



Haryana's MGNREGA and Women's Employment: A Geographical Analysis

Author: **Sweety**

Open Scholar,

Subject: Geography

Email ID: sweetybalhara9@gmail.com

Abstract:

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has emerged as a pivotal policy intervention in India, aimed at alleviating rural poverty and unemployment. This study delves into the specific context of Haryana, a north Indian state, to investigate the impact of MGNREGA on women's employment patterns, while considering the geographical nuances that shape the program's outcomes. Haryana, characterized by its unique blend of rapid urbanization and persistent rural agrarian practices, offers an intriguing backdrop for this analysis. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative fieldwork. Geospatial mapping and GIS techniques are utilized to assess the spatial distribution of MGNREGA worksites and their accessibility for women across the state. The findings reveal that while MGNREGA has generated employment opportunities for women in Haryana, significant disparities exist in the distribution and accessibility of these opportunities. Geographical factors such as distance to worksites, terrain, and local infrastructure play a crucial role in determining women's participation rates. Moreover, the study highlights the influence of socio-cultural norms and household dynamics on women's decision-making regarding MGNREGA participation. The highest women employment has been found in Karnal (45.57 per cent) district and the lowest in Panchkula (9.17 per cent).

Keywords: Women Employment, MGNREGA, Haryana, and Change

Introduction

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 mandates every state to establish a Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (REGS) within six months. The Haryana Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (HREGS) was established in 2007 to provide 100 days of annual guaranteed wage employment and develop infrastructural assets in rural areas. The scheme is centrally sponsored and financed by both Centre and State Governments. The Scheme, a Centrally Sponsored Program, is cost-sharing between the Center and State Governments, with the Central Government covering all wages for unskilled manual laborers and 75% for skilled and semi-



skilled workers, while the State Government covers 25% of these expenses. The NREGA program faced challenges in spreading awareness, but was successfully planned and implemented by Gram Panchayats, civil society organizations, and proper training for Secretary and Sarpanch. Vigilance and Monitoring Committees (VMCs) were formed to monitor work, fund utilization, administrative requirements, and paperwork.

The State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC) ensured transparency and accountability, addressing irregularities and tracking program functionalities. Haryana targeted Sirsa and Mahendergarh districts due to low rainfall and drought-prone conditions. Mahendergarh was agriculturally less developed and relied on mining and quarrying activities. Sirsa had better agricultural conditions and more dependent on farm-related works. During the implementation of a scheme, residents of both districts and related villages participated in voluntary skilled and unskilled works (Sekhri, 2013).

Workers in farming, mining, quarries, road construction, irrigation, sanitation, and medical centers worked in various sectors. Job cards were provided to track work allocation and wages, with one-third of households holding job cards, primarily SC and OBCs. Over 56% of enlisted families were SCs. Out of the complete work created under REGS, more than 60% of employment opportunity was profited by SCs and 31 percent by ladies (Pankaj & Tankha, 2010). When MGNREGA was launched in Haryana in 2008, there were 262.81 lakh working man-days overall, of which 90.26 lakh were logged by female employees. As a result, from 2008 to 2011, the tendency of women in the state to earn a salary exhibited an annual trend of growth. The availability of work on the outside of the village made it simpler for women to go to the job location and complete the assignment, which is the primary cause of the increase in the number of women participating in the MGNREGA. As a consequence, MGNREGA gave untrained rural women workers opportunity to earn money, improving their family's financial situation (Neeraj et al. 2011).

In the case of India, the majority of the population resides in rural areas where farming is their primary source of employment and income. However, the agriculture sector has had negative growth trends in recent years, which has constrained the amount of workers used there. As a



result, a lot of farmers quit farming and go to metropolitan areas in quest of new employment prospects. Inadequately distributed employment opportunities were a result of employees moving from rural to urban areas, which hindered the development of both the rural and urban economies. Thus, on October 2nd, the Indian government put into effect the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) project. The Act made sure that adults living in rural homes would have access to at least 100 days of employment at the legal minimum wage (Chopra, 2019). The offer of 100 days of lawful employment per fiscal year for adult family members willing to work in low-skilled jobs was the cornerstone of MGNREGA. The fact that women have fewer work opportunities than males does, however, provide the biggest challenge to the scheme's implementation.

