

Participation of Women in MGNREGA: How far is it Successful in Morigaon, Assam?

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Abstract

Progress of a nation is greatly shaped by the status of involvement of women along with their counterpart. Examples of highly developed countries show a gender-wise balanced use of human capital has a significant relation with the level of development. This paper tries to examine the level of participation of women in the much popular Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) activities vis a vis their male counterpart where special provisions are kept for the increased participation of women. It is done with the help of primary survey carried out in Morigaon District of Assam. By using tabular method to compare level of participation of women across communities vis a vis men, we also examined various socio-economic attributes that reflects the primary factors responsible for such gender-wise variation. Also, Probit analysis is followed to find out the role of gender along with other factors in the participation level. The result suggests that participation of women in physical activities and decision making is far from satisfactory except from backward communities who are more involved in physical work. Though education, primary occupation and age have inverse impact on participation in physical activities, education, distance from the panchayat centre has inverse impact on participation in decision making.

Keywords: People's Participation across Gender, MGNREGA, Rural Development, Impact of Sex, Assam

JEL No: O18, R53, R58, J21

1. Introduction

Any development programme is incomplete if it is not inclusive in nature. Whatever, rural development programmes were undertaken in India since Independence, there was a serious lack in involvement of a large section of population and majority of them were women. There have been some special programmes of the government of India, earmarked for the welfare of women, particularly from the weaker section of the society and deserted or destitute as well as widows. These were primarily in the fields of health care, nutrition, population control, education etc. Yet, the fruits of those programmes did not reach the targeted population significantly and in most cases it was because of the non-involvement of the stakeholders.

People's participation in the development programmes, especially of women has thus become an important issue for the human resources development (HRD) through rising income, education and health of the people especially in rural areas where the human element itself commands, directs, organizes, controls and optimizes the use of factors of production (Asaduzzaman, 2008; Khan, 2009; Aref, 2011). Effective management of development projects depends primarily on proper project selection, project design, project implementation, monitoring evaluation and active participation of the beneficiaries in the implementation as well as in the decision making process, which in turn depend upon the quality of human resource. Moreover, values, norms, social belief and opinions of the local people are affected directly or indirectly by the nature and pattern of development

programme undertaken and people's participation. Participation includes people's involvement in decision-making processes, in implementing programmes, their sharing in benefits of development programmes and their involvement in efforts to evaluate such programmes (Cohen and Uphoff, 1980). Participation of women in social, economic and political decision making process are found to be more effective (Ghosh and De, 2003).

In India, looking at the ineffectiveness of the top down approach of development the decentralized planning have been adopted to involve the local people in the process of development activities for which the programmes are undertaken. Special provisions have been kept for the women (like on field help for the mother, for care of children, their education etc) in order to increase the participation of women in the currently ongoing rural employment guarantee programmes under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) for their increasing participation. Thus the notion of participation across gender in the activities for their development has been gaining momentum in the process of human empowerment and development in India. Distance of the village from the town area (Effati, 1992, Siddiquee, 1995), Lack of awareness (Hossain *et al.*, 1978; Hossein, 1993), household size (Dolisica *et al.*, 2006), age of the potential participants (Shahidi, 1998; Motevalli, 2002) are found to be some important factors influencing the level of participation of people especially of women in the rural development activities. Chamber (2002) found gender discrimination to be an important factor that affects participation of people in the

rural development programme in Indonesia.

This paper tried to examine the level of participation of women in MGNREGA and their level of awareness about such project vis a vis their male counterpart in Moregaon, Assam. Also the paper tried to examine the basic reasons behind such variation in participation.

2. Materials and Methods

For the purpose of analysis, primary data has been collected from the Kapili Development Block of Morigaon district of Assam that reflects the basic characteristics of social and economic structure of the state and thus can be a representative of it. Kapili development block comprises of eight gram panchayats, of which five have been selected purposively for the collection of information. Two villages were selected from each of the chosen gram panchayats, one village nearer to the panchayat office and the other far from it in order to examine whether distance have any influence on their involvement. From the list of participants of MGNREGA activities (obtained from the local panchayat office) 30 were selected by simple random sampling without replacement from each of the selected village. Thus a total of 300 participants of MGNREGA were chosen as final sample units. Also, 300 non-participants, who did not take part in the field activities directly but some of them participate in the Gram Sabha meeting, discussion etc were selected in the same way. A structured questionnaire is used to collect information through direct interview on the social and economic conditions of the respondents and their awareness as well as the level of involvement in those activities. From the non-participants the reasons for their non-participation were also collected.

Tabular method is primarily used for the interpretation of the data on their socio-economic characteristics, awareness and participation collected from the respondent participants after segregating on the basis of male and female. Based on the literature it could be presumed that despite several measures gender plays an important role along with their social status, educational and occupational structure, primary employment category and income in influencing the level of awareness and involvement in the development programmes meant for them. Thus, we examined the effect of such factors on their decision to participate (the response variable that takes value 0 or 1) in the activities directly or in the Gram Sabha by using bivariate Probit Model like Probit (p) = $\alpha + \beta X$; where Probit (p) is the probit of participation, α is the intercept, β represents the vector of coefficients of the vector of explanatory variables (X) (Green, 2003). For this purpose, information on the non-participants was also considered as a control group.

3. Observations

3.1 Distribution of Surveyed Participants according to Gender in the Study Area

Gender discrimination is a commonly observed in almost all the rural development programmes implemented in India so far, despite keeping some special provisions for the involvement and welfare of women in various schemes. MGNREGA is also not an exception in this matter. It is observed that in all the surveyed villages the female participation is very low compared to their male counterpart in various MGNREGA activities. Overall the female participation in the study area is only 18 per cent (Table-1). Also, there is significant inter-village variation in female participation from 3.3 per cent in Barchukabha to 33.3 per cent in Charibahi among the surveyed villages. Female participation in the Muslim dominated villages like Borchukabha and Tuku-nabori is significantly low because of their social binding of not to allow women to participate in outside activities. In the Muslim dominated villages of Assam only the widow with no other source of income are allowed to work under the MGNREGA. Although in the other villages with more Hindu population, the female participation is comparatively higher and most of them are found to be from the SC/ST communities. Like other states of North-East India (De, 2010), here the gender discrimination is also comparatively low in case of SC/ST communities in respect of involvement in household and other economic activities, command over property etc.

