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## Awareness of Tribal Womenfolk Regarding Different Provisions of MGNREGA: a Study in Longjap Gram Panchayat under Kathiatoli Development Block of Nagaon District, Assam, India

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### **Abstract:**

*Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was enacted by the Indian Parliament on 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2005 with an aim of enhancing the livelihood security of rural households by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to every household in a year whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual works. The Act was implemented on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2006. The study area is Longjap Gram Panchayat (GP) located in Kathiatoli Development Block of Nagaon district, Assam. The objective of this paper is to examine the awareness of tribal womenfolk regarding different provisions of MGNREGA in the GP. Based on primary data, collected from 100 nos. of sample tribal women, it is found that although tribal womenfolk in the study area have substantial awareness on some provisions of MGNREGA, their awareness on several important provisions is not encouraging. There is, thus, a need to adopt new techniques to spread awareness among the villagers regarding different provisions of MGNREGA in the study area.*

**Keywords:** Longjap, Kathiatoli, tribal women, awareness and MGNREGA

### **1. Introduction**

Awareness about the basic rights and entitlements of a programme is the major issue that determines the successful implementation of that programme. MGNREGA is not an exception. If people have knowledge on the scheme, they can benefit more and it lead to improve their life style (Kumar, 2014). Therefore, creating awareness amongst the rural masses about different provisions of MGNREGA has been treated as a crucial task for the proper implementation of along with the workers' benefit from the programme concerned.

#### *1.1. A Concise Introduction to MGNREGA*

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), previously known as National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), was enacted by the Indian Parliament on 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2005. The primary objective of the Act is to enhance the livelihood security of rural households by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to every household in a financial year whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. The manual work needs to create sustainable assets that promote the economic and infrastructure development of the villages.

In India, the MGNREGA was implemented in a phased manner. Phase I was introduced in February 2, 2006 by covering 200 most backward districts of the country where seven districts of Assam were included. Subsequently, an additional 130 districts were added in Phase II during 2007-08 including five districts of Assam. Later, it was notified in the remaining rural districts of India from April 1, 2008 in Phase III where fourteen districts of Assam (including Nagaon district) came under the purview of the Act. The Act is now effective in the entire rural areas of the country including Assam.

The MGNREGA states that the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) should be the key agencies for planning and implementing the programme. The three-tier structure of the Panchayati Raj system of governance consists of elected executive bodies of people's representatives at the village level, which is known as *Gram Panchayat*, at the block level known as *Anchalik Panchayat* and at the district level known as *Zila Parishad*. The PRIs are directly involved in the implementation of MGNREGA.

### **2. Review of Literature**

CBGA (2006) reported that awareness level of workers on the rights and entitlements of NREGA were higher in Andhra Pradesh (97.5%) followed by Chhattisgarh (69%), Madhya Pradesh (45%) and Jharkhand (29%). Dey, S. and A. Bedi (2010) observed universal

awareness about the scheme in the study area. *Sivasankari, R. and Bharathi, V. (2012)* expressed that the beneficiaries of MGNREGA have adequate awareness regarding Registration, Employment, Wage payment, Facilities at workplace, Records in workplace except Casualty at worksite and Grievance Redressal Mechanism in the study area. They had also stated that the beneficiaries who have studied higher secondary level have more awareness on MGNREGA than others. *Rajalakshmi, S. (2014)* revealed that most of the rural people were aware about the programme in the study area.

### 2.1. Rational for Selecting Longjap Gram Panchayat as Study Area

There are 19 nos. of Gram Panchayats (GPs) under Kathiatoli Development Block (*Census of India, 2011*). Longjap GP is selected deliberately for the purpose of the study. The reason behind the selection of the GP is:

- As per 2011 census report, Longjap GP ranks top in size of tribal women population among the GPs of Kathiatoli Development Block.

### 2.2. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is -

- To examine the awareness of tribal womenfolk regarding different provisions of MGNREGA in Longjap Gram Panchayat.

## 3. Data Base and Methodology

The study is mainly based on primary data. The primary data have been collected from 100 nos. of tribal women living in Longjap Gram Panchayat. The selected tribal women were physically met in their respective households and asked questions to draw replies in affirmative and negative about their awareness of different provisions of MGNREGA with the help of interview schedule prepared. Thereafter, the collected data have been analysed and presented in Table. Moreover, secondary data were also incorporated where necessary. The sources of secondary data include Gram Panchayat Office, Longjap; Block Development Officer's Office, Kathiatoli; DRDA, Nagaon district; various studies and reports of MGNREGA published by Government and Non-Government Organisations, journals, periodicals and different websites of the State as well as the Central Government.

