

# Inclusive Empowerment Through MGNREGS: A Study of Socially Marginalized Communities in Uttar Pradesh, India

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## Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is an effectual and comprehensive flagship program of the Indian government aimed at offering causal and assured employment opportunities to the rural population of the country, especially women, schedule caste (SCs) and schedule tribes (STs) communities. The MGNREGS Programme aims to promote inclusive development through a demand-driven and participatory approach because India's rural areas have been characterized by rampant deprivations and lack of resources. This study analyses the recent developments in the financial progress, physical progress, and inclusiveness of the MGNREGS in Uttar Pradesh, India. This study used secondary data sourced from the official MGNREGA websites covering the period from 2020-21 to 2024-25. The analysis shows that the effectiveness of the MGNREGS programme in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India, has not been effective in achieving the objectives of a minimum of 100 days of satisfactory job, and only a small number of people completed the 100 days from 2020-21-2024-25 and overall average days of employment was 44.44 days. However, the participation of women in the MGNREGS was more than the statutory limit of 33% over the year from 2020-21 to 2024-25 and continuously increased every year but slightly declined to 41.8% in 2024-25. The SC/ST person-days generated reduced over the year, and it found that the SC and ST person-days under the MGNREGS were the highest at 31.75% and 1.13% in 2022-23 and 2021-22, respectively. However, the study recommends aligning the MGNREGS programme with the marginalized group of people and focusing on climate-resilient works that create sustainable infrastructure in rural India and give priority to agriculture and allied sectors to transform the livelihood security of the rural community.

**Keywords:** MGNREGS, Rural Development, Inclusiveness of MGNREGS, Women Empowerment.

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## INTRODUCTION

India has been battling a pair of problems, such as unemployment and poverty, since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Therefore, the Government of India (GOI) has initiated numerous social welfare schemes to provide social security and net safety to those people who have been excluded from the formal sector, and significantly, multidimensional poverty decreased from 51.1% in 2005-2006 to 27.9% in 2015-2016 (OPHI and UNDP, 2019). Since 2005, the Indian government has enacted various social welfare programs, such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005 and the National Food Security Act of 2013, the Indra Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme, 2007, the National Health Insurance Programme 2008; the Protection of Motherhood Scheme 2005, the Income Transfer Scheme for Girls with Insurance Cover 2008 (Nakray, 2022). These welfare schemes are unique in India because they are based on the rights-based approach that ensures

social welfare as an entitlement for the rural poor and places legal obligations and duties on the state government to guarantee those rights (Ruparelia, 2013). The MGNREG programme has been the most significant rural employment incentive of the government of India with unique features that provide guaranteed employment to those rural people of the country who volunteer to do unskilled manual work every financial year (MGNREGA, 2005). It offers equal wages to both men and women and supports women's social position and integrity, thus promoting gender equality (Rania Antonopoulos, 2009). The allocated budget of MGNREGA increased by more than seven-time from 2006-2007 to 2018-19, and the number of beneficiaries of the programme was 2.1 crore in 2006-07, which increased by 5.2 crore in 2018-19 (Baik, 2024). MGNREGS is based on the demand-driven approach (Kadia, 2022). The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) database pointed out a significant

increase in unemployment in rural India. The World Bank also said that MGNREGA is the world's most significant public welfare initiative, providing social security and net safety to 15% of the country's population (World Bank, 2015).

Thus, the MGNREG programme is a flagship comprehensive and inclusive policy framework for addressing the country's unemployment and rural poverty. It is a policy initiative of the government of India that aims to generate rural employment, especially for schedule caste (SCs), schedule tribes (STs), and women through public works on a massive scale. It aligns with goal 1 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which intends to end poverty by implementing a social safety net for society's vulnerable and underprivileged subsections. The significance of the MGNREG Programme for the Indian economy can be demonstrated by the fact that the MGNREGS provided employment for 75.5 million households between 2020 and 2021. UNDP's Human Development Report 2015 also identified MGNREGS as the best employment guarantee programme that guaranteed work to marginalized groups of people in rural India. Rural people are discriminated against by caste, gender, and class, as well as affects the rural people's participation in labour market and political process. Thus, the MGNREG Scheme aims to alleviate rural poverty by providing additional wages and empowering marginalized households in rural areas. However, the MGNREGS was designed to benefit the most marginalized citizens, especially scheduled castes (SCs), scheduled tribes (STs), and women. Further, the MGNREGA tries to create sustainable assets in rural areas to strengthen rural resource bases and stimulate the rural economy. The MGNREGS aims to promote sustainable livelihoods within local communities.

This study intends to create a framework to evaluate the inclusiveness and performance of the MGNREG programme in Uttar Pradesh. The study analysed the performance of the MGNREGS programme in Uttar Pradesh and looks at the inclusiveness of the MGNREG Programme among the scheduled caste, scheduled tribes, and women on the basis of the following criteria: (1) Financial progress, (2) Physical progress and (3) Inclusiveness indicators. Further, the indicators of the total allocated budget, total expenditure, and percentage of utilization funds were used to measure the financial progress. The physical progress indicators included the total number of works taken up, number of ongoing works, number of works completed, percentage of expenditure on agriculture and allied sector, percentage of NRM expenditure in MWC Block, and Percentage of Category B works. The inclusiveness indicators included the Scheduled caste (SC) person-days percentage as of total person-days, Schedule tribe person-days % as of total person-days, Women person-days out of total percentage, average days of employment provided per household and average wage

rate per day per person. The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To Examine the financial progress of the MGNREGS scheme in Uttar Pradesh, India.
2. To analyse the scheme's physical progress in Uttar Pradesh, India.
3. To assert the inclusiveness in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India.

