



Analysis of Women Empowerment through Mgnrega in Karnataka

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ABSTRACT

There is inequality and vulnerability of women in all sphere of life, they need to be empowered in all walks of life. Without active participation of women, establishment of new social order may not be a successful one. Social and economic development of women is necessary for overall development of any society or a country and women should realize that they have constitutional rights to quality health care, economic security and access to education. Now people are more comfortable to accept leading role of women in our society, though there are some exceptions. Our increasing dependency on service sector has created many entrepreneurial opportunities especially for women where they can excel their skills with maintaining balance in their life. The purpose of this paper was to study, how women empower themselves with an innovative MGNREGA Program, particularly of women from socially and economically marginalized groups which ultimately leads to sustainable development of society as a whole intended to find out various motivating and de-motivating internal and external factors of women empowerment in MGNREGA scheme in Karnataka MGNREGA firmly states that the status of women would not change merely by bringing legislations; it must be supported by change in the women's social circumstances and situations and also man's sexist attitude to women. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which entitles rural households to 100 days of casual employment on public works at the statutory minimum wage, contains special provisions to ensure full participation of women. The paper discusses status of women participation in Karnataka, MGNREGS scheme recognized the relevance of incorporating gender equality and empowerment in its design various provisions under the act and its guidelines aim to ensure that women equitable the provision like priority for women in the ratio one third of total workers Equal payment Positive impact on women empowerment in MGNREGA

KEYWORDS : Women empowerment, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)

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.

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 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. As argued by Bina Aggarwal, land rights to women can make a significant positive impact on women's economic empowerment. 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), 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.

MGNREGA

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.

Two important research questions for this study in the context of the above findings are: (1) whether MGNREGA has addressed the dynamics of gender inequality in our rural economy / society, i.e. whether it has influenced the factors that determine the unequal power relations between men and women in any significant way and (2) given the fact that MGNREGA has encouraged women's participation in the program, what kind of further steps are needed to strengthen empowerment of women under the program? And if there are some negative impacts observed, how can one address these impacts?

MGNREGA in Karnataka

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was notified on September, 2005. The Act provides a legal Guarantee of 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work at the minimum wage rate notified for agricultural labour prescribed in the State or else an unemployment allowance. The objective of the Act is to supplement wage employment opportunities in rural areas and in the process also build up durable assets.

Government of Karnataka (Government of Karnataka) launched MGNREGS on February 2, 2006 in 13 districts of the state. The scheme was subsequently expanded to all the districts by April 2008.

Karnataka has entered into the seventh year of its implementation of MGNREGS. For effective implementation and greater transparency of the scheme, Government of Karnataka has made necessary changes, based on its experiences, within the purview of the Act. MGNREGS is in implementation in 21862 Gram Panchayats of 1098 mandals with 1.3 Crore registered rural households.

Performance for the financial year 2012-13:

- 58.2 Lakh Households reported during the year
- 1.06 Crore wage seekers reported for wage employment
- 33.63 Cr person days generated, out of which 7.8 Cr (23.1%) were generated for SC households and 5.12 Cr (15.3%) were generated

for ST households.

- 57.8 days of average employment provided per household
- Rs. 106.97 is the average wage rate
- Labour : Material ratio is 74:26
- No. of households completed 100 days : 10.5 lakh

Processes in the Implementation of MGNREGS-karnataka.

Planning Process – Development Plan:

The objective of the planning process is to ensure that the district is prepared well in advance to offer productive employment on demand. The need to coordinate different levels of planning and to prepare a 'shelf of projects' to provide wage employment on demand requires preparation of an Annual Plan for the District. This is done before the commencement of the financial year so that the shelf in each GP is sufficient to meet the demand of wage seekers in the financial year.

