
An Evaluative Study of Service Delivery of MGNREGA in Bidar District of Karnataka

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Introduction

Services are defined as “deeds, processes and performances” (Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996). Their broader definition of services “include all economic activities whose output is not a physical product or construction, is generally consumed at the time it is produced and provides added value in forms that are essentially intangible concerns for its first purchaser.”

Chase et al, (2010) enumerated five differences between goods and services. The first is that a service is an intangible process that cannot be weighed or measured, whereas a good is a tangible output of a process that has physical dimensions. Secondly, the services require some degree of interaction with the customer. Thirdly, services are heterogeneous and vary from situation to situation while goods can be standardised. The fourth is that services as a process are perishable and time dependent, and unlike goods, they can't be stored. And fifth, the specifications of a service are defined and evaluated as a package of features that affect the five senses.

Parasuraman, et al, 1991 categorised customer service expectations into five overall dimensions: Reliability, Tangibles, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. The concepts of services quality has been applied in many situations and are measured with the help of the tool SERVQUAL developed by Parasuraman et. al (1985). They have defined the service quality in terms of “the difference between the expectations of the customer regarding quality and perception of the customers regarding the quality of a product”. SERVQUAL is a tool developed by them to measure the service quality and includes 22 questions to be answered for both expectation and perception of the quality.

Public services are those services which are offered by the public entity (either a government department or a public sector undertaking) for a consideration amount or for free. These include essential services normally monopolistic and other services where there are competitions from the private players. The example for the monopolistic public services are the railways, land records, caste and income certificates which are offered only by the government while the open category includes road transport, civil aviation and hospitality.

Public service delivery is unique in the basic philosophy of giving services without being guided by the commercial or financial considerations. While many public services are given free of cost to the needy citizens. Some of the services are priced. However, while deciding the price to be charged, a public organization is not motivated by the profit making motive. Hence, many instances, the public services are priced at a lower level than the private players.

Service provision is more complex in the public sector because it is not simply a matter of meeting expressed needs, but of finding out unexpressed needs, setting priorities, allocating resources and publicly justifying and accounting for what has been done (Gowan *et al.*, 2001). In addition, public sector employees are currently confronted with new professional challenges arising from the introduction of new principles and tools inspired by the shift to new public management (Caron and Giauque, 2006).

There are many welfare schemes by the government, which are intended for the benefit of the downtrodden people of the society. Many of these schemes are established with intent of removing poverty and unemployment or improvement of the health, education and income of people. These schemes do not effectively reach the beneficiary in many occasions, as the service delivery mechanism does not function at the expected level.

A study by the Planning Commission of India (2005) found out that leakages and diversions of subsidized food grains are large and only about 42% of subsidized grains issued from the Central Pool reaches the target group. The study also reported that over 36% of the budgetary subsidies on food is siphoned off the supply chain and another 21% reaches the APL households. Another study on the Integrated Child

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Development Services (ICDS) (2011) revealed that “AnganWadi Centers lack adequate infrastructure to deliver the six designated services and this deficiency has adversely affected the quality of delivery of services and hence, impact of ICDS”.

Shah (2012) compiled research studies conducted on the execution of MGNREGA and found many instances of leakages in the scheme. These points towards the deficiency of service delivery mechanism at the field level. In a study conducted across Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana, it was found that in Sirsa district of Haryana, Muster Rolls were not available at any of the worksites. The CAG audit found that copies of Muster Rolls were not available for public scrutiny in 246 GPs across 15 states. Field reports suggest that in some cases wage payments are made to workers who either have no Job Cards or those who did not actually undertake work at worksites. Double payments have also been noted in some cases.

Statement of the Problem

Against this background, a study was undertaken to understand the service delivery mechanisms of the MGNREGA in Bidar district. The study was titled “**An Evaluative Study of Service Delivery of MGNREGA in Bidar District of Karnataka.**”

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are the following,

1. To study the salient features Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Scheme.
2. To critically examine the implementation of MGNREGA in Bidar district of Karnataka.
3. To identify the gaps in delivery of various service commitments under MGNREGA in Bidar district.
4. To offer suggestions to bridge the gaps in service delivery of MGNREGA.