### Main Features of the MGNREGS

MGNREGS was introduced to guarantee the right to work to poor people of rural India and promote sustainable livelihoods locally (Pankaj, 2023, p. 2). Another significant aspect of MGNREGS is its decentralized implementation. According to the MGNREGS, the center's functions are reduced primarily to budgetary allocations, scheme management through operating guidelines and communications, and program outcome evaluation (Kadia, 2022,) Then, local authorities such as the Gram Panchayat (GP), the Block Panchayat (BP) and the District Panchayat (DP) are responsible for the execution of the scheme. These are the following goals of the scheme.

- Offering 100 days of assured minimum wage employment to rural households every financial year.
- Employment opportunities for marginalized sections of society, such as SCs, STs, and women.
- Create durable, productive, and sustainable rural infrastructure through manual labour.
- Ensuring the minimum level of livelihood security for low-income household.

MGNREGS was based on demand-driven, self-targeting, and right-base design. It includes provisions that restrict the use of machines and contractors. It includes various progressive provisions, such as equal wages, reservation for women in employment, work within a radius of 5 km, payment within 15 days, creche facilities at the worksite, and medical assistance for injured workers. Nonetheless, the benefits of the MGNREG scheme are expected to be achieved when there is voluntary participation of registered households and the generation of adequate employment opportunities for willing individuals in rural India. (MGNREGA, 2005).

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A large number of studies showed that MGNREGA has a positive effect on the beneficiary's living standards and income (P. Dutta, Murgai, Martin, & van de Walle, 2012; Ghose, 2012; Jose, 2013; Kannan & Jain, 2013; Ravallion, 2008; Sharma, 2013; Usami, 2011). Many scholars have studied the MGNREG's implementation process and found that a low level of awareness, elite capture, and corruption is the main reason for programme implementation failure. (Chaarlas & Velmurugan, 2012; S. Chatterjee, 2014; Das, Singh, &

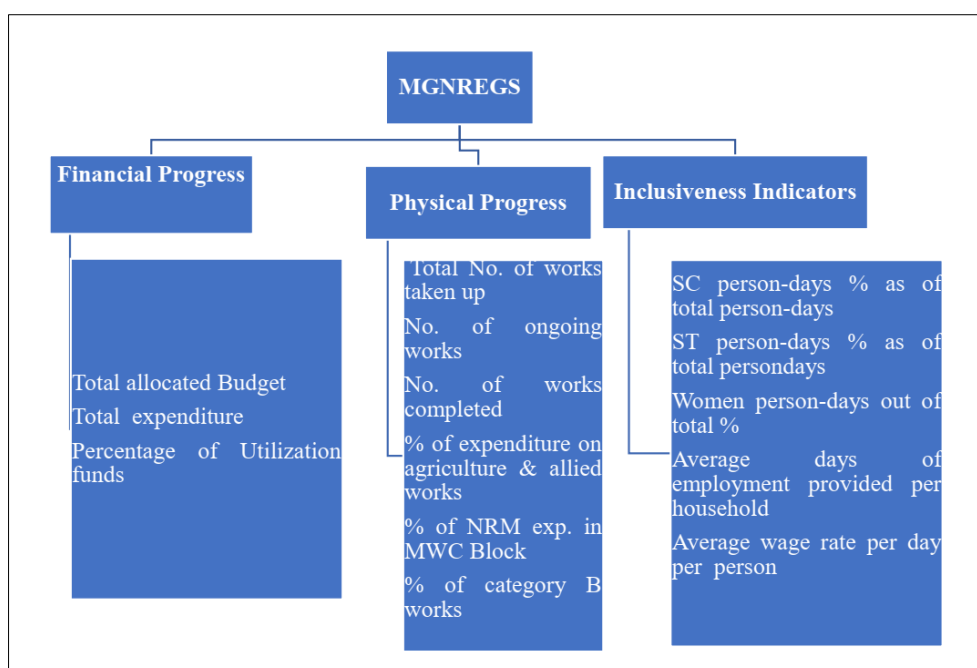
Mahanto, 2012; Dey, 2010; Jha *et al.*, 2009; Mani & Krishnan, 2014; Raabe *et al.*, 2010; Raghvan *et al.*, 2008; V. Shah & Makwana, 2011; Singh, 2012; Sudarshan, 2011; P. Dutta *et al.*, 2014). Some studies pointed out that employment generation through MGNREGS is lower than that assured by the Act (Malla, 2020; Narayanan *et al.*, 2022), environmental convergence (Satish *et al.*, 2013; gender equality (Antonopoulos, 2007, 2013; Narayanan & Das, 2014; Pankaj & Tankha, 2010; Viswanathan & Mandal, 2012), and programme create the sustainable infrastructure in rural India and environmental convergence (Desai, Vashishtha, & Joshi, 2015; Verma, 2011; Verma & Shah, 2018), migration and wage (Mukherjee & Sinha, 2011; Gulati *et al.*, 2014), some recent literature related to micro studies, geographic-specific work, gender, and income factors (Ravi & Engler, 2009; Das, 2013; Datta & Singh, 2012, 2014).

