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DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF MGNREGS BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS IN PUNJAB: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The present paper is an attempt to analyse the demographic and socio-economic status of sampled MGNREGS beneficiary households in the rural areas of Punjab. To analyse the results, a sample of 440 MGNREGS beneficiary households has been selected with multi-stage random sampling. The analysis reveals that majority of the MGNREGS beneficiary households, i.e., 81.59 per cent are belonging to scheduled caste households. The analysis reveals that overall in Punjab 36.25 per cent persons are illiterate, whereas 22.27, 14.61, 14.04 and 10.07 per cent persons have education up to the primary, middle, matric and higher secondary level respectively. This analysis brought out the fact that due to their low income, poverty and lack of scholarships, the children belonging to these poor people are able to obtain only formal education up to middle/matric level. Majority of the beneficiary households, i.e., 85.00 per cent are working as wage labourers. The results also show that 53.86 and 56.69 per cent of sampled households have toilet and bathroom facility respectively and still 71.36 per cent of households are using dung cake and wood as a major source of fuel in kitchen. The socio-economic status of MGNREGS beneficiary households shows that lack of access to equal opportunities and productive assets as well as social exclusion strategies, they are lagging behind in development outcomes- access to education, health, housing, sanitation and other basic amenities of life.

KEYWORDS

MGNREGS, literacy, sex ratio, occupation, housing conditions, sanitation facilities.

INTRODUCTION

In India, majority of the workers are dependent on informal sector for their livelihood. Most of the workers are either casual in nature or self-dependent. These workers have no security, no legal contract, no health benefits and other benefits extended to the worker of the formal sector. Their vulnerability is extended by the necessity to remain mobile due to the saturation and lack of demand in the agriculture sector. They generally have to work outside the native place and face uncertainties due to unfamiliar conditions, work expectation and job profile. Further they are, by and large, paid less than the nominal wage for any particular work owing to basic limitations like lower education, poor skills and dearth of capital (Kanan, 2010 and Viswanathan et al., 2014).

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is a historic legislation passed by the government of India. It was enacted to address the crucial issues of unemployment and poverty in rural India. This scheme guarantees a hundred day of unskilled employment to each household in every financial year at an equal wage rate for males and females workers (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2005 and Nair et al., 2009). The most important change MGNREGS represents is that it gives rise to programme that spring not from its willful benevolence, but as a legally binding response by the states to a right to work.

Punjab, an agriculturally developed state, is facing the problem of unemployment in general and in the rural areas particular. Modernisation and declining productivity has decreased the ability of absorption of more labour force in this sector. Industry is also not well-established in Punjab. This has created the livelihood problems for unskilled landless, marginal and small farmers (Department of Planning, Punjab, 2009). So in the present situation of misery, public works like MGNREGS can be become source of their livelihood. MGNREGS operation in Punjab was introduced in phase manner. In the first phase, it was launched in one of districts (Hoshiarpur) of Punjab since February 02, 2006. In the second phase, it was extended to three more districts, namely, Amritsar, Nawanshahar and Jalandhar during 2007-08. And, the scheme was further extended to all districts of Punjab with effect from April 3, 2008.

The socio-economic status of a society is a composition of various factors such as population, housing, education, economic activities and availability of basic amenities of life. It is a well known fact that education, employment opportunities and land has been distributed unequally among different sections of the society. Lack of skill, access to productive assets and employment opportunities pose challenge for livelihood security for privileged sections of the society.

The age and the sex structure of the population are the most important demographic characteristics. Age and sex are two attributes that largely influence an individual's role in society. The age structure of a population, i.e., the distribution of the population in different age groups, constitutes an important subject of demographic analysis and development planning. Age structural dynamics includes fertility, mortality and as well as related changes in family planning and social arrangements. The use of age structure goes beyond demographic analysis to other important areas. Public policies aim to improve the welfare of a population; population welfare in turn is determined and shaped by the needs of present and future population; a population's needs and its potential are strongly shaped by its demographic composition, i.e., by age-structural transition (Riyaza, 2000).

Education is the most important instrument for social, economic and political transformation. A well educated population, equipped with the relevant knowledge, attitudes and skills is essential for economic and social development in the twenty-first century. Education is the most potent tool for socio-economic mobility and a key instrument for building an equitable and just society. Education provides skills and competencies for economic well-being. Education strengthens democracy by imparting to citizens the tools needed to fully participate in the governance process. Education also acts as an integrative force in society, imparting values that foster social cohesion and national identity (Planning Commission, 2013).

Economic attainment refers to access to or command over resources by households and individuals, which enhances their capabilities. At the most elementary level, the status of employment of household members and ownership of assets determine a household's income, which to a very large extent determines the individual's command over resources. The most important indicator reflecting lack of economic attainment is the incidence of poverty (Government of India, 2011). But it is a well known fact that majority of the weaker sections in the rural areas are landless and they are dependent upon daily wage work for their livelihood security.

Housing is one of the basic requirements for the survival of human beings. Ownership of a house provides significant economic security and social status for a citizen in the society. Stable, affordable and accessible housing is directly and indirectly linked to human well-being. One can easily understand the socio-economic status of a family just by watching physical attributes of their housing. Good housing and its surroundings indicate the better standard of living of the family. Good housing provides facilities for education, recreation and many other facets of life. Housing provides the foundation for a home where a human being becomes

human and cultivates his/her personality. A person deprived of this basic need faces all odds of life and remains discriminated and marginalised in the society. The situation of the scheduled tribes, scheduled castes and the other socially and economically backward class families are worst affected by poor housing conditions. Shelter is a basic need of a citizen which is critical for determining the quality of human life. A roof over the head endows a shelter-less person, with an essential asset and improves her/his physical and mental well being (Planning Commission, 2013).

