MGNREGS Implementation in Bihar

2019-2023

Progress and Achievements in Bihar: State Efforts Shaping Success Across the Spectrum

pci INDIA

This report analyses the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act Scheme (MGNREGS) in Bihar from four financial years: 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-2023. It uses data from MGNREGS MIS, available in public domain, and compares Bihar's performance to ten other top-performing states. A few recommendations are made towards the end of the report to further strengthen MGNREGA's implementation in Bihar.

The report has been prepared by the Technical Assistance team of PCI India with support from the Bihar Rural Development Society (BRDS). The team is grateful to Shri Rahul Kumar, IAS, the Commissioner MGNREGA and CEO of JEEVIKA, for his inspiration and guidance in the preparation of this report. The team acknowledges the insights provided by Shri Sanjay Kumar Singh, IAS (Retired), COO, BRDS.

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1.   Bihar

Bihar, with a population of 10.4 crore, is the third largest state after Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. It is the most densely populated state as well, with a population density of 1106 people per square km, which is nearly 4 times higher than the national average of 382 per square km.
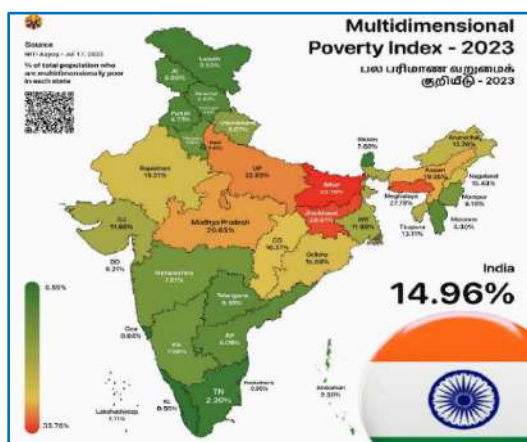
Description[1]	2011	2001
Approximate Population	**10.41 Crores**	8.30 Crore
Actual Population	104,099,452	82,998,509
Male	54,278,157	43,243,795
Female	49,821,295	39,754,714
Population Growth	25.42%	28.43%
Percentage of overall Population (All-India)[2]	8.60% Only 3% of Urban Population	8.07%

The state is predominantly rural with heavy agriculture dependence on the state economy. As per the 2011 census, the rate of urbanisation in the state was 11.3 percent, compared to the national average of 31.2 percent. Bihar is one of least urbanised states in India, only 10% of the population lives in cities. There is a large disparity in urbanization between different parts of the state. For example, Patna is 43% urbanized, while Banka is only 3.5% urbanized.

Maha Dalit and Dalits (Scheduled Caste) account for 16 percent of the population, while Adivasis (Scheduled Tribe) account for 1.3 percent. Bihar has the highest percentage of its population living in poverty among all states and Union Territories, according to NITI Ayog's Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). Bihar has the highest MPI, but it also has the fastest fall in MPI value, which has dropped from 51.89 percent in 2015-16 (NFHS-4) to 33.76 percent. The number of landless casual labourers is among the highest in Bihar.

The state government of Bihar launched the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act Scheme (MGNREGS) in 22 districts in February 2006 with central government funding. With this, the state also launched the Bihar Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (BREGS) in the remaining 16 districts with state

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[1] Source :
https://slbcbihar.com/geographicalmap.htm#:~:text=Total%20area%20of%20Bihar%20is,average%20382%20per%20sq%20km.
SECC Data Source: https://secc.gov.in/getAllCategoryDeprivationNationalLgdReport.htm

[2] Bihar has a population of 10.41 crore people, according to the 2011 census. It represents 8.60% of India's overall population of 121.08 crores. It has climbed from 8.30 crore in 2001. In this decade, total population growth was 25.45%.

government funding. On April 1, 2007, MGNREGS was extended to all districts of Bihar with central government funding. MGNREGS is the largest government-funded demand-driven employment scheme in the world.

The present report analyses how the MGNREGS is helping Bihar's poor through wage employment and asset generation. It also tracks the Rural Development department's efforts to strengthen scheme implementation and how the scheme is contributing to rural women's economic empowerment and supporting households during lean periods.

2.   MGNREGA: The Context of India's Rural Employment Guarantee Act

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005 is a legal entitlement for every rural household in the country to receive guaranteed work on demand. The objective of the act is the creation of durable assets and strengthening the livelihood resource base of the rural poor, keeping them from falling into extreme poverty. (Ministry of Rural Development, 2016).

The key provisions of the act include: **1**. 100 days of work per rural household in a financial year. **2.** If employment is not provided within 15 days of the demanding work, the applicant shall be entitled to a daily unemployment allowance. **3.** If wage payment is not made within 15 days of the completion of work, the worker is entitled to compensation for delay.

The approved MGNREGS Labour Budget for Bihar for the fiscal year 2022-2023 was 2500 lakh person-days. Of this, 2369.14 lakh person-days have been generated, which is 94.77 percent of the budgeted labour days.

The labour budget is contingent upon demand. In the first tranche, the Labour Budget for 2022-2023 was sanctioned by the Executive Committee of the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) at 1500 lakhs. This was subsequently revised to 17.50 lakhs and 2500.00 lakhs.

Brief Overview of MGNREGS

Mahatma Gandhi NREG Act, 2005 is to provide at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult member volunteers to do unskilled manual work.

9.61 crore households have active job cards, translating into 14.36 crore active workers. Bihar has 80.50 lakh households that have active job cards covering 89.78 lakh workers regularly seeking MGNREGS work.

MGNREGS promotes convergence to optimize investment in assets. It provides a good opportunity for NRM, Watershed Management, agriculture development, plantation, and other rural infrastructure creation.

Gram Sabha decides about the MGNREGS Shelf of Work, it also takes a call on decisions related to its integration into other programs at the Panchayat level.

Gram Sabha takes a call on the purpose of convergence, gap-filling budget requirement for value addition and forward linkage.

In comparison to the previous fiscal year (2021-2022), the Labour Budget for 2022-2023 was increased by 25%. Central funds released during the current fiscal was ₹ 605682.82 Lakh.

The budgetary allocation for FY 2023-2024 for Bihar has been reduced to 1700 Lakh despite past fiscal labour budget achievement at 2367.47 lakh.

State Commitment to develop an expert cadre of trainers and resource persons at all levels for effective implementation of MGNREGS.

3.   Supporting Rural Poor's Access to Work

During the fiscal year 2022-23, MGNREGA has performed well in majority of the key performance indicators especially in the inclusion of disadvantaged groups such as women and SC/ST households. It is worth noticing that 13.37 lakh households have attained demand based 71-99 days of work under the scheme till March 2023, however 50.24 lakh households have worked overall. The figure is 27 percent of all households worked under MGNREGA; this was 13 percent in the last fiscal year.

Over 13 lakh households have been employed for more than 71 days under MGNREGS FY 2022–23.

Figure 1 :No. of Days of Employment Provided to the Households for Financial Year 2022-2023

Bar chart values:
- 1-14 days: 815666
- 15-30 Days: 1143276
- 31-40 Days: 463038
- 41-50 Days: 489810
- 51-60 Days: 421116
- 61-70 Days: 313315
- 71-80 Days: 339633
- 81-90 days: 998297
- 100 Days: 35685

Legend: 1-14 days, 15-30 Days, 31-40 Days, 41-50 Days, 51-60 Days, 61-70 Days, 71-80 Days, 81-90 days, 100 Days
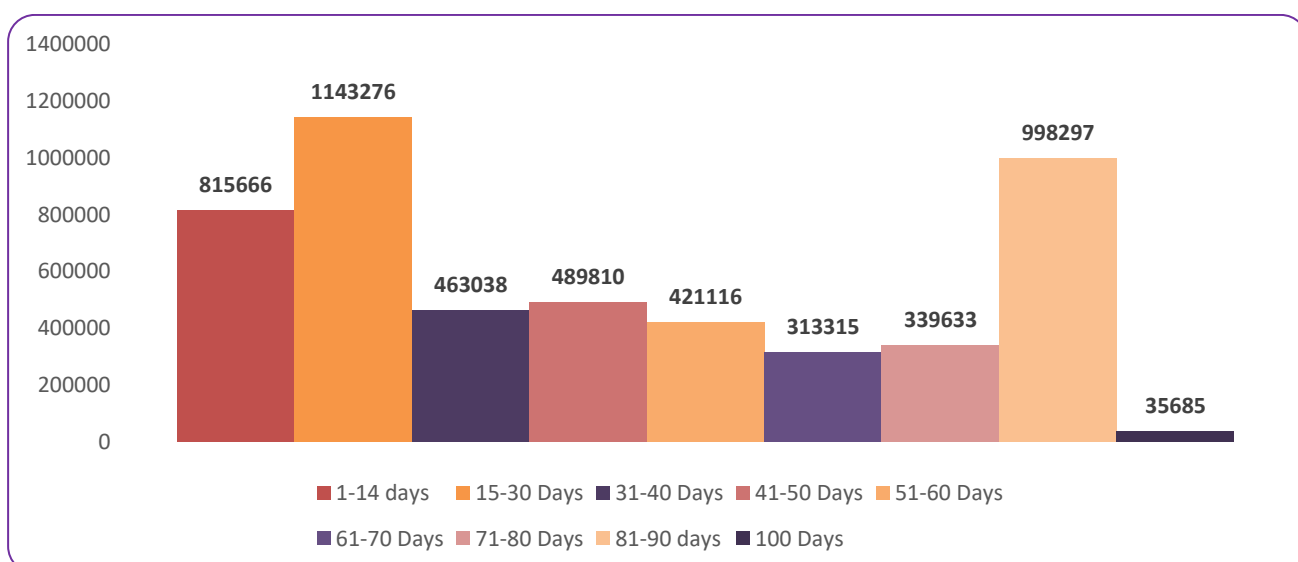
Figure 2 : Women Participation over five financial years

