Impact of MGNREGA on Women Empowerment with Special Reference to Kalakkanmoi Panchayat in Sivgangai District, Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

The eleventh five year plan marks a significant departure from the conventional way of looking at women in plan document. It tries to mark the centrality of women in all sectors. It explicitly recognizes, probably for the first time, that women are not just equal citizens but agents of economic and social growth (Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, 2008, P.50). In several developing and emerging economies, public works programs provide employment and social protection to the working age poor, with gender responsiveness now making them. The Mahatma Gandhi Nation Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in India and the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in South Africa are examples of important safety nets for women (UN Women, 2013). According to Dr. Pranab Mukherjee (2009) inclusive growth carries the twin strategy of the growth and the instrumentalities through which it is achieved, so that the benefits reach the largest section of the society and that the maximum numbers of people are able to derive benefits from these development projects. That is why special emphasis was given to schemes like NREGA and Bharat Nirman.

The study tries to evaluate the impact of MGNREGA on socio-economic empowerment of women in Kalakkanmoi panchayat of Sivaganga district, Tamil Nadu. It further analyses various risk associated with the women during the working time of MGNREGA. The study finds that the MGNREGA increases income and expenditure of the households compared over the pre MGNREGA period and the scheme significantly enhances the social and economic decision making power to women in the men dominated rural society. Hence the scheme ensures improved standard of living of the vulnerable poor, more specifically among women. It also finds that poor worksite facility, hot climate condition and reduction of leisure time put them much hardship during the working hours of MGNREGA.

Keywords: Inclusive Growth, MGNREGA, Socio-economic Development, Women Empowerment.

1. Introduction

The eleventh five year plan marks a significant departure from the conventional way of looking at women in plan document. It tries to mark the centrality of women in all sectors. It explicitly recognizes, probably for the first time, that women are not just equal citizens but agents of economic and social growth (Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, 2008, P.50). In several developing and emerging economies, public works programs provide employment and social protection to the working age poor, with gender responsiveness now making them. The Mahatma Gandhi Nation Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in India and the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in South Africa are examples of important safety nets for women (UN Women, 2013). According to Dr. Pranab Mukherjee (2009) inclusive growth carries the twin strategy of the growth and the instrumentalities through which it is achieved, so that the benefits reach the largest section of the society and that the maximum numbers of people are able to derive benefits from these development projects. That is why special emphasis was given to schemes like NREGA and Bharat Nirman.

Various research studies and government reports have focused on the impact of MGNREGA in terms of women perspective, particularly on socio-economic improvements and challenges faced by women. The study by Institute of Applied Manpower Research (2008) found that NREGS helps to improve the income level and enhance the standard of living of the rural people particularly the vulnerable section of the society such as women, SC/STs, minorities and so on. Reethika Khera et al., (2009) observed that the MGNREGA facilitate a lot to attain the socio-economic empowerment of the women workers. It is also said that two-third of the women come out of poverty and attained food security. Vinita Arora et al., (2013) study found that MGNREGA enhances decision making power in social and economic well being of women. Asha Sharma (2012) identified that distress seasonal migration was almost stopped with the advent of the MGNREGA. The reason is that MGNREGA provided regular work in their
native place and the flow of income was steady and reliable.

Ratna. M. Sudarshan (2010) study focused that improved women participation in MGNREGA is enhanced from active participation of NGOs and better wage payment of scheme which is above the prevalent market wage. The study by Sudha Narayanan (2008) pointed out that the provision of shade, food and other basic amenities for young children at MGNREGA worksite would ensure effective participation of women particularly mothers who are having young child. Xavier and Mari (2013) study revealed that MGNREGA eliminate the leisure time enjoyed by the women. However, Narayanan et al., (2013) found preparedness for the implementation of programme by the government viz., initial survey, designs and uploading of photographs before and after completion of works were not properly done due to paucity of staff particularly technical staff.

