



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### INFLUENCE OF MGNREGS ON WOMEN WORKERS IN WEST GARO HILLS DISTRICT

\*<sup>1</sup>Akaibel.D.Areng and <sup>2</sup>Prof. S. C. Srivastava

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, RDAP Department, NEHU, India

<sup>2</sup>Professor, RDAP Department, NEHU, India

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#### ABSTRACT

Necessity of women participation for development has been considered to be part of programmes and a provision under MGNREGS for women workers provides opportunity for such empowerment. Women workers participation percent was 34 percent, against the 33 percent of work reserved for women under the Act. Equal wages are received under the programme for both men and women though wages under casual work differs among both men and women. The income and the wages received under the programme has contributed to the total income of the household though in less amount. Income earned from wages under the programme has enabled them to spend in different items but around 69 percent are spent mostly on food item. There are problems in the worksite faced by the women workers which can be changed if all the provisions under programmes is implemented as per the norm.

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## INTRODUCTION

Active participation of any community is the important part of the development and empowerment for uplifting socio economic status. Though India is developing economically and technologically but sex segregated society still exist and especially rural women still continue to be discriminated and their current status in the society is the cause for concern (Hazra, 2011). A Government of India has therefore, taken up steps for encouraging women participation in the development process by providing provisions in policies and programmes. One of the major schemes having major component for women participation implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development at present is Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Majority of the labour work within the family that is required for maintaining life like raising children, hauling water etc., is done by women as a business partner without any pay and these works are often considered as low status. Even if women work outside in daily wage they earn less than male counterparts (Sushma *et al.*, 2013). The MGNREGA has potentiality for uplifting women status with the provisions of women equity in both work and payment of wages. In order to protect women justice and rights 33 percent of work are reserved for, which can help in promoting participation of women and thereby improving economic and also help in being more independent and self-

esteem (Akhtar *et al.*). Provisions under MGNREGA, thus, had the capacity to attract women workers, as women's care responsibility within the family influences their choices of work that are near the home, flexible time., etc even when they are in paid work. Thus, positive participation among the women have resulted in enhancing increase mobility, increase confidence and decision making skills among women. (TK Kartika, 2015). Dheeraja *et al.* (2013), mentions in their study that, some of the reason that promotes women participation under the programme are like distance covered under the programme which should be within the 5 km radius from workers residences, wages given equally as per the statutory minimum wages and uniformity and certainty fixed working hours for eight hours influences them for participation. Women empowerment is the long process and one of the process is getting access to opportunities and resources and control on their earnings and developing their well-being through active participation under various programmes provided by the government.

## Methodology

## Objective

1. To study the impact of wage employment income on the women beneficiaries in terms of income and employment.
2. To study the influence of MGNREGS wages on other casual wages received by women.

\*Corresponding author: Akaibel.D.Areng  
Research Scholar, RDAP Department, NEHU, India.

## Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the income of MGNREGA received by women workers and their number of days of employment generated.
2. Benefits of the MGNREGS have led to equality in wages received in both MGNREGS wages and other casual work wages.
3. The programme has contributed improved expenditure capacity of women MGNREGS workers.

Selection of sample: On consultation with DRDA blocks has been selected with Betasing and Rongram blocks representing above average performer and Dadenggiri and Tikirkilla blocks representing below average performer. From each block 5 VECs were selected on the random basis. Fifteen beneficiaries were selected for detailed study at household level. Thus a total number of 300 households were selected for detailed study through structured interview schedules. The beneficiaries were selected on the basis of sole criteria that they should have work under MGNREGS. Primary data was collected from the financial year 2010-2011 to study their performance and influence.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From Table 1 it can be observed that percentage of women participated in the MGNREGS work done shows highest of 44 percent in Betasing block and lowest of 24 percent in Dadenggiri block. Contribution of employment under MGNREGS to the household employment by the female workers in the family was highest in Betasing block (8 percent), and the least of 4 percent was in Dadenggiri block. Percentage change in actual employment of women workers and percent of women participated in MGNREGS among the sample blocks differ in percent. Dadenggiri block have lower percentage (24%) of women participation under the programme but they have higher actual employment percent change of 47 percent whereas, Tikirkilla block has highest of 43 percent of women participation under the programme, percent change in actual employment was only 17 percent. Betasing block among all the sample blocks have highest of 44 percent of women participation under MGNREGS programme and also highest of 56 percent change of actual employment of women workers. Women workers are contributing by working under MGNREGS though the percent contributed was very less, it has helped them in getting access to employment easily and the two blocks namely Tikirkilla block and Betasing block participation percent of women (43 percent and 44 percent, respectively) was higher than the reserved 33 percent of works for women under the programme. Data is collected for the income from 2006 and 2011 (gap of five years) to find out the income difference after implementation of the programme. Table 4 shows that, percent change highest of 18 percent was in the income of agriculture, followed by 17 percent change in livestock income. Percent change in labour income was 13 percent. After the programme income percent change was 15 percent in business and others. Highest percent change among the block in agriculture of 19 percent in Dadenggiri block and highest of 20 percent change in livestock was in Betasing block. In labour highest percent change of 16 percent was in both Rongram block and Betasing block respectively. In business percent change of income of 18 percent was highest in Rongram block.

Contribution of MGNREGS income by the workers to the total income of the household in 2010-11 was very less and their contribution to percent change among different income source can be concluded to be very negligible.

The table shows that, the income wages of the women workers and average number of days is highly correlated and significant at .001 levels (2-tailed). Thus, negative statement of the hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. Thus the contribution of MGNREGS employment and income by the women workers was very less but percent changes in employment and income of the household can be observed. The correlation status of the employment and income of the beneficiary women workers under MGNREGS programmes are highly satisfactory.

