



Impact on Women Empowerment in MGNREGA : With Special Reference to Virupasamudra gram panchayat (Tumkur District)

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Abstract

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005, was notified on 7 September 2005 and it was renamed as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on 2nd October 2009. The MGNREGA has completed ten years since its inception in India". The mandate of the Act is to provide 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year (FY) to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The purpose of the study is to examine the women empowerment, issues and challenges and MGNREGA scheme's impact on women empowerment in India. The methods of the study is based on both primary and secondary data. The sample size for the study is 50 respondent from Virupasamudra Gram panchayat, Pavagada Taluk, Tumkur district of Karnataka state. A questionnaire is designed to determine the various factors of MGNREGA that have impact on women empowerment. Variables identified are education, person days, awareness of MGNREGA, bank accounting, decision making of implementation of programme, work site facilities, mode of wage payment. This paper gives a brief definition of what is the influence of women empowerment due to MGNREGA.

Keywords

MGNREGA, Rural Development, Women Employment, Issues, Challenges and Impact

INTRODUCTION

India is a country which attained independence in 1947, but the rural-urban divide and the rich-poor divide are still plaguing India. 68.84 per cent of the Indian population lives in villages. There are 6, 40,867 villages in India. According to 2011 census, the Populations of rural women who are literate are 58.8 per cent. (Census,2011) According to the 2007 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects by the United Nations, India would continue to have the largest rural population in the world until 2050. (Hindustan Times, 28.2.2008) There are several issues which are creating difficulties in the lives of Indians, like rising crimes against women, increasing poverty, corruption, nepotism, lack of transparency in the official functioning, 2 bureaucratic hassles, criminalization of politics, criminal-politician-bureaucratic entente etc. However, the common Indian citizen is striving to get two ends meet.

The rural women empowerment is critical for the development of the rural India in the present scenario. The women empowerment is necessary for the government to develop as Empowerment of women will balance the bureaucracy system. In the words of "empowering women is a precondition for creating a good nation, when women are empowered, society with stability is assured". The role of MGNREGA has positive impact on empowerment and generating of employment opportunity and women community participation. It aims at

Ensuring social protection for the most vulnerable people living in rural India through providing employment opportunities, Ensuring livelihood security for the poor through creation of durable assets, improved water security, soil conservation and higher land productivity, Strengthening drought-proofing and flood management in rural India, Aiding in the empowerment of the marginalised communities, especially women, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), through the processes of a rights-based legislation, Strengthening decentralised, participatory planning through convergence of various anti-poverty and livelihoods initiatives, enhancing livelihood security by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household especially for women. Women participation has increased significantly and perceived it giving them a sense of independence and security. Country should be alerted with proper education and also they should be entrusted with all sorts of works as per their physical capability". Women are essential part of the world. They play important role in the improvement of the society as well as the country. If we express the definition of women in different dimension in the present scenario is actually different for different persons but there is an essential base that cannot change regardless of nationality, caste, color, profession etc.,. Empowerment of women refers to the influence of decision making of their own. The word "empower has proved to be as equal with the word women". "The present research paper takes a crucial look at the selected studies such as: women empowerment, issues, challenges and unraveling various impacts of MGNREGA in Virupasamudra Gram panchayat, Pavagada Taluk, Tumkur district of Karnataka state. The study focused on the impact of MGNREGA in terms of women perspective, particularly on socio - economic improvements and challenges faced by women.

WHAT IS WOMEN EMPOWERMENT?

Women empowerment is a socially unrestricting of the women about their making choices and performances that they are capable of doing. It is giving power to women to decide for their own lives or inculcating such abilities in them so that they can find their rightful place in the society. According to the United Nations, women's empowerment mainly has five components:

1. Generating women's sense of self-worth;
2. Women's right to have and to determine their choices;
3. Women's right to have access to equal opportunities and all kinds of resources;
4. Women's right to have the power to regulate and control their own lives, within and outside the home; and
5. Women's ability to contribute in creating a more just social and economic order

Historical background of MGNREGA (wage employment schemes)

After the independence of India in 1947, with the zeal and inspiration to transform India on the lines of developed Western countries, the Government of India initiated broader interventions in its socio-economic and political structures. Democracy, decentralization of power, globalization, equality in the socio-economic aspects of human life, secularism, development and socialist egalitarianism became features of Indian state. The Indian leaders, planners and intellectuals analyzed that following western model of development through industrialization will reduce the poverty related problems of India. It took time to get rid of the 'Urban Bias' to develop. "Early Congress governments focused on big-push industrialization at the cost of both anti-poverty policies and policies of trickle-down agricultural growth, while the focus shifted to the latter policies by the end of the 1960s" (Suraj Jacob: 2006:8). The limitations of the western model, gradually corrected to some extent.

