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DECLARATION

I, Tina Ulvin, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

ABSTRACT

This research addresses the impact of social security in reducing poverty with the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in rural Karnataka, southern India. The MGNREGA was incepted in India in 2006 and stands out as one of the largest rights-based social security schemes in the world. In brief, the MGNREGA guarantees annual employment for 100 days to all rural households, whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual labor at a minimum wage. The objectives of the research are to understand the effectiveness of the MGNREGA on reducing poverty, by identifying the benefits and the challenges of its implementation. Furthermore, the livelihood framework is used to identify the need for the MGNREGA in the study area, to be able to understand the contextual circumstances of how the MGNREGA is meant to bring positive change. A mixed methods approach was used in collecting the data through a survey, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. The findings reveal that the MGNREGA was needed in the study area mainly due to poverty, landlessness and a predominance of backward caste population. The MGNREGA had provided benefits in terms of durable assets, employment and income. However, only 7.7 percent of the respondents were provided employment for 100 days, and over half of the respondents had earned less than the minimum wage. These findings indicate that the MGNREGA had failed to fulfill its guarantee to the majority of the respondents. Moreover, the challenges faced by the implementation of the MGNREGA, was lack of awareness about the rights provided by the MGNREGA, distrust towards the government in its intention to implement the MGNREGA in favor of the people, improper maintenance of Job Cards and the use of contractors and machines in relation to the works conducted under the MGNREGA. Overall, these findings indicate that the potential benefits of the MGNREGA to provide social security in the study area have not been fully realized.

DEDICATION

To all the informants in rural Karnataka

With hopes of a satisfying future

Act of the people, by the people, and for the people

(CSE draft, s.a:iv)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAV	Anthodaya Anna Yojana
ADB	Asian Development Bank
APL	Above Poverty Line
ATREE	Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment
BC	Before Christ
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfers
CEGC	Central Employment Guarantee Council
CSE	Center for Science and the Environment
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EGS	Employment Guarantee Scheme
GC	General Caste
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GESS	Global Extension on Social Security
GOI	Government of India
GP	Gram Panchayat
GS	Gram Sabah
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labor Organization
INR	Indian Rupees
ISEC	Institute for Social and Economic Change
MEGA	Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Act
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

MORD	Ministry of Rural Development
NCMP	National Common Minimum Program
Norad	The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NSSO	National Sample Survey Organization
OBC	Other Backward Caste
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
RPP	Rural Poverty Portal
RTE	Right to Education (Act)
RTI	Right to Information (Act)
SC	Scheduled Caste
SEGC	State Employment Guarantee Council
SLA	Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
SPF-I	Social Protection Floor Initiative
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Scientists
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TPDS	Targeted Public Distribution System
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UPA	United Progressive Alliance
USD	United States Dollar

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The International Labour Organization (ILO) states *the right to social security* as a basic human right, and claims that social security is one of today's world's major challenges (ILO, 2010b). Globally, only 1 in 5 can enjoy sufficient social security coverage, while half of the world's population have no social security protection at all (GESS official website a). These numbers indicate not only a lack of social security, but also an unequal provision of social security coverage worldwide.

Social security is important to strengthen the capability of the poor to escape poverty and also to prevent people from becoming impoverished. Where adequate social security coverage is lacking, escaping the poverty circle becomes more difficult and the risk of falling deeper into poverty increases. Additionally, social security can also enhance economic growth and social stability within countries (GESS official website a).

Over the last decades the location of poverty has changed. Twenty years ago, 93 percent of the world's poor lived in low income countries, whilst today, 72 percent of the poorest people in the world reside in middle-income countries (Sumner, 2011). In 2010, India was ranked as a medium development country as number 119 on the Human Development Index (HDI, 2010). With a growth in Gross Domestic Product of 9 percent, India has become the 4th largest economy in the world based on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) (World Bank website, 2010). Nonetheless, despite the economic achievements, the country is home to 1/3 of the world's poor (ibid.).

In India, 456 million people live on less than 1.25 USD a day (Bolle, 2011), and 75 percent of these reside in rural areas (World Bank, 2011a). In rural India, poverty has nothing else but increased (UNDP, 2011), coupled with increasing unemployment (Negi, 2010).

In an attempt to combat rural poverty, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was incepted in 2006. Through the MGNREGA, the Indian government recognized the right to social security by initiating one of the largest rights-based social protection initiatives in the world (Hirway, 2005). In brief, the MGNREGA guarantees annual employment for 100

days to all rural households whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work at a statutory minimum wage (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a). The aim of the MGNREGA is to change the conditions of poverty not only by providing employment and income, but also by the creation of durable assets through the work conducted. These efforts are targeted to address the causes of chronic poverty and have the potential to transform the rural economy (GOI-MORD, 2008).

1.2 The Research Problem

With the MGNREGA as the point of departure, this research addresses the significance of social security for poverty reduction in the state of Karnataka in southern India. The purpose has been to explore to what extent the implementation of the MGNREGA has contributed to improve the livelihood security in a rural area in Karnataka. However, to fully understand the positive impact of the MGNREGA, the challenges faced by the implementation must also be addressed to capture the whole picture. Furthermore, to understand under what expectations the MGNREGA is meant to bring positive change, the conditions which underpin the need for the MGNREGA in the study area must first of all be examined. The objectives and research questions of the research were formulated keeping this in mind.

1.2.1 Objectives and research questions

The objectives and research questions are given below:

1. To understand why there is a need for the MGNREGA in rural Karnataka.

- ❖ What elements of the livelihood framework reflect the need for the MGNREGA in rural Karnataka?
- ❖ What factors identified by the respondents reflect the need for the MGNREGA in rural Karnataka?

2. To understand the benefits of the implementation of the MGNREGA in rural Karnataka.

- ❖ In what ways does the implementation of the MGNREGA improve people's lives and the community in rural Karnataka?

- ❖ How does the MGNREGA contribute to social security in rural Karnataka?

3. To understand the challenges of implementing the MGNREGA in rural Karnataka.

- ❖ What are the challenges faced by the local people participating in the MGNREGA in rural Karnataka?
- ❖ What are the challenges faced by the implementing agencies of the MGNREGA in rural Karnataka?
- ❖ What are the challenges related to the entitlement of rights in promoting development?

1.3 Rationale

The passing of the MGNREGA serves as a benchmark in the fight against poverty, not only in India but also in a global scale. The MGNREGA is revolutionary because it is the first right-based rural development policy ever in history (Hirway, 2005). Although a number of development programmes have been implemented in India in the past, none of them outmatch the commitment made by the government with the MGNREGA as a piece of legislation.

Notwithstanding India's economic progress, prosperity has not reached all, making the level of vulnerability in the country still intolerable (World Bank, 2011c). The need to address the conditions of the poor is crucial to promote a more even distribution of development across the entire population. Inclusion of the poor will only benefit the country, by generating a more healthy and productive population that will contribute in the development of the country (ADB, 2010).

To study the effects of the MGNREGA, it is important to be able to assess the degree the program has succeeded in fulfilling its goal of revitalizing the rural economy. Likewise, it is important to study the challenges in the implementation of the MGNREGA in order to understand in what stages, or in which areas the implementing process have been facing problems. To meet the expectations and potentials of the MGNREGA, any problem needs to be followed-up to prevent the MGNREGA from falling into the same category of mishaps as the preceding development schemes in the country. Furthermore, examining both the positive and

negative aspects of the implementation of the MGNREGA and learning from these experiences will most likely contribute to an improved continuation of the scheme in the future.

Focusing at the household level is important to comprehend the experiences of the MGNREGA in practice at the ground level. As rural households are the targeted group of the MGNREGA, they constitute the prime source of empirical knowledge related to the extent the MGNREGA has, or has not improved their livelihoods as intended.

In a global perspective, India is not alone in dealing with the challenges of chronic poverty. In respect of the MGNREGA, the experiences made by the scheme may not only serve as a useful learning experience within its own borders, but likewise in the rest of the world. By incepting the MGNREGA, the Indian government has showed an innovative commitment to take care of its own citizens, which can indeed function as a springboard for similar or regenerated commitments internationally.

1.4 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is presented in six chapters. The *first* chapter begins with introducing the theme and status of social security within a global context, the location of poverty in the world and in India, followed by a brief introduction of the MGNREGA. The research problem, the objectives and research questions will be presented as constituting the foundation of the thesis. Thereafter, the rationale of the study will be given at the end of chapter one.

The *second* chapter provides the theoretical premises of the study by introducing and discussing the relevant concepts and themes of the research. The right to work and the challenges of poverty in India are presented as motivating aspects for implementing the MGNREGA in the country, followed by a presentation of the MGNREGA in India. Next, the significance of social security in the development process is discussed with insights from the literature, together with the role of social security in an Indian context. Lastly, the topic of rural development is presented and discussed as a point of departure of the rural livelihood framework as comprising an analytical tool for the analysis.

The *third* chapter presents an overview of geographical, historical, cultural and social aspects of India, the state of Karnataka and the Ramanagara District to provide contextual information about the research area. Emphasis is given to the significance of caste, class and religion to better understand the dynamics of the Indian society.

The *fourth* chapter presents the methodological approach used in collecting the data. The chapter argues for the choice of methods with the use of theory and practical considerations. A discussion of the reliability and the validity of the research are presented, together with ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

The *fifth* chapter analyzes and presents the empirical findings of the study in relation to the objectives and research questions. The findings are discussed with insights from the literature and theory.

The *sixth* chapter presents the conclusion of the research. The main findings of the objectives and research questions are presented and summarized.



CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework and literature forming the basis for the discussion and analysis of findings in chapter 5. The chapter is structured in three main sections. The first section (2.1) attempts to explain the significance of the MGNREGA in India by introducing the right to work and India's challenges of poverty, followed by a presentation of the MGNREGA. In the latter, the objective of the MGNREGA, its practice and experiences will be described. The second section (2.2) deals with social security and its role in the process of development. First of all, development per se and the concept of social security will be presented and discussed to form the point of departure when later discussing social security as an important part of achieving development. Lastly, the role and evolution of social security in India will be presented. The third section (2.3) looks at rural development, its concept and state of being in India. Thereafter, the rural livelihood framework and its elements will be introduced in turn, followed by an illustration of the rural livelihood framework adapted for rural Karnataka.

2.1 The Right to Work, Poverty and the MGNREGA

2.1.1 *The right to work*

Article 23 in the Universal Declaration for Human Rights states employment as a human right:

1. *Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.*
2. *Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.*
3. *Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.*
4. *Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests (OHCHR, 1948).*

With the above, the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) presents guidelines for all nations to foster everybody's right to work. The United Nations (UN) is a leading organization in the promotion of the right to work both through Article 6¹ in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and through the International Labour Organization (ILO) whose purpose is to monitor and enhance international labor standards.

The right to work is one of the basic needs of human beings, not only because it generates an income, but also because it encourages a state of self-realization where people's lives have meaning and they feel useful. To be employed also situates people into the society and it contributes to the development of the country as a whole (Van Dooren, 2003).

India has signed the ICESCR, and the Indian Constitution under the Directive Principles of State Policy part 4, Article 41, 42 and 43 says that:

41. The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want.

42. The State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.

43. The State shall endeavour to secure, by suitable legislation or economic organisation or in any other way, to all workers, agricultural, industrial or otherwise, work, a living wage, conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities and, in particular, the State shall endeavour to promote cottage industries on an individual or co-operative basis in rural areas (GOI, PartIV).

¹ Article 6 says that: "1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts, and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right." "2. The steps to be taken by a State Party to the present Covenant to achieve the full realization of this right shall include technical and vocational guidance and training programmes, policies and techniques to achieve steady economic, social and cultural development and full and productive employment under conditions safeguarding fundamental political and economic freedoms to the individual". Found at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm#part3> 16.06.2011

However, despite the commitment made by the Constitution, India is home to low levels of productive employment generation, especially in the rural areas, and taking into consideration the low educational levels and the prevailing poverty, these are not positive indicators for the development of the country (Ghosh, 2006). According to the National Sample Survey on Employment and Unemployment 55th round for 1990-2000, India's growth of employment, measured by the current daily status², dropped from 2.7 percent per year in the period 1983-1994 to 1.07 percent per year in 1994-2000. The unemployment rate in India had increased to 7.2 percent from 5.6 percent during the same period (NSSO, 2000). The most substantial decline in employment occurred in the agricultural sector where the employment elasticity of output³ growth fell from 0.7 percent in 1983-1994 to 0.01 percent in 1994-2000 (Ghosh, 2006). One reason for this might be that from the mid-1990's, public spending on employment generation programmes in rural areas had been reduced to 0.13 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2000-2001 from already only 0.4 percent of GDP in 1995-1996 (ibid.). Moreover, in the first six years after the millennium, the unemployment rate in rural areas further increased (Negi, 2010). Predictably, employment generation became a significant socio-economic concern, not only at the political level, but also at the societal level in the country. It was evident during the general elections in 2004, that any policies implying reduction of employment opportunities were rejected by the people (Ghosh, 2006 and Negi, 2010). Consequently, a dedication to enhance employment in rural areas through a public works program was made by the winning party, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) (ibid.). The same year, the National Common Minimum Program (NCMP) was launched promising that:

The UPA government will immediately enact a National Employment Guarantee Act. This will provide a legal guarantee for at least 100 days of employment to begin with on asset-creating public works programmes every year at minimum wages for at least one able-bodied person in every rural, urban poor and lower middle-class household (NCMP, 2004:3).

² The current daily status is measured by the activities pursued every day for the reference period of 7 days (NSSO, 2000:2).

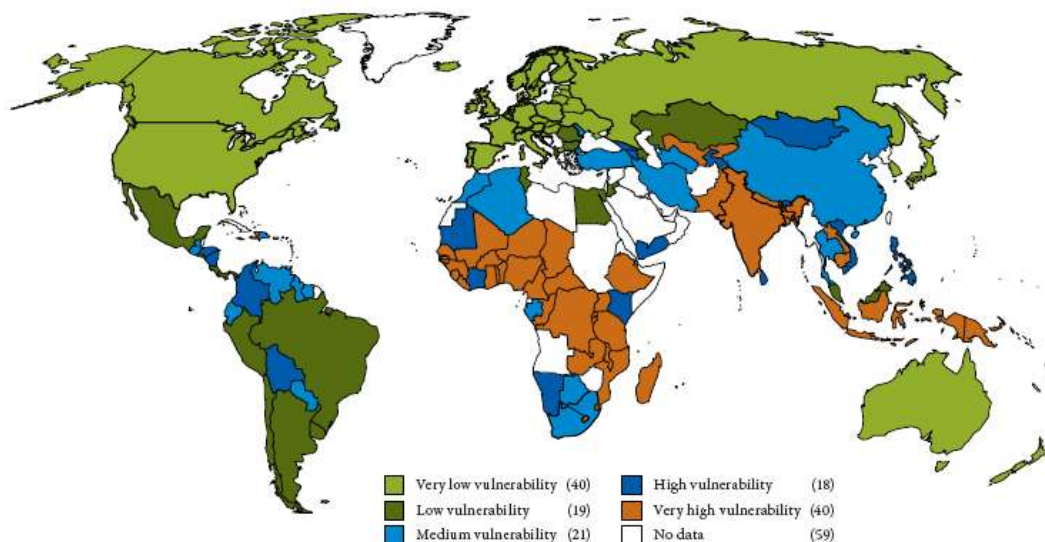
³ The extent to which additional output creates additional demand for work (Ghosh, 2006:90).

This promise represented the birth of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (MGNREGA) in India, which will be further elaborated in Subsection 2.1.3.

2.1.2 India's poverty challenge

Since the 1970s, the number of poor in India has been reduced from encompassing around 50 percent of the population, to approximately one fourth of the population at present (World Bank, 2011c). With a population exceeding 1.2 billion people (Census of India, 2011a) the number of poor remains very high.

Figure 2.1 Countries grouped by level of vulnerability



Source: ILO (2010a:31)

Poverty in India is multidimensional. According to **Figure 2.1**, India is ranked as a country with very high vulnerability measured by the proportion of the population living below the Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) of 2USD a day, and the proportion of workers engaged in the informal sector (ILO, 2010a:30). As much as 93 percent of India's total work force is engaged in the informal sector, which amounts to about 370 million people (GESS official website c). Being unrecognized and unprotected by law and the absence of unions makes the workers vulnerable to exploitation. In addition, over 70 percent of the work force is educated below the primary level or are illiterate (CSE draft, s.a.).

In 2004-05, the population below poverty line in rural areas was 28 percent and 26 percent in urban areas (World Bank, 2011c). Of the rural population, 80 percent lives below the poverty line of INR 22 a day (measured in PPP of 2USD a day) (World Bank, 2011a). According to the HDI for 2010, life expectancy in India was 64.4 years, the child mortality rate under the age of 5 was 69 deaths per 1000 births, and 22 percent of the Indian population suffered from undernourishment. In terms of education, the illiteracy rate in the country was 31.7 percent, and the mean years of schooling were only 4.4 year (HDI, 2010).

2.1.3 The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

2.1.3.1 Objective of the Act

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005, renamed the *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005* (MGNREGA), was initiated on September 5th, 2005 (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a). The MGNREGA⁴ is a rights based, income security scheme targeted for the rural poor. The objective of the Act is to enhance livelihood security of households⁵ in rural areas⁶ by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed employment at a statutory minimum wage⁷ in a financial

⁴ The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act will hereafter be referred to as the MGNREGA or ‘the Act’.

⁵ Chapter 2(f) says that ‘household’ means: the members of a family related to each other by blood, marriage or adoption and normally residing together and sharing meals or holding a common ration card” (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a:2).

⁶ Chapter 2(0) says that ‘rural area’ means: “any area in a State except those areas covered by any urban local body or a Cantonment Board established or constituted under any law for the time being in force” (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a:2).

⁷ Chapter 2(h) says that ‘minimum wage’ implies: “in relation to any area, means the minimum wage fixed by the State Government under section 3 of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 for agricultural labourers as applicable in that area” (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a:2). Chapter 3.6 (1) says that the minimum wage must be above rs.60 per day (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a:3).

year to every household whose adult⁸ members volunteer to do unskilled manual work⁹ (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a:1-2).

The aim of the MGNREGA is to: “foster conditions for inclusive growth ranging from basic wage security and recharging rural economy to a transformative empowerment process of democracy” (GOI-MORD, 2008:2). With this, the MGNREGA has four main goals: (1) to reduce poverty, (2) to encourage sustainable development in the agricultural economy, (3) to promote empowerment and (4) to promote grassroots democracy. Firstly, the heart of the Act is to eradicate rural poverty by providing a minimum income through employment for the poor. The purpose of the Act is to function as a social safety net during the agricultural lean season when other sources of employment are limited¹⁰. Secondly, the Act seeks to improve rural livelihoods by reinforcing durable assets through the initiation of preventive works that addresses the causes of chronic poverty, i.e. soil erosion, deforestation and drought (GOI-MORD, 2008:2). With this, the MGNREGA is regarded by the Government of India as having the potential of transforming the geography of poverty. Thirdly, the Act is meant to empower the people by being safeguarded as a legal ‘right’ in the Constitution. Fourthly, by promoting transparency and local participation, the Act aims at promoting democratic values (ibid.).

The MGNREGA represents an innovative commitment by the Indian government, and it introduces a new dimension to development in India by not only being a development program, but also ‘a regime of rights’ (CSE, 2008:9). The scheme is *demand-driven*, which makes the government legally bound to provide employment for all the people demanding it. If employment is not provided, the government is entitled to offer the workers unemployment allowances (ibid.).

⁸ Chapter 2(a) says that ‘adult’ means: “a person who has completed his eighteenth years of age” (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a:2).

⁹ Chapter 2(r) says that ‘unskilled manual work’ means: “any physical work which any adult person is capable of doing without any skill or special training” (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a:2).

¹⁰ Although the MGNREGA is entitled to provide employment throughout the year it is assumed that the demand for work will only occur during the lean season, because of limited employment opportunities related to agriculture during this period (CSE, 2008).

The Act states nine types of works as permissible, whereby seven involve water and soil conservation. They are listed according to priority to enhance the creation of productive assets to strengthen the rural poor's ability to improve their own livelihoods and surrounding environment:

- (i) “water conservation and water harvesting
- (ii) drought proofing (includes afforestation and tree plantation)
- (iii) irrigation canals (includes micro and minor irrigation works)
- (iv) providing irrigation facilities, plantation, horticulture, land development on land owned by SC/ST households, to beneficiaries of land reforms, or to beneficiaries of the Indira Awas Yojana/ BPL families¹¹
- (v) renovation of traditional water bodies (includes de-silting of tanks)
- (vi) land development
- (vii) flood-control and protection works, including drainage in waterlogged areas
- (viii) rural connectivity to provide all-weather access that encompass the construction of roads (culverts and drainage), but not roads included in the PMGSY¹² or cement roads. Preference should be given to SC/ST areas
- (ix) any other work assigned by the Central Government in accordance with the State Government” (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a:13 and GOI-MORD, 2008:27).

2.1.3.2 Previous employment generation schemes in India

The concept of wage employment programmes in India is not new¹³. A number of rural Employment Generation Schemes (EGS) have been implemented in the past and these are presented in **Box 2.1**.

¹¹ The Indira Awas Yojana is a public development scheme targeted for rural housing and will be explained further under section 2.3.1.1 *Rural development in India*. BPL stands for Below Poverty Line.

¹² PMGSY stands for Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana that is public development scheme with the purpose of improving rural infrastructure. The text will come back to the PMGSY under section 2.5.2 *Rural development in India*.

¹³ Internationally, the conduct of employment generation programmes (EGS) can be traced back to the 19th century Europe when the Poor Employment Act was put forth in 1817 in Great Britain. Later, the Poor Law Amendment Act was introduced in the same country in 1834 and in the 1930s the New Deal

1960	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rural Works Programme (RWP)
1970	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE) ▪ Food for Work Programme (FFWP) ▪ Maharashtra's Employment Guarantee Scheme (MEGS)
1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indian Wage employment Programme ▪ National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) ▪ Rural Labour Employment Guarantee Programme (REGP) ▪ Rural Landless Employment Guarantee (RLEG) ▪ Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY)
1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) ▪ Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY)
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) ▪ Food for Work Programme (NFFWP) ▪ National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)

Box 2.1 Overview of previous employment generation schemes in India

Created by Tina Ulvin (CSE, 2008 and Hirway, 2005)

Although the substance of the above schemes resembles the MGNREGA, it is only the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Act (MEGA)¹⁴ that precedes the MGNREGA by providing a legal guarantee (CSE, 2008 and Hirway, 2005). In 1961, the Rural Works Programme (RWP) was implemented in some rural areas with the purpose of providing employment in the agricultural lean season. Later, various wage employment programmes were implemented with the aim of improving the lives of the rural poor by providing employment and creating durable assets, such as the Food for Work Programme (FFWP) and the Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE) in the 1970s (Hirway, 2005). During the next decade, the India Wage Employment programmes was introduced in the United States of America. The aim of these programmes was to provide economic relief in times of economic depression and natural disasters. More recent, a number of employment generation programmes have been implemented in Latin America, Africa and in Asia (Basu et al., 2009).

¹⁴ The MEGA was enforced in 1979 (ODI, 2006) and is still in force today (Sumanjeet, 2005). The MEGA was applied only in the state of Maharashtra, and it guaranteed unlimited employment for rural adults who were willing to do unskilled work at a minimum wage. The overall participation in the MEGA has been low, but the scheme has provided economic relief for the people involved in periods of the year when other employment opportunities were scarce. However, delay of payments, long distance to the work place and an extensive registration system has been some of the problems facing the implementation of the MEGA (ODI, 2006).

Programmes, the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP)¹⁵, the Rural Labour Employment Guarantee Programme (REGP), the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee (RLEG)¹⁶ and the Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY)¹⁷ were implemented. In the 1990s, the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS)¹⁸ and the Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY)¹⁹ were introduced, and after the millennium the Sampurna Grammen Rojgar Yojana (SGRY)²⁰, the National Food For Work Programme (NFFWP)²¹ and recently the MGNREGA stands out as the latest initiative by the Indian government to reduce rural poverty (CSE, 2008).

Lack of planning has been the main problem of programmes such as JRY, EAS, SGRY and the MEGA, both in the short term and long term. Although the main goal of these programmes has been to reduce rural poverty, the demand for public wage employment has rather increased. Other evident problems have been corruption, too small programmes, low wages, low participation rate and limited creation of quality assets (Hirway, 2005:703).

2.1.3.3 The Implementation of the MGNREGA

Today, the MGNREGA is implemented in the whole of India²². The process of implementation has proceeded during three phases²³, whereas the first phase officially commenced on February 2nd 2006 and covered the 200 poorest districts. Two years

¹⁵ The purpose of the NREP was to employ the unemployed and underemployed to create community assets (CSE, 2008). In the state of Karnataka, a research-evaluation study of the NREP has been conducted by the Marketing Research Corporation of India in 1988. The report concluded that no improvements of living standards had been detected and the unemployment rate was still increasing (MRC-India, 1988).

¹⁶ The RLEG introduced a 100 days guaranteed employment for one member of every landless and rural household (CSE, 2008).

¹⁷ The JRY is a combination of the NREP and the RLEG (ibid.).

¹⁸ The EAS follows the RWP with the purpose of providing employment during the agricultural lean season (ibid.).

¹⁹ The purpose of the JGSY was to develop infrastructure demanded by the rural population (ibid.).

²⁰ The SGRY is a combination of EAS and JGSY (ibid.).

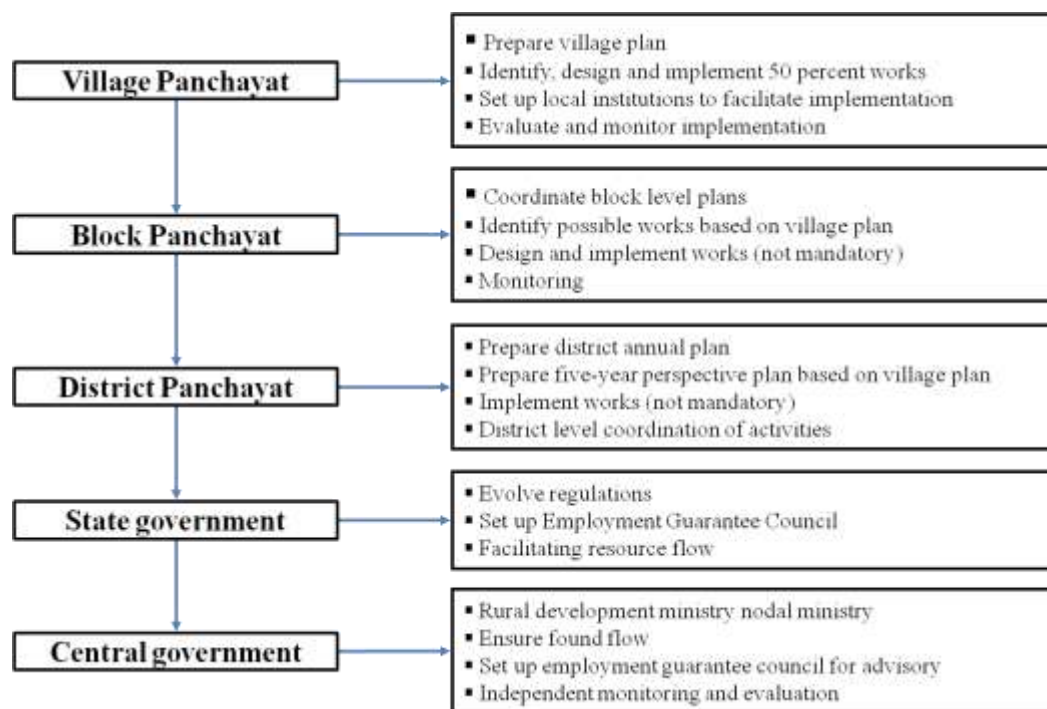
²¹ The purpose of the NFFWP was to act as additional wage employment and to provide assets (ibid.).

²² With the exception of districts that hold a 100 percent urban population (GOI-MORD, 2008:2).

²³ First phase: 2006, second phase: 2007 and third phase: 2008 (GOI-MORD, 2008).

later, the MGNREGA covered the whole country (GOI-MORD, 2008:2). In Karnataka, five districts were covered during the first phase. In 2007, six additional districts were covered, and in 2008, two more districts were covered including the study area in Ramanagara district²⁴ (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a). In 2008/2009, the MGNREGA had covered 33 percent of all rural households in India (World Bank, 2011c).

The various implementing institutions of the MGNREGA consist of five administrative levels, from the local level to the central level²⁵. These five levels starting at grassroots level are: the village panchayat²⁶, then further up into the administrative system at the block panchayat, at the district panchayat, at the state government and on top at the central government level (CSE, 2008). An overview of these is presented in **Figure 2.2**.



²⁴ In Karnataka, the first phase covered the districts of: Bidar, Chitradurga, Davanagere. The second phase covered: Bellary, Hassan, Chikmagatur, Belgaum, Shimuga and Kodagu. The third phase covered Cikkaballapura in addition to Ramanagara district (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a: 41, 55, 66) (For clarification; the page numbers listed refers to the total number of PDF pages).

²⁵ These five administrative levels represent the different sections the Indian society is managed from village level to the central governmental level.

²⁶ *Panchayat* is a word in Hindi which means ‘a council of five’.

Figure 2.2 The various administrative implementation levels of the MGNREGA (CSE, 2008:13)

The role of the village panchayat constitutes an essential part in promoting local participation and empowerment. The first step of implementation is by the Gram Sabah (village council), which is the established legal body for community participation at village panchayat level. The Act permits the Gram Sabah to facilitate at least 50 percent of the works to be carried out, to manage and monitor these works and to arrange *Social Audits*²⁷ twice a year for transparency and evaluation purposes. Additionally, the Gram Sabah conducts village meetings to give information about the MGNREGA and to discuss future works with the villagers. Furthermore, based on local resources and needs, the panchayat prepares village-level plans to be assessed and implemented by the Act. Registration of households and issuing of Job Cards are all in the hands of the Gram Panchayat (village council secretary office) (GOI-MORD, 2008 and CSE, 2008).

At the block-level panchayat, it is the Intermediate Panchayat who has the responsibility of planning, supervising and monitoring the MGNREGA implementation. Any works not planned by the village panchayat are taken care of at the block level. One of the main tasks is to ensure that every person who applies for work through the MGNREGA is offered work within 15 days of application. Ensuring that Social Audits are held is also a responsibility at the block level (GOI-MORD, 2008 and CSE, 2008).

At the district level, two planning documents are made with the aim of identifying local needs and development potentials of the villages; one district perspective plan for every fifth year and one district annual plan. The purpose of the first plan is to

²⁷ The function of social audits is basically to enhance public vigilance. Social audit forums are held by the Gram Sabah to involve the workers and various stakeholders of what is happening in the implementation of the MGNREGA, in the monitoring and evaluation processes. The purpose of social audits is foster transparency, participation (in the decision-making and validation of the scheme by all), consultation and consent (by the people in matters concerning the scheme), accountability (by all public staff in relation to the MGNREGA when questions are raised by the people) and redressal (official sanctions whenever frauds and irregularities are detected in relation to organization and implementation of the MGNREGA) (GOI-MORD, 2008:61-62).

enhance local development potentials through generation of assets by the works implemented in a long-term view. By the latter, the plan describes the various works that have to be implemented by the village-level panchayat by the month of December each year. In addition, the district panchayat has responsibility of issuing funds, and to verify Muster Rolls (workers attendance at each work) (GOI-MORD, 2008 and CSE, 2008).

At the state level, a State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC) is formed with the overall purpose of advising the State Government in the implementation of the MGNREGA. The SEGC has also the responsibility of determining, which works to be implemented by the scheme, to set up a State Employment Guarantee Fund, to hire staff working only with the MGNREGA and to monitor and ensure accountability and transparency through establishing a network of agencies (GOI-MORD, 2008 and CSE, 2008).

At the central level, the responsibility of the MGNREGA lies with the Ministry of Rural Development (MORD). With the Minister of Rural Development as the chair person, a Central Employment Guarantee Council (CEGC) is established to advise, monitor and evaluate all issues relating to the Act. The CEGC prepares annual reports about the implementation of the MGNREGA to the Parliament (GOI-MORD, 2008 and CSE, 2008).

2.1.3.4 The MGNREGA in practice

Any rural adult interested to work under the MGNREGA must apply, either written or orally, to get registered at the local Gram Panchayat secretary office. After verification, a Job Card will be issued containing a photograph of each household member interested to work within 15 days after the application was given. To be assigned work, the Job Card holder(s) must re-apply for work, in which, the application must convey the dates and the number of days they/he or she are/is interested to work²⁸. After submitting the application, the Gram Panchayat is

²⁸ The number of days must exceed 14 days (GOI-MORD, 2008:2).

committed to allot work for the applicant(s) within 15 days. If not, the applicant(s) are automatically entitled to the unemployment allowances²⁹ (GOI-MORD, 2008:2).

