



EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH THE MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME (MGNREGS) :AN ANALYTICAL STUDY IN ANANTHAPURAMU DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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Abstract

The process of empowerment is taking place at so many levels that it is quite difficult to gauge the actual nature and extent of empowerment in improving status of women. Certainly, the process is entangled in the struggles of civil society against the state, and under the weight of historical practice and ongoing debates over the appropriate role of ideologies. The realities of women in rural India are difficult to comprehend. Women, most of the times, are even deprived of some of the fundamental human rights and this denial is justified often in the name of tradition. In rural areas, women are generally relegated mainly to household duties and cheap labour. They are not perceived as substantial income generating source for the family. Without the power to work and earn a good income, their voices are silenced, as they are economically dependent and have no physical capacity to work and earn living requirements for them.

Keywords: Empowerment, Lab Our, Human Rights.

Introduction

The women in India had enjoyed considerable respect and wisdom to participate as per to their choice in different social, cultural, political, religious functions and economic activities and had enjoyed a very respectable position and honour in the prevailing socio-cultural system during *Vedic* period. In fact the presence of women along with their better offs was regarded compulsory for the success of performing various social and religious functions. However, it was after 500 BC the social status of women started deteriorating due to the sudden development of various social evils. The changing socio-cultural system during the post Vedic period had disturbed and increasingly reduced the participation of women in carrying out certain activities and were largely deprived the opportunities of education, participating in outdoor socio- economic and cultural activities. Though the upper caste women had the higher privilege and greater freedom to participate in certain activities than the lower caste women, as the consequences the former groups of women had found the opportunity to improve their socio-economic status in the society at higher level than the latter groups of women.

Empowerment of Women

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives' communities and in their society by acting on issues that they define as important. Empowerment occurs within sociological, psychological, economic spheres and at various levels, such as individual, group, and community and challenges our assumptions about the status quo, asymmetrical power relationships and social dynamics (Sengupta, 1998).

Empowerment of women involves many things - economic opportunity, property rights, political representation, social equality, personal rights and so on. The Indian society is a patriarchal system in which women's' position within the structure and duties towards the family precede their rights as individuals. Many people who argue for empowerment of women do so either with or without a full

understanding of the conflicts between the historical and contemporary status of women in the patriarchy and the goals of empowerment. Certainly we may track a great many changes that have occurred in the direction of change in the status of women in India but women have yet to achieve or realize many of the ideal stages of social, psychological, economic and political empowerment. Hence it is certainly more appropriate to define empowerment as a process rather than an end-point (Baxi, L.S., 1987).

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is one of the most progressive legislations enacted in India, since independence. It is a bold and unique experiment in the provision of rural employment in India. Further, it is the first expression of the right to work as an enforceable legal entitlement. In a country where labour is the only economic asset for millions of people, gainful employment is a prerequisite for the fulfillment of other basic needs and empowered the rights like– the right to life, the right to food, and the right to education.

The MGNREGA, with its guarantee of 100 days of unskilled work for every household, has been envisaged as a gender sensitive scheme. It allows for creche facilities on work sites, insists that one-third of the participants are women, and wages do not discriminate between the male and female. However, a gender analysis of the programme is necessary to make rural assets generation an inclusive process and address the crises underlying an increasing feminization of poverty in India.

There is much that the MGNREGA promises from the perspective of women's empowerment as well. Most boldly, in a rural milieu marked by stark inequalities between men and women – in the opportunities for gainful employment afforded as well as wage rates – MGNREGA represents action on both these counts. The act stipulates that wages will be equal for men and women. It is also committed to ensuring that at least 33 per cent of the workers shall be women. By generating employment for women at fair wages in the village, MGNREGA can play a substantial role in economically empowering women and laying the basis for greater independence and self-esteem.

Objectives of the Study

Though the general objective of the study the impact of MGNREGS on empowerment of women and subsequent problems of women in the field the specific objectives of the study are as follows.

1. To study the position of women in India and her social, economic empowerment levels.
2. To examine the employment and unemployment status of women in rural and urban areas.
3. To study various provisions of MGNREGA, with particular reference to women workers.
4. To study the socio economic profile of the study area and the sample respondents of rural women.
5. To find out the problems faced by rural women while participating in MGNREGS programme.
6. To critically examine the impact of MGNREGS on socio-economic empowerment of rural women.
7. To suggest the measures to bring more awareness on the MGNREGS among women and for effective implementation of the programme to enhance the empowerment of rural women.

Methodology

The study is exploratory in nature. The statistical data for the study have been mobilized both from the primary and the secondary sources. Primary data has been collected from the women beneficiaries of Anantapuramu district of Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh through a well designed interview schedule. Apart from canvassing the interview schedule, relevant field level data/information was also

collected through formal discussions with the implementing staff at field level. The secondary data has been collected from different reports published by Panchayat and Rural Development Department (Government of Andhra Pradesh), Ministry of Rural Development (Government of India), Census of India (2011), Directorate of Economic and Statistics (Government of Andhra Pradesh), the information is also collected from MGNREGS implementing agency of Anantapuramu district (DWMA) and reports submitted by vigilance teams, social audit teams and annual reports, books, journals and periodicals. The data thus collected, have been analyzed for specific interpretation.