Dey (2010) found that the majority of MGNREGA workers are illiterate and not well aware of the essential provisions of the scheme. Sudarshan (2011) concluded that rural people of Himachal Pradesh rarely participated in the Gram Sabha and had a low level of awareness of the employment Guarantee scheme. Raghvan *et al.*, (2008) also highlighted that rural people have low awareness of the MGNREGA scheme. Saha and Debnath (2015) studied those 10 Indian states that proved technical efficiency in the execution of the scheme from 2008-09 to 2013-14. Kumar *et al.*, (2020) revealed that a large proportion of poor SC/ST households are still not receiving employment benefits under the scheme in the Indian state of Karnataka. Singh (2016) pointed out that some states did not perform well during 2013 to 2014 with regard to the participation of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and women in the programme. Sarkar and Islary (2017) found that the percentage of women participating in the scheme in Jharkhand was lower than the statutory set limit of 33 % by the act. Drèze and Khera (2009) concluded that scheduled caste and scheduled tribe households get more

benefits from the MGNREGA scheme. Khera and Nayak (2009) examined the fact that the MGNREGA scheme provided 33% employment to women workers in the six northern states of India. It also found that the percentage of participation of women in the scheme varied from 5% in Uttar Pradesh to 71% in Rajasthan. Panday (2023) studied the performance of MGNREGA in Chhattisgarh and found that the majority of beneficiaries of the programme were Women as well as SC and ST communities. It strengthened the status of women and weaker sections of society. Malla (2020) studied the MGNREGA as livelihood security in Kashmir, and the scheme was found to be inadequately implemented, failing to serve as a safety net for poorer families facing job scarcity. Benefits were disproportionately allocated to non-poor individuals, resulting in the exclusion of several deserving poor households. Mukherji *et al.*, (2018) found that women's self-help groups, characterized by a small group of rural people, seeking a solution to common problems such as livelihood generation, medical issues or watershed management with a degree of self-sufficiency, were instrumental of increasing awareness among rural women and organizing them for the public employment scheme in Andhra Pradesh. Dar (2024) examined the technical efficiency of MGNREGA across Indian states and showed that MGNREGA is not implemented efficiently in most parts of India, and it performed better relatively in asset creation across both large and small states of India. However, it lagged in employment generation across both types of Indian states, reflected by the difference in difference score.

## DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The study uses secondary data, obtained from MGNREGA's official websites. The study covered periods from 2020-21 to 2024-25 and used descriptive statistics to analyse the Data. The MGNREGS progress indicators are divided into three parts.



Source: Goyal *et al.*,

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section analyses the financial progress, physical progress, and inclusiveness of the MGNREGS

in Uttar Pradesh, India, during the periods from 2020-21 to 2024-25.

### Financial Progress of the MGNREGS Programme

Table 1

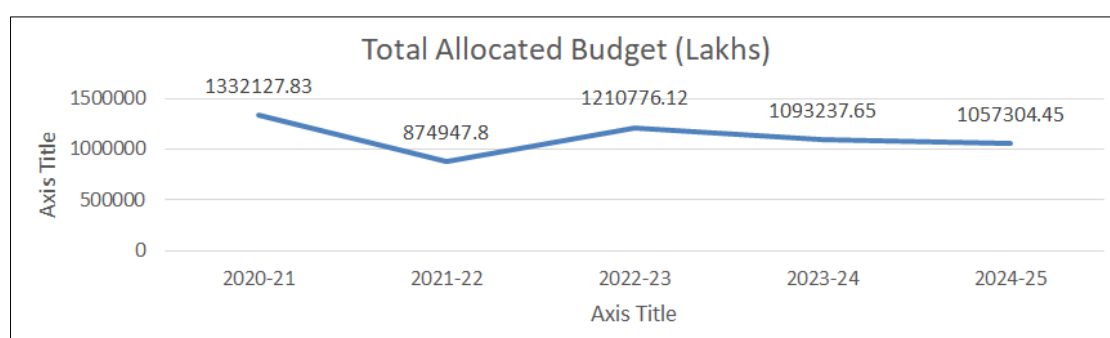
Year	Total allocated Budget (lakhs)	Total expenditure (lakhs)	Utilization of funds (%)
2020-21	1332127.83	1291584.28	96.96
2021-22	874947.8	875864.71	100.1
2022-23	1210776.12	11,93,320.88	98.56
2023-24	1093237.65	11,39,650.43	104.25
2024-25	1057304.45	11,38,166.1	107.65

Source: <https://nrega.nic.in>

Table 1 represents the financial progress of the MGNREG Scheme. The comprehensive budget allocation illustrates the variations from 2020-21 to 2024-25. The budget allocation for 2020-21 was Rs1,332,127.83 lakhs, while the expenditure amounted to Rs 1,291,584.28 lakhs or 96.96% of the allocated budget. Over the years, the table indicates that the percentage of fund utilization exceeds that of budget allocation; for instance, in 2021-22, it reached 100.1%,

marginally surpassing the allocated budget. In 2022-23, there was a budget underutilization, but subsequent years showed a consistent increase, with utilization at 104.25% in 2023-24 and 107.65% in 2024-25.

