

The Role of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Improving Hill Livelihoods in Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

Himachal Pradesh, known for its hilly terrain and predominantly agrarian economy, faced challenges related to unemployment and poverty. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) played a significant role in addressing these challenges and transforming the livelihood sector in the state. Under MGNREGA, the provision of 100 days of employment per household per year became a reality for the rural population of Himachal Pradesh. This led to a substantial increase in income levels and improved the overall quality of life for the beneficiaries. MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh also empowered women by ensuring their participation in wage employment. The programme emphasised gender equity and provided equal wages for both men and women, thereby promoting social inclusivity and women empowerment. Additionally, MGNREGA played a pivotal role in reducing migration from rural areas, as it provided employment opportunities within the villages themselves. Therefore, the objective of the present study is to analyse the role of MGNREGA in providing livelihood opportunities in the state of Himachal Pradesh. The result of the study shows that MGNREGA is creating durable assets such as water conservation structures, rural connectivity and soil conservation, which not only provided employment but also contributed to the development of rural infrastructure. The data has been processed in M.S. Excel and results have been depicted with the help of appropriate graphs and charts.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Hill Livelihood, Himachal Pradesh, Sustainable Development, Poverty Alleviation, Community Empowerment

Introduction

Major livelihood activities in rural regions are irregular primarily because of seasonal changes in agriculture and related activities. This causes workers to periodically

leave the workforce, especially marginal labourers who alternate between jobs that are classified as lucrative and domestic employment. Many employees relocate to different regions of the nation in pursuit of employment. Lack of other sources of income and a lack of skill development are the main reasons why people leave rural regions (Balasubramaniam et al., 2022). The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is regarded as the most successful strategy for improving the quality of rural living by giving every rural household a legal guarantee of one hundred days of paid employment to perform unskilled manual labour (Bhat & Mariyappan, 2016). By creating productive assets like roads, water tanks, soil and water conservation work, etc., MGNREGA offers an alternative source of livelihood that will have an impact on lowering migration, limiting child labour, reducing poverty, and making villages self-sufficient. Because of this, it has been referred to be the world's largest anti-poverty initiative (Majhi, 2017). MGNREGA has made a noticeable difference in rural India's development, including the construction of roads, irrigation canals, rural homes and other infrastructure (Pandey, 2017).

Himachal Pradesh, a hilly state in northern India, poses unique challenges for its inhabitants in terms of livelihood opportunities due to rugged terrain, limited arable land and geographical isolation. Recognising the need to address these challenges, the Government of India introduced the MGNREGA in 2005, aiming to provide livelihood security through guaranteed wage employment. The rural development programmes in India since Independence lacked sufficient inclusion of a significant portion of the population, limiting their overall effectiveness and impact (Bhattacharyya, 2013). All MGNREGA programmes must be adequately designed and completed within a

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specific time range. Every household should adhere closely to the 100-day rule for employment. There should be more transparency. The information must be available throughout the whole implementation process (Das, 2021). The MGNREGA initiative has been praised by the World Bank as a shining example of rural development and as a major policy obstacle for reducing poverty and fostering economic growth. Therefore, there is no question that the MGNREGA programme has a beneficial impact on lowering rural-urban migration, creating a lot of jobs, raising the standard of living for rural poor people and reducing rural poverty. Today's MGNREGA programme is called Digital MGNREGA since all work is done on a digital platform (Taufique et al., 2023).

Himachal Pradesh's government has implemented efficient policies and collaborated with the central government to accelerate progress and enhance the quality of life for its people, resulting in a vibrant economy. Through the hard work of its diligent population and the implementation of progressive programmes, Himachal Pradesh has emerged as one of India's prosperous and rapidly growing economies (Economic Survey of Himachal Pradesh, 2018). MGNREGA plays a crucial role in the economy of Himachal Pradesh due to its high rural population, with 74.13% of the total population residing in rural areas as per the 2011 census. It serves as an exclusive employment generation programme that effectively addresses the demand for employment in rural India, making it an important poverty alleviation measure in the state. Its implementation contributes significantly to the overall development and well-being of the rural population in Himachal Pradesh. The MGNREGA aims to improve the livelihood security of rural households by offering 100 days of guaranteed wage employment each year. This opportunity is available to all rural households within government-notified areas. The entitlement of 100 days can be shared among the adult members of a household who volunteer for unskilled manual work (H.P. State Institute of Rural Development, 2017).

In Chitradurga district, Karnataka, Tiwari et al. (2011) investigated the state of environmental services before and after measures carried out under the MGNREGA and vulnerability indices were created and compared. It was discovered that the activities decreased the sensitivity of agricultural output, water resources and livelihoods to erratic precipitation, water shortages and deficient soil fertility. Pankaj and Tankha (2010) investigated the

