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1. After having dealt a severe blow to one of the landmark Rights Based Legislation, that provided “Right to Livelihood & Employment” and changed the Rural landscape of the country like never before, the Narendra Modi led BJP Government has in a characteristic U Turn suddenly discovered the virtues of MGNREGA.
2. It was with great conviction that the Congress led UPA Government enacted in tandem with Smt. Sonia Gandhi steered National Advisory Council (NAC) the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in 2006.

A radical and unprecedented intervention was required to arrest growing poverty and employment driven migration and a new universal law was drawn up. Severely criticized by the BJP and its leaders (including the current Prime Minister) the Congress stood by the Programme and implemented it with sincerity and diligence.

3. In the first phase, it was implemented in the 200 most backward districts of the country and in the second phase of 2007-08, it was implemented in 130 additional districts. Eventually, On April 1, 2008, it was implemented in all the villages of the country. Today, this scheme is being implemented in 662 districts, 6858 blocks and 257710 Gram Panchayats of the country. In the past 10 years, under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, employment amounting to 1986.31 Crore workdays and disbursement of Rs 314877.12 Cr was done under this flagship scheme.
4. Shri Modi has come around from a position of criticizing the Programme to celebrating it. Unfortunately, his actions of neglect speak louder than his words.

On the 10 year anniversary of this historic law, the programme has received enormous acclaim and has also been studied for replication in other countries. Unfortunately the scheme has languished under the current Government:

While Rural India was enthused by getting this legal Right to Work, the Bharatiya Janata Party started a negative campaign against this scheme from day 1 itself. Their criticism reached the limits, when Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi viciously

criticized the MGNREGA in the Lok Sabha by saying that the “Digging holes is the result of 60 years of your misdeeds and this scheme is a living monument of the failures of the previous government” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nBRKUf6AAo>)

5. However, one year down the line, the same Prime Minister is lauding MGNREGA along with another flagship UPA programme- AADHAAR. And asking his MP’s to work for its success. Before reaching this point of ‘U’ turn, Shri Modi and his Government did everything possible to destroy MGNREGA. The following details are self –explanatory.

- a) Numbers of Families getting 100 days of compulsory employment under MGNREGA have been **systematically brought down by about half**. Whereas, 5173487 families got 100 days of employment in 2012-13 and 4659347 families got employment in 2013-14, It has drastically come down to 2493840 families in 2014-15 and a dismal 2045161 families in 2015-16.
- b) There are about 13.13 Crores job cards under MGNREGA in the country today with 27.59 Crores workers enrolled through them, Of these active job cards account for 6.35 Crores with 9.83 Crores workers enrolled on them. Of these, 19.6% belong to SC category and 15.22% belong to ST category.

It is shocking that in a Rural economy marred by drought while 19513989 families asked for jobs under MGNREGA in January 2016, Jobs were made available to 8675141 people. This has been the situation right since April 2015.

- c) Despite severe rural distress, instead of a 100 days only an average 39.98 days of employment is been made available to workers under MGNREGA. Even on such a reduced number of days the payments made to the workers is never on time and the gap between the workdays and wages is constantly increasing.
 - d) Whereas, 7.97 Crores people got jobs under MGNREGA in 2012-13, during the Modi Government it fell to 6.22 Crores in 2014-15 and 5.79 Crore in 2015-16.
6. The massive financial crippling blow to MGNREGA is visible in the fact that whereas, the Government spent Rs 39778.27 Cr and Rs 38552.62 Cr on the scheme in 2012-13 and 2013-14 respectively, the expenditure on it went down to Rs 36033.81Cr and Rs 34226.80 Cr in 2014-15 and 2015-16 respectively. What is

further unfortunate is that the Social Audit provisions in the act to ensure transparency have been undertaken by this Government only in 145 out of 662 districts even though the Financial Year is now coming to a close.

7. Performance of the NDA Government

a) *Delay in Wage Payment*

- Close to around **50% delay** in the total wages to be paid-Wages amounting to more than **Rs.11,000 crore have not been paid** in the current Financial Year.
- In FY 2014-15, the average delay in wages was **almost 60%**

b) *No funds with States*

- Funds with states have dried up and 14 states, including Andhra Pradesh, are showing negative balance

c) *Average days of employment per household*

- Decline in average days of employment per household in FY 2014-15 and 15-16 to 40 days, a sharp decline from the previous years

d) *Decline in households provided work in FY 2014-15*

- Only 4 crore households provided work in 2014-15 as compared to 4.8 crore households in FY 2013-14

e) *Average wage rate*

- Average wage per day increased only by Rs. 8 in FY 2015-16

f) *Households completing 100 days*

- Decline in number of households completing 100 days in last 2 years- only 25 lakh have completed 100 days in FY 2014-15 as against 47 lakh in FY 2013-14

8. The same can be contrasted with the rapid strides made under MGNREGA in bringing about unprecedented socio-economic change in Rural India during the previous regime by the following facts:

UPA's Achievements under MGNREGA

a) Social Security & Wage Employment

- Uptil 2014, MGNREGA was providing **employment for almost 25%, of the total rural households** in the country, i.e. 1 in every four rural households work in MGNREGA

b) Regeneration of the Rural Resource Base

- **Half of the works under MGNREGA relate to water conservation**
- 30% of works are related to land development and works on private lands of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Small and Marginal Farmers

c) Bank Accounts & Wage Payments

- **11 crore no frills bank and post office accounts** opened till 2014.
- Unlike the Jan Dhan Yojana most of these are operational on a regular basis. **80% of MGNREGA wage payment** is made through these accounts

d) Bank Accounts for women

- For the first time, a programme focused on opening of accounts in the name of women for the direct transfer of wage payments. **As a result more than 4 crore individual accounts in the name of women opened.**
- MGNREGA has increased women's confidence, control over resources and provided them with a sense of economic empowerment

e) Focus on Women

- With its provision of work within 5 kms and other benefits, MGNREGA had the highest number of women workers as compared to other public programmes

f) Findings of a study by IHDS and University of Maryland

- MGNREGA prevented 14 million persons from falling into poverty
- Poverty among adivasis was reduced by 28% and for dalits by 38%.
- MGNREGA has led to a decline in reliance on money-lenders
- MGNREGA households are investing more in children's education than others