The field survey was conducted during the period from September, 2013 to December, 2013.

There are three stages in which sample process has been carried out.

In the *first stage*, 5 nos. of tribal inhabited villages have been selected using purposive sampling method. The criterion of selecting villages is having the highest number of tribal women population in the respective villages. The selected villages are – Longjap No.(500 – 700) Acre, Lutumari Amdubi F.V.(Kheroni), Padumpukhuri N.C., Borpukhuri N.C. and Ulumguri N.C.

In the *second stage*, tribal households have been selected using random sampling method. For this purpose, all tribal households having women members were identified with the help of elected representatives of the respective villages and thereafter, 20 nos. of tribal households from each of the selected villages were chosen. In this way, altogether 100 nos. of tribal households were chosen for the study.

In the *third stage*, the tribal women have been selected. Using purposive sampling method, one tribal woman having minimum 18 years of old from each of the sample tribal household was chosen and thus, total 100 nos. of tribal women were taken as sample to elicit the required information for the study.

The analysis has been made using simple statistical tools like percentages, ratios, averages, etc. The diagrammatic representation of data is also made to strengthen the field data.

### 3.1. Utility of the Study

It is expected that the result of the study will provide valuable insights to the Government and Non-Government Organisations for implementing the Act effectively.

### 3.2. Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study are -

- Only 12 nos. of provisions of the MGNREGA have been taken into consideration for the study.
- The findings of the study have been made on the basis of views expressed by the sample tribal womenfolk.
- The study focuses on a particular Gram Panchayat. Hence, it may not be applicable in any other parts of the country.

### 3.3. Findings

The findings of the study are summarized as under -

I. Providing 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to any rural households in a year whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work is the preamble provision of MGNREGA. Regarding this provision of the Act, out of 100 nos. of tribal women interviewed, 79.0% of them are found aware and 21.0% are unaware.

II .Another important provision of the Act is that Job Cards should be issued to the registered households within a fortnight of the application received for registration. In respect of this provision, only 6.0% tribal women are found aware.

Sl. No.	Provisions of MGNREGA	Aware	Unaware	Total
		%	%	%
1	2	3	4	5
1	100 days of employment guarantee	79.0	21.0	100
2	Issuing Job Card within 15 days of registration	6.0	94.0	100
3	Written application for employment	77.0	23.0	100
4	Minimum wages	83.0	17.0	100
5	Equal wages for men and women workers	80.0	20.0	100
6	Payment of wages within a fortnight	78.0	22.0	100
7	Payment of unemployment allowance	3.0	97.0	100
8	Work within radius of 5 km	4.0	96.0	100
9	Provision of basic facilities at worksite	87.0	13.0	100
10	Reservation for women workers	5.0	95.0	100
11	Role of gram sabha	3.0	97.0	100
12	Conduct of social audit	2.0	98.0	100

Table 1: Awareness of Sample Tribal Womenfolk Regarding Different Provisions of MGNREGA

Source: Field Survey

III. A Job Card holder may submit written application for employment to the local Gram Panchayat, stating the time and duration for which work is sought. Regarding this aspect of MGNREGA, 77.0% tribal women are found aware and 23.0% are unaware.

IV. Every person working under the programme is entitled to wages as per the Minimum Wages Act 1948 for agricultural labourers in the state, unless the Center notifies a wage rate which will not be less than Rs. 60 per day. In respect of this provision, 83.0% tribal women are found aware.

V. Equal wages shall be paid to both men and women workers and the provisions of the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 shall be compiled with. In regard to this provision, 80.0% tribal women are found aware and the rest 20.0% are unaware.

VI. Payment of wages has to be made on a weekly basis and not beyond a fortnight in any case. In respect of this provision, 78.0% tribal women are found aware.

VII. Another important aspect of the Act is that if an applicant is not provided employment within 15 days of receipt of his / her application, he / she shall be entitled for unemployment allowance. In respect of this provision, only 3.0% tribal women are found aware.

