

An Overview of Employment Opportunities in Rural India

ABSTRACT

The rural population in India is abundant, but unemployment has been a problem over the years. A rural employment opportunity enables individuals to lead successful lives and contributes to the growth of our country. Despite the availability of many employment opportunities in the rural area, the government continuously implements several schemes to increase employment rates and reduce migration from rural areas to urban areas. The government provides a variety of training programs for rural people to improve their skills. A main purpose of the paper is to determine current employment opportunities in rural areas and possible opportunities to increase them. Furthermore, it discussed some government initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life for rural residents.

Keywords: Employment opportunities; agriculture; and other sectors; schemes; skills.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rural is the home of over 70% of the population in India. Their primary source of income is agriculture. Agricultural practices are affected by a variety of factors, including the reliance on rainfall, financial constraints, and outdated practices. Because of the abundance of employment opportunities in cities, people are moving from villages to cities in search of employment. This is increasing the density of the urban population. As of March 2020, India had an unemployment rate of 8.4%. In May 2020, it rose to 27% due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It dropped from 7.8% in June 2022 to 6.8% in July 2022 [1]. While other industries are struggling in India today, agriculture is helping the economy. Although unemployment in rural and urban India is a severe problem, rural people took advantage of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme during COVID-19. Individuals' lives are adversely affected by unemployment. In this regard, the government has the responsibility of creating employment opportunities. A variety of agricultural development programs as well as small- and large-scale industries might provide employment opportunities [2].

2. OPPORTUNITIES OF EMPLOYMENT IN RURAL INDIA

The rural economy and livelihoods of rural communities can be improved by many employment opportunities.

2.1 Agriculture Sector

Rural populations have access to substantial employment opportunities in the agriculture sector. In order to be successful in agriculture, farmers must have essential skills in cultivating different crops. For rural communities to be able to efficiently utilize available resources and learn different scientific methods, agricultural training institutes need to be established. The use of water, electricity, fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds efficiently is essential to increasing production and profit for farmers. Other than agriculture, dairy, forestry, value addition, and processing create many employment opportunities, such as honey bee production, backyard poultry farming, seed production, biofertilizer production, biogas production, farmyard manure, and vermicompost production [2].

2.2 Medical and Healthcare

Rural residents with excellent education can find employment opportunities in the healthcare and medical sectors. For the well-being of rural people, graduates of healthcare and medicine return to their villages to set up clinics and eye care centres. Rural areas have a need for skilled and unskilled labour for setting up clinics, eye care centres, and livestock centres [3].

2.3 Handicrafts Production

Different handicraft products are produced in rural areas by both men and women. There are various types of handicrafts produced in rural areas, such as pottery making, embroidery work, preparing decorative items and clothing, and making plastic garlands. By learning handicrafts from their parents, the children are able to expand their business and market it effectively [4].

2.3 Selling of Agricultural Products

Agricultural products from the farms of rural farmers are generally sold directly to consumers, such as milk, vegetables, fruits, and some other products [4].

2.4 Production of Value-added Products

It is becoming more common in rural areas to produce value-added products such as jaggery, butter, ghee, candies, papads, khakra, bakery products, and other food products. Agarbatti making and wax products are also sold by farmers besides food. Providing financial assistance to rural entrepreneurs is one of the functions of the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) [5].

2.5 Repairing Works

People with desired skills can find employment repairing two-wheelers, four-wheelers, and tractors. Agricultural activities nowadays rely heavily on machines, so it creates employment year-round [5].

2.6 Technology Centres/ Development Skill

Rural areas produce more employment opportunities as a result of the development of technologies. In today's world, most schemes are available online or on an individual basis. Technology centers in villages serve as a repository for people applying for any benefits that are available [5].

2.7 Other Occupations

A variety of jobs are available to rural people, including electrical work, plumbing, driving, gardening, carpentry, and painting. The works are the result of people's experiences and the education received at different institutions [5].

3. POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING EMPLOYMENT IN RURAL AREAS

- India's agricultural sector is a key contributor to its economic recovery. Agriculture still has tremendous potential, but it has not yet been fully exploited. Infrastructure enhancement, storage and processing facilities built after harvest, and upgrading transport facilities for distributing and selling produce can create a significant number of job opportunities. In order to boost agriculture, farmer income must be increased. That should be accounted for by raising the Minimum Support Price. Jobs can be created as a result of increased agricultural exports.
- Investing in non-agricultural enterprises, such as dairy farming, fisheries, etc., could provide abundant opportunities.
- Service sector employment has increased over the last few years, outpacing agricultural employment. This opportunity may lead to the creation of many jobs in rural areas through establishment of service businesses like IT service providers and media outlets.
- Over 51% of MSMEs are located in rural India. When MSMEs are supported and given access to the necessary skills and technologies, many new job opportunities will be created.
- Handicrafts, handlooms and other non-farm activities are now being promoted by many entrepreneurs. Incentives will be beneficial for firms creating jobs in rural India.
- Any industry cannot succeed without transportation facilities. The rural economy may be significantly boosted by infrastructure development.
- There is a pressing need for healthcare facilities to be established in rural India. As a result, everyone will have access to healthcare facilities. In addition, this will create a large number of jobs in rural areas [5].

4. SCHEMES FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES BY THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT

4.1 Agri Clinic and Agribusiness Centres Scheme (ACABC Scheme)

NABARD provides subsidies to farmers through the ACABC programme, which is implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Government of India. These schemes have the following objectives:

- Farmers can access extension services for a fee-for-service or free-of-charge, based on their entrepreneurs' business model, local needs, and level of affordability.
- Development of agriculture is to be encouraged.
- It provides opportunities for meaningful self-employment for unemployed agricultural graduates, agricultural diploma holders, intermediate farmers, and biological science graduates with advanced degrees in agri-related fields.

4.1.1 Agri-Clinics

Agricultural clinics offer farmers specialized advice and services for improving their crop and animal production and boosting their earnings. There are several aspects supported by Agri-Clinics, such as soil health, cropping practices, plant protection, crop insurance, post-harvest technologies, clinical services for animals, and market prices [6].

4.1.2 Agri-Business centres

Agri-Business Centers are for-profit divisions of agri-ventures founded by specialists in agriculture. In agriculture and related fields, these businesses might focus on post-harvest management, market connections, and customizing agricultural equipment maintenance and hire. In addition to financial assistance for instruction and mentoring, the programme also includes loans and credit-linked back-end subsidies [6].

4.1.3 Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

The project, introduced on December 25, 2000, by then-prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, aims to improve rural road connections. This program offers connectivity to areas with little to no

connectivity and contributes to eliminating poverty by facilitating access to social and economic services. As a result, people have the chance to connect with others around the world, ensuring long-term sustainable poverty reduction. Several communities have benefited from the plan and are now living better lives. Before the 14th Finance Commission report's proposal, the plan was entirely funded by the central government; now, the state and the federal governments are responsible for funding it [7].

4.1.4 Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana

The Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana, a component of the National Livelihood Mission, aims to support rural youth's professional goals and diversify rural families' sources of income. The scheme, introduced on September 25, 2014, primarily targets rural children from low-income households between the ages of 15 and 35. A sum of Rs 1500 crores has been allocated for the program to improve employability. The Yojana affects 6215 blocks, 568 districts, and 21 States and Union Territories, altering the lives of youth. Three hundred partners are working on 690 projects in total. According to government figures, more than 11 lakh individuals have received training, and roughly six lakhs of those have been hired [8].

4.1.5 Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana/ National Rural Livelihood Mission

The National Rural Livelihood Mission, formerly known as the Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, was introduced in 2011 by the Ministry of Rural Develop. This program, also known as Ajeevika, strives to empower women through self-help models all around the nation. By this program, the government offers a loan of 3 lakh rupees at a 7% interest rate that can be lowered to 4% upon repayment. The World Bank assisted the program, which aimed to build strong institutional foundations for the underprivileged. It also contributed to higher household income by making financial services more accessible. NRLM also assists in maximizing the potential of the underprivileged to contribute to the national economy's expansion [9].

