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Impact assessment of MGNREGA on women empowerment - A case study of Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

MGNREGA, which was enacted on 7th September 2005, is an outcome that resulted when GOI has thought of a flagship programme that could subsume the earlier employment generation programmes which were merely confined to subsidy provision. The success of MGNREGA has been well reflected in empowerment of rural women participated in the scheme besides improved livelihood security of the rural people. The present study was conducted in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh with the objectives i) to study the socio-economic profile of the MGNREGA beneficiaries, ii) to assess the impact of MGNREGA on women empowerment in the district. It was found that majority of participants in the district were women (55.56%) and majority of the respondents belonged to SC category (44.44%). It was found that majority of the beneficiaries (83.33%) belonged to no or low education group (illiterates and below high school). Majority of the beneficiaries were marginal farmers (58.89%) followed by landless agricultural laborers (25.56%) and small farmers (15.56%). Highest empowerment (100%) was perceived by the beneficiaries in the parameters like increased ability to contribute towards family income, receiving increased wage rates in all work types and employability for more days in a year.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Socio-economic characters, Women Empowerment, Participation, Employment Generation

Introduction

Rural India which represents a huge population is characterized by low income levels, not even adequate to ensure the minimum quality of the life compatible with physical well-being due to which the planning and strategy of rural development was changed. People's participation is understood as one of the foremost pre-requisites of development process both from procedural and philosophical perspectives. Hence the development planners, policy makers and the administrators have made an endeavor to make the plans participatory in approach by providing access to various groups of the rural people. (Sarkar, n.d.). Therefore, since independence, employment generation programmes in India have been repeatedly redesigned to generate productive employment and additional income and aimed for the alleviation of rural poverty. Prominent among them are Food for Work (FFW) (1977), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) (1980), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) (1983), etc., The NREP and RLEGP were merged under Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY) in 1989 which was revamped as the Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY- 1999), Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) -1993, National Food for Work Programme (NFWP) in 2004. Even though the above programmes yielded significant outcomes, still a large chunk of rural population are not absorbed for engaging in various rural developmental activities. These programmes were reported to have failed, primarily due to lack of sufficient resource allocation along with other limitations like lack of planned approach and confinement to mere subsidy providing programmes. In order to overcome the shortcomings of these earlier programmes, GOI has thought of a flagship welfare programme and enacted the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act on 7th September 2005 which was believed to subsume all the previous programmes and based on this act, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme was ceremoniously launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh on February 2nd 2006.

MGNREGA, a unique demand driven approach, since inception has been successfully contributing to the empowerment of participatory rural women in several spheres. The scheme was successful in lowering down the pressure that has been intensified on women due to

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unemployment and poverty since ages. Due to its provisions of providing guaranteed employment for 100 days, non-discriminatory and equal wage rate to both men and women and prioritizing women participation by envisaging that 1/3rd of all the participants should be women, the scheme is considered as the most successful gender sensitive program so far.

MGNREGA, through employment generation, has been successful in lowering down the pressure and hardships women have been facing resulted due to unemployment and poverty since so long. The provisions of the scheme like works within 5 km radius, regular and predictable working hours, equal wage rate for both men and women has enabled for the higher and active participation of women under the scheme.

Research Objectives

1. To study the socio-economic profile of the beneficiaries in the selected district
2. To assess the impact of MGNREGA on empowerment of women in the selected district.

Methodology

The study was conducted in 6 villages selected from 2 mandals namely Bapatla and Ponnur in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh during the year 2018-19. The study is based on primary data collected from 15 beneficiaries from each village thus making a total sample of 90 beneficiaries selected by means of multiple random sampling technique. The data was collected using pre tested questionnaire and data was analyzed using frequency, average and percentage analysis individually for 2 mandals and then the overall impact was assessed.

Results

Socio economic profile of MGNREGS beneficiary respondents Gender Wise and Social Category Wise participation of Respondents

a. Gender wise participation

As shown in table 1, the registered MGNREGS beneficiaries were studied with reference to gender and social categories in the selected district and mandals.

The participation of Women in both Bapatla (60%) and Ponnur mandals (51.11%) was higher than the specified percentage of 33 under MGNREGS. It was found that many women were inclined to participate in MGNREGS attributing to less exhaustive works in their proximity besides improving their livelihood.

b. Social category wise participation

When respondents were analyzed with regard to social category highest participation was recorded by SC category people in both the mandals, Bapatla (46.67) and Ponnur (42.22) contributing to overall 44.44 percent, followed by BC category participation and then by ST and OC categories similarly in both the mandals. It was observed that SC population were more willing to participate in MGNREGS works whereas OC population were more interested in other avenues of employment generation.

