

**CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT INDEX:  
AN IMPACT STUDY OF MGNREGA IN KAITHAL  
DISTRICT OF HARYANA**

**Mrs. Mukesh Chahal**

Assistant Professor & Research Scholar, Babu Anant Ram Janta College  
Kaul Kaithal & NIILM University, Kaithal

**ABSTRACT:**

Poverty and unemployment remain the main issue in India. These issues are mostly found in rural areas. The Government of India has been formulating various programs for rural growth and poverty eradication. One such programmed is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), a successful program in promoting gender equality, empowering women, and creating long-lasting infrastructure in rural areas providing employment. The basic objective of this study is to explain the impact of MGNREGA on women empowerment in the study area. The study was conducted in the Kaithal district of Haryana covering a sample of 100 beneficiaries. The collected data has been analyzed using simple frequency and percentage analysis, descriptive analysis, and correlation analysis. The results have revealed that the program was successful in empowering the women of the district.

**KEYWORDS:** MGNREGA, Women empowerment, Income, BPL, Right to work, Poverty.

**INTRODUCTION:**

The serious problem of our country is the problem of poverty and underemployment rather than unemployment. In spite of being one of the fastest economies in the world, in India still now 21.92 per cent population is below the poverty line (RBI Report, 2012). Several poverty alleviation and employment generation programmes were introduced by the successive government of India. However, those schemes had not effectively and efficiently implemented to reduce poverty and increase adequate remunerative employment. The problem of unemployment is only confined to rural areas particularly

among the rural women. As a result, the living standard of the people in rural India especially women population is very low. Women in India constitute more than 49 per cent of the total population of the country (Census Report, 2011). So, they are regarded as the better half of the society. Our society, particularly the rural society, is still male dominated and women are not treated as equal partners, both inside and outside the four walls of the house. The rural women are the most silent participants of economic development of India. Women of poorer segments of society are deprived because of poverty, illiteracy and ill health. They need employment due to come out of vicious circle of deprived condition. Under the circumstances, government of India had initiated a new employment generation scheme known as National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in 2005. This scheme was introduced for the betterment of women empowerment and development of rural population. One such program is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) which has been a successful program in promoting gender equality, empowering women, and creating long-lasting infrastructure in rural areas by providing employment. The program was implemented firstly in the year 2006 and has managed to sustain and be successful despite many political changes.

#### **CONCEPT OF MGNREGA:**

Government of India initiated a new employment generation scheme in 2005 which is called National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). This Act was first started in 200 selected districts on 2nd February, 2006 and was increased to 130 additional districts during 2007-08. This Act spread all over the country on 1st April, 2008. From October, 2009 the government of India changed the name of this scheme and renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. It was a significant way towards the realization of the 'right to work' and to extent the livelihood security of the households in rural areas of the country. By this scheme at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment are provided in every financial year to every family whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. By adult we mean a person who has completed his/her 18 years of old. By unskilled manual work we mean any physical work which any adult person is able to do without any special skill. This scheme is implemented by the Department of Central Government or a state Government, a Zila Parishad and Gram Panchayat. According to NREGA Act, the share of the Central government is 75% of the total fund and the same for State government is 25%. There are many characteristics of

this scheme among them one is that at least 1/3 of the workers must be women. Panchayati Raj Institutions plays an important role for monitoring this scheme.

### **CONCEPT OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:**

Actually there is no fixed definition of women empowerment because it is a multidimensional concept, i.e., it is used in several meanings. Different experts and different disciplines use the concept of empowerment differently. The dictionary meaning of the word 'empower' is “to give power or authority to someone. It is an intrinsic quality of a person, which cannot be bestowed by a third party. In a nutshell, empowerment is a process which enables one to gain power, authority and influence over others. Some of the experts explain the concept of empowerment as follows:

According to Batliwala (1994) empowerment is a process of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of power. The author has described that empowerment is the enhancement of power. Kabeer (2001) defined empowerment as “the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them”.

