

## **Empowerment of Women through MGNREGA: A Study of Anantnag District of Jammu and Kashmir**

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### **Abstract**

There is inequality and vulnerability of women in all sphere of life. They need to be empowered in all walks of life. Without the active participation of women, establishment of a new social order may not be a successful one, because women constitute half of the population. Women should realize that they have constitutional rights to quality health care, economic security, and access to education and political power. Mahatma Gandhi firmly states that the status of women would not change merely by bringing legislations; it must be supported by change in the women's social circumstances and situations and also man's sexist attitude to women. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which entitles rural households to 100 days of casual employment on public works at the statutory minimum wage, contains special provisions to ensure full participation of women. The paper discusses status of women participation in Jammu and Kashmir in comparison to other States and issues and challenges for women's participation in MGNREGS rightful place in their own society. In spite of the draw backs in the implementation of the legislation, significant benefits have already started accruing to women through better access to local employment, at minimum wages, with relatively decent and safe work conditions.

Gender is the inevitable push factor for growth and development of a nation like India. In India women constitute a major share of chronically poor population. The Government has framed different programmes/schemes to uplift the women from poverty and vulnerability of life. One such women friendly programme is Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) which was enacted in 2005. MGNREGA has provided a unique opportunity to people from rural India to earn their own income without any discrimination of caste or gender. Most remarkable feature of MGNREGA is that it pays women the same as men, something that was virtually unimaginable in rural India. However, some States have registered high percentage of women workers getting enrolled in the scheme whereas others have registered a very low percentage of women availing benefit under MGNREGA.

**Key Words:** Empowerment, Women Participation, MGNREGA, Poverty Eradication

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Government of India has passed the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, (NREGA) 2005 guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to any rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. The law was initially called the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and was renamed with the prefix “Mahatma Gandhi” on 2 October 2009, Gandh’s birth anniversary (Anonymous, 2009). MNREGA is a job guarantee scheme for rural Indians. It was enacted by legislation on 25 August 2005, but the act was come into force on 2 February, 2006 and implemented in phased manner. In phase one; it was introduced from the Anantpur District of Andhra Pradesh in 200 districts of the most backward Districts of the country (Das *et al.*, 2013; Kumar, 2011; Patel, 2008). It was implemented in an additional 130 Districts in phase two during 2007-08. MGNREGA covers the entire country with the exception of Districts that have a cent percent urban population. The scheme provides a legal guarantee for at least 100 days of paid employment in every financial year to adult members of any household willing to do unskilled manual work related to public work at the statutory minimum wage of Rs.142 /day in 2013-14. If they fail to do so the government has to pay the salary at their homes. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) in September 2005 (Pratapmal, 2007). It addresses mainly to rural poor and their fundamental right to work and dignity. It also empowers local citizens to play an active role in the implementation of employment guarantee schemes through Grama Sabha, Social Audit, Participatory planning and other means. It is consider being a land mark in the history of poverty reduction strategies in India. This scheme intends to provide employment to the rural poor during lean agricultural season and aims to create village asset and bring sustainable development. Further, the attempt is to provide adequate employment to women at equal wage. The program there for requires 2/3 of all workers are women so many studies reveal that MGNREGA was implemented for the growth and development of rural area by ensuring 100 days of employment. There is 33% reservation for women and there are expectations that 40% of the employment benefits would go to women. The scheme would benefit the BPL families in that the income of at least one member and per capita expenditure will go up. When a detailed study conducted regarding this topic by selecting 100 samples from

a panchayat, it is clear that, most of the panchayat has taken initiative to implement this scheme. The main objective of this study is to evaluate and understand the impact of MGNREG in socio-economic development and women empowerment.

- The act requires 1/3rd of the labourers engaged in a particular area to be women labourers.
  - The 100 days of employment are guaranteed even to women and equal wages are provided to both men and women.
  - The act requires a local vigilance and monitoring committee to be formed consisting of members from the locality or nearest village, in which SC/STs women are also represented.
  - Importance is given to women for participation in social audits. Single women and old women are required to be given work within 5 km of their residence as per the act.
  - The Act provides support for child-care at work and has also mentioned the provisions of facilities at worksite which should be convenient.
  - Single women are also considered as household and work is given to them which helps the divorced and widowed women to be self-reliant and independent.
  - Individual bank/post office accounts must be opened by the women to which their wages will be credited. This gives them a control over their earnings.
  - Empowerment is a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systematic forces, which marginalize women and other disadvantaged sections in a given context. A large segment of Indian womanhood still suffers deprivation and discriminatory attitudes. It is necessary to mobilize the vast women power, if the country has to progress in all sphere of development. Empowerment of women is a long and difficult process which is to be promoted with full public support and this could be successful only when those women living at the lower strata who have been suppressed by the male dominated society taking undue advantage of their lack of education and poverty can rise up to claim their
- Empowerment of Women Through MGNREGS :