Socio economic characteristics of the respondents

Respondents were studied in terms of family size, occupation, age and education level of the head of the family and size of the land holding and the details are presented in Table 2. The average family size of respondents was found to be 3.44 in

Bapatla mandal and 3.22 in Ponnur mandal contributing to an overall average of 3.33 in the district. The average age of head of family is 42.46 and 40.68 in Bapatla and Ponnur mandals respectively with an overall average age of 41.57 years. It was interesting to note that both young and very old age people (up to 70-75 years of age) had also been participating actively under MGNREGS. This can be attributed to the fact that less drudgery MGNREGS works have facilitated for the participation of elderly persons.

The education level of the head of the household is also found to be influencing participation under the scheme. It is observed that only very few percent of people who have education above high school level (16.67 percent) had been participating under the scheme whereas higher proportion (83.33 percent) of rest of population (illiterates, those with education up to high school level were more interested to work under the scheme illiterates. It was also found that more no. of landless agricultural laborers and marginal farmers (25.56 and 58.89 percent respectively) were more inclined to participate in the MGNREGS works than small farmers (15.56 percent).

Impact on Empowerment of Women in the selected district

In order to assess the impact of MGNREGA, 13 parameters were taken into consideration. This study has attempted to understand how MGNREGS programme has contributed to the empowerment of women in general and specifically examine the particulars like contribution of women towards family income, knowledge about developmental activities ongoing in the village, ability to take decision in village and household, ability to operate postal account and bank accounts, self-reliance, participation in SHGs and social activities, managerial ability towards farming, attitude towards modern agriculture, ability to contribute for children's education, no. of work days per annum, their wage rates and their standard of living.

As evident from the details present in the Table 3, in the study areas, all the respondents (100%) have opined that all the women beneficiaries were empowered in the areas of being able to contribute towards family income owing to increased earning ability after implementation of scheme. Similarly, all the respondents (100%) have opined that the no. of work days as well as their wage rates have increased compared to the situations prior to implementation of the scheme. Followed by these, pertaining to analyzing the empowerment regarding other areas many respondents (87.78 percent) have opined that women became self-reliant after implementation of MGNREGS, while only 12.22 percent opined that has been the same. Next higher percentage of people (86.67 percent) have opined that women were either able to take their own decisions or contribute to the decision making in village and household after implementation of the scheme, while (85.76 percent) have opined that the standard of living of women beneficiaries and their families have improved owing to their employability after implementation of scheme while 81.11 percent have opined that there is increase in participation of women in SHGs and other social organizations and communal activities for their own and mutual benefits.

Likewise, equally, 76.67% of the respondents have opined for improved ability of women to tackle postal/bank accounts and improved knowledge of women regarding developmental activities in the village as they were enabled to be a part through participation in the works of the scheme while 75.56 percent opined for improved contribution of women towards

children education, 74.44 percent opined for increase in savings made by women and 60% and 55.56% of respondents opined there is increase in progressive bent of mind towards modern farming and improved managerial ability towards farming respectively.

When individual mandals were considered, perceived empowerment was witnessed to be higher in Bapatla in terms of increased self-reliance, improved social participation and increased savings made whereas regarding other parameters it was higher in Ponnur mandal.

Table 1: Gender wise and social category wise distribution of Mgnregs respondents

S. No.	Gender Classes	Bapatla Mandal	Ponnur Mandal	Overall Guntur District
		Respondents (n=45)	Respondents (n=45)	Respondents (N=90)
1	Men	18 (40)	22(48.89)	40(44.44)
2	Women	27(60)	23(51.11)	50(55.56)
	Total	45(100)	45(100)	90(100)
Social category				
3	SCs	21 (46.67)	19 (42.22)	40(44.44)
4	STs	4(8.89)	5(11.11)	9(10)
5	BCs	19(42.22)	17(37.78)	36(40)
6	Others	1(2.22)	4(8.89)	5(5.56)
	Total	45(100)	45(100)	90(100)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate Percentage of total respondents

