

Women workers awareness status towards achieving MGNREGS goals

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ABSTRACT

Rural women workforce playing a catalytic role towards achievement of transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme is one such developmental cum democratic empowerment generating growth engine which is playing a significant role to meet the practical as well as strategic needs of women's participation with its gender sensitive features. MGNREGS focus on gender equality and reducing economic dependence of women on men in rural India by means of job creation which are essential for women empowerment. Women workers participation percentage in Rajasthan always reflects booming numbers on national chart. But on the other side of coin, only increased participation is not a single element for determining their active involvement, awareness and capacity building of women workers also essential component for achieving scheme goals. An attempt was made in the study to check the awareness status of women beneficiaries of MGNREGS of selected villages of Badgaon and Girwa block of Udaipur district. This study brings a light upon awareness of women beneficiaries about provisions and entitlements of scheme. It was found that majority possessed average awareness on various parameter of scheme related information. More efforts are required for generating mass awareness in dissemination of scheme entitlements for benefitting the mass.

INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme is a demand driven public wage employment programme where works are opened and jobs offered whenever there is a demand for work. With goals of social protection and creation of livelihood security among most vulnerable people living in rural India, it offers hundred days employment opportunity to every adult member of the household who want to do unskilled work. Special attention is given on

empowerment of socially disadvantaged, especially on women through innovative gender sensitive approach of equal wages and many more women friendly features. Unique features of scheme not only fetching women participation in huge number, indirectly building their capacities in many ways. Hundred days of unskilled work under scheme generate economic independence and decision making power among rural women. Unique gender sensitive features of scheme fetching a good participation from rural women and benefitting them in terms of enhanced income, work opportunities, creating

self-identity and better social life.

Further it is a true fact that success of any developmental programme depends on the effective participation and foremost awareness among peoples. Awareness acts as a milestone for developing such favorable attitude. Level of awareness of an individual decides their effective efforts, interest and action towards development. It leads any individual towards acquiring knowledge for their development. Various development scheme designed by the government for benefitting the rural mass but benefits would be utilized fully depends on the awareness among people. Thus an effort was made to examine the awareness of women beneficiaries working under MGNREGS.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present research was conducted in purposively selected in total eight villages of Girwa and Badgaon Panchayat Samiti of Udaipur. To select the sample, a list of village wise registered women beneficiaries employed for 100 days wage employment under MGNREGS from 2006 to 2013 was collected from both Panchayats. From the Panchayat MGNREGS enrollment records, women beneficiaries of respective villages were listed out separately and 25 women beneficiaries were randomly selected from each village. Thus, a total sample of 200 women was constituted for study. Interview technique was used for collecting data, with the help of developed interview schedule.

Many researchers in their studies concluded awareness of workers with regards to scheme and its provisions. Monika (2017) in her study in Badhra Block in Bhiwani District (Haryana), analyze the level of awareness of women beneficiaries of participated in the scheme. She concluded that with regards to important provision of MGNREGA, awareness of women beneficiaries was highest about daily wage rate (76%) and provision of equal wages to both men and women (66%). Provision of worksite facilities is most attractive feature of MGNREGS to involve women, but no awareness found among women beneficiaries. Farooqi and Saleem (2015) conducted a survey of rural areas of district Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh) and by the in-depth interview of women beneficiaries found that none was aware about unemployment allowance. The level of awareness about worksite facilities and provision of

guaranteed 100 days employment was very poor with 20 per cent respondents in favour of positive response. Small percentage (2%) of among all surveyed women respondent was aware about their right for work in MGNREGA. Dey (2014) concluded that scheme has helped women in rural areas to come out of their closed shell although people were aware of MGNREGA but not of the provision of the act. Mohanty (2012) briefed in her study that awareness level in the Sundargarh district, Odisha was not very encouraging. Around 93 per cent of villagers were aware about the MGNREGS. But workers awareness on how to apply for job cards, awareness about minimum wages and demand for work was reportedly very low.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Various Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities as per guidelines under scheme disseminating right based provisions of the act to ensure that the workers know their right to demand wage employment and exercise their right by applying for jobs as per their need. In the study awareness of women beneficiaries on general information and provisions of programme, registration and job card process, work allotment and wage payment procedures, reservation and women worker specific features under scheme, muster roll etc. were examined.