Women empowerment means to let women survive and let them live a life with dignity, humanity, respect, self-esteem and self-reliance. According to Pillai (1995), women empowerment is an active, multidimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. Power is neither a commodity to be transacted nor can it be given away as alms. Power has to be acquired and once acquired it needs to be exercised, sustained and preserved. As described by Kabeer (2001) there are two essential elements of women empowerment, i.e., process and agency. A process is defined as the series of events that produce gradual change. The process of women empowerment leads to expansion in their ability to have resources and to make strategic life choices. The agency element of women empowerment describes that women themselves are the significant actors in the process of change. It is the process through which choices are made. Empowerment cannot be offered by a third party rather it has to be claimed by those who would become empowered. Women will be empowered when they will have full control over their own life.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

There are so many studies on Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act(MGNREGA) and women empowerment. In the present study, some studies have been mentioned.

Vanitha and Srikantha(2011) considers that the MGNREGA women participants had better control over family expenditure, savings and social participation and participated more in household management decisions and financial management decisions compared to the non-participant women. The reason the authors cited is, the participation in MGNREGA gave them more confidence as they earned their own livelihood and also had opportunity to mingle and work with other people in the society. According to authors MGNREGA has been successful in providing all the components that pave the way for empowering women. The study found that 31.67 per cent of participant women were highly empowered compared to only 5 per cent in case of non-participant women. This indicates that MGNREGA is enhancing the empowerment of women. Shihabudheen (2013) in his paper looks into the salient features of the Act, its efficacy in empowering rural women, along with its major problems and prospects; The study has shown that there is quite high level of potential for MGNREGA for socio-economic empowerment of women, and reasonable level of political empowerment too.

Arora et al.(2013) analyse the relevance of MGNREGA on women empowerment in their study in Rohtak district of Haryana with 250 respondents through a field survey. Significant benefits reported by the study includes success in raising the level of employment and income of the rural household women, thereby enhancing their purchasing power, satisfaction and confidence etc. 95 percent of the beneficiaries believe that the program enhanced their credit worthiness and 78 percent women believe that they could start saving money only because of the MGNREGA. 76 percent respondents said that they spent wages on regular food and consumer goods.

Lavanya and Mahima (2013) in their study focused on analysing empowerment of rural women through MGNREGA with special references to Palakkad. The findings of the study revealed that women are benefited individually because they are able to earn independently spend some money for their own hands, contribute for their family expenditure. The study concluded that MGNREGA economically empowering women and laying the basis for greater independence and self-esteem. It has become a beacon of light in the empowerment of the rural women and contributed substantially for the increased living and economic conditions.

Xavier and Mari (2014) in their study try to evaluate the impact of MGNREGA on socio-economic empowerment of women in Kalakkanmoi panchayat of Sivaganga district, Tamil Nadu. The study finds that the MGNREGA increases income and expenditure of

the households compared over the pre MGNREGA period and the scheme significantly enhances the social and economic decision making power to women in the men dominated rural society. Hence the scheme ensures improved standard of living of the vulnerable poor, more specifically among women.

Saharia (2014) reviews the economic empowerment of women due to MGNREGA from following angles. Employment opportunity, women as wage earner wage parity, control rights of women in earning from MGNREGA, financial inclusion, bargaining power. The author concludes that some "Gender- Neutral Measures" such as increase in participation of women in planning and social audits of MGNREGA, implementation of better worksite facilities, proper payment of wages, planning of works in phases, speedy grievance redressal etc., will encourage women to demand more work under MGNREGA.

From the above review of literature it is found that MGNREGA has increased the employment, income, saving, expenditure, asset creation and so on. In the present study, it has been focused how much MGNREGA scheme has affected women empowerment.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

The main objectives of this Research paper are:

- To understand the performance of MGNREGA in the study area.
- To explain how much MGNREGA scheme affects women empowerment in the study area.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

The data for the study has been collected from Two villages of Kaithal district in Haryana namely Chandana and titram. From each Village, 50 respondents have been selected based on purposive sampling and the sample size is 100.

