

Analysing the Socio-Personal and Economic Profile of MGNREGA Beneficiaries in Cooch-Bihar District

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ABSTRACT

Rural development is the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas. The need for rural communities to approach development from a wider perspective has created more focus on a broad range of development goals rather than merely creating incentive for agricultural or resource based businesses. The MGNREGA ranks among the most powerful initiatives ever undertaken for transformation of rural livelihoods in India. The study was undertaken to analyse the socio-personal and economic profile of MGNREGA beneficiaries. The study was conducted in Kokoabari and Dakkhin Kalarayer Kuthi villages of Cooch-Bihar-II block of Cooch-Bihar district in West Bengal. Purposive as well as simple random sampling procedures were followed in the present study. The results showed high degree of female participation and more income generation in the villages after the implementation of MGNREGA.

Key words: MGNREGA, livelihood security, income generation, women empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Rural development is a human process. It requires hard work, dedication, responsiveness and accountability of all the participants under this process (Kumar, 2014). The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was enacted on 25th August 2005 and renamed the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on 2nd October 2009. MGNREGA is an Indian law that aims to guarantee the 'right to work' and ensure livelihood security in rural areas 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.

This act designed to provide an ecological perspective in order to achieve long-term livelihood sustainability. Swaminathan. M. N (2009) described MGNREGA as the world's largest ecological security and food security act, which can successfully strengthen the ecological foundations for sustainable agriculture. With the initiation of MGNREGA, the minimum purchasing power for food security is being created in families living below the poverty line.

METHODOLOGY

The district Cooch Bihar under the state West Bengal was purposively selected. Cooch Bihar-II block was also selected purposively. Gopalpur and Pundibari gram panchayats were selected purposively. Again the village Kokoabari under Gopalpur gram panchayat and Dakkhin Kalarayer Kuthi under Pundibari gram panchayat were selected purposively. From each of the villages 25 respondents (total 50) were selected randomly. Data were collected with the help of the structured interview schedule and were processed into statistical tools like Frequency, Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation, and Coefficient of Variation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 reflects the distribution of beneficiaries according to their age. Age is a very important variable (Debramma and Acharya, 2013) in the present study. The results showed that the majority of the respondent beneficiaries are under the age group of 36 to 50 years (58 %) followed by 18 to 35 years age (24 %) and above 50 years age (18 %) respectively. The mean score of the total distribution is 41.62 and the standard deviation of the

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distribution is 9.45. The distribution is consistent with a low coefficient of variation percentage (22.71 %). The table also presents the distribution of respondents based on their caste system. The majority of the respondents (92 %) belong to scheduled caste category. Only 8 per cent of the respondents belong to general category.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents on the basis of their age and caste

Age category	Age (Years)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Statistics
Young	18-35	12	24	Mean = 41.62
Middle Age	36-50	29	58	Standard Deviation = 9.45
Old	Above 50	9	18	CV = 22.71
Based on Caste:				
General		4	8	Mean = 2.84
S.C.		46	92	Standard Deviation = 0.55
S.T.		0	0	C.V= 19.37

Table 2 presents the respondent beneficiaries according to their education status. The result shows that most respondents of the study area studied up to primary level (36 %) followed by those who can read and write only (28 %). Among the respondents only 12 per cent and 22 per cent belong to the category 'can read only' and 'high school' respectively. Only 2per cent people of the study area are graduates.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents on the basis of their education

Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Statistics
Illiterate	0	0	Mean = 2.74
Can Read Only	6	12	Standard Deviation = 1.01
Can Read and Write	14	28	
Primary	18	36	CV = 36.86
High School	11	22	
Graduate	1	2	

Table3 reflects the distribution of respondents based on their primary occupation. The table shows that the primary occupation of 40 per cent of the respondents is farming. Thirty per cent respondents belong to 'Business' group and rest Thirty per cent belong to 'Daily labour and others' group. The distribution of the variable 'Primary occupation' is distributed with mean 2, standard deviation 0.78. The C.V value 39 per cent signifies the medium consistency level of the variable distribution. The table also reflects the distribution of the respondents based on their secondary occupation. Majority of the respondents (80 %) are only MGNREGA beneficiary. Rest 20 per cent of the respondents are MGNREGA beneficiary and simultaneously involve in some other works.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents based on their primary occupation and secondary occupation

