

## **IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON PEOPLES HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG THE PEOPLE OF BLOCK BEHIBAG OF DISTRICT KULGAM (J & K)**

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**Abstract:** This paper elucidates the impact of Mahatma Gandhi national rural employment guarantee act on the rural health and the quality of life among the people of block Behibag of district Kulgam (J&K). MGNREGA not only provides wage employment as an alternative source of livelihood but also creates durable assets such as road construction, land development, water conservation and irrigation facility, which has tremendous influence on different sectors of village economy and personal lives of the Block. This paper also highlights the impact of MGNREGA on the improvement of overall quality of life of people such as impact on health, income earning levels of household, employment opportunities, expenditure on food and non food items, expenditure on education, impact on social life, women empowerment and impact on labour migration. It also contains some suggestions which if implemented at ground level will help to enhance the quality of life.

**Key Words:** - Quality, life, Health, Impact, Employment and Empowerment.

### **Introduction:**

#### **MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARENTEE ACT**

Empowerment and upliftment of human population is the basic foundation stone to any economy. Indian population which is predominantly rural population accounts to 72.18% according to 2011 census lags far behind from their counterparts in urban India accounts to 27.82% .In many areas such as purchasing power, infrastructure, connectivity, employment etc, prone to seasonal fluctuations because rural economy is predominantly agricultural economy. So a need was felt to improve the living condition and quality of life of the rural India. In order to address this policy was conceptualized and subsequently formulated which came to be known as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) 2005 notified by Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India on 7th September 2005 (Sheikh Irshad <sup>20</sup>).This law which gives a legal guarantee of at least 100

days of wage employment to rural household whose adult members volunteers to do unskilled and manual work in a financial year. MGNREGA has given the largest economic resources in our country (Dreeze J.N<sup>4</sup>). It is the first employment act which works on the village level and made its impact on international level. The act provides the equal opportunities to both the genders of society to get benefit and to improve the standard of living. The act provides the work to the beneficiaries within the five kilometers of village, it is a big initiative of this act because labours work in their local society and women labours finish their daily tasks in their respective homes then work under MGNREGA. It provides them a chance to look after their homes, their children and also to become helping hand for their families. MGNREGA is a big enlightenment in the rural India because it works for the eradication of rural poverty and rural development (Khera .R<sup>13</sup> , Madhusudan Ghoh<sup>14</sup>).

Jammu and Kashmir is the northern hilliest state of India situated between 32.15 degree & 37.05 degree North latitude & 72.35 degree & 83.20 degree east longitude. J&K state is the 11th largest having a geographical area of 220000 Sq Kms. accounting to 3.20% of the total area of India. It is the 19th most populous state having a population of about 1.25 crore souls (2011 census) of which 75.19% residing in rural areas. As we know well J&K is known as the disputed area of India. So, it was difficult to come up with a scheme which will represent panchs and sarpanchs by means of Panchayat elections. In its first phase it faced to many issues because of militancy in J&K. Some of the elected panchs and sarpanchs faced death due to the militancy in Jammu and Kashmir and also due to the Article 370. Slowly and gradually people became aware about the benefits of this scheme and got implementation in all over the state in 2008 with the positive response of the common people and this act brought the enlightenment in the development of the state (Malla<sup>15</sup>, socio economic profile j&k<sup>21</sup>, Basharat<sup>1</sup>). MGNREGA came up with the aim of enhancing livelihood security of rural people whose adult population volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The act provides an employment generation scheme by which every rural person can get hundred days of wage employment in a single financial year. The act was implemented in 200 backward districts of the country in its first phase in February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2006. As the development and interest of the people from these 200 districts MGNREGA got implemented in additional 130 districts of the country in its 2<sup>nd</sup> phase in 2007-2008. It was observed both the genders participated and got benefit by this act and increased the thirst of people to work under MGNREGA (Ghosh<sup>6</sup>, Performance Mgnrega<sup>19</sup>). The act did wonders in all the spheres of the rural development. Finally in phase 3<sup>rd</sup> from April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008 ministry of rural development implemented it in all the remaining districts of country. MGNREGA changed the whole scenario of the rural development and rural economy and also helped in the eradication of the rural poverty which leads the positive impact on people's health and quality of life. So, it is considered as the largest employment generation scheme in the country (Jalan<sup>10</sup>, Jaswal<sup>11</sup>).

**Review of Literature:**

MGNREGA is the largest employment generation scheme in the country and has done wonders in the rural development. There are so many researches based on its impact and implementation process. Here are some researches which have been done in this field.

Mathur (2008) analyzed, if MGNREGA will be implemented honestly it will be the great changing factor in the socio-economic conditions and upliftment of rural economy as it provides the great livelihood security to the rural poor (Mathur<sup>16</sup>).

Jaswal et al (2007) found that MGNREGA created the basic assets which enhanced the basic infrastructure and development of the rural community. This research was done in the Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra where they found 42% of the cases of pond constructions, 26% of cases were found in cleaning of existing ones, 16% of the cases were found in the construction and maintenance of roads (Jaswal<sup>11</sup>).

Ghuman & Singh (2008) “studied the work share of different age groups under MGNREGA in a district of Punjab, in which he reported 91.3% workers belonging the age group of 18-50 yrs, 7.5% workers were in the age group of 51-60 yrs and the remaining 1.2% were belonging the age group of above 65 yrs (Ghuman<sup>7</sup>).

Khan, Ullah and Salluja (2007) have studied on a village where most of the people were unaware about this act and the main source of income of the village is agriculture. The people of the village want to take active part in the infrastructure and development of village economy but due to the mismanagement and corruptive Mgnrega bodies, these people are not taking benefit of this act. It keeps them away to eradicate their poverty and to earn their livelihood from MGNREGA (Khan<sup>12</sup>).

Report on the performance of MGNREGA and gender participation (2007-2008) in the west Bengal by the rural development department gives the clear analysis that if MGNREGA improve its performance it will enhance the quality of life and will help to eradicate the rural poverty. The study also shows the great interest by both the genders in which the study shows the women participation of 22%, which is a great move in the women empowerment (Report<sup>19</sup>).