Individual health and hygiene is largely dependent on adequate availability of drinking water and proper sanitation facilities. Proper sanitation is important not only from the general health point of view but it has a vital role to play in our individual and social life too. Sanitation is one of the basic determinants of quality of life and human development. The consumption of unsafe drinking water, improper disposal of human excreta, improper environmental sanitation and lack of personal and food hygiene have been major causes of many diseases in developing countries like India. In India, large sections of the population are living in the rural areas. Majority of the weaker sections in the rural areas have limited access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities (Ministry of Rural Development, 2004). The present paper deals with the demographic and socio-economic status of MGNREGS beneficiary households in the rural areas of Punjab.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The present paper is an attempt to analyse the demographic and socio-economic status of sampled MGNREGS beneficiary households in the rural areas of Punjab. It takes into consideration the following specific objectives:

1. To analyse the age and sex-wise composition of MGNREGS beneficiary households.
2. To examine the educational, occupational and economic status of MGNREGS beneficiary households.
3. To study the housing and sanitation conditions of MGNREGS beneficiary households in rural Punjab.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on the primary as well as secondary data. The primary data has been collected through a well-structured schedule /questionnaire. The selected MGNREGS beneficiary households have provided the first-hand information about the scheme in the rural areas of Punjab. In the present study, a sample of 440 MGNREGS beneficiary households has been selected with the help of multi-stage random sampling method at the district, development block and village level.

On the basis of average persondays generated under MGNREGS in 2013-14, all districts have been categorised into three categories, i.e., high participation districts, moderate participation districts and low participation districts. At the first stage, three districts, i.e., Fatehgarh Sahib (high participation district), Fazilka (moderate participation district) and Hoshiarpur (low participation district) have been selected purposively. At the second stage, nine developmental blocks, three from each district have been selected. At the third stage, three villages from each selected block have been selected. Thus, a total of 27 villages have been selected. Finally, a sample of 440 MGNREGS beneficiary households consisting of 106 from Fatehgarh Sahib, 229 from Fazilka and 105 from Hoshiarpur district has been selected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Age and sex-wise composition of sampled MGNREGS beneficiary households in the rural areas of Punjab is presented in Table 1. The table shows that out of total sample population of 1947 persons, 1061 are males and 886 are females. The age-wise break-up of the sample population shows that 169 persons (8.18 per cent) fall in the age group of 0-6 years, 314 persons (16.13 per cent) belong to the age group of 7-14 years, 1242 persons (63.79 per cent) represent the age group of 15-59 years, 161 persons (8.27 per cent) are in the age group of 60-65 years, and the remaining 61 persons (3.13 per cent) fall in the age group of above 65 years. The analysis makes it clear that the highest proportion of persons fall in the age group of 15-59 years.

Out of the total sampled population of 1947 persons, 474 persons are from Fatehgarh Sahib, 1001 persons are from Fazilka and remaining 472 persons are from Hoshiarpur district. The share of males to total persons is 54.49 per cent, whereas the share of females is 45.51 per cent which reveals that number of females is less as compared to males. The percentage share of males to total persons is 55.49, 53.85 and 54.87 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts, whereas the share of females to total persons is 44.51, 46.15 and 45.13 per cent respectively.

TABLE 1: AGE AND SEX-WISE COMPOSITION OF SAMPLED MGNREGS BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS IN RURAL PUNJAB

Sr. No.	Age Groups (in years)	Fatehgarh Sahib	Fazilka	Hoshiarpur	Punjab
1.	Up to 6 years				
	Male	20(4.22)	62(6.19)	9(1.91)	91(4.67)
	Female	14(2.95)	58(5.79)	6(1.27)	78(4.01)
	Total	34(7.17)	120(11.98)	15(3.18)	169(8.68)
2.	7-14 years				
	Male	55(11.60)	85(8.49)	44(9.32)	184(9.45)
	Female	34(7.17)	74(7.39)	22(4.66)	130(6.68)
	Total	89(18.78)	159(15.88)	66(13.98)	314(16.13)
3.	15-59 years				
	Male	158(33.33)	323(32.27)	187(39.62)	668(34.31)
	Female	133(28.06)	270(26.97)	171(36.23)	574(29.48)
	Total	291(61.39)	593(59.24)	358(75.85)	1242(63.79)
4.	60-65 years				
	Male	13(2.74)	51(5.09)	15(3.18)	79(4.06)
	Female	21(4.43)	52(5.19)	9(1.91)	82(4.21)
	Total	34(7.17)	103(10.28)	24(5.09)	161(8.27)
5.	Above 65 years				
	Male	17(3.59)	18(1.80)	4(0.85)	39(2.00)
	Female	9(1.90)	8(0.80)	5(1.06)	22(1.13)
	Total	26(5.49)	26(2.60)	9(1.91)	61(3.13)
6.	Total				
	Male	263(55.49)	539(53.85)	259(54.87)	1061(54.49)
	Female	211(44.51)	462(46.15)	213(45.13)	886(45.51)
	Total	474(100.00)	1001(100.00)	472(100.00)	1947(100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2014-15.

Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages.

Sex composition of the human population is one of the basic demographic characteristics, which is extremely vital for any meaningful demographic analysis. The Changes in sex composition largely reflects the underlying socio-economic and cultural patterns of a society in different ways. Sex ratio is the number of females per 1000 males. Sex ratio is an index of the socio-economic conditions of an area and it is also a composite indicator of women's status in the society. An understanding of sex ratio of an area is important for different types of planning and for comprehending demographic dynamism in terms of mortality, migration, marital status, economic characteristics and so forth (Census of India, 2001)

The sex-ratio among different age groups of MGNREGS beneficiary households in the rural areas of Punjab is presented in Table 2. The overall sex ratio has been worked out 835 females per thousand males among all the households taken together. The district-wise sex ratio has been worked out 802, 857 and 822 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively. The number of females per thousand males between 0-6 years has been worked out 700 in Fatehgarh Sahib, 935 in Fazilka and 667 in Hoshiarpur district, whereas among all the sampled households taken together, it is 857 in the rural areas of Punjab. The sex-ratio between 15-59 years has been worked out 842, 836 and 914 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively. Among all the households taken together, the sex-ratio between this age group is 859 in the rural areas of Punjab. Thus composition of sampled population reveals that the proportion of girl child is low in the rural areas of Punjab. The district-wise results also shows that child sex ratio is low in developed districts, i.e., Fatehgarh Sahib and Hoshiarpur districts as compared to less developed district, i.e., Fazilka district.

TABLE 2: SEX-RATIO AMONG SAMPLED MGNREGS BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS IN RURAL PUNJAB

Sr. No.	Age Groups (in years)	Fatehgarh Sahib	Fazilka	Hoshiarpur	Punjab
1.	0-6 years	700	935	667	857
2.	7-14 years	618	871	500	707
3.	15-59 years	842	836	914	859
4.	above 59 years	1000	870	737	881
5.	Overall Sex-ratio	802	857	822	835

Source: Calculated from Table 1.

Indian society is primarily an identity-based society. This identity of an individual stems from caste, ethnic, religious or even regional belongings amongst others. These identities unfortunately are still entrenched in caste and religious hierarchal institutions, governing social conduct and market transactions. This is seen to be more prevalent in the rural areas, where poverty is also high. Though the strict one to one correspondence of the broad caste categories with class has eroded substantially over time, there still remain strong linkages between the two, which have been strengthened by persistent cultural, social and religious ideas and their practice. India, therefore, suffers from its unique problems with their implications for livelihood outcomes, somewhat different from societies stratified only on class lines (Thorat, 2010).

The data relating to social status of sampled MGNREGS beneficiary households in the rural areas of Punjab is given in Table 3. The table shows that out of 440 sampled beneficiary households, 298 households (67.73 per cent) are from Sikh community, 141 households (32.05 per cent) are from the Hindu community and only 1 household from other community. The district-wise religious status reveals that 93.40 per cent households of Fatehgarh Sahib district, 65.07 per cent households of Fazilka district and 47.62 per cent households of Hoshiarpur districts are belonging to the Sikh community whereas, the percentage share of Hindu community for respective districts is 6.60, 34.93 and 51.43 respectively.

TABLE 3: SOCIAL STATUS OF SAMPLED MGNREGS BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS IN RURAL PUNJAB

Sr. No.	Social Status	Fatehgarh Sahib	Fazilka	Hoshiarpur	Punjab
1.	Religion				
	Sikhism	99(93.40)	149(65.07)	50(47.62)	298(67.73)
	Hinduism	7(6.60)	80(34.93)	54(51.43)	141(32.05)
	Others*	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	1(0.95)	1(0.22)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
2.	Caste				
	Scheduled caste	88(83.02)	179(78.17)	92(87.62)	359(81.59)
	Backward caste	12(11.32)	38(16.59)	6(5.71)	56(12.73)
	General caste	6(5.66)	12(5.24)	7(6.67)	25(5.68)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
3.	Type of family				
	Joint	28(26.42)	89(38.86)	36(34.29)	153(34.77)
	Nuclear	78(73.58)	140(61.14)	69(65.71)	287(65.23)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
4.	Head of family				
	Male	93(87.74)	212(92.58)	94(89.52)	399(90.68)
	Female	13(12.26)	17(7.42)	11(10.48)	41(9.32)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
5.	Marital status				
	Married	236(49.79)	508(50.75)	206(43.64)	950(48.79)
	Unmarried	90(18.99)	185(18.48)	168(35.59)	443(22.75)
	Others**	148(31.22)	308(30.77)	98(20.77)	554(28.46)
	Total	474(100.00)	1001(100.00)	472(100.00)	1947(100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2014-15.

Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages.

* Muslim, Christian etc.

** Divorcee, Widow, Widower, Children, below marriageable age etc.

The distribution of sampled MGNREGS beneficiary households by social groups shows that majority of the households, i.e., 81.59 per cent belong to scheduled castes, 12.73 per cent are from backward castes and remaining 5.68 per cent belong to general castes households. The district-wise distribution of sampled beneficiary households by social groups shows that 83.02, 78.17, and 87.62 per cent households in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts belong to scheduled castes households, 11.32, 16.59 and 5.71 per cent households from backward castes and the remaining 5.66, 5.24 and 6.67 per cent belong to general castes households respectively.

