



FORCES

(Forum for Crèche and Child Care Services)



Women in NREGA: Issues of Child Care

**Case Studies from
Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh**



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FORCES

(Forum for Crèche and Child Care Services)
C/o Centre for Women's Development Studies
New Delhi

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Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh

Supported by



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Preface

The importance of NREGA as a constitutional act [separate from the previous schemes] was that it recognized the 'right to work' as a legally protected right at the national level. The government introduced the NREGA as an act that for the first time identifies the right to work as a constitutional right, one that is protected under the sovereign law of this country. The Act introduced in 2006 was implemented, initially, in the 200 most backward districts of the country (and cover all rural districts by the end of 5 years) 100 days of employment in a year at the prevailing daily minimum wage level of a state. The Act also aims at arresting out-migration of rural households in search of employment simultaneously enhancing people's livelihood on a sustained basis, by developing the economic and social infrastructure in rural areas and whether the quality of employment provided under the NREGA actually deters migration can only be determined in the long run.

The Act was drafted keeping in mind the need to empower rural women through provision of employment. The empowerment of women is widely considered to be desirable not only for its own sake, but also for the far-reaching effects it has been shown to have on intra-family distribution of income, levels of education, treatment of the girl child, health, hygiene and, most importantly, child nutrition and mortality (as India's performance has been especially woeful on this last count). At the same time, the fruition of many of these benefits is contingent on a host of other conditions such as the availability of educational facilities. Thus, it would be prudent to conclude that the proportion of women workers in NREGA projects and the wage rate paid to women can together be considered as indicative of the relative benefit accruing to women, as long as the implications of this benefit are not exaggerated.

Currently the act is known as MNREGA but at time of study the scheme was introduced as NREGA. NREGA is the only Act in the country that legalizes support for childcare in the unorganized sector, by including the provision for crèches and availability of safe drinking water in it. Thus it recognizes both the work related rights of women, as well as their right to provide adequate nutrition and care for their infants. FORCES as a national network, committed to the survival and development of the young child and women working in the informal sector, feels that it is important to address the issues affecting women workers including care services offered by the scheme. In doing so, the provision of crèche at work site, employment of a Dai, access to drinking water and medical facilities and even the use of child labour at work sites should be probed. The other

related issues are also observed like changes occurring in the lives of women after accessing this scheme and status of migration etc.

The FORCES network attempted this kind of exercise for the first time as it was felt that in the past few years a lot of people amongst us have done commendable job in carrying out thorough and detailed social audits. However, it has been observed that issues concerning the status of women & children (and childcare, additionally) within the ambit of the act have largely been of secondary importance.

We have prepared the report/ document with the sole objective of using the information for our advocacy purpose and it is not a piece of pure academic research work in terms of following the sample technique etc. The survey was conducted in the areas where the FORCES network state chapters have its presence. The finding will be shared with the local level authorities and also become a tool for further interventions at the micro and macro level as well.

The report has been made possible because of the active participation of our network partners viz Seva Mandir, Rajasthan and Vigyan Foundation from Uttar Pradesh. We would specially like to mention the contribution of Ramayan Yadav and Rajdev Chaturvedi from U.P. and Swati Patel and Sunita from Rajasthan in facilitating the field surveys.

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Savitri Ray
National Coordinator
FORCES Network

Executive Summary

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (NREGA) guarantees 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to any rural household whose adult members are willing to participate in unskilled manual work. The Act is an important step towards realization of the right to work and aims at arresting out-migration of rural households in search of employment simultaneously enhancing people's livelihood on a sustained basis, by developing the economic and social infrastructure in rural areas. The act is important as it caters to the women labor force by providing child care services at the *Narega* worksite. The basic change *narega* confers on people in guaranteeing a right to employment and making the government accountable. It also contains several conditions which aim at improving participation of women in paid work.

The present study on evaluation of the NREGA Scheme is intended to assess the impact of this scheme on the status of child care services at worksites of the *narega*, status of facilities available to women workforce, changes occurring in the lives of women after accessing this scheme, status of migration and availability of facilities at the work sites. The study is also aimed at assessing the opinion of job-card holders and also the role of Panchayats in the implementation of NREGA. The overall purpose of this study is to capture the impact of the scheme, views and feed-back of the beneficiaries on various facets of implementation of the scheme at grass root level right from the stage of issue of job cards.

With the above set of objectives, the study was carried out in the states of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh by targeting 400 approximately beneficiaries in each state (In UP the total number of beneficiaries was 450, in Rajasthan 400). These beneficiaries hailed from the diverse geography and social backgrounds distributed evenly within the selected districts in the different states. The field data pertains to the year 2009. By way of open-ended interview schedule and Focused Group Discussions, data on several variables were collected from these beneficiaries who are part of the NREGA Scheme. Overall impact of the scheme, views expressed by the beneficiaries etc. is elucidated in a nutshell in the following paragraphs.

Although *narega* is a demand based scheme there is a considerable difference in the demand and supply of jobs in both the states. 2008-09 was the first financial year in which scheme was implemented in whole of the States. In the particular year 58,203,921 person days of wage employment provided to 2,518,472 households in UP. In Rajasthan total out of 23,

584, 1748 person days generated 4,268,861 got employment. Total BPL families which registered under *narega* are 13, 567, 67 and who got job is 6,79,743. If the scheme has to fulfill its demand driven criterion it has to spread and reach out further to the marginalized. The sampled data also reflect such a trend. In both the states there is a difference in the demand and supply of jobs.

The socio-economic profile of the women workers availing employment under *narega* highlights the abysmal survival conditions at the rural areas in all the states. Such data also starkly points towards the distorted development in the country. Basic rights of education, health and nutrition and care and protection of children, pregnant and lactating mothers are denied in the villages.

The programme has benefited the socially marginalized, but in different ways. From the sampled data the profile of the respondents shows that they belong to the lower socio-economic background. As per the occupational status of the respondents *narega* has been able to reach to the needy. Average wage employment per household may be worked out to just above 23 days. Although the participants are mostly SC and OBC women there is need to reach to the maximum needy possible.

Even though there is a provision for the 1/3rd reservation for women, the share of women participation on *narega* work is fairly low especially in Uttar Pradesh. The total person days work generated or provided under the NREGA share of women workers is only 17.99 percent, and 69.35 % in UP and Rajasthan respectively. In comparison, Rajasthan illustrates the highest percentage of female participation in the NREGS workforce. BPL families comprised a large share of the workforce in both the states. Acquaintance with the rules and regulations of the NREGA and ease of usage varies considerably across states and across districts, affecting differentiated relief outcomes.

Information pertaining to facilities at the *narega* site in Rajasthan is better than UP. 100% of the respondents in Udaipur district and 99% in Alwar said that drinking water was available at their site. However in UP both lack of awareness and availability of basic facilities is posing challenges in the implementation of *narega*. There is a clear indication that the overall participation can increase if the responsible agency [Department of Rural Development and Panchayat] willingly provide childcare facilities at the worksites. There is a strong need for awareness generation on NREGA and its provisions for the effective implementation of the scheme and improved participation of women.

Awareness of the basic provisions of *narega* is lacking. Primarily awareness regarding reservation of job for women and child care services needs to be highlighted in both the states.

As far as children were concerned the data on availing Anganwadi facilities show that in U.P. only 20-25% are registered in the Anganwadi. However in Rajasthan the scene is

fairly better. There is a provision for opening the anganwadi centres also to serve as crèche as per the need of the women workers. This is highly recommended by women in all the states.

The study also reflects that there is an acute lack of child care services at the *narega* worksite. In Uttar Pradesh, there is a zero presence of crèche at the worksite. Also in Rajasthan the number is very low compared to the demand of the women. In both the states the women (90% approx) have shown interest in working if child care services are made available at the worksite. However, awareness of provisions did not always coincide with the availability of the same. For example, 53% of the sample in Udaipur district was aware of the provision of crèche facilities, but only 0.7% said that a crèche was actually available at their worksite. In Uttar Pradesh, not a single worksite in the three districts surveyed, were found to have a crèche facility for women workers. Only 8% were aware of the facility, and when informed by the survey team, an additional 20% of the respondents over and above the 71% already engaged in NREGS works, expressed their willingness to work under the scheme if crèches were provided.

Both awareness and availability of provisions are crucial indicators that impact women's decisions to bring children to the worksite, and vice versa. This is the primary dilemma thrown into sharp relief by this study - if more women bring their children to the worksite; the availability of crèche facilities is bound to increase. On the other hand, only if more crèches become available at the work site will women bring their children to work with them. Childcare provision can work as a primary motivation for greater female participation in the NREGS. Majority of women admitted that the work opportunities provided under the NREGA was made less attractive because of the absence/insufficiencies of childcare at worksites. The gram panchayat's role in disseminating information about the NREGS' provisions related to women and childcare has been negligible in all the states surveyed. Another allied finding that has emerged from this study is the derelict state of the ICDS and women's dissatisfaction with the coverage, quality and working hours of the *anganwadi / balwadi* centres was universal.

The findings of this study seek to solicit intervention at the grassroots level and better advocacy directed to spreading awareness about the NREGA's provisions especially with regard to childcare, so as enable women to participate in the programme without being forced to compromise on their children's health and well-being.

WOMEN IN NREGA: ISSUES OF CHILD CARE

Case Studies From Rajasthan And Uttar Pradesh

INTRODUCTION

Economic processes in general and employment policies in particular are gendered and gendering practices. On one hand, women and men have different needs and capacities when it comes to employment conditions and opportunities. On the other hand, employment policies might reproduce differences in gender roles and unequal distribution of assets. However, employment policies might be invoked as *gender transformative* policies which challenge existing gender inequalities and address gendered distribution of productive assets. In order to do that, such policies must be gender sensitive which includes consideration of women-specific needs, such as child care. The availability of child care facilities is one of the factors influencing the extent of women's participation in employment strategies such as NREGA and the quality of their work.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. UNIFEM workshop *Engendering NREGA: Women's Empowerment through Guaranteed Employment* remarked that 'NREGA was not envisioned as a women's empowerment programme'¹. To develop this discussion further, FORCES undertook the assessment of child care facilities in NREGA sites in two states i.e. Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The study analyzes the current situation in NREGA sites and explores how availability of child care services contributes to the economic productivity of women.

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

It is well established that action research is a popular approach among small-scale researchers in the social sciences, particularly for those working in professional areas such as education, health and social care. In this direction, FORCES an advocacy network, decided to compile selected information based on the needs of the network also with a focus on improving aspects of their own practices.

The FORCES study was conducted with the sole purpose of highlighting the issue affecting women especially young women and their basic need of care services- a provision under the Act. The report would also be used for respective state chapters who were involved in the study. The criteria of geographical coverage have its own limitations in

terms of selection of blocks and districts. It was conducted in those areas where the network has its presence. The sample was done on random basis and the data collection was done by using survey method and also through focused group discussions with women’s groups and selected members of panchayats etc.

A field questionnaire was developed for women beneficiaries and used at sites and at the household level as well. The sample size in both the state was 850 respondents (women only) 400 in Rajasthan and in Uttar Pradesh with 450 respondents. The following table will give an at a glance picture of sampled area which suggest that 8 blocks from five districts were selected. A total of 850 women were interviewed and talked about on the various aspects of NREGA. Their views were also elicited by organizing FGDs.

State	District	Block
Uttar Pradesh	Barabanki	Nindoora
	Azamgarh	Maharajganj & Atraulia
	Chandauli	Chahaniya
Rajasthan	Udaipur	Kherwara & Jhadol
	Alwar	Thanagaji & Ramgarh

The study was conducted by FORCES in collaboration with its state chapters in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The convenor organisations in these states were Seva Mandir in Udaipur and Alwar districts, Rajasthan; Vigyan Foundation in Azamgarh, Barabanki and Chandauli districts, Uttar Pradesh.

The survey was conducted in the year 2009 and a total of 850 women were interviewed across the two states, at NREGS worksites and Gram Sabha meetings. Questionnaires and focused group discussions were the primary methods employed. An attempt was also made to conduct interviews with *sarpanches*, Block Development Officers (BDOs) and NREGA *sahyogis/ rozgar sewaks* for a comparative perspective on the implementation and administration of the programmes across the country.

This report addresses issues ranging from the social background of NREGA beneficiaries, the services (especially childcare) available at worksites, levels of awareness regarding the provisions of NREGA, the work experience itself (wages, measurement of work, facilities) out-migration patterns the scheme’s impact on quality of life and women’s opinion of benefits accrued under the NREGA, if any. Interviews with women further focused on how the programme’s implementation or design could be improved, and the ways in which it has contributed to individual and household well being.

The NREGA tries to ensure the well being of women in the traditional informal sector. It is a poverty alleviation programme that seeks to provide income-generating activities to women from vulnerable groups to enable their economic empowerment, and attempts to incorporate some gender sensitivity into its design. How successful it has been in doing so, and the impact of this attempt, is the focus of this report.

CHILD CARE IN INDIA

Historically child care in all its dimensions has always been considered the domain of the mother, or at best his family. However, in the context of changes in the family structure and the entry of women into paid work outside the home, this component of early childhood care is now acknowledged as an integral component of Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD). Notwithstanding this, it is still the least acknowledged component of ECCD which is evident from the near absence of adequate social policy and programmes on early child hood care.

The Shram Shakti report of the GOI (1988) brought into the harsh scrutiny of national consciousness the overriding needs of the millions of poor women to work, to get full employment and to have security of wages in order to survive. The neglect of their children and the need for a safe place to leave them emerged as a critical issue. The report zeroed in on this need and established the important link between poverty and the absence of any system to assist women with care of their children. Though formal institutions for childcare services are not yet fully developed in the country there has been intervention from public, private as well as voluntary / corporate sector. These services are provided through a variety of modes and are of varying degree in spread and quality.

Constitutionally, child development is a concurrent subject, which implies a shared federal and state responsibility. During the past half century, provisioning of childcare services has been limited to few interventions, though the well being of children has been an integral part of India's developmental planning since 1951. In 1953, the Government first began to play a larger role, promoting, through voluntary effort, kindergartens in rural areas. The first major training programme was the *Bal Sevika* (Child care worker) Training Scheme in 1961 by the Indian Council of Child Welfare. The second big breakthrough came with the Integrated Child Development Services in 1974, the world's largest attempt to provide a package of services to the most vulnerable children, although the attached four-month job training, intended to develop paraprofessionals with multiple roles and supported by untrained 'helpers' is somewhat diluted in content. However in the last few decades, this issue is making itself felt as one that is fundamentally related to and has wide implications for society as a whole. Simultaneously, there is also growing

impatience with the fact that the state has largely failed in its responsibility towards the child.

