**Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (MNREGA)**

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 later renamed as the "Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act", MGNREGA), is an [Indian labour law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_labour_law) and [social security](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_security) measure that aims to guarantee the '[right to work](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right_to_work)'.

After the notification of the MNREGA, a new scheme named “Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS)” has been launched on February 2, 2006. The ongoing programme of Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) and National Food for Work Programme (NFFWP) were subsumed within the MNREGS in the 200 districts identified in the initial stage. Implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development, MNREGA is a flagship programme of the government that directly touches lives of the poor and promotes inclusive growth. MNREGS has been launched with some guidelines/features mentioned below:

* To enhance livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.
* An applicant not provided employment within 15 days to be entitled to a daily unemployment allowance as specified by the State Government.
* Gram Panchayat to be responsible for identification of the projects as per the recommendations of the Gram Sabha and for executing and supervising such works.
* Central Government to establish a National Employment Guarantee Fund. State Governments to establish State Employment Guarantee Funds for implementation of the scheme.
* The scheme to be self-selecting in the sense that those among the poor who need work at the minimum wage would report for work under the scheme.

The Act came into force on February 2, 2006 and was implemented in a phased manner. In phase one it was introduced in 200 of the most backward districts of the country in 2007-08. The coverage was extended to all rural districts of the country in 2008-09.

**Objectives**

MNREGA is the first ever law internationally, that guarantees wage employment at an unprecedented scale. The primary objective of the Act is increasing wage employment. Its auxiliary objective is strengthening natural resource management through works that address causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation and soil erosion and so encourage sustainable development. The process outcomes include strengthening grass root processes of democracy and infusing transparency and accountability in governance.

**Achievements**

MGNREGA’s quantitative achievements have been striking as well:

1. Since its inception in 2006, around ₹1,10,000 crore (about USD$25 billion) has gone directly as wage payment to rural households. On an average, 5 crore (50 million) households have been provided employment every year since 2008.
2. Eighty per cent of households are being paid directly through bank/post office accounts, and 10 crore (100 million) new bank/post office accounts have been opened.
3. The average wage per person-day has gone up by 81 per cent since the Scheme’s inception, with state-level variations. The notified wage today varies from a minimum of ₹122 (USD$2.5) in Bihar, Jharkhand to ₹191 (USD$4) in Haryana.
4. [Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scheduled_Castes_and_Scheduled_Tribes) have accounted for 51 per cent of the total person-days generated and women for 47 per cent, well above the mandatory 33 per cent as required by the Act.
5. 146 lakh (14.6 million) works have been taken up since the beginning of the programme, of which about 60 per cent have been completed.
6. 12 crore (120 million) Job Cards (JCs) have been given and these along with the 9 crore (90 million) muster rolls have been uploaded on the [Management Information System](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Management_Information_System) (MIS), available for public scrutiny. Since 2010–11, all details with regard to the expenditure of the MGNREGA are available on the MIS in the public domain.

**Criticisms**

A major criticism of the MNREGA is that a lot of money disbursed by the government gets siphoned off by middlemen, thus leaving a number of MGNREGA workers either with unpaid wages or less than standard wages. In Mahuadand, [Jharkhand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jharkhand), most of the people who had worked under the MGNREGA did not get paid, while some either got paid less than stipulated or were given 5 kg of rice by private contractors instead.

Another criticism of NREGA is that it is making agriculture less profitable. Landholders often oppose it on these grounds. The big farmer’s point of view can be summed up as follows: landless labourers are lazy and they don’t want to work on farms as they can get money without doing anything at NREGA worksites; farmers may have to sell their land, thereby laying foundation for the [corporate farming](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporate_farming).