Women Participation over 5 FYs

Legend: All India | Bihar

Year	All India	Bihar
2018-19	54.59	51.76
2019-20	54.78	55.83
2020-21	53.19	54.64
2021-22	54.82	53.19
2022-2023	57.41	56.34
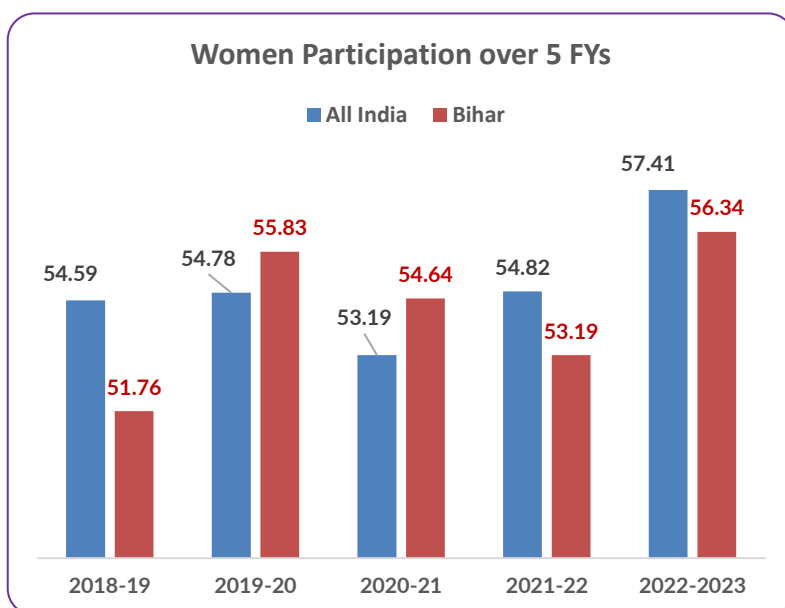
Strong commitment at the bureaucratic level led to focused efforts to facilitate women CBOs involvement in MGNREGS. These efforts raised awareness in the community about the schemes and increased engagement from rural poor, including women from self-help group (SHG) households and other disadvantaged groups.

As a result, there was improved participation from women, Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) households, along with increased person-days generated.

MGNREGS has been successful in providing wage employment to women in rural Bihar. Women's participation in the scheme is way higher in Bihar than the stipulated 33 percent as per the act, indicating that women perceive it more as a reliable means of employment than men, and because the scheme is able to provide women with demand-based employment near home.

Figure 3- Ten top-performing states in women person-days employed out of total as on March 31,2023 (in %). Average women person-days at national level was 57.4 percent in the last fiscal year.

Person-days generation in the state neared the all-India average for the financial year 2022-23. Bihar is placed only after Rajasthan (68.13 percent) among the low-income states (Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) in women person-days employment.

Kerala has the maximum women-person days out of total at 89.79 percent. The majority of states have seen a gradual rise in women's participation, though.
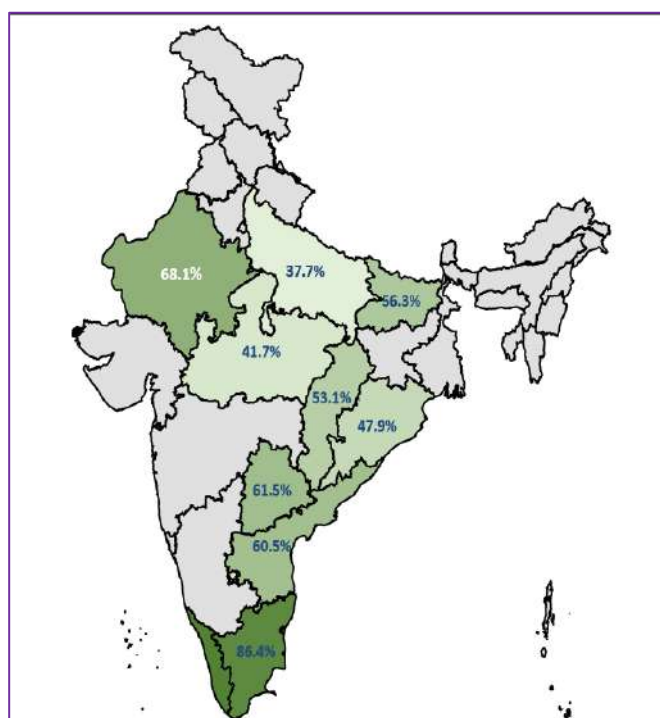

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Figure 3 makes it evident that states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh have relatively better women participation, above the national average of 57.4 percent.

Similarly, the **average number of days** of employment provided per household under the MGNREGS in Bihar was at its highest (**47.15 days**) to date in 2022-2023. It exceeded the all-India average and was only behind Madhya Pradesh (marginally) and Odisha among low-income states.

For all India, there was a decline in the average number of days, with a five-year low of 47.84 days, compared to 50 days in FY 2021-2022, 51.52 days in FY 2020-2021, 48 days in FY 2019-2020, and 51 days in FY 2018-2019.

At the national level, the average household employment barely exceeded 50 days; it peaked at 54 days in FY 2009–2010 and reached 51.52 days during the pandemic period (2020–2021). It was as low as 38 days in FY 2014–2015.

Household employment coverage under MGNREGS is not uniform across the state. For the last fiscal year, it was highest at 56.28 days for Rajasthan followed by Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. The higher average employment status at low-income states suggests that MGNREGS work continues to be relevant and indicates possible distress in the state rural market.

Figure 4 : 10 top performing states in extending Average days of employment per Household as of March 31,2023. For all–India, it was 47.8 days.
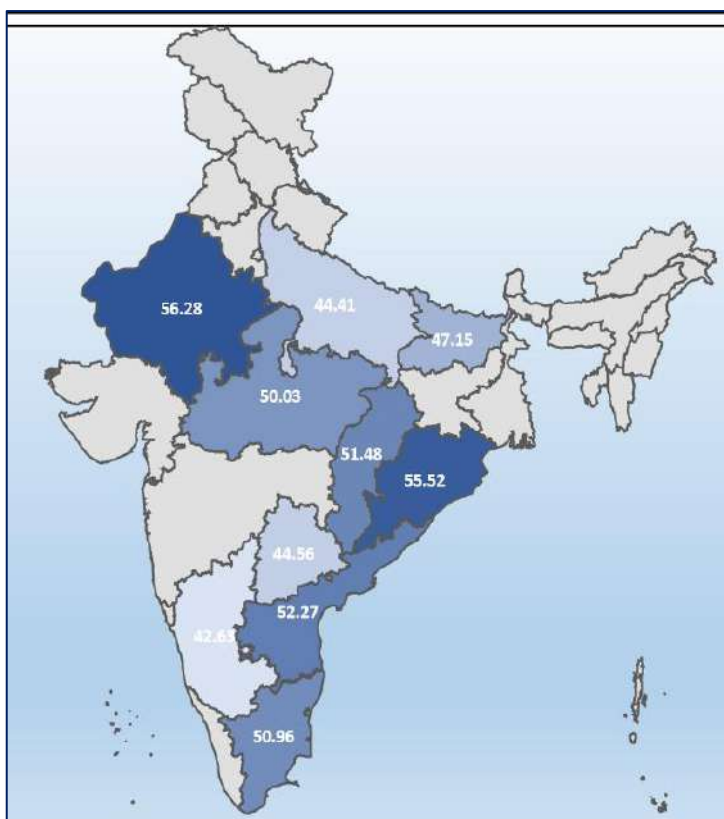
The higher average person-days in southern Indian states also show that MGNREGS investments are not focused on the nation's poorest regions, as relatively wealthier states are using scheme more effectively.

According to the 2011 census, 15.91 percent of Bihar's population belongs to Scheduled Castes (SC) and 1.28 percent belongs to Scheduled Tribes (ST). Most households belonging to SC communities are either landless or marginal landholders.

The Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) 2011 data shows that only around 17 percent of SC households have household ownership, and a little above 1 percent have agriculture as a prime earning source. About 15 percent of households' primary income source is manual agriculture labour.

Figure 5 : Share of ST Person–Days of Total in Bihar (%)
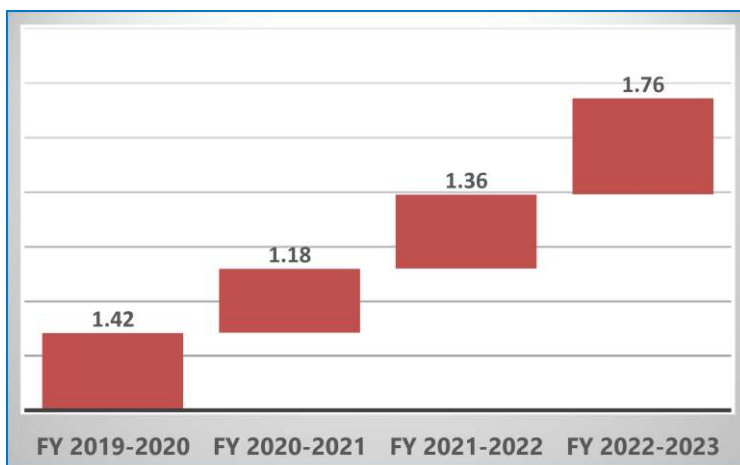
The share of **ST person-days** is showing an increasing trend in Bihar, even though the ST population in the state is less than 2 percent. SC and ST together account for about 20 percent of total MGNREGS employment in the state, which is higher than the share of Bihar population as per census 2011.

Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Odisha are top three states in generation of ST person-days.

According to the data, Bihar has demonstrated a 5-basis point increment in **SC person-days** generation out of total, which has made the state move up from the 9th place in 2021-22 fiscal to the 6th place in 2022-23 fiscal.

Figure **6** in the next page reflects a marginal fall in SC person-days in the top 4 states, while Bihar registered the maximum increment. This indicates the state's willingness and efforts to cater to the poorest and weakest sections of society.

Figure 6 : SC Person–Days in % of total in 2022–2023 and its previous FY.

