

# **Level of awareness of MGNREGA among women participants and the problems faced by them in Gorubathan block of Kalimpong district in West Bengal**

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## **Abstract**

MGNREGA emerged as a powerful tool for women empowerment in rural areas. For empowering women this scheme ensures that of the total workers at least one third workers should be women. In this paper the study area is Gorubathan block of Kalimpong district. Both primary & secondary data has been used. The study focuses on the impact of MGNREGA in empowering women of Gorubathan block. The impact are analysed by taking parameters like awareness level of women, their participation rate and the problems faced by them. In results we can see that the financial conditions of women is improved after this program. MGNREGA decreased the gender discrimination in terms of wage payment and brought self confidence among women. Passive participation of women found in MGNREGA due to lease of job cards. They are manipulated by the supervisors. Empowerment can be achieved by women if these loopholes in the scheme are controlled. MGNREGA is very effective otherwise in the socio-economic upliftment of rural women.

**Keywords:** MGNREGA, Socio-Economic upliftment, Empowerment, Rural population.

## **Introduction**

The **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act-2005**(MGNREGA) is an Indian law that tries to guarantee the 'right to work'. This scheme tries to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work & thus try to ensure livelihood security in rural areas. The MGNREGA Programme is the first programme not only to provide guaranteed livelihood security to India's rural poor but it also tries to boost the rural economy, stabilize agricultural production. If properly implemented it could eradicate rural poverty.

## **Study Area**

The Darjeeling Himalaya, a section of the Eastern Himalaya in India, consists of the lower portion of the Lower Himalayas and a stretch of the marshy tract known as Terai. The Darjeeling Himalaya falls under the administrative jurisdiction of Kalimpong district & Darjeeling district of West Bengal, India. Kalimpong town is the district head-quarter of the Kalimpong District and falls under the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration(G.T.A).

Gorubathan is a community development block (CD block) that forms an administrative division in the Kalimpong subdivision of the Kalimpong district in the Indian state of West Bengal. The Gorubathan CD block has an area of 442.72 sqkm. It has 1 panchayat samity, 11 gram panchayats, 91 gram sansads



(village councils), 38 mouzas and 27 inhabited villages. Jaldhaka police station serves this block. Headquarters of this CD block is at Gorubathan. Gram panchayats in Gorubathan CD block are: Aahaley, Dalim, Garubathan II, Kumai, Nim, Patengodak, Pokhreybong, Samsing and Todeytangta. According to the 2011 Census of India, the Gorubathan CD block had a total population of 60,663, all of which were rural.

## **Methodology**

The methodology is based on both primary & secondary data. The Primary data is collected through schedule. Out of eleven gram panchayats of Gorubathan block only 3 gram panchayats (G.P.) has been selected for field survey. They are Dalim, Samsing, kumai. 150 women were randomly selected who were benefitted from the MGNREGA & the data were collected. The secondary data are collected from the official website [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in), Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Census of India website etc. The data is analyzed & represented with suitable cartographic techniques.

## **Objective**

- a. To analyze the role of MGNREGA in women empowerment in Gorubathan block and level of awareness among women regarding the scheme.
- b. To examine the problems faced by a women in MGNREGA participation.