The table further reveals that majority of the sampled beneficiary households, i.e., 65.23 per cent households are a part of the nuclear family system whereas 34.77 per cent are living in joint family system in the rural areas of Punjab. The percentage share of nuclear family system is the highest (73.58) in Fatehgarh Sahib district followed by Hoshiarpur district (65.71) and the lowest (61.14) in Fazilka district. The classification of the sampled beneficiary households according to headship of families reveals that majority of the households, i.e., 90.68 per cent households have male head whereas only 9.32 per cent households have female head because of death of their husband and having no male member in their families. The district-wise percentage share of male headed families is 87.74, 92.58 and 89.52 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively.

The marital status of sampled beneficiary households reveals that 48.79 per cent persons are married, 22.75 per cent are unmarried and 28.46 per cent persons represent the category of others (widow, widower, divorce and children). The district-wise percentage share of married persons is 49.79, 50.75 and 43.64 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively whereas the share of unmarried persons in respective districts is 18.99, 18.48 and 35.59 per cent. The percentage share of unmarried persons is higher in Hoshiarpur district because of higher level of literacy.

The educational status of sampled MGNREGS beneficiary households in the rural areas of Punjab is presented in Table 4. The table clearly reveals that overall in Punjab 36.25 per cent persons are illiterate, whereas 22.27, 14.61, 14.04 and 10.07 per cent persons have education up to the primary, middle, matric and higher secondary level respectively. There have been very few persons who have obtained the graduation and post-graduation (1.90 per cent) as well as professional & technical (0.86 per cent) education. The percentage share of illiterate persons is the highest (48.30) in Fazilka, followed by Fatehgarh Sahib (31.94) and the lowest (17.66) in Hoshiarpur district. This analysis brought out that the fact that due to their low income, poverty and lack of scholarships, the children belonging to these poor people are able to obtain only formal education up to middle/matric level. The percentage share of beneficiary household having professional and technical education is negligible because they are unable to bear the high cost of these courses. The level of illiteracy is higher in Fazilka district as compared to Fatehgarh Sahib and Hoshiarpur districts due to the reasons such as border area, backwardness of people, low level of income, lack of employment and lack of public as well as private institutions.

TABLE 4: EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF SAMPLED MGNREGS BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS IN RURAL PUNJAB

Sr. No.	Education Level	Fatehgarh Sahib	Fazilka	Hoshiarpur	Punjab
1.	Illiterate	138(31.94)	412(48.30)	80(17.66)	630(36.25)
2.	Primary	110(25.46)	181(21.22)	96(21.19)	387(22.27)
3.	Middle	74(17.13)	83(9.73)	97(21.41)	254(14.61)
4.	Matric	64(14.81)	81(9.50)	99(21.85)	244(14.04)
5.	Secondary	39(9.03)	79(9.26)	57(12.58)	175(10.07)
6.	Graduation and Post Graduation	7(1.63)	14(1.64)	12(2.66)	33(1.90)
7.	Professional and Technical	0(0.00)	3(0.35)	12(2.65)	15(0.86)
8.	Total	432(100.00)	853(100.00)	453(100.00)	1738(100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2014-15.

Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages.

Note: 0-7 years children have excluded.

Unorganised or informal sector constitutes a pivotal part of the Indian economy. More than 90 per cent of workforce and about 50 per cent of the national product are accounted for by the informal economy. A high proportion of socially and economically underprivileged sections of society are concentrated in the informal economic activities. The high levels of growth of the Indian economy during the past two decades are accompanied by increasing informalisation. There has been new dynamism of the informal economy in terms of output, employment and earnings. Faster and inclusive growth needs special attention to informal economy. Sustaining high levels of growth are also intertwined with improving domestic demand of those engaged in informal economy, and addressing the needs of the sector in terms of credit, skills, technology, marketing and infrastructure (Government of India, 2012).

Table 5 reflects the primary occupation of sampled MGNREGS beneficiary households in the rural areas of Punjab. The table clearly shows that majority of the beneficiary households, i.e., 85.00 per cent are working as wage labourers. Among these, 67.50 per cent are engaged in non-farm activities, 15.23 per cent are casual labourers or agricultural labourers on daily wage in agriculture and 2.27 per cent are working as permanent or yearly basis agricultural labourers in agriculture. The percentage share of non-farm workers is 75.47, 58.95 and 78.10 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively whereas the percentage share of casual labourers in agriculture for respective districts is 7.55, 23.58 and 4.76 respectively. Due to lack of employment opportunities, poverty and landlessness, agricultural labour is major source of livelihood for majority of the households in Fazilka district.

TABLE 5: PRIMARY OCCUPATION OF SAMPLED MGNREGS BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS IN RURAL PUNJAB

Sr. No.	Occupational Category	Fatehgarh Sahib	Fazilka	Hoshiarpur	Punjab
1.	Wage Worker				
	(a) Non-farm wage workers	80(75.47)	135(58.95)	82(78.10)	297(67.50)
	(b) Agricultural Labourers (Casual labour in agriculture)	8(7.55)	54(23.58)	5(4.76)	67(15.23)
	(c) Agricultural Labourers (permanent or yearly basis)	0(0.00)	10(4.37)	0(0.00)	10(2.27)
	Sub-total (a+b+c)	88(83.02)	199(86.90)	87(82.86)	374(85.00)
2.	Self-employed in Agriculture	0(0.00)	4(1.75)	1(0.95)	5(1.14)
3.	Government Employees	5(4.72)	4(1.75)	2(1.90)	11(2.50)
4.	Private Employees	5(4.72)	10(4.37)	5(4.76)	20(4.55)
5.	Artisans	2(1.89)	3(1.31)	6(5.71)	11(2.50)
6.	Others*	6(5.66)	9(3.92)	4(3.82)	19(4.31)
7.	Total (1-6)	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2014-15.