The primary data of the study is collected using Questionnaires. The secondary data have also been collected from the official websites of MGNREGA), various research papers, books, and other published sources. The data is analyzed using statistical tools such as simple frequency and percentage analysis, column -chart, descriptive statistics.

#### **PERFORMANCE OF MGNREGA IN KAITHAL DISTRICT:**

Kaithal came into existence in 1989 as a Haryana district. Kaithal district is located in the

northwest of the state. Its north-west border is connected with the state of Punjab, it is connected to Kurukshetra in the north, Jind in the south and Karnal in the east, currently Kaithal is spread over 2317 Sq. Kaithal District is having 277 Gram Panchayats(277 Villages) covering 7 blocks. Kaithal District has 4 Tehsils and 3 Sub Teshil with 277 revenue villages.

The Performance of MGNREGA in Kaithal district of Haryana has been shown in Table 1.1. From the table it is found that a total 0.62 lakh households are issued job cards among them 0.34 lakh job cards are active during the financial year 2021-22.

**Table 1.1: Current Status of MGNREGA in Kaithal District**

Total No. of Job Card issued [In Lakhs]	0.62
Total No. of Workers [In Lakhs]	1.16
Total No. of Active Job Cards [In Lakhs]	0.34
Total No. of Active Workers [In Lakhs]	0.51
(i) SC worker % against active Workers	48.06
(ii) ST worker % against active Workers	0

Source: [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

**Table 1.2 Percentage of number of person days by category wise in Kaithal district**

Year	Person days Generated so far [In Lakhs]	SCs	Other	Women
2016-17	3.2	1.7(53.12)	1.4(43.75)	1.5(46.85)
2017-18	2.9	1.5(51.72)	1.3(44.82)	1.6(55.17)
2018-19	3.2	1.7(53.12)	1.4(43.75)	1.9(59.37)
2019-20	4.2	2.2(52.38)	1.9(45.23)	2.6(61.90)

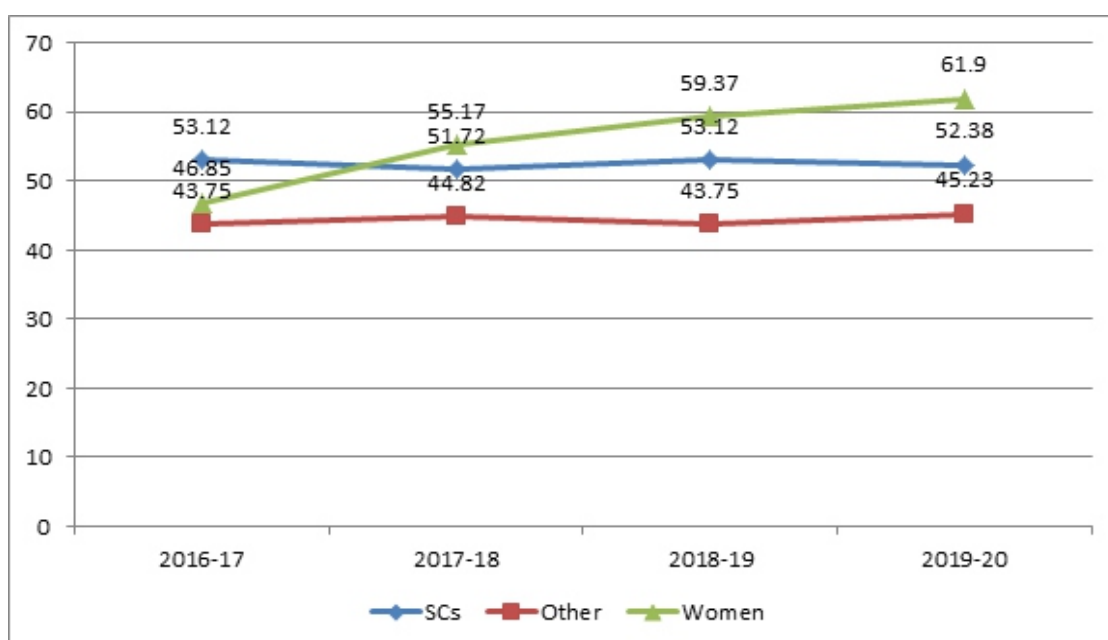
Source: [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

Note: Figures in the parentheses denotes percentages and data in lakh person-days.