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**Dey (2010)** looks at the performance of the MGNREGA from three perspectives: it examined the targeting aspect of the programme, the efficiency of the implementing PRI bodies and the impact of the program on various outcomes at household level. The study was based on primary data collected from 500 randomly selected households, 2249 individuals and 70 schemes located in 13 Gram Panchayats in Birbhum District of West Bengal. The study observed that in Birbhum District, the programme was likely to be accessed by poorer households, defined in terms of land holding, monthly per-capita income and other household related characteristics. At the same time there was a clear and substantial impact of left political inclination in terms of enabling access to a greater number of days of work under the scheme. In terms of the efficiency impact, the analysis revealed a clear violation of the formal clauses and the spirit of the MGNREG Act and thereby undermining the potential of the programme in terms of providing a safety net. The study found no statistically significant impact on economic outcomes at household level but there existed a statistically significant relation between reduction of stress related to joblessness and access to the MGNREGA. The author observed that while the MGNREGA may not be creating any new employment and may indeed be substituting for existing employment opportunities, the scheme was still considered valuable as it offered better working conditions.

**Kareemulla et al (2010)** evaluated the scheme in four states, viz., Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra with a specific focus on desirability, quality and durability of assets created and the programme's effects on the livelihood generation of beneficiaries. The study found that a wide variety of works were taken up under the scheme in the study districts including works on soil and water conservation structures and rural roads, which matched the requirements of the people but the quality and maintenance of assets need more attention in the coming years so that investment made would not go futile. They concluded that scheme was achieving its primary objective of employment generation but the assets created were generally seen as a by-product in the study areas.

**Gaiha et al (2009)** tried to construct an intuitive measure of the performance of the MGNREGA. Their paper focused on whether excess demand responds to poverty and whether recent hikes in MGNREGA wages were inflationary. Their analysis confirms responsiveness of excess demand to poverty. They observed that apprehensions expressed about the inflationary potential of hikes in MGNREGA wages were confirmed. The higher MGNREGA wages were likely to undermine self-

selection of the poor in the programme. They suggested in order to realise the poverty reducing potential of this scheme, a policy imperative was to ensure a speedier matching of demand and supply in districts that were highly poverty prone, as also to avoid the trade-offs between poverty reduction and inflation.

**Ambasta et al (2008)** evaluated the performance of MGNREGA in its first two years highlights major issues confronting its implementation. The study found that the lack of trained professionals for time bound implementation, under staffing and delay in administration, lack of people's planning, poor quality of works and assets created, inappropriate schedules of rates, unnecessary bureaucratic interventions and mockery of social audits were hindering the implementation process. The authors suggested for hiring a large number of full-time and fully trained professionals at Gram Panchayat level, while strictly enforcing their accountability to PRIs. Better use of information technology, mandating a role for civil society organizations (CSOs) to work as support agencies for PRIs in MGNREGA planning, implementation and social audit were some of their major suggestions for improving the functioning of MGNREGA.

**Jacob (2008)** observed that the MGNREGA programme has immense potential to improve the gap between urban and rural India and lead to rural development in terms of basic infrastructure like roads, in terms of agricultural productivity from irrigation works. It also provides a stable income for workers; their income graph would be much smoother with the MGNREGA bolstering their earnings in the 100 days between agricultural seasons. The efforts made by the Villupuram district (of Tamil Nadu) authorities though efficient functioning of MGNREGA, although there still might be some irregularities in the implementation should be used as a model in other regions to help realize the potential of this Act.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To understand the socio-economic conditions of women job seekers
2. To study the impact of women empowerment through MGNREGA.
3. To make appropriate suggestions for strengthening of the scheme on the basis of findings of the study