Table 1. Gender wise Distribution of the Participants in MGNREGA in the Study Area

Panchayat	Village	Male	Female	Total
Charibahi	Charibahi	20 (66.7)	10 (33.3)	30
	Bumuraguri	28 (93.3)	2 (6.7)	30
Kalmoubari	Kalmoubari	25 (83.3)	5 (16.7)	30
	Barchukabha	29 (96.7)	1 (3.3)	30
Jaluguti	Jaluguti	23 (76.7)	7 (23.3)	30
	Bonpara	21 (70.0)	9 (30.0)	30
Mikirgoan	Mikirgoan	25 (83.3)	5 (16.7)	30
	Tukunabori	28 (93.3)	2 (6.7)	30
Borbhagia	Borbhagia	25 (83.3)	5 (16.7)	30
	Niz Mikirgoan	22 (73.3)	8 (26.7)	30
Total		246 (82.0)	54 (18.0)	300

Source: Field survey conducted in August-October, 2011.

Note: Figures in the parentheses represent percentage to total.

3.2 Distribution Pattern of Female and Male Respondent Participants According to Their Age and Family Size

Though at every age group proportion of female is lower than that of male, within each gender majority are found in the

age group of 26 to 45 years and there was insignificant variation in the age distribution across the surveyed villages. No female participant was there over 55 years and only very few (11.1 per cent) were from below 26 years of age. However some male participants are observed in the age group of 14 to 25 years and also over 45 years, (Table-2). This might be because the young female aged 14 to 25 years are either unmarried or eligible for marriage and thus not encouraged to work outside their home.

Similarly, old aged females are in most cases not physically fit for the unskilled field labour, though many of them are found to be engaged in household work. Also, as very few working days are generated, and in principal, only one member from each family is allowed to get the job, the young males first involved themselves and in the absence of young, the older or very young males get priority from their respective families.

Table 2. Gender Wise Distribution of the Respondents according to their Age

Age Group	14-25		26-35		36-45		46-55		56-above			Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
Charibahi	3(15.0)	0(00)	6(30.0)	4(40.0)	8(40.0)	2(20.0)	2(10.0)	4(40.0)	1(5.0)	0(00)	20	10	30
Bumuraguri	2(7.1)	0(00)	6(21.4)	2(100)	11(39.3)	0(00)	6(21.4)	0(00)	3(10.7)	0(00)	28	2	30
Kalmoubari	1(4.0)	1(20.0)	9(36.0)	1(20.0)	7(28.0)	2(40.0)	5(20.0)	1(20.0)	3(12.0)	0(00)	25	5	30
Barchukabha	0(00)	0(00)	8(27.6)	0(00)	14(48.3)	1(100)	5(17.2)	0(00)	2(6.9)	0(00)	29	1	30
Jaluguti	1(4.3)	1(14.3)	9(39.1)	4(57.1)	9(39.1)	0(00)	3(13.0)	2(28.6)	1(4.3)	0(00)	23	7	30
Bonpara	2(9.5)	2(22.2)	14(66.6)	4(44.4)	3(14.3)	1(11.1)	2(9.5)	2(22.2)	0(00)	0(00)	21	9	30
Mikirgoan	3(15.0)	0(00)	11(44.0)	2(40.0)	6(24.0)	2(40.0)	4(16.0)	1(20.0)	1(4.0)	0(00)	25	5	30
Tukunabori	3(10.7)	0(00)	4(14.3)	0(00)	9(32.1)	2(100)	10(35.7)	0(00)	2(7.1)	0(00)	28	2	30
Borbhogai	3(15.0)	0(00)	10(40.0)	2(40.0)	8(32.0)	1(20.0)	2(8.0)	2(40.0)	2(8.0)	0(00)	25	5	30
Niz Mikirgoan	3(13.6)	2(25.0)	7(31.8)	3(37.5)	6(27.3)	0(00)	5(22.7)	3(37.5)	1(4.5)	0(00)	22	8	30
Total	21(8.5)	6(11.1)	84(34.1)	22(40.7)	81(32.9)	11(20.3)	44(17.9)	15(27.7)	16(6.5)	0(00)	246	54	300

Source: Field survey conducted in August-October, 2011.

Note: Figures in the parentheses represent percentage to total of respective gender category.

The poor and large families require more people including women and children to be engaged in earning for their survival. It thus sometimes force workable women to join the programme. In the study area the female participation was found to be higher in case of large family size having 5 or more members. The participation level for 5 and above family size was 81.5 per cent and that was also true for the male participants with 77.6 per cent (Table-3). However, proportion of female engaged is much higher in the large families as compared their male counterpart. Whereas, only 18.5 per cent of the female participants is from small family size of below 4 members and that is 22.3 per cent in case of male. But, one thing is noticed here that the majority of the participants in the highly literate villages Chariabahi, Borbhogia are from relatively smaller family size and females engaged from this group are very limited.

Table 3. Gender-wise Distribution of the Sample Participants According to their Family Size

Family Size	1-4 Members		5-7 Members		8 and Above		Total Sample		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
Chariabahi	7(35.0)	3(30.0)	13(65.0)	7(70.0)	0(00)	0(00)	20	10	30
Bumuraguri	7(25.0)	0(00)	15(53.6)	2(100)	6(21.4)	0(00)	28	2	30
Kalmoubari	6(24.0)	1(20.0)	14(56.0)	2(40.0)	5(20.0)	2(40.0)	25	5	30
Borchukabaha	7(24.1)	0(00)	16(55.2)	1(100)	6(20.7)	0(00)	29	1	30
Jaluguti	6(26.0)	2(28.6)	12(52.2)	3(42.9)	5(21.7)	2(28.6)	23	7	30
Bonpara	8(38.1)	2(22.2)	11(52.4)	4(44.4)	2(9.5)	3(33.3)	21	9	30
Mirikgoan	3(12.0)	0(00)	17(68.0)	3(60.0)	5(20.0)	2(40.0)	25	5	30
Tukunabori	2(7.1)	0(00)	17(60.7)	1(50.0)	9(32.1)	1(50.0)	28	2	30
Borbhogia	6(24.0)	1(20.0)	14(56.0)	2(40.0)	5(20.0)	2(40.0)	25	5	30
Niz Mikirgoan	3(13.6)	1(12.5)	15(68.2)	4(50.0)	4(18.2)	3(37.5)	22	8	30
Total	55(22.3)	10(18.5)	144(58.5)	29(53.7)	47(19.1)	15(27.8)	246	54	300

Source: Field survey conducted in August-October, 2011.

