RESEARCH ARTICLE :

Assessment of socio-economic status of MGNREGA women beneficiaries, Baran district (Rajasthan)

■ **Priyanshu Tripathi and Nikita Wadhawan**

SUMMARY : MGNREGA is an ambitious scheme providing employment to rural people of India. The basic aim of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is to enhance livelihood security of household in rural area. By this scheme Govt. gives assurance of employment to unskilled rural laborer for 100 days. With better implementation such type of scheme may be an effective weapon to fight against poverty. It also aims at transforming the rural areas by improving the socio-economic conditions of people. The present study was undertaken with the objective to assess the socio-economic status of MGNREGA women beneficiaries in Baran district of Rajasthan. Five villages namely Laxmipura, Chainpura, Ratanpura, Govindpura and Khedliganj from Atru Panchayat Samiti were identified for the study. Twenty five women beneficiaries from each village were selected making a total of 125 women beneficiaries. All respondents selected for the study were in the age group 30-45 years. Majority of the respondents (86.4%) were married and rest of them (13.6%) widow. Most of respondents who come for MGNREGA work belonged to schedule caste and schedule tribe (57.6%), backward caste (25.6%) and a small number were from general caste (2.4%). Maximum numbers of respondents (86.4%) were working as farm labour. Fifty eight per cent respondents were from nuclear family and rest of them (42.4%) belonged to joint family. Regarding education a high percentage respondents (91.2%) were illiterate and had no any organizational membership. Majority of respondents (72.8%) were landless, whereas 18.4 per cent had land upto 4.5 bighas. Most of them (53.6%) reside in Kachaha house. Calculation of socio-economic status (AICRP-HECM 1998) revealed that all respondents (100%) belonged to low socio-economic status.

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BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Today, when India has a population over 1.21 billion of which 250 million people are below the poverty line and approximately 75 per cent of them resides in rural areas, the employment of rural people is crucial for the development of India (2011 census). The rural population is at higher risk of under nutrition because of their dependence on primitive agricultural practices and irregularity of food

supply. Therefore, it is necessary to develop employment opportunities among men and women and encourage them to participate in it, so that the significant work force of the country may be utilized more efficiently in order to generate more income opportunities, reduce unemployment, regional imbalances and minimize incidence of poverty. To tackle all these problems government has introduced a number of programmes such as National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP), Employment Insurance Scheme (EIS), Pradhan Mantry Gram Rojgar Yojna (PMGRY) and Swarn Jayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojna (SJGSY) but these all programmes are not successful so finally National Rural Employment Guarantee Act came into existence on September 2005. It was launched on 2nd February 2006 and it is recently renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) (All-India Report on Evaluation of NREGA). The Act aims at enhancing livelihood security and food security of households in rural areas of the country. The unique feature of this programme is that it is the first ever law internationally, that guarantees wage employment at an unprecedented scale. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is a landmark initiative in providing 100 days guaranteed employment on demand to every rural household at the minimum wage whose adult members (both male and female) would like to do unskilled manual work. Participation of community in NREGS (Dhar, 2006 and NCEUS, 2009) is one of the pre-requisites to enforce the 'rights and entitlements' envisaged and make it community-oriented and demand-driven scheme. The success of the programme is entirely dependent on the participation of the community in general and women in particular since the share of latter in employment is almost 50 per cent. As women are found to be better change agents of socio-economic transformation, efforts are needed to strengthen their participation for household livelihood security as well as better asset management. Thus, present study was conducted to figure out socio-economic status of MGNREGA women beneficiaries in Baran district, Rajasthan.

RESOURCES AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in Baran district of Rajasthan purposively. Baran district consists of 9

Panchayat samities and in all the Panchayat samities, MGNREGA is running. The information regarding number of women enrolled in MGNREGA in all the Panchayat samities for the year 2010-2014 was collected from District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) of Baran district. One Panchayat Samiti namely Atru having maximum number of women beneficiaries wsas purposively selected. List of villages with the number of women enrolled was obtained from the programme officials. Five villages from this Panchayat Samiti *i.e.* Laxmipura, Chainpura, Ratanpura, Govindpura, Khedliganj from Atru Panchayat Samiti having maximum women enrolled were selected, on the basis of availability of women beneficiaries and their willingness to participate. A separate list of women beneficiaries was prepared for all the five villages and 25 women were randomly selected from each village constituting the total sample of 125 rural women for the present study. Keeping in mind the objective of the study and nature of subjects, interview method was used for data collection. An interview schedule was developed to collect the required information by consulting review of literature and discussion with the subject matter specialist with general information and personal attributes of the respondents including information about their name, age, sex, religion, caste, education, type of family, occupation, total monthly income, material possession and possession of agricultural land and lives stocks. The interview schedule developed under All India Coordinated Research Project on Home Science Extension Education-"Data base on Rural Women" (1998) was used with slight modification for measuring socio-economic status.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

This section dealt with the information regarding of the respondents like marital status, caste, occupation, family size and type, organizational membership, education, ownership of the fixed assets, housing, media ownership, availability of electricity and their socio-economic status.

Marital status :
The married working women are required to play dual roles- one as a wife, mother and home maker and other employers. Being subjected to dual demand of home and work, they are liable to face crises of adjustments (Kapur, 1971). Marital status of the

respondents gave them greater power and responsibilities in decision-making regarding in NREGP. Table 1 reveals that, majority of the respondents (86.4%) were married and rest of them were widow (13.6%).

Caste:

It is evident from the Table 1 that more than half of the respondents (57.6%) belonged to schedule caste/ schedule tribe, 25.6 per cent and 14.4 per cent of the respondents belonged to backward caste and upper middle caste, respectively and only two per cent of the respondents were from upper caste. Similar results were observed by Dreze (2006) that most of the respondents who come for NREGP work were from schedule tribes (57.22%), schedule caste (17.84%) and a small number were from general caste (3%).

