

Report of Baseline Survey II

Introduction

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was enacted in 2005 after a long struggle of trade unions, worker's movements, women's organizations, civil society groups and was supported by left parties.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA 2005) received the President's assent on September 5, 2005, after being passed by voice vote in Parliament. The bill provides an annual guarantee of 100 days of employment for every rural household in which adults are willing to do manual labour at the minimum wage. It is a landmark in the history of social security legislation in India - or indeed, anywhere in the world. It is path breaking legislation in a country where living wage is a distant dream for millions of people especially in the rural areas.

It is remarkable as the Act provides 33 percent provision for women and pays them equal wages, in a sector where they are not only paid less wages but are also exploited in semi-feudal environment and worse where they are edged out systematically. The Act can be major source of empowerment for women.

When NREGA was introduced in 2005 it was assumed that women will not only form large force of labour force employed under the scheme but the Act will bring major changes in the unorganized labour market where women have a considerable share. This will lead to economic empowerment and a step towards more equality for women.

Five years after the introduction of the Act there are conflicting reports and stories emerging from the various states. Though as per the 2011 indicators women's share in NREGA employment has reached 51.11 percent at the all- India level, many States are violating the Act by failing to ensure that the share of women in NREGA jobs is at least one third. In Uttar Pradesh the share of

women in NREGA employment is only 15.4 percent (as on Jan03, 2011) much below the national average and stipulated share as per the Act. (Annexure 1)

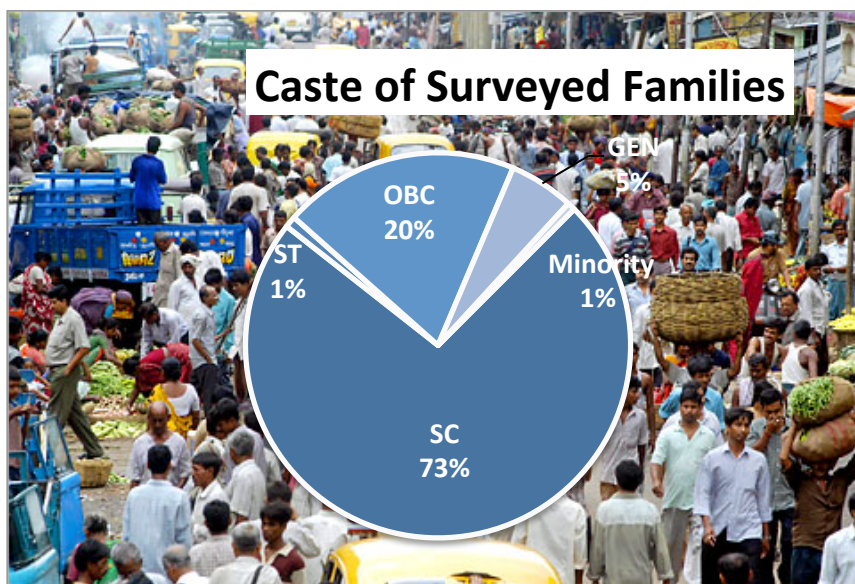
NREGA 2005, Schedule II, Section 6 states, “While providing employment, priority shall be given to women in such a way that at least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested for work under the Scheme.”

Baseline survey II was undertaken to find out the status of dalit women under MNREGA in terms of profile of dalit women, number of days employment was available, issues of violation of the Act and inequity, has MNREGA wages changed the status within family and led to women’s empowerment in order to make relevant intervention in the programme.

The survey was carried on in 84 villages of 6 blocks from 5 districts. Detailed questionnaire was used to carry the primary survey and total 3587 women workers were respondent. (Annexure II)

Profile of the surveyed women labourers and their household

Caste-

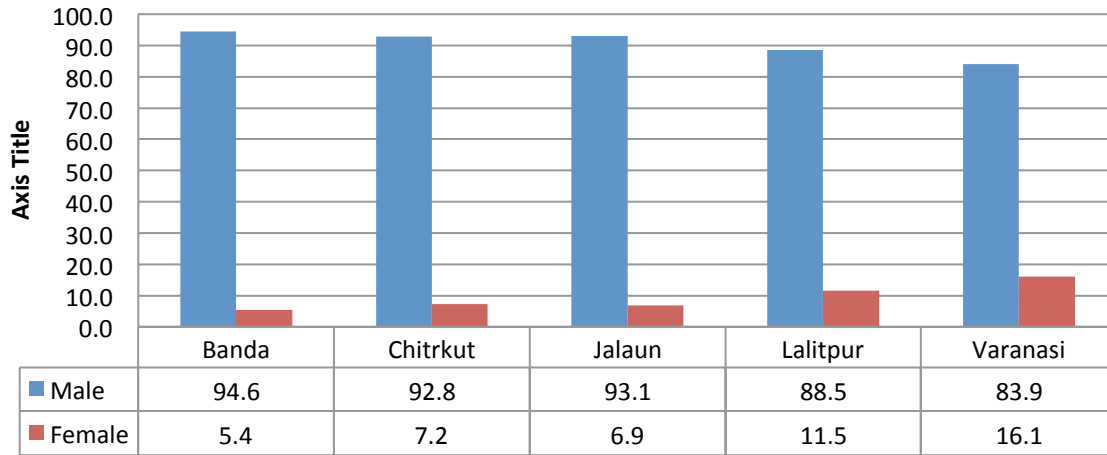


The workers mainly belong to Scheduled caste followed by other backward castes. Very few women from general category are working under MNREGA. These groups are further divided in 22 sub castes (Annexure III).

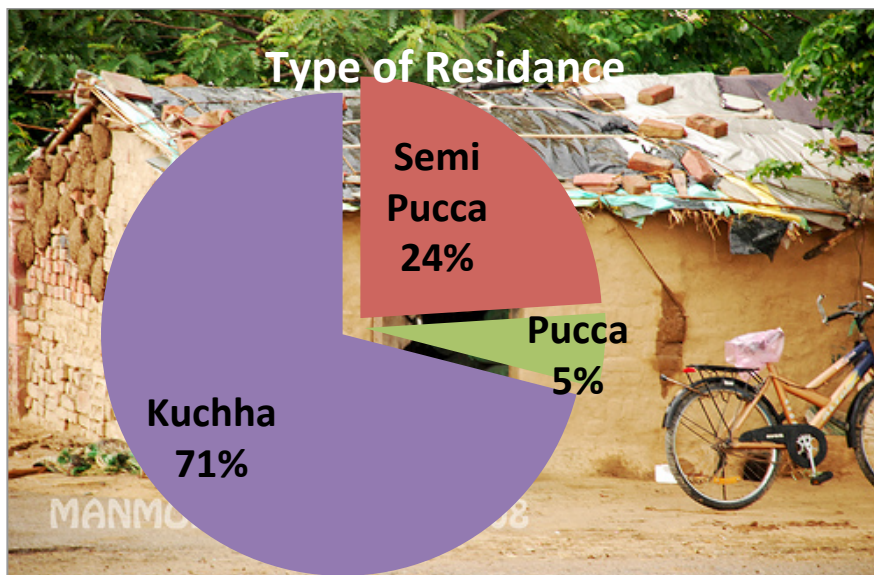
69 percent women are below 45 years old and 78 percent are illiterate and their family size is 6 persons per household. (Annexure IV, A-Profile-table 1, 2, 3)

The head of the household is important criteria as the same name is written as head on the job card and later the same goes as an account holder in banks determining the access to wages from the bank. As seen from the following chart these are mainly male headed households.

