

# MGNREGA : A Case Study of Jalandhar

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

**Submitted to the Office of Deputy Commissioner,  
Jalandhar**

Prepared under the aegis of Public Policy and Good Governance Lab

A collaboration of School of Public Policy and Governance, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad and District of Jalandhar



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## FOREWORD

The Jalandhar District Administration has constantly strived to improve the quality of governance and make sure that it is able to perform its duties in a professional manner and reach all sections of society, with particular emphasis on providing access to government services and schemes to the marginalized sections of society and making sure that no one is left behind. This citizen-centric approach of the administration has reaped dividends and has also been acknowledged and appreciated by, both the State and Centre's administration. The District Administration has been working tirelessly during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that the schemes of the government are implemented in a time-bound manner. The District Administration has been awarded the Skoch Award in recognition of its exemplary performance in improving the Public Service Delivery in the month of December of 2020. Further, it was also selected for stage 2 of the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration under Improving Service Delivery Category. These recognitions serve as an appreciation and motivation to the Administration's earnest efforts.


In its effort to constantly improve the quality of services, the district administration has frequently collaborated with leading academic institutions in conducting research geared towards providing tangible positive outcomes for the betterment of society. Government-academia collaboration also holds promising potential by being mutually beneficial, allowing academia to study the good practices of the administration and bridging the gap between theory and practice, while simultaneously helping the government gain insights from academics on how to serve the populace better by incorporating best practices. The periodic intake of interns is another push that has been a source of unparalleled knowledge to students from all walks of life, imparting them with insight into the daily affairs of the Administration while also providing practical problem-solving skills. The Inception of Public Policy and Good Governance Lab, a collaboration between the District Administration and TATA Institute of Social Sciences Hyderabad, School of Public Policy and Governance is among the latest initiatives highlighting the administration's commitment to ensuring the highest standard of service delivery.

During the internship period the students conducted the field study and prepared the following reports:

1. **Why Jalandhar has Low Uptake in MGNREGA:** The policy interns studied the implementation of MGNREGA in Jalandhar and examined the issue of low uptake of MGNREGA work in the district despite the registered initial demand for work. Through primary & secondary research, the students gave a good insight into the issue and suggested measures to increase the uptake of the scheme in Jalandhar.
2. **The Quality of Public Service Through Sewa Kendra:** The Zero Pendency Approach of Sewa Kendras in Jalandhar has been analysed and recommendations have been provided by the policy interns on how this approach of the administration could be further augmented to provide better services to the citizens.

3. **Vaccination Guideline for Elderly & Persons with Disability:** Assistance was provided by the policy interns to the district administration of Jalandhar in the conceptualisation of an inclusive guideline for doorstep vaccination of the specially abled & elderly via community & ANM(Auxiliary Nurse Midwife) led mobilization.
4. **District Mineral Foundation Fund (DMFF):** The policy interns analysed the current status of DMF in Jalandhar & the initiatives taken by the district administration to address issues in the mining industry of Jalandhar. Additionally, they also recommended best practices for better utilization of the funds in the district.
5. **Contouring the Methods of Targeting in India:** The policy interns carefully examined the implementation guidelines of 90 schemes and have identified various targeting methods that could be used by the district administration to delineate policies in the future.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Professor Aseem Prakash, for conceptualising this initiative successfully. In addition, I'd like to express my gratitude for the youthful and dynamic group of interns who have worked vigorously to compose these reports and give their inputs for the same. I sincerely hope that these reports can help us enhance the effectiveness of the policies in the future.

  
Ghanshyam Thori, IAS  
Deputy Commissioner  
Jalandhar

## Foreword

Collaboration between government and academia is the key to catalyse innovative policies which can effectively deliver sustainable and socially equitable outcomes. Government administration is often focussed on delivering tangible outcomes and serving the populace, while academia is focussed on building new knowledge and applying existing concepts through research. A synthesis of both the efforts can yield promising results and such an exercise can be mutually beneficial for the stakeholders. Towards this, the School of Public Policy and Governance (SPPG) conceptualised the institutional design of the Public Policy and Good Governance Lab (PPGGL). The district of Jalandhar under the leadership of Shri Ghanshyam Thori, IAS, Deputy Commissioner operationalised the 'PPGGL' to better understand the outcomes of the ongoing policies, document successful practices and plan for the immediate and the long term future. Thus, under the guidance of Mr. Thori, a cohort of policy interns from SPPG undertook a thorough analysis of several programmes/schemes.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), a flagship programme of the Government of India, is carried out in all the blocks of Jalandhar district for the purpose of strengthening livelihood resources and assets creation. The district of Jalandhar has a significantly higher demand for MGNREGA work by women than men. There is a low uptake of work by women despite posing initial demand for labour. The students of the Policy Lab carefully examined this problem and have provided recommendations that could help further to increase women as well as men participation in MGNREGA works in the district.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Mr. Thori for his visionary leadership and other officials of the District Administration for their enthusiastic support in this endeavour. I sincerely hope that the series of policy reports prepared under the aegis of 'PPGGL' will not only bring the good work done by the district administration in the policy discourse but also help them to further enhance the effectiveness.

Yours Sincerely

*Aseem Prakash*

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Professor at School of Public Policy and  
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## Executive Summary

- ❖ The twin fold problems encountered concerning MGNREGA work in the district of Jalandhar are: First, there is a low uptake of work by women workers despite posing an initial demand for work, and second, among those who demand work, the share of men is significantly lower than that of women. Hence, any policy solutions to this unique problem required understanding the gendered aspect of MGNREGA work in Jalandhar.
- ❖ There are four significant findings of the study. First, the robust mechanism of and well developed formal and informal channels of social security net ensure that the basic necessities of people are largely fulfilled. The work under MGNREGA then becomes choice-based rather than need-based for people. The formal channels include various welfare schemes rolled out by the government. The informal channel comprises community-led initiatives.
- ❖ Second, Jalandhar being an NRI belt of Punjab, has both economic and cultural ramifications. More than 25 percent of Jalandhar households receive foreign remittances that ensure the economic well-being of people in the rural areas. Close contact with NRIs through cultural meetings like NRI sabhas and communication technologies leads to increased awareness among indigenous people about better work conditions in other countries. Thus their choice of labour is primarily shaped by their perception of dignity of labour and opt out of such works which they feel are unsafe, polluting or hazardous.
- ❖ Third, the works undertaken under MGNREGA are not conducive to women workers. For instance, continuous, intense manual labour required for digging does not allow a woman to take care of her children. This problem can exacerbate

if an on-site crèche facility is not present. Further, exhaustion caused by such forms of labour puts an extra burden on women as they are primarily responsible for completing household chores. All this has led to a situation where women are irregular in taking up the job.