Area of the study

The NREGP programme was formally launched in Anantapuramu district of Andhra Pradesh on 2nd February 2006. The implementation of the programme was started in all 63 Mandal's of the Anantapuramu district from 2006-2007 financial year onwards. Anantapuramu district is the driest part of the State, where the average annual rainfall is 540mm. The dry condition, of Anantapuramu district often results in low crop yield or the loss of crops, which in turn forces the agricultural labor as well as small and marginal farmers to migrate to different parts of the state, sometimes neighboring states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra etc. Under these pathetic conditions, the launching of NREGP is considered as the boon by the labourers for their livelihoods. As such, Anantapuramu district was purposively selected for the study to examine the pros and cons of the MGNREGP programme on women's empowerment.

Sampling

The provisions of MGNREGS have been extended to all sections of the society irrespective sex economic, social and political status of the rural families. All the Mandals, revenue villages and hamlets in the district are covered by the programme. For effective study a purposive random sampling method was followed. For the collection of women beneficiaries views and ideas on the impact of the MGNREG scheme, two revenue mandals from each revenue division, two revenue villages from each mandal 30 women workers from each village three Gram Panchayats from three Revenue Divisions of Anantapuramu district were selected by random sampling method. From each selected Gram Panchayat 30 women workers were selected on simple random sampling method. This altogether covers 3 revenue divisions six revenue mandals, twelve revenue villages and 360 women workers who are engaged in MGNREGS from beginning of the scheme in their respective villages.

Limitations of the study

While the study has taken a broad view of the program and its impact on women empowerment, it has restricted its purview to gender aspects viz. impact of the program on gender and women's access to productive employment and income generation. The other aspects viz. wages, facilities at work spot, payment of wages and issues relating to overall impact of the program on women empowerment etc. have been covered. While examining the gender issues, the determinants and influences of women's participation, their (i.e. women's) access to work opportunities and dimensions such as women's time constraints, impact of work design and payment system on women workers etc. are being examined in detail.

Enrollment of the Respondents under MGNREGS

The authorities issue job cards for each house hold if they apply according to the provisions of MGNREGA. Even after issuing job cards some women participate in MGNREGS works in the same year or following years. Table 1 gives the details of year of registration of sample women under MGNREGS.

Table-1
Year Wise Enrollment of the Respondents under MGNREGS

S. No.	Year of Registration	Caste Categories				Total
		ST	SC	BC	OC	
1	2012	15 (41.67)	22 (21.15)	47 (27.49)	9 (18.37)	93 (25.83)
2	2013	11 (30.56)	38 (36.54)	71 (41.52)	12 (24.49)	132 (36.67)
3	2014	4 (11.11)	17 (16.35)	18 (10.53)	4 (8.16)	43 (11.94)
4	2016	2 (5.56)	13 (12.50)	11 (6.43)	10 (20.41)	36 (10.00)
5	2017	2 (5.56)	8 (7.69)	18 (10.53)	11 (22.45)	39 (10.83)
6	2018	2 (5.56)	6 (5.77)	6 (3.51)	3 (6.12)	17 (4.72)
Total		36 (100.00)	104 (100.00)	171 (100.00)	49 (100.00)	360 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

* Figures in parenthesis are Percentages

The data in table 1 shows that a preponderant majority i.e. 41.67 per cent of the ST respondents registered under MGNREGS in 2012. In case of other social categories the year of registration in 2012 sharply fallen and stood at 27.49 per cent, 21.15 per cent and 18.37 per cent in case of BC, SC and OC respondents. In 2013 36.67 per cent of the respondents registered under the scheme. In this regard BC respondents top the list with 41.52 per cent and followed by SC, ST and OC respondents with 36.54 per cent, 30.56 per cent and 24.49 per cent respectively. In 2014 16.35 per cent of the SC respondents, 11.11 per cent ST respondents, 10.53 per cent of BC respondent and 8.16 per cent of OC respondents registered under the scheme. With regard to the registration of respondents in 2016 there are wider variations among various social categories. In 2016 20.41 per cent of OC respondents registered and it sharply fallen to 5.56 per cent in case of ST respondents. Such variations were also noticeable in case of 2017. Here also OC respondents top the list with 22.45 per cent and ST respondents confined to 5.56 per cent. Again in 2018 OC respondents are ahead with 6.12 per cent and followed by SC, ST and BC respondents with 5.77 per cent, 5.56 per cent and 3.51 per cent respectively.

Impact of MGNREGS on Equal Wage

In spite of the “Minimum Wages Act” and other regulations, the agricultural wages in rural India are very low and discriminatory in nature. There is a lot difference between the wages of men and women workers. With the passage of MGNREGA-2005, the scenario totally changed. The act specifically mentioned that both the men and women shall be paid equal wages. The impact of the MGNREGS on equal wages as reported sample respondents was presented in table 2.