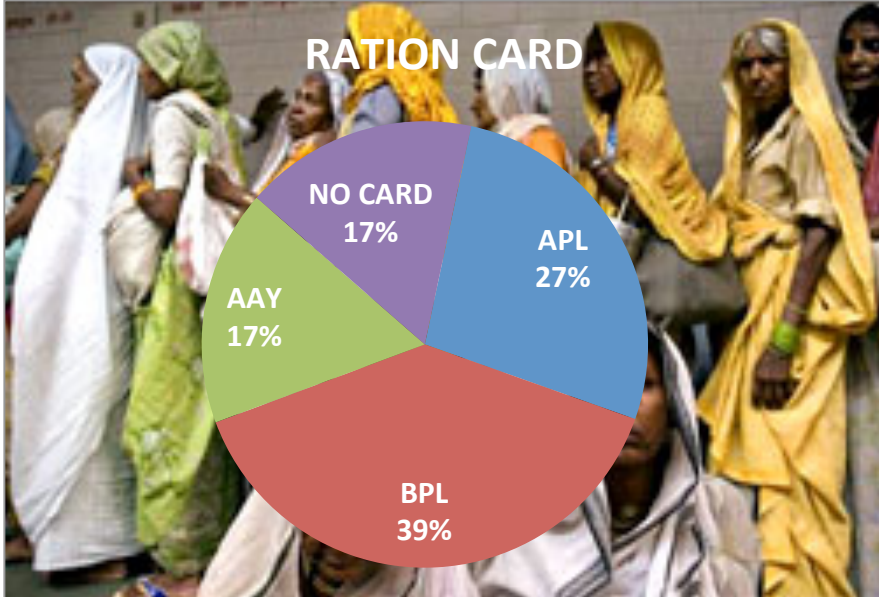
District wise Women headed Households



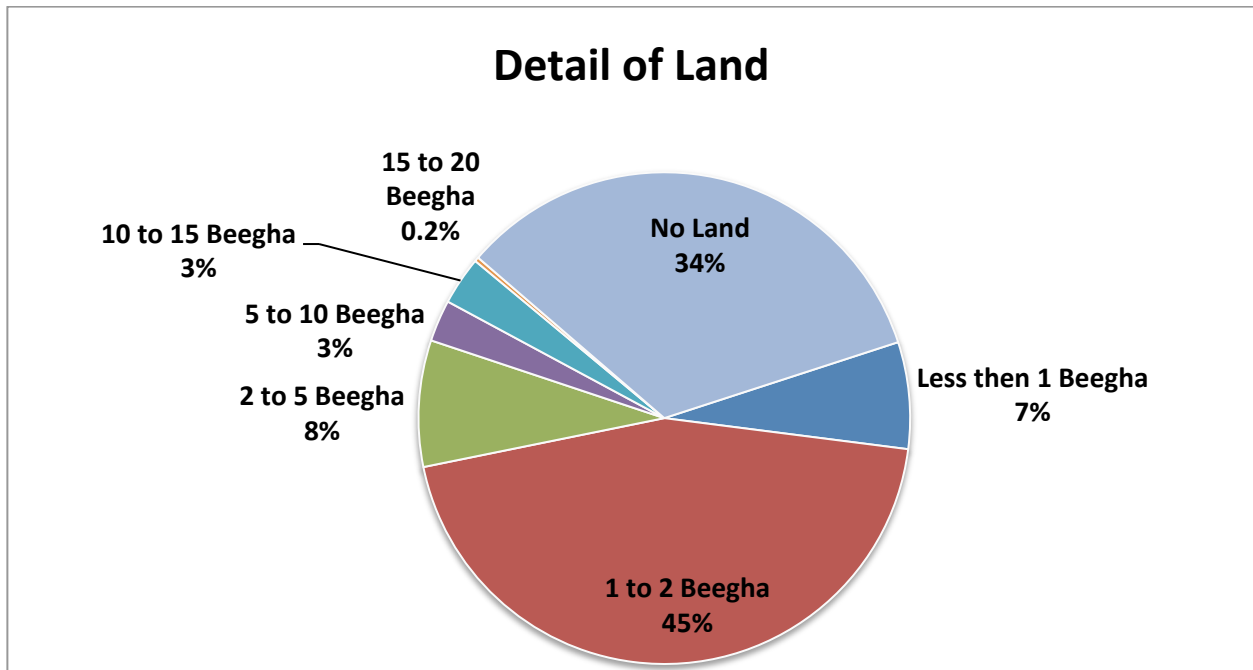
The workers belong to lower rung is also clear from houses they dwell in.



The workers mostly staying in kuccha (inbuilt) houses are also not covered by social security measures. Though workers families are equally covered by all categories viz.(APL –above poverty line, BPL- below poverty line, AAY-Antodaya yojana) the matter of concern is 17 percent category of women workers do not have any card to get the grain in lower prices and are totally left out of social security net.



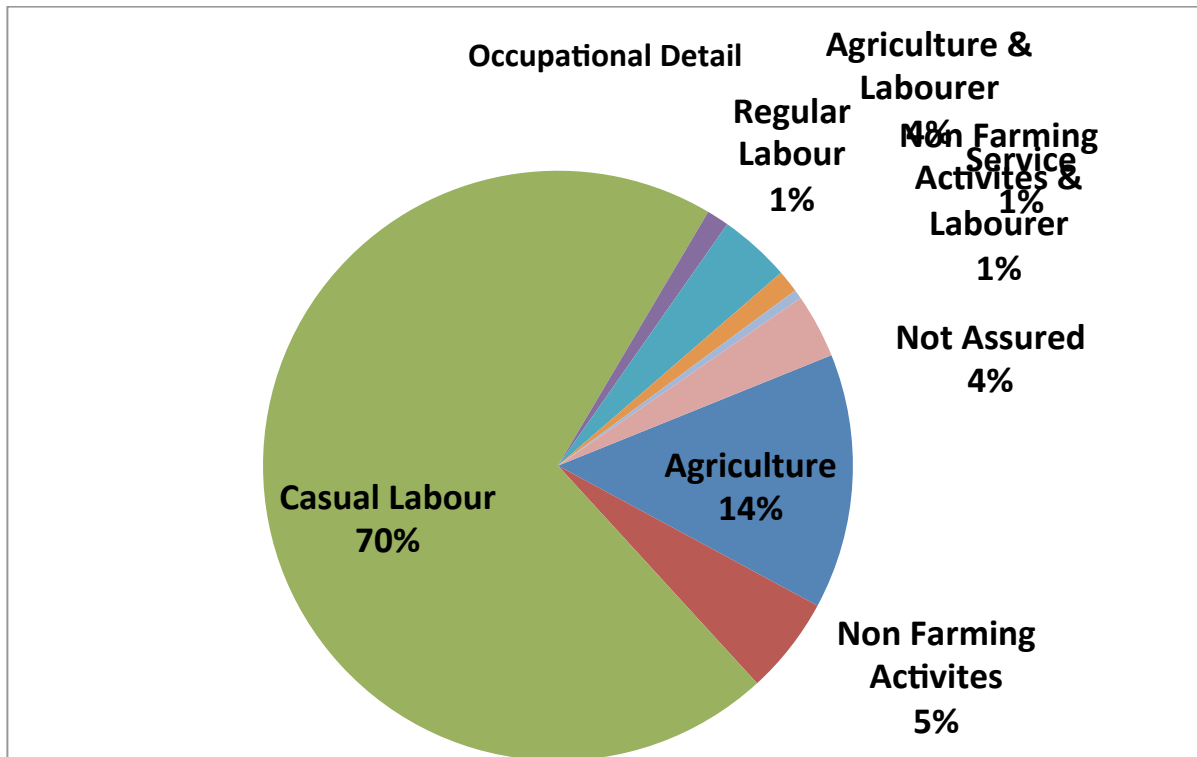
MNREGA was to address workers from rural areas from unorganized sector who do not have any secure source of livelihood. This is vindicated by data fro this survey.



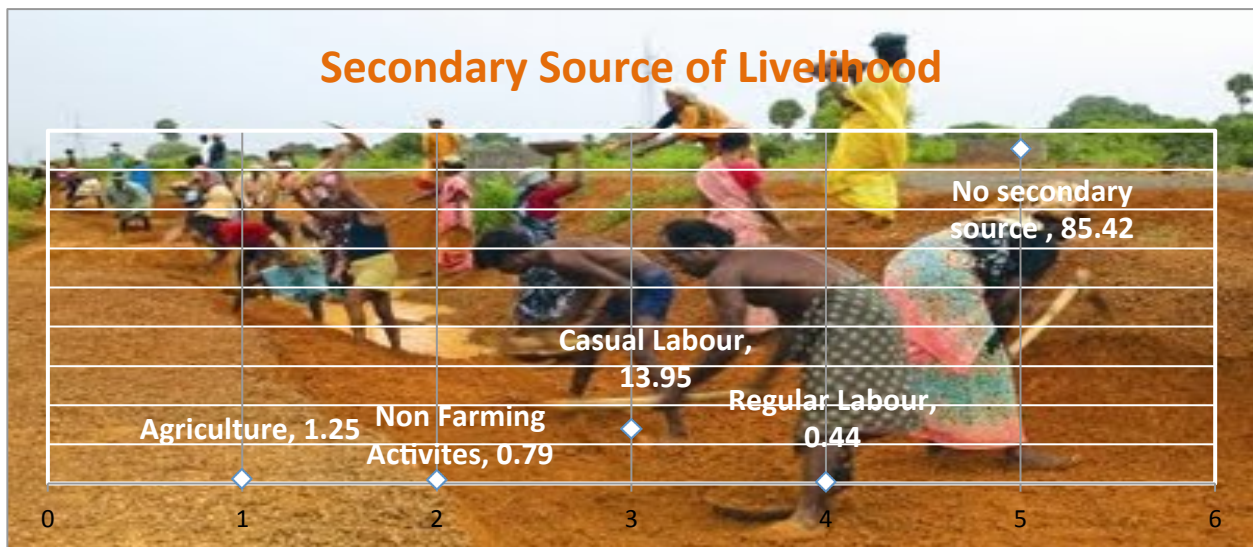
As the above chart shows there are huge numbers in the category of landless. Also the large number workers families have landholding less than 2 beegha (52 percent). As seen from the chart the numbers of workers decreases as land holding increases clearly demonstrating that women workers who are working under MNREGA belong the category of either landless or with smaller landholdings.

They do not have other sources of livelihood is also further strengthened by data on primary and secondary sources of livelihood in following two charts.

Primary source of livelihood



Secondary source of livelihood



As the chart demonstrates large numbers (70percent)are casual labourers and most of them(85 percent) also do not have any other secondary source of livelihood.

Profile at a glance-

- Largely Scheduled castes- 73 percent
- In the range of 25 to 45 years old -69 percent
- Illiterate-78 percent, Higher education-only 1 percent
- Male headed households-85 percent
- Family size-6 persons per household
- Kuccha houses-71 percent
- Ration card-17 percent-no card and 39 percent BPL
- Landless 34 percent and less than 2 bigha landholding 52 percent with only 0.2percent with landholding of more than
- Casual labourers -70 percent

The profile which clearly emerges is of rural poor women who are mainly dalits, illiterate, middle aged, staying in kuccha dwellings in male headed households, and are landless casual labourers without food security.

Issues related to awareness of the Act and its provisions.

NREGA is demand based act. Also it requires high level of people's participation for satisfactory implementation. Hence awareness regarding act is extremely important for realization of entitlements.