Mathur (2009) observed that some of the workers in the Andhra Pradesh were not paid according to their work during a social audit. It was also observed that fake job cards were issued to the workers and they were not maintained regularly. Some Job cards were found without the inner pages which made the suspension in its process and after checking the amounts of Rs 50,000 were returned back (Mathur<sup>18</sup>).

Indian institute of technology, Madras, Chennai (2009), this study reveals the impact of MGNREGA in Tamil Nadu and its benefits in various departments. According to the study MGNREGA have provided the jobs in the state and also helped in gender equality to

maintain the social equilibrium. The act played a great role in eradication of rural poverty in the state and by opening the bank accounts it provided the security to their money (Indian<sup>9</sup>).

Dey and Bedi (2010) this study reveals that MGNREGA should pay full attention towards its implementation process and it should fulfill the promises of people of Birubham district of West Bengal for which it is known. It is observed in the study that there is a delay in payment of wages which makes less interest of people towards this program and people of the district demanded to work throughout the year with more than hundred days of employment (Dey<sup>3</sup>).

Dreze (2007) the study was carried out in Orissa to check the corruption in the governing bodies of MGNREGA. Mgnrega can do better to check out the rural poverty and miseries among the people of Orissa but it is not functioning properly due to the corruption of authorities. MGNREGA should provide the water conservation for agriculture purpose, road connectivity and regeneration of forest land which is an essential need for the rural people of Orissa (Dreeze<sup>5</sup>).

Mathur (2007) gives some suggestions about the MGNREGA authorities that, there should be regular surveys during the MGNREGA tasks and people should be made aware about every new project and other implemented tasks. Advertisement should be made in every part of village, block or district level so that people can become aware and get benefit from this task. Authorities should check the wages, muster rolls, job cards, worksite facilities and other necessary tasks which will help to play a great role in the implementation and upliftment of rural economy (Mathur<sup>17</sup>).

### **1.3 Main objectives of the study**

1. To measure the extent of manpower employment generated under MGNREGA, their various socio economic Characteristics and gender variability in all the villages implementing MGNREGA since its inception in the Block.
2. To examine the impact of MGNREGA on village infrastructure.
3. To examine the effect of MGNREGA on the pattern of migration from rural to urban areas.
4. To find out the nature of assets created under MGNREGA and their durability.
5. To identify the factors determining the participation of people in MGNREGA scheme and to see whether MGNREGA has been successful in ensuring better food security to the beneficiaries.
6. To examine the effect of MGNREGA on the people's health and quality of life.

### **Research Methodology:**

The study was conducted in Block Behibag in Kulgam district of Kashmir. It was a study in which an attempt was made to study the impact of MGNREGA on the people's health and quality of life and also to check out the different parameters of the rural people in

the District KULGAM. Out of the 11 blocks of the district Kulgam, the study was conducted in one block namely BEHIBAGH and from this block, we took 20 villages out of 46 villages of the block on the basis of random sampling, further we took 10 respondents from each village so that our sample size became 200. This block has been selected with a view to analyze the impact of MGNREGA on people’s health and quality of life residing in the Block. To achieve the set objectives laid above, both primary and secondary data was used. The primary data was collected through well designed interview schedule. Besides interview schedule appropriate method was also used for collecting the desired information. The secondary data was collected from the published reports, magazines, and from various official sources. Block Behibag of District Kulgam has been selected for the present study because- 1. It is among the populated blocks of District Kulgam and contains different economic level population. 2. Not much research has been carried out on the impact of MGNREGA on the people’s health and quality of life in the study area. For the selection of villages, a list of villages was obtained from Assistant Commissioner Development KULGAM. To get the exact information on the ground level interview schedule was introduced to all the categories of people. During the field work photographs were also taken during execution and after the execution to improve the quality of our research. Block development office Behibagh provided the secondary data to fulfill the requirement of our study. During sampling the map was also used to cover all the villages of the block. All the villages are almost with same socio-economic profile but they are scattered in a vast area. Before our sampling a thorough study was carried out in the block to select the appropriate method of sampling. The study took period of few years for the analysis of data, statistical techniques were also used as per the requirements of the study.

**Profile of respondents:**

*Table 1 Distribution of respondents.*

Villages selected	Gender		Marital Status		Educational status		Age Status		
	M	F	Ma	Um	Lit.	Ilit.	15-24	25-35	36-above
zaban	4	6	5	5	6	4	3	5	2
Behibag	7	3	6	4	5	5	6	2	2
Palnoo	5	5	5	5	7	3	2	3	5
Kadder	6	4	4	6	6	4	3	2	5
Check	2	8	5	5	5	5	2	2	6