Note: figures in the parentheses represent percentage to total of respective gender category.

Table 4. Gender-wise Distribution of the Sample Participants According to their Educational Qualification

Category	Illiterate		Literate but below Primary		Primary but less than Class VIII		Class VIII but less than Madhyamic		Madhyamic but less than HSLC,		HSLC but less than Graduate		Graduate and above		Total		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
Villages	0 (00)	0 (00)	3 (15.0)	3 (30.0)	6 (30.0)	4 (40.0)	6 (30.0)	1 (10.0)	3 (15.0)	1 (10.0)	1 (5.0)	1 (100)	1 (5.0)	0 (00)	20 (66.66)	10 (33.33)	30
Charibahi	13 (46.4)	2 (100.0)	5 (17.8)	0 (00)	4 (14.2)	0 (00)	2 (7.14)	0 (00)	4 (14.2)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	28 (93.33)	2 (6.66)	30
Bumraguri	8 (32.0)	3 (60.0)	6 (24.0)	0 (00)	4 (16.0)	2 (40.0)	6 (24.0)	0 (00)	1 (4.0)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	25 (83.33)	5 (16.67)	30
Barchukabaha	6 (20.6)	0 (00)	7 (24.1)	1 (100.0)	7 (24.1)	0 (00)	7 (24.1)	0 (00)	2 (6.8)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	29 (96.67)	1 (3.33)	30
Jaluguti	5 (21.7)	3 (42.9)	9 (39.1)	2 (28.5)	0 (00)	2 (28.5)	1 (4.3)	0 (00)	6 (26.8)	0 (00)	2 (8.6)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	23 (76.67)	7 (23.33)	30
Bonpara	6 (28.5)	3 (33.3)	4 (19.0)	4 (44.4)	4 (19.0)	0 (00)	1 (4.7)	0 (00)	6 (28.5)	1 (11.1)	0 (00)	1 (11.1)	0 (00)	0 (00)	21 (70.0)	9 (30.0)	30
Mikirgoan	6 (24.0)	0 (00)	5 (20.0)	4 (80.0)	4 (16.0)	0 (00)	2 (8.0)	1 (20.0)	6 (24.0)	0 (00)	2 (8.0)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	25 (83.33)	5 (16.67)	30
Tukunabori	7 (25.0)	0 (00)	6 (21.4)	1 (50.0)	4 (14.2)	0 (00)	7 (25.0)	0 (00)	4 (14.2)	0 (00)	0 (00)	1 (50.0)	0 (00)	0 (00)	28 (93.33)	2 (6.66)	30
Borbhagia	1 (4.0)	2 (40.0)	5 (20.0)	1 (20.0)	5 (20.0)	1 (20.0)	5 (20.0)	1 (20.0)	6 (24.0)	0 (00)	2 (8.0)	0 (00)	1 (4.0)	0 (00)	25 (83.33)	5 (16.67)	30
Niz Mikirgoan	3 (13.6)	2 (25.0)	5 (22.7)	0 (00)	4 (18.2)	3 (37.5)	3 (13.6)	1 (12.5)	4 (18.2)	2 (25.0)	3 (13.6)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	22 (73.33)	8 (26.67)	30
Total	55 (22.5)	15 (27.8)	55 (22.5)	16 (29.6)	42 (17.1)	12 (22.2)	40 (16.3)	3 (5.5)	42 (17.1)	4 (7.4)	10 (4.1)	3 (5.5)	2 (0.81)	0 (00)	246 (82)	54 (18)	300

Source: Field survey conducted in August-October, 2011.
Note: Figures in the parentheses represent percentage to total of respective gender category.

Table 5. Gender-Wise Distribution of the Respondent Participants According to their Occupation

Category	Unemployed/ Housewife		Agricultural /daily Labourer		Cultivation		Rickshaw		Business		Domestic Helper		Others		Total		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
Village	0 (00)	1 (10.0)	15 (75.0)	3 (30.0)	2 (10.0)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	3 (15.0)	0 (00)	0 (00)	5 (50.0)	0 (00)	1 (10.0)	20	10	30
Chariabahi	0 (00)	0 (00)	22 (78.5)	0 (00)	2 (7.1)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	3 (10.7)	0 (00)	0 (00)	2 (100)	1 (3.5)	0 (00)	28	2	30
Bumraguri	1 (4.0)	1 (20.0)	19 (76.0)	0 (00)	1 (4.0)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	2 (8.0)	1 (20.0)	1 (4.0)	3 (60.0)	1 (4.0)	0 (00)	25	5	30
Borchukabaha	0 (00)	1 (100)	18 (62.0)	0 (00)	2 (6.8)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	3 (10.3)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	6 (20.9)	0 (00)	29	1	30
Jaluguti	1 (4.3)	2 (28.5)	12 (52.1)	1 (14.3)	3 (13.0)	0 (00)	1 (4.3)	0 (00)	2 (8.6)	0 (00)	0 (00)	4 (57.1)	4 (17.3)	0 (00)	23	7	30
Bonpara	2 (9.5)	4 (44.4)	5 (23.8)	1 (11.1)	1 (4.8)	0 (00)	9 (42.9)	0 (00)	4 (19.0)	0 (00)	0 (00)	2 (22.2)	0 (00)	2 (22.2)	21	9	30
Mirikgoan	2 (8.0)	5 (100)	15 (60.0)	0 (00)	1 (4.0)	0 (00)	1 (4.0)	0 (00)	4 (16.0)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	2 (8.0)	0 (00)	25	5	30
Tukunabori	1 (3.5)	1 (50.0)	19 (67.8)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	4 (14.3)	0 (00)	0 (00)	1 (50.0)	4 (14.3)	0 (00)	28	2	30
Borbhagia	0 (00)	1 (20.0)	9 (36.0)	0 (00)	5 (20.0)	0 (00)	5 (20.0)	0 (00)	1 (4.0)	0 (00)	1 (4.0)	2 (40.0)	4 (16.0)	2 (40.0)	25	5	30
Niz Mikirgoan	0 (00)	4 (50.0)	8 (36.4)	1 (12.5)	3 (13.6)	0 (00)	3 (13.6)	0 (00)	5 (22.7)	1 (12.5)	0 (00)	1 (12.5)	3 (13.6)	1 (12.5)	22	8	30
Total	7 (2.8)	20 (37.0)	142 (57.7)	6 (11.1)	20 (8.1)	0 (00)	19 (7.7)	0 (00)	31 (12.6)	2 (3.7)	2 (0.8)	20 (37.0)	25 (10.2)	6 (11.1)	246	54	300

Source: Field survey conducted in August-October, 2011.
Note: Figures in the parentheses represent percentage to total of respective gender category.

