

Role Of MGNREGA Towards The Upliftment Of Women's Status : A Case Study Of Papumpare District, Arunachal Pradesh.

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Abstract

At its core, grassroots development is about ensuring that every member of a nation's population has a fair chance to contribute to its progress toward prosperity, and this is something that all international leaders are aware of. The founding father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi, shared this view; he thought that the only way to establish democracy was to begin from the grassroots level and work our way up to the eradication of all suffering in India. Democratic politics in India must acknowledge the need of giving much more attention to the interests, demands, and rights of the most disadvantaged, including women, as even modern thinkers like Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen have argued. Economic and political elites in India held the view that the country's progress began in the countryside, and that women's participation was crucial to the success of any development initiative aimed at improving rural areas or the country as a whole. Consequently, the purpose of this article is to examine how women in the Papumpare area of Arunachal Pradesh feel about the MGNREGA and its execution.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Women, Empowerment and Awareness.

Introduction

Social movements, such as the right to food, which sought to ensure that the impoverished would have access to jobs, and the need for equal opportunity in the workplace free from discrimination were the driving forces behind the creation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). A primary goal of this plan is to implement the "economic right to work" outlined in Article 151 of the Indian Constitution's Directive Principles of State Policy. Both men and women in India have the right to adequate means of subsistence, as stated in Article 39 of the constitution, and Article 41 states that the government must, within its economic capabilities and development, guarantee the right to work. The origin of MGNREGA first started with the creation of Jawaharlal Rozgar Yojana on 28th, April, 1989 which was initiated by the then prime minister and on 1st April, 1999, it was replaced to Jawaharlal Gram Samridhi Yojana. After this, again it was replaced to Sampuran Gramin Rozgar Yojana in 1st April, 2002 and finally this scheme was merged to NREGA in 1st April 2008¹.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was the first of its kind when it was passed by the Indian government in 2005. The first law in India to provide rural residents the opportunity to earn an income was the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. Legally, it is the first program of its kind in India, and it will provide jobs to those living in rural areas. Before being renamed to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA) on October 2, 2009, the legislation was known as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). Phase one of the NREGA was launched on February 2, 2006, in the 200 most economically and socially disadvantaged districts; phase two saw an additional 130 districts added during the 2007–2008 fiscal year.

With this new formulation, the Act came out with new provision which calls every government of the state to implement this scheme. The new rules stipulate that every state government must give every rural family at least 100 days of guaranteed income from work per fiscal year. The Act also offers the states a framework to encourage job creation, as the federal government pays for 90% of all jobs. The MGNREGA is demand driven rather than supply driven, in contrast to other wage employment programs that were allocation based.

To ensure gender equality and equal opportunity in the workplace, MGNREGA sets itself apart from other programs by allocating at least one-third of its workforce to women beneficiaries who have applied for and been approved for employment under the program. Additional crucial clauses include things like:

- Household members are given the responsibility of dividing up the work, which encourages women to participate. The program also provides facilities like childcare at work sites.
- When it comes to opening banking accounts for wage payments, the local government should think about individual and joint accounts instead of crediting earnings to the male head of the household.
- These aspects of the MGNREGA program work together to try to achieve the program's stated goal of empowering women.
- Any adult in a village who is willing to do unskilled manual labor can apply for registration with the local Gram Panchayat. After verification, the Gram Panchayat will issue a Job Card.
- The Job Card will have a photo and the program's logo. After the fifteen-day application period ends, the Job Card should be sent out. If you have a Job Card, you can apply for a job with the Gram Panchayat in writing. Make sure to specify how long you're looking for work and how many days you're available.
- The Gram Panchayat will then issue a receipt dated 15 days after you apply, which is your guarantee that you'll get hired within that time. If you don't get hired within 15 days, the state is responsible for paying your unemployment benefits. Lastly, work should typically be provided within 5 km of the village.
- The wage rate for agricultural laborers in the state must be at least Rs. 60/ per day, unless the central government announces a rate that is lower. If the work extends beyond 5 km, an additional 10% wage is due to cover transportation and living expenses. All employees, regardless of gender, will get equal pay.
- In addition to officials from relevant departments, Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) play a crucial role in the planning and execution processes.

To achieve these fundamental goals, among which are the following: protecting the environment, empowering women and the poor through the provision of a right-based law that fosters social equity, creating a strong safety net for vulnerable groups by providing employment when other alternatives are inadequate, and enhancing livelihood security in rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment to every registered household in the fiscal year.

Brief overview of MGNREGA in the area of study

Although, the scheme was launched in other states of India from 2006 but in Arunachal Pradesh it was launched only in the year 2009. It was first introduced in Upper Subansiri district, and in the same year for second phase, it was covered two districts Lohit and Changlang district. Again, in the third phase remaining districts of the Arunachal Pradesh including Papumpare district were covered. In Arunachal Pradesh, job card was started to issue to each household by the government from the second phase and overall, 7.47 lakhs cards were issued. In Upper Subansiri district, 17 thousand households have been provided with employment through MGNREGA and between the years of 2011-2014, around 56,498 households have been provided employment in Papumpare district. Out of which 98 percent of beneficiaries are scheduled tribes and rest are from other categories. As per records shown in the websites of MGNREGA, more than 33 percent of women enrolled themselves under this scheme in both the districts².