impact of the MGNREGA on rural women in Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. Their findings indicated that women workers experienced empowerment through increased job opportunities and benefits, leading to improved income-consumption patterns, intra-household dynamics and expanded choices and capabilities. According to a study done by Prasad in 2012, the implementation of the act has empowered rural individuals by providing them with adequate purchasing power, enabling them to meet their basic needs, particularly in terms of food. As a result, the act has restricted the movement of rural impoverished individuals to urban areas, effectively reducing migration to cities. Moreover, it has not only facilitated rural livelihoods but also encouraged participation in non-agricultural occupations, effectively addressing the issue of disguised unemployment as well. A study was conducted by Swarup and Tiwar (2012) to examine the influence of MGNREGA on the living conditions of the impoverished rural population in six panchayats of Panchrukhi block in Kangra district, Himachal Pradesh. This study revealed that the programme has positively contributed to the overall development of the village community. However, it was also noted that there is a lack of awareness among the residents regarding the operational procedures and practices of MGNREGA, including the amount of funding received from the block level and its allocation for public works. The implementation of MGNREGA leads to an increase in wages and household consumption, benefiting families compared to the period before its existence. It also enhances the socio-economic position of women within traditionally male-dominated rural societies. Consequently, the act promotes an improved standard of living for the marginalised and particularly empowers women (Xavier & Mari, 2014). The study of Suman and Sharma (2015) on the Durgapur district of Rajasthan examined the socio-economic effects of MGNREGA on the lives of its beneficiaries and the results indicated a significant transformation brought about by the act. A study done by Rout (2019) in Behibagh, District Kulgam in Jammu & Kashmir revealed the significant impact of MGNREGA in the area. Prior to the implementation of this act, the block faced numerous hardships. However, the Act successfully addressed various needs such as constructing lanes, irrigation systems, crossings, flood protection bunds, village roads and water bodies. Additionally, MGNREGA generated ample employment opportunities for local households. This study is an

attempt to examine the role of MGNREGA in improving hill livelihoods in Himachal Pradesh.

Study Area

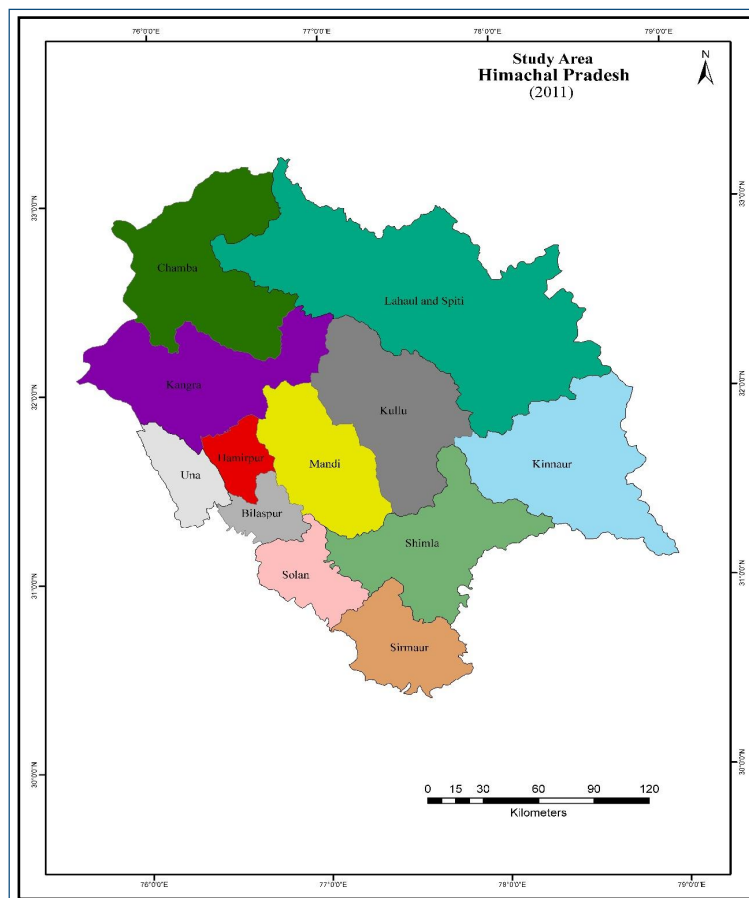
Himachal Pradesh, a state situated in the northern part of India, spans an expansive area of approximately 55,673 square kilometres. It is positioned between latitudes 30°22' to 33°12' north and longitudes 75°45' to 79°04' east (Map 1). The state's remarkable geography showcases magnificent mountains, lush valleys and winding rivers, creating a picturesque and awe-inspiring landscape. Himachal Pradesh boasts a diverse range of climatic conditions owing to the significant variations in altitude, transitioning from subtropical climates in the southern low-lying areas to alpine and tundra climates in the higher regions.

The population of Himachal Pradesh is a vibrant blend of various ethnic groups and communities, including Hindus, Buddhists and indigenous tribes. This cultural

amalgamation lends the state a rich and diverse socio-cultural fabric, characterised by vibrant traditions, vibrant festivals and exquisite handicrafts. The people of Himachal Pradesh take immense pride in preserving their cultural heritage while embracing modern influences.

In recent years, Himachal Pradesh has achieved notable progress in promoting female participation in the workforce. There has been a significant rise in the number of women pursuing careers in fields such as education, healthcare and government services. This growing trend of women entering diverse professions has not only contributed to the state's overall development but has also played a pivotal role in empowering women and promoting gender equality.

Overall, Himachal Pradesh encompasses the essence of natural beauty, cultural diversity and progressive societal values. Its breathtaking landscapes, thriving cultural heritage and the commendable strides made in women's empowerment make it a truly remarkable state in India.



Source: Census of India, 2011.

Map 1: Study Area

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the present study is to analyse the role of MGNREGA in providing livelihood opportunities in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

Data Sources and Research Methodology

Research methodology is a systematic process with a meaningful purpose to collect data or information about a specific objective and research methods are the techniques are various techniques and tools that are used to collect that required information. Therefore, for the fulfilment of the above objective of this article, data has been collected, processed, analysed and represented as given below:

Data Collection

Basically, the present study is based on secondary data sources. Secondary data is collected from published reports on the progress of MGNREGA by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. A temporal analysis has been done from 2014–15 to 2022–23 and the district has been taken as a unit of the study. District-wise data on the following indicators have been collected to achieve the objective:

- The Demand for Employment under MGNREGA.
- Generated Employment under MGNREGA.
- Type of Works Done under MGNREGA.
- Expenditure Spent for Various Livelihood Activities under MGNREGA .

