Chapter VI

Summary and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

Series of Schemes, one after another, with an aim to provide wage employment to the manual workers in rural areas had come into operation both at national level and in States ever since India adopted a planned process of development in the wake of attainment of independence from British rule. However, except the State of Maharashtra that experimented for some time the idea of replacing a Government orchestrated rural employment scheme by a full-fledged law providing for the workers entitlement to manual jobs as a matter of right, the country on the whole experienced the implementation of a series of schemes, each given a distinct title along with a specific set of physical targets and financial allocations. The latest instances of such schemes operating at national level prior to the enactment of NREGA are SGRY (Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana) and NFFWP (National Food For Work Programme).

The rich experiences of drought-relief measures undertaken in Rajasthan and Maharashtra provided the base for considerations behind MGNREGA.

6.2 Need for Wage Employment

The experiences of similar wage employment programmes could not able to yield desired objectives and, as a result, the rural employment scenario (unskilled wage employment) was suffering still suffering from lack of opportunities and gradually building pressure on urban area in search of employment. The severe droughts on one hand and depletion of natural resources eroded the base for wage employment opportunities in rural areas. This also severely affected the small and marginal farmers who eke out their
livelihood with seasonal agriculture activities (during rainy season) and as agriculture/casual laborers in non-agriculture season. Further, the agriculture sector went through series of modernization and mechanization processes and thus reducing the labour component as well, especially from the large-farm holdings. As a result, the wage earning capacity of rural land-less poor in particular was fast eroding. This situation was much severe in backward districts.

On the other hand, the Economic Reforms – though resulted in faster economic growth – resulted in positioning more gains for the richer rather than the poor.

This resulted in altering the ad-hoc approach to addressing the rural unemployment issue and also the need for social security in more authentic manner.

These gave rise to two important ideas behind MGNREGA. The first one was ‘assured employment as a social security measure’ and the other one was ‘to keep employment schemes under rights framework. The attention on social security emanated from the fact that Indian economy has been growing rapidly with increasing inequalities. The thinking behind in this regard was MGNREGA may take care of the re-distribution quite well.

In view of the reasons cited above, MGNREGA emerged not only as mere providing wage employment but also for addressing issues like creating productive assets, empowering women, reviving local economy, strengthening grass-root institutions, reducing distress migration and protecting environment etc.

6.3 MGNREGA in Brief

The Government of India passed the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 on September 2005. The act was launched in 200 Districts during 2006-07; another 130 are added in 2007-08 and extended to whole country (625 districts) from April, 2008.
The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) aims at enhancing the livelihood security of the people in rural areas by guaranteeing hundred days of wage employment in a financial year, to a rural household whose members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The objective of the Act is to create durable assets and strengthen the livelihood resource base of the rural poor. The choice of works suggested in the Act address causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation, soil erosion, so that the process of employment generation is on a bases of sustainable works suggested in the Act that addresses causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation and soil erosion, so that the process of employment generation is maintained on a sustainable basis.

The act directs state governments to implement MNREGA as a "scheme". Under the MGNREGA the Central Government meets the entire cost towards the payment of wage, 3/4 of material cost and some percentage of administrative cost. State Governments meet the cost of unemployment allowance, 1/4 of material cost and administrative cost of State council. Since the State Governments pay the unemployment allowance, they are heavily incentivized to offer employment to workers.

However, it is up to the State Government to decide the amount of unemployment allowance, subject to the stipulation that it not be less than 1/4 the minimum wage for the first 30 days, and not less than 1/2 the minimum wage thereafter. Hundred (100) days of employment (or unemployment allowance) per household must be provided to the abled and willing workers in a financial year.

6.4 Need for the study

Though originally the MGNREGA was not aimed at empowering women yet the provisions under the act has specific issues targeted at women like equal wages, work-site facilities and so on. Hence, there is every possibility of women empowerment if the programmes is implemented in an appropriated way. Since the present study is aimed at study of process and promotion of MGNREGS in the study area, it has been assumed that the MGNREGS is bound to impact the issues related to women, especially by virtue of their access to equal wages. It
has been assumed that the availability of work within the vicinity of the village, equal wages were expected to impact the level of decision making at homestead by the women in their respective families. This in turn may result in empowerment of women to some extent.