Statement of the Problem

According to a plethora of research, women in India have historically been subject to societal disadvantages and inequality due to the country's pervasive patriarchal framework. The Indian government has a constitutional responsibility to prioritize women's needs so that they may fully participate in national

²<https://www.nrega.nic>, retrieved on 06/04/2017.

development and enjoy their rights on an equal basis with men. As a result, the Indian Constitution makes an effort to address women's collective socioeconomic, educational, and political disadvantages. Article 14 of the fundamental rights guarantees women's equality, and Article 15(3) empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of weaker sections, including women. Other provisions include equal opportunity, equal pay for equal work, and equal payment for equal work. Local self-government has implemented reservations to increase women's involvement and representation in political institutions and decision-making, but these measures have not improved women's lives across the board.

As a result, the government of India came to the realization that economic empowerment is just as important as social and political empowerment for women. Arunachal Pradesh's women's situation is comparable to that of women throughout India. Each indigenous tribal group in Arunachal Pradesh has its own unique history, religion, politics, and culture, as well as its own language, rituals, and traditions. Kinship is acknowledged by males in the tribal family, which is patriarchal. The tribal women are thought of as having a lesser status compared to the males. As a part of tribal society itself, the women already come under weaker sections but being women itself in general put them under most weaker sections categories. There are two ways of looking at women's inherent fragility: first, as members of a culturally backward culture, and second, as women. Women are seen as less valuable than males due to the male-dominated nature of society. They should be reliant on and subservient to males. There is no way she can own any of the real estate. Men have the ability to make decisions and wield authority. As a result, the social structure of the indigenous women does not acknowledge their rights and freedoms. While women's status varies throughout these indigenous tribes due to their varying levels of development, it has improved significantly for Arunachalee women, especially in the urban areas. Modern women have come to realize that males treat them unfairly due to social pressures and the fact that metropolitan women have reaped the benefits of societal advancements. People in rural regions, on the other hand, are less likely to feel the effects of societal change. In the Panchayati Raj system, however, women have been given representation in order to empower them and there are many elected women representatives at the village council level but in practice, they are not real power holder. Women representatives are not free from male dominance in the village³ administration and no noteworthy alteration in the dynamics of power is seen in the village . At the same time, it is need to be discussed that inferior status of women in tribal society is socially structured and culturally conditioned. It is very difficult to break the circle to bring the changes regarding women empowerment. However, Central and State Governments have taken some initiatives in regard of empowering women through various programmes in the present day⁴.

According to the Management Information System Report (MIS) report of 2016-2017, the two districts of Arunachal Pradesh i.e., Upper Subansiri and Papumpare districts have a number of active women workers⁵. Though, it is shown in the official records that the women participation is very high but, in the reality, it has been found that most of the people in rural area are illiterate, because of which many of them did not know about the basic provision of MGNREGA like when the job cards are issued, worksites facilities provide for women like creche, child care worker for those women workers who come to the worksites areas with children less than age of 5 years, drinking water facilities, shed, working distance should within the radius of 5 km from their house etc. Moreover, many of the women are so busy in their household works, they did not give much attention to this opportunity. Most of the women workers even did not know how to apply for the job card under this scheme and mostly dependent on their male counterparts. There is also complained about irregular payment of wages, as per the provision of MGNREGA, the wage shall be paid within 15 days of work to the workers but in reality, it has not yet implemented in the respective districts of Arunachal Pradesh. There is also doubtful about the initiative taken by implementing agencies to sensitized the workers about the schemes by

³ Arora, Kulshreshtha and Upadhyay, 2013: 4.

⁴ Raji, 2018:39

⁵ <https://www.nrega.nic>, retrieved on 03/02/2017.

involving women workers too. Most of the works under MGNREGA sometime remain unreported to the villagers and only few people are involved. In such condition, a question should arise, has it been possible for women to get proper employment under MGNREGA. As a tribal area, there is no such rigid restriction towards women to work outside of the house which does not mean that they are getting equal opportunities. Most of the women in rural areas are also ignorant towards important provision for their rights. Therefore, the proper implementation as well as awareness regarding provision for women in rural area is very important for their self –confidence to get work and from that they can earn their livelihood without too much depended on others for everything.

HYPOTHESIS

The study has the following five hypotheses:

1. No drastic change on the status of women in Doimukh, Sagalee and Mengio blocks of Papumpare district these two districts, even after the implementation of MGNREGA.
2. Lack of awareness regarding the provisions covered under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) for the empowerment of rural women is found on the part of implementing agencies as well as among rural women.
3. Women from each three blocks Papumpare districts are not getting worksites facilities mentioned in the scheme.

OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the various problems and difficulties faced by women under MGNREGA.
2. To assess women’s perceptions towards the implementation of MGNREGA in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

Tools and sources for data collection

The data for present study has been collected from both primary as well as from secondary sources. The secondary data are collected from relevant published documents, research papers, books, government records, censuses and journals. The primary data has been collected by using semi-structured interview schedule as well as open-ended questionnaire and both qualitative as well as quantitative method has used to analysed the collected data.

Method of Sampling

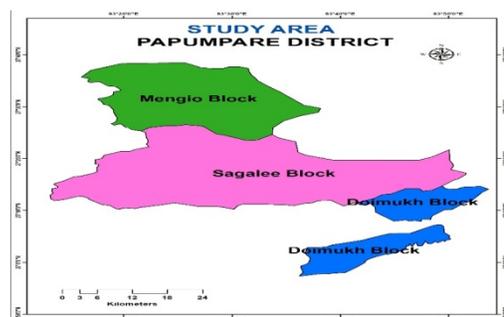
For the present study, the researcher used probability technique of stratified random sampling to collect sample from three blocks (Doimukh, Sagalee and Mengio) of Papumpare districts. The total 100 samples have been taken which comprised of 100 samples of women workers from each block of Mengio, Sagalee and Doimukh, Papumpare district.