General awareness about MGNREGS:

Data in Table 1 clearly highlights the fact that all the women beneficiaries (100%) possessed awareness about execution of MGNREG Scheme in their respective area. Enquiring about initiation or start of scheme only 18 per cent women beneficiaries confirming about its start *i.e.* 2006, while 49 per cent respondents mention approximate year time of MGNREGS initiation *i.e.* from how many years scheme is running in their area. Remaining 33 per cent women beneficiaries don't know about starting year of MGNREGS in their village. As far as awareness about complete name about MGNREGS, more than one third of the respondents (34%) affirms about its name *i.e.* NREGA (popularly known name among mass) but unable to state its complete name. Quite depressing to note that women participating in this scheme but more than half (66%) don't know about its name. They identify it by 100 days' work scheme

Table 1: Women beneficiaries general awareness about MGNREGS (n =200)

Sr. No.	Awareness about MGNREGS	f	%
1.	Aware about programme		
	Yes	200	100
2.	Starting of MGNREGS in village		
	Mention the start year <i>i.e.</i> year 2006	36	18
	Did not mention year	98	49
	Don't know	66	33
3.	Complete name of MGNREGS		
	Yes	68	34
	No	132	66
4.	Source of information about MGNREGS		
	Husband	18	9
	Relatives/Friends	28	14
	Panchayat Officials (Sarpanch/Panch/etc)	134	67
	Gram Sevak	14	7
	Mate	6	3

specifically.

As cent per cent women beneficiaries aware about the MGNREG Scheme running with in their village, further more than two –third of women beneficiaries (67 %) affirmed Panchayat officials (office) as a source of information about scheme from where they get informed about MGNREGS. Very less number (14%) of women beneficiaries came to know through relatives/ friends, further among other source of information 9 per cent women beneficiaries get information from husband about scheme running in their village, followed by (7%) women beneficiaries who came to knew through Gram Sevak. Very few women beneficiaries (3%) were informed by Mate appointed under scheme.

Awareness about job card and its process :

With regards to the awareness about the job card and its registration process Table 2 depicts that cent per cent women beneficiaries (100%) aware of it.

Regarding awareness of women beneficiaries about source of getting job card, majority of respondents (94.5%) reported panchayat office as a place of getting job card whereas few respondents expressed mate (3%) and sarpanch (2.5%) as a key person for getting job card registration. As far as any payment required for receiving job card, all women beneficiaries (100%) strongly affirmed that no payment required for getting the job card under the scheme.

Table 2: Awareness about job card and its process (n =200)

Sr. No.	Particulars	f	%
1.	Awareness about job card		
	Yes	200	100
2.	Source of getting/receiving job card registration		
	Panchayat office	189	94.5
	Mate	6	3
	Sarpanch	5	2.5
3.	Required any payment for receiving job card		
	No	200	100

Awareness on work allotment and wage payment procedures:

Recent amendment under MGNREGS lays stress on works and order of priority shall be determined by Gram Panchayat in meetings of the Gram Sabha (GS) and the Ward Sabha. Perusal of Table 3 shows that more than half of the respondents (59%) aware about role of gram sabha in work selection under scheme. Although

Table 3: Work allotment and wage payment procedures (n =200)

Sr. No.	Particulars	f	%
1.	Role of Gam Sbha in work selection		
	Yes	118	59
	No	22	11
	Don't know	60	30
2.	Work allotment under scheme by		
	Sarpanch	39	19.5
	Gram Panchayat	116	58
	Mate	45	22.5
3.	Work provided with in time of		
	A week	47	23.5
	Fortnightly	132	66
	Within three week	19	9.5
	Within a month	02	1
4.	Working hours well defined		
	Yes	200	100
5.	Minimum wage rate fixed under scheme		
	Yes	200	100
6.	Mode of wage payment		
	In bank account	182	91
	Post off	18	9
7.	Wage payment given with in		
	7-10 days	20	10
	15-20 days	121	60.5
	Within a month	59	29.5

30 per cent unaware about its role while 11 per cent women beneficiaries refused about the role of Gram Sabha in selection of work. Nearly 58 per cent women beneficiaries affirms that Gram Panchayat is the body for allotment of work, while rest of the respondents expressed mate (22.5%) and sarpanch (19.5%) as a responsible body for work allotment to the workers under scheme. These data indicated dilemma among women beneficiaries regarding work allotment procedure under scheme. Majority (66%) knew that Gram Panchayat is responsible for the providing work within a fortnight of the application issue a job card to the household, while about one fourth of the respondents (23.5%) affirmed with in week. All the respondents (100%) possessed awareness about well-defined working hours *i.e.* 8 hours under the scheme.

