



Developmental Out Comes and Participation of Women in Mgnregs Works

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ABSTRACT

Active participation of any community in their development is recognised as tool for its empowerment. In Indian social set up, the participation of women in the development process has to be ensured through tangible measures taken at various levels for their development. The government has taken a conscious view to make adequate provisions in its policies and programmes through which it is to be ensured that the women of the country are not only empowered but also become the active participation in the development processes for their main streaming .The various programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development , Government of India introduced MGNREGA programme.

The Ministry of Rural Development is implementing various poverty alleviation and Rural Development programmes. These programmes have special components for Women .The major schemes, having women's component implemented by the ministry include the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) .The implementation of these programme is monitored specially with reference to coverage of Women. The MGNREGA guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to any rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. It is provided employment, priority shall be given to women in such a way that at least 1/3 of the beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested for work under the scheme and equal remuneration to both men and women, these is the most important aspect in this Act.

Keywords : MGNREGA, EMPOWERMENT, PRIORITY, IMPLEMENTED, UNSKILLED MANUAL WORK

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Rural Development, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) aims at enhancing livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The Mahatma Gandhi NREGA has become a powerful instrument for inclusive growth in rural India through its impact on social protection, livelihood security and democratic governance.

The Act came into force on February 2, 2006 and was implemented in a phased manner. In Phase I it was introduced in 200 of the most backward districts of the country. It was implemented in an additional 130 districts in Phase II 2007-2008. The Act was notified in the remaining rural districts of India from April 1, 2008 in Phase III. (All rural districts were covered under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA)

Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is the first ever law internationally that guarantees wage employment at an unprecedented scale. The primary objective of the Act is augmenting wage employment. Its auxiliary objective is strengthening natural resource management through works that address causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation and soil erosion and so encourage sustainable development. The process outcomes include strengthening grassroot processes of democracy and infusing transparency and accountability in governance.

DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES OF THE NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT PROGRAMME

Since its inception the 2006 Mahatma Gandhi NREGA has ensured social protection for the most vulnerable and marginalized communities in rural India through providing employment opportunities. This significant achievements and

outcomes of the Scheme since its inception along with some key findings from independent studies.

Enhanced Daily Wages earning and security for livelihood

Mahatma Gandhi NREGA has provided basic income security to a large number of beneficiaries. The Scheme provides employment to around 5 crore households through out the country on an average, every year. This is almost one-fourth of the total rural households in the country. Since its inception Mahatma Gandhi NREGA has generated 1348 crore person-days of employment.

From Financial Year 2006-07 upto Financial Year 2011-12 (upto Dec, 12) over Rs. 1,29,000 crore has been spent on wages. This is almost 70% of the total expenditure. The Scheme's notified wages have increased across all States since 2006. The average wage earned per beneficiary has risen from Rs.65 per person day in 2006 to Rs.115 by 2012.

A panel survey conducted by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) on the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA in 3 states, also shows that the Scheme provides work at a time when no other work or alternate employment opportunities exist, the Scheme has also contributed to ensuring greater food security, monthly per capita expenditure, savings etc. Infact a recent report by a global research organization indicates that for the first time in nearly 25 years, growth in rural spending outpaced urban consumption in the two years between 2009-10 and 2011-12. It also concluded that the increase in rural consumption is driven in significant part by the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.

2. Financial Inclusion

To ensure transparency in wage payments and prevent misappropriations, the Government of India mandated that all MGNREGA wage payments should be made through banks/

post office accounts opened in the name of the worker. As a result, nearly 8.6 crore bank/post office accounts (as per MIS data) of rural people have been opened under MGNREGA and around 80 percent of MGNREGA payments are made through this route. There are 4.08 crore accounts in banks and 4.53 crore in Post Offices (as per MIS data). The opening of accounts has brought the poor into the organised sector and in some cases provided them with better access to credit, an unprecedented financial inclusion initiative.

Inclusive Growth

Evidence suggests that the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is succeeding as a self-targeting programme, with high participation from marginalised groups including the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). At the national level, the share of SCs and STs in the work provided under MGNREGA has been high and ranged between 40-60 percent across each of the years of the Scheme's implementation. SCs and STs participation rate in the Scheme exceeds the percentage share in the total population in most states.

Work on private lands under the Scheme, has also greatly benefited the marginalized. Since 2006-07, around 10 lakh households have benefited under this category of works. Micro-level case studies indicate the positive impact of the Scheme in creating sustainable livelihoods for these individual beneficiary households.

