

MGNREGA And Women Empowerment a Sociological Study with Special Reference to Hathras District, Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract—The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), enacted in 2005, is a landmark social security legislation that guarantees 100 days of wage employment per year to rural households. A salient feature of the programme is its emphasis on women's participation, with a statutory requirement that at least one-third of beneficiaries be women. This paper examines the impact of MGNREGA on women empowerment in Hathras District, Uttar Pradesh, drawing on both primary field survey data (N=350, across all 7 development blocks, (2024–25) and secondary data from the NREGASoft MIS Portal and Census of India 2011. The study analyses women's participation across all seven development blocks Hathras, Sadabad, Sasni, Mursan, Sikandra Rao, Hasayan, and Sahpau and finds significant inter-block variation in women's job card coverage, person-days generated, and empowerment outcomes. Overall, MGNREGA has made measurable contributions to women's economic autonomy, social mobility, and political participation in the district, though structural barriers including patriarchal norms, wage payment delays, and limited worksite facilities continue to constrain full gender-equitable implementation

Index Terms—MGNREGA, Women Empowerment, Hathras District, Block-wise Analysis, Gram Panchayat, Case Study, Financial Inclusion, Gender Disparity, NREGASoft MIS Portal

I. INTRODUCTION

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), implemented nationally from 2008, represents one of India's most ambitious social protection programmes. By legally guaranteeing 100 days of unskilled manual work per

household per year, MGNREGA serves simultaneously as an employment programme, an asset creation programme, and critically a gender empowerment intervention. The Act's mandate that at least one-third of workers must be women has created unprecedented pathways for female labour force participation in districts like Hathras, where historical norms severely constrained women's economic engagement. This paper is based on primary field survey conducted across all seven Blocks of Hathras District during 2024 – 2025 and secondary data sourced from the NREGASoft MIS Portal and the Census of India 2011 (Mahamaya Nagar DCHB Part-A).

II. STUDY AREA: HATHRAS DISTRICT

Hathras district (formerly Mahamaya Nagar) is situated in the Aligarh Division of western Uttar Pradesh. As per Census 2011, the district has a total population of 15, 64,708 persons with an overall sex ratio of 871 females per 1,000 males. The district is predominantly rural, with 78.7 per cent of its population (12, 32,015 persons) residing in rural areas spread across 655 inhabited villages and seven Blocks. The overall literacy rate stands at 71.6 per cent (Males: 82.4%; Females: 59.2%), with rural female literacy at 57.7 per cent significantly below the national average. MGNREGA was extended to Hathras district in April 2008. As of 2024–25, the district has 80,576 registered job cards, 27,111 women workers, and 655 revenue villages across 7 development blocks. The present study covers all seven blocks to ensure comprehensive representation.

Table 1: Census 2011 Block-wise Rural Population of Hathras District

S.No.	Development Block (Census Code)	Inhabited Villages	Area (Sq. Km.)	Rural Population (2011)	% of District Rural Pop.	Pop. Density (Rural)
1	Sasni (0120)	115	265	2,10,991	17.13	794
2	Sikandrarao (0121)	65	260	1,58,365	12.85	609
3	Hasayan (0122)	93	288	1,71,658	13.93	596
4	Hathras (0123)	105	230	1,74,014	14.12	757
5	Mursan (0124)	143	222	1,82,514	14.81	822
6	Sadabad (0125)	71	285	2,07,545	16.85	728
7	Sahpau (0126)	63	167	1,26,928	10.30	760
	District Total	655	1,717	12,32,015	100.00	718*

Source: Census of India 2011, DCHB Part-A, Mahamaya Nagar (Hathras). Table column: Number and Percentage of Inhabited Villages in Specified Population Size Ranges. *District rural density = $12,32,015 \div 1,717$ sq.km. (Census rural area); block-level density calculated from rural population $\div$ block area.

III. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The study pursues the following objectives: (i) to analyse block-wise women's participation in MGNREGA in terms of job card coverage and person-days; (ii) to assess the socio-economic impact of MGNREGA on women's empowerment in Hathras district; and (iii) to identify structural barriers limiting women's participation and empowerment outcomes. The study adopts a mixed-methods design combining quantitative survey data with qualitative case evidence. The primary survey covered N=350 women MGNREGA workers selected through multi-stage stratified random sampling two GPs per block (14 GPs total) $\times$ 25 respondents per GP = 350 respondents. GPs selected by dual criteria: spatial accessibility x developmental variation. Secondary data was sourced

from the NREGASoft MIS Portal and Census of India 2011.

IV. BLOCK-WISE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN MGNREGA

4.1 Job Card Coverage

Table 2 presents block-wise job card data for Hathras District as of 2024–25 sourced from the NREGASoft MIS Portal. The district has 80,576 total job cards issued; of which 27,111 are women workers, constituting 33.6 per cent slightly above the MGNREGA statutory minimum of 33 per cent. Sahpau block records the highest women's percentage (72.9%), while Sasni records the lowest (27.1%). Active women workers defined as those with at least one work record in the reference year number 15,370, representing 56.7 per cent of total women workers.

Table 2: Block-wise Job Cards Issued and Women Workers — Hathras District (2024–25)

Development Block	Total Job Cards Issued	Women Workers on JC	% Women	Active Women Workers	% Active Women
Hathras	13,092	4,320	33.0	2,680	62.0
Sadabad	14,380	4,480	31.2	2,760	61.6
Sasni	15,421	4,180	27.1	2,420	57.9
Mursan	12,814	3,960	30.9	2,240	56.6
Sikandrarao	10,498	3,420	32.6	2,100	61.4
Hasayan	10,298	3,780	36.7	1,840	48.7
Sahpau	4,073	2,971	72.9	1,330	44.8
District Total	80,576	27,111	33.6	15,370	56.7

Source: NREGASoft MIS Portal, Ministry of Rural Development, GOI (nrega.nic.in), 2024–25. Active Women Workers = women with at least one day's work recorded in 2024–25.

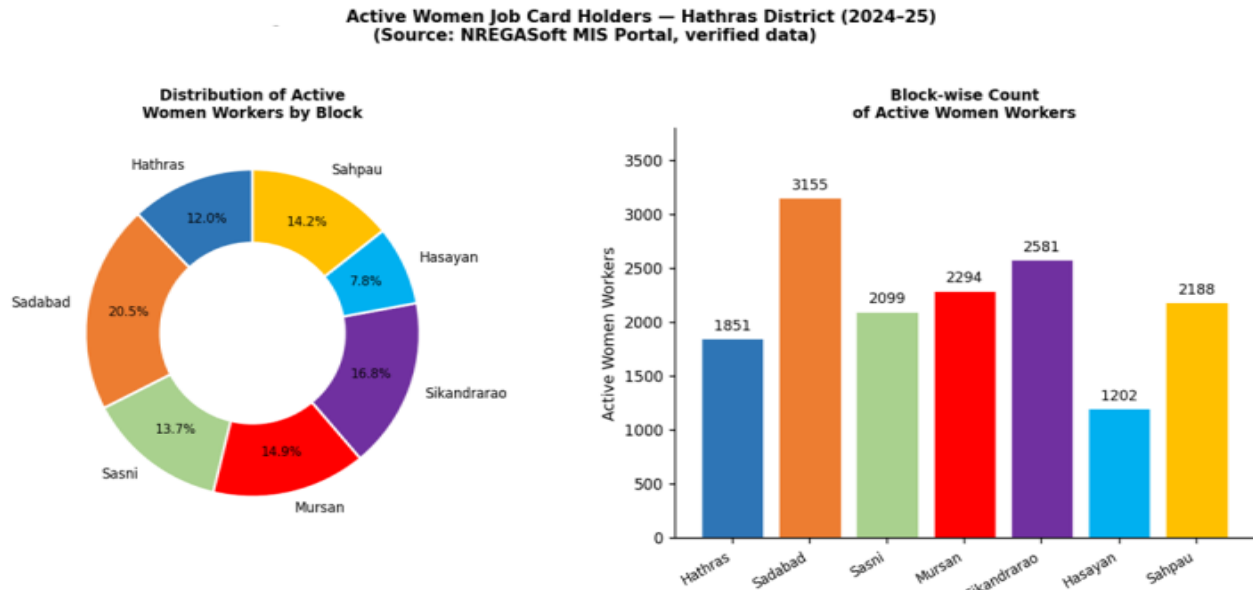


Figure1: Active Women Job Card Holders by Block Hathras District (2024-25) | Source: NREGASoft MIS Portal