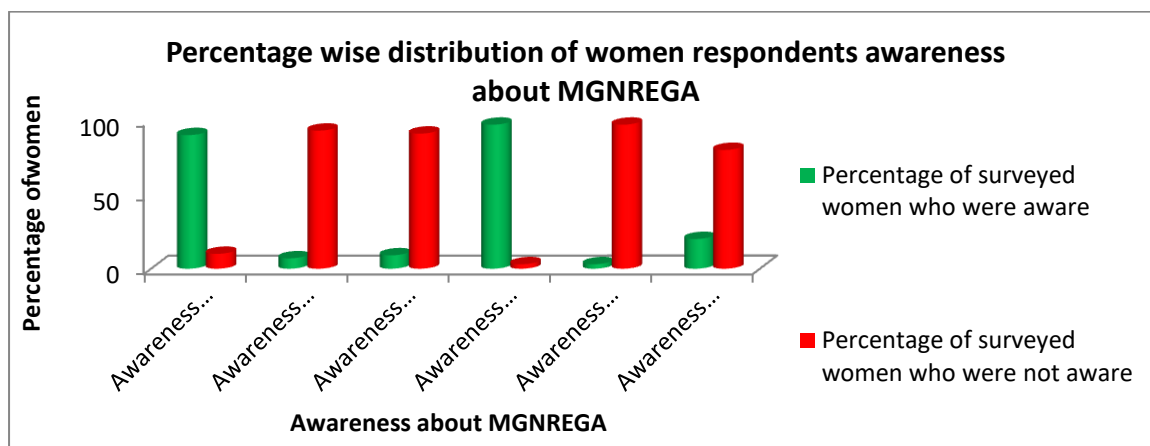
## Level of awareness about the MGNREGA scheme among women

Women will be empowered only when they are aware of the MGNREGA scheme. But in Gorubathan block the awareness about the scheme has a mixed outcome. There is less awareness campaign about the process of registration, payment norms, role of grampanchayats etc. For this the women are not much aware of the scheme.

**Table1:** Awareness of MGNREGA among women

Awareness about MGNREGA	Percentage of surveyed women who were aware	Percentage of surveyed women who were not aware
Awareness about 100days work	90	10
Awareness about Women friendly provisions	7	93
Awareness about non transferability of job cards	9	91
Awareness about proceduer to apply job cards	97	3
Awareness about unemployment awareness	3	97
Awareness about guaranteed wage rate	20	80

Source: Field Survey, 2019



**a. Women awareness about 100 days of work under the scheme** -The study was made to know to what extent the women beneficiaries were aware of the scheme which will empower them. But it is found that out of 3 G.Ps that were selected women of Dalim are mostly aware than the other two Gram Panchayats.

**b. Awareness about women friendly provisions**-There is a provision in this scheme that if there are 5 children, under six years of age are present in the worksite then childcare facilities will be provided. There is also another provision that women should get job within 5 km radius and if their worksite is more than 5 km they are entitled to get travel & subsistence allowance i.e. 10 % of the minimum wage. But during survey it was found that majority of

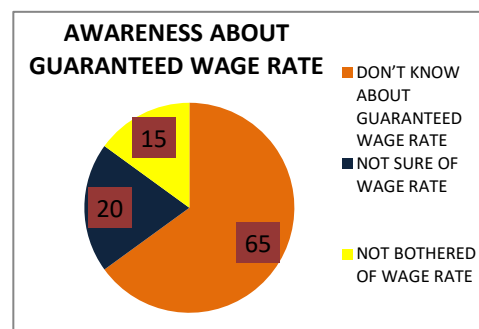
the beneficiaries (93 percent) are unaware of these provisions. Of the surveyed gram panchayats Samsing women beneficiaries have highest level of awareness of these provisions.

**c. Awareness about non-transferability of the job cards**-From the survey it was found that most of the beneficiaries are unaware about the non-transferability of the job cards. They told that their job cards are in the possession of the supervisors and they are paid Rs 300- Rs 600 per year as the lease amount for their job cards. The supervisors don't even inform them about who works with their job cards. 91 percent of the beneficiaries reported they are not in possession of their job cards.

**d. Awareness about the procedure to apply for job cards under the scheme**-From the survey it is found that as majority of the women are illiterate they alone can not apply for job cards in the panchayat office. So they are dependent on the supervisors in applying for work. About 97 Percent of the surveyed women are aware of the procedure to apply for work but being illiterate they have to be dependent on others. Out of surveyed GPs awareness about the procedure for job card application are highest among kumai women.

**e. Unemployment allowances awareness among women**-A provision of 'unemployment awareness' is there in the scheme if the applicant has not been given work within 15 days of applying. They can apply for unemployment allowance to the Gram Panchayat office by showing the receipt of date of application. But during survey 97 percent respondent have not heard about such provisions.