Family occupation :

Table 2 portrays that majority of the respondents (86.4 %) were working as a farm labour, 5.6 per cent had artisan work as their main occupation followed by farming (4.8%) and business (3.2%).

Family structure:

Size of family is a significant factor in determining mouth to feed and earning members. Large family size

Sr. No.	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
	Table 1 : Distribution of respondents on the basis of their marital status and caste		**(n=125)**
1.	Marital status		
	Married	108	86.4
	Widow	17	13.6
	Unmarried	0	0
	Divorced	0	0
2.	Caste		
	SC/ST	72	57.6
	Backward caste	32	25.6
	Upper middle caste	18	14.4
	Upper caste	3	2.4

Table 2 : Distribution of respondent on the basis of their family structure, family occupation, organizational membership and education (n= 125)

Sr. No.	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1.	**Family occupation**		
	Farming	6	4.8
	Farming + labour	108	86.4
	Artisan	7	5.6
	Service/ Business	4	3.2
2.	**Family structure**		
	Family Type		
	Nuclear	72	57.6
	Joint	53	42.4
	Family size		
	Small (Upto 4 members)	44	35.2
	Medium (5-8 members)	66	52.8
	Large (8 and above)	15	12
3.	**Organizational membership**		
	No membership	125	100
4.	**Education**		
	Illiterate	114	91.2
	Can read and write	11	8.8

and unemployment leads to poverty. Data in Table 2 indicate that more than half of the respondents (57.6%) were from nuclear family and rest (42.4%) belonged to joint family. Regarding the size of the family table further reveals that 52.8 per cent of the respondents had medium size (5-8 members) of the family and 35.2 per cent of the respondents had small family (upto 4 members) whereas 12 per cent were from large family *i.e.* having members more than 8.

Organizational membership:

Results show that all the respondents (100%) had no organizational membership. They had no contact with formal and non formal organization (Table 2).

Education:

Education is one of the most important determinants of a person's social status. Literacy is directly correlated with the general awareness and consciousness of the women. Education plays a vital role in selection of work and participation in Government programme. It brings a desirable change in the attitude of individual, which

motivates them to be economically independent. Regarding educational level of the respondents, it was quite depressing as Table 2 indicates that majority of the respondents (91.2%) were illiterate hence MGNREGA has become most important source of income generation for them, only few of the respondents 8.8 per cent were able to read and write.

Land holding :

Size of land owned by an individual determines the socio-economic status of the individual in their community. Perusal of the Table 3 reveals that majority of the respondents (78.2%) were landless, where as 18.4 per cent and 5.6 per cent respondents had upto 4.5 bighas and 5-9.5 bighas of land holding, respectively. Rain fed agriculture was the common practice and most of the agriculture work was done by casual laborers of landless families' women.

Housing:

Table 3 reveals that more than half of the respondents (53.6%) had *Kachcha* type of housing and

Table 3 :Distribution of respondents on the basis of their land holding, housing, media ownership and electricity (n=125)

Sr. No.	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1.	**Land holding**		
	Landless	94	72.8
	Upto 4.5 bighas	23	18.4
	5-9.5 bighas	7	5.6
	10-13 bighas	1	0.8
	Above 13 bighas	0	0
2.	**Housing**		
	Kachcha house	67	53.6
	Mixed house	50	40
	Pucca house	8	6.4
3.	**Media ownership**		
	Nil	61	48.8
	TV	64	51.2
4.	**Electricity**		
	Available	115	92
	Not available	10	6.4

1 bighas= 165sq ft

Table 4 : Distribution of respondent on the basis of their socio- economic status (n=125)

Sr. No.	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1.	High socio-economic status	0	0
2.	Medium socio-economic status	0	0
3.	Low socio-economic status	100	100

rest 40 per cent respondents had mixed type of housing, while only 6.4 per cent respondent had *Pucca* type housing. *Pucca* houses were provided to the beneficiaries under Indira Awas Yojna .

Media ownership:

It was found that half of the respondents (51.2%) had their own television set and rest had no media sources like radio and newspaper (Table 3).

Electricity:

Cursory of Table 3 indicates that electricity was available to 92 per cent respondents while 6.4 per cent reported that they were not availing the facility of electricity.

Socio-economic status:

Based on scores obtained by the respondents in different aspects of socio-economic status scale, the respondents were categorized as having high, medium, and low socio-economic status. Data in Table 4 depict that all respondents (100%) belonged low socio-economic status (Khera and Nayak, 2009).

Conclusion :

In India, problem of unemployment and poverty have always been major obstacle to economic development. This incidence is more in rural area than urban area and is higher for women than men. For the rural poor, labour is often the only asset they can use to improve their well being. Therefore a lagship programme, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) (initially named as National Rural Employment Guarantee Act or NREGA) was enacted by Government of India for 100 days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work related to unskilled annual work at statutory minimum wage of Rs. 100 per day. The act was introduced with two major objectives, livelihood and food security. Aim of the programme was to improved purchasing power of rural people. From a gender perspective, the MGNREGA hold great promise especially with its clause for protecting women's access and make sure about livelihood as well as food security to the scheme through proactive inclusion. It was found from the study results that MGNREGA had clear-cut objectives to provide job opportunities for rural masses The objectives of the act is to maintain equality among the various groups of the society and to promote standard of living thereby contributing to economical improvement of the people of the rural areas. It was revealed from data that 100 per cent women beneficiaries belonged to low socio-economic status and MGNREGA like employment programmes are their utmost need to uplift socio-economic status.

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