



MNREGA Means For Economic And Social Development Of Rural Women Opportunities And Challenges (With Reference To Bokaro And Ramgarh Districts Of Jharkhand)

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Abstract

Jharkhand is the 28th state of India, created on November 15, 2000, by separating it from Bihar. Despite its abundance of mineral resources, it lacks adequate industrial infrastructure and modern agricultural techniques, resulting in unemployment and poverty. Rural areas, particularly, face challenges such as job scarcity and poverty, further exacerbated by inadequate support for farmers.

The state and central governments have launched several schemes aimed at improving the economic and social status of women in Jharkhand. However, despite these efforts, women's condition remains unsatisfactory. One of these initiatives is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MANREGA), introduced on February 2, 2006, which targets economic and social development in rural areas. The study examines the scheme's impact on women in Bokaro and Ramgarh districts, highlighting challenges and offering recommendations for improving its implementation.

Keywords

Jharkhand, MANREGA, Employment, Agriculture, Women, Economic and Social Roles

Introduction

Jharkhand became the 28th state of India on November 15, 2000, after being separated from Bihar. Despite its formation as a separate state, it continues to face challenges due to a lack of industrial development despite its abundant mineral resources. The agricultural sector also suffers from inadequate modernization and infrastructure, leading to unemployment and poverty in rural areas.

As per the 2011 Census, Jharkhand has a total population of 3,29,88,134, of which women constitute 1,60,57,819, accounting for 48.68% of the population. Women play a vital role in the economic and social development of any nation, and their contribution is indispensable to building an individual, a family, and a society.

Women have a significant role in creating a harmonious, cultured, and progressive nation. For this, it is essential to make them economically and socially empowered. Realizing this need, both the Central and State Governments have implemented numerous schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana, National Urban Livelihood Mission, Women's Empowerment Center Scheme, Free Sewing Machine Scheme, and Ujjwala Yojana, among others, to promote gender equity and enhance the socio-economic conditions of women.

Similarly, in Jharkhand, various schemes have been implemented to economically and socially uplift women. Some notable ones include the Widow Pension Scheme 2024, Sakhi One Stop Center Scheme, National Urban Livelihood Mission, Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awas Yojana 2020, and others. In addition to these, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MANREGA), launched on February 2, 2006, was introduced in rural areas to address unemployment and poverty. It aimed to empower rural areas by developing basic infrastructure while providing consistent job opportunities to the impoverished, especially women, SC, and ST communities.

MANREGA is a rural employment scheme where eligible applicants can request work and are guaranteed a maximum of 100 days of work annually. During emergencies like drought or natural disasters, this extends to 150 days. The scheme ensures that at least 33% of employment opportunities are allocated to women. Additionally, it prioritizes SC, ST, and backward caste women.

This initiative has significantly contributed to generating new employment opportunities for women in Jharkhand. As a result, it has positively impacted their economic and social standing. However, women still receive fewer job opportunities compared to men under this scheme. Various factors, such as education, social structure, and workplace limitations, contribute to this disparity.

By addressing these challenges, MANREGA can become more effective in promoting sustainable development for rural women in Jharkhand.

Literature Review

1. **Central Institute of Fisheries Education (2009):**
In a study report titled Employment and Empowerment of Women under MANREGA in Maharashtra, it was concluded that MANREGA has significantly contributed to the empowerment of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) women. However, challenges like delays in wage payments and inadequate workplace facilities remain significant obstacles.
2. **Ritika Kheda and Nandini Nayak (2017):**
In their article, Women Labor and Rural Employment Guarantee Act, it was highlighted that while contractors benefited from the scheme, there was an urgent need to increase women's participation to achieve gender equality in the program's operations.
3. **Seema Parik and Ashok Parik (2016):**
This study showed that MANREGA positively influenced social harmony, caste integration, and community unity in rural areas. It emphasized that the program played a vital role in uplifting marginalized women economically and socially. However, issues like lack of political awareness and limited resources led to a lack of efficiency in its implementation.
4. **Dasgupta, Sukti and Sudarshan and Ratna M (2021):**
Based on NSSO data from 2004-2005 and information from MANREGA's official website, it was observed that women's economic conditions had improved due to the scheme. The participation of women in the scheme exceeded that of men in several rural areas, indicating its effectiveness in empowering women economically.

Research Objectives

1. To provide information about programs launched by the central and state governments for women's economic and social development.
2. To conduct a comparative study of the impact of MGNREGA on women's development in Bokaro and Ramgarh districts.
3. To identify the benefits of MANREGA for women.
4. To identify the challenges and shortcomings of the scheme and offer suitable solutions.

Research hypothesis

1. To present research center contains information about various schemes related to women run by Jharkhand government .
2. MANREGA scheme reveals the status of economic and social of women(in research area Ramgarh and Bokaro district)
3. Women's economic condition improvements due to employment opportunities provided through MANREGA schemes .
4. Comparative study of MANREGA schemes provide information about shortcomings of MANREGA, which can be removed to make the scheme more effective.