Overall, SC Person–Days made up 19.20% of the total in 2022–2023.
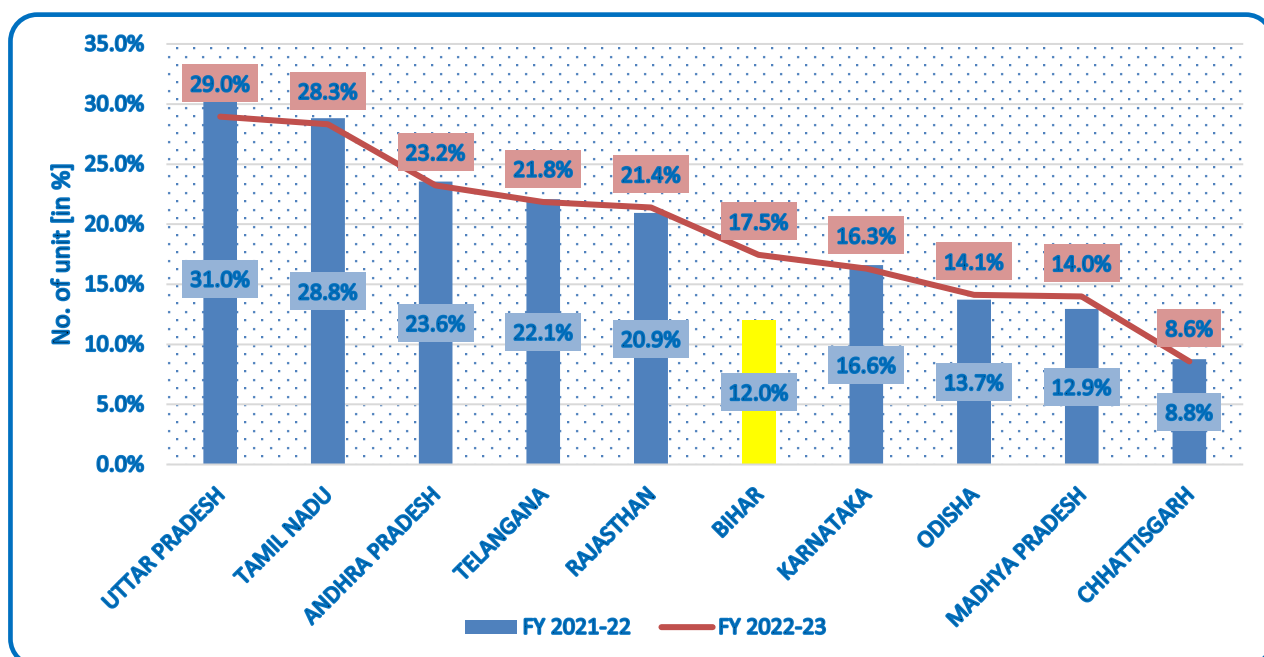
Bihar is among top 5 states in providing employment to rural households and in person-days generation.

Figure 7 : Person–Days Generated in 2022–2023– Top 10 States	All INDIA: 29393 Lakhs Person–Days generated in FY 2022–23.
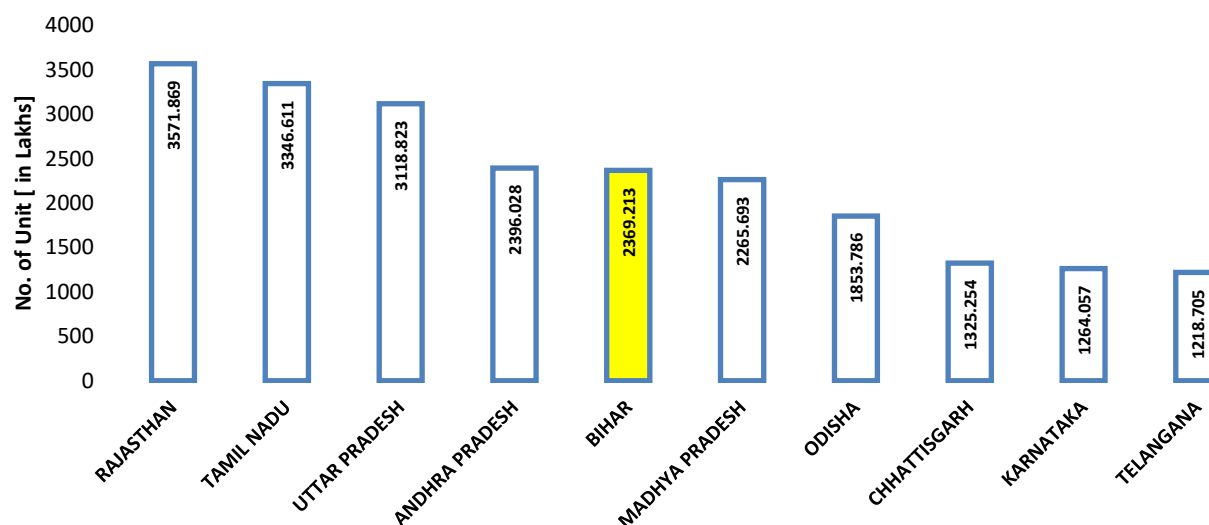
The past fiscal year had the highest-ever increase in the demand for rural unskilled labour in Bihar, outpacing the rise in the number of person-days generated during the pandemic.

Bihar contributed 8 percent of overall person-days generated. Rajasthan placed first with 35.71 crore person-days, followed by Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh. The state is in fifth place with 23.76 crore person-days.

Figure 8 : Top 10 state in providing MGNREGS to rural households.	Overall, 618.55 Lakhs Households worked under MGNREGA in FY 2022–23

MGNREGS Implementation in Bihar | 2019–2023
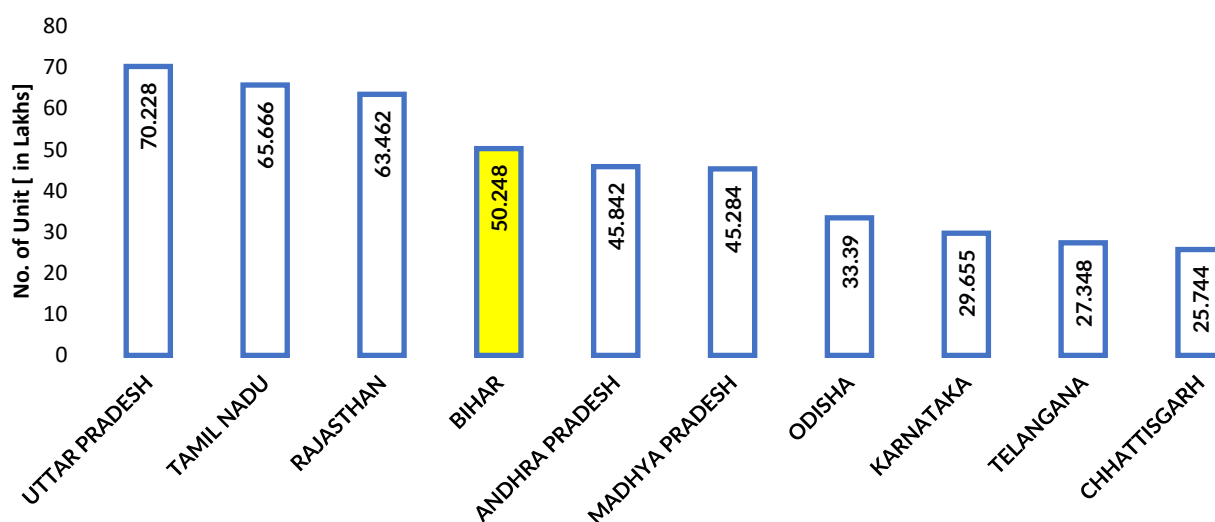
A total of 6.18 crore households availed employment and about 293.93 crore person-days has been generated as of March 2023 in MGNREGS. Over 14.41 crore active workers have been enrolled under the scheme.

In extending work to households under the scheme, Bihar attained the fourth highest position after Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan.

Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan have seen a reduction in the number of households that have worked in the past two fiscal years. **Bihar saw a marginal reduction from the pandemic period, but an increase of over two percentage points from the previous fiscal**.

This is similar to the overall figure for India, which also witnessed a marginal decline from 2020-2021. In the fiscal year 2021-2022, the number of households seeking work fell in most states after the pandemic, reflecting a declining reliance on MGNREGS jobs. However, in 2022-2023, there was an increase in demand at several states, which suggests that there may have been lower availability of rural jobs.

The MGNREGS has the potential to provide a safety net for rural incomes and create infrastructure in rural areas. It also offers opportunities for convergence at multiple levels. By strengthening the implementation of MGNREGS, the state government is caring for its citizens, especially belonging to the disadvantaged groups, through wage work under this workfare program and by creating livelihood assets and promoting linkages. In view of the higher rural job demand in the 2022-2023 fiscal, the state government has increased its attention on promoting sustainable livelihood assets, notably for the poorest of the poor households.

MGNREGA could improve the lives of poor rural families by fostering asset creation in addition to providing a safety net of 100 days of wage work. The Bihar state government is making efforts to increase the effectiveness of the programme by promoting labour group formation, engaging women worksite supervisors on rural works, strengthening Panchayat Rozgar Diwas, and raising public awareness of the programme.

Bihar State Performance Under Key Indicators

4.   Key Statistics as of March 2023

S. No	Metric	Bihar	India	Proportion of Bihar
1	Job Cards Issued Since Inception (in lakhs ₹)	170.47	1507	11%
2	Total Number of Active Job Cards (in lakhs ₹)	78.18	953	8%
3	Total Number of Active Workers (in lakhs ₹)	87.03	1427	6%
4	Approved Labour Budget (in lakhs ₹)	2500	28533	9%
5	Person-days Generated in FY - 23 (in Lakh ₹)	2369.47	29592	
6	Average Person-days per Household	47.15	47.84	
7	Average Wage Rate per Day per Person (in ₹)	209.91	217.91	
8	Percentage of SC Person-days of total	17.46	19.2	
9	Percentage of ST Person-days of total	1.76	17.99	
10	Percentage of Women Person-days out of Total	56.34	57.4	
11	Total Centre Released Amount for (in Crore ₹)	6,05,682.82	89,598.41	
12	No. of HH's completed 100 days	39,766	36,01,374	1.10%

As reflected in the table above, women's participation in MGNREGS in Bihar is well above the statutory requirement of 33 percent and is almost at par with the all-India average. The average number of days of employment provided per household is also on par with the all-India average.

However, the participation rate of SC and ST is lower than the all-India average, although on these criteria, Bihar has improved considerably and is aiming to reach a participation rate of 25 percent by FY 2025. To achieve this, the RD department is making efforts to prioritise the marginalised sections, such as facilitating the organisation of unskilled workers and others interested in MGNREGA work in labour groups that prioritise SHG women in need of work, promoting regular dialogues between MGNREGS work-site supervisors (MGNREGA Mates) and workers, and regularising and strengthening Rozgar Diwas to raise awareness about MGNREGS and disseminate timely information on approved projects.

