

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is one of the most progressive legislations enacted in India, since independence. It is a bold and unique experiment in the provision of rural employment in India. Further, it is the first expression of the right to work as an enforceable legal entitlement. In a country where labour is the only economic asset for millions of people, gainful employment is a prerequisite for the fulfillment of other basic needs and empowered the rights like– the right to life, the right to food, and the right to education.

The MGNREGA, with its guarantee of 100 days of unskilled work for every household, has been envisaged as a gender sensitive scheme. It allows for creche facilities on work sites, insists that one-third of the participants are women, and wages do not discriminate between the male and female. However, a gender analysis of the programme is necessary to make rural assets generation an inclusive process and address the crises underlying an increasing feminization of poverty in India.

The main way in which social protection seeks 'gender sensitive' - and this is true also of the MGNREGA – is to suggest that a certain percentage of beneficiaries must be women. While providing employment, priority shall be given to women in such a way that at least one – third of the beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested for work under this scheme. Given that agriculture is increasingly dependent on women cultivators as more men move out of agriculture, the availability of MGNREGA work is expected to be especially beneficial to women. Today 53 per cent of

all male workers but 75 per cent of all female workers, and 85 per cent of all rural female workers, are in agriculture. Women constitute 40 per cent of the agricultural workforce and this percentage is rising. Further an estimated 20 per cent of rural household are de facto female-headed, due to widowhood, desertion, or male out-migration. These women are often managing agriculture and providing family subsistence with little male assistance.

There is much that the MGNREGA promises from the perspective of women's empowerment as well. Most boldly, in a rural milieu marked by stark inequalities between men and women – in the opportunities for gainful employment afforded as well as wage rates – MGNREGA represents action on both these counts. The act stipulates that wages will be equal for men and women. It is also committed to ensuring that at least 33 per cent of the workers shall be women. By generating employment for women at fair wages in the village, MGNREGA can play a substantial role in economically empowering women and laying the basis for greater independence and self-esteem.

With this background the present study attempts to study the interventions of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme on the selected women beneficiaries. The study is mainly confined to the women of Kurnool District in Andhra Pradesh. The study deals with the various provisions of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which have concern to women and their impact on beneficiaries in the villages, namely, Sugur, Madhavaram, villages of Mantralayam Mandal, Ankireddy Palle, Belum, villages of Kolimigundla

Mandal, Chennampalli, Sivavaram, villages of Owk Mandal of Kurnool District. Thirty interview schedules were administered in each sample village. The study examines whether the women have made any real progress with the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

The researcher has adopted the interview method and keenly observed while interviewing the respondents and obtained the maximum information. In addition, the researcher has also collected the secondary data from the Government records at the State and District levels. During the survey the researcher has personally involved in several of the activities and functions to record the genuine information. The chapter wise summary of the study is narrated hereunder.

In the first chapter as stated, it is summarized with the following objectives.

Objectives of the Study

- ❖ To assess the participation levels of women in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme at national, State and District level.
- ❖ To analyze the facilitating factors as well as hindering factors (socio-cultural and economic) for qualitative participation of women in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.
- ❖ To know the extent to which Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is successful in achieving women empowerment.

- ❖ To evaluate the impacts of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme on income and employment status of women in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh.
- ❖ To analyze various risks associated with the women during the working time of MGNREGA; and
- ❖ To suggest measures for high participation of women in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

In the second chapter an attempt is made to review the literature available on MGNREGS and Women. The literature reviewed here focuses on different studies that look at problems in the implementation of the scheme in general and in particular pertaining to women and at possible ways to deal with these problems. They aim to assess MGNREGA's impact on the rural women and propose different changes how the scheme could be improved in order to meet its goals. This review of literature gives a direction for our current study on factors that facilitate participation of women in MGNREGS. The studies were reviewed under the headings of 'women and MGNREGA studies' and 'general MGNREGS studies'. As per the reviews a good number of studies have concentrated on MGNREGA legislation and its implications on rural poor. But these studies made a bird's eye view of the programme at national and state level by taking two or more states as sample. Some of the studies focused on the major components of the scheme like social audit, administrative mechanism, etc while some of the studies remarked on the pros and cons of the scheme. But nobody has studied the functioning of the scheme in Kurnool District and its impact on rural livelihoods. The literature

review carried out also reflects that though some researchers have done study on MGNREGS most of those are confined to economic aspect only. It is not comprehensive. Very few people have emphasized on implementation aspects of NREGS. Social aspects are not much highlighted.