Awareness related issues	Aware %	Partially aware %	Totally Unaware %
No of entitled days in a year	17	02	81
Minimum wages	85	04	11
Time period for the payment of wages	08	21	71
Distance of work place	08	21	71
Facilities at worlplace	08	21	71
Quota of women workers	04	08	88

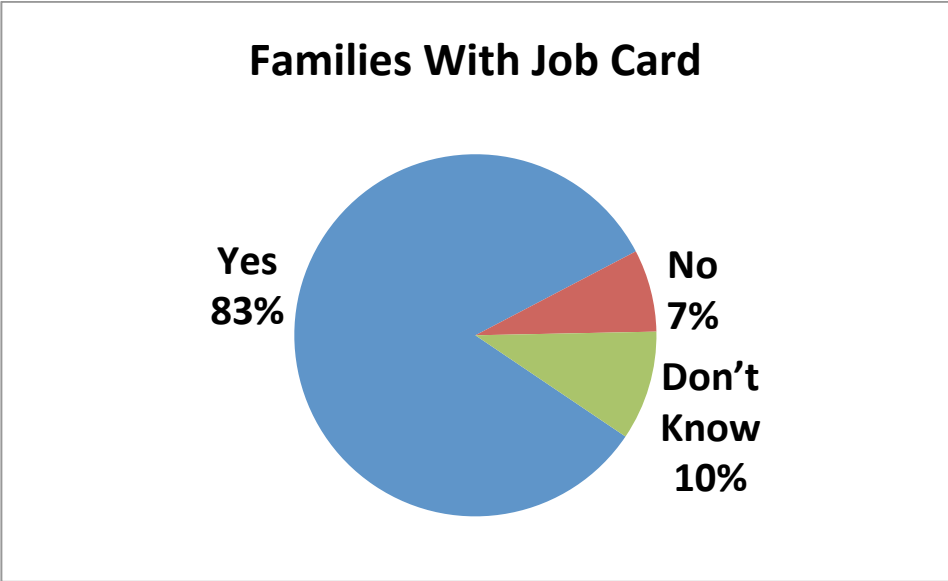
Awareness levels are very low and large no of workers are not aware about place of work, time period for the payment of wages and facilities nor are they very high about wage amount per day.

(Annexure IV-B-Awareness-table 1, 2, 3, 4) aware about no of days guaranteed to them in a year neither are they aware about percentage of women workers entitled under the Act but awareness level is

As we see from the data due to effective campaign through media and use of wall writings etc women are aware about basic provisions such as no of days and minimum wages (as these were catchphrase into simple jingles) but as they are tested on further complicated provisions their awareness quotient reduces.

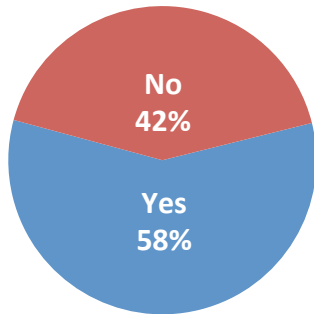
Issues related to job card

Job card is like passport for workers in MNREGA. It is basic document with workers where all records related to her employment are maintained.

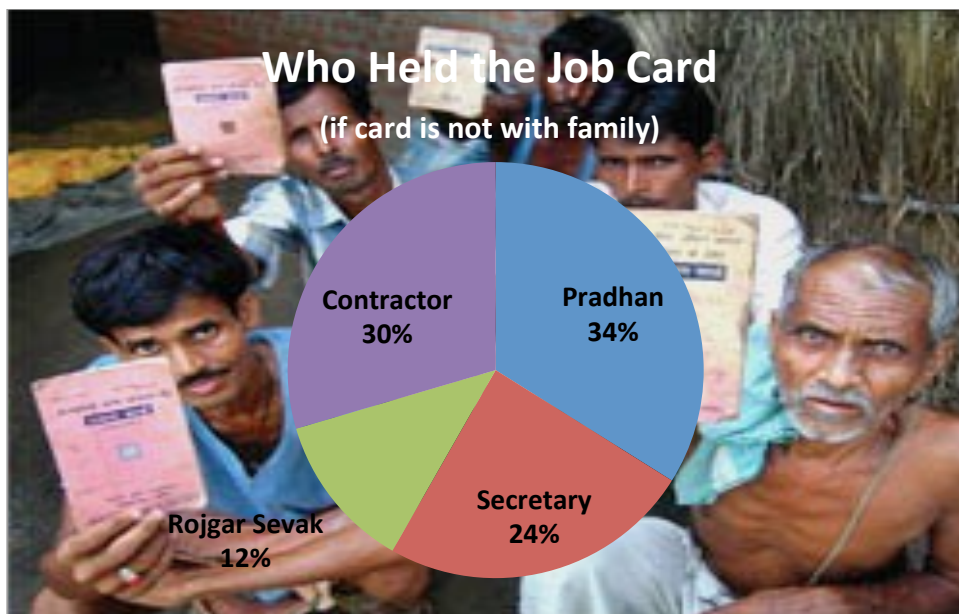


83 percent of women worker's families had job cards which is high percentage. But only in case of 58 percent job card is in the possession of family.

Possession of job card with family

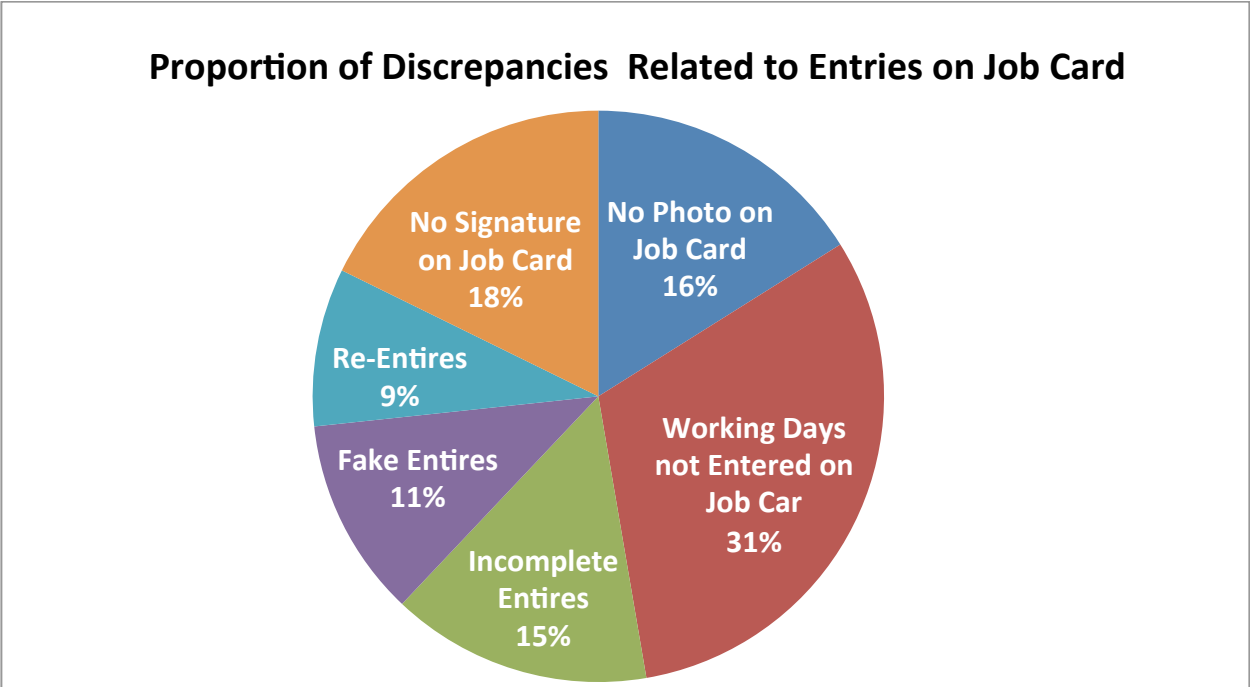


The critical question of who retains the job card is extremely important as the entry in the job card of employment status points out to the corruption in the implementation on the level of job cards.



As seen from above chart job card is in possession of either pradhan or rojgar sevak or with contractor or with secretary. All of them are responsible for implementation of MNREGS and are responsible for discrepancies and fraud.

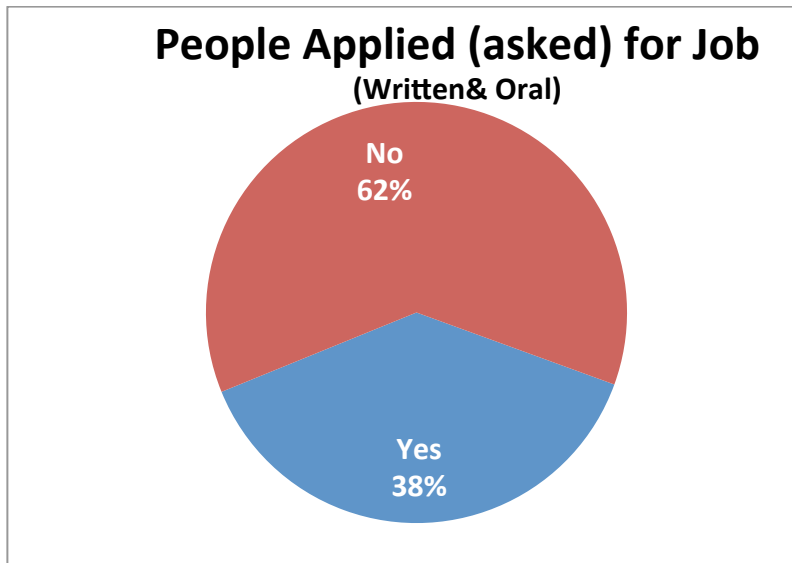
Various kinds of discrepancies are found on the entries of the job cards as shown in following chart.