Ashok Pankaj and et al (2010), in their field based study in four states observed that because of equal wages accrued by virtue of participation in MGNREGS, women have realized benefits like income-consumption effects, intra-household effects, capacity building and other related aspects.

Thus, keeping in view, the importance of MGNREGA in the rural wage sectors, the specific nature of works taken up which have emphasis on strengthening agriculture sector and its direct bearing on women empowerment in rural areas, especially among rural women wage seekers, the present study on “Impact of MGNREGS on Empowerment of Women Wage seekers in Andhra Pradesh: A Case Study of Vizianagaram District” was taken up.

6.5 Objectives
The objectives of the present study are as follows:

- To review the literature on rural women empowerment relate to elimination of rural poverty under different five year plans of India.
- To study the various provisions under MGNREGS to ensure participation from clientele group;
- To examine the socio-economic profile of women wage seekers under MGNREGS.
- To study the perception of women wage seekers on the provisions under the Act.
- To analyse the impact of MGNREGS on empowerment of women wage seekers.
- To conclude and suggest some measures to achieve women wage seekers empowerment under MGNREGS.
6.6 Research Setting:

The present study was conducted in Vizianagaram district in Andhra Pradesh. The district was specifically selected on the following criteria:

- The district was part of 1st Phase district and in view of this the district has been implementing the programme for more than five years. This in view, the provisions and programmes under the Act were likely to yield substantial benefits to rural women wage seekers.
- The district has been gaining the top three district position in terms of quantum of employment days provided and also employment days provided to women wage seekers.
- The district was conferred with MGNREGS National Award for the year 2010-11 for its excellence in executing the MGNREGS programme effectively through formation of Shrama Shakthi Sangams (SSS).
- Vizianagaram districts ranks first in the state in effective implementation of SGSY programmes and formation of women federation at district level.
- The district has larger participation of rural women wage seekers and thus providing enough opportunities for rural women wage seekers.

Keeping the above, Vizianagaram district was selected for the purpose of research investigation.

The selection of Mandals was restricted to three in number which have strong performance in regard to quantity of women participation in MGNREGS, number of works completed, and timely wage payments. The same criterion was also adopted while selecting the three villages specifically from each Mandal for the study purpose. Keeping this in view, the study area comprises the following three Mandals viz., of Garividi, Gantiyada and Cheepurupalle. From each mandal three villages were selected they are Baguvalasa, Koduru and Kumaram
from Garividi Mandal, Ramavaram, Budathapalli and Lakkidam from Gantiyada and Cheepurupalle, Alajangi and Ravivalasa from Cheepurupalle mandal, respectively.

6.7 Study Findings

A total of 450 wage seekers were selected for the purpose of the study. From each Mandal, 150 women wage seekers were selected for the study on the random basis from among those wage seekers who have accessed at least 75% person-days of employment.

Based on the data collected through structured schedule and also based on the secondary data as well as personal interaction with the women wage seekers selected, the following were the findings of the study:

A. Socio-economic Profile

- Majority of the wage seekers were in the age group of 31-40 years (40.9%) and little less than one third of them (29.6%) were in the age group of 41 years and above. Thus, slightly more than 70% of the wage seekers were above 30 years old and this trend was expected since majority of the wage seekers were experienced and pursuing labor work for quite some time. Those who belong to below 25 years (8.2%) were comparatively very less. The age group of 26-30 years was represented by 21.3% of wage seekers selected for the study.

- The social groups profile of the wage seekers indicate that more than half of them (68.4%) were from Backward Castes group and then substantially followed by Scheduled Castes (28%) and a negligible representation from Scheduled Tribe community (3.6%). Given the general social group profile of the study area which was more dominated by Backward Castes community, the representation of more number of wage seekers from BC community was quite understandable. Similarly, the area was also
dominated by considerable representation of Scheduled Caste community and hence it was also made substantial representation.