Research Methodology

Tool for data collection - The service delivery mechanism was studied by taking the perception of the beneficiaries (workers) about the scheme. An interview schedule was used for collecting the primary data from the workers. This schedule consisted of 39 items. About half of the items were of binary in nature, i.e., to be answered either Yes or No. Except the last item regarding their opinion about the scheme, all items were focused and factual.

Sampling - There are five block in the district. One Gram Panchayat from each block was selected in random. List of workers who have worked at least ten days during the previous years were drawn. Among this list, eight workers who were available in the village were selected for the interview. Thus the sample size was eight workers from five Gram Panchayats spread across five blocks of the district. However, only 39 workers could be interviewed during the course of the study. The data was collected in the year 2016.

Analysis of Data

Data Analysis was done mostly qualitatively. Simple percentages were mostly used for the quantitative purpose. Secondary data from the Management Information System of the MGNREGA available at www.nrega.nic.in was used for various analysis. The scheme guidelines as described in the provisions of the Act 2005 and the Operational Guidelines were referred to understand the service delivery benchmarks to assess the implementation.

The study focused on the fulfillment of the statutory assurances regarding the service delivery of MGNREGA. Table 1 shows the findings of the study with regard to the fulfillment of service delivery standards as reported by the beneficiaries. Almost all the beneficiaries reported that they got the job cards within the stipulated time of 15 days. The delay in allotting work (15 days after demand) was only to the extent of 2.56%. The study revealed that only 36.36% of respondents received payment of work on time whereas 65.64% got a delayed payment.

Table: 1 - MGNREGA implementation in Bidar District - Efficiency in Service Delivery against standards set.

Sl No	Question	Standard Set (days)	Delivered in time	Delayed delivery
1	Issue of Job Cards	15	97.43%	0
2	Allotment of Work	15	97.43%	2.56%
3	Payment for the Work	15	36.36%	65.64%

Note: - Source of SI No 1 and 2 is the primary data and SI No. 3 is the secondary data from the electronic data base of the MGNREGA for the year 2016-17 as available at http://mnregaweb4.nic.in/netnrega/all_lvl_details_dashboard_new.aspx.

The scheme gives an assurance that the people will be given a guaranteed 100 days of work up to on demand. The study revealed that the people given work up to 100 days are only 20.51% while nearly a quarter of the people were given work for 50-75 days and 76-99 days. Thus, the study shows that the scheme was successful in delivering the service standards in only 20% of the cases. Reasons for failure to ensure 100 days of work were probed as part of the present study. The study further reveals that only 2.56% of the beneficiaries worked for the full quota of 100 days. About a quarter of them worked for 51-75 days and another quarter worked from 76-99 days. Thus the service delivery of the scheme was not up to the standards set in so far as the number of days allotted work and days worked are concerned.

Table 2 - MGNREGA implementation in Bidar District- Work allotment and days Worked in an year - (Given as % of the respondents, N=39)

SI No	Question	0-25 days	26-50	51-75	76-99	100 days	No Response	Total
1	How many days worked during the previous year	5.13	15.38	43.59	17.95	2.56	15.38	100.00
2	Days of work allotted during the previous year	5.13	5.13	25.64	28.21	20.51	15.38	100

Worksite Management

Programme guidelines mandate certain requirements for management of the worksites. One of them is the child care facility at the worksite if smaller children are accompanying parents then one of the women is designated for taking care of the children. The study made efforts to find out whether these commitments are met in Bidar district. The findings are tabulated in Table 3. About half of the workers reported that they are bringing the smaller children to the work site. Requirement of an Aya to take care of children is fulfilled in most of the cases (85%)

Table 3. MGNREGA implementation in Bidar District - Work site facilities

SI No	Question	Yes		No		No Answer		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Aya in the worksite to take care of children	33	84.62	06	15.38	0	0.00	39	100
2	Bringing children to worksite	19	48.72	20	51.28	0	0.00	39	100

Another important aspect in the execution of MGNREGA is the emphasis on transparency by record keeping like NMR and dally signing in it, prohibiting contractors and disbursing the wage payment through banks. The study found that almost all (97.44%) signs the NMR and 89.74% signs daily. Most of them are paid through bank accounts. There were two questions to cross-check the information related to cash payment at different positions of the questionnaire. The response to the negative item regarding payment in cash and the positive item regarding the payment through bank accounts elicited the same

response. Most of the respondents (95%) reported that there is no involvement of contractors in execution of the scheme.