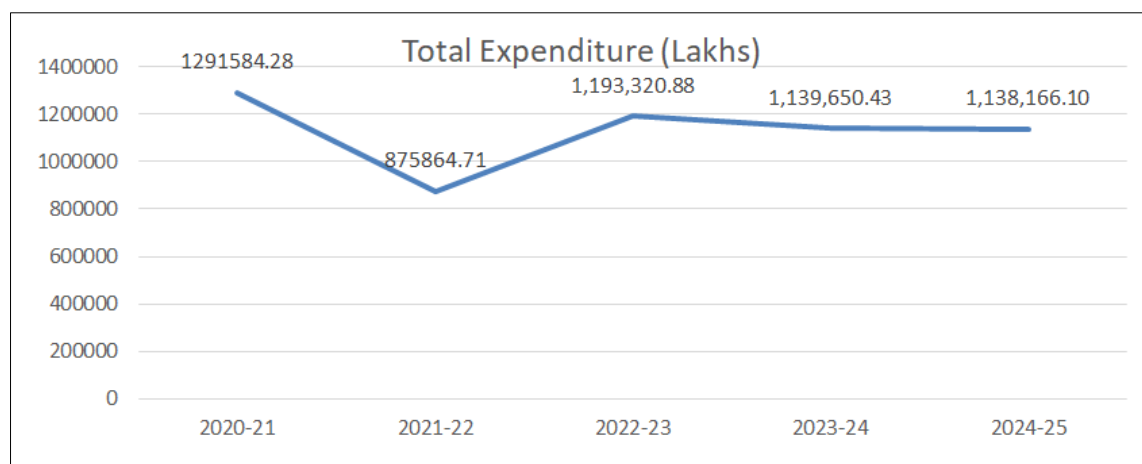
The mentioned relationship is illustrated in the figure below, which examines the financial progress trends of the MGNREG programme in Uttar Pradesh, India.



Source: Author's computation based on MIS NREGA data

Figure 1 illustrates the total allocation of budget under the MGNREG Scheme for the fiscal years 2020-21 to 2024-25. The allocated budget was Rs1,332,127.87 lakh in 2020-21, which saw a slight decline to Rs 874,947.80 lakh in 2021-22. Subsequently, the budget

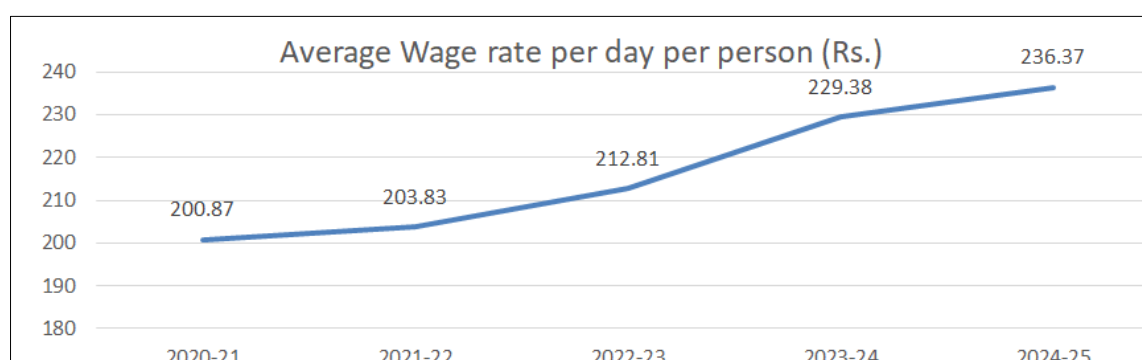
increased to Rs 1,210,776.12 lakh in 2022-23, followed by a continuous decrease to Rs 1,093,237.67 lakh in 2023-24, and further down to Rs 1,057,304.45 lakh in 2024-25.



**Source:** Author's computation based on MIS NREGA data

Figure 2 illustrates the total expenditure of the allocated budget under the MGNREG Scheme from 2020-21 to 2024-25 and shows that the total expenditure was Rs 1,291,584.28 lakh in 2020-21, which saw a slight decline to Rs 875,864.71 lakh in 2021-22. Subsequently,

the allocated budget increased to Rs 1,193,320.88 lakh in 2022-23, followed by a decrease to Rs 1,139,650.43 lakh in 2023-24 and a further slight decline to Rs 1,138,166.10 lakh in 2024-25.



**Source:** Author's computation based on MIS NREGA data

Figure 3 illustrates the percentage of fund utilization under the MGNREG Scheme from 2020-21 to 2024-25. It shows that the utilization rate was 96.96% in 2020-21, which rose to 100.1% in 2021-22. This figure

then decreased to 98.56% in 2022-23, followed by a steady increase to 104.25% in 2023-24 and reaching 107.65% in 2024-25.

**Table 2: Assets Creation Work under MGNREG Scheme**

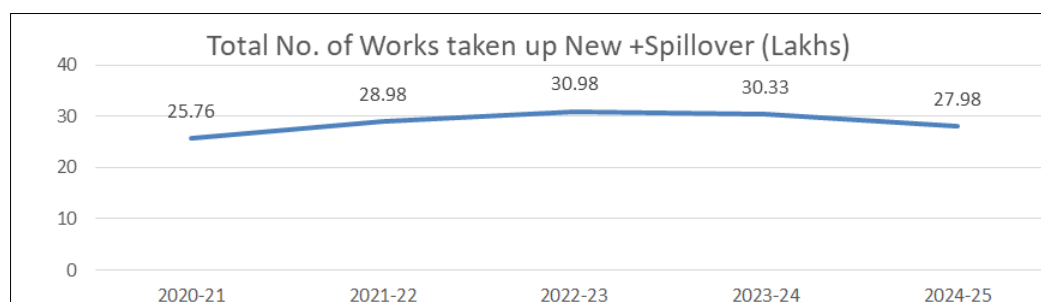
Year	Total No. of works taken up (New + Spillover) (lakhs)	No. of ongoing works (lakhs)	No. of works completed	% of expenditure on agriculture & agriculture allied works	% of NRM exp. in MWC Blocks	% of Category B works
2020-21	25.76	19.54	6,21,302	0	0	48.15
2021-22	28.98	18.24	10,73,814	61.87	54.37	49.59
2022-23	30.98	18.08	12,90,163	57.98	61.89	44.82
2023-24	30.33	20.13	10,20,589	31.29	18.04	49.02
2024-25	27.98	12.46	15,52,531	48.75	17	40.39