Indian government felt essential need to strengthen village economy through rural development, through restructuring of agrarian relations, through redistribution of economic resources alongside different protective measures for village poor. Rural development programmes came in picture. Many research scholars, keeping the theories of wage employment in their mind they review that Rural development has traditionally been associated with agriculture, Government of India started to analyze scientifically and developed many strategies for the implementation of rural developmental programmes thus employment generation coupled with development of agriculture was focused in 1960s. The Community development Programme (CDP) was introduced on October 2, 1952. The main objective of the CDP was to secure total development of the material resources of the rural areas, to raise the level of the rural poor through number of associated programmes and to develop local leadership and self-governing institutions. It was the first extensive rural development programme of Independent India. With an objective of comprehensive development of rural society, CDP was launched but its main focus was neither poverty reduction nor reduction in economic inequality. Development of rural infrastructure, agriculture and the related matters was aimed at, was supported by some socio cultural aspects of development like health, education and so on. From 1959, CDP was finally withdrawn and in the final analysis largely it turned out to be a failed programme because of failure in analyzing the root cause of grass root level problems and absence of local self government.

The Government of India have developed some strategies about the relief of crises in situation. Thus, the weaker section oriented, area specific and agro-based programmes like – Intensive Agricultural Areas Development Programme (IAADP) 1969-70, Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP) 1971-72, Hill Area Development Programme (HADP) 1973-74, Command Area Development Programme (CADP) 1974-75, Tribal Area Development Programme (TADP) and Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) 1976-77 were introduced. The IRDP, which focused at a set of allied schemes, at assisting households below the poverty line with loans and subsidies for asset creation, training and infusion of technology. The IRDP was extended on a nationwide scale in 1980. Another set of programmes consisted of rural employment generation programmes based on a variety of public works. The beginning programmes of rural development were the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and the Rural Labour Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP). They have been subsequently consolidated into the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY). The Seventh (1985-90) and Eighth Plans (1992-97) have largely followed this approach for poverty alleviation. Concurrently, the minimum needs programme has been continued. Important developments during this period are the Constitutional amendments in 1992 to enable greater powers and financial resources being given to local bodies at the district, taluka and village levels. The second set of the programmes oriented to benefit rural sections, however, too could not benefit the lowest strata of the village population to the extent it was expected.

After examination of the PEPs, many a studies and views (e. g. Mahendra Dev's study, V. S. Page's views) have recommended that the better decision making at the village level and ensuring participation of the villagers in the planning and implementation of these programmes would produce positive effects. It is important to note that, the central government led wage employment scheme e.g. SGRY did incorporate the idea of democratic decentralization and participation of the village poor in planning and implementing the PEPs. The main early antecedents of SGRY were: the Food for Work (FFW) programme, which began in 1977; the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), started in 1980; and the Rural Landless Guarantee Scheme (RLGS), initiated in 1983. In April 1989, NREP and RLGS were amalgamated into the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), and even the nominal work guarantee attached to the RLEGP was omitted. The emphasis was on creating community assets, notably roads and buildings. Under new arrangements, the district authorities

(through the District Rural Development Agencies - DRDAs) are required to apply directly to the Rural Development Ministry in Delhi for JRY funding.

In 2001, the JGSY and EAS were merged into one scheme which is named as Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana (SGRY). This is the largest ever wage employment based PEP at all India level.

Indian National Congress and its alliance (UPA) came to power 2003. UPA comprised mainly the NCP and the left parties. 'Aam Admi' (common man) centred agenda called Common Minimum Programme was focused. Due to the pressure from the left parties, the right to work was ranked high, in this agenda. The newly formed UPA government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and Congress President, Sonia Gandhi declared National Rural Employment Guarantee Bill in 2004 from the continuous struggle of social workers, NGOs and other political parties. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was passed in September 2005 and provided right to employment to about 5.4 crore rural poor in India. In the first stage, 200 most backward districts of the country were selected for the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP or NREGS). This programme is recently renamed on 2nd October, 2009 as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGA).

