

Research Study on

Factors Facilitating Participation of Women in MG NREGS in Himachal Pradesh



2017

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Factors Facilitating Participation of Women
in
MG NREGS in Himachal Pradesh

A study in
Selected Districts of Himachal Pradesh

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PREFACE

Provision of employment opportunities to people has ever been remained a demand in India, a country that has enough manpower who have been in the ever increasing dearth of livelihood option. MG NREGA is one such programme started by Indian Government which provides massive employment as unskilled work with guarantee of 100 days to a rural household in a financial year. The scheme has safeguards for the interests of deprived, marginalized and vulnerable stakeholders. The scheme has a provision for the women stakeholders for one third share in the stock of employment if they demand though women constitute half of the population. The MG NREGS is being implemented since 2005-06 and Himachal Pradesh has the credit providing maximum employment to women workers in District Mandi in the year 2013-14 among the north Indian States. Besides this, it has been found in a work, time and motion study that Himachal women spend a great deal of their time in cultivation and other allied works besides the household works. In view of this scenario, it become prudent to study the factors facilitating the participation of women in MG NREGS in Himachal Pradesh.

The study has been taken up in three districts of Himachal Pradesh with high, low and average participation of women in percentage terms in the year 2013-14. The three districts covered include Sirmour, Mandi and Una with two GPs selected from one block from each district on the same criteria. The data analysis, findings and suggestions have been attempted in accordance with the objectives of the study. The report writing has been accomplished by Sh. Rajeev Bansal, Research Officer whose work is put on record for his untiring efforts.

We are grateful to NIRD & PR, Hyderabad who have provided financial support for undertaking this study. The cooperation of officers and staff of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Departments is also acknowledged extended for collection of data in the field. I hope that the study will be useful for the concerned departments and the MG NREGS implementing agencies will find the suggestions useful for better execution of the scheme in future. The observations, comments and suggestions of readers are invited for feedback.

Place: Shimla
Date: 11th Oct, 2017

Madhu Bala Sharma, IAS
Director

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ABBREVIATIONS

BPL	Below Poverty Line
CBO	Community Based Organisations
ER	Elected Representatives
GP	Gram Panchayat
GRS	Gram Rozgar Sewak
GS	Gram Sabha
HH	Household
HP	Himachal Pradesh
IAY	Indira Awas Yojna
Kms	Kilometers
MG NREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MG NREGS	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NIRD& PR	National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj
Nos	Numbers
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NREGS	National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
NSSO	National Sample Survey Organisation
OBC	Other Backward Classes
PRIs	Panchayati Raj Institution
SC	Scheduled Caste
SHG	Self Help Group
Sq. Kms.	Square Kilometers
ST	Scheduled Tribes
TV	Television
VDO	Village Development Oragnisation

INTRODUCTION

Gender equity and empowerment has been recognised by the architects of MG NREGA and included women participation as integral component in its design. Various provisions under the Act and its Guidelines aim to ensure that women have equitable and easy access to work, decent working conditions, equal payment of wages and representation on decision-making bodies. MGNREGA extended an important work opportunity for women who would have otherwise remained unemployed or underemployed though comprise half of the community..

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MG NREGA) is one of the most progressive legislations enacted since independence. The significance of MG NREGA is evident from a variety of observations and interpretations. Mainly, it is an exclusive employment generation and an effective demand driven employment programme of rural India which is an essential requirement for the fulfilment of other basic rights- the Right to Life, the Right to Food and Right to Education. National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, enacted on 25th August 2005, guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. The Act has come into force with effect from February 2, 2006 in 200 districts in the first phase, 330 districts in the second phase in 2007-08 and extended to all the rural districts of India from the financial year 2008-09.

India has witnessed four most distinct institutionalization of policies; Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Right to Information Act (RTIA), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and Right to Education Act (RTE) since independence. As one of the salient features of MGNREGA, it has laid down minimum mandatory provision for each state for formulating its own scheme. One can refer the Directive Principles of the State Policy in this regard as substantiated in the Employment Generation Act (EGA) as the Directive Principles

uphold “*The State shall in particular direct its policy towards securing ... that the citizens, men and women equally have the right to an adequate means of livelihood*”¹.

MG NREGA ensures a guaranteed, at least 100 days, employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members (both male and female) are willing to do unskilled manual work. The act provides livelihood security to the rural community. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MG NREGS) provides an effective platform for community participation in planning execution and monitoring aspects in the local governance system.

Participation of community in MG NREGA is one of the pre-requisites to enforce the ‘rights and entitlements’ envisaged and make it community-oriented, demand-driven scheme. The success of the programme is entirely dependent on the participation of the community in general and women in particular since the share of women in employment is quite substantive. As women are better change agents of socio-economic transformation, efforts have been made to enlarge their participation for household livelihood security as well as better asset management in MG NREGS.

MG NREGA has several gender sensitive features that are attractive for women workers. The Act stipulated priority in allocation of work to women. In terms of implementation, it mandates that minimum one-third of the beneficiaries are to be women who have registered and have requested for work (Schedule II, Section 6 of MG NREGA). The state is obliged to ensure certain worksite facilities to enhance women workers’ participation. The Act also stipulates payment of equal wages to male and female workers. Wage earnings of workers are to be paid directly to the account either through bank or post office. In fact, MG NREGA has opened up a new opportunity for women workers.

1.1 MG NREGS Implementation

The number of days of employment provided to a household in MG NREGS was less than 50 days at national average and it varied across different regions and states. Participation of women

¹ Directive Principles of State policy, Indian Constitution: Part-IV

in MGNREGS was reported to be largely passive in nature. A few studies referred to some of the favorable and unfavorable factors determining women's participation including intensity of participation. Wage earnings of workers are to be paid directly to the person concerned either through bank or post office savings account. In fact, MG NREGA has opened up a new opportunity for women workers².

One of the most distinguishing features of MG NREGA is its approach towards empowering citizen including women citizen to play an active role in the implementation of the scheme, through gram sabha, social audit, participatory planning and other activities. Women's empowerment was among the intentions of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MG NREGA) among its main objectives. Provisions like work within a radius of five kilometres from the house, absence of contractors, and flexibility in terms of choosing period and months of employment not only helped women exclusively, but also, nevertheless have been conducive for rural women. The implementation experiences so far suggest that the participation of women has been positive – women beneficiaries of the MG NREGS (national average) constituted 41% in 2006-07, which increased to 43% in 2007-08 and further to 49% in 2008-09 (upto December 2008)³.

MG NREGA played a significant role to meet the economic as well as social needs of women. It emerged like a beacon of light in the empowerment of the rural women and contributed substantially for the better living and economic conditions by creating equal wages to male and female workers. Income generation and economic stability of the poor rural women helped them to think about the education of themselves and their children. It also helped them to become aware about their health and hygiene. It was found that the additional income of the poor women from MG NREGA increased their social status in the family circle. The act has great impact on liberty and decision making power of rural women. Their political consciousness and active participation in local self govt. and governance affairs become evident. In fact, the act focused

² Adhiraja,C, , Daimari,A., Madhuri PP. 2-3, Research study on factors facilitating women participation Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, NIRD Hyderabad (Research Report Series 98. Publication, 2013

³ Chandreleka S. and Ramu AR, 2014, A exploratory study on women empowerment through MGNREGS in Rayavaram villages in Pudukottai district, EXCEL International Journal of Multidisciplinary Management Studies, Volume : 4, Issue : 1
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on rural development with women empowerment yet MG NREGA had its own limitations. The implementation with inadequate facilities across the nation (such as lack of child care facility, worksite facility etc.) resulted into the gender insensitiveness towards the mandatory provisions of the Act.

The three major indicators i.e. number of days worked, wages paid, and inclusion of women not only reflect the spirit of the Act, but also constitute quantifiable components of MG NREGA implementation. The number of days worked helps to measure the success of MG NREGA as an employment guarantee scheme. The wage rate helps to measure the success of MG NREGA as a poverty alleviation tool. Most importantly, the participation of women in the MG NREGA program helps to measure the success of MG NREGA as an empowerment tool.

Nevertheless, MG NREGA has the potential to enhance women's economic independence through cash earning. Such earnings can also bring about a sense of equality because women can earn the same wage as men. The economic activities of women have become directly visible with the implementation of the Act. However, there is much to do in achieving gender equality and sensitivity, which needs a comprehensive perspective.

In the present study, an attempt has been made to test the assumed pathway of analytical framework, where the socio-economic profile of the sample getting the support of the enabling environment and individual traits have resulted in participation and thereby quality of life. The present study explored, through intensive field investigations, the reasons behind, extent and the implications of women's participation in MG NREGA in selected districts of H.P.

1.2 Women's Participation in MGNREGS:

MG NREGS is a special programme for livelihood support for the poor and vulnerable, aimed at directly increasing their income earning capabilities and at mainstreaming them in the overall inclusive growth process in order to reduce economic dualism and inequalities in socio-economic set up.

The women participation in MG NREGS has increased significantly which no doubt proved to be a positive aspect of women empowerment. MG NREGS has played vital role for income generation and quality of life of rural women.

The percentage of women participation has been varied in 2012-13 and 2013-14, the consecutive years. The participation of women in Himalayan Hill States of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and the Northern Indian States under MG NREGS for 2012-13 and 2013-14 is given in the table below:

Table 1.1: Participation of Women in MG NREGS

(Persondays in lakh)

Sr. No.	States	2012-2013			2013-2014		
		Total	Women	Percent	Total	Women	Percent
1.	Haryana	117.64	49.06	41.7	126.73	50.54	39.88
2.	Himachal Pradesh	282.09	176.36	62.52	239.37	145.14	60.63
3.	Jammu & Kashmir	330.52	76.38	23.11	240.82	49.37	20.5
4.	Punjab	134.54	70.96	52.74	63.59	29.68	46.67
5.	Rajasthan	1838.25	1245.55	67.76	2180.58	1504.45	68.99
6.	Sikkim	43.4	19.44	44.79	33.15	14.8	44.64
7.	Uttar Pradesh	1737.74	385.19	22.17	1376.36	270.7	19.66
8.	Uttarakhand	161.01	71.91	44.66	160.55	73.84	45.99
India		21867.74	11554.6	52.84	21848	11388.5	52.12

Source: <http://www.nrega.nic.in>

The above table 1.1 showed that Rajasthan ranked on the top with the maximum percentage of women participation in MG NREGS in 2012-13 & 2013-14 i.e. 67.76 and 68.99 percent, respectively while Uttar Pradesh recorded minimum participation with 22.17% and 19.66% in 2012-13 2013-14, respectively. Himachal Pradesh experienced a higher rate of women participation in comparison to national rate of women participation for both the years whereas the participation rate reduced to 60.63 percent in 2013-14 from 62.52 percent in 2012-13. The variation in participation of women in MG NREGS demanded to enquire into the factors affecting their participation for analysis.

1.3 Status of Women's Participation in Himachal Pradesh:

MG NREGA marked a paradigm shift and stood out amongst other rural employment programmes as it empowered the rural population, particularly women and other marginalized sections of the society with a legal right that guaranteed employment through an act of parliament, unlike other wage employment programmes. MG NREGS, as its most remarkable feature, offered equal wage rate to women and men, virtually appreciable in rural India. MG

***“Nrege da kam na mile taa
assare shareer akdi jaien”***
(Our body get stiffed without
work under MG NREGA)

***“Musterolley ch naa ni hoe ta
dil dhak dhak karda”***
(Heartbeats get high finding our
names missing in the muster roll)

***“Hun te apna kamaana te
majey naal jeena”***
(Now earn for ourselves and
live happily)

There is an apparent
reflection from these
statements that ‘what MG
NREGA matters’ to rural
women of Himachal Pradesh.

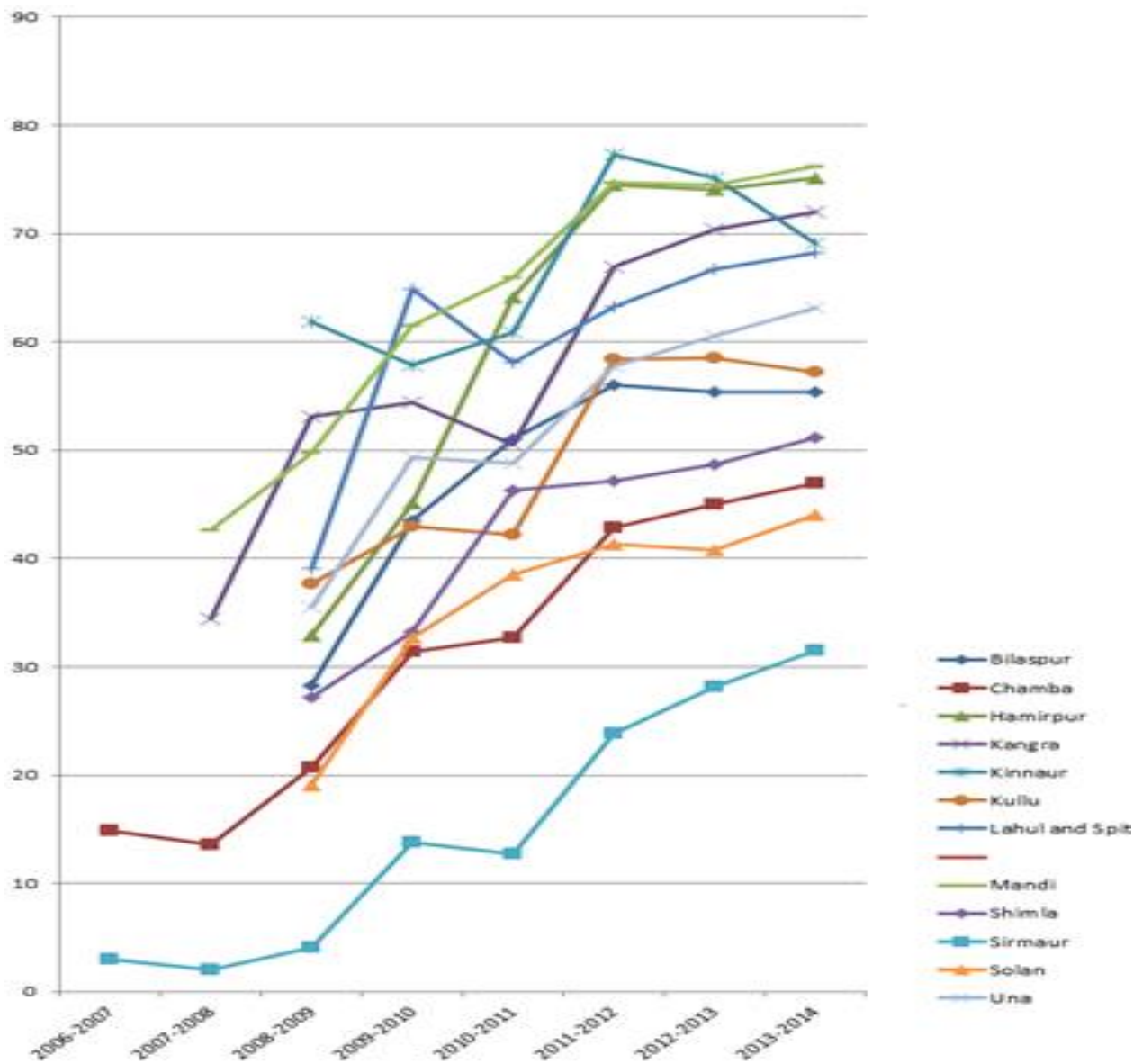
NREGS is no doubt an effective scheme for providing livelihood security and empowering rural women in all states including the state of Himachal Pradesh. In first phase, MG NREGA was implemented in two backward districts of Himachal Pradesh i.e. Chamba and Sirmour while Kangra and Mandi in 2006 and covering all the remaining eight districts since 2008. The pace of MG NREGS implementation was in gestation phase in the beginning till 2008, but later it gained steady momentum. Some districts took a very good lead and achieved high participation of women whereas other districts due to varied factors were in the process to emulate the examples set by the leading districts.

The participation of women in MG NREGS, district-wise and year-wise (2006-07 to 2013-14) has been presented in figure 1.1 below.

Source: Preliminary Field Data

Though the working conditions in the hilly terrains of Himachal Pradesh had not been very congenial, yet rural women found to be very passionate for MG NREGS works. They had remarkable enthusiasm to work under MG NREGS as they participated in almost every category of work permissible MG NREGS.

Fig 1.1: Trend of Women Participation in MGNREGS, HP



Source: www.mgnrega.nic.in

They did not had any preference for any particular category of work rather wanted continuous employment on MG NREGS works. Mandi District, HP got a national award for maximum participation of women amongst the states of north India in the financial year 2013-14.

The district wise participation of different social categories i.e. scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, women and others has been shown in the table below:

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Table 1.2: District-wise employment generation for social categories in 2013-14

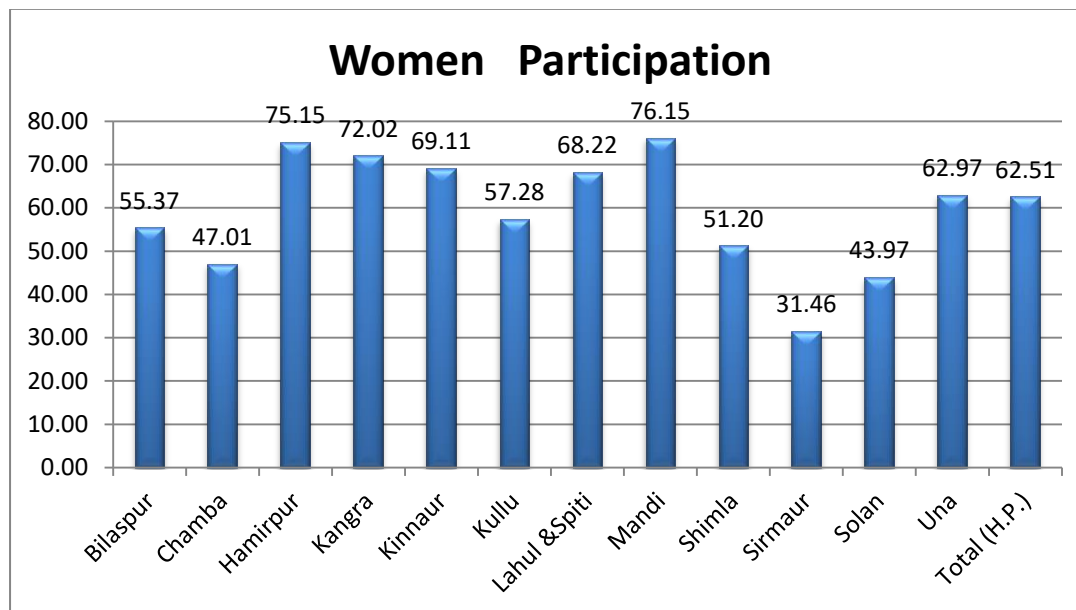
District	Cumulative Persondays Employment Generated				Women	
	SCs	STs	Others	Total	Women	Percentage
Bilaspur	370839	56310	981904	1409053	780236	55.37
Chamba	654017	1013357	1780283	3447657	1620595	47.01
Hamirpur	415356	13109	931848	1360313	1022298	75.15
Kangra	1487699	359694	3820414	5667807	4081934	72.02
Kinnaur	202602	308282	3508	514392	355498	69.11
Kullu	656956	29519	1443694	2130169	1220234	57.28
Lahul &Spiti	9168	145262	1833	156263	106607	68.22
Mandi	2152494	84785	5182011	7419290	5649805	76.15
Shimla	613218	7377	1465222	2085817	1068010	51.20
Sirmaur	617658	23396	1204299	1845353	580536	31.46
Solan	429514	15839	722467	1167820	513520	43.97
Una	423017	25112	582828	1030957	649226	62.97
Total (H.P.)	8032538	2082042	18120311	28234891	17648499	62.51

Source: www.mgnrega.nic.in

The above information has been presented in the figure for the purpose of convenience.