### Wages paid

Equal wages for both men and women brings the feeling of equality among women and their by help in building their level of confidence and decision making

Table 2 shows that wages received under the programme were equally paid for both men and women of Rs.117/- in the financial year 2010-11 for unskilled manual work. Whereas for casual workers amount paid was different for men and women and also varies among different blocks. Casual wages were higher in Rongram block and Betasing block which are nearer to Tura head quarter than the Tikirkilla block and Dadenggiri block both before and after in MGNREGS programme. Equal wages were not paid for women in casual work and the wages earned from the casual works was lesser than the wages paid under the MGNREGS. Thus, the statement that, "benefits of MGNREGS have led to equality in wages received in both MGNREGS wages and other casual work wages", has been found not to be true. Women workers income earned from wages under MGNREGS though not in bulk amount but had helped them in adding to their household income. Majority of the sample respondent spend their earnings mainly on food (69 percent) helping in providing regular meal for the family. After food 11 percent of the wages earned are spent on children education. Earnings from MGNREGS wages have also helped 9 percent of the women in procuring medicines for treatment of minor ailments in the family. On the other hand, around 6 percent of the women have been able to clear small debts. Around 5 percent of the women have spent the income from wages in repairing houses, buying seeds etc. Thus, MGNREGS wages has helped in improving the expenditure capacity of the women workers.

### Women problems faced during participation

1. Worksite facilities as per the norm under MGNREGS for enhancing women participation like providing drinking water, medical aid, crèche and shade are to be provided in all worksite. However, such facilities were lacking in almost all the selected blocks except for providing drinking water. Other worksite facilities supposed to be provided are like crèche, medical aid and shade were generally absent in the worksite.
2. Delay in payment of wages due to long process in submission of completion certificate creates a major problem among women workers. Most of them are not satisfied with the programme because of delay in payment of wages.

**Table 1. Status of women participation under MGNREGS**

Blocks	Participation percent of women workers	Contribution in percent of MGNREGS work to total employment of household by women workers	Percent change in actual employment by women workers
Tikirkillla	43%	7%	17%
Rongram	27%	7%	25%
Dadenggi	24%	4%	47%
Betasing	44%	8%	56%
Total	34%	7%	35%

Source : Field data.

**Table 2. Impact of MGNREGS on total income of the household**

Blocks	Contribution of MGNREGS income by household to the total income	Percent change in			
		Agriculture	Livestock	Labour	Business and others
Tikirkillla	3%	18%	16%	11%	15%
Rongram	9%	17%	16%	16%	18%
Dadenggi	6%	19%	15%	14%	13%
Betasing	8%	18%	20%	16%	13%
Total	7%	18%	17%	13%	15%

Source: Field data.

**Table 3. Results of correlation matrix**

Income from MGNREGS wages	Significance	Income from MGNREGS wages	Average number of working days
	Pearson correlation	1	.691**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	300	300
Average number of working days	Pearson correlation	.691**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300

**Table 4. Wages based on gender**

Blocks	Average MGNREGS wages received (in Rs.)		Casual work wages (in Rs.)			
	Men	Women	Before in MGNREGS		After in MGNREGS	
			Men	Women	Men	Women
Tikirkillla	117	117	100	50	150	100
Rongram	117	117	120	80	200	150
Dadenggi	117	117	100	50	150	100
Betasing	117	117	120	80	200	150

Source : Field data.

**Table 5. Benefits of MGNREGS on women workers**

Blocks	Proportion of MGNREGS women workers who said that it helped them in				
	Hunger	Illness	Repay debts	Children schooling	Others
Tikirkillla	51(25%)	8(27%)	4(20%)	10(28%)	2(13%)
Rongram	49(24%)	8(27%)	5(25%)	9(26%)	4(27%)
Dadenggre	57(28%)	6(21%)	6(30%)	7(18%)	6(40%)
Betasing	50(23%)	7(25%)	5(25%)	10(28%)	3(20%)
Total	207	29	20	36	15

Source : Field data.

- Almost all the sample workers were aware of 100 days of employment per household. But awareness about provisions under MGNREGS programme was very low. Most of the sample respondents were not aware that they can apply for employment and incase if 100 days of employment were not provided eligibility for unemployment allowance.
- Problem in maintaining time scheduled for working hours has also been one of the problems in the implementation process. as women after working under the programme has to take up the responsibility in taking care of the family.

- Awareness of the rights, entitlements, provisions and procedures under the programme still needs to be enhanced among all the workers of the rural areas.
- Regular payment of wages can improve their participation level in the programme
- Providing all the worksite facilities for making it convenient for the children at the working site can ease their difficulty in working under the scheme.
- Encouraging of preparation of works that can be worked by the women as some of the works are not convenient to be worked by women.

### Suggestions

Major suggestions by which performance of the programme can be further enhanced are:

### Conclusion

MGNREGS has been able to provide employment to all the sample rural households which have contributed to the actual employment of the household in very small percent. Sample

blocks having highest number of households occupation under agriculture has lower participation percent of women workers under MGNREGS. Women's equality in wages can be observed whereas, for casual work there was difference in wages among the gender. There was participation of women workers belonging from different income under the programme indicating their interest in the programme from different economical backgrounds. Increase in percent change among different income source was not because of MGNREGS as their contributing percentage to the total income was very less. But income earned from the wages of MGNREGS has benefitted women individually to spend on different requirements of the family. Problems in the implementation process can be reduced for the women workers if their awareness level about the programme is increased along with the provisions under the programme are made available for their participation and enhancing their capacity.

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