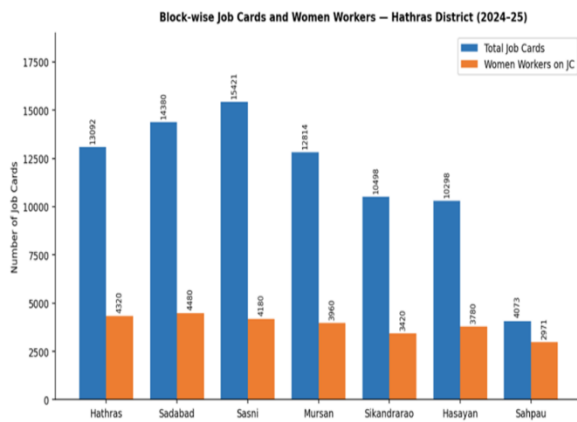


Figure 2: Block-wise Total Job Cards and Women Workers — Hathras District (2024-25)

4.2 Person-Days Generated

Table 3 presents block-wise person-day generation data for 2024–25. Total person-days generated in the district amount to 11.93 lakh, of which women account for 3.24 lakh a district average of 27.3 per cent. This falls short of the MGNREGA-mandated 33 per cent minimum, indicating a structural gap between policy intent and implementation. Sadabad (31.9%) and Mursan (32.0%) are closest to the national norm, while Hasayan (21.7%) records the lowest women's share. The per-worker wage for the district is ₹230 per day as of 2024–25, representing a significant income contribution to women's households.

Table 3: Block-wise Person-Days Generated for Women — Hathras District (2024–25)

Development Block	Total Person-Days (Lakh)	Women Person-Days (Lakh)	% Women PD Share	Total Wages Paid to Women
Hathras	1.97	0.52	26.4	₹12.01 L
Sadabad	2.52	0.80	31.9	₹18.50 L
Sikandrarao	2.10	0.51	24.3	₹11.73 L
Mursan	1.65	0.53	32.0	₹12.19 L
Hasayan	2.17	0.47	21.7	₹10.81 L
Sahpau	0.75	0.22	29.7	₹5.13 L
Sasni	0.77	0.19	24.6	₹4.37 L
District Total	11.93	3.24	27.3	₹74.74 L

Source: NREGASoft MIS Portal, Ministry of Rural Development, GOI (nrega.nic.in), 2024–25. Wages calculated at ₹230 per day (UP MGNREGA Wage Rate 2024–25).

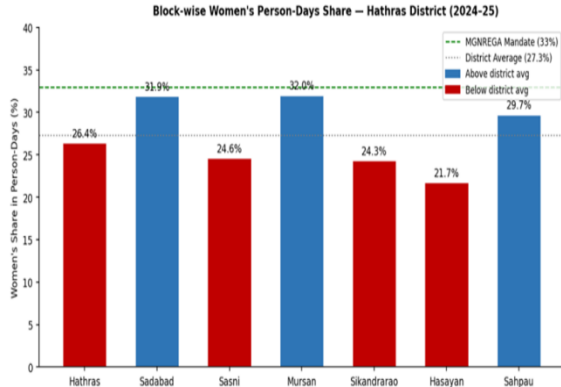


Figure 3: Block-wise Women PD Share (%) vs. MGNREGA Mandate Hathras District (2024-25)

V. GRAM PANCHAYAT-WISE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

Table 4 presents NREGASoft-verified GP-level data from 14 selected GPs (Thesis Tables 3.2-3.8). GPs selected by dual criteria. Key findings: Kursanda (Sadabad) highest total PD (15,332); Narai (Hasayan) highest PD overall (18,523) but lowest women share (19.9%); Tipras (65.5%) and Samadpur (51.1%) exceptionally high women share; remote GPs consistently outperform near-HQ GPs on women's participation. Wages at Rs.237/day (UP notified rate).