Fig 1.2: Women participation in MG NREGS in 2013-14

The participation of women has been illustrated in the figure shown below:



It is evident from the above table that women participation (76.15%) was maximum in Mandi District, minimum (31.46%) in Sirmour District and average (62.97%) in Una District which is quite close to state average (62%). This information formed the basis for selection of sample areas.

Women's participation in employment programme was reflected by several factors. The nature and conditions of work provided, the burden of care responsibilities and unpaid work, local labour market conditions were some factors that influence women's participation in public works programme. MGNREGS tried to address many of these factors, like for instance, providing crèche facility at worksite in order to enable women's participation. Evidence showed that MG NREGS disproportionately involved women participation in all type of works undertaken. However, there were wide variations both across states and within states in the number of work days earned by women.

Women's interest and participation in community based organizations (CBOs) could have accelerated the whole change process. It was vibrant that factors like education, awareness, participation in development programmes and social capital played a critical role in speeding up the empowerment process. However, such process was rather slow in a patriarchal society. The vivacity of the local self-institutions (LSIs), development programmes and the sensitivity of the delivery mechanism working for the cause of women could have quicken the process of change. The extent and nature of women's participation in MGNREGS would impact the competence and capabilities of women. This can affect the women's self-confidence, social recognition; changed roles and leadership qualities together transform their own functioning. This type of change in women can be construed as an important indicator of their empowerment.

Thus, the present study is an attempt made to test the designed framework in terms of socio-economic and demographic profiles of the sample and whether the individual traits have resulted in quality of participation and thereby in their quality of life.

1.4 Study Area

The study has been taken up in three districts of different geo physical features and women participation; one each from high, average and low performance district based on the extent of participation of women in MG NREGS works for the year 2013-14. In each district one block and two Gram Panchayats with same criteria were selected. About twenty five women workers were selected randomly for the sample from each GP on the basis of caste and number of days worked as MGNREGS employment.

1.5 Study Report

The present report is divided into five chapters. The Chapter 1, **Introduction**, gives an overview of the study with background information, **Women Participation in MG NREGS**, **Status of Women in H P**, general statement about the field of research, specific statements about the aspects of the problem already studied, need for more investigations, purpose of the study in brief, and justification of carrying out the research. The Chapter 2, **Review of Literature**, gives an insight of the concept in national perspective, evolution of women participation in MG NREGS, processes prevailing in different states, empirical evidences and findings from different studies and research papers besides suggestions in this regard. The Chapter 3, **Design of the Study**, gives an appropriate account of objectives, methodology and sampling, data collection and data analysis tools for the present study. The Chapter 4, **Profile of the Study Area**, gives the socio-economic information, MG NREGS implementation and women participation in the study area. In the Chapter 5, **Data Analysis & Interpretations** have been attempted based on the data collected, its analysis and discussions. Based on above analysis and interpretations, **Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations** have been made, in the Chapter 6.

Review of Literature

MG NREGA recognised the relevance of incorporating gender equity and empowerment in its design. Various provisions under the Act and its Guidelines, aim to ensure that women have equitable and easy access to work, decent working conditions, equal payment of wages and representation on decision-making bodies. Around Rs. 53,000 crore have been spent on wages for women and around 47 per cent of the total person-days have been generated by women from financial years 2006–07 up to 2011–12. Overall, MG NREGA has been a positive and important Scheme for women.

The literature on MG NREGS is unlimited but very few studies are available which reflects various dimensions of participation of various stakeholders especially women. A review of the available literature on MG NREGA and its impacts on participation of women as well as on other stakeholders is attempted here. These studies mainly contribute to understand the realistic status of women participation and factors interfering. This further helps to identify various research gaps and issues for further study.

Asha Sharma (2012) in her research paper ‘SC/ST Employment Guarantee: Women’s Empowerment in Rural India by MG NREGA’ has reflected that MGNREGA is an unique act which ensures guaranteed employment to SC/ST women but also promises from the perspective of women’s empowerment as well. Her paper highlighted the differences in the employment and empowerment attained among the SC/ST women in rural India. The high status of women among the SC/ST groups has important effect on the generating community assets and enhancing their spending capacity. High poverty rates pose to be significant obstacles in attaining empowerment among SC/ST women in rural India. By putting cash earning in women’s hands, MGNREGA has both increased and diversified the contribution that women are making to household incomes as wage earners. Difference in economic, social, and cultural background among the various SC/ST women in rural India need to be emphasized in order to understand the picture and the importance of MGNREGA.

Sudarshan M. Ratna (2011) in a survey of three states i.e. Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Rajasthan has explained that one of the prominent features of the NREGA is the high and varying levels of women's participation. The implications of taking part in the scheme at the household level – in the context of the general feminization the stark gender disparity in market wages ensures that NREGS work, with its guaranteed minimum wage, holds little attraction for men and is a great pull for women. This research examined women's participation in NREGS in selected areas in three states: Kerala, Himachal and Rajasthan. The NREGS (National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) has succeeded in bringing large numbers of women into paid work, many of them for the first time. This report explores the complex reasons why women's participation in the scheme varies significantly across and within states, and suggests improvements that could maximise impact. NREGS has achieved some success in empowering women, economically and socially. But the author suggests that minor changes to the scheme, to address local development challenges and priorities, could deliver better outcomes.

Ashok Pankaj and Rukmini Tankha (2010) examines the empowerment effects of the national Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) on rural women in Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. They argued that women workers have gained benefits from the scheme primarily because of the paid employment opportunity, and benefits have been realised through income-consumption effects, intra-household effects, and the enhancement of choice and capability. Women have also gained to some extent in terms of realization of equal wages under the MGNREGS, with long-term Implications for correcting gender skewness and gender discriminatory wages prevalent in the rural labour market of India. Despite the difficulties and hurdles for women, prospects lie, inter alia, in their collective mobilization, more so in laggard states.

Navjyoti Naidu (2010) in her study “Employment Guarantee and women empowerment in rural india” has discussed about the impacts of MG NREGS in the initial years. She said that MGNREGA not only improved the economic status of women but also has increased their awareness level along with their participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and gram sabha as well. Significantly, women are increasingly visible as part of the MG NREGA

workforce, there is still much scope to increase their involvement in PRIs to tackle issues like water, sanitation, health, education and of course the implementation of MG NREGA. She has clearly mentioned that MG NREGA seems to have created reasons and opportunities for people to work and remain in their own villages. The strengthening of this perception in rural areas can have significant impacts on questions of security, health and children's education, all of which are often compromised, in one way or another, during migration. Inevitably, women's NREGA earnings are increasing their contribution to household income.

The study also reveals that despite numerous problems, MG NREGA is a programme that has begun to make a difference in the lives of women. Furthermore, it is popular among the workers, who routinely ask if more work could be made available to them under MG NREGA. Clearly, there is a massive demand for MG NREGA work, and the administration should respond to it by increasing the scale of employment. Other challenges too remain. The timely payment of wages is a problem in most areas. As mentioned earlier, the low levels of awareness and lack of worksite facilities are also troubling. Nevertheless, the overall impact of MG NREGA on women's lives is quite positive in many ways, whether it is by enhancing their economic independence and self-confidence, contributing to food security, helping to reduce distress migration, or fostering better awareness (and wider enforcement) of minimum wages. The role of MG NREGA as a tool of women's empowerment deserves much more attention than it has received so far.

MG NREGA SAMEEKSHA (2012) mentioned that with a national participation rate of 47 per cent, evidence suggests that women are participating in the Scheme more actively than in other works. MG NREGA is an important work opportunity for women who would have otherwise remained unemployed or underemployed. However, the significant inter-state variation in participation of women requires further research and analysis. In year 2011–12,*Kerala had the highest women participation at 93 per cent, while Uttar Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir showed low levels of women participation at 18 per cent and 17 per cent respectively.

Dreze and Khera (2011) in a study conducted across ten sample districts of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh confirmed that only 30 per cent of the women in the sample recalled earning a cash income from a source other than MGNREGA. Of the total women in the sample, 50 per cent said that in the absence of MGNREGA they would have worked at home or would have remained unemployed.

Ghosh. J (2009) observed that significantly, female share on works under MGNREGA is greater than their share of work in the casual wage labour market across all States. Women are participating in the Scheme much more actively than they participated in all forms of recorded work.

Chandrashekar and Ghosh, (2011) based on an analysis of the NSSO's 64th round data showed that real wages, specifically for women increased in the rural areas after implementation of the Scheme. Casual wages in agriculture remains constant compared with 2004–05. Labour costs accounted for less than half and usually around one-third of total agricultural costs. MGNREGS had had positive effects on women workers in rural labour markets. It had caused gender gaps to come down.

Dasgupta and Sudarshan, (2011) in their study found that: (i) women's participation in the NREGA has been increasing; (ii) statewise women's participation in the programme is positively correlated with women's participation in rural areas, though women's participation in NREGA is often higher than in other forms of recorded work so far; and (iii) women's participation is negatively correlated with the existing gender wage gap in unskilled agricultural labour. The latter implies that where women's actual wages as a share of men's is lower in the private sector, women are flocking to work in this government administered programme. This will inevitably raise women's bargaining power, and is potentially a critical factor in reducing gender disparities in the labour market. The question of course is to what extent the implementation of the programme will adhere to the Guidelines and to what extent other considerations would influence the actual roll out of the programme in different state governments. The paper also found that the achievements or outcomes of the NREGA as far as women are concerned are—as with any other government programme—mediated by the intervening institutions including both the gendered nature of the labour market and the efficacy or otherwise of the local government.

Dheeraja and Rao, (2010) in a study on the impact of MG NREGS on gender relations in 102 districts in 27 States, found that gender relations in favour of women increased in the post-MG NREGS period. Self-esteem, self-image and confidence levels of women improved through their participation under MG NREGS. SHGs contributed to the changes in gender relations among the members and MG NREGS consolidated these changes. Gender Relation Index (GRI) consisting of social, economic and political dimensions at both household and community levels increased for women after implementation of MGNREGS.

Dutta et al, (2012) analysing the data from India's National Sample Survey for 2009–10 found that the scheme is attracting poor women into the workforce, although the local-level rationing processes favour men.

Hazarika, (2009) undertook a study in Assam with primary objective to find the impact of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme on women's empowerment and gender inequality and to identify major constraints, if any, on their access to productive employment opportunities through the employment guarantee programme. It was observed that the gendered distribution of assets and the resultant fallout on women substantially limits national efforts at overcoming poverty, thus indicating the urgent need for addressing issues relating to persistent gender discrimination and factors affecting women's ownership and control of assets. The study focused on women workers to derive conclusions to highlight the impact of the programme on the lives of women workers and gender relations. Significant benefits reported by the study included, income gain, social empowerment, more say in intra-household decision making and creation of community assets, etc. The study concluded by identifying certain barriers to women's access to MG NREGA and important learning lessons for policy.

Hirway, and Batabyal, (2012) highlighted the impact of MG NREGA on women in the village of Movasa, Gujarat and mentioned that MG NREGA has been found to certainly trigger processes which enhance women's empowerment through guaranteed daily wage employment with equal pay, mobilisation of collective strength and participation in GSs and Social Audits. However, MG NREGA has also added to women's time burden and drudgery. Much is yet to be done in empowering women to become active participants as well as real beneficiaries of MG NREGA.

Holmes, and Sadana, (2011) in a study presented evidence from qualitative and quantitative research carried out in Madhya Pradesh and assessed the extent to which MG NREGA integrates a gender-sensitive approach to public works programmes to support the inclusion of women in poverty reduction and growth processes. The findings suggested that women's employment in MG NREGA has improved the economic status of some women and enhanced their decision-making power slightly in some households. This related mostly to decisions on the food purchased for household consumption. In other cases, MG NREGA employment has had no impact on household relationships. Though the Scheme increased employment and wages for women, a closer look at the number of days of work provided and the actual provision of wages suggested a more unequal picture. The design of MG NREGA, with its different gender sensitive approaches, was not comprehensive in addressing the different ways in which women experience poverty and vulnerability. As a result, its impact had been mixed with gaps in gender sensitive design exacerbated by poor implementation. The study showed that the MG NREGA design and implementation should, therefore, be strengthened to avoid exacerbating gender inequalities; supporting women's participation in decision-making and investing in gender-sensitive implementation will empower women and enhance gender equality.

IIM Shillong, (2009) undertook a study of five districts in Meghalaya and five in Sikkim and found that Women form a majority of the work force; sixty-nine per cent women in Meghalaya and seventy two per cent in Sikkim work in NREGA. The provision of equal wages for men and women in the Act, the opportunity to share information during the course of work on a NREGS worksite, the opportunity and necessity of interacting with the bank/post office/government officials have all, in a fundamental way, empowered the rural tribal women by enhancing their confidence levels and by ensuring some degree of financial independence. Further, in Khasi traditional societal arrangement, there is no place for the women in the village durbars. Now because of NREGA, they can have a minimum of 30 per cent representation in the Village Employment Council (VEC).

IIT Chennai, (2010) in a study assessed the MGNREGS activities with relevance to village requirements. The report covered six key aspects, viz. effective tracking of job requests, wage difference across districts, impact of MGNREGA on agriculture, high participation of women in MGNREGS, human rights and MGNREGA, effectiveness of GS in decision making and reasons

for low BPL participation in MGNREGA. The findings of the assessment revealed that MGNREGA had become a blessing for the poor and had benefited a major section of rural people by providing a 100 days of employment to demanding households, prompt wage payment, protection of the rights of rural women and provision of a helpline.

IIT Roorkee, (2010) in its study looked at the implementation of MGNREGS in two districts, one in the plains and the other in the hilly regions. Chamoli (hill area and mostly agriculture based) and district Udham Singh Nagar (plains area and most developed district) of Uttarakhand. Besides other findings, the study showed that due to independent wage earning from MGNREGS the participation of the women in decision making has improved.

IRMA, (2010) in its study in Sikkim showed that MGNREGA has provided a supplementary source of income to families without discriminating between men and women, the significant reason for a high participation for women in the Scheme.

Ruhi Tiwari (2010) has mentioned in the third part of “MGNREGA status report-Working towards Empowerment” that in Rajasthan, MGNREGA has altered not just economic but also social dynamics in India. At least two out of every three workers employed under the scheme in most parts of the state are women and the MNREGA programme is contributing to their gradual, but steady, economic and social empowerment. Reflecting the case of Rajasthan she explained that 80-90% of the workforce under MGNREGA in Rajasthan comprises women. This has brought about a massive change in the mindsets of people here and has instilled new found confidence in women. The women, oppressed so far, have now become economically independent—earning their own living and also deciding how to spend it, unlike earlier, when the men would take all decisions. In fact, even their children’s health is improving given that they can now choose to spend their money where it’s needed. Ms. Tiwari on the basis of villager’s views stated that MGNREGA’s design promises much for women’s empowerment. Ignoring the reality of gender inequalities, it views men and women equally with respect to opportunities for gainful employment as well as wage rates. The women have also learnt to challenge certain social norms. Women MGNREGS workers now feel that economic empowerment not just lead to social empowerment rather it also leads to political aspirations. The fact that they are coming out of their homes to work and are making financial decisions shows they are breaking several social barriers. Women’s participation in the scheme has had a

direct impact on education with more families now spending on their children's education. She has also mentioned in the status report that apart from several benefits, women MGNREGS workers face several problems such as having to travel long distances and work all day long either leaving their children at home or keeping them with them in the heat. Delayed payments and low wages are other irritants.

Vinita Arora et. al. (2011) in their study "Relevance of MNREGA in mounting Women Empowerment" has counted significant benefits such as increased level of employment, and income of the rural household women, thereby enhancing their purchasing power, satisfaction, confidence etc. The study viewed in a wider perspective that MNREGA signals a possible reshaping of priorities in India through a democratic determination to provide real livelihood opportunities for the rural poor. The MNREGA is a wage employment program, providing minimum wage employment to casual, unskilled labour, women, disabled especially during lean season. Gender has never been at the center stage of the program as a policy. But this apart, MNREGA has emerged as a very powerful tool for addressing women empowerment. It was found that the program has indeed a positive impact on women empowerment, in so far as it has addressed a number of practical gender needs.

Usha Rani Ahuja (2011) in her research review paper "Impact of MGNREGA on Rural Employment and Migration-A Study in Agriculturally-backward and Agriculturally-advanced Districts of Haryana" has observed that despite being a source of employment, MGNREGA has not been able to check the migration from the developed region because of higher market wage rates at destinations. The study has concluded that farmers owning large size of landholdings and more number of animals are not much interested in participating in MGNREGA works as they are busy in their own activities. Then farmers who have small land and livestock resources are more inclined to work in MGNREGA and their participation is also more. Thus, MGNREGA is providing livelihood security to the resource-poor rural people. The study has also revealed that in an agriculturally-backward area participation in economic activities is more for non-beneficiaries as compared to beneficiaries but in agriculturally-developed area, situation is just reverse.

Asha Sharma (2012) in her research study ‘SC/ST Employment Guarantee: Women’s Empowerment in rural India by MGNRGEA’ has highlighted the difference in employment and empowerment attainment among the SC/ST women in rural India. She revealed that despite numerous problems, MGNREGA is a programme that has begun to make a difference in the lives of women. The high status of women among the SC/ST groups in rural India has important effect on the generating community assets and enhancing their spending capacity. High poverty rates pose to be significant obstacles in attaining empowerment among SC/ST women in rural India. By putting cash earning in women’s hands, MGNREGA has both increased and diversified the contribution that women are making to household incomes as wage earners. Nevertheless, the overall impact of MGNREGA on women’s lives is quite positive in many ways, whether it is by enhancing their economic independence and self-confidence, contributing to food security, helping to reduce distress migration, or fostering better awareness (and wider enforcement) of minimum wages. The role of MGNREGA as a tool of women’s empowerment deserves much more attention than it has received so far. Viewed in a wider perspective, MGNREGA signals a possible reshaping of state priorities in India through a democratic determination to provide real livelihood opportunities for the rural poor. Thus, as a progressive legislation for hitherto excluded groups-women, Scheduled Caste, Schedule Tribes, among others-MGNREGA can help to reclaim the lost faith in the possibility of pro-people governance.

Jawed Akhtar S.M. (2012) attempts to study and assess the environmental implications of the activities implemented under the MGNREGS. He considered that an ecological act is one of the best features of the MGNREGA as it designates a balance between human action and natural resources creating sustainable economic security through green jobs. The MGNREGS must be strengthened and revamped to provide not just wages for work done but work that will make regeneration possible. The author validates that assets created under MGNREGA have been useful and have contributed towards natural resource regeneration. Since MGNREGA is an ecological Act, it was suggested to set up a biological hedge that grows by the year and not regenerate like sea walls made of stone boulders.