In the financial years 2016-17 and 2019-20, the number of person-days generated was 3.2 lakh and 4.2 lakh respectively, out of which 1.5 lakh and 2.6 lakh person days were

generated for women. The status of MGNREGA in the Kaithal district from 2016 to 2020 has been shown in the above table. Women person-days out of a total percentage of women participants are 61.90 in 2019-20. If we compare this data with 2016-17 then we come to know that women workers' participation in MGNREGA has been increased within these 4 years. As in 2016-17 percentage of women participants was 46.85%. Now it has risen up to 61.90%. From the overall data, we can observe that rural women have started more participating in MGNREGA. The percentage of employment provided to women is increasing in all four years. It is shown in the table.

**Figure 1.1 Percentage of number of person days by category wise in Kaithal district**



Source: Based on Table 1.2

**Average wage rate per day per Person**

**Table 1.3 Shows Average wage rate per day per Person in Kaithal District**

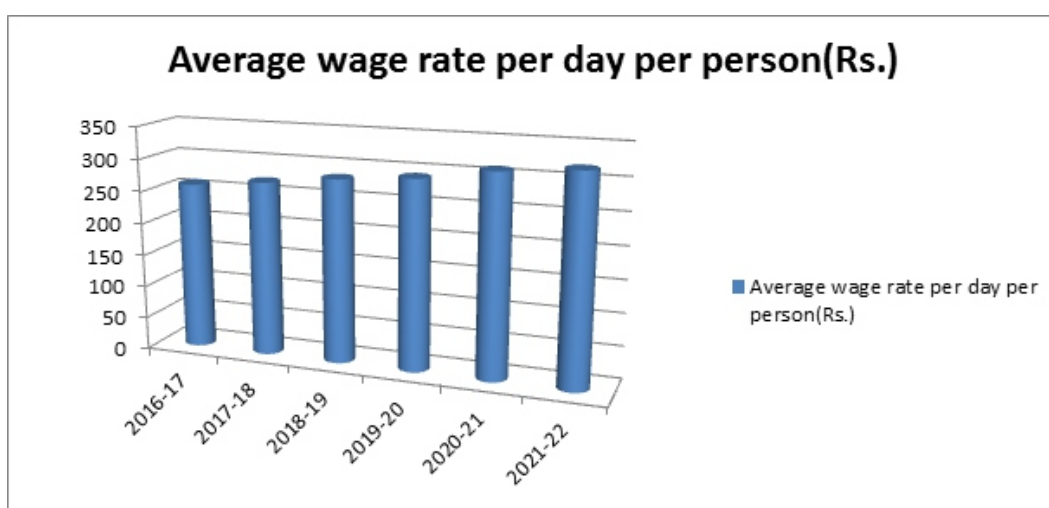
Year	Average wage rate per day per person(Rs.)
2016-17	259
2017-18	270

<b>2018-19</b>	<b>283</b>
<b>2019-20</b>	<b>292</b>
<b>2020-21</b>	<b>310</b>
<b>2021-22</b>	<b>319</b>

**Source: www.nrega.nic.in**

The table 1.3 shows that In the case of Average wage rate per day per person indicates an increasing trend during each financial year. Average wage rate per day per person in 2016-17 Rs.259 and in 2021-22 it increased to Rs.319.

**Figure 1.2 Average wage rate per day per Person in Kaithal District**



**Source: Based on Table 1.3**

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF BENEFICIARIES**

The survey of beneficiaries was done through a questionnaire to find out the economic empowerment of women in the Kaithal district through the MGNREGA program. 50 % of the appropriate sample size of 100 was taken from each village out of a total of two villages in the Kaithal district.

Socio-economic variables in the study include; Income levels, savings, expenditure on various components, changes in control over economic resources the distribution of respondents from two villages and the distribution according to the total sample size are classified below.