Data Processing and Analysis

Collected data has been processed in M.S. Excel software and necessary corrections have been made for the final analysis of data. Further, with the use of an Excel sheet, the data has been analysed in a systematic manner along with descriptive analysis giving due importance to statistical data.

Data Representation

To represent the results of the study, data has been represented through appropriate tables, bar graphs and maps. Arc GIS 10.3 has been used to prepare maps.

Results and Discussions

- Status of Demand of Employment under MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh.
- Status of Generated Employment under MGNREGA in the State.
- Type of Works Done under MGNREGA in the State.
- Expenditure Spent for Various Livelihood Activities under MGNREGA in the State.

Status of Demand of Employment under MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh

The Table and Fig. 1 and Map 2 provide a comparison of the demand for work under the MGNREGA in different districts of Himachal Pradesh between 2014–15 and 2022–23.

Table 1: Demand of Employment under MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh (2014-15 and 2022-23)

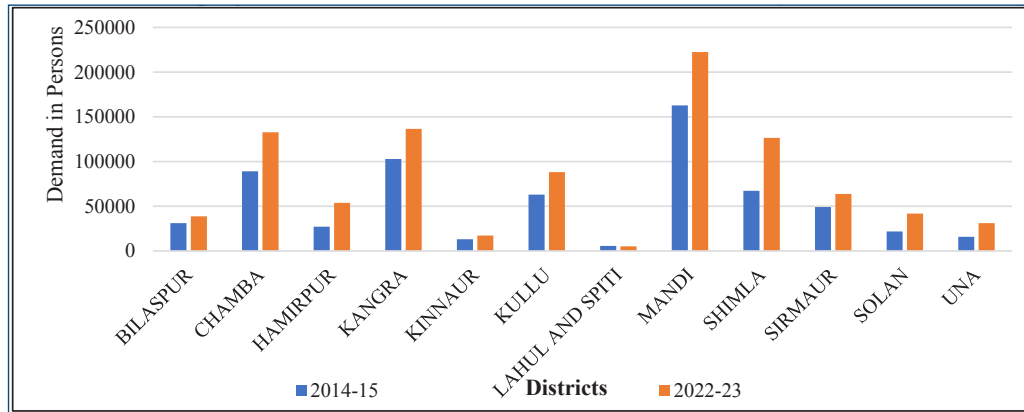
Sr. No.	Districts	Demand in 2014-15	Demand in 2022-23
1	Bilaspur	31194	38768
2	Chamba	89194	132695
3	Hamirpur	27180	53866
4	Kangra	102880	136507
5	Kinnaur	13077	17278
6	Kullu	63016	88207
7	Lahul and Spiti	5684	5245
8	Mandi	162742	222443
9	Shimla	67354	126582
10	Sirmaur	49132	63755
11	Solan	21851	41872
12	Una	15949	31079
*Demand in Persons			

Source: Compiled from Annual Administrative Report, 2014-15 and 2022-23 published by the Department of Rural Development, Himachal Pradesh Shimla.

In 2014–15, Lahul and Spiti districts had a demand for 5,684 persons to provide employment, which decreased to 5,245 persons in 2022-23. Similarly, the Kinnaur district witnessed an increase in demand from 13,077 persons to 17,278 persons during the same period. The district of Una experienced a significant surge in demand from 15,949 persons in 2014–15 to 31,079 persons in 2022–23. Solan district also had a notable rise in demand, with

figures increasing from 21,851 persons to 41,872 persons. Hamirpur district witnessed an increase in demand from 27,180 persons to 53,866 persons, reflecting considerable

growth over the years. Bilaspur district, on the other hand, had a slight increase in demand, going from 31,194 persons to 38,768 persons.

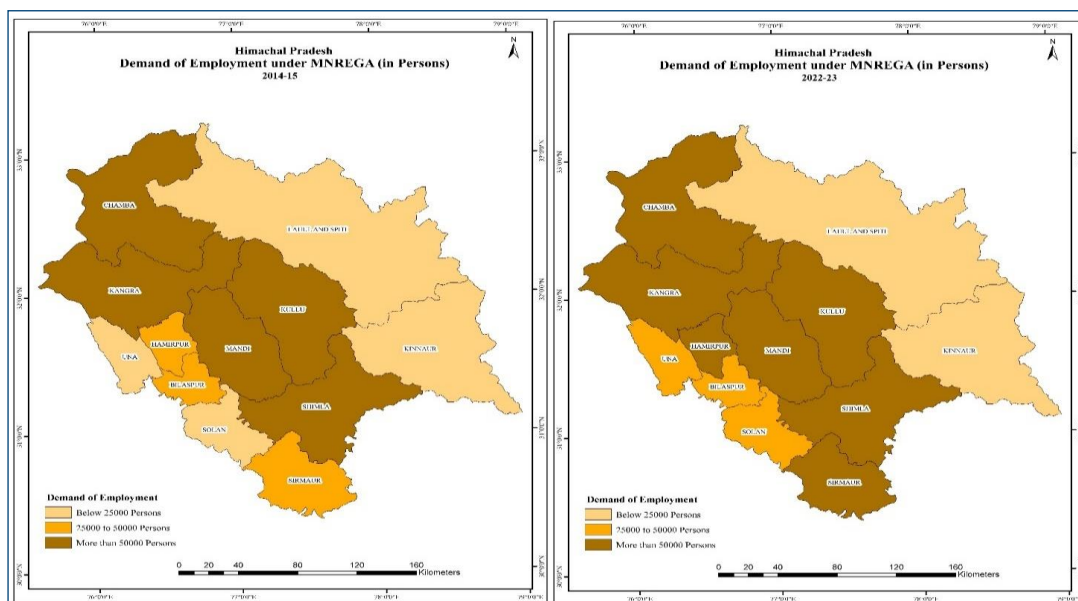


Source: Compiled from Annual Administrative Report, 2014-15 and 2022-23 published by the Department of Rural Development, Himachal Pradesh Shimla.

