the implementation of these schemes and evaluating their impact is very important.

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