**Table 1.4 Socio-economic profile of the beneficiaries Kaithal district  
N=100**

		<b>Count</b>	<b>Column N %</b>
Marital Status	Married	77	77.0%
	Widow	23	23.0%
Caste	SC	80	80.0%
	ST	01	1.0%
	BC	19	19.0%
	General	01	1.0%
Household Occupation	Agriculture Work	0	0.0%
	Landless Laborer	100	100.0%
	Self Employed	0	0.0%
	Other	0	0.0%
Age	18-35 Years	20	20.0%
	36-50 Years	62	62.0%
	Above 50 Year	18	14.0%
Ownership Status of House	Own House	100	100.0%
	Rented House	0	0.0%
	Provided by Employer	0	0.0%
	Other	0	0.0%
Education Level	Illiterate	68	68.0%
	Primary	24	24.0%
	Matric	08	8.0%
	Higher Sec. or Above	0	0.0%
Economic Status of Household Category	APL	32	32.0%
	BPL	68	68.0%
	No Ration Card	0	0.0%

**Source: Primary Data Calculated by Researcher**

An analysis of Kaithal district beneficiaries found that out of the total sample 100, the majority of the beneficiaries were married (77.0%), and the rest were widows (23.0%). According to caste analysis, the maximum was from the Scheduled Caste (80.0%) category and only a few respondents were from the ST (1.0%), BC (19.0%), and General (1.0%) category. It is interestingly seen in the household occupation category that all the respondents in the village were from the family of landless laborers (100.0%). The age-wise classification found that the maximum was in the age group of 36–50 years (62.0%), followed by those aged 18–35 years (20.0%) and above 50 years (18.0%). Frequency

distribution in homeownership suggests that all respondents live in their own homes (100.0%). The education level of the respondents in the village was very low as most of the respondents were found to be illiterate (68.0%). And some respondents were found with education levels of primary (24.0%) and matriculation (8.0%). The economic status of the respondents' families found that the maximum was from the BPL (68.0%) category followed by the APL (32.0%) category.

### **EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MGNREGA:**

Women empowerment means when women are economically as well as socially empowered. Economic empowerment is measured by the ability to control financial resources in the family, earning income on their own, and being self-reliant. Social empowerment means when women are respected in society, have freedom for their own decisions, ability to take household decisions, and are independent.

**Economic Empowerment of women Control over economic resources:** one of the main dimensions of women's empowerment is their control over economic resources. The women who have total control of their economic resources are taken as more empowered than others. In the present study, various indicators used to measure their control over economic resources are their control over their own earning, control over their saving, control over household daily expenditure, control household valuable asset, control Sale and purchase of land /house and Repayment of loan.

### **Impact of MGNREGA on change in the control over the economic resources**

After MGNREGA, control over various economic resources has become additional beneficial to the respondents than the husband of the beneficiaries. It can be seen in the examining table below that prior to MGNREGA only husband (43 %) had maximum control over earnings but now both husband and respondents (76%) remain in control over earnings. Control over savings is now in the hands of the husband and respondents (76%), prior to MGNREGA it is controlled by the husband (43 %). Prior to MGNREGA, the control of daily household expenses was controlled by the respondents (24 %) but now it is controlled by the husband and beneficiary (76 %). Prior to MGNREGA, maximum control over household valuable assets was exercised by the husband (43 %) but now it is controlled by the husband and beneficiary (76 %). Prior to MNREGA, control over the sale and purchase of land/house was controlled by the husband and wife (33%) but now it is controlled by the husband and beneficiary (42 %). Prior to MNREGA,

the control repayment of the loan was controlled by the husband and wife (33 %) but now it is controlled by the husband and beneficiary (42 %).

