



ENSURING SOCIAL PARTICIPATION OF RURAL WOMEN: THE ROLE OF MNREGP AS AN EMPOWERING STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, empowerment of women has been recognized as a central issue in determining the status of women. The empowerment of rural women is crucial for the development of the rural India. Bringing women into the mainstream of development is a major concern for the government of India. In order to achieve empowerment in every realm of life, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP) has become novel idea to eradicate rural poverty and strengthen women's voice by supplying at least 100 days job to a family and thereby creating their innate vitality. The study gives lights to the fact that most of the women were reluctant to attend public programmes and other ceremonies before the launching of MGNREGS. They have no bank accounts and their participation in social activities were few. Besides this it also aims at environmental protection and sustainable development. This is not only a scheme providing job but also gives rights to the workers in selection, completion, monitoring, inspection etc.

In Kerala, 95% of the workers are rural women having no other income so by engaging in MGNREGS the rural employed unskilled women got a regular income for their family it increases their social status in family as well as in the society. This study findings shows that this scheme can improve the self efficacy of women and their social participation.

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INTRODUCTION

Empowerment can be defined as the processes by which women take control and possession of their lives through expansion of their choices. Thus, it is the process of acquiring the ability to make strategic life choices in the context where this ability has previously been defined. (Kabeer, 2001). Empowerment can take place at a hierarchy of different levels -individual, household, community and societal and is facilitated by providing encouraging factors (e.g., exposure to new activities, which can build capacities) and removing inhibiting factors (e.g., lack of resources and skills).

Public welfare schemes and programmes in India have conventionally offered a unique opportunity for women to earn cash incomes in a context where, too often, the ability of women to work outside the home is severely constrained by social norms. Public works programmes have therefore been a subject matter of considerable interest from the perspective of gender. Public works schemes may provide resources to financially vulnerable women that would facilitate human capital investment especially for children's education and nutrition apart from improving women's bargaining power within the household (Quisumbing and Yisehac, 2005).

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National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was come in to force on 5th September 2005 and the scheme was launched on 200 districts in February 2006. Later it was extended to all the districts in India on April 2008. Prior to these Act lots of other schemes were implemented by the rural development department to give employment opportunities to the rural poor. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) has a vital role in livelihood alternative for poor households without productive land or marketable skills, because it ensures non-discriminatory access to work and the timely payment of fair wages. Its aims to enhance the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment each financial year to every rural household whose adult members demand work under the scheme.

The role of women in Kerala in MGNREGP was very high compared with other states. Works are suggested by the ADS (Area Development Society) in Gramasabha and from these works labor budget is prepared at panchayath level. Hence, even at the time of selection work, women participation through CDS (community Development Society) is high. Mates are selected with the help of CDS and in kerala, all the mates are women. About 95% percent of workers are also women. The community Development Society (CDS) play a vital role in MGNREGS. Primary selection of work is done in

'ayalkoottams' which is the base units of CDS. Then it is scrutinize by the ADS and submitted to Gramasabha for its consideration. The CDS also participate in the process of selection of mates and supply of labour materials for the work .CDS also give popularity to the scheme through its base units called 'ayalkoottam':

Hence, a MGNREGS in Kerala provides a prominent role to the women in every aspects of this scheme.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study conducted by RashmiRani Agnihotri *et al.*(2017) "A Study on Women Empowerment Programmes in Karnataka State- A Theoretical Overview" revealed the fact that the women of rural area are facing so many basic problems. In such a way policies and programmes are major role in bringing desirable changes with reference to social and economic life of women. Proper and timely interventions and suggestions have something to do in bringing desirable changes in the life of the women and their status.

In the study "A Study on Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in India" conducted by Rajeshwari M. Shettar (2015) attempts to analyze the status of Women Empowerment in India and highlights the Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment. The study reveals that women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by Government. It is found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society. The study concludes by an observation that access to Education, Employment and Change in Social Structure are only the enabling factors to Women Empowerment.

Manisha Raj (2014) conducted a study on "Women Empowerment through Employment Opportunities in India" tried to look into various growth prospects of financial empowerment of women and highlight the major issues that hinder these growth processes. This study is an eye opener is in to the fact that under SEWA some 60000 poor women could create assets worth Rs. 200 million (6.6 million U.S.\$). Therefore women literacy and women employment will add to the gross domestic product of the nation and raise the per capita income of the country also. With rising incomes and education there is a profound impact on consumption. The rates of growth of several discretionary categories are nothing short of dramatic as a result. Female consumers have impacted the market structure. The rural as well as urban women have shown interest in having financial status in the family. So with the increase in population and female awareness, the growth prospects of a nation will also change leading to development in the long term. Indian women are moving towards achieving high growth targets along with their male counterparts and adequate assistance will embrace a bright future in rural and urban areas.