- ❖ Fourth, low participation by men and high participation by women can be attributed to three significant factors. First, because of the presence of labour-intensive industries in Jalandhar, men can find employment in these industries while women are not preferred to do those jobs which are labour intensive. Second, wages in MGNREGA are lower than the average wage in other informal works. Thus, the male members of the family who are the primary bread earners prefer to work in industries/other informal sectors. In contrast, female members undertake work under MGNREGA as subsidiary employment. Third, rapid urbanisation in the district has opened up significant opportunities for work for male workers who can easily migrate from rural areas to the city. At the same time, social norms dictate gender roles, restricting the mobility of women for work.
- ❖ Therefore, any policy intervention to increase women's work uptake in the Jalandhar district must incorporate works conducive to women. For this reason, we have recommended expanding MGNREGA works to include those works that demand low physical duress by women and restoring ecological balance.
- ❖ Thus, to promote the participation of women, they can be employed as Van-Mitras to maintain and protect planted saplings. Additionally, women can also work under CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning) for ecological restoration and regeneration activities. Similarly, women SHG (Self-Help Groups) can be provided with MGNREGA work. We have analysed the integration of SHGs by taking the case studies of Rajasthan & Andhra Pradesh. Along similar lines, the cross-convergence of MGNREGA with other works such as "Seechewal-Model"

of wastewater management has also been recommended for improving the uptake by both men & women.

- ❖ Besides that, our report has also proposed the dignity of labour as a social right and. So with regards to the incorporation of the concept of dignity, amendments to the MGNREGA guidelines at the State level have been suggested to institutionalise the said concept. This change, as proposed by our report, could be realised by adopting specific minimum safety standards by taking inspiration from ILO guidelines.
- ❖ Lastly, we have also proposed that a District Level Action plan needs to be prepared for MGNREGA works to be carried out in the district based on the location-specific niche expertise of the people of Jalandhar. As recommended by this report, the plan should consider the interest of the workers keeping in mind their socio-economic background and devise such innovative works that suit their interests. The district administration can formulate the plan mentioned above by collaborating with research institutes to understand better workers' interests and engage directly with panchayat members and workers.

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## List of Abbreviations

**MGNREGA** - The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

**MRD** - Ministry of Rural Development

**NFHS**- National Family Health Survey

**NRI** - Non-Resident Indians

**PRIs**- Panchayat Raj Institutions

# INTRODUCTION

## SECTION 1

### INTRODUCTION

Jalandhar was known as Jullundur during British India. As the oldest inhabited city of Punjab, Jalandhar was also the capital of Punjab before Chandigarh. The city lies in the Doab region, situated at the confluence of the Beas and Sutlej rivers. Owing to it being a part of the doab region, the city boasts intensive irrigation facilities leading to robust agricultural productivity. As far as its neighbouring districts are concerned, Ludhiana lies in the East of Jalandhar, Kapurthala lies in the West. In contrast, Hoshiarpur and Ferozepur lie in the North and South of Jalandhar, respectively. The city of Jalandhar consists of 5 Tehsils, five sub-tehsils and 11 development blocks, namely Jalandhar East, Jalandhar West, Bhogpur, Adampur, Nakodar, Shahkot, Phillaur, Nurmahal, Lothian, Rurka Kalan and Mehatpur.

#### **1.1 Problem Statement**

As a law for the poorest and a right for the weakest, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act aims to give development a face. A flagship programme of the Government of India, the work mandated under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is carried out in all the above-mentioned blocks of Jalandhar actively. However, an analysis of official data available for the current year presents a unique issue with regard to the uptake of work assigned under MGNREGA in the district of Jalandhar. Data collected from the office of Deputy Commissioner, Jalandhar as on 28.06.2021, reveals that only 69.16 percent of workers took up MGNREGA work despite registering demand for the work initially. It is to be noted that the work was offered to 99.53 per cent of workers, thereby enveloping a large part of the demand. Furthermore, the analysis of workforce composition highlights that women comprise 62.10 percent of total active workers while men comprise 37.90 percent of the workforce. This substantiates our initial proposition that the demand for

MGNREGA work by women is higher than that of men. Therefore, the problem concerning demand and uptake of MGNREGA work in Jalandhar is twin fold. We summarise them below:

1. There exists low uptake of MGNREGA work in Jalandhar by workers despite registering demand for work initially.
2. Among those who demand work, the share of women is higher than that of men and thus offers us an opportunity to look at the reasons behind high demand by women and low by men.

## **1.2 Organisation of Sections**

This paper is organised into 5 sections. The first section expounds on the problem of low uptake of MGNREGA work identified in the district of Jalandhar despite registered demand in the Jalandhar district. The section then deals with a brief overview of MGNREGA, its major mandate, methodology used in the study and the source of data collection. The second section is dedicated to the review of relevant literature available on MGNREGA. The third section looks at the gender composition of the workforce under MGNREGA in Jalandhar to assess whether the low uptake of work has any gendered connotation. The fourth section outlines the findings of this report and the possible reasons for the low uptake of MGNREGA work, and the reasons behind high demand by women workers and low by men workers. The fifth section includes a set of recommendations based on the findings of the study.

## **1.3 Overview of MGNREGA**

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), one of the largest employment guarantee programs in the world, was launched with the primary objective of providing livelihood security to rural households. An integral approach of

natural resource management, perspective of looking towards livelihood generation and bottom-up, people-centred, demand-driven approach makes it distinct and unprecedented from earlier relief programs in the country. Currently, MGNREGA functions on two fronts i.e. strengthening the livelihood resources of the poor through employment provision on one hand and asset creation in rural areas on the other.

MGNREGA Act of 2005 was notified on 7 September 2005, and it came into force on February 2, 2006. The Act provides a legal mandate of at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The entire implementation of the scheme is monitored by the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD), the Government of India, the state governments, the local government and other local actors that provide on-ground support to the implementing agencies.

