

**Empowerment of Women through MGNREGA: A Study of
Auriya District in Uttar Pradesh**

Abstract

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Abstract

Women population is mostly equal to male population and their contribution is also impressive. The women participation in job market is very low. Women continue to face many barriers to enter labour market and to access decent work and face a range of multiple challenges relating to access to employment, choice of work, working conditions, employment security, wage parity, discrimination and balancing the competing burdens of work and family responsibilities. Women experiences inequality in all spheres of our society. Their active participation is important for the establishment of the orderly society as they constitute half of the population. By empowering the women we mean the improvement in totality of all human capabilities like their role the process of decision making in economic, social and religious spheres. Since Independence, various employment generation and poverty alleviation programmes were introduced by the Government of India with the consent of Union territories and state governments to decrease the unemployment crisis and to increase the standard of living particularly in the rural areas. But these programmes had not worked effectively and did not yield any desired results to increase the standard of rural living particularly of women inhabitants.

The Government has initiated Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) enacted in 25th August 2005 but it was fully implemented in 2nd February 2006 in all the rural districts of the country. It is the biggest poverty alleviation programme in the world to empower the rural women workers. The main objective of MGNREGA is to provide wage employment and to protect rural households from poverty and hunger. The programme also aims at generating productive assets, protecting the environment, empowering women, reducing rural-urban migration and fostering social equity. MGNREGA is, therefore, not just an employment scheme it is a tool of economic and social change in rural areas. MGNREGA is demand driven. This programme is focusing on empowerment of women in villages. Some researchers have done studies on MGNREGS. Most of them are confined to economic aspect of the program only. Some of the major studies like Sanjay Kanti das, Sharma, Nair, Mahapatra, Vanitha, Govind, Das, Sahoo, Jyoti, Smita and Ghosh have made good analysis on the program performance and women empowerment. All have accepted that the program has impact on rural villages in providing employment opportunities. This gender perspective of the program is the need of current economy. Hence an attempt is made to examine the empowerment of women through the program. The present study has the following

objectives. 1. To analyse the performance of MGNREGA in Uttar Pradesh in terms of physical assets, women beneficiaries, employment, unemployment allowance worksite facilities and 2. To study the empowerment of women through MGNREGA programme in Uttar Pradesh in terms of wages, income, employment, consumption expenditure and women participation.

The Auraiya district is selected for the study. Majority of the women are participating in the program in the district. Majority labour force is depending on agriculture for its livelihood. Due to lack of employment opportunities, majority people are migrating to urban areas for employment. MGNREGA is a life line for the people of the district. Apart from providing employment opportunity, the program also aims at rejuvenating the rural economy by executing projects that may significantly boost up the natural capital of the villages. Further on the basis of review of literature and research gap, the objectives and hypothesis of the research methodology part has been designed and on the basis of research objective the plan of the study has also been scheduled for accomplishing the study.

Major Findings of the Study

The study findings highlight the performance of the program and impact on empowerment of women workers. It has been seen that the majority workers covered by the scheme are scheduled caste female workers. MGNREGA program is providing employment for the rural people. The program is providing employment for women. However the issue is the quantity of employment for the people. It is supposed to provide 100 days employment to women workers. The success of the program is depending on achievement of the target. The wage rates are different in four villages. It means that the program is not following uniform wage rate in all villages. The change in income is not significant. Minimum 100 days of employment are not provided by MGNREGA.

Empowerment of women is explained in terms of work participation, participation in the local body decision making, and participation in main direct participation in local bodies, consumption level and saving rate of the women and education level of women in the villages. As per the act of the program, basic facilities are made available on the work site. Particularly women workers are supposed to get more such facilities in the villages. As per my survey the following facilities are made available to the women workers such as drinking water facility, Facility of Shade for resting time at work place, First aid medical facilities and crèches facilities. It reveals that most of the facilities as per the provision of MGNREGA are not

available in the villages except drinking water facilities. For about half of the worksite facilities are not available such as crèche's facilities and medicine facilities.

The performance of assets created under MGNREGA scheme in the sample region of Auraiya district. The main assets are such as pond, well, roads, cattle shelter, Fish tank, Canals and community halls. The main issue is the maintenance of the assets in the villages. Most of the assets are in the stage of none performing in the villages due to lack care and maintenance in the villages. The responsibility of the maintenance may be given to panchayats or village community head and make the person responsible for the assets of the scheme in the village.

The performance of MGNREGA in Uttar Pradesh has been examined by surveying 100 women workers in Auraiya district. The findings reveals that majority of the workers are uneducated. The majority of general caste households live in pucca house. The majority workers are living in kaccha houses in rural village. Nearly 88 percent of women workers are having BPL cards in the villages and only 12 percent of workers are having Antodaya cards.

The majority of the sample households depend on public hand pump for drinking water. Only 42 percent household depends on personal hand pumps in the villages. Nearly 92 percent of women workers have electricity connection and only 8 percent does not have electricity connection in the villages. But the supply of the power is the most concern in the villages. The television is the social economic status in the villages now days. Only 20 percent of women have the facility of television. Nearly 51 percent of population are not having access of toilet facilities in the villages. It seems that the swacch bharat program is to be implemented extensively in the village particularly in location of poor people. Only 5 percent of female workers are working only less than 10 days. There is only 3 percent of female labour working maximum 60 days in a year in the village. It is very clear that the program is not fulfilling its target of providing 100 days of employment to the people in the villages. Only 4 percent women workers are getting income up to Rs 10000 per annum. As per the act of the program every worker is supposed to get nearly Rs. 17500 per annum. Due to non-available of 100 days' work for the women worker, they are not getting the income in the villages.