Figures given in parentheses indicate percentages.

* self-employed in household's industrial units, shopkeepers, drivers etc.

Due to higher incidence of landlessness among these households, the percentage share of self-employed in agriculture is negligible. The share of government employees is 4.72, 1.75 and 1.90 per cent in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively, while as a whole, this is only 2.50 per cent. This is mainly due to their lower level of education as well as lack of employment opportunities in the government sector. The percentage share of private sector employees is 4.72, 4.37 and 4.76 per cent respectively, whereas as a whole this is 4.55 per cent among all the sampled beneficiary households taken together in the rural areas of Punjab. The table further shows that 1.89, 1.31 and 5.71 per cent households are artisans in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively. The percentage share of those belonging to the others category is 4.31 among the beneficiary households in the rural areas of Punjab.

The data regarding economic status of sampled MGNREGS beneficiary households is given in the Table 6. As per classification of sampled beneficiary households according to ration cards held by them 68.64 per cent of the households fall in the category of below poverty line (BPL) and 31.36 per cent in the above poverty line (APL) category. The percentage share of people below poverty line households is the highest (73.80) in Fazilka district followed by Hoshiarpur (67.62) and the lowest (58.49 per cent) in Fatehgarh Sahib district. The data regarding ownership of landholdings points out that 96.59 per cent of the sampled beneficiary households are landless. The district-wise analysis shows that the percentage share of landless households is 99.06, 94.32 and 99.05 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively.

TABLE 6: ECONOMIC STATUS OF SAMPLED MGNREGS BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS IN RURAL PUNJAB

Sr. No.	Economic status	Fatehgarh Sahib	Fazilka	Hoshiarpur	Punjab
1.	Household category				
	BPL	62(58.49)	169(73.80)	71(67.62)	302(68.64)
	APL	44(41.51)	60(26.20)	34(32.38)	138(31.36)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
2.	Land ownership				
	Land Owner	1(0.94)	13(5.68)	1(0.95)	15(3.41)
	Landless	105(99.06)	216(94.32)	104(99.05)	425(96.59)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
3.	Economic status				
	Earning	129(27.22)	279(27.87)	124(26.27)	532(27.32)
	Earning Dependent	195(41.14)	394(39.36)	240(50.85)	829(42.58)
	Dependent	150(31.64)	328(32.77)	108(22.88)	586(30.10)
	Total	474(100.00)	1001(100.00)	472(100.00)	1947(100.00)
4.	Employment status				
	Regular	6(5.66)	6(2.62)	4(3.81)	16(3.64)
	Self-employed	7(6.60)	16(6.99)	11(10.48)	34(7.73)
	Casual	93(87.74)	207(90.39)	90(85.71)	390(88.63)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
5.	Sector				
	Formal	6(5.66)	4(1.75)	2(1.90)	12(2.73)
	Informal	100(94.34)	225(98.25)	103(98.10)	428(97.27)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2014-15.

Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages,

The table further reflects that 27.32 per cent are earners, 42.58 per cent are earning dependents, and 30.10 per cent are dependents. The percentage share of earners is 27.22, 27.87 and 26.27 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively, whereas the share of dependents is 31.64, 32.77 and 22.88 per cent for respective districts in the rural areas of Punjab. The employment status of sampled MGNREGS beneficiary households reveals that 3.64 per cent are working on regular basis, 7.73 per cent are self-employed and 88.63 per cent are casual workers. The district wise analysis reveals that the percentage share of households working on regular or permanent basis is 5.66, 2.62 and 3.81 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively, the share of self-employed is 6.60, 6.99 and 10.48 per cent respectively and the share of casual workers is 87.74, 90.39 and 85.71 per cent respectively. The sector-wise employment status points out that 97.27 per cent of the sampled households are working in informal sector whereas the percentage share of households working in formal sector is only 2.73. The district-wise percentage share of households working in informal sector is 94.34, 98.25 and 98.10 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively whereas the share of households working in formal sector in respective districts is 5.66, 1.75 and 1.90 per cent in the rural areas of Punjab.

The housing conditions of sampled MGNREGS beneficiary households are presented in Table 7. The table reveals that among all the beneficiary households taken together, 74.55, 14.77 and 10.68 per cent households own *semi-pucca*, *pucca* and *kutcha* houses respectively. The district-wise analysis reveals that the percentage share of *pucca* houses is the highest, i.e., 22.64 in Fatehgarh Sahib district followed by Hoshiarpur district (17.14) and the lowest (10.04) in Fazilka district. The reverse trend has been noticed in the case of *kutcha* type of households which is the highest (11.35 per cent) in Fazilka district, followed by Hoshiarpur district (10.48 per cent) and the lowest (9.43 per cent) in Fatehgarh Sahib district.