Right to work offered by MGNREGA provided economic freedom to the vulnerable section of society, especially women. MGNREGA Act states that women should be given priority in employment, and for the same purpose, it makes provision of having at least one-third of women beneficiaries. According to data provided by the Ministry of Rural Development<sup>1</sup>, there is 53.67% participation of active women workers in the financial year 2021-2022. The higher number of participation of women, over and above the minimum requirement stipulated by the act which stands at one-third of the entire workforce has always been a unique outcome of this program. As male members of the family migrate to other places in search of work, women are left behind at home. These particular sections of women would engage themselves in the economic activity offered near their place of residence which in turn helped them to increase their average household income. For the facilitation of women workers, provisions related to worksite facilities are provided in the operational guidelines of MGNREGA. Facilities such as medical aid, drinking water and shade are the basic minimum requirements to be made available at the worksite. Provision of *crèche* facilities is mandatory if five or more

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<sup>1</sup>[http://mnregaweb4.nic.in/netnrega/all\\_lv1\\_details\\_dashboard\\_new.aspx?Fin\\_Year=2021-2022&Digest=B5DSyTB/eSUSkZd2BpGzbA](http://mnregaweb4.nic.in/netnrega/all_lv1_details_dashboard_new.aspx?Fin_Year=2021-2022&Digest=B5DSyTB/eSUSkZd2BpGzbA)

women workers are accompanying children below the age of six years. A woman worker can also be kept to look after such children. Social safety net provided by MGNREGA is a way towards transformation of a more equitable and connected society.

#### **1.4 Methodology and Source of Data.**

The data used in this report was compiled through mixed-method research that involved three key stages. The first stage included a systematic, in-depth review of relevant policy documents, including policy guidelines, census handbook, state plans as available from Central and State government sources, as well as scholarly literature. The second stage encompassed a quantitative data collection from the MGNREGA Portal, Government of India, as well as the Deputy Commissioner Office, Jalandhar. The third stage consisted of qualitative data collection undertaken through focus group discussions with the Deputy Commissioner, the Additional Deputy Commissioner (Development) of the district of Jalandhar, MGNREGA officials and other stakeholders.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## SECTION 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

As a flagship scheme that initiated demand-driven and rights-based employment for the poor and unemployed in India, many studies have been conducted to evaluate the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act(MGNREGA) for research purposes. The literature reviewed in this report focuses mainly on two issues which are addressed within our study. The first concern is the low uptake of MGNREGA work by women despite initial registration of demand for the work. Thus, those studies that analyse the factors hindering the participation of women are investigated. In addition, the reasons behind women's high participation in the scheme as compared to men are studied to gain a comprehensive understanding on NREGA's impact on employment opportunities for both rural women and men.

The introduction of MGNREGA as a scheme has opened up avenues to address rural poverty and unemployment in India. Studies show that the scheme has resulted in a positive impact on the employment patterns of women.<sup>2</sup> (Sanjay Kanti Das , 2013; Carswell, G & De Neve G, 2013; Planning Commission, 2011). With respect to the participation rates in MGNREGA, several studies reveal that marginalized groups like SC, ST, and women have disproportionately higher participation rates as compared to their population (Reddy and Upendranadh (2010); Dreze and Khera(2009). The reasons behind the increased demand of MGNREGA work by women, as observed by various studies has been the provision of an equal wage rate for both men and women and the enthusiasm by rural women to work for MGNREGA(Khera and Nayak 2009; Sudarshan

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<sup>2</sup> Das, S. K. (2013). A Brief Scanning on Performance of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in Assam, India. *American Journal of Rural Development*, 1(3), 49-61.

CARSWELL, G., & DE NEVE, G. (2013). Women at the Crossroads: Implementation of Employment Guarantee Scheme in Rural Tamil Nadu. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 48(52), 82-93.

Planning Commission (2011) *Midterm Appraisal: Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007–2012)*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

et al. 2010; Pankaj and Tankha 2010).<sup>3</sup> It has been evidenced in the study by Bourmpoula et al that since women are offered limited opportunities for participation in paid employment in the labour market, outside their home, MGNREGA remains a safe avenue for women to pursue work(Bourmpoula et al. 2016). Another reason behind the high demand of MGNREGA work by women is that it provides them with an avenue to receive higher wages as compared to the market (Sudarshan et al.,2010). Although the scheme is deemed empowering in nature, it has been found that MGNREGA works do not take into account issues for women, such as child rearing and the limited physical abilities; particularly older women<sup>4</sup> (Sudarshan et al.,2010). Even though the guidelines suggest crèche facilities at worksite, the implementation of the said guideline on ground has not been effective. These could be few reasons for low uptake of the work by women despite initial registration of demand. Moreover, when it comes to other hindering factors to participate in MGNREGS despite of the will to partake in the work, factors such as untimely employment, delayed payments, health issues, etc. were found to be the prominent ones for women. Other obstacles like household chores, work on own agricultural farms, MGNREGA wages offered lower than the market wages, unequal wages, discrimination based on gender or caste, harassment at worksite, insensitivity of officials, problems in getting employment, officials not able to provide employment, lack of mandatory worksite facilities, hard work and distance to worksite etc are also possible reasons which deter women from taking up MGNREGA work(C Dheeraja et al, 2013)<sup>5</sup>. Thus, it can be inferred that although women might register for MGNREGA work in high numbers, it would not result in high uptake due to multiple reasons which may hinder their participation. However, there is a lack of literature on the reasons behind the low demand of MGNREGA work by men in the scheme as compared to women.

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<sup>3</sup>Khera, R. and Nayak, N. (2009) ‘ Women Workers and Perceptions of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act’, *Economic and Political Weekly* 44(43): 49– 57.

<sup>4</sup> Sudarshan, R., Bhattacharya, R. and Fernandez, G. (2010) ‘Women's Participation in the NREGA: Some observations from fieldwork in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, and Rajasthan’, *IDS Bulletin* 41(4): 77–83.

<sup>5</sup> C. Dheeraja, N.V. Madhuri Ms. Antaripa daimari. (2013). Factors facilitating participation of women in Mahatma Gandhi NREGS. (Research Reports Series – 98, ISBN No. ISBN No. 978-81-85542, National Institute of Rural Development, pg 28-128

With all the above studies in consideration, it is evident that even though MGNREGA as an employment guarantee scheme has ensured increased opportunities of employment for women in several districts of India, multiple factors influence the uptake of the MGNREGA work by women. However, due to a gap in the existing literature on the influence of affluence and the concept of dignity of work over the low uptake of work under MGNREGA for the district of Jalandhar; our study has attempted to analyse and find the interrelationship to address the issue of low uptake of MGNREGA work.