2. Objective of the study

The present study is made with specific reference to the Kalakkanmoi panchayat, Sivaganga district, Tamil Nadu. The main objectives are:

- To evaluate the impacts of MGNREGA on socio-economic empowerment of women in Kalakkanmoi Panchayat of Sivaganga district, Tamil Nadu.
- To analyses various risk associated with the women during the working time of MGNREGA.

3. Methodology

The study used both primary and secondary data. Secondary date was collected from NREGA website (www.nrega.nic.in) for the financial year 2013-14. Primary data were collected from Kalakkanmoi Panchayat of Sivagnaga district during April 2013. The total samples were 120 and were selected randomly. The collected data were tabulated, graphed and analysed with the help of SPSS Package and Origin software.

4. Area Of Study

In Tamil Nadu, the MGNREGA was initially implemented in six districts, viz., Cuddalore, Dindigul, Nagapattinam, Sivagangai, Tiruvannamalai and Villupuram from 02.02.2006 onwards and in four more districts viz. Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Tirunelveli and Karur from 01.04.2007 onwards. From 01.04.2008 onwards the scheme was extended to the remaining twenty districts of the State. Tamil Nadu is the fourth largest states in India with 60.98 per cent) during the FY 2012-13. This is much higher than the national average of 53 per cent. As of March 2013, the MIS infers that in the phase I districts of Tamil Nadu, the share of women persondays reached a maximum of 82.82 per cent in Sivaganga district and minimum of 60.98 per cent in Nagapattinam district.

Sivaganga district is one among the six districts (Early Phase I NREGA implemented district during 02.02.2006) in Tamil Nadu. MGNREGA job generation wise data showed that out of a total of 31,30,809 persondays employment generated (till the reporting month FY 2013-14), women received about 26,94,261 persondays (86.06%) and men received 4,36,548 persondays (13.94%). Income earning wise, women earned Rs.2,496.2 lakhs and men earned Rs.424.57 lakhs. Among the 12 blocks of Sivaganga district, Kalaiyarkoil block generated the highest women employment during the current year (2013-14). It accounted 4,07,774 persondays (84.36%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Kalakkanmoi Panchayat in Tamil Nadu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>District Code</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [www.tn.gov.in](http://www.tn.gov.in)

Map 1: Profile of Kalakkanmoi panchayat

![Digital Map Source: TWAD Board, Chennai, Web Design: NIC, TNSC](image)

The reason for the good number of participation in Kalakkanmoi panchayat is that, it does not have sustained employments both from industry and agriculture. Therefore women participation is higher in terms of demand driven MGNREGA job. Totally they worked 13,194 persondays and received Rs.14,69,801 during 2013-14. The percipita income received through MGNREGA scheme is Rs.111. It is comparatively
higher than normal wage rate of an agricultural labour.

5. Analyses

5.1. Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women

Women generally assist their husband in the work along with maintaining the family and acts as a business partner, although they often receive no pay. Even if they are paid for their work, women earn less than their male counterparts (Sushma D.Bushan et al., 2013). However, this traditional system is averted completely after implementation of MGNREGA in rural areas, because the scheme provides at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment to every household, whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled work. Equal remuneration, job quota (one-third of job), locally available jobs, worksite facility and socially acceptable job support to women are the main thrive towards MGNREGA job in rural area. In addition to that MGNREGA has not allowed them doing hazardous work which is possible note in the scheme (N.Nayak, R.Khera, 2009).

The result shows that women’s earnings are increasing and they contribute a lot to household income.

Table 2: Income received through MGNREGA in Kalakkanmoi Panchayat during April 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income (Rs.)</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
<th>Men (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 2048</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 2560</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 3072</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: computed from primary data

Table 2 showed that the increased household income through MGNREGA job. The present study found that 43.3 per cent women and 3.3 per cent men obtained Rs.3072 during April 2013. Whereas 27 per cent of women and 2.5 per cent of men earned Rs.2560. The remaining 22.5 of women and 0.8 per cent of men beneficiaries earned Rs.2048. It is clear that majority of the women beneficiaries received maximum amount provided in the scheme. This earning capacity of the women helps them to take part in the decision making of the family. This elucidation is also shown in the fig.1.

