



# MGNREGS Praised By the Standing Committee on Labour

## Why in News

Recently, the [Parliamentary Standing Committee](#) on Labour in its report “**Social Security and Welfare Measures for Inter-State Migrant Workers**” praised [Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme \(MGNREGS\)](#) for providing **sustainable livelihood** to the **unskilled workers** including the inter-state [migrant labourers](#).

## Key Points

### ▪ Standing Committees Observation:

#### ◦ MGNREGS:

- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 provides for a **specific and significant welfare provision, constitutive of the very idea of citizenship**.
- There is no “**better scheme**” to provide “**sustainable livelihood**” to unskilled workers.
- Over 7 crore households (10.43 crore individuals) have already availed of the scheme and 330 crore person days have been created till February 2021 during the current [financial year](#). This is the **highest for any year since inception of the scheme in 2006**.

#### ◦ Migrant Workers:

- **1.08 crore migrant workers returned to their home states** during the pandemic.
- The **absence of reliable and authentic data/information** on the numbers of migrant workforce and their movement back to their home States following the outbreak of the [Pandemic](#) has apparently **impacted the relief and rehabilitation measures**.
- There were a number of appreciable initiatives launched by the Government (**eg: [Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana](#)**), which are aimed at benefiting the Migrant Labour.

- **However, no guidelines were issued** nor enforced for distribution of relief material to stranded Migrant Labourers.
- **No element of Social Audit** prescribed.

### ▪ Standing Committees Suggestions:

#### ◦ Instant and Immediate Relief:

- [Covid-19 Pandemic](#) and the resultant challenges and lacunae observed in the system must be addressed so as to **strengthen the preparedness to effectively deal with any such emergent situations**.

#### ◦ Credible Database to be Prepared:

- Credible databases of unorganized workers especially that of migrant labourers be put in place to **ensure seamless delivery of relief packages to them at the time of distress.**
  - Earlier in december 2020, the Government has decided to [create a database of migrant workers, including workers in the informal economy.](#)

## **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)**

- **About:** It is one of the largest work guarantee programmes in the world.
- **Launch:**
  - It was launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006
  - The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was passed on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2005.
- **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.
- **Legal Right to Work:**
  - Unlike earlier employment guarantee schemes, the act **aims at addressing the causes of chronic poverty through a rights-based framework.**
  - At least **one-third of beneficiaries have to be women.**
  - Wages must be paid according to the statutory minimum wages specified for agricultural labourers in the state under the [Minimum Wages Act, 1948.](#)
- **Demand-Driven Scheme:**
  - The most important part of MGNREGA's design is **its legally-backed guarantee for any rural adult to get work within 15 days** of demanding it, failing which an 'unemployment allowance' must be given.
  - This demand-driven scheme enables the self-selection of workers.
- **Decentralised planning:**
  - There is an emphasis on strengthening the process of decentralisation by giving a significant role in [Panchayati Raj Institutions \(PRIs\)](#) in planning and implementing these works.
  - The act mandates [Gram sabhas](#) **to recommend the works** that are to be undertaken and at least 50% of the works must be executed by them.

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## Way Forward

- The pandemic has demonstrated the **importance of decentralised governance**.
  - **Gram panchayats need to be provided with adequate resources, powers, and responsibilities** to sanction works, provide work on demand, and authorise wage payments to ensure there are no delays in payments.
- **Social Auditing** creates accountability of performance, especially towards immediate stakeholders. Hence, there is a **need to create awareness regarding government policies and measures in rural areas**.

**Source:IE**

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