# QUANTIFYING PROBLEM STATEMENT

## SECTION - 3

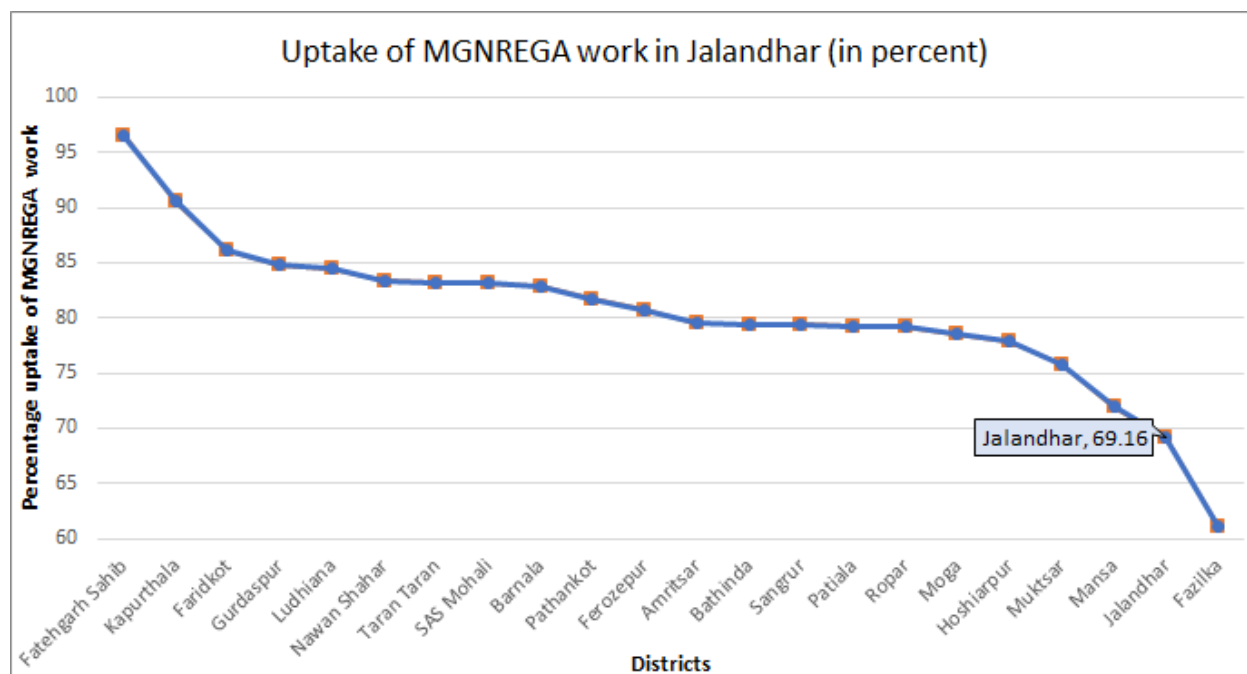
### QUANTIFYING PROBLEM STATEMENT

This section deals with the problem statement comprehensively using official data. We already mentioned in the introduction of this paper that there are two kinds of problems that exist with respect to MGNREGA work in Jalandhar district. First, there is a low uptake of MGNREGA work in the district despite posing initial demand for work. Second, among those who demand work, the share of women workers is significantly higher than that of men workers. In this section we attempt to look at both these problems using official data available to us for holistic understanding of the problem.

#### **3.1 Problem of low uptake of work despite posing initial demand for work:**

As on 28.06.2021, the official data on active job card holders reveal that out of total workers who demanded work, only 69.16 percent of workers took up work when it was offered. It is to be noted that, 99.53 percent of workers were offered work under MGNREGA. This massive gap of 30.37 percent between the demand and uptake of works may have repercussions on delayed creation of assets under MGNREGA in Jalandhar. As on, 9.07.2021 Jalandhar ranked 13th and 19th out 22 districts in Punjab in terms of completion of model school playground/stadiums and government school projects respectively. Though, statistically, a direct correlation between low uptake and delayed asset creation could not be established because of unavailability of data on uptake of work for each block. This dimension requires further research.

Following graph shows the rank of Jalandhar in comparison to other districts of Punjab in terms of uptake of MGNREGA work.



**Note:** Jalandhar ranks 21st out of 22 districts in uptake of work

### 3.2 High participation by women but low by men

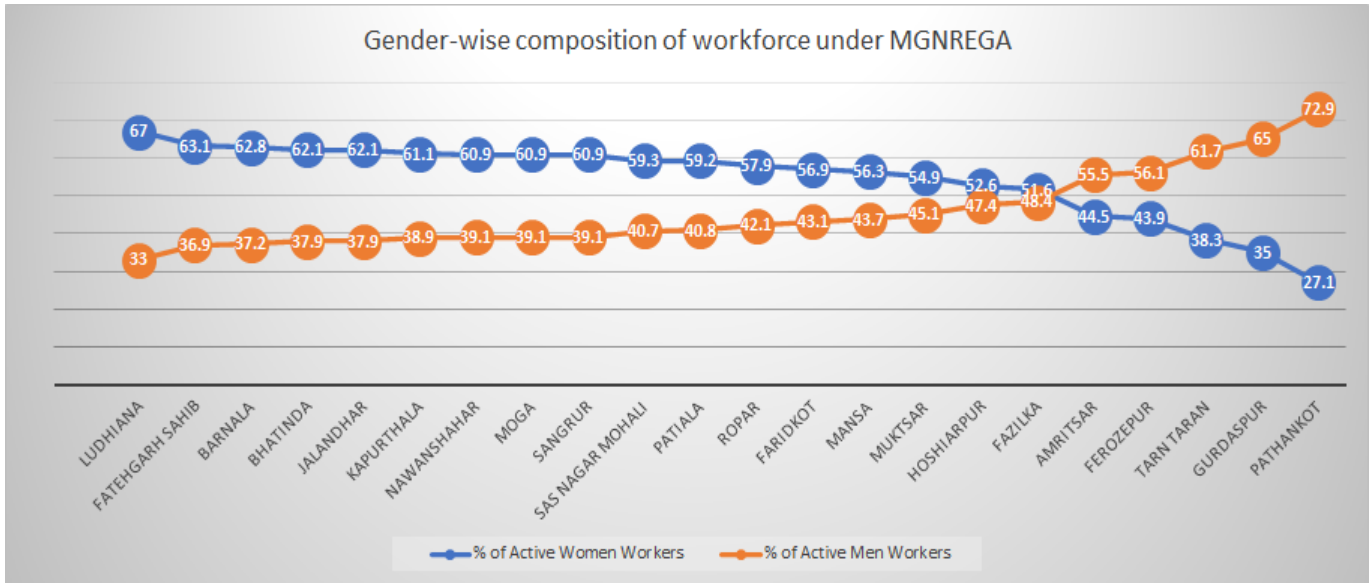
Having found out that there exists low uptake of MGNREGA work despite posing an initial demand, we oriented our study towards finding the composition of total workforce and exploring whether there exist any relation between the low uptake and the gender identity of workers. With this proposition in mind, we collected data on the composition of active workforce in MGNREGA in Jalandhar district. The data collected from the official website of MGNREGA on active job card holders<sup>6</sup> reveals that women make up a significant section of the total active workforce in the district. As on 13.07.2021, out of total 53652 workers, 33305 workers are women and 20347 are men. This makes women a significant 62.1 percent of the total active workers. This establishes Jalandhar as the 5th largest district of Punjab in terms of participation of women in MGNREGA works.