5.   Work and Employment

5.1. Job Cards

Job-cards legally empowers the registered household to apply for MGNREGS work. Since the MGNREGS inception, nearly 1.66 crore MGNREGA job-cards have been issued in Bihar as of March 2023. The state issued 691,423 job cards in the fiscal year 2022–2023, which is 4.10 percent of the total number of job-cards issued in India.

Maximum job cards have been issued in the district of West Champaran (61,498), followed by Muzaffarpur (57,193), Saran (56,681), and Darbhanga (54,237). Jehanabad (6172), Sheikpura (6,108), and Arwal (6,065) are among the bottom-up districts in terms

of the issuance of new job cards. Sheikhpura and Arwal are among the smallest districts of Bihar.

As of March 2023, 50 percent of job cards in Bihar were active, meaning that the holders of these cards had worked at least once in the past fiscal. The districts with the highest percentage of active job cards were Arwal (72 percent), Munger (69 percent), and Katihar (69 percent).

The districts with the lowest percentage of active job cards were Gopalganj (38 percent) and Saran (42 percent).

A majority of MGNREGS workers are from weaker sections of society; above 20 percent of job card holder households in Bihar belongs to SCs (18 percent) and STs (2 percent) categories combined. Over 100 lakhs (1.01 crore) women are registered under the scheme of which 47.08 lakhs are active workers.

Figure 9 :Percentage of Active Worker to Total Worker as of March 2023 among top ten performing states.	*As of March 2023, out of 27.17 crore MGNREGA workers, 14.24 Crore (52%) are active.*
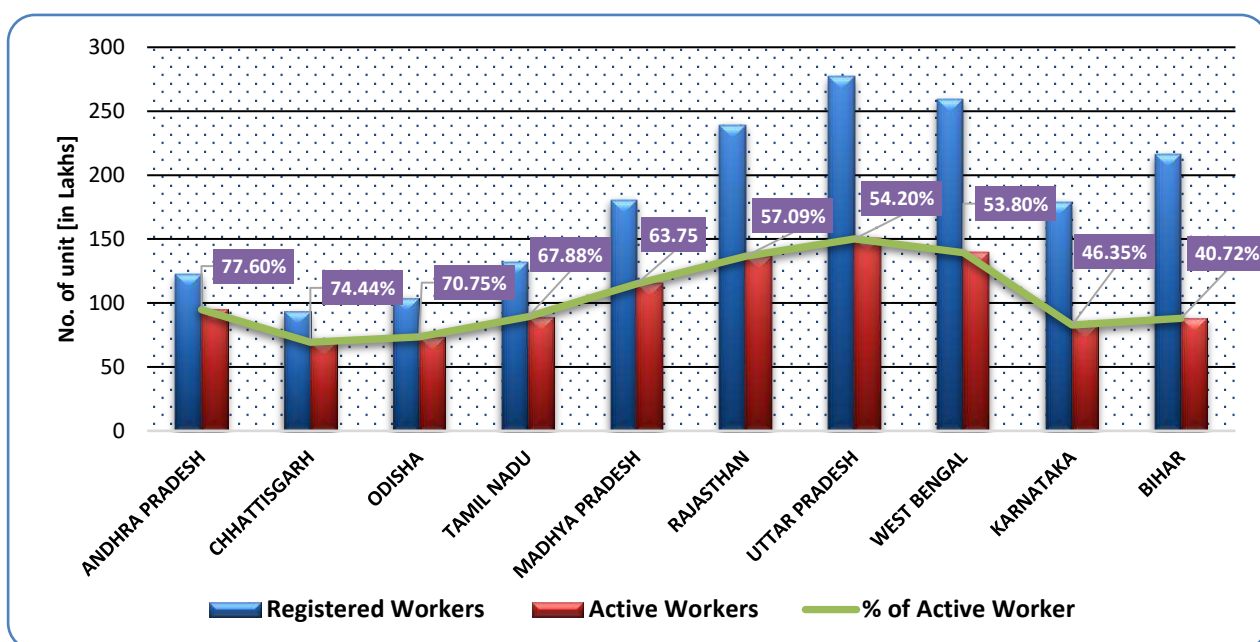
Status of Bihar				
No. of Job Cards Issued	1,66,29,140	→	Total Registered Workers	2,16,17,498
Active Job Cards	83,96,912		Aadhaar Seeded Job-Cards	1,43,51,078
No. of Job Cards Verified	65,27,505		Individual Members Verified with Aadhaar No.	1,13,24,523
No. of Active Job Cards Verified	41,33,184		Without Aadhaar No.	1,02,92,975
% of Job Cards Verified	39.27		Aadhaar No.%	66%
% of Active Job cards Verified	49.47			

5.2. Deletion of Job cards

Bihar witnessed the highest ever deletion of job-cards and workers in the last two fiscal years. However, despite that Bihar registered a good employment performance under MGNREGS. While job card deletion is an ongoing process within MGNREGS architecture due to migration of family, urbanisation of panchayat, workers opting out of work, omitting fake/ duplicate job cards issued and ghost workers, the introduction of Aadhaar Payment Bridge System (ABPS) condition was also a reason for several job-cards getting deleted.

> *Figure 10 : : MGNREGS Job–Card Addition and Deletion Over Fiscal Years in Bihar*

Note: for 2023-2024, the data is till May 2023.

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Job Card Added	1156423	1346998	2392052	2668362	1083900	357967
Job Card Deleted	154816	77415	182597	1283056	4862370	93145
Net Change in Job Card	1001607	1269583	2209455	1385306	-3778470	264822
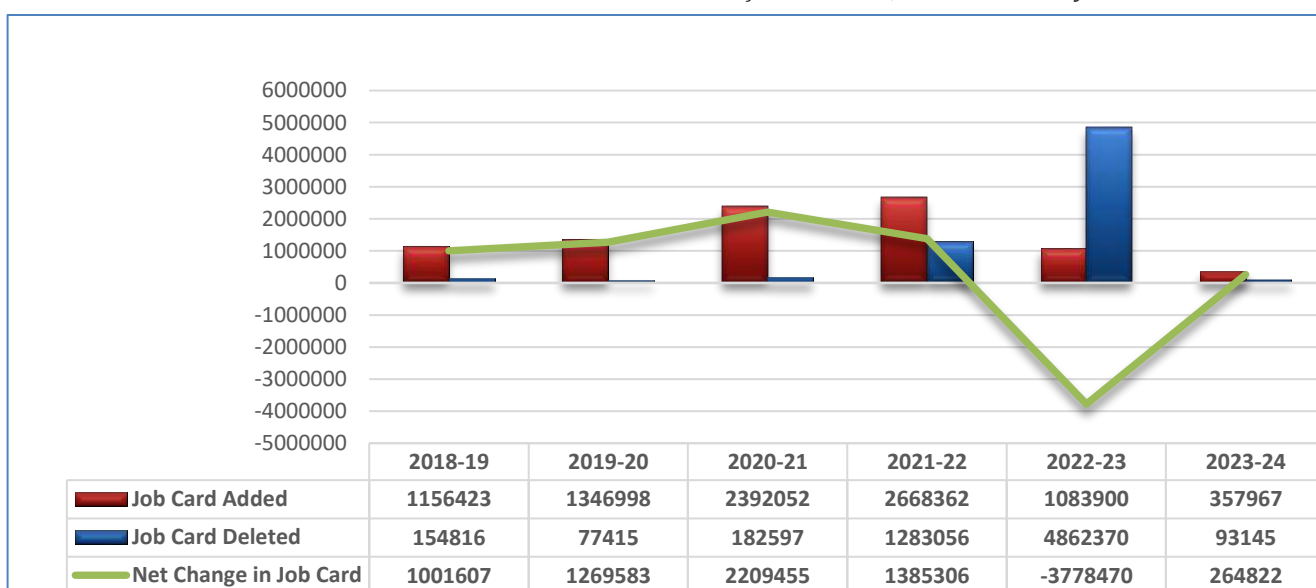
Bihar has experienced the highest number of job cards and worker deletions under the MGNREGS in the previous two fiscal years. In 2022-2023, 48.62 lakh job-cards and 75.74 lakh workers were removed, while 10.84 lakh job cards were added covering 15.47 lakh workers. Still, Bihar ~~nevertheless~~ had a strong employment performance.

5.3. Person-Days Generation

> *Figure 11: Person–Days Generation in Bihar*

MGNREGS has proven its relevance over the years in providing rural demand-based employment. During the pandemic affected years (FY 2019-20 & 2020-21), it has proven to be a fallback option for the vulnerable population, specifically the return migrants resulting in over 22.72 crore person-days generation.

In the following year, there was a 20 percent decline in person-day generation. Showing a rising trend, in FY 2022-2023, the person-days generated attained 31 percent growth over the previous fiscal year. A closer examination of the data reveals that the attained 2369.18 lakh person-days was 94.77 percent of projection.
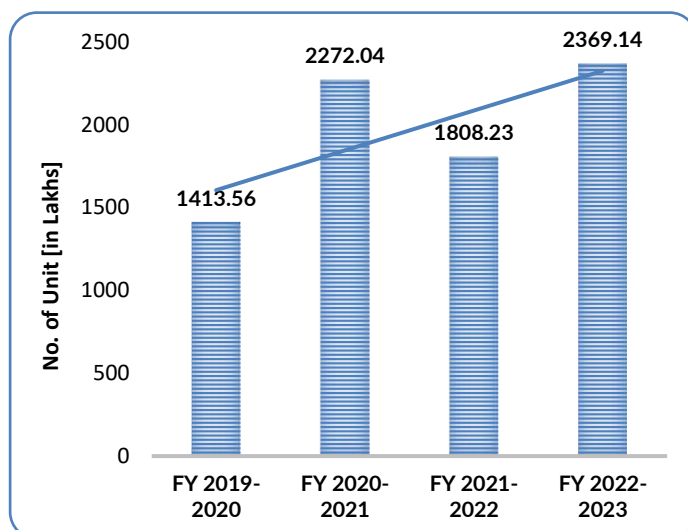
Cumulative Person-days Projection for 31.03.2023	Cumulative Person-days Generated as on 31.03.2023	Percentage (%) Achievement	Cumulative Person-Days generation last year - 31.03.2022
25,00,00,000	23,69,18,393	94.77%	18,08,23,428

5.4. District wise Person-Days Generation

The person-days generated in all districts of Bihar improved over the previous fiscal year. Notably, Gaya district saw a more than twofold increase in person-days generation within the 2022-2023 fiscal year, generating the highest employment in the state with 158.69 lakh person-days.