Fig. 1: Demand of Employment under MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh (2014-15 and 2022-23)

Sirmaur district experienced a substantial rise in demand, increasing from 49,132 persons to 63,755 persons. Kullu district saw a significant surge in demand, with figures rising from 63,016 persons to 88,207 persons. The demand for work in Shimla district rose significantly, going from 67,354 persons in 2014–15 to 126,582 persons in 2022–23. Chamba district also witnessed a

considerable increase, with figures rising from 89,194 persons to 132,695 persons. Kangra district experienced a moderate increase in demand, going from 102,880 persons to 136,507 persons. Lastly, Mandi district had a substantial rise in demand, increasing from 162,742 persons to 222,443 persons.



Source: Compiled from Annual Administrative Report, 2014-15 and 2022-23 published by the Department of Rural Development, Himachal Pradesh Shimla and Arc GIS.

Map 2: Demand of Employment under MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh (2014-15 and 2022-23)

In summary, the data illustrates a varied picture of the demand for work under MGNREGA in different districts of Himachal Pradesh. While some districts experienced a decline or moderate growth, several districts, including Una, Solan, Sirmaur, Kullu, Shimla, Chamba, Kangra, and Mandi, witnessed significant increases in demand over the years. This information sheds light on the evolving employment needs and trends in different regions of Himachal Pradesh.

Status of Provided Employment under MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh

The present study offers a comparative analysis of the employment generated under the MGNREGA in different districts of Himachal Pradesh over two different time periods, specifically in 2014-15 and 2022-23.

Looking at Fig. and Table 2 and Map 3, it is evident that there has been a significant increase in employment opportunities created through MGNREGA in most of the districts between the two periods. In 2014-15, Bilaspur district provided employment to 31,194 individuals, which rose to 38,768 in 2022-23. Similarly, the Chamba district witnessed substantial growth in employment, with

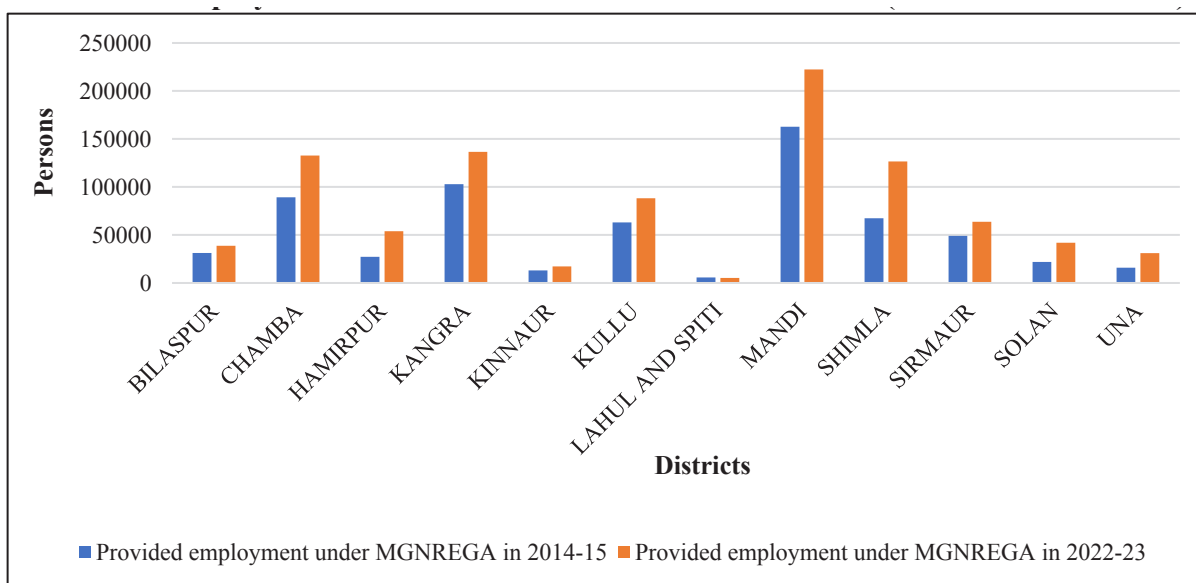
figures jumping from 89,194 in 2014-15 to 132,695 in 2022-23.

Table 2: Provided Employment under MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh (2014-15 and 2022-23)

Sr. No.	Districts	Provided Employment in 2014-15	Provided Employment in 2022-23
1	Bilaspur	31194	38768
2	Chamba	89194	132695
3	Hamirpur	27180	53866
4	Kangra	102880	136507
5	Kinnaur	13077	17278
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12	Una	15949	31079

*Provided Employment in Persons

Source: Compiled from Annual Administrative Report, 2014-15 and 2022-23 published by the Department of Rural Development, Himachal Pradesh Shimla.