4.1.6 Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

A rural household adult willing to perform unskilled manual labor is guaranteed 100 days of employment under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) of 2005. The Act speaks to the working class and their fundamental right to a dignified existence. A person is entitled to unemployment benefits if they are unemployed for more than 15 days. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) emphasizes the value of the fundamental right to employment. This statute has been modified in order to reduce corruption in the plan. In India, MGNREGA has reached more than 700 districts. Additionally, the number of MGNREGA cards issued in the nation is already over 14.8 crore, and 28 crore people have benefited from this program in 2021–22 [10].

4.1.7 Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (Gramin)/ Indira Awas Yojana

A welfare program designed by the Indian government to offer houses to rural poor people in India was previously known as Indira Awas Yojana. It was redesigned as Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awaas Yojana in 2016. All residents will have a place to live under this program by 2022. The center and the state will split the cost of building the homes. Except for Delhi and Chandigarh, the scheme has been implemented in rural areas across India. Essential utilities like a toilet, an electricity connection, a drinking water connection, an LPG connection, etc., will be included in the homes built under this program. The houses will be jointly registered in the names of the couple who received them. Nearly 58 lakhs of the 1.2 crore houses approved so far have been built [11].

4.1.8 Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY)

To encourage employers to create new jobs along with social security benefits and restore jobs lost during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY) was launched on 1st October, 2020 as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat package 3.0. The Government of India under ABRY will credit for two years both the employees' share (12%) and employer's share (12%) of contributions, depending on the employment strength of the EPFO registered establishments. EPFO registers all establishments with new employees (earning less than Rs. 15,000/- per month) under the ABRY program. Establishments that hire new employees after 1.10.2020 until 30th June, 2021

or those who lose jobs between 01.03.2020 and 30.09.2020 are eligible for this benefit. As a result of the CCEA meeting on 30.06.2021, the scheme's scope has been extended to include new employees until 31.03.2022. The scheme is expected to benefit approximately 71.8 lakh employees. After 31st March, 2022, all beneficiaries who have registered under the scheme will receive benefits for a period of two years [12].

4.1.9 Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan (PMGKRA)

It is a 125-day project launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 20th June, 2020 to address the issues of returnee workers and similarly affected rural populations by the Covid-19 pandemic through a multi-pronged approach of providing immediate employment & livelihood opportunities to the distressed, to provide the villages with public infrastructure and build livelihood assets to boost income generation activity and increase long-term livelihood opportunities by focusing on 25 works in 116 selected districts across 6 States with the allocation of Rs. 50,000 crores [13].

4.1.10 Aajeevika - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)

The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India launched Aajeevika - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) in June 2011. As part of the Mission, the World Bank is providing investment assistance to the rural poor in order to create efficient and effective institutional platforms that will enable them to improve their livelihoods and increase their access to financial services, thereby increasing household income [14].

4.1.11 Rural Self Employment and Training Institutes (RSETIs)

Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs) are government-run programs that provide training and skill upgrading geared towards entrepreneurship development to rural youth in each district throughout the country. State and central governments cooperate actively to manage RSETIs with the help of banks [15].

4.1.12 Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)

In order to create self-employment opportunities, the Prime Minister's Employment Generation

Programme (PMEGP) offers credit-linked subsidies in the non-farm sector for traditional artisans and unemployed youths to establish micro-enterprises [16].

5. CONCLUSION

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many people went back to their villages. Therefore, it is imperative to establish numerous employment opportunities in rural India as soon as possible. Establishing jobs in rural regions is crucial in preparing for impending pandemics since it can prevent significant economic damage. Numerous job opportunities can be created in rural areas by boosting the agricultural sector, promoting non-farm activities, establishing service sector businesses, and developing clean energy enterprises.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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