Just one-third as many jobs are available for women as there are for males. Due to a shortage of work opportunities, women's participation in the MGNREGA programme falls as a result (Kaushal, 2017). The panchayats further remarked that while they were locals, the villagers were unaware of the existence of the initiative. Women's capacity to fully embrace the Act is also hampered by the unsuitable banking and hours since they are unable to manage family responsibilities under erratic working hours. Additionally, women found it challenging to take part in MGNREGA since they were paid less than their male coworkers due to the gender pay gap (Narayanan et al., 2017).

Although 87.5 percent of village panchayats found it difficult to maintain the ratio, which calls for spending 69 percent in labour and 40 percent in material, MGNREGA stipulates that the resources shall be distributed in the form of a 60:40 ratio. The panchayats declared that it was impossible to maintain the investment ratio since doing so regularly wasted resources.

The panchayats assert that some public works require more labour than material requirements, and others call for less labour. Under these conditions, if the investment ratio is maintained, either labour or resource waste will occur. Thus, the strict 60:40 ratio mandate prevents the proper implementation of MGNREGA and the development of female job prospects. Therefore, it may be asserted that rigidity in the preservation of the 60:40 ratio affects MGNREGA implementation in terms of recruiting women (Natesan & Marathe, 2017).



How MGNREGA is executed and how many women are hired are both significantly impacted by the lack of supportive workers for the panchayats in the rural region. Without enough support staff, task assignment and payment distribution cannot be done effectively. Tracking the receipt, usage, and residual raw material accounts also requires the additional working resource. The responsibilities related to monitoring and supervision in the workplace could not be carried out either due to a lack of employees. Problems with MGNREGA implementation in terms of recruiting women were caused by a lack of professionals for carrying out different administrative and management tasks (Shah et al., 2018). The implementation of MGNREGA has a detrimental effect on women's employment, with issues such decreased job availability, employment lasting less than 100 days, late pay, late allocation, and a lack of facilities hindering women's involvement.

For instance, women workers in Pauri Garhwa, Uttarakhand, struggle with less than 100 days of work and remain unemployed (Kar, 2013).

A government programme called MGNREGA seeks to raise the education of women in rural India, where 83.33 percent of women lack a high school diploma and 10 percent have just an elementary education. However, only 50% of women are aware of government initiatives and programmes aimed at empowering women, and their poor health prevents them from engaging in menial jobs. Mobility constraints, domestic duties, income disparities, and the success of grassroots implementation all have an impact on how much MGNREGA is used by women in the workplace. Women frequently struggle to fulfil work outside of their villages because they lack adequate transportation and are struggling to make ends meet. MGNREGA, a women's empowerment organisation, addresses the issue of conventional male domination in rural areas, where women are expected to handle home duties alone and have less opportunity to work under MGNREGA (Esteves et al., 2013).

The government programme MGNREGA, which seeks to advance gender equality, has difficulties as a result of salary gaps between private sector employees and MGNREGA employees. Private employees make more money, which results in low participation rates. Women's full involvement is further hampered by the lack of amenities like crèches, lengthy



workdays, and gender relations. Implementation difficulties like flexible work schedules and demands for gender-specific life cycles may assist to increase the chances for women (Varman & Kumar, 2020). MGNREGA is a programme that offers women in Kerala greater employment options and a sense of identity. It is backed by state and local government organisations, Self-Help Groups, and NGOs. It motivates people to start their own businesses, work on farms, and provide for their families, all of which improve their general well-being (Kannadhasan, 2018).