<sup>6</sup> **Definition of Active Job Card holder or Active worker:** Any individual or household who has worked any one day in either the last three financial year or in current financial year

Since women comprised a significant section of the workforce, consequently we decided to investigate the gendered aspect of MGNREGA and the reason behind the low uptake of MGNREGA work by women despite posing an initial demand. However, another aspect of it deserves a mention here. It can be observed from the data that while women (with 62.1 percent of active workforce) make a significant section of total workforce who demand work, men participation is as low as 37.90 percent. It implies that demand for work by men is significantly lower than that by women in Jalandhar. Thus we are tempted to explore the following dimensions pertaining to the gendered aspect of work participation in MGNREGA in Jalandhar.

1. What are the reasons for low uptake of work by women who comprise approximately two-third of the total workforce?
2. What are the possible causes of high participation of women but low for men in MGNREGA work?
3. If men take up other work, do women get excluded from taking up the same work in the labor market?

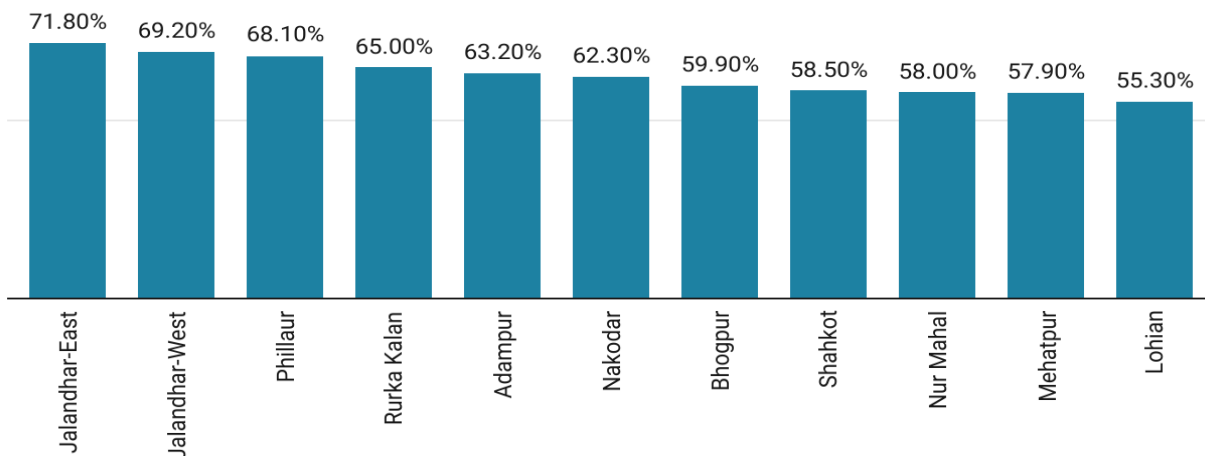
Following graph shows the gendered composition of the workforce in all the districts of Punjab. The data shows that Jalandhar ranks 5th in terms of women participation (62.1 percent). It is also significantly higher than the average of Punjab which is 53.87 percent.



Following data shows the percentage of active women workers in MGNREGA in each of the blocks of Jalandhar District. We can observe that the composition of women workers goes as high as 71.8% in Jalandhar-east while the lowest percentage of women workers seen in SAS Nagar Mohali is still more than 50%.

## Gendered Composition of Workforce in Jalandhar District

Block-wise



Source: MGNREGA Web Portal • Created with Datawrapper

# FINDINGS

## SECTION - 4

### FINDINGS

This section mentions four major findings of the study which seeks to answer the following questions pertaining to MGNREGA which are also the problem statements of this study.

1. What are the reasons for low uptake of work by women who comprise approximately two-third of the total workforce?
2. What are the possible causes of high participation of women but low for men in MGNREGA work?

It is to be noted that each finding arranged in chronological order cumulatively seeks to answer the above mentioned questions and thus should not be read separately.

#### **4.1. Possible reasons for low demand for MGNREGA work by men but high by women**

The findings based on official data reveal that active male workers under MGNREGA is as low as 37.92 percent as against active female workers which is 62.10 percent in Jalandhar. Consequently we attempted to find out the reasons for such high inequality in terms of demand for work by both genders. Our study has yielded some striking findings in terms of the uptake of MGNREGA work by both genders. This trend can be attributed to multiple factors.

First, Jalandhar hosts a large number of industries and is concomitantly experiencing an exponential growth in industrialisation. According to Niti Aayog (2000)<sup>7</sup>Jalandhar consists of 27790 small and medium enterprises, employing around 1.4 lakh people. It is

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<sup>7</sup> Punjab State Plan-[https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/stateplan/sdr\\_punjab/sdrpun\\_ch6.pdf](https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/stateplan/sdr_punjab/sdrpun_ch6.pdf)

the centre of the sports goods industry in Punjab (Soni et. al)<sup>8</sup>. Similarly, Jalandhar is well-known for its manufacturing of hand tools like spanner set, screw driver, nose pliers etc. as well as surgical instruments (Singh, 2002), automobile parts (Roy, 2013)<sup>9</sup>, cocks & valves, pipe fittings, bus body building, leather tanneries, ball bearings, switch & switch-gears and rubber goods (Niti Aayog, 2000). Since these industries are largely labour intensive, the inherent and intuitive gender bias against women regarding their inability to perform labour-intensive tasks makes the way for men to be employed in these informal works outside MGNREGA. It has been evidenced that women are offered limited opportunities for participating in paid employment in the labour market, outside their home (Bourmpoula et al. 2016).<sup>10</sup>

Additionally, the condition of women in the labour market is indicated by dominant social norms and expectations which restricts them to take care of household chores (World Values Survey). This interplay of dichotomic market and non-market forces impacts the workforce composition in the labour market to a large extent. It determines the manner in which women and men participate in employment and the form of engagement whether principal or subsidiary. Because of these two factors, women choose to demand higher work under MGNREGA than men.