Table-2
Impact of MGNREGS Equal Wage rates for both Men & Women on Agriculture works

S. No.	Item	Caste Category				Total
		ST	SC	BC	OC	
1	Increased	17 (47.22)	39 (37.50)	89 (52.05)	12 (24.49)	157 (43.61)
2	Marginally Increased	6 (16.67)	14 (13.46)	24 (14.04)	16 (32.65)	60 (16.67)
3	Status Quo	11 (30.56)	48 (46.15)	54 (31.58)	19 (38.78)	132 (36.67)
4	No Response	2 (5.56)	3 (2.88)	4 (2.34)	2 (4.08)	11 (3.06)
Total		36 (100.00)	104 (100.00)	171 (100.00)	49 (100.00)	360 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

* Figures in parenthesis are Percentages

Table 2 reveals that there is an impact of MGNREG programme on equal wages for both men and women on agriculture works. As per the reports of 52.05 per cent of the BC respondents, the wage rates for both men and women on agriculture works are equal in the study area. Among the ST respondents 47.22 per cent declared that the wage rates for both men and women on agriculture works has increased. Nearly 37.50 per cent of the SC and 24.49 per cent of the OC respondents also stated some amount of increase in paying equal wages for both men and women on agriculture works due to MGNREGS. With regard to marginal increase in equal wages for both men and women on agriculture works OC respondents stood at the top of the ladder with 32.65 per cent and followed by ST, BC and SC respondents with 16.67 per cent, 14.04 per cent and 13.46 per cent respectively. Nearly 46.15 per cent of the SC respondents reported no change with regard to equal wages for both men and women on agriculture works. About 38.78 per cent of OC, 31.58 per cent of BC and 30.56 per cent of ST respondents also reported status quo in case of equal wages for both men and women on agriculture works due to MGNREGS. As many as 5.56 per cent of ST respondent have no opinion on the equal wages for both men and women in study area. In the same way 4.08 per cent, 2.88 per cent and 2.34 per cent of OC, SC and BC respondents were also reported no opinion.

The study indicates that the equal wages for both men and women in agriculture works increased due to the implementation of MGNREGS in the study area has been expressed by 157 (43.61 %) respondents. Only negligible percentage of (3.06 %) respondents has no opinion on the equal wages for both men and women in study area. Nearly 36.67 per cent have expressed that there is no change in equal wages for both men and women in spite implementation of MGNREG programme in their area and 16.67 per cent are at the opinion that there is some improvement in paying equal wages for both men and women due to MGNREGS.

Impact on Savings

With the introduction of MGNREG Scheme the rural households got employment in major part of the year. The increased employment opportunities will increase income of the families and which in turn motivate them for savings. The impact of the scheme on savings of sample households is given in table 3.

Table – 3
Impact of MGNREGS on Personal Savings

S. No.	Item	Caste Category				Total
		ST	SC	BC	OC	
1	Increased	11 (30.56)	46 (44.23)	116 (67.84)	3 (6.12)	176 (48.89)
2	Marginally Increased	8 (22.22)	26 (25.00)	34 (19.88)	29 (59.18)	97 (26.94)
3	Status Quo	16 (44.44)	31 (29.81)	18 (10.53)	16 (32.65)	81 (22.50)
4	No Response	1 (2.78)	1 (0.96)	3 (1.75)	1 (2.04)	6 (1.67)
Total		36 (100.00)	104 (100.00)	171 (100.00)	49 (100.00)	360 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

* Figures in parenthesis are Percentages

As per table 3 the MGNREGS increased the personal savings of the sample respondents in the study area as stated by 67.84 per cent of BC, 44.23 per cent of SC, 30.56 per cent of ST and only 6.12 per cent of OC respondents. Marginal improvement regarding Personal savings is reported nearly 59.18 per cent of OC respondents and they were followed by SC, ST and BC respondents with 25 per cent, 22.22 per cent and 19.88 per cent respectively. As per the reports of 44.44 per cent of ST respondents no change is observable with regard to personal savings. Status quo respondents sharply declined to 32.65 per cent in case of OC respondents and it further declined in case of SC (29.81 %) and BC (10.53 %) respondents. 1 out of 49 constituting 2.78 per cent of ST respondents have no opinion on the increasing personal savings. In the same way 2.04 per cent of OC, 1.75 per cent of BC and 0.96 per cent of SC respondents have also no opinion.

As per the present study nearly half (48.89 %) of the sample respondents reported that there is significant improvement in the increasing of personal savings due to employment created by MGNREG programme. Moreover nearly 26.94 per cent of the respondents observed marginal improvement regarding personal savings in the study area with regard to MGNREGS. About 22.50 per cent of the respondents stated that there is no change on the increasing of their personal savings. Nearly 1.67 per cent of the respondents have not framed any opinion on the personal savings in their households.

Impact on the generation of Employment opportunities

The MGNREG programme provides new avenues for employment opportunities to working population. The employment which was generated through MGNREG scheme is known as direct employment. The opinions of sample respondents on the generation of employment man days through MGNREGS are presented in table 4.

