

# Knowledge and Awareness of Scheduled Caste Beneficiaries on MGNREGS; A Study of Kurnool District

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## **Abstract:**

Kurnool District, which is located in the Rayalaseema region, is the biggest and driest of all the drought prone districts of A.P. In this district it is clearly estimated that the droughts visits at least thrice in a decade. The Irrigation Commission and other Central Commissions have been identified the whole district as drought prone. A single dry crop i.e. ground nut is raised under rain fed conditions in most parts of the district. Agriculture is the main source of economy of the district. The work force engaged in agriculture is more than three fourth's of the total work force. The demand for labour in agriculture sector is highly uncertain and seasonal. This is leading to migration of labour in a large scale to the nearest cities. The drought conditions are creating an ecological imbalance and converting the district into a desert. Drought prone areas are more vulnerable to denude the forests and exhaust the natural resources like water, soil, minerals etc. By result the rivers and other streams dry up. Consequently the underground water levels vanish and the area under irrigation is declined. The instant result is the decrease in agriculture production. This is leading to food problem. All these uneven conditions are making the lives of agricultural labourer and farmers rigorous and not bearing. As a result the district has witnessed a number of farmers' suicides.

**Keywords:** Agriculture, Drought, underground water, farmers suicides etc.,

## **Introduction:**

Keeping all the above facts in view the Government of India has decided to implement the ambitious MGNREGS in this district in the Second phase. In spite of many other schemes under taken for the betterment of rural poor, it is the only programme that has mobilized the rural folk involvement. In this chapter an attempt is made to evaluate the progress and performance of MGNREGS in Kurnool District.

## **Gender Wise Participation in MGNREGS**

In MGNREGS works both men and women take equal part in the works. But women participation rate is higher than men at state level as well as district level. This is because women are not getting high wages in outside works when compared to MGNREGS works. The table 1 gives the gender wise participation of labourers in the programme in Kurnool District.

**Table-1****Gender Wise Work and Wage Earnings under MGNREGS Scheme in Kurnool District**

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Male registered	827202	827202	827202	827202	827202	827202	827202	827202
Female registered	738050	738050	738050	738050	738050	738050	738050	738050
Male working	241726	340344	304997	324282	248588	275285	252928	191551
% Male Working	49.97	48.56	47.89	47.61	47.25	47.24	46.64	46.60
Female working	242024	360488	331901	356826	277570	307492	289371	219486
% Female Working	50.03	51.44	52.11	52.39	52.75	52.76	53.36	53.40
Male wage(Rs.In Lakhs)	6293.93	7838.37	10267.41	7893.88	7977.25	7744.85	6458.56	4273.34
% Male Wage	49.26	47.06	46.44	45.78	45.47	45.64	45.28	45.00
Female wage(Rs.In Lakhs)	6484.1	8818.28	11841.83	9347.71	9565.21	9222.84	7803.61	5223.79
% Female Wage	50.74	52.94	53.56	54.22	54.53	54.36	54.72	55.00
Male average	88.9	88.13	88.32	92.28	96.02	105.48	109.9	119.66
Female average	88.08	87.25	87.62	91.28	94.39	101.41	104.58	113.32

Source: DWAMA Office, Kurnool

It is evident from table 1 that the number male and female registered under MGNREGS in Kurnool district is constant during eight years of study. The actual number of males and females working under the programme is not evenly distributed over the years. However, the per cent of women working under the programme in the district is gradually increasing year by year. On the other hand the per cent of male working under the programme is showing downward trends in the district. It means men are not more inclined to work under the programme. It can be attributed for low wage earnings under the programme. As such men were going for other works to earn more money. The wage amount allotted to men and women in the district is also unevenly distributed. As the women workers under the scheme is high, so the per cent of wages of female is higher than males.

### Caste Wise Beneficiaries

The MGNREGS scheme aims at bringing economic equality by giving large share of access and opportunity to the disadvantaged and economically weaker sections of the society, such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Below Poverty Line (BPL) households. Table 2 gives the details of Caste wise households benefited by this programme in Kurnool District since its implementation to 2014-15.