Work will be provided within a radius of 5 kilometers from the villages, and if not, a wage increase of 10 percent will be given to cover the expenses for transportation and housing. The minimum wage will never be less than INR 60, and if not stated otherwise by the State, it will be paid according to the Minimum Wages Act of 1948 for agricultural laborers. The same wage applies for both women and men, and it will be paid on a weekly basis and never later than 14 days (GOI-MORD, 2008:2-3). 1/3 of the beneficiaries in the MGNREGA shall be women (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a:10). As of 2006-2007, the Act requests workers to open up accounts either in Banks or post offices (GOI-MORD, 2008:34-36). The rationale is to enhance transparency and to minimize chances of corruption (Vanaik, 2008).

The MGNREGA is funded partly by the Central government and the State government. The central government covers 100 percent of the wage expenses and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the material cost, while the State government pays the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$. The wage costs compared to material cost should be 60:40, and the use of contractors and machinery is prohibited (GOI-MORD, 2008:38, 3). The logo of the MGNREGA is given as **Appendix 1**.

2.1.3.5 Successes and challenges of the MGNREGA

According to the NREGA implementation status report for the financial year 2010-2011, almost 120 million Job Cards had been issued. Nearly 60 million households had demanded employment and almost 55 million households had been provided employment through the MGNREGA. About 2.6 million works had been completed

²⁹ The unemployment allowances constitute $\frac{1}{4}$ of the minimum wage for the first thirty days, and $\frac{1}{2}$ for the remaining days (GOI-MORD, 2008:111). It says under section 7(3)(d), in the Act that the unemployment allowances will be distributed until the applicant(s) has earned the amount equal to 100 days of work in the MGNREGS (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a:7). However, to be allotted the unemployment allowances, the applicant(s) must apply at the Gram Panchayat secretary office or at the Block Panchayat (GOI-MORD, 2008:111). The funding of the unemployment allowances is by the state government. If the payment unemployment allowances are delayed, compensation will be made by the central government (GOI-MORD, 2008:37).

and the total expenditure amounted to almost INR 393780 million (NREGA official website, GOI). For comparison, in the state of Karnataka, about 2.2 million households have been provided employment and about 91 thousand works have been completed under the MGNREGA (ibid.).

The MGNREGA is slowly changing the lives of the rural poor for the better. A study conducted by Drèze and Khera in 2009, covered 1000 workers under the MGNREGA in six states in northern India. Their article states that the wages are increasing, productive assets are generated, large sections of marginalized social groups such as the SC and ST people have participated in the scheme, the migration from rural to urban areas has decreased and people have avoided exploitation and hazardous working conditions by working under the Act. Furthermore, beneficiaries of the MGNREGA have expressed that their participation have enabled them to escape hunger, to improve their selection of food ingredients, making it easier to repay debt, enhanced their capacity to seek healthcare, increasing their affordability to pay for school books and uniforms to their children and also to invest in different agricultural outputs such as fertilizers (Drèze and Khera, 2009). For the women, and especially for widows and single women, engagement in the MGNREGA has meant increased independence from male family members as they have been able to earn money for themselves (Drèze and Khera, 2009, Khera and Nayak, 2009).

However, the implementation of the MGNREGA has encountered a number of challenges such as; delays of payment, low wages, limited funding and qualified staff (Drèze and Khera, 2009, IFPRI, 2010 and Ambasta et al, 2008), and lack of worksite facilities, providing employment, lack of awareness about the Act among the rural poor³⁰ and heavy corruption (Drèze and Khera, 2009, IFPRI, 2010). Even though the MGNREGA is a right-based Act, ignorance about the various rights within the law (right to employment for 100 days when applied, the right to a minimum wage, the right to worksite facilities to mention a few) or even its existence, deprives possible beneficiaries to gain from the Act (ibid.).

³⁰ Even possible murders have occurred in the name of the MGNREGA in the state of Jharkhand, whereby one of the two persons was arranging a social audit, and the second one was a political activist engaged in the Act (Drèze and Khera, 2009).

Few applicants have been provided work for the guaranteed 100 days, but the MGNREGA has generated more number of working days than previous EGS. The state of Rajasthan has excelled as the state in India where the implementation of the MGNREGA has been most successful. For instance, according to Drèze and Khera (2009), the average number of working days in the financial year of 2006-2007 was 77 days, which they describe as an “unprecedented achievement in the history of social security in India” (Drèze and Khera, 2009).

Corrupt practices have constituted one of the main criticisms towards the credibility of the Act. Fudging of master rolls has proved to constitute one such problem. Fake names have been listed as attending the works, whereby wages are paid and end up falling in wrong hands. In addressing the problem of corruption, the Central government has promoted payment of wages through Banks or Post Offices in favor of by hand to limit the chances of corruption (Drèze and Khera, 2009). However, the shift has not been problem-free. A field study made in the state of Orissa has showed that illiteracy and lack of knowledge among the villagers on how Banks operate has caused hesitation to open Bank account (Vanaik, 2008).

Another initiative by the government to ensure transparency and accountability, not only in the MGNREGA, but in all governmental related work, is the Right to Information Act (RTI). Also introduced in 2005, the RTI requires the public authorities to share their activities and spending with the people, either given available on the internet, through reports and other documents, or given by request from the people (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005b). The states where corruption has showed least significance has been Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh (Drèze and Khera, 2009).

It has also been observed that although the allocation of Job Cards and photographs should be free of cost, applicants have had to pay to receive both of them (IFPRI, 2010). In addition, the quality of the works completed under the MGNREGA has been criticized for being too poor, for instance in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. This jeopardizes the long-term effects of the Act to enhance rural growth by improving rural infrastructure (Ambasta et al, 2008).

2.2 Social Security and Development

2.2.1 What is development?

Development is a founding belief of the modern world. Progress has long since replaced God as the icon of our age (Peet, 1991:1)

The Oxford advanced learner's dictionary (2000:344) explains development as “the gradual growth of something so that it becomes more advanced, stronger”. Development is typically associated with words like ‘progress’, ‘improvement’, ‘increase’, ‘economic growth’ and it encompasses all the development action and actors that on a global scale strive to realize a more just world for all.

Peet (1999:17) argues that development basically means, “Improving the conditions of life”. He says that fundamentally development is an economic process because economics is “knowledge about the effective use of resources in producing the material basis of life” (ibid). Furthermore, Peet (1999:1) gives a more specific description of development as: “using the productive resources of society to improve the living conditions of the poorest people”. With this, development entails an action of distribution of benefits for certain populations to improve their lives. According to Peet (1999), development is complex and it involves natural, economic, social, cultural and political aspects that are all connected.

Dating back to 1969, Seers (1969) stresses that to be able to measure if a country is experiencing development, one needs to address three specific issues: “What has been happening to poverty?” “What has been happening to unemployment?” “What has been happening to inequality?”(Seers, 1969:3). If a country can prove a decline in poverty levels, the unemployment rate and inequality, then development has taken place. However, if a country is experiencing economic growth, but is at the same time experiencing a decline in job opportunities, one cannot claim that process to be one of development (ibid).

Sen (1999) defines development as *freedom*. He argues that development “consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency” (Sen, 1999:xii). The main sources of unfreedoms are: poverty, oppression, poor economic opportunities, systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities and constrain set forth by

repressive states (limited democratic rights) (Sen, 1999:3-15). As of this, development will only occur when people experience a sense of alleviation from any of these sources of unfreedoms³¹.

Further, to generate expansion of freedom is viewed by Sen (1999) as both the *primary end* and the *principal means* of development. The primary end of development is also referred to as the ‘constitutive role’ whilst the means of development is referred to as the ‘instrumental role’ of freedom in development. The constitutive role of freedom entails the significance of substantive freedoms to enhance a life of quality. Substantive freedoms comprise of the elementary capabilities such as being able to read and write, to be numerate and to benefit from public participation. It also includes prevention of malnourishment, diseases and infant mortality (Sen, 1999). “A person’s ‘capability’ refers to the alternative combination of functionings that are feasible for her to achieve. Capability is thus a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combination (or, less formally put, the freedom to achieve various lifestyles)” (Sen, 1999:75). Furthermore, the term ‘functionings’ “reflects the various things a person may value doing or being” (ibid.). These functionings will vary from basic necessities as being free from undernourishment to more complex doings such as community participation or personal state of affairs such as self-respect (ibid.)³².

Moreover, as according to Sen (1999), the instrumental role of freedom constitutes the means to promote development, and they are: (i) *political freedoms*, (ii) *economic facilities*, (iii) *social opportunities*, (iv) *transparency guarantees* and (v) *protective security*. ‘Political freedoms’ imply the opportunity to exercise democratic values such as the freedom of speech, freedom to form political opposition and the conduct of free elections. ‘Economic facilities’ refers to the opportunities people have to

³¹ Sen (1999) has, among other contributions, participated in the development of the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Human Poverty Index (HPI). Through these indices, the process of development is measured by additional indicators than simply GDP per capita (Sen, 1999).

³² To illustrate the concept of capability, Sen (1999) gives an example of how an well-off person who fasts and a poor person who starves are both subject to suffer from undernourishment, but that the difference lay in the matter of choice, whereas the wealthy person chooses to fast and have the means to otherwise maintain sufficiently nourished, while the poor person cannot (Sen, 1999:75).

consume, produce and exchange the accessible economic resources in terms of markets and relative price adjustments. It also includes the availability of finance, and the degree of distribution of wealth from the state to its citizens. ‘Social opportunities’ imply the public provision of ensuring that the substantive freedoms mentioned above are met, such as education and health. ‘Transparency guarantee’ entails the level of trust and openness in the society, and its role of preventing corruption and other misuse of financial means. Lastly, ‘protective security’ refers to the importance of social safety nets to prevent further deterioration of people’s lives i.e. fixed institutional arrangements in terms of unemployment benefits and provision of statutory income such as through public employment for the poor or/and famine relief systems (Sen, 1999). In relation to the MGNREGA, India attempts to provide these instrumental freedoms both indirectly and directly to its rural poor. Particularly the latter freedom of protective security is directly related to the MGNREGA, but also the promotion of democracy, transparency (Social Audits) and financial means (income) are relevant aspects of the Act. Indirectly, the third freedom of social opportunities is aimed to be generated through enhancing the rural economy as a whole and also at the individual level.

2.2.2 Conceptualizing social security

*Poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere*³³

First of all, it is important to highlight that the term *social security* is often used synonymous with the term *social protection* by institutions across the world, although they can be differentiated (ILO, 2010a). For instance, the International Labour Organization (ILO) refers to social protection as either (1) being interchangeable with social security or (2) as ‘protection’ provided by social security in case of social risks and needs (ILO, 2010a:7). The ILO does not attempt to make a universal definition of

³³ A principle created by the ILO members under the *Declaration of Philadelphia* that was established in 1944. The declaration says that: labor is not a commodity and sets out basic human and economic rights under the principle that “poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere” (ILO, 2007).

the two as they are interrelated³⁴. The ILO (2010a) argues that on the one hand, social protection has often been charged with more meaning than social security, and it usually encompasses additional attributes such as protection offered by the family or the local community. Nevertheless, social protection has also been given a more limited meaning that only comprises selected groups of people that are socially excluded, poor and vulnerable (ibid.). In this text, I have chosen to apply the term social security as the principal concept encompassing both social security and social protection, as they cover more or less the same meaning. However, when referring to different sources in the text that have utilized social protection as their key concept rather than social security, references will be made according to the original source.

In the report *World Social Security from 2010/11 Providing Coverage in times of Crisis and Beyond*, the ILO (2010a:7) identifies social security as protection against:

- (a) *lack of work-related income (or insufficient income) caused by sickness, disability, maternity, employment injury, unemployment, old age, or death of a family member;*
- (b) *lack of access or unaffordable access to health care;*
- (c) *insufficient family support, particularly for children and adult dependants;*
- (d) *general poverty and social exclusion*

The ILO is a United Nations agency that has the global responsibility to maintain and enhance “opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity” (ILO, 2007:1). In their effort, the ILO develops policies, implements programmes and international labor standards to promote social justice (ILO, 2007).

For the ILO (2010a), social security encompasses a comprehensive net of schemes and social transfers provided by the nation state to enhance a quality standard of living of its citizens and to prevent conditions of destitution. These nets comprise of contributory schemes, universal schemes, categorical schemes, social assistance schemes and employment guarantee schemes. The most common contributory scheme

³⁴ However, the ILO states that their use of the title *Social Protection Sector* does include an extensive number of programs than that of social security, which is safety at work, labour migration, working hours, wages and more (ILO, 2010a:7).

is the statutory social insurance scheme entitled to people engaging in formal wage generating employment. The insurance guarantees protection in case of, for instance employment injury and maternity leave. The only condition required to the entitlement of a universal scheme is to be registered as a resident in that particular country, and it usually guarantees health services. Categorical schemes only cover a certain group (category) of the population. This scheme typically includes old age pension and children below the age of 18. In addition, single parents and farmers can be entitled to the categorical scheme. The social assistance schemes, also called Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT), are usually means-tested³⁵ and require a certain number of conditions to be met to be entitled to the transfer. For example, vaccination of babies can allow parents below a statutory poverty line to receive a certain amount of money. Lastly, employment guarantee schemes provide a minimum income security through the provision of work for a specific number of days to selected people, usually poor people (ILO, 2010a). The MGNREGA is an employment guarantee scheme where public funds are being transferred to the rural adults who have carried out a specified type of work. Thus, MGNREGA is a type of CCT scheme as its beneficiaries are people who have fulfilled these requirements.

On their official website, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) defines social protection as:

the set of policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labor markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against or cope with hazards and interruption or loss of income (ADB, 2011).

The ADB regards social protection to be a vital contributor in the fight against poverty because it generates a more equal participation in the development process. According to the ADB, social protection consists of five main areas: (1) labor markets, (2) social insurance, (3) social assistance and welfare service programs, (4) micro-and area based schemes and (5) child protection. The first three areas can be found in any social security coverage around the world. But the last two are subject to face the needs by the rural poor and workers in the informal sector (ADB, 2011).

³⁵ Means-tested refers to people or households that have been measured and are classified for example according to a poverty line (ILO, 2010a).

The ADB has developed a Social Protection Index (SPI) that reveals an indication of the level of social protection in Asian and Pacific countries, measured on a scale between 0 and 1 (ADB, 2008). The SPI measures a country's provision of social security as well as welfare, labor market, health insurance, micro credit, child protection and their effort to promote education and health programs to all its citizens, primarily the poorest sections of the population. The purpose of SPI is to monitor changes in the provision of social protection across time and between countries (ibid.). In 2008, on a list consisting of 31 Asian and Pacific countries, India ranked as number ten, which was above the average with a score of 0.46. According to the SPI, India surpassed countries such as China and Malaysia but was below countries such as Japan and Korea (ADB, 2008).

Drèze and Sen (1989), presents a broader definition of social security as “an *objective* pursued through *public means*” (Drèze and Sen, 1989:16). With this definition, Drèze and Sen (1989) diverts from the notion of social security as comprising specific programmes, as stated above by the ILO and ADB, as they regard these definitions as too narrow and predominantly suiting the developed countries. Rather, they would emphasize all the public means available to enhance social security to enable the best quality of life for the population. They argue that “the idea of ‘social security’ is that of using social means to prevent deprivation and vulnerability” (Drèze and Sen, 1989:15). Social means entail both direct support by, for instance free food distribution to victims of war, provision of free education and health services and old age pension, but also indirect intervention in terms of achieving economic growth that will in turn benefit the population as a whole by, for instance generating job opportunities (Drèze and Sen, 1989). The MGNREGA can be perceived as an indirect intervention of public means to stimulate rural economic growth.

2.2.2.1 Social Security as Intentional Development

Shanmugaratnam (2001) argues that in the question of ‘what is development’ another question emerges of ‘what development ought to be’. He refers to Cowen and Shenton (1996) who argue that development consists of both ‘immanent’ and ‘intentional’ development. In brief, immanent development implies the traditional belief that development is a natural process activated by an inner logic or dynamic

that would ensure equal development for all. Intentional development means subjective action conducted through policies to accomplish a specific goal (Cowen and Shenton, 1996). Moreover, intentional development would compensate and intervene in areas where immanent development had failed. For empirical references they looked back to the 19th century Europe and the uneven social consequences of capitalism that made people revolt and demand public action to secure their lives and well-being (ibid.). In this way, a request for intentional development was made to reverse the harmful effects of capitalism, the immanent part of development. With reference to the role of social security, the need for public action can be viewed as a response to help those excluded from the development process.

2.2.3 The rise of social security on the development agenda

Globally, development actors such as the United Nations i.e. the ILO, the World Bank and the ADB do all incorporate social security as one of the most important strategies in their aspiration for a better world. However, the situation has not always been like this, it was not until the 1990's that the concept of social security gained its recognition as a crucial element in the fight against poverty. As the concept before was regarded as expensive, ineffective and only as a set of instruments, as for example social insurance, social security was now defined as an objective in itself to assist in risk management, as an ex-ante approach to reduce vulnerability for the poor³⁶ (World Bank, 2003).

Several circumstances paved the way for this new approach, and one such event was the East Asia crises in the 1990s. Even though these countries had experienced an economic upturn, they were now confronted with challenges such as rising unemployment and decline in output. Any existing social safety net or public support was not enough to prevent people from ending up in a worse situation of destitution.

³⁶ Throughout the 1980-1990s, the notion of social security was viewed as even harmful to development (World Bank, 2003). This perception was grounded in the belief that poverty in poor countries comprised of large populations, and that these people suffered from same degree of poverty. Resultantly, this meant lack of resources, which would make provisions of safety nets ineffective. In the same way, another constrain was the notion of corruption in these countries that would challenge the social transfers to actually reach the targeted groups (Ravallion, 2003).

As it also proved difficult to introduce any kind of social protection system during the crisis, these state of affairs made scholars rather consider a preventative strategy to avoid a similar situation in the future (World Bank, 2003 and Holzmann and Jørgensen, 2000).

At the same time, a more comprehensive understanding of the factors causing poverty was asserted, as for example that of globalization generating rising inequalities between the resource rich and the resource poor. This made development scholars question the perception of economic growth as the main source of generating equal development (World Bank, 2003 and Holzmann and Jørgensen, 2000). According to Hickey (2010), a ‘new Post Washington consensus’ emerged as a response to the uneven development created by capitalism. In the new era of what he refers to as *inclusive liberalism*: “development got human (via poverty reduction), it got social (via social capital), and it even got political (via the rubrics of empowerment, good governance and even ‘equity’)” (Hickey, 2010:5). Under inclusive liberalism, a new focus on the role of the state emerged as a significant contributor to reductions of poverty. In comparison to the market-focused neo-liberalism that *excluded* certain populations from the achievements of development, people were now *included* in the development process for example by the entitlements of *rights*. By promoting rights to disadvantaged groups of the society, the state proved greater responsibility and commitment in fostering more equal opportunities for development for its citizens (Hickey, 2010).

In the aftermath of the shift in the development focus, the World Bank and others introduced the Social Risk Management (SRM) framework³⁷ in an attempt to ease the multiple risks faced by the poor (World Bank, 2003 and Holzmann and Jørgensen, 2000).

A newly established approach to target poverty reduction through social security is the Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPF-I) established by the UN in 2009. The aim of the SPF-I is to encourage a basic level of social protection for a decent life to all

³⁷ The SRM is a conceptual framework with the purpose of reducing vulnerability and poverty. The framework emphasizes the reasons causing poverty rather than the symptoms (Holzmann and Jørgensen, 2000).

people. The SPF-I promotes the facilitation of vital services and social transfers for the vulnerable and poor (GESS-ILO, 2010). According to the Global Extension of Social Security (GESS)³⁸, thirty developing countries have implemented various types of social protection measures in 2010 (ibid.). In India, the MGNREGA constitutes one such initiative.

2.2.3.1 Social security in development

In South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa less than 10 percent of the population has access to the most basic protection (ILO, 2010a). The ADB (2010:37) argues that social protection “is necessary in any society because the benefits of growth do not reach all, because people do not have the same capacity to overcome shocks, and because all people are vulnerable at different points in their lifecycle”. The ADB (2010) regards investment in social protection as crucial in prevention of poverty and inequality, for strengthening the human capital, in the achievement of economic growth and in the enhancement of social cohesion (ADB, 2010).

First of all, the ADB (2010) regards social protection as the key investment in reducing poverty. Not only does social protection reduce the chances of people from falling into poverty, it can also help the already poor to break the poverty cycle. Investing in social protection can reduce vulnerability and strengthen people’s ability to cope with challenges such as illness, unemployment, crop failure, natural disasters or indebtedness. In sum, provision of basic social security system can be viewed as crucial for survival (ADB, 2010). The ADB argues that poverty has been reduced by 50 percent in high income countries due to social protection in 2009 (ibid.).

Second, social protection enhances the human capital by investing in education and development of skills, for example through training. Consequently, people will be enabled to realize more of their potential and the labor force will be strengthened and the productivity will increase by, for instance, adaptation of new technology (ADB, 2010).

Thirdly, investing in social protection will enhance economic growth. By increasing the purchasing power of the poorer sections of society, domestic demand will rise and

³⁸ The Global Extension of Social Security (GESS) is run by the ILO Social Security Department.

further stimulate the market (ADB, 2010).

Fourthly, investing in social protection indicates a country's will to care for its people, attitudes are changing and new policies have been adapted. Addressing the rights for its citizens, including the marginalized and socially excluded, will contribute to a more satisfactory population and enhance inclusive growth and peace through social- and political stability and cohesion (ibid.).

In addition, overall, ensuring basic social security coverage might evolve as the determinant factor whether or not the world will achieve the first Millennium Development Goal of reducing poverty and improving the provision of health care and education (ADB, 2010, World Bank, 2003 and GESS official website b).

It is important to realize that social protection not only contributes to ease the lives of the poor, but it also generates security for wealthier groups of the population, such as the disabled, the elderly and the unemployed, that you will obviously find in every nation of the globe (ADB, 2011). In every country, social security is all about rethinking and adapting new strategies to advance the conventional public approach in areas such as social support policies, social insurance and the labor market. For the developing world, especially, social security concerns a shift from inefficient traditional coping strategies to more productive ways of managing risks and stress (World Bank, 2003).

Investment in social protection in different antipoverty programs has increased in a number of developing countries in Asia, Africa and South America over the years. For instance in Mexico, the Oportunidades program reduced the amount of people living below USD1.25 a day by 10 percent and it reduced the poverty gap by 30 percent. In Brazil, the Bolsa Familia together with a disability grant and a means-tested pension reduced the gap between rich and poor by 28 percent between 1995 and 2004. In South Africa the poverty gap has been reduced by nearly 50 percent due to social transfers (ADB, 2010).

2.2.3.2 Social security as a human right

The ILO states social security as a *universal* and *basic human right* and since its genesis in 1919, the principal objective for the ILO has been to enhance the 'right' to

social security. Through various instruments, Conventions and Recommendations the ILO has set forth a range of obligations and guidelines to enable nations to follow up this right (ILO, 2010b). The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)³⁹ and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) are examples of such instruments. By the latter, the legal recognition of social security as a human right is stated under the Article 22 from 1948:

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality (OHCHR, 1948).

Although the UDHR is not legally binding, the Declaration has achieved immense international recognition, and it has laid the foundation of a number of international treaties, national constitutions and civil society institutions in their promotion of human rights. In 2008, the ICESCR had 128 States parties, including India, and they are all obliged to endorse a maximum realization of the rights declared (Subrahmanya, 1995).

2.2.3.3 Social Security in India

The Global Extension of Social Security (GESS) states that, although India spends 2 percent of its GDP on social security coverage, as much as 90 percent of the Indian population does not have access to any kind of social security services, which amounts to about 930 million people (GESS official website b).

Subrahmanya (1995:2) states that broadly, social security can be regarded as “to comprise of all measures designed to assure everyone of a minimum income which would be adequate for a decent standard of life and to protect the same against the contingencies which tend to diminish it”. With this, in an Indian context, ‘all measures’ imply income support through asset creation, employment generation,

³⁹ Article 9 in the ICESCR states that: “The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance” (OHCHR website).

minimum wages, food subsidies and child nutrition. For people in the intersection of vulnerability and poverty such as old people, the disabled, widows and for new mothers (maternity), social transfers through insurance and subsidized insurance will provide a security of income (Subrahmanya, 1995).

In the Constitution of India, the concept of social security has not been applied. Even so, the significance of the term is encompassed under the Directive Principles of State Policy part 4, in Article 38 (1), 38 (2), 39, 39A and 47 (GOI, PartIV). A full citation of these is given as **Appendix 2**, while a selection within these will be presented here. The promotion of welfare is given in Article 38(1): “the State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may”. In Article 38(2), reductions of inequalities between people are stated as: “the State shall strive to minimise the inequalities in income, and endeavour to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities, not only amongst individuals but also amongst groups of people”. Article 39 further specifies equal treatment of its citizens in terms of gender, for example by adequate means of living and equal pay for equal work for both men and women. It also emphasizes security of children’s welfare and the prevention of exploitation of both children and youth. Article 39A promotes legal justice to all the Indian people and Article 47 emphasizes the improvement of public health and standards of living as: “the State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties” (GOI, PartIV).

The evolution of social security in India began during World War I and in the industrialization period, when demands by workers for better working and living conditions started. At the same time, formation of trade unions and working class movements continued to foster the demands from the working class. In the following year, India constituted one of the founding members of the ILO. A question was raised within the organization concerning India’s lack of social security coverage. As a response to the critique, the Workmen’s Compensation Act came into force in 1924. Later, a variety of social security schemes such as; old age pensions schemes, maternity benefit schemes, schemes for deserted or destitute women, schemes for people who were physically handicapped, health and medical care schemes, employment schemes and unemployment relief schemes, welfare schemes, insurance

schemes and savings cum (sperm) insurance schemes were introduced mostly during the 1980s (Subrahmanya, 1995).

As of 2009, the 12 major social security schemes in India are all presented in **Box 2.2**.

In 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)▪ Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)▪ Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)▪ Aam Admi Bima Yojana (AABY)▪ Swarajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)▪ Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY)▪ Sampoorna Gramen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY)▪ Midday meals▪ Schools stipends▪ Widow pension▪ Disabled pension▪ Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)
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Box 2.2 Overview of social security schemes in India as of 2009

Created by: Tina Ulvin (Source: World Bank, 2011b:x-xv)

One of them is the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), with the purpose of issuing ration cards according to people's poverty status (GOI-Dept. of Food and Public Distribution). The ration card offers commodities such as rice, wheat, sugar and kerosene at an affordable price and can be purchased in local TPDS shops once every month (ibid.). In Karnataka state, the different ration cards are distributed on the following conditions:

(1) Above Poverty Line (APL): Distributed to households with a total income above Rs.12 000 a year.

(2) Below Poverty Line (BPL): Distributed to households with a total income below Rs.12 000 a year.

(3) Anthodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)⁴⁰: Distributed to households with a total income less than Rs.5 000 a year (Narendra Foundation and ActionAid International India, 2006).

⁴⁰ The target group of the AAY card is the poorest of the BPL households (Narendra Foundation and ActionAid International India, 2006).

Table 2.1 illustrates the prices per kilogram of wheat and rice distributed as monthly rations to AAY, BPL and APL card holders in 2002. The prices are given in INR⁴¹.

Commodity	AAY	BPL	APL
Wheat	2	4.15	6.10
Rice	3	5.65	8.30

Table 2.1 Prices of wheat and rice in the TPDS per kilogram

Created by Tina Ulvin (Source: GOI-Dept. of Food and Public Distribution)

Other social security schemes are the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS) that is a monthly money transfer scheme for BPL households, widows and disabled and the Rashtriya Swasthiya Bima Yojana (RSBY), which is a subsidized health insurance scheme for BPL households in cases of hospitalization. The Aam Admi Bima Yojana (AABY) is an insurance scheme for rural, landless BPL households in cases of accidents, natural deaths and disability. Additionally, the social security coverage includes subsidized social insurance for unorganized workers (example beedi workers⁴²), in selected states and other anti-poverty schemes for the urban poor. Midday meals are a school feeding program for children in grades 1-8 enrolled in government and aided schools. The purpose of the schools stipend is to enroll people belonging to SC, ST and other marginalized groups. The widow pension and disabled pension provides cash transfers. Included is also the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY), which is a rural development scheme, which will be explained later under Subsection 2.3.1.1 *Rural development in India*. Additionally, the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) and the Sampoorna Gramen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) already mentioned in section 2.1.3.2 under previous EGS, is also included (World Bank, 2011b:x-xv).

Another recent legislation in India is the Right to Education (RTE) Act (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2009). Launched in 2009, the RTE provides free and compulsory education for all children between 6 to 14 years (ibid.). Contemporary under

⁴¹ 1 Norwegian krone equals about INR 7.

⁴² Beedi is a kind of tobacco.

negotiations in India is the possible next coming up legislations; the Right to Food Act and the Right to Health Act.

2.3 Rural Development

2.3.1 Conceptualizing rural development

The term 'rural development' gained its recognition in the mid 1970s, and referred to the fact that it was the rural areas that inhabited most of the world's poor, and that something had to be done to change this pattern (Ellis ,2000). The well-known scholar Robert Chambers has been one of the leading advocacies for rural development since the 1980's (Chambers, 1983). Chambers (1983) defines rural development as:

..a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of development. The group includes small-scale farmers, tenants, and the landless (Chambers 1983:147).

With this definition, Chambers (1983) suggests that rural development is a *strategy* to improve the rural poor's general living standard. He emphasizes how rural development will be initiated by the 'outsiders', but that the goal should be to transfer the role from the outsider to the people concerned. In other words, he stresses the importance of the rural poor gradually gaining the power to seize control over their own development (Chambers, 1983).

Singh (1999:21) defines rural development as a *process*: "leading to sustainable improvement in the quality of life of rural people, especially the poor". Singh explains this 'improvement' as not only including economic aspects, but also change in behavior, customs and belief systems for the particular people (ibid). Singh (1999), argues that the process of rural development can be explained in a nutshell as: "represent(ing) the entire gamut of change by which a social system moves away from a state of life perceived as 'unsatisfactory' towards a materially and spiritually better condition of life" (Singh, 1999:21). In other words, rural development is perceived as a positive change of condition for the people concerned.

Ellis (2000:25) defines rural development as: “an organizing principle for anti-poverty policies in rural areas of low income countries”. Rural development emphasizes an action or a change to develop or improve a rural area to the benefit of the people residing there. The change or action can entail a public program or a project usually put forth by the government or the civil society with the purpose of reducing poverty (Ellis, 2000). The MGNREGA in India is an example of such a program implemented by the Indian government with the aim of improving people’s lives.

2.3.1.1. Rural development in India

*The true India is to be found not in its few cities, but in its seven hundred thousand villages. If the villages perish, India will perish too*⁴³

Agriculture has a long history in India as it dates back as far as to the 7th millennium BC (Encyclopædia Britannica a). In 1999, nearly two-thirds of the Indian population depended on agriculture as their main source for employment and livelihood (Singh, 1999). According to the HDI (2010), 70 percent of the Indian population lived in rural areas (HDI, 2010)⁴⁴. The fact that rural livelihoods encompasses such large proportions of the population, suggests that emphasis on rural development should be a concern by the nation state (Singh, 1999).

The Indian government has a long history of programs and interventions aimed at developing its rural areas, but despite the effort, rural India is predominantly characterized as underdeveloped with high incidents of poverty (Singh, 1999). Rural areas suffers from production deficiency, lack of basic infrastructure, informal and scattered small-scale enterprises and a high dependence on climate conditions for securing their livelihoods, which in turn, makes life risky and difficult to plan ahead.

⁴³ Quote from Mahatma Gandhi, found at:

http://www.hinduismguide.com/hinduism/swadeshi_movement.htm (accessed 01.04.2011)

⁴⁴ For comparison, in 1951, 83 percent of the Indian population lived in rural areas (Singh, 1999). Considering the population growth, the number of people living in rural areas today is much higher than 60 years back. In the US, the number of people dependent on agriculture in the US was 3 percent in 1995 (ibid.).

In 1993-94, 55 percent of the rural Indian population was illiterate (Singh, 1999). Similarly, limited health care and access to social services also identifies rural India (RPP-IFAD website). Poverty is most severe among the lower caste populations, the SC and STs. In 2005, these groups constituted 80 percent for the rural poor. Moreover, particularly women are vulnerable due to gender discrimination in some social groups (ibid.). As of 2004-2005, 80 percent of the rural people in India were stated as undernourished (calorie poor) by the World Bank (World Bank, 2011a).

