

Utilisation and Preferences of Communication Sources for MGNREGA Information by Beneficiaries in Odisha, India

S. Parida¹, P.K. Bhowmick², P.B.S. Bhadoria³ and P.S. Sivakumar⁴

1. Res. Scholar, 2. Asso. Prof., 3. Prof., Department of Agricultural and Food Engineering, IIT Kharagpur, India, 4. Senior Scientist (ICAR-CTCRI), Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India

Corresponding author e-mail: splibra7@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Success of the any development programme depends on mobilising peoples' participation by creating awareness among potential beneficiaries and other stake holders. Communication plays a crucial role in mobilising the communities to actively participate in the development process to distribute its benefits equally across the social classes. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) of Govt. of India is a massive employment generation programme aimed to increase the purchasing power of the needy by assuring a reasonable level of employment in a year. While the Govt of India has used communication as a tool to increase beneficiary participation in the development programmes, the peoples' utilisation of these channels and their utility remain unknown. study was conducted in the two blocks Odisha state of India with 60 beneficiaries to analyze the communication channel utilization and preference for MGNREGA related beneficiaries. Primary data were collected by using structured interview schedule developed for this study. Results revealed that the interpersonal channels i.e. local leaders and gram panchayat officials were preferred and consulted frequently for MGNREGA information. Among mass media, television was widely used ahead radio.

Key words: Communication Sources, Beneficiaries, MGNREGA;

Communication is an integral part of development strategies of both developing and developed countries. Communication helps to understand the needs and concerns of the people in order to mobilize, organize and involve them in decision making. It plays a key role in creating awareness among people by providing useful information through developing interest and promoting understanding. Communication holds tremendous potential in increasing knowledge and information by engaging and empowering beneficiaries of different developmental programmes. It is an interactive process in which information, knowledge and skills, relevant for development are exchanged between beneficiaries and information providers either personally or through media such as radio, print and more recently the new "Information and Communication Technologies" (ICTs). Unless the information is communicated clearly which

is feasible to the needs, interests and values of the people, they cannot utilize it in effective manner. Hence, suitable communication sources are pre-requisite in developing favourable attitude of the people which ultimately improve their standard of living.

In recent past few years, government tries to adopt Information and Communication Technologies in the process of development with the concentration of eradication of poverty. It has great potential to bring in the desired social transformations by enhancing access to people, services, information and other technologies. The communication media, in the context of development, are generally used to support development initiatives by the dissemination of messages that encourage the public to support development-oriented projects (Kaul, 2011). Both the Government and the people depend on Communication and Mass Media not

only for disseminating information, but also in setting agenda for the development and other allied activities. Hence, communication media become powerful tool for disseminating information and diffusion of innovations (Yadav and Rani, 2011).

There have been several programmes/policies initiated by Government of India to address the livelihood opportunities by enhancing the several capitals. Though different innovative schemes and programmes have been initiated in different five year plans, only few of them have helped to achieve goals, whereas others have faced technical and implementation snags (Pattanaik and Lal, 2011; Sanyal, 2011; Hazra, 2011; Sharma, 2013). The MGNREGA is perhaps the largest and most ambitious social security and public works programme in the world. This scheme has certainly a boon for the rural people in strengthening their economic conditions (Gautam and Bhardwaj, 2013). One of the important steps to make MGNREGA success is the creation of awareness among rural people and other stake holders. Special emphasis needs to be placed on raising awareness among the MGNREGA workers. It should be ensured that the workers know their right to demand wage employment and exercise their right by applying for jobs as per their need. Therefore the study was conducted with the following objectives:

- i. To analyze the utilization of communication channels by beneficiaries
- ii. To study the preference of using communication channels by beneficiaries.