Jyoti Poonia (2012) in her research paper “Critical study on MGNREGA- Impact and Women’s Participation” has stated that a review of social protection approaches in India shows that until

the 1990s, most schemes were contributory and applicable to workers in the organized sector. The dominant majority of workers in the informal economy were excluded from social security provision. Anti-poverty programmes provided some measure of relief, and welfare fund covered a few groups of unorganized workers in parts of the country. Since the early 1990s, the better growth performance, as well as stronger political commitment, has led to many more social protection programmes being started. Among these, the NREGA stands out for the fact that it is demand driven had greater permanence than other schemes, covers the whole country, and has the potential both to provide a minimum income and stimulated local development. Public policy and public works in India have generally tried to include women as a percentage of beneficiaries, but have not paid enough attention to gender sensitive design. the MGNREGA in its design in its design has attempted some gender sensitivity. Preliminary finding suggest that in Kerala there has been some shift out agriculture into the NREGS, mainly with respect to female workers. Since the minimum wage paid under the NREGS is far greater than the market agricultural wage for female workers, women who were not working previously have started to do so on NREGS sites. There seems to have been some ‘smoothing’ of income or consumption.

The fact that MGNREGS wages are paid through banks encourages saving and, reportedly, some percentage is left in the account as savings. The actual performance of the NREGS in Kerala owes much to state government commitment and the managerial role of the Kudumbashree and area development supervisors in particular. Overall, preliminary findings confirm that the NREGS has the potential to stimulate local development, if the management and delivery are good; and that women’s weak position in the labour market has been greatly helped. The evidence further suggests these benefits are due to a strong state apparatus (which includes the Kudumbashree) and not to the demand of citizens per se.

Carswell and De Neve (2013) in their research paper titled “Women at the crossroads implementation of employment guarantee scheme in rural Tamil Nadu” reflected that the transformation of rural gender inequalities was not an intended goal of MNREGA. The study shows evidently that MGNREGS is very beneficial to the rural women in particular as availability of work at local level throughout the year. The rural women perceived it as “easy”

work with fixed and gender equal wages and also free from caste discrimination and subordination.

Ekta Joshi (2014) in her blog titled as ‘MGNREGA: Women’s participation and its impacts’ has reflected about the status of women’s participation in MGNREGS and its varied impacts on their lives. She has provided some insights into the implementation of the scheme in terms of providing an easy access to equitable work and wages to rural women. She has also emphasised on provisions as per MGNREGA guidelines i.e. at least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested for unskilled work under the MGNREGS. Further, since employment is provided within 5 km radius of the village/ panchayat, it has the potential to strengthen women’s participation. Her analysis has raised a question that has MGNREGA been successful in fulfilling this objective? Ms. Joshi has tried to analyse these aspects by comparing NSSO data for consecutive years 2005-2014. All this taken together seems to sketch out the beginnings of a marked shift from the previous role of women. While women's labor (farm and non-farm) has always been an essential component in the functioning of rural households, it has been made invisible due to the absence of any monetary remuneration. By putting cash earnings in women's hands, MGNREGA has both increased and diversified the contributions that women. MGNREGA’s own official data shows that women’s participation in MGNREGA has been on the rise. At the national level, it increased from 40% in 2006-07 to 53% in 2013-14. However, there are wide variations across states and across districts within a state. While the statute mandates that at least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women, the actual proportion varies, ranging from 22% in Uttar Pradesh to 93% in Kerala in 2013-14. The southern states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh show a higher rate of participation. Among the northern and some eastern states, however, the pattern has been low, with Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh being the exceptions.

Kavita Bardoa & Rimjhim Bordoloi (2014) in their research paper, ‘MGNREGA and its wages on Daily Waged Workers: A case study of Sonitpur District of Assam’ has discussed about the impact of MGNREGA on women empowerment and identified the obstacles in the path of the implementation of the scheme. The paper revealed that female workers have significant benefits from MGNREGA i.e. income gains, social empowerment, more say in intra household decision

making and creation of community assets etc. The paper also identified limitations in the implementations of MGNREGA .i.e. low level of awareness, delay in payments, poor worksite facilities, non- availability of child care facilities, lack of dedicated staff and poor administrative set up etc.

MoRD & UNDP (2014) jointly undertook four state action research study with a view to understand the reasons for low participation of women in MGNREGS and propose recommendations which specifically target an increase in female participation. State specific Gender Action Plans have been prepared and presented to the two state governments. These plans are based on a comprehensive mapping of gender outcomes, entitlements assured under the programme and delivery mechanisms that are in place and primarily focus on strengthening gender responsiveness of MGNREGA vis-à-vis the nature of work, worksite facilities and implementation modalities. Following the submission of the Gender Action Plans to the state governments of Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, It has been recommended that there is a need to build the capacities of grassroots functionaries for the effective implementation of the scheme. Also the training of government functionaries under MGNREGA is must to ensure successful implementation of the Gender Action Plans with an overall goal of empowering rural women through provision of just employment opportunities.

Sudha Narayanan and Upasak Das (2014) in their study ‘Women Participation and Rationing in the Employment Guarantee Scheme’ published in Economic and Political Weekly EPW November 14, 2014 Edition has clearly mentioned that MGNREGS has progressive provisions to incentivize women in this unique income generation program. Official data suggest that 47% of all MGNREGA workers are women. The extent to which the programme is inclusive of women, with a particular focus on subpopulations of women such as widows and mothers of young children who typically face serious constraints in the context of labor market participation, is examined in this study using data from the National Sample Survey. The study finds that while the MGNREGA has indeed been inclusive of women, the substantial variations both across states and the exclusion of vulnerable groups of women demand attention.

C. Goodrich, M. Bhattarai, A. Bose & C. Bantilan (2015) has reviewed and synthesized on concept, methodology, and analytical tools and techniques on assessment of gender implications of large scale social protection programs particularly in context of the Mahatma\ Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), which is one of the largest social protection program. They have summarized the findings of recent studies on gender implication of MGNREGA; described and illustrated a generic methodological and analytical tool (targeted to MGNREGA study) that any practitioner in the field can use in the future for assessing and quantifying gender dimensions of Social; Protection program such as MGNREGS and other program worldwide. By using the example of MGNREGA, and specific component of the tools and techniques, they have tried to show also the inter linkage between social protection and wider dimensions of development (such as economic, environmental, social, institutional and health / nutrition linkages), with a view towards providing a gender assessment tool which can be adapted for different programs across regions.

Sonalde Desai, Prem Vashishtha and Onkar Joshi (2015) in their recent research study 'Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act-A Catalyst for Rural Transformation' have analysed the effectiveness of MGNREGA and its role as a catalyst for rural development. The report compared data from 26000 rural households in 2004/05 and 2011/12, concluding that the scheme has reduced rural poverty by up to a third, provided many women with their first formal employment and increased financial inclusion. Their study has also reflected that MGNREGS funds availability rose about 25% between 2008-09 and 2009-10 but fell sharply after 2011-12. Funds use consistently improved after 2010-11 but competition of projects has not improved the technical capacity of at the ground level for project formulation. This is extremely required for improving infrastructure development. Their analysis shows that only 30% rural poor participate in MGNREGS while 21% non-poor workers. These figures envisaged that MGNREGS more likely attract poor as compared to non-poor rural workers having low education level and cannot find another work. This proves their vulnerability. But this is a big question mark that why remaining 70% families are not participating in MGNREGS?

Sonali Das, et. al. (2015) in their IMF working paper ‘women workers in India: Why very few among so many’ examines the determinants of -female labor force participation in India, against the backdrop of India having one of the lowest participation rates for women among peer countries. Using extensive Indian household survey data, they model the labor force participation choices of women, conditional on demographic characteristics and education, as well as looking at the influence of state-level labor market flexibility and other state policies. Their main finding is that a number of policy initiatives can help boost female economic participation in the states of India, including increased labor market flexibility, investment in infrastructure, and enhanced social spending. This paper also analyses whether India’s largest public employment program, resulting from the enactment of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2005, has resulted in higher female labor force participation. Launched as one of the world’s largest employment programs, MGNREGA offers 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year for all registered unskilled manual workers (both women and men). The MGNREGA includes pro-women provisions as it seeks to ensure that at least 33 per cent of participating workers are women, and stipulates equal wages for men and women. In addition, there are also provisions for facilities such as childcare at worksites, so as to reduce the barriers to womens’ participation (Government of India, 2014). As well, there are other aspects of the MGNREGA that may make such work attractive for women, for example, the stipulation that work is to take place within 5 kilometers of an applicant’s residence.

Concluding the studies, it is evident that MGNREGS has improved the income and savings of the rural households, increased the participation of rural women in paid work, led to useful assets being created. However, in order to enhance the impact of the programme, there is a need to improve the implementation part of the programme to address the broader aspects of poverty, strengthen active citizenship, increase women’s involvement in choice of work and improve childcare facilities to empower women

DESIGN OF STUDY

The MGNREGS has shown a significant improvement in different aspects. The number of households associated with MGNREGS works has been increasing consistently. Another important aspect of MGNREGS is the increasing participation of women. It not only provides employment to women but by giving wage rate equal to that of men, it has empowered the women economically as well as socially.

3.1 Need and Significance

Nevertheless, MGNREGS has the potential to enhance women's economic independence through earnings. Such earnings can also bring about a sense of equality because women can earn the same wage as men. The economic activities of women have become directly visible because of the Act. However, there is much to do in achieving gender equality and sensitivity, which needs a comprehensive perspective. The present study sought to explore, through intensive field investigations, the reasons behind, extent and the implications of women's participation in MGNREGS in the selected three sample districts, Mandi, Una and Sirmour and six panchayats (two panchayats per block) on the basis of their high and low performance in the financial year 2013-14 as given in the table 1.2 in Chapter-I.

The present study is formulated on the basis of a set of objectives, adequate sampling, data collection and analysis tools.

3.2 Objectives of the Study:

The prime objectives of the study included the following parameters:

- To assess the present status of women's participation in MGNREGS.
- To analyse the facilitating factors as well as hindering factors (socio-cultural and economic) for qualitative participation of women in MGNREGS and State-specific development programmes effecting women's participation.
- To study the influence of social capital and gender sensitivity of functionaries in MGNREGS on participation of women wage-seekers.

3.3 Study Area:

The sample districts for the data collection were identified on the basis of high, average and low participation of women in MGNREGS in 2013-14 financial year. The selected three districts represented three phases of MGNREGS implementation in the state. Mandi district had the maximum participation of women (76.15.11%), Sirmour district had low participation of women (31.46%) and Una district had average participation of women (62.97%) in MGNREGS in the financial year 2013-14. One development block from each selected district was taken following the same criteria and two GPs with high and low women participation of the same block were selected as sample for the data collection. In Mandi district, Chauntra block with 88.16% share had maximum participation of women among other blocks, Una block in Una district with 68.67% share had average participation of women among other blocks and Pachhad block with 36.52% share had minimum participation of women among other blocks in District Sirmour in 2013-14. Further two gram panchayats from each block were selected as sample on the basis of the criteria mentioned above.

3.4 Methodology:

The data was collected from both primary as well as secondary sources through different survey instruments. These survey instruments has included pre designed and tested questionnaires (translated in a simple & easily understandable Hindi) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) guidelines. Information was collected on the socio-economic profile of the women workers such as size of the household, dependency ratio, landholdings, sources of income and education, details about institutional affiliation, holding of formal positions in traditional and non-traditional affiliation, holding of formal positions in traditional and non-institutions, participation in women development programmes etc. This also included the information of respondents to access the 'social capital' of the women workers and its influence on participation.

Information regarding participation of the women respondents in MGNREGS (selection of works, works monitoring, social audit), and benefits derived out of participation (control over wage earnings, expenditure pattern etc.) were collected with a view to ascertaining the quality of change in women's life. Village information was collected to assess the socio-economic

conditions of the village. Along with these, there were discussions on the impact of seasons on the participation of women workers in MGNREGS.

Secondary data was collected through MIS reports, various research studies and documents, MGNREGA Sameeksha reports, as well as from Panchayats records etc. The studies of NIRD & other national and international institutions were reviewed for updated information.

Primary information was collected from various survey instruments i.e. pre- designed and tested interview schedules based on the information relative to their socio-economic profiles, their affiliations with various institutions i.e. VDOs, SHGs etc. and participation in various development programmes. This also included the participation of women in MGNREGS in terms of selection of works, monitoring and social audit. This also emphasized on the benefits resulting out of their participation persuading their quality of life.

3.5 Sample Area

The detail of the sample area is given in the table as under:

Table 3.1 : Detail of the Sample Area

Sr. No	Women Participation rate	District	Block	Gram Panchayats	
1.	High	Mandi	Chauntra	Main Bharola	Drubbal
2.	Average	Una	Una	Sasan	Batuhi
3.	Low	Sirmour	Pachhad	Kotla Panjola	Wasni

3.6 Sampling Methodology

The target sample size included 25 women from MGNREGS workers, 10 women from non workers from each sample gram panchayat. The selection of interviewed MGNREGS workers was based on random sampling proportional to size of the GP having maximum and minimum women participation in MGNREGS in 2013-14.

3.7 Selection of Respondents

A comprehensive listing of the MGNREGS beneficiaries in each selected Gram Panchayat was obtained. Out of this list, 25 beneficiaries were randomly selected for the investigation, thus the total sample size of major respondents was $25 \times 6 = 150$ respondents. Besides this, 10 non-workers were selected randomly including one or two elected women representatives (ERs) from each GP in the selected gram panchayats, thus, $10 \times 6 = 60$ responses were collected. In total the view point of 210 women worker and non workers respondents was gathered in selected six gram panchayats.

3.8 Data Collection

Interviews were conducted with MGNREGS women workers, women non-workers, officials and elected representatives of the sample Gram Panchayats. The views of concerned block officials were recorded. The focused group discussions (FGDs) were undertaken to assess awareness level of MGNREGS workers and also their self-assessment on contribution of MGNREGS to gender equity as well as other facilitating/hindering factors. Scoring was carried out during FGDs to analyse the status of their family as well community decision-making. The interviews with elected women representative (ERs) and government functionaries were carried out to ascertain the gender sensitivity and role played by delivery system in the whole process of women empowerment. The specific efforts made by women functionaries and innovative practices adopted for enhancing women worker's participation were the focus of these interactions.

3.9 Reference Year

The data of women participation in MGNREGS in financial year 2013-14 has been taken as reference year and the present status relates to year 2013-14.

3.9 Data Analysis:

Data analysis was done separately for different categories of respondents in each district i.e. MGNREGS workers, non- workers, Block & GP functionaries (Panchayat Sahayks/Secretaries (PSs), Gram Rojgar Sewaks (GRSs), GP Elected Representatives. Therefore, precise codes were

identified by multiple readings of the transcripts. Data was analysed by using SPSS (Special Package to Social Sciences) software.

A logical framework was defined to analyze the data collected for the study. This included discussions on many factors in various dimensions viz. MGNREGS worker's household characteristics, family background, delivery and support systems to women participation like VDOs, CBOs and SHGs to facilitate the women's role in decision making at household & community level to facilitate the participation of women in various stages of MGNREGS. This framework highlighted various characteristics like age, literacy, caste, economic dependency, landholding, participation in development programmes and labour markets along with family background combined with favorable socio-economic and cultural environment to enable the poor and deprived women to gain improved access to information and resources. The process also provided opportunities to obtain an opinion on decision making, both at household and community levels. Women's participation in decision making was expected to enhance the nature, quality and intensity of participation of women at different stages of MGNREGS and thereby leading to qualitative changes in the perception of 'self'. The magnitude of employment and contribution of women in household earnings could improve their access to and control over economic resources.

The resultant improvement in well-being of the household would bring a sustainable change in self. It was assumed that enhanced regular cash flow holds promise of improved savings and credit worthiness in the market and thereby facilitates better access to credit. Thus, improved wage incomes of women would help in proper spending in health care, nutrition and education of children (Human and Social Capital formation). The enlightened and enabled women can also participate in the community matters with the support of the CBOs such as SHGs and women empowerment programmes.

An index of women participation in decision making at household level was constructed with fourteen indicators i.e. matters pertaining to food, clothing, expenditure on self, purchase of assets, children's education, health and marriages, attending social gatherings, visiting relatives, agricultural activities, participation in labour, village development organisations/PRIs, rural development programmes etc.

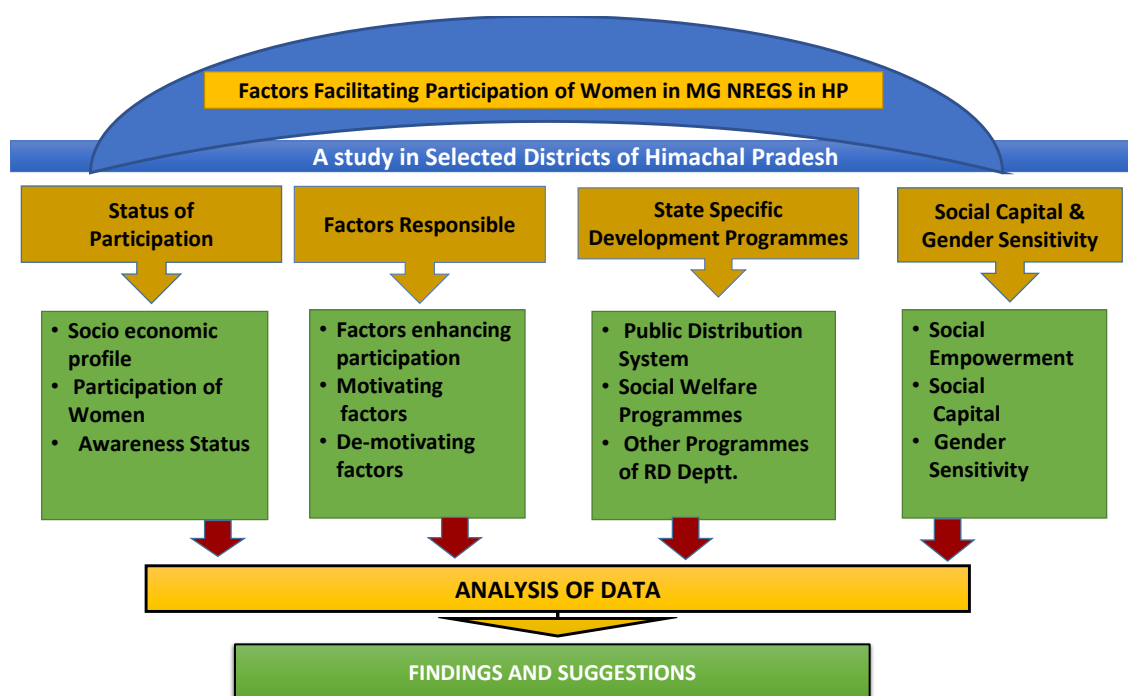
The participation of women in MGNREGS was been measured with the various variables, pointing towards the positive changes affecting their lives i.e. changes related to quality of life

(food, clothes, health, education & housing along with leadership qualities, motivation skills, negotiation skills, decision- making at household and community level, financial management, resource management, self- esteem, competency and mobility etc.