Most of the workers have job cards-83%. Though 58% have job card in their possession equally large number i.e.42% do not have cards in their possession. Their job cards are mostly in possession of either pradhan(34%) or rozgar sewaks(12%) or contractor(30%) or secretary(24%). The job cards have some discrepancy or other which is an indication of large scale corruption in the scheme.

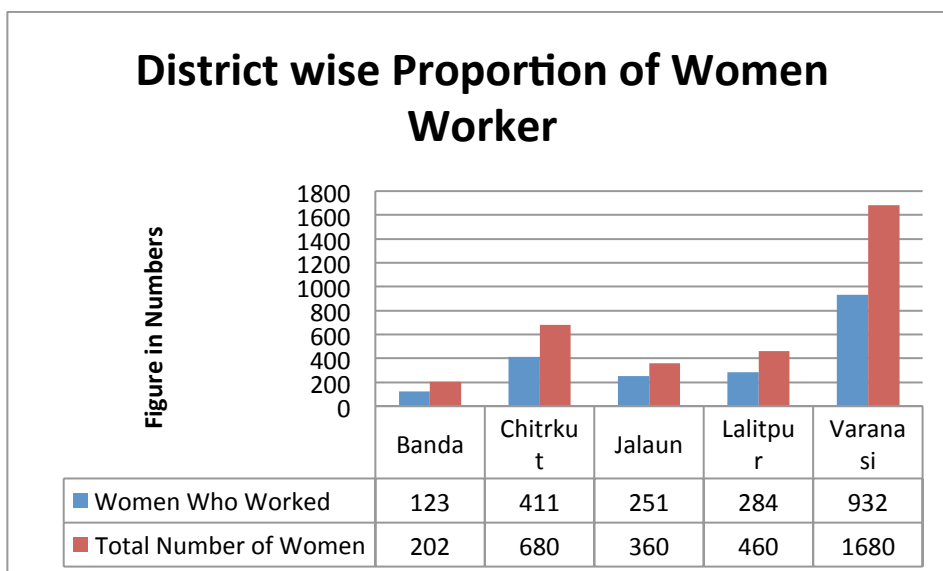
Issues related to work

As NREGS is demand driven scheme application for work assumes critical importance. As the onus is on people the issue of awareness regarding application process and acceptance of application on part of implementing authorities both are vital. It is very crucial as the receipt of job application is the proof for realization of right to unemployment allowance.



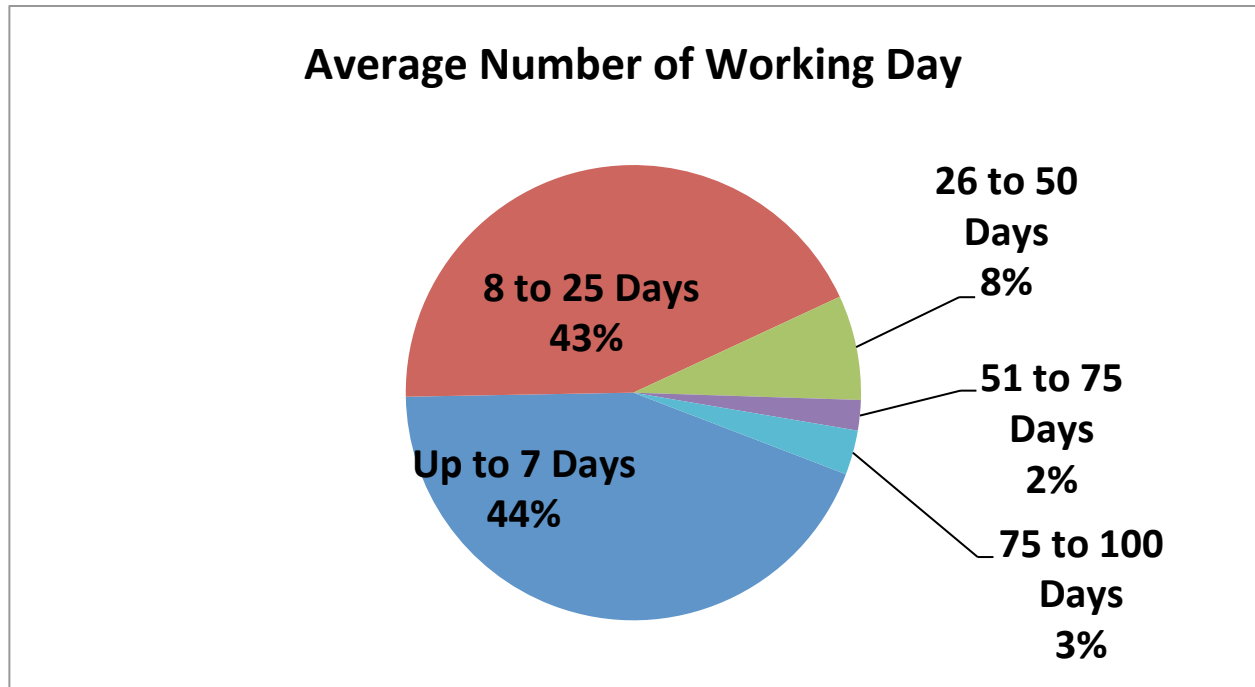
Only 38% of women workers applied for the job either in writing or verbally. 62% women workers did not ask for the work. The demand for applications is low in percentage as the literacy levels are also low. But analysis of reasons for not applying is not literacy levels but low level of awareness about application process and low awareness about demand based nature and worker's right for work and also frustration towards process.

The further analysis clearly shows that across all the 5 districts percentage of women who were actually employed under MNREGA is very low.



This clearly shows that large number of women and in this case predominantly dalit women are out side the safety net of MNREGA.

It is critical to know not only the rate of participation of women workers but numbers of day women were allotted work.



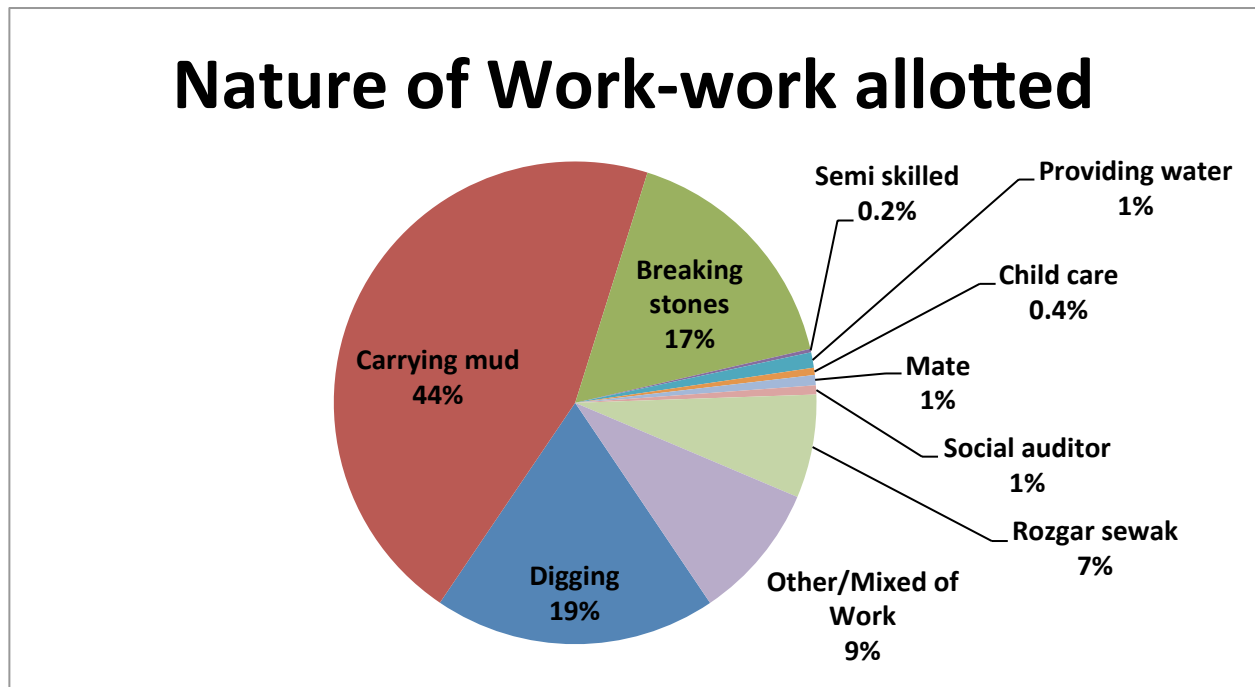
87 percent of women have got employment for less than 25 days. Out of which 44 percent got only for less than 7 days. Only 3 percent of women were able to reach complete 75 to 100 days which is very low.

Guarantee of work –a distant dream for dalit women worker

- Large no of workers did not apply for work (62%)
- 87 % have worked less than 25 days -44 % less than 7 days and 43 % less than 25 days. Only 3% have reached the category of 75 to 100 days.
- Average number of working days in all the districts is very low and less than 25 days.