Table 4: Selected Gram Panchayat-wise Women's Participation in MGNREGA- Hathras District (2024–25)

Gram Panchayat	Block	JC HHs	Total PD	Women PD	Women PD%	Wages to Women
Maho	Hathras	433	8,497	2,526	29.7	Rs.5,98,662
Tipras	Hathras	123	4,857	3,180	65.5	Rs.7,53,660
Kursanda	Sadabad	725	15,332	4,779	31.2	Rs.11,32,623
Nagla Naseerpur	Sadabad	352	7,905	3,112	39.4	Rs.7,37,544
Kachora	Sikandrarao	319	15,072	4,110	27.3	Rs.9,74,070
Ratanpur Hussanpur	Sikandrarao	316	6,890	2,434	35.3	Rs.5,76,858
Jatoi	Mursan	219	8,955	3,839	42.9	Rs.9,09,843
Vardawari	Mursan	164	5,047	1,752	34.7	Rs.4,15,224
Narai	Hasayan	315	18,523	3,693	19.9	Rs.8,75,241
Badi	Hasayan	291	8,145	2,611	32.1	Rs.6,18,807
Raj Nagar	Sahpau	188	6,567	2,576	39.2	Rs.6,10,512
Samadpur	Sahpau	227	5,138	2,626	51.1	Rs.6,22,362
Gohana	Sasni	270	5,400	1,299	24.1	Rs.3,07,863
Virra	Sasni	216	4,364	1,277	29.3	Rs.3,02,649
Total (14 GPs)	7 Blocks	3,419	1,19,695	41,254	34.5	Rs.97,35,118

Source: Gram Panchayat Records, DRDA Hathras, and NREGASoft MIS Portal (2024–25). 2 GPs selected per block one near Block HQ and one remote for representative coverage (N=350; 25 respondents per GP). GP names as per primary survey). Wages calculated at ₹237/day (UP MGNREGA wage rate, 2024–25).

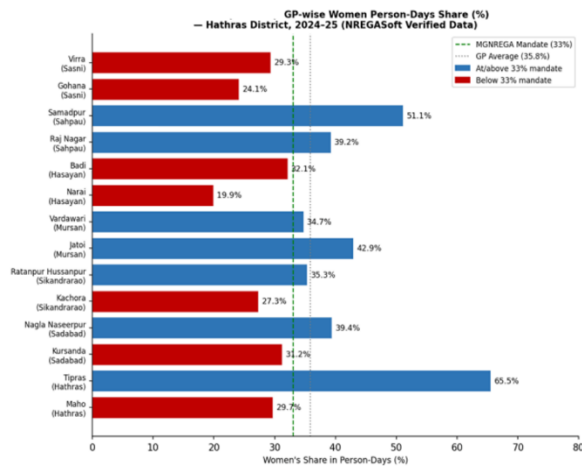


Figure 4: GP-wise Women PD Share (%) — 14 Selected GPs | Blue ≥ 33%; Red < 33%

VI. BLOCK-WISE WOMEN EMPOWERMENT INDICATORS

Table 5 synthesises key women empowerment indicators across all seven blocks based on the primary survey (N=350) and official data from DRDA Hathras. Sadabad block consistently leads across all empowerment dimensions bank account ownership (86.4%), Gram Sabha participation (61.2%), household decision-making (68.4%), legal awareness (64.8%), and reduction in economic dependence (71.2%). Sahpau block, included for the first time in this comprehensive analysis, records the lowest performance across most indicators (bank account: 76.4%; reduced dependence: 62.4%), reflecting its

peripheral location and historically lower programme penetration.