The conditions of dwelling houses reveal that the percentage share of good condition houses is only 12.26, 5.24 and 8.57 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively whereas, among all the households taken together, the percentage share of good condition houses is 7.73. The table clearly shows that majority of the sampled beneficiary households have average condition houses. The percentage share of average condition houses is 73.58, 69.43 and 71.43 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts whereas, among all the households taken together, this share is 70.91 per cent. The percentage share of households living in dilapidated conditions is the highest, i.e., 25.33 in Fazilka district followed by Hoshiarpur (20.00) and Fatehgarh Sahib (14.16) districts. Among all the households taken together, the percentage share of households living in dilapidated houses is 21.36. This is mainly because of low levels of income, higher incidence of poverty, lack of gainful employment opportunities etc.

TABLE 7: HOUSING CONDITIONS OF SAMPLED MGNREGS BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS IN RURAL PUNJAB

Sr. No.	Housing Conditions	Fatehgarh Sahib	Fazilka	Hoshiarpur	Punjab
1.	Type of dwelling house				
	<i>Pucca</i>	24(22.64)	23(10.04)	18(17.14)	65(14.77)
	<i>Semi-Pucca</i>	72(67.92)	180(78.60)	76(72.38)	328(74.55)
	<i>Kutcha</i>	10(9.43)	26(11.35)	11 (10.48)	47(10.68)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
2.	Condition of dwelling house				
	Good	13(12.26)	12(5.24)	9(8.57)	34(7.73)
	Average	78(73.58)	159(69.43)	75(71.43)	312(70.91)
	Dilapidated	15(14.16)	58(25.33)	21(20.00)	94(21.36)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
3.	No. of rooms				
	One	22(20.75)	50(21.83)	9(8.57)	81(18.41)
	Two	69(65.09)	145(63.32)	75(71.43)	289(65.68)
	Three	13(12.27)	28(12.23)	19(18.10)	60(13.64)
	More than three	2(1.89)	6(2.62)	2(1.90)	10(2.27)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
4.	Separate kitchen				
	Yes	44(41.51)	48(20.96)	40(38.10)	132(30.00)
	No	62(58.49)	181(79.04)	65(61.90)	308(70.00)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2014-15.

Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages

(Good: Walls with Plaster, Average: Walls without Plaster, Dilapidated: Without plaster and doors)

The analysis further provides that majority of the sampled beneficiary households, i.e., 65.68 per cent have two rooms, while the remaining 18.41, 13.64 and 2.27 per cent households are having one room, three rooms and more than three rooms respectively. The analysis also highlights that only 30.00 per cent of the sampled beneficiary households have a separate kitchen in their house whereas the 70.00 per cent have not a separate kitchen. The percentage share of households have separate kitchen in their houses is the highest (41.51) in Fatehgarh Sahib, followed by Hoshiarpur (38.10) and the lowest (20.96) in Fazilka district. This is mainly due to the reason that these poor households cannot afford a separate kitchen in their premises because of higher cost of construction.

TABLE 8: SANITATION FACILITIES OF SAMPLED MGNREGS BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS IN RURAL PUNJAB

Sr. No.	Sanitation Facilities	Fatehgarh Sahib	Fazilka	Hoshiarpur	Punjab
1.	Toilet facility				
	Yes	65(61.32)	110(48.03)	62(59.05)	237(53.86)
	No	41(38.68)	119(51.97)	43(40.95)	203(46.14)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
2.	Condition of toilets				
	Good	10(15.87)	10(9.09)	8(12.90)	28(11.91)
	Average	44(69.84)	52(47.27)	41(66.13)	137(58.30)
	Dilapidated	9(14.29)	48(43.64)	13(20.97)	70(29.79)
	Total	63(100.00)	110(100.00)	62(100.00)	235(100.00)
3.	Bathroom facility				
	Yes	66(62.26)	120(52.40)	63(60.00)	249(56.69)
	No	40(37.74)	109(47.60)	42(40.00)	191(43.41)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
4.	Condition of Bathrooms				
	Good	10(15.15)	10(8.33)	8(12.70)	28(11.24)
	Average	46(69.70)	60(50.00)	43(68.25)	149(59.84)
	Dilapidated	10(15.15)	50(41.67)	12(19.05)	72(28.92)
	Total	66(100.00)	120(100.00)	63(100.00)	249(100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2014-15.

Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages.

The availability of sanitation facilities among sampled MGNREGS beneficiary households in the rural areas of Punjab has been demonstrated in Table 8. The table reveals that the percentage share of beneficiary households having toilet facility is 61.32, 48.03 and 59.05 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively whereas among all the households taken together, this share is 53.86 per cent. The analysis shows that majority of the households have average conditions of their toilets. The percentage share of households have average condition toilets is 69.84, 47.27 and 66.13 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively whereas among all the households taken together, this share is 58.30 per cent. The percentage share of households have dilapidated conditions of their toilets is the highest, i.e., 43.64 in Fazilka district followed by Hoshiarpur (20.97) and Fatehgarh Sahib (14.29) districts whereas, among all the households taken together, this share is 29.79. This analysis points out that only 62.26, 52.40 and 60.00 per cent households have bathroom facility in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively, whereas among all the sampled households taken together, it is 56.69. While analysing the condition of their bathrooms, it has been observed that only 15.15, 8.33 and 12.70 per cent households have good conditions of bathrooms in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively whereas the percentage share of dilapidated condition of bathrooms for respective districts is 15.15, 41.67 and 19.05.

