

**A Consultation Workshop  
On  
Changing Gender Relations and Women's Empowerment  
NREGA Implementation in Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh**

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) is a landmark legislation to ensure livelihood security to all the rural households whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work upto 100 days for prescribed minimum wages in every financial year, implemented in all the 615 districts of the country.

Apart from being a rights-based and demand driven employment programme, the NREGA makes special provisions for women. These provisions include a minimum of one-third of beneficiaries to be women and certain worksite facilities, to make the work women-friendly. The implementation experiences so far suggest that the participation of women has been positive – women beneficiaries of the NREGS (national average) constituted 41% in 2006-07, which increased to 43% in 2007-08 and further to 49% in 2008-09 (upto December 2008).

Though women have been coming out in large numbers to participate in the scheme in certain regions, the most important issue is empowerment through participation. The question remains – Does participation in NREGS lead to empowerment – individually and socially (i.e. women as a community)?

The emergence of women workers as independent bread-earners with control over earnings has other impacts as well, such as greater role in decision making in the family, discretion to spend and control the use of their earnings and confidence to earn without support, which need to be explored further. There are also some reports that Self Help Groups (SHGs) of women have been able to enhance control over assets as well as transfer assets and benefits to women more effectively under the NREGA. Issues around women's empowerment thus become an important policy objective for further study. Further, terms of inclusion of women into the workforce need attention, so as to ensure equal wages and greater dignity for women on the whole.

In this regard the Institute for Human Development in association with UNIFEM is organizing a one day workshop to be held in the first week of September 2009, in Delhi, to discuss these and related issues.

The issues for deliberation would include:

- Workforce participation of women
- Work and Worksite related issues
- Intra household impact of women's participation in the NREGS

- Women's participation in procedural aspects of the NREGS
- Experiences of Asset Management and Scheme Implementation by Women

Ashok Pankaj and Rukmin Tankha from Institute for Human Development, have recently completed a field based study - **Changing Gender Relations and Women's Empowerment:NREGA Implementation in Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. The interim findings of this study show some interesting results.**

The purpose of this workshop is also to discuss the interim report and share the experiences with other researchers and scholars.

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