- Majority of the wage seekers were married (94.9%) and unmarried wage seekers were very less (0.2%). However, widows (4.9%) represent considerable number of them.

- Slightly more than half of the wage seekers were educated up to Primary level. Their participation in higher levels of education was quite negligible. For instance, only 11.8% of the wage seekers were educated up to Middle level but further progress in regard to education was quite minimal i.e. Secondary (1.6%) and Higher Secondary (0.2%). Similarly, almost one third of the wage seekers (28.9%) were illiterate.

- Slightly more than three fourth of the respondents (76.8%) were pursuing the principal occupation of Agriculture labour, followed by unskilled labour work among 75 of the wage seekers representing a percentage of 16.7%. Only 17 of the wage seekers reported that they pursue agriculture as principal occupation.

- In most of the aspects of remaining socio-economic profile, the respondents selected for the study were having low level of indicators and thus establishing the factor that the respondents selected for the study were belonging to socio-economically backward sections and hence MGNREGS has considerable role to play in uplifting them.

- The pattern of contribution to annual income of the wage seekers selected for the study had the higher incidence of contribution from MGNREGS wages among the lower income groups and in regard to higher income groups also had substantial contribution. Thus, it can be concluded that the MGNREGS has large influence on the concerned domestic economic issues.
Mixed opinion was observed from among the wage seekers in regard to adequacy of the rural development programmes while meeting the requirements of the poor. On one hand almost one third of them were having strong positive opinion and on the other hand almost equal number of them were having negative opinion. It also reflects that the rural development programmes penetration need to be improved further in the study area.

More than half of the wage seekers (51.7%) responded that the arrangements were not adequate at all. Only 59 respondents (13.1%) responded that the arrangements were just adequate. To sum up, as per the opinion of the wage seekers selected for the study, the administrative arrangements made for implementing the rural development programmes were not in place and consequently implies that they were facing several problems in this regard.

Majority of the wage seekers (71.7%) responded that the MGNREGS field staff were the principal source of information for them whereas other agencies did not make much of the contribution in this regard. For instance, local government officials (4.2%), Panchayati Raj Members (12.2%), fellow wage seekers (10.2%) and others like family members etc. (1.5%) made not much significant contributions in this regard. In other words, the field staff entrenched in the study area made quite a bit of hard work in promoting MGNREGS in the study area.

The local officials did generate awareness on provisions under MGNREGS but the practical awareness was only limited to the issues with which they were concerned either directly or which happens frequently. In other words, the participating wage seekers appears to have lack of awareness on several important provisions and there is need to improve the situation in this regard.
• Few of the wage seekers selected for the study were having total awareness on social audit in the study area. Though nearly half of the wage seekers selected for the study were aware of social audit and this answer reflects that the wage seekers have not really participated in the exercise of social audit as designated by the MGNREG Act. The negative aspect was almost 40% of the wage seekers selected for the study was not having appropriate awareness on social audit. Under these circumstances it may concluded that the wage seekers selected for the study need to be more oriented on social audit and make the implementation of works taken up under MGNREGS more trust worthy.

• Wage seekers selected for the study were having substantial participation in the MGNREGS Works taken up in the study area. Further, it may also be observed that the wage seekers selected for the study were mostly of middle-age group and thus had the immediate opportunity of participating in MGNREGS works. In overall terms, it may also be concluded that the wage seekers selected for the study had substantial exposure to MGNREGS works, provisions, exercising of rights and so on. Thus, the opinions and observations made about the wage seekers seems to have validity in view of the substantial exposure they had in regard to MGNREGS.