Table-2

## Caste Wise Participation and Wage Earning Analysis of MGNREGS in Kurnool District

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
BC-No of regd. HHs	410581	410581	410581	410581	410581	410581	410581	410581
BC-No of working HHs	154446	190302	168349	172950	141860	168758	165599	127959
BC-Total wage(Rs in Lakhs)	7792.21	10282.72	13654.22	9317.55	9444.34	9956.7	8445.25	5291.19
BC-Days worked	8736088	11719689	15576372	10334016	10004999	9708357	7939516	4593857
SC-No of regd. HHs	175256	175256	175256	175256	175256	175256	175256	175256
SC-No of working HHs	74358	87645	79208	79096	69948	76760	75663	62251
SC-Total wage(Rs in Lakhs)	3449.95	4542.69	5942.64	4130.23	5309.38	4465.86	3760.43	2656.2
SC-Days worked	3864420.5	5173542.5	6743746	4490179.5	5597038	4333035	3535694	2300083
ST-No of regd. HHs	19050	19050	19050	19050	19050	19050	19050	19050
ST-No of working HHs	6387	6945	6302	6074	5493	5742	5626	4638
ST-Total wage(Rs in Lakhs)	274.74	316.31	478.26	364.59	483.63	360.37	298.52	192.21
ST-Days worked	316604	361722	524000.5	392084	524766	352725	279262	166479
Minorities-No of regd. HHs	37767	37767	37767	37767	37767	37767	37767	37767
Minorities-No of working HHs	8805	12835	12029	13635	11376	13024	12803	10813
Minorities-Total wage(Rs in Lakhs)	387.18	603.52	830.49	640.96	662.49	678.36	598.06	446.11
Minorities-Days worked	438929.5	694342.5	945806.5	709050	691897	667090	557570	388940
Others-No of regd. HHs	127872	127872	127872	127872	127872	127872	127872	127872
Others-No of	34043	36704	32604	37541	28695	33715	33812	28232

working HHs								
Others-Total wage(Rs in Lakhs)	1273.71	1558.68	2046.09	1711.21	1613.14	1781.6	1589.25	1143.41
Others-Days worked	1477181.5	1785841.5	2309191.5	1869920	1671101	1721268	1460066	973603

Source: DWAMA Office, Kurnool

The data in table 2 shows that the per cent of working households among backward classes never crossed at least 50 per cent among the registered households. The per cent of working BC households among the registered households ranges between 31.17 per cent in 2014-15 to 46.35 per cent in 2008-09. However, it is pertinent to note that the per cent of BC working households among total working households is higher than other social category households. During eight years of study more than half (ranges between 54.71 to 56.90 per cent) of working households under MGNREGS belong to backward class community in the district. The total number of days worked for BCs is gradually increased during first three years of study. But after that downward trends appearing in total days of BCs. The wage amount disbursed to BC households is higher than other social category candidates as their participation is high.

The next social group which has highest number of participants in MGNREGS programme in Kurnool district is Scheduled Castes. The percentage of working households among the registered SC households ranges between 35.52 per cent to 50.01 per cent. The number SC households working under MGNREGS in the district is highest (87645) in 2008-09 and lowest in 2014-15 (62251). The per cent of Scheduled Caste working households among total households ranges in between 25.76 per cent to 27.18 per cent. In 2009-10 financial year the SC total working days is highest (6743746) and lowest in 2014-15 (2300083) financial year. More or less same trends are visible in case of SC household wages.

The other or general social category households occupies third place with regard to the participation in MGNREGS in Kurnool district. The per cent of households participating among registered general households ranges in between 22.08 per cent to 28.70 per cent. Their share among total working households ranges in between 10.92 per cent to 12.24 per cent. The total days worked by others gradually increased during first three years of study and thereafter they are unevenly distributed. The wages paid to other category of households' ranges in between Rs. 1143.41 lakhs to Rs. 2046.09 lakhs.

Among the minorities the working households among registered households ranges in between 22.08 per cent in 2014-15 to 29.36 per cent in 2010-2011. The per cent of working minority households among total working households is gradually increasing except 2012-13 and 2013-14. The total wages disbursed to minorities over the years is erratically distributed. The total number days worked by minorities increased during first 3 years of study and gradually declined thereafter.

The share of Scheduled Tribe working households among total working is comparatively low among various social categories in the district. The share of ST households never crossed 3 per cent of total working households in the district. The share of ST households among total working households is gradually decreasing except 2011-12. Only 24.35 per cent of registered ST households participated in MGNREGS works in the

district and it is highest i.e. 36.46 per cent in 2008-09. The total of ST households is highest (524766) in 2011-12 and lowest in (166479) in 2014-15.

### Number of Family Members Benefited by NREGP

As per the NREGA legislation gives a legal guarantee of employment in rural areas to anyone who is willing to do casual manual labour at the statutory minimum wage. Any adult who applies for work under the Act is entitled to being employed on public works within 15 days. The data with regard to number of members benefited in a family relates to 3 years i.e., from 2006-07 to 2008-09. The table 3 gives such details.