**f. Awareness about guaranteed wage rates under the scheme**-From the survey it is found that 65 percent of the beneficiaries do not know how much they are entitled, 20 percent are not sure and 15 percent are not bothered as they get lease amount for owing the job card without working and are more satisfied.

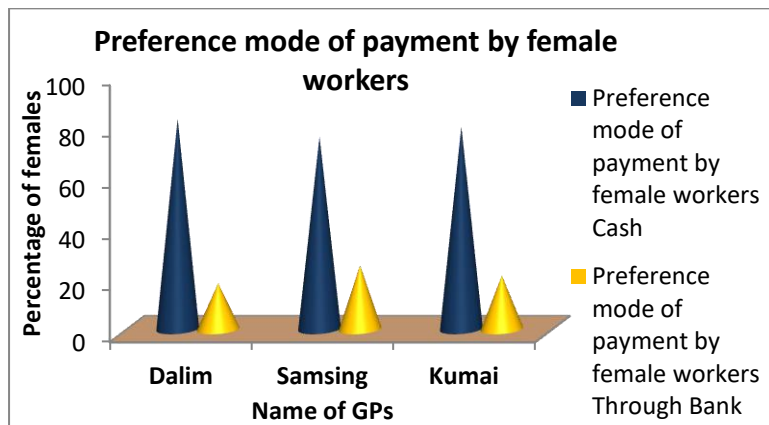


### **Womens participation in MGNREGA**

For women empowerment there must be more active participants. The study shows that the registered workers are more but the active workers are less. The women participate in MGNREGA meetings but most of the decisions are taken by man. Samsing Gram Panchayat has the highest number of person days generated (women ) under MGNREGA among the surveyed GPs.

## Preference for mode of payment

It is found that women prefer more payment in cash than through bank. Those women having payment through bank said that their knowledge about banking activities & transactions has increased from before. Rest 40 percent responded that they depend on family members and supervisors regarding banking transactions.



**Table2:** Preference mode of payment by female workers

Name of GPs	Preference mode of payment by female workers	
	Cash	Through Bank
Dalim	82	18
Samsing	75	25
Kumai	79	21

Source: Field survey, 2019

## Problems faced by women participants in MGNREGA

**a. Discrimination & Attitude of the society**-There are many stigmas against women in the society like they can not work on worksites with males as they are weak & therefore unfit to work in this scheme.

**b. Irregular payments and low wage**-In MGNREGA every job card holder is supposed to have a account in a financial institution. Opening account is not easy for women & this delays their wages payment. Women face lots of difficulties for this as they do not earn minimum wage.

**c. Absence of childcare facilities**-Under the MGNREGA scheme there is no implementation of child care for below 6 years of age. A female worker should be appointed to take care of below 6 years children in the worksite. There is a negative impact for non implementation of this provision on women labour force.

**d. Corruption-**The spirit and effectiveness of MGNREGA is hampered due to direct or indirect corruption.

**e. Level of Awareness-**It is seen that in Gorubathan block the level of awareness about the process & implementation of MGNREGA among the women are low as a result the participation rate is low.

**f. Work nature of MGNREGA-**As in this scheme physical force is needed so male workers are preferred more than females due to the nature of work.

## **Findings**

a. Issues of passive participation have been found in the forms of lease of job cards. Women are not possessing the job cards. It is with the supervisors and the women get Rs 300- Rs 600 per Year without working due to leasing job cards.

b. This scheme has provided livelihood for women in Gorubathan block. Women has stopped working for local landlord where they were paid less than the men before.

c. MGNREGA decreased the gender discrimination in terms of wage payment and bought self confidence among the women workers.

## **Conclusions**

MGNREGA emerged as a powerfull tool for women empowerment. This scheme has taken care of that corner of society which were untouched for years. In this scheme the wage payments can be made more transparent by removing middlemen who collect wages on behalf of workers. Government should become more vigilant to see that the job cards are not given in lease by the supervisors.

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