The MGNREGA statute, which supports equal pay for men and women, has greatly lessened wage discrimination between genders. The minimum wage requirement encourages women to register and carry out public duties, giving them financial stability and independence. This increases their involvement in economic activity and boosts the economy (Menon, 2017). Women are given access to paid employment possibilities and financial resources through the MGNREGA programme. They are encouraged to sign up so they may learn more about credit and financial transactions. Women may make wise decisions about spending and saving by receiving salary payments through bank accounts, providing increased financial inclusion in the rural sector (Prasad, 2016).

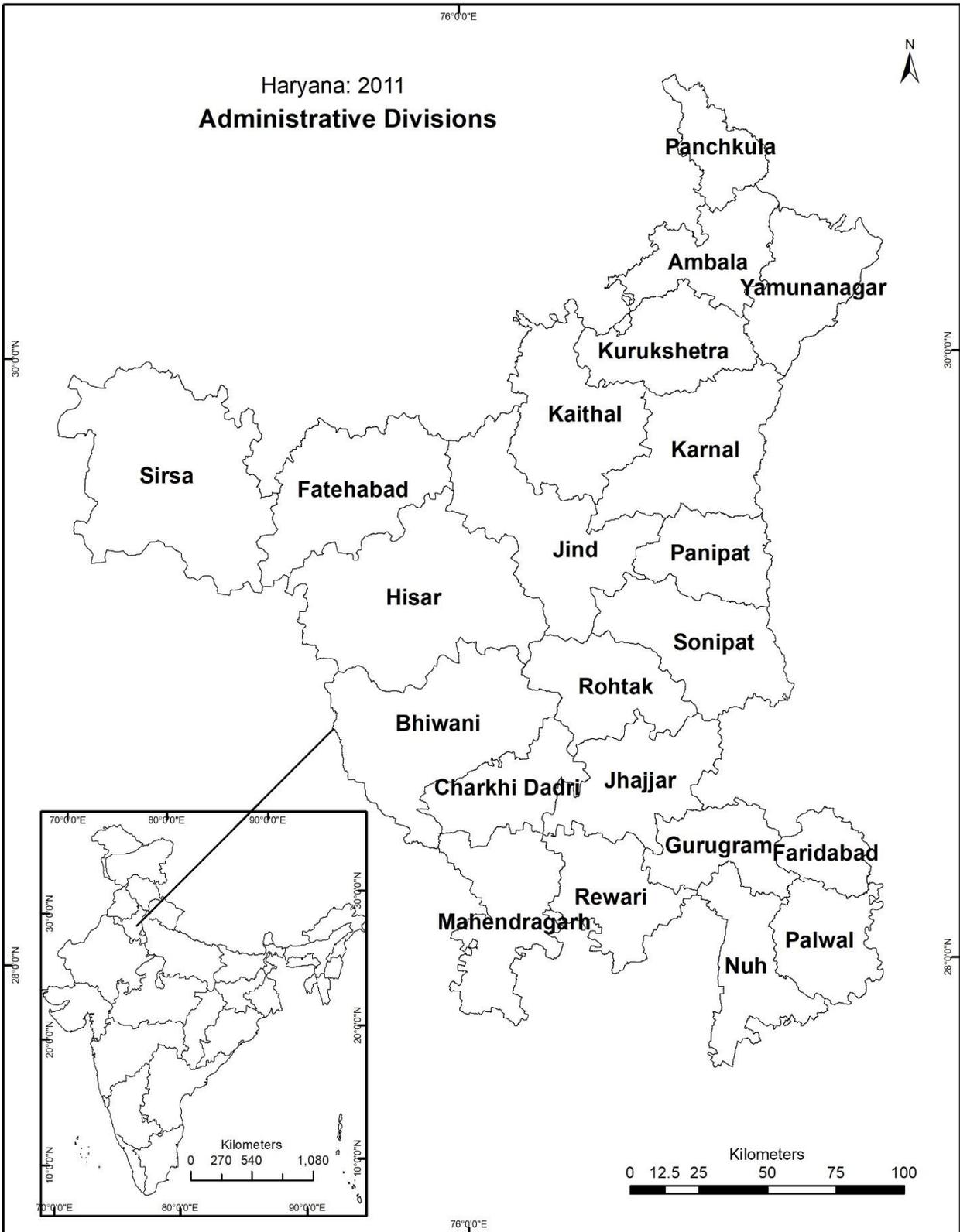
Study Area

Haryana is a state located in the northern part of India. It was carved out of the northern portion of the former state of Punjab on November 1, 1966, and it became a separate state in the Indian Union. Here are some key details and facts about Haryana. The capital city of Haryana is Chandigarh, which is also a Union Territory and serves as the capital for the neighboring state of Punjab. Haryana is one of the more densely populated states in India. Its population includes a mix of various communities, with a significant presence of Jats, Punjabis, and other ethnic groups. Haryana is known for its prosperous economy, driven by agriculture, industry, and services. The state is one of the leading producers of agricultural crops such as wheat, rice, and sugarcane. It is also home to industrial hubs like Gurugram (formerly Gurgaon), Faridabad, and Panipat, which contribute significantly to the state's economy.



Haryana has made significant strides in industrialization and urbanization, particularly in the National Capital Region (NCR). It is a hub for information technology, automobile manufacturing, and other industries. Haryana places a strong emphasis on education and is home to several prestigious educational institutions and universities. Kurukshetra University, Maharshi Dayanand University, and National Institute of Technology Kurukshetra are some of the prominent educational institutions in the state. Haryana has a rich cultural heritage, with a history dating back to ancient times. It is associated with the epic Mahabharata, as Kurukshetra, a city in Haryana, is believed to be the battleground where the great war took place. The state also has a vibrant folk culture, with traditional music, dance, and festivals. Haryana has a parliamentary system of government with a Chief Minister as the head of the state.