Table - 4 MGNREGA implementation in Bidar District - NMR and Payment

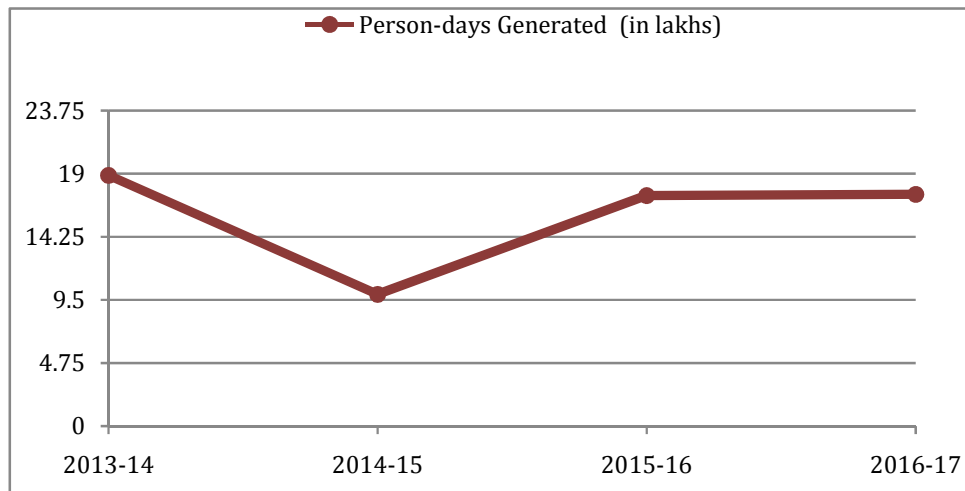
Sl No	Question	Yes		No		No Answer		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Signs the NMR	38	97.44	01	2.56	0	0.00	39	100
2	Signs NMR Daily	35	89.74	04	10.26	0	0.00	39	100
3	Involvement of Contractors	1	2.56	38	97.44	0	0	39	100
4	Payment in Cash	1	2.56	37	94.87	1	0	39	100
5	Payment through Bank	37	94.87	2	5.13	0	0	39	100

Para 7.13.2 of the *MGNREGA Operational Guidelines (2013)* prescribes that weekly measurement of works should be undertaken by measurement officers (Technical Assistants/ Overseers/ Junior Engineers). The response from the workers during the present study showed that in most of the cases (71.79%) the measurement is taken by the Engineers or implementing officers of the department are recording the measurement. Around 13% reported that the measurement is made by the Junior Engineer and the mate. Involvement of Gram Panchayat members were reported by 2.56%. About 10% responded that the measurement is done by the departmental officers. Data regarding this aspect of the scheme is tabulated and presented in Table 5.

Table 5 - MGNREGA implementation in Bidar District - Who makes Check Measurement?

Sl No	Who takes Check Measurement?	N	%
1	Technical Assistant/Junior Engineer/AEE	28	71.79
2	JE/Meti	5	12.82
3	Implementing Officers	4	10.26
4	GP members/officers	1	2.56
5	No Response	1	2.56
6	Total	39	100.00

Secondary data regarding the implementation of the scheme were obtained from the database of the Ministry of Rural Development which is available in public domain. The data available at the website of the scheme shows that during the period of 2013-2017, the district was able to generate around 17-18 lakhs person days in an year (with the exception of 2014-15). However, achievement against the targeted labour budget shows a different picture during the last four years. The achievement against the targeted Labour budget in 2013-14 was 162%, during 2014-15 was 45%, 2015-16 was 81% and 2016-17 was 96%. The estimating is reaching the realistic levels over the year which is evident from the near total achievement during the year 2016-17. (Figure 1)

Fig 1 - Implementation of MGNREGA in Bidar district - Person days generated in four years