• Most of the wage seekers selected for the study were having ‘agriculture labour’ as major occupation. Under these circumstances, the pull-factors for their participation in MGNREGS appears to be in tune with the profile of their occupation. It also reflects that MGNREGS emerged as panacea for the wage seekers to reduce the distress migration to some extent, at least among the female agriculture labour.
B. Process of Participation of women wage seekers in MGNREGS

The observations in regard to process of wage seekers participation in MGNREGS works in the study area, it may be concluded that the following were the major observations:

- The wage seekers did possess tremendous knowledge on various rights and provisions made under MGNREGS
- The level of awareness was principally due to able support the wage seekers received from the field staff working under MGNREGS
- The wage seekers were largely aware of Social Audit and they did participate in the event concerned. However, their participation appears to be not beyond probing level.
- The economic advantages of accessing the employment within 5 km radius, payment of wages within 15 days, Minimum Wages and so on economic features attracted the attention of the wage seekers and these causes were principally responsible for their participation in the MGNREGS.
- The women wage seekers substantially participated in the MGNREGS works and the district administration did excellently well in providing needful wage employment to the wage seekers, especially women.
- Benefits accrued to the wage seekers from the rural development programmes were mostly doing good for them. This can be correlated with the similar positive opinion that were expressed by them in regard to administrative and utility of the programmes being implemented.
• The participation of wage seekers in community based organization was encouraging and it was felt more in regard to those CBOs which yield them direct benefits.

• There is a need to create awareness regularly among the women wage seekers to demand the employment, collect acknowledgement, and participate in VMC (Vigilance and Monitoring Committee) and Social audit in true spirit.

• It is very essential to educate the women wage seekers to complete the assigned task in all respect in order to earn full wages. It is also found that only 60 per cent of wage seekers have reported that wages are timely paid through banking system.

• There is a need to strengthen the Technical staff for timely measurements and payment.

C. **Supporting factors to women wage seekers for participating in MGNREGS**

• Majority of the wage seekers (71.7%) responded that the MGNREGS field staff were the principal source of information for them whereas other agencies did not make much of the contribution in this regard. For instance, local government officials (4.2%), Panchayati Raj Members (12.2%), fellow wage seekers (10.2%) and others like family members etc. (1.5%) made not much significant contributions in this regard. In other words, the field staff entrenched in the study area made quite a bit of hard work in promoting MGNREGS in the study area.

• The important observation was at overall level, the wage seekers seems to have developed essential knowledge on various provisions under MGNREGS.
• Local officials did generate awareness on provisions under MGNREGS but the practical awareness was only limited to the issues with which they were concerned either directly or which happens frequently. In other words, the participating of women wage seekers appears to have lack of awareness on several important provisions and there is need to improve the situation in this regard.

• The wage seekers selected for the study were having total awareness on social audit in the study area. Though nearly half of the women wage seekers selected for the study were aware of social audit and this answer reflects that the wage seekers have not really participated in the exercise of social audit as designated by the MGNREG Act. The negative aspect was almost 40% of the women wage seekers selected for the study were not having appropriate awareness on social audit. Under these circumstances it may concluded that the wage seekers selected for the study need to be more oriented on social audit and make the implementation of works taken up under MGNREGS more trust worthy.

• The women wage seekers selected for the study were having substantial participation in the MGNREGS Works taken up in the study area. Further, it may also be observed that the wage seekers selected for the study were mostly of middle-age group and thus had the immediate opportunity of participating in MGNREGS works.

• Since most of the women wage seekers selected for the study were having ‘agriculture labour’ as major occupation. Under these circumstances, the pull-factors for their participation in MGNREGS appear to be in tune with the profile of their occupation. It also reflects that MGNREGS emerged as panacea for
the wage seekers to reduce the distress migration to some extent, at least among the female agriculture labour.

- Payment of Minimum wages, timely payment of wages, availability of work within the vicinity of their habitations etc. were the factors prompted them to participate in the programme
- The field staff of MGNREGS operating in the study area did excellent job in facilitating several aspects. Especially, in relation to operations in respect of Bank account (73.1%), Social Audit (71.3%) and Job Card preparation (69.6%) the assistance received from the field staff of quite excellent. Similarly, in regard to generating awareness (61.6%), selection of works (55.3%) and applying for works (49.1%) the field staff provided substantial support to the wage seekers as per their perceived opinion.
- The process of participation of wage seekers substantially included exercising of rights by the wage seekers and this was in tune with the level of awareness on rights and provisions under MGNREGS among the wage seekers.