Figure 12 : District wise trends in employment generation
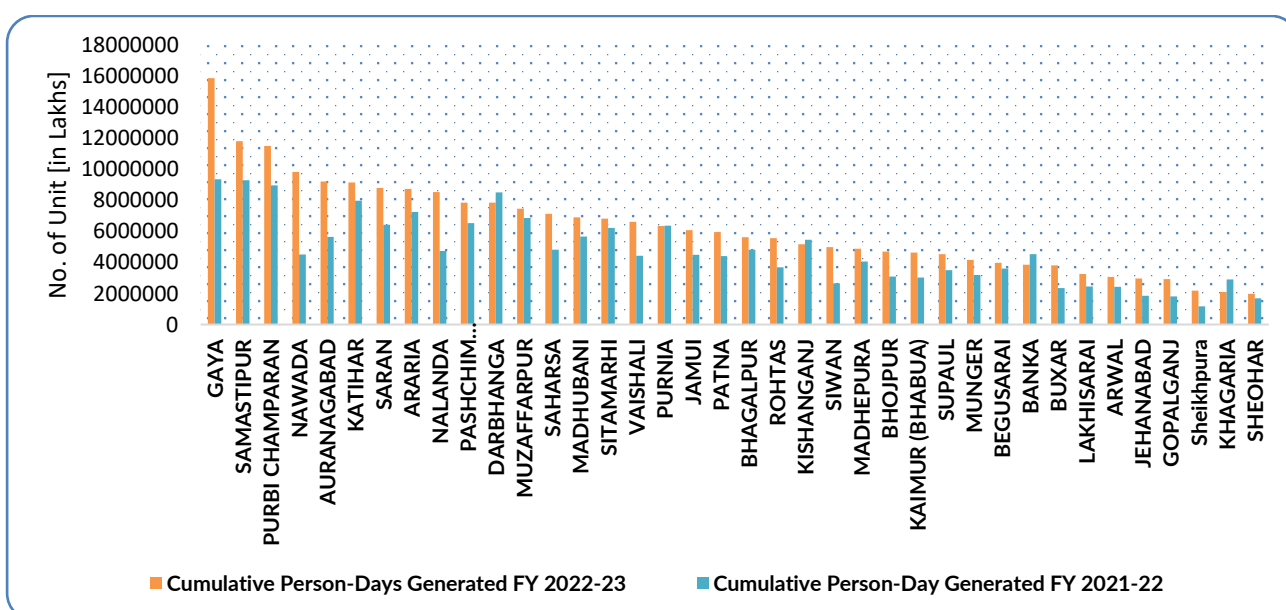
5.5. Employment Provided

The benefits under the MGNREGS continue to be high for Bihar. The number of households that have received employment under the scheme is showing a growth trend compared to pre-pandemic levels.

According to data, 50.25 lakh households received work under the scheme in the financial year 2022-2023, which is a 5% increase from the previous fiscal year.

The high demand for work from households and the generation of work for over 58 lakh (58.24 lakh as of March 31, 2023) individual workers reflect the continued dependence of rural households on the scheme as a fallback option. Both households and individuals saw an increasing trend in employment provided under the MGNREGS over pre-pandemic levels.

As shown in the graph below, the number of households and persons provided with MGNREGA employment saw a sharp jump in 2020-2021 over 2019-2020, and the number of person-days provided in the year was also the highest since the scheme's inception. This was followed by a dip in FY 2021-2022, before reaching an all-time high in FY 2022-2023.

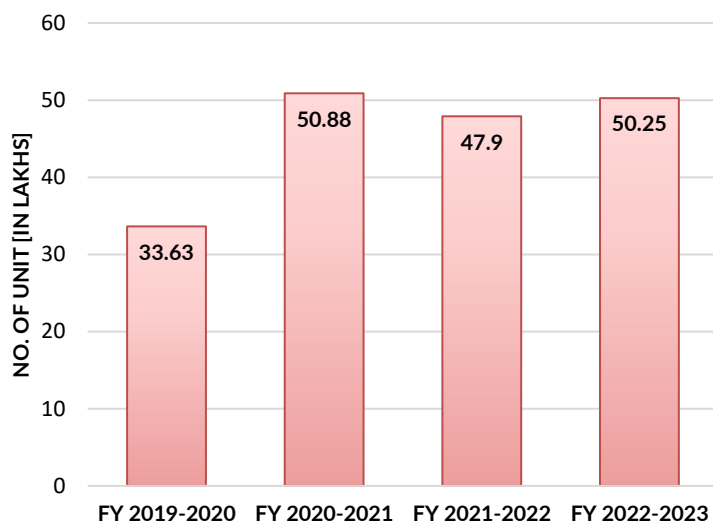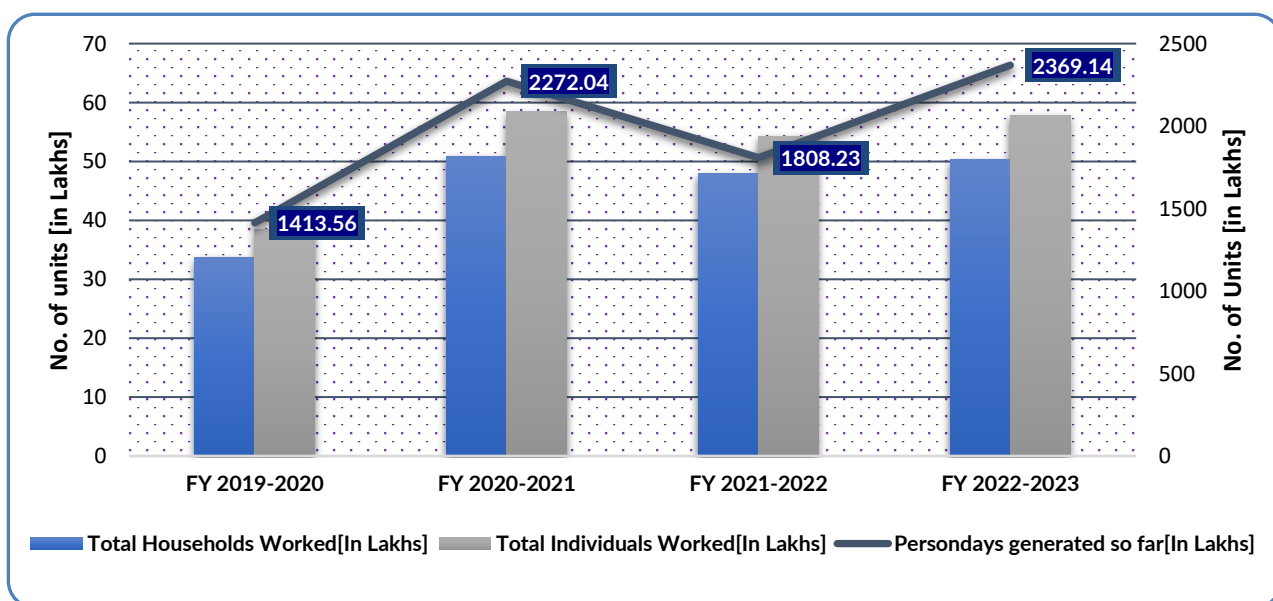*Figure 13:Households Availed Employment in Bihar*

Figure 14: MGNREGS Employment Provided in Bihar (Figure in Lakh)

As MGNREGS is a demand-driven scheme, matching fund allocation as estimated by the state would facilitate the state in covering more needy households demanding work under the scheme.

In the financial year 2022-2023, wage expenditure has been about 74.8 percent of the overall expenditure, indicating that close to 21.75 percent of the expenditure has been incurred on material and skilled wages, while 4.38 percent has been spent on administrative expenses.

The delays in the release of funds under the material and skilled wages component often affect the effective on-ground implementation of work under the scheme.

 In 2022-2023, government spent ₹6681.64 Crore for providing about 47 days of employment to about 50 Lakh rural households in the state of Bihar. Out of this wage expenditure was ₹ 4999.32 Crore.

5.6. Average Days of Employment per Household

The data on average days of employment provided per household during last 4 fiscal years shows that it was highest in 2020-2021, when it exceeded 44 days. This was followed by 2019-2020, when it just crossed 42 days.

However, in 2021-2022, it missed even touching 38 days. However, in FY 2022-2023 it reached an all-time high of 47.15 days.

It may be noted that exponential increase in person-days generated under the scheme also resulted into increase in average days of employment.

The data reflects that the number of days of employment per household is increasing with the demand of work.

Figure 15 : Average Days of Employment Provided Per Household
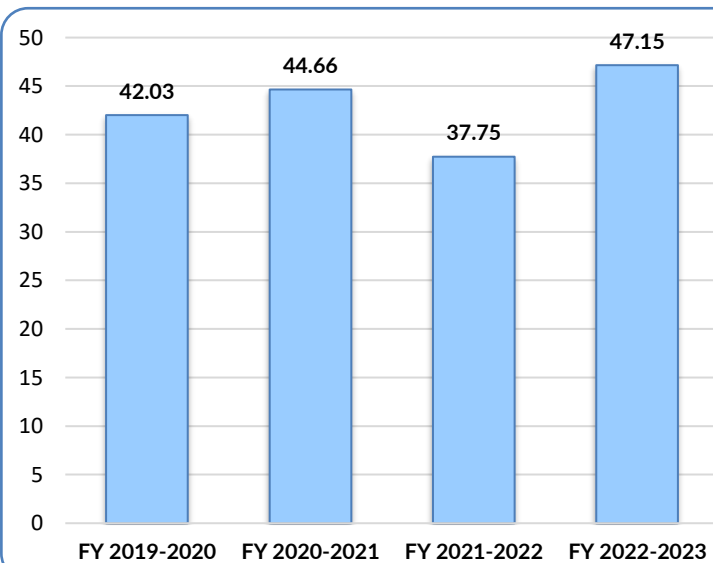
The Figure-15 below reflect that for majority of districts, the average days of employment provided per household exceeded the previous year figure.