Further it is observed that workers should get Job card within 15 days of the application. But in reality it is hardly happening in the villages. Majority of respondents nearly 69 percent proved it. They are not sure of method of selection for the jobs. When they submitted an application for job to the Panchayats, it was noticed in most cases that there was no dated receipt issued by the panchayat for the application made by them. Annual income of the female

workers of selected samples of households is in different range of income. They are participating in different works such as agricultural labour, contractual labour, self-employment and dairy works. These all are the sources of Income for the women workers along with the program. Data shows that maximum number of households have been observed in the income range of Rs 20000 to 25000. They are all living in miserable conditions in the villages. Further the selected samples of women workers are not getting any unemployment allowances from the program, if the program fails to provide employment to the applied people within 15 days.

There are only two methods of wage payment like cash and bank account transfer. The majority of 68 percent of female workers are getting wages through bank account transfer.. They are not aware of banking transactions. Majority of people nearly 84 percent of women workers says that female labour force participation rate is increasing and 16 percent people says there is no female labour force participation. It is clear that women are still backward in the village. They are not getting space to get the empowerment in the society. Nearly 40 percent of female workers said that there is no discrimination in allotment of employment under MGNREGA. But nearly 60 percent of female workers said that there is discrimination in allotment of employment under MGNREGA.

Women workers are not aware of the method of allocation of works for the applicants. The payment of wage is not on same time. The wage differentials are existing in the villages. Nepotism on social relations are very prevailing in the allocation of the works under the scheme. 53 percent of female workers says that they are not participating in decision making in any local bodies and only 47 percent of female workers says that they have participated in decision making in any local bodies. So, there is positive relationship between MGNREGA and female labour force participation rate because due to MGNREGA scheme mostly female workers are getting employment and they are independent. So, they can take their own decision making in any local bodies.

Nearly 79 percent of female workers are not migrated for the employment. Only 21 percent female workers are migrated from one place to another place for works. In the study area the migration is not a major issue in the villages due to availability of works under the program.

The maximum number of households have been observed in the consumption range of Rs 15000 to 20000. Nearly 66 households come under this category of consumption. The majority of households have been captured by this category of consumption. It means that the majority

of women workers are spending on consumption less than Rs 20000 per annum in the villages. While least number of households only 4 percent of women workers have been coming under the consumption category of 20000 to 25000 of annually expenditure. It is clear that only 4 percent of women workers are spending Rs less than 25000 per annum in the villages. As per the expert committee method of estimation of poverty the annual consumption expenditure must be Rs 58320. As per these criteria, all households are under poverty line. Thus almost all participants or beneficiaries of the scheme in the selected villages of Auraiya district are living in poverty and with miserable situations of life in the villages. The state has to take special programs for women workers of the villages in the state. 82 percent of women workers are spending their expenditure on food is less than Rs 10000 and only 18 percent of women are spending less than Rs 20000. It means that all the women workers are spending their income on food only. Women workers are neglecting their health in villages. Nearly 51 percent of women workers are not spending on health. Only 18 percent of women workers are spending less than Rs 1000 per annum on their health. The state has to improve the rural health facilities in the villages.

The consumption pattern of women workers is not changed. But the women are showing more interest on using mobiles in the villages. Mobile become a necessary product in the rural villages. Nearly 45 percent of women workers are spending the major share of their income on mobile charging. They are spending Rs 600 on mobile charges. This is the result of communication revolution in India. The rural women are more interested on using communication. The other basic necessary goods are neglected in the villages. It may be due to demonstration effect also in the villages. The program has no impact on women workers in the villages. The majority of the women workers are not even getting works under the scheme and wage payment in time. Hence, The MGNREGA has no impact on the empowerment of the women in the villages of the study. It clear that the major findings of the study proves that two hypothesis are correct. The objectives are fulfilled with the results of the study. This program is enough to bring changes in the lives of the rural women. The performance of the program is not satisfactory in the villages. These results are confined to my study only. But I cannot generalise my results. My results are also matching with few earlier studies also.

Recommendations

Based on my study results I would like to recommend to policy makers and government servants and civil societies. The implementing agencies must allocate adequate financial

provisions for health and education in program for the women in the village. There is a need to educate the women on banking transactions. The resources flow for MGNREGA scheme must be improved. MGNREGA programme is providing employment for the rural people. The number of working days should also increase through better implementation of the programme especially in Auraiya district. The implementing agencies must ensure that sufficient employment is generated in the villages for women workers.

There must be adequate basic facilities for the women workers in the worksite such as crèche's facilities and first aid medical facilities at the worksite. System of wage payment is through bank account in villages. The women workers are not educated and not aware of banking transactions in the villages. A door delivery system may be developed. Women are employed as unskilled labour on MGNREGA worksites. The skill development is to be initiated in the villages for women. Discrimination in allotment works may be reduced. 100 day's employment should provide to the women workers in the village. The wage payment must be timely. To overcome the difficulties faced by the women in drawing cash from bank, provision can be made to provide the wages directly at their home. Leakages of the program may be minimized. The responsibility of the maintenance of the assets may be given to penchants and make them accountability.