The problem, according to Singh (1999) is India's lack of a unified national policy that incorporates both agricultural and rural development. The contemporary practice by the Indian government is exercising several, as he writes 'subsectoral policies', such as the national forest policy, national water policy and land reform policies, and in addition to that, a number of various rural and agricultural programmes. In the worst cases, all these initiatives end up spoiling the development potential of each other (Singh, 1999).

The rural development schemes⁴⁵ implemented by the Indian Government in recent years includes the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), introduced in 2000, with the aim of facilitating rural infrastructure by constructing roads (MORD-GOIA). The Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)⁴⁶ was implemented in 1999 with the purpose of granting Self-Help Groups (SHG)⁴⁷, composed of people below poverty line, for generating income earning activities. Another scheme is the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) (rural housing)⁴⁸ that was introduced in 1996 with the

⁴⁵ It is important to mention that these schemes encompass only rural areas, whilst, many of the employment generation programmes listed under section 2.1.3.2 *Previous employment generation schemes in India* also includes urban areas.

⁴⁶ The SGSY replaced the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP). The IRDP was introduced in 1978 with the aim of reducing rural poverty (Drèze, 1990).

⁴⁷ A SHG is a village-based activity aimed at benefiting poor people through microcredit. A SHG is a group of about 10-20 people, usually women, that together save money and distributing loans to the group members when needed.

⁴⁸ The IAY originated as a part of the REGP and the RLEG rural employment generation schemes (MORD-GOIA). The latter two are described under section 2.1.3.2 *Previous employment generation schemes in India*.

purpose of providing financial support for improving rural housing for people belonging to SC or ST groups and other social groups falling below poverty line⁴⁹ (ibid.). The schemes are presented in **Box 2.3**.

1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) ▪ Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana

Box 2.3 Overview of rural development schemes in India

Created by Tina Ulvin (Source: MORD-GOIa)

2.3.2 The rural livelihood framework

The rural livelihood framework is an analytical tool developed and utilized by various scholars and organizations to understand the different micro and macro features that have influence on the survival strategies of particularly poor, rural households (DFID, 1999).

In short, the concept of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) emerged in the 1980s and 1990s on the backdrop of the current changes in the way development was perceived. The notion of development being measured based on single economic terms was replaced with a broader view encompassing human and environmental aspects as well (Brocklesby and Fisher, 2003). In 1987, the Brundtland Commission Report⁵⁰ applied the concept of sustainable livelihoods, and in 1990 the first Human Development Report was published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (Solesbury, 2003). In the latter, the Human Development Index (HDI) includes life expectancy and school enrollment together with the Gross Domestic

⁴⁹ The list of beneficiaries also include free bonded laborers , widows and close family members of military defense personnel killed in war (MORD-GOIa).

⁵⁰ The full name of the commission was the "World Commission on Environment and Development", and the title of the report was "Our Common Future". The leading chairperson at the time was Gro Harlem Brundtland (Solesbury, 2003).

Product (GDP) per capita. In this way, socioeconomic features and environmental issues were analyzed together when considering people and their livelihood outcomes.

Leading contributors to the concept of sustainable livelihoods and the sustainable livelihood framework are Chambers and Conway (1992), the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) presented by Scoones (1998), Ellis (2000) and the Department for International Development (DFID) (1999) in the United Kingdom.

In this text, the point of departure of the rural livelihood framework is Scoones' (1998) contribution to the topic. This is because I regard this framework as particularly relevant for this research as it not only illustrates the different elements affecting rural livelihoods, but also includes the aspect of the number of working days as one of the livelihood outcomes. As the aim of this thesis is to understand to what extent poverty is reduced through social security provided by the MGNREGA, the number of working days constitutes one crucial aspect when analyzing the livelihood outcomes in this respect. The livelihood framework will also be presented with contributions by Ellis (2000), Carney (1998) and the DFID (1999) to give an extended understanding of the framework.

Finally, based on these contributions of the rural livelihood framework, a livelihood framework adapted to describe the livelihood situation in rural Karnataka will be presented.

2.3.2.1 Defining livelihoods

Ellis (2000:10) definition of livelihood is:

A livelihood comprises the assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital), the activities, and the access to these (mediated by institutions and social relations) that together determine the living gained by the individual or household⁵¹.

Scoones (1998:5) present the definition of livelihood as:

⁵¹ Ellis's (2000) definition derives from Chambers and Conway's (1991) definition of livelihoods (Ellis, 2000:10). With their definition, Chambers and Conway excel as the pioneers within the concept of livelihoods (Carney, 1998:4).

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base.

2.3.2.2 Sustainable livelihoods

The concept of sustainability has gained worldwide recognition as being an integrated part of the development discourse. According to Scoones (1998), the term sustainable broadly deals with the relationship between poverty and the environment, but the concept has been subject to inconsistent usage in the literature making the term difficult to clarify. Scoones's (1998) definition of sustainable livelihoods derives from Chambers and Conway's (1991) contribution to the topic, and they refer to sustainability as "the ability to maintain and improve livelihoods while maintaining or enhancing the local and global assets and capabilities on which livelihoods depend" (Chambers and Conway, 1991:4)⁵². Ellis (2000), leaves the term 'sustainable' to only be included in relation to environmental matters as he regards the term as being "one of the most over-used and degraded words in development studies" (Ellis, 2000:x). As of this debate, the term sustainable will consist as a part of the concept of livelihoods throughout the text because of its relevance and importance in the interdisciplinary approach towards development.

2.3.2.3 The different elements of the livelihood framework

In 1998, the IDS (by Scoones, 1998), published an analytical framework for rural sustainable livelihoods, in which they raised the question:

*Given a particular **context** (of policy setting, politics, history, agroecology and socio-economic conditions), what combination of **livelihood resources** (different types of 'capital') result in the ability to follow what combination of **livelihood strategies** (agricultural intensification/extensification, livelihood diversification and migration) with what **outcomes**?*

⁵² Chamber and Conway's (1991) concept of sustainability in their definition of livelihoods, is adopted from the World Commission on Environment and Development's definition of livelihoods (Chambers and Conway, 1991:4).

*Of particular interest in this framework are the **institutional processes** (embedded in a matrix of formal and informal institutions and organizations) which mediate the ability to carry out such strategies and achieve (or not achieve) such outcomes (Scoones, 1998:3).*

According to the above question, the important features to keep in mind when adapting a livelihood framework is the given context, the resources available and the institutional processes that together influence the outcome of the livelihood strategies exercised. The livelihood framework gives a “holistic and integrated view of the processes by which people achieve (or fail to achieve) sustainable livelihoods” (Scoones, 1998:13). A livelihood is never static nor predetermined, but always changing and influenced by the environment people live in (ibid.). The livelihood framework presented by Scoones (1998) is given as **Appendix 3**.

In his definition, Scoones (1998) emphasizes the three terms *capabilities*, *assets* and *activities*, while Ellis (2000) emphasizes: *assets*, *activities* and *access* in his definition. Although Ellis (2000) refers to Scoones (1998) several times in his book, he adds a new contribution to the topic of livelihoods with the term ‘access’ as he regard is missing in the existing debate (Ellis, 2000:9). These will be further elaborated below.

2.3.2.4 Assets/capitals

Scoones (1998) presents four different assets or capitals that he claims constitute the livelihood resources. These are: *natural*, *human*, *financial*⁵³ and *social* capital. Ellis (2000) adds a fifth asset that he defines as the *physical* capital⁵⁴. The term ‘assets’ refers to the five resources or stocks of ‘capitals’ that the household already owns, controls, can claim and/or have access to. Together, they constitute the point of departure of to what degree the household is able to engage in production, join the

⁵³ In relation to financial capital, Scoones (1998) writes ‘economic or financial capital’, but to ease the clarification I will only refer to financial capital as it means the same thing.

⁵⁴ The DFID’s livelihood framework by Carney (1998), also includes physical capital as comprising one of the five capitals (Carney, 1998).

labor markets and interact with other household for reciprocal exchange (Ellis, 2000)⁵⁵.

‘Natural’ capital encompasses the natural resource base that includes land, soil, water, air, trees and other biological resources that people can utilize as means for achieving a sustainable living (Scoones, 1998). The natural asset is dynamic, and it can only increase its productivity by human influence. For example, for some, diversified agriculture would furnish the best outcome. Difference is made between renewable and non-renewable natural resources, whereby emphasis is put on the management of renewing the renewable resources, for example whether the forest is maintained to ensure a continuous supply of firewood or whether mechanisms to prevent over fishing is intact (Ellis, 2000).

‘Human’ capital refers to the household’s health status, skills, knowledge and ability to labor (Carney, 1998). The household can enhance its labor productivity by accessing more/higher education and through training (Ellis, 2000). In addition, good health and the ability to pursue a diversified number of income generating activities will further strengthen the household’s capacity to earn a living, and to manage risks and shocks (Scoones, 1998). At the micro level, the household constitutes the ‘cluster’ of human capital that is under constant change because of change in the family’s composition. For example, some family members will grow old and others will be born and some are married off and other gets married into the family. Together, the family will constitute the core influencing the level of human capital achieved. At the macro level, governmental policies dealing with education and health services will likewise have influence on the household’s ability to seize a sustainable livelihood (Ellis, 2000).

‘Financial’ capital refers to the economic status of a family in terms of savings and cash (Scoones, 1998), and its ability to access and accumulate more money through loans. For people that lack access to financial institutions, investments in for example livestock can function as savings (Ellis, 2000). Financial capital can also include remittances or pensions (Carney, 1998).

⁵⁵ For information, Scoones (1998) presents just a brief explanation of the assets in his article (p.7-8), while Ellis gives a more detailed description in his book (p. 31-37).

‘Social’ capital encompasses “the social resources such as networks, group memberships, trustful relations and connections to other institutions of society (Carney, 1998:7). These social resources may give a sense of social belonging and inclusiveness, which can contribute to further assist the household in the realization of a sustainable livelihood (Carney, 1998, Scoones, 1998 and Ellis, 2000). In practice, social capital can function as social security networks, for example, in the form of insurance and support through localized reciprocity among kin and/or friends and/or others (Ellis, 2000).

‘Physical’ capital refers to the household’s ability to invest in assets that will generate a future flow of income, such as tools and machines for irrigation purposes (Ellis, 2000)⁵⁶. Physical capital also includes building (houses) and basic infrastructure such as roads, power lines, communications and water supply (Carney, 1998 and Ellis, 2000).

Altogether, these five capitals constitute the means for survival for the rural populations both directly and indirectly (Ellis, 2000). They are presented in **Figure 2.3**.

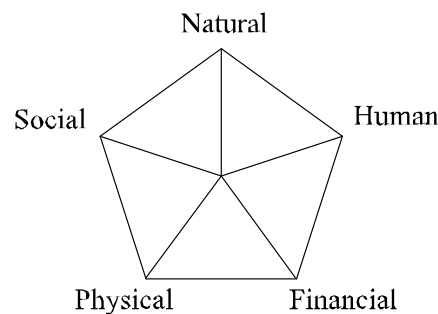


Figure 2.3 The asset pentagon (Carney, 1998:6)

2.3.2.5 Activities and livelihood strategies

The term ‘activity’ in the definitions entails the type of activities that together constitute the survival portfolio of the household. “Livelihood strategies are composed of activities that generate the means of household survival” (Ellis, 2000:40). The intention behind the activity can be to cover short-term and/or long-term needs, and/or to invest in other assets (Chambers and Conway, 1991:8), and

⁵⁶ For orientation, Scoones (1998:8) includes the features of Ellis’s physical capital in his economic and financial capital i.e. the basic infrastructure, tools and technology available for the household.

typically, these activities support the household with both cash and in-kind inputs. Cash is generated when livestock or/and the farm produce is sold, through wages, rents and remittances. In-kind is generated when the household consumes its own production, through exchange and transfers and payments of consumption items such as food. A household's sources of income can be classified as farm-income, off-farm income and non-farm income. The first refers to income collected from crops cultivated on own land, shared land or on rented land, and also from livestock. The net income is calculated by subtracting the production costs, and it includes both cash and in-kind contributions. The second refers to income generated from agricultural related work either through exchange or as wage employment carried out on other farms, and it also includes payment as in-kind for example through non-wage labor contracts. The latter refers to income generated from work not related to agriculture i.e. salaries and wages, rental income, remittances, other public social transfers obtained and self-employment pursued not in relation to agriculture (Ellis, 2000).

Back to Scoones (1998), livelihood diversification is another livelihood strategy pursued, which engages in multiple activities to advance the household's coping strategies in case of risks and shocks⁵⁷. Additionally, he also draws attention to agricultural intensification or extensification (either to increase the production efficiency on the given piece of land or extend the agricultural production through increasing the available plot of land) and migration as two alternative livelihood strategies available for the rural population (Scoones, 1998).

2.3.2.6 Access

Through what combination of social structures and processes are sustainable households realized? That is what the term 'access' tries to identify. Scoones (1998) emphasizes contexts, conditions and trends on the one side and institutions and organizations on the other, as the chief mediating factors that influence the livelihood strategies pursued. The first three include political, historical, climatical,

⁵⁷ Ellis (2000:15) defines rural livelihood diversification as: "the process by which rural households construct an increasingly diverse portfolio of activities and assets in order to survive and to improve their standard of living". Chambers and Conway (1991) also stress the practice of diversified livelihoods.

agrecological and demographical conditions, social differences, and other aspects such as macro-economic and terms of trade (Scoones, 1998). When describing institutions, Davies (cited in Scoones, 1998:12) argues that institutions are “the social cement which link stakeholders to access to capital of different kinds to the means of exercising power and so define the gateways through which they pass on the route to positive or negative (livelihood) adaptation” (Scoones, 1998:12). Institutions are normative and are constantly being reshaped due to numerous interpretations and power relations negotiating the rules, norms and institutional practices that should be permissible (Scoones, 1998). According to North (cited in Scoones, 1998:12), institutions differ by organisations whereby institutions forms “the rules of the game” and organisations constitute “the players of the game” (Scoones, 1998:12). In brief, organizations refer to the organizational structures developed upon the existing institutions (Scoones, 1998).

In the same way, The DFID (1999) presents the *vulnerability context* and *transforming structures and processes* as the mediating components of access. The vulnerability context resembles many of the factors listed by Scoones (1998), but is referred to as *trends*, *shocks* and *seasonality*. The various content of these are listed in **Box 2.4**. The vulnerability⁵⁸ context emphasizes the different risk factors that might jeopardize the sustainable livelihood security. According to the DFID (1999:3), the vulnerability context “frames the external environment in which people exist”.

Trends	Shocks	Seasonality
• Population trends	• Human health shocks	• Of prizes
• Resource trends (including conflict)	• Natural shocks	• Of production
• National/International economic trends	• Economic shocks	• Of health
• Trends in governance (including politics)	• Conflict	• Of employment opportunities
• Technological trends	• Crop/Livestock health shocks	

Box 2.4 The different component of trends, shocks and seasonality (DFID, 1999)

Households have very little or no control over these three elements, and yet they constitute the prime influencing factors for the livelihood’s attainment of assets.

⁵⁸ Vulnerability is defined as: “the proneness of a household or family to acute food insecurity when confronted by a calamitous event like a drought or flood” (Ellis and Freeman, 2005:6).

Trends are relatively predictable and they comprise population, resources (including conflict), national and international economy, governance and technology. Shocks are more unpredictable and can directly harm livelihoods in events of sickness, natural disasters, livestock's death, crop failure and conflicts. Economic downturns and sudden changes in exchange rates and terms of trade can also have negative effect on livelihood outcomes. In developing countries, seasonality constitutes a major cause of deprivation in terms of price fluctuations, deficiency in sufficient provision of employment opportunities, health status and access to food (production) (DFID, 1999).

The transforming structures and processes comprise of the institutions, organizations, policies, laws and cultural aspects that form the livelihoods, and their significance is visible both at the local as well as international level, in public and private domains. These elements influence the household's access to assets, the livelihood strategies pursued and the various decision-making institutions. Culture is included because it will also have affect on people's sense of inclusion and well-being in the society, and it will help to understand different practices in different countries (DFID, 1999).

2.3.2.7 Social relations

Wanting more emphasis on the notion of access, Ellis (2000) adds a third component to the term access, namely, *social relations*. Social relations mean the "social positioning of individuals and households within society" (Ellis, 2000:38). This in turn, depends on factors such as ethnicity, class, caste, age, gender and belief systems that will vary according to different contexts (Ellis, 2000). This aspect is particularly relevant for India as the importance of caste, class, religion and gender is evident in the country.

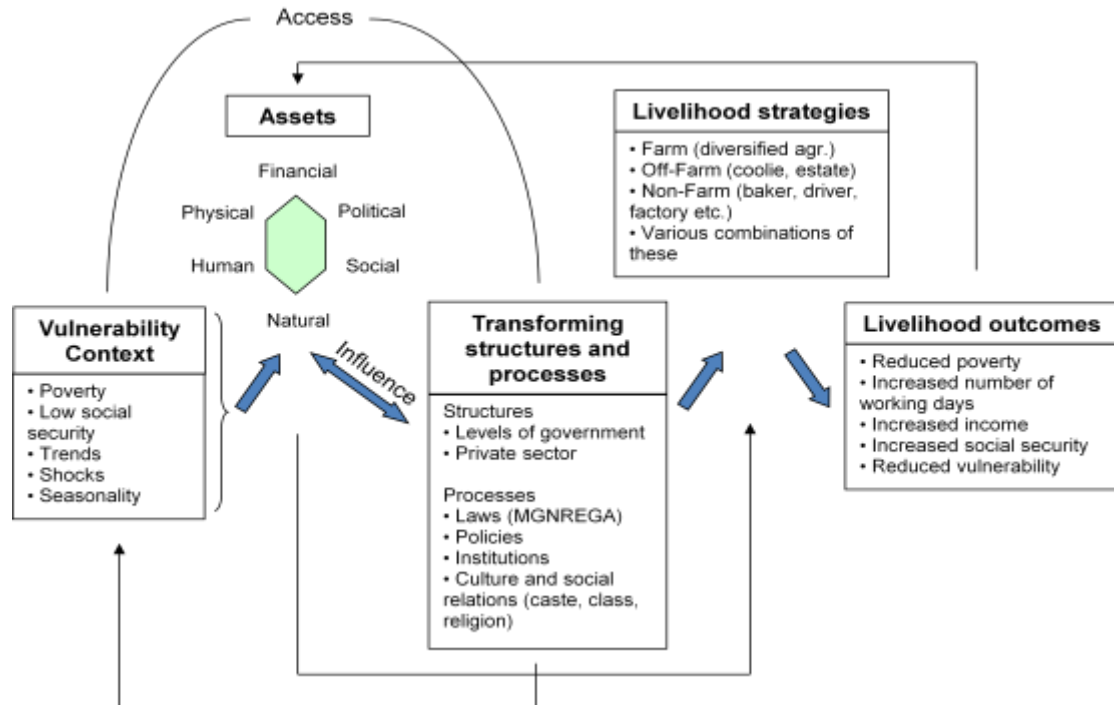
2.3.2.8 Outcome indicators of sustainable livelihoods

Based upon his definition, Scoones (1998) draws attention to five distinct indicators that help to convey whether or not a sustainable livelihood has been achieved. The first two indicators are of special interest for this research, namely employment and poverty, although all the indicators are relevant. Scoones (1998) suggests that a

minimum of 200 days a year should be devoted to work related activities to meet the family's consumption requirements. The second indicator highlights poverty as, what he claims, is the dominant aspect when addressing livelihoods. Poverty levels can be measured by an absolute poverty line, and relative poverty can be measured by the Gini coefficient (Scoones, 1998). The third indicator refers to the notion of capabilities and well-being as two supplementary aspects that help to look at the livelihood concept more broadly, and not just by material objects such as food, money and clothes. Concerns such as happiness, power, security, vulnerability and self-esteem, should also be taken into consideration when looking at livelihood outcomes. The fourth indicator stresses the relevance of livelihood adaptation, vulnerability and resilience, to understand in what ways a livelihood is able to manage, but also to recover from stress and shocks. The livelihood can be classified as vulnerable and non-sustainable when it is incapable of coping (temporary adjustments) and adapting (long term adjustments) to a new and unexpected situation (for example drought) (Scoones, 1998). Lastly, the fifth indicator emphasizes the sustainable use of natural resources. A livelihood is not sustainable if the natural resources it depends on is spoiled or damaged, for example by overgrazing (Scoones, 1998).

2.3.2.9 Adapting the rural livelihood framework to rural Karnataka

Figure 2.4 Conceptual view of household livelihood systems in rural Karnataka.



Source: Adapted from Scoones (1998) and DFID (1999) and modified by the researcher to capture the specificities of rural Karnataka⁵⁹

Figure 2.4 attempts to capture the different elements that comprise and influence the livelihoods of the research subjects in rural Karnataka. The livelihood framework presents the elements that constitute *access* (vulnerability context and the transforming structures and processes), and the elements that includes the household's store of *assets*, the *livelihood strategies* pursued by the households and the *livelihood outcomes* as a result of these.

⁵⁹ These two livelihood frameworks were chosen because they both include elements that are relevant to the villages studied in rural Karnataka. The DFID's (1999) framework used in Figure 2.4 is based upon two models found in: <http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0901/section2.pdf> and <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Information/Knowledge-Solutions/Sustainable-Livelihoods-Approach.pdf> Accessed 07.04.2011

The vulnerability context influences the assets of the household. For example, if the poverty level of the household is high, the household's store of the financial asset will be low. Assets and the transforming structures and processes have mutual influence on each other. For instance, in terms of education, it is the government who facilitates the household's opportunities to access education (by building schools, providing teachers and school books). Similarly, the educational level of a person constitutes one crucial factor for that person's ability to influence the government, for example, through a governmental profession. Furthermore, the transforming structures and processes influence the livelihood strategies pursued, which will also affect the livelihood outcomes. For example, through acquiring higher education, additional occupational opportunities other than farming become accessible for these people. Moreover, the transforming structures and processes influences the household's vulnerability context by, for example, enforcing a new law (the MGNREGA), which may have impact on the household's level of social security. The livelihood outcomes influence the household's assets in terms of, for example, increased number of working days that might enhance the household's physical capacity.

Figure 2.4 introduces three new elements to the livelihood framework adapted for rural Karnataka. These are: *social security* and *poverty* as a part of both the vulnerability context and the livelihood outcomes, and *political capital* as a part of assets⁶⁰.

In the vulnerability context, low social security and poverty are included together with the relevant features of trends, shocks and seasonality, as factors that all contribute to a vulnerable situation for the research subjects in rural Karnataka. The element of social security is included because it can constitute a buffer against, for instance risks and shocks. Ellis and Freeman (2005:27), claims that “the threat of uninsured asset loss and the possibility that unforeseen events can knock people into lower-level livelihood strategies underscore that safety nets can play an extremely valuable role in mitigating risks, in keeping short-term shocks from leading to chronic poverty through endogenous asset decumulation or low-return production and portfolio strategies”. As mentioned above, a number of rural development schemes have been

⁶⁰ ‘The MGNREGA’ and the concept of ‘social security’ and ‘poverty’ are included in **Figure 2.4** because they constitute the prime focus of this thesis.

implemented in India, including the MGNREGA, but still a comprehensive social security system is lacking. The element of poverty is also included because of its prevalence in the study area, and because poverty in all matters, makes people vulnerable.

With reference to the sixth asset; political asset, it is included because it identifies democratic values such as local political participation as a way to achieve control over one's life, but without fear of any kind of external sanctions. The point of departure of the political asset is Sen's (1999) concept of political freedom through the capability approach described earlier in this chapter.

Culture and social relations are added in the transforming structures and processes because culture in India in terms of caste, class and religion, has strong significance in the Indian society, especially in rural areas. The importance of caste, class and religion will be further described in Chapter 3.

The livelihood strategies pursued in the study area can be divided into farm, off-farm and non-farm related activities. The former includes diversified agriculture (multiple cropping) on own land. Off-farm related activities means work related to farming but not on own land. In the research area, this type of work was referred to as *coolie work* (casual worker in relation to farm work) carried out on other people's land. The third category, non-farm related work, includes work not relating to farm work, such as working in a bakery. In addition, in the study area, combinations of two or three of these were also pursued, which is referred to as a diversified livelihood.

Lastly, the livelihood outcomes described: reduced poverty, increased number of working days, increased income, increased social security and reduced vulnerability will be discussed in relation to the impact of the MGNREGA on poverty reduction in the study area. **Figure 2.4** will be more thoroughly discussed in Chapter 5.

2.3.2.10 Implications of the livelihood framework

One implication to the livelihood framework is that it does not include change over time. The livelihood framework presents the livelihood situation at a given time but it does not reveal any elements illustrating change of patterns that might have influence on the livelihoods. However, changes can be detected by utilizing the same

framework at different periods, for example every second year. Then comparisons of the various elements comprising the livelihood framework can be made and further analyzed.



CHAPTER 3: STUDY AREA

Chapter 3 presents geographical, historical, cultural and social features of India, the state of Karnataka and the Ramanagara District to give a broader understanding of the context of the research area. The significance of caste, class and religion will be given particular emphasis as they constitute influential components of social India.

3.1 Background: A Profile of India

The Republic of India, called *Bharat* in Hindi (Encyclopædia Britannica a), is the 7th largest country in the world in terms of geographical area of 3.3 million square kilometers. India borders to Pakistan in the north-west, to China, Bhutan and Nepal in the north, to Myanmar and Bangladesh in the east and to Sri Lanka in the south-east with a stretch of sea in between (CIA Factbook, 2011). The mainland is also bounded by the Arabian Sea in the west and the Bay of Bengal to the east (ibid.). India is divided into 28 states⁶¹ and 7 union territories⁶² (the States are presented in **Map 3.1** below) (GOI website, 2010).

Geographically, India holds four main regions; the hilly areas in the south (the Deccan Plateau), the mountainous Himalayas in the north, the river-borne areas between the Himalayas and the Deccan Plateau (Indo-Gangetic Plain) including the three big rivers (Ganges, Brahmaputra and Indus) and the dry semi-arid areas in the west (includes the Thar desert). Included is also the islands situated southwest (Lakshadweep) and southeast (Andaman and Nicobar). The climate varies from a more temperate in the north to more tropical in the south (Encyclopædia Britannica a).

⁶¹ The 28 states are: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Jharkhand, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal (GOI website, 2010).

⁶² The 7 union territories are: Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Lakshadweep, National Capital Territory of Delhi and Puducherry (GOI website, 2010).

Economically, India constitutes one of the most diversified economies in the world that has experienced enormous growth in the past thirty years. For instance, India has become highly specialized in technology such as software, but also other industries such as in manufacturing (handicraft, textiles, jewelries and steel), in mining (minerals), petroleum and agriculture (although its share of GDP has decreased) is included in the Indian economy (Encyclopædia Britannica a).

Historically, India has a rich cultural heritage, which is influenced by numerous invasions by ethnic groups and their religions, languages and customs, which dates back to Indus valley civilization 2600 years BC. Later, in short, the Indian subcontinent has been influenced by Aryan tribes and Islamic settlements. By the latter, India was first ruled under five Islamic kingdoms referred to as the Delhi Sultanate, and later, in the 16th century, for three centuries under the Mughal Empire. During this period, European explorers began to invade the country, which resulted in British domination from 1857-1947, also called the British Raj period. The day of independence came on August 15th, 1947 when India was also separated from Pakistan. A prominent person in the independence movement was Mohandas K. Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi) and his philosophy of non-violence (Encyclopædia Britannica a).

India is a multiparty federal republic (Encyclopædia Britannica a) and is regarded the largest democracy in the world (World Bank website, 2010). The head of state is President Pratibha Patil, and the Head of government is Manmohan Singh. The capital is New Delhi. Hindi and English are the two official languages, but also Urdu and hundreds of other Dravidian languages are spoken (Encyclopædia Britannica a).

According to Census of India (2011d), the literacy rate in the country is approximately 74 percent. The male literacy rate of 82.14 percent is higher than the female literacy rate of 65.46 percent (Census of India, 2011d). Being illiterate deprives people from a range of occupational opportunities that can accumulate higher wages and more stable working conditions than unskilled occupations. After the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act the level of illiteracy in the country will decrease, and preferably open up for engagement within the skilled labor market. This might again have positive impact on the poverty levels in the country.



Map 3.1 Map of India showing Karnataka State

Source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/india/indiastateandunion.htm>(16.06.2011)

3.1.1 The Significance of class, caste and religion

In the Indian society, the significance of class, caste and religion has remained strong, although its importance is gradually decreasing in both rural and urban areas (Shah, 2007). According to Census of India (2001e), the predominant religious groups in India were Hindus comprising of 80.5 percent of the population, Muslims 13.4 percent, Christians 2.3 percent, Sikhs 1.9 percent, Buddhists 0.8 and 0.4 percent belonged to Jainism.

“Caste has been the predominant marker of deprivation and privilege in India” (World Bank, 2011a:227). Anchored in Hinduism thousands of years back, the caste system has functioned as the social organizer of people within the Indian society (Encyclopædia Britannica a). According to once caste, or *jati*, the role (occupation), status and behavior was already decided at birth. The four main social categories of caste, or *varnas*, decided upon occupation and status were; (1) Brahmins (priests) highest on the hierarchical ladder, (2) Kshatriyas (warriors), (3) Vaishyas (merchants) and (4) Sudras (craftsmen and laborers) (ibid.). A fifth category comprise of the

former *untouchables*, which are now referred to as Scheduled Castes (SCs)⁶³. This group was at the bottom of society, excluded from the above social hierarchical classification because they were associated with an impure way of living. The various sources of impurity were such as dirt, hair, dung, leather, blood, and it was believed that if an untouchable ‘touched’ a person from a higher caste, that person would become ‘polluted’. Hence, to avoid getting polluted, any interaction between the castes, for example marriages was forbidden (ibid.). As the occupational role was passed on through generations, few opportunities existed for lower castes to escape poverty (World Bank, 2011a). In addition, the tribal people, or the *adivasis*, also encompassed the marginalized social groups in the Indian society. Although not subject to the perception of untouchability, the *adivasis* were physically excluded from the social community and living mostly in forest areas. These people, later categorized as Scheduled Tribes (STs), comprised one of the most impoverished social groups in India (ibid.).

Acknowledging the unfair disadvantages of the lower castes and tribes, the practice of caste was forbidden by law in 1951 to stop any discriminate behavior based on caste (Shah, 2007). However, the practice and relevance of caste has not disappeared, but it has changed. Shah (2007) argues that because of growing urbanization and westernization⁶⁴, caste as a system is more or less dead, but that caste still continues to exist as individual castes. For instance, the traditional determination of caste based on occupation has lost much of its significance as nearly every caste at present are employed in variety of professions, and the importance of distinct customs and restrictions have been wiped out due to migration and mixed settlements of different castes. As of this, Shah (2007:111) states that “castes too are globalized”.

In 2007, the SCs constituted about 1/6th of India’s population, and they were mostly landless and engaged as agricultural laborers (Shah, 2007). According to Census of India (2001f), 8.1 percent (84.3 million people) were Scheduled Tribes. In the

⁶³ Mahatma Gandhi referred to the untouchables as *Harijan* (“Children of God”) (Encyclopædia Britannica a).

⁶⁴ Westernization means influences from modern, western lifestyles. As an example, Shah (2007) states that even girls in rural areas have started to wear jeans.

preceding years, quotas has been allocated and public funds have been provided to STs, STs and people from Other Backward Castes (OBCs) in an attempt to enhance more opportunities for these people to raise their standards of living (World Bank, 2011a). Notwithstanding, the World Bank (2011a) states that although poverty has been reduced within backward castes and tribes, the standard of living among the SCs lag 10 years behind the rest of the population, while the STs can be regarded as lagging behind 20 years. In an attempt to break the poverty circle of these marginalized social groups, the MGNREGA states that 1/3 of its beneficiaries shall belong to Scheduled Caste (ST), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Castes (OBC) or from other Minorities (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a:10).

3.2 The State of Karnataka

The name 'Karnataka' in main language Kannada means "Lofty Land" (Encyclopædia Britannica b). Geographically, Karnataka is situated southwest in India and covers 191791 square kilometers, which equals 5.83 percent of India's total land area. In the north Karnataka borders to the states of Goa and Maharashtra, in the east to Andhra Pradesh, in the southeast to Tamil Nadu, and in the south to Kerala and the in the west to the Arabian Sea. In India, Karnataka has become a technological hub with the capital of the state Bangalore (also referred to as Bengaluru) as the leading centre of the software industry (UNDP, 2005). Administratively, Karnataka is divided into 30 districts (Census of India, 2011c).