The third chapter is devoted to analyze the objectives and significance of MGNREGA and financial funding of the programme. The expression of demand for employment under the scheme, labour budget, inventory of projects and perspective plan, work record, payment of wages and preventing bogus muster roils were also covered in this chapter. The purpose behind the initiation of Rozgar Jagaran Puruskar to Civil Society Organizations and its impact on such organizations is studied. The amendments made to the MGNREGA Act, 2005 from time to time and the consequences of such amendments are also analyzed in this chapter. The impact of MGNREGS on other anti-poverty programmes is also covered. The state wise and phase wise coverage of districts under the scheme and growth of MGNREGS in India during the years 2006-07 to 2013-14 were also given due importance in the study. The financial inclusion efforts under MGNREGS at national level were critically examined. Then the chapter reviews the implementation of the MGNREGS in Andhra Pradesh State. As part of it the chapter covers the phase wise coverage of districts under MGNREGS in Andhra Pradesh State. In this chapter the statistical data relating to female participation in MGNREGS, caste wise work and wage analysis 2006-07 to 2013-14, caste community work & wage analysis under MGNREGS in Andhra Pradesh, SHG participation in MGNREGS in Andhra Pradesh, disable participation in MGNREGS in Andhra Pradesh, work category analysis in Andhra Pradesh,

household wage earning analysis in Andhra Pradesh, total works overall status in Andhra Pradesh during the period of 2006-07 to 2013-14 is presented.

In the fourth chapter an attempt is made to study the brief history of Kurnool district during Paleolithic, Medieval and modern eras. The nomenclature of the Kurnool city and its growth over the years is also covered in the study. The geographical features of the district like location and area, physical characteristics, climate, types of soil, annual and seasonal rainfall, drainage system etc were covered in this chapter. The transportation, trade and commerce developments, tourism and industrial development in the district were covered in this chapter. The administrative and political divisions of the district were also presented in this chapter. The demographic particulars of Kurnool district such as density, literacy rate, sex ratio , population growth rate, child population, urban population, rural population etc were presented in this chapter. The introduction of MGNREGS and its need in Kurnool District is also covered. In this chapter the statistical data of Kurnool district relating to female participation in MGNREGS, caste wise work and wage analysis 2006-07 to 2013-14, caste community work & wage analysis under MGNREGS SHG participation in MGNREGS, disable participation in MGNREGS, work category, household wage earning, total works overall status during the period of 2007-08 to 2013-14 is presented.

Chapter five, analyses the field survey data relating to socio-economic background of respondents, knowledge and awareness of respondents and impact of MGNREGS on respondents. As a part of socio-economic

background of the sample households the details with regard to caste, religion, size of the family, age group of respondents, marital status, educational status, type of house, land-holdings, possession of ration cards etc details were analyzed. it examines the awareness of sample respondents on MGNREGS, awareness about the important provisions of MGNREGS and awareness on agency in identification of works. The year wise enrollment of the respondents under MGNREGS, time gap between date of registration and receipt of job card and time gap between date of application and the provision of employment were ascertained. The respondents opinions on the amount spent for receiving job card and on cost of photography were also analysed. The views of the respondents on the frequency of gram Sabha meetings held in sample villages, their participation in gram Sabha meeting as job card holders and frequency of their attendance to gram Sabha meetings were analysed. The opinions of respondents on facilities available at work site, views of the respondents on the adequacy of work site facilities, mode of wage payment and rating of MGNREGS were ascertained. The impact of MGNREGS on equal wage rates for both men and women on agriculture works, personal savings, employment opportunities, cash availability in the hand, household debts, purchase / procurement of gold and silver ornaments, possession of pairs of cloths, respect from other family members, possessing permanent assets, educational status of children, decision making on family matters, food consumption status in the family, participation in general village developmental activities, independent decision making in voting, social solidarity and village integration, creation of village common assets and overall environment of villages were covered under this chapter.

In the sixth chapter an attempt is made to present summary of the study, findings, and conclusions including offering some suggestions.