**TABLE – 3**

#### Number of Family Members Benefited by NREGS Programme

S. No.	No. of Family Members	Total No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of Total
1.	One	36	30.00
2.	Two	52	43.34
3.	Three	15	12.50
4.	Four	9	7.50
5.	Five	4	3.33
6.	Above Five	4	3.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Data

The table 3 indicates that in 30 per cent of the sample respondent families only one member got employment under NREGP scheme in last three years. About 43.34 per cent beneficiary households two members got employment under the NREGP. Around 12.50 per cent beneficiary respondent families three members got employment. In the remaining 14.16 respondent families got more than three persons were benefited by the scheme. It means that in these families more than one person got employment during one year or other year.

### Number of working days

Scheduled II of NREGA enactment outlines conditions for guaranteed rural employment under EGS scheme. Paragraphs 1-5 of this schedule envisages the issue of a job card, valid for at least five years at a time, entitling the holder to up to a maximum of 100 days employment (which is the limit set for the household). The number of working day each sample respondent beneficiary is presented in the table 4.

**TABLE – 4**

#### Approximate Number of Employment Days For NREGP Beneficiaries

S. No.	Numbers of Day	Total No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of Total
1.	Below 10 days	17	14.17
2.	10 to 25 days	25	20.83
3.	25 to 50 days	48	40.00
4.	50 to 75 days	11	9.17
5.	75 to 100 days	19	15.83
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>



Source: Field Data

As per the table 4, it is regret to note that only 15.83 per cent of sample respondent families got required number of man days. Nearly one-fourth of the families got man days 50 or less than 50. Among than 40 per cent got 25 to 50 days, 20.83 per cent got 10 to 25 days and 14.17 per cent got below 10 days of work. It is learnt that it is due to administrative lapses in identification of works, which minimizing the man days. Only 9.17 per cent got man days between 50 to 75 days.

### Bank / Post Office Accounts

Under the NREGP scheme the wages shall be paid to the beneficiaries through Banks or Post Offices. As such it is essential for every job card holder to open an account either in Bank or Post Offices, whichever is near and feasible. The Bank/Post Office accounts possessed by sample beneficiaries is given in the table 5.

**TABLE – 5**

#### Bank/Post-Office Account Possessed By NREGP Beneficiaries

S. No.	Responses	No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of Total
1.	Yes	116	96.67
2.	No	4	3.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Data

The table 5 indicates that 96.67 per cent of sample respondents opened their account either in Bank or Post Office. Only 3.33 per cent does not possess any account. It is learnt during the study that these four respondents issued job cards just before fortnight of the collection of primary data.

### Wage Payments for NREGP Beneficiaries

Every person working under the scheme is entitled to wages at the minimum wage rate fixed by the State Government or the competent authority concerned for agricultural labourers under the Minimum Wages Act 1948, unless the wages have been notified by the Central Government under section 6(1) of the NREGA Legislation. As per this legislation, wages should paid atleast once in a fortnight. It is essential to ensure to being paid on a weekly basis, and in any case within fortnight of the data on which work was done (NREGA, section 3(3)).

If workers are willing, dovetailing of wage payments under APREGS with social security arrangements can be thought of with the consent of the worker, a proportion of the wages may be earmarked and contributed to welfare schemes organized for the benefit of APREGS workers such as health insurance, accident insurance, survivor benefits, maternity benefits and other social security arrangements. Such a social security cover will be purely voluntary. No such contributions from the wages received by the worker will be made without the consent of the worker concerned. The relevant procedures shall be spelled out by the State Government and reviewed regularly by the State Council.

TABLE – 6

**REGULARITY OF WAGE PAYMENTS**

S. No.	Payment Mode	No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of Total
1.	Weekly	78	65.00
2.	Fortnight	18	15.00
3.	Irregular	20	16.67
4.	Don't Know	4	3.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Data

The table 6 makes it clear that nearly two-thirds of sample respondent beneficiaries stated that the authorities paying wages weekly once. About 15 per cent reported they are getting wages once in a fortnight. It is conspicuous to note that 16.67 per cent reported that the payment of wages are irregular. When asked about the authorities at Mandal level about the irregularity of payments, they replied that due to technical snags the payment of wages to certain beneficiaries is taking place long time. About 3.33 per cent denied to respond.

**Awareness about Minimum Wages**

As per the Minimum Wages Act-1948, the minimum wage for agriculture labour is Rs.80. As such under the NREGP scheme the beneficiaries has to get the daily wage not less than Rs.80. The maximum wage limit under the scheme is Rs.155. But the minimum wage which the beneficiary get largely depend on the piece of work. The awareness about the minimum wage is essential for the beneficiaries to avoid financial irregularities in the work. As such during the study the knowledge of beneficiaries on minimum wage was recorded and presented in the table 7.