3.10 Analytical Framework

The analytical framework of the study is presented in the chart given below:

Chart 3.1: Analytical Framework of the Study



The analysis of data undertaken on SPSS software has been reflected through different type of figures and charts for the convenience of presentation and understanding instead of going for tabular data with a view to engage the readers. The analyses have been represented for the entire sample collectively to have a macro view of the research problem instead of going for micro variations among the sample gram panchayats.

PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

The profile of study area include the information on State with sample Districts, Blocks and Gram Panchayats covered in their respective sections.

4.1 Himachal Pradesh and Sample Districts

Himachal Pradesh has emerged as one of the most progressive states in the country. Levels of development especially in the social sector programmes and physical infrastructure achieved by the State have been accredited at different platforms and the development strategy followed to achieve these heights is worth being qualified as model development strategy for hill economies.

Himachal Pradesh, spread across an area of 55,673 square kilometers with a population of 68,64,602 people (2011 Census), became the eighteenth State of Union of India in 1971. Administratively, Himachal Pradesh comprises twelve districts, of which two districts viz. Lahaul & Spiti and Kinnaur and two Sub-Divisions of Pangi and Bharmour of Chamba district are scheduled tribal areas. About 90 percent of its population lives in rural areas and about two thirds of its population is dependent on agriculture for earning their livelihoods. Most of the area in the State comprises hills of varying altitude ranging from 1500 meters to 6000 meters above mean sea level.

The study extended to the three districts of MG NREGS implementation in Himachal Pradesh i.e. first district Sirmour out of two districts covered in Phase-I, second district Mandi out of two districts covered in Phase-II and third district Una out of eight districts covered in Phase-III. These three districts of Himachal Pradesh represented the women participation rate i.e. the Gram Panchayat from District Sirmour represented low participation, the Gram Panchayat from Mandi District represented high participation and the Gram Panchayat from Una District represented average participation of women in MG NREGS in Himachal Pradesh.



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Socio-Economic Features: The socio economic information of Himachal Pradesh in contrast to the sample districts is given in the table below:

Table 4.1.1: Socio Economic Information of Himachal Pradesh & Sample Districts

Sr. No.	Particulars	Unit	Himachal Pradesh	Sirmour Phase I	Mandi Phase II	Una Phase III
	Demography (Census 2011)					
1.	Area	Sq. Kms	55,673	2,825	3950	1540
2.	Population	Lakh Persons	68.65	5.30	9.99	5.21
3.	Males	Lakh Persons	34.82	2.76	4.98	2.64
4.	Females	Lakh Persons	33.83	2.54	5.01	2.57
5.	SC Population	Percent	25.19	30.34	29.38	22.16
6.	ST Population	Percent	5.71	2.13	1.28	1.65
7.	Rural Population	Lakh Persons	61.76	4.73	9.37	4.76
9.	Sex Ratio	Per '000	972	918	1007	976
10.	Density of Population	Persons Km ²	123	188	253	338
11.	Literacy rate	Percent	82.8	78.8	81.5	86.5
	Rural Development					
12.	Total Villages	Nos.	20,690	976	3338	848
13.	Inhabited Villages	Nos.	17,882	968	2850	790
14.	Villages with Drinking Water	Percent	100	100.00	100	100
15.	Electrified Villages	Percent	100	100.00	100	100
16.	Total families (2002-07) Survey	Nos.	11,82,926	70,439	2,06,096	89,792
17.	Total BPL families (2002-07) Survey	Nos.	2,82,370	13,695	41,339	15,191
18.	Ratio of BPL to Total families	Percent	23.87	19.44	20.06	16.92

Source: Economics & Statistics Department, HP

The population of the State registered a decadal growth of 12.81 percent as against 17.54 percent during the decade 2001-2011, recording a decline of 4.73 percent as compared to

the preceding decade 1991-2001. This has been possible through a three-pronged strategy of intensive health cover, improvement in literacy rates, especially among the women and making family planning a people's movement alongwith a positive thrust of incentives. The prevalence of scheduled caste population had been 25.19% in the state which had a lesser incidence in Una District with 22.16% SC population, however, it remained better than the state average for the other two sample districts. The sex ratio for all the sample districts has been better than the state average except for district Sirmour whereas Mandi district had a sex ratio of 1007 females per thousand males. The trend of literacy had been 82.8% for the state whereas was higher at 86.5% for District Una, the other two districts were placed lower than the state benchmark. The status of rural development presented satisfactory picture since all the inhabited villages had been electrified and had drinking water facility. In addition to this, the state had 23.87% families living below poverty line but the incidence had been lower than the state average in all the sample districts.

4.1.2 MG NREGS Implementation 2013-14 in HP and Sample Districts

This flagship programme aims at enhancing livelihood security of households in rural areas by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. It mandated one third participation for women on their demand. The primary objective of the scheme is to augment wage employment, creation of durable assets and strengthening the decentralized governance. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme is being implemented in all 78 Development Blocks of the state. During the financial year 2013-14, 282.35 lakh persondays were generated in Himachal Pradesh out of which the share of women was 62.51% persondays. The variation in women share in the employment was gauged as in District Sirmour, women participation was 31.46% as minimum, 76.15% in District Mandi as maximum and 62.97% for District Una as average, close to the state level women participation at 62.51%.

The tables hereafter gives an account of MG NREGS implementation in terms of Job Cards, Employment Generation and Financial Disbursement.

Table 4.1.2: MG NREGS Implementation 2013- 14

Sr. No.	Particulars	Unit	HP	Sirmour Phase I	Mandi Phase II	Una Phase III
1.	Total Districts in Himachal Pradesh	Nos.	12	-	-	-
2.	Total Development Blocks	Nos.	78	6	10	5
3.	Total No. of GPs	Nos.	3,243	228	474	234
I Job Cards						
4.	Total Job Cards	Nos. in lakh	11.99	0.81	2.34	0.61
5.	Total Workers	Nos. in lakh	22.42	1.59	4.34	0.88
6.	Total No. of Active Job Cards	Nos. in lakh	6.87	0.45	1.66	0.25
7.	Total No. of Active Workers	Nos. in lakh	9.4	0.67	2.27	0.3
	i) Ratio of SC workers to total active workers	Percent	26.82	30.4	27.31	33.68
	ii) Ratio of ST workers to total active Workers	Percent	6.85	1.07	1.16	2.55
II Employment Generation						
8.	Total Households Worked	Nos. in lakh	5.39	0.36	1.35	0.17
9.	Total Individuals Worked	Lakh Persons	6.81	0.49	1.69	0.20
10.	Persondays Generated	In lakh	282.35	18.45	74.19	10.31
11.	Ratio of SC persondays to total persondays	Percent	28.45	33.47	29.01	41.03
12.	Ratio of ST persondays to total persondays	Percent	7.37	1.27	1.14	2.44
13.	Ratio of Women Persondays to Total person days	Percent	62.51	31.46	76.15	62.97
14.	Average days of employment provided per Household	Nos.	52.38	51.52	54.94	59.54

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15.	Total HHs completed 100 Days of Wage Employment	Nos.	55,350	4,161	14,054	3,868
	III Financial Disbursement					
16.	Wages	Rs. in Lakh	37,688.65	2,322.37	10,178.66	1,352.41
17.	Liability of pending Wages	Rs. in Lakh	24.89	6.19	1.73	0.3
18.	Average wage rate per day per person	Rupees	137.46	136.94	135.72	137.34
19.	Payments generated within 15 days	Percent	48.42	42.2	51.65	64.24

Source: www.mgnrega.nic.in

In the year 2013-14, Himachal Pradesh had 6.87 lakh active job cards with 9.4 lakh workers; the share of Sirmour was 45 thousand active job cards with 67 thousand workers, 1.66 lakh active job cards with 2.27 lakh workers in District Mandi and 25 thousand active job cards with 30 thousand workers in District Una. The ratio of SC Workers at the state level was 26.82% and all the sample districts maintained a level better than the state achievement.

The physical progress of MG NREGS implementation in the state has been gauged from three dimensions viz. in terms of persondays, households and individual workers with cross cutting share of marginalized groups. Out of the total 282.35 lakh persondays generated, females shared more than 62.51% persondays whereas share of SCs was 28% and STs was 7%. On account of employment generation for households, 5.39 lakh total households have worked in 2013-14 wherein 55,350 households could complete 100 days, average 52 days employment per household, the similar distribution was spread across sample districts. Total 6.81 lakh individuals worked in the year 2013-14 out of which 0.49 lakh belonged to District Sirmour, 1.69 lak to District Mandi and 0.20 lakh to District Una. However, the workers could only get their wages within the mandated provision of 15 days were in the range 42% to 64.5 in state and sample districts.

In the year 2013-14, an amount of Rs. 37,688.65 lakh was spent under MG NREGS as wages which reflected that the funds to this extent had gone direct to people in the shape of cash liquidity. Out of the amount gone to individuals as wages, it was found that 62.51% share had gone to female workers as direct purchasing power to their pockets. At a bird's eye view, average wage rate had been Rs.136.00 per day against the standard rate of Rs.160.00 per day.

This indicated better performance levels by MG NREGS workers since the state has been following the piece rate norms contrary to other states which follow wage rate norms, this implied that the wages were paid on the quantification of the work performed instead of mere attendance at the work.

It is noteworthy that there were cases of pending liability of wages at the state and district levels which emerged as an indicator of prevalence late disbursement of wages to workers.

4.2 Study Area Sample Development Blocks

The sample development blocks identified included Pachhad from District Sirmour, Chauntra from District Mandi and Una from District Una on the basis of the methodology followed for selection of sample.

4.2.1 Socio Economic Data of the Sample Blocks

The socio economic information of the three sample development blocks has been illustrated in the table given below:

Table 4.2.1: Socio Economic Information of the Sample Blocks

Sr. No.	Particulars	Unit	Sirmour Phase I	Mandi Phase II	Una Phase III
			Pachhad	Chauntra	Una
	Demography (Census 2011)				
1.	Area	Sq. Kms	405.67	236.39	215.72
2.	Population	Persons	53800	70981	118598
3.	Males	Persons	27912	33342	60226
4.	Females	Persons	25888	37639	58372
5.	SC Population	Percent	38.54	25.11	19.35
6.	ST Population	Percent	0.18	1.48	0.21
7.	Rural Population	Persons	53800	70981	118598
9.	Sex Ratio	Per '000	927	1129	969
10.	Density of Population	Persons Km ²	133	300	535
11.	Literacy rate	Percent	85.62	81.93	86.18

	Rural Development				
12.	Total Villages	Nos.	263	278	109
13.	Inhabited Villages	Nos.	262	271	109
14.	Villages with Drinking Water	Percent	100	100	100
15.	Electrified Villages	Percent	100	100	100
16.	Total Households	Nos.	10549	17012	24694
17.	Total BPL Families (2002-07) Survey	Nos.	1270	2842	2569
18.	Ratio of BPL to Total Households	Percent	12.04	16.71	10.40

Source: Economics & Statistics Department, HP

Though Una Development Block was smallest in area but was most densely populated as indicated with the density of 535 persons per square kilometer as it had the largest population size among the three sample development blocks. In contrast development block Chauntra presented the best sex ratio with 1129 females per thousand males, however, all the three blocks had an impressive literacy rate ranging 81% to 86%. In the similar manner, all the inhabited villages had hundred percent coverage of drinking water facility and electricity. The ratio of below poverty line families to total families was maximum in development block Chauntra with 16.71% BPL families, minimum in development block Una with 10.40% BPL families whereas Pachhad block had a moderate level with 12.04% BPL families among the sample blocks.

4.2.2 MG NREGS Implementation in Sample Blocks 2013-14

The status of the status of the NREGS implementation in Sample districts has been given in different categories to explain the progress under different components.

Table 4.2.2: MG NREGS Implementation 2013- 14

Sr. No.	Particulars	Unit	Sirmour Phase I	Mandi Phase II	Una Phase III
			Pachhad	Chauntra	Una
	Total No. of GPs	Nos.	30	40	62
	I Job Cards				
1.	Total Job Cards	Nos.	11,383	18,373	11,580

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2.	Total Workers	Nos.	18,755	27,513	15,293
3.	Total No. of Active Job Cards	Nos	7,180	9,882	3,811
4.	Total No. of Active Workers	Nos	10,802	10,697	4,354
	i) Ratio of SC workers to total active workers	Percent	37.68	25.04	32.98
	ii) Ratio of ST workers to total active Workers	Percent	0.5	1.03	0.37
II Employment Generation					
5.	Total Households Worked	Nos.	6,063	9,063	2,524
6.	Total Individuals Worked	Persons	8,807	9,689	2,656
7.	Persondays Generated	Numbers	3,27,641	3,87,188	1,32,165
8.	Ratio of SC persondays to total persondays	Percent	37.18	26.59	43.4
9.	Ratio of ST persondays to total persondays	Percent	0.28	0.71	0.17
10.	Ratio of Women Persondays to Total person days	Percent	36.39	89.93	71.17
11.	Average days of employment provided per Household	Numbers	54.04	42.72	52.36
12.	Total HHs completed 100 Days of Wage Employment	Numbers	874	295	281
III Financial Disbursement					
13.	Wages	Rs. in Lakh	384.03	516.71	172.55
14.	Liability of Wages	Rs. in Lakh	0.06	0.06	0
15.	Average wage rate per day per person	Rupees	137.63	136.55	136.82
16.	Payments generated within 15 days	Percent	59.45	75.4	74.46

Source: www.mgnrega.nic.in

Chautra development block had the maximum number of job card holders, followed by Una and Pachhad blocks, respectively. This pattern was not repeated for active job card as well as for active workers. The participation of SC workers was maximum in Pachhad block followed by Una and Chautra blocks. In case of participation of ST workers, their ratio had been negligible.

It was noteworthy that maximum 9689 individuals worked in Chauntra block and resulted into generation of 3.87 lakh person days of employment with 89.93% women share, maximum among the sample blocks, followed by Una block with 71.17% women share but contrary to it, only 36.39 women worked in Pachhad block. The same block was better placed in providing average days of employment as well as 100 days employment to 874 households in a year. Chauntra block had disbursed Rs. 516.71 lakh as wages to workers and released wages to 75.4% workers within 15 days which appeared to be excellent indicators of the performance in MGNREGS.

On account of wage rate, all the development blocks paid an average wage rate around Rs. 136/- per day to workers.

4.3 Study Area Sample Gram Panchayats

The sample Gram Panchayats from three sample blocks and districts included two Gram Panchayats from each block. The information of six sample Gram Panchayats has been given in the table indicating the socio economic data as under:

4.3.1 Socio Economic Data of Sample Gram Panchayats

The socio economic information of the sample Gram Panchayats has been illustrated in the table given below:

Table 4.3.1: Socio Economic Information of the Sample Gram Panchayats

Sr. No.	Particulars	Unit	Sirmour Phase I		Mandi Phase II		Una Phase III	
	Demography (Census 2011)		Pachhad		Chauntra		Una	
			Kotla Panjola	Wasni	Drubbal	Main Bharola	Batuhi	Sasan
1.	Area	Sq. Kms	9	15.27	7.92	22.80	4.43	9.76
2.	Population	Persons	1843	1794	3239	1352	1500	1456
3.	Males	Persons	924	871	1597	673	759	777
4.	Females	Persons	919	923	1642	679	741	679
5.	SC Population	Percent	85.08	37.24	16.51	12.5	30.26	47.18
6.	ST Population	Percent	0.00	-	-	0	-	-
7.	Rural Population	Persons	1843	1794	3239	1352	1500	1456

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9.	Sex Ratio	Per '000	995	1059	1028	1009	976	873
10.	Density of Population	Persons Sq. Km	204	179	408	59	338	149
11.	Literacy rate	Percent	100	99	83	97	100	100
	Rural Development							
12.	Total Villages	Nos.	5	10	12	3	3	1
13.	Inhabited Villages	Nos.	5	10	11	3	3	1
14.	Villages with Drinking Water	Percent	100	100	100	100	100	100
15.	Electrified Villages	Percent	100	100	100	100	100	100
16.	Total Households (2002-07) Survey	Nos.	397	429	923	392	334	248
17.	Total BPL Families	Nos.	76	51	120	59	46	15
18.	Ratio of BPL to Total Households	Percent	19.19	8.41	13.00	15.05	13.77	31.25

Source: Primary Data Collected from the Sample Area

It was evident from the data that GP Main Bharola in Chauntra Block with 22.80 Sq. Kms area was the biggest gram panchayat whereas GP Batuhi in Una Block with 4.43 sq. kms. area was smallest among the sample gram panchayats. On account of population, GP Drubbal with 3239 persons was the largest gram panchayat and GP Main Bharola with 1352 persons in the same block Chauntra was the smallest gram panchayat. GP Kotla Panjola with 85% SC population had the maximum concentration whereas GP Main Bharola with 12.5% had the minimum concentration. GP Drubbal was most densely populated in contrast to sparsely populated GP Main Bharola. All the sample gram panchayats reflected reasonable literacy rate which ranged from 83% to 100%. The incidence of poverty varied between 8.91% and 31.25% among the sample gram panchayats. The sample gram panchayats presented a highly varied status of sex ratio, three gram panchayats Wasni, Drubbal and Main Bharola had a sex ratio of 1059, 1028 and 1009 females per thousand males, respectively whereas GP Sasan had a very poor sex ratio i.e. 873 females per thousand males. The other two gram panchayats viz. GP Kotla Panjola (995) and GP Batuhi (976) had sex ratio better than the state average i.e. 972 females per thousand males.

4.3.2 MG NREGS Implementation in Sample GPs in 2013-14

Sr. No.	Particulars	Unit	Sirmour Phase I		Mandi Phase II		Una Phase III	
			Pachhad		Chauntra		Una	
			Kotla Panjola	Wasni	Drubbal	Main Bharola	Batuhi	Sasan
I Job Cards								
1.	Total Job Cards	Nos.	353	409	606	326	193	253
2.	Total Workers	Nos.	665	537	933	508	231	442
3.	Total No. of Active Job Cards	Nos	143	249	404	189	99	93
4.	Total No. of Active Workers	Nos.	221	323	492	200	108	94
	i) Ratio of SC workers to total active workers	Percent	71.95	40.25	25.2	6.5	45.37	67.02
	ii) Ratio of ST workers to total active Workers	Percent	0	0.62	0	0	4.63	0
II Employment Generation								
5.	Total Households Worked	Nos. in lakh	149	244	366	194	75	88
6.	Total Individuals Worked	Lakh Persons	243	299	421	217	81	89
7.	Persondays Generated	Nos	8,453	10,235	18,006	7,111	5,061	5,831
8.	Ratio of SC persondays to total persondays	Percent	73.1	43.64	24.31	3.45	53.47	73.49
9.	Ratio of ST persondays to total persondays	Percent	0	0.92	0	0	1.74	0
10.	Ratio of Women Persondays to Total person days	Percent	54.05	26.02	86.48	96.96	49.26	92.81
11.	Average days of employment provided per Household	Nos.	56.73	41.95	49.2	36.65	67.48	66.26

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12.	Total HHs completed 100 Days of Wage Employment	Nos.	29	7	18	0	18	14
III Financial Disbursement								
13.	Wages	Rs. in Lakh	11.67	8.87	21.35	5.17	3.96	6.04
14.	Liability of Wages	Rs. in Lakh	0	0	0	0	0	0
15.	Average wage rate per day per person	Rupees	138	138	137.49	130.23	138	138
16.	Payments generated within 15 days	Percent	87.08	51.45	66.02	82.35	85.77	77.17

Source: www.mgnrega.nic.in

The participation of SC workers was maximum in GP Kotla Panjola which gave job to 71.95% workers from this social category. Except for GP Main Bharola (6.5%) in all other GPs, SC Workers had a handsome share in employment. The sample Gram Panchayats were nowhere close to the guaranteed employment of 100 days to every household since maximum employment of 67.48 days (average) were provided in Gram Panchayat Batuhi, however, in case of SC families, it was 73.49 days in Gram Panchayat Sasan, however, it was least (3.45%) for GP Main Bharola. besides only 10 households could complete 100 days. In Gram Panchayat Drubbal, maximum 366 households had worked in the year 2013-14. In case of employment generation on individual works, GP Drubbal had the maximum number of persondays employment generated, both for individuals and households. In GP Main Bharola, the maximum share of women participation (96.96%) was witnessed followed by GP Sasan with 92.81% share of employment generated went to women. The instances of payment generation within 15 days were between 51% and 87% in sample gram panchayats. The purchasing power in term of wages amounting from Rs. 3.96 lakh to Rs. 21.35 was disbursed in the six sample gram panchayats. A very small number of households could complete 100 days guaranteed employment in the reference year. It was appreciable that there was no pending liability of wages in the six sample Gram Panchayats. The productivity of workers who earned an average wage rate of Rs. 138.00 per day was maximum among gram panchayats except the gram panchayats of Chauntra Block which earned a wage rate of Rs. 130/- per person per day.

