

MGNREGA: A step towards improving livelihood security of women in rural areas

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■ **ABSTRACT** : The present study was conducted in Faizabad district of Uttar Pradesh. The purpose of the present study was to find out improvement in life of rural women through MGNREGA. The sample consisted of 100 randomly selected respondents from two panchayat samities. Personal interview technique was used for collecting data. Findings of the study reveal that MGNREGA: improved the life of rural women in terms of their income and employment

■ **KEY WORDS**: Employment, Income, Benefits, MGNREGA

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Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is an Indian job guarantee scheme, enacted by legislation on August 25, 2005. The aim of this programme is to enhance livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of manual wage employment to every household in a year. If this programme achieve its objectives of first, providing work and thus income to the poor and marginal sections of the society and second, create productive assets that raise land productivity and thus, contribute in raising agricultural yields, then it would be able to transform the face of rural India. In case of women, MNREGA is also an opportunity to redefine the rural Indian women's identity in various ways; decision making, spending their wages independently or on their children's education, healthcare and clearing debts etc.

From a gender perspective, the MGNREGA holds

great promise especially with its clause for protecting women's access to the scheme through proactive inclusion. Priority is given to women in such a way that at least one-third of the beneficiaries are women. Some minimal worksite facilities and social security are provided by way of childcare at a worksite, safe drinking water, shade during rest period, first-aid, hospitalization in case of injury, ex-gratia payment of Rs. 25,000, and so on. Apart from employment, the Act can generate works that address gender needs. The MGNREGA has the potential of addressing women's "practical interests" through generation of income by way of wage employment and the creation of assets that address basic needs of food, water, fuel, fodder, and so on.

If the women are aware about the benefits of the development programme, it helps to ensure their participation, improve socio-economic profile of women and place them in main stream of development.

Thus, NREGA has an inbuilt component of encouraging women to take decision and appear in the economic sphere (Ministry of Rural Development). The present study attempts to find out improvement in life of rural women through MGNREGA.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

The study was conducted in two purposively selected panchayat samities of Faizabad district of Uttar Pradesh State namely Palpur and Mewapur having maximum number of women beneficiaries of MGNREGA. Two villages from each panchayat samiti *i.e.* Palpur, Tulsampur from Palpur panchayat samiti and Mutalke rasulpur leleha and Belambhi ka Purwa from Mewapur panchayat samiti having maximum women enrolled, were selected. A separate list of women beneficiaries was prepared for all the four villages and 25 women were randomly selected from each village constituting the total sample of 100 rural women for the present study. For collection of data personal interview technique was used. Data were collected with the help of structured interview schedule. Frequencies and percentage were used for analyzing the data statistically.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study as well as relevant discussion have been presented under following heads :

Employment generated in the programme :

Data in Table 1 regarding employment generated in the programme reveal that all the respondents reported availability of employment in lean season after enrollment in the programme. Though the employment was available for 100 days to each beneficiary but only half of them (50%) availed employment for 100 days. Half of the respondents (50%) were able to work for more than 80 to 90 days. The respondents were not able to work for 100 days, may be because of too much family work load, non-cooperation of family members and requirement of more energy in construction work which resulted in fatigue and debility. Further half of the respondents (50%) perceived that available employment was insufficient for them and they needed more employment to improve their family condition under MGNREG.

Reasons for working under MGNREGA :

Data in Table 2 show various reasons reported by respondents for working under the MGNREGA. The main reason reported by all the respondents (100%) was that they can work with their household work, whereas most of the respondents (95%) mentioned that they were working to improve their economic condition. Availability of employment within 5 km. was another reason reported by 52 per cent of the respondents. While rest of the respondents (14%) engaged in the programme as it required unskilled manual work, however only 11 per cent of the respondents were working for the reason that employment was given in lean season.

Garg (2008) found that majority of the respondents *i.e.* 158 out of 360 which comes to 44 per cent gave their reason to join MGNREGA to improve their economic condition and that they can work with their household work.

Benefits reported through MGNREGA employment/ income :

Data in Table 3 depict the benefits reported from MGNREGA. All the respondents (100%) said that, they were benefited from MGNREGA. Regarding benefits, majority of the respondents (68%) reported increased income while 37 per cent women mentioned increase in employment. In case of improvement in family condition all the respondents reported an improvement in the housing and mentioned that they got their houses repaired. Most of the respondents mentioned improvement in the food (99%) and education of their children (92%). Further the table depicts that, 35 per cent of the respondents reported income from MGNREGA helped to trim down their debt, while 50 per cent of the respondents reported that MGNREGA also benefited towards creation of community assets like pond and road work, respectively. The results are in conformity with Garg (2008) in her study found that MGNREGA helped to raise the income level of beneficiaries above poverty line, reduced the migration of rural poor and influenced the agriculture wage upward and provided employment in rural sector to the beneficiaries to a limited extent. Economic participation helped the respondent in increasing their resources, food consumption, clothing and housing. It also helped them to reduce the debt. Similar work related to the present topic was also done by Bishnoi and Rampal, 2015; Singh

Table 1 : Distribution of respondents according to the employment generated in the programme (n=100)			
Sr. No.	Items	f	%
1.	Availability of employment in lean season after enrollment in the in the programme	100	100
2.	Availability of 100 days of employment in the year	100	100
3.	Benefits of 100 days employment availed	100	50
4.	Employment available under the programme (in a year)		
	80 days	100	15
	90 days	100	35
	100 days	100	50
5.	Employment available not sufficient	100	50

Table 2 : Distribution of respondents on the basis of reasons for working under MGNREGA (n=100)			
Sr. No.	Reasons	f	%
1.	To improve economic condition	100	95
2.	Availability of employment within 5 km	100	52
3.	Employment given in lean season	100	11
4.	Unskilled manual work	100	14
5.	More facilities to women	100	3
6.	Interest	100	1
7.	Utilization of leisure time	100	2
8.	Can work with house hold work	100	100
9.	Can work with agriculture work	100	4
10.	Can work with younger children	100	2

Table 3 : Distribution of respondents on the basis of benefits reported through MGNREGA employment/ income (n=100)			
Sr. No.	Items	f	%
1.	Benefits received by the beneficiaries	100	100
2.	Benefits reported from the MGNREGA		
	– Increased income	100	68
	– Increased employment	100	37
	– Improvement family condition	100	
	- Housing	100	100
	- Clothing	100	0
	- Foods	100	99
	- Child care	100	5
	- Education	100	92
	- Social status	100	2
3.	MGNREGA helpful in reducing debt	100	35
4.	Creation of community assets		
	Pond construction	100	50
	Road construction	100	50

et al., 2013; Gupta and Patel (2015); Kaur and Randhawa (2016) and Tiwari and Upadhyay, 2013).

Conclusion:

It can be said that MGNREGA benefited the life of rural women by raising their income and employment

level, economic participation helped the respondent improving their family condition like housing, education and child care. MGNREGA also benefited in terms of creation of community asset like pond and road construction which will eventually improve the rural situation.

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