3.3 Gender-Wise Distribution of Respondent Participants according to their Educational Qualification

Educational status of the participants varies significantly across the surveyed villages and the female literacy rate varies from the lowest zero in Bumuraguri to cent per cent in Charibahi, Barchukabha, Mikirgaon and village Tukunabori. On the other hand, male literacy ranges from about 54 per cent in Bumuraguri to hundred per cent in Charibahi (Table-4). Education is supposed to be an important factor influencing the level of participation of the people in rural development programme. Although under MGNREGA scheme any person with any level of education can apply for job provided to them if they are willing to do. The information revealed that nearly 50 per cent of the participants both male and female across the villages are either illiterate or with below the elementary education level. It is observed that the female participation in the programme declines with higher educational qualification. But with regard to male participants it is observed that even if their participation has declined with the increase in educational qualification, the participation rate of male was much higher at all levels of education as compared to their female counterpart. The decline in proportion of participation with the increase in educational qualification may be due to the reluctance of the educated youth, especially educated girls to do unskilled manual labour or the educated youth already have better job opportunities. Sometimes, social status of the educated females compels them not to accept such job.

3.4 Female Participation vis-a-vis Male in MGNREGA in the Study Area According to Their Primary Occupation

As per the primary occupation of the female participants, 37.0 per cent each are housewives and domestic helpers. The housewives or domestic helpers consider it as an opportunity to bring additional income to their family. On the other hand, ma-

jority (57.7 per cent) of the male participants of the programme are agricultural labourer (Table-5) except in the village, Bonpara (adjacent to town) where a large section of the male participants are rickshaw puller (42.9 per cent). The numbers of participant (both male and female) from other categories of primary employment like cultivation, business and bus drivers or conductors, salesman etc are very low in all the villages. This is because, they receive regular income from those sources and thus are not eager to undertake temporary and mostly unskilled manual work under MGNREGA.

3.5 Monthly Family Income of the Female Participants vis a vis Male Participants

Table-6 revealed that overall female participation significantly comes from the low monthly family income group of less than Rs 2500, which is 85 per cent and very few are from the higher income groups. In rural areas, the relatively rich families in upper class society normally do not encourage their female members to work outside, especially the physical activities as provided under MGNREGA and they care for their families at home.

On the other hand, about half of the male participants come from the income group of Rs 1501 to 2500. In the Charibahi village with full literacy, the male participants are even found from relatively higher income group that is followed by the Borbhagia village. It is observed that the male participation is low from the lowest income group of below Rs 1500 (10.6 per cent) and as well as the high income group of rupees 5001 to 7500 per month (2.8 per cent). The participants from the lowest income group are mostly daily labourer and cannot wait for a long period to get their work under MGNREGA. Thus, they are engaged permanently in farm activities as hired labourer. People from higher income group, are not interested to do unskilled manual labour for their social positions.

Table 6. Gender Wise Distribution of the Respondents According to their Monthly Family Income

Monthly Family Income	Less than 1500		1501-2500		2501-3500		3501-5000		5001-7500		Total		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
Village													
Chariabahi	0(00)	3(30.0)	5(25.0)	3(30.0)	8(40.0)	2(20.0)	5(25.0)	1(10.0)	3(10.0)	0(00)	20	10	30
Bumuraguri	2(7.1)	0(00)	10(35.7)	2(100)	14(50.0)	0(00)	2(7.1)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	28	2	30
Kalmoubari	2(8.0)	1(20.0)	18(72.0)	3(60.0)	5(20.0)	0(00)	0(00)	1(20.0)	0(00)	0(00)	25	5	30
Borchukabaha	6(20.6)	0(00)	10(34.5)	1(100)	8(27.5)	0(00)	4(13.8)	0(00)	1(3.4)	0(00)	29	1	30
Jaluguti	0(00)	1(14.3)	13(56.5)	5(71.4)	5(21.7)	1(14.3)	5(21.7)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	23	7	30
Bonpara	1(4.8)	3(33.3)	13(61.9)	6(66.7)	4(19.0)	0(00)	2(9.5)	0(00)	1(4.7)	0(00)	21	9	30
Mirikgoan	3(12.0)	0(00)	14(56.0)	5(100)	6(24.0)	0(00)	2(8.0)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	25	5	30
Tukunabori	9(36.0)	2(100)	14(50.0)	0(00)	5(17.9)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	28	2	30
Borbhagia	2(8.0)	2(40.0)	13(52.0)	3(60.0)	3(12.0)	0(00)	5(25.0)	0(00)	2(8.0)	0(00)	25	5	30
Niz Mikirgoan	1(4.5)	2(25.0)	13(59.1)	4(50.0)	3(13.6)	2(25.0)	5(22.7)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	22	8	30
Total	26(10.6)	14(25.9)	123(50.0)	32(59.3)	61(24.8)	5(9.3)	30(12.2)	2(3.7)	7(2.8)	0(00)	246	54	300

Source: Field survey conducted in August-October, 2011.

Note: Figures in the parentheses represent percentage to total of respective gender category.

