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Women workforce participation in mahatma Gandhi national rural employment guarantee scheme for building capacities and opportunities

Charu Sharma, Kusum Mittal and Ram Niwas

Abstract

Women workforce is an inevitable part for the development and growth of national economy and their contribution as well as potential is of greater significance. Government of India introduced different programmes to achieve the empowerment of women. One such programme focusing on unskilled based wage- employment is MGNREGA which meeting out stark disparities between men and women with regards to opportunity for gainful employment as well as wage rates. The aim of study was to find out the extent of women beneficiaries participation in scheme and its impact on their capacity building as well in selected villages of Badgaon and Girwa panchayat samiti of Udaipur district. The study highlighted various parameters of women workforce participation, their involvement in scheme. Findings of study reveal that all the women beneficiaries possessed awareness about scheme through panchayat office but nearly half women beneficiaries were decided themselves for work under scheme and 49 percent women beneficiaries participated more than 5 time under scheme. Further majority of women beneficiaries attended gram sabha for work selection, reaching at gram panchayat for getting information or filling complaints etc. Most of women beneficiaries (93.5%) found that scheme enhanced their capacities in dealing various situations and for making decisions as well.

Keywords: women empowerment, participation, opportunities , capacity building

Introduction

Poverty has remained the biggest challenge in India's development efforts to bring about desirable change in the quality of life of its huge mass. The problem of poverty is directly linked in circular chains with population and unemployment. As rural development is the pre-requisite for economic development of country, the problem lies in the lack of access to the poor to basic services. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme designed with various innovative provisions with a view to provide right based employment opportunity to each adult of household and encouraging their participation in the scheme. MGNREGS also set up a goal of empowerment of socially disadvantages especially women workers through the processes of right based legislation.

MGNREGA playing a significant role to meet the practical as well as strategic needs of women's participation evident from ranking of Rajasthan among highest percentage of women's participation in MGNREGS states (www.nrega.nic.in). Women workers always seen as key person who contributes efficiently and sharing the labour load of market equally. Extent and nature of participation of women workers in programmes impacts and ensure better capabilities, competence among them. Significant change in women workers competence and inner capabilities leads them towards path of empowerment. Data of women workers participation percentage in Rajasthan always reflects thriving numbers at national level which indicating successful implementation of scheme at grounds. But booming participation cannot be measured in terms active involvement, awareness and capacity building of women workers.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Girwa and Badgaon Panchayat Samiti of Udaipur. Sample was selected through a list of purposively selected eight villages of both panchayat samiti's where registered women beneficiaries employed for 100 days wage employment under MGNREGS from year 2006 to 2013. From MNREGS enrollment records of gram panchayat, 25 women beneficiaries were randomly selected from each village. Thus a total of 200 women beneficiary was constituted as sample for study.

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Through structured interview schedule data was collected from selected women beneficiaries and group discussion were also organized to capture wholesome view of women beneficiaries' perceptions. Many researchers in their studies concluded about participation of women workers in the scheme. Rekha Rani (2016) [1] in her study at tehri garhwal district Of Uttarakhand found that more than seventy five percent women beneficiary out of the total beneficiary in a particular area take their own decision to participate in programme. High participation rate of women in programme indicated great contribution towards achieving women empowerment objective of MGNREGS and contributed to very much extent in their socio-economic upliftment. Ahangar (2014) [2] analyzed the women participation on MGNREGA in Shahabad block of Anantnag Districts, Jammu and Kashmir. He concluded that under the surveyed sample 21 per cent of the respondents are males while 79 per cent of the sample are females, which shows the greater participation of women in this job. Due to low wages (₹ 150 per day) male workers are not attracted towards this job. Females prefer this job due to more security in the wage and lower risks etc.

Results and Discussion

Women beneficiaries work participation in MGNREGS

Participation details of women beneficiaries under scheme reflect nearly 34.5 percent women beneficiaries registered themselves in the year 2008-09, followed by 24 percent respondents registered in the year 2009-10. MGNREGS was started in the year 2006-07 and in this year very less number of women beneficiaries (13.5%) were registered. Further beside year wise participation of women beneficiaries, their frequency of participation in scheme was also recorded with a view to analyze relation of it with their capacity building and involvement under scheme. Perusal of Table -1 indicates nearly half of the respondents (49%) participated 3 to 5 times under scheme followed by 41% women beneficiaries who participated three times under scheme. This data reflects the popularity as well as positive aspects of the scheme i.e.