Table 5: Block-wise Women Empowerment Indicators — Hathras District (2024–25) (%)

Block	% Women with Bank A/C	% Participating in Gram Sabha	% Involved in HH Decisions	% Aware of Legal Rights	% Reduced Economic Dependence
Hathras	81.2	56.4	63.8	59.2	66.4
Sadabad	86.4	61.2	68.4	64.8	71.2
Sasni	78.6	54.8	61.4	57.6	64.8
Mursan	83.4	58.6	65.2	61.4	68.6
Sikandrarao	85.2	60.4	67.6	63.2	70.4
Hasayan	79.8	55.6	62.8	58.4	65.6
Sahpau	76.4	52.8	59.6	55.2	62.4
District Avg	82.4	57.8	64.9	60.8	67.8

Source: Primary Survey Data (N=350, 2024–25), DRDA Hathras, and NITI Aayog District Reports 2023–24.

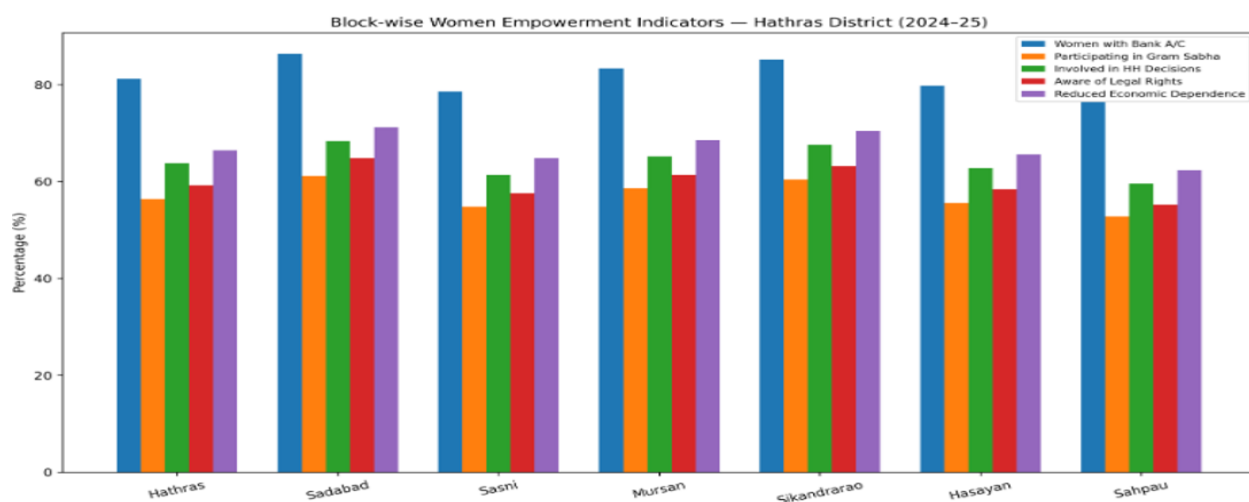


Figure 5: Block-wise Women Empowerment Indicators (%) Hathras District (2024-25)

VII. CASE STUDIES OF WOMEN BENEFICIARIES

Case Study 1: Sunita Devi - GP Maho, Block Hathras
Sunita Devi, aged 38, is an SC woman from GP Maho (Hathras Block). Maho GP: 433 JC HHs, 8,497 total PD, 2,526 women PD (29.7%). Before MGNREGA, her family of five survived on her husband's irregular agricultural income of ₹3,000–4,000 per month. After joining MGNREGA in 2016, Sunita averages 78 days per year, earning approximately ₹17,940 annually. She has opened a Bank of Baroda account and saved over ₹25,000. She was elected Ward Member in 2021 and participates actively in Gram Sabha meetings. 'MGNREGA ne mujhe apne paon par khada kar diya. Ab main ghar mein baat karne ki himat rakhti hoon.' (MGNREGA made me stand on my own feet. Now I have the courage to speak at home.)