Data Analysis & Interpretations

The present study was conducted in three sample districts on the basis of percentage of participation of women in MGNREGS in the financial year 2013-14. The data was further collected from one development block from each selected district with high percentage of women participation and two Gram Panchayats from each selected block having high and low participation rate of women in MGNREGS.

5.1 Status of women's participation in MGNREGS

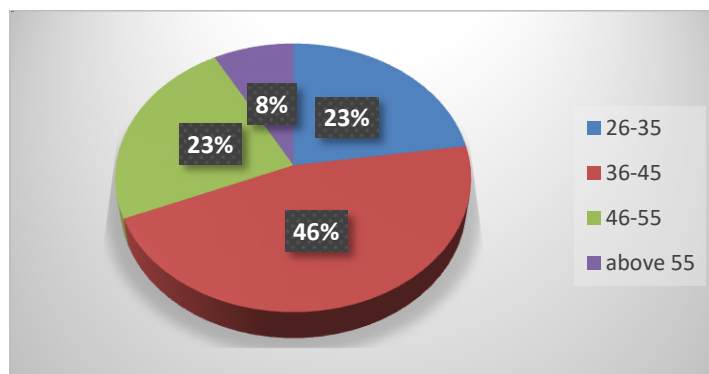
To have a realistic understanding about the status of participation of women and factors influencing their participation in MGNREGS, the socio-economic and demographic profiles of the respondents are given in the succeeding paragraphs.

5.1.1 Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents:

The profile explained the status of socio- economic condition of women in the society. The participation of rural women in MGNREGS has been assessed by inserting certain key factors which have possible impact on their involvement in the various developmental activities. Society has created certain boundaries for women which influence their household activities as well as outside. It not only affects her position in the society but also assigns her a low status in the social hierarchy. The socio-economic profile classified in different categories is presented below:

5.1.1.1. Age Distribution:

Age of women MGNREGS workers helped to understand their extent of participation in MGNREGS. It is observed from the data analysis that majority of respondents i.e. 46 percent women working in MGNREGS belonged to the middle aged groups i.e.36-45 years followed by 23.33 percent women in 46-55 years age group.

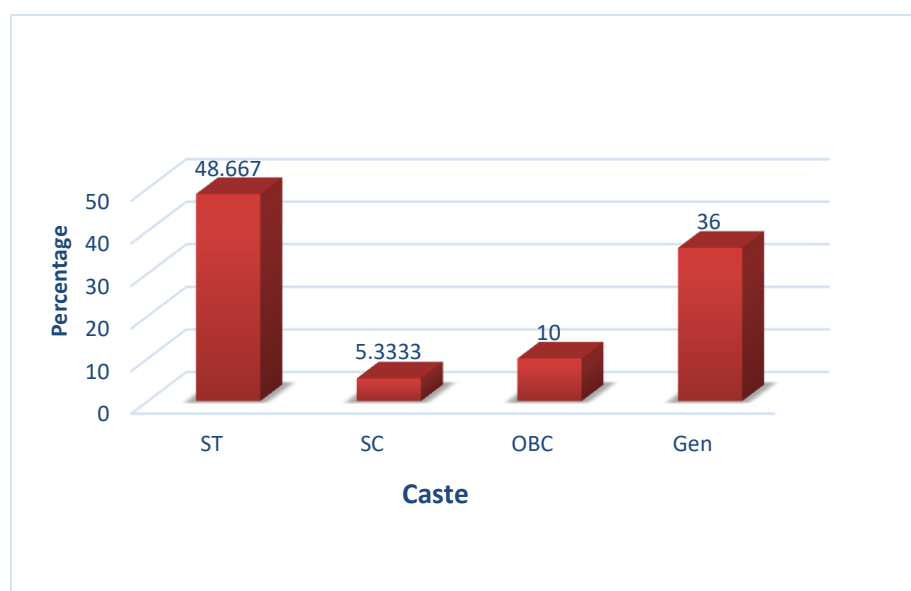
Fig.5.1.1 Age Distribution of the Respondents

Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

This has reflected that middle aged women are actively participating in MGNREGS in all the three sample districts of Himachal Pradesh. The participation of women in the age group 26-35 years is 22.67 percent while it is noticed same in all the districts i.e. 8 percent for age group above 56 years.

5.1.1.2. Caste Classification:

The communities in society are divided into different caste categories into various communities.

Fig.5.1.2 Caste Classification of respondents

Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

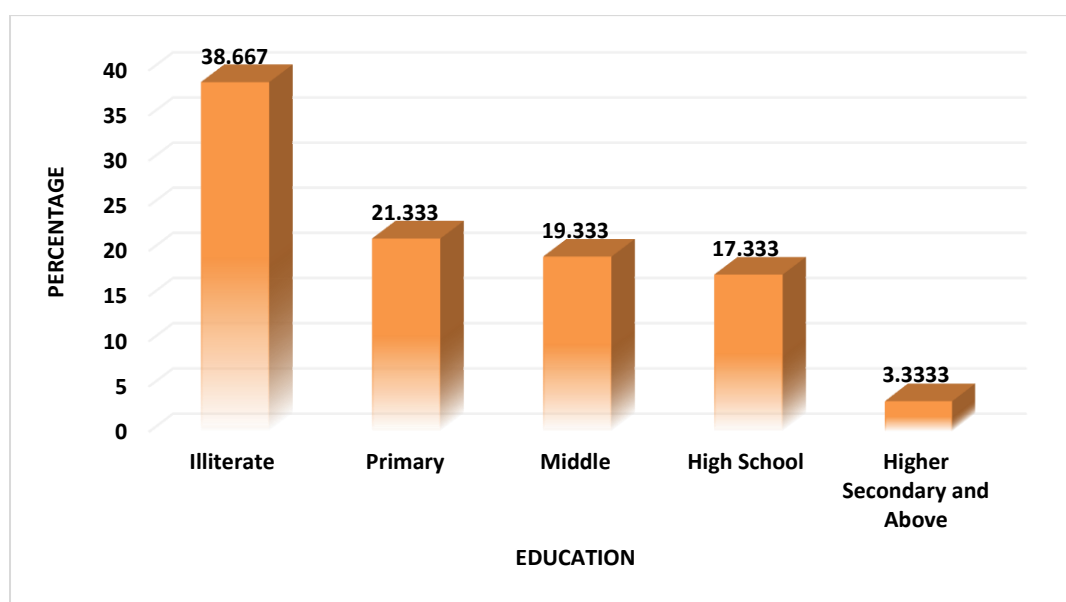
The classification of caste wise data collected reflected the extent of participation of women in MGNREGS in their respective caste categories. The data showed that majority of sample women MGNREGS workers were mainly from two social categories i.e. SCs and General in the sample Gram Panchayats respectively. The data reflected that 48.67 percent of the respondents belonged to schedule caste category followed by 36 percent from general category.

It was also found that participation from OBCs (10 percent) & STs (5.3 percent) was less in comparison with other social categories. It was clearly reflected from the data that participation of schedule caste women in MG NREGS was more than other social categories.

5.1.1.3 Educational Status:

Education is a key element to reflect the status of human development in the society. The data analysis indicated that majority of women respondents who were working in MGNREGS were illiterate i.e. 38.67 percent while the percentage of women who had got higher level of education i.e. higher secondary and above was 3.33 percent.

Fig.5.1.3 Education level of the Respondents

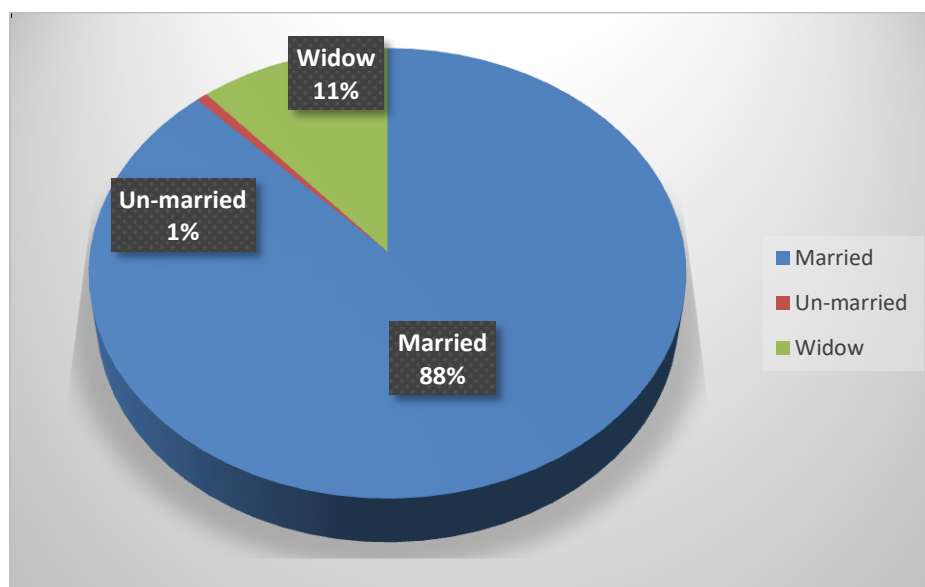


Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

It was noticed that the percentage of illiterate MGNREGS women workers was maximum in Una (46 percent) followed by Mandi (38 percent) and minimum in Sirmour district i.e.32 percent. MGNREGS provided job opportunities to both illiterate and literate women but proved more beneficial for illiterates who were not eligible for employment in other sectors.

5.1.1.4. Marital Status:

Fig. 5.1.4 Marital Status of the respondents



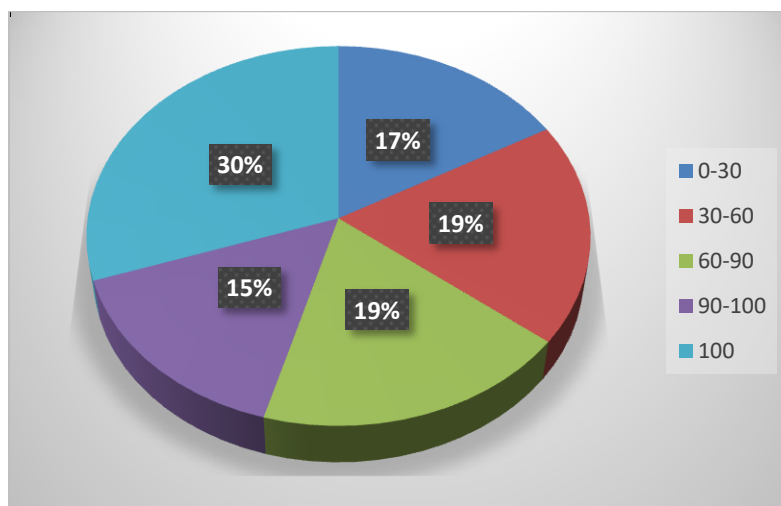
Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

The marital status of a woman has a positive or negative effect on any development programme/activity. Majority of women respondents, 88 percent working in MGNREGS were married women. These women were working to support their family with additional income from MGNREGS. The MGNREG scheme proved to be a helping hand for the single women i.e. widows. But their percentage was very low i.e.11 percent. It was interesting to know that a very less proportion of unmarried women worked under MGNREGS. Out of the total sample, the participation of unmarried women MGNREGS workers comprised 1 percent only. The percentage of participation of married women was 80 percent in Mandi district, 88 percent in Sirmour district and 94 percent in Una district, respectively.

5.1.1.5. Employment from MGNREGS:

The active participation of women in MGNREGS is a response of various factors facilitating. These factors mainly influenced their extent of involvement in the MGNREGS.

Fig.5.1.5 Employment provided to Women



Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

The data analysis showed that 30 percent respondents i.e. women MGNREGS workers had completed 100 days in the financial year 2013-14. 15.33 percent women had worked for 90-100 days. Only 16.67 percent women had worked for least days i.e. lesser than 30 days. 18.67 percent women had worked for 30-60 & 30% women worked for 60-90 workdays, respectively. This clearly indicated that female members of the households were continuous workers in MGNREGS, but women were not able to complete 100 days due to their household functions. The responses also reflected that women's preferences for different permissible works under MGNREGS varied from district to district. In Mandi district, women did not hesitate to do hard labour activities like digging, lifting heavy stones & material etc. and were motivated to do every kind of work as compared to women workers of Una and Sirmour district. Una & Sirmour district women workers showed their preferences for light works like plantation & nursery development, carrying cement, concrete etc.

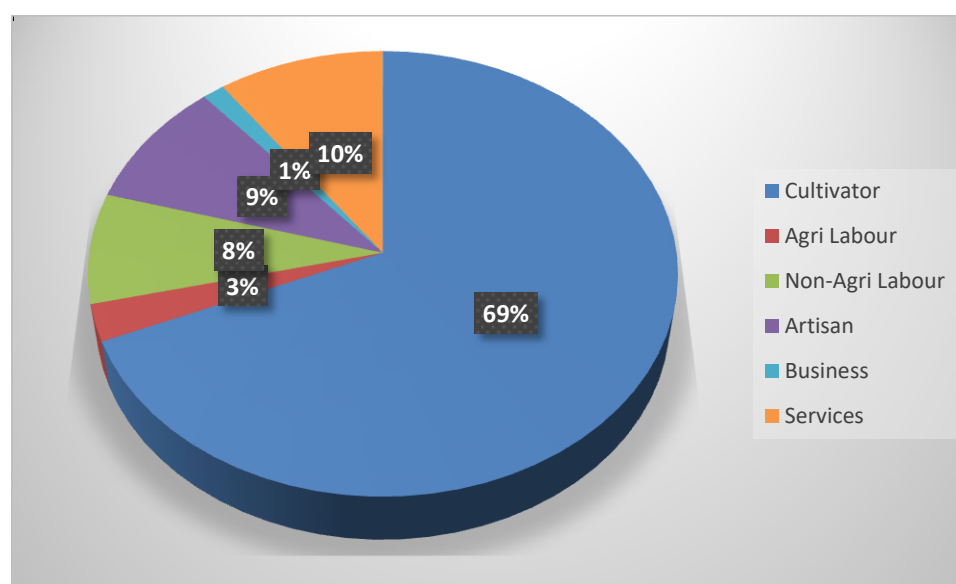
5.1.2. Participation of Women:

The participation of women in MGNREGS in different categories has been presented below:

5.1.2.1. Principal Occupation of the Households:

Occupation pattern of the households decides the women to spare time for livelihood activities. Majority of women in all the sample districts who were working under MGNREGS had cultivation as their principal family occupation. Their percentage was 68.67 percent, followed by 10 percent engaged in public or private jobs. It was observed that women hailing from business families had least participation i.e. 1.32 percent in MGNREGS. This analysis clearly reflected that women working in MGNREGS hailed from families engaged in agriculture and allied services sector. They asserted with pride to work within their village boundaries to support their families with their unskilled work.

Fig.5.1.6 Principal family occupation of the respondents



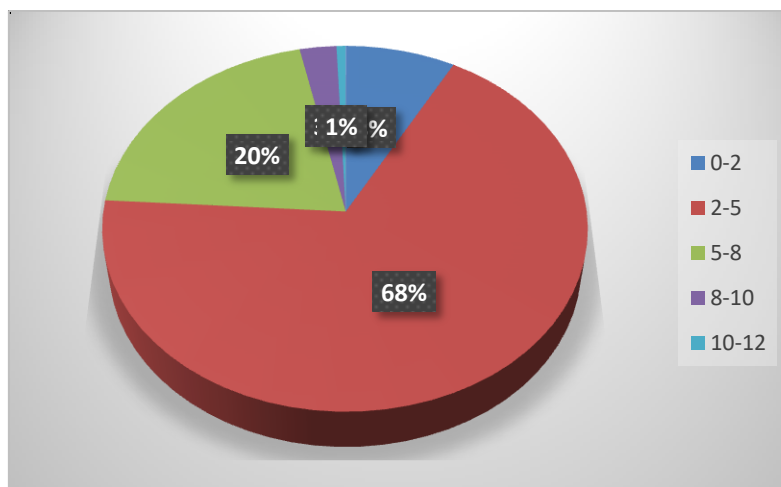
Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

5.1.2.2. Family Size:

Family size or members in one household came forth as an important factor for participation of women in MGNREGS. The data indicated that majority of sample respondents belonged to the households having 2-5 family members i.e. 68 percent followed by 28.67 percent having 5-8 family members. Although least 2.67 percent women MGNREGS workers was observed having larger family size i.e. 10-12 members. The family size of majority of respondents remained

between 8-10 members in Mandi district (30 percent), 5-8 members in Sirmour district (30 percent each) and 10-12 in Una district (40percent). This pattern showed that women in Una District belonged to larger sized families.

Fig.5.1.7 Economic Dependency (Family Size)

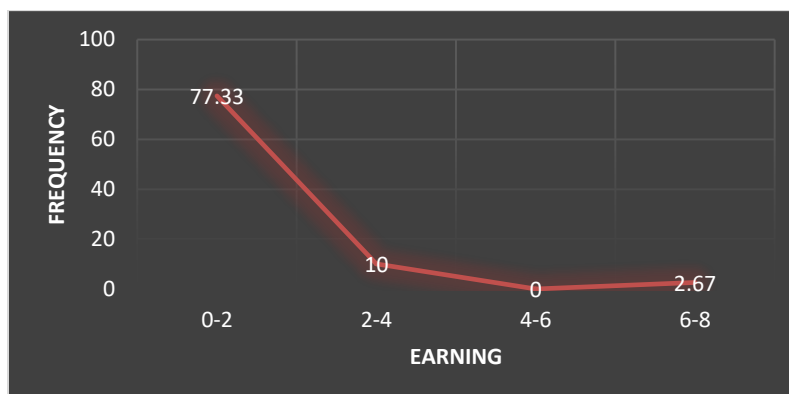


Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

5.1.2.3 Participation in livelihood:

Participation in livelihood earning per household was an important variable and proportional to family size. The analysis reflected a very stimulating picture that 77.33 percent majority of women respondents belonged to households having only one member earning livelihood. Although a very less percentage 2.67 percent of respondents had family size of 6-8 members earning livelihood.

