



Extent of Participation of Beneficiaries in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in South India

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This paper examines the extent of participation and factors responsible for participation of beneficiaries in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu state. *Ex-post- facto* research design was used in this study. The study is based on 120 respondents drawn by simple random sampling method from eight Gram Panchayats which had more MGNREGA beneficiaries selected from two randomly selected blocks in the district. The respondents were interviewed personally by a well-structured and pre-tested interview schedule. The overall participation of the beneficiaries was in medium level. Majority of the beneficiaries had regular participation in Grama sabha, open project meeting and meetings conducted by Social Audit Committee. Economic and personal factors had influenced majority of the beneficiaries to take part in the MGNREGA activities followed by organizational factors.

Key words: MGNREGA, Rural development, Poverty alleviation

A number of programmes have been taken up after the Fourth Five-Year Plan for poverty alleviation in India. Some of the most important poverty alleviation programmes implemented in India so far are: Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY), National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY), Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGRY), Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana (PMGY), Bharat Nirman, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA), etc.

MGNREGA (initially named as National Rural Employment Guarantee Act or NREGA) enacted by Government of India, is the largest employment programme ever started in a country with a huge public investment. The Act came into force on February 2, 2006 and was implemented in a phased manner. In Phase I, it was introduced in 200 of the most backward districts of the country; Phase II added another 130 districts in 2007-08; and in Phase III, the scheme was further extended to the remaining 274 rural districts of India from April 1, 2008 (GOI, 2008). MGNREGA aims at enhancing livelihood security 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. The other striking feature of the MGNREGA Scheme is to provide basic facilities like drinking water, shade, first-aid box and crèche at the worksite. MGNREGA has yielded such positive outcomes as the following: provided employment to more than 52 million households, which has

increased their income; given economic opportunities to disadvantaged groups, decreased out-migration from villages, impacted positively on the geographical ecological environment and improved the connectivity of rural areas (Amit Sharma, 2010). In Tamil Nadu, the MGNREGA was initially implemented with effect from 2.2.2006 onwards in six notified districts. (in Phase I). It was extended to 4 districts (in Phase II) from 1.4.2007 onwards and to the remaining 20 districts (in Phase III) with effect from 1.4.2008 onwards (Government of Tamil Nadu, 2012).

According to the provisions of MGNREGA priority must be given to women in such a way that at least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested for work under this Act. The official data (NREGA website, as of October 2012) suggest that the share of women in the total MGNREGA employment in the country progressively increased from 47.73 per cent in 2010-11 to 48.18 per cent in 2011-12 and. In the current year (2012-13), the share of women workers stood at 53.88 %. The states where the share of women in total employment was disproportionately higher in recent years include Kerala (92.56 %), Tamil Nadu (74. %), Rajasthan (69.5 %), Himachal Pradesh (60.02 %) and Andhra Pradesh (58 %). It was very low in Jammu and Kashmir (17.92 %), Uttar Pradesh (18.84 %), Mizoram (23.46 %), Assam (24.66 %), Nagaland (27.89 %) and Bihar (30.58 %).

Since the launching of MGNREGA, there have been several studies focused on socioeconomic impact of MGNREGA (Selva Maheshwari and Gangwar, 2011; Ahuja *et al.*, 2011; Naomi Jacob, 2008; Haque, 2011; Navneet *et al.*, 2011). There are

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some studies which focused on how the community level and political factors influence the performance of MGNREGA. For example Dreze and Oldiges (2007) tried to explore the political reasons behind startling differences regarding the levels of NREGA employment among different states. Shah (2007) and Khera (2008) argued that the role of civil society organizations and community based organizations is critical for successful implementation of NREGA. Jha *et al.* (2008) found that the disadvantaged groups (Scheduled Tribes and landless households) had significantly higher probabilities of participating in the programme. The probability of participation was also high among moderately land owning households or among self-employed in Agriculture. Apart from incidence poverty and large number of agricultural labourers or casual labourers, people's awareness about NREGA (especially their rights and entitlements) contributes to the demand side factors and factors like migration potential in an area and semi feudal structure of the local economy can influence the demand for NREGA work in a negative way, but there has been no study on focusing on the participation and factors influencing beneficiaries to participate in the scheme. Therefore, the study examined the extent of participation of the beneficiaries in MGNREGA, factors responsible for participation of beneficiaries in MGNREGA and relationship between socio economic characteristics with participation of beneficiaries.

Methodology

Ex-post-facto research design was used in the study. The study was conducted in Coimbatore District of Tamil Nadu state as more number of beneficiaries relied upon MGNREGA in this district. Moreover, the acquaintance of the researcher with the locale and successfulness of the scheme in the district made us choose this area. There are 12 blocks in Coimbatore district. Among 12 blocks of Coimbatore District, the study was conducted in Thondamuthur and Madukkarai blocks. Based on maximum number of MGNREGA beneficiaries, four Panchayat villages from each of the selected two blocks were selected. In each village, 15 MGNREGA beneficiaries were selected randomly. Thus, a total number of 120 beneficiaries were selected as respondents for the study. Data were collected during 2011 using a well-structured and pre-tested interview schedule.