Area of study

Papum Pare District, the capital district of Arunachal Pradesh occupies an area of approximately 2,875 sq km inhabited by a population of 1,76,385 (2011 Census). The average literacy rate of the district is 82.14 percent and is the most populous district in Arunachal Pradesh⁶. So, MGNREGA has been implemented in the Papumpare district in third phase in the year 2011, which has 6 (six) blocks viz., Balijan, Sagalee, Kimin-Doimukh, Kimin, Mengio and Borum but only three blocks will be taken for the study i.e., Mengio, Doimukh and Sagalee.

Sources: State Remote sensing application, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh.

Analytical Framework:

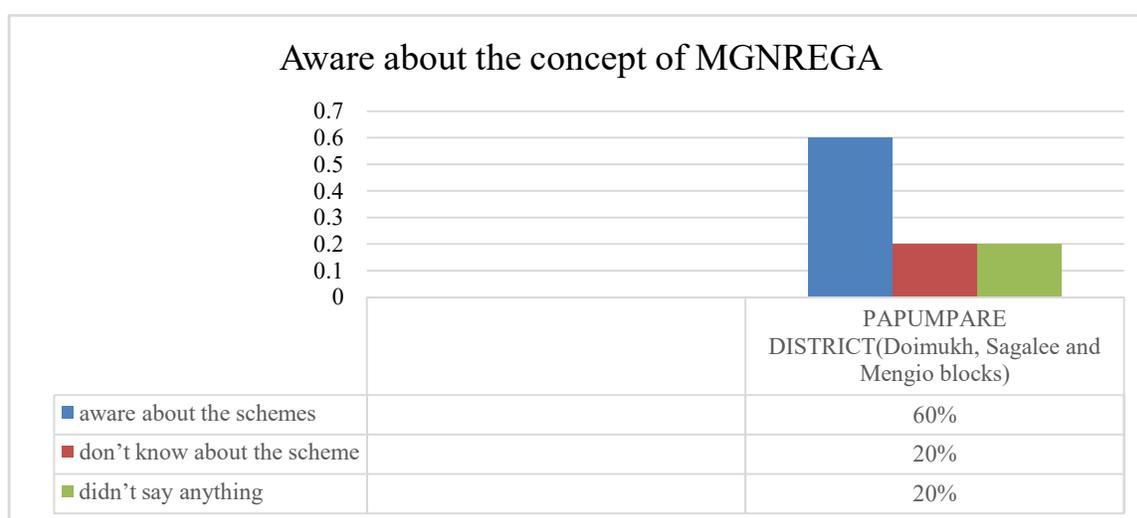


⁶ <https://www.censusindia2011.com>.

In Doimukh blocks, there are 15 panchayats where at present total number of female beneficiaries are 5501 and 4560 male beneficiaries have been registered under this scheme; in Sagalee blocks, MGNREGA is implemented in 29 panchayats where 7931 female beneficiaries and 6384 male beneficiaries are enlisted under this scheme; and finally, there are 2583 female workers and 2451 number of male beneficiaries registered under this scheme in the 13 (thirteen) panchayats of the Mengio blocks⁷.

Awareness about the Schemes among women beneficiaries in the three districts of Papumpare district presents the classification of women respondents towards their level of awareness about the concept of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA);