The scheme guidelines mandate that at least one third of the person days generated under the scheme should be by women. The execution of the scheme has seen fulfillment of this condition. The data presented in Table 6 shows that the share of person days generated by women in the district has been well above the mandated standards. It is 45% to 48% over the last four years. The scheme presents a very dismal picture in fulfilling the promise of providing 100 days of guaranteed employment to the households that demand work. The data shows that there are 1.15 lakhs job cards in the district of which around 51000 are the active job card holding households. The number of households that completed 100 days of work during the last four years has not crossed 7% in any of the last four years. However, the average number of employment provided to the households is in the range of 45-48 during these years.

Table 6: - MGNREGA implementation in Bidar District - Indicators on the Performance of MGNREGA during four years

Sl No	Indicator	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15	2013-14
1	Approved Labour Budget	18.22	21.42	21.97	11.62
2	Person days generated	17.44	17.36	9.92	18.88
3	Achievement against Labour budget	95.71	81.06	45.17	162.5
4	Share of Person days generated by Women against the total PD	48.55	46.5	44.84	45.39
5	Average days of employment provided to each household	39.97	48.94	42.65	50.07
6	Number of households completed 100 days	2,642	3,745	913	2,544

Source: http://mnregaweb4.nic.in/netnrega/all_lvl_details_dashboard_new.aspx

The Service Delivery Process

In order to understand the reasons for the timely delivery of two services and delayed delivery of one service, it is essential to examine the process involved in delivering these services. These explained mainly by referring to the Operational Guidelines for the MGNREGA.

The Procedure for Issuing Job Card

Job card is issued to any person willing to do manual work under the scheme who applies for it. There are two methods of application. The Gram Panchayat can proactively conduct a survey and ask the people to apply. On the other hand, any willing person who resides in the limits of a Gram Panchayat can approach the GP and submit the application for the job card either orally or in writing. The GP on receipt of the application shall record the details in the register and verify the particulars. The GP verifies whether the applicant is an adult member belongs to a household in the GP limits. If these three questions are answered in positive, the applicant is issued with a job card. The entire process is in four steps and action is required from GP only. The whole procedure is presented in Fig. 2

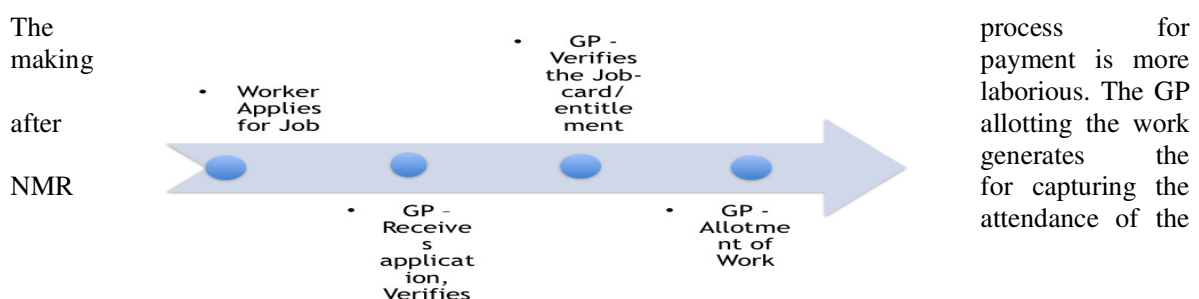
Fig. 2: - The Process of Issuing Job Cards



Process for allotting work

Once a person is issued with the job card, he/she can apply for the job in the GP. The GP again shall accept and register the application and verify the particulars. The verification will be done with regard to the applicant being a member of a household registered with the GP and issued with a valid job-card. The GP will further verify whether the job card has entitlement to work, i.e., the household has not already exhausted its quota of 100 days of work. If the household is found eligible, GP allots works to them. Like in the case of issuing job cards, the process is in four steps and action is required from GP only. Figure 4 represents the process of allotting work.