D. **Impact on Empowerment**

- The women wage seekers felt that there has been financial security (74.2%) at domestic level after participation in MGNREGS works. Since the majority of the wage seekers were accessing income from the MGNREGS participation and accessing Minimum Wages as well as equal wages on par with men wage seekers. Hence, these two issues were bound to influence the perception of women wage seekers to develop positive perception in this regard.
- As most of the wage seekers were agriculture laborers, they do not possess technical knowledge on work they have attended in terms of quality and quantitative aspects. While under MGNREGS there has been a provision to access information on qualitative and
quantitative aspects. As a sequel, the participating wage seekers bound to develop technical knowledge on qualitative and quantitative aspects of the works they attended to under MGNREGS. This consistent exposure in turn enables the workers to development needful knowledge and empowers them and this in turn desist them from being exploited. As expected, almost all the wage seekers perceived that the ‘measurement of works’ as their best perceived positive change among 424 wage seekers (94.2%).

- It was quite interesting to find that 416 wage seekers (92.4%) mentioned there has been a positive change in their perception in regard to unity with fellow workers. MGNREGS ensures group participation under the supervision of Mate (supervisor) in regard to specific manual works taken up. As many of the wage seekers selected for the study were having more than three years of exposure to MGNREGS works they seems to have experienced the advantages with the collective work. As a result, majority of the wage seekers felt that the unity with fellow workers has been their one of the perceived positive change. Such change would certainly been empowering factor in strengthening the professional issues associated with women wage seekers.

- Parity in wages was perceived as the most important impact factor among the wage seekers selected for the study.

- Specific working hours prescribed under MGNREGS (95.1%) and Rights to wage seekers (95.3%) were considered to be highly considered as a change factors among the women wage seekers.

- In terms of exercising decision making, the perceived change was recorded at a higher level (65.1%). Most of the respondents among the wage seekers responded they could able to perceive positive change in regard to their say in decision making in a higher positive manner. Those who perceived medium change were 16.7
per cent of the wage seekers. However, sizeable percentage of wage seekers (37.9%) responded that they could not able to perceive any change in decision making.

- At the overall study area level, the positive perception of women wage seekers on the issues of enquiry was more positive. As much as 65.9% of women wage seekers realized that there has been positive change in asserting the five economic issues (viz. occupational activities, Thrift & Savings, Domestic expenditure, Expenditure on self, Withdrawal of cash from wage accounts) identified in this regard. It may also be mentioned that all the women wage seekers were participating in the Self Help Groups for quite some time in the past. Yet, these women felt that their participation in MGNREGS has made substantial change in their positive perception. This can be correlated to the fact that the women wage seekers were substantially contributing the respective family’s annual income. Perhaps this might have contributed substantially to their empowerment.

- With respect to social empowerment around 70 per cent of the wage seekers felt that there has been positive change in their perception to a large extent on issues such as MGNREGS is an opportunity for unity, MGNREGS develops social relationship with fellow workers, MGNREGS works were quite useful to local economic development, Social audit is an important tool for social development. Similarly, in regard to those who were having positive perception but not in authentic manner too were on higher side (23.9%) when compared to similar perceptions in regard to economic empowerment. Even at the overall sample level, the totally negative perceptions (5.4%) were very minimal.

- Three fourth of the wage seekers (75.9%) responded quite positively that the various components of MGNREGS resulted in empowering
them to a large extent. In fact, the wage seekers considered right to employment (89.3%), interventions in agriculture through MGNREGS (84.2%), equal wages (90.2%) were rated very high in terms of positive empowerment among them.

**An Analysis of Impact of MGNREGS on Women Wage Seekers**

**Analysis of the Regression results**

Two regression models linear multiple regression have been estimated for analyzing the nature and size of relationship of independent variables with income of the households before MGNREGS and after MGNREGS. In the model pertaining to income before MGNREGS the following variables are found to be statistical significant at 0.01 percent level. They are education of the respondents, occupation of the respondents, Husband occupation of the respondents, land ownership of the respondents and Number of wage days.

In the model pertaining to the income after MGNREGS the following variables are found to be statistically significant at 0.01 percent level. They are education of the respondents, occupation of the respondents, husband occupation of the respondents, work participation, family size, and number of earning members, land ownership and number of wage days.