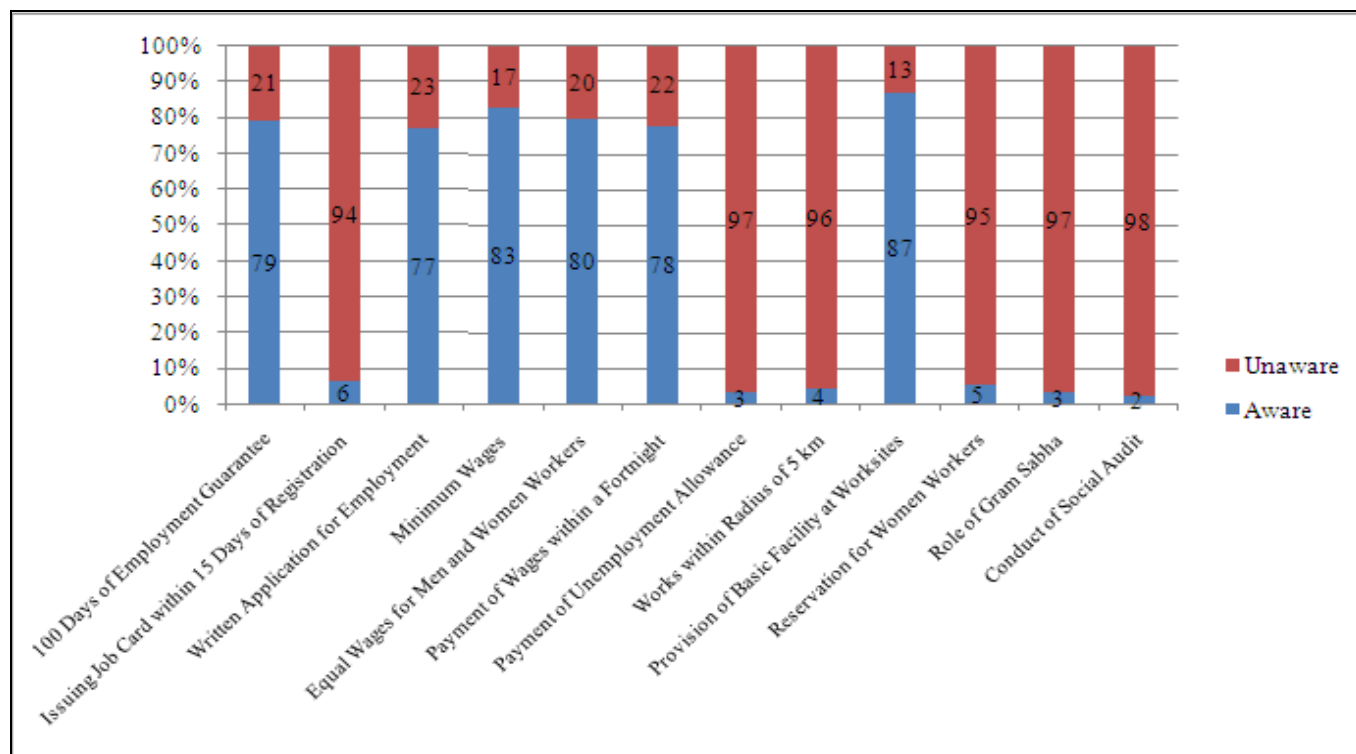


Figure 1: Awareness of Sample Tribal Womenfolk Regarding Different Provisions of MGNREGA(In Percentages)

Source: Field Survey

VIII. Works under MGNREGA should be provided within 5 km radius of the village where the applicant resides at the time of application, otherwise extra wages of 10 percent are payable to meet additional transportation and living expenses. Regarding this issue of MGNREGA, only 4.0% tribal women are found aware.

IX. There is also a provision of providing drinking water, shade for rest, crèche for children and first-aid facility at worksites. In regard to this provision, 87.0% tribal women are found aware.

X. Another important provision made under MGNREGA is that any work undertaken must have 33 percent women as workers. Regarding this provision, only 5.0% tribal women are found aware.

XI. Plans and decisions regarding the nature and choice of works to be undertaken in a year including the order in which each work is to be taken up, site selection, etc are all to be made in the Gram Sabha. In respect of this provision, only 3.0% tribal women are found aware.

XII. MGNREGA dictates that social audit has to be done by the Gram Sabha at least once in every six months. In respect of this provision of MGNREGA, only 2.0% tribal women are found aware.

### 3.4. Conclusion

Thus, from the analysis of awareness of tribal womenfolk regarding different provisions of MGNREGA, it can be concluded that although tribal women folk in the study area seem to have substantial awareness on some provisions of MGNREGA, yet their awareness on several important issues is not encouraging. Inadequate awareness about these issues seems to be a key barrier for claiming their rights in a proper way. There is, thus, a need to adopt new techniques to spread awareness among the villagers regarding different provisions of MGNREGA in the study area.

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