

Abstract

Growth with social justice has been the basic objective of the development planning in India since independence. The prevalence of unemployment and poverty were viewed as the most serious concern for development. To achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the desired growth pattern has to be sustained, inclusive and equitable. According to the Census Report (2011), 83 million people continue to live below the poverty line in rural India. The extent of poverty and severity of poverty is more prevalent among rural population. Several poverty reduction schemes have been introduced in India during different plan periods. All these are still not effective in eliminating the problem of unemployment leading to poverty. Consequently, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was started which is also an essential tool for a comprehensive growth. In Tamil Nadu out of 36 Scheduled Tribes, the Government of India has identified six tribal communities and named them as "Primitive Tribal Groups (PTG)". These six PTG's are Todas, Kotas, Kurumbas, Irulas, Paniyans and Katunayakans. The current study is a pioneering attempt to assess the impact of MGNREGA on a specific tribal group namely Paniyan community. The objectives of the study were to study the socio – economic and demographic profile of Paniyan Tribal population, to find out factors influencing the decision of Paniyan tribal population participating in MGNREGA, to examine the benefits received by tribal population by participating in MGNREGA, to assess and compare the impact of MGNREGA on tribal population in terms of select indicators like improvement in economic conditions and living conditions, to assess the health conditions of tribal population due to their participation in MGNREGA, to find out the various problems and constraints faced by the respondents in the study area. Gudalur block in Nilgiri district was selected for the study. A total 645 Paniyan respondents were included for the study who were participants in MGNREGA program. The study concluded that MGNREGA has gradually raised the standard of rural livelihood as it provides the proper wage disbursement and genuine work facilities and also betterment of living conditions.