## METHODOLOGY

The present study seeks to examine MGNREGS and empowerment of women in selected villages of Anantnag District, Jammu and Kashmir. The study focused on the economic impact of MGNREGS workers. The researcher has selected the Anantnag district from the 10 districts of the Kashmir valley. District Anantnag has 8 blocks namely Dachnipora, Khoviripora, Breng, Shangas, Qazigund, Shahabad, Achabal and Quimoh as per 2011 census. Out of these 8 blocks, Shahabad was selected for the present study. The data was collected from two villages of Shahabad block namely Bragam (village V1) and Hardu Dehrana (village V2). Simple Random Sampling method was adopted to select the Sample of 90 respondents. A sample of 45 respondents was selected from the two selected villages and a total sample of 90 respondents was selected for the present study.

**Table -1**  
**Education-Wise Classification of the Respondents**

S. No	Education	Villages		Total
		V1	V2	
1.	Illiterate	4 (8.9)	3 (6.7)	7 (7.8)
2.	Primary Education	9 (20)	1 (2.2)	10 (11.1)
3.	Middle Education	7 (15.5)	6 (13.3)	13 (14.5)
4.	Secondary Education	13 (28.9)	18 (40)	31 (34.4)
5.	Higher Secondary Education	9 (20)	9 (20)	18 (20)
6.	Collegiate Education	3 (6.7)	8 (17.8)	11 (12.2)
<b>Total</b>		<b>45</b> <b>(100)</b>	<b>45</b> <b>(100)</b>	<b>90</b> <b>(100)</b>

**Source:** Computed from primary data

Table-1 shows the education wise classification of the respondents. Out of the 90 respondents, 10 respondents had completed their primary education followed by 13 respondents who had completed their middle education. 31 respondents had completed their secondary education and 18 respondents had completed their higher secondary education in the study area. 11 respondents were graduates. Only few respondents were illiterate.

Table-2

**Age-Wise Classification of the Respondents**

S. No	Age	Villages		Total
		V1	V2	
1.	18-30 years	7 (15.6)	11 (24.5)	18 (20)
2.	31-45 years	21 (46.7)	17 (37.8)	38 (42.2)
3.	46-60 years	10 (22.2)	11 (24.4)	21 (23.3)
4.	Above-61years	7 (15.5)	6 (13.3)	13 (14.5)
<b>Total</b>		<b>45 (100)</b>	<b>45 (100)</b>	<b>90 (100)</b>

**Source:** Computed from primary data

Age determines the active participation of the community in promoting their economic and education position. Table-2 shows that out of 90 samples respondents, majority of respondents 38 were between 31-41 age-group, in this total, 21 respondents are in V1 and 17 respondents are in V2. 21 respondents were between the 46-60 age group, in this total, 10 are in V1 and 11 are in V2. 18 respondents were between 18-30 age group, in this total, 7 respondents were in V1 and 11 in V2. 13 respondents were above 61years, in this total 7 respondents were in V1 and 6 respondents in V2.

Table-3

**Average Annual Household Income**

S. No	Income	Villages		Total
		V1	V2	
1.	Agriculture	161100 (36.8)	282600 (52.9)	221900 (45.6)
2.	Agricultural Labor	58800 (13.4)	76400 (14.3)	67600 (14)
3.	Daily Wages	83600 (19.1)	101600 (19.0)	92600 (19.1)
4.	Business	46200 (10.5)	36800 (6.9)	41500 (8.5)
5.	Private Employment	3200 (0.7)	4000 (0.7)	3600 (0.7)
6.	Government Employment	85300 (19.5)	32500 (6.1)	58900 (12.1)
<b>Total</b>		<b>438200 (100)</b>	<b>174900 (100)</b>	<b>486100 (100)</b>

**Source:** Computed from primary data

Household income is one of the proxy indicators in assessing the levels of development of the households. Table-3 portrays the sources of household's income of the sample respondents. The sources of household annual income come from six sources of the study area. On an average, per household income is Rs 486100. Where the highest source of income comes from agriculture (45.6%). Daily wage stands as a second source of income (19.1%). contributes more towards other sources. Income from agricultural labour is (14%) to the total income. They are involved in agricultural operations, such as sowing of seeds, transplantation, weeding out, manuring, harvesting etc. A few of them involve themselves in tailoring, running shops, embroidery, shawl making, poultry farms and fish farms which come under business. Income from government employment is (12.1%). Income from business is (8.5%). The income from private employment is (0.7%). Private employment includes textile labourers. Mainly they work in the manufacturing of inner garments industries, hotels and small scale industries, private schools, networking companies etc.