Second, wages in MGNREGA are lower than the average wage in other informal works in Jalandhar. For example, in MGNREGA the daily wage is Rs. 269 per day, while average minimum wage for unskilled workers in Jalandhar is 335 for the year 2020<sup>11</sup>. It is because of this reason that the male members of the family prefer to work in these industries/informal sectors to secure their subsistence level of income. Wages drawn in MGNREGA work by a household is considered an additional/supplement source of

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<sup>8</sup> Soni, A., Verma, R., & Joshi, M. C. (2016, April). Sports Goods Foundation of India : A Case Study of a Solution Based NGO. *Indian Journal of Management*, 9(4). 10.17010/pijom/2016/v9i4/90772

<sup>9</sup> Punjab auto component units expect 5% growth-  
[https://www.business-standard.com/article/sme/punjab-auto-component-units-expect-5-growth-112100900075\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/sme/punjab-auto-component-units-expect-5-growth-112100900075_1.html)

<sup>10</sup> Kapsos, S, A Silberman and E Bourmpoula (2016), 'Decline of women's labour force participation in India: Explaining the puzzling trend', in S Dasgupta and S Verick (eds.), *Transformation of Women at Work in Asia: An Unfinished Development Agenda*, SAGE, New Delhi, pp. 75-102.

<sup>11</sup> Office of Labour Commissioner, Punjab-  
<https://www.capsi.in/notifications/The%20Punjab%20Minimum%20Wages%20Notification%201st%20Mar%202020.pdf>

income for the family. Thus, female members partake in MGNREGA as a subsidiary employment while men assume the responsibility of primary bread earners undertaking relatively high paying works in the informal sector.

Third, the high growth of urbanisation in the district of Jalandhar poses significant working opportunities for men in these urban areas in the informal sector and acts as a driving force for the migration of men to towns and cities. On the other hand, the social norms dictate gender roles and restrict the mobility of women for work. Thus, a legal entitlement based employment scheme like MGNREGA becomes their only recourse.

## **4.2. Robust mechanism of Social Security through formal and informal channels**

The two kinds of social security net provided to people through formal (State led initiatives) and informal channels (civil society organisations led initiatives) ensure that basic necessities of people are largely fulfilled. The interplay of these two guarantees that people do not remain vulnerable to any economic shocks. We discuss these two below.

**4.2.1. Well developed social security net provided by the State Government using their nine flagship schemes:** Social security net provided by the State Government through the flagship schemes like Smart ration card scheme, Aashirvad Yojana, Mai Bhago Vidya Scheme, Bebe Nanki Laadli Beti kalyan Scheme, Home for Widows and Destitute (Jalandhar), State Protective Home (Jalandhar) have more than 90 percent of uptake and beneficiaries. The proper implementation of these schemes largely ensures that the welfare of people living in rural areas are taken care of thus providing them a sense of security.

**4.2.2. Civil-society organisations strengthening social security net:** Punjab has a history of community led services and the deep rooted cultural practices like Sewa (service). Various civil society organisations have formed Dera (Shelter homes), Organise Langars, Community kitchen etc which guarantees people of basic needs to sustain life.

The culmination of these Formal and Informal mechanisms of social security has established a comprehensive and effective ecosystem for the social welfare of the citizens of Jalandhar which largely ensures that the basic necessities of the marginalised communities are secured to a large extent making them less vulnerable to any kind of adverse shocks.

### **4.3. High affluence and cultural assimilation in Jalandhar district because of it being a NRI belt of Punjab.**

The Doab region and particularly Jalandhar has been witnessing traditional out-migration to various parts of the world for over a century. Increasing scope of work through military and other paid employment, encouraged people to favour overseas movement (Kessinger 1974<sup>12</sup>; Fox 1985<sup>13</sup>). These movements continue to have extensive impact on the cultural and economic milieu of Jalandhar through networks that enable economic prosperity because of inflow of foreign remittances and cultural assimilation through exchange of ideas between local residents and NRIs of this region. We discuss below how the economic and cultural impact of Jalandhar being an NRI belt impacts the uptake of MGNREGA work in the district.

#### **4.3.1. Economic Impact**

The economic impact of Jalandhar being an NRI belt of Punjab could be gauged by the fact that more than 25 percent of the households in Jalandhar receive NRI remittances (EXIM bank, 2016<sup>14</sup>). Geographically, Jalandhar is situated in the doab region of Punjab. By virtue of its location at the cross-section of two rivers namely Satluj and Beas, it is a fertile area with abundance of agricultural productivity leading to high affluence. Historically, the immense and continuous flow of remittances made to the families living in the doab region

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<sup>12</sup> Kessinger, T.G. 1974. Vilyatpur, 1848–1968: social and economic change in a north Indian village. Berkeley: University of California Press

<sup>13</sup> Fox, R. 1985. Lions of the Punjab: culture in the making. Berkeley: University of California Press

<sup>14</sup> Report on migration and remittances in India, Export-Import Bank of India, 2016

assisted the agro-technological developments of the Green Revolution (Shiva, 1991<sup>15</sup>), which continued to bolster agriculture productivity in the area. Besides this, a significant amount of personal capital flows into villages from abroad (Roberts, 2001<sup>16</sup>) of which a large portion is attributed to the NRIs and is most commonly used in purchasing land, funding local weddings, constructing houses, and making donations to the villagers especially the religious temple or Gurdwaras. In this way, the economic condition of people is relatively better. Therefore MGNREGA work is not a need based work for people rather it becomes a choice based work making it easy for people to opt out of work when offered.