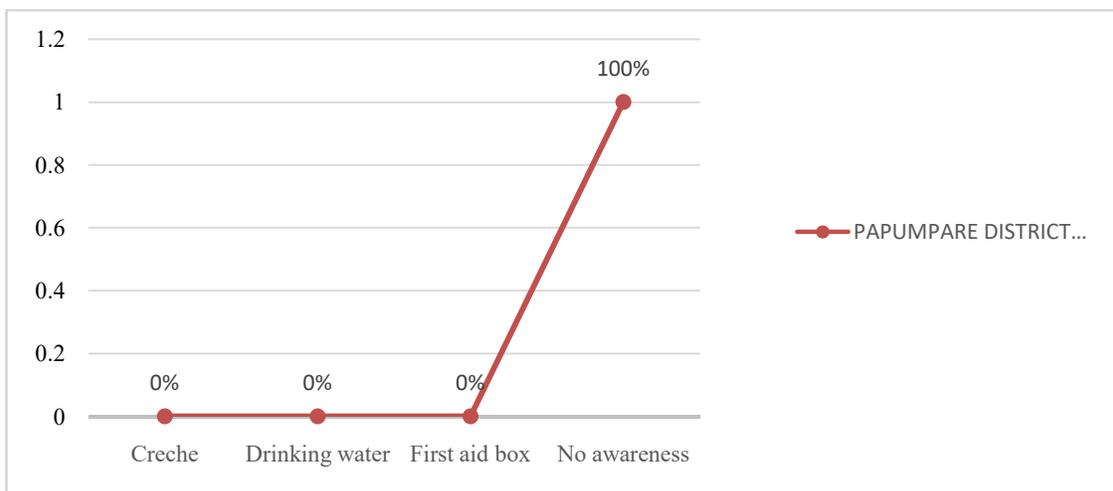
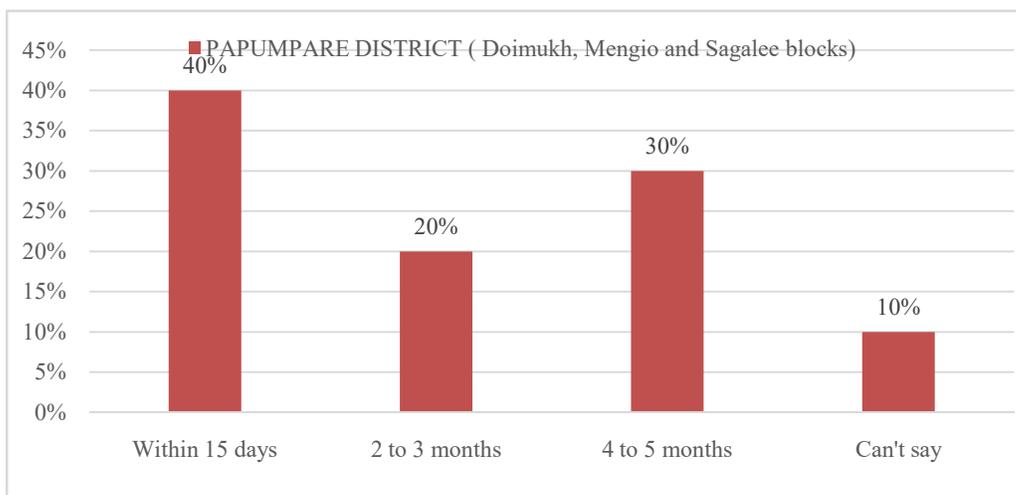
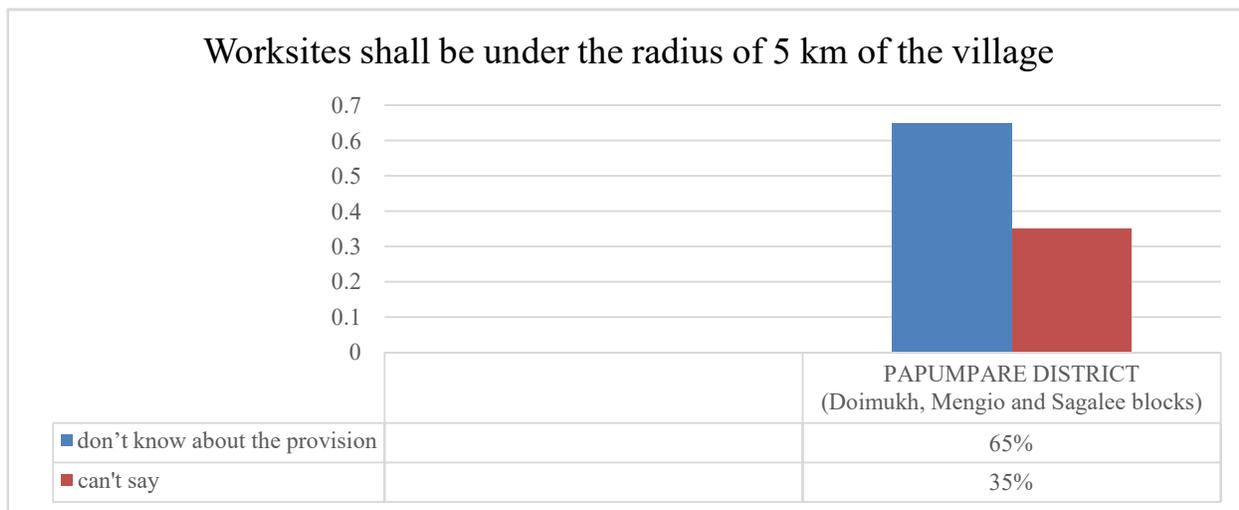
Sources: complied by researcher from field survey

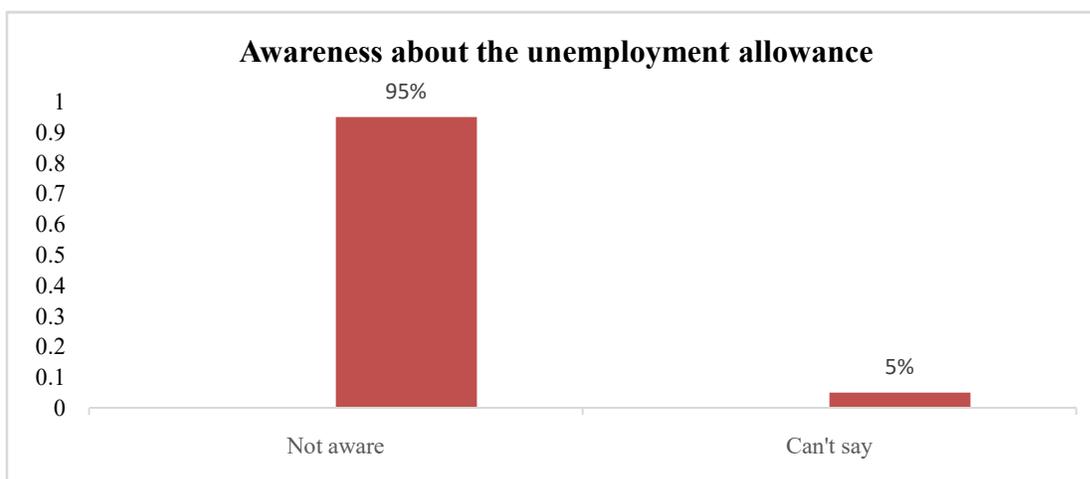


In the three blocks of Papumpare district, out of 100 women beneficiaries, 60% of women admitted to know the name of the scheme, 20% of women respondents accepted to know the name of the scheme. However, 20% of the women respondents did not say anything about this scheme but they knew that this scheme gives them opportunity to earn wages in every two- three month of a financial year. Lastly, it can be said that most of them admitted due to lack of education creates big problem in their way to understand any government schemes.