METHODOLOGY

An exploratory survey on utilisation and preferences of communication sources by the MGNREGA beneficiaries was conducted in four randomly selected Gram panchayats from two blocks named Baliana and Bhubaneswar under Khordha district of Odisha. Sixty MGNREGA beneficiaries who consented to participate in the survey, were randomly selected from four *panchayats* (N=15 per Gram panchayat). Data on communication source utilisation and preferences patterns were collected using a structured interview schedule supplemented with a focus group discussion. Descriptive statistics like frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation along with non-parametric analyses (Kendall W and Friedman Chi-square test) were used to derive insights from the

empirical data. All the analyses were conducted using Statistical package SPSS (Ver. 16; SPSS Inc, USA).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data furnished in Table 1 reveals that, higher percentage of the beneficiaries belonged to middle age group (60%), most of them were male (75%), 58.3 per cent were illiterate, cent per cent were belonging to Hindu community, most of them were from scheduled caste (63.3%), maximum number of them belonging to joint family (78.3%), most of them were having medium sized family (61.7%) and most of the beneficiaries had occupation of farming (43.33%).

Table 1: Distribution of beneficiaries according to their socio-personal characteristics (N=60)

Characteristics	Categories	No.	%
Age	Young (< 35)	16	26.70
	Middle (35 – 50)	36	60.00
	Old (above 50)	8	13.30
Sex	Male	45	75.00
	Female	15	25.00
Education	Illiterate	35	58.30
	Primary (1-4th std)	15	25.00
	Middle (5 – 7th std)	5	8.30
	High school (8 – 10th std)	3	5.00
	HS (10 – 12 std)	1	1.70
	Graduate and above	1	1.70
Religion	Hindu	60	100.0
Caste	SC	38	63.30
	ST	0	0.00
	OBC	6	10.00
	General	16	26.70
Family Type	Nuclear	13	21.70
	Joint	47	78.30
Family Size	Small (?4)	9	15.00
	Medium (5-8)	37	61.70
	Large (9 and above)	14	23.30
Occupation	Farming	26	43.33
	Farm labourer	18	30.00
	Artisan	9	15.00
	Business	7	11.66

Table 2 revealed that different communication sources were used by beneficiaries for receiving information about MGNREGA. The Communication sources were categorized in three categories namely informal sources, formal sources and media. Utilization of communication sources by the beneficiaries depicts that out of informal sources, 100 percent were getting

information from local leaders followed by friends (48.3%) and relatives (38.3%). In case of formal sources, 100 percent of them were getting information from gram panchayat official followed by panchayat notice board (16.7%). Regarding media, majority of beneficiaries were accessing TV (61.7%) followed by radio (35.00%) and print media (21.7%).

The result reveals that, more number of respondents were obtaining information from local leaders. The reason for this might be that people have more faith on local leaders than that of other informal sources. Cent percent of beneficiaries accessed information from GPO. It could be due to among formal sources, Gram panchayat officials were considered as most effective transmitter of information. Highest numbers of respondents were accessing TV. The reason that could be attributed to this is that television provides a conduit for entertainment as well as giving information about various matters. Maximum number of beneficiaries was illiterate to get the information from print media. None of the beneficiaries got information from NGOs, help line service and internet. The result of this study is congruent with the findings of *Devi and Verma (2011)*, *Yadav et al. (2011)* and *Alikhan et al. (2012)*.

Table 2: Communication sources utilised in accessing MGNREGA information by the beneficiaries (N=60)

Sources	%	Rank
<i>Informal Sources</i>		
Local leaders	100.00	I
Relatives	38.30	III
Friends	48.30	II
Beneficiaries	26.70	IV
<i>Formal Sources</i>		
Panchayat Notice Board	16.70	II
Gram Panchayat Official (GPO)	100.00	I
NGOs	0.00	III
Help line service	0.00	III
<i>Media</i>		
Television (TV)	61.70	I
Radio	35.00	II
Print media	21.70	III
Internet	0.00	IV

Data displayed in Table 3 indicates that interpersonal sources like local leaders (100%) and gram panchayat officials (98.30%) were frequently consulted to discuss about MGNREGA. Among media, television was more frequently used (46.70%) than radio and print media.