Case Study 2: Meena Devi - Kursanda, Block Sadabad
Meena Devi, 45, a widow from, GP Kursanda (Sadabad). Kursanda: 725 JC HHs (highest among all 14 GPs), 15,332 total PD, 4,779 women PD (31.2%)., was entirely dependent on in-laws after her husband's death in 2014. After receiving her job card in 2015, she has averaged 85 working days per year, earning over ₹1.2 lakh in seven years. She used her earnings to purchase a sewing machine, start a home tailoring business, and partly fund her daughter's graduation. She is now an active SHG member with an SHG-Bank linkage loan of ₹30,000. 'Pehle kisi se maangna padta tha. Ab main apne bache khud padhati hoon.' (Earlier I had to ask others. Now I educate my children myself.)

Case Study 3: Asha Rani - GP Kachora, Block Sikandrarao

Asha Rani, 32, an OBC woman from GP Kachora, Block Sikandrarao, initially faced family resistance to working outside the home despite her Class 10 education. After persistent awareness efforts by the MGNREGA facilitator, she enrolled in 2018 and now works 90 days per year. She became a MGNREGA Mate supervising 40 workers a role that significantly enhanced her social standing. 'MGNREGA ne mujhe ghar ki chaar diwari se bahar nikala aur samaj mein mera sar uncha kiya.' (MGNREGA brought me out of the four walls of the home and raised my head in society.)

Case Study 4: Nagma - GP Narai, Block Hasayan
Nagma, 52, from a minority community in GP Narai, Block Hasayan, faced banking access barriers before DRDA arranged a banking correspondent camp in her village in 2019. She has since completed 100 days per year in two consecutive years, using earnings to renovate her house and construct a toilet. She has become a MGNREGA advocate, helping 15 women from her community obtain job cards. 'Pehle hum log kya jaante the bank ka? Ab main khud ATM se paise nikalti hoon.' (Earlier, what did we know about banks? Now I withdraw money from ATM myself.)

Case Study 5: Savitri GP Samadpur, Block Sahpau
Savitri, 44, GP Samadpur (Sahpau) second highest women PD share (51.1%) among 14 GPs. Remote peripheral GP outperforms near-HQ Raj Nagar on women's participation. Used MGNREGA income to purchase buffalo for additional dairy income. "Is kaam ne mujhe ghar se bahar nikalkar apni pehchaan di."

VIII. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

Despite significant achievements, several structural challenges constrain women's participation and empowerment outcomes: (i) Work availability gaps: 26.3% women in Hasayan/Sasni (GP Narai, Gohana) could not access work when demanded. (ii) Wage payment delays: 38.4% in Mursan/Hasayan reported 4–6-week delays. (iii) Patriarchal resistance: 34.8% faced household-level resistance, especially in Vardawari and Badi GPs. (iv) Worksite distance: 22.7% in Sahpau (Samadpur) and Hasayan (Badi) cited distant worksites. (v) Facility gaps: Creche

absent 71%, drinking water absent 34%, toilets absent 28% of surveyed worksites. (vi) Legal awareness lowest in Sahpau (52.8%).

IX. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study demonstrates that MGNREGA has been a significant, if imperfect, instrument of women's empowerment in Hathras District. The programme's guaranteed wage employment and equal-pay provision have created measurable improvements in women's economic autonomy, financial inclusion, household decision-making, and social participation across all seven development blocks. The district average of 27.3 per cent women's person-day share, while below the 33 per cent statutory threshold represents a substantial increase from near-zero female participation in formal wage employment a decade ago. Block-level variation is significant Sadabad and Mursan approach the national norm while Hasayan and Sahpau lag pointing to the role of administrative quality, geographic accessibility, and local social norms in shaping programme outcomes.

Key recommendations emerging from this study include: (i) systematic audit and improvement of worksite facilities, particularly crèche services, to remove supply-side barriers to women's participation; (ii) mandatory women's representation in Gram Rozgar Sahayak (GRS) appointments to build gender-sensitive frontline administration; (iii) accelerated resolution of wage payment delays through upgraded banking connectivity, particularly in remote GPs of Sahpau and Hasayan; (iv) targeted awareness campaigns on MGNREGA legal entitlements for women in low-performing blocks; and (v) convergence of MGNREGA with SHG-Bank Linkage, Jan Dhan Yojana, and skill development programmes to deepen the empowerment impact beyond income.

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