Category	Score Range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Statistics
Primary Occupation				
Business	3	15	30	Mean = 2
Farmer	2	20	40	
Daily Labour and Others	1	15	30	Standard Deviation = 0.78
				CV = 39
Secondary Occupation				
Business	4	0	0	Mean = 2.2
MGNREGA beneficiary	3	10	20	Standard Deviation = 0.40
Others				
Only MGNREGA beneficiary	2	40	80	CV = 18.18
Daily Labour	1	0	0	

Table 4 presents the distribution of respondents based on their annual income. The table shows that 54per cent respondents' annual income is below 25000. Rest 46per cent respondents' annual income is within 25000 to 50000.

The finding of the study shows the private wage rate has increased, the relations between farmers and labourers was altered and the agriculture pattern has also changed due to the implementation of MGNREGA.(Thakur, 2011)

Table 4: Distribution of respondents based on their annual income

Category	Score Range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Statistics
Below 25000	1	27	54	Mean = 1.46
25000-50000	2	23	46	Standard Deviation = 0.50
Above 50000-75000	3	0	0	
Above 75000	4	0	0	CV = 34.25

Table 5 presents the distribution of respondents based on their social participation and extent of participation. Sixty four per cent respondents belong to the category 'member of an organization' followed by the category 'no member' (18 %) and 'office bearer in an organization' (18 %). Majority of the respondents (76 %) occasionally participate in different social programmes, functions or training programmes. 20 per cent respondents regularly participate in different programmes. Only 4 per cent respondents never participate in such activities.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents based on their social participation and extent of participation

Category	Score Range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Statistics
No member	0	9	18	Mean = 1 Standard Deviation = 0.61 CV = 61
Member of an organization	1	32	64	
Office Bearer in an organization	2	9	18	
Office Bearer of more than one Organization	3	0	0	
Extent of Participation				
Never	0	2	4	Mean = 1.16
Occasionally	1	38	76	Standard Deviation = 0.47
Regularly	2	10	20	CV = 40.52

Table 6 showed that before MGNREGA majority of the rural women (56 %) were involved only in household activities. Twenty nine per cent were involved in farming activities along with household activities. Only 15per cent rural women were involved in different self-help groups and other works like cottage industries, sewing etc. The table also presents the percentage of earning female members in the family after the implementation of MGNREGA in the villages. 51per cent of the rural women are now involved in different works under MGNREGA.

Reason behind that MGNREGA provides work within the village periphery, so it is being easier for the rural women to work under MGNREGA. 20per cent of rural women are involved in farming activities along with household activities followed by 15per cent of the rural women are the members of different self-help group or involved in some other works and 14per cent are engaged only in household activities.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents based on the percentage of earning female members in the family before MGNREGA and after MGNREGA:

Category	Percentage (%)
Before MGNREGA	
Only engaged in household activities	56
Household activities and farming activities	29
Member in SHGs or involved in some other works	15
After MGNREGA	
Only engaged in household activities	14
Household activities and farming activities	20
Member in SHGs or involved in some other works	15
Involved in works under MGNREGA	51

CONCLUSION

In the present scenario social participation has much contribution on rural development. The younger generation has greater accessibility to different communication channel. They are well aware about the work available in the villages. It was seen that they have greater manual skill than the old people. Under this scheme, the work is provided within the village periphery so as to make it easier for women to work. Wages are paid on the basis of work measurement and there is no time bound attendance on work site which facilitates the rural women to work according to their suitability during lean hours in a day and days unemployed elsewhere in a year accordingly. Due to this opportunity, the rural women are able to contribute their earning to run their family. This increases their self esteem and ultimately helps in women empowerment. If more works are provided under MGNREGA, it will contribute more to the upliftment of their livelihood and prevent seasonal migration of rural people.

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