The state legislature is unicameral, consisting of only one house, the Legislative Assembly. Haryana offers various tourist attractions, including historical sites, religious places, and natural beauty. Some popular destinations include Kurukshetra, Pinjore Gardens, Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary, and the historic town of Panipat. Haryana has produced many renowned athletes who have represented India at national and international sporting events. The state government has also promoted sports through various initiatives and training centers. Haryana's strategic location, economic growth, and cultural heritage make it a significant and influential state in India. It continues to play a vital role in the country's development and progress. Haryana is primarily a landlocked state, sharing its borders with several other Indian states and the national capital, Delhi. It is situated in the northwestern part of India and has a diverse landscape, including fertile plains, arid regions, and the foothills of the Shivalik Range.





Source: Prepared by Author.

Map 1: Location of the Study Area

Objectives

- To analyze the geographical distribution of women employment under MGNREGA in different regions of Haryana.
- To determine the extent of women's participation in the MGNREGA program in different geographical zones within Haryana and understand the variations in participation rates during 2011-12.

Hypotheses

- i. What is the spatial distribution of MGNREGA worksites across different districts and regions of Haryana?
- ii. Are there significant spatial disparities in the availability of MGNREGA employment opportunities for women in Haryana? If so, what are the key factors contributing to these disparities?
- iii. How accessible are MGNREGA worksites to women in different geographical areas of Haryana, and what are the major barriers to accessibility?
- iv. What is the extent of women's participation in the MGNREGA program in Haryana, and are there variations in participation rates based on geographic factors?

Database and Research Methodology

The main and secondary sources of data are the foundation of the current investigation. It was gathered according to the needs of the study from a wide range of governmental departments, agencies, and ministries as well as other trustworthy sources. On this matter, the Ministry of Rural Development of the Government of India, located in New Delhi, has, nevertheless, primarily relied on both public and unofficial statistics. Information has been gathered at the village and block levels from the pertinent BDO (Block Development Office) offices and DRDA (District Rural Development Agency). At the district level in Haryana, data on the employment



situation of women under MGNREGA during 2011–12. To create all of the themed maps, ArcGIS was used. The quintile approach has been used for data categorization.