Presents the classification of women respondents according to their awareness about the distance of work permitted under the Act;

⁷ibid





Entitlement of worksite

As per the provision Para 18, Schedule II of the Act: “As far as possible, the employment shall be provided within a radius of five kilometers of the village where the applicant resides at the time of applying”. Para 20, Schedule II of the Act: “In case the employment is provided outside the radius specified in paragraph 18, it must be provided within the Block, and the labourers shall be paid ten per cent of the wage rate as extra wages to meet additional transportation and expenses for living”⁸

In the Papumpare district, out of 100 number of women respondents, 65% of women beneficiaries from the three blocks (Doimukh, Sagalee and Mengio) also denied to know about such provision given in the schemes. The women beneficiaries from Doimukh block stated that although they didn’t know about this provision but most of them have no problem to go to work place because most of the works related under this scheme are conducted within their dwelling premise. However, women from Mengio and Sagalee blocks expressed that they faced transportation problem and most of the time, they have to bear their own travel expenses. They also confirmed that till date they did not receive any extra wages for transportation and remaining 35% of women respondents choose not to comment on this question.

Presents the classification of women over the aware about facilities given in the worksites as per the Act;

A. Entitlement of worksite facilities

Para 23, Schedule II of the Act: “The facilities of safe drinking water, shade for children and periods of rest, first aid box with adequate material for emergency treatment for minor injuries and other health hazards connected with the work being performed shall be provided at the work site”⁹. From above table it is clearly shown that in the three blocks (Doimukh, Sagalee and Mengio) of Papumpare district, overall, 100% of women respondents are denied to get any of the worksite facilities mentioned in the scheme, neither there is rest room for babysitters nor they get fresh drinking water arranged by implementing agencies. They also explained that till date no one ever received any medical aid for any kind of injury in worksites from the department as per the provision prescribed under MGNREGA.

Presents the classifications of women respondents on getting their wages on time under Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA);

A. Entitlement to receive wages within 15 days

⁸Annual Master Circular, 2021:27, retrieved from <https://rural.nic.in>.

⁹Annual Master Circular, 2021:80, retrieved from <https://rural.nic.in>.

Section 3 (3) of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA provides that “Save as otherwise provided in this Act, the disbursement of daily wages shall be made on a weekly basis, or in any case not later than a fortnight after the date on which such work was done.” All delay in payment of wages beyond 15 days after closure of muster roll shall attract a penalty as per Para 29 of Schedule II of the Act¹⁰.

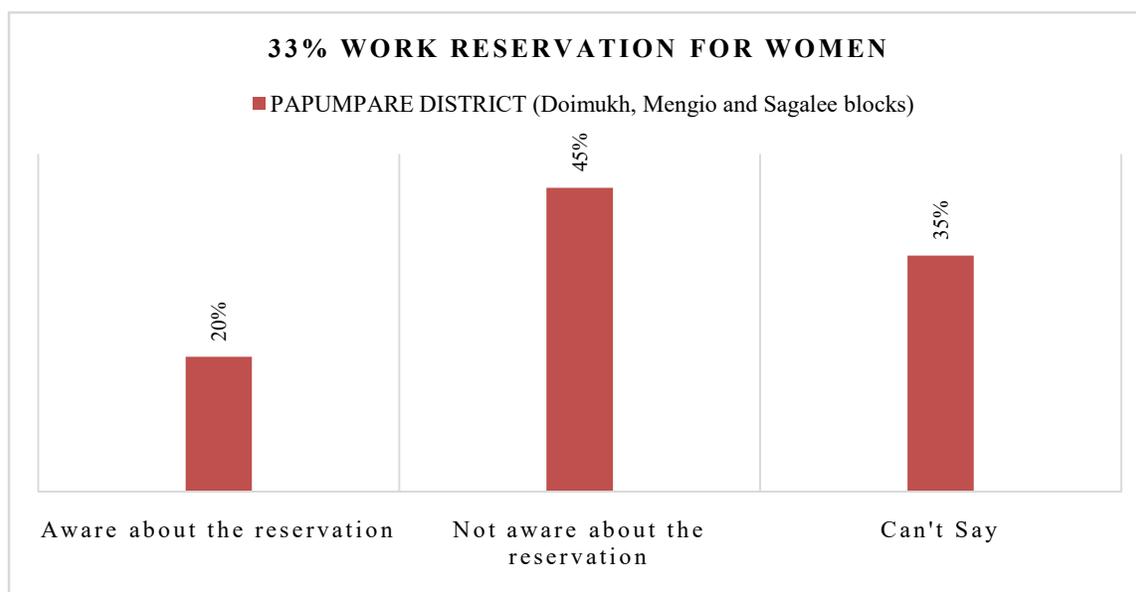
In the above, it shown thatIn the three blocks of Papumpare district, out of 100 women respondents, 40% of women beneficiaries accepted that they get their payment within 15 days of work whereas 20% of women responded that sometimes it takes two-three months to get their payment, 30% of women beneficiaries claimed that it takes four to five months to get their wages and remaining 10% of women denied to comment on this question because they are not aware when wages are credit in their account.

Presents the women respondent’s awareness about the provision of unemployment allowance given under MGNREGA;

Sources: Compiled by researcher from field survey

A. Entitlement to get unemployment allowance

It can be said that out of 100 samples of women respondents, 95% of women respondent from three blocks (Doimukh, Sagalee and Mengio) of Papumpare district opined that they did not know about the provision of unemployment allowance prescribed in the scheme, whereas 5% of women respondents didn’t say anything about this scheme. The women from these three blocks stated that because of lack of education, negligence from implementing agencies and society’s patriarchal attitudes towards women are some of the reasons which deprived women from information empowerment.