Government Initiatives

The need for childcare services has been emphasized recently in various government documents such as the National Policy for Children, 1994, and National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001 and the National Plan of Action for Children, 2005. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Demand for Grants for the year 2002-03 has also pointed out that all sections of the society should be allowed to avail the services of the crèches. The National Common Minimum Programme also emphasizes enhancement of childcare and development services in the future.

Formulations of labour rules comes the closest to any sort of early state action on care. The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, provides maternity benefits to working women on completion of 80 days of working. They are not required to work during six weeks immediately following the date of delivery or miscarriage. Upon the submission of medical certificate, advance maternity benefits are allowed. This benefit is also applicable to plantation labourers and contains enabling provisions to extend the same to agricultural workers. Under the Welfare Fund Act, a number of schemes for the welfare of beedi workers are being implemented. These include health, maternity benefit, housing, education, recreation, etc. The Factories Act, 1948, lays down provisions for providing crèches in every factory wherein more than 30 women workers are ordinarily employed. The Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966, the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970, the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 or 1980, also lay down provisions for providing crèches for women workers as per the rules mentioned under each Act. The Plantation Labour Act, 1951, provides that women workers be provided time off for feeding children. Building and Construction Workers Act (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of work) 1996 and National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 do also provide for crèche facilities for children below 6 (FORCES study-Undoing Our Future, 2009).

In India, more than 94 per cent of women workers are engaged in the informal sector, and thus are beyond the purview of many of the labour laws. Even in cases where labour laws are applicable poor implementation is an issue. This means majority of women workers are denied of any maternity benefits or childcare facilities.

In 1993-94 in order to meet the growing need for more crèches, the National Crèche Fund was set up. Under the social safety net adjustment credit from the World Bank, the Fund was set up by the Department of Women and Child Development with a corpus amount of Rs.19.90 crore. The funding was created to augment the number of crèches in the country to address the needs of working women and to protect child's rights to survival, growth, and development. Under this scheme, assistance was given to registered voluntary organisations/ mahila mandals to open and run crèches. Till 2005-06, 1805 crèches have been set up under the Crèche Fund.

Apart from this, assistance was also made available to voluntary organisations/ mahila mandals (women's groups) through the interest earned from the corpus fund to convert existing anganwadis (pre-school centres) to anganwadi cum crèche centres. ICDS, the biggest programme for children under six, was supposed to turn 10% of its centres into anganwadi -cum-crèches, but this scheme has been a non-starter. There is no information about how many anganwadi -cum-crèches actually functioned at any time.

In 2005-06, both the crèche and day care schemes were integrated into a new programme titled Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers. The Government under the new programme called 'National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)' which is an amendment to the scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) for providing additional components for education of girls at elementary level and it also has components for childcare services.

Even today there is a lack of availability of childcare services in India. The approach in this direction has largely been in terms of addressing the health and education (developmental) needs of children or in terms of meeting out the needs of women who enter the labour market. In the absence of adequate provisions for childcare, households rely on various measures for their childcare requirements. Small children, in most cases are either left to themselves or with older siblings. In most cases, the care taker would also be a young child who needs care and protection. Given the patriarchal norms, often it is the girl child in the family who is kept away from school to take care of the siblings. Many women carry their children to their worksites and are forced to leave them in unsafe conditions. Some rely on informal arrangements with neighbors, relatives etc, while some depend on paid ayahs/ domestic workers (Palriwala and Neetha, 2009). It has also been stated by many child rights groups including FORCES that state intervention is important for child care services than considering it within the private sphere. Therefore to look at women or children in isolation is to look at only half the picture and to plan for one without the other, as has been done for too long, is to leave plans quite incomplete.

Work-care regimes inhabited by women of different classes vary considerably. Yet the government's decision to compulsorily provide crèches at NREGS² is recognition of the gender specific constraints that limit a woman in her economic pursuits, particularly in the case of marginal female workers from poverty households. The Operation Guidelines to the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act clearly states, 'Worksite facilities are to be ensured by the Implementing Agency. Medical aid, drinking water, shade, and crèche if there are more than five children below the age of six years will have to be provided (NREGA, Schedule II, Sections 27 and 28)³.

Against this context of increasing rural poverty and unemployment, the Government of India enacted the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act [NREGA] which, indeed, is a revolutionary and historic landmark in independent India because it provides at least 100 days of employment for desiring rural households through *Grampanchayats*. The enactment of the legislation marks a paradigm shift from the earlier programmes in ensuring to the unemployed rural household a legal right to get at least 100 days' wage employment.

This study is aimed at assessing the child care services at the NREGA worksite and whether people are aware of such a provision. Awareness is important as NREGA is basically a demand driven act.

RAJASTHAN

1. NREGA IN RAJASTHAN – AN OVERVIEW

Rajputana, the collective of Princely States, formally joined the republic of India in 1949 to become Rajasthan. It became the largest state in the country after Chattisgarh was carved out of Madhya Pradesh in 2000. Its physiography is diverse: deserts in the west, hilly tracts in the southeast and green, arable land east of the Aravalli range. Settlements are largely non-nucleated and dispersed. The spectrum of livelihoods include prosperous peasantry, subsistence farming, small scale artisans, export oriented trade, nomadic sheep herders and dairymen⁴.

The NREGS was first introduced in Banswara, Dungarpur, Jhalawar, Karauli, Sirohi and Udaipur districts in Rajasthan on 2nd February, 2006. A quick perusal of the table below will reveal why these six out of the 33 districts in the state were chosen to implement the scheme. All exhibit extremely low HDI and GDI rankings, justifying their inclusion in the list of 200 most backward districts picked across the country to implement the first phase of the NREGS. By 2008-2009, the scheme was extended to all districts in the country and Alwar district was brought under the scheme in its Phase III of implementation.

Table 1.1: Profile of NREGS Districts in Rajasthan⁵

Districts	HDI Rank (out of 33 districts)*	GDI Rank (out of 33 districts)*	SC (%age share of population) ^o	ST (%age share of population) ^o	Female Work Participation ^o	Rural BPL Families (as a % share of rural families) ¹
Banswara	30 (.472)	28 (.439)	4.28	72.27	45.8	38.01
Dungarpur	32 (.456)	27 (.420)	4.15	65.13	47.06	46.85
Jhalawar	26 (.511)	32 (.470)	15.64	12.02	40.46	14.91
Sirohi	23 (.520)	22 (.460)	19.1	24.8	36.17	13.35
Karauli	8 (.584)	10 (.503)	23.15	12.01	39.5	22.92
Udaipur	27 (.503)	24 (.465)	6.01	47.86	37.51	34.8
Alwar	5	6	18.01	8.02	42.28	
Rajasthan	N/A	N/A	17.2	12.6	38.16	N/A

Table 1.2: NREGA Performance in Rajasthan

S. No.	Name of District	Total No. of Households provided employment	Total persondays (lakhs)	No. of person days claimed by women (lakhs)	% of women's participation
1	Banswara	2,56,167	246.99	167.54	67.83
2	Dungarpur	2,47,067	224.82	169.81	75.53
3	Jhalawar	1,96,995	119.24	74.09	62.14
4	Karauli	1,06,126	99.79	61.55	61.68
5	Sirohi	99,272	60.61	45.04	74.31
6	Udaipur	3,27,528	250.89	172.75	68.85
7	Alwar	2,24,747	120.57	61.94	51.37
	Rajasthan	63,73,000	4829.55	3241.04	67.11

Note: All figures are cumulative and inclusive of the year 2008-09

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in> as accessed on May 19, 2009

An analysis of the six districts' performance in the NREGS in the last three years throws up one common insight: an inordinately high percentage of female participation. Women have traditionally benefitted from public works schemes in India. While public works successfully harness unskilled women's labour (since by law, unskilled labour has to form 60% of the labour cost), the high visibility of women working under the NREGA in Rajasthan is also indicative of a feminization of poverty⁶. A gendered analysis of the NREGA is particularly necessary in order to make rural asset generation an inclusive process and address the structural crises underlying an increasing feminization of poverty in the country.

Dungarpur experienced the highest rate of women taking part in the NREGA works at 75.53%. In Udaipur, the percentage of women working was 68.85%. In Alwar, women comprised 51.37% of the total turnout. At the all-India level, women make up 49.61% of the total workforce participation in the NREGS⁷.

The 62nd Round NSSO Report on un/employment in India (2008) gives a good preview of the rates of local participation, both male and female, in ongoing public works' schemes. In Rajasthan, out of a sample of 6196 persons 4978 did not seek work; 446 got work and 772 sought but did not get work in public works (ibid). This 'did not seek work' category breaks up into 2348 women (79.32% of the total rural female sample) and 2630 men (81.27% of the total rural male sample). This high rate of disenchantment or lack of involvement is not the case with the NREGS, at least for women.

Table 1.3: District Profile

Indicators	Udaipur	Alwar	Rajasthan
Total Population	26,33,312	29,90,862	5,65,07,188
%Male	50.73	52.99	52.06
%Female	49.26	47	47.93
% Rural Population	81.38	85.47	76.6
% Urban Population	18.61	14.52	23.4
% SC Population	6.01	18.01	17.2
% ST Population	47.86	8.02	12.6
Sex Ratio	971	886	921
Sex Ratio (0-6)	948	887	927
Literacy Rate (M)	73.62	78.91	76.5
Literacy Rate (F)	43.26	43.95	43.9
% Main Workers (M)	78.85	72.52	43.7
% Main Workers (F)	21.14	27.47	17
% Marginal Workers (M)	68.96	30.25	6.3
% Marginal Workers (F)	31.03	69.74	16.5

Sources: Census of India, 2001

1.1 Economy and Livelihoods

Rajasthan's economy is primarily agricultural and pastoral. Rajasthan is also the biggest wool-producing state in India. Scarce rainfall patterns⁸ and natural water deficiencies makes for a precarious livelihood that is further aggravated by poverty. Rajasthan has only 1% of the country's total water resources, and irrigation covers only 30% of the total cultivated area. Productivity is closely linked to the possibility of rainfed agriculture, the availability of pasturage and drought recovery rates. Cyclical transhumance is also a significant feature of Rajasthan's economy. The arid environment and low agricultural yields direct the pattern of men and livestock movements. These migrant pastoralists travel with or without their families and practice sheep husbandry. Collection of forest produce such as *tendu* leaves is also an important livelihood option for many⁹.

In Udaipur, although both *rabi* and *kharif* crops are grown in the district, the latter is the main crop of the district. The third crop, *zayad* includes several types of vegetables produced in riverbeds during summers. The important crops in the district are sugarcane, maize, wheat, barley, and gram. Wells and tanks constitute important sources of irrigation. Several seasonal rivers carry fairly good volume of water and lakes have been constructed with bunds in between for irrigation purposes. The district is particularly rich in mineral resources including copper ore, lead, zinc and silver. Rock phosphate, asbestos, calcite,

limestone, barytes, emerald and marble, are also important. Mainly mineral and forest based small scale industrial units (cement, manufacturing of edible oils, cotton textiles, foundries for casting and forging iron and steel) have come into existence in the district over the years. Traditional occupations like goldsmithy, pottery, bamboo-works and stone carving are mostly carried out in the homes of the artisans and cater to the needs of local and neighbouring markets. Major and minor forest produce - timber, coal, firewood, gum, bamboo, *tendu*, *kattlia*, honey, wax, barks and grasses - constitute an invaluable source of income, partly sustaining the economy of the district.

Much like Udaipur, the main crops grown in Alwar district are bajra, jowar, maize, tur and other pulses. Some other cereals and millets are also grown. The large scale industries in the district are related to iron and steel, machine tools, chemicals and synthetics, and a coal fired power plant. Other medium sized industries are involved in manufacturing of edible oils, printing and publishing, and stone crushing. Among cottage industries in rural areas, cloth printing and dyeing, lac bangle making, stone carving, and pottery are popular.

Table 1.4: Distribution of Work by Gender

Name	Sex	HH Industries (%)	Cultivators (%)	Agriculture (%)	Others (%)	Total Workers
Alwar	M	58.83	51.9	40.3	76.6	8,41,811
	F	41.16	48.09	59.6	23.39	6,16,875
Udaipur	M	63.54	55.3	34.74	82.6	6,87,892
	F	36.45	44.69	65.25	17.39	4,12,988
Rajasthan	M	2.9	48.1	7.2	41.9	1,46,95,802
	F	2.8	67	16.2	14	90,70,853

Source: Census of India, 2001

The state income (net domestic product) for 1997-98 was Rs. 46,376.2 crores, registering an annual growth rate of 14.1% at current prices. Udaipur registered a growth rate of 16.11% in the decade between 1981 and 1991. Its district per capita income in 1992 was Rs. 4556.

Udaipur records high male workforce participation. In both Alwar and Udaipur, 'other' industries engage maximum percentage of the male population at 76.6% and 82.6% respectively (see Table 1.4). Female WPR is also high in the southern districts of the state, viz. Udaipur (overall 33%)¹⁰.

The employment portfolio is heavily stacked in favour of agriculture and animal husbandry, with 70% of the total population dependent on it. Given the weather dependent nature of both these professions, a low technology trap becomes inevitable. Regional differences of soil quality and terrain render the western desert districts completely infertile. A stagnant agricultural sector employs the largest proportion of workforce, and a thriving services sector account for only a small percentage of employment¹¹. Underemployment is rife in agriculture. The recent spillover into construction work comprises an exodus into casual labour that is primarily responsible for out-migration into the neighbouring states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Haryana¹².

The public sector is the largest employer in the state. In recent years, there has been a boom in non-farm sectors such as mining, quarrying, leather, textile, small repairs and tourism. These are sources of alternative livelihoods – ‘shock absorbers’ - for the rural poor, especially during agricultural distress owing to drought, market failure or depressed wages¹³. In the last two decades there has been an increase in the aggregate employment share of women. This increase has essentially taken the form of a flight from the fields to construction sites, mines and quarries, but the number of women farmers has also increased. The high number of women marginal workers in rural Rajasthan (see Table 1.4) serves to illustrate the case. In Alwar 59.6% of agricultural labour are women. In Udaipur, this climbs to 65.25%, an indication of **women’s primary involvement in the informal economy**. 58.51% of women in rural Alwar are marginal workers, and in rural Udaipur this is 65.58%.

i. Population

The population in Rajasthan is overwhelmingly rural (See Table 1.5). In Udaipur 81.38% of the total population is rural, and in Alwar, 85.47% of the population live in the district’s 1954 villages (Census of India, 2001). These figures underline the dependence on agriculture and consequently, the need for off-seasonal employment.

