

Women empowerment through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment in Anand district

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ABSTRACT

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (NREGA) guarantees 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to any rural household whose adult members are willing to participate in unskilled manual work. The Act is an important step towards realization of the right to work and aims at arresting out-migration of rural households in search of employment simultaneously enhancing people's livelihood on a sustained basis, by developing the economic and social infrastructure in rural areas. This is renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) from 2010 onwards. It is an Act that aims to strengthen the women employment by enforcing that about 33 percent of total work force should be women and also that there will be equal wages for men and women. It is playing a substantial role in creating employment for women thereby, leading to greater independence and self-respect among women. As far as women's role in MGNREGA is concerned, these programmes have noted a number of positive impacts on women such as their large scale participations in these programmes, increase in their self-earned incomes and use of these incomes for well-being of their own household. The present paper has made an attempt to study the participation of women through MNREGA in various states of India and also in districts of Anand. The highest employment status amongst women in terms of person days can be seen in Kerala. When we consider the total employment status of Anand District through MNREGA, a total of 33,05,473 person days employment is generated, out of which the share of women stands at 38.76 percent. The highest employment status amongst women in terms of person days can be seen in Tarapur district with 45.66 percent.

Key Words : Empowerment, Women empowerment, MGNREGA

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment refers to increasing strength of individuals or communities in the different spheres of life such as economic, political, social, spiritual etc. It also refers to instilling confidence in people in their own capacities. (Savaiah.H.2014)

Women Empowerment essentially refers to empowering women to change power relations between them and men in their favour. Women in general and women in developing countries in particular are observed to be lagging behind men in the different spheres of life such as, labour and employment, health and nutrition, education and skills, asset ownership, political and social participation etc., with the result that power of decision making in the multiple spheres of life lies more with men than with women, on the economic front, women own no/low assets as compared to men. This restricts their access to credit, to technology, to markets and to upward mobility. Women also

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have lower status in the field of labour and employment, as compared to men, reflected in their low participation, poor occupational diversification, low employment status, low wages etc. Women have lower mobility in the labour market and have overall poorer prospects for upward mobility in the labour market and in the economy, on the human development front, women are observed to be lagging behind men in literacy and overall educational achievements, health status including morbidity and mortality and overall human development. Human and gender development indices in developing countries show this very clearly. In addition, women also lag behind in leadership and political participation, in enjoying autonomy and freedom as well as in socio-cultural participation. This manifestation of gender inequalities in the different spheres of life is however a cause as well as a result of unequal power relations between men and women. Women are lagging because they do not possess power to change their inferior status, and they do not have power to change their status because they lag behind in most inputs needed to change power. There is a need to break this vicious circle to empower women and to enable them to take their own decisions. Multiple strategies have been suggested to break this circle and to empower women. A major strategy is to give them asset ownership, such as land, other productive assets or housing. Right to a productive asset tends to improve women's bargaining power within the household as well as outside the household in the mainstream economy. Apart from allowing women a say in decision making within the household, ownership of assets improves women's access to credit, to skill/ training, to markets etc and to developmental opportunity. Participation is another major strategy to help women to acquire power. It could be political participation (through voting, contesting and winning elections at different levels), economic participation (in the labour market through employment, skill training, finance and marketing), and social participation (in major social and cultural institutions through membership and through holding positions of decision making) or participation in other spheres. Participation is likely to help women in being active members of the society and economy, in acquiring positions of decision makers. It also helps them in acquiring confidence in their own capabilities. Human development, through improving human capabilities of women as well as through ensuring basic needs and primary services/ infrastructure is another important approach that can empower women and change the power relations in favour of women. It helps human capital formation among women, improves their productivity and reduces their vulnerability through improved health and nutrition. Basic infrastructure can reduce women's drudgery and can improve quality of their life, opening new opportunities for them. Mobilization of women to acquire collective strength for improved bargaining in the economy and society is also known to be an important strategy for empowerment of women. Collective strength of women challenges their subordinate status and inferior power, and removes certain critical barriers to empowerment, such as diffidence, isolation and feeling of powerlessness. It helps women to acquire confidence and self-esteem.. (Hirway, I, 2011)

MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act):

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was passed by Indian parliament in 2005 and the Scheme (each state was expected to design its own scheme based in the National Guidelines) designed under the Act was implemented in 200 districts on India in February 2006. The coverage of the Act was expanded gradually and since 2008-09 MGNREGA covers the entire rural India. As is well known, MGNREGA provides a legal guarantee of 100 days of wage employment at the minimum wage rate (prevailing in the concerned state) to every rural household living in rural India. The main objectives of MGNREGA are (1) to guarantee 100 days of work at the legal minimum wages to each household that demands work in rural India, (2) to generate productive assets in the economy and thereby enhance livelihoods of people and (3) to empower (Gram) Panchayats and Gram Sabha by ensuring their participation in the planning and implementation of MGNREGA, and thereby strengthen decentralized democracy. It is to be noted that MGNREGA is not designed with the objective of

promoting gender equality. As far as women's role in MGNREGA is concerned, MGNREGA offers 33 percent employment to women, guarantees child care facility at the worksite and provides scope to women to participate in planning and implementation of MGNREGA and in conducting social audit as members of Gram Sabha and of Gram Panchayat. Apart from these, there is no direct focus on women's empowerment or gender equality under MGNREGA. It is argued that one cannot load too many objectives on MGNREGA as that will diffuse its main focus. In spite of the absence of any direct focus on gender equality, MGNREGA seems to have benefited women in multiple ways. In fact, a large number of studies have shown that women have benefited from MGNREGA in many ways (Khera and Nayak 2009, Datar 2008, Pankaj and Tankha 2010, Sudarshan 2009, Hanumantha Rao 2008). These studies have shown that women have participated in MGNREGA on a large scale in most states in India; have received equal wages with men and earned incomes of their own; single women households and female-headed households have particularly benefited by MGNREGA as it provided them minimum incomes and food security; and participating women in general are frequently feeling empowered as they have now some say in decision making. (Tomar. A, Beg M.A., Varshney. I. 2014)