Table 7. Gender wise Distribution of the Sample According to the Level of Awareness Regarding some Provisions of MGNREGA in the Study Area

Category	Number of Respondents aware of the existing daily Wage under MGNREGA		Number of Respondents having job Card with Them		Number of Respondents aware of Un-employment Allowance		Number of Respondents aware of Worksite Facilities		Number of Respondents aware of the fact that 50% of NRE-GA works are Done by the Gaon Panchayats			Number of Respondents aware of So-cial Audit			Total sample for Each Question		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
	Village																
Charibahi	16 (80.0)	7 (70.0)	8 (40.0)	4 (40.0)	12 (60.0)	5 (50.0)	0 (00)	0 (00)	9 (45.0)	3 (30.0)	15 (75.0)	5 (50.0)	20 (10)	30			
Bumuraguri	15 (53.5)	2 (100.0)	14 (50.0)	2 (100.0)	2 (7.12)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	13 (46.4)	0 (00)	5 (17.8)	0 (00)	28	30			
Kalmoubari	13 (52.0)	4 (80.0)	14 (56.0)	3 (60.0)	9 (36.0)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	7 (28.0)	1 (20.0)	6 (24.0)	1 (20.0)	25	30			
Borchukabha	18 (62.0)	1 (100.0)	19 (65.5)	0 (00)	5 (17.2)	0 (00)	7 (24.2)	0 (00)	10 (34.4)	0 (00)	8 (27.5)	0 (00)	29	30			
Jaluguti	12 (52.2)	4 (57.2)	19 (82.6)	6 (85.7)	8 (34.8)	1 (14.3)	8 (34.8)	0 (00)	5 (21.7)	0 (00)	15 (65.2)	3 (42.8)	23	30			
Bonpara	11 (52.3)	4 (44.5)	15 (71.4)	6 (66.7)	8 (38.1)	1 (11.1)	0 (00)	0 (00)	4 (19.1)	1 (11.1)	12 (57.2)	3 (33.3)	21	30			
Mikirgoan	13 (52.0)	2 (40.0)	18 (72.0)	2 (40.0)	5 (20.0)	0 (00)	9 (36.0)	2 (40.0)	13 (52.0)	1 (20.0)	8 (32.0)	0 (00)	25	30			
Tukunabori	9 (32.2)	1 (50.0)	19 (67.8)	0 (00)	4 (14.2)	0 (00)	7 (25.0)	0 (00)	19 (67.8)	0 (00)	3 (10.7)	0 (00)	28	30			
Borbhogia	19 (76.0)	2 (40.0)	21 (84.0)	4 (80.0)	7 (28.0)	3 (60.0)	6 (24.0)	0 (00)	18 (72.0)	3 (60.0)	12 (48.0)	1 (20.0)	25	30			
Niz Mikirgoan	15 (68.2)	2 (25.0)	12 (54.5)	5 (62.5)	7 (31.8)	2 (25.0)	2 (9.0)	0 (00)	16 (72.7)	2 (25.0)	8 (36.4)	2 (25.0)	22	30			
Total	141 (57.3)	29 (53.7)	159 (64.6)	32 (59.2)	67 (27.2)	12 (22.2)	39 (15.9)	2 (3.7)	114 (46.3)	11 (20.3)	92 (37.4)	15 (27.8)	246	300			

Source: Field survey conducted in August-October, 2011.
Note: Figures in the parentheses represent percentage to total.

Table 8. Gender-wise Distribution of Participants about their Attendance in the Gram Sabha Meetings

Name of the Sur-veyed Village	Response for Attending the Gram Sabha						Frequency of Attending the Gram Sabha Meeting by the Attenders						Number of Partic-ipants Attending the Gram Sabha Meeting		
	Yes		No		Total		Regularly		Sometime		Hardly		M	F	T
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
Charibahi	14 (70.0)	6 (60.0)	6 (30.0)	4 (40.0)	20 (10)	30	6 (42.8)	0 (00)	8 (57.2)	2 (33.3)	0 (00)	4 (66.6)	14	6	20
Bumuraguri	12 (42.8)	0 (00)	16 (57.2)	2 (100)	28	30	0 (00)	0 (00)	5 (41.6)	0 (00)	7 (58.3)	0 (00)	12	0	12
Kalmoubari	16 (64.0)	0 (00)	9 (36.0)	5 (100)	25	30	3 (18.7)	0 (00)	9 (56.2)	0 (00)	4 (25.0)	0 (00)	16	0	16
Borchukabha	14 (48.2)	0 (00)	15 (51.8)	1 (100)	29	30	0 (00)	0 (00)	5 (35.7)	0 (00)	9 (64.3)	0 (00)	14	0	14
Jaluguti	16 (69.5)	0 (00)	7 (30.5)	7 (100)	23	30	2 (12.5)	0 (00)	7 (43.7)	0 (00)	7 (43.7)	0 (00)	16	0	16
Bonpara	10 (47.6)	4 (44.4)	11 (52.3)	5 (55.5)	21	30	2 (20.0)	0 (00)	2 (20.0)	1 (25.0)	6 (60.0)	3 (75.0)	10	4	14
Mikirgoan	17 (68.0)	1 (20.0)	8 (32.0)	4 (80.0)	25	30	5 (29.4)	0 (00)	8 (47.0)	0 (00)	4 (23.5)	1 (100)	17	1	18
Tukunabori	10 (35.7)	0 (00)	18 (64.3)	2 (100)	28	30	0 (00)	0 (00)	7 (70.0)	0 (00)	3 (30.0)	0 (00)	10	0	10
Borbhogai	18 (72.0)	2 (40.0)	7 (28.0)	3 (60.0)	25	30	5 (27.7)	0 (00)	12 (66.6)	1 (50.0)	1 (50.0)	1 (50.0)	18	2	20
Niz Mikirgoan	9 (40.0)	3 (37.5)	13 (60.0)	5 (62.5)	22	30	2 (22.2)	0 (00)	6 (66.0)	1 (33.3)	1 (11.1)	2 (66.6)	9	3	12
Total	136 (55.2)	16 (29.6)	111 (45.1)	38 (70.3)	246	300	25 (18.4)	0 (00)	69 (50.7)	5 (31.2)	42 (30.8)	11 (68.8)	136	16	152

Source: Field survey conducted in August-October, 2011.
Note: Figures in the parentheses represent percentage to total.