Udaipur also has a high tribal population and the main tribes residing in the district are the Garasias, the Meenas and the Bhils. The sex ratio (971) is far higher than the state figure of 921, a possible indication of its predominantly tribal population (47.86%). Alwar offers a dramatic contrast, with a poor sex ratio of 886, almost at par with the Haryana (820) and Himachal Pradesh (897).

Table 1.5: Distribution of Workers in Rajasthan

Name	Category	Sex	Total Population	Total Workers	Main Workers (as % of total workers)	Marginal Workers (as % of total workers)	NonWorkers (as % of total population)
Alwar	Rural	Persons	25,57,653	13,20,066	62.57	37.42	48.38
		M	13,49,768	7,26,177	79.81	20.18	24.38
		F	12,07,885	5,93,889	41.48	58.51	24
	Urban	Persons	4,34,939	1,38,620	87.7	12.29	68.12
		M	2,36,984	1,15,634	93.02	6.97	27.9
		F	1,97,955	22,986	60.97	39.02	40.22
Udaipur	Rural	Persons	21,42,995	9,46,081	61.55	38.44	55.85
		M	10,78,441	5,58,276	80.4	19.59	24.27
		F	10,64,554	3,87,805	34.41	65.58	31.57
	Urban	Persons	4,90,317	1,54,799	91.6	8.39	68.42
		M	2,57,563	1,29,616	94.19	5.8	26.09
		F	2,32,754	25,183	78.24	21.75	42.33
Rajasthan	Rural	Persons	4,32,92,813	1,98,56,423	70.31	29.68	54.13
		M	2,24,26,640	1,13,79,536	85.86	14.13	49.25
		F	2,08,66,173	84,76,887	49.43	50.56	59.37
	Urban	Persons	1,32,14,375	39,10,232	88.86	11.13	70.4
		M	69,93,371	33,16,266	92.56	7.43	52.57
		F	62,21,044	5,93,966	68.19	31.8	90.45

ii. Human Development

Udaipur is one of the most backward districts in Rajasthan (see Table 1.1), ranked 27th and 24th out of 33 districts in the HDI and GDI respectively. Physical infrastructure is poorer in a harsh climate. Settlements are dispersed, making the delivery of public services more difficult. Alwar fares significantly better, ranked 5th and 6th in the HDI and GDI respectively.

The incidence of poverty is high in the state of Rajasthan and 31.01% of the population lives below the poverty line. In Alwar, an estimated 22% of rural households live below the poverty line. In Udaipur, 58% of the same live below the poverty line¹⁴. Health indicators in the state are not promising. Infant mortality in Rajasthan is 103 for boys and 117 for girls¹⁵. Public health coverage is poor.

Literacy rates in both the districts for women are nearly equal at 43.26% (Udaipur) and 43.95% (Alwar)¹⁶. This is higher than the larger state-wide figure of female literacy (see Table 1.3), which is among the lowest in the country. Rajasthan also has a high dropout rate for girls and children from SC/ST households and low levels of learning.

Development programmes in the district are both centrally and locally funded. At the state level, some of the important schemes include Awasiya Rin / Anudaan Yojana, Uup Swasthya Kendra Yojana, 32-Zila 32-Kaam Yojana and Kam ke Badle Anaaj Yojana. In addition to the central government's nationwide employment generation and rural development schemes, schemes like the Desert Development Programme (Phase 1, 2 and 3; 1977-78) are specific to Rajasthan¹⁷. During 1980-81, over seventeen hundred villages were in the clutch of drought. Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP) was launched in the district to ease the crisis. About 50000 people received employment through the relief works (land reclamation, irrigation and afforestation schemes) started by the Irrigation, Public Works and Panchayati Raj departments. Public works in the last three decades have sought to bring about improvements in rural infrastructure, animal husbandry and rural electrification.

Following male out-migration, women are the primary breadwinners in the family. Collecting of forest produce and petty agriculture during good rains are the only means of livelihood. The NREGS in this context is a great boon for women, and its feminization unsurprising given the higher wages that men can command outside¹⁸.

2. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The survey was conducted at all the work sites of the five Panchayats in each block of the two districts selected for the study – Kherwara and Jhadol in Udaipur; and Thanagaji and Ramgarh in Alwar. They differ not only in their geographical contours, plains, plateaus and hills, but also in their demographic disposition, participation by BPL families, tribals and non-tribals. Following are the details of the profile in the selected area:

2.1 Caste and Tribe Composition

Udaipur district is predominantly tribal, so 82% of the respondents in Kherwara block and 85% in Jhadol block belong to Scheduled Tribes.

In Alwar district, the picture is more diverse. None of the respondents in Ramgarh block and only 16% in Thanagaji block belong to Scheduled Tribes. 53% in Thanagaji and 44% in Ramgarh belong to Scheduled Castes; 27% in Thanagaji and 45% in Ramgarh

belong to Other Backward Castes. Finally, 4% of the respondents in Thanagaji and 11% in Ramgarh belong to the General category.

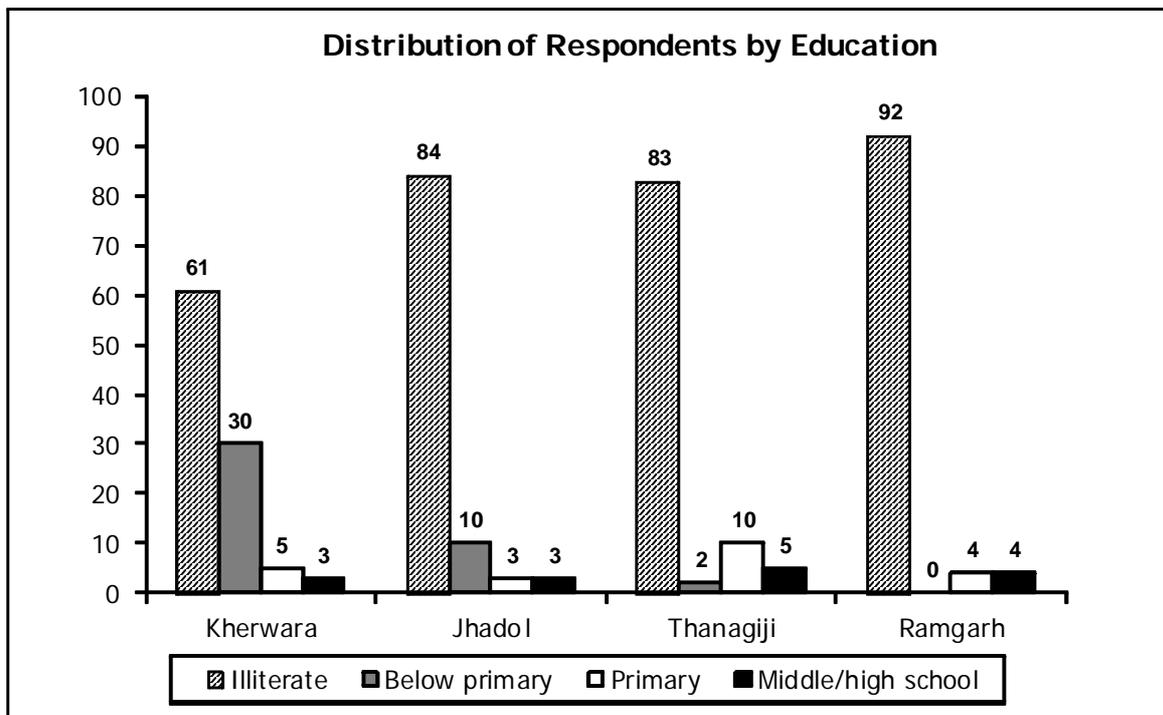
Table 1.6: Caste composition of the respondents

Caste	Number of Respondents				Total
	Udaipur		Alwar		
	Kherwara	Jhadol	Thanagaji	Ramgarh	
General	9	14	4	11	38
OBC	3	0	27	45	75
SC	6	1	53	44	104
ST	83	85	16	0	184
Total	101	100	100	100	401

2.2 Religion

In Udaipur district, 100% of the respondents in Kherwara block and 94% in Jhadol block were Hindus. 6% of the respondents in Jhadol block were Muslims. In Alwar district, 100% of the respondents in Thanagaji and 84% in Ramgarh block were Hindus. 16% of the respondents in Ramgarh were Muslims.

Figure1



2.3 Education

As we can see from the chart above, most of the respondents in all four blocks were either illiterate or below the primary level of education. 3% of the respondents in Kherwara block, 3% in Jhadol block, 5% in Thanagaji and 4% in Ramgarh block had middle/high school education.

2.4 Ownership of the land

Majority of respondents possessed land holdings and from the sampled data only 5% of the respondents in Udaipur district were found to be landless. In case of district Alwar 35% were reported as landless. 14% in Udaipur district and 23% in Alwar had less than one acre of land. 61% in Udaipur and 23% in Alwar district had between one and two acres of land. 18% of the respondents in Udaipur district and 13% in Alwar had between two and four acres of land. Only 2% of the respondents in Udaipur and 8% in Alwar had more than four acres of land. Land ownership data did **not** vary significantly between the blocks in the same district.

Since the majority of respondents were small and marginal land owners, the primary profile occupation of NREGA participants in the two districts was also agriculture. According to our data more than 80% of the respondents were involved in agriculture and livestock-raising

2.5 Migration

A look at the migration patterns of the respondents reveal that only 1% of the respondents in Jhadol block, Udaipur had ever out-migrated for work. In Alwar district, migration was a more common practice. 4% of the respondents in Thanagaji block and 20% in Ramgarh block said that they had migrated out of the district in search of work. 1% of the respondents who had migrated out of Ramgarh block went outside their district Alwar, 5% migrated within the state and 13% migrated outside the state. Most of the respondents in all blocks migrated for a period of 2-4 months. Children also accompanied their families but in a majority of the cases, migration was organized by contractors.

3. NREGA IMPLEMENTATION AND FIELD OBSERVATIONS

i. Accessibility

To start with, it is important to look at how many people are interested in using the NREGA and how many of them have access to employment under NREGA. According to the survey, 70% of the respondents in Kherwara block and 74% in Jhadol block participated in NREGA programme. In Alwar district, 69% of the respondents in Thanagaji block and 74% in Ramgarh block worked for NREGA.

There were 3 households in Kherwara, 6 in Jhadol, 7 in Thanagaji and 3 in Ramgarh who were facing problems in getting their names enrolled with NREGA.

Only 6% of the respondents in Udaipur district and 8% in Alwar district were not going to work with NREGA. Reasons for not applying for work were as various as domestic work pressure, illness, farming, children and others.

Table 1.7: NREGA accessibility

	Udaipur (%)	Alwar (%)	Overall (%)
Applied for work	75	73	74
Worked with NREGA	100	85	93
Not going to work with NREGA	6	8	7

The most important finding as far as policy redressal is concerned, is the need to create awareness among people so that they may exercise their legitimate right to know and seek information on any aspect of NREGA implementation. To make the act more effective for securing the desired objective of rural poverty eradication and livelihood security, there is an urgent need to ensure citizen participation in all stages of the implementation process. With regard to the act's administrative dimension, research in the chosen area of study showed the following:

3.1 Awareness on various provisions

❖ Written Application

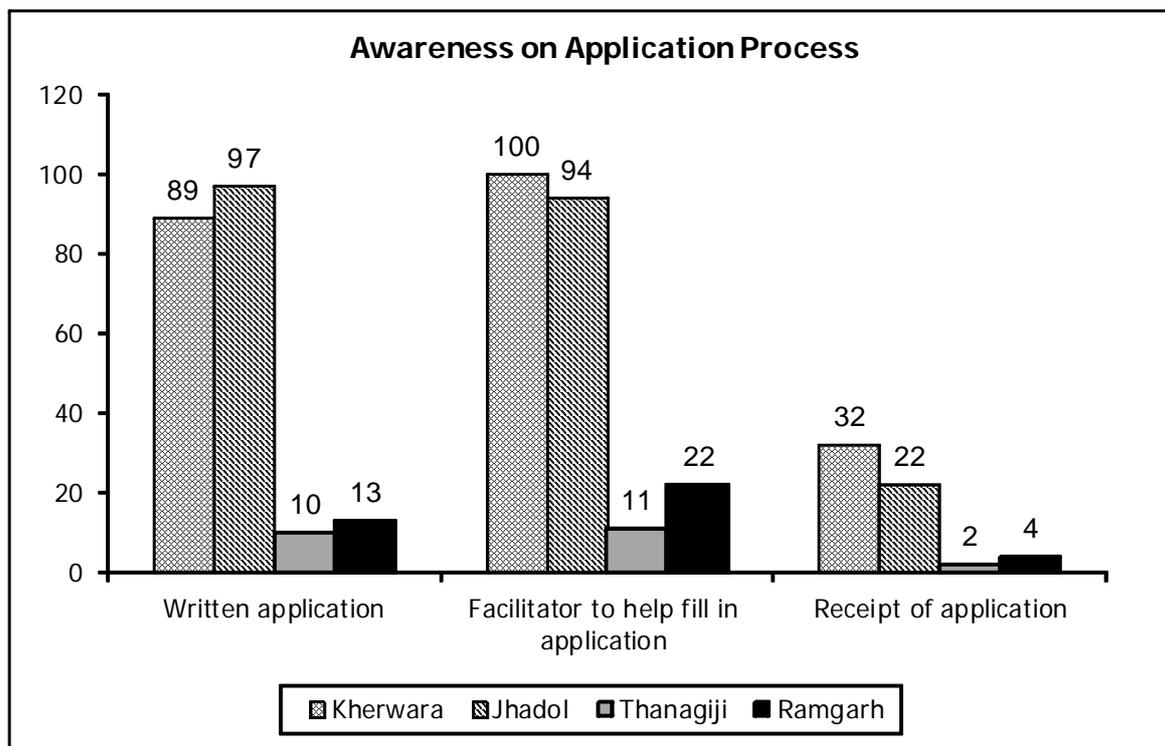
As per NREGA rules, a household interested in availing of the NREGA benefits has to make an application for **registration through the prescribed written form**. 89% of the respondents in Kherwara block and 97% in Jhadol block were aware that written application

was needed to apply for work. Altogether, 93% of the respondents in Udaipur district were aware of this procedure. In Alwar district, only 12% of the respondents were aware that written application was needed – 10% in Thanagaji and 13% in Ramgarh block.

97% of the respondents in Udaipur district were aware that **facilitator was provided to help** filling in the application form – 100% in Kherwara and 94% in Jhadol block. In Alwar district, only 17% of the respondents were aware of this procedure – 11% in Thanagaji and 22% in Ramgarh block.