Tabl-4

<b>Average Annual Household Expenditure</b>				
<b>S. No</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Villages</b>		<b>Total</b>
		<b>V1</b>	<b>V2</b>	
1.	Food	64800 (50.9)	77100 (55.1)	70900 (53.1)
2.	Dress	28000 (22.1)	31600 (22.6)	29800 (22.3)
3.	Education	25200 (19.8)	22200 (16)	23700 (17.8)
4.	Electricity	5700 (4.5)	5700 (4)	5700 (4.3)
5.	Health	3500 (2.7)	3200 (2.3)	3300 (2.5)
<b>Total</b>		<b>127200 (100)</b>	<b>139800 (100)</b>	<b>133400 (100)</b>

**Source:** Computed from primary data

Food expenditure pattern of the households is the best indicator of the existing economic condition of a community. The villagers have to spend for Food, Dress, Education, Electricity, Health and Others. Table-4 shows that on an average, the annual family expenditure stood at Rs133400. They have to spend the same for Food (53.1), Dress (22.3%), Education (17.8%),

Electricity (4.3%). Next to this they spent on Health (2.5%). Same pattern of expenditure could be observed in both villages. The sample respondents spent (17.8%) on education, which is to be appreciated. Education may bring awareness to the people in utilizing the government programmes like NREGA there by strengthening the available resources.

Table-5

Average Annual Household Savings				
S. No	Annual Family Saving	Villages		Total
		V1	V2	
1.	Post Office Saving	1500 (1.2)	1100 (1.2)	1300 (1.2)
2.	Bank Deposits	82000 (60.8)	52000 (56.1)	67000 (58.9)
3.	Cash	39000 (28.9)	32400 (35.0)	35700 (31.4)
4.	Private Saving	7400 (5.5)	4400 (4.8)	5900 (5.2)
5.	Life Insurance	4900 (3.6)	2600 (2.9)	3700 (3.3)
<b>Total</b>		<b>134800</b> <b>(100)</b>	<b>92500</b> <b>(100)</b>	<b>113600</b> <b>(100)</b>

Source: Computed from primary data

Table-5 shows that average household savings is recorded to the tune of Rs 113600. Of the six sources of savings identified in the study area, bank deposits (58.9%) occupies higher level, followed by savings in cash (31.4%), private savings (5.2%) and savings from Life insurance is (3.3%).

Table-6

Days of Employment Generated by Respondents from MGNREGA Per annum				
S.No.	Days	Villages		Total
		V1	V2	
1.	Below 50	8 (41)	7 (45)	15 (43)
2.	51-75	13 (62)	12 (67)	25 (64)
3.	76-100	24 (87)	26 (90)	50 (89)
<b>Total</b>		<b>45</b> <b>(72)</b>	<b>45</b> <b>(77)</b>	<b>90</b> <b>(75)</b>

Source: Computed from primary data

Table-6 shows the number of days of employment availed by the sample respondents in the study area. This table gives an idea why the respondents have not opted for all the days of employment. After reading the data, it has been grouped into three classes. It is interested to note that in all the classes there are entries. It reveals that the sample respondents have availed the employment depending on their need. On comparing both the villages, the respondents of the village V2 worked more number of days as compared to the respondents of the village V1. This is because, the village V1 is near to town and the people of the village went to town for doing other jobs at higher wage rates. On the other hand, the village V2 is a far flung village and the respondents of the village have least opportunities for other jobs. This is the main cause for doing more days of work in village V2 and less number of days of work in V2. The total 90 respondents on an average worked 75 days of employment in one year in the study area.