3.6 Level of Awareness of the Respondents about Various Provisions of MGNREGA

In the study area there is wide variations among female and male participants across the villages in regard to their level of awareness regarding those provisions. It is observed that the participants in all the villages are more aware of the going wage rate (about 56 per cent) and of the job card, which should remain with them (64.0 per cent) respectively (Table-7). But with regards to other provisions the level of awareness is comparatively low. Regarding the worksite facilities the overall awareness level is only 12.3 per cent, unemployment allowance (26.3 per cent) and none of the participants across the surveyed villages is aware of the travel allowance and ombudsman.

On an average, the awareness level is the highest among the participants of the village Borbhagia (51.1 per cent) followed by Charibahi (46.67 per cent) with high literacy (Table-2) and in these two villages more participants come from the higher income group (Table-5). Also, female participation is the highest in Charibahi village (Table-1). Overall awareness level is the lowest among the participants of Bumuraguri village with highest illiterate participants and low level of female participation. Hence, educational status especially of the women would have positive impact on the level of awareness of the villagers. Also, from Table-7 it is appeared that the distance of the village from their panchayat office adversely affect the information received and thus awareness level of the participants about the gram sabha meeting and various programmes initiated.

Overall, women are less aware than men in every respect. Only a significant portion of women in every village are aware of the wage payment and job card. There is minimum awareness among the women in regard to the worksite facilities, which are mostly provided to attract and involve women and the social audit of the activities.

3.7 Level of Participation of Women in the Gram Shaba

The Gram Sabha is the platform where all the MGNREGA workers, villagers and the panchyat members directly interact and discuss the issues relating to MGNREGA activities and accounts of expenditure in the respective areas. Information collected from the study area revealed that in almost all the villages the participation of the respondents in the Gram Sabha is not significant except in the village of Charibahi and Borbhagia where more than 50 per cent of the respondents claimed that they attended the Gram Sabha meeting and with the higher number of respondents who attend it regularly (Table-8). These two villages Charibahi and Borbhagia were also found to have higher level of awareness compared to the other villages and also the literacy status. Thus, a positive correlation was appeared between level of participation in decision making and level of awareness as well as literacy rate of the participants.

Majority of women participants of MGNREGA activities as worker do not attend the gram sabha (only 28.6%) and even in case of male 55.2% attend those meetings. Among these 28.6% none attend the meeting regularly; only a few of them attend sometimes and mostly attend hardly. In case of male, however a few attend regularly and majority of them participate in gram sabha discussions sometimes (Table-8).

3.8 Reasons for Participation in MGNREGA in the Opinion of Sample Respondents

In order to understand the reasons for participation, five major points, namely sponsored by the government, high wage, less work load, extra income and work within village have been put before the respondents to understand their preference for MGNREGA and the distribution of preference pattern is displayed in Table-9. Majority of the respondents stated two reasons for joining the programme. About 21.0 per cent of the participants are found to be in favour of government sponsored scheme and scope of additional income for the family, while 17.33 per cent of them (most of whom are women) express that the scheme gives them an opportunity to work within the village and at the same time it provides them an opportunity to earn some extra income. 15.33 per cent of the respondents mention the reason of only for the scope of extra earning. Some of the respondents (9 per cent) however state the reason of earning with less work load as the main reason for joining MGNREGA activities.

A village wise comparison reveals that in almost all the villages except in the village Tukunabori, Nizmikirgoan and Kalmoubari majority of the participants have joined MGNREGA because it is a government sponsored scheme and they can earn some extra income from it with even less work load. Majority of the participants from the village Tukunabori, Nizmikirgoan and Kalmoubari reveals that extra income and opportunity to work within the village instead of going to town is the reason behind their preference for MGNREGA and these three villages are comparatively remote villages and MGNREGA provides them an opportunity to work within the village.

Among the women participants, 22.2 per cent states in favour of the scope of earning additional money by working within the village and 9.3 per cent for less work load with higher wage and 16.6 per cent for government sponsored scheme with additional income. Also a few chose it because of supplementary income with less work load in the village that can be performed along with other household activities. Thus both male and female workers prefer it despite fewer working days available under MGNREGA because of some extra earning with less workload that can easily be availed in the neighbouring areas along with regular household activities.

Table 9. Gender-Wise Distribution of Participants as per the Reasons for Joining MGNREGA Activities

Category	Government Sponsored		Higher Wage		Provide Extra Income		Work provided Within the Village		Government Sponsored & Higher Wage		Government Sponsored & Less Work Load		Govt. Sponsored & Provide Extra Income		Govt. Sponsored & Work available Within the Village	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Village																
Charibahi	3(15.0)	0(00)	3(15.0)	0(00)	2(20.0)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	1(5.0)	0(00)	0(00)	1(10.0)	3(15.0)	1(10.0)	0(00)	0(00)
Bumuraguri	1(3.6)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	8(28.5)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	2(7.2)	0(00)	5(17.8)	0(00)	5(17.8)	1(50.0)	0(00)	0(00)
Kalmoubari	0(00)	1(20.0)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	2(8.0)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	2(8.0)	0(00)	2(8.0)	0(00)
Borchukabha	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	2(6.8)	0(00)	1(3.4)	0(00)	1(3.4)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	5(17.2)	0(00)	6(20.6)	0(00)
Jaluguti	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	5(21.7)	2(28.5)	0(00)	0(00)	1(4.3)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	9(39.1)	0(00)	3(13.0)	0(00)
Bonpara	8(38.1)	2(22.2)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	1(11.1)	1(4.8)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	1(11.1)	2(9.5)	2(22.2)	5(23.8)	1(11.1)
Mikirgoan	3(12.0)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	2(8.0)	2(40.0)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	16(64)	1(20.0)	2(8.0)	0(00)
Tukunabori	6(21.4)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	6(21.4)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	1(50.0)	3(10.7)	1(50.0)	2(7.2)	0(00)
Borbhogia	1(4.0)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	7(28.0)	2(40.0)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	1(4.0)	0(00)	7(28.0)	0(00)	2(8.0)	0(00)
Niz Mikirgoan	1(4.5)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	3(13.6)	1(12.5)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	2(9.0)	3(37.5)	1(4.5)	0(00)
Total	23(9.3)	3(5.5)	3(1.2)	0(00)	36(14.7)	10(18.5)	2(0.8)	0(00)	7(2.8)	0(00)	6(2.4)	3(5.5)	54(21.9)	9(16.6)	23(9.3)	1(1.8)

Source: Field survey conducted in August-October, 2011. **Note:** Figures in the parentheses represent percentage to total.