Table 2: Socio economic characteristics of the respondents

S. No.	Particulars	Bapatla Mandal	Ponnur Mandal	Overall Guntur District
		Beneficiaries (N=45)	Beneficiaries (N=45)	Beneficiaries (N=90)
1	Family size	3.44	3.22	3.33
2	Average age of the head of the household (Years)	42.46	40.68	41.57
Occupation				
i	Agriculture	35(77.78)	32(71.11)	67(74.44)
ii	Agricultural labour	10(22.22)	13(28.89)	23(25.55)
	Total	45(100)	45(100)	90(100)
Education				
I	Illiterates	6(13.33)	7(15.56)	13(14.44)
Ii	Primary education	15(33.33)	14(31.11)	29(32.22)
Iii	High School	19(42.22)	14(31.11)	33(36.67)
Iv	Above High School	5(11.11)	10(22.22)	15(16.67)
	Total	45(100)	45(100)	90(100)
Based on land holding				
i	Landless	10(22.22)	13(28.89)	23(25.56)
ii	Marginal (<2.5 acres)	28(62.22)	25(55.56)	53(58.89)
iii	Small (2.5-5 acres)	7(15.56)	7(15.56)	14(15.56)
	Total	45(100)	45(100)	90(100)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate Percentage of total respondents

Table 3: Impact of MGNREGS on Empowerment of Women

S No	Particulars	Bapatla (45)		Ponnur (45)		Overall (90)	
		Remained same	Increased	Remained same	Increased	Remained same	Increased
1	Average contribution towards the family income	-	45 (100)	-	45 (100)	-	90 (100)
2	Knowledge about development activities in the village	12 (26.66)	33 (73.33)	9 (20)	36 (80)	21 (23.33)	69 (76.67)
3	Ability to take decision in village and household	7 (15.56)	38 (84.44)	5 (11.11)	40 (88.89)	12 (13.33)	78 (86.67)
4	Ability to operate postal/bank accounts	9 (20)	36 (80)	12 (26.67)	33 (73.33)	21 (23.33)	69 (76.67)
5	Self-reliance	4 (8.89)	41 (91.11)	7 (15.56)	38 (84.44)	11 (12.22)	79 (87.78)
6	Participation in SHGs, other organizations and social activities	6 (13.33)	39 (86.67)	11 (24.44)	34 (75.55)	17 (18.89)	73 (81.11)
7	Increased managerial ability towards farming	21 (46.67)	24 (53.33)	19 (42.22)	26 (57.78)	40 (44.44)	50 (55.56)
8	Progressive bent of mind attitude towards modern agriculture	19 (42.22)	26 (57.78)	17 (37.77)	28 (62.22)	36 (40)	54 (60)
9	Ability to contribute for childrens' education	12 (26.67)	33 (73.33)	10 (22.22)	35 (77.78)	22 (24.44)	68 (75.56)
10	Savings made	10 (22.22)	35 (77.78)	13 (28.88)	32 (71.11)	23 (25.56)	67 (74.44)
11	Women workdays per annum	-	45 (100)	-	45 (100)	-	90 (100)
12	Wage rates in all work types	-	45 (100)	-	45 (100)	-	90 (100)
13	Standard of living	7 (15.56)	38 (84.44)	6 (13.33)	39 (86.67)	13 (14.44)	77 (85.56)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate Percentage of total respondents

Conclusion

The study concludes that the scheme has benefited women more, evident from their higher participation (55.56%) under

the scheme compared to men (44.44%) and regarding the social category it has benefited SCs (44.44%) compared to other social groups. Most of the beneficiaries were marginal

farmers (58.89%) and with regard to education level of the beneficiaries the major group belonged to education level upto high school (36.67%).

The opinion survey conducted to assess the impact of MGNREGS on empowerment of women indicated that all the respondents (100 percent) perceived that women were empowered in areas like being able to contribute towards family income, employability for more days in a year, being able to earn more wages in all work types followed by perception percentages in order of 87.78 percent, 86.67 percent, 85.56 percent, 81.11 percent, 76.67 percent, 76.67 percent, 75.56 percent, 74.44 percent, 60 percent and 55.56 percent for various categories like improved self-reliance, being able to take decisions in village and household, improved standards of living, improved participation in SHGs, organizations and social activities, being able to operate postal and bank accounts, having knowledge regarding developmental activities in village, being able to contribute for children education, being able to save more, having progressive bent of mind towards modern farming and improved managerial ability towards farming respectively.

Thus, MGNREGA is witnessed to have positive impact on women empowerment being an avenue for employment generation and thus poverty alleviation that led to overall improvement of rural participant women beneficiaries.

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