Progress and Achievements of MGNREGA in India

MGNREGS in India has been positive in ensuring livelihood for the deprived people in rural areas. During the year 2013-14, 3.8 crores household were given employment and a total of 135 crores person-days of employment have been produced. Out the 135 crore, 73.33 crore were for women, 21.09 crore for STs, and 31.53 crore for SCs. A total of 111 lakhs job were taken up of which 11.17 lakhs have been completed so far and remaining jobs are in progress. In the 1st phase of execution of NREGA 2006-07, 2.10 crore public got 100 days employment during the period. This comprises water harvesting and conservation 3.40 lakh, face-lift of traditional water bodies 96 thousand, provision of irrigation amenity 1.58 lakh, and small irrigation works 53 thousands, land growth 1.17 lakh, rural connectivity 2.03 lakh. Drought proofing nearly 1.13 lakh, flood control and safety 20 thousand. A budget delivery of Rs.12,000 crores has been made during financial year 2007-08, Rs.30,000 cores in 2008-09, Rs. 39,100 crores in 2009-10 and 40,100 crores in 2010-11 respectively for execution of the scheme (MoRD,2012). The apportionment of funds for 2011-12 financial years has been the government has allocated Rs.38,500 and 39,699 crores correspondingly for 2015-16 and 2016-17.

In the Virupsandra, gram panchayat has provided 12,296 man-day's. Out of these, 5768 (46.90 for women) were give wages in 2017-18.

Salient Features of the Act are summarized below:

1. Adult members of a rural household may apply for employment if they are willing to do unskilled manual work.
2. Such a household will have to apply for registration to the local Gram Panchayat, in writing, or orally.
3. The Gram Panchayat after due verification will issue a Job Card to the household as a whole. The Job Card will bear the photograph of all adult members of the household willing to work under NREGA. The Job Card with photograph is free of cost

4. A Job Card holding household may submit a written application for employment to the gram Panchayat, stating the time and duration for which work is sought. The minimum days of employment have to be fifteen.
5. The Gram Panchayat will issue a dated receipt of the written application for employment, against which the guarantee of providing employment within 15 days operates
6. Employment will be given within 15 days of application for work by an employment seeker.
7. If employment is not provided within 15 days, daily unemployment allowance, in cash has to be paid. Liability of payment of unemployment allowance is of the States.
8. At least one-third of persons to whom work is allotted work have to be women.
9. Wages are to be paid according to minimum wages as prescribed under the Minimum Wages Act 1948 for agricultural labourers in the State, unless the Centre notifies a wage rate which will not be less than Rs. 60/ per day
10. Disbursement of wages has to be done on weekly basis and not beyond a fortnight.
11. Panchayat Raj Institutions [PRIs] have a principal role in planning and implementation.
12. Each district has to prepare a shelf of projects. The selected works to provide employment are to be selected from the list of permissible works.

The different categories of permissible works are as follows:

- a. Water Conservation
- b. Drought Proofing (including plantation and afforestation)
- c. Flood Protection
- d. Land Development
- e. Minor Irrigation, horticulture and land development on the land of SC/ST/ -BPL/IAY and_ land reform beneficiaries_ Rural connectivity.

The shelf of projects has to be prepared on the basis of priority assigned by Gram Sabha. At least 50% of works have to be allotted to Gram Panchayats for execution. A 60:40 wage and material ratio has to be maintained. Contractors and use of labour displacing machinery is prohibited.

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- 13 Work should ordinarily be provided within 5 km radius of the village or else extra wages of 10% are payable.
- 14 Work site facilities such as crèche, drinking water, shade have to be provided
- 15 Social Audit has to be done by the Gram Sabha.
- 16 Grievance redressal mechanisms have to be put in place for ensuring a responsive implementation process.
- 17 All accounts and records relating to the Scheme are to be made available to any person desirous of obtaining a copy of such records, on demand and after paying a specified fee.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Jandu (2008) in the study carried out in four states-Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Tamil Nadu found that women are able to perform their role in the families as contributors to family expenditure and participate in decision making in the family affairs. Ramesh & Kumar (2009) also, in their study, found that the MGNREGS playing a substantial role in empowering women economically and laying the basis for greater independence and self esteem. It has become as beacon of light in the empowerment of rural women and contributed substantially for improving their economic and social status.

Pankaj&Tankha (2010) analysed the empowerment effects of MGNREGA through field study and found that women's earning from MGNREGA was significant in the incomes of households. The survey also observed women participating in Grama sabhas. They concluded that the scheme has potential to empower women by providing work opportunities.