Table – 4
Impact of MGNREGS on Employment opportunities

S. No.	Item	Caste Category				Total
		ST	SC	BC	OC	
1	Increased	19 (52.78)	68 (65.38)	94 (54.97)	18 (36.73)	199 (55.28)
2	Marginally Increased	7 (19.44)	22 (21.15)	29 (16.96)	21 (42.86)	79 (21.94)
3	Status Quo	8 (22.22)	12 (11.54)	44 (25.73)	9 (18.37)	73 (20.28)
4	No Response	2 (5.56)	2 (1.92)	4 (2.34)	1 (2.04)	9 (2.50)
Total		36 (100.00)	104 (100.00)	171 (100.00)	49 (100.00)	360 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

* Figures in parenthesis are Percentages

It is clear from table 5 that the SC respondents stood at the top of ladder with 65.38 per cent regard to significant increase opinions on the generation (Man Days) of employment opportunities through MGNREGS in the study area. They are followed by BC respondents with 54.97 per cent in second place, ST respondents with 52.78 per cent in third place and OC respondents with 36.73 per cent in fourth place. Marginal increase on the generation (Man Days) of employment opportunities through MGNREGS is reported by 42.86 per cent of the OC respondents and they are immediately followed by SC respondents with 21.15 per cent and they in turn followed by ST respondents and BC respondents with 19.44 per cent and 16.96 per cent respectively. In case of status quo on the generation (Man Days) of employment opportunities through MGNREGS the BC respondents stood at the top of list with 25.73 per cent. In this regard the second, third and fourth places were occupied by ST (22.22%), OC (18.37 %) and SC (11.54 %) respondents respectively. Among the ST category respondents 5.56 per cent have no opinion. In the same way 2.34 per cent of BC and 2.04 per cent of OC and 1.92 per cent of SC respondents have also no opinion.

It can be found that nearly 55.28 per cent of respondents reported that the MGNREG programme have positive impact on the generation (Man Days) of employment opportunities through MGNREGS. Of them 21.94 per cent reported marginal increase and 20.28 per cent reported Status quo or no change. About 2.50 per cent have no opinion.

Impact of MGNREGS on Cash availability

The women in rural India have little source of income. For their personal expenses they have to depend upon the male head of the family. Under the MGNREGS the wages of every worker are directly paid to worker. This gives scope for women to keep certain amount of money for their personal expenses. The impact of MGNREGS on the cash in the hands of sample women is given in table 5.

Table – 5
Impact of MGNREGS on Cash availability in the hands of the Respondents

S. No.	Item	Caste Category				Total
		ST	SC	BC	OC	
1	Increased	29 (80.56)	59 (56.73)	121 (70.76)	12 (24.49)	221 (61.39)
2	Marginally Increased	4 (11.11)	16 (15.38)	25 (14.62)	18 (36.73)	63 (17.50)
3	Status Quo	2 (5.56)	27 (25.96)	22 (12.87)	19 (38.78)	70 (19.44)
4	No Response	1 (2.78)	2 (1.92)	3 (1.75)	0 (0.00)	6 (1.67)
Total		36 (100.00)	104 (100.00)	171 (100.00)	49 (100.00)	360 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

* Figures in parenthesis are Percentages

Table 5 reveals that among all the four social category respondents, there are no wider variations in reporting significant improvement on availability of Cash in the hands of Respondents due to MGNREG programme in the study area. Around 80.56 per cent of ST, 70.76 per cent of BC, 56.73 per cent of SC and 24.49 per cent of the OC respondents reported significant increase on availability of Cash in the hands of Respondents. With regard to marginal increase on availability of Cash in the hands of Respondents OC respondents tops the list with 36.73 per cent. They are followed by SC respondents with 15.38 per cent and they in turn followed by BC and ST respondents with 14.62 per cent and 11.11 per cent respectively. According to 38.78 per cent of OC, 25.96 per cent of SC, 12.87 per cent of BC and 5.56 per cent of ST respondents, there is no change on availability of Cash in the hands of Respondents in the study area due to MGNREG programme. Around 2.78 per cent of ST, 1.92 per cent of SC, 1.75 per cent of BC and none of OC respondents has not given any opinion on the impact of MGNREG programme on availability of Cash in the hands of Respondents.

It can be found that as many as 61.39 per cent of the sample respondents declared that MGNREG programme have positive impact on availability of cash in the hands of respondents. Among them 17.50 per cent reported marginal increased and 28.06 per cent reported significant change. Nearly 19.44 per cent reported status quo on availability of cash in the hands of respondents due to MGNREG programme in the study area. Negligible percentage (1.67 %) of the respondents has no opinion on the increase on availability of cash in the hands of respondents.

Impact of MGNREGS on Clearing of Old Debts

The increased opportunities of employment are expected to improve the income levels of households and which turn is expected to reduce the debt burden of the respondents are presented in table 6.