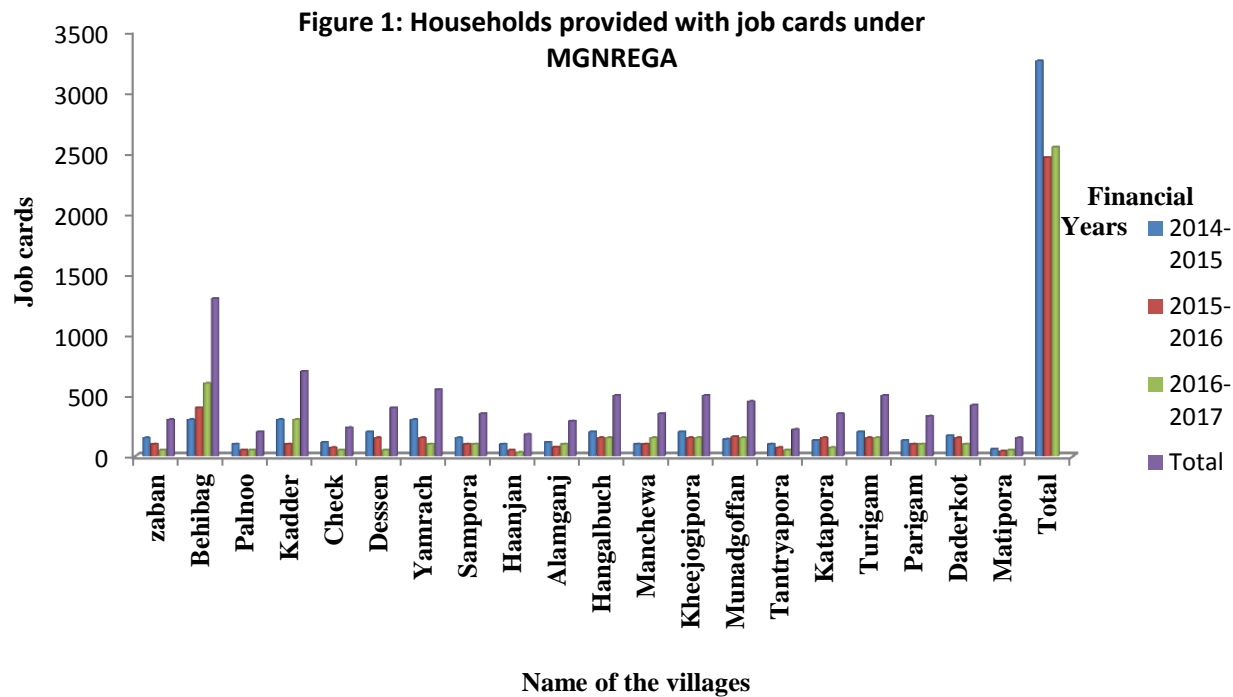
Dessen	5	5	4	6	5	5	5	5	0
Yamrach	7	3	3	7	7	3	6	3	1
Sampora	6	4	4	6	5	5	4	2	4
Haanjan	2	8	4	6	3	7	3	4	3
Alamganj	7	3	6	4	6	4	4	0	6
Hangalbuch	4	6	3	7	3	7	5	2	3
Manchewa	5	5	4	6	2	8	6	0	4
Kheejogipora	5	5	5	5	8	2	4	2	4
Munadgoffan	4	6	7	3	4	6	3	4	3
Tantryapora	3	7	6	4	6	4	5	4	1
Katapora	4	6	6	4	5	5	6	2	2
Turigam	8	2	5	5	5	5	5	3	2
Parigam	5	5	3	7	6	4	5	2	3
Daderkot	3	7	2	8	4	6	3	3	4
Matipora	4	6	3	7	8	2	4	4	2
Total=20	96	104	90	110	106	94	84	54	62

**Note:** M=male, F=female, M=married, Um=unmarried, Lit=literate & Ilit=illiterate

Table 1. Is the profile of 200 respondents selected from 20 villages of the block for the study purpose, from each village we have taken 10 respondents for the current study, On the basis of gender wise distribution among these 200 respondents 96 are males and 104 are females. On the basis of marital status among 200 respondents, 90 are married and 110 are unmarried and by the education wise

distribution literate are 106 and 94 are illiterates. The table also shows that out of 200 respondents, 84 are belonging to age group of 15-24, 54 are belonging to age group of 25-34 and 62 are belonging to the age group of above 35.

**Data Analysis:** The below study is the collection of data from the study area in the three financial years from (2014-2015), (2015-2016), (2016-2017 upto ending 2016). The study reveals the whole scenario about the impact of MGNREGA on people’s health and the quality of life among the people of Block Behibag of District Kulgam. The following study took at least three years to collect the same data from the field.

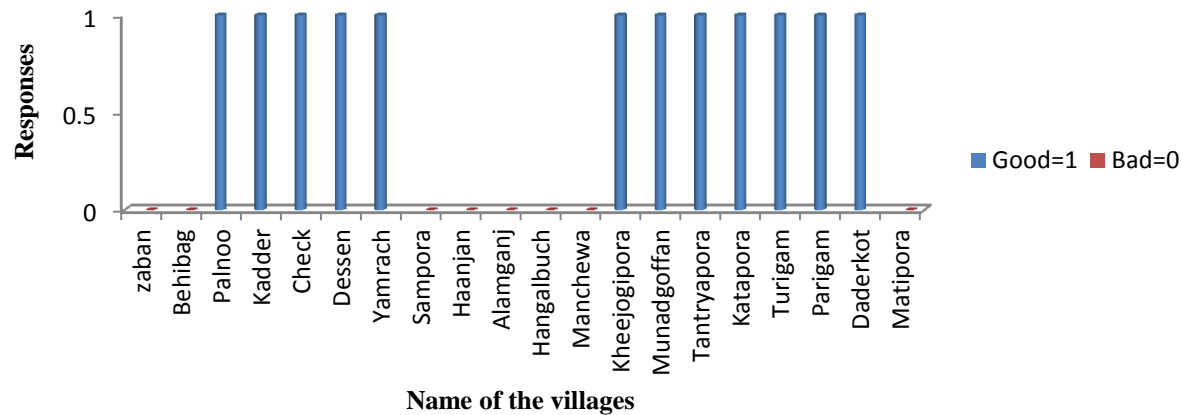


Source: Block Development Office Behibag<sup>2</sup>

Figure1.indicates that 8275 job cards were provided to the households of our study area, from the financial year 2014-2017, who deliberately worked under MGNREGA and also it indicates the village wise list of issuing job cards like as 3260 number of job cards were provided in the financial year (2014-2015), 2465 number of job cards were provided to the households in the financial year

(2015-2016) and 2550 number of job cards were provided to the households under MGNREGA in the financial year 2016-2017. It also indicates, the people are interested to work under MGNREGA and are getting proper benefit by this rural development scheme. From the above study the village Behibag got the highest 1300 no. of job cards and the village Matipora got the lowest 150 no. of job cards in the study block. The study block is distributed in the villages and covers a lot of area. The people of the block are very interesting in performing MGNREGA tasks.