Study Area and Timeframe

The study focuses on the Bokaro and Ramgarh districts of Jharkhand and covers data from the financial years 2018-2019 to 2022-2023.

Significance of the Research

1. Awareness for Women: The study raises awareness about various government programs aimed at empowering women.
2. Improved Economic and Social Conditions: It highlights the economic and social improvements achieved through MANREGA.
3. Understanding Challenges: It identifies the scheme's main challenges in the two districts and provides recommendations for improvement.

Analysis and Findings

Economic Development:-The impact of MGNREGA on women's economic development is analyzed through the following aspects:

Employment Opportunities:-Under MANREGA, 33% of the beneficiaries must be women. This ensures economic and social inclusion for marginalized women, including those from Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC).

In rural areas, the scheme has enabled women to earn livelihoods, contributing to their economic stability and increasing their income.

Women employed under the scheme have reported higher earnings and improved financial independence.

Employment Days for Women (Year-wise)

Years	Bokaro	Ramgarh
2018-2019	35.11	39.02
2019-2020	39.78	40.74
2020-2021	40.38	43.87
2021-2022	45.88	46.95
2022-2023	52.90	47.34

From 2018-2023, Bokaro recorded a total of 214.05 employment days, while Ramgarh reported 217.92. This shows that Ramgarh has provided slightly more job days compared to Bokaro.

Income Growth:-With the advent of MANREGA scheme, women and man receive equal wages, whereas in other sectors there is a difference in wage rate of man and women .wage rate per capita employments affect income.

In Bokaro district, from the financial year 2018-2019 to 2022-2023, the per capita employment day is 214.55 and in Ramgarh it is 217.92. Ramgarh district has more per capita employment days compared to Bokaro. Due to more employment opportunities , increase in income has direct impact on the social life and standard of living of the workers.

The local wage rate differs from market rates, but it still has a significant positive impact on rural women's earnings.

Agricultural Sector Development:-Under the MANREGA scheme , priority is given to works related to agriculture , which provides long term employment opportunities to people. Work related to water collection and storage , land leveling under land development and making barren land fertile ,works related to micro drainage comes under agriculture schemes of MANREGA.

Due to the predominance of agriculture in rural areas, MANREGA has an important contribution in the development of agriculture in Ramgarh district, since it is an agriculture dominated district. In Ramgarh district more work related to land reform and development of micro irrigation was done, As a result of increase in agricultural work ,women also got employment and their earnings increased. Increase in income has helped to uplift family condition and social condition of women.

Banking and financial information:-There is a provision for transferring the wages and unemployment allowance of women working under MANREGA scheme directly into the saving account of bank and Post office.

Due to predominance of banking related activities , Women participating in MANREGA gain exposure to financial systems through direct wage transfers into their bank accounts, increasing financial literacy.

Social Development: humans are social animals. The main factor play a role in social developments are education , health , employment , gender inequality , caste system, cleanliness etc.

Impact on Health and Hygiene:- Various projects are carried out under MANREGA scheme for health and hygiene for people , it includes constructions of drains along the road side , construction of soak pits to prevent the flow of stagnant water and production of compost manure for proper disposal of natural waste.

From 2018-2023, hygiene-related projects were higher in Bokaro due to its larger population density. In last 5 years work completed related to cleanliness for disposal of garbage are as follows . 795 works completed in 2018-19, 776 works in 2019-20,2873 works in 2020-21 , 2942 works in 2021-22 & 609 works in 2022-23. Whereas in Ramgarh 1 work completed in 2018-19 , 05 works in 2019-20 and 489 works in 2020-21, 1089 works in 2021-22and 313 works in 2022-23 .

Its very clear from the data , that more cleanliness related work were completed in Bokaro and during COVID pandemic more cleanliness related works were completed during 2020-21 and 2021-22.

Employment :- The nature and position of any person's employment affects their economic condition as well as social status . Women getting employment through MANREGA scheme strengthens their economic condition. Increase in income leads to better family condition, respect in community and standard of living as well.

Poverty:-Through the MANREGA scheme , women in rural areas gets employment under unskilled labour. Employment eliminates both unemployment as well as poverty . Employment in rural areas and increased income have improved the respect and standard of living in the family and society .Since more employment is provided to women in Ramgarh district compared to Bokaro district. This eliminated poverty and unemployment in rural areas.

Impact on gender inequality and casteism :- Under MANREGA scheme men and women work together in the same workplace with each other's co-operation and without any discrimination. As a result caste based discrimination has reduced to a great extent and support for each other helps in reducing gender based discriminations.

Change in traditional role :- with the advent of the MANREGA scheme , women of rural area joining the scheme with the aim of increasing employment and income. As a result of which along with participating in social work, women are also playing an important role in strengthening politics and panchayat raj.