Sangeetha Arora & Meenu (2011) in her study "Women Empowerment Through Microfinance Intervention in the Commercial Banks -An Empirical Study in the Rural India with Special Reference to the State Of Punjab" attempts to study the role of microfinance intervention in promoting women empowerment in rural India. The aim is to investigate the use of micro financial services by the women clients and access their level of satisfaction with regards to these services. The researcher made an attempt to recognize the role of

microfinance in socio economic empowerment of women in the Jalandhar district of Punjab. The study reveals that the microfinance has been successfully contributing to women empowerment drastically to their family development in terms of getting credit for housing repairs, education and marriage of their children and also for expenditure purpose.

METHODS

The 60 women who are working with MNREGP in a panchayat, Ernakulam districts were taken by using simple random sampling method.

Data analysis and Interpretation

Socio Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 Distribution of respondents on the basis of Age

S I no:	Age group	Frequency	Percentage
1	18-28	5	8.33%
2	28-38	20	33.33%
3	38-48	30	50%
4	48-58	5	8.33%
	Total	60	100%

This table shows the distribution of the respondents according to their age. 8.33% (5) of the respondents are between the age group of 18-28. The 33.33% (20) of the respondents belong to the age group of 28 – 30. 50% (30) of the respondents fall in the age group of 38-48. Remaining 8.33% (5) of the respondents are between the age group of 48- 58.

Table 2 Distribution of respondents on the basis of Education

S L no:	Education	Frequency	Percentage
1	Primary	15	25%
2	High School	25	41.67%
3	Higher Secondary	15	25%
4	Graduate	Nil	--
5	Post Graduate	Nil	--
6	Technical	Nil	--
7	Not Educated	5	8.33%
	Total	60	100%

The table shows that 25% of the respondents got only primary education. 41.67% of the respondents were not yet up to high school. 25% of the respondents have Higher Secondary qualification and none of the respondents are Graduates, post graduates and technical education. Remaining 5% of the respondents are illiterate.

Table 3 Distribution of the respondents on the basis of marital status

S L no	Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Married	55	91.69%
2	Un Married	5	8.33%
	Total	60	100%

The table shows that 91.69 % of respondent are married and remaining 8.33% are unmarried.

Table 4 Distribution of respondents on the basis of economical status

SL no	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	APL (above poverty line)	5	8.33%
2	BPL (below poverty line)	55	91.67%
	Total	60	100%

The table represents that 8.33% of the respondents have APL status. And 91.67% of the respondents are BPL.

Table 5 Distribution of respondents on the basis of membership in Kudumbasree

SL no	Membership	Frequency	Percentage
1	Valid member	55	91.67%
2	Not a member yet	5	8.33%
	Total	60	100%

The table shows that most of the respondents are members of the Kudumbasree (91.67%). Only 8.33% of the respondents are not member of Kudumbasree.

Table 6 Distribution of respondents on the basis of growth of confidence to attend public programmes before and after joining MGNREGP

SL no	Stages	Confident	Percentage	Not confident	Percentage	Total
1	Before Joining	10	16.67%	50	83.33%	100%
2	After Joining	60	100%	--	--	100%

The table shows that 16.67% of the respondents have been confidence to participate in public programmes. But 83.33% of the respondents have not confidence to participate public programme before joining MGNREGS. The respondents are 100% confidence to participate in public programmes after joining MGNREGS.

Involvement in the Social Activities

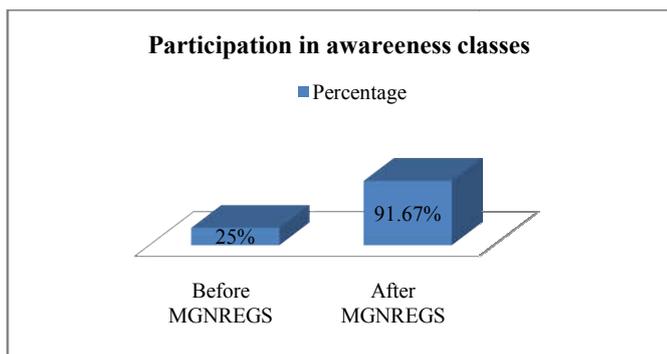


Diagram 1 Distribution of respondents on the basis of Participation in community awareness classes before and after joining MGNREGP

In the diagram represents only 25% of the people attended in community awareness classes before joining MGNREGS. But 75% of the respondents were not attended in any community awareness classes. But 91.67% of the respondents participated in community awareness classes after joining MGNREGS.