**Figure 2: State of water supply and quality of water**

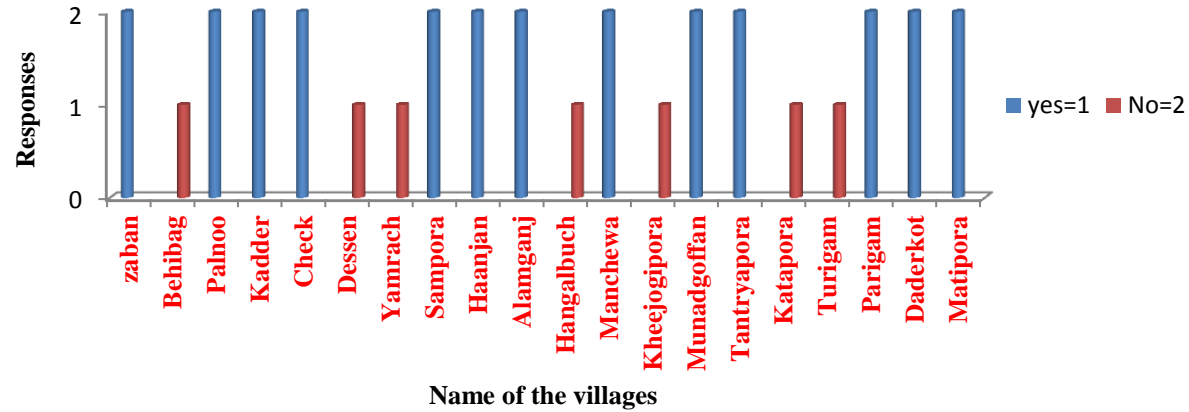


Source: Primary Data

Figure 2. Indicates the state of water supply and quality of water in the study block. It indicates that 65% villages responded that, they are provided by good water supply and remaining 35% villages responded that, they are still lagging behind in this process. Water is the important component of life and MGNREGA is working progressively to provide the quality water supply to the villages coming under the study block. MGNREGA also provided few water reservoirs and filtrate plants in the study block, which provides the good quality of water and stores the water for future purpose it is very fruitful in checking the diseases like malaria, typhoid, diaheria and other communicable diseases.



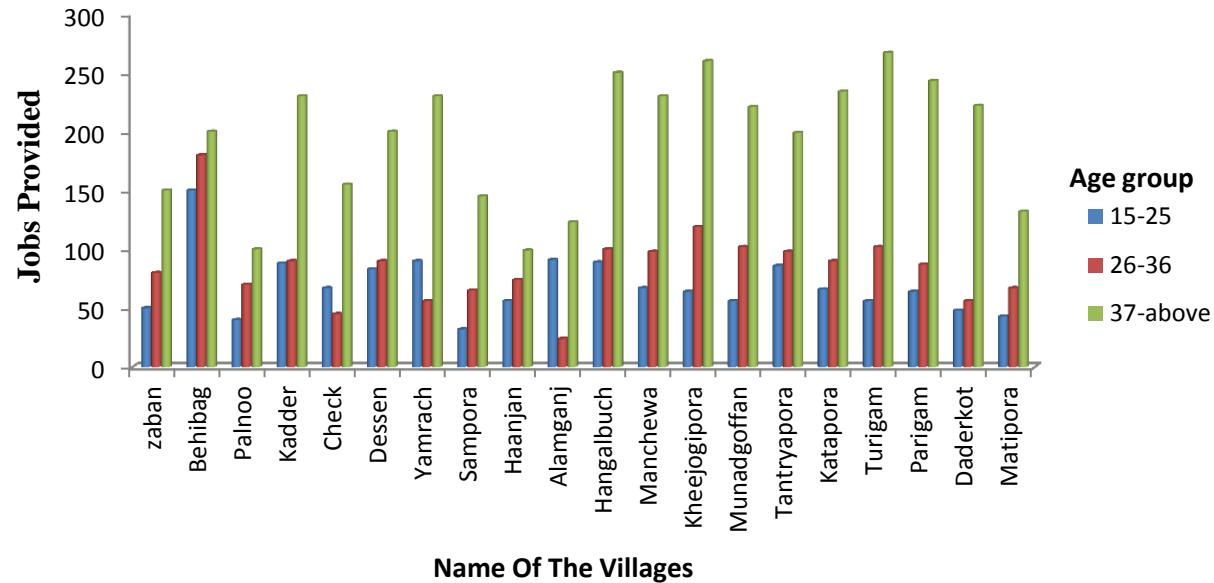
**Figure 3: Proper Drainage system for Household wastes**



Source: Primary Data

Figure 3. indicates that 65% villages have proper drainage system for house hold wastes and remaining 35% villages are not provided with proper drainage system under MGNREGA. Villages with large population and congested houses are not provided with proper drainage system due to which the response of these villages was very sick and they complained against MGNREGA bodies. Majority of villages appreciated the works done by MGNREGA and they asked that MGNREGA converted unhygienic atmosphere into hygienic atmosphere due to the proper drainage system of villages.

**Figure 4: Number of jobs provided to the three different age groups.**



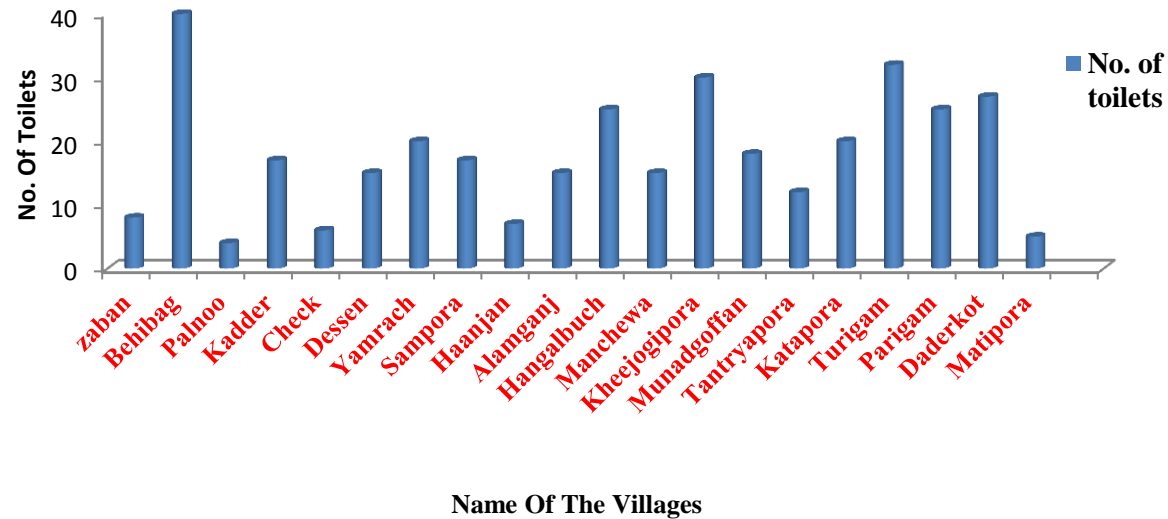
Source: Block Development Office Behibag<sup>2</sup>