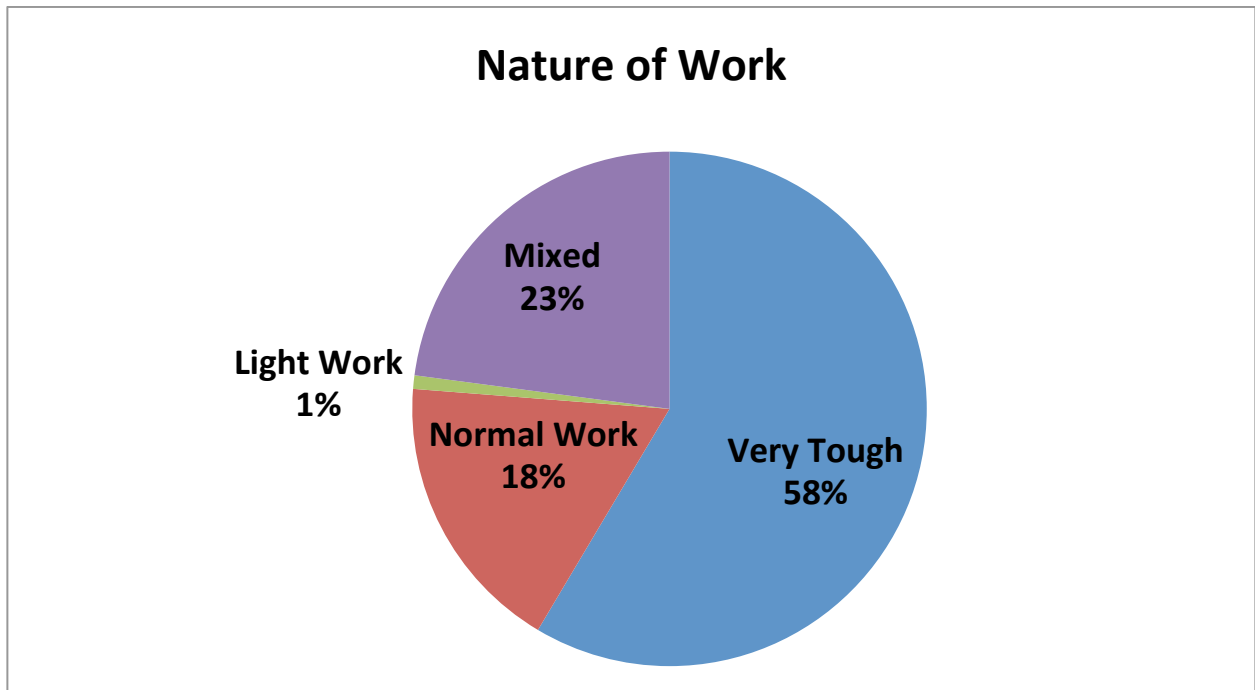
Discrimination

The discrimination takes place on various fronts such as nature of work allotted, denial of work as women, as a dalit woman and also harassment as dalit woman.

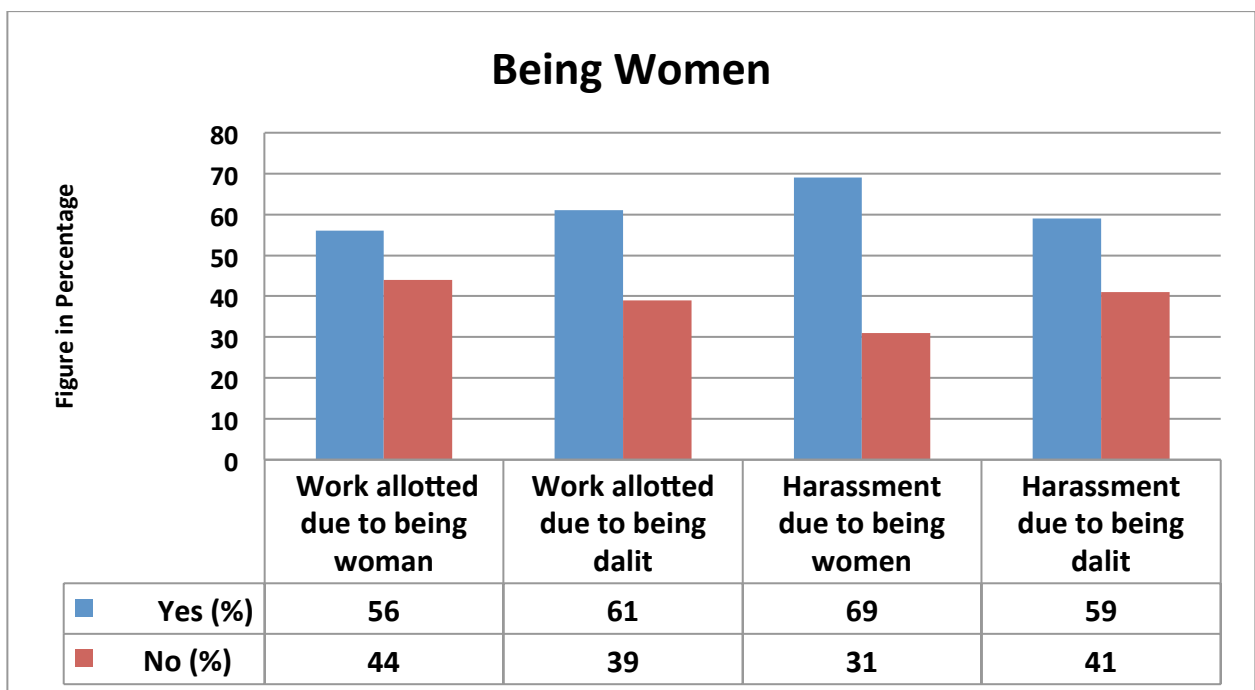


As clearly seen from above chart women worker are mostly employed to carry mud. Digging and breaking stones is also allotted to women worker to some extent but semi skilled jobs are out of their preview and semi technical jobs such as social auditor, meth or rozgar sewak they are hardly present. This is due to low level of literacy and also distrust to hand over technical work to women. But shocking fact is their denial from work such as child care or providing water also as this involves less hard manual work and in case they are allotted they were given to women from upper castes due to caste prejudices in providing water and provision of child care facilities is anyway violated.

Women felt that work allotted to them is very hard and this further restricts their entry in MNREGA.



Many women also felt that they were allotted this work as they are dalit and women as seen from following table.

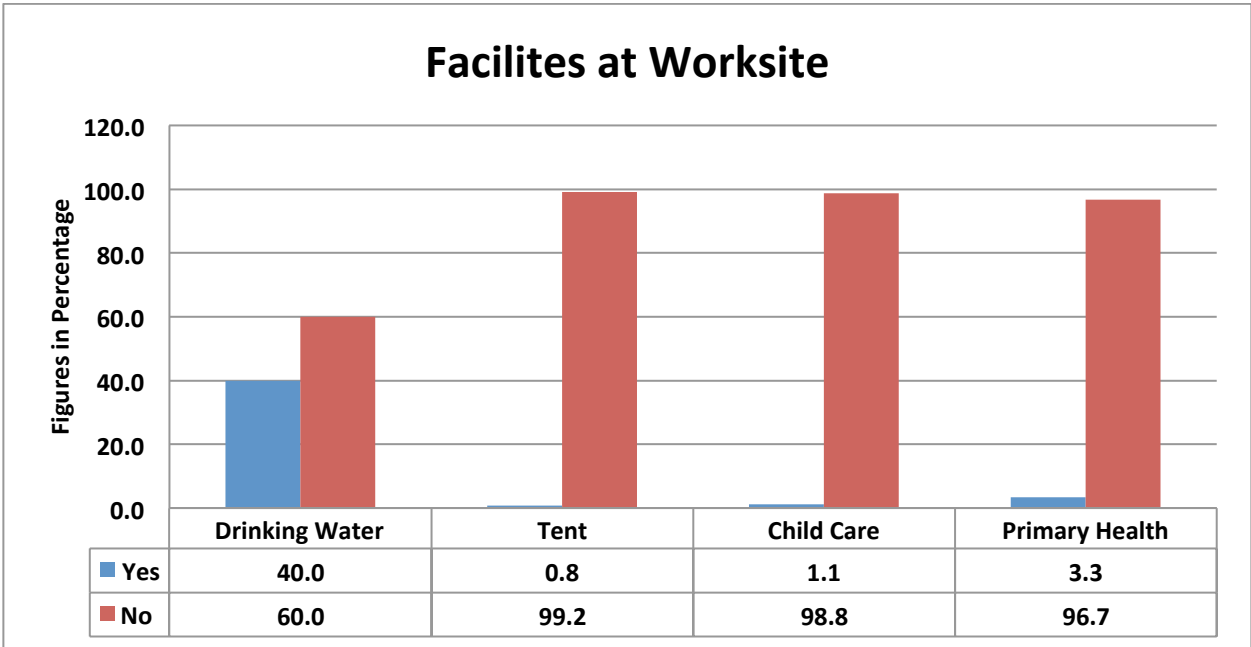


Discrimination and harassment as a dalit woman

- The work allotted under MNREGA strengthens the gender stereotyping and women are denied semi skilled and semi technical jobs denying them the opportunity to learn and have upward mobility.
- The hard work further restricts women’s entry in MNREGA.
- Women workers strongly felt that they are discriminated and harassed as dalit and as a woman.

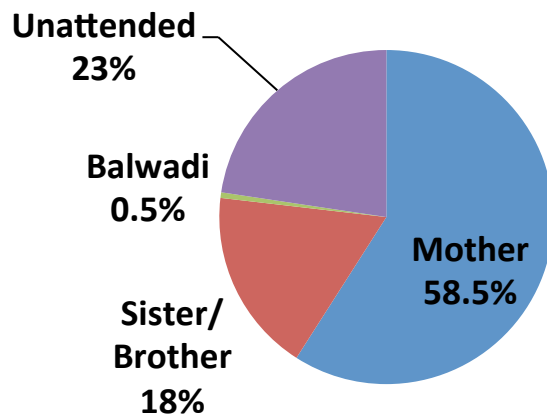
Facilities

The facilities at work site is an important factor which can help to increase the participation of women workers and these are mandatory under the Act.