Pananda & Umar(2011) in a study field on the impact of MGNREGA in Assam found an improvement in the women's status.

Jean Dreze (2011) observed that MGNREGA has become tool for rural empowerment by providing 100 days employment per year per household, increased bargaining power of women and rural labor and provided independent earning opportunity to women for empowerment. The authors also found that 79 percent women collect their own wages and 68 percent keep wages with them.

Reetika Khera and Nandini Nayak (2011) in the elaborative study found that limited and irregular labor market, social barriers and working condition discouraged women's work participation. But, Local availability of work, government work, regulated working hours; less exploitative and dignified nature of work under MGNREGA have been main motivating factors for women to participate in works. MGNREGA helped avoiding hunger and migration, purchasing of medicines, payment for children education and repayment of debts and avoiding hazardous working conditions for majority of the women job seekers, the study found. They also found that social norms against women working outside the home, lack of child care facilities are major barriers for women's participation.

Sudha Narayanan (2011) stated that NREGA work was indispensable for survival of women. It enabled them in the same way as Reetika Khera and Nandini Nayak found. Jyoti Poonia (2012) in the paper "Critical study of MGNREGA: Impact and women's participation" confirmed that the scheme helped women to override their weak position in labor market and get alternative employment. S.Krishnan and DR.A.Balakrishnan in their paper "MGNREGA MARCHING TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS-AN ANALYSIS" asserted that MGNREGA put money women earned directly in their hands without any middlemen, even their husbands were not have the rights to receive it. So the visible and invisible effects of MGNREGA on women are high, it facilitated an increase in the levels of savings of women. It alleviated their fear of hunger and poverty, the majority of women workers are now actively participating in the social activities. Their increased credit worthiness and social status facilitated a change in their attitudes towards life, work, friendship, economic independence and political leadership.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the present paper are as follows:

1. To understand the socio economic conditions of women job seekers
2. To make appropriate suggestions for strengthening of the scheme on the basis of findings of the study.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on primary as well as secondary sources data. Primary data was collected from interview scheduled. The area of study was Virupasamudra Gram panchayat, Pavagada Taluk, Tumkur district of Karnataka state. The Panchayat contain eight villages , 2869 Families and 3659 Job card holders were found in panchayat. Secondary data is collected from the www.nrga.in, MoRD, Karnataka at glance, Budget report of Karnataka, Annual report of RDPR, Books, related articles, journals, Tumkur human development report, official websites, etc. To analyze the collected data and for interpreting the results some specified statistical tools and techniques are used need fully to meet the requirement. The objectives of the study are : i) To understand the socio economic conditions of women job seekers ii)To make appropriate suggestions for strengthening of the scheme on the basis of findings of the study. The research methodology followed in this research was descriptive research. A simple random sampling technique is adopted in the paper to select the sample respondents. The source of data is the primary research done by conducting survey of the targeted individuals. The targeted sample size was 50 women respondents, from eight villages of Virupasamudra gram panchayat. All the respondents belonged to the Registered job card holders. The study is irrespective of caste and class.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

According to 2011 census, the women make up 48.6% of rural population in India. Hence there can be no progress unless their needs and interest are fully met. The recent studies analyzed that Empowerment would not hold any meaning unless they are made strong and alert and aware of their equal status in the society. There is much that the MGNREGA promises from the perspective of women's empowerment as well. The various impacts of MGNREGA on women are analyzed as follows:-

- a) Wage Employment:** In the financial year 2017-18, the Virupasamudra gram panchayat has provided 18.5% of man-day's. Out of these, 13% for women were given wages. If we raise the question of why the NREGA has provided employment for women in large scale. The reason is that 66% of women are awared of MGNREGA norms, Due to this reason the women are actively participating in the implementation of all stages in the schemes. Thus, the wage employment for women has increased to 16% compared to previous years.
- b) Delay of Wage payment:** According to MGNREGA Norms, Section 3 of the MGNREGA Act 2005 laid down that wages shall be paid to the MGNREGA workers within 15 days from the date of closure of the Muster Roll (MR). The Schedule of Act provides that the wages are to be paid to the workers through their savings account in the relevant banks or post offices, unless any relaxation is granted by the Ministry of Rural Development. Few years ago, in this panchayat the wages were given after 2 years of completion of the work. In this, some of them has received but some of them are yet to receive the wages from the gram panchayat. In the recent past, in the Virupasamudra panchayat, 65% of the women are receiving the wage

payment after 90-100 days of completion of the work. The Delay of wage payment is reducing compared to previous years because of their actively participating in the implementation of the scheme.