#### **4.3.2. Cultural Impact and the increased awareness about dignity of labor**

In addition to this, the presence of the NRI belt evokes significant cultural ramifications for the region. Cultural meetings like NRI Sabhas are established with the primary objective of strengthening their ties with the people and culture of their motherland. These regular networks are strengthened through the effects of communication technologies which allow villagers to have regular contact with their relatives. This exchange of ideas leads to increased awareness among indigenous population about better conditions of work and facilities provided at worksites in different nations. As a result, their choices regarding the nature of work are largely shaped by their perception of the dignity of labor. Consequently they refuse to do any such work which they feel is unsafe or hazardous. This finding was also corroborated through the interaction with BDPOs. One of the BDPOs said “*...women workers refuse to enter into the ponds to clean it because they do not like doing dirty work...they also demand more work site facilities.*” This points that MGNREGA workers, especially women, do not wish to do work which they perceive to be polluting (for instance, cleaning of drainage) or unsafe and not suitable to them.

#### **4.4. High economic prosperity in the region**

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<sup>15</sup> Shiva, V. 1991. The violence of the Green Revolution. London: Zed Books

<sup>16</sup> Walton-Roberts, Margaret. (2001). Returning, Remitting, Reshaping: Non-Resident Indians and the Transformation of Society and Space in Punjab, India.

The economic prosperity in the region has not been achieved only through foreign remittances but there are other factors responsible for it. The Economic Survey of Punjab (2020-21<sup>17</sup>) points to high economic prosperity in Jalandhar as compared to other districts. Various indicators point in this direction. For instance, Jalandhar has emerged as a popular medical tourist destination especially among NRIs (Economic Survey, 2020-21, pp.12). To facilitate information dissemination pertaining to overseas job opportunities, facilitation services and recruiting agents have been empaneled in Jalandhar (Economic Survey, 2020-21, pp.29). On the basis of households having 8 assets-”pucca house, electricity connection, phone, television, AC/cooler, refrigerator, washing machine, and motorized vehicle”- Jalandhar is the most affluent district out of 640 districts (NFHS, 2016<sup>18</sup>). Jalandhar has the second highest number of Small Scale Industries in Punjab (NITI Aayog, <sup>19</sup>) creating job opportunities for informal labor. The development of the Amritsar-Kolkata industrial corridor along Amritsar, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, SAS Nagar highways led to the migration of population from the neighbouring areas to the towns (Economic Survey, 2020-21, pp.100). Jalandhar is one of the five districts which are experiencing one of the highest rural-urban migration in Punjab indicating that there exists better job opportunities for people who could afford to migrate to urban areas. According to the 2011 census, the rate of urbanisation in Jalandhar is 53% which is the fourth highest in the state. It is also the third most urbanised district in Punjab. The Jalandhar district also has a robust agricultural sector as there are as many 12 regulated agri market functional in the district which is the 3rd highest in Punjab (Statistical Abstract 2020, Punjab<sup>20</sup>). In terms of per capita income, Jalandhar tops among all the districts of doab region while it ranks 6th in all of Punjab (Punjab District Census Handbook, 2011<sup>21</sup>) working conditions and greater worksite facilities such as creche, maternity benefits, transportation facilities etc. The above findings substantiate the notion that the interplay of social welfare initiatives by the state and civil

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<sup>17</sup> Economic Survey of Punjab, 2020-21- <https://esopb.gov.in/Static/PDF/EconomicSurvey-2020-21.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> National Family Health Survey, 2015-16- [http://rchiips.org/nfhs/FCTS/PB/PB\\_FactSheet\\_37\\_Jalandhar.pdf](http://rchiips.org/nfhs/FCTS/PB/PB_FactSheet_37_Jalandhar.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Punjab State Plan-[https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/stateplan/sdr\\_punjab/sdrpun\\_ch6.pdf](https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/stateplan/sdr_punjab/sdrpun_ch6.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Statistical Abstract 2020, Punjab - <https://www.esopb.gov.in/static/PDF/Abstract20201.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Punjab District Census Handbook,

2011-[https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/dchb/DCHB\\_A/03/0315\\_PART\\_A\\_DCHB\\_AMRITSAR.pdf](https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/dchb/DCHB_A/03/0315_PART_A_DCHB_AMRITSAR.pdf)

society actors, along with the inherent affluency of the region, secure an basic survival security for people. These factors, on one hand extend a subsistence level of income to the people, and on the other hand safeguard the basic social welfare needs of them. Their basic needs are largely fulfilled through other formal and informal mechanisms (various government schemes and community led services), existence of alternative job opportunities (agricultural and other informal sector) give them living conditions and thus they are not entirely dependent on MGNREGA work for subsistence. The findings reveal that the uptake of MGNREGA work by the people in the district of Jalandhar is mainly to support their existing income. This was also found out during the focused group discussion with different stakeholders.

#### **4.5 Work not conducive to women**

Further, with our discussions with officers at the District Administration, we found a consensus that some of the current works undertaken under MGNREGA are not in sync with the needs of women workers. For example, continuous, intense manual labour required for digging does not allow a woman to take care of her children if they are there on the worksite. This problem can exacerbate if an on-site crèche facility is not present. Further, exhaustion caused by such forms of labour puts an extra burden on women as they are primarily responsible for completing household chores. All this has led to a situation where women are irregular in taking up the job while still maintaining a majority in terms of the composition of active workers.

Therefore any policy intervention to increase the uptake of work in Jalandhar district must take into consideration the following three factors.

- 1. Incorporating works which are conducive to women since they are numerically the most significant section of the workforce under MGNREGA.**

**2.** Incorporating works and facilities that ensure dignity of labor as a social right in the design of MGNREGA.

**3.** Identifying and innovating new kinds of work other than the traditional work keeping in mind the well developed socio-economic cultural aspect of the district of Jalandhar.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## SECTION - 5

### RECOMMENDATIONS

As our study has evidenced the reasons behind the low uptake of the MGNREGA work in Jalandhar, it becomes imperative to address the issue through various policy interventions. The revised MGNREGA guidelines which are based on the Mihir Shah Committee report have suggested expansion of permissible works under MGNREGA.<sup>22</sup> Keeping that into consideration, we have come up with the following recommendations based on our cumulative study:

#### **I . Expansion of MGNREGA works which promotes participation of women.**

Since MGNREGA is a people-centric scheme and given that women comprise a significant portion in the programme, it is crucial that the employment provided to women is translated into high uptake by them. This becomes even more important in the case of Jalandhar district where the composition of women workers is more than 60% in the district. Pertaining to several factors (as discussed in the previous sections) that hinder the participation of women in the MGNREGA work, employment opportunities that encourage their participation needs to be created. They can be employed in works which demand low physical duress and simultaneously also help restore the ecological balance.