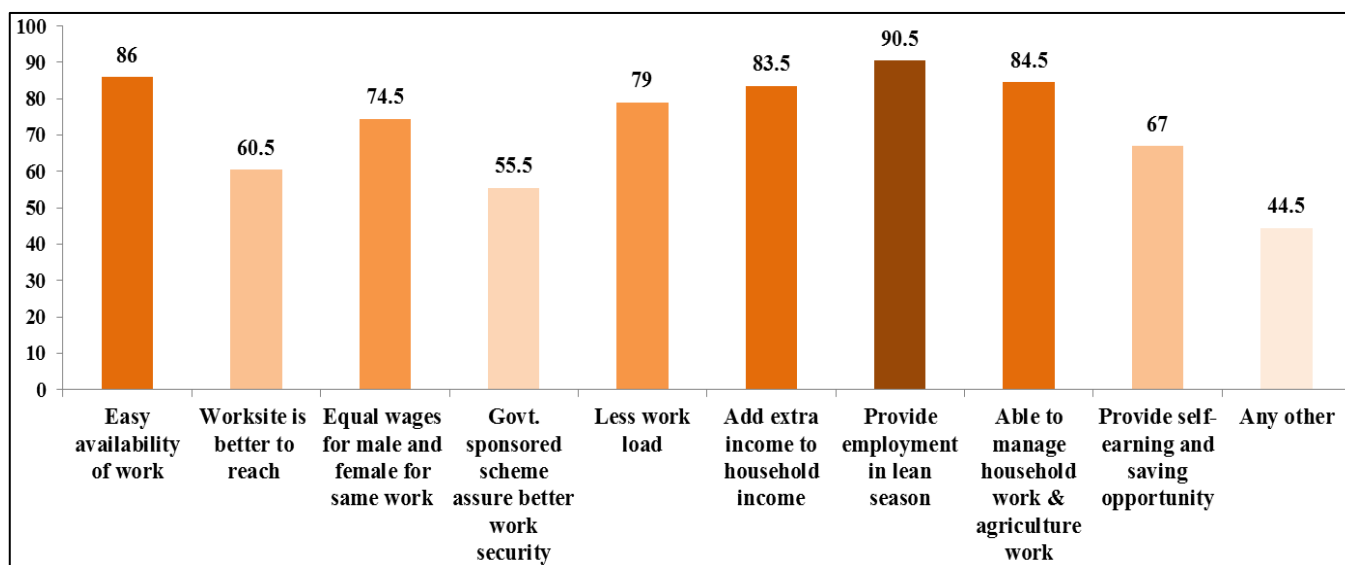
various women friendly features who continuously fetching their participation in the scheme. Only 10% women beneficiaries participated one time (3.5%) and two times (6.5%) in the scheme.

Table 1: Women workers participation under MGNREGS n =200

S. No.	Women beneficiaries work participation in MGNREGS	%
Registration Year		
A.	April 2006-07	13.5
	April 2007-08	19
	April 2008-09	34.5
	April 2009-10	24
	April 2010-11	9
Participation Frequency		
B.	One time	3.5
	Two time	6.5
	3-5 time	41
	More than 5 time	49

Factors facilitating participation of women workers under MGNREGS

All the women beneficiaries stated multiple reasons or factors behind their participation in MGNREGS. Analysis of data in the Graph-1 depicts that most of women beneficiaries (95.5%) expressed MGNREGS provides work during lean season time which keep them out of worries for getting work at that time, while nearly 86 percent women beneficiaries expressed easy availability of work under scheme without any hassle. Further 84.5 percent respondents were able to manage their agricultural as well as family work along with working under scheme. Another major reason behind high participation of women beneficiaries (83.5%) was adding extra income/earning for their family through working under scheme. Although wage rate was found low in comparison of outside labour market, still women beneficiaries earn a satisfactory and constant income through scheme employment which adds extra income to the household income.



Graph 1: Factors facilitating participation under MGNREGS

Majority of women beneficiaries (79%) stated that less work load found during working under scheme which also attracts them for participating in the scheme. Equal wage rates for male and female worker under scheme also one interesting

feature that fetch their interest for participate in the scheme. 74.5 percent beneficiaries stated that equal wage payment provision under scheme was the factor behind their participation. Further Graph-1 illustrate that more than two

third respondents stated self-earning and saving opportunity factor (67%) and worksite better reach (60.5%) as reason for working under MGNREGS. Sudarshan (2010) also stated in his study that in the state of Rajasthan, the availability and convenience of searching work near home was attracting women to NREGA work. Govt. schemes and policies gives a sense of assured work security, 55.5 percent women beneficiaries expressed this as a reason of participation under scheme.