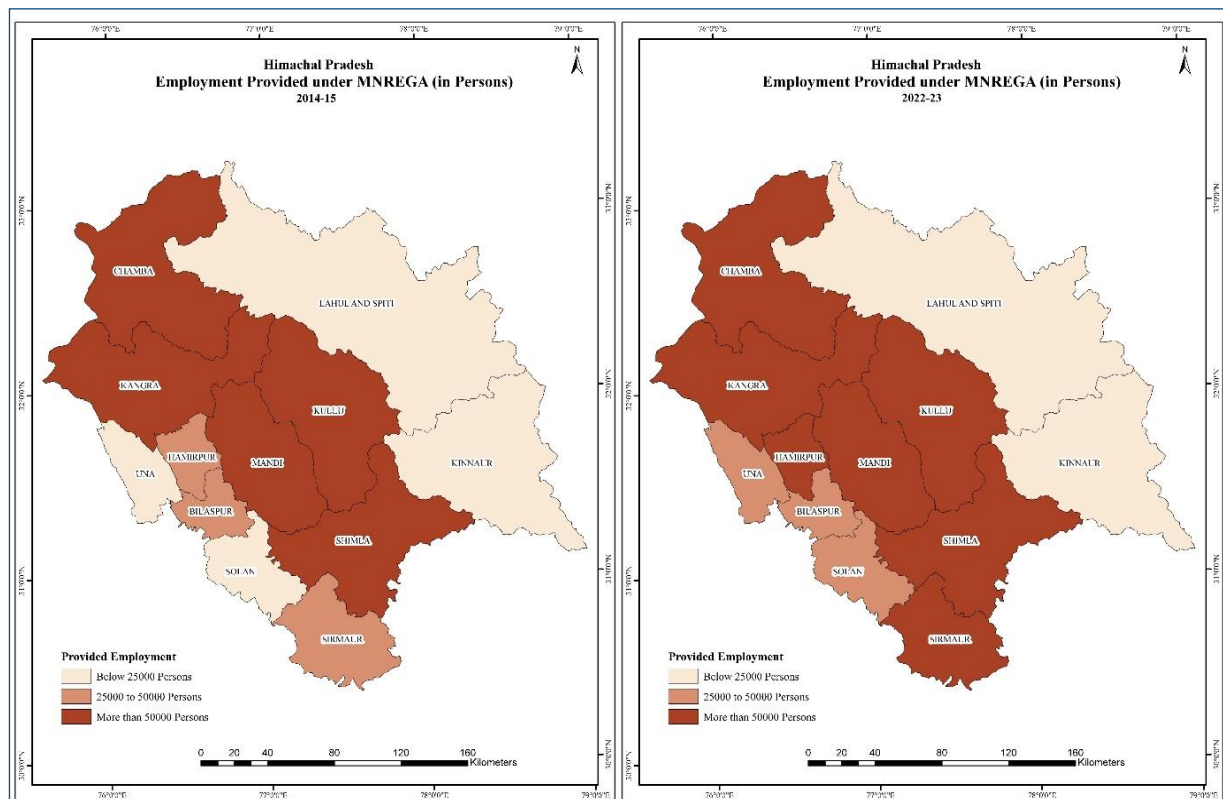
Source: Compiled from Annual Administrative Report, 2014-15 and 2022-23 published by the Department of Rural Development, Himachal Pradesh Shimla.

Fig. 2: Provided Employment under MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh (2014-15 and 2022-23)

Hamirpur district also experienced a notable rise in employment opportunities, with the number of individuals employed under MGNREGA increasing from 27,180 in 2014–15 to 53,866 in 2022–23. Kangra district, one of the more populous regions, provided employment to 1,02,880 individuals in 2014–15, which further increased to 1,36,507 in 2022–23.

Moving on to smaller districts in terms of population, Kinnaur witnessed a rise from 13,077 employment opportunities to 17,278 between the two time periods. Kullu district experienced a significant boost in employment, going from 63,016 in 2014–15 to 88,207

in 2022–23. Lahul and Spiti, on the other hand, had a slight decrease, with employment numbers dropping from 5,684 to 5,245. Mandi district saw a substantial increase in employment generated under MGNREGA, with figures surging from 1,62,742 in 2014–15 to 2,22,443 in 2022–23. Similarly, Shimla district experienced a remarkable growth in employment opportunities, with numbers rising from 67,354 to 126,582. Sirmaur district also witnessed a noticeable increase, going from 49,132 to 63,755 employment opportunities. Solan district had a considerable rise in employment, increasing from 21,851 to 41,872 individuals. Lastly, the Una district provided employment to 15,949 individuals in 2014–15, which rose to 31,079 in 2022–23.