For example:

- **Employing women MGNREGA workers as Van – Mitras to maintain and protect planted saplings<sup>23</sup>**

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<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Report of the Committee on Revision of MGNREGA Operational Guidelines, Ministry of Rural Development, 2012.  
[https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/reports/genrep/mgnarega\\_guidelines\\_2012.pdf](https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/reports/genrep/mgnarega_guidelines_2012.pdf)

<sup>23</sup><http://diprpunjab.gov.in/?q=content/van-mitra%E2%80%99-upkeep-400-saplings-be-planted-tribute-400th-parkash-purab-sri-guru-teg-bahadur>

Van-Mitras (Forest-friends) have been appointed across the state of Punjab to look after the plants which were planted on the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev in November, 2019. As there is a poor rate of survival (around 20 to 25 per cent) of newly planted saplings in Punjab, these plants need special attention in the form of regular watering, protection from pruning and safety from animals. Women MGNREGA workers act as tree protectors and are engaged in the process of examining and survival of planted saplings.

### **Intended benefit**

1. This will provide a regular supply of work that can be undertaken by women workers.
  - **Employment of women workers for eco-restoration and regeneration activities under CAMPA(Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning)**

The Green India Mission under the National Action Plan on Climate change aims to increase forest and tree cover. The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning fund is collected as compensation for forest land diverted to non-forest uses and it is used to promote afforestation and regeneration activities.

The convergence of this initiative with MGNREGA would be beneficial. It will provide substantial work to MGNREGA workers on the one hand and it will fulfill the aim of Green India Mission to increase forest and tree cover.

### **Intended benefits**

1. An increase in the green cover will help mitigate the side effects of rapid urban expansion of Jalandhar
2. Tree plantation is a kind of work which would provide long term, self sustaining employment especially to women.

- **Cross-convergence with other<sup>24</sup> works such as “Seechewal-Model” of wastewater management with MGNREGA**

Environmentalist Balbir Singh Seechewal developed the “Seechewal Model” under which sewage water can be purified and used for irrigation. In this, water coming from the houses is passed through three wells for the purpose of solid and oil waste segregation. Treated water remains stagnant in the pond for at least seven days helping to kill the germs in the water. This “Seechewal model” can be successfully implemented throughout the district with the help of workers under MGNREGA.

### **Intended benefits**

1. The treated water can be used for irrigation purposes as well as for cattles.
2. MGNREGA workers can be actively employed in the whole process of wastewater management through this model.

- **Women SHGs to be provided work under MGNREGA**

Active women participation in MGNREGA can be stimulated through women SHGs based on several best practices conducted throughout the country.

### **Rajasthan**

Rajasthan government has inducted women SHG (Self-Help Groups) to expand the scope of work. In Rajasthan, one lakh women of SHGs were identified. Among those who are eligible under MGNREGA were given entitlement to work. This was done with keeping in mind that women from the same group can come together and will be able to finish the work in a given time with the best quality.

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<sup>24</sup>

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/jalandhar/55-seechewal-model-based-ponds-to-be-developed-in-jalandhar-district-123534>

## **Andhra Pradesh**

In Andhra Pradesh, Workers were hesitant to take up the work due to delay in MGNREGA payments. State decided to tackle this with the help of SHGs where payments were to be made through SHGs on a weekly basis. Along with this, SHGs based fixed labour groups known as Shrama Shakti Sanghas were created in order to provide continuous assured employment. Each fixed labour group was allocated a work at a time which will guarantee them the work for the rest of the year.

However, the administration needs to be careful about that, the SHGs should not be built on extremely narrow lines of only gender understanding. The structure of SHGs should be such that they can easily integrate themselves with the local economy. This potential integration will make them a substantial part of the supply chain for the local hand tool industry, rubber goods, and surgical instruments industry etc. This whole process of integration will ensure that these SHGs are sustainable in nature. The resilient nature of SHGs will help their members to overcome pertinent socio-economic shocks such as economic crises caused due to poor health of members or failure of crops within members' families.

### **Intended benefits:**

1. SHGs can provide a platform to a group of women working together. It will be better as there is a sense of sisterhood among women and this will help them to work together more efficiently.
2. This will give them a collective voice to discuss their grievances. Women together can discuss and articulate their problems without any hesitation unlike any other work.
3. SHG are more accustomed to dealing with women related issues such as child care.

4. The combination of these factors Women SHGs will provide them with the conducive environment required for undertaking MGNREGA related work.

## **II. Incorporation of the concept of 'Dignity of work' in the implementation of MGNREGA**

MGNREGA functions on the concept of intense manual labour which leads to physical duress of the workers. The projects of cleaning drains which are infested with years of organic and non-organic waste under sanitation related works of MGNREGA not only requires more manual work but are also perceived to be humiliating, deterring workers from taking those works. Similarly, the hazardous working conditions associated with the task of cleaning sewage and drainage lines also acts as inhibitors for higher uptake of MGNREGA works. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that people in Jalandhar have high awareness about occupational safety and better working conditions caused due to the assimilation of ethos associated with western work culture disseminated by the NRIs originating from the district.

To address concerns mentioned above, there is an urgent requirement for incorporating the concept of dignity of labor while implementing MGNREGA for the district. Further, amendments can be brought to the MGNREGA guidelines at the State level to institutionalize the said concept. This change could be realised by adopting certain minimum safety standards by taking inspiration from ILO guidelines<sup>25</sup> The action plan specific to the district of Jalandhar can incorporate the integration of the hand tool industry (NITI Aayog, ) with MGNREGA. This would lead to a two-fold impact:

1. Facilitating workers to undertake hazardous work safely and efficiently by working in coordination with those machines.
2. Causing a surge in demand for the hand tools industry leading to employment

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<sup>25</sup><https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/occupational-safety-and-health/lang--en/index.htm>

opportunities for the locals.

### **III. Leveraging location-specific niche expertise in the district.**

The Niche expertise of workers in the district could be tapped by identifying their interest. This would entail that district administration incorporates such mechanisms which help in doing so. We propose that a District Level Action plan is prepared for MGNREGA works to be carried out in the district. The plan should take into consideration the interest of the workers keeping in mind their socio-economic background and devise such innovative works which suit their interest. The district administration can collaborate with research institutes to better understand the interest of workers, and engage with the panchayat members and workers directly.

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