**Source:** <https://nrega.nic.in>



Table 2 provides a summary of the progress of asset creation efforts taken under the MGNREG programme. The total number of works undertaken was 25.76 lakhs in 2020-21, rising to 30.98 lakhs in 2022-23. Nonetheless, it experienced a slight decrease to 30.33 in 2023-24 and continued to drop to 27.98 in 2024-25. The ongoing work amounted to 20.13 lakhs in 2023-24, marking the highest figure, but saw a significant decline to 12.46 lakhs in 2024-25, representing the lowest edge. The highest completed work was 1,552,531 in 2024-25, while the lowest completed work was 621,302 in 2020-21. In 2021-22, the expenditure on agriculture and allied

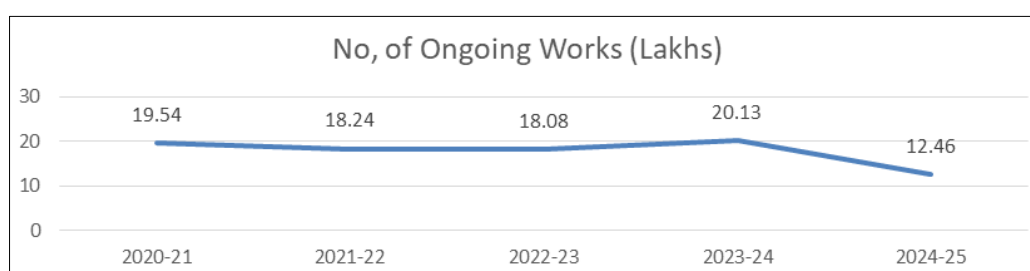
sectors stood at approximately 61.87%. This figure saw a slight decrease to 57.98% in 2022-23, followed by a further decline to 31.29% in 2023-24. However, it experienced an increase, reaching 48.75% in 2024-25. The proportion of spending on natural resource management within the mission water conservation block peaked at 61.89% in 2022-23, before dropping to a low of 17% in 2024-25. The Percentage of Category B work peaked at 49.59% in 2021-22 and subsequently decreased to a low of 40.39% in 2024-25. The relationship discussed can be demonstrated in the figure below.



**Source:** Author's computation based on MIS NREGA data

Figure 4 depicts the total number of works taken up (New + Spillover) under the MGNREGS programme over the years from 2020-21 to 2024-25. Indicating that 25.76 lakh works were initiated in 2020-21. The

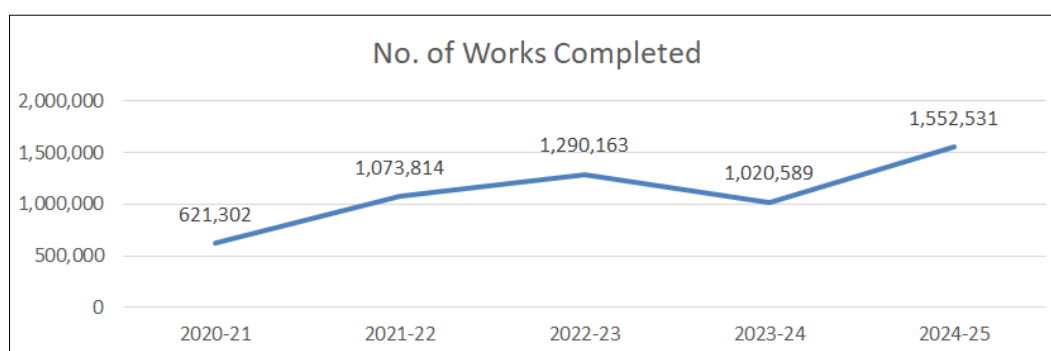
figures rose steadily to 28.98 lakhs in 2021-22 and further to 30.98 lakhs in 2022-23, followed by a slight decrease to 30.33 lakhs in 2023-24 and then a further decline to 27.98 lakhs in 2024.



**Source:** Author's computation based on MIS NREGA data

Figure 5 depicts the total number of ongoing works under the MGNREGS Programme from 2020-21 to 2024-25, indicating that 19.54 lakh works were initiated in 2020-21. It witnessed a decline over two

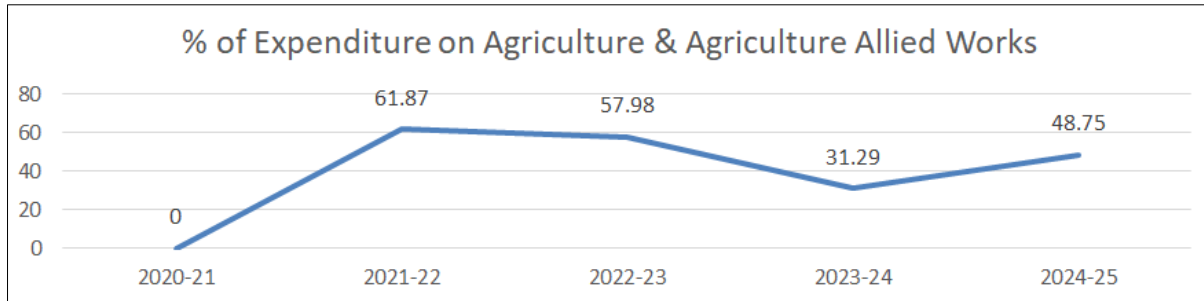
consecutive years, recording 18.24 lakh in 2021-22 and 18.08 lakh in 2022-23. After that, it rose to 20.13 lakhs in 2023-24 while again decreasing to 12.46 lakhs in 2024-25.