Challenges in Ramgarh District:- Ramgarh district is an agriculture dominated district and more than 75% of people are engaged in agricultural works. They earn their livelihood by working on it, but due to lack of advanced means and proper irrigation system for agriculture, people are not employed throughout the year. As a result there is unemployment , poverty and illiteracy .

There is poverty and unemployment in Ramgarh district due to lack of cottage industries and small scale industries and non-availability of other means of employment.

Due to lack of higher education and technical education institutions percentage of literacy in rural areas is low, as a result of it there is lack of awareness .

Challenges in Bokaro District:- Bokaro is an industrial district people of rural areas are not getting any benefit under MANREGA. Instead of paying attention to these schemes , they migrate permanently in search of permanent and regular employment. People from rural areas do not pay much attention to agricultural works under MANREGA, As a result of which work related to micro irrigation schemes and land development works has been reduced. In Bokaro district attention of MANREGA officers and employers towards land development are comparatively less .

Similarities between Ramgarh and Bokaro District

1. Both Bokaro and Ramgarh saw a decrease in employment opportunities.
2. In both the district women employment was less than men .
3. Problem of migration has been observed in both the district .
4. There is lack of facilities at work place under MANREGA scheme.
5. There is lack of awareness due to lack of education in rural areas.
6. In the research area , there are problems identified in MANREGA scheme like shortage of employees , lack of finance , delay in wage payment.
7. Due to social constraints and conservative thinking participation of women is less.
8. Under MANREGA scheme , unskilled employment is given only for 100 days throughout the year.

Challenges Identified in MANREGA scheme

Lack of Permanent Employment Opportunities: In the MANREGA scheme, less employment compared to the demand and there is lack of regular and adequate employment opportunities. While the scheme provides temporary jobs, it lacks provision for stable, long-term employment.

Delayed Wage Payments: Due to lack of sufficient budget in MANREGA scheme and lack of timely budget allocation, MANREGA workers do not get wages in time. Many workers face delays in wage disbursements due to administrative inefficiencies.

Inadequate Workplace Facilities: There is no facilities provided at workplace under MANREGA scheme. Women having younger kids are not able to leave their children at home and go to work due to lack of proper facility and security. Women often struggle with insufficient facilities such as childcare centers and secure working environments, affecting their participation.

Lack of trained MANREGA employees: employees and officer working under MANREGA in Jharkhand state are contractual and not trained. Due to lack of training and being on contract they are not paying full attention on MANREGA activities and Program. As a result MANREGA is not managed properly.

Illiteracy and Lack of Awareness: Most of women in rural areas are illiterate and do not have information about MANREGA and other employment related programs run by government. As a result significant portion of rural women remains unaware of their rights, benefits and entitlements under the scheme.

Corruption and Irregularities: The problem of corruption in MANREGA is a serious problem which has been clarified by various researchers through their research works. Cases of corruption and irregularities in job allocation and wage payments have been reported. Major reason for corruption is lack of employment, lack of awareness and employee not getting adequate and timely salary.

Low wage rate : Under MANREGA scheme, the wage rate in Jharkhand state is quite low and wages are not paid on time. On the other hand unskilled labourers gets higher wages in the local market. Wages are not paid in cash and unskilled worker find it complex to deal with banks due to low education or no education. As a result unskilled poor workers are less inclined towards MANREGA scheme.

Recommendations for Improvement in MANREGA scheme

Diversify Employment Opportunities:

Increase employment opportunities, Along with agriculture opportunities, the scheme should incorporate skill development programs such as animal husbandry, poultry farming, cottage industry, handicrafts, and small-scale industries such as 'papad', pickles etc. to enhance job prospects for women.

Fertile Land developments:

Barren lands can be made cultivable by planting precious and fruits bearing plants.

Adequate and on time allocation of funds :

The central government should allocate adequate budget and on time budget for Jharkhand state government.

Training for MANREGA Employees and officers :

Regular training and permanent employment should be employed for working under MANREGA

Strengthen Infrastructure:

Build childcare centers, health facilities, and safe workspaces to encourage greater participation from women. There should be proper arrangements of toilets, rest rooms for MANREGA workers. Regular inspection on infrastructure must be done to maintain the facilities.

Timely Payment of Wages:

Ensure timely wage payments through improved administrative processes and accountability mechanisms.

Spread Awareness:

People should be made aware of the scheme by wall writing , drama and by paying door to door visit and spreading awareness in their local languages .

Corruption Control Measures:

Implement stricter monitoring and grievance redressal mechanisms to minimize corruption.

Modern Awareness Campaigns:

Conduct localized awareness programs and use of Technology to educate women about their rights and the benefits of the scheme.

Sending SMS, IVRS whatsapp messages , Videos on awareness .

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