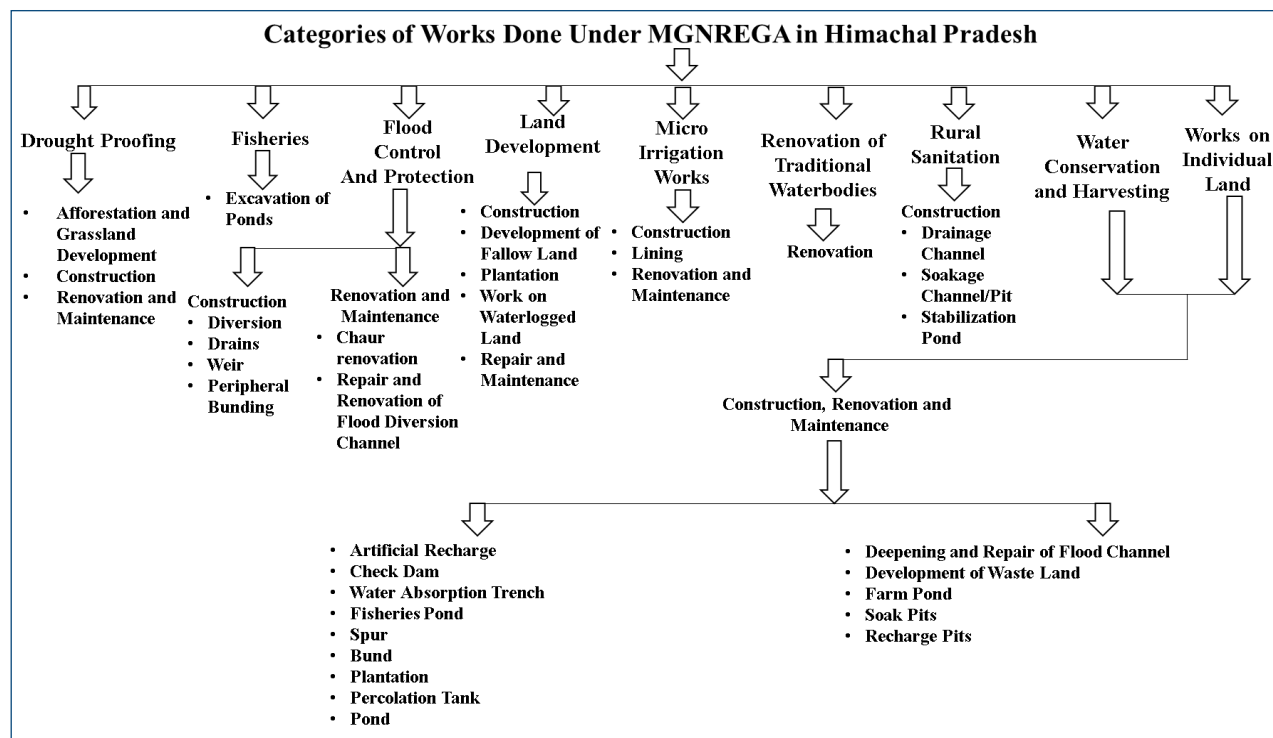
Source: Compiled from Annual Administrative Report, 2014-15 and 2022-23 published by the Department of Rural Development, Himachal Pradesh Shimla and Arc GIS.

Map 3: Provided Employment under MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh (2014–15 and 2022–23)

Overall, the comparative analysis of the data shows a positive trend in the generation of employment opportunities under MGNREGA across the mentioned districts between 2014–15 and 2022–23. This indicates the government's efforts to boost rural employment and improve the livelihoods of individuals in these areas.

Type of Works Done under MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh

Under the MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh, several activities are undertaken to address various aspects of rural development. Each of these activities is discussed in detail in the following paragraphs:



Source: Created by Author.

Fig. 3

Drought Proofing

This activity involves measures to mitigate the impact of droughts and ensure water availability in dry periods. It includes the construction of water harvesting structures like check dams, percolation tanks and farm ponds. These structures help in conserving rainwater, recharging groundwater, and providing irrigation facilities during droughts.

Fisheries

Under MGNREGA, fisheries-related activities are undertaken to promote pisciculture and enhance the income of rural communities. This involves the construction of fish ponds, hatcheries and related infrastructure. The objective is to develop sustainable fisheries resources, boost fish production and create employment opportunities.

Flood Control and Protection: This activity focuses on managing and mitigating the impact of floods in flood-prone areas. It includes the construction and strengthening of embankments, bunds and retaining walls. These

structures help prevent erosion, protect agricultural lands and settlements and reduce the damage caused by floods.

Land Development

MGNREGA supports land development activities to improve the productivity and fertility of agricultural land. It involves measures like land levelling, terracing, bunding, and contouring. These activities help in reducing soil erosion, enhancing water retention and improving agricultural practices.

Micro Irrigation Works

Micro-irrigation works aim to improve water-use efficiency in agriculture. This includes the installation of drip irrigation systems, sprinklers and other water-saving technologies. Such measures reduce water wastage, increase crop productivity and conserve water resources.

Renovation of Traditional Water Bodies

This activity focuses on restoring and rejuvenating traditional water bodies like ponds, tanks, and wells. It

involves desilting, repair and renovation of these structures to enhance their water storage capacity and improve groundwater recharge. It helps in ensuring a sustainable water supply for agricultural and domestic purposes.

Rural Sanitation

MGNREGA supports activities related to rural sanitation and hygiene. This includes the construction of household toilets, community sanitary complexes, and solid waste management facilities. Such initiatives promote cleanliness, prevent the spread of diseases, and improve the overall quality of life in rural areas.

Water Conservation and Harvesting

This activity aims to conserve water resources by promoting various water conservation techniques. It includes the construction of water harvesting structures like percolation tanks, check dams and recharge pits. These measures help in replenishing groundwater, increase water availability, and reduce water scarcity.

Works on Individual Land

MGNREGA also supports activities that benefit individual landowners. This may include land development, construction of farm structures like cowsheds and boundary walls, and other measures to enhance agricultural productivity or livelihood opportunities on individual lands.

In Himachal Pradesh, these activities under MGNREGA play a crucial role in promoting rural development, sustainable agriculture, water resource management, and improving the livelihoods of rural communities. They contribute to the overall socio-economic growth of the state and address the specific challenges faced by the rural population.

Expenditure Spent for Various Livelihood Activities under MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh

The study shows a comparative analysis of the expenditure (in lakh rupees) spent under the MGNREGA in various