Findings of the study

- ☞ As per the study Television occupies first place as the agent of awareness about MGNREGS in case of 26.11 per cent of sample beneficiaries. As the agent of awareness the second place is occupied by friends/relatives/neighbours as they created awareness among 15 per cent of sample beneficiaries. Government officials of several departments are the agents of awareness in case of 14.44 per cent of sample respondents. Nearly 8.33 per cent of sample respondents became aware of MGNREGS by the members of Self Help Groups (SHGs). News papers are the agents of awareness of MGNREGS through news papers. NGO representatives are the agents of awareness to 13.89 per cent of sample respondents. Panchayat Members are the agents of awareness in case of 10 per cent of sample women.
- ☞ The study shows that the payment of wages within 15 days of work is known to 62.22 per cent of sample women. With regard to the provision of medical assistance for injury at the worksite is known to 58.89 per cent of sample respondents. The payment of equal wages for both men and women is known to 54.44 per cent of the sample. The provision of employment allowance in case of failure to provide work within 15 days from the date of application for works is known to 52.78 per cent of sample respondents.

- ☞ As per the study the role of Gram Sabha in the implementation MGNREGS at various stages of its implementation is known to 50.56 per cent of sample respondents. Machinery should not displace the labour provision is known to 46.67 per cent of sample respondents. Providing work within a radius of 5 kilometers is known to 45.56 per cent of sample respondents. Provision of providing 100 days of unskilled work per household is known to 43.89 per cent of the sample. The respondents are poor with regard to awareness on minimum wages and ex-gratia in case of death and disability of worker at work site.
- ☞ It is clear from the study that more than one fourth (26.11 per cent) of sample women respondents enrolled as MGNREGS beneficiaries before 2007. As many as 36.67 per cent of sample women respondents registered under MGNREGS in 2008. The women registered in 2009 constitute 11.67 per cent of the total sample. Nearly 10 per cent of sample women respondents were enrolled under MGNREGS in the year 2010. In 2011 about 11.11 per cent of sample women registered under MGNREGS.
- ☞ The study shows that only 32.22 per cent of the sample respondents got job card as per statutory minimum days. In case of remaining 67.78 per cent the time gap between date of registration of receipt of job cards is more than statutory minimum days. . In case of 16.11 per cent of sample respondents the time gap is 16 to 20 days. About 13.33 per cent of sample respondents reported the time gap of 41 days and

above between date of registration and receipt of job cards. Around 11.67 per cent reported time gap of 30 to 40 days.

- ☞ As per the study majority of respondent women reported that they spent some amount to get the MGNREGS job card.
- ☞ It is clear from the study that nearly 68.33 per cent of women reported that they paid the money from their pockets to take photograph.
- ☞ It can be found from the study that the role of Gram Sabha in selection works is limited to white papers only. Most of the works of MGNREGS are not approved in the Gram Sabha meetings. More than half of the MGNREGS work selection is being done alone by the Field Assistant of concerned village.
- ☞ As per the study more than half (51.11 per cent) of the sample respondents declared that the Gram Sabha meetings are never held in their respective villages. About 32.22 per cent of sample women respondents reported that in their villages Gram Sabha meetings will be held only once in a year. The Gram Sabha meetings in some villages are held twice in a year as per the reports of 11.11 per cent of sample respondents.
- ☞ As per the study nearly 63.89 per cent of sample respondent women never attended the Grama Sabha meeting during last 10 years. Only 36.11 per cent of sample respondent at least once or twice attended the Gram Sabha meeting held in their villages.
- ☞ It is evident from the study that a preponderant majority i.e. 55.38 per cent of sample respondents attended the Gram Sabha meeting only once. The attendance to Gram Sabha meeting only twice is reported

by 32.31 per cent sample women. Around 7.69 per cent of sample respondents stated that they attended Gram Sabha meeting thrice. Four and more than four times of Gram Sabha meetings is reported by 4.62 per cent of sample respondents.

☞ The study shows that around 40 per cent sample respondents only getting employment within statutory minimum 15 days from the date of their application. In case of 31.11 per cent sample women respondents the gap is 16 to 30 days to get employment from the date of application. The time gap between date of application and the provision of employment is 31 to 45 days in case of 19.44 per cent sample women respondents. More than 45 days of time gap is reported by 6.11 per cent of sample respondent women.

☞ As per the study there is no Aaya or helper at work place as stated by 60.56 per cent of sample respondents. Around 83.33 per cent of sample women respondents reported that there is no crèche facility at work site. There is no shed for the women for dressing of women at work place as reported by 63.89 per cent of sample respondent women.

☞ As per the study 78.89 per cent of sample women expressed inadequacy of work site facilities.

☞ It is evident from the study that more than half of the sample women respondents reported that they are receiving wages through post offices. Payment of wages directly by cash is reported 12.78 per cent of sample respondents. As per the reports of 15 per cent sample women respondents, the wages are paid through banks. Smart card

system is the method by which nearly 16.11 per cent of sample respondent women are getting their wages.