Furthermore, 27% of the respondents in Udaipur district knew that the **receipt of application for job card** should be given to the applicant. 32% in Kherwara block and 22% in Jhadol block were aware of this regulation. However, none of the respondents actually got the receipt for their application in Kherwara block. In Jhadol block, 5% of the respondents who were aware of this regulation got the receipt (1 respondent). In Alwar district, only 3% of the respondents were aware of this procedure – 2% in Thanagaji and 4% in Ramgarh block. None of the respondents received the receipt for their application in Alwar district.

Figure 2



Out of total respondents 93% were aware about the fact that written application is essential for NREGA work in Udaipur district. On the other hand it is surprising to know that percentage is only 12% in Alwar district and overall awareness is 52%.

❖ **Receipt of Application for Job Card**

As per the provision of the Act, the receipt of every application for Job Card should be given to the applicant. 94% of the respondents were aware of this fact in Udaipur district and only 4% in Alwar.

❖ **Knowledge about Muster Roll**

The Act stipulates that all the entries of measurement should be made in the muster roll. Moreover at the time of payment of wages, entries on the number of days worked and also the payment amount needs to be made not only in the job cards but also in the muster rolls. In Udaipur blocks the level of awareness regarding this rule was 90% and in district Alwar, 75% of the respondents had knowledge about the muster rolls – 91% in Thanagaji and 53% in Ramgarh block. In total 80% were aware of this provision in our reported area.

❖ **Attendance**

According to the provision of the Act, it is essential to maintain daily attendance register at each and every worksite. 96% people were aware in Udaipur district and 95% were aware in Alwar district. Overall, 96% awareness was found in both the districts.

❖ **Unemployment Allowances**

If a person who has applied for the work is not given employment within 15 days from the date on which the work is requested, an unemployment allowance should be paid to the applicant. Hardly 2% of the respondents were aware of this provision in Udaipur district and only 3% in Alwar district.

❖ **Minimum Wages**

All the persons working under the Act are entitled to the wages as per the minimum wage rate fixed by the State Government. In case of our sample, 77% of the respondents who worked for NREGA in Udaipur district were aware of this provision as fixed by the

State Government (78% in Kherwara and 76% in Jhadol block). In Alwar district, 84% of the respondents were aware of this entitlement – 91% in Thanagaji and 78% in Ramgarh.

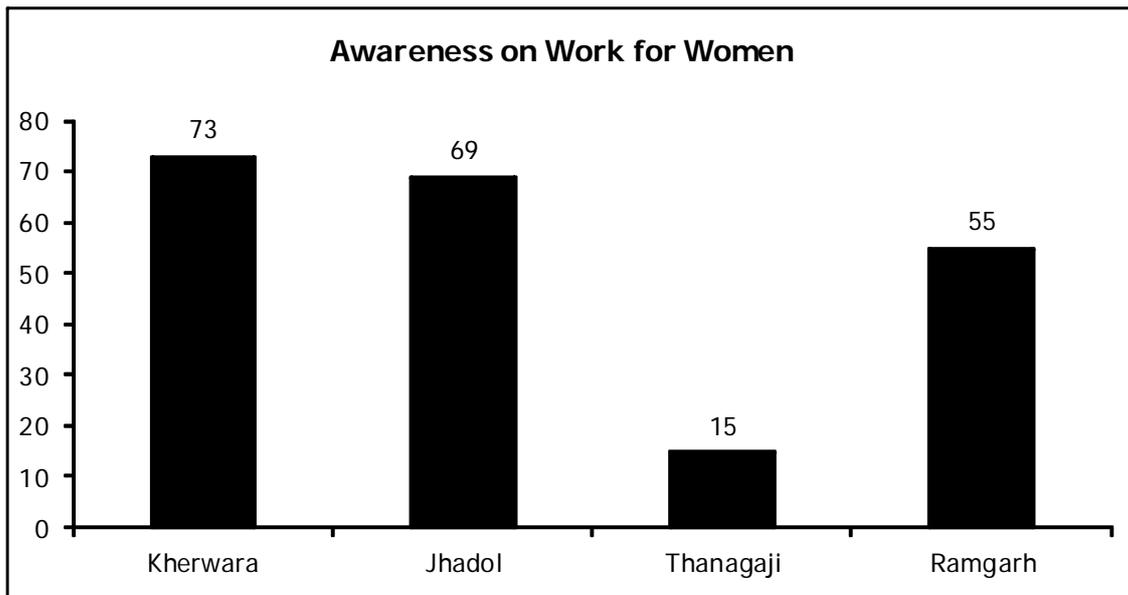
❖ **Transportation Allowance**

As per norm, NREGA work should be given within 5 kilometres of the applicant’s residence. If employment is provided beyond the stipulated 5 kilometres radius of the applicant’s residence, then s/he is entitled to 10% additional wages towards transport and living expenses. In Udaipur district only 1.4% and 7% of the respondents in Alwar were aware of this provision. In our reported area almost all work in their own villages, which is always less than 5 kilometres. Maybe this is the reason for less awareness of this provision of NREGS.

❖ **100 Days of Employment**

Under NREGA a household is entitled to 100 days of work in a financial year. This entitlement of 100 days can be shared within the household. The data shows that a lot of campaigning has been done by various agencies in this regard as 96% of the respondents in Udaipur district were aware of this regulation – 98% in Kherwara and 94% in Jhadol block. In Alwar district, 93% of the respondents were aware of this fact – 93% in Thanagaji and 93% in Ramgarh block.

Figure 3



❖ Women Workers

NREGA notifies that “priority shall be given to women in such a way that at least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested for work”. 71% of the respondents in Udaipur district were aware of this arrangement – 73% in Kherwara and 69% in Jhadol block. In Alwar district 35% of the respondents were aware of this - 15% of the respondents in Thanagaji block and 55% in Ramgarh block. This regulation therefore, is much better known in Udaipur district than in Alwar.

❖ Facilities at Work Site

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act states that “(t)he facilities of safe drinking water, shades for children and periods of rest, first-aid box [...] shall be provided at the work site”. 100% of the respondents in Udaipur district and 99% in Alwar said that drinking water was available at their site, although 2% of the respondents in Ramgarh block reported that a basic facility like **drinking water** was not being made available to the workers. Generally one or two women were assigned to fill drinking water in containers; especially in Udaipur district where water sources were far off the worksite and it took time to fetch water.

In Udaipur district, 55% of the respondents in Kherwara block and 65% in Jhadol block said that **shade** was available at their work site. In Alwar district, 30% in Thanagaji and 33% in Ramgarh block said that shade was present.

On the question of **medical kit**, only 4% of the respondents in Kherwara block and 2% in Jhadol block said that a medical kit was available at their site. In Alwar district, 21% of the respondents in Thanagaji and 41% in Ramgarh block said that a medical kit was there. At some of the sites, medical kits were available with the *meth*. On questioning the *meth*, he said it was lying at his house. Further, the medicines provided under this are not sufficient when one takes into account that between 100 to 200 people are employed per site.

On the question of having a shade at the site, it was also observed that the workers construed this as the shade of the trees and not tents, mandatory under the law. There was no facility of tarpaulin sheds found at any of the sites. People were at the *mercy of the natural shade provided by the trees*. On talking to the mates, they mentioned that it is difficult to put away the tents at night as they do not find any place for this, and that the trees provide a good enough substitute. Some of the discussants in FGDs mentioned that the panchayats have been provided with the tents for shade but that they are using it for personal benefit.

We can see that only the **drinking water** facility is properly provided in both districts and in all blocks. The availability of shade and medical kit varies significantly between districts and blocks. Whereas shade is provided well in Udaipur, the provision of medical kit is much higher in Alwar. It is also important to note the difference between the availability of medical kit in different blocks in Alwar. The availability of medical kit in Ramgarh is twice as high as in Thanagaji. These findings suggest that neither of the districts or blocks is providing work site facilities better than the other.

Table 1.8: Work site facilities

Facilities available	Udaipur (%)		Alwar (%)	
	Kherwara	Jhadol	Thanagaji	Ramgarh
Shade	55	65	30	33
Drinking water	100	100	100	98
Medical Kit	4	2	21	41

❖ **Awareness about criteria for measurement of work**

NREGA marks that states may evolve norms for measurement of work. The factors underlying this may include a set of the following key considerations: 1) the first is to ensure that all tasks required for undertaking the works under NREGS are identified clearly and that nothing remains invisible and underpaid in piece-rate work. Clubbing/ bundling of separable tasks (e.g. digging and lifting) should be avoided. 2) The second is to devise productivity norms for all the tasks listed under piece-rate works for the different local conditions of soil, slope and geology types in such a way that normal work for the prescribed duration of work results in earnings at least equal to the wage rate 3) The third is to devise measurement norms (individual versus collective), time lag between execution and measurement, in order to reduce corruption and underpayment.

92% of the respondents who worked for NREGS in Udaipur district were aware of how the work under NREGA was being measured. 31% of them claimed that it was measured by time rate and 69% that it was measured by the piece rate. In Alwar district, 93% of the people who worked for NREGA knew how the work was measured. Less than 2% claimed that it was measured by the time rate and 98% that it was measured by the piece rate.

❖ Child Labour

NREGS states that only adult members of the household (18 years or more) can apply for the employment and it is illegal to work for the children under the age of 18 years. 100% of the respondents in Udaipur and 80% in Alwar district were aware of this provision.

3.2 Participation in Social Audit

NREGS states that in order to guarantee transparency and public accountability, social audits of all works must be implemented. 49% of the respondents in Udaipur district participated in these audits – 56% in Kherwara and 41% in Jhadol block. In Alwar district, 20% of the respondents participated in social audits - 25% in Thanagaji and 15% in Ramgarh block.

3.3 Payment of Wages

NREGA states that wages must be paid within 15 days of work done. Only 1% of the respondents in Jhadol block, Udaipur district received their wages within 15 days of work done (1 respondent). In Alwar district, 1% in Thanagaji and 4% in Ramgarth block received their wages within 15 days of work. Only 8% of the respondents in Ramgarth block received their wages between 15 and 30 days of work done. None of the respondents in Udaipur district and Thanagaji block received their wages between 15 to 30 days of work. Almost all the respondents in the Udaipur district and 95% in Alwar district got their wages 30 days had passed since the completion of work. Many of the respondents did not get their payment even after 4-6 months.

3.3a Preference for Payment

In Udaipur district, 3% of the respondents in Kherwara block preferred to receive their payment in food, 31% in cash and 66% in a combination of food and cash. In Jhadol block, 11% of the respondents wanted their payment in food, 76% in cash and 14% in a combination of the two. In Alwar district, 13% of the respondents who worked for NREGA in Thanagaji preferred their payment in food, 23% in cash and 64% in the combination of food and cash. In Ramgarh block, none of the respondents preferred to receive payment in food, 36% preferred it in cash and 64% in the combination of the two.

3.3b Nature of Payment

Almost all of the respondents in Udaipur district received their payments through the Post Office and none of them used the bank services or received money in cash. In Alwar district, 70% of the respondents received their payment through the Post Office, 6% through the bank and 18% received money in cash. 6% of the respondents in Udaipur and 6% in Alwar received their payment in other ways.

3.3c Bank or Post Office Account

100% of the respondents in Kherwara block and 89% in Jhadol block had an account in the bank or post office. In Alwar district, 88% in Thanagaji block and 64% in Ramgarh had bank or post office account.

4. CONTROL OF WAGES AND EXPENDITURE

92% of women in Kherwara and 99% in Jhadol said they were in control of their own wages. In Alwar district, 91% of the respondents in Thanagaji and 82% in Ramgarh said they were in control of the wages earned under the NREGA. Issues affecting the workers with regard to wages especially in the area of expenditure have been outlined in the table below.

The wages received by the respondents are being used in many different activities. The highest proportion is found to be spent on social obligations i.e. 35%, followed by education (26%). A good proportion of wages (34%) have been invested in repayment of loans and also on medical requirements.

In Udaipur district, 38% of the wages of the respondents were spent on education, 5% on the repayment of loans, 17% on health, 31% on other social obligations and 10.5% were keeping money for saving. In Alwar district, 15% of the wages was being used for education, 30% for repayment of loans, 18% for health, 40% in other social obligations and only 0.7% was kept aside as savings.

Table 1.9: NREGA wages expenditure

	Udaipur (%)	Alwar (%)	Overall (%)
Education	38	15	26
Repayment of loans	5	30	17
Health	17	18	17
Savings	10,5	0,7	5
Other social obligations	31	40	35

5. CHANGES BROUGHT BY NREGA

The respondents who worked under the NREGA were asked if participation in NREGA works had brought any changes in their personal or social lives. In Kherwara block, 95% of the women said that there were changes in their own lives and 93% that there were changes in social life as well. In Jhadol block, 81% confirmed changes in personal and 88% in social life. In Alwar district, 52% in Thanagaji and 63% in Ramgarh said there were changes in their personal lives. 33% in Thanagaji and 35% in Ramgarh noticed changes in social life brought forth by the NREGA.

The majority of workers have related this change in terms of economic benefits. Data from the table above also points to an increase in women's participation in the social arena: their contribution to family expenses especially has had the important side effect of enhancing their self esteem.

6. ISSUE OF CHILD CARE

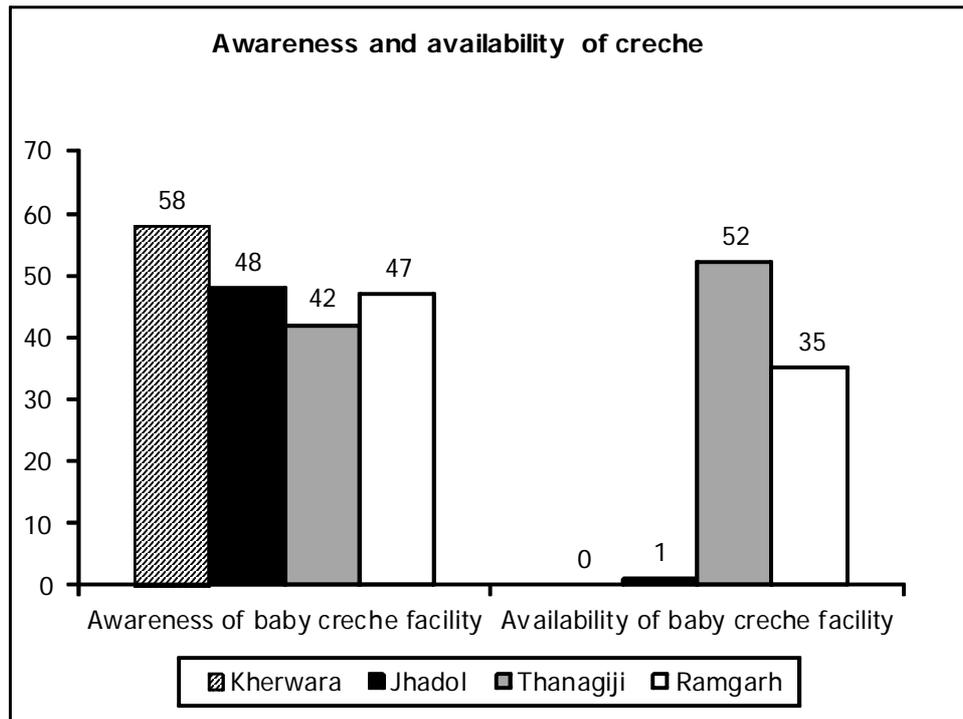
❖ Crèche Facility

NREGA states that "(i)n case the number of children below the age of six years accompanying the women working at any site is five or more, provisions shall be made to depute one of such women worker to look after such children".