Figure 16:Average Days of Employment Provided Per Household Across Districts in Bihar
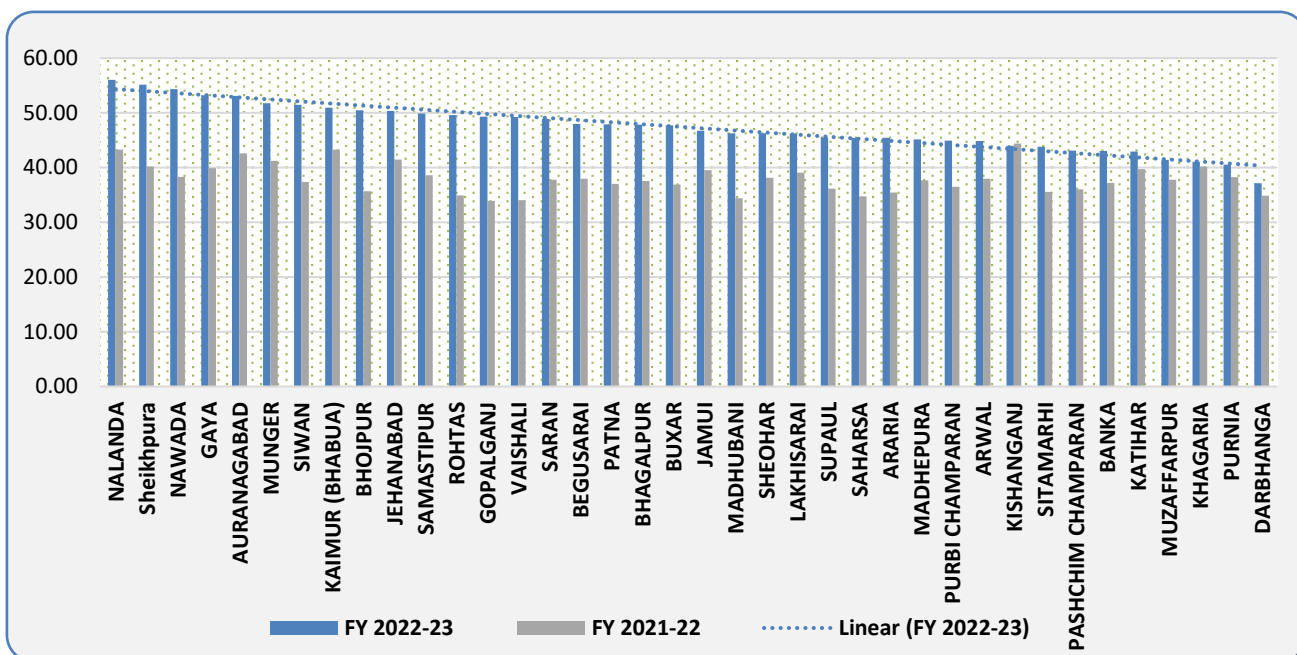
6.   How have Different Categories of Workers Fared?

At state level, there has been rise in MGNREGA participation compared to the last fiscal year both in terms of worker participation and person-days generation. There has been significant increase in participation of women and vulnerable communities (SC and STs).

Figure 17: MGNREGA Job-Card holder Households Break-up by Category - SC, ST and Others
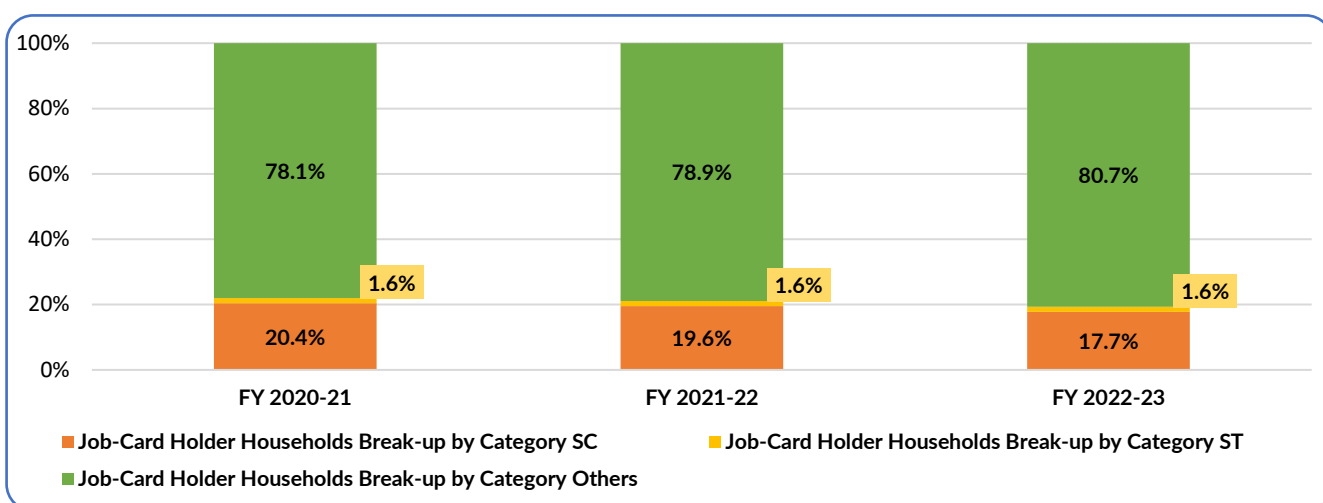
The table below and figure shows the caste break-up of MGNREGS job card beneficiary households. The data from FY 2020-2021 till March 2023 indicate steady growth in 'Others' (non-SC-ST households) category, while SC and ST households show marginal climbing up as well.

Financial Year	Households applied for Job card	Total Job cards issued	Total Job cards (SC)	Total Job cards (ST)	Total Job cards (non-SC/ST)
2022-2023	1,70,27,153	1,66,29,140	29,51,200	2,58,990	1,34,18,950
2021-2022	2,41,80,818	2,20,55,285	43,13,876	3,47,386	1,73,94,023
2020-2021	2,08,99,237	1,94,12,083	39,54,443	3,01,614	1,51,56,026

The Others category make-up about 81 percent of overall households issued with MGNREGA cards, SC households came down to 17.7 percent.

The SC household figure is expected to improve considering state focus of targeting interested Dalit, Maha-Dalit and Adivasi households in the current financial year.
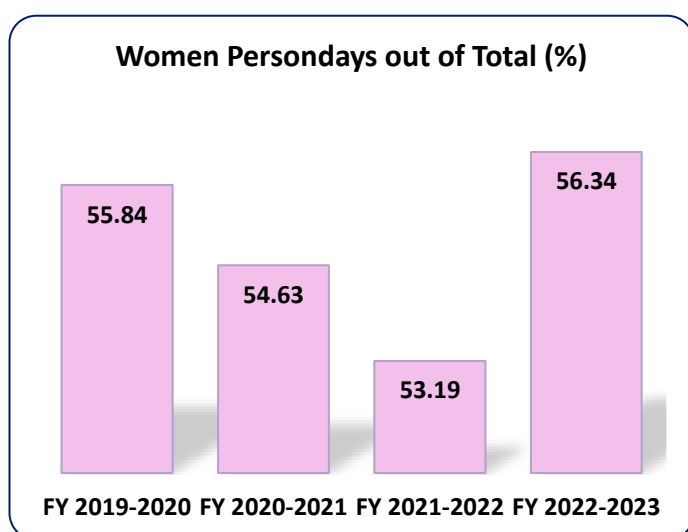
6.1. Women

MGNREGA offers a unique employment opportunity to women near home with equal wage. MGNREGA Employment is crucial for women who represent more than 53.51 percent of active workers, also more than 56.34 percent of total employment in Bihar making them an important contributor in the scheme implementation.

As of March 2023, over 47 lakh women are registered active workers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Bihar. However, only a few of them were fortunate to get work for the mandated 100 days in the state.

Figure 18: The Share of Women in Work

Women Persondays out of Total (%)

55.84 — FY 2019-2020
54.63 — FY 2020-2021
53.19 — FY 2021-2022
56.34 — FY 2022-2023

Women are about 47 percent of total registered workers but 54 percent of total active workers. Majority of women are registered as unskilled workers.

Workwise women employment data provided for the current financial year indicate that land development, rural connectivity and irrigation have been the key work categories of engaging maximum number of registered active women workers.

It is interesting to note that as of March 2023, the women person-days (56.34%) share out of total has been marginally less than national average (57.4%) and is significantly improved than previous year (53.19%).

The graph on women participation also reflects that since 2019-2020, there has been a decline in the share of person-days worked by women till 2022-2023.

The decline can be attributed to the possible outcome of return migration during COVID period (March 2020). During this period, probably more men in the household looked for employment and worked also.

The share of women in work at aspirational districts is also showing an encouraging

trend.

Figure 19: The Share of Women in Work at Aspirational Districts

■ Women Participation FY 2022-23   ■ Women Participation FY 2021-22
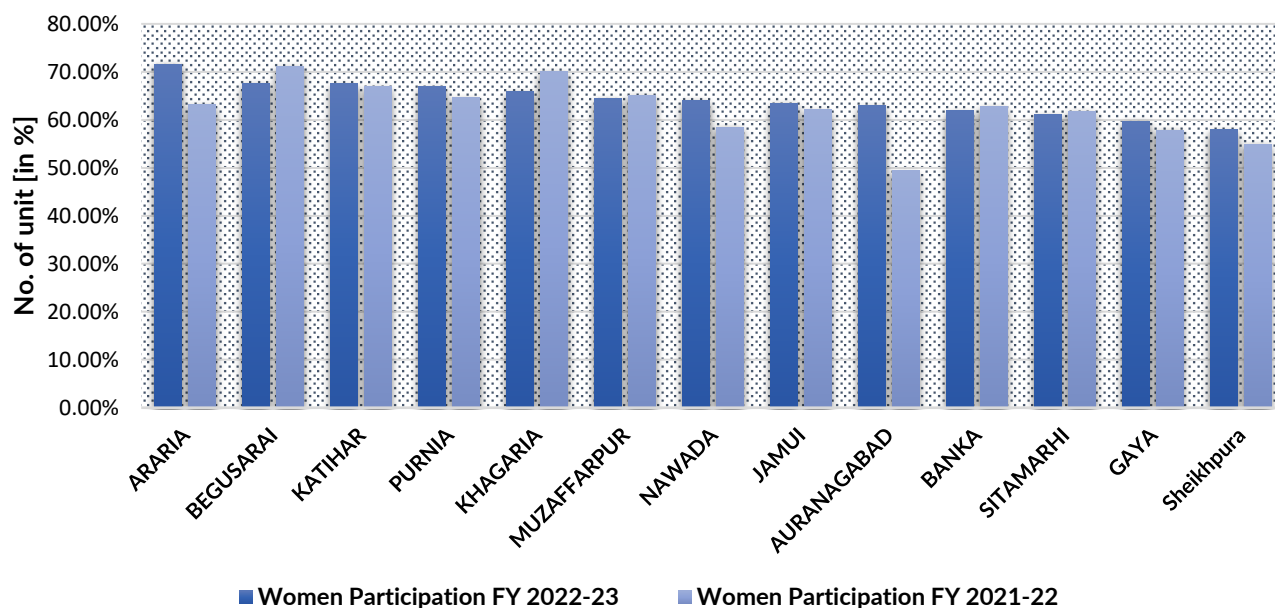
6.2. SC and ST Participation

The SC and ST person-days generation is on an onward trend over the previous three fiscal years. However, SC person-days generation at 17.46 percent is less than the national average of 19.2 percent and ST person-days at a paltry 1.76 percent (way less than the national average of 17.99 percent).