A person staying in a healthy and sustainable environment can naturally contribute much more to the development process than his counterpart who stays in an unhealthy environment. The availability of basic living facilities like drinking water, bathroom, latrine, housing, availability of electricity and fuel used in kitchen of an individual of a nation is thus a priori requirement for its growth and development. At the same time with rapidly growing population, it is perhaps the most difficult task of the respective governments, especially in the developing countries, to create sustainable infrastructure for ensuring decent living of its inhabitants (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2014).

The data pertaining to the basic amenities of life availed by sampled MGNREGS beneficiary households in the rural areas of Punjab is presented in Table 9. The table shows that tap is a major source of drinking water for 75.91 per cent households followed by hand pump (14.55 per cent) and submersible pump (1.36 per cent). However, the remaining 8.18 per cent households have no source of drinking water in their houses and they are dependent upon others for meeting their water requirements. The district-wise analysis reveals that 89.62 per cent of households in Fatehgarh Sahib, 68.12 per cent of households in Fazilka district and 79.05 per cent of households in Hoshiarpur district used tap as a major source of drinking water. The percentage share of households using hand pump is 4.72, 18.34 and 16.19 and submersible pump is 2.83, 0.88 and 0.95 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively whereas the percentage share of households have no source of water for respective districts is 2.83, 12.66 and 3.81.

The table also shows that only 17.92, 9.61 and 16.19 per cent of sampled households in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively have water filters/ R.O. in their houses whereas among all the households taken together, this percentage share is only 13.18 in the rural areas of Punjab. The analysis also shows that only 39.77 per cent of sampled beneficiary households have LPG facility whereas remaining 60.23 are dependent upon others sources. The percentage share of households have LPG facility is 55.66, 27.51 and 50.48 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively.

TABLE 9: AVAILABILITY OF BASIC AMENITIES OF LIFE AMONG SAMPLED MGNREGS BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS IN RURAL PUNJAB

Sr. No.	Basic Amenities	Fatehgarh Sahib	Fazilka	Hoshiarpur	Punjab
1.	Major source of drinking water				
	Hand pump	5(4.72)	42(18.34)	17(16.19)	64(14.55)
	Tap	95(89.62)	156(68.12)	83(79.05)	334(75.91)
	Submersible pump	3(2.83)	2(0.88)	1(0.95)	6(1.36)
	Others*	3(2.83)	29(12.66)	4(3.81)	36(8.18)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
2.	Water Filter or R.O.				
	Yes	19(17.92)	22(9.61)	17(16.19)	58(13.18)
	No	87(82.08)	207(90.39)	88(83.81)	382(86.82)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
3.	Gas				
	Yes	59(55.66)	63(27.51)	53(50.48)	175(39.77)
	No	47(44.34)	166(72.49)	52(49.52)	265(60.23)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
4.	Major fuel used in kitchen				
	LPG	43(40.57)	40(17.47)	43(40.95)	126(28.64)
	Dung Cake & Wood	63(59.43)	189(82.53)	62(59.05)	314(71.36)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
5.	Mobile phone				
	Yes	103(97.17)	180(78.60)	99(94.29)	382(86.82)
	No	3(2.83)	49(21.40)	6(5.71)	58(13.18)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2014-15.

Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages.

* community motor, neighbours etc.

The analysis also highlights that majority of the beneficiary households in the rural areas of Punjab, i.e., 71.36 per cent use dung cake and wood as a major fuel in their kitchens and remaining 28.64 per cent use Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG). The percentage share of households using dung cake and wood as a major fuel in their kitchen is 59.43, 82.53 and 59.05 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively. The access to LPG as a major fuel for respective districts has been worked out as 40.57, 17.47 and 40.95 per cent in the rural areas of Punjab.

The data regarding accessibility to mobile phones reveals that majority of the beneficiary households i.e., 97.17, 78.60 and 94.29 per cent households in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively have mobile phones, but the quality of their mobile sets is not good because of their low level of income. As a whole, 86.82 per cent sampled MGNREGS beneficiary households have mobile phones in the rural areas of Punjab.

The health of a nation is an essential component of development, vital to the nation's economic growth and internal stability. Assuring a minimal level of health care to the population is a critical constituent of the development process. Considerable achievements have been made over the last six decades in our efforts to improve health standards, but malnutrition affects a large proportion of children. An unacceptably high proportion of the population continues to suffer and die from new diseases that are emerging; apart from continuing and new threats posed by the existing ones. The strong link between poverty and ill health needs to be recognized. The onset of a long and expensive illness can drive the non-poor into poverty (Planning Commission, 2008).

The disability and chronic illness among sampled beneficiary households in the rural areas of Punjab has been presented in Table 10. The percentage share of households have disabled persons is 2.83, 6.55 and 4.76 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively, whereas among all the sampled households taken together, this share is 5.23. The table further indicates that the percentage share of households have chronic illness has been worked out to 0.94, 3.06 and 0.95 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively, whereas among all the sampled households taken together, this share is 2.05. Due to lack of proper medical facilities, higher incidence of chronic diseases like cancer and lack of safe drinking water, the percentage share of disabled and chronic illness is higher in Fazilka district as compared to Fatehgarh district and Hoshiarpur district.