Fig.5.1.8 Participation in livelihood



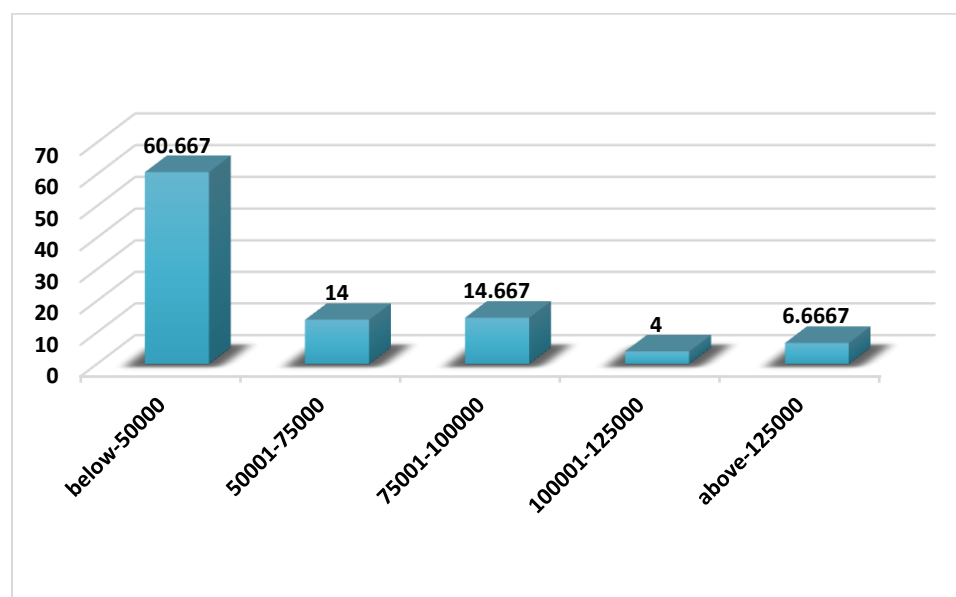
Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

The moderate range of 10 percent women participation was observed for the family size of 2-4 and 4-6 livelihood earning members of households.

5.1.2.4. Annual Family Income:

Income of respondents had great influence on women participation in MGNREGS. Annual income of the sample households Rs. 35,500 per annum prior to working under MGNREGS, had risen to Rs. 64,100 after their participation indicated a significant change in the distribution of income.

Fig.5.1.9 Annual Family Income



Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

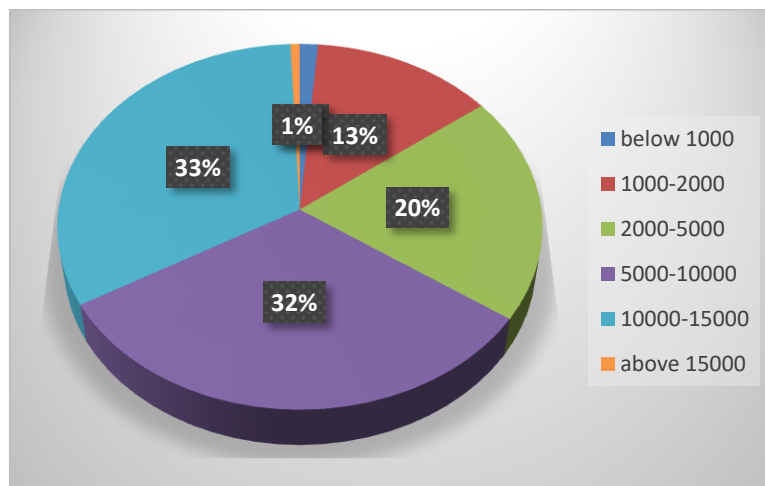
A negligible portion 9.33 per cent of the households were in the lower income group of less than Rs.20,000 without MGNREGS. Similarly, the percentage of households in the income group of Rs.20,000-50,000 per annum i.e.50.67 percent followed by 29.67 percent lied in the income group of Rs.50,000-1,00,000, 9.33 percent in Rs.1,00,000-3,00,000 and 1.33 per cent in the income group of Rs.3,00,000-10,00,000, per annum respectively, however, 0.67 percent respondents did not share their total family income.

5.1.2.5. Income from MGNREGS:

Women income from MGNREGS was contributing better as an extra earning source for the family. The data indicated that 32.67 per cent respondents contributed highest in the family

income with their MGNREGS income ranging between Rs. 10000-15000. 32 percent earned Rs.5000-10000, 20 percent Rs. 2000-5000 and 13.33 percent Rs. 1000-2000 respectively.

Fig.5.1.10 MGNREGS income of the respondents



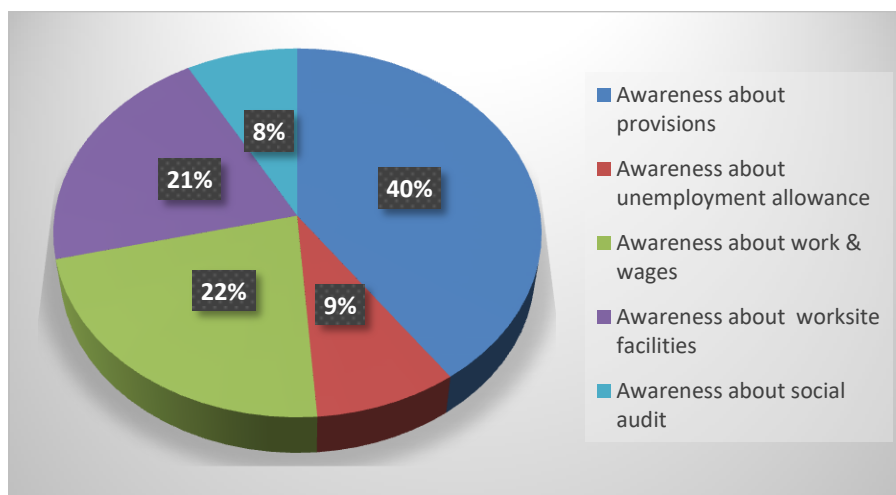
Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

5.1.3. Awareness Status

5.1.3.1. Awareness about MGNREGS:

MGNREGA is globally a unique act to provide employment opportunities to support livelihood to the adult members of rural households of India.

Fig.5.1.11 Awareness about MG NREGS

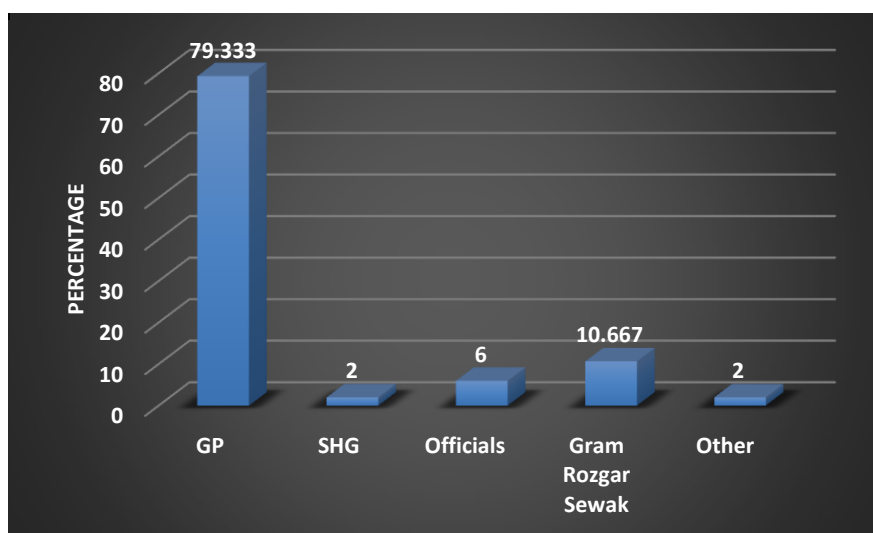


Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

The possibility and efficient chances of gainful employment largely dependent on the better awareness as it marks the level of accessibility. This issue of awareness emerged one of the hindrances to the local community. It highlighted the necessity of awareness regarding significant provisions viz guaranteed days of employment, unemployment allowance, minimum wages, availability of complaint register, etc. However, the situations were very surprising in the study area. As most of the worker respondents were illiterate and belonged to the economically poor class, the extent of awareness about MGNREGS emerged out to be a major concern in all the sample panchayats. 40.12 percent respondents were aware about the basic provisions of MGNREGS like registration, application for job no fee for family photograph on job card etc. only 8.68 percent respondents had knowledge about unemployment allowance followed by 22.46 percent had awareness about procedure of demand for work, selection of works in gram sabha, wages, period of payment of wages and awareness about the officials to approach in case of grievances etc. Only 20.66 percent women workers were aware of worksite facilities provided under MGNREGS. Awareness about Social Audit was very important aspect, but only 8.08 percent women workers knew about the social audit.

5.1.3.2. Effective awareness generation agency/person:

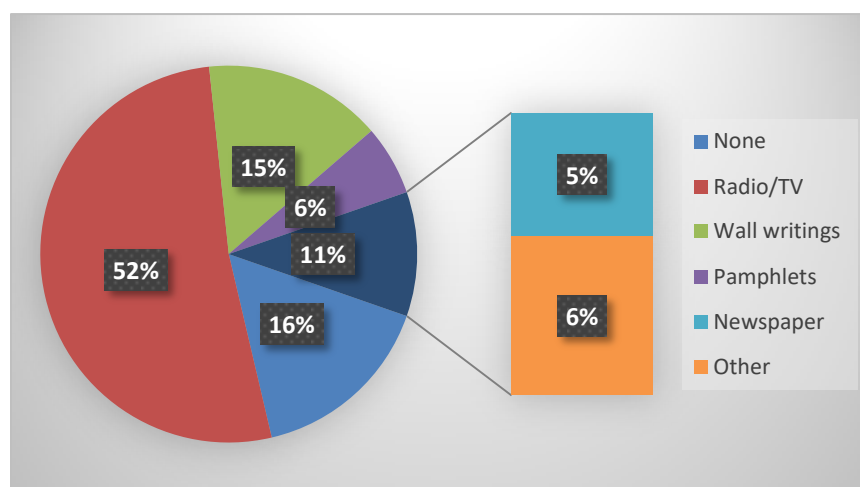
Awareness and participation were two factors interlinked with each other. To ensure active involvement of the stakeholders in any programme always proved to be a great challenge. The role of agencies/persons in awareness generation about MGNREGS effectively was very important and indeed tedious. Many local level agencies like GP, SHGs, officials and GRS had effortlessly worked hard in ensuring participation of women in the MGNREGS. 79.33 percent respondents stated that gram panchayat was an effective agency for motivating them by making them aware about benefits of the scheme. Women also highlighted the efforts of GRS i.e. 10.67 percent followed by officials at various levels (6 percent) and SHGs i.e. 2 percent. It was shared by 2 percent respondents about the impressive efforts of NGOs & mahila mandals. The respondents from all three sample districts claimed in majority that gram panchayat was an effective awareness generation agency.

Fig.5.1.12 Self Help Group Membership

Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

5.1.3.3. Effective media of information dissemination about MGNREGS:

Mode or media of information dissemination plays a vital role in ensuring participation of various stakeholders. The information dissemination media includes Radio/TV, wall paintings, pamphlets, newspapers etc.

Fig 5.1.13 Effective media for information dissemination

Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

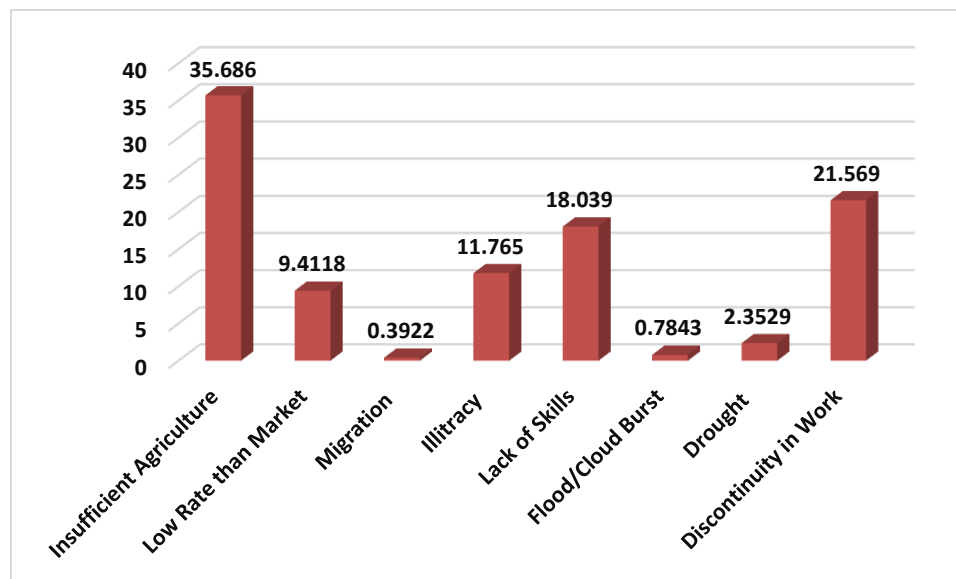
The interviews with the women MGNREGS workers reflected that radio/TV was an effective media for information dissemination. Majority of respondents i.e. 52 percent got to know about

MGNREGS very first time on Radio & TV. They also shared about wall paintings i.e. 15.33 percent followed by pamphlets (6 percent) and newspaper (4.67 percent). Surprisingly, 16 percent respondents did not respond on this while 6 percent also highlighted other media like awareness camps, rally etc.

5.2 Factors affecting the participation of women in MGNREGS

5.2.1 Factors enhancing participation of women in MGNREGS:

Participation in MGNREGS is one of the pre-requisites to enforce the ‘rights and entitlements’ envisaged in the Act, makes it a community oriented and a demand-driven scheme. Participation facilitates the process of community empowerment. It also facilitates the benefits to different stakeholders in a different manner. The participation of individual or communities affects their confidence, self-esteem, understanding of issues and power necessary to articulate their concerns and also ensure that action taken to address them and more broadly gain control over their lives. Participation of women in MGNREGS depends upon the various factors responsible for their participation. The present study considered various factors responsible for the participation of women in MGNREGS i.e. discontinuity in work, drought, flood, cloud burst, lack of skills, illiteracy, and low wages in comparison to market rates and insufficient agriculture production. The data analysis indicated that 35.68 percent responses pointed towards insufficient agriculture production as a major factor cause for the participation of women in MGNREGS followed by discontinuity of work i.e. 21.56 percent. Lack of skills among women (18.04 percent), illiteracy (11.77 percent) & low wages than market rate (9.41) also accounted for their participation in MGNREGS. Very less percentage of women workers counted draughts, floods, cloud burst and migration as affecting factors. In nutshell, it is concluded that insufficient agriculture production and discontinuity in the availability of works were the major factors responsible for their participation in MGNREGS.

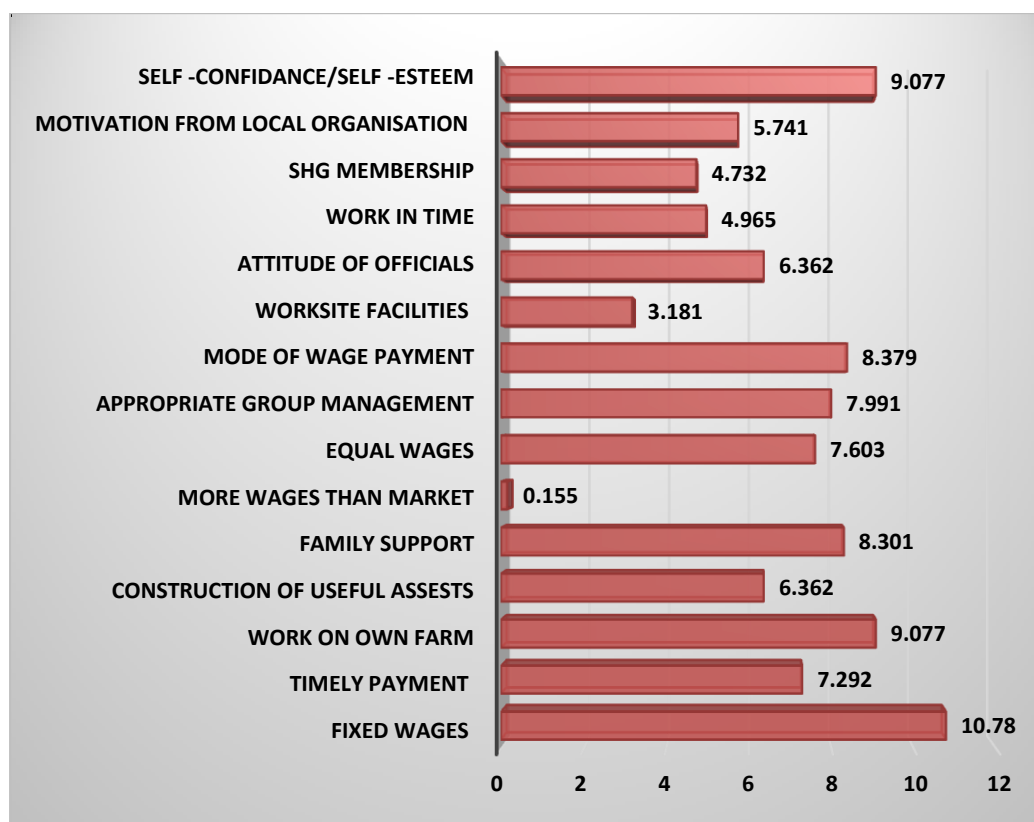
Fig.5.2.1 Responsible factors for the participation of women MGNREGS workers

Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

5.2.2 Motivating and Demotivating factors for participation of women in MGNREGS:-

The participation of women has been determined by various motivating and demotivating factors. The present study had enlisted various motivating factors facilitating active participation of women in MGNREGS. The scheme provided an opportunity to women to earn by working within the village boundaries. The factors have been categorized in three grades high, low and moderate based on the percentage responses of women workers. The factors where responses were below 4% were termed as low above 7% were termed as moderate.