Table-7

**Wage Income Generated by Respondents from MGNREGA Per annum**

S.No.	Wage Income	Villages		Total
		V1	V2	
1	Below 6550	8 (5371)	7 (5895)	15 (5616)
2	6551-9825	13 (8122)	12 (8777)	25 (8436)
3	9826-13100	24 (11397)	26 (11790)	50 (11601)
<b>Total</b>		<b>45</b> <b>(9432)</b>	<b>45</b> <b>(10087)</b>	<b>90</b> <b>(9760)</b>

**Source:** Computed from primary data

Table-7 shows the Wage income earned by the sample respondents from the MGNREGA works. The wage income of respondents is categorised into three classes. In V1 out of the 45 respondents the majority of the respondents are 24 and they come under the income category of below Rs 6550.13 respondents come under the income category Rs 6551-9825. 8 respondents come under the income category of Rs 5371. In V2 out of the 45 respondents the majority of the respondents are 50 and they come under the income category of Rs 9826-13100. 25 respondents come under the income category Rs 6551-9825.15 respondents come under the income category of Rs 5371. The respondents of the V2 earned more wage income as compared to the V1 because

the respondents of the village V1 went to the town to search for other jobs at high market wages. On the other hand the V2 is a far flung village and the respondents cannot search other jobs. They take part actively in MGNREGA works. All the 90 respondents on an average earned wage income of Rs 9760.

**Table-8**  
**Different Responses about the MGNREGA by Respondents in the Study Area**

<b>Knowledge about the MGNREGA</b>					
<b>S.No.</b>	<b>Knowledge about the MGNREGA</b>	<b>V1</b>	<b>V2</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Yes	22	31	53	58.9
2.	A little	23	14	37	41.1
3.	No	-	-	-	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Information Received from Which about MGNREGA</b>					
<b>S.No.</b>	<b>Information Received From</b>	<b>V1</b>	<b>V2</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	From Gram Panchayat	21	22	43	47.8
2.	From Political Member	2	9	11	12.2
3.	From Neighbours	22	14	36	40.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>How Much Time Period Respondents Worked in MGNREGA</b>					
<b>S.No.</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>V1</b>	<b>V2</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Below 7 years	28	24	52	57.8
2.	Above 7 years	17	21	38	42.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Have You Knowledge about Equal Wages in MGNREGA</b>					
<b>S.No.</b>	<b>Knowledge About Equal Wages</b>	<b>V1</b>	<b>V2</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Yes	33	23	56	62.2
2.	No	12	22	34	37.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Have You Received Wages At Proper Time</b>					
<b>S.No.</b>	<b>Receive Wages</b>	<b>V1</b>	<b>V2</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Yes	7	8	15	16.7
2.	No	38	37	75	83.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>

Table-8 shows that 53 percent of respondents say that they have knowledge about the scheme. 47.8 percent of respondents said that they receive information from Gram Panchayats.

12.2 percent of respondents say that they receive information from political member and 40 percent of respondents says that receive information from Neighbours. 57.8 percent of respondents have worked in MGNREGA below 7 years and 42.2 percent of respondents have worked in MGNREGA for more than 7 years. 62.2 percent of respondents have knowledge about equal wages and 37.8 percent of respondents have no knowledge about equal wages. 16.7 percent of respondents have received wages at proper time and 83.3 percent of respondents have not received wages at roper time.

**Table-9**  
**Awareness about the Scheme**

S.No.	Awareness about the Scheme	Responses	
		Yes	No
1.	Knowledge about the Scheme	100	-
2.	About Number of Days of Employment	35	65
3.	About Facilities Provided	26	74
4.	About Right to Work	24	76
5.	About Unemployment Allowance	12	87
6.	About the Works to be Taken Up	16	84
7.	About the Procedure of Work Selection and Allocation	27	73
8.	About the Role of Gram Sabah	21	79
9.	About the Maintenance of Muster Roll	81	19

**Source:** Computed from Primary Data

Table-9 shows that 90 percent of respondents says that they have knowledge about the scheme. 35 percent of respondents said that they have knowledge about number of days of employment.26 percent of respondents said that they have knowledge about facilities provided. 27 percent of respondents said that they have awareness about the procedure of work selection and Allocation. 21 percent of respondents have knowledge about the role of Gram Sabah. 81percent of respondents have knowledge about maintenance of muster rolls.

**Table-10**  
**Reasons for Low Employment in the Study Area**

S.No.	Reasons for low Employment	Response	
		Yes	No
1.	Simultaneous work opportunity in agriculture	68	32
2.	Hard work	28	72
3.	Inability	10	90
4.	Lack of facilities at work site	42	58
5.	In adequate wage	18	82
6.	Delay in wage payment	04	96
7.	Work not provided	26	74
8.	Restriction in the home	22	78

Source: Primary Data

Table-10 shows that 68 percent of respondents said that low employment in MGNREGA was due to simultaneous work opportunity in Agriculture. 28 percent of respondents said that low employment in MGNREGA was due to hard work. 10 percent of respondents said that low employment in MGNREGA was due to lack of facilities at the work site. 18 percent of respondents said that low employment in MGNREGA was due to inadequate wages. 4 percent of respondents said that low employment in MGNREGA was due to delay in wage payment. 26 percent of respondents said that low employment in MGNREGA was because they did not provide work to respondents. 22 percent of respondents said that low employment in MGNREGA was due to restriction in the home.