With regards to population, Karnataka is the ninth largest state in India (UNDP, 2005). According to Census of India (2011c), the total population in Karnataka had increased by 368.26 percent from slightly over 1.3 millions in 1901 to over 60 million people in 2011. Almost 42 percent of the population is under the age of 12, a number that conveys a very young population (Census of India, 2011c). The population density has increased from 276 people per square kilometer in 2001, to 319 in 2011. In 2011, the sex ratio in Karnataka was 968 females per 1000 males (Census of India, 2011b). In 2001, the total number of SCs in the state was about 8.6 million people and about 3.5 million were STs (Census of India, 2001c).

Historically, the state of Karnataka is fairly new as it was formed in 1973. Originally, the area of today's Karnataka was known as the state of Mysore, which was formed in

1956 after gathering all the Kannada speaking people in the area (UNDP, 2005). The majority of the religious followers in the state are Hindus, and slightly less was Buddhists and Janis. Only a few follow Islam and Christianity (Encyclopædia Britannica b).

Karnataka is the chief producing state of silk in India (UNDP India a), and it also produces a lot of coffee and sandalwood. The most common crops grown are rice, millet (ragi), sorghum (jowar), maize, pulses and oilseeds. In addition, cash crops such as cashew nuts, sugarcane, cardamom and grapes are being produced. Also, coconuts, cotton, chilies, rubber and tobacco are grown (Encyclopædia Britannica b). As much of the land is semi-arid, and only 25 percent of the agricultural land is irrigated, the farmers are highly dependent on the rains for cultivation. In the recent years, drought has posed constrains on the people dependent on agriculture as a means of living (UNDP, 2005).

The share of agriculture in state's economy has decreased in the past 30 years. As of 1960, the primary sector accounted for 60 percent of the state's GDP, while twenty years later its share had dropped to 26 percent. Meanwhile, the secondary sector and especially the tertiary sector of the economy have experienced growth (UNDP, 2005).

In Karnataka the literacy rate was almost 76 percent in 2011, which is 2 percent higher than the national literacy rate. The literacy rate in Karnataka has increased by 9 percent from 2001 (Census of India, 2011b).



Map 3.2 Map of Karnataka State showing Ramanagara District

Source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/karnataka/karnataka.htm> (16.06.2011)

3.3 Ramanagara District

The Ramanagara district, also referred to as Ramanagaram district, is situated 50 kilometers southeast of Bangalore, and 747 meters above sea level. The Ramanagara district has only existed for four years, as it prior to 2007 belonged to Bangalore Rural District (bangaloreorbit website). Therefore, all information regarding the Ramanagara district before 2007 will encompass the Bangalore Rural district⁶⁵.

The Bangalore rural district is a major producer of silk, and parts of the silk belt goes through the southern parts of the state (UNDP India a). In 2011, the population in the Ramanagara district was about 1.1 million people, with a sex ratio of 976 females to every thousand males. The population density had increased from 288 in 2001 to 303

⁶⁵ As the Ramanagara district is such a new district there is limited information regarding the district available. Therefore, to supplement the information about the district, additional information concerning the Bangalore rural district will be included.

people per square kilometer in 2011 (Census of India, 2011b). In 2001, the rural population in Bangalore rural district constituted 78.3 percent of the total population of about 1.8 million people (Census of India, 2011c).

According to the Census of India (2011b), the illiteracy rate in Ramanagara district had decreased to slightly over 30 percent in 2011, compare to almost 40 percent in 2001. For the males, the illiteracy rate had decreased about 7 percent in the last ten years to 23 percent in 2011, and for the females the illiteracy rate had decreased by ten percent to about 39 percent in the same period (Census of India, 2011b). These are positive sign for the development of people in the District.

The dominating religion in Bangalore rural district was Hinduism, which accounts for 1.7 million people. Muslims accounts for 170 thousand people and Christianity for 8.7 thousand people. The number of SC's in the district equaled 3.27 percent of the total population, and the three dominant caste groups within the SC were; Adi Karnataka, Madiga and Bhovi. The three main sub-castes belonging to ST were; Naikda, Iruliga and Meda (Census of India, 2001b).



CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

Chapter 4 presents and discusses the methodological approach used in combination with fieldwork and theory. The choices were made based on the most suitable research strategy to answer the objectives and research questions, and also grounded in my understanding of how we obtain knowledge of the social reality. Moreover, the reliability and validity of the research will be discussed along with ethical considerations and limitations related to the collection of data.

4.1 Research Strategy

The data for this research was collected in 10 villages in the state of Karnataka in India from October to mid December, 2010. The research strategy⁶⁶ used was a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods with the use of structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews.

4.1.1 A mixed methods approach

The research approach for this study was a mixed methods research. A mixed methods research means: “research that integrates quantitative and qualitative research within a single project” (Bryman, 2008:603). In the field, I conducted a survey with the use of structured interviewing together with semi-structured and unstructured interviews. The former research technique belongs to the quantitative method⁶⁷ and the next two belongs to the qualitative method⁶⁸. The rationale for using a mixed methods approach was to get hold of as much information as possible to

⁶⁶ Research strategy is described by Bryman (2008:22) as “a general orientation to the conduct of social research”.

⁶⁷ *Quantitative research* usually emphasizes quantification in the collection and analysis of data. As a research strategy it is deductivist and objectivist and incorporates a neutral science model of the research process (in particular, one influenced by positivism), but quantitative researchers do not always subscribe to all three of these features (Bryman, 2008:697).

⁶⁸ *Qualitative research* usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. As a research strategy it is inductivist, constructivist, and interpretivist, but qualitative researchers do not always subscribe to all three of these features (Bryman, 2008:697).

obtain the best understanding of the effectiveness of the MGNREGA on poverty reduction in the study area.

The aim was to take advantage of the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods to enhance the quality of the research. Scheyvens and Storey (2003:37) argues that “quantitative techniques can be very useful – and are often essential – but they must be treated with caution and often supplemented by other techniques”. The quantitative research strategy on the one hand, has been criticized for explaining the *what* but not the *why*, and thereby not stressing the dynamic dimension of life or a given situation (Scheyvens and Storey, 2003). The quantitative technique becomes particularly useful in attempts to cover a wide range of for instance people for generalization purposes, and to present more precise findings, and the approach has been much preferred in previous social science research (ibid.). Qualitative research on the other hand, has become more acknowledged in recent years. The data collection method includes participant observation, semi-structured interviews, focus-groups and oral histories (Scheyvens and Storey, 2003, Bryman, 2008). The qualitative methods emphasize a deeper investigation into a particular social phenomenon to understand the relationship between different variables, to further explain the ‘why’. However, the method has been criticized for being too subjective in the sense that the findings reflects too much of the researcher’s own interpretations and perceptions (Bryman, 2008).

The use of mixed methods in research has increased over the last thirty years, although the credibility of this kind of research strategy has been under much controversy. The stand against the mixed methods approach argues that the epistemological⁶⁹ dimension is lost and/or identifies qualitative and quantitative research as separate paradigms that cannot be blended (Bryman, 2008). In other words, they suggest that mixing qualitative and quantitative methods is not feasible. However, the stand in favor of the mixed methods approach objects the above and argues that qualitative and quantitative research are embedded in particular epistemological and ontological position but that these positions are flexible and not unavoidable (Bryman, 2008). One argument refers to how the qualitative and quantitative research strategy is associated with both advantages and disadvantages,

⁶⁹ Epistemology will be further elaborated in the next Subsection 4.1.2

and how by using both methods you can gain from the potential benefits of both. Another argument refers to how the two approaches can complement each other as “quantitative research provides an account of structures in social life but qualitative research provides a sense of process” (Bryman, 2008:609). In this way the study has the potential of both providing information about a particular situation/thing at one particular point in time and also seeing the dynamic aspects of it (Bryman, 2008).

4.1.2 Interpretivism and Constructivism

“Methods are not simply neutral tools: they are linked with the ways in which social scientists envision the connection between different viewpoints about the nature of social reality and how it should be examined” (Bryman, 2008:5). All research is rooted in a certain worldview that reveals how we can understand the social world around us.

Every research is being conducted in the light of an epistemological⁷⁰ and ontological⁷¹ position, that entails how the researcher regards ‘what we know’ and ‘how we know what we know’ (Bryman, 2008). This research takes the epistemological position ‘interpretivism’ and the ontological position ‘constructivism’, because I believe that knowledge of the social world will always be shaped by people’s ability to think, judge and reflect. A researcher’s understanding of the data develops throughout the entire research process, and that has to be viewed in connection to the understanding the researcher represents and thereby influences the study (Thagaard, 2006).

Interpretivism “requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action” (Bryman, 2008:694). The logic of the world is understood through how we interpret it. In this sense, the data collected will be a product from both the

⁷⁰ *Epistemology* is “a theory of knowledge” (Bryman, 2008:693). It refers to “what is (or should) be regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline” (Bryman, 2008:13).

⁷¹ *Ontology* is “a theory of the nature of social entities” (Bryman, 2008:696). It refers to “whether social entities can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors” (Bryman, 2008:18).

informant's perceptions of the world and the researchers own understanding of the social world. By contrast, a positivist would claim that the social world could be explained objectively without the subjective conscience interfering with a person's knowledge (Bryman, 2008).

Constructivism “asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors” (Bryman, 2008:692). In other words, the world is socially constructed by social interaction, dynamic and constantly changing. The meaning of all phenomena will vary according to the person observing it and living in it (Bryman, 2008). Hence, this research was an inter-subjective process, where knowledge was constructed by the researcher and the research subjects. In the form of discussion there was a constant interaction between the researcher and the scientific community (Lecture by Darley Jose Kjosavik, 17/09/09).

4.2 Selection of Study Area

4.2.1 State and District

The fieldwork was carried out in Ramanagara district in the state of Karnataka, India. Karnataka was chosen because of the location of the Non Governmental Organization Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) situated in the main city of the state, Bangalore. ATREE is a collaborating partner with Noragric⁷² in different projects, which gave me the opportunity to become affiliated with ATREE for the purpose of receiving both practical assistance and guidance in the data collection.

Ramanagara district were chosen because of three reasons: (1) the MGNREGA had been implemented in the district⁷³, (2) ATREE was operating in the area and had a good reputation, which made my presence in the area in affiliation with ATREE more acceptable for the villagers. This criterion was based on the assumption that I would

⁷² The Department of International Environment and Development Studies (Noragric).

⁷³ Conformed by the Indian government on the webpage:

http://nregalndc.nic.in/netnrega/homestciti.aspx?state_code=15&state_name=KARNATAKA

(accessed 01.02.2011)

most likely face some sort of skepticism by the villagers. First of all, because I was a foreigner, and second of all, the fact that I was asking questions about a scheme implemented by the government. The latter would maybe make the villagers believe that I was representing the Indian government, which would put me in a totally different role than a neutral researcher. (3) ATREE had a field-station located in the area employed by two staff members that could assist me, and it was also possible for me to spend the nights into the field, which made my presence in the village more effective as I could access the informants during early mornings and late evenings as well. As the villagers were working in the middle of the day, they were mostly available during mornings from 6:30am to 10:00am and evenings 5:00pm-7:30pm. Hence, without having to travel to and from Bangalore every day, I managed to use my time more effectively by being able to access the villagers at the hours of the day when they were most likely available.

4.2.2 Panchayat and Villages



Map 4.1 Map of Kanakpura Taluk showing the village area visited (Source: ATREE, December 2010)

The scope of my study encompasses nine villages in the Doddamaralavadi Gram Panchayat. The Doddamaralavadi Gram Panchayat is one of 43 Gram Panchayats in Kanakapura Taluk⁷⁴ (Kumar, 2010:17). The villages were: Chikkamaralavadi, Maralavadi, Hanomanthapura, Kenkeripaliya, Kulume Dhoti, Annevasalli, Krishna Bovi Dhoti, S.L.N Dhoti and Sidi Devarahalli. The tenth village visited, Konal Dhoti, belonged to the neighboring Thokasandra Gram Panchayat.

The selection of these villages was an outcome of a process. First of all, I visited the main Taluk office in Kanakapura together with staff from ATREE⁷⁵. The purpose of the visit was to gather information regarding, which Gram Panchayat areas the MGNREGA had been implemented in. The Taluk office suggested three potential Gram Panchayats. The next step was then to locate these Gram Panchayat areas one by one, and visit the local Gram Panchayat offices to acquire information about the number of works that had been carried out under the MGNREGA, and also to get to know how populous these villages were. The rationale for this targeting was that the more number of works that had been conducted under the MGNREGA; the greater the chances were for me to access informants that had participated in the Act. In addition, a higher number of residents in the villages would also increase the availability of informants to my research. The first Gram Panchayat office visited was empty of staff, but the next Gram Panchayat office in Marlawadi gave us the details necessary, and I chose to start the research in the village Sidi Devarahalli. Sidi Devarahalli had completed work under the MGNREGA, the population size was relatively big, and nearby ATREE had a field-station that could be used for accommodation.

The initial idea when I started the fieldwork was to carry out a comparative study, in which I would examine the effectiveness of the MGNREGA in a village closer to an urban area in comparison to a village situated in a remote area further away from an urban environment. However, because of time limits I changed the research approach to only cover villages in one area. This is because I soon realized that surprisingly few

⁷⁴ A Taluk is an administratively sub-division in India that has more or less the same functions as a county in for example Norway.

⁷⁵ The three staff members in ATREE were: the field-coordinator for Kanakapura, a research associate and my translator for the first 6 days in the field.

people actually had carried out work in the scheme, and therefore, to still try and accomplish the target of 80 respondents for the survey, I soon added a second village. But as the same findings were present also in the second village I chose to extend my study area to finally include ten villages⁷⁶.

The ATREE field-station was staffed with two local persons who helped me locate most of the villages and they helped me accessing certain informants, as for example Gram Panchayat members. In addition, one of the staff members (together with one translator) helped me write the rights provided by the MGNREGA in Kannada on paper, for me to copy it and distribute this information to the villagers I interacted with⁷⁷.



Image 4.1 Respondents reading the basic rights provided by the MGNREGA distributed during the fieldwork (Source: Tina Ulvin, December 2010)

4.3 Research Design and Data Collection

In the study, a cross-sectional design was used by structured, semi- structured and unstructured interviews. The cross-sectional design is often referred to as a survey

⁷⁶ A village in India is classified with a population less than 5,000 inhabitants, a male working population of less than 75 percent engaged in non-agricultural activities, and with a population density less than 400 per square kilometer (Census of India, 2001d).

⁷⁷ After only a couple of days in the field I realized that the villagers knew very little about the scheme including those who had participated in the MGNREGA. Hence, I decided to not only give information about the MGNREGA orally, but also in a written form to better equip the respondents with some of the basic information. This information is given as **Appendix 4**, and the translated version in Kannada is given as **Appendix 5**.

research, and is therefore usually associated with quantitative research. Nonetheless, a cross-sectional design can also be employed in qualitative research strategy, for example with the use of semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2008). Defined by Bryman (2008:44) a cross-sectional design: “entails the collection of data on *more than one case* (usually quite a lot more than one) and at a *single point in time* in order to collect a body of *quantitative or quantifiable data* in connection with two or more variables (usually many more than two), which are then examined to detect *patterns of associations*”.

‘More than one case’ refers to how the researchers will study more than one case to seek variation. A case can for example be organizations, companies or people (Bryman, 2008). For this research, to understand the effectiveness of the MGNREGA to reduce poverty in the study area, both people that had and had not participated in the MGNREGA were studied. This was to understand the reasons why the Act would be attractive for some and why the MGNREGA would not be attractive for others. Additionally, I interviewed several stakeholders in relation to the MGNREGA to acquire broader knowledge of existing perceptions and practices.

‘At a single point in time’ means that the data was collected within a relatively short time span (Bryman, 2008). In this fieldwork, the data was collected within three months.

‘Quantitative or quantifiable data’ refers to how the researcher would collect enough information to be able to discover any significant relationships, or ‘patterns of associations’ from the variables (Bryman, 2008). For this research, the statistical software Statistical Package for the Social Scientists (SPSS) was used to draw connection between the variables.

4.3.1 Sampling strategy in quantitative research

The sampling strategy used in this study was convenience sampling, which belongs to the category of non-probability sampling. A convenience sample is defined by Bryman (2008:183) as a sample that is “simply available to the researcher by virtue of accessibility”. My strategy in the field was to visit the different villages and meet as many people as I possibly could, and then ask them if they had participated in work

under the MGNREGA. I would also ask whether they knew about other people in the village that had done work in the scheme to more easily get hold of more respondents.

The disadvantage with convenience sampling is that the findings are not valuable for generalization, because the researcher is collecting data randomly from a certain population, in which he or she is unaware of the size of the total population (Bryman, 2008). In my case, I can only discuss findings that are pertinent for the informants I have interacted with in the 10 villages in rural Karnataka. I am aware that I cannot draw any general conclusions applicable for the rest of India.

A sample of 80 respondents comprised the quantitative research. These are survey respondents that include both men and women in rural Karnataka.

4.3.2 Structured interviewing in survey research

The quantitative part of the study was carried out by the use of structured interviewing. Bryman (2008:193) defines structured interviewing as a research technique that “entails the administration of an interview schedule by an interviewer. The aim is for all interviewees to be given exactly the same context of questioning”. In other words, every research subjects will be asked the exact same questions in the same order and in the same manner.

The aim of using the survey was to access people that had done work under the MGNREGA, for the purpose of understanding their experiences with the scheme. The survey was divided into six sections. Section 1 “general household information”, included basic information about the informants, such as relation in the household, sex, age, education level and income earning activity. Section 2 “proxy poverty indicators of the informants”, included information about ownership a ration cards, ownership of house, whereby I would also observe and classify the standard of the house as either *kutch*a, semi-pukka or pukka house⁷⁸. I also asked about ownership of land, satisfaction of health and attendance in local village meetings. The aim of both section 1 and 2 was to identify the informant’s store of the six assets presented in the

⁷⁸ Definitions: *Kutch*a house means a house made of only mud (lowest standard), *semi-pukka* houses are made of both mud and cement and *pukka* houses have cemented walls (highest standard).

livelihood framework in **Figure 2.4**. Section 3 “awareness about the MGNREGA”, included the informant’s source of knowledge about the MGNREGA and what kind of knowledge they had acquired about the Act. This was to understand the awareness levels of the MGNREGA among the respondents, as it is obvious that for any individuals to gain from a welfare scheme they have to know about it. Section 4 “experience of the MGNREGA”, included a question related to why the informants wanted to participate in the Act to assess the reason(s) why the MGNREGA was needed in the study. Additional questions related to how they had obtained the Job Card and employment through the MGNREGA, how many days they had worked under the Act, what type of work they had carried out and amount and satisfaction of payments was also asked to further understand the informant’s experience with the MGNREGA. Section 5 “benefits of the MGNREGA” encompassed the informant’s perceptions of if and how both they and their community had benefited from the MGNREGA. Lastly, section 6 “the Right to Information (RTI) Act and Social Audits”, was related to the informant’s knowledge of the RTI and social audits, and to what extent they had benefited from them.

I carried out a pre-test of the survey the third and fourth day in the field, as I could not get hold of any respondents that had participated in work conducted under the MGNREGA during the two first days. After pre-testing five informants, I had to change and delete some of the questions to further fit the context, and I also changed some questions from closed to open questions. First of all, I soon realized that the informant’s knowledge about the scheme was limited. This made me add an open question of what they knew about the MGNREGA in general. Thereafter, if they had some knowledge, I would continue to go more in detail asking specific details about ‘if they knew that they had the right to employment through the MGNREGA’, ‘if they knew that they had to apply for employment at the local GP office after receiving the Job Card’ and ‘if they knew that they were entitled to employment by the local GP office within 15 days after submitting an application (requesting employment). With the latter question, I also changed the following question ‘if they knew about the unemployment allowances’, to an open question, in favor of the original closed question ‘if they were not provided employment within the 15 days after submitting the application, were they aware that they were entitled to employment allowances’.

In this way, I would anyway get to know if the informants knew about the unemployment allowances, but in a more straight forward way.

Secondly, the practice of applying for a Job Card and employment through the MGNREGA at the local Gram Panchayat (GP) office did not seem to match how it was described in theory. This made me add open questions as to ‘how they had received their Job Card’ and ‘how they had been provided employment through the MGNREGA’.

Thirdly, coupled with the fact that the majority of the respondents had received the Job Card for more than 6 months ago, made it difficult for many of them to remember details of ‘how many days it took until they received the Job Card’, how many days it took until they were provided employment’ and ‘how many days it took until they received the payments’. This made me delete all these questions to avoid vague answers.

Fourthly, to understand how or if the villagers had benefited from the scheme, I originally asked closed questions directly related to purchasing power and the sense of self-esteem. However, I soon realized that these questions involved a too advanced vocabulary and were too challenging for the respondents to comprehend. This made me change the approach to rather use open questions by asking ‘to what extent they felt that they had benefited from participating in the MGNREGA’, and ‘if yes, then in what way(s)’. I also asked ‘to what extent their community had benefited from the MGNREGA’⁷⁹. In this way, it was easier to understand the informant’s own views of if and how they had benefited. Each interview took approximately 30-45 minutes. The questionnaire is given as **Appendix 6**.

⁷⁹ The fact that the majority of the respondents were illiterate made the interaction with the villagers in relation to the study more challenging than expected. For example, when the translator and I tried to explain to them the fact that they had ‘the right’ to employment through the Act, we were met with a lot of confusion of what the word *right* actually entailed in this sense, which might be obvious given the circumstances that many of these people have never been to school and learned what these kind of expressions means, that educated people can take for granted.



Image 4.2 (left): Focus-group meeting **Image 4.3** (right): Semi-structured interview

(Source: Tina Ulvin, November/ December 2010)

4.3.3 Sampling strategy in qualitative research

In the qualitative research, I also used the convenience sampling. I gathered information for the interviews simultaneously as I was searching for respondents for the survey. In practice, I strategically tried to gain information from all the villagers I came across to better grasp the reality of the effectiveness of the MGNREGA in this area. For instance, if a villager said that he had not done any work in the scheme, I would leave the survey aside and instead make a short interview with the person to understand *why* he or she had not carried out any work in the scheme.

Initially, the plan was to mainly have a quantitative study where I would only focus on the section of the population that had done work under the MGNREGA, but as I soon became aware of the fact that surprisingly few had participated in the Act, I had to change my approach of the study to also include the people that had not done any work to grasp the real picture of the effectiveness of the MGNREGA in this area. For example, *why was* the scheme not attractive to some sections of the population?

The qualitative part consisted of a sample of 80 smaller semi-interviews with respondents that had not participated in any work under the MGNREGA. These respondents were divided into four categories with the number of respondents in each category given in brackets: 1. Respondents with Job Cards, but has not worked under

the MGNREGA (19), 2. Respondents without Job Cards and still knew about the MGNREGA (22), 3. Respondents without Job Cards and knew nothing about the MGNREGA (22), and at last 4. Respondents that had applied for the Job Card in the MGNREGA, but had not received it at the time of the fieldwork (17). The interview-guide for the semi-structured interviews is given as **Appendix 7**.

In addition, the study also consists of two focus-group⁸⁰ meetings with women with the purpose of capturing a broader understanding of women's reflections about the MGNREGA as a group rather than as individuals. The interviews were semi-structured, and the interview guide is given as **Appendix 8**.

The study also includes 17 unstructured interviews. Five of these were extended interviews with participants under the MGNREGA (two females and three males) to grasp a deeper understanding of their perceptions concerning the Act (the interview guide given as **Appendix 9 (A)**). Also, interviews with two social workers, one interview with an ATREE field staff and an interview with two members of the Green Foundation⁸¹ in the study area were carried out to understand their local views about the significance of the Act (the interview guide for these three interview sessions is given as **Appendix 9 (B)**). The study also contains four interviews with governmental officials whose occupation is related to the MGNREGA from the village (Gram Panchayat) level to the Karnataka State level (the interview guide given as **Appendix 9 (C)**). Apart from these, the study also includes one interview with a professor at the Bangalore University to add an academic point of view regarding the effectiveness of the MGNREGA (the interview guide given as **Appendix 9 (D)**). Also, two interviews of contractors under the MGNREGA was conducted on an impulse, where the first in one of the villages, and the second when passing by a worksite under the MGNREGA in the village Hanomantapura. The last interview conducted was with a spokesman of the Right to Information Act (RTI) at the Institute of Social and Economic Change

⁸⁰ A focus group is “a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of research” (Flowerdew and Martin, 2005:129).

⁸¹ The Green Foundation is a community based organization (CBO) aimed at improving sustainable livelihoods of marginalized farmers in southern India. They had one of their offices in the study area. This is their website: <http://www.greenconserve.com/>

(ISEC) in Bangalore. The latter was to better understand the benefit of the RTI in relation to the MGNREGA and for the Indian society as a whole. All together, the aim of interviewing all these various stakeholders was to present a holistic picture of the effectiveness of the MGNREGA in the study area (the interview guide for the last two interviewees is given as **Appendix 9 (E)** and **(F)**).

4.3.4 Semi-structured and unstructured interviewing in qualitative research

The research technique in the qualitative part of the study was *semi-structured* and *unstructured* interviewing. These two techniques would vary from the previous structured interviewing by being more flexible in what order the interviewer asks the questions, and he or she could also add or delete questions according to the context (Bryman, 2008). A semi-structured interview is characterized as “a context in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview schedule but is able to vary the sequence of questions” (Bryman, 2008:196). An unstructured interview is even more flexible than the semi-structured interview where the researcher supports himself with a interview-guide that embrace a certain number of topics and issues, which ought to be raised during the interview (Bryman, 2008). The semi-structured interview technique was used with the informants that had not participated under the MGNREGA listed under the four categories above, and the unstructured interview technique was used for all the rest of the interviews mentioned above.

The purpose of applying semi-structured and unstructured interviewing for the qualitative research was to enhance the understanding of the dynamic dimensions in relation to the people and the MGNREGA in the study area. I wanted to do research with the freedom of spontaneous interaction whenever any new information was presented that I could spin on.

I got help from three different translators during the fieldwork, as I was not able to speak the local language. I started the data collection by using a tape recorder, but as all the translators were busy I found it very challenging to find time to transcribe the interviews together with them after being in the field. For that reason, I decided to stop using the tape recorder and rather write down the data collected in a notebook. I made a deal with the translators to always translate to me whenever the respondents

gave a new statement no matter what he or she was saying to be fully involved in the interaction and alert whenever a respondent gave any extended information⁸².

For the semi-structured interviews, I had a small interview guide with the purpose of having the opportunity to make statistical analysis. However, whenever any additional information was revealed I always had the possibility of asking extended questions. The semi-structured interviews would take maximum 5-10 minutes, and I always walked with a notebook in my hand to be able to carry out the interviews at any given time to be most efficient. For both the semi-structured interviews and the unstructured interviews, I had prepared an interview-guide for support that I always carried with me. I always wrote down the answers in the notebook as it was most sufficient and less heavy to carry even more paper. The intention behind the qualitative interviews was to have the opportunity to also improvise on the spot to catch any additional crucial data. After returning either back to the field station or at my residence in Bangalore, I again wrote down the qualitative data collected in another notebook to ensure that the information gathered would be understandable for me later on when I would start analyzing the data. This was because usually, the data was collected rather quickly in the field, which resulted in less organized handwriting.

4.4 Reliability and Validity

To assess the reliability and the validity of a research is important to evaluate the quality of the study. *Reliability* is concerned with the question of “whether the results in the study are repeatable” (Bryman 2008:31), and whether the measures used are consistent (ibid.). The reliability can be measured based on ‘stability’⁸³. The

⁸² I found this interaction technique very efficient, as I would be very much involved in the conversation with the help of the translator. I would not lose much time in writing down the answers as the translator would continuously ask the next question while I was noting down the answer to the previous question. I found this technique engaging as I could immediately respond to new information directly to the informant instead of feeling that I missed the chance if I would listen to the conversation some days later.

⁸³ Reliability can also be measured based on two additional criterions; ‘internal reliability’ and ‘inter-observer consistency’. However, the first involves the use of indicators that make up scales or indices (Bryman 2008:150). Therefore, as this research does not include that kind of indicators this measure is perceived as irrelevant. The latter involves a great deal of data collected based on observations,

consideration of stability asks “whether a measure is stable over time” (Bryman 2008:149). As most of the information gathered in this research is based on interactions with people, it is difficult to pursue this criterion as certain situations and natural social changes might affect the level of stability over time.

Validity “is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research” (Bryman, 2008:32). The validity can be measured in three ways; (1) ‘external validity’, (2) ‘internal validity’ and (3) ‘ecological validity’⁸⁴. These are all particularly relevant for quantitative studies (Bryman, 2008). The external validity assesses to what extent the results given in the research can be generalized outside the area the research was conducted in (Bryman, 2008:32). As already stated for this research, because of the utilization of the convenience sampling method, the findings presented in this study will not be generalized beyond the study area.

The internal validity is mainly concerned with “whether a conclusion that incorporates a causal relationship between two or more variables holds water” (Bryman, 2008:32). This criterion can be challenging to pursue with references back to the reliability measure of stability, as the social world is always changing and constructed by the people living in it. As already stated above, the finding in this research cannot be generalized. However, the results will convey an indication of certain social phenomenon and their relation.

The ecological validity asks to what extent the social scientific findings have relevance for people’s everyday life. In other word, how applicable are the findings for people in their natural way of being? This assessment is typically utilized in combination with studied carried out in laboratories or when interviews have taken place in special rooms (Bryman, 2008:33). For this research, I would argue that the

translation of data into categories and includes more than one observer (ibid.). As this research only consists of observations made by the researcher related to the standard of the respondent’s houses and their type of Job Cards, this measure is also regarded irrelevant.

⁸⁴ The validity can also be measured in a fourth way; the measurement validity’. But this measure is not included because it is applicable for deductive studies, while this is an inductive study (theory is the outcome of the research) (Bryman, 2008).

ecological validity was secured as all the interviews was carried out in the natural environment of the informants, either inside their houses, outside in the lanes or on some of the roads connecting the villages.

4.5 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

If social research is to remain of benefit to society and the groups and individuals within it, then social researchers must conduct their work responsibly and in light of the moral and legal order of the society in which they practice. They have a responsibility to maintain high scientific standards in the methods employed in the collection and analysis of data and the impartial assessment and dissemination of findings (SRA, 2003:13).

Conducting fieldwork in a different country with a different culture, customs, religion, climate and language poses several challenges to the researcher, and these are all aspects that the researcher must adjust to and take into consideration in the process of interacting with the local people and when acquiring the data needed⁸⁵. The issues of ethics have constantly undergone much debate due to various stands concerning the importance of the different ethical guidelines, but what is new to the phenomenon of ‘ethics’ during the recent years is the emphasis on ethics in general in any research (Bryman, 2008). The reason for this might be that the society demands more focus on ‘doing the ethics right’ to regard the research as fair and valuable (ibid.).

Bryman (2008) lists four main ethical principles in social research as; doing harm to the participants, lack of informed consent, deception and invasion of privacy. Any research that does any harm to the respondents, such as physical harm, mental harm (humiliates, discriminates, to make the person feel bad and so on), stress or makes the informants do something against their will is for most people regarded as unacceptable. These matters are just as important at the time of the fieldwork as the consequences that might occur after the research has been published. This is why the issue of confidentiality of the respondents is important to secure that no harm will

⁸⁵ As a foreigner in India I had the benefit of previous visits to the country in relation to work, school and travel, which gave me an advantage of knowing somewhat how to adapt myself to the new environment, although I had never been in Karnataka before.

happen to them in the aftermath of the publication (Bryman, 2008). However, (Bryman, 2008) states that the issue of confidentiality is more difficult to fulfill in a qualitative research than a quantitative research, because the first is typically more connected to people and places. Although this research includes a lot of qualitative data, the identities and records of the respondents have been minimized as much as possible. Nonetheless, identifications such as places, professions and gender have been revealed but that should not generate any constraints on the informants represented. The next two ethical principles are lack of informed consent and deception. The first entails that the informants should be given as much information about the researcher and the research as possible to be able to decide whether or not he or she wants to participate in the study (Bryman, 2008). In the latter, deception occurs when the researchers present their study to the informants as something else than it actually is, sometimes to get a more neutral answer (Bryman, 2008). Prior to all the interviews in this research, the informants were given the rightful information about who the translator and the researcher were, in addition to revealing the purpose of the study. A few respondents rejected to participate in the study, which was respected by the researcher. The last issue, invasion of privacy, involves the informant's right to refuse to answer questions they feel uncomfortable with (Bryman, 2008). This ethical principle was respected throughout the research. Two respondents revealed that I could not write down the information given that was respected.