Figure 4. indicates the age wise number of jobs provided to the three different age categories. The current study shows that 6969 jobs were provided to the households in which 1386 belongs to the age group of 15-25, 1693 belongs to the age group of 26-36 and 3890 belongs to the age group of 37-above. This graph also indicates that village Behibag, Kadder and Hangalbuch has been provided with large no. of jobs because these villages exist large number of population as compared to other villages. The study also indicates that the incomes of the beneficiaries were also improved due to the jobs provided by the Government. It also indicates that elder population showed more interest to work under MGNREGA as compared to the younger population because they have got family responsibilities.

Picture: 1&2 shows the labours with different age group.



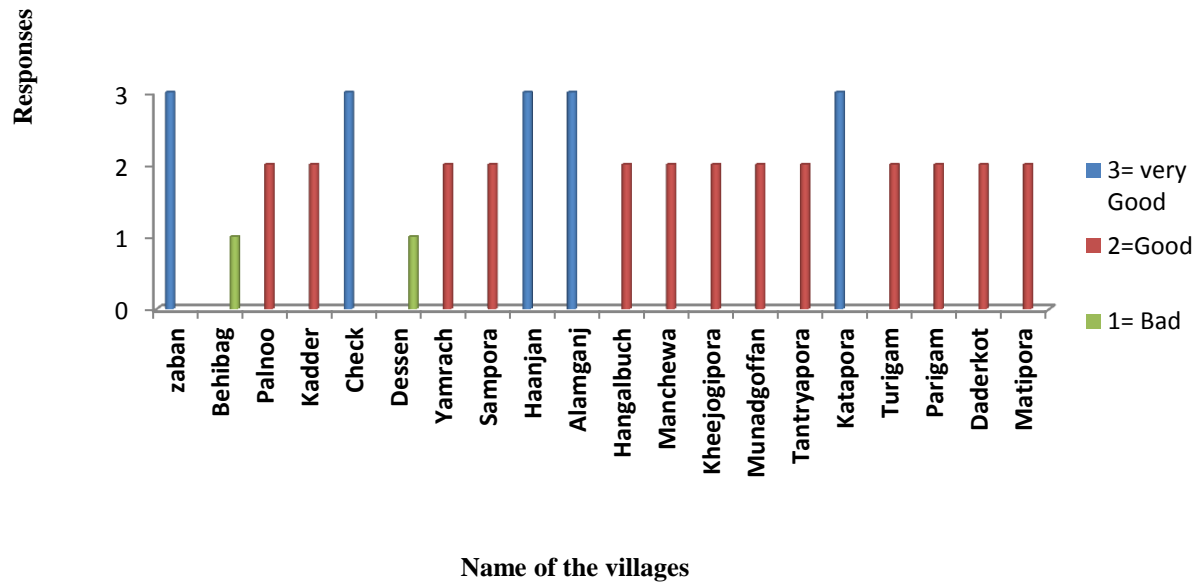
**Figure 5: Number of toilets provided to the villages of study block**



Source: Block Development Office Behibag<sup>2</sup>

Figure 5. indicates the number of Toilets provided to the villages of study block in the financial years from 2014-2017. The numbers of latrines provided are 289 and each respondent of the study area appreciated this move from the Government, because the poor families who were not in a position to afford a toilet but MGNREGA provided them free of cost. It was very difficult for the respective families to go outside for the Toilet purpose particularly the women population but bathrooms provided by the government helped them to maintain their respect and dignity.

**Figure 6: Proper construction, Proper drinking water and Proper irrigation facilities**



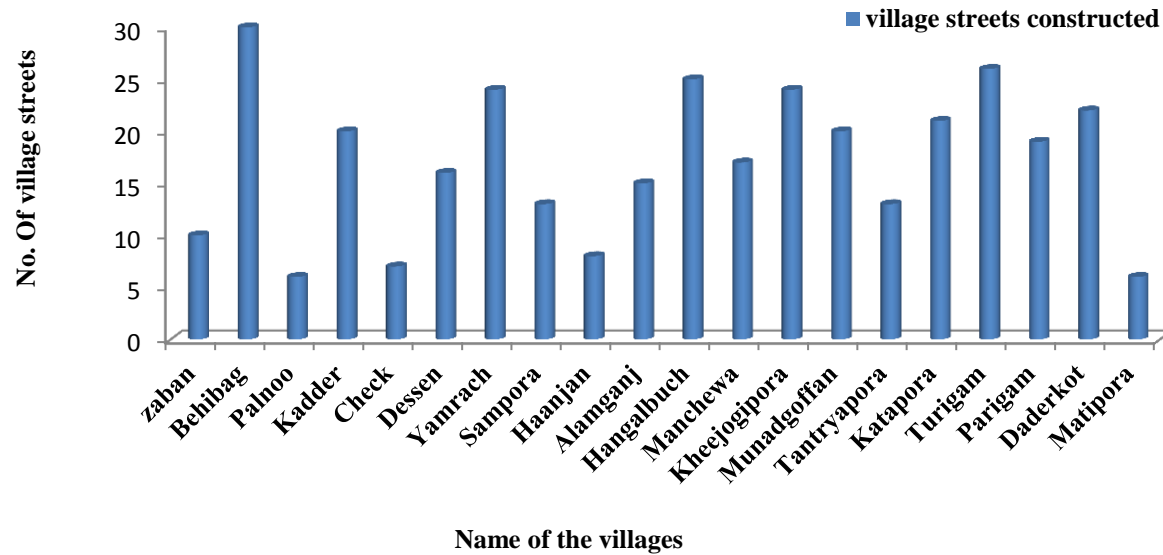
Source: Primary Data

Figure 6. Indicates the responses of the villages about the proper construction, proper drinking water and proper irrigation facilities provided by the Government under MGNREGA. It also indicates the response of 25% villages were “very good”, 10% villages responded “bad” and 65% villages responded “good”. It means majority of villages are provided with these basic facilities and due to which their health conditions and quality of life got improved.