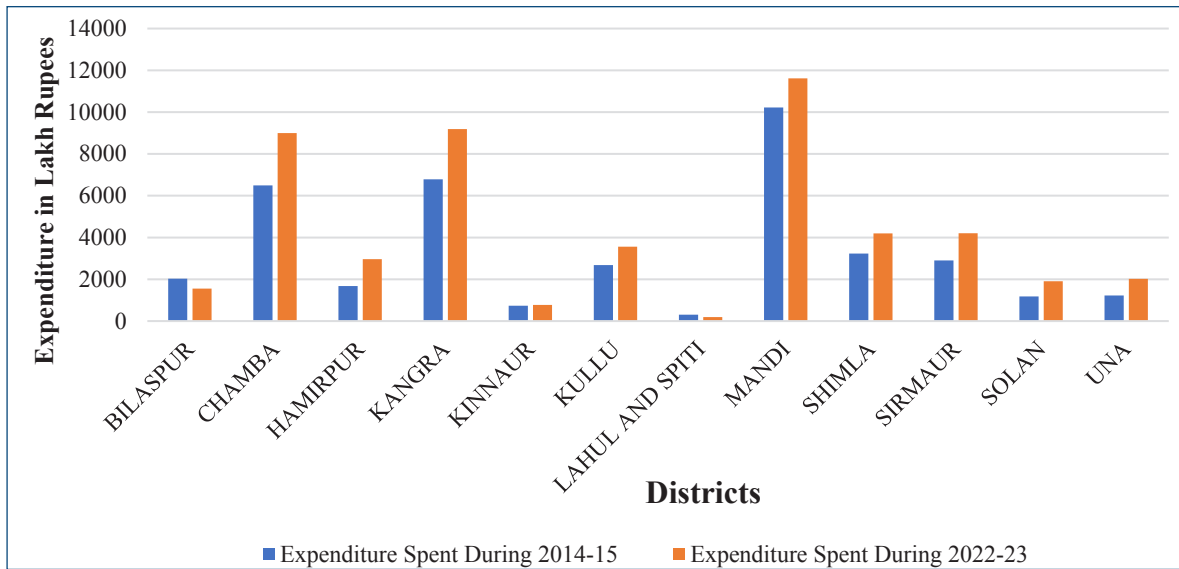
districts of Himachal Pradesh for the years 2014–15 and 2022–23 (Table 3, Fig. and Map 4).

Table 3: Total Expenditure Spent for Various Livelihood Activities under MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh (2014-15 and 2022-23)

Sr. No.	Districts	Expenditure Spent During 2014-15	Expenditure Spent During 2022-23
1	Bilaspur	2032.42	1553.21
2	Chamba	6495.33	8994.44
3	Hamirpur	1674.8	2961.88
4	Kangra	6782.04	9191.03
5	Kinnaur	737.65	776.03
6	Kullu	2682.31	3556.68
7	Lahul And Spiti	307.17	190.8
8	Mandi	10218.56	11613.74
9	Shimla	3234.22	4195.75
10	Sirmaur	2903.89	4201.02
11	Solan	1177.09	1903.96
12	Una	1225.86	2023.7
*Expenditure in Lakh Rupees			

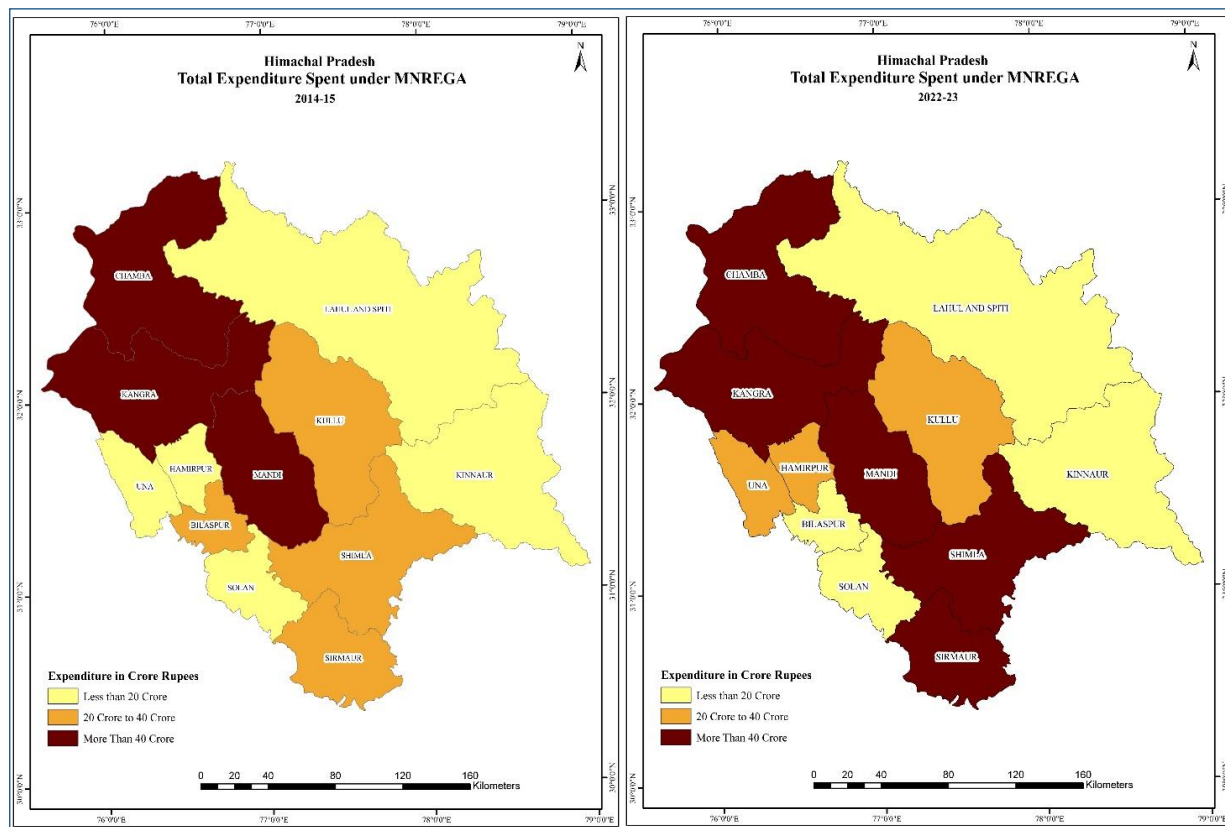
Source: Compiled from Annual Administrative Report, 2014-15 and 2022-23 published by the Department of Rural Development, Himachal Pradesh Shimla.