TABLE – 7

**BENEFICIARIES KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MINIMUM WAGES UNDER THE NREGP**

S. No.	Responses	No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of Total
1.	Yes	52	43.33
2.	No	68	56.67
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Data

The table 7 indicates that more than half (56.67 per cent) of the sample respondent beneficiaries are not aware of the minimum wages to be paid under the NREGP scheme. During the study, it is observed that illiteracy or minimum literacy level of sample rural respondents become a stumbling block to know the minimum wages. Only 43.33 per cent of beneficiaries are aware of minimum wages.

**Implementation of Equal Pay**

As per the NREGA legislation, equal wages shall be paid to both men and women workers, and the provisions of the Equal Remuneration Act-1976, shall be compiled with. The sample respondents responses regarding equal wages is presented in the table 8.

TABLE – 8

**IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK TO BENEFICIARIES**

S. No.	Responses	No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of Total
1.	Yes	101	84.17
2.	Don't Know	19	15.83
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Data

The table 8 indicates that about 84.17 per cent of respondents responded positively. With regard equal wages. None of the respondents reported negatively. About 15.83 per cent responded neither positively nor negatively.

**Use of Machinery for NREGP Works**

The NREGA Legislation envisages that all works under the scheme have to be taken manually, as the fundamental aim of the programme is to provide wage employment to rural poor during unseason. The use of machinery under the scheme is completely prohibited. In spite of this, the new using machinery in some areas of the district is heard. As such during the survey the perceptions of the respondents on use of machinery was registered and the same is presented in the table 9.

TABLE – 9

**USE OF MACHINERY UNDER NREGS**

S. No.	Responses	No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of Total
1.	Yes	7	5.83
2.	No	96	80.00
3.	Don't Know	17	14.17
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Data

The table 9 indicates that 80 per cent of the respondents reported that they have no knowledge about the using of machinery under the scheme. About 5.83 per cent reported that they observed the using of machinery under the scheme at one point of time or other. They said that the local landlord used JCB to level his uncultivated land and claimed bills under the scheme, with the consent of the local authorities. About 14.17 per cent denied responding.

**Usefulness of NREGP**

The utility of any programme/scheme is to be determined on the basis of views expressed by the beneficiaries, who are the active observers as well as promoters of the scheme. As such during the study the opinions of sample respondent beneficiaries were registered and presented in the table 10, by using 4 point rating scale.



**TABLE - 10****BENEFICIARIES PERCEPTION OF USEFULNESS OF NREGS**

S. No	Responses	No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of total
1	Very useful	28	23.33
2	Somewhat useful	57	47.50
3	No use	18	15.00
4	Don't know	17	14.17
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Data

The table 10 reveals that about 70.83 per cent of sample respondents expressed some kind of usefulness of the scheme. To be more precise, around 47.50 per cent expressed moderate usefulness of the scheme and around 23.33 per cent expressed most usefulness of the scheme. About 15 per cent expressed negative perceptions on the programme. During the study it is learnt that most of the respondents who expressed dissatisfaction is marginal and small farmers. They felt that after the introduction of the scheme, the wage rates of labour have gone up and also expressed scarcity of labour during agricultural peak seasons. About 14.17 per cent not responded.

**Irregularities in NREGP**

It is better to throw the money into a drain than to put it in the “National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme”, one of the country’s better known economists proclaimed when the debate for the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was at its peak. Many of the opponents of the NREGA bill and indeed, much of the public voiced concern that the scheme would simply add to the corruption that infects most of the development schemes in this country.

The Comptroller and Auditor General’s (CAG) report on the NREG (based on its first six months of functioning); points to a number of procedural irregularities. The often reported irregularities reported in the implementation of scheme is; 1. Corruption 2. Harassment of Labour during works 3. Frauds in work measurement 4. False muster rolls 5. Others like low wages, delay in payment etc.

**TABLE – 11****BENEFICIARIES OBSERVATIONS ON IRREGULARITIES IN NREGS**

(Multiple responses)

S. No	Type of Irregularities	No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage of total
1	Corruption	91	75.83
2	Harrasment of labors	22	18.33
3	False measurements in works	61	50.83
4	False muster rolls	96	80.00
5	Don't know	24	20.00

Source: Field Data

The table 11 makes it clear that more than three-fourths of respondents reported some kind corruption in the implementation of scheme. As a corollary to corruption is false muster rolls, which help the local authorities to

draw money by preparing false muster rolls. The false muster rolls results in the low average income to the beneficiaries. About 80 per cent reported false muster rolls. False in measurement of works is also another irregularity which was reported by more than half of respondents. Harassment of labour at work sites and low wages and delay in wages was reported by 18.33 per cent and 20 per cent respectively.