Sources: compiled by researcher from field survey

Presented distribution of women respondents about 33% of employment reserved for them under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act;

A. As per Schedule II, Section 6 of MGNREGA, “it mandates that a minimum 33% of the beneficiaries are to be women who have registered and have requested for work”¹¹.

¹⁰Annual Master Circular, 2021:82, retrieved from <https://rural.nic.in>.

¹¹ Ranjan, Annita, *MGNREGA and Women Empowerment*, Ocean Books Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi,2016, p110.

In the district of Papumpare, out of 100 samples from three blocks Doimukh, Sagalee and Mengio, 20% of women admitted to know about work reservation for women given in the act, whereas 45% of women accepted not aware about the mentioned provision and remaining 35% of women beneficiaries choose not to say anything on this question out of confusion.

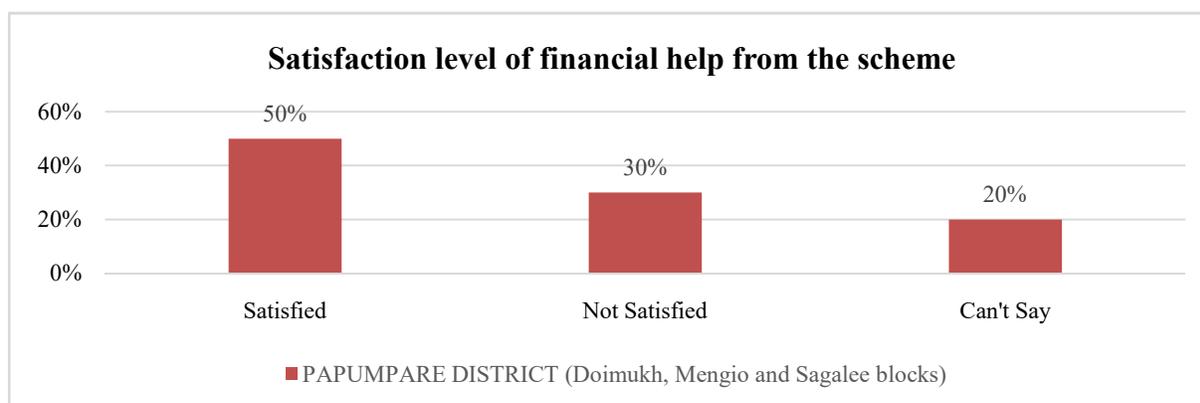
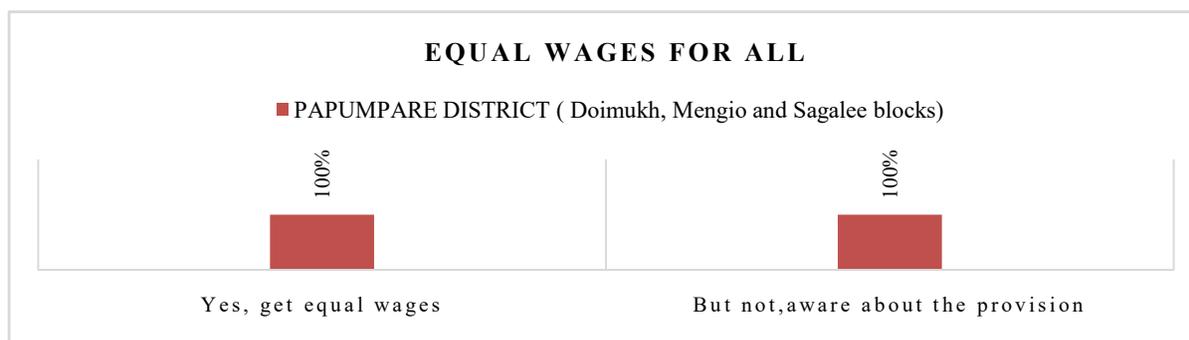
Presented the distribution of women beneficiaries according to their awareness towards the provision of equal pay for equal work given in the Act;

Sources: Compiled by researcher from survey

As per the schedule II, section 34 of MGNREGA, “equal wages for men and women without any discrimination”¹²;

It is very cleared from above graph that total sample of 100 accepted that they are getting equal pay of wages whereas they also admitted that not to aware about such provision provided under this scheme.

Presented the distribution of women to understand the level of financial help get from the programme;

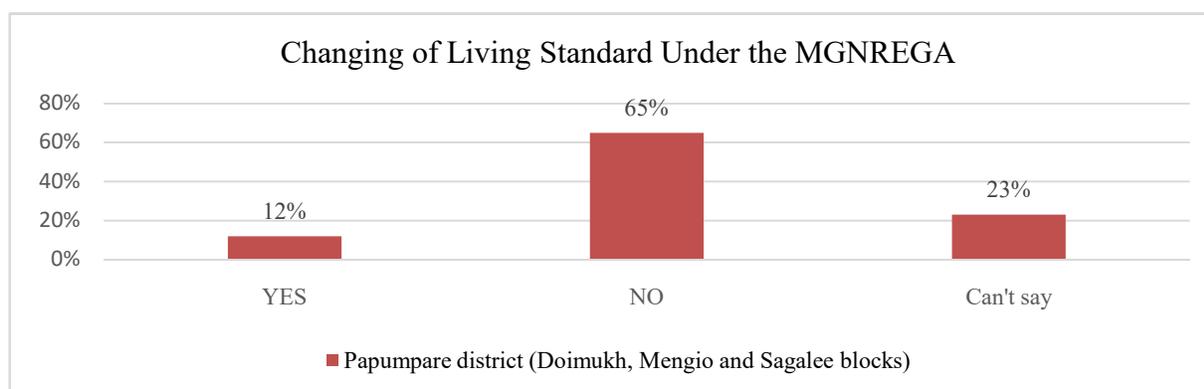


The above figure presented the detail of response of 100 women beneficiaries taken from three blocks of Papumpare district (Doimukh, Sagalee and Mengio), where out of 100 women respondents, 50% of women beneficiaries expressed their satisfaction towards the scheme, whereas 30% of women expressed that they are not satisfied with the financial aid getting from the wages because the labour charges in the scheme is less and in such small amount of financial aid, even they are unable to buy enough food to feed their large families.