TABLE 10: DISABILITY AND CHRONIC ILLNESS AMONG SAMPLED MGNREGS BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS IN RURAL PUNJAB

Sr. No.	Items	Fatehgarh Sahib	Fazilka	Hoshiarpur	Punjab
1.	Disability	3(2.83)	15(6.55)	5(4.76)	23(5.23)
2.	Chronic Illness	1(0.94)	7(3.06)	1(0.95)	9(2.05)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2014-15.

Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages.

Rural development as a concept has been highly associated with the promotion of standards of living and as a pre-condition for reducing rural poverty. The promotion of the rural economy in a sustainable way has the potential of increasing employment opportunities in rural areas, reducing regional income disparities, stemming pre-mature rural-urban migration, and ultimately reducing poverty at its very source (Anriquez and Stamoulis, 2007).

Types of way and the availability of drainage facility among sampled MGNREGS beneficiary households in the rural areas of Punjab have been presented in Table 11. The table shows that majority of the households, i.e., 78.86 per cent have bricked type of way to their houses followed by metalled type (13.18 per cent) and *kutcha* type (7.95 per cent). The percentage share of bricked type of way is 66.04, 80.79 and 87.62 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively whereas the percentage share of metalled type of way for respective districts is 33.96, 6.11 and 7.62 respectively. The *kutcha* type of way has been found only in Fazilka district and Hoshiarpur district, i.e., 13.10 per cent and 4.76 per cent. The analysis also shows that 90.45 per cent of sampled beneficiary households have drainage facility and remaining 9.55 per cent are without any drainage facility. The table further shows that majority of the sampled households, i.e., 66.98, 76.17 and 87.88 per cent in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively have semi-pucca type of drainage whereas among all the households taken together, this share is 76.63 per cent in the rural areas of Punjab. The percentage share of *pucca* type of drainage is 33.02, 8.29 and 11.11 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively whereas among all the households taken together, this share is 15.58 per cent.

TABLE 11: TYPE OF WAY AND DRAINAGE FACILITY AMONG SAMPLED MGNREGS BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS IN RURAL PUNJAB

Sr. No.	Items	Fatehgarh Sahib	Fazilka	Hoshiarpur	Punjab
1.	Type of way				
	Metalled	36(33.96)	14(6.11)	8(7.62)	58(13.18)
	Bricked	70(66.04)	185(80.79)	92(87.62)	347(78.86)
	Kutcha	0(0.00)	30(13.10)	5(4.76)	35(7.96)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
2.	Drainage				
	Yes	106(100.00)	193(84.28)	99(94.29)	398(90.45)
	No	0(0.00)	36(15.2)	6(5.71)	42(9.55)
	Total	106(100.00)	229(100.00)	105(100.00)	440(100.00)
3.	Type				
	Pucca	35(33.02)	16(8.29)	11(11.11)	62(15.58)
	Kutcha	0(0.00)	30(15.54)	1(1.01)	31(7.79)
	Semi-pucca	71(66.98)	147(76.17)	87(87.88)	305(76.63)
	Total	106(100.00)	193(100.00)	99(100.00)	398(100.00)

Source: Field Survey, 2014-15.

Figures given in parentheses indicate the percentages.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is clear from above analysis that majority of the MGNREGS beneficiary households, i.e., 81.59 per cent are belonging to scheduled caste households and 67.73 per cent are from the Sikh community. The composition of sampled population reveals that the proportion of girl child is low in the rural areas of Punjab. The district-wise results shows that sex ratio is low in developed districts, i.e., Fatehgarh Sahib and Hoshiarpur districts as compared to less developed district, i.e., Fazilka district. The education status of beneficiary households reveals that the percentage share of illiterate persons is the highest (48.30) in Fazilka, followed by Fatehgarh Sahib (31.94) and the lowest (17.66) in Hoshiarpur district whereas among all the households taken together, 36.25 per cent persons are illiterate. This analysis brought out that the fact that due to their low income, poverty and lack of scholarships, the children belonging to these poor people are able to obtain only formal education up to middle/matric level.

The analysis also points out that due to higher incidence of landlessness and lack of skill, majority of the households are dependent upon wage work for their livelihood. The employment status of sampled MGNREGS beneficiary households reveals that only 3.64 per cent are working on regular basis, 7.73 per cent are self-employed and 88.63 per cent are the casual workers. The sector-wise employment status points out that a large majority, i.e., 97.27 per cent of the beneficiary households are working in informal sector whereas the percentage share of households working in formal sector is only 2.73. The conditions of dwelling houses reveal that the percentage share of households living in dilapidated conditions is 14.16, 20.00 and 25.33 in Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur districts respectively whereas among all the households taken together, it is 21.36 per cent in the rural areas of Punjab. The results also show that 53.86 and 56.69 per cent of sampled households have toilet and bathroom facility respectively and still 71.36 per cent of households are using dung cake and wood as a major source of fuel in kitchen. This is mainly because of low levels of income, higher incidence of poverty, lack of gainful employment opportunities etc.

In a nutshell, the socio-economic status of MGNREGS beneficiary households shows that lack of access to equal opportunities and productive assets as well as social exclusion strategies, they are lagging behind in development outcomes- access to education, health, housing, sanitation and other basic amenities of life. Therefore, Government should provide free education and other basic amenities of life to these poor people for raising their socio-economic conditions.

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