**Table-11**  
**Opinion on the Scheme**

S.No.	Opinion on the Scheme	Responses		
		Yes	No	Don't Know
1.	Very useful for Society	81	05	14
2.	Very Useful for Individual	91	-	09
3.	Number of Days Work Provided is Adequate	02	92	06
4.	Created Productive Assets	42	06	52
5.	Increased Wage Rates in Agriculture Activities	65	10	25
6.	On the Implementation of the Scheme			
a.	Selection of Work is as Per Procedure	27	08	65
b.	Proper Maintenance of Muster Rolls	56	28	20
c.	Facilities Provided are Satisfactory	24	68	08
d.	Allocation of Work is Proper	48	41	11
e.	Measurement of Work is Proper	35	38	27

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7.	MGNREGS reduced Unemployment	22	77	01
8.	Helped Empowering Women	67	-	33
9.	Decreased Dependence on Men	100	-	-
10.	Reduced Stressful Borrowings	61	39	-

Table-11 shows that 81 percent of respondents said that MGNREGA is useful for society. 91 percent of respondents said that MGNREGA was very useful for individual. 42 percent of respondents said that MGNREGA created productive assets. 56 percent of respondents said that in MGNREGA there was proper maintenance of muster rolls. 68 percent of respondents said that in MGNREGA facilities provided are not satisfactory. 48 percent of respondents said that MGNREGA allocation of work was proper. 22 percent of respondents said that MGNREGA reduced unemployment. 100 percent of respondents said that MGNREGA decreased dependence on men. 61 percent of respondents said that MGNREGA reduced stressful borrowings.

### **FINDINGS**

- It was found that majority of respondents 42.2 percent were between 31-45 age groups.
- It was found that on average per household income of sample respondents were Rs. 486100.
- It was found that on average per household expenditure was Rs. 133400.
- It was found that on average per household savings was Rs. 113600.
- It was found that on average the days of employment generated by respondents from MGNREGA per annum was 75 days.
- It was found that on an average the wage income generated by respondents from MGNREGA per annum was Rs. 9760.
- Farmers and laborers were not educated about the objective of creating productive assets which can help them in generating further incomes.
- It was found that women were getting lesser wages than men for same work.
- It was found that the dependence of women on men started declining after joining MGNREGA.
- All the 100 percent of respondents demand for enhancement of number of days of employment provided under the scheme.

- MGNREGS was the main source of alternative employment for women in the study area.
- It was observed that participation of women in decision making over family affairs is 98 percent.
- It was found that awareness of the respondents on the key aspects- work selection procedure, facilities to be provided, role of Gram Sabah, right to demand work etc. is very unsatisfactory.
- It was also found that there is 30 percent increase (on aggregate) in the incomes of the respondents due employment provided by MGNREGS.
- It was also found that ninety percent respondents are carrying out transaction with banks and other agencies on their own.

## **CONCLUSION**

The field survey has shown that there is quite high level of potential for MGNREGA for socio-economic empowerment of women and reasonable (moderate) political empowerment too. MGNREGA lead to employment of women beneficiaries and consequently have increase in income and consumption level. Now, Women workers become moderately independent in earnings and support the families. The Act appears to be quite meaningful and powerful for rural development in general and women empowerment in particular for the entire nation. The problem lies not in the Act, but in its defective implementation and lack of proper monitoring. Involvement of political, delayed in wage payment, lack of transparency etc. need to be strictly controlled. The prospects of the MGNREGA for rural development and women empowerment are quite bright provided it is properly executed.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

- All eligible beneficiaries of the MGNREGS should be made fully aware of the provisions and objectives of the scheme.
- Measures should be taken to ensure job seekers get full days of employment.
- Allocation of work should be done properly to ensure that workers get maximum mandated remuneration.

- Appropriate measures are needed to ensure that women get equal remuneration on par with men for the same work.

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