Result & Discussion

High Percentage of Women Employment under MGNREGA in Haryana (2011-12)

Compared to other government programmes, MGNREGA has a greater participation rate for women, despite the fact that a number of socio-cultural, economic and geographic constraints have a negative impact on women's ability to participate in the workforce (Azam, 2011). MGNREGA offers opportunities for skill development, and when women actively participate, they acquire valuable skills that can be used beyond MGNREGA work, potentially leading to better job prospects and income-generating activities.

These 5 districts included the districts of Karnal (45.57 per cent), Jhajjar (42.74 per cent), Mewat (42.36 per cent), Kurukshetra (41.87 per cent), and Hisar (39.98 per cent) have been noticed higher women employment under MGNREGA. A high percentage of women employed under MGNREGA signifies an increase in women's economic participation. This can lead to greater financial independence, improved livelihoods, and enhanced decision-making power within households. MGNREGA provides wage employment opportunities in rural areas, and when a substantial portion of these jobs goes to women, it contributes significantly to poverty alleviation among rural households, especially those headed by women.

Moderate Percentage of Women Employment under MGNREGA in Haryana (2011-12)

In this category were included four districts of Haryana during 2011-12 which included the eight districts employment rate between 35 to 40 per cent of Jhajjar, Jind, Sonipat and Yamunanagar. Among these eight districts, Bhiwani had the highest women employment of 38.63 per cent during 2011-12. Sonipat district also exhibited comparable rates of women Employment under MGNREGA that accounted for 38.43 per cent. Fatehabad and Panipat noted women employment at 37.84 per cent and 37.83 per cent respectively during 2011-12. A moderate percentage of women's employment indicates that there is some level of gender inclusivity within the program. Women are participating in the workforce, albeit not at a very high rate. While the current percentage may be moderate, it also suggests room for improvement. Policy interventions and



awareness campaigns can be designed to encourage more women to participate in MGNREGA. A moderate percentage often indicates a more balanced workforce with a mix of both men and women. This balance can have positive effects on the workplace environment and contribute to a sense of equity.

Low Percentage of Women Employment under MGNREGA in Haryana (2011-12)

Two districts namely; Palwal and Panchkula were found to continue to have low employment rates of less than 35 per cent during 2011-12 as well. Panchkula had the lowest women employment among districts of Haryana through MGNREGA that employed 9.17 per cent during 2011-12. A low percentage of women's employment suggests significant gender disparities in access to and participation in MGNREGA programs. This indicates that the program may not be effectively reaching and engaging women.