Table – 6
Impact of MGNREGS on Clearing of Old Debts

S. No.	Item	Caste Category				Total
		ST	SC	BC	OC	
1	Increased	9 (25.00)	14 (13.46)	18 (10.53)	12 (24.49)	53 (14.72)
2	Marginally Increased	19 (52.78)	68 (65.38)	125 (73.10)	8 (16.33)	220 (61.11)
3	Status Quo	8 (22.22)	21 (20.19)	27 (15.79)	29 (59.18)	85 (23.61)
4	No Response	0 (0.00)	1 (0.96)	1 (0.58)	0 (0.00)	2 (0.56)
Total		36 (100.00)	104 (100.00)	171 (100.00)	49 (100.00)	360 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

* Figures in parenthesis are Percentages

It is clear from table 6 that the ST (25 %) respondents stood at the top of ladder with regard to significant increase in clearing old debts through MGNREG Programme in the study area. They are followed by OC respondents with 24.49 per cent in second place, SC respondents with 13.46 per cent in third place and BC respondents with 10.53 per cent in fourth place. Marginal increase in clearing old debts through MGNREG Programme is reported by 73.10 per cent of BC respondents and they are immediately followed by SC respondents with 65.38 per cent and they in turn followed by ST respondents and OC respondents with 52.78 per cent and 16.33 per cent respectively. In case of status quo in clearing old debts through MGNREG Programme, there are no wider variations among the four social categories. The OC respondents stood at the top of list with 59.18 per cent. In this regard the second, third and fourth places were occupied by ST (22.22%), SC (20.19 %) and BC (15.79 %) respondents respectively. Among the SC category respondents 0.96 per cent has no opinion. In the same way 0.58 per cent of BC respondents have also no opinion. None of the respondents from ST and OC categories denied to respond.

It can be found that nearly 75.83 per cent of the respondents reported that the MGNREG Programme have positive impact in clearing old debts through creation of employment opportunities. Of them 61.11 per cent reported marginal increase and 14.72 per cent reported significant change. Status quo or no change was reported by 23.61 per cent of the respondents. About 0.56 per cent has no opinion.

Impact on Decision Making

Generally the major as well as minor decisions in rural families of India will be taken by the head of the family, who are generally male except in case of women headed families. The role of women with regard to decision making is almost zero; as they do not enjoy economic independence in spite they add their labour to the income of family. One of the important objectives of MGNREG scheme is to provide economic independence to women and in turn inculcate the habit of participation in decision making process. The impact of MGNREGS on sample women is given in table 7.

Table – 7
Status of the Respondents in Decision Making on Family Matters

S. No.	Item	Caste Category				Total
		ST	SC	BC	OC	
1	Increased	13 (36.11)	31 (29.81)	89 (52.05)	11 (22.45)	144 (40.00)
2	Marginally Increased	6 (16.67)	16 (15.38)	21 (12.28)	5 (10.20)	48 (13.33)
3	Status Quo	16 (44.44)	55 (52.88)	58 (33.92)	32 (65.31)	161 (44.72)
4	No Response	1 (2.78)	2 (1.92)	3 (1.75)	1 (2.04)	7 (1.94)
Total		36 (100.00)	104 (100.00)	171 (100.00)	49 (100.00)	360 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

* Figures in parenthesis are Percentages

It is clear from table 7 that the BC (52.05 %) respondents stood at the top of ladder with regard to significant increase in the status of the respondents in decision making on family matters through MGNREG programme in the study area. They are followed by ST respondents with 36.11 per cent in second place, SC respondents with 29.81 per cent in third place and OC respondents with 22.45 per cent in fourth place. Marginal increase in status of the respondents in decision making on family matters through MGNREGS is reported by 16.67 per cent of ST respondents and they are immediately followed by SC respondents with 15.38 per cent and they in turn followed by BC respondents and OC respondents with 12.28 per cent and 10.20 per cent respectively. In case of status quo in status of the respondents in decision making on family matters through MGNREG programme, there are some variations among the four social categories. The OC respondents stood at the top of the list with 65.31 per cent. In this regard the second, third and fourth places were occupied by SC (52.88%), ST (44.44 %) and BC (33.92 %) respondents respectively. Among the ST category respondents 2.78 per cent have no opinion. In the same way 2.04 per cent of OC and 1.92 per cent of SC and 1.75 per cent of BC respondents have also no opinion.

It can be found that nearly 53.33 per cent of respondents reported that the MGNREG programme has positive impact in the increase in the status of the respondents in decision making on family matters through MGNREGS. Of them 40 per cent reported significant change and 13.33 per cent reported marginal increase. Status quo or no change was reported by 44.72 per cent of respondents. About 1.94 per cent has no opinion.

Respondents Participation in General Village Developmental Activities

The impact of MGNREGS on the respondents' participation in general village developmental activities is given in table 8.

Table – 8
Impact of MGNREGS on Participation in General Village Developmental Activities

S. No.	Item	Caste Category				Total
		ST	SC	BC	OC	
1	Increased	23 (63.89)	61 (58.65)	121 (70.76)	17 (34.69)	222 (61.67)
2	Marginally Increased	4 (11.11)	23 (22.12)	18 (10.53)	11 (22.45)	56 (15.56)
3	Status Quo	7 (19.44)	18 (17.31)	29 (16.96)	20 (40.82)	74 (20.56)
4	No Response	2 (5.56)	2 (1.92)	3 (1.75)	1 (2.04)	8 (2.22)
Total		36 (100.00)	104 (100.00)	171 (100.00)	49 (100.00)	360 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