**Source:** Author's computation based on MIS NREGA data

Figure 6 presents the total work completed under the MGNREGS Programme from 2020-21 to 2024-25, indicating that approximately 06.21 lakh works were completed in 2020-21. The completion rate showed a consistent rise, reaching 10.73 lakh in 2021-22,

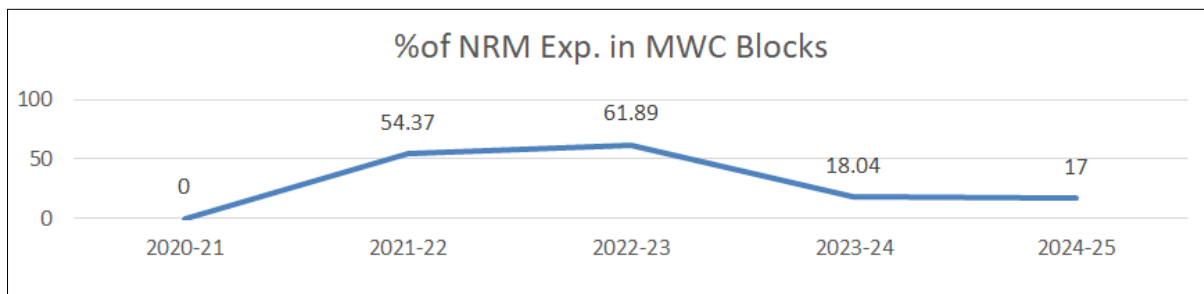
followed by an increase to 12.90 lakh in 2022-23. However, there was a slight decline to 10.20 lakh in 2023-24 before experiencing another increase to 15.52 lakh in 2024-25.



**Source:** Author's computation based on MIS NREGA data

Figure 7 illustrates the percentage of expenditure allocated to agriculture and allied sector programmes under the MGNREG programme from 2020-21 to 2024-25, indicating that there was 0% expenditure on agriculture and allied sector in the year

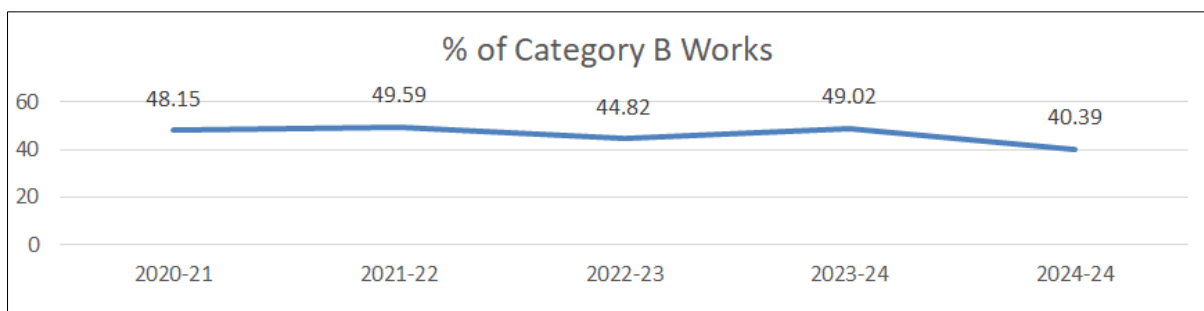
2020-21. The percentage was 61.87% in 2021-22, then decreased to 57.98% in 2022-23, followed by a further decline to 31.29% in 2023-24, and finally, it rose to 48.75% in 2024-25.



**Source:** Author's computation based on MIS NREGA data

Figure 8 illustrates the percentage of Natural Resource Management within the Mission of Water Conservation Block under the MGNREGS Programme from 2020-21 to 2024-25, indicating a 0% expenditure on NRM in the MWC Block for the year 2020-21. The

figure rose to 54.37% in 2021-22, reached 61.89% in 2022-23, then experienced a slight decrease to 18.04% in 2023-24, followed by another decline to 17% in 2024-25.



**Source:** Author's computation based on MIS NREGA data

Figure 9 provides the percentage of category B works taken under the MGNREGS Programme from 2020-21 to 2024-25, indicating a figure of 48.155% for the year 2020-21. The figure rose to 49.59% in 2021-22, subsequently fell to 44.82% in 2022-23, then increased

to 49.02% in 2023-24, and once more decreased to 40.39% in 2024-25.

#### **Inclusiveness of the MGNREGS Scheme**

The inclusiveness of the MGNREG programme in Uttar Pradesh has been examined based on the total

benefit of the MGNREG programme to scheduled caste, scheduled tribes, women, average days of employment

provided per household, and average wage rate per day per person.