The main objectives of the study were to find out the extent of participation of beneficiaries and factors responsible for participation of beneficiaries in MGNREGA. In this study the extent of participation was operationalized as the total participation in MGNREGA related activities and MGNREGA works. Participation of beneficiaries in the MGNREGA related activities viz., Grama sabha meeting, open project meeting, Social audit process (Vendan (2009) stated that it is a process in which details of the resources, both financial and non-financial, used by public agencies for development initiatives are shared with people), verifying muster roll, verifying job cards,

verifying bills/vouchers, scrutiny of records of ongoing works and wage distribution was assessed using a four point continuum. The response was obtained in a four point continuum. One score was given to no participation, two scores to rare participation, three scores to occasional participation and four scores to regular participation. The high score referred to high participation. The respondents were classified into low, medium and high level of participation using cumulative frequency. After assessing participation in MGNREGA related activities, beneficiaries' participation in MGNREGA work was similarly assessed and responses were obtained in four point continuum. Participation in MGNREGA works was assessed in terms of number of days of work attended and different kinds of work undertaken by the beneficiaries. Number days of work attended by the beneficiaries were classified into 0-75 days, 76-150 days, 151-225 days and 226-300 days. One, two, three and four scores were given to beneficiaries, who had worked up to 75 days, 76 to 150 days, 151 to 225 and 226 to 300 days respectively. Four kinds of works viz., rural connectivity, micro irrigation, water conservation and water harvesting, renovation of traditional water bodies (desilting of tanks/ponds, old canals and traditional open well) had been implemented in the study area. All four kinds of work were taken into consideration and single score was given to each kind of work undertaken by the beneficiaries.

The factors, which are responsible for participation of beneficiaries in MGNREGA, were classified as economic, social, personal and organizational factors. The beneficiaries were asked to indicate the factors responsible for their participation in MGNREGA. The factors were classified into 'greater extent', 'to some extent' and 'not an influencing factor' with the scores assigned as 3, 2 and 1 respectively and the arithmetic mean was worked out.

Results and Discussion

Overall participation of beneficiaries

The results of the overall participation of the beneficiaries in the activities of MGNREGA are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to their overall participation in MGNREGA (n = 120)

S. No.	Extent of participation	Number	Per cent
1.	Low	15	12.50
2.	Medium	88	73.33
3.	High	17	14.17
	Total	120	100.00

It is evident from Table 1 that two third of (73.33 %) of the beneficiaries had medium level of participation followed by 14.17 % and 12.50 % with high and low levels of participation respectively.

Further an attempt was made to assess the component wise participation of beneficiaries in MGNREGA. The activities were sub-divided into two

major areas viz., participation in MGNREGA related activities and participation in MGNREGA works.

Extent of Participation in MGNREGA work

The participation of beneficiaries in MGNREGA work is divided into two subitems viz., number of days of work completed in MGNREGA and different kinds of jobs undertaken in MGNREGA. MGNREGA was implemented during 2008 in the study area. The study was conducted during April, 2011. According to norms of MGNREGA, 100 days of employment is assured to each and every household who had volunteered for employment. Thus, beneficiaries could have worked anywhere between 0– 300 days. Data on number of days of work completed in MGNREGA were collected and results have been furnished in Table 3.

Nearly forty per cent of the beneficiaries (38.33 per cent) worked between 151-225 days followed by 30.83 per cent in 76-150 days category, 20.00 per cent in 226-300 days category and 10.83 per

cent worked upto 75 days. It implies that most of the beneficiaries worked more than 50 days but less than 75 days in a year.

Rural connectivity, micro irrigation, water conservation and water harvesting and renovation of traditional water bodies were the four kinds of work that were implemented in the study area. To find out the extent of participation of beneficiaries in different kinds of work, beneficiaries were asked to list out the works in which they had worked so far. The collected data is presented in Table 4. Among all four kinds of work, beneficiaries were found to be involved more in renovation of traditional water bodies followed by water conservation and water harvesting works. Majority of beneficiaries (88.30 per cent) had worked in renovation of traditional water bodies followed by water conservation and water harvesting works (60.00 per cent), micro irrigation (44.17 per cent) and rural connectivity works (35.83 per cent).

Table 3. Distribution of beneficiaries based on number of days of work completed (n = 120)

Category	Number of days of work							
	0-75		76-150		151-225		226-300	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Number of days of work completed	13	10.83	37	30.83	46	38.33	24	20.00

Table 4. Distribution of beneficiaries based on different kind of jobs undertaken (n = 120)

Category	Kind of jobs undertaken							
	One		Two		Three		Four	
	No	Percent	No	Percent	No	Percent	No	Percent
Number of jobs undertaken	14	11.67	66	55.00	32	26.67	8	6.67

***Multiple responses obtained**

Further, to understand more about the kinds of work undertaken by beneficiaries, they were further grouped based on number of works they had undertaken so far. More than fifty per cent of beneficiaries (55.00 per cent) had undertaken two different kinds of works while 26.67 per cent beneficiaries undertook three kinds of work. The proportion of beneficiaries who had involved in

only one kind of work is 11.67 per cent and meager percentage of beneficiaries (6.67 per cent) was found to be done all kind of works which had been implemented in study area till now. It could be well observed that 88.30 per cent of the beneficiaries participated in more than one work. The distribution of beneficiaries based on kind of jobs undertaken is given in below table.