“Interviewing in different cultural contexts, particularly in less developed countries, requires a heightened sensitivity to the complex power relations which exist between researchers and interviews, and to local codes of behavior” (Flowerdew and Martin, 2005:124). I discovered immediately the local villager's curiosity and interest in me, first of all with looks and later with conversations or/and a touch on my hands⁸⁶. Howard (cited in Flowerdew and Martin, 2005:125), describes how the interview subjects in such cases might view the researcher as more 'superior' to themselves and that this recognition might lead the respondent to give the answers he or she thinks the interviewer wants to hear instead of telling the truth. I became aware of this limitation

⁸⁶ Some children showed clear signs of being very skeptic towards me and even frightened, for example a young girl did almost not dare to touch me. Moreover, I was often confronted with various people's medical problems as it seemed like some of the villagers thought I was a doctor. I would instantly say that I was not a doctor, but if I had any advice to give them I would gladly share them.

to the study when one of the respondents answered me one thing but then afterwards turning his head in the opposite direction and then mumbling a radically different answer. Furthermore, some skepticism and hesitation was also evident by some of the respondents. Common questions by the villagers were *who sent you?* or *whom do you represent?* I later discovered, from the second translator overhearing a conversation between two villagers, that some respondents feared that I represented the Indian government and for that reason some of them would not reveal their actual opinions and experiences related to the MGNREGA (as it is a governmental scheme). This was because they feared that I might prevent them from accessing governmental services, for example by the Gram Panchayat, if they told anything negative or gave a complaint.

According to Flowerdew and Martin (2005:125), “Gender, age and marital status are all aspects of a researcher’s identity that can limit access to information or situations”. In India, the gender roles are more divided in the north than in the south. This was clearly apparent after having performed fieldwork both in Rajasthan⁸⁷ (the state situated northwest in the country) and in Karnataka, where I observed very different behavior of especially women. The women in Rajasthan portrayed themselves as much shyer and less willing to talk openly, while many of the women in Karnataka proved more self-confident, eager to talk and could share their opinions with me. Nevertheless, the men were still the heads of the households, and his opinions would matter the most in Karnataka as well. For me being a white girl from northern Europe, I always felt like an ‘outsider’ by looking very differently than the villagers, but I never sensed any lack of respect being a woman. However, my age of 25 could be considered as too old to be unmarried for the villagers; so to limit the gap between ‘me’ and ‘them’ I introduced myself as a married woman⁸⁸. The presentation of me as a married woman was also taken into consideration of my presence together with male translators, which could have posed a negative image of me (less respect).

⁸⁷ A small research carried out in Udaipur as a part of the EDS 387: State and Civil Society in India, in Jaipur, September, 2010.

⁸⁸ My perception was that as a married woman I might gain more respect from the villagers than as a 25 year old unmarried woman. This was because, as revealed by respondents, the normal age for girls to get married in the study area was around 18-20 years old.

Additionally, I dressed in Indian clothing, hiding knees and shoulders and I wore my hair in a ponytail to show respect of the Indian custom.

A limitation to the study was lack of time. I unexpectedly lost two weeks in the field because I had to return home to Norway to extend my visa as the initial visa was valid only for 3 months. Furthermore, after returning to India, it took me another two weeks to find a suitable translator who spoke fluently Kannada as well as English to be able to communicate efficiently⁸⁹.

I discovered very early the limitations of not being able to speak the local language and thereby having to be totally dependent on a translator. Although the translators would translate the conversations, there would always be some information missing as the interaction had to be mediated through a third person, and also due to lack of English vocabulary by one of the translators.

Also, often a crowd would gather around the interviewing sessions, which interfered in the interaction between the researcher and the interviewee. Based on observations, particularly female interviewees were interrupted by male members of the crowd. Although I made it clear that the focus of attention by the translator should preferably be paid on the particular research subject, the crowd might have influenced some of the data collected.

At last, the findings in the discussion chapter will reveal a various degree of missing data. This is mostly regarding the semi-structured interviews as this data were usually collected in haste because the research subjects had limited time to interact. Very commonly, these respondents were engaged in an activity or going somewhere, which limited the number of questions they were able to answer, or it made me forget to ask some of the questions.

⁸⁹The issue of getting hold of suitable translators during the fieldwork became challenging, as I seldom was able to plan ahead because of the uncertainty regarding whom to assist me.

4.6 Data Analysis

The analysis of the empirical data was conducted throughout the research process. With references to objective one, the livelihood framework presented as **Figure 2.4** was used as a point of departure when collecting the data. For the descriptive statistics SPSS was used to illustrate the findings. All the three objectives are discussed and presented based on findings with often the qualitative data supplying the quantitative data. The purpose of combining the qualitative and the quantitative data is to portray a more holistic picture of how successful the implementation of the MGNREGA was for reducing poverty in the study area.



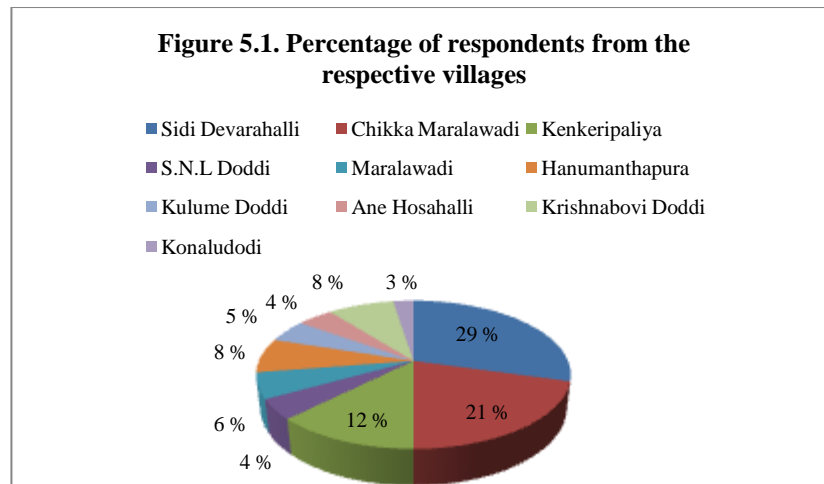
CHAPTER 5

THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE MGNREGA IN RURAL KARNATAKA: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Chapter 5 presents and analyzes the findings of the three objectives and the research questions with the use of empirical findings and insights from the literature. The chapter is structured into four main sections, whereby the first three encompasses the findings of the three objectives in turn. Section 5.1 discusses the various indications of why - or why not, the MGNREGA is needed in rural Karnataka. By using the livelihood framework presented in **Figure 2.4**, the different elements constituting assets, activities and livelihood strategies as well as the vulnerability context will constitute as the point of departure of the discussion. Section 5.2 discusses the benefits of the implementation of the MGNREGA, and the extent the Act has provided social security. Section 5.3 discusses the challenges in the implementation of the MGNREGA by the respondents and the implementing institutions, together with the issue of affordability and the effectiveness of rights in the process of development. Lastly, Section 5.4 discusses to what extent the MGNREGA has contributed to the livelihood outcomes described in **Figure 2.4**, and deals with extended reflections and considerations related to the MGNREGA.

Section 5.1: A social profile and livelihoods in rural Karnataka

Section 5.1 presents a social profile and demographic information of the informants. The total number of respondents was 160 (structured and semi-structured interviewees) and the data was collected in 10 villages in rural Karnataka. The percentage of respondents from each village is represented in **Figure 5.1**.



Total number of respondents: 160

Source: Fieldwork returns, Karnataka 2010

Figure 5.1 shows that the majority of the respondents, 29 percent, resided in the village of Sidi Devarahalli. Two reasons explain why: (1) Sidi Devarahalli is the third most populous village in the Dodda Maralawadi Gram Panchayat, with 1469 inhabitants⁹⁰, (2) it was the first village I visited, which made me spend extra time there due to pilot-testing, and it became my point of departure for general orientation of the MGNREGA in the area.

Chikka Maralawadi makes the second highest percentage of respondents with 21 percent. It is the most populous village in the Dodda Maralawadi Gram Panchayat, with 1865 inhabitants⁹¹, and it was the second village I visited. Twelve percent of the informants lived in Kenkeripaliya and this was the third village I visited. The remaining villages were relatively small and inhabited by a smaller number of residents.

The gender ratio of the respondents was quite even but with a slight domination of female respondents of 54.4 percent compared to 45.6 percent of male respondents. The reason for this is probably because, when approaching respondents during day-time in the villages it was most common to meet women, as the men were engaged in

⁹⁰ This calculation is from 2008 and the Dodda Maralawadi Gram Panchayat secretary office in Maralawadi town provided the number.

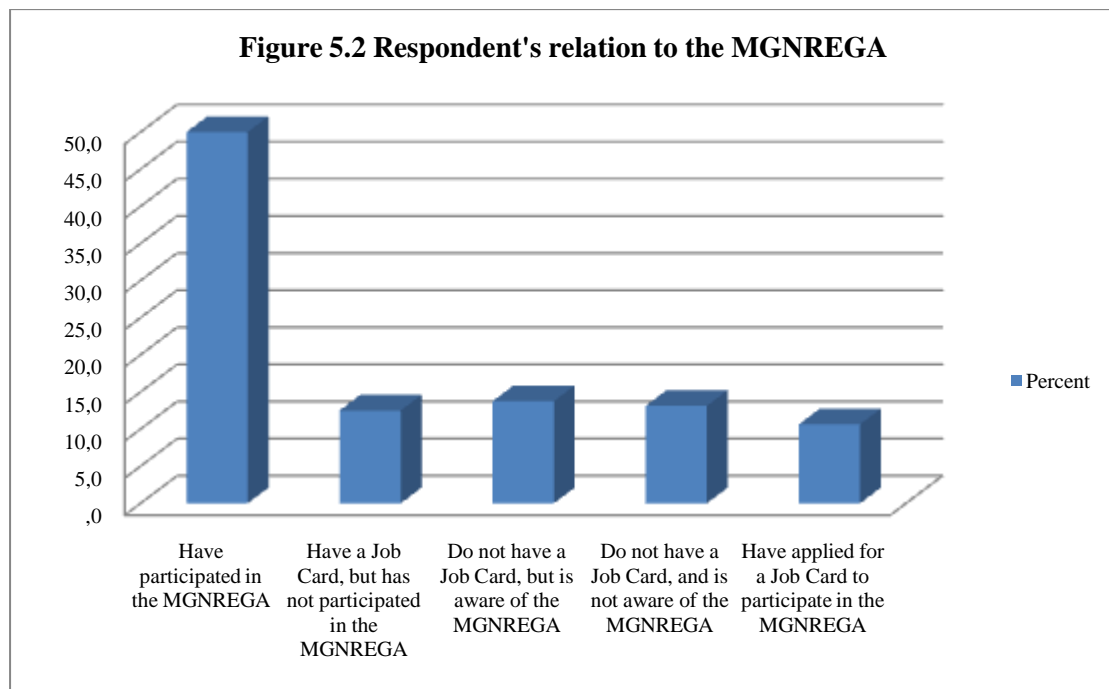
⁹¹ This calculation is from 2008 and the Dodda Maralawadi Gram Panchayat secretary office in Maralawadi town provided the number as well.

work outside the home. The average age of the respondents was 41.1 years. The oldest respondent was 78 years old and the youngest 18 years old⁹².

5.1.1 Relation to the MGNREGA by the respondents

The various respondents' relation to the MGNREGA is divided into five categories: (1) 'Have participated in the MGNREGA', (2) 'Have a Job Card, but has not participated in the MGNREGA', (3) 'Do not have a Job Card, but is aware of the MGNREGA', (4) 'Do not have a Job Card, and is not aware of the MGNREGA', (5) 'Have applied for a Job Card to participate in the MGNREGA'. The four last categories have not worked in the MGNREGA. This distinction is made to identify the need for the MGNREGA in the study area based on:

- A) The various reasons why some respondents wanted to work under the Act, and
- B) The various reasons why some respondents did not want to work under the Act.



⁹² The average age is calculated from 130 respondents, as 28 of the respondents were not aware of their age, and the age of two of the respondents is unknown. It must be noted that 55 percent of the respondents revealed their age as a number that can be multiplied by five, like 30 and 45. Because of this high percentage, one might assume that perhaps some of respondents simply revealed an age without knowing it for sure.

Total number of respondents: 160

Source: Fieldwork returns, Karnataka 2010

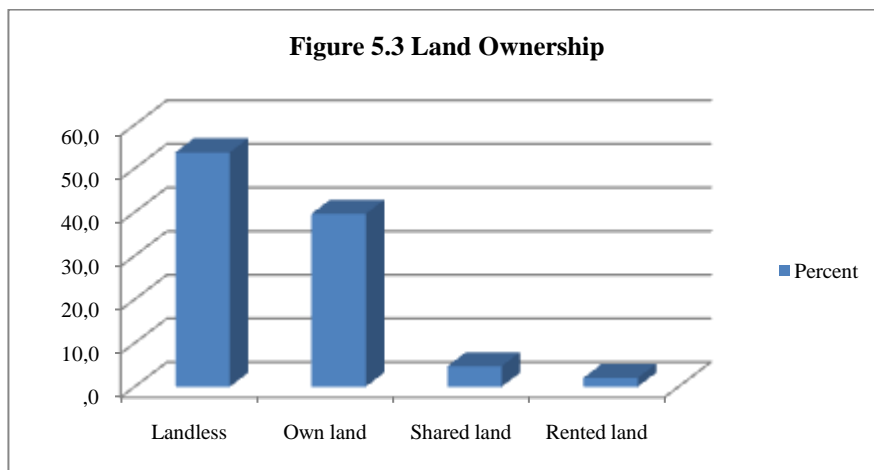
Figure 5.2 shows that 50 percent of the respondents participated in work under the MGNREGA. Twelve-point-five percent had a Job Card but they had not participated in any work under the MGNREGA. Fourteen percent did not have a Job Card, but knew about the MGNREGA. Thirteen percent did not have a Job Card and did not know about the MGNREGA, and 10.5 percent had applied for a Job Card, but at the time of the fieldwork, it had not been issued from the local Gram Panchayat.

References to these categories of respondents will be made throughout Chapter 5 when discussing the three objectives of the thesis.

5.1.2 Assets/Capitals

5.1.2.1 Access to land (natural capital)

The natural capital of the respondents will be discussed in relation to access to land. The holdings of land by the sampled households are presented in **Figure 5.3**. The figure shows that 39.6 percent of the respondents owned land whilst the majority of the respondents, 53.7 percent, did not own land and are referred to as landless.



Total number of respondents: 149

Source: Fieldwork returns, Karnataka 2010

The average size of the land owned was 1.7 acre (or approximately the size of a soccer pitch)⁹³. The smallest size of land owned was 0.25 acre, and the largest area of land owned was 12 acres. In general, the average size of land owned by villagers in Ramanagara district has decreased over the years; one reason for that is population pressure. This trend has forced people to switch from farming to engagement in the sericulture industry, or other wage employment (UNDP India a).

The two main crops cultivated was ragi and mulberry leaves. Ragi is a type of millet and it constituted one of the main ingredients in the respondent's food consumption⁹⁴. Mulberry leaves is grown to serve the silkworm production in the area. Farmers would either produce the mulberry leaves for personal silkworm production or sell the leaves to other villagers breeding the silkworms⁹⁵. Other types of crops grown were rice, horse gram, jowar (sorghum), bengal gram and spinach. In addition, coconuts and banana trees and chilies were grown. Most of the farmers practiced multiple cropping by cultivating more than one type of crop. The most common combination of crops was ragi and mulberry leaves, ragi and horse gram or ragi and rice. One of the respondents said, *"Since I own land in different places I can grow many crops and harvest at different times of the year"* (male, age unknown, OBC).



Image 5.1 Family engaged in sericulture (Source: Tina Ulvin, November 2010)

⁹³ The average size of land is based on 64 out of the 69 respondent's owning land. The remaining five are missing data, because the researcher was unable to obtain this data.

⁹⁴ Ragi flour is high in protein and calcium. Since it digests slowly, it was regarded a valuable food constituent by several of the respondents because it would make them able to work long and hard (without getting tired or hungry).

⁹⁵ The mulberry leaves could be harvested once in every two months up to ten years.

Moreover, over 50 percent of the respondents were landless and thus dependent on available wage employment throughout the year. This is a matter the text will come back to under Subsection 5.1.3 *Activities and livelihood strategies*.

5.1.2.2 Educational level (human capital)

The human capital will be discussed in relation to the educational level of the respondents. Additionally, the human capital portrays the knowledge (educational level) and skills of the respondents, which constitute a crucial point of departure for a household's capacity to make a living (Carney, 1998).

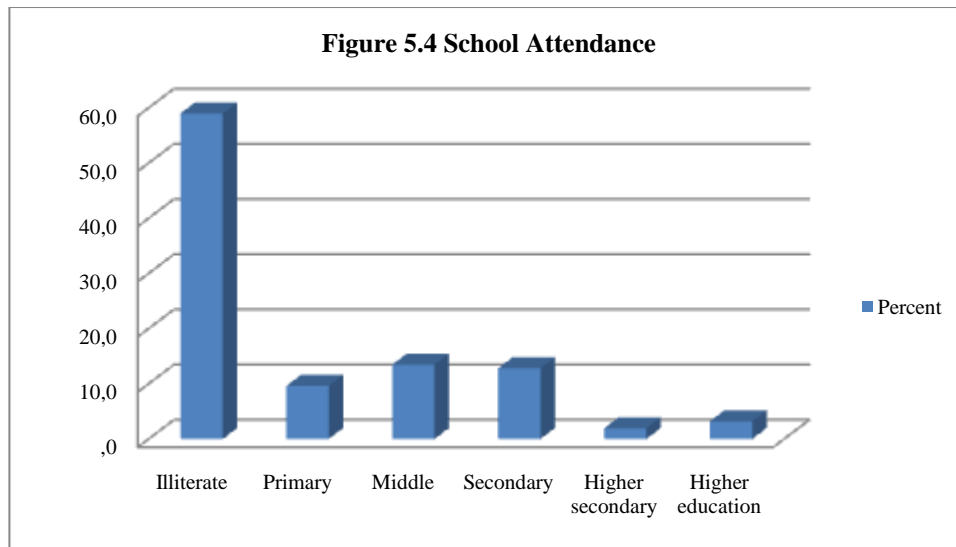
A typical household in the study area consisted of three generations: a married couple, their children and the husband's parents⁹⁶. The average size of a household in the study consisted of 4.5 members⁹⁷. This number is slightly lower than the district's average size of five members (Census of India, 2001b).

In India, the educational system is divided into primary school (class 1-5), middle school (class 6-8), secondary school (class 9-10), higher secondary from (class 11-12) and higher education/University (class 13+). **Figure 5.4** presents the school attendance of the respondents⁹⁸.

⁹⁶ According to general Indian custom, when a woman gets married, she moves in with the husband's family.

⁹⁷ This calculation is based upon 151 respondents.

⁹⁸ **Figure 5.4** illustrates school *attendance* and not the completed educational level of the respondents as it was common to drop out of school before any such educational level was completed. Attendance gives a clearer picture of the various respondents that has been enrolled in the different levels of school, but who has not necessarily completed it. According to the Human Development Index (HDI) measured 2001-2009, the drop-out rate of primary school was 34.2 percent (HDI, 2010).



Total number of respondents: 156

Source: Fieldwork returns, Karnataka 2010

Figure 5.4 shows that almost 60 percent of the respondents never attended school and only 3.2 percent of the respondents acquired higher education. Illiteracy is often synonymous to poverty since no education – or low educational level brings less general knowledge, less skills and limited employment opportunities.

In the Dodda Maralawadi Gram Panchayat, the villagers had access to two primary schools, six upper primary schools whereby one of them was private, two high schools (one private and one governmental) and one college⁹⁹.

Relatively high prevalence of illiteracy in the study area means a great deal of unskilled labor practices, as the text will come back to under Subsection 5.1.3 *Activities and livelihood strategies*. Considering that the purpose of the MGNREGA is to provide unskilled work for its beneficiaries, this may indicate that the villagers in the study area come under the target group of the MGNREGA.

5.1.2.3 Ration cards and price increase (financial capital)

The financial capital will be discussed in relation to the distribution of ration cards and increases in the prices of consumption commodities. The financial capital

⁹⁹ In addition, seven pre-schools were available in the Dodda Maralawadi Gram Panchayat.

encompasses the economic resources accessible for the household (Carney, 1998). In the study area, the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) provided ration cards to the respondents. The purpose of the TPDS system is to function as a safety net by providing necessary commodities to poorer families at an affordable price. A TPDS shop was observed in Sidi Devarahalli and in Chikka Maralawadi.

Table 5.1 presents the distribution of ration cards among the households. The different ration cards identified were: Above Poverty Line (APL), Below Poverty Line (BPL) or Anthodaya Anna Yojana (AAY).

Table 5.1 Holdings of ration cards by respondents¹⁰⁰

	Frequency	Percent
AAY	8	9,9
BPL	48	59,3
APL	18	22,2
No card	7	8,6
Total	81	100,0

Source: Fieldwork returns, Karnataka 2010

The majority of the households, 59.3 percent possessed a BPL card. Twenty-two-point-two percent had an APL card and 9.9 percent held an AAY card. These findings indicate that poverty was widespread in the study area. For illustration, almost 12,000 families were given AAY cards in Karnataka in 2009. In India, the number of BPL families amounted to over 65 million people in 2000 (GOI-Dept. of Food and Public Distribution).

Furthermore, the remaining 8.6 percent of the respondents said that they did not have a ration card right at the time of the fieldwork, but that they have had one before. Some respondents had been told approximately one year ago by the Gram Panchayat to hand in their ration card and that they would be given a new card soon, although it had not happened.

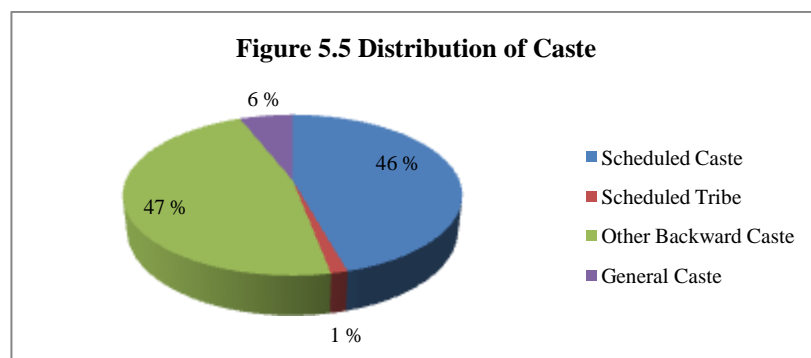
¹⁰⁰ The findings in **Table 5.1** are derived mostly from the survey respondents as the question of ration card belonging was not included in the semi-structured interviews. Nevertheless, occasionally when the respondents in the semi-structured interviews were not in a rush, I also included this question to them.

The prices of commodities in the study area had increased and that was regarded as a problem by some of the respondents. This included the price of rice, kerosene, vegetables and other food items. One of the respondents said, “*The food prices has gone up and now I cannot afford to buy everything*” (male, age 26, OBC). The increase in prices also included the rations distributed by the TPDS shop. Due to the increase, it was hard for many respondents to enable any savings, for instance, one respondent said, “*whatever I earn, it will be spent, and I am not able to save anything*” (male, age 65, SC). Because of the price increase, life in general was perceived as more difficult than before for many of the respondents.

The distribution of ration cards below poverty line equaled 69.2 percent (when adding the BPL and AAY card holders). This gives an indication of the poverty levels prevailing in the study area. Coupled with the increase in prices, these two factors pose a constraint on the lives of the respondents. Consequently, these findings suggest a need for the MGNREGA in the study area.

5.1.2.4 Caste and networks (social capital)

The social capital in the study will be discussed in relation to caste and social networks. The identification of caste was still evident in rural Karnataka, and, in many ways, caste reflects people’s social belonging and status. The distribution of respondents by caste is presented in **Figure 5.5**



Total number of respondents: 149

Source: Fieldwork returns, Karnataka 2010

The majority of respondents, 47 percent, belonged to Other Backward Caste (OBC) and 46 percent belonged to Scheduled Caste (SC). The remaining 6 percent of the

respondents belonged to General Caste (GC) and only 1 percent of the respondents were of Scheduled Caste (ST)¹⁰¹. This figure shows a large proportion of backward castes, 94 percent (when adding SC, ST and OBC), in the study area; they constitute the target groups of the MGNREGA.

Regarding any social behavioral differences relating to caste, one of the focus-groups said that sometimes people from the GC do not talk to them because they belonged to the SC. Similarly, another SC respondent said that she felt discriminated by people from the GC¹⁰².

The different sources of social networks revealed by the respondents were Self Help Groups (SHGs)¹⁰³ and the Green Foundation. The aims of both networks were to support and further assist the members when needed, for example through financial means. Also, every village was represented by one or more Gram Panchayat members. With reference to the HDI, measures from 2006-2009 shows that 66 percent of the population in India had access to a social support network (HDI, 2010).

¹⁰¹ The listing of the sub-caste groups is limited for several of the informants because the type of caste belonging was listed as either as SC, ST, OBC or GC, and not according to the sub-caste. However, some sub-castes have been noted down, and these were for the OBC's: Okkaliga, Marathi, Gowla, Kuruba, Dhobi and Agasa. For the SC's they were: Bhovi, Madiga, Kuruburu, Lambani and Adi Karnataka, and for the GC the sub-caste listed was Brahmins. There was no sub-caste listed under ST.

¹⁰² In one of the villages, a dispute was going on in relation to caste. Apparently, between one castes belonging to OBC and another of SC. The Gram Panchayat member of the village belonged to the OBC, and according to one SC respondent, he gave all benefit to only the people belonging to the same caste as him. This dispute was also reflected in the MGNREGA, whereby the entitlement of work favored the OBC's. This was a matter one of the SC respondents was very upset about.

¹⁰³ In the study area a SHG meeting was referred to as a *Shakti-meeting*.

5.1.2.5 House ownership and infrastructure (physical capital)

The physical capital will be discussed in relation to the informant's ownership of the house they lived in and in relation to observations made of the basic infrastructure available in the villages.

Table 5.2 House ownership of respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Own house	132	89,8
Rented house	13	8,8
Not owning house	2	1,4
Total	147	100,0

Source: Fieldwork returns, Karnataka 2010

Table 5.2 shows that the majority of the villagers, almost 90 percent, owned the house they lived in. Twenty-two of these respondents said that their house was given through the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) scheme by the government.

According to the standard of houses, 32.8 percent of the houses can be classified as kutchha, 54.3 percent as semi-pukka and 12.9 percent as pukka¹⁰⁴. This shows that the majority of the respondents lived in medium standard houses made of cemented walls and roofs made of tin plates. Almost 33 percent of the respondents lived in houses of the lowest standard made of mud and roofs made of different types of plants, while almost 13 percent lived in the best standard houses made of cemented walls and roof.

¹⁰⁴ These measures are based on a sample of 116 respondents. The best looking pukka houses were painted light green or orange and had beautiful carvings outside the walls. These houses had usually two floors.



Image 5.2 (left): Respondent showing her Job Card in front of her kutch house **Image 5.3** (right): Respondent showing his Job Card standing next to his green pukka house (Source: Tina Ulvin, November 2010)

Regarding infrastructure, the villagers in the Ramanagara district suffered from the lack of proper sanitation, sewage, electricity and access to safe drinking water (UNDP India a). According to Census of India (2001a), 43.4 percent of the rural people had access to electricity for lighting, but toilet facilities were missing. From observations, the villagers had access to power mostly during mornings and evenings, but as electricity was expensive they tried to minimize the use of it¹⁰⁵. In relation to water, access to safe drinking water did not seem to be a problem as all the villagers visited had a water pump. However, water access for agricultural purposes posed challenges to the farmers because they depended on rainwater for their crops. Irrigation facilities were seemingly scarce, which was confirmed by one respondents who said, *“If the rain comes, then we can get coolie work, but if there is no rain for a long time, then no work, because we do not have any irrigation equipment”* (focus-group 1). As revealed by the respondents, much of the crops were destroyed this year (in 2010) because of too much rain, while in the previous years, drought constituted the main source of crop failures.

All the villages were connected by roads of various standards. Most were uneven gravel roads with holes, but some were also in good shape because of recent work conducted under the MGNREGA. Other roads had been paved (asphalt), but as it had

¹⁰⁵ During evenings, some outdoor lamps located next to roads and attached to walls lit the surrounding areas.

not been re-paved for some time, these roads suffered from degradation making it difficult to drive, for instance an auto¹⁰⁶, on these roads¹⁰⁷.

Regarding the informants' ability to invest in means to enhance future income, their ability depends on the household's capacity to save money. Given that poverty in the area was widespread and the price increase, for many, investments would be challenging. This is a reality the villagers in rural Karnataka share with many people in rural India, and the reason why one of the goals of the MGNREGA is to initiate works aimed at strengthening the rural economy.

5.1.2.6 Attendance in Gram Sabah (political capital)

The political capital will be discussed in relation to political participation by the villagers' attendance in the local Gram Sabah (GS) meetings. These meetings were arranged by the Gram Panchayat and are an arena for sharing information, addressing various issues and concerns of the villagers in relation to the MGNREGA.

In the research area, the GS meetings were held in a school in Maralawadi town. **Table 5.3** presents how many of the respondents participated in GS meetings.

Table 5.3 Attendance in Gram Sabah

	Frequency	Percent
Never attended	52	66,7
Attended	26	33,3
Total	78¹⁰⁸	100,0

Source: Fieldwork returns, Karnataka 2010

¹⁰⁶ An auto is the characteristic Asian three-wheeler used for transporting people, animals and goods.

¹⁰⁷ The main road connecting the Dodda Maralawadi Gram Panchayat area to for instance Bangalore via Harohalli (a town with the main bus stop from Bangalore) was renewed with asphalt during my fieldwork.

¹⁰⁸ The total sample of respondents is only 78 because originally it was only a part of the questionnaire. However, sometimes this question was left out because the informant had limited time to interact with the researcher, and sometimes when the informants for the semi-structured interviews were not in a haste this question was also given to them. As a result, this sample consists mainly of survey respondents and a few semi-structured interviewee respondents.

Sixty-six-point-seven percent of the informants had never attended a GS meeting, while 33.3 percent had attended one or more meetings¹⁰⁹. This shows that the majority of the respondents had not participated in local village meetings and may indicate a lack of empowerment in relation to the political sphere. As two of the goals of the MGNREGA is to enhance empowerment of the rural poor and grass root democracy, this finding suggests that the Act is needed to encourage political participation in the study area.

Unawareness about GS meetings taking place was one reason why some of the respondents had not attended the meetings. Misunderstandings about the practice of the Gram Sabah were also evident among five of the respondents who thought that the Gram Sabah is only for Gram Panchayat members, which is not the case. A common response was “no one has told me, so why will I go?” (male, unaware of his age, OBC).

One of the respondents said that few women generally attend the GS. According to the data collected, out of the 26 respondents who participated in a Gram Sabah, 17 of them were male and the remaining nine were women. The sample is too small to give any further justification about this argument. This said, based on the existing findings, they at least show a higher frequency of male attendance than that of females.

5.1.3 Activities and Livelihood Strategies

With references to Ellis (2000), the activities and livelihood strategies pursued in the research area can be divided into farming, off-farming and non-farming, or a combination of two or three of these. A combination of activities can be referred to as livelihood diversification (Scoones, 1998 and Ellis, 2000). The various livelihood activities pursued in the study area are presented in **Table 5.4**.

¹⁰⁹ Among those respondents having attended Gram Sabah, they recalled the last meeting they attended was held 1 to 12 months back.

Table 5.4 Activities and Livelihood Strategies

	Frequency	Percent
(1) Farm income	14	9.1
(2) Off-farm income	61	39.6
(3) Non-farm income	33	21.4
Combining 1+2+3	2	1.3
Combining 2+3	10	6.5
Combining 1+2	33	21.4
Combining 1+3	1	.6
Total	154	100.0

Source: Fieldwork returns, Karnataka 2010

In this study, the majority of the respondents, 39.6 percent, were engaged in off-farm activities. These respondents were landless and referred to themselves as ‘coolie workers’, which means casual workers in relation to farm work. Coolie work includes various types of work carried out on other people’s land or on estates¹¹⁰, and it also involved engagement in sericulture.