* Figures in parenthesis are Percentages

The data in table 8 shows that there are wider variations with regard to positive impact of MGNREGS on participation in general village developmental activities. Among various social categories nearly 81.29 per cent of the BC respondents reported positive impact of MGNREGS in their participation in general village developmental activities. Among them 70.76 per cent reported significant increase and 10.53 per cent reported marginal change on participation in general village developmental activities. About 75 per cent of the ST respondents also stated positive impact. Out of which 63.89 per cent reported significant increase and 11.11 per cent reported marginal change in their participation in general village developmental activities. Nearly 80.77 per cent of the SC respondents declared positive impact of MGNREGS on the participation in general village developmental activities. Among them 58.65 per cent reported significant increase and 22.12 per cent reported marginal change. Around 57.14 per cent of the OC respondents reported either significant or marginal increase of MGNREGS in their participation in general village developmental activities. Among them 34.69 per cent reported significant change and 22.45 per cent reported marginal increase. With regard to status quo OC respondents tops the list with 40.82 per cent and they are followed by ST respondents with 19.44 per cent SCs with 17.31 per cent and BCs with 16.96 per cent. Negligible percentage of respondents in all social categories has no opinion on the impact of MGNREGS on their participation in general village developmental activities.

The study indicates that as many as 61.67 per cent of the sample respondents reported significant change in their participation in general village developmental activities. About 15.56 per cent of the respondents reported marginal increase and 20.56 per cent reported status quo in their participation in general village developmental activities. Only 2.22 per cent of the respondents have no opinion on the impact of MGNREGS in their participation in general village developmental activities.

Independent decision making in Voting

The increased personal stature at family and society level due to MGNREGS, gives the scope for independent decision making in voting. Table 9 presents the details of the respondents on the amount independence enjoying women in voting during elections.

Table – 9
Impact of MGNREGS on Independent decision making in Voting

S. No.	Item	Caste Category				Total
		ST	SC	BC	OC	
1	Increased	18 (50.00)	66 (63.46)	96 (56.14)	6 (12.24)	186 (51.67)
2	Marginally Increased	4 (11.11)	17 (16.35)	26 (15.20)	5 (10.20)	52 (14.44)
3	Status Quo	12 (33.33)	19 (18.27)	46 (26.90)	37 (75.51)	114 (31.67)
4	No Response	2 (5.56)	2 (1.92)	3 (1.75)	1 (2.04)	8 (2.22)
Total		36 (100.00)	104 (100.00)	171 (100.00)	49 (100.00)	360 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

* Figures in parenthesis are Percentages

As per table 9 majority of the respondents of three social categories reported significant change on the impact of MGNREGS on decision making while voting during elections. A preponderant majority i.e. 63.46 per cent of the SC respondents reported significant change. In the same way 56.14 per cent of BC, 50 per cent of ST respondents declared significant change on decision making while voting during elections. But it sharply decreased to 12.24 per cent in case of OC respondents. With regard to some kind of increase in the decision making while voting during elections SC respondents are ahead with 16.35 per cent and followed by BC, ST and OC respondents with 15.20 per cent, 11.11 per cent and 10.20 per cent respectively. Status quo on the decision making while voting during elections is reported by as many as 75.51 per cent of OC respondents. It sharply fell down to 33.33 per cent, 26.90 per cent and 18.27 per cent of ST, BC and SC respondents respectively. No opinion is formed on the impact of MGNREGS on decision making while voting during elections is reported by 5.56 per cent of ST, 2.04 per cent of OC, 1.92 per cent of SC and 1.75 per cent of BC respondents.

The study denotes that more than half (51.67 %) of the respondents reported significant increase on decision making while voting during elections. On the other hand nearly 31.67 per cent of the sample respondents reported status quo on decision making while voting during elections. Marginal increase in the decision making while voting during elections was reported by 14.44 per cent of the respondents. Negligible percentage (2.22%) of the respondents has no opinion on the impact of MGNREGS on the possession of household assets.

Impact on Social Solidarity and Village Integration

The improved economic status of farmers and agricultural labourers on one hand and employment throughout the year is expected to increase social solidarity and village integration. gives the details of the opinions of sample respondents on the impact of MGNREGS on social solidarity and village integration in the study area.

Table - 10
Impact of MGNREGS on Social Solidarity and Village Integration

S. No.	Responses	ST	SC	BC	OC	Total
1	Increased	7 (20.83)	30 (29.29)	15 (8.57)	11 (21.94)	63 (17.60)
2	Marginally Increased	11 (29.17)	39 (37.37)	36 (21.05)	16 (32.5)	102 (28.32)
3	Status Quo	16 (45.83)	33 (31.31)	120 (70.00)	21 (43.61)	190 (52.81)
4	No Response	2 (4.17)	2 (2.02)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.00)	5 (1.27)
Total		36 (100.00)	104 (100.00)	171 (100.00)	49 (100.00)	360 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

* Figures in parenthesis are Percentages

Table 10 reveals that there is an impact of MGNREGS on social solidarity and village integration. As per the reports, the SC respondents are ahead with 29.29 per cent regarding the increase of social solidarity and village integration. Among the OC respondents 21.94 per cent declared that the on social solidarity and village integration have increased. They are followed by ST (20.83 %) and BC (8.57 %) respondents respectively. Nearly 37.37 per cent of SC, 32.50 per cent of OC, 29.17 per cent of ST and 21.05 per cent of BC respondents stated marginal increase on social solidarity and village integration due to MGNREGS. With regard to no change or status quo the BC respondents are ahead with 70 per cent. About 45.83 per cent of ST, 43.61 per cent of OC and 31.31 per cent of SC respondents also reported status quo on social solidarity and village integration due to MGNREGS. Negligible percentage of respondents has no opinion among all four social categories. None of the OC respondent stated that they have no opinion.