Table 5. Distribution of beneficiaries based on number of jobs undertaken (n = 120)

Category	Kind of jobs undertaken							
	Rural connectivity		Micro irrigation		Water conservation and water harvesting		Renovation of traditional water bodies	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Different kinds of jobs undertaken	43	35.83	53	44.17	72	60.00	106	88.30

Factors responsible for participation of beneficiaries in MGNREGA

MGNREGA beneficiaries were influenced by many factors which were classified as economic, social, personal and organizational factors. These factors may influence MGNREGA beneficiaries

directly or indirectly. So, relevant data on the factors that influenced the beneficiaries to take part in MGNREGA activities under four major sub headings viz., economic, social, personal, and organizational factors were collected. The collected data were analyzed and the results are given in Table 6. Economic factors (2.155) and personal factors (2.102)

influenced majority of the beneficiaries to take part in MGNREGA, followed by organizational factors (1.819). The social factors made least influence in making the beneficiaries to take part in MGNREGA activities (1.586).

Table 6. Distribution of respondents according to factors responsible for participation of beneficiaries (n = 120)

S.No	Factors	Mean	Overall mean
A. Economic factors			
1.	To get additional income	2.585	2.155
2.	To improve savings	2.008	
3.	To clear debts	1.817	
4.	Guaranteed job for 100 days	2.319	
5.	No delay in wage distribution	2.050	
B. Social factors			
1.	Family background	2.433	1.586
2.	Due to compulsion of family members	1.658	
3.	Encouragement given by friends	1.300	
4.	After observing neighbours development	1.316	
5.	Societal influence	1.225	
C. Personal factors			
1.	Age (cannot go for any other work)	2.108	2.102
2.	To maintain family living	2.558	
3.	To avoid migration	2.066	
4.	To spend leisure time	2.235	
5.	Self- reliance or independence	2.641	
6.	Due to unemployment	1.214	
7.	Due to discontinuance of school education	1.166	
8.	As an alternative whenever there is no job	2.825	
D. Organizational factors			
1.	Guidance from DRDA's office	1.123	1.819
2.	Guidance from BDO's office	1.666	
3.	Guidance from Panchayat office	2.666	

Economic factors *viz.*, to get additional income (2.585) and guaranteed job for 100 days (2.319), No delay wage distribution (2.050) and to improve savings (2.008) influenced more to take part in MGNREGA. Family background (2.433) was responsible for majority of the beneficiaries to take part in MGNREGA in the social factors category. Among the personal factors, as an alternative whenever there is no job (2.825), self- reliance or independence (2.641) and to maintain family living (2.558) were factors that have influenced the beneficiaries to take part in MGNREGA. Among organizational factors, guidance from Panchayat office (2.666) made the beneficiaries to take part in MGNREGA.

Relationship between participation with socio-economic characteristics of beneficiaries

Correlation analysis was performed to find out the association of independent variables with the dependent variable participation and the results are

Table 7. Correlation analysis of independent variables with participation of beneficiaries in MGNREGA (n = 120)

S.No	Name of the variables	"r" value
1.	Membership in Social audit committee	0.949**
2.	Age	-0.379**
3.	Gender	0.037 NS
4.	Caste	0.018 NS
5.	Marital status	0.037 NS
6.	Educational status	0.480**
7.	Occupational status	0.580**
8.	Size of farm	0.019 NS
9.	Annual income	0.01 NS
10.	Family type	-0.055 NS
11.	Family size	0.012 NS
12.	Social participation	0.831**

** - Significant at one per cent level

NS - Non-significant

* - Significant at five per cent level

presented in Table 6. Out of the twelve variables studied, four variables *viz.*, Membership in social audit committee (X_1), Educational status (X_2), Occupational status (X_6) and Social participation (X_{12}) had shown positive and significant association with participation at one per cent level of probability. Age (X_3) had negative significant association at one per cent level of probability with participation.

Conclusion

The results of the study revealed that the overall participation of beneficiaries was at medium level. Findings on participation in works revealed that beneficiaries had worked between 150-225 days, involved in renovation of traditional water bodies and water conservation and water harvesting compared to other kind of works. Beneficiaries more influenced by economic and personal factors. The social factors had least influence in making the beneficiaries to take part in MGNREGA activities.

On the basis of the findings of this study, participation of beneficiaries could be increased by improving the facilities in worksites, Wage hike and through effective planning, targeting, implementation and monitoring. This study encourages future studies on the following points: (i) awareness and knowledge level of beneficiaries about features of MGNREGA, (ii) constraints that prevail in India for the participation in MGNREGA and ways to overcome

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