Additional activities comprising of coolie work mentioned by the respondents were: weeding, harvesting, cutting, and picking leafs (usually mulberry leafs) or other plants (grass) and bushes, maintenance of rice paddies and planting fruit trees (mango, orange) and other seeds. It also included farm related work such as ditching land for plantations (trees, banana), lifting mud, sand and stone in the fields, digging pits, cultivating with cow/oxen, nursery for plants (greenhouse) and different horticulture activities (flowers). For instance, one respondent’s income earning activity was cutting banana leafs on other peoples land, whereby he would sell the leaves to someone else who then sold the banana leafs in Bangalore. Another respondent sold milk from his own cows, and another woman sold flowers in Maralwadi town.

Being a coolie worker was challenging because they seldom or never had any reassurance concerning how much work they would obtain, and when or where they

¹¹⁰ Commonly, when the respondent referred to coolie work or estate work, they said work on ‘rich people’s land’. According to one of the respondents, 5 to 6 estates would hire workers in the study area.

would access work. From a day to day basis, the people who were interested/available for work that day passively waited to be ‘called’ by any person that would claim his need for labor, which did not happen daily. For instance, when it rained, there was no need for coolie workers¹¹¹. One coolie worker said, “*Whatever work I am called for I will do*” (female, age 40, SC). The payment of coolie workers varied between gender and between people. For the men, the usual wage was between INR 100 to 150, and between INR 50 to 70 for women. The number of working days during one week varied from two to six days¹¹².



Image 5.4 (left): Field with different crops **Image 5.5** (right): Coolie worker on farmland (Source: Tina Ulvin, November 2010)

Twenty-one-point-four percent of the respondents were engaged in non-farm work related activities. In the study area, various non-farm work activities were carried out, such as truck driving, road work, lifting bricks at construction sites, various factory jobs (pressure cooker, distillery), flour mill, flower shop, auto driver, weaving bags through the Green Foundation (in Maralawadi), running a TPDS shop, bakery, social work, cleaning at the hospital, bank and cooking at a school.

¹¹¹ Any information concerning the reason *why* there was no available coolie work when it rained was not revealed. It might be because usually when it rained; it rained so heavily that for example, stepping into the field might destroy the crops, or the fact that the workers themselves might get sick from becoming wet.

¹¹² None of the respondents worked on Sundays.

Housewives are also included in non-farm related activities¹¹³. Common for all the housewives was that their husbands were engaged in non-farm activities, which, in general, accumulated more money than being a coolie worker. For example, for one housewife, her husband was a carpenter, and for another, her husband was employed as a tractor driver for an excavator company¹¹⁴ and earned Rs. 5000 a month. For other housewives, their husband's occupation was a Brahmin priest (she was a leader of a SHG group), a tailor, a lorry driver, a teacher, a barber shop owner and a jewelry shop owner.

Only 9.1 percent of the respondents engaged in farm-income activities consisting of work on their own land and/or livestock rearing. Livestock's and other animals observed in villages were cows, buffaloes, goats, sheeps, donkeys and hens.

The remaining respondents practiced a diversified livelihood by engaging in more than one of these activities. The majority of these, 21.4 percent, combined farm and off-farm activities mostly as coolie workers or engaging in sericulture together with cultivating their own land. In addition, 6.5 percent combined off-farm and non-farm income related activities such as construction of roads together with being a coolie worker. Zero-point-six percent combined farm and non-farm related income activities, which included school work together with helping out in the family's field. The remaining 1.3 percent combined all three income related activities. One example was cultivation on one's own land, being a coolie worker in addition to lifting sand for road construction.

These figures illustrates that a high percentage of the respondents were engaged as coolie workers who depended on wage employment. Few of the respondents earned a living solely on farming; however, more respondents were engaged in both of these income-earning activities. Moreover, engagement in non-farm related work encompassed a relatively high percentage, which may be reflected in the study areas' close location to urbanized setups such as Harohalli, Kanakapura city and the state

¹¹³ Being a housewife is included in non-farm activities because the researcher does not regard housework as work related to farming. The typical chores mentioned by housewives in the study area was raising children, cooking, cleaning and generally taking care of the house.

¹¹⁴ Locally referred to as a 'JCB Company'.

capital city Bangalore. Some of these respondents worked at the town-like area/-local market place in Maralawadi. This issue will be further elaborated below.

5.1.4 The need for employment (*Vulnerability Context*)

“In a large part of the world where extreme poverty is high, the very concept of ‘unemployment’ seems to be irrelevant, as everybody has to work in order to survive” (ILO, 2010a:xvi). According to the ILO (2010a), less than 10 percent of the unemployed receive benefits in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

Access to income, whether it is based on farm, off-farm or non-farm related activities, is essential to gain a living. To better understand the need for employment in the study area, the respondents were asked whether or not they were interested to work under the MGNREGA. **Table 5.5** below shows that the majority of the respondents, 85.6 percent, were interested to work under the Act, while the remaining 14.4 percent were not interested. These findings indicate a wish for the MGNREGA in the study area.

Table 5.5 Interest to work in the MGNREGA¹¹⁵

	Frequency	Percent
Interested	137	85,6
Not interested	23	14,4
Total	160	100,0

Source: Fieldwork returns, Karnataka 2010

When asking the respondents the reason *why* they wanted to participate in the MGNREGA, the need for employment and income was regarded as the two main

¹¹⁵ In **Table 5.5**, the sample representing the number of respondents not interested to work in the MGNREGA derives from the group already presented in **Figure 5.2** as not having a Job Card but is aware or not aware of the Act. The latter group (not aware of the Act) is also represented because all the informants that initially did not know about the MGNREGA were given a brief introduction about the Act by the researcher and the translator before they were given the question relating to their interest to participate in the MGNREGA.

reasons to be able to buy food, clothes, medicines and provide care for children¹¹⁶. One respondent said that *“I am poor so I need work”* (female, age 40, OBC). Similarly, another respondent said that *“I need work because I need an income”* (female, unaware of her age, SC).

The need for employment in general in the study area was further stated by several of the respondents. A spokesman for the Green Foundation said that everyone in this area needed employment. The same was revealed by one of the social workers who said that unemployment was a problem in the area since coolie work was unpredictable. A former Gram Panchayat member said, *“This area needs more employment opportunities like the MGNREGA, because coolie work is not available every day* (female, age 37, OBC). In the villages of Krishnabovi Doddi, Maralawadi, Hanomathapura and in Ane Hosahalli, the need for employment was stated by respondents. The reason why they needed employment in the latter was because the rain had destroyed the crops this year (in 2010).

Taking into consideration that one of the main purposes of the MGNREGA is to provide employment in the agricultural lean season when agricultural work is limited, the lean season will affect all the people employed in farm and off-farm related activities, which account for 70.1 percent of the respondents (when adding all the respondents engaged in farm, off-farm and the respondents combining these two livelihood activities)¹¹⁷. This reveals that especially during the lean season, the majority of the respondents are particularly vulnerable due to limited sources of income. These findings indicate a need for the MGNREGA in the study area.

However, already being employed was regarded as the one of the main reasons why five of the respondents were *not* interested to work in the MGNREGA. These respondents were already employed in non-farm related activities and accumulated

¹¹⁶ In relation to this question, the total sample size is only 32 and includes both survey respondents and semi-structured interviewees. This is because I came to realize that the answer to this question was too obvious; the people who participated in the MGNREGA was generally poor, many were engaged mostly as coolie workers and were in need of work and income. It became apparent that they were not comfortable with the question which made me stop asking it.

¹¹⁷ Farm income of 9.1 percent, plus off-farm income of 39.6 percent, plus combining these two of 21.4 percent equals 70.1 percent.

higher wages than through the MGNREGA, which made the Act not attractive to them. Similarly, in relation to employment, two of the respondents wanted skilled work because they had higher education; one had already undergone training to become a tailor. Another three of the respondents were housewives and, therefore, not interested to work under the Act¹¹⁸.

The other main reason for not being interested to work under the MGNREGA was because some of the respondents owned land. The size of land owned varied between 1 to 12 acres. The relation between access of land and the need for wage employment was stated by one of the social workers. He stated that the dominant groups of people who are interested to work in the MGNREGA are either (1) landless or (2) own less than two acre of land. Common for the latter was that they had no access to irrigation facilities, which made it harder for them to be able to sustain themselves only on this area of land. Whether or not this reason is factual is beyond the scope of this paper to find out; however, owning up to 12 acres of land would be considered enough land to make a living. Nonetheless, as two of the respondents that owned land only owned 1 acre of land, that rejects the above argument made by the social worker. Therefore, respondents owning less than two acre of land, were also not interested to work under the MGNREGA.

Moreover, when interviewing one governmental official, he rejected the prevalence of poverty in the study area. He stated, *“The MGNREGA is meant for poor people, but no one in this area is poor”*. To substantiate his argument, he referred to how the people possessed mobile phones and how both husbands and wives could afford to drink alcohol during evenings, from which he stated, *“These people are not poor when they can afford that”*. He further claimed that people in this area had access to

¹¹⁸ One reason for this might be because the household earned enough money to sustain themselves through their husband’s engagement in skilled work, one as a tailor and another owned a barber shop and the other a jewelry shop. Other reasons for not being interested to work under the Act were for one of the respondents that she was of Brahmin caste and engaged as a SHG leader; therefore, she could not carry out such type of work under the MGNREGA. Another five of the respondents regarded the work as too tough for them to carry out, in which three of them blamed their old age as the reason. Another reason for another respondent was that she was handicapped and therefore not able to work but as her daughter worked in a factory, she was able to gain a living.

different kinds of employment, therefore not dependent on work provided through the MGNREGA.

Similarly, when interviewing another governmental official, he also argued that the need for the MGNREGA in the study area was not as evident as in other rural areas of the state because of the study area's close location to the state capital city Bangalore. He said that "*in semi-urban areas, like the Ramanagara District, people have access to other types of employment and the wage rates are generally higher. This makes the MGNREGA less attractive to them*".

The fact that the study area was situated close to an urban area, undoubtedly, increases the villager's access to markets and opens up for a variety of employment opportunities, compared to a very remote area far from any urban connectivity. With references to **Table 5.5**, one of the main reasons why 14.4 percent of the respondents were not interested the MGNREGA was because they were engaged in non-farm income related employment. This may support the above arguments, as most likely the need for the MGNREGA would be more pressing in more remote area.

Nevertheless, these statements contradict the findings that over 85 percent of the respondents in the study area were interested to work under the MGNREGA. Although the Ramanagara District is most likely not the district with the neediest population for the MGNREGA in India, the findings still indicate that the Act was much in demand in the study area.

5.1.5 Summary: A return to the first objective

Because of the lack of employment opportunities and the need for income, the respondents stated their need for the MGNREGA in rural Karnataka. The majority of the respondents were landless and therefore dependent on daily access to wage employment to secure a living. Several of these were engaged as coolie workers, which meant limited control over how much work they would have. Moreover, engaging either as farmers, in sericulture or as coolie workers, all these activities involved work in relation to agriculture that were subject to irregular demands of labor according to season, and other variations such as climate. The high number of landless respondents and the even higher number of people engaging in agricultural

related activities suggest that the MGNREGA is needed in rural Karnataka to provide social security in the form of employment or/and unemployment allowances for these people at times of the year when work in the fields are limited.

Other factors that can indicate the need for the MGNREGA in the research area was the prevalence of poverty and the increase in prices of consumption goods. One indication of this was the number of people living below the poverty line as shown by the distribution of ration cards (69.2 percent). The widespread number of illiterates (60 percent) demonstrates that few opportunities are available for many of the villagers to develop their potentials. These people will be mostly engaged in unskilled labor, which is the kind of work the Act provides. The high presence of backward castes (94 percent) among the respondents constitutes the main target groups of the Act, because they make up most of the marginalized sections of the Indian society. Limited opportunities for accumulation of money mean fewer possibilities to make investments, for example in infrastructure such as irrigation that will further assist rural livelihoods. Low attendance in local village meetings (Gram Sabah) (66.7 percent) indicates a lack of participation in the political sphere. Thus, as enhancement of empowerment of poor people is one of the goals of the MGNREGA, the Act can help strengthen the villager's political participation. In addition, approximately 85 percent of the respondents were also interested to participate in the Act. Henceforth, these are all factors that can reflect not only the need – but also the *wish* for the MGNREGA in the study area.

However, already employed and ownership of land was considered the main reasons why the MGNREGA was not needed in the study area; the first most likely due to the close location to urban areas.

The next sections will discuss both the benefits and the challenges by the implementation of the MGNREGA in rural Karnataka.

Section 5.2: The Benefits of Implementing the MGNREGA in Rural Karnataka

NREGA is not just about drought relief but relief against drought (CSE, 2008:55)

Section 5.2 will discuss the benefits of the implementation of the MGNREGA in terms of representation of gender and caste, the assets created under the Act, the number of days' worked and the wages received under the Act. At last, these findings will be assessed in relation to what extent the implementation of the MGNREGA has provided the respondents social security. The findings in Section 5.2 and 5.3 are based on the structured and unstructured interviews, as the former interviewees have participated in the Act.

According to the MGNREGA website, in the Ramanagara District in the financial year of 2010-2011, almost 20,000 Job Cards were issued. Almost 55,000 households demanded work under the MGNREGA, while almost 51,000 were provided work. Almost 2,100 households completed the 100 days of employment (MORD-GOIB).

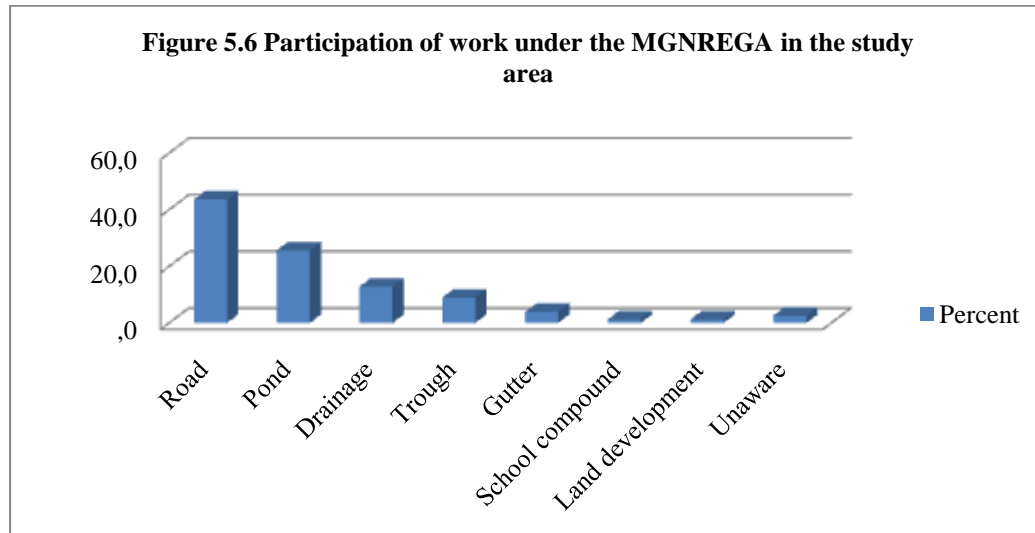
5.2.1 Representation of gender and caste

The Act clearly states that 1/3 of the beneficiaries in the MGNREGA shall be women, and 1/3 shall belong to either SC/ST or OBC (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a). In the study area, both of these requirements were met. From the 80 respondents who participated in work conducted under the MGNREGA in the study area, 59 percent were males and 41 percent were females. In terms of caste, all the beneficiaries belonged to backwards castes whereby 53.8 percent belonged to SC, 1.3 percent belonged to ST and the remaining 44.9 percent belonged to OBC.

5.2.2 The assets created under the MGNREGA

“The effectiveness of the NREGA crucially depends on what types of works it gives priority to” (CSE, 2008:20). If sufficiently implemented, the MGNREGA has potential multiplier effects in raising the economic productivity in rural areas. By increasing people's purchasing power and at the same time create durable assets, local markets and rural industries will in turn be enhanced, which will generate new employment opportunities. At its best, the MGNREGA has the potential to revitalize

the rural economy (Ghosh, 2006). In total, the respondents participated in the execution of seven types of work: road maintenance, pond cleaning, drainage construction and/or maintenance, construction of a trough for cattle, constructing school compound, land development and cleaning of gutter. Similarly, several of the respondents participated in a combination of at least two of these types of work¹¹⁹.



Total number of respondents: 78

Source: Fieldwork returns, Karnataka 2010

Figure 5.6 shows that the majority of the respondents participated in work proceeded under the MGNREGA either related to road maintenance, pond cleaning or drainage construction and/or maintenance. Fourty-three-ooint-six percent pursued work related to road maintenance. These were two roads connecting the villages of Chikka Maralawadi to Kenkeripaliya and Chikka Maralawadi to Kulume Doddi, each with a stretch of about one kilometre. Similarly, the standard of the lanes within villages was also improved in the village of S.N.L Doddi and in Hanumanthapura, whereby in the latter the work was going on at the end of the fieldwork. The nature of the work carried out was cutting and/or removing grass, bushes and trees next to the road, and levelling the road by adding sand, stones and mud. Also, holes and bumps in the road were filled to make the surface even. Twenty-five-point-six percent of the

¹¹⁹ As these findings are based upon information given by the respondents for only this study, there is a possibility that additional works under the MGNREGA have been carried out in the study area by other villagers that are not included in the sample.

respondents participated in pond cleaning. This pond was situated in a hamlet¹²⁰ named Annekeri Doddi, which belonged to the village Sidi Devarahalli. The purpose of the pond was to provide water for nearby fields. The workers removed mud and silt from the bottom of the pond and placed it on the sides to increase the pond's capacity to store rainwater. In relation to the trough¹²¹, 9 percent of the respondents participated in constructing it in the village Krishnabovi Doddi. The purpose of the trough was to collect rainwater in a small pond for the residing cattle in a downward hillside, and it was constructed by bricks and cement. Twelve-point-eight percent of the respondents participated in drainage construction and/or maintenance. The nature of the work was the construction of new drainage systems or removal of sand, plants and waste from the drainage. This work was conducted in the villages Maralawadi, Kenkeripaliya and Kulume Doddi. Three-point-eight respondents participated in cleaning of gutters in the village Hanumanthapura. This work involved removing waste from the open drains along the lanes within the village. In addition, one respondent participated in maintaining the school compound in Sidi Devarahalli village. Trees and bushes were removed to make way for grass, and a wall was constructed to protect the children from the nearby road. Also, one respondent obtained the permission to conduct work under the MGNREGA on his land, in which he also participated. The respondent owned two acres of land, and 10-15 people worked for 100 days in preparing a banana plantation on his land. At last, the two remaining respondents were unable to remember what type of works they had been engaged in. This can be seen in relation to a general lack of knowledge about the MGNREGA in the population, which made it difficult for several of the respondents to differentiate which work they participated in that came under the Act or not. This is a matter the text will come back to in Section 5.3. Overall, all these types of works, except the lane and gutter in Hanumanthapura, were carried out within the last year from the time of the fieldwork. Commonly, the working day lasted for nine hours between 8:00am to 5:00pm with a one hour lunch break.

¹²⁰ A hamlet is a rural settlement that is too small to be referred to as a village.

¹²¹ Locally, the villagers called the trough a 'pick-up'.

Box 5.1 The permissible works conducted under the MGNREGA in the study area

Permissible works under the MGNREGA:	The type of work conducted under the MGNREGA in the study area:
1. Water conservation and water harvesting	- Pond - Trough
6. Land development	- Land development
7. Flood-control and protection works, including drainage in waterlogged areas	- Cleaning drainage - Cleaning gutter
8. Rural connectivity to provide all-weather access that encompass the construction of roads (culverts and drainage), but not roads included in the PMGSY or cement roads. Preference should be given to SC/ST areas	- Road maintenance
10. Any other work assigned by the Central Government in accordance with the State Government	- School compound

Made by Tina Ulvin (Source: Fieldwork returns, Karnataka 2010)

In Chapter 2, the introduction of the MGNREGA listed different types of works in respect to priority as 1 to 9. Taking this list into consideration, the pond cleaning and the construction of the trough comes under the first permissible work. The execution of land development comes under the work of priority number six as the respondent belonged to OBC, and not SC or ST¹²². The cleaning of drainage and gutter comes under the seventh priority on the list. In relation to road maintenance, one might suggest that this execution of work comes under work priority number eight, however, whether or not these roads were included in the PMGSY¹²³ is unknown, but the roads were not cemented. The remaining work carried out at the school compound can be included in the last work priority, as this type of work does not match the other works on the list.

¹²² If the work was conducted on land owned by SC or SC the type of work would be included in the work priority number four (“providing irrigation facilities, plantation, horticulture, land development on land owned by SC/ST households, to beneficiaries of land reforms, or to beneficiaries of the Indira Awas Yojana/ BPL families”) (GOI-MORD, 2008).

¹²³ PMGSY stands for Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, and is described in Subsection 2.1.3.2.



Image 5.6 (top left): The road from Chikka Maralawadi to Kulume Doddi **Image 5.7** (top right): Gutter in Krishnabovi Doddi **Image 5.8** (bottom left): The trough in Krishnabovi Doddi **Image 5.9** (bottom right): The pond in Sidi Devarahalli (Source: Tina Ulvin, November 2010)

According to the CSE (2008), one predominant reason why wage employment generation schemes have disappointed in the past has been an insufficient emphasis on durable assets. But actually how *durable* are the durable assets? For instance, Ghosh (2006) argues that although road construction and maintenance are expensive to pursue, they have both direct and indirect positive effects in connecting rural areas to markets and other means of production that benefit rural livelihoods. Additionally, other less expensive works such as cleaning of ponds and other smaller irrigation works have positive impacts on the agricultural production and the sustainable use of the natural resources, both in the short – and long term (Ghosh, 2006). According to the respondents, most highlighted the maintenance of roads and cleaning of gutter as particularly beneficial for them. One respondent in Kenkeripaliya said, “*The road to Chikkamaralawadi became easier for me to use, so I have benefited from that, before there were many pits in that road*” (male, age 55, OBC). Another respondent said,

“After the gutter was cleaned there are fewer mosquitos and the children gets less sick” (male, age 55, OBC). Likewise, another respondent said that after the waste had been removed from the gutter, the village had become cleaner. The construction of the trough was regarded by two of the respondents as especially useful for the cattle. The respondent helping out maintaining the school compound said that children could now play more safely.

Resultantly, the respondents had participated in creating seven kinds of assets in the study area, which all have the potential to enhance rural growth. Six of these works come under the list of permissible works as stated by the Act whereby two of them under the first priority of works on the list. The majority of the respondents had participated in road maintenance that has both short – and long-term positive effects on rural livelihoods and their community.

5.2.3 Number of days of employment under the MGNREGA

The MGNREGA guarantees 100 days of work for all households who are willing to perform unskilled, manual work at a minimum wage each year. However, in the study area, the majority of the respondents had worked much less than 100 days during the last year.

Table 5.6 Number of days of employment under the MGNREGA in the study area

	Frequency	Percent
100 days	6	7,7
Above 50 days	5	6,4
Less than 50 days	53	67,9
Unaware	14	17,9
Total	78	100,0

Source: Fieldwork returns, Karnataka 2010

As showed in **Table 5.6**, only 7.7 percent of the respondents had participated in work conducted under the MGNREGA for the hundred-days guaranteed, while close to 68 percent had worked less than 50 days.

Moreover, from the latter, 27 of the respondents had worked less than 10 days, and 13 of these had worked less than 5 days with the lowest number of days recorded to only 1 day. In total, the average number of working days was 27.

The reasons for the generally low number of employment days varied. One reason indicated by one of the respondents was lack of awareness “*the (Gram) Panchayat do not inform us about when this MGNREGA work is available, so how can I go and do this work?*” (male, age 24, OBC). Similarly, another respondent stated that no one had asked him to carry out more work, so that was why he had only worked for 1 month. Subsection 5.3.1 will later discuss the issue of limited awareness about the MGNREGA among the respondents. Furthermore, as revealed by a respondent, another reason for the low number of working days was that in relation to the pond cleaning, the work had been stopped because of rain after 1 month. Three of the respondents had only worked for 2, 4 and 8 days because of sickness (fever). Another respondent who had worked for only 8 days said that she was not allowed to work anymore. She said that the contractor had told her “*there is no more work for you*” (female, age 35, SC). As a response to this happening she stated “*so what can I do?*”. Another respondent said that after he had worked with road maintenance for 15 days, he had stopped because rain had come and he had to leave and work on his own land. Also, two of the respondents were working at the time of the fieldwork and had only completed 3 and 1 day of work under the MGNREGA. The contractor at the worksite said that the work would continue for another 1 and ½ month. Subsection 5.3.4 will come back to the use of contractor in work under the MGNREGA.

The finding of the low number of working days correspond with Drèze and Khera’s (2009) study, which reveals that only 13 percent of their sample had worked for 100 days during the last year under the MGNREGA. However, their findings differed according to the various sampled States, whereby in Chhattisgarh only 1 percent of the respondents had been provided the employment guarantee, while 35 percent in Rajasthan had been provided the same. The average number of working days overall was 41, which is higher than the findings in rural Karnataka (Drèze and Khera, 2009). A different study conducted by Adam (2009), in the state of Kerala found that the majority of the respondents worked between 20-60 days and only 3 respondents had worked for one hundred days. The average number of working days was 51, which is higher than the findings of Drèze and Khera (2009). In contrast, the average number

of days worked in Rajasthan was 77, which confirms the recorded success of the implementation of the MGNREGA in the state (Drèze and Khera, 2009).

Ghosh (2006) criticizes the MGNREGA for limiting the number of days of employment to only 100 days a year per household. She argues that because poor households usually comprise of large number of people, this limitation might exclude some household members, especially women, from participating in the Act (Ghosh, 2006). In relation to the findings in the study area, the average household size consisted of 4.5 family members. Similarly, although the male representation of respondents participating in the work conducted under the Act was higher than the female representation, the difference only amounted to 18 percent. These findings might indicate that the criticism by Ghosh (2006) is not applicable in the study area. However, it may point to the need for flexibility in the total number of working days in the MGNREGA in relation to household size.

Scoones (1998), claims that 200 working days a year is the minimum requirement to achieve a sustainable livelihood. To what extent the MGNREGA has helped the respondents in fulfilling this minimum requirement remains an open question. But one may suggest that since only 7.7 percent had been provided the 100 days employment, the MGNREGA has not fulfilled its guarantee and thereby not the Act's potential to improve rural living standards.

5.2.4 Wages under the MGNREGA

According to one governmental official at the state level, the minimum wage for workers under the MGNREGA in the state was INR 100 a day¹²⁴. **Table 5.7** presents the wages earned by participating in work under the MGNREGA in the study area.

¹²⁴ The minimum wage of INR 100 was also confirmed by two other governmental officials.

Table 5.7 Amount of wages earned under the MGNREGA in the study area

	Frequency	Percent
Less than INR 100	37	50,0
INR 100	10	13,5
Above INR 100	16	21,6
Missing payment	5	6,8
Unaware of wage	6	8,1
Total	74	100,0

Source: Fieldwork returns, Karnataka 2010

Table 5.7 shows that only 13.5 percent had earned INR 100, however, surprisingly 21.6 percent of the respondents revealed that they had earned more than INR 100 a day. Two explanations can be given; firstly, as already mentioned, a general lack of awareness about the MGNREGA made it difficult for several of the respondents to distinguish MGNREGA related work to other types of work. This, obviously, also made it difficult to separate the wages collected. Consequently, as other types of coolie work often give wages higher than INR 100, these payments might have become confused with MGNREGA payments. Secondly, for people to be interested to do some of the MGNREGA work, the wages had to be increased. For example, according to the contractor at the worksite in Hanumanthapura, there were germs in the gutter and no one was willing to clean it for only INR 100 a day. This made him pay the double amount for both men and women. INR 200 was the highest wages received from MGNREGA work in the study area.

Table 5.7 further shows that 6.8 percent of the respondents had not yet received any payment for the work carried out under the Act. Since the work they had participated in had been completed at least 6 months ago, these cases are subject to criticism and imply a failure of the implementation of the MGNREGA in the study area. One of these respondents expressed, *“How can I benefit from the scheme when I am not paid?”* (male, age 26, OBC). A similar finding that identifies all these respondents is that they have worked for less than 4 days. Nonetheless, any participant in employment conducted by the MGNREGA is entitled to the wages equivalent to the days he or she has worked.

Moreover, **Table 5.7** also shows that half of the respondents earned less than INR 100 a day. Below, **Table 5.8** gives a more detailed description of these wages according to gender.

Table 5.8 Wages below INR 100 under the MGNREGA according to gender

INR ¹²⁵	Sex			
	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
90	1	6,3		
85	1	6,3		
84	1	6,3		
80	7	43,8	8	38,1
75	2	12,5	3	14,3
70	3	18,8	6	28,6
65			1	4,8
60	1	6,3	2	9,5
50			1	4,8
Total	16	100,0	21	100,0

Source: Fieldwork returns, Karnataka 2010

Table 5.8 shows a predominance of females receiving wages below INR 100. From the 37 respondents who earned less than INR 100, 16 of them were males and 21 of them were females. Although it is stated in the MGNREGA that wages must never be lower than INR 60, the lowest wage recalled by one female respondent was INR 50.

When asking the respondents *if* and if yes *how* they had benefited from working under the MGNREGA, the answers varied. Being provided employment was generally regarded a benefit by most of the respondents. Nevertheless, in terms of income the perceptions were mixed.

¹²⁵ The different amounts of wages given in **Table 5.8** are based on information given by respondents.

Table 5.9 Satisfaction of payments under the MGNREGA according to gender

	Sex			
	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Satisfied	7	18,9	2	8,3
A Little Satisfied	6	16,2	3	12,5
Not Satisfied	23	62,2	18	75,0
Unaware	1	2,7	1	4,2
Total	37	100,0	24	100,0

Source: Fieldwork returns, Karnataka 2010

Table 5.9 shows that 62.2 percent of the male respondents and 75 percent of the female respondents were not satisfied with the wages earned. However, it also illustrates that almost 19 percent of the male respondent and 8.3 percent of the female respondents were satisfied with the wages received. This finding indicates that generally most of the respondents were not satisfied with their income received under the MGNREGA. Resultantly, the table shows a predominance of female respondents being both most dissatisfied and the least satisfied with their income compared to the male respondents. Taking into consideration **Table 5.8** above, this might be related to the findings of female respondents in general having received most of the lowest wages under the MGNREGA.

One of the respondents said that *“my life has not been improved, because the payment is too little”* (female, age 60, SC). Another respondent said, *“By working in the MGNREGA I cannot afford anything more”* (female, unaware of age, SC). In contrast, one respondent told, *“As long as I get work and payment I will benefit from the MGNREGA”* (male, age 26, OBC). Some of the respondents highlighted that through participation in work under the MGNREGA, they could more easily afford to pay for food and other goods such as soap, as well as to send their children to school and to buy schoolbooks, to meet hospital expenses; one respondent mentioned that he had earned more money to construct a house for his family. One respondent said, *“Instead of simply sitting, doing MGNREGA work at least gives some money. At the time when I was called for work under the MGNREGA I did not have any other job, so I was happy to get this work”* (male, age 65, OBC).

Moreover, based on the findings and if comparing the wages provided by the MGNREGA to the wages earned as a coolie worker (male: INR 100-150, women INR 50-70), the men may risk earning less in the MGNREGA than as a coolie worker (engagement in casual work), while the women will most likely increase their wages by working under the Act. Consequently, in terms of wages this indicates that the women, if paid the minimum wage, will most likely benefit more under the MGNREGA than male workers. Furthermore, the seemingly small difference between wages received as a coolie worker and under the Act made some people question the benefits of the MGNREGA, as according to one respondent, “*Who wants to work for so little money?*” (male, age 35, SC).

The results demonstrate that the MGNREGA had provided the minimum wage – or even above the minimum wage to about 35 percent of the respondents, and below the minimum wage to half of the respondents. Considering that also 6.8 percent of the respondents had not yet received any payments, the implementation of the Act is subject to limitations. Nonetheless, almost 19 percent of the male respondents and 8.3 percent of the female respondents had stated that they were satisfied with the payments, which indicate that the MGNREGA had benefited some of the respondents. When comparing the wages received as coolie workers, the findings may indicate that the potential to benefit from the MGNREGA in term of wages is higher for the women than men. However, as the wage differences between the MGNREGA and coolie work were relatively small especially for the men, this may be a reason why the majority of the respondents were not satisfied with the wages received under the MGNREGA.

5.2.5 The MGNREGA: a source of social security?

Subrahmanya (1995) argues that promotion of employment opportunities have constituted one of the prime objectives of the Indian government in its attempt to provide social security and to reduce poverty in the country. He argues that “the strategy for eradication of poverty consists primarily in promoting the productive use of the poor’s most abundant, that is to provide a source of income through employment to those who are able to work but are unemployed for no fault of theirs” (Subrahmanya, 1995:10). With the implementation of the MGNREGA, India marks a

unique commitment to combat poverty (Hirway, 2005). But to what extent has the implementation of the MGNREGA contributed to social security in the study area?