- ☞ It is evident from the study that nearly 65.56 per cent of sample respondent women rated the works of MGNREGS as good or very good. Average rating is assigned to MGNREGS works by 17.78 per cent of sample women respondents. Around 16.66 per cent of sample respondents assigned the poor or very poor ratings to MGNREGS works.
- ☞ The study reveals that income of sample women respondent households' income increased due to the implementation of MGNREGS in the study area as reported by 128 respondents constituting 71 per cent of total sample. Only 12.78 per cent of respondents expressed that there is no change in their family income levels.
- ☞ As per the study more than three-fourth 76.11 per cent of the sample respondents reported that there is some improvement in the personal savings due to employment created by MGNREGS. Among them nearly 27.22 per cent of the respondents observed marginal improvement in their personal savings in the study area. Around 48.89 per cent reported significant change.
- ☞ It is clear from the study nearly 77.23 per cent of respondents reported that the MGNREG programme have positive impact on the generation Man Days of employment opportunities in the study area. Of them 21.67 per cent reported marginal increase and 55.56 per cent reported significant increase. Around 20.56 per cent reported Status quo or no change.

- ☞ The study reveals that as many as 78.99 per cent of the sample respondents declared that MGNREG programme has significant impact on availability of cash in the hands of respondents.
- ☞ As per the study nearly 19.44 per cent of respondents reported status quo on availability of cash in the hands due to MGNREG programme in the study area.
- ☞ It is clear from the study nearly 76 per cent of the respondents reported that the MGNREG Programme has positive impact in clearing old debts through creation of additional employment opportunities.
- ☞ It is clear from the study that the working of women in MGNREGS works has some positive impact in possession of gold and silver ornament. These ornaments include ear rings, nose ring, anklet, chains etc. As per the study 41.11 per cent of sample women reported that there is a marginal increase in the possession of gold and silver ornaments. Around 27.22 per cent of the sample declared there is a significant increase in their possession of gold and silver ornaments.
- ☞ As per the study nearly 40.56 per cent of sample women respondents declared that there is significant increase in possession of pairs of cloths by sample respondents. Marginal increase in the possession of cloths is reported by 19.44 per cent of the sample women respondents.
- ☞ The study shows that nearly 71.11 per cent women reported positive change in the respect from other family member as earning member in the family.
- ☞ It is evident from the study that nearly 62.78 per cent of sample women declared that there is no change in the possession of permanent

assets. Only one third of respondents responded positively with regard to change in the possession of permanent assets.

- ☞ As per the study nearly 60.56 per cent of women respondents reported status quo in health expenses. Nearly 31.11 per cent of sample women respondents reported marginal increase in their family health expenses. Only 6.11 per cent reported significant increase in the health expenditure.
- ☞ It is clear from the study that nearly 66.11 per cent of sample respondents stated that there is a positive increase in the educational status of children. Around 14.44 per cent reported marginal increase in the educational status of children. Status quo in the educational status of children is reported by 31.67 per cent of the sample women respondents.
- ☞ The study shows that nearly 45 per cent of sample women reported that there is no change in their decision making status on family matters. On the other hand 53.33 per cent reported some amount positive change in their decision making status on family matters. Among them 13.33 per cent reported significant change and 40 per cent of women stated marginal improvement.
- ☞ As per the study around 10.56 per cent of sample women reported marginal increase in the food consumption pattern of the family. But a preponderant majority of sample women declared that there is no change in the food consumption status of the family.
- ☞ It can be noted from the study that a preponderant majority i.e. 78.89 per cent of sample women declared that there is no change in their participation levels in village developmental activities. It can be

attributed for the non-conducting of Gram Sabha meetings at periodic intervals. Around 15.56 per cent of sample women reported marginal increase in their participation levels in village developmental activities and 3.33 per cent reported significant change.

- ☞ As per the study around 51.67 per cent of sample women and 14.44 per cent of another sample women reported marginal and significant increase in their freedom to vote in elections respectively. Around 31.67 per cent of sample women respondents reported status quo in their decision making during elections.
- ☞ As per the study more than half of the sample women respondents declared that there is no change in their social status due to their participation in MGNREGS. Around 28.33 per cent of women reported marginal increase in their social status due to the participation in MGNREGS. Significant increase in the social status is reported by 17.78 per cent of sample respondent women.
- ☞ As per the reports of 50.56 per cent of sample respondents there is no change in the creation of community assets in the study area. On the other hand 32.22 per cent 16.11 per cent of the sample respondents reported marginal and significant increase in the community assets respectively.
- ☞ The study shows that as many as 68.89 per cent of sample respondents declared that there is no impact of MGNREGS in the improvement of overall environment of the village. Some kind of positive change in the overall environment of village is reported by 29.44 per cent of sample respondents. Among them 21.11 per cent

reported marginal change and 8.33 per cent reported significant change.