The ST population is only 1.28 percent in Bihar, whereas the SC population is 15.91% of the total population as per Census 2011.

Figure 20: SC Person-Days in % as of Total Person-Days

Based on this figure, we may say that the participation rate is aligned with their share in the total population. Worrisome is SC workers make up only 15.1 percent of the total active workers whereas it is 18.9 percent of total registered workers.

Considering SC and STs living in rural areas are poorest of the poor and deserve priority, the RD Department has prepared a list of panchayat wise target beneficiary from SJY programme for giving priority in asset creation and employment under MGNREGA.

Another strategy to prioritise SC and ST households could be to prepare a village or Panchayat wise list of target beneficiaries who are SC and ST and in need of employment and assets under MGNREGA.

Also, the state can ensure verification of job-cards issued to SC and ST households and availability of them with respective households/beneficiaries.

Figure 21:SC Person-Days in % as of Total Person-Days

7. Demand

From the data of last three financial years, marked variation is noticed in the provision of employment to those demanding MGNREGA work.

As on March 31st, 2022, over 58 lakh registered households have demanded job of which little above 48 lakhs worked.

About 18 percent did not take work despite allocation, a similar trend was observed during preceding financial years. However, in the current financial year, over 86 percent of households allotted with work have worked in the scheme.

In terms of person-wise data of Bihar, over 99.82 percent workers who demanded work have been allotted work, however, only 84.80 percent worked against demanded as of March 2023.

Figure 22: Demand, Allocation, and Employment Pattern in Bihar
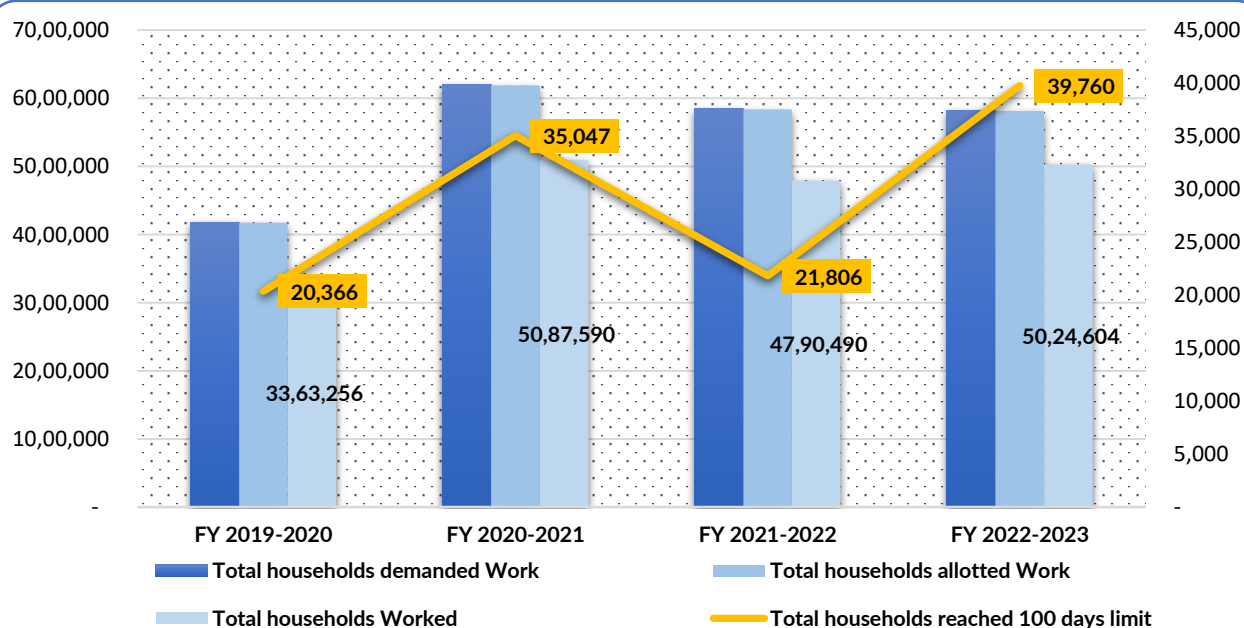
The data reflect that very small percentage of households have been provided with all 100 days of work and less than one percent of total households worked. However, the trend is same over years, the data of last five financial years reflect the same.

8.   100 Days of Employment

Close to 39,760 families have already completed their guaranteed 100 days of employment within FY 2022-23. This is higher than achieved at the last year 2021-22, and already 38% of households who have achieved 100 days of employment as of March 2022. The graphical representation of the top 10 district FY 2022-23 indicate that Aurangabad, Nalanda, Gaya and Saran have been the front runners in providing families with 100 days of employment.

Figure 23: Households Completed 100 Days of Employment
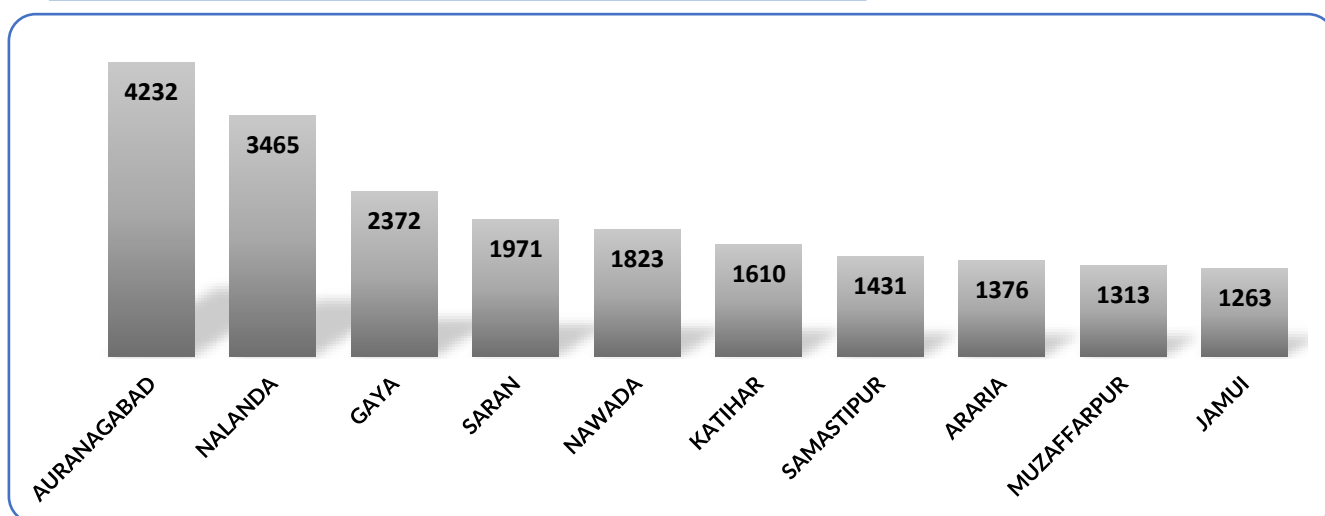
9.   Age-Wise Profile of MGNREGA Workers

The share of youth as MGNREGA worker is moving up over years, close to 11.36 lakhs already employed in MGNREGA fall in the age category of 18-30 years. The scheme employed over 17.65 lakh people in the age bracket of 31-40 years.

Figure 24: Demand, Allocation, and Employment Pattern in Bihar

10.   Observations and Suggestions

10.1. Ensuring Consistent Flow of Funds

Initially in FY 2022-23 Labour Budget of 1500 lakhs has been sanctioned by EC of MoRD and subsequently revised to 17.50 lakhs and 2500.00 lakhs. In compariso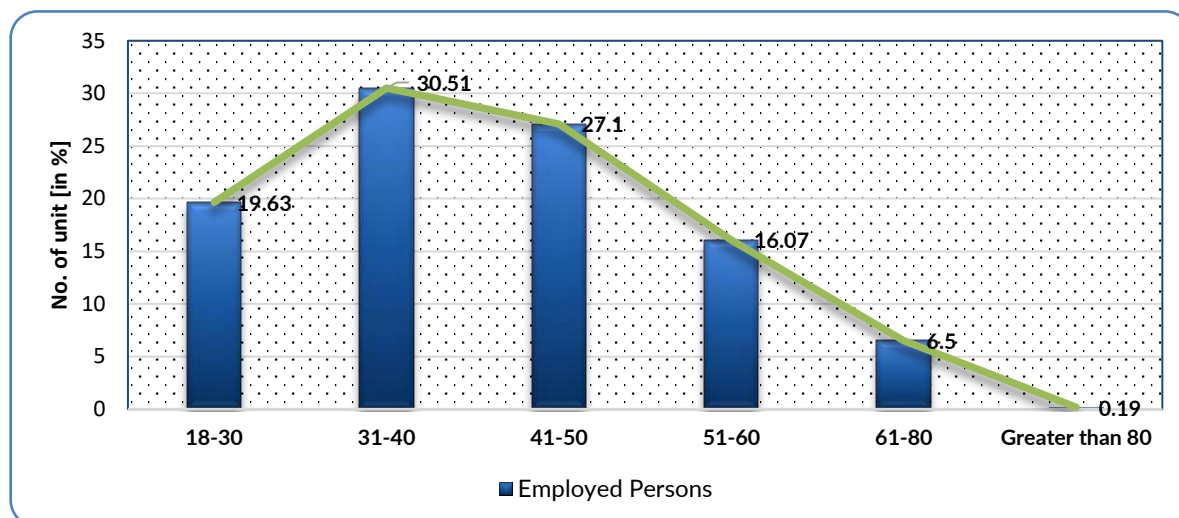n to FY 2021-22 Labour Budget has got an increase of 25 percent. The state has utilised about 95 percent of the allocated budget.