Table 3: Expenditure increased through MGNREGA in Kalakkanmoi Panchayat during April 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
<th>Men (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soap</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food items</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utensil</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painkiller</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: computed from primary data

Table 3 reveals that the household consumption of men and women through increases income of MGNREGA job. It is clear that MGNREGA helps to fulfill the regular needs of the family viz., food items, soap, cloth, utensil and health care expenses. Out of the 93.3 per cent of the women sample respondent, 68.3 per cent spend on food items, 16.7 per cent spend on cloth, 4.2 per cent said soap, 2.5 per cent on utensil and other household items and the rest of 1.7 per cent spend essential health care items like painkiller, tablets, etc., . This detail is also shown in figure 2.
During the pre MGNREGA implementation, the people who borrowed loan forced to migrate to repay their loan and make livelihood. Now an assured income through this scheme substantially supports the rural vulnerable section, specifically women which help them maintain the social dignity. The invisible benefits also arise among women in rural areas due to MGNREGA job. For instance, polite cloth and pay ability to the village festivals (Vizha) provide additional pride and decision making situation to women in male controlled society.

5.2. Adverse Health Impacts

Various research studies found that the adverse impact of MGNREGA on women health. Prabavathy, M (2013) pointed out that women in India have three areas to mange- house, child and office. This multiple role of her causes problems at domestic front, professional front or both. Rebecca Holmes et al., (2011) notes that while women work more hours than men, by combining domestic and productive work, MGNREGA has no provision for flexible working hours to ease their time pressures or support their dual responsibilities. Kiran Bhatt (2006) claimed that women worker in NREGP are forced to take medicine every day to get some physical relief. The CAG report, 2013 chapter 13 stated that about eighty per cent of the beneficiaries reported that one or more of worksite facilities were not provided in the worksites. People in Kalakkamnoi panchayat are not only doing MGNREGA related work but also perform agriculture operation in their own lands during the non-working days in NREGP. This has considerably reduced their leisure. Reduction of leisure time and lack of worksite facilities compound the problem and they easily succumb to illnesses like headache, physical pain, malaise and giddiness.

### Table 4: Health hazard faced by the women through MGNREGA in Kalakkamnoi Panchayat during April 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illness</th>
<th>Women Beneficiaries (in %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head ache</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical pain</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaise</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giddiness</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: computed from primary data

Field survey shows that 30 per cent suffer due to headache, 33.3 per cent are due to physical pain, 20 per cent giddiness and 16.7 per cent due to malaise. This is explained in table 3 and also shown in figure 3.

6. Conclusion

NREGP is widely acclaimed that it provides employment, income and help the rural people to come out of the poverty. In Sivaganga district, MGNREGA generated 31, 30,809 cumulative persondays during the FY2013-14, out of it, majority of the beneficiaries 86.06 per cent are women. The study finds that in Kalakkamnoi panchayat, majority of the women respondent (43.3%) earned Rs.3072 income during the late harvesting (April 2013). This increased income through MGNREGA helps to fulfill the regular needs of the household viz.; food items, soap, cloth, utensil and essential healthcare items like painkiller, tablets. The majority of the women respondents 68.3 per cent are using MGNREGA income to satisfy their family food consumption.
The dark side of the scheme shows that it takes away the leisure time enjoyed by the women and forced to work during the hot climate. Lack of worksite facility is also pushing women workers in to risk both in physically and mentally. As a result, they suffer due to various health related problems viz., headache, physical pain, malaise and giddiness. Nearly 33.3 per cent of the respondents viz., headache, physical pain, malaise and they suffer due to various health rel

to worksite facility and forced to work during the hot climate.

This leads to inadequate rainfall. Therefore additional 50 days of employment is very well solicited by the workers particularly women folk.

REFERENCES


WEB SOURCES