Every person working under scheme is entitled to wages at the wage rate notified by central government under section of MGNREGA. Awareness of women beneficiaries were also surveyed on wage parameters of scheme. Data in Table 3 indicated that cent per cent women beneficiaries were aware of minimum wage rates fixed under scheme. Two-third of women beneficiaries (60.5%) was aware about provision of wage payments within notified time period *i.e.* 15 days. With regards to mode of wage payment to workers, majority of women beneficiaries (91%) aware about the wage payments made through bank account of worker whereas very less number of women beneficiaries (18%) stated post office account of worker as a wage payment mode.

Awareness on women specific provisions under MGNREGS:

Among the salient features of MGNREGS, it ensures at least one-third beneficiaries should be women. Further exclusive attention given on widowed, deserted and destitute women as highly vulnerable group. Data in the Table 4 reveals women working under scheme were unaware of women specific provisions. It is quite depressing note that nearly half of the women beneficiaries (47%) don't even know about any reservation of women *i.e.* one third worker should be women under MGNREGS, followed by 44.5 per cent women beneficiaries reported that there is no reservation for women under scheme. Very less number of women beneficiaries (8.5%) aware about women reservation entitlements under scheme.

Sr. No.	Women specific entitlements under scheme	f	%
1.	Provision of reservation for women in work		
	Yes	17	8.5
	No	89	44.5
2.	Special provision for single / widow /deserted women		
	Yes	24	12
	No	85	42.5
3.	Equal wages to male female worker		
	Yes	200	100

Analysis of Table 4 highlighted low awareness on special provision for single/widow /deserted women registered under MGNREGS. Nearly half of respondents (45.5%) were not aware of any special provisions for different categories of women workers, simultaneously 42.5 per cent stated no information about such entitlements for single/widow and deserted women workers. Only 12 per cent women beneficiaries knew about such entitlements for women workers. All the women beneficiaries (100%) were aware of equal wages provision of MGNREGS.

MGNREGS was designed with various unique features and provision for providing employment opportunity with better working environment. Data in Table 5. More than two third women beneficiaries (67.5%) were aware about allotment of work under scheme made within 5 km radius of workers resident village. Further it was surprising to note that 28 per cent don't know about such provision although they are working under the scheme. Majority of respondents (83.5%) were unaware about unemployment allowance provision whereas 16.5 per cent declined about such provisions for workers. It's quite discouraging fact that not even single women beneficiary possessed awareness about provision of unemployment allowance right designed for ensuring right based employment opportunity for utilizing its benefit.

Worksite facilities under scheme are another feature added with the aim of providing favourable working environment to the workers at worksite. It caters various basic and emergency needs of workers *i.e.* drinking water,

Table 5: Awareness on unique provisions under MGNREGS (n =200)

Sr. No.	Provisions under MGNREGS	f	%
1.	Work allotment within 5 km radius		
	Yes	135	67.5
	No	9	4.5
2.	Unemployment allowance for workers		
	No	33	16.5
	Don't know	167	83.5
3.	Availability of worksite facilities		
	Yes	77	38.5
	No	123	61.5
4.	Kind of worksite facilities		
	Drinking water	77	38.5
	Shade at worksite	48	24
	Creche for children	23	11.5
	First aid for worksite injuries	37	18.5

shade, first aid etc. while working at worksite. Data presented in the Table 5 indicated differing awareness status of women beneficiaries on the worksite facilities aspect. Majority of women beneficiaries (61.5%) expressed no awareness about provision of worksite facilities under scheme, while more than one-third women beneficiaries (38.5%) aware of various worksite facilities provision under scheme although contrary to this experienced unavailability of such facilities at the time of working at their worksite. With regards to awareness about kind of worksite facilities provision, those one-third women beneficiaries showed varied awareness about it. Availability of drinking water at worksite was reported by 38.5 per cent women beneficiaries followed by provision of shade at worksite was stated by 24 per cent women beneficiaries. Very less number of women beneficiaries mentioned awareness on provision of first-aid facility for injuries at worksite (18.5%) and Creche for children of women workers (11.5%).