Presented the distribution of women based on their change of living standard under the scheme of MGNREGA;

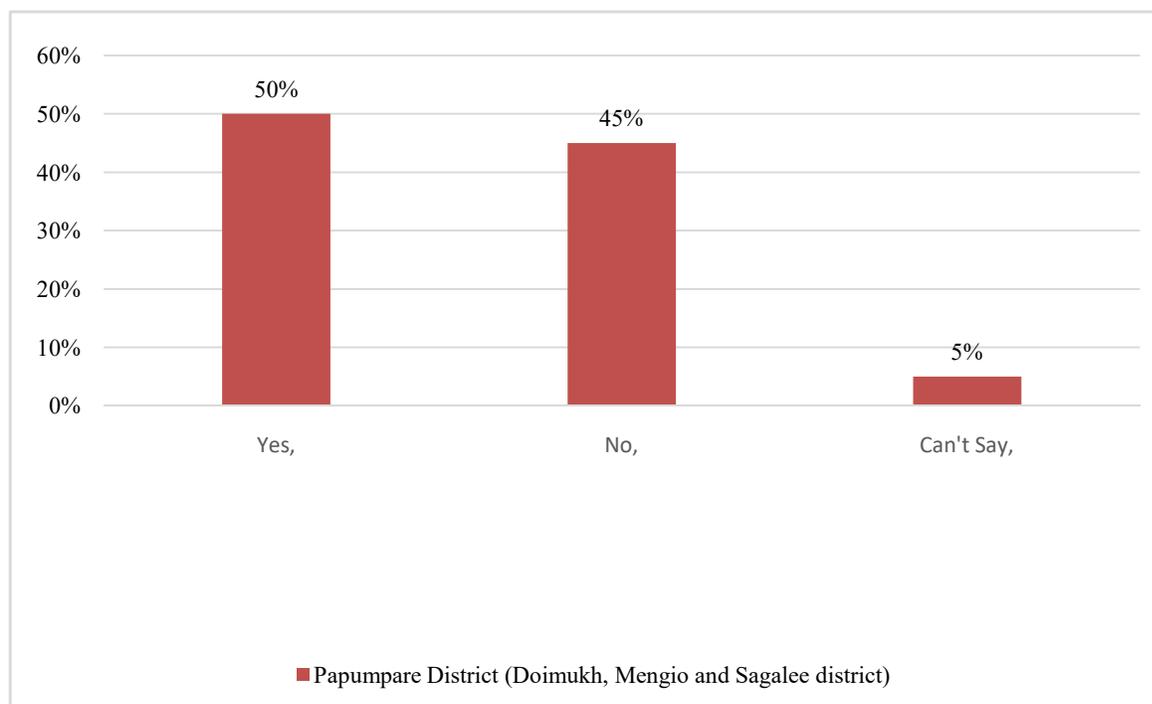
Sources: complied by researcher from field survey

¹² Azeez, Abdul, N. P. and Akhtar, Jawed, S.M., *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act: provisions, Implementation and Performance*, New century Publication, New Delhi, 2015, p10.



The figure also presented out of 100 women beneficiaries from three blocks (Doimukh, Sagalee and Mengio) of Papumpare district, 12% of women accepted that it helps them to bring small changes in their living standard by saving the wages for two- three years and after that they used these amounts to do small business. Now they are getting help from the money after invested in small business at least to have little comfortable life, whereas 65% of women beneficiaries denied to have any change in their living standard. Even they stated that because of less amount, sometimes they are not able to buy sufficient number of necessary items for their family. Finally, remaining 23% of women beneficiaries denied to say anything on it.

Presented classification of women about facing problem in the worksites under the scheme of MGNREGA;



Sources: Compiled by researcher from field survey

The graph also presented out of 100 women beneficiaries from Doimukh, Sagalee and Mengio blocks of Papumpare district, 50% of women agreed to have problem in worksites because of bad road condition, heavy rainfall and no proper place for defection; whereas 45% of women admitted not having any problem in worksites and remaining 5% of women did not say anything on this question.

Presented the classification of women about their opinions towards the important of the scheme in their life;

SL. No	Districts	Fulfilment of daily requirements		Total Number of women respondents	Overall opinion towards scheme				Total Number of women respondents
		Yes	No		Very Good	Good	Average	Can't say	
1	Papumpare (Doimukh, Sagalee and Mengio)	50%	50%	100	20%	20%	55%	5%	100

Sources: Compiled by researcher from field survey

While in three blocks of Papumpare district (Doimukh, Mengio and Sagalee), 50 % of women are admitted that scheme is very helpful for them. It helps them to buy their daily needs, they could afford stationaries for their children and they also used this wage for their medical expenses. However, they admitted that for fulfilment of their daily needs, one should use their wages in judiciously way, whereas 50% of women respondents from these three blocks of Papumpare district expressed their dissatisfaction for the schemes. They also admitted that payment is very less whereas price of every item is so high at present, so it is very difficult for them to rely on wages of MGNREGA. Therefore, the scheme is failed to fulfilled their daily requirements.