The Scheme also provides an alternate source of income for rural labourers, raising the reservation wage and implicitly offering labourers bargaining powers in an otherwise inequitable rural labour market. The Scheme has provided labourers (particularly those who are in debt bondage or contract labour) with a dignified choice of work. MGNREGA has also reduced distress migration from traditionally migration-intensive areas.

Empowerment of Women

Various provisions under the Act and its Guidelines, aim to ensure that women have equitable and easy access to work, decent working conditions, equal payment of wages and representation on decision-making bodies. From Financial Year 2006-07 up to Financial Year 2012-13 (upto Dec.2012), around Rs.62,000 crore have been spent on wages for women. Women participation rate has ranged between 40-48 percent of the total person-days generated, much above the statutory minimum requirement of 33 percent.

Infact, the participation rate of women under the Scheme has been higher than in all forms of recorded work. Research studies also indicate the MGNREGA is an important work opportunity for women who would have otherwise remained unemployed or underemployed.

With an increased rate of participation and large amounts being spent on wages for women, studies and field evidence suggest a positive impact of the Scheme on the economic well-being of women. The Scheme has also led to gender parity in wages. The NSSO 66th Round indicated the MGNREGA has reduced traditional wage discrimination in public works.

Access to economic resources has also had a favourable impact on the social status of women, for example women have a greater say in the way the money is spent in households. A large percentage of these women spend their money to avoid hunger, repay small debts, paying their child's schooling etc.

Natural resource regeneration and sustainable development

The works undertaken through Mahatma Gandhi NREGA give priority to activities related to water harvesting, groundwater recharge, drought-proofing, and flood protection. Its focus on eco-restoration and sustainable livelihoods will lead over time, to an increase in land productivity and aid the workers in moving from wage employment to sustainable employment.

Almost 53% works relate to soil and water conservation. Mahatma Gandhi NREGA works focus on regenerating the rural ecosystem and creating rural infrastructure that supports sustainable livelihoods.

Where planned and implemented well, MGNREGA works have led to a rise in ground water, improvement in soil quality and reduction in vulnerability of production system to climate variability. However, the extent and kind of impact of MGNREGA works on the environment depend on the scale of the activities undertaken, the technical design, the quality of assets created and ownership and use of physical structures constructed. A study found that due to check dams created under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, the percolation potential of the villages studied improved by 1,000-28,000 cubic metres a year. Construction of percolation tanks also improved recharge in the watersheds considered.

NREGA Impact on agricultural productivity

Provision of water is vital for agriculture and ensuring food and water security in rural India. Research suggests that water-related assets created under MGNREGA have increased the number of days in a year water is available and also the quantity of water available for irrigation. The increased availability of water has also led to changes in crop patterns and increased area under cultivation according to some studies.

To further strengthen the Scheme's synergy with agriculture and livelihood creation, the list of permissible works under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA has been expanded. The expansion of work is likely to improve the socio-economic condition of marginalised section of the society i.e., SC/ST/Small and Marginal farmers/IAY beneficiaries/Forest Right Act beneficiaries etc. since most of the new works are allowed on the land or homestead of these sections.

Participation of Women under MGNREGA, 2008-09

Sl.No.	State	% of women Employed
01	Kerala	85 %
02	Tamil Nadu	80 %
03	Rajasthan	67 %
04	Andhra Pradesh	58 %
05	Tripura	51 %
06	Karnataka	50 %
07	Chhattisgarh	47 %
08	Maharashtra	46 %
09	Manipur	46 %
10	Gujarat	43 %
11	Madhya Pradesh	43 %
12	Meghalaya	41 %
13	Orissa	40 %
14	Himachal Pradesh	39 %
15	Sikkim	38 %
16	Uttarakhand	37 %
17	Mizoram	37 %
18	Nagaland	37 %
19	Haryana	31 %
20	Bihar	30 %
21	Jharkhand	29 %
22	Assam	27 %
23	West Bengal	27 %
24	Arunachal Pradesh	26 %
25	Punjab	25 %
26	Uttar Pradesh	18 %
27	Jammu & Kashmir	6 %
	All India	48 %

In all over the India 48% participation of women workers in MGNREGS, a highest percentage of women's participate in Kerala state and second place Tamil Nadu state and Third place Rajasthan state and a very least participated women workers in Jammu & Kashmir state. As per the NSS 64th round survey said, there was no gender differential in wage rates for MGNREGA works while there was considerable wage disparity in other types of work. Independent studies con-

ducted by the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW), IIM Lucknow, Delhi University, Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI) point towards positive trends and empowerment of women as per the study. There is a good percentage of workers who are found to be spending on their children's

education and taking of nutrition food, who claim to spend on offsetting debts. Women have also started to appear more actively in the rural public sphere as they take up their work and responsibilities. These is generally low trend of migration.

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