Table 1: Pattern of Women Employment through MGNREGA in Haryana, 2011-12

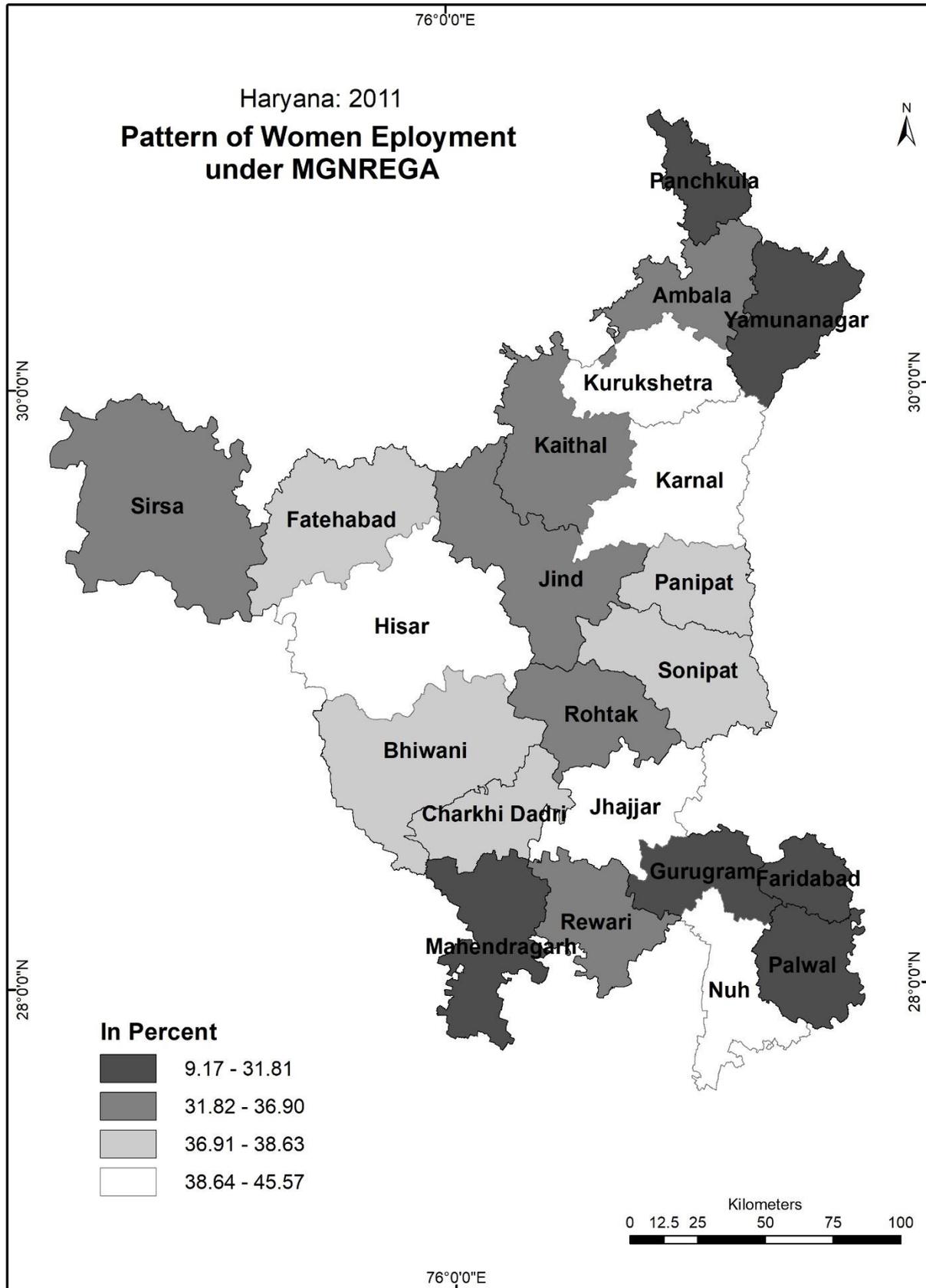
Sr. No.	Districts	2011-12
1.	Ambala	32.5
2.	Bhiwani	38.63
3.	Faridabad	21.20
4.	Fatehabad	37.84
5.	Gurugram	30.54
6.	Hisar	39.98
7.	Jhajjar	42.74
8.	Jind	33.84
9.	Kaithal	34.21
10.	Karnal	45.57
11.	Kurukshetra	41.87
12.	Mahendragarh	25.58
13.	Mewat	42.36
14.	Palwal	31.81



15.	Panchkula	09.17
16.	Panipat	37.83
17.	Rewari	36.64
18.	Rohtak	35.72
19.	Sirsa	36.9
20.	Sonipat	38.43
21.	Yamunanagar	31.05
Haryana		34.65