As above chart clearly points out except drinking water crucial facilities such as tent, child care and primary health services are not provided at the worksite violating the Act.

Child care at worksite



The women's right to child care was recognized for the first time for rural workers working in the unorganized sector but as shown in the graph below this is clearly violated. Only 0.5 percent worksite had child care facilities. This has not only affected women's participation in MNREGA but also restricted entry of elderly women who are not capable of manual hard work.

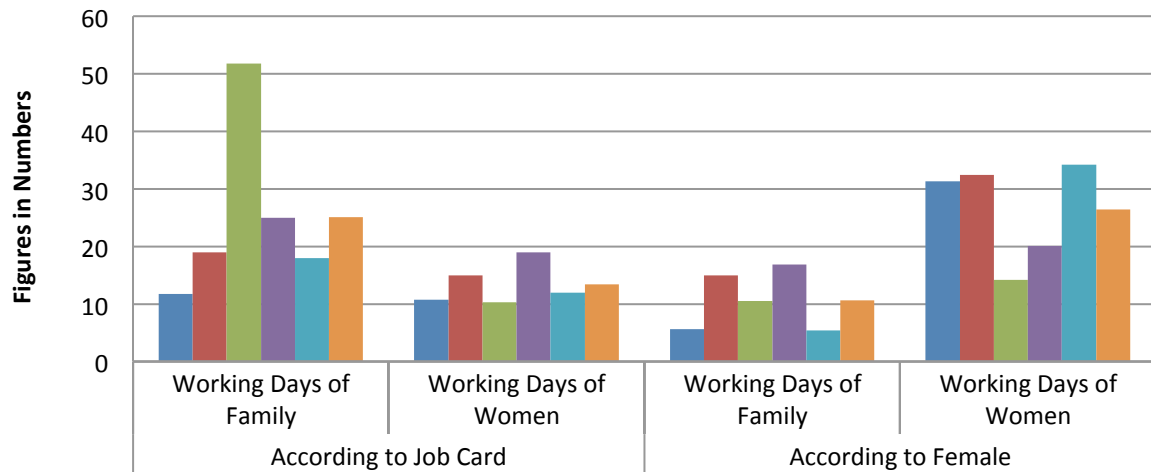
The violation by the implementing authorities in providing mandatory facilities at the work site has proved as an impediment in increasing women's participation.

Wages-a reality check

When NREGA was introduced there was hope that this can prove as a major boon for women labourers who are getting almost pushed out from rural sector as livelihood opportunities shrink and get scarce. The proponents and activists felt women who are denied equal wages and are exploited in other traditional employment sector would be able to get guaranteed employment and minimum wages in comparatively better environment.

The comparison between women workers statement and entries on the job card shows huge fabrication of data which severely affects the wage payment as shown in the chart below.

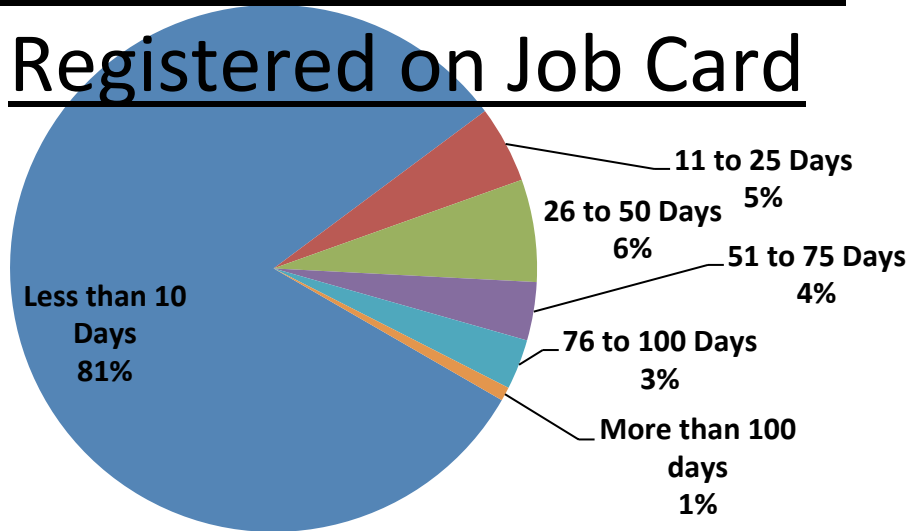
Working Days from April 2009 to June 2010



	Working Days of Family According to Job Card	Working Days of Women According to Job Card	Working Days of Family According to Female	Working Days of Women According to Female
Banda	12	11	6	31
Chitrkut	19	15	15	32
Jalaun	52	10	11	14
Lalitpur	25	19	17	20
Varanasi	18	12	5	34
Average	25	13	11	26

The comparison clearly points out two things. Firstly, women have worked for more days compare to rest of the family as per her testimony and secondly, her completed days are not recorded on job card.

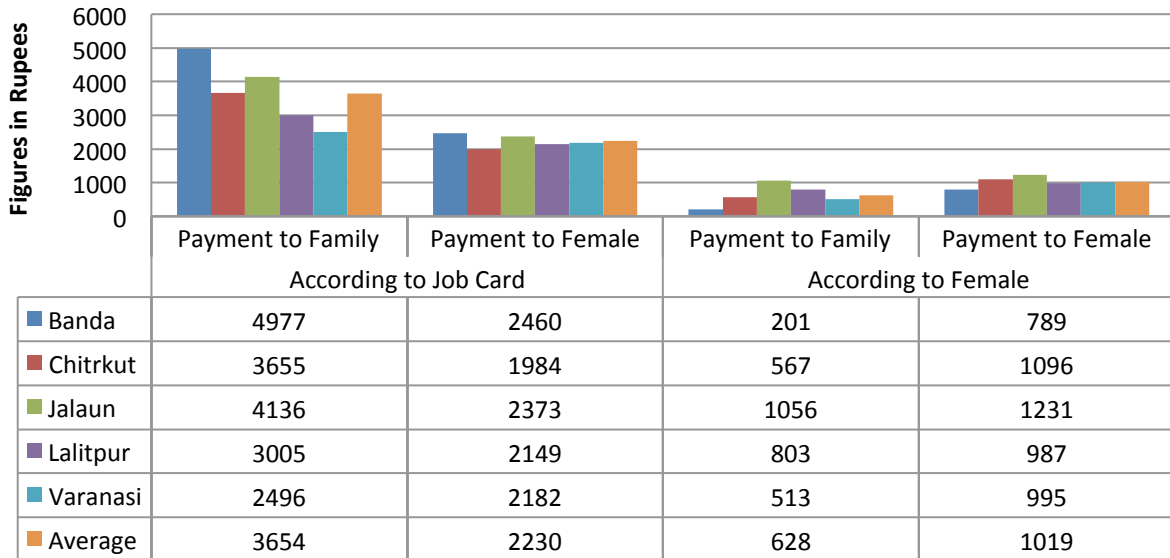
Number of Working Days Registered on Job Card



This fact is further vindicated in the above chart which shows 81 percent of women have worked for less than 10 days.

This clearly affects the wage payment as seen below and at the same time shows corruption in the system. Though job cards record show more payment women's testimony show she has been paid less than actual workdays.

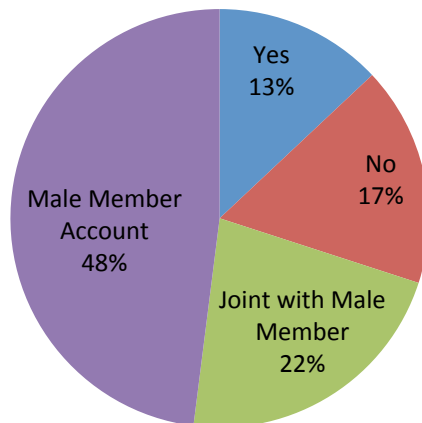
Wage Payment Under MNREGA



The fabrication in the entries not only points out to the huge corruption in the system but it takes away the women workers right to her wages which further marginalizes her from working sector.