Picture: 3&4 shows the improvement in irrigation and quality of water.



**Figure 7: No. of interconnected village streets constructed**



Source: Block Development Office

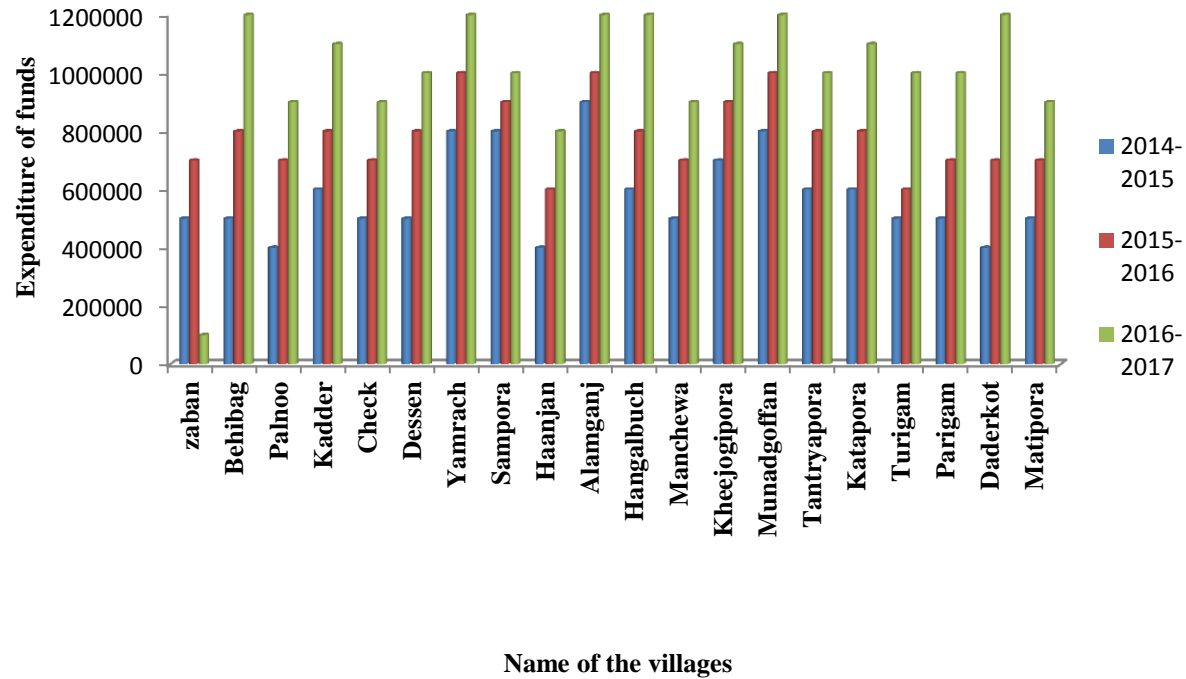
Figure 7. indicates the village wise construction of village interconnected streets. In the financial years 2014-2017, MGNREGA has provided 302 village streets in the study area. According to the study, it was very difficult for them to move during rainy season and winter season on these streets but MGNREGA changed the whole scenario of the villages by construction of these streets. It helped them to move freely on these streets in any season and added the beauty of these villages.

Picture: 4&5 shows the interconnected village foot paths and streets.





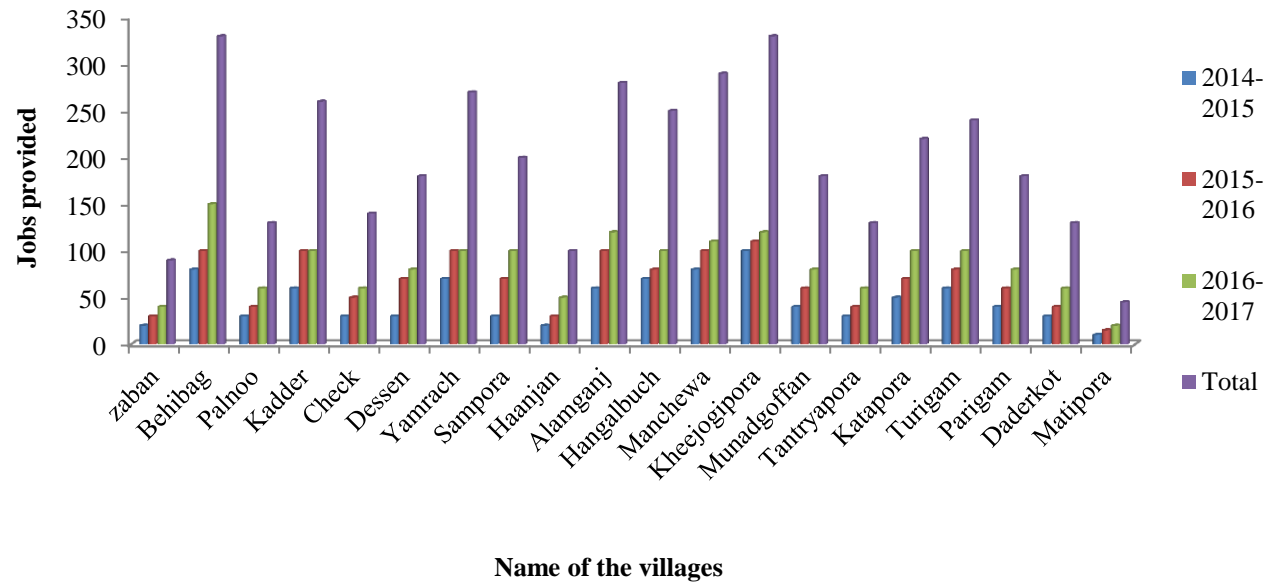
**Figure 8: Expenditure of funds in Rupees**



Source: www.nrega.nic.in<sup>8</sup>

Figure 8. indicates the village wise expenditure of funds in the financial years 2014-2017, it also indicates that Rs (4, 73, 00000) has been expended in the study block. Villages like kadder, Hangalbuch, turigama and Behibag have expended more funds than the other villages. The current study reveals that MGNREGA is expending a lot of funds for the village economy and for village development. It also indicates that funds provided by the Government are executed well in the study Block.