The study indicates that the Social Solidarity and Village Integration increased due to creation of MGNREGS in study area have been expressed by 45.92 per cent of respondents. Among them 17.60 per cent reported significant change and 28.32 per cent are at the opinion that there is some improvement on Social Solidarity and Village Integration due to MGNREGS. Only negligible percentage of (1.27 %) respondents has no opinion on social solidarity and village integration in study area. While majority of the respondents i.e. 52.81 per cent have expressed that there is no change on social solidarity and village integration even after participation in MGNREGS.

Findings of the study

1. As per the study nearly 26.11 per cent became enlightened with MGNREGS through television. About 15 per cent of the respondents became aware of the scheme through friends/relatives/neighbours. About 14.72 per cent of the women respondents became awareness on MGNREGS by Government officials. NGO representatives are the agents of awareness in case of 13.89 per cent of the respondents. Panchayat members are the agents of awareness in case of 10 per cent of the respondents. Through SHG members 8.06 per cent of the respondents came to know about MGNREGS. News papers enlighten 7.22 per cent of the respondents. 11 out of 360 respondents became aware of MGNREGS through radio. Only 1.94 per cent of all categories of respondents became aware of MGNREGS by other agents like village leaders, caste organization leaders etc.

2. The study makes it clear that nearly 62.50 per cent of the total sample is aware of the provision of right to get payment within a fortnight. The awareness level of sample respondents on the provision of medical assistance for injury in the work site stood at 58.89 per cent of the total sample. Around 54.72 per cent of the sample respondent women reported that they are aware of equal wages for men and women. Of the total sample 53.06 per cent of sample respondent women stated that they are aware of the provision of eligibility for unemployment allowance. The role of Grama Sabha in the implementation of MGNREGS is known to 55.56 per cent of the respondents. The provision of no labour displacing machinery is known to 46.67 per cent of sample women. Nearly, 45.54 per cent of the sample women declared that they are aware of the provision of work within 5 kilometers radius. The knowledge of sample women is confined to 43.89 per cent with regard to the provision of hundred days of employment for household. Knowledge about Minimum wages is confined to 37.50 per cent of the total sample. 129 out of 360 respondents are aware of ex-gratia payment for death and disability.
3. As many as 63.89 per cent of respondents stated that they participated in Grama Sabha meetings at one point of time or other. Nearly, 36.11 per cent of respondents not participated in any Grama Sabha meeting.
4. The study indicates that nearly 55.65 per cent of total sample respondents attended Grama Sabha meetings two times. About 31.30 per cent attended only one Grama Sabha meeting. Nearly, 7.83 per cent attended Grama Sabha meeting three times. Four and above Grama Sabha meetings were attended by 5.22 per cent of the sample respondents.
5. The study indicates that the equal wages for both men and women in agriculture works increased due to the implementation of MGNREGS in the study area has been expressed by 157 (43.61 %) respondents. Only negligible percentage of (3.06 %) respondents has no opinion on the equal wages for both men and women in study area. Nearly 36.67 per cent have expressed that there is no change in equal wages for both men and women in spite of implementation of MGNREG programme in their area and 16.67 per cent are at the opinion that there is some improvement in paying equal wages for both men and women due to MGNREGS.
6. It can be found that nearly 55.28 per cent of respondents reported that the MGNREG programme have positive impact on the generation (Man Days) of employment opportunities through MGNREGS. Of them 21.94 per cent reported marginal increase and 20.28 per cent reported Status quo or no change.
7. It is found that as many as 61.39 per cent of the sample respondents declared that MGNREG programme have positive impact on availability of cash in the hands of respondents. Among them 17.50 per cent reported marginal increased and 28.06 per cent reported significant change. Nearly 19.44 per cent reported status quo on availability of cash in the hands of respondents due to MGNREG Programme in the study area.
8. It is found that nearly 75.83 per cent of the respondents reported that the MGNREG Programme have positive impact in clearing old debts through creation of employment opportunities. Of them 61.11 per cent reported marginal increase and 14.72 per cent reported significant change. Status quo or no change was reported by 23.61 per cent of the respondents.
9. It can be found from table 5.23 that as many as 70.84 per cent of the sample respondents declared that MGNREG programme has positive impact with regard to respect from other family members as earning member in family. Among them 51.67 per cent reported significant increase and 19.17 per cent reported marginal increase. Nearly 27.78 per cent reported status quo in the respect from other family members as earning member in family due to MGNREGS in the study area.