	Respondent		Husband		Both husband and wife		Others	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
Control over earning before MGNREGA	24	24	43	43	33	33	00	00
Control over earning after MGNREGA	24	24	00	00	76	76	00	00
Control over saving before MGNREGA	24	24	43	43	33	33	00	00
Control over saving after MGNREGA	24	24	00	00	76	76	00	00
Daily household expenditure before MGNREGA	24	24	43	43	33	33	00	00
Daily household expenditure after MGNREGA	24	24	00	00	76	76	00	00
Own and control household valuable asset before MGNREGA	24	24	43	43	33	33	00	00
Own and control household valuable asset after MGNREGA	24	24	00	00	76	76	00	00
Sale and purchase of land /house before MGNREGA	08	08	09	09	33	33	50	50
Sale and purchase of land /house after MGNREGA	08	08	00	00	42	42	50	50
Repayment of loan before MGNREGA	08	08	09	09	33	33	50	50
Repayment of loan after MGNREGA	08	08	00	00	42	42	50	50

## CONCLUSION

From the above results and discussion it can be no doubt said that MGNREGA scheme has played an important role for the livelihood of the rural people by providing at least

100 days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Employment, income, saving, food security, asset creation etc., of the people in the rural area have increased. The secondary data analysis we can observe that rural women have started more participating in MGNREGA. The percentage of employment provided to women is increasing in all four years. MGNREGA has come as a ray of hope for rural families as the primary focus of the scheme is to enhance livelihood security in women. It has a positive impact on the participation and income of the women beneficiaries. The prospects of the MGNREGA for rural development and women empowerment are quite bright provided it is properly executed. The present study analyses how this Scheme is beneficial for the empowerment of women in Kaithal. The study conducted among MGNREGA workers in the Kaithal district shows that this scheme is highly beneficial to poor women. Through this program, they can get better control over their own earning, control over their saving, control over household daily expenditure, control household valuable assets, control Sale and purchase of land /house, and started taking control of Repayment of loans.

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

1. Borah, K. and Bordoloi, R. (2010), MGNREGA and its Impact on Daily Waged Women Workers: A Case study of Sonitpur District of Assam, *Journal of Economics and Finance*, Volume 4, Issue 4, PP 40-44
2. Ahmed, F. and Siwar, C. (2011), Women Empowerment through Participation in Microcredit Programme: A Case Study, *American Journal of Applied Sciences*, volume 4
3. Sarumathi, S. (2011), Role of Microfinance in women's empowerment: An empirical study in Pondicherry region rural SHG's, *Journal of Management and Science*, Vol.1, No.1
4. Sharma, A. (2012), SC/ST employment guarantee: women's empowerment in rural India by MGNREGA, *International Journal of Human Development and Management Sciences*, Vol. 1 No.1
5. Arora, V. and Kulshreshtha, L. R. (2013), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme: A Unique Scheme for Indian Rural Women,

International Journal of Economic Practices and Theories, Vol. 3.

6. Carswell, G. and Neve G. D (2013), Women at the Crossroads Implementation of Employment Guarantee Scheme in Rural Tamil Nadu, *Economic & Political Weekly*, vol xlvi no 52
7. Dass, S. K. (2013), A brief Scanning on performance og MGNREGA in Assam, India. *American Journal of rural development*, vol 1, no. 3, 49-61
8. Puthukkeril, K. R. A (2013), Impact of MGNREGS on Income Generation: a Study of Women Workers in Chengannur, Kerala, *International journal of scientific research*, Vol. 2, issue 12
9. Rahman, M. (2013), women's economic empowerment through microcredit program:A case of Thengamara mohila sabuj sanga in rural Bangladesh, *Journal of business and technology*, volume 8,issue 1 and 2
10. Saravanan (2013), Impact assessment of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme on rural women empowerment, *Golden Research Thoughts*, Volume-3, Issue-2
11. Ahangar, G. B. (2014), Women empowerment through MGNREGA: A case study of block Shahabad of district Anantnag, Jammu and Kashmir, *National Monthly Referred Journal of Research in Commerce & Management*, Volume III
12. Chahal, M.(2020), Impact of Mgnrega on Employment Generation in Haryana,*Journal of Economic Policy &Research*Vol. 16, No.1
13. [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in).