Fig. 5.2.2 Motivating Factors



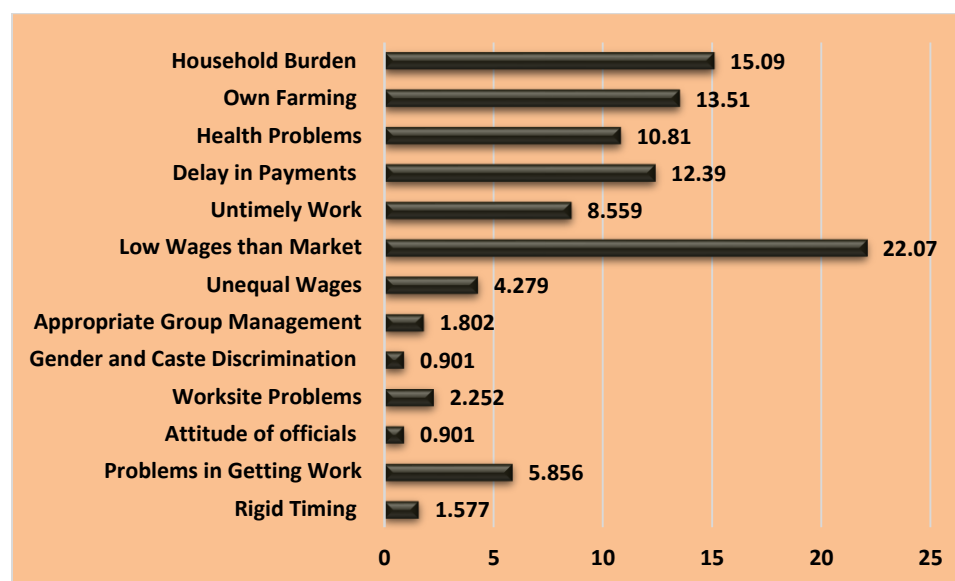
Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

i) Motivating Factors:

The two factors which fall in the low category of motivation for women to participation in MGNREGA more wages than market rate (0.16%) and work site facilities (3.18%). There were five factors which fell into moderate category included motivation from the local organisation (5.74%), SHG membership (4.73%), work on time (4.96%) and two significant factors i.e. attitude of officials and construction of useful assets, both fell in the same bracket (6.37%). In comparison to these, eight motivating factors included timely payment (7.3%), equal wages (7.6%), appropriate group management (7.99%) , family support (8.3%), mode of payment of wages (8.83%) work on own farm and self-confidence/self-esteem, both (9.08%) and fixed wages (10.78%) in terms of declared rates.

ii) Demotivating Factors:

On the same analogy of categorisation the demotivating factors have also been clubbed in similar categories of low, moderate and high.

Fig. 5.2.3 Demotivating Factors

Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

There are many factors which adversely affects the participation of women even after their willingness. The majority of respondents stated that low wages than market as main hindering factor in their participation. In the low category, the factors included appropriate group management (1.80%), gender and caste discrimination (0.90%), attitude of officials (0.90%), rigid timing (1.58%) and worksite problems (2.25%). There were two factors in the moderate category viz. unequal wages (4.28%) and problem in getting work (5.86%). In contrast to these, the factors in high category comprised low wages than market (22.07%), household burden (15.09%), farming on own land (13.51%), delay in payment (12.39%), health problem (10.81%) and untimely work (8.56%).

5.3 State-specific development programmes effecting women's participation

The participation of households in various development programmes/ schemes was observed an important aspect to influence their socio-economic status and social capital. The main objective of analyzing participation of sample respondents as beneficiaries of schemes/programmes implemented in the sample area was to understand their acquaintance with the various schemes other than MGNREGS.

5.3.1 Public Distribution System

It was found that 100 percent sample respondents were the beneficiaries of Public Distribution System (PDS) being implemented by Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, HP.

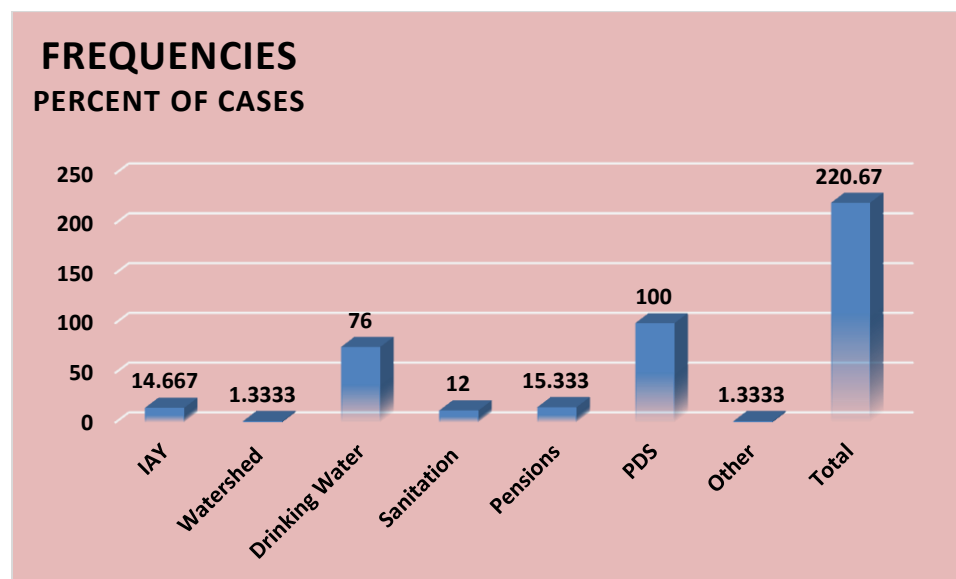
5.3.2 Social Welfare Programmes

On analyzing the participation of the respondents of sample districts, it become evident that 15.3 percent respondents were availing social security pensions besides 1.3 percent respondents families were also getting benefit of retirement pension.

5.3.3 Other Rural Development Schemes

It further came to notice that the respondents of sample districts were availing benefits from other rural development programmes as the respondents were the beneficiaries of IAY 14.7 percent, watershed 1.3 percent, drinking water 76 percent and Sanitation 12 percent.

Fig. 5.3.1 Beneficiaries of development schemes



Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

5.4 Influence of social capital and gender sensitivity

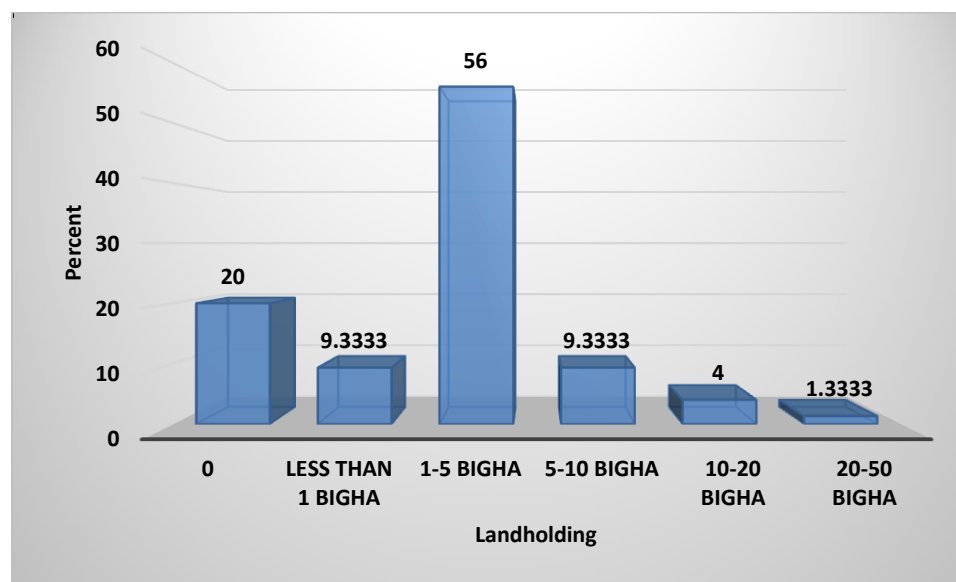
5.4.1 Social Empowerment:

The different factors of social empowerment of women who have participated in MGNREGS have been presented below:

5.4.1.1. Family Landholding:

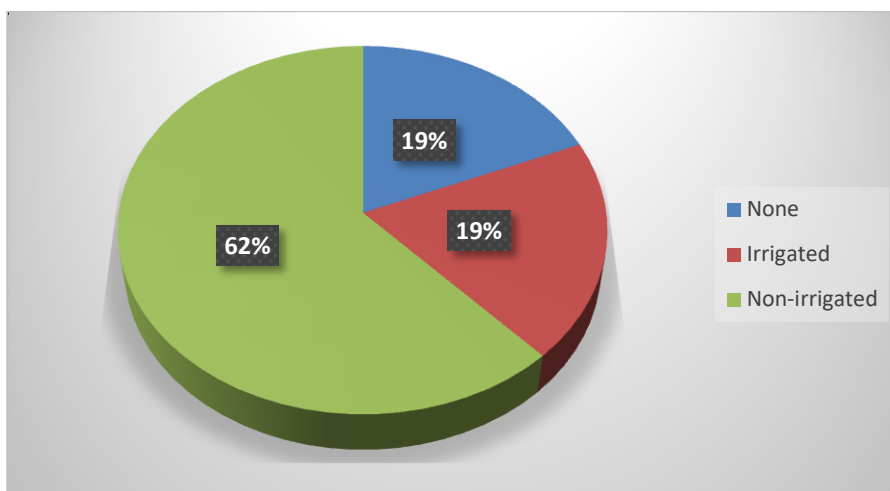
Landholding status was found important variable to determine the economic condition of the respondents. It was apparent that 20 per cent of the respondents were found landless while 80 per cent respondents had their own land. Out of which, 9.33 per cent respondents had less than one bigha of land (sub-marginal farmers). Marginal farmers accounted for 56 per cent having land 1-5 bighas. There was a very less percentage of large farmers i.e. 1.33 per cent with asset of 20- 50 bighas of land. The proportion of the landless was highest. It was the lowest at 10-20 bighas i.e. 4 percent respondents had its holding.

Fig.5.4.1 Total Family landholding



Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

The type of land holdings was another effective parameter which directly affected the economic condition of the family. The responses revealed that 62 percent women MGNREGS workers had non- irrigated land while 19.33 percent had irrigated land.

Fig.5.4.2 Type of landholding

Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

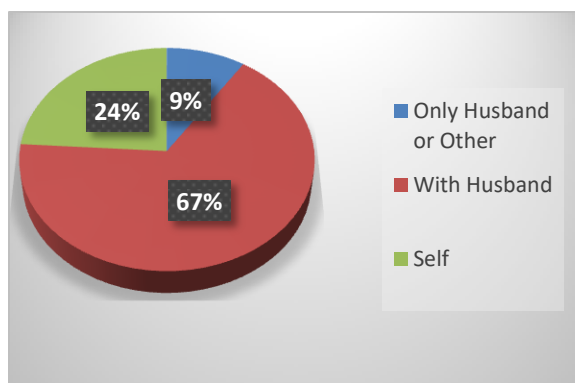
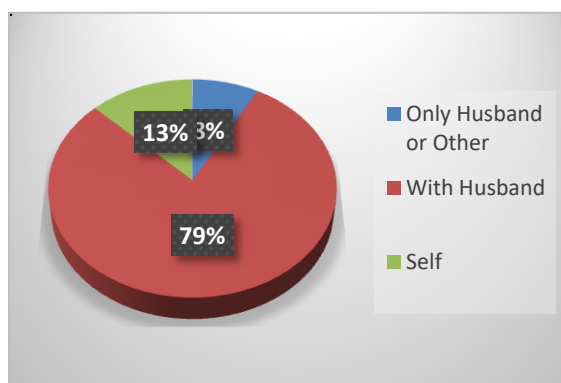
This clearly indicated that women were working under MGNREGS because of less agriculture gains, additionally, 18.67 percent women didn't respond to this aspect.

5.4.1.2. Land ownership status of the respondents:

Land ownership was not only an important source of women empowerment but also it provided access to credit market and as well as a sort of recognition. It was evident from the data analysis that only 5.67 per cent respondents had either individual or joint ownership of the land. These women had got this status only after death of their fathers or husbands.

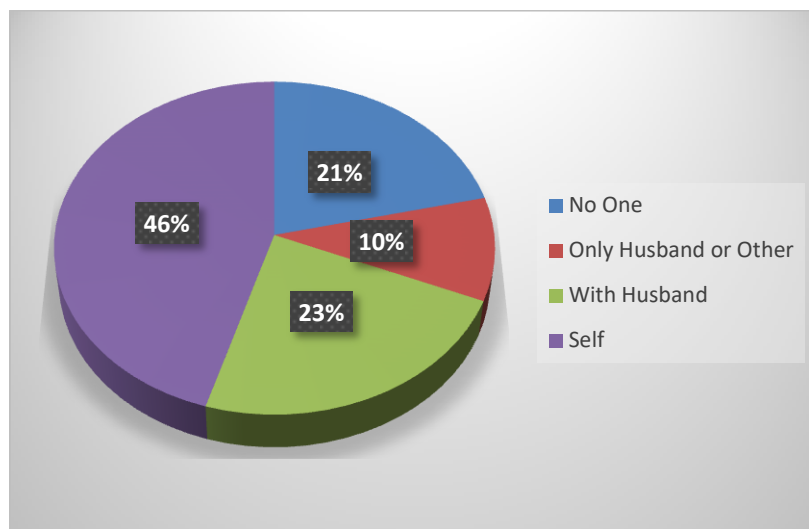
5.4.1.3. Family Decision Making & MGNREGS:

Economic gains from MGNREGS augmented the family income base but not positively affected the decision making at their own, family and community level. The data analysis clearly reflected that women were deprived of decision making at individual as well as family level. This further affected their participation in community level decision making. It became evident from the analysis of data that the independence of women was 24% on individual level, 12.67% at family level and 45.33% at community level in contrast to the participation with husband 66.67% at individual level 79.33% at family level and 23.33% at community level.

Fig. 5.4.3 Individual level Decision Making**Fig. 5.4.4 Family level Decision Making**

Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

This trend proved to be an indicator of women as a significant member of family in spite of her individual identity.

Fig. 5.4.5 Decision Making in VDOs

Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

5.4.2. Social Capital:

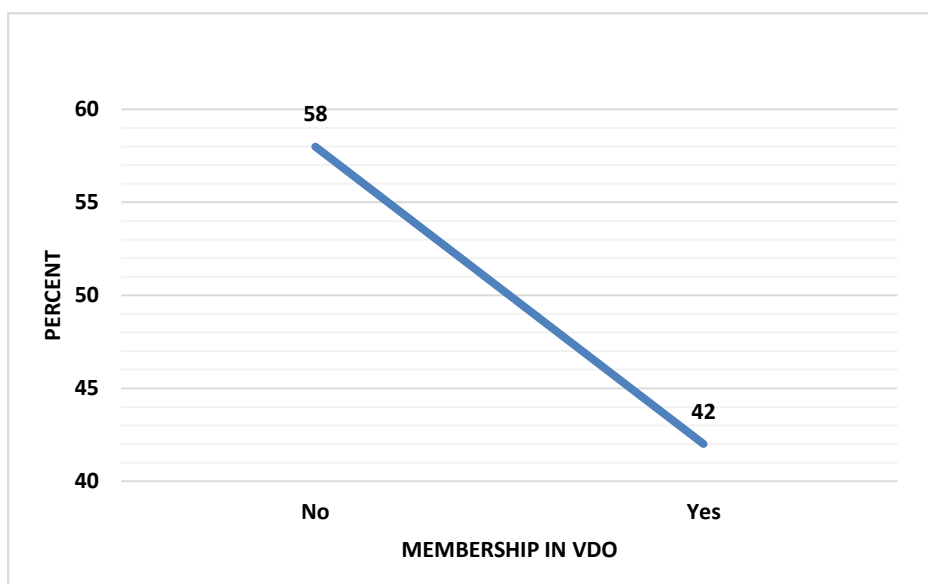
The term social capital implies network of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively. The World Bank mentioned that social capital is a concept that aims at emphasizing the importance of social contacts between groups and within groups, also stresses that social networks lead to increased productivity in individuals teams and organisations. Social Capital concept has significant implications for

enhancing the quality, effectiveness and sustainability of rural development programmes. Social capital facilitates co-operation and mutually supportive relations in communities and results into a valuable means of combating many of the social problems inherent in the modern societies. Social capital measures the relationship of people within a community and their link to the different networks.

5.4.2.1 Membership in Village Development Organizations (VDOs):

Village Development Organizations were playing an essential role in awareness generation activities and enhancing community participation in governance.

Fig.5.4.6 Membership in VDOs



Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

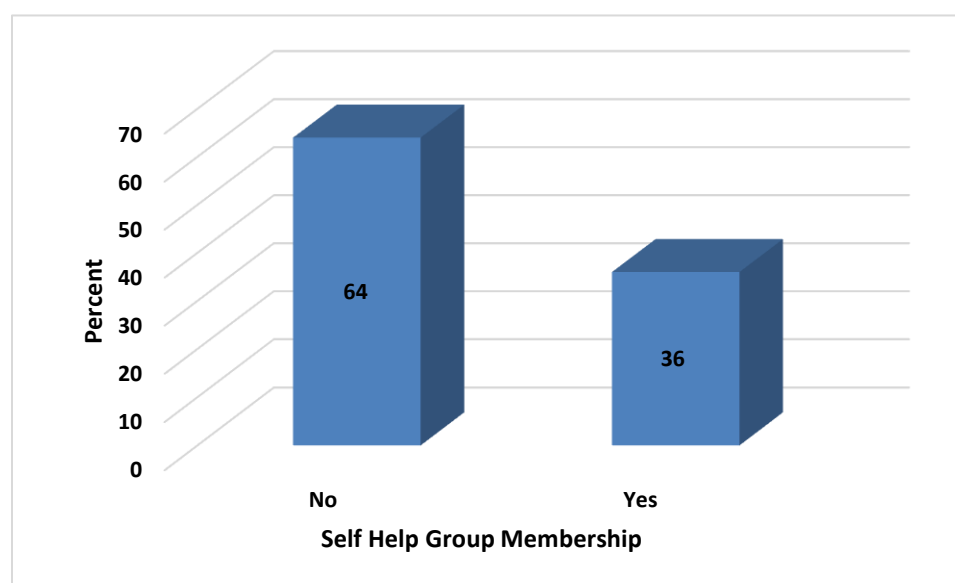
The data analysis reflected a different picture i.e. 1only 42 percent respondents had membership of VDOs and out of which only 10 percent were holding some position in the same. This indicated that the women participation in MGNREGS did not depend upon VDOs rather women had direct approach to work under MGNREGS without any association.

5.4.2.2. Memberships in Self Help Groups (SHGs):

The participation of SHGs in ensuring participation in the implementation of developmental schemes/programmes effectively has been assumed as a useful tool. SHGs help facilitation by

strengthening of PRIs with their active participation in local governance affairs. These groups were not only doing great efforts for saving, lending and increasing their household income but also shared information for dissemination to aware the members on social issues and motivating them for their participation.

Fig. 5.4.7 Self Help Group Memberships



Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

The study analyzed the level of awareness among SHG members and their active participation. This showed that 36 percent of the total respondents were associated with the SHGs. This comprised 50 percent in Mandi district, 36 percent in Sirmour District and 22 percent in Una district, respectively. This further indicated that SHG membership was an additive factor for the increasing participation of women in MGNREGS but it cannot be concluded that women participation in MGNREGS totally depended upon the participation of SHGs in Himachal Pradesh. Participation of women as members of mahila mandals/CBOs had somewhat supported the MGNREGS in terms of mobilizing more and more women to work and earn their livelihood.

