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Completion of Annual MGNREGA Work Limit

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Why in News

According to the central scheme database of the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA)**, at least **1.4 lakh poor rural households** have completed their quota of 100 days of work for the first three months of the year.

Therefore, they will not be eligible for further benefits under the rural employment guarantee scheme for the rest of the year.

Key Points

- **Related Data:**

- Overall, **23 lakh households** have already completed 60 days of work.
- Another **seven lakh households** have completed 80 days and are on the verge of running out of work.
- With almost 60,000 households which have completed 100 days of work, **Chhattisgarh** has the **highest rate** among States, followed by **Andhra Pradesh** with almost 24,500 households in this category.

However, Andhra Pradesh maintains its own database showing that 8.6% of all beneficiary households in the State have already completed 100 days of work.

- **Related Issues:**

- **Impact of Covid-19 pandemic:** Due to **Covid-19**, the **nationwide lockdown** has resulted in thousands of unemployed migrant workers returning to their villages and now dependent on MGNREGA wages.
- **Increase in Demand for Work:** The demand for **MGNREGA** work almost **doubled** in June as there is no other work available for many people.
Construction sector, which usually absorbs a large number of workers, has also collapsed.
- **Monsoon Season:** In many areas, **monsoon** is the hungry season and many people are desperate for work and dependent on MGNREGA wages.
It is also expected that in December the situation would be worse especially for **women, elderly** and **disabled** and **tribals** when agriculture work is over and there will be no work from MGNREGA.

- **Solutions:**

- **Expansion of the Scheme:** The MGNREGA scheme contains a provision for an **expansion of the scheme** to allow for **150 days of work** per household for districts affected by drought or other natural disaster.
Given that Covid-19 was declared a national disaster, this provision may be implemented immediately across the country.
- **Change in limit:** The limit should be **imposed per adult individual** rather than per household.
- **Increase in Wage:** There is a demand for an increase to 200 days per individual at a daily wage rate of ₹600.
The current wage rate of Rs. 200 per day does not even match up to minimum wage rates in most States.
- **Farming:** Getting employment from the Agriculture and farms is an option which can be provided to the migrants. Eg. Migrants workers being deployed in the Litchi farms of Bihar.
- **Government Initiatives:** It was announced in March that the workers under the MGNREGA would get a hike of **Rs. 2000** each on an average.
 - **Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan** was started to provide employment to migrant labourers who returned home during the lockdown. The scheme covers six states — Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Odisha.
 - It has as a provision to grant 125 days of employment to migrants.

MGNREGA

- The **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act**, earlier known as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was passed in 2005 to augment employment generation and social security in India.
- It functions under the **Ministry of Rural Development**.

- **Objective:** The primary objective of the scheme is to guarantee **100 days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household** willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work.
- It covers all districts of India except the **ones with 100% urban population.**
- It is one of the **largest work guarantee programmes** in the world.

Way Forward

- MGNREGA has come to the nation's aid in combating growing poverty. Even programmes like **Swacchh Bharat** and **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana** are being merged to leverage its utility, reach and value.
- Therefore, it needs an urgent extension for those who have already completed the work limits.
- **Initiatives must be taken to impart skills** in the workers so that they can take alternative livelihoods during such situations.
- Gram panchayats need to be provided with adequate resources, powers, and responsibilities to sanction works, provide work on demand, and authorise wage payments to tackle the crisis of the migrant workers.

Source: TH