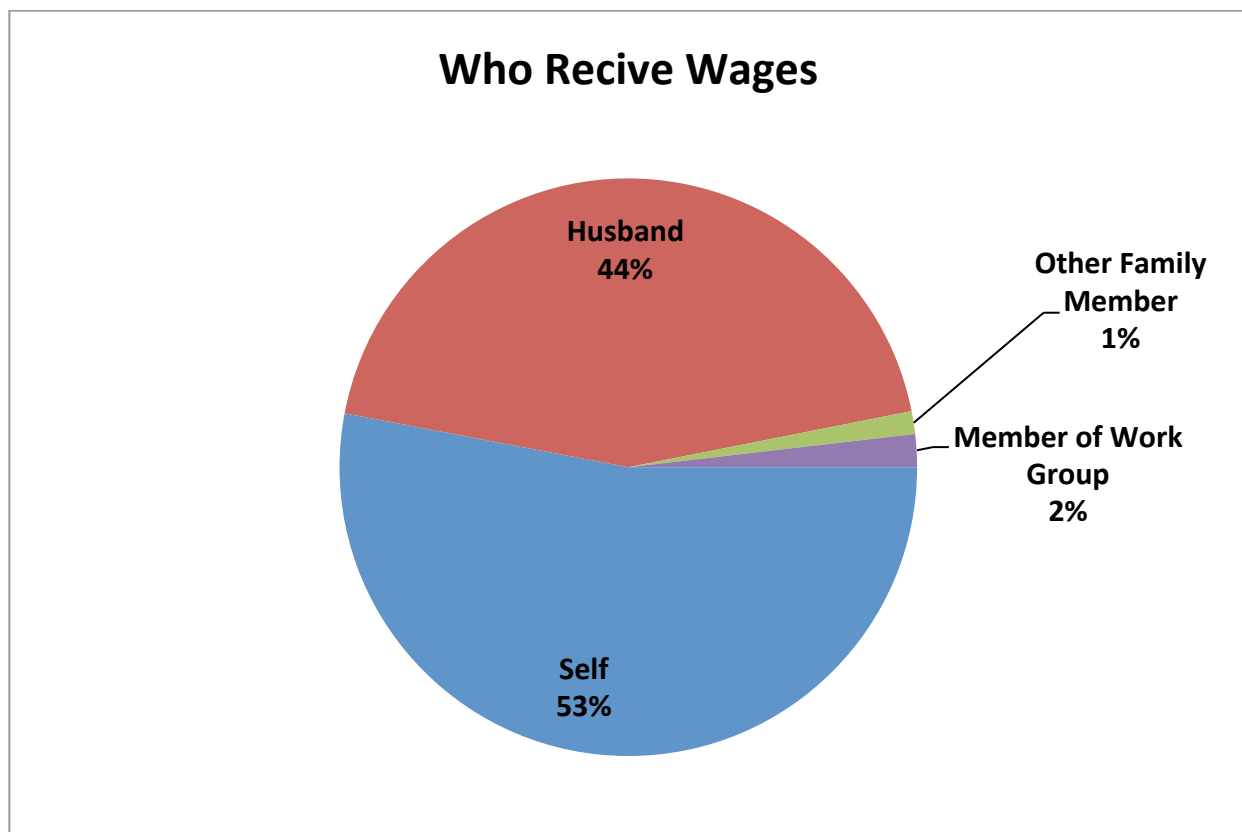
Women's right o her wages is further restricted as she do not have bank account in her name as shown below.

Detail of Women Bank Account



Only 13 percent of women have bank accounts in their names, while 17 percent do not have any bank account. 22 percent have it jointly with their male partner while in case of 48 percent account is only in

the name of male member. So 61 percent women do not have access to their wages which are paid through bank.



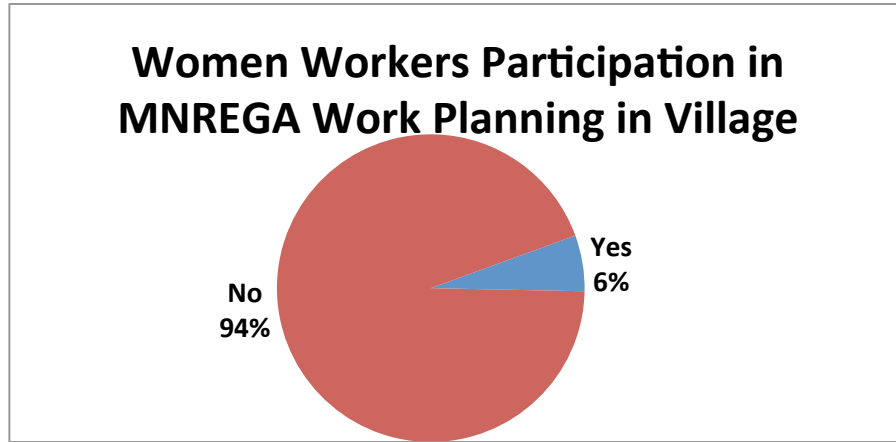
Hence only 53 percent received their wages and in case of 47 percent of women they were denied right o their own wages which is a grave matter of concern.

Wages at a glance

- **There is huge fabrication in data entries which points out to the large scale corruption in the system.**
- **The false records prevent women from accessing her legal right to her entitled wages.**
- **Women's access to her entitled wages is further diminished as she has limited access to bank as bank accounts are mainly in the name of male member.**

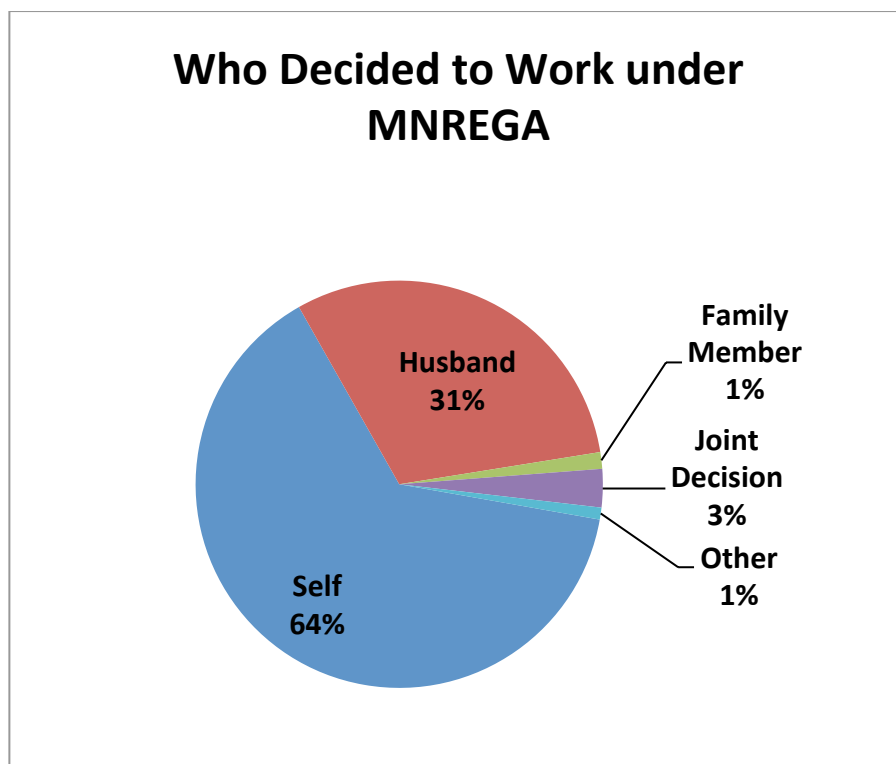
Decision making

Who is the decision maker is very pertinent question as it affects the planning, implementation and usage of resources.



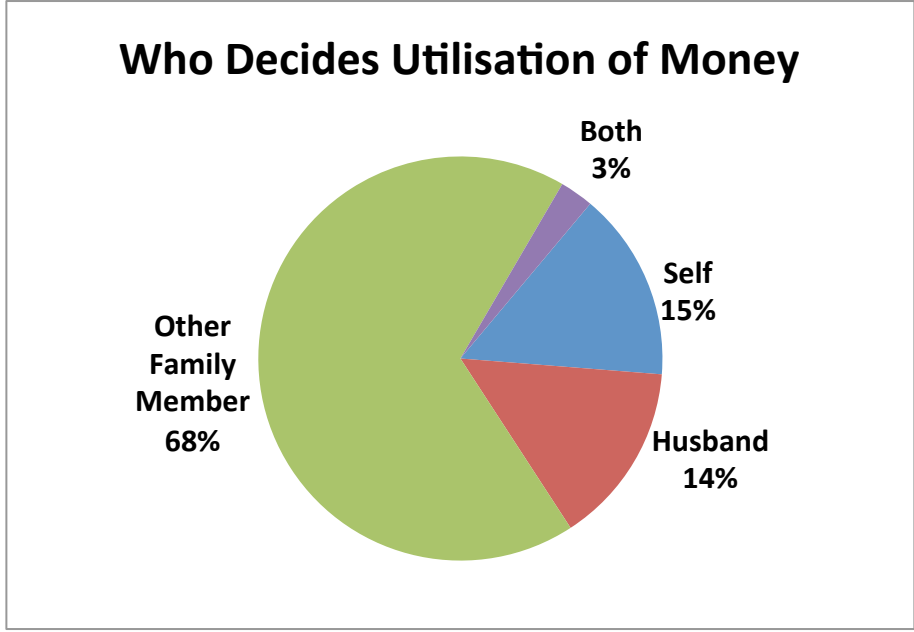
Women workers are hardly encouraged to participate in the planning process in gram panchayat as clearly shown above. In fact, women's role in gram panchayat is ridiculed by male dominated society.

But when it comes to who decided to work situation is different.



At the household level it is women who mainly take decision to work under MNREGA. This is because as seen from profile of women workers dalit women have always shouldered responsibility of contributing to the household expenses.

But right to use and control of money is again taken away from women.



