

## Profile of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) Beneficiaries in Thane district of Maharashtra

**Key words :** Employment, NREGS, NREGS beneficiaries, Profile, Rural.

Employment opportunities in rural areas are only seasonal. Eradication of poverty and hunger through generation of employment opportunities in the community has been one of the main goals of planning in India. The true development of any community or society is only possible when the members of that community or society learn to help themselves or in other words when they are being empowered. In a recent report released by the Planning Commission of India, 22.70 per cent of Indians live below the poverty line out of which 75 per cent of the population lives in rural areas. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (2006) is introduced with the very purpose of empowering the rural poor by increasing their buying capacity and making them more self-sufficient.

Many research studies revealed that the profile of beneficiaries was having great contribution in the extent of participation of beneficiaries in the development programmes. Considering the above facts in view, the present study was planned with a specific objective to study the profile of the NREGS beneficiaries.

The study was conducted by following descriptive research design in randomly selected ten villages of purposively selected five talukas of Thane district of Maharashtra. A sample of 90 beneficiaries selected randomly by following disproportionate random sampling procedure. Data was collected through well structured interview schedule. The collected data was coded, classified and tabulated. Finally, Arithmetic Mean, Standard Deviation, Frequency and Percentage were used for drawing conclusions.

The findings revealed that majority (48.89%) of beneficiaries belonged to young age group followed by middle age (43.33%) and old age (7.78%) groups.

The plausible reason for the above trend might be the young and middle aged beneficiaries are enthusiastic, possess more physical vigor and have more work efficiency than older beneficiaries.

The other reason for majority of young and middle aged beneficiaries might be due to long distance of work sites and heavy works taken up under like digging of farm ponds which requires more energy. However, the programme envisages that all the unemployed irrespective of age should be provided with employment opportunities. These findings are in agreement with the findings of Narayanan (2008).

It was also found that majority (53.33%) of NREGS beneficiaries were female and remaining 46.67 per cent were male.

The probable reason for the majority of selected beneficiaries in NREGS works being female is due to provision of 33 per cent reservation for women in total work force under NREGS and lack of employment to women to get employed before introduction of NREGS. Empowerment of rural women through the provision of equal wage employment to men and women is one of the important objectives of NREGS which led to increased participation of women in the NREGS works. These findings are in agreement with the findings of Ramesh and Krishnakumar (2009).

The results revealed that majority (64.44%) of beneficiaries were illiterate followed by secondary education (27.78%), primary education (5.56%), intermediate education (2.22%) and graduation (0.00%) categories.

This clearly shows that majority of beneficiaries were illiterates. As illiterate had no other job opportunities other than labour work, therefore NREGS was mostly helpful to illiterate people. This might be due to their medium annual income, lack of educational facilities at village level, lack of interest and lack of encouragement from family members. Similar trend was reported by Pattanaik (2009).

Which regard to family type, it was clearly indicated that two third (66.67%) of beneficiaries belonged to joint family and remaining one third (33.33%) of beneficiaries belonged to nuclear family.

This clearly shows that the majority of selected NREGS beneficiaries belonged to joint families. This might be due to importance attached to kinship as well as their age old dependency on supplementary labour which is making them to give preference to joint families for economic and social security reasons. This result was in agreement with the findings of Hemalatha Prasad (1995).

Findings reported that majority (57.78%) of beneficiaries had medium family size followed by 32.22 per cent small and 10.00 per cent large family size.

The poor families would have understood the difficulties involved in bringing up too many children with their limited means and thus might have limited their families. There might be good awareness about small family and family planning, which will not only help in improving their health but also help to create better family conditions. Similar trend was reported by Vinay Kumar (2009).

Majority (38.89%) of beneficiaries during farming occupation followed by landless labourer (34.44%) and farming + labourer (26.67%) categories.

The majority of selected beneficiaries were practicing agriculture due to being ancestral traditional occupation and also due to lack of enough educational qualification to get employment. This is reason for them to depend on farming alone and farming + labourer. These findings are in agreement with the findings of Telagalapudi (2004).

The results clearly showed that majority (36.67%) of beneficiaries were small farmers followed by 34.74 per cent landless, 22.22 per cent marginal farmers and 6.67 per cent big farmers.