By implementing the MGNREGA, India has moved a step closer to fulfill Sen's (1999) fifth instrumental freedom of 'protective security', by providing a social safety net for people in a vulnerable situation. With references to the ILO (2010a), the aim of the MGNREGA is first and foremost to protect the rural population against the fourth measure "general poverty and social exclusion", presented in Chapter 2 (ILO, 2010a:7), through the provision of work and income at times of the year when other sources of employment are scarce. However, for people to benefit from the Act, certain requirements must be accomplished (ILO, 2010a) such as the registration of the household, applying for work and attendance at the worksite.

Drèze and Sen (1989) introduce *protection* and *promotion* as two aspects of social security. 'Protection' refers to the facilitation of preventing a possible deterioration of people's living standards, caused by, for example, natural disasters or economic depression. 'Promotion' is viewed as a long-term achievement to improve people's lives over time through, for instance, reducing existing deprivation and widespread under nutrition. Although the definitions differentiate the two concepts, protection and promotion are mutually dependent on each other. For example, in a situation where an increase in living standards has been achieved (promotion), the potential of severe setbacks in case of economic depression will be reduced, as people will have more resources in hand when confronting the crisis (protection) (Drèze and Sen, 1989). Furthermore, Drèze and Sen (1989) argue that in terms of income, the instrumental role of protection is to avoid sudden wage reductions, while the promotion of incomes refers to encourage an increase of contemporary low incomes. With reference to the MGNREGA and its goal of alleviating rural poverty, one can claim that the Indian government attempts to provide social security, both in the short term by providing immediate economic relief through employment (protection), but also by establishing durable assets to benefit the people concerned in the long run (promotion).

The benefits of the MGNREGA implementation in the study area were discussed with four representatives at the governmental official levels. One governmental official emphasized that the MGNREGA, in general, provided social security for the rural

population through the creation of durable assets and wage increase in the villages. More specifically for Karnataka, he stated that the creation of assets, especially within horticulture activities such as banana, grapes and papaya plantations, had dominated the activities undertaken under the MGNREGA. Another governmental official assured that “*the MGNREGA work is more than sufficient to provide a good life in rural areas*”. Two other officials stressed that by providing employment, people’s economic status would be strengthened, which could, for example, as stated by one of the officials “*enable the people to invest in more livestock*”.

In the study area, the need for employment was a matter of concern; over 50 percent of the respondents were landless, which meant that they depended daily on wage labor throughout the year to make a living. In Karnataka, a minimum wage of INR 100 under the MGNREGA means that, technically, a person can earn INR 10,000 a year under the Act. This amount is over double the annual income of INR 4,272, which identifies a person as living below poverty line (CSE, 2008). Hence, the MGNREGA can lift people out of poverty (ibid.). However, in the study area, only six respondents had been provided work for 100 days under the Act. Multiplying the average number of working days of 27, this equals the average of INR 2,700 per household. This amount will most likely not have the same effect on transforming the patterns of poverty as a full utilization of the Act. With over half of the respondents having worked less than 50 days and earning wages below the minimum wage, one might suggest that the potential of the MGNREGA to function as a social safety net for the people in the study area has not been utilized to the maximum. Later, Section 5.4 will discuss that the benefits of the unemployment allowances had not yet reached the respondents in the study area.

Nonetheless, working for less than 100 days and earning less than INR 100 may still imply an economic relief that is better than no means of income at all. At times when access to employment is minimal, working under the MGNREGA and earning perhaps only INR 50 a day, may generate enough support to help the household through the day, although it may not mean any chances of changing the conditions of poverty for the household. Even so, five respondents highlighted that they preferred to participate in work conducted under the MGNREGA in favor of other coolie work as they were secured 100 days of employment.

5.2.6 Summary: A return to the second objective

One may suggest that the villagers in rural Karnataka had benefited from the implementation of the MGNREGA from being provided a certain number of days of employment, wages and through the assets created. Regarding the works carried out under the Act, the respondents had participated in creating seven assets. According to the guidelines of the Act, seven of these works can be classified as belonging to the list, whereby two of them under the first priority of works. By enhancing rural infrastructure, the people and the community could potentially benefit from the MGNREGA in the long term. Likewise, the respondents stated short-term benefits like improved health, a cleaner living environment, improved safety at the school, access to safe drinking water for the cattle and better road conditions.

In relation to employment and wages, over half of the respondents had worked less than 100 days and received payments below the minimum wage. Moreover, some respondents had not yet received their payments from working under the MGNREGA. These findings may indicate that the aim of the Act to reduce poverty by providing social security has not been successful in the study area. However, although the potential of the Act has not been fully utilized, even limited participation in the MGNREGA and/or limited amount of wages received could still promote some degrees of benefits to the respondents. In the short term, income through the MGNREGA has been stated as providing benefits such as being able to cover food and other household expenses. Furthermore, the respondents earning the minimum wage or above the minimum wage have increased chances to benefit more also in the long term as they have accumulated higher amounts of money. Moreover, when comparing the wages earned under the MGNREGA to wages earned as coolie workers, the findings indicates that women has the potential to benefit more than the men, as their wages as coolie workers is lower than MGNREGA minimum wage.

Consequently, in relation to the livelihood framework adapted to rural Karnataka, presented as **Figure 2.4**, the implementation of the MGNREGA may have contributed to achieve the livelihood outcomes described (reduced poverty and vulnerability, increased number of working days, income and social security) to some of the respondents by providing employment and wages. In addition, in relation to the assets created, the MGNREGA may also have contributed to reduce vulnerability by

improving rural infrastructure. The livelihood outcomes will be more thoroughly discussed in Subsection 5.4.1.

Section 5.3: The challenges of Implementing the MGNREGA in Rural Karnataka

Section 5.3 discusses the challenges faced by the implementation of the MGNREGA in the study area based on the findings related to lack of awareness, distrust and transparency issues, problems with Job Cards, and assets at risk with the use or non-use of contractors and machines. The findings will present challenges met by the respondents, as well as for the implementing agencies. Thereafter, the issue of affordability of the MGNREGA in India will be discussed, followed by various standpoints related to the effectiveness of ‘rights’ in promoting development.

5.3.1 Limited awareness

The Indian social activist Aruna Roy states that the MGNREGA could be viewed as containing aspects of a “mature democracy” because it provides “the poor with the right to demand, the right to know and the right to dignity, not the right to beg” (IFPRI, 2010:1). In theory, the MGNREGA is a rights-based Act, which gives the people nine rights:

- 1) *Application for registration*
- 2) *Obtaining a Job Card*
- 3) *Application for work*
- 4) *Choice of time and duration of the work applied for*
- 5) *Provision of work within fifteen days of application*
- 6) *Provision of crèche, drinking water, first aid facilities on work site*
- 7) *The right to check their Muster Rolls and to get information regarding their employment entered in their Job Cards*
- 8) *Payment of wages within fifteen days of work done*
- 9) *The right to get unemployment allowance in case employment is not provided within fifteen days of submitting the application or from the date when work is sought (GOI-MORD, 2008:6-7).*

However, in the study area this knowledge appeared to be non-existent among the respondents who had been provided employment under the MGNREGA. Not only being unaware of their right to work, additional practical details such as applying for employment or the unemployment allowance was unknown. None of the respondents had applied for employment by giving an application. Their perception of obtaining work through the MGNREGA was the same as obtaining coolie work by passively waiting to be called for within their respective villages.

When asking the respondents what they knew about the Act, the typical answer was “it is employment given by the government”. Any knowledge about for how many days work would be given, what type of works and amount of wages was unknown.

Table 5.10 Source of awareness about the MGNREGA

	Frequency	Percent
GP came to their village	37	52,9
GP came to their home	18	25,7
GS meeting	4	5,7
Family/friends/neighbors	4	5,7
Other	7	10,0
Total	70	100,0

Source: Fieldwork returns, Karnataka 2010

Table 5.10 presents the various sources of information about the MGNREGA by the respondents. The majority of the respondents came to know about the Act through a village meeting held in their villages by the Gram Panchayat (GP), and almost 26 percent through GP members coming to their homes. The fact that only 4 respondents came to know about the Act in a Gram Sabah (GS) meeting may be related to the general low attendance among the respondents in these meetings.

At the village level, “the Gram Panchayat is the pivotal body for implementation” (GOI-MORD, 2008:6), and the guidelines of the MGNREGA states that information regarding the Act should preferably be given in GS meetings (ibid.). However, as few

people attended these meetings, it seems that the GP have either arranged meetings in the villages or sought people in their homes to inform about the Act.

Additional sources of information about the MGNREGA in the villages were observed as writings on school or kindergarten walls in three of the villages. The local GP posted this information, which included six reference points of information written in the local language Kannada. Translated in English the information was as follows:

IMPORTANT POINTS OF THE NREGA SCHEME

1. *It provides 100 days of work to all family members.*
2. *The payment will be provided within 15 days.*
3. *For men and women the payment is equal.*
4. *Contractors and JSB companies cannot be given permission to carry out the work.*
5. *You can only claim the payment if the work is done/ proceeded under the Gram Sabah and other Panchayat Raj institutions¹²⁶.*
6. *The people participating in the program should have a bank account.*

For more information you must contact the Marlawadi Gram Panchayat.



Image 5.10 Information about the MGNREGA written on school wall (Source: Tina Ulvin, November 2010)

Positively, these reference points reveal information about the 100 days of employment, that the payment is equal to both sexes, that any use of contractors is

¹²⁶ The Panchayat Raj institutions mean the whole panchayat system.

forbidden, that payments can be claimed and that bank accounts are preferred. However, this posting poses a number of shortcomings:

- Absent from the list is the essence of the MGNREGA, the fact that people have the right to employment.
- The first reference point reveals that 100 days of employment will be given ‘to all family members’, which is not the case as the Act provides 100 days of employment per household and not to each individual within the household¹²⁷.
- Relevant information is absent regarding the 100 days of employment given each financial year, and not only once.
- Point number two does not state from when the payment will be given.
- The important practical step that people are required to apply for employment at the local GP is not stated.
- The amount of wages is missing.
- The fifth reference point is subject to confusion as it should be obvious that the public authorities, the panchayat, control any work conducted under the MGNREGA, and not any other institution.
- The issue of unemployment allowances is totally missing.

Considering these shortcomings, it may not be so strange that the awareness level among the respondents about the MGNREGA was limited¹²⁸.

Drèze and Khera (2009) detected similar findings in their study, whereby less than half of their sample was aware of their right to employment for the 100 days. Very few of their respondents had formally applied for work as they were unaware of this procedure (Drèze and Khera, 2009). In comparison, the study made by Adam (2009), shows that over 90 percent of his respondents in Kerala were aware of the 100 days guaranteed, the minimum wage and the entitlements to the payment within 15 days (Adam, 2009).

¹²⁷ Several members of the same household can participate and work, but the guarantee of 100 days implies the aggregate amount for all the household members together. For example, if the husband worked 30 days, the wife 30 days and the son 40 days (GOI-MORD, 2008).

¹²⁸ Regarding the illiterates, they would face problems acquiring the information written, however, getting a literate acquaintance to pass on the information is doable.

Moreover, with references to the total sample of respondents presented in **Figure 5.2**, 13 percent of all the respondents were not aware of the MGNREGA at all. This is a rather surprising finding as one might imagine that some information about the Act would reach the people somehow. Undoubtedly, this finding further indicates that the awareness levels of the MGNREGA in the study area need further emphasis.

The lack of awareness about the MGNREGA can be perceived as a challenge both for the people and for the public authorities in charge. For the people, obviously, being unaware of their rights means their rights cannot be claimed, which makes the purpose of the Act to reduce rural poverty rather inefficient. With regards to the implementing institutions, their efforts in informing the people have proved inadequate in the study area. To further maximize the Act's potential to benefit the people, one might suggest that the challenge for the implementing institutions lays in raising the general awareness about the MGNREGA.

5.3.2 Distrust and transparency issues

A prevailing distrust among many of the villagers toward the public authority was evident in the study area. Perceptions of frauds, scams and other sources of public misuse of funds were openly revealed. According to one respondent, *“There are so many programs to help poor people, but where does the money go? I have not seen any of it”* (male, age 65, SC). Another respondent said, *“The moment money is transferred to the Gram Panchayat office it will be eaten off within the panchayat family's members, and nothing will benefit us”* (male, age 23, OBC). Similarly, a respondent said that *“yes, our community can benefit from the MGNREGA, but the (Gram) Panchayat is not interested to do anything to help us”* (male, age 26, OBC).

According to an interview conducted with a professor at the University of Bangalore and one of ATREE's field staff, one type of scam happening in the name of the MGNREGA is that villagers possessing Job Cards are asked by contractors to go and sign a check in a bank, and for this request they will perhaps earn INR 20. Satisfied by earning some money without having to work, the villager completes the request, ignorant of the fact that he/she could have earned a lot more (the minimum wage), if they had been provided work through the Act. In this way, the muster rolls are

maintained by workers who seemingly have participated in the work. Funds to carry out the work are allotted from the government, and the work is carried out mainly by the use of machines. The surplus of the money provided is shared among the corrupt officials. The awareness of this kind of scam was known among several of the respondents. Two respondents showed their bank-book where amounts of money both deposited and withdrawn were entered, although this was money the respondents had never worked for, touched or seen.

Surprisingly, when asking one governmental official about his views regarding the impacts of the implementation of the MGNREGA in the State, he said, *“I am quite satisfied with the MGNREGA in this state, but if you go into the villages there will be a lot of complaints, perhaps related to corruption. But as this scheme is in such a big scale leakages will happen -it will always be there”*. By acknowledging his last sentence, corruption within the Act was not only conformed, it was even approved.

In Sen’s (1999) comprehension of development as freedom, the importance of a ‘transparency guarantee’ between different parties of the society as one of the instrumental freedoms is crucial in the prevention of possible misuse of funds. He writes: “when the trust is seriously violated, the lives of many people -both direct parties and third parties -may be adversely affected by the lack of openness” (Sen, 1999:39-40). As corruption is widely entrenched in the Indian society, its practice is banned and much effort has been made to reduce its presence, for example, through the Right to Information (RTI) Act¹²⁹. Nonetheless, the depth and extent of these kinds of corruptions going on in the study area was not further investigated in this research. However, it was obvious that the acknowledgement of these incidents taking place among the respondents only helped to decrease the credibility of the governmental sectors. In the words of a teacher in the area, *“So much money has been sanctioned to this panchayat through the MGNREGA, but still the villages looks the same, there are no improvements -only corruption”* (male, age 36, caste unknown).

¹²⁹ When interviewing a spokesman of the RTI at the institute of Social and Economic Change in Bangalore, he referred to the RTI as a *gun for the people*, by which he meant that by using the RTI, the people could serve as watchdogs of actions pursued by the government.

Canara Bank was the bank in the study area that offered bank accounts to MGNREGA workers. Although it says in the guidelines of the Act that opening a bank account should be free of charge, the workers had to pay INR 200 as a deposit to open an account¹³⁰. In relation to the operation of bank accounts, several of the respondents complained that they were unfamiliar with the banking process. One respondent said, “*I do not know anything about banks, so I want my wages to be given to me by hand*” (female, age 32, SC). When discussing this issue with one of the social workers, he said that the Gram Panchayat would arrange information meetings to instruct the villagers about the use of bank accounts in the near future.

Regarding the practice of social audits (described in chapter 2, with the purpose of enhancing public vigilance) or the use of RTI, the first 30 survey interviews included these questions. However, after getting only negative answers I stopped asking these questions, as it seemed this kind of information was non-existent. One governmental official, however, assured that social audits were held in the study area.

The sense of distrust among the people towards the public authorities created a barrier between the two, which hampered people’s perception of the government’s will to actually care for its people, a perception also encompassed in the MGNREGA. This barrier can be perceived as a challenge both for the implementing institutions and the people, as it halts the latter’s faith behind the intention of the government’s implementation of the MGNREGA to actually benefit the villagers. However, for this negative perception to be changed the public authorities must prove accountable and corrupt practices and attitudes must be defeated.

5.3.3 Problems with Job Cards

According to the guidelines of the MGNREGA, the Job Card is “a critical legal document, which also helps to ensure transparency and protect labourers against fraud” (GOI-MORD, 2008:22). In the Job Cards, all detailed information concerning the type of work, duration of work, the dates of the year and the amount of payment earned for five years shall be stated.

¹³⁰ It says under 7.2.1 number 8: “Banks should be requested to open the accounts for NREGA labourers, without charge” (GOI-MORD, 2008:36).

There were two types of Job Cards observed in the study area: one light blue with a paper cover and the other, pink with plastic cover. The latter was a newer version distributed and of better quality. Irrespective of type of card, all of them lacked all details related to the employment participation under the MGNREGA, except one card observed. In this Job Card, the number of working days was entered. Usually the Job Card contained photos of the household members registered for work, the names of these members and the date the card was issued. But for some, even photos and names were missing.

Drèze and Khera (2009) detected the same findings in all the six states except Rajasthan where 100 percent of the Job Cards were properly maintained. However, in the rest of the states, only 1/4 of the Job Cards contained the details required. For 37 percent of the respondents, any entries in the Job Cards were missing, and for 1/5 of the respondents fake entries had been made (Drèze and Khera, 2009).

Moreover, **Figure 5.2** shows that 10.5 percent of the respondents had at the time of the fieldwork not received a Job card although they had applied for it under the MGNREGA. Some of them mentioned that they had applied for the Job Card about a year ago when the Gram Panchayat members had informed the people about the MGNREGA in their villages. When I asked them if they knew why they had not been provided the Job Card, one of the respondent said, *“It is because I was not selected”* (male, age 65, SC), and another said, *“They (Gram Panchayat) told me I was too old”* (female, unaware of age, OBC). Even so, it is stated in the Act that ‘anyone’ who is willing to carry out work under the Act has the right to be provided work, and the Job Card shall be issued within 14 days after the application has been given (GOI-MORD, 2008).

For the MGNREGA to realize its full potential to benefit the people, satisfactory implementation of the Act must also be carried out at the ground level. When Job Cards are not properly maintained the credibility of the Act becomes threatened as the workers are more easily exposed to frauds. Moreover, when the Job Card is not even distributed to the people that have applied for it, people are deprived from the opportunity to benefit from the MGNREGA.

5.3.4 Assets at risk: the use or non-use of contractors and machines

The guidelines of the Act (2008) states that the use of contractors and machines for work carried out under the MGNREGA is not allowed¹³¹ (GOI-MORD 2008). However, with regards to the use of machinery, it can be utilized if necessary according to the Act, schedule 1, number 12: “As far as practicable, a task funded under the Scheme shall be performed by using manual labour and not machines” (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a:13).

In the study area, two interviews of contractors were collected, and the use of machines were both observed by the researcher and revealed by the respondents. Similar stories were also told by one of ATREE’s field staffs. One of the interviews was carried out at the worksite in the village of Hanumathapura where a tractor was observed in relation to the work. About nine people were working, both men and women. The male workers chopped loosely the waste of soil and mud removed from the gutter along the lane and upon the lane. Then, the female workers removed the loosely chopped waste and placed it in wicker baskets. They carried the baskets on the top of their heads and threw it in the trailer of the tractor. People working at and living close to the pond observed the use of an excavator and tractors. Additionally, three respondents working on the road between Kenkeriplaya and Chikka Maralawadi and on the road connecting Chikka Maralawadi to Kulume Doddi also observed an excavator.



¹³¹ In the MGNREGA under schedule 1 (11) it says: “The Scheme shall not permit engaging any contractor for implementation of the projects under it (GOI-Legislative Dept., 2005a:13).

Image 5.11 MGNREGA workers at the worksite **Image 5.12** Worksite showing the use of tractor

(Source: Tina Ulvin, December 2010)

The use of machinery deprives the MGNREGA workers from their opportunity to seize work, which is the whole practical utilization of the Act. Several of the respondents were furious and frustrated with the use of machines, excavators and tractors; one respondent said, *“I don’t like the use of JCB (machines) because we, the people, can do the work instead! If the community is going to benefit from the MGNREGA, then avoid using JCB”* (male, unaware of age, OBC). Another respondent said, *“Yes, the villagers can benefit from the MGNREGA by being given employment, but then machines cannot be used”* (male, age 35, SC). As to what extent the use of machinery in the types of works mentioned above was necessary or not is not a judgment this paper is going to make. However, in relation to the pond, according to one of the respondents, the use of machines was common in such types of work.

Furthermore, the use or non-use of machines has raised concerns related to the quality of the assets created. The CSE report (2008) says that especially in the long-term, by not using machines, the value of the assets are lost. Coupled with lack of planning and the fact that maintenance for work already completed under the MGNREGA does not come under the list of permissible works, several of the assets created practically become worthless (CSE, 2008).

Obviously, using machines practically steals much of the workload targeted for the rural poor and deprives them of the opportunity to earn an income through the MGNREGA. At the same time, if the outcome of not using machines is the creation of non-productive assets, then the goal of the MGNREGA to enhance the rural economy becomes more difficult to achieve.

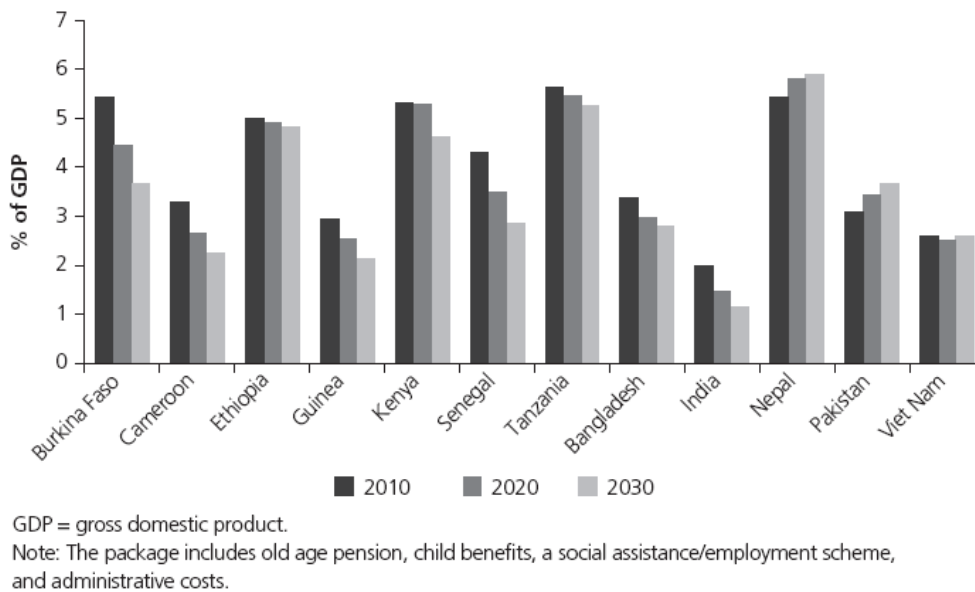
5.3.5 Affordability

How well can India afford to pay for the MGNREGA? Or phrased differently, can India afford not to have the MGNREGA? The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) report (2008) states that “social security is not only a desirable, effective mechanism for poverty reduction but also an affordable one” (Norad,

2008:24). The ADB report (2010) states that all countries can afford to provide some kind of social security for its people. However, the range of the social security coverage in all countries depends on the political will to allocate the means needed (Norad, 2008, ADB, 2010, Drèze, 2010 and Ghosh, 2006).

Basically, the stand against the idea that social security is not affordable for developing countries argues that the states will not be able to bear the cost of such investments, due to fiscal deficits because of a large, needy population. Nonetheless, the ADB report (2010) states that the fiscal costs will not be reduced because in sum, the country will gain from investing in a healthy, well-educated and well-nourished workable population that will help boost the national economy (ADB, 2010).

Figure 5.7 Estimated cost of package of basic transfers



Source: ADB (2010:50)

Figure 5.7 shows India’s total spending on social security schemes (which includes the MGNREGA) in 2010 amounted to 2 percent of the GDP, but 20 years ahead, the estimated cost is believed to be reduced by almost half the percentage of GDP (ADB, 2010). This estimate illustrates a positive prospect for India to manage the cost of not only the MGNREGA, but also additional social security programmes in the future.

5.3.6 Do rights work?

Through implementing the MGNREGA, the government of India has taken a great political commitment to reduce poverty in the country. By granting this right, the Indian government is legally bound to provide employment to its citizens. Following Hickey (2010), this commitment is what he describes as belonging to the citizenship-based approach under inclusive liberalism, which aims to include poor people in a more even process of development. The stand in favor of the approach argues that poverty can be reduced through state intervention. However, the stand in disfavor of the citizenship-based approach argues that only the *symptoms* of poverty is addressed and not the underlying *causes* of poverty. Claiming that “citizenship has become limited to participation in projects, not politics, and the right to have targeted subsidies, not the ‘right to have rights’” (Hickey, 2010:8). In his article, Hickey (2010) suggests that including the poor and marginalized (the excluded) in the development process is important to reduce the incidents of poverty, but that in the long run this development strategy is insufficient. He argues that although the promotion of civil, political and cultural rights does prove progress in the development of the poor, any major changes in the material and structural basis of deprivation has not been observed (Hickey, 2010). In relation to India, rural unemployment, as described in Chapter 2, has constituted one of the sources of poverty in the country. Hence, the implementation of the MGNREGA as rights to employment can be regarded as addressing the causes of poverty, which has the potential to also promote development in the future. However, the structural nature of the unemployment needs further attention.

Joshi (2010) makes references to the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Act (MEGA) when he suggests that the advantage in enforcing legal rights is to enhance the accountability of the state, and also by promoting public action that ensures people’s access and utilization of these rights. Through the MEGA, social activist campaigns encouraged people to claim their right to employment. Nonetheless, the disadvantage of rights is that protecting the workers from any violations from the state can imply complications. For instance, if unemployment allowances have not been provided to confront the state through a trial without any legal assistance provided by the state will most likely become very difficult for the marginalized worker in terms of cost. Because of this, according to Joshi (2010), the practical utilization of rights

can turn out more difficult than presented in theory.

Singh (2006) argues for the right to work as an issue of ‘the right to live’. He writes, “The right to work for the poor is not a mere demand rather it is an essential requirement to live” (Singh, 2006:160). He argues for the right to work as crucial to combat the widespread unemployment situation in India, especially in the rural areas, and the increasing incidents of malnutrition among the population, which has resulted in half of India’s children suffering from undernourishment (in 2002). Further, he states that by introducing the MGNREGA, the people have been empowered with a right to access work, which will in turn increase the purchasing power of the people. In addition, through the work carried out under the Act, rural infrastructure will be enhanced, which will further stimulate growth of production in rural areas (Singh, 2006).

Drèze (2010) argues that ensuring the right to work through the MGNREGA through a law rather than a scheme raises the quality of the Act in the long term. He writes, “Schemes come and go, but laws are more durable” (Drèze, 2010:262). He further argues that one of the essential features of the Act is empowerment because the bargaining power of the laborers is strengthened. He writes, “Unlike a ‘scheme’, a law gives people durable entitlements that they can fight for” (Drèze, 2010:267). However, he also claims that simply enforcing a law is not sufficient if people are not aware of their rights. To make use of legal rights, a process of public mobilization must be taking place. For instance, in terms of corruption, Drèze (2010) argues that the empowerment of the laborers is the best way to see an end to the problem; he writes, “The best way to fight corruption in public works is to empower those who are at the receiving end of the system of fraud and embezzlement-starting with the labourers, for whom it is a matter of life and death” (Drèze, 2010:267).

From these arguments, the entitlement of rights can be regarded as crucial in the process of developing the poor, for reduction of poverty, in mobilizing and empowering the poor and even for survival. However, for the people to benefit from and utilize their entitlements of rights, they must first of all be informed about their rights. In addition, if rights have been neglected, to claim rights from the state can pose hardship for the people. Furthermore, it has also been argued that rights do not

address the causes of poverty; therefore, it can have less positive effects on reducing poverty in the long run. However, in India, the implementation of the MGNREGA has addressed the problem of unemployment as one of the causes of poverty, which might suggest that the Act has potential to also contribute to the development of the country in the future.

5.3.7 Summary: A return to the third objective

The findings reveal that the lack of awareness about the MGNREGA constituted a constraint for the respondents in the study area to utilize the potential benefits embedded in the Act. Not being aware of their rights deprives these people from their opportunity to claim these rights, and the intention behind the Act becomes more or less valueless. The challenge for the implementing institutions lies in promoting awareness among the people about the MGNREGA to fulfill their promised guarantee.

In addition, the findings indicate a sense of mistrust prevailing in the study area related to a negative perception among some of the respondents of the intention behind the government's implementation of the MGNREGA to actually serve the people. This mistrust has caused a barrier between the people and the authorities as not playing on the same team, but rather against each other. The practical implementation of the MGNREGA has proved challenging in terms of possible detections of scams. Considering that corrupt practices were seemingly accepted at the governmental official level suggests that for the Act to prove its potential to reduce rural poverty, attitudes and behavior within the implementing agencies need to be changed to reduce the barrier between the two.

The missing details in the Job Cards further indicate the practical execution of the MGNREGA is subject to constraints. Improper maintenance of Job Cards puts the goal of the Act to enhance transparency at risk, and it exposes the participants under the Act to exploitation and misuse.

Additionally, although the MGNREGA prohibits the use of contractors and prefers that machinery is not used, both were observed in relation to employment carried out under the MGNREGA in the study area. For the people, the use of machinery posed challenges as their opportunities to access work was hampered. For the implementing

institutions, laws have been neglected, which also create challenges for the credibility of the Act. Nonetheless, as the quality of the assets created can be jeopardized by not using machines and contractors, this poses additional challenges to the effectiveness of the MGNREGA to transform the rural economy.

In relation to India's affordability to manage the cost of the MGNREGA, it has been argued that India can afford to provide social security also in the future, as its share of GDP will be reduced.

At last, when discussing the effectiveness of entitlements of rights as a tool to promote development, rights have been stated as essential for poverty reduction. However, for people to benefit from rights, it is crucial that they must be informed about its existence. In addition, it can be difficult for people to demand their rights from governments if their rights have been ignored. Furthermore, it has been argued that rights are not effective in promoting development in the long run because they do not address the underlying sources of poverty. However, with regards to the MGNREGA and the challenge of rural unemployment in India, the Act's entitlement of rights to employment as a social safety net has addressed the causes of poverty.

Section 5.4: Reflections and Considerations

5.4.1 The MGNREGA and livelihood outcomes

Looking back at the livelihood framework presented as **Figure 2.4** in Chapter 2, it questions: To what extent has – or has not the MGNREGA influenced the respondents in rural Karnataka achieving the livelihood outcomes described?

Overall, based on the findings, one may suggest that the implementation of the MGNREGA in the study has helped to ease the lives for some, but not for all. Only 7.7 percent of the respondents had worked for 100 days while almost 68 percent had worked for less than 50 days. In terms of wages, adding the share of the respondents who had earned above the stipulated minimum wage of INR 100, 21.6 percent, to the 13.5 percent of the respondents who has earned the minimum wage, equaled to slightly over 35 percent. In comparison, when adding the share of respondents who had received wages less than INR 100, 50 percent, to the 6.8 percent who had not yet

received any payments, these two amount to almost 69 percent. What these estimates tell is that the Act has provided the employment guarantee to only 7.7 percent of the respondents, and above –or the minimum wage to 35 percent of the respondents. Furthermore, these estimates also reveal that 68 percent of the respondents had worked for less than 50 days, while 69 percent had earned less than the minimum wage. In other words, the Act has succeeded in fulfilling its promise of employment not even to 1/10 of the respondents, while it has provided the minimum wage to just slightly over 1/3 of the respondents (that has participated in the MGNREGA).

In terms of to what extent the MGNREGA has contributed to increase the number of working days in the study area, one may suggest that the impact has been minimal. Still, as the Act has provided some respondents with the employment guarantee coupled with the average working days of 26, the Act have still contributed to some extent, although far from its stipulated promise.

Regarding income, as the MGNREGA has provided at least the minimum wage to over 1/3 of the respondents, one may suggest that the Act has helped to increase the household income to some extent. Nonetheless, taking into consideration that almost 70 percent of the respondents had earned less than the minimum wage, together with the low level of satisfaction of payments and relatively high food prices, this may indicate that the extent of the income increase does not cover all.