These models explain determine the household income before and after MGNREGS. The difference between the two models is that three additional variables are found to be more significant in the latter model (after MGNREGS). They are number of working hours (Work Participation), Family size and number of earning members.
MGNREGS is national programme aiming at improving the overall income of the rural households particularly the women workers. The women participation in MGNREGS is more than 40 percent. This is reflected in the variable work participation which is perhaps the result of the implementation of MGNREGS. One unit increase in work participation (working hours) of women wage seekers leads to 4.60 units increase in income as empowerment of the women wage seekers. Before joining MGNREGS one unit increase in work participation (work hours) of women wage seekers led to 2.12 units increase in income as empowerment of women wage seekers. It is found to be statistically significant at 0.05 percent level.

The second variable which is found to be more significant is the family size as mentioned above this indicates the demographic pressure at the household level. If the number of children for women is more she will not be able to participate in the wage employment. However in MGNREGS there is a provision for looking after the young children at the work site. Hence the sign of the variable is also found to be positive as against the negative sign that is expected in the hypothesis. One unit increase in family size of women wage seekers leads to 4.67 units increase in income as empowerment of the women wage seekers. Before joining MGNREGS one unit increase in family size of women wage seekers led to 2.13 units increase in income as empowerment of women wage seekers. It is found to be statistically significant at 0.05 percent level.

The third variable which is found to be more significant in the latter model is the number of earning members. The greatest advantage of MGNREGS is increase in the number of wage earning workers at the family level income also increases. This is reflected in our regression model which is found to be statistically significant at 0.01 percent level.
after MGNREGS. One unit increase in Number of Earnings members of women wage seekers leads to 4.31 units increase in income as empowerment of the women wage seekers. Before joining MGNREGS one unit increase in Number of Earnings members of women wage seekers led to 2.27 units increase in income as empowerment of women wage seekers. It is found to be statistically significant at 0.05 percent level.

Thus, we can conclude that the incomes of the rural households particularly incomes of women have increased substantially after participating in MGNREGS and their voice in the family have increased which is the real indicator of the women’s empowerment in the rural households.

To sum up the overall observations, it may be concluded that the implementation of MGNREGS and the activities were quite well implemented in the study area. The women wage seekers who were consistently participating in the programme concluded that the parity in wages, availability of works within the vicinity and various provisions under the programme were quite attracting factor to the respondents selected for the study.

As per the perception of the respondents selected for the study, the promotion and process of implementation of activities and provisions under MGNREGS were quite impressive for them. In fact, most of them could able to access the provisions under the programme. The field and other staff attached to the programme have also done excellent job as per their perception.

In regard to the benefits accrued and the process of empowerment among the respondents a positive trends were emerging among them.
The overall impact of MGNREGS in rural women empowerment is depicted in Figure 6.1 considering few important variables; as perceived among the women respondents.

To sum up the overall observations, it may be concluded that the implementation of MGNREGS and the activities were quite well implemented in the study area. The women wage seekers who were consistently participating in the programme concluded that the parity in wages, availability of works within the vicinity and various provisions under the programme were quite attracting factor to the respondents selected for the study.

As per the perception of the respondents selected for the study, the promotion and process of implementation of activities and provisions under MGNREGS were quite impressive for them. In fact, most of them could able to access the provisions under the programme. The field and other staff attached to the programme have also done excellent job as per their perception.

In regard to the benefits accrued and the process of empowerment among the respondents a positive trends were emerging among them.