53% of the respondents in Udaipur district were aware of this provision - 58% in Kherwara and 48% in Jhadol. However, only 0.7 % said that the crèche was available at their site. Similarly, in Alwar district, 45% of the respondents were aware about the NREGA provision of a crèche facility - 42% in Thanagaji and 47% in Ramgarh respectively. 43% of

the respondents who worked for NREGA in Alwar district said that baby crèche was available in their work site – 52% in Thanagaji and 35% in Ramgarh. Not surprisingly, none of the respondents in Udaipur district were satisfied with child care facilities, whereas one fourth of the women in Alwar were satisfied.

Figure 4



❖ **Children at the Work Site**

The research shows that only 2% of the respondents who have children in Kherwara block and 5% in Jhadol block were bringing their children to the worksite with them. In Alwar block, on the other hand, 62% of the respondents who have children in Thanagaji and 61% in Ramgarh were bringing children with them. We are witnessing a vicious circle here, at least in the case of Udaipur district. On the one hand, women do not take their children to the work site because there is no proper baby crèche at the site. On the other hand, there are no proper child care facilities because there are no children on the work site, as the NREGA states that there should be five or more children at the site for a baby crèche to be created. However, the question still remains whether women do not bring their children to the worksite because there are no baby crèches or because their children are being taken care of by older siblings or adults¹⁹.

❖ **Alternative Arrangements**

Those women, who did not bring their children to the work sites, had to make alternative arrangements for taking care of their children. In Kherwara block, 2 women out of 54 would leave their children at home with a girl taking care of them, 1 would leave at home with a boy taking care of them, 23 women would leave it at home with other family members, 1 at Anganwadi/Balwadi, and 27 would leave them at school. 1 woman out of 56 in Jhadol block left children at home with a girl, 15 with other relatives, 5 brought them to Anganwadi /Balwadi and 35 left them at school. As far as Alwar district is concerned, 3 women out of 19 in Thanagaji block left them at home with a girl, 1 with a boy, 8 with family members, 4 at school and 3 had other arrangements. In Ramgarh, out of 18 women who have children but do not bring them to their work sites, 3 women left them at home with a girl, 3 with a boy, 8 with family members, 1 at Anganwadi or Balwadi and 3 at school.

❖ **The demand for child care facilities**

66% of women in Udaipur district and 24% in Alwar said that they would be more willing to work if such facility was available at their worksite. 97% of women in Udaipur and 94% in Alwar wanted the extension of Anganwadi at NREGA sites. This finding suggests that unavailability of child care facilities at work sites acts as a **pullback for women** who would like to work but do not have a place where they might leave their children free of worry, or at least creates problems for women who go to work but have to arrange for child care themselves.

Table 1.10: Perception on Facilities*

Particulars	Udaipur (in %)	Alwar (in %)	Over all (in %)
Pregnant women at site	5	24	14
Crèche available	0.7	28	14
Women bringing children at site	2	42	22
Satisfaction by crèche facility	0	25	11
Willing to work if crèche available	66	24	47
Want childcare facility at NREGA site	97	94	95

*95% respondents have mentioned the need of child care facility at NREGS site.

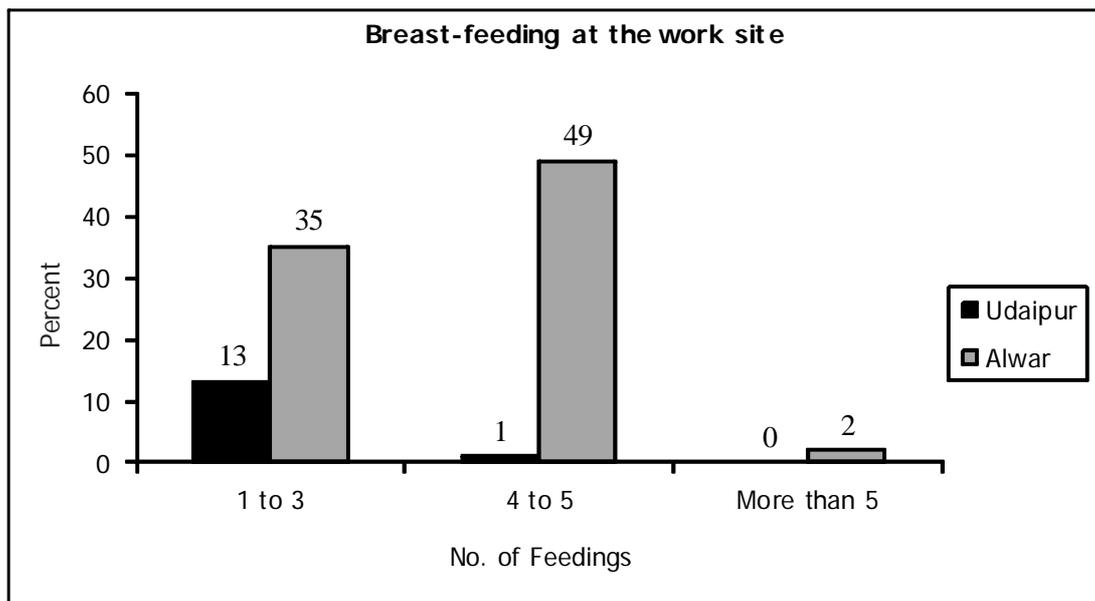
❖ **Pregnant Women and Nursing mothers as workers**

Pregnant women were also present at NREGA work sites in all four blocks. 2 women were pregnant at the work site in Kherwara and 3 in Jhadol block in Udaipur district. Much more pregnant women were found in the work sites in Alwar district - 18 in Thanagaji and 17 in Ramgarh.

14% of the women who bring their children to the worksite in Udaipur district breast-fed them at the work site. 13% of the women breast-feed one to three times per day and 1% between four to five times. In Alwar district, 86% of women who bring their children to the worksite were breast-feeding. 35% were breast-feeding one to three times a day, 49% - four to five times a day and 2% more than five times a day.

It was also observed that NREGA mates belong to the villages from where these women workers come from and in most of the cases they were also related to these women hence, there were no cases of discrimination reported from the sites.

Figure 5



7. COMPARISON OF UDAIPUR AND ALWAR DISTRICT FINDINGS

Research data points out that NREGA is implemented quite differently in Udaipur and Alwar districts. However, the differences between the ways in which it is implemented in different blocks within each district, are mostly small. The research findings were quite similar in Kherwara and Jhadol blocks, which means that the NREGA is implemented

quite consistently in different parts of Udaipur district. In Alwar district, the differences between the two blocks were bigger but did not follow a particular pattern. Women in Thanagaji block were more aware about the official procedures of NREGA than the women in Ramgarh block, but were less aware of other regulations of NREGA such as the rule of 1/3 of the workers being mandatorily women.

7.1 Official Procedures of NREGA

On one hand, such aspects as NREGA accessibility, familiarity with official procedures (filling in the application form), and provision of shade are implemented better in Udaipur district. On the other hand, the provisions of medical kit and child care facilities at NREGA work sites were better implemented in Alwar district. However, awareness regarding particular aspects of the NREGA such as unemployment and transportation allowances was very low in both districts.

In Udaipur district, such a disparity between awareness of technical procedures of employment on one hand, and unemployment and transportation allowances on the other, shows that information about NREGA is widely available in Udaipur district but that only *partial and particular information* reaches the people. Furthermore, we might speculate that such provisions as unemployment and transportation allowances are not known of and consequently, not implemented at the ground level because the execution of the employment guarantee does not necessitate these allowances. Interestingly, even though the percentage of respondents who applied for the employment under NREGA is almost the same in Udaipur and Alwar districts – over 70% - the awareness regarding procedures of enrollment was divergent – over 90% in Udaipur and only over 10% in Alwar. This is a clear indicator of **faulty administrative practices in Alwar district**.

7.2 Child Care Facilities

Research findings show that 22% of the respondents in both districts brought their children to the work site. 45% of children were placed on the ground, 35% were given a crèche facility and 16% of children were being taken care of by their elder siblings. We can see that a far greater number of women were bringing their children to the work site in Alwar than in Udaipur district – 42% and 2% respectively. Accordingly, **there are gaps between the awareness of baby crèche facility in both districts as well as its actual availability**. To compare 43% of awareness and 28% of availability of baby crèche at the work site in Alwar district with 1% and 0.7% respectively in Udaipur district illustrates the inequalities in childcare infrastructure between the two districts. The correlation between women

bringing their children to the work site and the actual availability of baby crèche is obvious here. If more women bring their children to the work site, the availability of baby crèche facilities is bound to increase. On the other hand, if more baby crèches become available at the work site, more women will bring their children to work with them.

It can be noted here that three times more women in Udaipur district (than in Alwar district) are willing to work under the NREGA if the baby crèche was made available at the work site. It would not be surprising if baby crèches would be widely available in Alwar, but the combination of 28% baby crèche availability and 24% of women who would be more willing to work is quite different.

At this point it would be interesting to analyze the availability of anganwadi and balwadi centers in Alwar district, which would help to assess why additional child care facility at NREGA sites is not as much needed and appreciated in Alwar as it is in Udaipur district. However, more than 90% of respondents wanted *an extension of the anganwadi in NREGA sites* in both districts and this shows that there is a need for additional child care facilities in both districts. As far as the anganwadi in general are concerned, the general satisfaction with anganwadi centers in both districts is 37%. The reasons for dissatisfaction are illustrated in the chart below. Almost half of the respondents were dissatisfied because anganwadis were opened irregularly and not at the right times. 18% said that children were not taken care of properly, 15% that there were no facilities at the center, 12% that the food provided was not nutritious and 9% that the anganwadi was far away from home.

Overall Child Care situation in Rajasthan

Some efforts, though on a very small scale have been made to provide relief to working mothers. Under Crèches/ Day Care Centres Scheme for working and ailing mothers 348 crèches and 76 crèches under National Crèches Fund for 10,600 beneficiaries have been working in Rajasthan. The state government has also come forward in this direction.

Still, childcare services are not within the reach of every working mother and providing daycare for such children will continue to be a serious problem. Labour laws have a provision for crèche facilities for children of women workers but many owners evade this provision by not allowing the number of women workers to reach the point where crèche becomes compulsory. So naturally women workers have to make personal arrangements for the care of their children.

It was found that 60% to 70% of such working women were leaving their children in the care of elderly relative, usually grand parents. 1% of such children are taken care of by the elder siblings. Women who have nobody to look after their child take them to their work place. At construction sites, at mines and in the fields one can see children lying on mounds of concrete or under the shadow of trees.

UTTAR PRADESH

1. PROFILE OF UTTAR PRADESH

Uttar Pradesh is the most populous State of the country, it is contributing about 16.7 percent to national population and its geographical area is 7 percent of country's total geographical area.

Rural population of the state is 79.2 percent which is 27.88 percent of total rural population of the country. Urban population of the state is just above 12 percent of country's total urban population. It is the most populous state in terms of total population and it is ranked at 14th in terms of urbanization.

	Population (Million)	Rural Population	Urban population	Annual population growth	Population density	Sex Ratio
India	102701	741.66	285.36	1.90	324	933
UP	166.05	131.54	34.51	2.30	589	898

Source: Census of India, 2001

Health Status

S.No.	Particular	UP	India
1	Birth Rate (per'000)	30.4	23.8
2	Death Rate (per'000)	8.7	7.6
3	IMR Rate (per'000)	73	57
4	Under 5 mortality	96.4	74.3
5	Anemia among children [6-35 months	85.1	79.2
6	Anemia among pregnant women [15-49 years]	51.6	57.9

Source: RGI, SRS-2010

The death rate in U.P. is 8.7 per thousand whereas the corresponding figure for India was 7.6 per thousand in 2005-06. In case of IMR (Infant Mortality Rate) the national average is 57 per thousand while for the state the figure is 73 per thousand in 2005-06. Every second child up to 3 years of age is underweight and every second pregnant women is suffering from anemia, the rate is 51.6 per thousand in U.P. and the corresponding figure for India is 57.9 per thousand.

Literacy

	Literacy rate	Male literacy	Female literacy
Overall	57.4	70.2	43.0
Rural	53.7	68.0	37.7
Urban	70.6	78.1	62.0

Source: Census of India, 2001

Overall literacy rate in the state has improved significantly during 1951-2001. Overall literacy rate has improved from 10.8 percent in 1951 to 57.4 percent in 2001 and female literacy has improved from 3.6 percent to 43 percent. But there is a wide gap among male - female and urban - rural literacy. Gap in overall literacy rate among male and female is 27 percent. In rural literacy, male -female gap is 30.3 percent and in urban it is 16.1 percent, while the gap in urban and rural female literacy is 24.3 percent.

Poverty

Poverty in India is defined by a poverty line fixed by the Government of India. In Uttar Pradesh rural poverty is defined at Rs.365.84 per capita per month and urban poverty is defined at Rs. 483.26 per capita per day. As per 61st round of NSSO, 32.80 percent of the total population is living below poverty line and despite significant reduction in the percentage of population living below poverty line number of poor has not changed significantly.

	No. of people living below the Poverty			Percentage from the total		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
UP	473	117.03	590.03	33.4	30.6	32.8
India	2209.24	807.96	3017.2	28.3	25.7	27.5

Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2004-05

Poverty in India and U.P. [2004-05]

UP is contributing about 16.6 percent to national population but out of the total poor nearly 20 percent are living in UP. 21.41 percent of rural poor and 14.48 percent of urban poor of the country are in U.P.