In the last fiscal year, the state witnessed payment delays including caste based and repeated delays at NeFMS level. To ensure a steady flow of funds, the labour budget should be sanctioned in its whole. From fiscal year 2021-2022, wages are released to the state in three categories: SC, ST, and Other.

Previously, there was no mechanism for wage payment by category. Payment categorization has complicated the payment system since wage expenditure has to be reflected and processed in three minor heads for SC, ST and others. Further, payment generation cannot be triggered if available funds in one category are depleted, despite the availability of funds in other two categories. As a result, payments are being made to different categories of workers at different times.

Wthis change, the 20 percent of SC-ST workers generally receive relatively speedier payment, but it is also critical because more than 80 percent of all MGNREGA workers in the state fall in the "other" category.

Delays in allocation also have a severe effect on wage earners, as most work with the expectation of timely payment, and their poor economic situation does not allow them to wait for long.

Figure 25: Demand, Allocation, and Employment Pattern in Bihar

Non - Payment Days (Excluding Holidays & Sundays)
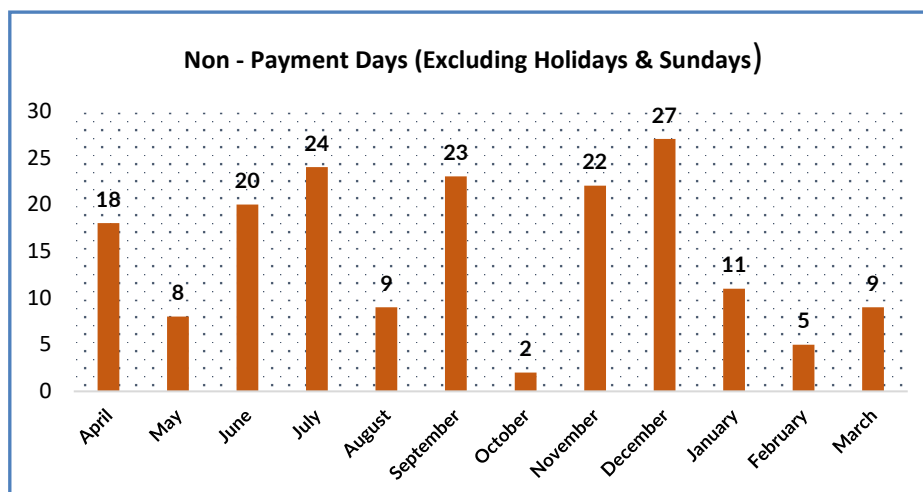
Month	Payment Days	Non - Payment Days	SC Amount (Rs. in Lakh)	ST Amount (Rs. in Lakh)	OTH Amount (Rs. in Lakh)	Total Amount (Rs. in Lakh)
April	4	18	7427	825	40786	49038
May	15	8	12386	1220	60110	73717
June	5	20	3282	308	17479	21070
July	2	24	4010	431	20995	25436
August	15	9	28895	2954	126969	158818
September	2	23	7697	710	24023	32430
October	18	2	5247	508	18565	24320
November	4	22	1366	114	5605	7085
December	0	27	0	0	0	0
January	14	11	10544	1102	49212	60858
February	18	5	2465	260	14423	17148
March	12	9	6298	667	35159	42124
Total	109	178	89618	9100	413325	512043

10.2. Strengthening Panchayat Rozgar Diwas Platform

Panchayat Rozgar diwas is an impactful platform for demand registration, grievance redressal and conveying about the programme among beneficiaries.

The platform needs to be regularized with Rozgar Diwas calendar, active involvement of PRI and SHG CBOs, preceded by appropriate IEC activities and unified monitoring at district and state level on outcomes.

11. Policy Measures taken up by the state government.

State government has undertaken explicit policy level measures to encourage women and vulnerable group participation at all levels in MGNREGS. Some notable ones issued in the current fiscal year include:

11.1. MGNREGA Mahila Mate

Women participation in MGNREGA supervisory roles has been a challenge for Bihar, this is despite over 50 percent women participation in wage work. There have been several likely reasons for less women participation including lack of awareness about Mate opportunity, male dominance in implementation system, safety and security concerns and lack of facilities at worksites.

Taking cognizance of the situation, state Rural Development department issued a policy to increase the participation of women (including transgender and differently abled) as MGNREGA Mates and leverage the SHG network for the empanelment of women as worksite supervisors, making them the centre of the programme, in which women participate in greater numbers both as workers and as worksite supervisors. More than 36,000 Mates have been registered and received training.

11.2. Village Organisation Office Building

Village Organizations (VOs) play a critical role in the ground-level implementation of MGNREGA. However, VOs in Bihar do not have their own office space and most work in rented spaces. This has made it difficult for VOs to carry out their functions effectively.

The departmental efforts, especially for the last fiscal year, have been directed towards promoting women's livelihoods, enhancing their income, and strengthening their capabilities and the role of women in facilitating community demand and access to entitlements. Some notable initiatives taken in this regard include:

- State-wide policy for women MGNREGA Mate.
- guidelines for prioritizing ultra-poor SHG households.
- community infrastructure for SHG-CBOs (VO building); and
- pilot testing for strengthening of the Rozgar Diwas platform (increasing work demand and grievance redressal).

The efforts resulted in significant improvement in key performance indicators, and completion of pending works.

The state government has taken steps to address this issue by issuing guidelines for VO office buildings under MGNREGA. The guidelines provide for a standard design and model estimates that can be adapted to different soil and topographic conditions. The goal is to have one VO building in each of the state's 534 administrative blocks. As of March 2023,

191 VO buildings were under construction. The construction of VO buildings will provide VOs with a formalised platform, space, voice, and resources for women members.

11.3. Productive Asset Creation for Ultra Poor households

The Bihar state government is implementing the 'Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojana' (SJY) programme to graduate about 1.5 lakh households out of ultra-poverty. SJY households are the poorest and neediest, and the state government has prioritised the creation of livelihood assets for them using MGNREGA resources. 46,000 SJY beneficiaries have been identified as eligible to receive livelihood assets, and guidelines for MGNREGA asset creation have been developed. Of these, 3,731 livelihood assets have already been created, and 3,376 projects have been initiated.

11.4. Capacity building of MGNREGA Functionaries at all levels

For effective implementation of MGNREGA, training and capacity building of programme officials and field functionaries is important. BRDS has streamlined the capacity building process and regularized trainings at all levels. In this connection, training in cascading mode was organized for MGNREGA mates at all 38 districts. Panchayat Rozgar Sevak and other block and district-based officials training framework has also been developed to be implemented in the next fiscal year, 2023-2024.

Apart from several efforts, the state government is also trying to make the scheme implementation a demand driven one by considering initiatives to improve awareness about the scheme, strengthening platforms such Panchayat Rozgar Diwas, and prioritising poor disadvantaged households and instilling confidence in them that the scheme offers assured wage work based on demand.

Special focus is being given to Natural Resource Management (NRM) works in the state through afforestation and plantation works on a large scale and focus on water-related works by renovating traditional water bodies. Special efforts are also being made towards the promotion of Didi ki nursery for quality plant saplings by SHG members, presenting entrepreneurship opportunities to those members.

12. PCI Technical Assistance to Rural Development Department

PCI has been extending technical support to the RD Department, Bihar to advance women's economic empowerment through social and economic convergence. The focus of the support is to increase women's participation in the state workforce by enabling convergence between the two largest programmes of the RD Department, JEEViKA and MGNREGA.

PCI's focus is to leverage the maximum funds available through MGRNEGA for generating employment for SHG women and promoting durable livelihood assets. PCI has embedded professionals at the RD department at the state level, as well as two learning districts (Gaya and Madhubani) and two immersion blocks (Dobhi and Jainnagar).

Over the past one and a half years of engagement with the department, PCI TA has been instrumental in coordinating processes for advancing convergence, developing strategies with outputs and activities, facilitating discussions based on best practises, conducting in-depth data analysis, and deliberating on the impacts of preferred policy options. The TA has also been able to enhance the focus on equitable growth and promote sustainable and inclusive growth by prioritising the poorest and most disadvantaged.

In the last fiscal year, the TA provided support and technical inputs to the RD Department in carrying out some key initiatives that would enable increased income for women and improve their agency. These initiatives included: **state-wide policy for women, transgender and differently abled MGNREGA Mate**; **guidelines for prioritising ultra-poor SHG households**; **activation and strengthening of the Rozgar Diwas platform** (increasing work demand and grievance redressal); and **community infrastructure for SHG-CBOs** (VO building). The Department has issued **guidelines for promoting assets for ultra-poor SHG households** and is **issuing monthly DO letters** to all 38 districts (marked to DMs), apprising them of district performance against progress metrics and suggesting efforts to improve on the same.

All these initiatives are focused on promoting women's and individuals of disadvantaged groups' livelihoods, enhancing their income, and strengthening their capabilities and the role in facilitating community demand and access to entitlements.

At present, the embedded team is providing support for the effective implementation of the Mate policy, including capacity-building, training, and oversight. TA is also undertaking the piloting of an innovative ICT-based solution for onboarding of MGNREA work-site supervisors and their monitoring for efficient on-ground program implementation.

Furthermore, the TA emphasised that no IEC spending has occurred in the majority of districts over the last three fiscal years. They proposed a strategic approach to eliminate implementation gaps through the development of a state IEC strategy and plan. The strategy emphasises convergent action, such as participatory labour budget planning to provide wage opportunities, prioritizing individual assets for disadvantaged groups, and community assets for more equitable and sustainable development.

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14. Notes

The fiscal year (FY) of the Government of India ends on 31 March.