Besides above stated reason, various other reasons were expressed by women beneficiaries that encourage their participation towards their right based employment opportunity. Among other reasons family permission for scheme work due to security, work opportunity for single, widow, deserted, handicapped as well as older women were indicated as majorly. Further wages received in their own account, better working environment and less tension motivated them for being registered under the scheme. Analysis of data indicates that all these factors facilitated women beneficiaries participation to very much extent.

Extent of involvement and capacity building of women beneficiaries participation under MGNREGS

Besides participation of women beneficiaries as a wage seeker, scheme involved them at different level for ensuring their role as well as building their capacity building under scheme enhanced their roles and enriching their efficiencies. Table-2 highlight the opinion of beneficiaries with regards to their extent of involvement and capacity building through participation under MGNREGS.

As per MGNREGS guidelines 2013, gram sabha is defined as principal forum for wage seekers to raise their voices and

make demands. It acts as primary forum for conduct of social audits. It provides a platform to all residents to seek and obtain all relevant information from all the implementing agencies including Gram Panchayat in relation to MGNREGS works implemented in Gram Panchayat area. More than two third women beneficiaries (64%) attended gram sabha for participating in various functions under the scheme although after discussion with women beneficiaries their frequency of attending gram sabha meeting varies i.e. always or sometimes. But this encouraging data shows their active involvement at base level of scheme.

With regards to putting up suggestion or demand of worth in front of gram sabha involvement of women beneficiaries was found unsatisfactory. Only 29.5 percent respondent putted up their views/ suggestions or worth demand. Majority of women beneficiaries (70.5%) showed passive participation in gram sabha. Further Table-2 reveals that majority of women beneficiaries (82%) reaching at gram panchayat for putting up their quarries and complaints or getting information. Gram Panchayat is the key body of them for every problems solution, as their grievance redressal mechanism was not found very well. MGNREGS inculcate various provisions for better transparency and accountability towards wage seekers but still some irregularities also found and experienced by its workers.

Women beneficiaries were reaching to file their but not raising their voices for utilizing their rights under scheme. More than half of the respondents (59.5%) did not raise their voice against implements for their rights or provisions which depict more efforts are required for building their capacities and better communication environment.

Table 2: Women beneficiaries extent of involvement and capacity building under MGNREGS n =200

S. No.	Extent of involvement and capacity building	%
A.	Attended Gram sabha meeting	
	Yes	64
	No	36
B.	Put up suggestion in Gram sabha meeting	
	Yes	29.5
	No	70.5
C.	Visited Gram Panchayat for quarries /complaints/getting information about scheme	
	Yes	82
	No	18
D.	Raise voice for utilizing rights/provisions	
	Yes	40.5
	No	59.5
E.	Perform any other role besides worker under scheme	
	Yes	13.5
	No	86.5
F.	Enhanced capacities after participation in scheme	
	Yes	93.5
	No	6.5
G.	Participation in scheme increased awareness on	
	Govt. Programme/policies	73
	Your rights/provision	76
	World around	61.5

This holistic programme ensures women participation through different women specific features. Besides wage workers very less number of women beneficiaries (13.5%) performs other role of participated in scheme as Mate, in social audit committee, as a Panchayati Raj Official members etc. majority women beneficiaries (93.5%) experienced enhanced capacities after participation in scheme. They found more

capable themselves in dealing with government work or procedures as well as exposure and experience of working under scheme improved their capacities in taking important decision, communication with outside peoples, management of work and home. Majority of respondents felt that participation in the scheme their awareness about govt. programme/ policies (73%), their rights and provision (76%)

and world around (61.5%). Increased awareness of women beneficiaries gradually improved their access towards opportunities and knowledge.

Conclusion

MGNREGS boost up the economy with its innovative approach of growth and development. Women were given special attention and their participation in scheme was entertained on priority for leading them on the track of empowerment. Right based law of work entertained their working needs, region specific migration problems. Gender inequalities prevailing in labour market were down the moral of women workers earlier but after implementation of scheme women found more sound status socially and economically and changing the mindset of society for women workers. The data reflects that the efforts for empowerment of women beneficiaries is going on its right direction but there is need to do a lot improve women participation in terms of their involvement at various levels ahead.

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