The overall impact of MGNREGS in rural women empowerment is depicted in Figure 6.1 considering few important variables; as perceived among the women respondents.
Figure 6.1 Impact of MGNREGS in rural women empowerment and Potential Operationalization in the Household and Community

**Economic**

- Women’s control over income; relative contribution to family support; access to and control of family resources

**Socio-Cultural**

- Women’s freedom of movement; lack of discrimination against daughters; commitment to educating daughters

**Familial/Interpersonal**

- Participation in domestic decision-making; control over sexual relations; ability to make childbearing decisions, use contraception, access abortion; control over spouse selection and marriage timing; freedom from domestic violence

**Household**

- Women’s control over income; relative contribution to family support; access to and control of family resources

**Community**

- Women’s visibility in and access to social spaces; access to modern transportation; participation in extra-familial groups and social networks; shift in patriarchal norms (such as son preference); symbolic representation of the female in myth and ritual

- Women’s access to employment; ownership of assets and land; access to credit; involvement and/or representation in local trade associations; access to markets

- Shifts in marriage and kinship systems indicating greater value and autonomy for women (e.g., later marriages, self-selection of spouses, reduction in the practice of dowry; acceptability of divorce); local campaigns against domestic violence
Legal

Knowledge of legal rights; domestic support for exercising rights

Political

Knowledge of political system and means of access to it; domestic support for political engagement; exercising the right to vote

Psychological

Self-esteem; self-efficacy; psychological well-being

House hold

Community

Community mobilization for rights; campaigns for rights awareness; effective local enforcement of legal rights

Women's involvement or mobilization in the local political system/campaigns; support for specific candidates or legislation; representation in local bodies of government

Collective awareness of injustice, potential of mobilization
There have been several positive trends in respect of say in household issues, decision making on social and economic issues, personal issues, children education etc. In other words, the participation in MGNREGS has resulted in enhancing the social and economic benefits to the respondents.

6.8 Suggestions

The MGNREGS implemented in the study area has substantial impact on the women wage seekers, yet there were certain issues which need to be addressed.

In the study district, the women participation in MGNREGS is fairly good in Gram Sabha, Vigilance and Monitoring Committee (VMC) and Social Audit for Identification, Planning and Monitoring of MGNREGS works. However, the participation of women in decision making process needs to be further improved through effective and regular awareness and publicity before the conduct of Gram Sabha, VMC and Social Audit.

Gram Sabha and Social Audit meetings should be planned in consent of the village community availability. Avoid meetings during festival, agricultural operation and marriage seasons, to ensure better participation of women.

The programme has massive participation from women and the social development issues like level of literacy, perception on several development issues etc., have still been need to be improved. In view of this, the ongoing social development programmes need to be dovetailed along with the programme.

The respondents overwhelmingly expressed that the children education has been their top priority. However, their economic status being very low and were in the process of empowering themselves by virtue of their participation in MGNREGS, the government agencies
concerned need to promote the educational awareness programmes more vigorously so as to en-cash upon the enthusiasm and realization emanated from among the workers.

There has been a need to improve the tools and implements facilities especially in terms of women user-friendly implements. In fact, large number of drudgery reduction technologies were emerging in India, the authorities of MGNREGS also need to focus more on technology promotion which do not displace the labour, so that the hardship of heavy labor work in hard and hot conditions can be reduced further. For example: use of pully to lift dug-out soil from the deeper depths and drillers to loosen the laterite and hard soils.

The respondents selected for the study, have expressed positive perception on many a social issues which include health related aspects. This concern need to be followed-up with more number of awareness generation and assistance programmes during the lunch breaks through the mobile medical camps at the worksites on periodical visits.

Most of the participating workers expressed that there has been tremendous increase in their ability to express themselves and also exercise their rights on several personal, domestic, social and economic issues as far as their family is concerned. Such empowerment need to be followed up with suitable savings and thrift programmes, income generating activities, social development programmes etc. so that the women can exercise their newly built awareness and access to their rights in an effective manner and contribute more to their family.

However, to conclude, the overall observations and suggestions, the MGNREGS has resulted in positive impact on the empowerment of women, within the context of the concept adopted for the study, and this has made possible due to regular and consistent participation of women and access to provisions under the MGNREGS. The field and supervisory staff have done excellent job in executing the works and activities under
the programme. The only major intervention that required is convergence of several social and economic development programmes, especially in view of the more unity, unanimity and positive change in the perception of women wage seekers.

Further, there is huge necessity to converge several of health, education, savings and thrift related programmes with MGNREGS so that the perceived positive change among the women wage seekers could be effectively used so as to ensure sustainable social and economic development among the weaker sections.