Table 9. Continued

Category	High Wage & Less Work Load		High Wage & Extra Income		High Wage & Work Within the Village		Less Work Load & Extra Income		Less Work Load & Work Within Village		Extra Income & Work Within Village		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	T
Village														
Charibahi	2(10.0)	3(30.0)	1(5.0)	0(00)	1(5.0)	0(00)	1(5.0)	2(20.0)	0(00)	0(00)	1(5.0)	1(10.0)	20	30
Bumuraguri	2(7.2)	0(00)	2(7.2)	0(00)	1(3.6)	0(00)	0(00)	1(50.0)	0(00)	0(00)	1(3.6)	0(00)	28	30
Kalmoubari	3(12.0)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	3(12.0)	1(20.0)	6(24)	1(20.0)	0(00)	2(40.0)	7(28.0)	0(00)	25	30
Borchukabha	1(3.4)	0(00)	1(3.4)	0(00)	3(10.3)	0(00)	2(6.8)	1(100.0)	0(00)	5(17.2)	0(00)	0(00)	29	30
Jaluguti	1(4.3)	2(28.5)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	2(8.6)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	2(8.6)	3(42.8)	23	30
Bonpara	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	1(4.8)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	3(14.2)	2(22.2)	21	30
Mikirgoan	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	1(4.0)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	1(4.0)	2(40.0)	25	30
Tukunabori	0(00)	0(00)	2(7.2)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	1(3.6)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	7(25.0)	0(00)	28	30
Borbhogia	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	3(12.0)	1(20.0)	0(00)	0(00)	5(20.0)	1(20.0)	25	30
Niz Mikirgoan	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	0(00)	4(18.2)	1(12.5)	0(00)	0(00)	8(36.4)	3(37.5)	22	30
Total	9(3.7)	5(9.3)	6(2.4)	0(00)	8(3.2)	1(1.8)	21(8.5)	7(2.8)	2(3.7)	40(16.2)	12(22.2)	246	54	300

Source: Field survey conducted in August-October, 2011.
Note: Figures in the parentheses represent percentage to total.

3.9 Opinion about the Reasons for not Availing the MGNREGA Activities by Women and Men Non-Participant Respondents

Information is also collected from 300 non-participants (224 male and 76 females) about their reasons for noninvolvement in MGNREGA activities. Among the female non-participant respondents, about 32 per cent states that they are not allowed from their respective families to accept any MGNREGA physical job on field and 27.6 per cent have recorded for not receiving the job card despite applying for it a long time back. Of the remaining, some belong to high income group or highly educated unemployed and reluctant to such activities. About 6 per cent of the overall respondents who are female are very reluctant to share any information and that also gives an impression that being female they are not allowed to work outside their home.

Among the men non-participants, the primary reason is either belong to high income and higher education group and these jobs are against their social status and positions. Some have not been offered job despite being interested in it and about 21 per cent have not even received their job card. A few also in old age pension scheme and thus not involved in it. Some 11.2 per cent also points out that they are asked for bribe for seeking job under it (Table-10). A section of respondents from villages Mikirgoan, Tukunabori, Borbhogia and Niz mikirgoan have stated that though they possess job cards but they have never been interested to get any such job either due to having alternative regular occupation, enough income, delay in payment for MGNREGA work or card is taken just to have identity proof. Some respondents, mainly from Kalmoubari, Bumuraguri, Jaluguti, Bonpara, Mikirgoan and Tukunabori reveals that they have been asked for bribe by the dealing panchayat members for getting a job card in the name of delay in application and the charge varied from Rs 30 to Rs 150.

Table 10. Distribution of the Sample Non-Participants of MGNREGA According to the Reason Mentioned by them for not Availing the Job Card or Job under this Scheme

Category	Applied but Did Not Receive		Not Required as Already have Higher Income		Not Interested in Manual Work but Highly Educated unemployed		Asked for Money (bribe)		Brother or Husband Possess A Job Card	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Village										
Chariabahi	3 (18.7)	6 (42.8)	10 (62.5)	2 (14.2)	3 (18.7)	4 (28.5)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	1 (7.1)
Bumuraguri	3 (23.1)	9 (52.9)	3 (23.1)	0 (00)	6 (46.2)	4 (23.5)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)
Kalmoubari	8 (32.0)	0 (00)	3 (12.0)	0 (00)	3 (12.0)	0 (00)	4 (16.0)	0 (00)	6 (24.0)	0 (00)
Barchukabha	2 (7.7)	0 (00)	3 (11.5)	0 (00)	6 (23.1)	0 (00)	11 (42.3)	0 (00)	2 (6.6)	0 (00)
Jaluguti	10 (43.5)	2 (28.5)	2 (8.7)	0 (00)	4 (17.4)	1 (14.3)	3 (13.1)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)
Bonpara	4 (25.0)	4 (28.5)	2 (12.5)	0 (00)	2 (12.5)	3 (21.4)	1 (6.25)	0 (00)	1 (6.25)	2(14.3)
Mikirgoan	4 (14.3)	0 (00)	2 (7.1)	0 (00)	4 (14.3)	1 (50.0)	3 (10.7)	0 (00)	2 (7.1)	0 (00)
Tukunabori	3 (10.7)	0 (00)	7 (25.0)	0 (00)	9 (32.1)	0 (00)	3 (10.0)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)
Borbhogai	6 (25.0)	0 (00)	1 (4.2)	2 (33.3)	5 (20.8)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	4 (16.7)	0 (00)
Niz Mikirgoan	3 (12.0)	0 (00)	3 (12.0)	2 (40.0)	2 (8.0)	2 (40.0)	0 (00)	0 (00)	3 (12.0)	0 (00)
Total	46 (20.5)	21 (27.6)	36 (16.1)	6 (7.8)	44 (19.7)	15 (19.7)	25 (11.2)	0 (00)	18 (8.0)	3 (3.9)
Category	Have Job Card but Remain Indifferent to NREGA Opportunities		Was Not Interested Earlier But Wants Now		Woman and Not Allowed		Avail Old Age Pension		Total	
Village	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Chariabahi	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	1 (7.1)	0 (00)	0(00)	16	14
Bumuraguri	0 (00)	2 (11.7)	1 (7.7)	0 (00)	0 (00)	2 (11.7)	0 (00)	0(00)	13	17
Kalmoubari	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	5 (100.0)	1 (4.0)	0(00)	25	5
Barchukabha	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	4 (100.0)	2 (7.7)	0(00)	26	4
Jaluguti	0 (00)	0 (00)	4 (17.4)	0 (00)	0 (00)	4 (57.1)	0 (00)	0(00)	23	7
Bonpara	0 (00)	0 (00)	4 (25.0)	1 (7.1)	0 (00)	4 (28.5)	2 (12.6)	0(00)	16	14
Mikirgoan	10 (35.7)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	1 (50.0)	3 (10.7)	0(00)	28	2
Tukunabori	3 (10.7)	0 (00)	2 (7.1)	0 (00)	0 (00)	2 (100.0)	0 (00)	0(00)	28	2
Borbhogai	3 (12.5)	3 (50.0)	5 (20.8)	1 (16.7)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0(00)	24	6
Niz Mikirgoan	7 (28.0)	0 (00)	3 (12.0)	0 (00)	0 (00)	1 (20.0)	4 (16.0)	0(00)	25	5
Total	24 (10.7)	5 (6.5)	19 (8.5)	2 (2.6)	0 (00)	24 (31.6)	12 (5.4)	0(00)	224	76