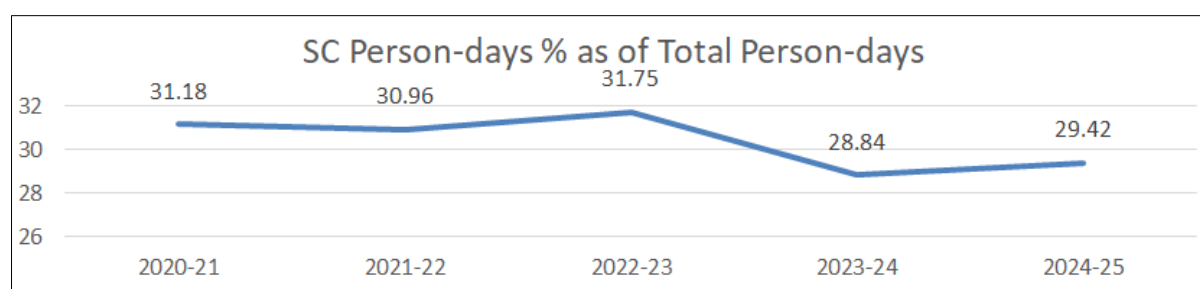
**Table 3**

Year	SC person-days % as of total person-days	ST person-days % as of total person-days	Women Person days out of Total (%)	Average days of employment provided per Household	Average Wage rate per day per person (Rs.)
2020-21	31.18	0.99	33.57	41.84	200.87
2021-22	30.96	1.13	37.25	41.95	203.83
2022-23	31.75	0.91	37.87	44.44	212.81
2023-24	28.84	0.87	42.26	50.37	229.38
2024-25	29.42	0.9	41.8	49.58	236.37

**Source:** <https://nrega.nic.in>

Table 3 analysis of the percentage of scheduled caste person-days relative to total person-days generated. In 2020-21, this percentage was 31.18%, which slightly declined to 30.96% in 2021-22. It then increased to 31.75%, followed by a decrease to 28.84% in 2023-24, and subsequently rose to 29.42% in 2024-25. The percentage of scheduled tribe person-days relative to total person-days reached a peak of 1.13% in 2021-22, while the lowest recorded percentage was 0.87% in 2023-24. The highest percentage of women person-days

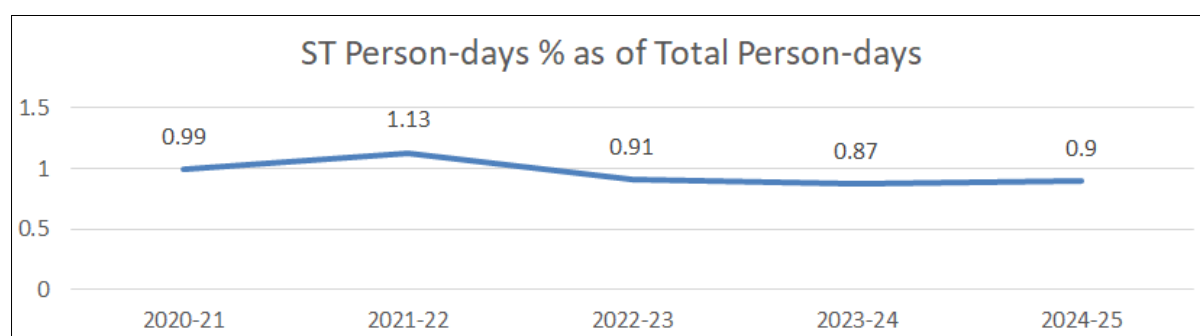
was 42.26% in 2023-24, while the lowest was 33.57% in 2020-21. The data illustrates the varying trends of women's person-days throughout the year. The average days of employment per household reached a peak of 50.37 in 2023-24, while the lowest recorded was 44.44 in 2022-23. The daily average wage rate per person exhibited an upward trend from 2020-21 to 2024-25. The values were 200.87 Rupees in 2020-21, 203.83 Rupees in 2021-22, 212.81 Rupees in 2023-24, and 236.37 Rupees in 2024-25.



**Source:** Author's computation based on MIS NREGA data

Figure 10 presents the percentage of SC person-days relative to the total person-days generated under the MGNREGS Programme from 2020-21 to 2024-25, indicating that 31.18% of person-days were generated in

2020-21. The percentage decreased to 30.96% in 2021-22, subsequently rose to 31.75% in 2022-23, then fell to 28.84% in 2023-24, and experienced a slight increase to 29.42% in 2024-25.

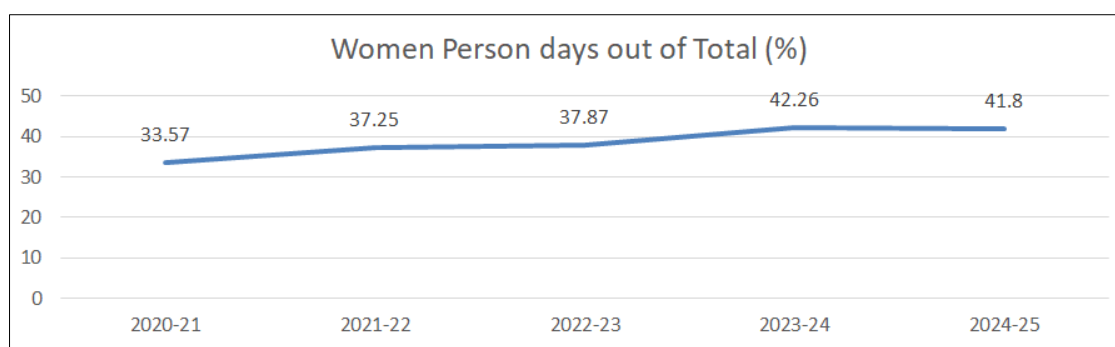


**Source:** Author's computation based on MIS NREGA data

Figure 11 shows the ST person-days relative to the total person-days generated under the MGNREGS Programme from 2020-21 to 2024-25, indicating 0.99% in 2020-21, an increase to 1.13% in 2021-22, followed

by a decline to 0.91% in 2022-23, further decreasing to 0.87% in 2023-24, and a slight increase to 0.9% in 2024-25.