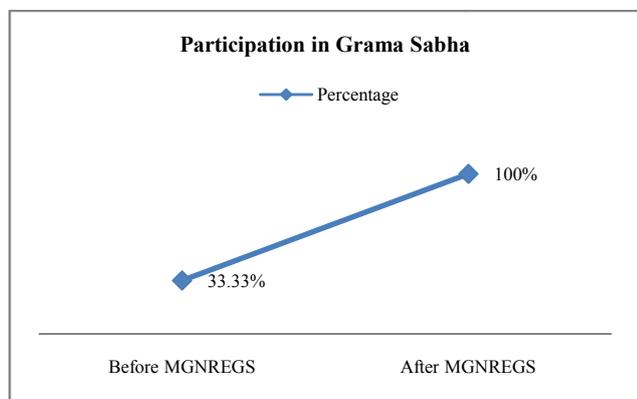


Diagram 2 Distribution of respondents on the basis of growth of Participation in Grama Sabhas (before and after joining MGNREGP)

33.33% of workers were participated in gramma sabha and 66.67 % of the respondents were not participated in grama sabha before joining MGNREGP. But 100% of the workers were attended in gramma sabha after joining MGNREGP.

Table 7 Distribution of respondents on the basis of growth of participation in Social service programmes before and after joining MGNREGP

SL no	Stages	Participated	Percentage	Not participated	Percentage	Total
1	Before joining MGNREGP	5	8.33%	55	91.67%	100%
2	After joining MGNREGP	50	83.33%	10	16.67%	100%

The table shows 8.33% of the respondents were participated in social services but 91.67% of the respondents were not participated in social services (before joining MGNREGP). After joining MGNREGP 83.33% of the respondents were participated in social services but only 16.67% of the workers were not participated social services.

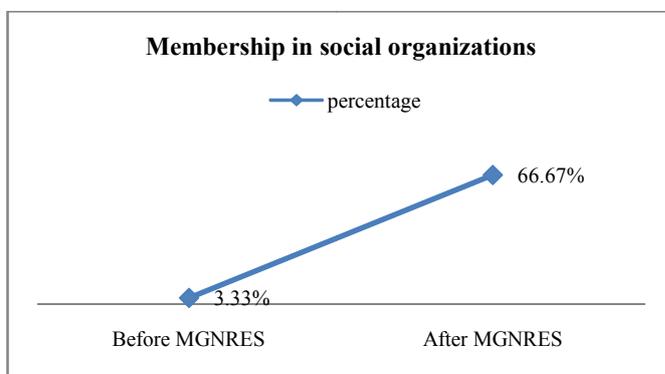


Diagram 3 Distribution of respondents on the basis of Participation in social organization before and after MGNREGP.

The diagram represents 3.3% of the respondents are the members in community clubs. But 96.67% of the respondents are not the members in community clubs (before joining MGNREGP). 66.67% of the respondents are members in the in community clubs after joining MGNREGP. But only 33.33% of the respondents are not members in the community clubs.

Table 8 Distribution of respondents on the basis of participation and responsibilities in Political parties after joining MGNREGP

SL no	Participation and responsibilities	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	55	91.67%
2	NO	5	8.33%
	Total	60	100%

The table explains that 91.67% of the respondents are engaged and gave attention in political parties (after joining MGNREGS). But before joining MGNREGS only 8.33% of the respondents were participate and gave attention in political parties.

Findings

- Majority of the women belong to the age group 38-48(50%).
- Most of the respondents were had the education below SSLC (41.67%).
- Most of the respondents were married (91.69%).
- Almost 92%of the respondents belong to BPL families.

- 66.67% of the labours were having no other jobs before working under MGNREGP.
- Most of the workers were members in kudumbashree ayalkoottams (91.67%).
- Most of the workers were reluctant to attend public programmes before working under MGNREGP, but after joining with MGNREGP, all of them got confidence to attend public programmes.
- Before working under MGNREGP only 33.33% of the labours participated in Gramasabha. But after working under MGNREGP all the respondents participated in Gramasabha.
- Membership of respondent in social organizations like clubs were only about 4% before working under MGNREGP. But after working under MGNREGP their participation increased up to 66.67%.
- More than 90% of the workers have political interests.
- Only 10% the workers have bank accounts before working under MGNREGP and their transactions were minimum but after working MGNREGP all of them have bank accounts and have regular transactions with banks.

CONCLUSION

The present study on social participation among rural women is a challenge to realize the impact of MGNREGS in improving social standards of women in society. Main aim of MGNREGS is poverty alleviation by giving labour to the rural people. In Kerala, 95% of the workers are women and among this 90% are housewife having no other regular jobs. So it acts as a saving to the family and also serves as a platform to the women to interact with the society.

The study paves the way to understand women's interest in public programmes and indulging in social and economical spheres. All of them have bank accounts and have the capability to make transaction with banks and other people. Almost 98% of the Kudumbashree members are also engaged in MGNREGS. This linkage helps to strengthen their Self Help Groups. Hence MGNREGS is a tool in the hands of women for their saving and social participation by rendering services to the public and thereby the development of rural society.

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