The extent of the MGNREGA to provide social security has already been given in Section 5.3, which explains that the Act still have a long way to go before it can fully claim its function as a social safety net in the study area. This is due to the shortcomings of both employment generation and the size of the wages. Nonetheless, for the few that has been provided the employment guarantee, the Act has fulfilled its promise. Linked with the three outcome indicators mentioned are the two remaining livelihood outcomes listed: reduced poverty and vulnerability. Needless to say, poverty can be reduced if employment is provided, the minimum wages paid and the durable assets created, also if poverty is reduced then reduction of vulnerability follows. Furthermore, through the assets created, rural infrastructure has been improved, which may have a positive impact on the level of vulnerability of the respondents, and even for the other villagers residing in the surrounding research area. The latter, because they as well can utilize the assets created, for example the roads

and the trough. These are possible synergy effects of the assets created in enabling opportunities to enhance the rural economy for the local villagers.

5.4.2 Reflections and future prospects of the MGNREGA

*rozgar guarantee zindabad*¹³²

The implementation of the MGNREGA has come long into its fifth year of implementation in the Hindi heartland¹³³. While having improved the lives of millions of people, the Act have faced a series of challenges that still need to be dealt with to fully realize the goals of the Act.

Ghosh (2006:101) argues that the MGNREGA is a “major move in the right direction”. By reducing rural unemployment, the surplus labor force together with the production of durable assets, can regenerate the rural economy, and possibly “the Indian experience can indeed serve as a model for the rest of the world” (Ghosh, 2006:102). However, Ghosh stresses that the MGNREGA is not alone *the* solution to end the rural suffering prevailing in the country. In addition to the MGNREGA, additional public social services, such as education, health and sanitation must also be further addressed to successfully alleviate rural poverty (Ghosh, 2006).

Similarly, Drèze (2010) argues that the MGNREGA is not the answer to end unemployment in rural areas, but it can support the poorest of the poor. He says, “One hundred days of employment at the statutory minimum wage is not the end of unemployment by any means, but for people living on the brink of starvation, it makes a big difference” (Drèze, 2010:262).

In the same way, Singh (2006) stresses that it will take time for the MGNREGA to reduce rural unemployment, but the Act represents a step towards empowering the rural population, which is necessary to achieve rural development. Furthermore, Singh (2006) requests that a similar legislation is targeted for urban areas, since unemployed causes many problems in these areas too.

¹³² This quote is written in Hindi, but in English it means ‘long live employment guarantee’ (Drèze, 2010:261).

¹³³ A term borrowed from Negi (2010:22), meaning ‘India’.

“NREGA needs to be evaluated on its development impacts, rather just on creation of employment” (CSE, 2008:26). The CSE (2008) states that the success of the Act should not only be measured by the amount of people it gives employment to, but also the number of people that *did not* demand employment because their lives have been improved by increased purchasing power and by the assets created under the Act (CSE, 2008). As a matter of fact, the intention behind the MGNREGA is not to last forever, but to gradually reduce its significance by establishing new grounds for extended employment opportunities and increasing livelihood security. By creating productive assets in the rural areas, these assets are meant to make way for new demands for employment. For example, one hectare of irrigated land creates additional demand for labor for 2.5 people (CSE, 2008). This way, the MGNREGA is meant to be self-fulfilling by gradually reducing the need for the scheme (Hirway, 2005).

When asking one of the governmental officials at the State level about his reflections concerning the future of the MGNREGA, he claimed, *“I do not want the MGNREGA to continue for a long time, because rural unemployment should now be reduced, and people should rather be trained to engage in skilled employment”*. Furthermore, he stated that the Indian government could serve as an agency to provide training for example in making bricks, fertilizers, in tailoring or in the garment business, where none of the professions require major skills.

One of the social workers was generally skeptical to the MGNREGA saying that the Act would not be very attractive in this area because of the low wages. For that matter, I asked about his reflections of what initiatives that could be implemented in the study area to ease the lives of the poor. His reply was that the government should rather focus on skilled employment and to give training to the people, for example, by opening a small garment factory or/and invest in the poultry industry. In this way more people would be employed and they could earn more money.

Till now, the MGNREGA has only been implemented for 3 years in Karnataka, so the real impact of the Act might become more evident in the years to come.

To further enhance the positive impacts of the MGNREGA in the study area, this study makes several suggestions:

- An extended effort to raise the awareness levels of the MGNREGA among the people should be conducted, both for the people to utilize their rights and also to strengthen their capacity to avoid being subjected to exploitation. Therefore, the people can help to make the Act more accountable.
- For the MGNREGA to serve as a social security net for the rural poor, the 100-day guarantee of working days each year must be fulfilled to all participants under the Act.
- Wages should be paid according to the minimum standard of INR 100, and it should be paid equal to men and women as the Act stipulates. To increase the quality of life for the participants in the MGNREGA, the wages received must generate a financial surplus to make any positive changes.
- The maintenance of Job Cards must be improved for the villagers to minimize the chances of the people to become victims of exploitation, and for the MGNREGA to prove accountable.
- With references to the governmental official stating that the MGNREGA would not be attractive to the villagers in the study area because he considered them not to be poor enough, perhaps his statement suggests that the willingness at the governmental level to sufficiently implement the Act is subject to constraints. As the findings in this research argue that the MGNREGA is needed in the study area, such a perception at the official level will most likely deprive the villagers from their opportunity to fully utilize the benefits from the Act.
- Likewise, with references to the acknowledgement and acceptance made by one of the governmental officials at the State level regarding corruption prevailing in the implementation processes of the MGNREGA, the likelihood to see an end of such illegal practices happening becomes hopeless. Again, for the MGNREGA to meet its goals of reducing poverty such attitudes must be defeated.
- Regarding creation of development asset, more emphasis on drainage systems should be given to future work conducted under the MGNREGA, as drought had been the biggest threat to the crops in previous years and flooding was, at the time of the fieldwork the primary cause of destructions of crops.

At last, for reflection, the last words of Hirway (2005:714) sums all up perfectly:

After a long struggle it has been possible to convert wage employment programmes in to this powerful tool of guarantee. The EGS therefore should not be treated as a poverty alleviation programme, but it should be seen as an opportunity to eradicate the worst kind of poverty, to empower the poor and to promote pro-poor growth of the Indian government.



CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The previous chapter has analyzed and discussed the findings related to the three objectives and the research questions given in chapter 1.

The need for the MGNREGA in the study area has been analyzed by using the livelihood framework presented in **Figure 2.4** as a point of reference. The respondents' store of assets, their livelihood strategies pursued and the vulnerability context have been described when discussing the need for the MGNREGA in the study area. The main reasons why the majority of the respondents (85.6 percent) were interested to work under the Act were the lack of employment opportunities and the need for income. Over half of the respondents (53.7 percent) were landless, which resulted in a dependence of wage employment throughout the year to secure a living. Most of these respondents were engaged as coolie workers (unskilled laborers) that meant unpredictable employment conditions. Furthermore, engagement in farm-related activities, either as coolie workers, farmers or in sericulture was subject to irregular demands for labor according to seasons and climate, which placed these workers in a vulnerable situation. Considering the number of landless and that the majority of the respondents (70.1 percent) were engaged in agricultural related activities, might suggest that there is a need for the MGNREGA to function as a social safety net during periods of the year when the demand for labor in the fields are restricted. In addition, when looking at the respondents' holding of the remaining assets, the need for the MGNREGA can be indicated by the prevailing poverty in the study area. The distribution of ration cards below poverty line (69.2 percent), coupled with the price increases of commodities further illustrates the necessity of the program. This finding suggests that an increase of livelihood incomes is crucial to help break the poverty circle. The high number of illiterates (60 percent) and the high presence of backward castes (94 percent) make up the target group of the MGNREGA as unskilled laborers belonging to the marginalized social groups of the Indian society. With few financial means available for the respondents, the opportunities to invest in infrastructure, such as irrigation, become minimal. Since the purpose of the works conducted through the MGNREGA is to create durable assets, this finding may indicate that the Act is needed in the study area to strengthen people's resource base by enhancing the rural economy. The low attendance in Gram Sabha meetings (66.7 percent), suggests limited participation of the respondents in the local political sphere.

Therefore, as two of the goals of the MGNREGA are to empower the people by implementing a rights-based Act and through grassroots democracy, this finding further suggests a need for the MGNREGA in the study area to encourage political participation in matters that concerns the livelihoods of the local people. However, responses of some of the informants indicating that the MGNREGA was not needed in the study area, was land ownership and access to non-farm related occupations. The reason for the latter was most likely the research area's close location to urban areas.

The benefits of the MGNREGA in the study area are indicated by the days of employment provided, the wages earned and the assets created. Seven types of assets had been created in the study area during the last year, whereby two of them can be classified as belonging to the first category of permissible works listed according to priority by the MGNREGA's implementing agencies. Benefits in terms of health, environment, access to drinking water, improved road connectivity and school safety had been stated by the respondents in the short term. As these seven assets have contributed to the enhancement of rural infrastructure, the benefits from these assets are promising for the people and their community also in the long term.

In respect to the number of days employment had been provided and the wages earned through the MGNREGA, the findings reveal that the potential of the Act to enhance social security in the research area has not been realized to its maximum. Only 7.7 percent of the respondents had worked the 100 days guaranteed, half of the respondents had earned less than the minimum wage of INR 100, and 6.8 percent of the respondents were still missing their payments at the time of the field work. Nonetheless, although the MGNREGA has not fulfilled its guarantee to all the respondents in the study area, it does not mean that its implementation has not provided any benefits at all. For instance, income support in terms of covering food and other household expenses was stated as benefits of the Act. Naturally, the chances of the respondents earning above – or the minimum wage to acquire long-term benefits is more likely than the respondents having earned lower wages, because the first have accumulated a higher income. Furthermore, the findings also indicate that in relation to coolie workers, the possibilities of benefiting from the MGNREGA are higher for females than for males, since the wages earned as coolie workers are lower than the minimum wage provided under the MGNREGA.

One challenge faced by the respondents in the implementation of the MGNREGA, was a general lack of awareness about the Act. Being unaware of their rights in the MGNREGA, people are, at the same, time denied their possibility of being included in and taking advantage of the rights that are beneficial to them. The first step when incepting a law of rights, such as the MGNREGA, is to ensure that the beneficiaries become aware of its existence. If not, the intention behind the Act may not be realized. Needless to say, people cannot make use of a right they are unfamiliar with. This finding indicates that the responsibility of the implementing agencies to provide information about the MGNREGA in the study area has been insufficient. Hence, one might suggest that a challenge for the implementing agencies is to put more emphasis on raising the awareness levels about the MGNREGA of the villagers.

Another challenge revealed was the sense of mistrust between the respondents and the government, which created a gap between the two. Perceptions of a corrupt government created a view among the respondents that the government was not an institution meant to care for them. This perception also encompassed the MGNREGA, and made some respondents doubt the intention behind the Act to benefit them. Possible scams prevailing in the study area was also indicated and connected to the practical implementation of the Act. This, coupled with attitudes at the governmental official levels, which seemingly recognized that corrupt practices within the MGNREGA's implementing agencies exist, suggests that further emphasis must be devoted to combat such illegal practices.

The findings also indicate that the practical implementation of the MGNREGA suffered from improper maintenance of Job Cards. As none of the Job Cards observed contained the required employment details, the participants under the Act can be subject to exploitation. Similarly, the goal of the MGNREGA to enhance transparency can be jeopardized.

Furthermore, the use of contractors and machines in relation to the work conducted under the MGNREGA were both observed in the study area. The use of contractors is prohibited under the Act, while the use of machines should preferably not be used. By using contractors, laws have been neglected by the implementing agencies, which challenge the integrity of the MGNREGA. By using machines, the beneficiaries may have been deprived of opportunities to access employment. However, the findings

also imply that by not using machines and contractors, there is a risk that the value of the assets created might be reduced due to work of lower quality. Hence, additional challenges emerge in the ability to create sufficient durable assets to change the conditions of poverty in the study area.

In relation to the cost of the MGNREGA, this thesis argues that sufficient social security coverage, including the Act, in India is affordable also in the future because its share of the country's GDP will be reduced.

Lastly, issues related to the effectiveness of rights as incentives to reduce poverty have been discussed, arguing that entitlements of rights can be regarded as vital in the process of developing the poor. However, it has been argued that to benefit from rights, people must first and foremost be aware of these rights. Also, if the rights are neglected, it can be difficult for people to claim their rights from the government. Furthermore, it has been stated that the effects of rights on poverty reduction in the long run might be weakened, as rights do not automatically address the causes of poverty. Nevertheless, since rural unemployment constitutes as one of the causes of poverty in rural India, the implementation of the MGNREGA give people the rights to employment as a social safety net and, consequently, can be regarded as addressing the sources of poverty in the country. Resultantly, one might suggest that the MGNREGA has the potential to challenge poverty also in the future.



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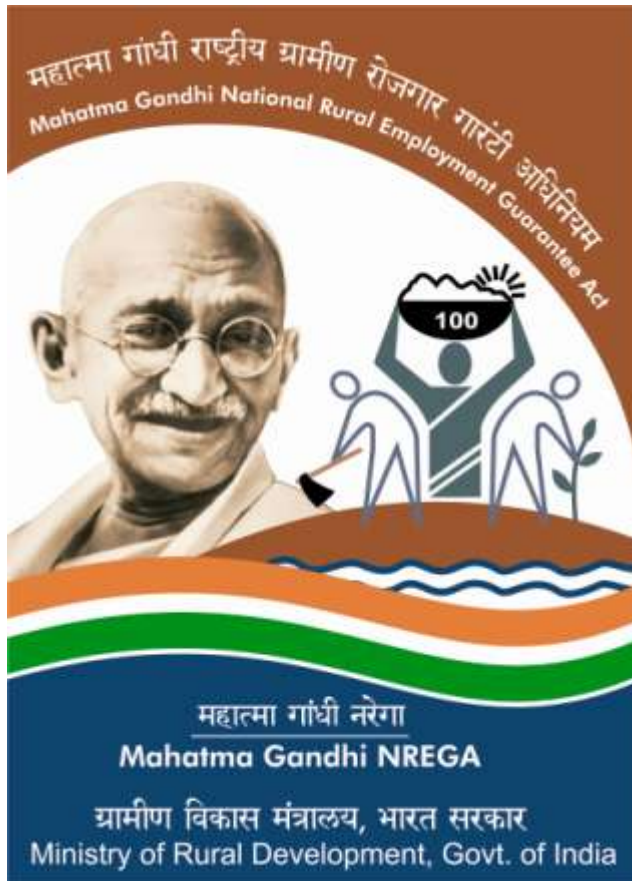
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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1 The Logo of the MGNREGA¹³⁴



¹³⁴ Source: NREGA website, available at

http://nrega.nic.in/Reference_center.asp (accessed 27.07.2011)

Appendix 2 Social Security in the Indian Constitution

The Articles encompassing the term social security in the Indian Constitution is stated under the Directive Principles of State Policy part 4, Article 38 (1), 38 (2), 39 and 39A:

38 (1). The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life.

38 (2). The State shall, in particular, strive to minimise the inequalities in income, and endeavour to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities, not only amongst individuals but also amongst groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations.

39. The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing:

(a) that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood;

(b) that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good;

(c) that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment;

(d) that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women;

(e) that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength;

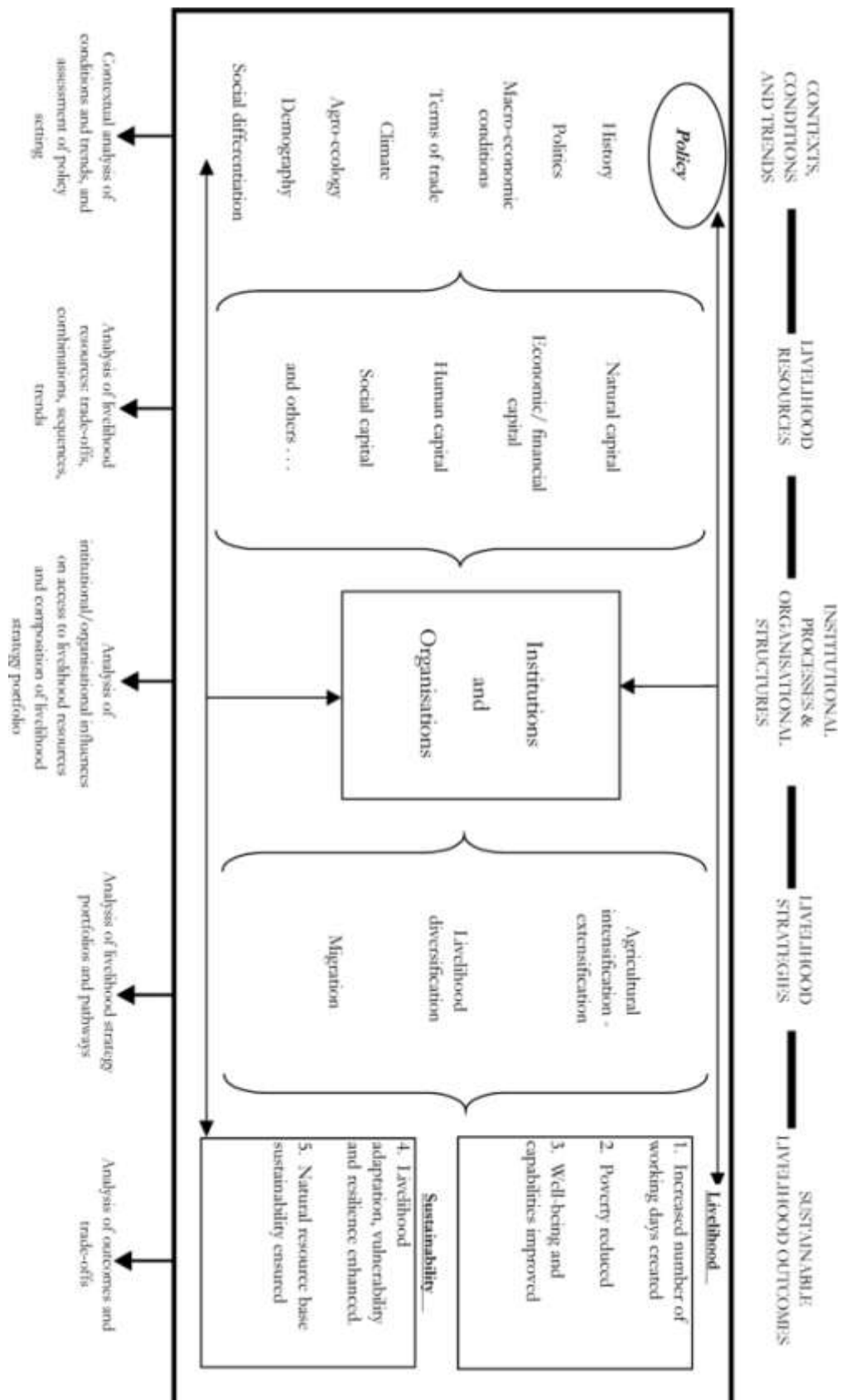
(f) that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.

39A. The State shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice, on a basis of equal opportunity, and shall, in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities.

47. Duty of the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health.—The State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties and, in

particular, the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health (GOI, PartIV).

Appendix 3 Sustainable rural livelihoods: a framework for analysis



Source: Scoones (1998:4)

Appendix 4 Rights under the MGNREGA

YOUR RIGHTS UNDER THE EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT¹³⁵

WORK APPLICATIONS

1. With this Job Card, you are entitled to apply for work at any time. You can submit your application to the Gram Panchayat, or to the Block office.
2. If you apply for work, employment has to be given to you within 15 days of work done.
3. When you apply for work, make sure that you get a dated and signed receipt.
4. If you do not get employment within 15 days, you are entitled to the unemployment allowance.

WORKERS' ENTITLEMENTS

5. All workers are entitled to the statutory minimum wage.
6. Men and women should be paid equally.
7. Wages should be paid within a week, or fifteen days at most.
8. Wages should be paid in public. When wages are paid, muster rolls should be read out and Job Card entries should be made.
9. Sign the muster roll after receiving your wages and checking the entries. Never sign a blank muster roll.
10. If you live more than 5 km away from the worksite, you are entitled to a travel and subsistence allowance (10% of the minimum wage).

AT THE WORKSITE

11. Muster rolls should be available and maintained at the worksite. You are entitled to check the muster roll at any time.
12. Shade, drinking water and first-aid should be available at every worksite.
13. If more than five children under the age of six years are present, child care facilities should also be provided at the worksite.

UNEMPLOYMENT ALLOWANCE

14. If you have not been given work within 15 days of applying, you are entitled to the "unemployment allowance".
15. The unemployment allowance amounts to one fourth of the minimum wage for the first 30 days, and one half thereafter.
16. You can apply for the unemployment allowance to the Gram Panchayat or Block Office (you will need the receipt showing when you applied for work).

WATCH YOUR JOB CARD!

17. This Job Card (with photograph) should be given to you free of cost. Don't let anyone charge you for it.
18. Every household is entitled to a separate Job Card.
19. Keep this Job Card with you. No-one has the right to take it away.
20. Entries have to be made in front of you when your wages are paid.
21. Make sure that no false entries are made in the Job Card.
22. If you lose this Job Card, you can apply for a new one from the Gram Panchayat.

HELP AND COMPLAINTS

23. If you have a problem, you should first approach the Gram Panchayat. If this does not help, you can submit a complaint to the Programme Officer at the Block level.
24. If you complain to the Programme Officer, it is his duty to register your complaint and take action within 7 days.
25. You can also seek help from the following "Helpline": [INSERT HELPLINE NUMBER].

¹³⁵ Source: GOI-MORD, 2008:111, NREGA Guidelines, 2008.

Appendix 5 Guidelines in Kannada distributed to respondents¹³⁶

ಪ್ರತಿಭಾವಂತರನ್ನು ಪ್ರೋತ್ಸಾಹಿಸುವ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮ

1) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಉದ್ದೇಶವೇನು.

2) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

3) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

4) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

5) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

6) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

7) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

8) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

9) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

10) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

ಇತರ ಮಾಹಿತಿ

1) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

2) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

3) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

4) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

5) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

6) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

7) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

8) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

9) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

10) ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಮೂಲಕ ಯಾವ ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

¹³⁶ Scanned document.

Appendix 6 Questionnaire for participants in the MGNREGA

Questionnaire

Social Security for Poverty Reduction: a study of the MGNREGA in rural Karnataka, India.

Dear interviewee,

my name is Tina Ulvin and I am a master student in International Development Studies at the University of Life Sciences (UMB) in Norway. At this moment I am doing research related to my master thesis. The aim of this field visit is to understand your experience with the MGNREGA to evaluate the effect of the Act in the rural Karnataka. I will therefore be very grateful if you could give me some of your time to answer these questions. All information given to me will be kept completely confidential, as I will not reveal your name in the publication. The information given will be analyzed and produced in my master thesis that will be finished by May, 2011.

Thank you!

Questionnaire No.
Date of field visit:
Start time-finish time:
Name of village:
Location of HH:
Caste (SC/ST/OBC/GC):

1. General household information and livelihood assets (1)

1.1 General household information

No.	1.1.1 Name	1.1.2 Relation in the HH*	1.1.3 Sex (M/F)	1.1.4 Age (Yrs)	1.1.5 Education **	1.1.6 Income earning activity of HH members > 18 yrs***
0						
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						

***Relation in the HH (1.1.2):** 1=Husband, 2=Wife, 3=Son, 4=Daughter, 5=Brother, 6=Sister, 7=Daughter-in-law, 8=Son-in-law, 9=Grandson, 10=Granddaughter, 11=Mother, 12= Father, 13= Mother-in-law, 14= Father-in-law, 15= Grandfather, 16= Grandmother, 17=Nephew/niece, 18=Uncle, 19= Aunt, 20= Other relatives, 21= Other non-relative

****Education (1.1.5):** 1=Illiterate, 2=Below primary education, 3=Primary (1-5th), 4=Middle school (6-8th), 5= Secondary School (9-10th), 6= Higher secondary (11-12th), 7= Higher education (13+)

*** **Income earning activity (1.1.6):** 1= Farming, 2= Off-farming, 3= Non-farming, 4= Domestic work (at home) 5= Retired/pension, 6= Student, 7=Disabled/handicapped/unable to work, 8=Unemployed, 9=Other

2. Proxy poverty indicators of the informants and livelihood assets (2)

2.1 Do you own a Ration Card?

2.1.1 APL.....

2.1.2 BPL.....

2.1.3 AAY.....

2.1.4 No, I do not....

2.2 Do you own the house you live in?

2.2.1 Yes, I do.....

2.2.2 No, I do not.....

2.3 Standard of house? (observation)

2.3.1 Kutcha.....

2.3.2 Semi-Pukka.....

2.3.2 Pukka.....

2.4 Do you own any land?

2.4.1 Yes, (specify acres).....

2.4.2 No, I am landless.....

2.4.3 Other (specify).....

2.5 Are you satisfied with your health?

2.5.1	Little Satisfied	
2.5.2	Satisfied	
2.5.3	Not Satisfied	

2.6 Do you attend Gram Sabah meetings?

2.6.1 Attended.....

2.6.2 Never attended...

3. Awareness about the MGNREGA

3.1 Source of knowledge about the MGNREGA

3.1.1 Gram Sabah meeting.....

3.1.2 Gram Panchayat.....

3.1.3 NGO/CBO/Social activists.....

3.1.4 Media (newspaper, TV, radio etc.).....

3.1.5 Friends/relatives.....

3.1.6 Other (specify).....

3.2 What do you know about the MGNREGA?

3.2.1 Specify.....

.....

.....

3.3 Do you know you have the right to employment through the MGNREGA?

3.3.1 Yes, I know.....

3.3.2 No, I do not know.....

3.4 Do you know you have to apply for employment at the local GP office after receiving the Job Card?

3.4.1 Yes, I know.....

3.4.2 No, I did not know.....

3.5 Do you know you are entitled to employment by the local GP office within 15 days after you have submitted an application (requesting employment)?

3.5.1 Yes, I know.....

3.5.2 No, I do not know.....

3.6 Do you know about the unemployment allowances?

3.6.1 Yes, I know.....

3.6.2 No, I do not know.....

4. Experience of the MGNREGA

4.1 What was the main reason why you wanted to participate in the MGNREGA?

4.1.1 Specify.....

4.2 How did you receive your Job Card?

4.2.1 Specify.....

4.3 How were you provided employment through the MGNREGA?

4.3.1 Specify.....

4.4 How many numbers of days have you worked under the MGNREGA?

4.4.1 Specify.....

4.5 What kind of work did you carry out under the MGNREGA?

4.5.1 Specify.....

4.6 What is your experience of working under the MGNREGA?

Payment (amount/ any delays):

4.6.1 Very satisfied 4.6.2 Satisfied 4.6.3 Little satisfied 4.6.4 Not satisfied

Specify reason.....

.....

5. Benefits of the MGNREGA

5.1 To what extent have you and your household benefited from participation in the MGNREGA?

5.4.1 Yes, (specify).....

5.4.2 No, (specify).....

5.2 To what extent have your community benefited from the MGNREGA?

5.2.1 Yes, (specify).....

5.2.2 No, (specify).....

6. The Right to Information Act and Social Audits

6.1 Do you know about the Right to Information Act?

6.1.1 Yes, I know very well.....

6.1.2 I know a little bit.....

6.1.3 No, I have never heard about it....

6.2 If yes, do you think the RTI is important and why?

- 6.2.1 Yes, I think it is important, (specify).....
- 6.2.2 I think it is somewhat important, (specify).....
- 6.2.3 I do not think it is important, (specify).....

6.3 Do you know about the Social Audit?

- 6.3.1 Yes, I know
- 6.3.2 No, I do not know

6.4 If yes, have you ever attended a Social Audit?

- 6.4.1 Yes, I have.....
- 6.4.2 No, I have not.....

6.5 If yes, do you think the arrangement of Social Audits are important and why? (Referring back to question 6.3).

- 6.5.1 Yes, I think it is important, (specify).....
- 6.5.2 I think it is somewhat important, (specify).....
- 6.5.3 I do not think it is important, (specify).....

Any further comments:

Appendix 7 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interview guide

1. Category of respondents:

- 1.1 Respondents with Job Cards, but has not worked under the MGNREGA
- 1.2 Respondents without Job Cards but knew about the MGNREGA
- 1.3 Respondents without Job Cards and knew nothing about the MGNREGA
- 1.4 Respondents that had applied for the Job Card in the MGNREGA, but had not received it at the time of the fieldwork

2. General information:

- 2.1 Village
- 2.2 Sex
- 2.3 Age
- 2.4 Caste
- 2.5 Education
- 2.6 Number of HH members?
- 2.7 Source of livelihood income?
- 2.7 Do you own the house you live in?
- 2.9 Do you own any land?
- 2.10 Are you satisfied with your r (not satisfied, satisfied, very satisfied)?

3. Need for employment:

- 3.1 Is there a need for employment in this village (explain)?

4. Benefits of the MGNREGA:

- 4.1 How could the MGNREGA benefit you?
- 4.2 How could the MGNREGA benefit your community?

5. Referring back to 1. Category of respondents:

5.1 If 1.1 and 1.2: Can you tell me why you have not participated in the MGNREGA?

5.1.1 Are you interested to work under the MGNREGA (explain?)

5.2 If 1.3: Are you interested to work under the MGNREGA (explain?)

5.3 If 1.4: Do you know why you have not received the Job Card?

5.3.1 Why did you apply for a Job Card? /are you still interested to work under the MGNREGA (explain?)

Appendix 8 Focus-Group Interviews

Interview guide

- **General Information:**
 - Number of respondents?
 - Sex?
 - Age?
 - Source of livelihood income?

- **Caste:**
 - Caste?
 - Does your caste belonging affect your lives, and if yes, how?

- **General reflections about life:**
 - How do you regard your life, what is positive and what is negative? (for me to understand the premises of a good life of the respondents).
 - (If negative aspects, what can you do to change these negative aspects (for a better life)?) (to understand the informant's own view about what they can do to improve their lives).

- **MGNREGA:**
 - What is your opinion about the MGNREGA? (How is the MGNREGA improving your life/ or not improving your lives) (explain)?
 - In what ways is the MGNREGA attractive/ not attractive to you (explain)?
 - How could the MGNREGA improve your lives even more?

- **Reflections of women's employment:**
 - Do you think it is important that women also engage in income earning activities (wage employment) (explain)?

- **Compare generations:**
 - How are your lives different in comparison to your parent's lives? (education, employment, no. of children, health etc.)?

- **Future reflections:**
 - What are your hopes for your children when they grow up?

Appendix 9 (A) Unstructured Interviews: Participant in the MGNREGA

Interview guide

- **Questionnaire number?**
- **MGNREGA:**
 - What is your opinion about the MGNREGA? (How is the MGNREGA improving your life/ or not improving your lives) (explain)?
 - In what ways is the MGNREGA attractive/ not attractive to you (explain?)
 - How could the MGNREGA improve your lives even more?

Appendix 9 (B) Unstructured Interviews: Social Workers, Green Foundation and ATREE field staff

Interview guide

- **Need for employment:**
 - Is there a need for employment in this area (explain)?
- **MGNREGA:**
 - What is your opinion about the MGNREGA? (How is the MGNREGA improving people's life/ or not improving people's lives) (explain)?
 - Is the MGNREGA attractive/ not attractive in this area (explain)?
 - What are the challenges with the implementation of the MGNREGA in this area?
 - How could the MGNREGA improve people's lives even more?
- **Reflections:**
 - What is needed in this area to improve people's lives (e.g. except the MGNREGA)?

Appendix 9 (C) Unstructured Interviews: Governmental Officials

Interview guide

- **MGNREGA:**
 - What is the minimum wage in Karnataka in the MGNREGA?
 - What are the benefits of the MGNREGA in the study area (explain)?
 - What are the challenges with the implementation of the MGNREGA in this area (explain)?
 - How do you regard the future for the MGNREGA in Karnataka, and in India?

Appendix 9 (D) Unstructured Interviews: Professor

Interview guide

- **MGNREGA:**
 - What are the benefits of the MGNREGA (explain)?
 - What are the challenges with the implementation of the MGNREGA (explain)?
 - How do you regard the future for the MGNREGA in Karnataka, and in India?

Appendix 9 (E) Unstructured Interviews: Contractors under the MGNREGA

Interview guide

- **MGNREGA:**
 - What kind of work are you carrying out under the MGNREGA?
 - How many people are working?
 - For how many days have they worked?
 - What is their payment?

Appendix 9 (F) Unstructured Interviews: RTI spokesman

Interview guide

- **RTI and the MGNREGA:**
 - What are the benefits of the RTI?
 - What are the challenges of the RTI?
 - Do people use the RTI?
 - Have the implementation of the RTI made the Indian government more transparent and accountable?
 - How do you see the benefits of the RTI in combination with the MGNREGA?
 - How do you see the future of the RTI?