Again, out of 100 samples only 20% of women have been admitted the scheme is very good for them especially for rural uneducated and unemployed women. It helps them to earn some amount for their family and also helps them to make their own decision while buying their necessary items. At the same time, 10% of women have found this scheme only good enough to purchase some needful items for their families and 55% of women agreed it is neither very good nor bad but average for them because wages given under this scheme is very low especially during this phase of price hikes of every product. Lastly, remaining 5 % of women didn't say anything but they also advised for hikes of wages under this scheme will really helpful for them.

MAJOR FINDINGS

It is found that majority of women from Mengio, Sagalee and Doimukh blocks of Papumpare district are not aware of special provisions provided for women workers. They for blamed it to the negligence attitude of implementing agencies towards them and lack of education also one of the reasons which deprived them from empowerment of information.

In Mengio, Doimukh and Sagalee blocks of Papumpare district claimed that women faced lots of problem in worksites because of bad road condition, heavy rainfall create fear of landslides in terrain area, no proper place for defection and no shed for women to breastfeed their infant babies are might be some reasons that male workers are more in compare to female worker in Arunachal Pradesh under this programme.

Researchers discovered that MGNREGA empowered rural women in a limited sense by requiring them to chip in with family spending and shoulder the financial burden of their children's healthcare and education. Women are also beginning to show signs of becoming more involved in rural public life, such as showing up to the Gram Sabha meetings that are part of this program.

However, in the economic sphere, scheme seems to be successful in providing self-reliance to women workers but it could not make any other complementary change in their socio- political life. Therefore, it can be said that although MGNREGA empower rural women to strengthen their bargaining position in the household but broad concept of empowerment is yet to achieved.

Policy Implications

Since most of the women workers from three blocks of upper of Papumpare districts complained that the rate of the wage is very low under the MGNREGA which would never help them to live standard life. As under

section 6(1), it is notified to state government shall fixed the rate of wage as per different types of work, different seasons and at the same time. In order to ensure that women, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities have equal opportunities to participate in productive employment, a separate schedule of prices for these groups will need to be developed. As a result, the state government did something by considering this timetable and prioritizing women.

Although the state government is required to establish a grievances cell in accordance with section 19 of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), no such entity has been established as of yet. In a letter dated 10 March 2017 and received by the Secretary of the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj of Arunachal Pradesh on 11 April 2017, the directive to establish a grievances cell and appoint an Ombudsperson for each district was issued by the Department of Rural Development of the Government of India, Ministry of Rural Development, Mahatma Gandhi NREGA Division. Hence, it may be one of the reasons till date workers from each two districts did not find any way to put forward their grievances and remained totally confused about the scheme too.

For the proper implementation of special provisions provided for women and increased the number of women workers, the state government need to adopt Kerala like model. In Kerela, state government has placed management of worksites and mobilization of women worker in the hands of women’s self-help groups. Therefore, state government of Arunachal Pradesh should direct all the Panchayat Raj institutions for better implementation of MGNREGA shall work in partnership with reputed women NGOs or Self-help group, so at least this group could fulfil the proper implementation of provision like child care at worksites, providing drinking water, first aid kits for workers. These mechanisms could also play a role to educate the rural women to know about their rights given under this scheme and even to demand for works.

In most of the study, it has been found that lack of awareness among women workers is one of the reasons which pull them back from empowerment. So, apart from role of women NGOs, wide publicity like mobile announcement using mikes, door to door campaign, wall paintings relating to various provisions of MGNREGA shall do by using local dialect along with Hindi and English language at an appropriate location suitable for public view and road hoarding about the features, objectives, institutional structure and various provisions of MGNREGA. At the same time, programme like Sarkar Apke Dwar could also play a role of awareness mechanism by providing one day counselling on importance of MGNREGA among rural people in general and women in particular.

Conclusion

In the present study, it has been very cleared that the broad concept of empowerment is very far behind for women of Doimukh, Sagalee and Mengio blocks of Papumpare district. Although wages are very low and number of working days are not enough but MGNREGA has given small opportunity to women of three blocks to take up the responsibility of their households need, take care of school fees of their children etc. which means because of this scheme, rural women are now self-reliance financially in domestic field but not in societal arena.

Within patriarchal societies such as Arunachal Pradesh, the indigenous population views women's empowerment primarily in terms of educational attainment, occupational mobility, dress freedom, and, most importantly, the choice of a life mate. On the basis of this myopic view of empowerment, the majority of patrilineal root-defenders in India have long extolled the virtues of tribal cultures' supposedly long history of gender inclusivity. Broader notions of empowerment, such as political power, social standing, and economic security, are not available to women in tribal culture. As a concrete example, consider the political representation of Arunachal Pradesh, a tribal state. Out of 60 required assembly members, only four are women. Moreover, since the state's achievement of independence in 1987, there has never been a female MP from this region.

The study concludes that rural women in the Upper Subansiri and Papumpare districts, specifically in each of the three blocks, do not gain substantial political, social, or economic empowerment through programs like the

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). At most, these programs offer a minimal opportunity to meet the basic needs of families and children. The empowerment they received allowed them to stop relying on their male partners and take charge of their families. While rural women in other regions of India may find empowerment in being able to rely on themselves, indigenous women in Arunachal Pradesh do not need this empowerment as they already possess it. In order to empower women in Arunachal Pradesh, men and women alike must work together, focusing on mutual engagement rather than confrontation, and using an intersectional strategy to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

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