Every third household of the State is living below poverty line and very high prevalence of malnutrition and anemia are other reflections of poverty. Every second child of age up to 3 years is underweight and more than half the women in the age group of 15-49 are anemic.

Workforce

Economy of Uttar Pradesh is primarily agrarian economy. Work participation rate is 32.5 percent and out of the total workers 72.8 percent are main workers and 27.2 percent are marginal workers. Total reported workers in 2001 were 53.98 million in which 39.33 million were main workers and 146.46 marginal workers. The trends are clearly indicating that in absence of adequate employment marginal workforce is increasing.

Share of marginal workers was only 8 percent in 1991, which increased to 27 percent in 2001. If the pattern continues, the share of marginal workers will be more as compared to main workers. More than 60 percent of the workers would be underemployed by the end of the 11th five year plan period [2012].

1.1 NREGA IN UTTAR PRADESH

Uttar Pradesh is one of the most backward states of the country. More than 16.6 percent of the population is living on less than 7 percent of the geographical area. Census data clearly indicates that marginal workforce is increasing with a significant pace and share of it increased from 8 percent in 1991 to 27 percent in 2001. Vulnerability of the workforce is further aggravating with growing unemployment. Rural unemployment was 3.1 percent in 1993-94, which has increased to 3.7 percent in 2004-05²⁰ and there are about 14.64 million marginal workers in which 11.13 million are cultivators and agriculture laborer²¹. Such huge magnitude of underemployed and unemployed rural workforce itself reflects the need of employment opportunities in the rural areas.

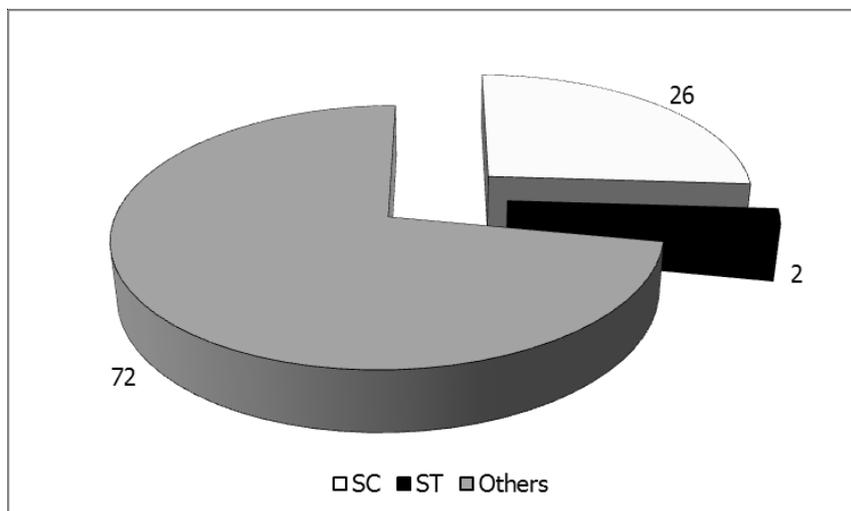
NREGA has been implemented in UP in 3 phases and it is applicable to entire state since April 2008. In first phase the Act was implemented in 22 districts and in the second phase 17 more districts were added and in third phase it was extended to the remaining districts.

Overview of NREGA in State²²

No. of registered households	4287266 [4.28 Million]
No of Job card issued	4185567 [4.18 Million]
Employment provided	4.33 million
Person days of work provided	228.75 million

Social Group Wise Distribution of Job Cards

Figure1: Distribution of Job Cards



2008-09 was the first financial year in which this scheme was implemented in the entire state. Within that particular year 58,203,921 person days of wage employment provided to 2,518,472 households. Though Act has a provision of 100 days employment for individual household, the 100 days employment was only provided to 39700 households, which is only 1.57 percent of cumulative employed households. Average wage employment per household may be worked out to just above 23 days. The women participation is even lower as out of the total person days of generated wage employment, share of women workers was only 14.02 percent.

Out of the total job card holders, 26 percent are from scheduled caste, 2 percent from scheduled tribe and 72 percent are others. Out of the total person days work generated or provided under the NREGA share of women workers is only 17.99 percent.

The scheme is demand driven and agency responsible for the implementation of the Act may argue that job has been provided to those who demanded for the work under the Act. The critical point of concern is that since 62.3 percent rural women are illiterate, the point is whether they are aware about the provisions or not or they are simply not interested. Even in case of non availability or lack of worksite facilities AWC can take care of their small kids. But effective functioning of ICDS is itself an issue of concern.

2. OVERVIEW OF NREGA IN THE STUDY AREA

Three districts from the first lot of 200 districts were selected for studying the beneficiary level impact and responses. These 3 districts are spreading throughout the state covering the state of Uttar Pradesh. Selection of these districts is done based on the presence of partners in the field.

State	District	Block
Uttar Pradesh	Barabanki Chandauli Azamgarh	Nindoora Chahaniya Maharajganj & Atraulia

From each districts specific blocks were selected in consultation with the district officials concerned and the NGO staff. In all 450 beneficiaries were selected on random basis.

Following sections analyses the responses received from the beneficiaries on various issues ranging from their social background to impact of the scheme on quality of life, services available at worksites, level of awareness regarding the provisions of NREGA especially in context of child care.

Profile of Study Area

Particular	Barabanki	Chandauli	Azamgarh
Population	26,73,581	16,43,251	39,39,916
Census households	4,59,077	2,34,574	5,42,994
Urban population [%]	9.3	10.56	7.5
Rural Population [%]	90.7	89.44	81.5
SC population [%]	26.89	24.29	25.73
Sex ratio	887	922	1020
Overall literacy	47.39	59.72	56.95
Female literacy	34.29	44.13	43.4
Work participation rate	36.79	32.1	30.45
Total workers	9,83,751	5,27,633	11,99,842
Female workers [% to total workers]	25.22	38.68	33.02
Main workers [% to total workers]	73.63	64.42	64.19
Female main workers [% of main workers]	13.11	15.04	17.64
Marginal workers	26.37	35.58	35.81
Female marginal workers [% of marginal workers]	57.48	50.88	60.38

Source: Census of India, 2001

The area has following characteristic features-

- ❖ % of female workers is higher than the state average of 24 percent
- ❖ % of marginal workers is significantly higher in Azamgarh and Chandauli as compared to state average of 27 percent, which clearly reflects the magnitude of underemployment
- ❖ Majority of the female workers are underemployed

Overview of NREGA in Study Districts (2009)

	No. of Job cardholders	%of SC/ST job cardholders	House hold provided employment	Person days of work generated	Person days of women	% of women person days to total person days	Average wage employment person house hold
Barabanki	72703	0	65667	1472	13533	0.91	22
Chandauli	12558	44.15	58536	1469	15860	10.79	25
Azamgarh	62570	10.05	40994	90191	46836	5.19	22

Source: <http://nrega.nic.in>

Employment of women is low in terms of state average but situation in the study districts is worse than the state average

As per the census data 25 to 38 percent of the total workers are female and most of them are underemployed but significantly lower employment of women under NREGA is an issue of concern.

Average number of employment per household is less than 1/4th of the provision of Act and despite provision of 1/3rd wage employment for women, their share is simply insignificant.

2.1 PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

In total, 450 workers from the four development blocks of 3 districts have been covered through household survey. 59 percent of the respondents are Dalits and 37% belong to OBC households' and a mere 4% found to be from general category. There were no tribal respondents and only 6 among the 450 respondents were Muslim which is included in the OBC category in this study.

Table 2.1: Distribution of Respondents with Caste Composition

	Barabanki	Chandauli	Azamgarh	Total
General	13	4	0	17
OBC	9	37	120	166
SC	95	68	104	267
Total	117	109	224	450

From the table it is visible that even in the three selected districts the caste distribution of the respondents is similar. In Barabanki 81% respondents were dalits and 19% percent belonged to “others” including backward and general. In Azamgarh 46% respondents were dalits and 54% come from OBC and not a single household was found to be from general caste. In the district Chandauli more than 60% reported as dalits.

Table 2.2: Distribution of Respondents with Caste and Level of Education

Level of Education	Districts with distribution of castes										
	Barabanki			Chandauli			Azamgarh		Total		
	GC	OBC	SC	GC	OBC	SC	OBC	SC	GC	OBC	SC
Illiterate	4	6	80	2	33	64	101	85	6	140	229
Below Primary	5	0	3	0	1	0	5	0	5	6	3
Primary level	0	1	2	1	1	2	1	5	1	3	9
Middle /Junior High School	0	0	2	1	0	0	4	2	1	4	4
Matriculation	3	1	4	0	2	1	4	6	1	7	11
Higher Secondary	1	1	4	0	0	1	5	6	1	6	11
Total	13	9	95	4	37	68	120	104	17	166	267

Education level of the respondents has brought more than 80% as illiterate. Only 3 percent were reported to be below primary and another 3 percent as primary pass. In the district of Barabanki 77 percent turned out to be as illiterate and another 9 percent found to be below primary and primary pass. In the district Chandauli, more than 90% (91%) reported as illiterate and another 5 percent were found to be primary and primary pass.

It could be seen from the data that the majority of the respondents were illiterate and this has a significant relation with caste distribution of the respondents. The education level of the Dalits is still lower compared to the other castes even at the state and national level.

2.3 Age distribution of respondents

	Up to 25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	Above 50	Total
No of Respondents	32	91	117	104	53	26	27	450

Majority of respondents are in the younger age category i.e. up to 35 years of age as 53 percent of them are found to be in that age group. Only 6 percent are in the age group of more than 50 years. And remaining 41 percent were between 36 to 50 years of age.

Table 2.4: No. of Female headed Households

Number of HH	Barabanki	Chandauli	Azamgarh	Total
GC	6	1	0	7
OBC	1	8	32	41
SC	15	11	20	46
Total	22	20	52	94

Our sampled data showed that of the total respondents 21 percent of the households were women headed households. The highest no. of female headed HHs was found among SCs followed by OBCs.

2.5. Occupation Pattern

Though 24 percent of the families covered under the study are landless but main occupation of 87 percent of the respondents is agriculture labor and another 2.4 percent are engaged as construction workers. Only 8 percent are engaged as self employed cultivators.

Considering both occupation of head of the family and respondent it is clearly indicated that most of the respondent's families are dependent on agriculture labor work.

Table 2.5(a): Occupational status of the respondent

Occupation	Barabanki			Chandauli			Azamgarh			Total		
	GC	OBC	SC	GC	OBC	SC	GC	OBC	SC	GC	OBC	SC
Cultivator	0	0	7	0	3	7	0	12	7	0	15	21
Agriculture Labour	9	9	80	4	32	55	0	108	95	13	149	230
Construction workers	0	0	3	0	2	4	0	0	2	0	2	9
Any other	4	0	5	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	7
Total	13	9	95	4	37	68	0	120	104	17	166	267

During the process of information collection majority of workers informed that casual labour work was the only secondary source of income and out of the total respondents 95 percent were marginal farmers and landless agriculture labourer. The table above suggested that more than 50% of labourer belonged to SC followed by OBC. Similarly in Barabanki, Chandauli and Azamgarh 84 percent, 83 percent and 91 percent respectively informed their status as agricultural labour. As per the occupational status of the respondents Narega has been able to reach to the needy. This is also one of the main objectives of Narega to provide employment wherever there is a demand.

Table 2.5(b): Occupational status of Head of the family

Social Group	Cultivator	Agriculture	Construction workers	Other
	No	No.	No.	No.
General	4	12		1
OBC	11	152	3	
SC	12	247	8	
Total	27	411	11	1

2.6 Land Ownership

Table 2.6(a): Households with social status and ownership of land

Social Group	Landless	Land holding		
		<1acre	1-2acre	> 2 acre
General	8	2	4	3
OBC	38	119	9	
SC	61	199	3	4
Total	107	320	16	7

Table 2.6(b): Distribution of Households with ownership of land

Ownership of land	Distribution of caste									Total		
	Barabanki			Chandauli			Azamgarh			GC	OBC	SC
	GC	OBC	SC	GC	OBC	SC	OBC	SC				
Landless	6	3	21	2	7	19	28	21	8	38	61	
<1acre	1	6	70	1	29	48	84	81	2	119	199	
1-2acre	4	0	3	0	1	0	8	0	4	9	3	
2-4 acre	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	
4 & above	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	4	
Total	13	9	95	4	37	68	120	104	17	166	267	

Our data substantiates the objectives of *narega* when it is correlated with the land holdings. The tables above shows 95% of the respondents come from landless HHs and families with less than one acre of land. Out of this, more than 93% belong to the SC category and 33% belong to the OBCs. Indian rural socio-economic structure is caste ridden and hence in analyzing poverty caste becomes an important factor and within that ownership of land is further discriminatory towards women and dalits.

2.7. Other source of livelihood

Irrespective of social group of the respondents casual labor work is the only secondary source of income or survival for 89 percent.

Table: 2.7: Other source of livelihood

Social Group	Milk selling	Casual labour	Others
GC	1	10	6
OBC	3	148	15
SC	2	244	21
Total	6	402	42

Table 2.8: Ownership of house

Social Group	Kuchcha	Pucca	Semi Pucca
General	2	5	10
OBC	94	24	48
SC	126	42	99
Total	222	71	157

Housing is another indicator of reflection of vulnerability and poverty. 49 percent of the respondent families are living in kuchcha houses and 35 percent have semi pucca houses. Thus 84 percent of the households are residing in either kuchcha or semi pucca houses. This indicates the inability of the respondents to invest on their dwelling place and thus being confined to low level of life style.

3. AWARENESS ABOUT NREGA AND ITS PROVISIONS

There are various provisions in the NREGA which was investigated at the field level also and brought the following results.

Possession of job card

Adult members volunteering to do unskilled work are eligible under the Act. The job cards are issued as family job cards and as per the information provided by the respondents; in 450 families, a total of eligible members are counted as 842 in which 46.31 percent are female members as shown in table below.

Table 2.9: Distribution of job cards holders and eligible members with social status

Social Group	Job card holders	Eligible Members		Total
		Male	Female	
Schedule caste	267	278	272	550
OBC	166	151	103	254
General	17	23	15	38
Total	450	452	390	842

- ❖ Eligible female workers are 46.31 percent of total eligible workers and almost 70 percent of women eligible workers are from scheduled caste community
- ❖ 65 percent of the total eligible workers are from scheduled caste community

As seen from the data the *narega* has been able to reach the communities, which many schemes even meant for their development, have failed. Employment is one of the basic needs for survival and the demand for such a scheme naturally seems high among the most marginalized section of the society.