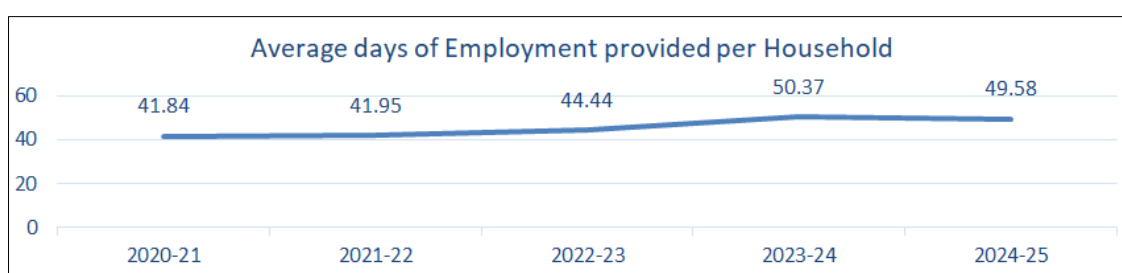




**Source:** Author's computation based on MIS NREGA data

Figure 12 illustrated the percentage of total women person-days generated under the MGNREGS Programme from 2020-21 to 2024-25. The data shows that person-days generated were 33.57% in 2020-21,

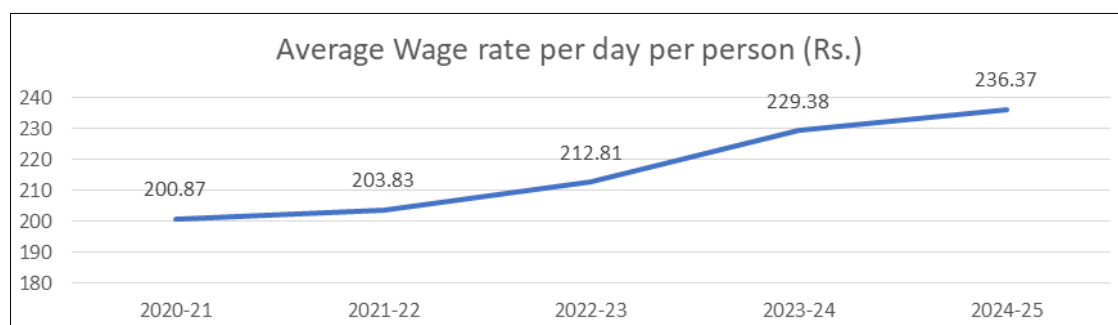
increasing to 37.25% in 2021-22, then to 37.87% in 2022-23, followed by a rise to 42.26% in 2023-24, before a slight decrease to 41.8% in 2024-25.



**Source:** Author's computation based on MIS NREGA data

Figure 13 demonstrates the average number of employments provided per household under the MGNREGS Programme for the period spanning 2020-21 to 2024-25. The data shows that the average days of

employment per household were 41.84 in 2020-21, increasing to 41.95 in 2021-22, then to 44.44 in 2022-23, followed by a rise to 50.37 in 2023-24, before a slight decline to 49.58 in 2024-25.



**Source:** Author's computation based on MIS NREGA data

Figure 14 indicates the daily wage rate per individual offered through the MGNREGS Programme for the period spanning 2020-21 to 2024-25. The data shows that the average wage rate was 200.87 in 2020-21, increasing to 203.83 in 2021-22, then to 212.81 in 2022-23, followed by a rise to 229.38 in 2023-24, and amounted to 236.37 in 2024-25.

## CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION

MGNREGS has played a significant role since 2005. It provides guaranteed employment to marginalized and underprivileged rural households and

has become the most prominent social welfare program in terms of budget allocation and coverage. The scheme has improved the livelihood security of rural households by providing additional wages to beneficiaries and empowering them through participatory institutions. This study analysed the financial, physical, and inclusive progress trends of the MGNREGS scheme in Uttar Pradesh, from 2020-21 to 2024-25. It also explores the inclusiveness of the MGNREGS scheme in terms of employment benefits provided to the marginalized section of people, especially schedule caste (SCs), scheduled tribes (STs), and women. The study shows the allocation of the budget under the MGNREG scheme and

finds the decreasing trends over the years from 2020-21 to 2024-25, and the highest budget allocation and expenditure was in 2020-21. The utilization rate of funds varied over the year, and it was highest in 2024-25. The proportion of work completion rate was not very impressive over the year, and the highest completion rate was in 2024-25. The MGNREGS programme was not very satisfactory in achieving the inclusiveness of SC/ST and women in the programme. The SC/ST person-days as a % of total person-days generated was not very impressive over the year, and it was highest in 2022-23, and ST person-days were the highest in 2021-22, after that, continuously decreased. The share of women in total person-days was above the statutory limit of 33% as mandated by the MGNREGA programme over the year. The average days of employment provided per household increased over the year and the highest average days of employment provided by the MGNREG scheme was 50.37 in 2023-24 and decreased in 2024-25. However, the study recommends aligning the MGNREGS programme with the marginalized group of people and focusing on climate-resilient works that create sustainable infrastructure in rural India and give priority to agriculture and allied sectors to transform the livelihood security of the rural community.

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