**Figure 9: women participation in MGNREGA**



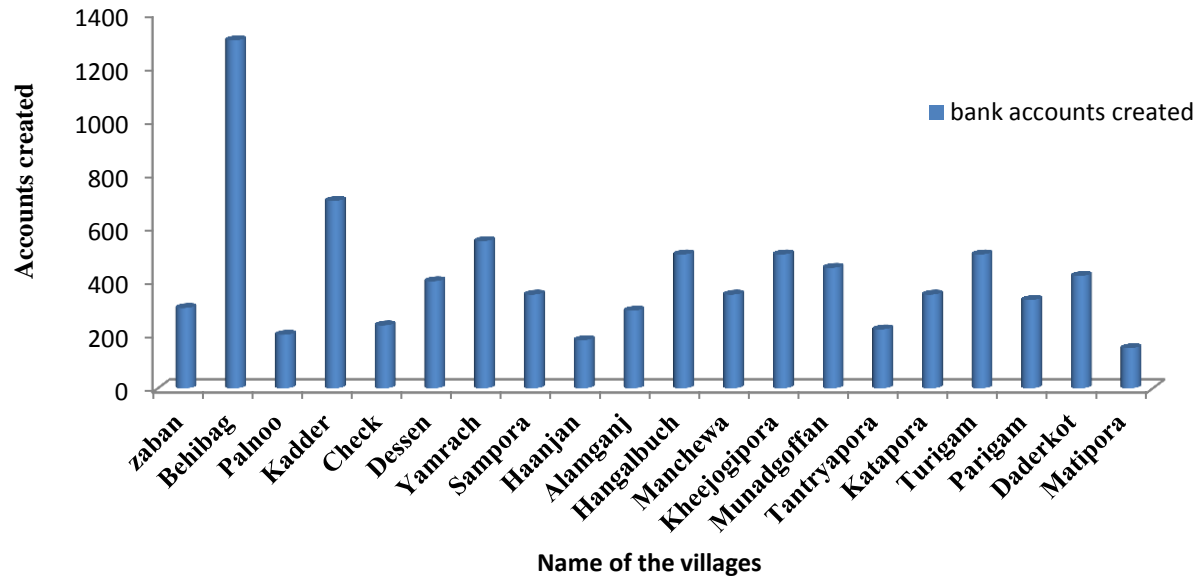
Source: Block Development Behibagh

Figure 9. indicates the village wise participation of women workers in the study block in the three financial years between 2014 -2017. Total number of jobs provided to the women workers is 3975, which is the big move in the empowerment of women. The current study also reveals that female concentration increases in MGNREGA works, because they get their work in their neighborhood within the range of 5 kilometers and are able to spend that money on their personal commodities. Due to working under MGNREGA their quality of life and health standard increased as compared to other works which was a big burden on them. They considered it a big move towards the women empowerment.

Picture: 6&7 shows the participation of womens.



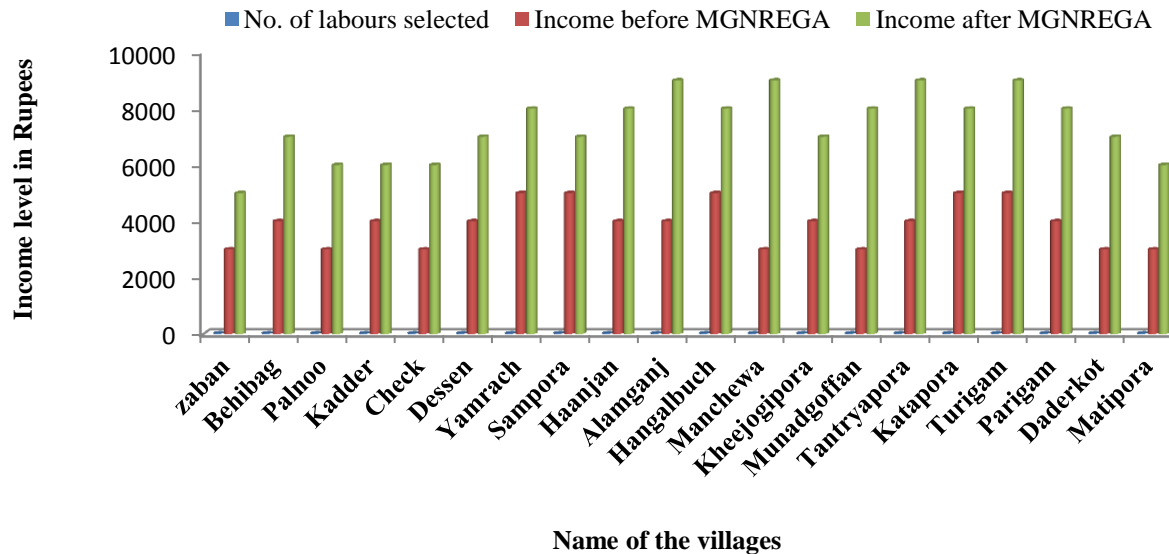
**Figure 10: number of bank accounts created in all the three financial years**



Source: Block Development Office Behibagh

Figure 10. indicates the total number of accounts 8275 are created under MGNREGA in the three financial years and also indicates the village wise number of accounts created in the three financial years between 2014-2017. According to the study opening of bank account is a good step for them because most of the workers were not having the bank account, which was the big issue for them and they were always in the threat of robbery but after opening the bank account under the MGNREGA they started to visit banks and ATMS. It also helped them to become modernized and provided security to their money.