Table 2.10: Number of respondents with knowledge & source of information

Caste	Source of information								
	Panchayat			NGO			Others		
	Barabanki	Chandauli	Azamgarh	Barabanki	Chandauli	Azamgarh	Barabanki	Chandauli	Azamgarh
GC	6	4	0	0	0	0	7	0	0
OBC	0	17	77	0	9	26	9	11	17
SC	30	25	37	35	31	39	30	12	28
Total	36	46	114	35	40	65	46	23	45

43.5 percent of the respondents had heard about NREGA in Gram Sabha meetings. The role of the NGO also becomes very crucial in disseminating information as it is closely working with people and information could spread faster through them. Even it can facilitate important provisions like child care services at the *narega* site along with others. However its role needs to be strengthened, as only 31 percent respondents were informed about the act through NGO workers. Almost 25% heard from other sources like by word of mouth or thru their neighbors.

Table 2.11(a) : Social Group wise employment under NREGA

Social group	Job card holders	Employed under NREGA	No Participation
Schedule caste	267	184	83
OBC	166	126	40
General	17	11	6
Total	450	321	129

- ❖ Out of the total respondents, 71 percent got some employment under the Act and 29 percent never participated.
- ❖ Only 9 percent of the respondents are not interested to work under the scheme.

Demand Driven or Employment as per Availability of Work

The scheme is demand driven and it has been propagated that work under the scheme is available as per the demand. But in true sense it is a supply driven scheme and Panchayats start work as per the availability of funds.

During the interactions with the workers and even the village level functionaries informed that employment is available subject to availability of work. The term demand of work is used as per the convenience.

Though 71 percent of the respondents got job under the Act but only 20 percent of the respondents informed during the interaction that they have applied for the work.

Table 2.11(b): Participants in NREGA

	Job card holders				Employed under NREGA			
	Barabanki	Chandauli	Azamgarh	Total	Barabanki	Chandauli	Azamgarh	Total
SC	95	68	104	267	65	47	72	184
OBC	9	37	120	166	8	24	94	126
GC	13	4	0	17	8	3	0	11
Total	117	109	224	450	81	74	166	321

A look at the above table shows that the eligible workers is far high than the job card holders even higher than those who participated in *narega*. The main reason that have emerged from the study is the absolute lack of child care services for which women even though possess job cards but fails to participate thus making way for a male member in the family. Childcare time and again has been seen as a domain of the women and this is systematically reinforced. During FGDs, BDOs have repeatedly mentioned the lack of interest of women in working without analyzing the situation at the worksite or at their family.

Table2.12: Knowledge regarding application of work

Districts	Knowledge regarding application of work	Knowledge regarding receipt of work
Barabanki	32	54
Chandauli	36	47
Azamgarh	65	65
Total	133	166

Only 29 percent of the respondents are aware that one has to apply for work even though the number of job card holders is high. Another 43 percent showed knowledge regarding receipt of work. As per the provision of the act the receipt of every application for job card should be given to the applicant. As most of the NREGA workers are illiterate the role of the mates and *rojgar sevak* becomes important in disseminating such information. However even though the act has such statutory provisions, there is a huge gap in the implementation process.

Table 2.13: Knowledge about muster roll

Districts	Knowledge of Muster Roll
Barabanki	14
Chandauli	7
Azamgarh	19
Total	40

Only 9 percent have knowledge about muster roll and this lack of knowledge is also reflected in the attendance where majority were signing on the documents other than prescribed muster roll.

Table 2.14 (a) Attendance at Worksite

Attendance taken	General	OBC	SC	Total
No	8	64	104	176
Yes	9	102	163	274

Though 61 percent informed about attendance at worksite and actual percentage may have increased to 85 percent as about 29 percent are not participating in NREGA.

Proper attendance is an issue of concern as only 3.33 percent of the total respondents informed about use of muster roll for attendance. The percentage may be slightly increased to 4.67 if calculated on the basis of number of households participating in the NREGA.

Table 2.14 (b) Documents used for attendance

Social Group	Document used for attendance	
	Muster Roll	Note book / Kuchcha record
General	8	9
OBC	2	164
SC	5	262
Total	15	435

The following table has brought out the other provisions of NREGA where the awareness of our sampled hhs/ respondents was estimated.

3.7 Awareness level on Special Provisions of NREGA

❖ Unemployment allowance

The table below shows that 20.2 percent of the respondents were aware on the provision of unemployment allowance.

❖ **Transport allowance**

Only 19 percent reported on the knowledge of this provision.

❖ **Minimum wage**

80 percent were aware about minimum wage rate.

❖ **Crèche facility at worksite**

A mere 17 percent of the respondents mentioned about Crèche facility as one of the provision at worksite.

❖ **100 days of work**

More than 70% of the respondents know the provision of 100 days of wage employment under the Act

❖ **Work provision for women workers**

69 percent had the knowledge regarding 1/3 rd work for women.

Table 2.15: Number of respondents with knowledge on Special Provisions of NREGA

Knowledge on provisions	Barabanki	Chandauli	Azamgarh
On unemployment allowance	25	31	35
Transport allowance	20	31	33
Minimum wage rate	89	90	179
Crèche Facility	20	28	28
100 days of work	82	90	160
1/3 women workers	63	83	164

Due to the lack of awareness of the major provisions of the act only 71 percent got some employment under the Act and 29 percent never participated despite holding job card.

3.8 Worksite Facilities

Despite several provisions for worksite facilities, respondents informed that there are no facilities like shade, medical kit or crèche available at worksite. Only 11 percent of the respondents worked under the program informed about availability of drinking water at worksite.

Table 2.16: Work site facilities

	Shade	Drinking water	Medical kit	Crèche
	No	Yes	No	No
Total Number of Workers	321	36	321	321

3.9 Measurement of Work

Though 71 percent of the respondents informed that they have worked or were working under the Act but out of the total respondents only 15 percent were aware about measurement of work.

Table 2.17: Awareness on measurement of work

Social Group	Awareness on measurement	
	Time rate	Piece rate
GC	1	1
OBC	11	12
SC	9	15
Total	21	28

3.10 Participation and Transparency

Workers participation in preparation of work plan or preparation of shelf of work and social audit are among very specific provisions of the Act. But these are among loose ends of entire implementation process.

Only 4 percent informed about participation in Gram Sabha meeting related to NREGA and less than 3 percent informed about participation in social audit or public hearing on NREGA.

As mentioned above only 9% were aware of muster roll though majority of them taking attendance on a *Kachha document*. None of the respondents is aware about scrutiny of muster roll.

Table 2.18: Participation and transparency

Social Group	Participation in Gram Sabha on issues of NREGA	Participation in social audit
General	0	0
OBC	13	7
SC	5	6
Total	18	13

3.11 Payment of Wages

As per the operational guideline of the NREGA, payment of wages need to be done on weekly basis and as per the amended guideline wage payment is now only allowed directly to account of the worker. But timely payment is still an issue of concern.

20 percent of the workers informed that they received payment within 15 days whereas 49 percent informed wage payment within 15 to 30 days. However no unemployment allowance have been provided to anyone not receiving employment within 15 days of work. One third cases were found where wages were given after a month.

Table 2.19: No. of workers with duration of wages received

Duration	Barabanki	Chandauli	Azamgarh	Total
Within 15 days	10	5	50	65
15-30 days	45	57	56	158
More than 30 days	26	12	60	98
Total	81	74	166	321

Table 2.20: Utilization of NREGA Wages

Utilization on	Barabanki	Chandauli	Azamgarh	Total
<i>Education</i>	24	15	18	57
Health	40	21	56	117
Saving	9	8	14	31
Repaying Debts	7	26	40	73
Others	1	4	38	43

More than 50% workers have utilized their earnings on health and education. It is seen from the above table that 36 percent of the respondents used the money for health aspects. Health especially of the mother and the child is one of the main concerns of the agricultural laborers mostly due to working and living conditions. The under five Mortality and the

IMR in the rural areas is generally high. About 2.1 million Indian children under 5 years of age die each year. In Uttar Pradesh the rates are higher than the all India rates.

23 percent have also reported to use the earnings for repaying debts.

3.13 Migration and NREGA

Theoretically NREGA is a demand driven program and it provides 100 days job guarantee for the rural households. About 1/3rd of the state population is living below official poverty line. Employment trend analysis clearly reflects that unemployment and under employment in rural areas is increasing. In such a situation, schemes like NREGA can add Rs. 10,000 per annum to the income of participating households. But in real sense it has not generated enough impact in the rural areas.

NREGA is aimed at providing wage employment opportunities at the village itself and 6 percent of the respondents reported migration after introduction of NREGA. Here it needs to be considered that majority of the respondents are small landholders and for 89 percent of the total respondents' casual labor work is secondary source of employment.

The reported 6 percent migration is not much and it is also a reflection of workers belief of working in their own village itself. But it is also true that people are not getting employment under the Act as per their need. Available secondary data reflects that average employment generation is about 1/4th of the target. It is also reported that only male members are migrating and 86 percent are migrating for less than 4 months.

Did NREGA bring change in life?

In the study area, only 14 percent of the respondents felt change in their own life and 12 percent experienced change in social life. This might be due to less participation in the scheme by the workers and those who are participating are not getting work as per requirement. About 29 percent of the respondents who have not joined the work force very clearly informed that they are willing to work under the Act subject to availability of child care facilities.

Table 2.21: Respondents mentioning on change due to NREGA

Social Group	In own life	In social
General	0	0
OBC	25	17
SC	21	21
Total	46	38

Wage Employment of Women in NREGA

As per the available secondary information women participation in NREGA in study districts is very low. It is 5.19, 0.91 and 10.79 percent in Azamgarh, Barabanki and Chandauli districts respectively and average women participation for study districts is 5.7 percent.

During the process of information collection 89 percent respondents informed that casual labor work is the only secondary source of income and out of the total respondents 95 percent are marginal farmers and landless agriculture laborer. In 450 surveyed families total eligible members are 842 in which 46.31 percent are female members. Despite all these facts and figures women participation in NREGA is negligible.

During FGD, and personal interactions different stakeholders gave different views on women participation in NREGA -

Group / Individual	View
Laborer	There is no worksite facility like shade, medical kit, etc. Even no facility is available for lactating mother and childcare. If these facilities are made available women participation will improve.
Women workers	<p>Panchayats never called any meeting for sharing information. They are unaware about provisions. Some of the participants informed that Panchayats do not provide work to women. Majority of the women said that they are unaware about any worksite facility or childcare facility and they never worked under the scheme.</p> <p>Findings of the household survey are clearly indicating that 29 percent of the respondents never participated in the NREGA and out of total non-participants 66 percent are willing to work under the scheme subject to availability of childcare facilities.</p> <p>Women also feel that their participation in work under the NREGA is discouraged</p>
Mate / Rozgar sewak	Childcare facilities are not available at the worksite as mothers of small kids are not working if they join the work forces then we might think of making this facility available
Block level official	The respondents said that women have not demanded for the work therefore their participation is low. Mothers of small kids are not working and therefore childcare facilities are not available

4. ISSUE OF CHILD CARE

Children under six

Total population of the surveyed families is 3731 and population of the children in the age group of 0-6 years is counted as 506. Of the total children in this age category, 57 percent of children lies in the age group of 0-3 years and 43 percent in the age group of 3-6 years.

Table 2.22: Number of Children under six

Age-group	Barabanki	Chandauli	Azamgarh	Total
0-6 months	12	11	24	47
6-12 months	23	18	38	79
1-3yrs	38	38	85	161
3-6yrs	48	58	113	219
Total	121	125	260	506

There are more than 500 children in the age group of 0-6 years in our sampled HHs and child sex ratio in this age group comes out as 813. The declining trend is similar as in case of the state and national as well. But when it comes to children's population up to 18 years, it shows improvement i.e. 1029 per thousand males.

Children in different age group not attending schooling or covered under Anganwadi

Table 2.23: Distribution of children not attending school and AWCs

Age Group	No. of Children			Not Attending Anganwadi /		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
0-6 months	35	12	47	31	10	41
6-12months	45	34	79	37	22	59
1-3yrs	78	83	161	43	50	93
3-6 yrs	121	98	219	22	21	43
6-8yrs	131	176	307	11	7	18
8-18yrs	302	330	632	85	112	197
Total	712	733	1445	229	222	451

The selected areas have also reported to have anganwadi centres but the table above suggested that almost 47% children are not registered at these centres. They are not availing the facility of these centres like supplementary nutrition and immunization etc. also children in the age group of 3-6 years are not attending pre- school. Main reason for not

sending children to these centres is the quality coupled with the problem of PSE not happening in these centres. As seen from the table below, there are also cases of women reporting not having a centre in their villages however more than 90% have reported to be having a centre in their locality.

It is seen from the above table that children in the age group of 3 to 8 years comprised a total of 526 of which almost 12% not attending any school including pre- school. It is also observed that the children including boys are involved in taking care of their siblings as the age category of 8-18 years is found to be dropped out from schools. *Thus the child care giver in Indian rural families is often found to be another child.*

Table 2.24: Existence of Anganwadi centres

Districts	Presence of anganwadi	
	Yes	No
Barabanki	112	5
Chandauli	103	6
Azamgarh	205	19
Total	420	30

Although there is considerable number of anganwadis in the villages from where the respondents have been selected, they have not been opened as per the need of the *narega* workers. The children at the worksite are on the ground in the most disheveled condition and there are no crèche at all in any of the site.

Table 2.25: No. of children with child care facilities

Social Group	On ground at the sites	Older sibling (Girl)	Older sibling (Boy)	Others	Total
Barabanki	1	20	0	100	121
Chandauli	6	24	15	80	125
Azamgarh	11	125	14	110	260
Total	18	165	29	290	506

It is mentioned earlier that there are no facilities for child care at worksite and during the interaction with women workers they also informed that normally the village level functionaries discourage women workers to work. But those who are working despite all odds are not getting any facility. More than 50% women leave their children in the custody of others like relatives etc. and 38% children are taken care by their older siblings of which major burden comes on the shoulders of girl child substituting her mother's role,

which fails to change the gender equation in the family. Thus crèche also becomes an empowering tool for both the mother and the young girls.

Lack of knowledge on providing creches is also cited as one of the major impediment on not providing creches. Women are not aware of the fact that an Narega worker could be employed as a crèche worker during the period of work on the similar wages. In fact some officials are also ignorant on this part either.