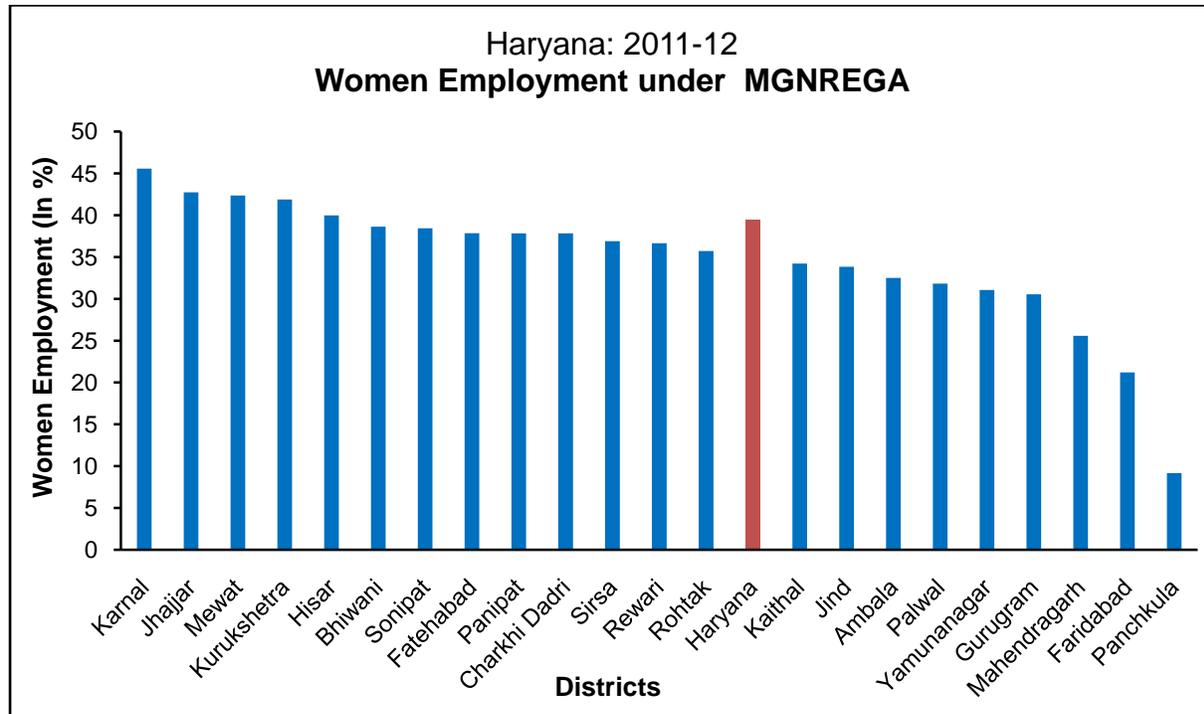
Source: District Rural Development Agency, 2012.

Low participation levels may signal challenges in achieving gender equity and promoting women's empowerment in rural areas, which is one of the program's objectives. Faridabad district noted the second lowest rates of women Employment under MGNREGA that comprised of 21.20 per cent during 2011-12. Lower wage rate and late payment of wages made the scheme less preferable to the poor and landless sections of society, especially noted in districts of Faridabad and Panchkula. A lack of participation may mean that women are missing opportunities for skill development and capacity building, which could enhance their employability beyond MGNREGA.



Source: District Rural Development Agency, 2012.

Map 2



Source: Based on table 1.

Fig. 1

Recommendation

Evaluate the overall impact of MGNREGA on rural livelihoods, poverty alleviation, and economic development. Assess the long-term effects of MGNREGA on income stability, asset creation, and food security in beneficiary households. Investigate the role of MGNREGA in promoting gender equity and women's empowerment, including women's participation and decision-making in the program. Examine the program's impact on marginalized and socially disadvantaged groups, such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other vulnerable populations. Conduct geographic studies to understand the spatial distribution of MGNREGA worksites, accessibility issues, and regional disparities in employment generation.

Conclusion

In the MGNREGA scheme, more than 35 percent of women were employed in Karnal and Jhajjar in 2011–12. Mewat simultaneously had a female employment rate. A significant



percentage of women were employed under MGNREGA in the Kurukshetra district. Generally speaking, MGNREGA participation will be most advantageous to women whose social contact and mobility are least constrained by traditional social norms. In this regard, Faridabad had a women's employment rate of very low, which confirms the tendency of lower women's involvement in more diverse districts. Out of these eleven districts, Gurugram and Palwal had the greater percentage of women employed under the MGNREGA in Haryana than Faridabad.

Jind and Ambala, had one third women employment under MGNREGA. In each of the three districts of Bhiwani, Kaithal, and Kurukshetra, there were similarly substantial percentages of women employed more than one third in total. We can conclude that MGNREGA scheme is good for women employment particularly illiterate women at the village level. The working women under MGNREGA has experienced more exposure than the other unemployed women.

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