10. The study denotes that nearly 62.78 per cent of the respondents denied the impact on the possession of permanent assets through income earned from MGNREGS. On the other hand nearly 33.89 per cent of sample respondents reported positive impact of the MGNREGS on the possession of permanent assets. Among them 20 per cent reported significant change and 13.89 per cent reported marginal increase.
11. It can be noted from the study that Status quo is reported by 44.72 per cent of the sample respondents. A preponderant majority i.e. 40 per cent of the respondents reported significant increase in sending the children for schools/colleges after benefiting by MGNREG programme. Nearly 13.33 per cent of the sample respondents reported marginal increase in the level of expenses of their children's education after generating employment opportunities through MGNREG programme.
12. It can be found that nearly 53.33 per cent of respondents reported that the MGNREG programme has positive impact in the increase in the status of the respondents in decision making on family matters through MGNREGS. Of them 40 per cent reported significant change and 13.33 per cent reported marginal increase. Status quo or no change was reported by 44.72 per cent of respondents.
13. The study indicates that the food consumption status of sample respondents and their families/households increased due to MGNREGS in study area has been expressed by 61.67 per cent of the total sample respondents. While majority of the respondents i.e. 20.56 per cent have expressed that there is no change in food consumption status of sample respondents and their families/households even after MGNREGS through watershed development programme in their area and 15.56 per cent are at the opinion that there is some improvement in food consumption status of sample respondents and their families/households due to MGNREGS.
14. The study indicates that as many as 61.67 per cent of the sample respondents reported significant change in their participation in general village developmental activities. About 15.56 per cent of the respondents reported marginal increase and 20.56 per cent reported status quo in their participation in general village developmental activities.
15. The study denotes that more than half (51.67 %) of the respondents reported significant increase on decision making while voting during elections. On the other hand nearly 31.67 per cent of the sample respondents reported status quo on decision making while voting during elections. Marginal increase in the decision making while voting during elections was reported by 14.44 per cent of the respondents.
16. The study indicates that the Social Solidarity and Village Integration increased due to creation of MGNREGS in study area have been expressed by 45.92 per cent of respondents. Among them 17.60 per cent reported significant change and 28.32 per cent are at the opinion that there is some improvement on Social Solidarity and Village Integration due to MGNREGS. Only negligible percentage of (1.27 %) respondents has no opinion on social solidarity and village integration in study area. While majority of the respondents i.e. 52.81 per cent have expressed that there is no change on social solidarity and village integration even after participation in MGNREGS.

Suggestions

1. There is a low awareness among some women workers of MGNREGA. To come out of this anomaly more awareness campaigns have to be conducted to educate the people about the provisions of the programme.
2. There is delay in making the payment of wages in the case of some workers. To avoid this appropriate steps are to be taken by the government to maintain the uniformity in wage payment.
3. Steps are to be taken to mitigate the problem of harassment of women at the worksites.

4. Some of the worksite facilities are very poor. So the steps should be taken to provide adequate worksite facilities. For this purpose separate mechanism should be evolved.
5. For comprehensive participation of women the women should be allowed to involve in planning for MGNREGS.
6. Women participation can be enhanced by appointing female supervisors on MGNREGS works and in conducting social audits
7. Women should be involved in the selection of works, which can create further mainstream employment in the village
8. The provision of food for women at the work sites creates enthusiasm among women to participate in MGNREGS works.
9. Designing special Statement of Rates (SOR) for women, preferably through conducting a systematic time and motion study, to ensure that they earn the set minimum wages.
10. Providing 100 days of work should be made mandatory to all including women workers, as this will accelerate the process of women's empowerment.
11. Improving the quantity of employment of MGNREGS by implementing all entitlements of workers including payment of the legal minimum wages, work site facilities and dependable first aid facilities. In addition, it is important to add some minimum social security such as health insurance. In other words, MGNREGS work needs to move towards quality employment.
12. Changes need to be made in the provision of asset ownership (on private as well as public lands) and in the distribution of returns of MGNREGS assets. When more than 100 million assets have been constructed under MGNREGS so far, it is necessary to develop a fair and just approach for asset ownership. In this context, we would like to recommend (1) joint ownership of all MGNREGA assets constructed on private lands, (2) fair share of women in the community assets and (3) just distribution of these assets between men and women.
13. Finally, MGNREGS implements as well as their maintenance are costly for MGNREGS workers. It costs time as well as money. It will be extremely useful if these are provided by the local Village Panchayat and their timely maintenance is also ensured by them.

Conclusion

While concluding this study, one can observe that the positive and negative impacts of MGNREGA on women's empowerment cannot be ignored on the grounds that these are unintended or not covered under the main objectives of MGNREGA. By addressing these impacts will not only help women's empowerment but it will also help in achieving medium and long term goals of MGNREGA and help in moving towards optimum use of labour in the economy. It will also help in moving towards some desirable national level social policies.

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Government Orders

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2. G.O.Ms.No.80, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development (RD-II) Department, dated 22-03-2006.
3. G.O.Ms.No.220, PR & RD (Elec. & Rules) Dept. “Reservation of seats and offices of Gram Panchayats Mandal Parishads and Zilla Parishad Rules 2006”, dated 25.5.2006.

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