The reason behind this might be that, people have more faith on local leaders and gram panchayat officials. Likewise television acts as good technical feasibility of information followed by radio. The non-usage of print media and internet can be attributed to low literacy level of the respondents and unavailability of internet facility. Similar results are reported by Okwu and Daudu (2011) and Pandey *et al.* (2012).

Table 3: Frequency of communication sources used in accessing MGNREGA information by the beneficiaries (N=60)

Communication Sources	I	II	III
<i>Informal Sources</i>			
Local leaders	100.00	0.00	0.00
Relatives	0.00	38.30	61.70
Friends	5.00	43.30	51.70
Beneficiaries	13.00	68.30	18.70
<i>Formal Sources</i>			
Panchayat Notice Board	0.00	16.70	83.3
Gram Panchayat Official (GPO)	98.30	1.70	0.00
NGOs	0.00	0.00	100.00
Help line service	0.00	0.00	100.00
<i>Media</i>			
TV	46.70	15.00	38.30
Radio	13.30	21.70	65.00
Print media	0.00	21.70	78.30
Internet	0.00	0.00	100.00

I=Frequently (%); II=Occasionally (%), III=Never (%)

Table 4: Mean ranks and agreement coefficients of communication sources by the beneficiaries (N=60)

Communication Sources	Mean rank	Overall rank
Local leaders	11.67	1
Relatives	5.45	8
Friends	7.00	6
Beneficiaries	5.55	7
Panchayat Notice Board	4.00	9
Gram Panchayat Official	11.33	2
NGOs	2.40	11
Help line service	2.60	10
TV	10.00	3
Radio	8.45	5
Print media	8.55	4
Internet	1.00	12
Kendall W	0.987**	
Friedman Chi-square	651.164**	

**Significant at 1% level ($p < 0.01$)

Data on respondents' ranking of communication sources were subjected to non-parametric statistical analyses using the Kendall coefficient of concordance

(W) and Friedman analysis of variance. The Kendall's W indicated the agreement among respondents in the ranking of communication sources. Generally, the value of W ranges between 0 and 1, where 1 designates perfect concordance and 0 indicates no agreement or independence of samples (Conover, 1999). The Friedman analysis of variance was performed to establish significant differences among respondents' rankings among the communication sources. The Kendall Coefficient of Concordance and Friedman ANOVA are displayed in Table 4.

The significant Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance ($W = 0.987$) indicated that the respondents applied same criteria in ranking the communication sources. It shows the consistency in evaluating the communication sources with reasonable accuracy. A significant Friedman ANOVA established that the communication sources differed in terms of their importance to the respondents. The respondents preferred the 'local leaders' ahead of other communication sources followed by 'gram panchayat official' and 'Television'. The communication sources such as 'internet', 'NGOs' and 'help line service' were least preferred. 'Print media', 'radio', 'friends', 'beneficiaries' and 'relatives' were equally preferred by the respondents.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the utilization and preference of communication sources by beneficiaries of MGNRGA. Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that cent percent of the beneficiaries were procuring information from local leaders followed by friends and relatives related to informal sources. In case of formal sources, cent percent of the respondents were getting information from *gram panchayat* official followed by *panchayat* notice board. TV was utilised more followed by radio and print media by the respondents. Local leaders and *gram panchayat* officials have higher relative frequent usage than that of other sources. They preferred the 'local leaders' ahead of other communication channels followed by 'gram panchayat officials' and 'TV'. The study draws attention that, the current communication scenario and the needs of development should be done in a regulatory framework. This will encourage beneficiaries to engage themselves more in this wage employment programme. This is important to generate awareness through information, education and communication for people to know their rights under the Act. This can be possible by effective use of communication and proper information based on the need of stakeholders.

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