**Fig. 4:- Process of allotting work.
Procedure for Making Payment**



workers in the worksite and transmit the same to the mate/technical assistant who is the work site in-charge. The person in charge of the work site should take the attendance daily and record it in the muster roll. On completion of the work or on completion of one week, he shall take the measurement and refer to the officer responsible for taking check measurement. The technical person shall record the measurement in the measurement book and record the quantum of work turned out. Both the quantum of work and the attendance is transmitted to the Gram panchayat. The GP verifies these information and generates payment order after entering the data into the Management Information System. The payment order and payment advice is transmitted from the GP to the bank and the payment is disbursed. Any delay in any of these steps can lead to a delay.

The data as presented Table 1 show that the service delivery commitments are fulfilled in the process of issuing job cards and allotting work. These involve simpler processes and have only once agency involved and can be completed from the Gram Panchayat itself. At the same time, there is significant delay in making payment within the stipulated time frame. The mechanism for making payment involves complex interaction of multiple agencies at different levels. The multiplicity of agencies and complexity of the processes contributes to delay in delivery of services. This shows that the implementation mechanism is ill equipped to handle the pressures of arranging the measurement and completing other formalities to ensure timely payment.

Major Conclusions

The study shows that the Service Delivery mechanism of MGNREGA in Bidar district has been successful in ensuring the service delivery standards in areas related to the desk work in the office like issuing job cards (Table 1), allotting work on demand (Table 1) and providing various welfare facilities in the worksites (Table 3). The scheme is also successful in ensuring the system of taking attendance and daily signing of the Nominal Muster Roll (Table 4). The implementation mechanism is near successful in ensuring that the contractors are kept out in the execution of works and avoiding cash payment to the workers (Table 4).

However, the scheme has not been successful in ensuring 100 days of work to the people who are desirous of taking up work (Table 2) and in making payment within 15 days (Table 1). This shows that the implementation mechanism is ill equipped to handle the pressures of arranging the measurement and completing other formalities to ensure timely payment. The most important factor in any wage employment scheme is to ensure that the payment is done on time. This is more critical as the workers desirous of working in MGNREGA are the poor people who do not have any other avenues for earning a livelihood. This is all the more important when the district experience drought-like situation. If the system is not able to ensure that the workers are getting the payment in time, then the system is not an efficient one and the service delivery standards are not met. The study showed that the people are not completing the number of days of works allotted to them. (Table 2).

The scheme is successful in fulfilling the mandatory commitment of including women to the extent of one third women in the generation of person-days and providing the worksite facilities (Table 6). The reason for the increased participation of women appears to be the women friendly conditions and worksite facilities. Arranging worksite facilities and other labour welfare activities are easier to comply with as it is the sole responsibility of the Gram Panchayat to provide them.

The analysis about the processes and success in timely delivery of services leads to the following conclusions.

- a) The timely delivery of services in MGNREGA is inversely proportional to the complexity of the processes. It means the simpler the process, the faster the service delivery
- b) The timely delivery of services in MGNREGA is inversely proportional to the number of agencies involved in the processes. It means the lesser the agencies involved, the better the service delivery.

Important Suggestions

Based on the analysis of data and findings, the following are the recommendations for better implementation of the scheme in Bidar district and for the schemes in general. Most important recommendation is the need to simplify the procedure in implementing the scheme. Smoother coordination among various agencies is another important requirement. The service delivery mechanism needs to be active and alert always to keep up the targets. The planning of the labour budget needs to be more realistic and should consider the local conditions of demand. The Management Information System could be strengthened with the use of technology to cut down the delay in various activities. The

attendance and measurement could be taken and recorded on the spot if portable data entry devices like tablets could be used. An app version of the MIS software need to be released which will help in reducing the delay in transmitting the NMR with attendance and measurement. The tab can be brought to Gram Panchayat or Block where there is internet connectivity. Transferring the data to the system from this device leads to delay and errors of data entry. Migrating to electronic fund transfer completely would help in reducing the delay in transferring the amount to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries.

MGNREGA is a guarantee and an assurance to the poor workers of the rural area of the country. The lives of these people are full of uncertainties as their life depends on the monsoon. Having such a fall back option for the livelihood is a big morale booster for them. Hence it is very important that the service delivery mechanism for the scheme should be fully geared up to meet the service standards set as per the law.

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