



CONTOURING EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN –MGNREGA MODEL IN KUTTANADU TALUK

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Abstract

Gender is the inevitable factor for growth and development of nation like India. Economic empowerment for women is the only way by which it can be possible to give equal status to women in a male dominated society. To be empowered, women should come forward and realize that they are not second grade citizen of the society and at the same time also equally capable with men in all aspects of livelihood. A major initiative taken by the Government of India to raise the level of socio-economic status of the rural people under the Ministry of Rural Development is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on the empowerment of women in Kuttanad Taluk of Alapuzha district in Kerala. It also focuses on the prospects and problems of women empowerment through MGNREGA and will try to provide some recommendations to overcome the shortcomings.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Women Empowerment

Introduction

It is observed that women are often experienced the situation of extreme poverty which are further aggravated by household and social discrimination. In spite of the given provisions in our constitution, the harsh reality of deprivation and degradation continues. The changes have taken place in a significant portion of urban women, but their counter parts living in rural areas are only marginally affected by these changes. The achievement of inclusive growth and overall development is highly dependent on the gender quality and prosperity of women in the rural society. A major initiative taken by the Government of India in the Eleventh Five Year Plan

to raise the level of socio economic status of the rural people under the Ministry of Rural Development is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). The implementation of MGNREGA has been positively affecting the rural life as well as empowering the women of India in various aspects.

MGNREGA - A Positive Initiative

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a landmark legislation passed by the parliament of India after a successful struggle for employment guarantee legislation. MGNREGA as a flagship programme of Government of India was notified on September 7, 2005 in 200 rural districts in its first phase of implementation which took an effect from February 2, 2006. In 2007 – 2008, it was extended to an additional 130 rural districts. The remaining districts were notified under MGNREGA with effect from April 1, 2008. Since then MGNREGA has covered the entire country with the exception of districts that have a hundred percent urban population. The main objective of the Act is to enhance livelihood security of the rural household by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. It was essentially a programme to provide basic income and employment opportunities to poor households in rural areas where opportunities of work did not exist or was very limited.

Review of Literature

Ramesh and Kumar (2009) in their study found that MGNREGA holds the powerful prospect of bringing major changes in the lives of women. MGNREGA is playing a substantial role in empowering women economically and laying the basis for greater independence and self esteem.

Babita Pandey and Tanveer Ahmedwani (2014) focused study on women participation in MGNREGA in Kashmir. The study shows that role of women in MGNREGA is a distant dream of achieving for it was meant and finds that Kashmir has the lowest percentage of women participation.

Lavanya and Mahatma (2013) determined the scope of women empowerment through MGNREGA in Palakkad. The results of the study showed that MGNREGA had made women beneficiaries economically independent and it was also concluded that the programme had laid a foundation for self esteem and independence for women beneficiaries.

Hazarika (2009) examined the impact of MGNREGA on gender empowerment in Morigaon and Bongaigon district of Assam. This study showed that almost 70

– 80 percent of sample workers had meaningful income other than unpaid family work during the pre – NREGA. Majority of the worker felt that they are now in better position to fulfill their own requirement without looking at others.

K. Borah and R. Bordoloi (2014) in their research paper, MGNREGA and its wages on Daily Waged Workers: A case study of Sonitpur District of Assam has discussed about the impact of MGNREGA on empowerment and identified the obstacles in the path of implementation of the scheme. The paper revealed that female workers have significant benefits from MGNREGA and also identified some limitations in the implementation of the Act.

Significance of the Study

. MGNREGA is the first programme in India that has promised to provide the legal right to work. Though the main aim of the Act is to generate employment in rural areas, but apart from this, there are several secondary benefits lies in the Act in the form of women empowerment. Women cannot take decision on their own without consulting their husbands or fathers neither do they have control over household productive activity such as farming. But these women usually contribute to farming activities such as harvesting and storage of farm products which are controlled by the male members of the house. Therefore it is necessary to know their opinion regarding the programme to get a clear picture about the success of MGNREGA. Though many studies have been conducted on women empowerment through MGNREGA, Alapuzha District remains under-researched in this aspect. Hence the present study aims to fill this gap.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the impact of MGNREGA on socio economic empowerment of women beneficiaries of five Gramapanchayats of Kuttanad Block.
2. To find out the problems in the implementation of MGNREGA.
3. To suggest measures for more effective implementation of MGNREGA based on the findings of the field study.

Methodology

There are twelve Development Blocks in Alapuzha district. Only five Gramapanchayats of Kuttanad development block has been selected for the purpose of the study. The total sample size is 50 and 10 samples from each grama panchayats have been selected randomly from Kuttanad block. The targeted groups for the study were the women beneficiaries of MGNREGA.

Table No.1

Benefit of women beneficiaries under MGNREGA and control of their own earning

Benefits of women in MGNREGA And control over own earnings	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	28	56
To some extend	15	30
No	14	14
Total	50	100

Table: 2

Participation of women beneficiaries in family decision making under MGNREGA

Participation in family decisions	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	31	62
To some extend	12	24
No	4	8
Could not reply	3	6
Total	50	100

Suggestions

- Lack of awareness regarding the scheme has reduced its success rate. To create awareness among the women regarding MGNREGA, apart from Brochures, newspaper, television, radio etc, proper campaigning through street drama, loudspeaker , writing on the wall about MGNREGA can be an effective measures to increase awareness.
- To increase awareness, women need to be educated .More initiation and awareness should be given to the rural poor women about MGNREGA that they should know the benefits of the scheme which will increase the women participation rate.

- Transparency and accountability ensure efficient utilization of resources under the scheme. Therefore provision for regular social audit must be carried out by Gram Sabha which enable in bringing transparency and accountability.
- Government should give more importance to productive works based on local need which will cover more women under the umbrella of MGNREGA.
- The study reveals that market wage rate is much higher than MGNREGA wage. It discourages the women to work under the scheme .Therefore in order to maintain consistency with the minimum market wage rate, MGNREGA wage rates should be revised at a regular intervals
- The government must take immediate steps to curb corruptions in implementation of MGNREGA and be vigilant so that without delay wages reach to the women workers for whom it is meant for.
- As Kuttanad Taluk of Alapuzha district is agriculture based society, government should provide more agricultural related works .
- More literacy driven programmes should be arranged by the government for the rural women, which will help them to involve themselves in such kind of scheme for their empowerment.

Conclusion

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is the largest poverty alleviation and well thought legislation in Indian history of social security programme since independence. By providing guaranteed wage employment to its registered workers, the Act has brought about a silent revolution in rural areas of the country. Though the official statistics reflects that MGNREGA has been quite successful and well implemented scheme operating in Alapuzha district, but in reality, there has been no significant dent on the problems of unemployment of rural women in the district. From the above analysis it can be concluded that the performance of MGNREGA is not full satisfactory. The scheme could not ensure the 100 days job guarantee to the majority of the women job card holders. The problem lies not in the Act, but in its defective implementation and lack of transparency etc, need to be strictly controlled. The prospects of the MGNREGA for rural development and woman empowerment are quite bright provided it is properly executed.

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