Each GP will have a labour budget for the financial year to meet the demand of all wage seekers. Consequently, the Program Officer matches the demand for work for all the GPs in the Mandal with the employment opportunities arising from MGNREGS-AP projects. He/ She prepares a plan for the Mandal by consolidating proposals of Gram Panchayats and Mandal Panchayats. Subsequently, The Mandal Panchayat approves and forwards the Mandal Plan to the Zilla Parishad. District Program Coordinator prepares 'labour budget' by the December end for the district.

Table 1 Women Performance through MGNREGA in Karnataka

Year	Male	Female	%of women participation
2006-07	1495193	1656354	53%
2007-08	3403623	3986501	54%
2008-09	4605587	5382659	54%
2009-10	5259317	6206631	55%
2010-11	5428102	6439942	55%
2011-12	4108610	5003496	55%
2012-13	4843485	5815743	55%

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING

The present study is focused in Karnataka state. Women Beneficiaries' participation under the MGNREGS with the covering of Karnataka State to study Women employment generation, asset creation and wage accruals in the community development by participating in the program at gross-root level. The study is based on primary and secondary data collected from MGNREGS Beneficiaries through the official website

FINDINGS

1. Socio-economic development benefits not effect to the Women Empowerment
2. Mostly of the rural Women's migrated, to urban areas with their Families
3. There is no awareness among the women's about the National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme and they unable to find it is as sort of right to get employment from officials by demand and 1/3 of employment reserved for women.
4. Below the minimum man days and wages According to the act at least 100 days of employment guaranteed in a financial year to every household, but women employment guaranteed 25-45 days of employment in every financial year (except 2009-10) for the first five years of the program. And also wage rate varies between 60 to 90 rupees it is below the minimum wage under the act.

Supplementary Recommendations

In order that women (and also men) in MGNREGA do not create a

permanent army of unskilled workers, it is necessary to help them to acquire employment in the mainstream economy. This can be done by (1) proper selection of assets under MGNREGA that can expand the labour absorbing capacity of the mainstream economy, and (2) ensuring productive use of these assets so that they expand employment in the mainstream economy. While the former requires a strong planning component of MGNREGA works (on a long term perspective), the latter requires meaningful dovetailing and convergence of MGNREGA with other ongoing rural development efforts. Follow up by SHGs formed of women workers of well-designed employment generating activities can also help here. These steps will strengthen women's empowerment considerably.

In addition, to recap our earlier discussion, the following steps are recommended in the design of MGNREGA to help empowerment of women:

- 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.
- Providing 100 days of work to all including women workers, as this will accelerate the process of women's empowerment.
- Improving the quality of employment of MGNREGA 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 maternity leave and benefits and health insurance. In other words, MGNREGA work needs to move towards quality employment.
- 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 MGNREGA assets. When more than 100 million assets have been constructed under MGNREGA 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.
- Finally, MGNREGA implements as well as their maintenance are costly for MGNREGA 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.

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.

Control the migration rural to urban and increase working days 100 to 150 days for rural Women's A most of women's have not aware about the program; hence awareness should be created among women's Employment under the program should provide in regular manner to arrest seasonal and non –seasonal migration at village level The wage calculation and work measurements has problematic under the act therefore it is needed to be revise by the nature of the work, then only they able to get minimum wage rate.

CONCLUSION

Since independence, the Government initiated several five year plans, programs, policies and laws and has made efforts for gradual socio-economic development of women's , but they still remain the weakest sections of the society. During the various five year plans, there has been a considerable increase in the fund allocation for the women's. But most of the tribal's & rural women's are not able to draw benefit from the facilities provided by government because of large- scale corruption among officials and improper implementation of women employment & development schemes. Employment guarantee scheme like MGNREGS is perceived as a part of the inclusive growth strategy which aims at reducing social and economic inequalities by providing gainful employment opportunities at the local level. The MGNREGS focused on labour intensive asset creating works which could help to solve the problem of unemployment as well as agricultural growth. This employment scheme also becomes sour grapes for the women's as compare to those earlier programmes. Like other schemes; there is a wide gap between the program and implementation in women employment. Without these specific groups improvement we cannot imagine India's development as a whole.

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