Awareness on other provisions under MGNREGS:

Many safeguards for transparency and accountability are built into the act and also in the NREGA guidelines. Perusal of data Table 6 depicts encouraging note that most of the women beneficiaries (96.5%) possessed awareness about muster roll, although awareness of women beneficiaries about use of muster

Table 6: Awareness on other provisions under MGNREGS (n =200)

Sr. No.	Provisions under MGNREGS	f	%
1.	Awareness about muster roll		
	Yes	193	96.5
2.	No	6	3
	Use of Muster roll		
	Attendance of worker	46	23
	Wage payment record of worker	14	7
	Work record of worker	23	11.5
3.	All above	110	55
	Muster roll read loudly in front of workers		
	Yes	166	83
4.	No	34	17
	Mode of attendance in muster roll		
5.	Daily	200	100
	Entries in the muster roll made by-		
	Mate	200	100

roll varies.

More than half of the beneficiaries (55%) were possessed multiple uses of muster roll *i.e.* for maintaining attendance, work record and wage payment record of workers. Further split responses of women beneficiaries were recorded regarding individual use of muster roll. Nearly one-fourth (23%) possessed awareness about use of muster roll for maintaining daily attendance followed by 11.5 per cent women beneficiaries knew about its use for maintaining work record of worker and 7 per cent women beneficiaries aware of its use for wage payment record of workers.

To ensure transparency and accountability in the implementation of MGNREGS, social audit, vigilance and grievance redressal were added as three innovative features. It is very depressing to note that after analysis of Table 7 that very less number of respondents (31.5%) possessed awareness about social audit under scheme. Majority of women beneficiaries (68.5%) don't know about social audit conducted under MGNREGS although after probing women beneficiaries affirms that they heard the name of social audit. More than half of women beneficiaries (58.5%) don't know about existence of any vigilance mechanism under scheme. No vigilance mechanism was stated by 24 per cent women beneficiaries. Very less number of women beneficiaries (17.5%) expressed awareness about such provision.

With regards to awareness about grievance redressal

Table 7: Awareness on other provisions under MGNREGS (n =200)			
Sr. No.	Provisions under MGNREGS	f	%
1.	Awareness about social audit		
	Yes	63	31.5
	Don't know	137	68.5
2.	Provision of any vigilance committee for worksite		
	Yes	35	17.5
	No	48	24
	Don't know	117	58.5
3.	Provision of grievance redressal mechanism		
	Yes	29	14.5
	No	66	33
	Don't know	105	52.5

mechanism among women beneficiaries, perusal of data in the Table 7 indicates that more than half (52.5%) don't know about provision of grievance redressal mechanism for filing their scheme related complaints. Contrary to this data one third of respondents (33%) stated unavailability of such provision, while only 14.5 per cent women beneficiaries possessed awareness about grievance redressal mechanism for filing complaints under scheme.

Overall awareness of women beneficiaries about MGNREGS :

Further an effort was made to categorize the women beneficiaries on the basis of their overall awareness about the programme. Awareness of women beneficiaries were checked on basic information parameters of scheme.

On the basis of scores obtained after attempting

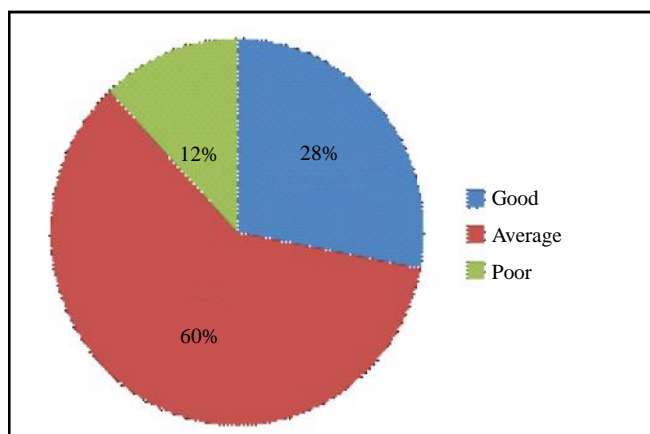


Fig 1: Categorization of awareness on the basis of their overall awareness of women beneficiaries about MGNREGS

various awareness parameters, findings reveals that two-third of the women beneficiaries (60%) had average awareness about different aspects of MGNREGS, however, 28 per cent respondents were in good awareness category (Fig. 1). Very less number of respondents (12%) falls in poor category of awareness about MGNREGS with overall mean per cent awareness score of 55.59.

Conclusion:

Awareness is the key to unlock the benefits of programme. Level of awareness varies among individual and it's also decides their extent of participation and access towards benefits. Awareness generation among potential and existing workers forms the most strategic aspect in effectively implementing rural development schemes, policies and plans of the government. The data in the finding highlighted on the need of generating awareness through camps for capacity building of women beneficiaries. It indicated dilemma among women beneficiaries regarding scheme provisions which should be rectified.

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