

Original Research Article

Women's Empowerment and MGNREGA: Exploratory Study in Pauri Garhwal District, Uttarakhand, India

Santosh Singh*, R. S. Negi and Rekha Dhanai

Department of Rural Technology, HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar Garhwal,
Uttarakhand, India

*Corresponding author

ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to investigate the level of economic empowerment gained by women engaged in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) within the in the district of Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand. The key objective of the MGNREGA is to provide social security to rural households by guaranteeing one hundred days of paid employment in publicly works every financial year. Based on nine variables (education, land ownership, ownership of other assets, control over income contributed by a woman to her family, control over the income of the family, savings, access to credit, social participation, cash income earned from income generating activities, the research compared the magnitude of women's empowerment before and after getting involved in MGNREGA. The findings suggest that whereas MGNREGA is an indispensable dive to making sure economic empowerment to rural women; however, the scheme has not been enforced properly within the district women and men not obtaining 100 days of employment, irregular mode of payment, very slow progress and poor quality in public works.

Keywords

Frequency,
Women's
empowerment,
MGNREGA, Pauri
Garhwal,
Uttarakhand

Introduction

There is huge literature on problems concerning about rural women's empowerment through the prevalent community works programme of India. National Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, first started in 200 districts since 2 February 2006 and renamed after the Father of the Nation as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act (MGNREGA) since 02 October 2009 on his birth anniversary (Dutta *et al.*, 2012; Negi *et al.*, 2015; Liu and Barret, 2013; Narayanan and Das, 2014; also Bhattacharyya and Vauquiline, 2013; Roy and Singh 2010 and Dhaka *et al.*, 2015). Underscoring the human rights notion of

right to work the act guarantees one hundred days of paid employment in unskilled works to poor rural households among the every financial year aimed toward granting social security (dutta *et al.*, 2012). Apart from this basic objective, the other objectives of the act are the creation of durable assets and strengthening the livelihood resources based on the rural poor, generation of productive assets, protection of environment, empowerment of rural women, reduction of rural-urban migration and fostering social equity. However, after a decade of performance, evidence suggests that MGNREGA has been suffering from

massive funding cuts apace with corruption and issues associated with poor implementation (Fraser, 2015; Jayati, 2015; Ruwali, 2014).

While the overall success and failure of this scheme has been widely researched upon in different states as well as India as a whole (Bhattacharyya and Vauquiline, 2013; Singh *et al.*, 2015&2017; Dutta *et al.*, 2012; Fraser, 2015; Liu and Barret, 2013). The present study takes a broader view of empowerment and defines it both as a process and as an outcome that alters the position of women both, inside and outside their households in respect of their economic empowerment gained by women engaged in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in the district of Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand.

Materials and Methods

The study is based on primary data. Primary data has been collected either from the beneficiaries as a part of the survey conducted individually or as a part of focus groups. For this, a household survey schedule was conducted to collect information among these beneficiaries. Prior to conducting this research however, consents were taken from the participants regarding their participation.

For collection of data from the sample households, a well-structured questionnaire. 150 beneficiaries to understand the impact of the scheme in terms of the socio-economic status of the households after the implementation of MGNREGA, through purposely-random sampling. This data was collected from five-gram panchayats (GPs) of Kaljikhhal block. The collected data were analysed using simple statistical analysis like calculation of percentage, frequency

have been worked out and presented in tabular format to determine the empowerment of women's employment under MGNREGA in the district Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 illustrates the variables and their categorisation. This Table presents that the variables education, land ownership, ownership of other assets, control over own income, control over income of the family, saving, social participation, credit creation and cash income earned from income generating activities are different before and after implementation of the MGNREGA. The awareness of women working under MGNREGA are presented in Table 2 100 percent are aware about the programme of MGNREGA, 90.00 percent reported well aware about the number of days of works in a year. 64.00 percent also well aware about the per day wage. Job Card (JC) should be issued within 15 days of application 58.63 percent women's are aware. About 55.33 percent beneficiaries were aware about the employment that will be given within 15 days of application for work; about 46.00 percent are aware about unemployment allowance as per the Act. Again only 37.33 percent of the respondents know about the worksite facilities, 23.33 percent know about social audit system whereas a 16.67 percent beneficiary knows about Right to Information (RTI).

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), is an imperative step for guarantee economic empowerment of rural women the findings suggest that in the block Kaljikhhal, These calculations signal that women involvement in income generating activities in MGNREGA contributed for enhancement in the scale of women's empowerment.

Table.1 Determine of Empowerment

Variable	Category	Observed Frequency	
		Before MGNREGA	After MGNREGA
Education	Illiterate	23	18
	Primary School	40	36
	Middle School	56	48
	High School	28	38
	College Education	3	10
Land Ownership	Land Ownership	146	146
	No Land	4	4
Ownership of other assets	No Assets	95	85
	Joint Ownership	39	46
	Sole Ownership of Other Assets	16	19
Control over own income	No Control	133	125
	Partial Control	11	11
	Full Control	06	14
Control over Income of Family	No Control	141	135
	Partial Control	02	06
	Full Control	07	09
Savings	No Savings	139	122
	Up to 25% of Earnings	09	25
	up to 50% of Earnings	02	03
Access to Credit	Yes	0	140
	No	150	10
Social Participation	Yes	12	148
	No	138	02
Cash Income earned from Income Generating Activities (₹/month)	₹ 0- 5,000	140	35
	₹ 5,001-10,000	07	106
	₹ > 10,000	03	09

Source: Primary Data

Table.2 Awareness level of the Beneficiaries under MGNREGA

S. No.	Awareness for the basic guideline	Aware		No Aware		Ranks
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%	
1	Awareness about MGNREGA	150	100	-	-	I
2	Job Card should be issued within 15 days of application	88	58.63	62	41.33	IV
3	Employment will be given within 15 days of application for work	83	55.33	67	44.67	V
4	Number of days of works in a year	135	90.00	15	10.00	II
5	Unemployment allowance as per the Act	69	46.00	81	54.00	VI
6	Per day Wage	96	64.00	54	36.00	III
7	Worksite facilities	56	37.33	94	62.67	VII
8	Social audit	35	23.33	115	76.67	VIII
9	Right to Information (RTI) Act	25	16.67	125	83.33	IX

Clearly, these analyses indicate that involvement of women in MGNREGA led to empowerment of rural women in the realms of education, savings, and access to credit, social participation and cash income earned through income generating activities. These findings stand resonance to a number of earlier studies (Bhattacharyya, 2016; Fraser, 2015 and Roy and Singh).

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