The reason for possession of small and medium land holding could be due to fragmentation of land because of separation of families. The big land holding might be due to continuation of ancestral property. The sampling area was 100 per cent tribal. The poverty among the people was very high. Due to heavy indebtedness might be most of them became landless. These findings are in agreement with the findings of Manoj (2008).

A cursory look of the Table 1 depicted that majority (71.11%) of beneficiaries belonged to medium income group followed by high (17.78%) and low (11.11%) groups.

The main objective of NREGS is to provide employment opportunities to rural poor in order to improve their economic conditions. NREGS helped

them to cross below poverty line by increasing their income level. It is interesting to note that majority of NREGS beneficiaries was coming under medium and high income groups after the introduction of NREGS. This result was in agreement with the findings of Reddy (1995).

Table 1 revealed that great majority (83.33%) of beneficiaries had medium socio-political participation followed by low (8.89%) and high (7.78%) socio-political participation.

Socio-political participation encourages beneficiaries to establish contact with the support system, which can promote their awareness and knowledge about the various developmental activities. The cent (100.00%) per cent of the selected NREGS beneficiaries came to know about NREGS through their active participation in the Gram Sabha. Low social participation is due to lack of interest and time, lack of perceived benefits and local politics. This result was in agreement with the findings of Manoj (2008).

A bird's eye view of the Table 1 indicated that majority (80.00%) of NREGS beneficiaries had medium level of aspiration followed by high (12.22%) and low (7.78%) levels of aspiration.

The level of aspiration of selected NREGS beneficiaries showed that they had many aspirations. After introduction of NREGS, most of them had expressed their willingness to improve their house condition, higher education to their children, their agricultural productivity and their income level in the future, etc. Most of the beneficiaries had mentioned that the improvement will take place as long as the NREGS is continued scheme. Similar trend was reported by Samuel (2000).

From the above findings it could be concluded that young people and females participation in NREGS works were more. NREGS is providing employment to illiterate people those who are not able to get employed. NREGS provides 100 days employment to each rural household. It is more beneficial to nuclear family than joint family. This study findings revealed that majority of beneficiaries belonged to joint family. Hence, Government should have to take it into consideration and to form some policies, so that the joint and nuclear family will get equal benefit. The income, social participation and level of aspiration were found medium to high in the majority of beneficiaries might be due to effective implementation of NREGS.

Table 1. Distribution of selected NREGS beneficiaries according to their profile characteristics

(n= 90)

Sl. No.	Variables	Categories	f	%
1	Age	Young age (18-35 years)	44	48.89
		Middle age (36 - 58 years)	39	43.33
		Old age (> 58 years)	7	7.78
2	Gender	Female	48	53.33
		Male	42	46.67
3	Education	Illiterate	58	64.44
		Primary education	5	5.56
		Secondary education	25	27.78
		Intermediate education	2	2.22
4	Type of Family	Graduation	0	0.00
		Nuclear family	30	33.33
5	Size of Family	Joint family	60	66.67
		Small (< 4 members)	29	32.22
6	Occupation	Medium (5-8 members)	52	57.78
		Large (> 9 members)	9	10.00
		Farming	35	38.89
7	Land Holding	Landless labourer	31	34.44
		Farming + Landless labourer	24	26.67
		Landless	31	34.44
		Marginal farmer (< 2.5 acres)	20	22.22
8	Income ( $\bar{X}$ = Rs. 16230, $\sigma$ = Rs. 3090)	Small farmer (2.6 – 5.0 acres)	33	36.67
		Big farmer (> 5.0 acres)	6	6.67
		Low (< Rs. 13140)	10	11.11
9	Socio-Politico Participation ( $\bar{X}$ = 3.8, $\sigma$ = 1.3)	Medium (Rs. 13140 – Rs. 19320)	64	71.11
		High (> Rs. 19320)	16	17.78
		Low (< 2.5)	8	8.89
10	Level of Aspiration ( $\bar{X}$ = 17.59, $\sigma$ = 3.67)	Medium (2.5-5.1)	75	83.33
		High (> 5.1)	7	7.78
		Low (< 13.92)	7	7.78
		Medium (13.92-21.26)	72	80.00
		High (> 21.26)	11	12.22

f = Frequency,      % = Percentage

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