- c) **Consumption Smoothing:** In the previous years, the labourers were dependent on the seasonal agricultural wage (3 months). The low wages from the private sectors was not sufficient for labourers to lead their life. In spite of low wages, the private sector was not the 'right to work' and this wage was not secure. Inevitably, women's MGNREGA earnings are increasing their contribution to household income. From the survey it has been found, a large majority (72 per cent) of the respondents said that they spent wages earned at MGNREGA works on regular food and consumer goods. The increased income locally available through MGNREGA work, they felt, was helping ensure at least two regular meals a day. It could reduce infant malnutrition through positive effects on household's food security and infant feeding.
- d) **Lower Indebtedness:** In the previous years, the struggle for women Empowerment was very less due to lack of awareness and information. The indebtedness was also more in the previous years because of low wages and rate of low wage. Now a days, Women are developing empowered because of awareness. Due to rapid increase in the women empowerment MGNREGA has provided both work and wage. MGNREGA helps to reduce the burden of debt of the women worker to some extent. From the survey, 30 per cent of the respondents said that they had spent their wages on repaying small debts. It also helps them to keep themselves away from the clutches of local moneylenders. But the amount earned through MGNREGA is not sufficient to repay debt because each family has five to six members.
- e) **Worksite facilities :** According to MGNREGA Norms, Work site facilities such as crèche, drinking water, shade have to be provided at the place of work. The labourers did not know the concept of worksite facilities due to lack of awareness and less participating. So, labourers were not able to receive the Worksite facilities. In the recent past, water and shade are provided at the place of work in the the villages of Virupasamudra gram panchayat.
- f) NREGA norms says that Work should ordinarily be provided within 5 km radius of the village or else extra wages of 10% are payable. In the gram panchayat, labourers worked 5 km away from their village but 10% of extra wage is not provided by Gram panchayat.
- g) **Improved Healthcare:** Through the employment guarantee act, in the study areas, the health condition of the poor people in both rural and urban areas are improved. A large expenditure regularly met through MGNREGA wages is health care, with around 40 per cent of the respondents having spent earnings on this. Therefore the health condition of the selected areas are seen a lot of improvement after implementation of MGNREGA act. This act also provides medical facilities, drinking water facilities, fooding to the worker's children etc. during the working hours.

All this taken together seems to sketch out the beginnings of a marked shift from the previous role of women. While women's labor (farm and non-farm) has always been an essential component in the functioning of rural households, it has been made invisible due to the absence of any monetary remuneration. By putting cash earnings in women's hands, MGNREGA has both increased and diversified the contributions that women

SUGGESTIONS

On the basis of the findings following suggestion can be made.

1. All eligible beneficiaries of the MGNREGS should be made fully aware of the provisions and objectives of the scheme. .
2. Appropriate measures are needed to ensure that women get equal remuneration on par with men for the same work.
3. Gram panchayat should be provided 100 days work to needed families and worksite facilities.
4. All community works must be selected through the gram sabhas
5. Panchayat raj should maintain the transparency up to pre project to post project

CONCLUSION

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was enacted in September 5, 2005. It came into force on February 2, 2006, and it was implemented in a phase manner. In Phase –I the programme was introduced in 200 most backward districts of the country. It was implemented in additional 130 districts in 2007-08 under phase- II, the scheme was extended to the remaining 274 rural districts of India from April 1, 2008 in phase- III. NREGA now covers all rural areas of the country. The NREGA has been renamed as MGNREGA in October 2, 2009. The MGNREGA provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to one rural household whose adult member in a financial year. At least 33% of the beneficiaries are to be women. MGNREGA focused on works related de-silting of tanks for water conservation, agriculture works like digging of vermin compost pits, building cattle sheds, land development, construction of rural connectivity roads, roads to farms, digging of wells, plantation work, building of water sheds etc can be taken under the scheme. It should also be recognized in the light of undesirable experiences and results in its implementation in the last 10 years period that a coordinated and scientific strategy is needed for desired results and their sustenance. Despite of the implementation of The Right Information Act (RTI) and transference act But question remain however, how long women are accommodated just in low paid manual labor just for the sake providing employment, why can't they be accommodated in other sectors, when there is scope, by educating, training in newly emerging production and services activities and by developing modern small scale industries in rural areas.

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