In 2014–15, the highest expenditure was recorded in the district of Mandi with 10,218.56 lakh rupees, followed by Chamba with 6,495.33 lakh rupees. However, in 2022–23, Mandi still maintained its lead with an increased expenditure of 11,613.74 lakh rupees, while Chamba witnessed a significant surge in expenditure to 8,994.44 lakh rupees, surpassing all other districts. It indicates a noticeable upward trend in the allocation of funds for MGNREGA activities in these districts over the years. Looking at other districts, Kangra and Shimla also experienced substantial growth in MGNREGA expenditure. In 2014–15, Kangra spent 6,782.04 lakh rupees, which rose to 9,191.03 lakh rupees in 2022–23, signifying a considerable increase. Similarly, Shimla witnessed an upsurge from 3,234.22 lakh rupees to 4,195.75 lakh rupees during the same period.



Source: Compiled from Annual Administrative Report, 2014-15 and 2022-23 published by the Department of Rural Development, Himachal Pradesh Shimla.

Fig. 4: Total Expenditure Spent for Various Livelihood Activities under MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh (2014-15 and 2022-23)



Source: Compiled from Annual Administrative Report, 2014-15 and 2022-23 published by the Department of Rural Development, Himachal Pradesh Shimla and Arc GIS.

Map 4: Total Expenditure Spent for Various Livelihood Activities under MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh (2014-15 and 2022-23)

On the other hand, some districts witnessed a decline in MGNREGA expenditure between 2014–15 and 2022–23. Bilaspur, Hamirpur, Kinnaur, Lahul and Spiti and Solan, all experienced a decrease in spending. Among these, Solan saw the most significant drop, as expenditure decreased from 1,177.09 lakh rupees to 1,903.96 lakh rupees. This downward trend could be attributed to various factors such as changing priorities, project completion, or reallocation of resources.

Overall, the comparative analysis of MGNREGA expenditure in Himachal Pradesh's districts reveals a mix of growth and decline. While some districts experienced a substantial increase in spending, others witnessed a decrease. These variations could be attributed to local developmental needs, government policies and implementation strategies in different districts.

Conclusion

In 2014–15, the demand for employment under the MGNREGA varied across different districts in Himachal Pradesh. The highest demand was observed in Mandi with 162,742 persons seeking employment, followed by Kangra with 102,880 persons. Lahul and Spiti had the lowest demand with 5,684 persons. However, in 2022–23, there was an overall increase in demand for employment in all districts. Mandi remained the district with the highest demand, reaching 222,443 persons, while Kangra witnessed an increase to 136,507 persons. The district with the lowest demand continued to be Lahul and Spiti with 5,245 persons.

The MGNREGA scheme provided employment opportunities to the people in Himachal Pradesh during the mentioned years. In 2014–15, Bilaspur provided employment to 31,194 persons, while Chamba provided employment to 89,194 persons. In 2022–23, these numbers increased to 38,768 and 132,695 persons, respectively. Similar trends were observed in other districts, indicating an overall rise in employment generation under the MGNREGA scheme.

The expenditure spent on MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh also saw an increase from 2014–15 to 2022–23. In 2014–15, the highest expenditure was in Mandi with 10,218.56 lakh rupees, followed by Kangra with 6,782.04

lakh rupees. In 2022–23, the expenditure increased to 11,613.74 lakh rupees for Mandi and 9,191.03 lakh rupees for Kangra. These figures reflect the commitment of the government to provide financial resources for the successful implementation of the MGNREGA programme.

Overall, the data indicates a growing demand for employment under MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh, along with an increase in the number of people provided with employment opportunities. The government has also increased expenditure on the programme to support the employment generation efforts in the state. These findings highlight the significance of the MGNREGA scheme in addressing the employment needs of the people in Himachal Pradesh and promoting rural development.

Suggestions

The following suggestions can be made on the basis of the present study:

Allocation of Resources

The increase in demand for employment under MGNREGA in most districts indicates a growing need for rural employment opportunities. The government should consider allocating sufficient resources to meet this demand and ensure that the programme effectively targets areas with high unemployment rates.

Skill Development

To enhance the impact of MGNREGA, emphasis should be placed on skill development programmes to equip individuals with relevant skills and increase their employability. This would enable beneficiaries to secure sustainable employment beyond the MGNREGA programme and contribute to the overall development of the region.

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is crucial to establish a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track the implementation and outcomes of the MGNREGA programme. This would help identify any gaps or inefficiencies in the utilisation of resources and enable timely corrective actions to be taken.

Public Awareness and Participation

Enhancing public awareness about the benefits and provisions of MGNREGA is essential to ensure maximum participation from eligible individuals. The government should engage in targeted awareness campaigns to reach out to marginalised communities and encourage their active participation in the programme.

Financial Management

Given the increase in expenditure spent under MGNREGA, it is important to strengthen financial management practices to ensure transparency and prevent misappropriation of funds. Implementing robust auditing mechanisms and promoting accountability would instil public trust in the programme and its effective utilisation.

Strategic Planning

The government should conduct a comprehensive analysis of the demand and provide employment data to identify districts or regions with persistent gaps. This would enable the formulation of targeted plans and strategies to address the specific needs of these areas and ensure equitable development across the state.

By considering these suggestions, the MGNREGA programme in Himachal Pradesh can be strengthened to effectively address rural unemployment, promote skill development, and contribute to the overall socio-economic development of the state.

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