5.4.3 Outcomes of Participation

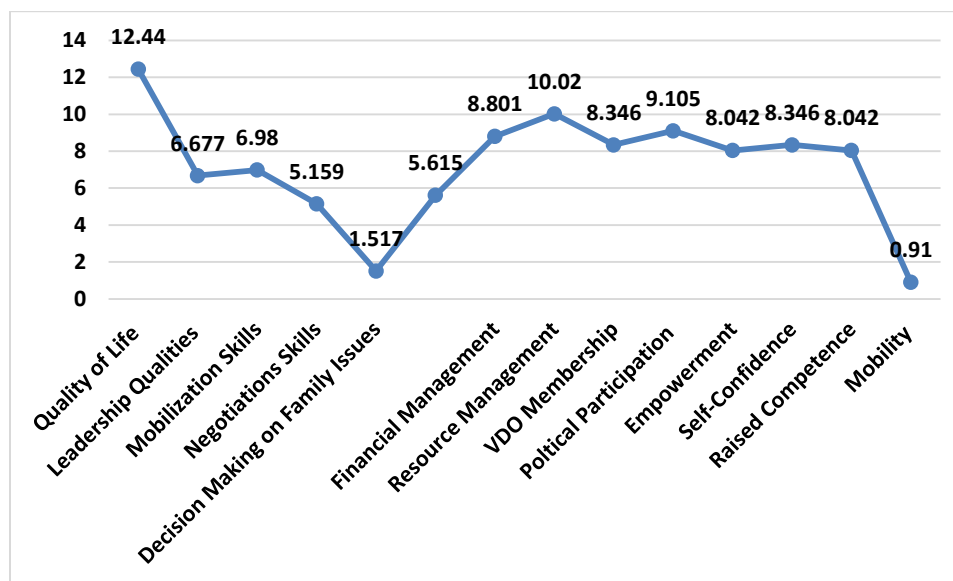
5.4.3.1 Competencies gained as Outcome of Participation

The percentage of responses related to change experienced by women workers with their participation in MGNREGS has been described in detail in the table given below:

Table 5.1: Competencies gained as Outcome of Participation

<i>Sr. No.</i>	Variables	Response percentage (%)		
		No change (Low)	Some change (Moderate)	Great change (High)
<i>1</i>	Quality of life	3.8	12.9	0.9
<i>2</i>	Leadership qualities	2.4	8.7	8.0
<i>3</i>	Motivation skills	6.2	6.8	8.3
<i>4</i>	Negotiation skills	8.2	6.1	8.0
<i>5</i>	Decision–making on household level issues	6.6	6.1	9.1
<i>6</i>	Decision–making on community level issues	9.3	5.4	8.3
<i>7</i>	Financial management	9.3	4.3	10.0
<i>8</i>	Resource management	10.2	4.7	8.8
<i>9</i>	VDOs membership	10.2	6.8	5.6
<i>10</i>	Political participation	13.7	7.9	1.5
<i>11</i>	Empowerment	7.1	8.5	5.2
<i>12</i>	Self-confidence	2.9	9.2	7.0
<i>13</i>	Raised Competence	7.3	7.4	6.7
<i>14</i>	Mobility	3.1	5.0	12.4

It is evident from the above table that MGNREGS has brought a revolutionary change in the lives of women in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

Fig. 5.4.8 Outcomes of participation

Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

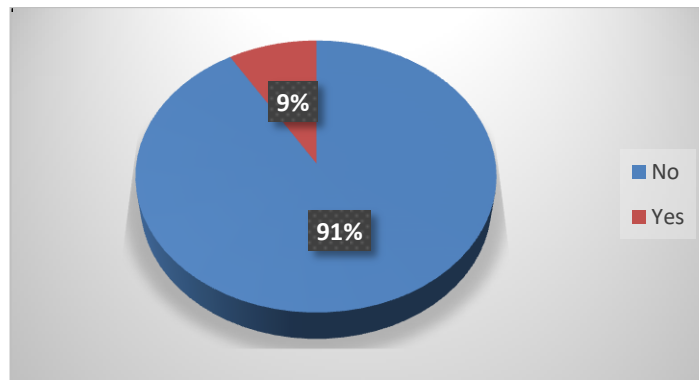
Majority of women MGNREGS workers (12.4 percent) felt that with the launch of MGNREGS, they got a chance to come out of the limited boundaries of their households. Women needed support from their family members earlier but now their mobility issues had been sought out with MGNREGS. They became able to now independently go outside for works; social, personal or official. The respondents (10 percent) accepted that earning from MGNREGS developed financial management skills. They were able to save their money in the banks and secure future. With this their say in family decisions (9.1percent) and community level decisions (8.3 percent) had been valued bettered. They had raised their self-confidence (7 percent) and competence (6.7 percent). They felt a bit empowered (5.2 percent) and also developed leadership (8 percent) & motivation skills (8.3 percent). MGNREGS has developed the negotiation skills among women (8 percent).

5.4.3.2 Effect of MGNREGS on Migration:

Migration resulted mainly response of diverse economic opportunities and income differentials in a particular area. Migration of rural community to urban places for livelihood generation is more prevalent in all over India. But the situation was found very different in the state of Himachal Pradesh. Although, MGNREGS tried to minimize the frequent mobility of rural community to other places for livelihood generation but it had increased the household burdens

on women. It was evident from the data analysis that 91.33 percent women workers felt no effect on migration with the launch of MGNREGS while 8.67 percent women MGNREGS workers confirmed that MGNREGS had somewhat reduced the migration in their respective areas. The migration was found to same extent a bit in Una & Sirmour, but, it was almost negligible in District Mandi.

Fig. 5.4.9 Effect of MGNREGS on migration



Source: Primary Data Collected from the sample Area

The percentage of women MGNREGS workers was more than men in majority of sample Gram Panchayats of Himachal Pradesh. Therefore, migration was not that much affected in the state. In contrast, it was found that men freely started moving to other places as women were working nearby their houses along with taking care of children and elders. It was reported by reluctant & unemployed male members that they were getting motivated in livelihood activities and started handling family responsibilities.

5.4.3.3 Gender Sensitivity:

MGNREGS, an effective scheme for women, afforded them opportunity to gain economic benefits, enhance leadership & negotiation skills, manage resources and helped to improve their quality of life. MGNREGS has inbuilt gender sensitive features like minimum 33 percent reservation for women in the work force, equal wages as men and work-site facilities such as crèche, shade, first aid etc.. These features accelerated the process of social change. This change significantly led to women empowerment by which women gained greater control over material and intellectual resources and challenged the ideology of patriarchy. MGNREG Act endeavoured to minimize the gender discrimination against women in all the institutions and structures involved in its implementation.

Case Studies

Case Study I: Livelihood Support & Women Empowerment



The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act particular focus on vulnerable population of women such as widows and mothers of young children who face serious constraints in the context of labour market participation.

Women are potentially-rich and MGNREGA is providing a great support to enhance their skill and capabilities. This evidently proved in Drubbal village of District Mandi. Gram Panchayat Drubbal is situated at a distance of about 35 kms from the Chauntra block headquarter and 25 kms from Joginder Nagar Sub Division of District Mandi. Sarla (52) belonged to Schedule caste community of Drubbal village. She had total 10 members in her family including her husband, one son and 7 daughters to look after, out of which 6 daughters were in the marriage age group. Her husband had no paternal land. Being an illiterate and handicapped by fingers in left hand, she was living a very critical life.

Sarla's husband was a mason, skilled to execute civil works and making both ends meet by working in local area by fits and starts. The family was living a miserable life as the husband was the sole bread-earner in the family of ten persons and they were surviving with hardship due to poverty and size of family. To augment the livelihood support to the family, Sarla started accompanying her husband to assist him in the mason work. Gradually, over the time, she developed her skills as a mason. She started performing all works, what a male mason could perform. Although, she faced wage discrimination repeatedly yet she tolerated it to support her family in view of its critical poor economic plight. The launching of MGNREGS proved a blessing in disguise as she started working as an unskilled labourer. Her family income got substantially increased and contributed to a larger extent in financing the marriage affair of her six daughters. Sarla had become a skilled worker, mason and performing to the best of her abilities in MGNREGS. As a mason, she had participated in construction of roads, crate walls, retaining walls, tanks etc. She emerged as an inspiration and source of motivation for other women in the area. Sarla, as a sole bread-earner, due to bad health of her husband got overburdened with the family responsibilities, was working overwhelmingly in MGNREGS for the survival of her family. She asserted that MGNREGS was a '*life saver*' for her family.

Case II: Social Change & Gender Mainstreaming



MGNREGS comprised provisions to ensure women participation. The women working under MGNREGS were not only having financial gains but also getting significant motivation, enhancement in their self-esteem, power within household and control over resources. MGNREGS had provided an excellent opportunity to come out of household chores and work independently. Women were independently handling the mobility issues in Una district. Women in Batuhi Gram Panchayat of Una block had never come out of their houses earlier. They were unable to move out of village without the company of their family member. They even never thought of working outside. In the beginning years of MGNREGS, family members did not encourage the women to work out of their homes. But later on, with the efforts of panchayat representatives, women got motivated to work under MGNREGS. They worked with great enthusiasm and earned income for their well-being. Women believed that they could never get a chance to come out their houses without MGNREGS.

Case III: Mahila Mandal facilitated participation in MGNREGS



Active participation of Village Development Organizations (VDOs) is a key to successful implementation of many flagship programmes in India. Participation of women organizations or community based organizations in MGNREGS played a vital role in the effective implementation of MGNREGS. There was an eye witness example in Gram Panchayat Kotla Panjola of Pachhad block of district Sirmour.

Kotla Panjola panchayat was on the top in high participation of women in MGNREGS in the financial year 2013-14. The contribution of ‘Jagriti Mahila Mandal’ of Deothal village in ensuring women participation in MGNREGS was significant for this achievement. All members of the mahila mandal are highly motivated to work as change agents for the development of their gram panchayat. Their motivation for togetherness was tremendous and indeed reflected in the performance of the panchayat in MGNREGS. Initially, the members of mahila mandal motivated the nearby people of their village. The mahila mandal had done a great job in the implementation of various development schemes and programmes i.e. Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), watershed development, MGNREGS etc. *“Our mahila mandal is very unique, we not only work in panchayat schemes but also help the women in their farms, household works” said pradhan of Jagirit Mahila mandal.*

Case IV: MGNREGS- Economic Empowerment of Household

The economic dependence of women was indeed a major cause of low status of women in the society. MGNREGS, a remarkable scheme, provided women an access and control over money. MGNREGS wages were paid through banks or post offices. This emerged as a supporting factor in the upliftment of status of women who worked or a chance to think about herself. Sakeena passionately participated in all works permissible under MGNREGS. She never differentiated between hard and light work. Her family was living under debt before the launch of MGNREGS. She enthusiastically told that she had savings of Rs. 70,000 in under MGNREGS. The female workers had independent bank accounts in their names in nearby banks. They used to withdraw their money and save for their future. Sakeena Devi (38) belonged to Drubbal village of Chauntra Block, District Mandi. She was working in MGNREGS since 2008-09. She shared proudly that MGNREGS was a very useful scheme for her family. This scheme gave her her own bank account after paying debts. She wanted to raise her savings up to one lakh and then spend it on her own and her children. She was confident and felt happy for not borrowing money from others.

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

The study was focused to explore various aspects influencing the participation of women in MGNREGS in Himachal Pradesh. These factors included many dimensions like awareness level of women workers about the provisions of MGNREGS, social capital, gender sensitivity of the functionaries towards women workers. This also included their decision- making at household and community level and participation in various stages of MGNREGS (from planning to monitoring & evaluation).

I. Findings & Conclusions

The major findings in respective categories are presented below:

6.1 Women Participation in MG NREGS

- Majority of respondents working in MGNREGS belonged to the middle aged groups (36-45 years), followed aged group (46-55 years) which reflected that aged women were actively participating in MGNREGS in Mandi, Una & Sirmour; all the three sample districts of Himachal Pradesh.
- The women who participated in MG NREGS in the sample area were engaged in cultivation mainly, however, a very small percentage of women respondent were engaged in public or private jobs.
- Majority of illiterate women worked in MGNREGS, however, very less percentage of women who had got higher level of education worked in MG NREGS. The scheme proved to be a good venture for livelihood support to both illiterate and literate women but more beneficial for illiterate who were not eligible for employment anywhere else.
- The average family size of respondents varied between 2-5 members with very small percentage of respondents having family size of 10-12 members in a household.
- Majority of women respondents working in MG NREGS were married who worked to support their family with their income from MG NREGS.

- The land ownership, an important source of women empowerment, was not found in favour of women. The women could get the land ownership status only after death of their fathers or husbands, in very rare cases.
- The percentage of women participation in MGNREGS works was found more than men in sample Gram Panchayats of Himachal Pradesh.
- MGNREG Scheme supported livelihood base for the single women i.e. widows, however a very less proportion of unmarried women worked under MG NREGS. The participation percentage of married women was least in Mandi District, moderate in Sirmour District and maximum in Una district, respectively.

6.2 Factors Affecting participation of women

Participation is one of the key characteristics of an empowered community. The number of days of employment in the works of MGNREGS was the main indicator of participation. An attempt was made in the present study to list out factors responsible for the participation of the women in MGNREGS. The detail of factors found in study area are as under:

- The major factors facilitating women participation included insufficient agriculture work, migration, lack of skills to do other works, illiteracy etc. Besides this, other factors which motivated respondents to participate in MGNREGS comprised support from family, group arrangement, equal wages, minimum wages, timely wages, work taken up in their own land, mode of payment, worksite facilities, timely employment, sensitivity of officials, SHG membership etc.
- The women in the sample area worked under MGNREGS because of less agriculture gains as majority of women MGNREGS workers did not have irrigated land.
- The factors acted as constraints for respondents to participate in MGNREGS included untimely employment, delayed payments, health problems, rigid timings, household works, own agricultural works, wages less than market wage rate, unequal wages, gender and caste discrimination, worksite harassment, insensitivity of officials, problems in

getting employment, lack of mandatory worksite facilities, hard work and distance to worksite etc.

- The membership in Self Help Groups was an additive factor for the increasing participation of women in MGNREGS . Women as members of mahila mandals/CBOs had supported the participation in MGNREGS in terms of mobilizing more and more women to work and earn their livelihood.
- The MG NREGS women workers in the study area did not count draughts, floods, cloud burst and migration as factors adversely affecting their participation in the work.
- The females workers engaged continuously in MGNREGS were not able to complete 100 days due to their household chores. The responses reflected that women's preferences for different permissible works under MGNREGS varied among different districts.
- The major motivating factors that raised self- confidence & self-esteem included opportunity to earn by working within the village boundaries, declared wage rate in MGNREGS and opportunity to work on own farms.
- Payment of wages through banks or post offices further provided them an access to banks besides great satisfaction and motivation.
- The women confirmed more comfort in an appropriate group management of MGNREGS workers comprising male and female in a suitable number.
- The role of local level organization like CBOs, NGOs and gram panchayat etc. proved to be very significant in motivating women for working in MGNREGS.

6.3 State Specific Development Programmes

- The women participation in MGNREGS in the sample area did not depend upon village Development Organisations rather women directly approached to work under MGNREGS without any association to such organisations.
- The respondents were the beneficiaries of Public Distribution System with hundred percent coverage.

- The respondent women availed benefit from social welfare schemes viz. Social security pensions. A negligible fraction of respondents' families were also getting benefit of retirement pensions.
- The women workers availed benefits from other programmes of Rural Development Department viz. Drinking Water Schemes, Indira Awas Yojna, Watershed and Sanitation.

6.4 Social Capital & Gender Sensitivity

- The women were deprived of participation in decision making at individual as well as family level. The participation of women in MG NREGS further affected their independence on individual level, family level and community level in contrast to the participation with husband. This trend proved to be an indicator of women as a significant member of family in spite of her individual identity.
- The empowerment of women was a dynamic process but slow; it was found from the analysis that the empowerment of women through MG NREGS was taking a long time to bring changes in their status, particularly the poorer households.
- Men had started moving to other places freely as women were working nearby their houses along with taking care of children and elders.
- During Focused Group Discussions, it was found that reluctant & unemployed male members were getting motivated in livelihood activities and started handling family responsibilities, taking inspiration from the counterpart women participating in MG NREGS.
- Women had a good social status across all the sample districts regarding food and clothing. With regard to decision making in the affairs related to their children like education, health, marriages etc, the respondent women took decisions in consensus with their husbands.
- In the matters like attending social gatherings, visiting relatives and expenditure on self were such areas, where decision was taken either by women themselves or jointly along with their husband/household members.

- In cases of agricultural activities and participation in labour work, it was largely a joint decision. In the affairs relating to purchase of assets, though women were also part of decision making, yet decisions were taken by either husband or other family members.

II. Suggestions

The conclusions drawn from the findings of the study paved way for some reasonable suggestions for improving active participation of women.

- Awareness of any programme/scheme plays an effective role in enhancing the participation of the stakeholders. Effective awareness generation activities must be organized at grass root level periodically by using effective modes of community mobilization & awareness. Women ERs & functionaries of Gram Panchayat should be involved in social mobilization and awareness generation among women workers.
- MG NREGS evolved as a women's empowerment programme, which provided income with dignity, therefore, the problems such as drudgery need to be addressed.
- The participation can be enhanced by effective provision of worksite facilities, e.g. shade and safe drinking water and childcare facilities, especially besides making available gender-sensitive/women-friendly tools.
- Some "gender-sensitive measures" with their role in planning, implementation and social audits may increase the participation of women in MGNREGS. As it has come out in the study that gender sensitivity of the delivery system has large influence on quality of participation of women in MGNREGS, special focus should be laid by addressing the attitudinal changes of the officials and making them more gender-sensitive.
- Delay in payments was an important demotivating factor for participation of women in MG NREGS, therefore, the Government should ensure effective provisions for timely payments to MGNREGS workers.

- Mahila Mandals/SHGs have effective role in ensuring and enhancing the participation of women in MGNREGS. Therefore, special efforts should make for involving more and more active CBOs to build the social capital.
- CBOs can be involved for enhancing participation of women in MGNREGS by encouraging their efforts with some reward & recognition and motivate them for the same.
- Women officials were found playing a constructive role and facilitating the participation of women in MGNREGS, therefore, as a policy certain percentage of positions at different levels may be reserved for women functionaries.
- The factors which served as constraints to the participation of women viz. untimely unemployment, delayed payments, work site harassments, insensitivity of officials , gender and caste discrimination and work site facilities are the issues to be addressed administratively. There is a need to strengthening of mechanisms for these issues with time bound monitoring with strong enforcement provisions.
- The coverage of other different development programmes have a myopic vision for females which needs to be treated with suitable remedial measures. The Women & Child Development Department may be approached to pursue the concerns of women across different development programmes aimed at the socio economic development of women for advocacy and awareness campaigns.

III. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made on the basis and findings:

- The awareness on right based entitlement and the different provision under MGNREGA needs to be disseminated through people and appropriate IEC.
- To facilitate more participation of women in MGNREGA, the worksite facilities and timely payment of wages need to be worked out in a better manner.
- The group formation should be encouraged to get more women participation in MGNEGA.

- The local level organization should be trained/motivated to facilitated dissemination of the schemes to every household at regular intervals.
- The programme officers and the officials working at GP level should engage the workers of MGNREGA in the other development programmes as well.
- There is possibility of greater awareness on gender issues for which the social capital may be enriched in the rural areas through MGNREGA,. Enrichment of Social Capital is highly recommended at GP level and to have better representation of both sex fairly.

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