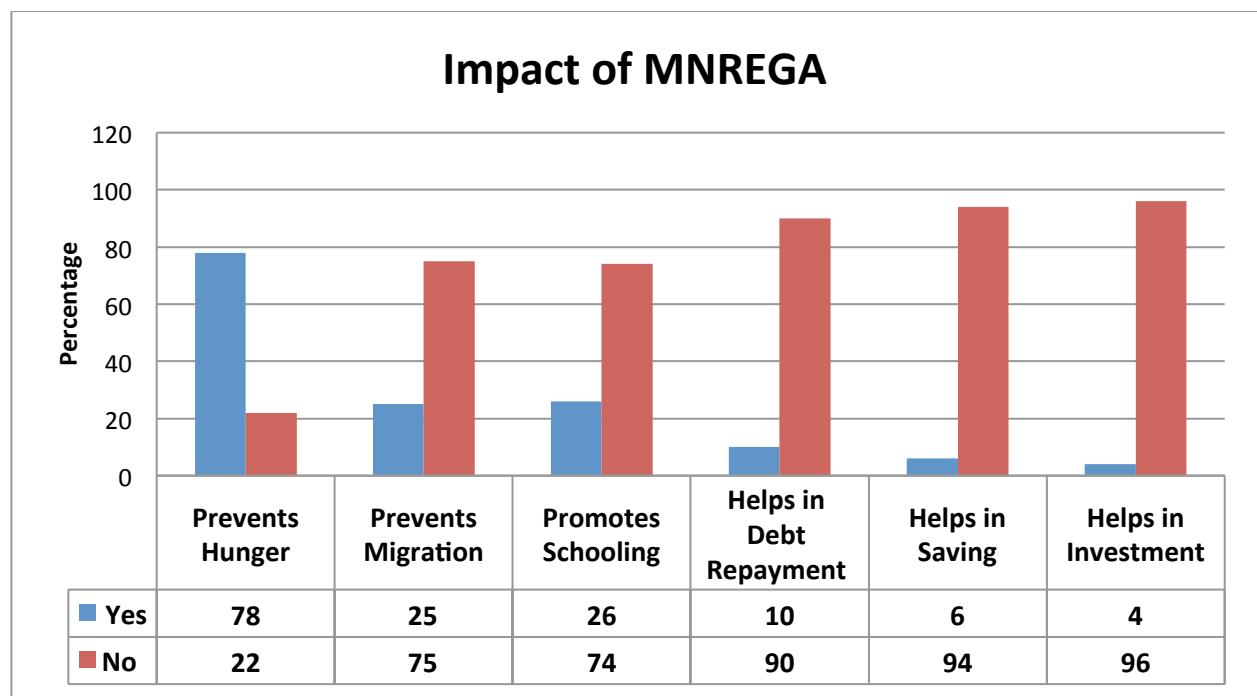
And truth that women are not allowed to control their own resources is very clear as only 15 percent of women decided usage of their wages.

Women are kept out of crucial decision making when it comes to control and access of resources both in terms decision about nature of resources and about usage of resources such as wages but they are encouraged and are allowed to use their own manual labour for contribution to family making them valuable resource for the family which is controlled by male members of the family.

Impact

MNREGA need to be analyzed from the view point of impact it has had on economic condition of women worker and whether her participation has led to change in status for within her family for her positive mobility.

Impact on economic condition



As seen from above chart women workers participation in MNREGA has not had very significant impact on her economic condition so far.

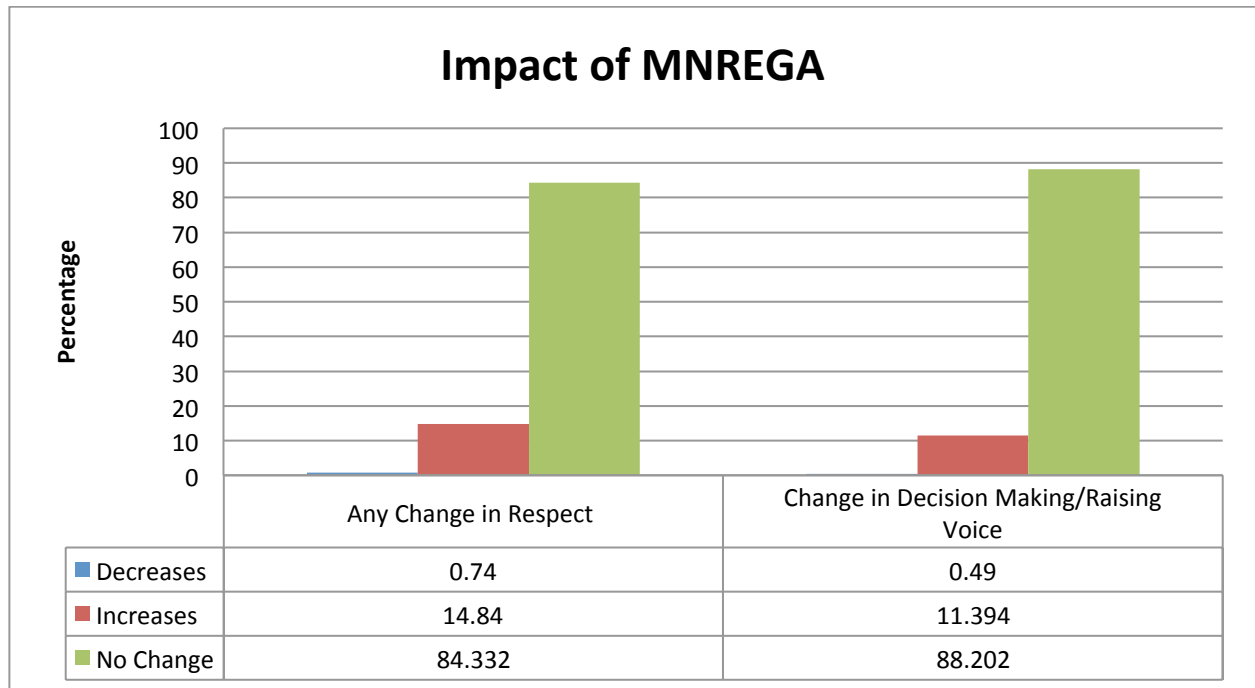
MNREGA wages has certainly helped in preventing hunger (78%) and helped in preventing migration for women worker (25%) and sending children to school to some extent (26%). But this is satisfaction of more immediate need and has not led to strengthening livelihood opportunities either by repaying debt or by savings and investment.

In case of migration MNREGA has helped in preventing migration for women worker as she has an option to work in the village itself and

need not migrate with male member of the family and this has also had positive effect on promoting schooling to some extent.

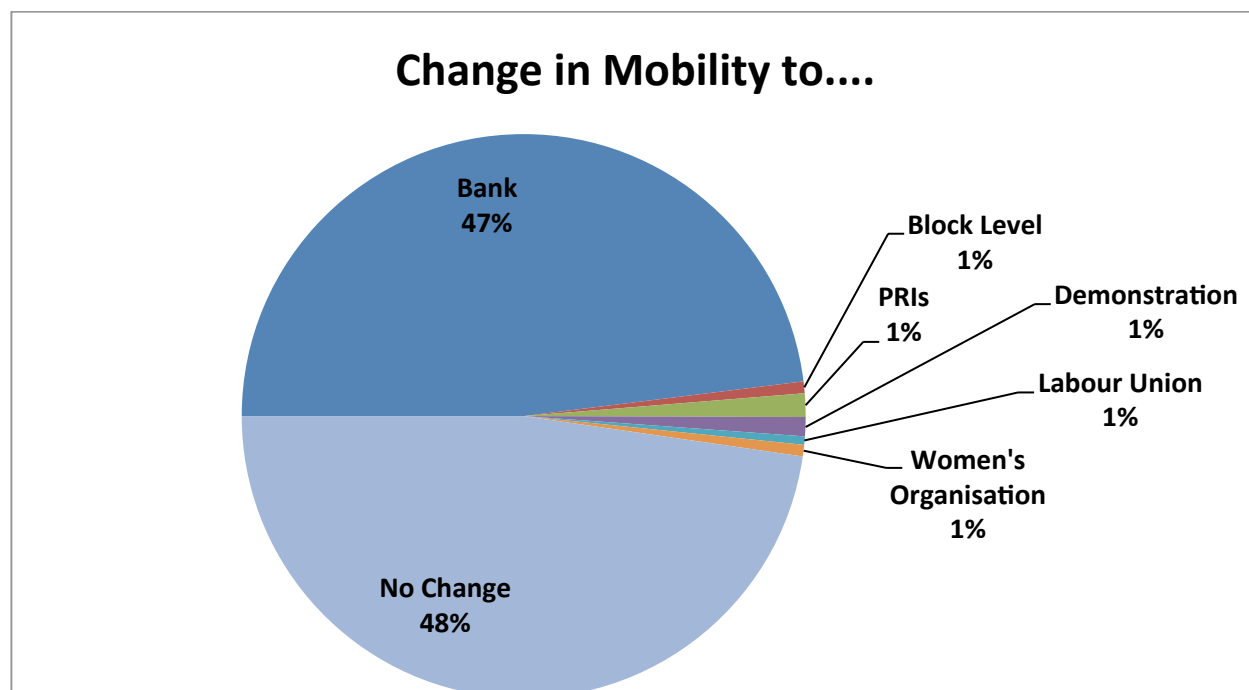
This shows that if implemented properly MNREGA can help in checking migration and leading to stability needed for families positive growth.

Impact on status within the family



There has been no significant impact for women worker on her status within the family. There has been no significant change in respect she deserves though it has increased to some extent (14.84%) nor there any significant change in her role in decision making. But positive point is her stepping out of the home has not led to any decrease in her status either in her respect nor in her says in decision making.

Impact on mobility



There is a very significant change here as women have had access to bank (47%) the area which was virtually no entry zone for them. Though as we had seen earlier few women had an opportunity to open bank accounts the women workers who had managed to do so feel that this has been a significant impact. There has been a negligible change in mobility only 1 percent for women in approaching and participating in panchayti raj institutions and at block level works. Their participation in case of demonstrations, labour unions and women's organization is also only 1percent.

Impact

- **Helped in preventing hunger but not for building sustainable livelihood opportunities.**
- **No significant change in terms of increasing respect within the family or say in decision making.**

- Open up new area of bank but no other significant change in mobility.

In conclusion

The conclusion of the study is straightforward and unambiguous. The patriarchal, caste based feudal processes and indifferent and insensitive state machinery has barred the entry of dalit women in labour force; this exclusion has been violent and in fact it has strengthened the stereotypes and has narrowed down her space.

But when ever she has forced her entry to get her rightful place given to her by legal Act there is positive though marginal change in her economic status which can lead to increase in her role in decision making and upward mobility leading to political mobilization.