Suggestions

- ☞ There is a low awareness among some women workers of MGNREGA. To come out of this anomaly more awareness campaigns have to be conducted to educate the people about the provisions of the programme.
- ☞ There is delay in making the payment of wages in the case of some workers. To avoid this appropriate steps are to be taken by the government to maintain the uniformity in wage payment.
- ☞ Steps are to be taken to mitigate the problem of harassment of women at the worksites.
- ☞ Some of the worksite facilities are very poor. So the steps should be taken to provide adequate worksite facilities. For this purpose separate mechanism should be evolved.
- ☞ For comprehensive participation of women the women should be allowed to involve in planning for MGNREGS.
- ☞ Women participation can be enhanced by appointing female supervisors on MGNREGS works and in conducting social audits
- ☞ Women should be involved in the selection of works, which can create further mainstream employment in the village
- ☞ The provision of food for women at the work sites creates enthusiasm among women to participate in MGNREGS works.

- ☞ Designing special Statement of Rates (SOR) for women, preferably through conducting a systematic time and motion study, to ensure that they earn the set minimum wages.
- ☞ Providing 100 days of work should be made mandatory to all including women workers, as this will accelerate the process of women's empowerment.
- ☞ Improving the quantity of employment of MGNREGS by implementing all entitlements of workers including payment of the legal minimum wages, work site facilities and dependable first aid facilities. In addition, it is important to add some minimum social security such as health insurance. In other words, MGNREGS work needs to move towards quality employment.
- ☞ Changes need to be made in the provision of asset ownership (on private as well as public lands) and in the distribution of returns of MGNREGS assets. When more than 100 million assets have been constructed under MGNREGS so far, it is necessary to develop a fair and just approach for asset ownership. In this context, we would like to recommend (1) joint ownership of all MGNREGA assets constructed on private lands, (2) fair share of women in the community assets and (3) just distribution of these assets between men and women.
- ☞ Finally, MGNREGS implements as well as their maintenance are costly for MGNREGS workers. It costs time as well as money. It will be extremely useful if these are provided by the local Village Panchayat and their timely maintenance is also ensured by them.

- ☞ MGNREGS should take up agricultural works in collaboration with private farmers, on a 50:50 share of the labour cost. It would help the individual farmers in bringing down the high cost of farming owing to the higher market wage and also will eliminate the labour shortage experienced in the agricultural sector. The 50:50 share will also reduce the expenditure of government on MGNREGS wage by half. Thus, it could turn out to be a win-win situation. The government could also acquire the agricultural products produced under this PPP mechanism and market them through its PDS machinery which could bring down the inflationary tendencies in the market.
- ☞ Since MGNREGS wage acts as a standard minimum wage and any hike in it will result in increase in the market wage, the government should consider all these aspects before increasing wage rate in MGNREGS
- ☞ The MGNREGS projects should be planned as to utilize the period of off-season for agricultural labourers. Such a planning will provide off-season employment to labourers.
- ☞ The MGNREGS projects should be made time bound and more regressive so that workers do not consider it as an easy way of earning money and guaranteed employment without much toil.
- ☞ The amount of employment provided by this scheme is limited in the agricultural sector. Some extent in agricultural sector, it is help to be growth rate on generation of employment and agricultural production in rural India.

- ☞ There is need to motivate the small and marginal farmers to register under NREGA, so more projects may be started for the development of agricultural sector.
- ☞ Social audit under MGNREGA should be strengthened. More creative use of information technology should be made. This can greatly strengthen social audit and reduce chances of fraud and leakage.
- ☞ Facilitate speedy registration, job card and application of programme for improvement of this scheme in prospect.
- ☞ Allocation of fund for the purpose of promotion in a campaign made with the support from media and other agencies. It will help to reduce corruption while the fund allocation.

While concluding this study, one can observe that the positive and negative impacts of MGNREGA on women's empowerment cannot be ignored on the grounds that these are unintended or not covered under the main objectives of MGNREGA. By addressing these impacts will not only help women's empowerment but it will also help in achieving medium and long term goals of MGNREGA and help in moving towards optimum use of labour in the economy. It will also help in moving towards some desirable national level social policies.