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on secondary data which has been collected from the relevant literature consisting of research studies, magazines, journals, reviews, information collected from the internet and publications by various academic organizations, management experts and researchers. The present paper has made an attempt to study the participation of women in MGNREGA in various states of India and also in Anand District.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Women employment through MGNREGA:

Presently, the MNREGA is being implemented in the all rural districts of the country. MGNREGA has resulted into major financial inclusion where in bank/post office accounts have been opened for the families getting employment. Ministry has advised all the states to ensure payment of wages fully through the accounts. Table 1 presents the data relating to women employment through MGNREGA in different States of India. The figure indicates the effective participation of women in the employment generated through MGNREGA. The highest employment status amongst women in terms of person days can be seen in Kerala (93.37%), Puducherry (85.65%) Goa (75.03%) Tamilnadu (84.04%) and Rajasthan (67.76%). The lowest employment share of women is followed by

Uttar Pradesh with 22.17 percent. However some States such as Uttar Pradesh (22.17%), Jammu & Kashmir (23.11%), Mizoram (23.52%), Assam (24.75%) and Nagaland (25.16%) have to initiate more efforts to increase the ratio of women employment through MNREGA. The data revealed to the financial year 2013-2014.

Table 2 presents the employment status of MGNREGA and women employment through MGNREGS in different districts of Anand. The highest employment status amongst women in terms of person days can be seen in Tarapur with 45.66 Percent, by Khambhat (42.05%), Petlad (40.37%), Anklia (33.78%). When we consider the total employment status of Anand District through MGNREGA, a total of 33,05,473 person days employment is generated, out of which the share of women stands at 38.76 percent. This clearly indicates that rural women of Anand district are in the process of improving their quality of life by joining the wage workforce of MGNREGA which can in turn enhance the developmental activities at the village level itself empowering rural women economically.

Conclusion:

MGNREGA is an Act that aims to strengthen the women employment by enforcing that about 33

Sr. No.	State	Total (person days)	Women(person days)	Women participation (%)
1.	Odisha	71182273	23894128	33.57
2.	Rajasthan	183855567	124575936	67.76
3.	Chhattisgarh	129896819	63035827	48.53
4.	Jharkhand	43622273	13913080	31.89
5.	Madhya Pradesh	111154518	48120951	42.64
6.	Tripura	52140820	24564663	47.11
7.	Maharashtra	5173627	22601053	43.7
8.	Gujarat	23029623	10124366	43.96
9.	West Bengal	229634053	81659753	35.45
10.	Kerala	86602968	80859312	93.37
11.	Karnataka	17885974	33491676	46.59
12.	Bihar	86233855	30153407	34.94
13.	Mizoram	13364810	4036279	23.52
14.	Haryana	11788219	4917318	41.71
15.	Himachal Pradesh	28249579	17660344	60.64
16.	Uttar Pradesh	175359678	38875025	22.17
17.	Nagaland	18380388	5317893	25.16
18.	Assam	29847172	7387472	24.75
19.	Uttarakhand	16562026	7433020	45.99
20.	Meghalaya	21583266	8982318	41.94
21.	Punjab	13468053	7102959	46.69
22.	Tamil Nadu	3677225583	308681745	84.04
23.	Sikkim	4403267	1974902	44.81
24.	Manipur	11323102	3990866	36.18
25.	Jammu And Kashmir	33820240	7829085	23.11
26.	Goa	115261	86787	75.03
27.	Arunachal Pradesh	3655712	1109495	29.39
28.	Lakshadweep	14436	3248	29.18
29.	Andaman And Nicobar	801448	378149	46.82
30.	Puducherry	845264	723973	85.65
31.	Andhra Pradesh	299386600	175681721	58.71
Total		2363852776	2363852776	45.64

Source : www.nrega.nic.in

Sr. No.	District	Total	Women	Women%
1	Anand	42096	14642	34.78
2	Anklav	28339	9573	33.78
3	Borsad	87542	33508	38.28
4	Khambhat	43068	18306	42.5
5	Petlad	51553	20811	40.37
6	Sojitra	23518	8618	36.64
7	Tarapur	26517	12107	45.66
8	Umreth	32840	12517	38.12
Total		335473	130082	38.76

Source: www.nrega.nic.in

percent of total work force should be women and also that there will be equal wages for men and women. It is playing a substantial role in creating employment for women thereby, leading to greater independence and self-respect among women. The present paper has made an attempt to study the participation of women employment through MNREGA in various states of India and also in districts of Anand. The highest employment status amongst women in terms of person days can be seen in Kerela. When we consider the total employment status of Anand District through MNREGA, a total of 33, 05,473 person days employment is generated, out of which the share of women stands at 38.76 percent. The highest employment status amongst women in terms of person days can be seen in Tarpur with 45.66 percent.

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WEB SOURCES

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