**Figure 11: income levels of labours before MGNREGA and after MGNREGA**



Source: Primary Data

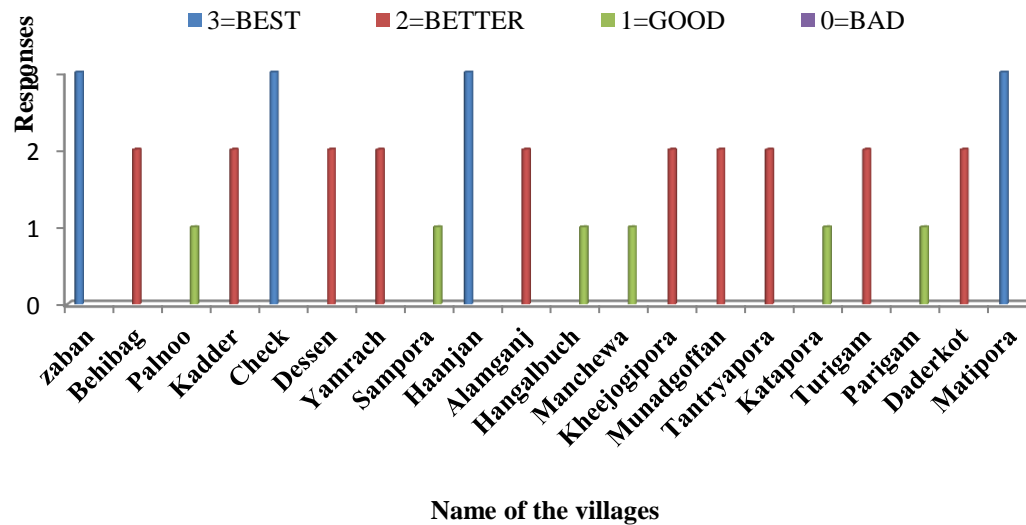
Figure 11. indicates the income level of labours of each village before MGNREGA and after MGNREGA. The figure indicates that, in all the selected villages, there is an increase in the income level of labours after working under MGNREGA. So it determines that, it has a great impact on the social life of block. According to the labours the increment of income level changed their life style and they started to eat a good food and also spent some money on the education of their children. Some labours used this money to start a small business and created a lifelong source of their income. The women labours were also benefitted and they spent this extra income earned from MGNREGA to fulfill their dreams like good dresses, ornaments, makeup kits and other necessary products which laid a

great emphasis on their quality of life. According to the labours there should be increase in the number of working days, so that, they can prevail benefit throughout the year.

Picture: 8&9 shows the labours working throughout the season.



**Figure 12: Improvement in health standard due to MGNREGA**



Source: Primary Data

Figure 12. indicates the village wise responses in the improvement of health standard due to MGNREGA. The current study reveals that 20% villages responded “best” in the improvement of health standard due to MGNREGA, 50% villages responded “better” improvement and 30% villages responded “Good” improvement on health standard, so it is clear from the above study MGNREGA has a great impact on the improvement of health standard of villages due to its implementation in the study block. MGNREGA controlled the most communicable diseases which were present due to the dirty environment, but after its implementation, it converted it into a new healthy environment by constructed proper drainage system, proper water supply, proper toilets and proper arrangement of garbage system.

Picture: 10&11 shows the development in the infrastructure of our villages.



**LIMITATIONS OF THE ACT:**

1. Corruption: there are several cases of fake muster roles, false names and unknown job cards. Payments are being made without taking the workers signature and different rates with different labours.
2. Discrimination: women's were issued with less number of job cards as compared to men and people from backward classes are given less wages were as young and relatives are given extra wages.
3. Low level of awareness: people are not properly aware about the MGNREGA so, there is low participation of labours and people are not getting proper benefit from the scheme.
4. Delay in payment wages: Delay in payments and poor worksite facilities should be checked, so that labours do not get exploited.
5. Funds are not executed on proper works: Funds provided by government are not executed on proper works because contractors want to get maximum profit, due to which the funds are used in illegal way.



**Findings and results:**

MGNREGA has a great impact on the development of the study block. The act has provided 8275 job cards in the study villages of the block and have provided 6969 jobs to the households who voluntarily worked under MGNREGA in the last three financial years. Years. MGNREGA has also a great impact on health and quality of life because it eradicated the rural miseries and sufferings. The act provided 289 toilets to the study block which is a great initiative towards modernization and also it provided 302 interconnected village streets which made the transportation and communication easy between villages. In these three financial years MGNREGA have executed Rs ( 4, 7300000) in the study block for the development and infrastructure purpose of the block. This act became a big livelihood source for both genders. There was a great participation of womens in the study block 3975 womens got employment under MGNREGA in these three financial years and also under this act 8275 bank accounts have been created in these years. All the categories of people were benefitted by this act and it increased the income level of labours and 65% people responded that, there quality of life got changed and also this act provided the proper water supply, proper irrigation bodies and proper construction for the development process of study block.

**Conclusion:**

As we know well MGNREGA is the largest employment generation scheme and provides enlightenment towards rural development. It was observed during the study of Block Behibag of District Kulgam MGNREGA has done wonders in so many ways to check the social sufferings and has created a colorful atmosphere. People of the study block were so happy with this employment generation scheme, According to the study the said block was very backward in means of road construction, water supply, drainage system, unemployment and awareness before MGNREGA but after MGNREGA it has changed the whole scenario of the respective villages of the block and has created a new shape towards modernity. MGNREGA not only provided jobs to the unemployment youth but created a lot of assets by which all the people were benefitted in the study block .under this scheme a lot of women population earned a handsome income and helped them to maintain their social life, they considered it a good move towards the women empowerment. Labours under MGNREGA were bestowed with reliance atmosphere and saved them from exploitation and thus helped them to check their health and dignity. MGNREGA laid a positive impact on the quality of life among the people of the block because it converted the unhygienic atmosphere into hygienic atmosphere and added the beauty of the villages. People of the study block became aware about this act and started to get the maximum benefit of this act. MGNREGA has a great social impact on the study block because in long run it benefitted the whole society and created a lot of assets by which whole community got benefitted. It also reduced the migration of labours and helped both the genders to work together to create a social solidarity. There are some limitations which need

to be checked at ground level to make this act more beneficial for the whole society such as, corruption, illegal presence of contractors, discrimination, late payment, improper material, fake job cards and fake reports. For proper development such issues should be checked immediately and initiatives should be taken to make it corruption free. To make this Act purposeful MGNREGA authority should not delay in proper implementation and valuable suggestion should be applied.

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