It has been found that 91 percent of the respondents are interested in work under the program but 20 percent [in addition to 71 percent] are willing to work subject to availability of crèche facility. Only 9 percent of the respondents are not interested to work under the scheme. In Chandauli 100 percent respondents would work if there is a provision of crèche near the narega worksite. As mentioned earlier, one of the main reasons for the lack of participation of the respondents is the unavailability of crèche.

Table 2.26(a): Number of respondents willing to work in case of availability of Crèche

Social groups	Participated in work	Willing to work
Barabanki	81	94
Chandauli	74	109
Azamgarh	166	205
Total	321	408

Table 2.26(b): Social group wise distribution of workers and potential increase with availability of crèche facility

Social group	Present participation in NREGA	Potential increase in participation [availability of crèche]	Possible % Increase	Not interested %
General	11	12	9	47
OBC	126	156	24	6.7
SC	184	240	30	9.7
Total	321	408	27	9.3

- ❖ Availability of crèche facility may increase the workers participation of other women members
- ❖ Out of the total respondents, 71 percent have got some employment in under the NREGA and 29 percent never participated. But the participation may increase to 91 percent subject to availability of crèche facility.

CONCLUSION

Thus it can be said that the NREGA has indeed been able to bring forward the concerns of rural poverty, and especially those of rural women. Due to the prevalence of patriarchy in the rural areas, women are bound to the household chores and child care. Time and again block level officials have mentioned that women prefer *to not* come to work, which shows that *even the implementers are not sensitive regarding certain traditional perspectives on women's work and responsibilities*. This has also been reflected in the lack of participation of eligible women despite possession of NREGA job cards.

Another issue which has been consistently raised through the study is the *need for the ICDS centres to collaborate with the NREGA programme*. This dire need for coordination is illustrated by the example a majority of the respondents demanding the opening of the *Anganwadi* centres during NREGA work hours, so that women may leave their children and participate in the works. This would facilitate the participation of women to a large extent. Thirdly, it is of immense importance to *spread awareness* among people about the program.

From the study it was found that the statutory provision of child care services in NREGA has not been actualized at the grassroots. It has also highlighted certain areas where further intervention and advocacy are required so that the very essence of the Act is not lost.

Some of the observations of the study are as follows:

- ❖ This study focused on child care services and found that knowledge regarding crèches is minimal.
- ❖ There is a strong need for improving the services as well as the coverage of ICDS services.
- ❖ There is a need for crèches in the village NREGA worksite; however lack of awareness has been a major obstacle. Creches are highly desired by all the respondents and would make an immense difference to rural women's lives.
- ❖ The data also indicates that the *Gram Panchayat* has played a major role in disseminating information about the NREGA in the village, but is silent on recruiting a *dai* or providing crèche.
- ❖ There is a strongly felt need by all the women that *anganwadis* should open up as per the need of the NREGA workers.

- ❖ Participation of women in NREGA has been affected due to an unavailability of crèches at the worksite. This has been a major factor affecting women participation.
- ❖ Health and education has emerged as equally important areas where workers invest their wages from the NREGA.
- ❖ There is no special rule/facility for pregnant and lactating mothers at the worksite

SUGGESTIONS

- i. There is a strong need for awareness generation on the NREGA and its provisions for the effective implementation of the scheme and improved participation of women
- ii. There is a clear indication that the overall participation can increase if the responsible agency [Department of Rural Development and *Panchayats*] willingly provide childcare facilities at the worksites. The **bureaucratic attitude towards women's needs and rights needs to change.**
- iii. Village/district/state level authorities should be made **accountable** as per the expectations of the act
- iv. NGOs should also play a proactive role in the proper implementation of the programmes.
- v. Training of Rozgar sevak and Mates should include increased **sensitivity towards the gender/caste/tribe/minority component**, so that the programme reaches out to the most marginalised.
- vi. Agencies responsible for implementation have their own perception and try to provide ambiguous reasons for the non-availability of worksite facilities as per the provision. Workers said they are willing to work and women said that they are unaware about the provisions and their participation is actively discouraged
- vii. Agencies (*panchayats* and block development offices) responsible should be more active in informing and educating people about the NREGA and its provisions.
- viii. ICDS services should be improved and serve the needs of the women workers in NREGA as both services are meant to be catering to the largely neglected needs of rural women and children.
- ix. Child care services are a must for eliciting women's participation.

Endnote

¹ Engendering NREGA: Women's Empowerment through Guaranteed Employment. Institute for Human Development - UNIFEM Workshop. 31 August, 2009

² Post-independence, rural wage employment programmes have been popular as a way of providing relief at times of crisis. It prevents costly adjustments such as sale of land, livestock and/or distress migration. The durable assets created contribute to rural infrastructure. These programmes also put an upward pressure on market wage rates by attracting people to public works programmes, thereby reducing labour supply and pushing up demand for labour. The NREGA can be read as yet another move in the direction of universalizing social protection in India, alongside the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the National Rural Health Mission – pillars of the UPA government's Common Minimum Programme.

³ <http://nrega.nic.in>

⁴ Rajasthan Human Development Report, 2002

⁵ *2002, *Rajasthan Human Development Report*; ⁰<http://censusindia.gov.in>; ¹<http://nrega.nic.in>

⁶ Women have lesser means, skills, assets, education and employment options than men (who generally opt for migration), and the range of available income generating options are limited. Most women in agriculture are marginal, subsidiary workers and forced to take recourse to public works schemes as a supplementary income during off season.

⁷ <http://nrega.nic.in>

⁸ 60% of the state in Rajasthan is arid, receiving less than 400mm of average rainfall, and the remaining 40% is semi-arid with precipitation levels ranging between 550 mm and 800 mm. Annual precipitation rates across the state is insufficient for rainfed agriculture causing a permanent agricultural drought even when a meteorological drought is not declared. Deficient rainfall has also adversely affected the recharge of ground water aquifers, wells, tanks and other water bodies (Girdawari Report, 2000; UN Disaster Management Team, India).

⁹ Rajasthan HD Report, 2002

¹⁰ Rajasthan HD Report, 2002.

¹¹ Rajasthan HD Report, 2002.

¹² Migration is a response to not only the scarcity of employment in rural areas, but also its unpredictability. Khera (2006) has observed a synchronized pattern of movements to and from destination states that keep timings of relief works programmes – a source of secure income close to home - in mind.

¹³ Rajasthan HD Report, 2002

¹⁴ Rajasthan HD Report, 2002.

¹⁵ Census of India, 1991

¹⁶ However, some communities like the *Meo* in Alwar are generally deprived of education and development opportunities as a result of their socio-cultural positioning. The status of women is very low because of traditional mindsets and customs of *pardah*.

¹⁷ www.rajasthan.gov.in

¹⁸ Ghosh, 2006.

¹⁹ The case of Nalla Singayyagaripally in Nallamada mandal of Andhra Pradesh's Anantapur district is a good example of how a civil society initiative forced the panchayat to appoint ayahs under the rural employment guarantee and look after the children of women workers. REDS, a non-government organisation (NGO) in Kadiri, Anantapur, and a part of the Centre for Environment Concerns initiative, stepped in. It surveyed the village and listed 33 households with women and small children and made the families aware of the law. The people were divided into three groups in such a way that each group had ten women with small children. When the weather became too hot, the children were kept in the homes of these ayahs, with REDS providing them some ragi gruel, bananas and lentil paste (<http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/sreelatha-menon-behind-every-successful-woman/20/58/385639/>)

²⁰ NSSO 61st round report

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The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) is an Act to provide a legal guarantee of 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteers to do unskilled manual work. He/she will get the minimum wage rate notified for agricultural labour in the State until the Central Government notifies a minimum wage rate, which in no case shall not be less than Rs. 60 per day. The NREGA came into effect on February 2, 2006. The NREGA then envisages a paradigm shift 'From Programme to Act', compared to the different Wage Employment Programmes (WEP) operating in the country since 1980.

i. Objective of NREGA

A component of the UPA government's Common Minimum Programme, the NREGA was largely responsible for catapulting the Congress to resounding election success in early 2009. Launched in February 2006 in 200 most backward districts of the country, the scheme was envisioned as more than mere wage employment during the lean season. In addition to stemming out-migration, it was expected to create sustainable village assets and promote sustainable development. The rural employment guarantee legally enshrines the right to work for 100 days, is demand driven, carries national coverage and in-built mechanisms for accountability and adopts a measure of gender sensitivity¹ into policy design that is unprecedented in India.

The government of India enacted the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in September 2005. The Act was notified in 200 districts in phase I with effect from February 2nd 2006 and then extended to additional 130 districts in the financial year 2007-2008. Today the NREGA has been extended to the whole country with the exception of districts that have a 100 % urban population. The NREGA aims at enhancing the livelihood security of rural households by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed labor. The types of works allowed under the NREGA - micro-irrigation, drought proofing, land development, flood control and rural connectivity - underline the Act's commitment to issues of drought, deforestation, and soil erosion, so that employment generation proceeds on a sustainable basis. NREGA is the most significant act in the history of Indian polity in many ways like grass-root level participation of every citizen and beneficiary through democratic process, multi-layered social audit and transparency mechanism by

involvement of civil society, comprehensive planning at village level towards sustainable and equitable development

ii. NREGA Coverage

The Act is applicable to areas designated by the Central Government. In its first phase it was commenced in 200 districts across the country. In the second phase, the Act has been notified in the financial year 2007-08 in an additional 130 districts, bringing the total number of districts covered by the NREGA to 330. Pre-existing wage employment programmes like the National Food for Work Programme and the Sampoorna Gramin Rojgar Yojana (SGRY) in these districts were merged with the NREGA. The remaining rural districts of the country were notified on 28th September 2007 where the NREGA came into force w.e.f. 1st April 2008.

iii. Highlights of NREGA Provision²

✓ Eligibility

All adult members of a rural household, resident in the area and willing to do unskilled manual work can apply. Even if a person is already employed/engaged in work, he/she has the right to demand employment under NREGA.

✓ Administration

The scheme is implemented through collaborative partnership right from Grama Sabha to Central Government Community participation by way of (i) Grama Sabha, (ii) local vigilance & monitoring committees, and (iii) Self Help Groups (SHGs), and ensures active role by Civil Society Organizations. At official level, the scheme was embedded with inbuilt monitoring & evaluation mechanism at every layer of implementation including online monitoring through Monitoring and Information System (MIS).

✓ Process of registration

A household interested in enjoying NREGA benefits has to make an application for registration to the *GramPanchayat* through the prescribed written form. The registration form and process are free of cost.

✓ Allocation of Employment Opportunities

The power to allocate employment under the Act has been vested with both the BPO and the *GramPanchayat*. Employment on local works should be prioritized. While providing wage employment, priority should be given to women so that at least one third of the

beneficiaries are women. If a disabled person applies for work then work suitable to his/her ability and qualification should be given.

✓ Measurement of Work

At first, it should be ensured that all components of the task are clearly identified and the wage rates fixed separately. The State should prepare an exhaustive and detailed list of all the possible tasks under the Employment Guarantee Scheme in different geomorphologic conditions. The State should also devise productivity norms for the District Schedule of Rates (DSR) for each locale in such a way that 7 hours of normal work earns minimum wages. This is of particular significance in areas with a high degree of location specificity and variability in soil-slope-geological conditions and seasonal variation. Therefore, a matrix of rates for the same task needs to be created using ecological rather than administrative boundaries.

✓ Role of the *GramPanchayat* in the registration process

In order to authenticate the registration, the *Panchayat* verifies whether the applicant resides in that village and is an adult. The unit of registration is the household. After verification, the *GramPanchayat* will issue a Job Card to the household.

✓ Job Card

A Job Card is the basic legal document which enables the registered household to demand guaranteed employment. The Job Card should be issued within 15 days of application and is valid for five years. The household Job Card will have the name and photograph of each registered member. The Job Card and photograph are free for the applicant. A job card does not automatically entitle a person to receive employment; he/she will need to apply for work in a plain sheet of paper to the *panchayat*. It is the *Gram Panchayat's* responsibility to issue a dated receipt for the application.

✓ Work application process

To get employment, the job seeker should submit a written application to the *Gram Panchayat* or Programme Officer (at the block office). Within a household's entitlement for 100 days individual members can apply for work. The demand has to be for at least 14 days of continuous work.

✓ Unemployment Allowance

If a person who has applied for the work is not given employment within 15 days from the date on which the work was requested, an unemployment allowance should be paid to the applicant by the State Government and the responsibility for this lies with the BPO.

For the first 30 days, twenty five% of the daily wage (Rs.18 per day) and then fifty% (Rs.36 per day) will be paid as unemployment allowance and this is not to exceed the standard wage of 100 days in any case, i.e. unemployment allowance + wage received for work done = wage rate of 100 working days in a financial year.

✓ Payment of Wages

All persons working under the Act are entitled to the wages as per the minimum wage rate fixed by the State Government. Equal wages will be paid to both men and women workers. The payment of wages will be made on a weekly basis but must not be later than a fortnight. The State Government will ensure that the Basic Schedule of Rates (BSR) is designed in such a way that a person working for 7 hours would normally earn a wage equal to the minimum wage rate and in Rajasthan it is fixed at Rs.100 per day. Payment of wages can be done both in cash and in food grains but at least 25% of the wage is to be paid in terms of cash. There is a provision of advance payment to the tune of 20% of the total standard minimum wage rate on a weekly basis.

✓ Social Audit

A District Internal Audit Cell in the office of the DPC shall be constituted to scrutinize the reports of the *Gram sabha* and conduct a special audit, if necessary. A monthly report will be compiled and sent to the DPC, State Programme Co-coordinator and the State Government who will initiate action for serious irregularities and also take appropriate preventive action.

✓ Physical Audit

Physical audit of works undertaken would be taken up to verify the quality of the work and to check that the expenditures incurred have been converted into durable assets.

¹ It allows for crèche facilities on worksites and insists that 1/3rd of all beneficiaries be women. Wages cannot discriminate between the sexes. Other entitlements include mandatory participation of women in the monitoring and management of the scheme.

² <http://nrega.nic.in>

About FORCES

FORCES is a national network of organizations and individuals concerned with issues relating to women working in the unorganized sector and care of their children.

Founded in 1989 to act as a pressure group, the network is committed to the survival and development of the young child and the mother.

The critical issues are children and maternity entitlements for the vast majority of women in the unorganized sector, which have a cascading impact on the health and development of children and families.

FORCES Commitments

To adopt a holistic approach with multi-pronged advocacy for:

- Harnessing adequate resources for childcare services;
- Seeking decentralization in the distribution of resources;
- Social security for women working in the informal sector;
- Adequate and just policies with planned outlays and inclusion of children in all sectors;
- Survival and protection of girl child.

FORCES

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