Nearly 8 per cent of the overall respondents across the surveyed villages state that one member of their family already has a job card so they cannot get another one (under MGNREGA one job card per household) though they are also interested in a job card after the other member is separated from their family. A few (7 per cent) of the non participants were not interested earlier but later on become interested to get a job card as in their opinion, it's an easy way to earn some extra income. Thus, sex along with other factors age, education, primary occupation and income, family status and sometimes corruption led to non-participation of many rural people despite being capable of doing the job. Women are more affected because of simply the social bindings, family traditions and that also varies across the cast, creed and religion.

4. Analysis

4.1 Factors Affecting Participation in the MGNREGA Activities as Worker and in the Gram Sabha and the Impact of Gender Differential

The Probit Analysis on the factors affecting the participation of the rural people in MGNREGA reveals that there is significant gender differential in the level of participation despite several safeguards provided to the women in MGNREGA activities. It is mainly because of the age old phenomenon of gender discriminations in rural society of Assam especially in Muslim communities where female are still not encouraged to work outside their home except the widow who has no other source of income and thus allowed to work under MGNREGA activities. Also, age, occupational status is found to have an inverse impact on the level of participation in MGNREGA activities. Generally the people who are accustomed to manual labour (agricultural and daily labourer), participates more than the people from other occupations. In case of SC/ST population, where intensity of poverty is more, the participation in MGNREGA activities is significantly higher in the study area than any other communities (Table-11).

Table 11. Results of Probit Regression of Participation in MGNREGA Activities on various Factors Affecting such Participation

Dependent Variable: Probit (Participation in Activities), N= 595 No. of Iterations: 20, Pearson Goodness of Fit: Chi Square = 451.64				
Parameters	Coefficients	Std. Error	Z value	Significance
Age	- 0.004	0.002	- 1.891	.059
Sex	0.086	0.054	1.578	.115
Education	- 0.017	0.005	-3.056	.002
SC/ST	0.110	0.037	3.023	.003
Occupation	- 0.021	0.008	- 2.510	.012
Dist. from Panchayat Office	0.004	0.008	0.593	.553
Intercept	-2.988	.100	-30.028	.000

Table-12 shows that unlike the case of participation in physical activities as worker; age and education positively affected the participation of the respondents in the decision making process. But the male had more inclination to participate in such process as in earlier case. There is significant gender differential in this case also. The elderly people take more interest in the gram sabha meeting than the young and the decision making process was still under male domination. Similarly, relatively more educated people take part in the decision making with greater intensity due to better access to information than the low educated or uneducated people. In the same way, though the people from backward community (SC/ST) participate more in physical activities for their earning, they take very less interest in the Gram Sabha meeting and thus decision making process. This is because in those rural area the SC/ST population are generally low educated and poor. Also, though distance from the panchayat office was not a matter in earlier case, in the participation of decision making it affects inversely and people involved in higher level occupation participate in lesser proportion.

Table 12. Results of Probit Regression of Participation in MGNREGA Decision Making Process on various Factors Affecting such Participation

Dependent Variable: Probit (Participation in Decision Making Process), N = 600, No. of Iterations: 19, Pearson Goodness of Fit: Chi Square = 313.73				
Parameters	Coefficients	Std. Error	Z-Value	Significance
Age	0.47	.009	5.152	.000
Sex	1.496	.275	5.433	.000
Education	0.65	.024	2.684	.007
SC/ST	-.140	.161	-872	.383
Distance from the Panchayat Office	-.088	.034	-2.605	.009
Occupation	-.061	.035	-1.746	.081
Intercept	-3.084	.515	-5.993	.000

5. Conclusion

Though several measures are undertaken in MGNREGA for ensuring the participation of women in rural areas in order to uplift their socio-economic status, the participation level is far from satisfactory. Of course some of the women are getting employment in various activities but comparatively much lower than the men. Gender discrimination still persists in the involvement of the people especially in the Muslim dominated and relatively high income areas. There is also a lag in the distribution of job cards to the females along with male. The observations of the socio-economic characteristics and the regression results together suggest the less participation of women is also due to the variation in educational, income and primary occupational

categories from that of men. Also there is social binding and lack of awareness.

The present paper also revealed significant lack of awareness of the participants in general regarding these provisions of MGN-REGA. The unawareness has been more pronounced in case of women. It was also observed that the participation of women in the decision making process through gram sabha is negligible though some men regularly participate in the gram sabha and evaluation process of various programmes. Not only that, age, education and occupational status inversely affect the participation level in the manual activities while participation from the poor and backward communities is significantly higher. But in the decision making process educated and aged male members from the nearby areas are mostly involved. It thus can be suggested for the expansion of elementary education for both male and female to encourage women directly and indirectly through the awareness of men to take proactive action in involving potential female members along with male. Malpractices and corruption also need to be controlled to make the development programmes truly inclusive across gender and class.

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